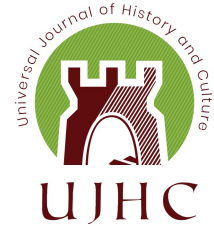


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# Njegos's The Mountain Wreath: The Text Behind Serbian Nationalism's Racist Foundation Myth

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## Abstract

This study investigates Serbian ultra-nationalism that is bent on the destruction of a multi-cultural community, Bosnia which is not wholly distinct. In the study of the avows of colonial-settlers—whose foundation myths assert absolute racial and cultural exclusivity based on the divine decree—the consequences in terms of ethnic cleansing is explained. Although, ultimately massacre of the indigenous minority populations look inevitable; and the following consequences may be insidious—especially if other powerful nations fail to intervene. To prevent dire consequences, it should be considered that failure may stem from the reality that the dominant powers share the racial or cultural bias of the colonizing power and therefore collude more or less overtly to assist the establishment of the aggressor. Thereby, they assist in the eclipse of the groups targeted for extermination. *The Mountain Wreath* by Petar Njegos and *The Bridge Betrayed* by Michael A. Sells are discussed in a comparative way to fully clear the background of a great massacre at the end of twentieth century.

**Keywords:** Petar Njegos, Massacre, Ethnicity, Bosnia, Serbia, The Ottoman Empire

# Njegos ve Dağ Çelengi: Sırp Milliyetçiliğinin İrkçi Efsanesinin Arkasındaki Metin

## Özet

Bu çalışma, Sırp aşırı milliyetçiliğinin kendinden farklı olmayan çok kültürlü bir toplum olan Bosna'nın yıkıma uğratma çabasını araştırıyor. Bu çalışmada, mitolojik geçmişi—ilahi bir lütfeye dayandığını inanarak—belirli ırk ve kültüre münhasır olduğunu iddia eden sömürgeci yerleşimcilerin, bir etniği yok etme çabaları ele alınmıştır. Olayların gelişimi sonucunda, azınlık olan yerli topluluğun katliamı kaçınılmaz görünse bile, güçlü uluslar müdahale etmedikleri müddetçe, paylaşılan sonuçlar güvenilir olmayabilir. Bu düşünce yapısının neticesinde ortaya çıkan sonuçlar açıklanırken de, tepkileri önlemek için bazı yanlışların, inanılan gerçeklerden kaynaklı olduğu açıklanmıştır. Egemen güçler, sömürgeci gücün ırksal veya kültürel sebeplerini paylaşarak, saldırganın hakimiyet kurmasını meşru kılamayıp, yok edilmeleri hedeflenen grupların kurtuluşuna yardımcı olmaktadır. Petar Njegos'un *Dağ Çelenkleri* ve Michael A. Sells'in *İhanete Uğramış Köprü* eserleri, Yirminci yüzyılın sonunda büyük bir katliamın arka planını açıklama amaçlı, karşılaştırmalı olarak ele alınmıştır.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Petar Njegos, Katliam, Etnisite, Bosna, Sırbistan, Osmanlı Devleti

## Introduction

Apart from the furore over the 2008 Kosovo declaration of independence from Serbia and the lamentable exploitation of the appalling suffers of people in Balkan Peninsula, the claimed Serbian reality—that states the Province of Kosovo is a hallowed ground and Kosovo is the heart and soul of Serbian history and Serbian identity—is submitted to an examination. Perhaps it would be a dose of healthy truth and reconciliation to face the fact that the history of Serbian nationalism includes some tragic episodes. In this regard, crimes against humanity are too terrible that committed words need to be recaptured through consciousness. There is no better way to accomplish this retrospective view than to review a book by Michael A. Sells, entitled *The Bridge Betrayed* (Sells, 1998). The bridge which he wrote about is setting in Bosnia and narrates a corrupted multicultural society with dynamited mosques and churches; and, it is inclusive of tortures, rapes, disappearing, and loads of murdered people.

Bosnia— Michael A. Sells wrote with great sorrow—was formerly a bridge between many cultures. In pre-Ottoman times, Bosnia was the home of three churches: Orthodox, Catholic, and the independent Bosnian Church. After the Ottoman Empire's conquests in Europe, Islam, Orthodoxy, and Catholicism have made up the larger pattern of Bosnian cultural heritage. After the expulsion of

the Jews from Spain in 1492, many Sephardic Jews who had been offered refuge in the Ottoman Empire came to Bosnia; for instance, Ashkenazi Jews from Northern and Eastern Europe migrated to Bosnia. The Gypsy population of Bosnia-Herzegovina was divided between adherents of Islam and Christianity believers (Sells, 1998, 141-147). The final chapter of *The Bridge Betrayed* is a tribute to the multi-cultural society of Bosnia—a cultural and intellectual bridge between the East and the West, between Christianity and Islam, and between past, present, and future—and also, a lament to its destruction. This bridge was betrayed by the extreme nationalists Serbs and Croats—but even more disastrously by the Western powers—the Security Council, the American and British negotiators, the “peacekeepers,” who drank toasts with the killers and went home to heroes’ welcomes in their own countries and by American diplomat, Henry Kissinger who declared “There is no Bosnian culture” (Sells, 1998, 149). Sells claim his perspective in a world that nationalism targets a land with homogeneous citizens. In this world, anyone who does not fit a particular mold must be exterminated or driven out.

