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Master thesis:

**Between Destruction, Oblivion and Assimilation.
Perception of and Dealing with the Ottoman Heritage in Serbia**

by:

Nevena Negojević

Supervisor:

Milena Dragičević Šešić, PhD

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Abstract

In considering diverse cultural heritage of Serbia, the Ottoman heritage has left the deepest imprint on our multilayered identity but also a great number of conflicting interpretations, ambiguities and unresolved conflicts. Five hundred years of the Ottoman rule brought us permanent political, institutional, legal, religious and cultural influences which to a large extent shaped not only Serbia but the whole region. Nevertheless, marked as the heritage of the archenemy (The Turks), it has been rejected and understood as the darkest period of our existence.

This research is a result of an interest in getting a better understanding of the mechanisms how memory and heritage shape our historical consciousness and collective identity and vice versa. The overall aim of the research is to investigate, analyze and evaluate the perception of Ottoman heritage and the ways how memory institutions treat heritage of this largely unwanted period of past.

The research deals with the scientific and presentational treatment of the Ottoman heritage within cultural institutions in terms of politics of memory. It starts with the premises that memory institutions have particular strength of “cultural authority”, the capacity to give meaning and, in doing so, to influence and shape historical consciousness from one side, and perceptions and understanding of the past from the other. It is precisely because of this authority that they play an important role in constructing and disseminating dominant historical narratives and memories. This research is done from an interdisciplinary interpretative approach, conducting discourse, content and textual analysis to show how institutional practices of treating Ottoman heritage are formed and later used in legitimization purposes in process of building of our collective identity.

The first part of the research is focused on ways how memory is used in articulation of collective attitude towards the Ottoman period based on which one social group constructs collective identity and sense of belonging. The research gives historical perspective of how this negative perception of the Ottoman past was created and re-created in Serbia from the 19th century till the post 2000 period. It also tries to show how this perception influenced the practices of memory institutions throughout this period.

In the second part, the research analyses the present practices of memory institutions in the City of Niš regarding the Ottoman period and tries to prove the misuse of memories

and historical representations of the Ottoman past. It also focuses on deconstruction of this negative perception as something used in re-building national identity and historical consciousness through using cultural heritage as a tool.

I Introduction

Relicts of the past are not, in themselves, what is the most important about cultural heritage. Once referring exclusively to the monumental remains of cultures, the concept of cultural heritage has undergone a profound change, extending from the narrow preoccupation with traditional principles of conservation, to heritage which can be understood as an idea, used to construct or reconstruct a range of identities and social and cultural values in the present. Heritage is defined by a range of activities that include remembering, commemoration, communicating and passing on knowledge and memories, asserting and expressing identity and social and cultural values and meanings (Smith 2006: 82). Such all-embracing understanding of heritage leads us toward the notion that heritage is more concerned with meanings than material artefacts (Graham 2002: 1004). It is our understanding and interpretation of the material artefacts that gives value to them and explains why they have been selected from the infinity of the past to be preserved, remembered and even cherished. As we look at the past which is transformed to heritage with our own “glasses” (Carr 1987: 29-30) different meanings applied to heritage are always coloured by present social and political circumstances. Thus, as its meanings are defined in the present, heritage represents the contemporary use of the past. As a consequence, it creates emotions and experiences of social and cultural relations that themselves create a sense of belonging and identity (Smith 2006: 82).

Not only that our experiences of the past and heritage are largely dependent on our present circumstances, but we also use the past to redefine our present societies, as the past commonly serves to legitimize the existing social order (Konerton 2002: 11-12). We create the heritage (or the meanings of heritage) that we require and manage it for a range of purposes defined by the needs and demands of our present societies (Graham 2002: 1004). This unending dialogue between the present and the past is especially important for the region of the Balkans marked by a very strong and specific relationship to history, identity, memory and cultural heritage (Rot 2000: 190). Turbulent and dynamic history of the Balkans has left its mark on the diverse heritage of the region. In considering this diversity, the Byzantine and later the Ottoman and Socialistic heritage have left the deepest imprint on the region's multicultural identity but also a great number of conflicting interpretations, ambiguities and unresolved conflicts (Rot 2000: 190-191).

This multicultural mosaic of the Balkans has been constantly self-negated due to the fact that for the Balkan societies the past represents the place of self-identification, a horizon which defines our identity and thus it is frequently the subject of mutually exclusive interpretations and narratives. The latest destruction of socialistic identity and common heritage, as well as inventing new interpretations of the past events marked by strong nationalistic discourse has shown to what extent past can be an important mechanism in creating and re-creating national identities (Hobsbawn 1992, 3). Thus, in search for the lost national identity, many heritages, especially the Ottoman one, have been destroyed or rejected as the heritage which is imposed, or as the heritage of *the Other*.

Five hundred years of the Ottoman rule brought us permanent political, institutional, legal, religious and cultural influences which to a large extent shaped not only Serbia but the whole region. Nevertheless, marked as the heritage of the archenemy (The Turks), it has been rejected and perceived as the darkest period of our national existence. This perception is largely constructed in specific historical moment that happened immediately after the establishment of Serbian national state in 19th century due to specific political and social circumstances, but it became a sort of meta-narrative continuously used throughout 20th and in the beginning of 21st century without any kind of critical reconsideration.

The research is a result of an interest in getting a better understanding of the mechanisms how history, collective memory and heritage shape our present societies and vice versa. Although it emphasizes the importance of the past, the research, however, is not a historical account of the Ottoman rule in Serbia, or the attempt to illuminate and give knowledge and information on numerous ottoman elements existing in our everyday life. The overall goal of the research is to investigate, analyse and evaluate the perception of Ottoman heritage and the ways how we cope with this largely unwanted past.

Furthermore, the research will try to debate the possibility to use this heritage in order to promote multiculturalism and cultural diversity rather than perceive it as the impediment or the problem. Can this dissonant, rejected, unwanted heritage, with all its complexities and ambiguities become a basis for bridging the gap which exists between the facts that something which left the real notion of the pluralism in the past represents, at the same time, the most controversial afterimage in the present?

II Culture of Memory stretched and shaped by Politics of Memory and Forgetting, Identity and Cultural Heritage

For historians, memory has always been an indispensable source of knowledge. The line which defines relationship between history and memory is fragile and thin and equally difficult to define. Just as in Greek mythology in which goddess Mnemosyne (personification of Memory) was mother of nine muses including Clio (history), the history was created from memory and it had represented one of its dimensions, but later on it became independent and consequently converted memory to the object of historical studies (Traverso 2013: 10). From the ancient times to the first half of 19th century history and memory were intertwined in conglomerate of what could be vaguely named historical studies. It was the ambitious project of young German historian Leopold Von Ranke to set history on a pedestal of scientific historiography that cast aside memory as something that stood as an impediment to much-desired objective historical neutrality (Tom 2008: 28-29). Only the incapability to understand and comprehend the horrors of the First and especially the Second World War brought the memory back on historical stage. Culture of memory emerged as particular cognitive and epistemological problem that has become the focus of many scientists, primarily historians, dealing with the modern period in an attempt to come to terms with tectonic political and social changes that happened in Europe after the WWII, but particularly at the end of the 20th century (Todorova 2004: 2-3; Asman 2011: 25-52). The end of the Cold War rapidly changed understanding of the past by different countries and ethnic and social groups. The end of totalitarian regimes and re-building of nation states has led to the rejection of the earlier established official versions of history. In these processes the power that the past has in transformation of the present situation has been disclosed (Kuljić 2002: 11-13).

Today, it is the implicit rule that participation in any social order (of smaller or larger scale) implies some kind of memory (Konerton 2002: 11-12). For a social group, memory puts past in meaningful order establishing harmony in the acceptance and interpretation of the world. Memory represents the result of different stories about the past and it does not necessarily represent the true past, but rather functional and tendentious interpretation of the past. Thus, memory involves different mechanisms or narratives that make possible for different social groups to reconstruct the past and cope with it in the present (Kuljić 2006: 11). As glue keeping one community together, memory has been conventionally used as one

of the objective attributes of the ethnic group and the nation, alongside language, territory state, economy, social structure, as well as culture. As such, it has been treated as the repository of different ideas about common origins and the joint past (Todorova 2004: 3).

History and collective memory are based on the same aspirations and marked by the same objectives - to elaborate the past. But history and collective memory should not be understood as synonyms. Memory serves to perpetuate the past in the present, thus it is exposed to the dialectics of remembering and forgetting. It is unconscious of its subsequent deformations and it is very sensitive to different types of manipulation (Funkenstein 1989: 9; Nora 1989: 8; Asman 2011). Therefore, it may be said that memory belongs to eternal present. Although there are profound differences between history and memory, it would be wrong to conclude that these two concepts are completely separated. Same as memory, history has its own defects and it can, also, be constructed and reconstructed based on the present circumstances. Due to this, the relationship between history and memory represents the field of different tensions in which the historical consciousness is created (Funkenstein 1989: 10-11).

Culture of memory studies the mechanisms of collective memory; it is focused on how the images of the past are created and transmitted to the social groups in order to use this past in legitimization of present social and political circumstances. According to T. Kuljić (Kuljić 2006: 11) culture of memory is related to the articulation of collective attitude towards the past events based on which one social group constructs collective identity and sense of belonging. In the very foundation of the concept of the collective belonging stands a strong belief that every individual by birth acquires a set of qualities which give him/her a membership card to belong to particular collective. Identity is constructed into discourses of inclusion and exclusion, of those who qualify for membership and those who do not. Collective identity can be visualized as a multi-faceted phenomenon that embraces a range of human attributes, including language, religion, ethnicity, nationalism and shared interpretations of the past (Ashworth, Graham, Tunbridge 2007: 5). Thus, belonging implies that there are others who do not belong. This notion of the *Otherness* is fundamental to representations of identity, which are constructed in counter-distinction to them (Douglas 1997: 151-152). Despite the fact that collective identity operates as a fixed and unique entity, it is important to underline that it, in fact, represents cultural and political structure which is linked to the sense of time and space, thus representing the subject of constant negations, interventions and re-constructions (Smit 2010: 157-191). Hereby, in process of creating

collective identity some parts of the past are remembered and some, the one that do not contribute to the creation of desirable collective identity are forgotten.

In the region conventionally thought to be cursed with too much history per square kilometer from one side, and traumatized with difficult past, protracted hatreds and proliferation of obstinate and incompatible ethnic and religious groups from the other, issues related to the collective memory and identity are of a major concern. Although collective memory is in its essence a part of cultural policy (Rogač Mijatović 2012), in transitional regional countries public cultural policies barely touched issues of memory politics directly (Dragičević Šešić 2011: 32), despite the fact that these are constantly employed in shaping and re-shaping collective identity, especially in the last two decades.

Within the memory policy different instruments have been used in shaping and regulating collective memory: proclaiming state and national holidays, monuments erecting and destroying, commemorations, changing the names of streets and cities, as well as publishing the new history textbooks... In these practices the dynamic of collective memory is displayed as they represent its infrastructure, the ever changing landscape in which the images of wanted past are created (Irwin-Zarecka 2007). Together with memory institutions these practices create *lieux de mémoire*. These sites of memory are created by an immixture of memory and history, in interaction of these two factors and in a particular sort of turning point in which the break with history is made and historical consciousness starts to emerge. Thus, the sites of memory are the ultimate embodiments of memory consciousness, illusions of eternity. The sites of memory mark the rituals of society; they are signs of distinction from *the Others* and a society membership card (Nora 1989: 18-24).

Cultural heritage, understood as set of ideas used to construct or reconstruct a range of identities and social and cultural values in the present plays important part in this process of creating the sites of memory. Cultural heritage narratives seek to design a past that will fix the identity and enhance the well-being of some chosen individual or folk (Lowenthal 1998: xiii-xvii). According to Lowenthal, heritage domesticates past and enlists it for the present cause. History explores and explains pasts; heritage clarifies pasts so as to infuse them with present purposes (Lowenthal 1998: xiii-xvii). Taking this into account, heritage is often used as a form of collective memory, a social construct shaped by the political, economic and social concerns of the present. It does not involve the study of the past but rather interpretations and representations of the past in order to strengthen the demands of present and future (Ashworth, Graham, Tunbridge 2007: 2-3). The fact that heritage can contribute to the existence of the present societies, the positive effects of this influence should not be taken as

granted. As every other power, the heritage can be used but also misused if not treated carefully. The very notion of “heritage”, implies the concept of “inheritance”, thus heritage seems to refer to something that is acquired once and for all by birthright (Bodo 2008). Consequently, the creation of heritage actively or potentially disinherits or excludes those who do not subscribe to, or are not embraced within it. From this characteristic arise the dissonance of heritage. On one side, it links us with ancestors and offspring, bonds neighbours, certifies identity, roots us in time-honoured ways. On the other side, heritage is also oppressive, defeatist, decadent. It breeds xenophobic hate, becoming a byword for bellicose discord. Debasement of the "true" past for greedy or chauvinist ends, heritage is accused of undermining historical truth with twisted myth (Lowenthal 1998: xiii-xvii).

Thus, heritage is deeply implicated in the processes of social and political inclusion and exclusion that define societies characterized by ever growing cultural diversity. Especially in the context of national state and national identity, starting from the 19th century rise of ethno-nationalism and Romantic notions of attachment to place (Lowenthal 1998: 55-87), the dissonance can be regarded as destructive, but paradoxically, it can function as a form of resistance of this hegemonic discourse and become condition for the construction of pluralist, multicultural societies based on inclusiveness, understanding and acceptance (Graham 2002, 1005).

However, in Serbia where reinforcement of national cultural identity has been a constant preoccupation of cultural policies, these positive effects of dissonance have not been yet exploited. The Ottoman heritage in Serbia has been marked as the heritage of the Other and as such it has been subjected to the different ways of forgetting, avoiding and marginalization with the explicit purpose of casting all memory of this unwanted period of the past into oblivion (Connerton 2008: 60). It was a firm belief that when human beings forget something that this means that they simply had memory loss. For a long period the forgetting was considered as spontaneous shortcoming of our brain activity. Nevertheless, the recent researches showed that our brains deliberately choose which memories will be lost, and what is more important, that this process of forgetting involves almost the same amount of brain chemistry work as the memorizing itself (Shuai et al. 2010). Translated to the level of a social group, casting of unwanted past to the oblivion involves certain mechanisms, ways of forgetting that are always imposed by various agents and that have various values and purposes (Connerton 2008). On the state level they serve in legitimization of historical narratives that on the other side perpetuating further forgetting.

III Methodology of Research

Everyone knows about 500 years of Turkish yoke. Even when translated into more neutral term as Ottoman rule, this historical period is the inevitable cornerstone of the historical and literary education in the modern Serbia. The analysis of Serbian history textbooks has shown that from the early phases of the education system (III and IV grades of elementary school), history textbooks insist on outrageous terror of the Turkish rule against the Serbian population which resisted valiantly but not less cruelly. Images and descriptions of cruel oppression, violence, corruption, theft and parasitism of the Turkish authorities continue throughout educational system in Republic of Serbia (Stojanović 2010: 86).

The negative presentation of the Ottoman past in Serbia is not consequence of the history textbooks as they are also the consequence of far deeper and long-term process whose beginnings can be traced back in the 19th century, in the period of the establishment of the modern Serbian national state. This period is characterized by Serbian uprising against the Ottomans in their quest for independent Serbian statehood. The period until the end of the First World War has been marked by intensive de-Ottomanization process of the whole region. According to M. Todorova, the de-Ottomanization process was characterized by a constant effort to distance Serbia and other countries from the former Ottoman/Muslim occupier. The Ottomans have been unanimously described as bearers of an essentially different and alien civilization characterized by a fanatic and militant religion, which introduced different economic and societal practices and brought about the pastoralization and agrarianization of the Balkans (Todorova 2006: 63-64). In the process of Serbian modernization, the Turks became the negative Other in Serbian national identity discourse. The Other became the most controversial position in existing nationalistic narratives, traditionally portrayed as different, foreign, and hostile, especially when referring to national imagination and myths, amplified additionally with nation-building processes, meaning that The Others are usually understood as The Enemies (Rot 2000: 196). Due to the absence of critical reflection of these concepts, this characterization not only survived, but has largely been boosted in recent religious and ethnic conflicts in the Balkans, as it was mirrored to the present Muslim community.

This research is a result of an interest in getting a better understanding of the mechanisms how history, memory and heritage shape our present societies and vice versa.

Although it emphasizes the importance of the historiography, the research, however, is not a historical account of the Ottoman rule in Serbia, or the attempt to illuminate and give knowledge and information on numerous ottoman elements which exist in our everyday life (Rot 2000: 190-191). The overall aim of the research is to investigate, analyse and evaluate the perception of Ottoman heritage and the ways how we cope with this largely unwanted past. In order to do so, the research will focus on analysing the perception of the Ottoman heritage within institutional framework in Serbia. Thus it will include analysis of different ways of representations of the Ottoman heritage within memory institutions, primarily museums, but also different memory sites related to this historical period.

The research is based on three main assumptions. First of all, it starts from the premise that memory institutions have particular strength of “cultural authority”, the capacity to give meaning and, in doing so, to influence and shape perceptions and understanding of the past. It is precisely because of this authority that they play an important role in constructing and disseminating dominant historical narratives and memories. But this ability (or power), also, makes them very important when it comes to promotion of cultural diversity and different multicultural heritage.

Secondly, museums in Serbia, as in other parts of Europe, played important role in the process of building national state in the 19th century (Diaz-Andreu, Champion: 1996, 3; Gavrilović 2011: 41-43). Due to the lack of critical attitude towards the question of nation and national or traditional culture, the memory institutions, most notable museums, are still very much rooted in national discourse (Гавриловић 2007: 67-68).

