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SLAVS, GOTHES AND IRANIANS: THE THEORY OF THE NORDIC *HERRENSCHICHT* AND CROAT RACIAL ORIGINS IN THE NDH

Sažetak: Ovaj članak analizira rasnu teoriju u Nezavisnoj Državi Hrvatskoj s obzirom na pitanje etnojezično-rasnog podrijetla ranosrednjovjekovnih Hrvata. Dok se u NDH raspravljalo o tome jesu li Prahrvati posebno Slaveni, Iranci ili Goti u etnojezičnom smislu, postojao je opći akademski i ideološki konsenzus da su, u rasnom smislu, bili gospodujući sloj nordijsko-arijskog podrijetla. U radu se ova tema analizira u širem europskom povijesnom i ideološkom kontekstu, uključujući i pitanje odnosa nacionalso-cijalističke rasne teorije prema Hrvatima i drugim slavenskim narodima.

Ključne riječi: Nordijska rasa, Arijci, Hrvati, rasna teorija, idealni tip, gospodujući sloj, plemstvo.

Introduction

The subject of race in the Independent State of Croatia (NDH) has in recent years received greater attention from both Croat and non-Croat historians, but most historians of the NDH still tend to downplay or even ignore the importance of this question. As a result, much of the historiographical analysis of Ustaša racial ideas and politics remains superficial, misleading and/or incomplete.⁷⁴⁴ In general, historians of the NDH have failed to properly examine the

⁷⁴⁴ For more on this subject see Nevenko Bartulin, *The Racial Idea in the Independent State of Croatia: Origins and Theory* (Leiden: Brill, 2014). The following two works also include a serious analysis of aspects of Ustaša race theory and racial politics: Višeslav Aralica, *Kmet, fiškal, hajduk: Konstrukcija identiteta Hrvata 1935.-1945.* (Zagreb: Naklada Ljevak, 2016) and Rory Yeomans (ed.), *The Utopia of Terror: Life and Death in Wartime Croatia* (Rochester NY: University of Rochester Press, 2015).

precise nature of Ustaša ideology because they have not applied the theoretical distinction between ethnic (or racial) and civic nationalism to this case. Consequently, there are still a large number of historians who argue, implicitly or explicitly, that the interwar Ustaše were some sort of generic nationalists who did not adhere to any particular ideology, while the Ustaša adoption of race laws in late April 1941 is explained as the result of a pragmatic policy of accommodation to German political and military power.⁷⁴⁵ Some conservative Croat historians, for their part, reject any suggestion that racial ideas formed part of interwar Ustaša ideology and have continued to maintain that the NDH's race laws were only adopted because of the 'pressure' exerted on the NDH by its dominant German ally.⁷⁴⁶ There is, however, ample evidence to show that ethnic-racial nationalism formed a key foundation of Ustaša ideology well before 1941.⁷⁴⁷

One of the clearest examples of the historiographical deficiency that exists in regard to the question of race in the NDH has been the inaccurate or superficial analysis of the well-known entry on 'Man in the Biological Sciences', published in the fourth volume of the *Croatian encyclopaedia* in 1942.⁷⁴⁸ This entry, which includes a detailed analysis of human evolution and racial anthropology, was written by the main expert who drafted the NDH's race laws, the Slovenian-born Croat biologist Boris Zarnik (1883–1945).⁷⁴⁹ This entry has often been used by a number of Croat historians to highlight the supposed 'anti-racism' – in the modern sense of the term – of Zarnik and the editors of the *Croatian encyclopaedia*, and even of the Ustaša

⁷⁴⁵ According to Mario Jareb, for example, Ustaša ideology was based on some type of non-racial 'national exclusivity' and not a 'racist viewpoint'. He admits, however, that article 11 of the 'Ustaša–Domobran Principles' (1933), which restricted political decision-making in an independent Croat state to those of Croat descent and blood, highlights that the Ustaša position toward ethnic minorities and foreigners was not based on 'democratic solutions'. But Jareb makes no attempt to explain his distinction between 'national exclusivity' and a 'racist viewpoint'. Mario Jareb, *Ustaško-domobranski pokret: Od nastanka do travnja 1941. godine* (Zagreb: Školska knjiga, 2006), 128–129.

⁷⁴⁶ Stjepan Razum and Tomislav Jonjić have even claimed that the NDH did not actually have race laws but only racial law decrees that had no real legitimacy (and therefore the NDH cannot be defined as a racial state). This baseless argument was recently demolished by the Croat historian Vladimir Geiger in his short article, "Dokon pop i jariće krsti" ili jesu li postojali rasni zakoni u NDH?, *Portal hrvatske historiografije*, 5 March 2016: <http://www.historiografija.hr/prikazi.php?id=236041>. Also see Nevenko Bartulin, 'The Question of the „Honorary Aryans” in the NDH', *Portal hrvatske historiografije*, 23 February 2018: <http://www.historiografija.hr/?p=8534>.

⁷⁴⁷ Nevenko Bartulin, 'Nezavisna Hrvatska Država Godišnjak 1934: Krv, rasa i rasna ljepota', *Portal hrvatske historiografije*, 8 July 2019: <http://www.historiografija.hr/?p=15595>.

⁷⁴⁸ Boris Zarnik, 'Čovjek: Čovjek u biološkim znanostima', *Hrvatska enciklopedija*, vol. 4. (Zagreb: Naklada hrvatskog izdavačkog bibliografskog zavoda, 1942), 335–366.

⁷⁴⁹ For more on Zarnik and the NDH's race laws, see Nevenko Bartulin, 'Boris Zarnik and his entry on race in the *Croatian encyclopaedia* (1942)', *Croatian Studies Review*, 12 (2016): 82–89.

government itself. This argument is based on the fact that Zarnik criticised the idea of ‘racism’, or what he also termed ‘race theory’, which he specifically defined as the belief in racial superiority. However, as the author of the present article has already highlighted, the proponents of this argument have overlooked the fact that Zarnik also made a clear distinction between racial anthropology and ‘racism’.⁷⁵⁰ His entry thus upheld the then widely accepted scientific tenet that human races were marked by distinct physical and mental traits and maintained that race was a key factor of nationhood (though certainly not the only one).⁷⁵¹ Zarnik’s explanation of this distinction was also completely in line with the arguments of leading German racial anthropologists in the Third Reich and even the official position of the National Socialist German Workers Party, a fact also entirely ignored by Croat historians.⁷⁵²

Historians have further ignored the fact that Zarnik’s entry included a summary of the important role played by the Nordic ruling class or, to use the common German term at the time, *Herrenschicht* in early medieval Slavic and Croatian history. Indeed, one of the key aspects of race theory in the NDH was the question of the ethnolinguistic-racial origins of the early medieval proto-Croats. While there was some debate in the NDH on whether the Old Croats were specifically Slavs, Iranians or Goths in an ethnolinguistic sense, there was a general academic and ideological consensus that they were, racially speaking, of Nordic-Aryan origin. This article will examine the role the narrative of a conquering Nordic ruling class played in shaping the heroic image of the ‘ideal Croat’ in the NDH. In order to show that this racial idea emerged in Croatia long before the establishment of the NDH, it is also necessary to discuss the historical development of this narrative type in and outside of Croatia during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. As George Mosse argued, one needs ‘tradition to activate thought or else it can not be activated’.⁷⁵³

The European Historical Context

During the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the Aryans came to occupy an important role in the fields of philology, history, ethnology and racial anthropology as a ‘char-

⁷⁵⁰ Ibid, pp. 89-98.

⁷⁵¹ ‘[Just] as the races are differentiated according to their physical characteristics, they are, naturally, also differentiated by their mental qualities; the manner of mental reactivity is different, [and] people of different races will react diversely under the same conditions, which is manifested in their different temperaments and different mental styles. The portion of individual races, which cooperate in the composition of a particular people, will therefore [co-]determine the quality of the spiritual goods of that people and their development. Naturally, the racial composition of a people is only one of the factors alongside a series of others...’ Zarnik, ‘Čovjek’, 366.

⁷⁵² Bartulin, ‘Boris Zarnik and his entry on race in the *Croatian encyclopaedia*’, 95-98.

⁷⁵³ George L. Mosse, *Nazism: A Historical and Comparative Analysis of National Socialism* (New Brunswick: Transaction Books, 1978), 101.

acter or narrative type.⁷⁵⁴ Although the existence of a linguistic relationship between Greek, Latin and Sanskrit had been highlighted by scholars before the famous address to the Royal Asiatic Society on the subject by Sir William Jones (1746–1794) in 1786,⁷⁵⁵ it was not until the early nineteenth century that a general term was found to classify the peoples which spoke the particular family of languages that dominated the Eurasian land mass stretching from Iceland to India. This group of peoples became known as the ‘Aryans’ or ‘Indo-Europeans’, or in the German-speaking world, ‘Indo-Germanics’.⁷⁵⁶ Appearing as a common narrative type in nineteenth-century European historiographical works and ideological (nationalist) writings, the Aryans were portrayed as a heroic and patriarchal, aristocratic warrior elite that had founded the great states and civilisations of Europe and central Asia in antiquity and the early Middle Ages. As Felix Wiedemann summarises, ‘the Aryans played a twofold role in history: they composed a *Herrenschicht* (a ruling class or caste) and appeared everywhere as *Kulturgründer* and *Staatengründer* (founders of civilizations and states).’⁷⁵⁷

Although scholars in the second half of the nineteenth century, such as Friedrich Max Müller (1823-1900), would clarify that ‘Aryan’ was primarily a linguistic term,⁷⁵⁸ it was also frequently used, from an early period, as a marker of ethnic, racial and/or cultural identification. It was employed in this fashion not only by historians and anthropologists, but also, at times, by philologists as well.⁷⁵⁹ As Müller himself wrote in 1871, ‘we are by nature Aryan, Indo-European, not Semitic: our spiritual kith and kin are to be found in India, Persia, Greece, Italy, Germany; not in Mesopotamia, Egypt, or Palestine.’⁷⁶⁰ The link made between Sanskrit, Old Iranian and the Germanic, Romanic and Slavic languages enabled European scholars to seek the real cradle of their civilisation in India or Iran rather than the ‘Semitic’ Middle East.⁷⁶¹ It further enabled both scholars and popular writers to increasingly employ the term ‘Ary-

⁷⁵⁴ Felix Wiedemann, ‘The Aryans: Ideology and Historiographical Narrative Types in the Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries’, in Helen Roche and Kyriakos Demetriou (eds.), *Brill’s Companion to the Classics, Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany* (Leiden: Brill, 2018), 32.

⁷⁵⁵ Helmuth von Glasenapp, *Brahma und Buddha: Die Religionen Indiens in ihrer geschichtlichen Entwicklung* (Berlin: Deutsche Buch-Gemeinschaft, 1926), 35.

