

## Back in the Foundation: Chauvinistic Scholarship and the Building Sacrifice Story-Pattern<sup>1</sup>

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On an 1820-21 trip into the fledgling Serbian Principality, Vuk Stefanović Karadžić (hereafter “Vuk”), the language reformer, orthographer, folklorist, and ideological father of the modern Serbian state,<sup>2</sup> collected the song “The Building of Skadar” (“Zidanje Skadra”) from the *guslar* (bard) Old Man (*Starac*) Raško<sup>3</sup> at Prince Miloš Obrenović’s manor in Kragujevac.<sup>4</sup> The song follows the three noble Mrnjavčević brothers (named Mrljavčević in the song)—the historical brothers Vukašin and Uglješa, and the likely invented Gojko (Koljević 1980:124, 138, 148)—as they erect the city of Skadar (Shkodër in present-day Albania). Whatever is built by day is toppled at night by female supernatural beings, *vile* (sing. *vila*).<sup>5</sup> After three years of struggle, the *vile* reveal that the structure cannot stand until a brother and sister, Stoja and Stojan,<sup>6</sup> are found and immured in the building’s foundation. When a search for these two proves

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<sup>1</sup> This article is based on a paper delivered at the summer convention of the Association for Slavic, East European, and Eurasian Studies in Zagreb, Croatia, on June 15, 2019. Thanks are owed to John Colarusso, Naomi McPherson, Aida Vidan, Marina Jurić, my two anonymous reviewers, and the editors of *Oral Tradition* for their helpful suggestions and aid in bringing it to its present form. A portion of this research was supported by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada and McMaster University. Thanks are also owed to the Department of Ethnology at the Croatian Academy of Sciences and Arts for access to their archives.

<sup>2</sup> Vuk Stefanović Karadžić (1787-1864) was a peasant-born Serbian folklorist, linguist, and scholar who standardized the Serbian national language on a phonetic basis and produced an expansive collection of folklore material (songs, oral narratives, proverbs, etc.) that was ahead of its time for its scope and academic rigor. His work set the bar for how folklore research would be conducted in the Balkans for the next century (see Wilson 1970).

<sup>3</sup> Raško was born in Kolašin, Montenegro (c. 1770). Like many Montenegrin Serbs in those tumultuous times, he joined one of the mass or personal exoduses out of Ottoman-controlled areas into the newly won, semi-autonomous Serb ethno-state. Raško arrived during the beginning of the 1804 Uprising against the Dahije (most certainly bringing “The Building of Skadar” with him) and settled in the village of Sabanta. For more on Raško see Karadžić 1833:xvii-xviii; Popović 1964:152; Nedić 1972:339 and 1990:114-22.

<sup>4</sup> Latković has provided convincing evidence that Vuk collected material twice from Raško, first in 1816 and then again during a trip from August 1820 to April 1821 (Nedić 1990:115); most early scholars assumed that “The Building of Skadar” was collected on the second trip (Tomić 1908e:537). None of Raško’s songs were printed until 1823.

<sup>5</sup> I use the native nominative plural *vile*. For a critical survey of the *vila*, see Jurić 2019.

<sup>6</sup> Both proper names are derived from the verb *stojati* (“to stand, to be erect”), and so are fitting names for sacrifices to strengthen a structure. There are Aromanian variants of the song that have borrowed this element and use the names Constance and Constantine to the same effect (Stefanović 1937:273).

unsuccessful, a new sacrifice is demanded—whichever of the brothers' wives brings lunch to the masons the next day, she is to be immured in a tower wall. The brothers make a pact that they will not tell their wives about the sacrifice and that chance shall decide which one brings the lunch. The two eldest brothers, however, break their oath, and their wives feign head- and hand-aches the following day to avoid the task. It falls to the wife of the naïve youngest brother, who is not warned of the danger and innocently carries the lunch to her death. As she is being walled in by her brothers-in-law, her desperate protests give way to bitter acceptance, and she begs the master mason to leave a window for her breasts so that she can continue to feed her young child.<sup>7</sup>

Raško's song was first published in 1823 in the second volume of Vuk's *Serbian Folk Songs* collection (*Narodne srpske pjesme*; later editions bore the title *Srpske narodne pjesme*). The song caused an immediate stir in European scholarly circles after Vuk sent the first two volumes of his collection in March of 1824 to his personal acquaintance, the German philologist and folklorist Jacob Grimm; Grimm called it "one of the most outstanding songs of all peoples and all times" (Dundes 1989:156). At the prompting of Jernej Kopitar (Wilson 1970:112-13),<sup>8</sup> Grimm had been using Vuk's song-books to learn the Serbian language, and he relished the opportunity to translate Raško's song into German to share with his peers (Grimm 1825; Dundes 1989:151). This led to Talvj's (1825:117-26) well-received translation the following year,<sup>9</sup> as well as Goethe's famous revulsion at what he saw as the "superstitious and barbaric attitudes" depicted in the song (1825).

The song is a beautiful and tragic example of the local ballad form and displays the emotional weight that the finest traditional songs in the Bosnian-, Croatian-, Montenegrin-, and Serbian-speaking ("BCMS-speaking") regions can carry. However, the central motifs and story-pattern of the song (hereafter referred to as the "Building Sacrifice" story-pattern)<sup>10</sup> are not particular to Serbian oral traditions. Rather, they are found throughout the Balkans in Albanian, Bosniak, Bulgarian, Croatian, Greek, Hungarian, Romanian, and Romani songs and oral narratives, as well as farther afield in Armenia, elsewhere in the Caucasus, and in India. As a migratory legend, the song's narrative is easily attached to well-known local structures in the social mapping of the groups among which it settles. The song is connected to a wide range of fortresses, cities, bridges, monasteries, mosques, and other structures, many of which predate the song's diffusion, in the areas where the story is sung or told. What unites all the versions is a

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<sup>7</sup> For an English-language translation see Holton and Mihailovich 1997:78-85.

<sup>8</sup> Jernej Kopitar (1780-1844) was a Slovene philologist and linguist. He worked as the Imperial Censor for Slovene literature in Vienna and played an active role in the Pan-Slavic movement. Kopitar invented a literary-political regimen consisting of a vernacular grammar, orthography, dictionary, and Bible translation, along with the collection and publication of folk songs, tales, and proverbs, to be implemented in all Austro-Hungarian Slavic holdings. His aim with this program was to wrest from Moscow to Vienna the representative center of the Pan-Slavic movement. Vuk became his partner for the Serbian leg of this project. See Wilson 1970:3; Živković 2011:161-62; Kropčej 2013.

<sup>9</sup> Terese Albertini Luise von Jakob Robinson (1797-1870), who wrote under the acronym Talvj, was a German-American author, linguist, and translator whose storied career included an early interest in the translation of Serbian folk songs. See Voigt 1913.

<sup>10</sup> In Thompson's (1955-58) Motif-Index, these include motifs D2192 ("Work of day magically overthrown at night") and S261 ("Foundation sacrifice").

common plot centered on a group of masons or brothers building a structure that is destroyed by supernatural means, who then learn that a sacrifice of immurement is required to end the demolition.

In the century after the song was first published, the initial acclaim it garnered in European circles was bolstered by increasingly refined academic attention as variants and multiforms were collected,<sup>11</sup> published, and analyzed throughout the region. Alan Dundes called the song and its multiforms “the most studied ballad in the history of folkloristics” (1989:153) and provided an exhaustive list of publications to support his assertion (153-55). Though this research made great strides in tracing variant forms and comparing various texts, the vast majority of it was written using what are today outdated unilinear diffusionist methods; this set of approaches was part of a folklore analysis program drawn directly from literary history and ill-suited to the study of oral traditions (Bynum 1978:20; Lord 2000:101). Moreover, as with many shared oral traditions in the Balkans, from its very beginning this scholarship was marred by ethno-nationalist divisions, with each scholar’s *Stammbaum* model tracing the diffusion channels of the songs to an *Urform* conveniently located in the author’s own nation. Thus, Sako (1984:165) had the home of the song in Albania, Megas (1969-70:54 and 1976:179) and Solymossy (1923-24) put it in Greece, Vargyas (1967:223-31) in Hungary,<sup>12</sup> and Stefanović (1937:286) split it between his native Serbia and a Greek origin he felt was too convincing to refute.

Dundes (1989, 1995, and 1996) outlined the folly of such scholarship by stressing the importance of a broader range of international variants. In an effort to move past the nationalist tendencies of his predecessors, he further suggested a possible Indian source transferred to the Balkans via Romani groups (1995:42-43). Yet, in many ways, later international debates regarding these songs drew attention away from early polemics amongst BCMS-speaking scholars and from longstanding problems affecting the study of oral traditions and claims of ownership in that contentious region. These debates speak to larger issues regarding the problematic theoretical paradigms that are often used to analyze oral traditions and regarding how materials largely derived from a peasant class are appropriated by academics and others for political ends. In this article, I return to the history of the collection of songs exhibiting the Building Sacrifice story-pattern in BCMS-speaking regions / Yugoslavia / the Habsburg, Venetian, and Ottoman Empires to explore the ethno-national manipulations to which this song has fallen victim over the last 200 years. I highlight three critical problems in past folklore research that allowed folklorists, ethnologists, and others to draw these materials into such contentious misuse: (1) ignorance of the interplay between print literature and popular oral traditions; (2) intentional disregard of regional distribution patterns in favor of supporting a false, *ex post facto* ethnic lens of analysis; and (3) the replacement of a dynamic model of song transmission and adaptation with a simplistic academic myth of unilinear diffusion. These

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<sup>11</sup> Zimmerman (1979b:373) cites the number of texts at over 200, Dundes (1995:40) suggests more than 700, and Vargyas (1967) presents 518 in his study.

<sup>12</sup> Dundes (1995:45) seems to have misunderstood Vargyas’s argument, claiming that Vargyas places the source of the song tradition in Bulgaria. In fact, Vargyas follows the same track as his peers, crowning the Hungarians as the first group to bring the tradition to Europe. He mentions Bulgaria as a possible source (Vargyas 1967:203, 211) but states that it was more likely the first beneficiary to borrow the song from Hungary (223-26).

problems are situated in a cultural-historical overview which aims to trace some of the underlying politics that informed these biased scholarly approaches. The problems are then explored, as they pertain to the Building Sacrifice story-pattern, through a modern critical lens, before a corrective is offered that allows for a clearer understanding of the true diffusion and history of this oral tradition in the region.

As an antidote to these problematic methods and theories, I use a system grounded in a diffusionary model that has been honed over time in the fields of folkloristics and comparative mythology, as well as my own reworking of a system based on analytical terminology employed by proponents of Milman Parry and Albert Lord's oral-formulaic system and on elements drawn from common folkloristics. Though diffusionary models were never Parry's or Lord's main concern when they began to explore the oral traditions of Yugoslavia (A. Parry 1971; Mitchell and Nagy 2000:ix-xii), the systematic approach they took to their research and the discoveries they made regarding the transmission of epic singing in BCMS-speaking regions has had lasting effects on the manner in which diffusion is understood in folkloristic theory. The model I employ here is further elucidated in my doctoral thesis (Jurić 2019:55-59), but a brief explanation of the terminology employed in this piece will help the reader navigate the following sections:

Story-pattern—a traditional cluster of generic motifs (Bynum 1978:79).

Formula—"a group of words which is regularly employed under the same metrical conditions to express a given essential idea" (M. Parry 1971:272).

Theme—"a subject unit, a group of ideas, regularly employed by a singer, not merely in any given poem, but in the poetry as a whole" (Lord 1938:410) and "a recurrent element of narration or description in traditional poetry. It is not restricted, as is the formula, by metrical considerations" (Lord 1951:73).

Multiform—an instance of variation among separate singings / recitations / tellings of various formulae, themes, and story-patterns that are of the same kind.

Variant—an instance of variation among formulae / themes / story-patterns / singings / recitations that are of a different kind.

Motif—a traditional unit of patterned behavior (by a character) in an oral tradition.

Episode—a smaller event / plot-point that is a constituent of a more elaborate motif, story-pattern, or theme.

For clarity's sake, in discussion I project this system of categorization onto previous scholarship that did not employ it.

