

The Destruction of Cultural Property of the Muslim Community during the War in Bosnia and Herzegovina

Jacek Dworzecki – Bernard Wiśniewski – Karol Kujawa

Prof. Jacek Dworzecki
Military University of the Land Forces
Poland
e-mail: jacekdworzecki@o2.pl
<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-9357-5713>

Prof. Bernard Wiśniewski
WSB University, Dąbrowa Górnicza
Poland
e-mail: bwisniewski@wsb.edu.pl
<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-0011-7271>

Ph.D. Karol Kujawa
WSB University, Dąbrowa Górnicza
Poland e-mail: kkujawa@wsb.edu.pl
<https://orcid.org/0000-0003-3035-0151>

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The Destruction of Cultural Property of the Muslim Community during the War in Bosnia and Herzegovina
The purpose of this work is to present the process of the destruction of cultural property of the Muslim community during the warfare conducted on the territory of Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) in 1992–1995. The work is based on historical and press sources in Serbian, Bosnian and Croatian. Field research conducted in 2000 and 2022 to obtain information on the number of demolished and restored mosques in BiH also makes an important contribution. In addition, in-depth interviews were conducted with Slovak soldiers who served in NATO IFOR operations, as well as with representatives of international institutions. Research results indicate that during the war in BiH (1992–1995) the Muslim community suffered the greatest losses of cultural property. 614 mosques were destroyed. Serbian armed troops carried out most of the damage, while Croatian armed troops did less. After the war, no individual was held responsible for the destruction of cultural property. The case of BiH shows that international law still does not protect religious sites.

Keywords: war, threat, law of war, cultural assets, religious communities, conflict

Introduction

In recent years, we have been experiencing Russia's brutal policy towards Ukraine. Among the targets of Russian attacks are cultural heritage – monuments, museums and shrines. The Ukrainian authorities are collecting information on the destruction of cultural property on an ongoing basis. The collected data can be used as evidence in trials before the International Court of Justice in The Hague or a special tribunal that may be set up to hold the Russians accountable for crimes committed in Ukraine. Ukraine's institutions maintain an official register of damage to cultural property through an interactive platform, where anyone can report the destruction of a monument, either seen and documented in person or published online. Currently, the list includes 243 objects. Among them are a very large number of religious sites, such as the

Dormition of the Mother of God Cathedral in Kharkov, which was severely damaged during the Russian invasion of Ukraine in 2022. Russian shelling also destroyed the buildings of the Holy Mountain Lavra in the Donetsk region.¹

The destruction of cultural property by the Russian Federation is not a new phenomenon. During the 1992–1995 war in Bosnia and Herzegovina, it militarily supported Serbian troops, who carried out the destruction of many historical sites, architectural monuments, museums and other cultural objects associated with the Muslim community. The situation was particularly dire during the siege of Sarajevo, where monuments such as the National Library in Sarajevo were destroyed by artillery fire. This destruction of cultural heritage in Bosnia and Herzegovina was a tragic result of the war and led to a huge historical and cultural loss for the region.²

After the end of the war, many efforts were made to rebuild and protect those cultural objects affected. However, the Bosnian authorities were not able to undertake the effort to rebuild and reconstruct cultural property on their own. In particular, countries such as Turkey, Saudi Arabia and even Iran played a key role in this process. However, this reconstruction has led to many social tensions and political disputes. Despite these difficulties, the process of reconstruction and the renovation of mosques in Bosnia and Herzegovina was completed in 2023. The last three major Ottoman mosques that were destroyed during the war – Arnaudija in Banja Luka, Kizlaragina in Mrkonjić Grad (both located in northwestern Bosnia) and Sinanbegova in Čajniče (in eastern Bosnia), all originally built in the sixteenth century, have been rebuilt and put into public use.³

