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THE LANGUAGE REFORM OF VUK STEFANOVIĆ KARADŽIĆ AND THE NATIONAL QUESTION AMONG THE SERBS¹

*On the occasion of the 100th anniversary
of the Treaty of London (1915–2015)*

Abstract: *From the very beginning, the philological activity of Vuk Karadžić was focused on issues associated with the national affirmation of the Serbs. Karadžić's main task was related to the sphere of linguistics and it had to do with the reform of the literary (standard) language. In this context, he had to address two key issues: the designing of a writing system that would be adjusted to the phonetic system of the folk language and the selection of the dialect basis for the literary language. Conforming to the spirit of the times in which he lived, in his pursuit of the Serbs national identity, Vuk Karadžić primarily relied on linguistic criteria, considering other criteria, such as religion, less important. Karadžić's approach to the issue of Serb language distribution did not remain without followers in contemporary studies.*

Key words: *Vuk Karadžić's reform, Serb language, national identity, writing system, dialect basis.*

While expressing my gratitude for the invitation by the British Library, at the very beginning, I would like to remind you that this is not the first time the Serbian philologist Vuk Stefanović Karadžić is mentioned in this renowned British institution. His works have long been part of the Library's collections and the Library has celebrated significant anniversaries related to him through various programmes. Between 26 June and 27 September 1987, the British Library organised an exhibition titled *Vuk Stefanović Karadžić 1787–1864* to commemorate the bicentenary of Karadžić's birth. The year of 2014 marks the bicentenary of the publication of Karadžić's *Мала њпросионародња славено-сербска њеснарица* (*A Small Simple-Folk Slaveno-Serbian Songbook*, Vienna, 1814) and *Писменица сербскоја њезука* (*Serbian Grammar Book*, Vienna, 1814). We recently had an opportunity to see on the Library's website a text written on this occasion by Milan Grba, the

Lead Curator of the Library. Accordingly, my present lecture is merely a modest and symbolic contribution to this tradition nurtured by the British Library.

I. The Emergence of Vuk Karadžić – the social and historical context

1. Vuk Stefanović Karadžić (1787–1864) appeared among the Serbs in a socially and historically cumbersome period. Without a deep understanding of that period it is impossible to understand his cultural and scholarly work. Karadžić was born in 1787 in western Serbia, in the village of Tršić (near Loznica), in one of the pashaliks (the Belgrade Pashalik) of the great Ottoman Empire. At that time, as well as over a long period before, the Serb² ethnic body was under the rule of the Ottoman and Austro-Hungarian

¹ The text of the lecture delivered at the British Library in London at the conference *Language and the Making of Nations* (14 November 2014).

² In this paper, the term *Serb* – in phrases such as “the Serb language”, “the Serb Orthodox Church” etc. – designates, in the spirit of Vuk Karadžić, the whole body of the Serbs, their language and culture in the Balkans, regardless of the geographical, political or any other distribution of this population (cf. the semantic

Empires (and partially under the Venetian Republic). The economic situation seemed to be particularly difficult in those areas that remained under the Ottoman feudal system and the same fate was shared by education and culture, underdeveloped and shaped to meet the modest needs of the church. Nevertheless, the powerful epic tradition, which had for centuries been nurtured among the Serbs (e.g. in western Serbia, Herzegovina, Montenegro, Lika, etc.), handed down to Karadžić's generation a rich body of knowledge about the Serbs, their identity and the place they had in the history and culture of the South Slavs and the Balkans. This context was particularly favourable for reminiscing over the old and powerful Serbian mediaeval state, ravaged in the dashing campaign of the Ottoman Turks in the 15th century.

Armed conflicts and wars between the Serbs and the Ottomans continued throughout Karadžić's life. In the late 18th century (1788), an uprising broke out in the Belgrade Pashalik (the so-called Kočina Krajina). It was followed by even more massive uprisings in the early 19th century: the First (1804) and the Second (1815) Serbian Uprising, etc. As a young man, Vuk Karadžić took part in the former insurrection as a scribe.

