

The Role of Language in the Creation of Identity: Myths in Linguistics among the Peoples of the Former Yugoslavia

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"If a union of all the Serbo-Croatian speaking peoples is ever realized, that is a genuine union satisfactory to both Croats and Serbians, it will be a remarkable victory of an originally intellectual movement, operating upon linguistic kinship, over exceptional obstacles" (Buck 1916: 66)

"...it was the great achievement of the communist regimes in multinational countries to limit the disastrous effects of nationalism within them." (Hobsbawm 1990: 173)

"The Slovene literary language is alive and well in the Republic of Slovenia in Yugoslavia, where it is functionally almost completely self-contained and whose speakers are politically, and more especially, economically successful, culturally and in civilizational terms, above the average Yugoslav. However, [the Slovenes] are still all too unaware that it is their literary language to which they are

fatefully tied, and that they will either stand or fall along with it." (Toporišič 1982: 459)

"Everybody agrees in Serbia that it would be ideal to elaborate an amended [Serbo-Croatian] orthography for the whole [Serbo-Croatian-speaking] territory, following joint or at least co-ordinated work of experts. However, until recently this has been impossible, mainly because of the unwillingness of Croatian colleagues to co-operate." (Ivić 1992: 108)

"Ostanite doma in na svojih delovnih mestih. Ne dovolite [sic] da vas zlorablajo [sic] zoper vaših življenjskih interesov. [...] Vsak odpor bo zlomljen." [Stay home and at your places of work. Do not allow anyone to abuse [sic] you against your vital interests. [...] Any resistance will be crushed."] (Excerpt from a flyer, written in grammatically and stylistically compromised Slovene, dropped from a Yugoslav Peoples' Army airplane over Slovenia, June 26, 1991.)

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Preliminaries

Commenting on the taking of U.N. hostages by the Bosnian Serbs, Slobodan Milošević in an interview in *Time* asserted that "[w]e had to do whatever we could just to eliminate that dirty story from the history of Serbs" (Gaines, et al. 1995: 28). This statement is most revealing about the Serbian perception of the events in the Balkans: history is now, and history can and should be manipulated to accrue to the benefit of the nation. What has remained enigmatic to much of the world is the fact that, to the Serbs, history is a largely atemporal (or panchronic) phenomenon and, furthermore, one of utmost significance to everyday people. As Vermeer observes, "[t]o an outsider, it is quite astonishing to see that the popular press in Yugoslavia is full of interviews with historians and similar people, evidently not because the public is really interested in what happened in the past, but because it is thought that past facts are somehow more important than present reality" (1992: 104). Because of this emphasis on the past and its projection onto the present, history in the former Yugoslavia plays a central role in shaping contemporary national attitudes. Of particular significance is language history, not only because of the (very important) symbolic function that language has in shaping national identity, but also because linguists can authoritatively advance claims about the links between language and territory in the past, that

is, create language myths. This in turn can have an effect on what people believe about their language, their past, and their national identity.¹

As Ferguson pointed out almost 40 years ago, “[I]n every speech community attitudes and beliefs are probably current about the language of the community as well as about other languages and language in general. Some of these are true, i.e. correspond very well to objective reality, others are involved with esthetic or religious notions the validity of which cannot be investigated empirically, and still others which purport to deal with facts are partly or wholly false” (1959/1968: 375). This is the sense in which the topic of myths will be investigated here, i.e., ideas about language that people have that may be true, false, or somewhere in between. However, here, rather than examine the spectrum of beliefs that people hold about their language, the intermediary role of native linguists in shaping language myths will be considered. This is relevant because linguists’ argumentation is too technical for the layman to penetrate and, as a consequence, their claims may go largely unquestioned and the advancement of both good and faulty ideas can be absorbed into the collective consciousness without a critical filter.

In the case of the Slavic peoples of the former Yugoslavia, who speak languages that stand in close genetic relationship to one another and have a high degree of mutual intelligibility, the linguistic component of historical interpretation turns on subtle differences. The similarities among these languages made possible a 19th-century (failed) attempt at language unification, the Illyrian Movement. Although the political analogue of this movement, a unified state of Yugoslavia, persisted for more than seventy years (1918–1991), during which attempts had been made to unify the languages, the differences among them have prevailed decisively. Although it is too early (and, for the moment, too monumental a task) to assess objectively all of the underlying causes of the disintegration of Yugoslavia, it does not seem extravagant to advance the idea that linguists played a not insignificant role in defining national consciousness and hence were part of the disintegrative process.

For the discussion below it will be necessary to dwell for a moment on some terminological points (though we will dispense with technical sociolinguistic terms). A central issue in the question of cultural myths in South Slavic linguistics is the tension between the fuzzy notions of **language** and **dialect**. The partly facetious diagnostic that a “language is a dialect with an army” is appropriate to the extent that it emphasizes that a dialect can be elevated to the status of a language when it is supported by the state. However, this is hardly an adequate definition. One could cite the Lusatian Sorbs, who are a Slavic people settled along the Spree River in what used to be East Germany. The Sorbs, an ethnolinguistic group numbering under 70,000, are speakers of two closely related languages, Upper and Lower Sorbian. Their varieties of speech are used in literature, theater, radio, television and print media, and speakers have at their disposal a range of written and spoken registers. Consequently, Upper and Lower Sorbian must be considered languages. Yet, they have never possessed a state and are unlikely to do so. On the other hand, Macedonian, which one certainly must consider a language with a state (now with its own army), cannot be separated on structural criteria from Bulgarian, with which it makes a coherent dialect continuum. This suggests that the distinction between language and dialect (variant) is not one of linguistically-definable structural contrast, but of perspective. In particular, one can view things from: (1) a **political** perspective (Is it the official or dominant language of a political entity?); (2) a **functional/cultural** perspective (Is it used in literature, science, the

media?); (3) a **historical** perspective (Does it relate to other languages in an earlier period? Can it be linked to a glorious past?); (4) a **structural** perspective (Is there a high degree of mutual intelligibility? Does the dialect geography suggest strong or weak differentiation from its neighbors?); (5) a perspective of **beliefs** (Do its speakers believe they are speaking a language or a dialect?). Thus, for example, one can rightfully call Macedonian a language in terms of (1), (2), and (5), but with respect to (3) and (4) Macedonian must be viewed as part of a genetic and typological grouping that contains both Bulgarian and Macedonian. It goes (almost) without saying that none of these perspectives is an independent or impermeable category, but rather, they are all interrelated in complex ways. Moreover, the question of language vs. dialect is not merely an academic one. In the South Slavic world (though not only there), where language (in the narrow sense of “standard” or “literary” language) is a marker of prestige and dialect is neutral or lacking prestige, language represents power, independence, sometimes also domination, dialect represents local sub-national identity, in essence, subordination. Because the categories fade into each other, language planners, and, as we shall see, even linguists not directly involved in language planning, have been keen to sharpen the distinctions and thus to shore up the beliefs relating to the status of language. This paper examines some of the contributions that native linguists have made to the Yugoslav peoples’ beliefs about their languages and, consequently, the role of linguists in building and fortifying national identity.

