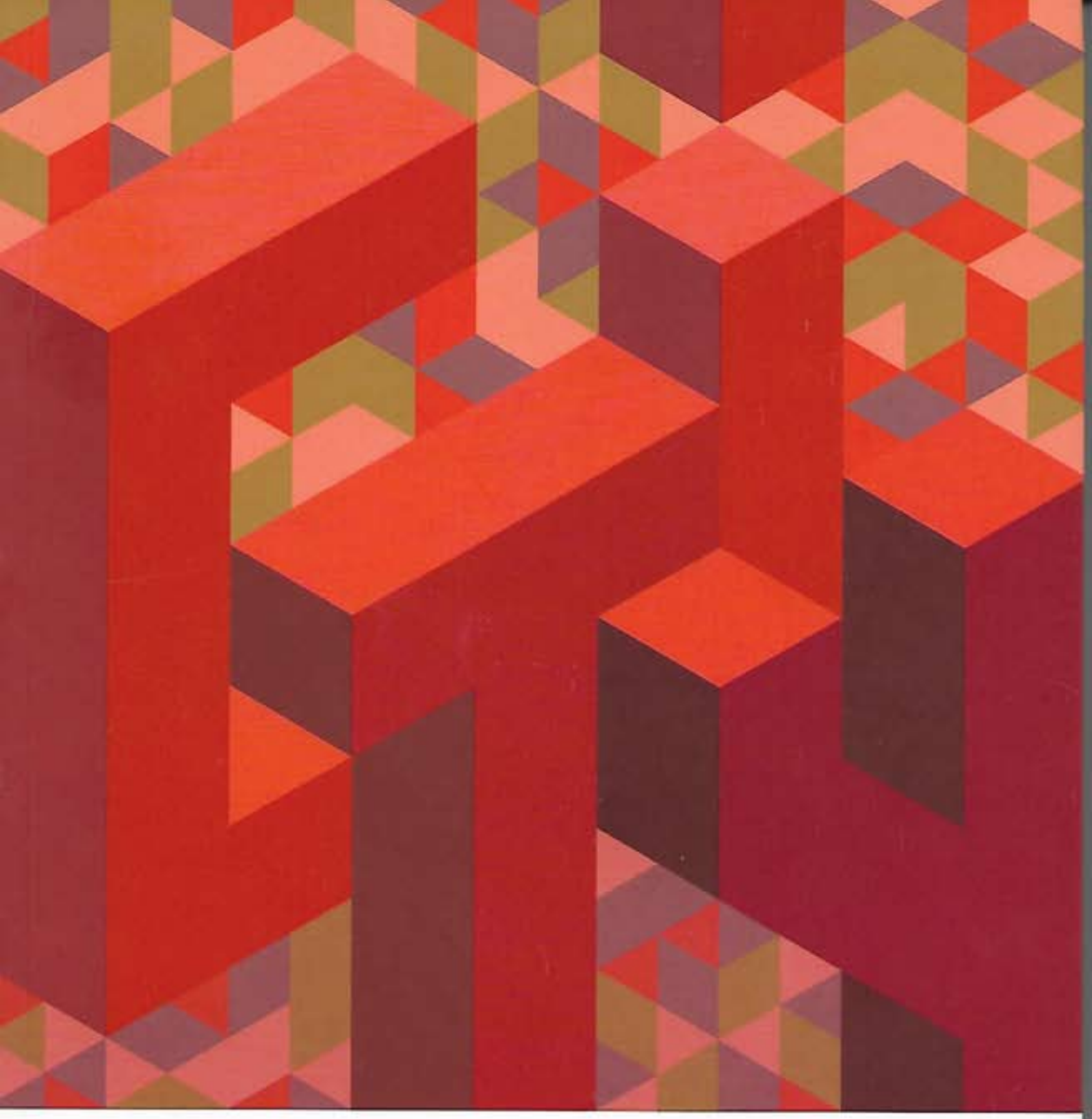

Heritage and the City

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Unwanted Heritage: On the Disappearance of the Oriental City on the Balkan Peninsula

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What actually constitutes an oriental city? It is said that in the 19th century, European travellers to the Balkans already considered themselves to be in the Orient as soon as they left the southern gates of Vienna. Thus, in 1856, the Swiss writer Ferdinand Lassalle talked of Belgrade as an oriental city: "Bosnia, Serbia, Wallachia or Moldavia appeared to Western Europeans no less oriental than the Arabian Peninsula."[1] As late as 1922, the Austrian geographer Norbert Krebs, while travelling across the Serbian Kingdom, described Belgrade as belonging to the "oriental trading towns."[2] Fifty-five years later, the Belgrade art historian Divna Đurić-Zamolo drew on the same narrative in her monography on the Ottoman-Islamic heritage of Belgrade, *Beograd kao orientalna varoš pod Turcima 1521–1867* [Belgrade as an Oriental City under Turkish Rule, 1521–1867].[3] However, the characteristic features of an Oriental city that Đurić-Zamolo described with regard to the historical Belgrade applied to many more of the Ottoman-founded cities on the Balkan Peninsula, as well as older towns reshaped by Ottoman culture and religion.

The cultural scientist Andrea Polaschegg has pointed out the general difficulty of the historical endeavour to define a geographical region described by the ambiguous term *Orient*.[4] On the other hand, in her

1 Andrea Polaschegg, *Der andere Orientalismus: Regeln deutsch-morgenländischer Imagination im 19. Jahrhundert*, Berlin and New York 2005, p. 70.

2 Norbert Krebs, *Beiträge zur Geographie Serbiens und Rasciens*, Stuttgart 1922, p. 24.

3 Divna Đurić-Zamolo, *Beograd kao orientalna varoš pod Turcima 1521–1867*, Beograd 1977.

4 Andrea Polaschegg, *Der andere Orientalismus...*, op. cit., p. 63 et seq.

influential 2009 book,[5] Bulgarian historian Maria Todorova profoundly criticised the depiction of the Balkan Peninsula in terms of Orientalism derived from Edward W. Said's famous text.[6] Thus, hereinafter referring to "Oriental cities" on the Balkan Peninsula, I neither want to locate these cities geographically in the Orient nor do I want to juxtapose them in an essentialist sense in opposition to the so called Occident. My aim is rather to give an account of the historical transformation of a "special type regarding a certain cultural space (*kulturraumspezifischer Spezialtyp*)"[7] as the geographer and Orientalist Eugen Wirth has defined the Oriental City.

