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11. (Identity) Politics and the National Museum of Bosnia and Herzegovina¹

Aliye Fatma Mataracı

Introduction

Zemaljski Muzej, referred to as Lándesmuseum in its Austro-Hungarian designation and as the National Museum of Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH)² in its English designation, is one of the country's most significant heritage institutions. It stands alongside the History Museum of Bosnia and Herzegovina on the boulevard that was notoriously known as

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² The terms National Museum of Bosnia and Herzegovina and National Museum are used interchangeably in this chapter.

'Sniper Alley' during the 1992–1995 Bosnian War, with its internationally recognised collections housed in a quadrangle of four pavilions from the Austro-Hungarian period. It was founded on 1 February 1888 by BiH's Austro-Hungarian administration (1878–1918) as both a scientific and an academic institution.³ It evolved during the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (1963-1992) to become BiH's National Museum and its foremost institution for research and the collection of artefacts.⁴ This chapter problematises the term 'National' in the English designation of the title of the museum—namely, the National Museum of Bosnia and Herzegovina—within the current political, socio-economic and legal context of BiH.

The museum consists of an archaeology department with prehistoric, ancient and medieval collections; an ethnology department with exhibits on the material, spiritual and social cultures of the peoples of BiH; and a natural sciences department with geological, zoological and botanical sections. In addition, the museum has a variety of significant collections, such as the charters of the Bosnian kings and the Sarajevo Haggadah (a Jewish illuminated codex manuscript from 1350 with an estimated value of \$700 million).⁵

In the outdoor areas of the museum, in the front and in the botanical garden, some of the best examples from across the country of *stećci* (singular: *stećak*)—the massive tombstones surviving from medieval Bosnia—are displayed. The museum's Botanical Garden also features around 1,700 species of plants.

³ Uredništvo 'Glasnika' [Editorial Board of Glasnik], 'Citaocima "Glasnika", 'Glasnik Zemaljskog Muzeja u Bosni i Hercegovini, 1 (1889), 1–5 (p. 1).

⁴ Helen Walasek, 'Culture Wars in Bosnia,' *Apollo: The International Art Magazine*, 27 March 2017, https://www.apollo-magazine.com/culture-wars-bosnia/

⁵ Immediately following the arrival of Germany's 16th Motorized Infantry Division in Sarajevo on 15 April 1941, a well-informed German officer tried to confiscate the Sarajevo Haggadah, but it was saved by the director of the museum and hidden for the duration of the war in a mountain village. Noel Malcolm, *Bosnia: A Short History* (London: Pan Books, 2002), p. 175.



Fig. 11.1 Entrance of the National Museum of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Photograph by Yunus Demirbaş, 2021, CC BY-NC-ND.



Fig. 11.2 *Stećci* in the Botanical Garden, National Museum. Photograph by Yunus Demirbaş, 2021, CC BY-NC-ND.

The mission and vision of the National Museum

The museum has a research library that was established in 1884, with a collection of around 25,000 volumes including journals, monographs, books, reprints and manuscripts in the fields covered by the National Museum—namely, archaeology, history, ethnology, folklore, geology, botany and zoology. It also has a research journal that has been published in both Latin and Cyrillic since 1889, titled *Glasnik Zemaljskog Muzeja u Bosni i Hercegovini* [Herald of the National Museum of Bosnia and Herzegovina]⁶.

Glasnik has presented close to four million artefacts, which attest to the rich culture and history of Bosnia and Herzegovina. In the first

⁶ Glasnik Zemaljskog Muzeja u Bosni i Hercegovini will be referred to as Glasnik in the rest of this article.

issue, published in March 1889, the mission of the journal was stated as follows: '[W]e want to have a public herald [to] knowingly study and describe each profession [...] in the museum. [W]e want this Herald to be instructive [and] we are guided in this by the principle of cultural community and common good'.⁷

In the same issue, both the National Museum and *Glasnik* are presented as sharing a dual mission:

The task of our museum is not only to act purely scientifically; it also has a cultural and educational task: to awaken the sons of the country, [...] to think about their duty and to study and get to know their fatherland; and as they get to know it, to start to love and appreciate it [...] The dual aim of the museum's 'Glasnik' corresponds to the true dual task of the museum: material-scientific and moral-cultural⁸.

