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Kosovo and Bosnia from Imperial to Post-Communist Times

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ABSTRACT During the period of nation building, the spirit of place (*genius loci*), attributing uniqueness to specific locations and ascribing to them close attachment to the nation, became a central vehicle for defending and appropriating territories and even for establishing a diaspora in exile. It was evoked through discursive practices reminiscent of religious rhetoric and around monumental works of art, thereby staging history as mythical sacred theatre. The process of establishing imagined national geographies during the long period of nation building from the nineteenth century to the post-communist period is analysed in comparative perspective in two multi-religious and multi-ethnical regions in southeast Europe—Kosovo and Bosnia. The leading question I will try to answer is why the Field of Blackbirds in Kosovo was successfully established as a national holy place in the collective memory of the Serbs, whereas similar efforts in Bosnia did not result in inscribing mythic places into national memory.

KEY WORDS Spirit of place; nation building; religion; nationalism; Bosnia; Bogumils; the Field of Blackbirds; Kosovo polje; Kosovo

Introduction: The Spirit of Place and Nation Building

Since Antiquity, the spirit of place (*genius loci*) has described the uniqueness of a location, attributing to it a specific atmosphere and character which awakens strong moods and feelings of coherence in people visiting them (Kozljanič 2004, 145–148; Valena 2009). Containing material, visible elements (such as geological formations, flora and fauna, etc.) as well as immaterial, invisible components which evade precise determination (experience of energy, power or mystery), the spirit of place qualifies a landscape and its population as an area marked by a specific geomantic, phenomenological and religious energy. In Roman Antiquity, it described a place inhabited and protected by a family clan and the spirit of its ancestors or a location of some other community (a military camp, a village or a city) protected by specific deities (Kozljanič 2004, 27–148). In the Christian period, the spirit of place was split into its demonic and its sacred aspects (ibid., 271–407). Demonic places were mostly linked to the old pagan cults, whereas locations linked to re-appropriated Jewish or to new Christian events were marked by their sacred spirit: Places known from the Bible

or where saints had lived and died were inscribed into an imaginary geography marked by new spiritual needs and performative religious practices (Halbwachs 2003, 154–211). The earth touched by their feet as a relic of place was believed to be sacred, although it contained no visible traces of historical events and although these took place at other locations or were simply legend (Koch and Schlie 2016).

During the period of nation building in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the spirit of place was extended from single spots to whole landscapes, incorporating the collective memory of a nation, like famous battlefields, or natural borders between nations, such as forests, rivers and mountains (Warnke 1992; Schama 1995; Lipták 2003; Cronin 2015, 14–21). The first became places of national memory, the second national frontiers. Whereas places of memory were revived by the care for tradition and its social routine, such as remembrance rituals, national frontiers were defined by imaginary close bonds between nature and the people living there (Giesen 2016).[1] Their relationship was not determined by a memory of the past attached to the place, but by an intensive experience of the space in the present. Nature was believed to inscribe itself into physiognomy, character and habits of people, who in return gave it the imprint of their work and culture. The idea of a close relation between people and nature had its roots in the romantic landscape, which served as a space for the projection of inner emotions and of national character (Hübner 1985, 349–352). It was also formed by Hippolyte Taine's (1828–1893) milieu theory, which postulated an interconnectedness of "race" (understood close to the German "Volksgeist"—genius of the nation), denoting physical, psychological and moral characteristics, of "milieu", describing the physical environment as well as social and political circumstances, and of "moment" (being close to the German "Zeitgeist"), meaning historical processes (Wellek 1959). Taine's and other milieu theories adopted and updated the legacy of theories of climate dating from antiquity and reinvigorated during the eighteenth century. Both places of memory and national frontiers were elevated to the status of natural temples of the nation and became a symbol of its identity. Religious rhetoric and pathos were transposed into a secularized context so that they could express emotional attachment to the homeland through nature. A landscape accommodating the spirit of place was less an idyllic, lovely location (a *locus amoenus*) than a frontier challenging human power and demanding tribute for regularly renewing close bonds

1 The sociologist Bernhard Giesen calls such collectives, being closely related to nature, primordial. They manifest in processes of nation building but also of nationalism, which aggressively strikes far beyond the love for the homeland. Members of primordial communities naturalize cultural similarities as innate, inscribed in the body, and perceived them as timeless and unchangeable. Such collectives draw sharp, impassable boundaries between their own community and the Other, so they barely allow an inclusion.

with it[2]—similar to the death toll Christian martyrs had to pay for their loyal attachment to their religious faith.

When milieu and racist theories of the nineteenth century culminated in the "blood-and-soil" ideology of the Nazis, the mythical spirit of place provided the compatriots who believed in the mission of racially purifying with spiritual and physical powers that arose from its telluric depth. One of the leading landscape and portrait photographers of the Third Reich, Erna Lendvai-Dircksen (1883–1962), writes in an introduction to her book of photographs *Mountain People* (*Bergmenschen*, 1936) about the mutual penetration of the land and the people manifesting in their physiognomy and habit:

> Just look at them: our high mountain dwellers. They are steep: the back of their head, the nose, the chin, the gaze, the posture, the walk....They are all their own landscape: craggy and cracked like the old mountains, grown old by the harsh weather of time; quick-tempered like wild streams of snow water in spring; in their eyes the bright power of mountain flowers. Here it is: the face of the landscape in the landscape of the face.[3] (Lendvai-Dircksen 1936, unpaginated)[4]

In her photo book *The Face of the German East* (*Das Gesicht des deutschen Ostens*, 1937) she compares the power of natural forces in Saxony with the conquest of the German settlers, whose 'urge to the east' is depicted as an almost cultic approach to the rising sun:

> Dark harmony in minor is sprinkled by the light of the northern face; the violence of the rhythms of feeling, fresh natural forces form and shape the face of the German East. Blood flows of all tribes of the empire surged in the waves of the centuries against the strangeness that crowds out of the giant eastern areas. Good, best

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2 Mountains, which were especially glorified in German films of the 1920s and 1930s, such as Arnold Fanck's *The Holy Mountain* (1926) or Leni Riefenstahl's *The Blue Light* (1932), merged with the elementary spirit of its people who died in their gorges.

3 Unless indicated otherwise, all translations from German to English throughout the article are by the author.

4 "Man sehe sie an: unsere Hochgebirgler. Sie sind steil. Der Hinterkopf, die Nase, das Kinn, der Blick, die Haltung, der Gang....Sie waren alle ihre Landschaft selbst. Schroffschrundig, wie die alten Berge, alt geworden in den Wettern der Zeit. Aufbrausend, wie der Wildbach im Schmelzwasser des Frühlings. In den Augen die Leuchtkraft der Bergblumen. Hier ist es: das Gesicht der Landschaft in der Landschaft des Gesichts."

