

The Bosnian Chalk Circle

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ABSTRACT

This text aims to provide a philosophical review of the current situation in the part of Europe that has already once been fertile ground sprouting a world war. Poetry, philosophy, and theology provide pieces of a mosaic showing the image of a return to a united sky. The text builds on the views of *sophia perennis*, as the one school of thought in philosophy, theology, and even religion that strives to rise above all types of divisions and to point out how problematic the approach by the contemporary Western civilization really is. Wars, including the one in Bosnia and Herzegovina, are a logical consequence of the contemporary mass media materialism.

Keywords: Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bosniaks, Croats, Crusades, Jesus, Love and hate, Nations, Serbs.

SAŽETAK

Tekst želi filozofijski govoriti o aktualnoj situaciji u onom dijelu Europe koji je jednom već ponudio povod za svjetski rat. Poezija, filozofija i teologija donose djeliće mogućeg mozaika slike povratka ujedinjenome nebu. Tekst se oslanja na stavove *sophie perennis*, kao one struje u filozofiji, teologiji, pa i religiji, koji pokušava nadići sve podjele i temeljito ukazati na problematičnost pristupa suvremene zapadne civilizacije. Ratovi, pa i ovaj u Bosni i Hercegovini logična su konzekvenca suvremenog masmedijskog materijalizma.

Ključne riječi: Bosna i Hercegovina, ljubav i mržnja, Nacije, Bošnjaci, Hrvati, Srbi, Isus, Križarski ratovi.

Science, Art and Religion (2022): 10.5005/jp-journals-11005-0006

WRITING AN INSCRIPTION OF A LAND

It is important to *be*, in speech, in writing, and in symbols. Particularly today, when *having* has won against *being*,¹ appearance has won against essence,² and images/photographs/films/visual aspects of social media communication have overpowered reality.³

We find ourselves in a Cassirer's world of symbols, in a Baudrillard's simulacrum, in a world in which we ourselves, as McLuhan would put it, have become servo-mechanisms of our own contrivances. Our posing in front of a camera has become a metaphor of our submission to technical intermediaries. Our addiction to media that intermediate political reality has come to the point when without a re-evolutive change in the relationship toward the system of media intermediation it is impossible to realistically view the collective will of a society, of a community that should enable each individual to feel as a free creator of relationships within it.

To be in a country and speak about it (regardless of the transience of and changes in such creations) means trying to be in the inscription that by speaking of a country, speaks of the times, of the people, and the one who speaks. As witnesses of the times, we speak of our attempts to civilize the communities that we live in.

A great poet from Bosnia and Herzegovina (in fact, a great world poet), Mehmedalija Mak Dizdar, sings about Bosnia

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How to cite this article: Alić S. The Bosnian Chalk Circle. *Sci Arts Relig* 2022;1(1):112–117.

Source of support: Nil

Conflict of interest: None

and Herzegovina in a descriptive, but knife-sharp language of Medieval tombstones, known as *stećci*. By finding Bosnia not-yet-awake, but rising, strong, decisive, defiant—Dizdar wrote one of the most beautiful poems dedicated to people in a country defined by language, customs, religions, and borders:

Once upon a time a worthy caller asked:
 Who is that what is that forgive
 Where is that
 Whence is that
 Where to is
 That
 Bosnia
 Tell
 And the questioned gave then a prompt reply to him:
 Bosnia forgive there is a land
 Both barren and barefoot forgive

Both cold and hungry
 And even more
 Forgive
 Defiant
 By
 A dream

In a timeless (non-time) the question seems to be coming from nowhere. The answer is given by the one who has been asked. The one who has been asked—knows. *The worthy caller will ask*, and the *questioned* will answer.

Dizdar's *Inscription of a Land* mirrors the poetic reach for essence.⁴ It is for us to decide if we are those who ask or those who will provide the answer.

Putting letters, words, and sentences on paper means that one thinks himself or herself responsible enough to leave a trace. By writing things down we collect ourselves from the tombstones, frescos, crosses. . . . We decipher the arabesques of influences and the ways they are intertwined.

In the speech through which we collect ourselves we read the possible path. The *Inscription of a Land* needs to be written over and over again because we are always new and always in new circumstances. By speaking for the community we call a state, we also determine ourselves. Every one of us is an inscription of a land of sorts, of a land from which we originate and which makes us the way we are.

