

УДК: 94(497.11)''1389''
930.2(497.11)''1389''
DOI: https://doi.org/10.18485/srpske_studije.2022.13.1
Рад примљен: 16. маја 2022.
Рад прихваћен: 1. јуна 2022.

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**THE INTERNATIONALIZATION
OF THE BATTLE OF KOSOVO OF 1389***

Abstract: In recent decades, the view that the Battle of Kosovo of 1389 was a unique event in medieval warfare has become dominant among some historians (especially those not specializing in medieval studies or this topic) and a large part of the academic community. They argue that this battle was “international” and “coalitional” – more specifically, that it was a clash between the Ottoman army and a Balkan or even European coalition. Despite the two-century-long tradition of critical historiography, whose interest in this topic has been almost global, and the results that have refuted these claims a long time ago, none of these authors has attempted to offer a methodologically sound discussion of the still unrefuted view which sees the Battle of Kosovo as a conflict between the Ottoman Turks and the army of the medieval states of Serbia and Bosnia. It is, in fact, quite the contrary: based on flawed interpretations of second-rate sources, the 19th century narratives of Croatian nationalism, and the claims of 20th century Albanian nationalism, the interests of imperialist and/or totalitarian ideologies of the 20th century,

* The realization of this research was financially supported by the Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development of the Republic of Serbia as part of the financing of scientific research work at the University of Belgrade – Faculty of Philosophy (Reg. no. 451-03-68/2022-14/200163).

and the alleged aspirations to suppress Serbian nationalism, a non-academic, axiomatic narrative has emerged and taken a prominent place in modern scholarship, education, and politics. It is this phenomenon that the present study aims to analyze.

Keywords: Kosovo battle, revisionism, sources interpretations, nationalism, identity, nation building, imperialism, cultural assimilation

Introduction

The Battle of Kosovo of 1389 is a medieval event of supreme contemporary influence and political significance in European terms. Much has been written about this event despite the scarcity of contemporaneous sources, and it was thoroughly researched in critical historiography as early as the first half of the 19th and the first decades of the 20th century. Until very recently, the fact that the armies of the Ottoman sultan and the Serbian prince Lazar, the latter aided by one regiment sent by King Tvrtko I, fought in the Battle of Kosovo of 15 June 1389 remained generally undisputed.

However, more recently, an entire faction has emerged, both in the general public and historiography, which argues that, in the Battle of Kosovo, the Ottoman army faced a coalition of Balkan peoples. Out of all those peoples (or ethnic groups), just one – the Albanian – national elite and scholars display an aspiration to present the battle as an important segment of their national history. This interpretation seems to be gaining more and more traction in modern syntheses and schoolbooks. It has not emerged as the result of the discovery of any new sources or a methodologically sound critique of previous academic achievements. In the context of the tension-fraught inter-ethnic relations in the Balkans and the constant efforts to de-politicize history curricula in Balkan countries, it is interesting to note that this view of a medieval battle found its way even into a regional handbook for teachers, with the self-proclaimed objective of de-politicization and removing nationalist narratives from school curricula, initiated and sponsored by international foundations – a handbook meant to offer a scholarly and popularly accessible view on the interpretation of historic events. A volume of additional material included in the series “Teaching the History of South-eastern Europe” (*Nastava istorije Jugoistočne Evrope*), which focuses on the Ottoman Empire, states that in 1389 the Ottomans defeated “a coalition led by Prince Lazar.”¹ It should be noted that the authors did not define any other medieval battle as “coalitional.”² In his book *Serbia: The History Behind*

1 *Istorijska čitanka 1, Osmansko carstvo*, ured. H. Bergtaj, B. Murgesku, Podgorica, 2012, 26.

2 The authors of this handbook seem to have tried to find a compromise between critical historiography and the narratives in the schoolbooks of various Balkan states.

the Name, which aims to explore national stereotypes, deconstruct myths, and even contribute to the creation of a new Serbian cultural pattern, despite claiming in the foreword to having been “kindly taught” early history by the renowned medieval scholar Sima Ćirković, the British historian Stevan K. Pavlowitch states: “There, on the narrower field of Kosovo near Priština, on 15 June (St. Guy’s day, or Vidovdan), he confronted a coalition of Serbian lords under Lazar, with contingents sent by King Tvrtko of Bosnia, and a diverse collection of knights and other warriors that included Albanians, Vlachs, Bulgars and sundry opponents of Sigismund of Luxemburg who had sought refuge in Tvrtko’s realm. The battle was not as catastrophic as later legend would suggest. Closer to a draw, it was nevertheless a great massacre in which both Lazar and Murad died, and which impressed contemporaries as a portentous event.”³

When learning about the Battle of Kosovo in Kosovo, Albanian school-children are taught that “Millosh Kopiliq is said to have assassinated the sultan, but since the sources are vague on this point, his ethnicity remains unclear and historians have yet to reach final conclusions regarding many other questions (*authors’ note*: concerning the Battle of Kosovo).⁴

Albanian educational institutions in Kosovo and Metohija have allowed an elementary school textbook currently in use to include the following statement: “In the second half of the 14th century, Albanian, Serbian, Bulgarian, Romanian and other lords formed a military alliance headed by the Serbian Prince Lazar to ward off the persecution of the Ottoman authorities, and Albanian regiments took part in this alliance led by their princes: Muzaka, Balsha, and others. In 1389, in the vicinity of Pristina, a wild battle took place, in which the fighter Millosh

3 S. Pavlowitch, *Serbia: the History behind the Name*, London, 2002, 9–10 (in Serbian edition: C. K. Павловић, *Србија, историја иза имена*, Београд, 2004, 20). In Conclusion Pavlowitch was even more precise: “The battle of Kosovo in 1389 was fought not between a Serbian and a Turkish army, but between two feudal leagues of no clear ethnic loyalty.” Ibid, 227.

Pavlowitch is not alone in these views. In the series *Histories of the Modern Nations* published by Greenwood Press, John K. Cox, who teaches at a Jesuit college, describes the Battle of Kosovo in an attempt to “help explain Serbian behaviour today.” Introduced as an expert on the topics of the Holocaust and World War One, this author underlines that “there were also certainly Bosnians and Albanians who were Christian at the time” among the Christian contingent in the battle of 1389, although “in the mindset of hardcore Serbian nationalists today, all Muslim populations in the Balkans share the ‘guilt’ of the conquering Turks.” J. K. Cox, *The History of Serbia*, Connecticut – London, 2002, 29–31.

4 F. Rexhepi, D. Frashër, *Historia 5*, Prishtina, 2013, 25–36; I. Bicaj, A. Salihu, *Historia 7*, Prishtina, 2013, 40–52, 55–57; F. Rexhepi, D. Frashër, *Historia 10*, Prishtina, 2013, 155–168. There is extensive literature on the death of Sultan Murad and the emergence of the story of Miloš Obilić, suggesting that the authors of this book not only failed to take this into account but also seem to have cared little about methodology and the rules of proposing and verifying academic hypotheses.

Kopili of the Kopilij village in Drenica is believed to have killed Sultan Murad. Both armies suffered heavy losses. The Albanian nobleman Muzaka⁵ was also killed in this battle, along with many princes from other realms. By the end of the war, the Balkan armies were defeated. The Ottomans continued to take control of Balkan lands one by one.”⁶

However, such a narrative first needed to be formulated. One of the prominent revisionists of the history of the Battle of Kosovo, Anna di Lellio, whose work will be discussed in more detail below, in 2009 wrote very decisively about the difference in the approach of Albanian historiography and Albanian schoolbooks, which “dedicate no more than half a page” to the Battle of Kosovo, and the most recent edition of an “Albanian history textbook... which draws on Ottoman sources more explicitly.”⁷ Albanian textbooks, the author notes, do not provide other information except the date of the battle; however, in the historiography of Albanian Kosovo, the battle had already been described as “an extraordinary event in which the participation of Albanian nobleman has been conclusively proven.”⁸ As we have seen, it was not long before the schoolbooks of Kosovo Albanians showed an interest in these new interpretations.

The Battle of Kosovo: from scholarship to nation

In his well-known study published in 1989, Sima Ćirković clearly and convincingly demonstrates that, except a symbolic number of mercenaries who might have fought in the battle, the Christian side at the Field of Kosovo in 1389 did not include any combatants but those from Prince Lazar’s medieval Serbia

5 In this study, it will suffice to name two feudal lords who might have been ethnic Albanians (*Arbanasi*): Đurađ II Stratimirović Balšić and Theodor I Muzaka (also spelled Musachi), whom some 20th-century authors have associated with the Battle of Kosovo. On various occasions, these two personages are mentioned together or individually. However, as contemporary sources do not mention Muzaka’s contribution to the battle (he is absent even in the most exhaustive modern-day study about the participants in the Battle of Kosovo, see P. Михаљчић, *Јунаци косовске легенде*, Београд, 1989. The hypothesis about his participation in the battle is based on a younger Albanian source of second-rate importance, which will be discussed below in more detail. Curiously, this 16th-century source does mention Theodor I Muzaka but contains no reference to Prince Lazar.

6 S. Gashi, *The History of Kosovo in the history textbooks of Kosovo, Albania, Serbia, Montenegro and Macedonia*, Prishtinë, 2016, 33. The author of this comparative overview (of Serbian, Albanian – including Kosovo and Albania, Macedonian and Montenegrin textbooks) describes the narratives of all five textbooks but fails to call attention to the fact that only Albanian textbooks contain fallacious and disproven reports about the Battle of Kosovo. *Ibid.*, 35–39.

7 A. di Lelio, *Bitka na Kosovu u albanskom epu*, Beograd, 2010, 30; A. Di Lellio, *The Battle of Kosovo 1389, An Albanian Epic*, London, 2009.

8 *Ibid.*, 31.

and from Bosnia.⁹ However, contemporary events have led many scholars to present this otherwise clear and precise academic topic as a struggle between two myths and two historiographies.¹⁰ For example, the Russian scholar Evgeniy A. Koloskov attempts to place the Serbian and Albanian historiography into the same chronological and developmental framework, dividing the 25 years after the 600th anniversary of the Battle of Kosovo (marked in 1989) into three periods, mostly based on the important events that have marked the recent history of the Republic of Serbia. The first period covers the last decade of the 20th century (1989-2000); the second spans from 2000 to 2013; and the third from 2013 on.¹¹ In doing so, Koloskov does not show that the interpretations and narratives about this topic in Serbian historiography have changed in any way during the 25 years under examination.

Major syntheses and encyclopedias

The scope and nature of this shift in the interpretation of the Battle of Kosovo are also evidenced by two extensive synthetic histories of the Middle Ages. The *Cambridge Medieval History*¹² (1923) includes a special chapter on the Battle of Kosovo and offers a truthful description of the event based on historical sources.¹³ It does not mention the participation of other Balkan nations, not even the alliance between King Tvrtko I and Prince Lazar, and emphasizes that Sultan Murad was killed by a young Serb called Miloš. The chapter “The rise of the Ottomans” in the *New Cambridge Medieval History, Vol. 6*, published 85 years later, claims that at Kosovo the Ottoman troops led by Murad clashed with the Serbian “king” Lazar and the Bosnian king Tvrtko. Although he mentions Lazar

9 S. Ćirković, *O snazi i sastavu Lazarevog tabora na Kosovu*, *Vojnoistorijski glasnik* XL/2 (1989), 161–162.

10 E. Колосков, *Косовский миф в современной сербской и албанской историографии: этапы и основные тенденции*, *Studia Slavica et Balcanica Petropolitana* 20/2 (2016), 152–168.

