

PALIMPSESTING MARTYRS: GRAVES OF SHAHIDS WITHIN THE SEDIMENTATIONS AND EROSIONS OF TIME IN BANJA LUKA AND ZENICA

PRESLOJAVANJE MUČENIKA: GROBOVI ŠEHIDA U SEDIMENTACIJAMA I EROZIJAMA VREMENA U BANJOJ LUCI I ZENICI

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In this paper I analyse two šehid turbe (mausolea) in Bosnia and Herzegovina, one located in Banja Luka and the other in Zenica. I present and interpret how these cultural sediments, with their religious and political connotations, narratives and symbols, eroded over time, re-interpreted and transformed, and how top-down political and social contexts influenced the local micro-contexts of the turbe. I analyse as palimpsest processes the ways in which cultural sedimentations and erosions of sacred religious graves are affected by the changes in political, religious and national dominance in the local context, and thus how within these changes the identity of a site may erode, or be displaced by new sediments. This process both reflects and embodies the spatial dimension of urban layers that change the identification of particular parts of the city, but it also reflects the broader changes in an urban landscape. I argue that changes and/or continuation of the political dominance of ethno-religious and/or national communities, can have a direct impact on interpretations and/or re-interpretations of particular sites within the urban context, in this case religious sacred graves. This influence can work as a palimpsest, covering the former layer so that it can change the identity of a site completely, down to the level of the toponym and its practical and symbolic functions and meanings; or, depending on the local scenarios, leaving the older layer visible, but making it hard to detect which layer is older.

KEYWORDS: turbe; shahids; Zenica; Banja Luka; Bosnia and Herzegovina; sedimentation and erosions of time; palimpsest; cephalophore martyrs

U ovom radu analiziraju se dva šehidska turbeta (mauzoleja) u Bosni i Hercegovini, jedno u Banjoj Luci, a drugo u Zenici. Obraduje se kako su ti kulturni sedimenti, sa svojim vjerskim i političkim konotacijama, narativima i simbolima, s vremenom erodirali i bili reinterpetirani i transformirani, te kako su politički i društveni konteksti odozgo prema dolje utjecali na lokalne mikrokontekste turbeta. Kroz interpretacijski rakurs palimpsesta, analiziraju se načini na koje promjene u političkoj, vjerskoj i nacionalnoj dominaciji u lokalnom kontekstu utječu na kulturne sedimentacije i eroziju svetih religijskih grobova, a time i kako unutar tih promjena identitet mjesta može erodirati ili biti istisnut novim sedimentima. Taj proces odražava i utjelovljuje prostornu dimenziju urbanih slojeva koji mijenjaju identifikaciju pojedinih dijelova grada, ali odražava i šire promjene u urbanom

krajoliku. Autor tvrdi da promjene i/ili nastavak političke dominacije etno-religijskih i/ili nacionalnih zajednica mogu imati izravan utjecaj na interpretacije i/ili re-interpretacije pojedinih mjesta unutar urbanog konteksta, u ovom slučaju vjerskih sakralnih grobova. Taj utjecaj može djelovati kao palimpsest, pokrivajući prijašnji sloj tako da može potpuno promijeniti identitet mjesta, sve do razine toponima i njegovih praktičnih i simboličkih funkcija i značenja; ili, ovisno o lokalnim scenarijima, ostavljajući stariji sloj vidljivim, ali otežavajući otkrivanje koji je sloj stariji.

KLJUČNE RIJEČI: turbe, šehid, Zenica, Banja Luka, Bosna i Hercegovina, taloženje i erozije vremena, palimpsest; mučenici kefalofori

INTRODUCTION: A PALIMPSEST APPROACH TO SEDIMENTATIONS AND EROSIONS OF TIME

This thematic issue analyses the development of religioscapes in urban localities in Bosnia and Herzegovina, beginning with the establishment of Muslim dominance in them following the Ottoman conquest, and then focuses on changes of the religioscapes from 1878 until the present. Newly built structures were sediments of the flows of cultural practices which may then be eroded by other such flows, and then re-sedimented, even more than once. The editors of the thematic issue argue that the physical structures can thus be deposited and eroded. We see the changing religioscapes of communities being marked by such deposits, which might indicate dominance, and can also be used to demarcate territories under the control/domination of such a community (Katić & Hayden, p. 154). The editors refer to such changes in the physical placement and features of settlements as being processes of sedimentation and erosion, with possible new physical sediments added to or covering older ones (Katić & Hayden p. 153).

Taking this conceptual approach, I believe that understanding sacred graves of martyrs within the process of sedimentations and erosions can demonstrate the utility of analysis using the metaphor of the palimpsest. Geographers and literary scholars use the metaphor of the palimpsest to describe urban form as well as experience and memories of urban life, and to visualise new urban forms and ways of life inscribed upon existing spaces and habits (Marshall et al., 2017, p. 2). The use of this script metaphor (Assmann, 2012) is rooted in the research based on exploring single memorials and the non-spatial semantic level of Pierre Nora's 'places of memory' (Nora, 1989). This term *invokes strong connotations of erasure and overlap in order to denominate practices of transforming cultural memory* (Pirker et al., 2019, p. 2). The palimpsest approach is useful for presenting multi-layered configurations of meaning, especially in contexts of violence, war or colonialism (Launchbury & Levey, 2014, p. 1). S. Dillon

suggests that the processes of erasure and re-inscription can inscribe new layers of meanings upon post-conflict landscapes in the form of reconstruction and commemoration. In this way, palimpsestic spaces challenge temporal notions of causality, fixity and linearity (Dillon, 2014, p. 37).