2. The cultural and educational context in which Vuk Karadžić's formation took place was no less important for the understanding of these issues. Education and culture among the Serbs in the late 18th and the early 19th century were rather underdeveloped, though the situation was slightly more favourable among the Serbs in southern Hungary. In any case, under such conditions it was impossible to cope with the growing national demands put forward by the young middle class. At that time, two models of literary language could be distinguished in written communication among the Serbs (cf. Младеновић 1973):

- *The Russo Slavonic language*, which is basically the archaic Old Church Slavonic language of the ninth century

distinction in the Serb language between the terms *srpски* and *srbijanski*).

modified into the Russian redaction. Since the mid 18th century, this was the official language of the Serb Orthodox Church. It was mostly associated with clerical circles, and was first adopted among the Serbs in southern Hungary (as a 'high style'). The use of Russo Slavonic enabled the Serbs to establish strong cultural ties with a large Orthodox Christian community and Russia, leaving a distinct Pan Slavic cultural imprint on the language.

- *The Slaveno Serbian language*, as an idiom based on a rather informal mixture of Old Church Slavonic (actually, Russo Slavonic), Russian and Serb linguistic features. Although it could not rely on normative instruments (grammar, vocabulary, orthographic conventions), this language model (as a 'medium style') was meant to fill an important gap in the sphere of secular communication, i.e. communication among the bourgeois class.

In this socio cultural distribution of the models of literary language little room was left for the *Folk language of the Serbs*. It was traditionally present in the history of Serb literacy as a low-style language since the very beginnings of literacy and in the centuries to follow its status did not improve. Quite the opposite: In the time of Vuk Karadžić, the prevailing opinion was that the folk language as the linguistic form used by the common people ('the language of pig farmers and herdsmen') could not be a medium for official communication within a society, for academic and literary writings or translations from foreign languages. Such an unfavourable social status of the folk language in literature and literacy, accompanied with a series of prejudices (stereotypes),³ continued throughout the first

³ For example, it was believed that Russo Slavonic was the pure, uncorrupted Serb language, whereas the Serb folk language was lexically poor, especially in terms of its potential to express abstract concepts, etc. Some of these prejudices were politically determined, such as the paradoxical fear that the adoption of the vernacular idiom as a

half of the 19th century. This is confirmed by the presence of numerous Russian (Russo Slavonic) loan words in documents issued by the Serbian insurgent authorities during the First Serbian Uprising – e.g. *knjaz* instead of *knez* ('prince'), *sovjet* instead of *sav(j)et* ('council'), *vrhovni vožd* instead of *vrhovni vod(a)* ('supreme leader'), etc.

3. The writing system (alphabet) used at that time largely shared the same fate. Although the Orthodox Serbs had used the Cyrillic script for centuries, it reached the bourgeois writers of Vuk Karadžić's time, augmented by a number of Old Church Slavonic graphemes (letters). For the sake of tradition, the Old Church Slavonic writing system was also used in secular spheres, as exemplified by the diphthongs used at that time: *ю, я* and *уј* (pronounced as *yu, ya, schch*); letters alternatively used to designate the same sounds (e.g. the letters *и, њ* and *і* were all pronounced as *i*); letters that were not pronounced (e.g. the 'silent letters' *ѣ* and *ѵ* at the end of words), etc. The writing system of the Serb language was burdened with about twenty letters that were superfluous according to various criteria.

Let's take for example a sentence from the Serb journal *Letopis Matice Srpske* (*The Chronicle of Matica Srpska*, Buda, 1828). It brings news from the German press about the reception of Karadžić's folkloristic work in England. The sentence features a number of graphemes from Church Slavonic:

Наводи се „да се и у Енглеској на еданпутъ вкусъ за народну поезію Сербалѣ распрострањо, и да е као нѣкѣи родъ моде постао”⁴ (It is stated that – “the fancy for folk poetry of the Serbs has suddenly become widespread, turning into a sort of fashion.”)

A prevalingly traditionalist approach to the language policy, accompanied by a significant

literary language would raise the threat of the conversion of the Orthodox population among the Serbs to Greek or Roman Catholicism, because the same cultural model was at that time cultivated among the Roman Catholic population speaking the same language (cf. III).

