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Narrations of a nation: Montenegrin self-representation through (re) construction of cultural memory

Naracija naroda: črnogorska samoreprezentacija skozi (re)konstrukcijo kulturnega spomina

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IZVLEČEK

Članek preučuje večplasten proces konstrukcije in rekonstrukcije črnogorskega kulturnega spomina skozi srednjeveško narodno zgodovino, ki so jo oživila gledališka igra *Balkanska carica* (1884) Nikole I. Petrovića Njegoša, princa in prvega črnogorskega kralja, istoimenska opera Dionisia de Sarno-San Giorgio (1891) in prva uprizoritev opere leta 2006 – glede na dane politične in kulturne okoliščine.

ABSTRACT

The paper considers a multi-levelled process of construction and reconstruction of Montenegrin cultural memory through the medieval national history revived in the 19th century theatre play *Balkanska carica* (Balkan empress, 1884) by the Prince and the first Montenegrin king Nikola I Petrović Njegoš, the opera with the same name by Dionisio de Sarno-San Giorgio (1891) and then one more time in 2006, when the opera was premiered, in the given political and cultural contexts.

Nations are signified by their narrations, based on the constructed cultural memory. The first Montenegrin national play *Balkanska carica* (Balkan Empress) by the Montenegrin Prince Nikola I Petrović Njegoš (1884), later (1891) set as an opera by Dionisio de Sarno-San Giorgio (1856–1937),¹ embodies discourse of heroism through a medieval battle between Montenegro (Zeta) and the Ottomans from the end of the fifteenth century, symbolising contemporary, nineteenth-century political program as a signifier of the Serbian-Montenegrin cultural memory.

Montenegro was internationally renowned due to the bravery of her soldiers, capable to resist to the much more powerful Ottomans and keep the autonomy. In 1858 Montenegrin army of about 7,500 soldiers led by Grand Duke Mirko Petrović (elder brother of Nikola I's predecessor Danilo II Petrović Njegoš, r. 1851–1860) won a victory over twice as large Ottoman army at the Battle of Grahovac.

Montenegro, to speak figuratively, is the Robin Hood of Europe, a dauntless champion of liberty that, with Freedom's clarion-cry ever on the lips, has for hundreds of years stood facing fearful odds, fearless of men, fearing God alone. Meanwhile her valiant sons, with all the fierceness of their nature, have fought for their very lives, the might of the most powerful armies in the world failing to quench their matchless courage, or to break down their unwearied defence. Montenegro is hemmed in by Albania (Turkey), Novi Pazar (Turkey), Bosnia, Herzegovina, and Dalmatia; some of these are hard names to remember, but then this is a hard land, inhabited by a hardy people. Only a very little of Montenegro fringes the sea, for both Turkey and Austria are extremely jealous of this tiny kingdom, and, if they could, they would shut her in altogether. Imagine, if you can, a land consisting almost entirely of naked rock, of enormous waves of jagged mountains stretching as far as eye can reach, and composed of grey limestone, here and there broken by vast valleys.²

Montenegro was during the Middle Ages divided in three parts and one of them, Zeta, was governed by the noble family Crnojević until 1499, when it became a part of the Ottoman sanjak (administrative region) of Schkodër. As early as 1514, Montenegro established an autonomous sanjak for next fourteen years, refusing to accept Ottoman rule. After numerous uprisings and battles, which concluded the Great Turkish War in the second half of the seventeenth century, and a defeat of the Ottomans, Montenegro became a theocracy governed by prince-bishops from the family Petrović-Njegoš.

1 Dionisio de Sarno San-Giorgio was an Italian diplomat in Montenegro and Serbia, as well as composer and organizer of musical life. After his studies in Naples and Florence, he came to Kotor in 1886. In the next six years he contributed very much to the development of musical life in Montenegro. But, since his efforts did not have significant results, unsatisfied with the circumstances in Montenegro, he moved to Belgrade (1893–1932), where he was also active as a diplomat, as well as consul of Spain. He donated scores of about four hundred his compositions to the Archive in Kotor, where he spent his last years of retirement. Unfortunately, the manuscripts of his two other operas, also in the Serbian language, *Gorde* and *Dane*, are lost.