Writing has no sense if it is not an attempt to collect oneself. If it is to be meaningful, writing needs to collect the majority of known thought paths that lead to the set goal. The objective also needs to include the journey. "To be on the road" (Jaspers) means to over and over again try to "express" an objective in a sentence, image, verse, symbol. . . .

"The God is near and hard to grasp, but where there is danger some salvation grows there too"⁵ sang Hoelderlin once, paying tribute to ancient Greece, but as if he was passing through Bosnia and Herzegovina. Bosnia is in danger. Bosnia has the spirit of togetherness, of understanding, which is the solution for Europe and the world. Despite the abyss of spirit that found its way to Bosnia and Herzegovina mostly from outside and poisoned everything that could be poisoned.

An old Chinese saying speaks of the method of determining motherhood. A wise man placed a child in a circle made of chalk. The "mothers" were then given the task to pull the child toward themselves. The one who managed to grab the child would prove that the child is hers. The real mother let go of the child and the wise man gave the child to her. Brecht played with this motif in "The Caucasian Chalk Circle."

The story of Bosnia and Herzegovina is similar. The young Bosniak nation is thorn to the East and to the West in a seemingly motherly fashion. Nobody wants to let go. No reference to literature, morality, or holy books helps. . . . and it seems as if there is no wisdom left among men. However, it is not all doom and gloom. Poems and writings on tombstones (*stećci*) bear witness to many a century of war and fighting under different flags, but they also bear witness, very powerfully, to the strong, moral, human, slightly heretic, stubborn, and deeply lived

self-consciousness of the Human that has grown in the territory of today's Bosnia and Herzegovina.

As if the Bosniaks, Serbs, and Croats of Bosnia and Herzegovina are deciding on the fate of relations between the East and the West, of the relations between Vatican and Moscow, among Vatican, Moscow, and Istanbul, Europe, America, and Russia, that is, the relations between Christianity and Islam . . . a great burden and a great opportunity.

The history of Muslims/Bosniaks is a history of the fight for survival in that triangle-shaped circle that the powers of the East and the powers of the West gamble with every now and then.⁶ It is the history of the Bosnian people waging war for others and of the fight for survival on their land. Through history, the Catholics have converted to Islam; the Muslims have been forced to return to the "old faith"; the Orthodox have faced difficult times and painful sufferings and then inflicted them many times over. The history of unhappy nations created the spiritual climate of common destiny and of reliance on each other. All in all, misfortune has never been in short supply.

Nevertheless, the unhappy are the most fortunate. They are the only ones fully open to a strong experience of happiness. The Bosniaks are ready for that feeling. The Catholics and the Orthodox of Bosnia (the Croats and the Serbs), unfortunately, have "alternative options" so they are still calculating. We again find ourselves in the situation that the spirit of Bosnia must rise against the ideologies of "pulling apart".

Will this pulling and tugging stop? Will we be able to celebrate the symbolism of a circle in a more appropriate way?⁷ Officially, everyone is in favor of a whole and united Bosnia and Herzegovina. The waters are still. The sun is basking on their surface. But the surface of the table is full of napkins with newly sketched borders, *non-papers* with ideas of how to change borders. The faces staring from electronic boxes swear on their good intentions. But the pulling and tugging grows stronger.

The chalk circle is attacked by the media, there is political scheming, there are promises and threats. Declarations of love and predictions of war. Citata u

What is war?

The war that looms over Bosnia and Herzegovina seems almost to be playing with the current definitions of "armed conflict". In the light of verbal outbursts and ill-mannered language from the dark memories of the 1990s that make our skin crawl—the definition of war slowly moves toward *the manufacture of consent*⁸ for war. In this context *War is the continuation of hate speech with words of led, gunpowder, dynamite, or various explosive compounds* . . .

War is an acknowledgment of sorts that the words that preceded it were *genuinely hypocritical*, that they feigned sincerity, that they had false morality and were uttered with the intention to mislead all those they were directed at.⁹

The hatred in the press printed with led paint that became its master, and the hatred uttered under the lights of political talk shows—will turn into hatred expressed in led bullets

(more persuasive than words) and to lights in camps where those captured will convincingly play the participants in reality or political talk shows. Offensive hate speech will be replaced by the speech that kills.

