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Cultural Organization

**National Commission
of Montenegro
for UNESCO**

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Mr. Ernesto Ottone Ramirez
Assistant Director General for Culture

Mr. Tim Curtis
Secretary of the Convention
For the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage

UNESCO

Dear Mr. Ottone Ramirez and dear Mr. Curtis,

Following your letter (reference: CLT/LHE/19/0150700024) concerning the nomination of *Boka Navy - Traditional Maritime Organization* for the inscription on the Representative List of Intangible Cultural Heritage, we are forwarding the answer of this organization to the letters addressed to Montenegro. The material received from UNESCO we have sent to the organization of Boka Navy itself in order to let the local community to address this issue and present their position, since the local community had and still has the leading role in the process of this nomination.

The text that we are sending as the comprehensive answer to the raised questions reflects the position of the whole organization of Boka Navy and its wider community, since it has been approved during the joint meeting of the Admiralty and the Steering Committee of the organization, held in the premises of Boka Navy in Kotor, on April, 1st.

The local community of Boka Navy and the institutions of Montenegro stand ready to provide any further clarifications regarding this or any other aspect of the nomination.

Thank you for your kind cooperation,

Secretary General of the National Commission of Montenegro for UNESCO


Milica Nikolic




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Kotor, April 2nd 2019

Mr Ernesto Ottone Ramirez
Assistant Director General for Culture

Mr Tim Curtis
Secretary of the 2003 Convention

UNESCO - Section of Intangible Cultural Heritage
(CLT / CRE / ITH)
7, Place de Fontenoy
75352 Paris 07
France

Dear Mr Ramirez and Mr Curtis,

Upon carefully studying the letters sent to you by Mr Zvonimir Deković, Mr Albert Petrović, Mr Vinicije Lupis, Mr Ivo Škanata (who attached a statement of the Kotor Diocese published on January 27th 2018) and Mr Vladimir Pasković (hereinafter: *letters*), that were aimed to deny the right of Montenegro to independently nominate Boka Navy for the UNESCO Representative List of Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity, claiming that the Boka Navy is in fact a cultural property which belongs to Croatian people in Boka Bay and Boka Bay people in Croatia, we are now sending you this letter, in which we use historical, cultural and sociological arguments based on relevant historical sources and data, to prove the baselessness of their argumentation.

1. Not one of the authors of these letters is a member of the organization of Boka Navy, nor are they experts for its history, tradition and values. At most, they have superficial knowledge on the subject. Vinicije Lupis, the only historian among them, didn't study the Navy in his professional work, as can be understood from the list of his works that he attached; it can be said that he too holds only superficial knowledge of the Navy. In addition, all of the letters demonstrate lack of knowledge of the general history of Boka Bay, state of Montenegro and the region, including Croatia, and misunderstanding of cultural, religious, social and political categories by equating or mixing religious, ethnic, linguistic and national categories. There are no significant scientists in the Republic of Croatia who have written any important works on the subject of Boka Navy.

The most important historians of the Boka Bay and Boka Navy were authors who lived and still live in the Bay, members of Boka Navy Kotor: Slavko Mijušković, vice admiral of the Navy

(Orthodox, Serbian), Miloš Milošević, admiral (Catholic, Croatian), Jovan Martinović, honorary vice admiral (Orthodox, Montenegrin). We would also mention Petar Šerović (Orthodox, Serbian), don Niko Luković, (Catholic priest, Croatian) and monsignor Pavo Butorac (Catholic bishop in Kotor, then Dubrovnik, Croatian), in addition to others mentioned in the Nomination Dossier. None of these or other numerous authors wrote about the Croatian character of the Navy.

Some of the most significant works that concern history, tradition, values and statute of the Boka Navy have been published by the Navy itself; Miloš Milošević (editor), *Twelve Centuries of the Boka Navy, 809-2009*, Kotor 2013; Miloš Milošević, Jelena Antović (editors), *Statute of the Fraternity of St Nicholas the Sailor in Kotor from 1463 with amendments until 1807*, Kotor, 2009; Milka Čanak-Medić, Zorica Čubrović, *St Tryphon's Cathedral in Kotor*, Kotor 2010; Jovan Martinović (editor), *Collection of Works from an International Scientific Gathering in Kotor, Twelve Centuries of the Boka Navy*, Kotor, 2010; Antun Sbutega, *Boka Navy*, Kotor, 2017; Antun Sbutega; *History of Maritime Affairs in Montenegro in the Context of Adriatic, Mediterranean and Global Maritime Affairs*, Kotor 2018. None of these works cite the Croatian character of the Navy.

Numerous documents, statutes, artifacts, photographs, films, weaponry, costumes, flags, decorations of the Navy, that bear witness to its long history, are kept in Kotor, in the Historical Archives, Maritime Museum, Navy House and Kotor Diocese, that is - in Montenegro, not in Croatia. None of the Navy statutes, starting with the first preserved one from 1463 all the way to the last one from 2016, as well as none of any important documents, mention any national or ethnic group, Croats included.

2. It is necessary to explain the chain of events that lead to some Croatian institutions and the very few representatives of Croatian people in Montenegro to deny the right of Montenegro to independently nominate the Boka Navy for the UNESCO list, as seen in the letters. Firstly, it is important to underline that the Boka Navy never received an official offer for joint nomination from anyone from Croatia or from any Croatian associations in Montenegro. Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Croatia made such a suggestion to the Ministry of Culture of Montenegro (who, after consultations with the Boka Navy Kotor, refused this offer due to the lack of argumentation), however, the Ministry (of Croatia) treated the Navy solely as an object, and not the subject of the nomination. When on February 4th 2018 the Minister of Culture of Croatia Nina Obuljen Koržinek arrived to Kotor, where a meeting was held with the Minister of Culture of Montenegro Aleksandar Bogdanović, during which she insisted on a joint nomination, she did not find it necessary to consult the Boka Navy Kotor about that, thus ignoring its opinion. In that same period, ministers of culture and foreign affairs of Montenegro, along with their consultants, and president of Montenegro, held numerous meetings and consultations with the leadership of Boka Navy Kotor.

Initiative for the nomination towards the Ministry of Culture of Montenegro has been made by the Navy more than ten years ago. In 2013, Montenegro declared Boka Navy to be intangible cultural heritage of Montenegro. During an official visit to Montenegro, then-General Secretary of UNESCO, Irina Bokova, visited Kotor on July 19th 2014, where she was welcomed by the Navy squadron and had traditional dance *kolo* danced in her honor. She then visited the Navy Home, got introduced to this institution and its intention to be nominated for the UNESCO Representative List of Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity. Secretary offered her support, and vice admiral Ilija Radović (Orthodox, Montenegrin) gifted her a charter making her an

honorary member of the Navy. When conditions for the nomination appeared, i.e. when, between March 7th and 11th 2017, a team of experts from UNESCO Center for Intangible Cultural Heritage from Sofia organized workshops in Cetinje and Kotor, in which Boka Navy members took part as well, the complex work of preparing a Nomination Dossier could begin. Team of experts of the Ministry of Culture, lead by Milica Nikolić, Secretary General of the National Commission of Montenegro for UNESCO, and representatives of the Navy, admiral Antun Sbutega, vice admiral Ilija Radović, major Saša Milošević and president of the Steering Committee Aleksandar Dender, worked on the Dossier for a year. Since the beginning, the preparation of the Nomination Dossier has been transparent and monitored by the Navy or other interested individuals from broader local community, media, with regular basic information published on the website of the Navy.¹ When the work on the Dossier was in its final stages, members of the Navy received its text, and on November 16th 2017 in Kotor, in the Navy Home, a public discussion for all interested parties was held. At the time, members of the Navy and the expert team of the Ministry of Culture responded to numerous questions, heard suggestions and proposal, and some of them, which they considered appropriate, were introduced in the Nomination Dossier. In addition, an invitation to the citizens and institutions was published on the website of the Navy and through different media (on October 14th and 31st 2017)² inviting them to send letters of support for the nomination. Many did so, including people of different national, religious, cultural and political affiliations, among which were also the Croatian Civic Society in Montenegro. Statement that Kotor Diocese was not invited to participate, i.e. that it was not invited to send a letter of support, is incorrect. Boka Navy is a layman organization, and although it successfully cooperates with the Kotor Diocese, especially in terms of organization of St Tryphon Day celebrations, it has no obligation to notify and consult the Diocese about its activities. The Diocese was invited to support the nomination through the media, same as others, and the Diocese failed to do so.

In addition, the statement that Boka Navy did not take part in the preparation of the Nomination Dossier is also incorrect. Monsignor Anton Belan, Catholic priest of the Kotor Diocese, a long term member of the Navy, was indeed included in the final stages of the Dossier preparation, as some of his suggestions, made during a meeting with admiral Antun Sbutega and president of the Steering Committee, Aleksandar Dender, were accepted and adopted.

In December 2017, the preparation of the Nomination Dossier was in its final stages, and this is when an intense political and media campaign from Croatia and some Croatian associations in Montenegro began. They sought to deny the right of Montenegro to independently (without the Republic of Croatia) nominate the Navy for the UNESCO List, using baseless claims (mostly the ones cited in the letters), stating that the Navy, from its foundation until today, has been a cultural heritage of Croatian people. At that time, some Croatian MPs (who had nothing to do with the Navy, and who had no knowledge of its history and values) in the Parliament of Croatia,³ EU Parliament⁴, as well as an MP of Croatian party Croatian Civic Initiative in the Parliament of Montenegro, took to serious protests against this nomination. Prime Minister of

¹ <https://portalanalitika.me/clanak/262393/zavrsena-radionica-o-nematerijalnoj-kulturnoj-bastini>

² <https://www.bokanews.me/featured/podrska-upis-bokeljske-mornarice-listu-unesco/>,
<http://www.radiokotor.info/radio/index.php/istorija/78-lokalne-vijesti/16773-podrska-za-upis-bokeljske-mornarice-na-listu-unesco>

³ <https://narod.hr/hrvatska/marko-vucetic-most-ne-moze-se-ignorirati-hrvatski-identitet-bokeljske-mornarice>

⁴ <https://www.vecernji.hr/vijesti/marijana-petir-bokeljska-mornarica-je-kulturno-i-duhovno-naslje-e-katolicke-crkve-i-hrvata-1230121>

Montenegro Duško Marković had a clear response⁵ and Admiralty and Steering Committee of the Navy issued a public statement titled “Whose is the Boka Navy“⁶, in which they confuted the incorrect data and arguments of those who denied the right of Montenegro to nominate the Navy, and they expressed a firm attitude, stating that only Montenegro could and should nominate the Navy. Therefore, the Government of Montenegro and the Boka Navy Kotor made a joint decision on independent nomination of the Navy. However, the debate continued through use of political and media pressure by Croatian institutions and Croatian associations in Montenegro. It ceased following the submission of the Nomination Dossier and its adoption by UNESCO. Leadership of the Navy, which carefully monitors the process of the nomination, was notified that a representative of the Republic of Croatia in UNESCO has continued to contest the nomination, and when we received these letters, on the Regular Annual Assembly of the Boka Navy on February 8th 2019, we notified the public thereof.⁷ After that, media campaign lead by Croatian contesters to the nomination regained strength.⁸

We wish to underline that the Republic of Croatia has never before made an initiative towards Montenegro for a joint nomination of some material or intangible cultural heritage (UNESCO list has 8 material and 17 intangible cultural properties from Croatia). Initiative for a joint nomination of tombstones (stećci) was made by Bosnia and Herzegovina, and joint nomination of Venetian fortifications was made by the Republic of Italy. However, now that Montenegro has nominated an intangible cultural property for the first time (Boka Navy), Croatia consistently tries to disable it.

In the same manner, during the period of preparation of Nomination Dossier for Boka Navy, which was a public and transparent process that lasted for one year, Republic of Croatia, in complete secrecy, prepared a Nomination Dossier for St Tryphon Day Celebrations and St Tryphon traditional circle dance (kolo).