Pirker et al. (2019, p. 17) argue that we need to address this ambivalent composition and ambiguity of coexisting layers in their temporal, thematic and social shapes, that are symbolic accretion through continuous addition of layers that shift and change meanings. To capture this effect, they adapt the notion of 'moiré' from the field of optics: *A moiré effect occurs when repetitive structures are superposed or viewed against each other* (Pirker et al., 2019, p. 17). As archaeologists using the palimpsest metaphor show, material remains become multitemporal agglomerations that at the same time include different epochs (Lucas & Olivier, 2022, pp. 43, 117). It enables us to observe material traces through understanding of time as a process of memory and commemoration and not as a distorted perspective on a linear past. This brings us closer to understanding object manipulation in different contexts that reflect multitemporal characteristics of the object (Milosavljević & Ilijić 2023, p. 721).

The layers of a palimpsest cannot be read in linear, sequential time as each layer is or was part and parcel of what came before it. A palimpsestic reading would thus 'unravel and destroy' the palimpsest by separating and re-ordering the tangled text. It is a linear and horizontal reading. In contrast, a *palimpsestuous* approach, akin to Foucauldian archaeology, 'seeks to trace the incestuous and encrypted texts that constitute the palimpsest's fabric' (Marshall et al., 2017, p. 5). Juxtaposing layers challenges notions of erasure that would otherwise believe that to move in linearity is to leave behind that which, materially, was not intended to survive (Okello & Duran, 2021, p. 2). Some objects remain/survive through time. To explain this Gavin Lucas, using the work of Serres and Latour, takes a metaphor of percolation – filtering. Some

objects from the past are still visible in present, while others disappear, though they might also re-appear in another context. As Milosavljević and Ilijić conclude, we don't deal with past, but remains of the past that enter present (Lucas 2021, pp. 93–94; Milosavljević & Ilijić, 2023, p. 721; Serres & Latour, 1995).

Andrew Murphy (2022, p. 3) argues that a martyr achieves a sacred status and become an embodiment of a collective memory only through rituals of remembrance. Furthermore, such sanctified martyrdom must be transmitted over time, and memory is not a passive process, but rather involves active engagement with past events (Murphy, 2022, p. 12). Percolation helps in understanding how this active engagement works, how previous sediments may be removed, partially obscured or even incorporated. We need to read material traces as percolations, but also as an archive of a particular time. As palimpsest methodology requires that researchers rethink what counts as an archive, it also challenges scholars to conceptualize a new role for what is widely regarded as the archive. Importantly, we understand the archive as marked by loss, fragmentation, and violence, and, as such, scholars must reckon with the splintered pieces of a past instead of reviving complete histories. One's relationship to research, thus, must be met with critique and an awareness of the ways power has functioned over time to distort and silence the voices of minoritized people (Okello & Duran, 2021, p. 7).

Although my contextualization of sedimentations and erosions of layers upon two sites of šehid turbe (mausolea), one located in Banja Luka and another in Zenica, is presented diachronically, it is not linear in the sense of analysing one sediment at a time, considering it as laid down in only one historical moment. On the contrary, I show how different "scenarios" – historically specific processes at a particular place - can produce palimpsestic sedimentation that may overlay older sediments, or leave the older sediments visible and use them as a part of the new ones. From that perspective linearity is lost and we approach sedimentations and erosions as comprising a fabric of multiple, possibly inter-

penetrating layers.

In the next sections I outline and contextualize the sedimentations, erosions and palimpsestic processes of Šehitluci in Banja Luka and Musala in Zenica, to illustrate how these processes work in practice on a micro-level that reflects macro-levels in these urban landscapes.

MARTYRS AND THEIR MONUMENTS IN BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

Martyrs are real and/or fictional(ized) characters said to have made the ultimate sacrifice, of their lives, for their community, religious and/or national identity, ideology or for an idea. John Soboslai (2024, p. 7) treats martyrdom as a concept that harbours *multiple symbolic components balanced in symbiotic tension*. Martyrdom is thus both a way of dying and a way of talking about death, when the death of a martyr is performed and interpreted by a sympathetic group. Soboslai therefore approaches martyrdom as both a discourse and a practice (Soboslai, 2024, p. 7). Andrew Murphy (2022, p. 1) argues that *martyrdom has always highlighted the interconnections between politics, religion, death, and memory*.

In Islamic contexts martyrdom means being a witness, and a witness, as D. Cook argues, *communicates personal credibility and experience to an audience* (Cook, 2007, p. 1). In the context of Islam in Bosnia and Herzegovina, martyrs – šehid (šehidi, pl.) – have entered folklore narratives expressing diverse religious vernacular beliefs and practices, but and have also been materialized in sacred graves and *turbe*.¹ They play an important role in contemporary Bosniak narratives connected to the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina from the 1990s.² In this paper I focus on folklore characters and narratives on the motifs of *šehid* who lost their heads and carried them in

¹ Mausoleum with one or several graves.