Taking into account these two facts, the research tries to argue that due to the absence of critical discourse regarding its role in the society, memory institutions are largely influenced by the overall negative perception of the Ottoman heritage from one side and that, from the other side, through public presentations of this heritage, they continuously contribute to preservation of the negative depiction and understanding of the Ottoman past. At the end, the research stands on the point that examination of different heritage practices regarding Ottoman past opens possibility for a new understanding and discussion of the multicultural past of Serbia in terms that it can serve as important democratic arena where difficult matters and cultural diversity can be discussed.

In order to debate the hypothesis, the research used case study research design. A detail and intensive analysis of the single case enabled the discussion regarding above

mentioned questions. The topic of the research was memory institutions¹ and sites in the City of Niš (South Serbia). Several reasons led to this choice of the case study:

- With specific geographical position, the City of Niš is conventionally considered as the *Gate which divides East and West*. In regards to the fact that the image of the Ottoman heritage was built upon two simultaneous processes (de-Ottomanisation and modernisation) this name magnifies the dissonance related to the Ottoman heritage as it implies additional effort to conceal unwanted past in order to be on the “right” side of the Gate.
- As the most important city’s memory institution, the National Museum of Niš has undergone a complete reconstruction in the last ten years. This process included not only the physical reconstruction of the museum building and opening of the new permanent exhibition but, also, introduction of the new museological standards. Taking this into account, this case represents a good opportunity to examine whether the introduction of some new concepts in the museum practice influenced the presentation and the management of the Ottoman heritage on the local level.
- As former administrative and military centre during the Ottoman rule, the City of Niš has rich Ottoman heritage within its territory: from the city Fortress, *Ćele Kula* (the Skull Tower), recently transformed to modern tourist site with small permanent exhibition providing a detailed description of the historical events leading to the construction of monument, to *Kazandžijsko sokače*: a former craft bazaar today is the place of enjoyment and diversity. There are, also, several religious objects- three mosques, of which one is still in use while others have been transformed to the objects of quite different purposes.
- In 2012 Siri Therese Sollie did ethnographical field study in which the author has conducted qualitative structured and semi-structured interviews with 6 out of 22 curators at the Ethnographic Museum in Belgrade. The research was focused on how this important national institution and its employees perceived Ottoman heritage and how this perception influences the representation of the Ottoman heritage in the Museum. The conclusion of the research was that the museum transmits and sustains the oblivion and negligence of the Ottoman heritage. One of the reasons for this

¹Memory institutions are social entities that select, document, contextualize, preserve, index, and thus canonize elements of humanity’s culture, historical narratives, individual, and collective memories. Archives, museums, and libraries are paradigmatic examples for traditional memory institutions (Asman 2011: 66-68). Due to the fact that the research deals with perception and treatment of the Ottoman heritage in Niš, during the collection of research data all memory institutions in Niš were visited. Nevertheless, National Museum of Niš and the Institute for the Protection of Cultural Monuments provided the most of material for analysis thus only these results will be presented in the study.

situation is what the curators referred to as something that the author called *A southern phenomenon*. Curators of the Museum regarded this heritage to be more present in Bosnia, Kosovo, Sandžak and the South Serbia and that these would be much better places to conduct the research of this kind (Sollie 2012: 11-42). Following this advice and in order to contribute to the further investigation of this subject, this research used the City of Niš as case study, a town deeply and profoundly shaped and marked by the Ottoman period with Ottoman traces very much noticeable both in everyday life of the local community but also in the city landscape.

This research is done from an interdisciplinary interpretative approach, conducting discourse, content and textual analysis in order to determine how Ottoman heritage is treated in institutional practices of memory institutions in Niš. The first part of the research is focused on ways how memory is used in articulation of collective attitude towards the Ottoman period based on which one social group constructs collective identity and sense of belonging. The research gives historical perspective of how this negative perception of the Ottoman period was created and re-created in Serbia from the 19th century till the post 2000 period. It also tries to show how this perception influenced the practices of memory institutions throughout this period. In the second part, the research analyses the present practices of memory institutions in management of the Ottoman heritage in Niš and tries to prove that historical representations of the Ottoman period is very much influenced by nationalistic understanding of the past. Furthermore, it tries to deconstruct this negative perception as something used in re-building national identity and historical consciousness through using the Ottoman heritage as a tool.

The analysis of collected data allowed me to map different ways of how the Ottoman heritage is treated by cultural institutions. The analysis, also, disclosed mechanisms that condition this treatment, standing in the very foundation of our understanding of the Ottoman heritage. It allowed me to test my hypothesis, but furthermore it provided me with firm background for mapping various ways on how this period of our past can be used in promotion of cultural diversity. Although the City of Niš represents a unique case due to its history and specific geographical position, in the context of development of institutional practices related to the dissonant heritage, it follows the general path established on the state level. Due to this, recommendations will be applicable, also, on other memory institutions in Serbia.

IV Perception of the Ottoman Past in Serbia: Origin and Issues

Perception of the Ottoman past in today's Serbia is built upon three social and political processes that marked development of Serbian state during the 19th and 20th centuries: intensive de-Ottomanization that happened immediately after the establishment of new national state of Serbia in the 19th and beginning of the 20th century, modernization happening simultaneously with the first process, and (re)creating of Serbian national or/and traditional identity. These processes deeply rooted in specific political and social context influenced culture of memory as well as cultural policies that from the other side connotated the framework in which the Ottoman heritage was understood.

IV.1 Building Nation-State: European Framework

Historical events and intellectual movements which took place in the 19th century Europe have had decisive impact on the development of European societies. Motivated by tectonic social and political revolutionary changes in Europe and under the influence of Romanticism, the end of the 18th and the whole 19th century were marked by profound change that happened in the way of creating and organizing knowledge, particularly in the context of re-evaluation and reconstruction of identity (Peri 2000: 235-252).

In this sense, the entire 19th century was marked by the final formation of different modern nation-states, as monolithic units marked by unique history, language, culture and territory (Smit 2010: 97). The process of creating a modern nation-state started during the end of the 15th and the beginning of the 16th century. Two important processes led to this kind of political change. The first reason was the economical one and the second we can describe as the cultural. In the economic sense this was a time of revolutionary change in the way economy was organised. Emergence of market economy profoundly changed the ways of functioning of all European societies and led to the strengthening of different states and re-organisation of the societies. The second revolutionary change which happened in this period

was cultural and educational. The core of this change was directly connected to the decline of ecclesiastical power that occurred after the Reformation, leading (among other things) to the development of secular studies and the development of humanities (Peri 2000: 71).

Merging of different feudal units in this period had connected and brought together three important aspects: territory, people settled there and the state apparatus (which was primarily focused on the institutions responsible for maintaining public order and peace: the courts, the tax system, the police and the army) (Babić 2008: 55-57). Communities had now become much larger than the medieval chiefdoms. Due to the fact that members of these communities did not know each other, their union could not be based on local traditions and jointly lived experience. In such circumstances, the articulation of the new elements of unity was a necessity (Smit 2010: 97-101; Hobsbom 2002a: 384). The whole process of creating the society as monolithic unit gathered around the idea of national identity and ethnicity implied certain mechanisms which were more or less implemented regardless of the socio-political climate in which they were applied (Geary 2007: 29-30). The first phase of this process involved the study of culture, language and history by a defined group of people in order to create conditions for the emergence of a sense of belonging. Once accepted by the smaller group of intellectuals these ideas were diffused to larger social groups through different channels (Geary 2007: 29-30). Studying of culture, language and history belonged to the wider Romanticism movement that to a large extent influenced all aspects of intellectual climate. One of the most influential figure of this new intellectual movement was German philosopher Johann Gottfried Herder (Johann Gottfried Herder, 1744-1803) and his idea of the nation's spirit - *Volksgeist* (Peri 2000: 318-319). According to Herder, each nation is unique and creative, and this uniqueness is expressed through language, culture and tradition. Although Herder spoke primarily about the spiritual and cultural nationalism, his emphasis on the unique culture of the people stimulated national consciousness especially among the Germans, and later in other parts of Europe (Peri 2000: 318-319; Geary 2007: 36-37; Babić 2008: 56-57).

In the construction of this unique national consciousness, the past certainly had a very important role (Habsbawn 1992: 3). In the centuries before the emergence of the modern nation-state, the only historical data that were important in social and political terms were those related to genealogy of the monarchs (Babić 2008: 58). Defined lines of inheritance were important as they suggested possible political alliances. When the divine right of the monarchs was called into question, the political system to a large extent started to be based on a different authority. As the nation-state was now the basis of the political map of Europe, the

authenticity of some communities had become a critical issue, and the joint past of each of the communities became a source of authenticity (Hides 1996: 37). Thus, the past, transformed to a cultural heritage became a tool that gives legitimacy to a nation, something which points to its continued existence throughout the history as a distinct and unique.

However, the success of this process depended on the wider social acceptance and appreciation. Thus, memory institutions, most notably newly established national museums, became the part of institutional structures with the goal to create the notion of collective belonging, converting “nation” simultaneously to the object and the purpose of their study (Diaz-Andreu, Champion 1996: 3). As the places of collective self-identification, large national museums open to public were established throughout Europe simultaneously with the process of the establishment of the modern nation-states (MecDonald 2003: 2-4; Gavrilović 2008: 38). While in the previous period museums (or at least their rudimentary forms e.g. numerous private collections) were a reflection and expression of individual or elites' wealth, in the period between the 18th and 19th centuries they became places open to public with strong educational role, appropriate for the expression of collective memory, national identity and linked to the idea of possessing a collective history as the equivalent of personal memory (Maroević 1993: 28-42). In fact, during the whole process of building collective consciousness, memory institutions acquired the *mirror effect*, in the sense that in the mirror we can see ourselves in an unreal virtual space that exists beneath the surface of our everyday tangible existence (Foucault 1967). And so, even though the individual is actually absent from the collective (because this collective is too bulky and inappropriate for the creation of some real and tangible biological and social connections) through emphasising the story about nation's history, unique culture and arts, museums contributed to the creation of one unique national identity and sense of belonging.

The construct of nation has historically subsumed several different forms of this relation. Its two most important forms have been: a relation known as nationality, in which the nation consists of collective sovereignty based in common political participation; and a relation known as ethnicity, in which the nation comprises all those of supposedly common: language, history, or broader 'cultural' identity (Hobsbawn 1992: 4). Thus, in Europe of that time, we can differentiate two types of nation. In cases like France or the United Kingdom, the concept of nation was marked by state-subject relation emphasising common political participation (Hobsbom 2002a: 385). Thus, countries that in this turning point of the establishment of the new political order already possessed defined state borders used their memory institutions as the testament of political power of already existing nation-state

(Gavrilović 2008: 39). In other cases, in which the boundaries of the state were not completely defined, like in the case of Germany or Serbia, nation was based on ethnicity, which in turn was defined primarily by common language, culture and joint history (Hobsbawn 1992: 4). So, here the establishment of national museum was a political project that was part of nation-state building process and determination of nation's borders on the grounds of cultural unity. This cultural nationalism was based on the Herder's *nation-as-culture* concept in which the nation is defined as a culture whose boundaries coincide with the boundaries of language (Gavrilović 2008: 40). This concept was not only appreciated in Germany, but also in other emerging countries in Central and Southeast Europe which were formulated under the strong influence of German Romanticism.

IV.2. The Ottoman Heritage in Serbia: between de-Ottomanisation, Tradition and Modernisation

While still under the reign of the Ottomans, in the 19th century, after the First and Second Serbian uprisings, as autonomous vassal principality, Serbia intensively grasped towards its independence. Both political and intellectual elites of contemporary Serbia faced important and rather complicated task on this path. Under the strong influence of German Romanticism in their quest for the independent statehood, they followed already established principle that political and national unity should be congruent (Dragićević Soso 2004: 170). In building new national identity among the population that until the 19th century lived in diverse and multiethnic Ottoman Empire, the pursuit for past or particular type of past itself became necessary element of building nation-state. Excluding Greece which could and did invoke its ancient roots (Todorova 2006: 196-200) connecting it to the Classical Greece, the cradle of Western Civilization, thus to the Europe itself, other Balkans countries, including Serbia, had a choice between different cultural formations that would serve as the constituent of their national culture and identity. On one side, there was a traditional, indigenous culture long suppressed by, so called, foreign invader, while on the other, there was rapidly growing need to follow established European, both cultural and political, models (Rot 2000: 195).

Taking into account the importance of the national museums in creating the sense of belonging to the national ideal (Gavrilović 2011: 38-39), it is interesting to explain this

dichotomy of the above mentioned choice on the example of the establishment of the National Museum in Serbia in the 19th century. Although still a vassal country of the Ottoman Empire, Serbia founded the National Museum of Serbia in 1844 as a way towards its independence (Gavrilović 2011: 41). The first period of the foundation and functioning of the National Museum was largely dependent on the work of one person, Mihailo Valtrović. Educated as an architect in Germany, after returning to Serbia, in 1881 Prof. Valtrović became the first researcher and professor of antiquities at the Belgrade *High School*, and shortly after, the first curator of the National Museum, as until the first half of the 20th century these two functions were combined in the work of one person (Милинковић 1998: 430, Величковић 1975: 61; Срејовић 2001: 93). In his work as a professor, Mr. Valtrović mainly highlighted the importance of studying classical art as this was in harmony with educational model of Germany but, also, with the mainstream European intellectual movement in which studies of classical antiquity were one of the most important of that time (Härke 1995: 53-54; Härke 1991: 204). In imitating German example, Prof. Valtrović was primarily motivated by the modern and well-organized state and universities, but, also, by well-known reputation of the German historiography school, as this was of great importance for the newly formed state (Babić 2002: 312). Following the same model, Prof. Valtrović was remembered as the founder of Serbian museology and as a person who was able to constitute the National Museum as an institution of modern character. In searching for appropriate model of how to organize the National Museum, in 1895 Prof. Valtrović proposed a study visit to European museums aiming to collect practical experiences and knowledge that might be applied to the functioning of the National Museum in Belgrade. The fact that majority of proposed museums to be visited were located in different German or Austria-Hungary cities (Veličković 1975: 630) serves as additional confirmation of German influence.

From one side, a small intellectual elite of Serbia in the 19th century, to which Mr. Valtrović certainly belonged, represented a kind of prolonged action of the political elite (Dragović Soso 2004: 170). Thus, in following examples from the Western Europe, primarily Germany, Prof. Valtrović emphasized national distinctiveness and political independence, showing respect towards European values and thus the rejection of the label of underdevelopment and backwardness.

On the other side, besides accepting the European values, equally important for Prof. Valtrović (but also for other members of contemporary Serbian political and intellectual elite) was promotion of national past. According to Prof. Valtrović, museums should be overall collection of various historical and artistic objects that are, in the first place, important from

the aspect of the history of our country and the people in order to serve to educational purposes. According to the reports written by Prof. Valtrović and submitted to the Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs, the majority of professor's work at the museum was focused on finding of all kinds of historical and cultural items appropriate for presentation of national past to the local public and foreign visitors (Veličković 1975: 611-645).

As historical and ethnographical studies showed, this gap between turning towards modernization or European culture and values on one side and turning towards indigenous, traditional culture on the other was too much to bridge (Rot 2000: 195-196; Stojanović 2010: 28-36). Rapid modernization permeated political, administrative, economic and educational system, but, also, involved the everyday life of individuals. Nevertheless, this process of modernization has never influenced complete change of social and cultural system in Serbia, but rather brought about the resistance of the most of (rural) population (Rot 2000: 195). The choice of European culture was the choice of the state, particularly the choice of the political and intellectual elite which had the opportunity to travel to European countries and attend European universities and consequently acquire direct knowledge regarding European culture and way of life (Rot 2000: 199). On the other side, majority of population gained this knowledge hearsay, and to a large extent in this case we can talk more about the perceptions and representations than about knowledge and lived experience. The difference between the two is often confusing, misleading but equally influential. Due to underdeveloped state mechanisms to expand these modernization forms to a larger population (Stojanović 2010: 33) and the fact that in direct collision with the modernization many had turned to traditional forms, as known and easily applicable (Rot 2000: 199), the whole modernization process was rather differentiated and complex. Thus, many argue that the process of modernizations was a rather symbolic one (sometimes entitled facade modernization). It stayed on the superficial levels of everyday life of Serbian society (focused mostly on the acceptance of elements of material culture and technological development) but never succeeded in changing the deeper social and cultural processes which we may refer to as values or social and cultural norms (Rot 2000: 206; Stojanović 2010: 28).

The ambiguity was even greater in relation to the traditional culture. Traditional culture was certainly at a high price during the process of national liberation when indigenous elements were perceived as the backbone of national determination. Nevertheless, soon after this initial enthusiasm regarding traditional Serbian culture, newly formed urbane elite started to perceive this approach to culture as rather abortive and crude but, also, as one of the main impediment for further modernization of our society (Rot 2000: 196). As some authors argue

this collision of the two tendencies was deciding for political, economical, social and cultural development of our society, both in the 19th and later on throughout the 20th century (Stojanović 2010: 25-58).

Despite the discrepancy existing between two cultural, social and political currents that were dominated throughout this period, there was one common denominator which united them on their way towards and in the first decades of modern national state: de-Ottomanisation process.

The necessity was to liberate and distance Serbia (and other Balkan countries) from its Ottoman/Muslim occupier as they have been described and perceived as carriers of essentially different and alien civilization that suffocated Serbian medieval state and traditional culture and introduced different political, economical and social practices. What was more important, it brought pastoralization and agrarization and overall misery of the Balkan countries (Todorova 2006: 59). Thus, soon after the liberalization, the Ottoman heritage or something that could be described as *Turkish* became the synonym for everything that is negative and detrimental in everyday culture. It is perfectly understandable that the rejection of this heritage and de-Ottomanisation of the national culture became one of the political and cultural priorities and interests of that time. All cultural expressions, including heritage, which did not fall under the notion of traditions and traditional culture were rejected and to a large extent destroyed. Similarly, as we favour and celebrate heritage precisely because it's inherent basis – it is understood as something that belongs to “us” (Lowenthal 1998b: 7, 8) – traditional culture is, also, understood as a system which does not accept “foreign elements” or the elements of the Others. Taking into account that the notion of tradition is, also, something that is created in the present and for the present circumstances, tradition is considered as a system that is free of any internal contradictions. Traditions, generally, omit and prohibit the recounting of facts about the past that might undermine or oppose to officially established meta-narratives about the past (Hobsbom 2002b: 5-25).