> people's force of German lands searched and found their living space in the open East, towards the rising sun. (Lendvai-Dircksen 1937, unpaginated).[5]

In her later photographic book *Migrating Dunes* (*Wanderdünen*, around 1940), dedicated to the region of the North and the Baltic Seas, she replaced mountain peasants by fishermen, who fight like the sand dunes with the stormy sea. In a comparison of land and people, wavy patterns of migrating dunes are parallelized with fishermen's forehead wrinkles. Their struggle with the open sea announces the Second World War, which is thereby elevated to a natural event like the tides. Two years later, the jurist and Nazi-sympathizer Carl Schmitt, in his writing *Land and Sea* (*Land und Meer*), defined a man as determined by land, although life came out of water and planet Earth consists to two-thirds of water:

> Man is a landowner, a land recruiter. He stands and walks and moves on the firmly established earth. That is his point of view and his ground; this gives him his point of view; this determines his impressions and his way of seeing the world. He receives not only his vision but also the form of his walking and movement, his figure as a living being, born on earth and moving on the earth. (Schmitt [1942] 2018, 7)[6]

However, the space revolution (*Raumrevolution*), which started with overseas expeditions, attached great importance to the water as a field of domination and transformed peasants into pirates. Schmitt observes that a new space revolution is taking place through the conquest of the element of air, which suspends the old division between land and sea and makes them equal to the "*nomos* of the Earth"—the space of conquest, of division and of utilization (ibid., 71).

Franz Strunz (1875–1953), professor of history of natural sciences in Vienna and member of the NSDAP, even claimed that "landscape, especially the extreme landscape (not the easy comprehensible geometric one) forms the human. Man carries it with him, ill-humoured, when it is dark, plain and heavy, relieved and elevated, when he sees the

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5 "Dunkle Harmonie im Moll wird gesprengt durch helles des nordischen Antlitzes, Gewalt der Gefühlsrhythmen, unverbrauchte Naturkräfte bilden und formen das Gesicht des deutschen Ostens. Blutströme aller Stämme des Reiches brandeten im Wellenschlag der Jahrhunderte gegen die Fremdheit, die aus den östlichen Riesenräumen herandrängt. Gute, beste Volkskraft deutscher Lande suchte und fand Lebensraum im offenen Osten, gegen die aufgehende Sonne."

6 "Der Mensch ist ein Landwesen, ein Landtreter. Er steht und geht und bewegt sich auf der fest gegründeten Erde. Das ist sein Standpunkt und sein Boden; dadurch erhält er seinen Blickpunkt; das bestimmt seine Eindrücke und seine Art, die Welt zu sehen. Nicht nur seinen Gesichtskreis, sondern auch die Form seines Gehens und seiner Bewegung, seine Gestalt erhält er als ein erdgeborenes und auf der Erde sich bewegendes Lebewesen."

bright heaven over himself" (Strunz 1939, 144).[7] He attributed to Germans a special relationship to nature und named German medieval mystics, romantic and symbolist poets, and writers as examples:

> We Germans see the landscape as the most humane among all peoples of the earth. Landscape, folk character and homesickness are German destinies. We Germans have discovered it as a subjective experience: as a space experience and a mental-spiritual reproduction of this existence. Landscape is made up of land-space, spirit and sentiment. (Strunz 1939, 146)[8]

According to Strunz, landscape has a power which can be compared to the transforming forces of historical events. At the same time, he declares homesickness to be a geo-psychical illness especially affecting the German nation (*Volksgemeinschaft*), understood as a community based on blood ties, due to its close relatedness to the soil and environment (*Umwelt*). This painful desire finally transgresses geography and becomes a form of biological self-preservation. Homeland therefore means, as Strunz concludes, "a paradigm of all reality and experience, just as man is the image of the world."[9] Therefore, he declares homesickness closely related to wanderlust (*Fernweh*) and home as "a bridge to the world" (ibid., 151). Such understanding of home and homesickness has not excluded expansion. The conquest of new space for living was at the same time considered the natural right of a superior race: where it did not have it, it was doomed to conquer it—as "the nation without space" (*Volk ohne Raum*), propagated as a complementary ideology by the publicist Hans Grimm (1875–1959) in his eponymous book from 1926. The new territories in the East should provide space for future German generations longing for "freedom": in an eternal struggle for life, they had to extend their territory not only in a romantic-religious vertical direction to heaven, but also in a horizontal, expansive direction eastwards into the neighbouring, racially "inferior" countries (Grimm [1926] 1936, 9–11).

In the course of nineteenth- and twentieth-century nation building, the Janus-faced longing for the spirit of place was thus destined to become a central vehicle

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7 "Landschaft und besonders die extreme Landschaft (nicht so sehr die geometrisch leicht fassbare) ändert den Menschen. Er trägt sie mit sich herum, verstimmt durch sie, wenn sie düster, niedrig und schwer ist, erleichtert und erhöht, wenn der Mensch den Himmel über sich erhellt sieht."

8 "Wir Deutschen sehen die Landschaft am menschlichsten unter allen Völkern der Erde. Landschaft, Volkscharakter und Heimweh sind deutsche Schicksale. Als subjektives Ereignis haben wir Deutsche sie entdeckt: als Raum-Erlebnis und eine geistig-seelische Nacherzeugung dieses Daseins. Landschaft setzt sich zusammen aus Landraum, Geist und Gemüt."

9 „Die Heimat wird zum Paradigma aller Wirklichkeit und Erlebnismöglichkeit, so wie der Mensch das Bild der ganzen Welt ist."

for patriotic defence of the homeland, on the one hand, or a means for the expansive appropriation of new territories, underpinned by milieu and racial theories, on the other hand. The process of evoking the spirit of place went hand in hand with sacralisation of the homeland and its compatriots, and the demonization of all those excluded from the primordial bond of community and nature, considered to be "foreigners" or "homeless nomads" as Jews (Darré 1942, 5–6).

In the following, I want to outline the process of a growing spirit of place in two multi-religious, multi-ethnical regions in southeast Europe during the long period of nation building from the nineteenth century to the post-communist period after the Yugoslav disintegration wars in the 1990s: Kosovo and Bosnia. First, I would like to demonstrate the role of discursive practices for reviving and re-enacting historical events of (imaginary) national or even transnational importance at a specific location—in order to evoke the spirit of place and to sacralise the sacrifice of the nation. Further, I will analyse the role of art and architecture to resituate the traces of the past or even to transfer the spirit of place from one location to another for the period when the place was occupied by enemies and thus not accessible. Finally, I will suggest some reasons to explain why the Field of Blackbird was inscribed, with long-lasting effects, as a holy place into the collective memory of the Serbs, whereas in Bosnia, similar efforts at the foundation of a common Bosnian identity reminded unsuccessful.