² Bosniaks (*Bošnjaci*) are mostly Muslims, and the term is often used interchangeably with 'Bosnian Muslim'. It was more broadly embraced during the war of the 1990s by Muslims in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

their hands to the sites where they fell - cephalophores. On that site a *turbe* was erected to house their grave and for the people to venerate them. According to the folklorist Vljako Palavestra, the origin of this motive is in both Christian and Islamic beliefs that holy persons continue to live on after death, that they are immortal (Palavestra, 2004, p. 494). Amila Buturović, a religious scholar, argues that beheaded Bosnian martyrs draw neither directly from the Islamic tradition nor the Catholic lore, but from Byzantine Christianity where they were integrated into culture of warrior saints defending the land and destroying the enemies (Buturović, 2015, p. 82). Buturović explains that cephalophores are the ones who cannot be killed if they are righteous. They alter our understanding of the lines that separate the two realms (Buturović, 2015, p. 83). Cephalophores are spatially memorialized and embedded in the landscape. The landscape becomes the holy ground commemorated subsequently through ritual visitations (Buturović, 2015, p. 85), while martyrs are remembered by Christians and Muslims in different types of legends (Buturović, 2020, p. 104), which makes them very susceptible to processes of sedimentation and erosions through palimpsesting.³

Since they are connected to Islam and originate from the Ottoman period, *turbe* structures and *šehid* narratives are among the motifs representing Ottoman heritage in Bosnia and Herzegovina in contemporary times. In the context of this paper, I view material heritage as sedimentations of a particular time and as a result of a historical process. The concept of sediments of historical processes 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,

³ Discussion about the nature of martyrdom, its social history, religious connotations and the similarities and differences between religious and political martyrdom goes beyond this paper. In this paper I only take sites identified as the graves of the martyrs as a starting point in analysis of the palimpsestuous approach toward sedimentations and erosions of time. For more detailed discussion on martyrdom see, for example, Soboslai (2024), Lindstedt (2022), Afsaruddin (2013), etc.

mixed or dissipated: *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* (Hayden & Katić, 2023, p. 135).

It is important to emphasize that 'erosion' does not imply a process of decay, or in any way presume that erosion of sediments means a negative or positive process. The concept is borrowed from geological science, where erosion is observed as the processes whereby the sediments are transported to a site of deposition. In that sense it refers to a new fact in the sedimentation process, not having positive or negative connotations.

In this paper I analyse two *šehid turbe* (mausolea) and interpret how these cultural sediments with their religious and political connotations, narratives and symbols eroded over time and were re-interpreted and transformed, and how top-down political and social contexts influenced the local micro-context of each *turbe*.

The sites of the research focus – Banja Luka and Zenica - were taken because of the geographical locations of the thematic issue, and the theoretical and methodological approach is also partially designed based on thematic issue call. However, the decision to compare these two specific *turbe* was taken because they demonstrate how differing local scenarios can produce different results in the *longue durée* processes of sedimentations and erosions of time in different localities within what is usually seen as a single cultural-historical field, in this case, of Bosnia. I argue that the changes and/or continuities of religious and/or national dominance that are a manifestations of political dominance, can have a direct impact on interpretations and/or re-interpretations of a particular site within urban contexts, in this case of religious sacred graves. This influence can work as a palimpsest, either covering the former layer and thus changing the identity of a site completely to the level of

the toponym, and its practical and symbolic in functions and meanings. Alternatively, depending on the local scenarios, the older layer may remain visible, but with changes obscuring the indicators of which layer is older. As Okello and Duran (2021, p. 1) argue, framing of time and realities as palimpsestic suggests that the past is visible and acting upon the present.

The diverse local scenarios in these two cities demonstrate ways in which a palimpsest approach toward sedimentations and erosions of time can be useful. Palimpsest processes overlay a sediment of time, but can also leave an older layer visible, or even re-use it for a new sediment. Thus, I turn to analysing in detail how sedimentations and erosions of sacred religious graves through the palimpsest processes are affected by changes in political, religious and national dominance on the local context, and thus how within these changes the identity of a site may erode, and new sediments be placed. This process both reflects and embodies the spatial dimension of urban layers changing the identification of particular parts of the city, as well as reflecting broader changes in the urban landscape.

ŠEHITLUCI IN BANJA LUKA

Banja Luka, situated in western Bosnia or Bosanska Krajina,⁴ is the second-largest city in Bosnia and Herzegovina.⁵ The turbe is on a hill overlooking the city, where Ottoman authorities sedimented two sacred graves of shahids. For these graves a turbe was built, and the hill was named Šehitluci (from Turkish *šehitlik*, a site where shahids were buried). From at least end of 19 century these graves were sacred for the local Muslim population, and everyone used the toponym Šehitluci when they referred to this hill (Hangi, 2009). After the First World War

⁴ Bosanska krajina or Krajina is a geographical subregion of Bosnia and Herzegovina enclosed by several rivers, the Sava (north), Glina (northwest), Vrbanja and Vrbas (east and southeast).

⁵ For more detailed analysis of Banja Luka religioscape development see Hayden, Šiljeg and Marić in this thematic issue.

there was a fire that burned the turbe but the toponym remained. In 1933, during the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, Banja Luka municipality erected a pyramid to commemorate the *shahids* (Ravlić, 2002).

One of the oldest written narratives about the hill Šehitluci is by Antun Hangi in 1899. While describing what shahid is, Hangi explains how above the *banja* (hot springs), at what was then Donji Šeher near Banja Luka, there was a hill with an old wooden turbe on the top. According to oral tradition as recorded by Hangi, in this turbe there were two shahids. Those martyrs lost their heads in a 'great battle' that occurred at the foot of the hill. As in other martyr folklore from Bosnia and Hercegovina, they picked up their heads and ran toward the mountain peak. When they reached the peak, they 'exhaled their souls' (*izdahnu duše*) and fell. People from nearby villages and from Banja Luka, out of respect and eternal memory, built a turbe for them on that site and they called the hill Šehitluci. Hangi explains that people believe that martyrs 'rise from their graves' (*ustaju iz grobova*) during the night to pray to God, and that is why people leave towels and water in ewers (*ibrik*), so that they can wash up after *avdest* (prayer) (Hangi, 2009, p. 196). As with all oral traditions and folklore, there are variations. According to Vljeko Palavestra, a folklorist from Bosnia and Hercegovina, there were three Muslims praying outside on a plane called Musala, near the hot springs, and they were attacked by *hajduci* (bandits) that cut off their heads. The three of them took their heads and ran towards the mountain peak. They first came to a spring called Vratinač (spring of the neck), called so because the martyrs washed their bloody necks there and continued running toward the peak. One of them fell down halfway, while the other two managed to reach the peak where they were buried in turbe (Palavestra, 2004, p. 493). An almost identical version of the oral tradition was written down by a Banja Luka journalist and chronicler Aleksandar Ravlić. He emphasizes that Šehitluci hill is the best viewpoint to see Donji Šeher (the centre of Ottoman Banja Luka) as well as contemporary Banja Luka (Fig. 1). He outlines the belief