On the other side, rejection of the Ottoman heritage was in line with newly established process of modernisation and acceptance of European culture and values. It should be said that even in the Western Europe attitudes towards the Turks and the Ottoman Empire changed during the time as they were largely dependent not only on the circumstances in the Ottoman Empire, but, also, on different political and social circumstances in Europe, more precisely in various European countries (Todorova 2006: 145-190). Despite these various faces of the Turks in the eyes of Europe, some general patterns of perception can be notice. Till the Enlightenment the perception of the Ottoman Empire was marked by the overawed towards

impressive political and military power (Jezernik 2010: 10) on one side and by strong anti-Turkish propaganda created in Europe during this period, on the other. Due to this propaganda, a stereotype of the Ottoman Turks as wild, vicious and inhumane people was created in the Western Europe. This opponent of European countries was demonized as the embodiment of the traditional enemies of Christianity (Todorova 2006: 153). Due to the decline of military power of the Empire and the opening of Europe with the beginning of the Enlightenment, this image of the Ottoman Empire and Islam in general, started to be reviewed but in its essence it remained mostly negative and strong dichotomy between the Islamic Orient and the Christian Occident represented prevailing narrative (Todorova 2006: 159-190). This narrative was particularly strong in Habsburg monarchy which insisted on self-representation as a bastion of Christianity defending Western civilization from bloodthirsty enemies, even when it became clear that the enemy did not have the political and military power needed to conquer Europe (Jezernik 2010: 21-24).

In the 19th century the metaphor *Bastion of Christianity* became very important among newly established and liberated nations in the Balkans (Jezernik 2010: 24). They thought that the burden of defending Christianity was on them, and while other nations could develop freely, they were exposed to great suffering under the Turkish rule. Thus, *five hundred years of Turkish yoke* became in the same time the most difficult period of their history and the most heroic one as not only that they succeeded to preserve their own identity but they, also, defended European civilizations showing in the same time that they deserve gratitude and respect, as well as the place among European nations.

In these specific cultural and political circumstances that existed at the time of creation of the modern nation state, perceived as heritage of centuries old invaders, the Ottoman period was considered to have negative consequences not only to the process of modernization, but, also, to the preservation and re-establishment of indigenous traditional culture. Taking this into account, immediately after the liberation, the elements of the Ottoman heritage have become symbols of backwardness and hateful past. The most important result of this perception is a cultural change that can be defined by two dichotomies: public/private sphere and urban/rural sphere (Rot 2000: 201, 202). In public urban life almost complete negation of traces testifying about Ottoman history occurred immediately after achieving political independence. These changes were very fast and equally destructive. Ottoman public buildings and mosques were destroyed while whole residential neighbourhoods from Ottoman period disappeared under the growing pressure of modernist urban development plans (Hartmuth 2006: 18). While numerous places changed their names

becoming “less Turkish”, this annihilation was also visible in everyday life of people, for example in changing/rejection of the Ottoman clothing. These were not only physical but, also, symbolic acts motivated by strong emotions related to the construction of national identity. These changes were far less present both in rural areas but also in private sphere of everyday life that were barely touched by de-Ottomanization process, where we can speak more about appropriation of the Ottoman heritage rather than about annihilation. The first wave of the modernization process has bypassed rural areas, and therefore there de-Ottomanization process was quite vague. Mixed with traditional culture many elements of the Ottoman heritage, mostly intangible one, continued to live. On the other side, even in the private sphere, Ottoman elements were kept present mostly among lower social class having in mind that only newly formed urban elite was the carrier of changes in modernization process and the main protagonist of European value system (Rot 2000: 201, 202).

Rejection and negation of the Ottoman heritage began almost immediately after the country’s independence, but the final break was completed after the World War I (Todorova 2006: 26). It was in this period that a narrative about the Turks as archenemy has been created, the narrative which in many aspects determined the way of dealing with this part of our history.

IV.3. The Turks Strikes Again?!?

Although this narrative about the Turks continued to exist in the period after the World War II², during socialist Yugoslavia, when researching and presenting of different pasts were fully institutionalized (complete development of historical, archaeological, ethnographical curriculum in the University of Belgrade, but also the development of broader museum network throughout Serbia), the narrative about our centuries old conquerors was not the one that determined our overall relation to the past. This period was included in the broader academic research and scientific interest regarding the past, but even then the focus was mostly on the 19th century and the period of liberation. Despite this, it might be said that official historiography heavily influenced by the state ideology put its focus on more recent historical periods which were important in context of post-war country rebuilding and

²It is the thought of famous Yugoslavian satirists Vladimir Bulatovic- Vid that average Yugoslav during his lifetime of 60 years spends at least 500 years under the Turkish yoke that perfectly depicts this continuity.

developing of the idea about brotherhood and unity (Babić 2002: 313). Another narrative that influenced our relation to the past as well as our collective memory during the socialist Yugoslavia was the one that put focus on national-liberation struggle. The prevailing collective memory discourse in socialist Yugoslavia was about revolutionary partisan struggle and our joint revolutionary past (Bajford 2011: 85-92). Even the process of post-war country rebuilding was presented and considered as mere continuation of our revolutionary struggle that in post-war times uses different means. Such narratives left little or no space for other parts of our history to be considered as important.

In this period, significant change happened in the organization of museum network in Serbia. While in pre-war period almost complete museum activity was focused on Belgrade, in the first years after the WW II almost every town in Serbia opened its own museum. From one side, these museums were opened as scientific, cultural and educational institutions and as such they served as manifestation of cultural development so much needed after the war destructions. On the other side, these institutions, called *Narodni muzeji* (*National museums*), became the evidence of established people's rule in liberated and newly formed country (Андрејевић-Кун 1948: 2). In this strictly defined ideological framework, step by step, all museums began to resemble each other. With ambition to become complex museums of the 19th century reduced to smaller buildings, each of these local museums tried to present the history from the very beginning of civilization till the National Liberation Struggle in WWII. However, in practice, the museums focused mainly on the revolutionary struggle that fit perfectly to the overall narrative of socialist Yugoslavia (Cvjetičanin 2004: 87).

The dissolution of Yugoslavia and rising of nationalistic ideologies followed by bloody nationalistic wars mobilized majority ethnic groups in the Balkans to search for their own national identity. In this process of re-building national identity issues related to the collective memory and cultural heritage were of major concern (Dragičević Šešić 2011: 32). Although officially Serbia proclaimed continuity with Yugoslavia, through numerous social and cultural practices, it entered in the process of identity rebuilding and in this process it heavily leaned towards the 19th century national state and the period when Serbia was liberated from the Ottoman rule. In political chaos that emerged after the breakup of Yugoslavia, exhibition practices of museums in Serbia were focused on representation of the 19th century completely idealized Serbian spirit. Monothematic exhibitions opened in some museums in Serbia during the nineties represented the romantic quest for once lost national

spirit rediscovered in traditional culture that survived the sufferings under the Ottoman rule and was liberated during the First and the Second Serbian uprisings (Krivošejev 2008: 201)³.

Nevertheless, in public discourse this process of rebuilding national identity was far more extreme and very much based on creating or recalling the images of ultimate enemies. In ideological cacophony between Yugoslav descendants and old-new traditional Serbian culture, Serbian identity during the nineties was defined by its difference in contrast to the Other (Dragicević Šešić 2011: 36). Within this framework the Turks once again became the most vivid foe of Serbian national identity and the images about the bloodthirsty Turks became once again alive. From Milošević's speech at Gazimestan in 1989 on 600th Battle of Kosovo anniversary stressing the importance of Serbian people as bastion against Muslim occupiers, this narrative about mythical enemy was not only boosted but, also, in a very peculiar way replicated to the more recent enemies of Serbian people. The images of those new enemies were to a large extent created according to the model of *the bloodthirsty Turk* and in extreme cases these enemies were presented as *his direct descendants* (Šuica 2010: 292). One of the most extreme (and bizarre) manifestations of such perception of the Ottomans was the idea that war in Bosnia during the '90s was just another historical conflict with the Turks by which this conflict was put in ideological context of eternal conflict between Christianity and Islam (Stojanović 2009). In the dawn of Srebrenica Genocide, Ratko Mladić, the commandant of Serbian forces stated that "after the revolt against Dahis, here in Srebrenica, the moment has finally come for Serbian people to revenge to Turks"⁴.

As much as this statement is extreme manifestation of the perception of the Turks as ultimate enemies to Serbian people, it is indicative how it is rooted and connected with the rebellion against Dahis and consequently with the outbreak of the First Serbian Uprising against the Ottoman rule. This brings us back to the historical period from which the narratives that contributed to the rebuilding of national identity were and still are derived.

³ It should be taken into account that due to economic situation most of the museums in Serbia kept their old permanent exhibitions focused on revolutionary struggle against fascism. Only a small number of museums presented new permanent exhibitions during this period.

⁴The quote: "Evo nas 11. jula 1995. godine u srpskoj Srebrenici. Uoči još jednog velikog praznika srpskoga, poklanjamo srpskome narodu ovaj grad i, napokon, došao je trenutak da se, posle bune protiv dahija, Turcima osvetimo na ovom prostoru". Ratko Mladić, TV statement (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wCkr7UxhOAw>) July 5th 2015

IV.4. The Turks and Their Role in Search for Usable Past

In post-2000 Serbia, it is indicative that liberation of Serbia from Ottoman Empire remained one of the most important historical narratives. Considering memory politics as different social and political practices that contribute to the regulation of collective memory, state holidays, among other things, represent important grummet in overall collective memory infrastructure (Irwin-Zarecka 2007). If we exclude Christmas and Eastern as religious holidays, the most important state holiday of Serbia, the Statehood Day, from 2002 is celebrated on February 15th. This date is connected to two historical events inseparably linked with the period of Ottoman rule in Serbia- the day when the First Serbian Uprising against the Ottomans began in Orašac (Serbia) in 1804, and the day when the first Serbian Constitution was accepted in 1835 in the City of Kragujevac.

It is perfectly clear that the 19th century, the period of the Serbian struggle for independence from the Ottoman rule, in which the foundations of the ‘modern Serbian state’ were laid, provided plenty of material for new symbols of Serbian statehood, especially taking into account that this period is often referred to as a golden age of Serbian democracy (Stojanović 2009). Of course, this motivation to establish new identity markers of the Serbian state was the result of simultaneous efforts to reconcile Serbia with Europe on one hand, and on the other, to reconcile different parts of Serbian society after the Milošević regime (Petrović 2012: 93). Thus, the 19th century Serbia is, at the same time, the period of modernization, introduction of European values, etc., but it is, also, inseparably connected to other constitutive cluster of values: the (orthodox) tradition. The fact that these two currents did not fit very well together even in the 19th century (as previously explained) was not really taken into account when these issues were redefined in the dawn of the 21st century. Thus, through this process the mythological medieval pivot of collective memory was changed. From the Kosovo Battle as “the place of national Golgotha and symbol of resurrection from defeat” to the modern political narrative of bravery, resistance and democracy reached through *national revolution* (Kuljić 2006: 283).

This refocusing of collective memory influenced the overall perception of the Turks. From century-long culprit responsible for all Serbian sufferings, the Turks came to the position of weakened enemy powerless against patriotism of Serbian heroes. After the nineties and rather unsuccessful nationalistic wars during the Milošević’s regime, this

narrative provided a manoeuvre space to restore a faith in the power of nation state-building through reminiscence of our national liberation spirit embodied in 1804 event (Šuica 2010: 289). Nevertheless, the image of *the bloodthirsty Turk* was not banished from the collective memory, as it still was and is a powerful mirror reflection in which we define ourselves. This is visible both in the fact that the 28th June (the Battle of Kosovo) still plays powerful role in our collective memory infrastructure, but, also, in the fact that in celebration of Serbian Statehood Day preference is given to the beginning of the First Serbian Uprising⁵. The event in 1804 leaves much more space for interpretations that involve the fight against *the bloodthirsty Turk* than the one in 1835 when the first Constitution was accepted and speaks more about contemporary political constellations than the mythical fight against the Turks.

It is striking that perhaps the two most important national holidays in today's Serbia – *Vidovdan* (28th June) and *Sretenje* (15th February) - are the evocation of events from our past that is tied to the Ottoman period, one from its beginning, and the second from the end. Their marking keeps alive the collective memory to those events in which the Turks were the reason for the end of Serbian medieval state in the 14th century, and then the barrier standing in the way of full national rebuilding in the 19th century. Nevertheless, here we are talking about the collective memory of our own past. But what is in between? What has happened with a part of the past inserted between these two pillars of Serbian identity? And what has happened with the traces of this past left behind? These issues relate to the heritage of the Ottoman period in Serbia and to the manner in which this heritage is treated today. In answering these questions we will consider the case of the City of Niš, the city of reach history and heritage to a large extent linked to the Ottoman period.

⁵This advantage is visible in the fact that on February 15th the official celebration ceremony is held in Orašac, the place in which the First Serbian Uprising started.

V How to Deal with the Ottoman Heritage: the City of Niš

V.1. Niš: the City's History and Memory

A city's ID represents the first and basic mean of city presentation and as such it can be found in almost every official presentation of various towns and municipalities. Number of inhabitants, geographical position and climate, ethnic, gender and age structure of city population, main public institutions, economy - these are all measurable facts that give visitors or other interested parties the sense of one city's functioning. Nevertheless, when we think about various cities, we rarely have in mind these facts and we often find ourselves scoping throughout city's history, cultural heritage, people and present or past events. Once we start constructing the city's image by these parameters, we do no longer speak about mere city ID, but we enter in the slippery field of collective memory and identity.

If we speak about the mere history of the area in which, over the time, the City of Niš was developed, numerous archaeological sites and individual findings suggest dynamic civilization processes that took place on the territory of today's Niš and its surroundings. The first settlement is linked to the Celtic archaeological traces and the establishment of the first Roman military camp at the beginning of the 1st century A.D. around which the first civil settlement was developed. From this moment, due to strategic position of Niš, at the crossroads of major Balkan routes, its history is inextricably linked to the military stronghold, later fortification, built on the right bank of Nišava River. The civil settlement, known as *Naissus*, that was gradually developed, acquired the status of the ancient *Municipium* probably in the middle of the 2nd century AD. The ancient *Naissus* reached the peak of its development in the 4th century A.D. Not only that in this period Niš became the imperial residence but archaeological findings, also indicate that in this period the town experienced relatively intensive urban development. Also, it is assumed that Constantine the Great was born in Niš surroundings (Петровић 1999: 25-45).

It seems that the destiny of Niš in the following centuries was conditioned (in both positive and negative ways) by its geographical position. From one side, the position of Niš on the important crossroads required the existence of the city with relatively strong fortification and military station. On the other side, this fact induced often partial destructions

of the city by each military campaign that occurred in this part of the region throughout history. Also, the fact that Niš was located in the interior of the territory, relatively far away from significant border areas, certainly affected its importance and the level of its development. Although civil settlement continued to live throughout medieval times, regardless of its important strategic position, till a very specific historical period, it can be said that Niš did not represent the highest military or administrative priority to be dealt with (Петровић 1999: 41-45; Милић 1983: 85-97).

During the Ottoman period, Niš experienced noticeable development. The first *Mahalas*⁶ were established on the right river bank on the place of former medieval fortification. During centuries the civil settlement spread to the left river bank. Numerous Empire's *Defters*⁷ from different years show that number of *Mahalas* was gradually increased. Towards the 17th century, Niš became important administrative centre. As political relations in the Balkans aggravated and relations between Ottoman Empire and Austria became more complex, Niš increasingly gained military significance as illustrated by the construction of the Niš Fortress (Милић 1983: 98-125, 209-261).

In the decades that followed the withdrawal of the Ottoman Empire from this territory, the gradual development of Niš started. This process of creating a new modern city was brutally interrupted several times during the wars from 1912 till 1918 and later on from 1941 till 1944 (Мирчевић 1995: 32-37; Андрејевић 1995c: 262). Only in socialist Yugoslavia, in the second part of the 20th century, Niš became the third city by size in Serbia and one of the most important urban nucleuses of this time. It became important industrial centre of the region, as it was recognised as the leading centre of Yugoslav electronic industry. Unfortunately, such image collapsed during the political and economical turmoil at the end of the century. These events made a space for promotion of this city in some other areas that previously have not been marked as priorities. This policy shift included promotion of Niš as educational centre, but it was, also, defined in developing and promoting Niš as a community. The latest one involved promoting Niš as unique tourist centre of Southeast Serbia. The tourist strategy is heavily based on Niš cultural and historical heritage, both material and non-material. Presence of significant historical individuals in the past, and being a place of important events (both for Serbian and European history) highlighted the uniqueness of Niš in comparison to the neighbouring cities (Virtual Museum, accessed: 10th May 2015).

⁶Mahala refers to neighbourhood or locality. It originates in Arabic word *Mahälla* meaning to settle or to occupy.

⁷Population, land and tax registers in Ottoman Empire.

Focusing on the tourist potentials of Niš involves thinking about and creating the image of the city that will be presented, both to its citizens but also to visitors. This ideal image of the city, its identity, is reflected in complex relation that is built between its past, present and its vision of the future. We create certain images regarding different cities based on their cultural history and contemporary cultural practices (Dragičević Šešić 2002: 183).

