https://doi.org/10.7592/FEJF2025.96.mencej

Paved-over Graveyards in Bosnia: The Agency of the Dead, Personal Experience Narratives, and Legends in the Media

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Abstract: In this article I discuss Bosnian Muslim narratives about traffic accidents and other misfortunes that occur in places where the dead were disturbed in their graves, transmitted orally and in the media. I first discuss vernacular notions about the dead exhibiting agency when their graves were being paved over, built over, removed or disturbed in any other way. I then discuss the roles that the narration of these stories may play for the members of the conduit. Finally, I argue that new details and interpretations that were introduced once the oral narratives entered the public media affected the overall role of the narratives about the disturbed dead – converting them from moral agents into vehicles of the ethnonationalist agenda.

Keywords: the dead, graves, traffic accidents, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Islam, media, nationalism

INTRODUCTION

In the early morning of 13 May, 2000, a bus full of Muslims on the way to a celebration of Muhammad's birthday suddenly veered left on the bridge in Zli Brijeg, broke through the guardrail and plunged into the river. The accident turned out to be one of the most serious in European history: forty-three passengers died and another eleven were severely injured.[1] However, this was only one in a series of accidents that have occurred on this particular section of the M17 motorway since it was built in the nineteen-seventies, earning it the reputation of being one of the most dangerous roads in central Bosnia. When attempting to account for the frequency of the traffic accidents, the "rational" voices typically put the blame on the inappropriate design of the road,[2] drunkenness, driver inattentiveness and excessive speed. However, alternative narratives positing a "supernatural" origin of the accidents soon spread among Bosniak (Bosnian Muslim)[3] inhabitants of the area, which placed the blame for the accidents on the destruction of a graveyard during the construction of the motorway. These narratives further entered the print and internet media and even became the subject of a TV documentary.

This article will discuss Bosniak narratives about traffic accidents and other misfortunes that occur in places where the dead are disturbed in their graves. It is based on fieldwork conducted among the Bosniak inhabitants in the rural area of Central Bosnia in 2016, 2017, and 2024 where I conducted a total of 110 semi-structured interviews. In addition, it relies on the analysis of various media sources, that is, articles, published in a magazine Aura[4], and various internet magazines and websites (often republishing texts from each other), as well as a documentary presented on the local TV (which until recently was accessible on a you-tube channel). I shall first discuss vernacular notions about the dead exhibiting agency when their graves were being paved-over, built-over, removed or disturbed in any other way, as discussed by my Bosniak interlocutors. I will then discuss the roles the narration of these stories may play for the members of the conduit. I will further demonstrate that once the oral narratives entered the public media, new details and interpretations were introduced that affected the message they convey. Finally, I will argue that these changes changed the overall role of the narratives about the disturbed dead – converting them from moral agents into vehicles of the ethnonationalist agenda.

VERNACULAR KNOWLEDGE ABOUT THE AGENCY OF THE DEAD

When I first came to Central Bosnia to conduct fieldwork in 2016, traffic accidents occurring on the section of the M17 motorway in Zli Brijeg where an old graveyard had been demolished during its construction were one of the first topics that cropped up in the conversations with both the Bosniak inhabitants living in the nearby villages and also in the wider area along the motorway.

In fact, the narratives about the accidents taking place on the M17 motorway, which had been built in former socialist Yugoslavia, were intermingled with stories about accidents taking place on the other side of the valley, in the village of Karaulsko polje (Mali Brnjic), where a small graveyard had been razed too during the construction of a local road. Indeed, the site of Zli Brijeg is not the only place in central Bosnia where stories link an unusually high number of traffic accidents with graveyards that had been demolished upon the construction of roads. Apart from a few others more rarely mentioned, the section of the M17 motorway leading through the nearby village of Janjići shares the dismal reputation of Zli Brijeg, as well as stories about accidents occurring due to a demolished old graveyard. In Vogošća, a suburb of nearby Sarajevo, frequent accidents occurring on the local road are similarly associated with the former graveyard demolished in 1956.[5]

The discussions about the uncanny experiences at these locations are typically third-hand narratives and rumours; I have never audiotaped a first-person memorate. Some of the narratives could be classified as "ghost stories" insofar as they discuss a "ghost", i.e., "the manifestation of the soul of the dead before the living" (Davies 2007: 2) – the emic term being "apparition" (*prikaza*, *ukaza)* or "it appears" (*prikazuje se*, *ukazuje se*) – appearing in front of the drivers in human form. In attempting to avoid hitting the apparition, they thus caused an accident:

> I2: *Listen, in that village the motorway was built upon the graveyard.*
> [...]
> I1: *I heard, that was not long ago, about that woman who had a car accident, this was before the bus accident took place, she drove off the road. Suddenly, she said,* ***a man was standing in the middle of the road.*** *And she put on the brakes in order not to hit him.* [When she looked around,] *there was no man, nobody was there anymore, God help us!*
> I2: *This appears.*
> I1: *A man appeared, in Zli Brijeg a man appeared,* [and] *the woman started to put on the brakes in order not to hit him, and the car drove off the road.* (37)[6]

> *Then another one said that …* [he saw as if] ***someone was walking with a white shroud around his back*** [...] *And they felt something, but what this is, only God knows…* (32)

However, not all narratives directly reveal the apparitions as the ghosts of the dead. The ghost in human form is often missing; instead, some stories refer to a *tombstone* – still a rather obvious metonym for the dead buried in the graves (see Softić 2016: 274) – or a *wall* appearing in front of the drivers:

> I2: *Well, people said that* ***tombstones*** *appeared in front of them. But they made this up* [...].
> I1: *These are stories, only stories!*
> I2: *When an accident occurs, those who survive say so.* (128)

> *I heard that there where there is a motorway, where there are always accidents... Suddenly something appears to them. They say that suddenly* ***a wall appears*** *in front of them. When they come across the wall, they turn around, and that's why the traffic accident* [happens]. (13, I3)

Still other narratives, however, lack any association with the dead, or with any particular visual or aural apparition for that matter. My interlocutors instead pointed to a *sensation*, or a temporary change of the drivers' sensory and cognitive abilities occurring at the place, which made them cause an accident:

> *There was a man who was driving two kids there, on the bridge, and suddenly* ***it seemed to him as if something was chasing him*** *and he jumped off the bridge, but the kids stayed in the car* [...] *The children said that their dad was screaming that something was chasing him, that something was chasing him ... that is how it seemed to him.* (32, I1)

