
THE ISSUE OF SANDŽAK IN THE CONTEXT OF DEMOCRATIC TRANSITION AND THE CREATION OF NEW STATES IN SOUTHEAST EUROPE²⁹⁵

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Abstract: The paper introduces the geographic, ethnic and political and legal territory of today's Sandžak. The aim is, primarily, to point out the problem of the status of Sandžak in the context of the democratic transition of the newly established states in the Southeast Europe. The authors indicate that the civilization framework of Sandžak has been systematically exposed for deliberate destruction during the years, which has been manifested by political and sociological changes, distortion of demographic balance and, in particular, by the disappearance of a significant number of cultural characteristics of the Bosniak national substance, all with an aim of suppressing their existence in this region, which is explained by Belgrade and Podgorica strategic influences and plans to diminish its current subjectivity and legal and political status.

As a historical continuity in terms of subjectivity, from time to time, Sandžak has changed its status, depending on the context it belonged, and often in unequal circumstances, it existed in different forms as an important center, in the context of history, in all major unrests in Europe and the region. Nowadays, it exists as a region, and its recent division into Northern and Southern part came about following the independence of Montenegro, thus causing an artificial division of this ethnic area.

By applying scientific-research, analytical-synthetic and comparative methods, which, as methodological procedures, enable detection, discovery and examination of scientific truth, the paper also pinpoints the consequences of international implications that are still existing. This confirms that the causes should be sought not only in the symbolic democracy of the countries in which Sandžak is currently located, but also in the lack of interest of Brussels towards this region, and in the incompetence of international entities which, by imposing European standards and modern projects, in fact contribute to the destruction of Bosniak identity in this region. Application of the observation method, the generalization method, and the Delphi method based on the logic and the utilization of acknowledged and affirmed opinions of reputable experts in this field have also contributed to this standpoint.

From the aspect of scientific predictions, the authors express their view that the process of European integrations in the countries of the Western Balkans will increasingly affect the solution of the issue of Sandžak and the general aspiration of its people for independence.

Key words: Sandžak, legal-political status, cultural-historical status, autonomy, assimilating states, European Union.

Field: Social sciences

INTRODUCTION

The objective scientific-elaboration of Sandžak's space and history of Bosniaks in addition to the historical-logical and processual, is particularly necessary in the ethnogenic method. Namely, the question of autochthonous Sandžak Bosniaks, which have been resisting and surviving for centuries, continues to this day. Let's just mention the Illyrians, Bogumila, South Slavs, Old Raska, Ottoman Turkey, the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, Partisan Yugoslavia, ZAVNO Sandžak and others. These questions remain controversial and unresolved not only about her complete history of Sandžak, but also because various dictators have imposed this people fear of the emphasis on their own identity, of material and spiritual culture.

The territory of Sandžak, as well as Bosnia and Herzegovina (hereinafter Bosnia and Herzegovina), was an extremely important geopolitical and strategic area, due to which Constantinople and Rome, Byzantium and France fought during history. Here were conflicts of world religions: Christianity and Bogomilism, Orthodoxy and

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Catholicism, Bogomilism and Orthodoxy, Catholicism and Bogomilism, conflicts between Orthodoxy and Islam, Catholicism and Islam.

Sandžak was first mentioned as a special administrative-territorial unit in 1578 as one of the seven areas that entered the Bosanski ejalet (Bosanski pašaluk, beglerbegluk or ejalet is the largest administrative-territorial unit in BiH during Turkish rule). Until the Balkan wars in 1912, Sandžak constituted a unique administrative-territorial unit with an administrative and cultural center in Sjenica, and then in Novi Pazar. Therefore, it is indisputable that Sandžak had its historical and internationally recognized borders confirmed by the decisions of the Berlin Congress in 1878 and the Constantinople Convention of 1879.

The territory of today's Sandžak includes parts of the states of Serbia and Monte Negro, making a distinct geographical and cultural-historical entity that borders the north-west with the territories of Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina, in the southwest with Montenegro, in the south with Albania and in the southeast with Kosovo. This most neglected region of the Western Balkans, although it was never an independent political entity, except for the period of ZAVNOS - *National Anti-Fascist Council of the People's Liberation of Sandžak* (1943-1945), but also only in theoretical sense, is characterized by geographical and cultural-historical factors, giving this area a special ethnic or social roundabout. However, this cultural and historical integrity continues to fulfill numerous crossings of the Islamic and Orthodox sacral tradition, since the ethnic formation of the largest number of inhabitants of the Novi Pazar Sandžak was conditioned by the massive acceptance of Islam and Islamic culture that permeated the ethnonimization of Bosniaks in BiH, with which Bosniaks in Sandžak still constitute an inseparable ethnic and national entity.

