

Faculty of Philosophy, University of Belgrade | 2025



1838

S

**Serbian identity:
reaffirmation or
deconstruction**

Edited book

*Slobodan Antonić,
Ana Vuković and
Zoran Kindić
(editors)*

*Serbian identity:
reaffirmation or deconstruction
Edited book*

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.46793/6427.371.8.SI>

Editors

Slobodan Antonić
Ana Vuković
Zoran Kindić

Publisher

University of Belgrade – Faculty of Philosophy

For the publisher

Danijel Sinani,
Dean of the Faculty of Philosophy

Reviewers

Elena Guskova
member of the Serbian Academy of Science and Arts,
Chief Researcher at the Institute of Slavic Studies
of the Russian Academy of Sciences (Russian Federation)
Biljana Vankovska
full professor at the Faculty of Philosophy in Skopje (North Macedonia)
Darko Đogo
full professor at the Faculty of Theology in Foča (Bosnia and Herzegovina)

Layout

Dosije studio, Belgrade

Printed by

Dosije studio, Belgrade

Print run

500

ISBN-978-86-6427-371-8

This publication was produced and printed as part of the project
*Formation of Serbian identity and theoretical controversies concerning attempts
of its deconstruction* (acronym FSITC, registration number 1561, Identities program),
funded by the Science Fund of the Republic of Serbia.



Science Fund
of the Republic of Serbia

CONTENTS

- 7 | Introduction
- 9 | *Marjan Aleksić*
Serbian Orthodox Identity Through the Ages:
Some Characteristics and Constants
- 43 | *Snežana Jelesijević*
On the Sources of Domentianus's Life of Saint Sava and the
Translation of Some of Its Sections
- 79 | *Ana Vuković*
The Role of Sava Vladislavić in the Affirmation
of Serbian Identity
- 91 | *Marinko Lolić*
Actualizations and Relevance of Dositej's Thoughts
on Serbian Identity
- 107 | *Zoran Kindić*
Nikolai's Interpretation of the Meaning of Serbian History
- 135 | *Dobrivoje Stanojević*
Biblical Style and Serbian Identity in Borisav Pečić's Novel
"The Golden Fleece"
- 153 | *Vladimir Milisavljević*
The Palanka as an Identity Metaphor and
Its Historical Preconditions
- 171 | *Jelena Miljković Matić*
Science of the Serbian People as a Factor of Identity
- 195 | *Slobodan Antonić*
The Image of Serbia in Inverse Nationalism
- 227 | *Milenko Bodin*
The Philosophy of Identity as a Defense Against the
Destruction of the Serbian Nation and the Serbian State

- 247 | *Ivica R. Todorović*
Deconstruction of Serbian Identity and Possibilities of
Defense (in the field of spiritual culture)
- 271 | *Ivan Zečević*
Reaffirming the Serbian Visual Identity:
Sociological and Cultural-Historical Dimensions
of Contemporary Symbolism

INTRODUCTION

This edited volume contains the revised and expanded presentations of the academic conference *Serbian Identity: Reaffirmation or Deconstruction*, which took place on December 20, 2024 at the Faculty of Philosophy in Belgrade. The framework of the conference consisted of members of the research team working on the scientific project “Formation of Serbian identity and theoretical controversies concerning attempts of its deconstruction” (FSITC 1561, funded by the Science Fund of the Republic of Serbia) and two guest speakers.

The project examines the emergence of modern Serbian national, political, religious and cultural identity and the elements of pluralism of identities in Serbia. It also examines the contemporary ideological controversies and conflicts related to the attempts to deconstruct, redefine or reshape various aspects of political and cultural identity in modern Serbia. Particular attention is paid to the phenomenon of *ethnic self-hatred*, which today triggers many ideological debates within Serbian identity politics.

In Serbia, as in some other (semi-)peripheral states, the ruling elites have proclaimed a development path of “modernization” (westernization) for the entire society, through the accession process to the European Union in the expectation that Serbia will enter the circle of economically developed countries relatively quickly. Since this has not happened, a critical approach has developed among part of the social (media and cultural) elite, which links Serbia’s economic backwardness with its traditional cultural heritage, nationalism, Orthodoxy, egalitarianism, patriarchal mentality and some key elements of national identity. In this sense, it is necessary to examine whether such an ideological stance is a legitimate critique of traditionalism and ethnonationalism (“small” imperialism) or merely a specific, inverted ethnonationalism. Is it perhaps a matter of creating a kind of political counter-identity by differentiating oneself from the lower social classes who are “struggling to adapt to global trends”, or is it a systemically conditioned culture of autocolonialism characteristic of societies on the (semi-)periphery of the global capitalist system?

The controversies over the content of Serbian national identity are indeed one of the most important cultural conflicts in Serbia today. As can be seen from the content of the articles included in this volume, the description, analysis and explanation of this phenomenon is only possible

through strong multidisciplinary research, i.e. through the synergy of sociology and other related humanities and social sciences. The emergence, formation and preservation of Serbian identity is examined on the basis of various theoretical approaches — from the identity theory of classical German philosophy (Kant, Fichte, Schelling, Hegel) to anthropological concepts (cultural evolutionism, structural functionalism, conflict theory, ethnogenetic constructivism) to globalization, nationalism and development policy (Eriksen, Baulch, Pham, Reilly), to sociological nation-building theories (Gellner, Bendix, Anderson, Rokkan, Galtung, Smith), to more recent theoretical concepts such as autocolonialism (metaphor of self-colonization) or auto-racism (internalized racism), with which we try to understand the complex position of small nations on the (semi-)periphery of the global capitalist system.

In the part of the study dealing with the historical genesis of modern Serbian identity, special attention is given to the period from the Serbian revolution in the 19th century (and its intellectual representative, Dositej Obradović) to the collapse of Yugoslav socialism and the revival of Serbian cultural identity during the “post-socialist transition”, including a theoretical reflection on the legacy of Saint Sava and the Kosovo vow as spiritual foundations of Serbian identity and its preservation during the Ottoman occupation. Since identity is not static and fossilized, but contains a moment of differentiation and implies a mediation with the Other, it is necessary to examine how the affirmation and/or denial of the legacy of Saint Sava and the Kosovo Vow have shaped Serbian national identity and how they continue to do so today. In general, the theoretical construction of a *dynamic model* of the formation and reconstruction of Serbian collective identity is necessary, which incorporates the dynamic elements of negative identity (autostereotypes, ethnic self-hatred) and counter-identity — as an escape into an alternative super-identity (Yugoslavism) or sub-identity (Belgradism, Vojvodjanism) — into the scholarly understanding of this phenomenon.

With this project, we wanted to initiate a debate within our academic community on the emergence and controversies of modern Serbian identity. In this way, we hope to gain a better understanding of the socio-historical sources of one of the most important ideological conflicts in contemporary Serbia and to jointly search for ways to reduce the conflictual tensions. We also hope to encourage academic communities in other countries, especially in countries on the (semi-)periphery of the global capitalist system, where similar phenomena related to the construction or preservation of identity have been observed, to conduct similar academic research and publish similar topics in their journals.

The Editors

Dr. Marjan Aleksić¹

Doctor of Theology

Diocese of Western Europe,

Serbian Orthodox Church

SERBIAN ORTHODOX IDENTITY THROUGH THE AGES: SOME CHARACTERISTICS AND CONSTANTS

This article is based on the thesis that the foundation of Serbian Orthodox identity is a specific Orthodox spirituality that has influenced its formation and shaping. This Serbian Orthodox spirituality developed among Serbs in the Middle Ages and was shaped by three spiritual centers: Mount Athos, the Holy Land and Mount Sinai, with which the medieval Serbian state maintained close relations. The most important features of this spirituality that we can emphasize are its ascetic (monastic) character and its clear eschatological orientation.

These two features are reflected in the Serbian Orthodox identity in the form of the Serbian commitment to the Kingdom of Heaven and the Serbian willingness to bear martyrological witness to their Orthodox faith. This proves how deeply rooted Orthodoxy is in the Serbian national essence, even if in some historical periods it seemed that Serbs were indifferent to their faith. Examples such as the monks Sinaites (14th century) and the Bogomoljci movement (20th century) will be used to demonstrate the continuity and permanence of this Serbian Orthodox identity.

Keywords: national identity, spirituality, Saint Sava, Mount Athos, asceticism, eschatology

Orthodoxy is not only an essential, but also a decisive factor for the national identity of the Serbs. With the adoption of Christianity from Constantinople through the apostolic preaching of Saints Cyril and Methodius and the missionary work of their disciples, the Serbs joined the Byzantine

1 email: marjan.aleksic@gmail.com; Orcid: 0000-0001-5943-3124

civilizational circle, or, to use Dimitri Obolensky's successful expression, the "Byzantine commonwealth".²

The aim of this article is to highlight some features of Serbian Orthodox identity that have remained constant despite the turbulent and changing currents of history, which have often been unfavorable to the Serbian people. We start from the thesis that the *Serbian Orthodox identity* emerged from an *authentic Orthodox spirituality* that was cultivated during the Middle Ages and later during the Turkish (Ottoman) occupation. By spirituality here we mean the practical life of the Orthodox faith, the embodiment of the dogmas, the truth of the faith in the daily life of Christians. Orthodox teaching and the experience of the Church of the East convey to us the truth that Orthodoxy, i.e., right belief, cannot exist without Orthopraxy, that is, right living. Therefore, authentic spirituality cannot exist without true faith, and the truthfulness of faith is tested by spiritual life. The struggle of Serbs through the centuries to preserve the true faith, Orthodoxy, even at the cost of suffering, has become a general feature of Serbian national identity. In the national consciousness, the act of loyalty and fidelity to orthodoxy, even to the point of shedding blood, is expressed by the short phrase about the preservation and defense of the "cross with three fingers". In this way, we want to draw attention to two important features of Serbian Orthodox identity: its ascetical character and its eschatological orientation.

