



Homage to  
significant  
women **B&H**  
and their achievements

Laura Papo Bohoreta  
Ševala Zildžić-Iblizović  
Smilja Mučibabić  
Vera Šnajder  
Iva Despić-Simonović  
Marian Wenzel  
Mica Todorović  
Nada Miletić  
Nafija Sarajlić  
Radojka Lakić  
Razija Handžić  
Staka Skenderova  
Vera Obrenović-Delibašić

## **Homage to significant B&H women and their achievements**

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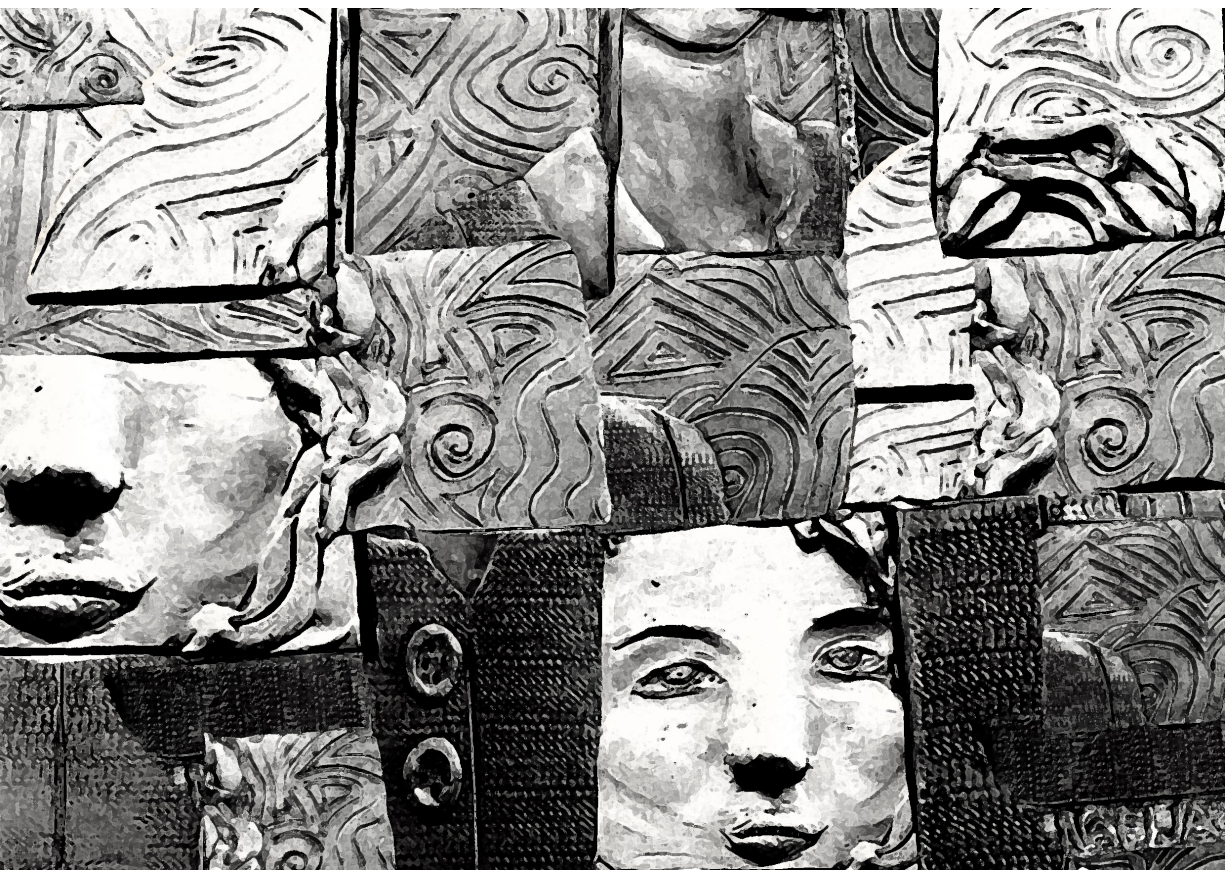
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# BIOGRAPHIES







## Laura Papo Bohoreta

Laura Papo Bohoreta, the birth name of Luna, was born in 1891 in Sarajevo as the daughter of Judah and Esther Levi. At the end of the 19th and early 20th century she lived in Istanbul, where her entire family moved. There they lived very modestly. Since early childhood, she began to read various books. Later she studied French at the International French School for Jews (Alliance Israélite Française) in Istanbul.

### Work

She was a writer and a business woman. She wrote a number of literary works in French, German and Bosnian, and later she wrote exclusively in Judeo-Spanish (Ladino). The main purpose of her life was to preserve the Sephardic tradition and to defeat the social stereotypes at that time that prevented the woman from penetrating the society. Obviously, from the earliest age, she understood the meaning of social injustice.

Laura Papo wrote theatrical pieces, compiled discussions about the past of Sephardic women in Bosnia, treasured a short story from Sephardic life, translated poetry and was a poet. Though few people are so talented, Laura is quite unknown in native Bosnia. According to the well-known Jewish philologist and a critic Kalmi Baruh "she has remained anonymous." Bohoreta's works are important because they were written for the purposes of enlightenment,

acquainting and preserving the national traditions and languages of the Sephardic Jews, and because they propagate diligence, treason, women's rights and social justice for all people and above all the pride and self-awareness of Sephardic Jews.<sup>1</sup>

Although the poet's opus of this writer is not as rich as her prose and the theatrical works, she has left several poems which can be found in her legacy in the Archives of the City of Sarajevo. These are: Violetas (Violets), a poem created during the First World War. Huanita is a poem about unhappy love, and one touching poem Laura devoted to her mother. A similar content poem was also devoted to her grandmother and it was published in the magazine a Jewish life in 1925. For one of her poem, she found inspiration in a flower called "Devil's eyes" in her mother tongue. Our writer also wrote a poem dedicated to the family's hat shop, their firm founded in 1911, in fact this is the poem about the austerities of the entire family who lived for the shop.

Laura did not write poetry for poetry, but through it, she talked about her life and her struggle. She wrote about what she was seeing and experiencing. She was not just a poet, but also she translated poetry. Thus, in 1927, she translated the poem of Jovan Jovanovic Zmaja Lem Edin into the Judeo-Spanish language and the poem of Gustav Krklec Uveli cvijetak

(The fading flower). She spoke modern Spanish, French, German, and partly English and Turkish and, naturally, the Judeo-Spanish.