FIGURE 1 *View from Šehitluci hill toward Banja Luka*

Source: Photographed by author



FIGURE 2 *View of Šehitluci Hill and the forest ranger's house before the monument*

Source: Museum of Republic of Srpska (1966)

among people that only shahids can carry their heads after death and this is the reason the hill is named Šehitluci (Ravlić, 1974, p. 50; 2002, p. 335).

No matter what version of the story is told,

the fact remains that during the Ottoman Empire the hill above Donji Šeher that later on became a part of Banja Luka was named Šehitluci based on the shahid turbe sedimented at the peak of the hill. According to Ravlić, the



FIGURE 3 *Monument to fallen Second World War fighters of Krajina on Šehitluci*

Source: Photographed by author

wooden turbe that was a sacred site for local Muslims was burned by local peasants after the First World War. In 1933 the municipality of Banja Luka erected a small pyramid in commemoration for the killed shahids. This pyramid was located near the forest ranger house built there in 1938 (Fig. 2)⁶. Because of partisan meetings in the forest ranger house detailed below, but perhaps also because of the symbolic potentiality of the site called Šehitluk with turbe to martyrs and the later pyramid built on it, the Communists decided to erect their monument to fallen World War II fighters of Krajina there.

The monument, by a famous sculptor Antun Augustinčić, was opened on the Day of Uprising on 27 July, 1961 (Ravlić, 2002, p. 345), and forever changed the landscape of Šehitluci and Banja Luka (Fig. 3). One of the reasons why the location of the monument is on Šehitluci hill was the events from 1941. As already mentioned, the forest ranger house was a hiding

place for two eminent partisans Šoša Mažar and Osman Karabegović, who were later joined by dervish Dedo Gazić. Even those early days of the war, the forest ranger Anto Jakić was also an active communist (Gazić, 1988). The forest house was also the site of a provincial session of the Bosanska Krajina Communists where they decided to start the uprising in Krajina. Based on this recounting of events, the Communist party overlaid the shahid narrative of Šehitluci hill with their own sedimentations of Partisan heroes hiding from Nazis and their collaborators.

When Antun Augustinčić, the sculptor, designed the monument that would be the dominant feature of Šehitluci hill, and a new sediment of his time, he was planning to make it into a mausoleum of Krajina insurgents that were killed during the World War II. In a 20 meters long relief on the monument the author shows how: ‘ordinary people from bare rocks, through suffering and struggle, enter history. It shows suffering, work, struggle and victory’ (Midžić, 1954) (Fig. 4). Augustinčić continues

⁶ Photograph from Museum of Republic of Srpska



FIGURE 4 *Detail from the monument to fallen Second World War fighters of Krajina on Šehitluci*

Source: Photographed by author

to explain his plans by describing the interior of the monument that was supposed to be covered in frescoes, with black marble on the floor and a white sarcophagus with remains of the fallen heroes (Midžić, 1954). A journalist who conducted an interview with the artist, Zijad Midžić, concludes: 'And when future generations will look at this monument, I believe, it will tell them more than many written pages about the history of fight of Bosanska Krajina people' (Midžić, 1954). These narratives and ideas expressed by Augustinčić and Midžić need some further explanation in order to draw out the palimpsest approach of communists after the World War II towards Šehitluci hill, carving out shahid narratives and sedimenting their

own heroes and their martyrdom over it.⁷

After the most recent war in Bosnia and Herzegovina, from 1992 to 1995, Banja Luka became the administrative centre of Republic of Srpska. During the war, the Bosnian Serb political elite put a lot of effort into destroying and eradicating almost all Ottoman and Muslim heritage, especially with religious connotations (for more details about this see other papers in this thematic issue and Husedžinović, 2005). After the war others' legacies from different time periods came into focus. As had happened af-

⁷ More detailed discussion on how communists in general used to erase religious memories see for example Smolkin (2018).

