

EthnoScripts

ZEITSCHRIFT FÜR AKTUELLE
ETHNOLOGISCHE STUDIEN

Tradition, performance and identity politics in
European festivals

Jahrgang 20 Heft 1 | 2018

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Syncretic debris: from shared Bosnian saints to the ICTY
courtroom

Ethnoscripts 2018 20 (1): 79-109

eISSN 2199-7942

Abstract

This article is an anthropological postscript to the work of the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia (ICTY), brought to a conclusion in 2017. Drawing on long-term fieldwork in Bosnia, I trace in the Tribunal's archives the strange afterlives of two shared and syncretic saints, George and Elijah, their feasts and the religiously plural landscapes they encapsulated. Surfacing as debris after violent impact – displaced and disarticulated – they offer here a possibility of reading both *along* and *against* the grain of the archival expectations. I analyse the chartings of ethno-religious distinctions and the discourse of 'historical enmities' between Bosnian communities, with particular attention to the iterations of these arguments in the reports of ICTY's expert witnesses. This sustained *invention of the absence of shared tradition*, although productive of debris, is, I argue, continually countered by the emplacement of remnants into rekindled wholes.

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eISSN: 2199-7942



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Syncretic debris: from shared Bosnian saints to the ICTY courtroom

Safet HadžiMuhamedović

An epitaph to the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia (1993-2017)

Debris is the displaced scattering of something broken or carelessly discarded. Usually manifold, its destinations might seem haphazard. However, the trajectories of debris are primarily determined by the original impact. Roofs are ripped out by hurricanes; they move until the whirlwinds come to some kind of halt. Tidal movements regurgitate the litter of global disregard onto the coasts of unwilling beneficiaries. From use to refuse. Volcanic debris displaces communities and draws flights to a stop. Pollutants sink from the air into lungs, soil and water. Looking at such particles, through the rubbles and their fragments, it is difficult to recognise some provenance. The pieces are dislodged from their usual temporal and spatial positions (where they never were pieces). These unlovely remnants hardly remind us of personal belongings anymore. If there are to be projects of restoration, debris has to be dealt with, ordered, cleared away from where it landed. The places of origin also remain affected. However, for them, the impact does not produce a pile of unrecognisable fragments, but rather enunciates absences of something that used to be *whole*. So, debris acts as a material connection between a place of origin and a destination – two nodes coupled through the moment of impact. They are separated by the difference between fragments and a fragmented relation.¹

This article considers the *impact* of nationalist destruction on the traditional calendar in Bosnia and the peculiar post-life of shared traditions in the courtrooms of the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia (ICTY). The Tribunal was established by UN Security Council Resolution 827 (1993), with the aim of bringing war crimes to an end and ‘redressing’ certain violations. In crude, general terms, the kind of impacts to be halted and redressed included the over two hundred thousand people killed; the two million displaced; the flattened urban and rural landscapes; the systematic destruction of over one thousand mosques, hundreds of churches, monasteries,

1 I would like to thank Dr Vanja Hamzić for our many conversations on this article and his astute readings, which undoubtedly helped shape my arguments. I also thank Dr Ann Wand and the two anonymous reviewers for their valuable and constructive comments.

libraries, archives and museums, the remains of which were sometimes removed and concealed; mass rape and countless discovered and undiscovered mass graves, which were moved to secondary and tertiary sites in pursuit of impunity (see ICRC Report 1999: ii; Riedlmayer 2002; Stiglmayer 1993; Jugo and Wastell 2015).

Upon such impact, attempting to ‘redress’ the debris of sociality reminds me of those Sarajevans who collected half-burnt pages of manuscripts flying around the City Library torched by shelling in 1992. Instead of redressing, I offer here an assemblage of some flight paths and undeveloped afterlives. I focus on the feasts of two saints, George and Elijah, the main protagonists of the warm seasons and the agricultural and pastoral cosmologies in Bosnia. Shared by Catholic and Orthodox Christians, Muslims and Roma, and invoking a plethora of ‘pre-Christian’ Slavic deities, Christian saints and Muslim prophets, these ‘syncretic’ characters have been increasingly rendered unfitting to the image of the ethno-religious boundaries of nationalist projects. To understand the intricate social and political lives of George and Elijah after the 1990s war in Bosnia, this article builds on my long-term, multi-sited fieldwork in Bosnia (see HadžiMuhamedović 2018), as well as my analysis of the legal archives produced by the ICTY. It reads like an extended case study in which the two festive events provide a starting point for a discussion of large-scale political changes.

I trace the making of difference and ideas of historical ethno-religious antagonisms in Bosnia from *fin-de-siècle* travelogues and nationalist attempts to appropriate the shared feasts to the scholarly debates and expert testimonies before the ICTY. Finally, I also look at the particles of shared and syncretic landscapes in the narratives of other, ‘ordinary’ witnesses called to testify for either the prosecution or the defence. Records of conversations from the ICTY courtrooms are a dark, uncomfortable and, at times, farcical vortex. Parts of testimonies are redacted for public use, forming absences in what is already a collection of fragments. Between thousand-page long documents on gang rapes and the examples of the defendants’ performative humour, encounters with saints and feasts can be only described as uncanny. Because I know something about those lives before the impact, these particles were not about encountering something strange or unfamiliar. They were uncanny in the sense of Freud’s *unheimlich* (‘unhomely’), ‘that class of the terrifying which leads back to something long known to us, once very familiar’ (1955: 220). The known appears disunited and alienated in its new surroundings. To search for Elijah and George in these archives was to rummage through debris, the dispersed landscapes belonging to this unconventional space only as a consequence of their devastation.

The folk calendar in Bosnia officially begins with Annunciation (*Blagovijest*) on the seventh of April. However, this is just a prelude; the actual commencement is not until the sixth of May, George’s Day (*Đurđevdan/Jurjevo*)

according to the Julian calendar, when the land completely emerges from under the snow blanket. Historically, Gurbeti Roma would arrive slightly before the festivities at the Field of Gacko in south-eastern Bosnia, set up their camps and prepare the George's Day feast. For subsistence, they relied on tinning copper dishes for Muslims and Christians. On George's Eve, they would welcome these neighbours to their fair and to a circular dance around a bonfire. Unfortunately, these meetings have not occurred since the beginning of the war, as the Gurbeti never returned. George's Day is a festival of fertility, and its numerous rituals, some of which I describe later in this article, focus especially on women and girls. Depending on the place, it is a more or less collective affair, but one always acknowledged to be shared by Christians, Muslims and Roma. The Bosnian George is also an inheritor of Jarilo, the Proto-Slavic deity of spring and sometimes synonymous with Hidr (or Khidr), the 'Green one', better known in Sufi circles. Around the Mediterranean, Khidr merges with Elijah in the festival of *Hidrellez*.² Haddad (1969: 27) considered George, Khidr and Elijah under the common denominator of 'georgic saints', whose powers relate to fertility and the continuity of life.

In Bosnia, the warm season between George's and Elijah's days was occupied by hard work in the fields. Diversion arrived only with Elijah's feast day (*Ilindan/Alidun*) on the second of August. In the Field of Gacko, this was the central event for the local Orthodox Christians and Muslims. People arrived from across the region to attend the grand fair. Stalls with food and drinks would be set up, villagers would perform the traditional Dinaric types of polyphonic songs (*bećarac* and *ganga*), organise athletic competitions and arrange marriages. Because the Christian feast (*Ilindan*) occurred around the Church of St Elijah in the late morning and the Muslim one (*Alidun*) next to the spring of Sopot and the mosque in Kula in the early afternoon, this tradition came to be expressed in a proverb, which says, '*Do podne Ilija, od podne Alija*', 'Until noon – Ilija, after noon – Alija'. Ilija and Alija are two names for the same Elijah. These words acknowledged the consonance of sameness and difference. Ilija and Alija were also the typical Christian and Muslim men's names in Bosnia, so the meaning of the saying was extended to designate the relations between persons and communities.