⁴ Of course, the text also features Russo Slavonic (Russian) linguistic features, such as *вкусъ* (Ser. *ukus* 'taste'), *нѣкѣи* (Ser. *neki* 'some'), *Сербалѣ* (Ser. *Srba(l)ja*), gen. 'of the Serbs'.

role of religious factors, considerably hindered the solving of important linguistic issues among the Serbs of Karadžić's time. Even in the first half of the 19th century, there were too many obstacles that hampered the raising of the Serb folk language on a pedestal as a literary language.

II. The Cultural and Scholarly Work of Vuk Karadžić and the National Affirmation of the Serbs

1. From the very beginning, the philological activity of Vuk Karadžić was focused on issues associated with the national affirmation of the Serbs, as this is eloquently indicated by the titles of his works: *Serbian Dictionary* (1818), *Serbian Grammar Book* (1818), *Serbian Folk Stories* (1821), *Serbian Folk Poems* (1823), *Serbian Folk Proverbs* (1836), etc. Such an approach demanded that Karadžić clearly departed from the ecclesiastical tradition and the related Russo-Slavonic (and Russian) influences in the linguistic communication among the Serbs. In this sweeping national revival, he was supported by many European intellectuals: the philologist Jacob Grimm, the writer and scholar Johann Wolfgang von Goethe and the historian Leopold Ranke from Germany; the Slovenian philologist Jernej Kopitar⁵ from Austria; the philologist John Bowring from England and many others. The national programme of Vuk Karadžić was not directly opposed to the political interests of the leading European countries. Moreover, in the extent to which it implied political and cultural suppression of Russian influences in the Balkans, the programme was acceptable for these states and it was, therefore, encouraged (cf. fn. 9). Accordingly, Kopitar's support of Karadžić, though partly motivated by the requirements of contemporary culture and communication, also had a political background (Добрашиновић 1980: 107–108). Perhaps it is reasonable to reconsider

⁵ The role of J. Kopitar, a censorship officer for publications in Slavic languages in Austria and a curator of the Imperial and Royal Court Library in Vienna, was particularly important. He was an inspirer, mentor and promoter of Karadžić's major reform undertakings, but also an unsigned co-author of some works, which Karadžić did not hide.

in this context Kopitar's lavish compliments to the Serbs, such as the one saying that the Serbs were "the most powerful Slavic tribe" (Ibid.: 175), or J. Grimm's statement that the Serb language surpassed Czech and Polish in terms of "grammatical abundance" (Стојановић 1924: 173). It is possible that similar politically strategic missions aimed for the Serbs and initiated from European countries could also be found in other cultural spheres.⁶

2. Accordingly, the affirmation of the Serbs at the national level could not be carried out without a firm reliance on folk culture and the folk language, i.e. without the introduction of the vernacular language in literature and the overall literacy practice. Hence Karadžić undertook his reform believing that the folk language ('the language of pig farmers and herdsmen') had the capacity of taking over the function of a modern literary language of the Serbs. Already by 1818, the general framework of Karadžić's reform was defined, as evidenced by his works: *Мала ѝпросионародња славно-сербска ѝеснарица* (*A Small Simple-Folk Slaveno-Serbian Songbook*, Vienna, 1814), *Писменица сербскоја ѝезика* (*Serbian Grammar Book*, Vienna, 1814) and, in particular, *Срѝски рјечник ѝстѝољкован ѝемачким и латѝнским рјечма* (*Serbian Dictionary, explained with German and Latin words*, with *Serbian Grammar* in the introduction, pp. XXIX–LXXI; Vienna, 1818). In the decades to follow, this reform would be expanded in many details, but it would also face constant opposition among a part of public opinion.⁷ One can see that, along with the modest grammar of the Serb language, the earliest works published by Vuk Karadžić included a small collection of Serb folk poems. It marked the beginning of an organised activity aimed at collecting and publishing

folklore (both poetry and prose) of the Serbs, through which he achieved several goals. Among other things, Karadžić demonstrated that this folklore, with various historical themes and motifs, was the best embodiment of the Serb national identity and a guardian of historical memory among the Serbs.⁸

