

MONTENEGRO: THE LITTLE-KNOWN FIELD OF TURKOLOGY IN THE BALKANS

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Abstract: Today's Montenegro is a new field of Turkology studies. As a Balkan country, the present-day Republic of Montenegro was established in 2006. In this well-preserved country, Montenegrins, Serbs, Bosniaks, Albanians, Romas, Croats, Turks, Russians, Ukrainians, Egyptians, Macedonians, Goranis, Slovenians, Hungarians, and Germans live together in varying population proportions. The people referred to as Turks of Montenegro, based on the name of the country they live in today, undoubtedly have connections with other Turks in the surrounding regions. Viewed holistically, Turks of Montenegro are the descendants of many Turkic tribes or groups that lived in Montenegro and its surrounding areas, as well as the Ottoman Turks who established their own state system in this geography for a long time. Various population censuses have been conducted in the geographical area now comprising the state of Montenegro at different points in history. These census publications have provided official demographic data for the region. In the information regarding the ethnic composition of the population, the Turkish community has also been mentioned. The most recent census in Montenegro was conducted in December 2023. Within the Balkans, which serves as an interaction zone for Turkish and other languages, the position of Turks of Montenegro is somewhat unique. The current cultural status of Turks of Montenegro differs slightly from that of Turks in neighbouring Balkan states. The native language of Montenegro Turks is one of the Rumelian dialects of Turkish. Montenegro Turks have limited contact with other Turks. It is possible to speak of relations with a part of the wider Turkic world, with the Balkans and Turkey.

Keywords: Montenegro; Turks of Montenegro; Turkology; Turkish dialects; Balkan languages;

Introduction

Contemporary Montenegro has emerged as a new field within Turkology studies. This country has started to enlarge its place in the Turkological literature with the recent studies. Such studies also contribute to the cultural research related to Montenegro. This article aims to provide a summarisation of the field of Turkology's Montenegro after our fieldwork, archival analyses, discussions and studies in Montenegro over the last ten years. New data and documents have been added to the information gathered throughout the years. Therefore, the work also involves development and updating aspects.

Firstly, this study provides basic information about Montenegro. In Turkological research, understanding Montenegro is primarily possible through understanding it as a country or area of study. Following the general information, the scope of Turkology has been covered. The article is organised into two main sections: Turks of Montenegro and Turkish language spoken in Montenegro. The content presented here for this new area of Turkological

studies is derived from fieldwork data. Archival and historical sources have also been consulted for the history of the Turks of Montenegro. Official documents from the modern period have been added to these data.

As a Balkan country, the present-day Republic of Montenegro (Montenegrin: *Republika Crna Gora*) was established in 2006. On 21 May 2006, a referendum on independence was held in Montenegro, which is a constituent republic within the state union of Serbia and Montenegro. Following a majority vote in favour of independence, the country officially completed its process of statehood. Thus, an independent Montenegro emerged on the European continent.

It is surrounded by Kosovo, Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Adriatic Sea and Albania. The Montenegro has an area of approximately 14,000 square kilometres and its capital is Podgorica. This independent state is not a member of European Union, but Euro (€) is in use as the currency of the country.

The coat of arms, flag and national anthem are specified in Article 4 of the Constitution of Montenegro (Ustav Crne Gore 2). The coat of arms of Montenegro is in the form of a golden double-headed eagle with a lion on its chest. The flag of Montenegro consists of the coat of arms and gold border in the centre of a red background. The national anthem of the country is ‘Oj, svijetla majska zoro’ (‘Oh, Bright Dawn of May’).

In this well-preserved country, Montenegrins, Serbs, Bosniaks, Albanians, Romas, Croats, Turks, Russians, Ukrainians, Egyptians, Macedonians, Goranis, Slovenians, Hungarians, and Germans live together in varying population proportions. Alongside the official language Montenegrin, Albanian, Bosniak, Croatian, and Serbian are also spoken in Montenegro and can be used officially. Turkish, which is within the scope of this article, is one of the languages spoken in Montenegro as well.

In terms of demographic structure, 2023 census recorded a population of 623,633 for this state. According to the census data, the most prevalent religion in Montenegro is Orthodoxy (71.1%), followed by Islam (19.99%), and Catholicism (3.27%) (Saopštenje 135/2024 2, 6-7). Some of the major municipality centres are (from large to small) Podgorica, Nikšić, Bar, Bijelo Polje, Herceg Novi, Budva, Berane, Pljevlja, Rožaje, Kotor, Ulcinj, Danilovgrad, Tivat, Zeta, Cetinje, Tuzi, Plav, Mojkovac, Kolašin.¹

¹ In studies of Turkology prepared in Turkish, they appear as follows: Podgoriça (*Podgorica*), Nikşic (Nikšić), Bar, Akova (Bijelo Polje), Hersek Novi (Herceg Novi), Budva, Berane, Taşlıca (Pljevlja), Rojaj (Rožaje), Kotor, Ülgün (Ulcinj), Danilovgrad, Tivat, Zeta, Çetinje (Cetinje), Tuz (Tuzi), Plav, Mojkovaç (Mojkovac), Kolaşin (Kolašin).