Nevertheless, in referring to a city's past we do not merely speak about objective historical facts that exist about the city, but rather about the collective memory regarding the city's past as specific social and political phenomenon that belongs to present (Konerton 2002: 9-14). Collective memory is created in relation to the present circumstances. We choose which historical events and periods are important enough to be memorised, to be saved from the historical dark vilayet and we do this based on our social and political reality and existing cultural practices. As social norms affect the ways how we remember the past, than it may be said that collective memory is socially conditioned by historical presentation (Rogač Mijatović 2012: 512). Thus, in shaping collective memory, memory policies and policies of forgetting play an important role. This effect can be so profound that constructed collective memories sometimes completely oppose existing historical facts. What makes these situation a bit more complicated is that this mechanism, also, works the other way around. Accordingly, the images of the past (which are created and induced by our present experience) are, as in a twisted feedback loop, very often used in order to legitimize the existing social order even when this means political and ideological misuse of the past (Konerton 2002: 11; Đerić 2009: 165). Taking this into account, the cultural memory has at least two important dimensions: the first is related to ideological usage of the past referred as political instrumentalization of the past, and the second one is concerned with articulation of collective attitude towards the past events that are used in creation of collective identity (Kuljić 2006: 11).

Creating collective identity, including the identity of one city, always embodies constant redefining because they are built on different sets of historical and cultural narratives that are dependent on present circumstances and consequently, very subjected to changes. The identity is created through choosing what should be remembered, rejected or forgotten (Rogač 2009: 2013-2014). Thereby, in this process, the society, or more precisely the institutional power of the state, creates, through cultural policy, hierarchical system of its own history and identity. Thus, some histories and some heritages in this process disappear as historical traces of the *Other*, because in the process of creating our own identity, the crucial segment is our distinction from the Other.

Having in mind the importance of Ottoman period for the development of Niš from one side, and overall negative perception of the Ottoman heritage from the other, this analysis will be focused on how the Ottoman heritage is dealt with, especially in the moment when the new image of the city has being created. The analysis will include existing ways of representation, as well as the ways how this heritage is managed by memory institutions. Beside National Museum Niš and its educational, research and presentation practices regarding the tangible and intangible Ottoman heritage, the analysis will be also focused on different heritage sites or the memory sites, above all Niš Fortress and the *Ćele Kula* (the Skull Tower).

V.2. The Research Plan

The heritage of the City of Niš is managed by four main institutions: the City Administration (different departments), the National Museum of Niš, Historical Archive of Niš and the Institute for the Protection of Cultural Monuments of Niš. Each of these institutions is responsible for specific cultural heritage. Speaking about Ottoman heritage, while the National Museum of Niš takes care of museum collections, permanent archaeological exhibition and *Ćele-Kula* (the Skull Tower), including virtual presentation of the heritage site explaining the events that led to the construction of the tower, the jurisdiction over the city Fortress, religious objects as well as several preserved city sites which can be in broader terms considered as Ottoman (*Čegar Monument*, *Kazandžijsko sokače* and *Kuća Stambolijskih*) is divided between the City Administration and the Institute for the Protection of the Cultural Monuments of Niš (hereinafter IPCM Niš). Due to this, the research was, from one side, focused on the National Museum of Niš and its work as the main memory institution including different aspects of its work (development, presentation, education, scientific research and publishing activity); from the other side, the research focused on particular heritage sites managed by different actors in the City⁸.

⁸This kind of research organization was introduced, also because there is almost no cooperation between these institutions regarding heritage management. For example, the only info booklet about the Fortress is published by the Museum (Vlaisavljević 2011) and it can be bought only in Museum objects (Archaeological Hall and *Ćele Kula*), but not in the Fortress or at the Info Tourist Point. On the other side, official documentation regarding archaeological excavations or reconstruction works in the Fortress can be found only in the IPCM Niš regardless the fact that the Fortress was under the Museum jurisdiction in the period between 1965 and 1973 when it was the subject of scientific archaeological research (Register SK 16, Tvrdava 6).

The collection of the necessary data was done on several levels. The first step in the research was *Reconnaissance*. It was done on two occasions, once in July 2014 and in May 2015 and included visits to all heritage sites related to the Ottoman period and Museum permanent exhibitions (Archaeological Hall and Virtual presentation of Ćele-Kula). On these occasions a detail discourse analysis regarding how these objects or remains are presented to the public was done. Also, these visits included careful observation of the manner how these objects are maintained and safeguarded. In this sense, the time distance between the first and the second visit was useful as it allowed me to make conclusions whether the recognized patterns in dealing with the Ottoman heritage are circumstantial or can be considered as deliberate.

The second step of the research included analysis of the official documentation of the National Museum Niš and the IPCM Niš. The main goal of this analysis was to gain insights into how the Ottoman heritage is treated both in scientific work of these institutions but, also, in their animation and presentation work in relation to general public. For the sake of clarity it must be said that during this part of the research some unexpected problems emerged that will be shortly addressed here. Firstly, the documentation of the IPCM Niš, although detail and well preserved, gave little or no information regarding the perception of the Ottoman heritage. Mostly technical documentation consisting of architectural plans and different letters of permission and prohibition to carry out different small-scale construction works inside the Fortress or on the Ottoman objects in the city, gave little material for proper analysis. The data collected in the IPCM Niš are thus used in this study but mostly as complementary to other collected material. On the other side, documentation of the National Museum of Niš, that would certainly give much more information regarding the Ottoman heritage (how many temporary exhibitions related to the Ottoman heritage have been organised and on what subjects; how many research projects related to the Ottoman heritage have been conducted, whether the results of these researches are published or not, etc.) was not included in the research. The main reason for this is that the Museum showed no interest in allowing me to do the analysis of its documentation. Although I tried to establish communication with museum curators on several occasions (both in 2014 and 2015), I received no answer regarding my requests. If we exclude several telephone communications with some of the curators who shortly explained to me that Museum does not deal with the Ottoman period and that it is much better to go to the IPCM Niš, my numerous written requests and appeals to allow me the access to the museum documentation remained unanswered.

In order to overcome this impediment, my research focused on the discourse analysis of scientific articles regarding Ottoman period and Ottoman heritage published in two Anthologies. The first one, named *Niški Zbornik* was published by the City of Niš between mid '70s till mid '90s, and the second one entitled *Zbornik* has been published since 1985 by the National Museum Niš. Besides this, complete bibliography of National Museum Niš was examined including catalogues of different exhibitions organized or co-organized by the Museum. Discourse analysis of scientific articles and exhibition catalogues published or organized in the period after the Second World War allowed me to gain a proper historical perspective on how the question of Ottoman heritage and the past were treated by academia. It, also, allowed me to gain significant, but not complete, insight in the Museum scientific, educational and exhibition work and practices regarding the Ottoman heritage throughout the second part of the 20th and beginning of the 21st century.

The final material that was included in this study was recorded interviews with different persons dealing with the Niš heritage. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with persons coming from the City of Niš Tourist Organization, the IPCM and the Historical Archive Niš and, also, with one independent researcher dealing with the Ottoman period of Niš (previous employee of the National Museum Niš) and a representative of the Muslim Community in Niš. Due to above mentioned reasons, the interviews with the Museum curators were not conducted. Thus, data collected during the interviews was mostly used as complementary material to my observations, not as a primary source of information.

V.3. The Beginnings: How the Enthusiasm of the First Antiquarians and Intellectuals Paved the Way for the Ottoman Heritage Marginalization

It may be said that the first studies and researches of the history of Niš had followed the general path of the institutionalized study of the past developed in newly liberated country. It started at the time of establishment of the independent state following the withdrawal of the Ottoman Empire in the middle of the 19th century. In this period the first legal acts to protect the historical heritage were created by Jovan Sterija Popović and Janko Šafarik (they also run the first archaeological excavations in Serbia) when the foundation for the establishment of National Museum in Belgrade were set up (Милинковић 1985:74-80).

Alongside this pioneering activity by the Serbian state, the Western scholars and diplomats were engaged in building up the knowledge regarding this part of the Europe driven by both: their political backgrounds and agendas from one side and romantics appeals from the other. In these first encounters the discourse of Balkanism was created (Todorova 2006: 97, 173). Squeezed between a “pure” West and a pure “East” the Balkan region (including Serbia) has gradually gain the attributes of a crossroads, a bridge, linking, yet separating the two sides of the divide. It was during this time of discovering of “exotic and remote land of noble savages” that Niš (still under the Ottoman rule) was introduced to the European public. It was mentioned in the writings of French poet and academician Alphonse Marie Louis de Prat de Lamartine and German academician Felix Kanitz who, among other things, conducted the first archaeological excavations in Niš on the site of roman imperial residential palace (Рањеловић 2013: 271-294, 222-223; Андрејевић 1995с: 261).

After the Ottoman withdrawal from Niš, studying of the past was influenced and directed by the overall social and political streamings in the recently liberated country. In the period before the Second World War, almost the entire institutionalized studying of the past in Serbia was limited to the capital, primarily to the National Museum Belgrade whose work was characterized by attitudes and interests of Prof. M. Valtrović and later Prof. M. Vasić. If Prof. Valtrović can be considered as the founder of Serbian Museology, then Prof. Miloje Vasić certainly represented one of the most influential figures when it comes to dealing with the past and heritage in the first half of the 20th century in Serbia. Professor Vasić was the first professional archaeologist in Serbia. He received his doctorate in Berlin and Munich where he studied the history and archaeology of Classical Greece (Миљинковић 1998: 434). He succeeded M. Valtrović in both positions: as main professor of archaeology at the Belgrade University and as main curator of the National Museum Belgrade. Through these two functions, as educated classical archaeologist with a firm faith that classical studies are the basis when it comes to understanding of the past, he created a framework and influenced the scientific research and process of dealing with the past in the period before and after the Second World War (Срејовић 2001: 110).

Influenced by these two powerful intellectuals (Professor Valtrović visited Niš in 1878 during his research about religious monuments (Ракоција 1994: 113-119)), the first historical and archaeological researches in Niš were initiated by the antiquarians and amateurs who were interested in cultural and historical heritage of the city. This work can be described as the work of enthusiasts interested in the past rather than as systematic scientific work (Babić, Tomović 1996: 95). Similarly to the work of professors Valtrović and Vasić,

their work was pioneering and equally focused on the ancient period. After only 10 years after the end of Ottoman rule in Niš, the first public exhibition was organized. It was the exhibition of *Lapidarium* - collection of stone monuments (tomb stones, votive stones, construction stones, two marble figures) from the 1st to 6st century. As today, the stone monuments were exhibited in Niš Fortress (Vlaisavljević 2011: 23). It is interesting that these monuments were discovered during the destruction of the Ottoman buildings in the Fortress (Андрејевић 1995с: 261). Nevertheless, the milestone in researching the city's past was the discovery of the bronze statue of Constantine the Great in 1900 during the bridge construction (Андрејевић 1995с: 261).

Driven by this great discovery the research of the city's past was intensified. The most prominent figures involved in this work were Adam Orsić Slavetić, Rudolf Bratanić, Borivoje Gojković, Aleksandar Nenadović and Borivoje Popović. Together with intellectuals from Belgrade, they conducted series of archaeological excavations in Niš and surrounding areas that brought numerous artefacts and findings and consequently the need for a place for these items to be publicly presented and safeguarded. Thus, in 1932 these pioneers established the first Museum Society and later on, in 1933 the National Museum of Niš was founded. Till the Second World War this institution was the only responsible for heritage management and research in Niš (Јанковић Михалцић 1995: 94-95; Славетић 1933-34: 305-310; Андрејевић 1995а: 95-103). It is interesting that till the Second World War, the Museum occupied one of the oldest Turkish houses in Niš that belonged to the trader Hadži-Todorović (built around 1820) (Јоцић 2005: 17). The house was destroyed during the Second World War in 1944 (Андрејевић 1995с: 263). During this period Museum work was separated in several different departments: prehistory, antiquity, middle age, numismatics, collection of paintings and collection of weapons (Јоцић 2005: 17). Nevertheless, from numerous reports and bibliographies, it is indicative that research work was highly focused on the periods that occupied minds of Serbian intellectuals. Besides minor excavation of several prehistoric sites in Niš area during '20s and '30s of the 20th century (Гарашанин: 1951; Гарашанин 1974), majority of the research energy was directed towards ancient remains of the *Naissus* (Петровић 1999: 13-15; Славетић 1933-34; Поповић 1995: 184-188).

We may observe that in this first enthusiastic pursuit of the past, little or no attention was given to the Ottoman heritage. Despite the fact that during the Ottoman period Niš was significantly developed with established urban nucleus, numerous mosques, public buildings, craft shops, residential building and houses, public baths, restored stone bridge and fortress (Милић 1983), little of these have survived the immediate post-Ottoman period.

Disappearance of the Ottoman Niš may be observed through decline in number of Niš mosques. Immediately after the town was included in Serbian territory, there were between 13 and 15 mosques. Only in the first year of Serbian governance three mosques remained while only one was in function (Милосављевић 2013: 110). Today, there are only three mosques preserved in Niš. Only one is in use by Muslim community – Islam Aga Mosque built in the 18th century. In 2004 it was partially destroyed in the street violence that burst as a consequence of declaration of Kosovo independence. As State protected cultural monument, it was reconstructed but according to the Niš Imam it still faces some fundamental problems (improperly developed sewage), that makes it unsuitable for the gatherings of larger number of confessors⁹.

This process of erasing Ottoman traces from public life in Niš was in line with the overall de-Otomanization process that took place in the 19th and the beginning of the 20th century, as previously explained. Chasing modernization and the need to restore “long oppressed” national spirit has led to destruction of the Ottoman heritage which gave way to creating the “modern image” of the city. Also, some public buildings from the Ottoman period were destroyed during the Balkan wars and the World War I (Андрејевић 1995с: 262-263). Nevertheless, this kind of attitude towards heritage should, also, be understood in the context of the general intellectual climate during this period. In order to understand even today’s attitude towards the heritage, including the Ottoman one, in Niš as well as in Serbia, it is important to look back on this vortex of the 19th century and to see what else is disclosed in this *Balkan as bridge* metaphor.

In order to understand this intellectual climate and to fully comprehend its causes and consequences (even in modern society of Serbia) it is necessary to explain in further details the relationship existing between Serbian pioneering researchers, the overall attitude toward the past and ambiguity of the Balkan geopolitical position in the 19th and beginning of the 20th century. To do so, we need to shortly enlighten the work of Austrian scholar who had been deeply involved in creating knowledge about Serbia in the 19th century and who had influenced many generations of researches in Serbia that succeeded him. If today someone wants to do a research on some heritage site in Serbia it is highly expected that he/she will (willingly or not) end up with Felix Kanitz’s descriptions. Although descriptions and plans Kanitz made during his encounters with the Balkans in the 19th century were later up-dated, refined and corrected, they are always acknowledged by contemporary researchers (Petrović

⁹ Interview with AM, May 2015

1989: 257-67). Felix Kanitz came to Serbia in 1859 as an illustrator of daily newspaper (Рањеловић 2013: 271). His immediate attachment to this country of “people who remained sane in their core” (Kanic 1985: 8) resulted in numerous meticulous studies about the Balkans (Рањеловић 2013: 272).

Kanitz’s description of the Serbs as “benevolent and intelligent, of constant nature and hospitable and their combat skills, praised by the Byzantines” (Стојанчевић 1985: 598) are very much the part of the Balkanism discourse identified by Maria Todorova (Todorova 2006). This romantic appeal lies in exotic and remote land but, also, in the idea of one’s own unsullied past, for which the Balkans served as a reminder (Todorova 2006). Put between opposed unities (West and East), the Balkans contained an implied ambiguity. As Todorova argues: “This in-betweenness of the Balkans, their transitional character, could have made them simply the incomplete other; instead they are constructed not as the other but as incomplete self.” (Todorova 2006: 72).

Kanitz undoubtedly knew a great deal about Serbia of his time and he displayed quite warm (or should we say typically romantically?) affections towards it, yet despite this, his work deals with it in terms of a pleasant semi-exotic country over which the Roman past is scattered. He recorded almost every archaeological site from Roman period in Serbia with astonishing details, but he also referred to numerous medieval and even Ottoman remains although with less enthusiasm (Каниц 1985). But in this meticulous work he did, what struck the chord with him was the past that he could relate to - the common European past of the Roman Empire. Pioneering researchers in Serbia followed the path of the ultimate authority of this German-speaking researcher (Babić 2001: 175-176). In times when spirit of modernization was at the peak, chasing Ancient past was a constant effort to relate to a common European heritage, thus to the Europe itself. And the best way to do this is to follow the footsteps of the scholar who had recognized our European roots even before we did. The irony is that the very footsteps they followed in this pursuit were abounded in images of the incomplete European self.

V.4. The Ottoman Heritage and the National Museum of Niš

Although significant, activities of antiquarians and the Museum in the first decades after the Ottoman withdrawal cannot be compared with the activity and development of the Museum that followed the Second World War. Driven by the overall post-war reconstruction, the great enthusiasm for discovering and presenting the city's past was at work during the socialist Yugoslavia. The Institute for Protection of Cultural Monuments in Niš was established in 1966 having approximately 25 municipalities in East and Southeast Serbia under its jurisdiction. Till 1970 a comprehensive research of monumental heritage was done: it was listed, numerous monuments were reconstructed while some were marked as the heritage of national importance including the Niš fortress built in the 18th century¹⁰. This urge for discovering of past and putting heritage in some meaningful, systematic order marked the Museum activity in the post-war Niš. Taking into account that the Museum's collection was heavily damaged by allied bombing of Niš in 1944, the post-war period was not just a new period in the Museum development, but, also, a new beginning. Besides purchasing articles and numerous gifts dedicated to the Museum, its collections were restored by numerous archaeological excavations. Almost all of the resources of the Museum were aimed at these activities. (<http://narodnimuzejnis.rs/o-muzeju/istorijat-muzeja/>, accessed May 15th, 2015). The task of the Museum's workers was to raise awareness among citizens about the need for collecting and preserving antiques.

