Why do they call it Raška when they mean Sandžak?

On the synchrony and diachrony of identities in Southwest Serbia

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St John's College, University of Oxford

Thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of

DPhil in Anthropology at the University of Oxford

Trinity term 2016

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This thesis investigates the diverse ways in which social agents construct the relationship between past, present and future through a study of historical consciousness and its role in the negotiation of identity and shifting power relations in the border region of Southwest Serbia. The focus of the research falls on ethnic relations between Serbs and Bosniaks, who predominantly inhabit the area, and the boundaries that they imagine surround the world they live in. The goal has been to trace the life of these ethnic boundaries, and with it the relationships between those who imagine them by following their transformations in history, as well as to inquire into elements of social patterns that may be discernable within a contextualized and historicized analysis of the region. In order to achieve this, I have analysed the diverse pasts and futures that coalesce in the many 'time spaces' that Southwest Serbia's social actors inhabit in any present moment and from which they (re)construct these boundaries and their identities. The research has been situated within the wider anthropological discussion about the relation of culture (memory) and history and draws on insights made by relevant studies and ethnographies conducted on the territory of the former Yugoslavia.

The data presented demonstrates that ethnicity and nationality are not fully crystalized as concepts in Southwest Serbia, their contents are imagined in inconsistent ways in and between social groups, while ethno-national identities and histories are not on the whole felt to be crucial to one's personal sense of self, but are perceived and put to use as malleable political resources. As a result, the most dominant allegiance in Southwest Serbia is to one's family, the only group whose 'essence' escapes political malleability and whose members share a common cross-temporal vision.

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Chapter 1 - Introduction

Like numerous other places, Southwest Serbia has more than one history and more than one name. Stories, chronologies, legends and interpretations intersect and overlap just enough to show that a common ground for disagreement exists as different groups engage in a battle to claim as much of 'the truth' for themselves as possible. Southwest Serbia as a concept lives only as an indeterminate geographical idea, but it takes different forms in the minds of its inhabitants and all those who speak about it. A transient Southwest Serbia only becomes a clear structure when it is called Raška[1] or Sandžak, in which case it brings to life a complex of ideas and beliefs about origin, identity, practice, purpose and history, bolstering strong sentiments along with it.

As I will describe later, the territory that Southwest Serbia encompasses today has been part of several different political entities – medieval kingdoms, empires and republics, subjected to an even greater number of economic and political systems. The 'Southwest Serbia' I speak of, and the numerous names its inhabitants use to refer to it, represent a piece of the present, the outcome of long-term processes that have run together throughout history. All that it can be today speaks to us about what it was two decades or centuries ago. One cannot escape the presentism that the use of these terms carries with it, nor can one avoid its long history – the history of war and conquest, peace and development, modernisation and transformation, and everyday life that uttering this or that name implies.

The question I pose in this thesis concerns the workings of history and memory and their interplay – the experience of the past as it is lived by social agents (Dosse 1999, Ricoeur 2004). Although I shall look at the content of memory (Thomson, Frisch and Hamilton

[1] The original spelling of the names of people and places has been retained in this thesis.

1994), it is the relationship between the present and the past, between individual and collective acts of remembrance and interpretations of history, that this thesis is most interested in, as well as their consequences for perceptions of everyday life and political issues in Southwest Serbia. This thesis calls for an acknowledgment of *longue durée* historical processes in the study of how different groups of people perceive, remember, forget and interpret their different pasts and presents. The anthropologist is keen to discover the past in the present, or as Halbwachs has said, 'the persistence of something from the past into the present' (quoted in Berliner 2005), while the historian focuses on the present in the past. I begin from the premise that the interplay of the synchronic and the diachronic in every phenomenon, utterance and action becomes obvious once we discover that a society's history can be *lived* from a multiplicity of often antagonistic standpoints (Berliner 2005), as has been demonstrated by numerous studies (Appadurai 1981, Bloch 1998, Boyarin 1991, Cohn 1995, Cole 2001, Dakhlia 1990, Hastrup 1992, Herzfeld 1991, Jing 1996, Kilani 1992, Rappaport 1990, Rosaldo 1980, Tonkin 1992, Sutton 1998). Building on this insight, I set out to investigate the different ways in which people construct the relationship between past, present and future through a study of historical consciousness and its role in the negotiation of identity and shifting power relations in Southwest Serbia.

Although the focus of this thesis falls on ethnic relations in Southwest Serbia, my aim has been to address the conflicts and identity issues in Southwest Serbia, and the tensions and affinities that stem from them through an exploration of the relationship between memory and history, as well as to inquire into elements of social patterns that may be discernable within a contextualized and historicized analysis of the region. I link this to insights made by relevant studies and ethnographies conducted on the territory of the former Yugoslavia, while situating the research within the post-Yugoslav context. This was necessary for a

number of reasons. The first is the very fact that the region of Southwest Serbia was part of Yugoslavia: this thesis explores identity negotiation from below to examine the effects that 'being' in the post-Yugoslav space took and still takes on people's understanding of self and others. The second reason is Southwest Serbia's position as a border region straddling the meeting place of what are now three independent states. Finally, the context of the break-up of Yugoslavia is also of crucial importance due to vicinity of war that was raging just tens of kilometres away across the border with Bosnia and Herzegovina (henceforward BiH). Boundaries may be lines in the sand, but they produce consequences as meaning-carrying and meaning-making entities. As James Ron observed, 'boundary related inequalities are starkest during war, where one's location vis-à-vis a boundary can mean the difference between life and death' (2000: 609). Today this very notion often crops up in people's understandings of themselves and others in Southwest Serbia.

'Southwest Serbia' will be used as a neutral term in this thesis, the intention being to denote a mountainous border region in Serbia that encompasses a little more than 4500 square kilometres and whose exact location I will pinpoint in the latter part of this chapter. It is for the most part the home of a population that considers itself Slavic in origin, some being of Orthodox Christian and others of Muslim religious affiliation. While the former mostly refer to their homeland as 'Raška', after the name of the medieval kingdom that expanded on its territory, for the Muslim population it is usually known as Sandžak, roughly 'county', a word that reflects the five-century-long rule of the Ottoman Empire in the area. At the same time, the region and its parts are also referred to by many additional names, regardless of ethnicity, but are officially not labelled as any of these – instead, Southwest Serbia is formally part of two counties that extend beyond and cut across the boundaries people imagine when they speak of Raška and Sandžak. Because this thesis is not concerned with one isolated ethnic group – unfeasible due to the many mutual links

that connect the peoples who live in the area – the exclusive use of either of the two terms for the region would be inappropriate. Rather, given my focus on ethnic relations in the context of historical reconstruction in Raška or Sandžak, I have decided that the term 'Southwest Serbia' is the most useful in denoting the territory I am examining.[2] In addition, I will use the terms 'Muslim' and 'Bosniak' interchangeably for reasons that will be explained in Chapter 3 of this thesis.

The historical context

Tracing the historical development of ethnic groups and and the territories they inhabit in the region has been described by numerous historians as a very difficult task, primarily due to the incessant mobility of peoples throughout the centuries. For example, historian St. K. Pavlowitch observes that for centuries the people we today call Serbs did not establish longer lasting links with any particular territory. As a result, he uses the term 'shifting Serbias' in approaching the study of their development: 'I have tried to understand how groups of people were influenced by those [institutional] forces through feudal, tribal or family links, church commemoration, folklore, imported ideologies, competing imperial policies, citizenship, education, military service (...) into feeling identified with the name' (Pavlowitch 2002: viii). In a similar vein, historian Simo Ćirković notes that studying what is today called 'Serbian history' includes the complex task of tracing the past of vast and diverse environments that were relevant to Serbian development (2004: xxi). Such approaches are opposed to histories written through the lens of national reductionism which approach nations and ethnic groups as unchanging, ahistorical entities, translating contemporary national terms, borders and

[2] The term 'Southwest Serbia' is not one that is typically used for the area. In fact, it has begun to be implemented relatively recently, mostly in the speech and documents of non-governmental agents and foreign officials who wish to avoid seeming biased.

identities to times past.

Thus, at the outset of this thesis I would like to make clear my own position with regard to this matter. If in the ensuing text I use what are today understood as national terms to describe historical events that precede the nation-state (such as Serb/Serbian, Albanian, Croatian, etc.), I do not use them in their present-day meaning, nor do I intend to imply their fixed contents or meanings, nor to subscribe to the primordial understanding of nations as natural and eternal categories. Rather, to the best of my ability, I intend to use them in the way they were used in the historical period which is being referred to. For example, it should be clear that when writing the biography of Stefan Nemanja in the 13th century, St Sava's use of the word 'Serbia' indicated a different type of boundary and identity to that implied by Holy Roman Emperor Leopold I in his *Litterae invitatorie* to the Christians of the Balkans in 1690, and both of these are at odds with the contemporary use of the term. When I write about history, I am doing so to further contextualise my findings in the field for the reader, not to indicate that the national history of one or the other group is unique and inevitable. The space and topic of this thesis does not allow me to provide an extensive history (or histories) and historical interpretation of identifications, borders and polities and the institutional and historical forces which influenced groups of people to identify with one name or another. As a result I have chosen to focus on those aspects of the past that are relevant today to my informants' understandings of self and figure as significant in present-day identity politics.

What is referred to as the Raška[3] region, often called Old Raška (*Stara Raška, Стара Рашка)*, is a natural whole that stretches from the river Drina on the west to the river Tara on the south, to Ibar on the east, and the mountains of Kopaonik, Golija, Javor and Zlatibor on the north, these being some of the lands of the medieval Serbian state and kingdom of

[3] For maps, see Appendix A.

Raška that expanded into parts of today's Montenegro up to Pljevlja and Bijelo Polje, and in BiH up to Višegrad and Dobrun, and at its height during the rule of Tsar Stefan Dušan (r. 1331-1346), to the Gulf of Corinth (Pavlowitch 2002: 4). Therefore due to the frequently changing borders of the Raška kingdom, the territories that Raška is thought to encompass today vary according to the source and speaker, but most often in Serbia these include the municipalities of Novi Pazar, Sjenica, Tutin, Raška, Kraljevo, Nova Varoš, Prijepolje, Priboj, Bajina Bašta, Ivanjica, Arilje and Užice.[4] The name Raška itself was used by Western European rulers to refer to this area both during its existence as a state and subsequently during the Ottoman occupation in the form of *Rascia* (Dimić 1976: 33-43).[5] Archaeological findings point to the presence of Christianity in this area, in the valley of river Lim, from as early as the 6th or 7th century (Nikolajević 1976: 206), though it only became the official religion in the 10th century AD (ibid.). This is confirmed by the numerous fortifications and old towns that have been uncovered (Ras, Maglić, Brvenik, Ostrik and others), as well as the churches and monasteries (the most significant architectural and artistic achievements are those of the monasteries of Đurđevi Stupovi, Studenica, Mileševa and Sopoćani), some of them listed as world heritage sites.

The origins of the term Raška remain uncertain. Some academics believe the name may have been derived from the town of Ras which was the centre of the first Serbian kingdom. Others argue that it comes from the Raška River that flows through the centre of the region, in whose valley the Slavs are believed to have settled in when they first arrived here in the 7th century (Morrison and Roberts 2013: 12). Old Raška is where the idea of Serbian statehood is said to have been born and where, subsequently, the first Serbian state organisation was established under Count Vlastimir in the 9th century (Fine 1983: 110).

[4] For a map Southwest Serbia, Raška and Sandžak see Figure 7 in Appendix A. For a map of Serbia divided into municipalities and counties see Figure 8 in Appendix A.
[5] For more on the origins and use of the Raška/Rascia name, see Kalić 1995.

The first capital of what in historiography is known as the Serbian medieval state of Raška was the city of Ras. This was the seat of the great *župan*[6] Stefan Nemanja (r. 1166-1196) who succeeded in uniting the lands of the numerous Serbian tribes. His older son, Stefan Prvovenčani was proclaimed 'king of all Serbia' in 1217 after obtaining a crown from the Pope, and his younger son, Rastko Nemanjić (St Sava), its first archbishop.[7] The link that was established between the Nemanjić dynasty, their dominions and the church in the subsequent period grew stronger, particularly when Stefan Nemanja and Rastko Nemanjić were raised to sainthood as St Simeon and St Sava. This inspired a cult of dynastic saints and the Nemanjić state that in the following centuries was maintained by the Church, in oral literature, and from the 19th century onwards, endorsed as important symbols in nation and state building efforts. As historian Vladan Jovanović observed, by developing a sense of kinship with the Nemanjić dynasty the population could be persuaded to participate in the effort to create a new state as powerful as the old (Jovanović 2014: 98). In the specific intellectual climate of the nineteenth-century renewal of Serbia and the awakening of national consciousness and historical awareness, Raška came to stand not just for a place, but for a complex of issues that run deep into the roots of Serbian medieval history.

It was, in fact, after the mid-12th century that the word 'Raška' began to be increasingly used as a synonym for 'Serbia' in sources. Prior to that, Byzantine, Hungarian, papal and other documents only spoke of Serbia, while Raška and, predominantly Ras are mentioned on fewer occasions and with a different connotation.[8] After Stefan Nemanja conquered the Raška region, he built the Đurđevi Stupovi monastery in honour of the victory, according

[6] A *zhupan (župan*) is the leader of a *zhupa (župa*) which represents a group of villages like a municipality. A *zhupan* could be said to resemble a count.

[7] The kingdom of Stefan Prvovenčani was at the time under the jurisdiction of the Orthodox archbishop of Ohrid, but in 1219, Rastko Nemanjić obtained the right to establish an archbishoripc for the dominions of the Nemanjić Kingdom, that is, the right to an autocephalous church.

[8] For example, Constantine Porphyrogenitus uses the term 'Rassa' to refer to the border area between Serbia and Bulgaria in the 9th century (Kalić 1995).

to sources 'in the very centre of Ras' (Nešković 1984: 12-13). Once Ras became the centre of his state, the name Raška began to acquire its new meaning - the oldest reliably dated attestation to this is in a 1186 charter from Kotor which refers to Stefan Nemanja as the 'zhupan of Rascia' (Novaković 1912: 22). The biographies of Stefan Nemanja written by his sons St Sava and Stefan Prvovenčani, however, speak only of 'Serbian lands' – for example, Stefan Prvovenčani described the second baptism of his father to have taken place in the monastery of St Peter and Paul in 'the middle of the Serbian land' (*usred srpske zemlje)* and the location of his 'throne' (*stolno mesto)* (Georgievska 1988). All subsequent rulers of the area would include the word Serbia in their title.[9] On the other hand, in foreign sources after the mid-12th century, Rascia and Serbia were often used interchangeably and sometimes together, to refer to rulers, lands and people.[10] The name Raška survived well into Ottoman times in Western sources.[11] For Serbs today, the name Raška stands as a symbol of the Nemanjić State, the achievements of the Nemanjić dynasty and the deeds of St. Sava, and figures as an important historical reference point.

Although they cover slightly different territories, Raška and Sandžak are today frequently used as coterminous.[12] Sandžak is typically understood as encompassing the municipalities of Nova Varoš, Prijepolje, Priboj, Sjenica, Tutin and Novi Pazar, in Serbia, and Pljevlja, Berane, Bijelo Polje, Andrijevica, Plav and Rožaje in Montenegro, with the

[9] Stefan Prvovenčani was proclaimed 'King of all Serbia' in 1217 (Pavlowitch 2002: 3). Stefan Dušan called himself the 'King of Serbia and Romania' [land of the Romans], and in 1345/6 proclaimed himself as the 'Emperor of the Serbs and the Greeks' (Pavlowitch 2002: 4). After Dušan's death, the Nemanjić state was divided among numerous fedual lords. Vukašin Mrnjačević, for example, called himself 'King of Serbia'. His son, Kraljević Marko, although an Ottoman vassal, took up the same title.

[10] For instance, when the Bosnian Ban Tvrtko I was crowned King of the 'Serbs and Bosnia' in the Monastery of Mileševa, the burial place of St Stava near present day Prijepolje in 1377, he was called the 'King of Rascia' and his state the 'Rascian Kingdom' (Ćirković 1964: 138).

[11] In a letter to to patriarch Arsenije III Čarnojević, Holy Roman Leopold I used the term 'Rascians' to refer to one group of believers under the patriarch's jurisdiction (Mikavica 2005: 11)

[12] This is the case not just in everyday speech, but often done so by politicians and even some academics. For an example see Rudić and Stepić 1995, Vlahović 1995, Gigović 2008. For maps see figures 7-9 in Appendix A.

city of Novi Pazar as its historical centre.[13] Novi Pazar was probably founded in 1456 near the former Serbian capital of Ras (Čar-Drnda 1984). The military feats that led to its foundation began with the Battle of Marica in 1371, near the village of Chernomen in Greece, and continued with the Battle of Kosovo in 1389, in which a group of forces, led by Serbian Prince Lazar, fought against the Ottomans.[14] These battles opened the way for further Turkish conquests to the west and north. The city of Skoplje fell soon afterwards in 1392, followed by most of the territory in the vicinity of the future city of Novi Pazar, such as the Zvečan fortress, the old town of Jeleč and the mining centre of Gluhavica (ibid.). In 1399, the Ottomans took what is in historiography referred to as the 'Serbian-Bosnian border', symbolised by the river Lim, and a type of dual Serbian-Turkish rule was established, persisting in the region until finally, in 1455, together with the surrounding lands, it came under the complete control of the Turks, where it remained until 1912.

It is unclear when the Sandžak name began to circulate as the signifier of a specific and bounded territory – most probably the region came to be known by this name during the second half of the 19th century (Morrison and Roberts 2013: 3). When written in lower case, the word *sandžak* (from *sancak* in Turkish, meaning 'flag') stands for one type of administrative unit in the Ottoman empire, the county. In the period of its greatest expansion, the Ottoman Empire consisted of almost eight hundred *sancak*s. The name and number of administrative units of the Ottoman Empire changed often and abruptly, reflecting current imperial policies, the organisation of power and territorial expansion. Similarly, the number of municipalities that Sandžak is thought to encompass changes depending on one's interlocutor.

[13] For a map that includes both Serbia and Montenegro see figure 7 in Appendix A.
[14] The forces led by Prince Lazar consisted of a coalition of Serbian lords, contingents sent by King Tvrtko of Bosnia, and a diverse group of knights and warriors that included Albanians, Vlachs, Bulgars, etc. (Pavlowitch 2002: 9)

Although some see it as stretching up to Kosovska Mitrovica and including parts of Bosnia, for most it simply mirrors Raška together with parts of northern Montenegro. Appearing in the 14th century, *sancak*s were initially the basic units of the Ottoman Empire and its feudal system, imagined as military districts.[15] Along with a paid professional army, the Ottoman military forces also included bodies of cavalry known as the *spahije (spahi)*, which would provide military service in return for estates given and guaranteed by the Sultan. In times of war, *spahi*s were under the command of the ruler of the *sancak* in which they lived, the *sancak-bey.* During the late 14th century, *sancak*s lost their original status, and with the establishment of *beglerbeglu*ks (provinces), later known as *eyalet*s, *vilayet*s or *pasaluk*s*, sancak*s came to represent sub-districts or parts of provinces (Mušović 1979: 42-44).

For most of the duration of the Ottoman Empire, the territory of the Sandžak in its present-day meaning was included within or divided among other *sancak*s and *pasaluk*s – the Pljevlja, Sjenica, Novi-Pazar, Herzegovian, Bosnian, Smederevo and Pristina *sancak*s*,* or the Bosnian and Belgrade *pasaluk*s. In 1455, the inner territory of medieval Raška became part of the first organized Turkish administrative unit in the Balkans – the Skoplje *krajište* (region). When Bosnia fell under Ottoman rule in 1463, the Bosnian *sancak* was founded and part of today's Sandžak was included within it, namely the *vilayet*s of Sjenica, and the Ras and Zvečan fortresses. Numerous administrative reforms took place during the turbulent 19th century in an attempt to calm the situation and find an organisational scheme that would help the Sultan maintain control over his lands. As a consequence, the Novipazar *sancak* was founded within the Bosnian *vilayet* in 1867, and it is the territory of this particular *sancak* that is most probably the Sandžak that continues to live to this day in

[15] For more information about the organisation and history of the Ottoman Empire in Serbia and Bosnia, see Šabanović 1959*;* Rizaj 1973*;* Čelebija 1957*;* Kosančić 1912; Novaković 1892.

name. It consisted of the *kaza*s[16] of Novi Pazar, Sjenica, Nova Varoš, Prijepolje, (Kosovska) Mitrovica, Priština, Rožaje, Bijelo Polje, Gusinje, Pljevlja and Kolašin (the last five are in present-day Montenegro). A number of small changes followed up until 1902, when the Novipazar *sancak* was broken up as an administrative unit: the Sjenica *sancak* was formed in its place, while the city of Novi Pazar was integrated into the Pristina *sancak*. This state of affairs remained until the First Balkan War after which the area was divided between Serbia and Montenegro.

The territories of Raška or Sandžak are alike a wedge placed between central Serbia, BiH and Montenegro, which has given it great geostrategic importance in the eyes of all those wishing to rule over the Balkans. It has long been an area where the opposing interests of neighbouring states, great powers and religions have become entangled. Because of its predominantly mountainous relief, the Balkan Peninsula contains few strategic routes permitting commercial communication, the movement of peoples or military campaigns. One of these is the once renowned 'Dubrovnik Road', which connected Ragusa in present-day Croatia with the interior of the Balkan peninsula, passing through Prijepolje, Sjenica and Novi Pazar to connect with the Via Militaris in Niš, a city in south-east Serbia, before leading on towards Sofia and finally Constantinople. In the period of Ottoman rule, this road served as the Turkish pipeline for Bosnia – it was a route taken by merchant caravans coming from far-off lands, travellers and armies. The specific geographical position of the area made it a key part of Serbian foreign policy from the 19th century onwards. With the breaking out of the First Serbian Rebellion in 1804 and the establishment of two Serbian centres of statehood in Šumadija[17] and Old Montenegro,[18] the territory of Old Raška, squeezed in between the two, was considered a link between all the 'Serbian' lands (the

[16] *Kaza* – a group of municipalities.
[17] Šumadija is the name for the area of central Serbia.
[18] Old Montenegro refers to the lands of the first Montenegrin state, which had its capital in the city of Cetinje.

autonomous part of Serbia with Montenegro, BiH). It is for this reason that Austria-Hungary fought for it during the Berlin Congress of 1878: Serbia and Montenegro were both declared independent states, and in order to prevent the two from uniting, Austria-Hungary struggled for and won the right to position its military garrisons in the Novipazar *sancak* in addition to establishing a protectorate over BiH – a state of affairs that persisted until 1908 (Morrison and Roberts 2013: 3).[19] After 1912, the area of Southwest Serbia has successively been part of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, Milošević's rump Yugoslavia – the Socialist Republic of Yugoslavia, Serbia and Montenegro – and, at this day, the Republic of Serbia.

Southwest Serbia as a research site

This thesis is the result of a recently awakened interest of mine in the area of Southwest Serbia to which I have often been – I say recent, because on average I have visited the region once a year throughout my life. The reason for this is a personal connection, namely that I used to have close relatives in the city of Sjenica, as well as in the nearby mountain village of Donje Goračiće, though they have since moved permanently to Belgrade. In my childhood, my stays were mostly confined to the little village that is settled entirely by Serbs; in later years my visits also often included short stays in Sjenica with my cousins.

When I speak of Southwest Serbia in this thesis, I will be referring to the area that most people imagine when they talk about the Serbian parts of Raška or Sandžak – the six municipalities of Novi Pazar, Sjenica, Tutin, Priboj, Prijepolje and Nova Varoš, whose

[19] For a map of the region after the Berlin Congress see figure 6 in Appendix A.

centres are cities of the same names.[20] The reason I have chosen to focus on municipalities in Serbia is twofold. Since the disintegration of the State Union of Serbia and Montenegro in 2006, the cross-border aspect of the region has begun to wane in an ideological, political and economic sense. The territory of what used to be understood as a cross-border region has been, in the two states, subject to diverse courses of development as a result of not only separate but also starkly different political and state influences, divergent policies and overall contexts. Furthermore, the ethnic composition of the population differs on the Serbian and Montenegrin side of the border. Consequently, attempting to encompass the topic of this thesis within these two separate states would have made the research area too broad. Secondly, the separation has exerted a strong effect on everyday life as confirmed by informants of all generations, particularly those living in the proximity of the Montenegrin border. The majority have indicated that communication, exchange and collaboration across the border is minimal and, as such, figures as marginal to them. However, because exploring the historical and political identity of Southwest Serbia was a significant theme in this thesis, the historical and conceptual links with Montenegro will be explored in the thesis.

Together, the six municipalities of Southwest Serbia that I have studied make up a cold, dry and mountainous region, abundant in rivers, that is among the most picturesque but also the most underdeveloped in the Balkans. According to census data from 2011, Muslims comprise the majority in the first three municipalities: in Novi Pazar the Muslim population makes up 81.21%, in Sjenica 78.55% and in Tutin 93.51%. In the latter three it is the Serbs who dominate in numbers: in Priboj the Serbs make up 75.86%, in Nova

[20] As I have previously stated, the six municipalities are officialy not referred to as either Sandžak or Raška, rather, they are divided into two separate counties, the Zlatibor and Raška county, which extend beyond and cut across the imagined boundaries of Raška and Sandžak. To see the official territorial organisation of the Republic of Serbia into municipalities and counties, consult figure 8 in Appendix A.

Varoš 89.55% and in Prijepolje 52.61%. In total, the six municipalities have 238,787 inhabitants, of which Bosniaks, Muslims (as a nation)[21] and Serbs made up 97.32% in the 2011 census. Of the remaining 2.68%, over half were those marked under 'unknown' and 'undeclared' and the rest were divided between various ethno-national groups of which the most numerous are the Roma, who made up 0.42% of the total number of the region's inhabitants. As we will see later, though many informants pinpoint their family's origins elsewhere – usually Montenegro, Albania or Herzegovina, most identify as either Serb or Bosniak Slavs. It is for this reason, as well as because the predominant historical and political narratives in the region are constructed around the Serbian and Bosniak/Muslim identities, that I decided to focus my research primarily on the populations these narratives refer to and target. Furthermore, I would like to stress that in this thesis I will use the very terms that my informants use to refer to themselves and to others when they describe both everyday and historical events. I do not aim to promote a view of identities as permanently fixed. Rather, such an approach will allow me to explore the very ambivalence between the diverse meanings of ethnic categories when used in different contexts and in different narratives, as well as to trace their historical transformations and the consequences and reactions to efforts that promote a consensus on their contents.

In order to answer the question in which this thesis is interested, I have conducted a critical review of the relevant theoretical literature in anthropology and, in some cases, related disciplines, the majority written in English as well as Serbian/Bosnian/Croatian/Montenegrin, as these are the languages I understand. However, the reader will notice that the use of historical literature also figures as important in this thesis. Historical data serve two purposes in this work. One is to acquaint the reader with the historical context in which the geographical area is immersed. The other is to act as

[21] See Chapter 3 for more on the term *Musliman,* that is, Muslim as a nation.

both the backdrop for and one dimension of theoretical inquiry, as I explore the place of the present in long-term historical transformations and the role of history in power struggles in Southwest Serbia.

I used a combination of methods to collect data, predominantly qualitative (participant observation, unstructured and semi-structured interviews, case studies) and to a lesser extent quantitative (the statistical analysis of data gathered from the interviews). All research questions in this thesis were explored by juxtaposing personal biographies and memories with public narratives in order to examine to what extent and how their interweaving created a sense of identification in the region today (cf. Obeyesekere 1975). For this purpose, I conducted participant observation and long-term semi-structured interviews with persons who were both directly and indirectly involved in the various events and processes, or those who experienced their after-effects, thus collecting both oral testimonies and other ethnographic material. I also conducted a textual and comparative analysis of reports made by governmental bodies, records of the debates and speeches of political and public notables and media sources, along with post-factum documentation and memoirs, all in order to examine how the former and the latter inform and shape each other.

Furthermore, in order to explore the different aspects of the identity of the region's inhabitants and determine which social groups are most important for their personal senses of self, I used a questionnaire to conduct semi-structured interviews with a sample of 40 informants in the municipalities of Sjenica, Prijepolje and Priboj. All informants were asked a set of the same 72 questions, of which some were demographic, the majority scale, the minority multiple choice and a number open-ended. The answers were recorded on a data sheet, but because the informants were also asked to elaborate and explain their

answers if they wished to do so, the conversations were recorded with a dictaphone, being transcribed and analysed afterwards in order to gain a more thorough grasp of the answers to closed questions. The methodology used and some of the results obtained using this method will be presented in Chapter 4. However, because this approach provided me with an opportunity to delve more deeply into the numerous sensitive issues with which this research deals, the insights gained will be presented throughout the thesis.

Although I made field inquires in all the municipalities of Southwest Serbia, my principal field site was the municipality of Sjenica, while Prijepolje figured as a secondary site. Sjenica is just some 300km away from the capital city of Belgrade, but the long, winding road up Mt. Javor that leads to it seems like a pathway into a world altogether different once one reaches the mountain plateau that is the gateway to the city. Authors say that the first mention of the town of Sjenica by that name can be found in a charter that the Serbian emperor Uroš issued to Dubrovnik in 1252, proposing Sjenica as a possible transit stop for merchants from the city (Premović-Aleksić 1995), although archaeologists have discovered the remains of a fortress dating to the 4th century (ibid.). However, not much points to the long history of this city today. Due to the terrain and the harsh climate, the land of the municipality of Sjenica is most fit for cattle-raising. This is especially the case for the Pešter plateau of Sjenica, which is surrounded by seven mountains and renowned for its dairy products – according to the 2002 census, 67% of the active population works in agriculture (RZS 2005), most of them self-employed on their small farms. Sjenica is primarily known to outsiders as the coldest part of former Yugoslavia and the home of a characteristic brand of strong white cheese, *sjenički sir*. The municipality has an average annual temperature of 6^{o} C and is the place of the lowest recorded temperature: -38.4^{o} C in 1954 (Šaponjić 2006.), although this record was broken in 2006 when -39 degrees were measured in a village on the Pešter plateau (ibid.). The municipality had 26,392 inhabitants

(RZS 2012), of whom more than half live in rural areas in scattered villages surrounding the town of Sjenica, numbering from 11 inhabitants in the smallest village to more than 500 in the largest (RZS 2005). Prijepolje, on the other hand, though adjacent to the municipality of Sjenica, lies in a rich and fertile valley of the river Lim in the foothills of Mt Jadovnik over which it also spreads and has an ethnically more balanced composition. In 2011, it was 52.61% Serb and 44% Muslim, with a total of 37,059 inhabitants, of whom 13,330 live in the town of Prijepolje (RZS 2012). Prijepolje was an important transit stop for merchants travelling on the Dubrovnik road, as well as a pilgrimage site due to the 13th century Orthodox monastery at Mileševa founded by the Serbian King Vladislav and the relics of St Sava, spiritual father of Serbs, which were kept there until the end of the 16th century, when they were confiscated and burnt by the Ottomans in Belgrade. Both Sjenica and Prijepolje have been experiencing a population decline, and Sjenica has been officially declared demographically 'endangered' because of its aging population, as well as being one of the least developed municipalities in Serbia (KORNRP 2009).[22]

Novi Pazar was founded in the 15th century by Isa-bey Ishaković (Čar-Drnda 1984).[23] Because it was a commercial centre, the biggest in the region until Sarajevo was established, the Turks called it *Bazar* – the old Serbian capital Ras became *Eski Bazar* (old market), while Novi Pazar got its name from the Turkish words for New Market – *Yeni Bazar* (ibid.). Although the city is distinctly Muslim, it is surrounded by some of the oldest and most prominent Orthodox monuments, such as the world heritage sites of the Sopoćani monastery dating to the 13th century and Đurđevi Stupovi to the 12th, both located on the outskirts of the city. Of the six municipalities of Southwest Serbia, Novi Pazar is the most populated with 100,410 inhabitants, 66,527 of which live in the city of Novi Pazar (RZS

[22] See footnote 26 for data.
[23] Isa-bey Ishaković was a famous Ottoman general and governor of the Bosnian *vilayet*. He founded many Ottoman cities, the most significant being Novi Pazar and Sarajevo.

2012), which is still the regional commercial centre and one of the most developed, not just in Southwest Serbia, but in the surrounding area as well. The city is located in the valley of four rivers and is surrounded by the Golija and Rogozna mountains. Distinctly marked by oriental architecture and its rising minarets, the city is known as much for its textile industry and skilful merchants as for its café culture, and it is one of the main religious and political centres of Muslims in Serbia.

I spent August and December of 2009 in both Novi Pazar and Sjenica (the cities are 56km apart), using these stays to make contacts, conduct interviews and collect material from the local libraries, NGOs and the museum in Novi Pazar. Due to my interest in the regionalisation process that became a very pressing issue in Serbia that year, I used my stays to follow its development closely in both electronic and print media and compiled a file of press clippings. Furthermore, I was present at a round table in Belgrade organized by Serb NGOs from Southwest Serbia as a response to problems with the regionalism process. Since I was not at the time able to secure a seat at events organised by Bosniak parties and organisation, I conducted interviews with available Bosniak representatives, such as the Public Relations Officer of Mufti Zukorlić and the Islamic Community in Serbia which he led at the time, as well as notable members of the non-government sector in Novi Pazar. While in Sjenica, I stayed in the house of my relatives. In Novi Pazar, I stayed with a Serbian family with whom I had not been acquainted up to then.

I returned to the region in December 2012 to conduct further fieldwork. I remained until mid-October 2013, and again from August to October 2014, spending the majority of my time stationed in Sjenica. From 2012 onwards, I spent a total of two months in Prijepolje and nine months in Sjenica. My visits to other towns in Southwest Serbia were mostly

short-term – three days in Tutin, a week in Priboj, three weeks in Nova Varoš and three weeks in Novi Pazar broken up into a number of visits.

In Sjenica I now stayed on my own in the empty house of my relatives, who had moved away. Although I had some acquaintances in the town, I had to create a network of informants from scratch and learn about the geography of this vast municipality on my own, as well as skills such as how to use a wood-burning stove to get through the cold Sjenica winter. Since the settlements of the municipality are scattered across the vast plain of Pešter and I do not drive, getting around required a mountain bicycle and considerable training in order to cover the distances, although I was at times aided by friends who offered to drive me. When conducting initial field inquires, I often made pre-arranged visits, but unannounced drop-ins were frequent too. The fact that my family on my father's side originates from the area greatly aided me while conducting fieldwork in both unfamiliar villages and in the city, since I discovered that most people recognise each other on the basis of family and village affiliation, the first question in most encounters typically being '*Čija si?'* [literally, 'Whose are you?', that is, 'Which family do you belong to?']. The fact that people I encountered for the first time were able to identify me on the basis of my surname and the village my family had resided in for the last hundred years meant that we were not strangers and induced more intimate interactions than would have otherwise been the case.[24] This phenomenon opened up an important question about identity and group belonging that I had not anticipated when putting together my research proposal. It prompted me to conduct further exploration using initially unplanned methods such as interviews on the basis of a semi-structured interview, as described above, and led me to explore additional field sites. The way my informants interacted with me, and my own

[24] I discovered this on a number of occasions when I failed to identify myself at the outset of an interaction. I was typically met with some suspicion and sometimes even avoidance that persisted until I 'exposed' my origins.

position in the field as someone who was at the same time an insider and an outsider, formed a significant part of my research and, thus, greatly affected the research process – the theme of family affiliation is one example of this. As a result, I will further outline the limitations and opportunities, and overall impact of my positionality in the field in the following section.

Positionality and research

My perception of Sjenica and the surrounding region before I began research was marked by early childhood experiences with my grandparents and long summer vacations with cousins, and though I had previous experience in the region, I was never, prior to fieldwork, immersed in it. Any understanding that I had about the history or character of the region was implicit, and it had not occurred to me that this could be interesting research material for an anthropologist. During my first year of Master's studies at Oxford I had already written a research proposal for an entirely different topic and geographical area, when I had the opportunity to translate a number of historical articles on the *Novipazar sancak* . Reading the material opened a window into the historical and social context of a place which I had up to then mostly viewed through the prism of my personal experiences, and it provided me with an opportunity to situate my memories within new findings, enriching them with an additional layer of meaning. At the same time, Sandžak/Raška had emerged as a frequent news topic in the preceding years – political relations between Bosniak political actors in the area had reached a crisis point, culminating with shootings in 2008, while Serb-Bosniak relations had also come to the fore due to the regionalisation process that was underway at the time. Finally, I found that while there was considerable historical and archaeological research on the area, and some studies in ethnomusicology and ethnology, it had been mostly absent in anthropological literature. Save for a number of analyses on politics and human rights in the region conducted

by non-government organisations, overall, the topic was comparatively under-researched by foreign scholars (relative to other parts of the former Yugoslavia). All this taken together prompted me to reconsider my chosen topic of research.

While preparing for fieldwork I thought at length about the possible unconscious element of bias in my research, particularly given my identity, but also about the assumptions that informants might have about me, due to this and my role as researcher from a western university,. At the outset, I was aware that I was going into the field with numerous *a priori* suppositions due to the lack of knowledge and experience that I had yet to gain through data collection. For example, one of my initial hypotheses was that in the region I would encounter a divided society and a place of ethnic conflict bubbling under the surface of everyday life that I had been acquainted with only in passing up to then. When I started my fieldwork, however, my research indicated a more complex situation: notwithstanding the existing ethnic and religious differences between my informants and the covert inter-ethnic and intra-ethnic political conflicts, the inhabitants of the region were at the same time linked not only by many common values, as we will see later, but also by common problems, emotions and perceptions, all of which fostered diverse alliances, relationships and interactions cutting across ethnic boundaries. As I inquired into these and sought an understanding of the context that shaped them, it emerged that focusing on ethnic relations fostered the bias that ethnicities are the principal social category of these communities. I chose to broaden the scope in an effort to determine the key factors of social organisation, so as to approach ethno-nationality as a context-specific variable (cf. Jansen 2005).

For example, soon after going into the field I confirmed that it was very difficult to make generalisations regarding how some particular aspect of my identity, such as nationality, was perceived by Bosniaks/Serbs, understood as homogenous, since no such groups could

be delimited in the field, and neither my own nor their ethnicity could be or were looked at in isolation. The dynamic varied and the reactions I came across depended on diverse factors, not a clear-cut Serb/Bosniak dichotomy. There is no one 'quintessential Serb' whose role I could assume, go into the field, and thus, be recognised in one way by other 'quintessential Serbs' and in another by 'quintessential Bosniaks', and my informants' attitudes, as I will describe below, confirmed this. The narratives on disunity that have pervaded politics and social life in Serbia in the last three decades (cf. Naumović 2005, 2009), which will be explored further in Chapter 4, have solidified non-ethnic social rifts based on divergent conceptions of what it means to be Serbian (or Muslim, or Bosniak), and, as a rule, judging a person solely on the basis of their declared ethnicity is today considered a futile exercise by the majority of my informants. My role and intentions were assessed on the basis of combination of variables, including, but not limited to, my ethnic identity. In fact, it is my very position of being an 'insider' in some respects, and an outsider in others, that made it all the more clear that Serbs and Bosniaks are not within themselves homogenous groups, but divided by numerous social fissures (cf. Scott and Ganga 2006: 21).

As Linda Nelson observed, the insider status of 'native' anthropologists is not always recognised in the field as a rule, but rather, they experience 'gradations of endogeny' (1996). When I went into the field, I discovered that my position was more ambiguous than I had expected. Such a status was not an impediment – in fact, analysing the multi-layered interactions with informants provided an opportunity to gain important insights on the topic of research (cf. Merriam et al. 2001, Rose 1997). For example, the shared sense of ethnic affiliation suggested insider status in relation to the Serb population of the region, however, this commonality brought to the fore our social differences as indicated by my place of birth, accent, place of study, religiosity, worldviews, political standpoints and so on. Similarly, in one breath I was an 'insider' in the region by virtue of my family's origins, but in

the other my role as a researcher emphasised my unfamiliarity with the region, while my place of birth indicated our differing social positions, underlining my simultaneous outsider status.

My specific accent and the fact that I was not fluent in the local speech variety were perceived as particularly important markers of our different cultural identities.[25] Most people in the region speak a similar dialect and the lexicon on average contains more words of Turkish origins, many of which I encountered for the first time. Aware of this, my interlocutors would often, on their own initiative, pause mid-sentence to explain the meaning of a particular word or phrase they had used. Furthermore, the fact that I do not 'have a strong Belgrade accent for someone from Belgrade' was often raised as a compliment, suggesting that dialect itself is perceived as important in determining the nature of an interaction and representing the contrast between what is seen as 'the centre' and 'the periphery'. This issue emerged as important when I was studying cultural activity in Sjenica in particular (see Chapter 7), where both the history of activity and the way it was narrated to me indicated how strongly the centre-periphery divide and Sjenica's position in that regard resonate in the community. My gender and age added a further layer. These were particularly significant in interaction with older and/or male informants, since my status as a young woman downplayed social differences allowing me to broach otherwise serious or sensitive topics more freely (cf. Kim 1994, Stacey 1988). In some of these situations, my family affiliation and age indicated a sense of hope – in a region plagued by emigration,[26] my presence there was interpreted as *return* [povratak], which reaffirmed the insider aspect of my position.

[25] For more on the role of language as a mediator of cultural identity see Basso 1996, Medicine 2001 and Ochs 1992.

[26] We can draw conclusions about the level of emigration in the municipalities of the region by looking at total population numbers by decade, as well as by comparing these with the municipal fertility rates. The average number of liveborn children per woman in all six municipalities is greater than 2, and in some areas considerably higher than the national average of 1.96 - in Sjenica it is 3.01, in Tutin 3.41, Novi Pazar 2.73 and Prijepolje 2.64 (RZS 2013). However, Sjenica, Nova Varoš, Prijepolje, Tutin and Priboj have all experienced population decline since 1991, and some, such as Sjenica and Nova Varoš have a lower number of inhabitants today than in 1941 (RZS 2014). This is especially pronounced in rural areas. The only

In contrast, in my interactions with peers or those younger than me, the dynamic was somewhat different and primarily determined by social class, my presence in the region observed as an indication of privilege. Such an outsider status was particularly underscored by the fact that I was, in part, treated as a 'guest'. As a result, I had the liberty to forge close relationships with persons of different gender, generation, marital status, ethnicity, political orientation, level of religious ardour, etc. At the same time, like other researchers, my presence was permanently defined by my capacity to leave both the place of research as well as the ties of the local system of relationships that I had entered into at will (cf. Stacey 1988: 22). Conversely, most of my informants, both young and old, male and female, could not transgress social boundaries and customs without some difficulty and sanction, and their freedom to 'leave' was restricted by numerous social, cultural and economic constraints. In a region where leaving is seen as an epidemic, and those who have stayed behind have often expressed to me their deep regret for doing so, such a situation significantly contributed to the insider/outsider dynamic of my own position *vis-à-vis* others in the field.

My informants did not, thus, form their impressions of me by looking though an ethnically-coded prism (cf. Henig 2012: 4), but on the basis of my biography (family affiliation, profession, place of birth, place of study, research topic, etc.), distinguishing characteristics, socio-cultural background (gender, age, ethnicity, educational background, class, etc.), and our developing relationships. This, in turn, shaped my own perception of them and, as I indicated above, induced a shift in research focus from their ethnicity to their other defining identities and idiosyncrasies. Other anthropologists have similarly observed that informants greatly determine the course of ethnographic research, as well as that the relationship between the

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municipality that has experienced great growth has been Novi Pazar which is primarily due to its position as a destination for the inhabitants of the surrounding towns (ibid.).

researcher and researched is dynamic (Narayan 1993, Mohanty 1989, Page 1988). Informants may affect the researcher through their own ascription of identities and roles to her, based on their own background (Harrison 1997, Smith 1999), and at the same time, their own understanding of self may be influenced in interaction with the researcher (Williams 1996).

Most notably, I found that even the slightest indication that I may be overstressing ethnicity in conversation, and in general, any perceived (real or imagined) attempt to reduce interaction to its ethnic fundamentals was as a rule rejected in personal interaction and interpreted as a breach of trust, causing an immediate rift. We would each 'put ourselves in a box' and continue the interaction from such positions, which would in turn bring to the fore the corresponding biases on both sides. The conversation would, in such cases, quickly become formal and distant for two reasons: partly because such an approach was in contrast with a personal sense of self and resonated with political narratives, but also because of the particularities of my own position in the field. This was the case among informants of all ethnicities. Overall, the individuals I met in the field did not approach me in such a manner, and they expected the same in return if social interaction was to continue. I considered this to be a very important finding and, as a result, explored the phenomenon in detail, the results of which are given mainly in Chapter 4. Opting to expand the research from an ethnic to a communal focus was, therefore, also significant in overcoming the limitations arising out of my own positionality.

At the same time, I found that the fact my father was from the region (and to some people, known as a notable person) inclined most informants to 'excuse' the fact that I had been born and raised in Belgrade, was doing a doctorate at a Western university and was at liberty to leave the field. Instead, they would put a stronger emphasis on the belief that I had, in some capacity,

'returned' to conduct research on my *rodni kraj* [place of origin].[27] This was more pronounced during fieldwork conducted from 2012 onwards, after my father had passed away and my close relatives had permanently moved from Sjenica to Belgrade. Together with other aspects of my biography, my familial affiliation to the region provided a certain assurance as to my trustworthiness. I did not go into the field knowing or expecting that this would more often than not be an advantage. It was only after several months, that I realised introducing myself by opening with a reference to my surname could open many doors, particularly to those individuals who seemed ambivalent about my intentions. My preconceived notions about the importance of various aspects of my positionality were challenged when I entered the field, particularly with regard to my ethnic identity, which turned out to play a less important role than I anticipated.

The fact that I was conducting research on the region in the capacity of a University of Oxford scholar was at times perceived as odd, if not questionable, although this judgment varied greatly depending on my stated intentions, and particularly, on the above-mentioned approach to others as ethnic subjects versus *individuals*. For example, while conducting research on the cultural scene in Sjenica for Chapter 7, I was mostly met with approval. Conversely, while I was collecting historical data on the Regional Antifascist Council of the National Liberation of Sandžak some interlocutors reacted negatively, while others assumed my intentions to be political and in turn told anecdotes or gave advice which they thought would be helpful in that regard. Similarly, I found that I had to choose my words in informal settings carefully, both in Bosniak and Serb company. In the latter case, our shared ethno-national identity and participation in the 'imagined' dominant national culture, when glossed over, could be expected to guarantee unproblematic interaction and mutual 'loyalties'. However, presuming commonalities with informants on such a basis would have been problematic

[27] Similar connotation to home, only referring to a wider area one originates from.

(cf. Hastrup 1992) – the situation was, as we have seen, more complex and nuanced. I was not an insider who knew the local and regional culture and who had lived the context, nor were my role and intentions beyond all doubt. If anything, being Serbian made my initial position more precarious with regard to other Serbs because the ambiguity emphasised socio-cultural differences, our divergent class status and the extent to which we differed in our understandings of what it means to be Serbian. Like other ethnographers in a new setting, I was there to learn the intricacies of everyday interaction and the values that guide them, and, as Jacobs-Huey argues, my status as 'native' did not diminish, but in fact increased the level of care with which I had to negotiate my legitimacy in the field (Jacobs-Huey 2002: 793).

My particular position as an anthropologist in the field was, as we have seen, context-specific and affected by a combination of my identities, roles and characteristics and those of the people I encountered. These were important variables that shaped both the research topic and the research methods I adopted – and as we have seen, in some cases, my position was enabling, in others, inhibiting (Hastrup 1992). It is, in fact, through reflection on my ambiguous positionality and relations with others that I came to several realisations which significantly impacted the course of my research. One of these was recognising that in order to minimise both my potential ethnic bias and the bias towards ethnicity as a dominant social category, it was necessary to study ethnic relations and ethnic identities as part of a broader inquiry into intercommunal relations and group identities, their histories and memories. Such an approach then allowed me to investigate the extent to which ethno-national categories had been institutionalised within popular identities. Secondly, the combination of my positionality and research goals prompted me to expand my research methods to include semi-structured interviews using a questionnaire, as I will further explain in Chapter 4. Thirdly, I became aware of the importance of family affiliation as a determinant of identity, honour as one of the more

significant values guiding social interaction, and the importance of the political/personal divide, all of which I then explored further. In all of these cases, moving the focus from the ethnic to broader themes opened up space for a more in-depth, contextualised and personalised discussion of perceptions, emotions and issues surrounding ethnic identities and relations.

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In this introductory chapter I have briefly presented the reader with the key themes and ideas of the thesis as well as the context on which the research was based. The second chapter will centre around the theoretical debates on history and memory in anthropology and lay out the analytical framework for the thesis. I will begin with a summary of the ways in which the past has been approached in anthropology and continue with a more detailed analysis of a number of works that stem from memory studies, such as those of Jan Assmann, Paul Connerton, Kirsten Hastrup, Marshal Sahlins, and others. The notions of *cultural memory* (Assmann 1995), *imaginative effort* (Sahlins 1985) and *prophetic work* (Hastrup 2004) that individuals conduct based on their knowledge of the past and present and their hopes for the future will be presented, as will their relevance to the study of historical reconstruction, identity politics and power struggles in Southwest Serbia. This is complemented with an overview of previous discussions of history, memory and ethnicity in the Balkans in order to draw insights from them regarding the wider region of which Southwest Serbia is geographically and conceptually a part. The goal is to explore whether an inquiry into the ways in which individuals and groups link the past, present and future can provide us with a framework for the study of how ethnic identity and ethnic relations are shaped and how they undergo change.

Chapter 3 begins with a review of the relevant anthropological literature on borders and boundaries and continues with a detailed account of the historical transformations of ethnic

identities in Southwest Serbia and of the political and academic debates that have influenced them. Starting with the arrival of the Ottoman Empire in the area, I will examine the long process of how the Serb-Muslim boundary varied over time and consider this in light of the dominant ideologies and the power relations that were characteristic of the different periods. Together with accounts from the field, this chapter aims to lead the reader towards a deeper understanding of the complexity of relationships that lie behind the issues that face the region, and more generally, to inquire into how questions of historical continuity and discontinuity are formulated within ethnic relations and on different levels (the personal, local and national levels) as they mutually affect one another.

Chapter 4 will present the goals and results of a combined quantitative and qualitative study of attitudes towards nationality and national belonging in Southwest Serbia. Within the context of theories of ethnicity, ethno-national relations and the influence of memory and conceptions of history on collective action, the goal of the inquiry is to explore the different aspects of identity, the ways in which they are entwined and how this plays out in inter-group relations in the municipalities of Prijepolje, Priboj and Sjenica, as well as to determine the social groups in which my informants' identities are primarily embedded.

Chapter 5 will provide a further analysis of the family unit as the primary source of group identification and the prism through which people connect the past, present and future, as well as explore the dominant values against which both individuals and peoples are measured and their significance in shaping identities and ethnic relations. I will examine the role that memories and stories of loyalty, betrayal, honour and dishonour play in both everyday stories and accounts of history and juxtapose these to political narratives using a variety of ethnographic examples.

In Chapters 6 and 7, I show how ethnicity became especially relevant in social interaction when politics penetrated everyday life, highlighting cultural differences and amplifying the importance of the past in the present-day life of Southwest Serbia, as enacted both regionally (Chapter 7) and locally (Chapter 6). Chapter 6 will analyse the diverse local cultural initiatives in the town of Sjenica as a form of individual expression and resistance to socio-political oppression and the ethnification of politics. I will explore how artistic activity emerges as both a field governed by political influence and a field of freedom through which questions of identity, ethnic relations and other sensitive issues are negotiated. Chapter 7 presents a case study of regionalism in Southwest Serbia, which is distinctive in that it was perceived as strategically significant on all state levels and also because it amplified ethnic tensions. The 'statistical' regions of the future viewed through the prism of the past had become a point of dispute between Serbs and Muslims with regard to where the borders of the two counties should be drawn, heightening with it ethnic boundaries and highlighting differences. I will trace how it transformed into a highly historicized and political issue in Southwest Serbia, thus allowing a study of the interplay between power, identity and the historical discourse within it.

Lastly, in Chapter 8 I will present the concluding remarks.

Chapter 2 - The past, present and future in anthropology

The influential *History and Ethnicity* volume, as the editors themselves assert, represents a compilation of answers to two questions, juxtaposed to one another: 'How did the past lead to the present?' and 'How does the present create the past?' (Tonkin et al. 1989: 1). Edwin Ardener's answer in the volume is based on his concept of the prophetic condition,[28] an answer that directly implies an orientation to the future, but that also links it to the past and thus serves to introduce the topic that will be discussed in this chapter. As Ardener maintains, the link between the past, present and future depends on the creation of a 'memory of history' that is not based on experience but on a process that is often repetitive, and sometimes creative, consisting of incessant re-memorisations of 'bricolage and debricolage' (Tonkin et al. 1989: 6). Thus, as soon as we begin working on 'remembering' history, we are structurally encoding it and are always doing so in the present moment because structural processes are synchronic (Ardener 1989: 25). This is precisely why 'prophecies' do not always come true, for it is from the present that people both imagine their future and remember their past, and within each moment they do so there is the space to conduct this activity in a creative way that may lead to what had not been previously imagined.

Therefore, it is argued that memory can serve social reproduction in some cases and social change in others, just as it is brought into play by different groups, some motivated by a desire for social change, others seeking to impede it. Goody and Bastide also elaborate on the 'presentist malleability of the past and the bricolage dimension of our relationship towards it' (Goody and Bastide in Berliner 2005: 204), stressing the notion that history is a

[28] Also cf. Ardener, 1989, *The Voice of Prophecy*.

symbolic system made up of everything we can get our hands on, but arranged differently by different groups because they synthesize their experience of the present in different ways (Appadurai 1981). Nevertheless, Goody (1972) and Bastide (1970) emphasize social transmission as key. Conversely, Hastrup observes that, 'in the social life of people, tradition and change are two sides of the same coin, not separate entities with distinct historicities' (1992: 3). This is a significant consideration relating to both the multiplicity of European histories and those existing within its societies. Southwest Serbia is no exception – on the whole it was part of the great European history of progress, while at the same time constituting a 'different historical space' (cf. Hastrup 1992: 2) marked by the long presence of Ottoman rule there and a longstanding political instability that continues to the present day.

In *Other histories* (1992), Hastrup argued that the wall that was raised between change and stability had great implications – it meant a separation between history dealing with the former and anthropology as focused on the latter. Numerous authors, however, showing that this division is wholly arbitrary, have called for an analysis informed by insights from both disciplines (Ballinger 2003, Hastrup 1985, 1990, Sahlins 1981, 1985). According to Sahlins, histories are grounded in structures that are systematic orderings of contingent circumstances (Sahlins, 1985: 144), meaning that it is precisely the presentist nature of history that allows it to conflate the past and the present by, in Braudel's words, 'bringing together movements of different origins, of a different rhythm: today's time dates from yesterday, the day before yesterday, and all former times' (Braudel 1980: 34).

Anthropological concern with questions of history has, for the most part, meant focusing on what Maurice Halbwachs has called 'the persistence of something from the past into the present' (Halbwachs 1994 [1925]). While the thesis as a whole considers this question of

the persistence of something from the past into the future, this chapter will look at how this issue has been tackled in more recent work. I will begin with a summary of the ways in which the past has been approached in anthropology and continue with a more detailed analysis of a number of works that stem from memory studies by Jan Assmann, Paul Connerton, Marshal Sahlins, Kirsten Hastrup and others. This will be complemented with an overview of discussions of history, memory and ethnicity in the Balkans in order to draw relevant insights raised by researchers into the wider region of which Southwest Serbia is geographically, politically and conceptually a part.

History of memory studies

The role of history in anthropological studies, as suggested above, was for long time problematic: evolutionism saw the two as inseparable, whereas functionalism discarded history entirely, at least as a matter of principle. With Malinowski and Radcliffe-Brown, anthropology made a turn towards a framework that treated 'primitive' societies as stable within a model of 'functional equilibrium'. They were perceived as timeless, and in a sense as if lacking a 'history', which could only be called such if it referred to the past of a 'nation'. That anthropology and history are incongruent remained the dominant opinion with structuralism, and it was not until the decline of colonial rule, the increased movement of populations, modernisation and the rapid changes that numerous societies were witnessing that the need arose to re-address this question. With influential voices coming from anthropologists like Evans-Pritchard, the role of the past in societies was reconsidered. Initially a solution was found in crafting theories of change that did not impinge on previous theories of stability, but in time a more historical anthropology that included historical processes within its analysis emerged. In fact, due to the probable

influence of the late evolutionist Robert Marett on Evans-Pritchard's work, the warning that anthropology must choose between being history and being nothing (Evans-Pritchard 1961) was more a call for a return to a nineteenth-century conception of the fusion of history with anthropology, although not a return to evolutionism per se (Douglas 2003). Nevertheless, Evans-Pritchard returned to history as a focus of anthropological interest, though that focus evolved in a number of different directions, from the historical concern with the past as it actually happened to a focus on the use of history in society and on the ideology that resides within it, and therefore to memory studies and historical anthropology.

It was during the 1980s that we witnessed the return of the diachronic into anthropological analysis when history emerged as one of its most topical themes, from the question of how societies construct and recount their histories to the idea that a society or a culture can remember and forget. With it, the work of Maurice Halbwachs on collective memory rose to popularity once again. As anthropologists began to focus their studies around questions of the past, *La Memoire Collective* (1997 [1950]) was rediscovered and seen in a new light. As stated above, this interest in the past did not represent an entirely novel approach – especially not within the context of memory studies, which in many ways equated memory and culture, inquiring into questions of cultural continuity through the prism of memory (White 2000). These inquiries, based on the premise that culture represents the collective memory of a people and so determines their perception and action, involved, to a certain extent, a resumption of earlier discussions on cultural transmission. For example, Durkheim maintained that the process of socialization and periodic ritual activity infuses individuals with a set of ideas, beliefs and emotions, that is, with a knowledge that is basic to the organization of society because it is shared by all of its members and so allows them to participate in the collective consciousness (Lalman 2004). Halbwachs, who was

Durkheim's student, drew on these ideas in order to focus on memory work and its role in society. The collective memory, Halbwachs stressed, precedes the individual memory. The latter is socially mediated and constituted as a part of the whole through everyday communication. Thus, 'remembering' is a process, for the most part unconscious and socially determined, that shapes memory around historical events and social markers that are significant to the group; it is a narrative of the past that provides its members with a sense of identity and unity (Halbwachs 1992).

The revival of Halbwachs had a formative influence on the development of memory studies in the second half of the twentieth century. Like Halbwachs, for example, Pierre Nora problematized the relationship between memory and history and assumed that there was a fundamental split between them – or in his words, between *milieux de mémoire* and *lieux de mémoire.* Unlike Halbwachs, however, he gave a preference to the former and placed both in a diachronic order as qualities of two eras in the 'history' of humankind. Nietzsche famously referred to this in *The Use and Abuse of History* as the 'odour of decay' of societies with a 'blind lust for collecting, of a restless gathering up of everything that once was' (Nietzsche 1957). For Nora, though, once people became aware of the transient quality of the past, *sites of memory* began to eradicate *real environments of memory* in a conscious effort to record as much of human experience as possible. Embodied in the archive, history reduces memory to 'gestures and habits, in skills passed down by unspoken traditions, in the body's inherent self-knowledge and reflexes' (Nora 1989: 13). Memory for Nora is thus 'life, borne by living societies' (Nora 1989: 8). Memory is 'true', while history is 'the opposite' – a duty, a deliberate and wilful act and no longer spontaneous. The reason for this is that the idea of *the past as absent* has become unbearable in the contemporary world of mass globalized culture and democratisation (Nora 1989: 7), which produces a constant feeling of uncertainty. A great fear of

forgetting, and thus disappearance, is diffused into all the pores of society, a feeling of nostalgia manifested as a desire to recall what has gone forever: 'No society has ever produced archives as deliberately as our own, not only by volume, not only by new technical means of reproduction and preservation, but also by its superstitious esteem, by its veneration of the trace' (Nora 1989: 13). That a difference between history and memory exists is a constructive insight, however, some authors were more inclined to argue that there exists fluidity between them as well.

An example of this approach is Assmann's notion of cultural memory. Once more, we encounter the idea that the transmission of culture through the generations – that is, 'the survival of the type' – is a product of socialisation carried out by means of the cultural memory (Assmann 1995: 125-6). Assmann, however, is at odds with Nora in that he distinguishes cultural memory from all those other kinds of collective memory that originate in daily communication, and which Halbwachs analysed as 'collective memory' in its totality. Assmann proposed that the metaphor of memory still remains applicable when we leave the 'field of oral history' (Halbwachs 1992) and enter into the area of 'objectivised culture' (Assmann 1995). That is, Halbwachs postulated that the relation to the group and the reference to the present do not figure as important in texts, monuments, cities and other forms of objectivised culture, since it is at this point that 'Memory is transformed into history' (Halbwachs 1992).[29] Assmann rightly noted that this does not have to be the case and that material culture and ceremonial forms of communication play an important part in the reaffirmation and maintenance of a group's knowledge of itself, as well as of fateful events from the past in which the cultural memory is anchored and which

[29] In *La Topographie légendaire* (1992) Halbwachs outlines the results of his study of Palestine, demonstrating that with each new generation of Christians, the geographical localisation of different periods of Christ's life changed. Utilizing his hypothesis on collective memory, Halbwachs found that in its quest to conquer new holy lands, European religiosity contributed to a constant social reconstruction of the chronology and content of the life of Jesus.

therefore play a crucial part in 'the concretion of identity' (Assmann 1995: 128-9). Similarly, Connerton asserts that material culture is an example of just one of the ways in which remembrance is produced (1989). The construction of sculptures, for instance, represents a society's calculated endeavour to encode the memory of its members and future generations. For Assmann, though, the key point is that the working of the cultural memory is motivated by a *need to identify* who one is as well as who one is not, as a consequence of which it engenders a system of values. However, because cultural memory is always being reconstructed in relation to the contemporary situation, it involves reflexive practice: it is through the concern of a group with cultural memory and thus its own self that it achieves an awareness of its unity (Assmann 1995: 132).

This is demonstrated in a subtler way by Connerton, given that he argues for an 'embodied memory' according to which bodily practices are transmitted as traditions. Acts such as gestural movements are performed by the body in an unconscious manner, but are significant in that they incorporate and transmit social memory. This recalls Barth's idea in *Cosmologies in the making* (1987) that collective memory is not equally distributed among members of a society, but can be brought together for a 'maintenance check' through periodical ritual activity. Connerton argues that the recollected knowledge of the past is sustained through ritual performances, stressing, however, that these performances are bodily. We are thus brought to the logical conclusion that memory, as an experience of the past in present conditions, is a constituent part of human practice.