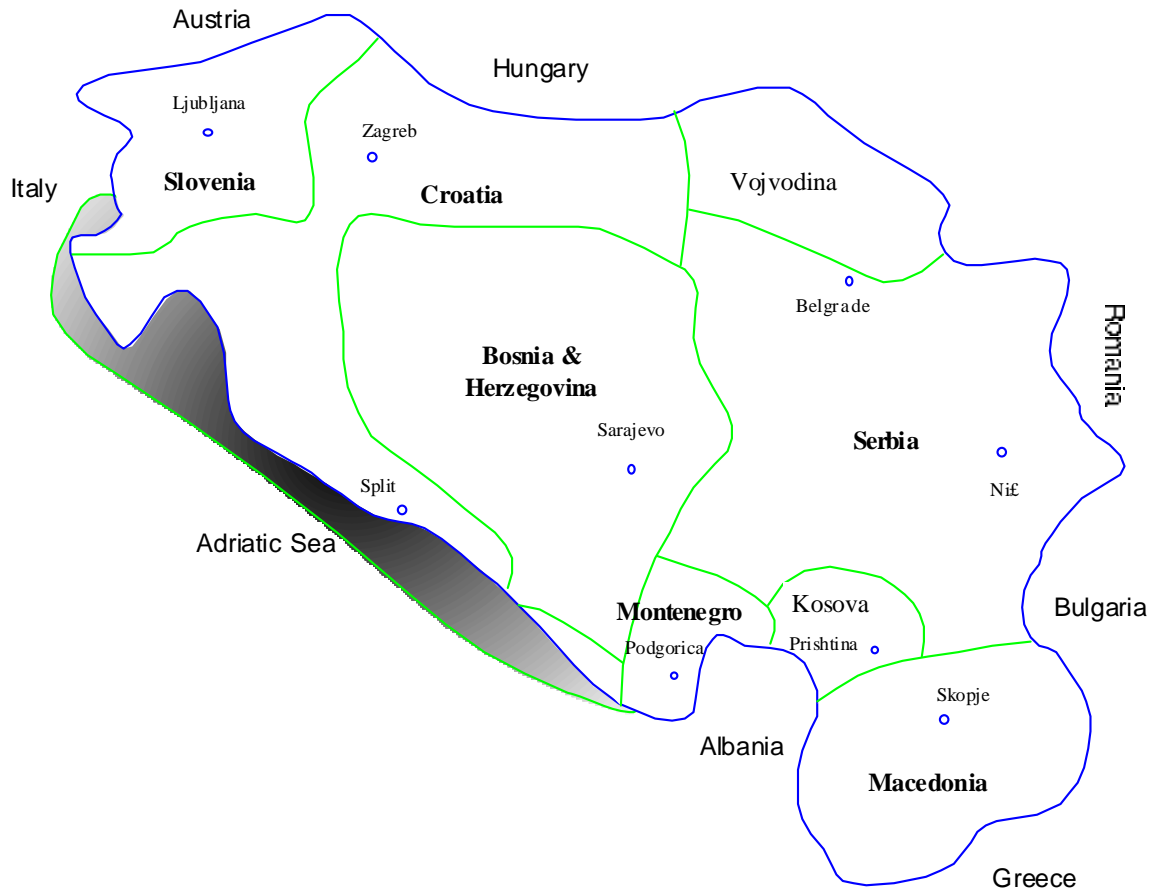
A thumbnail historical sketch of Yugoslavia

The state of Yugoslavia that existed from 1918 until 1991 was made up of four major Slavic ethnolinguistic groups, from north to south: Slovenes, Croats, Serbs (= Serbs + Montenegrins), and Macedonians. A religious group, the Slavic Muslims (*Muslimani*), though regarded as a separate national entity, nevertheless shared its language (with minor differences in usage) with the Serbs and Croats, and only since the recent Bosnian War has it begun to elaborate its own standard language (Bosnian, *bosanski jezik*). Macedonian, which gained the status of a standard language in 1944, became the official language of the Yugoslav Federal Republic of Macedonia and is now the state language of the independent Republic of Macedonia (also known as the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia). In addition, significant non-Slavic minorities are settled among the Slavic population. Particularly numerous are the Hungarians of Vojvodina and the Albanians of Kosova (see Appendices 1, 2; Maps 1, 2).

The Slovenes, Croats and Serbs of today descend from the Slavic peoples who migrated from north of the western foothills of the Carpathians and settled in the Eastern Alps in the north and the hinterlands east of the Dinaric Alps in the 6th-7th centuries AD.² They lie west of another group of southward-migrating Slavs who were to become the Macedonians and Bulgarians and remained for a time separated from the western group by Balkan Latin (later Romanian) and Albanian speakers until these two latter groups gradually receded (through assimilation to the Slavic population) to roughly the present-day western Romanian border and the eastern borders of the province of Kosovo and the Republic of Albania. From a structural viewpoint, Macedonian and Bulgarian are characterized by numerous grammatical parallelisms and lexical similarities to the languages of the Balkan convergence area (*Sprachbund*), which include also the non-Slavic languages Romanian, Albanian, Greek, and to an extent, Turkish (for an overview see Friedman 1986). Slovene, Croatian and Serbian are characterized both by a number of common structural innovations

and the fact that they lie outside of (Slovene, Croatian) or on the periphery (Serbian) of the Balkan convergence area. For the historical reasons just mentioned, the South Slavic area is discussed linguistically in terms of two subgroups: western-South Slavic (Slovene, Croatian, Serbia) and eastern-South Slavic or Balkan Slavic (Macedonian, Bulgarian). For the present discussion we shall leave the Balkan group aside and focus on the western group.

