



Nationalisation of the Sacred

*Orthodox Historiography, Memory,
and Politics in Montenegro*

Emil Hilton Saggau



PETER LANG

The Eastern Orthodox Churches in post-communist Eastern Europe are embroiled in long-running conflicts over ownership of territory, saints, sites, nations, and history. These often violent conflicts reflect political and national rivalries, most explicitly in former Yugoslavia and Ukraine. They are often understood as simplified ethnic-national tensions with religious overtones, but, as this book demonstrates such an assessment overlooks the deeper theological and historiographical framework.

Nationalisation of the Sacred offers a detailed analysis of the theological backdrop to these conflicts. It analyses how various strands of Eastern Orthodoxy have adapted to the contemporary political context, a process where history, memory, and politics are transformed to fit the needs of rival nations and churches. The book provides an in-depth analysis of this process and the transformations in church-related conflicts in post-communist Montenegro, where the Serbian Orthodox Church has been pitted against a rival Montenegrin church and Montenegrin government.

Additionally the book provides an up-to-date and unique analysis of Eastern Orthodox historiography, modern Serbian theology, religion in Montenegro more broadly, and the roots of the violent clash between Orthodox believers and the Montenegrin government in 2019-2021.

Emil Hilton Saggau holds a Ph.D. from University of Copenhagen (2020) and is currently research fellow at the section for Church History at Lund University, Sweden. He received the Miklós Tomka Award in 2018 and the Danish Elite Research travel grant in 2019 for his research into nationalism and religion in South Eastern Europe. He is a member of the Balkan History Association.

South-East European History

Cover Image: Orthodox election-victory celebration in Podgorica august 31, 2020 (Photo: Savo Prelevic, AFP)

ADVANCE PRAISE FOR

*Nationalisation of the Sacred:
Orthodox Historiography, Memory, and
Politics in Montenegro*

In this book, Emil B. Hilton Saggau delivers a very convincing and concise analysis of the Montenegrin Orthodox Church in the context of both Serbian Orthodoxy and Eastern European post-communist developments. He uses this case study to explain how ecclesiology, historiography, and national identity come together in various complex ways to shape modern politics. By focusing on Montenegro, he provides a corrective to many studies of the Serbian Church and politics, which are limited to internal developments and the link with the Yugoslavian wars. Moreover, Saggau's extensive knowledge of the theological background highlights another aspect often missing from treatments of religion and politics in the former Yugoslavia.

—Dr. Sebastian Rimestad, Senior Researcher in Religious Studies,
University of Leipzig

This book focuses on the theology-based ideologies and ideology-based theologies, which drive socio-political developments in the Western Balkans. The author does not stop there, however, and goes beyond, as far as to Russia and Ukraine. Wars and other conflicts in the Balkans and other areas, where peoples hold Eastern Christianity as their faith and identity, may look like isolated spots of violence, but in fact they constitute interconnected patterns. The author of the book connects many dots and explores these patterns thoroughly. He extracts from them what can be identified as a civil religion of political Orthodoxy — a peculiar amalgam of religion and politics that permeates both secularised and still religious societies in Southern and Eastern Europe.

This is an indispensable guide to the minefields of the Eastern Christian theopolitics. Without such a guide, one can hardly comprehend the most recent wars, including the ones in the former Yugoslavia, Georgia, and Ukraine.

—Cyril Hovorun, Professor of Ecclesiology, International Relations and
Ecumenism at Sankt Ignatios College, University College Stockholm,
and Director of the Huffington Ecumenical Institute at
Loyola Marymount University in Los Angeles

Nationalisation of the Sacred

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Montenegrin nationalist blocking the road to Cetinje during the enthronement of a new Serbian Orthodox metropolitan of Montenegro, 5 September 2021 (Photo: Savo Prelevic, AFP)

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Preface

When Thou hast created the Mind
It did not see you, Myopic and Blind
Thou are an endless Ocean
I, an Oarless Boatman

– NJEGOŠ, RULER AND METROPOLITAN OF MONTENEGRO

In my first piece on South Eastern European religion from 2011, “A journey at the periphery of the European mind”, I argued that the region of South-East Europe is the very fringe of European politics and interests. Studies of religion in this fringe provide, however, a mirror – a new perspective on European values and, prominently, religion. A case in point is Montenegro, a newly founded state with deep historical roots in the 7th century, which is today a continual reminder of how unstable states, governments, nations and, in particular, religious communities continue to be in Europe and the United States. Currently, the Montenegrin state is in the making, and so it offers insights into the crucial factors and mighty forces of humanity that make or break religions and societies – history, memory, ideology and even war. The national and religious identities in Western countries might have seemed more stable

than in Montenegro until recently, but places such as Montenegro are a reminder of how swiftly a shift in religious or national identity might come and how deep the consequences can be, as far as political turmoil and war are concerned. In Montenegro, a shift occurred in less than a decade which involved two wars. Today Ukraine has become another horrible example of the same process. It is a reminder of how shift in religious and national affiliations is tightly bound to political, economic and military conflicts.

This study is an attempt to look into the structures and reasons behind the shift in Montenegro and relate them to broader South Eastern European and European contexts. The focus is on how a shift in religious and national identity plays out in materials, place-making, ritual performances, historical writings and, finally, theology. In other words, the book examines *The Historiographical Practice and Religious Ideology of the Eastern Orthodox Churches in Montenegro and Its Backdrop in Theology*.

The question slowly formed in my mind when I first entered South-East Europe as a young scholar in May 2011. I crossed the Montenegrin-Albanian border with a group of researchers under the direction of Professor Jørgen S. Nielsen. Late in the evening, we came to Montenegro. We passed Mount Rumija, the ruins of the city of Suacium. We were accommodated in the old citadel of the House of Balšić. This book reflects my initial interest and ten years of work on the history and historiography of those sites, churches and communities that I saw for the first time back then. It is a history deeply connected to the inner dynamics, emergence and struggles of the Orthodox communities after communism.

Perhaps I had not foreseen that this topic would become relevant so quickly, as the case has been in recent years. In April 2019 the Montenegrin government tried to overtake a central Serbian Orthodox Monastery at Kotor Bay. It was met with fierce Serbian Orthodox Opposition. This incident was the first in an escalating struggle that would change Montenegrin politics. In May 2019, the government proposed a new controversial law on religion, which was passed through parliament on 24 December 2019. This new law brought the Serbian Orthodox Church and its supporters in Montenegro to the streets during

the December snow. The confrontation continued into 2020 and even through the pandemic lockdown in the spring. The conflict ended with the general election of 2020 when the government failed to be re-elected for the first time in thirty years. Shortly after this, the main spokesperson of the Serbian Orthodox Church in Montenegro, Metropolitan Amfilohije, died of COVID-19, thereby ending his thirty-year tenure. The fall of the thirty-year rule of the former Montenegrin government and the death of the Serbian Metropolitan Amfilohije marked the end of an era in Montenegrin history. An era with which this book is preoccupied. The intense conflict in 2019–2020 was about the right to the history and religious heritage of Montenegro, the very theme of this book. A debate that continued into 2021 and 2022 with its epitomical moment when the roads to the former Montenegrin capital, Cetinje, were blocked in September 2021 by demonstrations that set fire to their “walls” of car decks. The protesters tried to block the installation of a new Serbian Metropolitan in Montenegro to fill Amfilohije’s throne.

A religious and political question is beneath all of this, which arose from the disintegration of Yugoslavia and communism. The same development can be seen throughout South-East Europe. In this book, I will provide an analysis of not only the content of the conflict in Montenegro and its deeper structures but also relate these developments to other countries in the former Yugoslavia, namely Serbia and North Macedonia with an outlook to Bulgaria and Ukraine.

My argument is that there is a deeper religious ideological structure and theological reasoning beneath all of these struggles in the post-communist countries, which form them and provide them with theological foundations. In a sense, these deeper structures of history provide the scene where the national and religious struggles are to be played out. In other words, the struggles would not take place without an already set battle scene. I will try to provide a characterisation of these ideological structures, as they are formed throughout history.

Parts of chapters 2 and 5 have been published as prior articles (Saggau 2018; 2017; 2019a; 2019b; 2017b; 2020a), but they have been reworked, updated and incorporated into the general argument of this book.

Acknowledgement

The work on this book have brought me far and wide in former Yugoslavia. I am very grateful for the help from local scholars, journalists, clergy members and ordinary people. I owe much gratitude to Omer Kajoshaj, Professor Vladimir Bakrač from Montenegro and Professor Mirko Blagojević from Belgrade.

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Thanks to family and friends for their support and appreciation for stories. I have particularly been glad for the company of my father, a historian, during my travels and field site visits in Montenegro. There is no one else I would have preferred as the driver when our car was stuck (twice) in surprisingly thick April snow in the inaccessible Montenegrin mountains, without a map and with a broken GPS shortly after a breakfast *rakia*. No driver has ever taken the angry sheep across the thorny ruins of Suacium in hail so relaxed. A final thanks to my wife and kids. I hope you will enjoy my work and continue to partake in it – and the travels.

Notes on terminology

In this book, I have not altered the self-identification of identity or language. This approach means that I refer to the Montenegrin language and ethnicity if the source self-identifies as Montenegrin. This practice is not a statement about my own position. I have referred to Njegoš and other proto-national figures with a very generic term “Slavic” rather than call them “Serbian” or “Montenegrin” in order to avoid any embroilment in current debates. This book is not about which “ethnicity” they belong to.

Most translations of quotes are my own if nothing else is stated (from time to time, with help from indigenous speakers). Crucial quotes have the original Serbian or Montenegrin text in brackets after the English translation.

The use of names for clergymen, such as Metropolitan Amfilohije, follow the Orthodox tradition and call them by their monastic names – sometimes with their full name or secular names in brackets. In general, I used the Latinised version of Montenegrin or Serbian names and places. Otherwise, the Latinised English name is given preference. A name on point is Lake Skadar or Kosovo, as they are called in Serbian,

which from an Albanian point of view would be translated into English as Lake Skhöder or Kosova. The book is about Serbs and Montenegrins, wherefore the places and names follow their tradition.

Most names use the Latin version of Serbian and Montenegrin with special signs such as “š”, “ž” or “Đ”, or the standard English alliteration whereby Lovćen becomes Lovchen or Đukanović becomes Djukanovich and so on. For Russian, Ukrainian, Bulgarian Orthodox names, etc., I used the English standard version of the name, church or place.

Abbreviations

AO	The Archbishopric of Ohrid
BOC	The Bulgarian Orthodox Church
CEDEM	Montenegrin Center for Democracy and Human Rights (Centar za demokratiju i ljudska prava)
CPD	The Chronicle of the Priest of Duklja
DPS	Democratic Party of Socialists of Montenegro (Mng. Demokratska partija socijalista Crne Gore)
UOC-PK	Ukrainian Orthodox Church, Patriarchate of Kyiv
UOC-MP	Autonomous Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the Moscow Patriarchate
MaOC	The Macedonian Orthodox Church (from 2022 Ohrid Archbisophric)
MOC	The unrecognised Montenegrin Orthodox Church
SOC	The Serbian Orthodox Church
ROC	The Russian Orthodox Church

Chapter One

Introduction

In order to understand the revival of Eastern Orthodoxy and nation-states in Southeastern Europe following the fall of communism, I would argue that one needs to comprehend the deep structures of theology and ecclesial life, which shape the very stages at which the revival played out. This backdrop formed today's religious, military and political conflicts, as well as the debates about heritage, church buildings and the history of Orthodoxy throughout the Eastern Orthodox Commonwealth. This context shapes the national and orthodox identity of many Eastern European countries. This religious backdrop is overlooked in the analysis of the political and national development of countries where the Orthodox Church is the historical majority church. A neglect leads to simplistic analysis and the reduction of nationalism to religion and the church to a national agent. The diverse and theologically nuanced positions of Orthodox clergymen, hierarchs and even politicians are dismissed. The root for nationalism is far too often insinuated to be Orthodoxy. The churches are far too often simply reduced to a pawn in a political game. This situation is very much the case in scholarly assessments of the former Yugoslavia and in the analysis of

the development of the churches and national movements in Serbia and Montenegro. This one-sided approach is still the case today, and it is repeated in the analysis of other countries, such as Russia and Ukraine. Such an approach to current events falls short, as Andrew Baruch Wachtel notes, “[B]ecause they tend to view nationalism in a narrow political context, they are mostly unable to explain why it [nationalism] could have been marshalled so effectively and easily” (Wachtel 1998, 16).

This is to an extent true about the complex national and religious character of Montenegro and its relation to Serbia. In the 21st century a Montenegrin national and ecclesial movement surged, which paved the way for the forming of an unrecognised Montenegrin Orthodox Church and Montenegrin independence in 2006. The majority of analysis of this surge of national feelings contrasts the Montenegrin national identity with that of Serbia and likewise with the churches. In this simplistic analysis there are two narratives about who the Montenegrins are and to which church they belong. Either are they an independent nation with their own ethnicity, language, culture and most prominently



Image 1: Protesters with a Serbian flag in front of the main cathedral in the Montenegrin capital, Podgorica (Source: AFP)

church or they are simply a branch of the Serbian nation and church with their own significant characteristics, but nevertheless with deep roots in a shared culture and church (Morrison 2009). The rivalry is between these two simplistic narratives of who the Montenegrins are and which church they belong to. These narratives can be dated to the late 19th century (Šišteć 2014; 2010b). The question of Montenegrin identity has existed since then, but it has become even more radicalised since the fall of communism in 1989. Since the 1990s, Montenegrin and Serbian nationalists alike have nurtured the polarisation between a constructed Montenegrin and Serbian nation (Džankić 2009).

A reminder of this can be found in Podgorica, the capital of present-day Montenegro, where the slogans of Serbian national and religious unity often appear as graffiti outside public buildings or even at Montenegrin monuments. Alongside it, the year 1918 is inscribed, which was when the independent kingdom of Montenegro was dismantled and turned into a province controlled by the victorious (some would say Serbian) Belgrade army after World War I. The graffiti is a constant reminder to the people passing by that many Montenegrins see present-day Montenegro as a Serbian province that has defected from the union with Serbia – a region disloyal to the Serbian cause and a defying state and church now in pursuit of a fantasy of an independent ethnicity, language, culture and even an Orthodox church (Miedlig 2006). Some Serbs even have a derogative name for Montenegro's nationalist fantasy and church – they call it “Duklja”. Such a term traces the movement back to either communist or fascist roots (Terzić 2020), with some credibility (Šišteć 2014; 2010b). The Montenegrin nationalist and newly installed clergy are, however, relentless in their building project for a new history of Montenegro in which the Serbs only have a role as villains to play. They seek to thwart the freedom of the Montenegrin mountain dwellers and their church. The ancient Serbian kings and their church – even their modern descendants – are tyrants suppressing the genuine Montenegrin state and the church in this new Montenegrin narrative (Miedlig 2006). There is no longer room for a common history with the Serbs. Montenegrin nationalists and clergy deny historical unity between Montenegro and Serbia. A sharp formulation of this situation was given by the president of Montenegro, who

announced in a speech in May 2020 that the Montenegrin state's greatest threat was from Serbian clerics (Pobjeda 2020). The union with the Serbs is among the major parts of the Montenegro population and political elites a narrative of Serbian invasion and Montenegrin submission leading to suffering and misery.

The formation of the Montenegrin Orthodox Church in 1993 in opposition to the local branch of the Serbian Orthodox Church in Montenegro, and the subsequent alienation between the Serbian clergy and the Montenegrin government, has made the national identity conflict into one with an increasingly religious tone (Šistek 2010a). The tension was in the spring and summer of 2020 at its highest level due to a new law on religion. The law could have been used by the government to seize all historical Orthodox shrines currently owned by the Serbian Orthodox Church – a highly contested issue, which seemed to be the decisive reason for the fall of the Democratic Party of Socialists of Montenegro (DPS - Mng. Demokratska partija socijalista Crne Gore) government, who had ruled from 1996–2020, in the Montenegrin election of August 2020 and the presidential election in April 2023.

The rivalry and contradiction between these two narratives of Montenegro's past in the Serbian and Montenegrin Orthodox churches is the point of departure for this book. This book is not an attempt to give an exact, detailed account of these national narratives or to prove which of the two narratives is a correct historical account of Montenegro's past. The point is rather to identify how they are established and narrated within the Orthodox community through the renewed history of sites, saints and relics, what their purpose is and upon which ideological traditions and notions they draw. This background will be used to reflect on how religious, ethnic and national identity is created in Europe today, inspired by Michel de Certeau's critical assessment of what he calls the practice and religious ideology behind history. The main point of the book is that the theological and ecclesial life of the various Orthodox communities are essential parts of the very framework for the revival of national movements and nation-states. Turning back to Wachtel's point, nationalism needs to be understood in a larger context than the mere political one, because this explains why various nation-states and national movements are "marshalled so effectively

and easily”, as he wrote. The religious backdrop explains how, why and where the various national movements and nation-states can emerge – and more crucial, where and why they clash, such as in Montenegro and currently in Ukraine.

A roadmap to this book

In this first chapter I will begin with a short overview of the scholarly debate about the rise of Orthodoxy and nationalism in former Yugoslavia to stress the constant narrowing of the analysis to a political context, thereby ignoring the wider implications of Orthodoxy and theology. Instead, I propose to use a different theoretical point of departure in the analysis of the complex relations between churches and nationalism with the use of Michel de Certeau’s theory on historiography. Methodologically, the study uses a combination of textual analysis with more field-oriented methods, which studies, what I have labelled, the “nationalization of the sacred”.

The second chapter draws up the historical, religious and political context of Montenegro. This provides an overview of Montenegro’s church history and most significantly the transformation of Orthodox communities after the fall of communism. The chapter ends with an analysis and discussion of the conflict between the churches and the government in 2019–2020.

The third chapter turns to the wider debates about Orthodox historiography and its roots in both the Church fathers and more recent Russian Orthodox theology. The main point being that modern Orthodox historiography seems to fall into two different forms, which is defined by their perception of the state or the political power. The first one, called the Eusebian one, binds the church closely to the political power and embraces the nation to such an extent that it becomes a “holy trinity” of nation, church and state as a Montenegrin nationalist argues. In contrast stands the Athanasian one, which denies the state any power over the church and instead calls for the church to seek a direct relationship with the divine in chosen ignorance of the secular power. In chapter three, I conclude that the Montenegrin church embraces the Eusebian notion and subsequently the rising Montenegrin state and national movements.

The fourth chapter discusses if a selection of Serbian Orthodox theologians follows the same trail as their Montenegrin counterparts. The chapter consists of an analysis of the historiography of Metropolitan Petar II Petrović Njegoš (1813–1851), Bishop (later saint) Nikolaj Velimirović (1881–1956), father (later saint) Justin Popović (1894–1979) and finally the recently deceased Montenegrin Metropolitan Amfilohije (Radović, 1938–2020). The chapter concludes that despite differences, the discussed theologians shared common elements of an Athanasian historiography that denies the secular power any role over the church. In contrast they develop a different perception of the people, as potential “God’s people”, who can be redeemed through the guidance of the church.

In chapter 5 these “religious ideological” roots of chapters 3 and 4, as de Certau labels them, is discussed in relation to concrete saints and place-making in Montenegro. Four major cults and rebuilt shrines in Montenegro are analysed in order to reveal how these various forms of historiographic interplay with religious practice. In this chapter, I argue that the churches physically build religious infrastructures, which sets the very frame for the debate about national identity and statehood in Montenegro. The national question arises and plays out within a religiously defined frame.

The conclusion from chapter 5 is limited to the rivalry of the Serbian Orthodox Church and their Montenegrin counterparts. This point is enlarged in chapter 6 with an outlook towards other revived nation-states with Orthodox majority populations. The chapter consist of an assessment concerning North Macedonia, Bulgaria and Ukraine. It concludes that several key-elements from the Montenegrin case can be found in the national debates in the other three countries underlining that the Montenegrin debates bear traces of wider Orthodox and Eastern European phenomena.

The final chapter concludes this book and argues for the need to address the transformation of churches and nation-states in Eastern Europe in new ways that are not narrowly bound to the political context. The perception needs to better consider the theology and the churches’ ecclesial life as well as other aspects of human life.

The creation of a new religious and political landscape of Montenegro

The creation of a new history of Orthodoxy in Montenegro was formed during significant political and societal changes in Montenegro in 1989. The period began during the communist breakdown that followed the anti-bureaucratic revolution in Serbia, Montenegro and Vojvodina orchestrated by the Milošević regime in 1989. In 1991, Milo Đukanović (b. 1962) became the prime minister of Montenegro and ruled from 1996 as head of the government and the DPS party until the general election in Montenegro in August 2020. Just a few months before Đukanović's appointment, Metropolitan Amfilohije (Radović, 1938–2020) was installed in 1990 as metropolitan of Montenegro and the Littoral and went on to become the most influential Serbian clergyman for the Serbian Orthodox Church in Montenegro (SOC). The period in question runs from the appointment of both until their demise from political and religious life in 2020. This delimitation provides a spatial and temporal scope, a chronotype, in which Eastern Orthodoxy can be studied through its relation to history, memory, place-making, state-making and politics.

The period from 1990s to 2020 in Montenegro is characterised by one major political, cultural and religious transformation connected to the independence of Montenegro in which a renewed interpretation of Montenegrin religious history came about in the two rival Orthodox communities. This period is characterised by a bipolar reformulation of the country's religious and political history after the breakdown of communism. The new narratives of state, ethnicity, cultural and religious identity range from an ultra-Serbian nationalist one across a moderate middle ground to an ultra-Montenegrin nationalist one. There exist hundreds of variations and positions in this spectrum, but ultimately, they are all caught within the spectrum between the two poles of ultra-Serbian or Montenegrin nationalism. They all have to deal with the question of Montenegrin national, ecclesial and cultural identity. The two main Orthodox communities, the local branch of the Serbian Orthodox Church (SOC) and the unrecognised Montenegrin

Orthodox Church (MOC) play a key role in these narratives and in their production. Both institutions seek to establish their own narrative about the past in which they are the sole legitimate church and thereby monopolise history, persons, events and sites within one institution and one narrative. The central research question raised by these Eastern Orthodox historiographies is: What is the historical backdrop and logic in these competing claims?

The purpose of this book is to answer this question by examining – in Michel de Certeau’s words – the historiographical strategical practice and religious ideology behind their claims (Certeau 1988). The focus is therefore on the social and physical practices of reformulation history and the religion-based ideological reasoning behind. This focus will highlight the importance of religious ideology in the construction of national narratives.

The desecularisation of Yugoslav politics

Orthodox historiography has often been studied when the national historiography of the nation-states with a majority of Orthodox believers has been examined. Such studies highlight how national historiography, with inspiration from the local Eastern Orthodox Church, was developed in the Eastern European nation-states in the 19th and 20th centuries. Secular and Orthodox histories were slowly entangled in these years. National history was the primary focus, and the church was secondary. In the case of Bulgaria, Carsten Riis (2002) and others have written several crucial studies of the late development of Orthodox and national historiography. Similar studies exist for the Baltics (Rimestad 2012), Romania (Velicu 2020), Albania (Bido 2020), Greece (Beaton & Ricks 2009; Willert 2019), etc.

Much of the focus on Serbia and Montenegro has been on the construction of Yugoslavia in historiography and as an identity in the 20th century, which often overshadowed and marginalised the national and ecclesial histories of the Serbs and Montenegrins for several decades – unlike the case of Bulgaria or Greece. The implosion of the Yugoslav idea, state and communist rule in the 1980s only meant a greater

interest in Yugoslav historiography because these ideas had now failed and were replaced with re-emerging national identities. The question of why the idea of Yugoslavia failed and the region plunged into war attracted much scholarly attention (Sindbæk 2012; Djokic 2003). Less academic effort was devoted to the new emerging national historiographies of the 1990s. It was, therefore, not until the end of the 1990s that academic studies of particular modern national and ecclesial histories in former Yugoslavia emerged. In these studies, the overarching paradigm of the 2000s and 2010s studies of religion in Eastern Europe was to focus on the religious communities' role in politics, nation-building and national identity (see, e.g., Leustean 2014a; 2014b; Ramet 2014; Marsh 2007; Merdjanova 2000; Payne 2007).

The issue of religion and history in Montenegro after 1989 has rarely been an academic subject because it was mostly seen as an integrated part of the study of religion and history in Serbia (see Alexander 1979). The perspective was thus Serbian-oriented (Vukadinović 2008, 57–64). Members of the *Yugoslav Society for Scientific Studies of Religion* (YUNIR) mainly undertook studies of religion in the region of former Yugoslavia during the 1990s, such as the Belgrade-based sociologists Mirko Blagojević (2008; 1995; 1996) and Milan Vukmanović (2004; 2008). Blagojević noted how the traditional religious communities experienced a revival after communism – particularly the Serbian Orthodox Church – in the late 1980s and early 1990s. As Blagojević described, Yugoslav society experienced a desecularisation and clericalisation of political issues, such as Kosovo (Blagojević 2008). Blagojević's early studies in the 1994–1996 period set the scene for most studies that followed, such as Klaus Buchenau (1999; 2000; 2005; 2003, 2012) and Bojan Aleksov (2003; 2010).

The point of departure for this book is to follow Blagojević's perception of the desecularisation and clericalisation of political issues with a more nuanced theological reading and interpretation of the rebuilding of the Montenegrin and Serbian nationhood. The backdrop of this clericalisation of political issues must be found in the late development of the Orthodox historiography, which unfolds in chapter 3, and in the particular Serbian development in and outside of Montenegro, as discussed in chapter 4.

The “root” of the rising Serbian nationalism

Blagojević's perception of the development was read quite misleadingly by a series of Croatian or Anglo-American academics and journalists. During the heated period of Serbian nationalism in the Yugoslav civil wars of the 1990s, it was often claimed that Orthodoxy was the root of Serbian nationalism and violence (Judah 2000; 2002; Anzulovic 1999; Sells 1998). Many of these works focused on the Serbian Church and argued that its history and theology – most often boiled down to the so-called “Kosovo myth” and “Svetosavlje” – were the roots of Serbian nationalism (Judah 1997; Falina 2007; Malcolm 1999). These studies thereby touch on the subject of this book. However, many of these studies were directly anti-Serbian and written too much under the emotional influence of the wars. The Serbian Church's revived belief system was framed as the root of genocide, perhaps most starkly in Branimir Anzulovic's (1999) book, *Heavenly Serbia – from Myth to Genocide* or Tim Judah's *The Serbs* (2000) and Noel Malcolm's much debated *Kosovo* (1999). These works often include crude and anachronistic portrayals of the Serbian Orthodox Church and its founding beliefs.

A crucial, thorough and seminal work published simultaneously is Vjekoslav Perica's *Balkan Idols: Religion and Nationalism in the Yugoslav States* (2002). In it, Perica, a former Yugoslav diplomat, presents a grand narrative of the revival of religion in Yugoslavia, emphasising the Serbian Orthodox Church. The theoretical approach to religion in his study became the standard of subsequent studies of religion in both Serbia and Montenegro in the 2010s. However, Florian Bieber (2003) were the first to consider religion in Montenegro as a subject in its own right. Bieber's anthology was the first to attempt to write an account of the changes taking place solely in Montenegrin society after the fall of communism. The anthology included two contributions, one written by Srđa Pavlović (2003, 83–106) and one by Šerbo Rastoder (2003, 107–138), which describe the development of a Montenegrin-centred and independent national, religious and cultural narrative detached from the Serbian Orthodox Church and the Serbian nationalist narrative. Pavlović concluded that the endeavour to create a new independent Montenegrin national identity and separate church seemed highly

political and fuelled by the Montenegrin government's need to distance itself from the Milošević regime. He notes that the Montenegrins' independent cultural, religious and political identity was being moulded together in 2003, which led to a process of marginalisation and rivalry between a Montenegrin and a Serbian-centred religious, cultural and political identity (Pavlović 2003). Pavlović's conclusion in 2003 foreshadowed what was about to come in the wake of the referendum in Montenegro in 2006. The detection runs along the same lines as Blagojević but does not dig deeper into the theological backdrop. However, Pavlović saw how religion and history could be charged and instrumentalised in the debates on Montenegrin nationhood. A debate that continued throughout the 2000s and 2010s until it culminated in the larger protest in 2020, which I will return to in the next chapter.

In the footsteps of Perica and Anzulovic followed Kenneth Morrison (2009; 2015) and Jelena Džankić (2015a;2015b; 2014a; 2014b; 2014b; 2013; 2012; 2009). Their major contribution to the discussion of Montenegrin nationhood and the role of religion and history is empirical and will be discussed further in the next chapter. Both of them – together with František Šistek (2010a), Pieter Troch (2014) and Stefan Kube (2012) – repeat the same points that Perica made on religion but delimit it to Montenegro. They reach almost the same conclusion– often with the same references, the same specific rituals and events – without much new empirical backing from the field or primary sources. A major problem with Perica's work is that it is reductive towards religion and has a potential blind spot towards the theological backdrop, which the mentioned studies adopt, as further discussed in detail elsewhere (Saggau 2018).

The study of the ideology and practice of history writing

The approach to the question of how deeper structures reformulate a state, a nation or a church's historical identity is a historiographical question. Historiography deals exactly with the deeper structures of history. I have used Michel de Certeau's (1925–86) framework in this book. One

must remember that Certeau's work deals with the mystical religious history of Catholicism (Bocken 2013), which he took part in himself. Looking beyond his own entanglement in Catholicism, Certeau's view on religious organisations, sites, spaces and history is an ideal tool for this study. It is designed to catch Christian history's mystical and hagiographical form, tying it to power, place-making and the physical space (or *compositio loci*, as the Jesuits would say). Certeau stands at the intersection of the secular and the ecclesial traditions of writing history. Certeau argued that personal discourse or text and the practised form of history are bound to an order or ideology. Person, practice and ideology need to be considered. In one of the opening paragraphs of de Certeau's *The Writing of History* (*L'écriture de l'histoire*, orig. 1975), he explains that history "aims at calming the dead who still haunt the present, and at offering them scriptural tombs"(1988, 2). History, in its Western and modern form, is not a neutral recording of the past but one intended to create order or justify a specific contemporary social and political state. It provides a sense of the order of the world. It is a break between past and present in which "it promotes a selection between what can be understood and what must be forgotten" (Certeau 1988, 4). In this "labour", as de Certeau calls it, historiography produces symbols, periods, categorisations and other mental forms in which "the given must be transformed into a construct" (Certeau 1988, 6). Certeau's methodological definition of what a historiographical study must take into account is as follows:

[For] historiographical practices and discourses, I propose taking up, in turn, the following points: 1) The treatment of religious ideology by contemporary historiography requires us to recognise the ideologies that are already invested in history itself. 2) There is a historicity of history, implying the movement linking an interpretive practice to a social praxis. 3) History thus vacillates between two poles. On the one hand, it refers to practice. Hence to reality; on the other, it is a closed discourse, a text that organises and concludes a mode of intelligibility. 4) History is probably our myth. It combines what can be thought, the "thinkable" and the origin, in conformity with the way in which a society can understand its own working. (Certeau 1988, 21)

In this quote, de Certeau briefly lays out a methodological guideline for the study of history, which is hard to unpack, and that is what the rest

of his *The Writing of History* (1988) tries to do. At first, de Certeau argues that a study of historiography needs to be aware of both practice and discourse. Practice is social praxis, which is a key concept in his general work, and I will return to it later. For now, history is not cut off from the social life of a community. However, it is, in fact, formed from its everyday activity, the performance of rituals and labour of symbols, places, memories and other materials.

Moreover, history is related to the discourse of a given text, which for de Certeau is its structure and its “religious ideology” or the ideologies “already invested in history itself”. As de Certeau says, in point 3 of the quote, history “vacillates” between these two: the social practice of history and the hidden discourse of religious ideology. A study needs to investigate both historiographical practice and religious ideology, thus considering both texts and religion’s material and social form. History writing provides legitimacy to a political or cultural order or establishes it, but it also implicitly becomes a history of the very same order and can be studied as such (Spiegel 2007, 69). A study of a certain way of writing history is a study of that structure of power that formed it, be it religious, political, ethnic or cultural – or, as de Certeau puts it, “the *sociocultural localisation* of religious ideologies” (de Certeau’s italics) in his study of Christian saints (Certeau 1988, 134). A set of practices is essential to place-making, which could be either a tradition or academic standard for producing history or a social practice that mirrors the place and the textual realm of history. Practice is an outward human embodiment of a place and a discourse which becomes its visible form (Certeau 1988, 129).

Religious practice is formed in defence of a certain religious order of power. This point is further expounded upon in the introduction of de Certeau’s seminal cultural study *The Practice of Everyday Life* (1988b), originally published in French in 1980 (*L’invention du quotidien*. Vol. 1, Arts de faire). In this work, de Certeau provides further qualification of what a social or religious order is. He argues that humans construct place in two ways, which allow for two sets of practice. At first, a given place in time and space is formed from the organised narratives that create a “strategy” (Certeu 1988b). A strategy is the overlaying governing system that is formed through the use of power. It is a uniform

system informing individuals about where to go, what to do and what to believe. Against this power structure exists the individual's everyday practice, a tactic, which bends the rules and takes shortcuts. A strategically formed place sets up a scene at which a social practice can take place (Wolfeich 2012, 164). The strategic infrastructure – or as Stephen Hartnett calls it, “a politically manageable cognitive map” (Hartnett 1998, 290) – often forms in a text, a discourse. The text shapes a place and a social practice of the individual. In the strategic discourse, the place is also inscribed in the form of determination of what can be thought and what can be forgotten. If one follows de Certeau, studying a historiographical practice is to study the very place-making and social practice a certain religious group embodies. This practice attests to the social and religious order of certain religious texts and histories, which have been formed through the power to create a strategic infrastructure.

Consequently, two lines of enquiry into the historiography of the Orthodox communities in Montenegro exist. One goes through a study of the textual version of the history of Montenegro and the strategic order of power and notion of differentiation and breaks, which creates an infrastructure. This point will reveal the underlying religious ideology of the strategic infrastructure of history. The second route goes through the study of practice and place, which is the “the sociocultural localisation of religious ideologies”. This approach entails, on the one side, a material and social study of places and practices and, on the other, a contextualisation of a certain religious ideology. In this book, in order to follow the lines laid out by de Certeau, I will first and foremost study the social and material world of the given communities and second, discuss their particular attachment to a given system of a certain religious ideology.

Nationalism and religion: The same order?

As de Certeau notes, history establishes an order and legitimises a political rule in presenting the past to its reader. The emergence of the sovereign state and nation in the period from the seventeenth to the 19th century is seen by de Certeau as a new set of practices and order

rooted in the disintegration of the totality of Christianity in the 17th century (Giles 2014; Certeau 1988, 134–157). The nation-states appear from the midst of the Christian community. Nationalism in South Eastern Europe has likewise, by many scholars, been seen as rooted or inter-linked with the Eastern Orthodox Churches (Makrides 2019, 235–253). This close relationship, as Martin Schulze Wessel (2006) noted, between religion and nationalism in Eastern Europe has led to an increased “sacralisation of the nation [which] means that the nation takes over the form of expression of religion” (Wessel 2006, 7).

Studies of religion in Montenegro, such as Morrison (2009) and others (Šistek 2010a; Troch 2014; Kube 2012; Džankić 2015; 2014c), all dwell on this relationship. The main problem with the general paradigm used in these studies of religion in South Eastern Europe is, as de Certeau argues, the belief that a “single model (here, a political one) can, in fact, explain a society in its totality” (Certeau 1988, 120). According to Certeau (1988, 120), this approach builds on an anthropological postulate whereby a modern society contains both civilised and savage elements. The civilised elements are given a dominant position and used to categorise or interpret all other elements. In this example, such as Morrison (2009), the politics of a state are given a dominant position as the “essential” element of modern states, and “savage” religion is then categorised according to this (Certeau 1988, 120–122). Given this framework, politics is essential to civility and modernity, and religion is seen as the opposite. Religion is categorised beneath politics, economics, culture and urban development. Certeau argues that such an approach is not nuanced because a society advances through “a plurality of heterogeneous but combined developments” (1988, 121).

One way to build upon Certeau’s critique of the simplification of religion in studies like Perica (2002) and Morison (2015) could be to re-approach the events, concepts or sites studied without a single analytical agenda, but rather with a dialectical approach. Such an approach must preserve religion as a system of practices and beliefs but, simultaneously, be sensible to how that system spills over to the political system of nationalism. Certeau argues that each system needs to be understood in its own terms – distinct from each other – and then the

connection between practices and ideologies (the passage between the two systems) can be examined. The first step in an approach would be formed concerning the social or personal problems that religion or nationalism tries to solve individually – and how the religious or nationalist practice reflects this. The second step would be to examine how the two systems function together when integrated into a single system. Basically, the argument is that a religious system seeks to solve problems internally, but the religious system could be adopted by (or integrated into) a nationalist system to solve problems in that sphere – such as lack of authenticity, political legitimacy and credibility.

This approach could be used to unfold Klaus Buchenau's (2012) studies of religion in South Eastern Europe. Buchenau (2012, 61) notes that the former Yugoslav states all experienced an increased "Sakralisierung der Nation" (sacralisation of nations) during the early 1990s. Buchenau's concept of sacralisation is based on the notion that nationhood needs religion to bolster and strengthen its authenticity and historical legitimacy claims. This concept of sacralisation is also used by Milan Vukmanović (2008; Radić & Vukmanović 2015) in his depiction of the Serbian Orthodox Church's political role in contemporary Serbian society. The process of sacralisation is a social one, whereby the nation uses religion to create an aura of authenticity. It draws from the sacred wells of religion and re-uses symbols, sites, texts or other materials. National movements and political elites use religion in this way to bolster their power through the use of religion; thus, religion is adopted to solve a national problem. In his study, Buchenau (2012) describes how this process took place in Serbia in the crucial period in the 1990s as part of the mobilisation for war. Buchenau (2012), Vukmanović (2008) and also Bojan Aleksov's studies (2003; 2000; 2010; 2014) provide one way to interpret the development of Serbian Orthodoxy, which is, however, argued against and discussed by among Vladimir Cvetković (2015) and other Serbian theologians. It is crucial to recall that the matter in focus is still very much up for debate, and no consensus has been reached on the SOC's role in rebuilding a Serbian nation-state, Serbian national movements and the church's role in the war after communism.

The British historian, Adrian Hastings (1997, 187–188), provides a more concrete identification of the inner dynamic of how religion

shapes national formations. Hastings (1997, 187–188) identifies the core religious factors that could be activated to sacralise a nation. He argues that these factors are the various uses of early traditions, events and heritage that go beyond the immediate present. Hastings thus identifies how nationalistic political movements can use religion. This labelling of how nationalism uses religion as “sacralisation” builds on concepts borrowed from the analysis of the differences between political religion and politicised religion, such as it is argued by Emilio Gentile (2006). In Morrison (2009) et al. (Šistek 2010a; Troch 2014; Kube 2012; Džankić 2015; 2014a), the Orthodox communities in Montenegro are taken as “political religion” – religious organisations that act as political parties – whereas the situation, as I argue here, is much more one in which the Orthodox communities have been “politicised” by the nationalist struggles if one follows Gentile’s argumentation and studies the communities self-identification more closely. This distinction between politicised and political religion might seem like distinctions without consequences, but the analysis of religious communities as “political religion” disregards religion’s role in this process. The analysis overlooks theology or reduces religion to politic.

In Buchenaue’s, Gentile’s and Hastings’s theories, the analytical focus is on integrating religious functions into nationalism; therefore, their studies still preserve the main functionalist method of the mainstream studies of religion in Montenegro. This mainstream functionalistic approach is that religious phenomena are still interpreted as part of a specific form of nationalism or nationhood. The categorisation of religion in mainstream studies still takes its analytical point of departure from nationalism. A more nuanced picture is created when a reverse analytical strategy supplements Buchenaue’s and Hastings’s assertions. This reverse perspective is a *nationalisation of the sacred*. The emphasis is on how sacred and religious phenomena exist independently and are only moved into the national realm through political force or power. This categorisation originates in the realm of religious practice and moves into the realm of nationalism. The sacred also has forces of its own (e.g., its numinous power to terrify and fascinate) that exist outside the political realm. Glenn Bowman (1993) has already coined the term, *nationalisation of the sacred*, in a study of the conflict in Israel

and Palestine – a context with some similarities to that of the Balkans. Bowman argues (1993) that sacred sites can be called on in the imaginative process of a community. Bowman draws heavily on Benedict Anderson's concept of nationalism as an imagined community (see Kitromilides 1989) but applies it to the process of rebuilding, restoring and occupying a sacred space or material. The sacred (e.g., saints or sites) exists in itself but takes on a new function in political terms when it is called upon by national agents to serve their agenda. From this perspective, religion – characterised by its outlets, including sites, praxis and communities – is itself a phenomenon and not a proxy. Religion has been functioning in human society long before its adoption by nationalist agents; it is crucial to understand and analyse its original function to interpret why it is used in nationalism.

It is important to understand how religious praxis, or belief, is adopted, contested or captured by a national movement and why it makes sense historically, culturally or religiously for social and collective movements to take possession of specific rituals. The analytical concept of nationalisation of the sacred is an attempt to embrace all this. This line of thinking highlights the transnational potential or universal nature of sites, ideas or practices, which can only be forcefully adopted by a specific system of nationalism. Bowman's approach paves the way for a much-needed focus on the transnational historical contextualisation of rituals and beliefs.

The nationalisation of the sacred is a process that has been studied thoroughly previously. The nation-building processes throughout Europe and the Western world in the 18th and 19th centuries are filled with relevant examples, as noted by Cavanaugh (2011). During this period, several nation-states slowly assumed parts of religion's former role in these societies, also adopting its sacred sites, symbols and heritage. Many sacred elements slowly merged with nationhood, so separating them has become almost impossible, as Cavanaugh's concluding words pin-point (2011), the *holy has migrated from church to state*.

Besides institutional mechanisms, the nationalisation of religion or sacred elements can take other forms. Nationalisation can occur with a sacred site, as Bowman (1993) described. This type of nationalisation can take several forms, ranging from restoring a church in the image of

a new nation to rebuilding the site in order to support a new nation to the occupation of the site. Each of these are physical processes that can secure the sacred site within an imagined community. These processes also attest that the site bears a religious value in itself, regardless of the nation – a value that reaches beyond one nation and has to be cut off or moulded for one nation to secure the site within its national belief system.

In the former Yugoslav republics, this nationalisation process has not been as coherent and stable as in many other European places. This is largely evident in the Yugoslav republics' late independence from the Ottoman or Habsburgian powers and the shifting formation of nations and republics in the region throughout the 20th century (Jelavich 1983; Lampe 2000).