Sells recounts the Serb army’s destruction of the Oriental Institute of Sarajevo, the National Library of Bosnia-Herzegovina, and the National Museum in 1992 (Sells, 1998, 1-3). Sells also records that these repositories of cultural memory were systematically destroyed, and the remained was saved by the combined efforts of Sarajevo’s citizens. One treasure saved from the National Museum was an ancient Jewish prayer book, the *Sarajevo Haggadah* (originating around 1350), written in fourteenth-century in Spain and brought to Bosnia by Jewish refugees of the Inquisition period. According to Sells, During the Second World War, the *Sarajevo Haggadah* had been preserved by “a Muslim curator who hid it from Nazi soldiers,” and in 1992, it was saved through personal risk by “a team of Bosnian museum workers that included a Muslim, an Orthodox Serb, and a Catholic;” and consequently, *The Haggadah* has survived three historic persecutions: “the expulsion of the Jews from Spain in 1492, the Holocaust, and what has been called ‘ethnic cleansing’ in Bosnia” (Sells, 1998, 1-2).

### ***The Mountain Wreath in the Peak of Hatredness***

Through the exploration of the roots of the extreme nationalism and underlying ethnic hatreds which motivated such tragic destruction and waste, Sells mentions a Serbian national foundation myth is part of the process of being dug up and rehabilitation from the not too distant past—instead of looking back for thousands of years. Orthodox perception of Muslim as the hatred ‘Other’ was

crystallized in a book written by a Montenegrin Bishop and published in 1847—in the same year *Wuthering Heights* by Emily Brontë was published—under the influence of modern nationalism. In *The Mountain Wreath* (Popovic, n.d.), Petar Njegos, as a prelate of the Montenegrin Orthodox Church, depicts the extermination of Muslims by Orthodox Christians. It is a massacre which is elevated to the level of a sacred duty, worthy of praise and celebration. *The Mountain Wreath* is a verse-epic which records a possibly fictitious legend in the form of a liturgical ritual. Set on the heights of the sacred Mount Lovcen—the probable site of an ancient Pravoslav church—the drama opens on the feast of Pentecost and ends on Christmas day. It consists of monologues and dialogues between the ruler Danilo, his warriors, and a chorus—called the Kolos—who is representing the people or folk.

The protagonist of *The Mountain Wreath* is the legendary Prince-Bishop Danilo who ruled Montenegro at the end of the seventeenth century. At the beginning of the drama, he is in deep meditation, brooding over the dangers of the spread of Islam, the tragedy of the defeat at the Battle of Kosovo (1389), and the tragic consequences of the betrayal of Prince Lazar by Vuk Branković. At first, uncertain and wavering with a Hamlet-like delay in taking revenge, Danilo is thinking of what must be done. His warriors' counsel to the massacre of the Muslim Serbs, the Kolos repeatedly urge their leader to slaughter the Muslims and accomplish the massacre to be carried out. The climactic conclusion of the drama happens on Christmas morning with a liturgical celebration when the soldiers of Danilo return victorious after the massacre and are greeted by the blind Abbot who invited them to partake of the Blessed Sacrament without the need to be cleansed by the Sacrament of Confession.

Sells says that Njegos is regarded by many as the “Shakespeare” of Serbian literature and *The Mountain Wreath* is considered by many Serb nationalists as the “central work of all Serbian literature” (Sells, 1998, 41). Shortly after the appearance of *The Mountain Wreath*, Sells points out the feast day of St. Lazar—the Serbian hero who killed by treachery at the battle of Kosovo—was promoted to an important place in the Orthodox calendar for the first time as “Prophet Amos and Prince Lazar (Vid's Day)” (Sells, 1998, 44). Sells draws attention to the quite startling fact that on St. Vid's Day in 1914, Gavrilo Princep, who had memorized Njegos' *The Mountain Wreath*, assassinated Archduke Ferdinand and set off World War I (Sells, 1998). Besides, on this feast day in 1989, at the 600th anniversary of the Battle of Kosovo, Slobodan Milosović—the President of Serbia from 1989 to 1997—made his stirring speech to the throng gathered at the site of the Battle. The genocidal theme of Njegos' book gave modern emphasis when the Nobel Prize for

Literature was awarded to Ivo Andrić—for his literary career and novels like *The Bridge On the Drina* (Andrić, 1959) in which the basic premise of Njegos' book is restated and enhanced (Andrić, 1959, 45). Ultra-nationalist militia leaders like Milošević and Karadžić used to dress in costumes that consciously are reminiscent of *The Mountain Wreath*. It looks like they accompanied by men playing the guslé—the ancient single-stringed instrument favored for singing the old verse-epics and folk-lore recitals.