2 Roy Trevor, *Montenegro: A land of warriors*, with twelve full-page illustrations in colour by Allan Stewart (London: Adam and Charles Black, 1913).

The House of Petrović-Njegoš (1696–1918)	
Prince-Bishop Danilo I Šćepčev Petrović-Njegoš	1696–1735
Prince-Bishop Sava II Petrović-Njegoš	1735–1781
Prince-Bishop Vasilije III Petrović-Njegoš (joint ruler with Sava II)	1750–1766
Prince-Bishop Petar I Petrović-Njegoš (Saint Peter of Cetinje, Sveti Petar Cetinjski)	1782–1830
Prince-Bishop Petar II Petrović-Njegoš	1830–1851
Prince-Bishop Danilo II Petrović-Njegoš (restyled himself as Knjaz or Prince 1852)	1851–1852
Prince	1852–1860
Prince Nikola I Petrović-Njegoš (restyled himself as Kralj or King 1910)	1860–1910
King	1910–1918

During the reign of Nikola Petrović Njegoš I the Principality was significantly enlarged due to the combined outcome of wars against Turks and diplomatic activities. At the Berlin Congress Montenegro won the status of independent country in 1878. By that time, the Prince Nikola I has already established diplomatic relations with the main powers. Due to the extensive diplomatic contacts with the European powers, the royal capital, a very small town of Cetinje, was a center of diplomacy, with Austro-Hungarian, Belgian, Bulgarian, English, German, Italian, French, Ottoman, Russian and Serbian mission.³ The international relations of Montenegro were successful for one more specific reason: the Prince Nikola and the Princess Milena Petrović had twelve children, and five of their nine daughters were married to European royalty. For this reason, the Montenegrin King was known as “the father-in-law of Europe”:

Princess Ljubica, known as Zorka (1864–1890) married Petar Karadorđević (who after her death would become King Peter I, King of the Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes, which became Yugoslavia, including Montenegro);

- *Princess Milica (1866–1951) was married to Grand Duke Pëtr Nikolaevič Romanov of Russia, brother of Grand Duke Nikolaj Nikolaevič;*
- *Princess Anastasija-Stana (1868–1935) was married first with George, Duke of Leuchtenberg and then, after divorce, to the World War I general Grand Duke Nikolaj Nikolaevič of Russia Jr. (both were grandsons of Emperor Nikolaj I);*
- *Princess Jelena (1873–1952) became Queen Elena of Italy, wife of Vittorio Emanuele III, the King of Italy (1900–1946) and the King of Albania (1939–1943);*
- *Princess Ana (1874–1971), married Prince Franz Joseph of Battenberg.*

In 1910 Montenegro was recognised as the Kingdom and Nikola Petrović Njegoš I was its first and the only king, since Montenegro joined in 1918 the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, Slovenes, later on the Kingdom of Yugoslavia.

3 Cf., accessed on 9 December, 2014, <http://www.itinereri.org/itinereri/grad/cetinje/>.

Military successes of Montenegro, both independent and in alliance with Serbia and other Balkan countries or with the powers such as Russia, sometimes the Habsburg Monarchy and others, provided a peculiar image of Montenegrins.

*Tiny Montenegro was an especially favoured destination for both Western Slavs and Russians travelling in the Balkans. Western Romantics discovering 'these least civilised people in Europe' in the nineteenth century saw Montenegro as a bastion of liberty and heroic Christianity holding out against 'the Turk'... For the Slav-inspired pilgrim, however, Montenegro had a larger and more personal significance. Not only was it the only self-governed Slav state beside Russia, but its heroism, patriarchal way of life and egalitarianism (as well as the integration of church and state under the rule of the prince-bishops) seemed to preserve a pre-modern way of life that could be claimed as quintessentially Slavic.*⁴

The core of the national self-representation and the national identity was accordingly built on the basis of military glory in numerous art works, especially in literature – in epics and heroic poems (the most popular until today has been the practice of declamation of heroic epics with the gusle accompaniment).