> ***You lose your mind. You are not aware anymore.*** [...] ***You don't even know your name. For a moment. When it's all over, you come back to yourself.*** *What could that be? Here's what this could be...* [...] *We were, me and my wife, in front of the house, nice weather, what's the name of this one, UNHCR...?* [...] *He ran into the embankment. That big Land Rover. Crashed into the embankment up there* [pointing]*, God forbid! He was alone in the car. I was experienced, so I immediately took this saw and went there. A man was lying* [at the bottom of the truck]*, he could not exit, the door was stuck. And the door where you could exit was underneath him.* [I:] *Are you alive? He says: I'm alive, come on, don't be afraid. And I dragged him out. I took him under my arm and brought him down here* [home] *– I gave him water, some sugar .... The man comes to himself a little.* [...]*. He lights the cigarette, my wife brings coffee. Have a drink!* [I:] *What's wrong with you, man? You were in the middle of the road, and you turned into the embankment? He says: I don't even know what happened to me. I'm not drunk, I'm not tired, I* ***just suddenly couldn't see anything****, and I drove into the embankment. See, now, if there's God's power, you have to believe!* (33)

Generally speaking, however, narratives providing a description of specific uncanny experiences that affected drivers to make them cause an accident were not common. Instead, the interlocutors usually simply associated the accidents with the destroyed graveyard, that is, with the fact that the section of the road where the accidents occur had been built at the site of the former graveyard which had been demolished upon the construction work. Instead of solitary ghosts causing accidents, it was rather the (demolished) graveyard as a whole that exhibited collective agency.

> I3: *It is no good, there are always people getting killed here* ***because they built some structure or something on top of the dead****.* [...]
> *Because* ***it is not good to remove a graveyard****.* [...]
> I1: *Yes,* ***they built the motorway upon the graves****, was that it? Yes.*
> I3: *Yes, the motorway, and there were always people who got killed* [there]. (22)

> [Accidents occurred] *everywhere where* ***they dug out the graves****. Yes, people mostly die there, near Zenica* [i.e., in Zli Brijeg]*. Because they* ***went right through the middle of the graveyard. This should not be done****.* (20)

> I1: *The grandfather of this neighbour* [pointing toward his house] *died here, lots of people died, in short, they say that this happens because of this graveyard.* [...] *Those who survived say that this* [traffic accidents] *happens* ***because of the graves, because they moved them,*** *everything happens because of that.*
> F: *Why? Is one not allowed to do that?*
> I3: *Well,* ***they shouldn't have done this, remove*** [the graveyard]*, but then – when the motorway had to be built ...* (32)

Some interlocutors furthermore specifically explained that the main reason for the accidents is to be sought in ill-treatment of the bodily remains which, instead of being properly reburied at another location, were simply left there and paved over. This, indeed, would literally make the place a "paved-over graveyard", and the bones of the dead being continuously run over, again and again disturbed in their post-mortem life.

> I3: *Well, traffic accidents. A lot of traffic accidents, there was allegedly a cemetery here. And now this cemetery has been disturbed, and a motorway leads over* [it]*. And* ***a lot of bones were left here*** *and there is something, something is....* [...]
> F: *But why should this have any influence?*

> I3: *Well, maybe* ***there are graves that remained, bones, post-mortem remains****.* (19)

> *Listen, in the village just near ours, the motorway goes through the graveyard. And down here too, the graveyard was moved due to the motorway. And* [...] *traffic accidents happened there, lots of people got killed. And children were killed on the motorway too. A lot of this* [happened] *down here.* ***But, now since the workers found these tombs and moved them up, to proper graves, buried them and provided them with a funeral and made sacrifices*** **[kurban],**[7] ***nothing*** **[happens]** ***anymore****.* [...] *Everything is back to normal.* (37, I1)

Burying the dead, in most cultures, is certainly considered a duty of the living. Only through complete funeral rituals can the dead be properly transferred from one status to another, i.e., from the society of the living to the society of the dead (Pentikäinen 1969: 95; Gustavsson 2008: 25; Cowdell 2011: 54, 59). For Bosnian Muslims, this is not only a legal but also a religious obligation (Sokolović 1972), and only after the corpse is buried can the soul "find peace", my Bosniak interlocutors often emphasised. While in this case the dead had in the past been buried, their dug-out bodily remains should nevertheless be reburied with the accompanying rituals and prayers, my religiously educated interlocutor from Sarajevo explained (see also Jusić 2007: 25–27):

> *Of course, I mean ... when a road is being built, of course it* [the graveyard] *needs to be relocated, but relocating as such is not a problem. The problem is in the approach to relocating a cemetery. So, there is a code in Islam on how it can be done. You have to slaughter the sacrifices* [kurban]*, you have to ask permission from the dead* [...]*, you have to apologize to those dead, as if they were alive.* [...] *So, if it has to be done, and sometimes it has to be done, it is allowed* [to transfer the bodies]*, but there is, brother, a code of conduct, how to move them! You can't take the bones and throw them around as if they were dogs'!* (242)

In fact, explanations attributing the underlying cause of accidents to the destruction of the graves upon the construction of the road, or alternatively, to bodily remains that had been left and paved over instead of being ritually reburied, often overlap and are sometimes even offered by the same interlocutor. Indeed, underlying both explanations is the same notion that the dead should not be disturbed, and if they are, they will cause misfortunes. The prohibition to disturb the graves in any way – by paving them over, building anything, or even walking over them, let alone driving over them – was strongly condemned by all my Bosniak interlocutors (see Mencej 2025). "Disturbing the

dead is as if disturbing the living. This is a sin," Džemal[8] explained, and Razija elaborated further: "The dead feel everything, their whole body, every bone aches when they are moved."[9]

The prohibition against disturbing the dead is in fact explicitly addressed in *Islam* which is generally adhered to in the area: to disturb the dead, even by sitting on their graves or walking over them, is considered *haram*, i.e., a forbidden act.[10] The Prophet himself was said to have at first forbade even visiting graves, in order to prevent the deceased from being disturbed (Sokolović 1972: 64-65; Schimmel 2001: 105). In one of the hadiths,[11] Muhammad, upon seeing Omar Ibn Hizaam leaning against a grave, was said to have discouraged him from doing so, saying: "Do not harm [molest] the occupant of this grave." [Reported by Imaam Ahmad] In another hadith, he was alleged to say: "Do not sit on the graves, and do not pray facing them" [Reported by Imaam Muslim and others] (Book 5, Hadith 193; Book 21, Hadith 141; see also Hadith 140 below). A narrative from the prominent twelfth-century Persian philosopher al-Ghazali conveys a similar warning against visiting graveyards: "For a long time I was praying by the grave of my father. One day, in a time of terrible heat, I saw a person on a grave who looked like my father, so I became frightened, but this person said to me: 'Poor you to upset us all this time by your praying!'" (el-Ghazali 1998: 44–45). Later in his life, however, the Prophet changed his mind and even encouraged people to visit graveyards, with the aim to cultivate piety (Sokolović 1972: 65–66; cf. Schimmel 2001: 105; Idleman Smith & Haddad Yazbeck 2002 [1981]: 51; Campo 2004: 175).