In *The Bridge Betrayed*, Sells traces the strands of myth and history in Njegos' fictional work which fuses the fallen Serb leader Prince Lazar—killed in the Battle of Kosovo in 1389—with the holy Christ. The aim is to demonize the Muslims as 'Serb traitors' who converted to Islam just to perverse genetic flaw. In this regard, they transformed into Christ-killers who must be expunged to purify the Serbian nation. This combination of mythology and propaganda has united many Serbs around a racist fanaticism which helped to engender the religious but intellectual leaders of the country. Although Sells is careful to signal, not all members of the varied ethnic communities adopted this racist fanaticism—they preferred to see themselves as members of wider multi-cultural society. However, many Serbs have spoken out courageously in opposition to the genocidal implications of this ideology. Even after the Srebrenica massacre—in July 1995 against Bosniaks, mainly men and boys, in the town of Srebrenica during the Bosnian War—many Serbs who were then still at large, regarded the late Slobodan Milošević—as well as two of his cohorts—as heroes.

Milošević's confederates, Ratko Mladić and Radovan Karadžić later refused to hand them over to the World Court (International Court of Justice) at the Hague, though by now their crimes are accurately known. Milošević died before his trial and it is doubtful that the Serb nationalists will ever accept the Court's decision even though there is overwhelming evidence of Ratko Mladić and Radovan Karevitch—who they are known by the Western media as the 'Butchers of Bosnia.' Karavitch had the absolute gall to suggest that he should receive an award for his contribution to peace. Sells is not alone in his revisionist reading of *The Mountain Wreath*. In *The Bridge Betrayed*, he mentioned that other historians have already repeated that Njegos' verse-epic falsifies the actual historical relationship between the Serbs and their Ottoman rulers over the four and a-half centuries—from the battle of Kosovo and Njegos' mid-nineteenth century verse epic. As an illustration, both Norman Naimark and Alexander Greenawalt offer convincing evidence that the real history of that relationship is more complex than Njegos's drama.

Robert Bevan exemplified the effects of striking before and after the massacre through photographs. In *The Destruction of Memory: Architecture at War* (Bevan, 2006), Bevan tells the story of a lovely seventeenth-century mosque in Mostar standing side by side with the Serbian Baroque Orthodox Cathedral—both of which were blown up by Croat extremists. Bevan notes that the Cathedral was built in the late Ottoman period as a gift from Sultan Abdulaziz, the thirty-second Ottoman Sultan; and adds, it is a testimony to centuries of co-existence peaceful (Bevan, 2006, 18-19). In *Fires of Hatred: Ethnic Cleansing in Twentieth-Century Europe* (Naimark, 2002), Norman Naimark, also counters the simplified view that today's ethnic strife in the Balkans is continuations of “six hundred or more years of conflict” (Naimark, 2002, 139). This reductive a historic view is promoted by those who want the public at large to regard this conflict as irreversible, and that, therefore, just as “no one is innocent” (Naimark, 2002). In this regard, no one is guilty in this conflict. However, Naimark mentions ethnic cleansing results from “the conscious choices of a Milosević or Tudjman, backed by their supporters in Serbia and Croatia” (Naimark, 2002).

Moreover, Naimark dismisses the claim that Christians and Muslims in the Balkans had always engaged in conflict, only pointing out that this view was fostered by the nineteenth-century nationalist movement. He says, “Many of the countries are recent in origin and even those with medieval origins—Serbs, Croats, and Bosnians, among them—have not been locked in struggle or mutual animosity for centuries.” (Naimark, 2002, 141). Naimark speaks of a “six-century long Pax Ottomanica” (Naimark, 2002) which allowed the Balkan people to grow and develop within their own religious communities—the millets—even though they were under Ottoman domination. Before the end of the nineteenth century, a substantial percentage of the leadership of the Ottoman ruling class consisted of converted Christians from the Balkans—Albanians, Greeks, Serbs, Montenegrins and others; He wrote, “Conflicts and wars accompanied the Ottoman advance into the Balkans in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, and the Ottoman decline and exit from the region in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries also precipitated clashes and unrest.” (Naimark, 2002) He continues, these conflicts were “far less significant in their own right for the wars of Yugoslav succession in the 1990s than in the way they were commemorated and manipulated by politicians and ideologues” (Naimark, 2002).