In one historical period, by the circumstances, all Bosniaks of Yugoslavia were called Muslims in the national sense, but in the 1990s they regained their national name, although they were administratively separated from their home in Bosnia. Namely, at the first Bosniak assembly held in warlike Sarajevo in 1993, the *Declaration of Bosniacs* was adopted, which gave all Muslims in the territory of the former Yugoslavia the national name Bosniak, that is, the Muslims of Sandžak.

However, in addition to restoring the historical national name of Bosniaks, one particularly significant event on the path of achieving the cultural autonomy of Sandžak Bosniaks is the introduction of teaching in the Bosnian language. Namely, in 2005, Academician Alija Džogović first promoted the Bosnian language in Sandžak, at the Elementary School in the village of Ljeskova near Tutin, within the lecture *Bosnian language is my mother tongue*, which was delivered by the teacher Ifeta Tutic in the first grade. Lectures on introduction of subjects *Bosnian language and literature* in Sandžak schools Academician Džogović delivered lectures to educators in Tutin, Novi Pazar and Sjenica. In this context, Academician Džogović has also made curricula for all grades of secondary schools with teaching in Bosnian language in Kosovo - for the subject *Bosnian language and literature*. The reports of the Permanent Commission of the Bosniak National Council (hereinafter: BNC) show that in September 2013, Sandžak started with official classes in 35 elementary and secondary schools (in the 1st and 5th grades of the primary and in the 1st grade of the secondary school). For the last ten years, BNC has established in the important segments a whole system of values: from the adoption of the national flag, national holidays, recognitions, traditional cultural manifestations and institutions, the national anthem, to the legalization of the Bosnian language. Projects followed in the field of the official use of the Bosnian language and script, a list of the entire material cultural heritage and cultural goods, and the established media - the newspaper *Bosniak word* and the renewed *Sandžak newspaper*. Everything was crowned at the beginning of teaching in the Bosnian language at elementary and secondary schools in Sandžak.

In a conclusion, as a historical and cultural integrity, the Sandžak region can not be divided at all. In this discourse, the independence of Montenegro from 2006 must not, and can not influence the solution and issue of the status of Sandžak, without whose resolution there will not be complete equality of European peoples.

WHOSE IS SANDŽAK?

From the aspect of history, but also of historical onomastics, the Sandžak region is today highly challenging and interesting for all scientific disciplines, especially for international relations, but also for history and sociology, for a resource of cultures and traditions, linguistics in diachronics and synchrony, and even for Bionic culture and its relics. The Sandžak region is exponential in terms of wealth, antiquity and diversity of onomastic material. Therefore, this linguistic material should be collected in a timely manner and preserved from oblivion or intentional forgery, as it was in the near and nearer past, according to the nationalist model of Srbinja, Srbobran, Lazarevo, Obilićevo, Raska, Andrićgrad ...

Judging by the confusion present in the media, given in "scientific" statements, the verbal communication of many political subjects, and in the folk laity formulations and discussions, especially in the formulas of those who

integrate this region into their allegedly historic countries and the etimones of their national and confessional heritage and rights, it is still not clear what Sandžak is and whose Sandžak is. Despite the fact that many deny its geopolitical integrity, they join it with its national euphoria and projects leaning on that deadly Neretva letter, still floating above this Bosniak country, fearing not moving with the Bosnians to some fundamentalist country, it is in the heart of the Balkans where it has always been and belonged to those who lived there with their herds and households.

Today, Sandžak is a homogenous geopolitical region that connects four neighboring nations and their countries with peaceful cohesives: Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Kosovo and Serbia, representing an example of the greatest human tolerance in Europe. Sandžak is one and indivisible from the earliest times, from those bogumils and will be before them - when it was in the division between the Roman Empire and Byzantium, it can be before in the old world, dividing Illyrian, Thracian, Hellenic, Gothic tribes. And in a long historical region, this region has retained its independence, geographic, ethnic and cultural. Some other peoples came to these plateaus, and walked through the trampling for booty across Europe - east and west.