The socio-historical and cultural circumstances in Europe were favourable for the promotion and popularisation of Serb folklore. In Romantic Europe, especially in Germany, there was an increased interest in folklore as an expression of the authenticity of a nation and its national identity ('a mirror of a national spirit'). In this respect, folk poetry of the Serbs had much to offer Europe. Already Europe's first contacts with this folk poetry resulted in positive comments from academic circles (cf. II.1). According to Jernej Kopitar, these were "wonderfully beautiful folk songs of all kinds" (Добрашиновић 1980: 45), while in other typical comments (J. Grimm, J. Kopitar, etc.) they were compared with Homer's works (Ibid.: 31–40, Goldsworthy 1998: 23). Karadžić's collections of folk songs were well received by European nations and were translated into all major European languages. His folkloristic work became known to the Germans, French, Russians, Hungarians, Czechs, Slovenes, Ukrainians, Swedes, Italians and Poles, as well as to Europe's far west. A collection of these folk poems in English was published in London in 1827 as *Servian Popular Poetry* by **John Bowring** (1792–1872), an English philologist and the Secretary of the London Greek Committee (cf. Popović 1975: 79, Goldsworthy 1998: 23), with whom Karadžić maintained correspondence. Relying on the leading scholarly literature on the subject (P. J. Šafárik, J. Grimm, J. K. Adelung, J. Kopitar, etc.), in a detailed introduction extending over fifty pages, Bowring gave a brief history of the Serbs, an overview of the literary work among them (until the time of D. Obradović and V. Karadžić), and an outline of the essential cultural

⁶ In some studies, the hypothesis has been put forward that the Kosovo myth was revived (or even created) in the territories of the neighbouring states (e.g. Venice, Austria) and then infiltrated among the Serbs to encourage their resistance against the Ottoman Empire (Поповић 1977: 50).

⁷ For example, although he completed the reform of the writing system rather quickly (by 1818), his writing system was fully adopted as late as 1868, i.e. half a century later.

⁸ The epic poetry of the Serbs deals with numerous historical characters (Prince Lazar, Miloš Obilić, Vukašin Mrnjavčević, Prince Marko, Karadorđe Petrović) and events (the Battle of Maritsa, the Battle of Kosovo, the First Serbian Uprising, etc.).

features of Serb folk poems and their language. Bowring was full of praise for Karadžić and his work and the book opened with a dedication to him (Bowring 1827).

These books published by Vuk Karadžić, and particularly the epic poems, not only raised national awareness of Serbs at a time when this was an urgent necessity, but they also helped develop a feeling of sympathy in public opinion of European countries for the Serbian uprisings against the Oriental Ottoman oppressors.⁹ “In that world he [Karadžić] did more to spread the name of the Serbs than all the victories of Karađorđe or all successful achievements of [Prince] Miloš in establishing a new state” (Стојановић 1924: 726). Karadžić thereby achieved another national goal.

3. Nevertheless, Karadžić’s main task was related to the sphere of linguistics and it had to do with the reform of the literary language. In this context, he had to address two key issues: the designing of a writing system that would be adjusted to the phonetic system of the folk language and the selection of the dialect basis for the literary language.

3.1. Vuk Karadžić undertook his reform of the Cyrillic writing system guided by the phonetic principle ‘Write as you speak’ (J. K. Adelung), seeking to impose a rule according to which each phoneme in the Serb language would be represented by only one letter of the alphabet. An alphabetic system adjusted to the phonetic system of the Serb language was yet another example of Karadžić’s national approach to linguistic issues. As a result, the Serbs were to get a secular (folk) alphabet for their secular (folk) lan-