The decisive period for the formation of Serbian Orthodox identity was the era of the Nemanjić dynasty, which ruled the Serbian lands for two centuries. The work of the first rulers of this dynasty to gather and politically unite the Serbian states was completed by Archbishop Sava Nemanjić, who gave shape to the Serbian state and its spiritual identity through the organization and independence of the Serbian Church in 1219. A clear Serbian Orthodox identity can be recognized during the reign of Grand Župan Stefan Nemanja. Or perhaps it is more accurate to say that the reign of Stefan Nemanja left clear evidence and traces of Serbian Orthodox identity. While the progenitor of the Nemanjić dynasty expanded the borders of the Serbian state through wars and negotiations at the expense of the Byzantine Empire, he simultaneously strengthened Byzantine Orthodoxy in his lands and gradually introduced the Byzantine cultural pattern into the Serbian state and society. One of Nemanja's biographers, his son and the first crowned king Stefan Nemanjić, describes his father as a "gatherer of the lost lands of his fatherland, a shepherd and teacher, a builder of churches and a restorer

2 Refer to Dimitrije Obolenski, *The Byzantine Commonwealth*, Prosveta, Belgrade, 1996.

of ruined” (Stefan the First-Crowned, 1999, XLIII)³. Here, Nemanja’s son and biographer emphasizes not only his military and ruling merits in the gathering and unification of the Serbian lands, but also his merits in the spiritual field. Stefan Nemanja distinguished himself in church politics primarily through his building activities and donations. The historical sources have been recorded, and the national memory has passed on the awareness of the Great Župan Stefan Nemanja as the first founder and benefactor among the Serbian rulers to the following generations⁴. Perhaps the rulers from the period before Nemanjić also increased their donations, but they are neither preserved nor recorded in the national memory and the Serbian national consciousness. He began building his first endowments, the Monastery of St. Nicholas near Kuršumljia and the Monastery of the Most Holy Mother of God, as a ruling prince before 1166. This independent church building by Nemanja, which also represented an act of independent religious policy, led to dissatisfaction among his brothers, the Great Župan Tihomir and Princes Stracimir and Miroslav. The brothers imprisoned him in a cave near Ras, from which he was freed by the intercession of St. George the Great Martyr, to whom he prayed fervently. Before the final confrontation with his brothers, whose army he defeated in the Battle of Pantino on Kosovo, he sent one of his priests to the Church of St. George in the town of Zvečan to say night prayers. When the priest fell asleep after a long prayer, the saint appeared to him in a dream, dressed as a soldier, and said: “I am the servant of Christ, George, who helps your Lord to defeat his enemies” (Stefan First-Crowned, 1999, 31). In gratitude to the saint, the great Župan Stefan Nemanja built the Đurđevi Stupovi monastery. St. George became the war protector of the House of Nemanjić, to whom other rulers of this dynasty also turned for help and protection

3 This translation was proposed by Dr. Ljiljana Juhas-Georgievska, who, on the basis of research into the manuscript tradition of Stefan’s hagiography, established that the Paris manuscript is incomplete at this point and that a more recent copy from 1441/1442, preserved in the Gorica Miscellany, makes it possible to reconstruct the text. See Ljiljana Juhas-Georgievska, „*Beitrag zur Interpretation einer Passage in Stefans Hagiographie des Heiligen Simeon*“, 123-136.

4 The epic folk song “Saint Sava” reproduces Saint Sava’s answer to the Christian lords’ question as to where the treasure of “Emperor Nemanja” had gone:

“Do not be foolish,
Christian lords!
Father did not scatter the treasure
For saddles and maces,
Nor for fine horses for wars,
But father spent the treasure
Building many endowments” (*Anthology of Epic Folk Songs*, 2005, p. 48).

from battles and wars⁵. Stefan Nemanja's most important and magnificent endowment was the Studenica Monastery, which he began building in 1183 and which was dedicated to the Virgin Mary. Its catholikon became the burial church of the first rulers of the Nemanjić dynasty.

The second important aspect of the Great Župan's church policy is reflected in his concern for Orthodoxy and the preservation of the purity of the Orthodox faith. As First-Crowned reports⁶, the Serbian ruler harshly dealt with the Bogomil heresy and its leaders and preachers. With this act, Stefan Nemanja shows his concern for Orthodoxy and the purity of the Orthodox faith, which will remain an enduring feature of Serbian Orthodoxy and Serbian Orthodox identity. Nemanja's second biographer and youngest son, St. Sava, as archimandrite of Studenica, wrote the *Typikon of Studenica*, the first chapter of which is the hagiography of the founder Stefan Nemanja. St. Sava, who paints the picture of his father, first emphasizes his devotion to the Orthodox faith, into which he wanted to introduce his people, and then stresses his founding activity: "For what should I call him? A ruler or rather a teacher? For he edified and enlightened the hearts of all and showed us how true Christians should believe in God. By his example he first showed piety, then he led others, built churches and monasteries..." (St. Sava, 2018, 31). For the spiritual history of the Serbs, apart from his extraordinary royal achievements and great foundation undertakings, perhaps the most profound, spiritual and far-reaching act was precisely his abdication at the assembly in Ras, on the Feast of the Annunciation, on March 25, 1195, and his reception of the monastic tonsure from the hands of the Bishop of Raška Callinicus, who on this occasion gave him the monastic name Simeon. This act of the ruler leaving the royal throne and becoming a monk will determine the further course of Serbian history and give it a sublime, sacred meaning. Other rulers of the Nemanjić dynasty⁷ were to follow the example of the progenitor and his spiritual ideals. The newly ordained monk Simeon remained in his monastery, Studenica Monastery, for just over a year before setting off to Mount Athos on October 8, 1197 to meet his son, the monk Sava, who was then living in asceticism in Vatopedi Monastery.

5 King Stefan Dečanski prayed before the icon of St. George in Staro Nagoričino Monastery before the Battle of Velbužd in 1330.

6 "And cut off the tongue in the throat of their teacher and leader who does not confess Christ, the Son of God. And burn his evil books and drive him out, forbidding him to confess or mention the triple cursed name" (Stefan the First-Crowned, 1999, p. 37).

7 His son and successor King Stephen the First-Crowned, who died as the monk Simeon, and King Dragutin, who ended his earthly life as the monk Theoktist, also received the monastic tonsure.

St. Sava is a central figure in Serbian history and the most important person of the Nemanjić era. All historical events in the entire Serbian history are measured and determined by him, and every actor on the Serbian historical scene defines and determines himself through his relationship to him, as a positive or negative historical phenomenon. St. Sava was to shape, form and permanently strengthen the Serbian Orthodox identity through his spiritual and pastoral work. St. Sava of Serbia inherited the Orthodox tradition from Byzantium, but through his apostolic work, he creatively built the Serbian Orthodox identity and Serbian Orthodoxy, which later in the 20th century would be called Svetosavlje – the Orthodoxy of Serbian style and experience. The creative approach to shaping Serbian Orthodox identity in the work of St. Sava is reflected not only in his theological-literary work, but also in the architecture and art that emerged from his theological-literary work. Thus, a creative reception of Byzantine culture and tradition took place among the Serbs and not just its mere adoption and plagiarism.

Ascetic Character of Serbian orthodox Identity

One of the fundamental factors that contributed to the emergence and development of Serbian Orthodox identity was the strong influence of the most important monastic and spiritual centers of the Christian world, first and foremost Mount Athos, followed by the Holy City of Jerusalem with the sanctuaries of the Judean Desert and finally Mount Sinai, with which medieval Serbia maintained close relations and active spiritual contacts.

First of all, the connection with Mount Athos and the monastic tradition that St. Sava passed on to Serbia should be emphasized. The departure of the Serbian prince Rastko, the youngest son of the great Župan Stefan Nemanja, to Mount Athos to the Russian monastery of St. Panteleimon and then his passage around 1193, his monastic tonsure and his stay in the Greek monastery of Vatopedi had a decisive influence not only on Sava's spiritual formation and theological education, but also on the historical path of the Serbian Orthodox Church, its theology and spirituality. As Sava's disciple Domentijan reports, the monastic tonsure over Rastko was performed by Vatopedi's abbot Theostiriktos "and he clothed him in the angelic shema and called him Monk Sava" (Domentijan, 2001, 23)⁸. This shows the importance that the monks of Vatopedi attached to the Serbian prince's acceptance into their monastic brotherhood. Sava's choice of

⁸ St. Sava most likely became a rassophore monk in the Russian monastery of St. Panteleimon, while he received the monastic schema in the monastery of Vatopedi.

Vatopedi Monastery was certainly no coincidence, as many monks from respected noble families of the Byzantine Empire⁹ lived there in the 12th century. The monastery also had a rich library, which gave the young monk Sava the opportunity to study patristic writings. As a monk of Vatopedi, Sava was to begin his rich foundation work on Mount Athos. Until then, such intensive foundation work by a monk from Mount Athos had drawn attention to both Monk Sava and his royal family and country of origin, Serbia¹⁰. He later traveled to Constantinople as a representative of the monastery, where he obtained important privileges for Vatopedi at a meeting with Emperor Alexios III Angelos¹¹. From the emperor himself he received the abandoned Hilandar monastery, which Sava had originally offered to the Vatopedi monastery, but which was later handed over to the Serbs at the insistence of the Athonite Protos and the abbots of the Athonite monasteries. During his stays in the imperial capital, the saint lived in the monastery of the Theotokos Evergetis (Benefactress)¹², where he had the opportunity to become thoroughly acquainted with the cenobitic organization of the prestigious capital monastery. St. Sava took the Evergetis Typikon as a model when he wrote the Hilandar Typikon and later the Typikon of Studenica. The Vatopedi phase of Sava's Athonite life is of extraordinary importance, as it was during this time that he learned

9 The large number of noble monks in the brotherhood of Vatopedi should not be surprising, considering that, according to tradition, the monastery of Vatopedi was founded in 938 by three brothers, noblemen from Edirne: Athanasius, Nicholas and Anthony. See Papachrysanthou, 2003, p. 169.

