

Violent Highlanders and Peaceful Lowlanders

Uses and Abuses of Ethno-
Geography in the Balkans
from Versailles to Dayton*

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"In a process both cumulative and interactive, people make indications to one another about who they are and what other kinds of people are in their habitat," writes Ulf Hannerz (Hannerz 1992: 15). People make these indications in part by ascribing more or less stable clusters of traits to their own and other groups at levels that range from families to nations. In concrete cases the traits used will correspond to what the concrete groups consider important and will bear the mark of their concrete historical experiences. In this paper I want to explore one particular type of idiom used in mutual characterizations of various groups within what used to be Yugoslavia – the ethnogeographical idiom whereby people are classified as Highlanders or Lowlanders.

In his *Instructions for the Investigation of Origins and Psychological Characteristics* (published in Novi Sad in 1922), the eminent Serbian ethnogeographer Jovan Cvijić (1865–1927) advised researchers to go from house to house in the villages they are studying and ask about the origins of every family – are they old settlers or newcomers? Where did they come from, when, and why? What are the differences between settlers from different regions in language, dress, and customs? (Cvijić 1987b: 280). And most importantly, what are "the different psychological characteristics of the old settlers and the newcomers?" After that come the differences between villages and regions:

The peasants of a village or a region have well known opinion established by long experience about the peasants of surrounding villages and regions and know what these [inhabitants of surrounding villages] think of them. ... On the basis of the above opinions that he will himself test, and on the basis of anecdotes, stories and sayings, the investigator should ascertain the specific psychological characteristics of the village or region ... by which that village or region differs from the surrounding ones. ... Some investigators might be able to explain where these psychological differences came from (Cvijić 1987b: 283).

According to Cvijić, these differences were mostly traceable to the character traits of settlers from other Balkan regions. In many parts, he wrote, "the overwhelming majority are the families of immigrants and they know what regions they came from" (Cvijić

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1987a: 127). Thus he concluded that the intra and inter-village as well as inter-regional differences were in large part due to character traits that immigrants had brought with them from their original regions.

Cvijić was by no means a geographical determinist. He divided geographical influences into three types: direct and indirect influences, as well as those characteristics of the terrain which influence the movements of human groups. The direct influences of terrain, climate, landscape etc. on human physiology and psychology, Cvjić believed, are undeniable but extremely hard to specify and distinguish from a host of other non-geographical factors. Much easier to grasp are the indirect influences of environment – natural resources determine the material forms of human life: types of dwellings, forms of economy, food and clothing habits, etc., and these in turn affect “a great number of psychological phenomena,” yet their influence is intertwined with social factors and hard to distinguish from them. Most interesting for Cvjić, however, was the third group of geographical factors – those which influence the movements of human groups. Features of terrain facilitate or obstruct movements of people and contacts between civilizations. They tend to channel the advances and retreats of conquering empires, and in the long run they tend to shape the zones of their civilizational influences. This is why ethnopsychological profiles largely coincide with cultural zones which in their turn tend to follow the geomorphology of the terrain. Since it is mountains and valleys (as opposed to, say, coast and hinterland, or jungle and arid highlands) that constitute the main features of the terrain in the Balkans, Cvjić’s ethnopsychological distinctions came to revolve around the clusters of traits associated with Highlanders and Lowlanders.

I dwelt in some length on Cvjić’s *Instructions* in order to point to the empirical foundation of the ethnopsychological types he formulated. For decades he and his followers went literally from house to house collecting, among other things, minute inter-group perceptions, attitudes, and characterizations. It is partly from these folk distinctions that Cvjić arrived at his pan-Balkan synoptic map¹ of ethnopsychological types. Once formulated, they percolated back to the popular level, if not directly through Cvjić’s writings, then from his numerous popularizers, and became firmly entrenched as basic terms in the genre of popular ethnopsychological theory.

In this paper, I want to analyze how these popular ethnopsychological characterizations came to be used in the last few years that witnessed the break-up and war in the former Yugoslavia at levels extending from everyday conversations with ‘ordinary’ people in Belgrade, through local intellectual polemics carried out in Belgrade newspapers and magazines, to scholarly literature and international journalism. My first concern is to show how certain abiding clusters of traits associated with Highlanders and Lowlanders in internal Yugoslav inter-ethnic characterizations were transmitted to the international arena to serve as an explanation for the war and violence in the former Yugoslavia. Second, I want to question the facile cultural essentialism and determinism that underline what might at first glance seem as old-fashioned geographical determinism of this idiom. I will try to do that in part by showing how the characterization of whole national groups as bearers of either Highlander or Lowlander

