

**The Fluid Dynamics of Viscous Identities:
Sedimentations of Time in Five Late-Ottoman Refugee Towns
in Bosnia since 1863***

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Abstract

This article expands the concept of the “fluidity” of ethnic or national identities to include *viscosity*, the resistance of a liquid to flowing freely, to argue that group identities may be viscous, changing slowly and maintaining much continuity through time. We also develop Reinhart Koselleck’s concept of “sediments of time” processually, as sedimentation and erosion of the social and physical indicators of the presence of Self- and Other-identifying communities through time. Using this model we analyze developments in five towns newly founded by the Ottoman empire in 1862/63 on the northern border of Bosnia, to house Muslims expelled from Serbia and reinforce the border with the Habsburgs in places where few Muslims were then living. Over 150 years, the populations within the towns have overwhelmingly self-distinguished between Muslims (Bosniaks), Roman Catholics (Croats), and Orthodox Christians (Serbs). By 2013, only one settlement was still majority Muslim (now Bosniak), one was majority Croat, two majority Serb, and one nearly equal in Serb and Bosniak populations. To explain the flow of social interactions through time in these towns we develop a model drawn from fluid dynamics, of the differences between the *laminar* flows of liquids that seem smooth but are composed of layers of differing composition that do not much intermix, and *turbulence*, when such laminar flows meet an obstruction. Interactions between members of ethno-religious communities may also flow with apparent smoothness, yet in a laminar fashion. By paying attention to the varying ways in which physical and social indicators of such communities have developed through time in these five contrasting locations, we gain a better understanding of wider historical processes that continue to be in play.

Introduction: Diverging Trajectories since 1863 from a Common Starting Configuration

In 1862, in the endgame of their centuries of rule in Serbia, the Ottoman Empire agreed to relocate all Muslims from that principality into other parts of the Empire, under the Kanlica Agreement.¹ Many of these displaced Muslims were sent to the borders of the remaining Ottoman territories in the region: to Niš and to the west bank of the Drina, thus on the borders with Serbia; and to the south banks of the Sava and Una, which delineated the borders with the Habsburg monarchy, a heavily Roman Catholic polity. The Bosnian Catholics increasingly saw

themselves as Croats and Orthodox Christians as Serbs, and increasingly objected to rule by Muslims.²

On the Una and Sava the Muslims from Serbia were resettled in places where few Muslims were then living, in order to reinforce Ottoman control on these increasingly threatened riverine borders (see Fig. 1). In the westernmost location, Kostajnica, there was then an important bridge and a small, degraded Ottoman garrison in a fort on the Bosnian bank of the river Una, but no town on that side. In the most eastern location, Brezovo Polje on the Sava, there was a small Muslim settlement and a late 18th century mosque. The other three locations had few if any Muslim residents in 1862. Orahova is on one of the rare hills overlooking the Sava, between Dubica and Gradiška (Ottoman Berbir), towns which did have Muslim populations then. Šamac (founded as Gornja Azizija until renamed by the new Austro-Hungarian rulers in 1878) and Orašje (Azizija, then Donja Azizija until 1878) were both new towns completely. The concentration of these displaced Muslims in specific locations on the riverine borders changed the local political and social landscapes through the creation of new, modern settlements to receive these *muhadžiri* (from Turkish *muhacir*, Muslim migrant), each with a rectangular grid street plan and a new mosque centrally located within it.

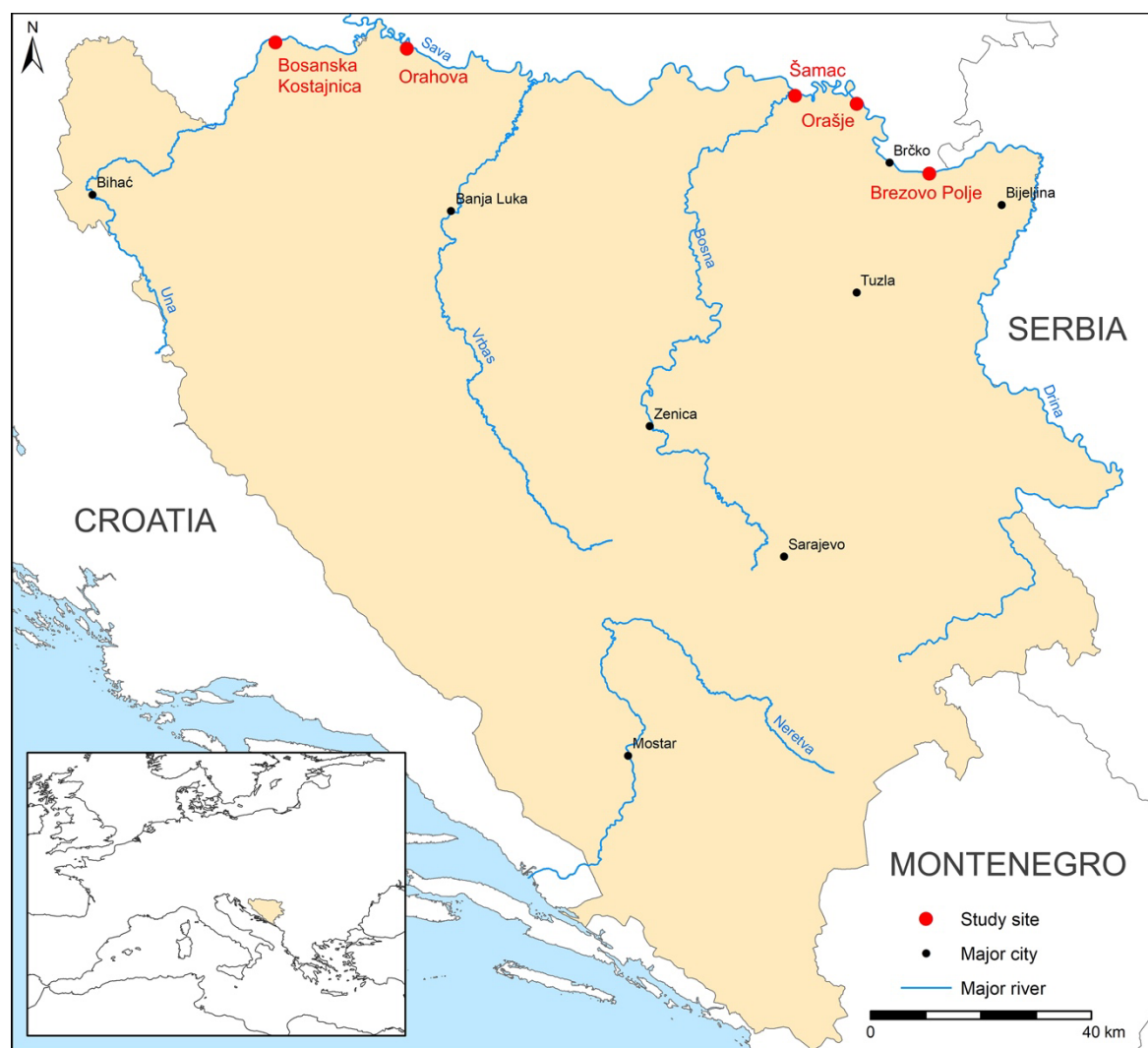


Fig. 1: the five 1863 Ottoman new settlements in Bosnia (map by Mario Katić)

The term *muḥacir* was later used for Muslim refugees from Bulgaria, 1877-78,³ and since then in Turkish for all Muslim refugees from the Balkans who settled in Anatolia following the fall of the Ottoman Empire. It is still used for Muslim refugees coming into Turkey from the Middle East after 2015. As this linguistic fact shows, the removals in accordance with the Kanlica Agreement constituted only one of many instances of Muslims being forced to leave territories in southeastern Europe as Ottoman rule was displaced by Christian empires or newly independent nation-states, from the Treaty of Karlowitz in 1699, which led to the departure of Muslims from Hungary and the territories of today's Croatia, through the establishment of the

Greek state (1832), the Serbian principality (1830) and the transfers of governing authority at the Congress of Berlin (1878) from the Ottoman Empire to the Austro-Hungarians in Bosnia-Herzegovina, to an Bulgarian principality under Russian sponsorship and to the British Empire in Cyprus, and from Macedonia after the Ottoman defeat in the First Balkan War in 1912, to give just a few examples. There are many studies of individual cases of such forced removals and some aimed more generally.⁴

The 1862-63 Kanlica relocations have been extensively studied, with historiographical presumptions ranging from Yugoslav-era Serbian “liberation from the Turks”⁵ through post-Yugoslavia Bosniak analyses of the “ethnic cleansing” of Muslims from Serbia,⁶ and most recently as one of the “ten genocides” that some Bosniak historians claim were committed by Christians against Bosniaks since 1699.⁷ The present article does not provide elaboration on those studies, all of which are concerned with analyzing only the events of 1862-63 and pay little attention to what happened afterwards in these towns. Instead, we use the formation of these new settlements for Muslims on the Una and Sava as providing the starting point for considering patterns of interaction in those towns of the major communities comprising them since 1862: Muslims (Bosniaks), Roman Catholics (Croats), Orthodox Christians (Serbs), with at some moments small percentages of Jews or Yugoslavs.