As she spent whole life in Bosnia, with the exception of residing in Istanbul (1900-1908) and Paris, she knew very well the life of the Sephardic community to which she belonged, especially the life of the Sephardic women. She also wore traces of Oriental epoch with a lot of Bosnian emotion. For the first time, we met with her theatre art after the First World War when the people from Visoko and Visoko's Sephards saw one of her theater shows titled Preparation for Pesach, a small play with a song and dance played by her two sisters. In her theatrical pieces, she often appears as a scenographer and as a playwright.

A little later she wrote a play Help Build a Great Temple to support the construction of the Great Sephardic Temple in Sarajevo, which will become one of the largest synagogues in this part of Europe. In 1930 she wrote the one-act play Avia de ser (Once upon a time). At the same time, her most valuable and important drama was Esther, a social image of that time in three acts. The work is devoted to Laura's mother Esther, who was called Esterka when she was younger. One year later, in 1931, Laura completed her new drama My Eyes, a play in three acts about Sephardic Bosnian folklore.

The next is The Preparation for Hanukkah, a humorous one-act play

<sup>1</sup> David Kamhi, a Jewish Voice, 72, December 2016, Sarajevo.





with singing, then Renado, My Great Daughter in Law, a play in three acts. A year later, she wrote a play The Mother in Law is not good, even if it is clay. This play Bohoreta devoted to Shalom Daniti, the actor who played in most of her plays. In the first half of 1934, she wrote another one-act play Patience is much worthwhile, which represents a folklore image from the Turkish period. In 1935, her play in three acts called The Stepmother, the Name Speaks for Itself was performed at the National Theater in Sarajevo.

Before the Second World War, when the dark fate overshadowed the Bosnian Sephardic community, Bohoreta wrote his latest theatrical achievement. It was Past Times. It is a great pity that none of her literary has been translated into our language or any other language because she wrote in Judeo - Spanish or Ladino that is understandable only to a small number of people. Bohoreta plays were not performed outside her homeland, and she did not even have the ambition to be a drama writer. She wanted to teach Sephardim on the example of her heroes how to live.

Laura Papo also wrote stories. Her first text Mothers cannot be considered a narrative but rather a polemic response to Avram Romana-Buky's story. The article was published in a Jewish life in 1924. It was the answer of Sarajevo's Sefardic woman, who is fighting for a better position of women in Bosnian society. Her first prose text appeared in the next issue of a Jewish life. It was

the story about Morena, the longest story in all Judeo-Spanish literature. Bohoreta here does not achieve the narrative power that will be expressed in her later prose works. Her story Linda - the Levant Commemoration was published in the Jewish magazine the Jewish Voice in 1928. It is about life in Istanbul from which she returned to Sarajevo as a young girl. This paper represents progress in the literary sense in relation to Morena. After that, she published a few more stories: That's why this old woman did not want to die, The Sweet of Roses and The Pelargonias of Uncle Kako. All three stories talk about Sephardim in Sarajevo.

Bohoreta left behind another piece of work that, without writing anything else, should be remembered, and that was the The Sefardic woman in Bosnia who had not been published for a long time to finally see the light of day in Sarajevo Connectum in 2005 translated by Prof. Dr. Mustafa Nezirović. She argued that it was a bitter debate when she came up against some claims by Jelica Bernadzikic -Belovic who wrote about the Sephardic woman in an article titled About the South Slavic Woman in Politics in the magazine Bosnische Post at the end of 1916. Bohoreta replied to this well-known cultural worker in the same newspaper in article The Sefardic woman in German with the intention of depicting Sefardic women as emancipated and whose actions were not limited to the



household. There is a very important social-political context considering the time when all this has been happening.

Namely, during the First World War, the question of women's position did not seem to be in the focus of any aspect of political activity. Thus, the unequal position of women in that period is certainly interesting and important as a historical phenomenon. Laura's understanding of the position of women was a basis for her active involvement in gender issues. She herself has achieved everything by hard work and education and therefore emphasized the need for women's education. Thus, there was a need to write an article about the Sefardic woman in Bosnia, her position, the Jewish customs, and folklore. In fact, she encourages Sephardic women to adapt to modern times. She started to write a book in 1917 in German. After that she translated everything into Spanish. She wrote it in a small cafe on Vratnik beside the Visegrad Gate and in the cafe on Dariva where she felt peace and quiet and where she could work.

In the youth, this Sarajevan was also the passionate collector of Sephardic romances of her native Bosnia. When she was nineteen, she met in Sarajevo Manuel Manrique de Laru, a well-known Spanish musicologist, composer and captain of the battleship, and talked to him about the romances she collected and recorded in 1917, and

which she had been handed over by the Sephardic women: Flora Abinun, Ms. Ashkenazi, Esther Levi and Gioia Teodoros Levi. De Lara, because of his knowledge and education, was the only one capable to work on collecting the Sephardic folk treasury.


### **Unknown facts**

Laura Papo Bohoreta became ill when her two sons were taken to Jasenovac. It is known that she died in Sarajevo in 1942, and according to many, in the Sisters of Mercy Hospital. However, this hospital, by stories, memories and testimonies of numerous sisters who still live and work in Sarajevo, did not exist at all in Sarajevo, although in some other cities do. There was a part of today's Clinical Center Koševo where the Sisters of Mercy lived. It is a building of old orthopedics. There is a possibility that she was hidden and died there. The mystery is also her gravesite in the old Jewish cemetery in Sarajevo. She was buried there, but there is no tombstone with her name implying that she may have been buried under some other name. Her cousin Gordana Kujić says: "Her grave was destroyed. Only her manuscripts were left."

### **Legacy**

The manuscript of Laura Papo Bohoreta is preserved in the Archives of the City of Sarajevo. In a small textbook there are six novels: La





hermosica (Beauty), Paseandose Rondale (Walking Rondal), El raptor pordiosero (Peranzules' Riding), Don Bueso y su Hermana (Don Bueso and his sister) and Hermanas reina y cautiva (Sisters the Queen and Small Slave). They were published in the journal *Lingvistica*, Ljubljana, XXVI, pp.115-130. Some of the collected novels have not been published: *Morena me yaman* (They Call me Brunette), *La doncella de Marsilla* (A Girl from Marseille) and *Carcelero* (The Captor).

She was very skillful to fit them into her literary works, so Benjamin Pinto, when speaking of her play *Avia de ser* (Once upon a time), noted: "With this lovely effort by Ms. Laura Papo, these novels have been preserved from their final destruction, not their words, but their silky, melancholic melody." (Benjamin Pinto, *the Evening of the Sephardic Folklore*, the Jewish Voice, 1930, p. 4).