1 In every region, Cvjić writes, there is a particular direction, alongside which the changes in psychological characteristics are most easily discernible. By following them “the researcher would better discern the differences between inhabitants, the more he goes away from the starting point. When he comes to the end point of the profile, he would be better able to understand and classify psychological characteristics of the population alongside the whole traversed space than would be the case should he limit himself to one or two regions alone” (Cvijić 1987b: 18).

mentality involves a fallacy that Fernandez calls *metonymic misrepresentation*, where “one place, which is simply a part of a much larger place – whether a province, a region, or a nation – comes to stand for a whole place, its particular problems coming to be perceived as the problems of the whole place” (Fernandez 1986a: 22).² I will further question the claim of this type of cultural essentialism by showing how in rhetorical uses quite different groups³ came to be labeled by a Highlander or a Lowlander mentality and how the valuations of these mentalities shift drastically according to who addresses whom, for what purpose, and in what context. Finally, the demonstration of rhetorical uses to which these anthropogeographical terms have been put opens the question of their epistemological status – are we to see them as arbitrary ethnic stereotypes, notions of discredited scholarly disciplines, or as characterizations that in some way correspond to “reality”?

I see this question as of growing importance to anthropologists who are increasingly grappling with signifying practices that go well beyond the level of everyday face-to-face communication which has been their traditional hunting ground. We now have to take into account the arenas of literature, media production, domestic social science and political rhetoric in the societies we study – commonly preserves of other disciplines – and integrate them with our ethnographic perspective. What are ethnographers to do with notions that perhaps originated in how peasants of one region in Serbia saw peasants from another; that then came to be formulated by a Serbian anthropogeographer (who shared a number of intellectual ancestors with Franz Boas) as a classification of ethnopsychological profiles; and which then percolated down from scientific discourse (in part through literature of such writers as the Nobel Prize laureate Ivo Andrić) to become emblems of national identity for some, and terms of abuse for others; and which finally find their way into Western media coverage of the war in Bosnia?

SERBIAN EPICS

In a 1992 BBC documentary entitled *Serbian Epics*, images of forbidding limestone peaks of the Bosnian Dinaric Alps are juxtaposed with images of Bosnian Serbs listening to their epics performed on gusle,⁴ and their guns firing into besieged Sarajevo.

2 Various strategies of metonymic misrepresentation that use the ‘geographical’ idiom of Highlander/Lowlander opposition should be seen in the context of European and even world-wide symbolic geographies and the tension between ‘self-display’ and ‘self-knowledge’ (Herzfeld 1987) that is particularly acute in peripheries which have to contend with disparaging images that economically, politically, militarily and representationally much more powerful cores have of them. In the case of the Balkans, the Highlander/Lowlander idiom is clearly a subset of representational practices that Maria Todorova (1997) identifies as ‘Balkanism’, and it partakes in the logic of what Milica Bakic-Hayden calls ‘nesting orientalisms’ (Bakic-Hayden and Hayden 1992; Bakic-Hayden 1995), or the present author calls ‘gradients of depreciation’ (Živković 1990; see also Živković 1997).

3 Cvjić himself indicates how certain clusters of traits could become disassociated with the original group to which they had been ascribed and used to label quite different ones: “The Peasants of Western Serbia refer even to those new settlers who are not coming from Bulgarian regions as Bulgarians; that’s because they sense a different soul in them, not because of small differences in language, and they have anecdotes and stories by which they characterize this ‘Bulgarian’ soul” (Cvijić 1987a: 282–3).

4 “A bowed, stringed musical instrument of the Balkans, with a round wooden back, a skin belly, and one horsehair string (or, rarely, two) secured at the top of the neck by a rear tuning peg. It is played in a vertical position, with a deeply curved bow ... related to the medieval rebec and the Greek lira and used in the Balkans to accompany the performance of the guslari, or epic singers” (*Britannica online*). Even though it was used by Croats and Bosnian Muslims as well as Serbs, in the recent period of national segregation and especially during the war of Yugoslav succession, gusle came to be identified exclusively with the Serbs.

In his 1992 *New York Times* article, John Kifner draws our attention to “the rocky spine of the Dinaric Alps, for it is these mountains that have nurtured and shaped the most extreme, combative elements of each community: the western Herzegovinian Croats, the Sandzak Muslims, and, above all, the secessionist Serbs. Like mountaineer communities around the world, Kifner goes on, “these were wild, warlike, frequently lawless societies whose feuds and folklore, have been passed on to the present day like the potent home-brewed plum brandy that the mountain men begin knocking back in the morning” (Kifner 1994).