In a way, these ideas assert an analogy between memory and culture to a greater or lesser extent: the 'past perseveres because it remains relevant for later cultural formations' (Olick and Robbins 1998: 128). Nevertheless, we should be aware that not every trace of the past in the present can be understood as memory, as Berliner has cautiously observed (2005).

Although defining the relationship between memory and culture is somewhat problematic, it certainly is not one of total congruence: ethnographic data suggest that memory is brought into play in order to satisfy present cultural or political needs, with parts of history being brought to life due to the requirements of the present day and the anticipated future, and vice-versa, culture is a means of reproducing memory. Nora stated that the 'collective memory is what (…) groups do with the past' (1972: 398), clearly insisting that remembrance is always a joint feat, a product, in many ways unexpected, of individual acts of remembrance. That individuals pass on their memories to one another through the process of socialisation (Assmann 1995, Climo and Catell 2002: 39, Olick and Robbins 1998) is to a certain extent true, but as Berliner (2005) cogently points out in his critique, there is a dangerous blurring of the line between memory and culture in memory studies. An illustrative example is given by Crumley, who defines social memory as corresponding 'to community perceptions, attitudes, behaviours, values and institutions [that] are transmitted across generations' (Crumley 2002: 40). Berliner juxtaposes this understanding of memory to Kluckhohn and Kroeber's definition of culture, which displays much similarity in that it is characterized as consisting 'of patterns, explicit and implicit, of and for behaviour acquired and transmitted by symbols' (Kroeber and Kluckhohn 1952: 357). Further, they elaborate that 'the essential core of culture consists of traditional (i.e. historically derived and selected) ideas and especially their attached values' (ibid.).

As White has pointed out, studies of memory are not detached from questions of culture and identity, but in fact reinvent the common approaches to these questions in ethnographic research (White 2000). Thus, many theorists have been looking at the question of social and cultural *continuity* through the prism of memory in a way that is not very different from Halbwachs. While Connerton has much to say on the topic of how societies remember, his main motive is to 'treat adequately the fact of social persistence'

(1989: 40). In a similar vein, as Berliner points out (2005), in their focus on issues of identity construction, studies of forgetting also entangle cultural reproduction with the process of forgetting (Augé 1998, Battaglia 1993, Carsten 1995, Connerton 2008). As Battaglia stresses, forgetting permits the continuity of 'a unitary perdurable social order' (1993: 430).

However, one cannot help but notice that the question of agency is mostly lacking from the perspective that assumes a more general correspondence between memory and culture. Numerous studies suggest otherwise: that within the same society one can encounter great variability in the memories of people and how they use them (Appadurai 1981, Bakić-Hayden 2004, Ballinger 2003, 2004, Bloch 1998, Bougarel et al. 2007, Boyarin 1991, Cole 2001, Dakhlia 1990, Denich 1994, Hastrup 1985b, Herzfeld 1991, Jansen 2002, 2007, Jing 1996, Kilani 1992, Rappaport 1990, Rosaldo 1980, Sorabji 2006, Sutton 2000, Tonkin 1992). It is very often the case that individuals and groups themselves take action due to a realization that the moment they have found themselves in is one of great historical importance – a crossroads that requires urgent action. They may, however, differ greatly in how they go about doing so. If we were to accept an absolute reinforcement of memory as culture throughout the generations, then we would not be able to account, at least not without much difficulty, for the great variability in the memories of people who inhabit the same space and time. Certainly this 'space and time' that we are analysing is not an isolated whole, nor is it timeless – this is a territory of dynamic memory interchange, flowing through time, and developing as it travels through space. A society's history can be lived from different *standpoints* (Berliner 2005), places from which people construct the relationship between the past, present and future in divergent ways. A number of works confirm this and show that there exists a dynamic flow between the synchronic and

diachronic that is apparent in people's words and actions. I will discuss some of these ethnographies in the following section.

The individual versus history

I will begin with Renato Rosaldo's ethnography on the Ilongot of the Philippines (1980) and continue with the works of Rappaport, Sahlins, Hastrup and others who have produced influential ideas about the relation of the past and the future, all the while acknowledging the role that agency plays in the link that binds the two. For example, Rosaldo's work is aimed at demystifying the 'exotic and primitive' character that previous ethnographies attached to the Ilongot and the presentist bias of anthropology that led to such conclusions. With this goal in mind, Rosaldo homes in on the stories of the past that the Ilongot people recount, of events experienced or passed down to them by others, stories which Rosaldo found to be a window into their way of life. Because the Ilongot lacked an official history, the stories they told were the result of personal selections, and together these biographies represented bits and pieces of a larger account of the recent history of the people and their institutions. Stories ranging from topics such as feuds, intermarriages and genealogy to accounts of even the most 'profane' activities, such as 'headhunting' and brutal killings in an ambush, were all culturally mediated and shaped into forms through which the Ilongot spoke about themselves to themselves. At the same time, the stories epitomized a sort of charter for action: for example, 'to remember how one's uncle was beheaded is at once to revive a painful memory and to urge one's children to retaliate' (ibid.: 32). It is for this reason, perhaps, that it was less the truthfulness of the stories which was contested, and more why certain stories were chosen to be told and when. It was through the telling of stories that people created moral links with past events and so organized not only their

perceptions of the past but also their views and projects for the future, grounding their present conduct in history (ibid.: 19). Through a simultaneous analysis of contingent happenings and cultural forms, as well as their development through time (ibid.), Rosaldo set out to study the historical consciousness of the Ilongot and showed that, while their activity is historically rooted, it is at the same time a continuous improvisation on social forms and cultural patterns.

Another relevant work is that of Joanne Rappaport (1990) on the historical consciousness of the Páez of Colombia, a study which tells of the efforts of a people to alter their subordinate social position through consciously recapturing their past and so shaping it into a valid history. Although Rappaport does not focus on the future per se, but rather on the present and the past within it as the basis of organization and action, the case of the Páez is one where the relationship of the past and the future is apparent in the most manifest way. That is, it is individuals themselves who stress its importance, as illustrated by the words of one native writer: 'The whites block our road toward the future by blocking our road to the past.' (Wankar 1981: 279). Through an analysis of a number of selected historical interpretations, Rappaport's study shows us that Páez historians used knowledge of the situation their people had found themselves in and projected it into their accounts of past events in order to craft a means for changing their present. The orientation to the future appears also in the form of those contents of the recounted past that are mythical in character, for Páez historians would frequently draw parallels between 'fabulous images' of the past and the bleakness of the present, between themselves and legendary political activists of times past. Through 'mythic or cyclical images' used to fill holes in oral histories, a sense of a link between the past and the future was established (Rappaport 1990: 16). It is through these elements that people confirmed the repetitive structure of historical processes, blending the past, present and future, mixing fantasy and

fact with it, and so 'providing a template for understanding where we came from, but also where we are going' (ibid.).

In Rappaport's study we encounter an approach that separates itself from both those memory studies which treat individuals solely as vehicles of cultural transmission and the 'invention of tradition' (cf. Hobsbawm 1983) approach that can likewise be faulted for rejecting agency – in this case, the agency of the 'masses' that are entirely susceptible to the history and tradition crafted by national elites. Aware that her work might be classified under the latter approach, Rappaport stresses that the Páez example is unique in that it represents a case of a reinvented past, not of invented tradition – an attempt to defy colonization, not a creation of tradition by colonizers. Thus, Rappaport concludes that native North and South American histories are a reflection of visions of the future – 'a vehicle for changing the course of history' (ibid.: 180).

That the past is malleable and can be used for different purposes is often observed in the Balkans, as demonstrated in David Sutton's work on local categories of history on the island of Kalymnos in Greece. In his book *Memories cast in stone* (2000), Sutton inquired into the role that cultural differences play in the shaping of historical consciousness, motivated by his desire to explain the phenomenon that 'some Kalymnians wished to cast the past in stone, while many others envisaged a more active role for the past' (ibid.: 5). The importance of the past in the lives of the islanders of Kalymnos seemed considerable – references to it were frequent in everyday conversation, it being present even in the most typical of everyday activities and experiences, its lessons considered in understandings of relationships, explanations of current events and rationalizations of future endeavours.

Sutton aptly demonstrates this with an interesting example – Kalymnian attitudes towards the 1999 NATO bombing of Yugoslavia (ibid.: 149-171). Although a geographically

isolated island, for Kalymnos Yugoslavia is felt as very close. According to Sutton, this proximity dates back to the joint war the Greeks and Serbs waged against the Ottomans in the First Balkan War, the battles fought in World War I and the fact, often repeated with much satisfaction in both Serbia and Greece, that the two countries have always been allies in their long histories. Interestingly, Sutton juxtaposes his own dealings with media reports on the Yugoslav war from the perspective of an 'American' to the Kalymnians' accounts. Unlike him, the people of Kalymnos found that the main motives of the war as reported in the mass media – namely long-standing historical hatreds and the payment of dues carried over from World War II – to be absolutely reasonable. In fact, Kalymnians criticised the involvement of the Western powers in the war because of their disregard for the historical component of the conflict, a component that they believed to be inextricably tied to the international geo-politics of the present (ibid.: 153). On the other hand, the fact that Serbian war operations were compared by the media to those conducted in Nazi Germany disclosed the insincere motives of the Great Powers and their great hypocrisy because, as Kalymnians explained, the Serbs had always been strong opponents of fascism and suffered great atrocities in their struggles against it. Debt and betrayal figured as key points in the everyday dealings of Kalymnians, and for them the same went for states. That this is lacking in inter-state relations in the West today was a common remark. For example, Denmark and Holland should not criticize Greece's dispute with Macedonia: instead, they should keep silently to one side and remember what they failed to do while the Greeks were resisting the Nazis in World War II (ibid.: 160).

In many other cases, however, the evocation of the past was motivated by reasons that were contradictory in nature, so that the past was then also treated differently. The Kalymnians would sometimes be dominated by ideas of history as revealing all that is essential – from the character of a person to the background reasons for the decisions

states make in the international arena, as demonstrated in the example above. It was then that ideas of historical debt would come to the fore, intensifying sentiments roused by the belief that what is done cannot be undone, regardless of whether the perpetrator was a neighbour or a different state (ibid.: 142). At other times, Kalymnians would give way to their longing for a future within Europe as proven Europeans, which caused them to adopt a more critical view of their imagined past, which then seemed unfitting for such a desired future (ibid.: 50). Nevertheless, in both cases the link between the past, present and future was strongly felt and expressed as essential, and while the content of history was open to debate, as a concept its meaning was widely accepted (2000: 4, 119-147).

What is interesting about Southwest Serbia is that disputes arise mostly in relation to how the content of 'official' history, as written in textbooks, should be interpreted, as well as regarding parts of the past they feel are unfairly under-represented or altogether absent. Depending on their ethnicity as well as family affiliation, the inhabitants of Southwest Serbia narrate diverse histories of the region, as do local historians.[30] What is peculiar is that it is in their current understanding of history and its role in the present that they seem to demonstrate the greatest inconsistency. Nonetheless, the people of Southwest Serbia are quite similar to Sutton's Kalymnians in that allusions to the past are made in daily utterances and discovered in daily experiences. Therefore, I shall follow Sutton in his desire to investigate how 'national questions of continuity between past and present are conceived and constructed at the local level' (2000: 7) by focusing the present analysis on the personal, local and national levels, while adding questions of discontinuity to the analysis as well.

[30] For examples see Crnovršanin and Sadiković 2007, Imamović 1996, Subotić et al. 2010.

The individual as the subject and object of history

That Kalymnians were determined to cast the past in stone at certain times, but were prepared to be more flexible when they wished it to take on a more active role, shows that Kirsten Hastrup was correct to assert that continuity and change go together (1992). However, as we have seen, the insuperable gap that was imposed between change and continuity in anthropology brought about the separation between history and anthropology in that the first dealt with one, the second with the other. Marshall Sahlins begins the opening chapter of *Historical metaphors and mythical realities* by stating something very similar – that structural anthropology was founded in a binary opposition, in radical opposition to history (1981: 3). An alternative anthropological venture should, Sahlins says, place the central focus on the intentions of human beings while at the same time considering wider historical processes that are structural in nature, given that any study lacking the latter will be futile in its aim of understanding the significance of events. Through an examination of events surrounding the killing of Captain James Cook on one Hawaiian island in the late eighteenth century, Sahlins provides a sharp critique of structuralism, of the Saussurean distinction between synchrony and diachrony, and of the dichotomy between structure and process. In Sahlins's account, Cook's killing was in many ways the enactment of a cultural plot, but because it happened in relation to a foreign culture it was driven by a novel force, and therefore it succumbed to the risk of reformulation and change. This risk in fact always exists because human beings will never carry out cultural schemes perfectly, but, guided by their specific interests and outlooks, improvise and bring cultural categories into play. As Handler and Linnekin state in their article exploring the invention of tradition:

> In the limiting case we may unreflectively perform some action exactly as we learned it from our parents; yet the performance is never completely isomorphic with past

> performances and, more important, our understanding of the performance is a present tense understanding, generated from the context and meanings of the present. (1984: 281)

These visions leave much space for social change, and while history is structural, culture 'is, by its own nature, an historical object' (Sahlins 1981), historically formed as a socially variable system. Thus, we encounter a motivation for a more historical anthropology that is interested in the interplay between the synchronic and the diachronic: 'The encounter with the world is itself a valuation, and a potential revaluation, of signs. If structural/semiotic analysis is to be extended to general anthropology on the model of its pertinence to "language", then what is lost is not merely history and change, but practice – human action in the world' (Sahlins 1981: 5).

Therefore, cultural categories are never taken as a given or incorporated in a total way, but are reconstituted with every new generation, a notion that takes us back to Halbwachs and his remarks on Palestine. However, while history is culturally ordered in a variable way in different societies, in its turn it determines the ordering of cultural schemes since the latter undergo a revaluation every time they are performed in practice (Sahlins 1981: 10). This suggests that history and tradition are reinvented every day and that the claim to continuity characteristic of national histories and crucial in the formulation of national identities, is, according to Sahlins, never valid, regardless of whether it takes into account the last decade or the last millennium.

Hastrup developed Sahlins's key ideas in order to produce a perspective that acknowledges the interplay between the past and the present, the synthesis between diachrony and synchrony, leading us to view people as both the 'subjects and objects of history' (Hastrup 1992: 10). In her work on Iceland (1985b, 1992b), Hastrup examines the 'failure' of Icelandic society that occurred in the sixteenth to eighteenth centuries, which she attempts to explain in light of the above. She finds that during this period Iceland was exposed to a

number of ‘events’ – happenings which appear as ‘events’ to us now, as outsiders from a separate time and space. However, within the Icelandic society of the time, the event status of these was ignored and led to a state of affairs that, in the long run, produced the ‘failure’. For example, the fall in temperature that occurred in Iceland during the ‘Little Ice-Age’ of the seventeenth century is an objective effect that caused a farming crash for years. Hastrup, however, stresses that this did not necessarily have to cause prolonged starvation and misery, as it did (1992a: 9). The reason why this was precisely the case, Hastrup finds, lies in the fact that the Icelanders of the period lived in a time that was pressed between two histories – ‘one marked by age, permanence, and authenticity and the other by decay, change, and extraneousness’ (1992b: 105) – a situation that they were entirely unconscious of. Explained in the words of Marshall Sahlins, within society there is a ‘dual existence and interaction between the cultural order as constituted in society and as lived by the people: structure in convention and in action’ (1985: ix). The Iceland of the period studied by Hastrup was marked by a domination of ideas about the glory of the mediaeval past, so much so in fact that their prevalence induced a deep and convoluted incongruity between the cultural order in society and the social experience of the people (Hastrup 1992b: 107), between the virtual and the actual (cf. Sahlins 1985: ix).

In order for certain events to become part of ‘history’, therefore, they have to be or to have been experienced as significant, says Hastrup (1992: 10), and she elaborates this further by paraphrasing Ardener:

> The structuring of history, or the selective memory is not only imposed retrospectively. Although the universe created and memorized in history is relative to a series of successive presents, memorability is identified synchronically. This implies that contemporary event registration is always the baseline for the trace left in history by any present instant. Thus, while people always embed their present in the past by encompassing the existentially unique in the conceptually familiar (Sahlins 1985: 146), they also and at the same time inform their future ‘history’.

To explain how the past, present and future are linked, Hastrup utilizes the metaphor of a theatrical play (2004) in which, much as in real life, everything unravels according to a plot:

> Meaningful action is always partly based on a sense of the plot in which one participates, and thus in anticipation of what will happen next. This sense of plot is loosely related to an illusion of a whole already in place but which becomes real only as individuals act on their perceptions of it. Individual agency is thus firmly based in the collectively and in the imaginatively envisaged future. (Hastrup 2004: 223)

Thus, the social is comparable to a stage, because the actions of people gain meaning only when they are carried out within a *social space* that is 'filled out by individual agents' imagination' and according to a *plot* (Hastrup 2004: 226).

It is precisely this imaginative component of the social that allows agency – people exert *imaginative effort* in their intention to understand the world around them (Sahlins 1985), and it is when they act according to these understandings that imagination assumes *material consequences* (Hastrup 2004). Therefore, informed by the past and the present, individuals carry out 'prophetic' work on a daily basis – they attempt to anticipate how the plot that their life develops around might end, and what action they must undertake in order to facilitate such an ending.

Charles Stewart tells a story that is quite similar in its development as he questions how people construct the relation between the past, present and future, using prophetic dreams as a case study (Stewart 2003, 2010). A common thread that can be traced in his work is the call for a move away from 'history' and towards 'historicity'. As he states, while the first isolates the past, the second takes a broader view of the temporal condition of the human situation – it sees it as being in flow (Hirsch and Stewart 2005). Thus, for Stewart, the principal interest is in studying how people construct relations between the past, present and future – and it is historicity that allows us to do so, for it centres in on the

'complex temporal nexus' that exists between the three (ibid.: 262). Versions of both the past and the future take a unique form in any present moment, a shape that is moulded according to constraints of the social ideology and anticipations of the future and which is reflected in current events, political needs and other transient phenomena (ibid.). One example of a study based on such a hypothesis is Stewart's ethnography of the 'epidemic' of prophetic dreaming on the island of Naxos that had its outbreak first in the 1830s and then again around a hundred years later, in the 1930s. By drawing on the common knowledge of the past, as represented by the intense historical content of the dreams, the villagers constructed a common vision of the future and decided on the collective action necessary to accomplish it. Thus, it was through these dreams, perceived as prophetic, that the community engaged with reality and dreamt its historicity 'in order to capture its past-present-future' (Stewart 2010).

Power and strategy in ethnic relations

In order to uncover the reasons behind the conflicts that erupted in Kosovo in the late-twentieth century, anthropologist Ger Duijzings explored the complex map of ethnic and religious identities in the region and came up with a thought-provoking explanation. In the introductory chapter of his work *Religion and identity in Kosovo* (2005), Duijzings describes how the specific conditions of life in Kosovo affected inter-group relations and how, once set in motion, the latter perpetuated these same conditions. When every day is reduced to a fight for survival to secure the minimal means for subsistence in conditions where sources are limited, the family nest becomes the nucleus of security to the individual and the source of group solidarity in an atomized community (ibid.: 20). What Duijzings describes is more commonly known as the *amoral familism* complex

as identified by Edward Banfield in his endeavour to find an explanation for the extensive patron-client relations and backwardness that allegedly characterize the bulk of social life in southern Italy (Banfield 1967 [1958]).[31] The patterns found in Kosovo are not lacking elsewhere in the Balkans, asserts Duijzings, that is, in areas that are distinguished by a persistent existential insecurity.[32] These traits taken together encourage individuals to take a chiefly instrumental approach to the world that lies beyond the family, as well as in establishing ties with outsiders – hence, as Duijzings notes, loyalties with non-kin are transitory and fluid.

At the same time, Duijzings, following Clifford, approaches identities as fluctuating rather than fixed, negotiable rather than determinate,[33] and preferring to speak of *processes* rather than *states*, of identification instead of identity (Duijzings 2005: 36). He finds this phenomenon to be at its extreme in the space of Kosovo, BiH, and Macedonia, primarily due to the general conditions of life and the social contexts that the populations inhabiting them have been subject to over long periods of time. Thus, Duijzings places his analysis of identities within the overarching context of the Balkans as a demarcation line separating East from West, a role it has played from the division of the Roman Empire onwards (2005: 28-29). According to Duijzings, this initially made it a field of power struggle between the Roman Catholic and Orthodox Churches, and later between both of these and Islam, leading to frequent migrations by entire populations, mutual assimilation, changing loyalties, conversions and reconversions and, in the last instance, a blurring of ethnic identities and a sharing of markers of identity (ibid.).

[31] For criticisms of Banfield's arguments, see especially Silverman 1968, Davis 1970, Miller 1974.
[32] Some of the patterns Duijzings discerns are: strong links to the family or the lineage, a sense of distrust of all those outside the circle of kin ties, pressure to protect the integrity of the family and punish those who threaten its reputation and honour, and a tendency to conceal information, cheat and deceive (2005: 20).
[33] James Clifford defines identity as fluid, variable and conjunctory (1998: 10-11). Richard Jenkins defines identity as the outcome of a dialectic interplay between the processes of internal and external definition (1996).

In Fredrik Barth's view, this birth and transformation of ethnicities is a process that is transactional and social in nature (Jenkins 1994: 198-199). Richard Jenkins expands this to include categories of power and authority within the process of social categorization. The process of defining is of a dual kind, argues Jenkins: it includes the process of internal definition or self-definition, and the process of external definition, whereby one group defines another. Together, both of these are 'in the complexity of day-to-day social life ... chronically implicated in the other' (ibid.). Therefore, Jenkins agrees with Barth that identity is found somewhere in the interaction between the inside and the outside – somewhere in between. What is missing from Barth's approach, however, is an analysis of the power struggle that takes place in the collision between the two processes of internal and external definition. As Jenkins asserts, we should not forget to ask to what extent one group can act on the lives of other groups – a question that asks about the role of authority and power in the way a group is characterized, since either of these two, as defined by Max Weber (1978), are prerequisites for acting upon others successfully.[34] Hence, determining the degree to which the social identity of a particular group – its name, nature and boundary – is the outcome of the internal-external dialectic is an important consideration to take into account in the study of ethnic relations.

Studies of border areas are particularly interesting in this regard – numerous authors have observed that these are often places where state power weakens as it confronts several other subsuming influences (Donnan and Wilson 1999). Although states and religious groups strive to raise solid borders of separation around their subjects, they are rarely fully successful in this feat, as borders tend to be porous markers that allow for interaction and the interchange of cultural practices (Bracewell 1992, Ballinger 2004, Donnan and Wilson

[34] 'Power (*Macht*) is the probability that one actor within a social relationship will be in a position to carry out his own will despite resistance, regardless of the basis on which this probability rests. Authority (*Herrschaft*) is the probability that a command with a given specific content will be obeyed by a given group of persons' (Weber 1978: 53).

1999, Driessen 1992, Duijzings 2005). Likewise, states aspire to construct subjects with a single and fixed identity, as these pose less difficulty for surveillance (Verdery, 1994: 37). Again, however, this aim is often subverted by the liminal nature of border areas, which are inhabited by people whose identity is 'something in-between', thus introducing an element of chaos into every clear-cut system of ethnic classification (Eriksen 1993: 156).

One example of such a border area is sketched out in the work on Kosovo by Duijzings just mentioned: due to the longstanding position of this area on the periphery of the numerous empires and states by which it was encompassed, group boundaries and identities tend to be fluid, indeterminate and dependant on context (2005: 43). Proof of this are the countless ethnic and religious 'irregularities' among the inhabitants of Kosovo – the peoples who escape the rigid Orthodox Serb-Muslim Albanian binary system of opposition, such as the tiny groups of Kosovo Croats, Turks, Catholic Albanians, Bosniaks, Ashkali Roma, Egyptians, Gorani and others. The reaction of political regimes is typically to reduce the level of randomness, either by repressing such minorities to assimilate them into a set category or by eliminating them from the body politic altogether (Eriksen 1993: 114). In Kosovo, examples of the latter practice are the exodus of Croats who lived near the border with Macedonia (Duijzings 2005: 61-95) and that of the Adyghe group (Circassians) who emigrated to Adygea, their historical homeland in the Caucasus. However, as Duijzings also notes, marginal groups actively endeavour to maximize whatever benefit they can (cf. 2005: 121-147, 179-202). The coercive framework of the state therefore leads groups to implement creative strategies or to shift their loyalties in transforming their identities, all in order to make their ambiguous position work in their favour (Denich 1994, Duijzings 2005, Ghodsee 2009, Krasnići 1957, Roux 1992, Schwandner-Sievers 1999, Todorova 1998). Thus, the marginality of a group's position in itself carries the potential for agency. The direction it takes can be driven by emotion,

necessity, circumstance or interest, but to the extent that it is exercised with a goal in mind, agency is strategic. In her study of war-time memories in Bosnia, which I will describe in more detail later, Bette Denich (1994) also observes the strategic activities of individuals and groups and notes that these always carry the possibility of change – an idea that brings us back to the theoretical discussions on memory and agency. That strategic thinking always carries with it a possibility for the transformation of the dominant power constellation is stressed by Foucault in his understanding of the relation of power and social change, as cited by Denich:

> Chance is not simply the drawing of lots, but the raising of the stakes in every attempt to master chance through the will to power, and giving rise to the risk of an even greater chance (Foucault 1984: 88 in Denich 1994:369).

Xavier Bougarel speaks of the Islamicisation of Balkan Muslim populations in a similar vein. For him, 'the emergence of Muslim populations as autonomous political actors' was a logical consequence of the collapse of the communist regime, the violent disintegration of Yugoslavia and the subsequent threat to their existence in the newly formed independent states, as were the processes of Islamicisation and re-Islamicisation that followed as a necessary precondition for the production of 'distinction' (Bougarel, 2003: 358). The fact that the political and cultural claims of Muslim populations in the region, as well as calls for sovereignty, were frequently based in what was declared a distinct religious identity[35] did not represent a challenge to secularization, believes Bougarel.

Another illustrative example in this respect is given by Maria Todorova in her work on identity transformation among the Pomaks of Bulgaria (1998). After Bulgarian

[35] In this regard, Bougarel (2003: 351) mentions political claims such as asking for independence in Bosnia-Herzegovina, or territorial autonomy in Sandžak, as well as the fact that in such situations, opposition political parties tend to reject the existing institutional and legal framework and create a parallel one. An example of this is the creation of a 'National Muslim Council of the Sandžak' in May 1991 by the SDA (*Stranka demokratske akcije*). For some groups, such as Albanians and Kosovo Albanians, religion was not crucial for national identity, but was based in of cultural nationalism. As an example, Ger Duijzings mentions the confrontation of the *dervis* groups in Kosovo and the Islamic Community in Sarajevo from the 1970s, which in part contributed to a separate religious identity of Muslim Albanians (2005).

independence from Ottoman rule, the Bulgarian-speaking Muslim Pomaks regularly shifted between a Bulgarian language-based identity and a Turkish religion-based identity. Categorized as Turks in the first Bulgarian censuses, they were subject to discrimination and marginalization until the state embarked on an intense campaign to assimilate them by promoting linguistic equivalence as the main determinant of national identity – thus, from the late 1930s it began to introduce 'Bulgarian language worship in the mosques, translated the *Qur'an* into Bulgarian, created a Bulgarian Muslim establishment separate from the Turkish, and promoted the creation of a local elite by enrolling Bulgarian Muslims into secondary and higher education establishments' (1998: 476). At the same time, however, Pomaks were coerced into changing their names and dress, which they accepted but restored as soon as the Communist Party established its rule. This pattern of change and restoration did not, however, end then – instead, the Pomaks changed their names on two other occasions during the twentieth century and restored them just as many times, as soon as the situation allowed it (Konstantinov 1992).

Managing memory in times of crisis

There are a number of works which explore the relationship between power, memory and identity in the space of former Yugoslavia. In an article analysing the war memories of three Sarajevo Bosniaks, Cornelia Sorabji proposes an approach comparable to that of Denich – a view of the individual as an 'active manager of his or her own memories' (2006: 1). In proposing this view, Sorabji attempts to augment the two dominant approaches to the role of memory in the Yugoslav conflict of the 1990s. The first of these approaches stresses that the power of personal and transmitted memories of World War II was so deep-seated and authentic that it fuelled the eruption of violence in Bosnia –

sometimes significantly close to the 'ancient ethnic hatreds' postulate when it implies that the experience of brutality in war severely and irreversibly marks generations across several centuries. The second is a top-down approach which concentrates on how collective and individual memory is forged and manipulated in the interest of political elites, and which, when pushed, places a greater focus on politics than on memory – that is, it can be guilty of ignoring the 'carriers of memory' altogether.

Alternatively, Sorabji is interested in the 'individual's awareness of memory and his or her desire to control it for the perceived benefit of self and others' (2006: 3). She investigates personal stories and experiences, recounting how Omer, a Sarajevo Bosniak who took part in the defence of his home town, remembers the days of the siege, or how Amra, a member of an old Sarajevo family, relates to those Serbs and Bosniaks who fled the town when it came under attack. For example, although he rarely utters it out loud, Omer has retained the right to remember that in the war 'we [Bosniaks] were just as bad as they'. The numerous examples show that, while an individual's narration of the past is not devoid of social influence, it is certainly subject to self-conscious reflection and critique (ibid.: 5-7). They also show that individuals are capable of critically inferring those memories transmitted to them by the older generations, just as they are able to manage their own memories (ibid.: 4).

In a comprehensive review of post-war literature on Bosnia,[36] Bougarel finds that the widespread approach 'from above' has been guilty of reducing Bosnian reality solely to its ethnic dimension or to legal categories (2007: 13). Instead of denying agency to ordinary people and marginalized segments of societies, Bougarel argues for an approach to socio-political realities 'from below' because of its potential in informing us of how citizens relate to the existential uncertainties produced by war, as well as giving us an 'insider's

[36] See 'Introduction' in Bougarel, Helms and Duijzings 2007.

perspective' from which we could explore many fundamental questions, such as why local actors behave according to a nation-state logic (ibid.: 14-15).

Correspondingly, Bette Denich (1994) analyses the symbolic dynamics of genocide within the context of what she refers to as the 'the dismemberment of Yugoslavia'. By looking at how repressed World War II memories among Serbs and Croats were intentionally revived as part of the surge of nationalist ideologies in post-Titoist Yugoslavia, Denich underlines the 'power of memory' in producing collective representations which can organize vast groups into politically desirable action. More specifically, the article analyses events surrounding the performance of a controversial play in 1980s Belgrade, a play which set out to expose how memory of the genocide of Serbs in the fascist Independent State of Croatia was buried together with the bones of the victims due to the Communist Party's policy of 'brotherhood and unity'. The analysis leads Denich to conclude that the 'freedom to remember' was perceived as the greatest protest against the social order in the 1980s and the most severe breaking of taboos.

In his article on the politics of ethnic cleansing in Medjugorje in the early 1990s, Mart Bax (2000) stresses the need for a systematic study of the local historical roots of violence. It was by using an approach to phenomena 'from below' that he concluded that much of the violence that occurred in the villages surrounding the celebrated Franciscan pilgrimage site cannot simply be explained as either being carefully orchestrated from above and executed by the receptive and passive masses, or as a result of ancient tribal hatreds. Instead, his case studies of a number of Bosnian villages that were ethnically cleansed by local formations of violence reveal that this had as much to do with local vendettas, political interests and age-old conflicts that did not always run along ethnic lines.

However, while Bax suggests that the ethnic 'animosity never ceased to exist but has been deliberately preserved and regularly nourished by collective rituals' (Bax 1997: 12) and 'concealed by political terror' (ibid.) – so much so that he even goes on to theorize that the local population felt it had no choice but to take the law into its own hands (Bax 1995) – Denich is wary of proposing either a strong top-down or bottom-up determinism. Instead, she calls on the reader to focus 'not on predictability, but on chance, the random constellations that create opportunities for those who lurk off-stage with alternate scripts' (1994: 369), thus indicating that, although individuals nominally shift their support as soon as the 'political traffic light' changes (Čolović 1994), they can, at the same time, do what they choose with their own memories.

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All these ethnographies, some more directly, others implicitly, speak of a link between the past, present and future, and show that at any present moment the past embodies the future just as much as the future embodies the past. The reason for this is that, as in a theatre, social life takes place upon a stage, that is, within a social space that is 'filled out by individual agents' imagination and according to a plot' (Hastrup 2004: 226) that gives meaning to people's actions. It is within this imaginative component that agency resides, for individuals use their knowledge of the past and present in an imaginative way as they interact with the world around them and anticipate how the plot of their life might end. Thus, individuals carry out daily 'prophetic work', and it is when they act according to it that they produce material consequences – or, as Ardener put it in *The voice of prophecy,* it is the prophetic activity of individuals that permits discontinuity within the social space (1989: 148).

Following a similar line of argument, Rappaport points out Bloch's criticism of the lack of consideration for 'temporal reckoning in practical activity' (Rappaport 1990: 14) and juxtaposes it to her previously described study of the Páez in order to show that accounts of the past are never merely static texts but in fact represent 'ever-changing interpretations that are applied in practice, whose form and contents are determined both by the memory of earlier interpretations and by the exigencies of the situation' (ibid.). The ethnographies of Renato Rosaldo, Joanne Rappaport, Cornelia Sorabji and Bette Denich, although interested in different parts of the world, show us that, while people feel a strong hold on the past – as illustrated in the writing of histories or telling of stories of the past – this hold is never all-encompassing, for a certain flexibility of interpretation is retained in what people do with the past in the present, with their memories and their identities, as they mould their future. As we have seen, discussions of historicity, and with it of the links between past and future times, are never separate from the structure–agency debate, most of all because structure and agency do not simply interweave within a specific place but do so in and through time. Agency is thus always oriented towards the future, even if it is consciously focused on the past – it is a making of the new within the old when the present moment is actively pushed towards an imagined future one.

Chapter 3 - A century in the life of the Serb-Muslim boundary

O men! ... we have divided you into peoples and tribes that ye might have knowledge of one another.

The Koran (49:13)

During fieldwork in Sjenica one evening, I was having a drink with a group of young Serbs, when another friend of theirs, Zoran,[37] showed up looking concerned. When asked what was wrong, and it seemed that he was carrying the weight of the world on his shoulders, he told us with a very sour expression on his face that he had accidentally helped out a Muslim in need. That afternoon, he said, he had stopped at the gas station to fill up his car when the man working there, his Serbian acquaintance, pointed to the car parked nearby and said that the driver was having trouble starting it and needed someone to pull him back home. Zoran immediately went over to the driver in trouble and offered to help him, supposing that his Serbian friend had directed him toward another Serb. However, it was not until he asked about the destination that he realized *who* exactly he was helping: 'He is from a Muslim village! Oh man, I thought to myself. But what could I do? I couldn't just decline after I had given my word that I would help. So I shipped the jerk all the way to his village. I twisted and turned all night in bed thinking about this…'.

The reactions of those present were split. Marko, another young man who had spent a lot of time in Kosovska Mitrovica, expressed similar antipathy and muttered something 'about the Turks'. Another male friend looked at me with a grin and nodded in the direction of Zoran and Marko: 'Tough guys, huh?' and then turned everything into a joke and light teasing about Zoran's stinginess being the actual root of his insomnia, and everyone in the

[37] Names have been changed to protect the anonymity of informants.

room, including Zoran and Marko, laughed. The girls spoke up, looking somewhat shocked and criticized him for making such claims: 'What is wrong with you? Who cares who he is, he was just a guy in need', and another girl repeated more or less the same.

By then, Muslims and Serbs had mostly stopped mixing in the bars and coffee shops of the city of Sjenica. On one side, most Serbs had begun to frequent only those bars and cafés owned by Serbs and visited by Serbs. The often quoted reason was that Muslim-owned places had stopped serving alcohol – most of them only during the month of Ramadan, while a number had discontinued it altogether, which Serbs felt was a clear signal that they were not wanted – as most people I spoke to told me. A few places remained mixed as neutral ground – one popular Serbian-owned coffee shop in the centre of town, where like-minded young people spent hours every day; and the town disco, visited by high-school students, which has since been transformed into a restaurant.

Although Zoran is a rare exception that I have come across doing fieldwork, his opinion is illustrative of a certain tension between people in Southwest Serbia, a tension they often invoke with worry when describing their relations with people of a different ethnic group, whether these are strangers or friends. Regardless of the everyday contact between Serbs and Muslims, they have been growing further apart since the violent break-up of Yugoslavia and the persistent deterioration of industry and the economy which has placed two out of six of Southwest Serbia's municipalities at the very top of the list of the most underdeveloped in Serbia. It seems that the underlying similarities that its inhabitants share – linguistic and cultural ones along with citizenship – have made it all the more important to stress the traits that are seen as distinctive and to employ them as symbols of difference. Historian Steven Pavlowitch observes that the use of religious symbols in the space of former Yugoslavia primarily serves to produce distinction – these representations and

symbols function as ‘clan totems’ to distinguish between groups that are otherwise more alike than not (1998: 94-111). However, the motives that prompt groups to separate themselves from each other and to carry out a daily ‘labour’ in order to maintain and deepen this distinctiveness are not all the same. The different motives of Serbs and Muslims stem from the different experiences of their ancestors and their memory of these experiences, as well as what they feel this says about who they are, but also from their own experience of everyday life in a border region. As we will see in the following chapters, the histories of events, heroes, hardships and feats that people recount and remember tell of the virtues and the moral imperatives of their ‘kind’ that are carried across the generations and that likewise reside within them. The national and linguistic overlap that exists, local histories and personal memories threaten to weaken the distinctiveness to a certain extent. Thus, the question of how political actors go about constructing difference and how this is manifested in everyday acts and utterances poses an important question in this thesis. In order to answer it, in this chapter I will consider both the persistence of the Serb-Muslim boundary in Southwest Serbia and, more generally, the shifts it has undergone in the context of wider historical and political processes as it has ultimately outlasted numerous empires and states.

Boundaries in anthropology

In anthropology there exist various types of borders and boundaries – symbolic ones, which separate ‘worlds of meaning’ (Donnan and Wilson 1999: 19) or determine membership in collectivities, such as ethnic, cultural or social, are usually referred to as boundaries. On the other hand, there are borders in the sense of geopolitical delimitations of space. Obviously the symbolic and geopolitical can and often are aspects of a single

boundary. Although primarily interested in state borders, Donnan and Wilson also speak of them more generally as 'meaning-making and meaning-carrying entities, parts of cultural landscapes which often transcend the physical limits of the state and defy the power of state institutions' (ibid.: 4). This means that the social, cultural and territorial aspects of borders need not correspond – in the case of Southwest Serbia this is clearly demonstrated, as I will show in this chapter and in Chapter 7 in particular.

Anthropologists were at first interested in the boundary only inasmuch as it encompassed their subject of study and bounded one cultural whole from another, as structural-functionalist work on tribes such as the Tallensi or Tiv demonstrates. However, as populations were becoming increasingly mobile the need for a new theoretical framework emerged, one that would be more responsive to the fact of increased intercultural contact between people of diverse backgrounds in the face of the industrialisation and urbanisation of the decolonized world. A shift of focus followed, from an interest in what a boundary encompasses to an interest in the boundary itself (ibid.: 21).

The publication of *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries* (Barth 1969) represents, perhaps, the best known example of this shift. Edited by Fredrik Barth, it represented a revolutionary redefinition of ethnicity studies in anthropology. As Barth asserted in the introduction and his own chapter on Pathan identity, rather than conducting a study of the physical and cultural traits of a group in isolation, the anthropologist would be better off placing more focus on ethnic *boundaries* as well as the ethnic relations that take place across these and that determine the identity and culture of the groups in question. Barth found that boundaries are created and maintained by the people themselves, who do so by making a selection of a number of cultural traits and then putting them to use to demonstrate their distinctive character. These are then taken to represent the 'overt signals or signs' of a

people's uniqueness (Barth 1969: 14). What this means is that ethnic groups are socially constructed and that all that the group is made up of, be it people or cultural traits, is not enduring and can be common to more than one group.

Furthermore, Barth emphasises that boundaries are persistent rather than variable, regardless of the mobility of people across them and the information they carry with them. He explains why this is so by postulating a type of ethnic interdependence theory according to which an ethnic group and the people that it consists of can use and alter their identity in a strategic way according to their needs, interests and the context that determines these. Hence, the stress on cultural differences serves individuals and groups in the pursuit of advantage and the avoidance of disadvantage. We see, then, that for Barth accentuated cultural differences serve to articulate social relations between groups that are bounded from one another, and defined in relation to each other – membership of an ethnic group is based both on the claim of an individual that he is of a certain ethnicity and on his desire to be treated by others as such, and this is entirely independent of the 'unique cultural contents' of this ethnicity. Boundaries are sustained regardless of the exchange that occurs between the groups they bound and the flow that happens across them, even when the cultural differences between the groups change. It is for these reasons that Barth asserts that boundaries and the relations that take place across them need to be the focus of attention.

The ethnic boundary that exists between Serbs and Muslims is also enduring, and Barth's interest in the norms of behaviour that contribute to this kind of endurance is of great value in the case of Southwest Serbia. However, one problem we are faced with here is the *origin* of this boundary – it is certain that it has not existed 'forever', and even more certain that it has shifted in time. Subsequent works have drawn on the ideas of Barth

while criticizing him in certain aspects (Cole and Wolf 1974; Wallman 1978; Cohen 1982a, 1985, 1986a, 1987; Okely 1983; McFarlane 1986, Jenkins 1997, Donnan and Wilson 1999), providing valuable insights for my study of Southwest Serbia. In order to understand better how ethnic boundaries in Southwest Serbia reacted and related to the rise and fall of state borders and the revival of old differences and loyalties in new socio-political contexts (cf. Cohen, 1965), in this chapter I will present a brief history of identity of Muslims/Bosniaks within the wider political formations Southwest Serbia was part of. I will provide a brief history of Islamicisation in the region since the portrayals and interpretations of this process and the concept of religious conversion itself, as we will see later, were important in forming state policies and Serbian public perceptions of the Muslim population. A deconstruction of the process of conversion will also shed light on the differences between popular perception of inter-ethnic relations in Southwest Serbia and that prescribed by the state, as we will see in Chapters 4 and 5.

In a similar vein, I will present an analysis of the process of national recognition of Muslims in socialist Yugoslavia, the political context in which it was embedded and debates that surrounded it. The question of whether Yugoslavia's Slavic Muslims should become a constitutive nation, and if so, what they should be named, was a significant and divisive matter from the founding date of the country onwards. The national question, that is, the determination of the status of national groups and their integration, was inextricably tied to the wider discussion on the socio-political organisation of the country, and by definition, the regulation of relations between the Yugoslav Federation and its constituent republics (cf. Perović 2005, Bilandžić 2004). While it is important to note that debates about the national question in Yugoslavia, in the 1960s especially, extended to all constitutive nations, it was only the Muslim group whose existence as a nation and whose name were brought into question (Kamberović 2009: 63). For this reason, an analysis of

the process of Muslim 'national affirmation' in the 1960s and early 1970s provides significant information on the the role and meaning of nationality in Yugoslav politics as well as the socio-political framework in which it advanced, and which, as we will see in the chapter 4, is still at play in present day Serbia. As a result, although the process of Serbian nation-building was likewise lengthly and complex,[38] I will not explicitly trace it in this thesis. However, the wider historical and socio-political framework within which Serbian nation-building was conducted and the numerous efforts exerted in this regard will be dealt with throughout the text.

A history of identity

Ottoman tax registers (*tahrir defters*) are certainly the best source of information on demographic growth and the spread of Islam in the Ottoman-ruled Balkans.[39] Although the process of translating these registers has not yet been completed for all years and they only cover a period of some hundred years, from the earliest in 1431 to the mid-16th century, when the authorities discontinued the practice of conducting surveys for already conquered lands, they contain detailed information about the taxpayers, including their names, legal status, amount of usable land and estimated tax revenue. For these reasons, tax registers have given researchers a valuable though incomplete picture of the rhythm of conversion to Islam in the first century of Ottoman rule over the Balkans. Islamicisation was at first a slow process that gradually speeded up, spanning several generations,

[38] For further reading on the topic of Serbian nation-building see Djordjević 1967, Dragović-Soso 2002, Gordy 1999, Mackenzie 1990, Pavković 1994, Pavlowitch 2002, Petrovich 1976, Spasić and Subotić 2001.
[39] *Defters* were used for numerous important purposes by the Ottoman Empire, such as establishing legal claims to land and assessing expected tax revenues, as well as distributing them to military and administrative officials, as a result of which they were carefully preserved (İnalcık 1954; 1994).

complemented and accompanied by consistent emigration and a general exchange of populations.[40]

The first Islamised people on the Sjenica plateau appeared in the Turkish census of Režgadinje in 1477. Forty taxed households were recorded at that time. Another three Muslim houses that did not have to pay the same taxes were also included in the census (Selimović 2000). By 1485, only 21 out of over 23,000 inhabitants of the Polimlje[41] area were Muslim (Mišić 2005: 75). It was only at the end of the 16th century that the first Islamised households (heads of households were interviewed) were recorded in some other villages of Sandžak. Of the then 652 recorded households, 13 were Muslim. In the Turkish census from the end of the 16th century, the population of Sandžak was marked as 'Vlach' (Mušović 1997).[42] The Ottomans took this term to denote cattle-breeders, but later on they would call all non-Muslims by this name, and it began to take on a pejorative meaning.

In the beginning, the Vlachs enjoyed special privileges under Turkish rule,[43] while those who accepted the Muslim faith were especially advantaged, regardless of their occupation or status (Hrabak 1997). These privileges were one of the main facilitators of Islamicisation among the Christian population, though the process was not consistent in all parts of the Balkans; as a rule, it had a greater impact in urban and coal-mining settlements and areas surrounding squares, fortresses and caravan roads, as well as among the cattle-breeding Vlachs (Ekmečić 2008: 66). In the Sandžak this phenomenon is cogently

[40] For analyses of Ottoman tax-registers, also see Filipović 1970, Džaja 1978, Hadžijahić 1990, Mandić 1967, Handžić 1975, Smailović 1977.

[41] *Polimlje* is a geographical term referring to the territory surrounding the basin of the river Lim, and includes the municipalities of Priboj and Prijepolje in Serbia, Bijelo Polje, Berane, Andrijevica and Plav in Montenegro, and Rudo in BiH.

[42] Though the term 'Vlach' is usually associated with Eastern Romance-speaking peoples in the Balkans and Eastern Europe, it was also used to refer to nomadic cattle-breeders in medieval Serbia, and subsequently to Christian subjects of the Ottoman Empire. From the 19th century onwards, it also began to be used as a pejorative term for Serbs. For further details on the history of Vlachs in Ottoman Bosnia, see Malcolm 1994.

[43] As Malcolm points out, due to their mobility and military tradition, the Vlachs were very suitable in satisfying the Ottoman government's needs to repopulate areas obliterated by war or disease, as well as to protect border areas. Consequently, they enjoyed reduced taxes on sheep and were often granted large land holdings for their services, as well as the permission to plunder enemy territory (1994: 70-81).

confirmed by tax registers, which indicate that in the town of Novi Pazar the numbers changed fairly rapidly in favour of the Muslim population,[44] as opposed to rural areas where the process was slower and limited to landowners, mine-owners and officials of the Ottoman Empire (Roberts and Morrison 2013: 32).

It was not unusual for a Christian father and a few brothers and sisters to live with an Islamised brother in the same household, as it was mostly young males who converted into Islam (Selimović 2000).[45] There was also some forced Islamicisation, which caused many to flee into the woods (Mušović 1979a). For this reason, entire families, and even clans, would move deep into hard-to-reach places. The Serbian population, which also included many Vlach cattle-breeders, often migrated to other regions in order to evade Islamicisation, pressure and trouble from Turkish rule, sometimes even crossing the Sava and Danube rivers.[46] Conversion also occurred due to 'revenge in blood' and other criminal activity, since this was a way of hiding evidence and avoiding punishment. A significant contribution to the process was the *devşirme* system, the blood tribute or blood tax (*danak u krvi*), which reached its peak in the 16th and 17th centuries and as a result of which over two hundred thousand young Christian males were taken to serve as janissaries[47] or servants of the sultan (Sugar 1977: 55-59).

[44] The earliest tax registers for Novi Pazar indicate that in the year 1468/9, 75 out of 276 households were Muslim. Less than twenty years later, in 1485, the situation was the reverse: among a total of 242 households, 71 were Christian (Morrison and Roberts 2013: 31). In the 16th century the town experienced great growth and was consolidated as an important commercial centre and transport hub, its many opportunities attracting inhabitants from the surrounding areas, who usually converted for social and economic motives (ibid.). For further details on Islamicisation in Novi Pazar, see Čar-Drnda 1984, Mušović 1978, Šabanović 1959.

[45] For instance, Tajib Okiç analysed the register of 1468/69, which contains examples such as: 'Mustafa, Ahmed and Mehmed sons of Radun' (Radun is a Christian name) or Muslim forenames of individuals with clearly Christian surnames, such as: Mahmud Božić, Alija Božidarčić (*Bož* is derived from the noun for God – *Bog*) (Okiç 1960: 118–119).

[46] Jean Auguste de Tout, for example, tells that among the defenders of Lipovo (Hungary) there were men who originated from Raška, having fled when Sokollu Mehmed Pasha attacked this city in 1552 (Selimović 2000).

[47] Elite military corps of the Ottoman Empire.

The reasons for conversion are sure to have been numerous: Islamicisation was the result of social, economic and psychological factors that affected the many individual decisions to change faith. However, the most significant causes were economic in nature. The structure of the Ottoman feudal and fiscal system provided its subjects with significant motivation to convert, as did the many privileges and possibilities for social mobility that were open only to those who practiced Islam, such as lower or no taxation, being assigned a position in the civil, military, police, administrative, judicial and other structures, and the possibility to practice certain professions that were prohibited to non-Muslims (Morrison and Roberts 2013: 31). In order to attain a high position in the Turkish administration it was important to be of Muslim faith, and not necessarily Turkish – many of the Grand Viziers of the Ottoman Empire were of Serbian, Bulgarian and Albanian origin.[48] Since conversion not only secured a more comfortable life for the families of converts, but also created a new native ruling class and so helped to perpetuate foreign rule in the Balkans, it created a chasm between Serbs and Muslims that has been mythologised in epic poetry and is invoked to this day, as will be explored further in Chapter 5. However, evidence of crypto-Christianity, religious syncretism, shared myths[49] and the continuing practice of Christian religious customs which have been recorded among the Muslim populations, in some remote rural areas even as late as the second half of the 20th century, indicate that the process of Islamicisation in the Balkans was incremental and complex (Inaldžik 1974, Selimović 2003, 2013, Skendi 1967, Vlahović 1993, Zirojević 2003).

[48] One of the most renowned of these is Mehmet Paša Sokolović (Sokollu Mehmed Pasha). Born into a Serbian-Orthodox family near Rudo, a border town in present-day south-east BiH, near the border with Priboj in Southwest Serbia, he was taken to serve the sultan as part of the *devşirme* tax. While visier, Mehmed Sokolu Pasha reinstated the Peć Patriarchate of the Serbian Orthodox Church and appointed as Patriarch his kinsman Makarije Sokolović (Malcolm 1998: 110)

[49] An interesting example are myths about the dragon from the Pešter lake in Sjenica, the local hero who saves a young girl from being sacrificed to it, and in the process also creates the surrounding and still existing villages and landmarks. The different versions of the legend have the same motives and follow a similar narrative, only the protagonist differs – when recounted by Muslims, the hero is Alija Đerzelez, when told by Serbs it is St George. For further reading see Giljferding 1996, Todorović 2012.

The fact that the Ottoman Empire was defined in religious terms as a Muslim state and organised on the basis of the *millet* system[50] is asserted by numerous authors to have produced a certain level of tolerance (Pavlović 2001, Sachedina 2001) and so created circumstances in which the conquered populations were able to safeguard their cultural heritage. This was certainly the case in northern parts of Serbia, since the territories occupied by Christians were organized according to the principle of self-rule. While the Muslims mostly inhabited the cities as centres of commerce and administration, the rural population was predominantly Christian. The villages were organized into patriarchal communities, a type of extended family organisation. A number of these comprised one village, and together a group of them created a county that was led by a count who was autonomous, chosen by the people and usually Christian. However, southern Serbia, from Novi Pazar in the west to Vranje in the east (and in Ottoman parts of today's FYR Macedonia and Bulgaria), was directly under Turkish rule, exerted by the *agha*s[51] over families of the nuclear type. A different structure of rule was established there after the eradication of the *timar*s,[52] one without village autonomy and based on the *çiftlik* feudal agrarian system according to which peasants lived on the land of *agha*s and *spahi*s[53] in complete dependence, and under great tax pressure. Not only did they have to pay the *desetak* (tenth) that was obligatory throughout the Empire, they also had to give the *spahi*s and *agha*s almost half their produce, or the *napolica* as it was called among the people.

Following the death of Suleiman the Magnificent in 1566, the military expansion of the Ottoman Empire ceased, leading to a transformation of its socio-economic structure. The lack of new land available for distribution, high rates of inflation and the need to move to a

[50] *Millets* were confessional communities that were allowed to practice their religion freely under the authority of their own religious leaders, as long as this was not in conflict with the established system and laws of the Empire (Morrison and Roberts 2013: 28).
[51] Title for a civil or military officer.
[52] A temporary land grant by the Ottoman government which was not heritable.
[53] Landholder.

cash-based economy imposed a new, more burdensome system of taxation and promoted the transformation of the old feudal-military *timar* system into the *çiftlik* system of hereditary private estates awarded to local lords and agents in return for the collection of taxes (Morrison and Roberts 2013: 34). Whereas peasants were free to work for their own monetary gain under the more liberal *timar* system, they now found themselves in the position of serfs with a large portion of their produce seized. Furthermore, the new system created more opportunities for corruption and oppression by local lords, who frequently acted independently of the Porte. Altogether, this contributed to the gradual polarisation of society between Muslim landowners on one side and the Christian, but also Muslim peasantry on the other (ibid.). This phenomenon was largely dependent on historical and geographical context[54] and only became more pronounced in the 18th and especially 19th centuries when, due to the decline of the Ottoman Empire and its decreasing control over frontier lands, local lords seized more power.

The new position the peasants found themselves in led to frequent revolts, as well as to many abandoning land to join plundering bands of outlaws (*hajduci*)*,* The *hajduci* cultivated a tradition of brigandage and on the territories of present-day Southwest Serbia targeted merchant caravans on the Dubrovnik and Bosnian roads, particularly on the road from Prijepolje to Novi Pazar, which led over Mt. Jadovnik and the plateau of Sjenica (Premović-Aleksić 1995: 94). As oppression grew in the 17th and 18th centuries, following

[54] There were numerous occasions in which local Muslims and Orthodox participated in joint battle against a foreign power. One such occasion was the 1879 rebellion against the Austrian occupation of Bosnia-Herzegovina led by *mufti* Mehmed Šemsekadić from Pljevlja whose rebel forces included Orthodox Serbs, Albanians as well as Muslim Slavs (Morrison and Roberts 2013: 65). In 1881 Austria-Hungary passed a new military law in BiH, triggering the Herzegovian rebellion that was characterized by the collaboration of Muslim and Christian populations (Avdić 1988: 76), and included fighters and commanders from Pljevlja. In 1906, the participants of the rebellion in Nova Varoš formed a committee consisting of members of both faiths. In 1907, Muslim peasants from Novi Pazar were joined by their Serbian counterparts, contrary to instructions coming from the Serbian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (ibid.: 78). Simiarly, when Muslim villagers from around Sjenica rose to rebel against tax collectors, Serb peasants joined them and pledged not to sell or buy at Sjenica's market until the new taxes were withdrawn (ibid.:78). Numerous popular protests took place after the annexation of Bosnia by Austria-Hungary in 1908. For more on collaboration from 1878 onwards, see Avdić 1988.

numerous wars waged by the Ottoman Empire, the consequent increase in taxes and the repression of local lords, *hajduci* numbers grew and by the 19th century had been transformed into an organised resistance movement against the Ottoman Empire (Sugar 1977: 242-245).

The experience of the Great Turkish War and subsequent conflicts with the Habsburg monarchy confirmed that the Islamised population, regardless of their origin, frequently sided with Turkey in its wars with Christian states, whereas the Orthodox population was inclined to side against it (Selimović 2000, Morrison and Roberts 2013: 40).[55] Thus, Islamicisation became more radical and, due to the pressure of the growing Muslim population, fewer Orthodox remained in the Sandžak basin.[56] In addition, the long wars and the recurrent advances and retreats of opposing armies led to movements of populations from and into the area of Southwest Serbia – the Orthodox moved northwards into southern Hungary, the Muslims into the south-east part of Rumelia (Selimović 2013: 21). The Sjenica plateau, along with all of Old Raška, represented not only the point of original departure into other lands, but also a type of transit stop, since many Christians continued further north across Mt. Javor after staying here for a shorter or longer period of time. The Sjenica plateau was the shortest link with central Serbia for people from Montenegro and some parts of Herzegovina, which explains why the main migratory paths led through it. Later on, the border crossing on Mt. Javor became a genuine migration channel, or what Jovan Cvijić would call a *metanastazional gate*[57] (Cvijić 1991 [1922],

[55] For example, during the Long War from 1593-1606, the *raya* around Mileševo (present-day Prijepolje) responded with a local uprising. In the Cretan War (1645-1669) and Great Turkish War (1683-1699), Bajo Pivljanin, an Orthodox *hajduk* chieftain in the service of the Venetian Republic, organised numerous attacks in the southern part of Sandžak (then part of the Herzegovina *sancak*). In Stari Vlah (a historical and geographical region between the rivers Drina and Lim, covering parts of present day Southwest Serbia), the local population, led by local count Mojsije Rašković, acted in support of the Austrian army in 1688 (Premović-Aleksić 1995: 94). During the Austro-Turkish war from 1736-1739, Atanasije Rašković attacked Sjenica when the Austrian army attacked Novi Pazar (ibid.).
[56] For more on this, see Cvijić 1991, 1918; Filipović 1972; Novaković 1892.
[57] From the Greek word *metanastasis* – to change place of residence.

1918). The departure of the relatively old and arrival of a new Serbian population lasted throughout the 18th and 19th centuries,[58] continuing after the fall of Turkish rule in 1912. Some of these families accepted Islam during the first half of the 19th century, but most of them did not change their old Christian surnames.

The disintegration of the Austro-Hungarian Empire that came with the end of WWI opened the way to the realisation of the Yugoslav idea. The idea of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes as one people with three different tribal names[59] which had been cultivated by their political and intellectual elites throughout the second half of the 19th and early 20th centuries, found its embodiment in the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes (the Kingdom of Yugoslavia from 1929) on 1st December, 1918. The position of Muslims in this tripartitely imagined state was ambiguous. After Novi Pazar had been taken by General Mihailo Živković in 1912, the Ottoman army retreated south, together with a mass of the Muslim population fearing revenge. However, it has been recorded that the general told a delegation of Muslims from Novi Pazar: 'My army will find Christians in Old Serbia and alongside them Muslims too, who are just as dear to us, and with them Arbanases[60] as well. We bring freedom, brotherhood and equality to them in the same way

[58] Following the battles in the Great Turkish War, Stari Vlah, Pešter and the northern parts of present day Montenegro were repopulated by the predominantly Christian tribes from Montenegro such as the Vasojevići, Kuči, Nikšići, Drobnjaci and others, some of which remained, while others continued on northwards. In 1700, the Shkodra vizier relocated 251 Catholic Kliment families onto the almost deserted Pešter plateau. These were followed by other Catholic tribes from present day Albania, such as the Šalje, Hoti, Gege, Škrijelji and Kuči (Radonjić 1950: 514). After Slavonia was taken over by the Habsburg monarchy, a large number of Muslims migrated into Southwest Serbia, among them the Hajderpašići, Ćorovići, Turkamonovići, Spahovići and other families. The *istraga poturica* [extermination of converts] at the beginning of the 1700s induced a number of Muslim tribes from present day Montenegro to move into the area (Selimović 2013: 22). Following the retreat of Karađorđe, leader of the First Serbian Uprising (1804-1813), from Novi Pazar in 1809, thousands of Orthodox families left their land, which was then repopulated by Catholic Malisori families. A great number of Orthodox families from the northern parts of present-day Montenegro moved into the area around Sjenica, Novi Pazar and Nova Varoš in the 19th century, but after the rebellion of Husein-Captain Gradaščević, leader of the Bosnian Uprising (1831-32) against the Ottoman Empire, many of these soon continued onwards to the north. Numerous Muslim refugees fled into the area after Montenegrin forces took towns such as Kolašin and Nikšić, particularly after the Berlin Congress, which granted Montenegro independence and Austria-Hungary *de facto* rule over Bosnia (ibid.: 24).

[59] '*Jedan narod sa tri plemenska imena*'.

[60] Typically referring to Albanians.

we bring it to the Serbs…' (Mušović 1979a: 44).[61] According to anthropologist Mušović, this was fulfilled in reality: when the new governing structures were constituted, a Muslim was appointed president, and four of five newly elected rulers were Muslim. This not only put a stop to Muslim emigration from the area, but also contributed to a general feeling of approval of the new rule. However, WWI broke out soon enough: Southwest Serbia fell under Austro-Hungarian rule. The Austrians, at war with Serbia, sought to conciliate Muslims in an attempt to further a policy of divide and rule, leading to a period of increased inter-ethnic tension and conflict.

In the newly formed kingdom, the situation of Muslims quickly deteriorated under pressure from Serbian and Croatian aims to nationalize the Muslim population of Yugoslavia; as Serbian politician Stojan Protić said: 'We will give the *Turks*[62] 24 hours. Maybe even 48 hours to return to the *ancestral faith*. And those who do not comply will be slain…' (Bojić 2001: 161, my emphasis). Even though Protić drastically changed his policy about Muslims in Yugoslavia in a more benevolent direction, the predominant conception was that the kingdom was a state of three nations whose members were the only ones who could represent it – including Muslims, if they agreed to declare themselves Serbian or Croatian Muslims. An illustrative example of the atmosphere at the time is summed up in the then often quoted rhyme *brat je mio ma koje vere bio* – that a brother is dear regardless of his faith – denoting that all South-Slavs are of the same kind. Conversely, some more radical political elements asserted that Muslims are by and large the successors of Turkish occupiers, who should, therefore, be expelled from the country. The project to nationalize the Muslims was partly successful, though it was mostly restricted to the intellectual and political elites.

[61] For further reading on the topic see Imamović 2007: 458, Mušović 2006.
[62] 'Turk' was the popular way to refer to Muslims on the Balkan peninsula, including within it both ethnic Turks and those of the native populations who had converted to Islam, and in time it acquired a pejorative meaning.