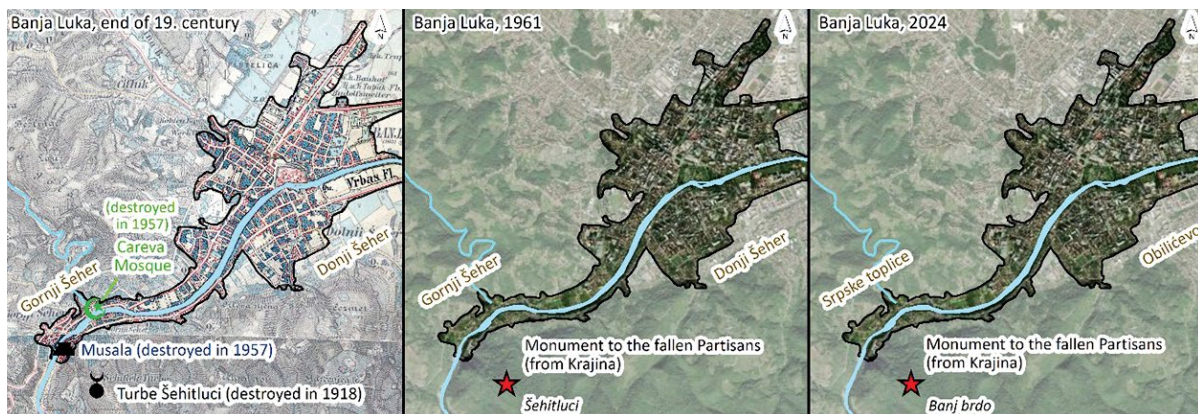


FIGURE 5 Sedimentations and Erosions at Šehitluci in Banja Luka

ter earlier transitions of power and dominance, it was a time for renaming streets, parts of the city and toponyms. For example, Gornji Šeher was renamed into Srpske Toplice, Međdan became Obilićevo⁸, and Budžak became Lazarevo.⁹ The turbe on Šehitluci hill was long gone, but since the communists had already sedimented their martyrs, and since most of them were local Krajinā Serbs, it was not acceptable to undo that part of the palimpsest (for more details about the partisan monument on Šehitluci and contemporary relations to it see Vukliš in this thematic issue).

However, the name itself – Šehitluci – represented the Ottoman legacy, a historical layer that was not acceptable anymore. Thus, over time Šehitluci hill was named Banj Brdo. Although in contemporary Banja Luka you will find Banj Brdo listed on touristic promotional materials and official street signs, it is very hard to detect the exact time when and why Šehitluci was named Banj Brdo. One of few written tracks is found in documents written by Banja Luka émigrés from 2015, called Šeher Banja Luka. In an open protest letter a group of Banja Luka (former) citizens requested the return of old street and neighbourhood names, informing the readers that during the 1990s war and up to 2007, 240 street names and 5

neighbourhood names were changed and *hill Šehitluci was named Banj brdo, even without any formal decision* (Vukoja et al., 2015). The Šehitluci toponym that remained the same up until the modern times is evidence of the porosity of palimpsest and the process of percolation. However, the material sediments and narratives were problematic for the dominating elites. Over different time periods the sediments were overlaid while the percolations were thicker, evidencing the intention to turn the site into a complete palimpsest (Fig. 5).

MUSALA IN ZENICA

The other case study, of three graves of šehid's and their turbe in Zenica, starts quite similarly to that in Banja Luka but with a different result. Zenica, a town in central Bosnia, was established as a small settlement during the Ottoman Empire, but developed into an urban centre in Austro-Hungarian Empire thanks to railroad and state prison.¹⁰ Zenica became one of the biggest industrial centres of socialist Bosnia and Herzegovina (see Džananović, 2017; Jalimam, 1991).

Bilmišće, a suburban part of modern Zenica, is located on the shores of river Bosna, just across the bridge from the oldest recorded mosque of Zenica, and probably the oldest part of the Ottoman town. This is the location of the *musalla*, the oldest 'outdoor mosque' (*zamje-*

⁸ Obilićevo is named by Miloš Obilić who was a legendary Serbian knight who is reputed to have been in the service of Prince Lazar during the Ottoman invasion of Serbia in the late 14th century. According to oral tradition in 1389 in the Battle of Kosovo he assassinates Sultan Murad.

⁹ Lazarevo is named by Lazar Hrebeljanović who was a medieval Serbian ruler who created the largest and most powerful state on the territory of the disintegrated Serbian Empire.

¹⁰ For a more detailed analysis of Zenica religioscapes development see Hayden, Šiljeg and Marić in this thematic issue.



FIGURE 6 *Mala musala with mimber*

Source: Photographed by author

na za džamiju) in Zenica according to Đulbić (2020, p. 24). Musala as toponym generally reflects a site where Muslims used to pray in open space instead of praying in a mosque. In Zenica, musalla is located on the right side of river Bosna, near the wooden bridge (*Drveni most*) that was erected during the Ottoman time. Musalla in Zenica has a mihrab that was probably built in the 15th century, with the earliest appearance of Ottomans. On the right side of the mihrab there is a *mimber* (pulpit) with a stone stairway (Đulbić, 2020, p. 138). (Photo 5) We can differentiate two musallas: *Mala musala* (small musalla) where the prayer site was situated, and *Velika musala* (large musalla) where a Muslim graveyard is located and also the turbe of šehid's (Đulbić, 2020, p. 24).

As with other similar sites, we have several versions of the oral tradition explaining the origin of the turbe. One version is a story about emissaries from Syria who brought Islam to Zenica in the 15th century. They spend the night on this site, however, since the locals were not so keen in their mission, they killed them. After Zenica was taken over by the Ottomans, to commemo-

rate the Syrians' martyrdom a turbe was erected on that site (Đulbić, 2020, p. 24, 215). The second version evokes another very widespread and prominent folklore motive – a wedding battle. The motif of stealing the girl/bride to marry her and the clash between the wedding party and her family trying to take her back is well-known throughout Bosnia and Herzegovina and often connected to *stećak* necropolises, explaining them as graves of a killed wedding party (Palavestra, 2004). In this version of the story, after the battle between the kidnapers of the girl and her family, three killed members of the wedding procession rode on their horses, but without their heads, to the site of Musala. On that location they fell, were buried, and a turbe was erected for them (Jović, 1998, p. 71). The architectural remains of musalla were renewed in 1974, while the location of Musala was cut into two parts by a newly built road. The bigger part, *Velika musala*, was used as a cemetery up until the 1990s, while the part where the stone mihrab remained was named *Mala musala*. During the construction of the road in 1969 the turbe was dismantled and in 1972 moved from Mala