The mission of the founders of the National Museum—those who made up the Museum Society, which was established before the museum and took an active role in the collection of artefacts from all around BiH—states that 'worthy followers [...] collect every remnant made by the creative head and crafted by the hardworking hands of our people in all parts of Bosnia and Herzegovina [to judge] the life and deeds of our grandfathers. [...] these valuable successors united and founded a museum society'. The frequent usage of the terms 'we', 'our' and 'us', highlighted in the texts quoted above, refers to the presence of a collective imagination of a Bosnian and Herzegovinian nation by the end of the nineteenth century. This point is revisited in the discussions below.

The opening of the National Museum

As of 1886, all the artefacts in the museum, initially collected by the Museum Society with the permission of the provincial government, were housed in the ground-floor rooms of the Renaissance-style Government Palace built on Musala Street in accordance with the project of the architect Joseph Vancas. As the collections grew, two apartments

^{7 &#}x27;Citaocima "Glasnika", 'Glasnik Zemaljskog Muzeja u Bosni i Hercegovini, pp. 2–3.

⁸ Ibid., p. 3.

⁹ Ibid., p. 1.

were rented in the new building of the Official Pension Fund, and the collections were officially opened to the public as a state institution called *Zemaljski muzej za Bosnu i Hercegovinu*. Soon, the premises of private residential buildings and businesses were acquired to provide further space for the expanding collections. Eventually, the construction of a museum building with modern facilities was offered as a permanent solution to the space problem by the then Joint Minister of Finance, Benjamin Kallay. The first location proposed was within the vicinity of the Main Post Office in Sarajevo, but this proposal was rejected by Kallay because of the estimated high costs, and by K. Hörmann, the director of the museum at the time, because of space limitations that could affect possible future expansion. All these discussions caused a delay in the construction of a museum building.

Discussions regarding the construction of a building to house the museum collection emerged again in 1905. A pavilion concept was considered the most favourable in terms of the cost-effectiveness of construction; it also allowed the enlargement of the space if needed without disrupting the existing architectural and urban design. At a conference held in Ilidža on 26 October 1906, the final decision was made to construct the new buildings according to this pavilion concept, which included plans for the outdoor botanical garden. The buildings were designed to house prehistory, antiquity and natural history collections, as well as an ethnography department and library. At the beginning of 1908, Karel Pařik (1857–1942), a Czech-born architect and construction consultant of the Fourth Construction Department of the Regional Government established in 1890, prepared the preliminary design of the museum complex. 13

The building of the Official Pension Fund was constructed according to the project of architect Karel Pařík on the Cathedral Square near the Cathedral of the Heart of Jesus (danas Gazi-Husrevbegova palata-Ask Adi) in 1888. Jela Božić, 'Izgradnja i arhitektura Zemaljskog muzeja u Sarajevu', in Spomenica Stogodišnjice Rada Zemaljskog Muzeja Bosne i Hercegovine 1888-1988, ed. by Almaz Dautbegović (Sarajevo: Zemaljski muzej Bosne i Hercegovine, 1988), pp. 413–21 (p. 413).

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Ibid., pp. 414–15.

¹³ Karel Pařík was one of the first-generation architects of the Austro-Hungarian period whose works left their imprint on Sarajevo. Among the constructions he designed in Sarajevo are the Shariah Judicial School (today's Faculty of Islamic Sciences) built in neo-Moorish style in 1887-89, the Evangelistic Church (today's Academy of Visual Arts) in 1899, the National Theatre in 1899, the Officers'

Although the preparatory work for the construction of the National Museum began as early as 1908, it was not completed until 1913. The museum was also part of a new plan for the area of Marijin Dvor, where it is located. Consisting of four pavilions in the style of the late neo-Renaissance, with connecting terraces and a botanical garden in the middle, the building is considered one of Pařik's most important works. It was one of the few purpose-built museums in Europe, where museums were most often former palaces. In addition, it was the first construction in the region designed to meet the needs of a museum, and one of the first such in the Austro-Hungarian Empire.