11 Ibid, 153.

12 *The Cambridge Medieval History, The Eastern Roman Empire (717–1453)*, Vol. 4, planned by J. B. Bury, J. R. Tanner, C. W. Previté-Orton, Z. N. Brook (eds.), Cambridge, 1923.

13 Ibid, 672–673. The author of Chapter 21 (*The Ottoman Turks to the Fall of Constantinople*) of the *Cambridge Medieval History* was Sir Edwin Pears (1835–1919), British barrister, author and historian. E. Pears was an authority on Ottoman history who had spent decades living and working in Istanbul. His letters sent during the April Uprising in Bulgaria were published in Britain and aroused protests led by William E. Gladstone. *Pears, Sir Edwin (1835–1919)*, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (online ed.), <https://www.oxforddnb.com/view/10.1093/ref:odnb/9780198614128.001.0001/odnb-9780198614128-e-35437;jsessionid=5103F58322A4BB411F0E9C74FFDA0D99>, (accessed on 22 July 2020).

more frequently, the author does write about the “Bosnian-Serbian alliance.”¹⁴ This history mentions the Battle of Kosovo four times. As this is a co-authored work, just thirty pages later, in the chapter more loosely titled “Christians and Muslims in the eastern Mediterranean,” a different author notes that the Turks won “... an even more significant victory when they defeated the forces gathered by an alliance of the Christian rulers in the Balkans at Kosovo.”¹⁵ The portrayal of the Battle of Kosovo in the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* underwent a similar evolution. The first edition of this old encyclopaedia – which has had the strongest global impact despite not being the oldest – in which Serbia was given an entry was the eleventh edition (1842). In the 20th volume, Serbia is described in a few sentences as a “province of European Turkey.” As for history, it mentions a period of “Christian rule” from 1718 to 1739.¹⁶ Two editions later, the editors’ attitude towards Serbia changed completely. By that time, Serbia had become an internationally recognized kingdom. An extensive chapter on the history of Serbia included a description of the Battle of Kosovo as an utter defeat of the Serbs, with the author cautiously noting that there are stories about the treason of Vuk Branković and the “glorious self-immolation of Miloš Obilić.”¹⁷ In the edition of 1911, the entry on Serbia was written by the Serbian economist, historian, politician and author Čedomilj Mijatović, who until 1903 served as the envoy in Great Britain. In this edition, the focus was on the Battle of Kosovo, and it was interpreted from the vantage point of contemporary historical scholarship.¹⁸ The narrative from the earlier edition was retained.

The *Britannica Concise Encyclopedia* (2006) includes a separate entry on the Battle of Kosovo. Here the battle is described as a “Serbian defeat” and

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- 14 *The New Cambridge Medieval History*, Vol. 6, (c. 1300–1415), M. Jones (eds.), Cambridge, 2006/2008, 853.
- 15 *Ibid*, 882–883. Interestingly, the author of the first contribution (*The rise of the Ottomans*), the Turkish historian I. Metin Kunt (1942) is a well-respected expert on Ottoman history and the author of the following synthetic works: *The Cambridge History of Turkey*, Vol 4, R. Kasaba, M. Kunt (general editor), K. Fleet, S. N. Faroqhi, Cambridge, 2012; I. M. Kunt, Ch. Woodhead, *Suleyman the Magnificent and His Age: The Ottoman Empire in the Early Modern World*, London, 2014; the second chapter, the one with a wider focus, was penned by Peter Edbury, a professor at Cardiff University who specializes in the Crusades, the Latin East, medieval Cyprus, and Old French literature from the Latin East.
- 16 *The Encyclopaedia Britannica: or, Dictionary of Arts, Sciences, and General Literature*, 7th edition, 20 volume, ed. by M. Napier, Edinburgh, 1842, 158.
- 17 *The Encyclopaedia Britannica: A Dictionary of Arts, Sciences, and General Literature*, 9th edition, 21 volume, ed. by T. Spencer Baynes and W. Robertson Smith, Edinburgh, 1886, 689.
- 18 Mijatović authored the first scholarly biography of Despot Đurađ Branković, Prince Lazar’s grandson. *The Encyclopaedia Britannica: A Dictionary of Arts, Sciences, Literature and General Information*, 11th edition, ed. H. Chisholm, Cambridge-London, 1911, 692.

the beginning of Serbia's three-century-long vassalage.¹⁹ However, the entry on Priština notes that it was the capital of the Serbian state (an incorrect statement, since it was the capital of Vuk Branković's lands) before the "Turks defeated the Balkan Christian armies in the Battle of Kosovo in 1389."²⁰ In the *Britannica Student Encyclopedia*, published under the *Encyclopedia Britannica* franchise, the Battle of Kosovo appears only in the entries about Kosovo, Montenegro and Serbia. Although it repeats the misconception of the earlier editions that Kosovo was the center of the Serbian kingdom and that until 1389 Priština served as its capital, it does state that these areas developed different identities after the Battle of Kosovo.²¹

The editions of very extensive and old encyclopedias, such as the *Grande Encyclopédie Larousse*, did not harmonize entries written by authors with different educational backgrounds who used different sources to portray the same topics, in this case the Battle of Kosovo. For instance, the entry on Murad I states that the "kings of Hungary, Bosnia, Serbia, Wallachia and Bulgaria" fought against the Ottomans on the Maritsa (Chernomen) in 1363 and 1371 and at Kosovo on 15 June 1389. However, the author states that it was Miloš Obilić, a Serb, who killed the sultan.²² The entry on the Palaiologan dynasty and the crisis of Byzantium merely reports that after the Battle of Kosovo Serbia became an Ottoman vassal.²³ In the entry on Serbia, the narrative is fully based on historical sources and methodology. King Tvrtko is mentioned as Prince Lazar's ally in his struggle to establish order in the north of the country. The prince's allies in the battle, which would go on to acquire tremendous significance for the Serbian people, are not discussed.²⁴

Rather indicatively, one of the most important German-language encyclopedias, the *Brockhaus' Konversations Lexikon* from the late 19th century, writes about an "alliance of princes", Balša, Branković and Prince Lazar, who fought

19 *Britannica Concise Encyclopedia, Encyclopædia Britannica*, Chicago – London – New Delhi – Paris – Seoul – Sydney – Taipei – Tokyo, 2006, 1051.

20 *Ibid*, 1549.

21 *Britannica Student Encyclopedia*, Chicago – London – New Delhi – Paris – Seoul – Sydney – Taipei – Tokyo, 2010, Vol. 7, 86; Vol. 8, 155; Vol. 10, 175; Vol. 12, 72.

22 *La Grande Encyclopédie Larousse*, Vol. 15, Paris, 1975, 8075.

23 *Ibid*, 8153.

24 *La Grande Encyclopédie Larousse*, Vol. 18, Paris, 1976, 10054.

against the Turks in 1389.²⁵ Thirteen years later, the editors of the new edition reprinted the same text.²⁶

Scholarly encyclopedias usually do not discuss the composition of the Serbian army in the Battle of Kosovo. Drawing on interpretations of the sources and their academic criticism, they generally opt to portray the matter based on the existing literature.²⁷

The internalization of the Battle of Kosovo of 1389: a historical overview Yugoslavization

Any account of the Yugoslavization of the Battle of Kosovo should start with its first historical appropriation, a proto-internationalization of sorts: the historical interpretation of the Battle of Kosovo by Ante Starčević, one of the progenitors of the Croatian national movement, who has been seen as the “father of the homeland” by many of his modern compatriots in the last hundred years. In his book *The Slavo-Serbian Race in Croatia (Pasmína Slavoserbska po Hervatskoj)*, Starčević leaves no room for any Serbian participation in the Battle of Kosovo. “At this destruction of homes in the neighbourhood, the king of Bosnia and Kastriotić rose with their Croats [Hervati] and Albanians [Shqiptar], and many Bulgars and Romanians. In 1389, a vast Christian army assembled in Kosovo. This army was certain to win and hence the suggestion to attack at night was discarded so that not a single Turk could escape in the darkness.”²⁸

Starčević is no less certain when it comes to the role of Miloš Obilić. Rather indicatively, he accepts his Albanian ethnicity as long as he “proves himself a Croat” at the decisive moment. “One Kastriotić started to flee. Miloš Kobilić proved himself a Croat, and the Turk himself, against his own compatriot, stood up to defend his honesty and glory.”²⁹

As we have seen, there was a political influence on the interpretation of the Battle of Kosovo in German scholarship even a hundred years ago. However, this phenomenon was also present in Serbia and other Yugoslav states and persisted even after the triumph of critical historiography in Serbia in the late 19th century.

25 *Brockhaus' Konversations-Lexikon*, Vol. 14, Rusedheim – Sorrus, Leipzig, Berlin und Wien, 1898, 872.

26 *Brockhaus' Konversations-Lexikon*, Rudera – Sorrus, Leipzig, 1908, 872.

27 A good example is the *Dictionary of the Middle Ages*, Vol. 11, Scandinavian languages – Textiles Islamic, Editor in Chief R. Strayer, New York, 1988, 180.

28 A. Starčević, *Pasmína Slavoserbska po Hervatskoj*, Zagreb, 1876, 30.

29 *Ibid.*

In the first decades of the 20th century, historians strove to find precursors of the Yugoslav unification. Vladimir Ćorović writes that “Yugoslav lands” were united under Tvrtko I. His comments in his synthetic work *The History of Yugoslavia* are rather explicit: “In Lazar’s army, an entire wing was comprised of Bosnian auxiliary troops led by Vlatko Vuković. Together with the Bosnians, Croats also came to aid Lazar as their ally – ‘crusaders’ led by John of Palisna who, as the prior of Vrana, commanded a contingent of the Knights Hospitaller. As if led by a deep premonition of the importance of this event, at one of the most fateful moments in our history, Serbs and Croats came together in a battle against a single enemy whom they would share for centuries. The Serbian lords from Macedonia, who were Turkish vassals, could not join their threatened brethren and mount a joint effort to break down the yoke of the new invader. Of course, this was in part due to their fear of the imposing Turkish force that advanced on Kosovo, from whence it could operate towards Serbia or Bosnia, as needed. However, it should be noted that it was in part also due to the lack of true national solidarity and the lost concept of the state as a whole as a result of pursuing particular interests. Self-centred individuals could not yet comprehend that the loss of the main state center and its significance would, in turn, make their position more precarious and weaker; Konstantin Dejanović even hosted the Turkish army as it passed through his lands on its way to Kosovo and supplied it with auxiliary troops. There are no reliable reports about the behaviour of King Marko.”³⁰

It was precisely on the critical assessment of sources and the critical deconstruction of the Kosovo myth that the Serbian critical historiography developed and matured. In the 1890s, the critical branch of Serbian historiography emerged victorious and assumed the dominant role at the Grand School in Belgrade (renamed the University of Belgrade in 1905), the Serbian Royal Academy and other institutions. One of the leading protagonists of critical historiography, who in their interpretations of medieval Serbian history insisted on a methodological critique of the extant sources and scholarly analysis of folk traditions, was Konstantin Josef Jireček, professor at the University of Vienna and an Austro-Hungarian subject. However, just like some politicized interpretations of the Battle of Kosovo in the abovementioned example from the *Brockhaus’ Konversations Lexikon*, a “Yugoslav” interpretation of the battle gradually emerged in Serbian historiography.