After Elijah's Day was over, everyone would start making plans for the next one. My interlocutors described it as the most important day of the year. 'Until Elijah by dust, after Elijah by mud', they would say to indicate the change of weather after the feast.³ By Demetrius Day (*Mitrovdan/Kasum*), on the eighth of November, all preparations for the harsh winter needed to

2 There are numerous variations of this name, which are usually a compound of Khidr and Elijah (see HadžiMuhamedović 2018: 204-220).

3 In the Bosnian original: '*Do Aliduna po prahu, od Aliduna po kalu*'. Elijah is the Biblical thunderer, but also the successor to the Proto-Slavic thunder-god Perun. He can strike the shed or the haystack and destroy the harvest (see HadžiMuhamedović 2018: 220-221)

be completed. The Field of Gacko was devastated during the 1990s war. Its Muslims and Gurbeti Roma went into exile. Those few Muslims who have returned since 1998 envisage the recuperation of the landscape and its sociality through the restoration of the shared Elijah's Day feast.

Bosnian festivals and the invention of absence

At the beginning of the 1990s war, traditional feasts came to be increasingly employed for political purposes. One noticeable pattern in both my ethnographic information and the ICTY archival material is the use of festivals for the establishment of local branches of nationalist parties and the organisation of their political rallies. As the biggest social event after the harvest, Elijah's Day was found to be exceptionally convenient for such incursions. Described by one of my interlocutors as 'the day that depicts one place of people' (*jedno mjesto ljudi*), it was a moment of condensed social intercourse. Before the heavy winter snows isolated the households, the feast was an expressive affirmation of the Gacko community: thousands would gather at the temporal and spatial nodes of great symbolic importance to eat, drink, dance, sing, engage in athletic competitions, arrange marriages and business deals, and so on. The attempted appropriation of Elijah's Day by the nationalists was a recognition of its social centrality. In 2011 and 2012, during my fieldwork in Gacko, the day included an assortment of nationalist emblems and declamations. However, after this 'formal' introduction – the speeches, the circumnavigation of the church with flags and the participation of local political figures in the Divine Liturgy – the folk festivity would begin. Most participants understood the latter rejoicing to be the more salient part of the day. The priests, though they sometimes did not like the uncontrolled celebrations 'fuelled by alcohol', were not capable of preventing the revelry.

I noticed that this 'folk refusal' constituted a significant regulation of institutional intervention. For example, when I attempted to organise a workshop and showcase some of my research findings during an Elijah's Day feast in Gacko, the presentations of the panellists were methodically drowned out by loud conversation, despite our microphone and large speakers. This rejection of the 'academic intervention' may be seen as part of the wider strategy of resistance to the external codifications of customs, summarised in the proverb my interlocutors repeated as they were attempting to restore life in their ravaged landscape: 'Customs are more important than the village' (*Običaji su važniji od sela*).⁴ This 'folk wisdom' suggests that, whilst the structures can be rebuilt, the end of the community begins with the disappearance of its habitual ways of life. The insistence on the restoration of Elijah's Day was, for the returnees, an attempt to revive (not invent) the community so expressively epitomised in the feast.

4 Their resistance relates to the history of academic expertise discussed later in this article.

As Hobsbawm (2000b: 282-288) noted, the *fin-de-siècle* nationalist and political religious movements were fully aware of the importance of ritual and myth. He describes the assimilation of the International Workers' Day with May Day, the symbolically charged juncture in the agricultural calendar. As a time of renewal, growth, hope and joy, the festival was conveniently woven into the messages and iconography of the movement (ibid.: 284-285). Yugoslav socialism likewise made use of the May Day feast (*prvomajski teferič* or *uranak*), which is still a widespread practice in Bosnia. Apart from the traditional feast, it often also included the hilltop bonfires more characteristic of the slightly earlier Annunciation. Dunja Rihtman-Auguštin (1990: 29) has argued that the socialist calendar in Yugoslavia adopted the rhythm of the traditional festivals, but also intervened in it 'by anticipating or postponing' the important moments. Socialist Yugoslavia, however, tolerated most of the traditional feasts (*teferič*) due to their 'secular appearance' (see HadžiMuhamedović 2018: 42-45).

The Nazis, Hobsbawm (2000a: 9) pointed out, took advantage of May Day and similar events 'with liturgical sophistication and zeal and a conscious manipulation of symbols'. In like manner, the nationalists in Gacko and elsewhere in Bosnia made use of the existing symbolic repertoire. Their programmes were articulated primarily in terms of identities and traditions that 'needed to be defended' from an always imminent threat. However, novel paraphernalia were gradually grafted onto the existing customs. The construction work in the Field of Gacko is an apt elaboration of the 'invention of tradition' thesis. The old Church of Saint Elijah in the village of Nadanići is the traditional locus of Orthodox Christian Elijah's Day festivities. This is where the participants would gather (inclusive of the politicians since the 1990s). The village, however, was understood to be too marginal in the post-war constellation, so a new, much more monumental Church of Holy Trinity was constructed in the 'ethnically cleansed' town centre, metres away from the site of the destroyed mosque. Stylistically, the new church was designed to resemble the mediaeval monastery of Gračanica in Kosovo, thus establishing a material link to the much wider discursive claim about the 'heartland' of the Serb people. To embed this new site in people's emotional maps, the city council organised the St Trinity Day parade when the politicians, the clergy and the townsfolk circumnavigated the new building, prior to a set of sacro-political communiqués in front of it.

The space where the new church sits is still known as *Tenis* (the locals tell that the Austro-Hungarian soldiers built the first tennis courts there after the occupation of Bosnia in 1878). Perhaps oblivious to this toponym, the Orthodox Bishop Grigorije proclaimed, during the St Trinity Day celebrations in 2009, that this was in fact an 'elevated place', 'liberated from the oppressor', with the new church, 'surely the most beautiful in recent Serb history' (see HadžiMuhamedović 2018: 200). As this newly concocted locus

of emotional centrality was being fused with the traditional calendar, the returnees worked on the reconstruction of the central town mosque. Together with all other mosques in the area, this one had been razed to the ground in 1992. The reconstruction of the mosques, like the restoration of the feasts, complicates the ‘invention of tradition’ argument. Hobsbawm noted:

‘On the other hand, the strength and adaptability of genuine traditions is not to be confused with the “invention of tradition”. Where the old ways are alive, traditions need be neither revived nor invented.’ (2000a: 8)

The Gacko returnees thought that the ‘old ways’ needed to be revived if they were to endure as a community. Embracing the adage that ‘customs are more important than the village’, they made use of various inventive strategies in their struggles for continuity. They moved the date of Elijah’s feast to accommodate the diasporic attendance (often agreed over social media) and turned their daily conversations towards the Christian-Muslim-Roma shared pastoral calendar of the past to argue against nationalist inventions of ethno-religious partitions. However, although very much alive in their bodies, most traditions could not simply be revived. For example, George’s Day rituals, which involved particularly the participation of young women and children, would have been a futile enterprise in the returnee community, where only the elderly resided and only a single child had been born after the war. Thus, they focused their aspirations on Elijah’s Day, when the other refugees would come back for a day, awaiting the revival of their past communal life.