Tamara Sarajlić-Slavnić realized the exhibition "Laura Papo Bohoreta: Sefardic Woman in Bosnia" in the Museum of Literature and Performing Arts of Bosnia and Herzegovina in 2017.

### **Curiosity**

As before every season, this time, the owner of the well-known fashion company *Chapeaux Chic Parisien* traveled to Paris to be informed, at the source of all fashion creations,

on the fashion trends and hats and creations which the world fashion metropolis prepare for the emerging season. The company *Chapeaux Chic Parisien*, Kralja Petra 11 managed to bring its customers into contact with the most exclusive news in the field of hats fashion, and at the same time the company found a way to afford the lowest prices to every lady who would like to have a hat of the latest fashion. This time, the company introduces a new one that our ladies will most certainly be grateful for. The company will now also sell hats at very moderate prices. These days the restoration of the *Chapeaux Chic Parisien* was performed, where Sarajevo got a fashion salon of the big city style.

Advertisement from the *Jewish Voice*, 1929




## Ševala Zildžić- Iblizović

Ševala Zildžić-Iblizović was born in 1903 in Sarajevo. She went to school although it was the difficult time for the girls who wanted to study because the milieu did not support the education of female children. At that time, completing a school for teachers was one of the greatest achievements that women could reach in education. But Ševala had other wishes, and she enrolled in the male gymnasium in 1919 and personally requested the consent of the Grand Mufti Čaušević and received it. On the way to the school she experienced different forms of violence: “The Sarajevo boys were waiting for her coming back from school and having rocks to throw at her, so her father had to take her in carriage so that they could not hurt her,” says her son Mirza Iblizović. (cited in StartBiH, 2005, p. 57)

After graduating from the high school she enrolled in the Medical School in Zagreb. She graduated from the Medical School in 1931 and became the first Muslim female doctor in Bosnia and Herzegovina. “(...) the news of giving a diploma to the first Bosniak female doctor and the first marital relationship of two Bosniak doctors was also published in the New York Times through the Zagreb correspondent.” (StartBiH, 2005, p. 57)

Upon her return to Sarajevo, she got a job but only after waiting for two years. She worked at the City Hospital, the



Infectious Disease Department, and at the Health Institute, and she finished her career in 1962 as a specialist gynecologist and pediatrician at the School Polyclinic Dr. Mara Kurtović. During the Second World War, the hospital did not work, but Ševala managed to reach their patients who went into labor at their homes, not looking at their political and religious beliefs. She continued her practice even after completing a career in the state institutions. She and her husband had a private clinic that at the time was among the first to have x-ray machine and a refrigerator to preserve medicaments. Shevala was an outgoing person woman and, as her son says, she liked to meet with her companions at the Hotel Europe and at Vrelo Bosne. She loved traveling and theater. (StartBiH, 2005, p. 58)

Sarajevo has recorded her existence by giving one of its streets the name Dr. Ševala Zildžić-Iblizović. PTT BiH issued a postmark in 2002, on the occasion of the centenary of her birth. So she became one of the few successful women in BiH who received both.

Ševala has been persistent in fighting against patriarchal practices, especially fighting for education as the most powerful means of emancipating women.




## **Smilja Mučibabić**

Smilja Mučibabić was born in Mostar on September 14, 1912, where she gained basic and high school education. From 1930 to 1934 she studied biology at the Faculty of Philosophy in Belgrade. In the Second World War, because of her antifascist attitudes, she was arrested and taken to the German camp Jankomir near Zagreb, where she was detained until the end of the war in 1945.

After the war, she returned to Krapina where she worked in the Gymnasium. During that period she joined the Communist Party. At her own request, she moved to the Teacher's School in Mostar and the next year she was appointed as the director of the Gymnasium. The daily newspapers then wrote on her successful management of the Gymnasium and on her concern to improve teaching and she received numerous recognition and awards. She was also involved in the literacy programs for the population.

In the fall of 1949, she moved to the position of a professor at the Higher Pedagogical School in Sarajevo, where she worked on the establishment of the Department of Biology at the Faculty of Philosophy in Sarajevo (1954). Immediately upon arrival at this faculty, she was trained in specialization at the Zoological Institute of the Faculty of Natural Sciences and Mathematics in Belgrade, where she was engaged for two years in the realization of zoology





teaching, preparing herself for the opening and beginning of the work of the newly established Department of Biology in Sarajevo.

At the Cambridge University, during the two years, she specialized and realized the experimental part of her doctoral dissertation in the area of protozoan ecology, which she then wrote and defended (1953). At the same time, at the Cambridge University, such a venture meant merit research and permanent presence in the lab for three years, but Smilja Mučibabić, due to her earlier credibility, experiment successes and excellent English knowledge, was exceptionally allowed to defend her doctoral thesis after two years. The results of her dissertation work were published in the prominent British scientific journals in the field of protozoan ecology (e.g. the Journal of Protozoology).

These are just some of her professional successes:

- The First Bosnian-Herzegovinian Doctor of Biological Sciences (Cambridge, 1953);
- Founder and first head of the Department of Biology at the Faculty of Philosophy in Sarajevo (1953);
- The first Dean of the Faculty of Science in Sarajevo (1960);
- The founder, the first and foremost head of the Department of Biology at the Faculty of

Science in Sarajevo (1960) and

- The co-founder and the first president of several professional and scientific associations and their publications (in BiH and the former Yugoslavia).

Smilja Mučibabić was one of the most prominent scholars of the former Yugoslavia and for the rest of his life she worked on the promotion of biology and ecology also emphasizing the importance of the environment protection.




## Vera Šnajder

Vera Šnajder (Sarajevo, February 2, 1904 - Sarajevo, February 14, 1976) was the first mathematician in Bosnia and Herzegovina. She has made a significant contribution to the development of mathematics as a modern fundamental discipline and to the development of the Department of Mathematics at the Faculty of Science of the University of Sarajevo. She completed elementary school and classical Gymnasium in Sarajevo in 1922.

She graduated from the Faculty of Philosophy in 1928 in Belgrade (a course of applied mathematics, theoretical mathematics and experimental physics). She was a professor at the Women's Gymnasium in Sarajevo, and a French government scholar. She went to Paris for further training (1929/30 at the Henri Poincaré Institute). She was an associate of the Sorbonne Hydrodynamics Laboratory until the end of 1932. During her study visit to Paris, Vera Šnajder published her first scientific work in *Comptes Rendus des Sciences de l'Académie des Sciences*, which was the first scientific work in the field of mathematics published by an author born in Bosnia and Herzegovina. She was offered a job engagement for the needs of the French Aviation Ministry, but she did not accept.