FIGURE 7 *Turbe at Musala in Zenica*

Source: Photographed by author

musala to the edges of Velika musala (Đulbić, 2020, pp. 138, 215). The old/new turbe was made with the same dimensions, however, in a more modern stile (Đulbić 2020, p. 215) (Fig. 7). There is a local oral tradition from the period of renovation, told to me by my Zenica informer. According to stories, when the road was built, no one from Zenica, regardless of religious denomination, wanted to participate in the demolition of the old turbe, so they had to hire workers outside of Zenica. However, because of supernatural events, they were not able to accomplish their task. The excavator would turn itself off every time it came close to the turbe. At the end, according to the story, the turbe was actually destroyed by a drunk driver who crashed into it with his car. After the turbe was destroyed, they reconstructed it across the street.

The fact that we are talking about prominent and perhaps oldest part of Zenica is backed up by a 19th century archaeological discovery. In 1891, during agricultural work, local peasants discovered the remains of some older structures. The most important archaeologist of that time

in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Ćiro Truhelka, was called to examine it. Very soon he discovered a double (two-nave) basilica around 1 km from the wooden bridge and musalla location. According to his conclusions, the basilica was used as a church up to the Middle Ages and there is a realistic possibility that Ottomans encountered it during their conquest (Truhelka, 1892, p. 341). The ground plan, location and the size of the basilica found by Truhelka still inspires discussions. Some authors argue that this could be the seat of the bishop mentioned at the Salonitan Councils from 530 and 533, as Andrija from Bestoensis, while others refute these claims and argue that a monastery was located there (Hajdarbegović, 2021, p. 54). Based on Roman spolia, the basilica was dated from VI to XII centuries with stone forms characteristic of Byzantium and early Romanesque art, based on early Christian and caroling traditions (Hajdarbegović, 2021, p. 56). Without going further into the debates over the basilica and its continued usage, the fact remains that the Ottoman musalla and martyrs turbe, were built near the site of one of the biggest basilicas from early Christian



FIGURE 8 *The new bridge built in 1969*

Source: Photographed by author

time in Bosnia and Herzegovina (Đulbić, 2020, p. 174), thus reflecting a pre-Ottoman sedimentations and erosions of time.

As already mentioned, by 1969, the development of the new socialist, industrial Zenica required other expansions, new infrastructure, and new roads and bridges. Since the location of the old wooden bridge had been chosen as the most convenient site for crossing the river, it was decided to construct a new, modern, bridge on the same site. As noted above, the identity of the site and the location of the turbe was changed. Socialist Zenica and Bosnia and Herzegovina wanted to ‘sediment’ their time. The local newspaper *Naša riječ* followed the construction of the bridge and the road. While there was no mention of turbe and musalla, from the texts we can easily read what was the desired vision of the city. In an article by Dušan Jakšić following the construction of the bridge (Fig. 8) we can read about socialist visions of this part of the town: ‘Almost on a daily base the citizens are coming to this construction site, they stop on old wooden bridge and watch how foundations of the new bridge are emerg-

ing, listening to the buzzing of drills, and you can see the happiness on their faces: something dilapidated will be gone. And impressions of every passer-by are filled with joy for everything new and beautiful in this workers’ and young town: the heights of many skyscrapers rush to the sky, overhanging the last *udžera*,¹¹ so while walking you stop and wonder – until yesterday these heights were not here. Zenica workers and builders are making a beautiful new town. From the dilapidated wooden bridge, which will soon be a thing of the past, unintentionally you look in the distance towards a new riverside boulevard whose end you cannot see, similar to water being pushed through a new channel...and our habits are also different, we are also changing in this kind of town – we become more urban, dynamic, we have less time, and that is good – we mind our own business...’ (Jakšić, 1969, p. 1)¹²

¹¹ A small and dilapidated house, a shanty.

¹² The original text: ‘Građani skoro svakodnevno dolaze na ovo gradilište, zastaju na starom drvenom mostu i posmatraju kako se udaraju temelji novom mostu, slušaju zujanje bušilica, a na licu im radost: nestat će nešto trošno iz prošlosti. A, utisci svakog prolaznika ovdje obogate se još jednim radovanjem svemu novom i lijepom u ovom radničkom I mladom gradu:



FIGURE 9 *New cenotaphs added at turbe*

Source: Photographed by author

Three years later, the new bridge and the road were completed. During the opening ceremony, the president of the Municipality Assembly, Abdulah Mutapčić, said: ‘in the post-war years, Zenica became of the biggest construction sites under the Yugoslav sky...the bridge that connects not just two shores of the river Bosna, but two parts of Zenica, replaces the old wooden bridge that was built, according to some sources, at the end of 16th century. Until the beginning of this century, that was one of the few covered bridges on the river Bosna. The new bridge, as you can see, has no roof, and it does not need one, because it was built in accordance with the latest achievements of bridge construction’ (N.

visine mnogih solitera hrlu nebu, nadvisuju posljednje udžerice, pa u hodu zastaneš, čudiš se – do juče ovih visina nije bilo. Zeničke radničke ruke I neimari kroje jedan novi, ljepši grad. Sa trošnog drvenog mosta, koji će uskoro biti prošlost, nehotice baciš pogled daljinama novog Obalnog bulevara kome ne vidiš kraj, kao ni toj vodi što se tiska novim koritom...A I naše navike su drukčije, mijenjamo se u takvom gradu i mi – postajemo gradskiji, dinamičniji, sve manje imamo vremena, a to je dobro – gledamo svoja posla...’