Although the communist regime (in power since 1945) eventually gave up on the concept of a Yugoslav nation, a shared narrative of interpreting the past and

30 В. Ђоровића, *Историја Југославије*, Београд, 1933, [https://sr.wikisource.org/wiki/%D0%98%D1%81%D1%82%D0%BE%D1%80%D0%B8%D1%98%D0%B0_%D0%88%D1%83%D0%B3%D0%BE%D1%81%D0%BB%D0%B0%D0%B2%D0%B8%D1%98%D0%B5_\(%D0%92_%D0%8B%D0%BE%D1%80%D0%BE%D0%B2%D0%B8%D1%9B\)_2.21](https://sr.wikisource.org/wiki/%D0%98%D1%81%D1%82%D0%BE%D1%80%D0%B8%D1%98%D0%B0_%D0%88%D1%83%D0%B3%D0%BE%D1%81%D0%BB%D0%B0%D0%B2%D0%B8%D1%98%D0%B5_(%D0%92_%D0%8B%D0%BE%D1%80%D0%BE%D0%B2%D0%B8%D1%9B)_2.21), (accessed on 08 August 2020).

constructing a shared historical consciousness could not but endure. Published in 1953, the *History of the Peoples of Yugoslavia* offers the following description of the composition of the Serbian side in the Battle of Kosovo of 1389: "Sensing that Bosnia was no less threatened than Serbia, Tvrtko provided military aid to Prince Lazar. He halted his conquest of Dalmatia and sent his army to Serbia under the command of Duke Vlatko Vuković. A regiment of Croats led by John of Palisna seems to have arrived together with the Bosnians. Among the Serbian feudal lords who came to Lazar's aid, the most prominent was Vuk Branković, on whose territory the battle took place. Lazar's nephews Stefan and Lazar Musić also stood by their uncle. It remains unknown if his other son-in-law, Đurađ Stracimirović Balšić, took part in the battle. Later Turkish reports that Prince Lazar was aided by Bulgarians, Albanians, Wallachians, Hungarians, Germans and Czechs are completely fictitious: the Turkish victory needed to be portrayed as hard-fought and momentous as possible. The clash took place on St. Vitus' Day, 15 June 1389, in the vicinity of Priština. The deployment of the troops is known to us only through later reports, which are impossible to verify in contemporary sources, although they seem credible enough. The sultan himself commanded the core of the Turkish army, which was certainly stationed around Murad's own camp. The European troops were on the right wing and were led by Bayezid, while the Asian troops on the left were commanded by Yakub. Lazar, with the bulk of his army, faced Murad. Vuk Branković led the right wing of the Serbian army (facing Yakub) and Vlatko Vuković with his Bosnians comprised the left wing (facing Bayezid). The course of the battle is little known. The Serbs seem to have had some initial success in the confusion among the Turkish troops when 'someone, very heroically' – in later reports this person was identified as Miloš Kobilić (Obilić) – 'who was later vilified by envious people and suspected of being an infidel', pretending to be a defector to the Turkish side, killed Sultan Murad."³¹

Here the author makes a distinction between unconfirmed and later reports about the composition of the Serbian army. It "seems" that a regiment of Croats led by John of Palisna arrived together with the Bosnians, but the later Turkish reports about the involvement of various peoples in a wide European and Christian coalition that purportedly fought against the Ottomans in Kosovo are "completely fictitious."

This "Yugoslavization" process, albeit limited and associated with a handful of authors, was more conspicuous in art. The author of the entry about the Battle of Kosovo in the *National Serbo-Croat-Slovene Encyclopedia* did not support such a hypothesis. He mentions "Serbs and Bosnians" as participants and among the Serbian contingent distinguishes those "...from Morava, Stari Vlah, Podrinje,

31 *Historija naroda Jugoslavije*, eds. B. Grafenauer, D. Perović, J. Šidak, Zagreb, 1953, 450–451.

Braničevo, Kučevo, Bosnians, Zachlumians, Kosovans and the inhabitants of the Drina Valley.”³²

Ćorović’s interpretation was not fully accepted in textbooks. For example, in the early 1930s, they depict the battle truthfully but include John Horvat among the participants although his presence has not been historically proven. Writing about the Serbian army, the author pointedly says “our army”, which in the age of integral Yugoslavism could have meant “Yugoslav.”³³ The textbook *General History of the Middle Ages* for the sixth grade of elementary school mentions the support sent by King Tvrtko of Bosnia, and John of Palisna and the “Croatian crusaders”, but does not make other efforts to prove the “Yugoslav” nature of the Battle of Kosovo.³⁴

Ottoman sources about the Battle of Kosovo were known by that time and many authors thought it opportune to show the unity of Balkan peoples against foreign invaders (the enemies of Christianity and the Western civilization). In 1915, Woislav M. Petrovitch, an eccentric Serbian diplomat, polyglot, librarian at the New York Public Library and eventually a Montenegrin separatist, wrote that large contingents of Albanians and Hungarians had come to Lazar’s aid.³⁵ In her MA thesis about nationalism in Serbia (1933), Eleanor Darmedy writes about the Battle of Kosovo, describing a coalition of “Bulgarians, Romanians, Bosnians and Hungarians” gathered around Prince Lazar (“Tsar Sajar”, sic!), citing works by Woislav M. Petrovitch and Čedomilj Mijatović.³⁶

By the mid 20th century, all now known Ottoman sources about the Battle of Kosovo had already been published and critically assessed. The oldest among them was the *Iskendername* by Taceddin İbrahim ibn Hizr Ahmedi. Completed in March 1390, it was contemporaneous with the battle, but its author lived in the far-off town of Kütahya in Asia Minor.³⁷ Ahmedi is rather vague when it comes to the composition of the Serbian army: “He conquered the land of Rûm. He made

32 *Narodna enciklopedija srpsko-hrvatsko-slovenačka, II vol.*, ed. S. Stanojević, Zagreb, 1926, 439.

33 Ђ. Лазаревић, *Историја за III разред грађанских школа*, Београд, 1937, 57.

34 Л. М. Сухотин, *Општа историја средњег века, за шести разред средњих школа, прегледао, допунио и предговор написао* Ј. Радонић, Београд, 1934, 148.

35 W. M. Petrovitch, *Serbia: her People, History and Aspirations*, London, 1915, 61. Influential in the UK and US on account of his sharp intellect and multilingualism, Petrovitch wrote on the same page that Pločnik, the site of Prince Lazar’s previous battle with the Ottomans, was located in the “hills of Montenegro.”

36 E. F. Darmedy, *Nationalism in Serbia since French Revolution*, Unpublished thesis, In partial fulfillment of requirements for the degree of Master of education, School of Education, Boston University, 1933, 17.

37 А. Олеснички, *Турски извори о Косовском боју, Покушај критичке анализе њихова садржаја и узајамне консекутивне везе*, Гласник Скопског научног друштва XIV (1935), 60.

their begs his servants. Finally, he coveted the Lāz; necessarily, a battle began between them. The fire-worshippers³⁸ and the Christians, everyone between here and the west, sent innumerable soldiers to the Lāz [as auxiliaries] so that they would fight with Gāzī Murad, and destroy his existence.”³⁹

Sixty years later, Oruç Bey, a scribe from Edirne, wrote about the Battle of Kosovo. In his far more specific description of Lazar’s camp at Kosovo, there is a poorly hidden tendency to portray the Serbian army as large as possible: “The despot Laz-oglu also took many mercenaries from Serbia (Syrf), Laz, Albania, Bosnia and Hungary. Having recruited soldiers from every people, he came to Kosovo.”⁴⁰

The next work was the anonymous *Tarihi Al-i Osman* completed in 1512, which repeats Oruç Bey’s report about mercenaries from the ranks of other peoples and/or ethnic groups.⁴¹

It was Oruç’s contemporary Shukrullāh, who wrote in Persian, who replaced the word “mercenaries” with “coalition allies”: “When he, Murad, had done all that pertains to the afterlife, he once again embarked on a conquest of Rumelia, fully committing to a holy war against the infidels. This time he set out for the land of Laz. The lord (melik) Laz heard [of this], and sent word to the infidels of the Western lands, seeking help. The Wallachians, Hungarians, Czechs, Serbs, Albanians, Hungarians and Franks sent troops. More than a hundred thousand infidels came together bearing various arms. The armies met and fought a battle never seen by the heavens since they began turning.”⁴²

A fourth and even later Ottoman source on the Battle of Kosovo is the historian Neşri, who writes that “troops from Wallachia, Hungary, Bohemia, and Albanians, Bulgars and Franks came” to Lazar’s aid.⁴³ Finally, a fifth medieval author – Sa’düddin – added Poles (Lech) and Moldavians (Bogdan) to this group. Olesnicki concludes that later authors simply listed all peoples neighbouring the Ottoman Empire in their own time.⁴⁴ It should be borne in mind that the Ot-

38 Taken more widely, this could mean “infidels” as well as Zoroastrians (“fire-worshippers”). The English translation of the quote is taken from K. Silay, *Ahmedi’s History of the Ottoman Dynasty*, *Journal of Turkish Studies* 16 (1992), 142.

39 A. Олесниџки, *Турски извори о Косовском боју*, 60. There is no mention here of either Albanians or other peoples who fought in the battle. The emphasis is on the claim that the Serbian army was large and, in a way, representative of the whole Christendom.

40 Ibid, 64.

41 Ibid, 69.

42 Ibid, 73.

43 Ibid, 87.

44 Ibid.

toman chronicles that mention Albanians in the context of the Battle of Kosovo of 1389 were written during the lifetime of the first Albanian figure with wider relevance for the history of the Balkans – Skenderbeg/Skënderbej. Besides the need to depict the only time in Ottoman history when a sultan was killed in battle as momentous and important as possible, this fact certainly played a role in the integration of Albanians into Ottoman historical memory and the reinterpretation of earlier history.

Internationalization

Ottoman sources influenced the earliest scholarly syntheses of Ottoman history. It was much later that, with the emergence of modern historiography, historians began to include contemporaneous Byzantine, Serbian and other sources, subjecting them to critical analysis.⁴⁵ This was still the case when, in the early 19th century, Joseph von Hammer-Purgstall wrote his influential *Geschichte des osmanischen Reiches* (History of the Ottoman Empire).⁴⁶ Although he did come closer to a scholarly historical interpretation, analyzing many different sources of various provenances, he writes about “seven languages” (Serbs, Bulgarians, Bosnians, Albanians, Wallachians, Poles and, as he claims based on Ottoman sources, Hungarians) who fought on the Christian side.⁴⁷

Things changed over the course of the 19th century as history made advances as a discipline. In their entry about the history of the Ottoman Empire, the authors of a British lexicon published towards the middle of the 19th century, write about the Battle of Kosovo based on Byzantine sources but describe the

45 17th and 18th century Western authors uncritically repeat the claims of later Ottoman sources about the composition of the Christian army at Kosovo in 1389. See, for example: G. Sagredo, *Memorie istoriche de Monarchi Ottomani*, Venetia, 1678 – who, admittedly, only mentions Wallachians, Bosnians and Bulgarians as the participants. Richard Knolles, the author of the earliest play about the Battle of Kosovo, in his history of the Turks, compiled 40 years before Sagredo published his book, writes extensively about the Battle of Kosovo, describing it as a war waged against the Ottomans by the “despot” of Serbia and king of Bosnia. Describing the belligerent sides in the “main” battle, he says that “Lazar” deployed Italians, Valachians, Hungarians, Bohemians and Bulgarians on both Christian wings. R. Knolles, *The Generall Historie of the Turkes, from the first beginning of that Nation to the rising of the Ottoman Familie with all the notable expeditions of the Christian Princes against them, together with the Lives and Conqvests of the Othoman Kings and Emperours*, London, 1638, 199–200.