Nationalisation of the sacred can be seen across South Eastern Europe. By addressing the nationalisation of the sacred, studies of religion will become more nuanced and better able to grasp the depth of religion in the 21st century. This can be done through contemporary studies of (a) how nationalisation is carried out by political and ecclesial elites, (b) which system of ideas and practices is used, (c) which cultural and historical contexts are relevant and (d) what purpose the nationalisation serves. This book examines several cases in chapters 2 and 3 before a general discussion in chapter 4 and a comparison with a similar process in North Macedonia, Bulgaria and Ukraine. The analysis shows four main ways (as discussed in detail by Saggau 2018) of nationalisation:

1. the use of institutions
2. restoration, rebuilding or occupying sacred sites or buildings
3. recovering or claiming saints or sacred materials (crosses, etc.)
4. the use of other societal structures of governance, such as the ecclesiology of kinship

The “Balkan idol”, as Perica (2002) calls the sacralisation of nations in Yugoslavia, could only be realised because there were sacred symbols, rituals, ideas and organisations that had been nationalised in advance. The sacralisation of nations requires a sacred source. No one is going

to kill for the telephone company – the un-sacred nation-state – as Cavanaugh asserts (2011). The state and the nation need the sacred to secure their eternal existence. The process of nationalisation of the sacred, as outlined above, will be the methodological point of entry into the analysis in chapter 3.

Studies of saints and sites

De Certeau initially stressed the place of production as an essential part of the writing of history. The practice of history writing is bound to this physical place. So far, I have only dealt with the immaterial social form of religion and its impact on systems of thought. In the following section, I will return to the physical form of religion in the materiality of sites, places and religious practice, which follows the material turn in religious studies in the 1970s and 1980s. In this “turn”, it was stressed that the studies of human life had had a tendency to focus on the transcendent and immaterial, whereas the materiality of human existence often was overlooked or seen as an outlet for immaterial meaning. The studies of the social form of religion, following Durkheim and Weber, are prime examples of this neglect or reduction of sites, rituals and material expressions of religion to outward symbols rather than material phenomena in their own right (Moberg 2016, 383).

De Certeau saw both the immaterial and material forms in creating systems of thought. As already mentioned, de Certeau’s cultural studies tended to focus on the physical form of religious systems, rites, places, sites and architecture in close alignment with theological thought. In particular, de Certeau’s work on pilgrimage has spawned a whole tradition for studies of spirituality in its own right (Sheldrake 2016, 38–40). In doing so, de Certeau followed the changing perception of religion in the 1970s during the later period of his life. Following de Certeau, Victor Turner and Edith Turner reshaped the study of rites and pilgrimage in the 1970s. The Turners, in their major theoretical work (2011) on pilgrimage from 1969 and 1978, argued for a renewed focus on the agents and the *communitas* in the studies of pilgrimage and place-making. These individuals, as well as collective pilgrimages,

formed sites through interaction, political opposition and limitation. According to the Turners, the pilgrimage was not just a mere sign of the religious devout or an outlet of a structural system. The pilgrim was something more, with the power to establish or contest political and religious orders (Eade & Sallnow, 2000).

Concerning this study of cults in Montenegro, it is essential to underline that the creation of the holiness of a given site is narrowly bound to pilgrimage if one follows Turner's approach. The communities can be ideological and set out to restore or contest the sacred. In the case of Montenegro, such communities are often the clergy in close accordance with their believers. This *communitas* asserts its ideological power through movement, rites and differentiation in which it marks what the sacred is in opposition to the profane. The pilgrims – and the rites, parades, liturgies and symbolism – thus form the infrastructure of the Holy and turn sites into embodiments of holiness. The physical form, the architecture, the texts, the movement of pilgrims and the social and political practices (rituals, statements, etc.) bound to the places constitute the holy. Without it, the significance of the site is lost – and without it, a new place of worship is not constituted (Eade & Katic 2014, 8–10). Moreover, Glenn Bowman (1991; 1993) has stressed that pilgrimage is a politically and religiously significant form of practice which embodies the interpretation of history and a given religion's sacred nature.

In the study of pilgrimage, the material turn is present because of the centrality of the sacred sites and the place-making, which often determines the form of pilgrimage. The sacred place is often simply where the pilgrim is going. The physical and outward characteristic of the place and route, such as the scallop shell of the Camino de Santiago de Compostela, also becomes the very material symbol of the pilgrim. The shell, as an example, is a sacred material deriving from the site rather than from any form of immaterial thought. Therefore, the study of material religion is closely linked to pilgrimage studies and its creation of sites. The study of material religion departs from materiality in the form of sites, architecture, crosses, icons, food, drink, etc. in order to examine how and why certain objects become sacred and what such a process entails. Birgit Meyer notes that it entails “very concrete

empirical questions about the specific practices, materials and forms employed in generating a sense of something divine, ghostly, sublime or transcendent" (Meyer 2012, 22). The material form and the process of transforming the material into sacred material involves a pattern or practice of memory, as both Danièle Hervieu-Léger (2000) and E. Frances King (2010) note. Hervieu-Léger and King's interpretation of chains of memory attached to material forms and hoes of de Certeau's conceptualisation of the practice of historiography as a material outlet. As such, all three stress the close connection between movement, limitation and differentiation (the pilgrimage) with the material form of the holy in a given place or revered item that all invoke or are attached to a memory of the past. The site becomes a place of memory through the pilgrim. The invocation of a certain chain of memory is an integrated part of the history and place-making of cults. Therefore the concept of memory and the attached field of memory studies must be considered (Dedovic 2018). Quite often, studies of historiography, pilgrimage and material religion seem to jump across the discussion of memory and its development, which is the case in both Hervieu-Léger's and King's studies of material religion. In de Certeau's work, it is almost impossible to separate the concept of history and memory because de Certeau seems to presuppose that history is simply a written form of memory. Memory studies are, however, also comparatively younger than de Certeau's cultural studies and have succeeded in drawing attention to the production of memories and the political and social process behind them.

In the case of the former Yugoslavia, a series of studies on memory (Sindbæk 2012) has emerged during the past decade. It is perhaps not surprising that historiography and memory studies are hard to separate. One of the reasons for this is that, as Jan Assmann asserted, "memory [is] contemporized past", which almost sounds like de Certeau's remark that history is formed by the present (Assmann 2008). Assmann (1995) also argues that the past is perceived through the needs and desires of the present day, which can turn into forms of schematic narrative templates. These templates function, according to James Wertsch (2008, 60), as "simplifying organisational frameworks" that shape the memory of the past. These narratives are created by repeating a narrative, which slowly assumes the form of being the only "natural" way

of perceiving the past. One could call them a sort of historiographical scheme that informs and standardises the way historical events are interpreted and presented in a way that seems not to be entirely ideologically driven. This is perhaps obvious in the case of Montenegro and Serbia, in which a range of new nationalist-driven interpretations of the past have spawned since the late 1980s, which catered to the new nation-states after Yugoslavia. However, in the assessment of the past, there is not only a creation of new textual works about the past and histories but also a series of what is often called “collective memories” (Erll & Rigney 2009)

Key concepts and sources

In this book, I approach religion as a collective expression of the basic needs to imagine an afterlife or a collective national identity (among other things) and enact that belief through certain rituals, symbols or ways of life. As such, it is an expression of a strategic “religious ideology”, to use de Certeau’s words. This is a so-called functionalist approach to studying religion, which identifies where religion unfolds in society and, from that point, traces it back to a religious system. Detlef Pollack and Gergely Rosta summarise this approach: “The functional method relates religion to a problem to which it is the solution. [...] Functional definitions seek to determine what religion does and achieves” (Pollack & Rosta 2017, 110). In this approach, the religious system’s heart is the sacred, which consists of places, symbols or transcendent ideas set apart from the profane society. The sacred is a category that erupts and marks a difference in everyday life – a category of belief, ritual behaviour or symbolic belonging. The origin of this definition is Emile Durkheim’s (1915, 48) work on religion and the theologian Rudolf Otto’s (1869–1937) description of the sacred (Otto 1920). Pollack and Rosta suggest that a substantive definition of religion should be reintroduced in functionalism in order to delineate what is religion and what is not. Pollack and Rosta’s proposed definition of religion is that religious activities, practices and thoughts have an element of or reference to the transcendent (Pollack & Rosta 2017, 47–48). This definition picks up on Durkheim’s

and Otto's concept of the sacred or the holy, which is constituted precisely, according to Otto's analysis, by its reference to the transcendent. It might be best to state that this definition of religion is a working definition suggested by Pollack and Rosta.

Another important term in this study is "tradition". As de Certeau notes, a history is a form of safeguarding a tradition and preserving the sacred of a certain religion. The German sociologist Max Weber (1864–1920) analysed what tradition meant for the early Christians. From a Weberian perspective, history becomes the institutionalisation of the sacred in a specific tradition. Writing history is both the establishment and transmission of the sacred, where it is located, and the meaning and identity of a certain society or community (Weber 2003).

Sources

The sources for this study are publicly available sources published by either the churches or organisations closely related to them, mainly in Montenegro. The majority of sources have either been gathered from field site visits in October 2013, October 2014, April 2018 or June 2019, or located during these visits or related ones to Serbia in 2017 or North Macedonia in 2015. All primary sources are published by principal actors and are therefore treated as direct sources of these principal actors' views on various issues pertaining to this topic. Each source is read historical-critically, often in its original form (in Montenegrin or Serbian). The majority of primary sources have been written by the Orthodox communities themselves in the period dating from 1989 to 2019. The positions expressed in them have, therefore, often been taken as representative of the religious elite of the community. In so, the sources reveal the "strategic" point of view of the religious community as it is formulated by the elite (be it ecclesial or political) but say very little about the daily or "tactical" religious life – to use Certeau's distinction.

The locating, assessing and analysing of primary sources have been undertaken in dialogue with local clergy members and academics to depict their position and narrate their community's history accurately.

The source material is vast, and the informal talks have been used to locate the material, find guidance through it and, in the end, select sources. The informal interviews from the field site visits are not used as direct sources – only in cases where the information was nowhere else to be found. A series of observational studies of sites and rituals from 2018 and 2019 will be used in chapter 5.

Sources for the MOC were located after an interview in 2013 with a high-ranking spokesperson for the church, either on the church's website (cpc.org.me) or on the online publishing platform scribd.com. The primary sources have been the founding documents of the church organisation and their Orthodox magazine *Lučindan*. The church sources were supplemented with material from the *Journal Matica Crnogorska*, a Montenegrin nationalist academic journal, and books published through this outlet. A key text is Goran Sekulović's "Crnogorska identitetska prava i slobode" (2010), which provides a detailed account of the legal and historical arguments of the Montenegrin Orthodox Church.

Sources from SOC were also gathered or located during the above-mentioned site visits and meetings with local clergy members in 2013 and 2018. In addition, the metropolitanate has been helpful in locating specific sources related to particular topics, such as the Metropolitan's letter on Lovćen used in chapter 5. A few of the books used for this study are gifts from the churches or were bought from them directly. Several sources derive directly from the Serbian Orthodox news agency in Montenegro, *Sveti-gora*.

Chapter Two

Eastern Orthodoxy in Montenegro and former Yugoslavia

Eastern Orthodoxy in Montenegro is central to the historical and cultural heritage. The Montenegrin predecessor states were governed for centuries as one of Europe's few theocratic states from the 17th–19th century. This period is one of the many reasons for the close historical relationship between the state and the church before the communist takeover in Montenegro. This chapter provides a comprehensive overview of this history and an analysis of the modern form of the Orthodox communities. The chapter is divided into a section on the church history of Montenegro until 1989, a section on the Orthodox communities in Montenegro after 1989 and finally, a section on the political struggles between the two churches and the government, with a particular focus on the clash in 2019–2021.

This chapter provides the historical, social and political overview and context for the following chapters. Many of the sites and saints are embedded in Montenegrin history and have become tokens of memory, which the government and churches fight for control over today. This chapter provides inroads into this embeddedness.

Slavic migration and medieval churches

Christianity in Montenegro and former Yugoslavia dates back to the Roman and Byzantine periods in the 5th century when the region was Christianised. From the 8th–10th century, Slavs slowly migrated to or conquered the hinterland and Montenegrin coastline under Byzantine control. Slavic magnates assumed the leading positions and were elevated to governors or princes under the tutelage of Byzantium or the emerging Bulgarian Empire from the 9th–11th century – and became also slowly Christianised by the Byzantines or Bulgars (T. Živković 2013). In what would become the Montenegrin and Serbian lands, a Slavic dynasty, the Vojislavljević, succeeded in fighting off Byzantium and the Bulgarians and thus formed the first short-lived independent Eastern Christian Southern Slavic kingdom, Duklja. Duklja was originally a Roman colony or polis, likely to have been established under Emperor Flavian in the late 2nd century in the later Eastern Roman province of Praevalitana (Šašel-Kos 2013). The area is later mentioned as a separate province called Dioclea in the Byzantine text *De Administrando Imperio* dating from the mid-10th century. In this text, the Byzantine Emperor Constantine VII Porphyrogenitus describes the land as “Diokleia” (in Greek: Διοκλεία). The text points out that Diokleia is a specific area along the line of Croatia, Dalmatia, Zamlje and Serbia. Unlike the description of Croatia, Serbia and even the province of Zahumlje, the author does not describe in precise terms the ethnic or tribal belonging of the inhabitants (Moravcsik 1967).

There is no doubt that there was a functioning church structure in the Roman city of Dioclea (Duklja) from the early 4th century onwards. The Roman Pope addressed a bishop based in Duklja in some letters from the 7th century before the Slavic-Avar invasion and destruction of the city. There also seems to have been an ongoing contact between the Western Church and some of the coastal dioceses and the Bishopric of Bar, which was under Slavic rule from the 9th century onwards (Dvornik 1970, 17; 1962).

The first ruler of Duklja is often identified as Stefan Voislav, described as a Byzantine governor (in Greek: ἄρχων) in the Byzantine sources (Fine 1991, 36). The Vojislavljević family was able to claim

independence under Stefan's son Mihailo (ca. 1050–1081) and his son Constantin Bodin (ca. 1072–1108), who raised their province to a kingdom that was recognised by Rome. Bodin was moreover successful in securing the promotion of the port city of Bar to a Western Archbishopric in 1089. During this period, the Normans attacked the Byzantines at Dyrrachion to whose aid Bodin did not come. The Normans referred to Bodin as the "Slavic King" (Fine 1991, 36–37). Byzantine sources do not completely align with the Normans. They do recognise the limited independence of Mihailo's rebellious realm but, at the same time, state that Bodin was solely a Byzantine governor (in Greek: δούξ), which does seem to have been the case for his family from 1108 onwards following his death and a later Byzantine invasion. The Byzantine account written by John Skylitzes describes Stefan and Mihailo in the 1030s as generic "Serbians", which seems mostly to be in order to differentiate them from the nearby Bulgars (Fine 2006).

Red Croatia

The Chronicle of the Priest of Duklja (CPD) provides a more detailed description of the Duklja and its local Slavic magnates from the 9th to the 10th century. According to most studies, it is probably written in the 11th century (Ingham 1987; Kowalski. 2021). CPD is divided into three main sections and claims in the first section that the region was, in fact, called "Croatia rubera" (red Croatia) and led by its own Slavic nobles, mentioned by name. However, no other sources or remains support this list of rulers and the name for the region suggested in CPD. The main point of the CPD is, nevertheless, that the ruling house of the Duklja region was of Slavic-Croatian descent and under Latin influence (Kowalski. 2021). This "Latin" claim on Duklja seems to be intended due to the fact that the CPD's main intention is to declare the port city of Bar as a long-standing Latin centre worthy to be a Western Archbishopric (Stephenson 2006, 119). After all, the historical value of CPD is highly criticised by the medieval scholar Paul Stephenson (Stephenson 2006, 36–37). The medieval historian John Fine concludes in that spirit that all the contemporary sources of Byzantium, the Normans and even the Arabs on Duklja did not seem to have been interested in differentiating

between various Slavic tribes, churches, realms, and traditions in the later Croatian, Montenegrin and Serbian lands (Fine 2006). The sources often refer to them all as Slavs.

The CPD contains a short and elaborative Life (*vita*) of St Jovan Vladimir (d. 1016), a local pious ruler murdered around 1016 in a church by a family member, the newly crowned Bulgarian Emperor, during an internal struggle over the succession to the Bulgarian throne. This *vita* resembles the Western and Eastern traditions of the lives of saints (*vitae sanctorum*) and contains some familiar topics, such as a betrayal modelled on the Judas story. The *vita* reveals a significant and strong ecclesial base in and around Duklja and that its members were powerful enough to produce a *vita* and interpret Jovan Vladimir's death into the familiar martyrdom scheme. Moreover, it also shows that the secular power in the area was probably aware of the value of promoting a local saint, especially one associated with the ruling family. The CPD claimed Jovan to be the uncle of Stefan Voislav and, therefore, an obvious patron saint for the Vojislavljević dynasty and state. In the *vita*, Jovan Vladimir is portrayed as a local ruler under the supremacy of Byzantium and later Bulgaria. The Byzantine chronicle written by John Skylitzes from the 13th century, describes him as originally the ruler of all of Serbia before he succumbed to the Bulgarians as a vassal (Ingham 1987, 199–201; Kowalski. 2021).

The close interconnection between the ruling elite and the ecclesiastical community under the Vojislavljević dynasty is also visible elsewhere than in the CPD. Mihailo and Bodin seem to have used the East-West split strategically to bolster their claims to kingship. As the Byzantine sources describe, Duklja was regarded as a Byzantine region, and the Constantinopolitan Patriarch would, therefore, never have accepted the area's status as a local independent kingdom. The Western Latin Church, on the other hand, might have been more willing to do so in order to manifest its power in the region in a way that was yearned for in the CPD. Mihailo and Bodin must have turned to the Western Latin Church because it would have been the most accessible way to form an independent kingdom and, subsequently, a local Archbishopric under their rule, as John Fine suggests (Fine 1991, 215–216).

The sources, therefore, point to interesting ecclesiastical circumstances in the Montenegrin area that might provide some historical context to the modern narrative of an independent church. The area was situated right in the middle between the Eastern and Western Churches, and their secular and ecclesiastical rulers used this to their advantage to promote or advance their region. The strategic use of the East-West split is, however, not uncommon for the region and was exploited by the later ruling elites of both Serbia, the Nemanjić, and Albania, the Skanderbeg (Fine, 1994, 3).

The rise and fall of medieval Serbia

The kingdom of Duklja crumbled after Bodin's death in 1108 under the might of Byzantine armies from the south. The fall of Duklja paved the way for the Serbian dynasty of Nemanjić, which formed the medieval Serbian kingdom controlling most of today's Serbia and Montenegro. The Serbian kingdom flourished under the Serbian royal house of Nemanjić (12th–14th century). Members of the Nemanjić house and other magnates in the Serbian province of former Duklja tried on several – often less successful – occasions to use Bar's role as an ecclesiastical centre to bolster their own power base in the region and with the Western Latin world. One of these occasions was when Vukan Nemanjić (1165–1207) ruled Duklja and tried to challenge both of his younger brothers. One of his brothers ruled all of Raška, and the other, later known as St Sava, had introduced the Eastern Orthodox faith at full scale to the Serbian Kingdom. Vukan was able to restore Bar as a Latin Archbishopric in 1199. He later overthrew his brothers in all of Serbia in 1202 with Hungarian help and promised to turn Serbia and Duklja into a Latin Christian realm. The local Latin clergy was, after 1202, gathered in Bar to make the new Latin Archbishopric coherent. The remaining sources from this re-structuring of the ecclesiastical rule reveal that there seems to have been a mixture of the traditions, which is still visible in the shared catholic-Orthodox shrines in churches along the coast of Bar today. Vukan's success ended abruptly, and his siblings gained the upper hand and restored the Serbian rule over Duklja as well as the Eastern church's control (Fine 1991, 215–216).

The Serbian Orthodox Church was founded in the same period in the Serbian heartland under St Sava (1174–1236), brother to the first Serbian king and Vukan. Sava's Church sought to counter the Latin influence after Vukan's defeat along the coast. It, therefore, established the Eastern Bishopric of Zeta with its seat at a monastery on Prevlaka Island in Kotor Bay. The Bishopric of Zeta covers most of the modern-day Southern Montenegro. The local Eastern Orthodox Church in the Serbian realm took a distinct anti-western attitude, which became even more vocal after the Latin takeover of Constantinople in the Fourth Crusade (1204). This is also visible in the Code of the later Nemanjić ruler, Serbian Emperor Stefan Dušan (1331–1355), which condemned the "Latin heresy". In 1346, the Serbian Archbishopric was elevated to a patriarchate, and in turn, the Bishopric of Zeta turned into a metropolitan seat (Fine 1991: 36–38). This change was part of Emperor Dušan's effort to turn Serbia into an Eastern Empire in the style of the Byzantine Empire. Remarkably, the Metropolitanate of Zeta was the de facto landowner of the coastline in the following period, including Bar and larger regions inland. The Metropolitanate of Zeta was growing in power during the late medieval period under the Nemanjić rule (Fine 1994, 45–46.48), which might explain the metropolitans of Montenegro's later crucial role as secular rulers of the Montenegrin clans. Several of the monasteries on Skadar Lake were founded in the period, and the monastic Islands became known as the Holy Land of Montenegro. The Dušan Empire was short-lived and was carved up by quarrelling magnates after Dušan's death. These magnates could not defend the former Serbian imperial lands from the advancing Ottoman, Hungarian and Venetian armies of the 14th–15th century, which took control of the region. The Ottoman took control of central Serbia, Kosovo, North Macedonia and the Montenegrin hinterland. In contrast, the Venetians took possession of the ports along the coast from Croatia over Montenegro, Albania, to Greece.

Rulers of Zeta

One of the Slavic magnates that carved up Dušan's Empire was the noble house of Balšić, who secured in 1362 a large degree of autonomy

for the province of Zeta-Duklja from the other Serbian principalities. The Balšićs were later ousted by their rivals, the noble house of Crnojevići, who ruled Zeta until the final Ottoman takeover in 1514. The Crnojevići were devoted to Eastern Orthodoxy and ended much of the Latin Church's influence, which had flourished again under the Balšić house (Roberts 2007, 99–102). The “ethnic” belonging of both these noble houses is ambiguous and debatable to a large extent. However, there seems to have been a stronger polarisation in the late period between the Latin Catholics, centred on the Venetian-controlled coastline, and the Orthodox in the formerly Serbian-controlled hinterland. This problematic constellation resurfaces, for example, in the diplomatic negotiations between the Serbian magnates and Venice (Fine 1994, 502).

Crnojevići's Zeta – or the Black Mountain, as it more often was known from hereon – eventually succumbed to the Ottomans and was ruled by an Islamised member of the Crnojevići house while other members preferred exile in Venice (Roberts 2007, 95–99). The main legacy of this period was left by Ivan Crnojevići, who ruled from 1465 to 1490. The Venetians forced him to leave the former Zeta capital in Skadar at the coast for the mountains. In these mountains, he founded the fortress city of Zablajk and the city of Cetinje that, along with Ivan's newly built monastery, became the seat of the Metropolitan of Zeta. The metropolitan later became the secular and religious leader of the clans in what became known as Old Montenegro (Stari Crna Gora). Ivan thus played a key role in Montenegrin history, as his cities, castles and legacy, including his heraldry, a double-headed golden eagle, became the centre of Montenegrin statehood in the following period.

The crucial question about the Zeta rulers, the Balšićs and Crnojevići, is whether or not these rulers were, in fact, autonomous and able to recreate the region of Zeta as an independent state. There is not any easy or clear answer to this claim. The entire region was ravaged by the local magnates' struggles for power under pressure from the Venetians along the coast, the Hungarians in the North, and the rising Ottoman power in the South during this period of decline for the Serbian Empire. The multitude of alliances, noble hostages, and diplomatic relations under the Balšićs and Crnojevići reveals that these rulers were feudal lords attempting to advance their own interests in the region

through alliances and submissions to foreign powers, such as Ivan's submission to the Venetians. Zeta was not a completely autonomous region and certainly not a very coherent state, even by medieval standards. Like many other medieval principalities, the region was a feudal holding belonging to a noble house capable of swearing allegiance to other noble houses, kings and states or even of advancing their own house to the level of kingship. The nobles of Zeta never got that far and should not be considered more than noblemen (Fine 1994, 99–102). The independence or autonomy of the region in the late medieval period is not visible without confusing the medieval feudal system with modern state structures (Miedlig 155). The region was as independent as any feudal holding during a break-up of a central authority and the subsequent power vacuum, but this did not mean that the region was autonomous. With that said, one needs to underline that this does not devalue the heritage of the Balšićs and Crnojevići but rather puts it into the correct historical context of the medieval era and the turmoil in the Balkans during the period from the decline of the Serbian Empire to the final Ottoman takeover. The Balšićs and Crnojevići heritage was crucial for the region's culture and its further development. It simply did not include a complete and coherent period of autonomous statehood. This point can be expanded to the local clergy, who depended on their feudal lords. These clergy must have struggled to find a permanent position and seems to have been under constant pressure from East and West. There seems to have existed a grey zone of Christianity along the coast, which was neither Latin nor Eastern rite, but a Slavic blend. After 1204 (the Fourth Crusade), the polarisation between the Latin and Eastern clergy took pace. In the later period under the Crnojevići, the division was clear, at least on a political level. The division at the local level amongst the peasants is hard to access.

The rise of the Vladikas

The clans of the Montenegrin Mountains resisted Ottoman control in the 16th century and were, from 1516 onwards, led by their Metropolitan of Cetinje. This metropolitan became their military leader after the Battle

of Lješkolje in 1604. The metropolitan assumed both secular and religious power over the clans of Old Montenegro. Formally, the metropolitan was under the rule of the Serbian Patriarch of Peć, which was finally dismantled by the Ottomans in 1766 after several failed Serbian uprisings (Roberts, 2007: 116). The metropolitans of Montenegro were since then often consecrated in Russia, which became a close ally to these Montenegrin rulers. The metropolitan office was held by the Petrović-Njegoš clan from 1697 until 1855 when the Petrović-Njegoš heir chose to become a secular prince.

Three of the metropolitans of the Petrović-Njegoš clan stand out in this period. The first one was Danilo I (1670–1735), to whom the sources are few. The Montenegrins later saw him as a strong ruler who secured the Montenegrin lands from further Ottoman incursions and Islamic conversion among the Orthodox Slavs. His descendant, metropolitan Njegoš, wrote an epic about his allegedly mythical and later controversial fight to make the Montenegrin Islamic countrymen either return to Orthodoxy or face death. In the epic, the Montenegrin clans kill off their Islamic kin in a bloody showdown on Christmas, later known as the Montenegrin Vesper. Danilo I is also noticeable because he refused to subordinate himself to Kalinik I, whom the Ottoman had appointed to Patriarch of Peć in 1697. The former Serbian Patriarch had fled Peć after a failed Serbian uprising. Danilo I was, therefore, the first metropolitan of Montenegro to step into a grey zone of jurisdiction between the Ottoman-controlled Eastern Orthodox Church's official leaders in their Empire and the Serbian leaders in exile. Danilo I and the metropolitan following him chose to look to Russia. During Danilo I's tenure, Saint Stephen of Piperi (d. 1667) and Saint Basil of Ostrog (also known as Vasilije Ostroški (Jovanovic) 1610–1671) functioned as ascetic leaders. Piperi worked in northern Montenegro at Morača monastery, and later, after his death, a monastery was founded in his name in the mountains of Breda. Basil of Ostrog was metropolitan of Herzegovina but moved to the caves at Ostrog late in his life, where he founded the monastery of Ostrog. Basil's remains and Ostrog became significant sacred sites to which pilgrims flocked (Roberts 2007).

In 1784, after several metropolitans from the clan of Petrović-Njegoš, Petar I Petrović-Njegoš (1774–1830) was installed as metropolitan,

ordained by the Serbian metropolitan of Sremski Karlovci, the exiled remains of the Serbian Church. Petar I tenure marks a turning point in the region's history. He strengthened and centralised the institution of the Montenegrin lands, paving the way for an independent state. Petar I envisioned himself as leader of a new large Orthodox Slavic state and found ground for hope in the Serbian uprisings during his lifetime in central Serbia. In 1794, he led his own army into battle against the local Ottoman governor and secured a victory and the incorporation of new land in the semi-independent Montenegro. After his death, he became canonised by the following metropolitan of Montenegro.

His nephew, Petar II Petrović-Njegoš (1813–1851), became the new metropolitan in 1830. Njegoš would become perhaps the most well-known metropolitan of Montenegro due to his poetic legacy. However, he was also a formidable ruler that followed the lines of his uncle Petar I and expanded the centralised institutions and land of Montenegro. At a very early age, Njegoš had begun an authorship inspired by romantic assessments and ideas. His poetic work combines religious devotion and quasi-historical plays and epics. Central to Njegoš' epic is a heroic and poetic image of the Montenegrin tribesmen dressed in religious and national romantic language connecting the tribesmen with the folkloric myth of the struggle of the medieval Christian Serbian kingdom against the Ottomans. Njegoš also connects his heroic clansmen and their struggle with his own time, most notably attributing the epic to the contemporary leader of the Serbian uprising within Ottoman-controlled Serbia. His works and their reception became a mythopoetic foundation for an ideal romantic nation, or Volk, most likely inspired by Gottfried Herder's (1744–1803) philosophical ideas. Njegoš was inspired by the Western romantic trend and also received more traditional Orthodox training. He eventually travelled in 1833 to Skt. Peterborough to be consecrated as a metropolitan, affirming his alliance with the Russian Tsar. This travel underpinned the Montenegrins growing reliance on Russian support – both economical and religious – so that Njegoš sought his consecration by the Russians and not the remanence of the medieval Serbian church in Sremski Karlovi. The trip to Russia took him through Vienna, where he met the notable Serbian intellectuals of his age, who were building the foundation

for the Serbian nation-state in their linguistic, cultural and religious works (Roberts 2007, 186–214). Njegoš seems to have shared these early Serbian nation-builders views on his own culture and language. Njegoš was, however, never clear in his description of the Montenegrin people and their relation to their Serbian relatives in his works. He does not seem to have distinguished clearly between the terms “Montenegrin” (Crnogorski) and “Serbian” (Srpski), thus leaving room for interpretation. Owing to this semantic openness, his epic and construction of national identity have subsequently been claimed by Montenegrin, Serbian and Yugoslav nationalists.

The Orthodox Church in independent Montenegro and Yugoslavia before 1989

Following Njegoš’s death, his nephew Danilo II (1826 – 13 August 1860) refused to take monastic vows and the metropolitan office favouring a secular prince title. Danilo II thereby ended the theocratic rule over Montenegro but ensured a continual close connection between the ruler and the church. The newly appointed ruler of Montenegro still chose the metropolitan himself without consulting with church leaders abroad. Danilo II was assassinated in 1860, and the young Nikola I (1841–1921) took over. Nikola ruled the land for almost sixty years, during which Montenegro rose to the status of an independent kingdom, as Serbia did in the same period. Nikola sought to make Montenegro the major Orthodox power of the region in friendly rivalry with Serbia and more deadly with the remnant of the Ottoman Empire in the Balkans – a rivalry that culminated in the Balkan wars of 1912–1914 (Roberts 2007, 234–298).

His metropolitans and clergy mainly cared for religious services during his early reign. This duty changed from metropolitan Visarion Ljubiša’s (1823–1884) tenure. Ljubiša was installed in 1882 and became the head of the newly founded Ministry of Education. This position suited him because he was the former head and professor of the newly founded Orthodox seminary in the Montenegrin capital. He was in this office integrated into the political affairs of Nikola’s government,

and the Orthodox Church in Montenegro took on a primary role in the educational programme. Following Ljubiša in 1885, metropolitan Mitrofan Ban (1841–1920) assumed office. He was consecrated in Russia, not Serbia, although the Serbian Belgrade church reassumed much of its power after Serbia's semi-independence and full independence after 1878. At the beginning of Mitrofan Ban's tenure, the Orthodox Church of Montenegro consisted of two Dioceses, 159 parishes with roughly 200 churches and 15 monasteries. The Montenegrin state was internationally recognised in 1878 and incorporated several provinces from the crumbling Ottoman Empire. It expanded to include new territories won in the Balkan Wars of 1912–13, amongst which was the historical seat of the Serbian Orthodox Patriarch in Peć and the famous Decani monastery in today's Kosovo. The Orthodox Church in Montenegro founded a new diocese under bishop Gavriilo Dožić (1881–1950) to oversee all the new Northern provinces (Pavlovich, 1989: 141–42).

The Montenegrin Kingdom succumbed in the First World War, and the Orthodox Church of Montenegro was subsequently dismantled in 1920 in order to be incorporated into the Serbian Orthodox Patriarchate of Belgrade in the same manner as Orthodox Churches throughout what was about to become Yugoslavia (Pavlovich, 1989: 141–42). Bishop Gavriilo Dožić had just become the metropolitan of Montenegro in 1920. He remained in this position until 1938, and thereafter he became Patriarch of the Serbian Orthodox Church until his death in 1950. Gavriilo Dožić's elevation from bishop to metropolitan and later patriarch reveals the close integration of the Orthodox Church in Montenegro into the Serbian Orthodox Church after the formation of the Kingdom of Croats, Slovenes and Serbs (later Yugoslavia) in 1918–20. Montenegro was abolished as a province within Yugoslavia in 1921, and the region was incorporated into the larger municipality of Zeta. The metropolitan seat persisted in the period.

When Nazi Germany invaded Yugoslavia on 6 April 1941, Patriarch Gavriilo Dožić sought refuge in Ostrog in Montenegro with the Yugoslav King. Patriarch Gavriilo remained in the monastery, whereas the king and court left the country. Shortly after that, Patriarch Gavriilo was arrested by the Germans on 23 April after which he spent the rest of the

war in prison. He refused to cooperate with the Germans during the war and even transferred to a concentration camp with Bishop Nikolaj Velimirović (1880–1956) in the last stage of the war. He was freed from the camp and was allowed to reassume office by the communist authorities after the end of the war due to his resistance. The metropolitan of Montenegro from 1939 to 1945, Joanikije Lipovac, was not so fortunate. The communists executed him for collaboration (Alexander 1979, 10), and he was later canonised by the Serbian Orthodox Church in 2001 as a neo-martyr. In 1945, after the war's end, Arsenije Bradvarević (1883–1963) was promoted to the office of Metropolitan of Montenegro, which he held until 1960. The communist authorities imprisoned him from 1954, and the church was consequently leaderless until 1960. The metropolitan seat was under great pressure, and 3.547 hectares of land were confiscated during the Agrarian Reform of 1945–48 and heights of local anti-religious sentiment. At the same time, Montenegrin separatism was encouraged amongst the clergy by the local authorities. In 1957, serious unrest spread among the clergy in Montenegro. They were too few, too poor and not very well educated, and had been left without a metropolitan. The Serbian Patriarch visited the metropolitanate in June 1957 to meet with the leaders of the newly formed Socialist Republic of Montenegro in order to end the unrest. The government promised to improve things (Alexander, 1979).

Metropolitan Danilo III (Dajković, born in 1895) succeeded the imprisoned Metropolitan Arsenije in 1960, and his tenure lasted from 1960 to 1991. Danilo III, a Montenegrin by birth, faced an immense challenge with few priests and a church falling apart. There were 184 parishes in Montenegro, and only 18 full-time priests, who could serve the community, according to figures from 1973 – a significant drop from barely a hundred years before in independent Montenegro in 1885. Danilo III's powers were extremely limited, and in 1971–72, the significant chapel devoted to the Petar II Petrović Njegoš' at Mount Lovćen was destroyed by the local authorities, who replaced it with a modernist mausoleum. There were no monks left in Montenegro in 1973, and several historical and symbolic monasteries fell into ruin (Alexander, 1979: 302).

The Serbian Church in Montenegro from 1989

Shortly after the fall of the Berlin Wall, Metropolitan Amfilohije (Radović, 1938–2020) took office in Montenegro in 1991. He faced a challenge similar to his predecessor but arrived at a watershed. As Blagojević (2008) has highlighted, religious communities across Yugoslavia became revitalised during this intense period – perhaps most noticeable in the Serbian Orthodox Church (SOC), which assumed a stronger position in Serbia and those republics with a majority of Orthodox population. Amfilohije became one of the leading figures in this revitalisation in Montenegro and across former Yugoslavia.

A major outwards sign of the change in that period is that around 50 % of the population of Montenegro began to back the SOC from thereon (Saggau, 2017), and the number of believers were on the rise in Montenegro (Bakrač 2012, 2011, 2013), as shown below.

A study from 2014 (Džankić, 2014c) indicates that the Orthodox population of Montenegro was divided into three different “camps”. At the surface, 2/3 supported now late Metropolitan Amfilohije and the SOC, while 1/3 supported the unrecognised Montenegrin Orthodox Church founded in 1993. However, Džankić’s (2014c) study suggests that almost 58 % of the believers identify themselves as just “Eastern Orthodox” without a national name (Serbian or Montenegrin). This study indicates that the wider community was perhaps not occupied with the local church’s national affiliation. A conservative estimation is that around 50 pct. – roughly 300.000 – of the total population of Montenegro adhered to the SOC from the late 1990s until today.

Table 1: Religious communities in Montenegro (believers in a total of the population in %)

Religious community	1953	1991	2003	2011
Orthodox	45,84	69,12	74,23	72,07
Islam	17,65	19,18	17,74	19,11
Roman Catholic	4,81	4,41	3,54	3,44
Atheist	31,46	1,60	0,96	1,24

The revitalisation of the SOC in Montenegro after 1989 followed the same trajectories as other religious communities in former Yugoslavia. An indication of this trend is found in Bakrač's (2011) study, which indicates that around 60 pct. of all Montenegrins accept all teachings of their religious community, and almost 90 % think that one should believe in God. Bakrač and Blagojević's other study (2013) indicates that attendance at religious services and other sorts of religious activities is not at the same high level. Attendance is below 50 % for all communities and even lower for the Orthodox during Sunday Liturgy. It underlines that religious identity is today a mode of the public expressing "belonging" rather than a mode of "behaving". In the total numbers,



Figure 1: Ethnic distribution in Montenegro 2011 (source Montestat)

the level of “belonging” has grown, as shown in Table 1. The trend has also affected the other “traditional” (as they are called in the old Montenegrin constitution prior to 2006) communities, the Muslim community and the Catholic Church. As Table 1 shows, the revitalisation was not in a rise of adherence but more in outward activity and public practice for these two communities (see Pačariž, 2015).

The following section will detail the revival of the SOC in Montenegro, focusing on the revival of various parts of the SOC and how its position in Montenegrin society has changed since 1989.

The role of the Metropolitan in Cetinje

The rise of the SOC in Montenegro is first and foremost associated with the late Metropolitan Amfilohije, who had an immense influence on the Church and in Montenegro. In every aspect of the Church, he has played a crucial role – in different fields such as theology, politics, education and rebuilding of the church’s infrastructure in Montenegro. In order to understand the revival of the SOC in Montenegro, one needs



Image 2: The funeral of Metropolitan Amfilohije in Podgorica during the pandemic, 2022 (Source: AFP)

to understand Amfilohije, his background and his role in SOC and Montenegrin society.

Amfilohije was a well-trained theologian. He took his primary theological education at Belgrade's theological faculty and studied abroad in Paris at the famous St Sergius Institute, Bern, Rome and Greece. One of the leading Serbian theologians of the 20th century, Father (later St.) Justin Popović (1894–1979) taught Amfilohije and influenced his theology and political views on Kosovo, Montenegro and Serbian politics and history in general (Buchenau, 1999: 11–15; Louth, 2015: 147). Amfilohije's theology was closely linked to Nikolaj Velimirović and Popović.

These two theologians are the key to understanding Amfilohije and the Serbian Orthodox Church today. Nikolaj Velimirović (1881–1956, later saint) is a debated personality like Njegoš and Popović. They are celebrated amongst some factions of Serbian society and shunned by others today. Velimirović is undoubtedly the most influential and prolific Serbian theologian of the 20th century because he was the first truly educated and systematic theological thinker of the Serbian Orthodox Church following the restoration of the Belgrade Patriarchate in the 20th century. He rose to the rank of bishop following (a debatable, see Berlis 2022; Chapman 2022) education abroad but was later exiled after the Second World War – and therefore spent the rest of his life in the West. He was sanctified in the late 1980s. The controversial part of Velimirović's legacy is his initial fascination with the Hitler regime and his strong anti-Semitic writings, as discussed by Byford (2008) and Vukomanovic (2008; 2004) but contested by others, such as Vladimir Cvetković (2015, 49–50). Velimirović seems to have changed his mind when Nazi Germany invaded his country, imprisoned him and eventually transferred him to the concentration camp of Dachau in the final stage of the war (Byford 2008). Velimirović's change of heart seems similar to what many other conservative Christians also went through during the same period in Europe. Velimirović is most well known for expanding a concept of a sort of "people-church", which is often called Saint-Savaism (Serb. *svetosavlje*). The concept is widely discussed, and its political implications will not be dealt with here because Klaus Buchenau (2006, 13–52) and Cvetković (2015) analyse and discuss them in detail.

Closely related to Velimirović's thought and work is Father Justin Popović (1894–1979), who was slightly younger than Velimirović and worked closely with him over an extensive period. Popović was, just like Velimirović, sanctified in 2010 in Serbia as St Justin the New. As a young man, he attended the Seminar of St Sava, where Velimirović was a teacher. Popović joined the Serbian armed forces in the First World War. Following the first years of the war, he took his monastic vows in 1916 and was sent to Petrograd in Russia to study, where he began to work on Pavel Florensky and the Slavophiles. The revolution cut his stay short, and he travelled on to Oxford, where he began to write a thesis, which was eventually never accepted as a thesis at Oxford. He returned to Serbia and later undertook studies in Athens. He finally received a doctoral degree in Athens with a thesis on St Makarios of Egypt – a monastic Father of the desert. He worked on various journals and seminars in Serbia. He was later appointed Professor of Dogmatics at the University of Belgrade, a position he kept until the end of the Second World War. Popović's outspoken criticism of communism throughout his life made his position as a professor in Belgrade impossible after 1945. He eventually ended up retreating to the rural monastery of Čelije in 1948, where he stayed for the remainder of his life. At the monastery, many of the next generations of Serbian theologians visited him. Popović successfully created a conservative intellectual circle of theologians opposing the communist regime (Buchenau 2006; 2005). An example of Popović's strong criticism of communism, which Buchenau (2005) refers to, is the book *The Truth about The Serbian Orthodox Church in Communist Yugoslavia* (Serb. *Istina o Srpskoj Pravoslavnoj Crkvi u komunističkoj Jugoslaviji*. Popović 1990).

Amfilohije's views on theology and politics are aligned with what has often been characterised as the "pro-Russian"-wing of the Serbian Orthodox Church that sees Russia as a close spiritual and political ally and is sceptical of the "decadent" West, as characterised by Milorad Tomanić (2001) and the Serbian sociologist Milan Vukmanović (2014, 125). An essential part of his academic and ecclesial life has been bound to Kosovo. Amfilohije was a leading member of the young and upcoming generation of theologians of the SOC in the 1980s. During this period, he took part in the reawakening of the Serbian national

consciousness. He was one of the twenty-one priests who signed “the plea for Kosovo” in 1982. Years later, he signed “the letter of support for Kosovo” in 1985. Both documents were essential in the renewed focus on Kosovo amongst the Serbs. Amfilohije also took upon him a role in the wars in former Yugoslavia of the 1990s and was described by Milorad Tomanić (2001) as one of the three leading members of SOC determining its position during the Milošević years.

