

Disassembling the pieces, reassembling the social: the forensic and political lives of secondary mass graves in Bosnia and Herzegovina

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Introduction

In a powerful documentary film entitled *Statement 710399*, director, activist, and former employee of the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia (ICTY) Refik Hodžić follows a trail of clues that he hopes will lead to the discovery of the fate of four young men (one a boy of only fifteen), who escaped the Srebrenica massacres only to be recaptured, interrogated, and later 'disappeared'. Escaping through a forest in the dark of the night, the youngest boy slips from his father's hand, and he and the other three can not be relocated by the escaping group. Once separated, the boys are later helped by a Serb family, who supply them with food, clothes, and directions – a family in whom the Serb authorities would later take a great interest. It is for this reason that the boys are interrogated when recaptured, in order to locate the family that attempted to offer them aid in their escape. The fate of the four is never fully ascertained by the end of the film, thanks to obstructive police officers (themselves still employees of the state despite their possible complicity in the wartime events the film depicts), and the families of the four young men fail in their attempt to gain some measure of closure over the loss of their loved ones.

While not an intentional narrative ploy by any means, the film offers a potent example of the ever-reassembling network of memory politics in Bosnia and Herzegovina. A legal artefact (the witness

statement) acts as an entry point through which the viewer can slowly unwind a skein of closely associated human actors, legal forms, political institutions and agendas, technical practices, and material objects that create the platform for both the constitution of collective memory in the aftermath of BiH's history of mass atrocity and – as importantly – its sites of blockage. In short, it is a perfect Latourian 'actor-network'.¹

There is probably little need to rehearse the basic tenets of actor-network theory here. Suffice to say, it is a constructivist and agency-based approach, where both human and non-human 'actants' are understood to hold similar forms of agency in networks of relational ties. These networks are fluid and performative, constantly in a state of making and remaking, and through this ongoing process of poesis, materiality and concepts, people and institutions, technologies and techniques, come together in a network of associations that demands 'the social' cannot be understood as a distinct domain of reality (in contraposition to 'the natural', for example), but exists as the 'glue' that fixes together distinct elements. That is to say, 'the social' is not a constellation of elements itself, but rather the assembling of the relational ties of heterogeneous elements.²

So in the case of *Statement 710399*, the viewer enters the network through a node (actant) that is both a material artefact (the particular document that is statement 710399) and a conceptual legal form – (such statements/documentation generally). The latter is a 'punctualization' of the former, a point we will return to briefly in the conclusion.³ The document exists in relation to the actors who created it and their agendas, but also in relation to the ICTY and a particular case in which it is brought into evidence. It is fodder for Hodžić's own agenda and its lengthy network of associations, even as it is connected to the plethora of actants that surround the investigation of the events in Srebrenica in 1995 more generally – actants that include forensic techniques, political organizations, individuals and families, mortal remains, material artefacts, and most importantly for our purposes, a unique sort of post-genocidal phenomenon, *the secondary mass grave*.

This chapter aims to explore the particular agency of *the phenomenon* of the secondary mass grave in the network of associations that constitutes the contested ground of BiH's memory politics. Why might a secondary mass grave play a distinct role from a primary mass grave, and in what ways, and for whom? Through an (admittedly implicit) description of the actor-network in which these graves are embedded, and the many sorts of actants with which they

are in relation, the authors will attempt to describe the precarious and shifting place of Bosnia's secondary mass graves in the country's processes of social reconciliation and peace-building.

A definition of the mass grave

Over the course of time, ever since the first excavations of mass graves, there have always been attempts at defining what constitutes a mass grave. Currently, there are several definitions and typologies of mass graves that have been put forward. Some of these definitions are based solely on the minimum number of bodies buried, while others try to define a mass grave not only by the number of bodies buried, but by the processes of creation and formation of the grave, the physical relationship between the bodies, and, especially in cases of mass graves of forensic importance, the legal and societal aspects of the burial.

The earliest definitions were given in 1987. Mant, after working on excavations of Second World War mass graves related to the Nuremberg trials, defined a mass grave rather nominally as a grave where two or more bodies in physical contact are buried together.⁴ This minimal definition has more recently been reiterated by Ruwanpura *et al.*⁵ By contrast however, Skinner defined a mass grave as one with a minimum of half a dozen bodies placed randomly and tightly together, but went on to note that the bodies were buried 'with no reverence to the individual', introducing a decidedly social aspect to the definition.⁶ Skinner *et al.* elaborated further on Skinner's original definition, distinguishing organized group graves, in which bodies are laid out side by side, and mass graves, where placement of the bodies is disorganized and they are buried with no regard to the dignity of their disposal.⁷ Of particular interest to the current discussion is the definition proffered by *The Final Report of the United Nations Commission of Experts to the Former Yugoslavia*, where a mass grave is defined as two or more individuals sharing the same permanent internment, the physical characteristics of which prevent movement of the bodies by natural elements within the grave, returning to a concern for numbers and forensics, but to the exclusion of social concerns like those intimated in Skinner's definition.⁸ Whether this definition foreshadowed or even prefigured the legal and political agendas that would surround the exhumation of mass graves across the former Yugoslavia can only be a matter of speculation.

However, the concern for numbers has remained something of a constant in this naming game. Connor defined a mass grave as containing more than six bodies, admitting that her discrimination of a 'multiple burial' (two to six individuals) from a 'mass grave' was arbitrary.⁹ Haglund presented a view that every grave is unique and different, and he rejected any oversimplifying definition, instead advocating for the number of bodies within the grave to define the grave itself,¹⁰ further emphasizing the view that a 'mass, of course, means a large quantity or aggregate, usually of considerable size' and thus a 'mass grave' should be left as a relative term.¹¹ These definitions, as Juhl points out, implicitly exhibit the common denominator that a mass grave contains human remains in close contact, packed tightly with no regard for the dignity involved in burial¹² – perhaps even where questions of dignity (i.e., social concerns around the *modus operandi* of burial) remain unenunciated. It was predominantly in the context of a rise in the number of exhumations and excavations of mass graves involving victims of human rights abuses that authors started defining mass graves by considering the manners of death visited upon the individuals buried within the grave, as well as the legal aspects of burials.

