

Yugoslavia & Serbo-Croatian

the South Slavic language situation

the national language of Yugoslavia

- ◆ From 1918 to 2006, Yugoslavia was a nation-state in southeastern Europe. The common and official language of Yugoslavia was **Serbo-Croatian**, sometimes called "Yugoslavian". Although the South Slavic dialects form a dialect continuum, Serbo-Croatian emerged as **the codified national standard language of Yugoslavia**, and excellent education ensured that nearly everyone in Yugoslavia could speak Serbo-Croatian (although many people could speak other languages too). With respect to the South Slavic dialect continuum, Serbo-Croatian served as the standard language for every dialect area between Slovene and Bulgarian.



Serbian writing and Croatian writing

- ◆ Traditionally, Serbs write Serbo-Croatian using cyrillic letters, and Croats write Serbo-Croatian using roman letters; and school children in Yugoslavia would **learn both alphabets**. For example, the Serbo-Croatian word for "horse" is pronounced the same by both Serbs and Croats, but the Serbs write "коњ" and the Croats write "konj". (Try testing this with your translation software!)
- ◆ The different alphabet preference is due to a religious difference. The Serbs tend to be Orthodox Catholics, who wrote the Bible with cyrillic letters; whereas the Croats tend to be Roman Catholics, who wrote the Bible with roman letters. Because of this religious and orthographic difference, some people have wrongly thought that Croats and Serbs speak different languages, when in reality Serbian and Croatian were just **different ways of writing the same Serbo-Croatian language**.

