

Bosnia and the Destruction of Cultural Heritage: by Helen Walasek, with contributions by Richard Carlton, Amra Hadžimuhamedović, Valery Perry and Tina Wik; Ashgate Publishing Ltd., Surrey, England; 2015; 430 pp.; £80 (hbk / ebk-PDF / ebk-ePUB); ISBN 978-1-4094-3704-8 (hbk) / 978-1-4094-3705-5 (ebk-PDF) / 978-1-4724-0088-8 (ebk-ePUB).

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Located at numerous historical interfaces (i.e. between Eastern and Western Christendom, the Ottoman and Habsburg empires), Bosnia and Herzegovina boasts an exquisite cultural heritage, followed by rich ethnic and religious diversity. Unlike other Yugoslav countries, Bosnia and Herzegovina was home to a demographic patchwork between three principal ethno-national/ethno-religious groups – Bosniaks (Bosnian Muslims), Bosnian Croats (Roman Catholics) and Bosnian Serbs (Orthodox Christians). This proved to be the trigger point for a very aggressive race for territory and ethno-national exclusivism in Bosnia after the breakup of Yugoslavia, which, among other things, resulted in the systematic and deliberate destruction of cultural and religious heritage during the 1992–1995 Bosnian War. This book provides a very systematic insight into the “cultural genocide” during the war and the reconstruction of the “hatred of memory” in the years to come.

This book consists of eight main chapters in addition to the introduction and the appendix. It is unusual to mention the latter; in this case, however, the appendix contains a brief overview of Bosnia’s history (i.e. medieval, Ottoman, Austro-Hungarian and post-WWI). Therefore, for most people who are not familiar with Bosnia, it would be most advisable to reverse the classic reading process and start with the appendix before dipping into the chapters. In the first two chapters, the authors went to a great length to give a detailed description of the destruction during the Bosnian War, including a very precise timeline and scope of the destruction. The following five chapters describe post-conflict fieldwork, protection and restoration of the damaged sites. In the last chapter, Walasek discusses the role of the International Criminal Tribunal and its prosecution of war crimes, with the purpose of searching for justice for victims of the human rights violations during the Bosnian War. In general, the book brought into focus the importance of protection and preservation of cultural heritage in order to safeguard the ethnic and religious pluralism and diversity, which tend to be forgotten in the state of war.

At a first glance, this book is not primarily intended for academics, professionals and students within the field of tourism. However, this initial judgment can be easily rejected by acknowledging the interdependent relationship between tourism and cultural heritage as major drivers of destination attractiveness and competitiveness. Firstly, the Old Bridge in Mostar and the National library in Sarajevo, the two most iconic sites destroyed during the war, are nowadays seen as the symbols of multiculturalism and diversity and the most visited tourist attractions in Bosnia. Secondly, the book paints a clear picture of what kind of cultural/ethnic/religious eradication took place all over the territory of Bosnia, and the scope of its consequences for the victims. This is important in terms of understanding the nature of the heritage upon which tourism is going to be built in the decades to come. Thirdly, the book refers to numerous international organizations (i.e. UNESCO, UNHCR, NATO, KFOR) and

their actions related to the implementation, monitoring and protection of cultural heritage during and after the war. Their failure to prevent the systematic and deliberate destruction of cultural heritage, and consequently the Bosnian identity, only proved that the international community must be very aggressive in its attempts to secure peace.

From the standpoint of tourism, the book represents a clear violation of the fourth article of the Global Code of Ethics for Tourism, which partially states that tourism is a user of the cultural heritage of mankind. The destruction of Bosnian cultural heritage does not denote the destruction of someone else's cultural heritage (as commonly regarded), but also the destruction of cultural heritage belonging to the humankind. Therefore, the book's discussion on remodeling the ethno-national/ethno-religious landscape serves as an important agenda for the worldwide community, since in the wars we are witnessing today an attack on one's heritage is an attack on the heritage of the humankind (i.e. Middle East, Northern and Central Africa etc.).

Although intended for detailed documentation, the book introduces specific local expressions and names of people, places and sites, which may prevent some readers from thoroughly comprehending the book. However, the authors included extensive photographic material and cross-references to other sources, which may be useful for someone who wishes to avoid the confusion with Slavic expressions and still grasp the extent of the destruction and devastation that resulted from the 1992–1995 Bosnian War.