

# From Guslars to Garašanin: Comparing the Influence of Oral Folk Literature on Croatian and Serbian National Movements from 1830 to 1865

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In March of 2016, a United Nations tribunal sentenced former Bosnian Serb leader Radovan Karadžić to forty years in prison for ten counts of genocide, war crimes, and other crimes against humanity during the Bosnian War from 1992 to 1995. The white-haired Serbian nationalist, like his Serbian counterpart Slobodan Milošević, caused the deaths of thousands of non-Serb Bosnian citizens. At the tribunal, however, he declared that “the entire Serb people stand accused,” and he defended his actions as the “expression of the national will of a long-suffering people.”<sup>1</sup>

With this phrase, Karadžić, who evaded capture by international police for twelve years, invoked the Serbian people’s suffering since their defeat at the Battle of Kosovo in 1389, more than 600 years ago. This battle and the ensuing Serbian subjugation to the Ottoman Turks is recorded in one of Serbia’s most famous and influential works – Vuk Karadžić’s four volumes of *Srpske narodne pjesme* (Serbian Folk Songs) produced between 1823 and 1833. These folk songs and epic poems recounted the trials and tribulations of the Serbian nation under Ottoman rule, led by traditional heroes such as Prince Lazar, Miloš Obilić, Marko Krajlević, Karadjordje, and Miloš Obrenović. By invoking these heroes and the Serbian past, Karadžić claimed to be the “spiritual reincarnation of Serb heroes of a bygone age ... spinning new myths for his people to help propel them forward for generations to come, just as he had been borne aloft by the old legends of Serb suffering...”<sup>2</sup>

Karadžić’s case may be newsworthy now, but he is just one example of Slavic political leaders who use oral literature to strengthen their cases for national Balkan states, often based on tenuous historical facts and in conflict with the national programs of other South Slavic peoples. Many historians have traced the influence of oral literature across the Balkans to the Romantic era of the early nineteenth century. Thus, in nearly every survey of nineteenth century Eastern Europe, the Balkans, or the Austro-Hungarian Empire, historians mention in passing some variation on the theme of these legends providing

a “link to past glory and more importantly an inspiration for the Serbs in the nineteenth century...”<sup>3</sup>

However, rarely do writers offer examples of how this literature concretely altered political mindsets or actions of the Serbs and other peoples in the 1800s. It seems that what historians generally agree to have occurred in the twentieth century – that epic traditions heavily influenced nationalist movements – has been retroactively imposed on the nineteenth century as well.<sup>4</sup> However, by comparing Serbian and Croatian oral literature, such as the Kosovo cycle and the *Death of Smail-Aga Ćengić*, with nation-building documents from the same states, it is clear that Serbian desires for an independent state outside the Ottoman Empire relied more heavily on the epic tradition to reinforce national memory, whereas Croats relied less on their oral tradition after abandoning the idea of a unified South Slav state in favor of autonomy inside the Austro-Hungarian Empire. In short, I argue that by 1863 Croatian national desires relied on historical territory while Serbia invoked the national epic tradition.

The oral tradition is a valuable historical source both for its long existence in South Slavic culture and for the telling malleability of its epics over time. As early as the seventh century, historical accounts record the Slavs’ penchant for singing as they moved across the Danube and into the Balkan Peninsula.<sup>5</sup> While this singing was mostly oral literature until the spread of literacy in the 1800s, visiting Venetians, West Europeans, and clerical figures did record some of these songs in earlier centuries and their recordings offer a valuable insight into both the political and cultural context of the age. As Svetozar Koljević writes about the evolution of folk songs in his textbook, *The Epic in the Making*, “an epic is transformed to meet the needs of the later times – and the process is analogous to the shift of meaning of oral epic formulas of medieval literary origin.”<sup>6</sup> Oral literature is more malleable than written literature, and its changes therefore reveal the political, economic, and cultural realities that alter the versions of traditional stories over time.

1 Julian Borger, “How Radovan Karadžić Embraced Evil,” *The Daily Beast*, March 24, 2016, <http://www.thedailybeast.com/articles/2016/03/24/how-radovan-karadzic-embraced-evil.html>; For more information see “Radovan Karadžić Case – Key Information & Timeline | International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia,” *United Nations International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia*, accessed October 28, 2016, <http://www.icty.org/en/cases/radovan-karadzic-trial-key-information>.

2 Borger, “How Radovan Karadžić Embraced Evil.”

3 Tim Judah, *The Serbs: History, Myth and the Destruction of Yugoslavia*, 3rd ed. (New Haven Conn: Yale University Press, 2009), 30.

4 See claims of retroactive perspectives in Barbara Jelavich, *History of the Balkans*, The Joint Committee on Eastern Europe Publication Series (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1983); and Judah, *The Serbs*.

5 Svetozar Koljević, *The Epic in the Making* (Oxford ; New York: Oxford University Press, 1980), 11.

6 *Ibid.*, 23.

While nationalism did not exist in the Balkans prior to this time, by the mid-nineteenth century these songs had served to spread the history and points of pride in Serbian and Croatian culture that formed the basis of future nationalism in the region. Ernest Gellner defines a nation as: “when general social conditions make for standardized, homogenous, centrally sustained high cultures, pervading entire populations ... in which well-defined educationally sanctioned and unified cultures constitute very nearly the only kind of unit with which men willingly and often ardently identify with.”<sup>7</sup> Gellner also predicated the development of nationalism on a “modern ‘national’ educational system,” with professional teachers who train citizens outside of their local groups.<sup>8</sup> But in the mid-nineteenth century, Balkan societies were still largely illiterate and rural, with only a small educated class of “high culture.” Predating a national culture or national education system, oral literature allowed the illiterate public to join in the early stages of cultural development that would later lead to nationalism in Gellner’s terms. Songs were sung by *gusle* players, the “traditional one-string instrument that typically accompanies the oral epic performance,”<sup>9</sup> in local cafes and at celebratory events that gathered large audiences of all ages to hear the tales of mythic heroes and battles. *Guslars*, the singers of the songs, acted as trained teachers who facilitated the spread of shared culture by remembering and popularizing the oral literature central to South Slavic identities. They transmitted these stories locally because bards travelled and performed regionally, but as Vuk Karadžić and Albert Lord have shown, the songs they sang shared overarching themes, characters, and form that loosely functioned as the precursor to a national education system.

Many of the epic poems and songs historians cite as inspiration for Balkan nationalists in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries have their roots in medieval literature and religion. As the legends grew over time, they evolved according to the contexts in which they were presented, but their “starting point of Providential interference in a national catastrophe has remained at the heart of their epic drama till the times of Karadžić’s singers.”<sup>10</sup> The centrality of God, defeat at the hands of foreigners, and future hopes of empire are central to these songs (*Kosovo Polje* and others) just as the songs themselves are central to Balkan culture. Their specific influence on nationalist movements in the 1800s, however, is less clearly defined, and is the subject of this analysis.

The most popular work of Balkan oral literature is the Battle of Kosovo cycle, which features the Serbian struggle for independence against the Ottoman Turks. Vuk Karadžić recorded the most famous version of the cycle in the early nineteenth

century. Though Karadžić was Serbian and later became a proponent of the Greater Serbian project,<sup>11</sup> he credited some of his most well-known songs to Croatian sources, which complicates the comparison of the influence of Serbian and Croatian folklore on national movements and state-making. To partially address this problem, I have also used Ivan Mažuranić’s *Death of Smail-aga Čengić* as an example of epic poetry from Croatia written by a Croatian leader. However, it too shares many similarities with Serbian songs in its content and treatment of heroes and Turks, which will be further explained below. Their shared characteristics actually make their differing effects on state-making more significant in my analysis. When the similar content of oral literature is viewed as the constant variable in the development of nationalism in Serbia and Croatia, we can explain their differing national outcomes by examining the dependent variables of political circumstances under the Ottoman and Austro-Hungarian Empires.