1. Turks of Montenegro

1.1. Cultural Characteristics

The people referred to as Turks of Montenegro, based on the name of the country they live in today, undoubtedly have connections with other Turks in the surrounding regions. Scientifically, the scope of research on "Turks of Montenegro" also includes topics such as, "Turks of Kosovo" and "Turks of Macedonia". The broader, now historical term "Turks of Yugoslavia" is directly related to them. Furthermore, the category of "Turks of Balkan" can be added in a broader sense.

Historically, it is difficult to determine which Turkic tribes had most influence in shaping Montenegro Turks. However, it can be said that they led a regular social life under the Ottoman Empire. The Turkish culture that appears in Montenegro in the XXIst century largely reflects this last order. Viewed holistically, Turks of Montenegro are the descendants of many Turkic tribes or groups that lived in Montenegro and its surrounding areas, as well as the Ottoman Turks who established their own state system in this geography for a long time. It is well-known that various Turkic tribes existed in the Balkan lands before the Ottoman period.²

Last mentioned order, that is, the Ottoman Empire period, started at the end of the XVth century in the territory of today's Montenegro. With its various sub-periods, it largely ended with the establishment of the officially recognised State of Montenegro in 1878 (Močanin 384-385; Karatay 153). The landlocked state had a much smaller territory than today's Montenegro.

Many cultural elements of the Montenegro Turks, such as clothing, cuisine, traditions and architecture, developed in the Montenegro area as part of the vast Ottoman Empire geography. In terms of historical characteristics, the Turkish language of Montenegro Turks also developed in Western Rumelia and in the Ottoman Turkish written language geography belonging to the Oghuz branch.

A full understanding of the contemporary Turks of Montenegro can be achieved by analysing the history of Montenegro, both from the perspective of the Turks and other peoples. In the historical process, it is necessary to interpret the contemporary situation in the light of the waves of Turkish migration outwards from the Montenegro territory for several centuries. The Turks of Montenegro in the XXIst century are the Turkish population that continued to live in the Montenegro region after the Ottoman Empire, which weakened in the 1800s and ended for the most part in 1878. They have faced a new political and social situation in the same territory. Many of their relatives, cognates, and co-religionists left the region through various migrations. Together with the remaining relatives, cognates and co-

² For the Turkish tribes in the pre-Ottoman Balkans, see sources such as Hamzaoglu; Vásáry; Bugarski; Curta.

religionists, they started to lead their own lives. Islam is a part of the culture of Montenegro Turks as a widespread belief. Together with their other cognates in their vicinity, Bosniaks and Albanians from neighbouring nations are also included in their belief world that they have passed down from history to today.

The literature on Turks of Montenegro and Turkish language in Montenegro is very limited. The title "Turks of Montenegro" (or "Montenegro Turks") is something new for both the academic works and daily life. In the XXIst century (especially in the last decade), a literature has begun to emerge from the studies carried out.

Until the 1980s, Turkish families in Montenegro were able to preserve their language and identity to a considerable extent. Many social conditions weakened the cultural characteristics of the families over time. After the 1980s, the decline in the frequency of Turkish language has increased to some extent.

In recent years, it has become evident that the transmission of national historical knowledge within families has been limited. A significant factor contributing to this is the lack of instruction on Turkish history in state schools. This situation is also known in other parts of the former Yugoslavia. Despite this, some children and young people have shown a desire to learn about their own history in one way or another. In Turkish families, some parents, in relation to their own upbringing, have made efforts to pass down religious knowledge to their children. Religious consciousness has been developed through sharing stories and information from the Quran and by observing the daily practices of the elders in the family. However, there seems to have been more leniency regarding national consciousness. The prevailing social environment and conditions have left families in a position where they have had to compromise on this matter. The aforementioned aspects reflect the general situation. Therefore, it can be assumed that these attitudes are not the same across all families.

In some families with a lower sense of Turkish identity, individuals may or may not identify as Turkish. These individuals have largely forgotten the Turkish language or now speak a version of Turkish consisting of a few words without grammar. However, in some cases, cultural practices have been preserved. In others, the culture has either transformed or disappeared entirely. The loss of national identity is what differentiates Turks of Montenegro from other Turkish populations in the Balkans. In Montenegro, this issue has arisen earlier and with greater intensity than in other regions.

