

Primary Sources

The Battle of Kosovo: Early Reports of Victory and Defeat

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from *Kosovo: Legacy of a Medieval Battle*

In popular interpretation it was defeat at the Battle of Kosovo which brought about the disintegration of the medieval Serbian empire. Careful analysis of the post-Dusan era, however, demonstrates that the empire had already collapsed long before the battle. During the years of Tsar Uros's reign (1355-71) the authority which the Nemanjic dynasty represented was completely undermined by powerful lords who succeeded in governing their territories quite independently of their tsar. With Uros's death in 1371 the Nemanjic dynasty became extinct; and in the eighteen years which separate his death and the Battle of Kosovo the struggle for territorial aggrandizement among the nobility of Serbia only continued.

This struggle was made more complex by the increasing danger which the Ottoman Turks posed to the region. Already in September 1371, the Ottomans defeated the strongest Serbian lords in Macedonia in a major battle on the Marica River. This victory was perhaps the Ottomans' most important success before their conquest of Constantinople in 1453, for the valley of the Marica River opened their way to the rest of the Balkans. Less than two years after the battle on the Marica the Byzantine emperor had to accept a vassal relationship with Murad I, and the ever-retreating line of defense against the Turks moved northwest to the more central regions of Serbia.

The rise of the Ottoman Turks from a small warrior state on the Asian frontiers of the Byzantine Empire to a formidable empire of their own in both Asia and Europe is a phenomenal story. By the end of the thirteenth century most of Anatolia was in their hands. Osman, who gave his name to the dynasty and the state, had his capital in Yenisehir beginning in 1299. The capture of this city made communications difficult between Nicaea and Bursa, two of the important surviving outposts of Byzantium in Asia. Two years later he defeated the Byzantine army near Nicomedia, a strategic port city which protected the sea route to Constantinople. Gradually his forces reached the Bosphorus, the Sea of Marmara, and the Black Sea. Finally in 1326, as Osman lay on his deathbed, the Turks took Bursa and made it their first imperial capital.

Osman's son, Orkhan, only continued the expansion. Nicaea fell in 1329 and Nicomedia in 1337. Eager to mold his population into a state Orkhan soon proved that the nomadic warrior was ready to lay the permanent foundations for a successor state to Byzantium. By the middle of the fourteenth century the Ottomans were knocking at the gates of Europe. From their first base in Gallipoli they advanced slowly into the Balkans along the river valleys which led to the Danube. While there was resistance to the invasion, some simply accepted what seemed to be the inevitable and opened their doors to the new regime. It is even argued that the Turks represented a social revolutionary force, offering stability and central authority to areas which suffered the ill effects of feudal capriciousness.

Plovdiv fell to the Ottomans in 1363 and Kumucina in 1364. In 1369 they captured Adrianople, and Murad, Orkhan's son and successor, moved the capital there. With the defeat of the Serbian forces in Macedonia in 1371 the path was open to the old heart of Serbia. Within a few years only the Serbian principality of Lazar Hrebeljanovid stood in the way of the Ottoman advance.

Prince Lazar built his court city of Krusevac in the northern regions of Serbia away from the heartland of Nemanjic Serbia. It was a necessary decision. After the battle on the Marica almost everything south and east of Kosovo was under Ottoman authority. Krukvac, however, was a comfortable distance from the Turks. As one of the last Christian refuges in the Balkans, his principality attracted large numbers of priests, monks, writers, architects, and artists from Bulgarian, Greek, and southern Serbian areas already subject to the Turks.

A new era of culture began to flourish in this frontier province which was to reach its fullest expression during the reign of Lazar's son, Despot Stefan Lazarevic. Lazar's success was due in part to adequate economic resources. The two most important mineral centers in Serbia - Rudnik and Novo Brdo - were under his jurisdiction; they were the economic basis of his power. Moreover, the support of the Serbian Church was an essential ingredient in Lazar's rise to political prominence, and that support was especially encouraged by Lazar's efforts to end the schism with Byzantium. The stage was certainly set for the restoration of central authority in Serbia under Prince Lazar. Unfortunately, however, time was not on his side; for the Ottoman armies continued their advance.

The first mention of any Ottoman movement into Lazar's territory is from a chronicle entry of 1381, when two of Lazar's subjects, Vitimir and Crep, defeated the Turks on the Dubravnic River near Paracin.[2] After that there is no record of any hostility between Lazar and the Turks until 1386. A chronicle entry for that year reports that "Murad set out against Prince Lazar and conquered Nis." [3] Another isolated entry for the same year observes that "Emperor Murad fled in front of Prince Lazar from the Toplica River at Plocnik." [4] These early Turkish attacks were basically plundering expeditions organized to test the strength of the enemy forces, to exhaust those forces as much as possible, and to prepare for an eventual conquest of the area. [5]

In 1388 the Turkish army advanced into Bulgaria and forced Tsar Ivan Sisman to his knees. Bulgaria had become a vassal state of the Ottomans in 1376, but vassal status never prohibited the sultan from continuing his attacks against the subject land. Throughout the 1380s the Ottomans continued to grab pieces of southern Bulgaria, and in 1385 they captured Sofia from Sisman. The attack in 1388 may have been provoked by Sisman's attempt to end his vassal relationship with the Turks. Whatever the cause, the outcome was disastrous for the Bulgarians. They were forced to accept their vassal status once again and to surrender more territory to the Turks. The Ottomans were also permitted to establish military camps in Bulgaria and to use the territory freely for the movement of troops deeper into the peninsula.

The Turkish incursions into Bosnia and Bulgaria certainly made Prince Lazar aware that it was only a matter of time until he faced another Turkish assault on his own territory. When it came, however, it was anything but a minor border skirmish or plundering raid. The Battle of Kosovo on 28 June 1389 was a full-fledged battle in the heartland of old Serbia.

It was natural that the Turks would choose Kosovo as their next objective in their continuing conquest of the Balkan Peninsula, for it was a particularly strategic territory. Its natural boundaries are the mountains: in the north the summits of Kopaonik and Rogozna; in the south the Skopska Crna Gora and the Sar mountains; in the east the slopes of Prugovac, Mramor, Koznica, and Zegovac; and in the west the mountains of Nerodimka, Crnovljeva, Drenica, and Cicavica. [6] At the southern end of the plain is the watershed between the Aegean and Black Seas which barely separates the headwaters of the Vardar and Morava Rivers.

This watershed in itself gives Kosovo a strategic position, for the path which nature carved through the mountains of Serbia and Macedonia that is followed by these two rivers is the shortest north-south route across the Balkan Peninsula. It connects the middle Danube with the Gulf of Thessalonika. Celtic tribes traversed this route as they advanced into Greece, and Romans used it to reach the Danube from Macedonia. Later it became one of the principal routes of attack for various barbarian peoples - most importantly the Slavs. [7]

During the late middle ages the plain of Kosovo was one of the most important crossroads in the Balkan Peninsula. [8] Linked in all directions with the rest of the peninsula, it was a strategically valuable prize to the

conqueror of the central Balkan Peninsula - whether he be the Serb marching to the southeast or the Turk to the northwest. Moreover, the hills surrounding Kosovo contained the richest sources of mineral wealth in the entire peninsula. These factors combined to make Kosovo a particularly enviable target for Sultan Murad and the Ottoman Turks.