The Ottoman City in South-Eastern Europe

The advance of the Ottomans in South-eastern Europe since the late 14th century until the first siege of Vienna in 1529 was inevitably related to a remarkable transfer of culture. Founding new or reshaping older cities on the Balkan Peninsula during their advance, the Ottomans "reiterated older oriental forms of spatial planning."[8]

It is difficult, if not impossible, to develop an ideal model either of the Ottoman[9] or the Oriental City[10] as such. Nevertheless, there are some distinct characteristics in which the Oriental-Islamic city – which is distinguished in Oriental studies from the older pre-Islamic Oriental City[11] – differs fundamentally from urban structures in other (Christian) regions of Europe. Within Oriental studies these characteristics correspondingly include: the main or Friday mosque, the central market (*Sūq*), residential districts as separated from the market, distinct residential areas separated according to the religions and ethnicities of its

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5 Maria Todorova, *Imagining the Balkans*, 2009.

6 Edward W. Said, *Orientalism*, New York 1978.

7 Eugen Wirth, *Die orientalische Stadt im islamischen Vorderasien und Nordafrika*, Mainz 2002, p. 7.

8 Wolfgang Müller-Wiener, "Stadtbild und städtisches Leben," [in:] *Türkische Kunst und Kultur aus osmanischer Zeit*, Barbara Kellner-Heinkel et al. (eds.), Recklinghausen 1985, p. 134 (131–140).

9 Idem, "Stadtbild...," op. cit., pp. 131–132.

10 Eugen Wirth, *Die orientalische Stadt...*, op. cit., p. 7.

11 Ibidem, p. 7; Klaus Dettmann, *Damaskus: Eine orientalische Stadt zwischen Tradition und Moderne*, Erlangen 1969, p. 200; Burkard Hofmeister, *Die Stadtstruktur*, Darmstadt 2005, p. 96; Heinz Heineberg, *Stadtgeographie*, Paderborn 2014, p. 310.

inhabitants, religious foundations (Arab. *waqf*), the multitude of blind alleys within the structure of the city, as well as in some cases the attachment of a citadel.[12] It is precisely these core elements of the Oriental-Islamic city which the Ottomans adopted for newly founded or reshaped cities on the Balkan Peninsula:[13] together with the central mosque, the market place (*Čaršija*), structured according to different types of trade, formed the centre of the city in the Ottoman Balkans, too. Without the numerous pious endowments (Turk. *vakıf*, Serbocroat. *vakuf*), the mosques, schools (*mekteb, medresa*), public baths (*hamam*), or soup kitchens (*imaret*), the "upturn of urban development, culture and quality of life" for example of the city of Sarajevo "would hardly have been possible."[14] Furthermore, the residential districts of the Ottoman cities on the Balkan Peninsula (*mahale*) were (and in some cases still are) separated according to the religions and ethnicities of its inhabitants. The outstanding examples of the aforementioned urban characteristics are the historic cities of Belgrade, Sarajevo, Mostar, Višegrad, Stolac, Prizren, Priština, and Skopje, to name but the most important ones.

Nevertheless, with the decline of Ottoman rule and the national uprisings of the 19th century, the destruction of Oriental-Islamic urban structures on the Balkan Peninsula set in under different political and societal auspices. Therefore, this article provides a historical survey of the different phases of the destruction of Oriental cities on the Balkan Peninsula.

A Fundamental Problem: Western Indifference and Islamic Heritage in the Balkans

In ten reports[15] published from February 1993 to January 1997, the Committee on Culture and Education of the Parliamentary Assembly

12 Klaus Dettmann, *Damaskus...*, op. cit., pp. 201–204; Eugen Wirth, *Die orientalische Stadt...*, op. cit., 515 et seq.; Burkard Hofmeister, *Die Stadtstruktur*, op. cit., pp. 96–99; Heinz Heineberg, *Stadtgeographie*, op. cit., p. 311.

13 Wolfgang Müller-Wiener, "Stadtbild...," op. cit., p. 134 et seq.

14 Holm Sundhaussen, *Sarajevo: Die Geschichte einer Stadt*, Wien, Köln, and Weimar 2014, pp. 30–38, 44.

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

of the Council of Europe gave accounts of the destruction of cultural heritage during the Yugoslav Wars in Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina (1991–1995). No other institution, neither on a national nor an international level, has investigated the destruction of cultural heritage during the wars on the territory of the former Yugoslavia as thoroughly as this committee of the Council of Europe. A recurrent concern raised by the reports of the committee was the apparent indifference towards the Islamic heritage of Bosnia-Herzegovina on the part of the international community. On the occasion of a coordination meeting of the leading international institutions concerned with the protection of cultural heritage (UNESCO, ICOM, ICOMOS, etc.) in June 1993 in Paris, the chairman of the Sub-Committee on the Architectural and Artistic Heritage of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe Jacques Baumel qualified the general situation of Bosnian heritage as follows: "The folly of what was going on there went beyond human reason: men and women were dying and their irreplaceable cultural identity was being destroyed while Europe and the international community stood by."[16]

The indifference of the international community towards the heritage of Bosnia and Herzegovina became a subject not only of concern but also of harsh critique amongst Bosnian religious dignitaries, art historians, conservators, and various intellectuals. The Bosnian architect Amra Hadžimuhamedović was amongst the numerous commentators on the Western disregard towards the "European backyard."[17] In an article published in May 1993 in the Bosnian daily *Oslobođenje* she wrote:

> [...] behind the curtain of the hypocritical assertion that cultural heritage was the basis of the common future of the European peoples the world cold-heartedly cultivates the oblivion of the destroyed temples, graves, and signs of absent life. [...] Where are the seventeen mosques of Foča? Where are the mosques of Sarajevo, disappeared by 1992? [...] Where are the 270 mosques of Belgrade? Where are

16 Ibidem, Report 3, doc. 6904 (1993), E, 11, Co-ordination Meeting on the Cultural Heritage of the Former Yugoslavia, Paris, 28 June 1993.