10 In the monastery of Vatopedi, St. Sava built the Church of the Nativity of the Most Holy Theotokos, the Church of St. John Chrysostom, the Church of the Transfiguration in the tower of the monastery and covered the katholikon dedicated to the Annunciation with lead. He also renovated the monasteries of Karakallou, Xiropotamou and Philotheou, where he is considered the second founder.

11 Although the monastery of Vatopedi had already been under the care and protection of Byzantine emperors, as the chrysobulls of Emperor Nikephoros III Botaneiates from 1080 and of Alexios I Komnenos prove, the monk Sava had a close family relationship with Emperor Alexios III, whose daughter Eudokia was married to Sava's brother and Serbian Grand Prince Stefan Nemanjić. This fact undoubtedly played an important role in the selection of Monk Sava as the monastery's envoy to negotiate with the emperor himself.

12 The Evergetis Monastery in Constantinople was founded in 1048/1049 by the monk Paulus. The founder of the monastery was succeeded as abbot by the monk Timothy in 1054. The Evergetis Typikon was compiled during Timothy's tenure (1054-1070). It is known that Stefan Nemanja, when he was still a grand prince, established a connection with this monastery and sent it rich contributions. It is possible that these connections were established during Stefan's stay in Constantinople in 1172 during his imprisonment. St. Sava continued the tradition of donations to the monastery and stayed there during his visits to the Byzantine capital. See Archimandrite Tihon (Rakicevic), *Saint Sava and the Evergetis Monastery in the Evergetis Typikon*, 17-49.

the Athonite cenobite monastic tradition, gained valuable diplomatic experience and made connections and acquaintances with the highest circles of the imperial court and the Byzantine Church¹³. By founding a Serbian monastery on Mount Athos, St. Sava included Serbia in the *Athonite commonwealth*¹⁴, which at the time included Greeks, Georgians, Russians and Amalfitans.

When he and his father, the monk Simeon, moved to the abandoned monastery of Hilandar in 1198, a new stage in the saint's work began, which would lead him from the foundation of an independent (self-governing) Serbian monastery on Mount Athos to the creation of an independent (autocephalous) Serbian church in 1219. Hilandar became the lifeblood of Serbian Orthodoxy, a place where original theological works were written in Serbian reduction of Church Slavonic language. One example of this is Hieromonk Domentijan of Hilandar¹⁵, the author of the *Life of St. Sava*. This work, which Domentijan wrote in the hermitage of Karyes, is far more than a literary work; it is a first-class source for the study of the development of theological thought among the Serbs. In his text, Domentijan repeatedly emphasizes Sava's love for the desert and the desert life there.

“...an earthly angel and heavenly man, who from his youth loved the desert and the God-fearing companions who live in it...” (Domentijan, 2001, 33)

“And this Most Reverend loved the desert life from his youth, nourishing and warming those who live in deserts and caves, serving them with every abundance and delighting them spiritually and physically with every joy” (Domentijan, 2001, 383).

Domentijan also calls him “desert-educated” (Domentijan, 2001, 295), while the saint himself refers to himself as a “desert-loving dove”

13 See Dragoljub Marjanović, *The Byzantine World and the Serbian Church in the 13th and 14th Centuries*

14 The British Byzantologist Graham Speake uses the term *Athonite Commonwealth* in his study *A History of the Athonite Commonwealth. The Spiritual and Cultural Diaspora of Mount Athos*, Serbian translation *The Holy Mountain Among the Nations. The Spiritual and Cultural Diaspora of Mount Athos*.

15 Hieromonk Domentijan of Hilandar was born in the first half of the 13th century and probably came from a noble family. He became a monk in the monastery of Žiča. In his work, he states that he was the last disciple of St. Sava. He accompanied the saint on his last pilgrimage to the Holy Land (1233-1235). Domentijan also accompanied St. Sava during his brief illness in Bulgaria and subsequently took part in the funeral ceremonies and burial in the monastery of the Forty Martyrs in Tarnovo. He took part in the translation of Sava's relics to Serbia in 1237. He then went to Mount Athos and worked in the Kareia hermitage. Around 1260, he was elected spiritual father of the Hilandar brotherhood. His last mention dates back to 1264 and he is buried in Hilandar.

in the Life of St. Simeon (St. Sava, 2018, 41). Sava's desert experience was extremely real and experiential. After the repose of Saint Simeon, he withdrew to a cell, a hermitage (hesychasterion) that he had founded in Karyes (Orahovica), the administrative center of Mount Athos, and dedicated it to his heavenly protector, Saint Sava the Sanctified. St. Sava also wrote a rule for those who wanted to live there ascetically after him, the famous Karyes Typikon, which stipulates that there should be no more than three monks whose task it should be to read the entire Psalter during the day. The hermitage life that Sava aspired to and practiced was inspired by the experiences of the Egyptian desert fathers from the famous monastic settlements of Nitria, Scetis and Cells. Their ascetic experiences were recorded and passed on by their disciples in the form of sayings or short dialogs in the form of questions from a spiritual disciple and answers from a spiritual father (abba), which are preserved in the collection known as the Paterikon (Gerontikon). This monastic-ascetic anthology, a jewel of hermit literature, bears witness to the central role of the Psalter and the singing of psalms in the spiritual life and asceticism of the desert fathers¹⁶. As a successor to the spiritual efforts of the great fathers of the Egyptian desert, St. Sava of Serbia introduced the rule of daily reading of the entire Psalter in his hermitage in Karyes. Following the example of the monk Anthony the Great, who was the first to enter the "great desert" and there took up the spiritual battle with the demons who possessed the desert, our saint withdrew to the hermitage in Caryes to fight against the enemies of humanity through fasting, prayer, nightly vigils and the singing of psalms, just like the great Anthony¹⁷. The desert¹⁸ as an inhospitable, uninhabited, waterless place with sparse vegetation and thus minimal food and survival opportunities was a space in which deadly dangers constantly lurked and where people only stayed temporarily or, as was more often the

16 To cite just one example from the Paterikon: St. Macarius of Egypt tells of two young men from abroad who came to Sketis to practise asceticism and asked the famous Abba for advice and a rule of life. When he visited them in their cell after some time, he saw that they got up in the night to "sing twelve psalms" (Paterikon, On Abba Macarius of Egypt, 33). On the significance of the Psalter and, more broadly, of the Holy Scriptures in the life of the Desert Fathers, see Douglas Burton-Christie, *La parola nel deserto. Scrittura e ricerca della santità*, 157-196.

17 Domentijan describes Sava's ascetic deeds in the hermitage of Karyes with the words: "He remained there in great silence, keeping vigil in nightly prayers, not allowing his mind to waver and awaiting the help of the Most High. That is why he mortified himself daily, ate a measured portion of bread, drank a measured amount of water and allowed his body to rest only for an hour or two" (Domentijan, 2001, 105).

18 For a more detailed discussion on the concept of the desert in Christian ascetic literature, see Marjan Aleksic, *El clamor del hombre en la era digital. Una mirada desde el Desierto de los Padres*.

case, were only passing through, but where no one settled permanently until the arrival of the monks. In the Christian consciousness, the desert is a place of the superhuman physical struggle for survival and the tough spiritual battle with invisible enemies, but also a place of encounter with God, where the voice of God can be heard more easily and clearly in the silence and solitude. In the desert, the monks felt all their human powerlessness, but they also tasted the grace of God, with whose help they resisted all enemy traps. Thus, the desert has remained a sublime Christian ideal that has attracted the most spiritually courageous and daring for centuries. In the second chapter of the Hilandar Typikon, St. Sava writes about St. Simeon: "...and having fled from the world that enslaves the soul, he came to this desert" (Hilandar Typikon, 1995, 59), referring to Mount Athos, while Stefan First-Crowned calls his father a "desert dweller" (Stefan First-Crowned, 1999, 95). We also find the identification of Mount Athos with the desert in the biographies of Sava, with Domentijan calling Mount Athos the "holy desert" (Domentijan, 1988, 259) and Theodosius "the holy and sweet desert" (Theodosius, 1988, 205). This phenomenon of identifying the terms desert and mountain in written sources and monuments was emphasized by Danica Popović in her research: "The monastic deserts and mountains of the Byzantine world thus have an undeniable common denominator and the same basic function. It is of central importance for our considerations that these are at the same time interchangeable terms. From the earliest times, deserts and mountains, and typically caves, are mentioned as integral parts of a unique natural and monastic environment" (Danica Popović, 2007, 253). We can present our interpretation of this identification of the entire Mount Athos with the desert among the Serbian medieval authors based on the understanding of the desert primarily as a place of spiritual struggle and ascetic efforts of monks, and Mount Athos is primarily a spiritual arena where the invisible struggle against demons and passions is waged in order to attain virtues and to reach deification. It should be noted that the desert has a consistently positive meaning in the aforementioned works. St. Sava's experience of the desert on Mount Athos, especially through asceticism in the hermitage of Caryes, is of essential importance for the direction in which Orthodox spirituality was to develop among the Serbs in the Middle Ages and later. St. Sava lived and tested the theology he learned in the libraries of the Athonite monasteries of St. Panteleimon, Vatopedi and Hilandar in the silence of the Athonite desert. The hermitage of St. Sava testifies to the monastic, ascetic character of the spirituality he lived and which he passed on to Serbia. Domentijan emphasizes the Athonite character of Serbian Orthodoxy and spirituality when he says that St. Sava "from there

(i.e. from Mount Athos) brought forth the true vineyard, Christ, the true God, and his purest faith, thus enriching his whole fatherland, and with it all those who love God and, above all and best of all, their fatherland” (Domentijan, 2001, 167), and similarly says: “and every pattern of Mount Athos he transferred to his fatherland” (Domentijan, 2001, 169).