To judge the effects of the epic tradition on nation-building in the mid-1800s, I will study both public declarations of national plans and private letters and documents written by Serbian and Croatian leaders. Although limited by a lack of English translations in some cases, I unearthed translations of several important political documents to support my thesis. In the Serbian national movement, I will focus on the *Načertanije* (Draft) written in 1844 by Ilija Garašanin that was kept a government secret as the plan for a Greater Serbia until the twentieth century.<sup>12</sup> I will also judge the effect of epic tales on Vladimir Jovanović’s 1863 article appealing to Western Europe and published in Great Britain, “The Serbian Nation and the Eastern Question.”<sup>13</sup> On the Croatian front, I will use excerpts from Janko Drašković’s 1832 *Disertacija* (Dissertation) and Josip Juraj Strossmayer’s *Letter of February 10, 1863* to contrast how each nation relied on and took inspiration from the oral tradition.

By oral tradition, I refer to the wide array of poems, songs, and stories written, recorded, and sung by South Slavic peoples from the eighth century onward. I will use the terms oral tradition, oral literature, epic poems, and so on interchangeably. The term South Slavic encompasses those who today are the Bosnians, Croats, Macedonians, Montenegrins, Serbs, and Slovenes. The oral traditions of these peoples each have their particular magnum opus, but in general they overlap in themes and structure to represent the experience of small ethnic groups living in a foreign empire. I will attempt to separate these groups based on their historical and political history, but, for example, Serbia and Montenegro share much of their history, as do Croatia and Slovenia. I will focus on Serbia and

7 Ernest Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism*, New Perspectives on the Past (Basil Blackwell Publisher) (Oxford, England: Blackwell, 1983), 55.

8 Ibid., 34.

9 Aleksandar Pavlović, “Rereading the Kosovo Epic: Origins of the ‘Heavenly Serbia’ in the Oral Tradition,” *Serbian Studies: Journal of the North American Society for Serbian Studies* 23, no. 1 (2009): 93.

10 See Koljević part 3, chapter I for an account of the evolution of the Kosovo myth, Koljević, *The Epic in the Making*, 158.

11 Marcus Tanner, “Illyrianism and the Croatian Quest for Statehood,” *Daedalus* 126, no. 3 (Summer 1997): 53.

12 Ilija Garašanin, “The Origins of Modern Pan-Serbism: The 1844 Načertanije of Ilija Garašanin,” trans. Paul N. Hehn, *East European Quarterly* 9, no. 2 (Summer 1975): 153–71.

13 Vladimir Jovanović, “The Serbian Nation and the Eastern Question” (Bell and Daldy, 1863).

Croatia most closely and address the influence of other peoples where applicable. The term state-making document refers to any work that presents a plan or targeted desire for statehood, usually nationalistic in tone. Hence government documents, works by politicians published abroad, and private letters are all useful in articulating state-making motivations, aims, and plans.

I will first contrast the history and development of the Serbian and Croatian nations alongside a comparison of the oral literature they produced. I will then analyze the effects of this literature and history on the *Načertanije* and the *Disertacija*, two documents produced before the revolutions of 1848. To illustrate the evolution of Serbian and Croatian national aims into the early 1860s – after the revolutions of 1848 and the end of Illyrianism – I will compare the use of oral literature in Jovanović's "The Serbian Nation and the Eastern Question" to that in Strossmayer's *Letter of February 10, 1863*. This research reveals how South Slavic peoples both used and neglected the epic tradition in their fight for nationhood long before Radovan Karadžić and Slobodan Milošević did the same in the 1990s.

### Folklore as History: Evolving Songs and Early Unrest in Serbia and Croatia

The South Slavic oral tradition developed locally to record religious and historical events in a generally illiterate region. Heroic songs fell under two categories: the *bugarštica* (long-line ballad) and the *deseterac* (decasyllabic line), which was more common in nineteenth century written works.<sup>14</sup> While not all epic poems follow this format – Mažuranić, for example, only used *deseterac* in parts of his *Death of Smail-aga* – the standardized form allowed songs to be memorized and transmitted more easily by *guslars*. There is not a song that provided the framework for singers to rely on, as Albert Lord describes, but each performance of oral literature is an original in and of itself based on stories of events or people.<sup>15</sup> Songs are often alike in form because themes – “the groups of ideas regularly used in telling a tale in formulaic style of traditional song,” – tend to cling to one another to form patterns memorable to the singer and recognizable to the audience.<sup>16</sup> As Lord and Milman Parry have shown, *guslars* could learn songs from their families, songbooks produced after the eighteenth century, and from listening to each other. Most of the early recorded songs available to us were transcribed by monks whose Christian perspectives heavily influenced the content and moral messages of the songs.<sup>17</sup> More important than religious influences, though,

the public “considered these epic folk songs to be based on historical facts,” and the “historicity of heroic songs ... survived well into the twentieth century.”<sup>18</sup> Most of the Balkan population was illiterate at this time, so oral literature based on written stories or created by *guslars* themselves from known myths provided the public with an accessible historical record. Hence when political leaders invoked these legends they also partially invoked a supposedly factual history, making their statements and plans more credible to the public eye. Historian Bogdan Rakić provides one appropriate example of religious influence, history, and poetry. In 1756 a Franciscan monk, Andrija Kačić Miošić, wrote a “history book disguised as a collection of poems” in *deseterac* so that, in Rakić's words, “the poor Slavic farmers and shepherds ... could learn more about their national history.”<sup>19</sup> As early as the mid-eighteenth century a Croatian national history had thus been catalogued by a religious figure in the hopes of educating the semi-literate public. As Miošić shows, these songs were more than entertainment, but rather were believed to be the history of a people with added significance from ecclesiastical culture.

But before monks, Vuk Karadžić, or Ivan Mažuranić could record their stories and epic poems, historical events and political upheavals had to inspire oral stories passed down from the medieval period. In Serbia, Stefan Nemanja and his sons St. Sava and Stefan Nemanjić founded the medieval Serbian state on the fringes of the Byzantine Empire with territory in Kosovo and Montenegro, initiating centuries of Serbian preoccupation with the “Old Serbia” invoked in later songs.<sup>20</sup> Medieval Serbia reached its height in the 1340s under the rule of Stefan Dušan, but fell into Turkish vassalage at the Battle on the Marica in 1371.<sup>21</sup> Interestingly, Marko Kraljević, one of the most famous heroes of Serbian folk tales, was the first Serbian leader to become a Turkish vassal under Sultan Murad II in 1385.<sup>22</sup> Although Prince Marko capitulated to the Muslim invaders and even died fighting for the Ottomans, his legend grew as a “disempowered hero, who nevertheless achieves his ends by great personal strength and cunning, and by whatever other means are at hand.”<sup>23</sup> This ability to manipulate and gloss over contradictions between fact and fiction is common in the political use of these poems, which illustrates the importance leaders placed on medieval stories in the national period. Prince Lazar and his son-in-law Vuk Branković, both important figures in history and in song, were similarly defeated by the Ottomans at the Battle of Kosovo in 1389 and are recorded as the

14 Bogdan Rakić, “Subverted Epic Oral Tradition in South Slavic Written Literatures, 16th–19th Centuries,” *Serbian Studies: Journal of the North American Society for Serbian Studies* 20, no. 1 (2006): 133.

15 Albert Bates Lord, *The Singer of Tales*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 2000), 101.

16 *Ibid.*, 69, 112.