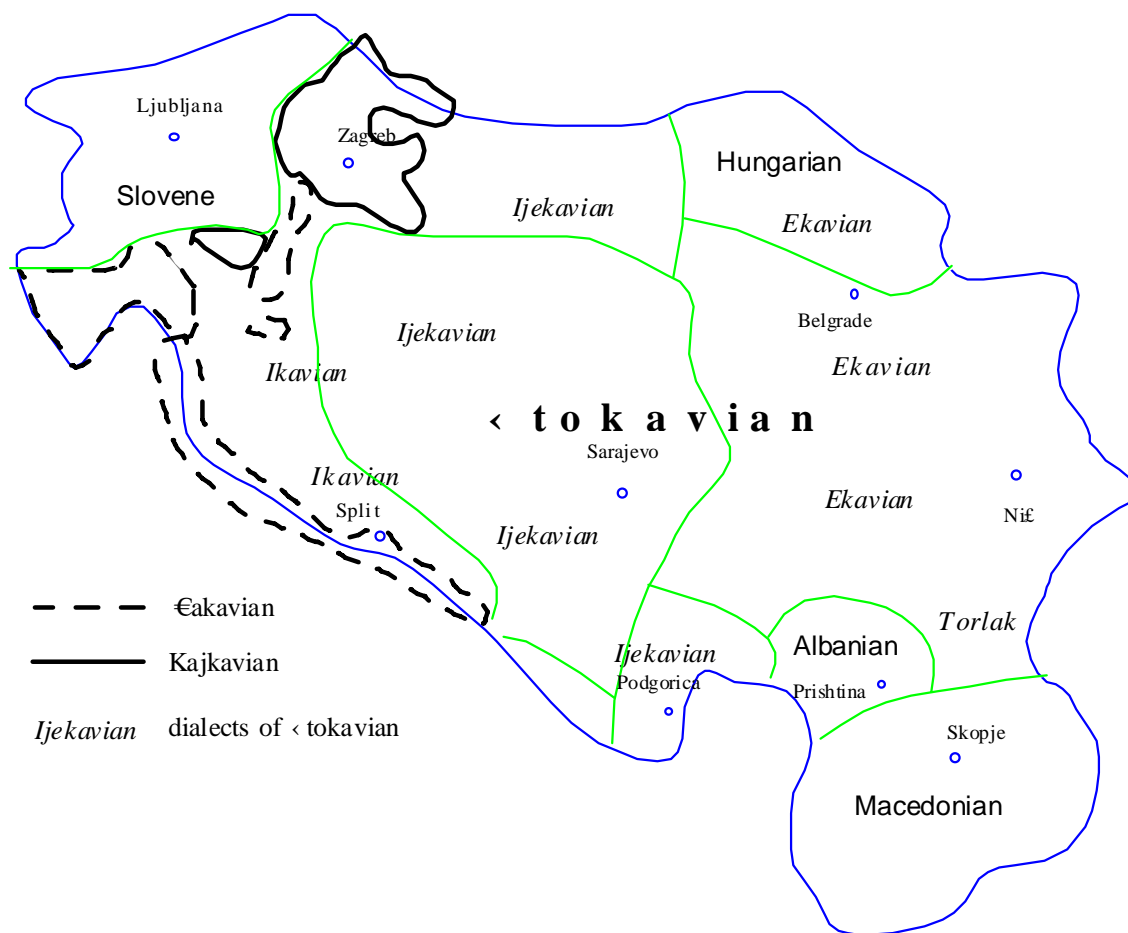
Map 1: The former Yugoslavia



Although it is difficult to establish the details, it is generally assumed that during the period following the migrations to the Eastern Alps and the Balkan Peninsula there must have been some degree of discontinuity in the settlement of smaller subgroups of the western South Slavs, which gave rise to early dialect differentiation reflected today in the Slovene language and the three major dialects of the Croats and Serbs: Čakavian, Kajkavian and Štokavian (characterized symbolically by the form of the interrogative pronoun ‘what’: *ča*, *kaj*, and *što*, respectively) (see Maps 1, 2).³ The Štokavian and Čakavian areas are further subdivided into smaller groups based on the reflex of the Common Slavic vowel “jat” (symbolized as *ě*), which are referred to as Ikavian (“i-saying”), Ekavian and Ijekavian. However, whatever discontinuity might have existed became obscured as the populations increased, spread, and came in contact with one another, giving rise to transitional areas among the dialects. Both the Čakavian- and Kajkavian-speaking areas have literary traditions, the Čakavian having reached its zenith in the Renaissance; the Kajkavian tradition remained fragmented and was oriented to still smaller subdialects through its history. The

Štokavian and Čakavian dialect areas expanded west- and northward in the 15th to 19th centuries in reaction to Turkish domination, in part at the expense of the Kajkavian dialect area (Ivić 1972: 72ff, 1986: 49ff, 331). As a result the Štokavian dialect area covers a far greater territory than it had prior to the 15th c. and both the Čakavian and Kajkavian territories must have been substantially larger, extending eastwards. There does not exist a close fit between these dialects and the modern ethnic groups and nations: Serbs are speakers of Štokavian Ekavian and Ijekavian; Montenegrins of Štokavian Ijekavian; Croats of Kajkavian, Čakavian, and Štokavian Ikavian and Ijekavian; Muslims speak Štokavian Ijekavian. In turn, the Kajkavian and Čakavian dialects form a bridge to Slovene. The Štokavian dialect area blends into Macedonian and Bulgarian through the transitional Torlak dialect in southern Serbia. The Štokavian dialect area blends into Macedonian and Bulgarian through the transitional Torlak dialect in southern Serbia.

Map 2: Languages of the former Yugoslavia (with dialects of Serbo-Croatian)



Local literary traditions, at times stronger than others, sprang up in each of these areas, so that one may speak of a Renaissance Čakavian, a Baroque Kajkavian as well as several local Štokavian literatures. Up through the early 19th century the Serbs used as a standard language Slaveno-Serbian, an amalgam of Serbian Church Slavic, with a large Russian and Church Slavic lexical component, and Štokavian Serbian. In the early part of the 19th century, due largely to the activity of the Serbian philologist and folklorist Vuk Karadžić, the élitist and artificial Slaveno-Serbian was replaced by a standard language closely

reflecting the Štokavian Ijekavian speech of Karadžić's native Eastern Herzegovinian dialect. Later, the Ekavian variety of Štokavian, characteristic of Belgrade speech and the majority of Serbs, replaced Ijekavian as the Serbian variety of the standard language. In the 1820-1830's in Croatia and, to a lesser extent, Slovenia, a movement to unify all of the South Slavic languages into a single standard, a something like a South-Slavic Esperanto, grew out of the Pan-Slavic Illyrian movement. The Illyrian movement failed after some attempts to forge grammars and produce an instant literature. However, a leading proponent of this movement, the Croatian (Kajkavian-speaking) philologist, Ljudevit Gaj, eventually agreed to adopt Štokavian as the common standard language of all Croats and Serbs, codified in the Literary Agreement of 1850. This unification in turn closed the door to the further incorporation of Slovene, which at this time was reaching its own synthesis around the figure of the Slovene Romantic poet Francè Prešeren.

Although centripetal forces were in place from the beginning, the abandonment of Čakavian and Kajkavian as models for a literary language and the adoption of Štokavian meant the beginning of an idealized entity known as Serbo-Croatian or Croato-Serbian. During 19th c. , the establishment of the Cyrillic alphabet as currently used in Serbia and Montenegro was established, as well as the Latin orthography now used Croatia and Bosnia (including the diacritics *č, š, ž, ć*, already in use in Czech and, with respect to the last letter, Polish). Karadžić's fundamental grammatical principal was "Write as you speak"; as democratic as this may sound, it really only referred to the phonetic spelling principle, since only those speakers who had a native command of the Eastern Herzegovinian dialect could write as they spoke. Fully a half-century passed before the general principles of Karadžić's grammar were accepted by Croats with the publication of Tomo Maretić's 1899 grammar. This meant the agreement on matters of phonology (sounds), grammatical categories, but the two variants continued to develop in divergent manners. The Serbian variant remained open to borrowings for new vocabulary, building on the already considerable Turkish lexicon. Croats have advocated neologisms, rather than borrowings, for new terms (cf. Serbian *avion* 'airplane,' Croatian *zrakoplov* 'airplane' <— *zrak* 'air' *plov* 'that which floats').

Though the opposition between the two major components of Serbo-Croatian remained a constant throughout the Yugoslav period, it cannot be denied that such a construct existed and remained functional throughout this period. A brief interval of independence in Croatia under the fascist *Ustaša* regime of Ante Pavelić (1938-1942) led to an immediate renewal of efforts to recodify an independent and markedly divergent Croatian standard, based on an etymological (*korienski*) orthography, rather than the Vukovian phonetic-spelling tradition, but this process was reversed with the victory of the Communists and the re-incorporation of Croatia into the new Yugoslavia.⁴ From the beginning of the 1970's linguists in Croatia worked towards a Croatian standard and increasingly used the (in Yugoslav terms) provocative designation Croatian Literary Language (*Hrvatski književni jezik*).⁵ Serbian language planners, on the contrary, continued to insist on the unificatory policy of Serbo-Croatian. The disintegration of Yugoslavia in 1991 led to an immediate renewal of efforts to cleanse Croatian of its similarities to Serbian and elaborate an independent Croatian standard. By default, a Serbian standard has persisted, though this is manifested largely by the more consistent use of the Cyrillic alphabet.⁶ A relatively new entity, though based upon an established literary tradition and local usage, is the emerging Bosnian standard. Though its codifiers acknowledge its identification with

Serbian and Croatian, it is conceived of as a separate standard for local and state use (Uzicanin 1995, Mønnesland 1996).