One of the earliest definitions taking into account the legal aspects of burial is that used by Bacre Waly Ndiaye, a UN Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary, or arbitrary executions. Ndiaye defined mass graves as 'locations where three or more victims of extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions were buried, not having died in combat or armed confrontations'.¹³ This definition was later taken up by the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia (hereafter ICTY) and is still in use.¹⁴ Jesse and Skinner unified this definition with earlier ones, defining a mass grave in terms of the number of bodies (two or more), their placement within the feature (indiscriminate and deliberate), and the legal aspect of their death (extrajudicial, summary, or arbitrary executions only).¹⁵

Schmitt argues that these definitions are incomplete as they rely on physical and technical characteristics and proposes a holistic approach to defining mass graves be taken by considering the anthropological context of human remains within the grave as well.¹⁶ For Schmitt, a mass grave contains remains of more than one victim which share a common trait related to the cause and manner of their death. He also went on to distinguish mass graves of forensic importance and interest (criminal mass graves), and those that are not.¹⁷ It is very important to distinguish these graves, as not all mass graves merit forensic investigation, and not every grave is created for

the same purpose. Criminal mass graves here constitute graves that are a result of a burial of extrajudicial, summary, or arbitrary executions that break international humanitarian law and human rights laws. Non-criminal mass graves are for the practical purpose of temporary storage of human remains after disasters and crises, before the remains can be properly disposed of and buried at a later date. Remains placed in these mass graves are often tagged with a specific identification reference code, as was the case with the victims of the 2004 Asian tsunami.¹⁸

It is important to highlight these differences in the social contexts of criminal and non-criminal mass graves. Non-criminal mass graves are places where remains are buried for temporary, but sometimes even permanent storage. These are remains of people that died as a result of natural disasters, but because of the high number of bodies involved and the sanitary conditions on the scene, they were buried in mass graves, most often after the documentation and attachment of an identifying code. If looking at earlier definitions involving 'no reverence to the individual', these graves do not qualify as mass graves in the sense with which this chapter is concerned, as in these cases it is highly important to respect the dead, and to take steps to minimize the trauma of them being buried in a mass grave that might be experienced by their families.¹⁹ Such mass graves often become places of pilgrimage and commemoration,²⁰ where large numbers of people come together in their grief and mourning. Likewise, there are examples of non-criminal mass graves of individuals executed and disposed of in criminal mass graves that are later exhumed, but reburied and memorialized collectively. The social and political decision to rebury the dead together creates a very different sort of actant, to return to our previous discussion of Latour, than either the criminal mass grave or the identified and reinterred mortal remains of *individuals* reclaimed by their loved ones or families.

Doubtless, criminal mass graves are those that most divide. Mass graves in Bosnia and Herzegovina (hereafter BiH) were made for the purpose of hiding crimes committed. By their very nature, these mass graves already divide people into victims and perpetrators. The mass graves of Srebrenica, for example, are the result of ethnic genocide, and as such, articulate and materialize mutually exclusive relations of sociality between groups according to their ethnic affiliation. Thus, survivors of the victims are called upon by the grave itself to isolate, distance, and differentiate themselves from the perpetrators of the crime. The division is further exacerbated where

there are attempts to obscure the past, usually through intimidation and/or the undermining of the survivors,²¹ especially where efforts have been taken to keep the graves concealed, which is where the distinct social valence of secondary (and tertiary, etc.) mass graves derives. Unlike the case of non-criminal mass graves, where creators of graves and families unite in the aim to alleviate distress and pain, the social aspects surrounding criminal mass graves combine to form a set of circumstances that make creators and relatives bifurcate into two very distinct groups on opposite sides of interest with respect to these graves.

The mass graves discussed in this chapter are criminal mass graves requiring medico-legal investigation. Despite the plethora of definitions put forward, we will be using the definition provided by Skinner *et al.*, which defines them as those that contain the bodies of many persons murdered and concealed by state actors or civilians during war.²² An important aspect of this definition is that for the first time, mass graves are viewed as also containing 'bodies that are often jumbled and incomplete'.²³ All definitions prior to this one dealt with bodies, victims, and/or individuals, definitions which imply completeness of the human remains buried. In the case of BiH, as will be shown later, mass graves, more often than not, contain partial, commingled, and/or disarticulated human remains, and this definition is especially reflective of this fact, and thus appropriate to our further discussion. It also anticipates the extent to which the mass graves under consideration in this chapter, and the mortal remains they reveal, must be understood as distinct sorts of actants in the networks that conceptualize memory and justice in the aftermath of BiH's wartime atrocity.

To find a grave

The war in BiH broke out on 1 March 1992, and included several factions. However, the main warring parties were the Army of Bosnia and Herzegovina (ABiH) against the Army of Republika Sprska (VRS) and between ABiH and the Croatian Territorial Defence (HVO). The crude rendering of the conflict thus was that ABiH represented Bosniak Bosnians (presumed Muslim), the VRS represented Serb Bosnians (presumed Orthodox), and the HVO represented Croat Bosnians (presumed Catholic).²⁴ Mobilization surely happened along these lines, but 'inevitable' ethnic antagonisms were more the object and *modus operandi* of the conflicts than their cause.

While outside the remit of this chapter, this vulgarized version of events disappears numerous other forms of identification that added multiple other factions to the conflicts, even as it occludes the intra-ethnic fighting that also occurred. In so doing, the overly facile account that suggests that there were three main factions that left a legacy of three histories of the conflicts becomes part of the ethno-nationalist memory politics about which we will be speaking – a form of memory management in which the international community has been entirely complicit.