17 Olaf Ihlau and Walter Mayr, *Minenfeld Balkan: Der unruhige Hinterhof Europas*, Munich 2009.

the mosques and harem of Požega, Đakovo, Osijek, Vranje, and Čačak?[18]

It is doubtful that Hadžimuhamedović's text found many – if any at all – readers outside of Bosnia. In any case, its punchline has definitely escaped the international reader's perception. Its significance lies in the fact that Hadžimuhamedović – to my knowledge for the first time ever – contextualised the current destruction of Islamic heritage ("Where are the seventeen mosques of Foča?") in a historical scenery which comprises a time span of not less than 200 years. It spans from the destruction of the built Islamic heritage during the process of the formation of the Southeast European nation states of Serbia ("Where are the 270 mosques of Belgrade?") and Croatia ("Where are the mosques and harem of Požega, Đakovo, Osijek, Vranje, and Čačak?"), as well as the destruction attributed to the doctrine of modernisation posited by the Yugoslav communists after 1945 ("Where are the mosques of Sarajevo, disappeared by 1992?") to the situation of Hadžimuhamedović's Bosnia of 1993.

That raises several questions. Is there any historical evidence supporting Hadžimuhamedović's perspective which is until today unique in the discourse on the destruction of cultural heritage during the Yugoslav Wars? Is the continuity of the destruction that Hadžimuhamedović evokes real? And if so, how can it be verified?

These are precisely the questions I want to investigate in the present text. However, a major obstacle to this task stems from the historic indifference of the so called "West" towards the Balkans. The already quoted Bulgarian historian Maria Todorova discussed that problem extensively.[19] The disregard of the Islamic heritage of this region is one aspect of this phenomenon. The fate of the latter is barely an issue in existing academic and popular literature. To my knowledge, not a single portrayal of its history since the formation of modern nation states in South Eastern Europe has been published so far. To investigate its fate, a discourse analysis appears to be a reasonable instrument. This analysis will include

18 Amra Hadžimuhamedović, "Bosanksi Jerusalimi: Suze Arnaudije, " [in:] *Oslobođenje*, 21 May 1993, p. 7.

19 Maria Todorova, *Imagining...*, op. cit.

widely scattered sources which do not necessarily originate from the discourses of monument protection and heritage preservation.

First, it seems of value to elaborate on the question from where a specific consciousness for a nationally or ethnically defined heritage on the Balkan Peninsula could have emerged. In Western European states its emergence coincides with the formation of modern nation states. The development in the Balkans is not different here. If we follow Hadžemuhamedović's allusion, the destruction of Islamic heritage in this region started with the formation of a distinct consciousness of a national or ethnical identity and a heritage which could be monopolised with it in mind.

Monument Protection in South-Eastern Europe

The tradition of monument protection in the South Slavic states goes back to the Middle Ages. The Serbian architect Branislav Krstić located an early regulation for the protection of architectural heritage in a statute of Dubrovnik from 1272. Already in 1857, building regulations became effective in the city of Zagreb. Starting in 1880, similar regulations followed in Sarajevo and other Bosnian cities. In 1910, the State Commission for the preservation of historical monuments in Croatia and Slavonia (*Zemaljsko povjerenstvo za čuvanje historijskih spomenika u Hrvatskoj i Slavoniji*) was founded. From the year 1911 onwards, monument protection in Croatia was organised and structured with decentralised offices in Dalmatia, the Krajn and the Steiermark. In Serbia, institutional monument protection began with the Regulation for the Protection of the Monuments of Antiquity from 1844 (*Uredba o zaštiti spomenika drevnosti iz 1844*) issued by Prince Aleksandar Karađorđević.[20]

However, for various reasons, a distinct law on heritage protection was not established either in the Principality of Serbia, the Kingdom of Croatia, in the later Kingdom of the Serbs, Croats and Slovenes (since 1918), or the Kingdom of Yugoslavia (since 1929). Only a law on urban development (*Građevinski Zakon*) was adopted in the Kingdom of Yugoslavia in 1931. Only after World War II, in July 1945, did the National Committee for the Liberation of Yugoslavia (*Nacionalni komitet oslobođenja Jugoslavije*) pass the first actual bill on monument protection in the form of the Regulation for the Protection and Preservation of Cultural Monuments and Antiquities (*Odluku o zastiti i cuvanju kulturnih spomenika i starina*), followed

20 Branislav Krstić, *Zakonodavstvo Arhitektonske Baštine*, Belgrade 2006, pp. 13, 49, 50.

by the Law on the Protection of Cultural Monuments and Natural Assets (*Zakon o zaštiti spomenika kulture i prirodnjačkih retkosti*) in 1946. Based on the Yugoslav constitution of 1946, finally the General Law for the Protection of Cultural Monuments and Natural Assets (*Opšti zakon o zaštiti spomenika kulture i prirodnih vrijednosti*) was enacted.[21]

Islamic Heritage and the Development of Nation States on the Balkan Peninsula

The uprisings and campaigns of the Christian population of the Balkans against the Ottoman Empire between 1804 and 1913 had a significant impact on the Islamic heritage of the region, as they coincided with the development of national movements, ethnic identities and of consciousness for national cultures. The different national movements finally led to independence from the Ottoman Empire. The antagonism of Christian nation state versus Turkish oppression henceforth formed a core element in the collective memory. For the Christian population of the region Ottoman rule and its spatial signs, the built Islamic heritage became the negative counterpart of its own identity. This brought fatal consequences for the built Ottoman heritage. With the collapse of the Ottoman Empire and its retreat from the Balkans the expulsion of Muslims by the Christian population began. Between 1821 and 1922 more than 5,000,000 Muslims were expelled from the region. Another 5,000,000 Muslims died: "some were killed during war; others lost their lives due to hunger and diseases while fleeing."[22]