The death of the objects of hate, which were long before the war sent falsely well-intentioned messages by hypocritical believers and false patriots—gives these false messages meaning. Killing is a “catharsis”/“cleansing” of a soul deeply immersed in a lie. Everything gains sense—because it becomes real. Blood will wash away the emptiness of the soul and the hypocrisy of words. Hatred is affirmed in its final form. There were no lies and no hypocrisy. It was all true.

LOVE AND HATE UNDER THE NATIONAL FLAG

What is Hate Speech?

Hate speech (let us reflect on what is most important for the analysis of reality in Bosnia and Herzegovina)—is a pathological form of expressing love. We hate only those that matter in our life, and important are mostly those to whom we have allowed to get close to us and those to whom we opened up. Through hate, without even knowing, we confirm love as the universal principle of human relations. By killing, we actually love, only in a very primitive and pathologically twisted way. More primitive than such form of love is only killing by torturing and/or raping before death or hiding bodies and bones into secondary or tertiary mass graves.

The proponents of the last war and their followers thought and have continued to think (and even call) the Bosniaks as the Muslims, and the Muslims (Bosniaks) as the Serbs that converted to another religion. In this consciousness rugged by myths the Bosniaks (i.e., the Muslims that are the former Serbs) have betrayed their people. They have betrayed the Serbs. An entire nation is consequently a traitor of its nation. It does not see, and it does not understand, or it will not recognize, that it is what it was and not what it wants to be.

However, this “argument” holds only for a short while. Namely, it would be logical to provide strength to those who have strayed when returning to the right path. It would be Christian to love thy Muslim brothers even more than thy Orthodox brothers because the former need to be helped back to the “right path”. But instead of Christian forgiveness and understanding in brotherly love, the scene of the last war was claimed by the scenario/stereotype taken over from the thousand-year-old Crusades.

These Serbs “that have betrayed the Serbs” needed to be exterminated in the last war. In order to exterminate them, one had to hate them, reduce them to numbers, packages, objects that needed to be gotten rid of. As slaves were once not considered human, the pathological hate sought for a similar justification in the “animal-like status” of the Bosniaks. Those who did not want to participate were liquidated (regardless of them being “the Serbs”).

The logic of war has nothing to do with reason. A machine made up of people whose objective is to kill people is at play. Each man in the machine is only a mere, replaceable wheel and as such unimportant. Preparations for war always begin by turning citizens into nationalist agitators, and nationalist agitators into guardians of the national being capable and willing to lay their life in combat against the “enemy”.

The situation is advocated again in which love for those that one wanted to persuade that they were the Serbs was manifested in the form of the most horrid hate, torture, rape, slaughter, execution, humiliation, . . . the hate toward those that the screenwriters of these atrocities also considered as the Serbs.

The genocidal intention of exterminating one’s own brothers is the most morbid form of expressing love.

Love and hate have always been proof that we matter to each other. Attempts to submit others is a sign of immaturity. Both at family and at national level. The paradox of the reality in Bosnia and Herzegovina lies also in the fact that the nation that considers itself older and that considers the Bosniaks as an artificial “fabrication” attempts to immaturely submit to itself a freed Bosniak nation that is rightfully seeking its place in the fleeting historical map of nations.

The fight for the past has started. The social media is overflowed with maps, dictionaries, and other documents that are supposedly providing evidence of the “first-born” nation or language. The people that history did not protect and that have been shuffled as a deck of cards, seeks exclusive evidence of blood and soil. The term nation is in the center of attention.

What is a Nation?

A disideological sensible opinion may be contrasted against an abundance of definitions: It has, simply put, from the very beginning been, and has remained to be, a means by which the minority will hide behind ideology to abuse the majority. Even when it is fighting for the survival of its own people, nation is a cloak under which the tricks of a newly established hierarchy are prepared.