### **The Andrić Polemic—Problem One: Ignorance of the Interplay between Print and Oral Culture**

In 1908, Raško's "Building of Skadar" became the topic of a scholarly polemic between a number of Serbian and Croatian scholars. As the new editor of the publishing house Matica hrvatska's (hereafter MH) *Croatian Folk Songs* collection (*Hrvatske narodne pjesme*), Croatian historian Nikola Andrić was tasked with selecting songs from MH's archive for their upcoming

fifth volume.<sup>13</sup> Among the 175 songs collected in southern Dalmatia by the lay collector Ante Franjin Alačević,<sup>14</sup> Andrić found three undated songs that were near carbon-copies of three in Vuk's collection, including "The Building of Skadar."<sup>15</sup> Convinced that Vuk had received or copied them from Alačević without crediting the collector, Andrić produced a short opinion piece on the matter, "Otkud Vuku 'Zidanje Skadra'?" ("Whence Vuk's 'Building of Skadar'?"), in MH's bi-weekly periodical, *Glas Matice hrvatske* (Andrić 1908a).<sup>16</sup>

Andrić derived his assertions entirely from a comparative textual analysis of Vuk's and Alačević's songs: Alačević's version had a number of characteristically Dalmatian dialect forms as well as a preponderance of words in the ikavian sub-dialect (characteristic of songs from many regions of Dalmatia). Andrić concluded that Vuk must have altered these to the ijekavian sub-dialect (the most common sub-dialect used in traditional singing, which is shared across the widest geographic range by singers of all ethnicities) in his published edition to better comport with his songs from Serbian sources (Andrić 1908a:98-99).<sup>17</sup> Moreover, character names that were consistent in Vuk's song varied in spelling and pronunciation in Alačević's. Andrić took this as a sign that Vuk had standardized the unhewn singing of a rural bard in Alačević's original (98). Andrić could attest that the song tradition of "The Building of Skadar" was well known in Southern Dalmatia because of the fact that Alačević's collection had a second multiform of the song (Alačević 1888.68). Andrić also noted that Vuk himself had admitted that one of the other two songs in question, "The Death of the Mother of the Jugovičes" (SNP II.48), had come "from Croatia"; Andrić felt certain that this admission betrayed a broader malfeasance.

Without researching Vuk's publications adequately, Andrić incorrectly suggested that Vuk had provided no information regarding the sources of these songs and intimated that there might

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<sup>13</sup> Nikola Andrić (1867-1942) was a Croatian writer, editor, philologist, and translator. He acted as editor for volumes five through ten of *Matica hrvatska's* folk-songs collection (1909-42). On MH's collecting project see Velzek 1950; Primorac 2010:13-17; Jurić 2019:27-29.

<sup>14</sup> Ante Franjin Alačević (1781-1856) was an early, lay collector of Croatian folk songs who gathered material in regions of southern Dalmatia throughout his life. His son and grandson continued this work and submitted the family's collections to *Matica hrvatska*. See Andrić 1908a; Bošković-Stulli 1978:314-17.

<sup>15</sup> Vuk's songs and their corresponding versions in Alačević are: "The Building of Skadar" (SNP II.26)—"The Song of the Building of King Ukašin" (Alačević 1888.129); "The Death of the Mother of the Jugovičes" (SNP II.48)—"The Song of the Death of the Mother of the Jugovičes" (Alačević 1888.46); "God Leaves No Debt Unpaid" (SNP II.5)—"God Leaves No Debt Unpaid" (Alačević 1888.45). There are in fact seven such songs in the collection (Bošković-Stulli 1978:315). Song and tale numbers in this article are indicated by a period (in the form "date.#" or "volume.#") rather than with a colon, which indicates page numbers. Please see the "Abbreviations" section at the end of this article for a list of abbreviations used in song citations.

<sup>16</sup> There was a similar row over ownership and claims of plagiarism in the 1860s, the so-called "Wild-Rose Trial" between Hungarian and Romanian scholars. See Leader 1967:1-2; Dundes 1995:41-42.

<sup>17</sup> Andrić (1908a:98) incorrectly posited an absolute correlation between Croatian singers and the ikavian dialect in opposition to Serbian songs and the ijekavian. The responding scholars were quick to point out the error (Pasarić 1908a:490). In reality the three sub-dialects are found in various regions and do not map clearly onto specific ethnicities. As a general rule, the traditional register of the songs in all regions relies most heavily on ijekavian forms, with forms from other dialects (very generally ikavian for Croats and ekavian for Serbs) serving metrical demands (ikavian and ekavian forms are usually one syllable shorter than corresponding ijekavian forms). There are, however, a large number of exceptions, which manifest in unique regional rather than ethnic configurations.

have been political reasons for this. It was common knowledge that Vuk had received songs from contributors throughout the Slavic holdings of the Ottoman and Habsburg Empires, and Andrić felt that this was another example. To Andrić, the nature of the correspondence between the two documents and Alačević's long history of collecting songs in his region—Alačević may have started already at the end of the eighteenth century—stood as irrefutable proof that Vuk had received these songs from Alačević, or through an intermediary, but failed to cite the Croatian source. Though Andrić endeavored to dissemble any sense of outrage in his writing—concluding the article with discussion about how this revelation would not sully Vuk's legacy since academic practices at the time demanded no such transparency—other scholars were quick to assume malice in Andrić's critique of Vuk and were later vindicated.

The response to this scandalous article was swift, prompting a spat which stretched across 13 articles published between June and September of 1908. Early, tempered responses came from the Croatian literary critic and editor Josip Pasarić (1908a) and from Serbian literary historian Jovan Skerlić (1908). These comments were later joined by the more virulent critiques of Serbian historian Jovan Tomić.<sup>18</sup> Tomić (1908a-e), for his part, stretched his leisurely prose and scathing castigation over a series of five short articles in which he both criticized Andrić's assertions and used the debate as an opportunity to conduct his own theoretical thought-project to explore how best one might determine a song's geographic origin. While Skerlić (1908:71) made passing remarks to this effect, it was only Tomić (1908a:224) in the earliest stages who recognized in Andrić's critique a politically charged chauvinism and not a simple scholarly error.

These scholars' responses addressed a number of inconsistencies in Andrić's depiction of Alačević's life (Andrić 1908a:98; Pasarić 1908a:488; Tomić 1908a:226-27) and debated how any solid culpability could be placed on Vuk when Alačević's songs lack dates and could just as easily have been copied from Vuk's collection (Skerlić 1908:69; Tomić 1908a:227). They reminded Andrić of other collections which contain multiforms of the songs in Vuk's, such as some older pieces in a collection of the Novi Sad scholar Tihomir Ostojić (Skerlić 1908:70), or in Matija Reljković's *Satir*, which shares a song with Vuk's collection (Pasarić 1908b:549).<sup>19</sup> They also took a wider, folkloristic approach to the song by noting that its story-pattern is found throughout the Balkans (even Vuk had commented on other multiforms (2006:253 n. 19)). This, for Andrić's critics, undermined hurried conclusions that would relegate the song's origins to ikavian-speaking Dalmatia, particularly when its action takes place in Albania (Pasarić 1908a:489; Tomić 1908a:229). Tomić (1908b:304-05) further argued that the multiple versions

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<sup>18</sup> Jovan Tomić (1869-1932) was a historian and director of the National Library of Serbia. Jovan Skerlić (1877-1914) was a Serbian writer and critic, editor of the journal *Srpski književni glasnik* from 1904 until his death. Josip Pasarić (1860-1937) was a Croatian publicist, author, literary scholar, and mountaineer. See Džonić 1932; Milojković-Djurić 1988; Stojančević 1991; *Hrvatska Enciklopedija*, s.v. "Pasarić, Josip."

<sup>19</sup> This is in reference to SNP II.100, which appeared in Matija Reljković's 1779 edition of *Satir iliti divji čovik* (*Satyr or the Wild Man*) (Reljković 1909:119). Andrić (1908d:148) later cast further aspersions on Vuk's scruples by suggesting that he had likely copied this song from Reljković and lied about the source. If any song in Vuk's collection should raise difficult questions of authorship and transmission, it would be this. Aside from some minor dialect variations, the songs are identical and show even tighter fixity than can be found in clear cases of derivation in Alačević's collection. Vuk was open about the similarity in a footnote, assuring readers that he had encountered the song often among peasant singers (Karadžić 2006:384 n. 76). Slovene scholar Matija Murko later agreed with Andrić, arguing that Vuk copied this song from Reljković and obfuscated its source (Murko 1925, 1951:12-13, and 1990:119), although it is possible that the song was memorized from the text by Vuk's source.

of the name “Mrnjavčević” in Alačević’s multiform were not proof of a vulgar original singer whose song had been polished by Vuk’s editing but, rather, proof that Alačević’s singer had obtained the song secondhand, far from its original source, and was unfamiliar with the personages of the song.

Most importantly, Pasarić and Tomić stood firmly in their support of Vuk’s transparency and the integrity of his collecting and editing practices (Pasarić 1908a:490; Tomić 1908a:223-25). They outlined Vuk’s numerous published comments regarding his devotion to properly capturing the language of his singers and his willingness to admit when he had betrayed that aim in his earliest publications (Pasarić 1908b:554-55; Tomić 1908e:539-42). Vuk had not encountered the ikavian sub-dialect before 1834 when he traveled through Dalmatia (Pasarić 1908b:548) and had no songs from Croatian singers or contributors in 1823, only from Serbian singers and regions (Tomić 1908d:469-70). Once Vuk had established Croatian connections and heard Croatian singers firsthand, he included songs in the ikavian sub-dialect (Pasarić 1908b:547-48) and named Croatian singers such as Gajo Balać (Tomić 1908d:472).

Both scholars also revealed Andrić’s elementary error and the simplest counterargument to his claims. While Vuk had indeed failed to print Old Raško’s name in 1823 when “The Building of Skadar” was first published, he had remedied that omission in his fourth volume in 1833, when he named both Raško and the singer Rovo (lit. “pock-marked,” a sobriquet) who provided Vuk with another of the contested songs, “God Leaves No Debt Unpaid” (Pasarić 1908a:488; Tomić 1908b:307-09).

In the face of these responses, and perhaps slightly ashamed at his simple error in missing Vuk’s song accreditation, Andrić countered vituperatively (to Skerlić and Pasarić in Andrić 1908b and to Pasarić and Tomić in Andrić 1908b and 1908c), revealing the chauvinism the others had inferred. As he attempted to fortify his position, he responded with a range of increasingly fanciful conspiracy theories about Vuk’s political agendas, thus pushing the polemic into an aggressive dialectic of personal attacks. He spurned claims of Yugoslav brotherhood by suggesting that Vuk set a precedent of habit for Serbian scholars to appropriate Croatian intangible culture, ever branding it with the Serbian name (Andrić 1908b:117-18). He also began to raise further allegations of a similar stripe: Vuk had borrowed heavily from eight Croatian dictionaries in constructing his own without crediting them (Andrić 1908b:117, countered as misrepresentation by Pasarić 1908b:545-47), Vuk did not respect the ikavian dialect (Andrić 1908b:119; response in Pasarić 1908b:547-48, Tomić 1908d:469-72), and more. Regarding the clearest flaw in his theory, Andrić doubled down on his beliefs, claiming that it was suspicious that Vuk had waited ten years to publish the names of the singers of these songs (1908b:118), later adding that both singers (Raško and Rovo) lacked surnames, full biographies, and character descriptions and suggesting that Vuk had invented both singers from whole cloth to obscure his theft (1908d:148).

When it became clear to Pasarić and Tomić that Andrić’s views did not rest solely in ignorance, they responded in kind. Tomić accused Andrić of denying science and willfully ignoring facts to “assert libel supported by imputation, falsification, and flights of fancy” (1908a:223-24 and 1908c-e). To Andrić’s assertions that Raško and Rovo did not exist, Tomić (1908e:537-38) cited a personal letter from Vuk to Prince Miloš Obrenović asking if more songs could be collected from the singers by a third party. Tomić also provided a probable source

for the third contentious song, “The Death of the Mother of the Jugovićes,” a bundle of manuscripts that Vuk mentioned having received from Archimandrite Lukijan Mušicki (Tomić 1908d:471).<sup>20</sup>

Living close enough to Zagreb, Pasarić made a trip to the MH offices to peruse Alačević’s collection for himself. Though both songs were similar, they were not identical, and Pasarić presented a detailed comparison of their divergences, noting that both presented variations distinct to their respective regions (1908b:550-52). He concluded that both scholars had likely collected the same song independently from two separate singers in their respective regions (552). Though Andrić (1908b:119) had made great claims about the age of the paper and ink in the earlier section of Alačević’s collection, Pasarić contended that the section exhibited three different orthographies and a variety of different inks (1908b:555). He also found a number of notes and date markings surrounding the songs in question denoting 1842, 1847, and 1850, as well as a song about the historical figure Ban Josip Jelačić (Viceroy of Croatia from 1848 to 1859), hinting at a likely date of collection well after Vuk’s publication (1908b:556). All of these points Andrić summarily rejected on tenuous grounds (Andrić 1908c:135-36).