Surviving the long twentieth century

It is both ironic and tragic that the heir apparent to the Austro-Hungarian Empire, Archduke Franz Ferdinand, was on his way to open the new buildings of the National Museum on the morning of 28 June 1914, when Gavrilo Princip shot and mortally wounded him and his wife Sophie. This assassination initiated the chain of events that led to the outbreak of World War I and the eventual downfall of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. The buildings and collections of the National Museum of Bosnia and Herzegovina survived three wars: They remained undamaged during World War I and World War II, but they were subject to wartime devastation between 1992 and 1995. Thanks to the dedication and efforts of the museum staff, its permanent exhibitions and collections were preserved in good condition.

Ćiro Truhelka, a Croatian archaeologist who studied Bosnia extensively, became one of the first curators of the National Museum.

Pavillion erected in the Filipović's Camp (a military complex) in collaboration with Ludwig Huber in 1901, the Ashkenazi Synagogue in 1902, Villa Mandić (today's Olympic Museum) and Heinrich Reiter's Villa (1903), the Ulema Medžlis (1912), and the Church of St. Joseph (1940). In addition, he was also the architect of successively erected primary schools in Bosnia and Herzegovina in 1890, 1893 and 1905, in collaboration with Karl Panek. Tatjana Neidhart, *Sarajevo through Time* (Sarajevo: Bosanska Riječ, 2007), pp. 61–234.

¹⁴ Marian Wenzel, Bosanski Stil Na Steccima i Metalu/Bosnian Style on Tombstones and Metal (Sarajevo: Sarajevo Publishing, 1999), p. 180.

¹⁵ For a detailed description and explanation of the wartime damage to the museum, see Rizo Sijarić and Peter Cannon-Brookes, 'World of Museums: Update on the Zemaljski Muzej, Sarajevo', Museum Management and Curatorship, 12:2 (1993), 195–206.

Several of his archaeological finds connected Bosnia to its long-forgotten Catholic past, including the discovery of the alleged remains of the fifteenth-century king, King Stjepan Tomašević. Truhelka published an anonymous pamphlet titled *Hrvatska Bosna: Mi i 'Oni tamo'* [Croatian Bosnia: Us and 'Them over There'] in 1907. In this pamphlet, he discussed the racial characteristics of the people of the region. He concluded that Muslims and Croats had broader chests, a higher incidence of blue eyes and fairer hair than the Orthodox Serbs, who represented a 'swarthy, physically weaker developed type'. 17

Truhelka's interest in Bosnia and his analyses were part and parcel of Croat intellectuals' general renewed interest in Bosnia because of its inclusion in the Dual Monarchy. The founder of the Croatian Party of Rights, Ante Starčević, reinforced this trend by defining Bosnian Muslims as Croats.¹⁸ Such incidences signalled the arrival of 'the pseudoscientific racial politics of Central Europe' in the Balkans.¹⁹ Ever since, as a cultural institution, the museum has not been immune to such discussions in and outside BiH.

During the 1992–1995 Bosnian War, the National Museum endured its share of what Ivan Lovrenović called 'the hatred of memory'—the destruction of a certain culture or civilisation by deliberately targeting its historical, cultural, literary and artistic productions, whether printed, handcrafted, manufactured or constructed. A much-cited story, based on a news report from September 1992 by BBC journalist Kate Adie, asserts that the National Museum in Sarajevo was intentionally targeted by Bosnian Serb artillery. Adie asked a Bosnian Serb artillery commander on the heights above Sarajevo why the Holiday Inn, where she and other foreign correspondents were known to stay, was continually shelled. The officer apologised and explained that they were aiming at the roof

¹⁶ Cathie Carmichael, *A Concise History of Bosnia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), p. 46.