⁷⁵⁶ Wiedemann, ‘The Aryans’, 35-36.

⁷⁵⁷ Cited in *ibid.*, 32.

⁷⁵⁸ Christopher M. Hutton, *Race and the Third Reich: Linguistics, Racial Anthropology and Genetics in the Dialectic of Volk* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2005), 89.

⁷⁵⁹ Wiedemann, ‘The Aryans’, 38.

⁷⁶⁰ Cited in Hutton, *Race and the Third Reich*, 88.

⁷⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 87-88 and Glasenapp, *Brahma und Buddha*, 5-14.

an' (from the Indo-Iranian *ārya*, meaning 'noble' or 'faithful') for the Indo-Europeans as this name could be traced to primary sources in Sanskrit and Old Iranian.⁷⁶²

By the turn of the twentieth century most linguists and historians were using the term 'Aryan' in the narrow sense of referring only to the Indo-Iranian branch of the Indo-European family of languages.⁷⁶³ But the broader sense of the word, namely, the use of 'Aryan' as an ethnic and/or racial term for the speakers of Indo-European languages did not lose its appeal among both scholarly and popular writers.⁷⁶⁴ This broader usage had already been popularised by the French diplomat and racial theorist Joseph Arthur, Comte de Gobineau (1816–1882). Fascinated by Persian history, Gobineau argued that the first homeland of the 'white race' was located 'in the heights of Asia' and from there it expanded into different branches, which settled either in Europe, or in other parts of central Asia, namely in India and Persia.⁷⁶⁵ As Gobineau explained, the name 'Iran' was synonymous with the term 'Aryan', which itself 'was the name common to all the white races at their origin.'⁷⁶⁶ For Gobineau, the Aryans (who formed the main branch of the white race) were the most beautiful type, marked by the specifically northern European or Germanic features that would come to be associated with the Nordic race: great height, fair skin, blond hair and blue eyes.⁷⁶⁷

The dolichocephalic or 'long Germanic skull' would also become an important identifying mark of the Aryans and this association was further strengthened by the fact that European scholars, particularly in Germany, increasingly sought the 'original homeland' (or *Urheimat*) of the Aryans in northern Europe rather than central Asia.⁷⁶⁸ But as an anthropological term 'Aryan' was increasingly being abandoned by scholars in favour of 'Nordic'. It had become clear by the end of the nineteenth century that language was actually a weak indicator of racial origins. For example, the idea of a shared Anglo-Indian Aryan identity based on linguistic affinity, originally favoured by a number of British scholars and writers, was replaced by the firm belief that Europeans could not possibly share a common racial origin with dark-skinned Indians.⁷⁶⁹ As the French anthropologist Joseph Deniker (1852–1918) pointed out, modern

⁷⁶² Wiedemann, 'The Aryans', 36 and Glasenapp, *Brahma und Buddha*, 37.

⁷⁶³ Wiedemann, 'The Aryans', 37.

⁷⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

⁷⁶⁵ J. A. de Gobineau, *The World of the Persians*. John Gifford (ed.) (Genève: Editions Minerva, S. A., 1971), 6. This work was first published in 1869 as 'History of the Persians'.

⁷⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷⁶⁷ Arthur Graf Gobineau, *Der arische Mensch in Weltgeschichte und Weltkultur: Herkunft, Weg und Einfluss*. J. P. Horn (ed.) (Niels Kampmann Verlag: Leipzig, 1935), 41–42.

⁷⁶⁸ Wiedemann, 'The Aryans', 38–39.

⁷⁶⁹ Hutton, *Race and the Third Reich*, 84–86.

philology showed ‘that we can no longer speak to-day of an “Aryan race”, but solely of a *family of Aryan languages*, and perhaps of a primitive *Aryan civilisation*’, and he used the term ‘Nordic’ to refer to the race characterised by tallness, fair hair and a dolichocephalic skull.⁷⁷⁰

In this case, however, the distinction between linguistic and anthropological classifications should not be exaggerated. As Wiedemann argues, ‘this was usually just a case of old wine in new bottles, a substitution without a change of concept: the Germanic skull, which had previously served as a key feature of the original Aryans, was now put forth as a key feature of the so-called Nordic type or race.’⁷⁷¹ Furthermore, whether as ‘Aryans’ or ‘Nordics’, the Indo-Europeans provided historians, classicists and linguists with a character or narrative type that could ‘explain cultural and historical change, and the so-called rise and fall of civilizations and empires, in terms of human migrations and invasions’, with the aristocratic Aryans playing the role of the ‘*Herrenschicht* par excellence.’⁷⁷² Most scholars were cautious not to assign all historical greatness exclusively to the Aryans but their image of these heroic warriors and ‘founders of culture’ proved to have a strong influence on nationalist ideologies in Europe.⁷⁷³ This image continued to play a very important role in both ideological and scholarly works in the Third Reich, in which the Nordic race played the same role of ‘virile invaders and conquerors’ as the Aryans had done in the nineteenth century.⁷⁷⁴

The Croatian Historical Context

The scholarly and popular interest in distant Aryan origins also had a significant impact on the development of Pan-Slavic Croat nationalism in the Romantic period. The Pan-Slavic idea reflected the growth of national movements in the nineteenth century that were founded on the notion of linguistic affinity.⁷⁷⁵ Under the influence of Herderian cultural ideas, the European peoples were divided into the three main linguistic ‘races’ of Germanic, Latin and Slavic, types characterised by a distinct spirit or soul, which found its ultimate expression in the mother tongue. For much of the nineteenth century, the term ‘race’ did not therefore refer only to physical characteristics but was used as a synonym for an ethnolinguistic group: ‘The *Homo Europeus* [white race] about which the eighteenth-century anthropologists wrote would

⁷⁷⁰ Joseph Deniker, *The Races of Man: An Outline of Anthropology and Ethnography*. Havelock Ellis (ed.) (London: Walter Scott, Limited, 1900), 318-319, 325, 329.

⁷⁷¹ Wiedemann, ‘The Aryans’, 39.

⁷⁷² *Ibid.*, 41.

⁷⁷³ *Ibid.*, 41-42.

⁷⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 48. Also see Hutton, *Race and the Third Reich*, 104-105.

⁷⁷⁵ Hutton, *Race and the Third Reich*, 84-87.

become the German, Slavic, or French race.⁷⁷⁶ Pan-Slavic Croat nationalists, beginning with the Illyrian movement in the 1830s, viewed their people as both (South) Slavs and Indo-Europeans in terms of their 'race'.

Croat Pan-Slavism had emerged as a nationalist reaction to the attempts of the Hungarian parliament to introduce Magyar as the official language of the Hungarian kingdom, including the associated Kingdom of Croatia-Slavonia, in the late eighteenth century, and the later attempts of the Hungarian government to centralise the Hungarian kingdom, which would have significantly reduced Croatia's traditional autonomy or historic state right. In response to Hungarian claims of ethnic superiority, the Illyrian movement emphasised 'the value of Illyrian-Croat culture and tradition and affiliation to the European civilisational circle'.⁷⁷⁷ In contrast to the linguistically Indo-European Slavs, the Magyars were defined by the Illyrian movement as the descendants of Asiatic nomads and racial kinfolk of the Mongols.⁷⁷⁸ The ideological heir of Illyrian Pan-Slavism, the Yugoslavist National Party, also regarded the Croats as both Slavs and Aryans in a racial sense. The historian Natko Nodilo (1834–1912) stressed his people's Aryan heritage in order to strengthen the campaign for Croat/Slav linguistic equality with the Italian-speaking elites of the towns in Austrian-ruled Dalmatia. In the political program of the Dalmatian National Party from 1862, Nodilo argued that 'the Dalmatian Slavs, noble according to their pure Indo-European origin, from which all the great civilised nations have emerged... take in hand the unwritten right of the free development of their nationality'.⁷⁷⁹

While the Illyrian and Yugoslavist movements had constructed an Aryan and Slavic racial and ethnolinguistic lineage for the Croats, marking them off from the non-Aryan Hungarians (and non-Slavic Italians and Austrian-Germans), the question of the Croats' relationship to other South Slavs, particularly the Serbs, remained unclear. The Illyrian movement had already failed in its aim to create a South Slav nation since the Serb cultural elite had thoroughly rejected the idea.⁷⁸⁰ It was left to the Party of Right led by Ante Starčević (1823–1896), an opponent

⁷⁷⁶ George L. Mosse, *Toward the Final Solution: A History of European Racism* (London: J. M. Dent & Sons Ltd., 1978), 34. The French racial anthropologist Georges Vacher de Lapouge (1854–1936) used the term 'Homo Europeus [Europaeus]' to refer specifically to the Nordic race. Deniker, *The Races of Man*, 329.

⁷⁷⁷ Arijana Kolak, 'Između Europe i Azije: Hrvati i Mađari u propagandnom ratu 1848./49.', *Povijesni prilozi*, 34, no. 34 (2008): 184.

⁷⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 185–186.

⁷⁷⁹ Cited in 'Program *Narodnog lista*: Program pristaša Narodne stranke u Dalmaciji (Zadar, 1862.),' in Tihomir Cipek and Stjepan Matković (eds.), *Programatski dokumenti hrvatskih političkih stranaka i skupina 1842. – 1914.* (Zagreb: Disput, 2006), 143.

⁷⁸⁰ Ivo Banac, *The National Question in Yugoslavia: Origins, History, Politics* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1984), 78–79.

of all forms of Pan-Slavism, to formulate an exclusively Croat idea of nationhood in the second half of the nineteenth century. He argued in favour of an independent state based on Croat historic state right and the national ideals of the French Revolution. According to Starčević, all the peoples that lived on the territory of the historic Kingdom of Croatia – encompassing the Triune Kingdom of Dalmatia-Croatia-Slavonia and Ottoman-ruled Bosnia and Herzegovina – were members of the same Croat civic or ‘political’ nation, including Catholic Croats, Orthodox Serbs and Bosnian Muslims. He thus believed that the unity of the Croat nation rested on mainly spiritual rather than biological grounds and argued that all nations were a mixture of ‘diverse blood.’⁷⁸¹ But Starčević also used the term *Slavoserb* (derived from the Latin words for ‘slave’) to denote those individuals and peoples that had a slave-like nature and were incapable of understanding the need for national freedom.⁷⁸² Although Starčević argued that the *Slavoserbs* could be found in all nations (including his own), he also defined them in racial terms; one of his categories of *Slavoserbs* was a people of ‘impure breed’ originally located in Thrace.⁷⁸³ Starčević identified this category with the Serbs – though he had also referred to them as ‘Orthodox Croats’ – and the nomadic population of the Balkans (i.e. the Vlachs).⁷⁸⁴

While Starčević had theoretically rejected the idea of blood purity, he nonetheless claimed that the Muslims, who formed the upper class of Ottoman-ruled Bosnia and Herzegovina, were the racially purest Croats. He considered them to be the descendants of the Bosnian Croat nobility that had converted to Islam in order to preserve its titles, lands and privileges.⁷⁸⁵ The decision of the Croat nobles to sacrifice their Christian faith in favour of their ‘lordship’ highlighted their high sense of aristocratic honour.⁷⁸⁶ This action further ensured that the Croat Muslims remained a closed upper caste, distinct from both Ottoman Turks and non-Muslim serfs, which meant they had retained ‘the purest Croat blood.’⁷⁸⁷ As Croat nobles, the Muslims were the descendants of a conquering people from the north (i.e. the land of White Croatia) that had, Starčević argued, succeeded in imposing their will and historic state right upon all the inhabitants of the western Balkans⁷⁸⁸ during the great ‘migration of peoples’ (*Völkerwan-*

⁷⁸¹ Ante Starčević, ‘Bi-li k slavstvu ili ka hrvatstvu? Dva razgovora’, in Josip Bratulić (ed.), *Djela Dra. Ante Starčevića: Znanstveno-političke razprave, 1894-1896 (III)* (Varaždin: Inačica, 1995): 39-40. This article was first published in 1867.