Despite their common beginnings as new towns built exclusively for Muslim immigrants forcibly transported to them from Serbia, in or very near the single geographic region of Posavina, and with only 245 km between Kostajnica on the west and Brezovo Polje on the east, they have developed in quite different ways. By the 2013 Bosnian census⁸ only Orahova, the most isolated, had a Bosniak [Muslim] majority, Kostajnica and Šamac were Serb majority, Orašje was Croat majority, and Brezovo Polje was roughly evenly divided between Serbs and

Bosniaks. While these population balances reflected in part the effects of the 1992-95 war, the relative percentages of Muslims in all but the one still Bosniak-majority had dropped throughout this 140 year time period, with the percentages of the other communities rising and falling as well. Yet the Muslim populations, now Bosniaks, live exclusively in the centers originally built for them, and have not expanded their presence more widely in the towns. Of the five mosques built in 1862/63, only that in Croat-majority Orašje still stood as of 1995, though the others have since been rebuilt or replaced, and churches that were built in the towns between 1878 and 1941 were destroyed, variously, in 1941-45 or 1992-95 but rebuilt thereafter. The original straight-grid street plans are still visible but are augmented by less linear additions. Administratively, Kostajnica, Orahova, Šamac and Orašje were in the Vrbaska Banovina in the Kingdom of Yugoslavia from 1929-39 and Brezovo Polje was in the Drinska Banovina, while since 1995 the Inter-Entity Boundary Line separating the Federation of Bosnia and Herezegovina (hereafter FBH) from the Republika Srpska (hereafter RS) runs between Šamac (RS) and Orašje (FBH), and Brezovo Polje is in Brčko District.

In our view, it is precisely their differing historical trajectories from almost identical starting configurations that make these towns interesting as a collective case study of social processes through time. This is especially so because the starting configurations are both social and physical: the settlements were built specifically to serve the needs of self-avowedly Muslim populations. As non-Muslims moved into them, however, the physical attributes of the towns changed in some ways that matched the needs of the newcomers and disrupted the original physical structures. As we demonstrate below, these physical changes can be analysed as the results of processes of social fluidity that have deposited physical structures and eroded them.

As we also demonstrate below, the metaphor of “fluid” identities that has become fundamental to the literature on ethnicity and nationalism to mean that such labels are “not fixed,” is impoverished and curiously static. In physics, fluidity is a condition of non-solid substances that must be paired with *viscosity*, the resistance of a liquid to flowing. If we take the concept of fluidity as necessarily requiring considering viscosity as well, analysis of both intra-communal and inter-communal interactions is enriched, and we are also enabled to bring in the flows of cultural phenomena linked to communities, including tangible ones such as the key structures of settlements. We are able to do this, however, only by analysing evidence of changes through time of social processes in these five towns. A microhistory of events in one short time frame in one of them, or even a longer diachronic analysis of any one of the towns, would not be sufficient.

False Dichotomies: Ancient Hatreds vs. Traditions of Tolerance; Fixity vs Fluidity

The varying events and social processes in northern Bosnia since 1863 that have led to these differing results were determined by momentary conditions in local contexts, punctuated in 1878 by upheavals accompanying the displacement of Ottoman rule by that of the Austro-Hungarian Empire (hereafter AHE), in 1919 by the displacement of that empire by the new Yugoslav state, in 1941-45 by the ghastly, multifaceted conflicts of that period and the establishment of the new Communist Yugoslavia, and in 1992-95 by the war following Yugoslavia’s dissolution. Yet they were also embedded in locally repeated histories that reached back nearly three hundred years, and that included references to social distinctions that remained constant even if their terminology changed: Muslims/ Bosniaks, Roman Catholics/ Croats, Orthodox Christians/Serbs. Locally, these were the larger social divisions within which local

people interacted, as members of each separate community, albeit then differentiated on grounds of sex/ gender, wealth, age and, at some points, political ideologies.

How should we understand these longer term intercommunal interactions? When the Yugoslav federation went into processes of violent dissolution in 1991-92, journalists (who perhaps didn't know better)⁹ and distinguished political scientists (who should have known better)¹⁰ invoked stereotypes of the Balkans, as somehow non-European and inherently violent, manifesting "ancient hatreds" between groups that supposedly have never changed. While these simplistic Orientalist/Balkanist imaginations were soon debunked,¹¹ an opposing stereotype was promoted, specifically in regard to Bosnia-Herzegovina, of a "tradition of tolerance" being "betrayed."¹² This last genre is often illustrated by a picture of the bridge in Mostar, as a symbol of Bosnia joining east and west, thus adopting Ivo Andrić's imagery in *The Bridge on the Drina* even though the Mostar bridge is not on the Drina but on the Neretva, and some Bosniak nationalists condemn Andrić for putative Islamophobia.¹³

Even apart from the Orientalist critiques, however, the putative dichotomy between "ancient hatreds" and a "tradition of tolerance" is untenable, as equally mythological stereotypes. Proponents of "ancient hatreds" never explain how, if they hated each other so much, people in Bosnia could live for centuries intermingled, if not often intermarrying, and interacting non-violently with each other most of the time. On the other hand, the proponents of the "tradition of tolerance" are forced to see the repeated periods of violence between these peoples as somehow alien to Bosnian culture and supposedly always exogenous in origin – that while "occasional conflicts" occurred, more serious ones were created only by the actions of foreigners, notably Austrians, Germans, and people from Serbia and Croatia, who somehow managed to get the Bosnians to start killing each other.¹⁴ One historian has even asserted that

using terms like “Muslim,” “Catholic,” Orthodox,” “Serb,” “Croat” or “Bosniak” is “essentialist” since all should instead be seen as “Bosnians,”¹⁵ apparently without noting that positing “the embrace of tolerance” as the supposed “soul of Bosnia” (*bosanski duh*)¹⁶ is as essentialist as anything that the usual suspects of nationalism could concoct.

The “tradition of tolerance” stereotype will remind anthropologists of the structural-functional models in vogue in the 1940s and 1950s, and critiqued by their presumptions of communities as traditionally being in harmonious interaction so long as they were isolated from outside influence. This was untenable for African villages under colonial rule, and is even less so for the territories and peoples of Bosnia-Herzegovina at any time in history. The “tradition of tolerance” stereotype minimizes the importance of the many indicators of consistent social distancing between the Roman Catholic, Orthodox Christian and Muslim populations, saying that these distinctions were not important because while there were conflicts, there was not civil war. This sleight of intellectual hand permits writers in this school to ignore the general literatures on ethnic conflict,¹⁷ on the logic of violence in civil wars,¹⁸ and on the ethnicization of electoral politics¹⁹ as irrelevant, since the violence seen in Bosnia since 1941 is supposedly contrary to tradition.

Positing Fluid Identities rather than Social Groups

Sophisticated attempts to avoid both of these mythologies tie into literatures developed since the 1980s that have argued that ethnic, racial, national and other such supposedly stable group identities are inherently fluid, not fixed, a position now pretty much orthodox in social sciences.²⁰ One influential model is that of Rogers Brubaker, who advocates analyzing not “groups” but “groupness,” as a variable that fluctuates depending on context.²¹ Applying this

model to a wonderfully detailed microhistory of the sudden eruption of mass violence between Muslims and Serbs in one town on the Una in western Bosnia in September 1941, Max Bergholz has argued for a concept of “violence as a generative force” of “sudden nationhood.”²² He analyzes a sudden attack on Serbs by Muslims and Croats as mobilizing the victims on an ethnic axis: “Perpetrators may *inscribe ethnicity on victims* through acts of violence; victims, in turn, can both *internalize this externally imposed ethnic categorization* and, through acts of revenge, can inscribe ethnicity on the initial perpetrators.”²³

Bergholz’s micro-history is extraordinary in detail, yet his theorizing and arguments are internally inconsistent. In common with the “tradition of tolerance” approach, he states at one point that his region in 1938 had an “atmosphere of general peace and *lack of overt, sustained ethnic conflict*.”²⁴ Yet surely “overt ethnic conflict” is impossible to sustain over long periods of time, and no serious scholar would argue this tenet of the “ancient hatreds” stereotype. Bergholz himself presents a much more sophisticated idea three pages later: that there was evidence that “mental templates existed in which one’s actions or interpretations of conflicts could take on a strong – and especially antagonistic – ethnic coloring.”²⁵ But what are these “templates,” and how are they reproduced? Are they all “imposed” by external actors? And why is this described as “coloring?” Compared to what? And if these templates exist, why are identities seen as “inscribed,” and how is that “inscription” accomplished?

Bergholz refers to the more general literature on ethnic conflict,²⁶ but primarily to argue that general studies of any specific conflict miss the dynamics of conflict in localities. There is a problem of selection bias here, however. Like many others, Bergholz uses the hydraulic metaphor of “the ebb and flow of violence,”²⁷ yet his microhistory amounts to studying the effects in one isolated cove of a tsunami hitting a larger coast line. Similarly, looking to

microhistory to explain general phenomena is like looking at the effects of a tsunami in a single cove to explain the sources of the tidal wave. There is also a problem of sample selection. In the case Bergholz studied, Muslim murders of Serbs prompted a much larger retaliatory mass killing by Serbs of Muslims at that particular moment in 1941. However, in Bosnia from 1941-45, about 65% of the approximately 300,000 people killed were Serbs, and 18% Muslims.²⁸ Thus the microhistory is potentially misleading.