1.2. Turks of Montenegro in Official Documents

Various population censuses have been conducted in the geographical area now comprising the state of Montenegro at different points in history. These

census publications have provided official demographic data for the region. In the information regarding the ethnic composition of the population, the Turkish community has also been mentioned. It is well known that the results of a census can vary in accuracy depending on the political and social conditions under which it is conducted. In this regard, the Turkish population reflected in the official data of Montenegro corresponds to the results that the census was able to capture. It should be considered that there may be population figures that are either not officially recorded or not declared.

The most recent census in Montenegro was conducted in December 2023. According to the published official results of this census, the total Turkish population in Montenegro in 2023 is 1,816. The census report also includes data on the Tatar population ("Tatari"), with a total of 161 Tatars noted within the national population. The number of people whose native language is Turkish is listed as 1,823 (Saopštenje 135/2024 2, 8). Tatars are also considered to be part of the Turkish people. The combined population of these two related ethnonyms totals 1,977. It is unclear whether the people recorded as "Tatars" in the census documents are different from those who speak the Western Rumelian Turkish dialect in Montenegro. Thus, in this study, detailed population information is given only for the citizens recorded as "Turks".

The most recent census prior to 2023 for the Turkish population in Montenegro was the 2011 census. A significant development in this census, considered a novelty for the country, was the inclusion of the "Turk" population under the ethnic affiliation section (Saopštenje 83). This marked the first time that the Turkish population was officially recognized by the newly independent Montenegro in 2006. In this way, the centuries-long presence of Ottoman Turks in the Montenegro region, and more broadly, the over a thousand-year legacy of Turkish heritage, was officially acknowledged by the state of Montenegro. This recognition continued in the 2023 census as well.

Table 1: According to the 2023 census, the distribution of the Turkish population in Montenegro settlements (Monstat; Saopštenje 135/2024)³

Municipality	Settlement	Number of population	Total population of municipality
Bar	Bar	42	116
Bar	Bjeliši	z	
Bar	Burtaiši	19	
Bar	Čeluga	z	

³ In the 2023 census lists, protected data (*zaštićen podatak*) are written in the description of the "z" sign.

Bar	Pečurice	z		
Bar	Stari Bar	z		
Bar	Šušanj	14		
Bar	Sustaš	22		
Bar	Zaljevo	z		
Berane	Berane	z	z	
Bijelo Polje	Bioca	z	15	
Bijelo Polje	Centar grada	z		
Bijelo Polje	Gornji dio grada	z		
Bijelo Polje	Kukulje	z		
Bijelo Polje	Lozna	z		
Bijelo Polje	Pruška	z		
Bijelo Polje	Resnik	z		
Budva	Bečići	z		345
Budva	Boreti	z		
Budva	Brežine	z		
Budva	Budva Centar	52		
Budva	Budva Polje	24		
Budva	Drobnići	z		
Budva	Dubovica	35		
Budva	Golubovina	35		
Budva	Komoševina	z		
Budva	Lapčići	z		
Budva	Lazi	27		
Budva	Maine	z		
Budva	Markovići	z		
Budva	Petrovac Centar	z		
Budva	Podkošljun	31		
Budva	Prijevor	z		
Budva	Rafailovići	23		
Budva	Rozino	50		
Budva	Stari Grad	z		
Budva	Velji Vinogradi	20		
Cetinje	Obzovica	z	z	
Danilovgrad	Bileća	z	26	
Danilovgrad	Brajovići	z		
Danilovgrad	Ćurilac	z		

Danilovgrad	Grbe	z	
Danilovgrad	Jastreb	z	
Danilovgrad	Klikovače	z	
Danilovgrad	Kosić	z	
Danilovgrad	Zagorak	z	
Herceg Novi	Baošići	z	54
Herceg Novi	Bijela	z	
Herceg Novi	Herceg Novi	z	
Herceg Novi	Igalo	z	
Herceg Novi	Topla	z	
Herceg Novi	Zelenika	45	
Kolašin	Kolašin	z	z
Kolašin	Smailagića Polje	z	
Kotor	Dobrota	10	41
Kotor	Donji Stoliv	z	
Kotor	Kotor	z	
Kotor	Prčanj	12	
Kotor	Radanovići	z	
Kotor	Škaljari	z	
Nikšić	Nikšić	z	z
Petnjica	Donja Vrbica	z	z
Petnjica	Petnjica	z	
Petnjica	Trpezi	z	
Petnjica	Vrševeo	z	
Plav	Plav	z	z
Pljevlja	Pljevlja	z	z
Podgorica	Donji Kokoti	z	956
Podgorica	Podgorica	z	
Rožaje	Bandžovo Brdo	z	z
Rožaje	Biševi	z	
Rožaje	Ibarac	z	
Rožaje	Jablanica	z	
Rožaje	Suho Polje	z	
Šavnik	Mokro	z	z
Tivat	Donja Lastva	15	178
Tivat	Krašići	z	
Tivat	Mrčevac	z	