17 Pavlović, “Rereading the Kosovo Epic,” 89.

18 Rakić, “Subverted Epic Oral Tradition in South Slavic Written Literatures,” 135.

19 *Ibid.*, 136.

20 Koljević, *The Epic in the Making*, 98.

21 *Ibid.*, 100.

22 Vuk Stefanović Karadžić, *Songs of the Serbian People from the Collections of Vuk Karadžić*, trans. Milne Holton and Vasa D. Mihailovich, Series in Russian and East European Studies (Pittsburgh, Pa: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1997), 161.

23 *Ibid.*

“greatest martyr and the greatest traitor in later heroic songs.”<sup>24</sup> Even more than Marko Krajlević, Prince Lazar and the Battle of Kosovo are central to the development of national ideology, in Serbia especially, centuries after the battle occurred.

The defeat at Kosovo is the linchpin of Serbian oral tradition because, in the words of Florian Bieber, it “establishes a historical continuity between the contemporary Serbian nation and the ‘Serbs’ of the Middle Ages, suggesting a perennial nation.”<sup>25</sup> The exact words and phrases of the Kosovo cycle, drawn from Vuk Karadžić’s collection, are less important to this study than the overarching ideas they imparted and the ways they were used in the nineteenth century to create – in twentieth century lexicon – a perennial nation. Karadžić’s poems take the reader through the final meal of Prince Lazar and his men, the accusation of treachery first against Miloš Obilić and then against Vuk Branković, the overwhelming odds the Serbian army faced, the lamentations of Tsaritsa Milica and the mother of the nine Jugovićs, and finally, Lazar’s choice of a heavenly kingdom instead of an earthly one, which resulted in the Serbian defeat and subjugation to the Ottoman Empire for centuries. While the facts of the battle did not change, the tale itself evolved throughout the centuries as political circumstances increasingly became anti-Ottoman.

The Kosovo cycle shifted from an early emphasis on Prince Lazar’s self-sacrifice to the nineteenth century focus on Miloš Obilić’s assassination of Sultan Murad. Records from medieval church manuscripts reveal that stories about Prince Lazar’s “spiritual victory” and martyrdom were enormously popular in the decades just after the battle.<sup>26</sup> The focus on Lazar’s spirituality can be explained partially by the recorders of the stories, who were church figures and thus chose to emphasize a spiritual meaning, and also by the fact that the religious focus on the “promised heavenly kingdom”<sup>27</sup> preserved the “dignity and self-worth of the subdued people.”<sup>28</sup> By choosing the heavenly kingdom instead of the earthly kingdom, Lazar, and the recorders of the epic songs, could honorably explain Serbia’s inevitable fall to the then much stronger Ottoman Empire. In the years after the battle, church leaders and local political leaders tacitly swayed the public towards a more religious Kosovo story with the promise of future glory.

In the nineteenth century, however, after more than four centuries of Ottoman domination, recorded Kosovo songs developed a much more aggressive anti-Ottoman theme with a stronger focus on Obilić’s heroism against Turkish rule. As Alexander Greenawalt and other Slavic historians argue, “only in

the eighteenth century ... when anti-Ottoman sentiment grew within Serbia itself, did a more comprehensive Kosovo legend centered on the story of Miloš Obilić become an integral part of that land’s oral tradition.”<sup>29</sup> Vuk Karadžić’s versions of the Kosovo songs published in the 1820s illustrate this shift.<sup>30</sup> In them, Obilić stars in multiple fragments of songs and in “Tsar Lazar and Tsaritsa Milica,” while Lazar’s heavenly kingdom is the center of only one song, “The Fall of the Serbian Empire.”<sup>31</sup> As Ottoman power weakened and local pashas became stronger at the close of the eighteenth century, Serbian songs mirrored political developments to foster the beginnings of a movement against their Turkish rulers by the opening of the nineteenth century.

Songs about the First Serbian Uprising of 1804 are one example of how oral literature changes over time and both influences and reflects the political atmosphere. In 1804 Serbian pashaliks rose up against not the Ottoman emperor, but the local Turkish *dahijas* – powerful Janissary leaders who exerted their power over the Ottoman periphery. Karadžić recorded this event in “*The Beginning of the Revolt Against the Dahijas*,” by blind singer Filip Višnjić. The *dahijas* had gained great influence at the expense of imperial power and planned to massacre Serbian leaders who objected to their increasingly violent rule. This plan triggered a Serbian revolt, led by Karadjordje against Janissary rule, which actually aligned the Serbs with the Porte against a common enemy. The poem recorded by Karadžić reflected this brief pro-Ottoman political atmosphere as it depicted the Sultan advising the *dahijas* to “not be harsh and cruel to the raja, rather be kind, gentle to the raja.”<sup>32</sup> These words come from Sultan Murad, of Kosovo fame, on his deathbed after being mortally wounded by Miloš Obilić. He continues to discuss lowering taxes on the Christians and promoting religious toleration.<sup>33</sup> This depiction of a sympathetic Sultan Murad contradicts the Kosovo cycle’s depiction of merciless Ottoman rule in the fourteenth century. The *Revolt Against the Dahijas*, like Mažuranić’s *Smail-aga*, was recorded during the early 1800s as events unfolded contemporaneously. It is one example of how oral literature can rewrite history to fit the political atmosphere and how parts of the literature could be completely ignored, as in the positive depiction of the sultan in the *Revolt Against the Dahijas* by later nationalists in the mid-nineteenth century. Unfortunately for the Serbs, great power politics among the Ottomans, the Russians, and the French hindered the Serbian cause as Russia declined to support Serbi-

24 Koljević, *The Epic in the Making*, 101.

25 Florian Bieber, “Nationalist Mobilization and Stories of Serb Suffering: The Kosovo Myth from 600th Anniversary to the Present,” *Rethinking History* 6, no. 1 (April 2002): 96.

26 Milica Bakić-Hayden, “Kosovo: Reality of a Myth and Myth of Many Realities,” in *Serbien Und Montenegro* (Vienna: Österreichische Osthefte, 2006), 137.

27 Karadžić, *Songs of the Serbian People*, 148.

28 Bakić-Hayden, “Kosovo: Reality of a Myth and Myth of Many Realities,” 137.

29 Alexander Greenawalt, “Kosovo Myths: Karadžić, Njegoš, and the Transformation of Serb Memory,” *Spacesofidentity.net* 1, no. 3 (October 1, 2001): 53, <http://soi.journals.yorku.ca/index.php/soi/article/view/8045>.

30 Karadžić, *Songs of the Serbian People*, 7.

31 Ibid.

32 Vuk Stefanović Karadžić, “The Beginning of the Revolt Against the Dahijas,” in *Songs of the Serbian People: From the Collections of Vuk Karadžić*, trans. Milne Holton and Vasa D. Mihailovich (Pittsburgh, PA: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1997), 283.

33 Ibid.

an independence, effectively exhausting Karadjordje's insurrection by 1813.<sup>34</sup> Not until 1833 would Serbia's *skupština* (parliament) declare autonomy and vestigial Turkish rule would not disappear until 1878.<sup>35</sup> As we will continue to see in later decades, both Serbia and Croatia were frequently dependent on larger empires and states for political and military support.