Institutional Islam, on the other hand, does not acknowledge post-mortem "life" of the dead and their agency. The dead causing traffic accidents and other misfortunes when their grave is disturbed is therefore not something that official Islam would approve. In contrast, in vernacular notions,[12] to disturb the dead is not only considered a prohibited act, but the consequences, anticipated if it were carried out, are specified too: the souls of the dead whose grave was "disturbed" are thus expected to torment those who committed such an immoral deed and cause various misfortunes. As the Bosnian folklorist Aiša Softić writes, there is a "deeply rooted folk belief that any disturbing of the dead will be followed by punishment in the form of an illness, often also imminent death" (2016: 272–280).

To disturb the graves, and consequently the peace of the dead in them, is therefore considered a deviation not only from legal, and religious, but also from moral norms of proper behaviour towards the dead, and the traffic accidents are understood as a consequence, an anticipated punishment for their violation. This does not necessarily affect the transgressors themselves; insofar as the place of the former graveyard is informed by this violation, *any* human being finding themselves at this place can suffer the consequences. In vernacular notions, the dead are thus understood as (moral) agents who react when a moral norm is threatened and consequently warn against its violation

(see Honko 1991 [1962]: 98, 116–118ff; Stewart 1991: 189; Valk 2006: 33–34; Tófalvy & Viciana 2009: 231; Nyce & Talja & Dekker 2015: 85). Contrary to the Irish narratives discussed by Harlow who – seeking to uncover the principles of interconnectedness that enabled and encouraged the juncture of oral ghost stories to local tragedies – argued that ghost stories resonate with accounts of disruptive events in people's lives and thus help to interpret the local tragedies with which they are linked (Harlow 1993), the connection between the "ghosts" and the tragedies in Bosnia is not only symbolic but *causal*. When the dead feature in these narratives (explicitly or implicitly), they exhibit agency that affects the living: it is them, it is generally thought, who actually *trigger* the accidents.

NARRATING STORIES ABOUT THE DEAD CAUSING TRAFFIC ACCIDENTS

While my interlocutors in the narratives presented above addressed vernacular knowledge about the agency of the dead who retaliated against the moral misbehaviour, they can also be observed from a narratological perspective. One cannot but notice that to a certain degree at least they are patterned in a recognisable way and include motifs that have been identified as belonging to the international folklore basin. The motif of the dead causing misfortunes when their graves are disturbed belongs to the stock of international folklore (see Thompson motifs E235. *Return from dead to punish indignities to corpse, or ghost*; E235.6. *Return from the dead to punish disturber of grave*). Legends worldwide tell of sites at which this prohibition against disturbing the dead was violated and which thus became haunted places, often triggering various sorts of misfortunes, not necessarily (only) traffic accidents (see, for instance, Fialkova 2001: 197; Ellis 2003: 187; Davies 2007: 50–51; Goldstein & Grider & Banks Thomas 2007: 208–209). Indeed, even in the Balkans, stories about the dead causing traffic accidents were not only attached to the places inhabited by a predominantly Muslim population. Several sections at the A3/E70 motorway Zagreb – Belgrade that were also built over gravesites by youth work brigades, in the area where Christianity is the dominant religion, likewise became known as haunted places that trigger accidents. A journalist who wrote about the traffic accidents occurring along the Zagreb–Belgrade motorway thus argued that the reason for them is precisely the disrespect shown by the socialist youth towards the graves:

> *The builders didn't care if there was a cemetery on the motorway route, they simply built the road over it. This is why a large number of traffic accidents are linked to the "disturbing of the dead". During the construction of the motorway, many crosses and tombstones were thrown into the roadbed and paved over! The youths who built*

> *it mocked the graves and crosses, not even respecting the dead!*
> (Lepan 2013)

Indeed, the narratives about traffic accidents in Zli Brijeg occasionally even intermingled with an internationally spread type of contemporary (migratory) legend "Vanishing hitchhiker" (see, for instance, Brunvand 2003 [1981]: 24–46; 2002: 463–465; Bennett 1998). This is how Aldijana, living in the vicinity of Zli Brijeg, explained what caused the horrible accident discussed above:

> I: *That's the incident* [near Zlijeg Brijeg]*. When the bus left for Mostar, maybe twenty years ago, they were supposed to go to Buna but it was allegedly cancelled that day. What happened? ....* [thinking] *The bus allegedly landed down there. And it was like a woman appeared there.*
> F: *To the bus driver?*
> I: *Yes. Like, he stopped, she hitchhiked, she disappeared from the car, what do I know, there were stories like this. Like a guy goes, a girl hitchhikes, and he takes her in and what now happens to him...* [trying to remember]*? She simply disappears while he's driving, leaving only her scarf (*hidjab*) behind. That were stories, yes. This was told for a while* [that] *it was appearing. Like, she was killed here once, in this place.* (interlocutor 043, interview MM035a)

Moving from discussing the underlying vernacular ideas about the agency of the dead, and their moral charge, one can also discuss these narratives from the perspective of the role the narration of these stories may serve for the members of the conduit. Certainly, these stories have a didactic role: they confirm (vernacular)religious moral notions that the dead in graves should not be disturbed, but also warn that a breach in moral behaviour cannot go unpunished. One could further argue that these stories offer a platform for the local population to address collective anxieties triggered by the destruction of the graveyards and disrespectful attitudes of road builders towards graveyards. Workers in the 1970s built the motorway under the communist regime which, of course, did not consider such "superstitious beliefs" about the prohibition to disturb the dead worth paying attention to. Realisation that the moral norms they have adhered to have been thoroughly violated must have produced tensions, and narrating these stories, even listening to them, has offered a platform to address the anxieties, and at least to some extent also to release them. Moreover, when narratives about uncanny experiences are "shared with licence" (cf. Ellis 1988: 66–67), they can be used strategically to one's benefit (see Narváez 1991: 354–357; Devlin 1987: 88; Mencej 2023). The stories in question may thus serve as a suitable reference for people to save face. As my interlocutor Zino explained, by referring to uncanny phenomena that they allegedly

experienced, some drivers tried to excuse their role in causing the accident and absolve themselves of guilt, at least in public:

> *A tombstone appears. Here, there is that policeman from Z. who is still alive, his wife and son were killed, but he is still alive. One also appeared in front of him* [...] *on the road. That's what he says, but* [...] *that's a story! You're not supposed to drive more than sixty kilometres per hour down there, and he was driving two hundred! And when you stay alive, you invent something so that, you see, you would not be deemed guilty.* (128, 12)

But while oral narration of these stories may offer the narrators a platform to release their anxieties, and thus some consolation, knowing that the immoral deeds have been rightfully punished, or even a tool that can be strategically used, these narratives, when mediated orally, have never been instrumentalised to mediate a particular ideological agenda. This, however, is precisely what turned out to be the case when they entered Bosniak popular media and digital platforms, as I will argue below. But before discussing the agenda that these legends convey when transmitted by the media and internet, let me first present the articles about the (disturbed) dead in this new channel of transmission and point out their specific features that distinguish them from orally transmitted stories, the changes that they have undergone within the new conduit.