It is interesting that the Republic of Italy, which is a successor of the Venetian Republic, does not pretend to the Italian character of the Navy, although its most significant historical period occurred precisely during the rule of Venice in the area of Boka Bay (1420 -1797), when all the members of the Navy were subjects of the Venetian Republic. Example of the Republic of Italy is instructive, because Italy could, and not only as a successor of the Venetian Republic, claim rights to a large part of material and intangible cultural heritage of the Republic of Croatia, and other European and Mediterranean countries.

3. The letters also demonstrate a lack of knowledge of basic nomination criteria in terms of cultural heritage inscription in the UNESCO list. Each country is a legitimate heir to all material and intangible cultural heritage on its territory, regardless of who made the heritage over the centuries, and it has an obligation and a right to preserve that heritage and valorize it. For example, if Croatia was denied a right to material and intangible cultural properties which were made by Illyrians, Greeks, Romans, Byzantines, Venetians, Austrians, Hungarians, Italians, Serbians and others, there wouldn't be much left.

⁵<https://skalaradio.com/dusko-markovic-bokeljska-mornarica-i-kolo-svetog-tripuna-pripadaju-svim-gradanima-crne-gore/>

⁶<https://skalaradio.com/cija-je-bokeljska-mornarica/>

⁷<https://www.bokanews.me/featured/sbutega-najveci-uspjeh-bokeljske-mornarice-u-zadnja-dva-vijekaja-nominacija-za-unesco/>, <https://www.bokanews.me/featured/hrvatska-bratovstina-bokeljska-mornarica-809-i-hnv-cg-uporno-pokusavaju-da-onemoguće-upis-bokeljske-mornarice-na-listu-unesco-a>

⁸<http://bokeljska-mornarica.hr/priopcenje-hrvatske-bratovstine-bokeljska-mornarica-809-rijeka-u-svezi-izjava-admirala-dr-sc-antuna-sbutege/>; <http://www.radiodux.me/vijesti/drustvo/odgovor-hnv-admiralu-sbutegi>

The Nomination Dossier offered no space for a more detailed description of the history of the Navy and its cultural, spiritual, social, artistic and other qualities, so the remarks made in the letters that some of the facts were left out or described in a few words are unjustified.

Therefore, we would like to use this opportunity to go into more detail, especially when the majority of arguments and facts cited in the letters is incorrect or partially correct and wrongly interpreted, due to lack of knowledge or a desire to falsify the history in a failed attempt to stick a Croatian identity to the Navy. Although the Croatian people, among others, did give a significant contribution to the Navy, it never had their identity. Boka Navy Kotor carefully studies its 1210 years long rich and varied history, transferring it from generation to generation, and thus it has no need to be lectured by others on its own history and identity.

In 2013, Montenegro declared Boka Navy a protected intangible cultural property, and Republic of Croatia declared St Tryphon folk dance and St Tryphon Day Celebrations its own intangible cultural property. Boka Navy Kotor and the Government, i.e. Ministry of Culture of Montenegro, made no protests to that. However, we would like to use this opportunity to underline that such an act had no historical or any other basis, and neither did the nomination of those properties for the UNESCO list, which was made by the Republic of Croatia. When it comes to the St Tryphon cult, we would like to underline that the cult is developed, in addition to Montenegro, in other Catholic (Italy) and Orthodox (Bulgaria, Macedonia, Serbia, where he is considered a protector of vineyards) countries, and that St Tryphon has Catholic churches dedicated to his cult in Italy, as well as Orthodox churches in Serbia and Russia, where St Tryphon has been declared as one of the protectors of Moscow.⁹ In Croatia there are no churches dedicated to St Tryphon, which clearly points to the fact that the cult of this Saint and celebrations in his name have no basis and tradition in Croatia, save for Boka immigrants. When it comes to the St Tryphon traditional circle dance (kolo), the tradition states that it was first danced on January 13th 809 by a group of sailors who established a predecessor to the Boka Navy. The dance was made in honor of the St Tryphon relics which were brought to the city. A church was built in his name, and in 1166 the Saint was honored with a cathedral. This dance, which was preserved in Kotor and Boka during centuries, gradually evolved and gained its current form consisting of twelve figures representing spiritual and religious symbols,¹⁰ and it bears no resemblance to others in Croatia, as the letters incorrectly state. This also pertains to the music that follows the dance, which also evolved during the centuries, and whose current version has Baroque characteristics and no known authors. Therefore, a claim that this is Croatian music is absolutely incorrect. Captain and poet Pavo Kamenarović from Dobrota in Boka Bay wrote the text to the music of the dance, and it became a hymn of the Boka Navy. He and the Catholic Bishop Marko Kalođera were protagonists of the restoration of the Navy in 1859. However, Kamenarović wasn't a Croat, he was Serbian and Catholic. The text does not mention Croatians, Serbians or other peoples, but calls to their unity and „clearly underlines the vastness of national and religious tolerance and the feeling of fraternity, which are carefully preserved in Boka.“¹¹

⁹K. Mitrović, „Kult svetog Tripuna u serdnjevjekovnom Kotoru“, *Dvanaest vjekova Bokeljske mornarice 809-2009*, Kotor 2013, pages 17-23; M. Čanak- Medić, Z. Čubrović, *Katedrala svetog Tripuna u Kotoru*, Kotor 2010; A. Belan, *Sveti Trpun i njegova katedrala*, Zagreb, 2011.

¹⁰ U. Raffelli, *A ballo di San Trifone*, Zadar, 1844, P. Butorac, *Tripundansko kolo*, Kotor 1941; M. Ilijin, „Narodne igre u Boki Kotorskoj“, Spomenik SAN CIII, Beograd 1953. P.Šerović, „Bokeljska mornarica“, Pomorski zbornik II, Zagreb 1962, pages 1855-1856; M. Milošević, „Kolo Bokeljske mornarice“, *Dvanaest vjekova Bokeljske mornarice 809-2009*, Kotor 2013, pages 106-109

¹¹ M, Milošević; „Kolo Bokeljske mornarice“, *Dvanaest vjekova Bokeljske mornarice 809-2009*, Kotor 2013, page 107

Costumes worn by Boka Navy members, which are very similar to the traditional folk costume of the Boka Bay area, were designed under influences of different Mediterranean countries, primarily Spain, Italy and Greece and local population, but not Croatia.¹²

No one wishes to contest the contributions made to Boka Navy by Croatian people, especially the Catholics. Their contribution has been underlined in the Nomination Dossier as it states that Boka Navy was preserved „mainly by Catholics, Croatians, Montenegrins and others“. Similarly, in the article „Whose is the Boka Navy“, which was published on December 25th 2017 by the Admiralty and the Steering Committee of the Navy, it is stated that there is “no doubt that in the last 150 years, after the establishment of national identities in the region of Boka Bay during XIX century and restoration of the Navy by the Austrian Monarchy in 1859 under a new name The Noble Body of the Boka Navy, the Catholics, primarily Croatians, had an important role in the development of the Navy“. What is not true, and what is persistently mentioned in the letters, is the claim that the Navy has been a cultural heritage of Croatians since its establishment in 809, as well as identification of Catholics in Boka with Croatians during the last centuries, and persistent claims that Montenegro has no right to nominate the Boka Navy for the UNESCO list without the Republic of Croatia.

Similarly, it is not true that the Nomination Dossier fails to sufficiently mention St Tryphon, Kotor Diocese, traditional circle dance *kolo* and its spiritual characteristics. Saint Tryphon is mentioned five times, Kotor Diocese three times and the traditional circle dance is mentioned numerous times, and Dossier states that it consists „of 12 figures with spiritual and maritime symbols“. The letters state that the Navy and its dance were relegated to their folklore manifestations, while the Dossier states that „the values of the Navy cannot be commercialized and the Navy does not perform in folklore shows.“

The cooperation between Boka Navy Kotor and Kotor Diocese can be called very intensive, although the Navy is a layman organization. The two cooperate every year during the organization of St Tryphon Day Celebrations, as well as during other significant events. In 2009, the Navy and the Diocese, in cooperation with Montenegrin institutions and with their financial support, celebrated 1200 years since St Tryphon’s relics were brought to Kotor and 1200 years since the Navy was established.¹³ In 2016, the Navy took part in celebration of 850 years since the construction of St Tryphon Cathedral in Kotor¹⁴, during the passing of the body of Saint Leopold Mandić from Padua to his hometown of Herceg Novi in 2017¹⁵ and in the welcome of the State Secretary of the Holy See Cardinal Pietro Parolin in Kotor in 2018.¹⁶

The letters state that the English and French translations of the Nomination Dossier have significant differences compared to the text in Montenegrin language - this is simply not true. A translation can never be identical, but it aims to conform to the spirit of the target language, without changes in the content.

The letters mention several times that Croatians make up 99% of the Boka Navy Kotor membership today. This is not correct. Over its long history, Boka Navy has never kept, nor does it keep today, a register of members based on their ethnic or national affiliation. Conditions for membership in the Navy were never based on ethnic or national affiliation

¹² J.Vukmanović, „Nošnja i oružje Bokeljske mornarice“, Spomenik SAN CIII, Beograd 1953, pages 215-224; M.Mihaliček, „Nošnja Bokeljske mornarice u likovnim prikazima od XVIII do XX stoljeća“, *Dvanaest vijekova Bokeljske mornarice 809-2009*, Kotor 2013, pages 137- 143.

¹³ I.Radović, „Proslava 1200 godina prenosa relikvija sv. Tripuna i postojanja Bokeljske mornarice,“ *Dvanaest vijekova Bokeljske mornarice 809-2009*, Kotor 2013, pages 191-199

¹⁴ <https://www.bokanews.me/featured/kotorska-biskupija-obiljezila-850-godina-posvete-katedrale-svetog-tripuna/>

¹⁵ <http://www.kotorskabiskupija.me/tijelo-svetog-leopolda-stiglo-herceg-novi/>

¹⁶ <http://www.kotorskabiskupija.me/kardinal-parolin-u-pohodu-kotorskoj-biskupiji/>

either, so we must say the data that letters mention is completely manufactured. Navy's membership certainly includes a lot of Croatian people, as well as Montenegrins, Serbians, Bosnians, Hungarians and others, as well as Catholics, Orthodox people, atheists, agnostics and others. The membership of the Navy is heterogeneous since it consists of different genders, religions, nationalities and cultural identities, but its homogenous in preservation of its traditions, history and fundamental values.

The claim that the Nomination Dossier is a result of political agreements is also false. The Dossier is a result of a long work of experts from the Ministry of Culture and representatives of the Boka Navy. The truth is, there were political pressures made by politicians and diplomats from the Republic of Croatia and Croatian politicians in Montenegro, with a goal of making Montenegro abandon the idea of independent nomination of the Navy. Threats were made that Croatia would make Montenegro's EU accession process difficult if Montenegro went through with its independent nomination. Croatian Civic Initiative is a political party in Montenegro which is a member of the leadership coalition - their representatives threatened to leave the coalition in the case of independent Montenegrin nomination.¹⁷

One of the letters claims that there are great similarities between Boka Navy Kotor and Sinjska Alka and Knights' Association Kumpanija Blato from Croatia, which is a false claim. In addition to great differences in history, tradition, costumes, functions, statutes, customs and other things, Boka Navy is a maritime organization and is much, much older than aforementioned organizations; Sinjska Alka was established in XVIII century and Kumpanija Blato only in 1927. Boka Navy Kotor never had fraternal relations with these organizations.