46 J. von Hammer-Purgstall, *Geschichte des osmanischen Reiches, grossentheils aus bisher unbenützten Handschriften und Archiven Von der Gründung des osmanischen Reiches bis zum Tode Selim's I. 1300–1520*, Pesth, 1840.

47 Hammer devotes special attention to Miloš Obilić, whom he calls Milosch Kobilovitsch. Ibid, 177, 179.

sultan's assassin as a "Servian or Albanian soldier", while claiming that insurgent Serbia "in conjunction with Hungary, Wallachia, Dalmatia, Croatia and Albania."⁴⁸

The statistical frequency of references to the nouns Kosovo/Kossova, Servian and Albanian in contemporaneous English-language newspapers shows that national and historical entries were closely tied to political interests, classical education and social trends. For instance, in the 19th century, in 55 Australian newspapers, the noun "Kosovo" appears 26 times, with 11 of those references published in the 1890s.⁴⁹ The version "Kossova" appears in as many as 74 articles (mostly in the 1890s and with 80% appearing between 1880 and 1901). In the first half of the 19th century, "Albania" – at the time designating only a term of historical geography – was mentioned in 38 articles. "Servia" – the place where the largest revolt in the history of the Ottoman Empire took place (1804-1813) and an autonomous territory involved in international developments – appeared no more than 50 times. This phenomenon is even more conspicuous if we consider the possessive adjectives "Albanian" and "Servian." In the first half of the 19th century, Australian newspapers used the adjective "Albanian" as many as 148 times and "Servian" no more than 87. Therefore, due to having a name associated with the history of Latin Christianity and Western European Middle Ages, Albania was disproportionately more present in the contemporaneous press.⁵⁰

This did not have a more significant impact on the emerging national consciousness of modern Albanians in the early 20th century. On behalf of all Albanians, in October 1918, Christo A. Dako addressed a memorandum that contained a reference to the Battle of Kosovo as the "sentimental demand of Serbia" to the US president Woodrow Wilson and the diplomacies of the Entente Great Powers. The "sentimental demand of Albanians" (not of "Albania", *author's note*) was not

48 *Encyclopaedia Metropolitana: Or Universal Dictionary of Knowledge... Comprising the Twofold advantage of a Philosophical and an Alphabetical Arrangement*, Vol. XII, London, 1845, 280. In another volume history of Serbia was presented with just mentioning its existence as "an independent state" "from 630 to 1365" and the Ottoman rule that followed. "Servia", *Ibid*, Vol. XXIV, 503–504. The same year, a sermon delivered in Great Britain used the Battle of Kosovo as an illustrative example. According to its author, the war against the sultan was waged by the "combined Christian armies of Europe and Asia", while the sultan was killed by a "wounded Albanian knight, Miles Cobelitz". *To the Christian People of Great Britain*, The Melbourne Courier, 4 July 1845, 4.

49 Australia is, we believe, a good example for this analysis, since at this time its press reported filtered news from the majority of British, American and, to a lesser extent, Western European papers.

50 Trove, collections from Australian libraries, universities, museums, galleries and archives, <https://trove.nla.gov.au/search/advanced/category/newspapers>, (accessed on 18 August 2020).

the same battle but, quite the contrary, the victory of the pasha of Skadar over the sultan's army in 1786.⁵¹

At the time when peace was being re-established in Europe, however, Western authors seem to have had little doubt in the historical interpretation of the history of the Balkans. In the book *The Resurrected Nations*, Isaac Don Levine mentions Kosovo only in the context of "Jugoslav" history. Levine writes: "The crisis came in 1389. The Serbian Tsar, Lazar, realized the acute situation and made a desperate appeal to all the Yugoslav chiefs and princes to come to his support. King Tvrtko, of Bosnia, was among those who heeded the call of Serbia. On the plain of Kosovo, the "Field of Blackbirds", two contending forces met. On one side were the hordes of Moslems; on the other, the Yugoslav kings, chiefs, nobles and soldiers."⁵²

In a well-known book on the history of Albania published in Tirana in 1964, at the height of Enver Hoxha's power, medieval history was covered only symbolically.⁵³ Despite referring to Serbian emperors of that period, the author failed to mention Prince Lazar and the Albanian nobles who fought against the Ottomans. While he describes these rulers as "Serbian", he does not designate the nobles Karl Thopia and Balša II as "Albanian."⁵⁴

The shift seems to have come from abroad. In a book published by the Assembly of Captive European Nations in 1964, the Battle of Kosovo was not included in its historical overview. "Kossova and Metohija" are described as "Albanian-populated regions [...] which Albania has always claimed as integral parts of the nation."⁵⁵ Six years later, two Swedish authors seemed very certain about "whose" the Battle of Kosovo was. Offering little in the way of explanation and historical introduction, for instance, about the Albanian medieval state and nobility, the authors write: "On August 29⁵⁶, 1389, the decisive battle was fought

51 C. A. Dako, *Albania's Rights Hopes and Aspirations, The Strength of National Consciousness of Albanian People*, Boston, 1918, 12; In his book *Albania, Past and Present*, Constantine A. Chekrezi mentions Kosovo (Kossova) eight times; besides the battle from the late 18th century, he mentions other events associated with this toponym and vilayet. C. A. Chekrezi, *Albania, Past and Present*, New York, 1919, 42.

52 I. Don Levine, *The Resurrected Nations: Short Histories of the Peoples Freed by the Great War and Settlements of their National Claims*, New York, 1919, 37–38.

53 K. Frasheri, *The History of Albania, A Brief Survey*, Tirana, 1964. Out of 343 pages, the period from the 4th to the 16th century is covered on barely 57 pages, with only six pages devoted to the 14th century.

54 Ibid, 54–55.

55 A. Gegaj, R. Krasniqi, *Assembly of Captive European Nations*, New York, 1964, 29.

56 The Battle of Kosovo took place on 15 June 1389 (Julian calendar). The date has never been a point of contention.

at Kossova. Czar⁵⁷ Lazar of Serbia was at the head of the united armies of the Balkans: a hundred thousand men, Serbs, Bulgarians, Albanians, Romanians. The Albanian nobility was under the command of two princes, Balsha II of Shkodra and Theodor Muzaka of Berati. The forty thousand Turks were led by Sultan Murad I. Czar Lazar was killed in battle. The Balkan army was utterly defeated. Sultan Murad I was murdered by a Serbian during his victory parade. His son Bayazid had himself proclaimed sultan and immediately executed his brother Yakub in order to secure his own power.”⁵⁸ Suggestively titled *Albania Defiant*, this book was written by Jan Myrdal (1927–2020) and Gun Kessle (1926–2007), husband and wife, both well-known Swedish cultural figures (Myrdal was an author and Kessle an artist) and radical leftists. At the time of publication, Myrdal’s ties with communist China, the sole protector of Albania in the 1960s and 1970s, were at their peak.⁵⁹ There can be little doubt that the writing of the book was motivated by the authors’ global views and Albania’s (and consequently China’s) position in it.⁶⁰

However, such interpretations had yet to find their way into the academic discourse. In the early 1980s, a book by the Croatian historian and politician Ivo Banac was published first in English and then in what was then called Serbo-Croat. Banac’s book on the national question in interwar Yugoslavia includes a chapter about Kachaks (Albanian outlaws of the time). Writing about the medieval heritage of Kosovo and Metohija, Banac quotes the Croatian linguist and Milan Šufflay but is in no doubt about the scholarly discourse of the time. He attributes the claim about the “seven kingdoms” that clashed with the Ottomans at the Field of

57 At that point, scholars had known for over a hundred years that Lazar had never been crowned emperor.

58 J. Myrdal, G. Kessle, *Albania Defiant*, New York – London, 1976, 40.

59 Jan Myrdal was the son of two Nobel laureates, Alva Myrdal (née Reimer) and Gunnar Myrdal. He was an author, filmmaker and, above all, political activist until his recent death. *Al-Intiqad’s interview with Swedish intellectual and writer Jan Myrdal*, 28 February 2006, <https://web.archive.org/web/20070927011817/http://www.arabeuropean.org/newsdetail.php?ID=120>, (accessed on 19 August 2020).

60 The Albanian-Chinese alliance ceased to exist in the late 1970s. This episode seems to have had little impact on the popular Chinese perception of history and even less on Chinese historiography. In an overview of the Kosovo Question published in 1999, Jiang Defu, a lecturer at the Department of History of the Jiamusi University, briefly states: “In June 1389, the Ottoman Turks defeated the Serbian kingdom at Kosovo” (姜德福, 科索沃问题的由来, 重要国际问题探源, 世界历史 1999年第2期 113; Contemporaneous papers on anthropological and cultural subjects also leave no room for ambiguity; in the article “European history: memory constructu and the nationalism: Kosovo legends in modern Serbian history” published in the same journal, Huang Yanhong discusses the war between Serbia and the Ottoman Empire and elsewhere quotes Rade Mihaljčić. 黄艳红, 欧洲史: 记忆建构与民族主义: 近代塞尔维亚历史中的科索沃传奇, 世界历史 2019年第5期, 45–46.

Kosovo in 1389 to the “Ottoman tradition” and correctly states that the majority of Albanians converted to Islam over the following centuries and therefore forgot their earlier traditions if any had indeed existed.⁶¹ Writing about the Albanian nobles of the period, Banac mentions the nobility from the territory of the modern-day Republic of Albania – the Arianiti, Muzaka and Dukagjini families, failing to mention the Balšić noble family.⁶²

This was the time when the shift in the discourse took place. C. W. Bracewell, professor at the UCL School of Slavonic and East European Studies, wrote a review of the unambiguously titled book by T. A. Emmert: *Serbian Golgotha: Kosovo, 1389*, emphasizing at the very beginning that it was about a battle between “Christian forces and Ottoman troops.”⁶³

However, uncritical quotes of 16th and 17th century Ottoman sources stemming from scholars specializing in other periods or politically motivated publications are one thing, while an attempt to offer a scholarly justification of a very recent national narrative is quite another. The first to seriously attempt to provide scholarly underpinnings for the premise about the Battle of Kosovo as a conflict between the Ottomans and a wide Balkan coalition seems to have been Muharem Čerabregu.⁶⁴ In 1996, Čerabregu published a book entitled *Distortionism in His-*