Sandžak remained where it was, one and indivisible, all the way to the Berlin Congress whose goals were codified in the papal bullae and the crusader aspirations - the transformation of wines into blood, burning on the sting and hypocrisy. By force and hatred, Sandžak was divided into pieces, so that after 1912, it was halved and strangled. The results of this violence are many genocides and exoduses - and the disappearance of a single historical nation, beyond which the walls and cemeteries remained, which the invaders oppressed and covered projects of their heritage and the right to this country. But these walls and cemeteries are Sandžak.

Unfortunately, in the "scientific" content that creates this geopolitical region, they participate, except those from the near and far surroundings, and their "Kultur kampfa", and some Bosniak "scientists" - historians, politicians and non-politicians, writers - all profit-makers at first hand. In their vocabulary, the awareness of unreasonable Sandžak, which was a time and autonomy, is still being exposed. Their followers and followers continue, perhaps from ignorance, to annihilate historical facts about Sandžak, even as cultural autonomy, about the identity of its people, language specificity and culture. They speak and write Raska, Serbian Sandžak, Montenegrin Sandžak - and it is only Sandžak, as a cross-border region between "two eyes in the head".

Nobody disputes the toponymic/hydronic unit of Raska, which was named by the Illyrians as they lead water and nature, but Sandžak today is the content that exists and inherits what his ancestors left enrolled in ostriches, pagers, bihars, arches, forests. Sandžak is one and unique, geopolitical, historical, linguistic ... It can be referred to only as Southern Sandžak and Northern Sandžak from a closer political projection.

IMPLICATIONS OF FOUNDING AND ABOLISHING ZAVNOS (NATIONAL ANTI-FASCIST COUNCIL OF THE PEOPLE'S LIBERATION OF SANDŽAK)

During the Second World War, the Third Proletarian "Sandžak" Brigade was active in Bosnia as one of Tito's partisan units. Most of its leaders (members of both nationalities), who supported the autonomy of Sandžak and promoted that idea among the communist elite, were killed in November 1942 near Mrkonjić Grad under mysterious circumstances. By transferring this brigade from the Sandžak area to Bosnia, it was with severe consequences for Sandžak and Sandžak Bosniaks, because they became the target first for Chetnik, and at the end of the war and partisan shooting. In 1944, several hundred Bosniaks joined the Partisan unit under the leadership of Pek Dapevic in Novi Pazar. After the withdrawal of the Axis Force from Novi Pazar in November 1944, Allied airplanes bombed the city center. After that, the city was captured by Serbian and Bulgarian partisans who organized public trials and executions of prominent leaders, including Hadziahmetovic. The Partisans declared the equality of men and women among all nationalities, publicly forbid ethnic hatred and began to open schools in remote villages (Krcić, 2011: 161).

Before the end of the war, between November 1944 and March 29, 1945, Sandžak had the status of an autonomous province, in the territory liberated by the Partisans. This province was unlawfully divided between Serbia and Montenegro, and six municipalities were grouped in Serbia in the Novopazar district, while seven municipalities came to Montenegro (two were disbanded, Gusinje and Petnjica, while others received unconstitutional and unconnected status). The Partisan leaders in Sandžak were also Bosniaks, Serbs and Montenegrins, and they all put pressure on Belgrade to form an autonomous region. Immediately after the war, Muhamed Hadžismajlović became the first and only president of this euro-region, that is, the Novi Pazar district. Accordingly, the Novopazar district has been in existence since 1947, when the republic authorities abolished the district system and introduced the region. As part of this administrative reorganization, Sandžak was divided between two areas with the majority Serbian population, whose administrative headquarters were located in remote towns in Uzice and Kragujevac. The new borders had little geographical sense, but the obvious intention was to diminish the Bosniak political influence,

that is, to enable the Serbs to be at the helm of the public administration. Other changes in the administrative boundaries occurred later in the period of communist rule, including the replacement of the district organization by the system of regions, until the return to the district. The common element of all these systems was the allocation of parts of Sandžak to the districts with the majority Serbian population. Nevertheless, memories of the war autonomous Sandžak region have been preserved, which will inspire a new generation of Bosniak-Muslim politicians in the early 1990s to the present day (Krcić, 2011: 161-162).