The letters also claim that contemporary Boka Navy, from 1859 to today, doesn't have a maritime character. This claim is incorrect. The Navy is not an exclusively professional organization of sailors that it once was; equally, it is not a religious fraternity anymore, and it doesn't have military function that it once had. However, its main goal, as stated in all its statutes from 1873 to today, has been to protect and valorize maritime history and tradition, as well as contribute to the development of maritime affairs. Its numerous members are still active or former sailors, maritime experts or members of families with long maritime traditions. In Article 28 of its current Statute it is stated: „Admiral of Boka Navy Kotor can only be a person of high moral and cultural qualities whose activities are connected to maritime affairs, as well as culture and tradition of Boka Navy and old maritime families of this region.“

Admiral Vladislav Brajković PhD (1964 -1989) was one of the most respected experts for maritime law in Yugoslavia, university professor and an academic. Admiral Miloš Milošević PhD (1991 – 2012) was a writer, archivist and a historian, whose total opus of several hundreds of scientific works was dedicated to the history of Boka Bay, especially its maritime history. Current admiral Antun Sbutega PhD earned his master and doctorate degrees based on thesis from the field of maritime affairs. He published numerous works on that subject, including history of Boka, Montenegro, maritime affairs. In addition, he was a professor at the Maritime Faculty in Kotor. Vice admiral Slavko Mijušković PhD (1964-1969), an academic, was a distinguished historian of the Boka Bay and especially its maritime history, and he published numerous scientific works on that subject, particularly focusing on the Boka Navy. Vice admiral Nenad Želalić (1991-1995) was a captain and a maritime expert, and vice admiral Borislav Ivošević (1996-2003) was a distinguished expert in the field of maritime law, professor at the University of Montenegro and author of numerous books and scientific articles on the subject. Current vice admiral Ilija Radović (2004-) is a captain with long experience and he was one of

¹⁷ <https://www.bokanews.me/featured/hgi-zbog-bokeljske-mornarice-napusta-vladajucu-koaliciju/>

the directors of Jugooceanija Kotor, the biggest shipping company to ever exist in Montenegro.¹⁸

In one of the letters it is stated that the current admiral Antun Sbutega is a high ranking official of the Government of Montenegro, which implies that he represents interests of the Government, and not those of the historical truth, values and interests of Boka Navy Kotor. Antun Sbutega (Catholic, Croat from Kotor) has never been a member of any political parties, nor has he ever been a member of some government. From 1977 to 1991 he was a professor at the Maritime Faculty in Kotor, and on October 2nd 1991, he emigrated to Italy with his family, because he refused to be a part of Yugoslav National Army and participate in an armed attack on Croatia. From 1994 to 2007 he worked in the Congregation for Evangelization of People in Vatican, and between 2007 and 2013 he was the first ambassador of Montenegro to Holy See and Sovereign Military Order of Malta. From February 15th 2015 to December 1st 2016, when he retired, he was an ambassador of Montenegro to the Republic of Italy, Malta and San Marino. Therefore, in the period when he was chosen as an admiral, between June 26th 2016 until December 1st of the same year, he was an ambassador of Montenegro, and not a member of the Government. Since then, he's been in retirement and he performs duties of an admiral on a volunteer basis, same as all other members of Boka Navy Kotor. He and other members of the Navy leadership, who suffered media and political pressure from Croatia, were inspired by a famous statement of Aristotle, who said, while criticizing ideas of his teacher Plato: "I love Plato, but I love truth more". And so, they said: "We love Croats and Croatia, but we love truth more."

4. Territory of current Montenegro has a very long, rich and tumultuous history, mentioned in the letters only in fragments and in an incorrect manner. Therefore, it is necessary to review this history.¹⁹

In the first millennium BC, this territory, same as whole of Western Balkan, was inhabited by Illyrians, who formed first states.²⁰ After three wars against Illyrians (229- 168 BC), Rome occupied the whole territory of Western Balkan, including Montenegro, and thus began the romanization of cultural, commercial, administrative, religious and ethnic aspects. Roman Empire was definitively split to Western and Eastern Empire in 395, and this border split Montenegro in two. „This divide left a mark on the political, cultural and religious history of Montenegro, because the Roman border later became a border between the Catholic and Orthodox churches, between the Ottoman Empire and the Venetian Republic (later replaced by Austria), between the western and eastern culture.“²¹ After the Edict of Milan in 313, during IV and V centuries first dioceses were established, and after the fall of Western Roman Empire in 476, the whole of Montenegro became a part of Eastern Roman Empire, Byzantium. During VI and VII centuries South Slavs came to the region of Balkan, destroying numerous cities (Salona, Epidaurus in Croatia, Sirmium in Serbia, Doclea and Risan in Montenegro), they made permanent settlements, mixed with the old Illyrian and Roman population and gradually accepted Christianity. When it comes to the ethnic structure of Montenegro in the early Middle

¹⁸ J. Martinović, „Admirali, viceadmirali, počasni admirali i mali admirali Bokeljske mornarice“, *Dvanaest vjekova Bokeljske mornarice 809-2009*, Kotor 2013, pages 76-83

¹⁹ *Istorija Crne Gore I-III*, Titograd, 1967, 1970, 1975; A. Sbutega, *Storia del Montenegro*, Soveria Mannelli 2006; Ž. Andrijašević, Š. Rastoder, *Istorija Crne Gore. Od najstarijih vremena do 2003*, Podgorica, 2006; E. Roberts, *Realm of the Black Mountain, A History of Montenegro*, London 2007.

²⁰ A. Stipčević, *Iliri. Povijest, život, kultura*, Zagreb, 1991.

²¹ A. Sbutega, *Storia del Montenegro*, Soveria Mannelli, 2007, pages 30–31.

Ages, of which there are no certain sources from that period, during XIX and XX centuries, when national identities and states based on nations were created, Serbian and Croatian historians claimed, with no valid arguments or evidence, that the Slavic tribes in Montenegro during that time were Serbian, i.e. Croatian, and that the first Montenegrin state Duklja (Doclea, Dioclea) in the Middle Ages was actually Serbian, i.e. Croatian. Written sources for that period of Montenegrin history are lacking, and the most important ones (De Administrando Imperio by Constantine VII Porphyrogenitus, Chronicles of Priest of Duklja, Chronicles of Split by Toma Arhiđakon) were written several centuries after the events they described. A point of contention is certainly found in the Chronicles of Priest of Duklja (known also as Sclavorum Regnum and Chronicles of Bar) from XII century, the first Medieval chronicle pertaining to the history of South Slavs, especially to Montenegro, whose original text was not preserved, and we have only later transcriptions in Latin, Italian and Croatian languages, which differ from one another.²² The only thing that is certain is that the population of Montenegro during Middle Ages called itself Diocleians, and that the first Montenegrin state was called Duklja, so named after the Roman city of Doclea (Dioclea), that was destroyed during invasions of barbarians. Similarly, it is certain that Slavs in Montenegro mixed with the old population of Illyrians, Romans, Byzantines, Albanians and others, and that there were several migration waves to the territory of Montenegro, as well as changes in the ethnic and religious picture, which lead way to its current complex structure.²³ Cities on the coast, of which the most important one was Kotor, were seats to dioceses, and they kept the Roman population and Latin language. These cities were fortified and they resisted invasions. They were the centers from which culture and Christianity was spread to Slavic population. Benedictine order which expanded from Italy to the coast of Montenegro had a significant role in the spreading of Christianity.²⁴ Already in X century, the first autonomous state was established in Montenegro, recognized by the Byzantine authorities. In 1042, the first independent state of Duklja was formed. During the time of Schism of 1054, Duklja was Catholic. In 1078, Pope Gregory VII recognized its independence and its first king Mihailo, and in 1089, Catholic diocese in Bar received the status of the Archbishopric and the Metropolitanate.²⁵ Duklja was conquered by Serbia 1185, and in XIII century Orthodox Christianity started spreading. Duklja remained as a part of Serbia until 1360, when another Montenegrin state, Zeta, was established. It was lead by a Catholic dynasty Balšići, which lasted until 1421.²⁶ After some time, when the majority of its territory was reintegrated within the Serbian territory, Orthodox dynasty of Crnojevići created the third Montenegrin state around 1450. In 1496, this state was conquered by the Ottoman Empire. During the time of their rule, Islam started spreading. Borders of Medieval states were not identical to current borders of Montenegro. Venetian Republic held some cities on the coast in the end of XIV century, and in the first half of XV century, it held Kotor, Budva, Bar and Ulcinj. Middle Ages saw the intensive development of culture and art, under the dominant influence of the West, and to lesser extent, East.²⁷

²² E.Peričić, *Sclavorum regnum Grgura Barskog*, Zagreb, 1991; D. Radojević, *Popa Dukljanina Sclavorum regnum*, Cetinje, 2016.

²³ Š. Kulišić, *O etnogenezi Crnogoraca*, Titograd 1980.

²⁴ K. Mitrović, *Benediktinci na području Barske nadbiskupije i Kotorske biskupije (9.stoljeće-1571)*, Kotor, 2015.

²⁵ D. Farlati, *Illirici sacri*, VI, Venezia, 1800, str. 57; I. Marković, *Dukljansko-barska metropolija*, Zagreb, 1902, page 52; V. Čorović, *Istorija srpskog naroda I*, Cetinje–Podgorica, 2009, page 231; Monumenta Montenegrina III, Podgorica, 2001, pages 68–69; P. Kher, *Papsturkunden in Rom (Nachrichten von der konigl. Gesellschaft der Wissenschaften zu Gottingen*, 1900, 2, page 148.

²⁶ B. Šekularac, *Crna Gora u doba Balšića*, Cetinje, 2000.

²⁷ R. Vujičić. *Srednjevjekovna arhitektura i slikarstvo Crne Gore*, Podgorica 2007

During XVI and XVII centuries, in the continental Montenegro, an alliance of tribes was formed, lead by an Orthodox metropolitan. It was a form of theocracy.²⁸ Those tribes, in cooperation with Venice, started a fight to liberate themselves from the Ottomans. Popes were already seen starting wars of West European countries against the Ottoman Empire, and Montenegrin Orthodox metropolitan accepted a religious union with Rome in 1640. The union lasted only a few decades.²⁹ In XVI, Ottomans conquered cities of Bar and Ulcinj on the coast. In the centuries that followed, Montenegrins cooperated with the Venetian Republic, and from the beginning of XVIII century, with Russia and Austria as well. They lead fights of liberation from the Ottomans, and on one part of the territory, they formed the first de facto liberated state in the Balkans. Rulers from the Petrovići dynasty expanded the the free territory, and Montenegrin independence was recognized in 1878 during the Berlin Congress. Montenegro gained a part of the coast (Bar and Ulcinj). After the fall of Venice, its territory falls in the hands of Austria, then Russia, France, and in 1813 it joins Montenegro, only to fall to Austrian hands in 1814, and remain under their rule until 1918. In the time when national identities and national states were formed, rulers from the Petrović dynasty (Petar II Petrović Njegoš and Nikola I) didn't spread Montenegrin national identity, but Serbian one. They did so with an ambition to make Montenegro a center of one big state in the Balkans, liberated from the Ottomans, home to the majority of Serbian population.³⁰ This created problems, because Serbia, the bigger country, had its eyes set on annexing Montenegro. For this reason, there were two assassination attempts on Nikola I. Montenegro became a kingdom in 1910. During XVIII and XIX centuries, ethnic and religious structures were significantly changed. There were also intense emigrations from Montenegro to other Balkan states, Russia, Austria, Europe, Turkey and America. After victories in Balkan Wars 1912-13, Montenegro joins Serbia as an ally during the WWI, and although it was one of the victors, Serbia forcefully annexed it in 1918. This caused a rebellion and a civil war lasting up to 1925.³¹ As a part of Serbia, Montenegro joins Yugoslavia, with no autonomy of its own. In that period, a special form of Montenegrin national identity was developed.