The play *Balkanska carica* is based on the nineteenth-century (author's) perspective of the heroic mythical medieval time. Nikola Petrović Njegoš I tended to promote a restoration of medieval Serbian Empire. It is worth mentioning the message of the Prince and future King of Montenegro, Nikola I Petrović Njegoš to the Montenegrins in Herzegovina, in 1876, during the Balkan crisis: "Under Murad I Serbian Empire was destroyed [this is a reference to the Kosovo Battle in 1389 – T. M.]. Under Murad V it has to rise again. This is my wish and wish of all of us as well as the wish of almighty God."⁵ With his theatre play, the author also aimed to stress the continuity of the Montenegrin statehood, which resulted in identity narratives on a Golden Age and a Heroic Age.

The Montenegrin identity narrative appears as a story of a Golden Age, followed by a Heroic Age. ...the Golden Age was identical with pre-Ottoman, medieval period, The Golden Age was conceptualized as a time of numerous political and cultural achievement on the part of the Serb nation. [...] It was especially the 'Serbian empire' of the Nemanjić dynasty that was conceptualized as the most glorious period of Serb history, a ready-made blueprint for a modern version of a Serb nation-state. [...] After the battle of Kosovo... remnants of the medieval Serbian empire quickly disintegrated and all Serb lands were gradually conquered by the Turks. However, Ivan Crnojević, ruler of the last remaining Serb land of Zeta, refused to give up. Together with his people, including members of the aristocracy and Orthodox clergy, he retreated to the inaccessible and inhospitable highlands under Mount Lovćen. [...] Unlike the

⁴ Wendy Bracewell, "Travels through the Slav world", in *Under Eastern eyes. A comparative introduction to East European travel writing on Europe*, Wendy Bracewell and Alex Drace-Francis, eds. (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2008), 166–167.

⁵ Murad I was the sultan of the Ottoman Empire from 1362 to 1389, when he was assassinated during the Kosovo Battle against Serbian army. Murad V was the sultan only between 30 May and 31 August 1876.

*previous era, which was 'Golden' for all the Serbs, the Heroic Age concerns only a fraction of them – those who had the courage, strength, and luck to become Montenegrins, ready to sacrifice their material possessions, advantages, and pleasures in order to remain free from the proverbial Turkish yoke and its multiple degenerative effects. The Heroic Age of Montenegrin history represented a long period of armed resistance against the incomparably mightier enemy.*⁶

The Prince Nikola I gave a great contribution to the culture of his land too. Intending to achieve the Central European forms of cultural life, which was a rather demanding task, he himself wrote the first national theatre play, along with poetry. Since the Montenegrin environment, however, expressed resistance to everything that was not directly related to the discourse of heroism, the Prince had to develop a cunning strategy to establish theatre life. During the writing of the drama (1881–1884), he was reading daily its newly written parts to a chosen circle of friends. This led to a lively discussion about the possibilities of the future course of dramatic action in entire Cetinje, and soon the citizens of the capital recited parts of the play by heart. As this was the first Montenegrin national drama, intellectuals around the Prince took care of its performance, so that the Dobrovoljno diletantsko društvo Cetinjske čitaonice (Voluntary amateurs' society of the Cetinje Reading room) was established.⁷ This was actually a *komad s pevanjem* (theatre play with music). Due to the patriotic subject, glorious heroes, brave Montenegrin women, and also due to the communicativeness of music numbers, the theatre play was popular very soon and it was recorded that “there were not similar excitement ever”.⁸

Nikola Petrović has chosen an episode from the fifteenth-century history of Zeta, then governed by Ivan Crnojević (r. 1465–1490), and finished his theatre play precisely on the 400th anniversary of the monastery dedicated to this medieval Montenegrin ruler. The family Crnojević is famous not only because of their military successes against the Ottoman army and diplomacy with Venice, but also because they established the first printing office in Southeast Europe in Cetinje in 1493. They also built the Orthodox monastery in Cetinje, around which the capital would later emerge. In the drama and hence in the opera, the historical facts were not strictly followed: instead of three sons of Ivan Crnojević (Đurađ, Stefan and Staniša),⁹ only two are mentioned (Đorđe

6 František Šístek, “Regimes of historicity, identity, and temporality in Montenegro, 1905–45”, in: Diana Mishkova, Balázs Trencsényi and Marja Jalava, eds., *Regimes of historicity in Southeastern and Northern Europe, 1890–1945. Discourses of identity and temporality* (London and New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2014), 83–84.