On 28 June 1389 the combined Serbian forces from the territories governed by Prince Lazar and Vuk Brankovic together with auxiliary troops sent by King Tvrtko of Bosnia faced Sultan Murad and his army on the field of Kosovo. It had been eighteen years since King Vukasin and Despot Ugljesa failed in their attempt to drive the Turks out of the Balkan Peninsula, and now the Serbian forces were definitely on the defensive. Given the divisiveness among Serbian lords which generally characterized the decades following Dusan's death, the fact that Lazar, Vuk, and Tvrtko were able to conclude an alliance against the Turks was reason for at least some optimism. No one, however, could have known that the struggle was to become a pivotal moment in the history of the Serbian people.

The historian is faced with a difficult problem when he attempts to discover what occurred in the Battle of Kosovo. There are no eyewitness accounts of the battle, and rather significant differences exist among those contemporary sources which do mention the event. There is little doubt that the confrontation occurred on the field of Kosovo on 28 (15) June 1389 between Christian forces led by Prince Lazar of Serbia and Ottoman forces led by Sultan Murad I. When it was over, both leaders were dead and Murad's son, Bayezid, returned to Edirne to secure his succession. The picture becomes very cloudy beyond these meager details. The early documents are not particularly concerned with armaments, tactics, size of forces, and the general course of the battle. Surprisingly enough, it is not even possible to know with certainty from the extant contemporary material whether one or the other side was victorious on the field. There is certainly little to indicate that it was a great Serbian defeat; and the earliest reports of the conflict suggest, on the contrary, that the Christian forces had won.

Rumors of the battle were disseminated as far as Constantinople, Florence, Venice, Barcelona, and Paris, but they appeared to emphasize just one particular bit of news: the death of the Ottoman sultan. While the West had been slow to judge the seriousness of the Ottoman advance into Europe, by the late fourteenth century there was a growing awareness of this new threat to the Christian world. The death of Murad was, therefore, a cause for celebration in the streets of occidental cities. In itself it was a kind of Christian victory.

Some of the earliest reports of the conflict were apparently encouraged by King Tvrtko of Bosnia. In a letter to the senate of the Dalmatian city of Trogir on 1 August 1389, he announced that he had defeated the infidel.[9] Some time that summer he also sent a message to the senate in Florence in which he informed them of his victory over the Turks on Kosovo. Although that message is not preserved today, the response of the Florentine senate to Tvrtko on 20 October 1389 gives us some idea of the news that was emanating from Tvrtko's court and elsewhere.

The Florentine letter is a critical document for our understanding of the battle because it provides certain information about the event for the first time. It correctly identifies Kosovo as the battlefield and June 28, St. Vitus' Day, as the date of the battle. Most important, however, is its claim that the Ottoman sultan died at the hands of a Christian assassin:

Fortunate, most fortunate are those hands of the twelve loyal lords who, having opened their way with the sword

and having penetrated the enemy lines and the circle of chained camels, heroically reached the tent of Amurat himself.

Fortunate above all is that one who so forcefully killed such a strong vojvoda by stabbing him with a sword in the

throat and belly. And blessed are all those who gave their lives and blood through the glorious manner

of martyrdom
as victims of the dead leader over his ugly corpse.[10]

In time the assassination would become the central act in the evolving record of the Battle of Kosovo. And while the Florentine description of the deed is quite different from later accounts which emerge in both Ottoman and Serbian sources, nevertheless, it provides a contemporary historical foundation for the idea that Murad was killed by a daring Serbian assassin.

Other brief contemporary references to the battle are found in notes of the senate in Venice;[11] in letters penned by the Byzantine orator and rhetorician, Demetrius Cydones;[12] in two works by the French writer, Philippe de Mezieres;[13] in an anonymous Florentine chronicle;[14] and in treatises by Beltramo Minianelli of Siena[15] and the Castilian Ruy Gonzales de Clavijo.[16] In all of these the death of Murad is the primary focus of the authors' attention. The most unequivocal expression of a Christian victory is found in those accounts of the battle which do not mention Prince Lazar or, when they do, are not aware of his death at Kosovo. Sources which do know of Lazar's death as well as Murad's are generally ambiguous concerning the outcome of the battle. Even the anonymous Florentine chronicler, who speaks of a Turkish victory, is not convinced that it was a decisive triumph for the Turks. His emphasis on the Turks' great losses on the battlefield and along the route of retreat seems to suggest a Pyrrhic victory at best. Only many generations later, under the influence of Ottoman chronicles and histories, would Westerners begin to describe the Battle of Kosovo as a clear Serbian defeat.

The earliest Serbian sources for the Battle of Kosovo are also not particularly concerned with detailed battle description and analysis of the outcome. Rather they concentrate on Serbia's own loss - the martyrdom of Prince Lazar. These first Serbian references to the battle are found in a number of sermons, eulogies, and hagiographic works written after the event in memory of Prince Lazar.[17] The basic character of these works is panegyric, which reflects a continuation of the early literary tradition in medieval Serbia. The contents also reveal, however, a need to interpret for Serbia the rather turbulent events of the last half of the fourteenth century. Some have judged these writings harshly because of their apparent lack of historical data.[18] Such criticism is meaningless, however, when one is dealing with religious rhetoric. They were not meant to be objective accounts of the event. At the same time, however, and in the spirit of good religious rhetoric, each author believed that he or she was proclaiming the truth about Kosovo.[19]

A feeling of despair permeated Lazar's Serbia following the prince's death in 1389 and Milica's surrender to the Turks the next year. Conscious of the need to combat pessimism in Serbia and to provide hope for a brighter future, monastic figures wrote eulogies and sermons in praise of Lazar in which they interpreted the events of this troubled period for their own generation. Varied as these writings are in style, length, and content, the central theme in each of them is still the death of the Serbian prince. Lazar's death was interpreted as a martyrdom for the faith and for his people. In the eyes of his eulogists he sacrificed himself so that Serbia might live.

In Patriarch Danilo's *Slovo o knezu Lazaru* the prince sees martyrdom as a clear choice and one which he eagerly pursues for himself and for his men. Having assembled his army to tell them of the Turkish invasion of his land, Lazar describes the ultimate prize which awaits those who struggle for the faith:

You, o comrades and brothers, lords and nobles, soldiers and vojvodas - great and small. You yourselves
are witnesses and observers of that great goodness God has given us in this lifeBut if the sword, if
wounds,
or if the darkness of death comes to us, we accept it sweetly for Christ and for the godliness of our
homeland.
It is better to die in battle than to live in shame. Better it is for us to accept death from the sword in battle
than

to offer our shoulders to the enemy. We have lived a long time for the world; in the end we seek to accept the martyr's struggle and to live forever in heaven. We call ourselves Christian soldiers, martyrs for godliness to be recorded in the book of life. We do not spare our bodies in fighting in order that we may accept the holy wreathes from that One who judges all accomplishments. Sufferings beget glory and labors lead to peace.[20]

The intent of Danilo's rhetoric is clear. After the loss of so many on Kosovo and the uncertainty of the future for Serbia some truth must be revealed in the tragedy. The Serbian patriarch declares that the thousands of Serbian casualties are perfect examples of Christian martyrdom. They volunteered their lives in the cause of truth and for the sake of others.