Read through the Bosnian case, *The Invention of Tradition* (Hobsbawm and Ranger 2000) is still highly applicable. On the whole, the book offers a wide-ranging critique of nationalist claims to historical foundations and continuity, as well as the legitimisation of political programmes through new and appropriated rituals. The volume’s focus – the invention of ‘time-honoured’ social scripts – encapsulates the long twentieth century, which was, for the most part, the violent aftermath and the malign, tardy proliferation of the nineteenth-century national myths of origins. The importance of tradition was, for the nationalists, about the consolidation of the political and territorial body, a body effectively naturalised through perpetual symbolic encroachment upon the human body and its habitual domains (land, kinship, language and religion in particular). The national question in Bosnia was, then, a process of inventing (imagining and effecting) the boundaries of such political bodies, conveniently latching on to the feasts and slowly reappropriating them. *The Invention of Tradition* (ibid.) considered the delineation of social boundaries in terms of their temporal extensions, from the present into the past. However, as ethno-national entities were being historically situated, their spatial (relational) boundaries were synchronously charted. For such programmes, the spatial and the temporal in(ter)ventions

were, and continue to be, part and parcel of the same objective – to elicit the political body. People from ex-Yugoslavia still joke about the ‘differentiation-dictionaries’ (*razlikovni rječnici*) that appeared in the early 1990s to help Croatian speakers steer away from Serbian (the two languages are basically the same, fully mutually intelligible, with slight regional variations that do not at all follow the nation-state borderlines). For the military campaigns of ethnic cleansing, religiously plural spaces and blurred boundaries became the primary intended target.

This article considers one effective and continued political strategy pertaining to Bosnia in which the nationalist invention of tradition was also a steady programme of unimagining the shared life and blurry boundaries between religious groups, as well as the insertion of these identities into new, solidly chiselled, ethno-national machinations. This process, which started in the nineteenth century, was also an *invention of the absence of shared tradition*. The crux of this invention, whether it appeared in academic publications, political speeches or the cross-examinations of the ICTY, was the same: Bosnia did not and cannot exist as a religiously plural space. It was fundamentally an anti-syncretic invention.

Palmisano and Pannofino (2017) differentiate between ‘invented’ and ‘inventive’ traditions; the latter ‘rediscover and innovatively reformulate pre-existent material through which they establish plausible continuity in order to appear credible and legitimate’ (ibid.: 14). This distinction, however, does not capture Bosnia’s political complexities, as both the nationalist programmes and the returnees’ efforts may fit into the above description – both claim possession over certain past customs, yet towards different aims. Zanetta (2017: 32-33), in her contribution to the same volume, argued that Hobsbawm’s and Ranger’s ‘invention of tradition’ is past-oriented, whereas the ‘inventive tradition’ is future-oriented. I would rather argue, through the case of Gacko, that both the nationalist and the anti-nationalist claims are fashioned with the past and the future of the community as their prerogative. Both are ‘inventive’, yet their crucial asymmetry lies in the measure of ‘invention’; whereas the nationalists employ the ‘old ways’ to legitimise the new social constellations, affixing new material and symbolic elements along the way, the returnees reside in the past in order to frustrate the nationalist progression.

Syncretic debris

Discussions of sharing, syncretism and mixture do not make sense without some defined boundaries. These are certainly complex and problematic vocabularies (Stewart 2011: 48). As Shaw and Stewart (1994: 7) argued, because all religions are syncretic, we should rather consider the processes of religious synthesis and discourses of syncretism and anti-syncretism. It is precisely in

this antagonism to religious synthesis that I locate shared lives in the ICTY archives. The ethnic cleansing of the 1990s was a climax of boundary-making and efforts in pursuit of nationalist purifications that began more than a century earlier. Syncretic debris was the product of these deep lacerations in the relational fabric, of the cavernous charting of otherness, of the violent unmaking of the world.

Yael Navaro (see 2009) has developed an anthropology of ruination, questioning and sensing the affective potentialities of remnants, residues, shards and debris. This work was crystallised through her approach to the disarticulated landscapes of Northern Cyprus. ‘By “ruination”’, she notes, ‘I refer to the material remains or artefacts of destruction and violation, but also to the subjectivities and residual affects that linger, like a hangover, in the aftermath of war or violence’ (ibid.: 5). Yet, to think of remnants is to establish a relation, to affiliate the pieces to a place of prior belonging, which thus gains durability (they are vestiges *of something*). In the ICTY archives, Bosnian saints seem suspended, uninvited, misplaced, unheard. Therefore, I resort to ‘debris’ – particles that end up where they do not belong.

Ann Laura Stoler’s (2013) project focused on imperial debris, the persistent material, conceptual and affective traces of colonial enterprises. Their durability is active, although not always visible or at a predictable destination. Whereas the debris in her discussion is about the afterlives of ‘imperial formations’ – relations of force – syncretic debris is about unintended trajectories and uneasy emplacements of shared life (or just life) after relations are forced into scales of difference and diversity. Part of Stoler’s project (see 2009) considers colonial archives and what, for various reasons, remains unrecorded. She distinguishes ‘between what was “unwritten” because it could go without saying and “everyone knew it”, what was unwritten because it could not yet be articulated, and what was unwritten because it could not be said’ (ibid.: 3). An archive may thus be seen as a ‘system of expectation’ (Stoler 2002). To ‘read along the archival grain’ is to look at the architecture of the ontological, what expectations it effectuates (Stoler 2009: 3-4). Systems of expectations inevitably produce silences or gloss over the unexpected. Users may also be guided into archives’ expectations. To read ‘against the grain’ is to approach archives through more than what they contain, through their ‘outside’ (see Zeitlyn 2012: 464).

Both are forms of subversive reading, of course, and this article makes a modest attempt at each. What comes across through Bosnian syncretic debris is that reading ICTY records ‘against its grain’ requires intimacy, which in turn involves temporal and spatial proximity. I have also read these archives against the grain of alienation, at times being able to conjure up images of landscapes hidden behind witness protection anonymity and rhythms of expectant cross-examinations. At those times, for me, displaced utterances were no longer a matter of debris, but signals of something *elsewhere*.

Debris is an image of disarticulation. Yet, its seeming disarray is also an outcome of articulated orientations. Debris is synthesised, *articulated as debris*, through the force of impact (and the subsequent impossibility or refusal to recognise what precedes fragmentation). The digging up of mass graves and their (sometimes repeated) relocation to conceal the initial crimes have further crumbled and shuffled the matter designated as refuse. The fusion of fragments in these nationalist assemblages reveals the orientation of the impact. In several instances, destroyed Bosnian sacral architecture was piled over the corpses in mass graves (see Walasek 2015: 37-39). The remnants of George and Elijah, as well as of the plural sacral landscapes they signalled, then belong to these wider accumulations of manufactured organic and social detritus, by way of the calculated dispersal they collectively suffered.

With a different kind of orientation, remnants may be disarticulated as debris and *articulated into coherence*; ‘fragments’ may demand emplacement into the wholeness of a body/landscape/relation. For example, when faced with bodily pieces of their family members discovered in mass graves, survivors continually petitioned for the ‘complete person’ (see Jugo and Wastell 2015: 152).⁵ Religious institutions have likewise stipulated the treatment of incomplete remains ‘as if they were complete’ (ibid: 163). In hope for completeness, graves continue to be reopened to unite new-found fragments with the interred remains. Similarly, fragments of destroyed architectural heritage have been used in post-war reconstruction, situated in re-validated wholes. Narratives about shared lives and the attempts to restore the syncretic feasts of George and Elijah belong to the same kind of orientation, against the disintegration of the social body. So, debris is ultimately a matter of displacement, whereas the thought of remnants prompts different kinds of emplacement.

