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**INTERCULTURAL PASTS AS A PROBLEM IN THE CONSTRUCTION OF NATIONAL PROGRAMS OF "CULTURAL HERITAGE" IN MODERN SOUTHEAST EUROPE**

"Without architectural heritage a nation is no more a nation because it finds no expression for its cultural identity in its usual environment", wrote the Belgian ICOMOS president Raymond M. Lemaire on the occasion of a special issue of that institution's journal aimed at highlighting Bulgarian efforts in historical preservation in 1981, "on the 1300<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the foundation of that country". History matters, and quite evidently even more so for societies hardly noticed by the "European jury" until the later 18<sup>th</sup> century. Following efforts to position oneself outside the scope of Hegel's notorious concept of "geschichtslose Völker", historiography formed an integral and very often ambiguous component of nation-building processes in Southeast Europe. Art history, a sub-discipline of the historical sciences too often ignored by historians of nationalism, followed suit, and was soon faced with the very same problem as the new nations' historiographers: that of creating the homogenous out of the heterogeneous, reading backwards the monoculturalist ambitions of the new nation-states into a hybrid regional cultural heritage.

It is the goal of my proposed paper to map these efforts in cultural construction (and oftentimes manipulation) in the historiographical output and practice of cultural heritage appraisal and preservation from the later 19<sup>th</sup> century to the present day. The cult of history and its monuments before 1989, as addressed in this abstract so far, will be theme of the first part of my paper. In the second part, in order to demonstrate that such efforts are part of an ongoing process, I shall turn to rather recent manifestations, focusing less on the massive destructions of historical sites during the recent conflicts in Bosnia, Croatia, and Kosovo, which had received due international media attention, but more subtle manipulations in times of "peace". Among other cases, I will discuss the crucial role of historical monuments in the debate over the future status of Kosovo, and the blunt inventions of traditions by provisional institutions (e.g. Serbian medieval monasteries described in official publications as monuments in the "Byzantine-Kosovar style" resurrected from the "old treasury of Albanian history"); the enterprise of a "national" sanctuary on the Plaošnik hill in Ohrid/FYROM, where - on the ruins of a 15<sup>th</sup>-century mosque demolished in the process - has risen a fantasy "reconstruction" of the church of St. Clement (a major figure in the history of Slavic literacy), now identified in the Wikipedia (a major platform for such contestations of heritage) as "the most sacred and holiest site among ethnic Macedonians"; or the restoration-museification of a medieval Armenian church in Eastern Anatolia, promoted by the Turkish government as a gesture towards reconciliation with the Armenians, while critics argue that the monument was really "Turkified" in the process. Embedding these cases in a more theoretical discussion, my paper will exemplify dilemmas of nation-building by addressing past and present strategies for the discursive transformation of spaces and images perceived as problematic in the light of intercultural legacies in the post-Ottoman region.