In this early period, even before romantic nationalism truly took hold in the Balkans, we see medieval Serbia and the Kosovo songs evoked by Karadjordje and his followers in speeches and emblems with the medieval Serbian coat of arms.<sup>36</sup> Historian Roger Paxton argues that the First Serbian Uprising was provincially minded and not nationalist bent, but he does concede that "rebel chieftains sought moral and ideological justification for their revolutionary assumption of power by associating themselves with the symbols of the Serbian medieval state."<sup>37</sup> These symbols were most often associated with the Battle of Kosovo and the Nemanjid and Lazarević dynasties to inspire Serbian fighters. Along with the evolution of the Kosovo songs from the fourteenth century to the eighteenth century, this instance of leaders using the medieval tradition and Kosovo tales in 1804 to foment revolution is an apt example of the many ways folk tradition influenced early movements for independence. Even as contemporary poems were anti-*dabija* and pro-Sultan, Karadjordje and his followers used the medieval legacy to focus primarily on an ongoing national Serbian struggle that they were attempting to win. In later sections I will more concretely analyze the manipulation of oral literature by leaders of Serbia and Croatia to further their national goals developed in the 1830s and later.

But before one can compare the Serbian and Croatian nationalism of the 1830s, we must take into consideration Croatian history up to the nineteenth century that explains a different national outcome than in Serbia. Like the Serbian medieval state, an independent Croatian state lasted only briefly – from the ninth century to the twelfth century – and reached its peak under Tomislav in the 910s.<sup>38</sup> Tomislav united much of the territory today known as Croatia and Bosnia, but the Croatian state fell to Hungarian, Ottoman, and Venetian control in 1102. Although Croatia retained its parliament, the *Sabor*, and a viceroy, the *ban*, this early subjugation marked its last period of independence before the twentieth century.<sup>39</sup> Croatia thus lost its independence long before Serbia in the fourteenth century, and unlike Serbia, it lacked a national church that could foster a national tradition during centuries of subjugation to the same degree as their Serb neighbors. While the Serbian Orthodox Church "preserved the Serbs' strong sense of national

identity and ingrained in their collective memory a recollection of a great pre-Ottoman independent kingdom," in Croatia, the popes of the Catholic Church "frowned on any attempts to impart a national, Slav tone," especially by suppressing the use of the vernacular language.<sup>40</sup> Memory of past statehood consequently had to be passed down through other channels – epic literature and oral songs.

Intellectual elites kept historical memory alive during the Renaissance era by proudly writing histories, poems, and songs in the Croatian language. Authors in the 1500s wrote in the Croatian language<sup>41</sup> and dedicated their texts to a "Croatian nation that transcended contemporary political boundaries."<sup>42</sup> Encouraged by contact with the French during and after the Napoleonic wars, language and literature continued to develop national consciousness in the nineteenth century.<sup>43</sup> Some seeds of nationalism were undoubtedly planted by French influences and the French annexation of coastal territory in this period, as shown in the united but short-lived Kingdom of Illyria from 1815 to 1822,<sup>44</sup> but Croatia always had to balance Austrian and Hungarian schemes for political and territorial domination. Magyarisation, the attempted Hungarian policy of teaching the Hungarian language in schools and suppressing Croatian traditions, threatened the growth of any early Croatian nationalism in the first decades of the nineteenth century. Unlike Serbia, though, "Croatian nationalism principally relate[d] to territory," and not to people.<sup>45</sup> This Croatian emphasis on historical territorial rights remained an important part of Croatian nationalism, as we will see later in Drašković's *Disertacija*.

40 Ibid.

41 The Croatian language converged over time to the štokavijan dialect that the majority of Slavic speakers used based on the word *što* for "what."; Marc L. Greenberg, "The Illyrian Movement: A Croatian Vision of South Slavic Unity," in *Handbook of Language and Ethnic Identity: The Success-Failure Continuum in Language Identity Efforts*, ed. John A. Fishman and Ofelia García, vol. 2 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 364–80."page": "364-380", "volume": "2", "source": "kus.cholarworks.ku.edu", "event-place": "Oxford", "abstract": "The article appears in a handbook that demonstrates the interconnection between language and ethnic identity, providing a systematic treatment of language and ethnic identity efforts, assessing their relative successes and failures, and placing the cases on a success-failure continuum. This essay focuses on the early nineteenth-century Illyrian Movement attempt in the framework of Pan-Slavism—an ideology intended to unite spiritually all Slavic speakers—to unify the South Slavs (Croats, Serbs, Bosnians, Montenegrins, Slovenes, Macedonians, and Bulgarians

42 Tanner, "Illyrianism and the Croatian Quest for Statehood," 49.

43 Ana S. Trbovich, "Nation-Building under the Austro-Hungarian Sceptre: Croato-Serb Antagonism and Cooperation," *Balkanica*, no. 37 (2006): 204; Susana S. Macesich, "The Illyrian Provinces: A Step Towards Yugoslavism," *Southeastern Europe* 1, no. 1 (January 1, 1974): 120.

44 The Congress of Vienna created the Kingdom to slow the Illyrian movement by excluding the Military Frontier and Dalmatia while bringing Roman Catholic Slavs closer to the Habsburgs. Macesich, "The Illyrian Provinces," 122.

45 Trbovich, "Nation-Building under the Austro-Hungarian Sceptre," 205.

34 Jelavich, *History of the Balkans*, 195–202.

35 Karadžić, *Songs of the Serbian People*, 277.

36 Roger Viers Paxton, "Nationalism and Revolution: A Reexamination of the Origins of the First Serbian Insurrection 1804-1807," *East European Quarterly* 6, no. 3 (September 1, 1972): 346.

37 Ibid.

38 Tanner, "Illyrianism and the Croatian Quest for Statehood," 47.

39 Ibid., 48.

In the minds of early nationalists, “Croatian statehood had never been extinguished,” since the Triune Kingdom of Croatia, Dalmatia, and Slavonia in the Middle Ages.<sup>46</sup>

Despite this political atmosphere in the Habsburg Empire, Croatian oral literature tackled issues similar to those of Serbian poetry, such as Turkish scourges and anti-Muslim ideas. As early as the seventeenth century, Croatian writer Franov Gundulić wrote *Osman*, about the last years of Sultan Osman II’s reign, which established “the liberation of the Balkan Slavs from Turkish rule as the central aspect of the so-called Eastern Question.”<sup>47</sup> Following in Gundulić’s footsteps, in 1845 fellow Croatian writer Ivan Mažuranić published an epic poem centered on the murder of a Turkish regional leader by a band of Montenegrins in protest against brutal taxation and treatment of Christians. Mažuranić’s epic poem, *The Death of Smail-aga Čengić*, was written more than a decade after Drašković’s national plan, but its topic and form are relevant to this analysis because it is the best representation of traditional Croatian epic poetry and one of the few Croatian epics translated into English. Similar to the *Revolt Against the Dabijas*, this poem was influenced by contemporary politics, but it also reflects traditional Croatian epic literature that influenced Drašković and other Croatians in the earlier 1800s. Mažuranić was so important to the Croatian tradition that he was chosen to write the last two cantos of *Osman* that Gundulić, his earlier Croatian poetic model, had not finished before his death.<sup>48</sup> *The Death of Smail-aga Čengić* is less known to foreigners than the Battle of Kosovo songs, so I will first discuss the significant aspects of the poem for its national influence on Croatian politics.

*Smail-aga*, like the Kosovo cycle, is based on a historical truth, but Mažuranić also retold the event with a more evil Turkish enemy so as to “stress the ethical aspect of this struggle,” that is, the “struggle of the Balkan Slavs for their freedom.”<sup>49</sup> He was undoubtedly affected by the romantic nationalism of the 1840s, which helped foster an overall South Slavic nationalism until the end of the Illyrian Movement in 1848. But Gundulić, who wrote about the same struggle for freedom in the 1600s, also heavily influenced Mažuranić’s work. Religion and ownership of the land were central to Croatia’s epic tradition, relating to the belief in their historical right to the Triune Kingdom. In one of the most powerfully nationalistic stanzas, Mažuranić invokes the birthright and blood right of citizens to their land.

