

SICHWEB

Conferences attended by the project team members in the first year of the implementation (in person and remotely)

1) Branko Banović, Marko Milenković, Miloš Milenković, Jelena Ćuković, Marko Pišev. *Return to ethnology as a prerequisite for heritage diplomacy – insights from the Western Balkans*. Panel HERI08: Living heritage as a source of resilience in times of uncertainty. **SIEF 2023** 16th Congress “Living Uncertainty”, Brno, Czech Republic, 7-10 June, 2023.

ABSTRACT: We present the findings of our ongoing research on how to apply anthropology in the Western Balkans in the processes of establishing lasting peace. Our fieldwork among heritage professionals and minorities’ representatives showed that efforts to incorporate social sciences and humanities into programs aimed at fostering intercultural dialogue, reconciliation, and peace have overlooked an increasingly important factor: the unacceptability of scholarly analysis of heritage by the bearers themselves. Anthropology, with its default critique of heritage as always already an oppressive construct, while critically and didactically fruitful, lacks the ability to fit into international reconciliation policies, especially in the flagship doctrine of conflict management through use of heritage as a developmental tool. If we manage to apply the model of stakeholder-inclusion based on social authority of ethnology, which majority of the populations concerned found trustworthy heritage keeper, we believe that cultural critique goals can be met without academically provoked stakeholder antagonism. We see our efforts as contributing to the development of a novel approach we are developing and propose to the SIEF for further consideration and debate - heritage diplomacy - as part of the search for the role of ethnology and folkloristics in contemporary political processes. We believe that our research can be useful and inspiring to colleagues throughout Europe, but also on a global scale, given that intangible cultural heritage - of which ethnology and folkloristics are parent disciplines - is gradually becoming recognized as an important political resource in the management of ethnic and religious conflicts.

2) Jelena Ćuković. *Battle for Jadav: mythological war narratives in ecological activism*. **16th IACM Conference** “Mythologies of Violence: War in Heaven, War on Earth” (Tulsk, Ireland, August, 21-25) (online participation).

ABSTRACT: In recent years, there has been a public debate in Serbia about whether or not mining giant Rio Tinto should continue its project and start extracting lithium in the western part of Serbia, in the Jadar region. While the government and part of the public support this multinational company, many formal and informal political groups and activists oppose the idea because of the company's poor reputation concerning environmental issues. The local communities around the Jadar River, where the mineral (Jadarite) is found, are the ones most concerned about the future of the project and its impact on their lives and nature. In their narratives, they refer to this situation as a colonial occupation and feel as if they are in a state of war. There is a widespread analogy that compares Rio Tinto to the Austro-Hungarian army in the Great War and ecological resistance to the glory of ancestral fighters. The historical interpretation of the Battle of Cer and mythological narratives of local national bravery play an important role in mobilizing the community in the struggle against Rio Tinto. The purpose of my presentation is to introduce my field studies and discuss questions about the use of mythological elements in environmental activism.

3) Branko Banović and Miloš Milenković. *Anthropological analysis of the use of Saint Basil of Ostrog cult in Montenegro's contemporary political life*. **16th IACM** Conference “Mythologies of Violence: War in Heaven, War on Earth” (Tulsk, Ireland, August, 21-25) (online participation).

ABSTRACT: Saint Basil of Ostrog cult is one of the most revered in Montenegro. A large number of Orthodox pilgrims (from Montenegro, Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, but also from abroad) visit the Ostrog monastery to venerate Saint Basil of Ostrog's relics. Some Catholic and Islamic believers also believe in the healing power of this important Serbian Orthodox Church saint. In 2020, the cult of Saint Basil of Ostrog became an especially important aspect of Montenegro's political life. Namely, in late December 2019, Montenegrin Parliament voted new “Law on Freedom of Religion or Belief and the Legal Status of Religious Communities”. According to this law religious communities must prove ownership of church property that had been built before 1918, and if there is no such evidence, that property will be considered state property. The Serbian Orthodox Church believed that this law is taking away its property, thus a wave of protests started against the controversial religion law. As time went on a considerable percentage of Montenegro's population took to the streets opposing the law. On the wave of these protests walks called “litije” (processions),