As this debate gained attention in learned circles, Dr. Miroslav Alačević, the grandson of Ante Alačević and the man who had submitted his grandfather’s collection to MH, decided he was bound to speak to the argument and wrote letters to both Andrić and Skerlić. These did little to settle matters. The younger Alačević admitted that he had met Vuk in Vienna but in 1859/1860, well after the latter’s volumes had been published. He had never shown Vuk his grandfather’s collection, nor had Vuk known of the man or his work (Pasarić 1908b:557; Tomić 1908e:544-45). These points were the final nail in Andrić’s coffin as far as Pasarić and Tomić were concerned, and yet Andrić found in the younger Alačević’s letter more “proof” to support his conspiracy theory. The older Alačević could not have taken the songs from Vuk’s collection because he never learned to read Cyrillic and had no books in his library written in the script (Andrić 1908c:135). One of the songs in question, “The Death of the Mother of the Jugovićes,” was not published by Vuk until 1845, whereas it appears in the earliest section of Alačević’s collection, in what Andrić titled “his oldest Venetian orthography.” Andrić suggested, without explanation, that the flow of literature at the time and lack of connection to Serbian publishing in Dalmatia would have meant that Vuk’s book could not have circulated in Dalmatia until around 1846/1847 (Andrić 1908d:148), at a time when Alačević was in the early stages of losing his vision (he went blind in 1851 (Andrić 1908c:136)) and old enough not to be keen on recording songs dictated from Vuk’s book (1908d:148). As Andrić grasped at increasingly obscure facts to support his theory (1908c:135), the debate faded to its conclusion. No resolution was accepted, only stubborn clinging to particular facts—Andrić certain that Vuk had taken his songs from Alačević and the others that Andrić was inventing fantasies to support a bias.

Returning to these shared multiforms, Andrić was right to suspect the close similarity between the two pieces as unnatural to the oral-traditional method of transmission (see Figure 1), especially given that seven songs are nearly identical across the two collections. The two

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<sup>20</sup> Lukijan Mušicki (1777-1837) was a Serbian poet, writer, translator, and finally bishop of the Diocese of Upper Karlovci. One of the earliest Serbian writers to use the vernacular language, he was a friend to Vuk and supported his language reforms and song collections. Much of Vuk’s early song recording was conducted while he was staying at the Šišatovac Monastery in the hills of Fruška Gora at Mušicki’s request (see Wilson 1970:110-11).



versions of “The Building of Skadar” do not exhibit a multiformity that is natural to the diffusion of oral traditions in the region (see Bynum 1978:13-18; Lord 2000:30-138). Although examples are found of very tight textual stability across multiforms, these are often only in the shorter lyric songs and some ballads and are never represented to the degree found in these pieces (Coote 1992; Lord 1995:22; Jurić 2019:198-240). The facts that Andrić uncovered do curtail simple conclusions about how Alačević came to have these songs in his collection, and the case raises many questions. Those questions, however, could never support the type of wild assertions Andrić made regarding Vuk.

Vuk had been clear in 1833 about collecting from Raško, had published nine other songs from the singer that show marked stylistic and thematic similarities (Nedić 1990:117-22),<sup>21</sup> and his letter to Miloš Obrenović cements the fact of Raško’s existence (Tomić 1908e:537-38). It is only a wild theory that would suggest that Vuk retroactively extended Raško’s name to his 1823 collection in an effort to hide the same type of Croatian source that he was elsewhere willing to admit. Skerlić’s suggestion that both might have copied the same popular song in its “perfect form” independently from two different singers (1908:70) reveals his misunderstanding of oral traditions from a literary bias and is untenable. Pasarić, too, suggested that the same song might have been collected independently by both collectors from two different singers in their respective regions, but this is equally unsound; Andrić was right to suggest that the textual stability between the two songs is close enough to raise concerns were it collected from two singers in the same region, let alone two separated by such immense distance (Andrić 1908c:134). Normal diffusion cannot account for two multiforms exhibiting this much similarity (Figure 1). This is further supported by the fact that the two collections include multiforms that exhibit an appropriate degree of variation indicative of diffusion (for instance Alačević 1888.165 and SNP II.38). Andrić simplified this case as a one-way example of plagiarism, *tertium non datur*; either Vuk copied from Alačević or vice versa. Under such stringent conditions, culpability could only fall to Alačević as the plagiarist. This is the conclusion that Maja Bošković-Stulli came to in her assessment (1978:315-17). Comparison of all of these songs reveals the majority have been copied and adapted to Alačević’s local dialect.

And yet a puzzle remains. Shifting Vuk’s songs to a local dialect is conceivable, but such a reading of the phenomenon still cannot account for the odd fact that Alačević randomized the naming of the Mrnjavčević brothers in his song into multiple forms. Was this an elaborate effort to obscure plagiarism? Was he rushed when he copied the pieces? Andrić and the junior Alačević provided notable evidence that Alačević was unaware of Vuk’s collection (1908c:135-36), but Andrić could not convincingly prove that Alačević had stopped collecting before Vuk’s books had reached his home city of Makarska (1908d:148). It is certainly possible that Alačević chose an odd approach to obscure his plagiarism, but one must wonder if the oversight that solves this

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<sup>21</sup> In total, Vuk published ten songs collected from Raško: “The Building of Skadar” (SNP II.26), “The Wedding of Prince Lazar” (SNP II.32), “Dušan’s Death” (SNP II.33), “Uroš and the Mrnjavčevićs” (SNP II.34), “The Building of Ravanica” (SNP II.35), “Battle at Deligrad” (SNP IV.31), “The Wedding of Grujica Novaković” (SNP III.6), “The Maiden Margarita and Voivode Rajko” (SNP III.10), “Czar Suleiman and Patriarch Savo” (SNP III.11), and “Four Uskoks” (SNP III.47). Vuk also noted collecting a multiform of the song “The Wedding of King Vukašin” from Raško, which he did not publish but which was relatively similar to the version he did (SNP II.25; Karadžić 1833:xviii-xix), as well as having collected portions of two other songs from him (Nedić 1990:115).

riddle might not plausibly lie with the lack of attention that early scholarship on oral traditions lent to the interplay between published collections and oral-traditional singers (Koljević 1980; Lord 2000:136-37; Mitchell and Nagy 2000:xiii-xiv). I believe there is another possibility, namely, that Alačević might have been unaware of Vuk's collection, but collected these songs from someone who knew it. "The Building of Skadar" and "The Death of the Mother of the Jugovićs" in Alačević's manuscript reveal a small number of stylistic shifts. The correlations are too close to reflect a traditional singer influenced by the song books (Finnegan 1976; Lord 2000:26-27, 136-37), but may have been recorded from an unskilled singer, working on belletristic rather than oral-traditional dictates, who learned Vuk's published songs verbatim. The songs might even have derived from someone actively obscuring the dialect markers to convince Alačević as collector that they were local songs. Whether it was Alačević or another who altered the songs to a local idiom, this collection could have easily occurred some time in the last half of the 1840s as Alačević's eyes began to fail him (which, despite Andrić's assertions, need not have occurred slowly), and when Vuk's collections would have been available in Dalmatia. Unfortunately, we will never know the manner in which Alačević came by Vuk's songs. What is certain is that Nikola Andrić's hurried conclusion about the resemblances was aimed, quite incorrectly, at labeling the Serbian Vuk as the obvious plagiarist and the Croatian Alačević as the hapless victim.

Pisma Zidanja Kralja Ukašina Alačević 1888.129	Zidanje Skadra SNP II.26
Grad gradila tri brata rođena	Grad gradila tri brata rođena
Do tri brata, tri Mirljavza	Do tri brata, tri Mirljavčevića
Jednom ime Ukašina Kralju	Jedno bješe Vukašine Kralju
Drugo biše Uglješa Vojvoda	Drugo bješe Uglješa vojvoda
Trići biše Mirljiviko Gojko	5 Treće bješe Mrljavčević Gojko
Grad gradili Skadar na Boljani	Grad gradili Skadar na Bojani
Grad gradili tri godine dana	Grad gradili tri godine dana
Tri godine sa trista majstora	Tri godine sa trista majstora
Ne mogoše temelj podignuti	Ne mogoše temelj podignuti
A kamo li sagrađiti grada	10 A kamo li sagrađiti grada
Što majstora za dan sagrađili	Što majstori za dan ga sagrađe
To sve vile za noć oboriše	To sve vila za noć obaljuje
Kad nastala četvarta godinica	Kad nastala godina četvrta
Tada viče sa planine vila	Tada viče sa planine vila
Ne muči se Ukašina kralju	15 Ne muči se Vukašine kralje
Ne muči se i ne arči blago	Ne muči se i ne harči blaga
Ne mo'š kralju temelj podignuti	Ne mo'š kralje temelj podignuti
A kamo li sagrađiti grada	A kamo li sagrađiti grada
Dok ne nađeš dva slična imena	Dok ne nađeš dva slična imena
Dok ne nađeš Stoju i Stojana	20 Dok ne nađeš Stoju i Stojana
A oboje bratu i sestricu	A oboje bratu i sestricu
Da zazideš kuli u temelju	Da zazideš kuli u temelja
Tako će se temelj ozdaržati	Tako će se temelj obdržati
I tako ćeš sagrađiti kulu	I tako ćeš sagrađiti grada
Kad to začu Ukašine Kralju	25 Kad to začu Vukašine kralje
On dozivlje slugu Desimira	On doziva slugu Desimira
Desimire moje čedo drago	Desimire moje čedo drago
Do sad mi si bijo sluga virna	Do sad si mi bio vjerna sluga
A od sada moje čedo drago	A od sade moje čedo drago
Fataj sinko konja najboljega	30 Vataj sine konje u intove
I ponesi šest tovara blaga	I ponesi šest tovara blaga
Idi sine, prigo bila svita	Idi sine, preko b'jela sv'jeta
Ter ti traži dva slična imena	Te ti traži dva slična imena
Traži sine Stoju i Stojana	Traži sine Stoju i Stojana
A oboje brata i sestricu	35 A oboje brata i sestricu
A ti otmi ol za blago kupi	Ja li otmi ja l' za blago kupi
Dovedi u Skadru na Bojanu	Dovedi ih Skadru na Bojanu
Da zidamo kuli u temelje	Da zidemo kuli u temelja
Ne bi l' nam se temelj odirzao	Ne bi l' nam se temelj obdržao
I ne bi li sagrađili grada	40 I ne bi li sagrađili grada
Kad to začu sluga Desimire	Kad to začu sluga Desimire
On ufati konja u intove	On uvati konje u intove
I ponese šest tovara blaga	I ponese šest tovara blaga

Legend

- Significant difference
- Difference of dialect
- Shifted word order
- Minor differences of pronunciation

Fig. 1. Comparative analysis of the first forty-three lines of Vuk's and Alačević's songs.

## **Chauvinism and Folklore—Problem 2: Privileging Ethnic Identity over Regional Distribution**

The Andrić polemic is indicative of a larger undercurrent in folkloristics in the region leading up to and through political unification. Andrić's critique of Vuk was rife with flaws, suppositions, and overwrought conjectures, but the grievances which fueled his argument were common among Croatian scholars at the turn of the twentieth century. Such emotional responses color the scholarly discourse of the time and allow an empathic vantage onto the rationalities that undergird "figurings" of thoughts in such past events (Rebel 2010:19-20).

As both the Croatian and Serbian nation-states strove for independence from their respective imperial entities in the nineteenth century, their nationalist movements were built on ethnic claims to existence and territorial sovereignty legitimated to a large degree by the thought-worlds of peasant folklore. This material, usually taken as the nation's collective memory held in retainership by a social biomass, was imagined to draw traceable linkages between then present-day groups and ancient kingdoms and empires. However, as in many other regions of Europe, the peasant class that produced this lore did not carry clear and easy awareness of ethnic identity and often had to be taught to which ethnic group it belonged (Popović 1973:101; Kilibarda 1989:iii-ix; Dukić 2004:10; Fine 2006; Hajdarpasic 2015:104-09). As with other nationalist movements of the time, the work of creating that awareness fell to what Edin Hajdarpasic calls "patriot-scholars," those self-made ethnographic populists (2015:30), such as Vuk Karadžić in Serbia or Ljudevit Gaj in Croatia,<sup>22</sup> who could marshal these materials in the service of the nation-state while facilitating their own advancement in social standing.