NARRATIVES ABOUT TRAFFIC ACCIDENTS IN THE MEDIA

Narratives about mysterious, uncanny and extraordinary phenomena have always been rather enticing for readers of popular media, and the Bosniak magazine Aura, launched in 2002 and advertised as "a magazine for alternative medicine and culture of life", as well as various internet magazines, and other websites[13] have shown a great deal of interest in stories about the mysterious phenomena occurring at places where the dead have been disturbed. Moreover, the uncanny phenomena in Zli Brijeg even became the topic of a documentary in a local TV series called *Slučajevi X* ("X-Files"). Yet contrary to the oral narratives which relate the traffic accidents at particular spots with the demolition of the graveyards, media tends to enhance their overall uncanniness and gruesome character and proclaim the places to be "cursed" and "enchanted". The title of the article on the accidents in Janjići in Aura, for instance, announces: "Janjići near Zenica – Enchanted place on the M17 motorway. Every year about 30 dead in nearly a thousand traffic accidents!?" (Aljović & Šehović 2008: 16; Misterije>whistler<). Zli Brijeg similarly features not only as a place of frequent traffic accidents caused by the dead from the demolished graveyards but as the "most sinister place", a place "hiding a tormented and tragic history". Since ancient times it has allegedly also been a place of highwaymen attacking,

robbing and killing passing merchants and ambushing passers-by, of processions of wedding guests killing each other,[14] of many deaths of people being run over by a train on the old Austrian railway leading through the valley, and victims that fell in World War II. All these dead, not only those disturbed by the demolition of their graves, we can read, have resulted in the numerous "apparitions" encountered by the local population (Aljović & Šehović 2008: 16; Misterije>whistler<).

Even in cases where the media present both arguments for the cause of the accidents, i.e., the "rational" explanation– excessive speed, poor layout of the roads, alcohol, and driver inattentiveness – and the alternative, "supernatural" one, which finds the ultimate cause of the accidents in the disturbing of the dead, the former is subtly concluded to be insufficient to account for the number of accidents occurring at these places. The journalists at Aura, referring to the accidents in Janjići, thus write: "Statisticians make records of the traffic accidents and of the number of victims. No one, however, deeply engages in the many mysterious and incomprehensible details of the victims of traffic accidents [...] Their passing seriously makes us at least shake our heads in doubt [...]" (Aljović & Šehović 2008: 19). They further present a statement from the policeman who was found liable for the traffic accident in which his wife died (see interlocutor 128 above), arguing that he caused the accident because a white tombstone had appeared in his lane, implying the inadequacy of the "rational" explanation: "Every accident in Janjići reminds me of the evening when I lost my wife. Therefore, I find it somewhat difficult to observe the police always blaming the drivers. There is something else here ..." (Aljović & Šehović 2008: 17). This interpretation is further corroborated by "material evidence that there were old graves which were demolished during the construction of the M17 motorway," and we read that "while *cars rush over the bones of the dead* [emphasis mine], the souls and hearts of several thousand people get wounded every year due to the loss or serious injuries of their loved ones" (Ibid.).

These stories, moreover, are not only presented to the readers as providing an alternative interpretation of the cause of the accidents, but instead as imbued with authority and the value of their bearers' – "*folk*'s" – wisdom. "*Folk says* [emphasis mine] that the bones should not be moved", we read on the Misterije>whistler< website. Similarly in Aura: "While official institutions blame drivers who do not adapt to the driving conditions, *folk is talking* more and more loudly of a curse. Even religious employees have become interested in and inquire about what *folk recorded in their legends*" [emphasis mine].

The trustworthiness imparted to folk narratives about the "supernatural" origin of the traffic accidents is significant. It allows the journalists to take the next step: placing the "supernatural" phenomena occurring at these places into the general framework of *religion*, more specifically, Islam. The journalists' commentary emphasizes the association of the accidents with Islam in several ways, thus giving them a new meaning and deeper significance within

an Islamic context. The time the accidents occur, for instance, is imparted a special meaning within the *Islamic religious calendar* and the cycle of Muslim daily prayers: "[It] is interesting to note that most of the traffic accidents in this place occurred in the period of some of the (Muslim) prayers [*namaz*][15] or some of the blessed [*mubarek*] nights. The most recent accident [...] occurred during the blessed night of Lejletul-Berat. According to Islam, [this is] the night when the supreme God determines the fate of people for the following year" (Aljović & Šehović 2008: 18–19). *Islamic prayer* is suggested as a means of providing consolation for victims, whose families, as we read, "[i]n order to dull the edge of that pain, [...] shed a tear, and give a (Muslim) prayer [*predaju rahmet ili 'pokoj'*] for those who suffered death to rest in peace." In searching for the true cause of the frequent accidents, the journalists at Aura addressed an *Islamic religious specialist*. An imam, also a *hafiz*,[16] knowledgeable in religious matters, confirms that the fact that the graveyard was demolished upon the construction of the motorway might be the true cause of the frequent accidents at this location. While he is hesitant to give this explanation priority, he nevertheless refers to the interdiction against disturbing the dead by citing *Islamic* hadith, conveying Muhammad's words: "It is better for one of you to sit on a piece of burning coal that would burn his clothes then penetrate to his flesh, than to sit on a grave" (Aljović & Šehović 2008: 19; cf. Sunan Abi Dawud 3228, Book 21, Hadith 140: https://sunnah.com/abudawud:3228; last accessed on 1 April 2025).

This placing of the traffic accident narratives within a religious framework by the media is rather innovative when compared to the narratives in oral circulation. While Islam, as discussed above, undoubtedly strongly informs people's everyday life in Bosnia, the local population have not generally made an explicit connection between the accidents, the demolished graves and Islamic teachings.[17] Instead, it was rather the consequences of the prohibited deed, and the agency of the dead, understood within the framework of vernacular religious notions that were in the focus of their attention.