Tivat	Radovići	z	
Tivat	Tivat	156	
Tuzi	Karabuško Polje	10	27
Tuzi	Planica	z	
Tuzi	Rogami	z	
Tuzi	Tuzi	15	
Ulcinj	Kodre	z	17
Ulcinj	Sukobin	z	
Ulcinj	Ulcinj	15	
Zeta	Golubovci	z	z
Zeta	Mojanovići	z	

In Table 2 below, the historical course of the Turkish population in Montenegro in the state records of the censuses conducted between 1921-2023 is presented. Turkish population is not given in every official census book or yearbook. Therefore, the ‘Turkish population numbers’ are those written in the relevant official documents. The pre-2011 census data reflects the situation during the periods of the Kingdom of Serbo-Croat-Slovenia, the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, the Democratic Federal Yugoslavia, the Federal People's Republic of Yugoslavia and the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. The 2011 and 2023 censuses also provide official population data for Turks in the current Republic of Montenegro.

Table 2: Turkish population in Montenegro according to official censuses after the Ottoman Empire (between 1921 and 2023 years)

Census year	Total population	Source
1921	172	(Popis 1921)
1931	63	(Die Gliederung der Bevölkerung) ⁴
1948	2	(Popis 1948)
1953	292	(Statistički Godišnjak FNRJ-1960 323)
1961	2.392	(Popis stanovništva 1961)
1971	397	(Popis stanovništva i stanova 1971)
1981	67	(Popis 1981)
1991	28	(Popis 1991)
2011	104	(Saopštenje 83)
2023	1.816	(Saopštenje 135/2024)

⁴ In this source, which presents data from the 1931 census, provides information on the population whose mother tongue is Turkish.

1.3. Interaction With Other Turks

Today, many countries in Eurasia are autochthonously inhabited by Turks. The geographical area where the Turkish population has lived throughout history is referred to as the Turkic world. Located on the western border of this region, where multiple Turkish written languages are in use today, is Montenegro. This region was once one of the peripheral areas of the Ottoman Empire. The natural border of the western frontier began with the Adriatic Sea. Montenegro retains these characteristics to this day. From the Adriatic coast inward, this geography is home to a large population of neighbouring peoples alongside the Turks.

Within the Balkans, which serves as an interaction zone for Turkish and other languages, the position of Turks of Montenegro is somewhat unique. The current cultural status of Turks of Montenegro differs slightly from that of Turks in neighbouring Balkan states. In the nearest country, Kosovo, Turkish is spoken as both a dialect and a written language. The general population is familiar with the Kosovo Turkish dialect, and there is a significant number of individuals who possess a strong command of the written language. Ultimately, Kosovo is a country where Turkish holds an official status at the relevant level. In terms of contacts with Turkey and other Turkish-speaking populations, the connections of Turks of Kosovo are much stronger than those of Turks of Montenegro.

In contrast, the situation among the Turkish population in Montenegro today is different. The knowledge of Turkish has been preserved in certain families. Within family circles, the Turkish dialect in Montenegro has been overshadowed by the influence of Montenegrin and Serbian, which are strengthened by official status, as well as by Albanian and Bosniak due to familial ties and social relations.

Although not widespread among the Turks of Montenegro, there is contact with Turkey. Istanbul, located at the eastern edge of the Balkans, is an important centre. It is the city where immigrants from Montenegro and other Balkan regions have settled. Given its general popularity, when "Istanbul" is mentioned in Montenegro, it may be understood as referring to all of Turkey. Turkey holds significance for the Turks of Montenegro. First and foremost, there are close and distant relatives in Turkey. Some families travel to Turkey periodically, usually to visit relatives, while also taking the opportunity to see other places. Additionally, Turkey serves as a destination for religious visits, such as the pilgrimage or as a stop for rest during long journeys. However, some members of Turkish families have never travelled to Turkey. While they may feel a sense of attachment to Turkey and have a desire to visit, these individuals have not had the opportunity to do so due to life circumstances.

In recent years, Montenegro has become more widely known in Turkey, largely due to the country's natural beauty and historical sites, which

have attracted tourist visits. Many Turkish tourists travel to Montenegro, especially to the coastal areas and other notable tourist spots. This has led to increased interaction between the Turkish population living in Montenegro and the Turkish tourists arriving from Turkey. People in Montenegro, including those involved in trade, diplomacy, or education, are more likely to have contact with Turks of Montenegro.

For Turks of Montenegro, it has been expressed with emotional significance that Turks living outside of Montenegro are aware of the Turkish community in Montenegro and establish contact with them. Even those who do not often express it verbally have been observed to be pleased by such interactions.