Aim

The purpose of this work is to present the process of the destruction of cultural property of the Muslim community during the warfare conducted on the territory of Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) in 1992–1995. In this context, the authors will present the steps that were taken by Serbian armed forces to destroy Muslim heritage in the country. Authors will analyse the causes and consequences of such policies. In addition, the damages suffered by the Muslim community during the war will be presented. However, this article does not address the problem of the destruction of the heritage of other religious groups and does not describe the process

¹ *Zniszczone dobra kultury na Ukrainie*, accessed August 1, 2023, <https://www.gov.pl/web/kultura/zniszczone-dobra-kultury-na-ukrainie>; *Rosjanie ostrzelali monastyr w pobliżu Swietogorska*, accessed August 1, 2023, <https://www.rp.pl/konflikty-zbrojne/art36434931-rosjanie-ostrzelali-monastyr-w-poblizu-swietogorska>.

² For more on the role of states in defending cultural heritage see: WIŚNIEWSKI, Bernard. Doświadczenia z zakresu przygotowań obronnych wybranych państw. In: *Kultura Bezpieczeństwa. Nauka – Praktyka – Refleksje*, 2013, pp. 11–27; WIŚNIEWSKI, Bernard, LUBIEWSKI, Paweł. Ochrona dóbr kultury współczesnej jako działanie w sferze ochrony dziedzictwa kulturowego. In: *Racjonalizacja zarządzania jednolitymi formacjami umiundurowanymi odpowiedzialnymi za bezpieczeństwo wewnętrzne*, 2017, Tom 2, Szczytno; DWORZECKI, Jacek, NOWICKA, Izabela, URBANEK, Andrzej, KWIATKOWSKI, Adam. Protection of national heritage in the light of the applicable law and the actions provided in this area by police in Poland. In: *Muzeologia a kulturowe dziedzictwo*, vol. 8, 2020, Is. 4, pp. 177–198.

³ COGNEE, Robin. Mosque Geopolitics in Bosnia and Herzegovina. In: *GIGA Focus Middle East*, no. 3, 2023, <https://www.giga-hamburg.de/en/publications/giga-focus/mosque-geopolitics-in-bosnia-and-herzegovina>; Erdogan's Sarajevo Visit May Affect Bosniak Leadership Race, accessed August 1, 2023, <https://balkaninsight.com/2019/07/08/erdogans-sarajevo-visit-may-effect-bosniak-leadership-race/>.

GANGLOFF, Sylvie. The Weight of Islam in the Turkish Foreign Policy in the Balkans. In: *Turkish Review of Balkan Studies*, 5, 2001, pp. 91–102; ÖKTEM, Kerem. *New Islamic Actors after the Wabbabi Intermezjo: Turkey's Return to the Muslim Balkans*. Oxford: European Studies Center, 2010; ÖZTÜRK, Ahmet Erdi Transformation of the Turkish Diyanet both at Home and Abroad: Three Stages. In: *European Journal of Turkish Studies (EJTS)*, 2018, p. 27.

of reconstruction of the Muslim heritage after the war; addressing these issues in a separate study would, though, be highly desirable.

The year 1992 is the opening caesura of this work, and it marked a turning point in the socio-political life of Bosnian Muslims. It was then that the declaration of an independent BiH took place, and the civil war began as a result. The end date of the work, on the other hand, is 2023, when the completion of the reconstruction of the country's mosques took place.

Methodology

During the research, expert interviews were conducted with, among others, soldiers of the Armed Forces of the Slovak Republic who served in NATO IFOR and NATO SFOR operations, as well as representatives of international institutions responsible for foreign policy and international security. Thanks to them, it was possible to determine the extent of the destruction and the amount of damage done to religious sites. In addition, the witness testimonies made it possible to establish the reasons for the actions taken by Serbian armed forces in BiH. Additionally, the authors conducted a study tour in 2000 in Sarajevo and another in 2023 in Banja Luka, during which a number of interviews were conducted with religious leaders and local government officials, including representatives of Bosnian Muslims in BiH. Other researchers were also consulted during a study visit to Dubrovnik and Zagreb in 2020. During these visits it was possible to trace the work on the reconstruction of religious sites in BiH. An in-depth analysis of source documents in Croatian, Serbian and Bosnian collected at the Adil Zulfikarpašić Institute in Sarajevo and the National Library in Zagreb was also used. Due to the lack of access to some source materials, newspaper articles from 1990–2022 (in the press of religious groups) play a large role in the work. Reports of international organisations, such as the agencies of the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe, and reports of the International Crisis Group also play an important role in the research.