In the anonymous *Pohvalno slovo knezu Lazaru*[21] the ultimate comparison is made to the sacrifice of Jesus Christ Himself. Lazar is the "unsleeping eye," "the unfaltering pillar of the Church," "the most lustrous of all stars," and "a savior." By his sacrifice he remains eternally among them as the good shepherd:

You are the good shepherd who offered his soul for us. How shall we praise you? With which language is it worthy to celebrate you? Oh praiseworthy martyr, Lazar, come unseen to us and stand in our midst. Show us the songs of praise so that we will not be like sheep who have no shepherd. You are our shepherd; you cared for your flock which Christ the Lord gave to you. Do not surrender us to a shepherd whom we do not know. Do not scatter your flock which you gathered and for whose sake you shed your holy blood.[23]

All of the portrayals of Lazar as a hero and martyr for the faith contributed to the establishment of a cult of the prince which took its place among the other great cults of medieval Serbia - those of St. Simeon and St. Sava. The cults helped to unite the Serbs in a strong religious and political unit. It appears that it was crucially important for the eulogists to establish some continuity between Lazar's Serbia and the Serbia of the Nemanjic dynasty.[24] Even though the church supported Lazar as Serbian autocrat in the tradition of the Nemanjidi, there is no proof that similar support existed outside the church. Therefore, the creators of the cult were eager to proclaim Lazar's divine-right selection as successor to the Nemanjici.

While various writers used different images to establish Lazar's legitimacy, all of them emphasized the importance of God's will and providence in providing a peaceful transference of authority during the troubled years of the post-Dusan era. The anonymous author of *Zitiye kneza Lazara* says that God led Lazar to the Serbian throne after Uros's death because of his "humility, righteousness, many virtues, and gentle habits." [25] Blessed by the archpriests, the entire priesthood, and the Serbian council he became autocrat of the Serbs.[26] In a eulogy for Lazar embroidered on his silk burial shroud, the nun Jefimija (Despot Ugljesa's widow) speaks briefly of God's special favor for Prince Lazar:

O new martyr, Prince Lazar. You were educated from your youth in all of this earth's beauty. And the strong hand of the Lord designates you powerful and marvelous among his earthly lords. You ruled the land of your fathers and found pleasure in all that was good.[27]

While the establishment of Lazar as legitimate ruler in Serbia and martyr for the faith is the primary focus of the early cult writings, the Battle of Kosovo is still an important theme in each of these works no matter how brief or indirect the descriptions may be. The writers describe the battle very simply as a struggle between

the forces of good and evil Murad with his band of bloodthirsty beast and Lazar with his pious army of God-fearing Christians. The Turks are identified as Ishmaelites or Hagarites - an obvious and derisive reference from the Old Testament.[28] In *Zitije kneza Lazara* the Ishmaelites are "arrows released by God because of our sins," and Murad is "the beast who came like a roaring lion seeking to devour Christ's flock and to destroy our homeland." [29] In Patriarch Danilo's *Slovo o knezu Lazaru* Murad, the head of the Ishmaelites, is compared to Alexander of Macedonia and Xerxes of Persia. Having gathered a countless multitude of men from both eastern and western lands, Murad attacked "like the cruel lion." [30] To the writer of *Prolosko zitije kneza Lazara* Murad is the "evil, heathen Ishmaelite emir who, like a roaring lion, rose up and conquered many peoples." [31] Approaching Lazar's territory he went "mad with wild fury, closed his ears like the deaf adder, and lunged at them." [32]

Having clearly identified the enemy, the panegyrists are chiefly interested in recounting Lazar's death as he defends his Christian flock. One looks in vain for any careful description of the battle, but there is enough detail to fuel the controversy over the actual outcome of the struggle. In the earliest of the panegyric compositions there are confusing references to victory:

Armed with their prayers [those of St. Simeon and St. Sava] they went off to meet those evil ones and won a shining victory. They cast off and defeated that evil Amir and cut off his odious head along with those of a multitude of his followers. But, alas, it is impossible to speak in detail about that sad event which happened to us. For then the pious, Christ-loving Lazar and a multitude of his noble soldiers-opposed as they were because of their Christian faith were sent to Christ by those false thinkers. And the ruler [Christ] decorated them all with the martyr's wreath which shone more brightly than all the radiance of the sun.[33]

The argument has been made, rather categorically, that the idea of victory found here should never be interpreted as a real, strategic victory on the battlefield but only as a spiritual one.[34] Certainly the idea of martyrdom, which implies a spiritual victory for the individual who sacrifices himself for the faith, is central to these texts of Lazar's cult. Does it, however, preclude the possibility that a real, temporal victory over the Turks is also expressed in some of these works?

Radojicic believed so three decades ago and argued that the earliest texts clearly suggest a Serbian victory.[35] Djordje Trifunovic, on the other hand, argues that the attribute "shining" or "glorious" with which the author describes Lazar's victory is an obvious reference to the spiritual character of that victory.[36] Certainly many of the cult references to victory are expressions of Christian martyrdom. But in the *Prolosko zitije kneza Lazara* cited above and in other eulogistic works it would appear that the author addresses two kinds of victory. Lazar defeats Murad and wins a victory before he himself is killed. His death secures for him the martyr's wreath, which is a personal reward for his sacrifice. The wreath symbolizes the ultimate victory-eternal life.

Patriarch Danilo III, on the other hand, in his *Slovo o knezu Lazaru* appears to make no conclusion as to the final outcome of the battle:

Again the word [was given] to rise up in battle. Both sides became exhausted and the battle ended. A countless multitude of both were killed - I am speaking of Serbs and of the enemy. And these were lying on Kosovo Polje. The above mentioned Amorat received a mortal wound in the heart with a sword and necessarily gave up his soul. And the victorious and godly zealot, the new martyr, Prince Lazar, was cut down with a sword and met his blessed end.[37]

A careful description of the battle and its outcome was not the patriarch's main objective in this work. Nevertheless, it is interesting that this interpretation of the battle in which neither side apparently achieved the

victory still found expression decades later. An anonymous chronicle from Dubrovnik toward, the end of the fifteenth century includes the following notation:

1389. On June 15, the day of St. Vitus, a Tuesday, there was a battle between the Bosnians and the Great Turk. These Bosnians were Despot Lazar, king of Bosnia; Vuk Brankovic; and Vojvoda Vlatko Vukovic. There were great losses of both Turks and Bosnians, and only a few returned to their country. And Emperor Murad was killed as was the king of Bosnia. Because of the great losses neither the Turks nor the Bosnians gained the victory. And the battle was on Kosovo Polje.[38]

Similarly, the anonymous author of one of the earliest Serbian chronicles makes no conclusion concerning the outcome of the battle. Like most sources the focus of the brief account centers on the deaths of Murad and Lazar:

That one [Murad] marched on with his troops of unbelievers, and this one [Lazar] would not allow the destruction of godliness and the humiliation and the desecration of the relics and the cross. There was a battle between them, and in this battle the infidel tyrant fell by the sword in the middle of the battlefield together with many of his heathen soldiers; and one of his sons remained. And toward the end of this battle - I do not know what to say in truth about this, whether he [Lazar] was betrayed by one of his own or whether God's judgment was fulfilled in this - he [Bayezid] took him [Lazar] in his hands, and after much torture he himself cut off his venerable, God-fearing head.[39]

It is important to note that neither this chronicle nor any of the other early Serbian accounts of the battle attributes Murad's death to the hand of an assassin. Here, for example, the author's lack of particulars makes it impossible to know exactly how the Turkish leader was killed; but the general sense of the statement seems to indicate simply that Murad, like many of his soldiers, was killed in battle. The theme of assassination, which appeared in the contemporary accounts of the battle from Florence and Siena and was also an important theme in all of the fifteenth century Turkish sources for the battle, would eventually become a central element in the Serbian epic.