¹⁷ Nevenko Bartulin, *The Racial Idea in the Independent State of Croatia: Origins and Theory* (Leiden: Brill, 2014), pp. 52–55.

¹⁸ Mario S. Spalatin, 'The Croatian Nationalism of Ante Starčević, 1845-1871', *Journal of Croatian Studies*, 16 (1975), 19–146 (p. 94–100).

¹⁹ Carmichael, A Concise History of Bosnia, p. 46.

²⁰ Ivan Lovrenović, 'The Hatred of Memory: In Sarajevo, Burned Books and Murdered Pictures', The New York Times, 28 May 1994, p. 19, https://www.nytimes. com/1994/05/28/opinion/the-hatred-of-memory.html

of the National Museum opposite the hotel and had missed.²¹ As also demonstrated clearly and in considerable detail in Helen Walasek's work titled *Bosnia and the Destruction of Cultural Heritage*, 'the catastrophic attacks on cultural heritage of Bosnia-Herzegovina were almost entirely intentional and systematic'.²²

During the siege of Sarajevo, the National Museum was struck by hundreds of shells and small arms fire from the positions of the Bosnian Serb Army directly behind it. These deliberate attacks shattered the glass roofs of the museum's main exhibition halls, and three years of rain and snow substantially damaged the structure of the building. The director of the museum at the time, Dr. Rizo Sijarić, was killed by a shell blast on the morning of 10 December 1993 while walking across a Sarajevo park to visit the director of the Institute for Protection of Monuments, who had been helping him to obtain plastic sheeting from humanitarian aid agencies to cover the holes in the museum's walls and windows.²³ By the end of the war, the museum's dedicated staff (of all ethnicities) was reduced to thirty-one from a pre-war total of ninety-five; its elegant turn-of-the-century neoclassical buildings were badly damaged and leaking and its collections were at risk.²⁴

The museum continued to function despite the significant challenges stemming from the Dayton Peace Agreement (DPA), signed on 14 December 1995, which marked the legal conclusion of the Bosnian War. The DPA divided BiH into two entities: 1) the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, which is subdivided into ten cantons with either Bosniak (Bosnian Muslim) or Croat (Bosnian Catholic) majority populations; and 2) the Republika Srpska, a unitary authority dominated by a Serb (Bosnian Orthodox) majority. The treaty's endorsement of Bosnia's three 'constitutive peoples'—namely, Bosniaks, Serbs and Croats—worked towards the reinforcement of ethno-national/ethno-religious identities and the entrenchment of powerful ethnocracies that came to dominate

²¹ Helen Walasek with contributions by Richard Carlton, Amra Hadžimuhamedović, Valery Perry and Tina Wik, *Bosnia and the Destruction of Cultural Heritage* (New York: Routledge, 2016), p. 65.

²² Ibid., p. 20.

²³ Christopher Wood, Peter Wakefield, Peter Addyman, Peter Cannon-Brookes, and Marian Wenzel, 'World of Museums', *Museum Management and Curatorship*, 13:1 (1994), 67–80 (p.79).

²⁴ Bosnia and the Destruction of Cultural Heritage, p. 67.

the post-war realm. Broad political powers were devolved to the entities, and new institutions were formed at the entity level. Meanwhile, central state structures remained fragile and constantly undermined by the activities of (typically) Serb and Croat ethno-nationalist politicians. Many former state institutions—including cultural institutions, such as the National Museum—struggled for legal recognition and consequently a place in central state budgets and funding streams.²⁵ This was mainly due to the lack of a state-level ministry of culture. The Ministry of Civil Affairs was responsible for international interaction regarding cultural activities. This left the support for state-level cultural institutions representing BiH at the mercy of the minister, and thus, dependent on the political interests of the post-holder—that is, the 'national' group and the political party this person represented.²⁶

