

Behind Invisibility and Silence – New Encryption of Female Contribution to Knowledge in Montenegro

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Women in Montenegro are invisible and excluded from different forms of publicity, which provides a constant topic for political academic and scientific community to critically reflect upon the existing situation and consider future steps. The aim of this work is to introduce a survey of a small, but significant number of works on women in Montenegro, created through the activist community by the labor of activists in the organizations of civil society and by the effort of scarce representatives in the academic community, among which the leading ones are : Mileva Filipovic, Lenka Blehova Celebic, Rajka Glusica, Nevenka Gluscevic, Jelena Radulovic, Aleksandra Nikcević–Batricevic, Natasa Krivokapic, Marina Martinovic, Vesna Kovacevic, Ervina Dabizinovic. I would like to indicate very solid foundations for the research of female contribution, together with the necessity of implementing gender component in all the research in Montenegro. This survey presents three major results: 1. The topic of female contribution to social development in Montenegro has not been thoroughly investigated; 2. Motivated by similar research in the region and around the world, the number of authors working with this topic is relatively small; 3. Montenegro has always had women whose generous contribution reflected in various domains- from arts, education and science to culture and sports.

My conclusion is as follows:

1. Necessity of introducing gender as the criteria of historical analysis;
2. Aiming research towards benefits and living standard of women, as well as transformation of the ratio between power and the existing gender hierarchy;
3. Research related to the experience of women as the largest social group in the entire population;
4. Introducing methods to widen the resources that exhaust female experience, but different from traditional methodology.

Key words: contribution, feminism, excommunication, patriarchy, gender, women in Montenegro.

This work has been developed for the conference *Women and Heritage; towards establishing Museum of Women in Montenegro*, within the project of *Inclusion of Gender Approach and Running the Cultural Heritage in Montenegro*. The Conference is organized by UNESCO, and conducted by NGO NOVA, in cooperation with National Committee of UNESCO, together with the Ministry of culture of Montenegro. Taking the concept of patriarchy into consideration on a daily basis I relate it to the very sensitive issue of female contribution to social development in Montenegro and elsewhere. Due to the fact that even nowadays patriarchy imposes political system with an incredible potential of transformation, I am trying to point to its vital component which has remained intact – the essence of any form of patriarchy and its metamorphosis lies in misbalance between male and female role in social development. The power inherent to men as social group in patriarchy has led to elimination and exclusion of any effort and labor women invested into conveying their experience into our civilization. Patriarchy with its power imposed on men makes women invisible. Thus, women are still in a position to fight for their place in society. Frequently enough, this fight is time-consuming, with no information to back it up, or any record about it. Female contribution to progress often makes a huge blank space.

Zarana Papic, a sociologist and feminist from ex-Yugoslavia, (1993), defines patriarchy as: “*historical category which is to be considered as such in order to fully understand its importance and dominant force over private and/or public relations between genders*”. “Male dominancy” as the crucial segment of this understanding of patriarchy together with its influence onto all the segments of society has affected female (in) capacity. The first one among female historians of women heritage, Gerda Lerner (1976), investigates “options of exploration and cognition of the particularity of historical female awareness”.

According to this author cultural determinative quality together with internationalized marginalization of women cause blank spaces in history and specify historical female experience. (Thus, this culture is determinative even for those that follow because they have no other option whatsoever). Being essentially aimed towards traditional historical science and “big themes” equals exclusion of the experience of the group deprived of power, the group not found in any of events including violence, war, or battle over the territory. Most often, women are found in the background, or on the outskirts, marginalized in the society. Possible and seemingly prosaic reasons like female poverty, as Virginia Woolf put it in 1929, in her essay *Owns Room*, determine the position of women in culture relating it to having personal working place and earnings to provide for independent life and thinking. Ever more frequent calls of social history for female experience shed light on the experience of this group deprived of its being vocal so far. On the territory of ex- Yugoslavia in the 1990s, on the waves of socialist system, women formally got their rights in different areas that are beyond women’s reach even today. In those days women from Yugoslavia won equality with men through their own contribution during World War II. During the 1990s bigger cities in what used to be united political and cultural region of Yugoslavia, saw birth of Centers for Women Studies where women could find answers to their questions of gender and identity. Organized female groups started to emerge together with academic women motivated to criticize political, cultural and scientific reality being aware of their own responsibility in the name of female history, to save information on various women - those in academic environment (Savic 2015), in political spheres (Suboticki 2012; 2014), in arts, education, and in history of feminism (Zaharijevic and others 2012; Duhacek 2015)