However, the metropolitan has often shown a pragmatic approach to political issues outside of Kosovo and to the language of the liturgy. He, therefore, does not fit into a strict characterisation of the conservative wing of the Orthodox Church. An example is his support for the Montenegrin Prime Minister Đukanović during his and Montenegro’s initial alienation from the Milošević regime in 1996–97, which paved the way for Đukanović’s control of the state apparatus (Morrison, 2009: 134–135). But Amfilohije’s relation to Đukanović and his various governments is complex, as will be discussed further in the next section. Many pro-Montenegrins saw Amfilohije as a controversial figure speaking for Serbian nationalism and threatening Montenegrin statehood. Đukanović and Amfilohije became alienated from each other during the process of independence in Montenegro in 1996 (Ramet & Pavlaković 2005, 264–268; Vukmanović 2014, 131). In opposition to the Montenegrin government, many Serbian-oriented Montenegrin citizens, parties and newspapers regarded Amfilohije as a beacon for SOC and a protector of the Serbian cause in Montenegro (Morrison 2009). A quick media search in Montenegrin Medias will quickly reveal that Amfilohije’s name and statements often have reached the front pages and more than once has been the centre of national attention or controversies in both Montenegro and Serbia in this period.

Passing on the tradition: Organisation, education and media

During Amfilohije’s tenure, SOC’s organisation, media outlet, and educational activities in Montenegro were all strengthened. The old Metropolitan of Montenegro and the Littoral was led by Amfilohije – until 2020 – and is the main Orthodox Eparchy or Diocese in the state of Montenegro. It is divided today into seven organisational units.

These are a sort of Deanery, which in Serbian are called “Archpriests” (Serb.: Arhijerejski protoprezviterijat), each led by their own Presbyter, Deacon or Archpriest. Besides the Metropolitan, two other Serbian Dioceses or Eparchies in the Montenegrin state have been revived. One of them is the Eparchy of Budimljansko-Nikšićki (Budimlje-Niksic), centred around the cities of Berane and Nikšić, which was made independent of the metropolitanate in 2001 and has been led by Bishop Joanikije II (Mićović, born in 1959) since 2002. Bishop Joanikije became the successor to Amfilohije in 2021 and was appointed as Metropolitan. His former eparchy covers most of the northern parts of Montenegro. The other eparchy is the Eparchy of Mileševa, seated in Prijepolje in Serbia, restored in 1992, but includes just a few parishes in the Montenegrin border region. Bishop Atanasius currently leads it. Since 1991, the SOC in Montenegro has been reorganised to create a more linear network and the relation between a priest, monks, bishops and other offices, which is partly done to function more smoothly with a greater number of clergy. The revival of the two “old” Eparchies beside the metropolitanate is partly due to the same reason but also reveals a symbolic “resurrection” of bishoprics long gone. A practical side is that the number of high-ranking SOC clergy in Montenegro has risen. This increase proved essential in 2019–2020 because the SOC had built a larger infrastructure and network in the Montenegrin state, which could be activated in the protest against the government.

The activities of the Church’s educational efforts in Montenegro are threefold. The church runs a network of Sunday schools and a religious secondary school (a “Bogoslovija”). It applies constant political pressure on the state to introduce religious education in Montenegrin schools. In Montenegro, “education is secular”, as the 2013 Montenegrin General Law on Education (Mng. Opšti zakon o obrazovanju i vaspitanju 2013) states in article 5. SOC has been advocating for a more traditional religious education system in which each denomination is allowed to teach pupils about their parents’ faith. The government has so far refused this (Ramet & Pavlaković 2005). SOC runs a secondary school in Cetinje, next to the seat of the Metropolitan. This school was re-opened in 1992, after being closed down during communism, and is today the main centre for Orthodox education in Montenegro. It holds

close ties to the Serbian Orthodox Church and is one of the nine of this type of “theological school” (Serb.: Bogoslovija) that SOC runs. The school is a part of the Serbian theological school system and is therefore supervised by the Serbian government’s office for churches and religious communities (Saggau & Pačariž & Bakrač, 2020). The students’ educational qualifications can be used inside Serbia and provide access to the theological faculties at Serbian Universities. On several occasions, the school, its pupils and teachers have been harassed and the school damaged by opponents of the SOC in Montenegro. (Saggau & Pačariž & Bakrač 2020).

The metropolitanate also founded its own information centre called “Svetigora” (Holy Mountain), named after the sacred waterfall at the Morača monastery. This centre publishes information letters and books on issues pertaining to the SOC in Montenegro. In 1998 the information centre launched its own radio station, and its website is today the main source for all communication from the metropolitanate. Svetigora has become the centrally coordinated outlet for the metropolitanate and SOC in Montenegro. This outlet works as a media centre for the SOC in Montenegro, which can surpass the traditional media, such as TV stations and newspapers, which traditionally have been more under the control of the Montenegrin government.

The rebuilding of the Metropolitan

A major part of the revival of the SOC in Montenegro is the rebuilding and renovation of churches and monasteries, mapped through my field observations from 2014 to 2019. According to the biography of late Metropolitan Amfilohije, his tenure has been “the most important architectural epoch in the history of these areas” (Svetigora, 2010). The book *Renewal and construction of monasteries and temples in Montenegro 1990–2010* (Svetigora, 2010) provides a detailed guide to the renovations. It is estimated that 569 church buildings have been restored. According to the church, the figure has today risen to 650. Perhaps the two most central and visible of these building projects are two new cathedrals, the first of which was built in the capital Podgorica and opened in 2013, and the second in the port city of Bar, which was

inaugurated in 2016. This intense construction work reflects a wider trend in Orthodoxy and the SOC in Serbia proper (Aleksov & Lackenby 2022, 4). These two major buildings have become symbols of the SOC's visible strength in two central cities and are often used for open-air services. Likewise, the metropolitanate restored several central monasteries, many of which are once again populated by monks. According to the church, the metropolitanate alone has twenty-three monasteries for women and thirty-four for men, without counting the two other Eparchies in Montenegro. An essential part of this ever-growing religious infrastructure is the monasteries of Cetinje and Ostrog, regarded as the most sacred. Cetinje, the metropolitan's seat, is where the casket of metropolitan St Petar I's is open to the public, and a large museum with many religious artefacts can be visited. In Ostrog, the home of the St Basil of Ostrog, the metropolitanate has enlarged the lower parts of the monastery and made the upper part more accessible so that it can welcome a larger crowd of pilgrims. Ostrog is regarded as one of the sacred places in Eastern Orthodoxy and draws pilgrims from the entire Orthodox world.

Besides these two centres, monasteries like Čelija Piperska (Home to St Piperi), Ždrebaonik and Donji Brčeli in central Montenegro, Stanjevići and Podmaine monasteries near Budva and the ones on Lake Skadar (Kom, Beška, Moračnik, Vranjina, Kosmač), as well as many others, such as Dajbabe outside the capital, have been rebuilt or restored, and also draw pilgrims and tourists alike. These sites all play a part in attracting more pilgrims (and funds), thus enlarging the religious, cultural and political power base of the SOC in Montenegro. This renewal has also entailed a modernisation of monastic life, which is visible in the renovation of the isolated monastery Kom which now has its own solar plant, souvenir shop and speedboat. Other more traditional parts of monastic life have been revitalised as well, such as being able to provide for oneself. In Donji Brčeli, the monastic buildings are surrounded by fruit and vegetable gardens to feed the clergy. The traditional production of local honey and wine is often also a part of monastic life and provides sources of income when the produce is sold to pilgrims and visitors.

A contested area is the churches of the Njegushi region (the villages of Raičevići, Kopito, Njeguši, Eraković, Dugi Do, Vojković, Vuči Do,

Kućišta). Njegushi is the historical home of the Petrović-Njegoš rulers and one of the Montenegrin nationalist movement's strongholds. There are several old churches in the villages of Njegushi, and the SOC has renovated some churches while the MOC has put up metal signs to stress their ownership of other churches. The twin churches in Raičevići bear such a sign. Despite the pro-Montenegrin sentiment of the local population, the Metropolitan holds frequent services in the area, but the ownership and access to the churches are disputed.

The revival of communities and rituals

Alongside rebuilding churches, cathedrals and monasteries and strengthening religious infrastructure, the SOC has also revived and instituted Orthodox rituals across the country. These rituals have become the central place for the believers to meet and for the clergy to maintain their societal position. The rituals serve both to strengthen the community and as visible signals to broader society stressing the renewed role of the Metropolitan. One of these new rituals is the commemoration at St George's Church (Sveti Đorđe) in Momišići on a hillside in the capital. On 26 March, the Metropolitan served a liturgy commemorating the death of forty children and two priests who were burned alive by the Ottoman forces in 1688 as retribution for the Montenegrin clan's killing of Ottoman troops. These neo-martyrs were canonised in 2012, and the church was restored in 1995 (Novosti 2012). The church is rather small, so the liturgy's main part takes place outside the church and on the street in front of it. In 2018, more than a hundred people attended the liturgy. In events like this, the church's renovation, the commemoration of the deaths and the revival of the ritual pertaining to them all reinforce each other. The most extensive ritual revival and rebuilding is related to the cult of St Jovan Vladimir (d. 1016) and the area around the port city of Bar, further discussed in the chapter 5.

Overall, the SOC has seen a crucial revitalisation, which has happened without much state support (from Montenegro). This process has provided the church with significant resources, networks and positions used in 2019–2020 to counter the Montenegrin government's attempt to

force a new law on religion. In the conflict between the state and the SOC in 2019–2020, many of the revived rituals were turned into a protest – banners and icons were used as posters for the protest underlining the religious tone of the conflict. The SOC is the strongest non-governmental organisation in Montenegro, and, significantly, the organisations do not rely on state support from Montenegro, wherefore it is almost free to act as it chooses. The general de-centralised church structures of Eastern Orthodox Churches means that the power of Metropolitan Amfilohije and other high-ranking clergies in Montenegro is almost unrestrained by the Patriarch of Belgrade, which also delimits the possibility of the Belgrade government to interfere in SOC business in Montenegro. This point was excruciatingly visible in the debate over Kosovo during 2019, in which Metropolitan Amfilohije, on several instances, denounced the initiatives of the Serbian government, to which the Serbian government had very few ways to respond (Saggau 2019).

The creation of the Montenegrin Church

The greatest threat to the rise of the SOC in Montenegro has been the movement for Montenegrin independence and the subsequent formation of a so-called Montenegrin Orthodox Church (MOC). This church organisation claims to be the true heir to the Orthodox Church in Montenegro from before 1920, which Mitrofan Ban and Gavriilo Dožić made a part of the enlarged Belgrade Patriarchate in the newly founded Kingdom of Slovenes, Croats and Serbs. The dismantling of the Montenegrin Kingdom and its church is a highly controversial subject in Montenegro today. Pro-Montenegrins claim that both things were done illegally by the Belgrade government and its army (see Sekulović 2010). During the Socialist Republic of Montenegro (from 1945 to roughly 1989), there were a few instances where the Orthodox clergy in Montenegro expressed the wish to form a local Montenegrin Orthodox Church, as the case in Macedonia. SOC continually denounced these claims and argued that the wish had been nurtured by anti-Orthodox attitudes from the communist regime (Alexander 1979, 169, 180).

The MOC was founded in Cetinje in 1993 around St Luke's day (18/31 October) and St Petar I's death day. The foundation of the MOC took place in Cetinje. According to various sources and my fieldwork, the MOC has an estimated 10–15 churches today and at least one monastery in Old Montenegro. Most of the MOC's churches are found around the village of Njeguši near Cetinje. The precise number of churches and monasteries is uncertain because the MOC frequently uses ordinary houses (and refers to them as churches) or open fields as places for religious services (Buchenau 2003). A few churches are old religious buildings, said to belong to the clans of Njeguši or Cetinje, while others are converted or restored buildings. Until now, the MOC has only built one new church, which is found in Cetinje and named after Ivan Crnojević. The MOC does, however, lay claim to several buildings currently owned by the SOC and has tried on several occasions to take possession of them forcefully. Most of these disputed buildings are in Old Montenegro, especially in Cetinje.

The MOC was formally founded in 1993 but has existed roughly since the All-Montenegrin National Synod in 1991 and functioned as an NGO until its official recognition in 2000. The recent history of the MOC is centred around two crucial periods. The first was in the early nineties (1991–1993) when the MOC became a spearhead for the Liberal Party and other Montenegrin nationalist factions. A major reason for the creation of MOC was the bloody St Petar's day in 1991, where a Serbian-armed militia and local-armed Montenegrins shot at each other after a violent Pro-Montenegrin demonstration in Cetinje. This event convinced many locals in Cetinje that Metropolitan Amfilohije stood in the way of the Montenegrin nationalist movement and that, consequently, the MOC needed to be founded to counter the SOC in Montenegro (Morrison 2009). Following its foundation in 1993, the MOC struggled to become an established community and put its organisation into place. A significant amount of energy was expended to secure the transfer of the office of Metropolitan from the first vladika Antonije Abramović (1919–1996) to the second vladika Mihailo (Miraš Dedeić) around 1996. Abramović was a Montenegrin clergyman in Canada who returned to lead the MOC. The Orthodox Churches of North America denounced his return and defrocked him. After his death in 1996, a

former Serbian priest from Rome, Mihailo, took over. Mihailo was consecrated by metropolitan Pimen of the breakaway part of the Bulgarian Orthodox Church (BOC) in 1998. Mihailo and other MOC priests, who have defected from SOC, are continually attacked by SOC, and all of them are denounced and defrocked by all Eastern Orthodox Churches – even BOC. The SOC has published a collection of 270 documents called “The merchants of Souls” (Serb. *Trgovci Dušama*), which document the SOC’s allegation against MOC (SOC 2005).

The second crucial period for the MOC began in 2000 when the confrontation between the SOC and MOC was put to the test. That year, the recognition of the MOC became a point of departure for an MOC-led campaign that sought to take back all Montenegrin shrines built before 1920, and this period culminated in 2007–2008, shortly after the referendum without the MOC overtaking any shrines owned by the SOC. The MOC leadership seemed to have hoped that Montenegro’s independence would pave the way for their control over the central churches and monasteries in Montenegro. Instead of being welcomed by the Montenegrin authorities, they were, in stark contrast to their expectations, confronted by a Montenegrin police force protecting the SOC, such as at an attempt to take over the monastery in Cetinje on 18 April 2007. In the years around the independence referendum, it seems like Đukanović and the DPS government tried to maintain balance and ensure no significant rise in hostilities, which might provoke Serbian official resentment and make the process of international recognition of independence more difficult.

Following 2007, the MOC was stabilised and institutionalised with a new constitution, the rebuilding of churches and a continual presence at official state events, such as the celebration of Njegoš in 2013.

The MOC’s clergy and ecclesial organisation

According to the MOC itself, its clergy consists of three vladikas, ten priests and one deacon (mng.: “trojicu vladika, deset svještenika i jednog đakona”, Lucindan 2010a, 77). Compared to this, the SOC had at least an estimated 60 priests and 160 other forms of ecclesial personnel in 2003 (Buchenau 2003), and the numbers have probably risen since then.

Noticeably, the MOC calls its bishops vladikas, not episkop or metropolitans, in its more informal texts. The title of vladika refers to the title worn by the former independent metropolitans of Montenegro. The title of vladika is only used loosely and in the official “constitution” of the MOC (Mng.: *Ustav Crnogorske Pravoslavne Crkve*, MOC 2009), the religious “leader” of the MOC is referred to as the “Archbishop of Cetinje and the Metropolitan of Montenegro” (Mng.: “*Arhiepiskop Cetinjski i Mitropolit Crnogorski*”, MOC 2009, Paragraph 9). The MOC’s hierarchical order begins with the Metropolitan and has six additional levels ranging from the bishop’s council to parish councils. Besides the hierarchy of the clergy, the line of management from the council of the Metropolitan down to each parish church is also established (MOC 2009, Paragraph 7). The constitution of the MOC explains in detail the scope of the church’s works. It ranges from what could be characterised as traditional Christian work, such as formal procedures of election of bishops (MOC 2009, Paragraph 16,17–18, 2009) and more general Christian work, such as “keep and defend the purity of Christian Orthodox teachings on faith and morals” (mng.: “*čuva i brani čistotu hrišćanskoga pravoslavnoga učenja o vjeri i moralu*”, MOC 2009, Paragraph 16.6) and maintaining internal unity (MOC 2009, Paragraph 16.3). In addition to this traditional Christian service, the MOC also defines its work as preserving, protecting and devoting attention to the Montenegrin ecclesial and historical materials, saints, texts, etc. (MOC 2009, Paragraphs 16.8, 17.23–24, 18.2–5, 2009). The MOC is divided up into the following dioceses/episcopates (mng.: “*episkopije*”, MOC 2009, Paragraph 23):

- The Archbishopric of Cetinje consists of the Katunska nahija.
- The Episcopate of Duklja consists of the capital of Podgorica, the city of Danilograd and the ruins of the city of Duklja.
- The Coastal episcopate, centred in Kotor, entails all of Montenegro’s coastland (the Littoral).
- The Episcopate of Ostroški – Nikšić, centred in the city of Nikšić and its upland. The episcopate claims the monastery of Ostrog, which the MML currently owns.
- The Episcopate of Bjelopoljska is centred in Bijelo Polje and the northern Montenegrin municipalities.
- The Diaspora Episcopate.

One can see that the MOC's internal division follows the borderline of the Republic of Montenegro, and most of the episcopates are built around the division of municipalities of Montenegro. Furthermore, the constitution of the MOC also contains a section on the criteria one has to fulfil to become a bishop. This section indicates the ideal form a senior member of the MOC clergy should be. The constitution states that a bishop in the MOC needs to be at least 30, have a higher theological education and be devoted to the church and the people/nation (mng.: "crkve I naroda", MOC 2009, Paragraph 24.5). He needs to be born in Montenegro and be a citizen (this does not apply to a bishop of the diaspora). The episcopal office is thus reserved for Montenegrin citizens devoted to serving the people/nation.

Who are the members of MOC?

Neither official records nor a standardised national census precisely estimates the number of members or Orthodox believers that adhere to the MOC. One could assume that there is a close correlation between being a member of the MOC and identifying oneself as a Montenegrin (Džankić 2014c). The members of the MOC could therefore be limited to the group of people in Montenegro who identify themselves as Montenegrins. This number is 45 % of the total population, which is roughly 300,000 persons according to the latest census from 2011 (Montestat 2011). This number is the absolute maximum number of persons that the MOC could appeal to within Montenegro.

A qualified estimate of the total number of members could be found in the empirical research on the political landscape of Montenegro conducted by the Montenegrin Center for Democracy and Human Rights (Centar za demokratiju i ljudska prava, shortened to CEDEM). Over the past decade, CEDEM has conducted two to three minor polls yearly. These polls include, from time to time, questions regarding the religiosity of Montenegrin citizens. Two of their polls, from 2009 and 2015, show the percentage of Montenegrin citizens identifying as members of either the MOC or the SOC (see Table 3).

These two polls indicate that the Orthodox Christians in Montenegro, which make up 72 % of the total population according

Table 2: Percentage of respondents that belong to MOC and SOC

	2009	2015
SOC	52.2 %	52.3 %
MOC	15.6 %	21.7 %

Source: CEDEM (2022)

to the 2011 census, are divided between the SOC and the MOC. The majority of the population (52–53 %), which is roughly two-thirds of all Orthodox believers, attest that they belong to the SOC, while the remaining minority, which is between 16–22 % of the total population and approximately a third of Orthodox believers in Montenegro, belongs to the MOC. If these polls are crossed with the 2011 census, they thereby indicate that almost 50 % of those Montenegrin citizens who identify themselves as ethnic Montenegrins do not support the MOC but the SOC. This information suggests that half of Montenegrins connect their national identity with their religious affiliation, while the other half does not. The two polls indicate, therefore, that approximately 150,000 Montenegrins in Montenegro are members of the MOC. This number seems, however, to be an overestimation considering the size of the clergy and the number of churches belonging to the MOC. This overestimation could be based on the fact that the respondents had to choose between the MOC and the SOC, which forced them to take a stand that they might not have taken otherwise. The polls were also conducted with a minor group of respondents (approx. 1,000 persons) and might, therefore, not precisely reflect the scale of the MOC. Furthermore, the polls might not show the actual number of members but rather the size of the population that passively supports the MOC without actively engaging in MOC activity.

This estimation flickers further when one considers another line of observation made by CEDEM. CEDEM has also asked regularly if Montenegrin citizens “trust” in specific institutions, such as the parliament, the military, the SOC and the MOC. This data provides a long series of observations displayed in Figure 2.

The median is 52.7 % for the SOC and 27.6 % for the MOC. The median reveals that statistically speaking, 27.6 % of the total population

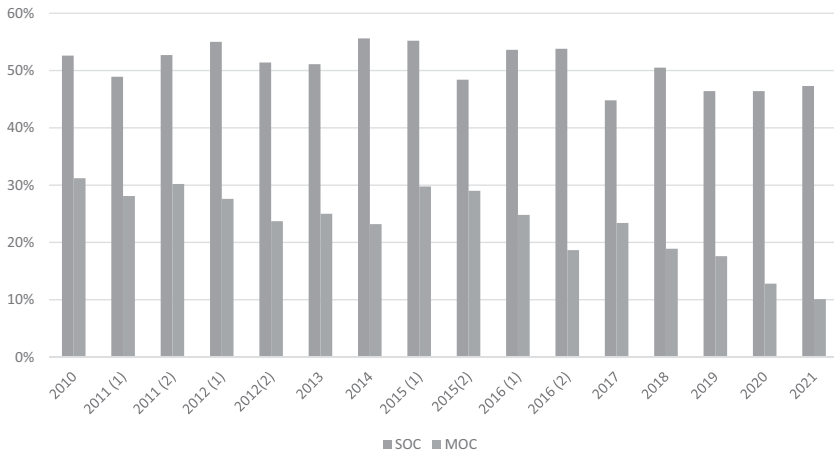


Figure 2: Percentage of respondents that “trust” the SOC and the MOC from 2010 to 2021

“trusted” the MOC as an institution until 2016. This result could be interpreted as support. This percentage of supporters is close to estimating the number of members in CEDEM’s other polls (2022). This result underlines that Table 3 shows the percentage of passive supporters of both MOC and SOC rather than its actual members up until 2016. However, this support steadily declined from 2017 for MOC and reached its lowest point in 2021, with only 10 %. This result might be a statistical sign that the MOC is losing general support after the DSP government was ousted in 2020.

A correlation to CEDEM’s polls is another poll from 2011, designed by a research group (Kolstø 2014). This 2011 poll indicates a somewhat different picture. In this poll, less than ca. 16 % of the ethnic Montenegrin population identify themselves with the MOC. This number is far less than the estimation from CEDEM. In contrast to this small group, the majority of ethnic Montenegrins, 58 %, would rather describe themselves with the bland label of “Eastern Orthodox”. The 58 % thereby signal that they belong to neither the SOC nor the MOC. This 2011 poll estimates the total number of MOC members ca. 47,000 if it is crossed with the 2011 census. A conservative estimate may therefore be that ca. 47,000 persons are firm and loyal members of the MOC, while at least 150,000 people in Montenegro sympathise with the MOC on some level.

A further correlation to these numbers is found in the budget of the MOC from 2009. Here, the MOC's treasury informs that 4,265 payments have been made to the MOC (Lucindan 2010a 69): 2,800 from legal entities and 1,465 from physical persons (mng.: "2.800 pravna lica i 1.465 fizička lica"). It is not made explicit what those two labels cover. However, a qualified guess is that fizička lica is literally a single person donating and that pravna lica covers families, clans, villages or organisations of some sort. This data provides enough information to assume that at least 4,265 persons have chosen to donate money to the MOC. This group – combined with the clergy and other officials – could be considered the core base of believers for the MOC.

In total, the sources mentioned above could be used to estimate the total size of the MOC. First and foremost, a base of firm and active believers comprises approximately 5,000 individuals. Second, a group of ca. 47,000 persons belong to the MOC, 16 % of all ethnic Montenegrins. Third, around ca. 150,000 persons in Montenegro sympathised with the CPC until 2016–2017. The size of this last group is the most difficult one to determine. The polls from CEDEM suggest that the group is between 10 % and 30 % of the total population. Finally, there are ca. 300,000 persons in Montenegro to whom the MOC could appeal. The numbers mentioned above are estimations based on the demographics of Montenegro in 2011, which is the last available census.

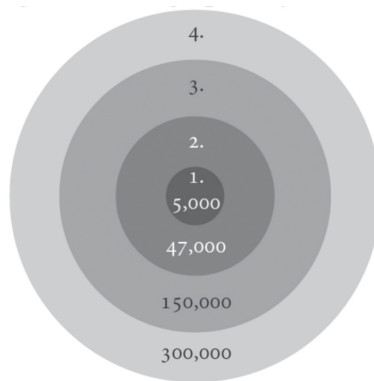


Figure 3: Demographics of the MOC

1: firm believers and members of MOC 2: those that identify themselves with the MOC 3: those that sympathise with MOC 4: those that the MOC can appeal to

The number of firm believers might have been higher during the formation of the MOC. Morrison reports that 15,000 people showed up to the foundational celebration of the MOC in Cetinje in 1993 (2009, 131). These 15,000 must have been strong supporters of the MOC and could be characterised as the core members of the early MOC. A new census in Montenegro might shed some light on this topic, but it has been delayed and postponed.

The cultic and ritual praxis of the MOC

In general, the MOC invokes Christian language, holidays and rituals as part of the clergy's praxis, described in detail in the magazine *Lučindan*, such as Metropolitan Mihailo's greeting to the MOC at Easter (*Lučindan* 2013b). To the extent that is visible in its outlet, the MOC should be characterised as a Christian community. However, there is often a paucity regarding biblical references, perhaps due to the lack of in-depth theological training rather than an expression of a theological stand. It is hard to determine if this form of Christianity is a deep commitment to the Christian faith or simply a structural and cultural garment for the community.

Besides the traditional Christian structures, rituals and holidays, the MOC's praxis is based on a revivalist interpretation of what Montenegrin Christendom should be. An example is the use of the title "vladika" rather than the title of bishop or metropolitan. Vladika invokes a local tradition of Christian rule rather than the long episcopal succession expressed in the title of bishop.

The MOC's main national characteristic is also found in the so-called "sainted Montenegrin cult" (mng.: култу Црногорславља), which consists of a list of saints that the MOC venerates in particular. These saints are especially bonded to the history of the Montenegrin lands and the former medieval states of Duklja and Zeta. However, the SOC and other Orthodox churches also venerate two of the saints. The MOC describes the essence of these saints as the fight for (Montenegrin) freedom. They are used as ideal figures exemplifying the Montenegrin's right to an

Table 3: List of national saints

Name of cult	Historical person	Historical period	Known for
Vladimiroslavlja	Jovan or Ivan Vladimir, Unkown family – perhaps Vojislavljević	Early medieval 990–1016	The first ruler of the Montenegrin area. First locally known saint.
Vasilioslavlja	Saint Basil of Ostrog (Sveti Vasilije Ostroški)	1610–167	Metropolitan of Herzegovina Founder of Ostrog monastery and highly venerated for his miracles
Stefanoslavlja	Probable Stefan Piperski	Ottoman period Unknown birth – 1697 20/21 May	Local Montenegrin Saint – founded the Manastir Čelija piperska in Brda outside Podgorica
Ivanoslavlja	Ivan Crnojević	Late medieval 1465 to 1490	Lord of the Zeta-Montenegrin state, founder of Cetinje and the Cetinje monastery
Petroslavlja	Petar I Petrović-Njegoš	1748–1830	Sainted vladika of the Petrović-Njegoš dynasty of Montenegro. Modernised Montenegro and known as Petar of Cetinje

Source: “Uloga Svještenstva”, Lučindan 33, 2010a, 83

independent state (Lučindan 2010a, 37). The five most central ones are as follows:

Noticeably, four local Montenegrin cults are turned into holidays, and another one is added. One central feature of all the celebrated holidays is that the person venerated is bound to a very specific geographical and often physical space (e.g. a monastery). Most of these places are today controlled by the SOC. The MOC underline, through their veneration, their claim on Montenegro’s physical heritage through a spiritual

argument (Saggau 2017). One of the most central holidays and rituals is the badjnak. The badjnak is a local ritual – used throughout Eastern Europe. It is centred on burning a large piece of oak, a Yule log (or sometimes just a bonfire) on Christmas Eve (Pavlovich 1989). The SOC and the MOC each hold a badjnak only a few hundred meters apart every year. The SOC burns its logs in front of the monastery in Cetinje, while the MOC burns its logs in front of the last Petrovich-Njegoš palace in a central square in Cetinje. During the badjnak, nationalist songs are sung by both crowds, and they wave Serbian or Montenegrin national flags. The reason the MOC continues to hold on to the date of the Badjnak is not only just a yearly provocation towards the SOC. Christmas has a cultural history of its own in Montenegro. Three key historical events occurred at Christmas in Montenegro, transforming the holiday into a national and cultural event that transgressed Christianity's limited symbolism (Saggau 2018).

A particular line of thoughts in MOC dwells on the status of the church – either as a continuation of the Orthodox Church in Montenegro prior to 1920 or its status as autocephalic. In a key text written by Goran Sekulović (2010), the “continuation”-thesis is stressed. In short, this thesis argues that MOC is the true descendant of the Church before 1920 and underlines that SOC is not. This line of thought is crucial for the claim on church property because the continuation thesis argues that SOC is an illegal entity with an illegal claim on the property. Closely related to the issue of continuation is the question of MOC's *autocephaly* (canonical independence), which MOC and many with it argue was the status of the Orthodox Church of Montenegro before 1920. An example is Novak Adžić's text “Nekoliko svjedočanstava o Autokefalnosti” (Mng: Many cases of Autocephaly. 2013). Adžić points here to historical documents, which supposedly show the autocephalic status of MOC. Noticeably, most of these documents are greetings from other Orthodox Churches and internal documents. There is no trace of a *tomos* (a church-legal document), and the documents attest that the autocephaly title was perhaps not so church-legal before 1920. The discussion about the autocephaly of MOC is further discussed elsewhere (Saggau 2014; Šljivić & Živković 2020).

Rising conflict between state and church

The core of the complex relationship between the Montenegrin government, MOC and SOC is a series of ongoing conflicts pertaining to property rights, religious education, etc. The following section will present some of the main incidents, conflicts and issues between MOC, SOC and either the Montenegrin state or parts of the pro-Montenegrin movement from 1991 to 2019. The core issues are

- recognition
- right to property
- movement of clergy
- religious education

The issue of recognition

The issue of recognition of the SOC by the Montenegrin Republic after 1989 is one of the key issues. The SOC has continually argued that they were recognised by the Montenegrin law on religion from the 1980s, which according to them guaranteed a recognition in the new Montenegrin republic. Hence, they felt no need to reapply for recognition in the framework of the new Montenegrin independent state after 2006. In fact, this recognition issue points back to the first direct conflicts over religion in Montenegro after communism between the SOC and the growing Montenegrin national movement of the 1990s. A few years after MOC was formed, it was recognised by the state in January 2000 and later greeted by Prime Minister Đukanović at Easter 2000 (Morrison 2009, 128–134, Šistek 2014). In the same year, MOC was anathematised by all traditional Eastern Orthodox Churches, and its clergy was defrocked. The ecumenical Patriarch even issued a warning to the Montenegrin government in which he denounced MOC (SOC 2005). The denunciation of the MOC was repeated by the Ecumenical Patriarch in 2019 during the debate on the law on religion (SOC 2019c).

Initially, in the late 1990s, there had been a division within the government where ministers such as Slobodan Tomović, the minister for religious affairs in 1997, endorsed the SOC rather than the MOC.

Others, such as Montenegrin Deputy Prime Minister Novak Kilibarda, tried to reach a nuanced position to force the churches to co-exist. In the end, the government, led by Đukanović, recognised the MOC prompting a harsh response from the SOC and the major traditional Eastern Orthodox Churches outside Montenegro. This recognition was essential in creating an ambiguous relationship between the state and the church, which evolved over the years (Ramet & Pavlaković 2005, 264–268). The SOC became the only “traditional” – as the old Montenegrin constitution formulated it – community that was not formally recognised by the Montenegrin state after 2000. The SOC was from 2000 and onwards only dealt with informally and practically, but legally speaking, the church existed in a grey area (Venice Commission 2019).

The issue of property

After the break-up of Yugoslavia in the early 1990s, the SOC claimed ownership of most traditional Eastern Orthodox sites in Montenegro, often without being questioned. The legal framework for restitution of ownership over historical sites and heritage in Montenegro was not implemented during this period. In so became the process more or less ad-hoc. The issue became relevant after the creation of the MOC, which laid claim to many traditional Orthodox sites which was now under the SOC. Several clashes between clergy, protesters and police have happened over the years – and culminated when the SOC clergy has gone on hunger strike. A major incident in the debate about the right to churchland or holy land was the Rumija affair in 2005 when the SOC erected a small metal church devoted to St Jovan Vladimir at the top of Mount Rumija with the help of two helicopters from an army base in Serbia. The place was seen as a multi-ethnic and multi-religious site which had now fallen under SOC control, further discussed in the next chapter. The erection of the structure at the site was met with fierce opposition from both pro-Montenegrin parties and Albanian minority parties in Montenegro, all of which viewed the erection of the church as an open provocation (Pavicevic et al. 2009). The former Montenegrin deputy prime minister, Novak Kilibarda, wrote, “Amfilohije’s lamina-church on Rumija was a stab with a bloody knife into the multi-ethnic being of

Montenegro, and it shook the very foundation of multi-confessional spirituality of the area above which Rumija proudly rises" (Kilbarda 2006). However, the church was never removed, and the dispute led to other conflicts between the government and SOC. In 2010–2011 the debate on Rumija reignited in parliament to which Metropolitan Amfilohije commented sharply in his 2010 Christmas' preach: "Whoever destroys the church, God destroys him and his descendants and the honourable cross will judge him" (Serb.: Ko sruši taj hram bog ga srušio i njegovo potomstvo i časni krst mu sudio) (quoted from RTV 2011). Amfilohije's statement was an indirect reference to 1 Corinthians 3:17 ("If any man defiles the temple of God, him shall God destroy"). The Montenegrin government responded by putting the metropolitan on trial for "hate speech" and for insulting the national feelings. He was convicted in 2012 by the High Court and was given a reprimand. The debate about Rumija centres on the question of the right to religious property.

This issue led to other open and even physical confrontations after 2012, such as in the Monastery of Holy Archangel Michael in Prevlaka Island, which on 2nd April 2019 was the scene of a confrontation between police officers, a demolition crew, clergy members and Montenegrin nationalists. The standoff ended without demolishing the debated renovated baptistery, but on 4 April 2019, the minister in charge of the affair published an open letter declaring the renovation illegal (Montenegrin Government 2019). The long line of issues and confrontations on the right to property, especially Rumija and the monastery at Prevlaka, is an essential precondition for the Montenegrin government's proposal of a new law on religion in 2019.

Movement of clergy

Another main issue is the SOC's clergy's right to enter Montenegro. In 2015, a high-ranking cleric of SOC, Velibor Džomić, who holds a central office for SOC as head of the metropolitanate's legal council, was denied his residence permit. He had lived in the country for 22 years but maintained his Serbian citizenship. The government said he was denied the permit because he was a security "threat" (Balkaninsight 2015), but he later won the right to remain in the country in court. According to

the metropolitanate, almost fifty members of its clergy have been put through similar trials in recent years (Orthodox Christians web 2018).

Religious education

Religious education does not exist in Montenegro; instead, there exist courses on citizenship. However, the Catholic and Muslim communities have been allowed to establish religious schools in Montenegro. In Cetinje, there also exists an Orthodox school under the SOC, but the state does not recognise it. The SOC runs several Sunday schools across the country as well. In the case of religious education, the relationship between the government and the SOC from 2000 to 2020 is crystallised. The Church runs a school and a school system, which is in the practical world working, but on paper and in the eyes of the government, this school is non-existent, as further discussed elsewhere (Saggau & Pacariz & Bakrač, 2020).

Overall, four areas are marked by growing tension from the independence of Montenegro in 2006 and onwards.

Head to head in 2019–2020

The relationship between SOC in Montenegro and the government significantly deteriorated in 2019 over a debate of a new law on religion. This section will assess the debate and its most significant documents to discuss the deeper societal reasons for the conflict.

Before 2019 there was no single and comprehensive legal framework for the SOC in the new state of Montenegro. As mentioned, the country's legal framework was a law on religion dating from 1977, which was obsolete, and the very broad provisions outlined in the constitution of the new country from 2007. The 2007 Constitution of Montenegro contains only two paragraphs on religion, which state that there is freedom of religion in Montenegro (article 46) and that all "religious communities shall be separated from the state" (article 14). Besides the constitution, a dozen or so laws related to other subjects, such as holidays or education, set up a regulated framework for

religious communities. These laws, however, do not address the core of the relationship between the state and the SOC, as Velibor Džomić (2009), the head of SOC's legal council in Montenegro, notes in his analysis of them. SOC has therefore called for a clarification of the relationship on multiple occasions, including during a conference in 2008 on the legal position of religious communities in Montenegro. SOC published the conference proceeding in which several authors line up the main issues that need to be addressed in a new law, such as the right to property and restitution, as well as religious freedom, and the autonomy and self-determination of churches, not to mention the legal problems in relation to the unrecognised MOC (Šijaković 2009). In 2016, the SOC obtained an opinion from the Ministry of the Interior stating that the SOC was *de facto* recognised as a religious community because it was already recognised under the 1977 law.

In 2016, the DPS government had already proposed that the dysfunctional law on religion in Montenegro from 1977 should be updated. The government's draft law proposed in 2016 stressed the secularity of the state. It contained a series of crucial passages pertaining to the SOC in Montenegro dealing with property ownership and the clergy's right to move between Serbia and Montenegro (Venice Commission 2019). The 2016 law was opposed by almost all religious communities, particularly SOC. A critical review of the law by the Venice Commission following the complaints from the religious communities led to the law being dropped from the legislative agenda (SOC 2018). In 2018, SOC published the Venice Commission's review of the draft law from 2016 because the SOC in Montenegro claimed that the DPS government had silenced the Venice Commission's report and its critical conclusions (Svetigora 2018). This report foreshadowed the government's proposal of a new edited law on religion on 16 May 2019. In the press release pertaining to the draft law in 2019, the Montenegrin Government stated that all property which belonged to the state before 1918 and had not since been passed on "in the proper legal way will be recognised as state property" (Montenegrin government 2019a). This wording in the 2019 draft law was new, but the 2019 draft contained many of the same formulations as the 2016 draft, according to the SOC. The president

of Montenegro, Milo Đukanović from DPS, did not defuse the situation but said publically in relation to the law that SOC in Montenegro “maintains the infrastructure of a Greater Serbia” and argued that SOC was a threat to the Montenegrin state (Balkaninsight 2019). The DPS government’s draft law on religion from 2019 attempted to create a legal and political frame to delimit the SOC’s activities in Montenegro.

The debate in 2019

The main debated issue of the proposed 2019 law was related to the section on the right to own property as a religious institution. The debate was familiar because MOC and pro-Montenegrin NGOs had argued for years for government intervention and seizing SOC property crucial as Montenegrin heritage. The main argument was that SOC eliminated the “Montenegrin” characteristic of the sites, such as the debate over the old church of St George (Crkva Svetog Đorđa) in the vicinity of the capital’s centre. The debate was already reignited in early 2019 when a pro-Montenegrin media outlet CDM (Adžić 2019) published a well-known Montenegrin nationalist and supporter of the unrecognised MOC, Novak Adžić’s article on the subject. In Adžić’s (2019) op-ed, he argued that all Orthodox shrines in Montenegro basically belonged to the state. His main argument was – a repetition of the continuation thesis – that the Montenegrin Kingdom owned all church buildings before 1918, and the SOC in Montenegro only obtained ownership after the Podgorica Assembly illegally dismantled the kingdom. This decision of the Montenegrin assembly in 1918 was, according to the DPS and other pro-Montenegrin parties, such as the Liberals, an “illegal” one. The “illegal” nature of the assembly affected the SOC’s ownership of sites because the control of these sites was an effect of the assembly. The unification of the Orthodox Church in Montenegro with the Belgrade one in 1920 was signed at the time by the ruler of the new Kingdom of Croats, Slovenes and Serbs, which, in the light of the nullification or illegality of the Podgorica Assemblies decision from 1918, would be an act without any legality in present-day independent Montenegro. Adžić’s argument has been raised before, but it seemed to be the new underlying logic of the new law from 2019. The SOC already voiced concern about this point

shortly after Adžić's article (Svetigora 2019a; 2019b). Around the same time, during the 2018–2019 New Year, the DPS government pushed for the annulment of many SOC clergy's residence permits.

In April 2019, the police and SOC's clergy confronted each other in Tivat over ownership of the monastery at Prevlaka Island. This process was at least a reminder to the DPS government of the issue at hand. The minister responsible for religion gave an interview to the pro-Montenegrin newspaper *Pobjeda* shortly after the announcement of the draft law in May 2019 (Montenegrin Government 2019b). In this interview, the minister was directly asked if the law was partly an effect of the 2005 Rumija affair or the events in Tivat in April 2019. The minister responded (in the government's own translation):

The Government is tackling this issue with full sensitivity to not intensify the division of the country among the Orthodox population. [...] Of course, we will not allow the building of religious facilities on state land or the land of religious communities, contrary to law. That is why we are passing the Law on Freedom of Religion in order to establish religious rights and obligations. (Montenegrin Government 2019b)

The draft law from 2016 was not altered or moderated significantly in the new law from 2019 but rather enforced with a new section on the religious property and restitution – not for the communities but for the restitution of government ownership over religious sites. In the section of the 2019 law, the issues of property built prior to 1918 are raised (Articles 62, 63, 64). In short, the law put forward a legal framework for assessing all religious buildings built before 1918 to decide the status of these sites. There are several possibilities for raising objections to the law. An objection would eventually lead to a court case, which would probably have ruled in favour of DPS. The DPS generally appoints the Montenegrin court and judges, and the independent rule of law is weak (See Montenegrin Government 2020).

The Venice Commission's inconclusive opinion in 2019

Shortly after the draft law on religion in 2019 was announced, The Venice Commission was approached and asked to assess the law.