Literature Review

The problem of the preservation and restoration of cultural heritage is very widely discussed in the world literature. It dominates, first of all, in studies of the countries that suffered the greatest destruction during World War II. These include scholarly works devoted to the destruction in Poland (the example of Warsaw, which suffered massive destruction during the Warsaw Uprising in 1944), Germany (the example of Hamburg and Dresden, which suffered massive bombing), Great Britain (the example of Coventry, which suffered heavy bombing in 1940) or Russia (the example of Leningrad, which suffered huge human and material losses).⁴

After the end of the war in BiH, the topic of the destruction of cultural property also became the specialty of many contemporary researchers from the Balkan Peninsula. However, it seems to have taken on a completely different character. One has the impression that in Bosnian literature it has become an element of the nation's martyrdom. In their studies, Bosnian writers repeatedly discuss the role of Serbs and Croats in the so-called *urbicid*. Similar publications are also published by the Islamic Community in BiH (*Rijaset Islamske Zajednice BiH*). The purpose of commemorating the destroyed mosques was to establish a "Day of Mosques" to commemorate the demolition of the Ferhadija Mosque and all other mosques demolished on the territory of Bosnia and Herzegovina on May 7, 1993. On this day, the Bosnian public recalls these tragic events during sermons in all the mosques in BiH. This attitude, however, should not come as a

⁴ DWORZECKI, NOWICKA, URBANEK, KWIATKOWSKI. Protection of national heritage...

surprise. The losses of Bosnian Muslims were the highest, with an estimated 97,000 or 110,000 to as many as 200,000 people killed (of which 65% were Bosniaks, 25% Serbs, 8% Croats, and 2% other.⁵ Nevertheless, some of the information presented by Bosnian researchers may be far from the truth. An example is the description of the events concerning the activities of the Muslim community during Communist Yugoslavia. It is often referred to as the “dark ages” in the history of Bosnian Muslims; however, it was essentially a period of development for the Muslim community.

However, not all works are so emotional. Among the most valuable studies used in the article are source materials published by the Muslim community in communist Yugoslavia – *Glasnik vrhovnog islamskog starjesinstva u SFRJ*. This journal contains rich source materials on the religious activities of Bosnian Muslims. In addition, materials collected by the authors in Sarajevo, in the archives of the Adil Zulfikarpašić Bosnian Institute, were helpful in writing the work. Nevertheless, many documents depicting the activities of this institution were destroyed during the war. It is also worth noting that this paper uses archival videos collected by the Bosnian army, which have been published on YouTube. They present evidence regarding the destruction of cultural property during the war.

The Background of the Problem

The devastation of cultural property in the Balkans has a very long history. After the Ottomans took over these lands, many Orthodox and other churches were destroyed or renamed mosques. At the same time, the Ottoman influence led to a flourishing of Muslim architecture. An example is Sarajevo, founded by the Ottomans (the name comes from the Turkish word *saray* meaning palace), built by Isa-beg Ishakovic in 1457. The city itself, as well as subsequent districts (*mahalle*), were built around mosques. In a little more than a century of Sarajevo's existence, the number of mosques in it came to exceed 100. The famous Ottoman writer Evliya Çelebi, traveling in Bosnia in 1660, noted that in Sarajevo there were 177 mosques and about 17,000 houses.⁶