Although various traditional song styles are found throughout BCMS-speaking regions and attested as far back as the fifteenth century, the long, stichic, decasyllabic epic songs that have made the oral traditions of the region famous derive specifically from the range of the Dinaric Alps that span the border between present-day Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina and descend through Montenegro into northern Albania (Bynum 1979:1; Medenica 1985:37; Golemović 2008:13). These songs represent a blend of prehistoric Slavic traditions and myth as well as possible Balkan substratal influence that coalesced into a formalized, performative art amongst pastoralist peasant groups in mountainous regions (Bynum 1979:2). While the art is likely very ancient, by the time these songs began to be collected in great number, their signature form and superficial content layer bore the indelible mark of the drastic cultural shifts initiated by the incursion of the Ottoman Turks from the fourteenth to the seventeenth centuries. During these times of political upheaval, singers in these communities used the art form as a mode of conveyance for cultural knowledge, ethical mores, religious solidarity, and historical and contemporary reportage. Their songs focused on past medieval kingdoms, Christian heroes who fought against the Ottomans, Bosniak nobles at the height of Ottoman power, border-disputes and banditry, as well as the later Christian rebellions that aimed to push off the Ottoman yoke, all laid in palimpsest over ancient mythic material and the residual detritus of past manifestations.

Most importantly, these songs did not align with a single religious or ethnic

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<sup>22</sup> Ljudevit Gaj (1809-1872) was a Croatian linguist, politician, journalist, orthographer, writer, and leader of the pan-Slavist Illyrian movement in Croatia. Despalatović 1975 remains the most comprehensive biography of Gaj.

denomination, but were sung by people who would fall into all of the three major politico-religious ethnicities of the region today—Muslim Bosniak, Catholic Croat, and Orthodox Serb. The songs were all built upon a singular stylistic model, but were divided in content along the major axis that obtained among the peasant class in the region in imperial contexts—a bifurcated division elicited on religious lines between Christians and Muslims and not in terms of modern ethnic divisions (Murko 1951:370-71; Irvine and Gal 2000:65-66; Đukić 2004:10). Thus Muslim singers (Bosniaks and Albanians) most commonly sang songs that celebrated Muslim heroes and were prone to reach extended lengths, while Christian singers (Serbs, Croats, and Montenegrins) sang songs that tended to be shorter in length and most often celebrated Christian heroes.

One must be wary of depicting the early cultivation and spread of the art form as a utopian and idyllic phenomenon; there are accounts of fights breaking out between adherents of different creeds over epic songs and places and times when singing was forbidden for fear of exacerbating political tensions (Žanić 2007:54; cf. Murko 1951:245). For the most part, though, our earliest data suggest a very egalitarian atmosphere among epic singers of differing religious denominations. Slovene scholar Matija Murko related that singers of various faiths actively shared songs, that they often knew and performed songs in which heroes of their own religious persuasion were bested by those of the opposite when the audience required it, and that competition over these stories usually played out through the art and discursive interaction between audience and singer. If a Muslim singer in a coffeehouse sang a song in which a Muslim hero slew a number of Christian characters, an Orthodox or Catholic singer might be inclined to take the *gusle* next and have his characters take retribution. At worst, the situation might lead to moderate confrontations between artists, involving arguments, the breaking of *gusles*, or the greasing of their strings so that they could no longer be played (Murko 1951:42, 241, 334, 371-72, and 1990:122; Buturović 1972-73:78; Lord 2000:19; Žanić 2007:59-60).

Artistic differences dividing Catholic and Orthodox singers were negligible if not entirely absent. Serbian singers sang songs with Croatian heroes and vice versa, occasionally even shifting a character's ethnicity in those rare instances when they associated a character with an ethnonym (Murko 1951:370).<sup>23</sup> Even the overriding division between Muslim and Christian songs extends to only a few, largely superficial differences—average song lengths, unique characters (who often have counterparts across religious lines, as in the case of Marko Kraljević and Đerzelez Alija), and a few particular tropes (Muslim heroes often win two brides rather than one, etc.), themes, and formulae unique to each group. At a fundamental structural level, the formulaic composition that undergirds the art form of both Christian and Muslim songs is identical. It is only in the Romantic Nationalist period, under the auspices of “patriot-scholars,” that these natural divisions in the exclusively peasant art form began to be refashioned along exclusively ethnic lines, both by the singers themselves and by interested parties external to the art.

By the time Vuk had published “The Building of Skadar,” he had already shifted the

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<sup>23</sup> It was common for Serbian singers to sing of Croatian heroes like Mijat Tomić, just as Croatian singers sing of Marko Kraljević. There are also unique examples that illustrate peasant singers' clear lack of ethnic association with particular heroes, such as songs where the Serbian Marko must learn the Serbian language to secret himself into an enemy city, or where he is noted for his wiles and intellect since he can speak or write in the Serbian language (see Vijolić 1887:168 for example).

focus of the publication plan that he and Jernej Kopitar had devised (Wilson 1970:108-12; Leerssen 2012:25; Kroje 2013). Facing constant backlash from his co-nationals in Austria and Serbia (Wilson 1970:105; Petrovich 1988:46; Živković 2011:161-62), Vuk quickly learned that legitimization of his language reform project would come exclusively from the circle of international scholars, particularly in Germany and Russia (Wilson 1970:4, 106, 131-49, 157, 177, 186; Zimmermann 1986:21-22; Hajdarpasic 2015:26),<sup>24</sup> whose approval and praise overshadowed any calumny brandished at the local level. Along with this revelation also came the high market price among Western European academics for the living oral epics that Vuk had earlier apologized for printing (Karadžić 1814:21-22). It was this patronage that helped spread Vuk's name in learned circles throughout Europe, and with it, the common titling of these songs with the Serbian ethnonym.

Moreover, until near the end of his life when Vuk began to more actively support the Yugoslav name and movement, his researches and collecting were built on a Herderian model of cultural groups.<sup>25</sup> Through his writings, Vuk attempted to house the vast majority of the region under the Serbian banner by classifying speakers of the Štokavian dialect of the BCMS languages (including present-day Serbia, Montenegro, Bosnia-Herzegovina, and much of Croatia) using the Serbian ethnonym (Karadžić 1849:23-24; Melichárek 2014; Hajdarpasic 2015:33). Though he was not the first to espouse it, his championing of a "Greater Serbian" idea would lay a strong groundwork for the newly formed nation-state and would inspire those such as Ilija Garašanin (1812-1874) who would carry the ideology through the nineteenth century (Hehn 1975; Pavlowitch 2002:44-46; Hajdarpasic 2015:95-117). This also meant that Vuk firmly believed that the songs he collected throughout parts of Croatia, Dalmatia, and Montenegro, as well as those that filtered in to him from collectors and singers in or from Bosnia-Herzegovina, were all Serbian songs, no matter the religious or ethnic affiliation of the singers.<sup>26</sup>

Vuk's writings suggest that these views in their early stages were not antagonistic, but derived from a general ignorance of competing nationalist movements. Later contact with the Illyrianists in Croatia, however, saw him stand firm with what was likely a mix of allegiance to academic rigor regarding cultural theories of the time and some level of cultural chauvinism (Wilson 1970:91-94, 184; Popović 1973:95, 104-05). These views were admittedly practical as

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<sup>24</sup> On Vuk's vernacular language reform, phonetic orthography, and the opposition he faced from an educated class of Serbs in the Austrian Empire, see Wilson 1970.

<sup>25</sup> That is, a model built on cleanly demarcated cultural groups with a natural claim to a habitable region and singularly united by language—one territory for one people with one language.

<sup>26</sup> Miodrag Popović relays a telling (although possibly apocryphal) account from Antun Mažuranić regarding one of the trips through Dalmatia he took in Vuk and Gaj's company. During a debate about the nature of the unity of their languages, Mažuranić claims that Vuk interrogated a local from the village of Orebić about which people he belonged to and what language he spoke. According to the account, the local "replied that he is 'a Dalmatian and he speaks "our language" [*naški*]." Later . . . he remembered finally and said that he speaks Slavic. Then Vuk hobbled over to him and asked him if he had heard of Serbian. The peasant said that he didn't know. Then Vuk said, 'do you understand how I'm speaking?' 'Yes, I understand.' 'There you go, that's Serbian. Do you understand now?' 'I understand.' 'Did you hear that, gentlemen?' Then Mažuranić said, 'my friend, have you ever heard about the Croatian language?' 'That's it! That's what I couldn't bring to mind right away. We are Croats and we speak Croatian'" (1973:101, translation mine). While Vuk's beliefs about the Serbian ethnonym were Mažuranić's main focus in relating this account, the peasant's relationship to ethnonyms is perhaps more poignant.

Vuk, like his Croatian counterpart Ljudevit Gaj with his Illyrian ethnonym, recognized the utilitarian service that a single ethnonym could provide in legitimizing a united Slavic polity independent of the two imperial powers ruling them. For Vuk, the Serbian name provided easy linkages from a not-so-ancient empire, through the songs and heroes of the peasant class, and into a modern political entity built on a warrior's ethic of revolt (Anzulovic 1999; Žanić 2007:125-26). It was these beliefs that inevitably caused the schism between Vuk and Gaj (Wilson 1970:299-304; Popović 1973; Despalatović 1975:133-34; Melichárek 2014), who embraced a joint project with Vuk, before realizing that Vuk's vision held no space for the Illyrian banner, nor for Gaj's orthography in the Latin script (Karadžić 1849; Popović 1973:104; Melichárek 2014:63-66).

While Gaj also used the oral epics and other song forms to support Croatian / Illyrian claims to national identity, he did so through publications in broadsides, newspapers, and other small, locally distributed media that were aimed at raising national awareness among the population in the Austro-Hungarian Empire.<sup>27</sup> Vuk and Kopitar incisively recognized rising international trends in folklore research and modeled a product that could do the double service of disseminating national awareness in local populations—albeit in a slightly slower, trickle-down model given the costs of the books and the time required to reformat for less costly forms of print media—while also appealing to a wider academic sphere. With Grimm's generous support through positive reviews and translations, Vuk's collection rapidly spread throughout Europe and with it the Serbian name. The stir caused by these works overwhelmed an earlier wave of publication that had carried a blended Illyrian / Croatian / Morlach name prompted by the publications of Alberto Fortis and Prosper Mérimée and in some ways even co-opted that movement with Vuk's inclusion of one song, the famous "Hasanaginica," in his collection (SNP III.80).<sup>28</sup>

Strong linkages between the epic songs and the Serbian ethnonym were also found in the

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<sup>27</sup> The Croatian political entity also did not map easily onto a Herderian national model, so that nationalism in Croatia more regularly relied on legal institutions, literature, and historical precedent rather than oral traditions to draw linkages to its medieval kingdom (Banac 1984:81; Despalatović 1975:4-5).

<sup>28</sup> Alberto Fortis's early publication of the "Hasanaginica" and of works from Andrija Kačić-Miošić's *Razgovor ugodni naroda slovinskoga* (*Pleasant Conversation of Slavic People*, 1756) in his *Viaggio in Dalmazia* (*Travels into Dalmatia*, 1774/1778; see Koljević 1980:4 n. 7; Wolff 2001; Leerssen 2012) exploded into *Sturm und Drang* pre-Romantic circles; his texts were translated, republished, and disseminated more broadly by Goethe and Herder (Herder 1778:130-38, 309-14; Dukić 2004:29-31). The popularity of those songs prompted Prosper Mérimée's *La Guzla* (*The Gusle*, 1827), a collection of anonymously-published poems purportedly taken down from an itinerant *guslar* but in fact, with the exception of a version of the "Hasanaginica," Mérimée's own inventions. It is to this earlier wave that Jovan Skerlić referred when he attempted to argue with Andrić that the Serbian name was well-known in Germany, but the Croatian / Illyrian name was known exclusively in France (Skerlić 1908:71; Andrić 1908b:117). These songs brought attention to the epic singing in traditional Croatian territories, but spread in association with a blending of ethnonyms and region-names (Morlach, Illyrian, Croatian, Dalmatian). Mérimée's book was also not a true academic work, but a belletristic farce of the author's own devising that was revealed soon after (Wilson 1970:202). The legacy of this early wave was soon overtaken by Vuk's highly academic work with the very clear and singular Serbian ethnonym.

stories themselves.<sup>29</sup> While the Christian epics contain foreign heroes such as the Hungarians János Hunyadi and János Székely, and some incontestably Croatian figures such as the *hajduk* Mijat Tomić, a large number of the most famous heroes in the songs sung by both Croats and Serbs are Serbian nobles and bandits—Starina Novak, Lazar Hrebeljanović, Miloš Obilić, Relja Krilatica, and the most popular hero of all the South Slavs, Marko Kraljević. There are also a number of historical figures immortalized in the songs, such as Vuk Mandušić and Stojan Janković, who belong to a relic ethnonym, the Morlachs,<sup>30</sup> and so are summarily claimed by both sides as members of their cultural retinue. Croat and Serb epic singers in a pre-World War One context would readily sing of all these figures with little worry of ethnic ascription, but in a postbellum, Yugoslav environment, the ethnicity of a song's hero became proof of ownership.<sup>31</sup> All these facts lent an easier legitimacy to the cultural continua that oral traditions offered to Serbian nation-builders and provided foreign audiences with a simplified formula of acceptance when they were presented with a book titled “Serbian Folk Songs.”