For Naimark, the highly polarized versions of the epic poems commemorating the battle on the Field of Blackbirds (Kosovo Polje) ignored the multi-cultural reality; “The fact that Christians and Muslims fought on both sides of the battle—that Serbs, Croats, Albanians, and Turks could be found in both armies—was quickly forgotten” (Naimark, 2002). However, Slobodan Milosević drew on

the emotion-laden archetype of the assassinated Prince Lazar and changed him into a Christ figure, when he gathered more than a million Serbs on Kosovo Field on June 28, 1989, to memorialize the 600th anniversary of the battle to galvanize the country and inspire the assault on the Muslims (Naimark, 2002, 143). Naimark wrote in the 1840s, the great “prince-poet” of Montenegro, Petar Petrovic Njegos, wrote the history of Montenegro by using the Kosovo myth. *The Mountain Wreath*, which tells the story of revenge through the sacrifice of the Serbs at Kosovo” served the cause of uniting Montenegrin Serbs in their battle against the Turks. He says, “In Njegos’ view, the problem was not so much Islam from without but Islam within—the fact that many Montenegrin clans had converted to Islam, and continues, “In the poem, Metropolitan Danilo, who ruled Montenegro from 1700 to 1735, debates with himself and his notables how to deal with the problem. In Njegos’ version, Danilo wavers and pounds his chest but in the end has no choice but to order the massacre of the Montenegrin ‘Turks’, who did not flee at the threat of extinction” (Naimark, 2002).

The analyses of both Naimark and Sells are confirmed by that of Alexander Greenawalt in a brilliant article condensed from a thesis which he submitted to Princeton University’s Department of Religion (1994). Greenawalt reminds that the story of the Battle of Kosovo is a history of defeat of Serbian Christian warriors at the hands of Ottoman Turkish forces led by the Sultan Murad in 1389, while the story told in *The Mountain Wreath* transforms this defeat into a victory—through a massacre—in the late eighteenth century, motivated by vengeance for that defeat. But, Greenawalt argues that the entire history of these highly mythologized events had to be radically reconstructed if they were to serve the rhetorical purpose of extreme Serb nationalism. According to popular history, Greenawalt wrote, “memories of Kosovo cemented a collective Serb identity throughout the Ottoman centuries, as the Serb people kept their national spirit alive through the support of the Orthodox Church and the practice of orally transmitted epic song.” (Greenawalt, 2019, 1) Greenawalt continues, in this popular artificially constructed version of the story, “Kosovo memory became an organizing principle, an inspirational link to medieval statehood that guided the Serbs through unimaginable hardships until, finally, in the course of the nineteenth century, they threw off the Ottoman shackles, and channeled national memory into a modern nation-state (Greenawalt, 2019).

Just as the Kosovo myth helped to trigger First World War by providing the motive for the assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand on the 515th anniversary of the Kosovo Battle in 1914, the intense nationalist support the Battle was evoked by Slobodan Milosević when—on June 28th, 1989, the 600th anniversary of the battle—he addressed the people on Kosovo Polje (Greenawalt,



2019, 2). But, Greenawalt is questioning the common claim asserted by Aleksa Djilas who says, “the Kosovo battle became an ineradicable part of Serbian history immediately after 1389 and inspired the greatest cycle of Serbian epic poetry” (Greenawalt, 2019). Like Naimark, Greenawalt shows the history oversimplified in the popular form of the myth falsifies centuries of relative calm and harmonious multi-cultural tolerance in the region. The primary task of the last decade thinkers was to provide a subtle version of Balkan history that overthrows nationalist myths by emphasizing the long tradition of the peaceful history of fluid identities—in compare with the violent history of Western Europe.

Noel Malcolm has argued that the idea of folk-poetic tradition as the essence of a special type of historical-national self-consciousness for the Serbs produces the nineteenth-century myth; through which, nation-builders—influenced by prevailing European ideologies—took the elements of the Kosovo tradition and transformed them into a national ideology (Malcolm, 1999, 79). In tracing the Kosovo myth, Greenawalt cites a Serbian book by Miodrag Popovic which traces the evolution of a legend. He noticed that the archetypal elements of the myth as they appear in *The Mountain Wreath*, are far from being part of a stable tradition of the fourteenth century, but, it emerges in modern times. In origin, Greenawalt describes anti-Ottoman version of the Kosovo myth was not even specifically Serbian, but had evolved around areas of anti-Ottoman resistance at widely different geographic location by saying, “Although scattered reference in a few mid-fifteenth century sources suggest (albeit unconsciously) that some basic account of the Sultan’s death may have circulated among the Ottoman Empire’s Christian population, there is no trace of the incident in any of the sixteenth or seventeenth century Serbo-Slavonic religious sources that served as repositories for the cult of Lazar.” (Popovic, n.d., 34-35) Greenawalt wrote, “the legend traveled west to areas still at war with the Ottoman Empire, where it was cultivated primarily among Catholic intellectuals in the Venetian empire (including Catholic Slavs on the Adriatic coast) and in a western Balkan form of epic poetry known as the *bugarstica*.” (Greenawalt, 2019, 3) He continues, the transmitting population included Serb ancestors in the form of Orthodox Christians on the anti-Ottoman military frontier, but the story clearly was not particular to this population, which for the most part did not even identify itself as Serb until well into the nineteenth century” (Greenawalt, 2019).