The concept of “fluidity” is often used in opposition to presumptions of “fixedness” in describing ethnic identities. Just as the concept of “ancient hatreds” makes sense only if the identities of the groups doing the hating are not only stable but also central to all their actions, the putative “tradition of tolerance” requires that peoples’ identities can fluctuate freely in content but also in importance – supposedly, they sometimes matter to people, and other times do not matter.²⁹ This is another misleading dichotomy, however, because in many cases, peoples’ identities are indicated by names, clothing, and other markers, and thus inherently present,³⁰ but may not be acted upon confrontationally or violently. We thus need a concept of a form of identity that is not necessarily fixed in all aspects, yet also resists rapid change. And as argued below, we think that for social analysis it is necessary to see many forms of identity not as fluid – freely changing – but as viscous, sticky, changing but slowly. While it is certainly incorrect to posit “ancient hatreds” between peoples with supposedly rigidly fixed identities, it is equally incorrect to posit “groupness” as occurring only occasionally and usually in response to threats of violence or its occurrence.

The Fluid Dynamics of Viscous Identities

How determinate, then, are ethno-religious groups, as communities? It has been common in social sciences since Fredrik Barth’s demonstration that the “cultural stuff” that supposedly

defines ethnic identities changes constantly,³¹ to see ethno-national or racial identifications as “fluid,” meaning unstable and constantly changing rather than fixed.³² This is a well-established figurative counterpart to the term’s meaning in regard to physical substances, of “having the property of flowing; consisting of particles that move freely among themselves, so as to give way before the slightest pressure” (OED). Yet not all liquids move so freely. In physics, *fluidity* is a variable property of liquids, many of which are viscous, which is the measure of a fluid’s resistance to flow. We may think of honey as compared to water. Viscous liquids do flow, but more slowly, and many do not mix readily with other liquids contained in the same flow - think oil and water. Viscous liquids may also not disperse easily in the context of immersion in one or more other liquids.

Viscosity is thus a necessary component for the analysis of the physical dynamics of liquids, and we would argue that it is a necessary component for the analysis of figuratively fluid ethno-national identities as well. Doing so may explain a part of Barth’s classic analysis that was central to his title but is not as heavily referenced: the maintenance of boundaries between communities in situations in which individuals or small groups may successfully integrate into another community in terms of everyday economic and social activity, yet still not be considered to have become full members of the new group. The converse is also true: in some cases, individuals or even small groups of people can successfully assume a new identity without thereby being seen as changing the definitions of the group being left or the one being joined, or erasing the border between them.³³ This seems not to be fluidity, but viscosity. Viscous substances have a stickiness to them: as opposed to more fluid ones, the particles that compose them do not move freely among themselves but are bound by various forms of connection. Furthermore, even fluids that flow easily under some conditions may flow much less so in

others. Another image that is useful in regard to sedimentation is of the components of glaciers. Most of the water in glaciers, being frozen, moves but slowly, though water at the interfaces of the glacier is more fluid. Analogous processes may be seen in the interfaces of ethno-religious communities.

In analyzing social sedimentation, we may envision the component particles of social flows being the life courses of individual human beings. People are rarely if ever uncategorized, however, and in the Sava and Una watersheds, as elsewhere in ex-Yugoslavia, a primary categorization is by ethno-religious nation, *narod* in the former Serbo-Croatian (*√rod*-, “birth”), conceptualized as a community into which one is born, defined in great part by the religious heritage of its members, and with great consistency between the members of these various communities as seeing themselves and others as members of Self- and Other communities. Of course, such identifications do not usually dominate all of their interactions with each other, yet they are part of the inherent framing of social life. The distinctions become critical at times in which the members of the group make manifest their belonging to it, for example at critical life cycle events (births, possibly baptism or circumcision, marriages, deaths), celebrations of religious holidays. In many regions, including the Balkans, the ethno-national distinctions often become critical when the structures of political domination of one group over (an)other(s) come into play, especially in elections.³⁴

Viscous Ethno-National Identities in Bosnia

In the area of the former Yugoslavia, patterned (thus non-idiosyncratic) social phenomena included languages and regional dialects within language families, religious communities and patterns of naming, inheritance and post-marital familial residence reproduced through systems of endogamous marriage and generally strong negative sanctioning of

exogamy.³⁵ While political machinations have brought various armies and administrations to the region, local populations have remained in interaction with each other, as communities distinguishing themselves and each other as Self and Other, on varying but fairly stable configurations of languages (mainly local Slavic dialects, with some Turkish, Hungarian, Ladino, and increasingly in the 19th century, German and Yiddish and until 1945), religions (Islam and within it, Sunni and various so-called heterodox dervish or sufi orders³⁶), Christianity in its Roman Catholic and Serbian Orthodox denominations, Judaism in both its Sephardic and Ashkenazi varieties). As noted, they also used different naming practices and kinship terminological systems, different food preferences and prohibitions, and into the mid-20th century often distinguished themselves from each other by dress. By the 19th century, these identities seem to have been anything other than easily fluid or indeterminate: while many conversions of Christians to Islam took place in the first centuries of Ottoman rule,³⁷ by the early 19th century they had almost ended.³⁸ The distinctions were also reproduced by strong patterns of endogamous marriage, reinforced by strong traditions of patrilineal descent. In regard to this last, Eugene Hammel noted that in the 1960s it was possible to record patrilineal genealogies up to 14 generations deep among Serbs and Montenegrins, but hard to go more than three generations back among Bosnian Muslims.³⁹

The terms that these people have used for their own and each other's communities have varied but the distinctions between them have not, essentially shifts in signifiers but not in their links to separate signifieds. Thus, and oversimplifying, the people now known to themselves and to other Bosnians as Serbs (*Srbi*) were called "Orthodox" (*Pravoslavci*) in the late 19th century, when today's Croats (*Hrvati*) were "Catholics" (*Katolici*), while today's Bosniaks (*Bošnjaci*) were called Muslims (*Muslimani*) in general speech after World War two and earlier, Muslims or

Turks (*Turci*), and Jews were called either *Jevreji* or *Židovi*, depending on the locally spoken version of what is now increasingly called foreigners BCS – (Bosnian, Croatian and Serbian, the former Serbo-Croatian).

No matter what terminologies were used, the communities referred to remained easily identifiable and severable, to their own members as well, as Self and Other peoples. The stability of the signifieds despite the changes in the signifiers does not mean that there were not changes in many of the social and cultural practices of the members of these communities, or that there were not people who chose to identify themselves outside of them. In particular, the sudden growth of self-identification of “Yugoslavs” in the 1970s indicates that there was potentially greater fluidity in identification at that time; yet as discussed further below, the demise of Yugoslavia in 1991 led most of the self-identified Yugoslavs of ca. 1981 to revert to self-identifying in accordance with the group distinctions in place for the past two centuries.

The social viscosity of each ethno-nation, *narod*, in Bosnia is thus provided by multiple indicators, such as names, kinship terminologies (which differ between them), favored or prohibited items of food or drink, some dress items, and in rural areas, residency patterns. An ethnographer in rural western Bosnia in the 1960s noted that there were significant differences between Muslims and Serbs in such phenomena as house styles and furnishings, oral traditions and music,⁴⁰ including occasional singing of separate nationalist songs from the World War 2 period, recording of which got the ethnographer expelled from Yugoslavia on short notice. Social viscosity is also reinforced through practices such as different religious holidays, religious texts and symbols (which also vary within larger religious categories, thus between the Christian communities, on the one hand, and Sunni and non-Sunni Muslim ones on the other), and separate life cycle rituals.

We argue that we should conceptualize collectivities, such as Self-and Other-identifying communities, as viscous: constantly changing but slowly, and with varying degrees of “stickiness,” reinforced by what Reinhard Kossalleck called structures of repetition, which shape continuity of actions between members of different generations.⁴¹ We explain this concept further below. The components of the viscous communities are individual human beings who may be associated with the groups in varying degrees of stickiness as they move through their individual life cycles and places of residence.

Laminar and Turbulent Flows

As noted above, fluidity and viscosity refer to the degree to which a non-solid substance resists flowing. In this regard, the standard social science and history metaphor of identities as being fluid because they are not “fixed” is curiously static. How would we know unless we view them as flowing, as changing (or not) through time? Fortunately, the metaphor of fluidity is easily extendable to the analysis of social processes through time. We have already noted that Bergholz, for example, refers to the “ebb and flow of violence.” We propose that the metaphor of fluidity can structure insightful analysis of the social life of communities through time in particular places.

As it happens, the five towns we focus on provide good case studies of such fluidity, because their inhabitants were literally brought to them on barges pushed by tugboats up the Drina or Sava, and deposited there by the Ottoman rulers, who insisted on the *muhadžiri* going to the new towns where they had been assigned.⁴² These originary deposits began trajectories of persistent and linked social traits, such as the family names of the original *muhadžiri* continuing to be common in the towns, along with assertions of their having arrived from specific places in

Serbia in 1862-63. There are also physical features developed there – the street grids with their central mosques, and accompanying Muslim cemeteries (*mezarje*). The living communities themselves, composed of people of varying ages in 1862-63 and their descendants, among others, since then, can also be seen as flowing through the place, increasing during some periods, decreasing during others.

The arrival of non-Muslims as residents of these towns, especially after the Austro-Hungarian takeover of Bosnia in 1878, introduced new communities with their own trajectories of social flow – e.g. new surnames, new occupations – and accompanying elements of changes to the physical structures of the towns: new streets, new house types, churches, Christian cemeteries, among others. Intermarriage between members of these differing ethno-religious communities was uncommon well into the 20th century,⁴³ perhaps the defining characteristic of the viscosity of these identities. Thus the trajectories of life processes of the members of these communities and of the groups as collectives – the flows of their history through time – can be seen as running tangentially.