The Army of Republika Srpska, in collaboration with the Yugoslav People's Army (JNA), the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Serbia, and various paramilitary units had an aim 'to implement the objective of ethnic separation by force'²⁵ of all non-Serbs, but mainly Bosniaks (Bosnian Muslims). The first attempts at preventing the war were undertaken as early as 1992, when Portuguese Foreign Minister José Cutilheiro proposed a plan which, although providing for a sovereign Bosnia and Herzegovina, would divide it into three distinct, ethnically divided territories.²⁶ This agreement fell through and led to the establishment of a Bosnian Serb police force, and later, on 12 May 1992, to the formation of VRS,²⁷ as a separate entity from the official state military force which fought ABiH.

Throughout the conflicts, reports of grave breaches of the Geneva conventions were documented on the territory of BiH. The UN Security Council adopted Resolution 780 (1992) on 6 October 1992, establishing an impartial Commission of Experts to analyse and examine allegations of these alleged breaches and violations of international humanitarian law in the territory of Former Yugoslavia, especially in BiH.²⁸ After the Commission submitted their First Interim Report, the UN Security Council established the ad hoc criminal tribunal – the ICTY – on 25 May 1993 to prosecute the perpetrators of the crimes uncovered by the Commission.²⁹ In its Final Report, published in 1994, the Commission provided the first list of 187 alleged mass graves they had uncovered across the territories of BiH and Croatia, among others several graves in Prijedor and one grave in Srebrenica.³⁰

Srebrenica, the UN safe area, fell on 11 July 1995, and men were separated from the elderly, women, and children, taken to the nearby Bratunac and were joined by thousands of men who were captured from the column of people trying to flee the area. They were kept in several locations, including a school building and an abandoned warehouse. Thousands of men were killed in 'carefully orchestrated executions' on 13 July 1995. Those not killed on this day were

executed between 14 and 17 July 1995, with only a few wounded surviving and later testifying at the ICTY trials.³¹ During the month of July 1995 these men were buried in mass graves throughout the Donje Podrinje area (an area around the towns of Srebrenica, Bratunac, Konjević Polje, Nova Kasaba, Cerska, and Zvornik), in an attempt by the Army of Republika Srpska to hide the crimes, especially in light of the ever-increasing presence of international reporters and investigators showing more interest in these crimes.

These mass graves might never have been found had it not been for the American CIA. After the fall of Srebrenica, the survivors started sharing stories of what they had witnessed in Srebrenica. A CIA analyst took notice and referred to overhead aerial spy images taken by US military U-2 airplanes in July 1995, and on 2 August 1995 he recognized three disturbances he identified as potential mass graves near the village of Nova Kasaba. The information was confidentially passed on to the US President at the time, Bill Clinton.³² The then US Secretary of State, Madeleine Albright, in a closed session, presented the UN Security Council with aerial images that she claimed showed mass graves in and around Srebrenica.³³ Albright showed the UN Security Council a 'before' image of prisoners crowded in a football field, and an 'after' image revealing three areas of disturbed earth where she claimed that up to 2,700 Bosnian Muslims had been killed and buried.³⁴

This revelation was originally received with scepticism, until David Rhode, a journalist for the *Christian Science Monitor*, visited the location identified by the analyst. After a two-hour search, Rhode uncovered freshly overturned earth and what he presumed to be a decomposing leg sticking out of the ground, together with empty ammunition boxes, and diplomas, photographs, and various other personal effects that he identified as belonging to 'Srebrenica Muslims',³⁵ finally providing evidence and support for claims of violence in Srebrenica. During the summer of 1996, the ICTY exhumation team excavated thirty-three bodies from this location from four separate graves in two fields near the village of Nova Kasaba.³⁶

The use of aerial imagery in locating mass graves in BiH proved very successful. The United States authorities provided the ICTY with aerial imagery of various locations in Donje Podrinje where they had noticed soil changes indicative of possible grave locations. Through aerial photography, thirty-nine mass graves related to the 1995 Srebrenica massacre have been identified, and all of them have been excavated.³⁷

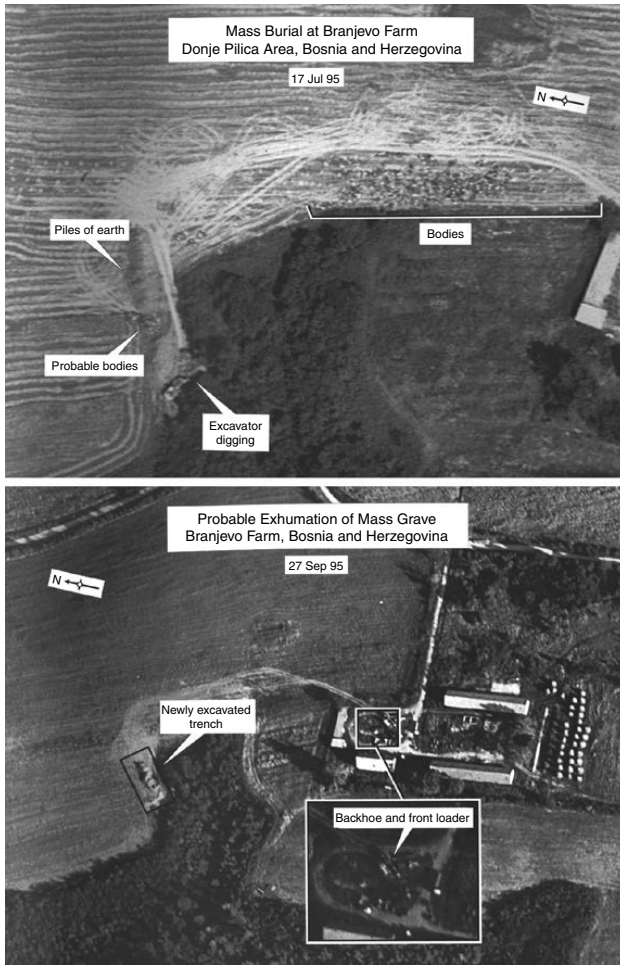


Figure 7.1 Mass burial at Branjevo farm: Donje Pilica area, Bosnia and Herzegovina. Courtesy of the ICTY.