7 A detailed study on the establishing theatre life in Montenegro in: Vesna Ivanović, *Muzički život Podgorice i Crne Gore u doba Nikole I Petrovića Njegoša* (Podgorica: Muzički centar Crne Gore, 2012), 67.

8 Ivana Antović, “Opera ‘Balkanska carica’ Dionizija de Sarna San Djordja nastala u Kotoru 1890. godine”, in: *Boka: Zbornik radova iz nauke, kulture i umjetnosti*, 27, 2007, 292. The writer Simo Matavulj, who was also an actor when the theatre play was performed, witnessed the birth of the work as well as its life on the stage: Simo Matavulj, *Biļješke jednog pisca* (Beograd: Nolit, 1988).

9 As for historical facts: “Ivan’s oldest son, Djurađ, succeeded him and ruled Montenegro from 1490 to 1496. Being unable to resist growing pressure from the Ottomans, Djurađ left Montenegro and settled in Venice in 1496. [...] He was succeeded by his brother Stefan, who nominally ruled Montenegro until 1499, when the region became part of the newly established Ottoman administrative unit, Sanjak of Scutari. Meanwhile, Ivan’s youngest son, Staniša. Disillusioned by the impossibility of succeeding his father, went to Istanbul and converted to Islam. As a loyal servant of the Ottoman sultan, Staniša Crnojević (who adopted the name Skender...) was appointed in 1513 as the Sanjak-Bey in charge of Montenegro and neighboring Albanian tribes.” Cf. Srdja Pavlović, *Balkan Anschluss: of Monenegro and the creation of the common South Slavic state* (West Lafayette: Purdue University Press, 2008), 31–32.

and Stanko). The younger brother Stanko from the theatre play was depicted in the drama (actually historical Staniša) neglected and frustrated, without any prospective to become a ruler in future, so that the sultan Murad's representative, Ibraim-aga, succeeded to convince him to join the Ottoman troupes in an exchange for the position of the future Balkan emperor (Staniša went to Istanbul and converted to Islam, becoming later the Shkodrian Sanjak Bey). Judging from the libretto, the main reason for Stanko's joining the Ottoman camp was to overcome the obstacles to marry Danica, what he was not able to do in Zeta because of her modest origin. Unable to accept his betrayal of the fatherland and his offer to become some day the Balkan Empress, Danica commits suicide. With such development of the action San-Giorgio shifted the focus of the opera from the wide patriotic and political context to the more personal love story.

The image of heroic Montenegro, called Serbian Sparta, is emphasized in the libretto by the references concerning the states asking for help of Montenegrin warriors, like Albania, as they needed a protection because of the threat from Ottoman conquerors. The next-to-last scene called "The Battlefield" is an image of the battle between Montenegrin and Ottoman armies. In spite of the overwhelming power of Ottoman soldiers, Ivan Crnojević and his soldiers won the victory due to their fearless fights.

Consequently, the theatre play/libretto is signified by the identification topics of Serbs from Montenegro, and these are:

- 1) the epic narrative of history,
- 2) both men and women are heroes and warriors in the name of patriotism, and
- 3) the Orthodox faith.

The Ottomans are referred to as the enemies, butchers, merciless wolves and the Islamic threat to Christianity.¹⁰ Maria Todorova touches upon such images: "The enormous output of anti-Turkish propaganda obviously created a stereotyped image of the Ottoman as savage, bloody, and inhuman, and produced a demonized antagonist epitomizing the hereditary enemy of Christendom".¹¹ In spite of such negative characteristics of the Other, the Montenegrin heroes respect the most important qualities in their own hierarchy of values: the heroism of the Ottoman warriors, who used "swords which cut well" and "lances which fly straight" and, consequently, their power. It is precisely this power that is a fatal temptation for Stanko Crnojević. Unable to accept such a development, and his offer to become the Balkan empress some day, Danica committed suicide, proving that patriotism and honour are the most important aspects in the life of a true Montenegrin woman.