From this period till today the Museum functions as a complex cultural institution whose work is based on research, collecting and systematization of various findings, presentations, pedagogical and promotional activities. All these activities are conducted within several Museum's departments: archaeological, ethnological, numismatics and epigraphy, historical, art historical, department of literary legacy, department of conservation, documentation and library and department for education, communication and public relations (<http://narodnimuzejnis.rs/>, accessed May 15th 2015). Besides this, the Museum is responsible for managing the cultural objects of national importance: the Archaeological site Medijana, Ćele kula, and the Concentration Camp "12. februar" from the Second World War. At least on demagogical level, it seems like the National Museum of Niš represents a modern institution fully aware of its roll in contemporary society and absolutely dedicated both to the

¹⁰ Documentation of IPCM

discovering and preserving the past as well as to education and presentation of the past to the broader community.

V.4.1. The National Museum of Niš: All Quiet on the Heritage Front?

This almost perfect mosaic of different departments and their responsibilities equally dedicated and accountable to the past and to the present reveals serious flaws when it comes to the heritage of the Ottoman period. The attitude of the Museum towards this period of past can be anticipated based on the official Museum internet presentation in which mentioning of the words *Ottoman* or *Turk* is only found in the part of presentation of the Skull Tower (<http://narodnimuzejnis.rs/>, accessed May 15th, 2015). All these departments have its own research priorities but these traverse and avoid almost any dealings with the heritage of the Ottoman period. If included, than this heritage primarily featured the heritage of the 18th and the 19th centuries and it is then interpreted in the context of re-building Serbian national state and identity after centuries long suppression.

In setting up the research focuses the Archaeological Department of the Museum follows the path established before the Second World War. Besides prehistoric period that is well documented in the area of Niš and continuously researched through numerous archaeological campaigns that took place during the '50s, '60s and '70s (Гарашанин 1974), the majority of resources are directed towards discovering of the ancient heritage. These campaigns focused on the archaeological site Medijana, ancient necropolis Jagodin Mala (from 1956) and ancient remains within and around the Niš fortress (from 1962) (Јанковић Михаљчић 1995, Петровић 1999, Јовић 2005, Поповић 1995).

The section for medieval times within the Archaeological Department in Niš is probably the most interesting in the context of perception of the Ottoman heritage. Majority of the Museum's collection from this period includes findings from two necropolises: *Glasina* from the 11th and 12th century, *Sv. Pantelejmon* (13th and 14th century) and *Gradsko polje* (10-11st century) (Ерцеговић Павловић 1977: 83-100; Zotović 1961: 171-175). Although the web presentation of the Museum shows that the medieval collection includes artefacts from the 6th to 15th century and several one from the 17th and 18th (<http://narodnimuzejnis.rs/o-muzeju/odeljenja/odeljenje-arheologije/odsek-srednji-vek/> accessed May 25th, 2015), based

on the focus of research campaigns one may conclude that the history of medieval Niš stops in the 14th century. It seems that events or life of the Niš between the 14th and 18th century is not of any social or scientific importance. These research priorities are also disclosed in official Museum's *Anthology* that has been published from 1985. Whether we are speaking about reports from archaeological campaigns or about articles that deal with some specific past event or artefact/part of museum collection, scientific interests of the National Museum of Niš do not include the Ottoman period as relevant research subject at least when it comes to archaeology. Majority of scientific archaeological articles published here are focused on the Roman or late Roman period with just a few exceptions that reveal information about prehistory of Niš or medieval artefacts stored in Museum's depot (Влаисављевић 2013: 229-233; Старчевић 2011: 276-291; Станојевић 2001: 271-303).

Similar situation is to be found in the Numismatic and Epigraphy Department. For example, in internet presentation of the Museum it is said that the Museum preserves the collections of coins from ancient, Byzantine, medieval and modern times (<http://narodnimuzejnisk.rs/o-muzeju/odeljenja/odeljenje-numizmatike-i-epigrafike/> accessed May 22nd, 2015). Nevertheless, in the interview conducted with the curator of Numismatic Department¹¹, it was discovered that the Museum possesses collection of approximately 2000 coins from the Ottoman period. As a respond to the question why this collection stays stored in the Museum's depot and why it is not mentioned on the website or in the scientific articles published in *Anthology* of the Museum, several reasons were listed. The first reason was that: "There is nothing special about this collection. We do not have one unique specimen. The collection only tells us that the Turks were here and that's it, and we already know that". What caused the questioning was the next attitude towards this matter in which the curator explained that we know very little about coins from the Ottoman period. As the curator explained, in order for the Museum to deal with this collection they need scientific literature and due to the very restricted budget the Museum will rather allocate resources to some other priorities like roman, byzantine or medieval collections in which the museum possesses some really extraordinary series. The irrationality of his statement is that although we know very little about this period we are quick in judging the remains from this period utterly unimportant.

¹¹Interview done with SP in May 2015. *Note:* This was the only interview done with any curator from the National Museum of Niš. It is already explained that due to the attitude of the Museum no cooperation was established during the research period. This interview was done by chance during the manifestation the *Museum Night* (May 2015) when the Museum in the spirit of openness organized curatorial guidance through permanent exhibition.

Similar attitude towards the Ottoman heritage is disclosed in other departments of the Museum. If we exclude several artefacts (Влаисављевић 2009: 40-59) from the Weapon Collection managed by the Historical Department of the Museum, it seems that the history of Niš is miraculously put on pause between the 14th and 18th century when it is reborn again from the ashes of the Ottoman rule in form of traditional culture and milestones of national historiography. Thus, in the expose of the Ethnographic Department in the web presentation, it is said that this department researches and presents both tangible and intangible heritage of *traditional culture* from the 18th to 20th century (<http://narodnimuzejnis.rs/omuzeju/odeljenja/odeljenje-etnologije/nggallery/page/1> accessed May 23th, 2015). As mentioned, traditional culture is something that excludes all foreign elements or elements that are not perceived as “ours”. This is especially the case in societies in which history and culture is still understood in the framework of national uniqueness. Traditional culture tends to mean a system relatively free of any internal contradictions or cultural expressions that do not fall under the notion of tradition. If these external, disturbing factors are strong, not easy to overcome, then the system tends to assimilate them so they are not perceived as such by those living in the system (Faroghi 2005: 16). Then we are speaking in terms of cultural influences that are incorporated in “our cultural system” by which they became “our tradition”. Thus, in the Museum’s Anthology several scientific articles dealing with the phenomena that can be put under the label of cultural influences can be found.

For example, in article entitled *Tobacco and the 19th century Niš*, the goal of the author is to enlighten one social and cultural phenomenon undoubtedly marked as the Ottoman heritage. Nevertheless, from the article’s title we already anticipate that scientific interests are not leaning towards the Ottoman heritage as such. Although the Ottoman elements of this social and cultural phenomenon are not negated and are fairly presented, the author focuses mostly on the 19th century and the usage of tobacco in the period after the Ottoman Empire withdrawal from Niš (Васић 2008: 121-130). Whether the reason for this situation can be found in availability of scientific data, the author’s diligence and personal interests or in mixture of these two, the Ottoman period of Niš, even when the Ottoman heritage is in focus, stays on the margin of any scientific research¹².

¹²There is, however, one interesting thing about all these scarce articles in the Museum’s Anthology for which we may say that even in this abbreviated way deal with the heritage of the Ottoman period. It is a particular sort of academic anomaly that we may call *a fear of interpretation*. Thus, in these articles one may find fragments of information regarding the life in Niš during the Ottoman period (of both Christian and Muslim inhabitants). These fragments are usually connected to the types of crafts that were developed in Niš (with mandatory indication of whether some particular craft was practiced by Serbs or Turks) or even to the information regarding private and public properties and real estate. Nevertheless, this data remain on the level of simple cognizance. Under the auspice of objectivity of the science the authors usually give a very short *objective description* of some documents or they enumerate known facts regarding the life or some cultural or social

While in its research work the Museum stays “objective”, accepting the fact that the Turks were in Niš, but left no scientifically important traces that deserve our attention unless these traces were meanwhile not accepted as our own, in presentational and educational work this consensus that the Ottoman heritage is not ours to deal with stays persistent. Only in the case when this heritage can be used for creating our own Serbian national identity it is treated with a little bit of more attention. This is particularly the case of Ćele Kula (the Skull Tower). Before we analyze this specific case it is important to share a light on the overall exhibition Museum work.

The Museum of Niš has two permanent exhibitions: one is the Archaeological Hall (located in today’s Museum building in a very centre of the city) and permanent exhibition¹³ in the Memorial complex “12 February” about former concentration camp from the Second World War that was located in this place.

Not only that the Archaeological Hall represents one of the most prominent Museum’s public works, but it is, also, one of the oldest exhibition of the Museum in the period after the Second World War. The first archaeological exhibition was opened in 1965 immediately after the Museum was moved to the present day location¹⁴ (Јоцић 2005: 19). The archaeological exhibition was redefined several times, in 1979 and 1989, and later on in 1997 and 2004 when the present concept was put in place (Макарић 2003: 188). Regardless of these changes, the basic conceptual organization of the exhibition remained the same. It is a classical, rather old-fashion exhibition¹⁵ that includes the most valuable artefacts the Museum of Niš possesses and safeguards from the prehistoric times to the Middle Ages. Similarly, as in the Archaeological Department, no Ottoman heritage is presented in this exhibition. The most prominent exhibited items are those from the ancient times, and their importance is emphasized in both, spatial and conceptual organization of the exhibition. Asked to explain why the archaeological history of Niš ends up in the 13th century, the curator SP¹⁶ explained

phenomenon from the Ottoman period, but do not go beyond this mere listing. This is a very pleasant position in which scientific articles from one side remain enshrined in the narrow description of “serious and objective” science and from the other side, they avoid any questioning of the officially established national meta historical narratives. Any kind of further interpretation of the statement that Serbs were mainly engaged in leather craftsmanship during the Ottoman rule will unavoidably lead towards the questioning of wildly spread opinion that Serbs did not have almost any economic power during the Ottoman rule.

¹³ After the Second World War this exhibition was placed in the city centre in the building that was called Museum of National Liberation Struggle. In 1950 the exhibition was moved to the Memorial complex “12 February” where it stays till the present days (Јоцић 2005: 19).

¹⁴ After the Second World War the Museum changed its location several times due to the lack of appropriate space that could host the increasing Museum collections (Јоцић 2005: 19).

¹⁵ The artefacts are placed in glass cases and explained by condensed legend that refers to the entire period. Artefacts exhibited like this suggest that their meaning is to be found in scientific value (because they are exposed as objects of archaeological studies) or in their aesthetic value. These values, of course, although clear to archaeologist-curator remain completely mysterious to visitors (Shanks, Tilley, 1992, 70-71)

¹⁶Interview done with SP in May 2015.

that from one side the Museum does not have enough space to present everything they have. From the other side, according to his opinion, it is important not to mix archaeological with later historical periods of the City of Niš. He added that if there were enough space they would certainly have a proper permanent exhibition that includes all periods of Niš development including the Ottoman one as well. On the other side, when confronted with the fact that the first periods of Ottoman rule in Niš can also be considered as archaeological periods, his answer was that from this period the Museum does not possess any extraordinary artefacts important enough to be exhibited.

Although in constant need for adequate exhibition space, the Museum managed to keep its presentational activities at the high level. In various spaces scattered around the city, after the Second World War the Museum organized approximately 300 exhibitions about different topics from history, visual arts, art history, cultural history, archaeology and ethnology. From 2004, the most of presentation work of the Museum takes place in the Gallery of Synagogue, former Jewish Synagogue that has been under the Museum's jurisdiction from 1957 but reconstructed only in 2004 for the purpose of this and other educational activities of the Museum (Макарић 2003; Макарић 2005; Макарић 2006; Николић 2012). Nevertheless, only two exhibitions focusing on the Ottoman period were organized during this period, both dealing with Ćele Kula and Čegar battle (to be addressed later) (Макарић 2005, Макарић 2006, Николић 2012).

The consequences of the Museum's selective approach to history and overall expressed negligence regarding the Ottoman heritage are, also, visible in the exhibitions dealing with the development of various cultural and social phenomenon or traces of material culture throughout the history. So, there are records about numerous thematic exhibitions that should by the nature of their conceptualization address the Ottoman period, but in the catalogues of these exhibitions we discover that the focus is almost exclusively on aspects that can be considered as Serbian culture. Similarly, as scientific articles, in exhibition catalogue texts, the Ottoman influences are not negated, but they are considered just as that: influences of some foreign past that disrupted practices established in our Serbian medieval times but luckily did not succeed to suffocate them. Consequently, as soon as these influences were gone, "our" culture (the same as it once was) continued to flourish. For example, in the exhibition catalogue presenting the jewellery safeguarded by the Ethnographic Department of the Museum, it is stated:

“...The impoverishment and destruction of the medieval Serbian state indicates the end of extraordinary jewellery that is in upcoming centuries typologically recognized in the traditional jewellery but only as a faint image of the former creative spirit and inventiveness.

“... Material culture from the 16th to 19th century was developed in the presence of strong oriental influences. The dominance of Islam created differences between material culture in villages and cities: in the city with mostly Muslim inhabitants the oriental elements are strong while in villages material culture stays patriarchal and ethnically conserved...”(Крушковић 1972: 10, 11)

And then the author continues to focus on traditional material culture of ethnically conserved villages. Even if we consider exhibitions organized in more recent times this way of interpreting past is still very much present. In 2003 the Museum organized the exhibition *Our daily bread (Hleb naš nasušni)* dealing with the production of bread and the meaning of it in Niš (Влаисављевић 2003). Although we can assume that cultivation, growing and using grain is more or less equally present in all cultures and during different historical periods, it is indicative that the author of exhibition decided to focus primarily on the importance and meaning of the bread and grain in Christianity. The catalogue text emphasizes and speaks only about different purposes of bread in Orthodox tradition and in what is considered to be a native culture of Niš everyday life. The known facts regarding the production of bread in Niš during the Ottoman period are listed in the catalogue, but here the author makes clear distinction between the importance of bread in Serbian tradition and usage of grain by the Turks (Влаисављевић 2003:1-2). In another words, confronted with the Christian/Orthodox Slav culture and tradition, Islamic culture is perceived as something foreign and utterly different from our own. It was an oppressive power in the Serbian society during the Ottoman rule which hindered the Orthodox culture and people to flourish. So, although the author makes clear that the bread was actually produced during the Ottoman rule in Niš, she finds no reason to address this issue in more comprehensive way, as this was not the part of our tradition. In the spirit of the exhibition name, it was not *our* bread.

“...We continue the story about bread that started in the distant past in the second half of the 19th till the first decades of 20th century” (Влаисављевић 2003: 3).

It is important to underline that these two examples do not represent any kind of uniqueness or extraordinariness. These are chosen because they represent typical sentences

and attitudes towards the Ottoman heritage that can be, also, found in other catalogues and exhibition exposes that were analyzed for the purposes of this paper.

Nevertheless, in whole presentation and educational activity of the Museum, there is one heritage site managed by the Museum where we can see that the Ottoman heritage, or specific aspect of it, does matter. The monument that was built during the Ottoman period and that can be considered as the Ottoman heritage, has never been perceived as such. On the contrary, the narratives that embody it transformed it in heritage that constitutes national identity. The memory site in question is the Skull Tower (Ćele Kula).

V.4.2. Ćele Kula: National Spirit Recognized in Suffering?

Built in 1809 by the right-hand side of the former civil and military road to Istanbul, on the outskirts of today's wider city centre, the Skull Tower represents unavoidable stop in itinerary of every school excursion, various tourists and travellers. As stated in the tourist booklet it, also, represents the heritage of the Ottoman period that turned against its creator and became the most prominent symbol of "martyrdom for the highest ideals" (Влаисављевић 2003b: 1).

The Skull Tower was built after the battle of Čegar which took place on May 31st, 1809. The battle of Čegar represents the turning point in the hitherto successful Serbian struggle against the Turkish rule during the First Serbian Uprising, which from this battle went on its downward path (Влаисављевић 2009: 1). The battle took place at the hill Čegar near Niš held by Stevan Sindelić, the Duke of Resava and his 3000 infantry-man. They were well entrenched successfully resisting the Turkish assaults until the moment when the Turkish army managed to break into the trench. Seeing that the defeat is inevitable, Sindelić blew up the entire trench by setting up ammunition dump on fire. This act claimed numerous deaths, Serbian as well as Turkish. It is said that approximately 10000 Turks died at the battle of Čegar. Angry due to such enormous loss, the Turkish pasha of Niš - Huršid Pasha ordered all Serbian fighters to be decapitated. Local furriers were order to skin the heads and to fill the skins with cotton. These were sent to the sultan. Skulls were used as construction material for the tower erected on Istanbul road. It is quadrangular tower, three meters high, with 952 skulls built into its walls (only 59 reminded until the present day). Although the next pasha of

Niš suggested that the tower should be destroyed as barbaric and cruel, this was not accepted by the local Turks so the tower remained and already during the Ottoman rule it became the place of horror but, also, at the same time, a sort of a sanctuary for Serbian people (Милановић 1977: 141).

In the year of Niš liberation from the Ottoman rule, the tower was fenced and covered by light wooden construction. Already in 1892 a chapel was built around the tower. On the occasion of the 60th anniversary of Niš liberation, a bust of Stevan Sinđelić, a work of sculptor Slavko Miletić, was placed in front of the chapel. In the year of 1989, for the 180th anniversary of Čegar battle, the Niš Museum organized and implemented several actions in order to properly mark this important historical event. The chapel and surrounding park were reconstructed, thus the whole space was transformed into proper heritage site, able to receive a large number of visitors (Влаисављевић 2003б: 13). Numerous artistic performances and cultural events were organized at the site in the days when Čegar battle happened. On the other side, considerable scientific attention was also channelled towards this event. Symposium entitled *Čegar battle and the Skull Tower* was organized in Niš followed by the inauguration of the first exhibition about the Čegar battle. Research and scientific articles were published in the Museum's Anthology (to be considered later). Unfortunately, available Museum documentation discloses very restricted information about the exhibition that was organized between May and June of 1989 (Станковић 1989: 141-149).