The Genius Loci on the Field of Blackbirds in Kosovo

The battle on the Field of Blackbirds (*Kosovo polje*), in which the Serbian knights were defeated together with their Bosnian allies by the Ottoman army on 15 June (according to the Gregorian calendar) respectively 28 June (according to the Julian calendar) in 1389, became an increasingly important historical event during the middle of the nineteenth century, not only for Serbian but also for international European politics. The Serbian struggle for liberation, although less supported by the Europeans than the battles in Greece, and the "Turkish question," concerning the division of the Ottoman legacy among new national states, raised the issue of the forgotten medieval battle (Zirojević 1998; Sundhaussen 1999; 2000). It soon took on a fateful dimension for Western Christian civilization and was reinterpreted as a moral victory of the Serbs, who finally chose the heavenly instead of the earthly kingdom, European democracy instead of oriental despotism. The English consul general in Serbia, Andrew Archibald Paton (1811–1874), was the first to include the most important episodes from the legendary battle in his travelogue *Servia, the youngest member of the European family* (1845). Among the glorified historical events was the decision of the pious

but militarily unsuccessful Prince or Knez Lazar for the kingdom of God by the heroic sacrifice of the knight in his service, Miloš Obilić, who rode alone into the enemy camp and stabbed to death the leader of the Ottoman army, Sultan Murad,[10] and finally by the betrayal of Lazar's brother-in-law, Vuk Branković, who did not rush to aid in the decisive battle (Paton 1845, 219–228). These topics were celebrated during the Serbian struggle for liberation in the early nineteenth century in folk ballads accompanied by a traditional music instrument, *gusle,* and published by the Serbian philologist Vuk Stefanović Karadžić (1787–1864). As excerpts from them were soon translated into several European languages and discussed by Jacob Grimm, Goethe and the historian Leopold von Ranke, they became very well known all over Europe (Heimstedt-Vaid 2004; Zimmermann 2012). Paton, who was not able to travel to the Field of Blackbirds on Ottoman territory and therefore only visited the mummy of the prince kept at the monastery Vrdnik (resp. Nova Ravanica), on Fruška gora in North Serbia, perceived the medieval battle as the beginning of the continuing fight of the Serbs for their place in the European family of nations. In Russia, which legitimized its imperial claims on the Balkans with the protection of all Orthodox believers, there was no place for the Serbian national heroic myth.[11] Instead, the Russian army was to be praised as the liberator of the southern Slavs (Zimmermann 2014c).

In the following decades, British writers, or those based in Great Britain, increasingly presented the mythical battle as a struggle of European significance. In travelogues from the end of the nineteenth century, when new nation states were founded after the Berlin Congress in 1878, the process of sacralisation of the Fields of Blackbirds in Kosovo intensified (Zimmermann 2014a, 305–314). Whereas early reports, published around the middle of the nineteenth century, described the landscape in a distant manner through the eyes of a historian and geographer, towards the end of the nineteenth century the events of the past became animated and re-enacted as a sacred theatre within their landscape. Nature took part in the fate of the nation. In her report *Travels in the Slavonic Provinces of Turkey-in-Europe*, written in 1867 and published together with the suffragist Paulina Irby (1831–1911), Georgina Muir

10 Paton calls him Amurath.

11 *Reports from Slavonic Lands* (1844–1847) was published by the Russian Slavicist Victor I. Grigorovich, who does not mention the famous battle at all (Grigorovich 1916). Slavicist and Russian consul in Sarajevo Alexander F. Gil'ferding (Hilferding) describes how the Field of Blackbirds became an important sacred place for the Serbian national identity in his *Travel through Bosnia, Hercegovina and Old Serbia* (1858), but perceives it only as an unfavorable territory for military confrontation (Kožančikov 1873, 167–198). He considers Knez Lazar's decision to confront the Ottomans on an open field strategically unwise and a tragic result of his bad military experience. For the Russian diplomat, the battle is less a heroic deed of the Serbs than a common effort of all South Slavs as well as Hungarians and Albanians to defy the Ottoman invasion.

Mackenzie (1833–1874) empathetically describes the empty scenery of the great battle in which Eastern despotism conquered European civilisation. Regretting that no traces remained from the times when Serbia still belonged to Europe, she compensates for the loss by insightfully reviving the plain field in the detailed weather description that evokes the tragic-melancholic spirit of this place:

> The morning, on which we entered Kóssovo was chequered by those alternations of cloud and gleam which usually herald a showery day. The wind blew fresh from the snow-wreaths on Liubatern, and swung aloft the boughs of the oak-copse, showing bright little lawns and dewy pastures, to which the grazing horses and cattle pushed their way through brushwood and fern: we felt that we had exchanged the yellow plains of the East for the green mountains and watered valleys of Europe. Unhappily, the verdure and the breeze are all that now testify of Europe on the field of Kóssovo. Old chronicles tell that at the time when a Turkish army first appeared on it the country was well cultivated and peopled with villages....Yeas, in those days Kóssovo belonged to Europe—to a society, though rude, of activity and progress; but it was conquered to be a pasture-ground for Turkish horses, on just such a showery morning as this, some five hundred years ago. (Mackenzie and Irby 1877, 182–183)

However, the local Serbs would compensate for the lack of historical traces by reciting folk ballads and by vivid, colourful descriptions of the battle—as if they had themselves participated in it.

> ...and so fresh remains its memory that to this day it is scarcely possible for a traveller to converse from more than a few minutes with a genuine Serbian without hearing the name of Kóssovo....As for any one who has been much in Serbia, and has studied the national traditions and songs, he will at last come to feel almost as if he had been at the battle of Kóssovo himself, so minutely is every detail enumerated, so vividly are the motives and actions realised, so deep the lines, so strong the colours, in which the principal characters are drawn. (ibid., 183–184)

The writer and artist Mary Edith Durham (1863–1944) reports in her travel journey *Through the Land of Serbs*, published in 1904, how strongly the memory of the past dominates present life: “They sang me snatches of Servian ballads—all monotonous wails over the slaying of someone by the Turks, ending in a cry for vengeance” (1904, 202). A year later, in the travel report *The Burden of the Balkans* (1905), the author warns in the preface that the contemporary revolts in the Balkans are no longer only

of religious origin, but have racial motives, asserting that the revolutionary party in Bulgaria would also murder Christians of all other Balkan nations when the opportunity occurred (1905, vii, viii). She describes the Balkan people as living "in their past to an extent which is hard for us in the West to realize" (ibid., 4). In her 1909 report *High Albania,* which includes Kosovo, she realises that the region was populated at that time mainly by Albanian-speaking people (1909, 278). Nevertheless, the Serbian population used to regard the region as its own and to appropriate it by comparing the historical battle with catastrophes of biblical proportions and by interpreting natural phenomena as divine miracles:

> There spread out, burnt, and parched before us for miles and miles, was Kosovo-polje, the fatal field on which the Turks gained the victory that established them, even to this day, in Europe—the Armageddon of the Servian people. "Kosovo-polje", said the Serb briefly. It summed up all the fate of his race. In the spring every year, he added, all the unploughed land is covered with blood-red flowers that grow in memory of the fight; they are sent by God. We struck across the great plain, uncultivated, desolate, and undulating; the parched turf was slit into yawning cracks by the drought, the scrub hawthorn burnt brown, the track dusty, and we reached the Sirnitza, crawling shrivelled between banks of cracked mud—the river that once ran red with the blood of heroes. (ibid., 278–279)

A few years later, in the course of the Balkan wars (1912–1913), the Kingdom of Serbia conquered the Ottoman territory of Kosovo, only to lose it a few years later, when the Serbian army led by King Peter I had to escape into exile on the island Corfu in 1915. During the First World War, the Kosovo myth was again popularised not only by Serbs but also by the British and Scots. It was used not only as a propaganda means for the fight of the British allies against Germany and Austria-Hungary, but also for the foundation of a future common south Slavic state under Serbian supremacy on the territory of the dissolved Habsburg and Ottoman Empires. In London, a "Kosovo Day Committee" was founded by several prominent intellectuals and artists who supported the foundation of a pan-Slavic state, among them the historian Robert William Seton-Watson (1879–1951), the archaeologist Arthur Evans, the French sculptor Auguste Rodin, the American painter John Singer Sargent, the Belgian poet Emile Verhaeren and other representatives of society (Zimmermann 2014a, 314–330; 2014c). Seton-Watson, who held a leading position in the committee, and Sir Cecil Smith (1859–1944), director of the Victoria & Albert Museums, enabled the Serbs to celebrate the anniversary of the battle in exile in London, accompanied by a large exhibition of heroic sculptures and a model of a future Kosovo temple, which was to be erected on the Field of

Blackbirds after the foundation of the new multi-national South Slavic state (Interview memorandum from 29 May 1915, Archive of the Victoria & Albert Museum, Blythe House). Monumental, temple-like architecture and memorial sculptures in antiquated forms with caryatids, muscled fighters, mourning women and a sphinx, by the pan-Slavic Croatian sculptor Ivan Meštrović (1883–1962), were arranged as a sacred place (Wachtel 1998, 63ss; Clegg 2002; Zimmermann 2014a, 314–326; 2014b; 2014c; see Fig. 1 and 2). The ensemble, reminiscent of an antique temple, was probably inspired by the myth about the antique origin of the Slavs, which had been spread some decades earlier already by the pan-Slavic linguists Cyprien Robert (1807–ca. 1865) at the Collège de France in Paris as well as Ján Kollár (1793–1852) and Martin Žunkovič (1858–1940) in the Habsburg monarchy (Zimmermann 2016a; 2016b). On the basis of topographical names, they tried to derive the mythical origin of the Slavs from several old cultures, such as Old Macedonians (also identified as Illyrians) and Etruscans. By presenting the South Slavs as heirs of ancient cultures, they raised a claim of a close attachment with the spirit of a place, which was ultimately also important for the foundation of European culture. Meštrović, who also tried to omit the style of conflicting national religious traditions—the warriors do not wear medieval suites of armours or any kind of clothing, thereby imitating antique heroes—created a common temple capable of celebrating the unity of all South Slavs. As the place was not accessible, he anticipated the erection of a pan-Slavistic temple in London. The detachment from the sacred soil was outbalanced by the monumentality of the art work, which established a sacred environment. It was clear that it would have a convincing place on the Kosovo field, which Great Britain and its allies were about to re-conquer.

FIGURE 1+2 Meštrović exhibition at the Victoria & Albert Museum, London, 1915, from: Clegg, Elisbeth. 2002. "Meštrović, England and the Great War." *The Burlington Magazine* 144 (2002), 740, Fig. 29, 30.

In his contribution to the exhibition catalogue, James Bone (1872–1962) describes the suggestive effect of the temple construction with its monumental, expressive sculptures:

> You entered a loggia formed of mourning caryatids, down which a sphinx, human save in the wings, stared watchfully and expectantly. Looking between the figures of the loggia, you saw groups of widows whose mourning and hopelessness were expressed in gestures with a primitive directness and force that came as a shock to the visitors. The loggia led to a small doomed hall, in which was a gigantic statue of the hero Marko Kraljević, the Serbian Siegfried, on his snorting horse. Round the walls in tall panels were torsos of Turks, and above was a rhythmic frieze of mingled figures of Serbs and Turks fighting. On either side of the hall were arched gateways and inside the arches were grotesque heads of Turks set in panels, two deep all the way round. You descended steps supported by crouching figures that symbolized the Serbs in captivity—gaunt, worn men with beards, their hands, palm downward, extended flat, a sign of subjection and insufferable strain. There was an extraordinary fury and purpose in every part of this strange building that moved one like the sight of blood or the call of trumpets. It was described as 'fragments of the Temple of Kosovo', the name of the fatal field where the Serbian nation went down, to remain in subjection for five hundred years....It had a burning spirit within it that seem to throb gesture through these forms as a tempest speaks through the new and fantastic shapes it gives to the trees in its grasp, or the announcements of the tongues and crowns of flame in a forest conflagration....Its beauty comes like the beauty of the flames, which is fire itself. (Bone 1915, unpaginated)

The artist received inspiration from "vivid folk-songs of his country, and something of the starkness and grandeur and terrible silhouettes of the wild hills seems to remain in his work," argues Bone. Such an expressive sort of art, bearing the militant past of the Balkan landscape in it, could be understood in times of war by British citizens as well:

> "In ordinary times the art of Meštrović might be too alien to England with our tradition of decorum and comfort, but in these times of stress the mood has been impelled upon us through which we can see and feel the message of his terrible images and the deep pitifulness, too, that lies within them. His heroic art, indeed, is almost the only art that does not seem alien to these mighty days." (Bone 1915, unpaginated)

The exhibition was accompanied by numerous meetings, lectures and propaganda booklets (Zimmmermann 2014a, 326–330). At the same time, on 15 October 1915, the Czech philosopher and later president of the pan-Slavic state Czechoslovakia, Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk (1850–1937), who emigrated to Great Britain and became a professor of Slavonic Studies at King's College in London, held his inaugural lecture on small, stateless nations at the very moment when Serbia was about to be attacked by Germany, Austria-Hungary and Bulgaria. He emphasised the importance of heroism and cultural heritage for the survival of small nations and gave the living memory of the Field of Blackbirds in Kosovo, sung in Serbian ballades, as an example. A befriended Serbian lieutenant had told him about it:

> When at the head of his regiment of peasant soldiers he reached the plain of Kosovo, the famous 'Field of Blackbirds', a death-like silence seized the whole detachment; men and officers, without any command, uncovered their heads, crossed themselves, and each of them tried to thread softly, so as not to disturb the eternal sleep of their heroic ancestors. (Here, my friend, quite lost in the remembrance of that great experience, unconsciously imitated their gait, and his voice fell to a whisper as he recalled the silence of his soldiers.) Many of the weather-beaten faces were bedewed with unconscious tears, as was my friend's face while he spoke. I, too, was deeply affected by the recital of his experience. (Masaryk [1917?], 21)

The simple Serbian peasant soldiers, impressed by the imaginary spirit of place, moved on the battlefield as if participating in a sacred ritual or playing in a sacral theatre. The location inhabited by the spirit of place has an impact on the performance of its visitors.