Your grandfathers were born here,  
Your fathers were born here,  
And you yourselves were born here:  
For you there is no fairer place on earth.

Your grandfathers shed their blood for it,  
Your fathers shed their blood for it,  
For it you too are shedding your blood:  
For you there is no dearer place on earth.<sup>50</sup>

This section recalls the historical right of land important to Croatian people, as well as the image of blood soaked land so central to the Kosovo narrative. In Croatian oral tradition, this passage also harkens to Kačić’s work, *Razgovor ugodni naroda slovinskog* (A Pleasant Discourse about the Slavic People), about which in 1759 Kačić wrote that he hoped,

“the knights and warriors of our own time will look into these pages like a mirror and see the brave campaigns and famous feats of their grandfathers and grand-grand-fathers; then, emboldened, they will freely follow their ancestors’ example and confront our common enemy once again.”<sup>51</sup>

Mažuranić’s poem is thus more than a reflection of nationalism in 1845, but it also clearly has an antecedent in the 1750s. The *Death of Smail-aga* is further reminiscent of *Razgovor* in that Kačić included all Slavic peoples in his work and targeted the Turks as their communal enemy.<sup>52</sup> The national focus in *Smail-aga* is not specific to the Serb or Croatian or Montenegrin peoples. The poem is about a Montenegrin triumph, but because a Croatian leader wrote it, we see the larger scale South Slavic unity that Croatian politics called for in the Illyrian Movement before 1848.

In addition to land and blood, Mažuranić stressed the power of Christianity many times in his poem. As he wrote, “... to die for the holy Christian faith is not hard for those who fight for it,” and, “... such men who would stand and die for the holy cross by which they were baptized, for the holy cross and golden freedom,” are only two examples of many.<sup>53</sup> Most explicitly, he claims that “... the Cross and the prophet, till one is destroyed; so much hatred burns their hearts!”<sup>54</sup> Such a strong hatred of Islam is surprising when Croatia was largely under the rule of the Habsburgs and not the Ottomans. Surprising initially, but logical in the context of ancient Croatian history that saw, like Serbia, centuries of Turkish maltreatment of Christians in Croatian lands, such as the Military Frontier (*Vojna Krajina*). This ancient tradition drove the Croatian and Yugoslavian mentality as they shared in the outrage and suffering of their own and their fellow Slavs’ subjugation. The Illyr-

46 Ibid., 210.

47 Zdenko Zlatar, “Slavic Epics: Gundulić’s *Osman* and Mažuranić’s *Death of Smail-Aga Čengić*,” *Sydney Studies in Society and Culture* 11, no. 0 (October 9, 2013): 194.

48 Ibid., 198.

49 Ibid., 200.

50 Ivan Mažuranić, *Smail-Aga Čengić’s Death*, ed. Ivan Slamnig, trans. Charles A. Ward (Zagreb: Association of Croat Writers, 1969), 14.

51 Andrija Kačić Miošić, *Razgovor Ugodni Naroda slovinskoga/Korabljica*, Jakša Ravlić, vol. 21, Pet Stoljeća Hrvatske Književnosti (Zagreb: Matica hrvatska/Zora, 1967) in; Rakić, “Subverted Epic Oral Tradition in South Slavic Written Literatures,” 136.

52 Rakić, “Subverted Epic Oral Tradition in South Slavic Written Literatures,” 137.

53 Mažuranić, *Smail-Aga Čengić’s Death*, 5, 11.

54 Ibid., 32.

ian Movement relied most heavily on this common history, but was eventually succeeded by a more territorial-based national plan in the later nineteenth century. These similarities between Serbian and Croatian epic literature make the contemporary political circumstances of each peoples more significant when comparing the developments of national plans and state-building in the 1830s and later.

### National Plans and Epic Influence, 1830-1848: Garašanin's *Načertanije* and Drašković's *Disertacija*

Beginning in the 1830s, romantic nationalism in Croatia and Serbia developed in two national movements – the Illyrian Movement and Greater Serbia. Both movements found their political voices in the works of two Croatian and Serbian statesmen: Ilija Garašanin's *Načertanije* (Draft) in 1844, and Janko Drašković's *Disertacija* (Dissertation) in 1832, a state secret until 1906, the Draft drove Serbian policy throughout the nineteenth century and into the Balkan wars.<sup>55</sup> Similarly, the Dissertation outlined the tenets of the Illyrian Movement in desiring an overarching partnership with Austria-Hungary that remained influential until 1848. I will first analyze the ways the Draft invoked Serbia's medieval past – kept alive by epic literature throughout the centuries – to advocate for a pan-Serb ideology, as Paul Hehn dubbed it, and a Greater Serbian state. I will then turn to the Dissertation to explain the political and historical circumstances surrounding why Croatian nationalists leaned more heavily on a common language tradition with some reliance on communal Slavic enemies in oral literature to form the idea of an Illyrian nation inside the Austro-Hungarian state.

While Serbia and Croatia were still proto-national, both the Dissertation and the Draft supported Gellner's definition of nationalism by emphasizing the importance of education, literacy, and language in their national plans. The Dissertation itself was prompted by the compulsory imposition of the Hungarian language in Croatian schools in 1827.<sup>56</sup> After attempts to Magyarise the public through the Hungarian language, the Illyrian Movement became further attached to a communal Slavic language that would protect Balkan peoples from the stronger national forces of the great powers. The Draft equally recognized the importance of the printing press in spreading, in Garašanin's words, the "spirit of the Slavic people," and

especially the Serbian people, to surrounding areas to grow their state and influence beyond traditional Serbian borders.<sup>57</sup> Although neither group had a modern education system or industrialized society required by Gellner's definition, these works supported his idea that literacy and education were central to national development.

While historians agree on much of Gellner's work, they debate whether to label Garašanin a Serb nationalist or a South Slavic nationalist, but for this analysis his references to and reliance on the medieval kingdom of Serbia to justify future Serbian statehood and regional domination are most salient.<sup>58</sup> The *Načertanije* does not explicitly cite the Battle of Kosovo, but it does rely heavily on the overarching messages of the famous oral literature – that the Serbian state has glorious roots in the medieval period and that it will be reborn and rebuilt on that foundation in the present nation-building period. It also does recognize the centrality of epic poetry to Serbian culture. Garašanin believed and included in his work that "in no single European country is the memory of the historical past so vivid as among the Slavs of Turkey, for whom the recollection of the celebrated events of their history is especially cherished and fondly remembered."<sup>59</sup> Just how were these celebrated events of history remembered? The answer, as shown earlier, lies in the epic poems and oral literature celebrating the Serbian state. The Draft was the first plan to envision Serbia as an independent state and became the leading model to be followed by nineteenth and even twentieth century Serbian statesmen.<sup>60</sup> As Tim

57 Garašanin, "The Origins of Modern Pan-Serbism," 164, 167.

58 For views on Garašanin's politics see: Edislav Manetovic, "Ilija Garašanin: *Načertanije* and Nationalism," *The Historical Review/La Revue Historique* 3, no. 0 (January 20, 2007): 137–73. *Načertanije*, that envisioned an independent Serbian state. His ideas and policies remain highly controversial. While some scholars argue that Garašanin was an inclusive Yugoslavist, others maintain that he was an exclusive Serbian nationalist seeking a Greater Serbia. Both arguments assume that the South Slav nations are pre-modern social phenomena. In contrast, this paper suggests that a modernist perspective of nations and nationalism provides a far more coherent and nuanced interpretation of Garašanin. Garašanin was a Serbian, not a Yugoslav, nationalist. But his nationalism was inclusive not exclusive. Inclusion was a precondition for social stability of the large state he wanted to forge. Garašanin was also illiberal. Establishing a state in a predatory inter-state environment required suppressing individual liberties. Insecurity caused by a Hobbesian world political system structured the content of Garašanin's nationalism." "ISSN": "1791-7603", "shortTitle": "Ilija Garašanin", "author": [{"family": "Manetovic", "given": "Edislav"}], "issued": {"date-parts": [{"2007", 1, 20}]}}}, "schema": "https://github.com/citation-style-language/schema/raw/master/csl-citation.json"

59 Garašanin, "The Origins of Modern Pan-Serbism," 160.

60 Manetovic, "Ilija Garašanin," 140. *Načertanije*, that envisioned an independent Serbian state. His ideas and policies remain highly controversial. While some scholars argue that Garašanin was an inclusive Yugoslavist, others maintain that he was an exclusive Serbian nationalist seeking a Greater Serbia. Both arguments assume that the South Slav nations are pre-modern social phenomena. In contrast, this paper suggests that a modernist perspective of nations and nationalism provides a far more coherent and nuanced interpretation of Garašanin. Garašanin was a Serbian, not a Yugoslav, nationalist.