In 1945 she was appointed as a Director of the Second Female Gymnasium and in 1946 she became one of the first



professors at the Higher Pedagogical School in Sarajevo. In 1947 she was appointed as a consultant at the Ministry of Education. Vera Šnajder took part in the establishment of the Faculty of Philosophy in Sarajevo, in particular the Chair of Mathematics where she worked as an associate professor until 1960 when the Chair became the Department of Mathematics and moved to the newly created Faculty of Science of the University of Sarajevo. Vera Šnajder taught Differential Geometry and Rational Mechanics, Linear Algebra and Introduction to Algebra.

She was a Dean of the Faculty of Philosophy in Sarajevo on two occasions in the school years of 1951/52 and 1958/1959. As a Dean in 1951, Vera Šnajder entered history as the first woman dean of one of the first faculties in Bosnia and Herzegovina and the first dean of one of the faculties in Yugoslavia.

She was a member of numerous institutions and commissions: a member of the University Council, a member of the Council for Education of Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Chairman of the National Library Council Committee, a member of the Commission for the Appointment of Scientific Associates, i.e. the Education Adviser, the Chair of the Commission for Admission to Professional Exam. She was also a longtime president of the Society of Yugoslavia - France and

others.

She was particularly active as a president of the Society of Mathematicians, Physicists and Astronomers of BiH, and also the main organizer of the 4<sup>th</sup> Congress of Mathematicians, Physicists and Astronomers of Yugoslavia, held in Sarajevo in 1965.

These are just some of her professional successes:

- She was a Professor at the Women's Gymnasium in Sarajevo;
- Since 1945, she was a Director of the Second Female Gymnasium in Sarajevo;
- In 1964 she became one of the first professors at the Higher Pedagogical Schools in Sarajevo;
- In 1947 she was appointed as a consultant at the Ministry of Education;
- In 1950 she participated in the establishment of the Faculty of Philosophy in Sarajevo and entered history as the first woman Dean of one of the first faculties in Bosnia and Herzegovina, but also as the first Dean in Yugoslavia.
- She wrote the first scientific work in Mathematics as an author from Bosnia and Herzegovina.




## Iva Despić-Simonović

Iva Despić-Simonović was born in 1891 in Hrastovica near Petrinja.

### Education and work

She attended the Art Course at the Zagreb School of Crafts, and when the course closed, she enrolled in the Art School. She opted for sculpture, though at that time it was unusual for women. Her professors were Robert Frangeš Mihanović and Rudolf Valdec. Extremely talented and active, she immediately attracted the attention of professors and the public. Her first exhibition, together with a peer Ljubo Babić, took place in 1910 at the Art Salon. After Zagreb, she continued her education in Munich and Paris. In 1914 she had an exhibition in Paris at the Salon des Beaux Arts, and according to the writings of the press at that time, her work was chosen by Roden himself. The young sculptor successfully exhibited at the Croatian Spring Salons (1911-1917), at the exhibition of the Croatian Society of Art in 1911, and as a member of "Lada" had an exhibition at the 4<sup>th</sup> Yugoslav Art Exhibition in 1912. In 1916, she had a very remarkable exhibition with Zdenka Pexidr-Sieger under the title "Intimate Exhibition".

Already then, critics are called her "the greatest plaquette artist not only among Croatian women but also among Croatian men." And indeed, Iva Despić-Simonović was excelling in the plaques and portraits/busts of children since the very beginning and



has remained unsurpassed until today among the sculptors from this region.

After marrying Aco Despić, the descendant of the prominent and wealthy Sarajevo family Despić, and moved to Sarajevo in 1920. Though she had all the material conditions for smooth creation, Sarajevo, and especially the patriarchal family of her husband, limited her to fully express her creativity and talents. Still, she continues to sculpt and have exhibitions. She worked constantly - and not only modeling, but also pouring her own sculpture into bronze.

In those years she often stayed in Belgrade, being a friend and adviser to the Queen Marija Karadjordjevic, who was also involved in art. At the court, Iva had an atelier in which she was working on commissioned busts, as well as a living space. Her first and only solo exhibition was at the Officers' House in Belgrade in November 1927. She exhibited 70 sculptures - most portraits and studies, drawings and paintings, as well as sketches for monumental sculpture projects, among which the monument dedicated to the mothers of the unknown soldiers was especially noted. This imaginative project has never been realized, though it is an excellent idea, even abroad. It was particularly commendable by the English press - the same year when she had her first solo exhibition, Iva Despić had also an exhibition at the Royal Academy in London on their

annual so-called "Summer Show".

In 1931, a summer residence with a large studio was built by Despić family for Iva at Vasin Han. Iva will spend the rest of her life there, dealing with art and raising her children. In 1930s, she actively exhibited at numerous important collective exhibitions - she exhibited at the First Exhibition of the Artist of the Drina Banovina, at the exhibition of the Club of Woman Visual Artists and at the international exhibition organized by the "Little Entente of Women" (International Organization, founded in 1923 represented women from the countries of the Little Entente).

After the Second World War she exhibited at the exhibitions of the Association of Visual Artists of BiH (up to 1953).

### **Legacy**

Although she was especially excelling in plastic portraits, Iva Despić had only three orders for public space - the busts of Aleksa Šantić, Svetozar Ćorović and Osman Đikić which were placed in Mostar within the celebration of the 10th anniversary of the National uprising.






## Marian Wenzel

Marian Wenzel was an art historian and artist of American descent. She has built her career in Great Britain for forty years, leaving behind dozens of works written on the basis on various interests and a wide range of topics - from Gothic art, Islamic art, house decorations in Sudan, Greek miniatures from the 4th and 5th centuries, glass and jewelry, all the way to the Bosnian medieval art, in which she left the deep trace. All of this is revealed from the legacies made up of several thousand books, manuscripts, studies, drawings and artworks donated by Dr. Marian Wenzel to the Historical Museum of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Already a superficial view of the legacy of Marian Wenzel is enough to recognize her basic interest in art history, but also to gain insight into her broad education, versatility, interests and hobbies.

After receiving her degree in philosophy at Columbia University in New York in 1957, she continued her studies at the Courtauld Institute of Art in London. Her visit to Bosnia in the 1950s has determined that this country became the first subject of her research. She chose the problem of medieval tomb monuments (stećci) as the topic of her doctoral dissertation. Her doctoral thesis *The Decorative Motifs on Stećci* was the result of the long-term research of the cultural and historical heritage of Bosnia and Herzegovina, and today represents an indispensable material for researchers of medieval tombstones. Drawings,



photos and diaries from the field are worth a note, not just about stećci, but also about people and places in the 1960s.

