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## CULTURAL HERITAGE OF MONTENEGRIN ROYAL DYNASTIES XIV-XVI CENTURY: RETROSPECTIVE OF MUSICAL TRACES IN LEGACY OF RULERS OF MEDIEVAL AND RENAISSANCE PRINCIPALITY OF ZETA \*\*

*Abstract:* Under the ruling dynasties of Balšić and Crnojević, Principality of Zeta gained cultural autonomy and pretended to develop the unique artistic style. In the murals of then newly erected churches and monasteries, we can find a scenes with a significant number of musical instruments and their use; in the monasteries was very active a transcript school of church books, which activities preserved notable manuscripts and widen their use throughout Christian temples of this region; diplomacy and cultural exchange managed altered level of development and appropriation of nearby culture and arts. The most significant accomplishment of Ruling dynasty Crnojević was the first printed book in 1494, with typical renaissance manner and decorations. Printing was stopped in Principality of Zeta by the end of XV century after the invasion of Turks, but was continued in Venice by Božidar Vuković Podgoričanin and his son Vincenzo.

Through centuries, territory of present Montenegro was located on the crossroad of at least two dominant and supreme cultures and the influence on its own social and culture body is more than obvious.<sup>1</sup> After the brutal fall of Medieval Duklja<sup>2</sup> under the Serbian realm Raška<sup>3</sup> in the beginning of 12<sup>th</sup> century, it changed name in Zeta<sup>4</sup> and after long conquest, on its territories

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\*\* Long-term project *Materials for the History of Montenegrin Music* which the Committee for Music Arts of *Montenegrin Academy of Scientists and Arts* has been working on since 1981, covers period from Prehistory until XVIII century. By the fact that research on Montenegrin History of Music is a relatively young area in the composite of Montenegrin scientific and educational Institutions, disquisitions has been made in the inner circle of our music and arts specialists. In the last ten years, there have been published three studies about History of Montenegrin Music (*Ancient Music Cultures of Montenegro I & II* and *Music Culture of Montenegro XIII-XVIII c.*) by late professor Manja Radulović Vulić, covering wide period of research and giving an extraordinary point of view on our history. While the period in this study (XIV-XVI c.) was extensively investigated from the historical, social-economic, legal and cultural aspect, only a small number of preserved musical music monuments was not a favorable circumstance for continuous follow up of development courses either of our medieval, renaissance or later music culture. With the exception of an in-depth study on the church organ by dr. Miloš Milošević, Ph.D not a single analytic work has been published on the music culture of the Middle Ages on our spaces.

<sup>1</sup> Present territory of Montenegro, as the physical border between East and West, naturally was distracted after the scission of the Roman Empire. Absence of long and stable development in social, economic and cultural policy, under the stable rule, caused the fragmentation of the historical continuity, witnessed from present perspective and reception. Fragmentation, not only in historical sense, but in socio-demographic and cultural area, made the research of this matter more difficult, strictly interdisciplinary conditioned, even in music.

<sup>2</sup> Duklja (Latin: Doclea) (9<sup>th</sup> – ca. 12<sup>th</sup> century), the first organized Medieval State in the borders of the Holy Roman Empire. Its political and social frame gave the fundamentals to the later organized states on that and near areas.

<sup>3</sup> Raška (Latin: Rascia) was the name of the region, as the province of the Serbian medieval realm.

<sup>4</sup> Zeta, like the name for a territory, was in use between ca. 1190 and 1451. In the sense of polity, it was a part of Serbian Despotate (ca. 1190 – 1365 and 1421 – 1451) and the independent state (1360 – 1421).

arrives temporal stability of political environment, which created a common ground for the systematic development of every kind. Using well installed institution of Catholic Church on the coast, Zeta gained political and cultural exchange with the Holy See and the West, keeping its territories safe. The arrival of the Orders of Franciscans and Benedictines meant a foundation of Monasteries and Legacies which later developed into the significant cultural and educational centers. Also, Serbian kings, from the Nemanjić dynasty,<sup>5</sup> erected Orthodox monasteries, monastic endowments and churches in Zeta, at the same time gaining many properties of surrounding villages and villagers, which guaranteed solid assets for the monks who had devoted to transcription and translation of liturgical books.