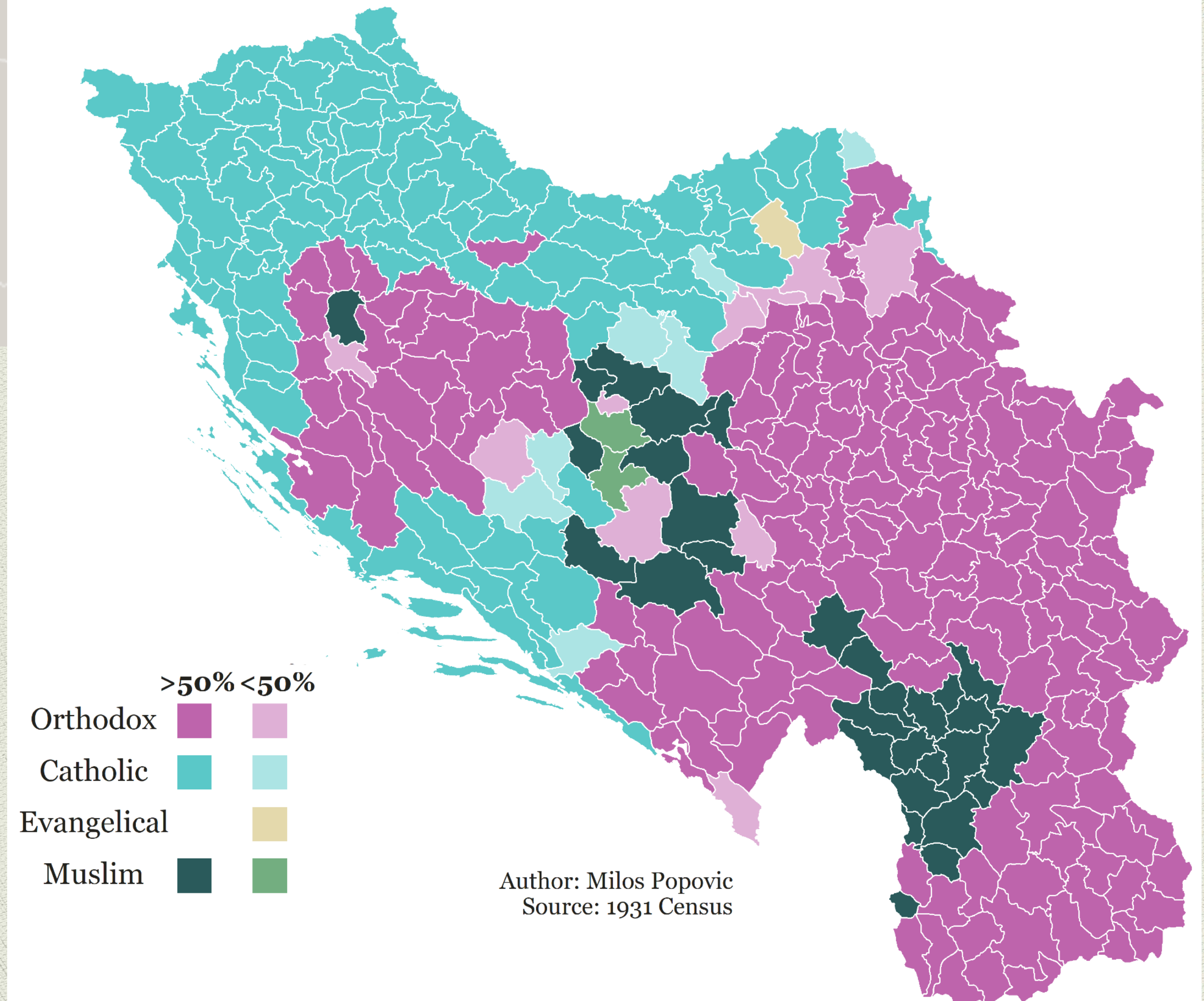


dominant religions
of Yugoslav republics

and of local municipalities

Religious Composition of Yugoslavia in 1931

Aggregated by absolute/simple majority



Land of the Southern Slavs

- ◆ Founded in 1918 as the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes, the nation's official name was changed by King Alexander I in 1929 to the Kingdom of Yugoslavia.
- ◆ In 1944, the monarchy was replaced by Democratic Federal Yugoslavia, consisting of the six federal states and two autonomous areas shown in this map.
- ◆ In 1989, civil war began, and Yugoslavia broke up into several countries. This map shows Yugoslavia before the break-up.



1989~2008 break-up

- Click on this animated map to see the gradual break-up of Yugoslavia from 1989 to 2008.
[http://www.ksc.kwansei.ac.jp/~jed/LxEcology/Yugo/Breakup_of_Yugoslavia.gif]



strong ethnic identities

- ◆ Ethnic identities were very strong. In the 1981 census, less than 6% of the people identified themselves as "Yugoslav", the rest preferring to identify themselves with the listed ethnic groups.
- ◆ Local dominance is shown in this map based on 1991 data. The break-up occurred primarily along ethnic boundaries, and the fighting and suffering was worse in the areas of mixed ethnicity.



Slovenia and Macedonia



- ◆ The Slovenian language (the codified standard Western South Slavic dialect of Slovenia) is similar to Serbo-Croatian, but it is different enough to be considered a separate language. Slovenia became independent of Yugoslavia in 1991. Slovenia's independence fighting was minor (cf. the Ten-Day War). The Slovenian language area closely matches the borders of Slovenia.
- ◆ The Macedonian language (the codified standard Eastern South Slavic dialect of Macedonia) is more similar to Bulgarian than it is to Serbo-Croatian. Macedonia became independent in 1991. Macedonia's independence was peaceful.

- ◆ It is natural to believe that the geographic separation and linguistic homogeneity of Slovenes and Macedonians helped these peoples to avoid the atrocities of the 1991-2001 Yugoslav wars.



Serbo-Croatian becomes BCMS

- ◆ Since the end of the wars, each of the new national governments of Croatia, Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Montenegro has wanted to have its own national language, so these countries have been creating **four different varieties of Serbo-Croatian**: Croatian, Serbian, Bosnian, and Montenegrin. From a grammatical or phonological perspective, these are **not** different languages. These language varieties are about as different from each other as Osaka-ben is from Kobe-ben. However, because each country now has its own army, these countries want to use different language names **for political reasons**.
- ◆ From an eco-linguistics perspective, Croatian, Serbian, Bosnian, and Montenegrin are not four separate languages. It is more accurate to say that Serbo-Croatian is currently a **pluricentric language**, which now has **four codified standard forms**. Other examples of pluricentric languages include English, French, Chinese, Spanish, Tamil, Portuguese, and German. In contrast, before 1989, Serbo-Croatian was considered a **monocentric language** with a single codified national standard (although it could be written with two different scripts), just like Japanese (which can also be written with multiple scripts). Because of Serbo-Croatian's recent change from monocentric to pluricentric, the Serbo-Croatian language is sometimes called "BCMS" in sensitive international political contexts.

next week: Nigeria and Biafra

- ◆ Next week, we will consider the language situation in Nigeria and former Biafra.