Forensic puzzle or forensics of a puzzle: groups and persons

The public discovery of mass graves led to Serb forces attempting to hide their crimes. During the months of September and October 1995, the VRS started digging up most of these mass graves, and reburying the bodies within them in several smaller graves in more remote locations, creating assemblages of related mass graves.³⁸

These would become a new and even more powerful node in the network of associations and the political afterlife of the Srebrenica massacres.

VRS held their victims in several different locations in lower Podrinje. Victims were either killed at the detention centre or taken to another location and killed. After the killings they buried their victims *en masse*. These locations are marked as 'primary' mass graves as they are the original places of burial. As news of the existence of these graves broke out, the graves were dug up by heavy machinery, a process that has since been termed 'robbing', and remains were transported elsewhere. Once dug up, primary graves are known as 'disturbed' or 'robbed' primary mass graves. The location where the dislocated remains are subsequently buried is known as a 'secondary' mass grave.³⁹ On rare occasions these secondary mass graves have been robbed, and the remains redistributed to other locations to make a tertiary mass grave.⁴⁰ This phenomenon of robbing mass graves and the subsequent reburial of remains from within them in secondary and tertiary locations in order to hide the crimes is unique to Bosnia and Herzegovina and is not encountered, in this form, almost anywhere else.

In a forensic sense, these graves are very different, and primary graves are easy to distinguish from subsequent graves. Primary graves, generally, are characterized by including complete human remains. There might be some commingling and repositioning of remains as a result of decomposition and a lack of reverence for their deposition within the grave feature, but generally they contain complete remains and artefacts.⁴¹ Once the grave is made, the content of a primary mass grave includes mixed natural soil from the location with inclusions of the original local soils. After a few months, during which the remains decompose naturally (leading to disarticulation of body parts as the flesh dissipates), these graves were robbed using heavy machinery, thus creating 'robbed primary mass graves'. This process destroys bodies as they become additionally disarticulated, and bones fracture and break as the machine digs the grave fill. Human remains and the grave fill are loaded onto trucks that will transport them to secondary locations, up to 50 kilometres away, initiating the process of commingling of human remains. Given such distances between graves, investigators from the ICTY's Prosecutors Office estimated that 'it would have taken at least two full nights and several trucks to move the bodies to the secondary gravesite'.⁴² From the prosecutorial point of view, this process of exhumation and reinterment suggests the systematic nature of the project, the

number of people and quantity of resources that would have been marshalled to conceal the crime, the possibility of using this evidence to corroborate other forms of evidence and testimony, and most importantly, the fact that the people ordering the robbing of primary mass graves knew that they had committed a crime. All of these inferences may be equally potent to the families of the victims, but the subsequent incompleteness of mortal remains when later exhumed creates new meanings for families in this network of association. Whereas the criminal proceedings might be content with the quantification of remains, an ability to establish 'command responsibility' or the presence of a 'joint criminal enterprise', and (perhaps) some evidence of the *mens rea* of the perpetrator, families might be at least equally concerned with the identification of remains and the ability to bury their loved ones as complete and reassembled – *reas-associated* – remains of a person. As one of the leaders of The Mothers of Srebrenica once poignantly said: 'I did not marry a man without hands or a head. I did not give birth to sons without hands or a head. But I buried them that way.'

Fournet argues that in cases of genocide, bodies are often completely destroyed by the perpetrators so as to be unrecognizable. This is done for two reasons: to erase all traces of the crime, so as to be able to continue the destructive behaviour, but also to destroy the group as a social entity.⁴³ This is at the very core of what genocide is. The actual victim of the genocidal act is the group, but the group is eradicated in part or in whole through acts visited on the bodies of discrete persons. The individual and the group become mutually constitutive insofar as the burial of corpses in mass graves destroys individual identities and in so doing, denudes the victim of all belonging to any group – including the collectivity of humanity, as they become unrecognizable and unidentifiable as consummate 'once-persons'. Therefore, victims disappear as a whole, their various erasures slowly defacing and denying the existence of the 'once-group'. In the case of BiH, burial of remains in secondary mass graves can very specifically be construed as what Fournet calls *genocidal death*, a death that aims 'to destroy the existence of the victims as individual human beings, to annihilate their identities and, therefore, to erase them from both individual memories and collective memory'.⁴⁴ And yet, in the case of BiH, even as families struggle to 'presence the dead'⁴⁵ loved ones through the identification of mortal remains now made visible to the world, the real intended target of genocide – the group – re-emerges with ferocity from the very existence of the secondary mass grave.

Not only do secondary mass graves index an implicit recognition of guilt for illegal acts ordered by political and military elites, but the existence of these graves and the coordinated effort required to realize them, suggests a further story to survivors. While it is not countenanced in international criminal law, in extralegal contexts, the graves betray a great level of corporate responsibility: Enter the spectre of 'us' versus 'them' and the entrenchment of ethnic division – materialized and revealed – in the phenomenon of the grave itself. Even as the histories of individual victims become obscured by the co-mingled remains of incomplete 'once-persons' in the secondary mass grave, the very grave itself reasserts new grounds for narrative and meaning. The narrative enabled by the secondary mass grave in its network of associations tells a seemingly more invidious meta-story that encompasses discrete, individual traumas. One person can command the exhumation, removal, and reinterment of hundreds or thousands of bodies, but numerous people must enact it. In this way, secondary mass gravesites inscribe a different kind of history, not just legally for the few people who will be prosecuted for the lives taken and the mortal remains disassembled, removed, and redistributed across multiple sites, but for a society that needs to grasp the reasons and mechanisms through which such atrocities happened. Secondary mass gravesites are a confirmation that the people doing the killing and the burying, and the unburying – not just their leaders – were aware that they were doing something wrong. This was not just war, which involves killing and is governed by its own laws. It is what Mark Osiel once termed the 'administrative massacre' of the Other.⁴⁶