55 Judah, *The Serbs*, 56; Garašanin, "The Origins of Modern Pan-Serbism," 157.

56 Greenberg, "The Illyrian Movement," 3."page": "364-380", "volume": "2", "source": "kuscholarworks.ku.edu", "event-place": "Oxford", "abstract": "The article appears in a handbook that demonstrates the interconnection between language and ethnic identity, providing a systematic treatment of language and ethnic identity efforts, assessing their relative successes and failures, and placing the cases on a success-failure continuum. This essay focuses on the early nineteenth-century Illyrian Movement attempt in the framework of Pan-Slavism—an ideology intended to unite spiritually all Slavic speakers—to unify the South Slavs (Croats, Serbs, Bosnians, Montenegrins, Slovenes, Macedonians, and Bulgarians

Judah has succinctly written, the *Načertanije* is the “document that synthesizes centuries of Serbian dreams as preserved by the church and epic poetry and formulates them into a statement of modern nationalism.”<sup>61</sup> It built on the oral tradition’s medieval histories and the promise of rebirth to fuel the beginnings of Serbian nationalism that was initially private to the state, but that ultimately lasted into the twentieth century.

Garašanin relied on the epic tradition when he harkened back to the Serbian state under Stefan Nemanja, Stefan Dušan, and Turkish domination to demonstrate Serbia’s roots and hence preparation for a large state in the nineteenth century. As he wrote, “its roots and foundation are firmly embedded in the Serbian Empire of the 13th and 14th centuries and the glorious pageant of Serbian history.”<sup>62</sup> He goes so far as to declare that ancient Serbia under Dušan almost inherited the Byzantine Empire’s cultural and political heritage, but Turkish power halted their progress. This glorious past is remembered through epic poetry that memorialized the successes and failures of the Serbian state in the Kosovo cycle and other songs. In the nineteenth century, he suggested, “this interrupted process must commence once more in the same spirit and again be undertaken in the knowledge of that right.”<sup>63</sup> To Garašanin, that “right” was the promised realization of medieval desires for a Slavo-Serbian kingdom in the old Greco-Roman lands. These desires stumbled in the Middle Ages in the “Fall of the Serbian Empire,” as Lazar chose defeat and future greatness over current glory, but were clearly not forgotten by statesmen and the public alike who desired an independent state in the late nineteenth century.

After he established the deep and glorious foundation of the Serbian state, Garašanin turned to the second theme of the oral tradition – the rebirth of the empire promised to the Serbs after their defeat at Kosovo. The Serbian Empire, the *Načertanije* claims, “must be cleared of all encumbrances so that a new edifice may be constructed on this solid and durable historical foundation... for then we Serbs could appear before the world as the heirs of our illustrious forefathers.”<sup>64</sup> The new edifice – the state – was part of the logical progress from the “historical foundation” laid by the “illustrious forefathers” of medieval Serbia. It was also a call for not just any South Slav state, but specifically a state built “upon the solid foundation

of the old Serbian state [to] erect a great new Serbian state.”<sup>65</sup> This path from a historical basis to a contemporary state led by Serbia justified Garašanin’s call for a Greater Serbian state because Serbia was believed to have the previous experience and foundation for leading a new incarnation of South Slav statehood – a national plan in conflict with Croatia’s, but supported by Serbian epic literature.

While the poems themselves are not quoted, the Draft places much of its evidence for a Serbian-led South Slav state in the “elevated and fiery national feeling”<sup>66</sup> created by the folk tradition. The rhetoric of the *Načertanije* is even similar to what is found in the oral literature. For instance, Garašanin’s goal in the Draft is the “rebirth of the Serbian kingdom,”<sup>67</sup> just as Nemanja and Dušan gave birth to it and Prince Lazar, as recorded in epic poetry, assured its rebirth in the future. Garašanin likely relied so heavily on folklore because it was ubiquitous in Serbian culture, and as Judah comments, “as for all nationalists, history was there to be used for the present.”<sup>68</sup> In the *Načertanije* itself, too, Garašanin claimed that “our present will not be without a link to the past...,”<sup>69</sup> an assertion that held true because of the Serbian epic tradition that supported an independent Serbian state.

In contrast to Serbia’s straightforward use of oral literature towards its goal of a greater Serbian state, Croatia’s national development focused more on language with some influence from their epic tradition to create broad South Slavic unity and autonomy, not independence, inside the Austro-Hungarian Empire. The movement “sought to link the Croatians with a people who had lived in the area before the Germans and Hungarians.”<sup>70</sup> Similar to Serbian aims, this move attempted to create a historical foundation for the South Slavic people before the Turks and Europeans. Drašković was a member of the Croatian *Sabor* (Parliament) and a Croatian delegate at the Hungarian Diet in Pressburg from 1832 to 1836.<sup>71</sup> He presented his Dissertation to the Hungarian Diet written in Croatian, instead of German or Latin, in the first instance of the use of

65 Ibid., 163.

66 Ibid., 160.

67 Ibid.

68 Judah, *The Serbs*, 58.

69 Garašanin, “The Origins of Modern Pan-Serbism,” 160.

70 Jelavich, *History of the Balkans*, 306.

71 Greenberg, “The Illyrian Movement,” 4; “Dissertation, or Treatise,” in *National Romanticism: The Formation of National Movements*, by Balazs Trencsenyi and Michal Kopecek, trans. Robert Russell, Discourses of Collective Identity in Central and Southeast Europe 1770–1945, Volume II (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2013), 349, “page”: “364-380”, “volume”: “2”, “source”: “kuscholarworks.ku.edu”, “event-place”: “Oxford”, “abstract”: “The article appears in a handbook that demonstrates the interconnection between language and ethnic identity, providing a systematic treatment of language and ethnic identity efforts, assessing their relative successes and failures, and placing the cases on a success-failure continuum. This essay focuses on the early nineteenth-century Illyrian Movement attempt in the framework of Pan-Slavism—an ideology intended to unite spiritually all Slavic speakers—to unify the South Slavs (Croats, Serbs, Bosnians, Montenegrins, Slovenes, Macedonians, and Bulgarians

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61 Judah, *The Serbs*, 59.