⁹ Of course, the official policy of a part of European countries revealed different approaches in relation to the uprising of the Serbs and the weakening of the Ottoman position in the Balkans. This was the case with the British official policy, which did not look with sympathy at these developments in the Balkans (Goldsworthy 1998: 27–31). On the other hand, even a century later, the Serbs were written and talked about in British public opinion as defenders of European civilisation in the Balkans (cf. West 1982). This marginal position of the Serbs, torn between East and West, is the focal point of the literary work of the Serbian Nobel Prize in Literature laureate Ivo Andrić (Radić 2009).

guage, limiting the old, church alphabet to ecclesiastical use. Relying on the reform ideas of **Sava Mrkalj** (*Сало дебелоја јера либо азбукойроуѣрес – The Fat of the Thick Yer, i.e. Alphabet Reshuffling*, Buda, 1810), Karadžić eliminated about twenty superfluous traditionally used letters, reducing the total number of letters to thirty.

At the same time, Vuk Karadžić highlighted the importance of linguistic criteria in this selection: for example, the Poles and the Russians, as he pointed out, needed the letter *ѡ* (yery), whereas the Serbs used *и* (*i*) in place of it (Караџић 1818: XI). However, such an approach inevitably required that some characters be invented and guided by some suggestions (from S. Mrkalj) or relying on the assistance of his associates (L. Mušicki), Karadžić introduced the letters *ђ* (*d*, derived from the already existing *ђ*), *љ* (*lj*) and *њ* (*nj*) (derived from the already existing *л* and *н*, i.e. *l* and *n*). In addition, he took over some of the characters that were not typical of the Cyrillic script: e.g. *ј* from the Latin script and *џ* (*dž*) from older texts. The phonetic principle also implied such orthographic solutions that would enable to reflect in writing (in most cases) various phonetic changes, such as *otac* (‘father’) → gen. *oca* (and not *otca*), *Srbin* (‘Serb’) → adj. *srpski* (and not *srbski*) etc.

Karadžić’s interests were not limited to the Cyrillic alphabet. Being fully aware of the geographical distribution of the Serbs, who included members of different religions (cf. III), he planned to undertake a reform of the Latin alphabet. This reform was intended for the Catholic Serbs and was to be carried out according to the same principles as the reform of the Cyrillic alphabet for the Orthodox Serbs. However, this undertaking was continued by his younger associate, **Đuro Daničić** (1825–1882).

3.2. Although at the beginning of his reforms Karadžić merely insisted on the use of folk language as a literacy language, regardless of dialect, he quickly realised that he had to choose a particular dialect as the basis for the literary language. This prompted him to take a deeper interest in the dialects of the Serb language and his initial findings were already published in *Писменица сербскоја језика* (*Serbian*

Grammar Book, 1814). In this book, Karadžić divided the Serb speaking area (the so-called Štokavian area) into three dialect types: the *Herzegovinian* (Herzegovina, Bosnia, Montenegro, Croatia, Serbia up to Mačva, Valjevo and Kraljevo), the *Sirmian* (Srem, Bačka, Banat, Belgrade, Smederevo, Kragujevac, Resava, Požarevac, Crna Reka and Krajina up to the Timok River) and the *Slavonian* (Slavonia, Croatia and Dalmatia). In his later research, Karadžić would supplement the concept with new data but his approach would not change fundamentally.¹⁰

Although he initially claimed that all these dialects were equally dear to him, over time he would, however, recommend the Herzegovinian (Ijekavian) dialect type¹¹ as the basis for the Serb literary language. The vast majority of those who used the dialect were (Orthodox) Serbs (Ивић – Кашић 1981: 361). Some minor corrections which were later incorporated into the linguistic norm (e.g. the inclusion of the consonant *h* into the alphabet) were done with the idea of bringing the literary language closer to the linguistic features used by the Catholic Serbs, “our brothers of the Roman Rite”, as Karadžić called them.¹² This model of literary language (based on the so-called new Štokavian speeches) would be adopted by the Croats (cf. Kordić 2010: 280–281, 284–285), who had mostly used other dialects or languages (the so-called Čakavian in coastal areas, and Kajkavian in the Zagreb area) in their literary production.¹³ Karadžić explained