With the slow collapse of the Ottoman Empire in the nineteenth century, there was a process of the eradication of Islamic heritage in the Balkans. Newly formed states such as Serbia sought to erase the Ottoman heritage from their lands. In Belgrade, for example, there were some 273 mosques in the seventeenth century. The city under Ottoman rule was one of the largest cosmopolitan cities in Europe. It was home to a mixed population, including Turks, Serbs, Greeks, Jews and Romany. However, at the beginning of the nineteenth century, the situation changed drastically. In the newly created Serbian Principality, the authorities wanted to expel the followers of the Quran (Turks, as well as Slavic Muslims) and destroy the cultural

⁵ NILSEN, Kjell. *102.000 drept i Bosnia*, accessed August 1, 2023, <https://www.nrk.no/urix/102.000-drept-i-bosnia-1.585120>.

⁶ *What the famous Evliya Çelebi wrote about Sarajevo?* accessed August 1, 2023, <https://sarajevotimes.com/what-the-famous-evliya-celebi-wrote-about-sarajevo/>; HADŽIJAHIĆ, Muhamed (1974). *Od tradicije do identiteta*, Sarajevo. *Investicije Turske na Balkanu: Između statistike i percepcije*, accessed August 1, 2023, <https://balkanp.aljazeera.net/news/economy/2021/9/28/izmedju-statistike-i-percepcije-investicije-i-trgovinska-razmjena-turske-i-balkana>; ANDREJEVIĆ, Andrei. *Islamska monumentalna umetnost XVI veka u Jugoslaviji*. In: *Glasnik Rijaseta Islamske zajednice u SFRJ*. br. 1, Sarajevo, 1985, pp. 102–105.

heritage that was a symbol of the empire. As a result, by the end of the nineteenth century, only one Bajrakli mosque remained.⁷

One of the few areas where the Muslim heritage remained almost untouched was BiH. In 1878, under the terms of the Berlin Congress, it came under the occupation of the Austro-Hungarian monarchy.⁸ From the very beginning of its rule in these lands, the Austro-Hungarian administration set itself the goal of gaining an ally among local Muslims. One means in the implementation of this policy was to provide them with suitable conditions for expressing their religious distinctiveness. Thus, they proceeded to rebuild destroyed mosques (including the rebuilding of the Careva mosque in Sarajevo in 1890, where the Bosnian Janissaries, Begas and Ajans had elected Zmaj as their leader) and Muslim graves, and to construct new, mostly secular buildings, while preserving the Ottoman-Turkish spirit (including the seat of the city government, the so-called Vijećnica, the Askenazy synagogue and the well-known Sebilj fountain in Sarajevo). The main executors of this new trend in architecture were the Czech Karlo Paržik and Austrian Alexander Wittek.⁹

Cultural Assets of the Muslim Community in the Kingdom of SHS (Kingdom of Yugoslavia) and the Independent State of Croatia (NDH)

In 1918, the lands of BiH came under the control of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes. Although the king of the state was a Serb, he tried to maintain an open and pragmatic attitude, seeking a modus vivendi between Serbian and Croatian national aspirations. Religious communities were treated quite equally, and the Yugoslav authorities did not force Muslims to resettle. Despite this, several mosques were demolished between 1918 and 1930 and rebuilt for other purposes. According to some contemporary calculations, 23 mosques were demolished from 1919 to 1940.¹⁰

During World War II, the territory of BiH came under the control of the fascist Croatian state NDH. From then, Croatian authorities treated Bosnian Muslims as part of the Croatian nation. They supported their activities and protected their cultural heritage. NDA leader Ante Pavelić even decided to build a mosque in Zagreb.¹¹

Cultural Assets of the Muslim Community in Communist Yugoslavia

After World War II, the communist authorities in Yugoslavia decided to punish the crimes of the fascist regime. Many Catholic and Muslim clerics were arrested and murdered. Six