A few families in each of the newly established little countries hide behind the syntagm of the national economy. The capital is, by means of problematic statutory provisions, removed from national to private ownership. The initial accumulation of the new Balkan variant is built on the wealth left behind by the self-governing socialism. Hypnotized by national freedoms, the advocates of change failed to realize that national trains have long speeded through Europe and that we live in times of new totalitarian tendencies brought to us by globalist corporations and their globalist media corporations.¹⁰

In reality, nation is a young and modern term of a fleeting character. Instead of preparing for new forms of enslavement that are coming from the world’s leading corporations, we sit in the trenches of the World War I, proudly looking as our national flags fly and beneath them the newly hatched capitalists celebrate their wealth built “from scratch”.



The people of Bosnia and Herzegovina have died in every war, always fighting for foreign interest. This last one was also not in the interest of the people of Bosnia and Herzegovina. The Serbs and the Croats and the Bosniaks hoped for peace, agreement, normal life, better work conditions, better salary, etc. Thirty years later, everybody except the proponents of a new war knows that the majority of them lives worse, that they have been manipulated but also that they can hardly free themselves from the straitjacket that has been tailored for them.

The people suffered while political bullies played vassals. Broken little states gave away their treasures for nothing. The children of the generation that went to war for one ideology emigrate to foreign countries to live there with the children of the generation that went to war for another, or the third ideology. It is to the first, the second, and the third that Dubiosa kolektiv sings their song "The Hymn of a Generation."¹¹

THE CRUSADES IN BOSNIA

Ideas are like underground rivers. Once they appear in human history, they become the weapons available to new generations. They may surface in unexpected places.

There were no calls to the last war by top religious leaders. To the contrary. As if they feared that things could turn in that direction. And they did. The war gained its Crusade character because of myths awakened by political leaders and their media drummers.

The character of a war need not and cannot be fully understood at its start. It reveals its face with time as well as basic and newly accepted motives. The Bosniaks/Muslims as a buffer between the Catholics and the Orthodox became the object of hate that should have aided the shared interests of countries bordering Bosnia and Herzegovina.

The break-up of Yugoslavia and the agreement between Franjo Tuđman and Slobodan Milošević on the division of Bosnia (in the footsteps of the old Cvetković-Maček political agreements) was a silent invitation or a trigger for the resurfacing of the idea of the Crusades against the infidels.

From the east, west, south, and north armies were deployed against the poorly armed Muslims that were to be exterminated unless they decided to convert to Christianity—the eastern or western variant. Sarajevo as the new Jerusalem was a symbol that needed to be defeated, conquered, and destroyed. The siege of Sarajevo was the siege of Jerusalem.

The raiders plundered, rapped, killed, and pursued, practicing a thousand-years old experience.

The idea became evident in places such as Srebrenica, Prijedor, Tuzla, Zvornik, Višegrad . . . it was then that it became clear to world leaders that they had to answer the question of whether they lived in the year thousand or the year two thousand.

The Crusades in Bosnia had been initiated through political persuasion, continued by guns and halted at the moment when the Muslims were able to defeat their

opponents. The peace agreement, sadly, only created conditions for legal, political, and economic continuation of the Crusades against Bosnia.

The amazement about the cooperation of the Serbs and the Croats in Bosnia is rooted in keeping quiet about or being unaware of the character of the war for Bosnia. Instead of openly addressing, criticizing, improving, or realizing all that had happened—the painful spots are simply not talked about. This, unfortunately, invokes new armed conflicts.

The majority of the people in Bosnia never really understood the character of the war that was imposed on them. Great men like Jova Divjak instinctively opposed and rose to defend the New Jerusalem. Many of them were killed by "their own" if they refused to fight or kill those that were captured. Morality reached its lows, but, on the other hand, magnificent men emerged, men worthy of the denotation—Human Beings.

The Bosnian Muslims and Bosnian Franciscans were the greatest guardians of the brotherhood among the Bosnian people before, during, and after the end of the armed conflicts. The protection of Bosnia and the Bosnian Muslims, Bosniaks, is a civilizational issue of the survival of human morality. It is therefore important how all actors outside Bosnia and Herzegovina will behave, but primarily how all people in Bosnia and Herzegovina will act. Policies are transient and human beings are reflected in the Eternal.¹²

This is the place and the moment in which Europe and the civilized world must decide whether they will support crusading policies by omission to act and tacit encouragement of hate speech, as well as the road to war announced by separatist calls, or whether they will accept European Muslims as brothers to their Christian brothers—Catholic and Orthodox (as well as Jewish, and others).