Making difference: from keen travellers to expert witnesses

The nature of shared life and syncretic religion in Bosnia has been a contentious issue for over a century. Since *fin-de-siècle* Orientalist travelogues, it usually appeared as a peculiarity of Ottoman and post-Ottoman mixtures. As a result of a growing interest in the ‘Eastern Question’, the British travel literature on Bosnia had a noticeably political character (Berber 2010: xiii-xv). Religion was used as the ostensible reasoning and the ‘most natural’ way to advance the new foreign policies (Allcock and Young 2000: xxiii-xxiv). The construction of this discursive image has had a durable existence. Bosnia was seen as standing on the frontier of two ‘civilisations’ – Christendom and Islamdom – never fully articulated in either of them (ibid.). These days, tourist guides in Sarajevo take visitors to the exact spot where ‘East and West meet’,

5 Jugo and Wastell (2015: 152) cite the remark of one person from Srebrenica: ‘I did not marry a man without hands or a head. I did not give birth to sons without hands or a head. But I buried them that way’.

a section of the boulevard between the Ottoman-era town centre (*čaršija*) and taller Austro-Hungarian buildings. The city council was quick to capitalise on this narrative, embedding an actual compass into the pavement along with a reminder which reads ‘Sarajevo: meeting of cultures’ (see Figure 1). This aged civilisation talk had long-lasting consequences. From its vantage point, Bosnian life was implicitly fragmented by religious difference, or into ‘nations’, as they were sometimes referred to in early travelogues (see Mackenzie and Irby 1877).



Fig. 1. Pavement orientations in Sarajevo, July 2017. Photo: S. HadžiMuhamedović.

In their 1877 *Travels in the Slavonic Provinces of Turkey-in-Europe*, two Victorian ‘keen travellers’, Georgina Muir Mackenzie and Adeline Paulina Irby, described some of these differences. They saw Bosnia as a rude, barbaric frontier, a society not yet evolved into Europe; Bosnian Muslims were racialised and primarily understood as the feudalist oppressor, whereas the Bosnian Christians and their struggle attracted some sympathies (Hadžiselimović 2000). Irby and MacKenzie did mention, however cursorily, some ‘shared’ religious elements. On a mountain above Sarajevo they noticed the Muslim festive gatherings on John’s Day, Elijah’s Day and George’s Day, ‘bright with red turbans and jackets and groups of women in white veils’ (1877: 8). Muslims, according to them, also celebrated another shared feast, their family patron saint (*slava*) (ibid.: 9), nowadays understood as primarily an Orthodox Christian tradition.

The famous English archaeologist Arthur Evans also ventured through Ottoman Bosnia. Upon visiting the Catholic pilgrimage in Komušina, he described its large fair, an ‘elegant’ *kolo* circle dance, and ‘cherry bonfires’, ‘round which the peasants clustered in social circles’ (Evans 1876: 133-134). This pilgrimage, better known as *Kondžilo*, is active to this day and focuses on the miraculous painting of the Virgin flanked by St John the Baptist and St Roch. The Catholic icon was also revered by Orthodox Christians and Muslims, and its narrative of origins is tied to a local Muslim family (see Katić 2010). For Evans (1876: 133), however, it seemed pathetic that the ‘influence of Islam seemed to have infected’ Christian rituals. He found it difficult to distinguish between the members of religious communities in terms of their garments and because ‘they grovelled in the ground and kissed the earth, as in a mosque’ (ibid.). His *a priori* conclusion that these were exclusively Christian pilgrims and his desire to differentiate between ‘religions’ provide but a glimpse into the wider and persistent fragmentation of Bosnian religiosity along the lines of the Occident-Orient binary.

In a similar fashion, Roy Trevor’s (1911) travelogue includes descriptions of St John’s Day apotropaic rituals near the town of Jajce, where the Catholic chapel of St John was ‘overflowing with Moslems and Christians, men and women, who rolled upon the ground gnashing their teeth, tearing their hair and rending their clothes’ (ibid.: 47). A number of other researchers since the second half of the nineteenth century have offered glimpses into Bosnian syncretic religiosity, which was usually considered in terms of ‘trans-Slavic’ ethnology or as part of Serb and Croat folklore.⁶

Rebecca West’s two-volume account is likely the most puzzling and politically disposed of the existing travelogues. In her *Black Lamb and Gray Falcon: A Journey Through Yugoslavia* (1946a; 1946b), she dedicated two chapters to a syncretic George’s Day feast in Macedonia, which she energetically rejected on moral grounds. The inclusion of sacrifice in the fertility ritual repelled her; she saw it as ‘shameful’, ‘a conscious cheat’, noting:

‘Women do not get children by adding to the normal act of copulation the slaughter of a lamb, the breaking of a jar, the decapitation of a cock, the stretching of wool through blood and grease. If there was a woman whose womb could be unsealed by witnessing a petty and pointless act of violence, by seeing a jet of blood fall from a lamb’s throat on a rock wet with stale and stinking blood, her fertility would be the reverse of motherhood, she would have children for the purpose of hating them.’ (1946b: 204)

6 Hadžijahić and Purivatra (1990: 186–87) have compiled a bibliography on these academic arguments over the national definition of folklore in Bosnia.

West also saw traces of shared religion as a testament to certain concessions that the Christians had to make under the ‘Turks’. Even if the ‘Moslems had no objection to worshipping in Christian churches’ (1946a: 308), this was, for her, primarily a form of strategic crypto-Christianity. Reasserting the Orientalist dichotomy of the psyche, she observed:

‘There could be no two races more antipathetic than the Slavs, with their infinite capacity for enquiry and speculation, and the Turks, who had no word in their language to express the idea of being interested in anything, and who were therefore content in abandonment to the tropism of a militarist system.’ (1946a: 307)

Her cavernous manuscript experienced a sudden, renewed interest with the advent of the 1990s war. Hall (1996) describes how West’s arguments about historical enmities between Serbs, Croats and ‘the Turks’ reinforced anti-interventionist U.S. policies in the Balkans. American author Robert Kaplan was captivated by West’s work, which he referenced throughout his own political travelogue *Balkan Ghosts* (2005 [1993]). He reiterated her stance on the endurance of ancient enmities and saw Bosnia as a ‘violent ethnic cauldron’ (Kaplan 2005 [1993]: xii; see also Hall 1996). Citing the Bosnian novelist Ivo Andrić, Kaplan suggested that ‘peaceful intercommunal tradition’ and ‘ethnic harmony’ have ‘often been balanced on a knife’s edge’ (2005 [1993]: xi).⁷ In particular, he argued that Bosnian villages ‘were full of savage hatreds’, so the ‘fact that the most horrifying violence – during both World War II and the 1990s – occurred in Bosnia was no accident’ (ibid.: 22).

Was the war primarily religious and ethnic, a product of long histories of conflict and irreconcilable differences, or rather incongruous with the abundance of shared practices and inter-religious proximities? This question, revived in scholarship and journalism during the 1990s war in Bosnia, was interwoven with the political destiny of the state. The answers are often markedly different and ideologically opposed. On the one hand, the war was a ‘betrayal’ of centuries of tolerant coexistence reaching into the Middle Ages (see, for example, Donia and Fine 1994). On the other hand, these religious groups never formed a cohesive community, making the country implicitly ‘impossible’. Bosnia should be partitioned along ethnic lines, as such coexistence and tolerance as did exist were but the fragile dependencies of plural empires, which ultimately erupted into carnage with the break-up of Yugoslavia (see Kecmanović 2007, Hayden 2002a, 2016).