Immediately after the Second World War, the communist authorities were terrorizing and defrauding the abusive Bosniak population, under various pretexts, armed groups and bandits among them, as well as refusing to accept the new order. In the Sandžak region there were active troops, as well as state police, that is, state security (UDBA), which often went to the raid on Bosniak, but not in Serb villages. The work of the UDBA was especially pronounced in Tutin, Pešteri, Bihor, Sjenica and other villages, all according to the directives of the Vice President of Yugoslavia and Interior Minister of the infamous Aleksandar Rankovic. Since in 1966, due to a case in Kosovo, Josip Broz Tito removed from the head of the UDBA the Serbian nationalist of the line, Vice President Aleksandar Ranković, a state security archive was opened in Tutin, and it seemed that UDBA deliberately increased the number of refugees from the law and sent false reports to Belgrade to justify strict measures against Bosniaks, both in Sandžak and Albanians in Kosovo. The communists kept the church and the mosque apart from the state, not by banning their religion, but by fully secularizing the state. Faith and religious rituals were limited to the church and the privacy of homes. However, for a rise in the social, political or economic scale, it was necessary at least a formal membership in the Party. These members of earlier marginalized ethnic groups - such as the Sandžak Bosniaks - allowed entry into the main political, economic, cultural and social flows (Krcić, 2011: 162).

HISTORICAL, CONSTITUTIONAL, LEGAL AND POLITICAL CIRCUMSTANCES OF SANDŽAK

Political, religious and cultural development of Bosniaks in the Serbian and Montenegrin parts of Sandžak, and after gaining independence of Montenegro, remains mutually dependent and inseparable from the state, of the current independent state of BiH. In this area, the dictatorial regimes of Montenegro and Serbia make it impossible to implement the European principles of regionalization and decentralization, thus jeopardizing democratic processes and expanding the network of vulnerable nations.

It is known that in 1912 the Ottomans in some way left Sandžak, which Serbian historians describe as a liberation, while most Bosniak intellectuals believe that it was actually an occupation that had killed many. According to Academician Džogović, "not surprising is the historical technology and science of the countries in the region, but it is surprising that many Bosniak 'scholars' and people - from poets, historians, geographers, linguists, etc. participate in their circuses. Sources do not matter with regard to the flood of these and similar discoveries" (Džogović, 2018: 443). Namely, the Bosniak corpses fit into their streams and learn everything from letter to letter, word to word, from a book and history - from great scientists and scholars. For example, some Bosniak scholarship is that the Bosniaks of Sandžak are of South Slav origin. However, academician Džogović raises the question of what was in Sandžak before the South Slavs. In his opinion, "in Sandžak, as well as throughout the Balkans, and outside the Balkans, some nations lived, and it is known who. The fact is that they were not Slovene for a long time, at least not all, that they were not even Christianized for long, and some never, at all. It was in Sandžak, before the arrival of Slovenes, and Vlachs, Kuman, and Greeks ... It was a lot of Bogomil, as confirmed by numerous toponymic structures, the structures of some anthropones (names and surnames), old cemeteries and tombstones, gardens and books, although rare. (...) Sandžak was predominantly Bogomil, until the 'nemanjic purge' ..." (Džogović, 2018: 444-445).

Also, Džogović further believes that "it's not a good history that 'Bosniaks from coming to the Balkan Peninsula ...', because the Bosniaks have nowhere to come to the Balkan Peninsula. They were there, they found them and the Slavs, and everyone before and after. It is true that the settlers were mixed with them, symbiotic created an autochthonous ethnicity, specific in culture and way of life" (Džogović, 2018: 445).

In this context, one can recall the remark, how could it happen that the center of the Serbian state of Raska, Sandžak, turned to Islam and how this religious option was best kept in Sandžak. It was as if the Christianized Nemanjići came and went, and it seems that their citizens on Raska, Byzantium and their faith, turned their backs. It was as if Islamic learning was similar to that of Manichaeism, Bogomil, pataren, heretical - as where.

Therefore, the Bosniaks, and everyone else in Sandžak, regardless of today's religious beliefs, remained old rashani, bogomils by conviction. Bosniaks by their ethnic autochthonism and ethnic continuity. As far as the Bosniak ethnogenetic substance in Sandžak is concerned, it is according to DNA research most similar to the most native Albanian people; more precisely, this project permanently breaks down a mistyped lie that Bosniaks are of Slavic origin. DNA research yields results that Bosnians are as much as 40 % of Illyrian origin, similar to Albanians, and

that these two nations make the right inhabitants of this part of Europe, and not the Slavs, as instructed, who will be recognized by their more aggressive method of imposing cultural heritage in the last the two centuries imposed both the Bosniaks and the Albanians on the other roots, often not to disassociate and distract each other from the geographical and national corps. The Bosniacs and Albanians are closely intertwined in the nationalities, witnessed the joint defense of the Sandžak and Kosovo cities from the Berlin Congress until the Second World War. Today, the national compactness of Bosniaks and Albanians is dominant in the Sandžak municipalities of Plav and Gusinje, and partly in Rožaje, continues along the Kula towards the town of Vitimirica and the city of Pec, but also in the southernmost city of Kosovo, Prizren.

