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## MULTICULTURALISM AS CENTRAL FEATURE OF MONTENEGRIN HISTORY AND MODERNITY

**Abstract:** The author analyzes Montenegrin ethno-cultural, religious, and linguistic pluralism and artefactual multiculturalism (historical and contemporary) as one of the fundamental and the most important characteristic of Montenegro, which had shaped the political and cultural identity of Montenegro through centuries. Analyzing historical and cultural heritage of Montenegrin multiculturalism as the product of the unique developments under the impact of Eastern and Western civilizations (Byzantine and Roman), the author conclude that nowadays Montenegro is the historical and geographical harbor and complex harmony of different cultural and political traditions and epochs: Byzantine and Roman, Mediterranean (Venice and Italy), Oriental (Ottoman Empire), East-European (Imperial Russia), Central-European (Austro/Hungary) West-European (France) and Balkan (Yugoslavia) in the same time under Orthodox, Muslim, and Catholic impacts.

For centuries border space and war zone between different civilizations and powerful imperial states, in modern times Montenegro becomes proper cultural bridge zone open (internally and externally) for cultural exchange and influences of closer and further cultures and as conscious aspiration to tighten links, to share with others, to receive from them and to give them, particularly through surrounding Mediterranean civilizational domain.

**Key words:** *multiculturalism, Montenegro, religion, ethnic pluralism, Christianity, Catholicism, Orthodoxy, Islam*

### INTRODUCTION

Montenegrin multiculturalism had and still has decisive importance and fundamental role in creating and maintaining Montenegrin cultural identity and continuity. Montenegro represents ethnic, political, national and

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cultural synthesis and assimilation of all changes and permeation of various cultures on this region: Ancient Illyric, Slav and Romanian, as well as Orthodox, Muslim and Catholic, whose cultural values are incorporated in Montenegrin cultural inheritance.

The historical, political and cultural matrix of Montenegro is the result of multi-layered borrowings and pervasions that were, still are, and would be among the central features of Montenegrin society. What makes Montenegro intercultural society are the presence and high visibility of various and different cultural patterns upon which its tradition and history grew and developed, as well as the existence of space provided for the expression of difference.

As the border line of civilizational circles, with various permeations and influences, Montenegro experienced advantages and shortcomings in the same time, which have enriching physical and spiritual potential of ethnically heterogeneous population during previous centuries.<sup>1</sup> Ethno-cultural, religious, and linguistic pluralism and artefactual multiculturalism (historical and contemporary) have shaped the political and cultural identity of Montenegro through centuries. Due to historical and geographical circumstances and unique developments under the impact of Eastern and Western civilizations (Byzantine and Roman), hodiernal Montenegro is the historical and geographical harbor and complex harmony of different cultural and political traditions and epochs: Byzantine and Roman, Mediterranean (Venice and Italy), Oriental (Ottoman Empire), East-European (Imperial Russia), Central-European (Austro/Hungary), West-European (France and Spain) and Balkan (Yugoslavia) under Orthodox, Muslim, and Catholic impacts. This mean that multiculturalism began to develop in Montenegro since ancient times. Geomorphologic, social, cultural, political and economic peculiarities moved towards ethnic, confessional and linguistic complexity and stratification of centuries long alluviations of heterogeneity and multiplicity, as characteristic of the distinctive Montenegrin identity.

Throughout all its millennium's long history Montenegro was multicultural region from ancient period of Roman province of Prevalitania, through the period of the first slavic principality of Doclea (Duklja), and medieval kingdom of Zeta, until early-modern principality and modern state of Montenegro. For centuries different ethnic communities in Montenegro lived, traded and cooperated in peace, building tradition of interdependence.

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<sup>1</sup> Đorđe Borozan, *Crnogorske dinastije. Vojislavljevići, Balšići, Crnojevići*, (Montenegrin Dynasties. Vojislavljevics, Balsics, Crnojevics), CID, Podgorica, 2017, p. 15

For centuries border space and war zone between different civilizations and powerful imperial states, in modern times Montenegro becomes cultural sphere of overlapping civilizational circles and proper cultural bridge zone open (internally and externally) for cultural exchange and influences of closer and further cultures and as conscious aspiration to tighten links, to share with others, to receive from them and to give them, particularly through surrounding Mediterranean civilizational domain.