During WWII, Montenegro was occupied in 1941 by Italians and then Germans; on July 13th 1941 the first uprising occurred on the territory of Yugoslavia, and the first liberated territory in Europe. Thus begins a dramatic war between the partisans and the occupiers and their collaborators, with great victims. In January 1945, partisans liberated Montenegro, which then became one of the six federal republics in the Socialist Yugoslavia. Official existence of Montenegrin nation is recognized. In the wars following the breakup of Yugoslavia 1991-2001, Montenegro was the only republic on whose territory there were no armed conflicts. The truth is that in the period between 1991 and 1995, when Montenegro was controlled by Serbia, the Croatian people were pressured and many had to leave Montenegro. However, all non-Serbian peoples faced the same pressure - Montenegrins, Albanians, Bosnians and others. Many emigrated. Until 2006, Montenegro remained in a federal union with Serbia. Its commerce, including maritime affairs, suffered a big crisis. In the referendum of 2006, citizens of Montenegro decided to restore the independence and sovereignty of their country, the fifth

²⁸ J. Roganović, V. Nikčević, *Crnogorska teokratija*, Cetinje 1991, R. Radonjić, *Crnogorska teokratija*, Podgorica, 2018.

²⁹ M. Jačov, *Spisi Kongregcije za propagandu vere u Rimu o Srbima 1622–1644*, Beograd, 1986, pages. 454–466. B. Pandzic, „L'opera della S. Congregazione per le popolazioni della Penisola Balcanica centrale”, *Sacrae Congregationis de Propaganda Fide Memoria Rerum, 1622–1972*, Vol. I, 1622–1700, Rom, Freiburg, Wien, 1972, page 295.

³⁰ Ž. Andrijašević, *Nacija sa greškom*, Cetinje, 2004.

³¹ Š. Rastoder, *Skrivana strana istorije (Crnogorska buna i odmetnički pokret 1918-1929)* I-IV, Bar, 1997.

one during the past millennium. Since then, the country saw a fast development, in 2017 it became a member of NATO, and it is expected that by 2025 it will become a member of European Union. Montenegro is the first in the world by the number of sailors per capita (oko 1%).

During its long history, Montenegro changed its ethnic, religious and cultural structure, political and social system, name and borders, and it has a very rich and varied material and intangible cultural heritage, created by various previous countries, peoples and religions.

According to the last census from 2011, Montenegro has a population of 620.029, consisting of Montenegrins (44,69%), Serbians (29,02%), Bosnians (8,65%), Albanians (4,91%), Muslims (as a nationality, 3,31%), Roma population (1.01%), Croatians (0,97%) and others. This truly is a multiethnic country. Religious structure is complex too, with 72,07% Orthodox (divided between Serbian and Montenegrin Orthodox churches), 19,11% Muslims, 3,44% Catholics and others. Unlike other Balkan countries, there is no identification between religious and national affiliations. Orthodox mainly include Montenegrins and Serbians, Muslims include Bosnians, Albanians and slavic Muslims, and Catholics include Albanians, Montenegrins, Croatians and others.

Therefore, Montenegro is an example of a multinational, multiconfessional, multicultural country and valorization of all its components is a condition of its stability and development. In its Constitution, Montenegro is defined as a civic country (and not national country of Montenegrins) and secular state, and official languages are Montenegrin, Serbian, Bosnian, Croatian and Albanian. In the Republic of Croatia, the population of Croatians is 90,42%, there are 86,2% Catholics and its Constitution states that it is a country of Croatian people and then national minorities, while the official language is Croatian.

5. Boka Bay is the deepest bay on the Adriatic coast. The sea penetrates the land in the length of 30 km, surrounded by high mountains, making the Bay a perfect port and base for trading and war fleets. Since the beginning of its history, maritime affairs were the primary activity.³² In the old times, the Bay was populated by Illyrians who established the city of Risan, which was the main port and for a while, the capital of Illyrian state. In it, the Greeks had a trading colony, and it was called the Bay of Risan. Romans conquered Boka in 168 BC,³³ and it remained a part of the Roman Empire until 476, when Byzantium took over. Romans built Kotor (Agruvium, Acruvium), Byzantines fortified it, and as such, it resisted the Slavic invasion. After Risan was destroyed in VII century, Kotor became the most important city and port in the Bay of Boka.³⁴ It was ruled by Byzantine until 1042, when it was named Decatera. In V century it became a seat of a diocese and it had a cathedral. Its population consisted of Romans and Byzantines, the language was Latin and the city had great autonomy. Main activities were maritime affairs and maritime trade. Ships of Kotor took part in the Byzantine actions against Arabs in 867.³⁵ Kotor and Boka became a part of the first Montenegrin state of Duklja in 1042. In 1155, Kotor had two war galleys,³⁶ and in 1167 it made a maritime agreement with Omiš, and then with other cities on the Adriatic.³⁷ In 1166, St Tryphon Cathedral was built and he

³² N.Luković, *Boka Kotorska*, Cetinje 1951; M.Milošević, „Istorijski tokovi na području zaliva“, *monograph Kotor*, Zagreb 1970; M. Milošević, „Pomorstvo – izvor života na kamenu“, *monograph Kotor*, Zagreb, 1970.

³³ J.Martinović, „Ilirska država, rasprava o hronologiji i etnogenezi“, *Godišnjak Pomorskog muzeja Kotor(GMPK) LIV*, 2006.

³⁴ J.Martinović, „Analiza izvora za ubikaciju Kotora“, *GPMK XIX*, Kotor, 1971.

³⁵ S. Mijušković, „Vojna orgnizacija Bratovštine kotorskih pomoraca“, *GPMK XX*, Kotor, 1972, page 28.

³⁶ Mauro Orbini, *Il regno degli Slavi*, Pesaro, 1601, page 349.

³⁷ M. Čanak-Medić, Z. Čubrović, *Katedrala Svetog Tripuna u Kotoru*, Kotor, 2010.

became the protector of the city.³⁸ From XI century to 1828, with short interruptions, Kotor Diocese was a suffragan to the Archbishopric and the Metropolitanate Bari-Canosa (Italy), which contributed to the intensive economic and cultural cooperation with Bari. Around 1185, Kotor and the whole of Boka Bay became a part of Medieval Serbian state, and remained within its territory until 1371.³⁹ During that time, Kotor was the main port of Serbia, and it enjoyed great autonomy, it expanded its territory, and Kotor noblesse and citizens were largely in control of the foreign trade between Serbia and the Mediterranean and Europe. They enjoyed great economic and cultural prosperity. Kotor noblesse performed very important diplomatic and financial functions in the service of Serbian rulers, which is why they and their city received great privileges. The Catholic diocese of Kotor also expanded its territory in the Orthodox Serbia, while the culture mostly remained Western, with Latin as the official language. In that period, Slavs gradually started settling in Kotor, mostly as servants, craftsmen and middle class.⁴⁰ Orthodox Christianity starts spreading in the Bay, and in 1220 the first Orthodox diocese was established in the territory of present day Montenegro. Following the death of the last Serbian emperor Uroš V in 1371, Kotor finds itself endangered by rulers of surrounding states of Zeta, Herzegovina and Dubrovnik. Ottomans start making their way onto the Balkans as well, and Kotor decides to accept the protection of Hungarian king Louis I, from 1371 to 1384, and from 1384 to 1391, Bosnian king Tvrtko I, who had already ruled over the western part of Boka and built the city of Herceg Novi in 1382. From 1391 to 1420 Kotor was an independent city - republic.⁴¹ It was constantly attacked by its neighbours, and the Ottomans made further invasions into Balkans and the Adriatic, so Kotor made seven requests for protection from the Venetian Republic. Venice accepted in 1420, and since then until the fall of the Republic in 1797, Kotor was a part of its territory.⁴² When the whole present day coast of Montenegro (excluding Herceg Novi and Risan) became a part of the Venetian Republic with cities of Bar, Ulcinj and Budva, this region was called Venetian Albania. Western part of Boka with cities of Herceg Novi and Risan became a part of the Ottoman Empire in 1482.⁴³ In 1571, the Ottomans conquered Ulcinj and Bar as well. Thus, Kotor found itself surrounded by the Ottomans on all sides, constantly attacked. The city was of vital strategic importance for both Venice and Europe.⁴⁴

In the Middle Ages Croatians are not mentioned in the area of Boka, although they certainly lived there. In XIII, Slavs, Albanians, Vlasi, Greeks and others⁴⁵ were mentioned in Kotor for the first time, and in XIV century, population expanded to include citizens of other states and cities, especially Italians and population of Dalmatian cities and Dubrovnik, who were primarily

³⁸ F.Sforza, *Bari e Kotor*, Bari, 1975.

³⁹ M.Milošević, „Istorijski tokovi na području zaliva,“ *monografija Kotor*, Zagreb, 1970, page 72; I.Sindik *Komunalno uređenje Kotora: od druge polovine XII vijeka do početka XV stoljeća*, Beograd, 1950

⁴⁰ J.Martinović, *Socijalno-ekonomska struktura društva u Kotoru prve polovine XIV vijeka*, Kotor, 2017.; G. Čulić, *Antroponimija Boke Kotorske*, Kotor 1996

⁴¹ P. Butorac, *Kotor za samovlade (1355–1420)*, Perast, 1999.

⁴² A. Dabinović, *Kotor pod Mletačkom republikom (1420-1797)*, Zagreb, 1934.; I. Božić, „Kotor poslije prihvatanja mletačke vlasti,“ *XII vjekova Bokeljske mornarice*, Beograd 1972; M. Milošević, *Pomorski trgovci, ratnici i mecene*, Beograd–Podgorica, 2003.

⁴³ P. Šerović, „Borbe sa Trucima oko Herceg Novog 1508, i 1493-1494.g.“, *Istorijski zapisi* 1, Cetinje, 1953, P.Kovačević, „Pomorstvo Herceg Novog,“ Boka 1, Herceg Novi, 1969,

⁴⁴ F. Braudel, *La Méditerranée et le monde méditerranéen à l'époque de Philippe II*, Paris, 1949, page 93; M.Milošević, *Boka Kotorska, Bar i Ulcinj od XV do XVIII vijeka*, Podgorica, 2008. pages 14-15.

⁴⁵ G. Čulić, *Antroponimija Boke Kotorske*, Kotor, 1996. pages 89-91.

involved in trading.⁴⁶ First Kotor documents that mention families of Chervatin and Horvatinovich (which indicates that they may have been Croatians) appear to be from 1431 and 1436.⁴⁷ During XVI century, there is a mention of hired Croatian soldiers in the service of Venetian Republic.

Population of Kotor and surrounding settlements, Perast, Prčanj, Dobrota and Stoliv, who in this period became communes and important maritime centers, were distinguished by their maritime skills and bravery in wars both at sea and land. They received numerous economic privileges from Venice, as well as nobility titles and decorations. During the wars in XVII century, Venetian territory in Boka became a home to warriors (hajduci)⁴⁸ and refugees from Montenegro and Herzegovina, who were Orthodox. After liberation of Herceg Novi and Risan from the Ottoman Empire in 1687 (in which the fleet and army of Venetian Republic, Toscana, Papal State, Sovereign Military Order of Malta, Boka people and Montenegrin squadrons took part), ethnic, cultural and religious structure of Boka radically changed. Orthodox population came to be a majority.⁴⁹ Croatians are mentioned again in the end of XVII century in the writings of a Russian diplomat P.A. Tolstoy, who wrote that Croatians lived in Perast, Serbians in the surrounding settlements of Boka which were liberated from the Ottomans, and Montenegrins in the hinterland.⁵⁰

According to the census from 1748, the population of Boka was 17.402, of which 10.113 were Orthodox and 7.299 Catholic.⁵¹ During that time, the idea of contemporary national identity didn't exist, thus Catholics cannot be ethnically equated with Croatians. Numerous Italians, Albanians and other non-Slavic Catholics lived in Boka at the time, and during the centuries, there were many mixed marriages between Catholics, Orthodox and others. Venetian Republic tried to have a tolerant relationship towards the Orthodox, and there were around ten churches with Orthodox and Catholic altars, used jointly by both.⁵² All of that, as well as common Slavic origin, language, similarities in costumes and customs, lead to members of different religions and ethnic groups coming together and getting used to coexistence.⁵³ During this time, the Bay gets its name Boka Kotorska (Bocche di Cattaro), and its population is called Bokelji (Bokezi), regardless of their ethnic or religious affiliations.