⁷⁸² Mirjana Gross, *Izorno pravaštvo: Ideologija, agitacija, pokret* (Zagreb: Golden Marketing, 2000), 18.

⁷⁸³ *Ibid.*, 249.

⁷⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 341.

⁷⁸⁵ Mario S. Spalatin, ‘The Croatian Nationalism of Ante Starčević, 1845-1871’, *Journal of Croatian Studies* 16 (1975): 55.

⁷⁸⁶ Gross, *Izorno pravaštvo*, 308.

⁷⁸⁷ Starčević, ‘Bi-li k slavstvu ili ka hrvatstvu?’, 40.

⁷⁸⁸ Gross, *Izorno pravaštvo*, 348.

derung). In contrast to the Yugoslavists, who had turned to philology to prove the pure Slavic racial origin of the Croats, Starčević employed the discipline of history to show the opposite. He thus used the tenth century account (later known as *De administrando imperio*) written by Emperor Constantine VII Porphyrogenitus and his officials to highlight that the Croats had a distinct origin from Serbs (and other Slavs).⁷⁸⁹ The Byzantine emperor had distinguished between two waves of migration to the Balkans: an earlier one consisting of Slavic tribes led by the (Turkic) Avars, and the somewhat later migration of the Croats, who defeated the Avars in battle and established their own state in Dalmatia and Pannonia.⁷⁹⁰

Starčević never actually defined the racial characteristics of an authentic Croat and his overall racial ideas were theoretically opposed to his concept of a civic Croat nation-state.⁷⁹¹ Starčević did, however, begin to unravel the confusion concerning the precise link between language and racial origins and he also outlined a separate Croat 'spiritual' identity. In other words, the Croats were not defined by their affiliation to some amorphous Slavic mass but by the ruling spirit of their conquering ancestors. But it was also clear that, in the age of nationalism and science, Croat nationalists required anthropological 'evidence' of the existence of a separate Croat people.⁷⁹² Although racial anthropology would confirm that all European nations were actually admixtures of several races, thereby potentially weakening the idea of national unity, it was also possible to argue that each nation possessed a 'core' racial component that provided the nation with a unique racial identity. Racial anthropology could also provide a negative sense of identity because it was able to classify and exclude foreign racial elements from the national body. The best example of this was the position of German *völkisch* nationalists toward German Jews. A traditional language-based nationalism would have accepted German Jews as members of the German *Volk* and Indo-Germanic family of peoples because their native tongue was German, but racial anthropologists furnished the argument that Jews (along with Gypsies) belonged largely to racially non-European groups.⁷⁹³ With regard to race theory in Croatia, it is important to note that Joseph Deniker's classification of the Dinaric race at the turn of the twentieth century would have a 'decisive' influence on racial discourses in central and eastern Europe.⁷⁹⁴ Deniker named this 'dark, brachycephalic, tall race' the 'Adri-

⁷⁸⁹ Spalatin, 'The Croatian Nationalism of Ante Starčević', 64-65.

⁷⁹⁰ Ibid and Branka Magaš, *Croatia Through History: The Making of a European State* (London: Saqi, 2007), 23-25.

⁷⁹¹ See Bartulin, *The Racial Idea in the Independent State of Croatia*, 38-42.

⁷⁹² Ibid, 42-43.

⁷⁹³ Hutton, *Race and Third Reich*, 22-23.

⁷⁹⁴ Christian Promitzer, 'The Body of the Other: „Racial Science” and Ethnic Minorities in the Balkans', *Jahrbücher für Geschichte und Kultur Südosteuropas*, vol. 5 (München: Slavica Verlagsbuchhandel, 2003), 27.

atic or Dinaric because its purest representatives are met with along the coast of the Northern Adriatic and especially in Bosnia, Dalmatia, and Croatia.⁷⁹⁵

Croat racial discourses in the early twentieth century would also stress the importance of the Nordic racial strain, derived from the original Croat ruling class. In an article on the origins of Croat folk music from 1896 the musicologist Franjo Ksaver Kuhač (1834–1911) argued that the Croats consisted of two main racial lineages or tribes: a brown-haired tribe descended from the first Slav migrants (who were subsequently Hellenised in the Balkans) and a blond-haired one descended from the ‘ruling tribe’ of Croats who migrated later from northern Europe.⁷⁹⁶ Although Kuhač did not use specific anthropological terms for these racial types, one could view them as more or less synonymous with the Nordic (blond hair) and Dinaric (brown hair) races.⁷⁹⁷ The first Croat scholar to study the question of Balkan racial anthropology in detail was the noted archaeologist Ćiro Truhelka (1865–1942), who argued, in an anonymous booklet from 1907, that Bosnia and Herzegovina were Croat lands on the basis of race, history and geography.⁷⁹⁸ A much larger percentage of Catholics and Muslims, for example, had fair hair and blue eyes, traits that characterised the pure Slavic race, while the Orthodox Serbs were largely the dark-skinned descendants of the Vlachs.⁷⁹⁹ Truhelka defined the Vlachs as a degenerate and sterile *Dauerrasse* (‘permanent race’) similar to the Jews and Armenians. Although he did not specifically name the racial type of the Catholics and Muslims, it is clear that Truhelka was speaking of a ‘Nordic-Dinaric’ racial admixture, because this type was characterised by fair pigmentation and a higher proportion of brachycephalic skulls and broad chests.⁸⁰⁰

Truhelka’s race theory was further developed by the Croat lawyer and amateur sociologist Ivo Pilar (1874–1933) in his detailed study (written in German) of the ‘South Slav Question’ from 1918.⁸⁰¹ Pilar argued that the Croats had a stronger Nordic-Aryan racial strain than the Serbs, who had largely interbred with the Romanic-Gypsy Vlachs. The Old Croats had been a ‘Slavic-Aryan people of only a slightly tarnished Aryan type: tall, light [fair], dolichocephal-

⁷⁹⁵ Deniker, *The Races of Man*, 333.

⁷⁹⁶ Fr. Š. Kuhač, *Poriello i umieće hrvatskih pučkih pjevača i glazbara* (Zagreb: Knjigotiskara i litografija C. Albrecht, 1896), 9–10.

⁷⁹⁷ Kuhač was also cautious to differentiate the brown-haired Croats from the Serbs, who were denoted as generally having ‘swarthier’ hair and complexion. *Ibid.*, 11.

⁷⁹⁸ [Ćiro Truhelka], *Hrvatska Bosna: (Mi i „oni tamo”)* (Sarajevo: Tiskara Vogler i drugovi, 1907).

⁷⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 13–20.

⁸⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 14–15, 27–28.

⁸⁰¹ L. von Südland [Ivo Pilar], *Die südslawische Frage und der Weltkrieg: Übersichtliche Darstellung des Gesamt-Problems* (Vienna: Manz Verlag, 1918).

ic.⁸⁰² The Croat *Adelsrasse* ('noble race') had proven itself, alone among the South Slavs, as an 'unbreakable' race, which even at the moment of death prided itself on its privileges, noble land and chivalry.⁸⁰³ Pilar cited the work of the Anglo-German racial philosopher Houston Stewart Chamberlain (1855–1927), who had argued that the Old Slavs belonged, along with the Germanic and Celtic peoples, to the 'Germanic race'.⁸⁰⁴ Pilar noted that, 'in Chamberlain's sense', he understood Germanics to include 'all Aryans, Germanics, the Old Slavs and Celts'.⁸⁰⁵ Although Pilar argued that the Slavic Croats had been a conquering, state-building people, he also accepted the widespread theory that most Slavs had, in comparison to the Germanic peoples, weak political and organisational abilities due to inherent racial traits.⁸⁰⁶ This idea was also adopted by other Slavic scholars, such as the Czech historian Jan Peisker (1851–1933) who wrote that 'all so-called Slav States of which we have sufficient information turn out to be either Germanic or Altaian foundations'.⁸⁰⁷ Peisker still viewed the Old Slavs as belonging predominantly to the Aryan racial type but due to the onslaught of various hordes of Asiatic nomads, the Slavs became polluted by the admixture of Altaian or Mongol blood; he even claimed that the Old Croat ruling class was of Avar and Turkic-Bulgar origin.⁸⁰⁸

Pilar sought to overcome the contradiction of viewing the Slavs as both Aryan and weak state-builders by stressing the stronger Aryan-Nordic strain of the Croats (and Poles) and pointing to their racial similarities with the Aryan Goths and Persians.⁸⁰⁹ This argument re-

⁸⁰² Ibid, 31-32. A slightly different translation (based on the 1943 Croat translation of Pilar's book) can be found in Bartulin, *The Racial Idea in the Independent State of Croatia*, 57: 'a Slavic-Aryan people of pure Aryan type: fair-haired, blue-eyed, tall height and [with] dolichocephalic heads.' Elsewhere in his book Pilar referred to the medieval Croat nobles as racially pure Aryans (*reinrassig arisch*). Südland, *Die südslawische Frage*, 303, 624.

⁸⁰³ Ibid, 171.

⁸⁰⁴ Houston Stewart Chamberlain, *Foundations of the Nineteenth Century*, vol. 1. Trans. John Lees ([1899] London: John Lane, The Bodley Head, 1910), 498, 505. Chamberlain preferred the term 'Germanic' to 'Indo-European', which was 'a mere theoretical and hypothetical term'. Ibid, 498.

⁸⁰⁵ Südland, *Die südslawische Frage*, 251n.

⁸⁰⁶ Ibid, 8-9.