Journalists work with striking images and sound-bites: mountains-folklore-brandyguns. The argument works by juxtaposition and association – the link between mountains and violence is left unexplained. However, that link, I would argue, is not that of direct geographical causation. The insertion of epic poetry into the chain of associations between mountains and violence points to underlying cultural determinism of this argument of images: there is something in the culture of Dinaric mountaineer that explains the violence of the war. The image of the Dinaric Highlander that Kifner and other journalists use, however, are not conjured out of thin air. A middle-aged bank clerk from Belgrade I met on a train in the summer of 1996 told me what he would do if he were the president of Serbia. In order to topple Milošević, he said half-jokingly, “I’ll call upon my Bosnians [meaning Bosnian Serbs]. Who else would do it? They are crazy – hat dearer than head. They have only one hat,” he explained, “and no money to buy another, as for the head, they don’t care much if they lose it – this is the violent Dinaric mentality,” he concluded.

MOUNTAINS, HARDNESS AND STATE-BUILDING CAPACITY

The Dinaric mountaineer is a category long used by the Yugoslavs themselves as a tool of self-understanding or self-criticism, and, particularly in times of conflict, as a rhetorical weapon in inter-ethnic conflicts. A recent example of its propagandistic uses is a book written by Croatian-American sociologist Stjepan Meštrović, *Habits of the Balkan Heart: Social Character and the Fall of Communism* (Meštrović 1993).⁵ However, since the book is actually little more than revamping of a study by another Croatian-American sociologist, Dinko Tomašić, it is more profitable to turn to the ‘original’ which, in addition to providing a history of the adversarial use of this idiom, will also lead us to its intellectual genealogy. Dinko Tomašić was a Croatian sociologist who emigrated to the United States and taught sociology at Indiana University. His *Personality and Culture in Eastern European Politics* was published in 1948. Despite his efforts to generalize to the whole of Eastern Europe, his argument is best seen as derived from and pertinent mostly to the region that was once Yugoslavia. His basic argument is that the bellicose and conspirative character of Eastern Europe, its “upheavals, convulsions and warfare” are to a large extent traceable to the clash between what Tomašić calls the *zadruga* and the Dinaric cultures.

According to Tomašić, the mountaineers of the Dinaric region exhibit an emotionally unstable, violent, and power-seeking personality. He argues that the Dinaric social and family structure is “sufficient to explain the ambivalent drives and the emotional instability of the Dinaric people” (Tomašić 1948: 32). “The Dinaric child is born and

⁵ Co-authors are Slaven Letica – a Zagreb sociologist and one-time adviser to President Tudjman, and Miroslav Goretta, a Zagreb psychiatrist.

reared in an atmosphere of rivalry and antagonism,” says Tomašić. “Deep feelings of insecurity in such a family environment create a strong need for self-assertion, with the resultant overcompensation in boastfulness and illusions of grandeur” (Tomašić 1948: 32–33).

It is interesting to note that he relies quite heavily on the work of Jovan Cvijić whom he obviously respects as the foremost authority on the Dinaric mentality, but whom he casts as a geographical determinist⁶ in contrast to his own ‘Culture and Personality School’ emphasis on the family upbringing. The Dinarics show a “ceaseless concern with their own importance and reputation,” says Tomašić quoting Cvijić. They “can hate with a consuming passion and a violence that reaches a white heat.” In the Dinaric regions, again quoting Cvijić, one can find “excessively fierce, wild and narrow-minded men who are goaded beyond endurance by the smallest insult” (Tomašić 1948: 35). In a word, Tomašić concludes, the Dinarics are characterized by

a malevolent, deceitful and disorderly view of the universe, and an emotionally unbalanced, violent, rebellious and power-seeking personality, together with tense interpersonal and cultural relationships, and extreme political instability. This herdsman-brigand-warrior-police ideal furnished a program for the conquerors of urban centers and of the surrounding peasantry (Tomašić 1948: 12).

Opposed to the Dinarics stand the peaceful, stable and tolerant peasants from the regions between the Drava and Sava rivers who, at least in the past, have been organized in large communal households called *zadruga*. “Exposure to happy family life and a mild, but reasonable family discipline, favored among the *Zadruga* peasants,” says Tomašić, results in

an optimistic, peaceful, just and well-ordered conception of the world, an emotionally well-balanced, non-violent and power-indifferent personality, and smooth and harmonious interpersonal and intellectual relations (Tomašić 1948: 12).

The main conflict in Yugoslavia, according to Tomašić, “was essentially a struggle of the *Zadruga* peasantry against the Dinaric warriors who had imposed themselves upon Croatia as Serbian military” (Tomašić 1948: 204).

What is important to note here is that, with minor exceptions, the equivalence is established between the *zadruga* society and Croats on the one hand, and Dinaric society and Serbs on the other. However, the *zadruga* type of socio-economic organization was wide-spread among both Croats and Serbs. The same holds for the patriarchal Dinaric social organization. Both Croats and Serbs have their own internal Highlanders and Lowlanders, and this master dichotomy tends to get reproduced on ever smaller scales on both sides⁷ whereby supposedly homogeneous Highlander and Lowlander communities further divide themselves into internal high and lowlanders, and so on even to the level of a single person. But before I pursue this recursiveness on the Serbian side, which is the main purpose of this paper, I want to show yet another feature of this type of dichotomizing discourse – the way that valences of the opposite poles get reversed.