his choice of this dialect as the basis for the Serb literary language by a whole series of arguments. One of them was: “The purest and the most correct language is spoken in Herzegovina and Bosnia” (Стојановић 1924: 589). Vuk Karadžić believed that the national identity of the Serbs was best preserved in the areas where the Ijekavian dialect was used because they were far away from urban cultural centres. According to him, it was in these areas that almost all folk poems of the Serbs had been created and the sound spirit of the Serbs had been preserved. On the other hand, in other Serb-populated areas and particularly in those regions in Hungary where the Ekavian dialect was used (Srem, Bačka, Banat), the situation was, according to Karadžić, rather different. In these regions, under the influence of a foreign culture, the members of the higher social class and intelligence among the Serbs parted from their own nation. Vuk Karadžić noted that they even “forgot [...] how to think in the Serb language” (Караџић 1849: 137).

III. The Reform of Vuk Karadžić and the Issue of the Geographical Distribution of the Serbs

1. The above discussion shows that the issue of the reform’s territorial reach, i.e. the question of the territorial distribution of the Serbs and their language, could not have been avoided in Karadžić’s linguistic and cultural reform. Vuk Karadžić must have been aware of that distribution from his early youth. Serb folklore, with which he was well familiar, could have provided rather reliable data, but he could have also drawn conclusions based on the boundaries of the Serbian Patriarchate, the ecclesiastical institution of the Serbs in the Ottoman Empire.¹⁴

¹⁰ Karadžić’s approach to Serb dialects has been analysed by several authors (Lj. Stojanović, A. Belić, P. Ivić, etc.). One of the most recent analyses is that of P. Herryty (1988).

¹¹ Karadžić would later designate these speeches as the *southern* dialect, in the context of the division into the *eastern* (Ekavian), *western* (Ikavian) and *southern* (Ijekavian) dialects.

¹² The Yugoslav, and especially communist ideology sought to interpret such activities of Vuk Karadžić as a result of an intention to establish links with the Croats, i.e. to create the so-called *Serbo-Croatian* literary language and even a Yugoslav political community (cf. Белић 1947).

¹³ In scholarly literature, this has been highlighted as a “wise move, which largely widened the boundaries of Zagreb’s cultural and political influence and paved the way for the formation of the modern Croatian nation” (Ивић – Кашић 1981: 360). The later attempts to cre-

ate a literary language among the Bosniaks and Montenegrins using the same dialect type as the basis, relied on the same approach.

¹⁴ There was a period when the Serbian Patriarchate (1557–1766) managed to spread its jurisdiction to the majority of the Serb ethnic areas in the Balkans: Serbia, northern Macedonia, southwestern Bulgaria, Srem, Banat, Bačka, Slavonia, Lika, Krbava, Bosnia, Herzegovina and Dalmatia.

However, Karadžić's scholarly spirit attributed greater relevance to what he had learnt from the European philology of the time (J. Dobrovský, P. J. Šafárik, J. Grimm) and, above all, to what he had learnt from **Jernej Kopitar** (cf. fn. 5). It was through Kopitar and other European philologists that Karadžić could get acquainted with the work of **Petar Hektorović** (1487–1572), who noted examples of folk singing in the Serb manner (“*na sarbski način*”, i.e. with a Serb chorus) along the maritime route Hvar – Brač – Šolta (Hektorović 1951: 15, 42).¹⁵ Karadžić must have known that there was a huge Serbs' community in Bosnia and Herzegovina; in the second half of the 19th century (the census of 1879), only the Orthodox Serbs accounted for 43 per cent (Екмечић 1994: 131). He must have been equally familiar with the philological work of the Slavonian **Antun Matija Reljković** (1732–1798) and the fact that he regarded Slavonia as a Serb ethnic territory (cf. Kordić 2010: 273), etc. After all, in his philological works from the beginning of the 19th century, prior to meeting Vuk Karadžić, Kopitar divided the literature of the Serbs into two branches, the Catholic (“the literature of the Catholic Slavo Serbs”) and Orthodox (“the literature of the Greek Rite Slavo Serbs”). The first group (designated by him as Illyrians, too)¹⁶ used the Latin alphabet and occupied western areas (the Ragusan, Bosnian and Slavonian dialects), whereas the second group populated eastern regions and used the Cyrillic alphabet (Копитар 1810: 79). A similar approach can be found in historical works of the time.