As for the Pesters' Plateau, many Albanian tribes live there today and retain their original Albanian language, as well as national culture and customs. It is worth mentioning an interesting fact that some objective Serbian authors claim that Sandžak has settled many Bosniak and Albanian tribes under the siege and crimes of Karadjordje Petrović, stating that the Albanian tribe Šalja was expelled, no less or more than from the center of today's central and then northern Serbia, to Sandžak, where it settled. The same goes for many expelled Bosniaks and Albanians from the territory of today's Podrinje in Serbia and eastern Serbia from Kuršumljija, Niš, throughout Pčinja and Toplički district, all the way to the border with Kosovo and Macedonia.

According to BNC data in Serbia, the territory of today's Sandžak extends over an area of 8,409 km². In addition, part of this territory belonging to the Republic of Serbia covers an area of 4,504 km², while a smaller part of the area of 3,905 km² is located within Montenegro (*Glas Sandžaka*, 2014: 2). The same sources state that according to the latest statistical data, there are a total of 393,223 inhabitants living in that area, of which 235,567 in the part of the Republic of Serbia, and 157,656 in the part of Montenegro (*Glas Sandžaka*, 2014: 2). So, in history, the number of Bosniaks varied, but it has always been advantageous in relation to the number of other national communities in Sandžak.

In some historical moments, when Bosniaks were particularly exposed to disloyalty, Belgrade and Podgorica authorities disputed their identity, language, culture. However, although the situation has been somewhat corrected in this respect, the Bosniaks of Sandžak are still far from European standards proclaiming the dignity and national affiliation of this people.

Significantly, throughout their history, the Sandžak Bosniaks have always been exposed to the most severe pressures, even genocides, as if Bosniaks do not have the right to political action. We recall the extermination and transfer of Bosniaks and Albanians in Gornji Polimlje - Plavsko-gusinjska ethnic region (See and Memić, 2004), then the extermination, slaughter and burning of Bosniaks in Sandžak in the period 1941-1944. which were committed by Chetnik civil-military formations of Draza Mihajlovic, Pavle Djurisic, Rade Korda, Baja Stanisic and others. By the Chetnik formations, during the Second World War, the most massive crimes against Bosnian Muslims were committed. According to previous research, this war has claimed the lives of 103,000 Bosnian Muslims, or 8.1 % of the then Muslim population (See and Macić, 2009: 352). So, the Srebrenica script is not new. For example, one of the greatest crimes in peacetime conditions, for which no one is still responsible, occurred in Sandžak, during the time of the SHS (1924), when at least 350 men, women and children were killed. The first time is mentioned Milovan Djilas in his book "A Wonderful Country" describing the Shahovic Slaughter – Annihilation of the converts to Islam . With the invented cause, organized and assisted by the authorities, the crime had all the characteristics of genocide, aimed at expelling the Muslim population from Šahović (Sandžak). Soon after the massacre, the Serbian and Montenegrin authorities have begun expeditiously issuing permits for eviction to the refugee population, and nothing to remind them of the Bosniaks in Šahovići, all mosques were destroyed, while the name of the town was changed to Tomaševo.

The basics of Serbian genocide policy today reflect the myth of Kosovo and Njegoš's "Mountain Wreath", where the extermination of the Muslims is a sacred and heroic act, which makes genocide, unfortunately, part of their national culture. For these reasons, Sandžak Bosniaks in the past mostly migrated to Turkey, BiH, Kosovo, but also to other European countries, so that in today's conditions, two thirds of Bosniaks live outside Sandžak.

FIGHT FOR POLITICAL AND NATIONAL RIGHTS FROM THE BEGINNING OF THE 90'S TO THE PRESENT

With the dissolution of Yugoslavia in 1992 begins the political organization of Bosniaks. Namely, the Bosniaks were organized with the intention of returning their national name, culture, history, constitutional, legal, political and religious status. In this context, in 1991, MNC Sandžak (the Muslim National Council of Sandžak, later the Bosniak National Council - BNV) conducts a referendum on the autonomy of Sandžak, in which almost all Bosniak members voted for autonomy (about 98 %). However, the agriculture of the Serbian and Montenegrin regimes in

BiH in 1992 and the referendum in Sandžak will be the reason for the already projected fierce pressure of the regime towards the inhabitants of the Bosniak national corps in this region.