For the anniversary of the battle in 1916–1917, 85,000 copies of the booklet *The Lay of Kossovo: Serbia's past and present* were published. The authors, among them the British writers Alice (1874–1917) and Claude (1865–1917) Askew, even tried to conjure up the medieval dead warrior in their appeal. A cult of the dead was supposed to capture the spirit of place:

> If only the dead could rise! Ah, if only our dead heroes could rise from their graves on this plain and lead back into battle! Lazar, Milosh Obilitch, Kosanchich Ivan, why do you slumber? Is Serbia to be lost a second time?…Hail to Kossovo Day, for it will be followed by the day of victory! (Askew 1917, 31)

Although five hundred years had passed since the battle, the medieval warriors were revived and their presence was invoked for revenge. The publicist Gilbert Keith

Chesterton (1874–1936) compares them with the “living dead”, who enjoy eternal life in the memory and identity of the nation:

> Five hundred years ago our Allies the Serbians went down in the great Battle of Kossovo, which was the end of their triumph and the beginning of their glory. For if the Serbian Empire was mortally wounded, the Serbian nation had a chance to prove itself immortal; since it is only in death that we can discover immortality. So awfully alive is that Christian thing called a nation that its death is a living death. It is a living death which lasts a hundred years longer than any life of man. (Chesterton 1917, 31)

At the same time, Chesterton legitimates Serbian claims to Kosovo, as if the death of Serbia’s ancestors on the Field of Blackbirds—like the death of Christian martyrs—had transfigured the territory into a holy place, almost sacramental, consecrated by the blood that was shed on it. Pointing to the close relationship between Christian culture and its holy places, he declares it a sedentary one and contrasts it with the nomadic, Islamic mentality formed in the desert and therefore lacking any relation to a place—and also any legitimacy to claim it:

> And the chief fruit of this philosophy is the national idea itself, the sacramental sense of boundary, the basis, in an almost religious sense, of agriculture, the idea of having a home upon this earth, which the Arab armies out of the deserts can hardly even be said to have violated, having never even begun to understand. (ibid., 34)

Chesterton thus denies Muslims—supposedly nomads by nature—any claim to the spirit of place and any possibility of marking a place or being primordially linked with it; with their blood bond, the Serbs had laid the boundary of the Christian frontier and became the preservers of the holy place.

Due to the foreseeable expenses and the dominant role of the Serbs in the myth, Mestrović’s temple was never realised. Instead of the Kosovo temple, the sculptor built a monumental tomb of the Unknown Soldier in Avala, near Belgrade, decorated with the titanic women personifications of various Yugoslav regions, significantly not of the ethnic nations. Only the destroyed church of St. John the Baptist, in Samodreža on the Kosovo field, which was believed to be the sacred place where medieval warriors had attended divine service and obtained sacrament for the last time before going to battle[12], was rebuilt in 1932 by the architects Petar Popović (1873–1945) and

12 The Russian consul in Sarajevo, Alexander Gil’ferding, reports in his travelogue that he was not able to visit the ruins of the church Samodreža because nobody informed him about such a place

Aleksandar Deroko (1894–1988) (Cultural Monuments in Serbia 2018). Only in 1953, in the communist period, a non-religious memory tower was erected, designed by sculptor Aleksandar Deroko, at the memorial place Gazimestan (Ubiparip 2017, 251). The Kosovo battle, together with the peasant uprisings in the sixteenth century, was interpreted at that time as the anticipation of the partisan struggle against fascism (Zimmermann 2010a). In 1989, when the 600th anniversary of the battle was celebrated under Slobodan Milošević's rule (1987–2000), religious rituals were reanimated in the Serbian nationalist context (Zimmermann 2014a, 330–355; 2014b; 2014d). The images of sacred warriors were resurrected in ethno pop songs, in radio re-enactments of the battle, on the front pages of the press, in radio and film. The remains of the fallen prince Lazar, which rested in the monastery Vrdnik resp. Nova Ravanica for centuries, were brought to the Kosovo field for the festivities (Perica 2002, 128). The religious national myth appropriated the *genius loci*, evoking its spirits in modern media and mobilizing it for the new war, which ended with its loss, depicted as yet another martyrdom of orthodox religion.

Today, the spirit of place on the Field of Blackbirds again attracts foreign travellers. In 2016, an anonymous British tourist confessed in the Bohemian Blog, an alternative online travel journal, that he or she visited the Field of Blackbirds due to its war-time past:

> It was war that attracted me to Kosovo. I don't like writing that, but it's the truth.... Back then though, all I knew about the place was the Kosovo War. I remember a year when it seemed to be all that was ever on the news; when I was growing up, Yugoslavia was never far from the headlines and by the time I was old enough to start paying attention, suddenly it wasn't there anymore. Watching a country disappear from maps like that changed my understanding of the world. Borders weren't static, just because they were printed in books. I realised history was still alive, and later, in 2008, Kosovo was the first time I followed the birth of a new nation....I may be no stranger to 'dark tourism,' but somehow this felt more provocative than any place I'd been before; it wasn't like Auschwitz or Chernobyl, with their guided tours and guest books. There was no tourist trail connecting the Kosovo massacre sites, no English signposts to the places where bloody war had raged only 15 years before. Exploring Kosovo, it felt like the dust had barely had

during his sojourn in Kosovo. He was only able to visit the tomb of the fallen Ottoman Sultan Murad I., with a cenotaph in Arabic supposedly erected by his follower Bayezid I, where the inner organs of the sultan were buried (Kožančikov 1783, 200). In their travelogue *The Stricken Land* (1916, 58), Alice and Claude Askew do not name Samodreža as the place where the Serbian soldiers obtained the sacrament, but rather the monastery church of Gračanica.

> time to settle and at times, I would find myself wondering *How soon is too soon*? (Bohemian Blog 2016)

Although Kosovo has not been a part of Serbia since 2008, but belongs to the autonomous Republic of Kosovo, the spirit of place on the Field of Blackbirds is still alive. The latest war, of 1999, called it to mind and transformed it into a location for 'dark tourism'. The Serbian memorial at Gazimestan is fenced and monitored by cameras to prevent it from being destroyed by Albanians:

> Arriving at the gates by taxi, a lone guard came out to meet me. It felt very much as though I were crossing a border; showing my passport before being ushered through a security gate into the political limbo beyond. I was alone at the monument that day. Alone, that is, save for the scattering of CCTV cameras that watched my every step on the windy hillside. (Bohemian Blog 2016)

Gazimestan, the memorial place in the heart of the Field of Blackbirds, where the heroes of the medieval battle are supposed to have died, became a place difficult to access. It is protected like holy places, where non-believers or believers of other religions are allowed to approach only for a short time and under surveillance.