⁶ “Cvijić, himself a Dinaric Serb,” writes Tomašić, “believes that the unbalanced temperament of the Dinaric man developed because of alternating periods of hardship and idleness, which were determined by the climate and by the geophysical conditions of the Dinaric regions” (Tomašić 1948: 32).

⁷ Even a superficial perusal of Croatian press in the last few years would suffice to show how important the opposition between peaceful lowlanders and urbanites, on the one hand, and violent, power-seeking highlanders (the “Herzegovinian Croats” Kifner mentions), on the other, is in Croatian politics. This is a case of what Susan Gal called “recursiveness”, whereby dichotomies get reproduced on ever smaller scales (Gal 1991).

When he discusses Dinarics, Tomašić is relying on Jovan Cvijić who, in his view, was “the outstanding theorist of Serbian imperialism” and thus his direct political enemy. Whatever the case might be, there is no doubt that by and large, Cvijić’s valuation of Dinaric character was the opposite of Tomašić’s. Tomašić’s somewhat biased account of Cvijić’s position will put this valence reversal in the sharpest possible relief.

Tomašić writes that, according to Cvijić, there are “four main types of man among the southern Slavs: the Dinaric, the Central, the East-Balkan, and the Pannonian (see the map). Each of these is subdivided into a few subtypes. Superior to all types is Dinaric man, and of his five subtypes the Šumadija variety is the best” (Tomašić 1941: 54). Šumadija is the heartland of Serbia, the cradle of the Serbian uprisings against the Turks at the beginning of the nineteenth century, and the core from which the modern Serbian state expanded. If the Šumadians were the best type for Cvijić, Tomašić writes, “the most inferior of all seems to have been the Pannonian type to which the majority of Croatian and some Serbs of the Pannonian plains belong” (Tomašić 1941: 55). I would argue, however, that for Cvijić, the main contrast is between the pride and heroism of those who retreated into the Dinaric ‘mountain fortress’ before the Turkish invaders, on the one hand, and the *rayah*⁸ mentality and moral mimicry of the groups who remained in close proximity of Turks in valleys and alongside main communications – that is to say the Central and the East-Balkan Types, on the other. The qualities of Dinaric man as defined by Cvijić, continues Tomašić, “are live spirit, sharp intelligence, deep feelings, rich fantasy, impulsiveness provoked by nonmaterial motives, national pride, and the ideas of honor, justice and freedom. Dinaric man is a born statesman, and his main urge is to create a powerful state ...” (Tomašić 1941: 54–55).

If for Tomašić, Highlanders are negative and Lowlanders positive, for Cvijić, to put it somewhat schematically, it is exactly the opposite – the higher the altitude, the nobler the character. One of the keys to understanding these valuations lies in the phrase “a born statesman.” State-building capacity was a matter of great importance at the time Cvijić was doing his major research. As one of six senior experts at the Paris Peace Conference, Cvijić was closely involved in the formal creation of Yugoslavia. It is certainly not a matter of chance, Halpern and Hammel note, “that his monumental work, *The Balkan Peninsula*, was published first in French in 1918, and only later in Serbo-Croatian” (Halpern and Hammel 1969: 20).

Cvijić was obviously concerned about presenting a little known population to “civilized” Europe in the most favorable light, and the most important thing was to present it as inherently capable of state-building.⁹ To understand this concern one has to bear in mind the prevalent characterizations of Slavs in the ‘civilized’ Europe at the

8 Literally ‘cattle’, or ‘herd’, *rayah* was the term used by the Ottomans to denote the non-Muslim subjects of their empire. “Rayah mentality,” according to Cvijić, is a cluster of character traits acquired by the subject populations due to centuries of Turkish oppression. It includes the worship of authorities, pragmatism, egoism, submissiveness, servility, resentment, and moral mimicry – his gloss for what would later come to be known as “identification with the aggressor” (see Živković 1995). The worst odium thus actually falls not to Pannonians but to Bulgarians (the Easternmost group). Tomašić’s account, however, helps us to see the reversal of valuations in a sharper relief.