Bodies on the move: the complexity of the Srebrenica genocide

The relationship between primary and secondary mass graves has been established through various methods. Original linking of graves was conducted on the basis of evidence and artefacts uncovered during excavations, ballistic evidence, and ligatures. Ballistic evidence was examined by the US Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives (ATF) with reports submitted to the ICTY.⁴⁷ Linking of graves was also realized through the work of Anthony Brown and his analysis of soil and pollen samples collected from different locations.⁴⁸ Finally, and most conclusively, the relationship of primary to secondary mass grave sites has been verified through results of DNA

analysis conducted by the International Commission on Missing Persons (ICMP).⁴⁹

Since 2001, the ICMP have been in charge of the exhumation process in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Since 2009, this has been under the auspices of the state-level Missing Persons Institute (MPI). ICMP has been implementing its DNA-led identification process in BiH since 2001, and results of these identifications have been used for linking mass graves within assemblages.⁵⁰ These links determined that there are five separate assemblages of graves related to the genocide in Srebrenica of July 1995. Out of over eighty mass graves related to the fall of Srebrenica,⁵¹ forty-nine mass graves in these assemblages have been located and excavated by late 2011.⁵² It has been established that from 5,557 unique DNA profiles obtained by the ICMP for Srebrenica related mass graves, over 1,700 individuals have been recovered from more than one grave,⁵³ with a single individual being reassociated from as many as four different grave sites.⁵⁴

Kravica warehouse related mass graves

Between 1,000 and 1,500 Bosniak people were bussed or marched from Sandići meadow, where they were held, and forced into the Kravica warehouse in the late afternoon of 13 July 1995. Kravica warehouse was a building of prefabricated concrete construction with brick or concrete interior walls and Styrofoam insulation sheets, a floor and ceiling also made from concrete, and brick and paint used in the construction of the interior and exterior of the building. During the killings several partially wrecked vehicles, grass, straw bales, and mechanical parts were located inside the building.⁵⁵

Once the warehouse was full, at around 6 p.m., the soldiers started killing the prisoners using machine-guns and automatic weapons, which were discharged amongst the packed prisoners, followed by hand-grenades thrown into the huddled crowds. Any prisoners trying to escape through the windows were caught and shot by the guards surrounding the building, and any survivors were called out the next day and also killed. A very few prisoners managed to survive by pretending to be dead.⁵⁶

Kravica warehouse was examined by the US Naval Criminal Investigative Service (NCIS) at the request of the ICTY on 30 September 1996. NCIS uncovered evidence of bullet strikes both on the inside and the outside of the building, evidence of blood spatter, and explosive residue along with human blood, bone and tissue adhering to the walls and floors of the building.⁵⁷ These samples

were later examined by the Netherlands Forensic Science Laboratory, and proved to contain human DNA and traces of trinitrotoluene (TNT).⁵⁸ The warehouse was also examined by the ICTY investigators on 12 April 1996 and 17 August 1997. During these visits ICTY investigators collected shell casings, bullets, personal identifications, and belongings, and eleven grenade handles supporting findings regarding the manner of these killings. Following the executions, a wheeled front-end loader was used to break through the entire concrete section of the warehouse wall containing the double entrance door to gain access to the bodies inside the warehouse. These were loaded onto trucks and transported to primary locations.

It is believed through forensic information that the bodies outside the warehouse were transported to Ravnice and the bodies within the warehouse to Glogova,⁵⁹ where they were buried. The remains were buried in four primary mass graves: Ravnice 01 and Ravnice 02, and Glogova 01 and series of interlinked sub-graves marked as Glogova 02. The mass graves in Ravnice were undisturbed and later excavated by the ICTY in 2000 and 2001, revealing graves containing remains of 175 bodies and 324 body parts. Almost all of the complete bodies were determined to be male, and 92 per cent of these cases were determined to have had gunshot injury as the cause of death. Some remains showed signs of burning.⁶⁰

The Glogova graves were exhumed by the ICTY in 1999, 2000, and 2001. Most of these graves were determined to have been robbed.⁶¹ Furthermore, some of the graves in the Glogova 02 series were undisturbed, but still contained body parts. The expert report on the excavation of Glogova 02 stresses that this fragmentation of remains was not due to taphonomic processes or grave environment, but was a result of a blast injury, i.e. events surrounding the death of the victims.⁶²

During the excavation of the Ravnice graves, the ICTY investigators uncovered plaster, concrete, and other building materials that were identical to the same material from Kravica warehouse (the execution point), Glogova 01 and Glogova 02 mass graves, and later secondary mass graves called Zeleni Jadar 05 and Zeleni Jadar 06. Investigators also highlighted the recovery of a piece of polystyrene that was indistinguishable from the polystyrene lettering on the outside facade wall of the Kravica warehouse, linking Ravnice mass graves to the Kravica warehouse executions.⁶³ ATF also established forensic links between shell casings recovered from Kravica warehouse and the secondary mass grave Zeleni Jadar 05,⁶⁴ while soil and pollen analysis linked Glogova 02 robbed primary mass grave to the secondary grave mass grave, Zeleni Jadar 05.⁶⁵

Through DNA links, primary mass graves from Glogova have now been linked to secondary mass graves in the areas of Zeleni Jadar (seven graves), Blječeva (three graves), Budak (two graves), and Zalazje (two graves), with evidence of robbing of at least one secondary mass grave⁶⁶ and subsequent deposition of its contents into a presumed tertiary grave Zalazje 04.⁶⁷ The Zalazje graves had, by 2010, only presumptively been linked to Glogova primary mass graves.

The secondary graves definitively linked to Glogova primary mass graves are: Zeleni Jadar 1A, 1B, 2, 3, 4, 5, and 6; Blječeva 1, 2, and 3; Budak 1 and 2; and Zalazje 01 and 04. By the end of 2011, 1,374 Srebrenica victims had been identified from the Kravica warehouse assemblage.⁶⁸ This case also demonstrates the intent of the perpetrators in hiding their crimes as the secondary mass graves are kilometres away from the primary graves in Glogova, with secondary graves in Blječeva being roughly 11–12 kilometres away, secondary graves in Budak being some 10.5 kilometres away, and Zeleni Jadar secondary graves being even further away, with Zeleni Jadar 1A and 1B being about 25 kilometres away and Zeleni Jadar being some 34 kilometres south of Glogova. Most of these graves have been uncovered through aerial images showing their creation during September and October 1995. The secondary mass graves are not only linked to the primary mass graves, but are also inter-linked to various levels.