Constitutionally, the political identity of Montenegro is defined as a civic identity, and Montenegro is grounded as a civic country, not as nation-state. According to the results of the latest population census, Montenegro can be described as a multicultural country with significant ethno-cultural pluralism. In the preamble of the Constitution of Montenegro the multicultural character of Montenegro is seen, acknowledged and presented as a significant value of the Montenegrin state and society.

The results of the 2011 population census demonstrated that Montenegro can be classified as a country with marked ethno-cultural pluralism, or a country with a high level of heterogeneity among the population, as well as country without dominant nation, since there is only 45% of Montenegrins by nationality. Namely, according to the data from the census, there are 44.98 percent of Montenegrins in the country, 22.73 percent of Serbs, 8.65 percent of Bosniaks,<sup>2</sup> 4.91 percent of Albanians, 3.31 percent of Muslims, 1.01 percent of Romani people, and 0.97 percent of Croats. A total of 4.87 percent of the population remained undeclared. Concerning religious designation more than 72% of the total population of the country are Eastern Orthodox; 3.44% are Catholics; and 19.11% are Muslims, with almost 16% defining themselves as adhering to 'Islam' and 3.14% as 'Muslims'.<sup>3</sup>

Montenegro is a secular state that guarantees freedom of worship and prohibits religious discrimination. In 2012 Montenegrin government has passed a protocol recognizing Islam as an official religion and ensuring serving of halal food at hospitals, military premises, and social facilities; permitting Muslim women to wear headscarves in schools and public institutions; and protecting Fridays off work for the Jumu'ah (Džuma-namaz — Friday) prayer. This exercise of religious tolerance has been hailed as model for the

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<sup>2</sup> Bosniaks are Slavic-speaking Muslims, who identify themselves with Bosnia as their original or actual homeland; while Muslims are Slavic-speaking nation, with a broader South Slav (ex-Yugoslav) ethno-national orientation.

<sup>3</sup> Designation "Muslim" roughly coincide with the ethnic (South Slavic) Muslims. Their ethnicity being predominantly Bosniak or Albanian and little percents of Montenegrins. Among the Albanians there is also a significant Catholic minority (some 26%).

region.<sup>4</sup> Generally, interreligious tolerance has grown considerably in the last two decades.<sup>5</sup>

Montenegro is almost the only country in the Balkans which already as kingdom in the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century introduced multicultural politics. A century and half ago, with the proclamations of its ruler after Berlin congress in 1878 and with the first constitution in 1905 acknowledged members of minority communities as equal citizens.<sup>6</sup> This ethnic rights were improved in Yugoslavia. Post-communist Montenegro escaped direct war conflicts on its territory and in very complex circumstances preserved interethnic and interreligious peace.

In order to remain functional state, Montenegro as multiethnic and multi-confessional civic country, practice the politics of multiculturalism as an imperative.

## MULTICULTURAL FACES OF MONTENEGRO IN 13 ACTS

There are numerous examples and illustrations which prove and exemplified this throughout the whole Montenegrin history. It could be represented through several acts which could serve as illustrations of Montenegrin multiculturalism.

### ACT 1

Montenegro is very diverse by geography, climate, population, culture and so on. The distance between the southernmost coastal Mediterranean climate and the northernmost continental climate of mountain picks is only 190 km. Very frequently it is said that Montenegrin history is its geography, since geography of its territory and geopolitical position is one of the crucial factors shaping its history.<sup>7</sup> But there are not only geographical

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<sup>4</sup> Zorica Kuburic, "Montenegro," in: *Worldmark Encyclopedia of Religious Practices*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition, Vol. III, p. 474 (473–481), available at: <https://www.academia.edu/9657735/Montenegro?auto=download>

<sup>5</sup> One of the examples is the Day of Saint Tryphon, which Orthodox and Roman Catholic believers celebrate together in the multiethnic and multi-confessional city of Kotor, celebrating this saint of undivided Christian faith. In the middle ages the saint powers were censed from one side by the nobility and from the other by citizenry, and from the 19<sup>th</sup> century from the one side by Catholics and from the other by Orthodox.