Greenawalt agrees with Popovic that early on, in Ottoman Serbia, the Christian Serbian population had cultivated a “Turkophilic” culture, within a substantial religious autonomy and a “general climate of accommodation to Ottoman rule” (Greenawalt, 2019, 4). Greenawalt describes the crux of the Kosovo story—as it is told today—is developed in foreign settings and reached the



Serbian masses just in time to be memorialized by nationalist reformers (Greenawalt, 2019). He says, the accommodations' sentiments of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries—which is even survived into the eighteenth—are judging from the Vuk Karadzic's four volumes of *Serbian National Songs*. Far from these folk poems, the “revolutionary fervour” or, fragments of Serb life in the Ottoman Empire. In other words, depict a world whose identity structures have nothing to do with the modern nation-state ideology” (Greenawalt, 2019). The Ottoman Sultan had duties against the people, and the people had duties against the Sultanate; but, the administration of religious institutions of Christians and Jews were left intact, including the Orthodox Patriarchate of Pec which was self-governing. According to Greenawalt, it is seen by some historians as being “contributed to a proto-national Serb identity” (Greenawalt, 2019, 5). Greenawalt's reading of the history of resistance to Ottoman rule shows that such resistance was initially not against the Sultan himself, but against the “Dahis”—the Janissary leaders who had become oppressive as they had a power that the new Sultan himself was unable to curb. Greenawalt interprets the text of a poem on the Kosovo myth that Karadzic found, but omitted from the four-volume collection. It is called “The Start of the Revolt Against the Dahis” and reflects the hierarchical values of the feudal system. Greenawalt reminds that in 1801, “Janissaries assassinated Ottoman Empire governor in Belgrade, and soon after four dahis assumed control of the Belgrade pasahlik, instituting a reign of terror in the countryside. Consequently, when the Serbs rose up in 1804, they did so in explicit loyalty to the Sultan, and with the express aim of restoring rights previously enjoyed, including lower taxes” (Greenawalt, 2019, 7). He wrote, ‘The Start of the Revolt Against the Dahis’ or, the First Serbian Uprising began not as “an independent struggle against the Sultan, but rather as a revolt against the excesses of the local dahis, leaders of the Janissary military class that had grown to increasing prominence as the Ottoman Empire slowly declined in the course of the seventeenth and eighteen centuries.” Consequently, the reforming Sultan Selim III “armed the Serbs in the hope that they might aid his efforts, and his appointed governor in Belgrade, Hadji Mustafa Pasha, was popularly known as the ‘mother of the Serbs.’” (Jelevich, 28).

It is typical in modern nation-formation that populations go through a process of self-defining, in which many elements are required to the construction of some ‘Other’. It is then demonized in order to solidify the national or ethnic identity of the consolidating group. The Battle of Kosovo myth seems to have served the purpose of identifying the ‘Other’ and so, identifying all ‘true’ Serbs is standing against that ‘Other.’ In spite of the historical fact, both Muslims and Christians fought on both sides of the battle—in retrospect of the Kosovo Battle. Though, there was a defeat under

the exigencies of national and ethnic identity formations. It became an archetype around racial stereotypes that could be manipulated to serve the nineteenth-century nationalist aspirations. To complicate recent versions of the history of Kosovo, the incredibly complicated events of the Second World War have been intruded, and its betrayals and defeats were used to incite the Serbs against the Muslims. Although painful memories of Croat slaughter of Serbs, Jews, and Muslims during the Second World War is alive, it seems they have been resurrected to involve Catholic Croatians in the divisive conflicts of the 1990s.