the Montenegrin opposition led by pro-Serb forces gained a slender victory on the August 2020 elections, so the first change of power happened since the beginning of nineties. The great Serbian poet Matija Bećković, in urging citizens to vote in the parliamentary elections, pointed out that “the opponent of President Đukanović and his ruling party this time is Saint Basil of Ostrog”. Zdravko Krivokapić, the leader of the winning electoral list and afterwards the Prime Minister of Montenegro, joyously proclaimed during the election night address: “After 31 years of absolute power, this had to happen. The rationale is simple: anyone who insults God and Saint Basil of Ostrog must go that way.” To comprehend this political-religious discourse, which is entirely unusual in contemporary European political life, it is crucial to examine modern Montenegro's identity politics. Our research shows that Montenegro's identity politics implemented after independence (2006) created a strong sense of exclusion and injustice among Serbs in Montenegro due to the belief that Serbs are being deliberately marginalized, that Serbian heritage, culture, and identity are being ignored, and that the Serbian Orthodox Church in Montenegro is considered undesirable. This incendiary identity setting culminated following the passage of the controversial “Church law”, and it conditioned the strong dominance of religious discourses in the political campaign for the 2020 Parliamentary elections. After analyzing identity issues surrounding the “Law on Freedom of Religion or Belief and the Legal Status of Religious Communities”, the ethnographic research analyses the shift of processions (“litije”) from religious to political contexts and examines the usage of Saint Basil of Ostrog cult in the political campaign for the 2020 Parliamentary elections. Finally, from the standpoint of applied anthropology, the research examines the influence of various models of Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH) preservation in order to overcome identity issues in Montenegro and Western Balkan countries.

4) Miloš Milenković, Marko Pišev, Jelena Ćuković, Branko Banović, Marko Milenković. *Heritage Diplomacy: Towards Mitigating Bilateral Identity Disputes In The Western Balkans Within the EU Accession Framework Through Inclusive Intangible Culture Research and Safeguarding*. University Association for Cotemporary European Studies (UACES) 2023 Annual conference. Queen's University Belfast (QUB), 3-6 September 2023, with a virtual day being held on 11 September. Virtual Panel 103: Enlargement & Integration in the EU (online participation).

ABSTRACT: Contribution of Anthropology to European studies is typically defined by the study of Europe's cultural diversity, the formation of a specific European identity, or the active strengthening of national identities against the European one, as well as numerous specific topics characteristic of specific European regions. But there is another way in which Anthropology can improve the multidisciplinary approach to European integrations - awareness of the role that cultural heritage can play in cultural diplomacy, especially in the new genre of “heritage diplomacy”. With the many political bilateral disputes in the Western Balkans based on cultural heritage, our collective research focuses on the role that heritage sciences, particularly Ethnology, which is part of Anthropology in the Western Balkans, can play in the process of mitigating existing or preventing future conflicts based on collective identity. We are focusing on Serbian intangible cultural heritage in cases where Serbs are an ethnic and religious minority, but we believe that the model we are developing can be applied in many other cases where heritage disputes play an important role in political dynamics. This study builds on previous studies on bilateral conditionality in the EU enlargement process by arguing that culturalized conditionality should be mitigated by heritage diplomacy based on inclusive research and safeguarding. Our model creates a space for humanities to collaborate with European studies in their search for new ways to impact enlargement policy and contribute to academic debate on conditionality.

5) Marko Pišev, Miloš Milenković, Branko Banović. *Ottoman Intangible Cultural Heritage as an Instrument of Reconciliation? “Tracing the Ottoman Legacy in Croatia and South East Europe: Challenges, States, Perspectives”* (19 and 20 October 2023, Maškovića Han, Vrana, Croatia). Section of Turkish Studies and Department of History Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, University of Zagreb.