In addition, BNC Sandžak in 1993 adopted the Memorandum of Special Status of Sandžak, which was sent to the Government of the FRY and the parliaments of Serbia, Montenegro and BiH, which will determine the long-term impulse of the initiators of this document. Seven years later, after the fall of Milosevic's regime (2000), Sandžak will be under the reform of the Serbian opposition led by Dr. Zoran Djindjic, until 2003, when the assassination of this Serbian reformer will be carried out. The last, until now, illegitimate division of Sandžak was carried out in 2006 when Bosniaks from South Sandžak were deceived by the current Montenegrin prime minister by voting for sovereign Montenegro.

The Bosniaks of Sandžak are still an exemplary example of the people from the territory of the former Yugoslavia who have not yet resolved their national, constitutional, legal and political status. In recent years, the unstable state and division of Sandžak Bosniaks is especially contributed by the Serbian Ministry of Religion, which has attempted to create a parallel Islamic community in defense of its own nationalism. As a result, there are two Islamic communities operating in Serbia - the Islamic Community of Serbia, headed by reis ul ulema Sead Nasufović and the Islamic Community in Serbia, which recognizes the spiritual leadership of the Reinventions in Sarajevo.

According to analyzes to date, Bosniaks are the most pressing people in Europe, not only in the past, but also nowadays. Referring to this opinion, it is indicative that, although enumerated in the Preamble of the Constitution of Montenegro, the Bosniaks of Sandžak are still in a subordinate position vis-à-vis the majority population, and they are reduced to the status of a national minority, ethnic group in particular in Serbia, communities or some other undefined groups. However, the Bosniaks of Sandžak, especially in Montenegro, do not accept being treated as a minority because they have already acquired the right to be nation, and a significant percentage representation in the total population of Montenegro. At the same time, it seeks to resolve its constitutional and legal status in the manner prescribed by international and European documents that regulate indigenous peoples' issues. Of course, this is how Sandžak is a European cross-border region.

SPECIAL AUTONOMY OR STATUS QUO

The idea of the autonomy of Sandžak was also presented in the agreement of the Bosniak Party (BP) on regionalization signed in 2006 with the Democratic Party of Socialists (DPS) of Montenegro. In that agreement, Sandžak was clearly defined as a cross-border region, and this was the key reason and guarantee for the Bosniaks of Sandžak that sovereign Montenegro is possible with the simultaneous preservation of Sandžak. However, DPS states that a cross-border region is mentioned in the agreement with the BP, but that this can not be interpreted as agreeing to the DPS on the autonomy of Sandžak. Therefore, although resolving the status of the Sandžak region would contribute to the stabilization of Montenegro and Serbia, and therefore in the region, mentioning Sandžak today is being treated as an anti-state act.

Sandžak played a small, but significant role in the history of the Western Balkans, and has been insufficiently trained for most scientists and ordinary readers in Western Europe all the time. However, at the end of 2013, a book by the British historian *Sandžak - History* appeared in public which has attracted particular media attention in the region. In this context, we have outlined the views of renowned orientalist and political analyst *Darko Tanaskovic*, a professor at the University of Belgrade. For prof. Tanaskovic the question is what can explain the claim of British historians that Sandžak has clear characteristics that encompass geographical elements and cultural-historical facts, which areas give a clear ethnic / social composition (Tanasković, 2013). Also, in his opinion, the coincidence of this view with the statement of Muhedin Fijuljanin in the book "Sandžak Bosniaks" is unclear, as Sandžak has always had its geographical, historical and ethnic specificities, making it a special entity. (Tanasković, 2013). However, there are opposing attitudes among Serbia's democratic forces. Namely, the Serbian leader of the LDP, Cedomir Jovanovic, who, in a coalition with the previous Sandžak Mufti accused of alleged separatism in Sandžak, in his address to a Serbian village (the village of Babine) of February 27, 2014, says: " You can call the area Raska, but I will call it Sandžak, because I learned so" ("Jovanović u jednom srpskom selu: 'Zovite vi Raška Oblast, ali ja ću ga zvati Sandžakom, jer sam tako naučio' ", 2014). Controversial views continue to be echoed by the media, such as the recent statement by the president of the *Dveri* movement, Mr. Bosko Obradovic, who believes that the Raska region is a source of Serbian statehood, and that it is extremely wrong to call that part of Serbia Sandžak. ("Obradović: Raška oblast je izvor srpske državnosti, pogrešno je nazivati je Sandžakom", 2019). For these reasons, Bosniak officials believe that the issue of Bosniaks and Sandžak should be resolved by the international community ("Ugljanin: Pitanje Sandžaka i pitanje Bošnjaka može riješiti samo međunarodna zajednica", 2018). However, Academician Muamer Zukorlic was the first to initiate the idea of restoring autonomy to Sandžak (2010). On the