Supplanting traditions: the competing Serbo-Croatian myths

The Serbo-Croatian problem is one that dates at least to the time of the Austro-Hungarian Emperor Joseph II, whose Germanizing policies caused reactions in the end of the 18th c. by the Magyar nobility and the Croat and Serb constituencies (Buck 1916: 62-65; Banac 1984: 75-76). The notion of unification under the rubric of Serbo-Croatian (or Croato-Serbian) served at least two major purposes: (1) for the Serbs, unification of all territories in which Serbs reside, including not only Serbia, but also much of Croatia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, and Montenegro, as well as assimilation of ethnic Croats and Muslims; (2) for the Croats, unification of the heterogenous dialects spoken by Croats—Kajkavian, Čakavian and Štokavian—and their local traditions. These purposes, while having a common unificatory core, were at odds with each other. The Serb motive was assimilatory and expansionist, a tendency made explicit in Karadžić's 19th c. campaign for a new literary language. Karadžić's language was (and is) based on the Štokavian dialect, all speakers of which were viewed as Serbs (cf. Karadžić's motto *Srbi svi i svuda* "Serbs all and everywhere"). As early as 1814 in his *Orthography of the Serbian Language According to the Speech of the Common People*, Karadžić characterized Croat speakers of Štokavian as "Roman Catholic Serbs" (Banac 1984: 80). This broadened use of the term "Serb," which equated Serbs with the Štokavian dialect (and, crucially, the Štokavian dialect with Serbs) was at variance with what Croats believed, a majority of whom were (and are) speakers of the Štokavian dialect but had never considered themselves as Serbs. On the other hand, Croats, too, desired a common linguistic denominator. However, this desire arose in order to unify the three major dialect bases spoken by Croats. Kajkavian, the dialect of the Croatian capital, Zagreb—at the time the core area of Croatia in the strict sense—was a prestigious literary language that was in its ascendancy in the late 18th and early 19th c. Kajkavian might well have served as a model for a Croatian national language. However, the relatively small population of Kajkavian speakers with respect to Čakavian (whose literary language had waned since the Renaissance) and Štokavian made it an unlikely choice for a unifying standard. Moreover, the Kajkavian dialect was felt as being closer to Slovene, and was thus unsuitable as a Croatian standard. After failing, under the leadership of the Croat Ljudevit Gaj (1809-1872), to advance a common language ("Illyrian") for all South Slavs (initially including also Slovenes and Bulgarians), Croatian intellectuals adopted a Croatian variety of Štokavian as their standard language. However, this unificatory process was inherently problematic because the choice of the Štokavian dialect, as the majority dialect of the Croats, implied sharing a single language with an alien nationality. The inherent tension between the competing Serbian and Croatian unificatory strategies was to inform the national question for more than the next century and a half.

The Serbian and Croatian aspirations for linguistic unification remained essentially the same throughout the Yugoslav period and we see in the activity of Serbian and Croatian linguists a reflection of the competing strategies for their two types of unification. After 1945 the Serbian assimilationist strategy could be disguised as internationalism, whereas the consolidating policy of Croats became branded as nationalist, bourgeois and counter-revolutionary. It is not surprising, then, that linguistic publications emphasizing the "Yugoslav" viewpoint predominate in the post World-War II, whereas the Croatian

viewpoint is submerged until the 1970's (see below on the relations of Slovene and Kajkavian and footnotes 4, 5).

Reinventing the past: Junković on the ancient relations of Slovene and Kajkavian, and the Serbo-Croatian question

As was mentioned above, Slovene and the Croatian Kajkavian dialect stand in a close genetic relationship. In contrast to Slovene, which has become a standard national language, Kajkavian was abandoned in the process of selecting a model for a common Croatian standard. In part this abandonment can be explained by the need to seek the maximum differences from one's neighbor, to sharpen boundaries. The adoption of Štokavian as the Croatian standard effected the maximal linguistic differentiation of Croatian from Slovene and, consequently, reinforced the separateness of Croatian and Slovene national identities. The historical paths of the two areas, though similar to each other with respect to the Serbian east, was indeed divergent: the Slovene language was heir to a strong tradition of literacy begun by Protestants and, after the retarding effect of the Counter-Reformation, it reached a new pinnacle in the Romantic period. In contrast, the Kajkavian-speaking area had experienced a somewhat weaker Protestant tradition and by the 19th c. had nearly nearly ceased to possess a literary tradition. This situation has left Croats with an identity crisis, one which Croatian linguists have attempted to correct by creating a new past for the Kajkavian, one both individual and integrated into the Croatian (and, in Yugoslav terms, Serbo-Croatian) sphere, as well as greater than its present geographical extent. In the new Croatian view, Kajkavian is seen as historically encompassing part of the Slovene speech territory and, paradoxically, maximally differentiated from Slovene.⁷

The similarities between Kajkavian and Slovene launched an ongoing debate beginning in the early 19th century, roughly coinciding (predictably) with the historical moment at which the equivalence of language and nation became a prominent notion and linguists began to worry about the genetic classification of languages. This debate can be dated at least as far back as 1806 with the Czech philologist Josef Dobrovský's equation of the Slovenes with the Croats (though later, under the influence of the Slovene linguist Jernej Kopitar, he separated the Slovenes from Croats, alongside the "Illyrian Serbs") (Kidrič 1930: 153). Since then, Slovenes and Croats, primarily in intellectual circles, have been engaged in a process of reconstructing the linguistic prehistory of the Slovenes and the Kajkavian Croats, each in an effort to advance and preserve their respective national interests.