61 I. Banac, *The National Question in Yugoslavia, Origins, History, Politics*, London, 1992, 392.

62 Ibid.

63 C. W. Bracewell, T. A. Emmert, *Serbian Golgotha: Kosovo, 1389*, Slavonic and East European Review 71/1 (1993), 164.

64 Muharem Čerabregu belongs to the category of scholars that mostly includes authors of speculative histories of Serbs which claim that the Serbs are the oldest people in the world. Čerabregu attended the University of Priština and the University of Zagreb and holds a PhD in geography. He taught at the University of Priština before relocating to the US as a Fulbright scholar. At the time of the book’s publication, Čerabregu was no longer living in Kosovo and had moved to the US to study computer cartography; in other words, by that time, he had embarked on a career that had little to do with historiography. However, this book proved more influential than his later works. It was probably this book that provided an alternative narrative to Noel Malcolm – a very different narrative than the one he had espoused a few years earlier in his *History of Bosnia*. About the Author, M. Čerabregu, *Geographical Origin of Language: The End of Place Name Mystery*, Pittsburgh, 2006, <https://www.amazon.com/Geographical-Origin-Language-Place-Mystery/dp/0805971246>, (accessed on 29 July 2020). Although the entire idea of Kosovo’s independence rests on the autonomy it was granted in 1974, a few years ago Čerabregu felt called upon to help the national idea by arguing that the optimal delineation with Montenegro would be achieved by using the maps in the *Yugoslav Encyclopedia* of 1962. This border determined by the odious “military experts” was to be “natural and to follow mountain slopes and rivers.” «ПРИЗНАЊЕ НЕЗАВИСНОСТИ НИЈЕ ДОВОЉНО: Албанци са Космета траже део територије Црне Горе!», Србин.инфо, 01 August 2015., <https://srbin.info/politika/priznanje-nezavisnosti-nije-dovoljno-albanci-sa-kosmeta-traze-deo-teritorije->

toriography. 19th century Falsifications. A Contribution to the Historical Geography of Kosovo in New York.⁶⁵ This rather concise book, by an author who does not have an academic background in medieval studies and fails to offer a methodological analysis of the 150-year-long history of international historiographical contributions, challenges the entire history of the Serbian people in the Middle Ages. According to the narrative proposed by Ćerabregu, the Battle of Kosovo in 1389 was fought by various peoples, including Dacians, Poles, Hungarians and Albanians, to defend the Christian West, whereas the Serbs sided with the Ottoman Turks.⁶⁶ In his work, Ćerabregu is disproportionately apodictic given his knowledge of the relevant sources and historical methodology: "Let's clear up the historical facts about The Battle of Kosova. Namely, following existing historical sources about the Kosova battle, the truth is as follows. In reality, the Serbian leaders V. Brankovic and K. Marko accepted negotiations with the Ottomans and reached an agreement under very humble conditions, and both leaders took sides with the Ottoman army. Only Albanians did not accept negotiations and fought to the end." Ćerabregu's book (originally published in 1995 and 1996) is one of three works that the Albanian portal Frosina⁶⁷ lists among the most important sources that support the claim that the Battle of Kosovo was an "episode" in the rich history of medieval Albanians.⁶⁸

crne-gore/, (accessed on 19 July 2020). It is hardly surprising that Ćerabregu had an academic interest in geography, the origin of language, medieval Balkan history, linguistics and "Byzantine churches of Kosova". M. Ćerabregu, *19th Century Historiographical Falsifications Concerning Kosova: a Contribution to the History of Albanian - Byzantine Churches of Kosova*, Self Published, 1995.

65 M. Ćerabregu, *Distortionism in Historiography. 19th century Falsifications. A Contribution to the Historical Geography of Kosovo*, New York, 1996.

66 M. Ekmečić, *Historiography as a Garb Only*, Response to Noel Malcolm's book: *Kosovo: A Short History*, ed. by S. Terzić, Belgrade, 2000, 16.

67 *The Truth about the Battle of Kosova (1389)*, The Frosina Information Network An Albanian Immigrant and Cultural Resource | A Section 501(c)(3) Non-Profit, <https://www.frosina.org/563/>, (accessed on 29 July 2020).

68 Spanning from prehistoric times to the present, Edwin E. Jacques' book on the history of Albanians (1995) not only describes Balša II and Theodor Muzaka as Albanian nobles but also claims that Sultan "Amurat" was killed by an Albanian called Milosh Kopiliq. E. E. Jacques, *The Albanians: An Ethnic History from Prehistoric Times to the Present, Vol. 1-2*, Jefferson, 2009, 171; The third book is a travelogue written based on a journalist's travels in Macedonia (1996); it does not address the role of Albanians in the Battle of Kosovo but does describe the battle itself (despite the widely acknowledged lack of reliable information about the event), referring to Vuk Branković, who withdrew from the clash, as Vuk Brancovic. F. A. Reed, *Salonica Terminus: Travels into the Balkan Nightmare*, Vancouver, 1996, 171-172.

On the eve of the NATO offensive for the independence of Albanian Kosovo in 1998-1999, Noel Malcolm⁶⁹ published his book *Kosovo, A Short History*.⁷⁰ Having previously published *Bosnia: A Short History* (New York University Press, 1994), the author set out to prove the distinctiveness and statehood of Albanian Kosovo. It was Malcolm who gave a scholarly guise to the claim about the role of soldiers who had come from beyond the territory of medieval Serbia and Bosnia in this battle.⁷¹ His primary objective seems to have been to demonstrate that Hungarians and Wallachians fought in the battle on the Christian side and that the heroes of the Kosovo myth, Miloš Obilić and the Jugović brothers⁷², could have had a different ethnic identity, claiming that Obilić could have been of Hungarian or even “Wallachian-Albanian” descent. These claims are based on a linguistic analysis of the last name, ignoring the extensive literature on the Serbian origin of the legendary hero’s first and last name.⁷³ *Kosovo: A Short History* had a remarkably strong influence on Western historiography. Until then mostly present among non-experts, as a peripheral topic in entries of major encyclopedias or in the works of historians that do not specialize in medieval history, after the publication of Malcolm’s book, this premise became a mainstream truism that no longer had to be proven. Although they have no qualms about doing the same thing themselves, very few authors mention the fact that, contrasting Serbian with Albanian historians and Ottoman sources, in his chapter on the Battle of Kosovo, Malcolm states that there is no conclusive evidence to confirm the participation of Albanians in the Battle of Kosovo. It should be noted that Muzaka’s chronicle was

69 Sir Noel Robert Malcolm is a senior research fellow at All Souls College, Oxford. Until the 1990s, the interests of this literary historian with a PhD in history were focused on modern European history. He wrote a biography of Thomas Hobbes. However, it was his interest in the Balkans – driven by his objections to the official British policy – that brought him international recognition. He was knighted in 2014; owing to his clear political views, he has served as the chairman of the Bosnian Institute, London and president of the Anglo-Albanian Association.

70 N. Malcolm, *Kosovo, A Short History*, London, 1998. In 2010, one of the authors of this paper asked Robert M. Kokta, American diplomat and trained historian, if there was a chronicle of the recent history of Kosovo and Metohija and Serbia published by the State Department or an American think tank. Kokta replied that everybody used Malcolm’s book on Kosovo.

71 N. Malcolm, *Kosovo*, 65–74.

72 Scholars agree that the nine Jugović brothers and their father “old Jug Bogdan” are fictional characters.

73 M. Ekmečić, *Historiography by the Garb Only, Response to Noel Malcolm’s book Kosovo. A Short History, London 1998*, Scientific Discussion, 8th October 1999, Institute of History of the Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts: 2000, <https://www.rastko.rs/kosovo/istorija/malcolm/mekmecic-garb.html>, (accessed on 08 August 2020).

later perceived as “confirmed to have been accurate” by Nolem Malcolm himself.⁷⁴ Malcolm writes about the Battle of Kosovo in his *Bosnia: A Short History* but does not discuss the potential role of other peoples or ethnic groups.⁷⁵

In this period, scholars took great pains to be “politically correct”. The renowned anthropologists Joel M. Halpern (University of Massachusetts) and Karl Kaser (University of Graz) gave a scholarly guise to the myth of a coalition-alliance that allegedly clashed with the Ottomans at the Field of Kosovo in 1389, in a paper entitled “Historical Myth and the Invention of Political Folklore in Contemporary Serbia.” In the section “The Historical Context for the 1389 Battle of Kosovo,” they write: “In the spring of 1389 the Ottoman Sultan Mehmet (sic!) decided to pursue further territorial advances. The Serbian Prince Lazar responded by recruiting an opposing army. This force included both Bosnian and Albanian troops.”⁷⁶ The two professors, the former being one of the finest experts on the anthropology of Balkan peoples in this period, offer no sources or secondary literature to substantiate this claim.

74 Despite not being a medieval scholar or Albanologist and not having published papers in these fields, Malcolm has acquired an enviable reputation, as evidenced by the fact that even the Wikipedia entry on Gjon Muzaka reports that his chronicle “mentions several interesting things that were confirmed to have been accurate by Noel Malcolm.” However, the book does not contain any confirmations or evidence and instead offers Malcolm’s personal opinion of this secondary source. *Gjon Muzaka*, Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gjon_Muzaka, (accessed on 08 August 2020). N. Malcolm, *Kosovo*, 62.

75 N. Malcolm, *Bosnia, A Short History*, London, 1994, 20 / N. Malcolm, *Bosna, Kratka povijest*, Sarajevo, 2011, 72–73; M. Ekmečić, *Historiography by the Garb Only*; In a strikingly methodologically bad-written recently published *A Concise History of Bosnia*, the Kosovo Battle was mentioned in Introduction. “Albanian allies” of Prince Lazar were not mentioned, but Christian allies were: “Tvrtko fought with the Serbian Prince Lazar at Battle of Kosovo polje in 1389 and survived the battle (unlike Lazar, who was captured and beheaded). Facing the army of the Ottoman Sultan Murad I many miles south, the battle brought Christian rulers together despite their differences and counter-claims. Like Lazar, Murad was also killed at the battle and possibly assassinated by a Serbian knight, Milos Obilic, and was succeeded by his son Bayezid. In his 1998. novel *Elegy for Kosovo (Tri këngë zie për Kosovën)*, the Albanian novelist Ismail Kadare saw this as a catastrophic turning point and an ominous sign for all the Balkan Christian rulers. ‘Everyone ran. Unknown men, short sword in hand, glared with wild eyes ... Through all the mayhem shreds of violence news were heard.... King Tvrtko, having by now lost his crown, was hurrying back to Bosnia.’” It is unbelievable that the author, the professor of History and Head of the School of History at the University of East Anglia, concerning the Kosovo Battle quoted just a novel written by Albanian contemporary writer Ismail Kadare. It was the probable reason why she wrote that King Tvrtko took part in the Kosovo Battle. C. Carmichael, *A Concise History of Bosnia*, New York, 2015, 12–13.

76 K. Kaser, J. M. Halpern, *Historical myth and the invention of political folklore in contemporary Serbia*, *Anthropology of East Europe Review* 16/1 (1998), 94.

Rather indicatively, in historiographic overviews, the Battle of Kosovo becomes a solely Serbian affair mostly in attempts to prove the historical and/or culturological roots of the crimes committed by the Serbian forces in the wars of the 1990s. In his book *Heavenly Serbia: From Myth to Genocide*, Branimir Anzulović (1999) never mentions that any other Balkan Christians fought in the Battle of Kosovo except the Serbs although the battle serves as one of the cornerstones of his premise.⁷⁷ This approach is hardly alien to Albanian authors. In 2018, Rovena Aliraj submitted a doctoral dissertation to the Armed Forces Academy (AFA) in Tirana entitled “Gjeopolitika serbe në mijëvjeçarin e ri: Ndikimi i saj në sigurinë ballkanike dhe hapësirën shqiptare” (Serbian Geopolitics in the New Millenium, its Influence on Balkan Securty and Albanian territories).⁷⁸ Although she mentions the Battle of Kosovo multiple times, she never describes it as anything other than a Serbo-Ottoman conflict.⁷⁹

On the other hand, the *Historiae e Popullit Shqiptar* (History of the Albanian People), published in 2002 by the Academy of Sciences of Albania, underlines the participation of Albanian nobles in the “anti-Ottoman coalition”, above all that of “Gjergj Balsha II.” Interestingly, the authors refer to the Battle of Kosovo as the “Dardanian” battle (Fushë-Dardanisë). Prince Lazar is mentioned only once, and there is no emphasis on the Serbian role in the battle.⁸⁰

However, Albanian scholars do mention Theodor Muzaka, who seems to have been more important to the authors of textbooks in Kosovo. Gjon Muzaka’s chronicle published in the early 16th century reports: “When Murad the Second took power, he seized Serbia and Bulgaria in a huge onslaught. Lazar, the Despot of Serbia, and King Marko of Bulgaria and Theodore Musachi, the second-born of our family, and the other Lords of Albania united and set off for battle, which the Christians lost. It was there that the above mentioned Theodore, who had a large band of Albanians with him, was slain. The said Lazar of Serbia was taken

77 B. Anzulovic, *Heavenly Serbia: From Myth to Genocide*, New York, 1999, 1, 38, 39, 82, 193; C. Rogel, *Kosovo: Where It All Began*, International Journal of Politics, Culture, and Society 17 (2003), 167–182; The authors of the book *Confronting the Yugoslav Controversies* espouse the same approach: *Confronting the Yugoslav Controversies: A Scholars’ Initiative*, ed. by C. Ingrao, T. A. Emmert, Washington, 2010, 4, 21.