<sup>6</sup> For political gestures of King Nikola I in this directions, cf. Simo Popović, *Me-moari* (Memoirs), CID, Podgorica, 2015, pp. 539–636

<sup>7</sup> Siniša Malešević, Gordana Uzelac, "A Nation-state without the nation? The trajectories of nation-formation in Montenegro," *Nations and Nationalism* 13 (4), 2007, p. 699

and climatic, historical and cultural, religious and ethnic differences, but also differences in mentality of the people from the continental North and maritime South, which have expressed in different historical and cultural development of the two regions.

From this facts it is obvious how much Montenegro in its history was subjected to cultural diversification. Geographic and climatic diversity are equally followed with cultural diversity which make it one of the most multicultural states in Europe. On the little space you can find artefacts as colonnades and aqueducts of the ancient civilizations, urban culture and space from early medieval time, Venetian-type town squares and renaissance poetry in coastal towns, mosques, minarets and Turkish baths, medieval Christian and renaissance architecture and paintings, and Austro-Hungarian roads and fortresses. Montenegro not only have rich and powerful intercultural dialog with its direct continental neighbors, but through its territorial sea share its existence and is in intercultural dialog with all Mediterranean countries. Its 650.000 inhabitants share dozen of cultures inherited in various epochs (Romanian, Roman, Hellenic, Byzantine, Christian, Orthodox, Catholic, Venetian, Ottoman, Habsburg, Russian, Spanish, French and Austro-Hungarian) which together make the picture of its multiculturalism.

## ACT 2

There is a legend telling the story about geological origins of this small country. When the God, the story tells, has created the Earth he was carrying the stones in a sack in order to disperse them all over the Earth, but when He came to this region the sack tear up, and the great deal of the content of the sack spill out on the region now called Montenegro. It was unintentionally, but the God also did something deliberately. He has arranged that on this small space live together numerous ethnic communities, religions, cultures and customs.

Montenegro comprises territory where always had been encountered, clashed, interbreed, and recast various ethnic groups, different cultures and religions from ancient times until today. There were in ancient times combined old Balkan, Morlaccian (from italian *Morlacco*, slav *Vlach*), Illyric, Celtic, Greek, Roman, Byzantine and Venetian traditions,<sup>8</sup> and from the 14<sup>th</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> About ethnic layers in Montenegro from ancient times cf. dr Dušan Ičević, *Crnogorska nacija* (Montenegrin Nation), Forum za etničke odnose, Beograd, 1998, pp 93–100, and about “ethnically colourful Montenegrin ethnical space” of fifteen nations cf. Petar Vlahović, *Etnologija Crne Gore — ogledi i članci* (Ethnology of Montenegro — Essays and Articles), CID, Podgorica, 2018, p. 70

century onward the direct impacts of Ottoman empire (for 4 centuries), Venetian (for 4 centuries), Austro-Hungarian (for 2 centuries), shortly even French, and indirect but powerful impact of Russian empire (for 3 centuries), which all left the traces on particular characteristics of Montenegrin society.

Montenegro is situated on the border line of eastern and western civilizations in Mediterranean circle, with intermittently of three great religions. Interweaving of East and West, paganism and Christianity, Orthodoxy and Catholicism, Christianity and Islam, Byzantine and Roman, have created continuity of Montenegrin multiculturalism shaping its political and cultural identity through history. Montenegro is the country and culture of the confine, great metaphysical border which separate East and West, and as such is predestined for communication, exchange, dialog and tolerance.