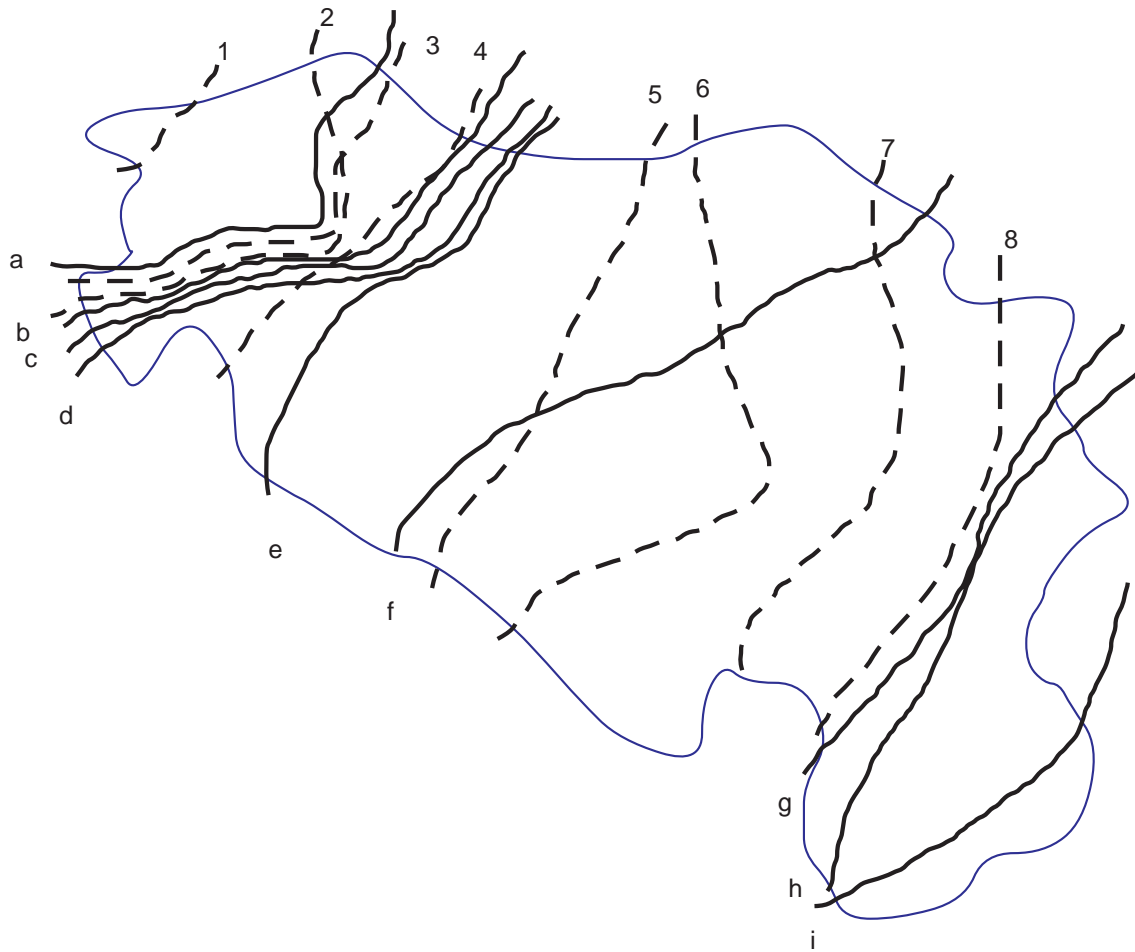
The question of the continuity or disunity of Kajkavian and Slovene, however, should not be regarded as a matter entirely for the amusement of historians and linguists. Most importantly, it is necessary to understand how fuzzy the distinction between the dialect areas were to the speakers themselves. The Slovene speech territory is divided into a number of regions that since the middle ages have displayed strong linguistic differentiation from one another, the features of which are readily recognizable to Slovene speakers: Carinthia, today to the north of the Julian and Karawanken Alps in Austria; the Littoral dialects, largely in Italy extending to Udine and Trieste with a center in Gorica/Gorizia; the Upper and Lower Carniolan dialects, making up the center and including the capital of Ljubljana on the border between them; Styria to the east, bordering on Croatia along the Kolpa/Kupa and Sotla/Sutla rivers; and Prekmurje (the northernmost portion of which today lies in Hungary), Prlekija and Haloze, making up the "Pannonian" dialect area. The

Styrian and the Pannonian regions made use of both central Slovene (Carniolan) as well as Kajkavian books from the 16th to the 18th centuries, while Prekmurje, in connection with its strong Protestant tradition, in the last half of the 18th century developed its own literary language, which persisted until this day, where it continues to be used as the liturgical language in the relic Protestant churches (Rigler 1968/1986).

How unclear things are is further reflected in the names used by and for the peoples and languages in the relevant areas. The term *Slovenec/slovenski*, now used by Slovenes and Croats in the meaning ‘Slovene’ (noun/adj.), originates in a Slavic tribal name that extends over a large territory, including that of the Slovaks (*Slovenec/slovenský*), Bulgarians (the name for the earliest Slavic written language, originating in the Macedo-Bulgarian speech-territory was *slověn'skyyi jazyk'*), and extending as far north as Novgorod in Russia, where the tribal name *Slověne* prevailed. Its original semantics were apparently ‘the (intelligibly) speaking people,’ in contrast to *něm-* ‘mute,’ later *nemec* ‘German.’⁸ Among the South Slavs it denoted those Slavs who did not carry the more specific names *Hrvat/hrvatski* ‘Croat,’ *Srbini/srpski* ‘Serbian,’ or *Bălgariin/bălgarski* ‘Bulgarian,’ all of which are probably of non-Slavic origin.⁹ Until the 19th c., the word *slovenski* was used as a term for the language in both Eastern Croatia (the Kajkavian area) and the Slovene lands, where it was gradually replaced in Croatia by *hrvatski* ‘Croatian.’ In short, names derived from the term *Slav'n-* mean ‘Slavic’; they are archaic and are thus of no corroborative value in establishing common innovation in the Slavic world.

According to the view of non-Croatian linguists, the Western-South Slavic linguistic area underwent differentiation by innovations primarily arising in the Štokavian area, leaving archaic regions in Slovene, Kajkavian, Čakavian (Ivić 1964, 1965, 1966; Šivic-Dular 1987 and bibliographies in these works). Although Kajkavian and Slovene share archaisms, which do not help much in establishing ancient affinities, they also share a number of innovations, so that “the majority of characteristics of the Kajkavian system appear in the Slovene system” (Ivić 1966: 383) and, consequently, “[t]he genetic closeness of Kajkavian [to Slovene] is obvious” (loc. cit.). In Map 3 it can be seen that a major bundle of isoglosses separates Slovene and Kajkavian from the rest of the Western-South Slavic speech territory, which has a pattern of gradual, largely parallel isoglosses.

Map 3: Selected isoglosses in Western South Slavic



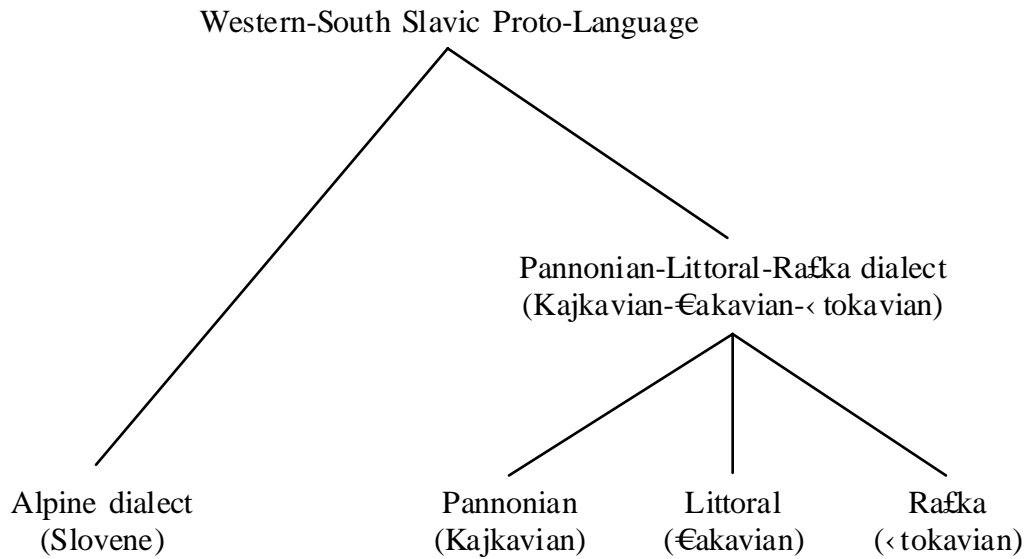
Based on Ivič 1957-58: 180 and author's material.