Absence of the Spirit of Place in Bosnia

A different pattern of appropriating the spirit of place occurred in Bosnia, which became a protectorate of the Habsburg monarchy in 1878. As early as the 1870s, the Ottoman Empire, while attempting to reform its administrative structures, permitted the previously prohibited construction of sacred places of non-Muslim religions (Sundhaussen 2014, 136). Amid the spread of national ideas, religious communities increasingly felt united by ethnic collectives. After the withdrawal of the Ottoman administration and of a part of the Muslim population from Bosnia, newcomers from the Habsburg Empire and the Principality of Serbia started to settle there: Serbs, Croats and Ashkenazy Jews (Sephardic Jews from Spain had migrated to Bosnia during the Reconquista in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries already [ibid., 81–85, 192–197]). In 1882, the Austro-Hungarian politician and historian Benjamin Kállay (1839–1903), who had been appointed first consul-general in Serbia from 1868 to 1875, became governor and started to modernise the province according to Western models (Milojković-Djurić 2000; Okey 2007, 55–144; Sundhaussen 2014, 205–213). His aim was to awaken a common Bosnian national sentiment in order to prevent the spread of diverging

nationalisms and to remove the Orthodox population from Serbian and Russian influence. In his book *Russia's Oriental Politics*, written in 1878, he already expressed his concern about Russia's new strategy to reinforce its influence in the Balkans by means of pan-Slavic propaganda (Kalaj 1885, 101–103). While the Russian empire protected all the Orthodox nations—the Greeks, the Romanians and various Slavic nations— at the beginning of the nineteenth century, it started to support particularly the Slavic "brothers" amongst Orthodox believers around the middle of the nineteenth century (Zimmermann 2014a, 103–107). Together with the enlightened local Bosnian authorities, particularly the major of Sarajevo Mehmed beg–Kapetanović (1839–1902) (Lindemann 2015, 64–68), Kállay therefore tried to diminish religious bonds and to intensify the ties to the region of Bosnia without, however, recurring to mythopoetic strategies of evoking the spirit of place. Unlike in Kosovo, this process coincided with a form of sacralisation of the entire territory. For this purpose, a common ancestor of all Bosnian religious communities was found: the Manichaean heresy of the Bogumils, which, at the end of the tenth century, had spread from Bulgaria to the Bosnian territory and became a dominant religion. Croatian professor of theology, historian and first president of the South Slavic Academy of Sciences and Arts Franjo Rački (1828–1894), in his book *The Bogumils and the Patarens,* published in 1870, convincingly interpreted the rapid conversion of a broader population to the Muslim religion, after the conquest by the Ottomans in 1463, as resulting from the pre-existing heretic religious inclinations persecuted by the Eastern as well as by the Western Church (Zimmermann 2014a, 240). Under Kállay, this view was turned from a negative historical identity based on religious demarcation into a positive myth. The Hungarian writer Johann (János) von Asbóth (1845–1911), who for several years accompanied Kállay on his travels through Bosnia and Hercegovina, published a travelogue in 1888. He presents the Bogumils as the melting and uniting power of Bosnian history (1888, 27–35). As the third component between East and West, the sect represents the central "principle of Bosnian history" (ibid., 28). He starts by referring to one of the rare monumental reminders of Bogumil culture:

> They are called the Bogumil tombs. And that those in fact belonged to some specific sect can be hardly doubted, as it can be observed that the tomb monuments are ornate neither with a cross nor with a turban; they also show no symbols of any other contemporary existing confession, whose adherents in this country, where religious life is deeply rooted, would certainly have never forgotten the signs of piety. (…) Who and what were these Bogumils? Interesting question. It will be demonstrated that the Bogumilian principle is, so to speak, the principle of Bosnian history. This is the axis around which everything revolves, so much that everything

> that is not related to it is limited to simple rivalries for personal power. This goes so far as to say that we can raise the question whether the Bogumils founded as well as ruined the Bosnian state. The question is important, important for Bosnia, since the Bogumils actually quite rightly called their religion the Bosnian, important in relation to the Hungarian empire, since the Bogumilian period coincided with the era of Hungarian supremacy and the sect played a major role in all Bosnian undertakings of the Arpads, Anjous and Hunyadys. Finally, the Catholic Church and Hungary lost Bosnia because they were not prepared to tolerate the Bogumils. But the question is also important from a wider European point of view. (...) It is certain, however, that especially Manichaeanism and the Bogumils belonged to the first sects who arose in the first centuries of Christianity; there is also an organic connection between them and the Western European Reformation. It is undoubted that Bosnian Bogumilism has given a powerful stimulus to the Western European Reformation. Although not identical with it, it was in a sense the father of the same. (ibid., 27–28)[13]

Asbóth subscribes to Rački's theory that the Bogumils later converted to Islam, which advanced Bosnian Muslims, in the eyes of the Austro-Hungarian occupant, from residual residents of the Ottoman period to the status of forming the core of the Bosnian nation:

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13 „Man nennt sie Bogumilen-Gräber. Und das dieselben in der That irgend einer besonderen Secte sind, läßt sich kaum bezweifeln, wenn man wahrnimmt, das die Grabmonumente im Allgemeinen weder ein Kreuz, noch einen Turban zeigen, also keinerlei Symbol der gegenwärtigen bestehenden Konfessionen, deren Anhänger in diesem Lande, wo das religiöse Leben jeder Zeit ein tiefgewurzeltes war, jene Zeichen der Pietät gewiß nicht vergessen hätten. (...) Wer und was waren diese Bogumilen? Eine interessante Frage. Denn es wird sich zeigen, daß das bogumilische Princip sozusagen das Princip der bosnischen Geschichte ist. Das ist die Achse, um die sich alles dreht, so sehr, das Alles, was nicht mir ihr zusammenhängt, sich auf einfache Rivalitäten um die persönliche macht beschränkt. Es geht dies so weit, das man fragen darf, die Bogumilen gründen den bosnischen Staat und durch sie geht es zu Grunde. Die Frage ist wichtig, hochwichtig bezüglich Bosniens, da die Bogumilen ihre Religion thatsächlich mit Fug und Recht die bosnische nannten, hochwichtig in Bezug auf das ungarische Reich, da das bogumilische Zeitalter mit der Ära der ungarischen Oberherrschaft zusammenfällt und die Secte in allen bosnischen Unternehmungen der Apaden, Anjous und Hunyadys eine Hauptrolle spielt. Schließlich verlieren die katholische Kirche und Ungarn Bosnien, weil sie die Bogumilen nicht dulden wollen." Die Frage ist aber auch vom weiteren europäischen Gesichtspunkte wichtig. (...) Gewiß ist jedoch, daß ebenso wie zwischen den ersten Secten und namentlich dem in den ersten Jahrhunderten des Christenthums entstandenen Manichäismus und den Bogumilen, auch zwischen diesen und der westeuropäischen Reformation ein organischer Zusammenhang besteht, und es ist zweifellos, daß der bosnische Bogumilismus eine mächtige Anregung zur westeuropäischen Reformation gegeben hat. Wenn auch nicht identisch mit ihr, war er doch in gewissem Sinne der Vater derselben."

