

TERRITORIAL AND GEOGRAPHICAL COMMONALITIES: MEDITERRANEAN SEA AND ITS COASLINES

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Abstract

In the Serbo-Croatian or Montenegrin language, the term *sloj* (layer) refers to a quantity of material covering a surface, or which is located between other surfaces. In this case, when discussing territorial, geographical, and other similarities, I believe that the second meaning can be applied: the surface (row) that lies between other surfaces (rows).

This is the case of modern Montenegro, a small country between the East and the West, the Mediterranean and the continental part of the Balkan Peninsula, in a word – the case of several layers. The case of various rows, of matter and spirit, which can be found among other, similar, or even identical, rows. What is Boka Kotorska Bay, which saw all civilizations and is popularly called just Boka, which in Spanish means mouth, but a layer of one culture merging with the other and touching it, the case of a kitchen that takes the tastes of the other, the case of architecture that has so much in common with neighboring architectures in Italy, the case that chemically interferes with other cases in a retort called a living Mediterranean organism?

Compatibility, stratification, ambivalence, polyphony, to use only Greek words, but the key Greek words for understanding Europe, lie at the heart of the first knowledge of the world that the men from these common areas acquired. These are, in a way, not only the first impressions of life but the limits of knowledge in life. I think that

understanding Europe is very important for everyone, and especially today when self-understanding (self-awareness) has become a special layer of Europe. The citizenry of Europe, to use the words of old philosophers who, in the 19th century, used to say: “I am a citizen of Europe”, and its citizens face is essentially determined by communion – the emotion of communion and the intellect of communion.

I am glad that in this respected place, in the country with long civilization experience, we can speak analytically about common layers – architecture, music, cuisine, maritime, art, crafts, customs, folklore, anything that the spirit of communion suggests to our genetic memory.

Introduction

In the Serbo-Croatian or Montenegrin language the term *sloj* (layer) refers to a quantity of material covering a surface, or which is located between other surfaces. In this case, when discussing territorial, geographical, and other similarities, I believe that second meaning can be applied: the surface (row) that lies between other surfaces (rows).

This is the case of modern Montenegro, a small country between the East and the West, the Mediterranean and the continental part of the Balkan Peninsula, in a word – the case of several layers. The case of various rows, of matter and spirit, which can be found among other, similar, or even identical, rows. What is Boka Kotorska Bay, which saw all civilizations and is popularly called just Boka, which in Spanish means mouth, but a layer of one culture merging with the other, and touching it, the case of a kitchen that takes the tastes of the other, the case of architecture that has so much in common with neighbouring architectures in Italy, the case that chemically interferes with other cases in a retort called a living Mediterranean organism?

Compatibility, stratification, ambivalence, polyphony, to use only Greek words, but the key Greek words for understanding Europe, lie at the heart of the first knowledge of the world that the men from these common areas acquired. These are, in a way, not only the first impressions of life, but also the limits of knowledge in life. I think that understanding Europe is very important for everyone, and especially today, when self-understanding (self-awareness) has become a special layer of Europe. The citizenry of Europe, to use the words of old philosophers who, in the 19th century, used to say: “I am a citizen of Europe”, and its civil face is essentially determined by communion – the emotion of communion and the intellect of communion.

I am glad that in this respected place, in the country with long civilization experience, we can speak analytically about common layers – architecture, music, cuisine, maritime, art, crafts, customs, folklore, anything that the spirit of communion suggests to our genetic memory.

When we say a ‘layer’ in the Serbo-Croatian, in other words the Montenegrin language, it is supposed to refer to the mass of some matter that covers the surface, or is located between other surfaces. In our case, when discussing common, territorial, geographical, and other similarities, I believe that it is the second case: the surface (row) that lies between other surfaces (rows).

This is the case of modern Montenegro, a small country on the borders of the East and the West, the Mediterranean and the continental part of the Balkan Peninsula, in a word – it is a case of several layers, i.e., the case of various rows, matter and spirit, which are found among other, similar, or even identical, rows.

The Bay of Kotor, which is remembered by all civilizations, and we popularly call it Boka, which in Spanish means “mouth”, is a layer of a culture that intertwines with

the other, and touches it, like the case of a kitchen that takes the tastes of the other, the case of architecture that has so much in common with neighbouring architectures in Italy, a case that chemically interferes with other cases, in a retort, a living Mediterranean organism?

Compatibility, stratification, ambivalence, polyphony, pluralism, to use only Greek words, but key Greek words, lies at the heart of the first knowledge of the world of man from our region. These are, in a way, not only the first impressions of life, but the limits of knowledge in life. I think that understanding Europe is a very important thing for each of us, and especially important today, when self-understanding (self-awareness) has become a special layer - a special archaeography of knowledge. Citizenship in ideas, to use the words of old philosophers who, in the 19th century, wished to say: "I am a citizen of the city of ideas", it is essentially determined by communion, the emotion of communion and the intellect of communion.