There is, furthermore, an additional, religiously-tinged innovation in the stories published in the media: the suggestion that the demolished graves were not just any graves but those of *shehids* [Bosnian šehid, pl. šehidi, from the Arabic *shahid*], i.e., "martyrs fallen while fighting on God's path", that is, sacrificing their life for Islam.[18] The TV documentary from 2014 focusing on the traffic accidents taking place in Zli Brijeg thus includes an interview with a local inhabitant who stated that "something like shehids died" [*neki ko šehidi da su umrli*] there. In Aura, one similarly reads that "according to the locals, the location of the motorway passing through Janjići used to be full of shehids' tombstones, which were demolished upon the construction of the motorway," and that "during the period of Islamisation of this part of Bosnia, the shehids, after having their heads severed in battle, took them into their arms and died in Janjići" (Aljović & Šehović 2008: 18).

Legends about shehids whose heads were severed in fights but who took them into their arms and carried them for a time[19] before falling to the ground and dying are indeed a part of traditional Bosniak folklore, and are as a rule associated with anonymous tombstones or mausoleums (*turbeta*) (see Hangi 1907 [1906]: 224; cf. also Suša & Trgo 1997; Palavestra 2004: 491–494; Softić 2005: 51–53, 170). In contrast with the media, however, no interlocutor from the villages around Zli Brijeg or in Janjići that I have spoken with has ever confirmed that the graves demolished upon the construction of the motorway belonged to shehids who died on the Bosnian soil during the Ottoman period. It is difficult to judge whether the difference is due to different interlocutors that we interviewed,[20] or whether the idea of the shehids was deliberately introduced by the journalists. However, I did manage to locate the local who had (rather hesitantly) stated in the TV documentary that shehids' graves had been demolished in Zli Brijeg. When asked about his statement, he explicitly denied that the graves had belonged to shehids. This likely indicates that it was the journalists who may have suggested to him to introduce the shehids in the first place.

LEGENDS ABOUT THE CONSEQUENCES OF DISTURBING THE DEAD IN THE MEDIA

To fully understand the meaning of the changes and the overall religious framework within which the narratives about traffic accidents have been discussed in the media, we should also take into consideration other articles that appear in the media and address the prohibition against disturbing the dead in their graves, and the consequences that ensue when this is violated. The article about traffic accidents in Aura (often partly and completely reprinted in various internet magazines, websites and Facebook accounts) is in fact just one segment of an entire body of articles that address the prohibition against disturbing the dead. Only by considering the narratives about traffic accidents within the entire body of folk legends about the disturbed dead introduced by the media can we properly understand the meaning and rationale underlying the media's renditions of folk narratives about traffic accidents in Zli Brijeg, Janjići and Vogošća.

Like the articles on traffic accidents, other articles that tackle the act of disturbing of the graves also tend to be imbued with religious connotations. Moreover, most articles in Aura contain at least implicit, if not explicit, condemnation of the disturbing of the dead, grounded in Islamic faith (see Hadžiahmetović 2005: 24–25). Coming across a new settlement of houses, allegedly built "upon the bones and the last 'house' of once living human beings", the journalist in Aura is outraged at people who dare to build their houses upon the graves, accusing them of having no fear of God. Thunderstruck, he asks rhetorically: "Can there ever be happiness [*hajr*] in those houses? If they [i.e. people who built the house upon a grave] don't respect the dead, do people fear

God, the devil, nature... anything?! Such an act renders one speechless" (Jusić 2007: 25–27). The journalist's emphasising the faith of his interviewee, who had allegedly built a house over a grave, implies that his act is considered a violation of religious, rather than (merely) social and legal norms of behaviour: "I asked him," the author writes, "how he could dare to build a house at this place, as I knew that *he believes in God*, *and that his family is the same*" (Jusić 2007: 26; emphasis mine). In another article, we read of a woman who was experiencing chronic terrifying uncanny experiences and was suffering various sorts of psychological problems because she lived "in a house which was built upon a graveyard." Luckily, we get to know that "the ghosts which had been troubling her for years *calmed down forever after verses from the holy Qur'an were recited*" (E. K. 2008: 68, emphasis mine).

Stories about demolished graves discussed in the media sometimes also make reference to demolished Islamic sacred buildings and places to which the graves were attached. According to an article in Aura, the building of the Presidency of Bosnia and Herzegovina in the centre of Sarajevo, completed in 1886, was originally built in 1561 over a *musalla*, a place "for Islamic prayer", and the wider complex, which also included a mosque and a graveyard, built "under the sign of Islamic religion, tradition and spirituality". As the author comments, "a place of spiritual life and progress has been replaced by its total opposite. If one also takes into account the fact that there was a cemetery there, then it is not surprising that the entire building may be 'cursed'". Indeed, the consequences of the prohibited act are not only personal but also political. The highlighted moral of the article teaches us: "It is not good to build houses, business facilities and other buildings on a cemetery! Ask yourself why there are nonstop problems in the building of the Presidency of Bosnia and Herzegovina, but also in the country of Bosnia and Herzegovina, what are the reasons for so much disagreement and problems faced by our politicians?" At the end of the article, the warning is repeated: "What do you think is the reason for so much disagreement and problems that our politicians are facing? It is not that all these people are that bad, but the souls of the dead do not give them peace and cause troubles among them. [...] Unfortunately, we do not pay attention to this, and this is a great danger, therefore, my dears, listen to the advice – when you build or buy a house, inquire carefully about the location" (Unknown author 2013: 51–52). Aura also presents the legend from Tuzla of a certain merchant who started to build a house; however, everything that was built during the day was demolished over the night. This went on for a while until one day he heard that this was happening because the house was being built upon the grave of a shehid. When he left the site of the grave undisturbed and built the house around it, everything was fine – in fact, the shehid has since become the protector of the whole town (Dramalija 2013).

Several articles, discussing the prohibited disturbing of shehids' graves, emphasise the resistance of the shehids' tombstones to being (re)moved.

When villagers tried to straighten up a shehid's tombstone, the author writes, "a miracle occurred": the heavy steel chain which they were using to lift the tombstone snapped like a thread. She then concludes: "From a villager we heard a firm belief that there is no machine in the world that could move the [shehid's] tombstone" (Balić 2008). Indeed, the shehids, we read, are immovable and can prevent anything from being built over them, even a mausoleum erected in their honour (Bender 2005: 28–29).