In parallel, the destruction of Ottoman Islamic architecture began. In the city of Belgrade this destruction was comprehensive. The demolition of mosques, Dervish monasteries (Tekkes) and vernacular Oriental architecture lasted for a whole century. In 1888, the publisher, astronomer, and adventurer Spiridion Gopčević wrote in his book *Serbien und die Serben*:

> Until 1862, Dorćol [district of Belgrade – author's note, T.S.] was solely inhabited by Turks who had built their wooden houses here and had created a real Turkish city with all its ugliness, dirt, and

21 Ibidem, p. 62.

22 Justin McCarthy, *Death and Exile: The Ethnic Cleansing of Ottoman Muslims 1821–1922*, Princeton 2004, p. 1.

smell. After the withdrawal of the Turks, the Serbian government paid a ransom of 9,000,000 piaster (1,500,000 marks) for their immovable goods and razed the whole Turkish city to the ground. [...] Only the plain and near derelict Bataldžamija still remains as a last reminder of the Turkish city – the Turkish government made its preservation a condition. [...] The mosques at the fortress have disappeared and made room for a church. [...] The city had already been reconquered by Miloš Obrenović, but the Turkish quarter therein still existed, as already mentioned, until 1862.[23]

Of 275 verifiable significant Oriental structures in Belgrade, amongst them 55 mosques, the only remaining objects are the Bajrakli mosque (1660–1688), the Mausoleum of a dervish sheik named Mustafa (1783) and the Lyceum of Dositej Obradović (beginning of the 18th century). 16 mosques alone were torn down between 1813 and 1900.[24] In 1922, the Austrian geographer Norbert Krebs described the changes to the cityscape of Belgrade:

The deliberately accelerated extinction of the traces of Turkish rule has annihilated the few remaining parts of the historic city, and right at the plateau where the Čarsija [marketplace – author's note, T.S.] was once situated new quarters sprung up. [...] Some local names such as Kalemegdan, Tašmajdan, Bulbuldere, and Topčider are preserved from Turkish times.[25]

The "extinction" of the "traces of Turkish rule" was a continuing phenomenon during the expansion of the Serbian Principality and later Kingdom (since 1882) towards the south of the Balkan Peninsula. With the conquest of Niš, Vranje, Leskovac, and Pirot in the years 1877 and 1878, as well as with the Serbian annexation of Kosovo in the course of the Balkan Wars in 1912–1913, Islamic heritage, mainly mosques, was destroyed as well.[26]

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23 Spiridion Gopčević, *Serbien und die Serben*, Leipzig 1888, pp. 24–28.

24 Divna Đurić-Zamolo, *Beograd...*, op. cit.

25 Norbert Krebs, *Beiträge zur Geographie...*, op. cit., p. 24.

26 Carl Polónyi, *Heil und Zerstörung: Nationale Mythen und Krieg am Beispiel Jugoslawiens 1980–2004*, Berlin 2010, p. 69; Katrin Boeckh, *Von den Balkankriegen zum Ersten Weltkrieg*, München and Oldenburg 1996, p. 166.

However, the destruction cannot be limited to Serbia alone. Similar developments took place in neighbouring Bulgaria during and after the uprising against Turkish rule, especially in the Russo-Turkish war of 1877–1878. Similar to Serbia, the problem in Bulgaria consists in the fact that historic Ottoman architecture – especially structures destroyed in that period – is only fragmentarily, if at all, documented. Lists of relevant objects do not exist.[27] Thus, the extent of the destruction can only be assessed by approximation. Whereas in the Principality of Bulgaria before the breakdown of Ottoman rule 2,356 mosques, 174 Dervish monasteries, 142 madrassas and 400 religious foundations existed,[28] the head of the Islamic community of Bulgaria stated in 2009 that in contemporary Bulgaria there were 1,156 mosques.[29]

It was not only warlike conditions that led to the destruction of Islamic heritage on the Balkan Peninsula at the beginning of the 20th century. The redesign of the cities within the Kingdom of the Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes, respectively the Yugoslav Kingdom, had a similarly strong influence on their former Oriental character. The restructuring of Skopje (*Üsküp*) by Dimitrije Leko (1914) and Josif Mihajlović (1929), for example, meant an "alienation from Oriental standards in urban planning" in the light of the growing "need for modernisation."[30] In this period, Islamic heritage was already given the connotation of "anti-modern" and "retrograde" which it should also keep in the doctrine of progress and modernisation of the communists in the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. A prominent building which disappeared in the course of the reconstruction of Skopje was the Burmali Mosque (1495), torn down in the 1920s. In 1929, the Officers Club (*Oficirski Dom*) was erected as a symbol of the new Serbian dominance in that re-

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27 Stephen Lewis, "The Ottoman Architectural Patrimony of Bulgaria Revisited: Infrastructure, Intentionality, and the Genesis and Survival of Monuments," [in:] *Monuments, Patrons, Contexts: Papers on Ottoman Europe Presented to Machiel Kiel*, Maximilian Hartmuth et al. (eds.), Leiden 2010, p. 154 (153–170).

28 Basri Pehlivan, "100 години Главно мюфтийство: Статут и дейност на главно Мюфтийство," [in:] *мюсюлмани*, vol. 5 (2009), pp. 26 (26–27).

29 Република България мюсюлманско изповедание главно мюфтийство, "Извънредната Мюсюлманска Конференция: Остана в Историята," [in:] *мюсюлмани*, vol. 11 (2009), p. 32 (32–34).