Under the rule of Tito—the dictatorial leader of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, from 1945 until his death in 1980—a discussion of the mentioned terrible events was strictly forbidden. John Cornwell, the author of *Hitler's Pope* (1999), he reviews the role of the Vatican in the Balkan conflicts at the time of the Second World War. He wrote the Church was involved in the aspirations of Catholic Croatians to create a “purely Catholic” Croatia. Cornwell recounts the history of Croatia under Nazi occupation between 1941 and 1945—during the ungodly massacres took place and led by members of the clergy, especially the Franciscans. A pact between Germany, Italy, and Yugoslavia was signed in Vienna on March 25, 1941. Cornwell reminds how two days later, a group of Serbian nationalists seized power in Belgrade, abolished the regency, and announced that Yugoslavia was siding with the Western democracies (Cornwell, 1999, 248). In reprisal, Hitler invaded Yugoslavia on April 6 bombing the open city of Belgrade and killing five thousand civilians. As Hitler's Wehrmacht entered Zagreb on April 10, and the Croat Fascists were allowed to declare the independence of Croatia. The next day, Italy and Hungary joined Hitler troops for their share of the Yugoslav cake. By April 12, Hitler had issued his plan for a partitioned Yugoslavia, granting ‘Aryan’ status to an independent Croatia under Ante Pavelic, who brought his ‘Ustashe’ troops back from exile in Italy to conduct a campaign of terror and extermination. Pope Pius XII warmly endorsed Croat nationalism and accepted Archbishop Alojzije Stepinac—who was later canonized by Pope John Paul II.

Cornwell recorded the estimates of the slain was 487,000 Orthodox Serbs, 27,000 Gypsies, and 30,000 Jews (Cornwell, 1999, 253). For this slaughter, a death camp at the village of Jasenovac became the center of the massacre. The Vatican had no attempt to make halt the slaughter. Michael A. Sells says the resurgence in the 1990s is because of the Second World War hatreds and conflicts as the return of the repressed. Unfortunately, again, some of the Catholic clergies in the 1990s enacted the roles of instigators, providing both exhortation and role models as they had done in the 1940s for the extermination of the ‘enemy.’ Cornwell attributes official Catholic “moral dislocation” shown

by their approval and even clerical participation in Croatian slaughter of Orthodox Christians and Jews in their “desire to build a Catholic power base in the Balkans” (Cornwell, 1999, 255). Thus, when Croats and Serbs felt the need for ‘Greater Croatia’ and ‘Greater Serbia,’ they gathered forces to eliminate the Muslims. The resulted destruction—with its terrible suffering and death and its irrecoverable cultural losses—produced a shameful record which only intensified wrongs in the past.

Unless many events happen to change society, we only notice the demonstrations and flag-burnings as a promising more of the same. The question is ‘whether Serbs and Croatians refer back to their own history and see themselves only as victims?’ There is an absolute need for a ‘Truth and Reconciliation’ process, through which, perpetrators and their surviving victims can both process what has happened and mourn the human and cultural losses. The prospect of 43rd president of the United States, George W. Bush Administration who were using Kosovo as a new base in its renewal of the Cold War under the guise of the ‘War against Terror’ was not a hopeful outcome. For certain, not any of the suffering people in the Balkans should demand it. But, also Kosovo’s situation is worth to notice. Sells wrote,

During most of the past three hundred years, the province of Kosovo has been inhabited primarily by Albanians. Albanians are not Slavic people; they speak a completely different language from the other inhabitants of Yugoslavia. Most Albanians traditionally profess Islam, but during the cold war Albania was ruled by an anti-religious Stalinist regime; Albanians in Kosovo were less brutally but still effectively secularized under Tito’s moderate communism (Sells, 1998, 54).

At particular times, Kosovo experienced a distinct status from the rest of Yugoslavia. Sells observes between the two world wars, Serbian patriots recaptured Kosovo, pushing Albanians out and moving Serbian settlers substituted. Tito halted the colonization process, and gave Kosovo an autonomous status within Serbia, on the grounds that it had a large population of non-Serbs and deserved a measure of autonomy (Sells, 1998). In recent years, many Serbs have left the poverty and unemployment of Kosovo behind to seek better conditions elsewhere, the majority are leaving in Albania. Thus, it seems that the claim to Kosovo on the part of present-day Serbian nationalism rests on the flimsy ground; in the fourteenth century, their remote ancestors were defeated in a battle there, and a highly dubious national foundation myth situates a gruesome massacre of Muslims by Orthodox Christians around that event.

## Globally Conflict of Ideology

Over and above the destruction of a multi-cultural community, Bosnia, and in far less detail, the on-going extermination of the Palestinians by the recently established exclusively of the Jewish state of Israel is worthy of discussion. Among all the unfortunate conflicts around the globe, the situation of Palestine in relation to Israel is the most glaringly similar. The foundation myth of the Jewish state shows that Palestine is seen as the eternal homeland of the Jewish people and that it be exclusively Jewish. In order to justify the extermination of the Arab Palestinians, the Zionist movement had to manipulate ancient history, claiming Palestine for the 'return' of all Jews, even those Ashkenazi Jews whose origins were in the Khazar Kingdom—as Arthur Koestler has shown—converted more or less en masse to Judaism as an expedient to avoid assimilation the Byzantine Christian and Muslim Empire. Koestler believes “the race of the Jews is not genuine, and the Jews nowadays are not of the same generation as the Israelites” (Hashemipour, 2018, 4). For him, “the race of Jews is mixed with races like the Caspian Turks. He says the Jewish people of Europe who now burst in ‘the return to Palestine, the Promised Land,’ are not at all Palestinian and originally Jewish, and have no historical or racial right to the Palestinian land” Hashemipour (2018). Thus, how we overcome the pitfalls of nationalist exclusivism with its genocidal implications? The implications of this question for other conflicts are clear: the genocide now being perpetrated against the Palestinians and those in other fraught regions of the world. One important principle is to develop humanitarianism that transcends the tribe and extends to the species to achieve something that the ethnographer Walter L. Wallace in *The Future of Ethnicity, Race and Nationality* (Wallace, 1997) calls as “species consolidation”;