Another idea was to move the Muslim population of the country to Turkey, though this was mooted predominantly with regard to the Albanian, that is, the 'non-Slavic' population. The legal relocation of 'disloyal elements' began to be considered as a possibility during the Versailles peace conference, when the Committee on New States and for the Protection of Minorities partially gave in to the Greek request for a voluntary population exchange with Bulgaria. Prior to that, the region had already experienced a series of recent mass emigrations. In the first instance, it was the Austro-Hungarian *de facto* occupation of Bosnia after the Berlin Congress that led to the emigration of Muslims from Bosnia into the Novipazar *sancak*, increasing the proportion of Muslims in the area from 45% to 60% (Jovanović 2011: 214). Following the Balkan wars (1912-13) after which the area of the Novipazar *sancak* came under Serbian rule, a migration of Muslim populations further towards the south-east ensued, motivated by diverse reasons – loyalty to the Ottoman Empire and a perception of its demise as a personal misfortune (Trifunoski 1988: 100), family ties, fear of revenge, and adherence to a religious doctrine that strictly forbade living under a government of different faith (McCarthy 2002), as well as a vision of a better life in Turkey (Rastoder 1999). By the end of March 1914, 24,296 Muslims had emigrated from Greece, 45,900 from Bulgaria and 60,000 from Serbia (Hrabak 1998: 97). The Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs claimed that a total of 200,000 émigrés had arrived from its former territories in the Balkans, while Justin McCarthy suggests that only 46% of the previous number of Muslim inhabitants remained in the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes (Jovanović 2011: 214).[63]

The emigration of 'non-Slavs' from the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes was regulated by Article 55 of its Law on citizenship, passed in 1928. However, the lack of a bilateral agreement with Turkey, which had closed its borders to further immigrants, led to

[63] For more on the emigration of Muslims from see Avdić 1985, Bandžović 1993, 2003, 2004. For details on the emigration of Serbs from the Novipazar sancak see Avdić 1989.

most being turned back or settling in Macedonia. Due to the long list of peasants waiting to receive the land of the land-owning Muslims, the government strongly favoured emigration, and in the 1930s began issuing travel documents on the basis of a signed statement, abolishing the need to fulfil conditions prescribed by the 1928 law (Jovanović 2011). By the end of the thirties, as Croatian-Serb relations were progressively pushed to the edge, and with the spread of fascism in and around the country, emigration became a topic of public interest. Inspired by bilateral agreements that Turkey had signed with Bulgaria and Romania, which foresaw the populating of entire Turkish provinces with immigrants and a series of privileges to induce migration, an inter-ministerial meeting of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia was held in September 1935 resulting in a formal project to 'relocate the non-Slavic [referring to the Albanian population] element from South Serbia'. Finally, in 1938, the agreement with Turkey was signed.[64] Its ratification and implementation were impeded for a number of reasons, and the beginning of World War II halted it altogether (Jovanović 2011: 218). A controversial paper, presented to the government in 1937 by influential Belgrade University professor Vaso Čubrilović,[65] is illustrative of the motivations and fears among the Serbian intellectual elite at the time. In this paper, entitled *The Expulsion of Arnauts*,[66] Čubrilović advocates for the use of force and various repressive measures in order to encourage the emigration of the Albanian population from the country, pointing out that:

> The Albanian block of our country occupies one of the most important positions – the main junction of Balkan rivers towards the Adriatic, Black and Aegean Seas. The possession of this strategic position is to a great extent decisive for the fate of the Central Balkans, especially the fate of the main line of communication in the Balkans: the Morava-

[64] For more on negotiations between Turkey and the Kingdom of Yugoslavia see Avdić 1991.
[65] Čubrilović was as a young man involved in the assassination of Franz Ferdinand. Since he was a minor at the time, the court sentenced him to 16 years of prision instead of the death sentence. He was released after the collapse of the Austro-Hungarian Empire in 1918 and later went on to become a professor at the Faculty of Philosophy of the University of Belgrade. Imprisoned during WWII because of his refusal to collaborate with the Nazis, following the end of the war Čubrilović went on to become a federal minister and dean of the Faculty of Philosophy.
[66] At the time, *Arnaut* was used to refer to people of Albanian ethnicity.

> Vardar rivers (…) The problem of the Novipazar *sancak* plays the same role in the life of our state as it did in 1912. The evacuation of *Arnauts* would break the last link between *our* [my emphasis] Muslims in Bosnia, Novi Pazar and other people of Muslim faith. They would become a religious minority – the only Muslim one in the Balkans, and this fact would accelerate their nationalisation. (Belić 1988).

The time of 'brotherhood and unity' in socialist Yugoslavia

One example of a critical development of Fredrik Barth's ideas is Sandra Wallman's theory that ethnic identity is the result of a two-fold process happening on both sides of a boundary. In her attempt to reveal the workings of ethnic processes in England, Wallman draws our attention to the relational nature of *social* boundaries and the question of when and why they can be utilized as a 'resource' and by whom (Wallman 1978: 208). Following this line of thought, she develops a framework around the idea of boundaries as necessarily oppositional entities that 'mark the edge of a social system' (Wallman 1978: 206), where the boundary itself is the product of interaction between two systems – it is an interface (Donnan and Wilson 1999). What is more, by marking off different systems of activity, organisation and meaning from one another, the boundary also serves a further identification purpose, as it distinguishes members from those who are not and provides a basis on which they can relate to the flow occurring across the boundary and the change this brings with it (Wallman 1978: 207). Like Barth, Wallman recognizes that boundaries can be put into play to serve the interests of one group, while posing as a liability to another, but she acknowledges that their 'status in historical or situational time' is variable – both the boundaries and the way in which they are marked can and do alter (cf. Donnan and Wilson 1999).

Anthony Cohen, like Sandra Wallman, is also interested in change, albeit change that is imposed on a community from the outside, along with the consequences of people's

responses for the community. As he showed in the edited volume *Belonging* (1982a), structural differences between and within communities disappeared with advances in communication technology, and with it, identity came gradually to free itself from the grip of local ties of kinship and class. Interestingly enough, as a consequence people began to exert increasing amounts of effort in the symbolic marking of community boundaries (Donnan and Wilson 1999: 24) in order to maintain a sense of distinctiveness despite these changes. The *Symbolizing Boundaries* volume (Cohen, 1986a) includes accounts of groups that are very diverse in size, nature and character, and it focuses on their boundaries, which are also different in scale. However, what is common to all the cases in it, as in the *Belonging* volume, is a focus on the boundary and its life in the minds of people – in the meaning that people give to it as they mark out their social identities and shape their sense of similarity to and difference from others.

Southwest Serbia is characteristic in being home to a predominantly Slav population, some of Orthodox Christian and others of Muslim religious affiliation. That said, the ethnic structure of Southwest Serbia is quite challenging to analyse due to its complexity and the delicacy of questions related to origin and identity. The delicacy derives from historical developments during which the differing political constellations made first the transformation and migrations of populations possible, and in the last, most recent phase provided the possibility for people of different confessions 'to declare themselves, in certain social and economic, cultural and political circumstances, as members of different nations…' (my translation, Rudić and Stepić 1995). The problem comes in the second part of this quotation – '…even though their ethnic roots are the same' (ibid.). This last statement, which asserts that all Muslims are Serbs who converted to Islam, demonstrates the predominant view of ethnicities in Serbia and is typically the cause of much discomfort when uttered in front of those of Muslim faith in Southwest Serbia, and even more so if

bluntly said by a Serb. For this reason, such discussions are avoided with anxious care and have become confined to Serb-only groups or rare alcohol-induced arguments. When I asked a young *imam* what he thought of the idea that all Muslims are converted Serbs, he told me:

> I congratulate you on this question. I have been longing for a while to have someone pose it to me, but no one dares. I will tell you how far-reaching this propaganda is.… At one seminar organized by the Conrad Adenauer foundation as a meeting of young theologians in order to inspire interreligious dialogue, a young girl from the Faculty of Theology very sincerely spoke on some topic regarding Kosovo. Very honestly and innocently she said: 'It would be very important for us that you accept that you are Serb Muslims, because you see, we have given the Albanians from Kosovo everything, and look how they have repaid us.' I don't think the young girl was being provocative, but she sincerely believes in this, that it means some kind of security. I am trying to tell you how a young intellectual, an unspoilt person, is capable of fascistic thinking.

An old Serb, on the other hand, was more tentative as he sketched out the historical transformations that, in his opinion, had taken place in Sandžak from the height of medieval Raška to the present day:

> First we lived as Serbs among Serbs, then we lived under the Turks, and then with the *poturica*[67] and under the Turks. After that we lived with Muslims [*muslimani*], then with Muslims with a capital M [*Muslimani*], then, finally, we now live with Bosniaks…a total confusion! (...) But, I ask, is this process ever going to end?

In order to account for the great variety of ethnic terms expressed in the above statement and to illustrate the variability of those that are and were in use in Southwest Serbia, I have conducted an analysis of censuses and policies from the time of socialist Yugoslavia onwards in the following part of this chapter. The structure of these censuses was a clear reflection of state policies and was altered frequently as a consequence of policies drawn up by the League of Communists.[68] If one were not aware of these, Yugoslav censuses would appear as proof of a very dynamic process of ethnogenesis, since the number of possibilities to choose from when defining oneself changed frequently. Another important

[67] Term used for those members of the native population who converted to Islam.
[68] The Communist Party of Yugoslavia changed its name into the League of Communists of Yugoslavia in 1952.

aspect of ethnic designations in Yugoslavia to keep in mind is the distinction between *narodi* (nations) and *narodnosti* (nationalities), whereby the former stood for the constituent peoples of Yugoslavia (initially Serbs, Croats, Slovenes, Montenegrins and Macedonians, and from 1963, Muslims), while the latter included ethnic minority groups such as Bulgarians, Hungarians, 'Muslims undeclared' (by religion) and others. Initially, the term 'national minority' was used, but it was changed in the 1963 constitution to *narodnost* due, as Edvard Kardelj[69] explained, to a realisation that all the people of Yugoslavia have the same rights as its citizens and members, regardless of their different and unique characteristics (Kardelj 1988).

In the first census following WWII, conducted in 1948, the Muslim population of Southwest Serbia had the choice of declaring themselves Serb-Muslim, Montenegrin-Muslim, and so forth, as well as Turk, Yugoslav, 'Muslim undeclared' or 'Yugoslav undeclared'. The question of Muslims and their nationality was discussed at length at the highest governing levels of Yugoslavia. For example, Moša Pijade,[70] a prominent Yugoslav communist, maintained that the Muslims of Yugoslavia are 'by and large nationally undecided' and 'without national characteristics', the cause of which he found in the rigidity of Turkish feudalism and the historical isolation of BiH (Bojić 2001: 230, CP BIH 1950: 11-17). A few years later, when he was interviewed about how the forthcoming census of 1953 would treat the population of Muslim faith, he replied:

> It is obvious, without a doubt, that the term 'Muslim' denotes religious affiliation and that it has absolutely nothing to do with the question of nationality [*narodnost*]. According to the decree that has finally been passed, the term 'Muslim' will not be related to nationality in the census. Individuals of South-Slavic origin that are not nationally decided will enter 'Yugoslav undeclared', while other nationally undecided individuals will mark themselves as 'undeclared nationally'. It is clear that this solution is the only right and correct one. No one has ever even suspected that Muslims in Bosnia, Herzegovina and Sandžak are not of

[69] Kardelj was a Slovene communist leader and one of the most influential theorists of Yugoslav socialism.
[70] Moša Pijade was a leader of Tito's partisans in WWII, a member of the Central Committee and the Politburo of the Communist Party of Yugoslavia, as well as first vice president and then president of the Yugoslav parliament.

> South-Slavic origin, an ethnic part of the Yugoslavian community. (my translation, Pijade in Borba 1953)

Similarly, in the early 1960s Josip Broz Tito publicly dismissed all inclinations to force a national designation on to the Muslim population as wrong, proposing instead that they should, if they wish, declare as citizens of Yugoslavia: '...there are unfruitful discussions among us, for example about whether Muslims should choose a nationality. That is nonsense. Everyone is entitled to be whatever they feel they are and no one has the right to impose any national label on them if they feel they are citizens of Yugoslavia' (Tito 1963). However, by 1970 his statements clearly indicated that he had changed his mind in favour of recognising Muslims as a *narod* (Kamberović 2011: 278-280).

In the 1961 census, a novelty in the form of 'Muslim (national or ethnic affiliation)' was added to the former designations. Such a messy statistical terminology, among other things, meant that it was increasingly complicated to compare censuses.[71] This was most acute in terms of the Muslim population, since the elusive methodology consisted in putting together, adding and subtracting those declared under different terms. For example, according to the 1948 census for the six administrative districts of Raška, more than nine out of ten inhabitants were marked as Serb, while Montenegrins, Muslims undeclared and 'Others' comprised the rest. This was a result of the possibility also to declare oneself to be a Serb–Muslim, who would then automatically be classified as 'Serb' by statisticians. In 1953, as we have seen, this designation was removed and replaced by 'Yugoslav undeclared' and the consequences are obvious: on the same territory, those declared as Serbs made up a bit more than 60% of the population on average, while Yugoslavs undeclared comprised around a third. Interestingly, the term 'Turk' was also included in this census, and on average 5% of the population of Southwest Serbia declared themselves

[71] An additional obstacle when comparing census data for specific regions is that in the first censuses (1948, 1953), the data were organized according to administrative districts, but in the later ones to municipalities and settlements.

as such. In some areas, such as the district of Novi Pazar, this number went up to as much as 21.87%. Although there is no doubt that a number of those who declared themselves to be Turks were in fact of Turkish origin, the majority of this population was native. The categories offered in the censuses of 1948 and 1953 reflect the unitarist ideology that guided Yugoslavia in this period (Höpken 1989: 193), and the prevailing belief of the Party that Muslims were 'by and large without national characteristics'. This was, however, in contrast to promises made during WWII. The Communist Partisan movement mobilised the people of Bosnia by pledging its future territorial integrity and proclaiming the equality of Serbs, Muslims and Croats (Bougarel 2009: 122). However, although BiH became a constituent republic of the Federation following the end of the war, the Communists did not keep their promise – Bosnian Muslims were not initially acknowledged as one of its constitutive nations. Coupled with numerous policies aimed at supressing religious life in the late 1940s, this produced a 'political vacuum' in which 90% of Bosnian Muslims chose to remain 'undeclared' in the 1948 and 1953 censuses (ibid.). Comparison with subsequent censuses of 1971 and 1981 (the territories of administrative units are not exactly the same, but do serve as a good point of reference), in which people could declare themselves as belonging to the Muslim *narod*, tells us that a predominant part of those who declared themselves as Serbs in 1953 included those of Muslim religious affiliation.[72]

Therefore, all ethnonyms that included the word 'Muslim' were considered to represent a *narodnost*, and this was the case in all subsequent censuses up to 1971, when Muslim in the sense of a *narod* was added to it. In Serbian this is distinctly marked in the spelling of words in either lower or upper case – a believer in Islam is called a *musliman*, just as a

[72] For example, 50% and 61% of people declared themselves to be Serbs in Novi Pazar and Sjenica respectively in 1953. However, in 1981, these figures fell to 28.94% and 29.50%. In 1991, 81% declared themselves to be Muslim in Novi Pazar, 83% in Sjenica.

Christian is called a *hrišćanin*. However, in order to denote a 'nation', an upper case initial letter is used. Therefore, in the 1948 census Muslims could declare themselves Muslims undeclared – *neopredeljeni musliman*, while in the 1971 census it also became possible to choose to define oneself as a *Musliman* in the sense of a *people* (likewise Serbs were *Srbi*, Montenegrins were *Crnogorci*, Yugoslavs undeclared were *neopredeljeni Jugosloveni,* etc.). This innovation was a result of the new constitution known as the 'Charter of Self-Management' (*Povelja samoupravljanja*). Drawn up in 1963, it described Yugoslavia as a socialist federal community of equal nations and nationalities (*naroda i narodnosti*) and recognised Muslims as having the same rights as Serbs and Croats in the preamble of the constitution of BiH. Accordingly, an additional torch appeared on the national emblem of the country.[73] Furthermore, the constitution prescribed that all the people of Yugoslavia, whether members of nations or national minorities, had to be represented in all public institutions according to quotas determined by demographic distribution, an arrangement that also allowed one the freedom to not declare one's self nationally at all. In 1968, the Central Committee of the League of Communists of BiH recognised that the 'Socialist Republic of BiH was designated as the state of Serbs, Croats and "Muslims by nationality"' (Perica 2002: 75). Finally, it was in the 1974 constitution that Muslims were raised to status of constituent nation of Yugoslavia.

[73] In 1946, Milovan Đilas, who was Minister for Constitutional Assemblies at the time, considered putting six torches on the emblem, but only as a symbol of the six federal units that made up the country. However, he finally rejected this idea, explaining that 'because every nation must get its own torch, there must be five. Clearly, I do not mean to deny the specific characteristics of today's Muslims with this' (my translation, Filandra 1998: 202).

The backround to Muslim 'national affirmation'

Following WWII, Yugoslavia was faced with numerous internal and external problems, one of the most important being the need to make a strict break with the Yugoslav-centrism of the interwar period and to find a working alternative (Sekulić 2004: 41 in Sarač 2009). Yugoslav Communists searched for the 'right formula' in the form of new theories, ideological justifications and policies. One particular innovation in this regard was that national liberation took on a central ideological role in the process of building the future socialist society (Grandits 2009: 16, cf. Brubaker 1996). Consequently, Yugoslavia underwent a process of 'nationalisation' which served as one of the principal substitutes for democratisation - instead of democratic pluralism, the ruling class opted to grant 'national rights' to its citizens, a process which ultimately led to the increased ethnicisation of politics and society as a whole (ibid.).

The 1960s especially were a time of colossal economic and social change in Yugoslavia, but also a period of increased political turbulence within the League of Communists whose factions could not agree on the ideological, economic and political course Yugoslavia should take. One of the principal points of conflict was the role of the republics in the Federation – the liberals were in favour of increasing their authority, while the centralists, led by Serbian representative Aleksandar Ranković,[74] were opposed to further decentralization of power to the republics (Burg 1983: 83). The ousting of Ranković from office in 1966 is cited as the moment which opened the way for decentralisation, inciting a period of frequent policy changes in the style of trial and error. One that is especially relevant in this regard was the policy of strengthening 'political peripheries' in the country (Kamberović 2009: 70). Aimed primarily at BiH, Montenegro, Kosovo and Vojvodina, the

[74] Ranković was minister of the interior and chief of UDBA, the Yugoslav secret service, known for his repressive methods. After falling from power 1966, he was expelled from the League of Communists.

policy was endorsed by president Tito, both as an attempt to appease critics of the undemocratic nature of the League of Communists, as well as an effort to stifle the domination of Serbian and Croatian political elites in the Federation (Grandits 2009: 17). The decentralisation of the Yugoslav political system, and the accompanying rise to prominence of the national question (ibid.), created a context that was favourable for the consolidation of the Muslim identity (Bougarel 2009: 122).

The second half of the 1960s saw intense debates about the Serbo-Croat language in Yugoslavia, inspired by the *Declaration on the name and status of Croatian literary language* and the *Proposal of a group of members of the Association of writers of Serbia*,[75] both of which were denounced as separatist and anti-communist Croatian and Serbian nationalism by the League of Communists. These prompted discussion on the national question in BiH, and particularly, the status of Muslims with regard to Serbs and Croats, paving the way for first the declarative and then official recognition of Muslims as a nation in 1968 at the 17th and 20th sessions of the CK SKBiH, [76] respectively. The debate initially focused on the question of culture. For example, a document entitled *On some questions regarding inter-ethnic relations*[77] juxtaposed Bosnian to Croatian and Serbian culture:

> ...there is an idea that, like the relative specificity of other social structures in the Republic, one must develop Bosnian-Herzegovian culture as a separate and particular factor of our social reality. (...) Namely, asking cultural workers [referring to artists, writers, etc.] from our Republic to declare as participants of Serbian or Croatian cultural life, in order for their works to be published in Croatia or Serbia, has contributed, among other things, to the tendency to confine oneself within the republic borders, and not just among Muslims, but also among members of other nationalities' (my translation, Kamberović 2009: 78).

[75] The first document, *Deklaracija o položaju i nazivu hrvatskog književnog jezika,* was published in March 1967 in Zagreb weekly *Telegram.* Signed by 18 academic and cultural institutions, it called for language equality of Slovenian, Croatian, Serbian and Macedonian and the use of Croatian standard language in Croatia. The second, *Predlog za razmišljanje grupe članova Udruženja književnika Srbije*, was published as a reaction to the first, and although signed by 42 members of the Association of writers of Serbia, at the annual assembly of the Association it was rejected by popular vote.

[76] See list of used abbriviations in Appendix B.

[77] *O nekim pitanjima međunacionalnih odnosa,* produced by the Committee on inter-ethnic relations of the CKSKBiH on the 10th of May, 1967.

Some seven months later, at a Committee meeting of the CK SKBiH, held on January 10th 1968 to discuss language policy, Hamdija Pozderac[78] moved the topic of discussion from Bosnian towards Bosnian Muslim culture, stating that: 'One must ask about the Muslims in our Republic, their national status – and, thus, the recognition of this *narodnost* [national minority] as a relevant factor of the language situation in BiH.' (my translation, Kamberović 2009: 66)

Together with the political denunciation of the *Deklaracija* and *Prijedlog* there was a campaign against what were proclaimed to be Muslim nationalist tendencies (Kamberović 2009: 65). Most notably this is illustrated in reactions to an academic article, *The Bosnian spirit in literature – what is it?* (1967), penned by University of Sarajevo professor Muhamed Filipović.[79] Criticized as 'Muslim nationalism', it ignited a series of meetings and resulted in the deliberation of a university committee on the best course of action (Kamberović 2009: 66). The document was judged together with the *Deklaracija* and *Prijedlog* by the Central Committee, all three documents being discredited as attempts to establish control of one nation over others. Although deemed to be a reaction to the other two nationalisms, Filipović's text was nonetheless assessed as a hegemonic attempt to impose Muslims as the only 'autochthonous' group in BiH (Lučić 2009: 102). In the end, however, the party leadership criticised the hasty political reaction, stating that an academic and professional debate with Filipović would have

[78] Pozderac was one of the most powerful Bosnian Muslim communists in the country, serving as president of the BiH presidency from 1971-74, president of its parliament until 1978 and federal vice-president in the 1980s until he was forced to resign in 1987. He also served as the president of the Federal Constitutional Commission and had an important role in the recognition of Muslims as a *narod,* particularly through the approval of constitutional amendments in the 1970s.

[79] In the 1980s, Filipović went on to become a critic of the regime. In 1990, he co-founded the Party of Democratic Action, but soon after, due to political disagreements, co-founded the Muslim Bosniak Organisation. He is one of the founders of the Bosniak Academy of Arts and Sciences.

been a more suitable approach (Kamberović 2009: 67).[80]

It was in such an atmosphere that on 26th January, 1968, the 17th session of CK SKBiH was held. Interestingly, though the debates were initiated by the language issue, the cultural aspects of the Muslim national identity were in this and subsequent debates largely glossed over. The conclusion of this session was that the appropriate ethnonym for Bosnian Muslims should be *Musliman* due to the long tradition of its use among the people, as well as because all other options, such as the Bosnian, Bosniak and Yugoslav, were deemed undesirable substitutes (Lučić 2009: 103). Although the 17th and 20th sessions represent key events in the official recognition of the Muslim national identity, a look at the transcripts indicates that the stated motives of various representatives and their interpretations of the category itself were varied.[81] Regardless of the ambiguities, the decisions that emerged from the meetings represented, to the public, the official stance of the CK SKBiH with regard to the national question in the republic: the unambiguous affirmation of the Muslim national identity, the equality of the three peoples of BiH and their complementarity as the basis for the affirmation of BiH as a republic (Lučić 2009: 105). A few months later, following the 20th session on 17th May, 1968, the CK SKBiH officially articulated the recognition of Muslims as a nation.[82] That the proclamation was made in a document entitled 'Conclusions regarding the ideological-political assignments

[80] That this, and subsequent events affected Filipović is illustrated by the turn his work took – though in 1967 he had written about the recognition of Bosniak literature, six years later, in his work *Ethno-methodological remark*s *and a discussion on unity* (1973), he described the Bosniak idea as obsolete and unsuccessful.
[81] An interesting illustration in this regard is that 'Muslims' were referred to in the third person plural (Lučić 2009: 105) – no representative openly identified with the category, which in itself could have been motivated by numerous reasons – from a wish to be perceived as objective in a situation were the Muslim identity had not yet been confirmed, to an actual personal distance from the category.
[82] For more on the attitudes of CKSKBiH towards the national question see Lučić 2008.

of the Communists of BiH for the further achievement of the equality of nations and national minorities and development of inter-republic cooperation'[83] is telling.

In fact, it was the political elites who were the carriers of the nationalising process in Yugoslavia, conducting 'national agitation' as a political assignment (Kamberović 2009: 62). At the same time, this growing importance of questions of nationality in politics did not, according to Grandits, strongly resonate with Yugoslavia's population in the 1970s during which it was more affected by the industrial and urban development of the country, and the process of 'modernisation' which aimed to supress patriarchal social relations, all of which integrated society on the basis of other values (Grandits 2009: 20).[84] Furthermore, nationalising policies 'from above' were by no means consistent – they were often ambiguous, ambivalent and sometimes downright contradictory, as a result of the differing positions in and between the republics (Grandits 2009: 17). For example, the described developments in BiH were received in different ways across the Federation. While the members of SKBiH articulated the national recognition of Muslims in opposition to nationalism in the neighbouring republics, for some representatives of SK Serbia this process itself represented a type of nationalism which carried the risk of confederalisation and, as such, posed a threat to unity and Yugoslavism (Jović 2003: 187). For example, at the 14th session of the CK SKS, historian Jovan Marjanović explained that the process had brought Yugoslavia into an 'absurd and comical situation' since, 'parallel to the proclaimed freedom of self-determination, a person could not declare as a Yugoslav,[85] and, thus, many sincere and honourable proponents of socialism are treated in a humiliating way, as people without a nationality, almost like some displaced persons'

[83] *Zaključci o idejno-političkim zadacima komunista Bosne i Hercegovine u daljnjem ostvarivanju ravnopravnosti naroda i narodnosti i razvijanju međurepubličke saradnje.*
[84] For more on consumer culture in Yugoslavia see Patterson 2001. See Lockwood 1975 for an ethnographic study of the effects of Yugoslav socialist transformation in urban and rural contexts.
[85] Referring to the ehtnonym 'Yugoslav undeclared'.

(Lučić 2009: 108). Other Serbian representatives at the session denounced his arguments as 'Serbian nationalism', and pointed to the important role of Muslims in WWII revolutionary battles as sufficient grounds for their national recognition (Lučić 2009: 109)

In such a context, a different perspective on the issue materialised in the form of an anonymous letter signed by Muslim members of the SKBiH in 1968. The document, entitled 'How Muslims of SFR Yugoslavia see inter-national relations. To comrade Tito and CK SKJ',[86] defined the Muslim nation on the basis of its cultural and religious identity, extending the boundaries of the national group beyond BiH:

> The expectation was that the CK would actively approach the question of Muslims in BiH, Sandžak and Montenegro and elsewhere in Yugoslavia following the Brioni session. However, a thorough and realistic analysis indicates that the actions of all state and party organs are in the majority of cases reduced to declarations whose goal is to pacify the public opinion of Muslim ethnic groups in Yugoslavia (my translation, Lučić 2009: 110)

The letter identified the principal threat to Muslims in Yugoslavia not in centralism, but in religious chauvinism, focusing on cultural repression and the historical and cultural Bogomil roots of the Muslim national identity. As such, it was in contrast to the rhetoric of the CK SKBiH which defined the Muslim national identity as secular and geographically limited to one republic (Lučić 2009: 111). In addition, the anonymous document is based on a different perception of the desirable socio-political organisation of Yugoslavia.[87] The official Party line that the national question is and should be permanently treated as an issue 'on the move', to be further developed and redefined,[88] until in the last ideological phase nationality and the state withered away, encouraged political disjunctions and numerous policy changes, and, as Latinka Perović noted, contributed to instability and a

[86] *Kako Muslimani SFRJ gledaju na međunacionalne odnose. Drugu Titu i CK SKJ.*
[87] Although the CK prescribed the secret investigation on the origins of this document and popularity of the views it expressed, there was never a public reaction and the extent to which this document resonated with members of the CK remains unknown (Lučić 2009: 114).
[88] For example, Džemal Bjedić, president of the Federal Executive Council, propagated that the national question should not be approached as something 'that is forever given and entirely defined' (Bartolović 1985: 131).

permanent constitutional crisis (Perović 2006).[89] At the same time, the undemocratic nature of the regime considerably limited the results that political debates could produce (Goldstein 2009), due to which, as we have seen, some politicians resorted to anonymity.

Muslim, Bosnian, Bosniak, Yugoslav?

As Yugoslavia's republics gained more power relative to the Federation, and particularly once Muslims were raised to status of a nation in 1968, it became politically important to foster popular support for some national categories as opposed to others. This was especially the case in the period leading up to the 1971 census that was characterised by campaigning to devalue competing narratives emerging from below (Lučić 2013). One of these undesirable identities was Yugoslavism whose attraction was growing quickly among both young people and those from the increasing number of inter-ethnic marriages (Grandits 2009: 34). At the same time, the Party aimed to promote ethno-national identification, as opposed to identification on another basis, as exemplified by the rejection of the equally popular Bosnian identity, and to a lesser extent, the Bosniak identity.

The subject had already been touched upon during the 17th session of the CK SKBiH. At the time, *bošnjaštvo*[90] was referred to only by two cadres, both Muslim representatives, who rejected the term on the grounds that it implied the negation of the status of Serbs and Croats in BiH (Lučić 2009: 103). Representative Osman Karabegović at the time spoke of *bosanstvo*[91] only as a historical identity, stating that it is an element that connects Serbs, Croats and Muslims, representing 'the unity of these peoples that differ according to nation

[89] For further reading on the matter see pages 5-26 and 68-69 in Perović 2006.
[90] Referring to the Bosniak identity, roughly translated as Bosniakhood.
[91] Referring to the Bosnian identity, roughly translated as Bosnianhood.

and faith' (Lučić 2009: 102). Following a similar line of argument, Karabegović further rejected Yugoslavism as a national category, stating that it would negate the national identity of Yugoslavia's peoples (Lučić 2009: 104).

In a socio-political context within which republics came to be understood as 'institutional crystallizations of nationhood' (Brubaker 1996: 30) and aimed to increase their power on the federal level, the idea of Yugoslav identity became politically undesirable. Yugoslavism was reduced to status of a political identity, that is, as Yugoslav ideologue Kardelj postulated - a cohesive factor of Yugoslavia's political system in which cultures and languages must develop independently (Kardelj 1988). A passage from a speech that Tito gave during his visit to BiH in 1969, is illustrative in this regard: '...it is particularly important that you cultivate brotherhood and unity in your republic [BiH]. Certainly, I do not mean to probe now into whether Muslims are a nationality or what they are...we will...you are, it seems to me, one republic which will [not] create one Yugoslav nation, but a Yugoslav community, a socialist community in every way (...)' (my translation, Kamberović 2009: 70). Excerpts from a widely publicised speech that Hamdija Pozderac, one of the leading Bosnian communists at the time, gave in 1971, give us an illustration into what was received by the public as the official Party line at the time:

> Yugoslavism as a national or supranational category negates national equality and harms the positive development of national interests. (...) One must not forget the fact that there is support for Yugoslavism, especially among young people, as a reaction and opposition to different forms of nationalism. This implies that there is a need to intensify activity in the battle against nationalism and to further explain the stance of the SK with regard to the national question. (...) Some use mixed marriages to justify and maintain the idea of Yugoslavism as a nation. However, this approach is extremely unscientific and tendentious. (...) Even though there are numerous mixed marriages in our country, that does not in any way create some Yugoslav nation. However, in a subjective sense, each individual has the right to feel and declare however he wants. It is a wide space of personal freedoms (Pozderac 1971: 3-4).

Though the final sentence concluded not just this, but numerous speeches, it is clear that the predefined framework given by the regime did not encourage this 'wide space of

personal freedoms', but that instead the leading members of the Party felt the need to intervene when national relations appeared to be developing in an undesirable direction (Grandits 2009:33). This was especially pronounced in the period leading up to the 1971 census that was supposed to yield numbers which would confirm that the implemented policies and directed social changes reflected social reality. In order to determine the prevalence of the Yugoslav identity with regard to other identities, a test census was conducted in 1969. Simultaneously, the weekly newspaper NIN conducted a parallel inquiry. Both surveys yielded what were perceived by officials, and in particular the Bosnian political elite, as an unfavourable outcome – widespread sympathy for the Yugoslav identity (Lučić 2013: 433). In response, they called for decisive national propagation.

Historian and prominent cultural worker Enver Redžić[92] described the situation in the following terms: 'In the following year [1971] there was to be the census, which was approached as a very significant political assignment, primarily with regard to the citizens' declaration on national affiliation and national equality. There was an ongoing campaign in the media which included notable politicians, as well as university professors' (Redžić 2008: 95, my translation). One of the most widely read Bosnian newspapers, *Oslobođenje*, at the time opened a Q&A section in which its readers could express their concerns about the forthcoming census. In response to questions on the Muslim/Bosnian/Bosniak categories, Atif Purivatra, one of the chosen experts, maintained that accepting the latter two would 'represent an attempt of resurrecting unitarist Yugoslavism[93] within the specific national relations in this Republic [BiH]. This would equally negate the national

[92] Redžić was a high-ranking participant in the national liberation movement during WWII, later assistant professor at the University of Sarajevo, director of publishing house *Svijetlost* and member of the Academy of Arts and Sciences of BiH.
[93] Referring to the Kingdom of Yugoslavia and its centralism in opposition to which the Communists built their platform.

individuality of Serbs and Croats and Muslims, as well as members of other nations and minorities in BiH' (Redžić 2008: 95-95). The extensive backlash to historian Enver Redžić's proposition to allow people to declare as Bosnians and Yugoslavs in the 1971 census is particularly indicative:

> A session of the Presidency was organised to analyse and judge my arguments (...) He [Hasan Grabčanović] said that there are enormous political implications in Redžić's arguments. Atif Purivatra claimed that Redžić's stance does not contribute to the improvement of inter-national relations and that it is unclear what the goal of Redžić's intervention was. Mustafa Vilović stated that (...); Ivan Brigić, that (...). Ahmet Čatić expressed conviction that (...) (my translation, Redžić 2008: 95-96).

The debates during this period also touched upon how the new 'Muslim' category should be determined – that is, who exactly may it refer to.[94] Arguments given by Party members from different republics also point to the extent to which the new constitutional order in the Federation shaped the national question in the country. As an example, at a CK SKBiH session in 1970, Kiro Hadži Vasiljev, a representative from Macedonia, stated that:

> According to all statements and academic works, which we have in our material, but also according to all our understandings, they [Bosnian Muslims] are a specific ethnic group. But this is not the case for all Muslims living in Yugoslavia, only for the Bosnian Muslims. I think it is obvious that a Muslim who is not a Turk and who lives in Sandžak does not belong to the same ethnic group as the Bosnian Muslims, especially if there are Muslims also living in Montenegro and Macedonia. Therefore, I would suggest that we agree upon this and treat only the Bosnian Muslims as an ethnic group (Lučić 2013: 435).

Such an understanding of the Muslim category is a clear affirmation of the republics, but also indicates the ambiguity existing between republican borders and ethnic boundaries in the new system. With regard to this, Lučić observed that, 'On the republican level, the defining characteristic of the Muslim category was the negation of Croatian/Serbian national identities. In the federal context, the dividing line was the denial of the category's capacity to stand for Muslims from republics other than BiH' (2013: 435).

[94] For a detailed outline of debates in the early 1970s, see Lučić 2013.

Furthermore, some academics argue that another contributing factor which positively predisposed the Communists to recognise the Muslim national identity was the gradual emergence of the Islamic Community (IC) as the leader of Muslims (Kamberović 2009, Sarač 2009). As a consequence, the Party aimed to regain the leadership position, which at the time meant diminishing the role of the IC in nationalising activity. This relationship, however, was ambiguous and inconsistent, since the Party was prone to using the IC to further its strategic goals. For example, although the Party encouraged the IC to take a prominent role in promoting the new Muslim identity prior to the 1971 census, once the census was over it pushed the IC into the background (Kamberović 2009: 77). After 1974, however, Bosnian Muslims became the only constitutive nation which did not have its own national institutions, such as the academy of arts and sciences which in Serbia and Croatia were national institutions. Similarly, Muslims did not directly identify by name with any of the federal republics (Bougarel 2009: 123). As a result, the Islamic Community emerged as the only national institution of *Muslimani* in Yugoslavia (Sarač 2009: 154). Xavier Bougarel notes that the role of Islam in defining the Muslim national identity in the 1960s and early 1970s was significant due to the ethnonym's very connotations and the emergence of the IC as its leading institution, and it sheds light on why the Bosnian pan-Islamic movement would emerge as a leader in the social mobilisation of Bosnian Muslims in the early 1990s (Bougarel 2009: 123). The explanation of the relation between the 'big M' and 'small m' [*Musliman* and *musliman*] that Husein Đozo, head of the IC, gave in 1970, provides a telling illustration: 'I would say that with this [*Musliman* national category] we are returning, not distancing ourselves. The "small m" does not lose [with this], but gains. The "big M" makes it stronger, consolidates it (...) We are aware that the "small m" represents the foundation of the "big M", without which it would imply an empty name, a word without content' (Đozo 1970: 205, my translation).

The varied political ideas of Yugoslavia's leading communists presented in this section, such as the simultaneous emphasis on national and republic affirmation, brotherhood and unity, coupled with the rejection of Yugoslavism and nationalism, may seem incongruous. However, as Rogers Brubaker observed in his analysis of the Soviet regime which the Yugoslav national framework closely followed, both were 'antinationalist but not antinational' (1996: 17). Although the regime supressed nationalism, from its founding moment it 'institutionalised a multi-layered model of national rights, which included a combination of suppression, competition, and compromise' (Jansen 2005: 54), as a result of which territorial nationhood and ethnic nationality emerged as fundamental social categories and so forged a political field conducive to nationalism (Brubaker 1996: 17).[95] This phenomenon became especially pertinent when official nationality quotas were introduced, turning nationality into a resource for furthering individual and collective ambitions (Jansen 2005: 54). National politics emerged as an important instrument of power within Yugoslavia's one party system and allowed space to be manoeuvred to advance interests on all levels, from the federal to the local (Grandits 2009).

The Bosniak nationality

National and religious identities are today understood to be linked by most Muslims of Serbia. This is certainly not unusual: dilemmas about identifying with one's religious group or nation, correlating them or even blending one with the other are characteristic for the majority of the members of the principal religious traditions and national groups in the space of former Yugoslavia.[96] Though most of the religious institutions in the former

[95] For further reading on the topic, see Bougarel (1996: 25–52, 81–100), Cohen (1995), Ramet (1992).
[96] One of the exceptions is the Albanian national group. Although the majority are Muslim, Albanians tend to define themselves on the basis of non-religious factors such as language. (Duijzings 2005).

Yugoslavia are not explicitly national, in key historical moments they took on a leading role in the social organisation of their flocks and in corresponding questions of ethnicity and culture, while religious orthodoxy itself became secondary (Ekmečić 1989: 15). In a similar vein, Dugandžija points out that religion was not the element which divided South-Slavic nations, but one that was, in specific historical circumstances, influential for their constitution and development (1983: 167).

As a consequence, the basic foundation of national movements in the former Yugoslavia resides in religious institutions, resulting in a specific form of religious nationalism (Ekmečić 1989: 15). For example, sociologist Olivera Milosavljević argues that in the last century the link between Orthodoxy and Serbhood became absolute. Although the League of Communists attempted to formulate nationality in, as we saw, different terms, in the 1980s, the idea of the Church as a safe keeper of the 'awareness of the Serbian national spirit' rose to prominence, and with it the amalgamation of nation and religion (Milosavljević 2002: 118).[97] As historian Ivo Banac points out, the national question in the region was shaped primarily by the 'dissimilar structure and goals of various national ideologies that have emerged within the political culture of each of Eastern Europe's national groups', that is, by the political elites who drew on a religious heritage to construct the diverse national movements (2002: xii). This has recently been most apparent in the concept of Bosniak nationhood.

The first time the Bosniak idea was concretely formulated as part of a national and political agenda was in the late 19th century during the occupation of Bosnia by Austria-Hungary. Prior to that period, being a Bosniak was primarily used as a geographic

[97] The process of the constitution of the Macedonian Orthodox Church, which was opposed by various national churches, as well as of the Montenegrin Orthodox Church which is still rejected as an imposter by the Serbian Orthodox Church is illustrative. These protests are not motivated by a denial of the existance of practicing Orthodox in Macedonia or Montenegro, but by a denial of the existence of a Macedonian or Montenegrin nation.

designation – Bosnia's Muslims would typically refer to themselves as Turks when at home, in order to differentiate from the Orthodox and Catholic, and as Bosniaks when outside Bosnia, in order to differentiate from the Turkish speaking population (Bougarel 2009: 119). This was a direct consequence of the Ottoman political system in which the terms did not carry an ethno-national significance (ibid.). As the strength of the Ottoman Empire began to dwindle, however, the Bosnian territories became a focal point of political interest on the part of the surrounding nationalisms (Ćirković 1964: 15). Austria-Hungary was determined to seize the opportunity to take hold of the south and found a justification for its imperialistic plans in claiming the historical right of the Habsburgs to Bosnia, a right that was said to be founded in their many links during medieval times, as well as in postulating the continuity of Bosnian nationhood, that is, *bošnjaštvo*,[98] since medieval times (Ćirković 1964: 20). These ideas additionally served to undermine the influence of Belgrade and Zagreb on the national formation of Serbs and Croats in Bosnia, as a result of which Benjamin Kallay, the Austro-Hungarian statesman appointed as administrator of Bosnia at the time, backed up that part of the Bosnian political and intellectual elite which had developed *bošnjaštvo* into an ethno-political concept.

The concept was based on the belief that, in the historical land of Bosnia lives an autochthonous population of an uninterrupted ethnic, cultural and psychological continuity spanning from the early Middle Ages to the present day and whose specificity is based in the Bogomil[99] tradition of medieval Bosnia.[100] Save for the emerging Muslim intelligentsia which enthusiastically endorsed it, such an understanding of *bošnjaštvo* was rejected by the Serbian and Croatian communities in Bosnia, as well as the majority of Bosnian

[98] *Bošnjaštvo*, roughly translated as Bosniakhood.
[99] Bogomilism was a Christian sect that preached a return to the teachings of early Christianity and that is thought to have originated in the 10th century in the Balkans, spreading from medieval Bulgaria towards the West, though its exact origin has not been confirmed.
[100] For more information, see Kralajčić, 1987, especially 89-308; Ćirković 1964: 21.

Muslims most of which preferred to maintain the established religious boundaries (Bougarel 2009: 119). In due time, this battle of nationalisms – a battle only ideational at first – spilled over into the realm of historical science. The thesis of the Bogomil tradition in Bosnia, which initially developed relatively independently of political influence, proved a very useful tool in this regard, as a result of which the ruling regime sponsored and encouraged its research and promotion. Forging the link between medieval Bosnian history and a contemporary political issue such as the question of whether Bosnian territory belongs to Serbia, Croatia or Austria-Hungary was not raised as problematic in historical science due to the strength of political discourses at the time (Ćirković 1964: 20-21).

After the disappearance of both the Ottoman and Austro-Hungarian empires, the idea of Bosniak nationhood remained more or less hidden from view for some seven decades,[101] both as a result of Serbo-Croatian influence, but also because the very nature of Muslim identity in the Balkans is characterized by a tension between the inclination towards the modern idea of statehood and its basis in religion.[102] This tension is reflected both in the political debates about the Muslim nationality in Yugoslavia after WWII, and in discussions about the Bosniak concept in the 1990s.

The 1960s and 1970s saw the birth of the *Musliman* ethnonym instead of a Bosniak one, primarily because the League of Communists wanted to avoid a situation in which one of

[101] A notable exception to this were the organisations Muslim Youth (*Muslimanska omladina*) and Movement for the Autonomy of BiH (*Pokret za autonomiju Bosne i Hercegovine*), both of which endorsed *bošnjaštvo.* They were founded in 1939 in opposition to the division of BiH between Banovina of Croatia and Serbia. However, when WWII broke out, the *Pokret* aligned with the Third Reich in its goal to create a 'Bosnian province' within the Independent State of Croatia, which in itself represented another project of dividing Bosnia – not only was it without west and east Herzegovina, but its creation prescribed the forced migration of populations in order to create ethnically homogenous territories (Hurem 1968). For more on this see Begić 1965, Bougarel 2009, Šehić 1981 and Trhulj 1990.

[102] In 1909 Islamic religious communities in Bosnia were given great autonomy which, according to Bougarel transformed the Bosnian Muslims into a 'neo-millet' (Bougarel 2009.: 120). That, as a result, they gave up on the project of nation building is, for Bougarel, illustrated by growing use of the term 'Musliman' in this period. Coupled with the supression of religious autnomy, the economic deterioration of the Muslim elites and the conflict between Serb and Croat nationalism, this led to a serious identity crisis and an outright negation of the political and physical existance of Muslims within the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, most notably illustrated by the division of Bosnia between Serbia and banovina Croatia in 1939 (ibid.).

the three constitutive nations of BiH could exclusively identify with it (Bougarel 2009: 123), but also, as we saw, because it was strategically in line with the policy of political peripheries, Yugoslavia's foreign policy, as well as the goal of the Party to take the leading position among the Muslim population. As Xavier Bougarel notes, 'The distinction that was established then [1960s] between "Muslims" [*Muslimani*] in a national sense of the word (with a capital "M") and "Muslims" [*muslimani*] in a religious sense (lower-case "m") reveals the ambivalence of this national construct and all the changes of identification that it could bring' (Bougarel 2009: 117).

The revival of the Bosniak idea began with the sharpening of political conflicts in Yugoslavia in the late 1980s. It first came from influential Muslims from abroad, such as Adil Zulfikarpašić from Zurich, successor in a long line of eminent Bosnian *bey*s[103] who initially took the leading position in the Bosniak movement by founding the Muslim Bosniak Organisation Party. Zulfikarpašić propagated the idea that Bosniakhood should be all-encompassing, including all inhabitants of BiH, the Muslim, the Catholic and the Orthodox – that is, that it should not be based in religion (Zulfikarpašić et al. 1995: 97). Opposition came from numerous sides. For example, Mustafa Imamović, an influential intellectual, wrote that 'Bosniak' as a term had been superseded as a potential national label and that it was simply unacceptable as a common national name for the greater part of the people of BiH (Imamović 1990: 15). The greatest opposition came from Alija Izetbegović, later president of BiH, and his Party of Democratic Action, which was in favour of the old solution and the idea of Muslims as supra-national.[104] The *Musliman* term was also more popular among the people themselves – according to a survey conducted in 1990, only 1,8 % of Bosnian citizens were supportive of the term Bosniak for

[103] Lord or chieftain.
[104] As a result, in 1990 those members in favour of *bošnjaštvo* were expelled from the SDA party.

Bosnian Muslims, while 17% felt it should be used to designate all of its inhabitants regardless of religion (Dunđerović and Bakić 1990: 299).

However, the catastrophic and devastating war the Bosnian Muslims found themselves in and especially the human tragedy it produced, together with the relative indifference of the West to the idea of 'Muslims' as a nationality, brought about the realisation that a label without a religious but with a state connotation would be more politically constructive. Before long, the Bosniak national name would be accepted by acclamation at the Bosniak Assembly that gathered together the Muslim political and intellectual elite in 1993 (Imamović 1996). International recognition came with the Washington Consensus in 1994, which proclaimed the creation of the Bosnian-Croatian Federation and its Constitution in which Muslims were strictly referred to as Bosniaks.[105]

However, due to the way the Muslim identity was formulated, and because of the specific process of its evolution in Yugoslavia, the ambiguous relationship between the ethnic, religious and national dimension of the Muslim/Bosniak identity survived in the post-socialist period. Political divergence on this issue is still present – a minority still believes in the Bosniak idea as integrating people on the basis of nationality and not religion: all those who are citizens of Bosnia and speak its language are Bosniak. On the other hand, it is the Bosniak idea, which is coloured by a strong Muslim connotation, that has found the greatest support,[106] as illustrated by the words of former *reis-ul-ulema* Mustafa Cerić: 'without Islam, without the Muslim civilisation, without Muslim culture – we do not exist' (my translation, Cerić 1994: 15). This version of the Bosniak idea is also more elaborate because it carries with it the obligation to link pre-Ottoman and post-Ottoman Bosnia and

[105] For further details on the transformation of Muslims into Bosniaks, see Bougarel 2009.
[106] For examples, see Balić 1973, Balić 1990, Bojić 2001, Handžić 1994, Isaković 1994.

it is this form that is the guiding philosophy of numerous political groups in Southwest Serbia.

According to Adem Handžić, Bosniak historian, the Bosniak population is 'indigenous' in Bosnia, Herzegovina and Sandžak, therefore any other name for it would be illogical: 'The assault on the Bosniak name began long ago, in the 19th century, and the basis for that was religion, that is, western and eastern cultural influences that led to the formation of the Croatian and Serbian national designation (my translation, 1994: 24). Consequently, even though the medieval inhabitants of Bosnia were all ethnically Bosniak, in the 19th century everyone except the Muslims ceased to feel Bosniak in a political and national sense because historical events in the Balkans induced separation along national and religious lines (Fočo 1994, Džaja 1991). This is complemented by a theory that argues for a religious, political and spiritual continuity between medieval Bosniaks and those of today on the basis of their Bogomil origins. The argument posits it was due to prosecution and the similarities of Islam and Bogomilism that the Bogomil-affiliated population of the medieval Balkans, along with a handful of Catholics and Orthodox Christians, made up the vast majority of those who accepted Islam.[107]

Research on Ottoman tax records, however, has largely discredited the view that Islamicisation in Bosnia was prompted by these motives (Morrison and Roberts 2013: 30). Nevertheless, as we can see, interest in the Bogomil theory has persisted from the time of Benjamin Kallay both in academia and outside it, and while it has mostly provided an impetus to more serious research in the former, in the practical-political sphere it has been put to use as factual. According to historian Srećko Džaja, the reasons for the endurance of this theory in both spheres are various – it is due to the late access and use of Ottoman

[107] This idea was throughout the 20th century at various times endorsed not only by Muslim, but also by historians of other nationalities in Yugoslavia. For examples, see Pelagic 1880: 39 and Čubrilović 1935: 372.

sources, the sheer practicality and simplicity of the thesis, and/or the fact that it is very convenient to refer to in political debates that touch upon religion and nationality (1987: 76-77).

The implications are numerous, one of them being that it is sufficient to state simply that Sandžak had Bogomils long ago, and that therefore the present-day Muslims there are its indigenous population too and the only ones who are the carriers of its medieval spirit. According to this framework not all the people of Bosnia are Bosniaks, but many of those who live outside it are. One example of this argument is found in the *History of Bosnia and Bosniaks,* where the author explains the ethnic origins of Sandžak's Muslims and uses an array of different ethnic terms (Bojić, 2001: 463, 466):

> The Muslims of Sandžak comprise an inseparable *ethno-genetic* and national whole with the Muslims-Bosniaks in the Republic of BiH (…) mixing through migration and marriage and in other ways with Bosniaks, i.e. with Bosnian Muslims throughout the centuries, they have ethnically become the same as them. That is why almost all of them declare themselves as *Muslimani* today, that is, as Bosniaks.

The words of former Public Relations Officer of the Islamic Community in Serbia, who is also a man of faith, are especially interesting since they are a combination of the Islamic understanding of the Bosniak idea and a rhetoric typical of the liberal-democratic political and civil-society forces of Serbia. When asked about the origin of Sandžak's Bosniaks, he said:

> All people who live here are of Slavic origin, and so are we. They were polytheist, they had the god Perun,[108] they believed in the forces of nature…they were typical pagans. Later on, some of them accepted one religion, others a different one. For some time, the Bogomil faith was very widespread in Sandžak, a faith that resembled Islam in some beliefs. That is why the Bosniaks of Sandžak accepted Islam so easily – because it appeared as similar, only more progressive. To present us in accordance with the fascist theory of Vojislav Šešelj,[109] that we are only Serbian Muslims, is an overture to a new

[108] Perun was the Slavic god of the sky and thunder.

[109] Vojislav Šešelj is founder of the nationalist Serbian Radical Party. A brilliant law student, he started out as a Communist, only to be imprisoned for eight years in the 1980s due to counter-revolutionary activity – criticizing the communist one-party regime as well as the pan-Islamism of his professors. He was on trial before International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia for war crimes in the 1990s but was acquitted in a first-instance verdict on all counts.

> genocide…I mean, you tell me that my great-grandfather was a convert and that I should go back to the ancestral faith. I do not want to comment on that, even…there might have been exceptional cases, but anyway, the basic point is that each individual should be allowed to determine who he is for himself. I am a Bosniak, I believe in that, that is my origin. Full stop. Will I be accepted if I agree that I am a Serb Muslim, if I give up myself, my history, my ancestors…? I am sorry, but I am not capable of that. My great-grandfather lived here, just like yours did. What is the problem, then?
>
> What is needed is a change of consciousness – that those who are dominant in numbers do not need to be the persecutors who have to get even with someone for something. We are not Turks; we are Bosniaks. We can go forward, establish a democracy, only if we begin to change our selves, our minds…and the place to start is the education system and school program. We need to leave history to the scientists, instead of discussing it at political meetings and designing our foreign policy according to a battle that occurred in the 14th century.[110] When the British and the French, the Germans and the French, let their experts deal with history, and turned instead to the economy and problems that bother the common man, the EU was founded. We should do the same.'

The Bosniak national designation first appeared in a Serbian census in 2003, although the former terms *Musliman* and undeclared *musliman* were also available options. During fieldwork conducted in December 2009, I noticed that the cities of Novi Pazar and Sjenica were covered in green posters sporting the emblem of Sandžak and a picture of a couple dressed in Bosniak traditional dress, put up by the Bosniak National Council. The posters called on people to register themselves in the special voting list of the Bosniak national minority, and in big red letters underneath explained this with the exclamation: 'Confirm your identity!'. Most Serbs I spoke to referred to these posters with irritation, as one man from Sjenica told me:

> Bosniaks, Bosniaks…who are these Bosniaks? They are not Bosniaks, they are Muslims, and they can call themselves Eskimos for all I care, I will call them Muslims. Suddenly I go to the pub and my friends tell me that they are Bosniaks with a Bosniak language, and yet, we still understand each other! It's just a game of politics we are all part of, a fight for power. Did you see those posters plastered all over town, calling people to confirm themselves as if they had no identity before, as if they didn't exist?

A girl in her early twenties told me:

> I have many Muslim friends; I don't care about that [religion]. I hang out with people who are good people, that's what matters but what everyone seems to have forgotten. I mean, I don't like extreme-minded people, whether they are Serb or Muslim. And all these posters

[110] A reference to the Battle of Kosovo in 1389 between the Ottoman Empire and forces led by the Serbian Prince Lazar.

> in town, they are not just pieces of paper, they have an influence. For example, the other night I was out with friends, and a Muslim friend of mine started speaking about that, and she said: 'We are a national minority!' 'So what?', I asked, 'you have the same rights as I do', and she replied: 'Yes, but I want my own country!'

***

During fieldwork in Sjenica in the summer of 2009, another incident involving a car took place – the car I was riding in with a Serbian family got stuck in a canal. As we got out, I saw a Muslim friend of mine nearby and called on her for help. Within a couple of minutes, she came back in another car with her friend Mustafa. After countless attempts to pull the car out with his car, Mustafa succeeded and then pulled our car to the nearest garage. Mirko, the father of the family, wasn't sure how to thank him, since Mustafa would not accept any money, and he tried to find something suitable in the car to give to him. With that, he pulled out a bottle of plum brandy with a large engraving of St. Nicholas, the most common patron-saint of Serbs, on it and handed it over. I saw that his wife raised her eyebrows as did my friend, and it was only after a couple of seconds that the father realized what he had done – he had given brandy to a very religious Muslim, and one produced by Orthodox priests. Suddenly, they were all waiting for Mustafa's reaction in suspense – it was not an elevated tension since everyone was well aware of the comical irony of the situation, but it could clearly be felt. He laughed it off: 'Well, I don't drink, but thanks. I will give the bottle as a present to my Serbian neighbour!' As Mustafa left, a rain of criticism poured down on Mirko: 'What were you thinking of? The boy spent an hour helping us and probably damaged his own car, and you repay him with brandy fit for communion? He will think you were trying to insult him on purpose! Disgraceful!'

Culture is an important aspect of boundaries and borders as institutions, processes and markers of identity, and it is seen by people themselves as such – as a source of meaning and a template for the valorisation of social life and social action. Similarly, the concepts

of ethnicity, nationality and identity are not just 'empty terms' of no use – the concepts themselves have played a very significant role in the official determination of who exactly inhabits South-West Serbia and by what name, as I have shown in the brief analysis of Yugoslavian censuses and the debates about the identity of Muslim Slavs in this chapter. This process reflects Obeyesekere's assertion that a sense of identification is the outcome of the interweaving of personal biography and public narrative (1975), or Xavier Bougarel's observation that in post-war Bosnia official narratives and personal stories, political strategies and psychological needs, constantly meet, confront and influence each other (2007: 24). Words and terms that began their lives in official ideology and as ink on paper have undergone a process of democratisation, and people have come to view them as familiar and important. The extent to which individual actors interact with state narratives and how they do so will be further explored in the following chapters.

Chapter 4 - Discourses of belonging and identity in Southwest Serbia

"When I use a word," Humpty Dumpty said, in rather a scornful tone, "it means just what I choose it to mean — neither more nor less."

"The question is," said Alice, "whether you can make words mean so many different things."

"The question is," said Humpty Dumpty, "which is to be master — that's all."

Through the Looking Glass
Lewis Carroll

A claim frequently made about any social group is that its members share a common vision of the future and understanding of the past, both of which determine strategic action.[111] It is in this sense in particular that ethno-national identities manifest themselves as political imagination (cf. Assmann 2012). As we have seen in Chapter 2, according to Kirsten Hastrup the structuring of memory is not a retrospective activity because people embed the present in the past (Sahlins 1985: 146) and in doing so inform their future history (Hastrup 1992a). Thus, the past, present and future are linked as in a piece of theatre, and real life unravels according to a plot within a social space that is filled out by individual agents' imagination as they attempt to prophesize the future (ibid.: 226). However, the lives of individuals unravel not within one, but within multiple plots that

[111] For example, Emerson's definition the nation is determined precisely by this link between the past and the present: 'The nation is a community of people who feel they belong together in the double sense that they share deeply significant elements of a common heritage and that they share a common destiny for the future' (Emerson 1960: 95).

intersect and shape each other, most of which are perceived as interim and as nested within those that are understood to be long-term. Prophetic effort is, as a result, based on an understanding of the self and depends on one's primary group affiliation. This chapter will therefore explore which are the primarily social groups that individuals in Southwest Serbia adhere to and which guide them in their activities.

In the following sections I will present the results of a combined qualitative and quantitative study of discourses of identity and belonging, the goal of which was to examine how identity is conceptualised in the region, which social groups it is entrenched in, the relationship between the individual and the collective, and the interweaving of the public and the personal in the municipalities of Prijepolje, Priboj and Sjenica. The study was conducted with the aid of a questionnaire[112] designed to inquire into the extent to which residents of the three municipalities feel that different social groups are important for their personal sense of self and for who they are as individuals. Although attempts to examine such sentiments are riddled with difficulties, the approach I took was based on the idea that personal identity manifests itself as a reflexively organised endeavour in the context of the multiple opportunities offered by contemporary society, such as the trace that society and its groups, organisations, institutions, social values and norms leave on the individual because she occupies various social positions within these, contemplating her experiences as she does so (cf. Beck 1986). Such a position views the individual as both a social subject and a social object, one who is immersed within the social structure, but within whose limiting framework the individual has some freedom to act. Accordingly, one of the goals of this questionnaire was to determine the degree to which informants perceive different sources of identity, such as membership in social groups or

[112] The questionnaire is available in its entirety in Appendix C.

identification with place, to be significant for their sense of self, and to analyse the role of the ethno-national group in this connection.

As outlined in Chapter 2, this thesis views group identities as the outcome of a twofold process of internal and external identification (cf. Jenkins 1997) within which power relations play a crucial role. Therefore, the secondary goal of the study was to gain an insight into how this process is played out in Southwest Serbia in shaping ethno-national identities, and to juxtapose it to data gathered through participant observation and case studies. In order to provide background to the analysis of how personal identities are influenced by the socio-political context, the first sections of this chapter will present the workings of the legal and political framework that provides the backdrop for present-day ethno-national politics in Southwest Serbia. The rest of the chapter will focus on an analysis of how individuals negotiate, manipulate and draw the boundary between what they understand to be the public and personal aspects of their identity respectively, between what is seen as temporary and imposed versus what is perceived as long-term and authentic, drawing particularly on interviews with individuals who escape the 'neat' categories imposed by post-Yugoslav identity politics, such as Yugoslavs, Muslim Serbs, those in mixed marriages and those who wish to remain 'undeclared'.

The legal framework

The position of national minorities in Serbia today and their individual and collective rights are determined by the Constitution of Serbia and relevant laws. The most important is the Law on the Protection of the Rights and Freedoms of National Minorities [Zakon o zaštiti prava i sloboda nacionalnih manjina] passed in 2002 in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, and which has continued to apply, with amendments, following the

disintegration of the State Union of Serbia and Montenegro in 2006. This and other laws and bilateral agreements[113] form a legal framework based on standards established by the relevant documents of the Council of Europe, such as the Convention for the Protection of National Minorities and the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages. On the basis of these standards, the members of national minorities in Serbia have the power to decide on issues regarding their culture, education, the use of language and script, as well as media, for the purpose of which they can establish national councils (Constitution of the Republic of Serbia, Article 75).