THE LAND OF THE PEOPLE WHO BELIEVE IN JESUS

The key problem lies in forgetting the manner in which one must be and one may be. By killing God and, consequently, by killing the criteria of the divine in himself or herself—man descended to the earth and became *Homo faber*. In this sense Frithjof Schuon interpreted the Eastern sin: Adam and Eve loved God in the beginning (because there is nothing outside God). When they started to love one another, after the fall, instead of love (based on the love for God) the profanity of lust appeared.¹³

In a similar manner, when discussing the "intellectual atrophy of man" and "hypertrophy of practical intelligence", Schuon in his book, *The Transfiguration of Man*, tackles the issue of connecting religion and homeland. He finds the rising cult of connecting the two phenomena repulsive and counterproductive. They will, thinks Schuon, only make religion repulsive.

In his explanation he wrote that Christ only cared about his heavenly homeland that is "not of this world"; and that this was sufficient, but nevertheless did not imply denying

the natural fact of one's earthly homeland, but only refraining from each deviant—and above all illogical—cult of the country of origin.¹⁴

The world has deeply plowed shallow furrows. A man without conscience is the spitting image of a man without God. The emptiness cannot be filled either by worldly love or by love toward a homeland. Without rising above the profane, man is destined to materiality which will never leave him or her in peace. The cult of the homeland and the cult of connecting homeland with religion has in Bosnia and Herzegovina led to religion being used as a prop for evil, for religions turning to political centers. The void in the place of true love people without God in them filled with rape, and protectors of homeland with stealing land. The land of believers turned into the land of tormentors and killers in which there was no room left for love or heavenly homeland, or for man.

The destinies of the Catholics, Orthodox, and Muslims, i.e., the destinies of followers of Jesus and Muhammad are the destinies of people condemned to draw the attention of humanity. The rhetorical questions of the Bosnian triangle are: may we, people, be different? May we in different ways honor one God in Judaism, one God in Christianity, and one God in Islam? It seems a blasphemy even to ask this question, but Europe's silence in the face of genocide against a nation makes us think and ask even more radical questions:

Is the idea of Europe only an ideological game of powerful states with provincial ones? How would Europe and the world be possible if Bosnia and Herzegovina is not possible? Is the spirit of Europe ready to stop love being turned to hate? Will we again kill those who are different without using the possibility to learn from them and thus enrich our spirit?

Serious people know that the territory of Bosnia and Herzegovina is a common ground, that the destinies of its peoples were hard but similar, that names, religions, and masters changed throughout history but that this was precisely the thing that led to a special dimension of recognition in suffering. This is the source of common risings and even wars against the Turks, Venetians, Crusaders, Austro-Hungarian Empire, Italians, Germans . . .

In this context it needs to be said that the people of Bosnia and Herzegovina were once again tricked, forced into waging war for the interests of others, crammed into ideologies, and cornered into hatred. The people of subtlety, of *sevdah* music, and good neighborly relations "subtly" took over the logic of the profane and suffered the consequences. The result was horrific.

We do not think it necessary to constantly draw the attention of the international community to commitments and responsibilities that have been undertaken. The point at issue is the strength of the people of Bosnia and Herzegovina who should, building on their centuries-old tradition, rebuild the betrayed and broken trust among nations and confessions. The point at issue is rising above the profane. Religion and God cannot be used as an instrument of war for a country or extermination of a nation that believes in the same

God (but interprets its beliefs in a different way). Using the notion of homeland and religion to serve political interests will only dishonor God, and religion and the homeland of us all.

Each nation is greater, stronger, and more honest than its politics. Each science is more relevant if it is supranational or global. Each type of art belongs more to the world depending on how independent it is from political interests or groups.

To view through the prism of science and art means to measure in centuries, to compare with the greatest minds of humankind and greatest artistic achievements. Therefore, words need to connect, restore trust, find what is alive and most valuable in each *ethos*, and be the source of moderation.

The West has (it is to be believed) understood the message by the almost barehanded people that defended Bosnia and Herzegovina in the last war. It has understood the message of the Croats and Serbs who shoulder to shoulder fought with the Bosniaks for Bosnia and Herzegovina. Without blackmail and without the barrel of a gun being directed at their backs . . .