Shortly after in June, the Commission published their opinion on the draft law. In this assessment, the Commission did not voice the same concerns as in 2016 but tried to reach a balanced standpoint on the law between the DPS government and SOC in Montenegro. The commission called for minor changes in the general draft and a few concerning wider rights on religious education, but their response mainly focused on property rights. The Commission stated they did not want to “assess historical facts” such as the Podgorica Assembly’s legality (Venice Commission 2019). Instead, the Commission recognises the grounds for the SOC’s concern over the law and thus argues that the law needed to specify the standard according to which legal ownership of religious buildings could be proved and that there needed to be made a clearer framework for trials pertaining to ownership. The Commission saw the possibility of a long series of legal battles over the property. However, it argued that it would not threaten the SOC because these lawsuits would be too lengthy and resource-demanding – an argument that seemed not to make any difference to the interest of the SOC. Finally, the Commission highlighted the conclusion of the Greek case at the European Court of Human Rights from 1994, in which the Orthodox Church was compensated for the lost ownership of historical monasteries and allowed to use the sites for religious activities from thereon while the state maintained ownership. The same could be applied to some of the historical sites in Montenegro, according to the Commission (Venice Commission 2019). Such a scenario would, however, be extremely disadvantageous for SOC because their administrative and educational centres are in some of the most historic buildings. The SOC would have to give up the administrative, educational and spiritual centres if the SOC could only enter the sites for religious service, as the case was with the sites in the Greek case from 1994. The Venice Commission’s assessment should have made a more serious effort to mediate the conflict over a dozen key sites. Shortly after the publication, the DPS government and the SOC both claimed that the Commission supported their point of view. The balance of the Commission’s opinion has provided sound ground for both claims because of its bland and inconclusive opinion. The major issue of the 2019 law on religion is historical facts about property

and heritage. In not being willing to “assess historical facts”, the commission has avoided taking a stand on the central issues.

The DPS government forced the draft law through the Montenegrin parliament with little dialogue or concern for the critics. On 24 December 2019, the parliament voted on the law and passed it. Members of the opposition tried to block the vote physically and were escorted out of the parliament in chaotic scenes. The SOC called for major protests outside of parliament, and the capital was filled with demonstrations.

The eruption of protest and violence

SOC in Montenegro had already called upon its clergy to meet at a synod on 15 June 2019 to formulate a common standpoint in response to the law. It rallied its supporters for a demonstration in the capital the same day. A message was released from the synods (Svetigora 2019a) in which the SOC in Montenegro warned the DPS government that they are ready to protect their sacred places against a law which, according to the Church, is directed directly against them (SOC 2019a). In an interview after the synod, the SOC’s legal head in Montenegro, Džomić, highlighted that the law puts the church and the government on a collision course and that this could potentially escalate into violence. Furthermore, Džomić went on to point the finger at the president, Đukanović, whom he claims is an atheist who is behind it all. Džomić then bluntly declared that the supporters of the Church were ready to defend it even with their life (SOC 2019b). This point of view has since been repeated by clerics, synods and politicians loyal to the SOC throughout 2019–2020. The core issue is constantly the recognition of the SOC as the only rightfully Orthodox church by the state and the right to its property. The Church rallied under the slogan “Do not give up our holy sites”, and protest has been widespread. This issue continued into the lockdown of Montenegro during the pandemic of 2020. Despite the lockdown of the state, clergy still called for open-air protests, sometimes in caravans or cars. On 12 May 2020, Montenegrin police arrested Bishop Joanikije and nine clergy members for 72 hours for violating the lockdown rules shortly after violence erupted on 13–14 May in many Montenegrin cities. Amongst them was the second

largest city of Montenegro, Nikšić, where many police and protesters were seriously injured. The bishop was released after 72 hours (Svetigora 2020).

The DPS president of Montenegro, Đukanović, talked to the public after a few days on 18 May 2020. This speech was meant to announce the DPS election programme and the opening event of the re-election campaign. Đukanović, surrounded by Montenegrin flags, blamed the SOC for the violence and claimed that the SOC's refusal of a Montenegrin Orthodox Church for all believers in Montenegro was the backdrop of the violence. According to DPS, the SOC did rather cling to the idea of a Serbian national church. Đukanović noted that it seemed like the SOC wanted to govern Montenegro and impose Serbian Orthodox values and forms on it.

In contrast, he put the rule of law, exemplified by the new law, on religion. The president repeated that the law would not take rightfully owned property from anyone, but only property that "was abducted" (Pobjeda 2020). The speech in May made the issue of SOC the central topic for the general election in Montenegro in 2020. The Đukanović government announced in July that their purpose with the election was to "win over the policy of the SOC", who is identified as their major political opponent (Vijesti 2020).

At the election in August 2020, DPS lost the majority by a very tiny margin. Therefore, the opposition alliance could form a new government, the first new one since 1989 and the first non-DPS government in independent Montenegro. Đukanović and DPS have tried to rally Montenegrin nationalist support behind him to secure his win – a tactic used before. The conflict with SOC and SOC's large-scale public mobilisation in 2019–2020 seems far greater than DPS had imagined. The revitalisation and rebuilding of SOC in Montenegro seemed to have been so overwhelming that the SOC could determine the outcome of an election – with a small margin.

On 28 December 2020, the new coalition government of Montenegro altered the controversial parts of the 2019 law on religion through a slim vote in parliament. Outside Montenegrin, nationalist protests took place, where protesters yelled, "This is not Serbia!" (RFE 2020).

Challenging the state framework

There is a pattern emerging in the long line of conflicts between the DPS government and SOC in Montenegro – particularly on the law on religion from 2019. Each conflict from early 1993 to 2020 occurred in a setting formed by legal norms and political and cultural discourse. These sources created, maintained or challenged structures and relations within a state where religious organisations can act. The altering of the law on religion in Montenegro in 2019 was an attempt by DPS to renegotiate the relationship and institutionalise other informal legal practices related to the other religious communities, mainly the Muslim and Catholic communities in Montenegro.

The relationship between a state and a religious community could be characterised through a “pyramid of priority” (see Figure 3), which provides an overview of the relations on a more general level. This pyramid shows the degrees of relations to and cooperation with the state from the point of view of the religious community. The various conflicts and more peaceful relations can be mapped in order to understand the general structure. The idea behind the pyramid is that communities can increase their cooperation with the state and gain influence, positional power and increased resources. However, as they do so, they are also subjugated to greater state control. Increasing cooperation means climbing up the pyramid while decreasing cooperation or even having deep conflicts with the state lowers the community’s position (Vinding 2013, 44; see also Ferrari 2008; 2003).

If the model is applied to the Montenegrin state, it becomes clear that most religious communities inhabit Level 2 because they cooperate with the state and the DPS government to a certain degree and are governed through mutual agreements (Saggau 2017). It is, however, quite different from the SOC in Montenegro. It very seldom cooperates with the DPS government and is hardly regulated by any laws until 2020, which puts it at level 1. In comparison, the SOC in Serbia is working closely with the Serbian state, which its branch in Montenegro is keen to underline. Thus, in Serbia, the Orthodox Church could be said to inhabit level 3 on most issues, such as education. This situation spills over to the Montenegrin sphere, where the Serbian state controls the

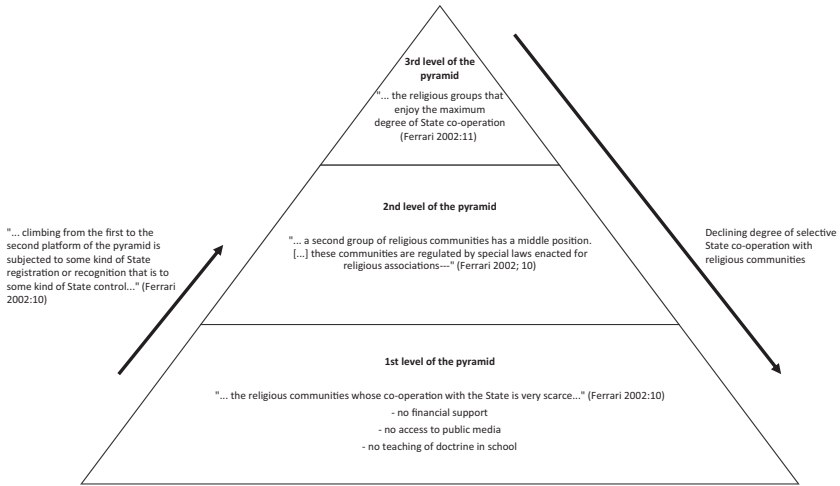


Figure 4: The Silvio Ferrari Pyramid priority of selective state cooperation (Vinding, 2013, 44)

religious Orthodox schools in Montenegro, which are part of the SOC framework, and the government and Serbian media interfere on behalf of the Orthodox Church in matters such as the debate around the law on religion in 2019. Therefore, the ambiguous relationship between the Montenegrin DPS government and the SOC in Montenegro existed for two major reasons.

First and foremost, the church, in many of its actions, contradicts challenges and does not acknowledge the DPS government and its vision of what the Montenegrin state in its current form should be. The SOC does not see the DPS government and – through it – the state as a direct legitimate partner because the DPS government has not shown any willingness to care for the SOC, and the DPS government has constantly enforced pro-Montenegrin politics endangering Serbian Orthodox heritage in Montenegro. This relationship has deteriorated even further due to the various conflicts from 1997 onwards, which have estranged the two from each other. The church views the DPS government with suspicion and sees many of the government's actions as a threat to the

church's position in Montenegrin civil society. There is a key reasons for this: the church has close ties to the Serbian "minority" in Montenegro, as the pro-Serbian part of the population has been labelled since the referendum in 2006. This group has their own opposition parties and media, constituting a civil "counter-state" forming cultural, religious and political opposition. The current Montenegrin state is still fragile and relies mostly on the DPS government and Đukanović's influence. Therefore, the state and the DPS government are hard to untangle, and they are more or less the same until August 2020. The church's opposition is towards the party and its actions. However, because the state is, to such a great extent, a prolonging of the government run by the DPS party rather than existing on its own accord, it also becomes opposition to the state itself. The other reason for the Church's position is its place in Serbia, which allows resources, personnel and support to flow across the border. The Montenegrin branch of the SOC does not stand alone and isolated in Montenegro, providing it with a much wider power base religiously, politically and culturally. Late Metropolitan Amfilohije and Bishop Joanikije stand out as the prime defenders of the Serbian national heritage in Montenegro and, by extension, as the defenders of Orthodox heritage. This position has been established and strengthened by its ever-expanding religious infrastructure of new rituals, churches, monasteries and the clergy's central place in civil society today. It is exactly that position Đukanović, and the DPS government tried to erode in the change of the legal landscape and the political campaign until the election in August 2020. The SOC had for several years overshadowed the MOC, and it is hard to see this balance change without state interferences (Saggau 2017; Morrison 2015).

The SOC's challenge to the Montenegrin state's basic framework posed a threat to the DPS government. The Rumija affair in 2005, the events in Tivat in 2019 and other such events have all demonstrated the DPS government's inability to control or even to find a compromise with the SOC in Montenegro. The revival of the SOC and its strengthened economic, cultural and political base has been used by Metropolitan Amfilohije and Bishop Joanikije to advance the church's position further. In a country where religion is at the core of the state's question of national identity, such a development poses a real threat.

Until 2019–2020, the DPS government had benefited from the ongoing struggle with the SOC because it has reinforced the image of DPS as the defender of the Montenegrin nation, thus providing itself with a political platform. However, Montenegro's political landscape has changed in recent years with the crumbling of the former coalition behind the DPS government. Montenegro was no longer a stage on which such a play could determine the outcome of an election. The cost of being revealed as incapable of government had become too high for DPS, and the issue of a legal framework for religion needed to be addressed. The law on religion in 2019 should be seen in this context, and it was thought of as a game changer insofar as it could jeopardise the expansion of the SOC and even put an end to it. However, as the 2020 elections showed, the DPS has miscalculated its popular base and underestimated its opponent, who formed a new government in 2020.

A determining factor between the DPS government and the SOC in Montenegro was the personification of both sides. President Đukanović and his attitudes towards church life embodied the government. The SOC was embodied by Metropolitan Amfilohije (and partly his close ally, Bishop Joanikije, who became Metropolitan after Amfilohije's death in 2020). Both Đukanović and Amfilohije had served since the early nineties, and the relationship between the state and the church has often come down to their personal relationship. The relationship might therefore change between DPS and the SOC now that Metropolitan Amfilohije has passed and Đukanović has been weakened. Thus he still held the presidency and controlled the majority of the opposition. Đukanović controlled 40 to 41 parliament seats following the 2020 election. In July 2022, a new agreement between the government and the SOC in Montenegro was made public and signed in August. The new agreement rolled all the decisions of the 2019 law back and bestowed extensive legal rights to the SOC concerning property, movement of clergy and their right to loyalty towards the patriarch in Belgrade. It sealed the defeat of the DPS against the SOC in 2019–2020, which was cemented when Đukanović lost the presidential election in April 2023.

Chapter Three

The Eastern Orthodox ideology of history writing

The Montenegrin debates on Orthodox history and politics are not an isolated island but were positioned within longer and deeper Orthodoxy traditions that were constantly referred to and used. This chapter provides an overview of this theological and church-historical context before I return to the Serbian theologians and the development in Montenegro.

The main argument in this chapter is that Eastern Orthodoxy developed in the 20th century two distinctive theological views on the relationship between Church and state, as Andrew Louth (2010) described: an Eusebian and an Ignatian one. These two positions draw on various theological concepts, sources and historical events, shaping how Serbian and Montenegrin Orthodox perceived their own churches.

This chapter describes and discusses the two various “religious ideologies”, as de Certau would have called them: the Eusebian and an Ignatian one. The religious ideology of the Montenegrin Orthodox Church (MOC) and the Serbian Orthodox Church (SOC) will be contextualised, and elements will be related and discussed concerning the Orthodox tradition.

This chapter is divided into three sections. The first section will introduce and discuss the development of the two different forms of Orthodox ecclesiology identified by Andrew Louth (2010). Louth's characterisation of the Eusebian model and its ancient roots will be discussed before it is used to assess how the MOC reinterprets Eusebios's notion in its perception of ecclesiology, history and the relationship between state, nation and Church today. The second section will focus on developing a historiography that contrasts the Eusebian one and seeks to place the Church at the centre of history. Such an approach to history is formulated by the Russian theologian Georges Florovsky (1987b), who draws heavily on and reinterprets the Church father, Athanasius. I have therefore called this specific historiographical order an Athanasian one. The final section discusses how this Athanasian model of history and the Church is present in contemporary Eastern Orthodoxy.

Historiography in Orthodox theology

According to de Certeau, a historiographical religious ideology is the exact order or structure localised through the outward embodiment of history in practice and text. The analysed ideologies could be called Eastern Orthodox historiographical orders and are often expressed by theologians in theological texts. I will argue that two poles of modern Eastern Orthodox ecclesiology exist, as Andrew Louth (2010) described as a Eusebian and an Ignatian one, corresponding to the two different forms of Orthodox historiography in the MOC and SOC. Louth describes Eusebian ecclesiology as a modern reinterpretation of a close symphonic relationship between the Emperor and the Church. This point corresponds to a modern historiography in which the nation-state and the Church are closely bound to each other. I will argue that the MOC and the Montenegrin state use this historiographical approach. In this Eusebian historiographical religious ideology, the close bond between the nation-state and Church is interpreted as a modern form of the Eusebian ideal relationship between the Emperor and the Church.

This modern Eusebian model is an antinomy of the Ignatian one in ecclesiology, which is also the case in historiography.

A historiographical religious ideology that contrasts the Eusebian model is where the Church, rather than the relationship between the Emperor and the Church, is the centre of attention. I will argue that such a form of Orthodox historiography exists in the SOC. This historiographical ideology draws on Vladimir Solovyov's idea of Integral knowledge and the other Slavophiles writer's idea of Sobornost, as these specific forms and concepts were given in the Paris school and the neo-patristic turn in Eastern Orthodoxy in the 20th century, exemplified in the writings of Georges Florovsky. This approach to ecclesial history, formulated by the Slavophiles and Florovsky, has paved the way for a specific form of Serbian Orthodox approach to history, expressed by SOC's Metropolitan Amfilohije's notion of history, as discussed in the next chapter. The historiographical religious orders of the SOC and MOC are argued to be two different interpretations of the Church's place in history and its relationship to the state and the people-nation.

Towards Eastern Orthodox historiographical orders

In Vladimir Solovyov's *The Philosophical Principles of Integral Knowledge* (published in Russian in 1877), the Russian Slavophile describes the development of human societies throughout history. In his characterisation of the history of the Orthodox churches, he notes bluntly that the Byzantine imperial system kept "their basic character and their basic principle" from the pagan Roman period (Solovyov 2008, 36–37). The higher form of society, which for Solovyov was the Church, was subordinated to the Emperor in Byzantium, which paved the way for the Byzantine and Slavic Orthodox states' submission to Islam, according to Solovyov. In the final part of his historiographical sketch, Solovyov argues that a third level of human existence is possible, in which the Church is not subordinated to the state. This third level will transcend the differentiation in science, arts, society and history. This context is:

A kingdom of the third force [which] is inevitable, the sole bearer of which may only be the Slavic peoples and the Russian nation [. It] is a religious calling in the highest sense [and] only then will all the particular forms and elements of life and knowledge attain their positive significance and worth;

they will all be necessary organs and instruments of a single, integral life.
(Solovyov 2008, 51–52)

Solovyov makes two essential characterisations of Orthodox history, forming the inner conflict in Eastern Orthodox historiography and politics. First, Solovyov notes that the Roman imperial system subordinated the Church, despite its ideal of equality between those two. This imperial church system dates back to Constantine the Great and the Milan Edict of 313. It was, according to Solovyov, never replaced by an ecclesial system but continued to exist as a Byzantine imperial church. Second, he argues that a third level of human society exists beyond the “pagan” Byzantine-inspired imperial system in his contemporary Russia of the 19th century. In this third level, the Church becomes an all-encompassing, integrated, unifying force for humanity.

Eusebian and Ignatian ecclesiology

Solovyov’s negative description of the Byzantine imperial system of state–church, with its famous expression in the words of Emperor Justinian’s Novel 6 about the “symphony” between Emperor and Church, is echoed throughout modern Eastern Orthodox theology. The state–church relationship and its genealogy in the Patristic writings have become a major theme and discussion in today’s Eastern Orthodox discussion of state and Church. Louth (2010) argued that there exist two traditions of patristic ecclesiology. The first tradition is a close relationship between the state and Church, which Louth calls a “Eusebian one”. Louth argues that this interpretation of the Church’s place in society (ecclesiology) is instituted by the Constantinian turn in 313 and further developed by Justinian’s already mentioned codex, among others. In this interpretation of the Church’s place, the Church is bound to the sovereign power as an imperial church. Ideally, the Emperor deals with the secular world. The Church is freed to focus on the spiritual. The Emperor and the Church both act for the “common good”, and so their interests are aligned (Schmidt 2020, 25–60). This so-called Eusebian ideal, expressed in detail in Eusebios’s *Church History* and *Life of Constantine* from the early 4th century, presupposes

a universal empire encompassing the entire Christian civilisation, governed by one Church in one Empire (Eusebios 2011). The model thereby combines Roman and Christian universalism. The overall assessment of this Eusebian model, its ancient form and later Eastern Orthodox reception was undertaken by F. Dvornik in his two volumes (1966) on *Early Christian and Byzantine Political Philosophy*. Here, Dvornik detects the devolvement of the Eusebian imperial church model and the shaping of the Emperor as a priestly and apostolic figure in late Patristic writings. Political development is significantly expressed in the ideal of a symphony between the Church and the Empire. According to John McGuckin (2003), Dvornik's assessment overlooked that the ideal of the symphony was not a continuation of the Hellenistic and Roman ideal of a Godly ruler but rather an attempt to define the bonds and delineation between the Emperor and the Church.

However, as John Meyendorff (1974, 213) sharply puts it, "there lies the tragedy of the Byzantine system: it assumed that the state as such could become intrinsically Christian". In other words, the model analysed by McGuckin (2003) and Dvornik (1966) did not work in the imperial practice as it was ideally thought, regardless of its roots. One of the sources of this problem was that the Eusebian idea was born out of an expectation that the elevation of Christianity to the Roman religion would be the start of the end, as Solovyov notes (2008, 36–37). In Eusebios's writings, Constantine's rule was the first sign of the end – and it seems like Eusebios is expecting Christ to return shortly thereafter. Therefore, the Eusebian ecclesiological model is unstable in its foundations because it draws on the church fathers Africanus and Hippolytus's notion of apocalypse and chiliasm. It expected the Emperor to institute 1000 years of peace for the Church, which was not the case. Byzantium never became an all-encompassing empire, nor did its Church become a world church because, among other things, Christianity plunged into political and theological strife in the 4th century and the centuries to follow.

The Eusebian imperial church model did, however, survive as an ideal and inspired the new Orthodox Slavic empires to come during the Byzantine period: Bulgaria, Serbia and, finally, Russia. The Eusebian idea persisted and re-emerged in the age of Orthodox nation-states from the 18th century onwards, before and after communism. That is what

Solovyov reacted against with his fellow Slavophiles in the 19th century. Today the Eusebian model and the Justinian notion of state–church relations (often called a symphonic relation) continue to dominate many Orthodox churches' thinking in Orthodox majority states, such as Serbia, Bulgaria, Russia and Romania (Leustean 2014a, Kalkandjieva 2011).

According to Louth (2010), new ecclesiological ideas emerged in the 20th century in opposition to the Eusebian model. A new model arose, drawing on Solovyov's notion of the third force as quoted above, as a theological response from the Russian diaspora theologians, shaped by their historical experience with the Tsarist state, the revolution and their subsequent exile in 1918. The Eusebian model had not delivered salvation as promised but instead paved the way for first a subordination of the Church to the Emperor following Peter the Great's reforms in the 18th century and then a complete dismissal of the Church from society under the rule of the Soviets. It is thus hardly surprising that the Russian Orthodox diaspora's trust in the institution of an emperor or a state was weak after the communist revolution. Therefore, a search for a new model was obviously needed, as Louth (2010) points out, and in the spirit of the Russian diaspora, the answers were sought in the Patristic writings. Nicholas Afanasiev (1893–1966), professor of church history at St Sergii Institute in Paris, suggested, mainly in his work *The Church of the Holy Spirit*, published posthumously in 1971, that another Patristic model could be found beneath the Eusebian imperial one (Afanasiev 2007, 136–137). According to Afanasiev, the state–church model of Eusebios presupposes what a church is; therefore, a primary form of the Church detached from the Emperor exists. Afanasiev argued that this other model could be found in the Epistles of St Ignatios from the 2nd century. The Church is seen as a local community of the baptised celebrating the Eucharist. This model became known as the Ignatian model at the centre of what would be regarded as Eucharistic ecclesiology in Eastern Orthodoxy.

Ecclesiological models in the Montenegrin case

Turning back to Montenegro, the two models of ecclesiology described by Louth (2010) are very much at play in the debate today. In Montenegro,

the two opponents each deployed a different form of Eastern Orthodox ecclesiology in the debate about the autocephaly of the MOC (Saggau 2014). According to the MOC, the Eusebian model is favoured as the Patristic root for the right church–state relations. Here is the Eusebian imperial model reinterpreted as the modern idea that an independent Orthodox nation and state presuppose an autocephalous church as well (Makrides 2013; Šljivić & Živković 2020). In the Montenegrin case, this is the main argument of the MOC and is fully developed in Goran Sekulović's "Crnogorska identitetska prava I slobode" (2010). Sekulović claims here:

The Orthodox tradition contains a rule in which an autocephalic church's borders identify with an independent state (nation, state, church). (Sekulović 2010, 15)

Sekulović supports this claim with reference to canon law (which must be Canon XVII from Chalcedon in 451) and continues to argue that an Orthodox state, therefore, inherently must create an independent (autocephalous) church. Sekulović and the MOC's perception of history and state–church relations clearly draw on a Eusebian model. The Church and state are identified as overlapping and dependent on each other.

For obvious reasons, the SOC denies the relevance of this church-legal argument. The SOC Metropolitan Amfilohije refuted this argument in a short text in which he sketches his understanding of the Church. The text is titled "The Church as the Pillar and Stronghold of the Truth – The Question of Autocephality and the Church" (Amfilohije 2013), which discusses what a true church is. In it, he argues that a true Orthodox church is instituted by the true Eucharist overseen by a proper bishop. Amfilohije directly refuses the technical church-legal discussion of autocephaly because no matter how canon law is twisted and turned, an Orthodox church can only be a true church through its belonging to the traditional Orthodox Churches and their hierarchy. The true Eucharist overseen by a proper bishop ensures that the local Church becomes one with the universal Church – that is, for Amfilohije, the true meaning of *katholikos* or *Sobornost* (Amfilohije 2013). This form of ecclesiology is, to a large extent, the core of Amfilohije's position in the Montenegrin debate about autocephaly. In Amfilohije's

position, Afanasiev's Ignatian model is a basis for ecclesiology. It is, therefore, possible to dismiss canonical decrees (such as Canon XVII from 451, mentioned earlier) if they contradict the Ignatian ecclesiology. In Amfilohije's argumentation, the centre is the Eucharist celebrated in the local Church as the main sign of a true church. Church law is of less importance. Amfilohije's approach to ecclesiology and that of the MOC each draw on one of the two different models described by Louth.

The development of state-centred historiography: The Eusebian history of salvation

The MOC's Eusebian approach to ecclesiology makes it reasonable to assume that they also approach historiography in a Eusebian way. Eusebios's approach to the Church and the Emperor is similar in ecclesiology and historiography. It is, therefore, crucial to note that Eusebios was not just a dogmatic thinker but rather a historian. His ecclesiology derives from his writings on history, so his conceptions of the Emperor and Church are bound to his historiography. The Eusebian ecclesiological model is a consequence of how he views the history of salvation and how this view is interpreted in the world of nation-states. The following short section is an assessment of Eusebios's historiography before I return to a discussion of how it is reinterpreted in the MOC today.

The tradition of the Christian account of history or what should be known as *Church History* is ascribed, according to Eusebios, who was the Bishop of Caesarea (263–339), to Julius Africanus (160–240), who in 221 wrote the first Christian world history (Maier 1999, 33). Africanus's pursuit was an eschatological one, and his history was a way to count the 6000 years of the history of humanity from Adam to Christ to the Last Judgement in accordance with the Book of Revelation. In 231 AD, Hippolytos (170–235) expanded Africanus's text, and this became the basis for Eusebios's first version of the *Chronicon* (a church chronicle) from 303 AD (Maier 1999, 370–371). Hippolytos's and Africanus's texts are born out of two early Christian-Judaic ideas, which profoundly influenced the Christian writing of history. These ideas are chiliasm and eschatology, concepts from the Book of Revelation and Judaism.

The basic idea is that Christ will return in a final judgement and initiate a 1000-year reign. World history becomes a narrative from the fall of Adam towards redemption, judgment, atonement and final salvation. Eusebios reinterprets this in his work *Church History* from the early 4th century, in which the foundation of the second Rome (Constantinople) and the rule of Constantine the Great are steps in humanity's history towards salvation. The Emperor becomes a part and player in the Christian journey towards salvation from Eusebios and onwards (Schmidt 2020, 25–60; Croke 2015, 407–408). The sacred is bound to the political state from hereon in Orthodox thinking on history.

The Eusebian way of writing history bears several implicit thoughts, such as Africanus's conception of time and history as a basic narrative from creation and fall, which ends with the final judgement. All events, persons and movements are interpreted into this narrative of salvation. The Emperor has also become embedded into this narrative (Croke 2015, 407–408). The Emperor plays a crucial role as an appointed guardian instituted and blessed by Christ on Earth, who promotes and protects the Christian society, according to Eusebios in his *Life of Constantine* (McGurkin, 2003 278–282). The Emperor and later the state are necessary guardians for the Christian Church peregrinating through the world – and so the “powers of the sword” (Romans 13.4) are rightfully the state's to wield. However, this Eusebian historiography binds the Church to the Empire. This bond is later interpreted as a bond to the king or the nation-state – and thus, the history of the Church naturally also becomes the history of the state. They become inseparable in the historiographical tradition that follows the trail of Eusebios. Medieval Western chronicles attest to this trend with their proto-national chronicle of state and Church. This point was pushed even further by the advent of the Protestant nation-states. Eusebian historiography connects the Church and the Empire so tightly together that they cannot be understood without each other. The Empire deals with the outward (one could say secular) matters, and the Church with the inner (religious) matters, but they strive towards the same “common good”, which is a part of God's history of salvation.

A modern reinterpretation of Eusebios

The historiographical scheme used by the MOC follows the same lines as Eusebios's in a modern form. The obsession of the MOC-oriented writers to find proof of the existence of a medieval Slavic state in the Montenegrin region with an independent church builds on a Eusebian historiographical approach to the past. In their opinion, the modern Montenegrin state and Church need to be continuations of the prior Church and state through the centuries – and these two concepts, Church and state, are closely bound and inseparable. In this approach, the new Montenegrin state needs its own Church because the state and Church embody the care for the welfare of the Montenegrins – both politically and religiously. What Goran Sekulović calls “the Orthodox tradition” (2010), in which Church and state are identified as one unit, could very well instead be called the “Eusebian tradition”. The Emperor is today's nation-state, just as the “polis” in Canon XVII of Chalcedon is interpreted as the nation-state. It is crucial to underline that this historiographical ideology in the MOC is deeply rooted in Eastern Orthodox Christianity, as Solovyov (2008) points out, and is further analysed as a contemporary trend by Daniela Kalkandjieva (2011). Kalkandjieva suggests that the use of a vernacular in the liturgy can be considered as one of the roots of the close relationship between state, Church and later nation in the Slavic world, which is further enforced by the institutional structures of the Eastern Orthodox churches throughout the Orthodox empires, nation-states and even during the Ottoman period in which the Church was the primary political institution for the Orthodox (Kalkandjieva 2011). These historical circumstances fit well with Eusebian historiography because the theologically prescribed close connection between Emperor and Church could neatly be interpreted as a call for a close relationship between state, nation and Church today – as in Montenegro and elsewhere in the Orthodox world. Despite Solovyov's critique and Afanasiev's attempt to form a new church-centred ecclesiology freed from the Emperor and state, the close connection between state and Church seems to suffice in the modern world of nation-states.

The dismantling of a state-centred historiography

Unlike the clear contrast between Eusebian and Ignatian ecclesiology, there is no tightly connected rival form of historiography to the Eusebian one. However, Afanasiev's (2007) analysis and later Louth's (2010) and John A. McGuckin's (2003) draw attention to the existence of a primary form of the Church (the Ignatian one) beneath the Eusebian conception of the imperial Church. In the same manner, I would argue that a form of Eastern Orthodox historiography is formulated in which there exists a primary or, to use Solovyov's words, a third form of ecclesial historiography before the connection between state and Church in the Eusebian scheme. This tradition of church-centred historiography became rudimentary through the centuries. It only became coherent in the 20th century when the Russian Orthodox theologians began to rethink ecclesiology and history disconnected from the state.

In the following section, I will unravel this tradition, which for now could be called an "Athanasian historiography" because its main feature is that it returns to the Patristic writings as a common ground from which to interpret history – in particular, a historiography based on St Athanasius the Great's (298–373) thoughts on the Church detached from the Emperor. In Athanasius's writings, such as *Against the Arians* and *Life of St. Antony*, he denies the Emperor a primary role and primary agency in Christian history. Instead, he puts the authority over history in the hands of the Church. This authority is most prominently reformulated into a modern historical approach by Georges Florovsky (1893–1979). Athanasius's famous image of St Antony in *Life of St. Antony* describes the ideal ecclesial life in the desert, becoming a powerful image of the Church walking towards salvation. The emperors are free to walk along, but their role is reduced to that of all Christian believers (Cartwright 2016). It is crucial to note that the ideal of St. Anthony in Athanasius's biography and Eastern monasticism spread quite fast in the Eastern Roman world and became a power to reckon with (Meyendorff 1974, 66–79; McGuckin 2003)

Florovsky's historiography

The eremite in the desert from, amongst others, Athanasius' writings is one of Florovsky's favourite images of the Church. At the same time, the state and nation are depicted as the Empire in the city in this image (Florovsky 1974, 241–264). The Church is only related to the Divine in an upward direction, and any preoccupation with the mundane would disturb this perspective. The purpose of history and the historian's job is to draw the focus back to the relationship between the Church and the Divine. The Church–Divine relationship is vertical, unlike that of secular or national historiography, which is a horizontal relationship between humans. Therefore, just like Afanasiev, Florovsky (1974) implicitly argues that there was a primary Patristic form of the Church before the Eusebian one. In this primary form, the commonality of the Church is central. This point is clearly expressed in his text on church–state relations in the Byzantine world (Florovsky 1974). Florovsky here writes:

In "This world", Christians could be but pilgrims and strangers. Their true "citizenship", *politeuma*, was "in heaven" (Phil. 3:20) [...] Justinian did not speak of State or Church. He spoke of two ministries or two agencies. (Florovsky 1974)

Florovsky continues:

Monasticism was, to a great extent, an attempt to evade the Imperial problem (Florovsky 1974)

Florovsky underpins that the true form of the Church was not that of an Eusebian Imperial one but rather one of pilgrims and strangers that could be found in monasticism. The monastic ideal and life are, for Florovsky, a constant reminder that earthly power is not the true form of the Church. According to Florovsky, this is the true basis for Justinian's Novella 6. In Novella 6, Justinian separates between the earthly power and the heavenly. The earthly is a horizontal relation between men, while the heavenly is a vertical between Man and God (see Saggau 2017a, 79–81).

It does not make Florovsky's perception of history into a simple history of dogmatics because it still has to relate to the personal experience

of a man with the Divine, thereby indirectly referring to the notion of how a man becomes united with God (the Godmanhood) from Solovyov. This image and form of history resemble, to a great extent, the very form of "history" found in Athanasius's *Life of St. Antony*, which seems to be Florovsky's blueprint. In Florovsky's work on "The Authority of the Ancient Councils and the Tradition of the Fathers" (Florovsky 1987b), he argues that the true criterion of history is that "Christ is the Truth", echoing Athanasius (Florovsky 1987b, 97). It is the divine revelation in Christ and not the Emperor that is the sole source of history – and the connection between Empire and the Church is thus denied any historical relevance for the Church. In another article, "The Function of Tradition in the Ancient Church" (Florovsky 1987c), Florovsky argues that the true tradition, which is the core of Church History, should be understood correctly through Athanasius's writings. Florovsky (1987c) quotes Athanasius to argue that only one "Tradition" derives from what the Lord gave and the Fathers preserved. Florovsky goes on to argue in his work on Christian historiography, "The Predicament of the Christian Historian", that "the Christian historian will regard history at once as a mystery and as a tragedy – a mystery of salvation and a tragedy of sin" (Florovsky 1974b, 65). In doing so, he concludes that the writing of history also unfolds the mystery of salvation and sin. A crucial reason behind this is that Florovsky seems to regard history as a form of preservation and a way to theologise on the very tradition of Christianity, as he quotes Athanasius: "the Fathers preserves". Florovsky notes in the opening of his work from 1959 that Christianity is a religion for historians because history is the witness to the tradition. The mystery of the faith can only be understood through history. History is, in this light, also inseparable from salvation – and no secular history exists for the Christian. There is only one history, and that is the one of salvation. Such a notion of history also rebels against the idea that Church history and the secular history of a nation belong together. They might interact, but their purpose is not the same.

A major reason for this is that the patristic heritage is, in Florovsky's opinion, not entirely a question for the dogmatic. The patristic heritage is rather a question for the historian, who must try to unpack the words of the Fathers in today's setting. The tradition needs to be preserved

constantly, as he argues in the above-mentioned article on the tradition (Florovsky 1987b), in which he quotes Athanasius. This point of view is characteristic of Florovsky, whose main theoretical thought was what he himself called the neo-patristic synthesis. In short, the synthesis answers modern-day problems through readings and discussing the Patristic writings. It could perhaps best be described as a form of a hermeneutic method, which Florovsky himself applied throughout his writing – without being occupied with formulating a clearer description of the synthesis and methodology. To some extent, it seems more like a slogan than an actual method, which is visible in the multitude of ways the synthesis is applied in Orthodox settings (Gavrilyuk 2013, 112; 2014, 86; Ware 2012, 77–93).

Florovsky's original departure into historiography is through Aleksandr Ivanovich Herzen's (1812–1870) philosophy of history and inspiration from the Slavophiles, Dostojevskij, Khomyakov and Solovyov, as well as inspiration and/or direct opposition to the older generation of Orthodox diaspora theologians – often referred to as the theologians of the Russian Religious Renaissance (Gavrilyuk 2015). From these Russian theologians and writers, he inherited a notion of absolute freedom for the individual human in history, which contrasts Western determinism or structuralism in modern or post-modern historiography. Personal choices drive history.

The salvation of the individual stands at the heart of history – and Florovsky takes the actions of individuals as the primary driver of history. Florovsky's historiography is, therefore, not an assessment of the progression of societies as Solovyov's. It is rather an ideographic portrayal of individuals and their thoughts and actions. History is not a reconstruction of how the past was but an opportunity to engage in the interpretation of and dialogue with the past. His works, therefore, often take the form of an assessment of one person's theology and persona (Gavrilyuk 2014, 90–91). As such, it is in keeping with the more mystical tradition of Orthodox theology, which recognises the divine as an absolute opposition to our world following the writings of the Cappadocian Fathers and Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite's apophatic theology. For Florovsky, first and foremost, Church history is a vertical line, almost a process of deification. In contrast, the secular or Protestant tradition of

his time was a horizontal line following the development of institutions or ideas.

In his grand exposition of Russian history, *Ways of the Russian Theology* from 1937 (Florovsky 1987), this becomes very clear because he constantly comments, assesses, and even speculates about each individual portrayed. He engages in discussion with each of them. History was not a linear progression, as in Eusebios or Western idealistic thought, but marked by turns, twists, crises and jumps ahead. This particular form of indeterminism is visible in the title of the work. He chooses the plural “Ways” (Russian: Пути / Puti) because he does not see history as a coherent progression that the viewer can trace as one single trajectory (Florovsky 1987). Florovsky clearly positions himself directly against a tendency in the Western forms of history in which structures are given primary agency, and concepts such as “world spirit” (Hegel) or “class” (Marx) are the drivers of history. He contrasted German idealism and opposed what he saw as a decaying form of liberal Protestant writing of history in authors such as Adolf Harnack, in which the progression of societies and the Church would gradually lead to the kingdom of God. His thought was shaped by the experience of the war and the Russian Revolution. Therefore, positions similar to Florovsky’s in matters such as personality, individual freedom and the return to ancient Christian history are also visible in Protestant and Catholic thought from around the same time. De Certeau, who shares the same attention and care for individual freedom, is a point in the case. German idealism seems to have been played out by Florovsky’s time for all Christian traditions. For that reason, Florovsky writes in the conclusion of his work *Ways of the Russian Theology*:

In history alone can one be fully convinced of the mystical reality of the Church and be liberated from the temptation to twist Christianity into abstract doctrine or moralism. Christianity exists entirely in history and is entirely about history. It is not just a revelation in history, but a call to history and to historical action and creativity. (Florovsky 1987, 296)

He goes on to say:

Patristic theology is always a “theology of the facts”, it returns us to events, to events of sacred history. (Florovsky 1987, 297)

Despite the similarity with other contemporary streams of thought in the Christian world, Florovsky inherited an anti-Western sentiment from the Slavophiles, which was common for his generation, according to Vasilios N. Makrides (2014; 2009). This understanding influenced his historiography. It should be noted that the interpretation of Florovsky's theology as anti-Western has been challenged by Matthew Baker (2010:2014), who argues that it opposed German idealism and rationalism rather than the general West. Florovsky's opposition to German idealism and the liberal trend in Protestantism also pitted him against other Western forms of historiography (Gavrilyuk 2014, 176–184). Namely the classic Anglican and conservative presumption that history was more an organic form in which all individuals were bound together in a slow progression. Florovsky rejected any form of organic interpretation of history because he saw it as an abstraction devoid of personal agency. History was, for Florovsky, mainly a tale of unity or collapse. Human society existed only through the continual upholding of unity. Otherwise, it would decline into fragmentation. As such, it takes on a form which draws heavily on Athanasius's description of the monastic life of unity and Solovyov's characterisation of the basic principle of integral knowledge, which is first and foremost unity. In such a perception of unity in history, Khomyakov's concept of Sobornost shines through. The Sobornost or communality (the Orthodox interpretation of the *katholou* – catholic) of the Church was all that mattered (Florovsky 1987d, 57–72). The historian in Florovsky's interpretation followed suit with that of Solovyov, Khomyakov and Athanasius – either trying to unite single events or disunite them. Florovsky's interpretation of history builds on some of the same Slavophile theological assumptions that Afanasiev has about ecclesiology. The unity – Sobornost – of the local Church is central both for history and ecclesiology.

Athanasian historiography today

In the so-called neo-patristic school, which followed Florovsky's slogan and returned to the Fathers, the thought of the patristic Fathers was at the centre, which could be seen as a continuation of the tradition

of the Slavophiles (Ware 2012, 113–114). Florovsky's works, influential as they became, were, in their essence, historiographical writings – and his thoughts about history were always a key theme in his writing. Florovsky's thoughts about history, centred on Athanasius, are perhaps the most radical break with Eusebian historiography in modern Eastern Orthodox theology.

However, Florovsky does not seem to have thought coherently about the features of such a form of Athanasian historiography but rather seemed to exercise it through his Patristic studies. This point is a distinctive trait of Florovsky's thought, apparent in how he practised rather than theorised the neo-patristic synthesis as well. In some way, the Athanasian historiography becomes much more apparent in the second generation of Orthodox neo-patristic theologians following him. In the writings of John Meyendorff and John Zizioulas, some of Florovsky's points are turned into actual historiography (Louth. 2015, 178–193; 214–225).

Meyendorff's work on Byzantine Theology (1974) clarifies the neo-patristic way of working. Meyendorff works through Byzantine thinking, and subject after subject, he distils the important theological points of this period. The harsh criticism of the close relationship between the state and the Church in Florovsky, Solovyov and Athanasius influences Meyendorff's interpretation. Meyendorff repeats the same Athanasian point in *Byzantine Theology*, *The Orthodox Church* and *The Byzantine Legacy in the Orthodox Church*. He argues that the Church became subordinate to the Emperor, which led to the undoing of Byzantine Orthodoxy (Meyendorff 1982, 43–66, 18; Meyendorff 1981, 18). Moreover, Meyendorff describes, in his analysis of middle Byzantine intellectual life, how the monastic ideal, dating back to Athanasius's portrayal of St Antony and the following Desert Fathers, became a political power with whom to reckon. This power challenged the close relationship between Emperor and Church. This "monastic" ideal, as Meyendorff calls it, is an Athanasian historiography in full form – and one Meyendorff draws a positive picture of (Meyendorff 1974, 54–61).

Similarly, the neo-patristic synthesis is seen in Zizioulas's collection of publications, *Being as Communion* (Zizioulas 1985). As in Meyendorff's

work, Zizioulas progresses through subject after subject (a collection of essays so that process seems inevitable), slowly reaching certain points by examining a given Patristic source. He even repeats a few of Florovsky's central points, such as the critique of a purely historical approach to the New Testament and the necessity of a notion of complete personal freedom without the restraints of abstract concepts and units (Zizioulas 1985, 70).