During that time, Italian language was the official one, the Catholic church used Latin, and unofficially, folk language was in use, sometimes called "Slavic", "Illuriyan", sometimes Serbian, but rarely Croatian.⁵⁴ Until XVI century in Boka, primarily in Kotor, humanistic and Renaissance literature developed in Latin and Italian languages. It primarily followed examples of Latin classics and Italian writers, and during XVII and XVIII centuries, writers from Boka were still mainly using Italian, and rarely Latin, to write. Sometimes they wrote in French as

⁴⁶ J. Martinović, „Trgovački odnosi Kotorana sa susjednim gradovima u prvoj polovini XIV vijeka“, GPMK LI, Kotor, 2003, pages 11-182; J. Martinović, „Italijanski trgovci u Kotoru u prvoj polovini XIV vijeka“, GPMK, LV-LVI, Kotor, 2008

⁴⁷ M. Pasinović „Hrvati u Crnoj Gori na početku trećeg milenijuma, demografske i identitske karakteristike, Kotor 2014, pages 28-29

⁴⁸ *Hajduci u Boki Kotorskoj 1648-1718*, Titograd, 1988.

⁴⁹ P. Butorac, *Boka Kotorska u 17. i 18. stoljeću*, Perast, 2000, pages 101-140; M. Milošević, *Boka Kotorska, Bar i Ulcinj od XV do XVIII vijeka*, Podgorica, 2009, pages 72-79, 256-264; A. Sbutega, *Historija pomorstva Crne Gore u kontekstu jadranskog, mediteranskog i svjetskog pomorstva*, Kotor, 2018, pages 163-164;

⁵⁰ P. Kovačević, „Učešće Bokelja u razvoju ruske mornarice“, *Dvanaest vjekova Bokeljske mornarice*, Kotor, 2013, page 85

⁵¹ M. Milošević, *Boka Kotorska, Bar i Ulcinj od XV do XVIII vijeka*, Podgorica, 2009, pages 260 -262

⁵² G. Stanojević, „Nekoliko statističkih podataka o Boki Kotorskoj iz sredine XVIII stoljeća“, Spomenik SANU, sv. 105, Beograd, 1956. pages 30-32

⁵³ G. Brajković, M. Milošević, *Proza baroka*, Titograd, 1979, page 22.

⁵⁴ M. Milošević, *Boka Kotorska, Bar i Ulcinj od XV do XVIII vijeka*, Podgorica, 2009, pages 276-280

well. Increasingly they started writing in folk language (sometimes called “Slavic”, “Illuriyan”, sometimes Serbian, but rarely Croatian).⁵⁵

Fraternity of St George and St Tryphon in Venice, established in mid XV century, which gathered Catholic South Slavs from the area of Western Balkan, primarily eastern coast of Adriatic, had a name of Scuola santi Giorgio e Trifone degli Schiavoni (or Dalmatians), which didn't only include Croatians, but also other South Slavs and Dalmatians, although Croatians were indeed a significant part of the membership.⁵⁶ Especially Boka people were numerous in this fraternity, which can be seen in its name: while the cult of St George was widespread in the eastern Adriatic, St Tryphon cult existed only in Boka, and not in other parts of Dalmatia.⁵⁷ During the Venetian rule, many emigrated from Boka to Venice, where Kotor people represented the biggest immigrant group from the coast of east Adriatic.⁵⁸

At the same time, church and institution of St Jerome was established in Rome, gathering the Catholic priests and believers from the east Adriatic coast, including those from Kotor Diocese and Bar Archdiocese. It was called San Girolamo degli Illirici or San Girolamo degli Schiavoni, calling to mind Illyrians and Slavs, not Croatians. Only in 1971 it got the name of Papal Croatian Institution of St Jerome.⁵⁹

During the Venetian rule, and especially in XVII and XVIII centuries, Boka was tightly connected with the continental hinterland of Montenegro, in economic, military, religious and cultural sense. The most important exported products of Boka maritime traders were products from Montenegro,⁶⁰ and Montenegrin priests had jurisdiction over Orthodox population of Boka since 1718.

Since the end of XVII century, Boka developed better connections with Russia; numerous Boka sailors went to Russia and held significant roles in the development of Russian military fleet. Some of them became admirals.⁶¹

During XVIII century, Boka saw a dynamic development of maritime affairs and maritime trade. In the end of that century, the Bay had over 300 large sailboats and several hundreds of smaller ones, as well as 3.500 sailors.⁶² At the time, Boka was the most significant maritime center in the Adriatic. A significant number of shipowners and sailors were Orthodox from the area of Herceg Novi and Risan.⁶³ Revenue gained through maritime affairs was invested in culture and art. During 377 years of Venetian rule in Boka, some of the most important structures, churches, palaces, fortifications and settlements were built. The largest part of

⁵⁵ Miloš Pantić, M., *Književnost na tlu Crne Gore i Boka Kotorske od XVI do XVIII veka*, Beograd, 1990; G. Brajković, M. Milošević, *Proza baroka*, Titograd, 1979.; G. Brajković, M. Milošević, *Poezija baroka*, Titograd, 1976.

⁵⁶ N. Luković, „Bratovština bokeljskih pomoraca sv. Đorđa i Tripuna u Mlecima“, GPMK VI, Kotor, 1957.

⁵⁷ T. Vallery, A. Sigovini, „Le Bocche di Cattaro e la Scuola dalmata di Venezia. I legami fra la città di San Marco ed i Bocchesi“, *Međunarodni naučni skup Dvanaest vjekova Bokeljske mornarice, Zbornik radova*, Kotor, 2010, page 44

⁵⁸ L. Čoralić, „Kotorski iseljenici u mletačkim bratovštinama kroz prošlost“, *Međunarodni naučni skup Dvanaest vjekova Bokeljske mornarice, Zbornik radova*, Kotor, 2010, pages 55-94,

⁵⁹ R. Perić (a cura di), *Chiesa Sistina (1589-1989)*, Roma, 1989.

⁶⁰ M. Milošević, „Pomorstvo-izvor života na kamenu“, *monograph Kotor*, Zagreb, 1970, page 70

⁶¹ P. Kovačević, „Učešće Bokelja u razvoju ruske mornarice“, *Dvanaest vjekova Bokeljske mornarice 809-2009*, Kotor, 2013; S. Mijušković, „Učešće Bokelja u ruskoj floti na Mediteranu (1769–1774)“, *12 vjekova Bokeljske mornarice*, Beograd, 1972.

⁶² F. Viscovich, *Storia di Perasto*, Trieste, 1898, page 233.; P. Putorac, *Kulturna povijest grada Perasta*, Perast, 1999, page 73.

⁶³ P. Palavršić, *Kapetani i jedrenjaci Herceg Novog*, Herceg Novi, 2018.

material and intangible cultural properties dates back to that time. It was precisely during that period that the specific culture and mentality of Boka and its population developed.⁶⁴

After the fall of Venetian Republic in 1797, Boka became a part of Austria. In 1805 it had more than 396 large sailboats, 290 smaller ones, there were 3.629 sailors and 239 captains.⁶⁵ After Russia's short rule (1806-07), the Bay was occupied by the French and it became a part of Napoleon's Illyrian provinces which included Dalmatia, part of continental Croatia and Slovenia.⁶⁶ In that period, under the influence of French ideas, national consciousness starts to develop in this region. It takes a form of Illyrianism, which was partially a model for future Yugoslavia.⁶⁷ During the French rule, the largest part of Boka's ships were ruined.

After an uprising against the French, which was organized in cooperation between Montenegrins, Boka people and the English fleet, Boka and Montenegro were united in 1813.⁶⁸ However, great powers decided to give Boka to Austria in the middle of 1814. Boka would remain a part of Austria until 1918. In the end of XIX century, a large military and maritime base was established in Boka.⁶⁹ Until mid XIX century, maritime affairs recuperated after losses incurred during Napoleon wars, and in 1853 the fleet had 121 sailboats for long journeys (many of which belonged to Orthodox Serbs). This fleet was left to ruin by the end of the century due to competition of steamships.⁷⁰ This becomes the reason for Boka people to move to different areas, primarily to Trieste, and then Russia, Italy, Europe, America, present day Croatia. It was not only the Catholics and Croats who moved, but Orthodox Serbs and others as well. During XIX century, interests of Austria, Italy, Serbia, Montenegro and others met in Boka, and under their influences, different national movements and identities were formed. Different ethnic, religious, linguistic, cultural and political factors had impact on those shapings.

Despite all that, there was a consolidation of a feeling of local belonging to Boka, regardless of religious and national identity, so the population of the Bay identified itself as Boka people (Bokelji, Bokezi). On June 13th 1848 an assembly consisting of 400 representatives of all Boka municipalities was held in Prčanj. The assembly was called to discuss revolutionary events in Austria and Boka. They were deciding on an answer to the letter sent by the Croatian Assembly, which requested their support to the idea of united Dalmatia (of which Boka was an administrative part) with Croatia and Slavonia, of which Boka was politically and administratively separated within Austria. Boka assembly responded with a letter written in Cyrillic script: „Our first and holiest duty is to announce to the world that we are not Dalmatians - we are Bokezi (...) If the upcoming events lead to Slavic-Serbian countries, i.e. Yugoslavian countries, uniting under one imperial protectorate, with no other nationalities such as Italians, Hungarians, Germans and so on, then there is no doubt that Boka would have no objections to fulfill your wishes towards unification.

However, the way things are today, and especially taking into consideration that you report to the Hungarian crown, do not allow us to sacrifice our nationality, recognized for us in the new constitution of the Austrian Empire, for purpose of this unification.

⁶⁴ J. Martinović, *Ostavština Venecije u Crnoj Gori*, Kotor, 2018

⁶⁵ I. Zloković, „Bokeljsko pomorstvo u Napoleonovo doba“, Pomorski zbornik II, Zagreb, 1962, page 1832.

⁶⁶ P. Pisani, *La Dalmatie de 1797 a 1815*, Paris, 1893, 1962; P. Butorac, *Boka Kotorska nakon pada Mletačke republike do Bečkog kongresa*, Zagreb, 1938.

⁶⁷ J. Plumyene, *Le nazioni romantiche, Storia del nazionalismo nel XIX secolo*, Firenze, 1982, page 161.

⁶⁸ *Ujedinjenje Crne Gore i Boke Kotorske 1813–1814*, Titograd, 1991.

⁶⁹ R. Pavićević, „*Werk – Austrougarske tvrđave u Crnoj Gori*“, Herceg Novi, 2012,

⁷⁰ J. Martinović, „Nestajanje bokeljskih jedrenjaka“, *12 vjekova Bokeljske mornarice*, Zagreb, 1972.

Once every Yugoslavian country becomes independent with no influence from others and in a correct manner, when it comes to be what we all want to see - establishment of an empire of Slavs protected by an emperor, when equal rights are established between those countries through contracts, then the Bay of Boka will be happy to join such an alliance."⁷¹

There were no population censuses made in this period based on ethnicity or nationality, instead they were made based on language and religious. A large majority of Orthodox Boka people declared themselves to be Serbian, majority of Catholics were declared Croatian, although there were a lot of Italians, Germans, Hungarians, Slovaks, Czechs and others, including Serbians, among the Catholic population. A group of Serbian Catholics existed in Boka, as well as Dubrovnik.⁷² Often members of same Catholic families had different national identities, either Croatian, Italian or Serbian. This is the reason that it is not possible to fully identify Catholics and Croats in this period. Croatian Catholic bishop and political leader Josip Juraj Strossmayer promoted ideas of a country of South Slavs, and such ideas found fertile ground among Boka population, mostly among Catholics. Many in the Kotor Diocese supported this idea. When bishop Franjo Uccellini Tice translated Dante's Divine Comedy in 1910, he dedicated it to "harmony and love between Croats and Serbians, brothers of same blood and same language."