Looking again to fluid dynamics, it has been well known since the late 19th century that flows comprised of fluids of differing composition are layered, the layers moving smoothly together but not mixing. A classic article in fluid mechanics in 1883 demonstrated that flowing water has

two characters of motion. This may be shown by adding a few streaks of highly coloured water to the clear moving water. Then although the coloured streaks may at first be irregular, they will, if there are no eddies, *soon be drawn out into even colour bands*; whereas if there are eddies they will be curled and whirled about in the manner so familiar with smoke (emphasis added).⁴⁴

The first form of movement is now called *laminar* flow, the second, *turbulent*, and these are basic terms in fluid mechanics. Laminar flows are smooth, with the particles contained in them arranged in layers, moving past each other but not intermixing until this smoothness is disrupted by obstructions, that cause turbulence which mixes and may re-order them.

As it happens, for much of its course the River Sava is wide and seemingly smooth flowing, as is the Una at Kostajnica [Fig. 2]. We are confident that analysis of their flows would reveal them to be largely laminar, though at times rendered turbulent by disruptive features of the river courses.



Fig. 2: Laminar flow: River Una at Kostajnica, looking south toward Bosnia from the Croatian bank; Ottoman fortress on left, minaret of Azizija mosque (1863-1992, 2008-) on right. Photo by Robert M. Hayden, 2019.

We argue that the social flows along these rivers have also been mainly laminar, but at times disrupted and turbulent. While turbulence in fluid mechanics is caused by physical obstructions that disrupt laminar flows, social turbulence arises from social causes. One such social obstruction may be when borders are erected or changed, because the change of

jurisdictions may suddenly disfavor a community that had been dominant while favoring another that had been subordinated. In the case of the Sava, for example, it served as a border from 1699 until 1878, when suddenly governance on both sides of it was by the same polity, and that change was accompanied by social turbulence, since it disadvantaged the Muslim population and favored the Christians. The Sava was then not an international border until 1991, since the first Yugoslavia (1919-41), the “Independent State of Croatia” (1941-45; hereafter NDH, the common acronym for its Croatian name, *Nezavisna Država Hrvatska*) and the second Yugoslavia (1945-91) governed both sides until Croatian independence. Other disruptions causing turbulence may be political, in that the hitherto dominance of one community over others is suddenly challenged and/ or displaced. Thus the dominance of Muslims in Ottoman Bosnia was displaced by that of Christians under Austro-Hungarian rule,⁴⁵ many Muslims and Catholics both felt dominated by Serbs in the first Yugoslavia, and Croats and Muslims dominated Serbs in the Independent State of Croatia. It might be said that in socialist Bosnia and Herzegovina all communities were subordinated to the rule of the League of Communists; but following the results of the first elections in 1990 and in every regime since, Bosniaks dominate in parts of the country, Serbs in other parts, and Croats in most of what is left.⁴⁶ Such dominance, and changes in it, are almost always reflected in physical form on the ground, a process to which we now turn.

Dominance and its Marking among Communities Living Intertwined

A counter argument to “ancient hatreds” has been that in the past in Bosnia and Herzegovina, “the main basis of hostility was not ethnic or religious but economic: the resentment felt by the members of a mainly (but not exclusively) Christian peasantry towards

their Muslim landlords.”⁴⁷ This economic domination, however, was an intended aspect of the establishment and maintenance of Muslim supremacy in territories conquered by the Ottomans, whose policy had been driven by the concept of extending the realm of Islam.⁴⁸ The Ottomans were accustomed to governing non-Muslims, who were often the majority populations in the territories they conquered, so long as the superiority of Islam, and privileged statuses for Muslims, were accepted by those subjected to Ottoman rule. They might thus not have understood the brutal intolerance that the Protestants and Catholics in Europe manifested towards each other and to Jews.

The dominance of Muslims in political and economic life was an explicit policy of the Ottoman Empire. New towns were the foundations of Ottoman rule, combining military and economic concentrations.⁴⁹ These towns were each formed around an Emperor’s Mosque (*Careva džamija*) paid for and maintained by state funds, in Sarajevo, Zvornik, Foča, Višegrad, Srebrenica, Travnik, Prusac, Prozor, Knežina, Doboj, Bijeljina, Gradiška, Kamengrad, Oborci, Glamoč, Drniš, Dobrun and Kulen Vakuf, among others.⁵⁰ Other towns were formed around central mosques supported by *vakuf* funds instead of directly by the state), but with strong state support.

Thus the dominance of Islam under the Ottomans was structural, and throughout the empire, a primary method of marking the supremacy of Islam in newly conquered territory was physically structural: by converting a large or otherwise prominent church into a mosque. The Christians re-converted some of them centuries later when they took control of the cities at the end of Ottoman rule. Examples of such conversion-reconversion cycles can be found in Bulgaria,⁵¹ Croatia,⁵² Greece,⁵³ Hungary,⁵⁴ and Serbia,⁵⁵ among others. This is not to say that there were not many churches in Ottoman Bosnia, but it is likely that they were wooden ones,⁵⁶

while many mosques were stone. There are stories of churches being moved and hidden, sometimes by supernatural means.⁵⁷ The older churches are small (7x4 meters) and undecorated, though the ones built during the Tanzimat period are larger.⁵⁸

When Muslim dominance was shaken in the 19th century, Christians constructed large and centrally located churches, with Ottoman permission granted largely because the costs of not doing so would be too great. In Sarajevo, the Serbian Orthodox Cathedral was built in the 1860s, thus during the last decade of Ottoman rule in Bosnia and Herzegovina, and when that rule had already de facto ended in Serbia. Once Ottoman rule, and hence Muslim dominance, ended with the Austro-Hungarian occupation of Bosnia in 1878, more churches went up, especially Roman Catholic ones, manifesting the dominance of that faith in the new imperial structure.⁵⁹ Following the end of Austro-Hungarian rule and the incorporation of Bosnia and Herzegovina into the new Yugoslavia, under a Serbian king, Orthodox churches began to rise in large numbers.⁶⁰ In the northern Bosnian city of Banja Luka, a large Serbian church was built in the 1930s in the new city center, only to be destroyed by the Croatian Ustasha forces in 1941, the 'Independent State of Croatia' (NDH) from 1941-45 being heavily Roman Catholic and violently hostile to Serbian Orthodox Christianity.⁶¹ The communist regime, being in principle unwilling to support religious institutions, did not permit the church to be rebuilt, but reconstruction was supported by the Republika Srpska, during and after the Bosnian war.

The sequential political and economic dominance of one of Bosnia's religious communities over another has thus been a common pattern since the arrival of the Ottomans, and it has been marked in the most tangible of mediums: stone, in the layout of towns and the religious structures built in their centers. One can in fact mark the trajectories of dominance by the various religious communities by careful analysis of town development and the strategic

placement, replacement and displacement of physical structures tied to the heritage religions of each: mosques, tekkes (*tekije*) and *turbe* for Muslims, separate Roman Catholic and Orthodox Christian churches, monasteries and saints' shrines; and synagogues, both Sephardic and Ashkenazi.⁶² There were separate Muslim, Jewish, Roman Catholic and Orthodox Christian cemeteries, which remained largely distinct even under socialism, when many were buried under a red star.⁶³

The placements of these structures have not been random or oriented mainly towards convenience in serving the needs of local congregations of believers, but instead have tended strongly to reflect which community was dominant when they were built. Since the Ottoman Empire made it very difficult to erect churches or synagogues,⁶⁴ most churches from the 15th through early 19th century were small and wooden as noted above. However, with the rise in nationalism among the Christian populations, followed by the occupation and then annexation of Bosnia by the Austro-Hungarian Empire, and then the creation of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, Serbian Orthodox and Roman Catholic structures became increasingly common, and built in the centers of settlements, where the Ottomans had prohibited such non-Muslim. The communist regimes destroyed many religious structures, and in the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina of 1992-95, massive destruction of religious sites, especially Muslim ones, was widespread.⁶⁵ In the post-Yugoslavia ethno-national territorial homogenization of most of Bosnia and Herzegovina, many religious sites have been (re)built, larger than what might have been there before in order to assert claims to territories or demonstrate dominance within them.⁶⁶ These are processes of social sedimentation, key concept in our analytical framework, as detailed below.

Sedimentation and Erosion as a Model for Analyzing Historical Processes

In thinking about fluid social processes and their cultural effects, we were drawn to Reinhart Koselleck's concept of analysing "sediments of time," which he defined as "structures of repetition," and "phenomena of recurrence that secure the conditions of possible singularity" of specific events, of greater than only local scope.⁶⁷ As social phenomena, these structures of recurrence are intergenerational, existing outside of the lifespan and individual cultural competence of individuals. These repetitive structures are "preconditions of experience that are in effect before their respective generational cohorts, and that will most likely continue after these cohorts pass on."⁶⁸ Such wider social phenomena include language and religion, which generally change over periods of time longer than any few successive generational cohorts, and also in ways linked to changes taking place in the communities of users of both that are wider than any locality. They are often reinforced and reproduced through marital endogamy and kinship systems that may differ between communities that thus rarely intermarry, as was common in rural Bosnia into the 1980s. They are thus the kinds of reinforcements of community membership that make group identities viscous.

Koselleck describes such sediments as "multiple layers" that change at different speeds and that "refer to each other in a reciprocal way without being wholly dependent on one another."⁶⁹ These processes take place over long periods, well outside of the experience of people living in any generational cohort. While Koselleck states that the sediments metaphor is not bound by the physical properties of geology, we think it useful for facilitating understanding of the metaphor to look at differing patterns of the occurrence of singularities in temporal-geographic coordinates that form an actual alluvial plain of historical sedimentation. Since river valleys and watersheds frequently serve as means of transportation and communication,

determinants of settlement and economic activity, and sometimes also as borders, some of the relevant social processes may be literally fluvial, and principles of hydrology, rather than geology, seem useful.