I am glad that in this high place, in Turkey, a country with a long civilization experience, we can speak analytically about common layers - architecture, music, cuisine, marine art, art, crafts, customs, and folklore, about what our genetic memory suggests about the spirit of communion.

I want to list several types of typical community, several layers that are characteristic of everyone on the warm shores of the Mediterranean. I am convinced that it is a privilege to be a member of the Mediterranean family, and I see digging for common layers as swimming together in the pool as an intellectual excitement. Here I have time for two archaeological layers, out of many of them, for music and scholastics. The first layer let me use the metaphor, is a layer of hearing, the layer of instinct.

In the 9th century, the Persian geographer Ibn Khuradabih, in a philological discussion, refers to the lyre (*luru*) as an instrument favoured throughout the whole Byzantium. We hear the sound of the lyre half a millennium later, in the Renaissance, now called the *lira di braccio*, in the hands of Italian poets of the 15th and the 16th centuries.

A Montenegrin poet and astronomer, Ljudevit Paskvalic, mentions lyre exactly seven times, so far as we are aware from his two collections published in Venice in 1550 and 1551. He was admired by young Shakespeare and with his name signed two sonnets, in that brilliant season of his Mediterranean euphoria, in London in 1595, which the Kotor poet sang and signed in a Mediterranean anthology a decade earlier. One thing I am sure of, as I am sure of my pack of cigarettes, is that no one will deny Shakespeare's Mediterranean instinct.

The sound of the lyre, however, does not disappear here either. This instrument is later heard in our closest neighbourhood, as we Montenegrins say, "across the border," in Southern Dalmatia and Eastern Herzegovina. It changed its name, in Dubrovnik, into a diminutive, and now it is called *lijerica*, a small lyre, but our senses travel downstream with sound, through deep layers, to Ibn Huradabih.

I do not mind mentioning another instinctive layer, sound, common to every ear from the Black to the Adriatic Sea. It is a whistle, a Turkish *duduk*, although its popularity does not lie in vocal performance, on the lips, but in the instrument with the same name.

The word is Turkish, and the instrument is Armenian (UNESCO in 2005 proclaimed the Armenian *duduk* for the Masterpiece of the Intangible Heritage of Humanity). But, you will be surprised that this device left a trail on the southern coast of the Adriatic. Namely, when the village idler shows that his working habits are not a better side of him, our people call him, simply, *duduk*.

Duduk, it is understood, a musical instrument is equally common to Armenia, Turkey and Montenegro. However, our village idler seemed to play more *duduk* than to cultivate the field, so they gave it this attribute, not realizing that one day the UNESCO commission will abolish the artist's "sin".

As a young poet, in 1982, in Cetinje, with the publisher Obod, who, with certain right, invokes the tradition of a printing office with the same name, founded in 1494, the first one for South Slavs, I hesitated when trying to think of a title for my first collection of poems. I decided that the main word must be a lyre, so for some time I thought that it should be called the Lyre of Montenegro, but I gave up, and called my collection "Lyre in the purgatory". It is better this way, I said, it is better to expand the field of the poetic fight to the Mediterranean shores, because the purification is a typical Mediterranean attribute, Dante's one, and the local tone does not endanger any poet or poetry in general.

Mediterranean history should be studied not only separately, but also together. This is my understanding of Mediterranean layers, the mining of deep mines. Palimpsest. Pluralism. I am in a hurry to discover the next layer, which is not a layer of instinct but a layer of knowledge: universities. Scholastics.

The founding of the university on the Mediterranean coast is the most powerful signal sent by the scholastics to the 11th and subsequent centuries. The light of the lights flashed in Bologna in 1088. Scholastics created urban centres in the Mediterranean basin with previously unseen accumulation of shades in knowledge and education.

It was, in fact, the signal most needed for the Mediterranean world: a pluralistic context. Layers and layers have received their permanent form through institutions.

The madrasa, which was established in Istanbul by Sultan Mehmed II, exactly 564 years ago (1453), is a typical example of this extremely important Mediterranean layer - a layer of knowledge, a layer of education. The pluralistic context of the institutions enables the Mediterranean world, ever since the beginnings of literacy, on which the Mediterranean spirit rests, an insight not only in the image of the Mediterranean, but also in the image of the world.

The institutional picture of the Mediterranean, the institutional structure of its shores, may be the very top of the structure of institutions we know through history. Each institution has its own layer. Each layer is, on the other hand, an institution.

When I close my eyes, I like to imagine how this method fulfilled its fate, at the dawn of the scholastics, in 1709, perhaps in the last air of the sun with this irresistibly appealing name, just on one of the Mediterranean coasts; and the smallest, in the Bay of Kotor. And in the smallest town, Perast, where a high nautical school for the education of the nobleman Peter the Great was working in order to gain insight into the image of the marine world.

As I do open my eyes; I immediately see the second layer. Another archeography. Otherness. And I do so indefinitely - on the endless horizon of anticipation.