

## **Ethnic symbols in a popular culture - role of media at a creation of national culture**

### **Subject**

The subject of this study is examination of the dynamic character of the ethnic state of Montenegro. In other words, ethnicity and ethnic symbols have derived from different social, cultural and linguistic transformations, especially from the political changes from 1945 until nowadays. Starting premise of the research is the assumption that domestic media has had an enormous influence on the development and construction (reconstruction) of the Montenegrin national identity.

Especially during the last 15 years, the social-cultural processes have been fueled with political developments in the region and trends of major political streams in the country, and have been intensified with promotion of national symbols in media, including the old ones (selected from historical and national heritage), as well as the new ones produced by popular mass culture streams. Therefore, ethno-dynamics and interpellation of persons and groups in the area of public and private life can be clearly followed through topics published in printed and electronic media. Ethnic symbols excel spontaneous reactions but are also closely related to representation of the larger national issue (and feelings). Their analysis should be conducted on different levels. For example:

- popularization of events and persons from local history and culture;
- significant popularization of cultural-historical symbols within the frame of tourist offer;
- creation of a national image of the politicians and domestic Estrada show business;
- representation public debates in connection with national (political, ethnic, linguistic) question;

- transformation of elements of pop culture into national symbols (music hits as anthems. For example, the popularity of the song of the pop band *No Name* in the period preceding the referendum);
- through fashion and fashion performances as a reminder of previous national outfit etc.

Clearly, by this kind of analysis it will be possible to determine the (in)stability of particular symbols (in context of concrete social, cultural and political environment).

### **Objectives**

Considering the constructed character of national symbols and their multiple symbolic meanings, I will conduct the research on several different levels: (with a common and final aim to define actual ethnic symbols especially in media):

- a) On one level I will examine the development, transformation and constitution of ethnic symbols based on historical, folkloristic, and epical foundation. This research will primarily involve older generation.
- b) On another level, I will delineate processes of national identification which would be examined by talking to people from the younger generation (which I argue has a different attitude towards certain traumatic events from the past than the older generation). Thus, exploration of ethnicity and ethnic symbols with a younger generation would be assessed primarily in the domain of the current popular, mass (media) culture. What is their relation to a creation and acceptance of new ethnic symbols (which can be consistent or conflicting with previous symbols)? How has the cultural field been extended to incorporate different ethnics/cultural symbols, created for everyday consumption or entertainment (places of gathering, ethno-restaurants, ethno-parks), music (Montenegrin musicians and their songs), sport (public support on match and requisites as new ethnic symbols) etc.

### **Working methods**

The main method and theoretical strategy in the research will pay special attention to cultural-historical dynamics and to past and current models of ethnicity. I will use a

comparative method between a model of ethnicity, a social-cultural field and the political-ideological conditions. The main subject of my research will include analysis of media contents, archival research and interviews with competent persons, experts who have been involved in production of national themes in media in Montenegro, in media). I will also conduct interviews with ordinary people.

### **Sources of the study**

I will use different sources of “ethnicity:” historical literature, archives, folklore (oral or written) material, interviews, and analyses of media as a prime source of individual and group representation of ethnicity.

Further I will analyze the TV stations broadcasting their programs in Montenegro (*TVCG1, TVCG2, TVIN, TV Atlas, TV Elmag, MBC, NTV Montena, Pink*), especially the station with the longest broadcast record, *TVCG* (this is the state television channel which was recently transformed in a public service). I will also analyze three daily newspapers (*Pobjeda, Vijesti, Dan*), as well as several weekly magazines and monthly editions specializing in socio-cultural issues. Regardless whether they declare themselves as independent or not, these different forms of public media, electronic and printed alike, have been officially recognized by a broad audience to have a specific national-ideological orientation. I will also pay special attention to newspapers targeting Diaspora.

I will especially examine the dominant newspapers “Pobjeda” because of two reasons:

- firstly, it has been printed for the longest period of time (since 1945);
- second, its founder and publisher are the state of Montenegro and as such its content can reveal of the (in)stability of the ruling ethnicity on official political level. Also, as a newspaper which targets broadest audience with its thematically very diversified subject matters, we can discern the dynamics of the dominant ethno-national process which invents, modifies, fuels, and denies ethnic symbols in many areas in Montenegro.

## **Work plan**

I will conduct the archival research in Montenegro for the following time period:

### I phase

1945. – 1989. (post World War II and post-socialist politics and developments – AB revolution);

### II phase

1989. – 2006. (time of AB revolution and social, economical transition, mass privatization – referendum 21. May 2006. (the independence of Montenegro);

### III phase

June 2006. – 2007/08/09 (present time and creation/stability national culture and folklore in popular culture).