30 Aneta Hristova, "Eine Hauptstadt im Umbruch: Die postsozialistische Stadtentwicklung von Skopje," [in:] *Megacities und Stadterneuerung*, Uwe Altrock et al. (eds.), Berlin 2009, p. 286 (281–292).

gion at the left bank of the river Vardar near the Stone Bridge (*Kameni most*) where the mosque was once located.[31]

The restructuring of the city of Prizren in the south of Kosovo had similar consequences. It started immediately after World War I under the *aegis* of the Serbian kings Peter und Alexander Karađorđević. Around 1919, an attempt was made to tear down the Sinan-Pasha-mosque (1615) located in the centre of the city. After its portico had been demolished, riots broke out amongst the city's predominantly Muslim population, and the project was abandoned.[32]

Remarkable beside the extinction of the architectural traces of the Ottoman period is the intense program of both the Catholic and the Orthodox Church to erect sacred buildings all over the territories of the young nation states on the Balkan Peninsula. Hundreds of churches were, for example, built in Croatia, Serbia, and Bulgaria; the largest proportion of all the Christian sacred buildings in this region dates back to the period between the beginning of the 19th and the end of the 20th century. Churches, monasteries, chapels, and shrines serve beside their religious function as symbols of colonisation.

The destruction of World War II and the Holocaust, however, affected the cultural heritage of all ethnicities and religions. Between 1941 and 1945, 812 Orthodox churches and monasteries, 110 Catholic churches, 345 mosques, and 106 synagogues were damaged or destroyed by German soldiers or their allies as the Serbian historian Nikola Živković claims.[33]

Islamic Heritage in the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia

After World War II, the destruction especially of Ottoman heritage continued under partly different conditions in the Federal National Republic of Yugoslavia (*Federativna Narodna Republika Jugoslavija*, 1945–1963), respectively the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (*Socijalistička Federativna Republika Jugoslavija*, after 1963). On the one hand, the image of the alleged Turkish "reign of terror" was further cultivated and

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31 Maximilian Hartmuth, "History, Identity and Urban Space: Towards an Agenda for Urban Research," [in:] *Reading the City: Urban Space and Memory in Skopje*, Stephanie Herold et al. (eds.), Berlin 2010, p. 14 (12–22).

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

33 Nikola Živković, *Novčana privreda kao oblik eksploatacije i pljačka zlata, arhiva i kulturnih dobara Jugoslavije 1941–1945*, Belgrade 1994, p. 88 et seq.

instrumentalised by the Yugoslav communists,[34] and led hence to a negative image of Ottoman architecture outside the Islamic communities.

On the other hand, the vernacular as well as the sacred Ottoman heritage had been associated, already during the interwar period, with backwardness and the anti-modern, rather than the doctrine of progress and modernisation.[35] A great number of Ottoman structures, amongst them traditional markets (*Čaršija*, pl. *Čaršije*), residential buildings and workshops, buildings of religious foundations (*Vakuf*, pl. *Evkaf*), and mosques, became victims of the modernisation of city centres and villages, especially in regions officially declared as "underdeveloped" as Bosnia-Herzegovina, Kosovo, and Macedonia. The first and in the best sense of the word monumental tourist guide of the Socialist Republic of Yugoslavia from 1958 describes Kosovo's capital Priština as follows:

> Large residential blocks have been built, as well as new streets, factories for roof tiles and for the production of ceramics, power generation plants to generate electricity, one of the country's biggest spinning mills, modern slaughterhouses, and cold storage warehouses as part of a large state combine for food production, a variety of buildings for different institutions, schools, etc., and a new water supply system.[36]

Yugoslavia's monument conservators appeared to have little awareness of the Islamic heritage which was about to disappear in the process of modernisation. Moreover, despite the simultaneous establishment of a legal framework for its protection, the heritage was hardly documented, as a commentator noted in the almanac for monument protection of Yugoslavia, the *Zbornik*, in 1960:

> In the course of its endeavours in the field of protection the Associated Institute [for monument protection – author's note, T.S.] has carried out different works which contribute to the efforts for the protection of

34 Wolfgang Hoepken, "War, Memory, and Education in a Fragmented Society: the Case of Yugoslavia," [in:] *East European Politics and Societies*, vol. 13 (1998), p. 194 (190–227); Klaus Buchenau, *Kämpfende Kirchen: Jugoslawiens religiöse Hypothek*, Frankfurt am Main 2006, p. 111.

35 Andrew Herscher, *Violence Taking Place: The Architecture of the Kosovo Conflict*, Stanford 2010, pp. 23, 27.

36 Turistička Štampa (ed.), *Jugoslavija: turistička enciklopedija*, Belgrade 1958, p. 274.

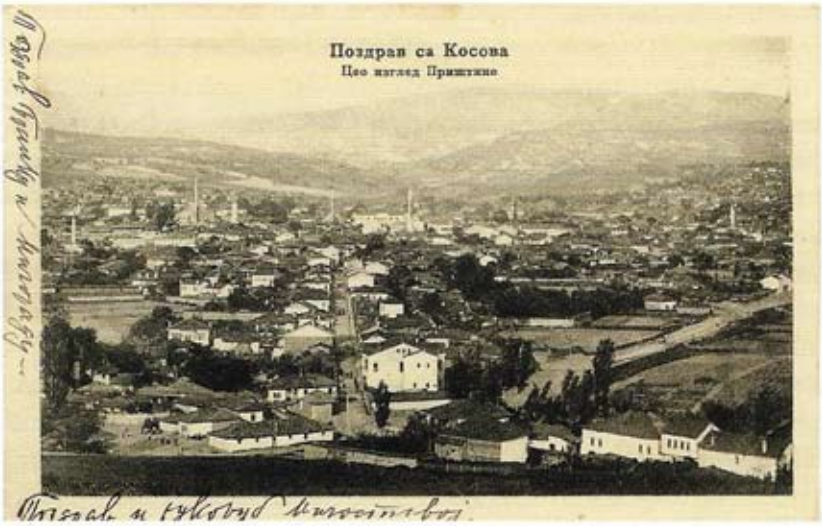

Image 1: View on the city of Pristina, central Kosovo from West to East on a historical postcard sent 1929
© Tobias Strahl

> cultural monuments in our country and which furthermore provide information on the value of these monuments. The initiative of the Institute to compile documentation on the Muslim cultural monuments in our country was inspired by the same objective. These monuments, with the exception of Bosnia and Herzegovina and a small number of objects in other parts of our country, have not been the subject of previous studies with the result that we have hardly any data on them, although they are documents of a period of building activity and of several hundred years of culture. Therefore, they were in many cases mercilessly destroyed after the liberation of our region from Turkish rule.[37]

In the light of the communist imperative of progress and modernisation such conservational efforts remained comparatively powerless as the Belgrade-based architect Svetislav Vučenović had to admit in 1960:

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37 V. L., "Prikupljanje Građe za Proučavanje i Zaštitu Muslimanskih Spomenika u našoj Zemlji," [in:] *Zbornik Zaštite Spomenika Kulture*, Belgrade 1960, p. 444.