Of inestimable importance for the formation and development of Serbian Orthodox identity is also the establishment of relations with the Holy Land and the shrines in the Judean Desert, especially the monastery of St. Sava the Sanctified. Just as the first Serbian enlightener and archbishop paved the way for the Serbs to Mount Athos “and made for them a great and broad way to Mount Athos”, he also paved the way for the Serbian people to the Holy City and Mount Sinai and “likewise made a way to Jerusalem and Sinai and to every place where the name of God is mentioned” (Domentijan, 2001, 27). As Serbian archbishop, St. Sava visited the Holy Land twice, in 1229 and 1234. His motive was certainly primarily the veneration of the greatest Christian shrines associated with the earthly life of the Lord Jesus Christ and the economy of salvation, but also the strengthening of the newly acquired autocephalous status of the young Serbian Church by establishing firm relations with the Patriarchate of Jerusalem. Domentijan’s report on Sava’s frequent meetings, discussions and joint services in the Church of the Holy Sepulcher and the Church of the Resurrection with the then Jerusalem Patriarch Athanasius II¹⁹ should be understood in this sense. During his second journey to the Holy Land, St. Sava also visited other ancient Eastern patriarchates, the Antiochian and Alexandrian, and established relationships with their primates. By making rich donations to the shrines he visited, the Serbian archbishop left a lasting memory of himself and the church he led, and by acquiring the monastery of St. John the Theologian on Zion, he ensured a permanent Serbian presence in the Holy Land. Other members of the Nemanjić family followed his example, and the Monastery of the Holy Archangels

19 The significance of the frequent mention of the Jerusalem patriarch Athanasius II. in Domentijan’s hagiography of Saint Sava for understanding the relationship of the Serbian archbishop to the patriarch and thus of the Serbian archbishopric to the ancient Jerusalem patriarchate is emphasized by Dragoljub Marjanović in his study: “The personality of Patriarch Athanasius of Jerusalem is unusually prominent in the hagiography of St. Sava of Domentijan, and he is mentioned a total of fifteen times by name or in a figurative sense, which makes him one of the most frequently mentioned personalities in Sava’s biography after Sava himself and St. Simeon Nemanja, which in turn points to the importance of the relationship between the two church primates, which has remained largely unnoticed in previous research on the relationship between Sava and Athanasius and is strikingly different from the descriptions of St. Sava’s encounters and relationships with other Eastern patriarchs in the writings of Domentijan” (Marjanović, 2021, p. 31).

in Jerusalem, founded by King Milutin²⁰, is perhaps the most important Serbian foundation in the Holy Land. The saint had the closest spiritual relationship with the monastery of St. Sava the Sanctified, where he stayed for a long time and familiarized himself thoroughly with the Sabaite monastic tradition. Perhaps Sava's love for the desert and the hermitage and the resulting ascetic character of Serbian Orthodox identity, theology and spirituality should be traced to the fact that he followed the example of his heavenly patron and spiritual role model, the organizer and spiritual architect of monasticism in the Judean desert, St. Sava the Sanctified (439-532). The Lavra of St. Sava played an important role in the development of Orthodox liturgical practice and hymnography and influenced the liturgical practice of the Serbian Church, which under Archbishop Nikodim (1317-1324) introduced the Jerusalem Liturgical Typicon as its predominant liturgical typicon. As proof that St. Sava paved the way to the Holy Land that some of his successors on the archiepiscopal throne were to continue in the same 13th century, we can cite the example of the Serbian archbishops Sava II, Joannicius, and Eustathius²¹. The first Serbian archbishop to visit the Holy Land after St. Sava was also a Nemanjić, the nephew of Sava and brother of King Uroš I, the later Archbishop Sava II (1263-1271), who took his disciple Joannicius with him. This pupil of Sava, the monk Joannicius, was ordained deacon and priest in Jerusalem. After his return from the Holy Land, he became abbot of Hilandar and then of Studenica and became Serbian archbishop in 1272. The third Serbian archbishop to stay in the Holy Land was Eustathius I. He visited the Holy Land as a monk of the monastery of St. Michael the Archangel in Miholjska Prevlaka, the seat of the episcopate of Zeta. After his return from the pilgrimage, he stayed on Mount Athos, where he became abbot of Hilandar (1262-1265), before being elected Bishop of Zeta and Serbian Archbishop from 1279 to 1286. Interestingly, these three Serbian archbishops were not bishops during their stays in the Holy Land, but simple monks, unlike St. Sava. In any case, by staying in the Holy City and visiting other shrines, they adopted the ascetic-liturgical tradition of Jerusalem and transferred it to Serbia.

It proved to be wise and far-reaching for Sava to spiritually bind the young Serbian autocephalous church to the old Jerusalem church, to its li-

20 The monastery was built by King Milutin around 1312/1313 in honor of the victory of the Byzantine army over the Persians in Asia Minor. King Milutin sent his Serbian elite warriors to support his father-in-law, Emperor Andronikos II, and thus contribute to the Byzantine victory. The monastery is located within the walls of the Old City of Jerusalem and was built for the life of Serbian monks and pilgrims staying in the Holy Land. Serbian monks administered the monastery until the 17th century.

21 See Dragoljub Marjanović, *Three Serbian archbishops "of Jerusalem" from the second half of the 13th century*, 11-30.

turgical and monastic-ascetic tradition. Cyril of Scythopolis, the biographer of the Palestinian fathers in the life of St. Sava the Sanctified, emphasizes that Jerusalem is the “mother of all churches”²². St. Sava of Serbia, who was well versed in the patristic writings and especially in the life of his heavenly protector, knew this theological truth and acted accordingly. Therefore, it should come as no surprise that we get the impression from the life of Domentijan that St. Sava in some way favored the Jerusalem Patriarchate over other ancient patriarchates, including the Constantinopolitan one.

Links were also established with Mount Sinai and St. Catherine’s Monastery, where the saint spent the entire Great Lent during his second stay in the Holy Land in 1234. St. Catherine’s Monastery became famous, among other things, for the spiritual-ascetic treatise by its abbot John, known as *The Ladder of Divine Ascent*. This work, of which numerous copies have been preserved, can be described as the most widely read ascetic text in medieval Serbia. The work of St. John Climacus also influenced the thinking and work of Stefan the First-Crowned²³ and St. Sava. Dimitrije Bogdanović, the translator of *The Ladder* into modern Serbian, is of the opinion that St. Sava had already read *The Ladder* before his departure to Mount Athos. Only the reading and study of this ascetic literature of Sinaitic origin can explain Sava’s great affinity for monasticism and his longing for the desert²⁴. This thesis is very possible, since *The Ladder* was translated into Slavic as early as the 10th or 11th century, most probably in the South Slavic regions, perhaps in Bulgaria. The spirit and tradition of Sinai monasticism was brought to Serbia in the 14th century by monks, the so-called Sinaites, during the reign of Prince Lazar. The interest of Serbs in the 15th century to read and studying *The Ladder* is evidenced by a new translation known as *The Braničevo Ladder*. This translation was made at the request of the despot Đurađ Branković by monks from Mount Athos under the supervision of the Metropolitan of Braničevo, Savatije, and copied by David in 1434²⁵.

The ascetic character of early Serbian spirituality is particularly reflected in the cultivation of the desert monasticism. The emergence of a great ascetic figure, St. Peter of Koriša, shows how strong the inclination towards desert monasticism was among the Serbs. This remarkable hermit and ascetic, who lived at the end of the 12th and beginning of the 13th century (he probably died around 1220), was the first of the Serbian hermits to have a service and hagiography written for him. He spent his

22 Cirillo di Scitopoli, *Storie monastiche del deserto di Gerusalemme*, 285.

23 Stefan the First-Crowned read this text and knew it well, which is why he quotes it in the Life of St. Simeon: “Climacus John said: Rise, brothers and fathers!” (Stephen the First-Crowned, 1999, p. 69).

24 Dimitrije Bogdanović, *John Climacus in Byzantine and Old Serbian Literature*, p. 179.

25 See Danica Popović, *Desert Monasticism in the Time of the Branković*, p. 123.

monastic and hard hermit life in the Koriša Mountains (Koriša Desert), in the steep mountains of the Koriša Gorge near Prizren. The river gorges, the lonely mountains and the inaccessible caves became places of trial for the Serbian hermits and later recognizable anachoretical spaces in the hagiographies of these Serbian hermits. The second biographer of St. Sava, Theodosius of Hilandar, came to Serbia around 1316 at the invitation of the elder George to visit the hermitage of St. Peter and examine the local traditions left by his direct disciples, which were still very much alive at that time. Based on what he saw, heard and learned, he wrote the hagiography and the service for the saint. Theodosius' hagiography of St. Peter of Koriša is a first-class source for the study of Serbian ascetic thought in the Middle Ages. After Peter came to these inaccessible mountains as a monk, he settled in a cave where he began his spiritual endeavor, the struggle with passions, the purification of the heart and the enlightenment of the mind, and the attainment of deification. The stages and the spiritual drama of this hard struggle are vividly described by Theodosius the Athonite, an experienced connoisseur of the Orthodox ascetic tradition. At this point, only a few aspects of Peter's eremite efforts in the desert will be outlined to better illustrate the ascetic character of Serbian spirituality at that time. First of all, it is about the battle, the spiritual war that Peter wages against the demons. Upon his arrival, the demons feel threatened because the ascetic comes to take over the space they consider their own, thus declaring spiritual war on them. When they could not frighten him with noise and apparitions in the form of various wild animals (wild boars, bears) and black ravens, they addressed him directly: "Leave us, unfortunate one! You have found no place among men, so you have come into our dwellings to drive us away, and you have unjustly inherited our rocks and caves for yourself. Leave us without evil, go, no one before you has come here and done us such violence!" (Theodosius, 1988, 277). The ascetic used fasting, prayer and the recitation of psalms and the creed as weapons in this unequal battle with disembodied spirit beings. The battle lasted a long time and the hermit also received physical blows from demons (devils) who came in groups like an army. The number with which they attacked the monk essentially showed how powerless they were against him, i.e. against his faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and against his humility, which they could not defeat. The biographer emphasizes at one point that despite the fierce battle he waged there every day, St. Peter "still went into the cave with a joyful soul" (Theodosius, 1988, 276)²⁶. When the saint was already at the limit of his strength in a hard, exhausting and