Beside the assumption that the music in Zeta survived under the favor of Christianity, other art directions were included into the cultural development, like expansion of fresco painting, goldsmith, scriptoriums. Cultural rise was noted in the minor cities on the Zeta coast, like in Budva, Ulcinj, Svač and Drivast, where monastic and humanistic schools were present. During that period, painting school from Kotor was very active. Known by the Western church as masters on the field of the fresco painting, Greek colony of the painters<sup>6</sup> who lived and worked on the Adriatic coast had an intense work in Eastern monasteries, but also on the Western (Catholic) sacral objects. One of the earliest examples is a fresco known as *Mockery of Christ* probably painted in the first two decades of XIV c. from the Church of blessed Ozana (Hossana) in the Old Town in Kotor. On the preserved part of the fresco, above Christ's head, it's clearly seen a fragment of two crossed instruments.<sup>7</sup> This scene is very rare on the wall paintings in Western Churches.<sup>8</sup>

In most of the sacral objects (built in late XIII and the beginning of XIV c.), in Zeta and Serbian region, there are present many musical instruments. Walls of Monastery Dečani were painted by the artist from Kotor, only known by the name Grešni Srđ.<sup>9</sup> The most notable frescoes belong to the *Creation cycle*. *Descent of Cain*, there are present wind instruments, one drum and

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<sup>5</sup> Nemanjić dynasty lasted from 1166 until 1371.

<sup>6</sup> *Pictores Græci*.

<sup>7</sup> Visible instruments are *Schalmeis* or *Buccinas*. The fresco is partly visible, and it was discovered during the reconstruction after severe 1979 earthquake.

<sup>8</sup> Scenes like *Mockery of Christ* in Byzantine painting style is common in Eastern sacral objects. Mostly, permeating between western and eastern artistic influences can be found in Eastern Europe and on the east Mediterranean.

<sup>9</sup> English: *Sinful Serge*.

obvious dancers.<sup>10</sup> Other notable part of the *Creation* is representation of *Apocalypse*, by two Angels playing the tubes.<sup>11</sup> Beside this cycle, there is another noticeable, called *Passion of Christ*, consisted of more than forty scenes. Two of them obviously contains music instruments. On fresco *Mockery of Christ*, there are instruments similar to corn (or cornetto), other wind instruments, one string and drums.<sup>12</sup> On *The Way of the Cross* there are visible instruments in the hands of soldiers.<sup>13</sup> Painter or painters for this cycle are not known. Also, this monastery has a decorative sculpture *Centaurs* with horns, which is very rare like a presence in Eastern monasteries.<sup>14</sup>

After the decay of Serbian empire under the king Dušan (1355),<sup>15</sup> Principality of Zeta gained independence and the new era begun under the rule of Balšić dynasty.<sup>16</sup> For the next 80 years, Principality of Zeta drive a course of stability and independence, more relaying on diplomatic co-relations and building its internal political ground.

Even if numerous, traces of laic music and musicians gave us general picture of living activities in the late XIV and XV c. The Court of Balšić followed the tradition of hospitality to the musical troops, which were present on the Feast-Days during a year.<sup>17</sup> There are numerous historical documents citing about presence of Dubrovnik musicians in Zeta, from which the oldest one is from 1385. Following that sources, we can learn that presence of that musicians was a tradition, especially in the period when policy between Zeta and Dubrovnik was on a high level. Occasions for guest musicians were, for example, the birth of the Crown Prince of the king

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<sup>10</sup> Recognizable are two musicians with elongated wind music instruments *Buccinas*, one drummer and three dancers, consisted of two males and one female, who waves with a white scarf or shawl. This apocryphal scene, especially with the movements on it, is rare in early Byzantine art. If we follow the fact that the painter is from Kotor, whose signature is under most of the frescoes, we can assume that he did not followed common structural fresco patterns, but inserted his vision of the dance from his region or homeland.

<sup>11</sup> This painted tubes can be also a form of *Buccinas*.

<sup>12</sup> Around the seated Christ, with a thorn crown, there are shown acrobats, one dancer with a scarf, one player on the elongated horn, one player with the Byzantine lira and two persons playing drums and kettle drums.