A further advantage of using the concept of sediments is that some of the evidence of the movements and settlements of these differing communities is physical, seen in features such as the layouts of towns, the placement of shrines and the differentiation of cemeteries, and the directional orientations and designs of the grave markers of the burials within them.⁷⁰ Linking these physical features to non-physical but cultural ones that are well attested through history, linguistics and other human sciences, lets us understand social processes that cannot be seen through more static forms of ethnography or archaeological attention to particular ethnographic moments of the past. The fact that analysis of the development, modification and decline of physical structures is itself a cultural process – since it can all be seen as apparently patternless “rubble,” the meaning of which depends on who is doing the interpretation⁷¹ – should not dissuade us from analysis unless we are willing to deny the possibility of social science.

This physicality, however, also reminds us that in the natural sciences sediments are defined as physical materials transported by fluid processes, mainly of water (including in glacial form) and winds, and deposited in accordance with gravity and principles of fluid dynamics. Such sedimentary deposits may accumulate, or may erode, and both processes can take place at rates of speed which need not be uniform, thus through varying periods of time. History is also often said to flow – this is presumably the basis of Kossalleck’s utilization of the image of sediments. But what really flows are social processes, manifested in the passages of aggregates of individual lives passing through specific locations, sometimes for longer times, sometimes briefly, the latter less likely to have social impact. The concept of sediments of historical

processes thus carries implications about *sedimentation* and *erosion*, the processes through which social and physical manifestations of the presence of human communities accrete and may become disturbed, mixed or dissipate, in local settings and potentially more widely.

Sedimentation and erosion are manifestations at different places during specific time periods of the same social processes. That is, the movements and resettlements of people from one place to another may lead to sedimentation in the destination and erosion in the place of origin. Similarly, new arrivals in a place may erode the physical and social patternings of structures and residency, while new ones are sedimented in place. To be more concrete, we can see the establishment of Ottoman control over settlements in Bosnia, and the movement of Muslim populations into them, as eroding the Christian sediments while creating new layers of Islamic ones. In the case studied here, the expulsion of the Muslims from Serbia in 1862-63 led to a sharp erosion of the physical and social manifestations of Muslim dominance and even presence there, but the people expelled created new Muslim sediments in the places in which they were relocated.

A Case Study: Five Late-Ottoman Muslim Refugee Settlements on the Una and Sava since 1863

Space does not allow recounting the developments over nearly 160 years in all five of all of these towns, so we focus on the two largest: Šamac (Gornja Azizija) and Orašje (Donja Azizija). These two accounts are followed by a summary of the general processes that occurred in all five towns, only one of which was Muslim/ Bosniak majority by 2013.

Šamac (Gornja Azizija, Bosanski Šamac)

Recent studies on the demographics of the Posavina region before the arrival of the Muslims expelled from Serbia in 1862 recount the many times that this territory has been depopulated due to the wars over control of it,⁷² and state that the region was sparsely populated before 1862. However, at least one source indicates that before the Muslims expelled from Serbia arrived, the Sultan ordered that Christians be removed from the places where the new settlements would be built.⁷³ The south bank of the Sava opposite the town of Šamac on the north bank was one such location. The Ottoman authorities built 200 houses there for the settlers, naming it after Sultan Abdulaziz: Gornja [“Upper”] Azizija.

The Austro-Hungarian census of 1879 found 802 Muslims, 122 “Greek Oriental” Christians and 31 Roman Catholics in what had already been renamed Bosanski Šamac. The 1895 census figures were, respectively, 995 Muslims, 244 Orthodox Christians and 277 Roman Catholics, this last reflecting the Empire’s efforts to settle Catholics in the region. In 1910, the figures were 1,167 Muslims, 395 Serbs, 462 Roman Catholics, 23 Sephardic Jews and 22 other Jews. Thus by 1910, what had been built as a settlement for Muslims in 1863 and where they constituted 84% of the population in 1879 was 56% Muslim. The Muslim population remained concentrated around the mosque in the center of the town. While a Roman Catholic parish was founded in the town in 1910,⁷⁴ no churches were built in the town until 1925, when the Kingdom of Yugoslavia permitted the construction of Roman Catholic and Serbian Orthodox churches one street west and one street south of the mosque, and literally across the street from each other.

The 1941 large-scale ethnic map developed by Austrian scholars for German military use⁷⁵ shows about 250 Muslims in Bosanski Šamac, with about 1500 Croats to the south of the town and another 1300 Croats in Šamac across the river in Croatia; and about 1200 Serbs in the

NW of the town, with another 1000 Croats northwest of them. With the collapse of Yugoslavia in 1941, Bosanski Šamac became part of the NDH and many of the Muslim men were conscripted into NDH forces, visibly marked as Muslims by wearing the *fez*,⁷⁶ an Ottoman dress item which had been banned in Turkey in 1925 in Atatürk's modernizing reforms. Some Muslims also joined the Partisans; the main Partisan monument in the center of the town lists many Muslims. As was the case with the other four towns in this study, Bosanski Šamac was held by the Ustaša and German forces until the end of the war; many Serbs were murdered and the Serbian church was destroyed. As of July 2022, a small monument in the center of the town commemorates a Partisan victory there in September 1943, but the town did not fall to the Partisans finally until April 1945. The Serbian church that was destroyed in 1942 was rebuilt in 1970.

Post-war, the demographics of the town remained fairly stable, with two interesting features. One is that the Muslim/ Bosniak population stayed completely within the town itself, not being found in the larger municipality (*općina*). The other is that in Bosanski Šamac, as in all five of these towns, there was a marked increase in self-identified Yugoslavs in the 1981 census, from 8% to 32%. This increase in Yugoslavs was accompanied by drops in the Muslims, from 44% to 30%, and Serbs, from 31% to 22%. However, in the 1991 census the percentage of Yugoslavs dropped, from 32% to 19%, while the Muslims increased to 35% and the Serbs to 28%; Croats had been stable throughout at about 13% of the population, of the town. The wider municipality had much different breakdowns from the town itself in 1991: 41% Serb, 45% Croat and only 7% Muslim, and 5% Yugoslavs.

The strategic importance of the location was the reason Bosanski Šamac was created in the first place, and in 1992, when Bosnia and Herzegovina collapsed, the town was among the

very first to be taken by Bosnian Serb forces, including paramilitaries.⁷⁷ This violence has been extensively described and analyzed in cases in the International Criminal Court for the Former Yugoslavia (ICTY).⁷⁸ The process known as “ethnic cleansing” was virtually complete, with almost all non-Serbs expelled from the town. The Roman Catholic church and the Azizija mosque were both destroyed. The Catholic church was rebuilt in 2007; a new Azizija mosque was built over the period 2004-2014.⁷⁹ Of the four 1860s Azizija mosques that were destroyed in 1992 and rebuilt after the war, the ones in Orahova and Šamac were not reconstructions based on the original designs. To the contrary, the mosque in Šamac is in a very modern style, angular and relatively low. Modernism in the design of mosques and Roman Catholic churches was been common since the 1960s in Yugoslavia and its successor states, though not universal.

The post-war returns processes were more successful initially within the town, which had a population by the 2013 census of 5,390, compared with 6,239 in 1991. The ethnic balance had changed, however, with Serbs in 2013 being 67% (up from 28%), Bosniaks 24% (down from 35%) and Croats 4% (down from 13%). Yet these numbers, which are those of the Bosnia-Herzegovina Agency for Statistics (BHAS), are certainly high. Slightly lower figures are shown by the Republika Srpska statistical agency, which unlike the BHAS processed the 2013 data using standard international controls for the false reporting of non-residents⁸⁰ and thus may be more accurate, and found about 6% fewer people in the municipality. In a 2018 interview, the imam of the mosque stated that while the 2013 census had listed 1265 Bosniaks, only 520 were actually living there permanently.⁸¹ It would seem that the social sediment of Muslims whose resettling in that place was the reason for the creation of the town, has largely been eroded.

Similarly, indicators of dominance have changed. While a 1970 aerial photo of the town indicates that the two churches were of about the same size and height, the Serbian church was

reconstructed in 2014 while the mosque was under reconstruction, to be much larger, and with a much taller bell tower, than the Catholic church and its tower, or the mosque and minaret. In another indicator of dominance, the streets bear the names of Serbian historical figures. While the address of the mosque is on Nikola Tesla St, the land it is on is bounded on one side by Svetosavska St, after the founder of the Serbian Orthodox Church, and on another side by Draže Mihajlovića [sic] St, after the commander in World War 2 of the Četnik forces that slaughtered many Muslims. While the largest monument in the town is to the Serb soldiers killed in the 1992/95 war, there is a second monument, to “Civilian Victims of the War,” listed by name, in the Cyrillic script, and years of birth and death, under the flag of Republika Srpska. Many of the names are clearly those of Muslims, but not all Bosniaks are happy with having their loved one’s names on that monument.

Finally, in Šamac as in all of the the other towns studied here except Orašje, the river became a border which also marked the boundary of dominance of the Serbian community over the others. However, Orašje, to which we now turn, had a different experience, where the river as a border did not define the local boundaries of one community’s dominance over the others. Indeed, far from being fluid, the boundary between the communities overcame the river as both barrier and border.