⁷ KARCIĆ, Fikret. *Primjena šerijatskog prava u Jugoslavenskim zemljama nakon prestanka Turske vlasti pa do 1918*. In: *Islamska misao*, br. 84, Sarajevo, 1985, p. 13; BAKIĆ-HAYDEN, Milica. *Empires Are Us: Identifying with Differences*, Pittsburgh, 2000; HADZIOSMANOVIĆ, Hasan. *Vezirov saraj u Beogradu (1573–1827)*. In: *Glasnik vrhovnog islamskog starješinstva u SFRJ*, br. Sarajevo, 1998, pp. 409–412; KUJAWA, Karol. *Polityka historyczna islamskiej partii SDA w Bośni i Hercegowinie na przelomie XX i XXI wieku*. In: *Rocznik Instytutu Europy Środkowo-Wschodniej*. Lublin, 2020, pp. 23–35; Hayden, Robert. *Religious Structures and Political Dominance in Belgrade*. In: *Ethnologia Balkanica*, vol. 9, Belgrade, 2005, p. 222.

⁸ STOJKOVIĆ, Momir (ed). *Balkanski ugovorni odnosi 1876–1996. Dvostrani i višestrani međunarodni ugovori i drugi diplomatski akti o državnim granicama, političkoj i vojnoj saradnji, verskim i etničkim manjinama*, I tom (1876–1918). Beograd, 1998.

⁹ OHRANOVIĆ Fuad. *120 godina institucije reis-uleme i rijaseta u BiH (1882–2002)*. In: *Zemzem*, br. 132, Sarajevo, 2003.

¹⁰ *U Sarajevu je od 1996. Godine sagrađeno samo 45 džamija*, accessed August 1, 2023, <https://vakuf.ba/bs/aktuelnosti/u-sarajevu-je-od-1996-godine-sagrađeno-samo-45-dzamija/1143>; See also: BOJIC Mehmedalija. *Historija Bosne i Bosnjaka*. Sarajevo, 2001.

¹¹ See also: MACAN, Trpimir. *Povijest hrvatskog naroda*. Zagreb, 1992.

mosques in Sarajevo were also demolished (including the Baghdadi Mosque in Bistrik in 1953). The situation changed in the late 1950s. Since then, Bosnia and Herzegovina has experienced dynamic modernization and economic progress and has undergone urbanization. According to some sources, more than 800 mosques were built between 1969 and 1980.¹² In addition, in 1956 the Federative People's Republic of Yugoslavia adopted the Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict (the so-called Hague Convention of 1954).¹³ Support for the Islamic community in communist Yugoslavia, however, was no accident. The renovated mosques became Yugoslavia's calling card. They were meant to promote it to the West, but especially to rich Muslim countries and encourage them to cooperate economically with Yugoslavia.¹⁴

All these activities made Muslims a true mainstay of socialism. During their religious holidays (including *ramazan* or *bajram*), they often greeted their leader with the statement: "long live our dear leader Marshal Josip Broz Tito of Yugoslavia; long live the brotherhood and unity between our peoples".¹⁵ The loyalty and allegiance of Muslims to the ideas of communist Yugoslavia were confirmed by opinion polls conducted in 1989. They showed that as many as 88 percent of Muslims felt strong ties to collective Yugoslavia (85 percent of Serbs and 63 percent of Croats).¹⁶

Destruction of Muslim Cultural Property during the 1992–1995 War

In the independence referendum held in the first days of March 1992, 99.44% of the population voted for the sovereignty and independence of Bosnia and Herzegovina, with the referendum boycotted by the Serbs. On April 2, 1992, Bosnian Muslim leader Alija Izetbegović declared the independence of BiH.¹⁷ In response, the Bosnian Serbs, with the help of the federation's Yugoslav People's Army (JNA) troops led mainly by Ratko Mladic, began bombing Sarajevo and many other Muslim towns (Tuzla, Žepa, Srebrenica). Two of the first objects shelled by Serbian artillery in Sarajevo were the National Library, built in the Oriental style by the Austro-Hungarian monarchy, and the Institute of Oriental Studies, founded by the Communists in the 1960s. In the village of Gerzevo, meanwhile, the tomb (*turbe*) of a national