The Prince's theater play inspired the Italian diplomat and composer Dionisio de Sarno San-Giorgio (1856–1937) to write the opera *Balkanska carica* ('Balkan Empress') as his political dedication to Nikola Petrović Njegoš. The composer was aware of the shortcomings in its dramaturgy and he did not even have expectations to see

10 Danica: "Naša je vjera lijepa, prava, / a turska nije no zla, krvava" (Our [Orthodox, T.M.] faith is beautiful, true / and Turkish is evil, bloody); Nikola I Petrović Njegoš, *Balkanska carica, drama u tri radnje*, ed. by Zdravko Gojković (Beograd: Zenit, 1989), 143. Cf. Tatjana Marković, "The Ottoman past in the Romantic opera's present: The Ottoman Other in Serbian, Croatian and Montenegrin operas", in: Risto Pekka Pennanen, Panagiotis C. Poulos, Aspasia Theodosious, eds., *Ottoman intimacies, Balkan music realities* (Helsinki: Suomen Ateenan-instituutin säätiö, 2013), 71–86.

11 Maria Todorova, *Imagining the Balkans* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 86.

his work performed. There was no a specific libretto for this opera, that is, San-Giorgio only chose determined parts from the drama and set them to music, as he explained in the preface to the vocal score:

[E]verywhere in the Slavic literary world, this celebrated and famous theatre play is regarded as the most beautiful flower in the glorious wreath of the Prince-Poet for its wonderful verse as well as its great content. The play has not been intended to be set to music. But since I found in it many places of wonderful lyrical beauty, and also several choruses similar to the ones from classical Greek dramas and the dramas by the Italian Metastasio, I decided to set some parts of the drama to music. [...] I took as much from the drama, as it was allowed in order to evade too long an action. Yet, this work could not be performed on the stage, partly because it lacks continuity needed for musical drama, partly because of its length and many a solo characters; and if it would be necessary to stage it, many numbers would need to be shorten in order to reduce the singers' efforts, especially the Tenor's.¹²

San Giorgio made apparent that he wrote this opera primarily as his (political) dedication to the prince (1860–1910), and afterwards the king (1910–1918) of Montenegro, Nikola Petrović Njegoš I in whose country he served as a diplomat, and whose drama was the basis of the libretto. “The most beautiful award for my work would be if I am lucky to receive His Excellency Prince Nikola The First's graceful acceptance and respect for it. I am proud of his highest permission to write my name at the end of this modest work.”¹³ For this reason, the composer named his opera as *Balkan Empress, drama in three acts by Nikola I the Prince of Montenegro*.

By choosing the lines almost exclusively from the roles of the two main characters in the drama, Stanko Crnojević and Danica, with the supporting roles of Ivan Crnojević, Uglješa and Marta, the composer did not shed enough light on the plot, and therefore the libretto itself does not provide a sufficiently clear idea about the connections between events, the motivations of characters as to why they act in a certain manner, or the wider late fifteenth-century political context.

The *Balkanska carica* is modelled mainly upon the Italian Romantic opera, and some national elements are introduced through genre-scenes, mostly dances. In numerous operas from the Balkans, the Other is understandably embodied through the Ottoman characters.¹⁴ In addition, different layers of the Orientalism are also recognizable in all the operatic texts. Although it is embodied through certain stereotypes and “fabricated constructs” in the relationship between East and West – “the Orient arouses anxieties and fears in almost equal measure with both imperialism itself and the social and intellectual conflicts of home”¹⁵ – we cannot say that the Romantics from

12 Dionisio de Sarno san Giorgio, “Opaska”, *Balkanska carica. Drama u tri radnje Nikole I. knjaza crnogorskog i.t.d.* (Trieste, Bologna: Edition C. Schmidl & Co.; Agram: Kugli & Deutsch; Petersburg: A. Büttner, s.a.), 1.