A comparatively small number of individuals and organizations in Montenegro are involved in systematic and scientific documenting of data about women both in the past and in present, plus it is not followed by critical assessment. Female associations in Montenegro were the first to open the political questions of violence against women, and the issues of female education as well. ANIMA Center for Women and Peace Education from Kotor, conducted the Program of Women Studies for ten years (20002-2012)¹. The participants were women from all over Montenegro. This program was the first of the kind not only in Montenegro, but in the region as well, since it gathered lecturers from all the Centers for women studies on the territory of ex-Yugoslavia. This one-year, alternative, and interdisciplinary program has not been thoroughly depicted or appreciated on the grounds of its contribution to introducing women into the public discourse. More than two hundred women have attended it so far. ANIMA Center has also initiated the foundation of INDOK Center – an initiative that was aimed at producing collective data bank, with the information on women all gathered at one place to be easily accessible in future, providing solid foundations for future research and systematic change of the position of women in society. This is perceived as the condition for facing patriarchy as a system typical of tendency to keep gender regime as found in experience and politics so far.

An integral part of this program was the project, *Memories of Women*, which produced a book of interviews with women aged about a hundred years, whose biographies proved sources to learn about history of society, and are still kept only as female experience and memory: *I remember – Identities of Women in Socialism*. Methodologically speaking, this is how women were turned into doers of action. This publication was issued in 2004. ANIMA Center also edits and issues the first magazine for feminist theory and practice ZINEC (24 numbers and two special editions), as well as PRESSJEK (9 numbers), press-clipping of daily press reflecting the topic of women in Montenegro. Reports and analyses are done monthly and annually. Up to the 1990s, Montenegro did not have female scientists to study the topic of women in the country.

Though, it must be noted that a historian Dimo Vujovic, in his book *The Princess Darinka – Political Activities 1855-1869*, (1968), draws attention to the remarkable contribution of the first Montenegrin princess, but only to prove the point that due to the fact that Darinka Kvekic was engaged in politics and diplomacy as male categories, qualified herself for an outstanding place in history. Another important work was published in 1969, by Titograd Institute of History, a collection of papers under the title *Women of Montenegro in the Revolutionary Movement 1918-1945*, providing abundance of facts and details about female participation and contribution in revolution and war against fascism in 20th century. Details about Liberation movement in Montenegro and Boka Kotorska that are found in this book, state the facts about 2,546 women among which 483 were killed, 1,754 were shot or hung, and 71 died in concentration camps. 12,108 women were imprisoned and/or sent to concentration camps.

¹ Program of Women Studies was adapted and accredited as the Educational Program for knowledge and skills acquisition in Gender Democracy, by the Center for vocational education of adults and National Committee of education for adults in Montenegro, in 2012.

In the period of 1990s, women in Montenegro (rarely men) publish their works appreciating topics about women from various theoretical perspectives. A few scholars to be identified for their significant contribution in this field in the period from 1996 to 2014, are Glusica (1996), Gluscevic (1996), Filipovic (2003), Radulovic (2009), Aleksandra Nikcevic – Batricevic (2010), Krivokapic (2010), Bulatovic (2014). The beginning of 21st century brought around increased production of books devoted to different women issues related to general movements of society changing from Yugoslavia, Federation of Montenegro and Serbiato Montenegro of today. These books highlighted not only the forgotten and invisible women, but the variety of their contribution as well. In 2002, Lenka Blehov Celebic, investigates the role and position of women of Kotor in Middle Ages, emphasizing the importance of researching social history in everyday life as opposed to political and national history. This research was motivated by *imago mundi* – picture of the world as created by men. The results of the research confirmed the misbalance –different position of women compared to men, but discrepancies between women themselves according to class hierarchy in the middle Ages on the territory of Boka Kotorska.