many of today's conflicts arise from groups' fears that they are culturally endangered species, that enemies seek their cultural, if not physical, annihilation. Such fears drive the militant Sikhs, Sinhala Buddhists, Kurds, Andean Indians, and Bosnian Serbs and provide motive and fuel to domestic conflicts in Punjab, Sri Lanka, Guatemala, Turkey, Bosnia, and Rwanda. Identities, including religious identities and the esteem conferred by them, are at stake. (Wallace, 1997, 141)

Walter L. Wallace argues that with the rise in the rate of worldwide population and the depletion of natural resources, the developed nations are faced to make a choice: To expend vast amounts of wealth to destroy 'the other' and ensure adequate supplies of life's essentials for themselves; or, to embrace the 'others' in the developing world and to expend that energy creatively to share natural

and cultural resources with them on a basis of equality. Wallace expresses the belief that world trends are toward species consolidation and documents the increase in inter-racial and inter-communal marriage in the US, Western Europe, and Japan “Currently in the US at least,” Wallace says, “all the evidence suggests that ethnicity is a declining barrier to love and marriage, a development that nationalistic barriers cannot conceivably survive” (Wallace, 1997, 128). In addressing problems of population growth and the depletion of the ecosystem, Wallace advocates “species consolidation” as the best way to avoid disaster. He says, “global species consolidation is conditional on all these accelerations [natural resource consumption and population growth] being braked before they reach levels that set off a global (in both the developed and the underdeveloped world) population crash and all the nearly unthinkable horrors that would imply” (Wallace, 1997, 145). To be expanded, “identity politics” implies the fetishization of ethnic origins and the exacerbation of ethnic rivalries and hatreds. Such divisive concentration on foundation narratives which include the definition of ‘us’ and ‘them’ antagonism is counter-productive.

Wallace mentions the trading in assigned ethnic identities and defines them as “ascribed” labels, for “achievement labels” (Wallace, 1997, 156-157). Thus, a policy is that would lend itself to the kind of voluntary affiliations spoken by Edward W. Said. It might be able to take up the slack for the loneliness and disorientation left by surrendering ethnic and tribal identities (Wallace, 1997, 158-159). At the conclusion of *Culture and Imperialism*, Edward Said is addressing some words of wisdom to his students by sharing “a hauntingly beautiful passage” by Hugo of St. Victor, a twelfth-century monk from Saxony. She says, “The person who finds his homeland sweet is still a tender beginner; he to whom every soil is as his native one is already strong; but he is perfect to whom the entire world is as a foreign place” (Said, 1994, 406-407). Said also quotes some wise words by Iranian philosopher, Ali Shariati who says, “Man is a ‘choice’, a struggle, a constant becoming, a migration within himself, from clay to God: he is a migrant within his own soul” (Said, 1994, 405). These are aspirations that may inspire us to the needed enormous effort if we break the old scapegoat, or exclusion pattern and embrace the ‘other’ by knowing that it is the only way to save ourselves.

### **Another Religious Based Polemic**

Milorad Pavić's *Dictionary of the Khazars: A Lexicon Novel* (Pavic, 1989) considers as the first and most notable work of him. This book is a translation of the only surviving copy of a book

written in the Seventieth Century. *Dictionary of the Khazars: A Lexicon Novel* consists of three Dictionaries or cross-referenced mini encyclopedias of three major Abrahamic religions in two Male and Female Versions. It consumes no specific plot but fantastic tales of mysterious princesses whose looks can kill through mirroring images of whom are awakened by their twin's fatigue—dream warriors who invade and manipulate other peoples' nightmares and many like. The central question of the story is the mass religious conversion of the Khazar people which is referred to as the Khazar polemic. Khazars were Turkish stock people who between seventh to tenth centuries lived in a region between the Black Sea and the Caspian Sea. They had a great effect on blocking Muslims after death of the prophet Muhammad to invade Europe. The Khazar polemic took place under the reign of Kaghan Bulan and debate on religions was conducted at the court of the Khazar Kaghan. Since the Jewish envoy bested the Greek and Arab representatives, the Khazars adopted Judaism under Kaghan Bulan's successor, Obadiah. The names Khazar, Zhid, Yid, and Jew are interchangeable; thus, during the time they lost the name of Khazars and became Jews.