By the time the Ottoman and Habsburg Empires collapsed after World War One and the first Yugoslavia was created, a dream of South Slavic union was implemented on top of two already established and firmly entrenched ethnonyms with the separate claims of both groups to national status, ethnic unity, and distinction supported by a shared peasant art form. These are the tensions that were felt in folklore circles at the turn of the century when a large number of Serbian and Croatian scholars were moving ever closer to an eventual shared Yugoslav entity and laying the academic and linguistic groundwork for that shift (Despalatović 1975:94; Petrovich 1988:54; Pavlowitch 2002:53-55; Barac 2006; Sotirović 2013:46).<sup>32</sup> This contentious legacy informed an unease in political unity that prompted Nikola Andrić to lash out at Vuk Karadžić four decades after the latter's death. While most Serbian and Croatian scholars noted the shared cultural inheritance of the two groups and treated the traditions honestly, some Serbian scholars saw Croats as unrightfully asserting ownership over their ethnic traditions (Tomić 1908a:224), while a number of Croatian scholars felt that Serbs were excising their claim to a shared cultural heritage.

These tensions continued to surface in twentieth-century Croatian academic work. When editors for MH's folk song collections came upon the phrase “Slavic *vila*” (*vila slovinkinja*) in a

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<sup>29</sup> Pre- and post-nineteenth-century uses of ethnonyms in the region are built on highly distinct conceptual models and so are often incommensurate (Banac 2002; Budak 2011). Ethnonyms occasionally arise in the songs but their uses are frequently arbitrary and contradictory. They are also generally based upon oral-traditional retention of historical models of legal / military association or noble lineage, likely opaque to most singers and reinterpreted by later, educated readers through a contemporary understanding of ethnicity.

<sup>30</sup> On the Morlach ethnonym, see Wilson 1970:192 n. 1; Wolff 2003.

<sup>31</sup> This includes Skerlić's faulty critique in response to Andrić, when he asked how songs with Serbian characters could be said to be “heard only in purely Croatian territory” (Skerlić 1908:71). This same drive to correlate the ethnicity of the song's hero with that of the singer occurs with Albanian singers who most commonly sing about Bosniak and Serbian heroes and whose art has often been treated as exclusively derivative. On the dynamic roots of Albanian epic singing see Pipa 1984; Di Lellio 2009.

<sup>32</sup> In their responses to Andrić, both Skerlić (1908:70) and Pasarić (1908a:490) felt obliged to make appeals to Yugoslav unity and the shared nature of the songs while simultaneously navigating well-understood arguments on ethnic lines. One reads in them the clear conflicts that were occurring both between interlocutors and within individuals as they navigated a shifting social identity in academic space.



song collected from the island of Hvar (Nališ 1885:46), they underlined the word “Slavic” in the manuscript and appended the suggestion that they alter the *vila*’s name to “Croatian *vila*” (*vila hrvatica*), “seeing as how Vuk would replace it with Serbian” (1885:79). When grievances regarding Serbian majority rule in the Kingdom of Yugoslavia became an excuse for state-sponsored genocide in Croatia’s Second World War fascist state, government-approved children’s school readers on Croatian folk songs included discussions about the role that Vuk had played in dispossessing the Croatian people of their intangible heritage (Grgec 1943:xv-xvi). Later, school curricula in Tito’s socialist Yugoslavia were thought by many to focus on Vuk’s collection to the detriment of others, while state-sponsored *gusle*-playing associations and festivals held to celebrate agrarian peasant culture in the republic were felt to stress Montenegrin playing styles and Serbian ownership of the art (Čolović 2002; Golemović 2012; Primorac and Čaleta 2012:160-61, 183).

In the decades leading up to the dissolution of socialist Yugoslavia in the 1990s, the state’s ethos of brotherhood and unity<sup>33</sup> began to falter and political tensions ran high. Once more, these issues of ownership resurfaced. In the political arena, Serbian and Croatian figureheads relied on material from the oral epics in their rhetoric, *guslars* came to prominence to sing about the tumultuous politics (Žanić 2007; Golemović 2012; Primorac and Čaleta 2012), and academics from all three ethnic groups returned to staking claim to the origins of the songs based on a selective use of historical facts. In this political climate, academic flag planting regularly sought to associate the songs with a single ethnonym (Zimmerman 1986:52-53; Koljević 1980:26, 31-33, 52, 300-02) or else to fight for smaller victories such as the ethnic source of the oldest extant or most celebrated songs (Balić 1970:306, 313; Pantić 1977; Šimunović 1984; Medenica 1987:10-19).<sup>34</sup> Some scholars chose a less scandalous way of undermining other groups’ claims to the songs by simply not mentioning them (Zimmerman 1986:1-106). Under these conditions, ethnic identity began to supersede discussion of the regional distribution of historical oral traditions, despite the fact that the former remained a poor criterion for assessing pre-World War One materials, and the latter a critical one.<sup>35</sup>

These approaches had a direct bearing on the analysis of the Building Sacrifice story-pattern and the actions of the supernatural *vila* within the song. When political fighting over the oral traditions reached its zenith, sweeping claims were attempted by some scholars in an effort to place the songs in Vuk’s collection in a patently false, “literary-style” continuum, suggesting

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<sup>33</sup> *Bratstvo i jedinstvo* (“brotherhood and unity”), the banner of ethnic coexistence Marshal Tito introduced in socialist Yugoslavia as a state motto to assuage interethnic tensions after the atrocities of the Second World War.

<sup>34</sup> See also the theoretical history of the Erlangen Manuscript provided in Medenica 1987. Here, Gesemann’s (Gezeman 1925) original theories are downplayed and competing theories of origin, such as Grgec’s (1944:175) or Prohaska’s (1928; cf. Buturović 1972-73:21-27), are excluded to present a single and unchallenged theoretical narrative that connects the document’s origins to Belgrade.

<sup>35</sup> Take, for instance, oral narratives about the fantastic land of “Golden Rasudenac,” which are often discussed in ethnic terms (Detelić 1998) despite having been collected from both Serbian (Čajkanović 1927:40) and Croatian (Mikuličić 1876:97-107, 137-43) storytellers in close geographic proximity in northwestern Croatia (Krstinja near Karlovac and Krasica on the Croatian Littoral) within some twenty years of each other (respectively collected shortly before 1886 and published in 1876; on these oral narratives see Jurić 2019:325-29). Examples such as this are myriad and stress the fact that songs and tales traveled in regional distributions with little consideration for ethnicity.

that all subsequently collected oral epics derived from his published work (Zimmerman 1979a:168). This perspective intentionally ignored the great time-depth and *longue durée* character of traditional storytelling and the methods by which oral traditions travel (both in oral and written form) among largely non-literate singers (Koljević 1980:91; Lord 2000:23, 79, 101). Aside from some very specific examples, there is no evidence to show that Vuk's singers were the originators of their respective songs; in fact, there is much evidence to the contrary.<sup>36</sup>

Writing thirty years after the Andrić polemic, the Serbian scholar Svetislav Stefanović<sup>37</sup> conducted his analysis of the songs by intentionally ignoring fourteen published Croatian multiforms despite their being known to him through Jovan Tomić's writings. Stefanović further co-opted a Bosnian variant of the song with clear Bosniak influence, naming its four multiforms as Serbian (1937:288-90). These efforts had wide-reaching repercussions as foreign scholars dealing with this song tradition regularly mislabeled Bosniak and Croatian multiforms as Serbian based on his work (Leader 1967:27-33; Vargyas 1967:212). These increasingly chauvinistic analyses obscured clear scientific approaches to the song's history and diffusion by constantly muddying the waters of the analysis.

In truth, "The Building of Skadar" belongs to the most common of three variants of the Building Sacrifice story-pattern (more on the others below), what can be called the "lunch-carrier" variant. This variant is represented throughout the Balkans and has been collected from every ethnic group in the BCMS-speaking areas. Comparative analysis of all twenty multiforms of the lunch-carrier variant collected in the region until 1908, as well as four other examples that mirror its immurement theme, reveals eighteen critical episodes and traits in the immurement theme that are variously encountered across the multiforms and largely represented in the wider international tradition (Vargyas 1967:183, 202-06). Seven of these episodes are found in Raško's song, while eleven are not (Figure 2). This stands in opposition to Stefanović's analysis that allowed him to claim that all the possible "motifs" (a term he uses for elements on all structural levels) of the song are found in Raško's "perfect" version (1937:289, 304). Moreover, Alačević's multiform, which we know to be derivative, is the only one that begins to approximate the particular combination of episodes in Raško's multiform. All twenty-three other multiforms contain less than half of these episodes, arguing strongly against the position that they are, at least exclusively, derivative of Vuk's publication. Rather, these songs fit nicely into larger currents of the story-pattern's transmission in the wider Balkan region, and their unique aspects align consistently with clear regional distributions regardless of the ethnicities of the singers.

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<sup>36</sup> Cf. Bynum (1978:20, 322). Vuk himself regularly cited other multiforms that he had personally heard (Karadžić 2006:98 n. 107, 311 n. 46, 356-57, 382 n. 74, among many), including publishing a multiform of one of the themes in "The Building of Skadar" that he had heard from other singers (253 n. 19; Zimmerman (1986:288) confuses this as a multiform that Raško sang). There are also older collections, such as the Erlangen Manuscript (Gezeman 1925) or Baltazar Bogišić's collection (Bogišić 1878), that are rife with variants and multiforms of Vuk's songs or their motifs and were collected a century before his work (compare Gezeman 1925:132 and Bogišić 1878:43 to SNP II.11 for instance); this also includes Reljković's earlier mentioned multiform of SNP II.100 published in 1779 (Reljković 1909:196-99). Some singers such as Filip Višnjić are clear exceptions in having actively invented many of their songs (Karadžić 1833:xii; Lord 2000:136).

<sup>37</sup> Svetislav Stefanović (1877-1944) was a medical doctor, poet, literary critic, and scholar, among other things. His legacy has been affected by his apologist views towards Hitler's fascist state (see Milosavljević 2010:77-81).

It is possible that a number of versions collected later in Slavonia derive from Raško's published songs, but if this is the case, they would represent natural currents built off the song re-entering popular practice from the published text in a traditional manner. However, the long history of the song collection in surrounding Hungary, Romania, and Bulgaria, the elements of those international multiforms present in the Slavonian songs, the divergence of a unique Slavonian variant (see below), and multiforms collected in Slavonia and Dalmatia as early as 1840-50 argue equally plausibly for a wide diffusion that predates all collected versions. Most of the scholars who have worked with the international data have concurred that the tradition's origins predate all collected versions by a number of centuries (Stefanović 1937:303; Vargyas 1967:230); it is equally likely that this holds for its diffusion, too (cf. Thompson's (1955-58) data on Motifs D2192 and S261).

<i>Motif</i>	<i>Source</i>	SNP II.26	Alačević 1888.129	Alačević 1888.68	Ilić 1876.275	Ivanišević 1885.106	Kamenar 1878.210	Burazović 1880.41	Gazdović 1883.31	Strohal 1883.18	Bogdešić 1884.26	Gabrić 1885.80	Lovretić 1885.19	Štuk 1886.13	Krauss 1887	Mostahinić 1892.10	Zovko 1893.195	Kušmiš and Kušmiš 1898.36	Hangl 1898.54 (HNP V.90)	Prčić n.d.12	Kachanovski 1882.120	Šestić 1889.193 (HNP V.92)	Kučera 1884.1	Kučera 1884.394	Lovretić 1885.32	Hangl 1898.50
Victim needs to tend to baby (and linens)		x	x		x				x	x	x			x		x			x	x			x		x	
Window for eyes		x	x	x	x	x		x	x	x	x					*		x	x	*		x	x	x	*	
Window for breasts		x	x																x		x					
Something dropped in foundation		*	*	x					x						x	x			*							
Victim's gradual realization of immurement		x	x						x											x	x					
Victim tries to purchase freedom		x	x																		x					
Reference to stone and wood		x	x							x																
Brothers-in-law remove lunch from atop the victim's head						x		x																		
Window the size of a mirror				x		x		x	x			x	x					x					x	x	x	
Window for hands							x													*						
River of milk flows from building				x	x		x	x		x	x						x	x								
Child drinks from river of milk				x	x		x			x	x							x								
Three rivers erupt from building			x														x	x								
Building destroyed by God/saints/heavens						x		x	x		x	x		x									x		x	
Victim avenges self by killing brothers-in-law									x	x																
Child cannot be consoled by father			x						x					x	x	x				x						
Victim chastises husband that his brothers told their wives; he did not									x					x												
Each brother guesses that his own wife is bringing lunch; husband is silent									x			x	x							x						
Shared episodes/traits with Raško's multiform		7	7	2	2	1	0	1	4	3	2	0	0	1	1	3	0	1	4	3	3	1	2	0	2	1

## Legend

Episode Present

Remnants of Episode



Fig. 2. Variable episodes across multiforms of the lunch-carrier variant.