Orašje (Azizija, Donja Azizija)

Orašje, originally Donja [“Lower”] Azizija, was settled by families from Belgrade, Šabac, Sokol and Užice. Those from Belgrade and Užice were shopkeepers and craftsmen, from Sokol came peasants and herdsmen, and from Šabac, fishermen and ferrymen.⁸² Some non-Muslim local people were relocated in order to establish the town. The settlement centered on

the Azizija mosque, built in 1863. By the 1879 Austro-Hungarian census, the population of the settlement was 837 Muslims, 2 Orthodox Christians, 21 Catholics and 31 Jews. In the 1895 census there were 759 Muslims, 277 Orthodox Christians, 41 Roman Catholics, 6 Jews and 17 Evangelical Christians. In 1910 the numbers were 885 Muslims, 55 Orthodox Christians and 115 Roman Catholics.

Orašje did not have either a Roman Catholic church or an Orthodox one until after the 1992-95 war. Instead, in 1864 the Ottoman authorities permitted the building of a Roman Catholic church and monastery in Tolisa, 6 km west of Orašje, and of a Serbian Orthodox church in Obudovac, about 16 km west of Orašje and 16 km east of Šamac; both churches were completed in the early 1880s, shortly after the Austro-Hungarian occupation of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

As was the case in the other four towns analyzed here, the multi-faceted war of 1941-45 was heavily contested. The 1941 large-scale Austrian ethnic maps of Yugoslavia show the town to have held about 1000 Muslims, surrounded on all sides by Croats, with almost no Serbs in the immediate area. Not surprisingly, then, the town of Orašje was under Ustaša control until April 1945. Post-war development was fairly steady. The Muslim population remained concentrated within the town itself, comprising 66% of the population in 1971, 44% in 1981, and 47% in 1991. As in the other four towns, in 1981 there was a sharp upsurge of self-identified Yugoslavs in the census, from 3% in 1971 to 22% in 1981, reducing to 12% in 1991. Much of this increase probably came from people who had been identified as Muslims in 1971, but also from people from other parts of Yugoslavia moving into the town. The Serb population was 16% in 1971, 19% in 1981, 22% in 1991. Croats formed 12% in 1971 and 1981, 15% in 1991.

The long-term imam of the mosque in Orašje said in an interview in 2021 that when he first arrived in the town, in 1979, he had a few meetings with Roman Catholic priests, but more with Serbian Orthodox ones, because there were preparations being made to build an Orthodox church in Orašje. However when the war started in 1992, all contacts with the Serbs were broken and he interacted increasingly with the Catholic priests.⁸³

Orašje, like Šamac, is located in what was the most hotly contested part of BiH during the 1992-95 war. Serb forces and paramilitaries attacked both towns in April 1992, succeeding in taking Šamac but not Orašje, which was defended by the 106th Brigade of the Croatian Defence Council (hereafter HVO, from its Croatian acronym), a unit which included Muslims/ Bosniaks in its numbers. Thus although it was damaged by shelling, the 1863 mosque was not destroyed in the war, because it was in a Croat-majority town defended by the Croatian forces in B&H. This shows the importance of local situational features in the overall conflict, because HVO forces did destroy mosques in other parts of B&H, where the main fighting was between Croats and Bosniaks. Indeed, as several authors have noted from their own experience, Bosniaks from northern Bosnia, where the war was between Serbs and Bosniaks, felt on going to Mostar, where it was between Bosniaks and Croats, that it had been a different war.⁸⁴

By the 2013 census, Bosniaks were 57% and Croats 37% of the 3796 people of the town of Orašje, but in the wider municipality of 21,284, Croats formed 87% and Bosniaks only 11%, and 97% of those Bosniaks are the ones living in the town. Thus the place had come to be de facto dominated by Croats, which can be seen in several ethno-national markers. One is the commemoration of the 106th HVO Brigade, a large monument in the center of the square in front of the mosque. The monument is overwhelmingly Croat and Roman Catholic in its symbolism,

but the pennant of the 106th Brigade does include the fleur-de-leis insignia of the Bosniak military in Bosnia and Herzegovina, along with the Croatian “checkerboard” national symbol.

Also on the square, closer to the mosque, is a much smaller grey-stone monument to the “*Šehidima, poginulim braniteljima i civilnim žrtvama*” of the 1992-95. This phrasing is interesting as *šehidi*, “martyrs of Islam” is the standard term used for fallen soldiers of the Army of Bosnia and Hercegovina (ARBH), while *branitelji*, “defenders,” is the term used on monuments in Bosnia and Croatia for fallen soldiers of Croatian military forces (Serb military dead are referred to on their monuments as *pali borci*, “fallen fighters”); and all the names on the monument appear to be Muslim, thus Bosniak. Also on the square is the remains of a socialist-era monument to “fallen fighters for the liberation of our region,” which might seem neutral except that the wording of “to fallen fighters” (*palim borcima*) is that used by Serbs on their monuments since 1995. Further, the term “liberation” (*oslobođenje*) is also linked to the communist period; all monuments in Bosnia and Herzegovina are to “defenders” of Bosnia and Herzegovina (by Bosniak “martyrs”), the Homeland (*Domovina*, by Croat “defenders”) or the Fatherland (*Otadžbina*, by Serb “fallen fighters”).⁸⁵ While the partisan monument was defaced, in 2019 someone had painted on it two 5-pointed red stars, the symbol of communism.

But Croat, Roman Catholic dominance is also apparent in the church built in 2006, with a very high bell tower, rivalling the mosque’s minaret. The Orašje parish was created only in 2004,⁸⁶ and the placement of the church and its naming are symbolic. The new Catholic church there is across the street from the foundations of the planned Serbian church that were laid before the war, and is much larger than the Serb church’s foundations. Moreover, just as the Serbs in Šamac named streets near the mosque there after Serb cultural or military heroes who were regarded as enemies of Muslims by Bosniaks, the new Catholic church in Orašje is named for the

Blessed Alojzije Stepinac, Archbishop of Zagreb during World War Two. Archbishop Stepinac is considered by many Croats to be a saint and a national hero, but he is reviled by most Serbs for not having openly opposed the extremes of the NDH. Croat, Roman Catholic dominance is indicated by a commemorative mass that was held in the Roman Catholic church on the occasion of the commemoration in 2019 of the founding of the 106th HVO brigade. On the other hand, in March 2021 the municipality authorities in Orašje helped the Serbian Orthodox Church clean the grounds of the building under construction there.⁸⁷

Summary of the Five Villages, 1862-2021: Social Sedimentation & Erosion in a Sometimes Turbulent Fluvial Plane

The history of these towns since 1862 shows patterns of social sedimentation, of peoples self-identifying as members of specific religious-national communities and building physical structures that correspond to this identity. Yet it also shows erosion of some of these sediments, more in some places than in others, and sometimes displacement of one sediment by another. The flows of history here seem generally to have been laminar, the process seen in fluid dynamics of particles flowing in layers without intermixing, but occasionally made turbulent by the sudden success of political movements that demand separating out some layers from the larger flow. This turbulence has been especially pronounced in the five 1862 river towns because of their strategic locations. Sedimentation has taken place during these periods of the laminar flowing of historical processes, erosion during periods of turbulence.

With Austro-Hungarian occupation and annexation in 1878, the Muslim population remained relatively stable or grew slightly, under a regime that, like most European imperialist powers wanted peaceful relations among its various citizens, so long as it was clear that Roman

Catholicism was dominant. Thus the Austro-Hungarian Empire was the first in Europe outside of Ottoman to recognize sharia law and sharia courts.⁸⁸ But the AHE also supported the rapid creation of many Christian churches, both Roman Catholic and Orthodox, and of synagogues, after 400 years of near-total Ottoman opposition to building them. These new churches were not placed near the centers of these five towns, however; and though Christians and Jews did move into them in small numbers, the towns remained majority Muslim.

Thus the flows in the AHE period were not turbulent, once the border had been effectively removed, but instead were laminar. The AHE occupation in 1878 had been opposed militarily by Muslims and Serbs, albeit for different reasons: Muslims knowing that their dominance was ending, Serbs that achieving their own dominance was blocked. But this turbulence subsided, and was in any case largely not fought on this border, but in Herzegovina and Sarajevo. The Una-Sava border, easily breached by the Austrians and then effectively dismantled, became no longer strategic.

The transition to the new South Slav state in 1919 was not very turbulent in this area, either; the border was not reinstated, and the new state also had conciliatory policies. The Kingdom of Yugoslavia not only recognized sharia law in Bosnia and Herzegovina but also in its other territories, including Serbia itself.⁸⁹ It also fostered the construction of churches, and these did start to encroach on the Muslim settlements, as seen in Kostajnica, Šamac, Orašje and Brezovo Polje, though not in Orahova, which remained isolated as a nearly totally Muslim enclave. The lack of social turbulence also facilitated the depositing of the physical sediments marking these communities, which also included cemeteries of the three different communities.

That laminar flow of social processes between these communities changed dramatically in 1941, with the creation of the NDH. In this case, many Muslims of these towns were forcibly

conscripted into the services of the NDH and enlisted in the task of eliminating their Orthodox and Jewish fellow-citizens. Those men also fought with the Croatian government and its German sponsors against the Serbian Četnik forces and the rising Communist ones. However, a considerable number of Muslims avoided conscription into the NDH by instead joining the Partisans.