After 1918, Montenegro had been one of the federal parts of Yugoslavia, like Macedonia, Serbia or Kosovo. The Turks of Montenegro were also been in the group known as “Turks of Yugoslavia”, along with their other ethnic kin. Balkan Turks who live outside Turkey naturally had known Montenegro better than those in Turkey. This situation remains the same today. Particularly during the Yugoslav era, the Turks of Kosovo, Macedonia, Sandžak, and the surrounding areas, who lived under the same state framework, studied, travelled, worked, and served in the military within their country. This allowed them to become familiar with Montenegro, albeit to varying degrees. As a result, today, Montenegro is a well-known and easily accessible holiday and transit destination for citizens of neighbouring countries, especially Serbia, Kosovo, and North Macedonia.

Much like their counterparts in the surrounding regions, the Turkish population in Montenegro also received education, travelled, worked, and served in the military in various parts of Yugoslavia. During family trips, many new places were discovered, and interactions were established not only with the locations but also with the people living there. In some of these interactions, when other Turks were encountered, emotional moments were also experienced.

2. Their Own Language: Turkish

2.1. Linguistic Characteristics

The native language of the Turkish community in Montenegro is one of the Rumelian dialects of Turkish. The dialect of Montenegro belongs to the "Western Rumelia" subgroup of the "Rumelia" dialect region. It is a dialect that resembles neighbouring Turkish dialects but also has its own unique characteristics (İğci 2018). They are generally speakers of a dialect, or users of spoken language. It could be said that dominance of the written language is weak. This dialect also reflects the recent history and social conditions of the Turks of Montenegro. Turks from this region speak also languages other than Turkish. They are bilingual and multilingual. Many of them speak Bosniak

and Albanian as the language spoken by their family members and relatives. In some households, the mother tongue of one of the family members is Bosniak or Albanian. As a member of the Turkish family, they also speak Turkish. Among the new generation of the family there are also those who do not speak Turkish. In addition, Montenegrin and Serbian are generally spoken at a good level. There are also those who speak English and French due to their education or profession. Like people from other communities in Montenegro, Turkish family members have taken part in labour migration towards Western Europe and Northern European countries. Therefore, especially in/with the young and middle-aged population, the official languages of countries such as Germany, Sweden, Norway and other languages of these geographies are also spoken.

The sounds of the Turkish dialect of Montenegro are largely compatible with the Turkish written language. The vowels among the sounds have a throatiness equivalent to the usage in the written language. Some of the vowels, which are generally at the level of the standard nasalisation, also have long vowels. All vowels identified in Montenegro are as follows with IPA characters and Turkish transcription marks in brackets: /a/ (a), /a:/ (ā), /u/ (ı), /ɔ/ (o), /ɔ:/ (ō), /u/ (u), /u:/ (ū), /e/ (e), /ɛ:/ (ē), /i/ (i), /i:/ (ī or ī), /œ/ (ö), /y/ (ü). All consonants except /ğ/, which is seen in Turkish written language, are also heard in Montenegro. Due to its characteristic structure, there is no /ğ/ sound in Montenegro. As a dialect of Western Rumelia, the previous form of this sound, is still generally used here. All consonants identified in Montenegro are as follows: /b/ (b), /dʒ/ (c), /dʒ/ (ç), /tʃ/ (ç), /tç/ (ç), /ts/ (ts), /d/ (d), /f/ (f), /f/ (F), /j/ (g), /h/ (h), /ʒ/ (j), /ç/ (k), /ç/ (K), /t/ (t), /l/ (l), /m/ (m), /n/ (n), /p/ (p), /r/ (r), /s/ (s), /ş/ (ş), /ʃ/ (ş), /t/ (t), /t/ (T), /v/ (v), /j/ (y), /z/ (z) (İğci 2025 99, 112).

2.2. The Use and Status of Turkish

The feature of written language influencing and transforming dialects is the case for all languages in the modern period. In Turkish, written language has an influence on all dialects. It is possible to talk about the influence of written language on the speakers of the Turkish dialect in Montenegro as in other dialect regions. While speaking a dialect in Montenegro, the trace of the written language can be noticed in some words and expressions. Especially in those who have more contact with Turkish tourists coming from outside Montenegro, a shift to written language vocabulary or morphology has been observed. However, it can be said that there is less influence here than in other Turkish dialects in the neighbourhood. As explained above, the fact that the Turks of Montenegro have less contact with the surrounding area and its written language also reduced the influence of the written language.