¹² *Saopštenje kabineta reis-ul-uleme*. In: Glasnik Rijaseta Islamske zajednice u SFRJ, br. 1. Sarajevo, 1990, p. 117. Svečano otvorenje obnovljene džamije i novosazidane munare u selu Vranićima (1965). In: *Glasnik vrhovnog islamskog starješinstva u SFRJ*, br. 3-4. Sarajevo, pp. 39–40; Svečano otvorenje temeljito obnovljene >Bajrakli< džamije u Beogradu. In: *Glasnik vrhovnog islamskog starješinstva u SFRJ*, br. 1-2. Sarajevo, 1964, pp. 51–58; FAJIĆ, Zejnil. Bibliografija Glasnika. Vrhovnog islamskog starješinstva u SFRJ, knjiga II. In: *Rijaseta Islamske zajednice u SRRJ od 1983.do 1992*. Godine, Sarajevo, 1995, pp. 18–19.

¹³ *Black lamb and grey falcon: A journey through Yugoslavia*, accessed August 1, 2023, <https://diyanet.gov.tr/en-US/Content/PrintDetail/11001>.

¹⁴ Alžirska delegacija u posjeti IVZ u SFRJ. In: *Glasnik vrhovnog islamskog starješinstva u SFRJ*, br. 11-12. Sarajevo, 1969, pp. 516–522; Delagacija marokanske uleme uzvratila posjetu islamskoj zajednici Jugoslavije. In: *Glasnik vrhovnog islamskog starješinstva u SFRJ*, br. 11-12. Sarajevo, 1969, pp. 653–655.

¹⁵ These words were spoken at a meeting of representatives of the Islamic community in Belgrade in 1963. (Službeni dio. Prvo zasjedanje petog saziva vrhovnog sabora islamske vjerske zajednice u SFRJ održanog u Beogradu dan 18. Decembra 1963. Godine. In: *Glasnik Vrhovnog islamskog starješinstva u SFRJ*. Sarajevo, 1963, p. 73).

¹⁶ VELIKONJA, Mitja. *Religious Separation and Political Intolerance in Bosnia-Herzegovina*. Texas A&M University Press, 2003, p. 229.

¹⁷ For more on the Islamic community's attitude toward BiH's independence, see: Treće ne želimo! Dvije Jugoslavije su već previše. In: *Novi Behar*, broj 10, Sarajevo, 1988, p. 3; Zaključci vrhovnog sabora islamske zajednice u SFRJ. In: *Glasnik vrhovnog islamskog starješinstva u SFRJ*, br. 4. Sarajevo, 1989, p. 110; Izvještaj o radu vrhovnog strajješinstva (rijaseta) islamske zajednice u Jugoslaviji. In: *Glasnik Rijaseta Islamske zajednice u SFRJ*, br. 5. Sarajevo, 1990, pp. 129–130.

hero of the Bosnian Muslims, Alija Đerzelez, was blown up. From the beginning of the war, the White Fortress (Bjela Kula) in Gradačac, built by the national hero of the Bosnian Muslims, Zmaj od Bosne (Dragon of Bosnia), was also bombed.¹⁸

During the war, however, the religious facilities of the Muslim community suffered the most. According to the Islamic Community, there were 1,144 mosques in Bosnia and Herzegovina before the war, 614 of which were destroyed. However, the Catholic and Orthodox communities also suffered losses. It is estimated that 269 Catholic churches and 125 Orthodox churches were demolished.¹⁹

The main role in the destruction of cultural property was played by the Army of the Republika Srpska (VRS) and the Yugoslav People's Army (JNA). According to the calculations of the Islamic Community, these troops demolished 534 mosques.²⁰ There is no doubt that these actions were part of the policy of Serbian leaders in BiH seeking to destroy the cultural heritage of Muslims. This is evidenced by the statements of VRS leaders such as Radovan Karadžić themselves, who at the beginning of the war stated that Sarajevo and the lands up to the Drina belonged to the Serbs, and that the Muslims living there (known as Turks or Poturčenac) should be displaced:

We have to prove to the international factor that we are not actually conducting any siege of Sarajevo. In fact, we are protecting our territories, and here you can see that Sarajevo was built on Serbian land, as Serbian property, and the entire surroundings of Sarajevo are Serbian, these are all Serbian villages, Serbian towns, Serbian settlements. We wouldn't have resolved these issues yet, but only where the ethnic areas overlap, that is, where the maps overlap, would be the disputed part in the Neretva valley, perhaps in the Sava valley, perhaps here on the Drina itself.²¹

Besides, that the destruction of Muslim cultural property was a planned action is evidenced by the folk songs of the Serbian army which were written during the war. In one of them, the author calls for the destruction of mosques. He claims that after the deaths of the leader of the fascist NDH state, Ante Pavelić, the leader of communist Yugoslavia, Josip Broz Tito, and the leader of communists in Kosovo, Azam Vllasi, the Muslims of BiH are vulnerable and it is time for a revanchist:

¹⁸ KUJAWA, Karol. *Bośniacy muzułmanie: Tożsamość, liderzy, bezpieczeństwo*. Wydawnictwo Naukowe Akademii WSB, Dąbrowa Górnicza, 2021, p. 34.

¹⁹ PUHALO, Srdan. *Ko je i koliko rušio vjerske objekte u Bosni i Hercegovini?*, accessed November 1, 2023, <https://www.frontal.ba/blogovi/blog/60507/ko-je-i-koliko-rusio-vjerske-objekte-u-bosni-i-hercegovini>; ČABARAVDIĆ, Sabina, *Uništavanje božjih kuća „onih drugih“ i njihova obnova*, accessed August 1, 2023, https://www.slobodnaevropa.org/a/tema_sedmice_vjerski_objekti/1733524.html; *Dan džamija u BiH: Podsjećanje na 614 srušenih džamija*, accessed August 1, 2023, <https://balkans.aljazeera.net/news/balkan/2022/5/7/dan-dzamija-u-bih-podsjecanje-na-614-sru-senih-dzamija>.

²⁰ *Podsjećanje na 614 džamija porušenih u BiH*, accessed August 1, 2023, <https://balkans.aljazeera.net/news/balkan/2014/5/7/podsjecanje-na-614-dzamija-porusenih-u-bih>; *Danas je Dan džamija*, accessed August 1, 2023, <https://preporod.info/bs/article/6155/danas-je-dan-dzamija>.

²¹ *Radovan Karadžić - Serbian Sarajevo - Russian guest*, accessed August 1, 2023, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IER-NMqEEg5s&t=51s>.

*Došlo vrijeme da se Srbi svete.
Sve džamije u oblake lete.
Nema Ante, Azema i Tite, date opet od
Srbina štite (x2).
Džaba Bosni ramazanskog posta, ne
spase te ni Alah ni Gospa.
Jer Srbina nema nigdje ravna, Srbin neće
ničijega jarma (x2).
Došlo vrijeme da se Srbi svete.
Sve džamije u oblake lete!*

(Author's own translation).

*Noone is stronger than Serb.
All mosque, flying among the clouds.
No Ante, Azem, or Tito to protect you
from Serb again (x2).
Fasting the Ramdan is useless, Allah or
Holy Mother won't help you.
A Serb's second to none, and Serbs won't
be enslaved (x2),
Noone is stronger than Serb.
All mosque, flying among the clouds.*