As Andrew Louth makes clear in his work on *Modern Orthodox Thinkers* (2015), a range of Orthodox theologians could be called neo-patristic. They might have their differences, but they share the return to Patristic sources and the influence of Philokalia and the Slavophiles. I would argue that Florovsky – and certainly Meyendorff and Zizioulas also crafted a new form of Orthodox historiography in this neo-patristic stream in a manner much similar to Afanasiev's ecclesiology. Regarding Zizioulas, Afanasiev's ecclesiology almost merges with Florovsky's historiography. Central in Zizioulas's historiography is that the state-centred focus was dismantled and shifted towards the local Eucharistic Church inspired by the ideals and images from Athanasius's description of the monastic life of St Antony.

Furthermore, this form of historiography does not contain a Eusebian notion of chiliasm and the same form of eschatology or apocalyptic thinking. World history is not a progression towards the end times, in which the Emperor-Christ figure will begin a 1000-year reign of peace. History now focuses on the communities' relationship with the divine (theosis).

As I have chosen to call it, Athanasian historiography in Eastern Orthodox theology is essentially a way of rethinking Church history through a rereading of Athanasius and, consequently, thinking about the Church outside of the confines of the state and the nation. Vasilios Makrides (2019, 235) notes that this problem is an imminent challenge in modern Orthodox thinking. Perhaps it is most noticeable in, among others, McGuckin's work (2003), Aristotle Papanikolaou and George E. Demacopoulos's recent anthology *Christianity, Democracy, and the Shadow of Constantine* (2017), and Papanikolaou's *The Mystical as Political* (2012). The anthology edited by Papanikolaou and Demacopoulos (2017) is preoccupied with thinking Eastern Orthodoxy beyond the

state and the nations in opposition to the long tradition of state–church cooperation inspired by Eusebios. I would argue that their anthology is a modern form of Athanasian historiography, which rebels against what Papanikolaou and Demacopoulos called “Constantine’s shadow”. A shadow Louth and, subsequently, I have called Eusebian ecclesiology and historiography.

This shadow also cast its shades into Cyril Hovorun’s book *Meta-Ecclesiology* (2015), where he discusses the development of different forms of ecclesiology from Biblical sources till today. Hovorun argues that the creation of the Imperial Church pushed Athanasius to develop a form of Incarnational ecclesiology, which Cyril of Alexandria perfected (Hovorun 2015, 53–66). In Eastern Orthodoxy of today, Hovorun argues that there exist three forms of ecclesiology “Sophiological ecclesiology” (103–105), “Neopatristic ecclesiology” (117–119) and “Eucharistic ecclesiology” (129–130; 132–134), which, however, is closely intertwined. Each of these forms of ecclesiology does not relate to the state but attempts – with different tones – to formulate an idea about the Church in the world independent of the state. Hovorun’s assessment highlights the “Athanasian” backdrop of modern Eastern Orthodoxy, which dismantled the state and nation as the central pillar. These new ecclesiologies starkly contrast the notion of history, politics, and Church found in MOC and many national Orthodox churches.

Chapter Four

The making of Serbian Orthodoxy in history

In the same historical period spanning from the Slavophiles to Florovsky, another Slavic and outright Serbian form of historiography took form, which became the base for Metropolitan Amfilohije's contemporary approach to history. This development was closely linked to the reappearance of the Athanasian historiographical thought in the neo-patristic school, as described in the previous chapter. This Athanasian ideal of the Church in the desert freed from the Emperor sufficed throughout centuries. It took prominence in modern Serbian Orthodox theology and the theologians' historical approaches, but with additional layers from the Slavophiles. This is the topic of this chapter, which explores the Athanasian notions of history, politics and the Church in Serbian Orthodoxy.

The main point of this chapter is that Amfilohije's historiographical theology, and with it that of the branch of the Serbian Orthodox Church (SOC) in Montenegro, is an overall Athanasian one. The rivalry between the unrecognised Montenegrin Orthodox Church (MOC) and Amfilohije's Church is mirrored or perhaps even derives from the contrast between their forms of historiography. In order to understand

Amfilohije's position, it is necessary to understand a distinct tradition in Serbian Orthodox theology. The following chapter draws up this particular tradition and highlights its relationship and differences with the Russian diaspora theologians, such as Florovsky and Meyendorff.

Njegoš's notion of history and the Divine

Like Florovsky's reformulated historiography, the history of a specific form of Serbian Orthodox historiography takes off with the Slavophiles. In 1831 – while the Slavophiles published their first works – Petar II Petrović-Njegoš, a young man of the Petrović-Njegoš clan, was consecrated into the office of metropolitan and ruler of Montenegro. He would be known as Njegoš and has already been presented in chapter 2. Njegoš spoke and read Russian and undertook two major trips to Russia during his early years, during which he may have become acquainted with the Russian Slavophiles' thoughts and writings. His travels to Russia gave him not only ecclesial and political backing from Russia, but they must have also given him intellectual inspiration, visible in his major library, dominated by Russian works. He shares at least Romantic conservatism with Khomyakov, who lived in the same period. Njegoš never became much aware of the deeper theological meaning of the state, perhaps because he was a secular ruler and a metropolitan – and hardly saw the contradiction between those two offices, which Solovyov makes much effort to stress. The interests of Njegoš's Church and his theocratic state always aligned because the source of both was himself. Instead, he was ahead of his time with his Romantic notions of tradition and people, where he developed a more mature theology of interest here. His two most important works are *Luča mikrokozma* (*The Ray of the Microcosm*, 1845) and *Gorski vijenac* (*The Mountain Wreath*, 1847), which are both widely debated and the second one even highly controversial (Goy 2010; Saggau 2019).

An issue in most analyses of Njegoš's work is that his background as a trained Orthodox theologian is often neglected. This point leads to much speculation about his philosophy detached from his theological background, which ends up in strange places. To mention one



Image 3: Njegoš in traditional metropolitan robes (Source: Wikimedia commons, painted by Giuseppe Tominz 1837)

common mistake: his view on human nature and the nature of evil is often interpreted as an esoteric form of the medieval heresies of the Bulgarian Bogomils, which is done repeatedly by Zdenko Zlatar (2007), Roland Clark (2004) and Nemanja Radulović (2018). There are sound historical reasons to dismiss this speculation because the hierarchy of the Bogomil Church was non-existent after the Ottoman takeover of the Balkans, and no verified Bogomil sources exist pertaining to the Bogomils after the 14th century in Serbia or Montenegro

(Fine 1977, 385–412). If Njegoš was thinking like a dualistic Bogomil, as many scholars suggest, a medieval concept of the world has to have somehow lingered on for almost 400 years in Montenegro without any external proof of its existence and then finally taken root in a well-trained intelligent theologian from the monastic tradition, who would have been trained to dismiss it as heresy. It seems much more obvious to see Njegoš's theology as a continuation of the mystical teachings of the Orthodox monastic tradition in line with the Byzantine ideal originating with Athanasius's depiction of St Anthony. Njegoš and many of his family belonged to the monastic tradition – a tradition that existed in Montenegro and monasteries nearby, such as the Greek metropolitan of Ohrid, during his lifetime in contrast to the Bogomil teachings. These places would have been alive with the inherited Slavic-Christian literature and Neoplatonic teaching of Athanasius, Dionysius the Areopagite, Gregory of Nyssa or other Fathers whose work was included in the *Philokalia*, which after all was published in nearby Venice shortly before Njegoš's reign.

Njegoš's point of departure seems rather to be from this monastic tradition, but with a modern Romantic influence and inspiration from the Augustinian pietistic movement through Romantic writers, such as Milton or Pascal, whose books Njegoš had. It is well established that Milton inspired Njegoš and he therefore borrowed Augustinian and Neoplatonic concepts (Goy 2010). It is, therefore, crucial to remember that Augustine shared at least the Neoplatonic sensibility with the mystical tradition of the East – and both Pascal and Milton shared a concept of the hidden God (*Deus Absconditus*), which falls in line with the apophatic theology of Dionysius the Areopagite and the Cappadocian Fathers of the East. At this exact theological spot of mysticism, the Western and Eastern traditions do not contradict but reinforce each other, which is visible in Njegoš's thoughts.

In *The Ray of the Microcosm* and *The Mountain Wreath*, it becomes clear that Njegoš's conception of the divine is based on the theological apophatic notion of the divine as unknowable. It is only through theosis that unity with God can be restored. This theme recurs amongst the Slavophiles. The main character of both of Njegoš's major works are often left without God and strive to return to a true relationship.

Therefore, history is not just a Eusebian narrative of slow historical progress, according to Njegoš, but a constant dialogue between times. Njegoš deploys a mystical understanding of time and text in which biblical time, the time of Christ, the present day and the future all mirror each other. This allegorical form of text and time has historiographical consequences. History, which Njegoš's work *The Mountain Wreath* could be understood as an interpretation of, is in constant dialogue with the past and present. His own time, the time of the main persons in his epic and biblical time are in dialogue and mimic each other. However, Njegoš theology is an unexhausted topic, which is beginning to return as a topic in Serbian theology (Knežević 2016).

Njegoš's mystical concept of time is similar to Florovsky's idea that Church history is vertical, unlike secular history. History is now and is about the relationship between the Church and the Divine. History is not a progression of time but is marked by jumps, crises and pits – which the historians or poets need to keep together. This idea is one Florovsky seems to have moulded over Athanasius's thoughts about salvation history as it is formulated in *The Incarnation of the Word* (*De Incarnatione verbi*), which might have been a source in common between Njegoš and Florovsky. Another key notion in Njegoš's *The Mountain Wreath* is that each person's fate is intimately bound to their community. Indeed, in the epic, the division between Christians and Muslims in the Montenegrin clans threatens the salvation and future of the people, which leads to the drastic conclusion that the Muslim converts must be exterminated. Apart from the drastic measures, Njegoš clearly constructs an idea of an ideal community, which is not state-bound but is something else. This community in Njegoš's writing draws on the Romantic notion of *volk*, but only in its initial and early steps (Goy 2010, 76–77). However, overlooked as it is, Njegoš's conception of community or people also closely resembles Khomyakov's concept of "sobornost". As Louth (2015, 7–8) notes, Khomyakov's thought shares many similarities with Western conservative Romanticism, which also seems to be an accurate label for Njegoš's thought. Despite this similarity, Khomyakov's works were published long after Njegoš visited Russia and in the late part of Njegoš life. It seems unlikely that Njegoš

knew them, but they seem influenced by the same wave of romanticism that led them to similar views.

The basic conceptions of the Church and people in both Orthodox writers, Khomyakov and Njegoš, seem to go well together, reinforcing a similar focus in interpreting Christianity and history. Therefore it is easy to see, as the Serbian theologians that followed do, Njegoš's community as a form of the local Orthodox Church described by Khomyakov. Njegoš's concept of community – often embodied as the “Kolo” (the choir) in his texts – could be called Sobornost. After all, the Christian Montenegrins are led by the metropolitan in Njegoš's epic, and in the final scene, after killing the Muslim converts, the Montenegrins go to Church at Christmas. The community is literally in Slavic a Sobornost. Njegoš's concept of the community could be seen as a unity between people and Church. The community in the epic is a sort of prototype of Sobornost, not only because of the close link between Khomyakov's and Njegoš's thought but also because the Slavic word “Sobornost” would to Njegoš both refer to the bishops' council and the church gathering, which are the main stage of his epic in which all essential questions are discussed and decided. The polysemy of the word “Sobornost” in Slavic plays well together with Njegoš's poetic sense. Using it, Njegoš provides an early form of Slavic or Serbian historiography in which the community or local Church is the focal point. For Njegoš, there is no division between the state and Church because his realm was a theocratic Orthodox state led by a metropolitan. This division would, however, come.

Velimirović and the return to St Sava

One of the reasons for Njegoš's great influence in Serbian Orthodoxy is due to (later Saint) Nikolaj Velimirović's (1881–1956) writings – among others, his influential book *The Religion of Njegoš from 1911* (Velimirović 2015). Velimirović is introduced in chapter 2. At this point, it is enough to recall that he is mainly known for propagating the concept of a “people-church”, often referred to as Saint-Savaism (Serb. *svetosavlje*). The concept is widely discussed and ambiguous. The focus here is

rather on Velimirović's historiographical ideology. He continued some of the thoughts from Njegoš and developed others in his interpretation of the Serbian heritage from its founding saint, St Sava. Velimirović's works can be divided into two periods with different thematic focuses. The first is preoccupied with Western ideas and concepts and willingly discusses them (Berlis 2022; Chapman 2022). The second period began when he was appointed as bishop of Ohrid in the early 1920s. In this second period, often called his Ohrid period, he returns to the more classic Orthodox writings, which some see as a mere application of Slavophil concepts to Serbian Orthodoxy.

In contrast, others see it as the beginning of his truly Orthodox theological thinking (Byford 2008, 38–39). In Velimirović's Ohrid period, he developed the essential ideas that ran through his late thinking. These late theological thoughts remain debated in the Serbian Orthodox Church and its theological departments. The crucial concept is the "Teodulija" (Serbian variation of the Greek name for a *servant of God*). Teodulija means a society in which all are governed by St Sava's ideas and live almost a monastic life. Life is then governed through four principles: faith, honesty, obedience and fortitude, as he describes in detail in his work *Teodulija; the Serbian People as Teodulija* (Serb. Теодул; Српски народ као Теодул, 1941). The book itself is a strange work written during a turning point in history. Velimirović's authorship of it is even questioned because his works lack a comprehensive scholarly bibliography (Petrović 2020). Nazi German forces invaded Serbia in early 1941, leading to bloody resistance and civil war during which the Nazi forces imprisoned Velimirović. The book is written in this troublesome period. The book is a dialogue between Velimirović and the Teodulija, the Serbian people serving God, who are silent throughout the work. The text's main theme is how the Serbian nation is chosen by God (Mishkova et al. 2009, 220–221). This argument is slowly built up through a discussion of the Christian teaching, which ends in chapter 28 when the Prophet arrives. At this point, the Western notion of history as a progression towards perfection is dismissed as false. This idea will lead towards the destruction of the Church, but Christ will return and judge humanity. Velimirović then concludes: "It is a vision of the All-man"

(Serb.: “To je vizija nadčovečanska”, Velimirović 2020) that will create the Teoduljia in contrast to the false idea of the West. The All-man will bring salvation. Velimirović thereby introduces a Serbian form of Godmanhood, in his words, the All-man, a sort of Slavophil-inspired idea in which the collective Serbs could institute the Teoduljia themselves. The All-man is the result of the divinification (theosis) of a man in which the man becomes one with the Divine. For Velimirović, this was the case with St Sava and the Serbian people during the medieval Serbian kingdom. He argues that the Serbian people, state and Church were united as a Teoduljia then. The concept is not of a personal form of salvation but a collective one, thereby turning the proto-version of an ecclesial nation of Njegoš into an actual Serbian ecclesial and national one. The Sobornost, the local Church, is, in Velimirović’s writing, one with the nation and state and thus becomes a collective embodiment of the All-man or the Teoduljia. It is a pure form of Solovyov’s third stage of human society. It all flows into one integral knowledge governing according to the monastic ideal, which obviates the secular power. In another version of Velimirović’s text, published as *The Serbian Nation as a Servant of God* (a different version of Теодул; Српски народ као Теодул, 1941, Mishkova et al. 2009), this point becomes clearer. In the English translation, Velimirović writes:

What kind of example has this nation received from its secular and spiritual leaders? The example of theodoulia is God’s service as the sense of life and the path towards the Celestial Empire. [... T]he Serbian master of the house has created something exceptional in the mountains with God’s help. He has turned his home into a place of worship and a church; he has turned it into a monastery and the Holy Mountain; he has turned it into Jerusalem. [...] The Serbian home has become a true monastery. (Mishkova et al. 2009, 222)

He goes on to say:

Christ has been the sense of life and struggles for Serbs, suffering and death, freedom, renewal, and labour. He has been the sense of the Church, the sense of the state, the sense of the family, and the sense of the individual. No single nation has beautified the festivals of Christ with such caring deliberation and tenderness of custom as has the Serbian nation. (Mishkova et al. 2009, 225)

Velimirović's speculation about Teoduljia is complex and draws heavily on Solovyov's ideas of Godmanhood and integral knowledge – a mystic vision in which humanity and Christ become one and recreate the world. It is, therefore, perhaps more in Velimirović's more popular historical writings, widely disseminated in his lifetime and after his canonisation, that his historiography and notion of Teoduljia come into play in a more direct form. In these popular works, the main theme is often the Serbian medieval dynasty of Nemanjić, founded by Stephan Nemanja (1168–96). Stephan's son became Stephen II, the first crowned king of Serbia, while the youngest son became St Sava, the founder of the medieval Serbian Orthodox Church. Velimirović wrote a book on St Sava, *The Life of Saint Sava*, which in an English version was published in the USA in 1951 towards the end of his life. In it, Velimirović seeks to introduce St Sava to readers outside of the Serbian tradition and to deploy a certain image of Serbian Orthodox history, the Teoduljia. In short, the text describes the life of St Sava and his family following the classic monastic ideal. However, the concepts of the All-man and Teoduljia are at play here – St Sava is the embodiment of Godmanhood or the All-man, and the society he helps create is the Teoduljia, which stands firmly on "an independent national church with national clergy" (Velimirović 1989, 65). The last chapter of the book describes the Turkish (Ottoman) invasion of the Balkans and their final burning of St Sava's body outside Belgrade in 1595. Velimirović notes:

So Sinan Pasha [the Ottoman governor] destroyed the body of Saint Sava but increased his glory and influence. [...] The living soul of the saint, however, looked triumphantly at the fire from the invisible world. For Sava's lifelong desire to be also a martyr, for Christ's sake, was now fulfilled. Therefore with the smile of victory, Sava forgave Sinan Pasha and blessed his Serbian people. (Velimirović 1989, 160)

The historiographical scheme deployed by Velimirović in his work on St Sava, published in exile, unfolds in a narrative form what Solovyov envisioned in his work on integral knowledge. The Emperor is substituted with the Serbian king, and the people or nation is drawn in as the church community. A certain part of this relates to the language because Velimirović frequently mentions the Serbian need for a church

of their own. The vernacular is also the source of the nationalisation of their Church. During the Romantic nationalist image of St Sava emerges an image in which the state is subordinated to the Church. It is St Sava who calls on the rulers and crowns them. The Church is the centre and not the state. The historiographical weight is heavily behind St Sava and the Serbian people, while the state never plays a crucial role. The intent is to say that society as a whole should serve God and only him. The state should grow into a church. This approach does not align with the latter development of Eusebian historiography, which is seen in today's unrecognised Montenegrin Orthodox Church.

Velimirović retells Serbian history through an Athanasian scheme very close to *The Life of St. Antony* but with an infused theological mindset deriving from Solovyov. The Teoduljia is the Athanasian monastic ideal freed from the Emperor as a modern society in which all are united in the final stage of Solovyov's scheme. The proto-national-Christian community in Njegoš's writings has taken on a new form in Velimirović's writings in which the salvation of the nation-church is a collective movement, a Teoduljia, embodied in an All-man or God-man. The relation between Teoduljia and the All-man or God-man is perhaps more theological complex, which Radovan Bigović discusses (Bigović 1997). Following Velimirović, other Serbian theologians took the concept of Teoduljia, a collective form of Godmanhood, further, which in the end, undermined the role of the state and the Emperor in Serbian Orthodox historiography. A peculiarity, which I will return to, is that Velimirović underlines that the invocation of the Teoduljia is through one All-man, a sort of ideal monastic person, who embodies society and creates a pathway towards salvation, much like the way St. Sava is presented.

Popović: Orthodoxy beyond the confinement of the state

Closely related to Velimirović's thought and work is Father (now saint) Justin Popović (1894–1979). In contrast to Velimirović, Popović was a much more well-trained dogmatic thinker and in line with the

Orthodox diaspora theologians of the Paris or neo-patristic school. This point might have to do with two essential elements. First, Popović was well aware of the Slavophil heritage because of his interest in Russian religious philosophy, which he encountered in Russia and at Oxford. Second, Popović was in close contact with neo-patristic thinkers in Athens and Serbia. The Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia (ROCOR) had its headquarters in Sremski Karlovci, the old centre of Serbian theology during the Ottoman period, and Popović is said to have had, in the 1920s, a close relationship with, among others, the Russian metropolitan Khrapovitsky (Antony), known for his conservatism, anti-communism and Slavophil position (Louth 2015, 143–148 for more details). Popović's theology is mainly discussed in English by Andrew Louth in his *Modern Orthodox Thinkers* (2015) and by Zdenko Širka (2018) in "Transformation in the Theology of Tradition: A study of Justin Popović and His Hermeneutical Presuppositions". A thorough Serbian analysis of Popović's theology can be found in Bogdan Lubardić *Justin of Celije and the Russian path of reception of Russian philosophy and theology* (Serb. Јустин Ђелијски и Русија путеви рецепције руске философије и теологије 2009), who also discusses his complex encounter and perception of the West (Lubardić 2022).

Popović's work is closely bound to Velimirović's, especially that of Velimirović's Ohrid period, in which he developed the notions of Saint-Savaism and Teoduljia, as Buchenau notes. Buchenau goes even so far as to claim that Popović's concepts of Godmanhood and Saint-Savaism (Svetosavlje) are a clear continuation of Velimirović (Buchenau 2006, 38). The relationship between the theology of Popović and Velimirović is perhaps not that simple, as Buchenau puts it, but a complex topic, where common aspiration, inspiration and conversations flow back and forth between the two, as Vladimir Cvetković argues (2015;2011; 2012). Among other things, Popović wrote the foreword to Velimirović's *Prayers on the Lake* from 1922. In this foreword, Popović describes Velimirović as a saintly person and even goes on to write that the prayers in the book are that of "the All-man" (Serbian: "Svečova", Popović 1928, 1). Popović concludes that the book and Velimirović "speak of an outcast of time and space, not of man, but of All-man" (Serbian: "govori nerob vremena i prostora, ne čovek, već Svečovek" Popović, 1928, 1). Popović

casts Velimirović as the All-man and seems to buy into Velimirović's thoughts about Teoduljia.

Popović's main legacy is not only his dogmatic works but his historiography and depiction of St Sava and the Serbian saints in his version of the *Lives of the Saints* (a Serbian Synaxarium), which plays a crucial role in Serbian Orthodox theology because the *Lives of the Saints* is much easier to understand and fits into the religious practice of his Church. Popović, or St Justin the New, is traditionally depicted with the *Lives of the Saints* in his hands, which underlines this work's central place in his legacy. For that reason, this work will be the focus here. In addition to the Lives, Popović wrote several works on St Sava, such as *Saint-Savaism as a Philosophy of Life* (ca. 1953– Serb. Svetosavlje kao filosofija života), *The Life of St. Sava and St. Symeon* (1962 in Serbian) and a Russian version of *The Life of St. Sava* (undated). Andrew Louth describes Popović's theology as a form of the neo-patristic synthesis applied to a Serbian Orthodox context emphasising the Church Fathers. Zdenko Širka (2018, 328) also notes this trait in Popović's writings. Popović's main project thus seems to have been transferring the major Slavophil thoughts into a Serbian context, much like Velimirović (Louth 2015, 154–155). Essential in this work are Solovyov's ideas of God-man and integral knowledge and Khomyakov's concept of Sobornost which has already been touched upon above. An example of Popović's approach to history is the Russian version of *The Life of St. Sava* (Popović 2020), which is remarkably similar to Velimirović's text of the same name. Both texts depict a well-known scene from St Sava's life when he chooses to follow Christ's call and travels to Athos rather than be married and become a secular prince. This monastic theme, which suited both Popović's and Velimirović's theology, is also used to cast St Sava as an All-man. Popović's and Velimirović's theology are in conversation with each other on this point. The difference is that Popović focuses greatly on the deeper dogmatic aspect of personhood and knowledge in the ascetic patristic writings (Louth 2015, 154–155). However, the core historiography remained the same so much that neither departed from more traditional slavophil-inspired viewpoints. The role of the state and Emperor – or rather lack of it – is a common denominator for both.

In Popović's introduction to *Lives of the Saints*, the concept of All-man, a neo-patristic synthesis, and a Slavophil ecclesiology are formed into the *Lives of the Saints* which are nothing else but the life of the Lord Christ, repeated in every saint to a greater or lesser degree in this or that form. More precisely, it is:

"The life [...] the God-man Jesus Christ who became man. [...] [The "Lives of the Saints"] are nothing else but a certain kind of continuation of the "Acts of the Apostles". In them is found the same Gospel. (Popović 1994)

He continues:

The man who makes himself a Christ surpasses himself, as man, by God, by the God-man, in Whom is given the perfect image of the true, real whole man in the image of God [...]. Christians are those through whom the holy Divine-human life of Christ is continued from generation to generation until the end of the world and of time, and they all make up one body, the Body of Christ-the Church. (Popović 1994)

Popović seems to argue that history is a continual repeating of the process of theosis in which man must seek to become All-Man. The Christians are the community that seeks this process and becomes the Sobornost, or body of Christ, which unites them with Christ. In other words, it is similar to Velimirović's Saint-Savaism and Teoduljia. It does, however, seem like Popović's neo-patristic orientation and his anti-Western attitude has, after all, made him transgress the Serbian boundaries, which Velimirović sticks to and, instead, view Serbian Orthodox history not as a singularity, but as one in close accordance with the Orthodox commonwealth and the Patristic heritage. St Sava is a Serbian example of an All-man. However, the Serbian nation as such does not occupy the entire vision of an Orthodox way of life in the manner encountered in Velimirović's work. Popović's writings do not hold the same grand vision of a society and state transformed into a church. This difference might be closely linked to their various historical experiences and contexts. Popović's latter writings were, after all, produced at the same time when he was surrounded by an atheistic and hostile regime, which might have made the pan-Slavic and Orthodox historiography more important to him. His connection to

Orthodox centres outside Serbia might also have provided him with this broader perspective.

Moreover, his monastic life and near-isolation in the rural districts likely led to more attention being paid to the ascetic and monastic ideals essential to the Desert Fathers and Athanasius's depiction of St Anthony. In Popović's writing, the state has almost vanished. St Sava and the Church or the All-man do not relate themselves to the state or the Empire. There is only room for the eremite in the desert. No Christian emperor is left with whom to form a relationship, to use Florovsky's image from Athanasius, in Popović's historiography. Popović might concur with Velimirović's point that the entire society should "become a true monastery", but beyond that, the state seems to vanish from his thinking. It has become entirely obliterated by his experience with the communist regime. This point is evidently more visible in a short text called "The clergy of Saint Sava and political parties" (Serbian: "Svetosavsko sveštenstvo i političke partije". Popović 1940–41) published after his death by Metropolitan Amfilohije's metropolitanate in 1994. In this text, Popović notes that

the duty of the Saint Sava's priesthood has always been and remains forever to be: leading the people to the immortal and eternal through time; to adapt the nations' souls and ideals not to the spirit of time, but to the spirit of the eternity and immortality of Saint Sava; not to bend to the winds of the various scandals of modernity (Serb.: dužnost svetosavskog sveštenstva uvek je bila i zauvek ostala; kroz vremensko voditi narod besmrtnom i večnom; narodnu dušu i narodne ideale prilagođavati ne duhu vremena, već duhu svetosavske večnosti i besmrtnosti; ne povijati se po vetru raznih sablažnjivih modernizama). (Popović 1994)

Popović here directly casts St Sava as the God-man in which the people or, to use Velimirović's word, Teoduljia can find eternal salvation – unlike the "scandals of modernity" (communism as an example). Popović goes even further in his dismissal of the state and argues:

Political parties, silently or openly and in principle, recommend or sanction the use of force and violence, especially when in power. The Saint Sava priest should not belong to any political party for the very reason of the Gospel. [...] Although they live in this world, the priests and the high priest of Saint

Sava are not of this world. (serb. Političke partije, ćutke ili otvoreno i u načelu preporučuju ili sankcionišu primenu sile i nasilja, naročito kada su na vlasti. Svetosavski sveštenik baš sa načelnog evanđelskog razloga ne treba da pripada ni jednoj političkoj partiji [...] Iako žive u ovom svetu, svetosavski sveštenik i svetosavski prvosveštenik, nisu od ovoga sveta). (Popović 1994)

Read in the context of the texts publication in the 1990s, the Church stands out as the hermit in the desert of the crumbling communist state. The Church only related to the Divine and not to the Emperor-state. Popović states that Orthodoxy does not desire secular authority (Popović 1994), which might have been his point of view formulated as a critic of how clergy members entered politics. This point is an extremely radical break with any relationship between the state and secular politics. However, it must be stressed that Popović continued with this vision concerning the communist state. In his writings, the people play a central role if they become the people of god (the Greek *Laos* or Velimirović's Teoduljia), which provides substantial grounds for some political involvement when the clergy needs to be "leading the people to the immortal and eternal" salvation. Popović's historiography is thus in line with the experience of the Russian diaspora thinkers, such as Florovsky and Meyendorff, whose thought is characterised by going beyond the confines of the state and hostility towards Western and communist ideology. Popović upholds the same veneration for the God-man, particularly St Sava, as seen in Velimirović's writings, but with a stronger anti-secular or anti-state position. The connection to the neo-patristics seems evident and is thoroughly documented by the Serbian professor of theology Bogdan Lubardić in his recent analysis of Popović's correspondence with Florovsky over the theology of Solovyov (Lubardić 2022). It should be noted that this is a limited analysis of both Popović and Velimirović, which is treated in much more detail by Bogdan Lubardić (2009) and Vladimir Cvetković (2015).

The main point of the analysis of Popović and Velimirović is that they seem to share a common perception of history, here called the Athanasian historiography. I would argue that Popović and Florovsky's perception of history is influenced by Solovyov's historiography, mentioned in the opening of this chapter.

Amfilohije and the embodiment of salvation

One of Popović's most vocal and theologically active students was Metropolitan Amfilohije (Radović), who led the SOC in Montenegro through the period after communism. Amfilohije's person is already described in chapter 2, and his historiography will be further discussed in chapter 5 in relation to the concrete development in Montenegro. In chapter 5, the connection between Amfilohije's, Velimirović's and Njegoš's historiographies is further considered. Therefore, this section will only discuss how Amfilohije relates to the neo-patristic school and the Serbian Orthodox tradition of historiography outlined above. Metropolitan Amfilohije drew on neo-patristic thought and method, in which he was well trained during his periods in Paris and Athens, as noted in chapters 2 and 3. His doctoral dissertation's patristic theme fits into the classic line of inquiry of the neo-patristic school, which is one of many things he shares with Popović.

It is worth mentioning that Amfilohije has a vast authorship. It is, therefore, difficult to cover all of his work, but in this context – besides the writings already discussed – the work *The Tradition of St. Sava's Enlightenment and Dositej Obradović's Education* (Serbian: *Svetosavsko prosvetno predanje i prosvetćenost Dositeja Obradović*. Amfilohije 1994) is an entry point. In this work, Amfilohije turns to St Sava and, in doing so, enters into a direct dialogue with Velimirović's and Popović's writings on this subject. Amfilohije opens the text by drawing an image of St Sava and Obradović as exponents and outward symbols of their times. St Sava is the famous founder of the Serbian medieval Church, whereas Dositej Obradović (1739–1811) was a Serbian national reformer and the first minister of education. Obradović became a monk but left his monastic cell to travel and work more as an enlightened thinker than a monk. Both of them embody the spiritual reality of their time. From there, Amfilohije ventures into the life of St Sava, stressing how saint Sava was essential in creating the Serbian Church. It becomes quite clear, though never spelt out, that St Sava here is described as an All-man, and the scene in chapter 1 of the book is the creation of the Serbian Teoduljia. The Serbian people and kings are called together around St Sava, and the Church is created through faith. The community becomes

the embodiment of the sacred as a church, the Sobornost or the *katholikós* – and in so doing a primordial model of the ecclesial society envisioned by Solovyov and seen in fragments in Athanasius's writings. Amfilohije continues to describe the inner workings of this community and St Sava's teachings and writes:

That is why the Holy Sava lays the same foundation of knowledge and reason eternally [...] Adding virtue to this as the eternal feature and strength of truth, Christ and demanding that we should have both, that is, faith and virtue, truth and deed, "That the man of God may be perfect" (2 Tim. 3:17). [the Bible quote is from the King James version, but in the Serbian version of the bible, the meaning of the quote is closer to: "that the perfected may be the man of God"] ((Serb.: Dodajući tome vrlinu kao večno svojstvo i silu Istine, Hrista, i zahtevajući da nam treba imati oboje, tj. veru i vrlinu, istinu i delo, "da savršeni bude čovek Božiji" (2 Tim. 3,17),). (Amfilohije 1994)

Here, Amfilohije combines the teaching of theosis, the community's pilgrimage towards unity with God, with that of the All-man. Humanity must be perfected to become one with God as an All-man. This oneness is possible through the devotion of the community to God. Amfilohije further unfolds this in chapters III-IV of the book before he turns his focus onto the martyr Prince Lazar of Kosovo (d. 1389) in chapter V. In this chapter, Amfilohije writes:

In these writings, the centre of the life of the nation becomes the Kingdom of Heaven. The martyrdom of Tsar Lazar is interpreted and linked in the sense of the suffering of Christ: it is Christ-like and, as such, a precondition for the popular resurrection, just as Christ's resurrection was preceded by crucifixion and death. (Serb.: "U tim spisima centar života nacije postaje Nebesko carstvo, mučenička smrt Cara Lazara se tumači i dovodi u vezu po smislu sa Hristovim stradanjem: ona je Hristolika i kao takva preduslov za narodno vaskrsenje, kao što je i Hristovom vaskrsenju prethodilo raspeće i smrt.") (Amfilohije 1994)

Amfilohije casts prince Lazar in the same manner as St Sava. They are both All-man, which invokes the possibility of the revelation of God's kingdom on earth. These two saints are pathways for the community towards unity with God. Amfilohije turns to Obradović, his time and thoughts in the remainder of the book.

There is a strong connection between Velimirović's, Popović's and Amfilohije's interpretations of St Sava and Prince Lazar. First and foremost, Saint Sava is continually identified as the All-man. Second, the All-men are for Amfilohije, a sort of theological pathway for the community towards the union with God. The monastic and all-encompassing ideal of Velimirović's Teoduljia is applied to society at large. The line of thoughts seems to be that the All-man paves the way for a sacralisation of the Serbian people, which should become a goodly one (the Greek Laos or Velimirović's Teoduljia). In a broader light, this seems to be the same way Amfilohije interprets the Montenegrin saints, as discussed in the next chapter. In a broader theological light, each of the saints is also an embodiment of the All-man, according to Amfilohije. The significance and the reason for the need to protect and rebuild their sacred shrines lie in Amfilohije's interpretation of them as All-men. The way to salvation is through these All-men towards restoring unity with God. The collective congregation takes part in each All-man through pilgrimage, rebuilding shrines, liturgies, parades, etc., ultimately ensuring their salvation. In other words, the very fundamental theological foundation or – as de Certeau would put it – “religious ideology” for the revival of these cults is the very teaching of Teodulija as a monastic societal ideal built on Athanasius's depiction of Anthony combined with Solovyov's vision of the third form of human society. This third form of society, Solovyov's ecclesial level, is instituted by a God-man, which could be found in Velimirović's and Popović's thoughts and Amfilohije's interpretation. In this Orthodox historiographical order, a certain interpretation of the community of the Church is presupposed, which is the one that is visible in Khomyakov and Njegoš's thoughts.

Chapter Five

Saints and place-making in Montenegro

A Serbian priest, with whom I spent some time in the Montenegrin Mountains, once said to me, “whom do you think the Montenegrins revere the most – God or holy Saint Basil?” He laughed and added that the Montenegrins would, of course, pray to Holy St Basil first. This remark became physically visible when the first major gathering of Serbian Orthodox protesters in 2020 took place after the parliament had passed the new law on religion in December 2019. The protest took place at St Basil’s Cathedral in Nikšić. The protesters carried a large icon of St Basil through the streets, and Metropolitan Amfilohije referred to the saint in his preaching. He encouraged them to defend the sacred heritage of St Basil. Eight months later, when the Democratic Party of Socialists of Montenegro (DPS) had lost the general election, the main opposition leader and, shortly after, Prime Minister, Zdravko Krivokapic referred to their defeat in his victory speech as the expected result for “those who strike against God and St Basil of Ostrog” (Balkaninsight 2020).

This story highlights the importance of local saints in politics and in the public appearance of the Orthodox Churches in Montenegro. These saints, their holy remains and places related to them provide

the very sacred fabric used to define the community's social identity. The very structure of history, national identity and politics builds on the religious ideology of these cults and their sites. They form the historical infrastructure, which defines the space of memory and politics in Montenegro, as partly noted by Alice Forbess (Forbess 2013) and also described as a general SOC trend by Bojan Aleksov and Nicholas Lackenby (2022). These sites are a space of memory, *a lieu de mémoire*, as Pierre Nora would have called them (1989).

This chapter analyses a selection of these saints, their holy remains and the sacred places related to them. The analysis focuses on the nationalisation of these saints, sites and materials to discuss the practice of historiography amongst the Eastern Orthodox communities in Montenegro. The chapter contains five sections. The first four are devoted to analysing four of the most central cults and sites in Montenegro. The last one provides a more general overview of other saints and sites in Montenegro.

Making space for memory

Before turning to sites, a few notes on the creation and role need to be clarified. In the opening of this book, it was noted how Michel de Certeau identified the close link between religion, history and social practice as a triangular relationship. In Certeau's view, the social practice is the external evidence of a religious community's social identity and religious order. Historiographical practice is "the sociocultural localisation of religious ideologies" (Certeau 1988, 134). A practice is visible in materials, rituals and symbols. This process is the space-making process, which relates to a certain religious order. It contests it, negotiates and flows from it. These sites are bound to memories, and as Pierre Nora notes in the opening of his seminal essay on memory and history that "memory crystallises [...] at a particular historical moment, a turning point where the consciousness of a break with the past is bound with the sense that memory has been torn" (Nora 1989, 7). Nora underlines that memories are formed at new turning points in which the former life and societal order are broken, and a new one arises. A case in point is Montenegro, the post-Yugoslav states and Ukraine, where the political breakdown, wars and political independence set the scene for

a break. War and newly found independence is a turning point, which becomes a break from the past.

Nora argues that the former social practice of memory becomes history. Memory is turned into a representation that is unfolded in the construction of history. The former coexistence and shared memory of the past are being buried in places like Montenegro and Ukraine. They are replaced with a spectrum of a bipolar representation of the past, in which agents are keen on stressing difference in all its forms. This memory structure – alive or not – becomes the new foundation of a church and a society. As such, the renewed form of practice of memory – or de Certeau's words: historiography – is not history strictly speaking, but rather a form of remembrance of the sacred, according to Nora (1989, 9).

The analysed form of the Orthodox practice of historiography and space-making departs from the Western form discussed by Nora because it is not strictly history but more directly a cult of remembrance. The history of the Eastern Orthodox Churches, their saints, sites and nations, is an infrastructure of memory, not a strictly scientific reconstruction of the past. It is not a reflexive form of history as understood in Western academia, which asks about its own inner logic, ideology or purpose. The Montenegrin and Serbian Orthodox historiographical practice is simply a theological stream bound to the ecclesial tradition. History is breathed like the air and practised as part of the liturgy. Saints and sites become sacred because they show the way for the community that claims them, rather than needing to be investigated to prove that they were pious believers. A saint is holy because the communities that claim him practice him as such – not because he was. This point will perhaps become clearer in the following analysis of space-making, veneration of saints and the discussions that erupt from it. These physical and material struggles highlight and reveal the religious ideology of the unrecognised Montenegrin Church (MOC) and the Serbian Orthodox Church (SOC) discussed above.

The cults of Jovan Vladimir

One of the major re-emerging cults of Orthodoxy in Montenegro is the cult of Prince St Jovan Vladimir (d.1016). This cult and its

re-establishment in the early 1990s is the first case to be examined here. It shows how the SOC operated and thought about the re-establishment of their Church during the crumbling of Yugoslav communism. It is also a case in which a whole set and network of space-making, rituals and political claims appear together.

Historical background

Vladimir, who stands at the centre of the cult, had become a feudal lord in 992 north of the Byzantine garrison of Dyrrachium. He became a lord under the vassalage of the Emperor Samuil and married his daughter Kosara. Shortly after Samuil's death in 1014, Vladimir was murdered by a family member of the imperial family, Vladislav, as part of the war of succession to the imperial throne. A cult devoted to him emerged shortly after his death (Fine 1991, 192–194).

A detailed description of his pious life and sacra-religious death is found in chapter 36 of the *Chronicle of the Priest from Duklja* (Ljetopis' Popa Dukljanina), written around the 13th century. The chronicle bears evidence of the early cult of Vladimir. Chapter 36 describes how Vladimir was killed (decapitated) in a church in 1016. After his death, his wife took his body to a region called "Krajina, where his [Vladimir's] court was, and interred him in the church of St. Mary", and she became a nun (Saggau 2021). Miracles began to happen, and the locals began to revere him as a martyr. His icons show him with his separated head in his hand and, from time to time, a wooden cross, which was the gift his brother-in-law used to trick him. The cross was said to be kept at a church near the mountain Rumija. Besides mentioning a St Mary church and the Krajina region, the Chronicle also mentions the city of Ulcinj. On the eve before the complete Ottoman takeover of the Balkans in the 15th–16th century, Vladimir's body was moved to Elbasan. Part of him found its way to the monasteries at Mount Athos, and his cult began to spread amongst Greeks, Bulgarians, Albanians and Serbs, dismantling the local geographical connection between the cult and his historical realm (Ingham 1987).

In the reconstruction of the Orthodox community in Montenegro and Serbia in the 18th–19th century after the end of Ottoman control, Vladimir's cult began to re-emerge and take on a stronger homogeneous form. In the Serbian Orthodox indexes of saints (the Synaxarium), Vladimir began to be included in the same manners as he was in the Greek, Albanian and Bulgarian indexes. In the *Lives of the Serbian Saints* (Janic 1890), he is portrayed as a Serbian saint ruling all of Serbia. The portrayal partially follows that of the Chronicle of Duklja, and the original names of places have vanished. It attests that he had become an all-encompassing Serbian saint by the end of the 19th century, detached from Southern Montenegro. Along with the revitalisation of Vladimir's cult in the 19th century, his death and his story with Kosara became a popular theme in Serbian culture (Filipović 2014, 733).

In 1925, the influential Serbian bishop Nikolaj Velimirović published a *Reading about the Holy King John Vladimir* (1925. Serb. Читанка о Светоме краљу Јовану Владимиру), which was a Serbian *akolouthia* including vitaes, poems, prayers, etc. This publication established Jovan Vladimir as an indisputable Serbian saint, and Bishop Nikolaj even wrote that Vladimir was one of the two most important Serbian martyrs, the other being St Lazar, who died at Kosovo Polje in 1389 (Velimirović 1925). In the publication from 1925, there are two important notes on the local customs of the St Jovan Vladimir cult in Montenegro, which dates back to a publication from a Russian ethnographer in the late 19th century. In the first one, the author notes that Vladimir is celebrated on his death day when people from around the area gather at a ruined church with candles near a city called "Vladimir", which was his court. The text mentions a few names north of Lake Ohrid in North Macedonia, close to the historical court of the emperor, which might have been where Vladimir was killed. The second text notes that the clans around Mountain Rumija in present-day Montenegro all revered St Vladimir in a small church on Rumija – and that the Muslims even respected him and the place for his worship. The text also notes that the inhabitants of Krajinian (Serb. Крајињани) and the clan of Mrkojević (Serb. Мркојевићи) fought over control of St Vladimir's cross, which ended with both groups converted to Islam in the 18th–19th century.