Significant actions regarding the managing of this heritage site were introduced in the years after the 2009 when the Museum marked the 200th anniversary of Čegar Battle. On this occasion, the Museum of Niš organized another exhibition about Čegar battle. As stated in the exhibition catalogue "the exhibition is dedicated to Stevan Sinđelić and others known and unknown Serbian freedom fighters" (Влаисављевић 2009: 5). In conceptual sense exhibition aimed at presenting the First Serbian Uprising as unique historical event, as well as explaining the context in which the battle of Čegar took place and showing the consequences it had on life of Serbian people (Влаисављевић 2009: 6). Various objects were presented in this exhibition. Some of them were objects that belonged to the Duke Stevan Sinđelić, but majority of exhibited artefacts were archive documents (such as illustrations, maps, drawings) and military equipment (Влаисављевић 2009: 39-61). Although, the exhibition presented material culture that undoubtedly should be considered as material traces and tangible heritage of the Ottoman period, especially when speaking about exhibited weapon collection (yataghans, sabers and buckles, etc.), it is interesting that the author of exhibition considers this presentation as a way forward deeper understanding of: "one historical period, *one nation*

and one man” (Влаисављевић 2009: 6, emphasis mine) having in mind, of course, the First Serbian Uprising, Serbian people and Stevan SINDELIĆ. The narrative that was used in exhibition was later on transformed in permanent virtual presentation opened at the heritage site of the Skull Tower in 2012.

In the immediate vicinity of the Skull Tower, in the former souvenir shop, the National Museum Niš set up, as a permanent exhibition, a virtual presentation that includes detailed explanation of events directly and indirectly leading towards the outbreak of the First Serbian Uprising, chronology of this event with detailed explanation of the Battle of Čegar. The presentation ends up with the history of Ćele Kula. Eight interactive monitors tell the story of the First Serbian Uprising, Čegar Battle and Ćele Kula using photographs, drawings, maps, quotes of various historical figures, including poets and artists, and detailed explanations given in the English and Serbian languages. The whole project was funded by Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Serbia.

Again, it seems like nothing is problematic here. One important cultural and historical monument that indeed testifies about one historical period is properly researched, protected and presented to the public. Historical contextualization is done and scientific language tailor-made to be understandable to a wider audience is used to give all necessary explanations. On the first seven monitors the presentation explains the political context in Europe in the 19th century, situation in Serbia under the Ottoman rule, causes, motives and historical course of both the First Serbian Uprising and the Battle of Čegar. Presentation in this part follows the historical facts and is characterized by plain yet informative language:

“The events shattering Europe at the end of the 18th and in the beginning of the 19th century had a profound effect on situation in the Ottoman Empire. The Napoleon wars, rapid changes in relations between great powers, awakening of the national awareness, as well as general progress of science and technology led to the decline of power of the Turkish central authorities.”(Monitor no.1)

Nevertheless, it does occasionally disclose the national discourse especially in the part focused on the national history:

“The First Serbian Uprising was organized *to ensure mere survival of the nation* suffering centuries of occupation and exploitation” (Monitor no.2, emphasis mine)

Thus, when speaking about general events in Europe, historical contextualization is important and it is practiced, but once we enter the national history sphere, this objective

historical intention presented on the first monitor is substituted by *engaged history* that reveals rather nationalistic and patriotic stands. This sentence resembles the perceptions of Turks as mere savages and Serbians who suffered unspeakably but with the notion of their national uniqueness in their minds that kept them alive for centuries. Also, it is interesting that focusing on national history immediately implies the absence of historical contextualization and gradual appearing of historical narration. Thus, it remains very unclear from where all these Serbian Dukes that started revolution came. Judging by the presentation, it seems like Serbia woke up in the 19th century with already socially, economically and politically well-established Dukes with enough social, economical and political power to start revolution. There is no mentioning of Serbian social patriarchal self-governing structures formed during the Ottoman rule (from these structures and thanks to the Ottoman authorities, Serbian *sipahi* that in one moment outnumbered the Turkish feudal lords emerged) (Stojanović 2010: 113). Therefore, even when the parts of what can be considered as Serbian history during the Ottoman rule are here omitted. The presentation tells us that what happened during the Ottoman rule should stay in this dark vilayet of history as this kind of historical contextualization cast a shadow of doubt on established narration about *mere survival*.

These two discourses (historical contextualization and national narration) mix throughout visual presentation till the moment we reach monitors no. 7 and 8 and the story about Čegar Battle and Čele Kula. Here, all intentions towards plain, yet understandable scientific language are dispersed and a visitor is left with uncritical copying of attitudes and quotations driven from the nationalistic interpretations of the history and from the discourse of the 19th century romanticism. Here, history is transformed to the myth, the myth that testifies about unique story of Serbian national spirit.

We find out from the description of the Čegar Battle that Sindelić and his fighters died “with the *dignity of heroes of Thermopylae and Kosovo*, making a great sacrifice in order to prevent what was inevitable” (Monitor no. 7, emphasis mine). Thereby, the direct contact is formed - not only to the cradle of European civilization, thus to the Europe and European identity itself, but, also, to the pillar of Serbian collective identity - the battle of Kosovo. And this contact reveals ethnical, ethical and aesthetic affinities. The temporal gap existing between the acmes of national identity is overlooked, since *the spirit of identity carved into stone* appears to operate, bringing all the Serbs, from past and present into a national union that discloses untainted ideas of beauty, heroism, patriotism, right and wrong. These values not only bridge the temporal gap, but they, also, stay “unpolluted” by all those cultural and social *foreign* influences and contacts that existed in between.

So what does this presentation tell us about Ćele Kula? It tells us that Huršid-pasha built the tower in order to leave testimony of his victory and to intimidate the Serbs. It is important to say that here the Museum made a progress in presenting Ćele Kula. It is a common thing to say that *the Turks* built Ćele Kula. Insisting on the fact that it was the act and decision of one man and avoiding such dangerous generalizations makes things a little bit more historical, put them in specific historical context and prevent them to be used for legitimization purposes of contemporary occasions. On the other side, the presentation fails to explain that the Tower was not only the testimony of pasha's victory and the message for rebellious Serbs, but was, also, the message for the central authorities in Constantinople. The great loss at Čegar Battle in the middle of Serbian rebellion endangered position of Huršid-Pasha in Constantinople and casted a doubt upon his abilities. It could be that building of such Tower strengthened his undermined political situation. Following these events, Huršid-Pasha became the Great Vizier in 1812. It is very unlikely that construction of the Skull-Tower brought such political promotion to pasha, but the fact that he managed to present the loss at Battle Čegar as his victory and to show the sultan how dedicated he is in defeating Serbian army certainly helped him (Panđeloviћ 2008: 212-213). The reason why visitors are not able to read about this story in the presentation is because this story makes the death of Stevan Sindelić still heroic but a little bit less mythical while it gives explanation of Ćele Kula that is more embodied in historical context of that time and less in the discourse of national identity.

The presentation also tells us that the cruel act of Huršid-pasha had quite the opposite effect. That “over the time the Tower became the legend which inspired resistance and revenge strengthening the wish for freedom and announced the day when slavery will come to its end” (Monitor no.8). Furthermore, according to the presentation the inspiration still lives:

“Sindelić and his soldiers, fallen but not forgotten, now spend their endless days in peace and silence of the chapel. Visitors of this unique memorial must be excited and touched by the story about them and at the same *time inspired to contemplate power of patriotism, love of freedom, conscious sacrifice for the sake of higher principles and goals, nobleness and humaneness. The message that has imbued many generations with purest feelings for the country and nation*” (Monitor no. 8, emphasis mine).

In order to be sure that this message is curved in mind of every visitor, the note of French poet Alphonse Marie Louis de Prat de Lamartine from the 19th century on how this

monument must be preserved for the sake of future generations is displayed here. It is interesting that Lamartine's description is repeated once again in the very chapel. The plaque with the message was put there on the occasion of the centenary of the First Serbian Uprising¹⁷.

Before we go in deeper analysis of the quote, we must pay attention to the repeating of Lamartine's message. This is important because it shows to what extent the Museum of Niš is uncritical and ignorant in its work. After more than 100 years since the first plaque was display in the chapel, the Museum completely failed to give any kind of explanation of this message in its new and "modern" presentation. Not of the message itself, but of the context in which this and other messages of this kind were written (for example, during one of his numerous visit to Niš Kanitz's, also, left the description of Čele Kula (Рапђеловић 2013: 271-272)). Lamartine's message embodies typical "touch" of 19th century Romanticism (Todorova 2006: 176). It is not the repeating of this message what is problematic, but it is its de-contextualization and acceptance of the message as undoubted and timeless true. Uncritical copying of this message without any explanation shows us that in understanding, interpretation and presentation of Čele Kula, regardless of modern interactive monitors and usage of new technologies, the Museum did not move far away from the discourse of the 19th century national identity.

This brings us back to the quote about Čele Kula as eternal reminder of *purest feelings for country and nation*. Glorification of *sacrifice for the nation* that is present throughout this virtual presentation is dangerous because in understanding of heritage and history it embodies the idea about nation-victim. Analyzing the Serbian historical textbook, historian Dubravka Stojanović concludes that the historical consciousness of youth in Serbia is constructed in the framework of two main ideas: the one of historical correctness of one's own nation and the second which is very close to this notion about purity of the nation is the one about nation-victim (Stojanović 2004: 331-333). Similarly as in history books, in the case of Čele Kula, the Ottoman heritage is firstly transformed in the sanctuary of our national history and then it is used for continuous legitimization of our national identity. Presenting the cruelty of the Turks, without any historical contextualization, except the one that proves how rightful we were for fighting for our freedom, glorifying painful death as a way towards heroic

¹⁷ "This plain was the scene of death of these brave Serbian rebels, and this monument is their grave. With my eyes and my heart I greeted the remains of these heroic men whose severed heads have become the cornerstone of the independence of their motherland. Serbia, in which we enter, is now free and the song of freedom and glory echoed in the tower of Serbs who died for their country. Soon Niš will become theirs. Let this monument be preserved, as it will teach their children what is the worth of independence of one people by showing them for what price their fathers bought it (Alphonse Marie Louis de Prat de Lamartine, 1833)"

immortality and insisting on national suffering that led to liberation and better future, is a dangerous path to follow when it comes to creating of collective memory. This approach forms the basis for hatred towards those who are not Serbs and this leaves the possibility of misunderstanding, conflict and revenge always open. These kind of “patriotic” feelings certainly cannot be the foundation for building multicultural society that accept and cherish differences.

In order to show that these are not just empty words, we will once again pay attention to the Museum’s Anthology. In the dawn of the last Balkan conflicts, in 1989, celebrating the 180th anniversary of Čegar Battle, in cooperation with Serbian Academy of Science and Arts (SANU), National Museum of Niš organized scientific symposium about the Čegar Battle and Skull Tower that was followed by issuing of the Museum’s Anthology no. 5 dedicated to this subject. Articles in this volume go beyond historical analysis. They are in the domain of socio-pathological examination. The articles speak about various historical events connected to the First Serbian Uprising but they also include the attitudes regarding *Moral messages of the Čegar Battle* (Милосављевић 1989: 91-101) or the one that deals with *Moral personality of the Serbian soldier (rebel)* (Мирчеџић 1989: 63-84) including detail explanation why the First Serbian Uprising shows that every war is patriotic war and that being the Serbian soldier (rebel) represents the question of morality and honour:

“The love for our own people brought the freedom fighters in the ranks of Serbian rebels. There are many examples in the historical past of the Serbian people showing patriotism of Serbian insurgents and soldiers because it's traditional characteristics and virtues of Serbian soldiers. For centuries, Serbian people lived and were brought up with the notion that the struggle for the liberation and unification of all Serbs in one state and return to its glorious state and national entities is necessity. It is because of this that Serbian rebel marched in all subsequent wars with the belief that justice is on his side and that he is fighting for a just cause and for Serbian national liberation.” (Мирчеџић 1989: 69)

Taking into account the moment of publishing of this Authority, as well as later interpretation of the war in Bosnia as a mere fight against the modern Turks, we see how building of historical and heritage consciousness can be used as a tool of war solidification. The lesson that we obviously did not learn (judging by the overall activity of the National Museum in Niš) is that past and heritage can be powerful weapons, weapons that can be bent

in order to be able to legitimize almost any contemporary circumstance. If treated uncritically and uncarefully, they can become a powerful motivation, motivation that in the end might claim human lives, as the recent history of the Balkans showed us.

V.5. The Fortress Niš

Ćele Kula is the heritage of the Ottoman period that is acknowledged and appreciated by the memory institutions of the City of Niš not as such but as our own heritage representing the symbol of national identity and the milestone of our national history and, therefore, it is treated with the attention that the monument of such importance deserves. In light of this perception, the second part of this analysis will include ways in which the other most important memory site in the City of Niš that was, also, constructed during the Ottoman period representing typical heritage of this historical period, but has nothing to do with any glorious or even mythical event of Serbian national history, is being perceived today. The Fortress of Niš, constructed in the 18th century, is placed in the very City's centre and represents the most visible legacy of the Ottoman period in Niš. In order to understand today's perception of this heritage site, it is important to understand its history, not just the history of the fortress itself but the history of the physical space where the Ottoman fortification was constructed.

V.5.1. Brief History of the Fortress

The first military camp and fortification in the location of the present fortress was built by the Romans in the early 1st century A.D. The fortress that in ancient sources was referred to as *Naissus* represents one of the oldest trace of Roman military presence in this region. During the first five centuries of the new era the Fortress had its ups and downs as it was frequently destroyed, conquered and rebuilt. In the 6th century the fortification was restored to a larger extent, but nevertheless destroyed again in Slavs' invasion in the 7th century A.D. In the following four centuries, there are no significant records regarding the

fortress on the right bank of the Nišava River. From the 11th century, the fortress has been mentioned by different sources indicating that it changed its size and degree of protection, but it never changed its position. Same as in the early Middle Ages from the 11th century A.D., the Niš Fortress was destroyed and rebuilt several times by Byzantines, Serbs, Bulgarians and occasional incursions of the Ugrians and crusaders (Vlaisavljević 2011).

Niš and its medieval fortress fell under the Ottoman rule in 1428 A.D. Judging by the travel writers during the 15th, 16th and 17th century, the Fortress was in a rather poor shape and was not maintained. Although the remnants of the Fortress were noticeable, they had no defensive function. Regardless of this poor shape of fortification system, according to the Ottoman *Defters* (population, land and tax registers) from different years during this period, the life in interior of the fortress has been far from non-existing. Throughout the 15th, 16th and 17th centuries, this area was gradually populated and developed as proved by various objects preserved in today's fortress and *Defter-s'* data on several Turkish *Mahalas* created around the mosques built in the fortress and its nearest surroundings (Милић 1983: 62, 244, 247-256).

From the second half of the 17th century, as the Ottoman Empire was losing its grip in Europe, and conflicts with Austria becoming more frequent, the idea about reconstruction of Niš Fortress started to emerge. When Turkish travel writer Evliya Çelebi visited Niš in 1660 A.D. he confirmed that the walls of the medieval fortress underwent restoration. But it was only when Austria conquered Belgrade in 1717 that military role of Niš became more prominent. In this period the Turkish troops stationed in Niš built a new fortification to accommodate them and to serve in defence purposes. The fortification known as *Hisar* was of a low quality built of earthy palisades and it covered not just the area of medieval fortress but, also, the civic settlement built during the previous centuries on the right side of Nišava River. After the end of Turkish-Austrian war in 1718, when the border between the two Empires was moved south of Danube River, near today's Paraćin, Niš became the only obstacle to the Austrian further penetration to the South. Understanding the significance of the Niš fortress in such circumstances, Sultan Ahmet III in his Charter of February 19th, 1719 ordered construction of a strong and modern fortress. The construction of the fortress was mostly finished by 1723 and the event was marked by lying of a memorial tablet above the main fortress gate. This is the fortress that is preserved till nowadays and which Niš citizens consider as the most prominent city symbol (Милић 1983: 247-256).

Polygonal shape of fortification with seven uneven sides and with eastern and western wall reinforced with bastions represents typical fortification system of this period. Massive

stone walls were constructed as a defending system against siege fire-weapons, as the 18th century was marked by an abrupt development of this kind of military armaments. Three roads were leading to the fortress: Stambol road – through the Stambol (Istanbul) Gate (the main Fortress Gate, from the south side of the fortress), Belgrade road – through the Belgrade gate (western wall) and Vidin road – through the Vidin Gate (north side of the fortress). Aside from these highly protected gates there were several smaller ones such as Water Gate and Jagodin Gate. Within the Fortress, life continued as before in this area. Military and administrative buildings were located in the eastern part of the Fortress, while the western part mostly served to civil purposes. Aside from residential buildings and craft shops the western part also accommodated the mosques and several food and arms storing facilities. Only a small number of these building are preserved till today (Милић 1983: 247-256).

Even when the border moved North and when Belgrade Pashaluk was established in 1739, the Niš Fortress continued to live. It was used by the Ottomans till 1878 when Niš became the part of Serbian National state. In the following centuries, Fortress continued to serve military purposes but its significance decreased due to the development of military technology. In World War I the fortress served as a Bulgarian prisoners' camp. After the Second World War, the Fortress completely lost its military purpose and in the second half of the 20th century it got its present-day face of popular tourist place and city's favourite park.