The rights of national minorities are primarily rooted in the concept of cultural autonomy, which, according to the Constitution, entails the right to the preservation of national, ethnic, cultural and religious distinctiveness [*posebnost*] and collective identity.[114] The definition of a national minority is somewhat vague – for example, although the Law states that a national minority must make up at least 15% of the population of a municipality in order to enjoy the right to the official use of its language and script on the territory of that municipality, and 2% of the general population in order to have the right to communicate with state institutions in its mother tongue, there is no prescribed figure on the basis of which groups are deemed to be national minorities and thanks to which they can enjoy many of the other rights guaranteed to them. In fact, the Law on the protection of the rights and freedoms of national minorities places greater importance on measures such as the

[113] This includes the Law on the National Councils of National Minorities of 2009 [Zakon o nacionalnim savetima nacionalnih manjina], as well as the Law on the Official Use of Language and Script [Zakon o službenoj upotrebi jezika i pisma], Law on the Foundations of the System of Education [Zakon o osnovama sistema obrazovanja i vaspitanja], Law on Local Government [Zakon o lokalnoj samoupravi], the Law on the Prohibition of Discrimination [Zakon o zabrani diskriminacije] and bilateral agreements on the protection of minorities with Croatia, Macedonia, Hungary and Romania.

[114] Together these guarantee the rights to use one's language and script, to education in the mother tongue, to the use of name and surname, to the establishment of private institutions of education, media outlets and measures to cultivate language, religion and culture, and the right to use national minority symbols and insignia. In order to exercise the right to primary or secondary education in a minority language, the Law prescribes that there must be at least fifteen students of the national minority group registered for instruction. However, a permit can still be issued by the Minister of Education when this figure is less than fifteen.

existence of historical links with Serbia, distinction and self-determination, and defines national minorities as groups of citizens that are 'according to number sufficiently representative'. In addition, they must have cultivated a long-term and strong link with the territory of the Republic of Serbia and be marked by unique characteristics such as language, culture, national or ethnic belonging, origin or religious affiliation that distinguish them from the majority of the population. Furthermore, the Law determines that these groups must also be conscious of their distinction and unity – the members of national minority groups must 'be characterized by caring to jointly cultivate their collective identity, including culture, tradition, language and religion' [my translation]. Finally, the Law concludes that it will deem all groups of citizens that call or determine themselves to be peoples, national or ethnic communities, national or ethnic groups and minorities, and which fulfil the criteria above, to be national minorities [Zakon o zaštiti prava i sloboda nacionalnih manjina, Section I, Article 2].

Unsurprisingly, the politics of minority parties is closely based on the above model of national distinctiveness. However, the minority policy formed by the legal framework above was not the result of a democratic and participatory process, nor based on a general consensus, but the outcome of an agreement achieved between the government and the most politically resourceful minority leaders. As Vujačić (2012) states, these were the leaders of the best organised national minority in Serbia, the Hungarian minority in Vojvodina, and the leaders of the national group seen to carry the greatest threat of destabilisation, accordingly giving them considerable leverage, namely the Bosniak minority. The new minority policy that was to be created after the overthrow of Milošević with the 2002 Law on the Protection of Rights and Freedoms of National Minorities was of great importance in the context of the processes of democratisation and the search for a new political consensus in Serbia after 2000 (Vujačić 2012: 156). It stood for the new

political identity and reintegration of Serbia and could have been a good basis for the cultivation of an integrative form of multiculturalism and the instruments and mechanisms for its implementation (ibid.). Instead, the way the Law was drafted and passed worked in favour of 'segregative multiculturalism', a form of multicultural policy that fosters distance between ethnic groups, weakening the fragile social links between them by exaggerating ethnic differences and isolating minorities (Bašić 2007). Instead of enabling cooperation, multiculturalism is reduced to a form of mutual toleration between the majority and minority groups, both of which have an interest in this state of affairs (Vujačić 2012: 157). For the ethnic majority this is a good model for keeping ethnic minorities marginalised whilst providing them with 'the highest standards of protection', while the ethnic minority, for its part, accepts this as an improvement. The particular political interests of minority representatives significantly contribute towards their compliance because minority parties aim to monopolise minority representation, a strategy facilitated by segregative multiculturalism (Vujačić 2012: 157). This model, states Vujačić, is also characteristic of other post-Yugoslav states and is one that results in the 'constitutionalisation' of segregative multiculturalism (Vujačić 2012: 157-159),. This is in accordance with an understanding of ethnicities and nations as discrete units and, as such, the building blocks of society. As we have seen, this idea was the basis of the Yugoslav socio-political framework which post-Yugoslav states inherited, but it is also compatible with liberal multiculturalism (Jansen 2005: 61), and in practice, it has played a part in the ethnification of the political space and the politicisation of ethnic identity. The effect of EU conditionality has not been as significant as expected with regard to minority policy in potential member states. As research has shown, minority policies in pre-accession and accession states depended greatly on domestic factors and the will of the ruling political actors (Rechel 2008: 172) and were, additionally, undermined by limitations imposed by

the EU itself. The inconsistent standard of minority rights in the EU, the emphasis on the *acquis communautaire* but not on monitoring the extent to which new laws were being implemented and a disregard of public attitudes towards national minorities (ibid.: 172-173) also affected the way the minority policy in Serbia was designed and implemented.

One illustration of the outcome of the minority policy in Serbia is the regulation of national minority councils. The Law on these councils prescribes their establishment as an instrument of national minority self-governance, whereby these bodies are to represent the national minority in all questions regarding the latter's cultural autonomy. Members of the national councils can be chosen either through direct election when the electoral list consists of at least 40% of the total number of members comprising the national minority in the previous census, or through an electoral assembly in other cases (Zakon o nacionalnim savetima nacionalnih manjina, Article 29).[115] Until 2009, the establishment and jurisdiction of these councils was regulated by the 2002 Law on the Protection of Rights and Freedoms of National minorities. A separate Law on National Councils was passed in 2009 and subsequently amended in 2014, after the 2010 Council elections demonstrated that it was lacking in certain aspects. The amended law is also subject to criticisms due to the great influence it bestows on the governing political parties of national minorities, a phenomenon that was observed in the 2014 council elections and all the preceding ones. Political parties in Serbia typically do not have ethnically specific names, but most national minorities are represented by political parties that are ethnically specific in their programs and goals. For example, minority parties are usually differentiated solely on the basis of their ethnic policy – their approach to language, religion, history and proposed relationship with host and parent states – while they rarely

[115] The national council elections held in 2014 are an illustration of the national diversity in Serbia. There were a total of 82 electoral lists with 1616 candidates for 17 national minority councils and 357 posts. Of a total of 456,444 registered voters, 46.3% voted (Danas 2014).

have a coherent economic policy. At the same time, the Law does not regulate funding, promotion and campaigning for the national council elections – there is no control of the amount and sources of resources invested in the pre-election campaigns, nor whether all candidates have equal access to the mass media. In such a situation, political parties in both parliamentary and local coalitions have a significant impact on national councils thanks to their access to the media and to sources of funding. This leads to one or two parties dominating the national councils and defining the cultural policy in a narrow way (cf. Gojković n.d.). As such, the policy has had a significant impact on the logic of minority parties, the understanding of ethnicity, nationality and identity that they propose, and with it, the understanding of self and other of ordinary citizens. How the legal and political frameworks have interacted with subjective notions of the self will be explored in the following sections.

Methodological remarks

The questionnaire I used was inspired by the National Identity Study II conducted in 2003 as part of the International Social Survey Program[116] (ISSP 2003) with the goal of exploring national consciousness and national identity in 34 countries around the world. However, I was aware that the questionnaire had to be adapted to the specific needs of my research questions, methods, field site and target groups, and that I needed to confirm that using it to perform data collection would meet the intended objectives of the study. As a result, I conducted a pilot study on a group of seven informants from Sjenica using the questionnaire as a model, four of which were Bosniak, and three Serb. The pilot study

[116] The International Social Survey Programme is an annual programme of cross-national collaboration on surveys covering topics important for social science research, bringing together pre-existing social science projects and co-ordinating research goals since 1984, so adding a cross-national perspective to individual national studies.

prompted me to amend some of the original questions and given answers and to eliminate a large number of questions altogether and replace them with my own that were more sensitive to the socio-historical context as well as the research situation and my position as the interviewer.[117] One of the reasons for the chosen approach was to minimise the possibility of informants tailoring their answers so as to avoid giving offense to me, or the ethno-national group I belong to. As a result, the questions posed were formulated in such a way that the informant was asked to speak mainly about himself – his identity, family history, ethno-national group, personal attachments and the things he considers important with regard to these, which in turn made the informant more comfortable and allowed me to acquire a more authentic understanding of his or her worldview. As the researcher, I myself did not wish to offend or provoke my informants in any way – even by accident, which is why after careful consideration and the conducted pilot study I removed numerous questions from the original questionnaire.[118]

As for the remaining questions, some of which which could be interpreted as ambiguous, I aimed to minimise their potential to be so by customising the order in which the questions were asked. For example, I felt that inquiring about one's nationality or the extent to which one identifies with the Republic of Serbia might arouse discomfort or, in the second case, be glossed over to evade conflict. To avoid this, the first question was posed right after a range of introductory demographic questions, interspersed with open-ended personal questions designed to familirise myself with the informant as well as to lessen any potential feelings of risk the situation may be seen to carry. Questions such as 'Where did you go to university? Is that where you met your husband? Where did you serve the army?

[117] See the National Identity in Southwest Serbia questionnaire used in this chapter in Appendix C. Questions adapted from the National Study II questionnaire have been marked with an asterisk.
[118] These include questions assessing the extent to which one is proud of one's national group, the extent to which the other national group can be proud of its history and so on, which I found during the pilot study provided either very reserved answers or alienaited the respondents.

Who were your best friends in the army? Have you stayed in touch?'[119] and so on, made the conversation more friendly, and recounting fond memories had a trust-building effect on both the informant and myself. Likewise, I would ask about the extent to which one feels closeness not to the 'Republic of Serbia', but to 'the country one lives in' and in the midst of a series of similar questions listing a range of other territories – towns and countries.

In addition, adjustments were made so that the research instrument would complement the data collection approach. While the ISSP's National Identity study was based on a closed questionnaire and conducted as a poll on a large sample in multiple countries through live, telephone or postal interviews, my approach was to have a more personal encounter with fewer informants and to motivate them to tell a story through their answers. For this reason, I introduced a list of open-ended questions, asked informants to elaborate on their choices in response to multiple-choice and scale questions, and additionally posed a unique set of questions to each informant on the basis of their specific history, experiences and the relevant topics our conversation addressed.

Data collection was thus conducted through anonymous semi-structured interviews on the basis of a questionnaire.[120] All informants were asked to provide answers to a set of the same 72 questions, of which 10 were demographic, the majority were scale questions (38 questions) and the minority multiple choice (8 questions). I read out the questions and, where relevant, the answers to the informants and recorded their answers on a data sheet on the basis of a predefined code. In addition, the questionnaire contained a number of same open-ended questions (16 questions) that allowed the informants to define several

[119] Most men served the army in far off places – from Slovenia, to the Croatian coast to Macedonia, where many made friends for life and cherished memories.

[120] I conducted one group of interviews with support of the Museum of Prijepolje. The Director of the Museum, Slavoljub Pušica, kindly helped me establish contact with numerous informants by recommending me, but also by providing transport to hard to reach mountain villages. He was never present at the interviews themselves.

concepts independently and freely, express their views on their significance, and provide their opinions on a number of issues. Finally, throughout the interview, the informants were asked to speak about themselves, their personal and family's histories, as well explain their answers and choices to close-ended questions freely and in their own words if they wished to do so. These answers were recorded with a dictaphone, transcribed and analysed in conjunction with the data gathered from close-ended questions. I felt it was important to do this, so that I could contextualise the answers better, ask more informed questions and generally get to know my informants as well as possible. Asking the informants to explain and justify their choices served as a crucial part of the analysis, providing meaning to the numbers and expanding the narrow view of complex realties that multiple choice and scale questions often provide.

The first reason for taking an approach that included closed-ended questions was to mimic the daily experiences of informants in which they are implicitly or explicitly required to declare themselves in typically limited ways, to reduce the complexity of their inner being to a single term, that is, an ethno-national term. This is especially the case during pre-election campaigns that give voice to the expectation that the inhabitants of Southwest Serbia should cast their vote exclusively on the basis of their ethnic identity, as illustrated by a poster I photographed in Sjenica in 2010, asserting:

> Bosniaks are a nation, remember! Sandžak is a historical region; Bosniaks are a people, not a minority. The Bosniak people of Sandžak are autochthonous – on their land; they have their own culture, faith, language, history, art and all else that other nations [*narodi*] have, and that is why we have the right to the resolution of our status and the status of Sandžak. That is the truth!

Similarly, before and during census data collection in Serbia, neighbouring BiH or Montenegro[121] the region is flooded with awareness-raising campaigns aiming to inform

[121] For a review of census politics in the Balkans, see Visoka and Gjevori 2013. For a review of controversial issues surrounding the 2013 census in BiH, see Perry 2013.

the target populations about their ethnic identity so that they will choose the 'correct' answers to politically significant questions about self-identification when taking the census, such as nationality, language and religion.[122] These three questions in particular carry weight for a number of reasons. In Serbia, the first is the law on national minorities on the basis of which numbers are significant for exercising certain rights, as described in the first section of this chapter. In BiH, the issue is even more significant due to the Dayton Agreement that still functions as the constitution and that has established a census-based system of ethnic quotas for ministerial appointments, public-sector employment, etc., but only covering Serbs, Bosniaks and Croats. The second reason lies in the power of numbers – census results are analysed carefully and considered indicative of the future, almost prophetic. Stef Jansen has referred to such statistics as 'national numbers'. As a technology of power/knowledge, these were the subject of extensive scholarly inquiry and used to conduct the mapping of nationality onto territory in the 1990s (2005: 47). The scientific inquiry into the validity of a group's claim to it, however, extended beyond statistics[123] and its traces are still present today.

As Visoka and Gjevori note, 'by making people choose what ethnicity they are, what their first language is, and so on, new categories are formed on which nationalist struggles are based and legitimised' (2013: 1). In this process the census appears as an objective instrument for measuring subjective identities (ibid.), as a technology of truth production (Urla 1993: 831). The limited possibilities the census offers are in stark contrast to an individual's complex sense of self, Benedict Anderson posits, writing that 'The fiction of

[122] As a result, while Bosnian citizens could be classified in one of more than twenty ethno-national categories in the 1991 census, this number was reduced to just four in the 2013 census consisting of the three constitutive nations, Bosniak, Serb, Croat, while all those whose answers did not fall into these three categories (e.g. Bosnian, Roma, Jew, Muslim, undeclared, etc.) were classified as 'Others' who do not have a right to quota representation.

[123] For further reading on this process with regard to the Muslim/Bosniak identity, see Filipović 2008, Redžić 2000. For examples, see Hadžijahić et al. 1970 and the journal *Prilozi* (4) from 1968.

the census is that everyone is in it, and that everyone has one – and only one – extremely clear place. No fractions' (1991: 244-5).

This has especially been the case with Muslim populations due to the transition to the Bosniak national identity in recent decades, as described in Chapter 3. An illustrative example that resonated very strongly with the inhabitants of Southwest Serbia is the census slogan describing the 'ethnic triad', as one of my informants put it, which was popping up on mass media, social media and public spaces in the form of a verse on the eve of the census in BiH in September 2013, instructing people how to answer the three questions: 'I am a Bosniak, my faith is Islam, my language is Bosnian and on the census I will declare this' [*Ja sam Bošnjak, vjera mi je islam, jezik bosanski, na popisu to ću kazati*]. As a response, civil-society organisations launched a campaign with the message: 'Don't let others tell you who you are. Be yourself!' (Pašić 2013).

Though the methodological approach I adopted mimicked these experiences by posing close-ended questions about ethno-national identity, forcing the informants to summarize their entire sense of self in a number or a word, it also allowed them to express how they feel when having to answer complex questions by choosing from a limited number of answers and to articulate their ideas on the issue at hand, and, perhaps most importantly, it also drew their attention to the significance of these feelings and ideas and the burden that being perceived one-dimensionally carries with it. As one informant pointed out:

> It is very difficult to talk openly here [about politics, identities]. Sometimes you cannot even do so with your own brother or sister, nor with your parents... you keep all this bottled up inside, in the end (…) you take care of your words, what you say and how in front of others. *In front of your own compatriots* [informant's emphasis].

The questionnaire also indirectly encouraged the participants to say what they think about those political and methodological approaches that are based on the premise that 'discrete, sharply differentiated, internally homogeneous and externally bounded groups' are the

basic social blocks and the main actors in social conflicts (Brubaker 2004). For example, one informant had this take on close-ended questions: 'I am sorry, but these questions are not easy at all, they are very difficult questions that require a lot of thought and a lot of explaining so that you can understand what I mean. And I can't just choose from 1 to 5 and be done with it'. Another informant explained that I would find very diverse attitudes among people who come from two adjacent villages, even more so from different municipalities, and that if my goal was to uncover a unified view, that would be next to impossible.

The second reason for the chosen methodological approach was to establish a more comfortable context for the informant. In resembling a poll, the questionnaire served as a means of providing sense to the conversation, the purpose of which was otherwise perceived as unclear at best, and dubious at worst (*why are we having a conversation?*). It was also designed to help the informant feel more at ease in a situation that is familiar (*the conversation has a meaning, order and frame that the informant is accustomed to*), as well as to encourage the informant to think about and explain issues and questions that in everyday life and everyday conversation are often presented as a given or whose discussion is restricted (*that is the way it is, and everyone knows it).* This was also important due to my own Serbian nationality, as I explained at the outset of this section, and the fact that part of my family originates from the area. Because of this, asking certain questions in a casual conversation was interpreted as sometimes strange and at other times as insulting – because 'I should already know the answers'. Finally, in a socio-political context where the space for open conversation on topics of ethno-national belonging and identification is contracting, such an approach provided an alternative.

I conducted 40 interviews averaging 46 minutes in length. The structure of the sample with regard to municipality of residence was as follows: Sjenica – 9, Priboj – 13, and Prijepolje – 18. Informants from both rural and urban areas participated, from the ages of 18 to 85, of both genders and with different levels of education. The sample was varied with regard to class, with a representation of informants from diverse economic backgrounds, profession and education (3 respondents had elementary education, 18 had secondary education and 19 attained higher education). A smaller number of informants were selected on the basis of characteristics thought to be especially relevant to the research (e.g. profession or earlier political engagement), while most were selected using the snowball method. In some environments the informants themselves referred me to others whom they expected would have a fundamentally different perception of the issues discussed, especially so in the town of Prijepolje – a declared atheist would recommend I talk to a religious leader with whom he is acquainted 'to hear what he thinks about the subject'; a former member of the League of Communists would recommend I interview a Bosniak nationalist, an urban dweller would recommend an acquaintance residing in the countryside, demonstrating that friendships and cooperation cut across ideologies, ethno-national loyalties and personal world views.

In order to ensure that my informants were comfortable, informed about the interview they would participate in and felt free to express themselves, as well as to withdraw at any point, each interview was preceded by a short introduction into the goals of my research, my background as well as the guiding principles of conducting the interview. These were that the interview would be recorded anonymously, that I would not quote anybody by name unless agreed otherwise, as well as strive to protect their anonymity with other

means,[124] that they could skip a question if they did not feel like answering it for whatever reason, and that they were free to explain their answers or not at all, and could withdraw or change their mind. I stated that the interview would be more like a conversation, that there were no right or wrong answers, adding that the informants could ask me a question or request clarification at any point. Members of vulnerable groups were not interviewed and there were no covert elements regarding the aims of the research. While conducting the interviews I paid particular attention to the details of the answers provided, in order to ask informed follow-up questions and to expand the conversation, as well as to make sure that both my informants and I enjoyed the activity as much as possible so that any expressed friendliness was sincere. The fact that most interviews were conducted in the homes or offices of the informants contributed to this goal since the informant was on 'familiar territory' and conversations were typically accompanied by sharing food and drink.

The questionnaire had 72 questions, divided into a number of thematic wholes: 1) personal identity, 2) spatial identity, 3) nationality and ethno-national identity, 4) interethnic relations, and 5) relation to the past. As the study was not initially conceived with the idea of providing data that can be quantitatively analysed, the fact that in some respects the study yielded results with very limited variation, in which informants were more usually uniform in their answers than not, came as unexpected. I will therefore present these results as relevant and valid. The rest of the chapter will focus on an analysis of the ways in which informants thought about and discussed the questions posed, how they formulated their answers and conceptualised terms such as nationality and identity, and the frameworks within which they thought about themselves and others.

[124] For example, if I were to state ethnicity, profession and place of residence of an informant it would, together with the views or facts expressed in a testimony, in some cases be clear to the informed reader who the informant was. For this reason, on a select number of occasions in this thesis I avoided these and similar designations.

Discussions of one's national belonging

Q8. Citizenship? _____
Q9. Nationality [*Nacionalna pripadnost*]? _____
Q11. Please give us your explanation of what is a nation and tell us your perception of its importance.

It has been noted that when studying nation-building in the Western Balkans it is important to differentiate between the Western concepts of 'ethnicity' and 'nation', and the standard term used across the former Yugoslavia in both everyday context and legal-political documents – *narod* (Kolstø 2014: 5). Unlike ethnicity and nation, *narod* is both 'a cultural and a political concept, as it denotes a cultural group which possesses political identity linked to a state, but is not identical with the entire population of that state' (ibid.). What is interesting is that even though Serbian laws, as we saw, use the term *narod*, it does not appear in the 2011 census of Serbia. Rather, the census respondents were asked to state their *nacionalna pripadnost*. Although the literal translation of this term into English would be 'national affiliation', in all official English translations of the census reports it appears as 'ethnicity'.

In a region where nationality is often presented and perceived through an ethnic lens, as the above example and numerous studies illustrate (cf. Bieber 2004, Bojičić-Dželilović et al. 2013, Bougarel et al. 2007, Fine 2006, Hayden 2012), and the boundaries between citizenship, nationality and ethnicity are also blurred within the legal framework, I considered it important to inquire into how people understand and explain the difference and to observe the relationship between these two important legal markers of identity and rights. Therefore, at the beginning of the conversation, I asked the informants to tell me their citizenship and in the following question to state their nationality, one of the reasons

being to motivate them to think about and be clear on the difference between the two. These were open-ended questions. Since the word *narod* has multiple connotations and *etnička grupa* [ethnic group] is not widely used, in formulating my questions I opted to use the same term that was used by the authorities when conducting the census, that is, derivatives of *nacionalna pripadnost* [nationality, national affiliation, national group, etc.].

In terms of nationality, the structure of the sample was as follows: 16 informants stated that they are of Serbian nationality, 17 of Bosniak, 3 of Muslim nationality, and one Montenegrin. One person, from a mixed marriage, declared herself to be a Yugoslav, and two said that they were nationally undefined. Of the those who identify as Serb nationals, one is of Muslim faith. The three Muslim nationals were all female, very different in generation, two of them residing in rural settlements. As for those who declared themselves to be Bosniak, a number expressed uncertainty, like this informant: 'Muslim...that is, Bosniak'. This was not surprising and can be attributed to the fact that the Bosniak ethnonym has attained wider circulation in this area only in recent years, there still being the habit of declaring oneself in the way that was most widespread in the period before the 2000s, that is, as a Muslim national [*Musliman*]. Regardless of this, all informants who made such a comment corrected themselves and unambiguously stated that they are of Bosniak nationality.

Excerpts from two interviews with informants who deliberated on how to declare themselves nationally throughout the conversation illustrate the uncertainty and difficulty that many in the region face when trying to self-identify. Though the first informant is originally from BiH, he has spent two thirds of his life living in Southwest Serbia and is now retired.

> *Your citizenship?* Serbian. *Your nationality?* Muslim. At least that's how I declared myself on the census... *You choose Muslim, not Bosniak?* Well, 'Muslim' used to be widely

> accepted, although it was a unique case, a precedent if you will, because it denotes religious affiliation [not ethno-national]. However, I do not think that declaring oneself [*izjasniti se*] to be Bosniak is a good solution. Muslims are now in a very messy situation. They should return to their roots – that would be best. Of course, that does not mean they should change their faith, but their national affiliation – although I do not think it is easily changed. It is something you are born with, as a member of a collectivity, of a nation. Now, that is where the problems began – with politicisation. The attitude of some Muslim leaders is that a distinct nation should be created, which is why they returned to *Bošnjaštvo*.[125] *Bošnjaštvo* based first and foremost on Islam – which automatically brings Muslims into conflict with the Croats, Serbs, Montenegrins, everyone. (...) But if someone is a Serb, it does not necessarily mean that he is Orthodox.
>
> *But is that how the majority Muslim and Serb population views it?* Yes, the state [of Serbia] is also to blame, which is why those Muslims who do view it that way are correct (...) *Are you proud to be....what have you decided, Muslim or Serb?* [respondent was unsure in previous answers] I am tipping to both sides, but still – a Serb. Listen, this is how I feel – no matter how much I love Bosnia, the place where I was born, where I finished school, I say Serb because I spent my entire working age here, I made friends, and all the most wonderful things I experienced in my life, they happened here. (...) *How would you rate your knowledge of the history of your family?* I know very much about our history, although many family members resent that. Because I found out that my family [before accepting Islam] used to carry the last name [states last name],[126] the patron saint they celebrated was St Archangel – the saint's day of the Nemanjić dynasty and of a large part of the Serbian nobility, and everything I discovered confirms this. So, why should I disown this? I will not deny it. (...) Some, outside of my family, have physically threatened me because I say this out loud in public. I have also had a lot of problems in my family. They tell me – we suffer because of your actions. And I tell them – I do not forbid or force you to do anything, you are free to do and say as you choose. Though it is true that they have had to endure a little discomfort. But, let them endure a little!

A young man, twenty years old at the time of the interview, described his understanding of national identity in Southwest Serbia by alluding to the complexity that arose as a result of multidirectional migrations into the area:

> I did not want to blindly accept everything that I am told, so I began from the micro level – from myself. My *pleme*[127] came here six hundred years ago, from Skadar [Shkodra].[128] They came as Catholics and through assimilation they accepted Islam. In general, Albanian origins are most widespread in Tutin, Pešter, Novi Pazar. My father remembers how his paternal uncles [*stričevi*] and his father used to go to the annual assembly of our brotherhood [*zbor bratstva*] in Skadar [Shkodra] and that everyone spoke Albanian. When it comes to roots, I am a 'rare bird'. Most of my peers show no interest in studying their roots. I try to influence people around me to do so, and most who have discovered that their families originate from Albania. In the beginning I declared myself to be an Egyptian, because I was

[125] *Bošnjaštvo*, roughly translated as Bosniakhood.

[126] Names, surnames and places of residence were in some cases concealed in order to protect the anonymity of informants.

[127] May indicate a brotherhood or larger territorial-political groups consisting of several lineages. The meaning of the term will be discussed in a subsequent section of this chapter.

[128] Shkodër or Shkodra in Albanian, Scutari in Italian, is a city in Albania which lies on a lake of the same name straddling Albania and Montenegro. Historically it was a significant commercial and military centre from Roman times onwards.

> interested in Egyptology. Then as Irish, because I was fascinated by their culture. Then as an Albanian, when I explored my roots. And now, as a Bosniak. What I want to say is – one should not bicker with others about this.

One of the questions that followed asked the informants to explain the word 'nation' in their own words. More than three quarters of the interviewees were not sure how to define it in the first instance, after which they would list words they associated with the concept. The terms which were most often repeated while describing what a nation is were 'belonging', 'feeling of belonging', 'people' [*narod*], 'distinction', 'familiarity'. A young Bosniak explained:

> When you go to Sarajevo, you *know* [informant's emphasis]. You say, my name is [states name] and nobody bats an eyelid. You go out, you shout it at the top of your lungs, nobody cares. In Belgrade, you are at university, you are doing an oral exam. You hand over your student card. The professor reads your name ... then, he reads your father's name. It's a classic example – even when it generates a positive reaction [it is still a reaction]. I had many positive experiences because of my name in Belgrade, like with girls – I never had it better than then and I never will...because, I do not look like how you might imagine a textbook Ottoman [looks] [laughs].

Numerous informants defined the nation as a people [*narod*], such as 'A nation is a *narod* that has its own language, culture, tradition and customs'. The word *narod,* however, signifies more than just 'people' – in the above context its meaning is 'a folk' or 'a nation' understood as a kin-community.[129] The frequent use of the word *narod* in informants' explanations of nationality corresponds to its presence in a range of legal documents from the Constitution to different laws of the Republic of Serbia, producing an ambiguous understanding of the relationship between citizenship, ethnicity and nationality. For example, according to the Law on Citizenship [Zakon o državljanstvu], citizenship can be acquired by a member of the Serbian nation [*narod*] who is not resident in the Republic of Serbia as long as he submits a written statement claiming he considers the Republic of Serbia his own state and is able to provide evidence of Serbian origin such as proof of the Serbian citizenship of a parent or ancestor that is extended to include documents in which

[129] The word *rod* that is in the root of *narod* can mean kin, lineage, gender, birth or seed. Narod is also often used with a non-ethnic connotation, to generally refer to any group of people.

the ancestor declared himself to be the member of the Serbian nation [*narod*]. The ambiguity involved is illustrated by the definition of nationality provided by an informant from Priboj:

> Some say nationality is a territorial label, others that it is a cultural or religious designation… Yet others think that nationality is determined by ethnic affiliation. I think it is all more complicated than any of those. Nationality is defined by all of these things. One thing is your origin, another thing is where you live. For example, there are Serbs in Istria, and on the basis of their dialect, way of speech and everything else they are close to the Croats, but their heritage and origins are Serbian. That is why I think that both ethnic origin and where you live are important. Nations today are associations of a large number of families.

There were also a number of answers which implied that a nation is something you cannot choose, but which is given to you, one you are fated to belong to, usually as a result of ancestry: 'It is what your grandfathers were, what you are, at birth, what you cannot choose; everything else in life – you can choose'. Nevertheless, after giving an explanation of nationality, informants frequently stated that 'nation is not that important – what counts is what kind of person one is'.

One Serbian historian from Prijepolje described his understanding of nationality by telling the story of why he chose his profession:

> I didn't become a historian by accident, but because I wanted to find out more about my people and their origin, history, roots. Even more so because all of us in these areas came from somewhere – there are no autochthonous peoples. Everyone came two to three hundred years ago, maximum. It is also in the tradition of people in this area to try to find out who they are, where they came from, especially so [to avoid incest] because a lot of surnames were changed in the 19th century. We [my family] decided to take a new surname in the 18-19th century. I do not know why exactly; I have not yet traced our genealogy. Maybe it was due to blood revenge and the need to hide our trace…probably, like most families here – both those Orthodox and those Muslim.
>
> (…) Nationality for me is not to proclaim, 'I am a Serb of Orthodox faith', and then to 'pound my chest' [*busati se u grudi*], but to know your roots, tradition, historical events. (...) As a child, I was curious to know why there was [historical] conflict between the Muslims and the Orthodox. We know that in these areas, if you open the telephone directory and you don't see the name, but just the surname, you will not be able to distinguish who is who: the Bošković in Prijepolje are both Muslims and Serbs, the Bećković, the Gojak... so much is mixed and shared, and I did not understand it in high school. It was only after doing some research that I understood.

A number of informants, especially younger ones born in the 1990s or later, were initially puzzled by the difference between citizenship (*državljanstvo*) and nationality (*nacionalnost*). When asked about her nationality, one 18-year old girl tried to recall the current consensus on the matter: 'I am not sure how that is defined now. *Srpkinja, Srbijanka?* Although, when the census took place, we mostly said Bosniak.'

When translated into English, both these terms [*Srpkinja, Srbijanka*] mean 'a Serb woman'. However, the slight difference is perceived as a fundamental one by the inhabitants of Southwest Serbia and beyond. Most Serbs reject the term *Srbijanac/Srbijanka* for a number of complex historical and political reasons.[130] Officially, in dictionaries, this term is defined as having a geographical connotation and as referring to all those who live on the territory of Serbia, or sometimes Serbia proper, as opposed to the terms Srbin/Srpkinja, which imply ethno-national affiliation, regardless of residence. However, when asked whether they use the term, many Serbs I spoke to replied negatively and stated they did not have 'a clear idea what the word is supposed to represent'. For some the word should not be used, as it is 'a pejorative term Croats use for Serbs', 'a pejorative term Belgraders use for Serbs who live in the periphery', etc. What came as unexpected, however, is that a number of Bosniaks I interviewed stated that they would also declare themselves to be *Srbijanci/Srbijanke* if they could since to them these terms denote geographical origin and cut across faith and ethnicity, making them more integrative than the terms 'Serb' or 'Bosniak', which are perceived as ethnic:

> Ethno-national belonging is twisted among our people here. Instead of all of us [Serbs, Bosniaks] aiming to declare ourselves as *Srbijanci,* they [Serbs] want to mark us as if we are *Srbi muslimani* [Serb Muslims]. If they told me I could be a *Srbijanac* I would gladly be that, a *Srbijanac musliman*. (...) I would love the coat of arms, but only if I am citizen of this state, and not seen as a national minority in this state. I am a Bosniak, and I want to be and

[130] For a detailed look at linguistic politics in the space of former Yugoslavia, see Bugarski and Hawkesworth 2004, Bugarski 2010, 2013, and Greenberg 2004.

> to stay a Bosniak. But I am also a *Srbijanac*. But no – they say, you are Serbs, and according to faith you are Muslims.

On the basis of answers to questions on nationality, one can discern that most informants understand that the nation can be viewed both a political unit and an ethnic category that is at the same time a construct and 'objective' in its existence, beyond choice and given as a birthright. Though seen as fundamental, nationality is also perceived as a framework that allows some room for manoeuvre and represents a basis for opportunistic action. As a result, in discussions on ethno-national identity and origins, one can discern a dialectical relationship between what is perceived as authentic and what is fabricated, between one's genuine nature and the mask one puts on in interaction with the outside world. The narrative fluctuates between these two poles, which are both seen as the determining factors of identity, expressed in divergent remarks such as 'politics is short-term and insignificant/politics reveals a group's nature', 'a man is defined by his character/a man is defined by his membership in an ethnic group', etc. The idea that nationality is a tool one must employ because of circumstances beyond one's control was illustrated clearly in the thoughts of a Muslim religious figure:

> I will tell you what Islam says about nationality. In Islam, nationality has almost no importance. What is important is that someone is a believer, while his nationality is irrelevant. However, in the situation we live in, nationality becomes significant for entirely different reasons (...) so it became important whether someone defines himself in this or that way. But, for Islam, it is a completely insignificant thing. *And for you?* No, for me it is also of minor importance, I do not care for it much. Of course, I do declare myself in a certain way.

In a discussion on language politics, a university professor explained his stance on the issue in the following way: 'Serbian, Croatian, Montenegrin and Bosnian are linguistically the same language, but, on the other hand, everyone has a right to name this language as their own.' Correspondingly, when asked what his nationality is, one informant jokingly answered: 'Well, now they say I am a Bosniak'. Another informant explained: 'I think nationality is one very carefully conceived category for the separation of people. (…) I

wish there was some super-national category, but there isn't. When they ask me on the census, I answer. I am not a Martian, but I do not like the idea of a nation at all.' Another informant, a woman who was born in a mixed marriage, had these reservations about declaring her nationality:

> It is a little unusual in my case, since I am the child of a mixed marriage. My mother is an Orthodox Christian, my father a Muslim. Can I remain undeclared? Or you can write Yugoslav, since I was born in Yugoslavia. My mother comes from north Montenegro; my father is from a village near Sjenica. OK, put down *Srbijanka.* I am very opposed to declaring myself in the census as a *Srpkinja,* because that is associated with religion. *Srbijanac* is OK, though. I am also bothered by the national anthem that does not mention the members of other nations in a single verse. The Montenegrin anthem does not mention nationality at all, while the Serbian one mentions it in every line. I think that, as an educated woman, I am obliged to have an opinion about this. And of course, it still happens to me that when the anthem is playing I am reciting the words to *Hej, Sloveni* [the Yugoslav anthem] to myself instead. It is sad, but that is how it is.

As the quotations in this section illustrate, my informants declared themselves nationally in this or that way for varied and complex reasons, and attached diverse meanings to their chosen national category. Writing about census categories and sense of self in Yugoslavia, Stef Jansen similarly observed that:

> ...people did not always simply and straightforwardly inhabit the categories of the census. Yes, the label that was picked from the census list could function as an expression of a deep-rooted sense of national self-identification. But it could also be a mere answer to an administrative question, a reflection of a sense of territorial belonging, a claim to a national tradition, an ideological stance, a strategic move, or perhaps nothing more than a joke. Of course, it could also evoke a combination of two or more of these possibilities. (2005: 57).

The following sections will further explore the motivations, reasons and meanings behind chosen national identities.

Loyalties, identities and nation-building

Q32. Please mark how close you feel to Yugoslavia?				
*To feel close meaning identifying with.	1	2	3	4

The memory of Yugoslavia, as illustrated in one of the quotes above, still plays an important role in how one perceives the self, identity and the state in present circumstances. The words that informants use to speak about Yugoslavia tell us about the past and even more so about the present and how it compares. Similarly, the answers to questions I posed with the goal of exploring spatial and historical identities illustrate that, regardless of the public narrative, the past forms a significant and intimate part of my informants' personal identity. Though it is very rare today to come across a person who self-identifies as a Yugoslav, when asked to mark the extent to which they identify with different places on a scale from 1 to 4,[131] Yugoslavia was given significantly higher marks than the region [however one imagines it] or any other country listed, including Serbia, and similar marks as one's home town, even though Yugoslavia 'no longer stands for a place, but represents a memory', as one informant put it. Initially, most were surprised to be asked this or to hear the name and responded emotionally, most often citing the good living standard, the good times and the 'large space' that Yugoslavia provided for its citizens, both physically and metaphorically,[132] as illustrated in the following remarks:

> 'I will never get over its loss.'
>
> 'I am really what you would call a nostalgic. As I told you before, I've been all around, served the army in Macedonia... Yugoslavia was, it seems to me, really tailored to fit.'
>
> 'I feel melancholic. Yugoslavia stands for my whole generation. You feel grief for the large territory. It was different when I went to Pula [Croatia] in the 1970s [as a student], I just brought a sleeping bag and slept on the beach for twenty days – nobody asked me who I was or why I came. (...) And how can I convert this pathos into a number...I would say 3 [on a scale of 1 to 4].'
>
> 'I lived the best then. I have fond memories of socialist Yugoslavia. Back then I went to Slovenia, to Croatia. In comparison to today, we had a solid standard, much

[131] Questions 25 to 34 of Questionnaire in Appendix C.
[132] As expected, the younger the informant, the less the felt connection, though most of those born in the 1990s or after say that, even though they do not have direct memory of Yugoslavia, they nevertheless feel it as at least remotely important due to 'everything their parents told them about it'.

> higher than now. It is certainly in the top, on the first or second place in importance, to me.'

What is interesting in this regard, then, is that informants who state they do not identify with Yugoslavia most frequently describe it as 'dream', denoting that the life they had 'was a fantasy', 'a transient stroke of luck, 'a result of beneficial political circumstances', 'a great idea in theory, but not sustainable in practice', and so on. The dream was followed by an abrupt awakening, and, as one of my informants explained, 'it is better to live in a miserable reality than in a beautiful dream'. A young Bosniak born in the early 1980s explained his relationship to the country in the following manner:

> On a scale of 1 to 5, I would mark my identification with Yugoslavia with a 0. I do not care for Yugoslavia at all. It was the most beautiful illusion that ended in the foulest way. And it really was the most beautiful [idea], because everyone could have solved their problems in it – found their place in it, everyone who tried to do so later [through other means]. Everyone wants for all of their people to live in one state, and in Yugoslavia they could have had that.

In a similar vein, a Serbian woman in her early forties said this about the 'illusion of Yugoslavia':

> I do not identify with Yugoslavia. Let's say 2 [on a scale of 1 to 4]. I spent half of my life in that country. Thanks to it I had an education and lived part of my life carefree. But now, with age, with experience, when I look back...it was an anaesthesia that was good while it lasted. When the wakening began, it was how it was. And I think [in the long run] it had negative consequences (...), so if somebody asked me, I would never repeat it. But did it have good sides? It did.

The recurrent referral to Yugoslavia's extraordinary and fantastic essence and the explanations put forth to justify it are illustrative of the term 'confiscation of memory', a term the historian Dubravka Ugrešić (1998) coined to describe the 'collective amnesia' imposed by post-Yugoslav states on their subjects. While for some, the Yugoslav identity had never been an option, for many others it had been a lived reality (Jansen 2005: 57) and more than that, it was often seen as compatable with a simultaneous sense of identity with other national groups (Godina 1998, Spasić 2003).[133] In the new post-Yugoslav historico-

[133] See Godina 1998 for a historical perspective on 'Yugoslavness' as a supranational category. For studies

political framework, however, the Yugoslav past, and with it the personal histories of those who were part of it, were declared irrelevant, anomalous and thus worthless (Ugrešić 1998). The early post-Yugoslav period – characterized by strong popular movements, the extreme ethnification of politics and the dissolution of institutions, and marked by a heritage of political rights based in ethnicity – presented political opportunities of great potential, leading to the rise of political parties based on religious nationalism (cf. van der Veer 1994) and transforming inter-ethnic relations into highly politicized and salient issues (Žilović 2012: 5). With it, identities had to undergo a re-evaluation in alignment with the new regimes so that the individual would be reduced to a neat ethnic unit that could figure as a bargaining resource in the political arena. At the same time, the break-up of the country transformed what were formerly the constitutive nations of Yugoslavia into ethnic minorities who found themselves living outside their new parent states – the rise of religious nationalism meant that the different ethno-national groups were entitled to sovereignty in their own states, but subordinated in the states of others (cf. van der Veer 1994).[134] The emerging states, for their part, engaged in nationalizing practices in order to convey which parts of its citizenry in particular were the rightful owners (Žilović 2012: 14) while at the same time seeking to establish themselves as 'national homelands' (Brubaker 1996: 103-106) of kin-communities residing outside state borders. Former Yugoslavs, together with all those who used to identify with their states on the basis of residence, had to choose a new identity, and due to the political context, most chose one based in ethnicity, not in territoriality. Taken together, all this has had a significant impact

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on 'Yugo-nostalgy' see Boym 2001, Jansen 2009, Kolstø 2014, Spasić 2012.

[134] For example, 1,366,104 Serbs lived in 1991 BiH, comprising 31% of the total population, as well as 760,852 Croats (17%) and 242,682 Yugoslavs (DZZSBiH 1993). In Croatia in 1991, there were 581,663 Serbs (12.2%), while 106,041 (2.2%) identified as Yugoslavs (DZZSRH 2010). Albanians were the largest ethnic group in Serbia, after Serbs, according to the 1991 census in Serbia, comprising 17.12% of the population. In addition, there were a total of 317,739 (3.24%) Yugoslavs, 237,358 (2.42%) Muslims, 140,024 (1.43%) Montenegrins and 109,2 14 (1.16%) Croats (RZS 1991). In 1991 in Montenegro there were 89,932 (14.6%) Muslims and 25,854 (4.2%) Yugoslavs (ibid.)

on both the legal determination and popular notion of citizenships and identity, as well as on self-identification, as we have seen in this and the previous sections. All Yugoslavs ceased to exist with the dissolution of their country, and with them most Bosnians [*Bosanci*] and Serbians [*Srbijanci*].

Kolstø describes this process as part of the 'third wave of nation-building' in the Western Balkans (2014: 2). The motives and methods of these strategies of identity consolidation within states of the Western Balkans have largely differed to that conducted in previous 'waves' in other parts of the world. Rather than being put into motion as a side-process to modernization or democratization, post-Yugoslav nation-building has been, Kolstø found, more designed, direct and deliberate in its execution, partly as a result of the 'short timespan' within which the process needed to be completed (ibid.: 4). The construction and manipulation of symbols and rituals was directed with the aim of quickly fostering a common identity on a new basis. In the case of Serbia, this entailed creating the impression of an unbreakable continuity and fixed identity of all the polities that called themselves Serbia, and peoples calling themselves Serbs, from medieval to contemporary times and bringing to the fore those traditional symbols deemed appropriate in this regard (Jovanović 2014). As a result, symbolic nation-building in Serbia targeted the 'titular nation'. Even more than that, the strategies and symbols deployed indicated a very narrow and exclusive understanding of the titular nation, which in turn brought to the fore social fissures on numerous basis, as I will show in the latter part of this section.

As an illustration, the 1990 Constitution of the Republic of Serbia, at that time still part of Federal Yugoslavia, defined the Republic as a 'democratic state of all citizens who reside in it', whereas the 2006 Constitution of the Republic of Serbia defines it as the 'state of Serbian people and all citizens who reside there'. Other aspects of the 2006 Constitution

further point to a transformation towards a less inclusive model of the state, such as articles that insist on the official use of the Serbian language and the Cyrillic script, the wording of the national anthem and the use of national symbols strongly based in Serbian tradition. This is by no means unique to the Serbian case, and the 2006 Constitution was, in fact, inspired by similar examples from the region (Vujačić 2012: 159, Stanković-Pejnović 2010: 468). Likewise, the national anthem of Serbia, 'God of Justice' [*Bože pravde*], was contested by both non-religious Serbs and non-Serbs when it was adopted in 2006 due to its religious symbolism and ethnic exclusivity expressed in verses calling upon God to 'protect and cherish, the Serbian lands and Serbian race [*rod*]'.[135] This was closely mirrored in the renaming of streets,[136] the introduction of new state holidays and state symbols, the transformation of history textbooks, the political use and exhaustion of the founding myth of Kosovo, all with the goal of creating an impression that the new state 'fell out of the past' (Stojanović 2010: 83).

As anthropologist Slobodan Naumović points out, the first result of such nation-building efforts was that all citizens who did not or could not identify with the titular nation interpreted the process as an attempt at assimilation or domination (2009: 298). Furthermore, identity politics based on neo-traditionalist symbols also alienated a large part of the titular nation (ibid.). Insistence on the traditional symbolism and its conscious alignment with a nationalist ideology divided the Serbian body politic by putting in focus the numerous historical and ideological schisms in Serbian society – Partisan/Chetnik, monarchist/republican, Europeanist/nationalist and others. These 'essential' divisions in turn, fostered and submerged within them other social cleavages, such as those related to a group's or individual's place on the scale of 'modernisation'. One's relation to parts of folk tradition became a reflection of divisions according to class, generation, education,

[135] *Rod* can mean kin, lineage, gender, birth or seed.
[136] The names of over 800 streets in Belgrade were changed after the year 2000 (Stojanović 2010: 134).

profession, and gender, and served as a matrix for the expression of deep disagreements along the centre/periphery, Belgrade/province, urban/rural, and Srbijanci/Srbi Prečani[137] axes (ibid.). In a similar vein, ethno-national interests became a proxy for other ideological or economic divisions such as those between centralists and federalists, the republic and local elites, which I will illustrate in Chapter 7.

Similarly, analysing the results of survey data gathered by IPSOS Strategic Marketing for the 2011 study on Strategies of Symbolic Nation-building in South Eastern Europe,[138] historian Vladan Jovanović observed that the nation-building process in Serbia is still incomplete and that the population is divided by numerous social fissures, resulting in the prevalence of identifications on non-national foundations and the very diverse understanding of what being a member of the nation and a citizen of the state signifies. The political elites guiding the nation-building process differ(ed) greatly in their vision of the final form of the state, but also, the visions they had were unclear and the symbols they chose were both inconsistent and unsuitable for the political realities of the time (Jovanović 2014: 93-94).[139] These fractures corresponded with those existing in society and were exacerbated by the inconsistent policies. Thus, as we can see, the manipulation of traditional values and symbols were instrumental in reactivating divisions along ethno-national, ideological and social lines.

Once reinvigorated, however, ideological, cultural, economic and social conflicts were not managed in a constructive way, nor approached as an impetus for social change (Naumović 2005: 99). Rather, political leaders both intentionally and unintentionally

[137] Serbs from Serbia proper as opposed to those from Croatia and BiH.
[138] The survey was conducted in each of the Western Balkan states. Some of the questions were country-specific, and the majority uniform in order to allow cross-country comparison
[139] Slobodan Naumović's data indicates that most political parties in Serbia, regardless of their proclaimed ideology and policies, strategically used varied traditional symbols according to the demands of daily politics and that there was little difference between self-declared left and right parties in this regard (2009: 302).

misinterpreted social problems and differences by viewing them through the prism of traditional narratives of Serbian disunity and treason, which, in turn, transformed ideological cleavages into an obstacle to the democratic bargaining and consensus building processes. The discursive production of disunited, opposed Serbias has, according to numerous academics[140] been continual in the last three decades – although there was an expectation that it would wane after the fall of Milošević's regime, this has not been the case (Naumović 2009: 246). Narratives of disunity, and within them, the instrumentalisation of the traitor archetype have proven particularly effective in both political mobilisation, as well as as a tool for stifling critical or opposing voices – through expelling ideological opponents by declaring them traitors and dangerous to the unity of the people. As a result, as Naumović points out, disunity narratives turned into powerful tools of 'social exclusion and segregation and the construction of quasi-ethnic identity splits in Serbian society' (2005: 68-69).

In a similar vein, sociologist Mladen Lazić noted that the heroic/traitor discourse was frequently invoked in political and academic propaganda of the late 1980s and throughout the 1990s in order to draw a line between those that are on the right historical path and, thus, hold the monopoly on patriotism – on being Serbian, and *others* – the traitors in one's own ranks – Muslims, unpatriotic Serbs – 'foreign mercenaries', 'sell-outs' and so on (Lazić 2002: 8). Within this framework, internal differences in the way members of a group react to challenge or pressure are interpreted as fundamental indicators of character – opposing views are disregarded as the consequence of one's political, ethical, economic or other inferiority. Instead of serving as a tool to redefine and compromise, conflicts are

[140] For further reading and examples see Lazić 2002, Naumović 2009, Omaljev 2016, Živković 2011.

used to oust members of the group from the imagined community (Naumović 2005: 88).[141]

The reasons why these narratives resonate with the citizenry and have multiplied are several. On the one hand folk narratives on disunity and the related traitor archetype are an important element of folk tradition and a genre of everyday identity discourses that were carried across the generations (Naumović 2009: 305). The development of modern narratives on Serbian disunity was intrinsically tied to nation-building and state-building efforts, and the corresponding conflicts over the political and cultural identities of the said state and nation. Thus, these narratives were used in the 19th century nation and state building efforts, and they again served a purpose in the late-20th century and early 21st century Serbia (Naumović 2005: 86). Although they are not a modern phenomenon, within the political discourses that appropriate and instrumentalise them these narratives attained different roles and new elements (Naumović 2009: 305). Finally, the potency of these narratives is also due to the fact that they reflect real, unresolved social divisions that the party system has not been able to deal with. The narratives, then, serve as an alternative regulatory mechanism (ibid.: 293) that at the same time perpetuates the state of affairs and leads to further divisions.

Since these rifts combine identity-based factors with perceptions of economic and social injustice, Naumović argues that they resemble deep-rooted conflicts. In these there is no one clear-cut distinction between Us and Them; rather, the in/out lines criss-cross social reality on several levels, resulting in the fragmentation of solidarity and social groups, but also of the individual sense of selfhood (Naumović 2005: 97). The consequence is the continual social presence of discourses of disunity, the accumulation of dissatisfaction and frustration, the loss of trust in and paralysis of political institutions and the democratic

[141] A telling example of such identity conflicts are the stuggles between the First and the 'Other' Serbia (*Druga Srbija*) in the 1990s. For more on the topic see Omaljev 2016.

process, which in turn widens the the gap between citizens and political elites and contributes to the perceived inefficiency and weakness of the state (Naumović 2005: 98-9).

This is confirmed by studies on popular conceptions of politics in Serbia. For example, research by Pavićević and Spasić on the topic has indicated that political parties are perceived by citizens not as mediators of social interests, but primarily as the instigators of social conflicts, political scandals and social fragmentation in general (2003: 67-73). Likewise, in his analysis of the IPSOS survey results, Jovanović observed that the efforts of political elites to direct national consolidation by merging together pre-Yugoslav and post-Yugoslav symbols has been in many ways unsuccessful, and, coupled with the continuing economic and social disintegration, has resulted in the unintended alienation of citizens from the state – both those identifying with the 'titular nation', and minorities.[142] When asked to indicate to what extent they agree that the state authorities make them feel that they belong to the country of Serbia, only 23.7% gave an answer at the positive end of the scale. On the other hand, if the material conditions of life were good enough, 87.2% stated they would like to live in Serbia for the rest of their lives. When it comes to historical revisionism, the IPSOS survey results indicate that the majority are opposed to this practice.[143] Interestingly, only 7.4% thought that the state authorities present the history of Serbia entirely accurately. When asked which national anthem they preferred, 48.4% answered 'Bože pravde', and as many as 29.3% answered 'Hej Sloveni' [Yugoslav anthem], while the rest liked both equally or refused to answer. Almost one third stated that they still feel Yugoslav, while 42.9% stated that they did but no longer do. These

[142] The sample sizes for non-Serb groups in the IPSOS survey were small (eg. 24 Croats were surveyed, 14 Roma, etc.), and Bosniaks/Muslims, even though one of the largest national groups in Serbia, were not included in the survey. This limits the relevance of the results for this thesis when it comes to the attitudes of the Bosniak/Muslim population specifically, however, some findings about the attitudes of the general population are indicative of the relation to state and its nation-building efforts.

[143] 60.5% were against the renaming of streets, regardless what they are renamed into, 71.1% disagreed with the idea of moving Tito's tomb out of Belgrade and a minority, that is 27.7%, agreed that Yugoslavia was a 'Serbian delusion'.

answers correspond to the proportion of those who said they regretted the dissolution of the country – 70.9%, most of them citing a better economic situation, but also brotherhood and unity and less nationalism.

Although few in Southwest Serbia reminisce about what once was, the majority of those interviewed continue to maintain an emotive and mnemonic link with the past. The nostalgia expressed is most often a longing for a time when ethnic differences were not perceived as so divisive, and when, in the case of Bosniaks, they were not treated as a national minority, but had equal status to other constitutive nations. This is expressed in small acts of resistance to the new ethnic order, as in the example of the woman who hums the Yugoslav anthem to herself while the new one is playing.

My research has confirmed the majority of the findings presented in this section. For example, when asked what is the biggest threat to the achievement of an ideal condition of one's nation, the majority unsurprisingly gave an answer related to the economic situation – unemployment, poverty and emigration. However, a large number of my informants, regardless of national affiliation or demographic characteristics, also gave an answer that could be grouped under the theme of 'disunity'. Many used precisely that word, that is – *nesloga,* or alternatively stated that divisions and lack of unity were the fundamental obstacle to progress. That the disunity discourse is not only characteristic of Serbs was confirmed by numerous Bosniak respondents who, in answering the question, alluded to the division of the Islamic communities in Serbia and the sometimes ferocious disagreements between Bosniak political parties.[144] Bosniak elites have, in fact, used

[144] The Muslim citizens of Serbia have been divided into two official communities since their leadership split in 2007. On one side is the Islamic Community in Serbia (ISIC), which is more inclined to look to Sarajevo as its centre; on the other side is the Islamic Community of Serbia (ISOC), which is oriented towards Belgrade and has its headquarters there. The headquarters of the ICIS are in Novi Pazar, along with the *madrasah*, *maktab*, University and other institutions that are affiliated with it. In 2012, the Bosniak population could vote for as many as 11 political parties, of which the most influential are the Party of Democratic Action (Stranka demokratske akcije - SDA), the Sandžak Democratic Party (Sandžačka

similar strategies of exclusion against political opponents and strategically deployed traditional and religious symbols in order to create a demarcation line between the true representatives of the Bosniak nation, and those who are lacking. In turn, I have found that my informants are very aware of the fact that being Bosniak, Muslim or Serb can mean very different things to different people. At the same time, many of the social cleavages previously listed with regard to Serbs are relevant for all the citizens of the region. The centre/periphery, centralist/decentralist, secular/religious, communist/nationalist, and partisan/non-partisan divisions cut across ethnic boundaries, further complicating the state of affairs. The end result has been in line with that described by Slobodan Naumović – social fragmentation coupled with identity crises (2009: 300), as illustrated especially by conceptions of national identity and selfhood. These will be explored in more depth in the following section.

What makes a nation?

Informants were further asked to think about what determines national belonging:

Please indicate how important the following are for saying that a person is of a certain nationality. **From 1 – Not at all important, to 4 – Very important.*					
Q36.	To have been born in the relevant country	1	2	3	4
Q37.	To have citizenship of relevant country	1	2	3	4
Q38.	To have lived in relevant country for a long time	1	2	3	4
Q39.	To speak the relevant language	1	2	3	4
Q40.	To practice the relevant religion	1	2	3	4
Q41.	To practice national customs	1	2	3	4
Q42.	To personally feel like they are of nationality	1	2	3	4
Q43.	To have ancestors of that nationality	1	2	3	4
Q44.	To have nationally recognizable name	1	2	3	4
Q45.	To have relevant name	1	2	3	4

demokratska partija - SDP) and the Bosniak Democratic Community (Bošnjačka demokratska zajednica – BDZ). For a comprehensive overview of recent political development in the Sandžak see Morrison and Roberts 2013, especially chapters 15 and 16.

As many as 30 out of 38 informants considered a personal feeling of national affiliation to be very important, and another five marked it as important. Therefore, 35 out of 38[145] informants find this to be significant when determining one's nationality. Though no consensus was reached, in the majority of cases language, customs and ancestry were marked in the upper part of the scale. Through an analysis of the elaborations of choices made, it emerged that *feeling one is a member of a certain nation* is a result of the influence of other variables. The informants agreed that certain factors, when taken together, can affect an individual's process of identification and her national affiliation. Ancestry was marked as very important by 26 of those interviewed, and another eight marked it as important – in total, 34 out of 38 considered this factor to be of significance. As many as 34 marked the practice of customs and the maintenance of tradition in the upper part of the scale, while 29 informants did so for language. In answering these questions, the interviewees were significantly consistent, regardless of religious or national affiliation, gender and other characteristics. A young politician told me:

> How you feel is essentially the only thing that matters. People have no idea [of history, culture], and when you ask them...well, it is not their fault if they do not know, because culture changes. (...) What we have come up with now [to be the markers of national identity], it is fabricated. We chose one phase [of history] and focused on that.

One aspect that may be surprising in this matrix is that religious affiliation was marked as less significant than one might expect, given that 35 out of 40 of those interviewed claimed to have a religious affiliation. However, discussions about the level of religious ardour of the informants shed light on this apparent incongruity. Namely, the questions 'What is your religious affiliation?' [*Koja je Vaša verska pripadnost?*] and 'Are you religious?' [*Da li ste religiozni?*] are experienced in a fundamentally different way. The first is considered as understood and even taken for granted – everyone, save for a few exceptions, answers

[145] Two informants out of a total of 40 chose not to answer this series of questions

the question by citing either Orthodoxy or Islam. The second question, however, called some informants to attention: 'No, I am not particularly religious', 'I am not really that religious', or as one informant explained: 'I am not religious in the classic sense. I am rarely in church. I love and respect tradition, I like all the customs related to religion, but my beliefs are based on the idea that God is in all of us. Going to church, strictly adhering to the fasts…I am not that type, not that type of believer.'

Through conversation, it emerged that faith is frequently understood as keeping the family tradition and the celebration of religious holidays, that is, as orthopraxy, whereas religiousness is equated with orthodoxy, that is, knowledge of and adherence to religious doctrine. At the same time, the majority of customs and family traditions that are considered significant in determining national belonging stem from religion and, according to the informants themselves, are what principally distinguishes Serbs and Bosniaks. As Jan Assmann explains, the field of 'objectivised culture' is specific in that it plays a fundamental role in the maintenance of a group's knowledge of itself and of significant historical happenings. The cultural memory is anchored in material culture and ceremonial forms of communication, and it is from there that the 'the concretion of identity' stems (2012: 128-9). It does not come as a surprise, then, that, regardless of how religion fared in answers to the above question, numerous informants stated that it is 'the family and faith that make a nation'. Many recall the sense of unity that customs foster both within the family and the whole community. While religious customs are part of observing the religious tradition, most, like the Serbian custom of celebrating the patron saint of the family, known as the *krsna slava,*[146] or the Muslim Bayram,[147] place the family and the

[146] The *krsna slava* is among the most significant yearly festivals among Serbs. According to research, the *slava* is a remnant of pre-Christian times – each family was in the patronage of one Slavic God, who was then transformed into a saint with the arrival of Christianity in the area (Kaser 1993: 93-122). The saint that is celebrated is believed to stem from the date when the family originally accepted Christianity, therefore families celebrate on different dates. It is a time when family and friends come together, visit each other, and

local community in the centre of celebrations and as such are seen as more significant for the maintenance of the family tradition. A Muslim lady in her eighties recalled:

> Customs should be respected, and everyone can practice their own – it doesn't bother anyone. For example, Bayram is coming up and nobody bothers us. When I was a girl in Gonje,[148] we all used to visit each other. After the slaughter of the *kurban* [the animal sacrifice], my father would give the first offering to Mileva[149] – he would prepare it, and then we would take it to them, I still remember. And they would thank us and say '*fala đedu, na zdravlje i na napredak!*' [thanks to grandfather, may it bring you health and progress!]. And, she would never let us leave empty handed, but would give us some colourful and long candies. Then we would visit the other neighbours, those closest to us. Then the poor.

That religious holidays were a great treat for children was confirmed by an informant from Priboj:

> When we were children, we would gather for Bayram and then go from door to door. We had no idea whether we were knocking on the doors of a Serb or a Muslim – all we knew is that someone was supposed to give us something. And people knew that, that we came with this motive and they would have something prepared. Today, as adults, we still go – we visit each other, for the *slava,* for Bayram.

Decades of socialist rule additionally had a great impact on the eradication of the religious element from everyday life, especially in Prijepolje, which had a strong Partisan tradition – though not strictly prohibited, many testify that the practice of religion was not openly conducted by most. A journalist from Prijepolje in his late fifties described the transformation in the following way:

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conduct a series of rituals with the goal of bringing peace, protection and prosperity to the family (Vlasto 1970). Furthermore, due to the fact that the majority of families changed their surname at some point in history (either due to blood revenge, rebellious activity or a change in religious affiliation), while the patron saint remained a constant, this information is often used to infer whether two families stem from a common ancestor or not.

[147] Among the most important religious holidays in Islam, and thus also for the region's Muslims, are the Kurban-bayram (*Eid al-Adha* in Arabic), which honours Ibrahim's sacrifice, and Ramadan bayram (*Eid al-Fitr* in Arabic), a celebration to mark the end of the Islamic holy month of fasting. The word 'bayram' comes from Turkish and signifies both secular and religious nation-wide celebrated holidays. These are occasions when both the family and community come together to celebrate. For example, the first day of the Ramadan Bayram is celebrated in the circle of the family, while the last day is reserved for friends and neighbours. Kurban Bayram is particularly communal, since it is customary to share the meat of the Kurabn with one's neighbours. Most municipalities in Southwest Serbia, particularly Novi Pazar and Sjenica, organise celebrations to mark the occasion which usually involve at least one communal meal to which everyone is invited.