### **Curiosity**

Since the beginning of the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina in 1992, Marian Wenzel's new relationship with Bosnia began, in which she proved her love for the country she has been dealing with so far. Since then, her efforts to address the problem and to protect the war endangered cultural and historical heritage have begun. These efforts are reflected in a series of articles in eminent foreign journals and the founding of a charitable organization for the protection of the cultural heritage of BiH - Bosnia & Herzegovina Heritage Rescue (BHHR).

### **Legacy**

In the gratitude and as a sign of respect for the character and work of Dr. Marian Wenzel, and because of the value of material for studying history, history of art and architecture, the Historical Museum of BiH has founded the Special Department of Art History - Marian Wenzel.

She died in 2002 at the age of 69.




## Mica Todorović

Mica Todorović was born in Sarajevo in 1897 and died in 1981, also in Sarajevo.

After completing the Higher Girls' School in Sarajevo she goes to Zagreb to study painting under mentorship of Prof. Ljubo Babić, as the only woman in class. After graduation, she travels to Italy, where she is fascinated by the art of the Florentine early Renaissance – strictness, linearity and the closed form of the early masters become her role models. On the portraits created upon her return to Zagreb, the form is visibly closed by a precise line that sharply delimits the figure from the background. Earth tones dominate the paintings, which she masterfully revives using delicate accents of bright colors (red, blue, yellow, white).

In 1932 she returns to Sarajevo and joins her colleagues, advanced artists oriented towards the Communist Party of Yugoslavia, within the active cultural life.

From 1937, Mica Todorović primarily turns to painting. Color acquires primacy over all other visual elements. It is obvious that she is a born colourist with a strong sense of harmony, who is also prone to take on bold and unexpected colourist procedures. The applied colors range from pasty, almost relief like ones to completely translucent (transparent), airy ones like watercolors.



New phases in painting and curiosities After the Second World War, which she spent in captivity in Germany, the human figures disappear entirely from her paintings; she turns to objects, not as a concrete forms in space, but more to the emotion that these objects awaken within her. The entire body of work of the sixth decade, and later, exudes with serenity and enjoyment within small everyday things. She paints cafes, flowers, gardens, fruit, interiors... Finally she has reached the peak of her creative power and she can paint whatever and however she wants. In 1959 she paints "Venice", a shimmering, dazzling, white painting, which serves as an introduction to the "white phase". In 1962 she travels to Paris, which represents the beginning of a very important phase, which lasted until her death. She brought oil pastels and an album filled with sketches back from Paris. Oil pastel began to penetrate into the painting, which in combination with oil became her preferred technique. The first combination was realized with pastel on canvas with a minor addition of oil, but later the situation reversed and she accentuated her oil paintings using pastel.

## Legacy

Mica Todorović is most closely related to the development of the BiH art: she worked closely with the association "Collegium Artisticum" (1939-1941), she is one of the ten founding members

of the Association of Visual Artists of Bosnia and Herzegovina (ULUBiH) and one of the first professors at the newly founded School of Applied Arts in Sarajevo. In 1975 she became a full member of the Academy of Sciences and Arts of BiH. Since 1978 she was a member of the Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts. She received the most important awards and acknowledgements for her work. They called her "the first lady of Bosnian and Herzegovinian painting."

## Unknown facts

In all the biographies so far, the year 1900 was mentioned as the year of birth of this artist. However, on the baptism certificate issued for Mileva Todorovic, which is considered as an official document, the above-mentioned year (1897) was entered.



## Nada Miletić

Nada Miletić was born in 1925 in Prijedor, in a family of a teacher. She attended the primary school in Skopje and Prizren and completed in 1935. She attended secondary school in Skopje until 1941, then in Čačak, where she graduated in 1943. She studied the History of Art and Archeology in Belgrade at the Faculty of Philosophy in Belgrade. She graduated in February 1950.

### Work


On the basis of the planned allocation of professional staff she was assigned to work in Bosnia and Herzegovina. In July 1950 she was appointed as a curator-trainee for the Middle Ages at the Archaeology Department of the National Museum of Bosnia and Herzegovina in Sarajevo.

She passed her professional exam in Belgrade in 1953. In 1963 she was promoted as the senior curator for the Early Middle Ages, and in 1977 she was appointed to the position of associate senior research fellow. She was appointed scientific advisor in 1983.

She was retired in 1990, but worked continuously in the National Museum until April 1992.

Nada Miletić belonged to the generation of archeologists and scientists of the National Museum who started working immediately after the Second





World War, in the 1950s. In all these circumstances, she went through all the phases of museum work related to the collections of the Archaeology Department of the National Museum of Bosnia and Herzegovina: sorting post-war collections, transferring new inventory and drawing already existing items in the collection, inventorying of newly discovered findings, conserving and preserving of findings and sorting the depos. Since 1960 she has been continuously working on the documentation from all excavations.

Scientific advisor Nada Miletić spent all her working life in the National Museum of Bosnia and Herzegovina in Sarajevo. For a long time, she was a member of the Science Council of the Museum, a member of the Publishing Council of the National Museum, a member of the Editorial Board of the Herald of the National Museum, the Volume of Archaeology, a member of the editorial office of the scientific project "Archaeological Lexicon of Bosnia and Herzegovina" and a member of the National Committee in two international encyclopedia projects.

She spent the period of war in Sarajevo, regularly interested in events in the National Museum. After the war, she was actively engaged in the work on the return of the medieval exhibition in the Archaeology Department of the National Museum and setting up a new exhibition "Bosnia and Herzegovina

in the Carolingian period, the end of the eight - the beginning of the tenth century."

## Legacy

In addition to the shorter interval when she worked in the newly established and later on closed Department for Ottoman Period, the main preoccupation of Nada Miletić's activities was the problems of early medieval archeology and art in the territory of Bosnia and Herzegovina, and at the same time the study of the medieval tomb monuments (stećci) in general: she was in the team under the leadership of Dr. Alojz Benac in 1951 in Široki Brijeg; In 1953, in Čitluk - Čerini, she was a the team leader; In 1958, she recorded the most important necropolises of stećci in Bosnia and Herzegovina for the needs of the publishing company Jugoslavija from Belgrade.

Both of the aforementioned branches were equally related to field research, study and museology.

She died in Sarajevo on October 8, 2002, and was buried in Banja Luka  
Source: the Herald of the National Museum of Bosnia and Herzegovina: Archaeology 50/51: 2008/2009, pp. 200-266, Sarajevo, 2009. (Izvor: Glasnik Zemaljskog muzeja Bosne i Hercegovine: Arheologija 50/51: 2008/2009, 200-266, Sarajevo, 2009.)