Articles referring to folk legends also focus on the punishments visited on those who attempt to disturb shehids' (sometimes overlapping with *evlijas*'[21]) graves: "They say that everyone who laid hands on the grave of Bajraktar [a shehid from Kamengrad – M. M.] suffered God's punishment. During World War II, the tomb was defiled twice; both perpetrators died soon afterwards. In the last war an explosive was placed under the sarcophagus but didn't explode. The man who placed it suffered a heart attack, but the tomb remained intact" (Z. Č. 2003: 36–37). We can also read legends about shehids who caused death (Hadžimuhamedović 2005; Bajramović 2006) or hail (Dedić 2008) when their graves or mausoleums were disturbed.

Neglecting their graves is strongly condemned: "It is a sin and haram for many souls that this mausoleum [built over a shehid's grave – M. M.] is being neglected" (Karić 2005: 33). Indeed, the journalists sometimes even turned into "activists" themselves, fighting for the proper protection of the shehids' (and evlijas') graves. When told by the villagers that the new urban plan included a road that would be constructed over the grave which allegedly belonged to a shehid, they actively engaged in the villagers' fight against it. Although experts from the Institute for the Protection of Cultural and Historical Monuments in Sarajevo whom they had consulted in the matter claimed that there was no record of any Muslim grave at this location in the archives, the journalist made the local assistant director of civil engineering projects promise that "no grave, no matter whose it is, will ever again be ploughed over or removed" (E. M. 2004: 31; cf. also M. Ž. 2004: 22–23).

Taking all of these articles into consideration, we can see that the legends condemning the disturbing of the graves (especially those of shehids and evlijas) and discussing the consequences of the violation of this prohibition are generally rather popular among journalists. Likewise, the religiously informed changes to the folk narratives about the traffic accidents made by the media are not limited to these narratives: the emphasis on Islam is also common in articles presenting other belief narratives about disturbed graves. Finally, one may ask why the legends about disturbed graves, and their consequences, have been so readily embraced by the media, and moreover, why have they acquired religious tone, connotations, figures and interpretations in the media that they lack when narrated orally? While uncanny phenomena are undoubtedly appealing to the readers of this type of popular media, this, I argue, is not the only, or even the main reason for their being embraced by the Bosnian popular

media. Instead, in the next section I will argue that the reason for their inclusion in the media lies primarily in their usefulness for the promotion of a particular ideological agenda.

THE DEAD AND GRAVES IN NATIONALIST IMAGININGS

To understand why narratives on the dead and graves are so readily embraced by the Bosniak media, it is important to understand their role in broader social processes. As Anderson demonstrated, the dead, and graves, play a significant role in national "imaginings" (1992 [1983]: 9–10; see also Ashplant & Dawson & Roper 2000: 7–8). Katherine Verdery has argued that the connection among kinship, burial, nationalism and soil is potent and widespread, especially in post-Yugoslav countries where kinship structures are highly salient (1999: 26, 41–53, 103–106). Indeed, the notions of death, the dead, graves, ossuaries and killing grounds became particularly common in the political discourse in the 1980s and 1990s, when, upon Yugoslavia's disintegration, ethnonationalist processes gained momentum in the ex-Yugoslav republics. In the nationalist discourse, as Čolović demonstrated, the graves of the unknown dead of the same ethnonational group were transformed into the "womb of the ethnonational community". Moreover, the "ancestors'" graves "laid out a geography of territorial claims" and became symbolic markers of the national territory, not necessarily restricted to its political borders (Čolović 2015: 108–109; see also Verdery 1999: 101–111). Similarly, the notion of the "spiritual territory of the nation" in the political discourse implied the land of the "ethnically pure" dead, i.e. the territory marked by traces of national history and culture, such as the sites of battles, ossuaries, graves, etc. (Čolović 2015: 48–54). In such nationalist discourse, the dead are therefore not "just" the dead bodies or spirits but are raised to the status of the "ancestors of the nation". The dead buried in the Muslim graveyards, especially old ones, represent the *ancestors* of the Bosniak nation, and it is this, I argue, that is the main reason for the media's pointed interest in the legends discussed here. The comment of a journalist making an appeal to the readers of Aura clearly illustrates this: "Personally, I would not even build a future home for myself and my family on the bones of a dog, let alone on *the graves of my ancestors*" (Jusić 2007: 25–27; emphasis mine).

This symbolic framework allows for the exploitation not only of the links with the unknown dead and their graves, but also with glorious heroes and martyrs of the past (cf. Petrović 2000: 173). In the nationalist discourse, the national heroes "occupy the place of clan elders in defining a nation as a noble lineage" (Verdery 1999: 41), and their graves, tombstones, chapels and mausoleums symbolically mark the national territory (Čolović 2015: 109). The replacement of the graves of "ordinary" dead with those of shehids, and the introduction of the legends about the shehids, i.e. religious heroes who died fighting for Islam, but also those of *evlija*-s, *Dobri*, the "ideal Muslims", should

thus come as no surprise. Even less so as shehids play a significant role in the nation-building and re-Islamisation processes in Bosnia and Herzegovina since the war in the 1990s. While no folk legend mentions shehids as fighting for Islam (Softić 2002: 115), but focus instead only on their death in battle, their religious role is emphasised in a popular magazine (see Mencej 2019) as well as in political discourse. While the graves of shehids used to play a role in vernacular practices,[22] since the beginning of the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina (1992–1995) their symbolic power, Bougarel argues, has been subjected to considerable changes in political, and to a lesser extent in popular discourse. In April 1992, the Bosnian Islamic Community started labelling the Bosnian Muslims who were killed fighting the Yugoslav People's Army and Serb paramilitaries as shehids, "chosen by Allah among the best believers". Moreover, the leaders of the Party for Democratic Action (*Stranka za demokratsku akciju* – SDA) endeavoured to apply the term shehid to *all* Muslim war victims, not only Muslim believers (Bougarel 2016 [2007]: 168–177). Contrary to the pre-war vernacular cult of shehids, the "new" cult, according to Bougarel, has not been a spontaneous phenomenon, but an authoritarian one, imposed on the Bosniak population from "above" – more precisely, by the Islamic Community in Bosnia and Herzegovina and the SDA – to participate in nation-building and re-Islamisation processes initiated during the war (Bougarel 2002, 2016 [2007]; Maček 2016 [2007]). The shehid, an embodiment of "the Muslim and Islamic credo" and a symbol of "the Islamisation of Bosnia" (Bringa 1995: 176, 196), has thus played an important role in the transformation of Bosniak ethnonational identity. It has served political projects and practices, with which political and religious leaders "strove to impose their own conception of Islam and definition of Muslim ethnonational identity upon a largely secular population" (Bougarel 2016 [2007]: 170).