An Orthodox family, the Andrović, in a village outside the city of Bar, kept the cross from thereon. The cross itself is mentioned several times in the *akolouthia* of 1925. There are several versions of the genealogy of the particular cross. The dominant narrative is that Vladimir was given the wooden cross as a token for safe passage before he was murdered. The cross was later gilded with gold. In a publication from the Serbian Orthodox Church in 2016, it is argued that the Andrović had kept the cross from the 19th century and had been leading a yearly procession to the peak of Rumija each year until the ritual was ceased in the 1960–70s (Svetigora 2016d). Around the end of the 1930s and the beginning of the Second World War, publications about the cult and St Jovan Vladimir dries out. Following the communist takeover of Yugoslavia in 1945, the cult and rituals pertaining to it dwindled.

Reconstructing the cult

At the beginning of the 1990s, the Serbian Orthodox Church (SOC) in Montenegro began the reconstruction of the cult. The ritual devoted to St Vladimir had been discouraged by the communist authorities in Montenegro in the 1970s and 1980s, as well as any other public display of religion. The sites connected to the cult had slowly fallen into ruin, and new ones had not been erected. Despite its considerable size, the new coastal city of Bar lacked any significant Orthodox shrine. The revival of the cult centred around two sites: Bar and the top of Rumija. According to the SOC, the first step towards building a massive cathedral in Bar was taken in 1991, followed by the revival of the ritual on Pentecost in 1994–1996, at which a religious procession would head to the top of Rumija (Svetigora 2016). The following four key sites related to the saint, and his cult will be discussed before returning to an overall assessment of the SOC's rebuilding of the cult.

1: The Trinity Church at Rumija

The first site is the Trinity Church at Rumija. The original Church had been destroyed or fell into ruin at some point in history, which is not recorded. It was located at the summit of the mountain, the

pilgrim ritual's destination devoted to St Vladimir on Pentecost. In 2005 SOC erected a new church made out of tin with the help of the two helicopters from the Serbian army. The construction came in the wake of the Montenegrin referendum on independence from Serbia in 2006, why it has been seen by many in Montenegro as a statement in the heated debate about whether the Montenegrins were a separated ethnicity or simply a branch of the Serbian nation (Pavicevic & Djuriovic 2009).

The pilgrim-ritual connected to the site was revived in 1994 when Metropolitan Amfilohije participated. The ritual begins in a village below the mountain. In this village, a liturgy is held around midnight, and thereafter the community will climb the mountain led by the Androvic family carrying the cross. At sunset, a liturgy will be held in the small metal church at the summit (Svetigora 2016d). According to local costumes, the original ritual would also include carrying stones to the top. It was said in a local folk poem that the church one day would rise from these stones. In the original ritual, members of the clan of Mrkojević and the inhabitants of Krajina would also participate even though they had converted to Islam. Amongst the local Albanian Muslims, the ritual, the site and St Vladimir are revered as an Illyrian-Albanian cult. It is stressed that local poems and costumes were instituted by the local Albanians of the Krajina region where the Prečista Krajinska monastery is situated, which for centuries was where Vladimir's body was kept. When the new Trinity Church was erected, the strongest condemnation came from the representatives in parliament from the Albanian ethnic parties. The Church has been vandalised few times with slogans claiming the ground as Albanian (Pavicevic & Djuriovic 2009).

The Montenegrin government also reacted strongly to the erection of the Church. The government has claimed that there was no building permit for the Church and should therefore be dismantled. It has, however, never occurred, but it has prompted SOC's Metropolitan Amfilohije to announce in his 2010 Christmas greeting that "[w]hoever tears down that temple, may God strike him and his progeny down, and may the Holy Cross pass judgment on him" and warned that "if it comes to the destruction of the church, it may lead to the destruction of some

mosques, and even to bloodshed on religious grounds” (Balkaninsight 2011b). The government accused the metropolitan of “hate speech” in his Christmas greeting, for which he was convicted in 2011 by the High Court. The metropolitan refused to go to jail and has not been forced (Balkaninsight 2011b).

The Church also prompted a response from the Montenegrin nationalist organisations, intellectuals and the unrecognised Montenegrin Orthodox Church. The former minister and well-known author Novak Kilbarda wrote extensively about it (2006). The local unrecognised Montenegrin Orthodox Church (MOC), has been extremely critical of the church building. MOC also claims Jovan Vladimir as a patron saint and has tried to seize control of the holy sites, such as Rumija, pertaining to him for three decades. In MOC’s church magazine, *Lučindan*, a series of articles treat the so-called Rumija case of constructing the Trinity Church. The action of the SOC excluded the local Albanians and Montenegrins according to the articles by Rotković (Lučindan 2011a), S. Vucinić (Lučindan 2011b) and Z. L. Đurović (Lučindan 2011c). MOC claims Jovan Vladimir and Rumija as a constituent part of the cult of Duklja, which is discussed further in the next section. Overall, the MOC writers tried to tie Jovan Vladimir to the Vojislavljević house, as is the case in the *Chronicle of the Priest from Duklja*, and so argue that he is a descendant of the Duklja-slavs, which is – according to them – a different ethnicity than the Serbians.

2: *The Cathedral in Bar*

The second site of the cult is in Bar, a central port city in Montenegro that was expanded heavily during the communist period as one of the main commercial ports of Southern Yugoslavia. The cities’ quick urbanisation leads to a mixture of ethnic and religious groups drawn to the city from across the area. During the Ottoman time, the city was already a commercial hub mainly inhabited by Muslims. However, with the rise of the Montenegrin Kingdom at the end of the 19th century and its violent takeover of the city in 1878, many Muslims migrated from the city (Pačariz 2016, 59). The city has one old church ruin dating back to Byzantine times.

During the 2000s, the Muslim, Catholic and Orthodox communities began significant building projects in the city. The Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Bar, entailing much of present-day Montenegro, has built a new Cathedral, which was inaugurated in 2017 – while the Muslims inaugurated a large Islamic complex in the vicinity. Roughly during the same time, the Serbian Orthodox Church built the St Jovan Vladimir Cathedral. The project began in 1991 when a local clergyman gave a speech stressing the need for a new church in Bar and that he was willing to go on a hunger strike for the cause. He was on strike for three days and was supported by the local community. Soon after the hunger strike, a wooden cross was erected in the central Bar at which the priest every Sunday would lead a prayer. The wooden cross was later replaced with a concrete cross and blessed by the metropolitan. In 2009, at the site of the cross, the foundation was laid for the Cathedral, and it was blessed. The Cathedral was opened in 2016, and minor construction works and paintings were still taking place in 2019. The Orthodox Cathedral's wings are decorated with scenes from the life of St Jovan Vladimir, and the cross on the top of the Church is a large replica of the St Jovan Cross. The Church has four towers and a major dome covered in gilded materials, making the Church visible from afar. A replica of the metal church at Rumija is displayed close to the Cathedral. The Cathedral was inaugurated in 2016 on Vladimir's 1000 years' death day with a large festival at which many high-ranking members of the traditional Eastern Orthodox Churches from around the Orthodox world attended (Svetigora 2016c).

Since then, a liturgy and a parade at the Cathedral have been held on his death day. During the celebration of the liturgy, the St Jovan Cross is displayed, and his icon is placed centrally in the Cathedral. The parade, devoted to him, takes place on the same evening when clergy march with banners of crosses and icons through the streets of Bar. Behind the clergy, members of the community follow traditional folk costumes. In a shop nearby, icons and other religious merchandise are sold to pilgrims (Field observations 2019, June 4). The Bar Cathedral is the centre of the revived Serbian Orthodox cult of St Jovan Vladimir and at which place most effort financially, religiously and symbolically has been put into reviving his memory.

3: *The Prečista Krajinska*

The third site is situated in the Krajina region today, mainly inhabited by Albanian Muslims. The region consists of small valleys on the slopes of a mountain line bordering north, south and west. Arriving from the coast and Bar, one must cross some smaller peaks near the coast and follow the single road that leads through the region and inland to the lakes, marshland and the valley of Zeta with the Montenegrin Capital. Along the coast, a few isolated islands are located with ancient Orthodox monasteries often called the Montenegrin Holy Land.

In the south of this region, at the slopes of Rumija, is the ruined Church and monastery of the Prečista Krajinska (The lady of Krajina, which might refer to Vladimir's wife, Korsara). This place is traditionally regarded as where Korsara buried Vladimir and became a nun, according to the *Chronicle of the Priest from Duklja*. It is the only major site in Krajina. The monastery is just outside an Albanian village and next to the region's main road and two other Albanian villages, which both have small mosques and burial grounds nearby. The monastery is in ruin, and it is only a partly intact tower. Today, the tower is reinforced with concrete and armed iron to keep it standing. On a clear day, it is possible to see the summit of Rumija and the Trinity Church from here. From time to time, SOC holds liturgies at the site commemorating St Jovan Vladimir (Svetigora 2016b).

4: *The city of Šas*

The final site is the city of Šas (sometimes Svach or Sash or in Latin Suacium), located at a lake in the lush areas close to the river connecting Lake Skadar and the Adriatic sea. The site is an obvious commercial and strategic point which could be used to control the river and trade routes from the sea to the inland region. The ruins are just outside an Albanian Muslim village called Vladimir and the main road between Bar and Skhröder in Albania. The site is 1.2 hectare dominated by a castle and church ruin on a hillside and a range of other ruins scattered across the thorny hillside with grassing sheep.

Only one major excavation of the site in 1985 uncovered that the city was probably founded during Emperor Justinian's time in the 6th or 7th century. The city was enlarged in the 11th–12th century during the rise of the kingdom of Duklja and Vladimir's reign. The excavation and the historical sources show that there have been three different sieges of the castle. The first one was in 1183 by the rising Serbian kingdom. Following that, the city was sacked during the Mongol (Sophoulis 2015) invasion of Europe in 1242 and rebuilt by a Serbian Queen. The area came under Catholic Venetian control after the fall of the Serbian kingdom in the 14th century and was eventually destroyed in 1571 by the advancing Ottoman army. The site is in Albanian called "Kisha" because a local legend, backed by two late Chronicles, claims that there were 365 churches in the city (Hadžibrahimović 2019). It seems unlikely, given the city's relatively small size. The city was an ancient roman commercial town (city-state) with a catholic bishop from around the 10th to 15th century. The name became a titular see in the Catholic Church in 1933. The site may very well be Jovan Vladimir's capital because it is the only major city from his reign close enough to the Prečista Krajinska, which is said in the *Chronicle of the Priest from Duklja* to be next to his throne. The excavation also attests that the city was enlarged around his reign, and the nearby village name, Vladimir, might be a direct reference to him. The name is odd for an Albanian Muslim village because the name is both Slavic and Christian. At a more general level, does the story, true or not, about the 365 churches in Šas fit well into the narrative of the pious ruler Vladimir (see more about the city in Pettifer & Cameron 2008).

In recent years, according to the Church, SOC held a liturgy in Šas on 8 June in honour of St Vladimir. According to a local newspaper, the local Muslim Albanians tried to prevent the metropolitan from accessing the site in 2018 because they did not want the Church to take over the site. A local police force separated the two groups, and the metropolitan continued with the liturgy. Afterwards, in a press release from the Serbian Orthodox Church, the metropolitan argued that the cult was not Serbian. However, liturgies were likewise held in Greece and Albania in honour of the saint on the same day. The metropolitan is quoted as saying that nationality does not play a role (SOC 2019).

Forging and forgetting

At the beginning of the 1990s, all four sites had decayed and were left untouched or in ruin. The rituals and cults associated with them had dwindled, and the memory of Jovan Vladimir was almost non-existing in this region. Almost simultaneously in the early 1990s, two places and a ritual binding them together were forged by clergy from SOC, while the two other sites were left almost untouched. The question is why these two places and which factors contributed.

The demography and geography of the area play a huge role. The untouched sites are mainly Muslim Albanian-dominated areas in the countryside. In contrast, Bar is a diverse urban settlement. The peak of Rumija and the site of the Bar Cathedral are highly visible both topographically and symbolically. In the municipality of Bar, there is a Serbian Orthodox community, and a rivalling Montenegrin and Catholic one.

As a Serbian clergyman once bewailed me, it should be noted that since the independence, families have been divided. Two brothers can easily be found, where one calls himself a Serb and the other a Montenegrin. This situation has made the need to mark ethnic or religious affiliation for the local Montenegrins or Serbs direr to make themselves visible.

This point is crucial in Bar, a vital city for the inner Orthodox conflict and with significant political and symbolic power – unlike the Muslim countryside close to the Albanian border. Prečista Krajinska and Šas are placed in a more homogenous area, which in this countryside was, until the late conversion of the local Albanians to Islam, dominated by the Catholic Church. Šas is still a bishopric by name in the Catholic Church.

Historically, Bar has played a more significant role than these rural settlements. The Montenegrin conquest of Bar in 1878 was seen as a turning point for the liberation of the Slavs under Ottoman supremacy. In contrast, the Prečista Krajinska and Šas are ancient sites that fell into ruin long before the creation of the new Slavic nation-states and their subsequent takeover of the area. The Prečista Krajinska and Šas are perhaps closer related to the historical realm and cult of Jovan Vladimir,

but their role had been played out long ago. Bar and the area around the city were, in contrast, a continual home for the Jovan Vladimir cult in the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century attested in ritual on Pentecost and the protection of Jovan Vladimir cross in the Andrović family before the Second World War.

Sara McQuaid (2016, 133–34) has, in a study, identified the factors that determine the creation of collective memory in contested political settings. These factors are applicable in this case as well. First of all, McQuaid notes the existence of violent takeovers as a crucial factor. Bar is where the Montenegrin kingdom prevailed militantly in 1878. Just outside the city, in the valley of Tudemile, the historical Slavic kingdom of Duklja won its independence in a battle against a superior Byzantine army. The government has built an obelisk marking this victory. Therefore, the city of Bar and its area is a crucial remembrance site in Montenegro because the local Slavic states' independence is associated with central military victories here. As McQuaid (2016) notes, such sites of violent takeovers and battles are essential as sites of memory, which remind the community of a change in the political system. This is not the case in the Albanian countryside, where the "aggression" of the Orthodox Slavs in the 19th, 20th and 21st centuries is more present. There is no great victory to remember, but only the disintegration of the Ottoman state, the invading Slavic armies and the muddy civil war of the Second World War. The remembrance of Jovan Vladimir in a Serbian Orthodox setting becomes a threat and challenge in the Albanian-dominated area. A threat to the Albanian version of the cult and narrative about the sites, which departs from the Montenegrin claim, because SOC is more present physical and material. SOC arranges pilgrimages and liturgies and naturally places themselves in visible sites, like on the top of Rumija. The metal church can be seen on a clear day in most contested areas because it shines in the sun's reflection, unlike the MOC, whose claims are mostly on paper.

The region's political transition in the last thirty years is also a contested one, which is a crucial factor in creating new memories (McQuaid 2016). In the transition, the SOC has continually sought to re-establish itself in rivalry with other religious communities and the

government of Montenegro. As a politically important town, Bar is one of many sites at which the SOC had felt a need to mark itself – firstly with the wooden and concrete cross and later with the Cathedral and the tin church. The SOC has had a religious and political need to establish materials, rituals, parades, history, icons, and so on to mark and re-affirm the Jovan Vladimir cult and, in turn, the presence of the Church. To some extent, this is also part of the national and political struggle between the SOC, MOC and the government. The cult is today, first and foremost, a Serbian Orthodox one, which directly ensures that the collective memory of Jovan Vladimir is becoming a Serbian one. Montenegrin nationalists and the MOC have tried to counter this but with very few symbolic, material and performative products. The SOC has successfully marginalised the Montenegrin narrative and memory of Jovan Vladimir publically through the material and rituals.

The countryside with the two ruins plays no significant role for this minority, unlike the Albanian Muslim centre in the city of Tuzi or Ulcinj in Montenegro. In contrast to Bar, the forgotten sites' political role must be more obvious for the Albanians than the SOC. Therefore, the interest in the two sites in the countryside could be more present for the Albanians.

Paul Connerton (2008) argues that forgetting sites, personas and events often comes from a political need to establish a new order in which particular memories serve no role. Originally, all four sites in this analysis had been "repressive erased", to use Connerton's words by either the Catholic Venetians, the Orthodox Serbian medieval kingdom or the Ottoman Turks (Connerton 2008). Neither seems to have been interested in the cult of Jovan Vladimir and the sites at first. It is only with the revival of SOC and the national romantic appreciation of the story of St Jovan Vladimir in the early days of the Serbian nation-states of the 18th century that the memory of Jovan Vladimir once more plays a significant role in the region. The cult is an ancient one preceding the Medieval Serbian state and seems to be, in the eyes of the clerics and poets, a memory of the first Serbs (or Albanians and Montenegrins, depending on the point of view).

The story of Jovan is also ideal for the renewal of Orthodoxy in the 18–19th century because it contains an image of a pious ruler, a Christian love story and Slavic resistance to external threats. Nationally speaking,

it also provides political claims on Montenegro and Macedonia that suited the interest of both the Montenegrin and Serbian nation-states in the 19th century.

The history of the sites is important. Bar is the historically most important city in the region, both in recent and more ancient history. The city's importance as a commercial hub has also made it a centre of political and economic interest. Therefore, this site attracts the most attention – from all active religious communities, exemplified by the construction of an Orthodox and Catholic Cathedral and the grand mosque in the city in recent years. However, despite all these factors, creating sites of remembrance or a large-scale infrastructure of memory depends on the given political or religious zeitgeist. There needs to be a window of opportunity, a political transition, in which there is a need for new memories. Without the return of the SOC to society after communism, there would perhaps not have been such a large reconstruction of sites. The place-making would perhaps have taken place. There are plenty of examples of re-emerging religious cults even during the communist period, such as the Catholic site of Medjugorje in Bosnia-Herzegovina in the 1980s. A group of Orthodox pilgrims and clergy could have turned Bar and Rumija into a place of remembrance during the communist period but perhaps not have been able to construct the same large-scale complex as today.

Turning to the forgotten site, their importance in political and economic terms are low. They are placed in rural, difficult accessible areas with a homogenous ethnic and religious composition. The demography and the topography do not make them highly symbolic places, which seems to contradict their historical status as perhaps the most central sites to the early St Jovan Vladimir cult. Further adding to this picture of neglect is that the sites were under the Catholic Church until the late conversion of the local Albanians to Islam in the 19th–20th century. The area was, therefore, of historical importance to the Catholics, which is also expressed in the creation of the titular bishopric of Suacium in the Roman Catholic Church. However, with the conversion of the locals, the sites lost their connection to the local community. They fell between different zones of interest. The sites were neither purely of interest for the Orthodox nor for the Catholics, who did not live in the area – and

the locals no longer belonged to a religion in which the sites played a significant role, despite their participation in the Rumija ritual. The neglected sites seem to have been abandoned after an invading army's erasure of the site, which perhaps has left a scattered community unable to rebuild and remember the site as generation to generation passed.

A crucial factor in both the forging and forgetting is the constituency of the newly formed national religious memories or narratives of the region's Albanians, Montenegrins, Serbs and Croats. The area of the neglected sites plays a minor role in any of these narratives, unlike Bar.

Perhaps even more crucial, the Albanian memory and narrative about Jovan Vladimir are closely related to the monastery at Elbasan, where his remains were moved to in the late medieval period. Therefore, despite Jovan Vladimir's role in Albanian Orthodox or Catholic imagery, the neglected sites are at the periphery of the broad Albanian collective memory. In contrast, Jovan Vladimir in the Serbian and Montenegrin memory is bound to the region but mostly associated with Bar. SOC is aware of the neglected sites and seeks to incorporate them into its infrastructure through the various celebrations of the liturgy. They are, however, met with resistance from the local Albanians, who still – despite their Muslim faith – have preserved the image of Jovan Vladimir. The conflict between the SOC and the local Albanian memory of the neglected sites is not currently at a high level. Unlike the current debate about the controversial Church at Rumija, it still contains the potential for a deeper conflict.

The SOC-dominated infrastructure of the cult of Jovan Vladimir is a crucial example of how the SOC was able to build, maintain and evolve a new practice that supported their position in the region of Bar. The infrastructure holds political, religious and historical importance and is shaped by all three in a highly visible and continuous way.

The cult of Duklja

A second cult of importance in Montenegro is MOC's creation of a cult of Duklja, which has become the sacred foundation for what could be called their "Dukljan identity". This identity is formed through a series of historical and religious claims on the ruler of Duklja from the 9th–14th

century and their Church. These claims on descendants from historical rulers are supported through various lines of argument that dwell on different aspects of the Church in Montenegro, its contested history, its religious and cultural identity, and its theological and legal foundations (see Miedlig 2006). The arguments are presented to the fullest extent in the MOC's main publication *Lučindan*, which will be examined in this section and discussed in relation to Montenegrin national historiography. This cult is unlike the cult of Jovan Vladimir because it is mainly a Montenegrin one, which no other religious groups seem interested in claiming. There is some overlap to SOC saints, which will be discussed.

MOC's creation of the cult of Duklja is, first and foremost, the production of a historical identity through the definition of boundaries of the community – be it religious, ethnic or national. Pål Kolstø argues (2005) that such a definition of boundaries through historiography could be divided into four different forms of “myths”. Kolstø does not define myths negatively but rather as historical narratives of differentiation, boundaries and alienation, narrating a specific group's genesis. The cult of Duklja is such a myth of *sui generis*, which underlines that the Montenegrins and their Church descendants are from their own ethnic group, delineated from other ethnic groups such as the Serbs. In contrast, claims the Serbs and SOC more often than the Montenegrins' descendants from a *common* ethnic and religious group. This situation mirrors the power relation, as Kolstø points out, because “in an uneven power relationship [...] the latter [weaker] will tend to highlight the differences between the two, while the former [stronger] will tend to emphasis similarities” (Kolstø 2005, 19). In addition, MOC also claims the cult of Duklja because it provides them with a claim on “superior antiquity” to the region and the Church of Montenegro. The cult of Duklja “gives credence to claims for control over specific territories” (Kolstø 2005, 21).

The content of the Duklja cult

MOC's magazine often features articles with historical content or references of particular interest in relation to the cult of Duklja. The rulers of Duklja from the Vojislavljevi Balšić and Crnojevići are all seen

as integrated sacred parts of this cult. The MOC refers to some rulers, such as Ivan Crnojevići, as their Montenegrin Saints (see chapter 2).

The Church magazine is filled with articles about these rulers, their history and, in particular, their Church. The Vojislavljević dynasty is treated, among others, by Aleksander Radoman's article (Lučindan 2013C) about Constantine Bodin and the state of Duklja and an article by Novak Adžić (Lučindan 2013d) turns the attention to the Balšić rulers and the Zeta state. Radoman and Adžić's articles could best be described as popular historical articles which explain and dramatise the life of historical persons such as Bodin Vojislavljević or Đurađ Balšić. A notable feature of these texts is that their authors spend a great deal of energy investigating the family and the various relationships of the person in question to demonstrate which other local noble Đurađ or Bodin were related. This endeavour has an underlying target that rarely reaches the surface of the text. Both writers try to show how Bodin and Đurađ were not associated with the great noble families or bloodlines of the Bulgarian, Serbian and Albanian medieval realms. In fact, they want to demonstrate that they belong to a unique Dukljan-Slavic line of blood. The Montenegrin authors try to delineate the rulers and secure them as sources of *sui generis* or *superior antiquity* for a religious and national identity as Montenegrins.

The essence of these articles regarding the past independence of Montenegro is summarised in an editorial note of MOC, which states the following:

These are the truths; the Montenegrins form an independent, indigenous, and historical nation that originated and evolved in its own millennial ethnic and historical past [...] created in the struggle for freedom and attained freedom that was constituted and preserved in their state Duklja – Zeta – Montenegro [...] The SOC did not create this state in Montenegro since the Montenegrin state is older than the Serbian state and Church, because the Dukljan Montenegrin ruler, Mihailo Vojislavljević, and his country were internationally recognised. He was crowned 140 years before the first Serbian ruler. (Lučindan 2012c, 10)

It is further elaborated in a press release printed in the same magazine, which argues that "Montenegro was liberated from the Serbian occupation of the Nemanja dynasty in 1360, during the reign of the Balšić, the country's second dynasty" (Lučindan 2012d, 20). The independence

of Duklja and Zeta states is seen as a guarantee that the churches of these states were also independent of the Serbian Patriarch of Peć. This point is vital because it stresses that the churches and the traditions that originated in Duklja completely differ from the SOC founded under the Nemanja house. The Nemanja house and the Serbs are portrayed as alien to the Duklja tradition. In the quote, the MOC speaks of a “Serbian occupation under the Nemanja dynasty”. In other words, a portrayal of the Serbs and their medieval kings as enemies that subverted the Montenegrin Church, people and state. The difference between the indigenous Slavs and the Serbs is thereby highlighted, underpinning the Duklja-Slavs as “superior antiquity”. The MOC make, through these statements and articles, claim on Duklja under the Vojislavljević rule and the Zeta state under the Balšić (and later Crnojevići) house, as their ethno- and religio-genesis. The rulers of Zeta and Duklja are differentiated from the rulers of Serbia, and their Church is argued to be independent. This claim is heavily supported by a specific reading of *Chronicle of the Priest from Duklja* (Ljetopis’ Popa Dukljanina), which is used to construct a historical identity of a “Red Croatia” or Slavic Duklja. A press release puts it bluntly:

One of the most obvious pieces of evidence of this [the Serbian occupation] is the destructive and subversive act of oppression on the Dukljan-Montenegrin cult of prince St Vladimir, whose dynasty, Vojislavljević, was repressed under the Serbian-Nemanja occupation of Montenegro from 1186 onwards. (Lučindan 2012d, 20)

The names of geographical units and rulers of Duklja and Zeta are mentioned frequently in Lučindan between 2009 and 2014. On average, forty-eight references per issue. This high level of interest in the medieval period of Montenegro is interesting because most references are not to religious leaders or landmarks, such as St Jovan Vladimir, which one could expect a church magazine to write about. References to St Jovan Vladimir only comprise around 5 % of all the medieval references during the period. It is rather the lords of Duklja-Zeta that dominates the scene. The theme seems to be “state” independence more than anything else.

In the pro-Montenegrin magazine of *Matica Crnogorska*, the same structures exist. *Matica Crnogorska* is “an independent non-governmental organisation of intellectuals, founded at Cetinje in 1993” (*Matica* 2016). The organisation is devoted to a pro-Montenegrin stance and publishes a journal with political, scientific and cultural content. It pays special attention to promoting the Montenegrin identity and the MOC. Its programme from 2014 states:

Montenegro is a political and cultural community with a millennium-long statehood tradition. Since the foundation of the independent state of Duklja in the mid-11th century, [...] Montenegro, despite periods of shorter or longer occupation, always managed to reconstitute its independence. (*Matica* 2014)

And it continues:

The Montenegrin Orthodox Church was one of the rare churches not to succumb to earthly benefits and desire to rule the people. The Western Church had its own archbishopric in Duklja, so Constantinople supported some dioceses. The reality of the coexistence of Eastern and Western churches on the territory of modern Montenegro has a long tradition that resulted in rarely recognised examples. (*Matica* 2014)

In *Matica Crnogorska*'s pro-Montenegrin programme, the organisation highlights the long tradition of church and state independence as a significant backdrop of the Montenegrin identity and modern state. These two independent institutions are closely interlinked and therefore form the backbone of the Montenegrin cultural, religious, and political identity in their view. The organisation also argues that an independent Slavic state, Duklja, existed in the 11th century with its own cultural traditions that differed significantly from the Slavic Serbian community and the medieval Serbian kingdom. Second, the organisation emphasises that the Montenegrin territory was split between allegiance to the Western Latin and Eastern Orthodox Churches, which led to a rare example of coexistence. In the background of this dual religiosity, it claims that the Church in Montenegro developed its own unique tradition. Vojislav D. Nikčević (2012), a Montenegrin historian, has written two major works on the formation and ecclesiastical history of the provinces

of Duklja and Pravalitana, which complement several smaller treatments of the topic.

In Matica Crnogorska's journal, the main theme under scrutiny is the political history of the principality of Duklja-Zeta. In particular, is the rulers of the Balšić and Crnojevići houses after the fall of the Serbian Empire (ca. 1362–1514) is a frequent topic. This theme seems vital for the authors in Matica because several monasteries and castles were founded during this period. Božidar Šekularac (2010), an author in Matica, points out that the borders of modern-day Montenegro were formed at this time. Therefore, the Balšić and Crnojevići era of Zeta is central in the eyes of these pro-Montenegrin authors because the borders, cities and cultural heritage of Montenegro were formed during that period. It, therefore, becomes clear that the political status, religious orientation and cultural origin of the Crnojevići are also a vital part of the Montenegrin identity along the same line as an independent Duklja in the 11th century (Miedlig 2006, 146–165). The main sources of the Montenegrin discourse on the Balšić and Crnojevići period of Zeta are two anthologies and an additional volume published by Matica Crnogorska (Jelčić 2010; Drašković et al. 2012; 2010).

This analysis of the MOC's publications and its close cultural ally Matica Crnogorska reveals four main points regarding the medieval past of Montenegro. These four points are the central pillars of the Dukljan identity. They are used both combined and individually to argue for a significant independent religious and cultural tradition in Montenegro that differs from Serbia proper:

1. The region encompassing Montenegro was an independent kingdom called Duklja under the Vojislavljević house before Serbia (Raška) emerged.
2. The region had its own independent church history before the Serbian takeover.
3. The region was also an independent entity called Zeta after the fall of the Serbian Empire under the rule of the Balšić and Crnojevići houses.
4. Therefore, the region has distinct and significant medieval religious and cultural traditions.

These four claims together constitute the cult of Duklja. The MOC uses these historical claims to differentiate and delineate their religious and national entity from their Serbian counterparts. The cult is what Kolstø (2005) called a *sue generis* or *antiquity* historical myth. The cult of Duklja is an essential cornerstone of the MOC's identity. The newly built MOC church in Montenegro, the first of its kind, is also devoted to one of these Duklja-Zeta rulers. The Church is named after Ivan Crnojevići, and new icons have been made of him. The promotion of St Ivan underpins the MOC's claim on the city of Cetinje, which Ivan founded and which is depicted by a major statue at the city centre. Cetinje is the cradle of modern Montenegro, and clamming the city's founder through text, churches and icons is an outward physical embodiment of the *sue generis* or *antiquity* historical myth.

The Serbian myth of a common descendant

In contrast, Serbian writers and the SOC draw a quite different picture of the Duklja-Zeta period in Montenegrin history. This point is vocally expressed in a text by Petar Vlahović (1995), a Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts member. Vlahović draws up an alternative Montenegrin identity in a text from 1995, which stresses the common descendant of the Serbs and Montenegrins and stresses the SOC as a mutual Church. He raises in his text the question of the tribal or ethnic affiliation of the Duklja magnates, which he claims to be Serbian, just like the Nemanja house. He portrays the Vojislavljević family as Serbs and characterises them as a rivalling Serbian noble house to the Nemanja dynasty. Second, he questions the validity of the *Chronicle of the Priest from Duklja* with good reason and fair use of historical arguments. Vlahović also notes that many Montenegrin clans originate from some real or imaginary ancestor. They often connect themselves, whether they have real grounds or not, to the Nemanja and the heroes of the Kosovo battle (Vlahović 1995). Slavenko Terzić, also a Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts member, takes Vlahović's further. Terzić (2003) claims that the pro-Montenegrin interpretation is a fascist-Catholic construction created to weaken the Serbian nation and de-attach Montenegro from Serbia. Savić Marković Štedimlja

(1906/7–1970) is claimed to be the author behind the construction of the Duklja identity, as Terzić calls the “Diokletian Red Croat” identity, originated in the interwar period of Štedimlija’s writings. In 1937, Štedimlija wrote a pamphlet titled *Crvena Hrvatska* (Mng. Red Croatia) and a book based on it titled *Osnovi crnogorskog nacionalizma* (Mng. The Foundations of Montenegrin Nationalism) (Terzić 2003). In these texts, Štedimlija argued that Montenegrins were not Serbians. However, they were former Catholics and “red” Croatians, as the *Chronicle of the Priest from Duklja* suggests, who were forced to convert to Orthodoxy and be Serbianised by the Nemanja rulers. Terzić defines this point of view on Montenegrin identity as a “pro-Croatian and Catholic fascist” interpretation of Montenegro’s history and further claims that this point of view was adopted by the anti-Serbian communists, who wanted to weaken Serbia and create a separate and independent Montenegro as part of the re-organisation of Yugoslavia after the Second World War (Terzić 2003).

SOC in Montenegro does not openly share this harsh point of view, but Terzić’s and Vlahović’s points resurface. In official writings, SOC argues that the Western influence along the coast was a part of the Venetian and Catholic domination of the coastline, which was countered by St Sava, who, according to the SOC, restored “true” Christianity in the region. In the eyes of the SOC, there would have been no Montenegro and no Orthodoxy in the region if it were not for the efforts of St Sava and the Nemanja dynasty. The early partial independence of the ecclesiastical structures in Duklja is overlooked as some minor event within the broad Christian world before the split between East and West in 1054. The Montenegrin Metropolitan prior to the Montenegrin Kingdom and the Balšić-Crnojevići medieval state are therefore also regarded as something indirectly created by the Sava and the Nemanja dynasty, a continuation of the tradition rather than an opposition to it (SOC 2000).

The Ambiguous Montenegrin medieval history

The pro-Serbian interpretation of the Duklja-Zeta past, in which Duklja was a Serbian proto-state, and the Crnojevići was a continuation of the Serbian tradition, was also the general understanding of the past in the late period of the Montenegrin Kingdom (1889–1918)

according to František Šistek's analysis (2014; 2010b). Šistek argues that the Montenegrin King Nikola I Petrović-Njegoš (1841–1921) saw Montenegro as the Piedmont of the Serbs and therefore deployed the Montenegrin identity into the broader history of the Serbs in order to ideologically support his effort to be the head of all South Slavs. After the First and Second World Wars, the Yugoslav authorities did not favour this specific interpretation of the Montenegrin identity and past. The Communist Party in charge in Yugoslavia after the Second World War and its main Montenegrin spokesperson Milovan Đilas took a more balanced stand on Montenegrin national identity. Đilas argued that the Montenegrin was both Serbian and something else. This approach allowed the Montenegrin identity to contain an ambiguous character, in which a specific republican Montenegrin nationhood, nurtured by the communist state, existed along a more Serbian-based ethnicity and language (Pavlović 2003, 83–106). The pro-Serbian viewpoint on the Montenegrin identity was, however, revived by the Serbian nationalist movement in the late 1980s under President Slobodan Milošević – as it appears in the writings of Terzić and Vlahović. This revival coincided with the reappearance of the contemporary pro-Montenegrin construction of the Duklja identity by the MOC and Matica Crnogorska. The MOC and pro-MOC writers in Matica Crnogorska's interpretation of the Duklja past bear much resemblance to Štedimlija's interpretation from 1937. They both focus on the *Chronicle of the Priest from Duklja* and the "non-Serbian" features of the Duklja-Zeta past. Therefore, the important point is that both the pro-Serbian and the pro-Montenegrin positions are traceable back to the formation and discussion of the Montenegrin national identity in the late 19th and early 20th century. The two viewpoints are shaped by the ideological, cultural and religious backdrop and cultural heritage of the Montenegrin civil war in 1918–1920 between the pro-Serbian Whites and the pro-Montenegrin Greens. Therefore, the religious and cultural conflict portrayed by these authors is not merely a modern phenomenon but rather a continuation of the discussion of the embattled and ambiguous identity of the Montenegrins.

What is remarkable in this process is how these historical themes were, in fact, revived and reinterpreted in MOC. The ambiguous

religious, ethnic and national symbolism of St Jovan Vladimir and Ivan Crnojevići is dismantled to pave the way for a new sort of symbolic value. This process is nationalisation of the sacred in which former polyphonic material is delineated to a specific community. MOC differentiate between all Montenegrin and Serbian. This transformation and utilisation of historical saints, rulers, events and sites underpin and support the argument that Montenegro and its population differ from Serbia. The region's identity is detached from the Nemanja dynasty, often portrayed as brute invaders and autocratic rulers of Duklja and, therefore, from the grand narrative of Serbia. MOC thereby fabricated a process reverse to that of Yugoslavia; they downplay the Nemanja period and highlight the non-Serbian parts, such as the Duklja state and Church.

Hasting (1997) argues that some core ecclesial materials could be used to construct nationhood. From Hastings' point of view, the MOC is activating these core factors, such as sanctifying a starting point of "Montenegrinness", exemplified by the sanctification of Jovan Vladimir and Ivan Crnojević, as well as the Church mythologising of the Nemanja rule as a threat to Montenegro. It is, therefore, apparent that the Duklja identity and its logic constitute a distinct recasting of the specific Montenegrin nationhood. Hastings argues that there are concepts of states, nations and peoples in the medieval past on which contemporary nations could be based. However, he underlines that the medieval structures are not the exact same as contemporary ones. This concern is clearly not one that the MOC shares. The delineation and differentiation of MOC play on the assumption that the state and church structures of ancient realms are transferable to today without any historical concern. Carsten Riis (1999) calls this phenomenon an assumption of "continuation", which is widespread in South Eastern Europe and discussed in the next chapter. This assumption is that the states and churches are a continuation of former states and churches without regard for the actual organisational and historical context. Although the argument of SOC and MOC, the churches of medieval Montenegro were quite different from any of the modern churches.

The sainthood of Petar I

Petar I (1774–1830) of the Petrović-Njegoš clan is perhaps the oldest and most influential local saint in Montenegro because he was already promoted to sainthood shortly after his death. St Petar I became the patron saint of the Montenegrin principality led by his descendant of the Petrović-Njegoš clan until 1918. His monastery in Cetinje became the centre of the Orthodox Church in the Montenegrin lands, whose largest treasure was his remains, which occupy the centre of the monastic complex.

St Petar I is, for this reason, also claimed by both the SOC in Montenegro and MOC. It is not just his legacy but also his physical remains and the monastery of Cetinje that the two communities fight over. The MOC has, on at least two instances, shortly after the Montenegrin independence of 2006, tried to overtake the Monastery of Cetinje violently. The Montenegrin police have prevented them from this, and violent clashes have erupted between supporters of MOC and SOC in Cetinje. This section takes a closer look at the role and interpretation of St Petar I in the SOC and MOC today. He is not just a symbol but also incorporated into a concrete and lived experience of Orthodoxy in Montenegro. This experience is key to understanding the SOC in Montenegro and its primary theological voice, the now-late Metropolitan Amfilohije.

The embodiment of salvation

Metropolitan Amfilohije and SOC held back in 1996, shortly after the Dayton Peace Accord, a conference on *War and Peace* in Cetinje with the participation of other clergy, Serbian officers and even the president of the Bosnian-Serb republic during the war in Bosnia, Radovan Karadžić (1945-). The conference talks are published in the book *God's Lamb and the Beast from the Abyss* (Serb.: Jagnje Božije i Zvijer iz bezdana), where Amfilohije et al. reflect on war. The book combines quasi-psychological, historical, political, philosophical and theological writings. Metropolitan Amfilohije's (1996) text in the volume is titled "St. Petar of Cetinje and war" (Serb.: Sveti Petar Cetinjski i rat).

In this text, Metropolitan Amfilohije presents and discusses the history of St Petar I, and his view on history and politics becomes very concrete.

The central point of Metropolitan Amfilohije's text is that the holy and war are somehow chained to each other, which can be found in the life of St Petar I. According to Amfilohije, the holy cannot be freed from the pains of war in this world, but rather the given physical world means pain and suffering for the holy – in the same manner as Christ through his humanity had to suffer. This point of view is spelt out in the opening statement of Amfilohije's text. Then follows a detailed description of St Petar I's life and the wars in which he has to participate. The first war is an inner war, where St Petar I has to fight the dedication of his very soul and being to God Almighty. This war is personal, between the inner vice and virtue of Saint Petar I. Amfilohije makes the point that no outer war can be won if the soul is in conflict with itself. The second war, which St Petar I is forced to fight, is internal in Montenegro. At the time, Montenegro was mainly a clan-based society. The metropolitan loosely governed the clans, but blood revenge and internal feuds between the various clans were the norms. Saint Petar I enforced a new set of laws on the clans and ended the blood feuds. The final war St Petar I fought was against external enemies. During his rule, he faced the Ottoman Turks and Napoleon's forces occupying the former Venetian Littoral beneath the mountains of Old Montenegro.

In Amfilohije's optic there exist a hierarchy of wars ranging from the inner spirit to the internal ones within a community and onto the wars with external threats. The external wars cannot be won without the inner and internal wars having already been won. Central to Amfilohije's thought is that each war can only be won through a sacrifice. St Petar I becomes the manifestation of the holy, and he must suffer to win in a manner like Christ. St Petar embodies Christ and the history of the suffering of Christ. Amfilohije calls St Petar I's and his communities' sacrifice a "crucifixion" at the very beginning of the text. The individual – as well as the organic unit of the community – can suffer, and this suffering binds them to the cross of Christ. The suffering is a necessary evil because, as Amfilohije writes:

There is constant warfare through the entire history of humanity [...] it is something that belongs to the history of mankind at all times, and it is something that belongs more or less to all men. How do we explain this historical fact? It is not easy to answer. However, one thing is clear, there's something imperfect in the human nature [...] this imperfection is present in mankind's historical reality ... there are always signs of a struggle between light and darkness, between God and Satan, between Good and Evil. [...] [T]he true sense of Christianity is not yet realised in mankind's history; which means that the New Testament is only visible on the horizon; and which one might be able to attain as an individual by becoming the full image of Christ and his crucifixion [...] St. Petar's history, and through him Montenegro's and the Serbian people's history as a whole, all the way to today, is more or less a return to the Old Testament. (Amfilohije 1996)

Moreover, his final remarks are:

St. Petar accepted the war as a necessity, as unavoidable. At the same time, I need to stress this again; he did not need to wage war for his own sake, out of selfish love, but for those who were ready to sacrifice themselves for their loved ones, for their sake, for the defence of that which is most sacred for any man. (Amfilohije 1996)

Amfilohije thereby underlines that the connection between the holy and war exists in the self-deliverance of humans, which becomes an act of compassion. This act reaches across the physical plane of earthly reality, as Amfilohije calls the landscape of the Old Testament, into the spiritual realm of the New Testament. The message of salvation at the core of The New Testament becomes only partially revealed and only in the images of those who sacrifice themselves for love, in the image of Christ. The self-deliverance of humans in the face of war and violence becomes an embodiment of Christ, taking his cross on their shoulders. In that manner, St Petar's wars with evil in his inner world, in collective society, and against external threats point to what Amfilohije calls "the inner man". The actions of St Petar are an imitation of Christ himself. It is a theosis – the Eastern Orthodox process of becoming one with God.