26 This statement by the biographer expresses the old ascetic view that the place of their asceticism (desert, mountain, cave, cell) is a place of hard struggle with passions, sin and demons, but also a place of encounter with God and a place of gracious divine visitations.

unequal battle, he received help from above, the archangel Michael appeared with his sword drawn or an angel who strengthened and supported him in battle. The ascetic experience of the Church shows that God never abandons his fighters and spiritual athletes. Sometimes God watches their struggle in the spiritual arena “silently” so that they can prove their faith, endurance and perseverance in battle and trial, but in the end he gives them his gracious help to defeat the enemies²⁷. This victory of the ascetic is the victory of Christ in the ascetic, after which he obtains the grace of God, which most often manifests itself through the appearance of light. Theodosius describes the end of Peter’s struggle, which ended with a victory over the demonic forces. “And the Venerable One, after this terrible battle, and after the victory and the overcoming, after the demons had departed, went into the cave and fell to the ground, giving thanks to God with great weeping in his breast like David, saying: *I will praise Thee, O Lord, for Thou hast sustained me, and hast not made my enemies happy with me, for my feet had almost slipped, my steps had almost faltered. And if you, Lord, had not helped me, my soul would soon have been in hell. Your mercy, Lord, has helped me, Your mercy, Lord, will let me rest forever, and my mouth will proclaim Your praise, Your salvation, all day long.* And so, with much tenderness, he practiced many prayers and confessed. After this a great light shone in the cave in an inexpressible vision, and sleep left him by day and by night, and he thought as if he were in heaven and not on earth in divine joy and festivity, and he wallowed for many days in inexpressible visions, so that he forgot to eat bitter herbs and acorns, and then he thought no more of gathering them, nor did he wish to live longer on earth” (Theodosius, 1988, 281-282). In this description by Theodosius, it becomes clear what effects the visitation by divine grace had on the ascetic and how the transforming grace had an effect on his organism for a time, resulting in him no longer being tired and no longer needing sleep or food. Researchers have already noted numerous similarities and parallels between the hagiography of St. Peter of Koriša and the life of St. Anthony (Vita Antonii)²⁸. We believe that this similarity conceals something much deeper than a simple literary model and the adoption of the same literary motifs and topoi. With this act, Theodosius apparently wanted to show that St. Peter of Koriša had repeated the deeds of St. Anthony the Great on Serbian soil. Therefore, in addition to the title “Peter the New Hermit” (Theodosius, 1988, 285), we can also call him “the Serbian Anthony the Great” The spiritual gifts and experience in spiritual struggle attracted many disciples to St. Peter, who passed on his spiritual knowledge

27 “He endured all the insults and blows of the demons in the awareness that God, my King, sees his struggle with the enemies and his suffering” (Theodosius, 1988, pp. 276-277).

28 See Irena Špadijer, *Saint Peter of Koriš in Old Serbian Literature*.

and experience. The disciples buried the remarkable hermit in his cave cell, where they laid out his tomb. Through the holy relics of St. Peter of Koriša, God performed many miracles and numerous healings that continue to this day. The importance of the saint and his monastery²⁹ is also evidenced by the historical fact that Emperor Dušan visited the monastery with his family in 1355 and venerated the relics of the holy ascetic. At the end of the 17th century, due to the threat of the Ottomans, the relics of St. Peter were transferred to the Crna Reka monastery, where they still rest today. This cave monastery, where another Serbian hermit of the Middle Ages, St. Joanikije of Devič, continued ascetic struggle, became a spiritual nursery in the 1980s, from which the Nemanjić monasteries on the territory of the Raška-Prizren diocese were renewed.

St. Sava not only founded a Serbian monastery on Mount Athos, thus ensuring the permanent presence of Serbs in this important spiritual center of Orthodoxy, but with the translation of the relics of his father, St. Simeon the Myrrhusher, from Hilandar to Studenica in 1207, he established the tradition in Serbian Orthodoxy of gathering and congregating around the relics of national saints. In the person of St. Simeon, the “new Myrrhusher”, the Serbian church received its national saint and the Serbs as a people a heavenly protector and patron. After his arrival in Serbia, St. Sava not only organized the cenobite monastic life in the Studenica monastery, but also promoted desert monasticism as a hermit. For this spiritual purpose, he established the hermitage of Studenica, which is now called the Upper Hermitage of St. Sava. Later, the Mileševa hermitages were also founded, which also bear the name of St. Sava. It is difficult to say whether the saint devoted himself to asceticism in them, but the association with the person of St. Sava alone indicates that the monastic, hermit-like way of life was always closely linked to his name in the Serbian national consciousness. It is therefore not surprising that the Serbs call all caves and hermitages where monks have settled over the centuries *Savina* (Sava’s). Numerous monastic settlements in medieval Serbia were built near large cenobite monasteries and were named after deserts, one of the most famous being the Dečani desert. A characteristic of Serbian hermit monasticism was literary activity, which was reflected in the copying, translating or writing of original theological and literary works. Averkije’s copy of the *Typikon* of Studenica from 1619 was made in the Studenica hermitage of St. Sava. The aspirations of Serbian hermits were directed not only towards personal spiritual perfection, but also towards the wider

29 The Koriša hermitage was transformed into a monastery in the middle of the 14th century, surrounded by walls and a church dedicated to St. Peter. This monastery, which became a metochion of Hilandar monastery, maintained close spiritual relations with Hilandar monastery and, through it, with Mount Athos.

community and the needs of the Serbian Church. Just how widespread hermitism was among Serbian monks is shown by the example of some of the most important leaders of the Serbian Church who had experienced desert monasticism, such as Archbishop Eustathius and Patriarch Ephrem.

Eschatological orientation of Serbian orthodox Identity

Another important feature of Serbian spirituality in the Middle Ages was its eschatological orientation. In Domentijan we find a multitude of statements and theological reflections on heavenly glory and eternal joy, heavenly rewards, the preparation for the Last Judgement and the anticipation of the Kingdom of Heaven as the goal and purpose of the Christian life. In his appreciation of Sava's great deeds, Domentijan cites eschatological hope as the reason for them: "He constantly strove for a greater weeping of the heart and a weeping of the eyes, always desiring to see God with a cheerful face and a blooming countenance, with indescribable joy and a bright soul and pure eyes, who sits in great glory on judgment, and to receive from Him the consolation and reward of joy that has no end, and an inexpressible feast in the age to come, and this is what he strove for" (Domentijan, 1988, 125). In Domentijan's work, St. Simeon is compared to Jacob, the father of the chosen people. In connection with the translation of Simeon's relics to Studenica, he writes: "And behold, another Israel was not brought out of Egypt, but from the Holy Mountain" (Domentijan, 2001, 151). This comparison leads to a further identification of the Serbs with the chosen people. The mere identification of Simeon as "another Israel" and the Serbs as the chosen people should be understood more broadly than in the context of the prevailing ideology of the Nemanjić dynasty. Stefan Nemanja, a warrior and ruler, became a monk in the Athos desert. In his person, through effort and personal asceticism, he achieved the goal of the Christian life, salvation. His body showed streams of myrrh and signs of holiness, which for his contemporaries were clear evidence of the work of divine grace in him. Stefan Nemanja became Simeon by renouncing the throne and accepting the monastic tonsure, and through the monastic test of repentance and prayer, he was glorified by God as St. Simeon the myrrhgusher. In the consciousness of the Serbs, this dual role as ruler and monk is expressed by the name Simeon Nemanja. The Serbs placed the saint above the ruler. The holy dynasty of Nemanjić set holiness as the ideal, goal and calling not only of the individual, but also of an entire people. The struggle (the

test) to attain eternal life and the Kingdom of Heaven became the vocation of the entire people. The concept of the chosenness of the Serbs as a people is to be understood and seen in this calling to holiness through the path of ascetic efforts. The eschatological faith of the Serbs found its deepest expression in the Kosovo commitment to the Kingdom of Heaven. In the decades before the Battle of Kosovo, a group of monks known as “Sinaites” came to the Serbia of Prince Lazar Hrebeljanović, who was to be the leader of the Hesychast spiritual movement. The Ravanica monastery, which was founded by Prince Lazar and to which St. Romilo came around 1375, was the first center of the spiritual renewal of the Hesychasts. St. Romilo learned the Hesychastic prayer life from St. Gregory Sinait (+ 1346) in the Paroria desert. After ascetic monastic experience on Mount Athos, which he had to leave due to the frequent Turkish attacks, he moved with his disciples to Serbia, where he was to play a key role in the introduction of hesychasm. His disciple, St. Gregory of Gornjak, wrote his hagiography in Greek. Prince Lazar wholeheartedly supported the Sinaites and shared their spiritual beliefs and the theological teachings of hesychasm. Therefore, the period before the Kosovo catastrophe can be described as Lazar’s “Sinaitic Renaissance”. “The arrival of the Sinaites before the collapse of the Serbian state contributed even more to the consolidation of the ascetic character of Serbian Orthodox identity. In the history of the Christian Church, the era of martyrdom precedes the era of monasticism (asceticism), while in the history of the Serbian Church and the Serbian people, the era of asceticism precedes the era of martyrdom. The era of asceticism, Lazar’s “Sinaitic Renaissance”, was the preparation of the Serbs for the martyrological confession of Christ. In addition to its ascetic character, Serbian Orthodox identity was also to take on a martyrological (martyr-like) character during the centuries of Ottoman occupation. In their martyr-like confession of Christ, the Serbs expressed the eschatological character of their faith and their Orthodox identity. It can be summarized in a sentence spoken by the holy deacon Avakum before the Turks in 1814: “There is no better faith than Christianity! A Serb belongs to Christ, he rejoices in death.” With this brief confession, the holy martyr expressed his people’s belief that there is no death in Christ, but only eternal life (the Kingdom of Heaven), which is why Serbs go to their death with joy.