The dialect spoken in Montenegro is a dialect of Western Rumelia. Those who are unfamiliar with the archaic features of this region and the existence of other Turkish dialects may describe Montenegro Turkish as somewhat difficult to understand. This idea also exists among those who speak this dialect. They can point out that the Turkish they speak makes their interlocutors in Turkey smile. Personal perceptions are in question here. It is known that every language has various dialects. When the wide dialect geography of Turkish is not known, it is normal to describe the experiences in this way. There is also the following situation in the Balkan context. This dialect description can be considered as an attitude specific to Balkan Turks living outside the borders of Turkey. Dialectal features that differ from the written language may be interpreted as deformation or change by Turkish speakers living in a multilingual environment. Examples can be found in Montenegro, as well as in Kosovo and elsewhere.

The new words that started to be used in Turkish after the proclamation of the republic in Turkey have not reached Montenegro. Montenegro at that time, where Turkish was not used in officialdom, education and press, could not be informed about the new developments in Turkish written language. Therefore, new concepts and terms of the written language had to be learnt and accustomed for the Turks of Montenegro. The aforementioned innovation was most difficult for the elderly. While watching Turkish television channels, it was stated that the old people who had spoken Turkish as a dialect all their lives could not understand some expressions and sentences.

Today, the age group where Turkish is weak and not spoken is the youth of Montenegro Turks. There are also those who speak Turkish with limited vocabulary among children. Efforts to improve their knowledge of Turkish through courses were observed among them. The mother tongue is acquired in the family, especially in the preschool age. Later on, leaving home due to education caused the Turkish language to weaken in general. There are also children who do not speak Turkish at all and this is directly proportional to the Turkish identity of the family concerned. Turkish speakers are generally the middle-aged and older part of the population. Language dominance in the Turkish population of Montenegro is determined by the level of disorganisation of the population. Therefore, those who speak Turkish among them today are acquaintances or relatives. Apart from this, they can communicate in their native language when they meet each other. Apart from the aforementioned conditions, official affairs, educational institutions, large shopping centres are the places where they use their second language such as Montenegrin. In multilingual family environments, Bosniak and Albanian, which are close to Montenegrin, are the main languages used.

The social environment in which Turkish is spoken intensively with relatives and neighbours has been disrupted for many reasons in recent history.

The 1979 earthquake in the south of Montenegro is important in this respect. This devastating earthquake disrupted the language environment of the Turks in this region as well as many other things. On 15 April 1979, an earthquake with a moment magnitude of 7.1 struck the coastal area of southern Montenegro near the city of Bar. It was the culminating event of a persistent series of foreshocks with magnitudes up to 5.3 within the region and caused more than 156 casualties, 1,400 injured and left more than 100,000 people homeless. The devastation was enormous and incalculable. Over 1,600 cultural monuments suffered in the catastrophe as well as thousands of works of art and valuable collections (Montenegro Earthquake 5; Schmitz et al. 1).

After the 1979 earthquake, the families moved to apartments provided by the state and started to live in more crowded environments. It was explained that Turkish children were looked at strangely in some environments where their peers were present. Faced with such an attitude, the child found it difficult to understand why others treated him differently. The fact that his mother spoke Turkish to him in the presence of his peers could be a reason for hesitation for that child. The child asked his mother not to speak Turkish with him. These expressions beautifully describe one of the social environments that Turkish language has encountered in recent history. After the 1979 earthquake, it can be said that the conditions for speaking Turkish would have been much better had it not been necessary to settle in the new neighbourhood. After the earthquake, the number of people speaking Turkish in the new neighbourhood became limited. Apart from the family, they could only speak Turkish with the people in the neighbourhood when they went to Stari Bar. The negative effect of having no one to speak Turkish in the neighbourhood was also encountered in places like Pljevlja in the north of Montenegro.

With the weakening of the custom of Turkish families marrying Turks, marriages with neighbouring nationalities have increased. This has created a different social environment. The fact that one of the members of the new couple was from a non-Turkish speaking environment had a negative impact on the future of Turkish in this new family. The fact that the future mother did not learn or speak Turkish resulted in the children being deprived of Turkish. In such marriages around Lake Skadar, the fact that the mother was an Albanian-speaking individual initiated the process of transition from Turkish to Albanian for the children. This process usually resulted in the children forgetting Turkish completely and remaining only Albanian speakers. This is a situation that is also observed in other studies and settings for this part of the Balkans.

In Turkish families, the arrival of the child at school age has also had a negative impact on the Turkish language. Some parents have started to stop speaking Turkish regularly at the beginning of their children's school age. Reasons such as the student not struggling at school have been put forward.

The decrease in the Turkish population in Montenegro has naturally meant a decrease in the Turkish population. As the number of Turks decreased, the proportion of people of other nationalities around them in the general population increased. Those who lost their lives due to wars, bandit movements, epidemics in recent history have been the bitter losses of the Turkish population. In addition, a significant number of the population left Montenegro through migrations. After all these losses, the number of Turks remaining in Montenegro has become more or less the number of Turkish speakers. The new social conditions started to cause a weakening of the language among the Turkish population of Montenegro, which fully uses Turkish.