Amfilohije often directly writes in his text that the history of St Petar is something from which his community today can learn. Amfilohije thereby underlines that the text is an instruction to the reader rather

than simply a descriptive historical text. The text itself speaks of a meta-level, a biblical level or landscape, in which mankind lives. This meta-landscape is one in which St Petar I, the writer, and the reader live. They share this reality, and the experience of each is related to the experiences of the others. Amfilohije's text operates with more than one level of meaning and several points from which he draws his imagery. Amfilohije's text is a form of an Orthodox allegory. In the Eastern Greek Christian world, allegory goes back to the Catechetical School of Alexandria and especially Origen of Alexandria (184–253), who operated with various ways to interpret a text. Origen's perhaps best-known writing demonstrating these levels is his commentary and homilies on the Song of Songs. He interprets the biblical poem as about the love between the Church and the Saviour (King 2005). In the prolongation of Alexandrian tradition, it was often argued that various forms of "senses" existed in biblical texts.

In the East, this type of hermeneutics lived on to some extent. Gregory of Nyssa's long apology for allegory is an example of this. Nyssa's commentary on the Song of Songs has had a long-lasting effect on Eastern Orthodoxy and became a reference point regarding this form of biblical interpretation (Heine 1984). This way of writing or reading was passed down in the mystical writings of Eastern monastic centres. Today, according to Andrew Louth, Orthodox theology can still play an allegorical sense as a continuation of this tradition. In Louth's work, *Discerning the Mystery* (Louth 1983), he argues that allegory is a viable way of establishing theological positions. Louth argues that

allegory is a way of entering the "margin of silence" that surrounds the articulate message of the Scriptures, it is a way of glimpsing the living depths of tradition from the perspective of the letter of the Scriptures. The literal sense is the object of faith: this is what we are to believe, to believe in, in a God who meets us in history, becomes man in Jesus of Nazareth. The allegorical sense represents our attempt to understand the mystery we discern here. It is a movement from *fides* to *intelligentia*. (Louth 1983, 96)

In Louth's essay on allegory, he puts allegory as a practice at the very centre of Christianity. It should be noted that Louth's interpretation of the mystical line of thought in Orthodoxy is challenged, and other

more critical stances on allegory exist within Eastern Orthodoxy. Louth was also an Anglican priest at the moment of the publication, and one should therefore be aware of the limit of his approach.

Nevertheless, Amfilohije's text aligns with a tradition that Louth takes seriously. Amfilohije's text has a literal sense of the history of St Petar. The text also points to the future (its anagogical sense), which is the experience of the Serbs in Bosnia and later in Kosovo and provides both moral guidance (its topological sense) and doctrinal guidance (its allegorical sense). Regarding doctrine, the history of St Petar I is an instruction in the Cyrillian teaching on war and its reading of the doctrine of war formed by a few quotes from the Gospel of John (Saggau 2019). As for the moral aspect, history reveals that inward peace needs to be achieved before any outer war can be fought. The Serbs must be confident in their faith, or they will fall into irreligion. It is important to note that Amfilohije uses "the margins of silence" of allegory to quote Louth to speak about war through the scriptures.

Amfilohije's historical writing, where history blends with commentary on the present and thoughts about the future, is not merely Amfilohije's own doing. Speaking in the margins of the silence of the scriptures is part of the larger Orthodox mystical heritage, by which Amfilohije seems to be inspired. In this tradition, theologians are allowed to speak to multiple groups simultaneously. It provides a window through which to engage in dialogue with the Bible, the Patristic tradition, immediate history, the present and the future all at once. This form is used as a historiographical tool to unfold the polyphony of the scriptures. Montenegro's Orthodox heritage holds a few key examples of this form of writing. St Petar I's nephew, Njegoš, plays a major role in using this tradition in theology. Njegoš's epic about his and St Petar I's forefather, Danilo I, operates with the same theme as Amfilohije's text – the relation between the holy and war. Much of the Njegoš's text is devoted to Danilo I's thoughts and reflections about why and how he could save Montenegro from the threat of the Muslims. Danilo's final conclusion is that to save Christian Montenegro, those Montenegrins who turned their back to Christianity must be killed. The bloodshed of the Muslim converts is justified based on securing the Montenegrins' collective Christian "we". Much like Amfilohije's text, war is allowed in the face of

external threats. Another similarity is that in Amfilohije's text, the war is waged against the "Turks" and "Muslims"; some of the other contributions in the volume expand this perspective even onto the Bosnia wars.

What becomes apparent is that the way to salvation in Amfilohije's and Njegoš's theology is through self-deliverance and humility. The concrete lived experience of war, be it in modern Bosnia or St Petar I's time, is a re-enactment of the world of the Old Testament, as Amfilohije writes. Current events are just "types" of past historical moments. In Auerbach's words, they are a "figura" of the past (Auerbach 1938). Bosnia, Montenegro and Kosovo are a re-enactment of Golgotha.

Amfilohije and Njegoš use the allegorical form as a historiographical tool to retell the history of Montenegro, bind it to the Holy Scriptures, teach the tradition and comment on the present. In this way, Amfilohije can bind his current challenges together with the Montenegrin past and holy scripture. In that sense, he makes St Petar and his community into something similar to Velimirović's concept of Teodulja. This godly figure embodies salvation through the saint and his people in St Petar's saintly deeds. The saint paves through his own process of salvation, theosis, making the way for the community towards collective salvation. In that sense, the monastery, the saint's remains and icons of him become the physical doorways towards salvation. This theological interpretation of St Petar exemplifies Metropolitan Amfilohije's expansion on Velimirović's concept of Teodulja.

A Montenegrin response

The sophisticated theological vision of St Petar I by Amfilohije is not duplicated in the MOC. The MOC's claim on St Petar I follows the lines already laid out in the cult of Duklja. In MOC's publication, there are frequent references to the good rule of St Petar I. He is, therefore, almost like in the SOC, seen as an ideal Saint. His official presentation can be found in the MOC priest Žarko L. Đurović (Lučindan 2012e, 52–54) article called "Holy Petar of Cetinje – the Peacekeeper" (Mng. "Sveti Petar Cetinjski – Mirotvorac"), which is a short vita of him. Đurović writes, "Historians claim that he is the most important person in Montenegrin national history" (Lučindan 2012, 52). The vita describes him as an ideal

national leader who secured peace amongst the Montenegrin clans and the country's independence from external threats. Đurović vita of St Petar is, in a general form, quite like the ones found in official vitas in the SOC. The key difference is that MOC sees St Petar as a continuation of the Duklja-Zeta church, and his realms independence from the Serbian exile church in Sremski Karlovici and the rebellious Serbian provinces in the Ottoman empires are taken as further proof of the delineation between Serbs and Montenegrins.

Metropolitan Mihailo of MOC sharply formulated this point in his speech at St Petar I's saint day in 2011. MOC was founded on St Petar I's saint day (31 October), which is used to celebrate him. The MOC metropolitan's speech is titled "MOC must not be prevented to a life such as St. Petar's" (Lučindan 2012f, 62) and published in their church magazine. The metropolitan states halfway through his talk that the MOC must:

[f]ollow the example of St. Petar, which means that one has to be completely loyal to the indestructible Montenegrin state and national freedom and autocephaly of the Montenegrin Orthodox Church. That is not always the case for us today. We still show love towards ourselves, our own being and spirit, towards the saints of our state, people and Church. The sooner we wake up and go his way, we will enjoy the grace of his blessing words. The sooner we realise this is his legacy, the more we can approach His Holiness. Should the Montenegrin Church be prevented from reaching his life and the holy throne of the Cetinje monastery, which bears his glorious name, in independent Montenegro? You all know the answers. Let us publicly make ourselves visible as soon as possible so that we shall not live in a free state without religious freedom. (Lučindan 2012f, 62)

In the speech, the MOC metropolitan not only claims St Petar I as a patron saint of his Church but also links this claim to the monastery of Cetinje. The Montenegrin Orthodox Community is prohibited from entering the sacred life with St Petar I if they are prohibited from entering his monastery and sacred remains. The metropolitan, thereby, almost similar to the SOC metropolitan, argues that his communities' pathway towards salvation goes through the saint. The MOC metropolitan also closely links the independence of his Church to the independence of the Montenegrin state. He argues that the Montenegrin state's

religious freedom depends on his community's freedom. This freedom is interpreted as the right to the monastery of Cetinje.

Therefore, MOC's cult of St Petar I do not depart from the structures of the Duklja cult. The cult delineates the community from the SOC, and any narratives of communality with the Serbs are ignored. The claim on the cult is also here used to claim a physical monastery and the sacred remains – a claim which has ended in a physical confrontation with the SOC.

The metropolitan of MOC does argue in a similar manner to Amfilohije. However, in a less sophisticated theological form. The access to the cult of St Petar ensures the salvation of his community. The access is connected to the community's freedom and, subsequently, the state.

Canonising Petar II: Njegoš

St Petar's nephew, metropolitan Petar II Petrović Njegoš – or simply Njegoš (1813–1851), is the most iconic of the saints fought over in South Eastern Europe. His poetic legacy is widely debated and has increasingly been considered controversial in the context of the wars in former Yugoslavia in the 1990s. Despite this mixed legacy, he is continually regarded as one of the greatest European poets. Unlike his uncle, Petar I, he was not canonised after his death. Njegoš gains great influence in Serbian Orthodoxy – amongst other in Velimirović's writings – such as his influential book *The Religion of Njegoš* from 1911 (Velimirović 2015). Njegoš was buried in 1851 on the top of Lovćen in a modest chapel, presumably according to his last wishes. Lovćen and the chapel quickly became the very symbol of the Kingdom of Montenegro and a material expression of the heavenly and royal mandate of the following Petrovich-Njegoš rulers until 1918 (Zlatar 2007). This chapel, its several reconstructions, and the practice around it are the object of study in the following section. At this site, the SOC, MOC and Montenegrin government all came head to head in 2013 to (re-)claim Njegoš as their own symbol.

This crucial role played by the site and Njegoš is due to its similar role during both the communist-ruled and Karadžević-ruled Yugoslavia (1918–1989). Njegoš was held in high regard for most of the

20th century, and his works were integrated into the school curriculum, which is further discussed in detail by Andrew Wachtel (2004). Following the independence of Montenegro, the discussion about Njegoš's legacy was reignited. Montenegrin nationalist NGOs sought to claim his literature as Montenegrin, while their Serbian-oriented counterpart continued to stress Njegoš's "serbhood" (Baskar 2019). This debate was mirrored in ecclesial circles and escalated in the wake of his 200-year Jubilee in 2013. The following section examined the debate in 2013 and how this debate, in particular, was related to the physical form of Njegoš's tomb at Lovćen.

The material transformation of Lovćen

The tomb at Lovćen was subject to a series of transformations in the 20th century. Montenegro fell to the Austrian forces in 1916, and the last Petrovich-Njegoš king and his court went into exile early. During a siege, the Austrian forces shelled the chapel on Lovćen (Brendel 2014). The Austrians ensured that Njegoš's body was carefully removed, so they would not be accused of the desecration of his body afterwards. The Belgrade army ousted the Austrians in 1918, and the former Montenegrin Kingdom came under Belgrade's military rule. According to Montenegrin historiography, the army prevented the return of the former Montenegrin government's return from exile. It ensured that the Montenegrin Assembly joined the newly founded Serbian-dominated Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes in 1918–1919 (Roberts 2007, 319–332).

In the early 1920s, the newly crowned former Serbian King, Alexander Karađorđević (1888–1934), wanted to re-establish a sanctuary for Njegoš on Lovćen. Alexander sought to stress his own relation to Lovćen as the grandson of the last king of the Petrovich-Njegoš lineage. Alexander has often been described as pro-Yugoslav and viewed Yugoslavia's three constitutive "peoples" as one Yugoslav nation (Djokovic 2012). In constructing a Yugoslav identity, Njegoš was promoted as the posthumous prophet of Yugoslavdom (Wachtel 2004). The Karađorđević government did not rebuild the chapel. They arranged a competition for artists to offer their ideas for a new monument. A Viennese-educated

and pro-Yugoslav art nouveau artist, Ivan Meštrović (1883–1962), won the competition with a large and classically inspired mausoleum. Meštrović was already the artist-in-charge of several major monuments throughout Yugoslavia commemorating World War I, such as the monument to the unknown soldier at Avala outside Belgrade. The Meštrović mausoleum of the 1920s was, however, never built. The government lacked the means to undertake extensive construction on an almost inaccessible mountaintop. Instead, the government chose to reuse the old chapel's ruins on Lovćen to reconstruct a nearly identical chapel. Njegoš's remains were once again moved to the new chapel on Lovćen.

The Karađorđević government's reinterpretation of Njegoš's heritage foreshadowed the new communist regime's reconstruction of Njegoš. During the rebuilding of the country after the devastating World War II and the civil war in Yugoslavia, the communists pursued the politics of the Karađorđević government's new Yugoslavdom (Wachtel 2004). Njegoš was reintroduced into the new communist curriculum and celebrated once more as a Yugoslav poet. At the same time, it was allowed to be claimed as a national symbol of the Montenegrin Republic within Yugoslavia (Wachtel 2004). Sreten Stojanović (1898–1960), another art nouveau and pro-Yugoslav artist, made a new statue of Njegoš, set up in central Belgrade to commemorate Njegoš. In the wake of the 100th celebration of Njegoš's death in 1951, the local republican Montenegrin government suggested that a new monument on Lovćen should be constructed. The artist Meštrović was again approached and made new sketches for a mausoleum and a new statue of Njegoš. Once again, the central authorities dropped the plan due to a lack of funds. However, years later, it was reintroduced by the local authorities in the municipality where Mount Lovćen is located (Selhanović 2013).

The SOC and several Serbian intellectuals opposed the idea. Public discussion continued of the monument, and shortly after, protests and demonstrations took place targeting the Metropolitanate and backing the government. The government took the issue to a trial at the Montenegrin high court, where the Metropolitanate lost to the municipality. There was, therefore, given the green light to build a new monument (Selhanović 2013). Thus, the Meštrović monument was realised during the early 1970s after the demolition of the former chapel and

was finally inaugurated in 1974 with a reburial of Njegoš in the new mausoleum. Duško Kečkemet (1984) and Andrew Wachtel (2004) point out that the new mausoleum was seen as a pro-Yugoslav patriotic work underlining the state's effort to create a more coherent federal Yugoslav identity.



Image 4: The destruction of Lovćen chapel (Source SOC's archive)

The Serbian Orthodox Church's claim on Montenegrin heritage

SOC began in early 2012 to resurface their criticism of the monument as part of the Church's campaign for reclaiming Njegoš. Metropolitan Amfilohije sought to promote Njegoš as a new Serbian saint and would similarly turn the mausoleum into a Serbian chapel (Wachtel 2004). In a letter to the Montenegrin government in 2012, the metropolitan urged the government to respect Njegoš's last wish and rebury him in a new chapel on the mountaintop instead of keeping his body "trapped" in Meštrović's mausoleum (Amfilohije 2012). In the letter, Metropolitan Radović speaks of the monument as expressing a "Pharaonic and Roman pagan spirit ... inspired by his [Meštrović's] contemporary western Nazi-fascist monumentality and Titoist-Stalinist [Serb: brozovski-staljinistički] socialist realism" (Amfilohije 2012). Amfilohije argued that the mausoleum was "pagan" due to its borrowings from classical architecture. The materiality and architectural plan of the mausoleum were in the letter described as being a style alien to the Orthodox Church. According to the metropolitan, the mausoleum was not only formed by this pagan style but also possessed the same spirit. The monument differed from what was proper in Orthodoxy in its physical and metaphysical form. Amfilohije linked that sort of "paganism" with the architectural styles of atheistic and autocratic regimes, such as the communist and fascist governments. The letter was filled with several accusations concerning the older high court case on demolishing the former chapel in the 1970s, underpinning that the SOC found the ruling unjust and wanted it reversed. Amfilohije viewed the destruction of the former chapel in the letter as an attack on the site's religious symbolism. The construction of Meštrović's mausoleum was an act of blasphemy, identifying it as the secular communist state's attempt to rid the place of religious meaning.

In the letter of 2012, Metropolitan Amfilohije continues to stress other problematic aspects of Meštrović's mausoleum. He underlines several legal, historical and religious arguments against the mausoleum and refers to himself and SOC as "defenders and guardians of the Montenegrin Orthodox Shrine" (Amfilohije 2012). Amfilohije thereby claimed to be the defender of the lost religious shrine, which at the

same time implicitly made his opponents enemies of Orthodoxy. The identification revealed that the mountaintop was still a religious place for SOC, even without the material chapel. This very place was desecrated, threatened and polluted by the existence of the mausoleum. In the final sentence of the letter, Amfilohije demands that a new chapel should be built at the Lovćen site and suggests that the mausoleum remains in place as an expression:

of the spirit of his [Meštrović's] time, and his concurring mythomaniac interpretation of Njegoš's personality and works, only with the important difference that the mortal remains of the Bishop will be exhumed for the sixth (and hopefully last) time and removed from the basement of the Mausoleum (= imprisonment) and returned to his Church. Only in this way will Njegoš, his authentic personality and work, be returned to a central position on Lovćen, in accordance with his will and his thirst for freedom from all physical and metaphysical shackles. (Amfilohije 2012)

And concludes that

who muster to do so will inevitably write themselves into the history of Montenegro and humanity. For this act will undoubtedly take the curse off the Metropolitan [Serb.: Митрополита] Petar II Petrovic Njegoš and Montenegro and even of his offspring. (Amfilohije 2012)

Amfilohije plainly speaks of the mausoleum as a prison, as Njegoš's "physical and metaphysical shackles", and the symbolic fields of memory gathered around him. The imagery of shackles and imprisonment is very strong. It draws, among other things, on the folk legend that Njegoš – out of love for freedom – refused even to kiss St Peter's shackles because they were symbols of imprisonment. The mausoleum had become a physical shackle and a prison for religious meaning. This meaning needs to be revealed and rehoused – physically through the construction of a new chapel and reburial of Njegoš – before it can be "returned into a central position on Lovćen". This needs to be done, according to Amfilohije, to lift the "curse" (Serb.: проклетство) from Njegoš, the land and its inhabitants (Amfilohije 2012). In the final and crucial part of the letter, the metropolitan speaks of Njegoš not as a poet or ruler but as, first and foremost, a "Metropolitan". He thereby signals

a religious line between him, as the metropolitan of Montenegro, and Njegoš's time in the same office. Amfilohije stressed Njegoš as a religious person belonging to the Serbian Orthodox community rather than to civil Montenegrin society.

This stress on Njegoš as a religious rather than secular symbol became central to the SOC's celebration of Njegoš in 2013. In May 2013, Metropolitan Amfilohije proposed to the Serbian Orthodox synod that Njegoš should be sanctified as a Serbian saint during the year of celebration. The metropolitan explained this proposal to the Serbian newspaper *Politika* in May 2013 as a necessary step to preserve Njegoš's religious heritage. This step opposed the "Marxist-Titoist" interpretation of Njegoš's works and person. The metropolitan said, "[I]n this [Marxist-Titoist] secularised and anti-Christian interpretation of Njegoš, he is almost declared atheist and revolutionary. According to some analysts, in Podgorica, even his poetry has nothing to do with God" (*Politika* 2013).

The SOC did not sanctify Njegoš as a whole; he was celebrated as a saint only in Montenegro. This sanctification was expressed in a new icon and church service, which was revealed as a part of the process. Like most Orthodox saints, he is dressed in religious garments, and there are attributes or insignia in the icon that in some way symbolise the vital part of his religious work or personal hagiography. In the icon, he holds the former chapel on Lovćen as his insignia. The SOC in Montenegro thereby signalled Njegoš's religious importance within his Church very clearly, and the former chapel of Lovćen was a sign of this. Even though it has ceased to exist, the chapel became the very material symbol of "Saint" Njegoš. This change made the Meštrović mausoleum into a competing material symbol in relation to the chapel and a material expression of the competing interpretation of Njegoš during the Jubilee. A model of the Njegoš chapel was later built next to St Jovan Vladimir's cathedral, and his icons were present here and in the chapel in St Petar I's monastery in Cetinje.

The SOC in Montenegro viewed the mausoleum as a symbol of a "Marxist-Titoist" "secularised and anti-Christian" interpretation of Njegoš that falsified his Orthodox religious significance to the point that he is almost "declared atheist". The mausoleum was the material

expression of the threats of the “Marxist–Titoist”, “secularised and anti-Christian” and “atheist” values posed by the DPS government towards the SOC in Montenegro. This point underlines that Amfilohije and the SOC in Montenegro viewed the old chapel as a material expression of its religious system and the site as a central strategic point within its field. The site – with or without any monument – plays a significant role in rebuilding the strategic infrastructure of the memory of SOC in Montenegro, which supports its religious and political needs. SOC in Montenegro, therefore, frames the competing strategy of the Montenegrin government as belonging to an opposing system of values. According to the SOC, this competing strategy contains “the secularised and anti-Christian” and “atheist” values vested in the Meštrović mausoleum (Saggau 2017b).

Several physical differences exist between the original chapel and the new mausoleum, which underlines the transformation of the Lovćen site’s materiality from a place attached to an Orthodox religious strategy into another form of strategy. First, Njegoš remains have been moved to a crypt below with a sarcophagus decorated by a cross and the double-headed eagle. The tomb and Orthodox religious symbols have been moved to the deepest and darkest corner of the site. The site, in its materiality, is filled with examples of how Orthodox materiality can be purged from a site (Saggau 2017b). The grave, especially for one devoted to a prominent religious leader, is conspicuous in its lack of crosses. The statue of Njegoš and the symbol behind the statue lack any reference to the religious Orthodox office and insignia he held. The ground plan of the new monument differentiates itself significantly from general Orthodox architecture, thereby giving the visitor a different spatial impression from those offered at local religious sites, such as the churches and monasteries nearby. The site is a space of memory, a *lieu de mémoire* (Nora 1989). The space is constituted by the symbolic fields connected to Montenegrin history and, most prominently, the very name of Njegoš. According to the Metropolitan Amfilohije’s interpretation of the site’s materiality, Meštrović’s mausoleum strives to marginalise the Orthodox religious connotation of the memory and replace it with another secular and republican one. The monument, therefore, constitutes a significant attempt to articulate a site without

implicit Orthodox religious presence. The obvious question is, then, what the place instead articulates through its materiality in the context of the new independent Montenegrin Republic.

A Montenegrin claim on Njegoš

Different groups answered that question in Montenegro in 2013. The mausoleum and Njegoš himself were highly debated throughout the period from many positions with different agendas. The SOC was not alone in its attempts to claim the site such as the local Muslim community and groups of Serbian or Montenegrin intellectuals (Saggau 2017b).

The DPS government and its leader, Milo Đukanović, used the occasion to launch their interpretation of Njegoš, most prominently at a large and choreography celebration at the very monument on the 200 birthday of Njegoš. Milo Đukanović – at the time prime minister – spoke here to the public and a large crowd. This speech, partly published in the national newspaper *Pobjeda* the day after, not only revealed the government's perception of the site but also unfolded the interpretation of Njegoš favoured by the government. Its position was also supported by several pro-Montenegrin politicians, among them president Đukanović's close ally Vujanović of DPS (Pobjeda 2013a). At this crucial symbolic moment, the monument was used as a stage for a national celebration. Đukanović began his speech by asserting that "those who do not interpret Njegoš and explore the depths of the contemporary messages, those who remain on the surface and do not understand Njegoš' modernity, are not even able to have a real experience of his religious grandeur" (Pobjeda 2013b).

A "true" interpretation of Njegoš's religious impact should rather be founded on the fact that Njegoš "confirmed and affirmed the spiritual genius of Emperor Constantine, who ... declared the freedom of the Christians and mankind" (Pobjeda 2013b). Đukanović further concluded that Njegoš's spiritual legacy was the realisation that freedom was essential in every society. In this sense, Njegoš's religious heritage is interpreted as modern and aligned with western European values. Đukanović then spoke of this yearning for freedom as the core of Montenegrin history that was denied the Montenegrins in the

Kingdom and Federation of Yugoslavia. The core principle of the historical Montenegrin Kingdom was freedom. He reminded the crowd that in 1918:

Montenegro [was] erased from the geographic maps ... the remains of the chapel [on Lovćen] were destroyed and in 1925 rebuilt in a shape similar to Njegoš' [own chapel]. However, its message was contrary to [the principle of] historical Montenegro. (Pobjeda 2013b)

Đukanović thereby linked the destruction of the first chapel with the destruction of the Kingdom of Montenegro. In the eyes of the prime minister, the chapel, which was rebuilt in 1925 under orders from Serbian and Yugoslav King Alexander Karađorđević, no longer carried the message of Montenegrin independence but rather expressed a Serbian claim to Montenegro. The chapel from 1925, which Metropolitan Amfilohije and SOC in Montenegro wished to be rebuilt once more, thereby signifying the Serbian domination of Montenegro.

Đukanović, in that sense, reframed the discussion of the site in such a way that the Karađorđević chapel was no longer a true Orthodox religious symbol devoted to Njegoš but rather a symbol of the Serbian annexation of Montenegro in 1918. The Serbs denied the Montenegrins' spiritual yearning for freedom embodied by Njegoš. This denial was forcefully expressed by the material claim on Lovćen posed by the Karađorđević chapel. Đukanović, therefore, saw the Meštrović mausoleum as a symbol of the Montenegrin freedom allowed within the Socialist Federation. He referred to opponents of the monument and its message as "mythomaniacs, preachers of hate". He stressed that "we would like Njegoš to become a spiritual father and leader" (Pobjeda 2013b).

In Đukanović's speech, he denied that the chapel removed in 1974 was a true religious symbol, let alone connected to Montenegrin history or Njegoš. The chapel was void of religious meaning and only contained an outer expression of Serbian domination of the Montenegrins. In the words of the Montenegrin historian Zvezdan Folić, the chapel from 1925 was not "the legacy of Njegoš anymore. It was the legacy of King Aleksandar Karađorđević" (Pobjeda 2013c). The first chapel, destroyed during World War I, on the other hand, was identified with

the Montenegrin kingdom, and this chapel's destruction symbolised the "erasing" of the Kingdom of Montenegro in 1918. In this context, the mausoleum became a symbol of the resurrection of Montenegro as an independent republic within the framework of the Federation and then as an independent country in 2006. Đukanović's interpretation of the material transformations of the site connected the three monuments to various moments in Montenegrin history and politics. Meštrović's monument thus symbolises the current state of the Montenegrin people and state.

Another remarkable thing in Đukanović's speech is the lack of reference to Orthodoxy, Njegoš's office as a metropolitan, and any wording that would invoke them. Instead, he spoke of Njegoš as a "spiritual" (duhovni) rather than an "Orthodox" (pravoslavne) person. This discourse of the prime minister linked Njegoš's religious heritage exclusively with a yearning for freedom. Đukanović thereby carefully and indirectly marginalised every Serbian Orthodox aspect of Njegoš. According to the prime minister's interpretation, Njegoš is a symbol of freedom for the Montenegrin people, and his "religious grandeur" and spiritual insights consisted only of the idea of freedom for the Montenegrin nation. The Serbian Orthodox symbolism vested in the space was dissolved into a symbolism of politics, history and ethnicity.

The crucial point in the Đukanović speech was that he linked the mausoleum to a strategic infrastructure of the independent Montenegrin nationhood and history. He connected the site to values such as freedom, Europeaness and Montenegrin statehood. These values were connected to the site, which became a quasi-religious stage for a national celebration. The event could best be described as a civil-religious ritual (Bellah 1967; 1975) in which the site, the mausoleum and Njegoš became framed as central outlets of the Montenegrin nationalised civil religion. In the celebration, the DPS government simultaneously marked the SOC as alien to the site and in opposition to Montenegrin's freedom and statehood. An indirect witness to this was the description of Njegoš as a spiritual rather than an Orthodox leader.

Đukanović's speech was welcomed by the MOC, whose metropolitan was present on the stage. In MOC's church magazine (Lučindan 2014), entire sections are devoted to Njegoš and the celebration. During

the celebration, the MOC followed the DPS government's interpretation of Njegoš as a symbol of Montenegrin freedom. Unlike the DPS government, MOC does, however, claim Njegoš as their religious leader in the manner of St Petar – but noticeably without challenging the “civil” religion of the government and their control over the Lovćen site.

Saints, neo-martyrs and the forgotten tombs

Throughout Montenegro and former Yugoslavia, there are many more embattled saints and sites, which are tokens in the growing strategical infrastructure of memory of the SOC. The landscape of Serbia is filled with new routes of pilgrims, new churches and a new generation of Eastern Orthodox believers populating these routes and sites. The above-discussed sites and saints are a selection which provides insights into the reconstruction process of both MOC and SOC in Montenegro during the country's transition towards independence. These sites and saints are considered the major ones in Montenegro, but on a day-to-day level, other saints and sites play the same important role in local communities. The point of view in this chapter has been on the elites' construction of the saints and cults, which differs from everyday Montenegrins. In this section, some other saints and sites will shortly be introduced and discussed to provide a larger overview and a glimpse into the extension of the issue in Montenegro.

The most visible one left out of this chapter is St Basil of Ostrog and the monastery of Ostrog. This saint and shrine hold significant meaning for the Montenegrins and Serbians, but unlike St Petar II (Njegoš), St Basil of Ostrog is a global Eastern Orthodox saint. Believers from across the Orthodox Commonwealth will travel to Ostrog. The monastery and its surroundings are built to accommodate these crowds. St Basil is, therefore, not reducible to a Montenegrin saint because the area was attached to Herzegovina. St Basil was born and lived most of his life in the regions of nowadays Herzegovina. His connection to Old Montenegro and the cult of Duklja is not so obvious for MOC. Therefore, the SOC in Montenegro stresses him as one of their patron saints even more. The life of St Basil underlines the common descendant of the

Serbs of both Bosnia-Herzegovina and Serbia with the Montenegrins. St Basil becomes a symbol of the common Orthodox heritage across these lands. This lingering symbolic feature of St Basil is perhaps also why he was so frequently used as a point of reference in the protest by the SOC in 2019–2020.

The case of St Arsenije, the second Serbian Archbishop, and his remains at the monastery of Zdrebaonik just outside Danilograd near the capital is almost similar to St Basil. Arsenije took over after St Sava, and the Nemnjas built Zdrebaonik during the medieval period, which connects both saint and site to the medieval Serbian realm. Arsenije and Zdrebaonik underline the SOC claim to a common line of descent for the Serbs and Montenegrins, which it stresses in SOC's publication on the subject (SOC 2011). Arsenije and Zdrebaonik are of less interest for the MOC, who tends to leave the site and saint with silence in their narrative. It distorts their narrative. It is, therefore, less embattled.

The debate over ownership of St Stefan Piperski (d. 1697) and the Ćelija Piperska monastery contrasts St Arsenije as embattled. Stefan Piperski is linked to both Ćelija Piperska and the monastery of Morača (founded in 1252), two central monasteries currently under the control of SOC. Piperski is claimed as a Montenegrin saint by the MOC, who also claims the two monasteries. The debate over Piperski and the two monasteries mirrors much of what has been discussed above.

The SOC has, on its own, begun to create new cults and promote local saints across Montenegro, which differs from MOC. Promoting these so-called Neo-martyrs and Neo-saints is a common development amongst the Eastern Orthodox churches in the former Eastern Bloc, which is extremely noticeable in the Russian Orthodox Church, as further discussed by Karin Christensen (2019) and Milena Benovska-Sabkova (2008). The promotion of Njegoš, Nikolaj Velimirović and Justin Popović in SOC recently is a significant part of the rebuilding process of SOC after communism in which former Church leaders are turned into sacred forefathers. At a more local level, the promotion of the martyrs of Momišići by SOC is part of this process. The Neo-Martyrs of Momišići are forty children and two priests burned alive by the Ottoman forces in 1688. The neo-martyrs were canonised in 2012

(Novosti 2012). Promoting these burned children reminds the local SOC community of those that have suffered for the faith. However, it also ties SOC closer to the local community – this is given a physical dimension through the reconstructed Church building at Momišići and the public rituals on their saint day. This specific development is not only seen in the SOC. Similarly, the MOC seems not to be occupied with creating new saints. MOC is rather focused on promoting older “Montenegrin” saints belonging to the cult of Duklja.

Another arena in which the MOC and SOC face each other is in the contestation of several sacred sites. These debates often involve the government and armed forces, which escalated in 2019 and ultimately led to a confrontation between the government and SOC. As mentioned, the debate in 2019 was related to the Rumija church from 2005 and the Monastery of Holy Archangel Michael in Prevlaka Island, home to the first Montenegrin Orthodox Bishop (discussed above). There is, however, a wide range of sites that are contested in the same manner. The Vlaska Church in Cetinje became the scene of a physical confrontation between SOC and MOC in 2000, and an SOC priest went on a hunger strike inside the Church (Morrison 2015, 110). In the entire Njegushi region, home to the Njegoš dynasty, debates over church property frequently erupt. At some of the 10–15 churches in this mountain valley, the MOC has put up signs with their name to prevent SOC from entering them. The ownership debate also occurs concerning the monasteries on Lake Skadar (Kom, Beška, Moračnik, Vranjina and Kosmač), known as the Montenegrin “Holy Land”. Many of the monasteries at Lake Skadar have been repopulated and reconstructed by SOC in the last 20–30 years. The same has happened to monasteries around the capital and the mountains, such as the Donji Brčeli monastery.

The creation of cults

A particular and crucial part of MOC’s claim on site and saints is that the Church itself is also founded based on tribal allegiance. Church buildings, parishes and even saints are considered part of a specific “family” or “clan”. According to a spokesperson of MOC (MOC interview 2013), the organisational structure and ownership of the Church were based

on kin. Each clan builds and sustains its own churches – and subsequently is the ownership bound to this clan. The Church is, therefore, not constituted by the clergy alone but by tribal allegiance. This allegiance has some historical basis because the clans elected the priests and metropolitan of Montenegro before establishing the Montenegrin state. This “ecclesiology of kinship” seems to reach beyond the modern-day world and the modern organisation of states. This structure is perhaps a much more genuine tradition of allegiance in Montenegrin society. However, such a conception of identity – both religious and national – implicitly also argues that Montenegro is still socially organised in clans and is, therefore, a tribal state. Montenegro is not still a tribal society; however, the cult of Duklja and MOC’s religious identity could perhaps not be understood as a specific type of ethnos or nationhood but rather as an identity of kinship that survived within the clan structures of Montenegro and has been revived today. Even the pro-Serbian author Vlahović (1995, 157–168) identified the clan system in his text and the tribal structures as quite important factors in Montenegro. In his opinion, this is the explanation of Montenegrin identity, which he claims is a clan identity, unlike the Serbian identity, which is an ethnic one (Vlahović 1995). Kolstø’s definition of a historical identity as a *sui generis* or *antiquities* myth support such a notion. The historical identity needs to be linked through the ages, and the clans and families ensure this through the link of blood. It becomes a succession through kin and blood. The Serbian–Montenegrin word for people (*narod*, *nanodots*) bears reference to that because it also refers to a broader concept of family or blood bond between kin and clan. A Montenegrin religious identity based on such a concept of kinship is not far from nationalism because it is still based on the idea that all members belong to a delimited and sovereign connected community, which is the central part of the classic constructivist definition of a nation (Tomka & Szilárdi 2016, 81–85). This discussion is much broader and comes down to the question of what a nation or people is and whether it makes sense to expect a complete ethnogenesis from the middle ages and onwards (Curta 2007, 6–35; 2006).

MOC’s revival of the Dukljan cult as a forerunner for a Montenegrin national identity must be seen as several interlinked processes. It is a

continuation of the Montenegrin nationalist sentiments that date back to the civil war of 1918–1920. It is also a nation-building process in which a specific religious sacralisation of history occurs. The process of Church- and nation-building within the MOC is a cultural and political process of differentiation whereby the Church and the nation are claimed to be holy. The differentiation process plays into the creation of the *sui generis* and antiquity myth, which stress the Dukljan-Montenegrins as the true descendants by blood in the land. The mutuality and the long period of the medieval Serbian Kingdom are rejected as something external, threatening and hostile to the Montenegrins, wherefore the Nemanja rulers are labelled as “violent” and “autocratic”. This process resembles, to a large degree, how Hastings (1997) argues that ecclesiastical agents construct nationhood.

SOC, in contrast, stresses the mutuality and the local saints of Montenegro’s relation to Serbian Orthodoxy more generally, such as St Arsenije and St Basil. Despite the controversies and debates over sites and saints between MOC and SOC, it is quite apparent that the SOC targeted their effort against the government rather than MOC. The SOC effort of rebuilding a large-scale strategic infrastructure of memory consisting of sites, shrines and saints throughout Montenegro was intended to be an everlasting powerbase for SOC – a powerbase with both a secular and a religious purpose. The secular reasons were, first and foremost, to secure land and revenues from local communities and pilgrims, who, in turn, received religious services. The repopulation of Montenegro of the priest, monks and nuns could only be feasible through this. The infrastructure has become indispensable as a resource, which became apparent in the confrontation with the DPS government. The religious reasons were to re-establish the Church after communist rule and secure its sacred sites and shrines – the deeper “religious ideology”, as Michel de Certeau calls it. The next chapter focuses on how this reconstruction of the past was practised and discussed in other Eastern Orthodox countries after communism.

Chapter Six

Outlook on the politics of history writing in Eastern Europe

The definition and observation regarding the historiographical practice of the Orthodox communities have so far been limited to the two communities in Montenegro. De Certeau's observations, which initially concerned the Western European form of history and religion, apply beyond these confines, particularly to many Eastern Orthodox communities. Several Orthodox institutions have attempted to rewrite and rethink their history similarly throughout today's formerly communist-controlled Eastern Europe, in which the Eastern Orthodox communities have been revived. This reinterpretation of history might follow the same historiographical lines. This outlook attempts to broaden the observations and discuss if other Orthodox churches have followed similar lines.

A defining factor in Montenegro is that the revival of the religious communities and the renewed historiographical practice coincided with the political changes in Yugoslavia. A similar political transition and return of traditional religious communities to society at large is a common feature for many Eastern European states. In many of these states, the Orthodox Churches have also been the subjects or agents for

further nationalisation the Church, as Vasilios Makrides (2013) notes. The nationalisations in the former Eastern bloc do, on the surface, display similarities with what is discussed and analysed so far. The following three sections enlarge the scope of the enquiry and make some more general points of observation regarding the contemporary historiographical practice of Eastern Orthodox communities throughout Eastern Europe. In doing so, it might highlight a more general form of historiographical practice of the Eastern Orthodox Churches after communism. This comparison is mainly based on other scholars' work on the particular cases in question. So it is, to a large extent, dependent on the validity of their conclusions.

North Macedonia: The history of the Archbishopric of Ohrid revisited

Aleksander Zdravkovski and Kenneth Morrison (2014) argue that there are many similarities in the now historical struggle between the former unrecognised Macedonian Orthodox Church (MaOC) and its Serbian counterpart in North Macedonia and the parallel conflict in Montenegro between the Montenegrin and Serbian churches. From an academic point of view, the similarities are also noticeable in the studies of both countries, which are often strictly social scientific and rarely go further than the conclusion that the Macedonian Orthodox Church is an extension of Macedonian nationalism and an integrated nationalist institution – similar to the conclusions about Montenegro (Cepreganov et al. 2014). However, the difference between Montenegro and North Macedonia regarding their churches is noticeable. The unrecognised Macedonian Orthodox Church (MaOC) was created with great interference by the local authorities and even the leader of Socialist Yugoslavia in the 1950s and 1960s. The Church unilaterally declared itself autocephalous from the Serbian Orthodox Church in 1968 (Alexander 1979). The Macedonian Orthodox Church is, therefore, today, practically speaking, the major religious institution for the Orthodox population who also identify themselves as Macedonians (64 % of the total population of North Macedonia). This statistic is in contrast to Montenegro, where



Image 5: Orthodox Montenegrin priest calling to war (La Guerre D'Orient, 1878, Source: Reuters)

state interference in the current conflict was relatively late (2000) and did not entail significant resources to the unrecognised Church – perhaps this is why the Serbian Orthodox Church (SOC) has managed to persevere its position as the major religious organisation in Montenegro. The ecclesial positions of the churches today in Montenegro and North Macedonia are quite the opposite regarding resources and adherence, but they are alike on a structural level. In both countries, a branch of the SOC is pitted against a local unrecognised Orthodox Church (Šljivić & Živković 2020). Alternatively, so was the situation until May 2022, when

the MaOC received a canonical status, which meant that the situation had now changed.

The construction of the modern form of the Macedonian Orthodox Church and its historiography is a process that, however, began before the fall of communism – and therefore, the process of differentiation from its Serbian counterpart (as well as Bulgarian and Greek) is older than the similar process in Montenegro. Montenegro might have had a deeper and older tradition for independence during the Petrović-Njegoš dynasty (16–19th century) compared to North Macedonia. However, the current discussion about Montenegrin independence is still more recent than in North Macedonia. This situation is also visible in the continual division between pro-Serbs and pro-Montenegrins in Montenegro, which is hardly the case in North Macedonia, where most Slavic-speaking people identify them as Macedonians and as Macedonian Orthodox. In North Macedonia, there are hardly any Serbian Orthodox communities or local Macedonians who identify as Serbs, according to most polls (except a small ethnic Serbian community). This situation might also be the reason for the SOC's willingness to acknowledge the MaoC in 2022. Ljupcho S. Risteski and Armanda Kodra Hysa (2014) note how many parts of the nationalisation programme of the independent Macedonian state, now North Macedonian, have not involved the Church nor targeted the Serbs. The major rivals of the revived national identity of Macedonia are, to a higher degree, Greece and Bulgaria, which historically also controlled the North Macedonian region far longer than any Serbian-dominated state. The long centuries of Greek Byzantine and Phanar rule and the two Bulgarian medieval empires and Bulgarian rule during the World Wars dominate the region's history. The period under the medieval Serbian empire and Serbian-dominated Yugoslavia is far less influential and much shorter. The symbolic struggles in North Macedonia over national symbols (the flag), sites (Ohrid) and persons (Alexander the Great, Tsar Samuel or Mother Theresa) are struggles with Greece, Albania and Bulgaria and are mainly connected to state and national formation rather than ecclesial institutions (Risteski & Hysa 2014).

This does not mean there is no process of localisation of the religious order and an acute sense of historiographical practice within

the MaOC. It is, however, less pressing and confrontational than in Montenegro. A closer look at the MaOC reveals that national elements are a strong feature of the Church's social identity, as Nenad Živković (2014; 2019; 2020) notes. In the Macedonian ecclesial narrative, the differentiation from the Serbs is crucial. However, there also seems to be a need to distance the Macedonians from the Greeks, the Bulgarians and even the Albanians. The Macedonian Orthodox Church faces rather a sort of multi-differentiation of identity against a series of churches, which is not present in the bipolar ecclesial struggle in Montenegro (Živković 2020).