[148] Gonje is a multi-ethnic village between Sjenica and Prijepolje.

[149] Mileva is a Serbian name. When recounting stories most informants rarely specify their religious or national affiliations; rather, this is implied through one's name or, most frequently, by the context

> I am an atheist, and my father was also an atheist, while my mother was pious. I was never baptised. However, we celebrated Easter, the Christmas holidays…afterwards [after the break-up of Yugoslavia], my brother decided to be baptised – that was his wish, while I didn't want to. I am growing even further and further away from religion when I see all those former Communists who have now become religious. My father was one of the few buried without a priest, and there is still a star on his grave. There used to be many stars, but when the 1990s came, many took down those stars and put up crosses. I remained consistent and didn't change my father's grave. My mother is next to him, and on her grave there is a cross. Now that's democracy! [laughter]
>
> When I was a young journalist, I went to the *slava* of my friend's uncle, who was an old man of faith. Afterwards, a colleague asked me where I had been, and I told him, to which he said: 'Be quiet, someone might hear you!' But [even though I was not a believer] I respected people of faith who observed religious traditions. Now, a new time has come – now it is shameful to say you do not celebrate the *slava*! I hold true believers in high regard, whereas these nouveaux-believers who switched sides for material gain… And it is the same for both Serbs and Bosniaks.

Numerous informants referred to the importance of consistency as well moderation in measuring one's worth. For example, two Bosniak entrepreneurs from Prijepolje, both in their forties, told me about what they call the 'M-92 phenomenon':

> M-92 are those Muslims who became battery-powered Muslims after 1992, and now the Duracell is slowly growing empty. For example, my mother went on the Hajj twice, my father went once. She performs all five daily prayers, she fasts for each Ramadan, she is careful never to insult or hurt anyone. My father on the other hand, he is not interested at all in adhering to it [to the principles of faith]; if someone catches him on the wrong foot he doesn't hold back. I can definitely say he is an M-92. My mother, on the other hand – when times were tough, when times were good, she always knew who she was, what she was, where she came from. She always adhered to her faith, observed the customs, and respected everyone else.

Although most are critical of practices that overemphasise the religious element, they at the same time welcome the return of religion into the public sphere. In this predominantly rural area, religious identities were, and still are, considered an important part of one's sense of self. That the League of Communists downplayed this, discouraging the open practice of religious rituals and banning religious dress is something that many condemn.[150] Regardless of whether they were devout prior to the end of Communism, most informants in the region, both Serb and Bosniak, gradually adopted a more conscious religious

[150] Religious communities were not legally prohibited, but they were systematically supressed from public life. At the same time, the state financially supported religious communities, participating in funding for its officials, as well as maintaining and repairing religious buildings (Sarač 2009: 167). For more on the relation of state and religious communities see Boeckh 2006, Radić 2005.

identity. This was more pronounced among some, particularly after the fall of Milošević, however, as time has passed, the need to stress the religious element as a 'distinction' through 'exaggerated' displays of religiosity, as some informants have dubbed it, has lessened and religion is in some parts of the region returning into the private sphere. A retired teacher and former member of the League of Communists recounted how the fall of Communism led to the fall of a wall between himself and religion. His story illustrates Assmann's notion (2012) that within the working of cultural memory there is a space for reflexive practice, which is continuously undergoing alteration due to the needs of a group to identify itself with regard to the changing conditions it finds itself in at any particular moment:

> For a while the national aspect was not given much importance, and the religious aspect too, with it. It was even neglected in a way, except in the circle of the family. If you were a member of the League of Communists, you couldn't say you were a man of faith, go to church or the mosque. You wouldn't celebrate Bayram or fast. My mother, when she fasted, she was always afraid it might harm me in some way, harm my beliefs, that it might give someone a motive to criticize me… Afterwards that changed, and we began to think about all that. Now we do celebrate Bayram in our house, but we do it in moderation, without much pomp, we do not make a display of it [as some do]. We make cakes, food, you walk from house to house, we visit some of the elders, someone visits us. But it is not characterised by a significant religious element, it is more tradition, custom.
>
> I was a man without religious belief – that is how I was raised. I believed in the League of Communists, in its Statute – that was sacred to me. That was my ideology. Now it has collapsed, it's gone, and you begin to question things, you think about religious postulates, about God. Now I am a good friend of the local hodja [*hodža*][151] – not because he is a religious man, but because he is a man who writes books, does research, and I help him as an editor and I want him to persevere in his pursuit. However, back in the day I would never even sit with a hodja. I never used to even enter the mosque. Now I do enter, not as a particular religious ritual, but, say, when someone dies (…). I didn't do that before. I entered the mosque for the first time in my life when my father died. (...) So, I do not know how to pray, but I have torn down the wall that existed between *this* [informant's emphasis] and myself.

On average, one's name was marked as insignificant for national identity by most informants – 24 marked it in the lower part of the scale, usually referring to a similar issue as the Serbian historian who gave the example of the telephone book. As another informant stated: 'often you cannot tell a person's nationality just by knowing his surname,

[151] *Hodža* - a Muslim preacher, madrasa professor or religious teacher.

and sometimes even if you also know the first name'. A religious figure added, and many agreed: 'Nowadays, names that are typical of other nations have become popular. In Prijepolje, for example, in recent years both the Orthodox and the Muslim have been giving girls the name Sara'. However, as will be further explored in the following chapter, numerous informants shared the opinion that the family name is of crucial importance for personal identity and the more reliable indicator of one's personality, rather than religious or national affiliation.

The numerous lineage assemblies [*zbor bratstva*] that have been gaining in popularity in the last decades, and that informants from all over Southwest Serbia have told me about also testify to the important role that family and roots today play in the self-identification of individuals. These are occasions when all those who are believed to stem from the same distant ancestor come together, often meeting each other for the first time, as one member of the Mušović family told me: 'Five years ago we had a *Mušovijada.*[152] There is one photo with all the Mušović who are related to each other, gathered in one place. These were people we didn't even know. We are everywhere – Montenegro, Serbia, abroad. Life has taken us in all directions.' Many are also conducting research in an attempt to reconstruct their family trees and identify their relatives, and the more organised families collect funds to publish their findings. A Bosniak teacher told me of his attempts to trace the family origins:

> I have been working on identifying the origins of the [states last name] family. You can find us all around – in Serbia, Bosnia, in Montenegro, in Nikšić – those are Montenegrins, and they are of the Orthodox faith. One story is that we came from Nikšić. Another is that an ancestor came here with his sons because of blood revenge and accepted Islam. He had seven sons, and we come from one of them. (…) I have been reconstructing the family tree, the male line, and found that in 1893 there were 16 [states last name] households in [states village]. In total I have identified 105, 106 families that have migrated all over – there are some even in the United States, in Canada and so on. I am interested in where they all came

[152] The suffix *–ijada* is added to words to denote an event that centres around whatever it refers to. For example, *slaninijada* [*slanina* – bacon] designates a fair of pork products, *kupusijada* [*kupus* – cabbage] is a fair of cabbage and cabbage products, etc.

> from exactly, but I have not found historical data. No one has done this before me, and when I stop someone else can continue. We are putting the pieces together.

A twenty-year-old Serbian student from Sjenica knew a little about his family's history thanks to a book published by a relative, and recounted an event that illustrates the tension between ancestry and religious affiliation in fostering closeness:

> There is a book written about the [states last name]. It was long ago and there were, they say, three brothers. One settled one part of [states village], the other settled the other part, the third I do not remember. And the first one was *poturčen*[153] by the *aga*.[154] His name was Mašo, and so they became the Mašović. Therefore, the Mašović are our distant relatives, and they are still in the same place. One of them was quite angry; he said, 'Why didn't you invite me to the assembly?' And you know, I told them to invite him…

As these examples show, the 'family' in Southwest Serbia is not conceptually limited just to its nucleus but is frequently understood in the sense of a historically continuous unit, consisting of all those who stem from the earliest known common ancestor, and individuals are in part identified by their belonging to it. Numerous ethnographers have in the past observed a similar phenomenon in those parts of the Balkans historically characterised by a 'tribal organisation' of their peoples (Halpern et. al 1996: 434, Todorova 1990: 62) – for example, Đurđev (1954) and Pulaha (1975) distinguished between the *kuća* (household) as a minimal lineage, the broader extended family including first and second cousins (*porodica* or *familija*) and the *bratstvo* (in literal translation, brotherhood) as the maximal lineage which included up to fourteen generations of agnatically related kin (Kaser 2012: 297).[155] All of these units were exogamous (Halpern et. al 1996: 434), each played a different role in the social life of the *pleme* and had different competencies, and while this is no longer the case, informants' testimonies and use of words such as *pleme* and *bratstvo* illustrate that when they discuss their family origins and recount histories they are thinking in the above terms.

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[153] *Po-turčiti,* literally meaning 'to turn Turkish', referring to the act of conversion from Christianity to Islam during Ottoman times,

[154] *Agha* (from Turkish) – title for an Ottoman civil or military office.

[155] As a result, in this thesis I translate the word *bratstvo* as lineage

These complex historical family structures in the Balkans can be traced back to large kinship agglomerations in the mountainous cattle-breeding Dinaric regions, where many territories escaped Ottoman rule, functioning as refuge areas and, in the absence of larger state structures, providied the groups inhabiting them with relative autonomy (Halpern et al. 1996: 434). Certainly, the pastoral way of life had an impact on the evolution of family organisation, principally the development of the joint family household and patrilineage, as identified by a number of authors (Halpern et al. 1996, Todorova 1990, Filipović 1976). The conditions of life under Ottoman rule, particularly those outside of the main urban hubs, were also conducive to this form of social organisation. Since mountain dwellers in particular were largely left without opportunities to be absorbed by the Ottoman administration, they developed social structures based on the patrilineage and the patriarchal joint family as survival strategies in a hostile political and economic environment (Halpern et al. 2012: 50, Boehm 1983, Cvijić 1922: 127-181). Warfare as a condition of everyday life was an important cultural focus and has been particularly well documented in oral epics of the region (Halpern et al. 1996: 429), which will be further explored in the following chapter.

As a result, in areas like northern Montenegro the patrilineage emerged as the principal structural and ideological unit, based on an ideology whose core elements were ancestor worship, warfare, vengeance and agnatic dyadic relationships (Halpern et al. 2012: 51). As my informants' stories of family roots testify, their understanding of family history is likewise focused around a male ancestor whose sons sometimes became the founders of sub-lineages, in accounts typically after having to flee enemy armies, prosecution or revenge and resettle on a different territory. The spread of Ottoman rule in the Balkans and the wars waged on its territory, accompanied by population growth and the many privileges handed out by both the Ottoman and Habsburg administrations to re-settlers

(Hammel 1972: 345-346), resulted in massive migrations of peoples, the most discernible direction of movement being from the mountainous south to the plains in the north. These moving populations brought their own ways of life with them (Halpern et al. 2012: 51, Cvijić 1991), as a result of which their remnants can still be identified today in contemporary stories of family pasts.

In fact, when telling these stories, many of my informants use the words *kuća* (house, extended household), *bratstvo* (brotherhood) and *pleme* (larger kinship agglomeration), and they do so with pride. The meaning and everyday use of the word *pleme* does not precisely correspond with the English word for 'tribe', nor with its use in those media reports and parts of academic literature where it appears as a defining characteristic of the Balkans, in unison with terms such as 'the backward, the primitive, the barbarian' (Todorova 1997: 3).[156] According to anthropologist Pavković, *pleme* in fact has been used to refer to different things by different groups, and this meaning has varied in different parts of the region and in different historical periods (Pavković and Naumović 2005: 144). In addition, particularly after migrations to valley areas, a patrilineage could become synonymous with all the households of a village, or a specific part of a village, and sometimes the households of a patrilineage could be spread over several villages of a region (Halpern et al.: 434). Therefore, *pleme* has been used and, when talking about the past, still is used to refer to different things - a smaller kin group, a brotherhood, a *rod* ('race'), offspring of the male line, as well as a larger territorial-political group consisting of several lineages. The word *pleme* itself is a native term deriving from the Proto-Slavic word *plemnik* – seed (*seme*) (Pavković and Naumović 2005: 144).), as indicated by the

[156] On a related note, Maria Todorova (1990) made an important critique of the use of the 'zadruga' term in the field of Family history, particularly of studies that argue it is an obligatory stage in the evolutionary development of the Balkan family or those that start from the position that the 'zadruga' is applicable to the entire Balkans as a uniform institution. Todorova and others have pointed out that, among other things, such studies perpetuate the stereotype of the 'familistic' and therefore 'backward' societies of Eastern Europe (see Kaser 2004, Melegh 2006, Sovič 2008; Szołtysek 2008, Todorova 1996).

common phrase in which the two words go together, that is '*seme i pleme*', in which case its meaning is close to the idea of a kin group. As Pavković observes, some difficulty in historical research on the social organisation of peoples in the Balkans has been posed by the use of varied foreign terms in primary sources which did not precisely describe what was being referred to (Pavković 1982: 101). Similarly, though the word *pleme* is typically translated into English as 'tribe', it is important to remember that it has a different connotation for those who use it.

The past, present and future as determined by the family unit

Due to the economically and geographically peripheral position of the region, the comparatively slow process of urbanisation and industrialisation, and, in particular, the isolation of villages in the mountains, the joint family household persisted in rural parts of the region until WWII. Following WWII, the Communist regime discouraged individual agricultural production, and encouraged industrialisation and urbanisation as a means of achieving the general modernisation of society, which resulted in the fragmentation of joint and extended family households. One of the goals in this regard was suppression of the social capital of the family by stimulating social mobility on other bases (Milić 2004: 229). At the same time, agrarian reforms were frequent, especially in the first decades following WWII, as were political and legal changes, and in the end peasants were able to retain a small portion of their land. This created a situation where taking advantage of an opportunity presented by a change in regulation could, a few years down the line, turn out to be a disadvantage, which, together with the limitations posed by small landholdings, disincentivised peasants from investing and directed them to produce for private consumption rather than for sale (Barić 1967: 272).

Another consequence was the emergence of a modified version of the extended family in rural areas, in the form of a mixed household consisting of family members who worked their land and those who worked full-time in state-owned enterprises, and some members who were both (Barić 1967: 271, Milić 2004: 228). This was particularly widespread among poor households in regions characterised by land scarcity, such as mountainous or underdeveloped agricultural areas (Milić 2004: 230).[157] As employment in the cities became more widespread, numerous families established a house in an urban area, whilst retaining a 'branch' in the countryside. Retaining the land was important for several reasons – it provided a source of additional income and food, but also figured as a source of identity and gave a sense of security and control (Barić 1967: 267).

In fact, these countryside branches played a very important role in family subsistence in the 1990s. The adverse conditions, the growth in unemployment and decline of social security during this decade pushed individuals to turn to the family as a source of survival, either by self-support through agricultural production or by procuring food from close kin in the countryside. As many as 38% of Serbian households in the 1990s subsisted from private farming (Milić 2006). After 2000, economic deprivation, unemployment, precarious employment, the risk of social exclusion, political uncertainty, and weak institutions contributed to the continual importance of the informal economy and local networks of ties as familial survival strategies (Milić 2006: 70-72, Babović 2006), as well as fostering the important role of the family in overcoming the deficits created by these conditions (Miletić-Stepanović 2011). As an important source of social capital, the family

[157] The fact that during this period there was a tendency to leave the entire inheritance to one male descendent in order to prevent the further fragmentation of already small land holdings is illustrative (Milić 2004: 229).

is still instrumental in helping its members in forming bonds with non-members, in getting by and getting ahead in everyday life (Tomanović 2008, 2010).[158]

In addition, research has indicated that in this socio-economic situation the extended family has emerged as a coping and adaptive mechanism (Babović 2009, Petrović 2009, 2011, Miletić-Stepanović 2011).[159] For example, the extended family provides a solution to the problem of housing – over 60% of individuals have lived in the extended family at some point in their lives (Miletić-Stepanović 2011: 111), as many as 47% of couples in Serbia begin their married life within the extended family, while the 90% of couples who do own a flat have acquired it with the support of their parents or close kin (Petrović 2004: 190). The extended family is also in the majority of cases the provider of care for small children and the elderly (Tomanović 2005, 2010), as well as a refuge for one third of one-parent families in the city, and two fifths in rural areas (Miletić-Stepanović 2011: 127). As opposed to the nuclear family, extended families have a slightly higher standard and economic status (Petrović 2010: 129). Taken together, this has led researchers to infer that the extended family, although based on patriarchal and traditional value patterns, has demonstrated adaptability and flexibility in the post-socialist period (Miletić-Stepanović 2011: 125). It links members of agnatically related kin, providing kin-based inclusion in a fragmented society characterised by a high degree of exclusion (ibid.).

[158] For comparative perspective on the family in Serbia today, see Milić and Tomanović 2009.

[159] According to a survery of households conducted in Serbia in 2003 and 2007 by the Institute for Sociological Research, the extended family type has been on the increase since the 1990s. The results of these surveys, conducted on a representative sample, indicated that extended families make up around 33%, although they have taken on new morphological, structural, socioeconomic and functional features in a new context (Milić 2004: 229, Petrović 2011: 67). The reconstruction of statistical data on households collected for the 2002 census in Serbia indicates a similar picture – that the extended family makes up 25% of all families in Serbia (Miletić-Stepanović 2011: 107). In comparison, around 2% of all families in the 'older' EU member states (EU15), and 10% of the states that joined the EU in 2004 (EU10), belong to the extended family type (Miletić-Stepanović 2011: 106).

Therefore, the importance of family in the self-identification of my informants is the result of a complex interweaving of factors, one of which is the fact that throughout the post-socialist transformation the family unit has indeed been the primary source of subsistence, security and protection to its members. As we have seen, historical membership in a *bratstvo* or a *pleme* is articulated as a privilege, a phenomenon which will be analysed further in the following Chapter. In a similar vein, the reputation and ideological value of the family today are recognised by most of my respondents – one is in the first instance identified on the basis of one's family background, and this can bring gains in everyday life and serve as a basis for forming ties with others. That this ideology serves as an important basis for understanding the world and as a link between one's family in times past and the family in the present can also be identified in the importance that informants in Southwest Serbia place on their ancestors and their family identity when talking about themselves, as well as about national identification. A young archaeologist analysed why ancestry is considered important and explained it in the following way:

> Ancestry does not have to be definitive [for national identity], but it is important. When I was told who my ancestors were – that they were border guards, that they protected the Ottoman Empire from Serbia, that they were all soldiers – I had no dilemma [about myself]. And [this is demonstrated] in archaeology – I graduated on graves and the domestification of death. It was not that people domesticated the plants and the animals and then transitioned to a sedentary lifestyle. It was the spiritual sphere that affected everything else, the cult of the ancestors was fundamentally linked to this – and still is. When you vulgarise that, you come to Šešelj's argument – the Serbian lands are where Serbian graves lie. And everyone [every civilisation] from the Neolithic Age to today is based on that, we are based on that like a computer program. This is where my graves are – this is where my home is. And whenever you need to redefine a state or a people, it is the graves, the ancestors, that are first referred to, so of course ancestry is important.

Like the archaeologist above who found personal validation in the occupation of his ancestors, it often emerged that the interpretation of national identification and the relation to place felt by informants was to a large extent justified through family history and the role of one's ancestors in the current of historical events. The descendant of an Ottoman commander explained how his origins affected his attitude to nationality:

> When Bosnia was fighting for independence [in the 19th century], when Gradaščević led the rebellion, my family was on the side of the Sultan, and they protected Priboj. There are different theories about my origins. You can draw different conclusions on the basis of the *vakufnama* [a charter listing possessions left as an endowment]. Hasanaga [my ancestor] was the *azeban*[160] of this area (…) So, there is one theory that I am a Turk. Another theory is that my ancestor, Hasanaga Pribojac, was taken as a child to Turkey [as part of the *devşirme* tax]. In the *vakufnama* he left everything to the town, stating that he leaves everything that had always been his. That indicates that he is from these areas. But it is not certain. So, I am not very national.

A Bosniak from Sjenica recounted that his family played a different role in the nineteenth-century Ottoman Empire, drawing the following conclusions from that:

> My family came to the territory of Sandžak from Bileće in 1826. (…) They were one of the few rebels against Ottoman rule in that area, which is why they were forced to leave Bileće. (…) In those times they wanted the Bosniak state. This fact itself, that they rebelled in those times, that they identified with the Bosniak nation, that they were against the Turks, points me to our Bogomil origins. My family was indigenous to Herzegovina, and most Bosniaks from Herzegovina are Bogomils, and it was as Bogomils that they accepted Islam.

That family affiliation is significant for one's sense of self was also confirmed by informants in their answers to questions directly probing the issue. That is, interviewees were asked to select three groups that have had the greatest impact on the formation of their personal identities. The respondents could choose from among a list of 9 groups (family, nationality, religious group, age group, occupation, gender, social class, part of the country you live in and political party/group/movement),[161] and could add a group of their own if they felt the list was incomplete:

As many as 38 out of 40 respondents choose family as one of the three most important groups, and of these, 33 put the family group first. Conversely, the respondents were in disagreement when determining the significance of other listed groups. Among them, only the 'part of the country one lives in' had relative prevalence in answers – 22 respondents named this to be among the most important groups, typically citing their home town when

[160] Commander of a town.
[161] See questions 12-14 in Appendix C.

asked which 'part of the country' they are visualising, while the region (Sandžak, Raška, Polimlje, Raška county, Zlatibor county, etc.) was mentioned on fewer occasions. This is in line with answers to related questions about the level of identification felt with different territories such as the village, home town, region, resident state, neighbouring states, etc.[162] Out of all the territories listed, most informants expressed the greatest allegiance towards the village one's family stems from, a tie that has its source in the strong identification with the family unit. Whether or not one was born there, the village was felt to be a nucleus where the present and future merge with the past to determine one's trajectory in life, or as one informant explained: 'My father always told me that, while I should look forward, it is important to take a look back from time to time'. Furthermore, the felt bond extends to all those originating from the village, or sometimes the surrounding villages – and in the case of multi-ethnic environments, this cuts across religious affiliation: 'You are a Serb, and I am Muslim, but it doesn't matter. I liked you from the first moment I saw you, as if I have known you a hundred years. I am from Gonje; your family is from Goračićе. Just for the fact that you are from my *kraj* [area, neighbourhood], it is as if we are of the same blood.'. Although this statement may reflect a desire to be hospitable towards me, the belief that those who originate from the same area are close, or even related in some symbolic way is something I often encountered.[163] One clear demonstration of this phenomenon is that when introducing me to potential informants, the person doing the introductions would cite our common village, but also regional origins as an implicit indication of my trustworthiness and as an argument that they should help me out as a person who is in that way 'close' to them. The fact that I had been born and grew up in Belgrade was irrelevant in that regard.

[162] These are questions 25 to 34 in Appendix C.
[163] The historical practice of village exogamy could be a factor related to the perception of those from a similar area as 'close'. For more on the topic see Pavković 1973, Naumović and Pavković 2005.

In addition, four out of five of those interviewed stated that the bond they feel with their town of residence is strong or very strong, which is in line with answers stating that the part of the country, primarily the home town, one lives in is an important source of personal identity. In comparison, profession (18 respondents) and gender (13 respondents) were considered significant to a lesser extent, whereas nation was chosen as one of three most important by 6 respondents, and religious group by 12.

After choosing the three most influential groups, I asked the interviewees to go through the list again and mark each on a scale from 1 – insignificant effect, to 4 – very significant effect in order to acquire a more thorough insight, as well as to compare the results. The family group was marked as having the greatest effect of all groups. Religious affiliation was as a rule marked as significant or very significant, implying that, although it was in the first question marked to be among the three most important groups by just one fourth of respondents, it nonetheless plays a significant role in personal identity for the large majority. Such results, combined with informants' explanations additionally imply a certain overlap between family and faith. When it came to the other social groups, the answers to the two questions yielded comparable results.

Taking into account such a prevalent answer to this question, as well as to previously posed questions, we can observe that nationality is not unambiguous or fully crystalized as a concept – both its core and its periphery are malleable (cf. Brubaker 2004: 76).[164] Ancestry and tradition were marked as very significant for determining nationality in one question, whereas in another, the national group was generally characterized as lacking an effect on personal identity, unlike the family group, which determines ancestry and through which tradition and customs are passed on. It is the family group, perceived as a

[164] Brubaker applies the concept of the schema in his approach to ethnicity understood not as a thing in the world but as a perspective on the world. A schema is a cognitive frame, which consists of a more permanent core and a periphery whose elements are more prone to change due to circumstance.

historical unit, that has emerged as the principal group of allegiance, the prism through which the past, present and future are perceived, and the source of those values against which individuals and groups are judged. The family unit is also the only group whose members share a common temporal vision, as opposed to others, such as the national group, which is seen as characterised by disunion, discontinuity and guided by short-term politics both by Serbs and Bosniaks – a situation that is frequently described as regrettable and as an impediment to the common good.

Following the disintegration of the state, its institutions and the sense of security these used to provide, my informants feel that their lives are unravelling in an uncertain, unpredictable and unhospitable socio-political context. The process of state-building has paradoxically produced a weak and inefficient state. Likewise, nation-building efforts have not succeeded in creating a cultural and historical consensus, but have had the opposite effect, contributing to the breaking of ties in the political community and the devaluation of its institutions. This has resulted in the alienation of the citizenry from the political elites and the state institutions they represent, and prompted people to take on a more instrumental, less conviction-based, approach to politics. As we have seen, for many this is a novelty in comparison with Yugoslav times when, notwithstanding all the observed shortcomings and 'ruptures' of the regime, the felt level of identification between state and society and the perceived credibility of institutions were higher. Unsuccessful state and nation building has, thus, created a space for the operation of diverse groups and local elites, and the imagination of individuals. Plagued by economic instability and the resulting emigration that poses a risk to the future of family structures and deterred by the politicisation of ethnicity, the people of the region have turned to family values and family histories as an important source of identity, stability, power and community. The role of

these values and histories in community and ethnic relations will be analysed in more detail in the next chapter.

Chapter 5 - Memories of honour: linking the past, present and future in Southwest Serbia

In accounts of both Bosniaks and Serbs, as we will see in this chapter, honour is an important component of the link between the past and the present. History is about a chain of exchanges that never cease, and it is through the maintenance of reciprocity in these exchanges that others prove themselves in our eyes. Stories of betrayal and therefore dishonour play a dominant part in everyday stories, much as they do in accounts of history and narratives on disunity. An illustrative example is the concept of the *poturica* (from the verb *po-turčiti*, meaning to turn Turkish), which forms a significant part of the Serbian national narrative. It was coined to designate Serbs who converted to Islam during Ottoman times, thus 'betraying their kind in a quest for a better life'. The term itself is infused with emotion, implying both repulsion and disappointment, disrespect and fear. A large part of this is explained to be because many converted Muslims became feudal lords or military leaders, if not in the first then in subsequent generations, thus safeguarding Turkish rule over Serbia. That the 'Turk is in blood up to his knees, while the *poturica* is in blood to his shoulders' and that 'There is no better Turk than a *poturica*' have both become national proverbs. The belief that those who converted to Islam were 'traitors to their own kind' was solidified in epic poetry which formed the corpus of Serbian oral history during the five centuries of Ottoman rule, and subsequently figured as a prominent part of Serbian interwar historiography and that of the late 20th century, most often personified in calls for Muslims to 'return to the ancestral faith'.

One of the events that had the greatest impact on the collective consciousness of the Balkan peoples and served as the foundation for Serbian and Montenegrin modern history was the Battle of Kosovo in 1389, which subsequently took the form of a powerful myth through which 'the Turks', and as a result, those who converted to Islam – the '*poturice*' – were constructed as the Other (Zlatar 2007: 139). To illustrate this point, historian Zdenko Zlatar conducts an analysis of one of the most significant works of Serbian literature, *The Mountain Wreath*, a modern epic poem published in 1847 as a play by the then prince-bishop of Montenegro, Petar Petrović Njegoš, and a literary work that is representative of the mid-19th century understanding of history, the times and the world. Written at the height of Serbian and Montenegrin national romanticism and rebellion against the declining Ottoman Empire, the theme of the Mountain Wreath is the so-called 'extermination of the *poturice*' and the dilemma of the protagonist, the ruling bishop of Montenegro, about whether the deed is humane and moral, or not. It is through the poem itself that Njegoš attempted to forge a new identity for the Montenegrins, and, as Zlatar points out, to solve 'Montenegro's existential crisis by a radical denial of alterity, of the Other' (Zlatar 2007: 773).

The Serbian and Montenegrin oral tradition interprets the Battle of Kosovo in a strongly religious and mythical sense, as the moment when the earthly Serbian empire was lost due to the sins of Serbian noblemen and, in the last instance, exchanged for a heavenly one, as evidenced by the heroic sacrifice and death of the Serbian Prince Lazar. By choosing to wage wars on each other in a battle for land and power, the Serbian noblemen weakened and so exposed the Serbian kingdom to the onslaught of the Ottomans. The version which narrates a story of betrayal and its consequences and places blame only emerged as dominant centuries after the event occurred, after multiple mythifications across a number of generations. It was by means of this myth that the concept of *sloga* – concord or unity,

was constructed as an unattainable Serbian ideal and that those who converted to Islam began to be held accountable for subjugation to and maintenance of Ottoman rule. Understood as having 'sold their birth-right for a mess of pottage' [*prodali veru za večeru*], as the proverb goes, they 'become Turk' but not quite. Even though those who converted to Islam were referred to as 'Turks' both in epics and in everyday dialogue, they were still perceived as having South Slavic tribal origins; according to Zlatar, they were, in much of the oral tradition, never treated as foreigners, but as domestic traitors and as the very opposite of the heroic ideal, to be distinguished primarily by their religion and their dishonourable past for centuries to come (Zlatar 2011: 151).

Marko Živković made similar observations with regard to contemporary narratives of Serbian disunity, which we discussed in Chapter 4. Noting that these were based on the traitor as an archetype (2011), he described them as stories Serbs tell themselves and others about themselves (Živković 2001). The *traitor,* the enemy within, is in such stories portrayed as the omnipresent danger and cause of downfall. The role of the traitor has in different historical periods been filled by diverse groups and, according to Živković, post-Yugoslav Serbian identity was too built on its foundations (2011: 187). As we have seen, however, although this strategy produced the short-term results that the political elites intended, in the long-term they have been detrimental to the state and nation-building process. Slobodan Naumović's research on the socio-political bases, modes of functioning and consequences of the political use of narratives on Serbian disunity has confirmed that these form a significant part of popular Serbian self-perceptions. As a genre of everyday identity discourses, they have acquired 'in the Serbian popular imaginary a notorious, quasi-demiurgic status' (2005: 67). Whether they are perceived as an uncontested form of social reality, a cause of social reality, or its undesirable consequence, they provide a certain order and meaning to the world, at the same time expressing and reaffirming the

idea of disunity as a constitutive trait of Serbian identity (2005: 76). In his analysis on the use of *gusle*[165] in war propaganda, anthropologist Ivan Čolović observed that the Serbian nationalism of the 1990s significantly drew from folk culture and epic formulas, that is, 'political folklore' (1993). One of the effects was to create an impression of Serbian history as an unfolding drama in which every person feeling themselves to be Serb is a contributing participant (Laffan 1989: 25). The nation-state itself, its titular nation and political leaders were, in such a way, presented as ahistorical – in any particular moment, regardless of its 'contents' or 'boundaries', they were all portrayed as having fixed identities, as reincarnations of the founding state, the founding nation and legendary epic heroes (Duijzings 2005). In such a framework, how an individual carried himself became an issue of epic proportions.

One cannot possibly forgive another who has committed an injustice to one, and so betrayed one, especially if this was done at some crucial point at the crossroads of history, when the Other was supposed to prove himself more than ever. As Herzfeld (1992) notes, the worst kind of betrayal is that conducted against one's own, one's kin and one's kind. The betrayal will never be forgotten, and the dishonour demonstrated will become a constitutive trait carried on through the generations in the case of a family, or forever in the case of a people. In this way we come to an early romanticist view of history, as described in the works of Renan, Herder, Mazzini – of history as revealing the true nature of a people that is unchangeable. As we have seen in Chapter 3, the question of Islamicisation and discussions of origins are still taboo in much of the region, primarily because raising the issue is perceived as questioning one's family's honour – which in fact is often done with precisely this intention. However, is the regional understanding of honour and how it is distributed among members of different faiths exhausted in the

[165] The *gusla* is a single-stringed instrument always accompanied by singing, typically of epic poetry.

concept of the *poturica*, as explained by Zdenko Zlatar or its use in 1990s political and academic propaganda? To what extent does the view of the world and inter-faith relations described in a body of work composed by a prince-bishop and other epics instrumentalised in 1990s political propaganda correspond to that expressed in oral literature that stemmed from below? This will be one of the questions that this Chapter will address.

As of late, a re-evaluation of history has been taking place in conjunction with a systematic analysis of Ottoman tax registers, and more historians are arguing that individuals converted primarily to help their families. As Slavoljub Pušica, Director of the Museum of Prijepolje explained, 'One brother would accept Islam, and the others would stay in Orthodoxy, after which the first would be in a position to help his family. However, over several generations the link would be gradually lost. The fact that Bosniaks and Serbs share many of the same last names in the region points to this'. As Chapter 4 has shown, the inhabitants of Southwest Serbia are well aware of the familial links that bind them, and in inter-ethnic encounters they are guided by personal experiences and local histories more than anything else. As a result, the state-sponsored narratives are frequently at odds with personal memories and values. The aim of this chapter, therefore, is to inquire into the memories and values that determine the link between the past and the present and that shape inter-ethnic relations in the region. The first part will focus on practices of commemoration in order to sketch out the prism through which the inhabitants of Southwest Serbia connect with the past. In the second section I will look at discourses of heroism through an analysis of everyday heroic deeds, as well as legends and epic poems that recount instances of interethnic bonding. The final section of this chapter will provide examples of contemporary interethnic solidarity that comes into play when mutual honour is at stake.

Monuments as safe-keepers of memory and honour

Monuments, as the tangible objectification of historical 'truth', carry a particularly important role in determining one's family honour: they testify to one's place in time, the part played in the current of historical events, and tell whether the role was honourable or dishonourable (cf. Just 2000). Southwest Serbia, as a place with a multiplicity of histories, is dotted with diverse monuments, from those that are religious and of historical significance, such as monasteries, churches, mosques and even a Catholic chapel pointing to Austro-Hungarian presence in the area, to those that are commemorative. In this regard, Prijepolje in particular sports a wealth of interesting historical sites, much thanks to the town's central location in the current of historical events. However, as I noticed during one of my first strolls down its streets, unlike most other places that have had their fair share of history, Prijepolje sports an unusual number of memorials and monuments for a town of just 13,000 inhabitants. As I walked around the town centre, I counted no less than ten monuments just there, and that was not all.

As a result, walking down the streets of Prijepolje opens up the possibility of observing memory and identity politics, their long-term transformation in the town and implicitly the wider region, as well as their uses and appropriations by groups and individuals on the local level. The most prominent position is taken by those monuments dedicated to the heroes and fallen soldiers in World War II due to the anti-fascist, partisan and communist tradition of Prijepolje, but also because of the general importance that was placed on monument policy, which in socialist Yugoslavia formed a significant part of cultural policy and the greater process of historical reconstruction (Šešić 2011: 38). On no particular day, I was shown around town by two young men in their twenties: Petar, a

historian, and Aleksandar,[166] a university student, both of whom declared themselves to be apolitical. The first monument we encountered was that of the 'People's heroes'[167] in the central park, among them the bust of the famed Prijepolje-born Vladimir Perić Valter. Valter was only 21 when he joined the Partisan army, and his pursuits against the Germans were raised to legendary status in one of most famous Yugoslav movies, *Valter defends Sarajevo*. Seen as a symbol of interethnic tolerance as well as defiance against all sorts of domination, he is a great hero not just in BiH and Serbia, but also in China, where this film achieved cult status in the 1970s and 1980s, making it one of the most watched films of all time. These and other monuments dedicated to WWII were erected in the years after the war ended, among which the most elaborate is the '4th of December' memorial complex that marks the place where German forces attacked the old Austro-Hungarian hospital housing wounded Partisan solders, leading to one of the bloodiest battles in the war. Interspersed between them is a series of monuments erected in the last twenty years, following the disintegration of Yugoslavia. Their significance, the world views they represent and those they commemorate tell us of the diverse times and spaces that the people of Prijepolje inhabit and how these overlap, as well as of the various political discourses that compete for predominance through the historical truths they purport to convey and those values and individuals they (dis)honour.

Starting from Prijepolje's main square, one can find two monuments built in honour of St Sava, the 12th-century Serbian prince turned monk, first Serbian archbishop, spiritual father of Serbs and patron saint of schools. The relics of St Sava were kept in the nearby Mileševa monastery before the Ottomans confiscated and burnt them in Belgrade. As a result, the cult of St Sava is very strong in Prijepolje and the surrounding villages, a

[166] Names have been changed to preserve the anonymity of informants.
[167] Illustration 1 in Appendix D.

phenomenon that was observed among both the Muslim and Christian populations.[168] In addition, St Sava is said to have resided in hermitages in the village of Hisardžik near Prijepolje, and many toponyms around the municipality carry his name. One of the two monuments standing in the main square was erected in 1995[169] and carries an extract of the much circulated yet falsely attributed words of St Sava: '...but we are destined by fate to be the East in the West, and the West in the East.'[170] According to sources, the quote was written and wrongly attributed to St Sava in the 1980s, but since it corresponded perfectly to the political agenda and general sentiment of the times, many believed it or chose to believe it without question, and the quote continues to circulate as if authentic to this day. That the belief in the complex geopolitical position of Serbia as a fundamental cause of its many misfortunes throughout history still resonates today is demonstrated by the reaction of a high-school history teacher to my claim that the words were not in reality uttered by St Sava: 'So? It is the truth, nevertheless, we are what it says we are.'

Outside the town hall stands a monument erected in 2012 in memory of the soldiers of Prijepolje who fell in the wars that raged from 1912 to 1918. It is dedicated to those who participated in the First and Second Balkan Wars, as well as those who fell in World War I.[171] There is also a memorial dedicated to 'the fallen heroes in the wars from 1991 to 2001',[172] as well as one which commemorates the bridge that 'was destroyed by the NATO aggressor from the 3rd to 11th of May, 1999',[173] erected in 1999. While most of

[168] For more on the cult of St Sava and other traditions shared by the Muslim and the Orthodox, see Mušović 1979b, Vlahović 1993, Selimović 2002, 2013.
[169] Illustrations 2a, 2b and 2c in Appendix D.
[170] The words on the monument in Serbian are: '...a mi smo sudbinom predodređeni da budemo Istok na Zapadu, i Zapad na Istoku...'. The complete quote reads: 'At first we were confused. The East thought that we were West, while the West considered us to be East. Some of us misunderstood our place in this clash of currents, so they cried that we belong to neither side, and others that we belong exclusively to one side or the other. But I tell you, Irinej, we are destined by fate to be the East in the West, and the West in the East, to acknowledge only heavenly Jerusalem beyond us, and here on earth – no one.
[171] Illustration 3 in Appendix D.
[172] Illustration 4 in Appendix D.
[173] Illustration 5 in Appendix D.

these do not generate much concern, there are two monuments in Prijepolje that are in particular the subject of controversy, as illustrated by the reactions and discussions of my two guides. While strolling around the city centre we came to the main mosque and, in front of it, a monument that both men announced – that is, denounced – with the words: 'And now we have arrived in front of the fake monument'. What they were referring to was a marble plate commemorating those killed in the Štrpci abduction, warning the onlooker that: 'Whoever in this country forgets the Štrpci station and the 27th of February, abandons the future.'[174]

Štrpci, a village near the Bosnian-Serbian border but on Bosnian territory, is where the Belgrade-Bar train made its usual stop on the 27th of February, 1993 when nineteen passengers were singled out on the basis of the names in their identification documents, abducted, tortured and murdered by a Serbian paramilitary group in BiH. Eighteen of the passengers were Bosniaks, all Serbian or Montenegrin citizens, many residing in Belgrade, and nine of them originally from Prijepolje. When I inquired why the monument was deemed a fake, my interlocutors told me that it was because of its political connotations, not because the event as such was fabricated – and because it was placed in the centre of Prijepolje and not, say, in Priboj, which is closer to Štrpci. In an attempt to explain his feelings about it, Petar mentioned the example of 'another fake monument', one raised opposite the Mileševa monastery at the initiative of *vladika*[175] Filaret, the controversial Orthodox bishop, to those 'Murdered by the Communists in the civil war and in peace, from 1941–1951.'[176] The civil war in question is the one that raged in Serbia during WWII between the Partisan army devoted to the Communist Party and the royalist army of Chetniks, loyal to the monarchy. The monument, an anthracite-coloured marble block

[174] Illustration 6 in Appendix D.
[175] Bishop.
[176] Illustration 7 in Appendix D.

resembling a tombstone and bearing a cross, commemorates those killed by the former not only during the war, but also after it ended. Even though allegiance to one or the other army was often more a question of chance than informed choice, and sometimes a result of forced mobilisation, the decision would prove to be an important determinant of family fate for decades to come. While the Partisans were honoured as heroes in books and on monuments, those who fought in the Chetnik army, like all others deemed to be traitors and Nazi collaborators by the Communist regime, were prosecuted or executed, their families shamed and humiliated, and in the decades following WWII, demonised through mass media productions and in historical textbooks. As Milena Šešić observed in an article on new memory policies in Balkan countries, 'Yugoslav nations, regions and cities had lived throughout socialism with divided memories: private memories which kept alive "dissonant memories and heritage" – sometimes even tabooed (...) making them present in collective sub consciousness, and, on the other side: collective "official" memories, stimulated through educational system, public representation events, ceremonies, historical research (memories of revolutionaries) and monument building policies' (Šešić 2011: 38-39). With the awakening of nationalism in the former Yugoslavia in the 1980s came the call for historical revisionism and, following the break-up of the country, memorials began sprouting like mushrooms. Witnesses tell me that many of those present at the erection of Filaret's memorial wept, saying that they finally felt a sense of justice for those they had lost, but also that they experienced a sense of liberation from the burden of historical shame they had been carrying for generations.

Petar, however, felt differently and maintained that the monument was 'a fake', saying that 'it commemorates only Serbs – and others were also killed by the Partisans...', and concluding that the main problem with all of these is their attempt to control memory for their sole political benefit. It was then that Aleksandar interrupted him, furious that he had

compared the two monuments, and even more so that he declared this one also to be 'a fake'. Even though he himself had found all the monuments we encountered up to then 'over the top and too political', he had an emotional link with this particular one, as his grandfather's name was inscribed on it. As a result he replied: 'You wouldn't speak like that if it were you. We may both dislike the Filaret, but the people commemorated there were innocent victims.' Though it is rare for people to deny the crimes commemorated by the two monuments, most of those who denounce them 'read between the lines' and feel that the memorials themselves are a political message more than anything else, initiated by those who wish to fuel fear and interethnic hatred – 'the self-proclaimed protectors of our memory who manipulate our histories and our feelings', as another informant put it.

For most, therefore, the problem with some of the recent monuments is not so much whom they commemorate, but the political beliefs and world views they are seen to promote and those they deny as a result. The emphasis in the diverging interpretations of the monuments is more on *who* is doing the commemorating and what the commemoration is perceived to be doing. The monuments are certainly understood as places where history is staged and as a means for political actors to consolidate their status through the manipulation of the community's core values such as those of honour and heroism. The Štrpci monument is thus perceived not so much as a reminder of a horrible crime committed against one's fellow citizens, but as a shrine to ethnicity and a warning that there should be no trust between Serbs and Bosniaks. As one informant pointed out: 'Nineteen people were killed in Štrpci. However, when the massacre is commemorated only eighteen are remembered. The nineteenth person killed was a retired Croatian general of the Yugoslav army from Belgrade, and the only one who stood up that day in the train to protest against what the perpetrators were doing. That is why he was killed. But since he was not Bosniak, not entirely Croatian due to his allegiance to the Yugoslav army, and not

ethnically Serb, this fallen hero is not commemorated by anybody today. He is forgotten.' Likewise, the memorial in front of the Mileševa monastery is read by some as a negation of Yugoslav values and an endorsement of those the Chetniks fought for. That the role of commemorating the victims has been assumed by religious institutions or organisations with a clear political agenda is cited as another indicator of the 'real' underpinnings of the act.

As these examples show, monuments are not taken for granted but understood as political spaces that, regardless of their political content, are more or less disputed on the basis of the extent to which they correspond to the values of the most significant groups one identifies with – the family group and the local community. It is through the prism of family and community honour that the inhabitants of Prijepolje connect with the past, and while they may contest the meaning that different monuments are seen to carry, the fact that the town is dotted with so many implies that one thing at least is common: the acceptance of diversity as Prijepolje's *differentia specifica*. Prijepolje, the only municipality in Southwest Serbia where neither Serbs nor Bosniaks are a considerable demographic majority is also the only one where I encountered such a group of what are usually considered at the very least mutually contradictory monuments in one place. Together, they mark the various historical crossroads which still divide peoples in the former Yugoslavia and local communities in the region I study, indicating that these are societies where private memories, collective memories and normative memories are not always in agreement. The municipality of Prijepolje, however, with its interethnic government – an inevitability due to the balanced ethno-national mix of its population – has long prided itself on interethnic cooperation and tolerance throughout history, and this democratic approach to memory reflects the attitude. Since most of the monuments mentioned were erected on the initiative of diverse non-government groups, though with

the support of the municipality, the community appears to have been able to grapple with the heterogeneous memories and requests of its inhabitants. This diversity is only the tip of the iceberg in a region which is so often portrayed as having two unified ethnically defined voices. What is unique about Prijepolje, however, is the sheer diversity of historical views that are honoured and that the commemoration of victims and celebration of heroes cuts across ethnic lines.

This is something that cannot be said for the rest of the region, which in many places is plagued by historical taboos and a politics that seeks to eradicate from its memory everything which might potentially divide the members of the dominant ethnic group (Halbwachs, 1925: 39), instead opting to connect it with traditions that suit 'better its needs and aspirations in that moment' (ibid.: 358). For example, though the Bosniak National Council (BNC) has chosen to celebrate Sandžak day on the founding date of the Regional Antifascist Council of the National Liberation of Sandžak in World War II,[177] it also hails the World War II Nazi-appointed mayor of Novi Pazar, Aćif-efendija Hadžiahmetović, as a national hero. Following the end of the war, the new Communist rulers sentenced Aćif Hadžiahmetović to death. Since the disintegration of Yugoslavia, many appeals for rehabilitation have been submitted, and in 2009 the Bosniak National Council did this for Hadžiahmetović. In August 2012, prior to the outcome of the process and in a provocative move, the Council erected a memorial plate in his honour in the centre of Novi Pazar, raising a flood of concerns over where the loyalties of Serbia's Muslims lie, questions about why the Republic of Serbia is unwilling or unable to react, and a debate about who Aćif-efendija in fact was and whether the Council is manipulating the history and the memories of those it is supposed to represent.

[177] Sandžak day is celebrated on the 20th November, the founding date of the Regional Antifascist Council of the National Liberation of Sandžak (*Zemaljsko antifašističko vijeće Narodno oslobodilačke vojske Sandžaka* or ZAVNOS for short). ZAVNOS will be explored in more detail in Chapter 7.

As an investigative journalist from Novi Pazar, Slađana Novosel, told me in an interview:

> The whole narrative seems forced on the part of Esad Džudžević [former president of the Council], who spent twelve years sitting in Belgrade [as a parliamentarian] and remained silent. Then Ugljanin[178] let him go 'down the drain', and suddenly he has taken it upon himself to be the Bosniak ideologue (...) Aćif is the response to [the effort to rehabilitate] Draža[179] and Kalajitović. But just how much the history of Bosniaks is manipulated – they [the Council] had an exhibition of twenty esteemed Bosniak historical figures and among them – Kulin Ban! And then, [Murat] Šećeragić, together with Aćif [Hadžiahmetović] – an antifascist 'put in the same basket' as a fascist.

An identical stance is held by a retired Bosniak high-school professor from Prijepolje: 'The Aćif memorial plate was raised as a counter-move against Draža and Vuk Kalajitović. Vuk massacred 42 Muslims in Nova Varoš (...) The only Muslims that were in ZAVNOS were from the Mileševa [Prijepolje] county – they were dedicated to the *brotherhood and unity* [informant's emphasis] that is now spoken of with irony in Novi Pazar.' A Serbian educational worker from Novi Pazar who enjoys esteem among the local Muslims gave this ironic account:

> I want to sell my house and leave Novi Pazar. I do not see a single reason to stay here anymore. Things are becoming unbearable – just see the hysteria around Aćif-efendija. You know what is interesting, though? Aćif saved my grandfather's life. He was on death row together with other Serbian notables from Novi Pazar, but when Aćif heard he immediately said to set him free.

The post-socialist story of Vuk Kalajitović certainly contains some similar themes. Kalajitović, also known as Kalajit, was a Chetnik commander during World War II. In 2010 three Serbs funded the erection of a monument to Kalajit in the municipality of Nova Varoš, in the yard of a private home, on Kalajitović's patrimony, in the village of Štitkovo. This caused an outcry among both Serbs and Muslims, while the reaction of the local or state authorities was much the same as in the subsequent case of the Hadžiahmetović memorial plate – silence interpreted as indifference. In explanation, the individuals who

[178] Sulejman Ugljanin has been the leader of the Party of Democratic Action (*Stranka demokratske akcije*) of Sandžak since its foundation in 1990. He was minister without portfolio in the Serbian government and is currently the president of the Bosniak National Council and representative in the National Assembly of the Republic of Serbia.
[179] Dragoljub 'Draža' Mihailović was the leader of the Chetnik army.

funded the monument claimed that Kalajitović was a protector of both Serbs and Muslims in Nova Varoš (B92 2010). Serbian historian Dubravka Stojanović stated at the time that the monument is probably partly a reaction to the radical tension-raising politics of former mufti of the Islamic Community in Serbia, Muamer Zukorlić, as well as a result of Serbian politics that 'placed a sign of equivalence' between the Chetniks and the national liberation movement, adding, however, that such a politics lead into the 'spiralling of violence and a competition of strength' (ibid.).[180]

The fact that the Kalajitović initiative was funded with private, not public resources, and that the monument was placed in a private and not a public space, has been pointed out by many as an indication that, if the erection of the Aćif memorial plate was a counter-move, it certainly 'upped the ante and the tensions'. In November 2012, the president of the district court in Novi Pazar stated that the proposal for the rehabilitation of Hadžiahmetović had been withdrawn by the authorised attorney of the BNC, a claim the president of the BNC rejected, simply stating that they had not renewed the proceedings as they were obliged to do on the basis of the new Law on rehabilitation passed in 2011. The case has remained unopened, though the memorial plate is still in place.

The BNC's memory policy clearly aims to promote a new moral regime in place of the old, where allegiance to the ethnic community and inter-ethnic solidarity are elevated above political and ideological divisions, so that what is seen to be in the interest of the group is what is more sacred than everything else. Historical responsibility, then, becomes relevant only with regard to the fate of one's ethnic group, and ambiguous political

[180] Stojanović is referring specifically to the controversial amendments to the Law on the rights of veterans, disabled veterans and their families that was adopted by the Serbian parliament in 2005, equating the rights of veterans of the Chetnik and Partisan movements. Though welcomed by some as a 'long-awaited reconciliation of Serbs', the amendments generally spurred a lot of debate and contention both among Serbs and non-Serbs. However, in 2012, the Constitutional Court of Serbia ruled parts of this law unconstitutional, a move that received very little media attention in the country (Biblija and Petrović 2012).

allegiances in the past and present are judged solely on their perceived benefit to it. Though such a relationship with the past is common to different groups in Southwest Serbia, it is by no means unique to the region and as we have seen, the BNC's activity in this sense is closely modelled after strategies employed by the state. As the following sections of this Chapter will illustrate, the heroes of epic songs are never judged in absolute terms but from within the context in which they act. One of the reasons that the diverse commemoration practices in the region resonate with their intended audiences is because they draw on this ideology, even when those leading the process utilise it for their particular interests. Even more than that, one could postulate that it is the interpretation of heroism and the way honour is measured that is one of the deeper dividing lines among both different groups and different municipalities in the region and one of the primary sources of socio-political friction.

Brothers forever

Not all memorials commemorate a particular historical event, as proved by the sculpture entitled 'Brothers forever' [*Zauvek braća*] that one can find in front of the Museum of Prijepolje. Based on a photograph taken in Prijepolje in 1919,[181] it shows a proud mother, Ružica, posing with her two sons, Luka Pejović and Alija Poturak, who are dressed in typical Serbian and Muslim dress respectively. Alija, who was born as Risto, is said to have converted for different reasons – some say it was to avoid prosecution for the transgressions committed due to his aggressive nature, others that he did it for love. The latter tell that Alija wished to marry a young Muslim girl and that the local *imam* approved it on condition that he accept Islam, which he did upon receiving a blessing from his

[181] Illustrations 8a and 8b in Appendix D.

mother. The creation of the sculpture was initiated and financed by Vlada Bogdanović, the nephew of the Sorbonne-educated lawyer from Prijepolje who took the original photograph. Bogdanović explains his motives as follows: 'The motive is intimate, somewhere in all of us. I believe this sculpture arouses the most beautiful emotions. I wanted to safeguard an authentic testimony, a part of our history. The descendants of these people live well, cooperate, respect and visit each other. They think of themselves as relatives, despite all the misfortunes and divisions' (Gagričić 2012). The Pejović and Poturak families confirm this: 'The descendants of our children should also know of our common roots and the *amanet*[182] of our great-grandmother Ružica, and that is love' (Bjelopoljac 2015). The sculpture was placed in front of the Museum with the approval of its director, and awaits a decision of the city council regarding its permanent location.

As many in Prijepolje told me, this photograph symbolizes what is most precious in this town – respect among people of different faiths. Though most monuments that promote brotherhood were erected by the Communists after World War II, the sculpture is unique in that it cannot be politically pinpointed with ease, though there were attempts to do so. For example, some find the sculpture controversial and tendentious, an indirect statement that Bosniaks are Serbs, but one that is 'even worse than usual since it is concealed by a veil of supposed promotion of love and tolerance', as one Bosniak politician told me. The Bosniak National Council led the protest against the sculpture, their reasons succinctly expressed in an open statement:

> The BNC expresses protest due to the illegal and illegitimate placement of the sculpture (...) which was preceded by the self-initiated decision of the director Slavoljub Pušica to have this provocative and grotesque memorial made and exhibited. The choice of this sculpture, forged according to a photograph with a recognisable anti-Bosniak and assimilating rhetoric, has created an unnecessary and provocative scandal which insults the dignity of Bosniaks and is a new attack on their national identity and ethnogenesis (my translation, Bošnjačko nacionalno vijeće 2013).

[182] An *amanet* can mean pledge, promise, last wish, a wish or possession left to another to honour.

However, while the sculpture in question does raise some eyebrows, most in the town agree that it is there for the better, not worse – to remind people of the importance of mutual cooperation. More than that, the maintenance of good relations and doing good for those of the other ethnicity in times of peace, but particularly during war or in those instances when doing so is increasingly difficult or superfluous, is seen as an obligation and an important source of honour to the individual who acts and, thus, his whole family. Whilst doing fieldwork, it emerged that this understanding of honour figures as one of the key values in interpersonal relations, understanding of the world and relationship to history, a standard against which everything else is judged. This concept of honour is much like the Montenegrin folk terms *čojstvo* and *junaštvo* that, taken together, are seen as the mark of a true hero. The terms are usually associated with Marko Miljanov, famed 19th century Montenegrin general and leader of the Kuči clan, who described them in his booklet on the Montenegrin code of honour, *Examples of čojstvo and junaštvo* [*Primjeri čojstva i junaštva*]. In it, he defines *junaštvo*, translated as courage or daring, as protecting the weak from others, and *čojstvo* as the act of protecting them from yourself. To be honourable, that is, to maintain a *čist obraz* (a clean cheek, in literal translation, elsewhere translated as esteem or face) is to practice both *čojstvo* and *junaštvo* at all times, since honour is a value above all others, including life, a principle often observed in Miljanov's work: '*Radije sam poginuti glavom, no obrazom*' [I would rather lose my head than my face]. Andrei Simić translates *čojstvo* as 'manliness' and interprets it as 'an abstraction carrying some of the impact of the Spanish word machismo but emphasizing male excellence through heroic deeds rather than sexual prowess' (Simić 1967: 84), while Duško Doder describes it as 'the ultimate standard of behaviour (which) involved the notions of uncompromising honesty, physical courage and honour' (Doder 1979). Elsewhere, the term is referred to as 'manly virtue' (Boehm 1983), while in domestic

literature it is often described as morality, humanity, nobility or spiritual and moral strength.

Therefore, *junaštvo* alone is not enough, for without its counterpart, *čojstvo,* it is just brute force. This conception of heroism was born out of centuries of fighting to stave off the Ottomans, who were never entirely successful in subjugating the Montenegrins thanks to the unwelcoming and impenetrable terrain, as well as the social organisation[183] of Montenegrin families and the premium placed on manly heroism, which were both exploited as defence mechanisms. In a 'refuge-area warrior society' (cf. Boehm 1983), where most of one's life was spent in plundering, revenge and battle, courage was raised to moral status only when it was conducted with a higher goal in mind, such as resistance to the Turks, in a noble way and in accordance with the principle of honour (Radović 1964).

In fact, the conditions of life forged a flexible understanding of the heroic morality, as evidenced by one of the most popular heroes of the South-Slavic oral tradition, Marko Kraljević [Prince Marko]. Marko's ethical profile is ambivalent – he is courageous and noble, but at the same time cunning, rash and spiteful (Pavićević and Simeunović-Patić 2005: 162). The hero is not judged in epic tales – on the contrary, the storyteller supports his 'strategic line of reasoning and essence of the heroic ethos' (my translation, Kostić, 2002: 381). Marko is redeemed for committing questionable acts thanks to his consistent struggle against the repression of a mighty enemy and his protection of those who are weak: 'his heart remains pure: fearless and noble, in God, and in treachery, vassalage and trickery' (my translation, Kostić 2002: 70). This remains possible even when he is driven by 'lesser' motives such as political pragmatism or a will to power because these are facts

[183] Families were organised into lineages, and some of these came together to form a *pleme*, as mentioned in Chapter 4, a territorial-administrativ unit bound by joint ownership of land and elements of military organisation and governance. Along with collective property, there was the *kuća* - the extended family and the principal unit of production.

of life experienced in one's own historical reality (ibid.: 376). This leniency is what permits the raising of one's status to the heroic, since, according to Kostić, the heroic character turns a blind eye to smaller and greater moral transgressions if they are in the service of the basic guiding imperative – in this case, being victorious over the repressive and wicked enemy. Marko Kraljević is thus the hero that emerged from the social context in which the people who told of his feats found themselves: the hero, like his people, is torn between *čojstvo* and *junaštvo* on the one hand, and their darker side to which everyday life drives them on the other – revenge and banditry (Dvorniković 1939: 545-547).

Such a moral framework formed the basis of identity and was, through tales of heroic feats of resistance by one's ancestors, passed down through the oral tradition (Boehm 1983: 41-42). While the religious divide, and as such, the socio-economic differentiation between peoples and protagonists is typically made clear in the South-Slavic oral tradition, in most the characters are differentiated principally on the basis of the extent of their heroism as defined by the heroic ethos. Contrary to the Mountain Wreath mentioned at the start of this Chapter, numerous epic songs told in or about different historical contexts distribute honour more evenly among their protagonists and demonstrate that interethnic relations were not perceived as strictly oppositional. For example, though rivals and divided by religion and social status, the heroes of the epic 'Đerzelez Alija and Vuk Jajčanin'[184] manage to find a mutually satisfactory solution because they are guided by the value of heroism that transcends both Islam and Orthodoxy. In this epic, the esteemed character of the Christian Vuk Jajčanin is built in opposition to his *pobratim* (blood-brother),[185] the

[184] The song was recorded from a storyteller in Gacko, a town in East Herzegovina, on the border with Montenegro.

[185] *Pobratimstvo,* or ritual brotherhood, is a form of fictive kinship entered into voluntarily, entailing the reciprocal obligations of aid and protection, as well as certain restrictions such as the obstacle to marriage between the brothers' kin. The ritual usually involved an exchange of blood, as a symbol of kinship and

Muslim *hajduk*-servant Husein – a man who, overtaken by passion for his master's wife, has 'become one' with plunder and murder. Jajčanin organises an attack on Sarajevo in order to honour the obligation he has to his *pobratim* Husein*,* but, when faced with the opportunity, he refuses to set fire to the tower of Alija Đerzelez, or to hurt Đerzelez's mother because, as he explains, 'she gave birth to a good hero'. Then, precisely because he is 'a good hero', Đerzelez is able to recognise that Jajčanin is honest and heroic in his deeds and as a consequence, spares his life. This is not to say that violence is not all-pervasive in the epic – a moment before sparing Jajčanin, Đerzelez slays Husein and his pregnant lover, and a moment after, enraged he kills the sister he had just rescued from Jajčanin, all because she dared to question the grandness of his heroism. Therefore, it is not mercy that guides the protagonists, but their particular understanding of heroism and honour.

Another illustration is given in the epic poem 'Marko Kraljević and Đerzelez Alija', as told by storyteller Murat Kurtagić from the town of Rožaje in northern Montenegro.[186] This poem speaks of the encounter of two great heroes of South-Slavic epic poetry, the Christian Marko Kraljević and Muslim Alija Đerzelez. In this particular song, Đerzelez is presented as a more mythical character – he is an unbeatable hero who travels with wild beasts across lands and mountains, he is just, humane and well-meaning (Džogović 2007: 21). On the other hand, the song portrays Kraljević in a more realistic light, in that he has human faults due to which a conflict among the two heroes arises in the first place (ibid.).

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honour, and a mutual pledge of faith further strengthened by the sharing of a meal (Bracewell 2016: 340). In literal translation, the vernacular reflexive verb *pobratimiti se* would be 'to become brothers with one another'. The equivalent in English could be blood-brotherhood, although anthropologists such as Bracewell prefer to use the term 'ritual brotherhood'. Usually, the relationship was entered into to consolidate an alliance or friendship, establish mutual protection or end a feud and the entailing obligations were understood as imperative, the failure to honour them a profound sin - regardless of religious affiliation (Brkić 1961: 56–58). For studies see Hammel 1968 and Stojanović 1977.

[186] The song was written down by Ljubiša Rajković as told by a storyteller and gusla-player Murat Kurtagić from Rožaje. For the text of this and other songs from Sandžak, see Rajković 2001.