78 R. Aliraj, *Gjeopolitika SERBE NË MIJËVJEÇARIN E RI: NDIKIMI I SAJ NË SIGURINË BALLKANIKE DHE HAPËSIRËN SHQIPTARE*, Unpublished doctoral dissertation, Akademia e forcave të armatosura, fakulteti i sigurisë dhe mbrojtjes, Ministria e mbrojtjes shtabi i përgjithshëm i forcave të armatosura, Tiranë, 2018. Drawing on Anna Di Lellio, the author concludes that the Albanian epic of the Battle of Kosovo, unlike the Serbian version, did not play a central role in the evolution of “national and regional identity”, Ibid, 141.

79 Ibid, 6, 9, 91, 147, 154.

80 *Historiae e Popullit Shqiptar*, Tiranë, 2002, 324.

prisoner and later slain.”⁸¹ This is, then, a younger source narrating the family’s history 126 after the fact. The chronicle also reports that King Marko (described as a Bulgarian king by the author) fought in the Battle of Kosovo, which is certainly not true and has never been a point of contention in scholarship. This account also narrates that Theodor Muzaka died in the Battle of Kosovo, a piece of (mis) information uncritically repeated by the authors who advocate the thesis about the coalitional composition of the Serbian army and the Albanian role in it. Based on a critical examination of the available sources, scholars have long ascertained that Theodor Muzaka was alive in 1390, as evidenced by an inscription on the Church of Christ the Life-Giver in the village of Borje near Korçë in Albania.⁸² The sources confirm that he was still living in 1412, almost 25 years later.⁸³

If they managed to change even the name of the battleground that had been in use until their time, revisionist Albanian scholars could certainly accomplish much more. The question of the role played by Đurađ II Stratimirović Balšić,⁸⁴ Prince Lazar’s son-in-law, was resolved in scholarship a long time ago.⁸⁵ Medieval

81 C. Hopf, *Chroniques gréco-romanes inédits ou peu connues publiées avec notes et tables généalogiques*, Berlin, 1873 (reprint: Athina, 1961); G. Muzaka, ‘Giovanni Musachi di Berat; Breve memoria de li discendenti de nostra casa’ Musachi 1510/1515; J. Musachi, ‘Brief Chronicle on the Descendants of our Musachi Dynasty’, 1515. <https://web.archive.org/web/20100910095427/http://www.albanianhistory.net/texts16-18/AH1515.html> (accessed on 08 August 2020); P. Радић, *Клио се стици, против злостављања историјске науке*, Београд, 2016, 48.

82 В. Ј. Ђурић, *Мали Град – Св. Атанасије у Костуру - Борје*, Зограф 6 (1975), 41–42, 49; P. Радић, *op. cit.*, 49.

83 *Prosopographisches Lexikon der Palaiologenzeit*, VIII, ed. by E. Trapp, Wien, 1986, 43. No 19425; P. Радић, *op. cit.*, 49.

84 Nations did not exist as such in the medieval period, and ethnicity had different characteristics than today. The claim that the Balšić family was an Albanian (or Arbanasi) feudal noble house is untenable for formal reasons – because, at that time, there was no Albanian feudal monarchy to whose nobility they would have belonged. Unlike the short-lived Principality of Arbanon, the Serbian empire did exist at the time when the Balšić family rose to prominence and acquired its status. In addition to the name Balša (sometimes transliterated Balsha), as evidence of his ethnicity, there is the express statement that Despot Stefan, on his return from Constantinople and the war with the Tatars, stopped “at Arbanasi” to visit his brother-in-law Đurađ, the “Arbanasi” lord. К. Филозоф, *Повест о Словима и Житије деспота Стефана Лазаревића*, Београд, 1989, 97; S. Ćirković, *Tradition interchanged: Albanians in the serbian, Serbs in the albanian late medieval texts*, *Οι Άλβανοί στο Μεσαίωνα / The mediaeval Albanians*, ed. by C. Gasparis, Athens, 1998, 202.

85 On the eve of the Battle of Kosovo, Đurađ II was embroiled in a conflict with King Tvrtko of Bosnia. They agreed to peace terms in the spring, but this regional lord is known to have not taken part in the battle either due to his rivalry with the king or fear of pirates. И. Божић, *Историја Црне Горе*, 2/2, Титоград, 1970, 59–61; С. Рудић, *Ратна флота Балшића*, *Историјски часопис LXVII* (2018), 91–92.

scholars agree that he did not take part in the battle. However, Đurađ Balšić's alleged participation is one of the arguments of the authors who support the premise about a wide Balkan coalition that clashed with the Ottomans in 1389 and the Albanian presence in the battle. Based on long refuted claims of younger sources, this premise became a stumbling block for the construction of another national history – that of the Montenegrins.

Professor Živko M. Andrijašević, the author of the *History of Montenegro*, ineptly transliterated into Cyrillic and published in 2015, describes the 14th-century region of Zeta as a distinct polity bordering “Serbia.” The Battle of Kosovo is probably the only historical event in this synthesis for which Andrijašević expressly lists those who did *not* take part in it. Although the entire passage makes it clear that Đurađ Balšić did not leave his realm in the summer of 1389, the author finally concludes: «Đurađ Balšić did not take part in the Battle of Kosovo (1389).»⁸⁶ This need to be so specific and to underline well-known facts in an extensive synthesis of the entire history of a country⁸⁷ is perhaps more understandable in the context of a newspaper article reported by some of Montenegro's prominent news outlets in 2011: “The Balšić family did not participate in the Battle of Kosovo in 1389” is a text in which, citing multiple Serbian medieval scholars, a certain Vuk Popović constructs a narrative about the separate identities of Serbs and Montenegrins from the time of Đurađ II to that of Metropolitan Amfilohije Radović.⁸⁸

Some sources – usually second-rate and written far from the site of the battle – mention Đurađ Balšić among the participants of the Battle of Kosovo, a claim that has been the subject of scholarly debate over the previous century. Djordje Bubalo has recently published a paper on the description of the Battle of Kosovo in Monk Albert's *Chronica Mundi*, penned in 1458 at the Cistercian monasteries Heisterbach Abbey on the Rhine and Žďár nad Sázavou in Bohemia. This later report, which itself draws on second-rate sources, bears no importance for the interpretation of the Battle of Kosovo and even fails to mention Prince Lazar, instead describing “Gjergj Baleč, lord of Albania” as the foremost Christian leader and claiming that he died in this battle. Б. Бубало, *Један незапажен извор о Косовској бици, Војноисторијски гласник 2* (2015), 37–38. In any case, even if Đurađ II Stratimirović Balšić fought in the Battle of Kosovo, he would have done so as a noble from the territory of the recently fallen Serbian empire and certainly not as the head of some polity in the Western Balkans unknown to us.

86 Ж. Андријашевић, *Историја Црне Горе (Од најстаријих времена до 2006. године)*, Београд, 2015, 28.

87 The territory of modern-day Montenegro is twice the size of Zeta under the Balšić family and there is no doubt that parts of it belonged to the area ruled by the feudal lords who took part in the Battle of Kosovo; 70% of Montenegro's population remains loyal to the traditions of the Serbian Orthodox Church, whose saints include the Holy Emperor Lazar; hence the insistence on this newly independent ruler of an area that had previously belonged to the Serbian empire is unusual even from the perspective of the Montenegrin nation-building process.

88 The article was originally published in the Podgorica daily *Vijesti*. V. Popović, *Balšići nijesu učestvovali u bitci na Kosovu 1389. године*, Montenegrina.net, 14 March 2011, <https://mon->

It precisely the synthetic overviews of the history of these newly emerged nations that reveal how historiography was used to provide their underpinnings. As the myths in question are formative, in the absence of local ones, the Serbian Kosovo myth needed to be challenged. Over a century ago, Serbian history had critically reviewed and refuted many popular traditions about the Battle of Kosovo, but from the standpoint of Albanian national traditions and younger Ottoman sources, the academic contributions of Serbian and even European historiography needed to be discredited or at least questioned. It was not until Kosovo began to harbour aspirations of statehood that the identification of the Battle of Kosovo as primarily Albanian became important to its advocates. If it were to accept participation in the Battle of Kosovo, the weak Montenegrin national identity, insufficiently distinct from the Serbian one, would risk being assimilated, leading to Andrijašević's need to prove in a synthetic overview that a regional lord (whose territory was smaller than modern Montenegro) did not fight in the Battle of Kosovo. The identification of present-day Bosnians with their medieval heritage is more recent; hence, although King Tvrtko did send an entire regiment to fight in the battle, the joint participation of their ancestors in the battle with their Serbian counterparts would have been of little use in the building of this modern nation whose modern identity is based on the faith of the Ottomans – the opponents in the battle. Mehmedalija Bojić, the author of a book on Bosnian history, offers no more than one rather terse sentence on the matter, with the following caveat: "Next year, in 1389, Tvrtko's grand duke Vlatko Vuković, a supporter of the Church of Bosnia, led a few thousand knights in the famed Battle of Kosovo."⁸⁹

In the meantime, over the recent decades, in the area of Novi Pazar, local Bosnians and Albanians have been trying to establish an independent state. A history of Sandžak by two British historians (2013) adopts the Albanian-Kosovan narrative: "In 1389, the Ottoman sultan, Murad II⁹⁰, amassed a large force intended

tenegrina.net/nauka/istorija/crna-gora-do-xix-v/balsici/balsici-nijesu-ucestvovali-u-bitci-na-kosovu-1389-godine-vuk-popovic/, (accessed on 06 May 2020).