9 Cvijić, like Vladimir Dvorniković after him, thought of himself as a Yugoslav and believed that Yugoslav national consciousness will eventually emerge in the crucible of a new state of South Slavs, yet he extolled the virtues associated mainly with Serbs. This was resented by Croats who were quick to see Serbian expansionism behind their Yugoslav unitarian rhetoric. To emphasize the state-building capacities of the Dinarics was for Croats like Tomašić tantamount to a hardly concealed claim for Serbian supremacy and the inherent right to rule over other Slavs united in the new state, some of which, like Croats and Slovenes, considered themselves as more cultured and civilized than the Serbs.

time as being of “the dovish disposition” – peaceful, passive, and “non-statebuilding” (*nedrzavotvorni*), as Dvorniković, a very important but neglected student of Cvijić, notes in his *Characterology of Yugoslavs* (Dvorniković 1939: 141). According to the famous Slavacist Alexander Brückner, Dvorniković reports, Slavs are:

good-natured and hospitable, carefree and joyful ... without initiative and energy, indolent and superficial ... they retreat before every attack, avoid all authority. ... In addition they are inordinately humble, seek after nothing, and that’s why despite their courage, large numbers, and physical endurance, they were not made for conquerors or founders of states” (Dvorniković 1939: 141–142).

Dvorniković’s *Characterology* can be read as an incredibly detailed refutation of the above view. “Modern Slavic nationalism – particularly the Yugoslav one!” he writes – “feels bad about the old Slavic peacefulness and sees in it a sort of inferiority. Triumphantly the discoveries are shown that even those pre-Slavs were sometimes brutal warriors and that they did what other peoples of their age did” (Dvorniković 1939: 272–273).

Tomašić relates *zadruga* culture, and by extension, Croats, to the culture which existed among the Slav farming folk in the marshy plains of Polesia at the beginning of the Christian era. For Tomašić, this ancestry is something positive, especially as contrasted with the Ural-Altai or even Tartar origins he ascribes to Dinarics. For Dvorniković, however, that same ancestral Slav population is tainted by its passivity and inability to build states. He is at great pains to establish at least some high altitude pedigree¹⁰ for that portion of Slavdom who migrated to the Balkans and thus differentiate them from their passive, amorphous Slavic brothers. For Dvorniković, even more than for Cvijić, the state-building capacity is related to higher altitudes which breed the necessary backbone, initiative, and hardness. This is perhaps why so much of his thick volume is devoted to various plays on the hard-soft and active-passive continuum. On a larger scale, the mountain-hardened South Slavs are contrasted to the soft Russians and Poles with their “lack of highland energy,” “soft languages,” and love of diminutives (Dvorniković 1939: 283). The same dichotomy is then refracted recursively among the South Slavs themselves, and could be seen, for instance, reflected in the dialects of Serbo-Croatian. “Štokavian is a ‘hardened’ Slavic speech,” Dvorniković writes, “Kajkavian is, like Russian, a soft language of the lowlanders ... Particularly sharp is the opposition between the masculine *što* and feminine *kaj*, ... which was not without influence on the tribal-political relationships between Serbs and Croats, between the Štokavian Belgrade and mostly Kajkavian Zagreb” (Dvorniković 1939: 635, 642). Hardness is evident in the montagnard physiognomy as well. Their faces are “sharp, angular, accented: [This is] the type that does not bend, does not retreat before the clash, ready for the thrust and response. No, this is not the old Slav of Prokopios and Herder ... who retreats before every pressure!” (Dvorniković 1939: 197).

For Tomašić, mountains correlate with violence and the syndromes of amoral familism, factionalism, and power-seeking. While he realizes that the bearers of that syndrome played an important role in the state formation, even more important is the instability they bring to the whole region. Opposed to turmoil caused by the Highlander

10 “Even before migration to the Balkans, the ancestors of South Slavs (Serbs and Croats) might have belonged to the Carpathian [that is to say mountainous] branch of Ur-Slavs. So they might have had some highlander’s accumulated energy prior to coming to the mountains of the Balkans” (Dvorniković 1939: 284).

element and its congenitally undemocratic personality, *zadruga* mentality, Tomašić argues, offers a factor of stability and democracy.

We have thus seen how the opposite poles of the same high-lowland dichotomy can reverse valence depending on who is talking to whom and for what purpose. I have also mentioned how this dichotomy gets reproduced within one of its poles – namely, how Croats, supposedly on the Lowlander side of the scale, divide themselves further into internal Lowlanders and Highlanders. The purpose of this paper, however, is to see how this dichotomy plays out at the supposedly Highlander end of the scale – among the Serbs themselves.

HIGHLANDERS AND LOWLANDERS AMONG THE SERBS

It was not very hard for Tomašić to use Cvijić in emphasizing the negative traits of the Dinarics.¹¹ Alongside with romanticizing and extolling, Cvijić also criticized the Dinaric ethnopsychological type. Yet, by and large, wittingly or unwittingly, he was the originator of what historian Slobodan Jovanović called “the Dinaric psychosis.” “What was an ethnological finding for Cvijić was transformed into a national ideal in Serbia at the turn of the century,” Jovanović writes, “and in that transformation, the Dinaric type was significantly simplified ... What was emphasized was his dynamism, his impetuosity and heroism, and his reckless bravery that asks not what is and what is not possible” (Jovanović 1991: 83).