Several authors have produced arguments about the lack of shared life in Bosnia as part of some sort of academic advocacy for the dissolution of the state. I briefly look at the apparent similarity between the arguments made

7 On the Orientalisation of the Bosnian Muslim in the work of Ivo Andrić, see Mahmutćehajić (2015).

by the regional nationalist politicians, two regional political scientists and a prominent anthropologist.

The campaign to solidify ethnic cleansing through the complete territorial differentiation of ‘pure’ entities is a central and ubiquitous ingredient of political rhetoric in Bosnia. Milorad Dodik, who, since 1998, has served two terms as President and two terms as Prime Minister of Republika Srpska,⁸ articulates most frequently this position by arguing that Bosnia is an ‘impossible country’, whose people do not share a single holiday, for ‘they have always been on different sides of history and marked [the holidays] in different ways; some as a victory, some as a defeat’ (Buka 2015).⁹ This became a strikingly methodical mantra, repeated *ad nauseam*. The absence of ‘shared’ religious elements has been taken as strong evidence of the only viable political solution – separation.

Several ‘scholarly’ publications legitimised this idea. Mirjana Kasapović and Nenad Kecmanović, two internationally marginal political scientists, yet prominent through their columns in regional periodicals, have published monographs leaning towards the same conclusion. Kasapović’s (2005) book centred on the proposal for the ‘confederalisation’ of the country into ethnically pure entities. In her opinion, ‘confederalisation’ is necessary as Croats, Serbs and Muslims in Bosnia have no shared experience of history, religion or common culture; they disagree on the basic values and norms of shared life (ibid.: 158-191). Such ‘deep religious and ethnic separation’ is presented as a crucial and rooted historical characteristic of the country (ibid.: 138). She goes even further by suggesting a civilisational divide between religious communities in Bosnia, unsurprisingly making use of the controversial arguments of Samuel Huntington on the ‘clash of civilisations’ (ibid.: 21-22; compare Huntington 1996).

Kasapović does not entertain ‘primitive talk of neighbourliness, shared feasts and get-togethers between Bosniaks, Croats and Serbs through the ages’ (2007: 139). These forms of proximity are not of relevance, perhaps because they stand in stark contrast to her ethno-nationalist political chartings. For Kecmanović, Bosnia is, likewise, an ‘impossible state’, without any consensus on history, divided in all events ‘no matter whether this is about shared victories and pride or shared plight and sorrow’ (2007: 7).¹⁰ He sees

8 Republika Srpska, although usually not translated, means ‘Serb Republic’. Together with the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, it is one of the two ‘entities’ that politically constitute the contemporary state of Bosnia and Herzegovina (the town of Brčko is a district). This division, which largely follows the frontiers of ethnic cleansing, was instituted through the Dayton Peace Agreement in 1995.

9 All translations, unless otherwise indicated, are my own.

10 Although not considered in this article, the shared past of the World War II Partisan anti-Nazi resistance is likewise routinely obscured by the nationalists.

the dissolution of the state into ethnically cleansed territories (as manufactured in the 1990s) as the only way out of this conundrum.

Another remarkably similar body of work has been produced by the American anthropologist Robert Hayden (see, for example, Hayden 2002a; 2002b; 2007; Bowman 2012). Like Kasapović, he did not take ‘common’ Bosnian life into account, which is remarkable considering the extended argument he is making on precisely that topic. He gathered his information through ‘census data, public opinion polls, voting patterns, and the configurations of the contending military forces, rather than primarily [relying] on more traditional forms of ethnography’ (2007: 107). In a more recent treatise of the same ‘model’, Hayden et al. (2016) mention Hayden’s 1992 fieldwork in India, which was compared to ‘ethnohistorical and historical accounts of South Asian colonialism and Ottoman imperialism in the Balkans, but also with the events taking place in 1992 in Bosnia’ (ibid.: 17). Acknowledging existing criticism of this decision to avoid fieldwork or ‘thick’ description, Hayden et al. argue that their work ‘contrasts with such inherently static and essentialist forms of analysis’ (ibid.: 70). Like others, they resort to several quotations from Andrić’s work. Brief fiction is apparently better positioned than ‘static’ fieldwork to argue for subtle, yet persistent, inter-ethnic antagonisms.

So, what are ‘antagonistic tolerance’ and ‘competitive sharing’ in the work of Robert Hayden? The first concept aims to explain ‘how it happens that peoples of different religions who live peacefully intermingled for generations, and who may develop aspects of syncretism in their religious practices, turn on each other violently, even engaging in what is now called “ethnic cleansing”’ (Hayden et al. 2016: 1). Such ‘peoples’, it is further argued, endured but never embraced each other in Bosnia, so they competed for domination over shared religious sites, and, when the political systems ensuring passive tolerance broke down, they competed violently (Hayden 2002a; Hayden et al. 2016: 7-8). The 1990s war was thus not so much a nationalist project as a matter of reactivated competition.

These antagonistic tolerators, it is repeatedly suggested, discourage intermarriage (Hayden et al. 2016). The notion of ‘intermarriage’, however, is not defined, so the reader is left to wonder about the reasons for its importance in Hayden et al. They do not mention the frequent practices of ‘cross-religious’ sworn kinship (*kumstvo*) or blood brotherhood/sisterhood (*pobratimstvo/posesistrimstvo*), which had a significant role in Bosnian communal and personal relations, often working against the large-scale production of enmities (see HadžiMuhamedović 2018: 128-150). These authors seem to rest their idea of intimacy on an outdated, ‘pre-Schneiderian’ concept of kinship as either descent or affinal alliance. This problem would have been at least visible to the authors had some ‘more traditional’ anthropological interlocutors in Bosnia been encountered.

With the same brush, Hayden (2002b: 161) painted over the much-discussed notion of *komšiluk* or neighbourhood/neighbourliness in Bosnia (see, for example, Sorabji 2008). People of different religions who ‘chanced to live in close proximity’, he argued, only engaged with each other pragmatically and as representatives of groups, yet failed to integrate affectively, as individuals (Hayden 2002b: 161). Following Bougarel, he argued that *komšiluk* may be understood as ‘antithetical’ to the intimacy of marriage because the groups remained ‘unmixable’ (ibid.). The intimacy of marital mixing, it would appear, asserts its sexual connotation here. How else would mutual rhythms of care, socialising, affection, shared religious celebrations and other forms of kinship be irreconcilable with it? Hayden, to my knowledge, also does not note any in-depth research among those Bosnians he would consider ‘inter-married’.

The proposed impact of his argument is relatively tucked away. Given the history of antagonism (with passive tolerance), which was contained only by undemocratic subordination, Hayden notes:

‘Attempts to impose diversity after a country has been partitioned may well require indefinite occupation to deny power to the nationalists for whom people would vote if given the chance to do so. [...] Clear recognition of this situation might permit decision makers to assist in reconstructions of shattered societies based on what people are willing to accept, even if that means the injustice of partition.’ (2002a: 219)

Like Kecmanović and Kasapović, if for the most part less directly, Hayden then also points to a certain ‘impossibility’ of Bosnia as a religiously plural society, ultimately doomed to be fragmented into more possible ethnic enclaves constructed through war.