Image 2: View on the city of Pristina, central Kosovo from West to East in 2012
© Tobias Strahl

> Where modern city centres are formed amidst historical agglomerations which occupy a relatively large space, a significant number of historical objects necessarily disappear, and the structure of the historic city changes.[38]

Within a few years, the small provincial town of Priština (Serb.; Alb. Prishtina) was restructured as the new capital of Kosovo. Almost the entire historic building structure has been sacrificed to this process, as Milan Ivanović, at that time the director of the Institute for Monument Protection of the Autonomous Province of Kosovo, recognised in 1968:

> It is known that in the post-war period of economic-administrative and political prosperity Priština, as the general centre of the region, has lost much of its old characteristic architecture and urban agglomeration due to new interventions. Whole parts of the historic city of Priština were destroyed to make room for contemporary architecture and the organisation of urban infrastructure. The intervention

38 Svetislav Vučenović, "Proučavanje i zaštita kulturnog nasleđa u oblasti urbanizma," [in:] *Zbornik Zaštite Spomenika Kulture*, Belgrade 1960, p. 154.

of the institutions for heritage protection came too late because these conservational institutes were established only a decade after the liberation [from the Nazi regime – author's note, T.S.].[39]

At the beginning of the 1960s, the "modernisation" of the city of Prizren in the south of Kosovo started as well. Despite the urban transformation that Prizren had already undergone during the inter-war period, its historic core consisted of a particularly dense agglomeration of Ottoman architecture.

Thus, every major intervention inevitably had to have far-reaching consequences. First of all, the banks of the river Bistrica (Serb.; Alb. Lumbardhi) were consolidated throughout the city. This process saw the disappearance of a large number of traditional mills and vernacular buildings that were nestled along the riverbank, yet had survived the inter-war period. On the right bank of the river, in the extension of the old marketplace, a large complex of mixed-use buildings was erected around 1962. To make room for the new concrete structures the assembly and prayer room of the Arasta-mosque (1526–1538) was torn down, however the minaret of the mosque was preserved. The Mustafa Pasha Mosque (1563) in the south-western part of the city faced a similar fate. It was completely demolished to make room for an administrative building. Stanko Mandić, at that time professor of architecture at the University of Belgrade, commented on the restructuring of Prizren in 1968:

> The majority of our monuments have no supportive lobby although they enjoy the privilege of being marked with brass plates by authors with positive ambitions [i. e. institutions for monument protection – author's note, T.S.]. The specific problem and the necessity to protect this city [Prizren – author's note, T.S.] is that it is the only city in Serbia which is overloaded with valuable heritage [...] and that the city at the same time is exposed to the process of urbanisation like every other city.[40]

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39 Milan Ivanović, "Stari gradski han, sahat kula i stara gradska kuća u Prištini: Istorijski podaci i problemi konzervacije," [in:] *Problem Zaštite i Egzistencije Spomenika Kulture i Prirodnih Objekata i Rezervata na Kosovu i Metohiji*, Prishtina and Belgrade 1968, p. 167 (167–168).

40 Stanko Mandić, "Prizren: Ovovremenost i nasleđe," [in:] *Problem Zaštite i Egzistencije Spomenika Kulture i Prirodnih Objekata i Rezervata na Kosovu i Metohiji*, Prishtina and Belgrade 1968, p. 77 et seq. (77–100).

But neither was the destruction of historic city centres and Ottoman architecture within the Socialist Federation of Yugoslavia limited to Kosovo alone, nor was it enforced only by communist officials against the will of its citizens.

The vision of a modern city provided with reasonable infrastructure and the amenities of an uninterrupted supply of electricity and water as well as the symbolic renunciation from a conflict-laden history and the promised social advancement were attractive especially to the Muslim population, because in most parts of Yugoslavia Muslims had been treated as second class citizens since the defeat of the Ottoman Empire. Therefore, a by no means small number of Muslims, for example in Bosnia-Herzegovina, played an active role in the restructuring of their cities – in other words, in the demolition of historic Islamic architecture. The Bosnian author and intellectual Rusmir Mahmutćehajić has described this phenomenon and its underlying psychological preconditions with reference to his native city Stolac, where the historic core was partly demolished after 1945:

> Individuals were sought out and supported who might demonstrate, whether directly or indirectly, in thought, word, or deed, that this was not sacred heritage to be preserved inviolate and that the only contribution it could make to the building of the new world was as material to be extracted via the destruction and crumbling of whatever had been built before. They were expected to affirm their fitness for the new age by readiness to deny and destroy. [...] The perpetrators of the act of destruction itself were sought amongst the children of the dead. They were required to affirm their "progressiveness" [...]. With a burning desire to prove themselves, they toppled and shattered their ancestors' headstones.[41]

Islamic Heritage during the Yugoslav Wars (1991–1999)

In the course of the Yugoslav Wars from 1991 to 1999 and the anti-Serbian riots of 2004, the cultural heritage of all ethnicities was a target of attacks and destruction. International observers of the conflict have argued on various occasions that Yugoslavia was amongst the first countries

41 Rusmir Mahmutćehajić, *Maintaining the Sacred Center: The Bosnian City of Stolac*, Zagreb 2011, p. 156 et seq.

that had signed the Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict of 14 May 1954. Indeed, Yugoslavia ratified the document on 29 December 1955. Nevertheless, the argument raised by international observers was outweighed by the gory realities of the wars of the last decade of the century. In their different theatres in Croatia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, and Kosovo, dozens of irregular and paramilitary forces fought beside or against regular troops. Most of them fought, murdered, and destroyed without any code of conduct, with only one imperative: victory – no matter at what price. The Yugoslav army (*Jugoslovenska narodna armija*, JNA), consequently cleansed of all non-Serbian elements under the Serbian president Slobodan Milošević, was responsible for the major part of the destruction of cultural heritage in Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Kosovo. The European Community Monitor Mission (ECMM) in this regard spoke of the "inefficacity of the Hague Convention."[42]