89 M. Bojić, *Historija Bosne i Bošnjaka (VII–XX vijek)*, Sarajevo, 2001, 29.

90 The sultan in question was, in fact, Murad I. Besides this banal fallacy, the following two sentences represent an almost puerile attempt to present the history of Serbs, whose political center in the early period had been in the Novi Pazar area, as a figment of the collective imagination. It is absurd to claim that in the 14th century the Ottoman Empire wanted to seize the mining resources of Kosovo – quite the contrary, mining cities were deserted after the conquest of these areas in the mid-15th century. The attempt to frame the battle as having been fought by an international army and yet "the most totemic in the whole of Serbian history" has some relevance only if the intention behind it is to relativize the entire Serbian history and consequently prove the legitimacy of the Albanians' and Bosnians' respective claims to Kosovo and Sandžak. K. Morrison, E. Roberts, *The Sandžak: A History*, London, 2013, 25. Sandžak/Sanjak

to seize the mining regions of Kosovo and provide a foothold for future Ottoman advances into Serbia and Bosnia. Prince Lazar, supported by forces sent by his son-in-law Vuk Branković, and by King Tvrtko, as well as by an assortment of Bulgars, Vlachs and Albanians, joined battle with Ottoman forces at Kosovo polje (the Field of Blackbirds) near Priština (Albanian: Prishtina) on St Vitus's Day, 15 June 1389, in a battle which was subsequently to become the most totemic in the whole of Serbian history."⁹¹

In 2005, a book in a seemingly neutral series on the "cultures of the world", penned by an author with an Anglo-Saxon name, offered the following formulation about the Battle of Kosovo: "1389: Ottomans take over some Albanian lands."⁹² However, as in the case of *The Cambridge Medieval History*, the internationalization and Albanization of the Battle of Kosovo was not adopted everywhere. For instance, the book *Albanian Identities, Myth and History* (2002) does not include even a single reference to the Battle of Kosovo of 1389.⁹³

Politics had a strong impact on the interpretation of the Battle of Kosovo in books published in the 1990s in the UK and US. The less a synthetic book had to do with medieval history, the more likely it was to describe the forces that fought against the Ottomans at the Field of Kosovo in 1389 as a coalition army. An illustrative example is Miranda Vickers, who in 2001 published the fourth edition of her "modern history"⁹⁴ of the Albanians. Vickers claims that the Ottomans managed to set up "military bases in Macedonia shortly before the battle. Their further advance caused alarm among the local feudal lords, and precipitated a number of Serbian, Hungarian, Bosnian, Bulgarian and Albanian nobles into forming a coalition under the leadership of the Serbian Prince Lazar. On 28 June 1389 the coalition armies marched onto the vast plain of Kosova to confront the Ottoman troops led by the Sultan, Murad I. During the battle, despite the death of Sultan

was an administrative division in the Ottoman Empire for only 15 years in the second half of the 19th century. The region's status is not defined in the constitution and legislation of either Serbia or Montenegro. However, it is the only area of its kind in the territory of former Yugoslavia whose history has been published by a British or American publisher.

91 Ibid.

92 M. L. Knowlton, *Cultures of the World: Albania*, New York, 2005, 138.

93 *Albanian Identities, Myth and History*, ed. by S. Schwander-Sievers, B. J. Fischer, London, 2002. This fact is even more interesting given that Noel Malcolm authored one of the chapters in the book (albeit about the early 20th century). In contemporary on-line edition of *Encyclopedia Britannica* the Kosovo battle is presented according to the historical sources. T. Bunting, *Battle of Kosovo Balkans [1389]*, Encyclopedia Britannica, <https://www.britannica.com/event/Battle-of-Kosovo-1389-Balkans>, (accessed on 12 March 2020).

94 The title makes it unclear whether the term "modern" refers to the history book itself or to the history of Albanians in the modern period.

Murad at the hands of a Serbian soldier, the Balkan armies were totally crushed, and Prince Lazar was among the thousands slain." Interestingly, Vickers attributes the assassination of Murad to an unidentified "Serbian soldier".⁹⁵ In one of her earlier books, the meticulous Vickers is not nearly as specific: she continually writes about Serbia and the Serbian army, but in addition to promoting the theory about three contingents (Prince Lazar, Vuk Branković, Vlatko Vuković) she notes that a wide coalition "led by Serbian, Hungarian, Bulgarian, Bosnians and Albanian nobles" fought in the Field of Kosovo.⁹⁶ Unlike in *The Albanians: A Modern History*, Vickers does provide some references here, albeit solely from John V. A. Fine's book. Fine's book, however, contains no mention of Albanian nobles or a coalitional Christian/Balkan army or armies that allegedly fought in the battle.⁹⁷

If in the 1990s Noel Malcolm strongly influenced the global unscholarly interpretation of the Battle of Kosovo, it was Anna Di Lellio who took over this role in the early 2000s. Di Lellio is an Italian scholar who had begun to explore Balkan topics a few years before publishing *The Battle of Kosovo 1389: An Albanian Epic*. Di Lellio is convinced that an analysis of the historical elements in Albanian epic poetry about the Battle of Kosovo can be done solely based on Albanian literature and sources much younger than the battle itself. When she quotes Sima Ćirković, she does so only to confirm the fallaciousness of the "Slavonic heroic narrative" of Mavro Orbini, a Ragusan chronicler from the early 17th century.⁹⁸ Without feeling the need to substantiate her claims in any meaningful (let alone methodologically sound) way, Di Lellio rejects the findings of practically the entire Serbian historiography and argues that an alliance of Balkan armies fought against the Ottomans at Kosovo.⁹⁹ She also seems unaware that she goes not only against the findings of Serbian historiography but also against those proposed by others, for example, the Croatian historian Franjo Rački, who in the late 19th century concluded: "... what clearly follows from all of this is that at Kosovo Bulgarian, Arbanasi, Vlach or Hungarian regiments did not fight alongside the Serbs;

95 Later in the same text, the author refers to these "coalition armies" as the "Balkan army." M. Vickers, *The Albanians: A Modern History*, London – New York, 2001, 6, 97.

96 This was in 1998, before the conflict and Kosovo's secession from Serbia, and so the author deemed it necessary to clarify: "Albanian princes were at that time close allies of the Serbs, the result of their shared desire to oppose the Ottomans. In many districts the Slavonic and Albanian elements existed side-by-side, and numerous examples are known of close economic and political ties between Serbs and Albanians during the medieval period". M. Vickers, *Between Serbs and Albanians*, New York, 1998, 13.

97 This paper uses a later reprint of Fine's book: J. V. A. Fine, *The Late Medieval Balkans: A Critical Survey from the Late Twelve century to the Ottoman Conquest*, Michigan, 2009, 408–410.

98 A. di Lellio, *Bitka na Kosovu u albanskom epu*, 37.

99 Ibid, 36–37.

this alliance was invented by the Turks themselves to make their triumph against the ‘infidels’ seem more glorious.”¹⁰⁰

In addition to the abovementioned Theodor Muzaka, Di Lellio does not reject the participation of the “Bulgarian king Marko” in the battle.¹⁰¹ Failing to analyze the available sources, including Constantine of Kostenets, who in the first half of the 15th century described Miloš Obilić as the Serbian warrior who killed Sultan Murad, the author even quotes local Albanians, the inhabitants of Drenica, as having told her that “Milosh Kopiliq was theirs”.¹⁰² Di Lellio made no effort to explore the decades-long academic output on the Albanian epics about the Battle of Kosovo – epics that were, incidentally, first recorded and published by Serbian scholars. She did not attempt to analyze the layers that tie these epics to the older Serbian or Indo-European tradition and make it a local offshoot of a much wider tradition that emerged in the modern period and was meant to provide an interpretation of the figure of Miloš Obilić and thus legitimize the Albanian presence in Kosovo.¹⁰³

100 F. Rački, *Voj na Kosovu, Uzroci i posljedice*, Rad Jugoslavenske akademije znanosti i umjetnosti 97 (1889), 50.

101 P. Радић, *op. cit.*, 48.

102 A. di Lelio, *Bitka na Kosovu u albanskom epu*, 59, 61.

103 Authors generally quote a number of local and foreign sources on Miloš Obilić that, being authentic and older, make the Albanian epic tradition irrelevant. “Historiographic and literary works, both domestic and foreign, recorded segment after segment of the epic construction, which, in a causal relationship and branching variants, emerged in the mid-15th century. This was a multi-layered ideational whole and a clear reflection of the verses. In the *Life of Stefan Lazarević, Despot of Serbia* (written before 1431), Constantine of Kostenets quotes a segment about a noble (called Miloš) who was ‘defamed by the envious before his lord...’ Jörg von Nürnberg, a master of artillery at the court of Stefan Vukčić Kosača (1456–1460), in his work *Geschicht von der Türkei*, quotes one of Lazar’s sons-in-law: ‘On the morrow we shall see who is the greatest warrior among us’ and provides a full account of Murad’s assassination and Lazar’s death. In the chronicles of the Greek historians John Doukas and Laonikos Chalkokondyles, dating from the middle and second half of the 15th century, the sultan’s assassination is described as the fulfilment of an oath given by a Serbian knight (Milon) to his liege lord. All later Christian sources add an account of the supper in the Serbian camp and Lazar’s toast and the emergence of a traitor. In his *Memoirs of a Janissary*, Konstantin Mihailović, also known as Constantine of Ostravica (captured by the Turks in 1455 near Novo Brdo), reports that “... Miloš Kobila (one of Prince Lazar’s knights) killed Sultan Murad; introduces the figure of ‘Topličanin’ (inhabitant of Toplica), who wraps Lazar’s severed head in his robe so that it ‘would not touch the ground’; and describes the bringing of Miloš’s severed head.” Н. Милошевић-Ђорђевић, *Упоредни осврт на развој српске и албанске народне епике*, Прилози за књижевност, језик, историју и фолклор 79 (2013), 19–32, <http://www.doiserbia.nb.rs/img/doi/0350-6673/2013/0350-66731379019M.pdf>, (accessed on 17 August 2020).

However, Di Lellio is a scholar with clear political inclinations and an amateur historian. Her first book on the subject was released by one of the most prestigious publishers in the English-speaking world.

In this period, the task of creating a new historical consciousness in Serbia through US- and EU-funded organizations and media was entrusted to Petrit Imami, an award-winning Albanian scriptwriter who had studied and worked in Belgrade and then (shortly before 1999) began to “explore the Serbo-Albanian political and cultural relations in the past.”¹⁰⁴ In his extensive synthetic overview drawing on a wide range of references, Imami gives an account of the history of these relations which does essentially represent a historical revision (the Albanians, he argues, have existed since times immemorable, while the medieval Serbs are often referred to as Slavs). However, when it comes to the 20th century, he did not attempt to prove the allegation about Serbia’s and Yugoslavia’s genocidal policy towards the Albanians.

Imami’s unfamiliarity with historical methodology became obvious precisely in the chapter about the Battle of Kosovo:

“Afterwards the Serbian Prince Lazar, Bosnian King Tvrtko and Balša II, who was the lord of Zeta¹⁰⁵, set out against the Ottomans in a fateful battle. According to a Turkish chronicle, ‘seven languages’ fought against the Ottomans in 1389. Besides the Serbian nobles led by Prince Lazar, several Balkan noblemen came to the Field of Kosovo with their armies, including the Vlach duke Mirčeta, Bosnian prince Saruja Djuma, Croatian ban Ivan Horvat and the Albanian noblemen Theodor Corona Muzaka, the lord of Berat, who was killed there, Dhimitër Jonima¹⁰⁶, the Junt brothers, and other minor feudal lords. They fought on the right wing of the battlefield with Vuk Branković. Although the battle ended in defeat and

104 P. Imami, *Srbi i Albanci kroz vekove*, Beograd, 1999, author’s biography.

105 Here we clearly see the difference between the amateur interpretations of the authors who are influenced by Albanian nationalism and those who base their narrative on the new “European” interpretation of the histories of states that exist in international terms. Unlike his compatriots who describe Đurađ Stracimirović Balšić as an Albanian ruler (citing later Ottoman sources), Imami seems comfortable with accepting the alliance of the forerunners of modern Serbia, Montenegro and Bosnia and Herzegovina.