13 Idem.

14 Western and Central Europe had “two main sources of influence: the Ottoman Empire, both its Turkish heartland and the Levant, and the ‘Moorish’ lands of the West”. John M. MacKenzie, *Orientalism: History, theory and the arts* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1995), 144.

15 Ibid., 31.

Southeastern Europe – “had highly individualized responses to their visions of the East, each a projection of their own fantasy worlds” like Byron and Shelley, for instance.¹⁶ In opposition to this, the Romantics’ Other was part of their reality, their own political and cultural context. Characteristic of the opera is that “the ‘cultural work’ that is done by the arts when they evoke another society [...] is not necessarily as repressive and regrettable. [...] It should not, that is, be assumed that the worldview that musical and other cultural texts of this sort support is necessarily pro-imperialist.”¹⁷

Due to omitting all scenes where the Ottomans participate in the stage action, de Sarno-San Giorgio stressed his focus on national self-representation, so that the three acts contain a sequence of arias by Stanko, Danica and other characters of Montenegrins. The central scene of the opera is a genre scene or the *khorovod* with a significant role to equal the self-representation with the national self-celebration: it contains folk songs performed by a choir and *kolo* circle dances.

The entire Scene 3 is a *kolo* consisting of eight parts (A-H), based on eight stanzas of the folk song *U Ivana gospodara*, celebrating beauty and heroism of Montenegrin women. The song is about a ruler Ivan and his two sons, for whom the father wants to find suitable wives. Every part of the varied strophic form includes two main themes, in accordance to two verses, which are repeated four times. Every verse is set to two-measures phrases in the range of a fifth or sixth without leaps, resulting with a monotone movement, typical for epic poetry, which is in turn one of the signifiers of Montenegrin identity. The instrumental accompaniment is simple, based on the movement tonic-dominant. What produces contrast is first of all the tonal plan, and also harmony, melody and texture, while melody remains almost the same. In other words, entire scene is organised in a form of Glinka’s variations.

Kolo A: G-minor – G-major

Kolo B: C-major

Kolo C: F-major

Kolo D: C-major

Kolo E: A flat-major

Kolo F: E flat-major

Kolo G: C-major – F-major

Kolo H: C-major

As the prophet hinted in advance, at the beginning of the opera, Montenegrins will win and avenge Kosovo. Danica helps the wounded on the battlefield. This is where occurs Danica’s and Stanko’s final meeting: she condemns him as a traitor, but confesses that she still loves him. Seeing no other way out from this situation, Danica jumped into the Morača river. Opera ends with a winning celebration of the victory over the Ottoman army, the liberated Montenegro, and celebrating the act of Danica as an example of patriotism associated with Montenegrin women. In the patriarchal Montenegrin

¹⁶ Idem.

¹⁷ Ralph P. Locke, “Cutthroats and Casbah dancers, muezzins and timeless sands: Musical images of the Middle East”, in: Jonathan Bellman, ed., *The Exotic in Western music* (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1998), 106–107.

society, in whose hierarchy heroism occupied the highest place, status of women is specific, what is also confirmed by an example of Danica in this opera.

Although a Montenegrin himself does not respect his wife highly, anybody else is not allowed to least offend her, for he would pay it by his life; additionally, it is shameful to attack a weaker one. For that reason, the women are free to go anywhere even during the biggest wars of Montenegrins, and the men send their wives everywhere, where they are not dare to go. The women follow their husbands when they go to a military mission, walking for two or three days without a break and carry food on their shoulders, wash the wounded men's faces, give them wine and brandy, and heal their wounds. Along to this, they support and encourage the combatants to the battle by their own presence, yes! And if any of the fighters dares to escape, then the women... mock them and, by ridiculing them, the women are able to get them back them to the fight. Montenegrin women are also diligent at home: they spin and knit; they carry water, firewood, and [...] help their husband... in ny kind of work. This hard work make them healthy and virtuous.¹⁸