¹⁵ This is a peripheral area of the Serb ethnic territory (cf. figure: The Treaty of London), where the use of the Cyrillic script dates back to the late 12th century (cf. the Povlja Cyrillic inscription from the island of Brač).

¹⁶ Not even the leader of the so-called *Illyrian movement* among Croats, Ljudevit Gaj (1809–1872), who used the Kajkavian dialect, denied that ‘Illyrian’ was actually the Serb language. He wrote: “nu nama još ni izdaleka nije na um palo ikada tvarditi, da to nije serbski već ilirski jezik” (“It has never occurred to us to claim that this is not the Serb language but the Illyrian language”, Gaj 1846: 170).

This topic was discussed by J. Bowring, mentioned above as a translator of Karadžić's folk poems (see: II. 2), at the very beginning of his book, in the first sentence of the Introduction. This is how he summarised his time's knowledge about the territorial distribution of the Serbs after the great migrations in the seventh century: “In the middle of the seventh century, a number of Slavonian tribes stretched themselves along the Sava and the Danube, down to the Black Sea, and founded, at different times, no less than six separate kingdoms, those of Bulgaria, Croatia, Serbia, Bosnia, Slavonia, and Dalmatia ; under the name *Srb* the four last of these nations must be considered as comprised” (Bowring 1827: VII, cf. fn. 9).

2. Conforming to the spirit of the times in which he lived, in his pursuit of the Serbs' national identity, Vuk Karadžić primarily relied on linguistic criteria, considering other criteria, such as religion, less important. Just like his predecessor, D. Obradović,¹⁷ Karadžić persistently believed that language should be the main cultural constant and a pivot of a modern nation. He supported this idea with examples from Enlightenment Europe. Indeed, for the liberal-minded people of the time, religion could not be a relevant criterion in determining a national identity – this criterion was the ethnic body (kinship), i.e. language. Karadžić had an opportunity to learn this in Europe and he could have received, directly or indirectly, proper instruction from German scholars (e.g. Johann Gottfried Herder), as well as from the examples of those European nations whose internal religious divisions did not conflict with their national unity (the Germans, the Dutch, the Hungarians, the Slovaks).¹⁸ Karadžić addressed this issue in his

¹⁷ For example, Obradović repeatedly pointed out that one could change customs and religion, but not the origin and language.

¹⁸ Among the Serb intellectuals of the time this approach was widely accepted. The Montenegrin Prince-Bishop P. P. Njegoš emphasised the supremacy of the national language over religion in the poem *Поздрав роду из Беча* (*Greetings to the Kin from Vienna*) in 1847: “It doesn't

study *Србу сви и свуга* (*Serbs, All and Everywhere*, Vienna, 1849), arguing that the central South Slavic (the so-called Štokavian) linguistic area (Serbia, Bosnia, Herzegovina, Montenegro, Srem, Banat, Bačka, Slavonia, Dalmatia, etc.) actually belonged to the Serb linguistic and, accordingly, national identity. At this point, he came into conflict with Croatian intellectuals, who favoured non-linguistic factors – above all, religion, in dealing with matters of national identity.¹⁹

Through persistent and well-argued advocacy of his views, in the mid-19th century, Vuk Karadžić managed to pave the way for his linguistic reform among the Serbs. His reform was undoubtedly culturally far-reaching and it significantly contributed to the strengthening of the national consciousness among the Serbs. It has been pointed out that Karadžić's work, in its own way, played a role in the subsequent liberation wars against the Ottoman occupation of the Balkans, which ended as late as the early 20th century (the Balkan War of 1912) by the expulsion of Ottoman rule from the Balkans. It has been noted that Serbian warriors drew strength for their harsh resistance from their heroic, epic past, which had been brought closer to them owing to Vuk Karadžić (cf. Поповић 1977: 147). Although he had spent his life coping with persecution and hardship, while his work had often been criticised and banned, the following generations saw him as the founder of the science of the Serb language, the founder of Serb ethnography, as well as “the first original writer of modern Serb History” (Стојановић 1924: 725).