106 Western European and American authors of comprehensive histories seem to have had a rather liberal approach to using Ottoman history books written in the early modern period. A good example is Georges Castellan, who mentions Dhimitër Jonima as a participant of the Battle of Kosovo in his history of the Balkans which covers the period from the 15th to the 20th century. G. Castellan, *History of the Balkans: from Mohammed the Conqueror to Stalin*, New York, 1992, 54.

marked the beginning of the occupation period, in Serbian history and tradition the Battle of Kosovo is seen as one of the most important events.”¹⁰⁷

“If Ottoman chroniclers are to be believed, it is clear that he (Đurađ Stracimirović Balšić) did take part in the battle. Indeed, in view of the fact that Ottoman chroniclers describe Đurađ II Balša as the ‘lord of Shkodër Arbër’ and the lord of ‘Shkodër of Arbër’, then the information provided by Bitlisi¹⁰⁸ about the preparations of the participants of the Balkan coalition for the day of battle, including the ‘lord of the Arbëri’, cannot possibly refer to anyone but Đurađ II Balša.”¹⁰⁹

A university professor draws his conclusions from a comparative analysis of two Ottoman, second-rate, later sources, without taking into account other sources or the literature on the subject, which goes back more than 150 years. The methodology remains the same when it comes to reconstructing the number of combatants on both sides. Comparing uncited Ottoman and Serbian sources, Dalipi quotes a work by Petrika Thëngjilli, the author of a history of Albanian people published in 2000¹¹⁰, who inferred that the ‘Serbian researchers’ who claimed that the Ottoman side had 30-40,000 troops and the Serbian 20-25,000 did so in an attempt to “minimize the forces of the Balkan coalition.”¹¹¹ The rest of

107 P. Imami, *Srbi i Albanci kroz vekove*, 41. Imami’s references do not include a single synthetic overview of Serbian medieval history. He used two books by Stojan Novaković, both discussing literary and social history. There is no mention of Rade Mihaljčić, Sima Ćirković, Mihailo Dinić or of extensive works such as the *History of the Peoples of Yugoslavia* or the *History of the Serbian People*.

108 İdris Bitlisi (*Mevlana Hakimeddin İdris Mevlana Hüsameddin Ali-ül Bitlisi*) (1455–1520) wrote a history of the Ottoman Empire a generation after the previously mentioned historians, without introducing any new primary sources.

109 “Nëse u besojmë kronikave osmane, atëherë del qartë se ai ka marrë pjesë në betejë. Në të vërtetë, duke marrë parasyshë faktin se Gjergji II Balsha në kronikat osmane cilësohet “Sundimtar i Shkodrës Arbërore” dhe “Sundimtar i Shkodrës së Arbërve”, atëherë, të dhënë që na e ofron Bitlisi lidhur me përgatitjet e pjesëmarrësve të Koalicionit ballkanik për ditën e mynxyrës së Kosovës, në mesin e të cilëve përmend “Sundimtarin e Arbërve”, s’është gjë tjetër, veçse është fjala për Gjergjin II Balshën.” Q. Dalipi, *Histori Beteja e Kosovës, viti 1389, dhe Shqiptarët / History: The Battle of Kosovo, year 1389, and the Albanians*, 2005, <http://www.albasoul.com/modules.php?op=modload&name=News&file=article&sid=1654&mode=thread&order=0>, (accessed on 09 August 2020).

110 P. Thëngjilli, *Historia e popullit shqiptar (395–1875)*, Tiranë, 2000.

111 Ibid. At the beginning of the paper, he quotes Sima Ćirković’s study on this specific topic – the composition and size of the Serbian army in the Battle of Kosovo. Published a decade before Thëngjilli’s synthesis, this work must have been known to the author, particularly since he chose to criticize ‘Serbian researchers.’ Even if we take Ćirković’s study, which minutely analyzes contemporaneous Serbian and Ottoman sources and in its estimates takes into account demography and general military history, to be motivated by Serbian nationalism and thus eager to reduce the strength of the ‘Balkan coalition’ (for which, on a side note, the author proves that it

Dalipi's text can hardly be described as anything but intellectual acrobatics and random citations of second-rate sources and literature from the modern period, even treating later Albanian folk poetry as a first-rate source.¹¹² His paper ends with lessons allegedly taken from folk legends, including "Prince Lazar's place is in Kraljevo, not at Kosovo."¹¹³

Conclusion

The road to the internationalization of the Battle of Kosovo of 1389 has been convoluted and uneven. It began with a claim of the Ottoman sources – the general premise about a large army that included all infidels. In time, the claim evolved to become more and more specific and include a growing number of ethnic groups. Owing to the triumph of critical historiography in Serbia and the global evolution of history as a discipline, the premise was extensively criticized in the 19th century until it was no longer a point of contention. Some politicization did occur in the efforts to 'Yugoslavize' the Battle of Kosovo but, as we have seen, this was not the dominant trend in the creation of the Yugoslav nation. The "Yugoslav" interpretation was at the same time a kind of middle-ground response to the appropriation of the Battle of Kosovo and a large part of Serbian history by the Croatian Party of Rights and its supporters. This was a political manoeuvre more than anything else: "if we are one and the same, why should

was neither a 'coalition' nor 'Balkan'), it remains unclear why both Thëngjilli and Dalipi reject his estimates without first critically analyzing or even mentioning them. The supreme authority for the two Albanian authors seems to be their layman's reasoning about what is logical. Comparing his research with the earlier results of Gavro Škrivanić (a Montenegrin historian) and Petar Tomac (a Croatian historian), Ćirković proposes more conservative estimates than Tomac, although the Albanian authors also seem to consider the latter's research results as being of 'Serbian' provenance. S. Ćirković, *O snazi i sastavu Lazarevog tabora na Kosovu*, 151, 161–166.

112 Ibid.

113 "Sipas legendës popullore: "Miloshi ka pas lindur në Kopiliqin e Epërm, por më vonë është vendosur në Kopiliqin e Poshtëm". Pleqtë e Drenicës tregojnë se "Milosh Kopiliqi â kanë prej ktuhit" (Drenicës). Ata vënë një vijë të qartë demarkacioni: "Car Lazari â kanë i serbëve, Milosh Kopiliqi i yni"; "Milosh Kopiliqi â kanë më i madhi kreshnik i shqiptarëve në luftën e Kosovës". Në Kopiliq të Poshtëm ka vende që quhen: "Te trolli i Miloshit", "Veneshta e Miloshit", "Te kisha e Miloshit" etj. Në Sallabajë gjendet "Vorri i Milosh Kopiliqit". "Miloshi e mbante ushtrinë në pyjet e Çiçavicës e të Kukës" (pyje të Drenicës). "Car Lazari... venin e tij e ka pas kah Kraljeva dhe jo në Kosovë"." Ibid. It takes little research to deduce when this legend emerged: Kraljevo was given its current name in 1882, having been previously called Karanovac. Also, the first region (albeit an administrative one) that had Kosovo in its name was the Vilayet of Kosovo, founded in 1877. However, it is more probable that this "folk legend" emerged at the time when Kosovo already enjoyed a degree of independence and when Kraljevo ceased to be known as Rankovićevo (1955) and became the preferred destination of Serbian exiles from Kosovo (after 1966). In the medieval period, Kraljevo was called Rudo Polje.

we not be Yugoslavs rather than Serbs or Croats.” All of this had nothing to do with critical historiography.

A new attempt at politicization came with the emerging aspirations to statehood in the Autonomous Province of Kosovo, first abroad, among Albanian émigrés, a then among the champions of Kosovo’s independence. With time, these claims entered the historical narrative and remain present in the majority of historical interpretations proposed in Western Europe and the US – except, highly indicatively, in the works of medieval scholars. This is particularly the case with encyclopedias and lexicons. Noel Malcolm and Anna Di Lellio, the political allies of the Albanian national movement, played a decisive role in this process. Noel Malcolm seems to have been most influential in this as he does not personally claim that Albanians fought in the Battle of Kosovo of 1389 but rates highly and trusts a later, second-rate and largely proven as incorrect Albanian source that does state so.

We have shown how the Battle of Kosovo went from the covenantal site of the Serbian nation to a litmus test for newly emerged Balkan nationalities. Those who have gradually emancipated themselves from the Serbian people or have a strong religious identity – Montenegrins and Bosnians – tend to relativize the involvement of the inhabitants of the areas that now form part of their countries in the Battle of Kosovo; conversely, since they have been trying to develop a distinct Albanian-Kosovan polity, Albanians are attempting to prove that Albanian warriors did fight in the Battle of Kosovo.

We have been unable to find a post-1999 academic paper discussing the participants of the Battle of Kosovo that has offered new sources or scholarly interpretations. Despite this, the abovementioned new and unscholarly interpretations have become widespread and widely accepted. They have been espoused by scholars who claim that the Serbian myth needs to be deconstructed, groundlessly criticizing Serbian historiography and accepting (or failing to respond to) even the most bizarre claims proposed by Albanian authors. Paradoxically, some Serbian scholars – many of whom have not previously published papers on medieval history – accept the claims of this academically unsound attempt at historical revision without even trying to refute the results so far uncovered in medieval studies.¹¹⁴

114 D. Djokic, *Whose Myth? Which Nation? The Serbian Kosovo Myth Revisited*, *Gebrauch und Missbrauch des Mittelalters, 19.–21. Jahrhundert / Uses and Abuses of the Middle Ages: 19th–21st Century / Usages et mésusages du moyen âge du XIXe au XXIe siècle*, ed. by J. M. Bak; J. Jarnut; P. Monnet and B. Schneidmueller, Munich, 2009, 219–221; R. Elsie, *Albanian Literature in the Moslem Tradition: Eighteenth and Early Nineteenth Century Albanian Writing in Arabic Script*, *Oriens* 33 (1992), 287; A. Pavlović, S. Atanasovski, *From Myth to Territory: Vuk Karadžić, Kosovo Epics and the Role of Nineteenth-Century Intellectuals in Establishing National Narratives*, *The Hungarian Historical Review* 5/2 (2016), 357–376; S. Arpalier, I. Hamzaj, *Analysing from a sys-*

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ИНТЕРНАЦИОНАЛИЗАЦИЈА КОСОВСКЕ БИТКЕ 1389. ГОДИНЕ

Резиме:

Последњих деценија став да је Косовска битка 1389. године представљала јединствен догађај у средњовековном ратовању и да је као таква она била вођена између османских Турака и једне широке хришћанске коалиције, постао је преовлађујући међу појединим историчарима (посебно онима који нису специјализовани за средњовековне студије или ову тему) и великим делом академске заједнице. Они тврде да је ова битка била „међународна“ и „коалициона“. Упркос двовековној традицији критичке историографије, чије је интересовање за ову тему било готово глобално, и резултатима који су ове савремене тврдње одавно оповргли, нити један од ових аутора није покушао да понуди методолошки утемељену расправу о још увек непобитном научном становишту које Косовску битку представља као сукоб између Турака Османлија и војске средњовековних држава Србије и Босне. Заправо је сасвим супротно – на основу погрешних тумачења другоразредних извора, наратива хрватског национализма из 19. века и тврдњи идеолога албанског национализма током 20. века, а у складу са интересима савремених империјалистичких и/или тоталитарних идеологија, те, коначно, наводне тежње за сузбијањем српског национализма – појавио се неакадемски, аксиоматски наратив и заузео истакнуто место у савременој науци, образовању и политици. Узроцима, појединостима и развоју овог феномена посвећена је ова студија.