Interestingly enough, the opera *Balkanska carica* was for the first time integrally performed only in 2008, two years after the declaration of an independent state of Montenegro. The Federal Yugoslavia ceased to exist in 1991, when Slovenia, Croatia, and later Macedonia declared their independences, followed by Bosnia and Herzegovina in 1992. After that, Serbia and Montenegro proclaimed the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, and they finally achieved their own indepedence in 2006. Montenegro's secession would end what has become an increasingly fractious federation with Serbia, kept together by pressure from the European Union.¹⁹ It was claimed by the pro-independence politicians that it is a great day for the citizens of Montenegro to regain independence after 88 years, referring to 1918, when was established the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes, later becoming the Kingdom of Yugoslavia. The process of reconstructing cultural memory included the construction of a new so-called Montenegrin language, Montenegrin Academy of Sciences, along with attempts of the declaration of the independent Montenegrin Orthodox church. The concerts and other events take place in several Montenegrin cities to mark the anniversary on the same day, including also visits to the monument of the country's most famous nineteenth-century poet, Petar Petrović Njegoš, on the top of mountain Lovćen, under the auspices of the new government led by Milo Djukanović.

Since 2006, a comprehensive reconstruction of the glorious past, spanning from the time of Zeta to the nineteenth-century Montenegrin Principality and Kingdom led

18 Dimitrie Milaković, ed., *Grlica, kalendar crnogorski za godinu 1835*. Mladeži crnogorskoj najvećoj nadeždi unapredašnjeg Štita slobode otečestva posvećen (Crna Gora: Mitropolitska pečatnja, s.a.), 54–54. The last word of the citation, translated here by me as „virtuous“ (meaning also „of high moral standards“), is „celomudren“. It is taken from the Bible to express a person who is moral, without any vices and whose body and mind is clean.

19 Under rules negotiated with the European Union, Montenegro's government agreed that it would have to win at least 55 percent of the vote for independence to be internationally recognized. In a referendum held on May 21 2006, 55.5 per cent of citizens voted for independence. Cf. Nicholas Wood, “Pro-independence movement leads in Montenegro”, *New York Times*, May 22, 2006, http://www.nytimes.com/2006/05/22/world/europe/22montenegro.html?pagewanted=print&_r=0.

by the members of the family Petrović Njegoš took place in the state cultural policy.

Since cultural memory is defined as the way a society ensures cultural continuity by preserving its collective knowledge – with the help of cultural mnemonics – from one generation to the next, rendering it possible for later generations to *reconstruct* their cultural identity. Precisely the drama *Balkanska carica* re-entered the repertoire of the national theaters, and also numerous gusle players. This was followed by the first performance of de Sarno-San Giorgio's opera in 2008, as a spectacle reviewed more in political than cultural and artistic narrative, confirming the re-inventing of national cultural memory. The opera *Balkanska carica* was performed in a rather new form, rearranged, significantly shortened, with added musical numbers and new orchestration. Even its end was changed and it became unrecognizable. Consequently, references to the past reassure the members of a society of their collective identity and supply them with an awareness of their unity and singularity in time and space—i.e. an historical consciousness, as Ian Assmann pointed out, by *creating* a shared past.²⁰

POVZETEK

Članek preučuje večplasten proces konstrukcije in rekonstrukcije črnogorskega kulturnega spomina. Z namenom propagiranja svojega političnega programa je Nikola I. Petrović Njegoš, princ in prvi črnogorski kralj, leta 1884 napisal prvo narodno gledališko igro *Balkanska carica*. Igra temelji na dogodkih iz srednjeveške zgodovine Zete, ki jo je vodil Ivan Čarnojević, in je hkrati tudi podlaga za

prvo narodno opero z enakim naslovom (1891). Opero je kot politično posvetilo Nikoli I. Petroviću Njegošu napisal skladatelj in italijanski ambasador v Črni gori Dionisio de Sarno-San Giorgio. V celoti je bila prvič uprizorjena šele leta 2006, ko je Črna gora dobila status samostojne države. Novo vodstvo je rekonstruiralo kulturni spomin, da bi s srednjeveško Zeto in kraljestvom v 19. stoletju poudarilo stalnost črnogorske nacionalnosti. To je hkrati pomenilo tudi popolno predelavo opere.

20 Ian Assmann, *Das kulturelle Gedächtnis. Schrift, Erinnerung und politische Identität in frühen Hochkulturen* (München: Beck, 1992), 30–34.