Also, responsible for the destruction of Muslim cultural property are Croatian Defence Council (HVO) troops and the Croatian Army. In 1993, Croatian forces broke off cooperation with the BiH Army and began pushing for the creation of a separatist Croatian state within BiH. After that, HVO troops and the Croatian Army began destroying the cultural property of Bosnian Muslims. In Mostar, eight mosques were demolished and their remains removed. The 1676 mosque on Babun near Ilići was demolished, followed by the 1975 mosque in Jasenica near Mostar, the 1847 mosque of Ali Pasha Rizvanbegović on Buna near Mostar, the mosque on Gubavica near Mostar from the seventeenth century, the mosque in the village of Pijesca from 1962, the mosque of Hajji Alibeg Lafa from 1651, the mosque of Baba Beširova in Balinovac from 1631, the mosque of Dervish Pasha Bajezidagić in Podhum from 1592, etc. Along with the bombing of the Balinovac mosque, a general attack on the 4th ARBiH Corps, which was defending part of Mostar, began on May 9, 1993. Two days later, the Pijesce mosque was demolished. It is estimated that Croatian troops destroyed 80 mosques during the war in BiH.²²

Legal Responsibility

As a result, more than 3,000 religious buildings were destroyed or damaged during the war in BiH. Despite the enormous material losses, no one was held accountable for these crimes. The only exceptions were a few sentences handed down in the Hague and the Tribunal of Bosnia and Herzegovina, in which some individuals were convicted of war crimes. Demolition of religious buildings and other war crimes were added to the indictment in connection with the crime of destroying cultural and historical monuments under Article 151(1) of the SFRY Criminal Code. In addition, the Prosecutor's Office in Banja Luka prosecuted the war crime case, but it applied the Criminal Code of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (CFR Yugoslavia), which was still in effect at the time. According to this law, the act of the "Destruction of Cultural and Historical Monuments" was punishable by imprisonment from one to 15 years, with the statute of limitations for criminal prosecution expiring 15 years after the commission of the criminal

²² *Kulturocid HVO-a i HV-a na prostoru Hercegovine – Samo u Stocu, Čapljini i Mostaru srušeno je 40 džamija*, accessed August 1, 2023, <https://bosnac.info/index.php/kulturocid-hvo-a-i-hv-a-na-hercegovine-samo-u-stocu-capljini-i-mostaru-sruseno-je-40-dzamija-2>

act. As a result, no one has suffered punishment for the destruction of cultural property in BiH.²³

Conclusion

The destruction of the Muslim heritage in the Balkans began in the nineteenth century. With the collapse of the Ottoman Empire, the influence of the Muslim community weakened. New Christian states such as Serbia emerged, which sought to eliminate Ottoman legacies due to their association with foreign occupation. As a result, just one mosque remained in Belgrade at the end of the nineteenth century. The destruction of mosques in the Western Balkans was halted in the territories of Bosnia and Herzegovina by the Austro-Hungarian monarchy. They annexed the area in 1878. The Austrians sought to maintain the status quo in the region. The authorities did not persecute Muslims and even strengthened the development of their architecture in the Oriental spirit. A similar policy toward Muslim heritage was adopted during World War II by the authorities of the fascist Croatian state NDH.

However, the greater flourishing of the Muslim community occurred paradoxically under Communist Yugoslavia. New mosques were built and Ottoman traditions were revived. This attitude of the communist authorities turned Bosnian Muslims into a mainstay of socialism, and they expressed widespread support for the Yugoslav authorities. The death of the leader of Communist Yugoslavia, Josip Broz Tito (1980), as well as the collapse of Communist Yugoslavia, proved tragic for Muslims.

After the declaration of BiH's independence (1992), they became the target of the Serbian army, which proceeded to eradicate the Ottoman legacy in the territory. As a result, during the war in BiH, according to various estimates, 614 mosques were demolished and destroyed. The main responsibility for the destruction of these religious facilities lies with the Serbs. In 1993, Croatian armed forces joined in the destruction of Muslim heritage. After the war, attempts were made to settle accounts with the criminals who perpetrated the destruction. Until now, those responsible for the destruction of Muslim heritage have not been punished. Thus, the example of BiH shows that international law continues to fail to protect religious sites. Everything indicates that there will be a similar situation after the end of the war in Ukraine.

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²³ *Smijemo li reci ko nam je srusio džamije?* accessed August 1, 2023, <https://www.pressreader.com/bosnia-and-herzegovina/preporod/20211215/281767042533380>

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