N., 1971).¹³

Within this process of industrialization and urbanization, religious narratives and sites were no longer very important and it was acceptable to let them erode while new sediments were deposited reflecting new ideals – roads, bridges, modernization and secularization. However, it seems that already during socialism religious communities had some influence. By the turbe on Mala musala there was a parallel sedimentation process of adding new palimpsestuous layers based on prominent figures of the 20th century Zenica Islamic community. In front of the turbe, on the left side of the entrance, four new graves with *nišani* were added. These *mezar* (graves) are actually empty – cenotaphs (Fig. 9).

¹³ The original text: ‘Zenica je u posljednjim godinama postala jedno od najvećih gradilišta pod jugoslavenskim nebom... Most koji od danas spaja ne samo obale rijeke Bosne, nego koji povezuje dva dijela grada Zenice, sagrađen je umjesto starog Drvenog mosta, koji je po nekim podacima sagrađen prvi put na ovom mjestu koncem XVI vijeka. Sve do početka ovog vijeka to je bio jedan od rijetkih pokrivenih mostova na rijeci Bosni. Novi most, kao što vidite, nema krov, a I ne treba mu jer je građen u skladu sa posljednjim dostignućima u mostogradnji.’



FIGURE 10 *New mihrab added in 2013*

Source: Photographed by author

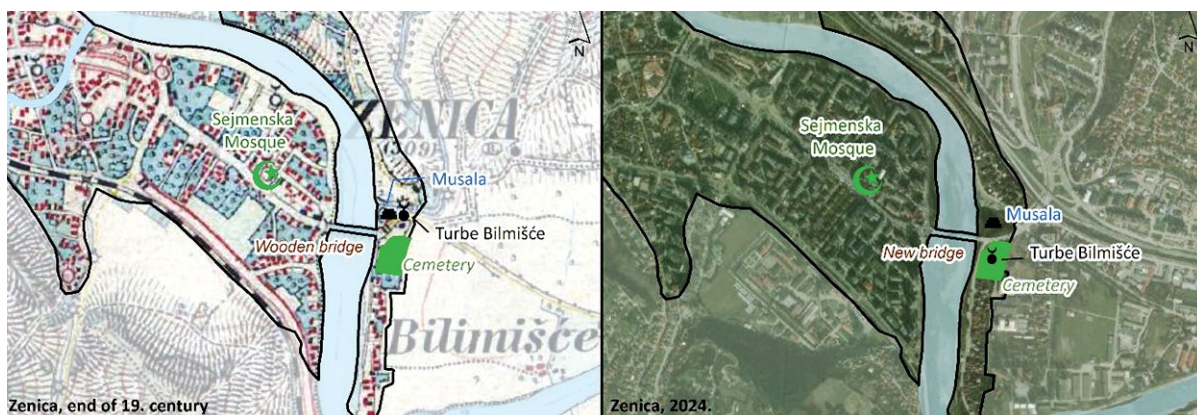


FIGURE 11 *Sedimentations and Erosions at musalla in Zenica*

According to one informer, the idea was to make an ambience where people would have less space to hang out. The names written on the graves are of important members of the Muslim community from first half of the 20th century and of early Zenica Muslim urban intellectuals. The most famous is Muhamed Seid Serdarević (1882–1918), and his grave is the closest to the turbe. In the 1970s the library in Zenica madrasa was named after him, and in contemporary Zenica, the street where madrasa is located is also named after him, while during socialism

it was named Fadil Jahić Španac (1910–1942), a partisan hero (*narodni heroj*). Serdarević was the author of several religious schoolbooks and he advocated education in local language in maktab. He wrote more than a hundred articles in Islamic Bosnian journals, was very engaged in civil society, and publicly spoke and wrote against Muslim emigration to Turkey in 1910. He died in 1918 in Zenica (Mehtić, 1996, p. 307).

After Serdarević's death, his work was continued by his brother Abdulah-efendija (1889–

1950), whose cenotaph is second in the row. According to Halil Mehtić, these brothers who were active in the post-Ottoman and post-Habsburg periods, were very eager to provide religious literacy and education within the spirit of that time to Muslims of Zenica region (Mehtić, 1996, p. 311).

The third cenotaph is of Asim ef. Tarabar (1886–1962), imam and important religious figure after the World War II. The fourth cenotaph is of Alija Ekinović (1894–1966), the first president of the Zenica Islamic Community.

In contemporary Bosnia and Herzegovina, Zenica has become a Bosniak dominant city and the centre of Zenica-Doboj Canton, a part of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina. In 2013, in Mala musala a huge mihrab was constructed for prayers during Islamic holidays (Đulbić, 2020, p. 138) (Fig. 10).

Inside the turbe, according to oral tradition, there are legendary early Ottoman intellectuals, poets, dervishes from Syria who are said to have brought Islam to Zenica and represent the sediment of Ottoman times. Next to them are four cenotaphs of 20th century Islam intellectuals and members of Zenica Muslim religious elite that represent the sediment of their time and the fact that Zenica remained a Muslim-dominated city. In independent Bosnia and Hercegovina, this site was further developed with the (re)construction of musalla in Velika musala and restoration of the graveyard near Mala musala (Fig. 11).

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, we can compare specific processes of sedimentation and erosion in the two towns. First, above Banja Luka, or to be more exact above Donji Šeher and its musalla, where centuries-old river crossing and the oldest mosque in Banja Luka were located, early Muslim settlers sedimented graves of the heroes who represent the ultimate sacrifice for Islam – martyrdom. In Zenica, on the location called Musala where for centuries the river Bosna was crossed and just across the oldest mosque in Zenica, early Muslim settlers sedimented graves of

the martyrs, representing the arrival of Islam to Zenica and early martyrs' sacrifices.