### ACT 3

When the Roman Empire in the year 395 split into the Eastern and Western empires, the territory of present-day Montenegro belonged to the province of Previlis (or Prevalis) which was added to Eastern Byzant Empire. Administratively, Province of Prevalis was under Constantinopolis, and their bishops turned to Rome. There were erected the first Slavic principality Doclea with three worships and liturgies: domestic ancient Slavic, Latin and Greek, introduced from outside and forced upon. Slavic worship was guiding in Doclea and Latin was tolerated (opposite was in Croatia and Dalmatia). The bishops were more or less non-Slavs (Italians and Greeks) since the eastern coast of Adriatic sea for a long period of time was under political power of Byzant, while the inner side was in the hands of Docleans.<sup>9</sup> There was established Doclean-Bar Archbishopry in 1089 (temporarily suspended in 1867), as the consequence of the battle for status and imposition of the jurisdiction between Eastern and Western churches in the Balkans after the schism of 1054. Whatever, Bar was not stricken with the Papal and Patriarchical exclusivities, but owing to certain specificities, beside latent pressures, succeeded to built a model of its own self-preservation. Namely, it was made certain form of symbiosis and cooperation of heterogeneous religious elements (Greek, Latin and Slav worship) and its organizational structures.

It is possible to distinguish three periods in the development of Montenegrin multiculturalism in the formative period of Montenegrin political and religious history. The first period is the period of Montenegrin (Doclean)

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<sup>9</sup> Dr Fran Milobar, *Život Dukljanske kraljevine* (Doclean kingdom) *Glasnik Zemaljskog muzeja Bosne i Hercegovine*, 1914, available at: <http://www.crnogorskipokret.org/bastina/istorija/dr-fran-milobar-zivot-dukljanske-kraljevine/>

political autonomy in the eleventh and twelfth centuries (lasting 175 years) — when it was predominantly under catholic impact from Rome. The second period is period of orthodox domination when the same territory (then known as Zeta) was for 183 years part of the expanding Serbian Empire — with the consequence of changing of its religious identity with the introduction of the orthodox faith as state religion. Population of Zeta received new national conscience and was integrated with Serb ethnic group, but this domination of orthodoxy and amalgamation with Serbian ethnic group did not change the multicultural character of Dioclea/Zeta. The Orthodox religion, the Old Church Slavonic language, and the Cyrillic script became more influential and finally dominant (the older Glagolitic script disappeared), but the bi-confessional (Orthodox and Catholic) situation continued to exist to some degree. The third period is the period when the country reverted in the 14<sup>th</sup> century to a period of small-scale autonomy and catholic influence again under Balšić family<sup>10</sup> who, as restorers of politically autonomous medieval entity, reaffirmed the aspect of separate Montenegrin political history and independence.

Between 13 and 15<sup>th</sup> centuries cultural life was under the mixed sway of influences from Ottomans and Venetians. The Byzantine tradition of creating, copying and translating literary works was interwoven with the strong influence of Italy, especially after the Fall of Constantinople (1453), when Zeta was experiencing a special kind of Renaissance. This relates particularly to the towns in the coastal area, where the Italian Renaissance left visible traces. Linguistically speaking, from the late fifteenth century the written language was increasingly influenced by the local Slavic spoken language, while in the Bay of Kotor area Latin and Italian became predominant. From the second half of the eighteenth century the written Slavic language was spontaneously transformed into an un-codified but factually standard literary language.

The very name “Montenegro” first appeared in a Papal epistle in 1053, denoting an area of Kingdom of Slavs (Doklea), and in Cyrillic sources, in 1276, meaning ‘black mount’ or ‘black hills’ since it looked like forestland.<sup>11</sup> The name for the territory was finally introduced and stabilized in the time of Crnojević family in the 15<sup>th</sup> century.

<sup>10</sup> Balšići reverted again to Catholicism in 1369. Cf the letter of Pope Urban in: Đorđe Borozan, *ibid*, p. 195. Political entity of Balšić family fell again under Serbian impact again introducing Orthodox Christianity as state religion in 1421.