Perhaps the most interesting part of this passage from the Serbian chronicle is the author's allusion to the possibility that Lazar was betrayed in the battle by one of his own men. It is significant that this is the earliest reference to treason found in any of the Kosovo sources. Betrayal becomes a more important theme in later descriptions of the battle and a dominant theme in the Serbian epic.

Fascinating as these early cult writings are, it should be obvious that they do not hold the key to understanding many of the particulars of the Battle of Kosovo. That was not the objective of panegyric literature. Most of these authors wrote at a time when Serbia had already submitted to Bayezid's authority, and the reality of that situation had to be considered. The establishment of a cult served the interests of Lazar's son and successor, and the cult literature emphasized themes and ideas which encouraged a sense of hope for the future of Serbia and her people. Already with these texts we can discern some of those themes which would give shape to the cult of Kosovo: the glory of pre-Kosovo Serbia; the necessity of struggle against tyranny; and the essential link between the Kosovo ethic and Christianity, which was expressed most clearly in the heroic ideal of self-sacrifice for the faith and for Serbia. The eulogists interpreted Lazar's death as a victory in the religious sense of the word and used the New Testament symbol of the crown as the reward for the martyr's sacrifice.[40] Lazar as martyr for the faith and for Serbia would redeem his people with his sacrifice.

At the same time, it is far from clear that the writers considered the battle a great Turkish military victory. The Serbs had sustained substantial losses in the battle, and yet Murad and a multitude of Turks had been killed and Bayezid and his army had retreated to Edirne. In reality much of Serbia managed to survive with a certain autonomy for another seventy years. Of course, Lazar's eulogists could not be aware of the long period of transition which would follow the conflict on Kosovo. What they were very conscious of was the fact that the battle robbed Lazar's principality of its strength and leadership. The anonymous author of *Slovo o knezu*

Lazaru says that the death of Prince Lazar deprived Serbia of its defender; and when the "godless Ishmaelites" returned to Serbia again after a certain time, they succeeded in destroying the land and enslaving the people. The author interprets this later Turkish success as a second fulfillment of prophecy - the new Babylonian captivity.[41]

Such expression makes it clear that Lazar's death paralyzed Serbian society. Serbia lost its strongest territorial lord, who seemed to represent the last hope against the Turk. He may have trampled down the Turkish sultan at the Battle of Kosovo, but he paid for it with his life and left Serbia without its God-appointed shepherd. In the eyes of Lazar's contemporaries, this was the great tragedy of Kosovo.

In time the Battle of Kosovo came to be seen as the source of all the misfortune Serbia was to suffer during her long years of subjugation to the Turks. The theme of defeat at Kosovo was necessary for the companion themes of hope and resurrection. Lazar and the Serbian people gave their lives freely for the faith and for the land; and because of this martyrdom at the hands of the heathen enemy the Serbs knew that God would protect His people and return them one day from their captivity. Thus it was that any impression of a Serbian victory or even an indecisive outcome was lost in the emerging legendary tradition of Kosovo.

Part of that tradition would eventually include the theme of righteous struggle against tyranny. While the desire to avenge Kosovo and liberate Serbia from oppression finds some expression in the early cult sources, the main inspiration for this powerful motif lies in the evolving legend of the assassination of Murad at the Battle of Kosovo. It was that legend which would give shape to the central ethos of Kosovo.

It is surprising that the assassination of Murad is not recorded in any of the Serbian cult sources for the battle. Why the Serbian authors would fail to speak of the assassin if they knew of him is unclear, and yet it is possible that they believed that any reference to the assassin would distract from their portrayal of Lazar's own selfless and courageous martyrdom. Whatever the reason for this silence, it appears from later sources that the story of Murad's assassination was clearly known in Lazar's principality.

This first Serbian account of Murad's assassination is found in Constantine the Philosopher's *Life of Despot Stefan Lazarevic*.^[42] Constantine, a Bulgarian at the court of Lazar's son, Stefan Lazarevic, was largely responsible for the important literate culture that emerged during the time of his sovereign's rule. While his description of the Battle of Kosovo is similar to accounts found in the cult sources, it is his description of the assassination which is new:

And there was a battle on a place called Kosovo which happened as follows. Among the soldiers who were fighting in the front lines was one of very noble birth who was slandered before his lord by certain jealous ones and marked as disloyal. In order to demonstrate his loyalty as well as his bravery, this one found the favorable time and rushed to the great leader himself as though he were a deserter, and they opened the way to him. And when he was near, he dashed forward at once and thrust a sword into that very haughty and terrible autocrat, and then he himself fell there at their hands.

At first those around Lazar overcame and were victorious. But it was not yet the time of deliverance.

Then

the son of that emperor rallied again in that very battle and overcame. And God allowed this so that this great one [Lazar] and those with him might be wreathed with the crown of martyrdom. And what happened

after this? He attained the blessed end through decapitation. Before this, however, his dear comrades came

forward with many sad entreaties to die before him so that they would not see his death. This battle was in

the year 6897 [1389], the month of June, the fifteenth day.^[43]

While the assassin is not named here, some of the most essential themes in the evolving tale of the assassination are clearly expressed by Constantine. The assassin is a nobleman who has been slandered before Prince Lazar by other jealous noblemen and is under suspicion of disloyalty. In order to clear his name and to show his knightly courage, he flees to the sultan, feigns desertion, and stabs the Turkish leader to death. In time this story would be embellished with detail, new characters, and vivid description; but the core of the account is still that which is first found in this work by Constantine the Philosopher. It represents the heroic image in the developing ethos of Kosovo.

This heroic image in the Kosovo tradition, although not absent entirely in the early cult writings dedicated to Lazar, appeared to evolve after the cult of Lazar as martyr lost some of its initial strength and visibility. As Rade Mihaljevic observes, the cult of Lazar was increasingly localized in Serbia so that eventually only the monastery of Ravanica continued a regular commemoration of the holy prince.[44]

On the other hand, the more forceful image of the Kosovo hero survived the end of the Lazarevic dynasty and the eventual collapse of the Serbian Despotate. That image found its expression in the evolving oral tradition of the Serbian people. This epic expression of selective historical memory accompanied the Serbs as they migrated out of the territory of the Despotate to the central mountainous regions of old Serbia, Montenegro, Hercegovina, and Bosnia. In the decade following the fall of Constantinople to the Turks in 1453 more than three hundred thousand Serbs began this nomadic trek. And it was in these regions of the peninsula that the image of the Kosovo hero was cultivated and preserved. The figure of Murad's assassin found a home in the culture of exile, where his courageous deed could inspire respect and enthusiasm for continued resistance to the Turk. In this culture the patriarchal Serbian village the epic tradition developed its own periodization of history. Everything revolved around great events which were seen to be important turning points in the life of a nation. In this tradition, Kosovo became the crucial turning point in the popular consciousness and served as the dramatic watershed between independence and servitude.[45] Toward the end of the fifteenth century and in the early sixteenth century the records of several literate observers lend support to the conclusion that the assassination of Murad was already a central theme in the evolving oral history of the Serbian people.