While the border was not re-created by the NDH, the boundaries between the communities effectively also became borders for Serbs, Jews and Roma, because the NDH defined them as outsiders to the state, to be eliminated. This led to massive social turbulence – an extraordinarily brutal war, even by the standards of central Europe,⁹⁰ with heavy casualties from the fighting but also localized massacres and mass killings, and forced movements of populations. In this war, the 1862 Muslim towns without exception became entangled in Ustaša and German power, and were among the last places to fall to the Partisans in 1945. This period of great social turbulence had effects on the physical sediments as well, notably the destruction of Orthodox Christian and Jewish religious sites.

Still, the socialist Yugoslavia policy of “brotherhood and unity,” and its concomitant practice of creating general memorials “to the victims of fascist terror” rather than to specific victims of specific killers, and also monuments to the victorious Partisans, fostered another long period of laminar flows of history, and social sedimentation. The churches in these towns were rebuilt or repaired. The increase in self-identified Yugoslavs in the 1970s is tied to this period of peaceful interaction. The dominance of each religious community in early times – Muslim under the Ottomans, Catholic under the Austro-Hungarian Empire, Orthodox Christians under the Kingdom of Yugoslavia – was suppressed by state secularism, though practice of the religions was permitted.

This period of laminar historical flow and peaceful social interaction ended abruptly with the failure of social democracy and secularism to gain many votes in the 1990 elections, in Bosnia and Herzegovina or anywhere else in Yugoslavia. The nationalist forces that won elections partitioned the society as thoroughly as had the creation of the NDH in 1941, with one exception: there was no longer any non-nationalist secular force to join. And on the Sava, the border that had not been present since 1878 was suddenly re-imposed in 1991, with the independence of Croatia. The Muslim population, soon to re-name themselves Bosniaks, found themselves suddenly defined as external to the Republika Srpska, and thus found themselves to be de facto allied with the similarly externalized Croats. The result was the greatest social turbulence since 1941-45, fortunately with far fewer casualties but with great material damage, this time eroding the material presence of the Muslims and Catholics of this area and of Serbs in some other parts of Bosnia and Herzegovina. The fighting concentrated on the border area as such, with a new border being drawn between Šamac and Orašje, leaving small pockets of Croat domination in Posavina (Orašje, Odžak and Domaljevac-Šamac) separated from the RS as parts of the FBH.

The uneasy peace that followed has led to the outflow since 1996 of many of the Muslims from the towns created for them in 1862-63, especially in the RS but also in Orašje. This period of relative social stability has led to the rebuilding of much of the physical infrastructure of the religious communities, but now often as “heritage,” demonstrations of where these peoples had formerly lived, rather than to serve the needs of local congregations, and with the Christians marking their local dominance with large churches: the Orthodox in Kostajnica and Šamac, the Catholics in Orašje. This is true not only in this region but throughout Bosnia and Herzegovina.⁹¹ On the other hand, the Catholic church in Kostajnica was not rebuilt, and the Orthodox one in

Orašje has not been completed. The landscape is also religiously nationalized by memorials, or their lack: the Partisan monument destroyed in Croat-dominated Orašje but not in the other towns; the Serbian Orthodox iconography on the monuments to the “fallen fighters” of the RS in the Fatherland war, compared to the Roman Catholic iconography of the monument in Orašje to the Croat “defenders” who fell in the Homeland war, compared to the Muslim “martyrs” who died defending Bosnia and Herzegovina, also in Orašje but small and not prominent; and the Islamic iconography of the monument to the “killed fighters” of the ARBH in Brezovo Polje, the only one of the towns with a monument to the fallen soldiers of both the RS and the ARBH, because it is not part of either the RS or FBH.

Seeing History through Flows rather than Static “Traditions” or Short-term Events

Viewing history as flowing, often in a laminar manner but subject to periods of turbulence, leading perhaps to re-direction of some of social components of the larger flow or by new laminar flows but often with different components locally, allows us to demonstrate the inadequacy of the two prominent understandings of Bosnian history discussed earlier. These are the putative “tradition of tolerance” that was supposedly “betrayed” in the 1990s and the concept of “sudden nationhood.” They are inadequate because they see the periods of laminar flow of Bosnian history as being both normal and normative, with turbulence as abnormal. Yet it is clear that the periods of turbulence are associated with changes in the political structures of governance in BiH, such that the dominance of one community over the others is threatened or overthrown. The “periods of most intensive social conflict prior to 1941” were the uprising in 1875-78 that led to the Austro-Hungarian invasion, and the transition from AHE to the Yugoslav Kingdom in 1918-21,⁹² as well as the collapse of that Yugoslavia and the period of the NDH

from 1941-45, and then the end of socialist Yugoslavia, 1992-95. In the first, Muslim superiority was displaced by Christian and specifically Roman Catholic dominance, in the second period Roman Catholic dominance was displaced by Serbian Orthodox Christian, 1941-45 was the time of the dominance of Croat Roman Catholicism, which was itself displaced by a secular state; and the secular state was displaced in 1991, letting the three major communities compete with each other over dominance in parts of BiH. The violence that accompanied these transitions certainly violated most normative standards, and was often criminal. Yet its occurrence was so patterned, occurring in periods of transition of control and domination of one community over others, as to make it predictable in these circumstances.

If one looks beneath the surface at the laminar flows of social and political interaction between these periods of turbulence, peaceful interactions were encouraged by the various rulers so long as they did not threaten the dominance of their own community, but forms of competitive interactions still continued. Thus Amnesty International's 1985 report on Yugoslavia discussed a number of cases in Bosnia and Herzegovina, noting that most of its "prisoners of conscience" were from there, while also saying that "During the Second World War this region saw bitter inter-communal fighting, and the authorities have frequently referred to the bloodshed of that period as a justification for repressive measures."⁹³ Amnesty International seems to have taken a position similar to that expressed by Helsinki Watch in its 1990 report on the "Crisis in Kosovo," that all statements were protected by "liberty of expression, although the actions so advocated might violate the human rights of others and would thereby require action by responsible authorities."⁹⁴ Helsinki Watch had in mind specifically nationalist statements that "urge separatism or, as has too often been the case in Yugoslavia of late, [are] statements about other ethnic groups that are considerably more ugly than mere separatism."⁹⁵ But these are only recent

examples; the history of the region contains many instances of such hostile interactions even in periods of apparently peaceful interaction.

“Tradition of tolerance” authors look mainly at periods of laminar flow in Bosnian history, and do so in a way that is comparable to the lay description of a river surface as “smooth flowing,” without examining closely the interactions at the interfaces of its laminar components. They are part of a genre of books on places that supposedly had a tradition of near-idyllic multiculturalism that was disrupted by the machinations of religious fanatics and/ or nationalist politicians. Examples include medieval Spain’s supposed *Convivencia*, which more thorough scholarship has seen instead as “conveniencia,”⁹⁶ peaceful coexistence predicated on established relations of power and calculations that maintaining good relations was more generally beneficial than conflict – until conflict itself offered opportunities. Another example would be Smyrna, described by one author as literally “Paradise Lost” and “Islam’s City of Tolerance” until Turkish forces burned it in 1922;⁹⁷ yet surely the context of the end of the Turkish army’s successful defeat of the Greek invasion and brutal occupation over the previous two years had a lot to do with this breakdown.⁹⁸ Contrary to the portrayal of Smyrna being disrupted by violent Turks, an elegiac portrayal of present-day Thessaloniki as a Greek-occupied “city of ghosts” of what was Muslim-Jewish inhabited Ottoman-era Salonika⁹⁹ largely ignores the ways that Muslim dominance was maintained in Ottoman Salonika until 1913.

While the “tradition of tolerance” literature does not look closely at the dynamics below the seemingly calm surface of the periods of laminar flow of history in BiH, the idea of “sudden nationalism,” argued by Max Bergholz (2016) in his extraordinarily detailed microhistory of conflict and mass killings in the BiH town of Kulen Vakuf in a few months in 1941, looks overly closely at that period of intense turbulence, without serious consideration of inter-communal

dynamics in earlier years. For example, he mentions that the new Austro-Hungarian administrators “were not particularly interested in promoting the interests of one community at the expense of another” because in 1892, “the steeple of an Orthodox church ... joined the minaret in reaching for the sky” and “the call to prayer in Arabic ... mingled from time to time with the ringing of church bells.”¹⁰⁰ Yet the Austro-Hungarian censuses of 1879 and 1895 show that the municipality had a strong Orthodox Christian majority, so the fact that there had not been a church there had been one of the Ottoman Empire’s manifestations of Muslim dominance by prohibiting church construction. Throughout the Balkans, the construction of churches was a demonstration that Muslim dominance was ending or had ended,¹⁰¹ thus actually favoring the Christians.

A further difficulty with the concept of “sudden nationhood” is that it presumes, following Rogers Brubaker’s model of “ethnicity without groups,” that “ethnicities” or “nations” are not “abstract collective actors to which people somehow naturally belong and act through” but rather are only frameworks for seeing the world, that can suddenly “happen.”¹⁰² In this view, violence triggers such a “happening” of national identity. However, if we see these types of identities as viscous rather than fluid, multiply reinforced in everyday life, specific calendrical events and in those marking major life cycle ones, the identity for most people is primary before violence takes place, and does channel violence for many even if not for all. They may act as members of a collective even if not of a collectivity as a single entity.