Yet there are internal divisions among the Serbs. Some authors use the idiom of the opposition between mountaineers and valley folk in a way that the valuations are reversed: the mountaineers are seen negatively and the valley folk positively – often in terms identical to those used by Tomašić, Meštrović, or Kifner on a larger scale. Appeals to this ethnopsychological idiom became very prominent at the time when the Yugoslav crisis was rapidly evolving into a civil war.

A well known Belgrade psychiatrist Vladimir Adamović wrote in January of 1991, on the eve of the war in Croatia, that he was afraid of the conflict between the Serbian and the Croatian Dinarics in Croatia. Of different faith, they are nevertheless of the same psychological constitution – fanatics and capable of boundless hate – and that’s why the conflict between them, Adamović concluded, was bound to bring so many casualties. This is a footnote to an essay in which he contrasts the Serbs of Morava region with the classical Dinaric highlanders. Cvijić considered the population of this heartland of Serbia to have been predominantly Dinaric, but Adamović argues that the Morava Serbs are *less* Dinaric than Cvijić thought. They are less narcissistic and vengeful, more rational and pragmatic, and more inclined toward compromise. After the war in 1945, however, the Dinarics swept into Serbia, Adamović says, especially into cities, and became dominant in party, state, military and police institutions. This is a type, he says, inclined to extremism, disproportional aggressiveness, rigidity and fanaticism with the elements of messianism. Dinarics are good for a short war, an uprising or a revolution, the Morava Serbs for periods of peace, negotiation and dialogue.¹² On the eve of the

11 In 1988, Belgrade literary critic Petar Džadžić took out those passages from Cvijić’s work which were critical of Dinarics and assembled them together with selected critical passages from Ivo Andrić into a highly successful book (Cvijić and Andrić 1988).

12 Dvorniković is also talking of the possibility of tempering the Dinaric character with some of the opposite traits associated with other groups. “That something rationalized, positivistic, non-poseur, non-epic and non-rhetorical which many ascribe to the population of Eastern and South Serbia, could be an infiltration

war, however, the predominance of Dinarics in Serbia can spell disaster, Adamović thinks, so he pleads for “more Morava types wherever the fate of the nation is being decided” (Adamović 1991: 93).

“On the Morava rivers,” writes Danko Popović, “they fear that the warmongers could drag Serbia in the new bloodlettings ...” (Popović 1994: 80). An author of the immensely popular *Book of Milutin*, an ode to the Serbian Šumadija peasant that was reprinted in seventeen editions by 1986, Danko Popović is certainly one of the most influential recent exponents of the thesis that pits impetuosity, irrational extremism, and nationalistic fanaticism of the highlander Dinarics against the sobriety, wisdom, pragmatism and peacefulness of Morava peasants. “Is it normal that Serbia be ruled by the Serbs from outside of Serbia, as if it were a colony populated by primitive tribes?”, Popović asks. No, he replies, “it is exactly the opposite – they are the ones who are forcing the tribal spirit and habits on an area which is legally organized as a state” (Popović 1994: 93).

Echoes of Tomašić! Here is Danko Popović, a prominent Serbian nationalist, claiming, as Tomašić did fifty years before, that it is the peaceful lowlanders who are the state-builders while their mountaineer Dinaric brethren are warmongers and state-destroyers.

The highlanders are often collectively referred to as ‘Serbs’ in opposition to ‘Serbians’ – meaning the Serbs from Serbia proper. The ‘Serbs’ are also called ‘prečanić’, meaning ‘those across the river’, in this case, the Drina river that forms the natural boundary between Serbia and Bosnia.¹³

If the sober, peace-loving lowlander Serbs are lamenting what they see as domination by their megalomaniac, impetuous highlander brethren, it is only to be expected that the latter might have a different view of the situation. In 1991, the influential Belgrade weekly *NIN* was running a series of essays titled: “The Dinarics and the Serbians.” The fifth installment featured Nikola Koljević, a professor of English literature at the University of Sarajevo and later one of the top leaders of Republika Srpska (who recently committed suicide). He accused *NIN* of abusing its newly won freedom from Communist control by conducting an “anthropogeographical” survey of “who is who” among the Serbs in which “the so called Dinarics got the worst deal.” He goes on to sarcastically enumerate their supposed sins in the eyes of the Belgrade weekly: they are guilty for refusing “to be cast in chains preferring instead to be in a centuries long mountain hideaway,” and for “taking over many respectable and influential positions” through their connections in Belgrade.” This is not “civilizationally” correct, Koljević notes with heavy irony.