## Nafija Sarajlić

Nafija Sarajlić was born in Sarajevo on October 3, 1893, and died on January 15, 1970. She is one of the first female prose writers in Bosnia and Herzegovina who wrote the Enlightenment literature and was oriented towards the modernist understanding of literary expressions and followed the current poetics and narrative.

She was also one of the few female intellectuals of the time. She was rare among the Bosnian women in general, among Bosniaks in particular, because public work, professional engagement and financial independence of a woman from the Bosniak family, due to their continued reliance on the patriarchal tradition of the Ottoman Empire, were all but complicated and almost unimaginable.

She was born into Hadžikarić family from Sarajevo, and had three brothers and four sisters. Mother Dzevhira was a housewife. Father Avdaga was a tailor and at the time one of the few Bosniak who did not hesitate to educate his female children, which was considered to be the precedent. She spent the earliest childhood in Bascarsija where her father had a shop. The family house was also located in the immediate vicinity in today's Budžak Street in Bistrik. The couple Sarajlić wanted all their children to be educated, so Nafija and her sisters completed the Girls' Pedagogical School as an expected choice for girls.



Nafija became one of the first Bosniak women with a completed high school. Upon graduation, she married a well-known writer, Šemsudin Sarajlić.

## Work

Shortly after marrying, she starts working as a teacher. Nafija Sarajlić lived in the period of modernization, emancipation and European education of citizens of BiH, which was administered by the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy. One of the emancipatory features of the Austro-Hungarian occupation in BiH was certainly the involvement of women in public life, which gave them the opportunity to be visible and engaged in the dominant male sphere.

With the support of parents, such cultural and historical situation enabled Nafija Sarajlic to begin writing. The women's literary work was supported by the magazines *Bosanska vila*, *Zora*, *Biser*, *Nada*, *Zeman*, in which the female writers published their works, recorded their creations, and even were editors (Stojanka Kašiković and Milena Mrazović Preindlsberger). In this historical period the literature itself was directly related to Enlightenment and it sought to Europeanise Bosnian-Herzegovinian culture and its people in accordance with the spirit of the new times, contrary to the already obsolete Ottoman lifestyles. Non-Europeanised local discourse needed to be edified regarding the new values.

In 1912, in the Bairam edition of the *Zeman* magazine, Nafija Sarajlic published the first literary work *Rastanak* (Partying), a story about a teacher who gets reprimanded for having additional classes for some of the girls.

Most of her stories were published in the *Teme* (Themes) collection. This collection of short stories was first published in an improvised edition between the two World Wars in Mostar, and then officially published in 1986 in Sarajevo. Although Nafija Sarajlic was an instrument of a mechanism which sought to establish a universal and colonial system of values, the tactic of resistance in her acts is important because she expressed disapproval, articulating ideological traps, emphasizing that modernization had failed women, offered men a lot of privileges and pointing out that emancipatory intentions of the Europeanization did not focus on women.

Following the death of her daughter Halida, Nafija never wrote again. She devoted her full attention to the housekeeping and family. At the request of her husband, she abandoned her work and transferred her pedagogical knowledge in another way, giving the literacy lessons to women and children from the neighborhood, especially the girl.

After the First World War she has been

forgotten because she stopped writing, and was on the side of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, the occupier, which was not tolerated either in the Kingdom of Yugoslavia or in the SFRY.

### **Re-actualization**

The historical moment when Nafija Sarajlic was re-actualized and rehabilitated, necessary and eligible, was created when materials for new Anthologies were missing and when the writers needed to be rehabilitated for the creation of ethno-national policies and poetics. Rehabilitation in this case did not imply any emancipative reconstruction nor the practice of a repetitive lecture where it would finally be read out what Nafija Sarajlic wrote, about which, in what context, which is usual when it comes to the re-animation of already largely forgotten and overwhelmed authors. Her phenomenon has been used in ethno-national Bosniak corps for patriarchal representational politics. In other words, she was understood as an ideal image of a woman victim who neglects herself and her needs for the benefit of men, families and collectives whose become her personal needs. In the late years of her life, she spent her time at a family estate in Semizovac, working in the garden. She died in Sarajevo on January 15, 1970.

The collection of life and work of Nafija Sarajlić is in the process of forming in the Museum of Literature

and Performing Arts of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

A primary school, a street in Sarajevo and a street in Bihać were named after.

### **Unknown facts**

When the Museum of Literature and Performing Arts of Bosnia and Herzegovina realized an exhibition about Nafija Sarajlić called Stand up Woman! Europeanization and emancipation: the case of Nafija Sarajlić - themes and reminiscences of the authors Ifeta Lihic, Amina Hujdur and Zlatan Delić, it was discovered that there is no manuscript legacy of Nafija Sarajlić either in a family ownership or in the archives of her publishing house. Testimonies about Nafija Sarajlic are usually very rare and poor.

### **Curiosities**

At the Museum of Literature and Performing Arts of Bosnia and Herzegovina, in the collection “Nafija Sarajlić”, there is a testimony in the Arabic language, signed with author’s hand. This is one of the few testimonies of her pedagogic career. The museum is in possession of the document thanks to the kindness of the heirs of one of Nafija’s schoolgirl.





## Radojka Lakić

Radojka Lakić was born in 1917 in Skender-Vakuf (BiH). Her father, a village teacher, often changed the working environment, so she attended the primary and secondary school in several places. While she was still attending grammar school in Bijeljina, she joined the revolutionary youth movement, and in 1935 became a member of the League of Yugoslav Communist Youth. In Belgrade, she first enrolled in the Faculty of Technology, and then she moved to the Faculty of Philosophy.

### Political activity

Upon arrival at the Belgrade University, she continued her political activity within the student revolutionary movement. She joined the Communist Party of Yugoslavia (KPJ) in 1937. Because of the parent's disregard for her revolutionary work, she refused their financial help and due to the difficult financial situation found a job at the post office. To avoid arrests by the Ustashe, who have been repeatedly searching for her, she moved from Bijeljina to Sarajevo. At the beginning of the war she worked undercover in Sarajevo and was involved in preparations for the uprising. She took over the role of secretary of the party cell in Bašaršija and in the most difficult conditions continued her illegal work. She was hiding from the police disguised as the Muslim woman wearing a veil, often changing the place of residence



and using false names. In the early 1941 she was arrested on the street under the name of Marija Hodak. The proclamation about uprising was found in her bosom. In Ustashe jail, though tortured, she did not give away any information, and was sentenced to death at the Court-Martial.