In XIX century, language was an important element of national identity formation. In the first half of XIX century, an Illyrian movement appeared in Croatia, which called South Slavs Illyrians, and their language Illyrian. In 1850 in Vienna, the most important Croatian and Serbian linguists made an agreement on language with a goal of bringing together Croatian and Serbian language, which was later often called Slavic, Croato-Serbian or Serbo-Croatian. Official language in Dalmatia and Boka was Italian, but in the last decades of XIX century, Serbo-Croatian language started being introduced. At a session of municipal council in Kotor on August 7th 1866, a discussion was led on the subject of official naming of the language used by the population in Boka. Some of the suggestions were Slavo-Dalmatian, Serbo-Dalmatian and Illyrian language.⁷³

Gymnasium in Kotor introduced mandatory (which wasn't the case before) classes of Serbo-Croatian language in 1872,⁷⁴ and Maritime School in Kotor introduced the classes in 1879.⁷⁵ During the visit of emperor Franz Joseph to the Kotor gymnasium on May 3rd 1875, he was greeted by three students, in German, Serbo-Croatian and Italian languages.⁷⁶

According to the population census from 1890, there were 22.794 Orthodox in Boka, 11.825 Catholics and 188 others. Serbo-Croatian was used by 29.599 people, Italian by 969, German by 602 and 2.359 people used different languages.⁷⁷

Same as the Venetian Republic, Austria aimed to keep the balance between different nationalities and religions in the interest of political stability. In addition to Catholic diocese, Orthodox one was also established in Kotor.

⁷¹ N. Luković, *Prčanj* (reprint izdanja iz 1937), Kotor 2010, pages 74-75

⁷² Ivo Banac, „Vjersko „pravilo“ i dubrovačka iznimka: Geneza dubrovačkog kruga „srba katolika“, „Dubrovnik“, 1990, br. 1-2,

⁷³ Historical Archives fund in Kotor, Municipality of Kotor XXXI -379

⁷⁴ *First programme, Kotor Gymnasium for school year 1872-73*. Dubrovnik 1873.

⁷⁵ V. Boljević - Vuleković, „Pomorska škola u Kotoru,“ *12 vjekova Bokeljske mornarice*, Beograd, 1972. page 191,

⁷⁶ *Third annual report, Kotor Gymnasium for school year 1875-76*. Dubrovnik 1876, page 56.

⁷⁷ M. Pasinović, *Hrvati u Crnoj Gori na početku trećeg milenijuma, demografske i identitske karakteristike*, Kotor 2014

During the Austrian rule, Boka had very strong connections with neighbouring Montenegro, in economic, religious and cultural sense, and it represented its most important connection with the Mediterranean and Europe.

In the beginning of XX century, Boka had dominant characteristics of its Venetian heritage and Austrian cultural influences, as well as influences from Eastern (Orthodox) culture, but „within great civilizational and state projects, Boka never lost its local color, its peculiarity and its civilizational attributes.“⁷⁸

In 1918 Boka joined Kingdom of Yugoslavia (until 1929 Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenians), and it was part of an area of Zeta, along with the rest of territory of present day Montenegro. In 1931, 64,6% of the population of Boka was Orthodox, while 35,4% were Catholics. Boka was occupied by Italians in 1941, and then by Germans. It was liberated by Yugoslavian partisans in the end of 1944, and in 1945 it became a part of the Republic of Montenegro, in the context of Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. In that period, maritime affairs were intensely developed, and Maritime Museum and Maritime Faculty were established in Kotor, as well as shipping company Jugooceanija (which in 1988 had over 26 overseas ships with 812.467 tonnes).⁷⁹ On April 15th 1979 a strong earthquake hit Boka and caused big human and material losses. It especially damaged cultural and artistic monuments. That same year, Kotor and its area were inscribed in the UNESCO World Heritage List. Thanks to the solidarity and help of Yugoslavia, and after its breakup, Montenegro, cultural monuments were successfully reconstructed. After 2006, when Boka remained as a part of sovereign and independent Montenegro, tourism started dynamically developing, and especially nautical and cruising tourism. Boka is the most developed part of the country.

This long and complex history left deep marks in the material and intangible culture, mentality, religious and national structure, and Boka stands as an example of peaceful coexistence between people of different religions and cultures. During all its history, Boka was never a part of country of Croatia, as the letters stated. It wasn't a part of Croatian Medieval country when it lost its independence in 1102, nor was it a part of nazi-fascist Independent State of Croatia during the WWII (1941- 1945). It also wasn't a part of the Republic of Croatia within Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia.

In the period between 1371 and 1384 Kotor was under the protection of Louis I, king of Hungary, who was also a king of Croatia; Medieval kingdom of Croatia lost its independence in 1102 and became a part of the kingdom of Hungary, whose kings also wore a crown from Croatia, who had certain autonomy, and who accepted Austrian rule in 1527. A part of present day Republic of Croatia was conquered by the Ottomans, while another part belonged to the Venetian Republic. From 1814 the whole territory of present day Croatia belonged to Austria, all the way until 1918. The truth is that during long historical periods, Boka belonged to some countries that occupied the whole territory or part of territory of present day Croatia; Rome, Byzantium, Venetian Republic, France, Austria and then Yugoslavia. Ties between Boka and Croatia, especially Dalmatia and Dubrovnik, are very strong, as well as its ties with other parts of the Adriatic, Europe and the Mediterranean, especially Italy. All of this left marks on its culture, art and mentality.

The letters state that Boka has never been a part of Montenegro until 1945, which is simply untrue. Boka Bay shared political, cultural and religious fate of present day Montenegrin

⁷⁸ B. Sbutega, *Kurosavin nemir svijeta*, Beograd, 2007, page 254.

⁷⁹ I.Radović, „Jugooceanija nastavila slavnu tradiciju boklejskog pomorstva“, *Dvanaest vjekova Bokeljske mornarice 809-2009*, Kotor, 2013, page 166

territory until 1360, but also later, during Venetian and Austrian rule. Its economic, cultural, religious, military and political ties with the rest of Montenegro were very strong. Since 1918, Boka has always been politically integrated with Montenegro, within the region of Zeta (1918-1941), Republic of Montenegro within Socialist Yugoslavia, and since 2006, with independent Montenegro.

There is no doubt that Boka, out of all parts of present day Montenegro, had the strongest historical ties to Europe and the world, thanks to its maritime affairs, therefore its Boka Navy. However, it has always been and it will always remain a link between the rest of Montenegro and Europe and the world.

6. According to tradition and some historians,⁸⁰ Boka Navy was established on January 13th 809. On that date, relics of St Tryphon, Christian martyr from Asia Minor (III c), were brought via a Venetian ship from Istanbul to Kotor. At the time, Kotor was ruled by Byzantium, and it had Latin and Byzantium population, there were no Slavs, therefore no Croatians. The letters claim that Boka Navy was established by Croatians, which is hereby proven to be untrue. Historians believe that in the period until XIV century, during which time there are no preserved documents about the Navy, there used to be an organization of sailors in Kotor, taking into account that the city had developed maritime affairs and a military fleet.⁸¹ The first document that mentions the Navy (which was called Pia sodalitas naviculatorum Catharensium - Pious Society of Kotor Sailors) dates back to 1353, when Kotor was a part of Serbian Empire and the most important city and a port in the Empire. The document certifies that the organization was a fraternity (sodalitas, fraternitas, confraternitas, schola, scola, fratillia, fraternità, confraternita, frataglia, etc.), similar to those existing in other cities of Mediterranean Europe and guilds in Northern Europe.⁸² Fraternities gathered people of the same profession and protected their interests, at the same time being religious organizations. In the Medieval Kotor, there were many fraternities for different crafts, but the fraternity of sailors was the most important one, as maritime affairs were the most important commercial activity. This fraternity was the only one to have its own church, dedicated to St Nicholas, protector of sailors. This document confirms that.⁸³ Current coat of arms of the city also dates back to the period of Serbian rule. This coat of arms later belonged to the Navy as well. It features, in the upper part, a representation of St Tryphon, protector of the city, and a tower, while in the lower part it has a lion's figure.⁸⁴ The next document dates back to 1453, the time of Venetian rule of Kotor. It again pertains to the church of St Nicholas, belonging to the fraternity. The first preserved statute (and there are numerous indications that the fraternity had earlier statutes which were not preserved) dates back to 1463. The statute was written in Italian language, excluding the title page, written in Latin: Liber Fraternitatis divi Nicolai marinariorum de Catharo (Statute of the Fraternity of St

⁸⁰G. Gelcich, *Storia documentata della marinarezza bocchese*, Ragusa, 1889; A. Dabinović, „Može li se govoriti o kontinuitetu Kotorske Mornarice od 809. do danas?“, *Godišnjak Pomorskog muzeja Kotor (GPMK) VIII*, Kotor, 1957.

⁸¹ M. Milošević, „12 skica za 12 vjekova Bokeljske mornarice“, *Dvanaest vjekova Bokeljske mornarice*, Zbornik radova sa međunarodnog naučnog skupa, Kotor, 2010, page 12; A. Dabinović, *Kotor pod mletačkom republikom (1420–1797)*, Zagreb, 1934, pages 121–122; P. Šerović, „Bokeljska mornarica“, *Pomorski zbornik*, Zagreb, 1962, pages 1848.

⁸² Z. Novak, „Značaj i uloga bratovštine pomoraca Sv. Nikole od Sdorija u srednjovjekovnom splitskom društvu“, *Zbornik radova sa međunarodnog naučnog skupa Dvanaest vjekova Bokeljske mornarice*, Kotor, 2010, pages 118; I. Benyovsky, „Bratovštine u srednjovjekovnim dalmatinskim gradovima“, *Croatia christiana periodica*, 41, 1998, page 147

⁸³ S. Mijušković, „Bokeljska mornarica“, *Dvanaest vjekova Bokeljske mornarice*, Kotor, 2013, pages 59–61.

⁸⁴ L. Kampe, „O grbu grada Kotora“, *GPMK LIX-LX*, Kotor 2013-2017, pages 133-143

Nicholas the Sailor in Kotor). This statute, as well as numerous other preserved documents that allow us to trace back the history of the Navy, clearly demonstrates that the Navy, in addition to the religious, had many different functions: protecting the interests of sailors, shipowners and maritime traders (for a while this included ship builders), their mutual assistance, transfer of knowledge on maritime affairs and related skills, ransoming sailors kidnapped by pirates, organization of sanitary services, transfer of state mail via ships between Kotor and Venice, and so on.⁸⁵ During XV century, when Kotor had war galleys that protected the Bay and when it was taking part in operations of Venetian fleet on the Mediterranean,⁸⁶ the fraternity started gaining military functions, and the members started joining galleys and other warships and taking part in naval military operations. It was lead by an admiral who was a port captain as well. The first admiral was called Alegreto Nigro (1493), and he served as the port captain at the same time.⁸⁷ The Navy took part in numerous sea battles and operations of Venetian fleet against fleets of Ottomans and pirates, distinguishing itself through its efficiency and bravery. Kotor galley St Tryphon joined the Christian fleet in the famous battle against the Ottoman fleet that took place in 1571 (Battle of Lepanto). The whole crew and the captain died a heroic death.⁸⁸ For this reason, the fraternity enjoyed numerous privileges given by the Venetian authorities. It organized St Tryphon Day Celebrations, and on that occasion, it would take over the rule of Kotor for a few days, thus having the ability to pardon convicts and free prisoners. The most important privileges were of the economic nature, because they contributed to the development of maritime affairs and trade. The fraternity had a monopoly over these activities. According to a provision from 1631, only a member of the fraternity could perform these activities, excluding Perast inhabitants, who had their own fraternity of sailors.⁸⁹ After a part of Boka Bay was liberated from the Ottomans (Herceg Novi and Risan) in 1687, the Navy's authority spread to the whole Bay. The letters insist that during this period the Navy mostly consisted of Croats, for which there is absolutely zero evidence. Not one of the Navy's documents from that period mentions Croats or the ethnic structure of the Navy.⁹⁰ During XVII and XVIII, the Navy was often called the Navy of Kotor (Marinerezza di Cattaro). There is no doubt that this was a Catholic fraternity and that the majority of members were Catholics, although there were some Orthodox members. After the fall of Venice in 1797, during the first Austrian rule, the Navy lost its military function although it kept a military organization. During the French rule (1807-1813), the Navy was abolished and its church was taken away. During a short period of unity between Boka and Montenegro in 1813-14, the Navy was restored. Austria again forbade its functioning until 1833, when it was restored. Due to the participation of its members in revolutionary events, in 1848 the Navy was once again abolished. It was restored in 1859 through efforts of a Kotor bishop Marko Kalođera and captain and poet Pavo Kamenarović, who was Catholic and Serbian. In 1872, Austrian archduke Albrecht Friedrich Rudolf Dominik von Habsburg-Teschén gifted the Navy with a flag that had a ribbon on which it was written Fides et Honor (faith and honor). These words became the motto of the Navy, as confirmed by their inclusion in the new statute from 1873. This statute also declared a new name for the organization - Corpo nobile della Marinarezza

⁸⁵ M. Milošević, Jelena Antović, J., (editors), *Statut Bratovštine svetog Nikole mornara u Kotoru iz 1463, sa alegatima do 1807*, Kotor, 2009.