<sup>11</sup> Šerbo Rastoder, “A short review of the history of Montenegro,” in Florian Bieber (ed.), *Montenegro in Transition: Problems of Identity and Statehood*, Nomos Verlagsgesellschaft, Baden-Baden, 2003, p. 107

## ACT 4

One of the testimony of communion and religious tolerance in Montenegro are four churches with two altars — orthodox and catholic, along the coast. In Bar catholic and orthodox believers were accustomed to built churches with two altars or one common altar. In Kotor one of catholic churches from 1195 (St. Lucas) was given in the seventeenth century to the Orthodox citizens of the town, and until the beginning of the nineteenth century had two altars, a Catholic and an Orthodox one, and thereafter only an Orthodox altar for a growing Orthodox population. Budva displays a good deal of historical religious co-existence as well. In this town Catholic and Orthodox churches stand side by side and the co-existence of both forms of Christian faith seems to have been possible notwithstanding the many 'regime changes' in its history: from Byzantine rule to a succession of South Slav rulers (Docleia, the Serbian Nemanjić, then Balšić and Crnojević) to Venetian rule (1442–1797) to Austrian rule and then Yugoslavia. The town of Bar (Antibarum, Antivari) has its Slav name alongside its Latin and Italian names since the twelfth century. The town is thus important for both the Orthodox and the Catholic cultural traditions, as well as for Muslim from the period when Ottomans came to the Balkans. Not far from Bar, near the town of Sutomore, is another church with two altars, Catholic and Orthodox.

## ACT 5

There is a legend about the King (actually, Prince) Vladimir who presumably ruled the region around the year 1000 and later was consecrated because of his sacrifice for his people (he was killed by the Macedonian emperor Samuilo). Now for centuries long period believers of all three confessions (Orthodox, Muslim and Catholic) every Pentecost have carried St. Vladimir's cross to the top of the mountain Rumija in order to pay tribute to this extraordinary ruler and saint. St. Vladimir's Cult was celebrated by Montenegrins, Serbs, Greeks, Albanians, having an integrative role in this multiethnic and multi-confessional area. This martyr is also celebrated in Albania in a monastery in Elbasan, colloquially called Šin-Đon. This tradition of bearing the cross lasted for centuries, though interrupted in the years of wars and social tensions, beginning in the middle of 19<sup>th</sup> century and romantic revival of ethnocentric feelings. This tradition was



“forgotten” in the communist period from 1959 to 1984 and renewed in the last three decades.<sup>12</sup>

#### ACT 6

A notable event occurred in 1493 (40 years after Gutenberg’s invention) when a printing press from Venice was imported and installed at Obod near Cetinje, as the first state owned printing press in the world and one of the first in Slavic language. The very event of establishing of printing process was multicultural, “printing Orthodox cyrillic text in Slavic language with West-European syllabi.”<sup>13</sup>

#### ACT 7

The collapse of powerful dynasties in the Balkans in the 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> centuries open the door to the advance of a new power in the Balkans: the Ottomans. Over the next four centuries, Montenegrin history was marked by its position between the Ottomans and Venice. The Ottomans never gained full control over the lands of Montenegro. “They managed to establish control over the main cities, but found themselves incapable of maintaining a grip on the mountainous villages where the Orthodox population found refuge.”<sup>14</sup> After Skender Bey’s (Staniša, the son of the last ruler from the family Crnojević — Ivan beg) death (in 1530), Montenegro was adjoined to the *Sandžakat* of Skadar and gained the status of *vilajet* — that is, “a province of the sultan where his rule did not rely on Muslims.”<sup>15</sup> For most of the period between the 16<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, even if the Montenegrin tribes would frequently cause trouble or refuse to pay tribute, it was a matter of nominal Ottoman suzerainty rather than direct rule or effective sovereignty

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<sup>12</sup> However this renewal was monopolized in last decade by Serbian orthodox church (which have replaced autocephal Montenegrin orthodox church in 1918 when kingdom of Montenegro was annexed by Serbian kingdom and as its part become the part of Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovins). This monopolization with emphasis on its Serbian origin and orthodoxy and not as non-ethnic event is the reason of the sad event that from 2005 this custom is not multicultural since Muslim and Catholic believers — in some kind of protest — have kept away from the manifestation.

<sup>13</sup> Expression of Professor Vukčević, President of MANU, at the Lesson delivered at the School of Multiculturalism in Petrovac, Oktober, 2017.