The first writer to give the name of Murad's assassin was Konstantin Mihailovic from Ostrovica who wrote his *Memoirs of a Janissary or Turkish Chronicle* about 1497.[46] His description of the Battle of Kosovo was intended as an example of what happens when disloyalty rules the day. Lazar remains the most important figure in this description of the battle, but Mihailovic identifies "Milos Kobila"[47] as the assassin of Murad and gives careful consideration to the "disloyalty of evil people." His work reveals some of the legendary motifs about Kosovo in the very early stages of their development.

And then on Wednesday, the day of St. Vitus, there began a violent battle, and it lasted until Friday. Lords who supported Prince Lazar fought bravely, loyally, and honorably at his side; others, however, observed the battle looking through their fingers. Because of this disloyalty and dissension and the jealousies of evil and wicked people, the battle was lost on Friday at noon.

And here Milog Kobila, Prince Lazar's knight, killed Emperor Murad...[48]

Most significant here is Mihailovic's assertion that disloyalty had something to do with the Serbian defeat. The first hint of the possibility of treason on Kosovo had been raised decades earlier in the Serbian chronicle of Pec: "I do not know what to say in truth about this, whether he [Lazar] was betrayed by one of this own or whether God's judgement was fulfilled in this"[49] Within a century after Mihailovic the legendary tradition of Kosovo would place all of the blame for Serbia's defeat on the shoulders of one man: Vuk Brankovic.

Three decades after Konstantin Mihailovic's Chronicle, Benedikt Kuripesic wrote a travel description of the Balkan peninsula in which he also included a description of the Battle of Kosovo.[50] Its primary focus is the assassination of the Turkish sultan by one whom he identifies as Milos Kobilic. Kuripesic's account contains some of the essential themes of the Kosovo legend: the suggestion that other Serbian lords slandered Milos

before Prince Lazar, a last supper on the eve of the battle where Milos pledges his innocence to Prince Lazar and vows to avenge the slander, and the successful assassination of Sultan Murad by Milos in the sultan's tent.

Kuripesic is recording what he himself says he heard during his journey through the Balkans. Whatever his sources the account suggests that the popular tradition about Kosovo was well established in the early decades of the sixteenth century and was widely disseminated. The tale of Milos's courageous act in the Turkish camp had become such a central theme in the evolving myth of Kosovo that Kuripesic includes little else but the details of the assassination. And Kuripesic clearly delivered a message in his description. He interpreted the assassination as an example of true heroism:

Oh, Kobilovic, did not everyone think that you would get revenge on your displeased lord and your jealous ones with their misfortune and that you would surrender them into the arms of the enemy? But you got revenge in a Christian way and turned evil to good. You gave your life for your slanderers and saved your homeland from the enemy's hand.[51]

It has been suggested that this assassination theme may have found its way into the Serbian tradition from Turkish sources. Before the appearance of Mehmed Nesri's detailed description of Kosovo in 1512, there were a number of other Turkish writings in which some attention was given to the battle. Since the Turks were profoundly affected by the death of their sultan in battle, it is understandable that all of the early sources would report the circumstances of his death. Their version of the assassination, however, is rather different from the description we find in the evolving Serbian tradition.

Essentially two versions of the assassination exist in the early Ottoman sources. In one version the murder takes place after the battle is already over.[52] Murad was on the field of Kosovo awaiting the return of his army, when suddenly one of the Christians, covered in blood and apparently hidden among the enemy dead, got up, rushed to Murad, and stabbed him with a dagger. At that moment the sultan became a martyr for the faith as well.[53] In the other version, the Christian forces were scattered and put to flight after a countless number of deaths on both sides.[54] As Murad's soldiers pursued the enemy army, the sultan found himself completely alone on the field. Suddenly one of the Christian noblemen arose from among the corpses lying on the battlefield. He had promised himself as a sacrifice and approached Murad, who was sitting on his horse. Pretending that he wished to kiss the sultan's hand, he stabbed the sultan with a sharp dagger. The Ottoman begs assembled themselves after Murad's assassination, agreed to raise Bayezid to his father's throne, and executed Yakub, Bayezid's brother. Then they began the battle with the Christians once again, captured Lazar and his son, delivered them to Bayezid, and executed them upon Bayezid's orders. After this the Ottoman soldiers killed some of the unbelievers with the sword, and scattered those who remained. Finally the Turks returned to Edirne and placed Bayezid on the throne.

Despite the differences in the Ottoman sources, it seems more important to note what it is they have in common. And that is clearly the assassination of Murad, no matter where it is found in the narrative. Moreover, while they all consider the battle a Turkish victory, there is little attempt to magnify the significance of that success. Neither the earliest account by Ahmedi nor a description one hundred years after the battle makes any reference to plunder or other exploitation from the victory. Given the death of their leader and the decision to return immediately to Edirne, it was perhaps a pyrrhic victory at best.

It is only in 1512 that a highly detailed description of the Battle of Kosovo appeared among the Turks. This account by Mehmed Nesri, however, would become the major resource for subsequent descriptions of the battle, not only in the Ottoman world but in Western Europe as well. Nesri has been described as a doctrinaire writer whose primary purpose in his writing was to arouse his readers' religious fervor and military virtue.[55] He clearly intended to describe a significant Ottoman victory at Kosovo and thus exaggerated much of his narrative in order to magnify the success of the Turks. By eliminating most of the colorful embellishment, we can easily summarize its content.[56]

In Nesri's view Lazar was a vassal of the Turks who had to be punished because he turned against his lord. That punishment was the object of the Battle of Kosovo. In order to protect his land Lazar gathered a huge army, asked his knights for advice concerning the appropriate action against the Turks, and then sent an envoy to reconnoiter the Turkish army. The Turkish sultan consulted with his own men as well and was told that they could win if they succeeded in drawing the Christians out of their tight battle formation. Shortly thereafter, Lazar's envoy returned and informed the prince that they had little to worry about, since the Christian forces had three times as many men as the Turks. When Murad and his son Bayezid then surveyed the battlefield they discovered a Christian army of five hundred thousand, which was at least twice as large as their own forces. Amazed by the size of this enemy army Murad asked Bayezid and others if they should place a line of camels in front of their ranks. They all advised against that tactic, primarily because they believed that God would protect them and give them the victory. Moreover, if the camels became frightened by the enemy, they might stampede into the Turks' own ranks. The night before the battle while his soldiers slept, Murad prayed until dawn. He offered himself to God as a sacrifice for the faith and for the victory of his own men. The Christians, on the other hand, spent the evening in drunken revelry. When Lazar suggested that they consider a night attack on the unsuspecting Turks, everyone rejected the idea.

At dawn the next day the Turkish camp was alive with excitement as they placed themselves in battle formation. The Christians arranged themselves as well, although they were still drunk and talking nonsense. Lazar's army began the battle with a cannon volley which did not land close enough to do any damage. This was followed by an archery attack, but the arrows also fell short of the Turkish lines. The Turks responded with cannon and arrows, and then suddenly the Christians surged against the Turkish left flank. They completely defeated it and pushed their way to the rear of that flank. At the moment of possible defeat Bayezid rallied the Turkish right flank and began a counterattack against the Christians which ended in a victory for the Turks. The description of the assassination follows:

After the heathen was defeated Murad was perplexed because he still had been given no sign that he would die a martyr. But as he and some of his courtiers were surveying a mound of dead bodies, [there was on that field] a heathen known as Milod Kobila. This damned soul was an excellent and great knight.