⁸⁶ A. Dabinović, *Kotor pod Mletačkom republikom (1420–1797)*, Zagreb, 1934, page 120.

⁸⁷ S. Mijušković, „Kotorski admirali“, GPMK XV, Kotor, 1967,

⁸⁸ M. Orbini, *Il Regno degli Slavi*, Pesaro, 1601, pages 308–309.

⁸⁹ P. Butorac, *Kulturna povijest grada Perasta*, Persta 1999, pages 75.

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bochese (Noble body of the Boka Navy). At the time, its members were both Catholic and Orthodox, and Orthodox members held some of the highest functions.⁹¹ Niko Ognjenović, Orthodox and Serbian, served as an admiral between 1833 and 1836. At that time, national identities were being formed, which was causing tensions. Both Orthodox and Catholic churches took part in this. In 1860, the Orthodox members asked that the Navy, in addition to taking part in the celebration of St Tryphon, also takes part in the celebration of the Orthodox Day of Holy Trinity. The leadership refused this request due to the fact that the statute did not envision this possibility. Following this, around 40 members of the Navy, who were Orthodox and Serbian, left the Navy and established the Serbian National Guard, that had almost the same uniforms and cherished the same traditions, but it was connected to the Orthodox church.⁹² However, Serbians of Catholic faith remained in the Navy. This division lasted until WWI, when the Navy came together with members of different religions and nationalities.

Statute from 1873 was written in Italian language, same as the one from 1463. Italian was the official language of the Navy all up until the last few decades of XIX century. However, in the end of that century, the folk language started being used. This language had different names - Serbo-Croatian, Croatian, Serbian, Illyrian, Slavic, etc. It was only in 1913 that the rulebook of the Navy was written in Croatian language. The statute was to be translated in two languages, but this wasn't done. This statute clearly showed that the Navy was no longer a religious fraternity, although it had ties with the Catholic church and it took part in St Tryphon Day Celebrations. In addition, the statute stated that the Navy may take part in the welcoming of emperor or members of his family. The Navy did indeed take part in the welcoming of emperor Franz Joseph in Kotor in 1875. It also participated in the 60th anniversary of his crowning in Vienna in 1908. This was the first time that the Navy performed outside of the Boka Bay.⁹³ The statute (article 6) stated that the members of the Navy can only be inhabitants of Boka and members of their families, and in extraordinary cases, Austrian citizens living in Boka. Members were no longer exclusively sailors, but also members of different professions. The Navy got its memorial character, but still, the majority of its members were sailors or maritime experts. In the period between 1878 and 1935, admirals were chosen from maritime captains, experts or shipowners. The statute does not mention Croats or Croatia. It instead stated that the Navy "received the best privileges from the Republic of Kotor, kings of Serbia and Venetian Republic, and this enabled its fast development, which made it the most interesting monument of Kotor and Boka."

In the end of XIX century, the Navy had around 300 members, and around 150 of them took part in the St Tryphon Day Celebrations in Kotor.⁹⁴

The letters claim that the Boka Navy exists on the territory of present day Croatia, and that it came to be there through the immigration of Boka people in the end of XIX century. Supposedly, they moved to Split and other Croatian cities, and started celebrating St Tryphon Day Celebrations there, while wearing Boka costumes and cherishing its traditions. The statute and other Navy documents clearly demonstrate that the Navy had no branches and it did not exist outside of Boka.

⁹¹ P. Šerović, „Bokeljska mornarica“, Pomorski zbornik II, Zagreb, 1962, page 1854

⁹² A. Sbutega, *Historija pomorstva Crne Gore u kontekstu jadranskog, mediteranskog i svjetskog pomorstva*, Kotor, 2018, page 308

⁹³ S. Mijušković, *Kotorska mornarica*, Podgorica, 1994, page 258.; A. Sbutega, *Historija pomorstva Crne Gore u kontekstu jadranskog, mediteranskog i svjetskog pomorstva*, Kotor 2018, page 311.

⁹⁴ J. Parall, *Bokeljska mornarica i Tripundan*, Kotor, 1899, page 27.

Despite the tensions occurring during the formation of national identities, all inhabitants of Kotor and Boka, be they Catholic, Orthodox, Croatian, Serbian or something else, took part in celebrations of St Tryphon, who was, same as St Nicholas, a common saint of both Orthodox and Catholic church. This period gave birth to an ecumenical custom that still holds today. This custom dictates that on February 2nd, day before the main celebration of the St Tryphon Day on February 3rd, citizens of both Orthodox and Catholic affiliation come together in the St Tryphon Cathedral in order to take part in the ritual involving relics of the Saint.

The statute written in 1873 remained in force until 1934, when the Navy was reformed and a new statute was adopted, on the initiative of Rudolf Giunio, (admiral 1938-1959)⁹⁵ and Ćiro Kamenarović. Both of them were advocates of Yugoslavian ideas, and not Croatian national ones, and they held a significant role in the creation of Yugoslavia. Kamenarović was a secretary of the ministry of finances and ministry of interior affairs of the Kingdom of Montenegro, and during the WWI, he fought in the Montenegrin Army and was a member of the Yugoslavian Board in London.⁹⁶ In addition to the memorial character, the new statute included social and humanitarian activities, as well as actions aimed to improve maritime affairs. A permanent museum collection of the Boka Navy was established in Kotor, and in 1952 this collection grew to become the Maritime Museum. The Navy existed only on the territory of the Bay, its members were of various religions and nations, and the Navy was allowed to perform only in Boka, on occasion of the St Tryphon Day Celebrations, or welcomings of the king and his family and other extraordinary events. In 1935, professor Karlo Radoničić PhD was chosen as an admiral. He got his education in Trieste, Kotor and Vienna, and at the time he was a professor of the University of Zagreb.⁹⁷ In 1938 Rudolf Giunio became the admiral. This statute did not stipulate the existence of any Navy branches outside of Boka, so the associations of Boka people founded in Zagreb, Belgrade and other Yugoslavian cities were not an integral part of the Boka Navy, as the letters incorrectly state. During the Italian and German occupation in the period between 1941 and 1944, the Navy was abolished because it wouldn't agree to cooperate with the occupiers, and admiral Giunio was interned in Italy. Around 150 members of the Navy joined the resistance movement of partisans, 70 were in concentration camps, Italian and German prisons, while many others sailed on allied ships. Many lost their lives in the war, and one of them, Mašo Brguljan, was declared a people's hero in Yugoslavia.⁹⁸

The Navy was restored in 1945, and it continued to celebrate St Tryphon's Day until 1947, when the communist authorities decided to prohibit such celebrations. Admiral Giunio protested this decision and offered his resignation, which was not accepted, and he remained a formal admiral until his death in 1959. The Navy was reformed in 1964 when a new statute was adopted, and Vladislav Barajković PhD was chosen as the admiral. He got his education in Kotor, Belgrade and France, and at the time he was a professor at the University of Zagreb and an academic.⁹⁹ This statute described the main goals of the Navy as such: „1. Cherish the bright traditions of our maritime affairs and the famous history of the Boka Navy; 2. Protect and

⁹⁵ M. Milošević, „Rudolf Giunio, admiral Bokeljske mornarice (Prčanj 1938–1959)“, GPMK LIX, Kotor, 2006.

⁹⁶ <http://hbl.lzmk.hr/clanak.aspx?id=9514>

⁹⁷ J. Martinović, „Admirali, viceadmirali, počasni admirali i mali admirali Bokeljske mornarice.“ *Dvanaest vjekova Bokeljske mornarice 809-2019*, Kotor, 2013, page 78.

⁹⁸ L. Maslovar, Članovi Bokeljske mornarice u Naordnooslobodilačkoj borbi,“ *12 vjekova Bokeljske mornarice*, Beograd, 1972, pages 218-221.

⁹⁹ J. Martinović, „Admirali, viceadmirali, počasni admirali i mali admirali Bokeljske mornarice“, *Dvanaest vjekova Bokeljske mornarice 809-2019*, Kotor, 2013, page 79.

improve the brotherhood and unity in Yugoslavia and strengthen the values created through the People's Liberation and socialist revolution, taking into account that in its long history, the Navy was always based on the values of brotherhood and unity between our peoples; 3. Cooperate with state bodies, institutions and other organizations that feature maritime tasks in their programmes; 4. Maintain relationships with similar organizations in the country and abroad." September 10th, the Day of Yugoslavian War Navy and Maritime Affairs, was declared as the Boka Navy Day. For the first time, this statute included the possibility of establishing branches, with the center remaining in Kotor. Following that decision, branches in Croatia, Serbia and Boka (Herceg Novi, Perast and Tivat) were founded. All these branches recognized the leadership, statute and the provisions of Boka Navy and had to act in accordance with them. The first article of the 1976 statute states that the seat of the Boka Navy is to be in Kotor and that its activities spread on the territory of Montenegro. Statutes from this period do not mention Croatians nor any other peoples, nationalities or ethnic groups. The statutes also don't mention branches outside of Boka, in Croatia and Serbia, although at this point they existed. According to the 1976 statute, Boka Navy assembly consisted of 15 delegates from the Montenegrin branches (Herceg Novi, Perast and Tivat), but branches from Croatia and Serbia did not offer delegates.

In line with the communist ideology of that time, the Navy was separated from its religious traditions. Until 1990, it didn't participate in the St Tryphon Day Celebrations, although it kept its motto *Fides et Honor* and its coat of arms that featured the likeness of St Tryphon. Both Croatian and Catholic members agreed to this, including the admiral Vladislav Brajković. Other distinguished members, such as one of the later admirals Miloš Milošević, also agreed to this, while continuing to privately take part in religious rituals, including the religious celebration of St Tryphon. Thanks to that, the Navy preserved its continuity, and in 1990, it had no problems to return to its earlier traditions. In 1991 it changed its statute (in which it also said that the activity of the Navy spreads to the area of the Bay of Kotor) and it continued to take part in the St Tryphon Day Celebrations. Therefore, it is incorrect that in that period the Navy preserved its tradition thanks to the Croatian branches, as the letters state. Those branches were only a peripheral part of the Boka Navy and they had to follow its statute and rulebooks.