How could it be when, since the times of Cvijić, it is well known that those are the violent types who are poisoning the agrarian tender souls with their aggressive visions of Serbian unity and concern for the brothers in other Serbian regions.

It should be noted that Koljević puts the “agrarian tender souls” in the same category with “decadent” Belgrade elite luxuriating in fine distinctions, oversophisticated

of that non-dinaric, Turanoid element, an infiltration which sinuously and doggedly penetrates towards the West and is being felt today, through the Dinaric racial area, all the way to Drina. Many are of the opinion that the chivalrous and eloquent Dinaric could do well with some Šop supplement and correction. But, on the other hand, the Šops are told (Jovan Cvijić!) that they would do well to adopt some of the Dinaric’s passion and idealism!” (Dvorniković 1939: 236).

13 ‘Prečani’, however, also refers to the Serbs from across Sava river that used to mark the boundary between Serbia proper and Austro-Hungarian territories. These ‘prečani’ were the principal bearers of Central European culture and institutions in the new Serbian state (see Jovanović 1925).

democratic principles and neurotic individualism at the time when the great danger to the nation as a whole necessitates the highlanders' superior mettle and sense of national mission.

The Belgrade cosmopolitan intellectuals, of course, strike back. In an essay titled "Murder of the City," for instance, Bogdan Bogdanović, an architect-philosopher, a former mayor of Belgrade (1982–1986) and a sophisticated urbanite of impeccable pedigree, posits an 'eternal Manichaean battle' between 'city lovers' and 'city haters' or 'city destroyers' (Bogdanović 1993). The immediate context is the Serbian shelling of Vukovar, Dubrovnik and Sarajevo and one can easily discern the dichotomy of mountain vs. urban folk, or the Dinaric Savage vs. Sarajevo Urban Cosmopolitan underlying his argument. Bogdanović is perhaps the most outspoken representative of the opposition intelligentsia in Serbia which condemns the *montagnard* mentality as the antithesis to civility, modernity and Europeanness (Veselinov 1992; Vasiljević 1992).

What follows is a response from the viewpoint of "agrarian tender souls," coming from Nikola J. Novaković, a lawyer from Novi Sad, and secretary of the local Rotary Club:

Our peasants lean on the Fruška gora¹⁴ with their feet in the Danube and they see to the ends of Europe. Those others [highlander newcomers] do not have the breadth [of view] and do not know how to look. They see nothing but the mountains up to their noses, only the sky, vertically. ... Some hard and harsh people. They holler and snarl, swallow vowels or twist them.¹⁵ They proclaimed force and power for justice, deception and corruption for morality, malice and envy for customs, Asiatic howling for music, and pistols and revolvers for national costume. ... Comrades,¹⁶ here we celebrate other people's successes and we pay for our own drink. This is the essential difference between the comrades and the gentlemen (gospoda). I am not losing hope that you will understand the importance of good manners and home upbringing (Novaković 1994).

Not having mountains to block his view, the Vojvodina lowlander peasant can see to the ends of Europe, he is thus allied with it, as with civilization and culture. In Novaković's view, he is a kind of peasant-cosmopolitan.¹⁷ And for all the bitterness the natives feel for newcomers, according to the saying: "came the wild, kicked out the tame" (došli divlji, isterali pitome), Novaković believes that the "wild" will eventually get tamed.

We see how somebody like the Rotarian Novaković – obviously an urbanite intellectual – extols the virtues of peasants over the vices of highlander newcomers. In that he is allied with the influential writer Danko Popović with his idealized Morava peasants. Cosmopolitans like Bogdanović, however, are contrasting idealized urbanites and not idealized peasants to the violent Highlanders. The highlander urbanite Koljević pits his proud Dinarics against both the "agrarian tender souls" and Belgrade decadent urbanites who somehow coalesce into a single group.

14 The only mountain in otherwise completely flat Vojvodina region.

15 Note how Novaković reverses Dvorniković's valuation of the way Highlanders speak.

16 Insinuating that Highlander immigrants are Communist. Like Danko Popović, Novaković emphasizes the fact that the new Communist elite which flooded Serbia after the WWII, and which disinherited and physically purged the old bourgeoisie, was overwhelmingly composed of the Highlander Dinarics from outside of Serbia proper.

17 I owe this phrase to Professor Raymond Fogelson who suggested it as a logical fourth term in the tripartite classification of types I initially proposed consisting of: 1) The (Šumadija) solid peasant, 2) the cosmopolitan-urbanite, and 3) the peasant-urbanite halfling. At that time, I couldn't find an example of the peasant-cosmopolitan, but I have since realized that in addition to Novaković, such influential writers as Danko Popović and Dobrica Ćosić are actually attributing a peculiar kind of 'cosmopolitanism' to their idealized peasant characters.