As the author of this text I want to stress the importance of scientific studies and academic portrait of Mileva Filipovic, PhD. Proffessor Mileva Filipovic is a sociologist whose scientific interests encompass the studies of gender as well. She is the author of a number of books, among which: *Introduction to General Sociology* (2002), and *Social Power of Women in Montenegro* (2003). As a translator from French language, she translated Pierre Bourdieu's book, *The Reign of Men* (2001). In her book *Social Power of Women in Montenegro*, she develops solid theoretical foundations for conducting a research, followed by empirical evidence about female social power and the position of women in society in the late 20th century. She found reasons for this research in the lack of scientific research dealing with changes caused by the war in the 90s, collapse of the system of real socialism and economy, and emerging of *competitive nationalisms* (Filipovic 2003, p. 12). The changes led to diminishing of women's civil and social rights and affected deeper submission of women in Montenegro, who were shifted to private sphere yet again. The author considers the concept of power as pervading in any relationship. Thus, this concept of power is approached through understanding the power as interaction and as institutional power. By this definition through interaction, she understands *social inequality in the ability to influence others regardless of their resistance*.

In order to explain the mechanisms of power of women she studies it through political, legal, economical, and educational interdependence. She also perceives power as the opportunity for more individuals *to meet their needs, aims and interests through social acts, disregarding others potentially involved in the same acts* (Filipovic, 2003, p. 10). Her analysis questions *the main determinism of the submissive position of women, its perpetuation, and the potential of the existing strategies for women emancipation to alter this position* (Filipovic 2003, p. 15). Theoretical stronghold of this research is in Pierre Bourdieu's structuralism theory of power introducing gender equality not only as mutual difference, but as the social relation of power as well. According to this theory power is in all spheres of social and cultural reproduction. The key issue is the gender-specified power, i.e. inequality between genders. Resulting from the social construction of female nature, this power prevails and produces inequality which is taken as socially justified. Filipovic understands power efficient through gender inequality to have asits base male legitimacy to any power under any social circumstances. In the interaction between men and women gender constructions, men take an active part inherent of power, whereas women are passive and impotent. Social interactions relate these two gender constructions in the way that male power generates female submission interpreting it as the nature of women social role. Filipovic continues claiming that women are taught to legitimize their own submission.

The author also points to the structure of gender divisions in men-centric Montenegrin society and in key areas – politics, economy, education. The invisible strategy of public / private prevails even in cases of transparent changes. Henceforth, economic evaluation of certain jobs prevailingly seen as female jobs (cleaning) and economic independence still do not set women free from the governing models. The situation is the same and seen in empirical evidence in the sphere of law and justice, where women do have political rights, but the basic misbalance between men and women has not been resolved. Positive discrimination as a possible form of intervention is a mere attempt of dealing with symptoms of a society where gender misbalance is still present. Nothing will be changed unless it is done systematically. Filipovic thoroughly investigates legal, parliamentary, executive, and economic power of women and concludes that their power is comparatively diminished. In the period between 2004 and 2014, a number of different publications and monographs about women came out.

Melanija Bulatovic makes a decision to select women to be introduced in her book *Women Map of Montenegro* (2004), using the criteria of “leading women in different walks of life”. In spite of offering short information about women, the intention is to encourage further research in this field.

The publication was supported by the Gender Equality Office. Lazar Seferovic, a historian, produced similar monographs: *Famous Women of Novi* (2012), and *On the Trace of Remarkable Women in Boka Kotorska* (2014). The former book introduces women born in the area of Herceg-Novi, whereas the latter covers a wider span both geographically and historically speaking. Andjelija Bulatovic’s work from 2010, *Women of Montenegro through Centuries*, presents details about life, their position and upbringing in Montenegro within the framework of agricultural society and strong impact of clans. Woman in such a society is closely tied to her family through different personal and social functions (wife, mother, sister). How “immature” woman is in patriarchy may be seen through her position in front of the law (represented by men). Plenty of details in this book present patriarchal society as deeply rooted, having no interest in introducing changes. The same idea is developed in another book by the same author *Montenegrin Woman in 20th century*. The role and position of woman is described from the legal, economic, biological, and psychological aspect both in rural and town families. The author identifies causes that led to changes and difficulties that accompany them. Levels of development are recorded since WW II, through legal position, work, education, health, politics, and marriage. She concludes that the last decade of 20th century witnessed considerable decrease in terms of the rights won and reinforced patriarchy.