- | | | | |
|---|--|---|--|
| 1 | W retention of cluster <i>tl/dl</i> : <i>moliti—moliti</i> 'to pray' | a | W retention of dual-plural distinction |
| 2 | W change of cluster <i>*žd'</i> > <i>ž</i> : <i>drožje—droždže</i> 'yeast' | b | W use of interrogative pronoun <i>kaj</i> |
| 3 | W shift of falling accent <i>*oko > okó</i> 'eye' | c | W retention of compound future in <i>*bada; bom igral—igrat ću</i> |
| 4 | W change of <i>*dj > j</i> : <i>meja—međa</i> 'border' | d | W retention of supine and infinitive |
| 5 | E merger of <i>*šć</i> with <i>št</i> : <i>ognjšće/što—ognjšte/što</i> 'hearth'/'what' | e | W retention of dat. and instr. pl. endings in <i>-am, -ami</i> |
| 6 | W change of <i>žě</i> to <i>re</i> : <i>more—može</i> 'may, can' | f | W retention of at least 5 case distinctions in plural |
| 7 | W retention of vowel quantity | g | E development of postpositive article |
| 8 | W merger of short central vowels: <i>dan/san—den/son</i> 'day'/'dream' | h | E dev. of 1 pers pl. pronoun in <i>mie: mi—mie</i> |
| | | i | Innovations in possessive pronoun: <i>njib- —teb-</i> |

One could go on for a very long time sketching the subtleties and specific history of the Slovene–Kajkavian question, however, we shall focus on the most recent phase of this history, which was opened by the Croatian linguist Zvonimir Junković. In 1973 Junković published a book that aimed to answer two questions: (1) What was the language (and, by implication, nationality) of the Protestant writer Antun Vramec (1538-1587)? and (2) What was the genesis of the Kajkavian dialect? (Junković 1973). The first question has symbolic implications, because Vramec, though born in Vrbovec—a village just on the Croatian side of the Slovene-Croatian border—has his roots in the Slovene province of Styria (Jembrih 1981: 22-23). The question of his nationality and language is essentially answered at the very beginning of this work, under the rubric of “biographical data on Antun Vramec relevant to language,” where Junković asserts that the *Kapelan* of the brotherhood of St. Hieronymus in Rome, the capacity in which Vramec served in 1565, must have been of the Croatian nationality “since the Church of St. Hieronymus performed services in Old Church Slavic as well as Croatian” (Junković 1973: 14). By extension, therefore, Junković implies that the Eastern half of present-day Slovenia (the province of Styria) is a strong candidate for inclusion in original Croatian territory.

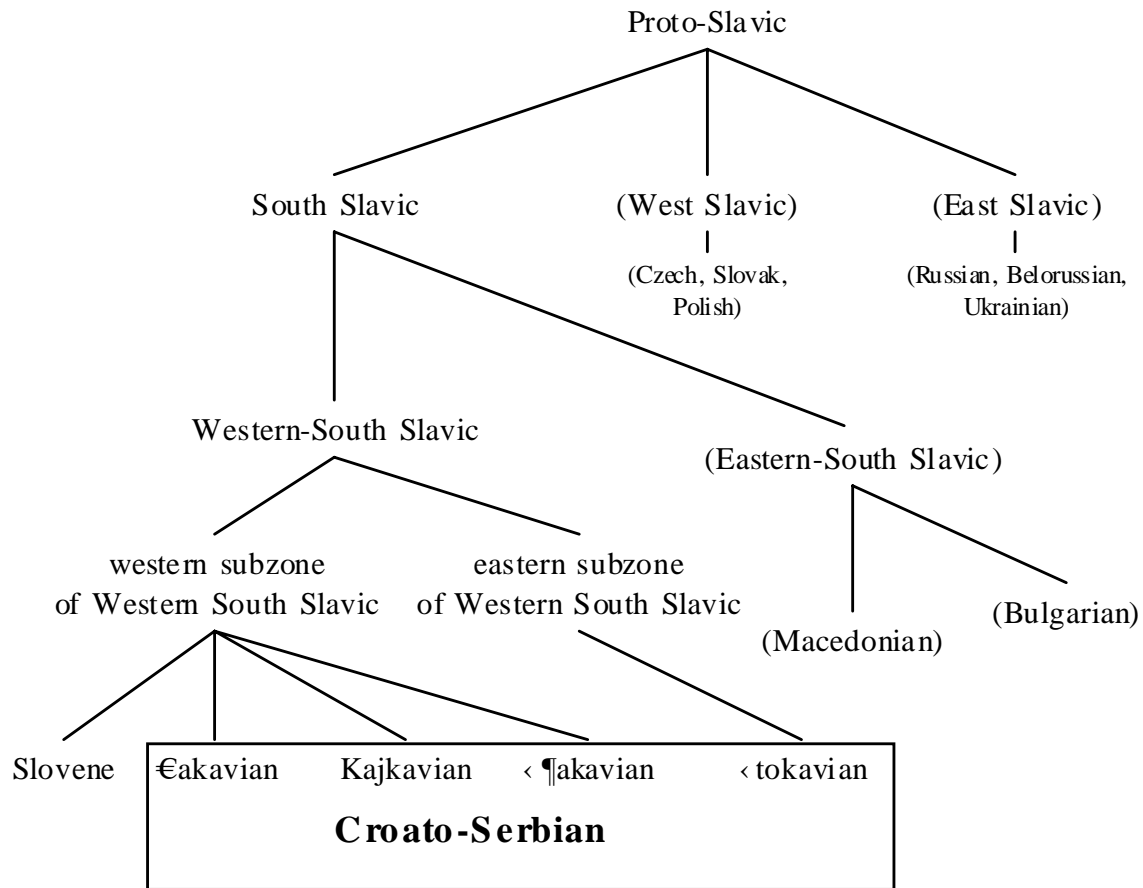
It is the second part of Junković’s book that has become influential and is thus more important for our purposes. In this part Junković attempts to describe the disintegration of the Western-South Slavic dialect (i.e., the part that was to become Slovene and Serbo-Croatian) of Proto-Slavic (roughly, 7th-9th cc. AD). He sets up four dialect areas within this Western South Slavic dialect: (1) Alpine, (2) Pannonian, (3) Littoral, (4) Raška (178). The student of the South Slavs cannot but identify these terms with the modern dialect groupings: (1) the Slovenes, who are settled in the Eastern Alps; (2) the Kajkavian speakers, who settled in the lower reaches of the Pannonian plain; (3) the Čakavian speakers, who are settled along the Adriatic littoral; (4) the Štokavian speakers, a majority of whom are Serbs (and all Serbs are Štokavian speakers), as identified by the name of the medieval Serbian state, Raška. Junković’s theory claims that the Alpine (Slovenes) split off first, leaving a union of Pannonian-Littoral-Raška (= modern Serbo-Croatian), then this group gradually differentiated; furthermore, the eastern part of what is today Slovene is, according to Junković, historically a part of the Pannonian (i.e., Kajkavian Croatian) dialect (1972: 214). Junković’s theory is represented schematically in Figure 1.

Figure 1: Stammbaum development of W-South Slavic in Junković 1972



From the outset Junković's results cannot have linguistic validity because they project onto the distant past (7-9th cc. AD) a political and ethnic division that is observed in the 19th and 20th cc. Second, methodologically, the analysis is flawed because it is explicitly designed to fit the family-tree model of genetic relationship, a model which accounts only for linguistic divergence and precludes the possibility of explaining parallel features arising after an alleged split as due to common innovation or later convergence. At least since 1872 (with the publication of Johannes Schmidt's *Die Verwandtschaftsverhältnisse der indogermanischen Sprachen*) linguists have understood the greater explanatory power of linguistic geography, which accounts for the spread of innovations from a center to a periphery. Indeed the linguistic border between Slovene and Kajkavian is well-known to be a transitional one. Linguistic analyses that take into consideration the entire picture of isoglosses in the South Slavic area reveal that precisely the opposite order of events occurred: the Štokavian dialect began to innovate first, leaving archaisms in the periphery represented today by Slovene, Čakavian and Kajkavian. Thus, methodologically, Junković's theory is a giant step backward. There are additional reasons of a technical nature that further weaken Junković's theory, both with respect to mistakes in his analysis as well as misapprehension of data (Šivic-Dular 1972-1973; Rigler 1976; Greenberg 1992: 71-72). Despite these fatal shortcomings, Junković's theory has been tacitly accepted and its results repeated by Croatian linguists (e.g., Katičić 1986: 94; Lončarić 1988; Babić et al 1991: 18-19; Moguš 1993: 11-12; Barić et al. 1995: 9-14). Especially perplexing is the elaboration of Junković's family tree in Lončarić 1988, which has emphasized the unity of the three dialects of Serbo-Croatian after their initial splits by gathering in the branches into a Croato-Serbian group (see Figure 2 and the discussion of diasystem below).