### **Proclamation of the national heroine**

Radojka was executed by a firing squad in 1941 at Vraca in Sarajevo, but even then she scoffed at her executioners. She was buried in the Tomb of the National Heroes at Vraca near Sarajevo.

She was proclaimed national heroine on June 8, 1945.

### **Legacy**

The story of Radojka Lakić, the heroine of the Second World War is preserved in the History Museum of Bosnia and Herzegovina through her portrait, authored by Nada Novaković and personal belongings, today placed in the permanent exhibition “Open Depot”.

### **Curiosities**

It is widely believed that the monument “Stratišta” (The Scaffolds) by Alija Kučukalić at Vraca was dedicated to Radojka Lakić. This monument is partially destroyed today, and its fragments are kept in the museum.

The museum initiated the monument restoration.





## Razija Handžić

Razija Handžić was born in 1909 in Banja Luka and grew up in Zavidovići. She completed her studies in Yugoslavian literature at the Faculty of Philosophy in Belgrade.

### Work

Razija Handžić was a poetess and a publicist, the editor of the first and second edition of the Antifascist Front of Women's magazine "Nova žena" ("New Woman") and a director at Radio Sarajevo. She worked as a curator at the National Museum of B&H, the Museum of Sarajevo City, the Museum of Revolution/the Historical Museum and was a founder and the first director of the Museum of Literature and Performing Arts of BiH. She published her poems, stories and critiques in the period of Yugoslavian kingdom. She participated actively in antifascist defence of BiH during the Second World War. As a working member, she advocates what the Communist Party believed - education, emancipation in all areas of life, overcoming the backward habits of life and modernization. After the war she worked as a cultural worker.

Razija Handžić witnessed many social changes by her work and engagement, supremacies and ideological shifts in and outside of institutions of government, power and knowledge and their treatment of women and women's contributions to cultural and scientific institutions.

Her literary work greatly contributes to the reconstruction process of literary canon, history of literature and collective memory that will not be patriarchal and does not serve to monument and commemorate literature and to sharpen discourse limits among conflicted models of canonization, but to their regeneration and emancipatory articulation.

## **Legacy**

Her professional engagement as a cultural worker, or what we call today a cultural manager, included the research work in cultural and scientific institutions throughout the SFRY, lobbying for their establishment, opening and running them. She was a founder of the Museum of Literature and Performing Arts of Bosnia and Herzegovina and the first director of this cultural institution.

## **Curiosities**

The collection with exhibits related to Razija Handžić is kept in the Museum of Literature and Performing Arts of Bosnia and Herzegovina and contains over 150 original manuscripts of poems, stories, essays and reviews. Although she wrote over a hundred poems, only fifty of them were published in the collection of "Standing Flames" (Uspravno plamenje) in 1977. The poems she wrote before and during the Second World War, which discusses the issue of female

sexuality, were not included in her only published poetry collection. The wider readership is thus deprived of the poems in which women's sexuality is understood as one of the essential segments of emancipation of a female subject.

She died in Sarajevo in 1994.





## Staka Skenderova

**Staka Skenderova** was born in Sarajevo in 1831 in a family originally from Prijepolje.

She published in Russian magazines and helped Russian Consul Hilferding in collecting Serbian antiquities. She was not only the first woman to have founded a women's school in Sarajevo and began teaching but also the first woman from this region who published a book "The Bosnian Chronicle" (Ljetopis Bosne), albeit far from her native tongue and in a foreign language. She learned Turkish at an early age and this was of great help when dealing with Turkish authorities to have her requests fulfilled. She taught herself to read and write or it happened in the elementary school in Sarajevo. She read a lot and was the only woman from that time singing in the church.

Hadži-Staka Skenderova wore men's clothes, smoked tobacco, visiting bars. They were talking to her, but she did not pay much attention to it. Staka Skenderova's "male suit released her to be locked up in the household, allowing her free access to a circle of men and churches (Liturgy was allowed for girls and young women in Bosnia only during fasting and sometimes during the specific holidays and going to the church on other days was considered inappropriate), but at the same time put in front of her the obligations in relations to the church and the people, which is not a common for ordinary Bosnian woman."

She often represented the poor in the courts, wrote letters, appeals, struggling to change things in the city (for example, at her initiative, the church bells were erected for the first time), went to prisons, encouraged and aided the prisoners, brought the poor to her home, so there were always a few poor girls living with her. During the market days, women and girls came to her house to ask for advice on some diseases or medications. She taught them about the basics of health and hygiene protection and so, thanks to her, many women entered the medical practice for the first time.

### **Legacy**

She is the first woman, a public and cultural worker among the Serbs in Sarajevo, who opened the first girls' school in Sarajevo on October 19, 1858 (The Staka Skenderova Girls' School). The work of the school was supported by the Turkish administration, the French government, and occasionally the Russian empress. The school initially had three, and later five grades. At the end of the school year, there were annual examinations attended by parents and representatives of the authorities and consuls. This school produced the first Bosnian-Herzegovinian female teachers.

### **Curiosities**

She was the first woman to make the hajj (pilgrimage) to Jerusalem.

The journey lasted for a year, and in Istanbul she was welcomed by the Sultan Aziz, to the recommendation of Topal Osman-pasha, where she stayed for a month away. On her return, the Sultan donated 10,000 grosz to school. She probably have been ordained in Jerusalem and covered with black scarf. Her dressing style did not change until her death. Ever since she was young, she always wore a black suit and black scarf on head. Through messages and letters, Sarajevo was informed about her travel and never before had anyone been so welcomed on return to the city.

She died in Ilidza, near Sarajevo, in 1891, in an unusual way. She was run over by a horse-drawn carriage passed along the same route she went. The well-known Sarajevo Englishwoman Miss Irby arranged the funeral and paid all the associated costs.

Many citizens of Sarajevo attended a memorial service.







## Vera Obrenović- Delibašić

Vera Obrenović-Delibašić is the first female writer in Bosnia and Herzegovina who has published a novel. Female inter-war literary creation and revolutionary engaged literature related to the period of the Second World War II was marked by her work.

### Birth and early life

Born in Livno in 1906, she grew up and was educated in Sarajevo. She died in Belgrade in 1992.

The Obrenović family was one of the most respected and prominent families in Sarajevo. Her father Pavle Obrenović was a revolutionary, an antifascist and a famous Sarajevo teacher (one of his scholars was Gavrilo Princip). Vera inherited talent and love for pedagogy from her father, and her mother's family talent for music. After her father's death she grew up in a very difficult conditions with three sisters and a mother who worked multiple jobs to survive. By the nature of private circumstances, they lost their right to a part of Vera's father pension.