Medieval Serbian Orthodox spirituality in its simplified form was later passed on by folk singers and guslars, so that the epic folk songs are a reflection and echo of the high culture and spirituality of the Serbian Middle Ages. They bear witness to the deep rootedness of the ideals of svetosavlje spirituality in the essence and consciousness of the Serbian people.

Constants of Serbian orthodox Identity in the 20th Century

How deeply the described characteristics of Serbian spirituality are woven into the spiritual essence of the Serbs as constants will become apparent in the 20th century. After the First World War, a process of spiritual renewal of the Serbian people began in the newly founded Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes, a process that was silent and invisible to many at the time. The period in which the process of spiritual awakening and Orthodox renewal of the Serbs took place was not long; it spanned the 1920s and 1930s. In these two interwar decades, significant inner spiritual changes took place among people who were to become the carriers of the spiritual movement and the moral renewal of the people. In order to understand the genesis, development and course of these events, or the spiritual anatomy of what would later be recognized as Orthodox spiritual transfiguration, we will look at the spiritual biographies of some of the representatives of this movement. Unfortunately, most of them are almost completely unknown and unrecognized in the cultural and intellectual history of the Serbs. Two important factors that contributed to the spiritual renewal were the arrival of the Russian white emigration and the movement of the God-seekers (Bogomoljci). These two factors, which stimulated the spiritual renaissance of Serbian Orthodoxy, are closely connected and interdependent. Among the Russian refugees to the Kingdom of SHS were a large number of Russian church representatives (bishops, priests, monks and nuns), led by Metropolitan Anthony Khrapovitsky, who organized the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad in Sremski Karlovci.

The most important bishop of the Serbian Church in the 20th century, Dr. Nikolai Velimirović (1881-1956), played the most important role in the spiritual events that were to mark the spiritual renaissance of the Serbian Orthodox Church in the interwar period. The ancient city of Ohrid, a center of Slavic spirituality and literature and the place where Saints Clement and Naum, disciples of the Slavic enlighteners Cyril and Methodius, preached, can be described as the starting point for the spiritual renewal that was initiated. After his transfer from the diocese of Žiča and his election to the newly founded diocese of Ohrid, Bishop Nikolai arrived in the city of Ohrid on July 21, 1921. This city exerted a great influence on the then young and educated bishop and contributed to his spiritual and intellectual change, which we can describe as a transfiguration in the sense of the patristic understanding of this term. This change was obvious even to his contemporaries, some of whom have left written testimonies about it. Before he came to Ohrid, Nikolai had already become famous as a bril-

liant orator whose sermons filled the churches of the capital (Belgrade), where he served and preached on Sundays and holidays. He wrote books that attracted a great deal of attention from the Serbian reading public of the time. In Ohrid, however, Nikolai gradually underwent an inner transfiguration, which was also reflected in his outward appearance. The bishop replaced the silk cassock with a modest monk's habit and even adapted his rhetorically highly stylized sermons to the environment in which he began his pastoral ministry. Several factors influenced the changes that took place in Bishop Nikolai. First and foremost was his encounter with the ancient shrines of Ohrid³⁰. The monastery of St. Naum, where numerous miracles took place³¹ at the tomb of the saint, left a special impression. The living faith of the people in this region, who flocked in droves to the tomb of the saint, inspired admiration and respect in the Bishop of Ohrid. Nikolai became aware of the importance and greatness of the sacred history and spiritual tradition of the Church he led and endeavoured to integrate his life and work into the spiritual fabric of the Church and continue the deeds of his holy predecessors. A fortunate circumstance that turned a man who had acquired a broad knowledge of theology, philosophy and literature at prestigious universities in Western Europe to the Eastern Orthodox tradition was the Russian library he found in the metropolis, the bishop's seat in Ohrid. Among the books, Bishop Nikolai found patristic works that had been translated into Russian in the 19th century, which he began to read and study carefully. This type of literature, which he had encountered before, but which he had neither studied systematically nor familiarized himself with in depth, had a profound impact on his theological and philosophical thinking and changed not only the style and content of his works, but also his way of life. What Nikolai read from the patristic works in those Ohrid years can be seen from the quotations he cites in the *Ohrid Prologue* published in 1928. In addition to the great church fathers and teachers — St. Athanasius of Alexandria, St. Basil the Great, St. Gregory the Theologian and St. John Chrysostom, whose theological writings he quotes — Bishop Nikolai frequently quotes sayings of the desert fathers from the Gerontikon (St. Antony, St. Poemen, St. Arsenius the Great, St. Macarius the Great, St. John Cassian, Abba Moses, Abba Isaiah, Abba Daniel, Abba John the Dwarf, Abba Ammon, Abba Matta) and the *Spiritual Meadow* of John Moschos. The Prologue of Ohrid reveals that

30 Bishop Nikolai's reflections on the Ohrid shrines can be found in the text "*Ohrid Shrines*" from 1923. See Bishop Nikolai, *Collected Works* X, 610-611.

31 Abbot Kallist (Milutinović) says about the year 1920: "At that time, many miracles took place in the monastery of St. Naum of Ohrid; stories about these miracles circulated among the people. I also prayed to St. Naum to admit me to his monastery if it was destined for me to become a monk" (Jovanović, 2024, p. 44).

its author is very familiar with the ascetic thought of St. Isaac the Syrian, St. Ephrem the Syrian, St. John Climacus, St. Mark the Ascetic, St. Peter Damascene, St. Symeon the New Theologian and St. Gregory of Sinai. The themes he writes about in the pages of this truly great work, both in terms of scope and meaning, are penance, prayer, asceticism and the struggle with passions. The Prologue of Ohrid, in its entirety, is primarily a work of ascetic and eschatological character, based on the ideas and teachings that prevail in it. In a sermon, the bishop calls upon the readers: “O my brothers, let us awaken, and let us strive only to be worthy to win that blessed world” (Bishop Nikolai, 2001, 53). In a hymn composed for March 4, he gives a short and concise but clear definition of the spiritual life as struggle and ascetic effort united with prayer:

*“The spiritual life is a battle against the hordes of the devil,
In this battle the proud is defeated from the beginning,
He who calls on the name of God in deep humility,
He is protected in this battle by God’s mercy”* (Bishop Nikolai, 2001, 142).

Nikolai’s turn to the Orthodox tradition, especially to prayer and asceticism (he chants about penitence, noetic prayer of the heart, corporal and spiritual fasting), is also noticeable in the *Prayers by the Lake*, published in 1922, but they also exude the spirit of Western rationalism and Indian pantheism³². During his time in Ohrid, the bishop was to free himself from these spiritual and intellectual deposits, which he had acquired during his education in the West. Nikolai’s thinking was orthodoxized in Ohrid and transfigured in the depths of Lake Ohrid, the new Sea of Galilee of Serbian theological thought and spirituality³³.

32 In the Ohrid prologue, Bishop Nikolai exhorts the Serbian intelligentsia, who had taken a similar path to his own: “Let us return from the western detour to the eastern path, for on this path lies salvation” (Bishop Nikolai, 2001, p. 281). By this he does not mean the Asian East, but the Orthodox East, the spiritual tradition of Byzantium.

33 In his characteristic sermon *On the Way with Christ*, Bishop Nikolai gives a profound interpretation of the Lord’s call to Simon: “Go out into the deep” (Lk 5:4) and writes: [Go out into the deep!... In shallow water there are snakes and frogs and other small vermin – that is the whole catch. But in the great deep, the danger is great. There are great sea monsters and great storms – that is the danger; but there are also great fish in great numbers – that is the catch. Therefore, O consecrated ones, go out into the deep!... When you go into the deep with Christ, do not be afraid, but go joyfully and courageously, clinging to the Lord. You will make the best booty, and with it you will fill both boats, physically and spiritually” (Bishop Nikolai, 2001, p. 145). He himself first responded to this divine call and sailed into the depths of the Tradition of the Church of Christ on Lake Ohrid, and from Nikolai’s rich fund the Orthodox Serbs, and all those who read his works, which are now translated into many world languages, live on spiritually.

The third factor that influenced the bishop's transfiguration and his turn to an ascetic life inspired by the Orthodox monastic tradition was Mount Athos. Bishop Nikolai, who had become Bishop of Ohrid, visited Mount Athos every year. The bishop's nephew, the later Bishop of Šabac-Valjevo, Jovan Velimirović (1912-1989), who lived with his uncle in Ohrid at the time as a student at Ohrid High School, left behind valuable records of visits to Mount Athos.

“Every year, Bishop Nikola visited Mount Athos and stayed there for at least a month. During his stays on Mount Athos, Nikolai visited not only all the monasteries, but also all the hermits and ascetics in various parts of the Holy Mount. He spent whole nights with many hermits in prayer, reading and conversation. He returned from Mount Athos with entire notebooks filled with conversations with hermits. This was a significant spiritual experience for him, which he collected year after year and used when writing books and sermons to hone his skills in prayer and asceticism. He knew all the well-known hermits on Mount Athos and was warmly welcomed by them for talks... During his time on Mount Athos, he spent the nights with ascetics in cells and prayed all night, turning his Ohrid episcopal residence into a hermitage and transforming the entire Lake Ohrid and the monasteries on its shores into prayer cells, especially St. Naum with its numerous cells and monks” (Protić, 2013, 631).

In the above testimony of Bishop Jovan, the first thing that strikes the reader is Nikolai's interest in anachoretic monastic endeavor, his visits to ascetic monks and his desire to learn from their living ascetic experience. In his affection for the hermits, the bishop is very similar to St. Sava. Another important fact conveyed by the narrator is Nikolai's great desire and endeavor to transfer what he saw and learned on Mount Athos to Ohrid and apply it as a rule of life.