To understand why the legends about traffic accidents as the consequences of disturbed graves in the media are – in contrast to their oral counterparts – placed within an overall religious framework, and why Muslim heroes and "saints" (*evlija*s) have been singled out as embodiments of Muslim identity, it is important to remember that in Bosnia and Herzegovina, as elsewhere in the Balkans, religion has been the most important and persistent factor in the formation of ethno-national identity. In the late eighties and early nineties, when the political situation in the former Yugoslavia triggered ethno-nationalist as well as re-Christianisation and re-Islamisation processes, among the Bosniaks, Serbs and Croats religious elements became crucial in the process of "the ethnification of politics and the politicisation of the ethnic" (Velikonja 2002: 196). Since they could not construct any differentiation among their ethno-national identifications on the basis of language, political unity or territorial cohesion, religion became the basis for collective identification (Velikonja 1998: 18–22; 2002; Andjelić 2012). While according to a survey taken in 1988 only about 38% of Muslims, 19% of Serbs and 56% of Croats in Bosnia and

Herzegovina considered themselves to be religious, after the disintegration of the former Yugoslavia and the consequent war, political developments evolved in the direction of increasing ethno-national and religiously-tinged political pluralism, the de-privatisation of religion, and religious-nationalist mythic constructs (Velikonja 1998: 279, 286–289, 312–313; Petrović 2000: 171–174). Squeezed between Serbian and Croatian nationalist interests, Muslims thus began to reinforce their ethno-national identity by emphasizing Sunni Islam – with its cultural heritage, historical legacy, set of practices and moral values – as the main constitutive factor of a collective identity that distinguished Bosniaks from Catholic Bosnian Croats and Orthodox Bosnian Serbs (Bringa 1995: 7–11, 197–198; Velikonja 1998: 308).

Viewed from the perspective of the role that the dead, graves and religion play in ethno-nationalist identity processes, the media's articles on misfortunes that ensue as the consequence of the removal, demolition, paving over, building over or in any other way disturbing the dead seem neither coincidental nor entirely "innocent". Within this framework, the eradication of (Muslim) graves and the removal of the dead (Muslim) bodies, or their substitutes (tombstones) in the legends can be understood as symbolically representing (the threat of) the eradication and removal of the Muslim ethno-national community at large from the Bosnian soil (see Mencej 2019). The reason for the inclusion of legends about disturbing the dead and their religious interpretation in the media therefore seems to lie specifically in the usefulness of these legends to the furthering of ethno-national identity processes in contemporary Bosnian society.

CONCLUSION

Throughout history, folklore has been drawn upon and exploited to serve nationalist, but also other ideological, political, economic, etc. goals, and the interests of various social, political and other groups, institutions and structures (see, for instance, Kamenetsky 1972, 1977; Dégh 1984; Fine 1985; Alver 1989; Oring 1994; Niles 1999: 66–67, 87–88; Mullen 2000: 136; Ellis 2017). Folklore has also been shown to have been instrumental in the ethno-nationalist processes in ex-Yugoslavia. Politicians often resorted to folklore forms, motifs and characters, implying that they express the will of the "folk", in order to legitimize political and military endeavours and with the intention to use them to arouse patriotic and military feelings (Čolović 1994: 83–92, 145ff; see also Žanić 1998; Rihtman Auguštin 1998; 2001: 89, 93). While ghost stories and other legends discussed in this article certainly fit with the popular media's interest in "breaking" events and tragic, extraordinary, inexplicable, mysterious phenomena, I have argued here that they were published in Bosniak popular magazine Aura so frequently, in particular in the period 2003–2008, particularly due to their ideological charge rather than due to the audience being

drawn to their uncanny appeal. The narratives about the dead exhibiting agency when their graves are disturbed, which in oral transmission reinforce obedience to the moral norms of proper respect for the dead, and their narration may help release the anxieties triggered when these are violated, or be used to save face, are used in the media to reinforce religious norms. They become vehicles in the process of the reinforcement of the Muslim religious and ethno-national identity of the population in Bosnia and Herzegovina. In this sense, it is not insignificant that the majority of the readers of Aura, in which these legends were published, are Bosniaks, and that the owner of the publishing house issuing the magazine was until 2012 (when he sold it to his ex-wife) the Bosniak journalist, entrepreneur and politician Fahrudin Radončić, the founder of the Bosniak political conservative right wing party *Savez za bolju budučnost BIH*.

Let me conclude this paper with an excerpt from an article published in Aura that perhaps most explicitly illustrates my point about political instrumentalization of folklore. The "ghost" story discussed in the article takes place at the military barracks built upon the family grave of the Muslim Ćebo family, some members of which were brutally murdered by *chetniks*[23] and others by the Communist government. As the story goes, one night an apparition of a "cursed man without a nose" suddenly for a few moments appeared to a soldier on guard and warned him that if he "didn't have what he had in the pocket by his heart, he would never leave the place again." What saved his life, the journalist explains, was a talisman with verses from Qur'an which the soldier carried in the pocket of his shirt. Moments later, the story continues, "another figure in human form appeared", this time an "extremely pleasant looking" one, with a recognizable Muslim attribute – an *ahmedija*, a thin cloth wrapped around a cap (*fez*) on his head, worn by Islamic religious leaders and dignitaries. Greeting him with, among Bosniaks today, the common Muslim religious salutation *Selam*, he promised the soldier that he would punish the apparition without a nose for upsetting him. The story concludes with the journalist enlightening the readers with the explanation of the "true" meaning of the miraculous event, the "message" that the story allegedly "conveys to the Bosniak people": the experience, he explains, is related to the awakening of the (dead) Muslim family, who "in this way command the Bosniaks to turn to religion and unity" (Sarajlić 2003: 16–17).

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The research leading to the results presented in the paper has received funding from the European Research Council grant agreement No. 101095729 (DEAGENCY); views and opinions expressed are, however, those of the author only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or the European Research Council Executive Agency. Neither the European Union nor the granting authority can be held responsible for them. The author also acknowledges the financial support from the Slovenian Research and Innovation Agency (research core funding No. P6-0187).

NOTES

1 http://www.klix.ba/vijesti/svijet/autobuska-nesreca-kod-kaknja-medju-najtezim-u-evropi-u-posljednje-23-godine/130709057; https://www.facebook.com/permalink.php?story_fbid=744744612218104&id=408561169169785.

2 I have been told that since an additional lane was built in Zli Brijeg a few years ago, the number of accidents has diminished significantly.

3 While in the first three censuses after World War II, people who are now officially called Bosniaks (*Bošnjaci*) were treated as a religious group, i.e. Muslims (and were counted in national terms as Serbs, Croats, Yugoslavians or Undeclared), which rendered them politically invisible (Markowitz 2010: 53); at the end of the 1960s/beginning of the 1970s they gained the status of a nationality: "Muslim" was now a national rather than a religious category. The ambiguity of using the term Muslim to refer to the national identity was avoided by writing it with an initial capital (*Muslimani*) while referring to members of the religious community with a lowercase initial (*muslimani*). In this way, Yugoslav socialist policy implicitly denied the dependency of the national category on religious identity (Velikonja 1998: 267–272; Norris 1993: 254; Bringa 1995: 9–10).