However, because Kraljević resorts to heroic honesty when faced with the more powerful Đerzelez, and respectfully admits the superiority of his rival, Đerzelez too recognises the heroism of Marko Kraljević. As a result, instead of participating in a duel, Marko and Alija become and remain *pobratimi,* or blood-brothers. An interesting illustration of heroism is also provided by the epic and historical figure Hrelja Omućević who is in Serbian epics a Christian, known as Relja Krilatica (the Winged) and in Muslim epics known as Hrelja of Pazar [referring to Novi Pazar]. One of the many songs that recounts his feats, 'Death of Hrelja of Pazar' [*Smrt Hrelje od Pazara*], tells the story of three *pobratimi* – Hrelja, Kraljević Marko and Musa Ćesardžija. It opens with an image of their mothers discussing whose son is the greatest hero, a question that is then solved by Kraljević Marko who announces that Hrelja heroically died saving the lives of his *pobratimi* in their joint battle against the Arabs (Hodžić 1979: 101-104).

Pobratimstvo or ritual brotherhood, though typically contracted between members of the same sex or religion, often crossed these boundaries using the language of kinship and, in patriarchal societies dominated by religious differences, allowed what were otherwise understood as 'impossible relationships' (Bracewell 2016: 343). The principal reason ritual brotherhood could exist in such a form was not just that its participants were guided by pragmatism, but also because that they shared the moral imperatives of honour and heroism – they were united both by common interests and a common culture (Lory 1997). In such a way, ritual brotherhood 'eroded down the concept of separate confessional identities, and admitted one's enemy's capacity for faith' (Bracewell 2016: 345). However, Bracewell warns against taking a too indulgent view of interethnic ritual brotherhood and the values of heroism, honour and the masculinity it affirms as a force for peace and social cohesion – *pobratimstvo* also facilitated disorder, violence, plunder and conflict and allowed outlaws and frontiersmen to disregard the forces of state law at the expense of the

rest of the population (ibid.: 352-3).

Regardless of the view one takes of the social phenomenon of ritual brotherhood between members of different confessions, its prevalence as a theme in epic songs points us towards a more nuanced understanding of honour and interethnic relations in times past. As Wendy Bracewell demonstrated in her analysis of ritual brotherhood across the military frontier of the Eastern Adriatic hinterland (the Krajina), the presence of this theme in epics of the region indicates that links and relationships which cut across religious boundaries captured the popular imagination to a great extent (ibid.: 347). Thus, as we have seen above and as examples in subsequent sections of this Chapter will show, epics and stories recorded in and around the area of the Novipazar sancak frequently grapple with the theme of interethnic bonds and the corresponding ambiguities of interest and affection – be they friendship, marriage, or *pobratimstvo.*

The epic tradition today

The regional boundaries of Bosniak epics are marked by two antipodes – the Lika-Krajina cycle and the Montenegrin-Herzegovina cycle (Buturović 1992). As the populations migrated, following the shifting border of the Ottoman Empire, they carried their traditions with them to new lands. This phenomenon was particularly widespread on the territory around the Montenegrin border, resulting in 'intense intertwining of the spiritual expression of several peoples [nations] on a small territory' (Bašić 1991: 10). As a result, numerous songs that could be characterised as belonging to the Lika-Krajina type[187] have been recorded in Montenegro and the territory of the Novipazar sancak. However, although they often speak of the same events or heroes, in content they came to differ

[187] In the region these songs are also known as the *krajišnica.*

greatly after having been performed by numerous generations of storytellers in a new context (Bašić 2005: 72).[188] For example, while the epic songs of Bosniaks from the territory of modern-day BiH tell of battles waged on the Krajina and the Dalmatian coast, the Sandžak epics describe the wars and duels of well-known Muslim heroes with various Montenegrin, Albanian and Serbian heroes and families of the region. Like other South-Slavic epics, these are also characterised by a respect for one's rival and the predominance of the heroic ethos (Bašić 2005: 75), they laud courage, humanity and the defence of those who are poor and weak (Azemović 2005: 122). With a strong presence of religious motives and the universal theme of the fight between good and evil, earthly and heavenly forces, their moral is that God is on the side of those who are just (ibid.: 125).

According to Redžep Škrijelj, the migration of people from the Montenegrin parts of Old Herzegovina, especially those from Nikšić and Kolašin, to the the Novipazar sancak had a decisive influence on the *epic* tradition and this cult of *čojstvo* and *junaštvo* in the region (2005: 152). In an interview conducted in 1999, renowned regional storyteller Murat Kurtagić from Rožaje defined a true epic hero as one 'who will never attack, let alone kill another without reason. If he is to do so, it is because he is forced by trouble and oppression - if a member of his family was killed, robbed, abducted, his house burnt, if he is deprived of his freedom, if he is protecting his doorstep...if one commits evil and violence without a motive, if one does not respect wisdom, empathy, humanity, then the audience does not accept such a song and such a hero.' (my translation, Azemović 2005: 126). Harvard ethnomusicologists Milman Parry and Albert Bates Lord[189] observed a

[188] For a systematic comparison of Muslim South-Slavic songs from different regions see Rajković 1988.
[189] Milman Parry and Albert Bates Lord recorded oral literature in the region while conducting research in Yugoslavia from 1933-35. Lord carried on the fieldwork in the 1950s and 1960s. Their collected works can be found in the Milman Parry Collection at the University of Harvard which is today the 'largest single repository of South Slavic heroic song in the world' (Harvard Library 2017).

similar moral overtone in the songs of famous *guslar*[190] Avdo Međedović, whose technique they compared to that of Homer. Also known as the 'singer of tales' from Bijelo Polje (Lord 2000), Međedović sang of the glories of the Turkish Empire at its height during the rule of Suleiman the Magnificent, particularly emphasising the dedication, morality and honour of Bosnian heroes who fought under its flag (Lord 1991: 60), relating them 'to the basic epic theme of the divine, or divinely inspired, hero who is a saviour of mankind' (Lord 1991: 67).

It was during fieldwork in northern Montenegro and later in and around Novi Pazar that Milman Parry found evidence of the Homeric tradition in South-Slavic epics (Čolović 2005: 44-5). Lauded as a particularly talented storyteller by the two researchers, Avdo Međedović was not an exception to the rule and his example illustrates how widespread *gusle* playing was in the region in the first half of the 20th century. Međedović stemmed from a tradition that had been carried across many generations and passed on by skilled singers - without it Međedović would not have had the materials for his songs, and without them he would not have had anyone to learn his art from (Lord 1991: 67).[191] Therefore, both the number, quality and variety of songs recorded in the 20th century,[192] as well as numerous testimonies[193] indicate that *gusle* storytelling was popular among both Serbs and Bosniaks in the region until relatively recently. However, although the oral tradition of

[190] *Guslar* – an individual who tells stories in verse whilst playing the gusle

[191] For example, Međedović inherited his skill primarily from his father, who was, in turn, influenced by Čor Huso, a regionally renown *guslar* from the Montenegrin town of Kolašin. As Lord and Parry found, Ćor Huso was well known in a larger area spanning from Bijelo Polje to Novi Pazar, inspiring and passing on his songs to many other storytellers.

[192] For more on the oral tradition of the region, see Bašić 1991, Bašić 2003, Čolaković and Čolaković 2004, Lord 1991, Lord 2000, Medenica 1974, Murko 1951, Rajković 2001, Šmaus 1938, and the periodical Almanah, published in Podgorica by Udruženje Almanah.

[193] Ragip Sijarić, a collector of epic poems, illustrated the importance of gusle in the region in the following way: 'Don't ask for gusle in the Sandžak, because almost every house has one and keeps it as an amulet and relic. They are kept in an honourable place, next to shelves with the *mush'af* and other holy and old books' (Džogović 2005: 130).

Bosniaks is prolific,[194] it is performed less frequently among them today due to the fact that epic poetry is typically accompanied by the *gusle.* The status of both significantly deteriorated among this ethno-national group at the end of the 20th century as a result of their emphasised use in Serb war propaganda.[195] Many Bosniak informants from the younger generation have an aversion to *gusle* and epic poetry because they associate it with Serbian nationalism and often admit to lacking knowledge of the Bosniak oral tradition. This state of affairs is exacerbated by the current school program in Serbia which focuses predominantly on the Serbian oral tradition.

Though at first glance it may seem that today the epic tradition no longer resonates with the contemporary citizens of the region, the situation is quite the opposite. As we have seen above, oral literature was a popular form of storytelling in and around the region until comparatively late and this is largely due to to the low levels of literacy that persisted in the region until the first half 20th century,[196] as well at the slow rise of radio and television to status of household staple, particularly in rural areas.[197] According to historian Dubravka Ugrešić, one significant impact of epic songs has been to make historical and current events known to an illiterate population, as a result of which she has called the phenomenon 'gusle journalism' (1994: 35). Gusle storytellers, thus, not only sing about heroes from the distant past, but their role is also to spread news and provide a moral for current events. However, as certain topics emerge over others, through systematic

[194] See Buturović 1992, 1995, Buturović and Maglaljić 1998, Lord 1990, Hörmann 1996 for collections and analysis.
[195] For more on the political use and abuse of gusle, see Čolović 2002).
[196] For example, in 1931, only 21.35% of people in Sandžak were literate, and 7.67% of all women (Bondžić 2010: 92). In 1941, 76.4% of the population of Sandžak was illiterate (92% of women), and in some areas, such as Tutin, this number was close to 90% (Gološ 2002: 105). By 1961 the illiteracy rate had drastically fallen – 31% for the six municipalities of SWS, although women still made up the majority (75% of the total number of those illiterate), and these numbers were significantly higher in rural areas (SZS 1965: 4-5).
[197] Even by the 1980s the region of SWS was lagging behind the rest of the Republic in this regard. For example, while the republic averages for number of radio and television subscribers per 100 people were 20 and 17 in 1983, and in Belgrade as high as 29 and 27, the average for the municipalities of SWS were 9 and 7. Tutin had the lowest recorded numbers – 3 and 2, followed by Sjenica – 6 and 5 (RZS 1984: 380-383).

repetitions and retellings over years and generations, they undergo mythologisation. In line with this, Ugrešić has observed that gusle storytelling is, then, more than 'journalism', it is 'collective remembrance reduced to sound' (Ugrešić 1994: 13). Consequently, though some topics of gusla songs continue to remain significant long after the event they described took place, others change with the times – after WWII one could find epics about battles waged by the Yugoslav national army and Yugoslav national heroes, the successes of communist post-war modernization, but also the boxing triumphs of Muhammad Ali and others the singers and their audiences looked up to. During the disintegration of the Yugoslav federation, however, the violent wars provided a plethora of material to sing about, and the specific allegorical and symbolic form of gusla storytelling made it a useful instrument in the hands of the political elites for political mobilisation and national homogenisation.[198]

Today the epic tradition is reproduced through the educational system within which students study and analyse the major works of national epic poetry, the media, which sometimes interprets current political events in mythical and epic terms,[199] and is fortified by the everyday use of sayings that stem directly from the epic tradition. Furthermore, the body of epic poetry expands every day – it is not a static field in which the epics of yesteryear are retold, but a space of much creativity. The epic tradition has been cultivated by numerous cultural societies, singers, poets and storytellers throughout the former Yugoslavia, in particular by Serbs and Montenegrins, but also by Bosniaks. The wars of the 1990s and the breakup of Yugoslavia have inspired numerous new poems, and though

[198] In his research on the political uses of folk tradition in 1990s Serbia, anthropologst Slobodan Naumović observed the prevalence of three elements in particular, all of which relied on the epic tradition – the use of the traditional verse form in contemporary political slogans, the modification of epic poems to suit current needs, and especially the use of the Kosovo epic and the identification of its central characters with contemporary 'saviors' (2009: 144).

[199] A recent example is provided by a wtiness testimony of how Sjenica-born sergeant Ivan Vasojević led twelve soldiers of the Serbian army into battle against a more numerous unit of the Kosovo Liberation Army. The tabloids all likened Vasojević to Miloš Obilić, a hero of epics on the Kosovo battle and presented the story in mythical terms. For an illustration see Kurir 2017.

these are by no means a part of the mainstream, they do have a large audience. Even though the *gusle* have as of recently fallen out of favour among young Bosniaks, that is not to say that the values expressed in the stories the instrument accompanied have likewise vanished. In the following sections, I will present some contemporary examples of heroism and perceptions of honour which echo the heroic ethos and understanding of honour of the oral tradition.

The everyday hero

In *Land without Justice* (1958), Milovan Djilas describes his own experience of growing up in the system Boehm described as a refuge-area warrior society (1983): 'The story of any Montenegrin family is made up of traditions about the lives of ancestors who distinguished themselves in some special way, most frequently through heroism. These traditions reach back into the remote past, to legendary founders of clan and tribe. And since there are no unheroic tribes and clans, particularly in the eyes of their members, there is no family without its renowned heroes and leaders' (1958: 3-4). Consequentially, one is indebted to one's ancestors and must follow in their footsteps. As Simić points out:

> The concept of honour (*čast*) and self-esteem (*obraz*) is the expressed collective responsibility of every member of the clan or family and depends not only upon his actions but also those of his ancestors and descendants (...) The collective and individualistic components of the heroic milieu are in delicate balance. The individual is completely immersed in his kinship group and he cannot ignore their opinion or reputation. (1967: 89)

According to a local politician I spoke to, asking people of the area about their family origins would produce uniform results - everyone would start their story in some undefined moment in the distant past, and it would always commence with three brothers who for this or that reason had to start their own lineages and would then end up where they are now. The gaps, he said, would be filled with imagination – the earliest ancestors

would often be presumed to be significant historical figures[200] and the events leading to the present-day would have demonstrated the honour and courage of the family. Though this is an exaggeration, many of my informants' stories did follow a similar narrative and were based on common themes. Similarly, after conducting field interviews about family histories in Novi Pazar, Peter McMurrey observed that most are characterised by three key themes (2005). The first is the religious theme, among Bosniaks typically the historical moment in which the family accepted Islam, and among Serbs and atheists accounts of their family's cultural traditions, among which most were religious in character (eg. *krsna slava*). The second theme was that of migrations – the story of how and why the family arrived at its current location, with frequent references to local and natural landmarks. Finally, the third theme was related to community, expressed in referrals to the neighbourhood as a community of kin (McMurray 2005: 135-136). These stories of a family's past are culturally and temporally mediated and serve as a way for the members of a family group to 'speak to themselves about themselves' in the present moment (cf. Rosaldo 1980). The retelling of these stories, particularly at family gatherings and in family history publications such as those described in Chapter 4, plays a crucial part in the concretion of identity and serve as a charter for action (Assmann 1995: 128-9), especially so in the uncertainty of contemporary times.

The way in which family heritage provided a sense of direction and served as a source of pride was recounted to me by many in Southwest Serbia, such as a man from Prijepolje in his forties who indicated that it is the family name that distinguishes a person, rather than religious or national affiliation:

[200] Some examples of notable ancestors that I came accross during interviews included Karađorđe, Hasan-agha Arapović immortalised in the Hasanaginica ballad, members of the Nemanjić dynasty, Husein-beg Gradaščević, and socialist activist and literary critic, Svetozar Marković.

> My first and last names are very important to me, because I want someone to know me through my family name, not through my nationality. (…) You can be of any faith, but it is important that your name identifies you, your roots, your family. My family has good roots, so who am I to change that in the opposite direction? If ten generations worked and walked on a beaten path, who am I to change that?

In the contemporary everyday context, however, where one does not have much opportunity to demonstrate sacrifice and heroism, this translates into public demonstrations of generosity and pride (Simić 1969: 91). In his ethnography of the Yugoslav male image, Simić pointed out that the typical Yugoslav demonstrated his manliness by becoming a cafe-hero, a role with clearly defined obligations through which a man could exhibit his generosity, independence and lack of concern for petty details. Simić observed that, because cash is a scarce commodity in Yugoslavia, being overly generous, almost reckless with it is a symbol of status – as a result, a cafe-hero is distinguished, among other things, by spending a month's worth of wages on a night of drinking and singing with his entourage (Simić 1969: 97). Though the concept of the cafe-hero still resonates in Southwest Serbia, being merry in the *kafana* is not the only occasion when one can prove his worth – unlike in Simić's ethnography of Yugoslavia, in Southwest Serbia it is in relations with the Other in particular that one's intrinsic value is revealed.

On one occasion, while I was conducting interviews using the National Identity questionnaire described in Chapter 4, I found myself in the mountain village of Kaćevo together with a Serbian historian. We came with a specific interviewee in mind and at the recommendation of a local geography teacher. While looking for his house, we encountered the ranger's dwellings, where he and his wife greeted us. We opted for a change of plan, and although initially discouraged by the word 'interview', linking it to the media, after a few minutes of persuasion the ranger agreed to be interviewed. Just as we were about to finish, a car arrived and two men, entrepreneurs, came out to greet us. When

I suggested we do a group interview, they obliged, even though it was clear they were in a hurry. The ranger joined in the persuasion – having gone through the questions, he expected to be entertained by the answers of his two acquaintances and while laughing quipped: 'Come on, you will enjoy the interview! I am especially keen to hear who is your favourite Bosniak!' The 'quick interview' turned into a group debate that lasted over two hours, during which the conversation veered in numerous directions. An anecdote told by one of the men, after the official part of the interview was over, is illustrative:

> I bought a house from [Marko Petrović].[201] My wife wanted to live in that part of town. And Marko tells me – [a number]. We negotiate (...) and shake hands. In the few days we were negotiating, people told me that Marko had been previously offering the house for [two thirds of the agreed price]. 'That is a lot of money for Prijepolje', they said. Why did I do it? One reason was that I had made a lot of money, and I was afraid I would succumb to temptation, gamble it away, or spend it in some other way, whereas I wanted to leave something to my children while I still could. A second reason that played a great role was the death of my brother, who was the greatest man I had ever known. When I came to Marko, I found out about something that had happened to him – his son died young and left behind him a wife and children. That really got to me. So, I knew that he had been trying to sell for much less, but I did not want to 'shoot' for that, because he also justified his price to me. He said: 'I want to secure a roof over my head in Belgrade, yes, but I also want to give my daughter-in-law and the children a small apartment as a gift from their father.' And I paid it. Some say I was acting like Santa Claus, but I am proud of that. Maybe I am crazy. When [states name] died, everyone went to the funeral, and Marko's wife, Ivana, and his daughter came up to me and said, 'Every dinar you have given us has been *halal*.[202] We now have a home, and we also bought our daughter-in-law an apartment, and even had some money left over, and may the house you bought be *halal* to you.'

The Serb[203] who had been listening to this story explained its twists to me: 'If a Serb asks a Muslim for help, it would have to be something really difficult for the latter not to oblige. But if a Muslim asks a Muslim, well, maybe he won't help out. But if a Serb asks, he will go out of his way to help, and vice versa. A Serb will do all in his power to honour the favour to a Muslim – because these are our neighbours. You do not need to help another Serb, he is *yours,* and you are not doing him a favour per se. However, if a Muslim comes

[201] Names have been changed to protect the anonymity of informants.
[202] *Halal* in Islam refers to what is permissible according to Muslim religious customs. In everyday conversation in Southwest Serbia and BiH, it is also used to indicate good fortune and benefit
[203] In Kaćevo I conducted a group interview with two Bosniak enterpreneurs, while the ranger, also Bosniak, was an observer whom I had interviewed prior to their arrival. The Serb historian was absent during the interviews, however, since the conversation continued long after these were over, he participated in this particular discussion.

to me and asks me for help, then I have a special obligation, I cannot leave him hanging. We [Serbs and Bosniaks] function in the same way in this sense'. Another Bosniak, who was present, agreed: 'I do not know if it was as hard for my ancestors as it is for me to be Bosniak and Muslim where I should be, in my town. My town is the most contradictory in the world. People of the other faith will do so much for you, give you so much that you would be surprised. At the same time, people of your own faith will take from you more than you could imagine.'

As Herzfeld argues, honour is the ability to recognize one's social obligations (1987: 80). That an understanding of honour illustrated in the statements above is an important component of inter-ethnic relations and one that is frequently referred to is something I encountered on a daily basis in Southwest Serbia, in everyday conversations as much as in political and historical discussions. On one unusually hot summer day in Sjenica, I walked in on two old friends in the midst of an animated discussion over coffee on the porch of the family home of one of them. One, an award-winning amateur actor by hobby, is a devout Muslim and Bosniak, the other an artist and sculptor. The former had invited me to come along and meet his friend – since I was investigating cultural activity in Sjenica at the time, he thought I would be interested in his friend's activities and what he had to say. After the introductions, they continued the discussion I had interrupted, kindly familiarizing me with the issue at hand:

> The local school was once located in the courtyard of Sjenica's church, but in 1943 or so it was destroyed by bombing. There used to be a well there and everyone would use it, children would gather around it… So my neighbours and I made an initiative to renovate the well – the priests were against it initially, but we got organised, collected donations and got to it. We wished it to be without religious symbolism – it is in the courtyard of the church already – we simply wanted a place where we can gather and drink fresh water, without sitting 'beneath a cross or moon' – that is what I told people when I was doing fundraising. At the time I also had the idea that a particularly dedicated [Muslim] neighbour, who is generally a great humanitarian, should be given a *gramata*[204] by the Mileševa eparchy as a

[204] An official document with which one expresses gratitude.

> sign of gratitude and honour for his donations. Look, perhaps he won't put it up on his wall, but he will keep it safe somewhere. You never know what sorts of times are coming, so maybe, one day, they [his heirs] will take it out and say: 'Look at this that my grandfather received, what an honourable and great man he was'.
>
> However, one other [Orthodox] neighbour made an alliance with a priest of the church and got in on it – before that he did not really pull his weight. Well, he told the priest that he had organised the whole thing with the well by himself, and so he took the *gramata*. Now they want to put a cross on the well's cupola, and I am ashamed because it seems like I was saying one thing and doing another thing.

They concluded:

> All of a sudden a new sort of people have appeared here. They cross themselves and pray [*klanjaju*] *differently* [informant's emphasis]. I own both the Bible and the Quran, I have read both, but I did not find that it was written in either that you should hate the other. Back in the day we knew our etiquette. 'If you see that your Muslim neighbour is praying, or you know that it's the time of day for prayers, then don't bother her', my mother used to tell me when I was a child. Now it seems as if people have no sense of these things anymore, or they choose to disregard them on purpose.

The mixed ethnic group composition of the interlocutors certainly had an effect on the flow of the conversations depicted above and the social communication strategies deployed. For example, this may have influenced the anecdotes and stories the participants chose to tell, and may well have induced them to embellish or exaggerate. At the same time, however, there are limits to enhancements in a group setting since the towns the participants came from are small communities, as a result of which they know (of) each other, and word travels fast. Notwithstanding, the composure and words uttered in the examples above do not bring into question but in fact confirm the heightened value assigned to cross-ethnic support. The conclusions that were drawn in the conversations are in line with further findings about friendships, which will be illustrated below, but more than that – the very fact that all those involved in the conversation readily confirmed and illustrated both to me and their interlocutors that they without a doubt ascribe to and have experienced the phenomenon of cross-ethnic support indicates the value and the honour assigned to it in these communities.

Robert Hayden theorises that coexistence is not necessarily evidence that pluralism is

positively valued in a community, since it can conceal inter-group competition. In those social contexts, says Hayden, in which groups have no choice but to coexist with each other, tolerance is often manifested in a negative way, that is, as non-interference out of the necessity of accommodating oneself to an unchangeable situation (2002). Such a situation is illustrated by the sharing of physical space that, nevertheless, goes hand in hand with social segregation and separation. As an example, Hayden points to the *komšiluk*[205] ('neighbourhood', from Turkish) as the institution which regulated the relationship between members of different groups who by chance had to live in proximity, establishing 'clear obligations of reciprocity', but also prohibiting intermarriage (Hayden 2002). For Hayden, as for Bougarel (1996: 81–88), this is an indication that the groups in question are in a structural opposition, and that a relationship established in the *komšiluk* is the result of necessity and is therefore 'antithetical to one based on intimacy'. However, as the above examples illustrate, between passive non-interference and intermarriage lies an entire spectrum of human interaction.

Furthermore, there have been numerous studies critical of the aforementioned understanding of the *komšiluk* as exclusively regulating relationships between members of different (ethno-national) communities or groups (cf. Henig 2012, Jansen 2007a, Sorabji 2008). As Sorabji pointed out, 'the *komšiluk* is not understood that way at the grassroots level' (2008: 100), Rather, the *komšiluk* refers to neighbourly relations and the physical environment of the neighbourhood whose boundaries are, in part, defined subjectively. In a wider sense, it is like the British English use of the word 'home' in that it implies a moral context with a positive connotation, even though neighbourly relations are at times enjoyed, and at other times may be sources of irritation (ibid.:107). In a similar vein,

[205] Neighbourhood-derived metaphors have figured prominently in descriptions of BiH in particular, and in some explanations of its descent into a violent war. For examples of different approaches to the *komšiluk* see Bougarel 1996, Bringa 1993, 1995, Donia and Fine 1994, Halpern and Kideckel 2000, Hayden 2002, 2007, Henig 2012, Pouligny 2002, Sorabji 2008.

Honig argues that the *komšiluk* is an 'ethnically indifferent regime of morality and sociality' in that it linked people who lived in proximity, and who may or may not have belonged to different ethnicities or any other group-like entity (2012: 16). As we saw in Peter McMurray's remarks above, and as my own research has indicated, the understanding of the *komšiluk* in the region is related to the idea of interpersonal relations within a community, typically a community of households, and in many areas where a *komšiluk* is inhabited by people sharing the same last name, as a community of kin. What is important to stress is that the while the *komšiluk* 'entails both the moral imagination and social pragmatics of the everyday rhythms of life' (Henig 2012: 13), it is not enacted nor functions in a uniform way across the region – these depend on the particular neighbourhood, its history, rural/urban location, social and ethnic makeup, the present context and other factors.

In a similar vein, intermarriage, taken as a measure of tolerance in a society, is a symbol not so much of positive tolerance between groups but of the *blurring* of group lines. As Rogers Brubaker stated, individuals are not determined solely on the basis of their membership in ethnic groups – they belong to numerous and varied other social groups, rendering their identities layered, and these layers allow them to form relationships on non-ethnic foundations. The institution of ritual brotherhood which was discussed above demonstrates that this was as much the case in the past, as contemporary inter-ethnic friendships are illustrative of this point in the present. An intimate link between two individuals, friendships act as an indicator of inter-ethnic tolerance when they are formed across group lines. In addition, as I have found, it is precisely interethnic friendships that are brought up when informants are asked about the state of interethnic relations, and cultivating them is seen as contributing to an individual's value. That this value has been preserved in the oral tradition first became clear to me on the same day I was in the village

of Kaćevo, after the interviews were over and the two Bosniak entrepreneurs had left. Just as my colleague and I were finishing our coffee at the ranger's house, the car of the two men came back up, and one of them rushed out, and while still standing said:

> Look, I had to come back to tell you one last thing. Some time ago I went to Montenegro to buy a car from a Serbian guy. He seemed a decent guy, we made a deal, and as we were saying goodbye he took out a CD and told me: 'Here is a gift for you, you can listen to it on your way back to Prijepolje'. I looked down and saw that it was a CD of *gusla* songs. I said thanks, but I was puzzled. Was he trying to insult me by giving me such music, I wondered, and why? All Serbian *gusla* songs are about the *poturica*, the Turk enemy...I was fuming. I decided to listen to the CD anyway, and I am glad I did! The story the CD told is 'A word not betrayed' [*Nepogažena riječ*]. And it is about my *pleme*. About the unlikely relationship, friendship and *pobratimstvo* of an ancestor of mine, an Ottoman captain, and a Montenegrin rebel, about their honour and heroism. By the time I was halfway through, tears were coming down my face.

Not only are friendly relations seen as a virtue by those involved, they are also often jokingly described in a mischievous tone as a subversion of the dominant political narratives that seek to reduce the space of permitted social interaction. In addition, true friends, it appears, are distinguished precisely by their ability to jokingly question the other's origins and honour, as these two friends demonstrate:

> F1: I tell him, real Slavs are Muslim, Bosniak, however you wish to call it, because it was not possible to conduct the first wedding night with their wives. And so I tease him, because he is dark, I tell him – aha, some *bey*[206] must have ambushed your great-grandmother! If you were a Slav, you would be blonde like me!
>
> F2: I say, 'Oh you Turks, if you are prepared to cut off your own heads [referring to the practice of circumcision], then how can I expect you not to do the same to me?' [laughing].

A young woman from Sjenica described how she sometimes challenges others' presuppositions through practical jokes: 'My best friend's name is Anida,[207] and I really love to tease people and tell them that we are cousins. I say to them, yes, Anči[208] is my relative, that's why we are so close. And she often calls me Sanči, not Sanja. People get

[206] Term for an Ottoman lord or chieftain.
[207] Names have been changed to preserve anonymity.
[208] Anči is a nickname for a name that traditionally could be either Serb or Bosniak, whereas Sanida is a typical Muslim name.

really puzzled, and we laugh about it. She has always been there for me; she truly is like my own.'

Longstanding friendships are often invoked with pride by informants telling stories of how they have persisted in the face of war taking place just kilometres away, war crimes occurring within communities, the aggressive propaganda of the 1990s and the rise of ethno-nationalist politics. Often, it is precisely the humorous and light-hearted attitude between friends that many say helped them endure the difficult times. A Muslim from Priboj described the atmosphere in the 1990s:

> Marko[209] and I were friends also back then, and we worked and spent time together during those times. But, it was not pleasant when you saw the soldiers passing in the street (…) or you went to bed and fell asleep to the sounds of cannon on Goražde.[210] Then you listen to the media, bad though they were, and they say: 'The Green Berets[211] will attack Priboj tomorrow'. A large number of people left Priboj because of this. Sometimes we would sit in the pub and we would start cursing at each other, insulting each other's Serbian and Turkish mother [jokingly], and everyone would run out of the pub in fear. (…) Marko almost lost the head on his shoulders one time, he almost got killed in Rudo [Bosnian municipality near the Serbian border]. He was mucking about; he didn't understand that a war was happening. He kept digging [as an archaeologist] even during the height of the war. One time they came, stopped and searched them, and they found a child's binoculars, which they confiscated. Afterwards, what a fool he was, he went to get the binoculars back, and we almost lost him. I am giving you a small illustration of the times. One time, for example, I was on my way to Užice. The train was late. What happened? Some passengers were kidnapped in Štrpci, we are told. Regardless, the next train arrived, and I went to Užice. In those moments you don't know if you are crazy or brave, we were all somewhere between those two poles. We were sitting in the pub and at one moment they began to bomb the electricity relay in the new part of town. And I would start telling a story, how I was expecting this because, according to legend, Mehmet II Fatih conquered Priboj on the 29th of May, and today is that day, and the West knows this. Everyone begins to groan and curse me. That little bridge over there, the insignificant one that leads to the hotel [points to a footbridge several meters long] – during the war we would all sit in this pub, and our rationale to be there all day was that we were 'guarding the bridge' [laughs]. It was this spirit that kept us going, and I think this spirit still exists in Priboj today.

Another man from Priboj said that it was his friends more than anything else that helped him overcome negative emotions and stay in Priboj:

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[209] Names have been changed to protect anonymity.

[210] Goražde is a municipality on the Bosnian-Serbian border that was one of the six Bosniak enclaves in the area besieged by the Bosnian Serb Army during the Bosnian War. From 1993 it became a United Nations Safe Area..

[211] The Green Berets were a Bosniak paramilitary organization later integrated into the Army of the Republic of BiH once it was founded.

> You don't feel the extremes on a daily basis, but when an extreme situation occurs, then it all comes out, even more so when you have a minority nation in such a situation – like during the war in Bosnia. I was saved in part by my friends – [names friends of different backgrounds], it was thanks to them. As we say, *plaha vremena za pogana insana*[212] – when bad times come around, bad people come to the fore, but they don't last long. The situation was very ugly in Priboj during the war years, but thanks to good people we overcame all this and we forgot.

The impact of the war on interethnic relations, however, differs greatly not just from municipality to municipality, but from village to village. While one may expect that physical closeness to the territories where the conflict was raging may have had a greater impact on the erosion of trust, informants' testimonies state otherwise, signifying that the historical heritage of how the community reacted to conflict and the experience of interethnic relations is a more significant factor, as well as the extent to which a settlement is historically inhabited by communities of different ethnicities, allowing for personal experience and exchange practices in various everyday contexts. The World War II story of Sjenica is illustrative in this regard.

As soon as German forces entered Sjenica after the capitulation of Serbia in April 1941, local armed groups began to operate throughout the area. A mosaic of small Chetnik formations arose in Serbian villages, while Muslim militia formed in those villages with predominant Muslim populations. The murder of seven Muslims from the village of Kladnica by Chetnik forces in May 1941 spurred fear among the Muslim population of the Sjenica municipality, while a plea by a Muslim delegation to Ustasha representatives to incorporate Sjenica into the Independent State of Croatia caused great concern among the Serbian population (Ćuković 1964: 131). An attack by Montenegrin forces consisting of both Partisans and Chetniks from the direction of Bijelo Polje escalated into an interethnic conflict with Muslim forces supported by Ustasha gendarmerie (ibid.: 134). This chaotic situation induced the leading local notables, led by the highly regarded merchant Hasan-

[212] This is a Bosnian saying meaning 'A good time for bad men'

aga Zvizdić, to form an interethnic council under German acquiescence, with the primary goal of defending Sjenica, maintaining law and order and preventing interethnic conflicts. Furthermore, the council formed its own interethnic militia that, thanks to the good reputation of its leaders, established relations with village leaders across the municipality.[213] The good relations led to the departure of most Chetnik forces as well as of two Ustasha platoons, and in some places at least to the lifting of tensions. When the Partisan army wanted to take Sjenica in December 1941, however, the interethnic council was unanimous in the opinion not to allow this and pleaded with the Partisans to give up the idea. They foresaw that Partisan control over the town would be short-lived, what with the presence of Italian and German tanks nearby, which would, in turn, rouse the Chetniks to attack too, resulting in grave consequences for the town of Sjenica and its inhabitants (Živković 2011: 268).[214] Though the Partisans ignored this plea and attacked on the 22nd of December, 1941, they suffered defeat. It was only three years later, on the 12th of December 1944, that they succeeded in taking the town. The local elementary school in Sjenica is named after this date, as is one of the city's main streets.

As a result, while the inhabitants of Kladnica, a Muslim village on the outskirts of Sjenica, express a strong distrust of Serbs, the situation is quite the opposite in Gonje, a historically multi-ethnic village, and is varied in the town of Sjenica itself. When describing interethnic relations in a positive way, informants would often cite examples of mutual aid in tough times as evidence for their claims and would clearly indicate the value they themselves placed on collaboration across ethnic lines. In addition, the way individuals explain what heroism is and discuss who and why they consider something heroic is

[213] For more information on the Council of Sjenica, see Živković 2011 and Vrcić 2005.
[214] According to documents of the Commission for Establishing War Crimes of the Occupier and their Collaborators in the Archives of Yugoslavia, this was just an excuse for the public, whereas Zvizdić's real motive to reject cooperation with the Partisans lay in the lucrative cattle-supplying contract he had with the German and Italian forces (Živkovič 2011: 268).

illustrative in this regard. For example, a young Serbian man from Gonje told me this with regard to interethnic relations:

> Hasan-aga Zvizdić is one of the most significant Bosniaks from this region. He was the guardian of the city of Sjenica, and he didn't differentiate people on the basis of nation. He formed a Muslim militia, but it was also made up of a select number of Orthodox in whom they had great trust. If it were not for him, Sjenica would have experienced a massacre at the hands of the Partisans, the Chetniks… his only affiliation was to his town; nothing else interested him.

This, and other examples from this chapter, illustrate both the historical and contemporary significance of the value of heroism and honour in the region, as well as its presence and significance in the choices actors make and the ways they interpret the choices of others. While religious, political and other divisions separate the inhabitants of the region, at the same time common values draw them together, shaping their thoughts, hopes and actions. Though actors are not separate from the socio-political context, they are not prisoners of the context either. The examples given in this section, both from the present and the past, illustrate that the differences between individuals and groups in the region could cause tension, but that the boundary set by the differences could and still can be crossed. Actors in the region share numerous commonalities and depending on the possibilities provided by context, these can come to the fore in friendships or be put into play in an effort to foster a whole range of desirable outcomes – coexistence being one of them.

Chapter 6 - Cultural activity in Sjenica: resistance to power and individual expression

Those who sing mean no harm.[215]

When one mentions the words 'culture' and 'Sjenica' in the same sentence, one is typically met with cynicism and scorn, both from those born in Sjenica and those who were not, due to the prevailing emphasis on the area's geographical remoteness and perceived cultural marginalisation. For those who look in on Sjenica from the outside, this is perhaps due to the fact that travelling there is experienced as an endeavour and a passage to another realm of existence, where time has slowed down, as evidenced by the winding and inaccessible roads shrouded in a fog that emerges as soon as one starts climbing up towards the unwelcoming terrain and harsh climate. That the 'crude highlanders' (*gorštaci*), as those who have been born and raised on such land are referred to, could be capable of refined achievements seems a stretch for many who do not know them.

However, just a scratch on the surface of daily activity uncovers a history of rich extracurricular activity and artistic expression in the form of both individual and group initiatives. Those who were or are part of it speak of 'culture' in Sjenica with pride, always justified with evidence – awards, diplomas, invitations, photographs, video and book appearances. Maybe because of this, much creative activity is an indirect call for the world to recognise the municipality, its villages and inhabitants and at least symbolically, if not physically, to integrate them within itself. The words the poet Muhamed Abdagić, a Sjenica native, uses to describe his feat in organising a reception in honour of France in the

[215] 'Those who sing mean no harm' is a saying characteristic across the former Yugoslavia: '*Ko peva zlo ne misli*'.

late 1930s illustrate that little has changed in the way of perception and self-perception since then:

> ...even an academy in honour of France was organised for which the French national anthem was prepared. It was altogether unimaginable: in one, so to speak, *kasaba,*[216] *Bogu za leđima* [literally, 'behind God's back'], far away from any cultural centre, among the backward Muslim and even Orthodox masses, an academy is prepared and held in honour of France, and it opens with the French hymn, the Marseillaise, sung by a choir of illiterate or semiliterate youth who did not know a word of French... (my translation, Abdagić 1992: 71).

That the organisation of the French academy was chronicled in an article entitled 'Cultural-political work of students and the youth between the two wars' points us to a longstanding and intimate relationship between politics and culture. The intertwining of these two spheres will be the subject of this chapter, which I will explore through a study of the ways in which artists and amateurs adapted to and resisted the politicisation and ethnification of culture. I will present the case of Sjenica's longest standing cultural society, Jedinstvo ('Unity'), by analysing its predecessors, past and present activities, and the situation today, especially the causes and consequences of the literal and metaphorical neglect of Unity. The rest of the chapter will look at the diverse cultural activities in the remote mountain town of Sjenica, from *gusle* to experimental theatre, and sketch out the role of artistic activity as one of few available platforms through which group and communal values, memories and interethnic relations are discussed and negotiated.

Culture in Sjenica before World War II

The first records of cultural activity in post-Ottoman Sjenica take us to 1921 in the newly formed Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes and the unofficial formation of the 'Educational Society of Sjenica's Youth', also known as Njegoš (Vrcić 1988). Though its

[216] Word for a small urban settlement in Ottoman times. In modern use it often carries a pejorative meaning, implying a backward, undeveloped town.

statute was confirmed by the relevant ministry only five years later, its members were active from the beginning. Njegoš had a little room rented out in the local *kafana* [pub] where its members congregated, but which also served as the space for the town's first lending library, however modest it was. When putting on plays and larger events, the society moved on to other local pubs whose owners served as its patrons and helped put up improvised podiums. As Edo Mašović, often referred to as the 'doyen of Sjenica's theatre', told me, '*Sjeničaci* [citizens of Sjenica][217] watched their first play in 1925, when a theatre from Bitola [a major city in the Republic of Macedonia] visited and put on five plays. And they liked it somehow, so they said, "We can do the same! Oh how can we really? Yes, we can!" This was an inspiration for the members of both societies, so Njegoš started a drama group, prepared a number of plays, and from then on theatre became a standard in Sjenica.'

At the same time, the Gajret,[218] initially established in Sarajevo in 1903 as the first cultural and educational society of Bosniaks, was revived in the new Kingdom,[219] and already in 1920 a local branch opened in Sjenica (Dacić 2009: 33). Though its primary focus was humanitarian and educational – helping collect funds to support the secondary and higher education of poor Muslims, as well as organising literacy courses – from 1929 it also initiated cultural activity by forming a drama society and putting on its first play, Hadži-Lojo,[220] by the famed Serbian satirist Branislav Nušić (ibid.: 39), which featured only men due to the traditional confinement of young Muslim women to the circle of the family. Like Njegoš, Gajret too rented out the quarters of a local coffee house (Vrcić 1988) and turned it into a makeshift library. As their names imply, the Njegoš society – named after Petar II

[217] Though the citizens of Sjenica are called *Sjeničani* in standard Serbian, the form most often used locally is *Sjeničaci.*
[218] The word *gajret* is of Arabic origin, and signifies zeal, effort, passion, nobleness, aid, strength, devotion.
[219] For more on the role of Gajret in Bosnia from 1903-1941 see Kemura 1986, and in interwar Sandžak see Bandžović 1990.
[220] Hadži-Lojo is a piece Nuišić wrote in 1908. Telling of the heroic efforts of Hadži-Lojo, the leader of Serbs and Muslims, in standing up to the Austro-Hungarian army, in parts it directly alluded to the current political situation, that is, to the annexation of Bosnia by Austria-Hungary in 1908.

Petrović Njegoš, the 19th century prince-bishop and poet of Montenegro – catered primarily to Serbs, whereas Gajret was meant to serve the Muslim community. However, soon enough the boundary became blurred – some Muslims joined Njegoš, some Serbs joined Gajret, and many were members of both, a process that intensified in the second half of the 1930s, as written sources testify. For example, an article in the Gajret journal reports that at the 1932 annual assembly 'it was not only [Gajret's] members who were present but other citizens of Sjenica, not just Muslims, but also the Orthodox and Jewish, who do not think that this society belongs just to our Muslims and that its success and progress is at the same time the success of all of us. (...) Unanimity, harmony and love for the joint work is the best illustration that Gajret is not to be considered a religious society, but our common cultural and educational society' (my translation, Gajret 1933: 33).

Both societies had their own tamburitza[221] bands already in the 1920s, as many local musicians I spoke to pointed out with satisfaction, and it was a love of music that pushed them together. The lack of instruments and skilful players meant that both were frequently borrowed and shared by the societies, and soon enough the bands began to perform together on occasion and even jointly enlisted a music instructor from Bosnia to help them improve their skills (Vrcić 1988: 192).[222] The same was true of their drama groups. It was this necessity and spontaneous interest, together with the effect of external factors that, according to sources, brought the two societies and two religious communities together. That is, after 1935 cultural activity in Sjenica was given another push towards collaboration thanks to two events: the enrolment of its first generation of university students in Belgrade

[221] A tamburitza [*tamburica*] refers to a family of long-necked lute instruments, played typically by the plucking and pairing of strings, similar to the mandolin or the Persian tanbur. It is particularly popular in the countries of the former Yugoslavia, as well as in Hungary. The various tamburitza instruments are typically played as part of tamburitza bands.

[222] The societies invited each other to perform at their respective celebrations. For example, in 1929, at the first ever party organised by Gajret and held in honour of King Aleksandar Karađorđević's birthday, the program included a performance of Njegoš's tamburitza orchestra (Dacić 2009: 190).

and Skoplje, and the formation of a local communist cell. The Communist Party was at the time proscribed and membership severely prosecuted by the authorities of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, and as a result its Central Committee had to adopt a new tactic so that the revolutionary struggle could continue under the radar. Sources point out that the solution was reached at the 7th Congress of the Comintern:[223] a decision was taken to proceed with the formation of popular fronts and the active establishment of cooperation with other, non-communist political parties and organisations. The realisation that the majority of the working class, among it young people in particular, were taking part in diverse cultural and sports groups brought with it a new attitude towards non-political associations. As outlined in a document of the Communist Party of Yugoslavia, the goal was '...to gain support in all economic, professional, cultural, educational, etc. organisations, societies and institutions, peasant cooperatives, professional associations, voluntary and firefighting societies etc., societies such as "Napredak", "Gajret", "Hrvatski Dragiša", "Narodna uzdanica"...' (KPJ 1950). The communists and their supporters began to enrol massively in these all across the country with the goal of surreptitiously 'hijacking' them for their own purposes. Due to their sudden strength in numbers, they were then able to take the leading positions at annual assemblies and spread the ideas of the communist movement, a strategy that was soon implemented in Sjenica with the local *Gajret, Njegoš* and football club *Sloga* (Abdagić 1992, Vrcić 1988). Therefore, the process that began with Gajret and Njegoš in the 1920s – the general promotion of the Yugoslav idea until the assassination of King Aleksandar Karađorđević in 1934 – continued from 1935 on a wider front by bringing together people regardless of religious or class affiliation, profession or status and involving them all in a diverse cultural life.

All this was wholly new, and as such very attractive to the inhabitants of the town of

[223] The Comintern is short for the Communist International or the Third International, an international organisation founded in 1919 to campaign for communism around the world

Sjenica, and even more so to those in surrounding villages. It helped that the societies also organised frequent celebrations during religious holidays, for professional guilds (the bakers party, tailors' night, etc.) and for village fairs, when the *tamburitza* bands played local dances but also began to introduce novelties such as the waltz, as well as activities such as raffle draws, funny cards and competitions for the best couple or the queen of the dance. These were attended by locals regardless of religious affiliation, and as documents point out donations and honours were also given independently of this (Dacić 2009: 66-81). One of the few living participants in Sjenica's cultural activity from the 1940s onwards is the former 'first lady of Sjenica' and award-winning amateur actress in retirement, Gorica (Gora) Jovanović. As an eighteen-year-old girl, she was proclaimed the 'queen of the party' at Gajret's annual ball: 'I loved to dance the waltz! We danced then, I don't remember if it was with Drago Avramović or Dragan Veljović, but I remember well that we were the only couple that danced, while everyone else looked on. I was young, happy and carefree, and on that night I received the most "funny cards", which secured me the title of the party queen' (Danas 2010).

Less than a year later, Serbia was engulfed in World War II and all activity ceased until the formation of the liberation movement of Sandžak.

Culture in socialist Sjenica

The leaders of the Yugoslav national-liberation struggle in WWII and after based their policies on Marxist-Leninist notions of economic and social progress and the improvement of the entire society (Hofman 2011: 36). Therefore, political revolution could not occur alone – it was to go hand in hand with the cultural revolution (Majstorović 1977). The

Yugoslav idea of self-management[224] in particular gave an impetus to the creation of a 'massive cultural movement' – the culture of all working people – and led to a new, self-governing understanding of culture that was, in union with political action, to facilitate the shift towards new relations of 'liberated labour' (Majstorović 1977: 351-352). As a result, in some places, including Sjenica, cultural groups were formed even before the war ended. Once peace was restored, and in particular after self-governance was endorsed in the 1950s, there was a great push towards their proliferation. Known as Cultural-artistic Societies [*Kulturno-umetnička društva* or KUD for short] or Cultural-educational Communities [*Kulturno-prosvetne zajednice*], these were similar to non-profit civil-society groups in their organisation and function and, after 1972, came under the aegis of the Association of Amateurs of Serbia [*Savez amatera Srbija*] (Vukanovuć 2011: 1).

The number of KUDs further increased after 1974, partly due to the new Yugoslav constitution, which advocated further decentralisation, giving greater financial power to lower units of government such as town councils or even neighbourhood councils [*mesne zajednice*]. This rationale was also applied to cultural policy – in order to support direct cooperation and mobilise citizens to participate in the decision making process, local bodies called 'Self-governing Interest Groups' [*Samoupravne interesne zajednice* or SIZ for short] were established (Hofman 2011b: 42). The responsibility for cultural planning and financing was transferred from regional or republic institutions onto the local SIZs,

[224] Yugoslav socialist self-management or workers' self-management was developed as opposed to the étatist socialism of the Soviet Union and its central planning and centralised management system. The key role in implementing this policy was played by Workers' Councils which were founded in each enterprise so that the workers themselves would participate in the decision-making process and, on the whole, in managing industrial production. The Councils had authority in appointing managers, determining internal pay structures, recruitment procedures and allocating surplus value. Though studies demonstrate that most decisions were guided by management, the Councils held sway when it came to questions of welfare, employment and pay (Estrin 1991: 188-189). Self-management reached its height with the Yugoslav 1974 Constitution, which raised it to the status of the governing principle in managing the entire society: all organisations, economic or not, were expected to reorganise in accordance with self-management principles. For a critical review of the impact that socialist self-management had on Yugoslav economy, see Lampe 1996.

while the organisation of cultural activity was placed into the hands of local Houses of Culture[225] and KUDs (ibid.: 43). At the same time, the idea was to create a multicultural canon of culture – a 'new folk culture' understood as the joint product of all the working people (ibid.: 35) and consisting of '"contemporary" content created in accordance with socialist demands, but in connection with "existing cultural forms"' (ibid.: 36). Amateurism was to play a crucial role in building this new culture and in fulfilling the 'basic necessity of each individual subject in the aspiration to be part of the "wider social community"' (my translation, Supek 1974: 8-9).

In 1944, after the Partisans took control of Sjenica, a group called simply 'Cultural Group' was initially formed by the local National-Liberation Committee out of local partisan groups and former members of Njegoš and Gajret, and for the first two years the focal point of their activity revolved around a combined program of a choir singing of partisan songs, slapstick and recitals (Vrcić 1989). According to Hakija Jusufović, first president of the newly formed cultural group, drama enthusiasts who had withdrawn into the villages of the Zlatar mountains together with liberation units began to organise cultural activity in the months preceding liberation, and this continued afterwards, always in close cooperation with the new governing structure. Shows organised by the group were a standard part of all youth labour actions [*omladinske radne akcije*],[226] assemblies and celebrations (ibid.) in both the town of Sjenica and the surrounding villages. In addition, the cultural group organised regular tours of the villages of Sjenica, in the first years entirely on foot, when its members would not only put up a cultural program that involved partisan songs, plays and

[225] Known as the House of Culture [*Dom kulture*] or Institution of Culture [*Ustanova kulture*], these were founded across the country from the late 1940s, many of them in rural areas, with the goal of organizing cultural and educational activities (Hofman 2011b: 39). In Sjenica, the House of Culture was established in the 'Community House' [*Društveni dom*], built on the initiative of the Njegoš and Gajret societies, which had organised the collection of donations (in money, materials and labour) and the construction of the building. The building began in 1938, the roof was placed in 1940, but the House was inaugurated only in 1950 due to World War II (Vrcić 1988: 194).

[226] *Omladinske radne akcije* were collective voluntary labour activities organised by the Young Communist League of Yugoslavia predominantly to build or repair infrastructure after World War II.

dances, but also provide complementary services to the villagers. According to Asim Vrcić, in the first tour of 1946 that included the villages of Vapa, Štavalj, Brnjica, Duga Poljana, Rasno and Tuzinj, the services of the barber were most in demand, but also of the carpenter, locksmith, cobbler and plumber (ibid.). Though such initiatives were more frequent in the first years after World War II, the tradition stayed on for many years to come, as Edo Mašović, who joined the society in 1965, told me:

> People worked very hard and they volunteered in development activities whenever needed – if help was needed to build a road, or in construction. The organizer of these was the cultural society. When working on reconstructing some building in the summer months, during the day they would say, 'When will night fall so we can have some music?' And then they would organise a gig, stay until the next day and continue working, without going home. The KUD was the only means of entertainment in Sjenica, for years. (...) I personally participated on a number of occasions. For example, I designed the cultural program to celebrate a hundred years of the school in Lopiže [local village]. We were all glad to go there – it did not matter that it was Lopiže. There were days when we went to Dobrinjci [town in BiH] or to Ruma [town in Serbia], but it was just as important to go to Lopiže or to Bare [local villages], to show them what was going on in the cultural life of Sjenica. And the person who most contributed to that was Asim Vrcić. He was the director of the local cultural centre.

Soon enough, the drama troupe of the Cultural Group became more active and already in 1948 gave its first visiting performance in the neighbouring town of Ivanjica. The reception was said to have been so warm, and the members of the group so thrilled, that the representatives of the local government and public enterprises took a decision to support a tour of all the towns of Sandžak by providing a truck and 200 litres of petrol to 'go as far as it would take them', a very exciting and luxurious prospect at the time (ibid.). The petrol lasted long enough to tour five towns – Priboj and Nova Varoš in Serbia, and Pljevlja, Bijelo Polje and Berane in Montenegro. Upon arrival in Bijelo Polje, the group discovered that a youth work action program to clean and fix up the city was in operation, so they joined in out of solidarity – everyone save for two members of the society, whose 'desertion' initiated some irritation, but mostly humour, according to Hakija Jusufović (ibid.).

In 1950, the cultural group was transformed into a KUD called Jedinstvo [Unity]. What exactly happened to Gajret and Njegoš, and the Cultural Group, as well as who initiated the formation of Unity is not entirely certain. After World War II, the activity of Gajret was re-established in Sarajevo, but on foundations more in line with the new socio-political regime (Kemura 1986: 361-362). However, it was disbanded soon after the regional conference of Muslims of BiH, when the delegates endorsed the idea of organising a 'mass cultural movement' and opted to establish a new society called 'Rebirth' [*Preporod*]. A day after the founding assembly of Preporod, held on 13th September 1945, Gajret unanimously voted at its own assembly to cease acting as a separate organisation and to integrate with Preporod (ibid.). In Sjenica, Gajret's activity ended with the beginning of WWII and, according to sources, there were no attempts to revive it after the war ended (Dacić 2009, Vrcić 1988).

The few written sources tell that Unity was established on the initiative of Gajret's and Njegoš's members as a natural heir in the new social and political order. Asim Vrcić, former president of the society and of the local House of Culture, and a figure recognised by most as the driving force behind Sjenica's cultural life in the second part of the 20th century, is one of the few to have chronicled the history of the society. According to him, the society was called Unity because it 'inherited the significant experiences of the pre-war Njegoš and Gajret societies and continued its activity on the basis of their rich tradition (...) The name "Unity" itself points to one of its most important characteristics, because throughout its existence the unity of the members, regardless of national or class affiliation, would enable its survival and successful work even in times of difficult crisis' (my translation, Vrcić 1989). Informants often speak of Unity as the result of a desire to grow in a small and undeveloped environment, rarely mentioning politics. Edo Mašović, whose father was a member of Gajret, recollects the formation of the Unity as such:

> The people of Sjenica were a little afraid of the state. And the state had given up on Sjenica – why would it bother? Sjenica back then was like a handful of people to it. So the *Sjeničaci* had to make their own way, had to be resourceful. Only few stood out, so to speak, and openly showed religious intolerance – on the contrary, people really mixed and consorted together [before 1944]. Well, KUD Jedinstvo is the result of that. There had been the Gajret society, and the Njegoš society, and the first gathered the Muslim youth, while the second was attended by Serbs. They both had *tamburitza* players, but they did not have all the instruments...so they had to borrow from each other. Seeing that they could not do without each other, that music could not do without – and that they could not do without music...

Whatever the reason was, the former and present members of Unity recollect the days spent there with joy and nostalgia, not only for times past, but for a period when great enthusiasm was not only unbridled but supported and even championed by everyday politics. Gora Jovanović provides the most personal account of Unity, as it was the focal point of her life for over four decades. Starting from World War II onwards, she tells of how it was precisely this society and the people who made it what it was that gave her life meaning:

> The war was difficult, but we managed. My mother died, and as the oldest I had to take care of my four siblings. Father remarried soon, and that was very rough on me. Soon enough I got married myself and moved to Prijepolje, but less than a year later I left that marriage and returned to Sjenica. I was washing his clothes one day and found a *note* in his pocket [informant's emphasis]. That kind of marriage was not for me! So I secured another title [along with First Lady of Sjenica] – I was the first ever divorcee [*raspuštenica*] in Sjenica! [laughter].

Divorce was a rarity in those times, even more so in conservative southern Serbia, so upon return to her hometown Gora went into voluntary house-arrest out of embarrassment and heartbreak. She never remarried and explains that it was the KUD where she found love and family:

> Before the war I had already helped out in Gajret and Njegoš; I always enjoyed music and theatre. The two societies merged in the 1940s, and seeing how lonely and sad I was, my sister convinced me that I should get out and clear my head, and audition for an acting part in the new society. That is where I found my true love: it was KUD Jedinstvo, the greatest love of my life, and that society, it became like my family (...) I can easily say that this was the most wonderful period of my life. We travelled a lot. There were no divisions, as in – this one is Serb, that one is Muslim, and such. We were all like brothers and sisters there, like a family.

Gora spent over forty years in Jedinstvo, and as one of the leading actresses of its amateur

theatre took on numerous roles. Her favourite, however, remains the role of Hasanaginica[227] in the South-Slavic ballad 'The Mourning Song of the Noble Wife of the Hasan-Agha', which chronicles the tragedy of a mother of five whose freedom is limited by the strong patriarchal order of 17th century Muslim society, her destiny determined entirely by the men in her life – first her husband, and then her brother. When speaking of the part, she speaks in the first voice; her face is instantly transformed as if on stage once more and, although decades had passed, she recites the closing lines of the play with accuracy, empathy and conviction:

> I have forgotten most of my other lines, as I starred in so many plays. I remember Hasanaginica very well, however. When my brothers come to take me away [to remarry] and I tell my baby son for the last time: 'Dear Hasan...you watch your mother, for your mother to give you milk, but your mother cannot give you milk, all has withered from the tears and the pain, but a last kiss she will give you!'. And then I come closer, I hug him, and I fall.

Thanks to the many awards and achievements in her long acting career, Gora was given the Gold Plaque of the Association of Amateurs of Serbia [*Zlatna plaketa Saveza amatera Srbije*] in 1985 for her work in developing amateur cultural activities. She was also professionally recognised – a dedicated worker in the local Commercial Enterprise [*Trgovačko preduzeće*], she was awarded the Medal of Labour [*Medalja rada*] in 1977, one of the highest civilian medals in Yugoslavia, a great honour and one that opened many doors in those times. However, although she had offers, she never had second thoughts about leaving Sjenica.

Edo Mašović, another of Sjenica's award winning amateur actors, joined the society as a young boy in 1965, his first role being the son of a character played by Gora. Like Gora, he cultivated a strong work ethic towards the society, motivated by his love of theatre, but also his desire to prove that Sjenica is not just a mountain town famed for its cheese: 'Many people think that I graduated in some subject to do with languages or literature, and when I

[227] Hasanaginica literally translates as the 'wife of Hasan-agha'.

tell them that I am an electrician, that is quite a surprise [laughs]. That is how we all are in the KUD, there are all sorts. But, we were all so dedicated to the goal of moving forward with every new play, to go up, so that they would say "The *Sjeničaci* are good.". So that we would become known for that – and not just cheese![228] [laughs]' The members of the society also took their humour seriously, as illustrated by the famous 'potato nights' they used to organise: 'We got this idea while visiting Banat...or was it Topola? While we were there the annual "grape days" were taking place. Then in Aleksandrovac, we visited the "wine days". We thought, what could we organise in Sjenica...the only thing that grows well in Sjenica [due to the harsh climate and terrain] are potatoes. So we said, "Potato nights!" and we organised these usually in the local Srbija *kafana* [pub].'

Jedinstvo flourished while she and Edo were there, and both agree it was thanks to the enthusiasm and work of aforementioned Asim Vrcić, under whose tutelage the society expanded to include an amateur theatre, tamburitza orchestra, national orchestra, pop and rock bands and folklore society, as well as art and music classes. Gora fondly remembers that period, especially the times spent on tour: 'Asim secured the membership of Unity in Yugoslavia's Inter-Republic Community for Culture and Education, thanks to which we had the opportunity to tour the whole of former Yugoslavia, and further. We also had a bus at our disposal, and free transportation, so we went to the seaside every year. We organised parties and spread a good mood wherever we went.' For Edo, Asim's role as the patron of culture in Sjenica is still an inspiration:

> Asim pushed us to keep thinking how we could contribute to Sjenica, with what, how we could live better. He gave everything to the KUD. And not just the KUD, but also as the director of the cultural centre. He started the Sjenica journal. But, Asim died and the journal died. And then...how much time he spent on helping to publish the book *The Pešter highlands of Sjenica*, just to keep it all from forgetfulness, to demonstrate that we do have culture, that we have our customs, everything. And it is these enthusiasts who endured quite a

[228] Sjenica is predominantly known for two things – its particular brand of strong white cheese, and the lowest recorded temperature in the former Yugoslavi

> bit so that we would make it to today...who also did it out of *inat*,[229] and said '*Ne dam!*' [I won't give!]. This '*ne dam*' has remained and helped to maintain amateurism in drama, so that it does not decline, so that it is not forgotten.

Most informants I spoke to told of the great passion that pushed them in decades past, sighing with resignation that somehow people nowadays do not seem willing or able. As Gora put it: 'We have become so impoverished now. But, then I think back – there were times much worse in the past, before the war, during the war, after the war [WWII], when we had much, much less, and yet we tried to and managed to make something of it.' That zeal moved a great many people in those days is confirmed by Edo:

> When you do something out of love, it means a lot (...) but Gora, she hardly left the KUD's quarters. She carried the whole KUD on her back. We used to get old, discarded costumes from the theatre in Kragujevac [a large city in Serbia] thanks to her brother. It meant a lot to us to collect what they wanted to throw away, and we would do it in secret. A committee had to sign it off – there was a whole procedure, as if we were dealing in weapons! And Gora, she would take these clothes, clean and mend them. Back in those times we did not have washing machines, she would do it all by hand, and by the end of it, these costumes, that had been worn by God knows how many people, they were a pleasure to put on.

The number of plays and performances testify to the immensely prolific work of Unity's drama troupe – from 1950 until 1989, the society put on some 2100 performances of a total of 91 plays (Vrcić 1989).