The post of Minister of Civil Affairs was held by Sredoje Nović (a Bosnian Serb and a close political ally of Milorad Dodik, the President of the Republika Srpska) from 2007 until 2015. In his speech dated 22 December 2011, Nović recalled that it is the Constitution of BiH that stipulates that the field of culture is under the jurisdiction of the entities and cantons, and hence, there is no institution in the field of culture at the level of the state of BiH. He added that the Ministry of Civil Affairs had been co-financing those institutions for years, and because the budget for 2011 was adopted, his ministry could only provide heating for the National Museum.²⁷

In this context, the National Museum closed its doors to the public on 4 October 2012, for the first time in its 124-year history, because of the continued lack of funding stemming from its legal status. The status and funding of the National Museum was still not settled, and its staff had not been paid for more than a year. The museum's director at the time, Adnan Busuladžić, announced that the museum—the largest employer of field archaeologists in the country—would remain closed to the public until the politicians clarified its funding situation. Wooden planks reading 'closed' and 'zatvoreno' (closed) were nailed over the

²⁵ Ibid., p. 13.

²⁶ Walasek, 'Culture Wars in Bosnia'.

^{27 &#}x27;Nović, Kultura je po Ustavu BiH u nadležnosti entiteta', Klix.ba Magazin Kultura, 22 December, 2011, https://www.klix.ba/magazin/kultura/novic-kultura-je-po-ustavu-bih-u-nadleznosti-entiteta/111222109

main entrance. Enver Imamović, the wartime director of the museum, considered its closing a shame, as it had remained open even during the war.²⁸

The reopening of the National Museum

Despite public accusations of mismanagement, incompetence and negligence widely broadcast in the media, the museum's management and staff looked after the building and its exhibits for almost four years, between 4 October 2012 and 15 September 2016. Meanwhile, among the campaigns drawing attention to the situation and the importance of the museum, the civil society initiative of the Bosnian cultural nongovernmental organisation (NGO) Akcija Sarajevo called *Ja sam Muzej* (I am the Museum) was the most effective in capturing the attention of the public.²⁹ The main goal of the initiative, as stated on their website, was 'to remind the public in Bosnia and Herzegovina and internationally of the fact that the biggest and most important institution in Bosnia and Herzegovina has been closed for almost three years, and to influence those in charge to resolve this problem as soon as possible'.³⁰

Ja sam Muzej consisted of portraits and stories of the museum's workers, literary works about the museum by notable writers and essayists from BiH and the region and calls for the museum to engage relevant social actors, public figures and citizens to share the message of the urgent need to address the National Museum's status. Ja sam Muzej revived the spirit of the Museum Society, which had been initiated even before the founding of the museum, but this time, with an emphasis on 'I' rather than 'We'.³¹ At the Europa Nostra Awards 2016, employees and activists of the National Museum won the EU Prize for Cultural Heritage, the largest European award in the field of heritage. They received the award for their commitment to working for years to maintain the museum without any salary or contributions and despite the difficult political situation in BiH, as noted in an article published

²⁸ Elvira M. Jukic, 'Bosnia's National Museum Shuts Down', Balkan Insight, 5 October 2012, https://balkaninsight.com/2012/10/05/ nailed-wooden-planks-close-bosnian-national-museum/

²⁹ Walasek, 'Culture Wars in Bosnia'.

^{30 #}jasammuzej, 'About us', http://jasam.zemaljskimuzej.ba/about-us

³¹ Ibid.

on 8 April 2016 by the English-language Bosnian news portal *Sarajevo Times*.³² The then acting director of the museum, Mirsad Sijarić, claimed that the award had been granted to them 'for doing the very work for which the politicians and the media had condemned them'.³³

Despite the effectiveness of the *Ja sam Muzej* campaign in renewing public interest, it was the appearance of two new actors in the political arena that raised hopes for the reopening of the museum in early 2015—the then incoming US Ambassador Maureen Cormack and the Minister of Civil Affairs, Adil Osmanović, appointed by the recently elected Bosniak-led government. Minister Osmanović, insisting on the significance of the National Museum for BiH, took the initiative to resolve the problems of all state-level institutions facing issues similar to those of the National Museum.³⁴ On 15 September 2015, the National Museum re-opened its doors to balloon-waving schoolchildren in the presence of Ambassador Cormack, who announced a donation of more than 500,000 euros from the US Ambassadors Fund for Cultural Preservation (AFCP).