At a feast given by Lazar he had said, "I will go and kill the Turkish lord." He had hidden on his body a steel dagger. Arriving with this goal in mind, he got into a fight with the gazis and was wounded. Then this

heathen, wounded and completely covered with blood, hid himself in that mound of dead bodies. When Gazi Murad happened upon this one, the heathen stumbled and came toward the Lord. When the guards tried to stop him, Gazi Murad instead declared, "Doubtlessly he has a wish. Let him come forward."

This damned one had the dagger hidden in his sleeve. He came forward pretending that he would kiss the

sultan's foot, but suddenly he stabbed him. When that which is fated to be happens, the eyes are blinded. He was destined to die here. At that hour his soul, a heavenly bird like an angel, soared to the heavens.

He

was a warrior for the faith and now he died a martyr's death. That heathen was immediately cut into pieces

on the spot. Over the sultan they quickly erected a tent.[57]

Then Lazar and his son were captured and executed, and Bayezid ordered the execution of his own brother, Yakub Celebi. The next morning Bayezid was placed on the throne.

Nesri's account had something in common with the popular Serbian tradition circulating in the central regions of the Balkan peninsula. Most importantly, Nesri was aware of the assassin's name and his vow on the eve of the battle to prove his loyalty to Lazar. Nesri's interpretation, of course, removes a bit of the glamour from Milos's act. Since Murad had promised himself as a sacrifice for the faith, Milos becomes a kind of agent of God's providence. Moreover, the act is accomplished after the battle is over and the Turks have won.

Regardless of such differences, however, it appears plausible that Nesri was familiar with the popular Serbian tradition of Kosovo and adopted some of it for his own work.[58]

The detailed information that is found in Nesri's description of the Battle of Kosovo has allowed military historians, particularly Petar Tomac and Gavro Skrivanic, to analyze the strategy, battle formation, tactics, and general course of the battle.[59] Such analysis, while based on Nesri, is also influenced by a general understanding of warfare in the late fourteenth century and by the fragments of evidence which exist from other battles at that time. As such their study is useful although unsubstantiated by much concrete evidence from the contemporary data.

Certainly the later sources, especially Nesri, describe a stunning Serbian defeat. As we have seen, however, that most crucial element in our understanding of the Battle of Kosovo cannot be supported by the handful of extant contemporary sources. And certainly the legacy of the seventy years which separate the battle from the final collapse of Serbia in 1459 confirms that the Battle of Kosovo was far more important in legend than it was in reality.

On the basis of available evidence it does appear that the Turks fled in haste to Edirne after the battle. Bayezid had to secure his authority in the East for several reasons: his father's death, his brother's murder, and the readiness of his neighbors to seize lands in Anatolia. Thus Princess Milica and her young sons continued to rule in Krusevac, and Vuk Brankovic governed his extensive territory from his center in Pristina. Milica did not, however, enjoy a long period of peace. Her territory suffered from internal disturbances, an ever-present threat from Hungary, and further Turkish incursions. In October 1389, Dubrovnik offered Milica and her family asylum if things became unbearable in her principality. The Hungarians attacked in November 1389, and occupied Borat and Cestin; and although they returned home soon of ter, their threat remained. Finally, when the Turks began to increase their pressure on Milica's eastern border, the princess agreed to pay tribute to Bayezid and, sometime in 1390, gave him her last daughter, Olivera.

Vuk Brankovic continued to defend his territory against the Turks and, like Milica, was guaranteed refuge in Dubrovnik. In January 1392, he was forced to surrender Skoplje to Bayezid and to pay tribute to him. These agreements to pay tribute and to supply troops when needed, however, did not symbolize total conquest by the Turks. By paying tribute the Balkan states temporarily preserved their existence. They enjoyed autonomy, were protected from extensive plunder by the Turks, and continued to live according to their own traditions and religion. This policy allowed the Ottoman state time, to consolidate its authority, to advance into new territories, and to prepare carefully for the final conquest of each of its vassal states.

In 1402 Lazar's successor, Stefan Lazarevic, accompanied Bayezid in an attack on Tamerlane, who had reached the eastern borders of the Ottoman state in Anatolia. The Ottoman army was defeated in a battle at Angora on 28 July 1402, and Bayezid was captured. Stefan managed to escape with his army and stopped in Constantinople sometime in August. There he received the title of despot from John VII Paleologus, Manuel II's co-ruler in what little remained of the Byzantine Empire. Stefan returned to his despotate, recognized the authority of Sigismund of Hungary, and built his new capital in Belgrade, which was given to him by Sigismund.

Under Stefan Lazarevic's rule, the process of reunification of Serbian lands began. Stefan received Vuk Brankovic's territory from the Turks in 1397, which precipitated a period of enmity between the Brankovici and the Lazarevici that was not completely settled until 1413 when peace was made between Stefan and his cousin Djuradj. In 1421 when the last Balsic, Balsa III, died, the land of Zeta was bequeathed to Stefan. Venice did not recognize Stefan's right to this land, and a war began between them which lasted until an agreement was made in August 1423. Stefan retained control over the internal territory of Zeta and the coastal cities of Budva, Bar, and Drivast.

The first decades of the fifteenth century were a period of relative prosperity in Stefan's despotate. Many new monasteries and churches were built in the northernmost lands, which now represented the core of the Serbian state; and a new period of literary and cultural activity flourished. Stefan was accepted as a strong, central leader, and the separatism among individual lords was finally ended.

Stefan, who was childless, was succeeded upon his death in 1427 by Djuradj Brankovic. By an agreement with Hungary, which recognized Djuradj's right to the succession, Belgrade was returned to the Hungarians. Thereafter, Djuradj built the strong fortress of Smederevo on the banks of the Danube west of the mouth of the Morava. In 1439 the Turks conquered Smederevo; and almost all of Serbia with the exception of the area around Novo Brdo and the territory of Zeta fell into Turkish hands. In 1443, however, Djuradj joined the Hungarian-Polish king, Vladislav Jagiellon, and John Hunyadi in a crusade against the Turks. Their successes forced the Turks to restore Djuradj's authority over the lands of the despotate (August 1444). But that was the last reprieve. The situation began to decline again, especially after the fall of Constantinople in 1453. In 1455 the southern areas of Serbia with the important mining centers of Novo Brdo and Trepca were taken, and on 20 June 1459 Smederevo itself fell. Seventy years after its legendary battle on the field of Kosovo, Serbia had succumbed to the Turks.