Competition for Hayden et al. (2016) is primarily a negative phenomenon. They are interested in competition between the members of different religious groups. However, this presumption of difference, or of religious difference as more important than other forms of difference, is not unlike the miscalculations of those *fin-de-siècle* Orientalist travellers mentioned earlier. Understanding competition beyond ethno-religious conflict is crucial for Bosnian landscapes. Let me give you some examples (see also HadžiMuhamedović 2018). The religiously plural Bosnian George does not simply defeat the dragon; the two compete for the maiden and the (in)fertility of the world. On George’s Eve, children around Bosnia light fires on hill-tops around their landscapes, competing through the height of their flames. And in the morning the same children chase each other around with stinging nettles, stirring up the blood and awaking the season. Young women go down to river slopes to bathe in the ritual of *omaha* and to collect stems of hyssop. Lads hide to see them undress and later compete to steal the hyssop

arrangements from their windows and front doors. The girls put swings on the branches of old trees and compete to see whose will fly furthest into the air. During the feasts of George or Elijah in south-eastern Bosnia, women compete to become the reputable bachelorette (*namuša*) and men compete to ‘steal’ the girls from others by asking them for a walk. They also compete in song and a wide variety of athletic disciplines (such as ‘rock from the shoulder’ and ‘climbing up a greased pillar’).

Sometimes, during Elijah’s Feast Day in the Field of Gacko and other places, groups of men enter an annual fistfight, which is understood as a release of energy before the winter. On St Peter’s Eve, in the village of Mokro in central Bosnia and elsewhere, children go around with torches (*lile*), trying to get the most sweets from each household.



Fig. 2. St John’s Eve in Kreševo, June 2012. Photo: S. HadžiMuhamedović.

During my 2012 fieldwork, I visited the town of Kreševo in central Bosnia on St John’s Eve. The town was literally divided into two neighbourhood teams, Gornje Čelo and Donje Čelo. Everyone worked strenuously throughout the day collecting wood for the ritual bonfires, which, the children instructed me, ward off evil. Before the flames were lit, one of the teams climbed on to the back of a truck with a large, spray-painted slogan that read ‘Gornje Čelo eats shit’, which rhymes in Bosnian (see Figure 2). As they drove through the neighbourhood of Gornje Čelo, they elicited laughter and some performative resentment. Both teams were Catholic Christian, although this is beside the point. There was no actual ‘winner’ of the competition; one’s own bonfire was, of course, taller.

The main problem of the ‘competitive sharing’ and ‘antagonistic tolerance’ thesis is that it starts with a fallacious assumption of religious difference and its correlating enmity. It conflates the nationalist claims of territorial and racial purity with the communities that nationalisms attempted to instrumentalise.

Magister ante portas

Hayden and Hayden et al. make arguments that rest entirely on the presumption of religious difference that turns into conflict, so their ‘competition’ is, first and foremost, a methodological problem. If reweighed, this foregrounded object of analysis – religious difference – would suggest that a reconceptualization of ‘competition’ is likewise needed. Hayden’s contributions have significantly intensified the academic debates on the qualities and structures of relation in Bosnia. Scholarly conundrums, however, also have the attested potential of wider social impact. Just as the oft-quoted novelist Andrić finds himself in a posthumous embrace of the ‘historical enmities’ debate, so too is Hayden’s work cited in the arguments presented before the ICTY. The already mentioned author of the ‘impossible state’ thesis, Nenad Kecmanović, acting as the expert defence witness (see *Prosecutor v. Blagoje Simić et al.* 1), consistently refers to Hayden’s work, including the notion that Bosnia as a state ‘can only be preserved by a regime of permanent occupation’ (ibid: 10809). Kecmanović follows Hayden’s general argument, noting that ‘inter-ethnic antagonisms’ have only culminated in the 1990s in a country that was a ‘corpus separatum’ for almost half a millennium (ibid.).

Hayden was, likewise, an expert defence witness before the ICTY (see, for example, *Prosecutor v. Duško Tadić*). He argued that Croats, Muslims and Serbs in Bosnia have been historically divided by religion, customs, diet and dress, particularly in rural areas (ibid.: 5690). He underscores his ‘antagonistic tolerance’ model of Bosnian history ‘punctuated by violence’ whenever the larger states, which ensured harmonious life, collapsed (ibid.: 5708). Judge Ninian Stephen was slightly confused by this argument:

‘There were two questions I would like to ask you, Professor. The first one is we have heard a great deal from individual witnesses about contentedly living together of different ethnic groups, to the extent to which “my best friend is a Serb” or “I am godfather to a Croat”. Contrasted with that is the fact that we find that in villages in the opstina Prijedor they seem to be very clearly designated and understood by everyone as being Muslim villages or Serbian villages or Croat villages. How do you, if you do, reconcile those two views?’ (ibid.: 5715-5716)

Hayden responded, not through the ‘antagonistic tolerance’ model, but by arguing that ‘intermingling’ was much less common in rural areas and that nationalism did not originate in mixed areas (ibid.: 5715-5717). This also requires some unpacking. The rural/urban binary was a common representation of the 1990s war. Nationalism was seen as produced in the villages and encroaching upon the ‘mixed and tolerant’ cities. As Bougarel (1999) noted, this discourse is firstly an academic one. We can trace its origins in the racial typologies of the Serbian geographer and ethnologist Jovan Cvijić (1922 and 1931), Croatian sociologist Dinko Tomašić (1993) and several other academics during and after the 1990s war.¹¹ They took Dinaric villages, with their tradition of *gusle* epics, to be an exemplar of nationalism.¹² For Cvijić, the ‘Dinaric man’, burning with national desires, is the best breed in the Balkans. For Tomašić, however, these were aggressive criminals whose psychological traits can only be understood as contrary to ‘Western European civilization’.

The Field of Gacko, where I did most of my fieldwork, lies along the Dinaric Mountains. Perceiving a lack of ‘mixture’ in this space is a fallacy generated by a lack of historical and ethnographic knowledge about it. Gacko’s Orthodox Christians, Muslims and Roma shared exactly what Hayden seems to deny them: ‘religion, customs, diet and dress, particularly in rural areas’. They shared their pastoral economy, the feasts of George and Elijah, Procopius’ Day and Demetrius’ Day. Orthodox Christians and Muslims regularly entered sworn kinship (*kumstvo*), which Judge Stephen was rightly concerned about. Whilst they seldom ‘intermarried’ in Hayden’s terms, *kumstvo* was an enduring form of relatedness, sometimes kept up between households for over a century. Muslim women did not wear veils when meeting their Christian male sworn kin, which was a conduct reserved only for the closest family members. In fact, proverbs remind us that sworn kin were held more important than brothers. Christians and Muslims in Gacko also shared the *gusle* epic tradition, visited each other’s homes (including for Eid, Christmas and Easter), helped each other out during the harvest (in group field work, so-called *mobe*), worked together in factories, etc. Approaching their shared lives primarily in ethno-religious terms is likewise problematic. We might forget that these are actual people with different trajectories and life histories. It was often the neighbourly ritual of shared coffee, as in the case of Mila and Fata from Cernica, that formed lasting alliances and affections. When

11 See, for example, Bogdanović’s discussion of the ‘archetypal fear of the city’ and the ‘restless epic man’ (2008: 37, 128), or Zulfikarpašić’s comments about the tolerant ‘natives of the city’ and the ‘semisavage’ nonurban population (Đilas and Gaće 1994: 71).

12 *Gusle* is a single-stringed instrument that usually accompanies epic songs in the Dinarides. These songs are yet another shared tradition that was gradually purified and imbued with a nationalist ethos. For a wider discussion of *gusle* epics and nationalism, see HadžiMuhamedović (2018: 46-48, 153-65, 200-201).

Hayden makes the argument in the courtroom that he is not a historian but a cultural anthropologist who ‘deals with people as they exist now’ (*Prosecutor v. Duško Tadić*: 5777), this begs the question whether these people are only ever allowed to exist as exemplars of ethno-religious principles.