Earlier the same day, a memorandum of understanding had been signed in the *Parliamentary* Assembly of *Bosnia and Herzegovina* ensuring financial support for all seven state-level cultural institutions until 2018. The support for the memorandum came only from Bosniak majority cantons and municipalities in the Federation, not any of the Croat majority cantons or the Republika Srpska. It did not take long for politicians and cultural institutions from Republika Srpska to start speaking out in opposition to the memorandum. Nevertheless, Osmanović continued to defend the seven institutions as indisputable

^{32 &#}x27;Employees and Activists of the National Museum won the Europa Nostra Award', Sarajevo Times, 8 April 2016, https://www.sarajevotimes.com/ employees-and-activists-of-the-national-museum-won-the-europa-nostra-award/

³³ Walasek, 'Culture Wars in Bosnia'.

³⁴ There are six other state-level cultural institutions sharing the same issues as the National Museum:

The National Art Gallery (*Umjetnička Galerija BiH*)

The Historical Museum (Historijski Muzej)

The Cinematheque of Bosnia and Herzegovina (Kinoteka BiH)

The National Museum of Literature and Theatrical Arts (*Muzej Književnosti i Pozorišne Umjetnosti BiH*)

The National and University Library of BiH (*Nacionalna i Univerzitetska Biblioteka BiH*) The Library for Blind and Visually Impaired People (*Biblioteka za Slijepa i Slabovidna Lica*)

legal state-level institutions inherited from the former Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina that preserved the cultural heritage of all the peoples of BiH. He reminded his opponents that the constitution, in theory, incurs an obligation to maintain the state-level institutions that had operated up until the signing of the DPA.³⁵ Nevertheless, the legal status of the National Museum and the source of its operating funding remain uncertain.

Politics of the identity of the National Museum

Having outlined the tragic struggle to preserve the memory and treasures of BiH over the decades, this chapter will proceed to problematise the term 'national' in the English designation of the title of the museum. It is important to recall at this point that the term 'national' is present in neither the original Austro-Hungarian designation, *Lándesmuseum*, nor the Bosnian version, *Zemaljski Muzej*, which can both be translated as Country Museum in English. In the English designation, the term 'country' is replaced with the term 'national'. What does the term 'national' refer to in relation to the three constitutive nations of Bosniaks, Croats and Serbs?

The last population census—namely, the Census of Population, Households and Dwellings in Bosnia and Herzegovina 2013—took place between 1 and 15 October 2013, twenty-two years after the previous one. The Census was prepared, organised and conducted in accordance with the 'Law on Census of Population, Households and Dwellings in Bosnia and Herzegovina in 2013' by the Institutes for Statistics of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina and Republika Srpska, in cooperation with administrative bodies and organisations of BiH determined by the law and units of local self-government. The data collected by the Census were to be used for statistical purposes only according to Article 16 of the Law. In accordance with Article 13, the Census forms were printed in the languages of the constitutive peoples—Bosnian, Croatian and Serbian—and the answers written in the forms were to use Latin or Cyrillic scripts. Article 12 allowed for optional declaration of ethnic/national and

³⁵ Walasek, 'Culture Wars in Bosnia'.

