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- 4 JAN. 2019



Mr. Tim Curtis  
Secretary of the 2003 Convention

UNESCO  
Section of Intangible Cultural Heritage  
7, Place de Fontenoy  
75352 Paris  
France

**Subject:** Opposition to an independent nomination of the Bokelj Navy for the UNESCO representative list of Intangible Cultural Heritage as submitted by the Republic Montenegro

Dear Sir,

there is an old folk saying stating that it is the history of a people to determine its identity through future generations. We can all learn a lot from history; history is, just to quote another popular expression, „life's teacher“. This saying is true above all for us Europeans and even much more for the area of the permanently turbulent Balkan Peninsula. Respecting a people's heritage on the territory of another country, even if that particular people, due to historical circumstances, is not present any more on the territory of that country or has been reduced to a small minority, is a prime scope that any modern European country should aim at if it wants to be part of modern society.

The ceremony celebrating Saint Tryphon and the traditional dance named after the Saint, Saint Tryphon's Kolo, are intangible cultural heritage of the Croats living in the Bay of Kotor (Boka Kotorska), who maintained that tradition through centuries and did so particularly within the Catholic Church; settling down in the Bay of Kotor, our Orthodox sister nations, the Montenegrins and the Serbs, accepted that holy tradition of ours and passed it over from generation to generation together with us Catholic people.

The Confraternity Bokelj Navy 809 has always been first and foremost a „spiritual“ organization devoted to and celebrating Saint Tryphon, the Patron Saint of all us Bokelj people. The Confraternity used to dance Saint Tryphon's Kolo solely and exclusively on the occasion of the ceremony celebrating Saint Tryphon, and only in the town of Kotor.

Historically, the Bay of Kotor was part of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy until 1918; within that country, it was a part of Dalmatia, which was in turn, together with Croatia and Slavonia, a Croatian region within the Kingdom of Hungary: Dalmatia, Slavonia and Croatia are at present the constituents of the Republic of Croatia.

Throughout its history, Montenegro was a country in the mountains, without access to the sea, which did only change in 1872 during the war against the Ottoman Empire when Montenegro for the first time in history got a short coastline between the towns of Bar and Ulcinj. After the end of the Second World War and the creation of Tito's Yugoslavia in 1945, the Bay of Kotor happened to find itself within the border of Montenegro.

Due to economic and other reasons, Croats started to leave their birthplace, the Bay of Kotor, as early as 1918 and more massive emigration took place after 1945. Much alike any other nation emigrating, they took with them in their hearts and souls their identity and the heritage of the Saint Tryphon's Celebrations and Saint Tryphon's Kolo, which have been preserved for centuries for our Croatian nation by the Confraternity Bokelj Navy 809 in the Republic of Croatia, a fact that was recognized by the Republic of Croatia and was filed as intangible heritage in the Register of Cultural Heritage of the Republic of Croatia.

The Bay of Kotor is today part of Montenegro, a fact that we, Croats originating from the Bay of Kotor, acknowledge and respect, but we will never accept the fact that an aspect of our culture, which has dominantly been maintained and passed over by us Croats for more than 1000 years, is nowadays presented as „Montenegrin cultural heritage“ only because the Bay of Kotor is today within the border of Montenegro.

Dear Sir, let us go back to the beginning of my letter and to the definition of what its historical identity means to a nation: to us, Catholic Croats from the Bay of Kotor, Saint Tryphon's Kolo of the Confraternity Bokelj Navy 809 and Saint Tryphon's Celebrations mean literally „everything“.

Our sister nations, the Montenegrins and the Serbs, vaunting their glorious history and honour, should know that the history of a people which is nowadays a minority on a certain territory must be respected.

Unfortunately and sadly, despite all our efforts made in order to submit a common nomination with Montenegro in the spirit of peace and cooperation between nations, which also included agreements among diplomats, Montenegro submitted its request independently.

Dear Sir, once again I would like to stress that history is life's teacher.

I hope you do believe in justice and repudiate injustice.

Yours sincerely,

Vladimir Pasković, mag. ing. pp.

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