<sup>14</sup> Siniša Malešević, and Gordana Uzelac, *ibid*, pp. 699–700

<sup>15</sup> Šerbo Rastoder, *Ibid*, p. 112

of Ottoman empire.<sup>16</sup> The process of islamization has made deep impact, since Montenegrin Muslims were obliged to collect taxes, but also to help Ottomans in their frequent attacks on Montenegro. But also there were numerous examples of the cooperation and memory of common ancestry.<sup>17</sup>

#### ACT 8

Everyday religious life passed in peace and tolerance (the confrontations were in the mean of intertribal relations and disputes over common land and not about religion!). It is known that Muslim and Orthodox believers in Sandžak (nowdays partaged between Serbia and Montenegro) collectively celebrated some fests: the Đurđe, Peter, Mitar and Ilija days. Even the names of this holidays were not changed, except translation of Ilija in Alija day. Muslims honoured orthodox fests and visited orthodox cult places, particularly the tomb of St. Sava in the Monastery of Mileševo. The example of tolerant interreligious relations is also community of Mrkojevići near Bar. Also there were examples of oaths of Muslims who obliged themselves to prevent incursions of Ottomans. Anti-Ottoman commitments were not rare among Muslim tribal chiefs in Montenegro. In 1660 Muslim and Orthodox tribal chiefs concluded an anti-Ottoman agreement with Venetian republic, and the communion of the tribes were concluded in spite of confessional belonging of the intruders.<sup>18</sup>

#### ACT 9

Until the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century Orthodox Montenegrins and Muslims lived in good relations and tolerance owing to clan tradition, consciousness about common origin, reciprocal help, common life in tribal organization and almost constant reliance on brotherhood and family relations. Only with the emergence of a political project that called for nation-building and national homogenization they begin confronting each other in relation to

<sup>16</sup> Zuzana Poláčková; Pieter van Duin, "Montenegro Old and New: History, Politics, Culture, and the People," *Studia Politica Slovaca: časopis prepolitickévedy, najnovšie politické dejinyamedzinárodnévztahy* Vol. 6/1, 2013 p. 63, available att: [https://www.sav.sk/journals/uploads/04241525SPS\\_1\\_2013\\_Z%20Polackova\\_P%20van%20Duin.pdf](https://www.sav.sk/journals/uploads/04241525SPS_1_2013_Z%20Polackova_P%20van%20Duin.pdf)

<sup>17</sup> Cf. Zvezdan Folić, "The consciousness of common origins" (Svijest o zajedničkom porijeklu), in: *ibid*, pp. 76–84

<sup>18</sup> For numerous examples of religious toleration and common life between Montenegrins and Muslims cf. Zvezdan Folić, pp. 43 to 84

their respective ethnic and religious identities.<sup>19</sup> Before this awakening of national consciousness they fought each other from economic and not identity reasons and on behalf of different foreign invaders, and ethnic or religious differences were not crucial in their confrontations. Moreover, Montenegrin society in the 17<sup>th</sup> and the 18<sup>th</sup> century was characterized by occasional and voluntary co-operation at the inter-tribal level, forming temporary alliances for military purposes.

#### ACT 10

Central Western Balkans was historically situated on the Roman *limes* across Drina river, which continue to build the “fault line” between Orthodox and Catholic religion, as religious divide between Eastern and Western church. But this was not the reason for deep conflicts and sharp confrontations in Montenegro between Catholics and Orthodox, and this religious line was not so sharp as it was the line between Christianity and Islam. In spite of reciprocal changing of the ownership over the churches in the Middle ages between Catholics and Orthodox, already from the ancient period lasted coexistence between them, and there were mixed influences from both East and West.