How successful he was in this spiritual endeavor is shown by the titles bestowed on him by those who saw and knew his life in Ohrid: “the Hermit of Ohrid”, “the Prayer of Ohrid”, “the Ascetic of Ohrid”, “the Miracle Worker of Ohrid”³⁴.

We see that Mount Athos played the same role at the beginning of the 20th century as it had previously in the 13th and 14th centuries, namely as a spiritual center from which the spiritual currents of the time were transmitted to other parts of the Orthodox world. During the years in which Bishop Nikolai frequently visited Athos, a large number of Russian monks, who were the most numerous there at the time, practiced ascetic lifestyle. He established spiritual connections with many of them, and the most famous Athonite ascetic with whom Bishop Nikolai met and conversed was

34 These titles, which the people of Ohrid bestowed on their bishop, are mentioned by Bishop Jovan Velimirović. See *Bishop Jovan Velimirović's memories of Bishop Nikolai* in Priest Milisav D. Protić, Nikolai. *Bio-Bibliography 1880-1941*, p. 636.

St. Silouan the Athonite³⁵. It is also worth mentioning Nikolai's close relationship with Serbian monasticism on Mount Athos and his concern for the Hilandar Monastery, which is particularly evident in his active role in the introduction of cenobite monastic life there in 1933. As a representative of the Serbian Patriarchate and with the blessing of the Patriarch of Constantinople, the Bishop of Ohrid Nikolai enthroned the newly elected Abbot of Hilandar, Archimandrite Raphael Stevanović³⁶, on March 13 and 26, 1933 in the catholikon of Hilandar.

Thus spiritually awakened, Nikolai began to spiritually awaken others, and a similar spiritual awakening and fervor of Orthodox zeal was recognized among the members of the Bogomoljci movement, whose official name was the People's Christian Community. This spiritual movement emerged spontaneously among the population after the First World War and mainly affected villages, initially in Banat and other parts of Vojvodina. Its members, called bogomoljci, were Orthodox Serbs who endeavored to live even more zealously according to the rules of their faith, fasting more strictly, praying more and reading the Holy Scriptures. Their zeal was often met with misunderstanding and sometimes even open persecution by the priests. The Bishop of Ohrid, Dr. Nikolai Velimirović, recognized that a part of the clergy did not understand the significance of the Bogomoljci movement, which had arisen as an expression of the spiritual hunger and thirst of the people, and addressed it in an article entitled "Our Bogomoljci – Do not Reject Them! A letter to the priests", which was published in the SPC Messenger on September 14, 1921. In this article, the bishop referred to the movement as "Bogomoljci." To his rhetorical question "Who are the Bogomoljci?" he himself gave the answer: "They are countless and unorganized men and women, from Čurug to Bitola — thousands and thousands of them — who fast and pray fervently to God; they observe Sunday and partake of the Lord's Supper, preach repentance and the imminent return of the Savior." Bishop Nikolai concluded his text with a warning to the priests: "Therefore, make an effort to understand the bogomoljci. Do not throw stones at them, for you could easily hit Christ. Do not reject them, lest they reject you" (Bishop Nikolai XV, 1997, 11-14).

35 On the occasion of the funeral of Elder Silouan, a brother of the Russian monastery of St. Panteleimon, Bishop Nikolai wrote a text and published it in *The Missionary* in 1938. In the obituary, the bishop writes, among other things: "The Serbian monks from Hilandar and the Hermitage especially loved Father Silouan. In him they saw a true spiritual father who renewed them with his love. They all felt the pain of saying goodbye to him... And Father Silouan helped me a lot spiritually. I felt that he was praying to God for me. His prayer strengthened me. Whenever I visited Mount Athos, I rushed to him" (Bishop Nikolai IX, 1983, p. 496).

36 Bishop Nikolai also wrote a biography of the Abbot of Hilandar, Archimandrite Raphael (Stevanović), after his passing in 1937, which was published in the *Collected Works of Bishop Nikolai*, Volume IX, pp. 433-458.

At its core, this movement was a call to national repentance and moral improvement. The Bishop of Braničevo Hrizostom Vojinović (1911-1989), who himself emerged from the Bogomoljci movement, brings testimonies from two Serbian priests about the Bogomoljci Protospresbyter Tufegdžić from Mačva in his text "The People's Christian Community" says: "... They attach great importance to confession. This is also a condition for joining the ranks of the bogomoljci. Their confessions are sincere, but also terrible. I could never have imagined that there are such terrible sins among our people as I have heard in confession," and Protospresbyter Živan M. Marinković adds in his report: "They greatly appreciate priests who preach. They confess conscientiously and seek penance themselves... They observe fasting and do not break it even in sickness" (Bishop Hrizostom, 1991, 232-233). By decision of the Holy Synod of the SPC, Bishop Nikolai was to lead the Bogomoljci movement and, through his wise leadership, protect it from unorthodox dogmatic-spiritual aberrations and steer Bogomoljac piety in the direction of healthy Orthodox ecclesial ethos. One of Nikolai's ways of achieving this was to bind the Bogomoljci movement firmly to the Serbian monasteries. Annual congresses of the Bogomoljci and missionary courses³⁷ were organized in monasteries. Most of the monks and nuns in the Serbian monasteries were recruited from the ranks of the Bogomoljci or, after the Second World War, from families of Bogomoljci who had remained faithful to the Serbian Church and the Orthodox faith in times of open anti-religious and anti-church state order.

The example of the Sinai monks from the 14th century, who brought new spiritual currents of the Hesychast movement to Serbia and guided the currents of Serbian spirituality of the time, can be compared to the arrival of the Russian White Emigration. One of many examples of how the arrival of the Russian White Emigration in Serbia after the October Revolution of 1917 positively influenced the flourishing of Orthodox faith and spirituality among Serbs is the case of the Zernov family from Moscow. The four youngest members of the family, the sons Nikolai and Vladimir and the daughters Sophia and Maria, wrote a two-volume family chronicle: *На ѱереломе. Три ѱоколения одной московской семьи (Семейная хроника Зерновых. 1812-1921)* and *За рубежом: Белград-Париж-Оксфорд: Хроника семьи Зерновых (1921-1972)*³⁸.

37 The major annual gatherings of the Bogomoljci include those at Drača Monastery in 1926, Ljubostinja Monastery in 1927, Bogovadja Monastery in 1928, Fenek Monastery in 1929, Žiča Monastery in 1930, Petkovica Monastery in 1931, Rakovica Monastery in 1932 and Kovilj Monastery in 1933. The last gathering of the Bogomoljci took place at Žiča Monastery in 1940.

38 Три поколения одной московской семьи (Семейная хроника Зерновых. 1812-1921), YMCA-press, Paris, 1970; За рубежом: Белград-Париж-Оксфорд: Хроника семьи Зерновых (1921-1972), YMCA-press, Paris, 1973

In its content and the valuable historical information it provides, the book goes beyond the chronicle of a family and becomes the chronicle of an entire era. The work is of extraordinary importance for our work because it offers insights into the spiritual events in Serbia from the pen of eyewitnesses and active participants themselves. Six members of the Russian refugee family Zernov (father, mother and four children) arrived in Belgrade by train from Constantinople on October 18, 1921. The main reason for the family's decision to come to Belgrade was the desire of son Nikolai and daughter Maria to enroll at the newly founded Orthodox Theological Faculty. Nikolai Zernov (1898-1980)³⁹ enrolled as a first-generation student at the Faculty of Theology in 1921 and graduated in 1925. His sister Maria was the only female student at the Faculty of Theology at the time. What distinguishes this family from other Russian families who came to Serbia in the 1920s is the deep faith and total devotion of the youngest members to the Orthodox Church. In order to understand what influence their essentially four-year stay in Serbia had on Serbian spirituality, it is necessary to look at the spiritual path they had taken before their arrival in Belgrade. Mikhail Stepanovich Zernov and Sofya Alexandrovna Zernov-Kesler, the parents of Nikolai, Sofya, Maria and Vladimir, belonged to a circle of liberal Moscow intellectuals who were not hostile to the faith, and Orthodox feasts were respected in their home, and the family fasted and received the Holy Communion. Mikhail Zernov's father was the respected Moscow archpriest Stefan Ivanovich Zernov (1817-1886). The young Zernovs did not undergo the path of spiritual awakening and Orthodox churchmanship in Moscow, but in the Russian steppe in the North Caucasus. When the family left Moscow because of the revolutionary unrest, they found themselves in the city, a well-known vacation resort called Yessentuki, where they had previously spent their summers. It was here in 1918 that they had a fateful encounter with the Cossacks, their faith and the traditions of pre-Petrine Russia which they had preserved. In the Cossack church of St. Nicholas, the young Muscovites met Cossacks who revealed to them the treasures of the Orthodox faith and tradition. They familiarized them with the strict liturgical typicon and the works of the Church Fathers. The Cossack Miroshnikov gave them the works of St. Isaac the Syrian to read, and the Guardian of the Old Believer Church gave them the lives of Barlaam and Josaphat. Nikolai Zernov noted that before meeting Pavel Florensky's

39 Nikolai Zernov became a well-known Orthodox theologian, especially in the English-speaking academic world. After leaving Belgrade, he briefly taught at the Russian Orthodox Institute of St. Sergius in Paris. He obtained his doctorate in philosophy at Oxford College, where he taught the foundations of Eastern Orthodox culture from 1947 to 1966.

book “The Pillar and the Ground of Truth” in Georgia, he had already read the patristic works and the Russian ascetic writers St. Theophan the Recluse and St. Ignatius Brianchaninov. It is important to mention that the process of orthodoxization and in-churching of the Zernov siblings took place in parallel and simultaneously. They left Russia and arrived via Georgia and Constantinople as refugees who had lost all their material possessions, but brought with them something much more valuable and lasting, namely a living experience of the Orthodox faith. In Belgrade, the Zernovs organized the student circle “St. Seraphim of Sarov”, which brought together both young Russians and Serbs. At the meetings of this circle, Nikolai and Maria Zernov met a girl, Nadežda Nada Adžić⁴⁰, who was 23 years old at the time. Seeing her spirituality and interest in faith, the siblings exerted a significant spiritual influence on the young Serbian woman and contributed greatly to her decision to choose the monastic path and dedicate herself to the revival of Serbian female monasticism. Nadežda Adžić became the famous Mother Ana (Adžić), abbess of the Vračevšnica monastery, around whom she gathered a large sisterhood, which she led spiritually and passed on the monastic tradition inherited from Bishop Nikolai and the Russian nuns from Hopovo monastery. To illustrate the spiritual support that Nikolai and Maria gave Nadežda Adžić in growing and deepening her understanding of the mysteries of the Orthodox faith, let us cite an example of confession. Reflections on this great sacred mystery of the Church can be found in the diary entries of both Nikolai Zernov and Mother Ana (Adžić).