Footnotes

1. Cf., for example, Lord Kinross, *The Ottoman Centuries* (New York, 1977), pp. 41-42.
2. Ljubomir Stojanovic, "Start srpski rodoslovi i letopisi," *Zbornik za istoriju, jezik, i knjilemost srpskog naroda*, XVI (1927): 214.
3. Stojanovic, "Start srpski rodoslovi," p. 215.
4. Stojanovic, "Start srpski rodoslovi," p. 215.
5. Cf. Gavro Skrivanid, *Kosovska bitka* (Cetinje, 1956), pp. 10-17.
6. Kosovo is a plain, extending generally SSE-NNW. It is approximately eighty-four kilometers long and fourteen kilometers wide and has an average elevation of 530 meters. Concerning Kosovo's geography, see G. Skrivanic, *Kosovska bitka*, pp. 53-54; Emil Cergov, *Rimljani na Kosovu i Metohiji* (Belgrade, 1969), p.13; "Amselfeld," *Der Grosse Brockhaus*, I (1928): 411.
7. Dimitri Obolensky, *The Byzantine Commonwealth* (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1971), pp. 21-22.
8. See K. Jirecek, "Trgovadki putevi i rudnici Srbije i Bosne a srednjen vijeku," *Zbornik Konstantina Jireceka*, I (Belgrade, 1959), pp. 275-85, 300-3.
9. See M. Braun, "Kosovo: Die Schlacht auf dem Amselfelde in geschichtlicher and epischer Oberlieferung," *Slavisch-Baltische Quellen and Forschungen*, VIII (Leipzig, 1937), pp. 9-10. Letter found in Lucius, *De regno Dalmatiae et Croatiae*, V (Vienna, 1758), p. 248.
10. V. V. Makusev, "Prilozi k srpsko j istori j XI V i XV veka," *Glasnik srpskog ucenog drustva*, XXXII (1871) 176.
11. S. Ljubic, *Monumenta spectantia historiam slavorum meridionaliurn*, Vol. IV: *Listine o odnogajih izmedju juffnoga Slavenstva i mletadke republike* (Zagreb, 1874), pp. 269-70.

12. R.J. Leonertz, *Demetrius Cydones Correspondance*, II (Citta del Vaticano, 1960), no. 396, pp. 350-51; no. 398, pp. 352-53. See the discussion by S. Cirkovic, "Dmitrije Kidon o kosovskom boju," *Zbornik radova vizantoloskog institute*, XIII (1971) 213-19.
13. *Songe du vieil Pelerin*, text found in Fonds Francais, Bibliotheque Nationale, Paris, N. 22.542. And *Epistre lamentable et consolatoire*, text found in *Chroniques de Froissart*, edited by Kervyn de Lettenhove, XVI (Brussels, 1872), p. 510. Mezieres' sources are discussed by M. Dinid, "Dva savremenika o boju na Kosovu," *Glas srpske kraljevske akademije*, CLXXXII (1940) 133-48.
14. *Cronica Volgare di Anonimo Fiorentino dall' anno 1385 al 1409*, Vol. XVII, Fasc. 152 of *Rerum Italicarum Scriptores*, edited by L.A. Muratori (Citta di Castello, 1917), pp. 77-79.
15. Ruina Damasci text included in Dinic, "Dva savremenika," pp. 146-47.
16. *Vida y hazanas del Gran Tamorlan con la description de las Tierras de su Imperio y senorio escrita por Ruy Gonzales de Oavijo, camerero del muy alto y podereso senior Don Enrique Tercero Deste Nombri Rey de Castilla y de Leon. Con un itinerario de to sucedido en la embajada que por dicho senior rey hizo aldicho principe Ilamado por otro nombre Tamurbec, ano del nacimiento de mil y quatrocientos y tres*. See the English translation of de Clavijo's work: Clements R. Markham (trans.), *Narrative of the Embassy of Ruy Gonzales de Clavijo to the Court of Timour at Samarcand, A.D. 1403-1406* (London: Printed for the Hakluyt Society, 1859).
17. In approximate chronological order the early Serbian sources for Kosovo includes
- a. *Prolosko zitije kneza Lazara* (Anonymous), in Dj. Radojicid, "Pohvala knezu Lazaru sa stihovima," *Istorijski casopis*, V (1955):251-53.
 - b. *Slovo o knezu Lazaru* (Patriarch Danilo III), in V. Corovic, "Siluan i Danilo II, srpski pisci XIV-XV veka," *Glas srpske kraljevske akademije*, CXXXVI (1929):83-103.
 - c. *Zitije kneza Lazara* (Anonymous), in S. Novakovic, "Nesto o knezu Lazaru," *Glasnik srpskog uffenog druftva*, XXI (1867) 159-64.
 - d. *Slovo o knezu Lazaru* (Anonymous), in A. Vukomanovic, "O knezu Lazaru," *Glasnik drustva srbske slovesnosti* XI (1859) 108-18.
 - e. *Pohvala knezu Lazaru* (Jefimija), in L. Mirkovic, "Monahinja Jefimija," *Hrigcanski zivot*, I (9-10) (1922):539-40.
 - f. *Sluzba knezu Lazaru* (Anonymous), in *Srblijak*, II (Belgrade, 1970), pp. 143-99.
 - g. *Pohvalno slovo knezu Lazaru* (Anonymous), in Dj. Danidid, "Pohvala knezu Lazaru," *Glasnik drustva srbske slovesnosti* XIII (1861):358-68.
 - h. *Natpis na mramornom stubu na Kosovu* (Anonymous or Stefan Lazarevic), in Dj. Sp. Radojicid, "Svetovna pohvala knezu Lazaru i kosovskom junacima," *Juffnoslovenski filolog*, XX (1953-1954) 140-41.
 - i. *Vrse mishni knezu Lazaru* (Andonius Raphael of Lepanto), in L. j. Stojanovic, "Stars srpski hrisovul ji, akti, biograf i je, letopisi, tipici, pomenici, zapisi, i drugs," *Spomenik*, III (1890), pp. 81-88. Corrections made by V.V. Kachanovskii, *Istoriia Serbii s' poloviny XIV do kontsa XV v.* (Kiev, 1899), pp. 349-59.

These works received their most scholarly analysis as literary works in a study by Djordje Trifunovic: *Srpski srednjovekovni spisi o knezu Lazaru i Kosovskom boju* (Krutevac, 1968).

18. See A. F. Gil'ferding', *Bosniia, Gersegovina i Staraia Serbiia* (St. Petersburg, 1859), p. 277; V.V. Kachanovskii, *Istoriia Serbii* pp. 38-41; Ruvarac, *O knezu Lazaru* (Novi Sad, 1888), pp. 7-8; and N. Novosad, "Sv. Lazar' kniaz' serbskii," *Zhurnal Moskovskoi patriarii* VII (1964):67-70.

19. In his work, *New Testament Interpretation through Rhetorical Criticism*, Matthew Hodgson discusses the distinctive rhetoric of religion. "Absolute demands," he argues, "deliberate rejection of worldly reason, sometimes paradoxes or even obscurity, become a persuasive factor in the enunciation of a new religious message." This applies as well to the rhetoric of the Kosovo hagiographic literature. Cf. Hodgson, *New Testament Interpretation through Rhetorical Criticism*. (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1984), p. 6.

20. Text as published in Corovid, "Siluan i Danilo II," pp. 89-90. Cf. Trifunovic, *Srpski srednjovekovni* pp. 71-72.

21. Text as found in Danicic, "Pohvala knezu Lazar," pp. 358-68. See Trifunovic, *Srpski srednjovekovni splsi* pp. 254-58.

22. Danicic, "Pohvala knezu Lazaru," p. 367.

23. Danicic, "Pohvala knezu Lazaru," p. 360.

24. The German scholar Frank Kampfer argues that the cult writings, taken as a whole, represent "the intellectual inventory of Serbian society after Kosovo." Cf. Kampfer, "Podetak kulta kneza Lazara," *O knezu Lazaru* (Belgrade, 1977), p. 266. Kampfer suggests that the identity between land and dynasty in Serbia had to be eliminated. The society of Lazar's principality knew that their land was not the same territory as Nemanjic Serbia. To tie Lazar to the Nemanjidi would establish a sense of continuity in Serbian history. If Serbia continued beyond the death of Dusan, then it could continue beyond the tragedy of Kosovo. Cf. Kampfer, pp. 265-69.