4 I analysed all issues from 2002 to 2017.

5 The location of the accidents in Vogošća, however, does not correspond entirely to the site of a previous graveyard – this was destroyed upon the construction of the parking lot near the Tas and Pretis factories, located by the road, and the Čardak restaurant, located some ten metres further up the road, while the accidents actually occur along the section between the Čardak restaurant and the bus stop further down the road. The narratives nevertheless associate the accidents with the demolition of the graves.

6 I in the interviews indicates an Interlocutor, and F a folklorist, i.e. me. The number in the brackets after the interviews refers to the number of the interview in the archive kept at the Department of Ethnology and Cultural Anthropology, University of Ljubljana.

7 A ritual sacrifice of a calf or a young ram.

8 All names are pseudonyms. Interview MM051, interlocutor 064.

9 Interview MM049, interlocutor 060.

10 https://islamqa.info/en/answers/4309/it-is-not-permissible-to-show-any-kind-of-disrespect-towards-graves.

11 An account of the words, actions, and habits of the Islamic prophet.

12 Islam was only introduced to the population of today's Bosnia and Herzegovina in the 15th century, which provided scope for syncretism with Slavic pagan ideas and practices as well as the vernacular Christianity of Bosnian Orthodox Serbs and Catholic Croats. In addition, the Sunni Islam of the Hanafi school of jurisprudence, to which the Bosnian Muslims belong, is the most open school of thought within Islam, and this together with the influence of Sufi mysticism in Central Bosnia (Bringa 1995: 174) resulted in vernacular ideas and forms of religiosity which do not always fully correspond to the official teachings of Islam.

13 See for instance: http://depo.ba/clanak/110304/ukleto-mjesto-na-magistralnom-putu-m-17-godisnje-ovdje-pogine-30-ak-ljudi-u-blizu-hiljadu-saobracajnih-nesreca; https://www.facebook.com/permalink.php?story_fbid=744744612218104&id=408561169169785.

14 It is interesting that a rather well-known type of etiological legend about rival bridegrooms' processions who kill each other on their way to propose to a girl, in Bosnia usually explaining the origin of a medieval necropolis or smaller Muslim graves from various periods under the Ottoman empire (cf. Palavestra 2004: 162–164), is taken as an instance of the tragedies that had taken place here in the past.

15 There are five daily prayers conducted by practising Muslims.

16 A person who is able to recite a complete Qur'an by heart.

17 In fact, only one of my many interlocutors referred to Islam as the source of the prohibition against disturbing graves.

18 Contrary to other dead, it is believed that shehids do not need to wait until the Day of Judgement for the decision that will determine their fate in the afterlife, but are immediately granted direct access to dženet, i.e. Paradise. Moreover, they are believed to be alive in their graves (Qur'an 3: 169; cf. Schimmel 2001: 326; Nasr 2002: 344–346; Rosen 2002: 76; Brown 2004: 432).

19 Cf. Thompson motif F 511.0.4. Man carries his head under his arm. Bosnian scholars, however, argue that the Western motif of Christian saints carrying their severed heads, although similar, cannot be linked with the Bosnian motif of shehids carrying their heads. They maintain that the motif has probably been appropriated from other Eastern peoples with whom the Ottomans were in contact (Arabs, Persians etc.), and that Sufis or dervishes as agents of Islamic mysticism (*tesawwuf*) played the main role in their transmission (Filipović 1955: 97–105; Bringa 1995: 176–177; Softić 2002: 115–116, 363; Palavestra 2004: 492–494).

20 Neither shehids' tombstones nor mausoleums (*turbeta*) can be found on the list of shehidic monuments in Zli Brijeg or Janjići in the book by Mujezinović (1998), which gives an overview of shehid tombstones and mausoleums in central Bosnia. Tombstones of shehids are only mentioned in relation to Vogošća (cf. Mujezinović 1998: 20; Palavestra 2004: 491). According to Bosniak folklorist Aiša Softić, only legends of the local community truly testify which graves are traditionally considered shehids' graves (personal communication, July 2019).

21 Shehids sometimes overlap with "*Dobri*" (lit. the "Good ones"), i.e. *evlija*-s (from the Arabic *waliyya*), a sort of Muslim "saints" (cf. Bejtić 1982 [1981]: 111).

22 Especially in Sufi-influenced central Bosnia, the cult of shehids, centred around the graves of fallen Muslim warriors from the Ottoman Empire who invaded the territory of present-day Bosnia and Herzegovina from the end of the 14th to the end of the 16th century, played a significant role in the vernacular religious practices of the Muslim population. To ensure the fertility of the fields, women used to engage in collective annual prayers (*dova*) for the dead (*tevhid*) and for rain near some of the shehids' or good men's mausoleums (*turbe,* pl. *turbeta*), or tombstones (*nišan*, pl. *nišani*) in spring (Bringa 1995: 171–177; Softić 2002: 120). Individual practices, such as prayers for health or to ensure a happy outcome to a personal problem at the graves of shehids and other Good men (*evlija*s), sometimes a sort of sooth-saying practices (Palavestra 2004: 484–497), have also been common (cf. Rosen 2002: 76).

23 Members of a Yugoslav Royalist and Serbian nationalist guerrilla movement in the Kingdom of Yugoslavia.

LIST OF INTERVIEWS / INTERLOCUTORS

Interview 13

I1: male, b. 1949, Bosniak.

I2: female, b. 1951, Bosniak.

I3: female, b. 1982, Bosniak.

Interview 19

I3: female, Bosniak.

Interview 20

I: female, b. 1953, Bosniak.

Interview 22

I1: male, b. 1946, Roma Muslim.

I3: male, b. 1993, Roma Muslim.

Interview 32

I1: female, b. 1946, Bosniak.
I3: female, b. 1952, Bosniak.

Interview 33

I: male, b. 1938, Bosniak.

Interview 37

I1: male, b. 1969, Bosniak.
I2: female, b. 1972, Bosniak.

Interview 128

I1: male, b. 1956, Bosniak.
I2: male, b. 1986, Bosniak.

Interview MM035a

interlocutor 043: female, b. 1977, Bosniak.

Interview MM051

Interlocutor 064 (Džemal): male, b. 1970, Bosniak, automechanic.

Interview MM049

interlocutor 060 (Razija): female, b. around 1960, Bosniak.

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