Second, by the time of socialism under the communist regime, both sites had been already overlaid within Austro-Hungarian and Kingdom of Yugoslavia political and social processes. Socialism, however, sedimented new, palimpsesting sites. Industrial and urban development changed the nature of the sites and new elements of the landscape were added. However, socialism did not erase the older layers, but integrated them within new sediments. Since Banja Luka Šehitluci is a geographically prominent site it was sedimented with a new Partisan monument. In Zenica, turbe and musalla were replaced by physical manifestations of the communist belief ideology of progress and building modern infrastructure. However, in Zenica, another religious layer was added integrating the older one. New graves, or to be more exact, cenotaphs, were becoming part of turbe landscape, adding new narratives in the palimpsest that are fully used and integrated in the independent Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Throughout decades of different processes of sedimentations and erosions, some layers of the sites remained visible underneath the newly layered sediment. Šehitluk in Banja Luka, up to modern times kept its name and it witnesses the porosity of palimpsest. Musala in Zenica remains named the same even today. With the change of the local context the sediments are interpreted differently. In the case of Šehitluci, the aim after 1945 was to create completely new 'manuscripts', to use palimpsestic discourse. However, in the case of Musala the older sediment has remained desirable, and its outlines need to be visible in order to use them for contemporary sedimentations, it is characterized by percolation.

As would be expected in a Muslim-dominated town, Zenica elites used older sediments and palimpsestous results of this process to further develop the local Muslim narrative by (re)constructing musalla and making the graveyard more visible. Furthermore, as we would expect in a Serbian dominated town, Banja Luka elites decided to finish a different palimpsestuous process and erase older layers completely, which

for the modern Republic of Srpska constituted undesirable heritage. Changing the names of neighbourhoods, streets, even the hill itself, left almost nothing from Ottoman sediment of time in these prominent parts of the town. As Hayden, Šiljeg and Marić in their paper of this thematic issue conclude, these new manifestations are new sedimentations manifesting or contesting present and future dominance in these locations.

What can we learn from these cases? Sediments in urban landscapes can function as a tangible form of city archive where we can read how a different time was marked structurally, and how such markers were overlaid with new sediments. These urban archives work as palimpsestic processes with some layers being visible and others being obscured or removed depending on local context. From that perspective linearity is lost and we are approaching sedimentations and erosions as a fabric consistent of multiple interwoven layers, but also as evidence of percolation in understanding how it happens that previous sediments may be removed, partially obscured or even incorporated. These two urban environments are especially interesting and relevant since they have similar starting points, and the palimpsestuous processes within them happened within similar national political and social changes, but different local political and social environments. Thus, we can read how in multi-cultural, multi-national, and multi-religious communities, local relations of dominance have literally tangible effects on urban landscapes and everyday life of the community.

In places where the end of the Ottoman Empire and loss of political dominance at the larger political level did not occur at lower regional or local levels, this tangible evidence of Muslim dominance has remained. However, there were drastic changes where local religious, and national, dominance is questioned. That started during Communism with political elites trying to marginalize religious identities from public space. In Banja Luka on the site of Šehitluci a new prominent secular sacred site was built – the monument to fallen partisan fighters. In Ze-

nica we see the transformation of a Musala site into a symbol of Socialism – road and bridge construction. However, since 1992, with more drastic changes in ethno-religious dominance in Banja Luka even the toponym was changed. Bosnian Serb elites want to erase the earlier Muslim identity of that location completely. At the same time, in Zenica, local Bosniak elites want to re-establish the Ottoman and Islamic heritage and identity of Zenica by making the Musala even more prominent site.

I have thus shown how changes and/or continuation of religious and/or national dominance, and thus of political dominance, can have a direct impact on interpretations and/or re-interpretations of a particular site within the urban context, in this case religious sacred graves. This influence can work as a palimpsest, covering the former layer so that it can change the identity of a site completely to the level of the toponym and its practical and symbolic functions and meanings, or, depending on the local scenarios, leaving the older layer visible, but making it hard to detect which layer is older.

Finally, while mapping the turbe that are the focus of this paper and observing them in a broader urban landscape of Banja Luka and Zenica I observed an intriguing spatial dimension of their locations (Fig. 5 and Fig. 11). Namely, in both towns the turbe sites are located across the rivers from the oldest – Ottoman period – parts of the towns, and from the oldest mosques built in them. They both have connection with sites called Musala – an area for praying outside of mosques when the mosque has not yet been built, or during some religious festivities. In Banja Luka, the Musala is connected to turbe by oral tradition and turbe is located above the Musala, while in Zenica the turbe was located on a Musala. Since both sites are located in the oldest parts of the towns, we are talking about very prominent sites with potential continuations of settlement and religious object from at least the Middle Ages.

While it is not within the scope of this paper to discuss and argue for historical facts, it is relevant to note how both locations have physical characteristics useful for Islamic religious

prayers, have toponyms that confirm these relations, are on prominent sites in the oldest parts of the town, and have narratives and graves of martyrs connected by folklore to early Islam. According to Amila Buturović, the majority of cephalophore martyrs are associated with early military expeditions, and most of their graves were built in the early Ottoman style (Buturović 2015, p. 85), which is, it seems, backed up by urban positionality of the turbe in focus of this paper. Thus, it is not surprising that these sites and turbe were subject to the processes of palimpsesting sediments of different times and erosions of the sediments in other time periods.

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