### Variants, Histories, and Academic Myths—Problem 3: Inaccurate Distribution Models

Beyond the aforementioned, problematic scholarly habits, nearly every study conducted on this story-pattern from the 1890s to the 1980s has also based its analysis on an outdated, unilinear diffusion model grounded in an understanding of oral traditions as peasant literature. At times, the authors of these studies have seemed to make a concerted effort to ignore the artists who perpetuated the tradition as well as the decades of research we have—starting from the early works of Matija Murko, through Milman Parry and Albert Lord, and into the later proponents of their oral-formulaic school—that has focused on the means and manner by which these traditions were performed and promulgated. Here the singers are relegated to their romantic-era role as *vulgus in populo*, brainlessly repeating oral traditions over centuries, that allowed them to conveniently serve as the collective repository of a national spirit. Scholars working in this vein have often made bold errors regarding the logic that undergirds the diffusion of these songs and have consistently drawn these traditions back beyond extant records into imagined pasts and the realm of academic myths.<sup>38</sup> By producing theoretical models based on imagined *ur*-songs performed by a single, original fabulator and subsequently degraded in simple, unilinear transmission akin to a child's game of "telephone," these scholars could ground chauvinistic habit in convoluted leaps of logic, tracing all the songs back to their own home nation as spawning ground while silencing peasant artists in the process.

When Jovan Tomić was embroiled in his earliest critique of Nikola Andrić's bold claims against Vuk, he used the opportunity provided by his publications on the topic of the Building Sacrifice story-pattern to conduct his own theoretical experiment, investigating how best one might determine a song's geographic origin (Tomić 1908a-e). His final model settled on a rather simple, and often flawed, geographical triangulation based on a degradation-model of song transmission. For Tomić the key to finding the source of the song was to look at all recorded variants to find only the pure, un-degraded forms, that is, those that are most belletristically pleasing and rife with commonly shared motifs and names. The logic here is circular—those songs that contain the characters of King Vukašin and his brothers and locate the action at Skadar are the only contenders for belonging to the "true" tradition, and those self-same characteristics then become the coordinates for locating the song's true home (Tomić 1908a:229-30 and 1908b:304). Since Vuk's and Alačević's versions were the only two to contain all three characters (Vukašin, Uglješa, and Gojko Mrnjavčević) and the name of the city of Skadar, they were the only contenders for the source song. Since Skadar is in Northern Albania, the tradition of the Mrnjavčević brothers in oral lore is strongest in Upper Albania, Montenegro, and South-West Herzegovina (Tomić 1908b:307), and since the singer Raško was from Kolašin in Montenegro, Vuk's version is the logical original.

Beyond being self-fulfilling, this theory was based on a number of faulty suppositions.

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<sup>38</sup> I use the term "academic myths" to describe a loose conglomerate of scholarly tendencies to step beyond contextual empirical data into "scientific" storytelling about oral traditions. These include tendencies to invent pasts, presents, or futures for those materials and their fabulators, as well as the use of "civilizing" models that have at times sought to divest oral traditions of their original contexts and potent systems of resonance in efforts to enclose them within ill-suited and foreign taxonomies. For a strong overview of this kind of myth-making in comparative mythology, folklore, and philological circles of the past, see Lincoln 1991 and 1999; Arvidsson 2006; Rebel 2010:131-80.

The Building Sacrifice story-pattern regularly attaches itself both to locally esteemed nobility and to important ruins and structures. There is nothing “original” to the tradition regarding the use of the Mrnjavčević brothers or the use of the old city at Shkodër as the structure being raised / razed. The Mrnjavčevićs’ names had a surprising reach in connection to the song, with Vukašin attested as far afield as western Bulgaria (Kachanovskii 1882.120) and Gojko’s name appearing in a song from Osova, Bosnia (Krauss 1887:19-20); the family might have represented a predominant noble connection in the region. This wide diffusion also made the Mrnjavčević names poor proof that southern Dalmatia could not be a natural home for the songs (Tomić 1908a:229 and 1908b; see Andrić’s accurate response in 1908d:146; cf. Bowra 1952:510; Stolz 1967). They are, however, no more an original feature of an imaginary *Urform* of the song than are the noble families of Atlagić, Filipović, Jakšić, Tatković, or Jugović connected (respectively) to multiforms and variants in Potočan (Šestić 1889.193 / HNP V.92), Dragovci (Bogdešić 1884.26) and Oriovac (Gabrić 1885.80), Mikanovci (Kučera 1884.394), Kućište (Štuk 1886.13), or Cavtat (Mostahinić 1892.10). Neither does the much wider and more common practice of using the masons themselves as the primary builders offer support for an *Urform* that must include the three noble brothers (Jukić 1850:100-02; Krauss 1887:19-20; Alačević 1888.86; cf. Vargyas 1967:195-96). In truth, Tomić made his most important contribution to the larger discussion of this story-pattern when he discovered records of an oral narrative version attested from fifteenth-century Albania (1908b:305-06; cf. Stefanović 1937:265-66). This fact provided an early hint at the story-pattern’s great time-depth in the area and stood as a challenge to those who would perform Taylor’s (1959) error of seeing Vuk’s song as the oldest form simply because it was the first collected.

As the focus of local and international scholarship began to untangle the Building Sacrifice’s wider tradition in the decades following Tomić’s articles, the material drawn from BCMS-speaking regions continued to be dogged by chauvinistic tendencies, but now Balkan-wide. After more than thirty years of scholarship in the region detailing the transmission patterns of epic singing, ballad scholar Lajos Vargyas<sup>39</sup> writing in 1967 could still ignore peasant artists and contrive empty theories to prove his native Hungary as the source of this oral tradition (1967:222). Exhaustively reviewing prior scholarship, Vargyas produced the most expansive analysis of most of the European versions of the Building Sacrifice story-pattern. Yet, despite the article’s breadth, its logic was regularly faulty, with everything ascribed to unilinear diffusion and decay (195). Vargyas’s *ur*-models were also all constructed from the dictates of the physical world, so that there may only be a logical number of masons (196) and duration of construction (198-99), bridges must be secondary structures because it makes no sense for a sacrificial woman to enter water to support a bridge (196-97), and singers may never add superfluous episodes (209). In setting conditions for candidacy to *ur*-status, Vargyas ensured that scholarly logic would ever dictate the rights of peasant singers to use their imaginations. Moreover, once he had systematized the tradition, it fell to his model to eliminate those competing theories that would undermine his assertions regarding unilinear transmission. This put him at odds with Svetislav Stefanović who, thirty years earlier, had quite correctly recognized a separate variant tradition of the songs in Bosnia.

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<sup>39</sup> Lajos Vargyas (1914-2007) was a highly esteemed Hungarian ethnomusicologist and ballad scholar.

Stefanović, for his part, had approached these traditions from an equally troubling framework that traced derivation at will across all cultures, global regions, and times, and blurred distinctions between different structural levels of the songs, labeling any aspect he wished to discuss as a “motif.” Working from the same Frazerian, myth-ritual theoretical model as most other scholars,<sup>40</sup> Stefanović isolated a number of motifs for which he tried to support academic myths of ancient heritages—the building being razed derives from the Biblical story of Jericho’s walls crumbling (Stefanović 1937:259-61; see Josh 6:1-27), two children being immured has parallels in Africa (Stefanović 1937:258, 285)—while simultaneously and counterintuitively using those same traditions as proof of origin in local nations. Stefanović had, however, correctly identified a unique Bosnian variant involving children that are immured in a bridge and argued for two separate victim traditions—the “lunch carrier” originating in Greece and a homegrown Serbian tradition of two interred children (289-90)—that coalesced in Raško’s song. Unfortunately, this “Serbian” *Urform* was built on an erasure of the very clear Bosniak Muslim influence in the variant and its four extant multiforms. Stefanović’s conclusions also involved a strange disenfranchisement of Raško’s claim to his own song, with constant stress on Vuk Karadžić’s name and with Raško only appearing when the denouement of the argument required mention of his roots in Kolašin (292).

Stefanović’s erasure of the Bosniak character of these songs was then compounded by Vargyas’s need to reduce the diffusion pathways of the tradition to a single descent-line so that he might locate its source in his native Hungary via an academic myth of ancient song-swapping in the Caucasus (1967:223-26). Vargyas targeted the ancient origins reconstructed by Stefanović, and with them, by a kind of sleight-of-hand, cleared away the entire Bosnian variant as beholden to the tradition and therefore irrelevant (201, 206-10). The Bosnian variant is, in fact, a unique innovation on the common tradition. Vargyas was correct that there are enough aspects of the more common lunch-carrier tradition in this variant to link it to the wider story-pattern (208-10), though how much of the modeling of those aspects is convergence and how much divergence is a chicken / egg argument lost to the past and only to be conjectured about. It is undeniable, however, that the four Bosnian songs represent a unique manifestation. Their variant form belongs in large part to the local Muslim population, who were able to competently ground it in local legendry involving two historic sites—the bridges at Višegrad and at Mostar. The variant tradition represented by these four songs is not the only divergence in the region; there are, in fact, three clear variants of this song:

The first is a minor variant with few attestations (Figure 3), all collected in south-central Slavonia (Burazović 1880.73; Bogdešić 1884.135 / HNP V.29; Kušmiš and Kušmiš 1898.59) and taking the form of a much shorter lyric song. This variant details a character named Young Ivica / Jovica building a city that *vile* are destroying by night. He complains to his mother, who tells him to station fantastical guards about the city—falcons on the roads, wolves in the alleys, and guardsmen in blockhouses. A *vila* is caught by these sentries, at which point the songs resolve

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<sup>40</sup> Dundes (1989:157-59 and 1995:40) has offered a competent deconstruction of this problem.

themselves in various ways—transitioning into swan-maiden motifs<sup>41</sup> and other narrative patterns common to the tradition (see Jurić 2019:174-75).

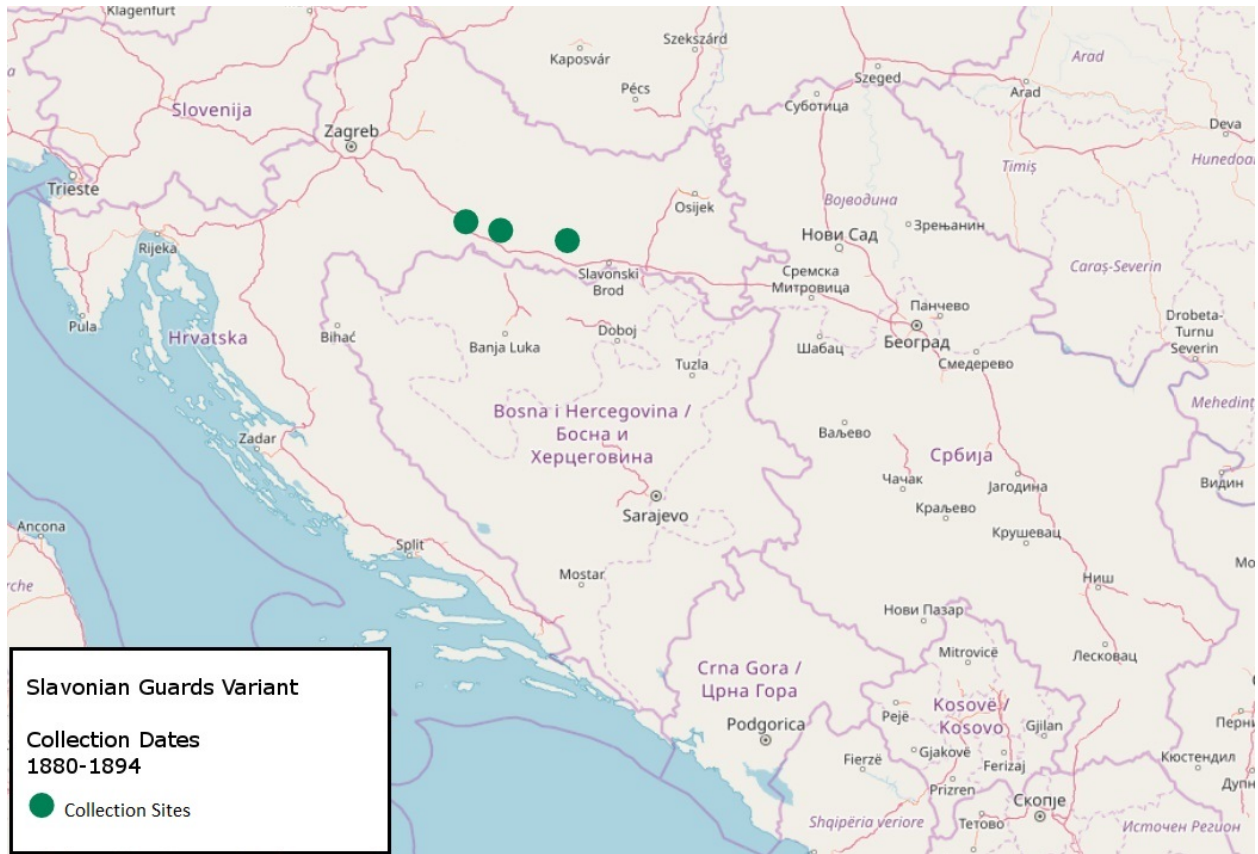


Fig. 3. Distribution of the Slavonian Guards variant.