<sup>13</sup> On this scene, which represents Christ going up to Golgotha, soldiers which surround him are blowing into horns and tubes.

<sup>14</sup> *Centaurs* are the work of the architect of Dečani Monastery, sculptor from Kotor *Fra Vito* (eng. Brother Vito).

<sup>15</sup> Stefan Uroš IV Dušan Silni (English: Stephen Uros IV Dušan the Mighty) (c. 1308—1355). King of Serbia, Emperor of Greeks and Serbs.

<sup>16</sup> Balšić dynasty, noble house that ruled Principality of Zeta, lasted between 1362—1421.

<sup>17</sup> Main Feast-Days were Christian Saints and Patrons of local families, regions or cities, collective holidays like Christmas or Easter or significant dates connected to Ruler's House. During Feast-Days there were collective gathering of people, similar to present fairs.

Balša III,<sup>18</sup> where (according to sources) were present *piffaris* and *tubatoribus*, members of the Duchess Band, by the special permission of the Small Council of Dubrovnik.<sup>19</sup> Feast was eight days long, and we assume it happened in the Castle of Balšić in present city of Ulcinj. On the other occasions, on the Court of Balšić, there were present *tubatores* and *ioculatores* (actors-entertainers). Contemporary to dynasty of Balšić, Bosnian aristocracy the House of Kosača,<sup>20</sup> in the beginning of XV c. owned some rural parts of present Montenegro. Even if related to Balšić family, aristocracy Kosace were not always friendly. Materialistic supremacy of Kosače family gave them luxury habits, which included richer cultural events. In their courts they gathered most able and prominent musicians and entertainers. Dubrovnik archives gave us information about the intense circulation of Dubrovnik artists on the Court of Kosače. In the testament of herceg Stjepan Vukčić Kosača,<sup>21</sup> Dubrovnik archives noted also a one small organ with silver tubes (it's a small instrument, portative, or a *small organ*, which was often present in then European Courts).

One of the most popular occasions for musicians to travel were – pilgrimages. Yet from the early middle ages, church festivities and domestic saint were an occasions for a wide celebration. One script from XII c. stated that three confessions together started a cult for some saints, like St. Jovan Vladimir of Doclea.<sup>22</sup> So, there were not only liturgical contents, but public manifestations. From the scripts of Dubrovnik Archive, we gained information about one popular builder of instruments Philippus de Drivasto<sup>23</sup> who's workshop was located in Dubrovnik, but he provided instruments to Kotor and Zeta. One of the most interesting instruments was *Dulce Melos* (or *Dulcimer*) which is an instrument similar to monochord and clavichord. Unfortunately, these information are only shown as words, in the archive, not noted as pictures. Phillipus de Drivasto was not known only for his workshop, but as a leader of Dubrovnik musicians, which,

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<sup>18</sup> Balša III (1387—1421). The fifth and the last ruler of Principality of Zeta.

<sup>19</sup> Small Council (Croatian: Malo Vijeće) was the administrative body of the Dubrovnik Republik. Established in 1238, it had the executive power.

<sup>20</sup> The House of Kosača, medieval noble family from medieval Bosnia. During a 14<sup>th</sup> century, they ruled various parts of Bosnia, Croatia, Dalmazia and present parts of Montenegro.

<sup>21</sup> Stjepan Vukčić Kosača (1404—1466). Nobelman of the House of Kosača.

<sup>22</sup> Sveti Jovan Vladimir Dukljanski (English: St. John Vladimir of Duklja), ?-1016. Ruler of Duklja. Patron Saint of Bar, Montenegro. His personality built a strong cult, which is preserved even nowadays in Montenegro, which unites other confessions and religions, like Catholics and Muslims.

<sup>23</sup> Philippus de Drivasto. Trumpet player and instrument constructor. Noted in Dubrovnik archives as a musician in Dubrovnik music band.

in that time, were famous for their instrumentarium and popular for their capabilities as musicians. There are noted, also, couple of names from Zeta.<sup>24</sup>

Also, in the parts of the present Montenegro, where was the influence of Kosača aristocracy, we will find tumb stones<sup>25</sup> placed on the grounds where cemeteries and necropolis were placed. Decorations on those thumb stones were floral and vegetative motives, figural scenes and other. On some monuments, presented motives were dynamic expressions of music-folklore motives, like country-dance (dance, like a special part of funeral ceremony, was preserved from the antic times and practiced even in the end of 19<sup>th</sup> and the beginning of 20<sup>th</sup> c. in Montenegro). Dancers on this thumb stones are presented in rows or in pairs, independently or in combination with some other illustration.