³⁶ Referred to as the Census hereinafter.

religious affiliations: Persons covered by the Census 'are not obliged to provide data on their ethnic/national and religious affiliations and the questionnaire shall have an informative note about it'.³⁷

The Census revived discussions about identity. Question 24 in the Household and Dwelling Questionnaire (P-1) is about the ethnic/national declaration of the respondent, and the options provided are 'Bosniak', 'Croat', 'Serb' and 'Undeclared' (as allowed by Article 12). The Bosniak, Croat and Serb categories represent the constitutive people recognised by the current Constitution of Bosnia and Herzegovina, which is actually the DPA, as mentioned above. The options provided for question 25, which is about the declaration of religion, are 'Islamic', 'Catholic', 'Orthodox Christian', 'Agnostic', 'Atheist' and 'Undeclared'. The categories provided for question 26, which is about the mother tongue of the respondent, are 'Bosnian', 'Croatian' and 'Serbian'—the languages of the constitutive people.³⁸

The answers provided for the three questions mentioned above had to be entered using the options given. In cases where enumerators (parties going household by household and filling in the forms) could not obtain an answer, they were obliged to enter 'Unknown'. All the answers that did not align with the options offered on the form were listed under the 'Other' category.³⁹ In such a framework, the plurality of ethnicities in BiH is not recognised. Any discussion about Bosnia's pluralist society is inclined towards an explanation of the peaceful coexistence of the three constitutive people, without any reference to the seventeen recognised national minorities in BiH.⁴⁰

³⁷ This work utilised the unofficial English translation of the 'Law on Census of Population, Households and Dwellings in Bosnia and Herzegovina in 2013', https://popis.gov.ba/popis2013/LEGISLATION/ZakonOPopisu_EN.pdf

³⁸ For samples of the Personal Questionnaire (Form P-1) and Questionnaire on Household and Dwelling (Form P-2) in Bosnian and English, see the Annex of Popis Stanovništva, Domaćinstava i Stanova u Bosni i Hercegovini, 2013. Rezultati Popisa/ Census of Population, Household and Dwellings in Bosnia and Herzegovina, 2013. Final Results (Sarajevo: Agency for Statistics of Bosnia and Herzegovina, June 2016), https://www.popis.gov.ba/popis2013/doc/RezultatiPopisa_BS.pdf

³⁹ Ibid., pp. 12–13.

⁴⁰ The Law on the Protection of Rights of Members of National Minorities adopted by the Parliamentary Assembly of Bosnia and Herzegovina in 2003 states that BiH is to protect the status, equality and rights of 17 national minorities, namely: Albanians, Montenegrins, Czechs, Italians, Jews, Hungarians, Macedonians, Germans, Poles, Roma, Romanians, Russians, Ruthenians, Slovaks, Slovenians, Turks, and Ukrainians. OSCE, 'National Minorities in BiH',

In the Bosnian and Herzegovinian context, national identity is defined based on ethnic identity, which is actually based on religious affiliation, as Bosniaks, Serbs and Croats are all mainly descendants of South Slavs. Historically, the great majority of Serbs were Eastern Orthodox by religion, Croats were Roman Catholic and Bosniaks were descended from local converts to Islam (variously Orthodox, Catholic and followers of the local schismatic Bosnian Church) after BiH became part of the Ottoman Empire following the conquest of Mehmed the Conqueror in 1463. The sensitivity towards the protection of the rights of the constitutive peoples within the legal, political, economic and cultural frameworks works against not only the minority groups in BiH but also a collective understanding of the peoples of BiH as a nation, defined by Benedict Anderson as 'an imagined political community'. 41 Instead, it allows for variations on three 'imagined political communities' based on constitutive peoples. The meaning of the term 'national' in the current English title of the museum, within the context of the current tripartite system in BiH, is being left to varying imaginations.

The National Museum has been one of the major beneficiaries of aid and development since the end of the last war; as stated by Torsten Kälvemark in his evaluation of the activities of the Cultural Heritage without Borders foundation between 2001 and 2007, it 'has been regarded and treated as a major monument and a symbol of the common cultural heritage of the country'. There are varying interpretations in the academic literature regarding the investments by the international community for the renovation of the National Museum and the maintenance of its collections. Some scholars consider the investments

https://www.osce.org/files/f/documents/7/b/110231.pdf

⁴¹ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, revised ed. (London: Verso, 2006), p. 6.