2.3. Text Sample from Montenegro Turkish

This text, taken as an example of Turkish dialect in Montenegro, was collected in Stari Bar. Stari Bar (Turkish: Eski Bar) is located in the south of Montenegro. It is near Bar, which today is situated on the Adriatic coast with its harbour. It is a foothill overlooking the sea and is the original historical site of the castle. According to the last census (2023), a total of 1,652 people live in Stari Bar, which is now a tourist destination (Monstat). Below is the actual text showing the Turkish spoken in Montenegro. The text is written in IPA characters. Below it is the translation. In both the original text and the translation, some explanatory sentences are given in double brackets.

((Describes her daily life.)) var mi penzija cədʒamun. ε... a dʒidejm təpolitsa, satlamma nedur mi lazum. dʒeturijler me ili əjlum ili cuzuim. a var mi dʒelijle^f suc suc. suc dʒelijler. sucular... ben atʃunsum saj, atʃun ajuwramaj bi ʃe, ben jyrijm. istejm biras jyryma. lazumduur biras jyryma. a inatʃe. a ben jaʃamisum jijwermi ici juʃ təpəlitsaja. atʃun imiʃ zerzele. bu εf imiʃ əjnəʃuc bitevi. ta tʃi ja japmisuc.

((Describing homemade food and drink.)) buni ben cajnatwrmisum. viʃnja. niðze deʃuniʃ viʃnja? bilmejm. eh. soc atʃjm. surup japajm. a viʃnaja catajm mu biras, da biras setʃer. pa ja japajm dʒem. ε bilmejm niðze deʃuniʃ turʃe. eh. alidur dəma:tʃe. cəmajm buni limun tos. ni ne buʃar cəjler bile nasu vinəbranle. bilmejm neler, ni tʃiʃurutlijler turʃe.

valja arcadaʃ? eh pa valja... capajani o capiji. aha capaja, capaja. buʃrun. lazumduur. ədur da səuc, daadur səuc. ben bydʒyn jacmamisum atəʃi. a her dʒyn ja jacajm. buʃrun. cutiʃarı ne satlaniʃuc, cutiʃar itʃi cəjler mu bile neler εp. pestetsidi ne dejler. bilmejm dema da. ε. a bulen jəctur mu bi ʃej itʃeri. sade setʃer em viʃnjanun soc. ((Conversation.)) εje itʃejsen tʃiʃar jəctur. ben itʃmejm em ja satlanmajm.

(İğci 2025 211)

Translation:

((Describes her daily life.)) I have my husband's pension. E... But I go to Topolica⁵, to buy what I need. They bring my son or daughter. But I have them; they come often. They come often. Often... When I'm strong, when nothing hurts, I walk. I want to walk a bit. I need to walk a bit. But otherwise. But I lived in Topolica for twenty-two years. When there was an earthquake. This house was completely dislodged. Until I built it.

((Describing homemade food and drink.)) I boiled this. Cherry. How do you say cherry? I don't know. Eh. I buy fruit juice. I make sherbet. But I add a little more sugar to the cherry. So I make it into marmalade. I don't know how it's called in standard Turkish. I don't know how it's called in standard Turkish. But it's homemade. I don't add this; lemon powder. They add some kind of preservative. I don't know what they call it in Turkish.

Is it, mate? Well, so it is... Close that door. Yeah, close it, close it. Here you are. I need it. It's colder, colder. I didn't light the stove today. But I light it every day. Here. What do we buy in boxes? They always put things in boxes. Pesticides. I don't know what else to say. E. But when you do it like this, there's nothing in it. It's just sugar and cherry juice. *((Conversation.))* There are no cigarettes if you smoke. I don't smoke and I don't buy it.

Conclusion

Montenegro, the country inhabited by the Turks of Montenegro, is a relatively new field of study within Turkology. It is not well-known in the discipline of Turkology. During the period of Yugoslavia, Turks who were living in Kosovo and Macedonia had advantages in preserving and developing their identity, whereas the Turks of Montenegro have remained somewhat in the background. This situation of being in the background has also applied to studies of Turkology regarding Montenegro.

Due to the historical processes of Montenegro, it is necessary to consider the "Yugoslavia" context when studying the Turks of Montenegro. Historically, Turks of Montenegro were certainly part of the broader category of Turks of Yugoslavia.

In the contemporary period, the linguistic and cultural characteristics of the Turks of Montenegro are closely linked to the identity traits of Oghuz Turks. The fundamental features of the Turkish dialects of Montenegro are the greatest proof for this. Among their cultural characteristics, determining which elements are related to non-Oghuz Turkic groups or pre-Ottoman Turkic traditions remains a subject for independent studies.