A very interesting aspect of this assemblage is the fact that even the primary mass graves, Glogova 01 and Glogova 02, are linked by DNA. This fact further supports the findings of excavations where bodies have been determined to have been partly destroyed prior to their burial.

While one would expect to find destruction of corpses during the robbing of mass graves and transport of bodies to secondary and tertiary locations, in the case of Kravica warehouse, destruction of corpses started during the killing of victims. As noted during excavations, use of RPGs and hand-grenades caused blast injuries and the bodily destruction of victims held at Kravica warehouse, and thus body parts and destroyed corpses got buried in primary locations, and not just complete bodies, as is usually the case.

Lazete mass graves assemblage

On the morning of 14 July 1995, a group of about 1,000 prisoners held in Bratunac the night before were transported in thirty buses to Grbavci school in Orahovac, already half-full with prisoners that

had been arriving that morning. With the arrival of buses, the building filled up within a few hours, and there were about 2,000–2,500 prisoners in total. After being held there for a few hours, the prisoners were taken out in groups, loaded onto trucks, and led to execution in a field less than a kilometre away. The prisoners were lined up and shot in the back. While the executions were in progress heavy machinery was digging the two primary mass graves where the bodies of the killed were buried.⁶⁹

These primary graves are Lazete 01 and Lazete 02. Mass grave Lazete 01 was excavated in 2000 and contained the remains of 130 males, and Lazete 02 was excavated in 1999 and 2000 and included the remains of 243 males. Aerial imagery shows that Orahovac was originally constructed between 5 and 27 July 1995, when comparing images across that window of time. Aerial images further showed that the robbing of these primary graves occurred between 7 and 27 September 1995.⁷⁰

Links between Lazete 01 and 02 primary mass graves have been established to a series of graves in the Hodžići Road area 8–12 kilometres away, with both evidentiary and DNA links being confirmed. The US ATF linked shell casings from primary Lazete 02 grave to Hodžići Road 03, Hodžići Road 04, and Hodžići Road 05 secondary graves. Furthermore, the ATF linked shell casings recovered on the surface around primary graves, the area where the executions occurred, to the same secondary mass graves.⁷¹ Soil and pollen analysis also linked Lazete 02 to Hodžići Road 03, 04, and 05, as did the recovery of piping from the original primary location,⁷² which was disturbed during excavation and robbing and then transferred to secondary locations. The ATF also examined blindfolds and ligatures recovered by the ICTY teams during exhumations and those collected from the Grbavci school, and through this analysis has positively linked Lazete 02 mass grave with the secondary mass graves Hodžići Road 03, 04, and 05.⁷³

Through DNA links the primary mass grave, Lazete 01, has been linked to a single secondary mass grave, Hodžići Road 05, while the primary mass grave Lazete 02 has been linked to 6 Hodžići Road graves: Hodžići Road 01, 02, 03, 04, 06, and 07, and by the end of 2011 841 individuals had been identified from this assemblage.⁷⁴

Petkovci dam mass graves assemblage

On 14 July 1995 about 1,500 to 2,000 people were brought to and held at Petkovci school. After being held in deplorable conditions,

they were taken out in small groups, ordered to strip to the waist and take their shoes off, and then had their hands bound behind their backs. During the night they were taken in trucks to nearby Petkovci dam. Once there, they were taken off of the trucks in small groups, lined up, and shot. The bodies were collected and buried by heavy machinery at the plateau in front of the dam.⁷⁵ The ATF's analysis of shell casings from the Petkovci dam grave and shell casings on the surrounding surface showed that this was the site of both the executions and primary burial.⁷⁶

As with Lazete primary mass graves, aerial imagery shows that the Petkovci dam grave was originally constructed between 5 and 27 July 1995, when comparing images across these days. Aerial images further showed that the robbing of these primary graves occurred between 7 and 27 September 1995.⁷⁷ A team of ICTY experts exhumed the site in April of 1998, and concluded that the grave was robbed using heavy machinery. This robbing resulted in 'grossly disarticulated body parts' in the grave.⁷⁸

DNA links between Petkovci dam primary mass grave have been established to a series of graves in the Liplje area roughly 18 kilometres south from Petkovci dam. Through DNA links, Petkovci dam has been linked to Liplje 01, 02, 03, 04, and 07 secondary mass graves. Furthermore, secondary mass graves have also shown inter-linking: Liplje 01 links to Liplje 02 and 03, Liplje 02 additionally links to Liplje 04 and 07, Liplje 03 links to Liplje 01 and 04, while Liplje 04 links to Liplje 02, 03, and 07. By the end of 2011, 815 individuals had been identified from this assemblage.⁷⁹

Branjevo military farm graves assemblage

About 1,000 to 1,200 men were bussed from Bratunac to a school in Pilica near Zvornik on 14 July 1995, and were held there for two nights. On 16 July 1995, these men were bussed to a Branjevo military farm where they were to be executed. After being held with no food, water, or latrines, they were called out, had their hands bound behind their backs and were taken to the execution site, while some men had already died from dehydration when being held in Pilica school. Men started arriving on trucks at Branjevo around 10 a.m. and, once at Branjevo, prisoners were lined up in groups of ten and shot in the back. Heavy machinery was used to dig the grave while the executions were still ongoing and later to bury the corpses in the grave.⁸⁰ During the Krstić trial, it was noted that over the course of

the executions, 'when some of the soldiers recognized acquaintances from Srebrenica, they beat and humiliated them before killing them', and that machine-guns were used for the killings, the gunfire often 'mortally wounded the prisoners, but did not cause death immediately and prolonged their suffering'.⁸¹