Depending on who is talking to whom, when, under what circumstances, and for what purpose, the permutations and combinations, sometimes seemingly logically inconsistent, of these ethnopsychological distinctions can assume dizzying complexity. The tokens of highlander or lowlander mentality could be pinned on different regions, and different groups of people in order to "exalt or debase identities" in the "quality space" (Fernandez 1986a). Both could be given a whole spectrum of variously shaded valuations: lowlanders could be seen as rational, pragmatic, cultivated on one hand, or degenerate, soft, and submissive on the other; the highlanders, as brave, proud, of superior mettle, or obversely, as violent, primitive, and arrogant.

CONCLUSION: FROM VERSAILLES TO DAYTON

The man in the train who was talking about "his reckless Bosnians" in 1996 was invoking the notion of the Dinaric character formulated by Cvijić at the time of the Paris Peace Conference. In the nearly eight decades that divide Versailles from Dayton, Croatian sociologists used these notions to promote their own agendas, *New York Times* correspondents appealed to them to explain the violence of the Yugoslav wars, and Serbs invoked it in their internal cleavages. Dormant at times of relative stability, the Dinaric Highlander seems to pop up at the times of crisis and turmoil as a notion that natives and outsiders alike use to gain understanding, criticize or extol, or further their political agendas. The question for anthropological theory is what precisely is the status of those notions.

Originally, with Cvijić, Dvorniković, as well as Tomašić, the Dinaric and other ethnopsychological types were meant to describe what particular groups were really like, notwithstanding their other agendas. The originators of these types worked within disciplines that were ancestral to modern-day social/cultural anthropology: Ratzel's human geography, *Völkerpsychologie* of Lazarus and Steinthal, characterology of Ludwig Clages, or national and social character studies. If not discredited, these disciplines are now consigned to the museum of sciences, and we are inclined to relegate those notions to the status of floating signifiers, tokens of identity, and rhetorical devices. Who would dare say today, that the Dinaric type accurately describes the actual character of a whole people? Yet Hammel and Halpern write that:

These theories about 'folk mentality', as the Yugoslavs call it, are now a firm part of folk social science, encapsulated in a series of ethnic stereotypes. Interestingly enough, they are fairly accurate; whether because they originally summarized behavior in an adequate way or because people live up to role models, or both, is hard to say (Hammel and Hammel 1969: 21).

For some, however, this was more than just an epistemological problem. Writing in the first months of the war in Croatia, Slobodan Blagojević, the Belgrade dean of post-modern sophistication, found the return of the "national psyche" existentially threatening. As somebody fully aware of "the decentered I, of Lacan, Lyotard ... of Groff and Derrida," he is deeply unsettled by what he cannot help but see as the essential correctness of Dvorniković's account of the "national psyche" fifty years after it was published. "Is there then some sort of psyche there or not?", he asks – "Yes there is, to the point of its threatening to kill us all, to strangle us like a she-wolf strangles her puppies, like a totem strangles its blind animists" (Blagojević 1991: 17).

Ethnic stereotypes discussed above could at some levels function as "fairly accurate summaries of behavior," and at others as images manipulated for purely rhetorical purposes. They are used by variously situated groups and individuals to "make

indications to one another about who they are and what other kinds of people are in their habitat," but rarely without an element of "adornment" or "disparagement" insofar as they take up "the mission of metaphor in expressive culture" (Fernandez 1986a: 41).¹⁸ They are used locally for self-understanding and self-criticism as well as for self-display before more powerful international others. By tracing their intellectual genealogies and historical vicissitudes, as well as the pragmatics of their uses on various levels and in various arenas, I am hoping to set a stage for a finer anthropological understanding of cultural dimensions of such complex socio-historical phenomena as the breakup of Yugoslavia or the wars of Yugoslav succession. By finer understanding I mean an endeavor to investigate the role of Dinaric Alps in recent events that moves beyond saying that mountains and epics breed violence, or that the national psyche threatens "to strangle us like a she-wolf strangles her puppies."

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¹⁸ Highlanders and Lowlanders could be seen to form a continuum in the Balkan "quality space" as formulated by Fernandez. My analyses of value reversals and of Dvorniković's play on soft-hard continuum, for instance, are informed by his topographic model in which inchoate pronouns are moved along a set of culturally specific dimensions or continua by metaphoric predication (Fernandez 1986a: 3-70). These types are, however, usually embedded within at least elementary narrative structures, such as "came the wild, kicked out the tame" scenario mentioned in connection with Novaković above and have to be analyzed on the level of "stories Serbs tell themselves (and others) about themselves" which goes beyond the topographic model.

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