25. Stojan Novakovic, "Nesto o knezu Lazaru," p. 159.

26. Novakovic, "Nesto o knezu Lazaru," pp. 159-60.

27. According to the edition of the text published by L. Mirkovic, "Monahinja Jefimija," p. 539. Cf. the contemporary Serbian translation in Dj. Sp. Radojicidid, *Antologija stare srpske knjilevnost* (Belgrade, 1960), pp. 97-98. See the entire study by L. Mirkovic: "Monahinja Jefimija," *Hriscanski zivot*, I, nos. 7-8, 9-10, 11-12 (1922) 452-59, 529-43, 632-43.

28. The terms come, of course, from Hagar, Abraham's slave concubine, and Ishmael, her son. "And the angel of the Lord said unto her, Behold, thou art with child, and shalt bear a son and shall call his name Ishmael; because the Lord hath heard thy affliction./ And he will be a wild man: his hand will be against every man, and every man's hand against him: and he shall dwell in the presence of all his brethren." Genesis 16:11-12.

29. Novakovic, "Nesto o knezu Lazaru," p. 162.

30. Corovic, "Siluan i Danilo II," p. 88.

31. Radojicidic, "Pohvala knezu Lazaru sa stihovima," p. 251.

32. Radojdic, "Pohvala knezu Lazaru," p. 251. Cf. Psalms 58:4. "Their poison is like the poison of a serpent: they are like the deaf adder that stoppeth her ear."
33. Radojdic, "Pohvala knezu Lazaru sa stihovima," p. 252.
34. See Trifunovic, *Srpski srednjovekovni spisi* p. 35.
35. Radojdic, "Pohvala knezu Lazaru sa stihovima," p.248.
36. Trifunovic, *Srpski srednjovekovni spisi* p.366.
37. Corovic, "Siluan i Danilo II," p. 94. The text says that Lazar was "cut down with a sword in the lanita." While it is difficult to give the precise meaning of the word "lanita," Trifunovic says that most agree that it is a term for the lower part of the head, perhaps the face or jaw. Trifunovic, *Srpski srednjovekovni spisi* pp. 52-53.
38. *Annales Ragusini Anonymi* Vol. XIV of *Monumenta spectantia historiam slavorum meridionallum* (Zagreb, 1883), p. 48. In spite of the apparent confusion concerning the identity of Prince Lazar, it is interesting that some one hundred years after the Battle of Kosovo one can find such a straightforward interpretation of the battle as an indecisive venture.
39. Known as the chronicle of Pec (Pecki letopis), its actual title is *Zitja i nadel'stva sr'bskhy' gospod; kol po kim' koliko car'stvova* (The lives and reigns of the Serbian lords: who ruled after whom and for how long). Stojanovic, "Stars srpski hrisovulji," pp. 93-97.
40. New Testament literature is full of references to the crown of righteousness as the Christian's ultimate reward. The Apostle Paul wrote: "For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day, and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing." 2 Timothy 4:6-8
41. Vukomanovic, "O knezu Lazaru," p. 112.
42. *Zitje i zizn' pris'nopom'nimaago, slovustaago, blagoc'stivaago gospodina despota Stefana*. Text is according to a manuscript from the second half of the fifteenth century, published in 1875 by V. Jagid, "Konstantin Filosof i njegov Zivot Stefana Lazarevida despota srpskoga," *Glasnik srpskog udenog drustva*, XLII (1875) 223-328; relevant material on Kosovo: pp. 260-61. Cf. J. Safarik, "Zivot Despota Stefan Lazarevica," *Glasnik srpskog udenog drustva*, XI (1870):363-428; M. Braun, *Lebensbeschreibung des Despoten Stefan Lazarevic von Konstantin dem Philosophen* (The Hague, 1956, see also St. Stanojevic, "Biografie Stefan Lazarevic's," *Archiv for slavische Philologie*, XVIII (1896):409-72; IU. Trifunov, "Zhivot' i deinost' na Konstantina Kostenetski," *Spisanie na Bulg. akademiia na naukite i iskustvata*, LXVI (1943), pp. 223-92.
43. V. Jagic, "Konstantin Filosof," pp. 260-61.
44. Mihaljcic, Lazar *Hrebeljanovic: Istorija, Kult, Predanje* (Belgrade, 1984), pp. 177-84.
45. Cf. Vaso Cubrilovid, *Istorija politidke misle a Srbiji, XIX veka* (Belgrade, 1958), pp. 38-39.
46. Konstantin Mihailovic iz Ostrovice, *Janicarove uspomene ili Turska hronika*, edited by Djordje Zivanovic (Belgrade, 1966), pp. 105-7.

47. For a discussion of the many names by which Milos Obilic appears in historical sources, see the interesting article, Dragutin Kostic, "Milos Kopilic-Kobilic-Obilic," *Revue Internationale des Etudes Balkaniques*; I-II (1934-1935) 232-54.
48. Konstantin Mihailovic iz Ostrovice, *Janicarove uspomene*, p. 105.
49. Stojanovid, "Stars srpski hrisovulji," p. 96.
50. Benedikt Kuripetic. *Putopis kroz Bosnu, Srbiju, Bugarsku i rumeliju 1530* (from the German by Djordje Pejanovic [Sarajevo, 1950]). It was first published in Serbian by Ceda Mijatovid in "Vidovdan" (Beograd, 1863). Cf. Alojz Smaus, "Kuripegidev izvestaj o kosovskom boju," *Prilozi za knjilevnost, jezik, istoriju i folklor*, XVIII (1938) 509-18.
51. Kuripesic, *Putopis*, p. 35.
52. See Miodrag Popovic, *Vidovdan i casni krst* (Belgrade, 1976), pp. 22-31. Popovic believes that Milos and the story of the assassination came from the Turkish tradition. The Serbs then gave him his noble attributes.
53. See sources by Alunedi (*Iskender-name*) from first decade of fifteenth century and by Sukrullah (*Behtet ul-tevarih*) from 1457. Ahmedi's text given in A. Olesnicki, "Turski izvori o Kosovskom boju," *Glasnik skopskog naucnog drustva*, XI V (1934), 6062; for Sukrullah, see Olesnicki, pp. 73-75.
54. See works by Oruc (*Tevarih I Al-i Osman*) from the middle of the fifteenth century and by an anonymous historian (*Tevarih I Al-i Osman*) from the first years of the sixteenth century. For Oruc, see Olesnicki, pp. 62-67 and for the anonymous historian, see Olesnicki, pp. 67-70.
55. See Olesnicki, "Turski izvori o Kosovskom boju," pp. 79-80.
56. Text in Gliga Elezovic, *Ogledalo sveta ili istorija Mehmeda Nesrije* (Belgrade, 1957), pp. 33 T7. Nevi's work was to become a standard reference for the Battle of Kosovo even into the twentieth century.
57. Elezovic, *Ogledalo sveta*, pp. 69-71.
58. Cf. Nenad Ljubinkovic, "Opts kosovskog boja kod turskog istoridara Mule Negrija i nage narodne pesme," *Glasnik Muzeja Kosova i Metohije* (Prittina, 1961), pp. 161-71.
59. See Petar Tomac, *Kosovska bitka*, (Belgrade, 1968); and Gavro Skrivanic, *Kosovska bitka* (Cetinje, 1956).

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