⁸⁰⁷ [Jan] T. Peisker, 'The Expansion of the Slavs', in H. M. Gwatkin and J. P. Whitney (eds.), *The Cambridge Medieval History*, vol. II, xiv ([1913] Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1957), 433.

⁸⁰⁸ Ibid, 420, 437-440 and J. Peisker, 'The Asiatic Background', in H. M. Gwatkin and J. P. Whitney (eds.), *The Cambridge Medieval History*, vol. I, xii ([1911] Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1957), 353-356, 359.

⁸⁰⁹ For example, Pilar argued that the 'Slavic-Aryan blood' of the Croats and Poles had 'felt a deep aversion to [Byzantine] Orthodoxy, just as the Goths had once [felt]'. Südland, *Die südslawische Frage*, 158, 276, 623-624.

flected the development of novel philological and archaeological theories in the early twentieth century that linked the Old Croats with Indo-Iranian or Germanic peoples.⁸¹⁰ These theories would provide nationalist scholars and ideologists with the intellectual basis for shaping a Croat racial identity separate from other (South) Slavs. The Iranian and/or Gothic theories of Croat origins also served to provide a very fitting example of a state-building *Herrenschicht*. According to the Polish Jewish sociologist Ludwig Gumplowicz (1838–1909), the *Völkerwanderung* had not involved the movement of entire peoples but only the migrations of ‘warrior bands’ (*Kriegerscharen*) in the pursuit of ‘land and people.’⁸¹¹ The original Croats were thus an Ostrogothic ‘tribe of masters’ (*Herrenstamm*) that replaced the Avars as the ruling class of the earlier Slav population in the Balkans.⁸¹²

Race Theories in the Kingdom of Yugoslavia

Racial theories would play an important role in political and scholarly debates between Croat, Serb and Yugoslav nationalists during the period of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia. Serbia dominated the new Yugoslav state through its ruling royal family and its former army, which provided the bulk of the officer corps for the new Yugoslav army.⁸¹³ On the other hand, the official state ideology was based on the idea of *narodno jedinstvo* (‘national oneness’) according to which Serbs, Croats and Slovenes were considered three equal ‘tribes’ of one ‘people.’⁸¹⁴ During the interwar period, Yugoslavist scholars and ideologists attempted to provide Yugoslav nationalism with a firm racial basis by promoting the idea of a common Dinaric racial identity.⁸¹⁵ But leading Serbian nationalist scholars, even including those who accepted the Yugoslav national idea, such as the geographer Jovan Cvijić (1865–1927), also argued that the ‘Serbian variety’ was the ‘best example of the really pure patriarchal Dinaric type.’⁸¹⁶

A number of Yugoslavist ideologists and scholars also stressed the important role of a specifically Nordic-Dinaric core component. In an article from 1927 Boris Zarnik, a Professor

⁸¹⁰ For more on this topic see Bartulin, *The Racial Idea in the Independent State of Croatia*, 48-49.

⁸¹¹ Ludwig Gumplowicz, ‘Die politische Geschichte der Serben und Kroaten’, *Politisch-Anthropologische Revue I* (Eisenach und Leipzig: Thüringische Verlags-Anstalt, 1902-1903), 780.

⁸¹² Gumplowicz claimed that the old Serbian ruling elite was also of Gothic origin. *Ibid.*, 781-785.

⁸¹³ Banac, *The National Question in Yugoslavia*, 150-151.

⁸¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 98, 144-145, 231-234, 202-214.

⁸¹⁵ For more on this topic, see Bartulin, *The Racial Idea in the Independent State of Croatia*, 72-78.

⁸¹⁶ Jovan Cvijić, ‘Studies in Yugoslav Psychology (I)’. Trans. Fanny Foster. *The Slavonic and East European Review*, 9 no. 26 (1930): 377-378.

of Biology at the University of Zagreb, wrote that 'apart from Sweden, no other state in Europe has a population with such a relatively equal racial composition as our land, which...shows everywhere the same Dinaric-Nordic core.'⁸¹⁷ In another article from 1931 Zarnik argued that the Nordic race was 'the creator of the Aryan or Indo-Germanic languages.'⁸¹⁸ The fact that contemporary peoples of other racial types, such as the Persians and Indians spoke Aryan languages could be explained by the theory that 'people of Nordic race, as warriors, subjugated peoples of foreign races, and then as a ruling layer slowly imposed their language upon them.' In the case of European history, Zarnik wrote that 'Nordic tribes, especially the Old Germanics and Slavs conquered the whole of central and southern Europe'. Old Slavic graves had revealed dolichocephalic skulls 'that could not be distinguished at all from Old Germanic skulls.'⁸¹⁹ These ideas mirrored the arguments of leading German racial anthropologists, such as Hans F. K. Günther (1891–1968), who had also identified the ancient Indians, Persians, Hellenes, Romans and Slavs as racially Nordic.⁸²⁰ Günther had noted that 'the graves of the Old Slavs from the times of the wandering of the peoples show a ruling class which is still almost purely Nordic.'⁸²¹ Günther also considered the Dinaric race, which was strongly represented among south Germans, as 'second among the races of Europe' (following the Nordic) according to 'mental capacity'. Dinaric mental characteristics included such Nordic-type virtues as bravery in war, musical gifts, a warm feeling for nature and a strong love of home.⁸²² Although the Dinarics probably shared a common origin with the Hither Asiatic (or Near Eastern) race, Günther argued that there were considerable physical and mental differences between these two races.⁸²³ Since Dinarics were considered to have many admirable qualities, even by the standards of Nordacist German racial anthropologists such as Günther, the idea of

⁸¹⁷ Boris Zarnik, 'O rasnom sastavu evropskog pučanstva', *Hrvatsko kolo*, 8 (1927): 79-80.

⁸¹⁸ Boris Zarnik, 'Rasa i duševna produktivnost', *Priroda*, 21, nos. 5-6 (1931): 134.

⁸¹⁹ Ibid, 134-135. In his article from 1927, Zarnik argued that the ancient Persians bore 'strong Nordic admixtures'. Zarnik, 'O rasnom sastavu evropskog pučanstva', 79.

⁸²⁰ Hans F. K. Günther, *The Racial Elements of European History*. Trans. G. C. Wheeler (London: Methuen & Co. Ltd, 1927), 122-192.

⁸²¹ Ibid, 225. The Austrian anthropologist Viktor Lebzelter (1889-1936) noted that the 'Nordic element' among the Old Slavs represented a 'thin upper layer' (*dünne Oberschichte*). Viktor Lebzelter, 'Zur Rassengeschichte der Jugoslaven', *Vjesnik Arheološkog muzeja u Zagrebu*, 15, no. 1 (1928): 28.

⁸²² Günther, *The Racial Elements of European History*, 58-59.

⁸²³ For example, while 'the expression of the Dinaric face may be called bold, that of the Hither Asiatic is cunning.' Ibid, 67-70, 111. The Polish anthropologist Jan Czekanowski (1882-1965) argued that the Dinaric race emerged from an admixture of the Nordic and Armenoid (Near Eastern) races. Jan Czekanowski, 'Anthropologische Struktur der Slaven im Lichte polnischer Untersuchungsergebnisse', *Etnolog*, 10-11 (1937/1939): 239.

Nordic-Dinaric racial mixing was viewed by both Yugoslavist and Croat nationalist scholars and ideologists as a positive historical phenomenon.⁸²⁴

With the notable exception of the Croat historian Milan Šufflay (1879–1931), who, following the arguments of Peisker, postulated that the Old Croat ruling caste was of Avar/Turanian origin,⁸²⁵ leading interwar Croat nationalist scholars and ideologists argued that the Croat *Herrenschicht* was of Aryan origin, regardless of whether it was specifically Slav, Gothic or Iranian. The ‘Indo-European-Aryan’ or Iranian (i.e. Zoroastrian) interpretation was also the principal scholarly theory on the origins of Old Croat/Slavic religion during this period.⁸²⁶ Interwar Croat scholarship and nationalist ideology were also influenced by the theory of the Polish-German art historian Josef Strzygowski (1862–1941) who postulated that Old Croatian art and architecture, which was distinguished by latticed decorative motifs and irregular stone churches, was of Nordic origin.⁸²⁷

The leading proponent of the Iranian theory of Croat origins in the interwar period was the Jesuit historian Stjepan Krizin Sakač (1890–1973). According to his article from 1937, a Slavicised Iranian ruling class originally hailing from the Caucasus region had founded the state of White Croatia along the Vistula River. The White Croats were thus the product of an admixture of Iranian peoples such as the Alans with the Slavs. As Sakač wrote, ‘the strong and fresh Caucasian [Iranian] blood produced in one part of the primitive Slavic masses an enterprising and heroic Eurasian type, who had more sense for state organisation than the Slavic individualists and more initiative than the passive pure Slav.’⁸²⁸ The term ‘Eurasian’ was used here in a geographical-cultural, and not racial, sense because in his article Sakač explicitly referred to both the Iranians and Slavs as ‘Aryan’ peoples (even if the Slavs had weaker state-building abilities).⁸²⁹ Other interwar Croat historians and writers traced the origins of the Croat ruling class to the Goths. Relying on philological arguments and the medieval chronicle of Thomas the Archdeacon of Split (*Historia Salonitana*), the historian Kerubin Šegvić (1867–1945) argued that the Old Croats were the Slavicised descendants of the *Hrôthgütans* (‘victorious or

⁸²⁴ The phenomenon of Nordic-Dinaric (and Alpine) racial admixture in German history was viewed positively by the German racial anthropologist Eugen Fischer (1874-1967). Hutton, *Race and Third Reich*, 146-148.

⁸²⁵ See Milan Šufflay, ‘Značajke Hrvatske nacije’, in M. Šufflay, *Hrvatska u svijetlu svjetske historije i politike: Dvanaest eseja* ([1928] Zagreb: Novija hrvatska povjesnica, 1999), 37-38 and Bartulin, *The Racial Idea in the Independent State of Croatia*, 105.

⁸²⁶ Nikola Crnković, ‘Vjera i svetišta starih Hrvata: Novi putovi istraživanja’, *Croatica Christiana Periodica*, 18, no. 33 (1994): 61.

⁸²⁷ For more on this topic, see Bartulin, *The Racial Idea in the Independent State of Croatia*, 110-111.

⁸²⁸ Stjepan Krizin Sakač, ‘O kavkasko-iranskom podrijetlu Hrvata’, *Život*, 18, no. 1 (1937): 18.