other hand, the promoters of the monoethnic entity and the continuation of the genocide against Bosniaks accuse all those who contribute to Serbian political instability, especially some Western services, including, of course, Turkey. Although Serbian officials believe that real problems in Sandzak can be solved exclusively by Belgrade, the return of Sandzak's autonomy in the form of European cross-border regions, such as in Europe, is inevitable. According to Kosovo politician Azem Vllasi, the history of Sandzak's autonomy has long been current but never achieved because of the political environment, although he had more reasons for autonomy than Vojvodina. Although Serbian officials believe that real problems in Sandzak can be solved exclusively by Belgrade, the return of Sandzak's autonomy in the form of European cross-border regions, such as in Europe, is inevitable. According to Kosovo politician Azem Vllasi, the history of Sandzak's autonomy has been current long time but was never achieved due to the political environment, although it had more reasons for autonomy than Vojvodina (Bajrović, 2018). We came to that position due to the reason that the Sandžak champions have already built their autonomy through history, which still permeates and influences the determination of the national identity of Bosniaks. Thus, Sandzak's autonomy is an inevitable social process that should be discussed with Serbian and Montenegrin officials in the interest of the stability of the region, taking South Tyrol as an example of cross-border cooperation. Such and similar views are increasingly advocated by Bosniak MPs in the Serbian Parliament, demanding the establishment of the Sandzak cross-border region in such a way that this state shows that it thinks of all citizens ("Dr. Fehratović u Skupštini zatražio uspostavu prekogranične autonomije Sandžaka", 2019).

In the last century, Sandžak, together with its participants, experienced a continuous cultural genocide that has devastated the signs of its multicultural tradition. Novi Pazar, as the most obvious example of Balkan, but also European culture, today, instead of being a civilization buckle, exists on the slopes of ruins of former magnificent buildings and sights that made it historically important in this region. As a separate entity, in the multifaceted continuity, Novi Pazar was considered a hub of cultures in which Orthodox, Catholic and Judean civilization preserved its traces. Instead of being grateful for guarding other cultures in this region, from the period of the short Austro-Hungarian occupation, until the end of communist rule, the Sandžaklija experienced attempts to completely suppress their origin in this region. In these attempts somehow managed, because Novi Pazar does not have a well-deserved place today on the map of the Balkan capitals of culture.

It should be noted that the causes of many crimes and genocide against Bosniaks and Albanians in these prostrations were preceded by procedures for the elimination of everything that constitutes their cultural and historical nucleus. According to the guardians of the Orthodox shrines in this region, they dealt with a fierce animosity in the pre-post-communist era. An example of the demolished mosques in Novi Pazar, which were decorated by the city center: Isabegova, Ejup-begova, Sofi Memi, Ak Iljaz, Askerli, Seveli, Ali-vojvode known as Hajrudin's mosque, Ahmed Mukadema, Subash, Ahmed Mujezin, Hasan efendija, Kadi-efendija, Taš Koper and many others, for which the exact locations where they exist today are still known, and many images testify and how they looked. These are the oldest mosques in Novi Pazar, built in the period from the 16th to the 18th centuries, which Novi Pazar made after Sarajevo the most important city, that is, the second spiritual capital of all Bosniaks in the Balkans. The destroyed mosques are followed by the destroyed marsh and objects of exceptional importance, which are primarily a market charm, and then the wider part of the city made it unique.