Concerned with the fate of cultural heritage in general, several international observers of the Yugoslav Wars have agreed that Islamic heritage, especially in Bosnia-Herzegovina, was hit the hardest.[43] This was the case because Bosnian Muslims had been attacked by both Serbian and Croatian forces since May 1993. Furthermore, a significant number of objects of Ottoman architectural heritage were damaged or entirely demolished in the war in Kosovo in 1998–1999.[44]

A study on the war damage to the Islamic heritage of Bosnia-Herzegovina from 1992 to 1995, published by the Council of Elders of the Islamic community (*Rijaset Islamske zajednice u Bosni i Hercegovini*), lists 614 destroyed and 307 damaged mosques, 218 destroyed and 41 damaged *Mesdžid* (prayer rooms without minaret), 69 destroyed and 18 damaged *Mekteb* (Islamic elementary schools), as well as 405 destroyed and 149 damaged buildings belonging to religious foundations.[45] Another investigation by the Federal Institute for the Protection of the Historic-Cultural

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42 *Information Report...*, op. cit., Report 8, doc. 7341 (1995), §1, 51.

43 *Information Report...*, op. cit., Report 1, doc. 6756 (1993), Introduction, §4; Robert Bevan, *The Destruction of Memory: Architecture at War*, London 2006, p. 26; Helen Walasek, *Bosnia and the Destruction of Cultural Heritage*, Farnham 2015, pp. 25, 43.

44 Bashkësia Islame e Kosovës (ed.), *Barbaria Serbe ndaj Monumenteve Islame në Kosovë (Shkurt '98–Qershor '99*, Prishtina 2000.

45 Muharem Omerdić, *Prilozi Izučavanju Genocida na Bošnjacima (1992-1995)*, Sarajevo 1999.

and Natural Heritage of the Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina (*Federalni zavod za zaštitu kulturno-historijskog i prirodnog naslijeđa*) from 1995 states a number of 3,805 objects and architectural ensembles affected by the war, of which 1,262 were entirely destroyed. The largest share of these built structures consisted of mosques and other objects of Bosnia's Islamic heritage.[46]

András Riedlmayer, scholar and researcher at the University of Harvard, investigated 392 objects and architectural totalities in Bosnia-Herzegovina for a report submitted to the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY) in the Hague in July 2002. Amongst them were 277 mosques, of which 255 were either severely damaged or entirely destroyed. 161 of these destroyed or damaged mosques were built during the Ottoman period in Bosnia-Herzegovina (early 15th century until 1878). 71 mosques belonged to the registered and therefore protected heritage of Bosnia-Herzegovina.[47]

The Fate of the Heirs

But what about the heirs? Is there any parallel to be drawn between the destruction of the historical Ottoman-Islamic heritage, reaching from single objects up to whole urban cores, and the destiny of the heirs, the Muslims of South-eastern Europe? Evidence suggests that there is. As the already quoted scholar Justin McCarthy argued, approximately 10,500,000 Muslims became victims of killings and expulsions between 1821 and 1920.[48] Jacques Baumel of the Council of Europe, on the other hand, put an emphasis on the common fate of people and their built heritage during the war in Bosnia.[49]

Concerning demographic growth on the Balkan Peninsula, there is no precise data reaching back before 1921. Numbers on forced expulsions and the exodus of the Muslim population during the Greek War of Independence (1821–1829, 25,000), the fight for Independence of the Bulgarian

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46 *A Report on the Devastation of Cultural, Historical and Natural Heritage of the Republic/ Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina (from April 5, 1992 until September 5, 1995)*, Zavod za zaštitu kulturnog, historijskog i prirodnog nasleđja republike Bosne i Hercegovine, Sarajevo 1995, pp. 9–10.

47 András J. Riedlmayer, *Destruction of Cultural Heritage in Bosnia-Herzegovina 1992–1996: A Post-War Survey of Selected Municipalities*, Cambridge 2002, pp. 9–10.

48 Justin McCarthy, *Death and Exile...*, op. cit., p. 1.

49 Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, *Information Report...*, op. cit.

Christians (1876–1878, 500,000), the annexation of Bosnia-Herzegovina by Austro-Hungary (1878, 130,000) as well as during the Balkan Wars (1912, 1913) and the First World War (approximately 1,600,000) are mere estimations. Nevertheless, it is agreed in scholarly discourse that in 1911 Muslims still made up 51 per cent of the "population in Ottoman Europe."[50] However, after 1923, only 38 per cent of the Muslim population from before 1911 remained in South-eastern Europe. The other 62 per cent "died in flight or were killed."[51] Notwithstanding, the expulsion of the Muslim population and the destruction of its built heritage was conducted more severely and thoroughly under the newly established reign of the Serbian and Bulgarian Christian principalities in the East of the Balkan Peninsula. In Austro-Hungarian annexed Bosnia-Herzegovina Muslims and Ottoman heritage largely escaped death and destruction since Muslims and Islam were strengthened by the representatives of the Danube Monarchy, which aimed to build a counterweight to the national (and often radical) movements of Croats and Serbs in the region.[52]

The first reliable numbers on the proportion of the Muslim population originate from a census held in the Kingdom of Yugoslavia (1918–1941) in 1921. Thus, the Muslims made up 11.15 per cent of the total population (approximately 1,338,000 people).[53] The majority of Yugoslav Muslims lived in Bosnia-Herzegovina, Kosovo, and the Sandžak. The territory of the Socialist Federation of Yugoslavia in turn was nearly identical with the former Kingdom. According to a census held in 1981, Muslims made up 8.5 per cent of the entire Yugoslav population (approximately 2,000,000 people).[54]

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50 Karl Kaser, "Das ethnische Engineering," [in:] *Der Jugoslawien-Krieg: Handbuch zu Vorgeschichte, Verlauf und Konsequenzen*, Dunja Melčić (ed.), Wiesbaden 2007, p. 406 (401–414).