Over the last years Montenegro has seen publications on its history coming from different communities. The first one to be issued was *History Reader: Women in Montenegro from 1790 – 1915* (2011), published by NGO NOVA, edited by Natasa Nelevic. This edition resulted from the clear recognition of invisibility and silence of historical science on the topic of woman in Montenegro. The reader includes a number of documents on almost all aspects of life of women in Montenegro through social development phases: childhood and girlhood, the choice of husband, maternity, house and around-the-house chores, female guilt and punishments, violence against women, the position of divorced women, property, single mothers-treatment and their position, illnesses and health care, women in war and blood revenge, education...almost all the topics to be found in the special branch of modern history – social history, an ever-growing field of interest. Senka Babovic Raspopovic, in her review of the Reader, points that the absence of women in historical research was “determined by the interest in political history in our country”. (Raspopovic 2011, p. 8) She questions gender as the issue of social power of those who make decisions on what directions research in our country should go.

Disclosing the existence of *Girls’ Institute of Empress Maria in Cetinje*, (1999), a historian, Marina Martinovic leaves space for running the research on the education of female children in Montenegro, but on the individuals whose biographies prove work of women who are excluded from the main stream. I myself was motivated by this topic and conducted a research on life of Divna Vekovic (1884-1945), the first midwife and dentist who got her education on Sorbonne university in Paris. This woman was the first to translate Njegos’s² *Mountain Wreath* into French (1917), created French-Serbian dictionary (1916) and Serbian-French dictionary (1924). Also, she produced ethnological collection of female folk costumes from the region of Vasojevici³, and was engaged in educating children. Divna Vekovic participated in activities important for society and culture, and emphasized the importance of peaceful conflict resolutions. I have devoted a special place in my work to the outstanding example of the first female ruler in Montenegro, Princess Darinka Kvekcic (1836-1892) who was trying to improve education for children in Montenegro, and was actively involved in home and foreign affairs of her country. Investigating lives of women in Montenegro, I was working on Ana Maria Marovic’s story, too. She was the founder of the Institute for Young Women in Venice (*Instituto Canal ai Servi*). Their alternative was the opportunity to work and make for their living.

All the works listed in the previous paragraph resulted as the part of ACIMSI doctoral programme of gender studies in Novi Sad, Serbia. My master’s thesis was retained in 2012, at the University of Belgrade, Serbia. *Presentation of female body in Montenegrin culture*, analyzes the position of female body in patriarchy culture as the position of imprisonment, and the potentials for liberation from the burden of stereotyping and being a mere instrument in patriarchy system.

²Petar II Petrovic Njegos (1813- 1951), Montenegrin ruler and national poet

³Vasojevici in the north- east of Montenegro

An important moment in the research of female contribution was another work which came from the academic community in 2013. A master's thesis was retained in the field of historiography, in historical science. It came out a decade after Mileva Filipovic's work in social studies. In her work *Women and their contribution in historiography of Montenegro during the first half of 20th century*, Vesna Kovacevic, M.A., documents the outstanding contribution of women in all the spheres traditionally occupied by men.

In spite of all the prejudice and stereotypes by comparing and contrasting different sources, she tried to reveal the reasons for silence and invisibility of women, and to emphasize their contribution. The author perceives the reasons for women not being historically recognized in complexity of social and political events, patriarchy culture and their interaction. Katarina Radonjic, the first female historiographer, must have considerably shaken macho culture in the policy of science with her conclusions about the necessity of deconstruction of different contents present in the existing science literature. It is also important to evaluate how reliable the information may be in relation to the way it has been gathered, systematized or interpreted. Finally, she requires the new reading of the existing literature in the light of clear critical perspective, focusing on women who have not yet been the inventory of scientific considerations so far. This review may provide substantial evidence for the obvious efforts to "shift" women from the "shadows and invisibility" into the "public light", because their places were taken by the biographies of those who had been recognized as important by the political and national history. The door behind invisibility and silence has been open to give space for studying significant female contribution in various spheres.

Conclusion and recommendations

There are three important findings in this review to indicate how topic of female contribution to social development in Montenegro has not been thoroughly investigated, and also, that the number of female authors is comparatively small. They are motivated by similar investigations in the region and around the world proving that in Montenegro there have always been women who contributed greatly in different fields of art, education, science, sport and culture. Thus, it is important to suggest the following:

1. To remember the necessity of introducing gender as the category of historical analysis;
2. To encourage research aimed at improvements and well-being of women together with the transformation of the existing relations of power and gender hierarchies;
3. When conducting research to relate to female experiences with women being the largest social group in the entire population.
4. As opposed to traditional methodology, to introduce different methods which would guarantee a wider scope of resources including female experience?

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