Another defence expert witness, sociologist Stjepan Meštrović, reiterated cultural and ethnic differences in Bosnia (see *Prosecutor v. Dario Kordić, Mario Čerkez*). He also employed Huntington’s concept, arguing that Islam and the West were engaged in a cultural war and that there was no historical co-existence between different religious groups in Bosnia. He adamantly opposed Donia’s arguments about shared life, and his expert report even included a chapter on the ‘rebuttal of Robert Donia’s testimony’. Like Hayden, he held that ethnic tolerance did not prevent ethnic violence. Both geographically and culturally, Meštrović notes, Serbs, Muslims and Croats lived separate social lives (*ibid.*: 17591).

In his own expert report for the prosecution, historian Robert Donia problematised the ‘myth of ancient tribal hatreds’, arguing that there is little historical evidence to support such claims (see *Prosecutor v. Blagoje Šimić et al.* 2). In his view, the national or ethnic conflict is a modern occurrence typically instigated by foreign invaders. In addition, he held that the notion of historical enmities, promoted by diplomats and journalists in the 1990s, forestalled the possibility of international intervention during the war (*ibid.*: 9965).

Shared life and Bosnian saints: ICTY archival patterns

After impact, debris scatters into multiple directions. For its recipients, it is not exactly a vestige of something that used to be complete. Not knowing its prior vitality and social significance, the recipients will likely see it as a waste, should they see it at all. ICTY conversations revolve around an assortment of terms of art, which include categories of ethno-religious distinction. By accepting the logic of strictly delineated ethnic groups, Sari Wastell has argued that ‘the criminal prosecution of wartime atrocity produces a naturalised continuation of the conflict’s overarching project’¹³ Through the exercise of divisions that were the very object of war, Wastell continues, ‘law also reifies these distinctions, enshrines them in its politico-juridical structuring and re-telling of the conflict, and reiterates the ultimate violence of the acts themselves’¹⁴ Beyond this legal paradigm, the difference-*cum*-sameness of Bosnian communities remains essentially undetectable. ICTY maintains a particular notion of ethno-religious diversity-as-difference. The witnesses (both expert and non-expert), as well as the wider intended audiences of the

13 Sari Wastell mounts this weighty critique in her forthcoming article ‘Scales of Justice for the Former Yugoslavia: Calibrating Culpability for Wartime Atrocity’ (on file with author).

14 See previous footnote.

Tribunal, are then invited into this system of expectations. The dissemination of this, now legally legitimised, rendition of relations has powerful political consequences and, perhaps unwittingly, further crumbles and shuffles the debris of lives encapsulated by George and Elijah.

The problem is similar to that of ICTY's reliance on the idea of gendered bodies and actions (see Campbell 2007), which is vividly illustrated when a witness from Foča is repeatedly asked what she means by rape (see *Prosecutor v. Radovan Stanković*). Witness 95 replies by breaking it down etymologically: *silovanje* (rape) is related to the word *сила* (force). She continues:

'So they used force, power, strength to bring me there, and that means everything. Everything I went through, as well as the other girls, occurred not through my will or my acquiescence but by the use of force, power and strength.' (ibid.: 2422-2423).

Silovanje is, for her, not disconnected from the 'non-sexual' torture she went through. The questioner, however, needs to approximate this to legal horizons: 'Does that mean [that they] put their penises into your mouth, or vagina, or anus?' (ibid.). ICTY thus employs international law to maintain 'normal science' in the Kuhnian sense, where 'those that will not fit the box are often not seen at all' (Kuhn 1970: 24). Witness 95 made an intervention that was not acknowledged.

This legal and political problem is ultimately an ontological one. The witness speaks, but the listener does not hear – the speaker's world is simply not conceptually mapped out in that of the listener. The same applies to the ethno-religious conceptions of Bosnian communities. Life is refashioned as 'diversity', 'intermingling', 'intermarriage', (*inter-life!*); it becomes 'co-existence', which, as the poet Abdullah Sidran once remarked, is the assassination of existence (2011). Diversity, Sari Wastell argues, is always a matter of scale. It becomes through the act of measurement:

'Or perhaps better put, diversity is not something that is 'already out there', waiting to be described and ordered. It is made by systems which operate through the estimation, valuation and proportion of entities – as apprehended by the system itself.' (2001: 186)

Even before it manifests in the courtroom, the detail of Bosnian life has found a fixed place in the project of measurement. Therefore, the debris of one world enters another scalar system.

Another witness (186) from Gacko is asked about the moment she was taken from a transit camp set up in a school in Kalinovik, transferred into a refrigerator truck with eight other underage girls and gang-raped in different locations. She noted that it happened on the second of August.

'Q: And the 2nd of August, how come you know this date so well? Was it a special day?

A: Yes. The Serbs were celebrating Ilinden and the Muslims were celebrating Alidza.' (*Prosecutor v. Radovan Stanković: 2929*)

What she means, of course, are the shared celebrations of Elijah's Day, which is glossed over. Both names for the feast, *Aliđun* and *Ilindan*, are misspelled in the records. The general diversity of spelling has made it extremely difficult to engage with immense ICTY archives while looking for the debris of shared lives. The court cannot understand the sociality that Elijah's Day prompts, nor its centrality in Gacko, where the witness is from. Remembering that something occurred on Elijah's Day, particularly when that something is so diametrically opposed to the ethos of the celebration, is otherwise only logical. So, the question is rehearsed with witness 191, also from Gacko, who was subjected to the same trajectory of violence as witness 186:

'Q: The 2nd of August, is that a specific day in the calendar?

A: The 2nd of August was, until noon, Alidjun, and in the afternoon, Ilinden, a special day for Serbs and Muslims.' (*ibid.: 3130*)

The reply is transcribed using a slightly different spelling this time. What witness 191 is referring to is a saying all people from Gacko and most Bosnians know well: *Do podne Ilija, od podne Alija* ('Until noon – Ilija, after noon – Alija').¹⁵ It is a microcosm of relations in her landscape. These utterances are interventions. Even if unacknowledged in the courtroom, they offer a reading against the grain of the archives.

Elijah is stripped of his shared qualities in various testimonies. Hard-liner Vojislav Šešelj, whilst indicted for war crimes, defended organising a nationalist demonstration in 1990 with reference to the fact that it was a 'great Serb holiday' (*Prosecutor v. Šešelj: 17502*). He organised another rally on George's Day (*Prosecutor v. Ratko Mladić: 3250*). One paramilitary unit was even named St George (*Prosecutor v. Galić: 18510*). The use of saints and feasts for nationalist rallies is a common thread in ICTY records. The assemblies which formed the Serb Democratic Party (SDS) were held on Elijah's Day in the town of Bosanski Šamac (*Prosecutor v. Simić et al. 3: 9002-9009*). Another local branch of the party was formed in Gacko on Elijah's Day, near the church that was traditionally central to this occasion in the village of Nadanići. In the words of witness B-1122, the traditional festival of Elijah's Day 'was used to set up' SDS (*Prosecutor v. Milošević 1: 27773*).

The nationalists thus knew very well the size of the congregations and the significance of the feast, which they used to promote their programmes at odds with the shared qualities of the celebration. Similarly, witness Nusret

15 Witness 196 gives this in reverse.

Sivac described the choice of venue for the Četnik paramilitary rallies in the village of Marićka:

'Your Honour, you are referring to the rally held in the village of Maricka in front of one of the oldest Orthodox churches in the area. This took place in August 1990 on a great Serbian holiday, Ilindan, Saint Eligus' feast day. Maricka was not selected by chance.' (Prosecutor v. Stakić: 6796)

The emotional centrality of specific times and places related to Bosnian saints was thus understood to be a convenient vehicle for nationalism.