⁸²⁹ *Ibid.*, 3-6.

glorious Goths').⁸³⁰ This name corresponded to the traditional way the Croats were depicted in their heroic epics, namely, as a 'people of masters' (*Herrenvolk*).⁸³¹

It was also possible to combine the Iranian and Gothic theories, as was done by the Ustaša ideologist Mladen Lorković (1909–1945) in his book on Croat ethnic history from 1939. On the basis of the work of Sakač and other scholars, Lorković defined the Old Croats as a 'tribe of Iranian-Caucasian race' and a 'warrior nation' that had organised the Slavs in both White Croatia and the former Roman provinces of Dalmatia and Pannonia.⁸³² The Croat Iranian ruling class intermarried with its numerically dominant Slav subjects, which led to the Slavisation of the former, but also the transformation of the latter into a state-building people.⁸³³ Lorković noted that the majority of scholars had, by this period, rejected the Gothic theory, but there was strong evidence of a Gothic-Croat ethnic 'symbiosis', especially in Bosnia.⁸³⁴ The Croats also received a 'strong Illyrian-Celtic blood admixture' in Dalmatia through interbreeding with the Romanised Illyrians and Celts, two peoples Lorković explicitly defined as racially 'Aryan'.⁸³⁵ The descendants of this new Aryan people fought each other centuries later as Catholics and Muslims during the wars between the Habsburg and Ottoman empires, but they still shared the same culture of chivalry and, through their heroic exploits, also proved that the Croats were not 'a people of weak blood'.⁸³⁶

The Dinaric race theory was combined with the idea of an Aryan ruling class in the work of the President of Croatia's oldest cultural institution, *Matica hrvatska*, the geographer Filip Lukas (1871–1958). In an essay on Croat culture from 1938, Lukas argued that, during the course of their migration to Dalmatia from their homeland somewhere along the Vistula, the Slavic Croats had already interbred with Caucasian (Iranian), Tatar-Mongol and Germanic

⁸³⁰ Cherubin Segvić [Kerubin Šegvić], 'Die gotische Abstammung der Kroaten', *Nordische Welt*, 9-12 (Berlin: Verlag Klinkhardt & Biermann, 1935): 35. Over time the name 'Gutans' ('Goths') disappeared, leaving the prefix 'Hrôthi', which, through the form 'Hruat', became the Croat name 'Hroati'.

⁸³¹ *Ibid.*, 35-36.

⁸³² Mladen Lorković, *Narod i zemlja Hrvata* ([1939] Split: Marjan tisak, 2005), 17, 35.

⁸³³ *Ibid.* 16, 35-36.

⁸³⁴ *Ibid.*, 36n, 37.

⁸³⁵ *Ibid.*, 17, 37-38. The Illyro-Celts were the ancestors of the medieval Croat Vlachs of largely Dinaric type, who Lorković distinguished from the more nomadic Vlachs of 'Slavic-Romanic-Albanian' origin who arrived in Croatia during the Ottoman invasions and appeared to be racially linked to the earlier, pre-Aryan Near Eastern inhabitants of the Balkans. These latter Vlachs were the ancestors of most Serbs in Croatia. See *ibid.*, 17, 37, 41-42, 68-70.

⁸³⁶ *Ibid.*, 48, 69.

tribes, such as the Antes, Avars and Goths.⁸³⁷ But the Croats received their most significant 'blood admixture' in Dalmatia where they interbred with the Romanised Illyro-Celts, Romans, the remnants of Avars and Germanic tribes, and it was from this admixture that the dominant Dinaric racial type of the Croats emerged.⁸³⁸ Croatia had also become the home of some Nordic settlers, 'who, merging with the old inhabitants, gave our culture many beautiful contributions.'⁸³⁹ Although Lukas admitted that the Croats carried a slight non-Aryan (Avar) racial strain, this was marginal in comparison to their dominant European ethnic-racial components. This is evident from the way Lukas made a clear distinction between the Croats and Russians, the latter having assimilated much 'non-Aryan blood', especially through admixture with Finno-Ugric and Mongol tribes.⁸⁴⁰

It should be noted that there was a fair degree of concurrence between the racial ideas of Croat, Serb and Yugoslav nationalists, particularly in regard to their common adulation of the Dinaric race. This ideological convergence would enable Boris Zarnik to transfer his ideological allegiance from Yugoslavia to the NDH in April 1941.⁸⁴¹ But the theory of an Aryan ruling class of Iranian or Gothic origin played a much more important role in Croat nationalist racial thought. This style of racial elitism, which sought to separate the Croats from other Slavs in a racial sense, did not fit well either with Yugoslavism or Cvijić's idea that the Serb racial psyche was characterised by an inherent predilection for democracy (since the Serbs did not possess a hereditary aristocracy). For Cvijić, the ideal Dinaric Serb was represented by the historical figure of the *hajduk*, the wild brigand or outlaw who had fought the Turks.⁸⁴² In contrast, the ideal Croat in the NDH was portrayed as a noble Aryan warrior or knight (*vitez*).⁸⁴³

⁸³⁷ Filip Lukas, 'Problem hrvatske kulture', in F. Lukas, *Hrvatska narodna samobitnost I* (Zagreb: Izdanje Matice hrvatske, 1938), 27-30.

⁸³⁸ *Ibid.*, 30.

⁸³⁹ *Ibid.*, 30-31.

⁸⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

⁸⁴¹ Bartulin, 'Boris Zarnik and his entry on race in the *Croatian encyclopaedia*', 72-84.

⁸⁴² Cvijić, 'Studies in Yugoslav Psychology', 381-383 and Jovan Cvijić, 'Studies in Yugoslav Psychology (II)'. Trans. Fanny Foster. *The Slavonic and East European Review*, 9, no. 27 (1931): 664-665.

⁸⁴³ Although the original meaning of the term 'Ustaša' was 'insurgent' or 'rebel', and could therefore reflect the Balkan 'hajduk' tradition of rebellion, Ustaša ideologists in the NDH interpreted the word 'Ustaša' to mean simply a 'fighter for Croat freedom'. Marko Samardžija, *Hrvatski jezik u Nezavisnoj Državi Hrvatskoj* (Zagreb: Hrvatska sveučilišna naklada, 1993), 69-70. Wartime Ustaša references to the Croats as the 'offspring of wolves and lions' (*porod vuka i arslana*) – a literary phrase borrowed from the Yugoslavist Croat writer Vladimir Nazor (1876-1949) – also reflected an ideological attachment to the Dinaric martial tradition. See Nevenko Bartulin, 'Intellectual Discourse on Race and Culture in Croatia 1900-1945', *Review of Croatian History*, VIII, no. 1 (2012): 203-204. Overall, however, the narrative type of the noble, Aryan Croat warrior remained much more influential in the NDH.

The Theory of the Nordic/Aryan Ruling Class in the NDH

The NDH's first three race laws, issued on 30 April 1941, restricted Croatian citizenship to those of Aryan descent (*arijsko porijetlo*) and forbade marriages between Aryan Croats and non-Aryan Jews and Gypsies.⁸⁴⁴ The official interpretation of the laws declared the Croats to be (like other European nations) 'a mixture of the Nordic, Dinaric, Alpine, Baltic and Mediterranean races with small admixtures of other races.'⁸⁴⁵ While the Croats thus represented a mixture of the main European racial types, the majority of scholars and ideologists writing on the subjects of racial anthropology and ethnolinguistic origins in the NDH emphasised the central role of the Nordic and Dinaric races in shaping Croatian history and culture. As part of that narrative, there was a general consensus that the original Croat Nordic ruling class interbred with a numerically larger western Balkan population of Dinaric racial type. While racial theorists from Gobineau to Günther had viewed the admixture of an Aryan or Nordic *Herrenschicht* with a non-Nordic people as the principal cause of the fall of the great civilisations of Persia, Greece and Rome,⁸⁴⁶ the case of Nordic-Dinaric racial admixture provided an exception to the rule. According to Ustaša race theory, the state-building ability of the Croats was thus primarily derived from a Nordic ruling caste, but the martial virtues of the Croat nation could be traced to both the Nordic and Dinaric racial components.

The Croats were portrayed in the NDH as a cultured warrior people. As the Poglavnik Ante Pavelić (1889–1959) declared in a speech in Zagreb in May 1941, the 'glory of the Croat name was carried throughout the world for centuries by the arms of Croat soldiers,' who had inherited martial prowess through their blood.⁸⁴⁷ In a speech to the NDH's *Sabor* in February 1942, the commander-in-chief of the Croatian army, Field Marshal Slavko Kvaternik (1878–1947), claimed that 'only warrior peoples' possessed a creative spirit because only they had created the state, the 'greatest and worthiest social community,' and the Croats were one of the nations that had 'conquered Europe through sword and blood.'⁸⁴⁸ The state-building ability of the Croats was, according to one of the NDH's leading ideologists, Ivo Bogdan (1907–1971), a 'racial characteristic' that represented 'the genius of Croatdom,' and which had been embod-

⁸⁴⁴ 'Krv i čast hrvatskog naroda zaštićeni posebnim odredbama', *Hrvatski narod*, 1 May 1941, 1, and 'Zakonska odredba o državljanstvu', *Hrvatski narod*, 1 May 1941, 2.

⁸⁴⁵ 'Tumačenje rasnih zakonskih odredbi', *Hrvatski narod*, 3 May 1941, 7.

⁸⁴⁶ According to Günther, 'every „fall” of a people of Indo-European speech is brought about through the running dry of the blood of the creative, the Nordic race.' Günther, *The Racial Elements of European History*, 198.

⁸⁴⁷ 'Braćo Ustaše!', in Petar Požar (ed.), *Ustaša: Dokumenti o ustaškom pokretu* (Zagreb: Zagrebačka stvarnost, 1995), 189.

⁸⁴⁸ 'Hrvati – ratnički narod', *Hrvatski narod*, 28 February 1942, 3.

ied in the Croat nobility.⁸⁴⁹ The state-building and martial virtues of the Croats went hand in hand with their innate cultural creativity. As an article in the main Ustaša daily *Hrvatski narod* pointed out, the ‘monumental Old Croatian art in stone and marble’, which had been ‘carried from the North’, highlighted that the Croats had played a ‘great civilising role’ in south-eastern Europe.⁸⁵⁰ According to a 1943 article by the economist and mountaineer Ivan Krajač (1877–1945), the ‘untainted Croat national character’ consisted of three main traits: ‘The first is the feeling of honour, honesty and the straight path, which is completely contrary to the typical trait of the Orient. The second is military heroism, bravery and ability. The third is cultural ability...’ As these traits had been preserved it was clear that the ‘basic blood elements’ and ‘racial foundation’ of the Croats had not undergone any major changes.⁸⁵¹

The ‘racial foundation’ of the Croats was composed primarily of the Dinaric and Nordic races. Nordic-Dinaric racial admixture had resulted in the emergence of a fair Dinaric type that was found mainly in the mountainous areas of the NDH (such as central Bosnia) and represented the characteristic or ideal Croat. As Filip Lukas noted in a geography textbook from 1942, the Dinaric type of fairer complexion was primarily the product of an admixture of the Nordic Slavic (Old Croat) settlers with the older population of Romanised Illyrians.⁸⁵² According to the Croat ethnologist Mirko Kus-Nikolajev (1896–1961), a large part of the NDH, from the north Adriatic to the Drina River, was populated by people of Dinaric race with ‘a strong admixture of the Nordic racial element’ (though this element was probably derived from the Illyrians or Celts).⁸⁵³ The Ustaša editor and journalist Milivoj Karamarko (1920–1945) also pointed to the ‘strong bodily similarities’ between the Dinaric and Nordic races, adding that the portion of the Nordic race in the Croat racial composition only enhanced the traits of health, strength and tenacity found in the dominant Dinaric type.⁸⁵⁴ In a book on the Mongol invasion of medieval Croatia, published in 1942, the writer Ante Tresić Pavičić (1867–1949) extolled the ‘Croat prototype’ as a ‘highlander’ and ‘lean, tall and broad-shouldered hero [with] grey and blue eyes’. He compared this ‘handsome Aryan type’

⁸⁴⁹ Ivo Bogdan, ‘Povjestni značaj ustaške revolucije’, *Spremnost*, 10 April 1942, 3.