⁴² Torsten Kälvemark, Cultural Heritage for Peace and Reconciliation: An Evaluation of Cultural Heritage without Borders (CHwB), p. 31, http://chwb.org/bih/wp-content/uploads/sites/5/2016/05/Cultural-Heritage-for-Peace-and-Reconciliation.pdf. The foundation Cultural Heritage without Borders (CHwB) is an independant Swedish non-governmental organisation founded in 1995. It was established 'to work in the spirit of the 1954 Hague Conventions for the protection of cultural property in the event of armed conflicts, natural catastrophes, neglect, poverty or political and social conflicts.' It has been primarily active in the former Yugoslavia with building restoration, museum development and experience. Cultural Heritage without Borders, 'Who we are / History', http://chwb.org/bih/who-we-are/history/

as attempts to present BiH as a multi-cultural/multi-ethnic/multi-confessional country on a path similar to that of many Western European countries.⁴³ Others, as argued by Tonka Kostadinova in her article titled 'The Politics of Memory and the Post-Conflict Reconstruction of Cultural Heritage: The Case of Bosnia and Herzegovina', interpret them as attempts to create the image of a monolithic Bosnian society that has remained unchanged across time and to highlight representations of common history at the expense of less symbolically charged sites.⁴⁴

Conclusion

Despite the varying imaginations corresponding to the term 'national' as it is used in the English designation of the title of the museum, and despite varying interpretations of the museum's mission, the international community, with its investments, and civil society, with its initiatives, continue to recall and promote a possible collective imagination in today's BiH. This collective imagination was very much present at the time of the National Museum's establishment. By the end of the nineteenth century, the collective imagination was denoted by the terms 'we', 'our' and 'us' in the mission and vision set forth in the first issue of the museum's journal, *Glasnik*.

Today, the collective imagination is left mainly to the investments and initiatives of civil society. In this regard, *Ja sam Muzej* (I am the Museum) provides a successful metaphor in terms of recalling and raising awareness of the collective within the individual. In his work titled *Learning from Bosnia: Approaching Tradition*, Rusmir Mahmutćehajić, president of the International Forum Bosnia and former vice-president of the government of BiH, underlines the significance of understanding

⁴³ Vanja Lozic. 'National Museums in Bosnia-Herzegovina and Slovenia: A Story of Making "Us"', Building National Museums in Europe 1750–2010. Conference Proceedings from EuNaMus, European National Museums: Identity Politics, the Uses of the Past and the European Citizen, Bologna 28–30 April 2011, ed. by Aronsson, Peter and Gabriella Elgenius, EuNaMus Report No 1 (Linköping: Linköping University Electronic Press, 2011) http://www.ep.liu.se/ecp_home/index.en.aspx?issue=064, p. 78.

⁴⁴ Tonka Kostadinova, 'The Politicis of Memory and the Post-Conflict Reconstruction of Cultural Heritage: The Case of Bosnia and Herzegovina', Cas Working Paper Series, Issue 6, Advanced Academia Programme 2012-2014 (Sofia: Centre for Advanced Study Sofia, 2014).

'I in we and we in I' to fully appreciate the Bosnian reality. Adam B. Seligman also articulates this point in his foreword to Mahmutćehajić's work:

The Bosnian reality as it was experienced before the war ("neither Serbian nor Croatian nor Muslim, but rather as inclusively Serbian and Croatian and Muslim") is a social reality as well as an ideational truth that we have to learn to abide by if we are not to enter into that chasm of barbarism that seems to open before us.⁴⁵

Despite discussions in literature regarding whether it provides a full or a partial representation of the cultural heritage of all the peoples of BiH, the National Museum continues to offer a unifying Bosnian alternative to the tripartite division that ended the war. Nevertheless, its preservation and maintenance are still characterised by the temporary patchwork resolutions of local and international political actors.

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⁴⁵ Rusmir Mahmutéehajić, *Learning from Bosnia: Approaching Tradition*, The Abrahamic Dialogues Series (New York: Fordham University Press, 2005), p. xxii.

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