After the death of Balša III in 1421, last ruler of royal family Balšić, Zeta was 30 years a part of Serbian Despotate, which concluded the era of Balšić family.

In 1451, under Crnojević dynasty<sup>26</sup> years to follow were in the sign of battles for independence against Ottoman Empire, which cased slow progress of cultural environment in most of the cities and counties. Transcription practice, fresco paintings, orthodox chant liturgies were almost disappeared in the wave of Ottomans. After the temporary exile from Montenegro to Italy in 1478, ruler Ivan Crnojević<sup>27</sup> was back in 1482 and keeping the promise to the Lady of Loretto, he dedicated a new Castle and Monastery in newly founded city of Cetinje. After the return from Venice, he brought impressions from Venice, not only cultural but architectural. Its noticeable on the architectural solutions of new Monastery (dedicated to the Birth of the Blessed Virgin), decorative elements of the capitals and impressive constructions clearly marks the presence of early renaissance. Similar architecture in that time can be found also in Kotor, on palaces of noble families.

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<sup>24</sup> Slavic names of undefined origins were also noted into archival scripts, so we can assume that some of them, like *Mikoš* (in documents noted as *Michoch Tamburino*) which are still in use in some present parts of Montenegro, were originally from Zeta.

<sup>25</sup> Tumb stones (Montenegrin: *Stećci*) were marks placed on the sights to mark a necropolis or a cult places. Although their origins of use are significantly elder, culture of usage of Tumb stones will have a peak in usage during 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> century. In present days, they can be mostly found in the region of Bosnia and Herzegovina and in various locations in Montenegro, like Piva, Pljevlja, Grahovo, Žabljak and Nikšić.

<sup>26</sup> The House of Crnojević, medieval noble family that held Principality of Zeta.

<sup>27</sup> Ivan Crnojević, medieval ruler of Zeta and the first lord of the Principality of Montenegro.

In the year 1493, when Ottoman attacks were on the lowest level in years, lord Ivan Crnojević founds the first Cyrillic Printing house on the Slavic south and that was the huge step in the cultural history of Montenegro.<sup>28</sup> For almost three years of its working life, there were printed aesthetically valuable books: *Oktoih prvoglasnik* (Oktoih The First Voice), *Oktoih petoglasnik* (Oktoih The Fifth Voice), *Psaltir s posljedovanjem* (Psalter with Hymns), *Trebnik* (Prayer Book), *Četvoroevangelje* (Four-Gospel). Printing technique and graphic equipment which were used for Montenegrin first Incunabulas, were created by the famous printer, monk Makarije, and were shaped in the spirit of traditional Medieval manuscripts, at the same time expressing the closeness with the Venetian renaissance books.<sup>29</sup>

On the three (of the 27 in total) Initial pages of Psalter with Hymns, there are figurative forms, in typical renaissance ornamental encirclement; symbols of Apostles, presentations of real and fantastic animals (like Gryphon, Dragon, Lion), than Angels holding on floral decorations and the Great Seal of Crnojevic Family at the bottom. The first Initial page is significant, because represents three persons, three saints, writers of Church Hymns: in the middle St. John from Damask, famous hymn writer, reformer of church music (whose hymns are present mostly in this Oktoih); in Orthodox tradition he is known also as St. John *Golden-voice*; left from him is St. Joseph hymn writer too; and on the far left is St. Theophanus. On the second page we can see St. John the Baptist, faithful people in front of him and behind him a Castle, for which historians agreed that was original Castle of Crnojević Royalty. The third page is called *Council* (or *Convocation*) of non-corporal Forces. It presents Christ with angels and Seraphim (with six wings).<sup>30</sup>

Between various initials from the printed book *Psalterium*, notable are two examples of Pagan symbolic – Initial *E*, with the presentation of the *Horn of Abundance*, and also one notion of the *Mask*. Presence of the obvious Pagan symbol of *Mask*, like one recognizable sign of folklore tradition is a confirmation for a tolerance between Christian Church and a pagan inheritance, which was still present in everyday life. Initial *K* belongs to the group of the most attractive in the books from the Printing House of Crnojević. Central figure on this Initial is a

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<sup>28</sup> The first Printing house was placed in Obod, near Skadar Lake.