⁸⁵⁰ ‘Hrvatska država i nacionalistička misao’, *Hrvatski narod*, 8 June 1941, 14.

⁸⁵¹ Ivan Krajač, ‘Kulturna sposobnost Hrvata’, *Spremnost*, 6 June 1943, 9.

⁸⁵² Filip Lukas, ‘Zemljopisni i geopolitički položaj’, in Zvonimir Dugački (ed.), *Zemljopis Hrvatske: Općio dio*, vol. 1 (Zagreb: Izdanje Matice hrvatske 1942), 24–28.

⁸⁵³ Mirko Kus-Nikolajev, ‘Rasni sastav Hrvata: Nordijske primjese pojačavaju i onako visoku životnu i kulturnu vrijednost hrvatskog naroda’, *Spremnost*, 12 July 1942, 5.

⁸⁵⁴ Milivoj Karamarko, ‘Dinarska rasa i Hrvati: Osebujne naše značajke i pozitivni prinos nordijske rase’, *Spremnost*, 22 November 1942, 7. Karamarko also noted the possibility that the Old Croats were themselves of Dinaric type. See *ibid.*

to the 'disgusting' and 'horrible' physical appearance of the Mongols.⁸⁵⁵ Even in strongly Dinaric regions such as Herzegovina one could still find a sizeable minority of blond-haired individuals with a fair complexion and light eyes, as had been shown by an anthropometric survey of pupils carried out in Mostar in the late 1920s. A summary of the survey's results was presented by the Croat anthropologist Franjo Ivaniček in an article published in a German anthropological journal in 1944.⁸⁵⁶ He postulated that the blondness found among the Croats could be traced to the Slavs (or Antes) and Goths. The presence of blondness was not only a 'very interesting anthropological question' but also important for understanding Croat racial origins.⁸⁵⁷

The question of the specific ethnolinguistic origins of the Old Croat ruling class remained open in the NDH, with the Aryan Slavs, Goths and Iranians all playing an equal (albeit disputed) role as the heroic paternal ancestors of the Croats. In his entry on 'Man' in the 1942 *Croatian encyclopaedia*, Boris Zarnik argued that the Old Slavs were undoubtedly of Nordic race but had assimilated Finno-Ugric ethnic elements that belonged to the short, brachycephalic and ash-blond-haired East Baltic race.⁸⁵⁸ The Nordic race existed amongst all nations that spoke Aryan languages. For example, the Persians were represented, like the ancient Greeks and Romans, as having blond hair and it was well known, Zarnik argued, that the Indian Brahman caste originally had fair skin and blond hair. One had to conclude that 'white people of Nordic race' were the 'creators of the proto-Indo-European language'.⁸⁵⁹

The East Baltic Finno-Ugric elements initially occupied a 'subordinate position' in Old Slavic societies, but over time they entered into the ruling Nordic caste and, probably due to 'greater fecundity', increased their share of the racial composition to 50% (though the Slavs would also receive some more Nordic blood through admixture with certain Germanic tribes).⁸⁶⁰ The Old Slavs also later mixed with other races, with Alpine admixtures having been assimilated by the Slavs in central Europe and Mediterranean elements by the Slavs in the eastern Balkans. In contrast, the Nordic-East Baltic ruling layer that brought the Slavic language to the western Balkans assimilated a Dinaric admixture. Croatian skulls dated from the tenth to twelfth centuries AD still had a cephalic index of 78.8, which was close to the mean Nordic

⁸⁵⁵ Ante Tresić Pavičić, *Izgon Mongola iz Hrvatske* (Zagreb: Izdanje Matice hrvatske, 1942), 17, 41.

⁸⁵⁶ Franjo Ivaniček, 'Beiträge zur Anthropologie und Rassengeschichte der Kroaten (Eine Untersuchung an Schülern aus Gau Hum.)', *Zeitschrift für Morphologie und Anthropologie*, 41, no. 1 (1944): 177-192.

⁸⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 187.

⁸⁵⁸ Zarnik, 'Čovjek', 364-365.

⁸⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 364.

⁸⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 365.

cephalic index of 77.8–78.2; Zarnik included an image of a medieval Croat Nordic skull from Dalmatia (this suggests the Nordic racial strain was stronger than the East Baltic one). But Croat skulls dated from the thirteenth to fifteenth centuries were already more brachycephalic with a cephalic index of 81.4.⁸⁶¹ The Dinaric type more frequently found among the Croats (and Slovenes) was marked by dark hair together with a fairer complexion and blue eyes. The fairer traits of these Dinaric Croats could have only been derived from the mainly Nordic Old Slavs.⁸⁶² The Croats were thus largely formed from a Nordic-Dinaric racial admixture with additional contributions from the East-Baltic and Alpine races.⁸⁶³

While the Old Slavs were defined as predominantly Nordic, there was a strong ideological and scholarly tendency in the NDH to stress the generally weak state-building and organisational capabilities of the Slavs. In a guide book for Croat soldiers from 1941, Slavko Kvaternik referred to the Croats as ‘the purest warrior people’, but added that it was a ‘misfortune’ that they had built their national ‘distinctiveness’ on a ‘Slavic basis’, since the Slavs were marked by ‘indecisiveness’ and the avoidance of responsibility, while ‘firm resoluteness’ and the readiness to bear responsibilities was an ‘Old Germanic virtue’. Kvaternik also noted, however, that the ‘Old Croatian blood’ still ran through ‘our veins’ (without specifying whether that blood was Gothic or Iranian).⁸⁶⁴ The Ustaša ideologist Danijel Crljen (1914–1995) argued that, due to their organisational talents, the patriarchal and warrior Iranian Croats had been able to ‘reign over the submissive Slavs’.⁸⁶⁵ An article in the 1942 *Ustaša annual* explained that the Croat racial make-up consisted primarily of the non-Slavic/Iranian and Slavic ‘blood’ components. While the former was marked by a ‘fighting spirit’ and ‘state-building’ abilities, the Slavic component was defined by the traits of ‘compromise’ and ‘peacefulness’. Although both blood components were united within one ‘national soul’, it was important to achieve a sense of balance between the two, as it would be ‘fatal’ if the ‘Croat soul’ was completely dominated by the Slavic component.⁸⁶⁶

⁸⁶¹ The image of the Nordic Croat skull was taken from the work of the German racial anthropologist Ilse Schwidetzky (1907-1997). See *ibid*, 363-365.

⁸⁶² The Dinaric type belonged to the ‘mountain racial zone’ of the European (white) sub-species (*Homo sapiens albus*). Dinarics were typically marked by brown to dark brown hair and brown eyes (though the eyes were also frequently grey). Although their light-brown, rosy coloured skin could tan under the sun, it was not quite as dark as the complexion of the Mediterranean race. See *ibid*, 353, 363.

⁸⁶³ See the pie chart showing the racial composition of the Croats in *ibid*, 365.

⁸⁶⁴ Slavko Kvaternik, *Odgoj i značaj hrvatskog domobrana* (Zagreb: Novinski odsjek ministarstva hrvatskog domobranstva, 1941), 99-100, 106.

⁸⁶⁵ Danijel Crljen, ‘Organizatorna sposobnost i snaga Hrvata’, *Spremnost*, 19 April 1942, 3.

⁸⁶⁶ Z. K., ‘Hrvatska povijest je proizvod hrvatske narodne duše’, *Ustaški godišnjak 1942* (Zagreb: Glavni ustaški stan, 1942), 122-123.

The Slavic biological heritage of the Croats was thus somewhat problematic, even though the Slavs also possessed some markedly positive attributes. This complexity was best explained in a book on the medieval Croatian kingdom written by the head of Spiritual Education for the Ustaša Youth, Julije Makanec (1904–1945). The Slavic character was, he argued, ‘full of contradictions’. As a group of peaceful fishermen and farmers the original Slavs had weak organisational and political abilities, but, as a ‘people of Aryan descent’, they had also shown a ‘considerable culture-creating ability’.⁸⁶⁷ The Croats were fortunately not pure Slavs, and this was proven by their ‘strong state-building instinct’. But Makanec claimed that the Croats had no need to be concerned by the fact that they still carried a strong Slavic strain. One only had to look at the ‘splendid and firm human type’ that had been produced by ‘Germanic-Slavic admixture in north-eastern Germany’ to see that positive Slavic traits would come to the fore as long as Slavic weaknesses were counterbalanced by a spiritually strong, non-Slavic component. The Croats could thus primarily thank the Slavic component for their gift of poetry and art, while their state-building and martial abilities were derived from the Gothic and Iranian-Caucasian components.⁸⁶⁸

During the NDH Stjepan K. Sakač elaborated on his earlier Iranian theory by tracing the ethnic name ‘Hrvat’ (‘Croat’) to the province of Harahvatiš (Arachosia) in ancient Persia. The name ‘Harahvati’ or ‘Harahvaiti’ denoted ‘those Aryan or Iranian clans and tribes’ that lived in this province. The descendants of these Aryans formed the ‘main core of the later Slavic people of White Croats and the present day Croats.’ Numerous aspects of Croatian culture and history had their origins in ancient Iran, including Old Croatian art, religious customs, and many personal and geographical names.⁸⁶⁹ In an article from 1943, Sakač outlined the reasons for the Slavicisation of the Iranian Croats. Firstly, the increasing dominance of Altaian-Turanian peoples such as the Huns over the Siberian and southern Russian steppes had cut the ties between the Iranians of Europe (including the Croats) and Iran. Secondly, the Iranian Croats were polygamous; as they had numerous, mainly Slav, wives, Slavic became the main language of their children, which meant that the Croatian language truly was the ‘mother tongue’.⁸⁷⁰

The theory of Persia as the Croat proto-homeland was also presented by the historian and Ustaša ideologist Ivo Guberina (1897–1945) in a book on medieval Croat rulers published

⁸⁶⁷ Julije Makanec, *Veličina i propast kraljevstva hrvatskoga* (Zagreb: Promičba ustaške mladeži, 1942), 13-14.