Figure 2: Stammbaum development of W-South Slavic in Lončarić 1988: 94-95



To sum up, Junković created a myth of an ancient dialect division emphasizing a prehistoric unity among the present-day dialects of Serbo-Croatian and, by the same token, discontinuity with its nearest relative, Slovene. This theory implicitly supports the claim that the Kajkavian dialect is appropriately subordinated to the Štokavian based standard. Junković enlarged the ancient territory of the Kajkavian dialect, in which territory the Croatian capital of Zagreb is located, at the expense of Slovene. Junković’s myth may be considered successful in the sense that it has been accepted uncritically by leading Croatian linguists and has been transferred to popular references about the history of the Croatian language.

Reintegrating the past: the Croatian or Croato-Serbian diasystem

A corollary to Junković’s theory on the origin of Kajkavian (as well as its implications for the rest of the Western South Slavic dialect group) is the application of notion of *diasystem* to the Serbo-Croatian speech area. According to Weinreich, who coined the term, a diasystem “can be constructed by the linguistic analyst out of any two systems which have partial similarities (it is these similarities which make it something different from the mere sum of two systems” (1954: 390). What Weinreich was speaking of is the relationship between speakers’ notion of a language and the system of dialects that correspond to it (loc. cit.). He continues: “[i]t may be feasible, without defining ‘dialect’ for the time being, to set

up ‘dialectological’ as the adjective corresponding to ‘diasystem,’ and to speak of dialectological research as the study of diasystems” (loc. cit.). The term receives an even more abstract interpretation in Croatian linguistics:

“The concept of a diasystem [...] is a general terminological problem in the systematics of idioms.¹⁰ If a local dialect is a concrete organic idiom, then it is clear that it is, in a linguistic sense, a system. Organic idioms of a higher order are abstract and thus must be diasystems. An organic idiom at the rank of language is also a diasystem, but in a certain elastic sense we can view groups of organic idioms at the rank of language as kinds of diasystems, albeit with a high degree of abstraction: narrower groups of languages (or subgroups), wider groups of languages (often a ‘branch,’ especially in Slavic studies), a narrower family, a wider family. This means that we can regard either organic idioms of a higher or lower order, or groups of two or more idioms at the rank of language as diasystems” (Brozović 1970: 14).

Brozović’s view appears to entail that any group or groups of similar linguistic systems can be a diasystem if the linguist decides to make it so.

The term is used frequently by Croatian linguists, presumably in Brozović’s sense. For example: “...Kajkavian is a linguistic idiom at the rank of dialect, of a group of dialects (Dialektgruppe), a part of the Croato-Serbian diasystem, one of three Croatian dialects, and one of two, in addition to Čakavian, spoken only by Croats” (Lončarić 1990: 97). This matter-of-fact use reflects the standard acceptance of the concept and implies that all members of the diasystem have an equal relationship to each other. The inherent problems are hinted at by Katičić:

“From a strictly linguistic point of view, the Croatian or Serbian language is a diasystem of organic dialects that arose in a particular way from the Proto-Slavic language, and this is what differentiates them from all other diasystems that arose from Proto-Slavic. According to this criterion Croatian or Serbian is one Slavic language among the Slavic languages. It differs possibly only in that the variegation of its dialects is greater than the Slavic average” (1986: 253).

In a similarly vein, the term is used in a new reference grammar of Croatian intended for the general public:

“... precisely in these last fifty years there have been several important realizations about the development of the Croatian language: that the Croatian and Serbian language is genetically one definite diasystem, at the rank of a language among the Slavic languages, and that in the framework of this diasystem there arose several literary languages, that their basis is Neo-Štokavian (except for the Gradišće Croatian literary language), and that these literary languages, except those based strictly on dialect bases, grew out of a particular centuries-long social and cultural development of individual nations (Barić et al. 1995: 38).

The diasystem as applied to Croatian (or Serbo-Croatian) seems to be a way of artificially asserting linguistic unity in the face of underlying structural heterogeneity. There is nothing inherently illusory in the synchronic application of this notion, particularly in

Weinreich's original sense of the word. It captures the fact that heterogeneous, though similar, systems can be perceived by speakers as belonging to the same language. This is a linguists' reflection of what Kajkavian speakers believe about their language: that they are speaking a variety of Croatian. At the same time, it is revealing that the diasystem surfaces as the model of choice among some Croatian linguists. The diasystem model initially gained currency to describe the structural relations in the dialect geography of Yiddish (Weinreich 1954), a language that has the unusual status of being spoken discontinuously over a wide territory alongside various languages of Western and Eastern Europe. Yiddish dialects thus display, in addition to ultimate structural similarities and genetic identity, striking divergences (see Herzog 1979: 52-57). The application of the diasystem to Serbo-Croatian implies a model that allows for a unifying label of a set of dialects without addressing serious issues about the membership criteria of that set. By extension, one could include in a diasystem, following Brozović's definition, (indeed, why should one exclude?) Slovene and Macedonian, as well as Czech, Slovak, Polish, Bulgarian, etc. It is in the assertion of the diasystem—a metaphor for unity—that the Croats have solved the long-term problem of the consolidation of their heterogeneous dialects.

Conclusion

The discussion above was intended to give a glimpse into the cultural and historical background of the formation of the national identity of the Western South Slavic peoples, in particular, the vexed question of Croatian national identity with respect to both Slovene and Serbian national identities, with an emphasis on the role which language plays in these issues. Much was made of the use of linguistic metaphors as they have been employed in disciplines of historical and comparative linguistics and historical dialectology. In effect, the myths of national identity were reinforced — if not in fact created — through the selective use of data and their representation in various guises (especially, maps). On the surface it may seem that language and national identity are two separate notions (recall Benjamin Franklin's maxim, paraphrased here, that "England and America are separated by a common language"). However, if one takes as a premise that language is the primary marker of national identity, one is then forced to see the two as inseparable. This is what happened in the constituent Slavic nations of the former Yugoslavia. Here, the ranking of national identity over other considerations (truth, academic integrity) caused otherwise very intelligent and well-informed linguistic researchers to selective filter reality (to speak plainly: misuse facts) to make linguistic data conform to an idealized national conceptualization.

To be fair, however, one can understand the necessity for the Croatian linguists to take this particular stand, since their opponents operated with the same premises and argued for an abnegation of Croatian national identity altogether. Since Croats felt themselves to be something other than Slovenes and Serbs — based on considerations of cultural, historical, and religious experience — it seems a natural defense, given the intellectual context, for the Croats to have defended themselves through the reification of their national identity through linguistic arguments.