ABSTRACT: Intangible cultural heritage – ICH (folk beliefs and knowledge, language, crafts, etc.) is considered as the core of cultural identity around which different local communities and even entire nations often dispute, sometimes violently. It is frequently used in the processes of instrumentalizing tradition in politics, media, education, and science, thus posing a risk to peacebuilding, regional reconciliation, and development. In Southeast Europe especially, and in the Western Balkans in particular, different communities argue over which specific elements belong to whose ICH, occasionally escalating from intellectual debates to bilateral state disputes. In our presentation, we focus particularly on Ottoman ICH, shared between Croats, Serbs, Bosniaks, and Montenegrins. Our goal is to demonstrate that

shared/contested heritage can be used as a bridge for reconciliation rather than a source of division in a region where post-conflict stabilization is still incomplete. Paradoxically, the layers of Ottoman ICH can serve as a basis for achieving this goal, precisely because all four nations share them but employ them in different capacities, by disowning or not considering them as intrinsic, original, or native.

6) Branko Banović, Marko Pisev, Miloš Milenković. *Exploring Controversies Surrounding Ottoman Intangible Cultural Heritage in the Western Balkans: The Potential of Tamburitza-Playing as a Mediator among Local Communities*. “**Balkan Express 2023 - Between Orientalism and Occidentalism**” (10 and 11 November 2023, Prague, Czech Republic). The Faculty of Humanities, Charles University and the Institute of History, Czech Academy of Sciences in cooperation with the Institute of Philosophy, Czech Academy of Sciences (Zora Hesová), the Czech National Committee of Balkan Scholars — Czech Association for Slavonic, Balkan and Byzantine Studies.

ABSTRACT: UNESCO plays a substantial role in raising awareness about the vital need to preserve intangible cultural heritage (ICH) worldwide, irrespective of its origin. However, the profound influence of Ottoman culture on the Western Balkans notwithstanding, research indicates a significant underrepresentation of Ottoman ICH in the region's National Registers of Intangible Cultural Heritage. This study delves into the theoretical and practical dimensions of this issue, employing Montenegro's National Register as a case. ICH is inherently tied to cultural identity, often sparking debates among local communities and even whole nations. The presentation concentrates on the potential of collectively disputed ICH to serve as a bridge for reconciliation, surpassing its conventional role as a mere subject of appreciation or contention. In the midst of challenges related to asserting local identities, Pljevlja, the northernmost city of Montenegro, emerges as a compelling case study, underscoring the latent potential of ICH as a catalyst for peacebuilding. The exploration centers on tamburitza-playing (the art of performing traditional folk music on a stringed instrument called the tamburitza, popular in various Balkan and Eastern European cultures), highlighting its capability of bridging divides between local Bosniaks/Muslims and Serbs, thus embodying the prospect of unity through shared heritage.

7. Miloš Milenković. *Inclusive intangible cultural heritage research and safeguarding in the Western Balkans: Issues, perils, opportunities*. “**Cultural Meeting Points in the Balkan Area**” conference. The University of Shkodra "Luigj Gurakuqi", Faculty of Social Sciences University of Belgrade, Faculty of Philology.

8. Miloš Milenković. *Anthropological Theory, Stakeholder Inclusion and Minority Rights: Reflections on the Investigation and Preservation of Serbian Intangible Cultural Heritage in the Western Balkans*. “**Are minority rights (still) human rights**” conference Belgrade SASA/FLBU, 2023.

9. Miloš Milenković, Marko Milenković. *Cele nacije kao sobe odjeka: Sakralizacija kulturnog nasleđa u javnim medijima tokom bilateralnih sporova u kontekstu pristupanja Zapadnog Balkana EU*. Konferencija „**Antropologija književnosti, umetnosti i medija**“, Beograd, Filozofski fakultet, 22-23.12.2023.