She graduated from high school in Sarajevo and from the Higher Pedagogical School, where she later lectured. She was extremely talented for music and was the first violinist at the Sarajevo Philharmonic.

## Work

Her first poems and novels were published in the 1920s and 1930s in the *Gajret* journal. She was a member of the Sarajevo Writers' Group. Within the association, Vera Obrenović gained a reputation by writing poems and stories. She acted as a participant in cultural actions and literary evenings and was the organizer of various socially involved programs that emphasized the importance of the national liberation movement of the Yugoslav peoples, and called on citizens to unite, resist and fight against fascism and Nazism. Because of her leftist positions, the Kingdom has sentenced her to the ban on employment in the civil service. Prior to the establishment of the NDH (The Independent State of Croatia) authority in BiH, she left Sarajevo with her husband and son. During the war she wrote poems, but mostly worked on writing the novel *Through No Man's Land* (*Kroz ničiju zemlju*).

Both her and her husband, writer Mihajlo Delibašić, later director of the Sarajevo publishing house *Svjetlost*, participated in the national liberation struggle, and after the liberation, they returned to Sarajevo with their son Predrag.

She was a member of the main board of the Anti-Fascist Front of Women in BiH, edited the newspaper *Vidici* and wrote songs for the magazine *Nova*


*žena*, which was established as an Anti-fascist Front of Women's journal. Also, after the end of the war, she published poems in the then newly formed daily newspaper *Oslobodjenje*. Her collection of poetry *Pjesme* was published in 1946 by the publishing house *Svjetlost*. This collection was first published in an improvised edition between the two world wars in Sarajevo in 1930 and was officially published in 1946. After this collection, she abandoned writing poetry, since the critique described her poetry as a bad one.

## Unknown facts

In the first post-war years in the SFRY, the people's freedom struggle was publicly spoken and written exclusively by men, while women's voices and their experiences rarely came to expression, especially in official media. Despite these circumstances, Vera Obrenović's first novel of Social Realism genre about the National Liberation Struggle in the SFRY was published in two sequels - *Through No Man's Land* (1948) and *Through No No Man's Land 2* (1950) by the publishing house *Svjetlost* and *Oslobodjenje*. Thus, she became the first female novelist from BiH.

The novel presents a comprehensive chronicle of war, revolution, national liberation struggle, and the unification of the Yugoslav peoples in the fight against fascism. The novel features





the construction of narratives from the position of female characters and the presentation of their experience in the revolutionary struggle for freedom. The plot is situated in the border villages between western Serbia and eastern BiH. Women's characters are represented as determined, vigilant and imaginative women advocates of the ideals of revolutionaries who knowingly and responsibly accept the course of anti-fascist struggle. Although they were revolutionaries in the fight against fascism and the occupation of the country, her female characters were not presented uniformly, but some heroines also had love ties with their enemies, i.e. collaborators, which shows that Obrenović-Delibašić in these representational qualities examined the borders that did not fit into the ideal of the communist ideology that after the end of the war established the power in society and in the literary canon.

A collection of stories *Zore nad mahalama* that describes the lives of women during and after the Second World War was published by *Svjetlost* in 1955. In these narratives, she was mostly concerned with questioning motherhood and the role of mother in patriarchal societies and her function in times of crisis and ideological turmoil. Her son Predrag was arrested and sent to Goli Otok in 1950, and in 1951, when Predrag was released, Vera moved to Belgrade with her husband.

In Belgrade, she was not accepted, and she could not even find a job. She felt like a stranger. After the death of her husband, she moved to Montenegro where she was collecting holdings at the Historical Institute of Montenegro for a time. She got a job because she possessed very good communication skills. In Cetinje, she published two more novels: *Od kolijevke do Sutjeske* (From the cradle to Sutjeska) in 1961 and *Višnja iz ničije zemlje* (*Višnja from No Man's Land*) in 1971.

### **Curiosities**

The literary work of this author was almost deleted from the official historical reviews of the Bosnian and Yugoslav literature. Her works are not taught in literature studies, and information of her life hardly exists. In signatures of rare photographs taken with colleagues, sometimes by a female colleague and husband, her name is not mentioned. In this way, her work has been multiply marginalized, although she was among the first to write about the emancipation of women within the national liberation struggle. Her entry into the "male" sphere resulted in the disappearance of her works. The Museum of Literature and Performing Arts of BiH has a collection of her life and literary work. The collection was formed by Razija Handžić, founder and first director of the Museum.

## ABOUT THE PROJECT

The project Homage to significant B&H women and their achievements is a project that was created in the co-operation between the CURE Foundation and the TAKO Association from Sarajevo. In 2019, it is supported by the Tourism Association of Sarajevo Canton.

The aim of the Project is to present the women who, through their work, scientific and cultural achievements, contributed to the development of BiH society in an innovative way. The Project resulted in the biographies of 13 scientists and cultural professionals from the Sarajevo area in whose memory the two unique ceramic commemorative plaques and mobile application were made. Pupils of Druga gimnazija Sarajevo participated in the making of the commemorative plaques, and on this occasion they enriched their knowledge and skills in a unique and creative way. A free mobile application available to everyone includes biographies as well as a location maps where these women lived and created. The ceramic commemorative plaques and mobile application represent a product that will promote the female cultural heritage and improve the quality of the tourist offer of Sarajevo.





## ABOUT CURE FOUNDATION

CURE Foundation is a feminist-activist organization that promotes gender and sex equality and works for positive social change through educational, cultural and research programs. By organizing affirmative collective actions, CURE celebrates the strength and power of women, and helps to empower individuals to become initiators of social change in Bosnia and Herzegovina and the world. The feminist activism has created a safe space where women are strong, fearless, competent, and united with all their differences. CURE is an organization of professionals and volunteers who take to the streets to protest against violence, discrimination, violation of laws and basic human rights. Furthermore, CURE organizes art performances against violence, inviting artists, scholars, lecturers, activists, and citizens to act, participate, and contribute to the creation of a better, sounder Bosnian-Herzegovinian society.



## **ABOUT TAKO ASSOCIATION**

Association TAKO is a non-governmental organization registered in September 2013 with activities in the field of arts and culture.

The Association TAKO dedicated its activities to the empowerment of artists, children, young people, women and the community in general, through promotion and support in the research of applied arts. TAKO focuses its efforts on the revival and promotion of arts that have been forgotten in Bosnia and Herzegovina, with a special emphasis on the art of making ceramic items.