Notes

¹ Linguists' participation in the construction of cultural myths has a venerable tradition in Slavic studies, dating at least back to the 19th c. Russian Slavophiles (vs. Westernizers). To illustrate with examples in the 20th c.: two of the leading exponents of the Prague School, Prince Nikolaj Trubeckoj and Roman Jakobson, otherwise known for their lasting contributions to structural linguistics and poetics, each advanced cultural myths in the Slavophile tradition. Trubeckoj, writing on the "Common Slavic Element in Russian Culture" in 1927 lamented the loss of Eastern Orthodox culture among the East Slavs (Russians, Ukrainians, Belorussians) with the elevation of vernacular Ukrainian to a national language, for which the Ukrainians abandoned the Church Slavic element that had informed the language of Russia. This was seen as a further development of the Western (Germanic, Holy Roman) advance to the east that had earlier submerged the Slavic elements of the Czechs, Slovaks and Poles. Trubeckoj argued for a southward (Church Slavic) and eastward (Eurasian) (re-)orientation for Russia's future (Stolz and Toman 1993: 417-419). This myth, which sought to reinvigorate and renew for the future the idea of the glorious Slavo-Byzantine past, addressed three important issues: (1) the question of Russian identity, an ongoing issue in Russian culture; (2) the challenge to this identity engendered by Bolshevik internationalism; (3) the necessity of avoiding a self-abnegating westward orientation. Jakobson, in a 1943 essay on the *Wisdom of the Ancient Czechs*, traced the history of anti-German sentiment in medieval Czech texts and chided the Czechs for having forsaken the Cyrillo-Methodian tradition, continued today among the Serbs, Bulgarians and Russians. This work can be seen in retrospect as wartime support for the repatriation of the Germans of Bohemia (many of whom were really Germanized, and thus urbanized, Czechs) and for Czech self-determination (Stolz and Toman 1993: 417—419). Elsewhere Jakobson rightly pointed out the remarkable (and frequently overlooked) achievement of the Cyrillo-Methodian tradition, which employed the revolutionary notion of using the vernacular as the liturgical language some seven centuries before Luther's activity (Jakobson 1945/1968).

² In Slavic studies one usually speaks of three major branches of the Slavic language family: West (Czech, Slovak, Polish, Upper and Lower Sorbian); East (Russian, Ukrainian, Belorussian); South (Slovene, Croatian, Serbian, Macedonian, Bulgarian).

³ The details are unclear because there is scant historical evidence for the period of migration and settlement. Slavic writing, at first exclusively for ecclesiastical purposes, began only in the late 9th c. (extant copies of which date to the 11th c.). Until then only ambiguous references are made to Slavs in Latin and Greek sources.

⁴ The Pavelić era was a taboo topic in Yugoslavia until the independence of Croatia in July of 1991 and until the publication of Samardžija 1993 little had been written about it.

⁵ In 1973 the publishing house Školska knjiga ('school book') prepared the 6th edition of a book that had appeared in five previous editions as *Pregled gramatike hrvatskosrpskog jezika* [Survey of the Grammar of the Croato-Serbian language]. The new edition, which was initially given approval for publication, was entitled *Pregled gramatike hrvatskog jezika* [Survey of the Grammar of the Croatian language]. However, when authorities discovered that an edition of this grammar with the new title was being published in London by diaspora Croats, the Yugoslav edition was banned. The next (7th) edition was published in 1990, nearly 20 years later, after the dissolution of Yugoslavia.

⁶ In contrast to the Croatian practice, Serbian linguists continue to insist on the unity of Serbian and Croatian. Note, for example, the title of Pavle Ivić's 1991 book *Iz istorije srpskohrvatskog jezika* [On the History of the Serbo-Croatian language], published in 1991.

⁷ The debate has created misunderstandings that have led some Western (non-linguist) scholars, ill-equipped to evaluate the linguistic evidence, to commit embarrassing blunders. For example, Jelavich (an American historian) refers to Slovene as a "kajkavian dialect" (1990: 28), thereby negating the five-hundred years of unbroken literary tradition that had elevated the Slovene dialects to standard and literary status. It is

conceivable that Jelavich intends to imply that standard Slovene is somehow subordinate to the Kajkavian dialect of Croatian, and by extension to the Serbo-Croatian standard, a step not taken even by the most nationalistic of Croatian or Serbian linguists.

⁸ This type of naming is apparently common, cf. Hungarian *Magyar* 'Hungarian,' *magyarozni* 'to explain, make clear'; Albanian *Shqiptar* 'Albanian,' *shqiptoj* 'to explain, make clear.'

⁹ The origins of the names *Hrvat* and *Srbin* are not yet settled. *Hrvat* is variously interpreted as a Gothic or Indo-Aryan name assigned to a Slavic tribe (Gluhak 1990, 1993: 267-270; Klaić 1990: 18-22). In any event, the term *Hrvat* cannot be an originally Slavic name, as initial *h* does not occur in native words (unless such words alternate with a prefixed compound form). *Srbin*, an ethnonym shared by the Lusatian Sorbs, is apparently also Indo-Aryan (Gluhak 1993: 573-574). The Bulgarians take their name from a Turkic tribe. The origins of these names indeed play a role in the national self-definition of the respective peoples; however, this problem will be left aside here, as it would require a lengthy study of its own.

¹⁰ Brozović uses the term *idiom* as a "general, qualitatively and hierarchically neutral and non-specific term," roughly equivalent to the English term *code* (1970: 10).

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Appendix 1: National and language composition of Yugoslavia

(From Bertić 1988: 95, based on 1981 census)

Nationality	Language	Location	Population	% of tot.
Macedonians	Macedonian	Macedonia	1,341,598	6.0
Montenegrins	Serbo-Croatian	Montenegro	579,043	2.6
Croats	Serbo-Croatian	Croatia	4,428,043	19.7
Muslims	Serbo-Croatian	Bosnia & Herz.	1,999,890	8.0
Serbs	Serbo-Croatian	Serbia, Croatia, B&H	8,140,507	36.3
Slovenes	Slovene	Slovenia	1,753,571	7.8
Albanians	Albanian	Serbia, Macedonia	1,730,878	7.7
Bulgarians	Bulgarian	Serbia (Kosova), Mac.	36,189	0.2
Hungarians	Hungarian	Serbia (Vojv.), Cr., Slv.	426,867	1.9
Italians	Italian	Croatia, Slovenia	15,132	0.1
Turks	Turkish, others	Serbia (Kosova), Mac.	101,291	0.5
Ukrainians	Ukrainian	Croatia, Serbia, B&H	12,813	0.1
Slovaks	Slovak	Croatia, Serbia	80,334	0.4
Romanians	Romanian	Serbia	54,955	0.2
Romi	Romani, others	Serbia, Mac., elsewhere	168,197	0.7
Rusins	Rusin	Serbia, Croatia	23,286	0.1
Vlahs	Aromanian, etc.	Serbia, Macedonia	32,071	0.2
Czechs	Czech	Croatia, Serbia	19,624	0.1
Misc.			38,296	0.2
“Yugoslavs”			1,219,024	5.4
Undeclared			46,701	0.2
Regional allgnc.			25,730	0.1
Unkown			153,545	0.7
Total			22,427,585	100.0

Appendix 2: Languages classified by number of native speakers

(From Škiljan 1992: 31, based on 1981 census)

Language	Number of native speakers	% of population
Serbo-Croatian	16,342,885	72.88
Slovene	1,761,393	7.85
Albanian	1,756,663	7.83
Macedonian	1,373,956	6.13
Hungarian	409,079	1.82
Romani	140,618	0.63
Turkish	82,090	0.37
Slovak	74,033	0.33
Romanian	59,869	0.27
Bulgarian	37,268	0.17
Rusin	19,413	0.09
Italian	19,409	0.09
Czech	16,197	0.07
Ukrainian	7,058	0.03