Another feast-related theme is their use for temporal orientation. They used to be, first and foremost, seasonal markers of agricultural and pastoral calendars. During the war, however, saint days often recorded a chronology of destruction, exile and executions. I mentioned how the girls abducted for rape remembered the beginnings of their agony through Elijah's Day. Witness Dragomir Mladinović remembered expulsions and the beginning of war through George's Day and a murder by way of Elijah's Day (Prosecutor v. Orić: 2951-2953). Likewise, witness C-017 was certain that an attack on the city of Mostar occurred on George's Day (Prosecutor v. Milošević 3: 22100). The habitual orientational function of the feasts was thus extended, by both the perpetrators and the victims, to register the unmaking of communities.

The same connections appear in the cases of religious architecture destroyed during the feasts. Witness DD recounted how the Aladža mosque, in the centre of the town of Foča, had been blown up on Elijah's Day (Prosecutor v. Kunarac et al.: 5178-5192). Near the town of Doboj, a similar programme of destruction was executed on George's Day, as noted by expert prosecution witness Andras Riedlmayer:

'They described how a Yugoslav army transporter had come up the hill on Djurdjevdan, the feast of St. George, a Serb holiday, how the soldiers had strung explosives inside the mosque, how the men operating the plunger had taken the Imam ceremonial hat with the turban and put it on his head as he blew up the minaret, and how they had driven down the hill in the mostly Muslim neighbourhood, still wearing the same hat, and singing anti-Muslim songs.' (Prosecutor v. Milošević 2: 32822)

I have recorded at length the use of saint days to measure time in the south-eastern Bosnian highlands (see HadžiMuhamedović 2018). Their use for recording displacement and ruination is apparently not a new occurrence. Đula Dizdarević, interviewed in 1935 as part of a study of epic poetry, recalled how people had to flee from Gacko into the mountains at the beginning of World War I in 1914. They descended the mountain on Elijah's Day (see Vidan 2003).

The third pattern in the archival material of the ICTY are references to shared religious celebrations. Witnesses usually employed them to describe the disparity of life before the war and the nationalism that ensued. Asked about pre-war relations between Christians and Muslims in Gacko, Asim Bašić noted that, before the paramilitary formations arrived, such bonds were excellent: ‘we socialized, we celebrated our religious holidays together’ (*Prosecutor v. Stanišić and Župljanin*: 5983). Witness Sulejman Crnčalo described the same sudden change in Pale:

‘Sir, it wasn’t just St. George’s Day that was celebrated but many other religious holidays. Before the political parties were organised, people of different religions invited their friends to their religious holidays to celebrate the Bajram and Christmas and other holidays. The situation was quite a good one. Once the political parties took over, all of the things that we are discussing now and all of the things because of which I am here now started happening.’ (Prosecutor v. Ratko Mladić: 3253-3254)

Similarly, witness Sulejman Tihčić told the court how he visited Serbs and Croats for Christmas and Easter in Bosanski Šamac and went to the Orthodox Church for Easter, whereas they would visit him for *Bajram* (Eid) (*Prosecutor v. Blagoje Simić et al.* 4: 1239-1240). Such were the relations in the town of Vitez until the nationalist violence erupted (*Prosecutor v. Kupreškić et al.*).

One of the most succinct descriptions of shared celebrations is to be found in the cross-examination of Radomir Kezunović. Radovan Karadžić, found guilty of genocide in 2016, was examining the witness, as he was acting in his own defence. The question was posed here to establish the improbability of a nationalist rally during a George’s Day gathering.

‘Q. You said it was a tradition. Let me remind you. Do you agree that the tradition of early-morning gatherings on St George’s Day is something that exists for centuries, attended by Muslims and Serbs and especially the Roma of all religions? Is that a century-old holiday or something that we introduced in 1991?’

A. You’re completely right. It’s a tradition respected by everyone in Bosnia and Herzegovina, especially the Roma, Serbs and Muslims. It’s an old tradition.’ (Prosecutor v. Karadžić and Mladić 1: 13922-13923)

What detail about shared feasts gets to surface, in which occasion and from whom, is not necessarily clear. After the original impact, debris continues to wander and becomes more easily subjected to novel displacements. Among the many farcical details from the ICTY records is a conversation between Radovan Karadžić and Judge Iaian Bonomy (*Prosecutor v. Karadžić and*

Mladić 2: 190). As it was George's Day, Karadžić decided to congratulate it to Roma and Serbs, but also to the Scots, thus hinting at Bonomy's national identity. The judge replied that he was shocked to hear Karadžić's sympathies for St George, but that he understands them nevertheless. Was he thinking of the Crusaders or English nationalists? Perhaps, though less likely, he was shocked by the nationalist's recourse to the shared saint? Nevertheless, he instructed Karadžić that his invocation is not particularly apt, as St Andrew is the Scottish protector.

Conclusion: a different kind of saint

Debris... scattered in all directions. Worlds that used to be personal belongings brush against the surfaces of law that does not know what to do with them. Living bodies, dead bodies, saints and seasonal cycles glance through the structured expectations of cross-examination as they become an archive.

Anna L. Tsing (2004: 2) has argued for the study of 'friction', 'the sticky materiality of practical encounters' to help bridge the traps of abstraction and particularity. In the archives, the scapes of seasonal rituals and shared saints encounter not only the paradigms of international law, but also the advocates and executioners of ethnic demarcation. At this intersection, some discrepancy is suddenly made manifest – worlds measured differently reveal each other – in the 'sticky' moments of a repeated question, surprise, confusion and disregard in the courtroom. This friction goes 'against the grain' as archives are produced. However cursory, the intrusions of George, Elijah and their landscapes into these records seem to invite a conversation on the rendition of social relations. They offer themselves as ontological obstacles to the political projects of appropriation and annihilation.

Anthropological fieldwork disrupts the incompleteness of the archive, and this is especially true of ICTY records. I have attempted to demonstrate briefly how the argument of historical religious enmities poured, in a sustained fashion, into the ICTY records through expert witnesses who often reiterated much older Orientalist conceptions of civilizational divides. Their claims contrast with the Bosnian plurality expressed in the feasts of the warm season. The shared lives around which George and Elijah focused made a strange, unannounced entrance into these records, as debris washed onto the shores of another world. At the same time, I have shown how the people in Gacko and elsewhere in Bosnia inventively counter the nationalist *invention of the absence of shared tradition*. This invention of absence, I have argued, is itself becoming a sort of a tradition, now over a century old, inherited and reproduced by political and academic actors and infiltrating courtroom conversations.

As I write this, the Tribunal has come to an end, after twenty-four years of existence and 161 indictments. It concluded with two high-profile sentenc-

es, to Ratko Mladić for genocide, *inter alia*, and six Croatian military officers in the *Prlić et al.* case, for crimes against humanity, again *inter alia*. On the eve of the latter judgement a Catholic liturgical service for a ‘just’ verdict was held in Mostar. During the pronouncement of the judgment, one of the six, Slobodan Praljak, stood up, rejected the sentence and the Tribunal, and took a quick sip of potassium cyanide from a small vial he managed to smuggle into the courtroom. Several thousands attended his commemoration in Zagreb, whilst others lit candles and held his photos on the main square (see Radio Free Europe 2017). Memorabilia with Mladić’s image has been widely available in Bosnia and Serbia for much longer. Short of beatification, these icons of nationalist martyrdom constitute a new kind of saint, one antithetical to the shared lives of George and Elijah.

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