Aerial images of the Branjevo farm area show large numbers of corpses lying in the nearby field, as well as excavators moving them on 17 July 1995, with the robbing of Branjevo primary grave and the creation of the related secondary Čančari Road graves between 7 and 27 July 1995. These graves were then backfilled before 2 October of the same year.⁸² Branjevo military farm mass grave, also known as Pilica, was excavated by the ICTY between 10 and 24 September 1996, with 132 remains being uncovered, with almost all being established to have died from gunshot wounds.⁸³

Pilica Dom was also examined by the US NCIS and the ICTY on 27 September and 2 October 1996. NCIS uncovered evidence of bullet strikes on the inside of the building, evidence of blood spatter, and explosive residue along with human blood and human bones.⁸⁴ These samples were later examined by the Netherlands Forensic Science Laboratory and proved to contain human DNA and traces of trinitrotoluene (TNT).⁸⁵ The ATF also examined blindfolds and ligatures recovered by the ICTY teams during exhumations and those collected from the Branjevo military farm, and through this analysis positively linked Lazete 02 mass grave with the secondary mass graves Čančari Road 03 and 12,⁸⁶ while similar links have also been established by the ICMP during their excavation of Čančari Road 08 secondary mass grave.⁸⁷ Additional links were provided through the presence of hay in secondary mass graves, as it was established that Branjevo-related mass graves contained hay as the bodies buried in the Branjevo primary grave were covered with it.⁸⁸

DNA links between Branjevo military farm primary mass grave have been established to a part of a series of thirteen graves in the Čančari Road area roughly 45 to 50 kilometres south. Thus, through DNA links, Branjevo has been linked to Čančari Road 04, 05, 06, 08, 09, 11, and 12 secondary mass graves. Čančari Road 10 secondary mass grave does not directly link to Branjevo primary mass grave, but through its links to Čančari Road 06, 11, and 12, it has been established that it is also a secondary mass grave related to Branjevo military farm.⁸⁹ Furthermore, other Čančari Road secondary mass graves have also shown inter-linking. By the end of 2011, 1,735 individuals had been identified from this assemblage.⁹⁰

Kozluk graves assemblage

About 500 men were killed and buried at the edge of the Drina river, near the Vitinka bottled-water factory between 15 and 16 July 1995. Information on this event was provided to the ICTY by Bosnian refugees in Germany. The prisoners were loaded onto trucks, and while being driven to Kozluk for execution, they were forced to sing Serb songs. Heavy machinery was used to dig the graves, with burials taking place between 17 and 18 July 1995.⁹¹

Aerial images of the Kozluk area show that Kozluk primary mass grave was created between 5 and 17 July 1995, with the robbing of Kozluk primary grave and creation and backfilling of related secondary Čančari Road graves between 27 September and 2 October of the same year. Kozluk primary mass grave was excavated by the ICTY between 27 May and 10 June 1998, with at least 340 individuals being excavated. As the executions and burials occurred in the vicinity of a bottled-water factory, both primary and secondary mass graves included green bottle glass and bottle labels in the grave fill.⁹²

The ATF linked shell casings from the primary mass grave at Kozluk to the Čančari Road 03 secondary mass graves.⁹³ DNA links between Kozluk primary mass grave have been established as part of a series of 13 graves in the Čančari Road area roughly 45 to 50 km south. Through DNA links, Petkovci Dam has been linked to Čančari Road 01, 02, 03, and 13 secondary mass graves. Furthermore, other Čančari Road secondary mass graves have also shown inter-linking. By the end of 2011, 813 individuals had been identified from this assemblage.⁹⁴

Destruction of corpses: forensic and social aspects

The forensic work in the identification of these remains and their return to families for proper burial is complex in the case of the missing from the fall of Srebrenica as they, in anthropological terms, represent a very homogenous group. All of those excavated from these mass graves have similar demographics: they belonged to a displaced, economically underdeveloped population, with a large number reported missing (over 8,000) who are mostly males between seventeen and forty-five,⁹⁵ men commonly referred to as men of a fighting age, and there is generally inconclusive information in terms

of ante-mortem medical and dental records because of the victims' social, cultural, and/or economic status.⁹⁶ Dental records are available for less than 10 per cent (roughly 600) of those reported missing.⁹⁷ All of these factors severely limit the use of non-DNA-based (or more 'traditional' forensic) methods normally useful in the process of 'reassociation' (reassembling mortal remains) and identification,⁹⁸ and indeed had DNA not been utilized as a powerful tool in the forensic arsenal of the Srebrenica exhumations, these remains might never have been identified.

Through ICMP's implementation of a DNA-led process of tracing, excavating, and exhuming missing persons in the Balkans, the search and recovery of the missing and their return to the families has changed. DNA has started being used for reassociations of body parts within graves and between graves, but also for the identification of remains that allow for their return to family members. To this end, ICMP formed the Podrinje Identification Project (PIP) located in Tuzla in 1999 and the Lukavac Re-association Center (LKRC), in Lukavac, near Tuzla, in 2005. Their task was to examine remains recovered from mass and other graves sites, identify them and return them to their families, by combining 'traditional' forensic anthropology and DNA analysis. LKRC also conducted bone-to-bone DNA matching in order to resolve a high volume of cases of disarticulation and commingling, as well as to expedite the whole process and make it more efficient.⁹⁹

However, after the complex process of identification, which can exist in tension with the needs and resource requirements of the forensic evidence sought by prosecutorial institutions, there enters yet another actant into this network of competing agendas. In a country where ethnic, political, and religious identities are fused, the commingled remains of the secondary mass graves might prove a particular sort of conundrum for the religious communities that seek to represent both the individual dead and the groups from which they come. While families might want to commemorate their individual murdered loved ones, they will likely hope to do so in many cases in ways that conform to practices that identify those individuals as members of a specific collectivity. This might not be for political reasons (although on the part of religious and political leaders, it often is), but because of matters of personal belief. As Tunjo Stanić, a family member from Orašje, points out: 'If it is possible somehow to find the body, to bury it, so that there is a place to go at the cemetery, to light a candle and so forth',

the perpetrators have not entirely succeeded as they thought they had.¹⁰⁰ Here, the commingled remains of the disassociated person are mirrored by the commingled preoccupations of individual and group identities.