Another “fault line” was confrontation between Slavs and Albanians. But, in Montenegro Albanians and Montenegrins were fight along clan and tribes lines in spite of the temporary inter-ethnic alliances. Also there were common customs, life style and way of living between Montenegrins and Albanians until the introduction of Islam, but even after that there were some kind of “ethnic fusion” between them through weddings, kinships, and brotherhoods between clans.<sup>20</sup>

#### ACT 11

The process of islamization was very intensive on the territory of Montenegro under impact of Ottomans, but Ottomans never succeeded to impose their language and wider customs to Montenegrin Muslims, who remained through all the period of Ottoman domination loyal to local traditions and saved the conscience that they were separate part which by origin, language

<sup>19</sup> The Montenegrin tribesmen of the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries valued their tribal allegiance highly and were much more aware of their belonging to a particular tribe than they were of thinking of themselves in terms of a national identity, Srđa Pavlović, “Who are Montenegrins? Statehood, identity, and civic society,” in: Florian Bieber (ed.), *Op. cit.*, p. 85

<sup>20</sup> Zuzana Poláčková; Pieter van Duin, *Op. cit.*, pp. 60–61

and tradition is different from Turks and similar to their tribal neighbours and compatriots. So, Christianity and Islam become common heritage of Montenegrin history. There were often change of religion of the population of Montenegro. Mostly they transfer from Catholic to Orthodox faith. Montenegrin tribes Kuči, Bjelopavlići, Drekalovići, Bratonožići, Piperi (who still in 1610 were Catholics) were all until the middle of the 17<sup>th</sup> century converted to Orthodox faith, but some, like Kuči, also in Islam.<sup>21</sup> These conversions were not condemned, but treated as freedom of conscience.

Between Montenegrin Muslims there was clear conscience of common ancestry. In difference to Albanian Muslims they are domestic origins and belong to Slav ethnic group. They did not come from anywhere, but are autochthonous (native) in long historical process, as the part of Montenegrin people which received Islam and through time become distinct and separate national identity. There are investigations showing that 90% of Muslims in Montenegro are of Montenegrin origin. A Muslim historic Ejup Mušović have written: "No other south Slav people was not so conscious about common ethnic origin with Muslims as Montenegrins. It was publicly stressed, kept safe in tradition, written in literature. There is to seek causes of more explicit solidarity, tolerance, common living, peculiar for Montenegro and alien to other areas ... And vice versa, Muslims of Montenegro were carefully guarded tradition of their Montenegrin origins, and in everything, like Montenegrins, with pride highlighted their previous clan belonging, what is specificity of only Montenegrin area."<sup>22</sup>

Reading the traditional epics of Montenegro one would get wrong impression that Montenegrins and Muslims were constantly in war. But it was quite opposite. Montenegrins were all the time in opposition to Ottoman Turks and not to domestic Muslims. In longer periods the relations between Orthodox and Muslim population were characterized with normal coexistence, harmony, and religious tolerance. Lot of Montenegrins who accepted Islam were not in service of Ottoman interests.

All this speaks about multi-confessional and multicultural harmony and intercultural permeation in Montenegro. In spite of sporadic abuses and widely spread stereotypes about Christian-Muslim intolerance in the time of Ottomans, the history teach us that it was not the rule. There are plenty of examples from the 17. century which witness cohabitation and tolerance between Montenegrins and Muslims and their alliances for common action and defense.

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<sup>21</sup> CF Zvezdan Folić, Op. cit, pp. 43–60; Ejup Mušović, *Muslimani Crne Gore: 17. vijek — epoha pojačane islamizacije* (Muslims of Montenegro: Seventeenth Century — Epoch of stronger Islamization), available in excerpts at: [http://www.montenegrina.net/pages/pages1/istorija/odcrnojevica\\_dopetrovica/epoha\\_pojacane\\_islamizacije\\_ejup\\_musovic.htm](http://www.montenegrina.net/pages/pages1/istorija/odcrnojevica_dopetrovica/epoha_pojacane_islamizacije_ejup_musovic.htm)

<sup>22</sup> *ibid*

## ACT 12

In liberated, so called “Under-Lovćen Montenegro”, before the recognition of its independence by Berlin Congress 1878, there were small numbers of Muslims. But even then its rulers were open-minded. In the Code of Prince Danilo from 1855 (thirty years before Berlin Congress and international obligation of Montenegro on religious tolerance) Muslims were equated with Christians. In the article 92 of the Code Prince Danilo Petrović declared: “Although in this country there is no other nationality except Serbian and no other confession then eastern Orthodox, every member of other clan and confession can live freely in this freedom and our domestic justice enjoy as every Montenegrin and inhabitant of the Hills enjoy”.<sup>23</sup> By this article Montenegro have declared religious freedom before Berlin Congress and the national identity of Muslims was introduced and recognized.