> There can be no doubt that the Bogumilians initially converted massively to Islam, while the rest later gradually seemed to follow. A great part did this, especially at the beginning, certainly with the reservation of returning to the old faith in a favourable moment. Always persecuted, they may have learned to deny their beliefs for a time. But since the favourable moment did not come, this intention had to be gradually and completely forgotten by the later descendants. (ibid., 90)[14]

The Bogumils were now praised as having founded a pre-Ottoman, trans-religious common identity, thereby unifying various ethnic groups. The new common Bosnian identity, *Bošnjaštvo*, invoking an old, extinct religion that had not left any living cult practices, was supposed to be able to bridge ethnic and religious differences once again. Whereas the Kosovo myth was directed against the Muslim religion and never tried to integrate the Albanian population, the myth of the Bogumils was, on the contrary, destined not only to integrate them but to attribute to them the leading role in the process of the new Bosnian nation building.

The collection of the National Museum (*Landesmuseum* resp. *Zemaljski muzej*) in Sarajevo, founded in 1888 and destined to contribute to the formation of a common Bosnian identity, was focused on the pre-Ottoman history of medieval Bosnia (Bagarić 2008). In 1913, a monumental new edifice in a neo-renaissance style was built by a Viennese architect of Czech origin, Karl Pařik (1857–1942), a pupil of Theophil von Hansen (1813–1891). In the garden, a large collection of Bogumilian grave steles (*stećci*), brought from different scattered places in Bosnia, was displayed (see Fig. 3). Rather than a sacred place, the museum, as an enlightened scientific institution preserving and studying the traces of the past, was supposed to become an institutional centre of a nation deprived of ethnic affiliations and religious conflicts.

Kállay's concept of uniting all Bosnians was deemed to fail. In the all-too-enlightened museum, the secularisation of religion went along with the alienation from the spirit of place. The Habsburg authorities and their local supporters upheld the Bogumilian myth in order to introduce a model of historical identity allowing for an equal participation of all ethnic groups in Bosnia. However, none of them engaged in the revival of the myth with energy comparable to that of the Serbs projecting their national mission onto the Field of Blackbirds. The Austro-Hungarian administration failed when it proposed an

14 „Es kann kein Zweifel darüber bestehen, dass die Bogumilen gleich anfänglich in Massen zum Islam übertraten, während der Rest später allmählich nachgefolgt zu sein scheint. Ein großer Teil that dies, namentlich in der ersten Zeit, gewiß mit dem Vorbehalte, in einem günstigen Augenblicke wieder zum alten Glauben zurückzukehren. Stets verfolgt, mochten sie wohl gelernt haben, ihren Glauben zeitweilig zu verleugnen. Nachdem aber der günstige Zeitpunkt nicht kommen wollte, mußte diese Absicht allmälig und bei den späteren Nachkommen umsomehr ganz und gar in Vergessenheit geraten."

imaginary common history to the Bosnians of different ethnic groups and religions they governed.

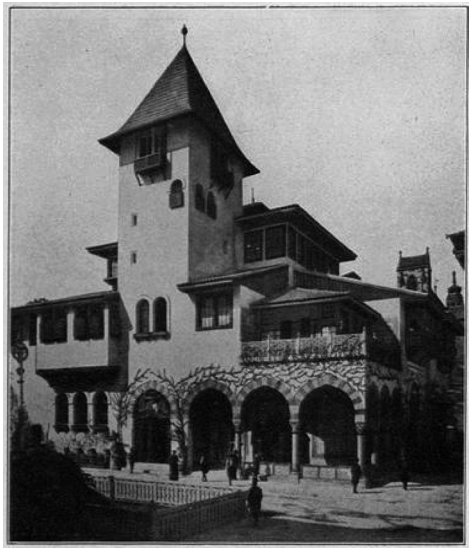
Several large exhibitions accompanying the enlightened Austro-Hungarian project did not provide sacred environments that mythically evoked the spirit of a multi-national place, but rather invited people to cosy, profane buildings. The so-called "Bosnian House" at the Millennium Exhibition in Budapest in 1886, another house at the Emperor's jubilee exposition in Vienna in 1898 and the Bosnian-Herzegovinian pavilion erected in the Rue des Nations for the Paris World's Fair in 1900 were hybrids of a Bosnian architecture and invented pseudo-Moorish stylistic elements (Reynolds 2014, 106–108; Hajdarpasic 2015, 192–196; see Fig. 3). They were all designed by foreign architects and engineers—for instance, the Bosnian-Herzegovinian pavilion in Paris by the Czech artist-architect Carl Panek and the painter of advertising posters Alfons Mucha (1860–1939), who transformed Bosnian oriental style into fashionable orientalism of Art Nouveau, adapted to the European taste (see Fig. 4).

The spirit of place was substituted with a commercialised orientalist environment, adapted to European spectators. The exhibition, resembling ethnographic shows, presented Bosnia as a symbiosis of exotic costumes and traditional way of life, on the one hand, and modernist achievements of the "wise empire" in education, in the construction of factories, mining, road and rail network, in agriculture and forestry, in the press and culture, on the other hand.

> Already the exterior of the pavilion, above all the defiantly towering tower, is reminiscent of the struggles from which the double province came to the blessings of peace, and the oriental façades with their wooden architecture and the women's oriel point to the time when Bosnia was ruled by the Half Moon. On the other hand, in the interior of the building visitors encounter Austro-Hungarian Bosnia. The entrance hall, a lounge coquettishly decorated with Bosnian oriental carpets, makes a friendly, comfortable impression. On the right, we find a Bosnian-Mohammedan women's chamber with its beautiful inhabitants, a view to an impressing panorama of the city of Sarajevo with its mosques, its fountain and the large bazaar by the painter Adolf Kaufmann. Continuing on the right, a hall equipped with mythical pictures from Bosnian history by Alfons Mucha opens up, in which there are also two interesting equestrian models ('Bosnian Boys'). While the ground floor gives a picture of the Bosnian artistic life, the country products, artisan products and outstanding buildings, especially educational institutions, are presented to us in models and prospects on an upstage. (Fromm 1900, 448)[15]

15 „Schon das Aeussere des Pavillons, vor allem der trotzig emporragende Turm, gemahnt an die Kämpfe, aus denen heraus die Doppelprovinz zu den Segnungen des Friedens gelangte,