⁸⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 15-16.

⁸⁶⁹ Stjepan Sakač, ‘Historijski razvoj imena „Hrvat” od Darija I. do Konstantina Porfirogeneta (522. pr. Kr. do 959. posl. Kr.)’, *Hrvatska na novom putu* (Zagreb: Nakladna knjižara Velebit, 1944), 71-72.

⁸⁷⁰ Stjepan Krizin Sakač, ‘Tragovi staroiranske filozofije kod Hrvata’, *Život*, 24, No. 1 (1943): 9-10n.

in 1944.⁸⁷¹ He argued that the Croats were only completely Slavified after their migration to Dalmatia.⁸⁷² The White Croats could not be classed as barbarians, since they had been 'a cultured element, an element of order and statehood, by which they rose high above all their other neighbours in the north at that time, particularly the Slavic masses.' Although the Old Croats were eventually assimilated by the Slavs in a 'physiological' sense their 'psyche' remained distinctly Iranian.⁸⁷³ Tresić Pavičić also traced the Aryan origins of the Croats to Iran itself. He wrote that the Old Croats, a 'heroic tribe' and 'military caste', were descended from the 'Iranian Persians' and had once 'enjoyed the mild climate of the Persian Gulf or the north Indian ocean'.⁸⁷⁴ Other supporters of the Iranian theory were content with the Caucasus as the Croat proto-homeland. In his entry on early Croat history in an encyclopaedia from 1942, the historian Lovre Katić (1887–1961) argued that the Old Croats had been 'a branch of the Iranians and lived in the western Caucasus' near the Antes, 'their kin and also of Iranian blood'. The Croats became the ruling caste of the Slavic population between the Carpathians and the rivers Vistula and Bug.⁸⁷⁵

Many of the NDH's scholars and ideologists continued to stress the Old Croat links with the Germanic world. In a 1942 article in a German-language Ustaša newspaper, the curator of the Croatian State Historical Museum, Božidar Murgić, wrote that the 'ancient autochthonous culture' of the Old Croats was derived from the 'high north' and cognate with the 'original Germanic-Nordic culture'. In line with the arguments of Josef Strzygowski, Murgić declared that the Croats had 'remained a Nordic people' because they had preserved their Nordic soul, bravery, honour and art.⁸⁷⁶ According to Kus-Nikolajev, Old Croatian art was possibly originally derived from the Nordic Celts, and then later revived 'under the influence' of the racially Nordic Iranian Croats.⁸⁷⁷ In a book published in 1943 the Croat art historian Ljubo Karaman (1886–1971) ar-

⁸⁷¹ Ivo Guberina, *Državna politika hrvatskih vladara* (Zagreb: Nakladna knjižara Velebit, 1944). Guberina was also a Catholic priest and belonged to the more 'clericalist' wing of the Ustaša movement, which tried to fuse Ustaša ethnic nationalism with Catholicism. These Catholic nationalists tended to downplay the importance of race but their overall political influence was rather limited. Apart from the fact that the NDH had willingly adopted race laws and was officially a secular state in which the Islamic Religious Community and the Evangelical Church enjoyed (at least) formal equality with the Catholic Church, there was not a single reference to Catholicism in the Ustaša Principles from 1933. For more on this topic, see Bartulin, *The Racial Idea in the Independent State of Croatia*, 4, 16-17.

⁸⁷² Guberina, *Državna politika hrvatskih vladara*, 32-36.

⁸⁷³ *Ibid.*, 20, 186-187.

⁸⁷⁴ Tresić-Pavičić, *Izgon Mongola iz Hrvatske*, 14.

⁸⁷⁵ Lovro [Lovre] Katić, 'Dolazak Hrvata', in Ivo Horvat (ed.), *Znanje i radost: Enciklopedijski zbornik I* (Zagreb: Naklada hrvatskoga izdavačkog bibliografskog zavoda, 1942), 33.

⁸⁷⁶ Božidar Murgić, 'Die Kulturbeziehungen des kroatischen und deutschen Volkes', *Neue Ordnung*, 26 May 1942, 13.

⁸⁷⁷ Mirko Kus-Nikolajev, 'Nordijsko podrijetlo starohrvatskog pletenca', *Spremnost*, 10 April 1942, 7.

gued that the Old Croats, a 'Slavicised warrior tribe', had adopted their characteristic interlace art from north-eastern Italy. This art corresponded to Croat 'artistic abilities and their innate ability, like all primitive peoples from the North, for simple ornamental decoration of surfaces.'⁸⁷⁸

In a 1942 book on Croat history and culture (published in German), the writer and journalist Josip Horvat (1896–1968) argued that the Croat *Herrenschicht* had consisted of both Goths and Iranians. As warriors and conquerors they had formed the ruling caste of a group of 'Slavic agriculturalists' north of the Carpathians.⁸⁷⁹ The Iranian Croats originated from the Caucasus region, which represented 'the venerable mother-soil of the ablest European races', and had interbred with the neighbouring Goths. The Goths had, according to the English historian H. M. Chadwick (1870–1947), formed one of the branches of a northern European *Herrenschicht* that ruled over Europe for two millennia.⁸⁸⁰ This argument helped to buttress the Gothic theory of Croat origins because the Croats had lived near the Goths, shared similar personal names (i.e. the names of both Gothic and Croat leaders ended in the suffix *-mir*) and there were similarities between the Old Croat Glagolitic script and Gothic runes. The Gothic-Iranian Croat rulers were Slavicised through the gradual adoption of the language of their Slavic wives.⁸⁸¹ According to Ivan Krajač, the Old Croats had also received 'the first class racial components' of the Goths and Illyrians in Dalmatia. Since the Goths were an 'able noble people', and the Illyrians a 'heroic' people of highlanders and sailors, the 'blood quality' of the Croats could only be further strengthened.⁸⁸²

In his 1942 study on Bosnian-Herzegovinian geography and history, Lukas argued that the remnants of the Goths in Dalmatia and Bosnia had interbred with the Old Croat settlers.⁸⁸³ The assimilated descendants of these 'state-building' Goths may well have helped the Croats become the first Slavic people to establish a state. Lukas also noted the similarity between the personal names of Gothic and Croat rulers, which pointed to some sort of 'ethnic kinship' or 'a strong political-dynastic merging' between the Ostrogothic and Croat elites. In any case, both the Old Slavs and Germanic peoples had belonged to the Nordic race.⁸⁸⁴ In his preface to the 1943 Croatian translation of Ivo Pilar's book on the 'South Slav Question', Fedor Pucek argued that the Old Croat population had been composed of a 'Slavic majority' led by a numerically

⁸⁷⁸ Ljubo Karaman, *Živa starina: Petdeset slika iz vremena hrvatskih narodnih vladara* (Zagreb: Izdanje hrvatskog izdavačkog bibliografskog zavoda, 1943), 9, 78.

⁸⁷⁹ Josip Horvath (Horvat), 'Kroatiens Werdegang', in Clemens Diederich (ed.), *Die Kroaten* (Berlin/Zagreb: Verlagsbuchhandlung Velebit, 1942), 67-71.

⁸⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 67-70.

⁸⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 70-72.

⁸⁸² Krajač, 'Kulturna sposobnost Hrvata', 9.

⁸⁸³ Filip Lukas, 'Bosna i Hercegovina u geopolitičkom pogledu', in *Povijest Bosne i Hercegovine od najstarijih vremena do godine 1463 (I)* ([1942] Sarajevo: Hrvatsko kulturno društvo Napredak, 1998), 67.

⁸⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

smaller 'warrior stratum of Gothic-Caucasian-Iranian origin'.⁸⁸⁵ The Nordic Slavic element still represented the largest 'racial component' among contemporary Croats, even though the portion of the equally Nordic 'Gothic-Iranian component' was also 'comparatively very high' because the 'conquerors and ruling layers' had a better chance of 'biological survival and growth' than the groups that were subject to them. The Croats had biologically preserved the 'fairer elements, which today we partially term Nordic or European in a narrower sense' to a far greater degree than the other Balkan peoples, such as the Serbs and Romanians.⁸⁸⁶

National Socialist scholars closely followed the research and discussion on Croat racial origins in the NDH. The German Scientific Institute in Zagreb outlined a plan to undertake archaeological excavations in the NDH in order to research Croat racial origins with 'particular attention' assigned to the question of 'Nordic migrations' (the Institute was not interested in 'Mediterranean finds'). In February 1944 the NSDAP Chancellery in Berlin was informed that 'favourable preconditions' existed for the beginning of such research in view of the fact that Croat historians supported, above all, the Iranian-Caucasian and Gothic theories on the origin of the Croat ruling class (*Herrscherschicht*), although the 'pure Slavic theory' continued to play a 'very considerable role in the background'.⁸⁸⁷ Naturally, the National Socialists regarded Gothic and/or Iranian warriors as more attractive ancestors for their Croat allies than Slavic farmers, even if the Old Slavs were defined as predominantly Nordic. As Helmut Schaller has noted, the National Socialists had to regard the Slavs as *artverwandt* ('related by racial type or blood') because they belonged to the Indo-Germanic family of peoples, but most contemporary Slavic peoples were not accepted as racially kindred in a narrower sense (i.e. they were generally far less Nordic than the Germanic peoples). However, the 'image of the Slavs' (*Slawenbild*) could be presented differently in the cases of those states that had 'political

⁸⁸⁵ See Pucek's preface in L. von Südland (Ivo Pilar), *Južnoslavensko pitanje: Prikaz cjelokupnog pitanja*. Trans. Fedor Pucek ([1943] Varaždin: Hrvatska demokratska stranka, 1990), xxv.

⁸⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, xxvi-xxvii.