The second variant is the Bosnian tradition (Figure 4), in which Pashas and/or masons are building a bridge and the *vile* razing it demand the other sacrifice—a brother and sister (Stojan and Stoja, also Ostoja or Stojka) to be immured in the bridge’s foundation. This variant tradition retains many aspects from the wider tradition, but has its own set of recurrent symbolism, often including a log-jam or tree trunk that must be cut with an axe, the fact that construction must wait until Đurđevdan (Saint George’s Day), and other details. The songs in this tradition mapped onto two specific structures—Mehmed Pasha Sokolović’s bridge on the Drina<sup>42</sup> in Višegrad

<sup>41</sup> In swan-maiden narratives, a man acquires a supernatural, ornithomorphic wife (a *vila* in the BCMS tradition) by stealing and hiding her wings and/or crown. After some years have passed and she has given birth to progeny, the bride regains her stolen items and flees back to her supernatural realm. See Jurić 2019:149-55.

<sup>42</sup> This event is most commonly known through Ivo Andrić’s depiction in his opus *Na Drini ćuprija* (*Bridge on the Drina*), which mentions the song tradition (I. Andrić 1978:28, 49). Nikola Andrić’s suggestion that the Palunko multiform (Palunko 1886.80 / HNP I.36) concerns the Drin river in Albania and not the Drina in Višegrad (Andrić 1908d:146) is completely untenable.



(Hörmann 1888.3; Palunko 1886.80 / HNP I.36; Petranović 1870.52) and the Old Bridge in Mostar (Jukić 1850:100-02; for more detail on this variant see Juric 2019:172-73).<sup>43</sup>

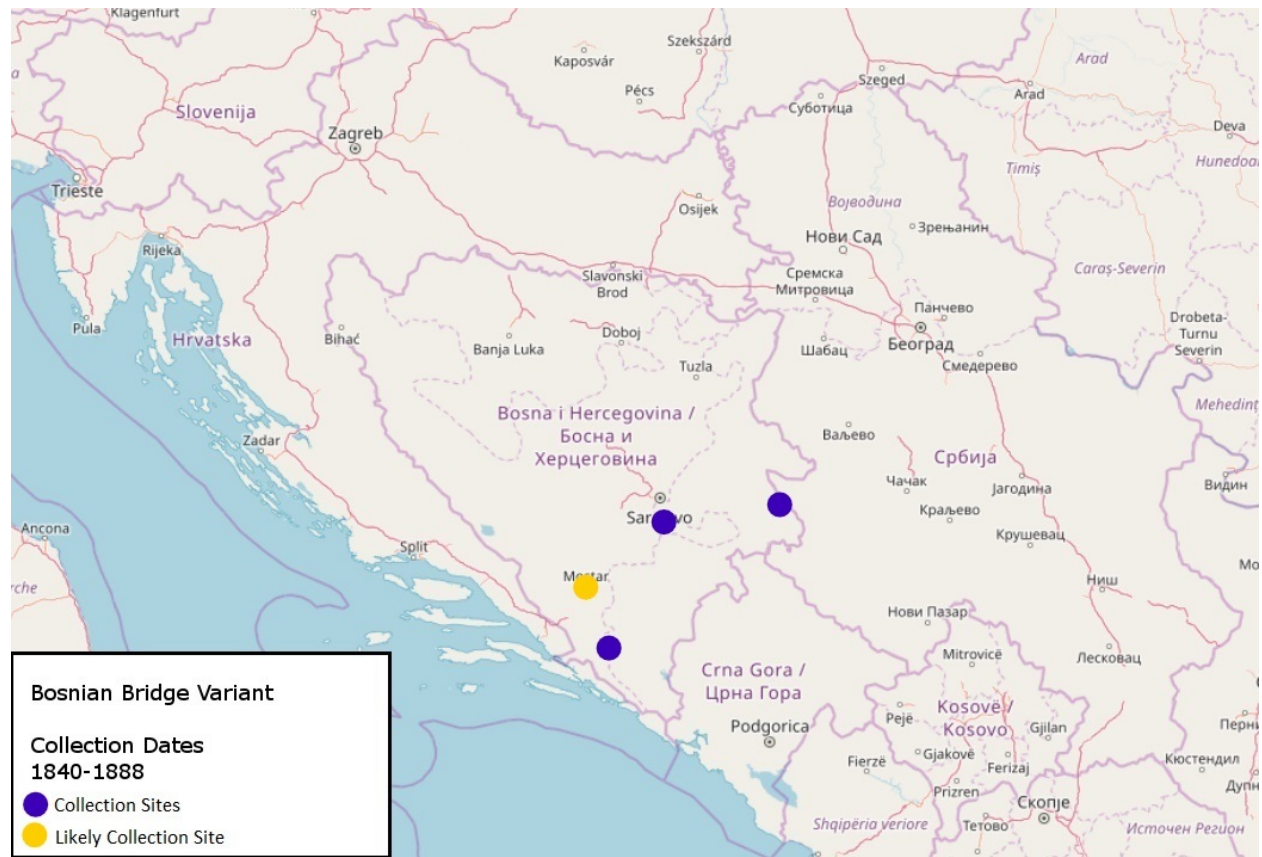


Fig. 4. Distribution of the Bosnian bridge-building variant.

Although the only two noted singers of this variant are not Muslims (Jela Bukvić Perinice in Popovo (Palunko 1886.80 / HNP I.36) and Ilija Divjanović at Jahorina (Petranović 1870.52)), Bosniak influence on the tradition is critical, if not central to its divergence. The Jukić multiform, collected by Marijan Šunjić (presumably in Mostar, though we have no data on the collection site), is the outlier in this regard for having no clear connection to Bosniak song culture beyond the characteristics it shares with the other multiforms. There is, however, no reason that we should not take Hörmann at his word that his songs were all collected from Bosniak sources. Hörmann's song, with its multiform in Palunko's collection, celebrates the Ottoman Turks'

<sup>43</sup> In 1891 Austrian Consul General Carl Peez noted that the Old Bridge was nearly destroyed by a log-jam in the 1870s but was saved when a youth of the city, one Anto Ančić, was bravely lowered into the waters on a hemp rope and cut the obstructions free with an axe (Peez 1891:17). This is the same event outlined in the Jukić song published in 1850 and reflected in many of the other multiforms across Bosnia. Peez was aware of the song (he published a few lines in his text (15-16)), but seems not to have questioned the veracity of the circumstances which caused a log-jam on an exceptionally tall bridge arch elevated 20 meters above water level and brought the song's events to life. I suspect that the Mostar tradition was also known in local legend and was fed to the foreign official as historical fact, although it could be that both song and vernacular history drew their inspiration from a historical event which was misdated when relayed to Peez.



bridge-building at Višegrad, focusing on Pasha Sokolović's trials. Both are also notable for including a secondary motif of a horse arrested in the river by a *vila* that is indicatively Bosnian and common to Bosniak song (Jurić 2019:122-24).

As for Ilija Divjanović's multiform (Petranović 1870.52), it is rooted in the bridge building at Višegrad, but disconnected from Pasha Sokolović and highly divergent from the other multiforms. This is the result, however, of intentional manipulation by the collector Bogoljub Petranović to produce a "Serbian" song to work in opposition to the Muslim versions. We know that Petranović was intentionally influencing the singer Divjanović to produce epic songs that he could use to support the Serbian state's political agitation in Bosnia (Kilibarda 1989:xii-xiii; Hajdarpasic 2015:102-05) and that the two worked together as a political song-farm, borrowing mythic material from Vuk's collection (Kilibarda 1989:xxii-xxiii) and regularly co-opting local Muslim material (xix-xx). These facts account for the extreme length of the multiform (642 lines compared to an average 103 in the others), the confused arrested horse motif (ll. 191-245, 611-31), the unnatural focus on *Serbian* builders, *Serbian* sacrifices, *Serbian* money in opposition to "dirty" Turkish funds, and the beneficent but traditionally artless bequeathal by *Serbian* King Milutin of his two children as a sacrifice (ll. 429-515). They also explain the appropriation of the log-jam from its poetic role in the other multiforms as the magic, bleeding testament to the construction's lasting nature, to simply another step in a series of politicized rituals to remove Turkish "taint" from a Serbian edifice (ll. 588-637), as well as the patently untraditional killing of the Pashas at the song's conclusion (ll. 551-63). It seems quite clear that Divjanović was well acquainted with a version of the Bosniak variant and remodeled it to serve Petranović's cultural-political agenda.<sup>44</sup>

The final variant, that of the lunch-carrier, is the most common, the most widespread, and likely the oldest (Figure 5).<sup>45</sup> It is also the version with the most variation across multiforms (and in comparison to the wider tradition (Vargyas 1967:205-06)). While the songs generally follow the plot in Raško's version, of course lacking the search for the sibling sacrifice, they contain various unique episodes throughout (see Figure 2 above as well as Jurić 2019:173-75) and minor alterations, including the various false ailments the sisters-in-law use to avoid bringing the lunch, as well as the four multiforms that confound Dundes's assertion that this story-pattern requires a female victim (1995:47-48) by having a male character immured (Kučera 1884.394; Šestić 1889.193 / HNP V.92; Hangi 1898.29 / HNP V.91 and 1898.50; cf. Vargyas 1967:223). They also regularly resolve themselves in a number of unique ways: the husband of the immured wife cannot console his child and ends his own life (Mostahinić 1892.10), a river of milk erupts from the wall and the abandoned child drinks from it (Ilić 1878.275; Burazović 1880.41; Gazdović 1883.31; Bogdešić 1884.26; Gabrić 1885.80; Ivanišević 1885.106; Zovko 1893.195; Kušmiš and Kušmiš 1898.36), God or saints take pity on the child and release the mother with lightning bolts

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<sup>44</sup> It is important to note that while Divjanović's song was intentionally re-crafted, its problem is most certainly not its comic elements as Stefanović suggested (1937:283). My research has produced abundant examples of humor, parody, and subversion of traditional expectations in the region's epic songs, which is not a sign of corruption, but the common play of innovative traditional singers (Jurić 2019:247-48, 362-68).

<sup>45</sup> Lacking from this discussion are a number of songs that might be thought of as "hapax legomena," songs for which we have no multiform data and which likely represent singer innovations. They are noted in Figure 6 and discussion of them can be found in Jurić 2019:173-75.

that destroy the structure (Burazović 1880.41; Gazdović 1883.31; Bogdešić 1884.26; Kučera 1884.1; Gabrić 1885.80; Ivanišević 1885.106; Lovretić 1885.32;<sup>46</sup> Štuk 1886.13), the mother avenges herself upon her brothers-in-law (Gazdović 1883.31; Strohal 1883.18), and so forth. The songs also reveal the various ways in which singers attempted to moralize the events of the song, such as a multiform from an unnamed singer in Banja Luka who inverted the straightforward tragedy in the motif by making the older brothers' revelations to their wives more tragic and relatable, while the youngest brother's reticence is ascribed to a cocksure hubris about his knowledge of his wife's schedule (Hangi 1898.54 / HNP V.90).