The Muslims should be greater than the Bosniaks, the Catholics should be greater than the Croats, and the Orthodox greater than the Serbs. What does it mean to be greater?

To be Anthropos . . .

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2. "But certainly for the present age, which prefers the sign to the thing signified, the copy to the original, fancy to reality, the appearance to the essence, this change, inasmuch as it does away with illusion, is an absolute annihilation, or at least a reckless profanation; for in these days illusion only is sacred, truth profane." Feuerbach, Ludwig, *The Essence of Christianity*, translated from The Second German edition by Marian Evans. Ludgate Hill, London: Trübner & Co.; 1881.
3. A little something has been said about it in the book by Alić, Sead, *Masovna proizvodnja narcizma [The Massproduction of Narcissism]*. Sveučilište Sjever; 2019.
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5. "The god is near and Hard to grasp but Where there is danger some Salvation grows there too." Hölderlin, Friedrich, *Selected Poems*, translated by David Constantines. Bloodaxe Books Ltd. p. 54.
6. See the paper by Alić, Sead, *Sjene križarskih ratova u Palestini [The Shadows of the Crusades in Palestine]*, in which the author sketches one of the possible trains of thought on the "collective unconscious" of the western attitude toward Islam, *Bošnjački glas*, No. 61, pp. 16–20.



7. In his book, *The Eleventh Hour*, Martin Lings writes that religions in their most outward forms are often depicted as different points of a circle, at the center of which is the divine truth. Each point is connected with the center by a radius that represents the esotericism of a particular religion. The more the radius nears the center, the closer it is to other radii, illustrating the fact that esoteric paths are getting closer and closer to each other, regardless of how far apart the relevant esotericisms might seem. Lings, Martin, *Jedanaesta ura [The Eleventh Hour]*, Zagreb: Vuković i Runjić; 2018. p. 78 (Original: Martin Lings, *The Eleventh Hour*, 1987).
8. "Another member of the Creel Commission was Walter Lippmann, the most respected figure in American journalism for about half a century (I mean serious American journalism, serious think pieces). He also wrote what are called progressive essays on democracy, regarded as progressive back in the 1920s. He was, again, applying the lessons of the work on propaganda very explicitly. He says there is a new art in democracy called manufacture of consent. That is his phrase. Edward Herman and I borrowed it for our book, but it comes from Lippmann. So, he says, there is this new art in the method of democracy, "manufacture of consent." By manufacturing consent, you can overcome the fact that formally a lot of people have the right to vote. We can make it irrelevant because we can manufacture consent and make sure that their choices and attitudes will be structured in such a way that they will always do what we tell them, even if they have a formal way to participate. So we will have a real democracy. It will work properly. That's applying the lessons of the propaganda agency." Chomsky, Noam, *What Makes Mainstream Media Mainstream*, From a talk at Z Media Institute June 1997. <http://zmag.org/chomsky/index.cfm>
9. For more detail see Alić, Sead, *U dolini svetog licemjerja [In the Valley of Holy Hypocrisy]*, Logos magazine No. 61, Tuzla, <http://logos.org.ba/node/61>
10. For more detail see Alić, Sead, *The Road to a New Totalitarianism*. Saarbrücken, Germany: LAP LAMBERT Academic Publishing; 2021.
11. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?5xuauDWxYw>. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?5xuauDWxYw>
12. Introducing the seventh chapter of the book *To have or to be* to the reader, Erich Fromm wrote: "This chapter deals with the thesis that social change interacts with a change in the social character; that "religious" impulses contribute the energy necessary to move men and women to accomplish drastic social change, and hence, that a new society can be brought about only if a profound change occurs in the human heart—if a new object of devotion takes the place of the present one." Fromm, Erich, *To Have or To Be*. London/New York: Continuum; 2008. p. 109.
13. See Schoun, Frithjof, *Ezoterizam kao počelo i kao put [Esoterism as Principle and as Way]*. Sarajevo: Connectum; 2011. p. 73.
14. Schoun, Frithjof, *Preobraženje čoveka [The Transfiguration of Man]*. Beograd: Ukronija/Centar za izučavanje tradicije; 2020. p. 40.