It is well-known that huge migrations from Montenegro occurred after the collapse of Turkish governance. These migrations led to a significant

⁵ Topolica is the seaside part of Bar.

decrease in the Turkish population of Montenegro, which has also resulted in various losses in terms of national identity. Over the course of approximately a century, official census results have reflected highly variable population numbers. According to official sources, the highest population was recorded in 1961. Since then, the population numbers have remained very low. In the 2023 census conducted in modern Montenegro, the Turkish population count was very close to the peak number recorded in 1961. From this perspective, it is both possible and conducive to a peaceful world to hope that the negative developments that affected the Turkish population and were reflected in population statistics in the historical process have now been left behind.

According to official sources, the highest population number was observed in 1961. In the following period, the population numbers are very low. In 2023, in the results of the census conducted in modern Montenegro, the population number of Montenegro Turks is very close to the highest number in 1961. It is both possible and suitable for a peaceful world to hope that the negativities that have developed against the Turks in the historical process and which have been reflected in the population numbers have been left behind.

The Turkish population, as seen in the results of the last census of 2023, has a partially dispersed distribution within the country. Registration data are from the southern, eastern and northern territories of Montenegro. It is slightly more concentrated in the south and east. Here, there are a total of 89 settlements within the municipal borders of Bar, Berane, Bijelo Polje, Budva, Cetinje, Danilovgrad, Herceg Novi, Kolašin, Kotor, Nikšić, Petnjica, Plav, Pljevlja, Podgorica, Rožaje, Šavnik, Tivat, Tuzi, Ulcinj and Zeta.

According to these official results, the Turkish population is concentrated in the wider surroundings of Lake Skadar and in the Sandžak region. Stari Bar and Bar, in the south of Lake Skadar, seem to have the most vibrant Turkish population in Montenegro as of the XXIst century. The number of inhabitants shown in the census results shows the lowest figure, but it is significant. Field surveys have revealed that some individuals of Turkish origin are not registered as "Turkish" for various reasons.

Among the Turks of Montenegro there are those who have Turkish identity and those who do not. Those who are known to be Turks today are the main informants of Turkish dialects of Montenegro. These are the people who use the local Turkish. Those who have lost their Turkish identity largely or completely, depending on their location, have completely or largely switched to the neighbouring identity closest to their own culture. The transition that seems easier for this group is towards another Muslim ethnic identity. In the vicinity of Lake Skadar, the transition is mostly in the direction of Albanian identity; in the Sandžak region, it is mostly in the direction of Bosniak identity. The reverse is also possible.

Montenegro Turks have limited contact with other Turks. It is possible to speak of relations with a part of the wider Turkic world, with the Balkans and Turkey. Montenegro has been part of Yugoslavia for a long time (in different sub-periods). Turks from Kosovo, Macedonia, Sandžak and the surrounding areas, who lived under the same state during the Yugoslav period, shared their lives in Yugoslavia, where they were citizens. This enabled them to get to know each other. Although it is not widespread but there is contact with Turkey. Istanbul is one of the cities where immigrants from Montenegro and other Balkan regions settled. Turkey, especially Istanbul, is important for the Turks of Montenegro. There are relatives in Turkey. Some families travel to Turkey at various intervals. Turkey is also on the route of religious visits such as pilgrimage. Among the Turks in Montenegro, there are some who have never travelled to Turkey. Seeing the presence of Turks outside Montenegro, even if they are not contacted and spoken to, can be a reason for excitement among Montenegro Turks.

The dialect of the Montenegro Turks is more widely used than the written language. The spoken dialect is similar to the neighbouring Turkish dialects in Western Rumelia, but it is also a dialect with its own characteristics. This dialect reflects the recent history and social conditions of the Turks in Montenegro to some extent. Conditions seen in various linguistic features and vocabulary are traces of the history of the Montenegro Turks who have reached the XXIst century. Turkish dialects of Montenegro, as an archaic Turkish dialect, can contribute to historical and contemporary linguistic studies.

The social environment in which Turkish is spoken has deteriorated for various reasons in recent history. The devastating 1979 earthquake in the south of Montenegro is important in this context. The earthquake not only damaged the living spaces of the Turks in that region but also disrupted the environment of language.

The migrations experienced by the Turkish population of Montenegro, the disruption of linguistic environments, the influence of official and dominant languages, and factors such as children starting school have all negatively impacted the frequency and usage of Turkish spoken in Montenegro. Marriages with members of neighbouring nations, where one of the partners does not speak Turkish, have also adversely affected the future of the Turkish language within these new families. Today, the Turkish spoken in Montenegro has undergone all these challenges.

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