62 Garašanin, “The Origins of Modern Pan-Serbism,” 159.

63 Ibid.

64 Ibid.



a standardized Croatian language for political discourse.<sup>72</sup> As his message was to validate the Croatian right to language determination and thus national determination, his piece opened with, “I shall use our own mother tongue, in the hope of demonstrating its ability to express all that the heart and reason may demand.”<sup>73</sup> This language was the štokavian dialect that the “root stock of our kingdoms” used and that had historical precedent in “all the old books” written in Croatian lands.<sup>74</sup> Similar to Serbia’s establishment of a foundation for their state, Croatia attempted to establish a basis for their Illyrian language to enhance legitimacy. The Illyrian Movement stressed an overarching language to convince people that “all South Slavs were basically one people and that, by implication, they should form a political unit.”<sup>75</sup> They believed a standard language would unite South Slavs under one government, hopefully a Croatian-led government, inside the Austro-Hungarian Empire. As Drašković wrote, because “language is the spiritual connection between peoples and countries,”<sup>76</sup> having a united Illyrian language of the štokavian dialect mixed with parts of Slovenian and Serbian forms would connect the Slavic people to a unified state in the empire.

However, the *Disertacija* was not without folk literature influence. The Illyrian Movement’s goal was to unite Croatia, Slovenia, and Serbia under the Austro-Hungarian Empire with the center of “Great Illyria” in Zagreb.<sup>77</sup> Hence, though seemingly unrelated, the *Death of Smail-Aga Čengić* actually fit into the national plan of uniting South Slavic peoples. By celebrating Montenegrin success over the traditional enemies of both Serbia and Croatia, Mažuranić’s epic poem and other Croatian oral literature created the bond between Slavic peoples with a common enemy that Croatian nationalists relied on to promote their movement. Though Drašković’s outline of national unity was less forceful than Garašanin’s, he did advocate for Dalmatia rejoining Croatia so that “we shall again form one nation and one blood.”<sup>78</sup> The Croatian epic tradition was thus emphasized in the Illyrian Movement to stress the commonalities between Serbian and Croatian peoples and the Croatian hope for a convergence of national plans.

Unfortunately, for the Croatian project, the Serbs did not react well to a Croatian-led state in another empire while they had a Greater Serbian project growing simultaneously with the help of Garašanin and Karadžić. Though Illyrians seemed open to all Slavic peoples, the *Disertacija* revealed nationalistic rhetoric by quietly insulting the Serbs who were “in a condition of subjugation from which we freed ourselves more than a hundred years ago, and are now too wise to lapse into

slavery again.”<sup>79</sup> In the same section, Drašković also appealed to the Hungarians as he placed the Illyrian Movement in between Eastern Ottoman subjugation and Western “brilliance the weak eyes of our people are not yet able to bear.”<sup>80</sup> It is clear throughout the document that their ideal state would be partnered with the Austro-Hungarians in a federal system – a plan that was ultimately unappealing to Serbians who had not yet fully gained autonomy from their own imperial enemy and so doomed the Illyrian aim of a united state until the twentieth century. Jelavich was correct as he wrote, “there was no reason to abandon the emphasis on Kosovo and the medieval Serbian kingdom for this mystical ancient basis,” of Illyria.<sup>81</sup> While the *Disertacija* outlined the Illyrian Movement in 1833 with the help of communal oral literature and language, by the time Garašanin wrote the *Načertanije* with its heavy reliance on Serbian national myths in 1844, the Croatian and Serbian national plans had diverged so much that future nation-building would follow a pattern of Serbia emphasizing its popular folklore while Croatia largely moved away from its previous invocations of communal oral literature.

### **Folklore, Territory, and Great Power Politics, 1848-1865: Jovanović’s *The Serbian Nation and the Eastern Question* and Strossmayer’s “Letter of February 10, 1863”**

As we have examined the history of oral literature and its influence on early national movements before 1848, the final sources I will compare to the oral tradition are both documents from 1863, one from a private propagandist who had previously been in the Serbian government, and the other from a Croatian bishop who led the People’s Party for Croatian autonomy inside the empire. These documents are particularly useful because they illustrate the development of Balkan national plans in the larger romantic nationalist period. They offer examples of how oral literature was used in nation-building outside of official national plans and directed towards outside audiences. Jovanović wrote for the British people in English to gain support for Serbian independence, while Strossmayer wrote his letter to a fellow Croatian nobleman in Vienna outlining his preference for a federalized Austria. As the dreams of statehood grew in Serbia and Croatia, we see that Serbia continued to rely on the Kosovo cycle and medieval history recorded by folktales to further its political goals, while Croatia shifted its focus further away from language and the influence of oral literature to an argument for historical territorial rights to a Croatian nation.

By 1863, Prince Mihail Obrenović III had asserted more autonomy for Serbia, causing increased tensions between the still-occupying Turkish forces and the Serbian government and prompting a Turkish bombardment of Belgrade in 1862.<sup>82</sup>

72 Drašković, “National Romanticism,” 341.

73 Ibid., 344.

74 Ibid.

75 Jelavich, *History of the Balkans*, 306.

76 Drašković, “National Romanticism,” 345.

77 Macesich, “The Illyrian Provinces,” 124.

78 Drašković, “National Romanticism,” 344.

79 Ibid., 346.

80 Ibid.

81 Jelavich, *History of the Balkans*, 308.

82 Gale Stokes, *Legitimacy through Liberalism: Vladimir Jovanović and the*

Vladimir Jovanović's trip to England followed shortly after this conflict as the Great Powers stepped in to halt a Balkan War. His mission aimed "to win England's favor for a Serbian national liberation movement," despite England's long support of the Turkish Empire.<sup>83</sup> In March of 1863, Jovanović published a brochure entitled *The Serbian Nation and the Eastern Question* that recounted the ancient history of the Serbian state up until the present day to illustrate Serbian propensity for an independent, liberal government. To establish this liberal foundation, Jovanović explicitly used and manipulated the epic tradition to assert Serbia's long national memory and history of enlightened government. Though a slightly different influence than on the *Načertanije*, folk literature continued to be a source of national pride and method of transmission of political ideas, even when written to a non-Serbian audience.

Like Garašanin's Draft, Jovanović's brochure is significant enough to be analyzed ten times over, but most important to my research is his use of the Kosovo cycle and the tradition of heroic songs that in his words, "awakened recollections of Serbian history."<sup>84</sup> Whereas the Draft established Serbia's national plan to expand based on historical right, the *Serbian Nation* brochure made the argument international and used folklore to convince other nations of Serbia's legitimacy, which illustrated the centrality of the overarching oral tradition in nineteenth century Serbian nationalism. Early on in the 46-page document, Jovanović gives the national history of Serbia from Dušan who "had done much to preserve the original spirit of the Serbian nation," to the interference of the vojvodas whose "evil consequence of this decentralization ... [was] faithfully pointed out in the heroic songs of that period."<sup>85</sup> Dušan is held up yet again as the greatest leader of the medieval kingdom and it is only after the failures of Vuk Branković, also explicitly named in the brochure, and the fighting vojvodas that the nation fell to the Turks, which we know from the "heroic songs of that period." But not to be forgotten, "the valour and devotedness of the Serbian nation was made manifest in the heroic deed of *Milosh Obilitch...*," and "nothing could destroy the Serbian spirit of freedom."<sup>86</sup> The use of epic histories in such official propaganda in 1863 illustrates just how long the tradition had survived and the significance of Vuk Karadžić's books of collections. They were not only powerful in internal Serbian nationalism, but also central enough to be used in arguments to the international world for a Serbian nation.