⁸⁸⁷ Frank-Rutger Hausmann, „*Auch im Krieg schweigen die Musen nicht*“: *Die Deutschen Wissenschaftlichen Institute im Zweiten Weltkrieg* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2002), 320. In a study on nationalism first published in 1944, the philologist Kruno Krstić (1905-1987) remarked that he saw no reason to seek the ancestors of the Croats among Gothic 'passers-by' or Iranians removed from Croatia by thousands of years and kilometres. In any case, the 'Slavs', he wrote, were as Aryan as the Iranians. Krstić also criticised the theory of a common (South) Slavic racial identity, remarking that the Slavs were not racially homogeneous (even though the distinction between linguistic and racial identity was a long-standing tenet of racial anthropology). Although he tried to downplay race as a key factor of nationhood, Krstić still felt the need to distinguish the Croats from the Serbs in a racial sense. The Dinaric race was thus the most common racial type of all the Balkan peoples, but it was most strongly concentrated in Croatia. Furthermore, the Serbs had probably assimilated 'considerably more remnants of the Mediterranean pre-Slavic population than the Croats' and the 'dark type' was generally more widely represented among the Serbs. Kruno Krstić, *Narod, država, nacionalizam* (Zagreb: Hrvatska smotra, 1945), 12-13.

or ideological connections' with the German Reich, namely, Bulgaria, Slovakia and Croatia.⁸⁸⁸ The Croats in particular were considered by the National Socialists to be of valuable racial stock due to their purported Gothic-Iranian origins and largely Nordic-Dinaric racial type.

For the ethnographer and director of the Reich Institute for Border and Foreign Studies, Karl Christian von Loesch (1880–1951), the historiographical question of whether the first Croat state had been ruled by a 'Gothic leading class' (*gotische Führungsschicht*) was 'politically unimportant.' The 'decisive' point was the long-standing Croat belief in a Gothic origin. Loesch himself derived the origins of the Croats from a 'Germanic-Slavic racial foundation.' They were a 'warrior and seafaring people of Slavic tongue and Gothic heart', best typified by the 'Nordic-Dinaric' Croat Muslims with their 'tall figures and blond hair'.⁸⁸⁹ As the German ethnologist Wilhelm Mühlmann (1904–1988) argued, the Nordic Croat ruling caste was eventually ethnically and socially 'overlaid' by the Slavified 'Thraco-Illyrians', but Croatia still had a closer racial connection to Nordic central Europe than the other Balkan lands.⁸⁹⁰ In May 1943 the chief of the SS Main Office, SS-Obergruppenführer Gottlob Berger (1896–1975), justified the recruitment of Croat Muslims on the basis of their predominantly Dinaric racial type, which meant that they belonged to the 'Germanic world' in an ethnic-racial sense.⁸⁹¹

Just as the romanticised figure of the Bosnian Muslim had provided Starčević with the ideal type of aristocratic Croat, so too did the 'Croat of Islamic faith' present the Ustaše with an archetype of the noble Aryan. The preface to an illustrated book on Croatia published in 1942 referred to the Bosnian Muslim as a *koljenović* (a Croat of old stock) or 'offspring of the purest Croat race' who had managed to preserve his aristocratic heritage (*aristokratizam*), language

⁸⁸⁸ Helmut W. Schaller, 'Slawische Philologie', in Frank-Rutger Hausmann (ed.), *Die Rolle der Geisteswissenschaften im Dritten Reich 1933-1945* (München: R. Oldenbourg Verlag, 2002), 280. For more on the German term *Art* (also meaning 'species' or 'race'), see Hutton, *Race and the Third Reich*, 18. Mario Jareb completely ignores the complexity of National Socialist policies toward the various Slavic peoples by arguing that the Nazis simply regarded all Slavs (including the Croats) as racially inferior. Mario Jareb, 'Jesu li Hrvati postali Goti? Odnos ustaša i vlasti Nezavisne Države Hrvatske prema neslavenskim teorijama o podrijetlu Hrvata', *Časopis za suvremenu povijest*, 40, no. 3 (2008): 874-875, 881. For more on the positive National Socialist attitude toward the Croats, see Bartulin, *The Racial Idea in the Independent State of Croatia*, 194-201.

⁸⁸⁹ Karl C. von Loesch, *Croatia restituta* (Zagreb: Hrvatski državni tiskarski zavod, 1942), 9-11, 24-25.

⁸⁹⁰ Karl C. von Loesch and Wilhelm E. Mühlmann, *Die Völker und Rassen Südosteuropas* (Berlin: Volk und Reich Verlag Prag, 1943), 49-51.

⁸⁹¹ Zvonimir Bernwald, *Muslims in der Waffen-SS: Erinnerungen an die bosnische Division Handžar (1943-1945)* (Graz: Ares Verlag, 2012), 50. Despite the tensions between the SS and Ustaša authorities over the recruitment of Bosnian Muslims for the SS Handžar division, the SS did recognise, at least in theory, the Croat nationality of the division's Muslim soldiers. For example, apart from the Croat coat-of-arms worn on the left sleeve of their Waffen-SS uniforms, the division's bilingual periodical 'Handžar' was published in German and 'Croatian' (not 'Bosnian'). *Ibid.*, 330.

and concept of chivalry within the 'religious democracy of the Ottoman Empire'.⁸⁹² According to an article written in the same year by the Poglavnik himself, one of the differences between the Turks and the Croat Muslims was the fact that the former had never possessed a hereditary aristocracy. The Ottomans had allowed the Bosnian nobles to keep their rights and privileges under new Turkish titles. The nobility formed a large part of the population and even in the present day, 'almost every tenth Muslim in Bosnia has the title of beg or aga'.⁸⁹³ According to a 1942 article written by the Bosnian Orientalist Hazim Šabanović (1916–1971) the Croat Muslims had played the 'leading role' during the most glorious period of the Ottoman Empire's history. The 'racial strength' of the Muslim Croats had managed to 'force' the Ottoman Turks to adopt Croat 'attributes'. Thus, the Croat influence at the Porte was so strong that Croatian became the second official language of the Ottoman state.⁸⁹⁴ Many Ottoman pashas and viziers had been of Bosnian descent, a fact that enabled Ćiro Truhelka to argue, in a book published in 1941, that the 'Aryan blood' of these high-ranking Ottoman officials had managed to rejuvenate the 'Turanian blood' of the Turks.⁸⁹⁵

The Asiatic/Near Eastern/Balkan nomad – who was embodied in the Serb-Vlachs, Jews and Gypsies – represented the counter-type of the noble Aryan Croat warrior in the NDH. In an interview he gave in late 1941 on the subject of the 'Serb Question', the Ustaša Foreign Minister Mladen Lorković argued that the 'so-called' Vlachs, who formed a significant component of the NDH's Serb population, were descended from 'Balkan-Romanic and Gypsy mixed peoples' (*Mischvölker*).⁸⁹⁶ In a 1943 study the Croat-German publisher and journalist Theodor Uzorinac (1909–1967) defined the Balkan nomads or Vlachs as the product of a racial admixture of various peoples, including the pre-Aryan inhabitants of the Balkans, Mongols, Avars and Gypsies.⁸⁹⁷ In 1944 Julije Makanec (then the NDH's Minister of Education) explained how the 'Slavoserb breed', according to Ante Starčević, had been formed from the admixture of 'var-

⁸⁹² *Hrvatska zemlja: Lijepa naša domovina – knjiga prva* (Zagreb: Izdanje hrvatskog izdavačkog bibliografskog zavoda, 1942), 3.

⁸⁹³ Dr Ante Pavelić, 'Pojam Bosne kroz stoljeća', *Hrvatski narod*, 28 February 1942, 2.

⁸⁹⁴ Hazim Šabanović, 'Die muselmanischen Kroaten und der kroatische Staat', *Neue Ordnung*, 8 February 1942, 5.

⁸⁹⁵ Ćiro Truhelka, 'O podrijetlu žiteljstva grčkoistočne vjeroispovijesti u Bosni i Hercegovini', in Ć. Truhelka, *Studije o podrijetlu: Etnološka razmatranja iz Bosne i Hercegovine* (Zagreb: Izdanje Matice hrvatske, 1941), 30.

⁸⁹⁶ 'Worum geht es in Bosnien?', *Neue Ordnung*, 7 September 1941, 2. The NDH's Serbs were not formally defined as 'non-Aryan', but they were considered to be of partly non-European (i.e. Near Eastern) origin. See Bartulin, *The Racial Idea in the Independent State of Croatia*, 204-218.

⁸⁹⁷ Theodor Uzorinac, 'Das Problem der Balkannomaden' in *Kroatien Baut Auf* (Zagreb: Europa-Verlag, 1943), 16.

ious Balkan refuse' and posed a grave threat to the 'Croatian breed', which was distinguished by its 'racial nobility, purity and firmness of character.'⁸⁹⁸ Nomadism was viewed by Nordacist race theorists, such as Walther Darré (1895–1953) and Hans Günther, as one of the main traits that separated Aryan peoples from non-European races. The National Socialists thus rejected the notion that the Nordics should be viewed only as raiding invaders, 'arguing that the history of the Nordic race showed the qualities both of peaceful agricultural settlement and of warlike heroism.'⁸⁹⁹ Filip Lukas similarly argued, in an essay published in 1944, that the Croats did not arrive in the Balkans only as 'conquering warriors' but also as 'colonising farmers'. The Croats came into contact and assimilated much of the Greco-Roman culture they found in their new homeland but they also 'preserved their agricultural-warrior culture.'⁹⁰⁰

Conclusion

Precisely because they were the classic state-builders of Indo-European history, the Goths and Persians proved more appealing than mere Slavs as ancestral role models to the Ustaše, who were themselves committed to the task of constructing a state. But the more or less Nordic Old Slavs still continued to occupy an important place in Croat racial genealogy, at least as far as the nation's maternal line was concerned. The ideal or narrative type of Croat favoured by scholars and ideologists in the NDH was the 'Nordic-Dinaric' man, a combination of the aristocratic Nordic hero and the rugged Dinaric warrior. Apart from the influences of racial anthropology, philology, archaeology and ethnic nationalism, the NDH's narrative type of the Croat *Adelsrasse* was also shaped by the nineteenth-century cult of historic state right – the idea that statehood rested firmly on the medieval right of conquest of land by the sword.

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⁸⁹⁸ Julije Makanec, *Hrvatski vidici: Nacionalno-politički eseji* (Zagreb: Hrvatska državna tiskara, 1944), 42-43.

⁸⁹⁹ Hutton, *Race and the Third Reich*, 105.

⁹⁰⁰ Filip Lukas, 'Osebnost hrvatske kulture', in F. Lukas, *Hrvatski narod i hrvatska državna misao* (Zagreb: Matica hrvatska, 1944), 148.

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SUMMARY

Abstract: This article analyses race theory in the Independent State of Croatia in regard to the question of the ethnolinguistic-racial origin of the early medieval Croats. While there was debate in the NDH on whether the proto-Croats were specifically Slavs, Iranians or Goths in an ethnolinguistic sense, there was a general academic and ideological consensus that, in a racial sense, they were a ruling class of Nordic-Aryan origin. This topic is analysed within a broader European historical and ideological context, including the question of the position of National Socialist race theory toward Croats and other Slavic peoples.

Key words: Nordic race, Aryans, Croats, race theory, ideal type, ruling class, nobility.