As difficult as the 1990s were in the region, the society continued to exist and to produce plays, still under the leadership of Asim Vrcić. Damir Kabaš, a member of one of the last generations of Unity's actors, joined the society in 1998 as a ten-year-old boy and remained active until he left for Sarajevo to pursue a law degree. In an open letter he wrote in 2014 in protest against the neglect of the society and the lack of interest in commemorating seventy years of its existence, he described his acting days with great fondness and nostalgia:

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[229] The word *inat* is translated in dictionaries as 'spite' or 'grudge', though neither encompass the complex meaning of the concept. *Inat* can be described as 'an attitude of proud defiance, stubbornness and self-preservation – sometimes to the detriment of everyone else or even oneself' (Milović 1999

> I remember the old, out of tune pianino and its worn pedals. I remember the old leather armchair in which *rahmetli* [deceased] Asim Vrcić, the then president of the KUD, used to sit, and the kitsch bright red sofa and armchairs in the same shade. I still see that low ceiling of dusty cane, and the dancing *kolo*[230] of young men and women wearing the traditional dress of Serbs, Montenegrins and Bosniaks painted on the wall on a blue background. I remember everything. (...) It seems to me, from this perspective, that the rooms of the KUD had never looked better. Because back then we worked. Acted, played, sang, danced. We really worked hard. Not even fifteen days would pass without the KUD putting on at least one performance and the tamburitza bands playing one concert, or even a day without the rock band 'Uranium' attempting to learn a new Cobain hit. That was the year I started to act. It became a hobby of mine that I loved with all my heart. (...) nothing was professional (i.e. compulsory), but everything gave away an impression that it was. The conditions were never worse in the KUD, yet there was never more zeal, there were never more plays, visits, trips. And all in conditions that are now considered impossible to work in.

After 2000, activity in the society slowly began to wane and by the 2010s it had come almost to a halt. The headquarters of the KUD were renovated, the dusty cane removed, the old furniture replaced, yet the rooms were empty, and with it, the spirit of Unity described by the informants in this section had disappeared too.

The end of Unity

The fall of Slobodan Milošević from power and the establishment of a democratic regime led to the drafting of a range of new minority policies that were meant to promote diversity, multiculturalism and, as a result, overall freedom. In reality, however, as we saw in Chapter 4, this proved fertile ground for political exploitation leading to segregation and a raising of walls between ethnic groups. Voters had to choose between political parties whose leverage and thus program was based entirely on ethnic policy and once elected, their policies took effect in all spheres of local life, including culture. In the newly independent state of Serbia, 'the state of Serbs and others' as it is defined by the constitution, policy prescribed that it was now each man for himself – each ethno-national group was responsible for the cultivation of its own culture. As a result, culture in general

[230] *Kolo* is the traditional folk-dance among South-Slavic peoples, danced collectively in a circl

came to be predominantly perceived as ethnic, leaving little space and few incentives to nurture artistic expression that surpassed the traditional. What had been used to create a wide front now became a means of separation. Unity was no longer in the interests of the political elites, and accordingly both the idea and the institution symbolising it were left with no one to care for it.

According to informants, 'the first nail in the KUD's coffin' was hammered in the year 2000. In his open letter, entitled 'The murder of KUD Jedinstvo', Damir Kabaš describes how the death began when 'some *čaršijski gulanferi* [from Turkish, downtown tramps] came and broke into the KUD with the aim, they said, to "drive out" Asim Vrcić. The story was – and I was a child, so I could not understand – that he was no longer suitable to be the president of the KUD and how it was necessary to bring in "new" people.' Kabaš says the incursion was effective, and Vrcić was soon replaced. When the local cinema was shut down as the only place with a professional stage, the KUD continued by putting on plays in school halls, kindergartens and even canteens. However, as time went on the enthusiasm faded in Unity, but did not disappear entirely from Sjenica. Instead, it appeared again with the revival of the pre-WW2 societies – first it was Njegoš that was founded, and after it Gajret. When I spoke to Damir, his opinion was that this was due to the constitutionalisation of 1990s politics:

> In Sjenica everything is still viewed through the prism of what I call national-fascism – that is what I call the events of the 1990s. So, why did people in the village of Štavalj have to register their own society? It's great that they have it, but the question is – why couldn't they do what they do in Unity? When I was in Unity there were Serb members. And when Asim died, that is, when they chased him away or as they put it 'when he died for the KUD', all the Serbs disappeared too. Why? Well, because those *gulanferi* as I described them earlier, who came, broke into the KUD and changed the locks, were people from [names political party] – a [Bosniak] nationalistic party. So, it's completely normal that these people no longer want to come there when they know what those who run the place think about them. If I were them I would not come either.

The reestablishment of Njegoš provided an impetus for the revival of Gajret. Today both

societies are active and primarily focus on youth folk dance and song – the first catering to Serbian children, the second to Bosniak children. During non-religious celebrations both societies are called on to perform, but otherwise they function separately of each other. Though former Unity members do not speak against the new societies, they often wonder why Unity is no longer possible. For Edo Mašović, the fact that cooperation was possible seventy years ago, but not today, is a sign of time going backwards: 'Back in the day the Serbs had Njegoš and the Muslims had Gajret. Still, Murat-agha, a contrabass player, used to perform with both societies. *Čika* Miša [uncle Miša] also. They were friends regardless of all of that. So, as many as seventy years ago they could, but now they can't. But, who is it that can't? People who do not care about culture, who do not know anything about culture, who are so uncultured they could not possibly understand what it is all about.' Kabaš, who describes himself as a proud Bosniak nationalist and defines his nationalism as a 'love for your nation not measured by the amount of hate towards the other nation', believes that the death of Unity means the death of culture in Sjenica, but even more so, it represents a prelude to the death of the value of unity in the town. In his open letter he asks:

> Do they know that Unity was created out of the union of Gajret and Njegoš in 1944? Do they know that this society got its name precisely for this reason, because it unified the Serbs and Bosniaks of Sjenica into one institution? Do they know that it is a symbol of mutual recognition, respect and interethnic tolerance in Sjenica? Do they know that KUD Jedinstvo is dying and that it needs reanimation, otherwise all the values that it stands for will die together with it?

These quotes show that the disappearance of Unity is primarily experienced as the raising of walls that had long ago been torn down, a reduction of the space in which one is expected to move and from which one can act and, in the last instance, a manipulation of memory. As one informant told me: 'When I think back, I realize how quickly good times turn into memories! But, we cannot allow someone to take these memories from us, to blemish them. Memories are what they are because we idealize them and because we conceptualise them as we want to. And I want to remember that KUD Jedinstvo was...and

will be the main pillar of culture in Sjenica'.

Unsurprisingly, a debate about the causes of Unity's demise often leads to a discussion of the wider issues the local community is faced with, such as the lack of critical voices and opposing opinions – 'of anything that is not orthodox Serbs or Bosniak', as one informant put it. In a small community dominated by politics and which has, as a result, developed into a complex network of patron-client relations, many have told me that speaking out has become a privilege of the few.[231] Kabaš says many consider him courageous to have written his open letter, but he says he was free to do it only because he makes a living in Sarajevo and is thus financially independent of Sjenica. When asked why is it that people do not speak up, he pointed to the lack of economic freedom and the reign of political parties that dominate all aspects of life:

> In Sjenica you have a rule of terror of political parties over all other segments of life...and the people who work in politics tend to meddle in issues they understand the least. Sjenica is a small town, and people there are mutually dependent on each other. Someone helped employ your aunt, and in return you made arrangements for his relative, and so, of course if you or your family member got a job thanks to the man who is running a certain party, it is expected that you will not speak out against him. (...) I do not have that problem.

Many of those who participate in culture are not optimistic about its future for a variety of reasons, most of all the permanent flow of emigration that has aged the population of the municipality. Edis Hadžić, a lawyer in his thirties, performs with the local tamburitza band, *Sjenički tamburaši*, together with his father and his father's peers. The desire to contribute to the preservation of the tamburtitza sound in Sjenica was his main motivation for participating, but his predictions for the future are bleak: 'People ask me if I will continue after them [my father and his band members], and I have no answer to this question. I don't see how it can continue. (...) Because every year, you feel the drain of the youth. And of

[231] Not a recent phenomenon, clientelism was also present during the rule of the League of Communists which protected and privileged its members. However, since Yugoslavia was an authoritarian one-party regime, speaking out was by definition restricted. In a liberal-democratic regime, as my informants have noticed, the expectations of its citizens are that speaking out should be the norm, not a privilege.

those who do stay, no one seems to have a motivation to be in music'.

Can culture save Sjenica?

Within the new Yugoslav cultural policy, whose priority was to bring 'authentic cultural values' closer to the citizen so that they may become 'part of his social being', folklore, understood as local and stemming from the people, and thus authentic, underwent a revival (Đukić 2010: 227-228). Accordingly, amateurism, seen to be most in line with this idea of cultural democracy since it allowed each citizen to take an active role in culture and art within the numerous KUDs (Vukanović 2011: 10), gained an important status in cultural policy and expanded to include a wide array of activities such as native instruments and song (March 2013: 234). During this period, amateur and professional cultural groups and institutions were treated as equals when applying for resources to fund their regular program activity.

The principal purpose of amateur culture was to develop cultural activity in rural areas such as Sjenica so that its inhabitants, who did not have the chance to adopt to urban cultural patterns, could actively participate in cultural creativity – a strategy whose goal was also to counter the elitism of traditional institutions of culture (Đukić 2010: 22). Taking place in diverse local contexts, the participants were expected to draw on local themes and traditions and to be free to reinterpret these in new, distinct and personal ways. These unique forms were all brought together at local, regional, republic and inter-republic festivals, where the participants were to compete and learn about and from one another. Furthermore, many of these were frequented by professionals and researchers who partook in the cultural dialogue, leading to a synergy of local and national, amateur and professional, folk and elite.

However, according to several authors, when it came to rural economy and culture there was a great discrepancy between the propagated goals and official narratives on the one hand, and their application in practice on the other (Hofman 2011a, Hoffman 1959, Ivanišević 1977), as illustrated by the low investment in agriculture and the treatment of village cultural life in general, which received just 10% of the funds dedicated to cultural activity (Hofman 2011b: 43). In addition, the premium placed on the project of de-agrarisation, together with the establishment of popular culture in Yugoslavia and in particular Yugoslav rock as the basis for Yugoslav identity, contributed to a further political neglect of folk culture (Vuletić 2008). As a result, cultural life was mostly in the hands of local enthusiasts, with very little or no intervention by the state authorities (Hofman 2011a). The local amateur groups were not directed by professionals, nor were they pushed to transform their repertoires in line with political or ideological agendas – on the contrary, they were mostly left to themselves to cultivate the local art forms, as policy intended, and as the history of the 'music scene' in Sjenica illustrates.

Imko Hadžić, Edis's father, was a member of one of the first rock 'n roll bands in Sjenica in the 1960s and 1970s, when the 'accordion ruled Sjenica' but rock music began to take over Yugoslavia. They were among the first to play gigs with a purely rock sound, which soon enough became very popular among the town's young and received support from the local government. Edis, who had a rock band in the 1990s and now plays in the tamburitza orchestra, notices that the attitude to musicians has changed: 'Richie [his father's friend] used to tell me that the president of the municipality would address him as "Sir" and always in the formal voice – while he was still in high school! That sounded impossible to me – that the president receives you and equips you to be the ambassador of Sjenica. I never experienced this. I grew up near a warzone when culture lost all meaning.' Initially called *Dženabeti* [Turkish for someone who is mischievous and wreaks havoc], the first

rock group of Sjenica later changed its name to Albatross, though there were other suggestions:

> We were so full of enthusiasm, and we wanted to have a logo and a board with our band name so that people could recognise us. We went to ask our art teacher for help, because in those days there were no printers around and he suggested the name 'Albatross' because it is a bird that can withstand a lot and it cruises the oceans. As he said, 'There is nothing in Sjenica and one could say you are cruising above the town, trying to create something out of nothing'. We thought it was a great idea, so he made our emblem, and we even had badges. Then, the politicians would try to influence us a little – 'How about we buy you instruments, but you change the name of your band?' Which name? 'Young worker.' No way! [laughs].

The first tamburitza band of Sjenica was formed in the 1920s and, as we have seen, the love of music and lack of musicians led to the unification of Serbian and Muslim cultural societies. In the decades after World War II, the same reasons led to an alliance between generations and lovers of different sounds. When asked how he made the transition from rock to tamburitza music, Imko explains that it was spontaneous – whenever there was a regional festival of ethnic music, the director of Sjenica's cultural centre would call the band members to come along and join in to strengthen the tamburitza orchestra with the guitar, and they obliged. With the years, and as they grew older, the Albatross members took over the orchestra and began to prefer a 'subtler sound'. For Imko things have not changed much – back then, just like today, most innovation was based on individual initiative and a lot of activity was improvised, but they did their best to present Sjenica in a good light: 'In the 1980s, when Galija [a major Yugoslav rock band] visited Sjenica, Neša [the frontman] said – if someone had told me that I would play on an electric Rhodes piano Fender 73, here, in the middle of Pešter, I would not have believed them. One time, when the Yu Group [a major Yugoslav rock band] was touring, their equipment blew a fuse on the Niš highway and we lent them ours so that they could play until they fixed it. Even though Sjenica is small, we always tried to have everything – good quality instruments and a good repertoire.'

Edis joined his father's tamburitza orchestra in a similar way. In 2004, the orchestra was invited to the II International Festival of Tamburitza Players in Bijelo Polje, Montenegro. Unfortunately, first it was the *prim* player who cancelled because he was invited to do a paid gig at a wedding, after which the contrabass player opted out too for the same reason, leaving the orchestra with just three members. Imko solved the problem by calling on the young rock musicians to help. Edis remembers the turbulent few days during which they experienced great lows and great highs:

> We were renovating the house and in the middle of fixing the roof when I received a call from my dad, who was already in Bijelo Polje at the time, 'Turn your car on, find someone from your crew and get over here however you can!'. At the sound check we sounded terrible – the technicians, all people from the RTV CG [Montenegrin national broadcasting company], raised the volume to the maximum and asked us to try a little louder, to which we pulled away from the mikes even more so that they would not hear our shame. When I arrived in Bijelo Polje I saw that my dad, usually a very calm and collected man, was very nervous – he had heard the other orchestras playing, among which many were professional ones from big cities. Following his instructions, I locked him and my friends in a room all day. Their plan was to stay locked in until they learnt three songs, but many of the guys were just 15, 16 – they hardly knew how to hold a guitar. When we did the sound check, the technicians were truly bewildered. However, when we went out on the stage everything changed. We received the strongest applause and everyone was singing along with us. No other orchestra managed to create such an atmosphere. The sound check and the performance, they were complete opposites.

Improvised performances are something many informants recount. Miljan Ašanin, from the coal-mining village of Štavalj – which, with its 1500 inhabitants, is among the most populated in the municipality of Sjenica – is a keen a cappella folk singer and has passed on the passion to his son and daughter. Together, they are all part of the local KUD, which was registered in 2004. The focal activity of Štavalj's KUD is folk singing, and to a lesser extent folk dance and the playing of traditional instruments such as the *gusla*[232] and *frula*.[233] They have won numerous awards, many of them brought in by Miljan's daughter, Milica, and so continued the tradition of Štavalj's folk group. Active until the break-up of Yugoslavia, it was the most successful in the municipality of Sjenica:

[232] See Chapter 5.
[233] The *frula* is a wooden folk instrument with six holes similar to the flute and traditional in Serbia.

> There were fifty of us in the group. However, 'culture' [the local cultural authorities] used to take care of us, they would invite us everywhere. (...) Each neighbourhood council [*mesna zajednica*] had its own group – Lopiže, Trijebine, Raždaginja, Bare, Rasno, Duga Poljana, Vapa, Kamešnica, Štavalj...did I miss someone? There would be three gatherings, each with three groups, and the winners would go to Sjenica and from there onto the regionals. (...) We were among the best, we would win every year [at the village gatherings], which is why we were financed by the Institution of Culture.

What is characteristic about Štavalj's KUD is that they sing local folk songs, 'the ones sung by our grandmothers and grandfathers in the fields', all of them from memory, passed on from generation to generation. As Miljan explains, most of the songs are unique to this part of Serbia and Montenegro, and many originate from Montenegro: 'As people migrated, they took the songs with them, except they are not sung in the same way, not as it was originally in Montenegro. This is due to the mixing of the populations – as people married, the voice and the melody changed a little. For example, in Montenegro they sing everything in the same melody, the same tone, they just change the words. We do things differently – every song has its own melody.' A similar way of thinking is applied to traditional dress – the KUD's members wear only inherited dress – nothing is bought new and nothing is sewn – so all the members of a group look different: 'The judges also take that into account. Many KUDs, they buy new uniforms that are supposed to look old. The same goes for songs – you would have a KUD from Ivanjica singing songs from the Krajina, or one from Kosjerić singing popular folk songs you can hear on the radio.' However, Miljan recalls the one time they took this philosophy a step too far:

> One time we were performing at a festival in Zlatibor, four of us [men]. One guy forgot his *opanke* [traditional peasant shoes], so he wore shoes, and the rest of us all had different types of *opanke*. At one point, Brko said to me, 'Take your vest off so that we look uniform.' Uniform? How can we possibly be uniform, look at us! And I said, back in the day people wore what they had, no one was ever uniform!

Miljan recalls that, while sometimes people are not able to appreciate the authenticity of their approach, whenever they were in front of a jury that was in the know they would reap awards, as the example of his relative Slobodan Ašanin illustrates:

> One time, we were invited to a festival in Kosjerić, and only ten of us went, just the male singing group – back then we were not a registered KUD yet. Among other things, the festival included a competition of *frula* players. One relative of mine had brought along his *svirka* [another name for the *frula*] and we started persuading him to participate, which he outright refused: 'What would I do there, they all carry 5-10 *frulas*, they are all educated, I can't compete with them!' His *svirka* was old-fashioned and quite thick. When he started playing for us, Ceca Azanjac,[234] who was in the jury, heard him and insisted that he register to compete. He protested, but we signed him up to play a *kolo* and he won. The next year, he took part again and won second place. After that, wherever he went, he would win some award.

Even though Štavalj is one of the biggest villages in the municipality of Sjenica due to the jobs provided by the local coal mine, the decrease in population is also felt there. Miljan remembers that when he was a child, there used to be 'seventy children in one grade, two classes times 35 kids – and now there are barely enough children for one class'. Still, in comparative terms and in the context of the dismal demographic map of rural Sjenica, Štavalj is thriving. Just some ten kilometres away is the village of Gradac, which has almost come to a standstill.

Vuk Pantović, a poet and *gusla* player from Gradac, laments the absence of interest among his few co-inhabitants to participate in any cultural activity today, identifying the root of the problem as the decreasing population and the disinterest of the state in safeguarding traditional culture, but also a certain fear and foreboding that has infiltrated the population. Telling the story of culture in Gradac, Vuk, a man in his fifties, and his relative Dula, a shepherdess in her seventies and one of few female *frula* players, recall the traditional assemblies [*sabori*] that used to take place all summer across the territory of rural Sjenica, typically in front of the village church on religious holidays. After WWII, these became the village gatherings [*susreti sela*] and were held in front of a local House of Culture or some other non-religious object, gathering folk groups from villages of both ethnicities. As in Štavalj, the instruments used were handmade and the traditional dress passed on from generation to generation.

[234] Svetlana (Ceca) Azanjac is a famous ethnomusicologist and musical director of the national broadcasting company.

Dula remembers 1975 in particular with fondness – that was the year that Petar Vukosavljević, the eminent Serbian ethnomusicologist, came to visit the municipality to learn about its cultural heritage and discover locals who could authentically represent it. She started to play the *frula* when she was still a girl herding cattle to pass the hours, at first using just a blade of wheat tied at the top and with holes punched on the side, trying to arrange the notes into a melody. A relative of hers had a *frula* which she would often secretly take and play where no one could see her, since these instruments were all considered typically male. However, though they could not see her everyone could hear her, and she was soon found out: 'I played for myself, out of boredom. And they laughed at me, they used to smirk, look at her play, "du du du"'. However, when Petar Vukosavljević toured Sjenica he was told about the unusual woman from Gradac, and as a result Dula ended up on national television and playing in one of the biggest concert halls in Belgrade at a festival of traditional culture. After that, she says, everyone looked at her differently.

The village gatherings ran out of steam as the 1980s neared their end and, after the breakup of Yugoslavia, ceased completely. The KUD from Štavalj has focused its energies on going to festivals and competitions outside of the municipality, while Vuk tried to renew the old tradition of village *sabors* in Gradac, but with little success:

> Gradac used to have the traditional *sabor* on the day of the Holy Trinity, which I tried to revive through one organisation. And I invited everyone to come. Everything was free – the food, the drink. My neighbours looked on – their houses are just fifty meters away – but they did not want to come and support it. Instead, people from elsewhere came and enjoyed themselves. People seem to be disheartened, as if they would like to, but then they mustn't, like they are afraid of something... it is not that they do not like it – everyone loves a *sabor,* being friendly, good food (...) Then, there is also some envy, your typical 'I would have come if you were not organising, but if I was instead'. I have tried to organise quite a few things, but the majority would say 'It would be OK if it was not Vuk'. And I said, fine, let it be someone else, I will support it. But even if someone else tried to do it, he too would get the same treatment.

When asked to specify why this is so, Vuk says that it may sound illogical, but it is difficult to explain to someone who has not lived in the village: 'There is a fear of anti-Serb politics.

The enemies of Serbs have multiplied from all sides. It has always been that way, when you look into the past and what the people have gone through...'. When asked how this is related to the lack of interest in something such as renovating the local church, which he had been talking about a moment earlier, Vuk answers: 'That, that cannot be understood. You would have to live here. I can try to explain it to you, but that would not be it. Instead you would live here, and then even you would say, 'Maybe it is better that I bow down and live a little with my children, than to express what is Serbian, national!' That Vuk's words resonate with how many in the municipality feel is demonstrated by some of Sjenica's Serbs who do not wish to partake in any activity supported by the local government, but instead keep to themselves even when opportunities arise.

The poems and epic songs that Vuk writes for the *gusla* express this sentiment, but also communicate the feeling of neglect and marginality of being in Sjenica, and the wish I have found among many informants to feel a sense of belonging with the world outside the barren confines of Pešter. In a song dedicated to the local school, Vuk expresses grief over its closure – today inhabited by 'shepherds who take their pigs and cattle there'. The verse ends with 'Now we have no churches and no schools / we are blind and our spirit has left us / all because of a government that does not hear us' [my translation]. Most of Vuk's other songs celebrate the beauty and history of the village of Gradac and of Pešter, a few are more political in nature, like the plea to the world's powers to not break up Serbia, and some are a call for action, such as the one calling upon Serbs to unite and renovate the local church that had, throughout its history, been destroyed and rebuilt numerous times:

> (...) Above the Vapa spring it lays submerged,
> Where only requiems can now be heard.
> And there are no prayers or baptisms,
> No weddings, nor anointments,
> No monks, or holy fathers,
> The bells do not ring over Gradac.

If I could gather my brothers,
And unite them spiritually with Christ.
God's will would be fulfilled,
And the Cvetnica church rebuilt.
One will bring a coin, the other a stone,
So our church will come to life once more.
And that will always remain holy,
Where we plead for God's mercy.
May the holy secrets be observed,
And mistakes from the past never repeated. (...)
[my translation]

Altogether, his opus illustrates the existential rupture that many feel due to the dying out of life as it once was. Whether this means the perishing of villages and the loss of family vitality that this is thought to signify, or the disappearance of Unity in the city, the sense of helplessness in fighting the external forces that dictate these changes is expressed by many – often in actions more than words. Though felt on a very personal and fundamental level, the sentiment is shared across the region of Southwest Serbia and is something that most can empathize with, regardless of ethnicity.

Roused by a similar sentiment, but expressed in a different form, Galib Mujović, a Sjenica native in his seventies, wrote a script for a somewhat experimental theatre production. Having spent much of his life living outside Sjenica, he dresses in a way that distinguishes him on the streets of that city – all tweed and donning a beret, he looks every part the gentleman. Some tell me he had always been eccentric and that his travels had little to do with it – there are stories of him being one of the first young men in Sjenica to grow his hair and pierce his ears in the sixties, while others recount the rumour that in recent years he had a Wahhabi[235] episode during which he grew his beard long and carried a large staff in his hand. Coincidentally, his play is entitled 'The dwellers of Began's Well' [*Mahalaši s Beganovog bunara*], referring to a neighbourhood of Sjenica that is thought to be the birthplace of people who are somewhat strange in their ways. In 2013, when we met, he

[235] Wahhabism is an ultraconservative branch of Sunni Islam

was in retirement and excited about this new project, for which he was trying to raise support and funds. To date he has not succeeded.

The story takes place in the rooms of the KUD Jedinstvo and follows a discussion of the actors, who play themselves, about the idea of putting on a play chronicling the life of David Bowie, 'the perfect rock star, a man and a woman, a king and a queen, an alien and a human, the man who sold the world!'. On Bowie's side are those who come from around Began's Well, while the rest are opposed. Some of the characters have never heard of David Bowie but are deterred in their conservatism by his wild ways, others argue that the play would not arouse any interest in the town and that the KUD should focus on strictly traditional motives and characters, while yet others think that it might make sense to do the production if one were to insert some marketing into the text:

> He stuffed himself with cocaine, but you should put in the scenario that when he was on the brink of death he only ate peppers filled with Sjenica's sour cream [traditional product from Sjenica]. That he drank milk from Sjenica and ate Sjenica's goat and sheep cheese. That way we promote Sjenica's brand, our recognisable products, our organic food. So that we bring tourists to Sjenica – and the youth find employment. (...) And also... put in the scenario that Enida, the daughter of Reuf 'Čalo' used to take full buckets of peppers to London for him! So that the whole world will know it was the peppers of Sjenica that kept him alive. (...) Ah, when the world learns the truth, they will flock from London. All of England! Then from Berlin! Frankfurt! Dublin! From Paris – Ramiz Muslić, our Sofija Ćuk, Bajko Jukić and many other of our Parisiennes. They will come from Austria, from Vienna, from Australia, and then there they are coming from the States, and the whole world will follow, to Sjenica.

Though the last motive is a clear dig at the arbitrary development strategy of the local authorities, it is also expresses the wish for all those Sjenica natives who have left the town and who now live all around the world to return, as well as a hope that it is culture – in this case, the KUD and David Bowie together, that can save Sjenica. The discussion continues, mentioning along the way the numerous celebrity figures from Sjenica who have succeeded locally, nationally and internationally. As the play continues, the characters become further and further from agreement and the argument escalates, until finally the oldest actor runs in, panting and excited, with a letter from Bowie himself, announcing his visit to the town:

> My dear *Sjeničani, mahalaši* from Began's Well,
>
> The daughter of your artist and entertainer, Reuf 'Čalo' Nalović, Enida (...) now citizen of London and my good friend, has told me so many wonderful things about you that she has roused emotions hidden deep within me and which I thought were reserved for some future time. For the people described as the *Mahalaši* from Began's Well. I have grown affectionate towards the spirit of your neighbourhood. Your generosity. The solidarity interlaced with sincere love. Oh, how you have conquered my heart and my soul, so much so I cannot wait for us to meet! Of course, you are to also bring me, David, to Began's Well, so that I may sip some of that beneficial water, that many of you compare to the Zem-Zem water of Mecca.
>
> I recognise your wonderful energy and sincerity, because it shines all the way on me in London. And I do not care what you look like, whether your men wear their beards long or short, whether they do not shave or are clean shaven. It does not matter what you look like, it is much more important for me to look at the inside and what resides within. I, David Bowie, recognize that you are quite certainly my sincere friends and destined to me.
>
> I am entirely sure that you, *mahalaši* from Began's Well, will be and stay with me forever, just like you can be sure that I, David Bowie, will be with you until the end of time.
>
> You can now announce my visit to Sjenica. I am definitely coming.
>
> I, David Bowie
>
> PS. Send me a description of Began's Well and the nearest neighbours. I love you very much.

With this the play closes, and Sjenica is saved.

***

As many have told me, the main difference between cultural life today and even fifteen years ago is not so much that there is less initiative, but that there is 'less strength'. For Edis Hadžić, this is visible in all spheres of life: 'In the first instance everyone is so ambitious, but as we near the goal they grow colder and colder. (...) people do not pull through. And you can see this everywhere. It is the 21st century, yet our roads are filled with holes.'

For Gora, the times of Unity have gone with her youth: 'That was how it was once, but no more. We can only tell tales of times past. (...) When I can't fall asleep, I begin to think about all those who were in the society and who are now gone...but, we *lived* [informant's emphasis], it was not a society, it was a family.' Edo is also melancholic for the KUD's

golden days:

> My soul aches for that society... We should stop it from falling into oblivion, it should be recorded – for the love of culture, for those *Sjeničaci* who fought for something, who fought against the monotony, who kept the society alive. When there is money, you are no longer interested in art, you are there on the job. But, we, we were always in the KUD. We persevered and fought to keep people together. There is nothing easier than chasing people away. But, to keep them...!

There are many like-minded citizens, yet they have not managed to find a common denominator to push them towards action – not that they did not try. When asked, no one is able to say why this is so for sure, yet a distrust of other's motives and their agenda has crept in where eager cooperation, sacrifice and mutual support used to lie, leading to inwardness.

Although the tradition of amateur activity has continued to this day and amateurs are still the force behind the majority of cultural production in Serbia, the loss of the status they used to enjoy has pushed them towards the financial and existential brink. The year 2000 and the establishment of a new regime brought with it a new politico-legal framework and thus many changes for these activities. Local governments are now the designated primary caretakers of amateurs and amateur associations, which were expected to reorganise on the basis of 'European civil society principles' (Vukanović 2011: 1). The main problem such associations faced in this regard was the disparate level of development of different municipalities and of civil society within them. This, in turn, left amateur culture at the mercy of the local ruling parties and dependent on the level of importance these place on different types of cultural activity, leading to a general inconsistency in the way funding is dispersed, the greater advantages of associations in cities relative to those in the countryside, and the overall collapse of the network of amateur associations (ibid.). At the same time, the majority of Serbia's population, especially those in rural or semi-rural environments, access cultural content only through the activity of amateur groups in their

communities.

Culture, and its amateur side, have both lost the political significance they used to have. As Maners points out, aesthetic goods and forms of behaviour can serve as a window into the negotiation between ethnicity and the state (2000: 311), so that tracking their transformation in time allows us to analyse them as symbolic commodities which are reproduced within the political economies in which they are embedded (ibid.). Whereas the aim of cultural activity in the former Yugoslavia was the emancipation of the working classes and the embodiment of brotherhood and unity, amateur culture is today of interest to the ruling structures only to the extent that it can serve the dominant ideology of ethno-nationalism – otherwise, their priorities lie elsewhere. Amateur theatre has lost its former official role in community development, but folklore dance and song, especially that of the minority groups, has retained some of its previous significance, albeit in a new, reduced form as an ethnically bounded activity.

What is interesting in this regard is that, of all the sub-groups of KUD Jedinstvo, the folklore group was the least successful, although when it did run, its participants came from different ethnic backgrounds, and just like in the rest of Yugoslavia, learnt the dances of different ethnicities. This was 'Yugoslav folklore'. Made up of a range of diverse ethnic elements and seemingly far removed from the sphere of politics, it played a crucial role in the reproduction of the Yugoslav ideology of socialism, as well as of the equality of its nations and nationalities. As a result, following the disintegration of the country, folklore was 'by definition ripe for re-appropriation and conversion from Yugoslav polysemy to ethnic monosemy' (Maners 2000: 312), as represented by the cultural groups Gajret and Njegoš. At the same time, as this chapter has shown, the memories and personal experiences of cultural activity in Sjenica demonstrate that in Yugoslavia official cultural

policy was locally appropriated and performed in diverse ways, interpreted dynamically and given personal significance. These experiences and memories have continued to resonate in the post-socialist period and influence how cultural activity is perceived, what is expected of it, but also how it is performed today, as evidenced by the words of those cited in this chapter.

The year 2014 marked seventy years since the beginning of KUD Unity. Though it seemed uncertain whether the local authorities would commemorate this jubilee, the local Institution of Culture [*Ustanova kulture*] organised a celebration in its new and modern building, inviting all living members of the society and other interested parties. The program included performances of Sjenica's choir, the now independent tamburitza orchestra and monologues by some of the KUD's amateur actors, and ended by awarding plaques to those who had done most for the society and Sjenica's culture in general – most of them now in retirement, and some awarded posthumously. Though the event resembled more a tribute to the society than a page in a new chapter in the KUD's history, the beautiful new stage conveyed a sense hope. The Institution of Culture initially took it upon itself to organise what had once fallen under the tutelage of the KUD and introduced drama classes for children, set up a choir and hosted theatre productions and many other events. Though the directorship of the Institution changes with the political winds, this has not interfered with its program in recent years, as most of its other employees have been there for decades, while former directors are often appointed assistant directors once they have been removed from office. In August 2015, the leadership of KUD Unity was re-elected, and with the support of Sjenica's Institution of Culture, new life was breathed into it. The first activity to recommence was the youth folklore group which, six months later, numbered more than eighty members. Even though other cultural troupes, groups and KUDs established in the years of its absence continue to operate, a hope for 'Unity' in the

town of Sjenica glimmers.

Chapter 7 - A case study of regionalism in Southwest Serbia

At the height of public interest in the re-regionalisation process in Serbia in the summer of 2009, the media frequently reported the existence of a sevenfold economic disparity between the most and least developed parts of Serbia. Numerous reasons could thus be heard in favour of the re-regionalisation of Serbia – achieving even regional development, establishing a more democratic state regime and more effective forms of governance, and satisfying the requirements of the EU and of eligibility for its pre-accession funds. At the same time, however, there was and still is a strong belief among both supporters and opponents of regionalism that the redrawing of administrative boundaries carries with it the danger (or opportunity) of separatism, while any form of decentralisation is typically characterized by its opponents as 'subversive of the state of Serbia' and as a 'continuation of Yugoslav politics', which had tensions of its own over decentralization. The latter in particular triggers painful memories of historical events in which 'Serbs let others determine their fate', such as the decisions of AVNOJ (the Antifascist Council for the National Liberation of Yugoslavia), which will be discussed in more detail later, or the constitutional changes of 1974, which have since been the subject of political and intellectual debate as potential root causes of both the demise of Yugoslavia and the decline of Serbia, as well as the eventual independence of Kosovo.[236] The prevailing

[236] The 1974 Constitution of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia was the result of an ongoing political debate dating back to 1967 and of the victory of the reformist current of Edvard Kardelj, a Slovene communist, over that of the so-called unitarists, who instead pushed for a unitary state. The reform provided for the transformation of Yugoslavia into a *de facto* eight-unit confederation, an 'ideological construct', with sovereignty transferred to the republics organised as states (Cipek 2003). The Serbian provinces of Kosovo and Vojvodina, the only ones in the Federation, achieved greater autonomy to the extent that their governments could veto decisions taken at the level of the Serbian republic, but the republican authorities could not do the same within the provinces (Pavlowitch 2002). The two provinces had already been defined as 'constitutive elements' of the Federation through amendments to the Constitution of 1963 passed in 1968.

opinion in Serbia today, which was extensively exploited by both Milošević in his rise to power and the ideologues of Yugoslav unitarism in the 1980s and 1990s, is that, through post-World War II Yugoslav politics, those who intended to weaken the federal republic of Serbia imposed decentralization on it,[237] leading to the disintegration of the former Federation and ultimately 'sealing the fate' of Kosovo. There is still great anxiety among the Serbian public and some political parties that the 'crumbling of Serbia' (*raspračavanje Srbije*) is a process that is still unfinished, as illustrated by the frequency with which the term featured during pre-election campaigns or whenever decentralisation was in the spotlight, as well as by the fact that Vojvodina[238] and Sandžak are often mentioned, even in everyday talk, as 'being next'. As a result, in order to gain popular support regionalism in Serbia has to achieve all the aims listed earlier in this paragraph, while at the same time, and most importantly, safeguarding the unity of the state and preventing any further separatist tendencies.

Therefore, the question of regionalism in Serbia has been highly relevant and contested for over half a century,[239] the most recent wave occurring since the regime change of October 2000, which saw the downfall of Slobodan Milošević and his government. The calls to 'federalize Serbia', 'give Vojvodina its full autonomy back', 'grant personal autonomy to the Hungarians of Vojvodina' and 'define Sandžak, the homeland of Bosniaks, as an autonomous territory' are among those that could be heard in the early 2000s from

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In this document their establishment was described as the outcome of the 'joint battle of the nations and nationalities of Yugoslavia', after which these territories were said to have joined the Republic of Serbia of their own free will (Vacić et al. 2003). This political arrangement meant that these provinces were interpreted as deriving their constitutional status freely from the revolutionary struggle and not from the Republic of which they were part, and also that national minorities were acknowledged as subjects who had the right to establish a political community within Yugoslavia, that is, outside their 'parent states' (ibid.: 11). For an academic inquiry into Yugoslavia's constitutional design and its effects, see Jović 2003.

[237] For more on the topic see Cipek 2003.

[238] Vojvodina is the northern part of Serbia that borders on Hungary.

[239] The question of decentralisation has been a pertinent one since the Constitution of the Federal National Republic of Yugoslavia was passed in 1945, although it was focused primarily on the status and jurisdiction of Kosovo and Vojvodina.

different, mostly minority and regional political parties. These were part of a delayed reaction to the consequences of the recentralisation process which took place in Serbia in the 1990s (Vacić et al. 2003: 10).[240] The contemporary territorial organisation and local administration of Serbia are based on a network of municipalities and cities, while counties exist as 'branches' of the central state government which execute those tasks of the latter that cannot be carried out from the state centre, such as policing, tax administration, etc. In practice, this means that counties do not represent units of decentralisation, as they do not have their own jurisdiction and are managed by bureaucrats who are appointed by the state, not by locally elected officials.

Ideally, however, regionalism is imagined as being closely tied to the idea of the decentralisation of the state, that is, it is meant to introduce the liberal-democratic principles of limited state power and constraints on the central government. More generally, the principal goal of regionalism in the EU is to reorganize the state according to the concept of subsidiarity, that is, to provide services at the lowest possible level of governance, thus aiding citizens in the realisation of their interests and fulfilment of their needs within institutions that are closest and most familiar to them (Wilson 2000: 146). The demands of the European Union are clear with regard to the goal of European integration – the decentralisation of state and public authority and the support of local and regional autonomies are among the principal requirements. EU candidate states are expected to synchronize their regional structures with EU standards within two years of signing the Stabilisation and Association *Agreement* (ICP 2010).

[240] The political slogan of the time, 'O Serbia of three parts, you shall be whole again!' (*Oj Srbijo iz tri dela ponovo ces biti cela*), illustrates the direction of change, the intention being to reverse the effects of the 1974 constitution. Quoted as one of the principal arguments to explain the inability of Serbia to act effectively in the Federation, the Milošević regime sought to abolish it rapidly and to transform the state into a unitary one.

Serbia set out to implement all the standards before it signed this agreement in order to speed up the process. One of the requirements that Serbia faced in this regard was the creation of regional structures as vehicles for the distribution of pre-accession and post-accession EU funds. These would be supervised by regional agencies whose main task would be to coordinate regional projects with the relevant governmental bodies in Belgrade and the EU. On the other hand, no directly elected regional authorities would be established, at least not in the first phase, nor would the regions possess any type of political autonomy – they would not have complete authority over resources allocated to them by the EU because the central government would remain an important arbiter in determining how these were spent. Nevertheless, regional projects would be developed and carried out by regional bodies that would in time learn to govern themselves. According to public statements by all the relevant political actors, the regionalisation process in Serbia was not politically motivated, but instead served solely to obtain access to money from EU funds and ensure their 'even and fair distribution'.

It was within this framework that the long awaited Law of Regional Development of Serbia was passed in the summer of 2009. Proposing a purely statistical division of Serbia according to the 'Snow White and Seven Dwarfs' Model, as it was jokingly called by the public, it represented a framework within which the whole of Vojvodina was to become one region, while the rest of Serbia was divided into six small regions. Officially, how the municipalities of Serbia were to be arranged among these six regions had yet to be determined by the Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia and in accordance with EU standards. Unofficially, lobbying by Bosniak political parties paved the way for an already determined design, contrary to the objections of a number of Serbian NGOs from Southwest Serbia, as well as academics and presidents of a few municipalities who were

against the 'break-up' of the present counties.[241] Bosniak MPs, who belonged to minority parties that were part of the then ruling government coalition and thus possessed bargaining power, voted in favour of the Law once they had secured a promise that the six municipalities of Sandžak would comprise a single region.

The claims which will be laid out in the following sections, that Southwest Serbia should be defined as Raška or Sandžak, and the everyday use of these words convey information about those who make these claims. The voices dictating where new regional lines should be drawn tell us the same and more – they open up the question of the changing nature of identity in Southwest Serbia and of power relations both within it and in relation to the centre. Regional cultures can take on a 'proactive role' and thus affect policy formation, representation and policy reception, while at the same time they have continually negotiated cultural frontiers (Donnan and Wilson 1999: 11-12).[242] Due to the specificity of Southwest Serbia as both a region and a border region, as will be explained in the following section of this chapter, I will focus on symbolic borders – those people put up in order to separate themselves from each other, as well as those they imagine bound the territory they live in and on the basis of which they negotiate their identities. Following a number of studies (A.P. Cohen 1982b, 1986b; Bouquet 1986, MacFarlane 1986), I will look for 'the boundaries of their [people's] worlds in symbolism' (A.P. Cohen, 1986b: 2). The symbolic borders in which this Chapter is interested are the ethnic ones that separate Serbs from Muslims, as well as those historical borders that are imagined to exist on the ground when one speaks of Raška or Sandžak. These boundaries may become more

[241] As explained in the Introduction, the region is formally divided into two counties that cut across and extend beyond the imagined boundaries of both Raška and Sandžak. The establishment of regions did not mean the abolishing of counties, however, the frequency with which the term 'breaking up' was used in public statements suggests mistrust of what regionalism might bring in the future.

[242] For examples of similarly oriented studies, see O'Dowd's research on the influence of Irish and British culture on policy-making (O'Dowd and Corrigan 1995, 1996), as well as Sahlins' (1989, 1998) inquiry into the historical role of local, regional and national cultures in the creation and negotiation of the French-Spanish border.

tangible as state controls weaken, a development that causes state borders to become more porous, while regional ones are created and/or strengthened (cf. O'Dowd 2001).

The historical identity of the region

Bosniak political and cultural representatives today usually trace the beginning of the struggle to achieve autonomy for Sandžak back to World War II and the Regional Antifascist Council of the National Liberation Movement of Sandžak. In fact, the date the Council was founded, 20th November 1943, is celebrated each year as the 'Day of Sandžak' (*Dan Sandžaka)* and is one of three official secular holidays of Bosniaks in Serbia. Chosen by the Bosniak National Council (henceforward BNC) in 2004 and confirmed by the National Minorities Council of the Republic of Serbia in 2005, the choice of this date remains controversial.

On April 17th, 1941, the Kingdom of Yugoslavia capitulated to Germany and with it the cross-border region of Southwest Serbia and northern Montenegro. The region was initially carved up into several zones of control on the basis of an agreement between Italy and Germany,[243] and, within these, the German-sponsored Independent State of Croatia and Italian-sponsored Albanian Kingdom also exercised their influence (Roberts and Morrison 2013). While the first was interested in subsuming within it a Greater Bosnia that would include Sandžak, the second pushed for a Greater Albania whose rule would include Novi Pazar, all the way to the town of Raška. These territorial claims were accompanied

[243] Priboj, Nova Varoš, Sjenica and Novi Pazar came under German rule, and Prijepolje, Tutin, Pljevlja and Bijelo Polje under Italian rule (Lakić 1992: 48)

by nationalist campaigns: Ustasha[244] ideologues branded Sandžak's Muslims 'Croats of Muslim faith', while their Albanian counterparts designed a series of measures and acts with the aim of Albanianising the resident Muslim population (Ćuković 1964: 55). The Serbs, together with the Jews and Roma, on the other hand, were to be eliminated.[245]

At the same time, several movements of resistance were in the making, most significantly the royalist Chetnik forces supporting the crumbling monarchy and the royal family in exile, and the sprouting Yugoslav Communists, whose movement had been consolidating for over two decades, though for most of this time in the Kingdom of Yugoslavia it had been illegal. Though the Chetnik forces enjoyed the support of the Allied powers at the outset of the conflict, the relationship changed in favour of the Communists as the years went by, in part due to the collaboration of the Chetniks with the Axis powers against the Communists (Roberts and Morrison 2013: 117) and the belief that the Communists were more effective in fighting the Nazis. The divisions that were created among the population by the two movements went deep, and even today, eight decades later, they are still invoked and influence local politics, interethnic relations and world views to a great extent, as we saw in Chapter 5. On the other hand, membership in one or the other group, especially in the countryside, was often a case of contingency more than anything else: the armies of the two opposing movements recruited members as they crossed the land, and it was not uncommon for the inhabitants of two adjacent villages to become recruits for two different groups.

During World War II, the Communist Party formed national liberation councils as provisional governing bodies of resistance on the liberated territories of Yugoslavia. Over

[244] The Ustasha (*Ustaše*) was a fascist and ultraconservative organisation which fought for an ethnically pure Greater Croatia and, under the auspices of the Independent State of Croatia, murdered hundreds of thousands of Serbs, Jews and Roma during World War II.
[245] See Mušović 1965 and Ajbl 2002 for further reading on the extermination of the Jewish population from the region in WWII.

time these councils were transformed into permanent bodies of territorial rule. The impetus for this came in November 1942 with the establishment of the Antifascist Council for the National Liberation of Yugoslavia (*Antifašističko vijeće narodnog oslobođenja Jugoslavije* or AVNOJ), a political umbrella for the regional councils functioning as a deliberative assembly with a select number of delegates from each regional council. On November 29th, 1943, during what was later to become the historical second session of AVNOJ, the second Yugoslavia was defined as democratic and federal, while national liberation councils and regional antifascist councils of national liberation were proclaimed as principal organs of rule of the peoples of Yugoslavia, and AVNOJ became the highest legislative, executive and representative body (Dimitrijević 2010: 5-19).

The Communist movement spread initially in Sandžak through the formation of brigades that operated in the region. In autumn of 1943, the capitulation of Italy brought about the liberation of a unified territory spanning the tri-border area between modern-day Serbia, Montenegro and BiH.[246] This facilitated the expansion of the national liberation movement in the region and a few months later led to the founding of the Regional Antifascist Council for the National Liberation of Sandžak (*Zemaljsko antifašističko vijeće narodnog oslobođenja Sandžaka* or ZAVNOS), on November 20th, 1943 in Pljevlja, Montenegro (Lakić 1992). Once the war had ended, the territories governed by the antifascist councils were transformed into the federal units of Yugoslavia, which, after the disintegration of the country in the 1990s, became today's republics. The sole exception was the regional council of Sandžak, which was disbanded 1945 and whose territory was divided between the federal republics of Serbia and Montenegro.

[246] The liberated area included Nova Varoš, Priboj and Prijepolje in Serbia, Pljevlja, Bijelo Polje, Berane, Andrijevica, Kolašin, Žabljak and Šavnik in Montenegro, and Gacko and Bileća in BiH.

In light of this, the question of who exactly initiated the idea of a regional council for Sandžak, and with what exact purpose in mind, are topics that are still subject to speculation,[247] from the unlikely claim that it was the outcome of a student movement fighting for Sandžak's autonomy, to those who hypothesise that the Communists allowed it in order to mobilise the Muslim population to join the resistance movement. Although archival documents related to the Council shed some light on the topic, historians have not yet reached a final answer to the question. For example, the initiation committee of the Council wrote the following about its establishment:

> Following the initiative [of the second session of] AVNOJ in November 1943, ZAVNO Sandžak was founded, even though the decisions of the second session [of AVNOJ] did not foresee Sandžak as a federal unit (...). The founding of ZAVNOS was enabled by developments in Sandžak. The invader and traitors of our people had succeeded in damaging relations between the Serbian and Muslim populations, which had definite consequences for the people of Sandžak... (Lakić 1992: 52)

Though historian Zoran Lakić agrees that relations were certainly troubled, he points out that the region was not a unique case in this regard – other interethnic areas such as Herzegovina, Vojvodina or Dalmatia were also grappling with similar problems, which, states Lakić, implies that more intricate reasons were at stake in the specific case of ZAVNOS (ibid.).

Elections were held at the first official session of ZAVNOS on 20th November 1943, and 62 councillors were chosen, all of them from the counties of Pljevlja, Bijelo Polje, Mileševa (Prijepolje), Priboj and Nova Varoš. The chosen delegates were of the different ethnicities characteristic of the area, as well as being different in religious affiliation,

[247] According to Zoran Lakić, the first trace of an idea for ZAVNOS can be found in a letter sent by Josip Broz Tito, commander of the National Liberation Army, to Ivan Milutinović, delegate of the Central Committee of the Party in the autumn of 1943. In the letter, Tito expresses the belief and wish that there should be one regional council for the whole territory of Montenegro, Boka, Sandžak and Metohija: 'I think that it is necessary to start preparing, as soon as possible, a conference for [the founding of] the antifascist council of national liberation in these areas, preferably from the bottom up, democratically, through secret elections in each county' (Lakić 1963: document 1). However, Tito's order to create one Council for all these 'areas', as he called them, was not implemented, as we see from the reply of Ivan Milutinović, which contains no mention of Sandžak (or Metohija), but only that a council for Montenegro and Boka had been established.

gender and social class; that is, as the above-mentioned letter stated, the session gathered together all those 'who have proved, through their work and their conduct in the national liberation struggle, their love for the people and for freedom, which are in the interests of our struggle, our people, the brotherhood of Serbs and Muslims, their future and freedom' (ibid.). ZAVNOS was abolished on 29th March 1945, at its second and final official session, held in Novi Pazar, and the area that had up to then been under its command was divided between the federal Yugoslav republics of Serbia and Montenegro in accordance with the pre-war territorial organisation, or more precisely, according to the borders that were drawn up after the Balkan Wars. Contrary to the previous claims of Communist leaders that it would be the people of Sandžak who would determine its fate, the decision was made behind closed doors and implemented by those members of the ZAVNOS committee who were in agreement; the absence of the war-time ZAVNOS president, Sreten Vukosavljević, is often interpreted as telling in this regard (Petranović and Zečević 1987).

With all the foregoing in mind, the choice of the founding date of ZAVNOS as Sandžak National Day by the Bosniak National Council is an interesting one from both the political and historical perspectives. Since ZAVNOS was the most active group in those municipalities where the Partisan movement was the strongest, after World War II these municipalities continued – and to this day still continue, despite the general nationalist turn politics has taken – to cultivate national liberation and the antifascist spirit as a legacy most of its inhabitants take pride in. An elderly Serb teacher from Prijepolje, a former employee in the local association of veterans, told me:

> Prijepolje, Nova Varoš, Pljevlja and, to a certain extent, Bijelo Polje, were vital for ZAVNOS. There was no one from Sjenica or Novi Pazar. Some fifty members were just from Prijepolje, the majority from Ivanje [a village near Prijepolje] which is, on the whole, a Partisan area (...) Nova Varoš was a divided community – either they were Chetniks or Partisans. (...) The first celebration of the liberation of Prijepolje was unusual in a way – the

> county committee of the Party sent a letter to Ivanje, which instructed that on celebration day there will be a rally and that speakers will talk of the victory, after which all will head together to the local church and then to the mosque. And then, once they have done that, they will all go to 'pull out' the bridge that the Germans demolished when retreating (...) What is also interesting is that the deputy of Sreten Vukosavljević in ZAVNOS was Murat Šećeragić – a hodja.[248] In Nova Varoš, the priest Karamatijević was in charge. The commander once said: 'The priest [*prota*] and the hodja [*hodža*] alone were worth more than two divisions'.

Murat Šećeragić, vice-president of ZAVNOS and supreme *sharia* judge in the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, was an important participant in the storm of historical events that the region endured. Born in Prijepolje in 1882, he lived four years short of a century and throughout that time witnessed the coming and going of countless armies and systems of rule. In 1971, at the age of 89, he wrote an autobiography and a 'Short history of Sandžak' which have never been published.[249] The material provides many interesting insights, based mostly on the author's personal experiences or the oral testimonies of his contemporaries. In the passages below he describes the situation he encountered after returning to occupied Prijepolje in World War II and the work of the council he formed with Sreten Vukosavljević to safeguard friendly interethnic relations in the municipality. These two were later the leading figures in ZAVNOS.

> When I came to Prijepolje from Skoplje, I found the army of the so-called Independent state of Croatia there (...). As soon as they arrived, they started creating trouble, stealing in villages, persecuting some Serbs, creating a municipal administration without any Serbs (...) They brought with them 'Pop Brale' [Priest Brale], a bishop from Sarajevo who was Pavelić's[250] trustee for BiH in order to put a bell on the chapel that had been built by the Austro-Hungarians when they had been here, and with criminal intent he gave a speech in front of the municipality, saying from the outset that he had come to the place where the 'bloom of the Croatian people' lives, that the few Serbs are a 'cancer wound' to [this] human organism and should be killed or exiled. This roused anger and exasperation among Muslims and Serbs, this announcement of the extermination of Serbs and the allusion that Muslims are Croats... in Prijepolje there lived only a single Croat, some inn-keeper [called] Barica.
>
> They began creating strife between Muslims and Serbs with the help of some scoundrels and inexperienced young men, according to the famous 'divide et impera'. So as soon as I returned from Skoplje, some Serbian friends and neighbours came to welcome me and

[248] A Muslim preacher, madrasa professor or religious teacher.
[249] Years after his death, all the written material was handed over by Šećeragić's family to Nadir Dacić, a hodja in Prijepolje, who was kind enough to share it with me. The material has not been edited.
[250] Ante Pavelić was the leader of the Ustasha movement and the Independent State of Croatia during WWII

> complain that the occupier had started to create discord between Serbs and Muslims who had lived in peace for 500 years. The supervisor of elementary schools, my old friend Joso Jevđević, told me that all the bridges between Serbs and Muslims had been torn down. And I told him: 'When the flood comes all the trash floats onto the surface' and that it is not justified to burn the 'duvet because of the fleas'. It was fortunate that the Ustasha retreated to Bosnia with their collaborators when a detachment of the Italian army came from Pljevlja. On the same day, as leader of a delegation of honest Muslims, I visited the commander and told him about the situation (...) and that I believed it is in the interest of the Italian empire that there is peace and order in this town, among the population of both faiths, and that for this purpose it would be appropriate to form a collaborative council of five Serbs and five Muslims. This request was accepted, and a council of five Serbs, led by Sreten Vukosavljević, professor at the Faculty of Law in Belgrade, and five Muslims, led by [myself] (...) The task of the council was primarily to smooth out the disputes and the strife (...) and forge cooperation. The first session of this council was in the municipal hall in the presence of an Italian officer, and it was determined that the council should take care of municipal duties (...). Sreten [Vukosavljević] took the opportunity to say that it is saddening that the 500 years of cooperation between Serbs and Muslims had been disrupted by Ustasha efforts, aided by domestic collaborators, and that we will jointly aim to re-establish the earlier brotherly relations. He added that, even if this cannot be immediately achieved, we will not allow a massacre, even though it might happen that we 'elbow' each other here and there. Right after leaving the municipal hall, Sreten and I went down the *čaršija* [centre of the city] hand in hand, and as soon as the two of us demonstrated cooperation [in this way] this story reached even the furthest village of our county.
>
> (...) Sreten and I were of different political views before the war, but history has repeated itself. My father, H. Abdulah, as a secretary of the court during Turkish rule, was a close friend of Sreten's father, master Vesa, who was a judge in the same court, and they cooperated at work. Thanks to our collaboration we succeeded in establishing a mutual friendship between Serbs and Muslims [in Prijepolje] so that there were no shootings or killings among them (...) unlike in Bijelo Polje, Pljevlja and Priboj, where many Muslim villages were destroyed and its inhabitants killed by the Chetniks.

This is quite different to the predominant perception of historical events in the city of Novi Pazar – the regional political and economic centre, and the seat of all the more important Bosniak institutions and parties. As one of the last areas to be liberated in World War II, Novi Pazar was more marginal to the success of ZAVNOS and the antifascist movement. In fact, as it had been an important commercial, political and urban centre during centuries of Ottoman rule, it was also home to the descendants of the Muslim ruling and landowning classes who had been stripped of their privileges after the Balkan Wars – their class and political interests thus opposed them to both the Communists and the monarchist Chetniks. It was some of these who welcomed the Germans with the hope of reacquiring their previous status, and who then welcomed the Croats as the lesser evil, as opposed to the

threat posed by the Chetnik forces or the Albanianisation that they soon realized was part and parcel of their cooperation with the occupying powers.

Even this brief excerpt of the region's World War II history demonstrates the very complex historical situation of its towns and inhabitants, and the numerous conflicting political, economic, geostrategic and cultural factors that were at play. This 'historical web' has not been comprehensively, systematically and scrupulously untangled by any historical authority throughout the socialist and post-socialist years of Yugoslavia, but has instead been glossed over by epic narratives of victory and unity persevering against all the efforts of the invader and their collaborators – the principal *Other* of the Yugoslav ideology of 'Brotherhood and Unity'. This is one of the reasons why the contemporary state discourse too is a patchwork of ideologically and politically conflicting storylines and symbols. As a result, the policies of most Bosniak parties and of the Bosniak National Council of Serbia follow suit. One of its manifestations, the 'battle of monuments', was described in Chapter 5. It is within this convoluted context that the identity of the region is discussed, imagined and negotiated.

Are we a border people?

To call Southwest Serbia a border area is not entirely straightforward. The reason for this stems from the historical identity of the area it covers and its administrative organisation,[251] as well as its geographical position and perceptions of it in the eyes of those who live there. To summarize, Southwest Serbia borders BiH to the west, Montenegro to the south while to the southeast lays the disputed border with Kosovo. Since in the initial stages my research indicated that historically and conceptually the

[251] See Chapter 1.

region is perceived to be linked and to extend to Montenegro and BiH, I focused my fieldwork around the *tromeđa* (tri-border)[252] area linking these two countries and Serbia. As a result, the majority of my research was conducted in municipalities resting on the tri-border area.

Though data gathered in the field in 2009 implied that these borders did not figure as fundamentally important for the majority of Southwest Serbia's inhabitants, the results of fieldwork conducted in 2013 and 2014 point to significant a shift in perception. The new state borders have gradually created a decrease in the regional exchange of people and ideas. As the new states began to turn inwards, the whole tri-border area has become increasingly marginalised on account of its peripheral location in each of the three states, a situation exacerbated by the poor road infrastructure and disintegration of the regional market.

For most people in 2009, the 'young' border with Montenegro[253] especially was not perceived as a marker that bounded Southwest Serbia from 'something else'. Most people, both Serbs and Muslims, have close relatives in northern Montenegro, as well as distant family who carry the same last name, due to the many migrations of people from Montenegro into Southwest Serbia in the 18th and 19th centuries. In addition, Serbs traditionally view northern Montenegro as particularly Serbian due to these familial links, shared history and the similarity of the mountainous terrain, as well as the fact that the people who live there predominantly declare themselves to be Serb. In the minds of Muslims, Sandžak does not end with the border – it historically encompasses, they say, eleven or twelve municipalities, only six of them in Serbia, the others being in northern

[252] When used, the term *tromeđa* (tripartite border) refers to the geographical point at which the borders of three countries meet. In Southwest Serbia this is as a rule used to refer to the shared border between Serbia, Montenegro and BiH.
[253] Montenegro declared independence on 3 June 2006, following a referendum in which 55.5% voted in favour of independence, narrowly exceeding the necessary threshold by 2,300 votes.

Montenegro. However, the once frequent references to the south and north of Sandžak and the Serbian and Montenegrin parts of Sandžak have become rarer; when used, the word Sandžak now usually denotes the municipalities on the Serbian side of the border. As a Bosniak from Hisardžik, a village just 35 km from the border with Montenegro said: 'Sandžak used to be wider, now it has been "narrowed". Novi Pazar, Prijepolje, Sjenica, Tutin...those towns have remained [part of it]. Otherwise, it also used to include, say, Pljevlja... now that has gone into Montenegro. It's no more. (...) Pljevlja is now so close, yet so far.'

Furthermore, politics was cited by many in their explanations of why their sense of identification with the bordering states has deteriorated in recent years. When asked to tell me to what extent they identify with Montenegro or BiH, informants would often mention two or even three different sentiments, depending on the political and temporal context in which one uses the names of these states. Thus Montenegro as 'the political entity that it is today' is one thing, while as the historical source of 'true Serbianhood' it is something entirely different and that will never change. In a similar vein, one distinguishes between Bosnia as 'it once was', 'the *raya'*,[254] and this 'craziness today'. The present, typically epitomized by politics, and the past, expressed in expectations, often become intertwined in the ultimate judgement: 'Montenegro is a great disappointment. All of this is, unfortunately, viewed through the prism of Montenegrin politics. But, when the people support this kind of politics, then it is official (...) This "tailoring" of history in Montenegro – I have a negative attitude to that, even though Serbia is also to blame,' said a journalist from Prijepolje.

[254] In its original meaning, the Ottoman Turkish word *raya* (in Serbian, *raja*) denoted the tax-paying lower classes of the Ottoman Empire, who were predominantly non-Muslim. However, in post-Ottoman Yugoslavia, it evolved into a term with a very positive connotation, generally referring to a group of people, usually friends, but also standing for the hearty and jovial spirit of the Bosnian *čaršija* (from Turkish *çarşı,* meaning 'downtown', 'bazaar', or in colloquial terms, 'people')

The border with BiH is also ambiguous. On the one hand, Bosnia is viewed as the 'homeland' by most Muslims of Southwest Serbia, since Sarajevo is the regional centre of Islam. It is sometimes also considered continuous with Sandžak, since the area was part of the Bosnian *pasaluk* for an extended period of time during Ottoman rule. On the other hand, the highly complex political situation of BiH today, as well as the pejorative use of the word 'Sandžaklija' by Bosnian Bosniaks, have been cited as reasons for the weakening of the felt bond. In addition, Southwest Serbia borders on the Republika Srpska entity of BiH that is predominantly Serb populated and led, thus impairing the link imagined by Muslims.

When asked to pinpoint the extent to which they identify with different territories on a numerical scale, the results were not surprising. The greatest allegiance was felt towards the village one's family stems from, whether or not one was born there, as we saw in Chapter 4. The place one lives in was also selected as an important source of identification – four out of five of those polled stated that the bond they feel with their home town is strong or very strong. My informants showed much more disagreement with regard to the level of felt identification with the region and with the state of Serbia. The principal reason cited to explain the relative indifference to the region was the fact that the current territorial organisation is very ineffective and based on criteria 'that do not make sense', diminishing its practical importance and impeding a stronger emotional attachment on the part of its inhabitants with it. At the same time, the bond with the unofficial regions of Sandžak or Raška was also felt to be problematic due to the political meaning these terms were seen to carry, which will be further explained in the following sections of this chapter. Though on average the informants identified more with Serbia than with the region, the explanations provided by informants of different ethnicities varied greatly. While Serbs were on average more emotional both when explaining their relationship with

the state and when criticising its negligent relationship to Southwest Serbia and the 'lack of its presence' in their lives, Bosniaks often spoke in a more matter-of-fact tone: 'Well, I live in this country, so yes, I do identify with it'; 'This is the only country I have, so yes, it is important'; 'When you go abroad and people ask where you are from, of course you won't tell them Sjenica, but Serbia, so yes, it is important'. Another factor that many of those born before the 1990s pointed out when considering the state is the fact that the state as a polity is something fleeting and often changing:

> Do I identify with the state? The state...I have, all of us have, changed so many states. Just like that man in the story, who changed many countries without moving an inch – first he was in the Ottoman Empire, then in Austria-Hungary, then in the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes, then in the Kingdom of Yugoslavia... So did we – Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, Socialist Republic of Yugoslavia, Serbia and Montenegro, Serbia... And our state is like any state... Still...when you go abroad and you meet people, you cannot tell them that you are from Prijepolje. So yes, it is there, in second place [in importance, in comparison to the hometown].