The international English reader was emphatically reminded of the strength of Serbian national vitality throughout the brochure. According to Jovanović, "the Serbs kept alive their

enthusiasm for freedom by their 'hope in God,' and by their songs, which related the glories of the past and expressed the hopes of the future, instead of bewailing the unhappiness of the present."<sup>87</sup> In churches, too, "they sang the deeds of their heroic ancestors, and declared what was to be undertaken against their oppressors."<sup>88</sup> National memory of Kosovo, the kingdom they lost and the future kingdom the song promised the Serbian people, was thus central to the propagation of Serbian nationalism both inside and outside the Balkans. These explicit reminders of the power of Serbian songs illustrate their significance in growing and maintaining a national spirit in the late nineteenth century. Jovanović closes, too, with the claim that "it is owing, indeed, to the great internal vitality of the nation that it did not entirely disappear or become wholly degenerate and corrupt" under centuries of rule by "a herd of uncultivated savages."<sup>89</sup> This internal vitality was cultivated by the oral tradition of heroic songs espousing the mythic medieval losses and triumphs that inspired nineteenth century nationalists. The rhetoric of past defeat and future splendor is so ingrained in Serbian policies and foreign relations by 1863 that Jovanović can even quote a book by an Englishman who travelled through the Balkans and spoke of his "respect and admiration for a people whose virtues have not been destroyed by four centuries of oppression, and without an assurance that for such a race a splendid future is in store."<sup>90</sup> From Garašanin to Jovanović, Serbia's nationalism had only become more dependent on the themes and rhetoric of their epic tradition for independence – a stark contrast to Croatia's national development from the *Disertacija* to Strossmayer's letter.

In Croatia, instead of inching towards independence like in Serbia, the national movement faced setbacks in the revolutions of 1848 as Vienna defeated the Hungarian revolt and imposed a centralized system of administration with no territorial reward to the Croats for their support of the empire against Hungary.<sup>91</sup> The Illyrian Movement ended in 1848 as Hungarian nationalism no longer threatened the Croatian state, while the Croats had lost much of their autonomy with the new centralized regime in the empire, and Serbia had turned away from a unified Slavic national movement to their own national plans. Strossmayer, a former Illyrianist and leader of its political descendant, the National Party, was made bishop of Djakovo in 1849 and was a strong supporter of Yugoslavism and a federal Austro-Hungarian Empire.<sup>92</sup> His letter to a Croatian politician in Vienna laid out his pro-Austrian, federalist views focused on historic territorial rights with only slight invocations of the oral tradition. Though some heroic songs highlighted Croatian successes, much of the Croatian oral tradition celebrated victories over foreign Turks and South Slavic

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*Transformation of Serbian Politics*, Publications on Russia and Eastern Europe of the Institute for Comparative and Foreign Area Studies 5 (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1975), 53.

83 Miroslav Došen, "Projects for the Federation of South-East Europe in the 19th Century," *Studia Universitatis Babeş-Bolyai. Studia Europaea* 51, no. 2 (2006): 50.

84 Jovanović, "The Serbian Nation and the Eastern Question," 12.

85 *Ibid.*, 8.

86 Emphasis in original. *Ibid.*, 9.

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87 *Ibid.*, 11.

88 *Ibid.*

89 *Ibid.*, 38, 29.

90 *Ibid.*, 45.

91 Jelavich, *History of the Balkans*, 318.

92 *Ibid.*, 319.

unity, as in the *Death of Smail-aga*, which was a less influential factor on Croatian nationalism by 1863 when their desires had evolved from a Croatian-led Slavic state inside the empire to a single autonomous state under the empire's wing.

As the translator of the letter, James Bukowski, writes of Strossmayer, "the principal object of his political career was to win for Croatia the status of an autonomous and territorially reunited Kingdom under the Habsburg dynasty."<sup>93</sup> With this goal in mind, he relied on the idea that "the Croats and the other 'historic' people of Austria possessed a separate 'state right' which preceded their membership in the empire and stood as the imperishable witness of their national existence."<sup>94</sup> By basing the Croatian state on territorial claims instead of claims on people, language, or culture, Strossmayer was likely influenced by the folk tradition that recorded the medieval history of the Triune Kingdom when the Military Frontier, Dalmatia, and Slavonia were all united under Croatian rule. As he suggests to his countryman, "the only way to wrench Dalmatia once and for all from the jaws of Italy is to make it Slavic, as is its ancient right and character..."<sup>95</sup> Surprisingly, he uses the verb "make" instead of one that would emphasize Dalmatia's hereditary Croatian-ness to support his point. This verb choice could merely refer to making the region part of Croatia by law, but the choice of the term "Slavic" instead of a national term like Croatia then becomes strange as Croatia no longer saw a Croatia-led South Slavic state as feasible in the 1860s. The ancient right he references is likely tied to oral histories from the period that have been passed down through song, but this version of nationalism is much less reliant on oral literature than the Serbian variant in 1863.

Even when Strossmayer did include references to the epic tradition, he focused not on South Slavic traditions, but specifically on Croatia's relationship to Austria-Hungary. For example, he cited the role Croatia played opposing incursions of the Turks over time as he wrote, "we are a people who have made uncountable sacrifices in battle against the accursed enemies of humanity and of Austria..."<sup>96</sup> The Croatian oral tradition did record many instances of Slavic-led triumphs over the enemies of humanity, but Strossmayer in this case chose to highlight Croatia's historic defense of *Austria* from Turkish enemies instead of the communal Slavic effort to repel the Turks that the Illyrian Movement had previously emphasized. To close his letter, Strossmayer outlined his opinions on a political system inside the Hungarian sphere of empire that tied Croatia closer to the East than the West. One of his points stated, "our integrity must be guaranteed and realized."<sup>97</sup> Perhaps it is only an innocent omission, but by avoiding the word 'national' in

his statement, he struck a much less forceful nationalist tone. This contrasts starkly to the Serbian state-making examples discussed above that were unabashedly nationalist and focused on national myths. Although this difference is explained by Strossmayer's focus on a federal, autonomous Croatian state instead of an independent nation, my comparison of national development and folklore influences reveals that not all nineteenth century Balkan nationalist movements were inspired nor heavily influenced by their respective epic traditions.

## Conclusion

While historians have been quick to claim that the "fever of nationalism in the nineteenth century led to the use of oral epics for nationalist propaganda,"<sup>98</sup> they have generally overlooked how folklore influenced Serbian and Croatian nationalism in the early national period. It is true that folk literature in both regions influenced national planning until 1848 – it helped Serbia establish a historical foundation for the rebirth of its nation, and it helped Croatia form a relationship among South Slavic peoples through a common language and enemy. However, post-1848, while folk literature remained central to Serbian nationalism and its drive for independence, Croatia greatly decreased its use of folk literature as it aimed for autonomy in an empire that did not strongly relate as strongly to its oral tradition.

This comparison makes it easier to understand how Radovan Karadžić viewed himself as part of Serbia's national mythic past, which its politicians have so ardently invoked since Garašanin. It is also easier to understand how the shared folk traditions among the South Slavic peoples helped to justify the twentieth century Yugoslavian state under Tito. Unfortunately for the fate of the twentieth century state, though, the divergence of Croatian and Serbian national planning in the 1800s, with their differing goals and uses of oral literature, foreshadowed the eventual violent split of Croatian and Serbian nationalism in the 1990s.

Although the Yugoslavian state dissolved, the South Slavic epic tradition will likely live on as small Slavic states face the same conflicts between great powers and among each other over religion and territory as they did in centuries past. After all, the people who supported Radovan Karadžić before his arrest also encouraged him to offer the younger generation of Serb nationalists this piece of advice: "Sing with and through the gusle. Speak about Serb traditions. Hold the banner of our glory high."<sup>99</sup>

93 Josip Strossmayer, "Bishop Strossmayer's Idea of a Federalized Austria: A Document from 1863," trans. James B. Bukowski, *Southeastern Europe* 3, no. 1 (January 1, 1976): 89.

94 *Ibid.*, 90.

95 *Ibid.*, 97.

96 *Ibid.*, 96.

97 *Ibid.*, 99.

98 Lord, *The Singer of Tales*, 7.

99 Borger, "How Radovan Karadžić Embraced Evil."