



University
of Victoria

Graduate Studies

Notice of the Final Oral Examination
for the Degree of Master of Arts

of

STEVAN BOZANICH

BA(University of British Columbia, 2013)

**“The Mobilisation of an Invented Tradition:
The Serbian Warrior Hajduk, 1804-1995”**

Department of History

Friday, July 14, 2017
10:00 A.M.
David Turpin Building
Room A136

Supervisory Committee:

Dr. Serhy Yekelchuk, Department of History, University of Victoria (Supervisor)
Dr. Perry Biddiscombe, Department of History, UVic (Member)

External Examiner:

Dr. Megan Swift, Department of Germanic & Slavic Studies, UVic

Chair of Oral Examination:

Dr. Steve Perlman, Department of Biology, UVic

Dr. David Capson, Dean, Faculty of Graduate Studies

Abstract

Based on Hobsbawm's notion of "invented traditions," this thesis argues that the Serbian warrior tradition, the *hajduk*, was formalised from the folk oral epic tradition into official state practices. This politicised the social sphere and led to drastic consequences. Using reports from the Balkan Wars of 1912-1913, military histories of Yugoslavia's Second World War, and case files from the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia (ICTY), this thesis shows how the *hajduk* epics were used to articulate war programs and formations, to construct perpetrator and victim identities, and to help encourage and justify the levels of violence during the Yugoslav wars of succession, 1991-1995. During Serbia's modernisation campaign in the nineteenth century, the epic *hajduk* traditions were codified by Serbian intellectuals and fashioned into national heroes. Serbia's army was also modernised, but the *hajduks* did not receive official recognition as a state actor. Instead, they became paramilitary units. In the Kingdom of Serbia's drive to "liberate" Kosovo, Methohija and Macedonia from the Ottoman Empire during the Balkan Wars, 1912-1913, the state employed *hajduk* bands as extermination units to cleanse the territories of undesirable populations. The *hajduk* tradition was mobilised as Nazi Germany invaded Yugoslavia in 1941, with both Draža Mihailović's *Četniks* and Tito's Partisans appropriating the historic guerrilla tradition. During the "re-traditionalisation" period under Slobodan Milošević in the 1980s, the invented *hajduk* tradition was again mobilised in the service of war. As Bosnian Muslim bodies were flung from the Mehmed Sokolović Bridge in Višegrad in 1992, the Serbian perpetrators dreamed of themselves as avenging *hajduks* thus justifying a modern ethnic cleansing.