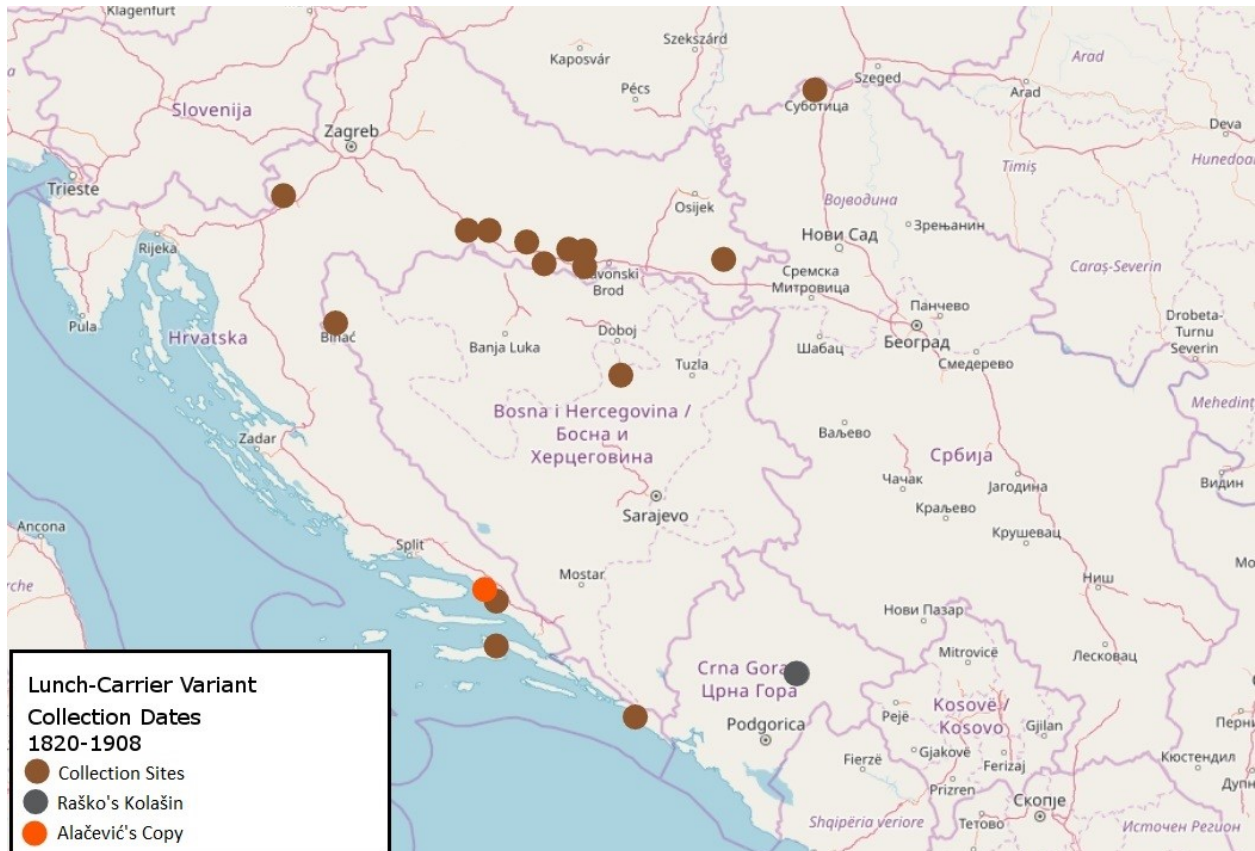


Fig. 5. Distribution of the lunch-carrier variant.

The lunch-carrier variant, however, never includes mention of the sibling sacrifice outside of Raško's multiform and Alačević's copy. Stefanović's suggestion that Raško's version is a blending of the lunch-carrier variant and the Bosnian variant is indeed correct. As Stefanović noted early on, Raško undoubtedly learned his song in Kolašin, which put him on the border between a well-established lunch-carrier tradition in Northern Albania (though likely already diffused throughout the entire Balkans) and a Bosnian bridge-building variant which had reached

<sup>46</sup> One of Lovretić's two multiforms (1885.32) has been copied directly from Kučera's collection (1884.1) along with a number of songs surrounding it in the manuscript. The history behind this might merit some investigation. For comparison with all of this song-swapping and plagiarism, one might wish to consult Ivanišević 1885.106 and Burazović 1880.41 to see what traditional multiformity looks like across two songs in close regional proximity. Cf. Lord 1991.

as far as Herzegovina (Palunko 1886.80 / HNP I.36) and could easily have been commonly encountered in northern Montenegro (Figure 6).<sup>47</sup> This song is not, however, an example of poetic perfection (Stefanović 1937:289, 304) that was stumbled upon by blundering serendipity, as Stefanović suggested (291), nor is it the product of the purely unique imagination of a belletristic artist, as Koljević would have it (1980:148), but, rather, the result of intentional crafting by a skilled *guslar* and oral-traditional artist, who lived in a border area where both traditions were known. In his multiform, Raško intentionally incorporated a false start from the first tradition, either to prolong the song or else to add suspense and intrigue to the telling (see Lord 2000:24).<sup>48</sup> It may also be that such a blended form was a common regional variant for the singers of Kolašin, though we have no data to support such an assertion.

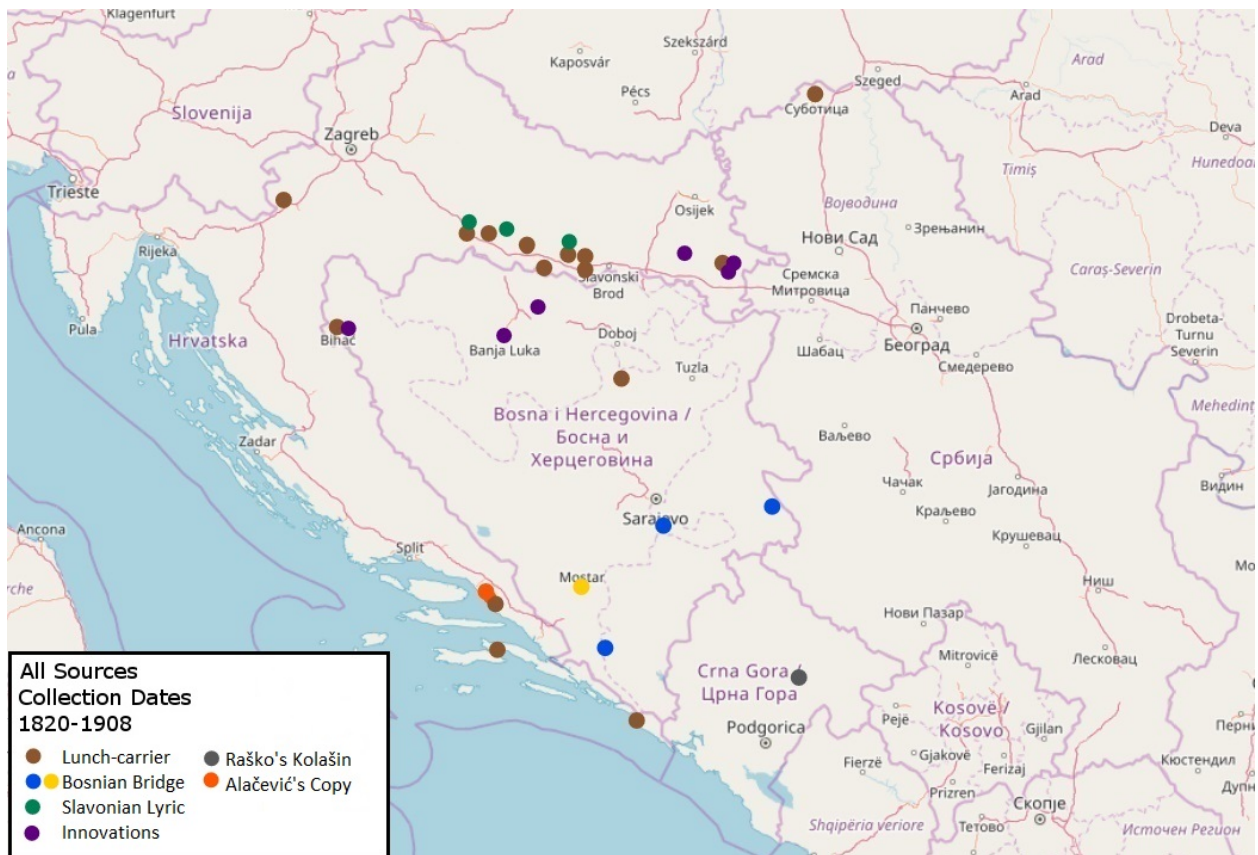


Fig. 6. Distribution of all variants and multiforms.

<sup>47</sup> Vuk considered Kolašin to lie within the boundaries of Old Herzegovina (1833:xiii) and classified Raško's singing as an example of Herzegovinian style (Kilibarda 1972:91). Kolašin was also the home of many Muslim singers (including the famous Ćor Huso (Pipa 1984:86; Lord 2000:19)) who might have performed the Bosnian variant of the song.

<sup>48</sup> One might conceivably argue for superfluous addition due to the singer's erring in the heat of performance (see for instance Lord 2000:114-15; Jurić 2019:181 n. 187, 168 n. 171), that is, for the possibility that Raško began singing the lunch-carrier variant, accidentally detoured into the search for siblings from the Bosnian variant, realized his mistake, and corrected it in performance by making the children undiscoverable. This type of error, though, is unlikely for such a skilled and senior *guslar*, and the text gives no indication of such, unless it was emended in Vuk's editing. See Jurić 2019:152-54 for examples of singers blending and combining separate traditions.

What is certain is that this story-pattern did not diffuse in a simple, linear pattern and that the movements it did make are obscured by a long enough history to make them largely opaque to academic inquiry. The scholars who have worked on the tradition have attributed its diffusion in the Balkans to dates between the twelfth and fourteenth centuries (Stefanović 1937:303; Vargyas 1967:233; cf. Dundes 1995:43-44). Long before these songs were collected in the nineteenth century, they had settled into distribution patterns that left certain variant forms bound to particular regions while also supporting a broader, and most certainly oldest, lunch-carrier variant throughout the region and beyond. How those traditions traveled, settled, divided, and converged, how often they doubled back upon themselves, where they died out or transferred across linguistic boundaries—such questions are not pointless to pursue, but in large part they can only be answered with conjecture. Their answers, however, are certainly not beholden to the kinds of simplistic unilinear patterns (for example, Greece → Serbia → Hungary → Bulgaria) proffered by most scholars and generally used to situate a privileged home nation at the point of origin (Leader 1967:32-33; Vargyas 1967:178).

### **Conclusion: Sacrificing “The Building of Skadar”**

This song tradition has been plagued by poor folklore theory since its inception; while Alan Dundes has more generally addressed the jingoistic problems in the wider scholarship, the long history of problematic approaches to studying the distribution of this song in BCMS-speaking regions has fallen out of focus. It is important, however, to return to these issues. Nearly all of the subsequent research that addresses the distribution of this story-pattern is either deeply embroiled in faulty logic and chauvinistic manipulation, or simply carries the detritus left behind by others' poor scholarship. That scholarship has been marred by ignorance of the interplay between print literature and oral traditions, intentional ignoring of regional distribution patterns in favor of a less useful ethnic lens of analysis, and reliance on a simplistic academic myth of unilinear diffusion patterns in lieu of a dynamic model of song transmission and adaptation. All of these errors have, intentionally and unintentionally, distorted the facts of the oral tradition's diffusion in the service of useful nationalist narratives.

The history of folklore collection in the BCMS-speaking regions is intimately tied to post-imperial legacies and struggles for national independence under various banners. By returning to some of these politics and their connection to the region's folklore research, we can reveal the insecurities, worries, and biases that informed various approaches to the Building Sacrifice story-pattern. By bringing a modern analytical lens to the song, we can competently map the tradition and objectively reveal what can (and importantly, what cannot) be known about its diffusion and manifestation in the region. This not only provides a clearer image of what the actual tradition looked like at the time these materials were collected, but also allows us to give credit to the insights that scholars of the past working with the song actually contributed to its study. Like the lunch-carrying wife or the stably named brother and sister in the Building Sacrifice story-pattern, this oral tradition has been a consistent victim of sacrifice. By returning to these debates we can trim the fat of bad science and produce a clearer understanding of the

distribution and diffusion of these songs free of the chauvinistic manipulation of interested parties.

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### Abbreviations

- HNP *Hrvatske narodne pjesme*. 10 vols. Zagreb: Matica hrvatska. HNP I = Broz and Bosanac 1896; HNP V = Andrić 1909.
- SNP *Srpske narodne pjesme*. 5 vols. Vienna: štamparija Jermenskoga manastira. SNP II = Karadžić 1845; SNP III = Karadžić 1846; SNP IV = Karadžić 1862.

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