51 Ibidem; See also: Justin McCarthy, *Death and Exile...*, op. cit.; George Mavrogordatos, "Orthodoxy and Nationalism in the Greek Case," [in:] *West European Politics*, vol. 26, no. 1 (2003), p. 129 (117–136); Carl Polónyi, *Heil und Zerstörung...*, op. cit., p. 76; Katrin Boeckh, *Von den Balkankriegen...*, op. cit., pp. 155, 163, 168, 258, and 265; Eadem, *Serbien/Montenegro: Geschichte und Gegenwart*, Regensburg 2009, pp. 79, 81.

52 Alexander Popović, "Islamische Bewegungen in Jugoslawien," [in:] *Die Muslime in der Sowjetunion und in Jugoslawien*, Andreas Kappeler et al. (eds.), Köln 1989, pp. 274, 276 (273–286).

53 Holm Sundhaussen, *Geschichte Serbiens: 19.–21. Jahrhundert*, Wien, Köln, and Weimer 2007, p. 491.

54 Wolfgang Höpken, "Die jugoslawischen Kommunisten und die bosnischen Muslime," [in:] *Die Muslime in der Sowjetunion und in Jugoslawien*, Andreas Kappeler et al. (ed.),

However, during the Yugoslav Wars of 1991–1999 the Yugoslav Muslims, beside the destruction of the Ottoman heritage, were most badly affected by death and expulsion. Beside the destruction of virtually the entire Ottoman and Islamic heritage of cities such as Banja Luka, Foča, Rogatica, Višegrad, Stolac, and Brčko, to name but those most severely hit, 66 per cent of the total of human victims of the war were Bosniaks, i.e. Bosnian Muslims. Amongst the civilian casualties, 83 per cent belonged to the Muslim community of Bosnia "rising to nearly 95 per cent in Eastern Bosnia."[55] In 2013, 170,000 Bosnian Muslims still had the status of refugees.[56]

Heritage of the Ottoman Period after the Yugoslav Wars

Since the end of the Yugoslav Wars, mainly vernacular heritage from the Ottoman period has been affected by neglect and destruction. Now the remaining residential buildings, for instance of Priština and Prizren, have to make room for a barely controlled restructuring and commercial development of these cities. A striking example of this trend is the Potkaljaja-quarter in Prizren. Until the end of the war in Kosovo in June 1999, Serbs had formed the majority of residents in this quarter. Their systematic expulsion by Albanian nationalists began immediately after the presence of NATO troops in Kosovo was established.[57] In the course of the following ten years the majority of the traditional architecture of this quarter was either burned down or razed to the ground. New concrete structures dominate more and more the image of one of the most attractive parts of the city. Institutional monument protection and preservation is very weak in Kosovo. It will not suspend the process of ongoing destruction.

Concerning the restoration or reconstruction of the built Islamic heritage that was destroyed in wartime, it has to be emphasised that in the parts of Bosnia-Herzegovina which were "ethnically cleansed" of their Muslim population it is not successfully implemented. Rebuilding

Köln 1989, p. 181 (181–210).

55 Aid Smajić, "Bosnia and Herzegovina," [in:] *Yearbook of Muslims in Europe*, vol. 5, Jørgen S. Nielsen et al. (eds.), Leiden and Boston 2013, p. 124, (123–141).

56 Ibidem.

57 The city of Prizren belonged to the Area of Responsibility (AoR) of the German contingent of the Kosovo-Force (KFOR).

Image 3: Historical vernacular architecture in the Potkaljaja quarter of Prizren in the South of Kosovo is undergoing a constant process of demolition since 1999. The image shows the situation in 2012
© Tobias Strahl

or restoration activities are sporadic or do not exist at all. Local authorities of the Christian Croatian or Serbian population, who had already been actively performing key functions during the war, effectively boycott any initiative for the reconstruction of destroyed Islamic objects and thereby also of possible chances for reconciliation. The British museologist Helen Walasek recently presented an exhaustive investigation on that subject.[58]

Conclusion

The destruction in the course of the war in Bosnia-Herzegovina affected the majority of the Ottoman Islamic heritage there. As in Kosovo, in Bosnia mainly urban agglomerations were affected by systematic attacks on Islamic heritage. In some Bosnian cities virtually all Islamic sacred buildings were destroyed by artillery fire, arson, or controlled detonation. This was the case, for example, in Banja Luka, Foča, Gradačac, Kiseljak, Mostar, and Stolac, to name only a few of the affected cities. In many

58 Helen Walasek, *Bosnia...*, op. cit.

cases, the leftovers of the destroyed Islamic buildings were bulldozed and levelled with heavy equipment. The destruction of Islamic heritage in the Yugoslav Wars indeed represents a momentary climax and at once temporary endpoint in the history of continued destruction of Islamic heritage on the Balkan Peninsula. Significantly, this destruction took place and was conducted under different agendas.

In the course of the evolution of the Christian nation states, the built Islamic heritage was systematically demolished as a negative counterpart to the Christian national identity. In this historical period the Ottoman heritage for the first time was connoted with the meaning of "anti-modern" and "retrograde." During World War II Islamic heritage, beside the heritage of other religions and ethnicities of the Balkan Peninsula, was an object of systematic destruction by the German troops and their allies. In communist Yugoslavia, Ottoman Islamic heritage fell victim to the doctrine of progress and modernisation promoted by the Yugoslav communists. In the Yugoslav Wars Islamic heritage finally became the main target of a nationalist policy of "ethnic cleansing" conducted by Croatian and Serbian forces alike. Sacred heritage was targeted particularly for its high symbolic meaning and its identification with the Muslim population of Bosnia-Herzegovina and Kosovo. The continuity of the destruction of Ottoman Islamic heritage investigated in this essay has contributed significantly to what can be called the "disappearance of the Oriental city on the Balkan Peninsula." The process as such has not been the subject of academic research so far. No exhaustive academic work on the history of the destruction of Islamic heritage in this part of Europe has been presented yet.