<sup>29</sup> Partly preserved copies of the printed books are preserved in various locations in Europe, including Belgrade, Ljubljana, Zagreb, Prague, Moscow, Berlin, Oxford, London and in private collections.

<sup>30</sup> Presentation of Saints and other details are taken from Easter Orthodox iconography. Luxurious ornaments which are present on all pages are typically renaissance.

winged boy which is playing in *Dvojnice* (Latin: *pluralia tantum*), double tube wind pastoral instrument (common to many countries in the Balkans), but also very similar to a brass instrument *Buccina* (which in this case is double).

Like other manuscript books before them, book from the Printing House of Crnojević does not include any traces of notation, even if it is known that books were for liturgical chant. In the foreword and afterword of this books, on couple of places it is only mentioned: "...So we please those who read, or *sing*, or prescribe...". So, this books can confirm many researches which stated that in Medieval Montenegro singing was just a part of narrative tradition, and transmitted orally.

At the same time when Orthodox monasteries in Montenegro were sharing printed books from the mentioned Printed House of Crnojević, churches in Kotor (Catholic church) were provided by Incunabulas printed in Venice. If we assume that the first Venetian printed book was introduced just before that, it is more than obvious that City of Kotor was very accurate, not only for a church music, but for the art in general. In the Printing Houses in Venice, there were present two Montenegrins, from Kotor: Andrija Paltašić<sup>31</sup> and Nikola Orba who generously provided printed Missals and prayer books to Kotor. Most significant obtained printed books form Venice are four editions of famous Venetian printer Luka Antonio de Giunta.<sup>32</sup> Books are printed in the last year of XV c. and in the first years of XIV c. These are *Graduale* (1499), *Antiphonarium* (1500) and *Psaltherium* (1503). Very important is to say that printing technique for this editions was different than the other: they were printed on a metal patterns, not on wood (metal patterns are invented by Venetian Ottaviano de Petrucci da Fossombrone). Dimensions of this editions are large, so that can be put on the high stand and used for a multiple singers or a singing choir.

After the treat of ottoman Empire against Montenegro, in the beginning of XVI c. many Montenegrin printers continued their work in Venice. Most notable Printer was Božidar Vuković Podgoričanin<sup>33</sup> and his son Vincenzo.<sup>34</sup> They opened their Printing Houses, hired masters and

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<sup>31</sup> Andrija Paltašić (Italian: Andreas de Paltasichis) (1450—1500). Montenegrin printer and publisher from Kotor.

<sup>32</sup> Luca Antonio de Giunta (1457—1538).

<sup>33</sup> Božidar Vuković Podgoričanin, 1466—1540. The first Montenegrin printer in Venice.

<sup>34</sup> Vincenzo Vuković (?—1537).

provided liturgical books on the territories where Ottomans were, ensuring continuity of Christian Liturgy and literacy in the next two centuries.

Printing house of Crnojević disappeared after couple of years after it was founded. Historical sources said that it was used to produce bullets for Montenegrin army during a war against Turks. The same faith had the second Printing machine in the middle of 19<sup>th</sup> century, when Prince Danilo I used its led and metal parts to make bullets in the final battle against Turks. The period between mid 16<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> century was a period when Montenegrin soil was constantly endangered by Ottomans and from the West by growing Empires. While the City of Kotor will gain upswing in culture, education and economics under Republic of Venice, Habsburg Monarchy, Kingdom of Italy and Austrian Empire, Montenegro will be isolated and rely on the Slavic countries, leaving rich tradition of cultural development, which gained earlier. Even in those conditions, there are exemptions of continuity of painting arts visible on the walls of some monasteries and a collection of printed liturgy books, which were still provided to the monasteries and churches from abroad. Music life was reduced to folk music, with no perspective for development until mid 19<sup>th</sup> century, following the Romantic era, under the rule of dynasty Petrović Njegoš, when stability and peace qualified its existence and upbeat.



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