As one Mother of Srebrenica says:

Even today we are searching, we are looking, hoping that they will appear. I would always prefer to live in hope, to expect that someone will appear somewhere, regardless of whose child, not only mine, anyone's child. If any child might still return, we will keep searching as long as we are still standing on our feet, and it seems to me that I would walk, I would look, with whatever God gives us.¹⁰¹

These are the bodies of the twice dead. These bodies underwent a process of anonymous death (on the individual level) and sacrilegious burial (in terms of group concerns). The phenomenon of secondary mass graves twins the defilement and destruction of both physical being and any kind of shared identity in a particularly powerful form. As a result, Wagner notes in her book, *To Know Where He Lies*, that in contemporary Bosnia, interring and commemorating victims of genocide or crimes against humanity relies on both following Bosnian Muslim traditions, and also on improvising from them. Thus, communities must reconcile the initial conditions of death and burial of their loved ones with the return of the (usually partial) remains and identities through consecrated funerals.¹⁰²

The Bosnian Islamic Community (IZ) responded to this need by consulting Sharia law, in order to make sense of the destruction of bodies through repeated sacrilegious burials. A leading Bosnian Islamic cleric weighed in on the issue, and at a roundtable discussion in March 2003, the only open forum to have dealt with this particular problem, the current head of Bosnia's IZ, and then Tuzla *mufti*, Husejn ef. Kavazović, explained that

Sharia law considers a missing person as a person who went missing for some reason and for whom we do not know current whereabouts or their status; whether they are alive or dead. ... Bearing in mind the circumstances leading to mass executions of Muslims from Srebrenica and Žepa, which are confirmed by the verdicts of [the] ICTY as well as the discovery of mass graves, it is assumed that the victims who are still missing are presumed to be dead. They would be considered dead if more than four years have passed since their disappearance¹⁰³

if they have gone missing during circumstances of war. Kavazović went on to explain that Srebrenica victims have the status of a *šehid* (martyr) and this determines the religious practice that was to be

accorded to both excavated and unexcavated remains. This finally resolved the question of the treatment of skeletonized remains encountered in mass graves, which get washed in mortuaries by technicians and not according to religious practices, as a *šehid* in him/herself is clean and thus would not require the 'usual cleansing ritual nor will the remaining clothing be removed from them'.¹⁰⁴ Kavazović also addressed the burial practices by stating that each of the identified remains, whether complete or incomplete, should be marked with a *nišan* (a tombstone) with the person's identity, as is the custom in the Bosnian Islamic tradition and 'the same treatment should be used for incomplete body parts for which identity is known'.¹⁰⁵ He added that incomplete remains should be treated as if they were complete during prayers and markings of the graves and also that bones of multiple individuals can be buried within a collective tomb, while reminding listeners that they do not just have strictly religious obligations to these remains, but that they also have a duty of commemorating them.¹⁰⁶

In this way, the Bosnian Muslim community and its 'improvised' or reinterpreted doctrines have served as new actants in the network of BiH's memory politics around the crimes committed during the conflicts of the 1990s. On the one hand, the identification of all the missing as having the status of a *šehid* serves to counteract some of the most disruptive ethno-nationalist associations posed by the phenomenon of the secondary mass grave. This rendering of the disappeared and the disarticulated creates what Latour referred to as a 'de-punctualization', whereby a whole (here the secondary mass grave) is broken down into its parts (the partial remains of individual persons of faith, as well as the absences instantiated by what is still missing). This is much the same process as when a machine, upon breaking down, is recognized as an aggregation of its various parts and systems. If at first we throw up our hands and say, 'my laptop is broken', we later reassess the situation to recognize that it is either the electronics or the mechanics, this discrete component or that one. So, too, does the insertion of the concept of the *šehid* into the overall network disaggregate (de-punctualize) and disrupt the initial meaning that the secondary mass grave has in association with other actants from the network. However, it cannot be ignored that this new node in the network must necessarily also recapitulate the centrality of collective identities as well (here the Bosnian Muslim identity of the victims against the shared identities of the perpetrators), and in so doing, it reiterates the divisions that criminal mass graves always instantiate.

Some concluding remarks

Much of the point of this chapter has been to argue for the secondary mass grave as a particular kind of actant in a post-conflict network of memory politics. Because of its mode of coming into being and the fact that the persons in the grave remain incomplete assemblages of mortal remains, often even after DNA identification, these graves divide even more than other mass graves. They create clear delineations along ethnic group lines because of the kind of phenomenon they are. The makers of the graves are seen as collective perpetrators because of the systematic, concerted, and resource-intensive processes involved in the graves' production. The incompleteness of what can be found in the graves pulls in sometimes conflicting directions – towards identifying the shared fate of the commingled partial remains as a targeted *group*, even as families seek to materialize the absence of their *particular* lost members. These processes lead to changing significance for other nodes in the network, for example where material objects found in a grave or left behind before the loved one was taken come to serve as a stand-in for either the parts of the person that will for ever remain missing or as a placeholder for someone disappeared and never identified at all. And all of these processes are inflected by the agency of actants that are not necessarily persons or objects, but include the forensic practices we have described, the political organizations that have motivated exhumation and/or identification, and the religious concepts mobilized when faced with secondary mass graves (for example). So rather than talk blandly about the '*social context*' that allows for BiH's current, overheated ethno-nationalist politics, this chapter has sought to describe the '*social*' as the connections between the multi-various nodes in a network, turning attention not to what is '*socially exceptional*' about BiH, but how certain entities in its network of memory politics provide for unanticipated patterns of connection and reassemblage – like that of the phenomenon of the secondary mass grave.

Notes

This research was supported from the European Research Council and was undertaken as part of the project 'Bosnian Bones, Spanish Ghosts: "Transitional Justice" and the Legal Shaping of Memory after Two Modern Conflicts' (grant no. 241231).

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