This, however, does not mean that there exists no distinct sense of a regional identity shared by the people of Southwest Serbia. There is reason to assert that the area is characterized by a segmentation in which ethnic identities blend within an overarching regional identity. Whether Muslim or Serb, the people do feel themselves to be unique to the area, and this is a feeling that is, in part, shared despite religious differences and associated with a shared history of hardship due to the 'crossroads' status of the area, the cultural similarities and common lifestyle, as well as the distinctive characteristics of people from different towns and villages of Southwest Serbia. As one man from Novi Pazar told me: 'This area, whether anyone wants to admit it or not, is one whole. Something that is different from Šumadija[255]...and other parts of Serbia. The topography is different, what people do, their speech...'. Another informant, from Prijepolje, described Sandžak in the following way:

[255] A geographical region in Serbia that occupies its central part.

> Sandžak is a space that has always been undeveloped, prone to emigration – sometimes more, sometimes less, but the mobility of populations has been a constant. I like to recount an anecdote of Sreten Vukosavljević[256] which concludes that Sandžak is actually the most developed part of Serbia. On one occasion, he hosted a guest who saw oxen pulling hay on a wagon with no one present to direct them. To this he remarked: 'I have not seen narrower roads, more foolish people, smarter oxen and wider wagons anywhere!'

The regional identity also fragments across Southwest Serbia according to a whole number of factors: the terrain, the dominant occupation, the influence of neighbouring towns in 'bordering' areas, etc. However, the fact that the people of Southwest Serbia are susceptible to these slight differences between themselves, variations that people from other parts of Serbia or adjacent countries would not be able to perceive, is something that also contributes to a sense of exclusivity. For example, an archaeologist born in Sjenica, but who has lived and worked in Novi Pazar for a long time, referred to differences in speech while talking about the area:

> People from the Sjenica and Pešter area have always spoken a mix of *ijekavica* and *ekavica.* I am from Sjenica, so I know that for some things we use the first – like *mlijeko, lijepo, snijeg, bijelo* [in *ijekavica,* instead of *mleko, lepo, sneg, belo*].[257] On the other hand, we say *pesma* [in *ekavica,* instead of *pjesma*]. Then there is the *Shj* sound – My grandfather used to say '*Shjedi!*' – using a sound that the Montenegrins are now adding to their alphabet to distinguish it from Serbian. Wherever there was an S at the beginning, we would say 'Shj' – *Shjenica* instead of *Sjenica*, *shjekira* instead of *sekira*. In Novi Pazar it is not the case.

However, it would be very difficult to maintain that regionalism is characterized by a 'centre-periphery relationship' and thus 'segmented' (cf. Parkin 1999) in the case of Southwest Serbia as a whole within Serbia. Certainly, the Serb population is aware that it shares numerous 'elements of identity' with the majority population and that on that level its regional identity is contained within the national one. In interviews with Muslims, though, I have found that they believe much less that this is the case for them, and envisage a type of transitory model in which Southwest Serbia is somehow undefined in

[256] Prijepolje-born Sreten Vukosavljević (1881-1960) was a sociology professor at the Faculty of Law of the University of Belgrade, president of the Regional Antifascist Council of the National Liberation Movement of Sandžak and a minister in the Provisional Government of the Democratic Federal Yugoslavia.

[257] *Ekavica* and *ijekavica* are the two speech forms of Serbian, where the second is distinguished by the presence of the letter *j*. Thus the first four words in this example are in *ijekavica*, while the four in the square brackets represent the same, only in *ekavica.*

this sense, an entity that is subsumed under several encircling influences. Many Serbs have pointed out this dimension of the regional identity of Southwest Serbia as well. And while one 'can be a Norman or Gascon without ceasing to be French' because 'one's regional identity nestles within one's national identity' (Parkin ibid.), it is becoming increasingly difficult to be a Muslim without ceasing to be Serb, and logically impossible, due to the nature of its definition, to be a Bosniak and a Serb. This is mirrored in the re-regionalisation process in Serbia, which has been transformed into an entirely political matter. The political claims and arguments put forward as to why and how regionalisation should be conducted are modelled after a purely oppositional view of identities in Southwest Serbia.

The regionalism debate: a political matter?

In July 2009, former mufti of the Islamic Community in Serbia Muamer Zukorlić[258] established the Forum of Bosniak Organisations and Institutions, announcing that its first aim would be to modify some of the key points of the Constitution of Serbia, namely, those parts related to the anthem and the preamble in which Serbia is described as the 'state of the Serbian people and all those who live in it' (Republic of Serbia 2006). In his words:

> I am sorry, but I do not experience the hymn of Serbia, 'God of Justice', as my own because it refers from the first to the last verse to the Christian God, and I don't see the two-headed eagle on the emblem of Serbia as my own either because there is no symbol of my people on it. As an organisation that transcends divisions between political parties, we will fight for the rights of Muslims and Bosniaks within the legal system of Serbia, and we will ask for Sandžak to be defined within the Constitution as a distinctive region with Novi Pazar as its capital. (Papović 2009)

[258] For details of the organisation of Islamic communities in Serbia, see footnote 144.

On the same day that the Forum was established, it passed a Declaration against the violation of rights of Bosniaks and Muslims through discrimination and 'further administrative disintegration of the Sandžak region' (FBOI 2009: point V). It also asked that, 'in accordance with the principles and standards of European regionalism in the process of decentralisation and regionalisation of Serbia, in future constitutional and legal decrees, the state bodies respect the uniqueness of the Sandžak region, which implies its integrity and capital in Novi Pazar' (FBOI 2009: point IV). However, none of the Bosniak parliamentary parties signed this Declaration. When Rasim Ljajić, Minister of Labour, Employment and Social Affairs of Serbia and leader of the Sandžak Democratic Party of Serbia (SDP), which at the time held three seats in Parliament, was asked whether there is any basis to the suspicion that the notion of 'statistical regions' is being used to divide Sandžak definitively, he replied negatively and said: 'It was already divided before this. We are fixing that now' (Tanjug 2010).

At about the same time that the Forum was established, the leading parliamentary Bosniak parties – the SDP and the Bosniak List for a European Sandžak (BLES, a coalition of Bosniak parties gathered around the Party of Democratic Action) – agreed to vote for the Law of Regional Development after having secured guarantees from the Government that the six municipalities of Sandžak would be part of one region. The Law was passed in early July 2009, prescribing the future creation of seven regions, to be named as follows: 'Vojvodina, Belgrade, Western, Eastern, Central, Southern, and Kosovo and Metohija'[259] – as well as laying down that the Government of Serbia will determine which municipalities

[259] The Republic of Kosovo proclaimed its independence in 2008 and to this date, 111 out of 193 UN member states have recognised it as an independent state, not including the Republic of Serbia. However, since the early 2010s there has been and a slow move towards normalisation of ties mediated by the EU, resulting in the negotiations of the highest ranking politicians and several agreements. Regardless of these developments, the Constitution of the Republic of Serbia proclaims that 'the province of Kosovo and Metohija is an integral part of Serbian territory, [and] that it has the position of essential autonomy within the sovereign state of Serbia'. Consequently, the final version of the Law on regionalisation includes Kosovo and Metohija as a region, as it is referred to in legal documents of the Republic of Serbia.

belong to which region on the basis of the recommendations of the Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia (SORS) and criteria defined by the Law and in accordance with EU standards.

After several months of work on a decree that would determine the content of future regions, the SORS produced one that was then confirmed by EuroStat and passed by the Government in December 2009. Its content foresaw the creation of seven regions in Serbia, a framework within which Novi Pazar and Tutin would have been part of the Central Serbia region, while the other four municipalities considered part of Sandžak would have fallen to the Western Serbia region, regardless of the agreement that the leaders of the two Bosniak parties had made with their coalition partners. Why the MPs of the SDP and BLES voted in favour of the Decree, regardless of this agreement, is unknown, yet within days a wave of protest erupted from the members of some Bosniak parties and religious leaders, after which the leaders of SDP and BLES announced that it was all the result of a grave misunderstanding and that they would meet with the prime minister as soon as possible to discuss matters with a view to changing the Decree. According to Esad Džudžević of BLES, the reasons for their opposition to the Decree were numerous. However, while he maintained that 'it is crucial to put economic motives first', he also asserted that the Decree represents a violation of the human and minority rights of the Bosniak community: 'Both the Constitution and the Law of Minority Rights determine that the state is obliged to acknowledge the existence of geographical regions when making administrative divisions, that is, regions which one minority inhabits, as is the case with Sandžak. This Decree obstructs the Bosniak national minority in satisfying its rights' (Kruševljanin 2010).

As a reaction, in mid-January 2010 a group of regional Serb NGOs organized an emergency round table in Belgrade that I attended. I was doing my MPhil course in Anthropology at the time and had used my winter vacation to conduct as much fieldwork for my MPhil thesis as I could and I happened to be in Belgrade on the day the round table was organised. Their main aim was to discuss ways of counteracting the possible impact of the approaching meeting between Bosniak parliamentarians and the Prime Minister of Serbia. A number of Serbian academics were present, as well as the presidents of a few of Southwest Serbia's municipalities who had travelled to Belgrade especially for the purpose. The atmosphere was characterized by a nervous yet subtle urgency. Members of the mass media had also been invited and were present in relatively large numbers, mostly journalists from various daily newspapers, but also cameramen from two popular TV stations. The first point to be discussed was the content of the official statement drawn up by the organisational committee of this group of local NGOs that was to be sent to the Prime Minister and, they hoped, published by the media as a warning about the consequences of what they believed would be an improperly conducted regionalisation:

> We warn that singling out four municipalities from Zlatibor county and two from Raška county, and their unification into one territory, the so-called Sandžak region, has no basis in the economic, cultural, historical or any other sense, and that drawing up borders for it would represent a creation of borders of separation instead of borders of integration and understanding. It would be unacceptable for the Government to change its decision, already taken, due to pressure and blackmail and extract four municipalities from Zlatibor county without the approval of the Serbs in these municipalities, especially since Serbs comprise the majority in three of these four [municipalities]. […]. Many citizens would experience this as … a soft 'Kosovo-isation' of the Raška region. The breaking up of Zlatibor county would generate the departure of the Serbian population from this area, encourage separatism and bring forth a destabilisation of the whole western area…

Once the declaration had been read out, several speakers took the stand to express their thoughts on its contents, whether anything should be modified and to state their view of the situation in general. Since the academics present were experts in different fields, the audience could hear about the alleged problems with the Bosniak proposals for

regionalisation from the economic, historico-political, legal and other perspectives. For example, one president of a municipality from Southwest Serbia spoke about the problems the local administration is faced with, pointing out that a dispute about regional borders is just a symptom of a much more serious problem facing his municipality and those aligned with it:

> Whatever the borders, it is just a matter of time, because it is not the borders that are the key problem. I will speak concretely, about facts. For example, consider this new Law of Rationalisation – of the judicial system, local administration, education system...it directly affects Zlatibor county, causing the departure of people and a transformation of the ethnic structure. Other municipalities that are threatened by this law cannot express their worry because their presidents cannot speak up due to directives from their party centres. I, on the other hand, can speak [as a member of an opposition party], but no one in the media wants to listen about the problems of local administrations. If they close the municipal court that is more than 130 years old, if they shut down the village schools and ambulances, if they conduct a rationalisation of the local administration without any criteria, the population will move to some better place, and it is obvious who will move in since this is a border area. We are a border region and we share the same fate with all these other municipalities. (…) From 1991 to 2001, the county that had the greatest reduction of population size in Serbia is Zlatibor county, and that is no coincidence. These are facts, things which are happening already. Here, we are concerned about borders, but we do not realize that everything has been set up much earlier. The core problem is the process of emigration.

Minister Rasim Ljajić asserted that the suggestion that all Sandžak's municipalities be merged into one region did not represent a 'heating up of separatist tendencies' and that the idea of the 'Sandžak state is a long gone story' (Večernje Novosti 2010). He continued:

> There are many who are now trying to gain political points. The Bosniak nationalists are saying that this [the Decree] is proof that Serbia wants to eliminate and destroy Sandžak and marginalize Bosniaks, while Serbian nationalists maintain that someone wants to create a state. Autonomy is an already told historical topic that we do not need to return to. It is an impossible mission. It is imagined by a marginal and insignificant number of people (ibid.).

As for what the motives actually are, he listed economic, industrial, transportation and practical reasons, assuring participants in the round table that regionalisation so conceived has no political dimension whatsoever.

Since I was not able to be present at a conference on the topic of regionalisation organised by any Bosniak party or organisation, I tried to set up meetings with Bosniak politicians

and religious leaders in order to hear their stance on the topic. I received a reply only from the PR officer of Mufti Zukorlić, whom I conducted an interview with in Sjenica, excerpts of which can be found throughout the thesis. I also spoke with a high-ranking politician from the Party of Democratic Action who wished to remain anonymous, and whose opinion on the issue can be found in the latter parts of this Chapter. In addition, while in Novi Pazar, I interviewed intellectuals and members of the non-government sector, most notably Aida Ćorović, a human rights activist and presently a parliamentarian, Slađana Novosel, an investigative journalist from Novi Pazar, Semiha Kačar, president of the Sandžak Committee for the Protection of Human Rights and Freedoms,[260] Ramiz Crnišanin, a renowned lawyer, published activist and former parliamentarian, and others who provided valuable insights. Finally, I spoke to numerous informants on the matter. The results of these conversations will be set out in the following sections.

A region-wide frustration

In his address to the round table, the president of one municipality in Southwest Serbia described the state of affairs there and the relationship of the state officials and the media to 'Sandžak' as an idea. His words express great frustration and a sense of helplessness that was characteristic of the reactions of many people I spoke to in Southwest Serbia, both Serb and Bosniak, due to a feeling that their views were being disregarded and overlooked by important political actors in Serbia, making it all the more important to take action. I cite him at some length:

> There is great concern, great anxiety, and there are many people who are disappointed with our 'end' [referring to Southwest the region]. Many of them have already experienced certain things, we have a lot of refugees down there who have already gone through one

[260] Sandžački odbor za zaštitu ljudskih prava i sloboda.

> exodus, and their fear is understandable. (...) If I were to speak to people in Southwest Serbia about what I think is going on, I would end up with accusations that I am spreading nationalism, spoiling good inter-ethnic relations...and that is also a specific type of pressure. (...) Today, before I came here, I had a telephone call – they told me: 'Don't raise tensions: this is all just economics'. Well, if it is just economics, then what in the world do we, Priboj and Nova Varoš, have in common economically with Novi Pazar and Tutin? We can't do anything together; we couldn't even make a landfill together, let alone carry out a more serious project. There is absolutely no rational argumentation. I have had numerous meetings with representatives of OSCE, ambassadors, members of various international organisations (...) on the other hand, in all these years I have been visited by a couple of ministers on very rare occasions. We are of no interest to our ministers…

A little before the Bosniak representatives met with the Prime Minister of Serbia, Serb representatives from Priboj, Prijepolje and Nova Varoš, municipal presidents and leaders of NGOs rejected the possibility of their becoming part of a Sandžak region, describing it as preposterous. As a response, they threatened to organize road blocks and to ask for a referendum: 'If the Government succumbs to the demands of the Bosniaks, we will announce a referendum!', said the president of the municipality of Priboj, Lazar Rvović (Kriještorac and Biševac 2010). On the other side, some Bosniak politicians stated that, if pressed, a referendum would be organized in the municipalities of Novi Pazar and Tutin since the people there should also be allowed to declare whether they approve of this or that option, adding that the capital city of the new Sandžak region need not be Novi Pazar, but could be Prijepolje. In addition, it was stated that they would be open to the possibility of introducing two official names for such a region, either Sandžak or Raška (ibid.). It was in this text that I first heard of any such initiative, since earlier demands were to call the potential region either Sandžak or a neutral name using a geographical term.

The fact that it is 'statistical regions' that are being discussed in all these examples is not at all obvious, and unless this is stressed, an uninformed reader would quickly lose sight of this fact. The suggestion that a future 'statistical region' should be given two official names shows just how far away the political debate on regionalism has strayed from 'economic and practical criteria'. That ordinary people have understood regionalisation as

a very serious process, suspecting it has been designed by the 'enemy' to produce potentially long-term and disastrous effects, is apparent from the reactions to the messy politics of regionalism in Serbia. For example, the term 'breaking up Sandžak' has appeared on several occasions in the words of Bosniaks, even though Sandžak is not an administrative unit. A small proportion reacted to the news of the Decree with fervour as strong as that of the young man quoted below; in fact, such rhetoric predominantly originated from Zukorlić, who was also frequently heard talking about 'a long-awaited national awakening' and an 'end to the obedient silence of the Bosniaks under Communism' (Reakcija: Sandžačka hronika 2009). That this has had some effect is apparent among young people especially. For example, in Novi Pazar, one young man was very open in telling me about his thoughts on the dangers that loom:

> It is high time that the people of Sandžak take over and do something for themselves before it is too late. If not, our politicians will lead us to disaster; they have betrayed their people and their homeland [Sandžak] by working for those who are the enemy of the Bosniaks. The people of Sandžak should come together and prevent its break up because that is just the first step – breaking up Sandžak would lead to its disappearance. We have the right to autonomy, and we will not allow ourselves to live without any rights, like the Palestinians!

A number of others I spoke to in Novi Pazar repeated similar things, such as: 'We have to fight for our right to Sandžak' and 'We can't let them take Sandžak'. Some also underlined physical security as a reason they were in favour of a Sandžak region: 'The only option for us, if things are ever to get better, is Sandžak. We can only ever be safe within an autonomous region'. This sheds some light on the distrust felt by some Bosniaks towards the state of Serbia and the effects of memories of the 1990s war that was waged only some hundred kilometres away in BiH. The feeling of uncertainty is exacerbated by post-2000 constitutional developments which present Serbia as an ethnically-defined nation state, as described in previous chapters. For many Serbs any mention of regionalism and Sandžak in the same sentence brings to mind the threat of 'Kosovisation' or the 'Green Axis'

theory[261] that gained prominence during the nationalistic 1990s. In the minds of Bosniaks the future is characterized by much more uncertainty. As one man told me:

> In the early 1990s I went to a large meeting in Novi Pazar, at the football stadium. All these Muslim politicians were making speeches about what might happen and what should be done. So then Suljo [Sulejman Ugljanin][262] took the microphone. He said first that Croatia and Slovenia were going to be independent. Most of us raised our eyebrows. Then that Bosnia would be independent. This, we thought, was a bit of an exaggeration. On and on he went. He even said that Montenegro and Kosovo would be independent. By that time the whole stadium was hysterically laughing.

Conversely, a young politician and local official from the SDA party took a more strategic view:

> I identify more with Sandžak than with my home town. Sjenica, Novi Pazar, Tutin, Prijepolje – if you put all of these together, then you would get something resembling a proper city. (...) So I don't really pay attention to anything below the regional level [in my politics]. And everything I do, even things I do at the local level, I do only for this reason. This town is a *selendra* [pejorative term for a village], and it cannot survive if it does not function together with [surrounding towns] as part of a cultural, historical, economic whole, a middle level.

Most Serbs reject the term Sandžak by offering various explanations, though they all conclude that the most important reason is its contemporary political connotations. One Serb from Novi Pazar, an education worker, said: 'I personally think that the popular use of Sandžak precedes popular use of the name Raška as a geographical term'. Regardless, he chose not to refer to the area as Sandžak, and says, 'Of course, the term Raška was also used before. But in the recent past it has been used to counter the Sandžak term because "Sandžak" doesn't just describe the rich history of this area anymore, now it means politics', citing the referendum for the autonomy of Sandžak in 1991 as an example.[263] A

[261] The 'Green Axis' refers to a geopolitical project that the enemies of Christianity are said to have designed with the goal of connecting Muslims from Turkey to Bosnia through Kosovo and Sandžak. The breakup of Yugoslavia was, according to the theory, a necessary condition for the realisation of this project, which further requires the dismantling of Republika Srpska and the independence of Sandžak in order to be achieved. It is unclear who authored the theory, but it was used by Serbian nationalists in the late 1980s and throughout the 1990s as one argument in justifying the wars in BiH and Kosovo.

[262] See footnote 178.

[263] The referendum was organised by the Muslim National Council in October 1991 in a period of growing ethnic tensions in BiH and at the height of Milošević's power in Serbia and Montenegro, encouraged by the Bosnian nationalist Party of Democratic Action and its leader Alija Izetbegović (Ron 2000). Voters were asked to mark whether they supported 'full political and territorial autonomy' as well as the right of the

Serbian historian from Prijepolje quotes a similar reason for disregarding the term 'Sandžak', but provides another solution: 'I reject both names, both Raška and Sandžak. These are both political terms, and I refuse to use either. I call my home Polimlje,[264] which is a geographical designation and covers a broad territory that shares a similar history and culture'.

Numerous Bosniaks I spoke to also agree that the political use of both terms has given them negative connotations. Many claim to use the term Raška when speaking of the Serbian medieval kingdom or when referring to the geographical term Starovlaško-Raška Highlands [*Starovlaško-raška visija*][265] and that, in all other contexts, it carries a political message. When I asked a student I had just met in Belgrade where he was from, his reply was illustrative of the variety of terms that are in use in the region: 'I am from the Sandžak or the Raška region, in a wider sense, that is, from Stari Vlah, in a narrower sense, or to be more precise, from the village of Božetići, in the municipality of Nova Varoš.'

One Bosniak entrepreneur from Prijepolje described his understanding of the two terms in this sense: 'Sandžak for me as a term is only [relevant] when we are talking about history. Sandžak is a term that many are now narrowing down. For them, Sandžak is now reduced to Novi Pazar...while it is actually also part of Montenegro, and Bosnia up to the town of Foča, and a part of Serbia. And what does the word Raška mean to me? A provocation.'

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region to secede, mirroring the Krajina Serbs in Croatia (Morrison 2008). The referendum was declared as unconstitutional by the authorities in both republics, who deemed it as an act of treason and subsequently treated it as a serious threat of separatism.

[264] *Polimlje* is a geographical term referring to the territory surrounding the basin of the river Lim, and includes the municipalities of Priboj and Prijepolje in Serbia, and Bijelo Polje, Berane, Andrijevica and Plav in Montenegro.

[265] *Starovlaško-raška visija* is a geographical term and refers to the highlands that occupy the south-western part of Serbia, spanning from the Western Morava river in the north, to the Montenegrin *Brda* (northern Montenegro) to the south, the Drina River (forming the natural border with BiH) to the west and the valley of the river Ibar and Kopaonik mountains to the east, covering about 4500 km². The name itself suggests that this region consists of Raška and *Stari Vlah*, another historical region that cuts through parts of Sandžak, but also including towns to the north.

That most people are aware of the political connotations of these words is perhaps most directly illustrated by the attitudes of elderly inhabitants of remote villages. A 75-year old Muslim widow living alone in a remote mountain village only said this when asked about what the word Sandžak means to her: 'I don't know. I don't meddle in political affairs.'

In municipalities such as Sjenica and Novi Pazar, where the Muslim population is numerically predominant, most Serbs expressed a fear that, should a region with a majority Muslim population be created, they would be swallowed up within it: 'The state has rarely shown any interest in this area anyway – imagine how it would be for us if the Bosniaks received more power? If this town became part of some "Sandžak" county, I would have no choice but to move to [the town of] Raška, Kragujevac, or even Belgrade, wherever I can get a job'. On the other hand, those from towns with a predominantly Serbian population, such as Nova Varoš, were especially irritated with the whole process, since, they said, they felt no connection, cultural, historical or economic, with some of the other Sandžak municipalities. A Serbian development worker from Nova Varoš told me: 'Just because Nova Varoš was part of some historical county centuries ago does not mean that we have anything to do with each other today in practical terms. We have no link whatsoever with Novi Pazar – we are more closely linked to Zlatibor and Užice.'[266] A journalist from Prijepolje agreed: 'They want to push us to be with Novi Pazar, but Prijepolje and Novi Pazar – they are like fire and water.' These statements are also telling of the alliances and rivalries of the towns, with Novi Pazar, the only flourishing city in the region that is today one of the biggest in Serbia, often seen as too dominant. Many, however, also pointed out the everyday difficulties that are a result of the official regional structure. For example, the inhabitants of Sjenica often expressed their discontent with the current territorial organisation which makes this municipality part of Zlatibor county, and

[266] Zlatibor is a big tourist centre to the north of Nova Varoš, while Užice is the economic centre of the Zlatibor county

thus hours away from Užice, its administrative hub, instead of being part of the same county as neighbouring Novi Pazar, towards which it naturally gravitates. The hope of all those I spoke to, however, was that the new regional units would finally provide a long-awaited solution.

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In the spring of 2010, the government of Serbia announced that the Decree of December 2009 was inadequate, giving as the principal reason the uneven number of inhabitants in the seven different regions (Blic 2010). In May 2010, the Law of Regional Development was amended and five regions formed instead of the original seven. The West and Central regions which the Decree had proposed as separate were united into one, called the 'Šumadija and Western region'.[267] Along with a large number of other municipalities, this region also encompasses the six thought of as Sandžak by Bosniaks, but it does not have a Muslim majority. The Bosniak ministers were officially satisfied with this plan, while their more radical counterparts saw it as yet another defeat for Muslims. On the other side, the government was pleased with the outcome, while the group of local Serb NGOs, municipality leaders and academics, mentioned above, as well as some political parties from the opposition, stated that this was a victory for Muslim politics in Serbia and a clear demonstration of the government's conscious neglect of state interests. However, there is at least one thing almost everyone in Southwest Serbia agrees about: the new 'Šumadija and Western region' is too big and developmentally dysfunctional.

[267] See figure 9b in Appendix A.

Chapter 8 - Conclusion

In this thesis I have set out to investigate the different ways in which people construct the relationship between past, present and future through a study of historical consciousness and its role in the negotiation of identity and shifting power relations in Southwest Serbia. In order to do so, I have focused on boundaries, both ethnic ones between Serbs and Muslims, who predominantly inhabit the area, and those that they imagine surround and criss-cross the world they live in. My goal has been to trace the life of these boundaries, and with it the relationships between those who imagine them, by following their transformations in history and their roles in the minds of the people, as well as in the meanings they give to them as they mark out their social identities and shape their sense of similarity to and difference from others. I have analysed the diverse pasts and futures that coalesce in the many 'time spaces' that Southwest Serbia's social actors inhabit in any present moment and from which they (re)construct these boundaries and their identities.

The data presented have demonstrated that ethnicity and nationality are not fully crystalized as concepts in Southwest Serbia, their contents being imagined in inconsistent ways in and between social groups, while ethno-national identities and histories are not on the whole felt to be crucial to one's personal sense of self, but are perceived and put to use as malleable political resources. This is not unusual for border areas, which are typically a mosaic of cultural, linguistic and socio-political practices and influences. However, in the case of Southwest Serbia, both the data collected for the purpose of this thesis and those of other researchers, as described in Chapters 2, 4 and 5, implies that the roots of this situation lie primarily in socio-historical factors, the ruptures and social fragmentation caused by the violent disintegration of Yugoslavia and the political strategies that preceded

and followed it, as well as in the complexities that characterise the post-Yugoslav space in terms of identity politics, a phenomenon that is especially manifest in its border regions. The general feeling of uncertainty that all of these have produced is a significant contributing factor in the decision-making and identification processes of both individual and political actors.

One of the goals of this thesis has thus been to address how power is diffusely made manifest in society through local practices of remembrance and forgetting, that is, to inquire into what different actors on the local level do with their minds, emotions and memories that allows a new political regime to constitute itself, or, on the contrary, sabotages it in its aspirations to do so. This focus has induced me to consider the different interpretations of history as a manifestation of power as it 'travels' from the national to the local and individual levels. Systems of power aspire to construct their individual systems of truth rather than systems of dominance in order to mobilize individuals, groups and their activities. History, then, appears as one such system of truth, and, as we have seen in this thesis, in the present historical moment in which Southwest Serbia has found itself, this is laid out bare.

Research has shown that there is a strong sense among the people of the Balkans that proclaimed identities should not be taken for granted. Denying identity to the Other is frequent because identities are often perceived as masks or constructs put to use to serve selfish purposes. The negation of the Other's identity, however, is not only a result of the flexible and changing nature of identities, but is itself often part of a political struggle. One of the most pertinent to the topic of this thesis is the negation of the identity of Muslim Slavs – while they are categorized by most Serbs as 'Islamized Serbs', at the same time they are 'not quite Serb'. The Muslim Slavs who remained in the post-Ottoman state of Serbia and in the various polities it was part of subsequently stood for an anomaly that was

subject to various state policies. At the same time, as we have seen in Chapter 3, the obscurity that characterizes whatever is vague and liminal allowed for manoeuvring and for the calculated action of those who are on the margins of society. The regionalism debate, as presented in Chapter 7, is one example of this phenomenon: through the use of different names for the same territories, opposing groups have participated in both the approval and the denial of identities and histories in Serb-Muslim power struggles. Jenkins' point (1997) about the power of categorisations is particularly useful in concluding this thesis: by distinguishing between *group identification* and *social categorisation*, he turns to the question of *where* ascription is directed from. The first 'occurs inside the boundary, the second outside and across it' (1997: 23), and identity is the outcome of both. The development and changes that the ethnic term for Muslims has undergone from 'Turk' to 'Bosniak' show that we must not forget to inquire about the place of power in ascription – the power to name and therefore define yourself and the Other according to your rules.

Though they do not articulate it in these very words, my informants are aware of this phenomenon which they describe as a general feeling of constraint and inwardness in their everyday lives. In that regard it does not come as a surprise that national identity is marked as not particularly significant to one's personal sense of self by many of the people I have interviewed, even though their actions often indicate the contrary. To a certain extent these declarations arose as a reaction to the inconsistent, divisive and undemocratic nation-building processes, as described in Chapter 4 - as an attempt to assert some control over these processes, but also to 'defend' one's intimate feelings of self, one's memories and family histories against political appropriation and discreditation. It is an illustration of the unspoken belief that preserving the integrity of one's emotions and memories is a political act in itself. At the same time, however one reacts to social

categorisation, the reaction becomes constitutive in the process of identification (cf. Jenkins), as a result of which these two processes interact and affect each other in complex ways.

As we have seen in Chapter 4, the inhabitants of Southwest Serbia are aware of the influence of identity politics on their everyday lives. When 'politics permeates every pore of society', as one of my informants put it, they are increasingly likely to take part in the process of ethno-national identification and how different groups and spaces are named, defined and classified. Willingly or not, but nonetheless consciously, they participate in the process in order to try to shape it to their particular interests, though this is rarely publicly articulated as such. In the political arena, other discourses are employed in order to give legitimacy to the power struggle that is at the heart of the matter, the most frequent being the historical discourse, and within it, questions of the historical justification of political claims, intertwined with the minority rights discourse. Ethnicity has emerged as a particularly effective proxy for other social fissures. The call for regionalism is thus justified by evoking feelings of insecurity and uncertainty that resonate with the population of the region in a very real way and at the same time gloss over issues related to the distribution of power, access to resources, as well as the centre/periphery, urban/rural, Yugoslav/nationalist and other divides, all of which cut across ethnic boundaries.

According to the symbols that political representatives of the Republic of Serbia have deployed to forge a bond of identity between themselves and the population, the state has been presented as belonging more to one group – the group it is named after – than to other groups that are included as national minorities and do not, as a result, have 'full' membership in the nation-state. They may be entitled to it, should they choose to go down the route of assimilation, or, they can take an alternative route to 'compensate' for their unequal status, as provided by the framework of segregative multiculturalism described in

Chapter 4. Such a framework has provided the backdrop for much social friction in Southwest Serbia. In areas such as Sjenica, the state has sent a message to the Serbian population through symbols that they have been granted a higher degree of ownership to it. However, everyday life in a municipality on the economic and political periphery of the country does not, for the most part, correspond. On the other hand, all those identifying as non-Serbs have, in this framework, been excluded from the sense of belonging. The 'concessions' that the state allows national minorities in the form of access to resources on the basis of ethnicity, local decision-making, leniency towards tax evasion and so on, have not remedied this gap – quite the opposite, such strategies have further strengthened the perceived absence of the state in these areas.

Thus, the principal strategy of all ethnic groups has been emigration. While most of the population is motivated primarily by economic reasons, marginalisation also figures as an important reason. Although the Serb population in Bosniak-majority municipalities places greater importance on a sense of alienation from the local community and municipality, while the Bosniak population feels the same primarily with regard to the state, these feelings are segmented and the resulting sense of marginalisation is shared. The second strategy I have found as prevalent in everyday life has been withdrawal. This can be manifested in several ways - as a refusal by Serbs to participate in programs sponsored by the local Bosniak-run government or an avoidance of bars owned by a member of the other ethnicity, but more than anything it is expressed by an inwardness – a withdrawal into small local groups, the circle of the family and oneself which has been described by many of my informants, examples of which we saw particularly in Chapter 6. The third strategy is mobilisation. In Chapter 7 we have seen how this plays out on the regional level. The asymmetric ethno-national situatedness that comes to the fore in such moments – where the Serbian population is presented and perceived as a majority on the state level, but a

minority on the local level, while Bosniaks citizens are a state minority, but a local majority, produces fears and identity claims on both sides.

Therefore, the first important theme which has emerged in this thesis is the question of control over the process of identification. We have seen that, although informants do not consider nationality to be of crucial importance for their intimate sense of self, there is a general understanding among them of the hold that ethnonyms have on their everyday lives, their past, present and future, as well as that what these consist of is prone to change and thus allows considerable room for manoeuvre. The data demonstrate that there is a general consensus among both Serbs and Bosniaks of the role of power in designating, shaping and transforming ethnonyms. They are aware, that is, that their own ethno-national identities are continually being renegotiated and reconstructed as a bargaining resource in the political arena. However, what is significant is that the data also reveal their awareness that identification and social categorisation do not merely occur across the ethnic boundary. On the contrary, most ordinary people consider the processes of social categorisation to be controlled by the political elites to serve their particular interests and thus see them to be occurring largely independently of them. On the other hand, how the results of these processes will be interpreted and put to work by those they address is understood as an entirely different matter.

In *The Voice of Prophecy*, Ardener tells us that it is the prophetic activity of individuals that permits discontinuity within the social space – the individuals themselves are in fact those who represent these discontinuities (Ardener 1989: 148). Of course, prophets must be careful not to let their imagination run wild lest they be pronounced mad, since they are at every moment anchored in the social, regardless of the potential that acting on anticipation provides them with (Hastrup 2004: 231). The ‘prophecies’ that are uttered

daily in Southwest Serbia and with reference to it are numerous, conflicting, and appear as entirely reasonable to those they address. Bleak in their forecasts, the prophecies perfectly reflect the bleakness of everyday life in Southwest Serbia as perceived through the prism of the past. As we saw in Chapters 4, 5, 6 and 7, people interact with the world in an imaginative way, according to a vision of a plot of how the 'story' might develop, a vision that is informed by their memory of the past and their experience of the present. This creative activity contributes to a type of collective imagining, almost a collective memory of the future, which feeds on the contents of the social context that people are immersed in and the *plot-spaces* of remembrance they walk through every day.

Monuments in the region, as elsewhere, are symbolic codifications of memory and of desirable values, a means of minority representation as well as of provocation and control. In Southwest Serbia, the diversity of monuments indicates that the region's inhabitants identify with different regimes of moral orientation, and as such, cultivate a sense of duty and indebtedness (Ricoeur 2004) to diverse groups from the past and construct the Other in a variety of ways. While for most individuals a primary sense of obligation is felt towards one's family or community, which may be expanded to include those of the other religious affiliation, political actors aimed to impose a regime in which a sense of solidarity is reserved chiefly for the ethnic group, even when this is in conflict with personal memories and values. This is apparent in the struggle over who should join the region's pantheon of heroes and the question of which characters from the past one is indebted to, as illustrated by a competition of morally opposed monuments and everyday discussions of heroes and heroism in Chapter 5. The changes that Sjenica's cultural scene has undergone in recent years, as described in Chapter 6, also illustrate this process.

Chapter 7 has, however, shown that in some cases actors may choose to act in accordance with nation-state logic. The regionalism debate brought to the fore the economic and political neglect of Southwest Serbia and the inconsistency that exists between state narratives and local circumstances, quickly changing into a campaign which illustrated that most inhabitants of the region believe in the correspondence of nationality, identity, culture and territory, in unity, as an ideal to aspire to and the ultimate solution. The fact that a clear correspondence between these ideas does not exist both for the Serbs and Bosniaks creates a certain tension that requires change. For these reasons, the concepts of ethnicity, nationality and identity and their contents are not fixed in Southwest Serbia, but are still 'on the move' and in a process of negotiation.

What has emerged as a result, and is the second theme of this thesis, is that the primary and by far most dominant allegiance in Southwest Serbia is to one's family, understood as a historical unit, and to a lesser extent one's local community – the group whose 'essence' escapes political malleability and whose members share a common cross-temporal vision. It is family membership that determines one's temporal perspective, one's place in the historical dimension of everyday life and, consequently, in the interpretation of ethnic narratives and struggles. One's national identity is viewed through the prism of family heritage and temporarily moulded by current politics in any particular moment.

We have seen in the last two chapters that ethnicity became especially relevant in social interaction when politics penetrated into everyday life, highlighting cultural differences and amplifying the importance of the past in the present life of Southwest Serbia, as enacted on both the local and regional levels. As Donnan and Wilson point out, 'the vast number of ethnic groups have a national identity as the cultural element which binds them together, and their nationalism is linked in varying degrees to a past, present or hoped-for

future national identity and national sovereignty' (1999: 6). However, through the reflections of informants on various topics, it was possible to discern a consciousness about the absence of a common vision both within national groups and between them. Though contemporaries, members of ethno-national groups move in divergent plot spaces and act upon their uncommon visions of the future, impeding collective action and the formation of belonging to a greater collective. Most frequently described as a lack of concord [*nesloga*], *sloga* or concord has emerged as the unattainable ideal, the barrier to a better life, in the answers of informants from all backgrounds.

The world we enter, discover and define during our fieldwork is a state in 'particular time-space' (Hastrup 1992: 7), an amalgamation of society and history: 'Individual agents act partly on their vision of the plot-space and their perception of what must come next—and thus they respond to their own prophetic position between a familiar past and a dimly perceived future, falling into place as emplotted and acted on' (Hastrup 2004: 231). These theoretical considerations prompt a more historical anthropology that is interested in the interplay between the synchronic and the diachronic and that I have attempted to implement in the study of the dominant values that the people of Southwest Serbia attempt to realize and the explanations they offer for their feelings and actions. These lessons teach us that we should be careful not to confuse discursive integration for coherence, for one 'world' is more often than not characterized by disjunction, disagreement and difference.

If we follow the hypothesis that the world is plotted and parcelled up, it becomes apparent that the mere existence of a dominant discourse of identity does not guarantee consistency in the ways it is imagined. When it is the opposite, as is the case in Southwest Serbia, discourse has different effects in each of the many plots and parcels. In the 'shared world' that is Southwest Serbia, people stand on different plot-spaces, and it is from there and

with regard to their self-image that they interpret the realisation of the past in present events: the content of history may be agreed upon, but its consequences are an altogether different matter (Hastrup 1992). A historical anthropology must therefore allude to *both* space and time. Hence, to the realisation that the world consists of many places, we must add another – that there are separate 'times' through which the minds of people inhabiting the same world travel.

Appendix A - Maps

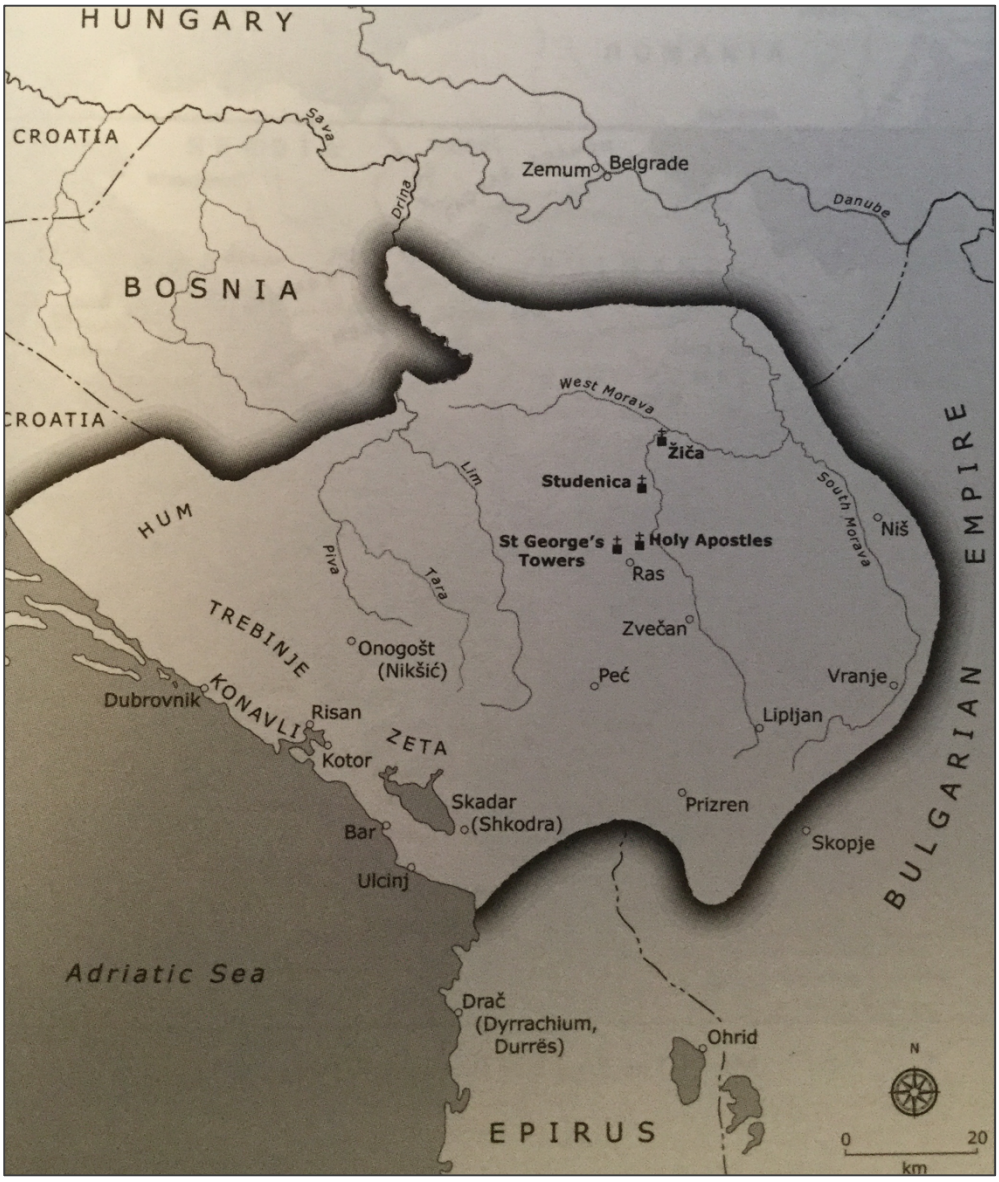


Figure 1. 'Raška/Serbia in the time of Stefan, the first-crowned [Stefan Prvovenčani], c.1220'.
Source: Morrison and Roberts 2013.



Figure 2. ‘Map of the Byzantine Empire in 1265’.
Source: Shepherd 1911.



Figure 3. ‘The Byzantine Empire and the Ottoman Turks in 1355’.
Source: Shepherd 1911.



Figure 4. ‘The Ottoman Empire 1451-1481’.
Source: Shepherd 1911.



Figure 5. ‘The Bosnian pasaluk from 1593 – 1606’.
Source: Šabanović 1959.



Figure 6. ‘Eastern Europe after the Berlin Congress, 1878’.
Source: Labberton 1884.



Figure 7. Southwest Serbia border region
Source: Google Maps 2017, my adaptation.

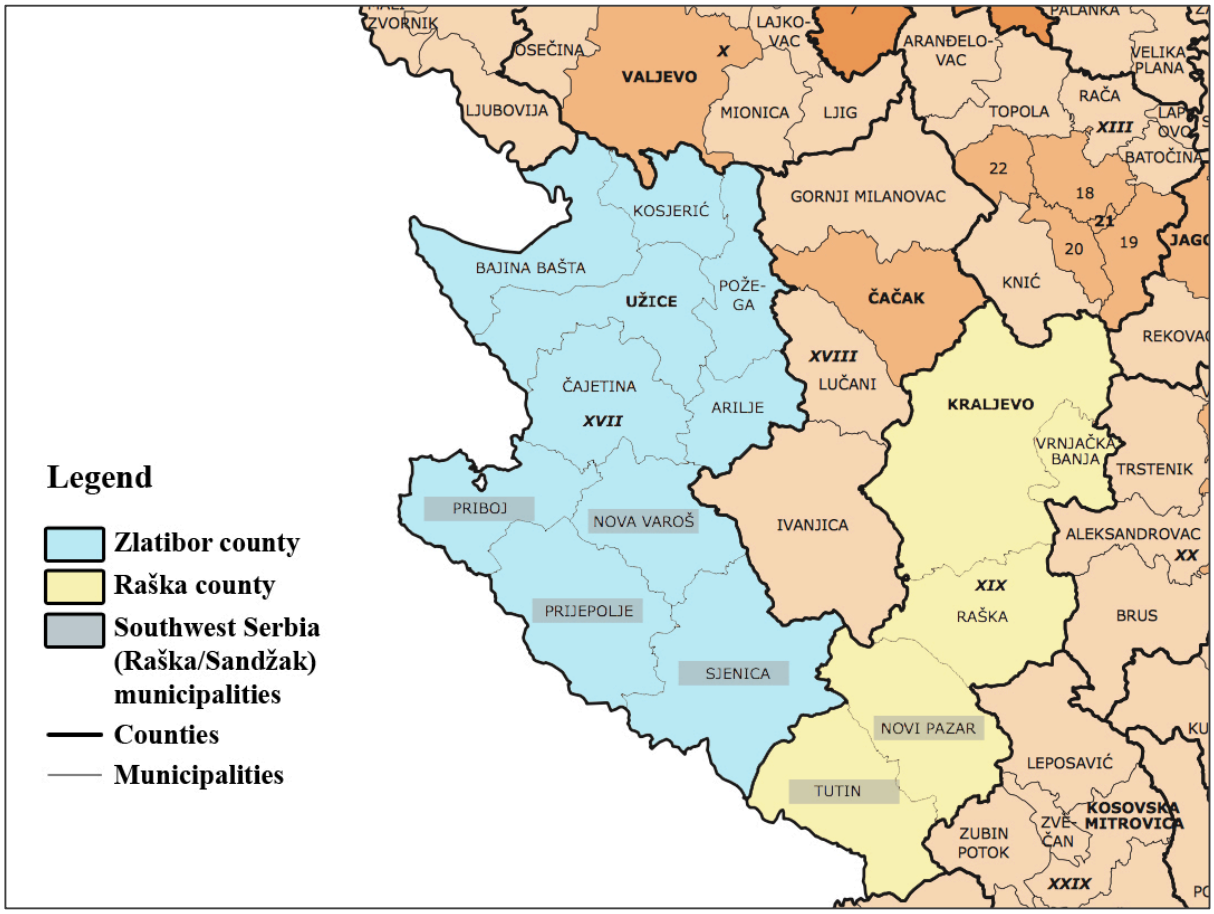


Figure 8. Zlatibor and Raška county
Source: Varjačić 2010, my adaptation

Adapted official map of the Statistics Office of the Republic of Serbia showing the division of the Republic of Serbia into municipalities and counties according to the Law on the territorial organisation of the Republic of Serbia[268] from 2007. The thick black lines represent the borders of counties and the thin black lines the borders of municipalities and cities.

[268] Note that the according to the Law on territorial organisation which this map is modelled after, and the Constitution of the Republic of Serbia, Kosovo is considered an integral part of Serbian territory. As a result, all official maps produced by the Republic of Serbia include it. For more on Kosovo's status see footnote 259.

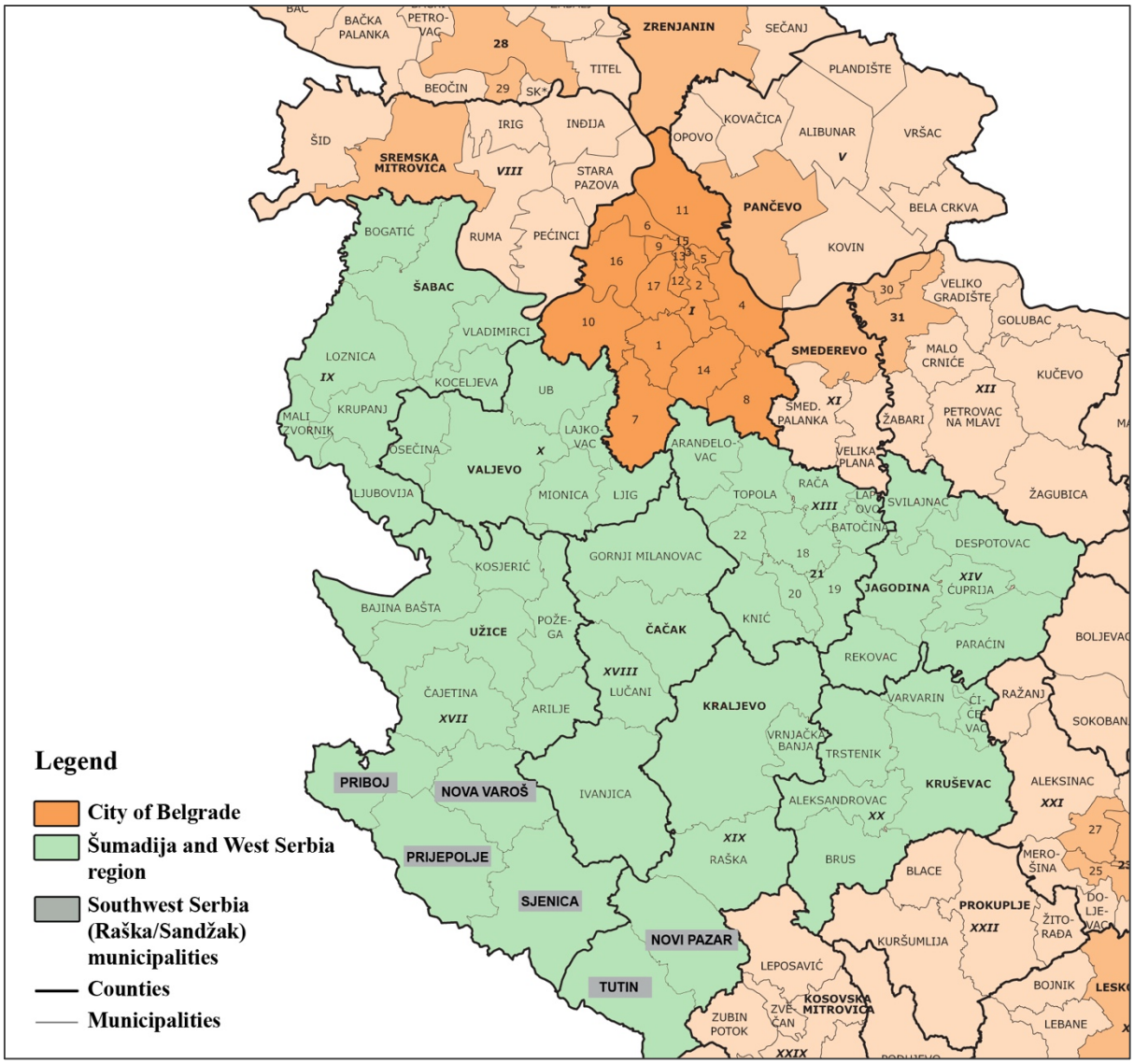


Figure 9. Šumadija and Western Serbia region
Source: Varjačić 2010, my adaptation

Appendix B – Abbreviations

AVNOJ - Anti-Fascist Council for the National Liberation of Yugoslavia (Antifašističko vijeće narodnog oslobođenja Jugoslavije).

BiH - Bosnia and Herzegovina.

BLES - Bosniak List for a European Sandžak (Bošnjačka lista za evropski Sandžak).

CK - Central Committee (Centralni komitet).

CK SKBiH - Central Committee of the League of Communists of Bosnia and Herzegovina (Centralni komitett Saveza komunista Bosne i Hercegovine).

CK SKJ - Central Committee of the League of Communists of Yugoslavia.

IC – The Islamic Community.

KUD - Cultural-artistic societies (Kulturno umetničko društvo).

SDP - Sandžak Democratic Party (Sandžačka demokratska partija).

SFR Yugoslavia - Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia.

SK - League of Communists (Savez komunista).

SK BiH - League of Communists of Bosnia and Herzegovina (Savez komunista Bosne i Hercegovine).

SKJ - League of Communists of Yugoslavia (Savez komunista Jugoslavija).

SORS - Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia.

ZAVNOS - Regional Antifascist Council of the National Liberation of Sandžak (Zemaljsko antifašističko veće narodnog oslobođenja Sandžaka).

Appendix C - Questionnaire

National identity in Southwest Serbia

1. Year of birth: _____
Poller - Mark decade:

- ○ < 1940
- ○ 1941-1950
- ○ 1951 - 1960
- ○ 1961 – 1970
- ○ 1971 – 1980
- ○ 1981 – 1990
- ○ > 1990

2. Gender: ○ Female ○ Male

3. Place of birth: _____
Town/Village - Municipality - Country

4. Place of residence: _____
Town/Village - Municipality - Country

Poller - Mark municipality of residence**:** ○ Prijepolje ○ Sjenica ○ Priboj

Poller - Is place of residence urban or rural? ○ Urban ○ Rural

Poller - Is place of residence multi-ethnic or monoethnic? ○ Multi-ethnic ○ Mono-ethnic

5. Occupation: _____

6. Education [Where did you go to school, university?]: _____

Poller – Mark education:

○ Elementary school ○ High school graduate ○ Undergraduate degree ○ Postgraduate degree

7. Employment status:

- ○ Employed/Self-employed
- ◉ Unemployed
- ○ Student
- ○ Retired
- ○ Other: _____

8. Citizenship (ask as open-ended question): _____
Poller – Mark citizenship:

- ☐ Albanian
- ☐ Bosnian
- ☐ Montenegrin
- ☐ Serbian
- ☐ Other: _____

9. Nationality (ask as open-ended question): _____
Poller – Mark nationality:

- ☐ Albanian
- ☐ Bosniak
- ☐ Montenegrin
- ☐ Serbian
- ☐ Muslim
- ☐ Yugoslav
- ☐ Undeclared

Other: _____

10. Religion: _____
Poller – Mark religion:

- ○ Atheist
- ○ Christianity – Catholic
- ○ Christianity – Orthodox
- ○ Islam
- ○ Other: _____

11. Please give your explanation of what is a nation and your perception of its significance?

_____

Think about how you would describe yourself. We are all members of different social groups and organisations. Which of these would you say are the most important in defining who you are?

Your family
Your nationality
Your religious group
Your age group
Your occupation
Your political party, group, movement
Your gender
Your social class

Country or part of the country you live in

(*) 12. Please select the most important group:
(*) 13. Please select the second most important group: _____
(*) 14. Please select the third most important group: _____

Please signify the importance of each of these social groups in defining your personal identity, from 1 – Insignificant to 4 - very significant.

15. Your family	1	2	3	4
16. Your nationality	1	2	3	4
17. Your religious group	1	2	3	4
18. Your age group	1	2	3	4
19. Your occupation	1	2	3	4
20. Your political party, group, movement	1	2	3	4
21. Your gender	1	2	3	4
22. Your social class	1	2	3	4
23. Country or part of the country you live in	1	2	3	4

24. Would you add anything else you feel is especially important for your sense of identity, but missing here?
_____

(*) 25. Please mark to what extent you feel close to your town? 1 2 3 4
*To feel close understood as identifying with

(*) 26. Please mark to what extent you feel close to the region you live in? 1 2 3 4
*Region understood as the most relevant unit to the respondent, smaller than the country and bigger than the municipality.
Poller: What is the name of the region? _____

(*) 27. Please mark to what extent you feel close to the country you live in? 1 2 3 4

28. Please mark to what extent you feel close to the Balkans? 1 2 3 4

(*) 29. Please mark to what extent you feel close to Europe? 1 2 3 4

30. Please mark to what extent you feel close to Bosnia and Herzegovina? 1 2 3 4

31. Please mark to what extent you feel close to Montenegro? 1 2 3 4

32. Please mark to what extent you feel close to Yugoslavia? 1 2 3 4

33. Please mark to what extent you feel close to Turkey? 1 2 3 4

34. Do you have a home-village? Please mark to what extent you feel close it? 1 2 3 4

(*) 35. Think about the concepts of nationality, nation, nation state. Describe your initial feelings:

- Negative
- More negative than positive
- More positive than negative
- Positive
- Indifferent

(*) Please indicate how important the following are for saying that a person is of a certain nationality, on a scale of 1 to 4, 1 – insignificant and 4 – significant.

(*) 36. To have been born in the relevant country	1 2 3 4
(*) 37. To have citizenship of relevant country	1 2 3 4
(*) 38. To have lived in relevant country for a long time	1 2 3 4
(*) 39. To speak the relevant language	1 2 3 4
(*) 40. To practice the relevant religion	1 2 3 4
41. To maintain the national culture and traditions	1 2 3 4
(*) 42. To personally feel like they are of certain nationality	1 2 3 4
(*) 43. To have ancestors of that nationality	1 2 3 4

44. Would you add anything else you feel is especially important for determining whether a person is of a certain nationality, but is missing here? _____

45. What are the biggest problems your national group is faced with today? _____

46. What are the solutions to overcoming these problems? _____

47. Who/what is preventing this from happening? _____

48. Who are the most important personalities in the history of your nation? _____

49. Who are the most important personalities in the history of [other nation]?

50. How do you imagine the ideal condition of your nation? _____

51. Would you describe yourself as a Sandžaklija? ○ Yes ○ No

(*) 52. Some people think of themselves first as [nationality]. Others may think of themselves more as [city]. Which, if any, of the following best describes how you see yourself?

○ Only [nationality] ○ More [nationality] than [city] ○ As [nationality] as [city]

○ More [city] than [nationality] ○ Only[city]

(*) 53. Some people think of themselves first as [nationality]. Others may think of themselves first as [region]. Which, if any, of the following best describes how you see yourself?

○ Only [nationality] ○ More [nationality] than [region] ○ As [nationality] as [region]

○ More [region] than [nationality] ○ Only [region]

(*) 54. Some people think of themselves first as [citizenship]. Others may think of themselves more as [city]. Which, if any, of the following best describes how you see yourself?

○ Only [nationality] ○ More [nationality] than [citizenship] ○ As [nationality] as [citizenship]

○ More [citizenship] than [nationality] ○ Only [citizenship]

55. Do you use the word Sandžak? What does Sandžak mean to you?

☐ Often ☐ Sometimes ☐ Never

Poller - Mark all that apply:

☐ Positive ☐ Negative ☐ Neutral

☐ Political ☐ Territorial ☐ Affective ☐ Historical

☐ Other: _____

56. Do you use the word Raška? What does Raška mean to you?

☐ Often ☐ Sometimes ☐ Never

Poller - Mark all that apply:

☐ Positive ☐ Negative ☐ Neutral

☐ Political ☐ Territorial ☐ Affective ☐ Historical

☐ Other: _____

57. How similar or different are Serbs and Bosniaks in your town? Mark on a scale of 1 to 4, 1 – very different on average, 4 – very similar on average: 1 2 3 4

How similar are Serbs and Bosniaks in your town in regard to the following?

58. Language 1 2 3 4
59. Customs 1 2 3 4
60. Interpersonal relations 1 2 3 4
61. Sense of humour 1 2 3 4
62. Appearance 1 2 3 4

63. Think about your co-nationals. Are there any key characteristics most of them share? If so, name them:

64. Think about [other national group]. Are there any key characteristics most of them share? If so, name them:
_____

65. How interested are you in history in general? Mark your interest on a scale from 1 to 4, 1 – not at all interested, 4 – very interested: 1 2 3 4

66. How would you mark your knowledge of it, from 1 to 4? 1 – Poor, 4 – Excellent. 1 2 3 4

67. How interested are you in the history of your "end"? 1 2 3 4

68. How would you mark your knowledge of it? 1 2 3 4

69. How interested are you in the history of your family? 1 2 3 4

70. How would you mark your knowledge of it? 1 2 3 4

(*) 71. Tell me something about the history of your family on your father's side:
Poller – Mark the kin-distance until which the respondent knows of ancestors on the paternal side: _____
Poller – Which is the earliest municipality/country that the informant's maternal family originates from? _____

☐ Current place of residence ☐ Serbia ☐ Montenegro ☐ Bosnia and Herzegovina

☐ Albania ☐ Turkey ☐ Unknown ☐ Other

(*) 72. Tell me something about the history of your family on your mother's side:
Poller – Mark the the kin-distance until which the respondent knows of ancestors on the maternal side: ____
Poller – Which is the earliest municipality/country that the informant's maternal family originates from? _____

☐ Current place of residence ☐ Serbia ☐ Montenegro ☐ Bosnia and Herzegovina

☐ Albania ☐ Turkey ☐ Unknown ☐ Other

Appendix D - Monuments in the city of Prijepolje



Figure 1. Monument to the National Heroes of WWII.



Figure 2a. Monument in honour of St. Sava.



Figure 2b. Monument in honour of St. Sava.



Figure 3. Monument to the fallen soldiers of the 1912-1919 wars.



Figure 4. Monument to soldiers killed in the wars from 1991 to 2001.



Figure 5. Monument commemorating the bridge that was destroyed by NATO from the 3rd to 11th of May, 1999.



Figure 6. Monument dedicated to those murdered in the Štrpci massacre.
Source: N1 2016.



Figure 7. Monument dedicated to those murdered by the Communists 'in the civil war and in peace, from 1941–1951'.



Figure 8a. Photograph of mother Ružica with her sons, Alija and Luka, taken in 1919. Source: RTS 2013.



Figure 8b. Monument in honour of mother Ružica and her two sons, Alija and Luka. Source: RTS 2013.

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