Karadžić's approach to the issue of the distribution of the Serb language did not remain

matter how one makes the sign of the cross, / But whose blood warms one's soul, / And whose milk nourished him”.

¹⁹ Although formally atheist, Yugoslav communist ideology strongly opposed Karadžić's approach to this issue (cf. Vukomanović 1987: 61, 87).

without followers in studies (among Serbs: Đ. Daničić, St. Novaković, Lj. Stojanović, P. Milosavljević, R. Marojević, M. Kovačević, etc.). They would, more or less consistently, follow Karadžić's idea of the linguistically Serb nature of the so-called Štokavian area, regardless of religion or any other division among language speakers (see: Wilson 1970: 294–313).²⁰ Relying on detailed knowledge of the South Slavic dialectology and seeking to define the relationship between the modern Serb and Croatian literary languages and their dialect origins and literary traditions, **Pavle Ivić** wrote: “And indeed, the Serbian literary language is actually Serbian in origin, while Croatian in most of its characteristics is not related to Croatian dialects or older Croatian tradition” (Ivić 2001: 8). We are undoubtedly dealing with an idea of the Serb ethnic territory that has for centuries persisted among the Serbs. And not only Serbs. We have already drawn attention to some examples and we will conclude with yet another noteworthy illustration: on the political map that was created a hundred years ago as a result of the *Treaty of London* (1915), during the I World war (cf. Шемякин 1997: 341–381), the borders of western Serbia were not much different from the Serb ethnic boundaries established by Vuk Karadžić in his study *Србу сви и свуга* (*Serbs, All and Everywhere*), relying on the philological method and largely supported by the European scholarship of the time.²¹

²⁰ Until the present, politics have always largely interfered with these linguistic issues both by acting from the inside and through outside influences and various methods (cf. fn. 12, 19). Already Franc Miklošič (1813–1891), a professor at the Department of Slavic Philology in Vienna, drew attention to the need to separate these approaches. He consistently defended Karadžić's philological approach (by making the same distinction between the Croatian and the Serb languages as Karadžić), but he did not deny the need for a political union between the Serbs and the Croats at a certain moment (Миклошић 1879: 201).

²¹ These and many other data could help complete the image of Vuk Karadžić and his work and even eliminate negative stereotypes about him among a part of Western scholars (cf. e.g. Frucht 2005).



The Treaty of London, 1915 (<http://www.jugoslavologija.eu/london-treaty-1915/> – accessed, 4. 02. 2015) – and the map of western territories offered to Serbia.

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ЈЕЗИЧКА РЕФОРМА ВУКА СТЕФАНОВИЋА КАРАЦИЋА И СРПСКО НАЦИОНАЛНО ПИТАЊЕ

Резиме

Упорно и аргументовано заступајући своје ставове, Вук Ст. Карацић је половином XIX века прокрчио пут својој језичкој реформи код Срба. Његова реформа је, несумњиво, имала врло широк културолошки домет, дајући значајан допринос омеђавању српске културне баштине и учвршћивању српске националне свести (заснованост књижевног језика на народним говорима, а савремене графиције на српском језику). Ни приступ Вука Карацића распрострањености српског народа и његовог језика није нестао без трага у српској науци, иако се већ читав век те Вукове поставке на различитим странама (па и у делу Српства) покушавају оповргнути и прогласити заблудом. Реч је, несумњиво, о вишевековном континуитету у поимању српског етничког простора од стране српског народа. И не само српског. Тако, на политичкој карти насталој пре тачно сто година Лондонским споразумом (*Treaty of London, 1915*), западне српске границе нису представљене много другачије од оних српских етничких граница које је, управо филолошком методом и уз подршку тадашње европске науке, омеђио Вук Карацић (*Срби сви и свуда*, 1849). Објективни истраживачи ни данас не могу имати озбиљне примедбе на овакво виђење српских етничких граница на западу, посебно не на овде омеђене домете српског језика.