In today Fortress most of the objects that visitors can see are dated from the Ottoman period: *Stambol (Istanbul)*, *Belgrade and Vidin Gates*, *Hammam*, *Bali Beg's Mosque*, *Arsenal*, *5 Powder magazines*, and *Turkish jailhouse*. There are, also, several monuments and objects erected after Niš was included in Serbian territory in the 19th century: *Monument to Knez Milan* who liberated Niš from Turks, *Historical Archives Building* built in 1870 originally accommodated the Cartography Department of the Serbian Army; *Memorial Charnel House* at the place where Bulgarians executed Serbian fighters in World War I; and *The Open Air theatre* built in 1958 but carefully fitted into the ambient of the Fortress. In several archaeological campaigns that were conducted in the second part of the 20th century within the fortification walls, several ancient and Byzantine objects were discovered: *Roman Thermae*, *Building with Vaults* dated between the 3rd and 4th century A.D., *Basilica* and *Early Byzantine Street*. Also, in the central part of the Fortress there is the *Lapidarium* - collection of stone monuments (tomb stones, votive stones, construction stones, two marble figures) from the 1st to 6th century are exhibited (Андрејевић 1989: 101-110; Vlaisavljević 2011).

V.5.2. *The Fortress: Symbol of Niš, no Matter What?*

From losing its military and residential purpose after the Second World War the Niš Fortress with beautiful park within the walls has been marked as cultural monument of national importance. Although the Institute for the Protection of Cultural Monuments of Niš is the main responsible and only authorized institution to conduct any kind of reconstruction or preservation work on or within the Fortress, the city administration is the one that is responsible for management and administrating it. Not only because of this administrative aspect, but also because of its central place in city cultural and everyday life, the Fortress is considered as the core feature of city's identity. Maybe the best indicator of how much the Fortress participated in the creation of city's identity and to what extent it represents the city's symbol is the fact that the main *Stambol Gate* is featured in the city's coat of arms. It is important to underline that it is not only the Fortress's rich and diverse history as centre of Niš urban development throughout the history that continuously influence this strong connection, but it is also the fact that the Fortress hosts all major cultural manifestations in Niš. From Yugoslav Film Actors' Festival established in 1966 and Choral Festival with 44 years long tradition to Nisville- International Jazz Festival and Nisomnia – International Music festival and numerous other smaller manifestations more recent but equally important to the city cultural life, all are inseparably connected with the Fortress. Thus, the Fortress is not just a heritage site, but it is transformed to the living heritage that constitutes the city image. Taking this into account, the Fortress really represents *genius loci* because it is perceived as a space of authentic and founded identity. Exactly in this place the *leux de memoire* (site of memory) (Nora 1989) that contribute to the creation of collective memory, but also collective identity, are formed (Rogač Mijatović 2012: 6).

In this sense, and at the superficial level, it seems that the City of Niš, through its Fortress as city's symbol, embraces all its heritages and pasts regardless of their Ottoman origin. The mixtures of different heritages co-exist in the fortress while all layers of rich history are presented and explained to the visitors and Niš citizens. Nevertheless, once we leave this comfortable position of multiculturalism that is presented to us in this wider observing frame, and when we decide to take close view on the Fortress, we may discover battlefield of historical narratives trying to prevail the fact that the Fortress is indeed the Ottoman legacy.

Numerous remains exhibit within the Fortress can be separated in two groups of objects. The first group includes all those objects that are used today in different purposes, while the second group includes the remains that have no contemporary function (*Powder Magazines and Vidin-Gate*). Objects that are used today date mostly from the Ottoman period and include: *Hammam, the Arsenal, Belgrade and Stambol Gate, Bali Bey's Mosque* and *Turkish jailhouse*. Except for the *Turkish Jailhouse* that is used by the National Museum Niš as a depot and *Stambol-gate* in whose niche the Tourist Info Desk is placed, all other objects are used as art galleries and restaurants/cafes facilities. Only the adapted Pasha's residence is used by the Public Utility Company Gorica as office premises. Despite all objects being reused, simultaneously, the main historical facts regarding the remains are explained on Info-tables (in Serbian and English) which are placed in front of each object. The language used on these info-tables is cleared of any ideologically or any other potentially problematic meanings. It is simplified but yet clear, scientific language that provides essential information to any visitors transmitting only basic knowledge cleared of any "additional values" or problematic interpretations. For example, in case of Beli Bey's Mosque the text on info-table is the following one:

BELI-BEY MOSQUE

The endowment of Beli Bey, the Mosque, is placed in the central part of the Fortress. It is the only preserved mosque out of ten erected. It was first mentioned in 1521 and thereafter in 1523 in Smederevo defter as masjid (a small Turkish shrine without minaret). It was not before 1710 that it was listed as a mosque. Square-shaped in base, it has a barrel vault with mihrab in the direction of Mecca. Two domed porch with four arches and three columns extend above the mosque's entrance. The whole mosque was built of ashlar framed by brick. In 1972, 1976 and 1978 The Institute for the Protection of Cultural Monuments of Niš carried out the conservation works on the mosques which is, for its construction techniques and harmonious proportions considered to be the unique monument of Ottoman architecture in Serbia.

The fact that objects are rented by the city administration and transformed to restaurants and cafes speaks more about city administration attitude towards heritage in general than about attitude towards the Ottoman period and its legacy specifically. Firstly, it

is not only the objects of the Ottoman period that are used in this way. *Roman Thermae* located near the Hammam are treated in the same way. They are used as a children playground of nearby restaurant located in the niches of the Belgrade-Gate with plastic models of Disney castles, plastic swings and toboggans all around place. Secondly, all reused objects are placed in the central part of the Fortress where the largest number of tourists passes. Here we see a clear manifestation of the need to use tourism potential of the Fortress. It is the necessity that follows the logic of profit and not “the trifles” of historians, archaeologists and the ones dealing with the cultural heritage. In the broader sense we may conclude that in this case the heritage is understood more as an instrument for economic development than as a means that maintains, protects and promotes social inclusiveness and sense of belonging or as an object of past time that needs to be preserved for the pure sake. Nevertheless, it is important to underline that whatever stream of thoughts (heritage-base, value-based or capital-based framework) we find good and desirable, in the case of the Niš Fortress this state of affairs is not the consequence of strategy-based thinking. As in many other transitional countries that face numerous social and financial troubles and challenges, culture, including cultural heritage, is left to the mercy of wild neo-liberalism (Dragicević Šešić, Stojković 2007: 40-41). The employee from the City of Niš Tourist Organization said that this is not the right way to use this tourism potential, and that city administration does not care to whom they rent the objects¹⁸. No criteria are defined, thus basically anyone who is willing to pay the highest prices can use these premises. He welcomed the idea that greater control over this matter should be introduced, because owners of rented premises do not take a proper care about the interior of the objects nor they consult The Institute for the Protection of Cultural Monuments when conducting any kind of interior change.

If we redirect our attention to the presentation of the objects that have no contemporary function, such as five Powder Magazines or Vidin-Gate located in relatively remote part of the Fortress, we discover the other side of the story about Fortress as the city’s symbol or the biggest tourism potential; the story that reveals battlefield of wanted and unwanted pasts of the Fortress. Except for the one Powder Magazine which is recently reconstructed and properly protected, the others are turned into illegal dumpsites or are on the way to collapse. Although info-tables describe them as the unique military objects in Serbia, these magazines are poorly protected and hardly visible to the passers-by as they are completely overgrown with vegetation. The Vidin Gate is in equally poor shape. Once the

¹⁸Interview with VJ, May 2015

subject of trial archaeological excavations (in 1984 and 1986), today it stands as a wreck, hidden by vegetation and left to the oblivion. Interviewed workers of different cultural institutions in the city explain such state of these objects by the fact that they should be maintained by the Public Utility Company Gorica (City Greenery) currently experiencing serious financial troubles that are the main cause of this negligence¹⁹. This explanation should be taken with a grain of salt from at least two reasons. The first one is the fact that for the purposes of this research Niš and the Fortress were visited twice, firstly in July 2014 and then in May 2015. During both visits the situation was absolutely the same. Nevertheless, the second reason speaks a little bit about public attitudes towards multiple pasts of the Fortress. Not far from the Powder Magazine no. 5 there are the remains dated to the 4th century A.D. discovered in archaeological campaign conducted in 1982. This Vaulted building, as named in tourist guide and in info-table, although preserved only in its foundations, represents a perfect example of Late Antique architecture – tetrarchs imperial architecture. It, also, represents a perfect example of how object considered as a cultural heritage, if not reused for contemporary purposes, should be maintained. Clean and tidy, not covered with rubbish or left at the mercy of swollen vegetation. As banal as it seems, the obvious difference in treating the Ottoman and antique heritage is not just the consequence of the overall negligence or incompetent heritage management. In this banality, the priorities are disclosed, the priorities that speak about pursuit of not just any past, but the past that is desired.

This priority is, also, visible in numerous archaeological campaigns organized in the second part of the 20th century. In archaeological reports safeguarded in the Institute for the Protection of Cultural Monuments of Niš, almost no data can be found regarding the artefacts from the Ottoman period. Reports usually do not mention findings from the Ottoman period, or if they do than it is in the context of pursuit of Roman past. To paraphrase, the Ottoman layers encountered during these campaigns were simply removed in order to reach the layers of antique that lies 4 to 8 meters below the surface (IPCM Register SK 16 Tvrđava 1, 2, 5, 6; Register: Arsenal u Tvrđavi). Of course, it is the irony of archaeological science that in order to discover one part of history it needs to destroy the other, more recent one. Exactly because of this, from the 19th century archaeologists have been occupied with the development of the methodology of archaeological excavations using all kinds of technological inventions to at least document discovered remains that cannot be preserved *in situ* (Грин 2003: 11-166). Nevertheless, in case of Niš Fortress, the employee of the Institute said that he does not know

¹⁹Interviews with VJ, May 2015

what happened to the findings from the Ottoman period encountered during these excavations and that for this information I should go to the Museum, but he doubt that even they have some documentation regarding this issue²⁰. The Institute, however, keeps technical documentation regarding all reconstructions of the objects within the Fortress (including the ones from the Ottoman period), but this documentation includes only architectural drawings and data and leave no space for further analysis (IPCM Register SK 16Tvrđava 1-6). Even in the case of Vidin-gate that was the subject of trial archaeological excavations between 1984 and 1986²¹, the Institute does not possess any documentation that could tell us more about the findings from the Ottoman period regardless the fact that excavation was done on the fortification itself.

This kind of situation can be explained by the overall negligence towards the Ottoman heritage, but it can, also, be the result of the fact that for a long period of time jurisdiction over the Fortress changed frequently. It started with occasional jurisdiction of the National Museum of Niš during the sixties. Then, in 1973, the Fortress was put under the protectorate of the *Fund for the Protection and Improvement of Niš Fortress* that was established in 1973. It stayed under the auspice of the Fund only until 1975 when the Fund was abolished and the protection of the Fortress was transferred to the newly established *Self-governing Interest-based Cultural Community of Niš*. Political change in the nineties obviously induced another change, thus Self-governing community was closed and the Fortress was put under the auspice of the *Fund for Culture of Municipality of Niš*, that was later included in the administration of the City of Niš (IPCM Register Tvrđava 1976-1979). Even today, it is not Cultural Department of the City's administration that takes care about the Fortress but the Department of Business and Property Affairs. This fact brings us back to the profit-based management framework of the Fortress. Through all these changes, the Institute for the Protection of Cultural Monuments in Niš has reminded responsible for making any kind of decision regarding any reconstruction work on the Fortress and formally it should be consulted regarding management of the Fortress as well, but there are numerous examples of violation of this procedure. Nevertheless, even the Institute is not the last instance to be addressed but just a mediator, because all decisions regarding this heritage site must be approved by the central state institution: the Institute for the Protection of Cultural

²⁰Interview with ĐS, May 2015

²¹ Information from the info tourist table placed in front of the Gate

Monuments of Republic of Serbia in Belgrade²². In this bureaucracy labyrinth the traces of archaeological documentation can be easily lost.

Taking all this into account, the analysis has shown that although the Fortress unambiguously represents the Ottoman heritage, based on scientific or public interest we see that it is not the Ottoman period which makes it so important and interesting but the pasts that are hidden beneath the obvious. The overall attitude towards this heritage site can be anticipated from the tourist booklet published by the National Museum of Niš that concludes with the following statement:

“The Fortress was the site of archaeological research which has been presented to the public to a very limited degree. Further researches will certainly reveal more data on the ancient and medieval history, as well as on the look of the town and its sites. The archaeologist believe that the ancient town presently lies 4 to 8 meters below the surface and that it has not been damaged by the later construction works which opens possibility for further investigations” (Vlaisavljević 2011: 30)

Judging by these sentences, one may conclude that we know everything about the Ottoman period of the Fortress and that future research need to be conducted exclusively in order to complete the story about ancient and medieval period of this site. If the history was science reduced to the past of stone constructions this might be a true. As this is not a case, we see that the Ottoman heritage is once again perceived as nothing more than imposed *construction barrier (works)* that separates us from our medieval and ancient roots. But while we may be well aware of the mere history of the Niš Fortress, we remain utterly ignorant about the culture that made it. Because of this we continue to perceive “*these fortification walls as the speechless witness of innumerable human sufferings*” as stated in the tourist booklet (Vlaisavljević 2011: 31, emphasis mine) and not as traces of diverse cultures that constitute our past and might as well largely contribute to our brighter future.

²² Interview with ĐS and VJ, May 2015

V.6. Discussion: City of Niš - the Symbol of Multiple Layers of Memory?

Multiple pasts and layers of rich history are visible all around the City of Niš. Nobody will argue differently. Depending on the political and ideological framework different narratives regarding city's identity and its past were conceptualized: from the great industrial centre of socialist Yugoslavia that rose from the ashes after sufferings in the Second World War, to the city that represents the Gate between East and West, and thus between modern and traditional in the beginning of the 20th century, to the ancient city of residential palaces and the place where Constantine the Great was allegedly born. These narratives are interlaced, aligned or emphasized depending on present circumstances. However, in all these changes there is one narrative that throughout the modern history of Niš shaped the way in which the collective memory and city's identity are created. The narrative about the Ottoman period; the period that at the same time left irreversible traces on the overall city development from one side and brought the biggest sufferings to its inhabitants from the other.

This attitude is noticeable when it comes to the perception and the management of the Ottoman heritage in Niš. The existence of the Ottoman heritage is indisputable. Nevertheless, perceived as the heritage of the Other, the research showed that the Ottoman past have been subjected to the policies of oblivion and forgetting. In various practices of treating the Ottoman heritage in Niš forgetting appears as *repressive erasure* (Connerton 2008). As a way of forgetting, repressive erasure is here employed in order to bring a direct historical connection between Serbian medieval and nation state. As explained, this erasure sometimes took malign forms of destruction but most of the time it was encrypted without apparent violence. Nevertheless, in both cases it was directly implemented by the state, in this case, public memory institutions and it represented and still is the part of state cultural policy.

Researching monument policies in Southeaster Europe in the period of transition and nationalistic wars, Dragičević Šešić (Dragičević Šešić 2011), following the categories introduced by Slapšak (Slapšak 2009), identified three models of strategy and monument policies applied in different phases of post socialist transition. In considering transitional cultural policy in Serbia and in the Balkans Slapšak speaks about anti-culture and counter-culture, the two signifiers representing diametrically opposite things in culture or the two mutually opposing cultural policies. Understanding the anti-culture as something opposed to the culture itself, Slapšak argues that anti-culture became the *raison d'etre* of the entire social

structure in Serbia (Slapšak 2009). Re-adapting these categories, in dealing with monument policies of transitional societies M. Dragičević Šešić identified three models of strategy and monument policies: *anti-culture* (destruction strategy, appropriation strategy, ignoring “the other” and provocation strategy); the model of *culturalization* (monument building within new identity policies, decontextualization strategy, musealization of the heritage of others, “gratitude” strategy); and the model of dissent – creative dialogue (counter-culture strategy, strategy of opposing within one’s own culture) (Dragičević Šešić 2011). The research shows how through these different strategies and monument policies, cultural policies tried to introduce new values and practices contributing to the re-building of national identity.

Taking into account these different identified models from one side and the results of the research that have been done in Niš from the other, we may conclude that in treating the Ottoman heritage, the model of *anti-culture*, as the part of forgetting politics is the dominant one and it is introduced through different strategies of dealing with the Ottoman heritage. The most common strategy is the one of *indicative overlooking and omission*. It is characterized by the fact that the Ottoman heritage is acknowledged but it is perceived as something which is not important enough to be dealt with or it is not perceived at all. Thus, in the case of Niš Fortress, the fact that this cultural monument of national importance is the legacy of the Ottoman period is clearly stated, but in scientific work and established presentational practices, this fact is overlooked and the priority is given, above all, to the ancient and, to a certain extent, to medieval historical periods. It should be said that majority of the interviewed cultural workers expressed dissatisfaction with this kind of institutional obsession with the heritage of Roman and late Roman period. The main reason for this kind of exaggerated interest they find only in the fact that Niš was the centre of commemoration of 1700 anniversary of the Milan Edict. On the other side, through this analysis I tried to argue that reasons for such relation towards the ancient period go much deeper and that it is the consequence of mainly two compatible processes. From one side, this relation is the result of institutional development of humanistic disciplines in Serbia and from the other it represents continuous effort to create a self-image with European roots, not the Oriental ones. Thus, it may be said that in the foundation of this model there lies the need to discreetly *negate* the Ottoman legacy.

We also recognized this intention in the exhibition practices of the National Museum of Niš in which it seems that history of Niš stops in the 14th century and then again begins in the 18th. Again, once we enter the 18th century, the Ottoman influences are acknowledge, but only as some foreign element incorporated in traditional Serbian culture that had originated

much before and which in its nature had reminded free of major internal contradictions. Thus, cultural diversity is recognized but only while it stays in the framework of traditional culture. Hereby, the *indicative overlooking and omission* is transformed to the *assimilation strategy* that can be most obviously observed in the way of how different social and cultural phenomenon, such as production and usage of tobacco are interpreted. From phenomena that emerged in the Balkans in the Ottoman period they became the common place of our traditional way of life. Although assimilation in its broader sense refers to recognition or at least toleration of different cultures within one society (Goldberg 1994: 1-45), it implies obliteration of differences because it is defined as process by which one culture may be absorbed by another (Ashworth, Graham, Tunbridge 2007: 8). Thus, taking into account that this strategy at the same time acknowledged and negated the obvious, it is a very common way of treating the Ottoman heritage in Niš. We find it in the practices of Ethnographical Department of the Museum of Niš, in which the traditional culture overcomes the temporal gap existing between modern period and medieval times and emerges in the 19th centuries with the Ottoman influences that are understood only in the context of *our* tradition.