The issue of the localisation of the religious order and differentiation is most visible in the case of the Ohrid monasteries (among other St Naum Monastery), its legacy and the recent schism within the Macedonian Orthodox Church. Ohrid and St Naum were the ecclesial centres created by St Clement and St Naum of Ohrid, pupils of St Constantine-Cyril and St Methodius, in the 8th and 9th centuries (Fine 1991, 124–125). The Church of Ohrid later became home to the medieval autocephalous Bulgarian Church during the reign of the Bulgarian tsars in 934 until it was finally abolished under the Ottoman rule in 1767. The centre was Slavic and Greek and is said to be where the Cyrillic script was invented. MaOC claims to be the true descendant of the Ohrid Church and thereby denies the pan-Slavic, Bulgarian, Serbian and even Greek influence and control over the Ohrid Church (Gjorgjevski 2017). The history of Ohrid, St Clement and St Naum is, therefore, also where MaOC's manifestation of its conception of itself as independent in rivalry with the Greek, Serbian and, in particular, the Bulgarian Church is most visible. The Bulgarian Orthodox Church (BOC) claim to be the true heir to the medieval Bulgarian Church in Ohrid and the tradition of St Clement and St Naum. BOC poses a greater "symbolic" threat to MaOC than its Serbian counterpart.

In the particular case of Ohrid, the historiographical practice of MaOC fits the pattern identified in Montenegro in which long-gone sites, saints and institutions are claimed as constituent historical parts. Unlike in Montenegro, this is not done in opposition to one counterpart but rather to a range of counterparts – primarily the Bulgarians. However, the scale and intensity of the conflict are lower despite the

larger number of opponents. MaOC has tried to reconnect with the BOC several times before 2022 (Živković 2020, 224–25). It was even in union with the Pimen part of the BOC during the Bulgarian Church's schism in the 1990s, which was also the case of the MOC until the death of Metropolitan Pimen (Enev) in 1999. So, despite the need to claim these sites and deny the Bulgarian influence, it has not led to an intense church conflict between the Macedonian and Bulgarian clergy simply because the BOC of today does not officially claim North Macedonia and its Slavic population as a constituent part. MaOC is, therefore, not in an open battle for “souls” and “land” but only for recognition and a legitimised canonical status (Živković 2020).

The major battle for “souls” began in 2002 and ended in 2022. This struggle was between the SOC and the MaOC after a failed attempt to renegotiate their relationship, allowing the Macedonian Church to return to a canonical Orthodox status in 2001 (the so-called Niš-agreement). The deal fell through due to the Macedonian bishops and synods' refusal to change the name of their official Church to the Archbishopric of Ohrid (AO) after severe criticism from Macedonian public opinion and the government (Živković 2014, 53–67). In the aftermath of the failed deal, a local Macedonian bishop, Jovan, accepted the deal and was appointed by the SOC as the new autonomous Archbishop of Ohrid in 2002. Archbishop Jovan and his breakaway Church AO were quickly met with severe pressure from the state and his former Church, the MaOC. He has since been imprisoned several times, and his Church was continually harassed. AO and its conflict provide a point of departure into the inner workings and forms of historiography practised in this more Serbian-oriented church structure on Macedonian soil until 2022. A key place in which the structures of history are expressed is Archbishop Jovan's *Brief History of the Ohrid Archbishopric* (Jovan 2008) (Mac.: Кратка историја на охридската Архиепископија). AO seeks to recreate in this text a renewed Orthodox infrastructure around Ohrid in which the close connection between Macedonia and Serbia is preserved, but most crucial is the line of succession from the first Slavic bishops of Ohrid to Jovan's own time, which is the main narrative. A striking feature of Archbishop Jovan's writing is the balance with which national and ethnic categories are presented. Macedonian ethnic independence

is hardly dealt with, and the differentiation between Bulgarians and Greeks is minor.

Instead, mutuality is stressed, and the universality of the Church is a key focus. The balanced character of the narrative is because the text is not being intended as an address to Macedonians exclusively. However, it is also meant for the other canonical Orthodox Churches, which are called upon to recognise their shared history in the narrative of Ohrid. It is strikingly transnational and a key example of how a “stronger” national and ecclesial identity stresses the mutuality of descendants between the SOC and MaOC, as Kolstø pointed out (2005). A central document backing Archbishop Jovan’s version of the history of Ohrid after 2002 is the compilation of documents called *For the Kingdom to Come* (Vitanov 2005. Mac.: Заради идното Царство), which is a book published by Jovan’s Church with letters, addresses, etc. from the Archbishop. The book was published bilingually in Macedonia and English for a broader audience. It seems transparent that the Archbishopric calls for support from abroad, so the archbishop and his Church’s vision of history is inclusive and transnational. The differentiation is toned down, but the use of the Ohrid name, site and heritage in rivalry with the MaOC only holds up the claim to legitimacy and authority. Hidden beneath the transnational and inclusive narrative is a sharp jab at the Archbishop’s opponents in the MaOC. They are indirectly painted as bishops clinging to the national name – ethnophyletism, as the heresy of putting nationality before the Church is called in the Orthodox world.

Turning back to the MaOC, the Archbishopric was mostly ignored until 2022, especially after the state seized almost all the OA’s property. Several other localisation processes or a new form of Macedonian Orthodoxy are at play, which does not relate directly to OA, SOC or BOC. Of course, Ohrid plays a major role, in particular, due to the saints St Clement, St Naum, St Cyril and St Methodius, who are to some extent claimed as Macedonians. As a professor at a Macedonian Orthodox institution writes: “The Ohrid Archbishopric was restored as the Macedonian Orthodox Church in accordance with the well-established church tradition and practice by other Orthodox churches” (Borisov 2017, 52). In such a statement, the MaOC’s historiographical practice of claiming the saints and sites of Ohrid follows a pattern that

can be recognised from Montenegro. The heritage of Macedonia is seen as strictly Macedonian, denying the pan-Slavic presence. In addition to this, similar to the SOC's neo-martyrs in Montenegro, the MaOC has begun to sanctify local ecclesial figures.

An example is Father Gabriel (civil name Mijalce Parnadziev, 1926–1990), who was elevated to sainthood in 2017 on the fiftieth anniversary of the MaOC's declaration of autocephaly. St Gabriel is closely connected to the Lesnovo Monastery, founded by another St Gabriel of Lesnovo (11th century). The older St Gabriel is often regarded as a Bulgarian hermit, but through the MaOC's process of sanctification of the newer St Gabriel of Lesnovo, the elder one is now more closely associated with the MaOC. The old monastery of Lesnovo is in this process also claimed (Velev 2017). This historiographical practice of claiming sites and saints in the case of St Gabriel and Lesnovo resembles, to a high degree, the one practised by both the MOC and SOC in Montenegro.

The MaOC has the opportunity to follow that road of practised historiography because there are several historical materials and sites in Macedonia that could be the bricks in a larger narrative. Metropolitan Theodosius (Vasil Iliev Gologanov, 1846–1926), an exarch of Skopje from 1885, and the Macedonians who fell in the Ilinden uprising in 1903, could be the next in line for sanctification by the MaOC if the pattern from Montenegro is followed. The deeper structure of the Macedonian ecclesiastical revival is the reaffirmation of Macedonian independence in Socialist Yugoslavia, which has now gone hand in hand with ecclesial independence (Alexander 1979, 249–289). The historical background to the formation of both the Macedonian republic and Church in socialist Yugoslavia was that the previously formed Bulgarian, Serbian and Greek nation-states all claimed Macedonia on the eve of the Balkan wars and in the First World War. These claims and the subsequent wars in the 20th century made the modern Macedonian differentiation process necessary much sooner than the Montenegrin – but, as discussed above, the national symbolic construction of Macedonian ethnic identity is not entirely church-bound. The process is a sort of multi-differentiation in contrast to the bipolar one in Montenegro. The Church is not as needed in Macedonian nationalism as in Montenegrin nationalism. However, the state still intervenes on behalf of the Church and

imagined nation in matters such as against the AO backed by parts of the SOC. The history of the MaOC is a continual state matter, but not as acutely as in Montenegro. In the Macedonian case, the Serbian-oriented AO illustrates another form of historiographical practice: the formation of institutions as outlets of historical interpretation. The SOC-backed Archbishopric from 2002 to 2022 drew on the historical legacy of Ohrid as a source of legitimacy and authority. It thereby mirrors the MOC, a recent institution that likewise claims its legitimacy and authority based on a claim of being the descendant of a long-gone historical institution.

All of this changed dramatically and swiftly in the spring of 2022 when the ecumenical and the Serbian patriarch acknowledged the MaOC under the name of the Ohrid Archbishopric. The Niš-agreement of 2001 seemed to be enacted, so the MaOC became a canonical church. The deeper consequences and impact of these changes remain to be seen. However, the turn of events was almost unanimously welcomed by all Orthodox churches – even the Bulgarian despite some initial respite on using the Ohrid name. The reason behind this swift resolve of the MaOC issues could be many – ranging from the war in Ukraine and conflicts in the Orthodox world that might have pushed all involved into finding a solution before matters got out of hand. Another crucial background seems to have been the change of patriarch and much of the synod of the SOC because several of the older generations in the synod had passed away during the COVID-19 pandemic. Regardless of the background, 2022 meant that the MaOC generally prevailed as the prime heir to the Ohrid Archbishopric with Serbian, Greek and even Bulgarian blessings. It is perhaps one of the few peaceful modern examples of such a transition.

Bulgaria: The homecoming of national neo-martyrs

The ecclesial disputes and issues at hand in former Yugoslavia differ from the broader post-communist Orthodox world of Eastern Europe. Yugoslavia, with the late dismantling of the framework of the socialist federation in the 1990s, became a hotbed for national and ecclesial

rivalry in the breakaway nations, such as Montenegro and Macedonia discussed above. Outside of Yugoslavia, almost all the traditional Orthodox nation-states of the 19th and 20th centuries have remained quite stable since the end of the Second World War, except for the regions that had formerly been a part of the Soviet Union, such as Ukraine and the Baltics. The relative stability of Greece, Bulgaria and Romania in the 1990s contrasts Montenegro, Serbia and Macedonia, which may have also made a contemporary reshaping and revival of a national Orthodox historiography unwarranted outside of Yugoslavia. On the other hand, these more stable states have experienced the same political transformation away from communism or authoritarianism as the Yugoslav republics since the 1980s, which might have opened the same window of opportunity for the Orthodox churches. A suitable case for discussing this is Bulgaria, which has substantial elements and structures in common with the other Balkan states of Yugoslavia. Bulgaria has been a nation-state since its creation in 1878 and through the period of Moscow-oriented communism, much in contrast to Yugoslavia. Carsten Riis (1999), Daniela Kalkandjieva (2014; 2014b) and others (see Hopkins 2009, 4–6), focus precisely on the relationship between state, nation and Church in the historiography of Bulgaria. These works provide suitable roads into the question of how historiography has been practised in the Bulgarian Orthodox Church (BOC) and Bulgarian society after communism and whether these patterns depart from what has been noted in this thesis on the Orthodox churches in former Yugoslavia.

Riis (1999) discusses in detail the historiography and Eastern Orthodoxy in Bulgaria, emphasising the Ottoman period and its consequences. The main argument by Riis (1999) is that national and ecclesial independence are closely tied together, which is primarily seen in historiography from the 18th century onwards. The two main paradigms of these national historiographies of Bulgaria are, according to Riis (1999) and Hopkins (2009), a “theory of catastrophe” and a “theory of continuation”. The second theory of continuation is a narrative in which the BOC is the guardian and safe keeper of the Bulgarian nation throughout history. This paradigm stresses a continual close link between state, nation and Church from the conversion of Khan Boris I in 965, across the

Ottoman period, until the creation of the Bulgarian nation-state. All the “Bulgarian” churches of these different states are seen as a continuation of each other by BOC today. Hopkins (2009, 63–80) traces the continuation theory in Bulgarian historiography back to work known as *Slavo-Bulgarian History* from 1762 by the Bulgarian monk Paisii of Hilendar (1722–1773). Paisii’s main argument was that the Slavic churches of Ohrid and Tarnov were independent Bulgarian churches. Following Paisii, the first major modern work on the Bulgarian Church was written by Marin Drinov (1838–1906) in 1869, which centres on the ecclesial development of the Bulgarian Orthodox Churches during the time of the medieval Bulgarian Empires (Riis 1999, 140; Drinov 1869). According to Riis (1999), Drinov’s work was written to support the claim for Bulgarian ecclesial independence in the Ottoman realm prior to national independence in 1878 as a continuation of Paisii. The connection between the state and Church, exemplified by Drinov, became the major historiographical paradigm of history in Bulgarian academic and ecclesial works on Bulgarian history. As Riis portrays it, this tradition of historiography has continued almost uninterrupted from 1869 until today. Even during the communist period, the tradition was intensified in the late 1980s with an increased emphasis on the connection between national identity and religion. The major reason for this increased focus in the late 1980s was not a need to delimit the Orthodox nation from other rival Orthodox nations. The purpose was rather to marginalise the Muslim minority of Bulgaria, which became a key feature of the late communist political campaign of national reawakening from 1985 onwards (Riis 1999, 42–47; Eminov 1997). Kalkandjieva notes that the “Bulgarian Orthodox Church [...] is widely used in Bulgarian historiography as a notion that de facto embraces several historical entities”, which underlines the predominance of the continuation theory that disregards the differences between the medieval Church of Boris I in the 970s and the renewed Bulgarian Patriarchate after the Second World War (Kalkandjieva 2014, 114). Riis especially points to Dimita Angelov as a modern proponent of that theory after the fall of communism and critically discusses in his thesis both Angelov’s influential Bulgarian monograph and his summary of the book in an English article on Bulgarian history from 1992 (Riis 1999, 211–224, see Angelov 1992, 13–27).

In Angelov's (1992) historiographical narrative, the BOC has not needed to be demarked in opposition to another so-called Orthodox Church after communism, as in North Macedonia and Montenegro. Bulgaria has been differentiated within its own "national" context – a differentiation separating Bulgarian Muslims and Christians. Bulgaria's long centuries under Ottoman control, with the Christian Church as the main guardian of the nation, is the main theme in this contemporary historiography, in which the main conflict of Bulgarian history is portrayed as one between Orthodoxy and Islam rather than between different Christian communities (Kalkandjieva 2014, 179–180). Hence, unlike in Montenegro and North Macedonia, the differentiation has not targeted other national Christian communities. Instead, it has focused entirely on a different religion, which it tries to mark as alien to the (imagined) nation. In a way, this has also occurred in Yugoslavia between Catholics, Muslims and Orthodox Christians. This differentiation between Christians and Muslims in Bulgarian historiography is closely bound to the theory of "national catastrophe", which is identified in Bulgarian historiography in detail by Michiel Kiel (1985) and further discussed by Riis (1999, 88–93). In short, this historiographical theory of disaster is mainly related to the Ottoman period, which is seen as a period of national Orthodox catastrophe for the Bulgarians that almost led to the disintegration of the nation, state and Church. During this "Ottoman yoke", the Orthodox Bulgarian nation sought refuge in the ruins of the churches and monasteries from where the national awakening could begin. This narrative of national disaster is a central part of the national mythology and a key argument justifying the national reawakening in the 19th century, which is also visible in former Yugoslavia, Greece and even Russia. Kolstø (2005) links the theory of national disaster to the myth of martyrdom or *antemurale* in which the Orthodox nations sacrificed themselves as the defenders of Christendom's outer wall against the Islamic invaders. These narratives provide that national history with other sacral power and become a constituent part of the nationalisation.

An underlying premise in this theory is that the Church became the fortress of the nation from which a continuous line runs from the medieval period until today. In the continuation theory and the catastrophe

one, the difference between the Islamic tradition with its Muslim settlements in Bulgaria and the “indigenous” BOC is stressed. The differentiation process is not an inner Orthodox or even an inner Slavic one, but between different religions. The need for religious differentiation between Orthodox and Muslims might also explain why particular Bulgarian neo-martyrs killed by the Muslim Ottomans take centre stage in Bulgarian historiography (Riis 1999, 158–182). Kalkandijeva (2014, 169) notes that it was not only the Bulgarian neo-martyrs but also ancient Bulgarian martyrs and saints, such as St Ivan of Rila (876–946) and St Petka of Tarnov (13th century), which played an important role in the construction of a Bulgarian national movement in the 19th century. Neo-martyrs and nationalised saints from the Ottoman period exist across South Eastern Europe, but their prominence in the different contemporary churches differs. They are the centre of attention in Bulgaria because they highlight the difference between Islam and Christianity. The revered neo-martyrs of Bulgaria slain by the Ottomans are symbols of the difference between Islam and Christianity. So they underpin and support a historiographical narrative in which the Bulgarian Muslims are not indigenous. The practice of veneration of these saints supports and underlines the Orthodox Bulgarian Christian religious ideology as the supreme order.

Overall, the Bulgarian Orthodox historiography seems to be much more stable across the last three centuries and less in need of a revival than in its Yugoslav sister churches. The process of nationalising sites, such as the monastery of Rila, and saints, such as St Petka or the neo-martyrs, had already occurred in the 19th century. The notion that the BOC is the centre of the Bulgarian nation has stood almost unchallenged since then, and its internal debates are limited to discussions about whether or not the Macedonians should be considered Bulgarians or the extent of the damage caused by Greek interference in Bulgarian ecclesial matters has been (Riis 1999; Danforth 1995). There seems to have been no need to readdress the connection between nation, Church and state in Bulgaria following communism, which might have to do with the strikingly nationalist character of the late Bulgarian communist regime (Kalkandijeva 2014, 193–195). The stability of the nation-state and the prior construction of nationhood during the second and

third Bulgarian kingdom (1879–1945) and later in the communist era has made a historiographical renewal process unwarranted. The contrast between the relative ethnic homogeneity of the Bulgarian state and the multi-ethnic character of the Yugoslav state seems to have been a key factor. Contributing to this is the close cooperation between the Bulgarian Church and the communist regime, which led to no Bulgarian intellectual “diaspora” within or outside of the country. In contrast, the Serbian Orthodox Church built opposition to the communist regime in Yugoslavia through the works of Velimirović and Popović, further discussed in chapter 6, which also led to more than one dominating the national historiographical narrative.

This stability of the Bulgarian historiographical narrative was perhaps most acutely highlighted in the BOC’s schism (1992–2015), where a part of the Church broke away, declaring itself the true Church. The schism, led by Metropolitan Pimen (1906–1999), was mostly politically motivated and in opposition to the Bulgarian patriarch Maxim (1914–2012), who was suspected of being heavily involved in the communist-controlled spy network during the communist era (Broun 2004, 204–245; Hopkins 2009, 233–238). One might expect that this schism might have led to a renewed assessment of the ecclesial history of Bulgaria and a reassessment of the relations between Church, nation and state, but this was not the case. The conflict focused on what consequences there should be for those within the church hierarchy that had failed to sustain the Christian ideal. However, the conflict did not raise a renewed form of historiography or change the perception of the past, according to Hopkins (2009). This point underlines the fact that even the major political transformation of the Bulgarian state away from communism did not alter the interpretation of Bulgarian Orthodox history or create a renewed form of historiographical practice. As noted above, a major reason for this seems to be that the Church’s position in the Bulgarian nation and state was not altered or challenged during the communist period in the same manner as in Yugoslavia. The nationalisation process had already occurred in Bulgaria in the late 19th century without any new need to renew it, like the SOC. However, many of the same processes were at play during the construction of the Bulgarian national notion of itself and its Church in the 19th century as in the

former Yugoslav republics of today. Paisii's work on Bulgarian history, the revival of saints, martyrs, sites, etc., in Bulgaria is the same form of historiographical practice. Notably, the Serbian state and the SOC in the 19th century followed the same pattern as the Bulgarians, as Bojan Aleksov (2014) describes. Over the course of the 20th century, these two Orthodox nation-building projects evolved quite differently. The Bulgarian one was almost unchallenged and was not altered but intensified during the communist period.

In contrast, the Serbian perception of their own history and religious identity dramatically changed several times across the 20th century, providing grounds for various rival narratives' emergence. The drastic changes to the territory and state-supported forms of identity in former Yugoslavia provided a window of opportunity for a renewed process of nationalisation and for different forms of practice of historiography in which the rivalry between the churches of the Serbs, Montenegrins and Macedonians could become acute issues. Bulgaria's political and national turmoil has been of much lesser historiographical consequence after 1945 (Šljivić 2020).

A final outlook to Ukraine: From brotherhood to division

Considering the conclusions from the comparison with the Bulgarian case, it makes more sense to compare the renewed practice of Orthodox historiography in former Yugoslavia with current events in Ukraine. The relatively late independence of modern-day Ukraine and the renewed nationalism of Ukrainians follow a similar trajectory as the Montenegrin case, further supported by the fact that the unrecognised Kyiv Patriarchate shared, before 2018, a status similar to that of MOC. Furthermore, these two churches also formed an alliance. In the Ukrainian case, the continual conflict from the early 1990s until 2018 between the unrecognised Ukrainian-dominated Patriarchate of Kiev or Kyiv (UOC-PK) on one side and the Autonomous Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the Moscow Patriarchate (UOC-MP) on the other mirrors the Montenegrin case. In both cases, the country where the conflict occurs

(Ukraine and Montenegro) is a breakaway republic with an important tradition of its own. In this breakaway republic, a renewed form of nationhood (Montenegrin or Ukrainian) is then re-established. A new local Orthodox Church is formed and argued to be a much-needed revival of an older form of church institution region. Marko Veković and Mirosljub Jevtić (2019) have further unfolded these similarities and their political consequences. There are, however, still significant differences between the two situations. In Ukraine, a former Russian metropolitan with a substantial part of the Church and its clergy declared themselves independent in the 1990s. The conflict between the UOC-MP and UOC-KP was, therefore, in terms of resources, a more equal struggle to the one in Montenegro, which is also visible in the difference in the percentage of the population backing each Church and the number of parishes belonging to each (Wasyliw 2014, 317–18). The UOC-KP was, according to Thomas Bremer (2016, 17), only one-third of the size of the UOC-MP in 2016, which is still more than its Montenegrin counterpart. There are two further dimensions in Ukraine as well, which are different from Montenegro. Kyiv was the first home of the Russian Orthodox Church (ROC), according to ROC. Both churches, therefore, saw themselves as the continuation of Vladimir's or Volodymyr's baptism in Dneryn in 988, as described in the Primary Chronicle.

The two competing churches claimed the same origin in Ukraine. Thereby, many of the same saints and sites are claimed by both in stark contrast to the situation in Montenegro. The claim to the same "birth-certificate" in Ukraine makes a huge difference, intensifying the current Ukrainian conflict in historiographical terms. MOC would never dream of claiming the founder of the SOC, St Sava, or the many saints of the house of Nemanjić. Second, the church conflict in Ukraine is one with many more actors and one in which the Ecumenical Patriarch intervened in 2018. The Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church (UGCC) and the interwar Orthodox Church of Ukraine, the so-called Ukrainian Autocephalous Church (UAC), also played a role in the lead-up to the schism of 2018 (Wasyliw 2014 Mykhaleiko 2020). So to sum up, the similarities are apparent, but so are the differences.

These issues have even intensified and become more complex after the Russian invasion of Ukraine in 2022, which continue, while these

words are written. This invasion has seriously changed and altered the trajectories of Orthodoxy in Ukraine – and the national movement and civic identity. From the onset of the war, and regarding the focus of this book, the significantly altered position of the Autonomous Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the Moscow Patriarchate (UOC-MP) is most remarkable. Metropolitan Onufriy (Berezovsky, born in 1944) spoke directly against the Russian invasion and indirectly against his superior, Patriarch Kirill (Gundyayev, born in 1946), from the onset of the wars. Amongst the UOC-MPs, they quickly followed a widespread protest, where priests stopped using the name of Kirill in their liturgy. It is difficult to discern the short-term and long-term effects, and this section should rather be read as one that draws the lines up prior to the invasion.

A thorough investigation of the Ukrainian ecclesiastical case prior to the war of 2022 and even the split of 2018 is found in Andrii Krawchuk and Thomas Bremer's (2016) and Elizabeth A. Clark and Dmytro Vovk's (2020) anthologies, which provides inroads into the inner dynamic and historiographical structures of the conflict. In Alfons Brüning's (2016) contribution to Bremer (2016), two different streams of national and ecclesial traditions are detected in the historiography of Ukraine. One tradition claims Kievan Rus' and Vladimir the Great's baptism in 988 as origin to the Russian state and Church. This "Russian" Kievan tradition and lineage of culture is argued to have been persevered and further developed in Moscow following the defeat of Kyiv in 1242 to the Mongols and the later incorporation of Kievan lands into Lithuania. This tradition is the basic historiographical structure of the UOC-MP in which the early sites and saints of Kievan Rus are claimed as Russian. It bears many similarities with the Bulgarian historiographical narratives of continuation and catastrophe. The other tradition argues that Prince Volodymyr's (a Ukrainian form of the name Vladimir) baptism began a Kyivian tradition, which survived through the centuries in concord with the Catholics and the Uniate Church of the West following the Unions councils of Florence in 1439 and Brest in 1596. This Kyivian tradition stands in opposition to Moscow-based rule. According to Brüning (2016), these two historiographical narratives exist in a variety of forms ranging from the complete denial of the Russian heritage and a

pro-Western-Catholic orientation in the UC of Western Ukraine, a more balanced one in the UOC KPs, to a complete denial of the Kyiavian one in the Moscow-oriented OUC-MP. These historiographical streams and the practices attached to them take on a form much like the ones in Montenegro and Macedonia (Brüning 2003). As such, the Ukrainian conflict resembles the Montenegrin one in historiographical terms with a bipolar differentiated interpretation of history.

This issue is further unpacked by Andriy Fert (2020; 2020b), who, in detail, shows how these narratives in UOC-MP and UOC-KP were developed during later communism and in independent Ukraine. Fert concludes (2020, 207) that UOC-MP and UOC-KP have formed two different narratives of the history of Orthodoxy in Ukraine. The UOC-MP narrative stresses the communality between Russians and Ukrainians, while the UOC-KP delineates and stresses the differences between the two. In that regard, the situation corresponds to the Montenegrin case.

Yuliya Yurchuk (2019) shows that these narratives draw on ideas already formed during the World Wars. In this period, Ukraine was shortly independent before becoming a Soviet province. The historical parallels between MOC and UOC-KP are, therefore, deeper. Both churches' narratives of self derive from the interwar period and the break-up of the Great Powers in the First World War. This period shaped a new form of national identity, and the local memories, saints and sites became their backbone. Remarkable in Ukraine and Montenegro, local memories and ideology survived and resurfaced in the breakdown of Communist rule.

The political changes and independence in Ukraine and Montenegro after 1989 have shaped the scene in a way that made possible a historiographical shift in favour of a renewed form of local ecclesial-based independent nationhood. However, in both Ukraine and Montenegro, this has only been possible because there was already an existing tradition of independence and a historiographical narrative available, which stood in contrast to the one that tied the newly independent republic to a "mother nation", e.g. Russia and Serbia. The political window for change after communism in 1989 seems, therefore, not to have been the deciding factor but rather the "trigger" which woke the local forms of national ecclesial narratives from before World War I in rivalry with

the “mother nations”. In both Ukraine and Montenegro, the local wars after 1989 intensified the revival process even further – and the need for distancing and differentiation from the former “mother nation” and Church became more acute in the 1990s. War seems to be a crucial factor in the differentiation process, speeding it up. This conclusion might also point to the war in Ukraine that began in 2022. For the Yugoslav Orthodox churches and nations, the devastating war of Bosnia-Herzegovina was the turning point, which sealed the differentiation process into various new nations and even the independence of churches in Montenegro and North Macedonia. If this holds a general truth, the Ukrainian Orthodox churches will move more towards independence. The Ukrainian language and national identity will be thoroughly separated from the Russian after any form of conclusion on the war in Ukraine that began in 2022.

History and memory

Religious practice is, therefore, inseparable from that memory and history. The social practice of historiography, the formation of memories and their material form is history – not the bare facts. There is, therefore, no split between religion, memory, history and identity in Montenegro post-Yugoslavia, because they are all one as part of the perhaps largest structure of Christianity – that of salvation. All history and all memories are but one brick on the road to salvation, seen from the perspective of the Eastern Orthodox clergymen. The saints, their sites and the remembrance of them play the same role – as steps towards a union with God (Theosis). All history in Orthodoxy is one form of “integral knowledge” of salvation, as the Russian Slavophile Vladimir Solovyov would have put it (Solovyov 2008).

Chapter Seven

Towards a theory of nationalisation of the sacred

Michel de Certeau identified the close link between religion, history and social practice as a triangular relationship, as noted in chapter 1. The social practice is, in his analysis, the external evidence of a religious community's social identity and religious order. Historiographical practice is "the sociocultural localisation of religious ideologies", meaning that a practice is a social, cultural and physically located phenomenon visible in materials, rituals and symbols (Certeau 1988, 134).

Overall, I have argued that religious practice amongst the Orthodox communities in Montenegro should not simply be reduced to a form of political practice – nationalism. It is well-grounded that religion, particularly Orthodoxy, has become a social marker of identity for both Serbs and Montenegrins. However, this social form of identity is constructed by elites and is not strictly bound to or simply reducible to national identity. The example of the Badnjak ritual at Christmas in Montenegro is illustrative (Saggau 2018). The Christmas feast in the former Montenegrin capital, Cetinje, draws on various commemorative lines, which are not bound or limited to the debate about nationalism or the notion of national self. The ritual's meaning is found in



Image 6: Badnjak celebration in Podgorica, Montenegro 2021 (Source: AFP)

Montenegro's deeper history (Saggau 2018, 45–47), its events, persons and even the broader Slavic custom of log burning (the Badnjak). The practice of the Badnjak ritual is today presented as a national confrontation in most studies (Morrison 2015; Kube 2012), but this is only possible because the ritual is already highly symbolic and traditional. The ritual is constructed of proto-national material, upon which religious and nationalist movements can draw. The ritual existed before the nationalisation process and revealed other religious and ideological forms today than the national one. The Badnjak ritual, with its own history and the history of the Christmas cleansing and uprising in Montenegro, is part of an older Slavic Orthodox order. In de Certeau's words, an order is a sociocultural localisation of religious ideology, which determines where and how national identity can be brokered. On these grounds, I would argue that the strategic infrastructure or religious order is already in place in Montenegro. Places, rituals and symbols together are a point of departure from where the national movements can be formed. The national movements need to "nationalise" the sacred, as Glenn Bowman (1993) argues. This process can only be done when there is something to nationalise. This work is a social and political

process in which the former strategic infrastructure of the Orthodox system of beliefs (the sacred sites, persons, icons and so on) needs to be taken over and turned into national sites and persons, partly stripped of their religious significance.

It is crucial to note that this underpins Adrian Hastings' work (1997, 187–188). He points out that proto-national materials existed before the rise of nation-states. In chapter 1, I argued that the process of nationalisation should be studied as:

1. Institutionalisation.
2. Restoration, rebuilding or occupying sacred sites or buildings.
3. Recovering or claiming saints or sacred materials (crosses, etc.).
4. The use of other societal governance structures, such as the clan structure called the ecclesiology of kinship.

Returning to de Certeau (1988) and Kolstø (2005), it is striking how all forms of historiographical practice are deliberative processes of differentiation and demarcation, which form in the above-described nationalisation process. The sociocultural localisation of the religious order is a way to delimit a social group and claim ownership over a particular historical tradition – a deep religious and historical structure. De Certeau argued that “current events are the real beginning” of history (Certeau 1988, 11). This point is certainly true for nationalising the cults, saints and sites discussed above.

Towards a definition of Orthodox historiographical practice in Montenegro

According to de Certeau, historiographical practice is the making of an infrastructure of order, which governs and structures everyday practice. This structure is made out of physical materials, such as church buildings, icons, crosses, etc., performed through rituals and put into language through text, preaching, etc. Historiographical practice can be observed in concrete material, the performance of rituals or the discourses of texts. As such, it is bound to the social world and is an outlet of a form of a religious order – either affirmed, challenged or

reinterpreted. This structure needs constant supervision or will be neglected or fall to pieces. The overarching structure is made by the authorities of a given institution, such as the high-ranking clergy of the SOC, who supervise and reinterpret it constantly. Therefore, it differs from how everyday Montenegrins practice their form of religion and national belonging. However, according to de Certeau, the religious and cultural structures set the scene for the day-to-day space. The creation of this order is an elite project. It would look quite different if it were approached anthropologically at a local level and through the eyes of an everyday Montenegrin citizen. It might be simpler and more complex from an everyday angle because the individual must move tactically around these infrastructures.

The infrastructures in place are materials which can be revived or neglected. Most cases in chapter 5 show how neglected religious materials belonging to a bygone Orthodox order before communism have survived and are now reinstated after 1990. The revival is a social form of the reinterpretation of historiography and takes on different forms. The main ones studied here are the restoration, rebuilding or occupying of sacred sites or buildings and recovering or claiming of saints or sacred materials (crosses, etc.). These materials are the building blocks for a larger infrastructure for a certain religious order, called a historiographical religious ideology. The physical reconstruction of churches and the reinvention of rituals is the "sociocultural localisation of religious ideologies".

The practice of historiography depends on a series of differentiations. Sites, stories and materials must be claimed, forgotten or reinterpreted as alien for a new infrastructure to rise. The Serbian Nemanjić rule, as an example, needs to be remembered as alien and threatening by the MOC to pave the way for their narrative of an independent Duklja. This narrative neglects that the Nemanjić were crucial to constructing and renovating key sites, such as the monasteries on Lake Skadar. The reconstruction of new infrastructure is also not a process internal to one organisation. However, it is formed on the materials available, such as in constant rivalry or dialogue with other parts of society, like the government. Finally, a set of features determines the construction of these localisations of religious

orders. These are geography, topography (visibility), demography, the history of the sites, their political and economic importance, and finally, their entanglement and positions in connected religious or national narratives.

The theological, cultural and political trajectory of Eusebios' writings was grounded in a certain perception of history. History was the revelation of Christ and, in so being, as Florovsky notes, the very witness to the true tradition. In this Eusebian perception, the tradition was about to end with the second coming of Christ. God's creation was the core source for both secular (*imperium*) and religious (*sacerdotium*) power. This ideal model is based on a religious hope, with the underlying premise that the entire human world was the Christian empire: Church and state governed in *Symphonia* from one prime source towards one and the same end goal. Practically speaking, Emperor Justinian had perhaps already seen the weak points of this ideal model in the 6th century. So he tried to strengthen its foundations through his famous church laws, which would restore justice and the rule of law. With the advent of the Orthodox Slavic kingdoms and empires in the late Byzantine period, which later resurged after the Ottoman period in the heyday of nationalism, the Eusebian model for history and state–church affairs sufficed. The Montenegrin intellectual, Goran Sekulović, is perhaps right when he argues that there is an Eastern Orthodox rule for the close relationship between Church and state. However, Eusebios and the Justinian Byzantine world thought this relationship as a universal system which would never degrade to petty discussion between rivalling nation-states. Sekulović's point highlights how this former Eusebian-envisioned universal system has been nationalised and emptied of its former content. The core theological message of the Eusebian system was that the state and Church should work together towards the Kingdom of God because Christ was standing at the doorstep. This eschatological theology has been drained out today. Instead, the Church is another central pillar for the nation to raise if it wants independence. The Church is used to delineate the nation and trace an ethno-genese back to antiquity. There are sound historical and political reasons for that, with which a multitude of studies deal with. This situation is a wider European phenomenon, as Hastings describes (1997), which has only emerged in forming the

new nation-states of South Eastern Europe in the 19th century. It is crucial to remember that the modern-day versions of the Greek, Bulgarian, Serbian, Romanian and even Russian nations and churches are merely two hundred years old. They all claim a long line of tradition and to be a continuation of former structures, but this is not an unbroken chain. Orthodox Churches are reconfigurations of the ancient ones. Barely two hundred years ago, none of these churches was led by a patriarch, and their influence was kept at bay by the tsars or the sultans (Leustean 2014a; Aleksov 2014). Social scientific studies tend to forget this historical point and buy into what Riis called the “continuation” theory in which all historical institutions of the Church seem to be the same (see Zdravkovski & Morrison 2014). By doing so, many studies of Eastern Orthodoxy and state–church relations overlook the fact that the practical and political reality of a state running a national church rather derives from Petrine reforms in Russia, which imported the Protestant Caesaropapism of among others, the Anglican Church, as Kalkandjieva so sharply points out (Kalkandjieva 2011).

The chain of tradition for these churches is polyphonic and points in many directions, so visible in Ukraine, North Macedonia and Montenegro. St Jovan Vladimir can simultaneously be a Serbian, a Montenegrin, a Greek and even an Albanian Muslim figure. Vladimir of Kiev or Volodymir of Kyiv can be both a Russian and Ukrainian figure. Saints and sites are, in their sacred nature, universal, which today is delimited and cut into national pieces.

Religious ideology

In contrast to the Eusebian model, the historiographical religious ideology “already invested in history itself” (Certeau 1988) seems to differ from the Serbian Orthodox point of view. Serbian Orthodoxy draws heavily on a particular Serbian form and interpretation of Slavophil, Russian religious philosophy and neo-patristic theology. As discussed here, the major themes and theological presuppositions used to interpret history by the Serbian Orthodox Church in Montenegro come from this tradition. First, there is a general Serbian Orthodox presumption about the Church, closely related to Khomyakov and Njegoš’s concept

of collective community (Sobornost), which is shared by Amfilohije, Velimirović, Popović and theologians of the neo-patristic school, such as Florovsky. Second, the concept of God-man and All-man is a theme both in neo-patristic, and Serbian Orthodox thought, though slightly different and with different emphases. Third, the selected Serbian theologians of the 20th and 21st centuries discussed here share many stylistic and methodological traits with Florovsky and Meyendorff.

The neo-patristic synthesis or the return to the Church Fathers is essential, but for the Serbian Orthodox treated here, it means a return to St Sava above all. Both traditions contain the same way of writing history; there is a constant focus both on the individual thinker and, to some extent, their context, which at the same time is balanced (sometimes for better or worse) with society at large. Florovsky's description of the Russian theologians (1987) and their impact on their time could be read as the very scheme upon which Amfilohije's text on St Sava and Obradović is formed. The person is at the centre. History is marked by jumps, crises and pits, which are only avoided by the unity of history, humanity and God in the theologies of Florovsky and Amfilohije. At the same time, the attention is always kept on the individual's relation towards the divine. The attention is on the theosis and the gradual becoming of the All-man, which ensures the pathways to salvation for the Eucharistic congregation celebrating Christ and the Christ-like saints. The basis for Florovsky's historiographical theology and perhaps the lingering background of Solovyov's, Njegoš', Amfilohije's, Velimirović's and Popović's is the ideal of the monastic life deriving from Athanasius. This idea is to preserve the true tradition. Historical writings about St Sava are for the discussed Serbian theologians, above all the preservation of the true Christian Tradition, which Athanasius spoke of, but one without any ties to the state. The king or emperor might exist, but their true place is one believer amongst the rest, as St Antony replies to his disciples in Athanasius's *Life of St Antony*.

Velimirović's concept of Teoduljia, as a societal model beneath the slogan of a people-church for St Sava (svetosavlje), contrasts a continued eschatological vision of society retreating to the famous desert of monasticism. Florovsky argues that this desert is the opposite of the imperium in his recasting of Athanasius. Perhaps the real cause for the

rise of the Athanasius-inspired historiography and the Serbian variant of it is the theological bankruptcy of the Eusebian model. Its theological content was no longer viable and needed to be rethought. There is, therefore, not a refusal of Eusebios in the Serbian historiography, both practised and ideological, as analysed in this book, but rather just an attempt to think beyond the narrow constraints of the state. It is often argued, among others, by William Cavanaugh (2011), that the creation of the modern-day state is based on reusing the sacred nature of religion. In such an interpretation of state–church, the state swallowed more or less the Church in the Eusebian model and took over the *sacerdotium*. The neo-patristic historiography in the Serbian case seems to be a way to think beyond the parameters of the all-encompassing nation-state, which their Montenegrin counterpart has, in contrast, embraced. This Serbian vision is not a theocratic one in which the priest becomes the politician. It is rather an eschatological vision, which is far more radical. Its point is to transform the entire society into a monastery and eliminate the need for a state, the king and the politician.

The history of the saints or the nations?

The cults, which have been analysed in this book, provide insights into how these ideologies of Eusebius and Athanasius take on a practical social form today. The Montenegrin Orthodox Church's devotion to the cult of St Jovan Vladimir and the local dynasties of "Duklja" embraces the imagined historical nation-state. These rulers, which the MOC celebrate, are not entirely religious figures but founders of states. The Eusebian model of history is clear here, and as such, the state and the Church need to be founded on the nation for all three to play along. In reality, the Church and state become the final external symbols of the nation. It is the Eusebian model nationalised, and so is history, not the history of the Church, but that of a nation. MOC's point of view is that the state and the borders of the nation determine the limitation of their sight. This is why so much ink is used in the MOC's journal on the family trees of the various rulers of the Montenegrin medieval lands. The MOC's approach to history is shaped by the development

of Montenegrin historiography from the Montenegrin Kingdom and onwards, as described in chapter 5. As chapter 5 also argues, the main historiography that the MOC draws on is a variant of Montenegrin nationalism based on the writings of the illustrious person of Marko Stedimilja, which in itself is an odd turn of history.

In contrast, the SOC in Montenegro and the late Metropolitan Amfilohije did not seek to recreate a new state for the Serbian Church and nation (at least not now). As in Popović's writing, the state has dwindled and become but a shadow. The true form of the community is the Eucharistic gathering of the Church in which the *katholikós* or *Sobornost* becomes real. This collective form of gathering is the local Church, which can become one with God through the embrace of the All-man or God-man. These Christ-like figures discussed in chapter 5 of St Petar I Petrović-Njegoš, his nephew St Njegoš and St Jovan Vladimir are local examples that ensure the community's return to God. As such, they could be compared to St Sava and St Lazar, shepherds of the people. As a witness to tradition, history is bound to these All-men and their community through them. In this theological vision, the local community, the local Church, also becomes the people, as described by both Khomyakov and Njegoš. However, due to the conservative romanticism inherently inscribed in these concepts, it also becomes a form of "volk". It is perhaps not the same as the modern concept of the nation, strictly speaking, but it bears various similar traits. It is perhaps more like a form of continued proto-nation bound to the All-men and restricted, to some extent, by the continual stressing of the universality of the Church. In that respect, just as neo-patristic historiography is balancing between depicting the individual whilst arguing for the *Sobornost* (collective), it is also balancing between depicting the local Church whilst stressing the universal feature of becoming one in the body of Christ – an almost impossible job.

In conclusion, it is striking that all the rival churches in Montenegro and Ukraine use the same ways of practising historiography, whilst the "religious ideology" to use de Certeau's concept beneath is so different. Creating sites and history is made through the same worn-out tools, but the motivation differs. This issue might have to do with the fact that the historical, political and cultural circumstances for the two

different forms of historiography are the same. The MOC and SOC in Montenegro stand in the same context and with the same horizon. Their goals and ideologies might differ and contradict each other, but history is still made similarly.

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