Wider Implications: Cultural Sedimentation and Erosion through Time and Space

The metaphorical alluvial plain reminds us of the potential for sediments of time to be widely distributed in geological space. Just as glaciers and the geological structures with which

they interface may be distributed widely, communities and the physical structures which they build, modify, abandon or destroy may also become widely diffused. Archaeologist Tuğba Tanyeri-Erdemir has written evocatively of the 19th-century Greek Orthodox churches in Anatolia that were left empty when the Greeks were expelled in the “population exchange” of 1923, as a “horizon of abandonment.”¹⁰³ This sediment of abandoned religious structures could be linked to the similar phenomenon of mosques in Greece also abandoned in 1923,¹⁰⁴ or the abandoned Ottoman-era mosques in Meskheta, Georgia,¹⁰⁵ or the much more eroded Muslim religioscapes in Hungary and Croatia, as already noted. But the 19th century churches abandoned in Anatolia might also be linked to the continued use of such late-Ottoman churches in Bosnia and Herzegovina, in places such as Čajniče and Foča, or in Bulgaria in places such as Razgrad and Plovdiv. In all of these now Christian-dominated towns, there are churches from the mid-19th century, with dedication inscriptions (in Greek, Bulgarian or Serbian, depending on the location) acknowledging the support of the Ottoman Sultan Abdulaziz, the same Ottoman ruler for whom the mosques in the five new towns in Bosnia were named, or of his immediate predecessor, Sultan Abdülmecid I. Still, it must be remembered that the churches built under such imperial sponsorship generally could not be in the center of towns, be ornate or have bell towers.

In all these cases, the “horizons of abandonment” might be seen as eroded sediments deposited during periods of locally laminar flows of inter-communal relations, disrupted by turbulence, and new flows of dominance. In the newly laminar conditions, churches or mosques that were abandoned might be destroyed, or converted to other uses, while the ones that were still in use might be augmented, such as with the additions of bell towers. The sediments of that

which was abandoned became eroded; while those of the structures that continued to be dedicated to their original use acquired more layering.

The model we have presented, of historical sediments left by the interactions through time of members of communities whose identities are more viscous than fluid, and their erosion and additional layering depending on local flows of historical processes, can help us see more clearly the commonalities of some kinds of long-term social processes. Interactions between members of such communities may usually flow with apparent smoothness, yet in a laminar fashion, of separation of the components of the flow. When events occur that disrupt the flow, the resulting turbulence, which is often violent, may lead to the separation of some of the layers, possibly into new forms of laminar flow. Change or threatened change in established patterns of hierarchical relationships between these viscous communities is a major cause of such turbulence. Further, the boundaries of viscous groups, even when permeable, seem more robust than are political borders. Borders amount to static structures meant to direct the flows of interactions between members of viscous communities, and like all static edifices, may be rendered useless by changes in flow. But they may also serve to separate components of a laminar flow.

We think that our model can also help overcome two ingrained limitations of much anthropological work: localism and the constrained frameworks of limited time frames: an ethnographic present, or archaeological horizon. At the same time, looking at the changes in social sediments through time, as we have done, can also reveal the weaknesses of claims that a region or the people thereof, in this case Bosnia and Herzegovina, have some kind of “tradition” of tolerance and thus lived peaceably unless foreigners intervened. All regions, in this case Bosnia and Herzegovina, have seen repeated movements of peoples on greater or lesser scales,

thus sedimentations and erosions of history as well. By paying attention to the varying ways in which a single such sediment has developed through time in several locations, we can gain a better understanding of the wider historical processes that continue to be in play.

ENDNOTES

¹ Also spelled *Kanlidža* (Serbo-Croatian), or the original *Kanlıca* (Turkish), which was the location of the conference.

See Mirsad Arnautalić (ed.), *150 Godine Od Protjerivanja Muslimana Iz Knježevine Srbije: Zbornika Radova*, Orašje, 2013; Safet Bandžović, "Iseljavanje muslimanskog stanovništva iz kneževine Srbije u Bosanski vilajet (1862-1867)," *Znakovi vremena - Časopis za filozofiju, religiju, znanost i društvenu praksu* 12, 2001, pp. 149-171; Mirza Hasan Ćeman, "Urgentne urbane intervencije osmanske vlasti na području Bosne i Hercegovine nakon 1860. godine," in Maximilian Hartmuth (ed.), *Centres and Peripheries in Ottoman Architecture: Rediscovering a Balkan Heritage*, Sarajevo, 2010, pp 136-151, Amir Krpić, "The 1862 Kanlıca Conference and Demographic Changes in Northeast Bosnia in the 1860s," *Prague Papers on the History of International Relations* 2020 (2), pp. 27-42.

² Edin Hajdarpasić, *Whose Bosnia? Nationalism and Political Imagination in the Balkans, 1840-1914*, Ithaca, NY, 2015.

³ Krzysztof Popek, "Liberation and Exile: The Fate of Civilians During the Russo-Turkish War of 1877-78 in Bulgarian and Turkish Historiography," *Prace Historyczne* 148, no. 3, 2021, pp. 515-533. 6

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⁵ Vaso Čubrilović (ed.), *Oslobođenje gradova u Srbiji od Turaka 1862-1867*, Belgrade, 1970.

⁶ Arnautalić, *150 Godine Od Protjerivanja Muslimana Iz Knježevine Srbije*. The term "ethnic cleansing," which originated in the Yugoslav wars of the 1990s as a literal translation of *etničko čišćenje*, has widened in use to refer not only to the brutal expulsion of Muslims by Serb Četniks in places like Foča, Bosnia in 1992, but also to the brutal expulsion of Orthodox Christians by Muslim çete in Foča, Anatolia, in 1914 (see Mattias Bjørnlund, "The 1914 Cleansing of Aegean Greeks as a Case of Violent Turkification," *Journal of Genocide Research* 10, no. 1, 2008, pp. 41-57; Emre Erol, "Organized Chaos as Diplomatic Ruse and Demographic Weapon: The Expulsion of the

Ottoman Greeks (Rum) from Foča, 1914," *Tijdschrift voor Sociale en Economische Geschiedenis* 10, no. 4, 2013, pp. 66-96.

⁷ See Mirjana Kasapović, "Bošnjačke Politike Povijesti: Genocid kao Sudbina," *Analiza Hrvatskog Politikološkog Društva* 18, no. 1, 2021, pp. 165-167.

⁸ The 2013 census of Bosnia – Herzegovina is problematical, with unusual overcounts of non-residents as if they were resident, contrary to otherwise universal international standards; see Robert M. Hayden, "Postmortem on a Stillborn Census: Bosnia–Herzegovina, 2013–16," *Ethnopolitics*, 20, 3, 2020, pp. 317-340 . It must thus be read with care, and the different results from the Republika Srpska and the Federation of Bosnia & Hercegovina compared.

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¹⁰ E.g. Samuel P. Huntington, "The Clash of Civilizations," *Foreign Affairs* 72, Summer 1993, pp. 22-49 .

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¹⁷ Donald Horowitz, *Ethnic Groups in Conflict*, Berkeley CA, 1985.

¹⁸ Stathis Kalyvas, *The Logic of Violence in Civil War*, Cambridge, 2006.

¹⁹ Michael Mann, *The Dark Side of Democracy: Explaining Ethnic Cleansing*, Cambridge, 2005.

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²⁴ Bergholz, *Violence as Generative Force*, p. 50, emphasis added

²⁵ Bergholz, *Violence as Generative Force*, p. 54

²⁶ Bergholz, *Violence as Generative Force*, pp. 11-12

²⁷ Bergholz, *Violence as Generative Force*, p. 11

²⁸ Tomislav Dulić, *Utopias of Nation: Local Mass Killing in Bosnia and Herzegovina, 1941-42*, Uppsala, 2005, p. 314

²⁹ Tara Zahra, "Imagined Noncommunities: National Indifference as a Category of Analysis," *Slavic Review* 69, 1, 2010, pp 93-119.

³⁰ Albert Doja, "The Imaginary of the Name," *Irish Journal of Anthropology* 8, 1, 2005, pp. 31-50.

³¹ Fredrik Barth, *Ethnic groups and boundaries. The social organization of culture difference*. Bergen and London, 1969.

³² See Davenport, "The Fluidity of Racial Classifications."

³³ Barth, *Ethnic groups and boundaries*. pp. 22-25.

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³⁵ Eugene A. Hammel, "Demography and the origins of the Yugoslav civil war," *Anthropology Today* 9, 1993, pp. 4-9.

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⁴⁰ William Lockwood, *European Moslems: Economy and Ethnicity in Western Bosnia*, New York, 1975, p. 49

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⁹⁹ Mark Mazower, *Salonica, City of Ghosts: Christians, Muslims and Jews 1430-1950*, New York, 2005.

¹⁰⁰ Bergholz, *Violence as Generative Force*, p. 34

¹⁰¹ Robert M. Hayden, "Intersecting Religioscapes in Post-Ottoman Spaces: Trajectories Of Change, Competition And Sharing Of Religious Spaces," in Rebecca Bryant (ed.), *Post-Ottoman Coexistence: Sharing Space in the Shadow of Conflict*, New York: Berghahn, 2016, pp 59-85.

¹⁰² Bergholz, *Violence as Generative Force*, p. 19.

¹⁰³ Tuğba Tanyeri-Erdemir, "Christian Architecture of the Ottoman Empire after the Departure of Christians from Anatolia," in Maximilian Hartmuth (ed.), *Christian Art under Muslim Rule*, Leiden, 2015, pp. 219-235.

¹⁰⁴ Lowry, *In the Footsteps of the Ottomans*.

¹⁰⁵ Nicole Kançal-Ferrari, "Islamic Art and Architecture in a Contested Region: Negotiating the Muslim Heritage in Meskheti, Georgia," *International Journal of Islamic Architecture* 11, 2, 2022, pp. 293-321.