Also, there is a strategy towards the Ottoman heritage that needs to be addressed here in greater detail: *destruction*. As mentioned, this way of dealing with the Ottoman heritage was widely used in the period that followed the events of the Ottoman withdrawal from Niš. Numerous objects, public, private and religious buildings that were erected during the Ottoman times were destroyed in order to create space for building a new modern city. Nevertheless, through the *oblivion* this model continues to be active even today. Obvious example of this is Burmali mosque erected probably in the beginning of the 19th century (Милић 1983: 246; Милосављевић: 2013), today simply known as Mosque in Šumatovacka Street. The mosque is under the protection of the IPCM. Nevertheless, during my meetings with the Institute's employee the existence of mosque was never mentioned, despite the fact that it is located only one street from the Institute's building. Today, the place where the remains of Burmali mosque are still visible is transformed to illegal dumping site. Imam of the Niš Muslim community said that he wrote numerous requests to the Institute demanding for this site to be safeguarded properly, but he received no reply. According to him the illegal site is occasionally cleaned up, but only when neighbours start complaining on mephitis. "It is like everybody just waiting for the last standing stone of this mosque to collapse"²³.

²³ Interview with MA, May 2015

Similar situation is with the house entitled *Kuća Stambolijskih* built in 1875 by Amet Memetrović. The history of this house reveals different strategies of dealing with the Ottoman heritage that are interrelated. The object was bought from its Turkish maker by trader Todor Stankovic Stambolija in the time when the Ottoman Empire withdrew from Niš. It became one of the first monuments that were declared as cultural monument of national importance in 1949. Several times it was saved from demolition and finally in 1970 it was reconstructed by the IPCM. Nevertheless, reconstruction actually meant demolishing the house and building a new one (following the old architectural plans and using the same constructing methods). From this period it started to be perceived as typical monument of *old Balkan architecture*. After the reconstruction it was transformed to the tavern conveniently named *Sinđelić* (Андрејевић 1995b: 272-273). The restaurant was closed in 2012 and today the house is abandoned. There are some rumours that it will be transformed to the Ethnographic Museum of Niš, but there are no clear indications that this will actually happen. In this case of gradual disappearance of any Ottoman traces (name of the house, the fact that it is seen as an example of old Balkan architecture, transforming it in the restaurant entitled *Sinđelić*, and rumours about the future of this object) we are faced with re-contextualization of the monument that represents embodiment of *appropriation model* in dealing with the Ottoman heritage.

The most striking example of this model is the Skull Tower which today nobody sees as the Ottoman heritage but as the symbol of national glorious past full of sufferings. The way how the Skull Tower is treated in all aspects of heritage management indicates that the only way for the Ottoman heritage to be considered as important and valuable is to stop being the Ottoman heritage and to be transformed to the pivot of national identity.

The conclusion of the analysis is that the Ottoman heritage in Niš is accepted only when it can be used for building the meta-narrative about national identity, history and culture. In all other cases it is ignored as much as possible or left to oblivion as the heritage that does not fit in nation-based understanding of history and past thus, as the heritage which is not ours.

VI Instead of Conclusion: From the Critique of Practices of Memory Institutions to the Critical Approach to Heritage

This paper has focused on enduring and complex relations that exist between heritage (more precisely with the management and understanding of the heritage), collective memory, collective identity and historical consciousness in Serbia.

In this paper we started with the premises that interpretation of past, heritage, collective memory and collective identity are fluid categories and that, as such, they are in constant dialogue with the present circumstances. This constant dialogue implies that these categories are often used to legitimize different narratives that shape our contemporary society but, at the same time, these narratives serve as interpretative matrix for understanding these categories. Taking into account this vicious feedback loop, I tried to see how the Ottoman heritage is treated and understood in Serbia today, more precisely what is the attitude of memory institutions, that are perceived as important social authority capable of shaping public opinion, towards this historical period and its legacy. In doing so, focus was put on one particular case, the City of Niš, the city that was unequivocally shaped by the Ottoman period.

I argue that national discourse that formed out perception of the Ottoman period and heritage was created in one very particular social and political historical moment in the end of the 19th and beginning of the 20th century and that till the present day it has never been deconstructed. Furthermore, I argue that this is a consequence of non-existence of any kind of critical approach to national history or to the interpretation of national history. Broadly speaking in our public discourse, history is not secular and intellectual production that calls for analysis and critique (Nora 1989: 8-9), but a fertile soil for building national identity. I identified a complete absence of this critical approach in the practices of memory institutions in Niš that heavily lean to the ideals of national past. In dealing with the Ottoman heritage, the analysis of Niš institutions especially the city Museum, has shown lack of need for systematic re-questioning and re-thinking of established narratives, but also the lack of questioning of their own position in society, their purpose and power they have as cultural institutions.

In order to understand the Ottoman period and its heritage, memory institutions especially museums need to rethink their position and role in contemporary society of Serbia. Transitional change of social, political and economic system earmarked culture and heritage as an important strategic point of development (both in terms of the development of cultural tourism, as well as in terms of emancipation and acceptance of universal values) (Dragičević Šešić, Rogač Mijatović 2014: 10-19). This has certainly led to increased interest in museums and other memory institutions, but at the same time it also set out new tasks in front of them (Гавриловић, 2009, 128). These tasks primarily required the re-conceptualization of the museums on the basis of theoretical tendencies, which include the museum in the real world and promote their active presence in people's everyday lives.

These ideas came to the focus during the so called *Museums-boom* of the 1970s and 1980s that involved the mass reconstructions of existing and opening of new museums, but in fact, represented the change that occurred in the museological theory in the second half of the 20th century (Šola 2002: 51). Although nowadays put under certain question marks, this *new* museological paradigm tries to break up with two centuries of elitism and exclusivity in museum work, making them institutions that move away from the care for museum objects towards institutions that care for and of the visitors (Subotić 2014: 197; Ross 2004: 84-86, Šola 2002: 50-51; Pjetrovski 2013: 30). Nevertheless, although communication with the visitors represents the essential part of this *New Museology*, it actually is not a goal in itself. Thus, above all, it emphasizes the active social role of the museum. Museums are required to be active part of the community in which they operate. As public institution, it does not need to exist only as temple of memories of past times but it need to participates, and through education, shapes the contemporary society (Pjetrovski 2013). This new museological paradigm changes the social and political position of the museums and gives them the important place as educational and cultural institutions.

In Serbia, on the other side, this *Museums-boom* or the paradigm shift never happened (Subotić 2014: 197). Although in the period of post 2000s some museums in Serbia introduced substantial changes (especially the ones in small cities across Serbia) and although these changes are certainly important it seems that they did not come to the point to discuss their social role in depth. Thus, although these museums put considerable amount of effort in introducing new practices enhancing communication with visitors and involving *emotions and the experience of the past times* through using technological, informational, digital and other contemporary accomplishments, the role of the museum in the society or local community stays quite undiscovered (Gavrilović 2006: 47-50). Undiscovered, because this

induced experience mainly reinforces and consolidates what has been previously learned and understood rather than it causes re-questioning, re-thinking and creating of a new knowledge or experiences.

Being the segment of collective and social memory, transformed museums should change their position in society from being mere transferor of accumulated values and knowledge to the creator of the new one. This lack of change is also visible in treating and interpreting the Ottoman heritage.

On the other side, in the previous period the way we understand heritage also experienced paradigm shift. Once, heritage implied singular past of one community identity visible through monuments, material remains, practices and beliefs. It was considered as fixed, static value (aesthetic and scientific) temporally and spatially embedded. Understood as such, heritage was perceived as a mere transmitter of the values that must not be questioned but only preserved for the sake of future generations. Nevertheless, under the auspice of scientific objectivity and universal aesthetics, ideological basis of heritage creation and management that provides legitimization to particular cultures and nations was hidden (Smith 2006: 29-31).

Critical heritage studies brought the notion that heritage is the part of the past that we select in the present for the present purposes whether these be economic or cultural. Smith suggests that heritage should be understood as a cultural process that engages with the act of remembering that work to create ways to understand present (Smith 2006: 44). This present-centeredness of the heritage brought to it (besides universal aesthetics and scientific) a complex array of contemporary values, demands and principles. Thus, different purposes started to be recognized and extract from the heritage. Besides, being recognized as important economic resource, one exploited everywhere as a primary component of strategies that promote tourism, economic development and rural and urban regeneration, heritage is also knowledge, a cultural product and a political resource that fulfils crucial socio-political functions. Thus, heritage is accompanied by a complex and often discordant array of identifications and potential conflicts, not least when heritage places and objects are involved in issue of legitimating of power structures (Ashwort, Graham, Tunbridge 2007: 35-38).

If we accept the idea of heritage as knowledge than the main question remains: in what ways, in addition of having its own value, heritage is important and can be used for social cohesion and well being of the societies? How all these potential conflicts, conflicting narratives deposited in heritage may be recognized, preserved but also mitigated and accommodated? Heritage has been a part of the policy debate for a long time, but numerous

documents regarding this issue were mostly concerned how to protect heritage. Thus, these documents, although gradually broadened to include intangible heritage and practices (UNESCO 1972, UNESCO 2001, UNESCO 2003, UNESCO 2005) are nevertheless embodied in old heritage discourse prevailing in practices of public memory institutions that legitimize dominant ideas of nation, class, tradition and ethnicity.

On the other side, Council of Europe's Framework Convention on the Value of Cultural Heritage for Society (the Faro Convention) published in 2005 (Council of Europe 2005) opens the possibility for bridging the gap existing between theoretical rethinking of heritage's usage and policy framework concerning it. The novelty that the Faro Convention brings is that it is less concerned with *how* to protect heritage and more with *why* to protect it (Fairclough et al 2014: 9-11). Above all, the Faro Convention moves away from reducing the heritage to series of special monuments, buildings and places, something that represents national histories and that can be used in basic tourism purposes that resemble mere consumption.

This Convention considers heritage as a process that involves debates and interactions and that is crucial for ordinary, everyday life of people. In this way, the Faro Convention puts people's aspirations, values and needs in focus, celebrating the diversities and plurality and calling for respect the heritage of the others as much as our own heritage (Fairclough et al 2014: 9-11). The Faro Convention is important because it opens the possibility for heritage not to be understood and considered as simple material remains which values are based on their aesthetic and scientific importance from one side and national uniqueness and exclusiveness from the other.

The analysis of the perception and dealing with the Ottoman heritage in Niš has shown that in considering cultural heritage, collective memory and historical representations, new heritage and memory practices are needed in order for this and other dissonant heritage to stop being the source of conflict and to become the meeting place or the melting pot of different identities and aspirations. However, although Serbia has ratified the Faro Convention, national-ethnic-based dimension of heritage and memory politics as part of cultural policy is still predominant. In line with this, memory institutions are focused on memories, values and practices that divide *us* from the *others* (Dragičević Šešić 2011: 45). What is dangerous is that in this division we are always the ones who suffer while others are the ones who cause sufferings. Thus, the *others* are not negated and the plurality of narratives has been developed but these narratives do not overcome the established framework of glorious and heroic national past.

Breaking of this vicious feedback loop, in which the confirmation of nation is in the same time the object and the results of memory practices, implementation of both, top-down and bottom-up policy actions is needed. Regarding the bottom-up actions we need to consider two interesting fact. First of all, in Niš there are no cultural or artistic actions that in any way involve dealing with the Ottoman heritage of Niš. On the other side, among Niš citizens there is a strong notion about oriental influences and ottoman tangible and intangible traces in their everyday life. We may say that discrepancy between these two facts represents a good starting point for involvement of the Niš citizens in re-discovering of their own “private” histories related to the Ottoman period and promoting the sense of place and belonging. Especially in the areas of former *Mahalas* on the outskirts of the city centre or in the surrounding villages, supporting the valorisation of this local still visible, ordinary, everyday ottoman heritage can be mutually beneficial. First of all, it moves us away from old heritage discourse (because a very few of these traces could be considered as heritage in traditional terms) and brings us closer to marking heritage (both tangible and intangible) as something that is important not to the overall meta- historical narratives but to the everyday life of the local inhabitants. Involving the inhabitants in re-discovering forgotten ottoman traces of our everyday life could lead the city towards the establishment of the new identity.

It is already said, that one of the priorities of the city of Niš is to promote the city as community. This strategy involves promoting of Niš as unique tourist centre of Southeast Serbia. Nevertheless, in emphasising touristic potential, till now both, the city administration and cultural institutions, have mainly been focused on well established and well known heritage sites and historical narratives that are almost completely unavailable, incoherent and unconnected with everyday life of the local community. Thus, focusing on the everyday heritage of the community and not on the meta-heritage of the nation may really contribute to the creation of the unique and specific touristic centre that offers experiences and knowledge that go beyond mere and rather suffocating mass touristic consumption. In the same time, emphasising the heritage of the community also contributes to the safeguarding of the multicultural past and present of the city of Niš (Đukić 2010: 353-364).

Of course, in this process, memory institutions should play an important role, but their involvement includes several filled prerequisites. First of all, they also need to be involved in re-discovering of the Ottoman heritage. This should involve both scientific research projects and pedagogical or presentational work. Nevertheless, this brings us to the broader problem of educational policies in Serbia. The analysis has shown that almost no cultural worker in the city of Niš is involved in scientific inquiries regarding Ottoman culture and history. To a

large extent this is the consequence of our education system in which the Ottoman history and culture are not legitimated scientific or educational subjects. Nevertheless, although the absence of the Ottoman history and culture from universities curriculums represents a significant concern, in order to contribute to creation of the open and multicultural society, above all memory institutions and cultural workers need to overcome the nation-based category of existence. When it comes to the perception of the Ottoman heritage, this means that in dealings with this subject they need to go deeper from established narratives to understand the reasons and ways how these narratives were constructed and then how they influenced interpretation of the Ottoman period throughout history. They also need to deal with the Ottoman period and culture as such and not just with position and culture of Serbian people under the Ottoman rule. Furthermore, they need to be able for a fair dose of self-critique in sense that memory institutions, most notable museums need to accept their social and political responsibility for contributing to the establishment and legitimization of these historical meta-narratives. Above all they need to be accountable to the society they live in and be aware of the consequences their actions have on the society. Otherwise, the question of their purpose is posed: to research, to safeguard, to present, to educate? How any of these purposes can be fulfilled if they do it selectively based on the criteria established in the 19th century? As a starting point, they might ask a simple question: How did we come to the point in which one modern Turkish TV-novel *Suleiman the Great* contributed more to the understanding of the Ottoman culture among broader audience than all the museums in Serbia?

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Documentation

Documentation of the Institute for the Protection of Cultural Monuments Niš

Documentation of the Historical Archive Niš

Biography

Personal Info:

Family name: Negojević

First names: Nevena

Date of Birth: 12th November 1985

Contact: email nevena.negojevic@gmail.com telephone no. + 381 60 678 66 74

Address: Kosovska Street 16, 11000 Belgrade

Education:

- Department of Archaeology, Faculty of Philosophy, University of Belgrade, BA and MA degree in Archaeology (2011)
- Currently: UNESCO Chair for Cultural Policies and Management, University of Arts, Belgrade

Professional experience:

Heartefact Fund, Belgrade

2014 – Present

Position: Program coordinator

Description: Responsible for program and project development and coordination of program activities of the HF. Oversight of project activities within several program areas including grant-giving, developing philanthropic practices, promotion of rights of marginalized groups, cooperation in the Balkans, arts production.

Associazione Trentino con i Balkani

2012-2013

Position: Project coordinator

Description: Management of intercultural regional project entitled *Memories-elaboration of the conflict among Balkan youth*. Main responsibilities: 15 volunteers and youth activists from the Balkans coordination, managing of all project activities and realization of the final project result: exhibition *Bekim Fehmiu-richness lost in silence* about Yugoslavian actor of Albanian origin Bekim Fehmiu. Organization of the exhibition in Serbia, Bosnia, Kosovo and Italy in cooperation with local CSOs

Cultural Center REX / Fund B92

2012

Position: Project assistant

Description: Assistance within the project Visit to Old Fairground. Organization of study visits, public events, conferences within the project and assistance to the project associates in publishing activities. Preparing of documentation for project narrative and financial reporting

Associazione Trentino con i Balkani

2010-2011

Position: Project coordinator

Description: Developing and conducting a research regarding organizational capacities and potentials of the CSOs active in rural and urban areas of Kraljevo Municipality dealing with position of socially marginalized groups (women, Roma people, mentally and physically disabled persons...). The research included: development of questionnaire, mapping of potential participants in the research, conducting more than 60 semi-structured interviews with representatives of local CSOs and their beneficiaries regarding organizational capacities and development as well as existing and required social services; assisting to and monitoring of collected data analysis and publishing process.

Archaeological Institute Belgrade

2005-2007

Position: Volunteer and Research assistant

Description: Analysis of archaeological materials, participation in the scientific archaeological research in *Caričin Grad* (excavation site near Leskovac, Serbia, 6th century) and processing of the excavated materials and artifacts.

Seminars and trainings:

- *The role of cultural heritage in the development of rural communities* at Seminar: *SEE-NET: a trans-local network for the cooperation between Italy and South-East Europe-Vertical action-2B*, Regione Piemonte and Zenica-Doboj Canton (2011)
- *Management of intercultural projects in post conflict regions* (Tavolo Trentino con i Balcani), Trento, Italy 2013

Published articles:

- Matejić J., Negojević N., Renault M. (2014), Cultural projects as an impetus for local sustainable development. In: *Culture and Sustainable Development at time of crisis* (ed. Dragičević-Šešić M., Nikolić M., Rogač Mijatović Lj.), University of Arts Belgrade, Belgrade 2014