After numerous orientalist travel reports that had been published since the occupation of Bosnia in the annexation year 1908, the first travel guide with practical tourist information about the duration of trips, quality of hotels, shops selling souvenirs and prizes, *The Bosnian Eastern Railway* (*Die bosnische Ostbahn*), appeared. It was written by



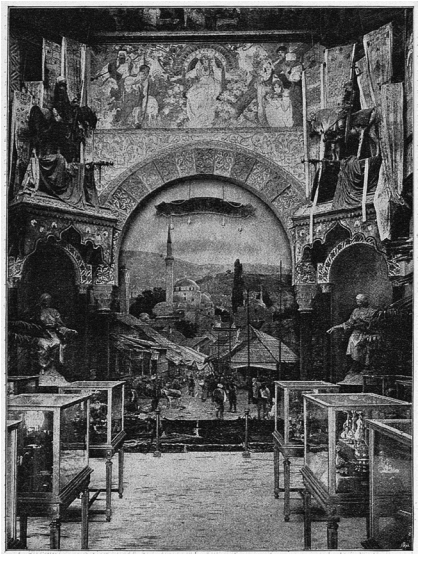


FIGURE 3 (left) Bosnian-Herzegovinian pavilion, World's Fair in Paris, 1900, exterior, from: *Die Weltausstellung in Paris*, edited by A. J. Meier-Graefe. Paris: F. Krüger 1900, 30.

FIGURE 4 (right) Bosnian-Herzegovinian pavilion, World's Fair in Paris, 1900, interior, from: Fromm, Carl Jos. 1900. "Bosnien und die Hercegowina auf der Pariser Weltausstellung." In *Die Pariser Weltausstellung in Wort und Bild*, edited by Georg Malkowsky, Berlin: Verlag Kirhhoff & Co. 1900, 450.

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und die orientalischen Fassaden mit ihrer Holzarchitektur und den Frauenerkern weisen auf die Zeit hin, in der Bosnien noch unter dem Halbmond stand. Dagegen tritt dem Besucher aus dem Inneren des Gebäudes das österreichisch-ungarische Bosnien entgegen. Der Vorraum, ein mit bosnisch-orientalischen Teppichen kokett ausgestattete Salon, macht einen freundlichen, behaglichen Eindruck. Wir finden da rechts ein bosnisch-mohammedanisches Frauengemach samt seinen schönen Bewohnerinnen, im Prospekte ein von dem Maler Adolf Kaufmann herrührendes gelungenes Panorama der Stadt Sarajevo mit ihren Moscheen, ihren Brunnen und dem grossen Bazar. Weitergehend eröffnet sich uns rechts eine mit Muchaschen Bildern aus der bosnischen Geschichte ausgestattete Halle, in der sich auch zwei interessante Reitermodelle (‚bosnische Boys') befinden. Während so das Erdgeschoss ein Bild des bosnischen Kunstlebens giebt [sic], werden uns auf einer Emporbühne die Landesprodukte, kunstgewerbliche Erzeugnisse und in Modellen und Ansichten auch hervorragende Bauten, besonders Unterrichtsanstalten, Bosniens vorgeführt."

Vienna-born writer and journalist of Croatian origin, Milena von Preindlsberger-Mrazović (1863–1927), an influential mediator between cultures. The guide, which also provides information on the "Bosnian-Herzegovinian Tourist Club", founded in 1892, as well as other publications of this kind testify that Bosnia-Herzegovina became a popular tourist destination in Austria-Hungary at the time. The spirit of place became a part of a tourist offer, of a landscape with standardised routes and sights for experiencing a European Orient.

In socialist Yugoslavia, after the break with the Soviet Union in 1948, the Bogumilian myth was again used, this time in order to propagate Tito's "third way" between East and West (Zimmermann 2010a; 2010b; 2014a, 232–246). The heresy based on the double refusal of Western and Eastern Orthodoxies was perceived as the anticipation of a specific form of Yugoslav socialism, resembling neither Soviet communism nor Western capitalism. Its leader, President Tito (1892–1980), was compared with the founder of the sect, Bogumil. The most important propagators of the communist Bogumilian myth were the Croatian writer Miroslav Krleža (1893–1981) and the Serbian art historian Oto Bihalji-Merin (1904–1993). As was the case with the period of Kállay's leadership as Austro-Hungarian governor in Bosnia, the myth was again imposed from the outside. In 1950, Krleža organized an exhibition of Yugoslav medieval art in the Palais de Chaillot in Paris, transforming a huge hall into a temple where various religious ancestors were brought up as historical anticipations of the "third path": along with the Bogumils, visitors were introduced to the Serbian autocephalic church and the Glagolith writing and culture in Dalmatia following the spread of Slav liturgy in the ninth century by the apostles Cyril and Methodius. The religious message of the monuments was neutralised by interpreting them as manifestations of folk culture anticipating a common Yugoslav history. One of the famous partisan films nominated for an Oscar, *Battle on Neretva* (1969), in which international stars, together with Yugoslav actors, played heroes of the partisan resistance against fascism, established a connection between Tito's partisans and the Bogumilian sect. In the film, the partisans, who unified various South Slavic nations, heroically fight until the end behind the Bogumilian grave steles in the Bosnian mountains.

After the Yugoslav dissolution wars in the 1990s, some Bosnian intellectuals tried to use the remembrance of the Bogumils to create a new variant of Bosnian identity, now excluding the Serbs and the Croats and comparing, instead, the extinction of the Bogumils in the fifteenth century with the contemporary genocide (Lovrenović 2008).

Conclusion

Kosovo and Bosnia are the scenarios of two different patterns of appropriating the spirit of place, but not equally successfully. In the former, the spirit of place was evoked over decades through intense discursive practices. It drew from monumental art and media, using them in an analogous manner to religious rituals in order to stage the events of the past as a sacred theatre. The spirit of place of the latter was based on rational, enlightened adaptations of history as displayed in museums or in commercialised ethnographic exhibitions, adapted to the taste of European spectators and designed by leaders coming from areas outside of the region. Kosovo polje was established as a national sacred place, whereas Bosnia, as a multi-ethnic territory, was promoted as a trans-religious or secular space, uniting different ethnicities and religions by way of the Bogumil identity—without, however, constituting a living religious cult. They both demonstrate how pathetic religious concepts of a holy place, based on the idea of the spirit of place, were recoded—in order to animate and legitimate the establishment of modern nations. Secularised, intellectual attempts at constructing a common memorial culture and myths of a common spirit of place uniting different ethnic and religious groups seem to be much weaker than emotionally charged myths claiming the exclusive right of one nation to inscribe itself into a given place and to forge a bond with the territory. The appropriation of a geographic area in the name of a sacred national history could succeed only if the spirit of place was kept alive within what a nation believed to be its identity and its mission.

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