EUROPEAN DECENTRALIZATION AND SANDŽAK AS A EUROPEAN CROSS-BORDER REGION

In the questionnaires of the European Commission sent to Montenegro and Serbia, there are also numerous questions about the state and capacities for decentralization of these two countries, in whose territory the Sandžak region is located, and whose commitment to decentralization depends on the challenges of the Sandžak issue in the new conditions. In this regard, the questions obtained, regardless of the fact that they cross the figure 2483 classified in 33 chapters, aim to test the two countries as they are ready to meet European demands in time. We note that each of the chapters in these tasks, which were received by Serbia and Montenegro, covers the fate of the Sandžak issue, representing a separate area that will be the subject of future membership negotiations. The European Commission's questionnaire is an official instrument by which the EU assesses the readiness of the state to start the accession process. The answers to the questions should be made by line ministries with the coordination of the Office for European Integration (Krcić, 2011: 165-166).

Decentralization is an area that is also covered by the Questionnaire in the part relating to democracy and the rule of law. The first issue already speaks a lot about the legal framework for decentralization and refers to a brief description of the constitutional and institutional situation in Serbia. The answer to this question will show that the Constitution of the Republic of Serbia has carried out the division of power, both horizontally and vertically. It should also cover the issue of citizens' rights to local self-government and territorial autonomy. Furthermore, a set of ten questions in the same chapter relates to the organization of local self-government, the electoral system at the

local level, the associations of cities and municipalities and their capacities, the division of powers between central and local government, the political boundaries of municipalities, state property, fiscal decentralization and the implementation of the reform state administration. Of particular interest is the issue number 30 in this chapter, as well as in chapter 22, which relates to regional development, as regards further decentralization plans, i.e. transfer of powers from the central level to the level of local self-government. In the context of regional development, the European Commission is also interested in the territorial organization of the country, are there and in what respects the deconcentration of ministries and inter-departmental structures, and how the provisional statistical classification of the NUTS 1, 2 and 3 regions has been introduced? In this regard, the issues related to the role of local self-government units in the preparation and implementation of local strategies development, for inter-municipal cooperation, cross-border cooperation and those that define competencies entrusted to "sub-national" levels of government. Issues that directly or indirectly concern decentralization are found in the chapters dealing with the field of fiscal policy, funding of local government competencies, administrative capacity, structure and capacity of authorities and institutions participating in the programming of projects applying for EU social and cohesion funds (Krcić, 2011: 166-167).

With this topic we want to draw attention to the following. The work of writing answers to a number of issues predominantly belong to ministries of public administration and local self-government, as well as to the Ministry of Economy and Regional Development, but also to the Ministry of Finance. As far as it is known, politicians from Sandžak will not have the ability to influence the answers, questions, but if they stick to the principles, then they will see how much Serbia and Montenegro are on the European path. There is a possibility that other secrets, both governmental and non-governmental, will participate in the formulation of the response. The Office of the National Council for Decentralization is preparing a series of important analyzes that can serve as a support to the ministries in giving answers and explanations. The permanent conference of cities and municipalities also plays a corresponding role. In this context, although the European Union has no direct requirements or criteria in terms of the territorial-political organization of the state, it certainly has the expectations regarding the achievement of standards in providing public services to citizens. They are all very simply under the principle of subsidiarity, which states that competencies should be exercised at the level that is closest to the citizens and which allows for the most efficient and effective provision of public services. In these categories, a chance for a faster development of the Sandžak euro-region is visible, which would gain new competencies from Europe and the European Community, thus eliminating obstacles to the creation of a common market and applying the European principles of integration in these areas. In this way, a cohesive picture would be created that the European Union operates at the centers of power in Belgrade and Podgorica, which are essentially against regionalization, to feel European, both political and economic discourse of thinking in all ethnicities living in the Sandžak region in this region (Krcić, 2011: 167).

CONCLUDING DISCOURSE

The division of Sandžak between the Serbian and Montenegrin nationalist policies is a continuation of the genocide against Bosniaks in this region. However, if the European Union is based on the general values of respecting human dignity, freedom, equality, the rule of law, and respect for human and minority rights, until the issue of Sandžak is resolved, both countries should wait for accession to the EU.

Although it is questionable when and whether the European institutions will see the true position of the Sandžak Bosniaks, it should be noted that the autonomy of Sandžak does not necessarily involve changing the state borders. Namely, there are numerous examples in Europe cross-border autonomy. Therefore, the Sandžak demands are extremely European and Serbia and Montenegro should apply them on their way to the EU, as regionalization is one of the basic liberal postulates of the developed European countries.

Sandžak in a peaceful way wants to enter Europe, based on European documents, conventions and charter. Associatively, the Sandžak institutions are trying to create and develop awareness of multiethnic, multicultural, multi-confessional Sandžak as an equal European region.

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