During the fall of Yugoslavia in 1991, branches in Croatia separated from the Boka Navy in Boka, changed their name to Croatian fraternity Boka Navy 809, they changed the statute and chosen their own leadership - from that moment they were no longer a part of their mother organization;¹⁰⁰ therefore, Croatian fraternities were a part of the Boka Navy for two decades only. Despite that, delegations from the Montenegrin Boka Navy, lead by the admiral, vice admiral and other members of the leadership, attempted for years to reestablish the unity, negotiating a new union between Croatian fraternities and the Boka Navy, under a condition that they accept its name, statute, rulebook, leadership, values and traditions. These attempts were fruitless and Croatian fraternities were steadfast in their refusal, insisting that the Boka Navy Kotor should change its name and statute in line with their requests, i.e. they wanted it to be called a Croatian navy and enter in its statute that it is an organization of Croatians; this was, of course, refused. The last meeting with representatives of Croatian fraternities, which happened on the initiative of Kotor Navy, was held in the Boka Navy Home in Kotor in September 2016, on the occasion of celebration of 850 years of existence of St Tryphon Cathedral. After that, Croatian fraternities ceased contact with the Boka Navy Kotor. However, when the Nomination Dossier of Navy to UNESCO was in its final stages, Croatian fraternities

¹⁰⁰ A.Sbutega, *Bokeljska mornarica*, Kotor, 2017, page 30.

mobilized several Croatian politicians and some Croats in Montenegro (who were not members of Boka Navy), as well as the Government of Croatia and its Ministry of Culture and diplomatic officials, in order to begin an inappropriate and forceful media and political campaign against the nomination. They attempted, with no valid arguments (mostly cited in the letters), to prove that Montenegro had no right to independently nominate the Navy.

The Navy had no major issues in continuing its activities during the fall of Yugoslavia in the last decades of XX century, and especially since Montenegro regained independence in 2006. In 2009, the Navy celebrated 1200 years of its existence and 1200 years since the relics of St Tryphon were brought to Kotor. President of the celebration board was the President of Montenegro, Filip Vujanović, and the Government financed the celebration. These celebrations were attended by a papal representative Cardinal Franc Rode, President of Montenegro, Prime Minister of Montenegro, ministers and numerous diplomatic, political and religious representatives of neighbouring countries, including Croatia, as well as citizens and pilgrims.¹⁰¹

The last statute was adopted in 2016, when a new leadership was elected. Following that, a new Rulebook on costumes, weaponry and performances of the Navy was adopted, standardizing and regulating its activities. The Navy was seen as an important institution of the public and cultural life, actively cooperating with institutions on both local and national level. The Navy also had several guest appearances abroad.¹⁰²

The aforementioned clearly demonstrates that the identity of Boka Navy is manifold, as it is correctly stated in the statement of the Kotor diocese, in addition to the fact that „today (the Navy) belongs to all those who accept its Statute, to those who appreciate and respect it, to those who want to get to know it, to those to whom the St Tryphon kolo feels as a part of their spiritual identity, those who wish to spread fraternal harmony“. Similarly, it is clear that the underlining of the dominance of Croatian identity does not correspond to the historical truth and that it would mean that the Navy is deprived of its important characteristic, which is exactly its multi layered structure, multi confessionality, multiethnic and multicultural character.

7. The letters often mention the fact that Croats feel endangered in Montenegro, and it would behoove us to take a look at that claim as well. Population census in Montenegro from 1948, the first one that had data on ethnic affiliation, listed 6.808 Croats, comprising 1,8% of the total population. According to the 1991 census, there were 6.244 Croats (1.02%), and according to the last census from 2011, there were 6.021 Croats in Montenegro, comprising 0,97% of the population.

We can conclude that since 1948 until today, the total number of Croats decreased slightly, while their share in the total population decreased a bit more. However, during that same period, there were big changes in the whole structure of Montenegro population. The 1948 census listed 90,67% Montenegrins - this number dropped significantly to 61,86% in 1991, and to only 44,98% in 2011. Therefore, the aforementioned data cannot lead to a conclusion that the number of Croats their share in the total population decreased due to assimilation, persecution and political pressures; if we were to follow demographic data, the most endangered in Montenegro are actually Montenegrins.

¹⁰¹ I. Radović, „Proslava 1200 godina prenosa relikvija sv. Tripuna i postojanja Bokeljske mornarice, *Dvanaest vjekova Bokeljske mornarice Kotor 809-2009*, Kotor, 2013, pages 191-199.

¹⁰² I. Radović, *Nastupi Bokeljske mornarice van Kotora, Dvanaest vjekova Bokeljske mornarice Kotor 809-2009*, Kotor, 2013, pages 191-199.

When it comes to Croatian language, the 2011 census listed 2.711 people who declared that they spoke Croatian language (41% of the total number of Croatians), while the rest of Croatians stated that they spoke Serbian, Montenegrin or other language.

When it comes to Boka Bay, on whose territory the Navy exists, in 2011 it had a population of 4.519 Croatians, comprising only 6.7% of the Boka population. At the same time, there were 6.795 Catholics in Boka, comprising 10% of the total population.¹⁰³ It is therefore clear that not all Catholics in Boka are Croatians.

Croatians in Montenegro have optimal conditions for development and acting, in line with the Constitution, laws and political practice. Montenegro has a political party called Croatian Civic Initiative (established in 2002), Croatian Umbrella Community DUX Croatorum (established in 2007), Croatian National Council (2007), Croatian Civic Society (2001), Croatian Cultural Society Napredak (1998), Croatian Cultural Society St Jerome (2014), Croatian Orchestra Tripo Tomas (2009) and Croatian radio DUX (2009). A magazine called Croatian Gazette has been regularly published since 2003. All these associations are funded by the state of Montenegro and Republic of Croatia.

Croatian national party has privileged conditions when it comes to elections for the Parliament of Montenegro - their candidate needs only to get 0,35% of the votes (around 1.400 votes), while candidates of other national minorities have to get 0,7% of the votes, and other candidates 3% of the votes. Croatian Civic Initiative's place in the Parliament is all but guaranteed. In addition, long term president of this party, Marija Vučinović, became a minister without a portfolio in 2012, and has kept that place in the previous and current Government of Montenegro. On the parliamentary elections in Montenegro in 2016, CCI candidate won only 1.802 votes (0,47%), but he still got a place in the Parliament of Montenegro. For a long time, mayors of Tivat and Kotor were Croatians.

When it comes to Croatian language, the Constitution lists it as one of the official languages in Montenegro, along with Montenegrin, Serbian, Bosnian and Albanian languages. Latin script, used by Croatians, is equal to the Cyrillic script, and is widely used in Montenegro. Croatian associations in Montenegro organize courses of Croatian language and numerous other activities, especially in the area of culture.

During his visit to Montenegro, Prime Minister of the Republic of Croatia met the Croatian community on August 2nd 2017. On that occasion, he "expressed satisfaction upon seeing that Croatians in Montenegro have a minister and a representative in the Parliament as well as mayors in certain municipalities, especially in the Bay of Kotor (...) Croatians are represented in the political, cultural and public life, which is very useful for their position here as well as connections between our two countries (...). He said that the position of Croatians in Montenegro is good and they are a subject of continuous dialogue between varied positions on the level of Croatian and Montenegrin ministries of foreign affairs, as well as state bureau for Croatians outside the Republic of Croatia and Ministry for Human and Minority Rights of Montenegro."¹⁰⁴

Both Montenegro and Croatia are members of NATO, and Croatia provides support to Montenegro in its EU accession process. Diplomatic, political, economic and cultural relations of our two countries are very good and the claim that the nomination of Boka Navy for UNESCO stands to spoil these relations is absurd.

¹⁰³ <https://www.monstat.org/cg/page.php?id=535&pageid=322>

¹⁰⁴ <https://www.vecernji.hr/vijesti/plenkovic-polozej-hrvata-u-crnoj-gori-je-dobar-1186125>

Another absurd claim is that the nomination of Navy stands to decrease a number of Croatians in Montenegro. Decrease in the number of Croatians in Montenegro, which is relative in itself, is a consequence of numerous factors, among which the most important ones are low natality and emigration due to economic and other reasons. We would like to note that a big wave of emigration is currently ongoing from the Republic of Croatia towards other developed European countries. The population number in Croatia is drastically decreasing, and that phenomenon, as well as low natality, is characteristic for the majority of Balkan countries, including Montenegro.

8. The letters also state that the Catholic church seems to be in danger, so let's review that subject as well. According to the first census after WWII that has data on religious affiliation, in 1991 in Montenegro there were 27.153 Catholics (4,4%). The 2003 census has this number at 21.172 (3,54%), and the 2011 census puts it at 21.299 (3,44%) Catholics, of which 7.954 Albanians, 5.667 Montenegrins, 5.527 Croatians, 275 Hungarians, 224 Slovenians, 115 Serbians. Therefore, Croatians comprise only 25,9% of the total number of Catholics in Montenegro, while 91% of all Croatians are Catholics.

Montenegro used significant resources to restore churches and artifacts owned by the Catholic church. It is also the first modern country with the majority of Orthodox population to sign the Fundamental Agreement with the Holy See (2011), which regulates the status and rights of the Catholic church in a country.¹⁰⁵ The highest representatives of the Holy See, Pope Francesco¹⁰⁶ and State Secretary Cardinal Pietro Parolin,¹⁰⁷ expressed their satisfaction at the status of Catholic church in Montenegro several times, stating that they were pleased with Montenegro's relationship with the Holy See. Tradition of these good relations is long - Principality of Montenegro (which did not include Boka Bay at that time), signed a convention with the Holy See in 1886, regulating the status of the Catholic church (there were only 5-6.000 Catholics in the country).¹⁰⁸

9. The letters mention several times, unjustifiably, that the nomination of the Navy to UNESCO by Montenegro represents an infringement on the rights of Boka people who live in Croatia, denying them their identity and right to follow their traditions. They stated that the inscription of the Navy on the Representative List of Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity would mean „1. murder of the memory (destruction of the historical awareness on members of a minority, their tradition, ethnographic and ethnic heritage), 2. murder of culture (by calling the cultural heritage of a minority a cultural heritage of a majority) and 3. murder of language (extinction of mother tongue of a minority population).” One member of the Croatian fraternity Boka Navy 809 from Rijeka said that this would be “the biggest cultural genocide of the 21. century”.¹⁰⁹ We find that these absurd claims merit no commentary.

No person in the Boka Navy or in Montenegro ever tried to deny rights of Boka people in Croatia, nor will they attempt to do that in the future. They can, as they did so far, continue to cherish their tradition in their own way. Inscription on the UNESCO Representative List would

¹⁰⁵ I. Jakulj, „ Međunarodni ugovori Svete Stolice i Crne Gore“, Crkva u svijetu, 48 (2013), no 2

¹⁰⁶ <https://www.vaticannews.va/it/papa/news/2018-10/papa-presidente-montenegro-djukanovic.html>

¹⁰⁷ <https://www.lastampa.it/2018/06/28/vaticaninsider/montenegro-inizia-la-visita-del-cardinale-parolin-positivo-limpegnodellue-per-i-balconi-Cn3gQvOkwHJ1yl8F1g6N5l/pagina.html>

¹⁰⁸ F. Caccamo, “La politica orientale della Santa Sede e il concordato con il Montenegro”, in M.G. Del Fuoco (a cura di) *Ubi neque aerugo neque tinea demolitur*, Napoli 2006

¹⁰⁹ <https://www.vecernji.hr/vijesti/most-upozorio-zbog-bokeljske-mornarice-prijeti-najveci-kulturocid-21-stoljeca-1231477>

promote the Navy in the world and it would make it a heritage of all, including citizens of Croatia, so it is very surprising that they find themselves in such an energetic protest against that.

10. We are convinced that this long text, which cites numerous relevant sources and data, succeeds in explaining in detail the general history of Boka Navy Kotor (1210 years long), its complex cultural, religious, social and demographic connotations, and strong ties with other countries, peoples and cultures that participated in its creation during history. We are also convinced that our arguments confute the claims from the letters that aim to deny the right of Montenegro to independently nominate the Boka Navy for the inscription on the UNESCO Representative List of Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity. Finally, we are convinced that UNESCO will recognize the outstanding values of the Boka Navy, the oldest maritime organization in the world, and that it will reach a decision to inscribe it on the List.

Antun Sbutega
Boka Navy Kotor Admiral