Milorad Pavić was born in 1929 Belgrade, the capital of Yugoslavia—and died in 2009 Belgrade, where was the capital of Serbia. He was a poet, translator, historian, and novelist. Pavić's book is a postmodern work that leaps between past and future and can be read in an infinite number of ways. The factual details Pavić uses are correct, and details are complete that it is hard to know the historical mind of Pavić because the characters are detailed and well-researched. The original 1691 Daubmannus edition was a sort of Khazar encyclopedia, a collection of biographies or hagiographies of individuals who were at the time of the Khazar Empire and participated in the Khazar polemic. The book consists of recorded and studied elements of the Khazar polemic. *Dictionary of the Khazars: A Lexicon Novel* opened many polemics and also, different groups tried to interpret this book in a political context. The book was subject to attack by learned men from the Jewish community. The rabbis had not to quarrel with the orthodoxy of the Hebrew sources, but they could not agree with the claims of the other sources. Pavić articulates that in 1998 Andrew B. Wachtel (Wachtel, 1998), the professor of the Chicago University in his book *Making a Nation, Breaking a Nation: Literature and Cultural Politics in Yugoslavia* attempted to interpret *Dictionary of the Khazars* as a source that influenced Slobodan Milošević and the fallen part of Yugoslavia. Pavić utters his affirmative judgment about Milošević. When he found Milošević was leading Serbia, he signed a petition by requesting Milošević's resignation that was published in the largest Belgrade newspaper, Politika, in 1992.



*Dictionary of the Khazars: A Lexicon Novel* consist of three common parts and three sections. Ateh and Kaghan are two characters that all three major religions—Christianity, Islam, and Judaism—show their effect on the Khazar polemic. Avram Brankovic represents the Christian view about the Khazar polemic. Yusuf Masudi is the author of Islamic view about the Khazar polemic and Samuel Cohen is the author of Jewish texts. The authors of *Dictionary of the Khazars* inscribed devils by representing the Christian, Muslim, and Jewish hells—as active characters in the *Dictionary*. Their main purpose is to stop people from learning more about the vanished Khazars and most importantly their dream hunting skills during the ages. Dream Hunters were ancient sect who were believed who live among the Khazars and remained alive after their disappearance. Members of this sect could go into their own, and also, other peoples' dreams, and retrieve words or objects from them.

Behind *Dictionary of the Khazars* is a centuries-old Khazarian society that had many influences on the modern world. The major part of the Israeli Jews, are Ashkenazi Jews that were ancient Khazarian descendants. Arthur Koestler in *The Thirteenth Tribe: The Kazar Empire and its Heritage*, explains the similarities between Ashkenazi Jews and the Khazars. *Dictionary of the Khazars: A Lexicon Novel* is maintaining Salvador Dali's painting, Fellini's movies and Umberto Eco's *The Name of the Rose*—which is also mentioned on the cover the book. Despite this book is consisted of three parts that represent three religions—Christianity, Islam and Jewish—it is clear that if we put a Christian entry into the Islam book, no one will find any discordance. *Dictionary of the Khazars* breaks its neck to reveal the identity of a nation when Russian Communism tried to hide Khazar-Jewish connections.

## **Conclusion**

This study investigates two seemingly intractable centres of conflict in contemporary global affairs that origin in exclusive foundation myths. Through deconstruction, the negative stereotypes of the 'other' in the Serbian foundation myth embodied in *The Mountain Wreath* and kindred narratives, it clarifying the distortions in the actual history of the various ethnic components that have contributed to violent conflict and even genocide. The only way to avoid the horror is required to define and marginalize the 'others' in order to deprive them of the wealth, honour, knowledge and power; In this regard, 'we' possess is to seek a radical reconciliation with the 'others': to turn the same energy into the consolidation and sharing of these good with the 'other' and to treat

them as equals. It is an undeniable fact that Njegos has a unique literary talent in story-telling, but he tailors his stories meticulously. While he seems to be giving an objective picture, he actually claims the non-existence of the 'sweet tranquility' which was regarded as the main aim of existence in the Balkans during the Ottoman era. However, to draw this conclusion one needs to read between the lines and be aware of his hatred towards Bosnian Slavic Muslims and his perception of Ottomans—as colonizers in the Balkans. The study also discussed the origins of the Serbian case, then comparatively considers some parallels with Israeli-Palestine conflict. In both cases, it examines the source of the extreme racism and xenophobia and the complacency with the so-called 'community of nations' and reinforces the consequent cultural destruction amounting to politicize.

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