After Berlin congress in 1878 Montenegro become again after four centuries extreme multicultural (multinational, multiconfessional and multilingual) country since territorial extension meant the new citizens of Montenegro — Muslims and Catholics, Albanians and later Croats. Theirs legal equality, property inviolability and guarantees of civic, political and religious rights, were stipulated by the special article of Berlin congress. But King Nicolas I, already during the liberation war from 1876 to 1878, before the Berlin congress, guaranteed to Muslims all the rights in Montenegrin state and full protection of their religious identity. The Muslim population had its religious leader, the Montenegrin *mufti*, and the Islamic community in Montenegro, founded in 1878, was the oldest community of its kind both in the Balkans and in Orthodox countries. Montenegro was also the first Orthodox country to sign the concord with the Vatican (1886).

## ACT 13

But in the periods of wars and social disturbances (during and after the Balkan war, during and after the First World War and during the Second World War, as well as during the Balkan wars for Yugoslav succession in 90's) there were forced emigrations, deportations, occasional ethnic conflicts, reciprocal persecutions, even forced conversions, under impact of paramilitary organizations or dissident local powerful persons, with various successes of Montenegrin government to protect its citizens.<sup>24</sup>

<sup>23</sup> Zvezdan Folić, *ibid*, fn. 581

<sup>24</sup> For example: persecution of Muslims in Šahovići and Pavino polje (1924), reciprocal persecutions of Serbian nationalists Chetnicks and Muslim militia (during II WW),

But, despite external and internal pressure in the 90's — for instance the war in Bosnia and Kosovo, the spread of the Serbian nationalism and the activities of radical paramilitary groups — Montenegro has kept its multi-ethnic and multinational composition, and succeeded to avoid interethnic conflict on its territory, remaining “a safe place for Muslims compared to other Balkan countries.”<sup>25</sup>

## CONCLUSION

In its history Montenegro was mostly a multicultural society, notwithstanding the fact that in one period in 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries — particularly in the time of nation and state building — until 1878 it was predominantly homogenous Orthodox society. All other time in its millenium's history it was multiethnic, multi-religious and bilingual society.

In Montenegro there is whole range of different cultural models and various ethno-cultural communities. This cultural models are, however, often closer to each other then the models with the same ethno-national designation, but from different cultural areas. Contemporary Montenegro is common home of its different cultural communities and nobody is someone's subtenant. Montenegro became common home of all its national and cultural entities and identities, which they built and develop in a democratic legal and political culture. Liberating itself from dangerous adventures and fatal nationalistic illusions, prejudices and misapprehensions, Montenegrin society is building real complex and composite multicultural community of various cultures, languages, religions and nations and cultural identities who have an opportunity to treasure and protect their identities, alone and together, and to develop their common Montenegrin political identity, as condition to advance their own identities and cultures, and vice versa. The political formula for such intercultural society, political culture and the state is the strategy of constitutional patriotism, which integrate without discrimination or assimilation, allowing different cultural identities to protect and develop itself. Intercultural society in which categories of ethnic majorities and minorities simply doesn't fit.

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shameful anti-Muslim terror of paramilitary formations in Pljevlja (1992), deportation of refugees from Bosnia and Herzegovina (Herceg-Novi 1992), intimidation of Bosniacks and Muslims and ethnic cleansing in Bukovica (1993), and kidnapping and killing several Bosniacks/Muslims in Štrpci (1993) by Serb paramilitaries

<sup>25</sup> Bohdana Dimitrova, “Bosniak or Muslim? Dilemma of one Nation with two Names,” *Southeast European Politics*, Vol. II, No. 2, October 2001, pp. 94–95