40 Nadežda Adžić was the daughter of the well-known Serbian educator Sreten Adžić (1856-1933), the founder and first director of the teachers’ school in Jagodina. Nada Adžić was born in Belgrade in 1900 and continued her education at the renowned “Saint Mary” School Institute in Turnu-Severin after completing elementary school in Belgrade in 1912. Nada then studied at the newly opened School of Applied Decorative Arts of Gita Predić-Nušić (daughter of the playwright Branislav Nušić) from 1926 to 1930. From 1930, she herself worked as a drawing teacher in the home of the craft school for schoolgirls in Belgrade. After the death of her father in 1933, whose pension she inherited, she devoted herself to humanitarian work in Mother Jevrosima’s Society and in the Home for Abandoned Children in Pop Stoyanova Street in Belgrade. Her move to Bitola, where she ran the “Bogdaj” children’s feeding center, revealed her talent for working with children. Due to the Bulgarian occupation of Macedonia, she moved to Serbia in 1941 and continued her work in Trstenik. During her charitable work in Bitola, Sister Nada lived a strictly ascetic life as a novice. After the Second World War, in 1948, she took her religious vows in the Sretenje monastery on Ovčar under the name Ana. With the sisters who gathered around her in Bogdaj in 1949, she moved to the Vračevšnica monastery near Gornji Milanovac, which she led until her death in 1975. As a student and one of the closest collaborators of Bishop Nikolai (Velimirović) of Ohrid-Bitola, she left behind valuable testimonies about this great hierarch and spiritual leader in her diary entries.

Nikolai wrote about Nadežda: “In a special way, she combined folk wisdom, roots in Serbianism and a tender, virgin soul untried by temptation. She was pious, but in her own way. For example, when she found out that we were going to confession before communion, she was surprised. Why are you confessing? – she asked us – I have no sins. We were taken aback by these words, but they rang true from her mouth. Much later, when she had already become a strict and experienced abbess of the monastery, she confronted all manifestations of sin in the split human nature” (Đorđević, 2014, 159).

After their spiritual awakening in 1918, the Zernovs embarked on a serious path of maturation in the Orthodox faith, accompanied by existential upheavals and losses brought about by the revolution, constant dangers in which they lived daily during those years, but in which they also discovered the work of God’s providence in their lives. Driven by an ardent zeal, they endeavored to pass on their spiritual experiences and knowledge to the Serbs, their peers, among whom they mostly found indifference and disinterest in the faith⁴¹. For them, the church was neither a consolation nor a refuge from worries and hardships, but the real source of life, without which they could no longer imagine their existence. Since they still recognized the same spiritual attitude in Nadežda, they tried to help her on her spiritual path. They brought her to the Hopovo monastery, which at the time was home to a large Russian sisterhood of 80 nuns who had fled the famous Lesna monastery. The sisterhood was led by Abbess Ekaterina Jefimovska (1850-1925). In Hopovo, Nada confessed to Archpriest Alexei Neljubov and left a record of her first confession on October 19, 1924 in her diary.

“How wonderful and much this one word conveys. How sinful and terrible and how much has been taken away from the Serbs because they do not know confession. To pay attention to one’s deeds, not to forget one’s sins, to correct oneself, to take care of the righteousness of one’s spirit. That is the only important and the only eternal thing in a person’s transient nature. No one can write down how immense the importance of confession is. Perhaps I am not even aware of its ultimate value. Hopovo has brought me back to

41 Nikolai Zernov’s report reflects the spiritual state of Serbian youth at the time. “Most of them were not like Nada. They were torn away from their Church and their national roots. They considered themselves members of Western civilization, sought faith but did not have it, and were alienated from Orthodoxy. This capitalist youth was interested in everything and ready to discuss anything, but by and large they only criticized life and did not live it. The girls from this circle were not busy anywhere, were under the influence of socialism, dreaming of equality and brotherhood. Our belief in the renewing power of Orthodoxy and our rejection of revolutionary utopianism were incomprehensible to the young Serbian intelligentsia. We fought passionately to reveal the truth of Orthodoxy to them” (Đorđević, 2014, p. 160).

life! I feel the grace and blessing of Hopovo in my body and soul.” (Đorđević, 2014, 243).

The insight that Nadežda had reached in the meantime shows how right the Bogomoljci were when they insisted on the importance of confession and repentance (insight into one’s own sins and insight into one’s own sinfulness) as a prerequisite for spiritual progress. Nadežda Adžić became close to the Bogomoljci movement, whose members she met in the church in Vrnjci, where she lived on the family estate. In September 1929, she recorded her impressions in her diary after a sermon by Bogomoljac Boža Čeperković, around whom people gathered in front of the church in Vrnjci after the end of the liturgy.

“He spoke skillfully, without pausing, without confusing himself, loudly and decisively, spiritually and instructive, often repeating ‘brothers and sisters’, calling for repentance, purification and confession. And he often made very clear and beautiful comparisons to the people, so that everyone listened to him eagerly.” (Đorđević, 2014, 275).

After completing their studies at the College of Belgrade, the Zernovs went to the West, first to Paris and then to England. After the death of her parents, Nadežda Adžić recognized charitable work and caring for abandoned children as her life’s mission and vocation. During one of his visits to the home for abandoned children in Pop Stojanova Street in Belgrade, Bishop Nikolai Velimirović was convinced of her sincere dedication to this ministry and invited her to continue her mission in Macedonia, in Bitola. Nadežda Adžić accepted the invitation and on December 1, 1935, she took over the management of the children’s feeding center “Bogdaj”, which had been founded by Bishop Nikolai for the daily care of poor Christian and Muslim children from Bitola. Bogdaj marked the beginning of a new stage in Nadežda Adžić’s spiritual life and social work. Here she began her novitiate (in black monastic dress) and organized the daily life of the small community that had gathered around her, following the example of an Orthodox monastery, where, in addition to working with children, their upbringing and education, there was also time for spiritual endeavors such as fasting and prayer. She was joined by Stana Vukas and Milunka Mladenović, who followed Sister Nada to Serbia and later became Sisters Stefania and Maria of the Vračevšnica monastery, which Mother Ana (Adžić) took over in 1949. At the invitation of Sister Nada, Stevka Đurđević (1887-1945) also came to Bogdaj and lived quietly and in seclusion, dedicated to ascetic life and unceasing prayer in a small house in the garden. Stevka was a Serbian farmer who originally came from the village of Vrake near Skadar and settled with her family in the village of Drenovac in Metohija after the expulsion of Serbian families from Alba-

nia in 1933. She lived separately in a hut, where she practiced strict fasting and noetic prayer of the heart. She attended church services at the Visoki Dečani Monastery. About 92 letters of confession⁴² on 328 pages have been preserved from this great ascetic of Hesychastic orientation, who lived in a hermitage — a hut — and was liturgically connected to such a spiritual center as the Visoki Dečani Monastery, which she wrote to her spiritual father, the Bishop of Skopje Viktor (Mihailović), who lived in Dečani at the time. The surviving letters bear witness to the heights of knowledge of God and the depths of theology that this barely educated woman reached. The emergence of a 20th-century ascetic with a Hesychastic orientation, who practiced noetic prayer in a hermitage — a hut — and was liturgically connected to a spiritual center such as the Visoki Dečani Monastery, confirms our belief in the ascetic character of Serbian Orthodoxy. Stevka Đurđević received the monastic tonsure with the name Stefanida and ended her life as a martyr. She was beaten to death by the Bulgarian occupiers in Bogdaj on Good Friday 1945 because a candle was burning in her house, although this was forbidden due to the danger of Allied bombing raids. She was buried in the monastery of St. Christopher near Bitola. By decision of the Holy Synod of the Archbishopric of Ohrid, she was canonized in 2024 as the Saint Martyr Stefanida of Bitola and Skadar. In Bitola, Bishop Nikolai, who was appointed Bishop of Ohrid-Bitola in 1931 after the Ohrid diocese was annexed to Bitola, gathered young and learned theologians to teach at the Bitola Theological Seminary. Among the professors of the Theological Seminary in Bitola were great names of the Orthodox Church and Orthodox theology such as Hieromonk John Maximovich (celebrated among the saints as St. John of Shanghai), Hieromonk Cyprian Kern, Hieromonk Justin Popović (celebrated among the saints as Venerable Justin of Čelije). As early as 1923, in the article “The Inner Mission of Our Church (Realization of Orthodoxy)”, published in the magazine “Christian Life”, Hieromonk Justin (Popović) emphasized the importance of the Bogomoljci movement and its ascetic character as one of the greatest values for the Serbian Church and Serbian Orthodoxy.

“Therefore, the most important task of our Church is to create Christ-bearing ascetics... This mission of our Church is facilitated by God Himself, because there is a whole ascetic movement among the people. This is the Bogomoljci movement. Through this movement, our popular soul expresses its longings and hopes: It turns to the Holy Fathers, to the Orthodox ascet-

42 The letters were discovered in 1963 in the library of the Visoki Dečani monastery by theologian Risto Radović, who would later become Metropolitan Amfilohije (Radović) of Montenegro and the Littoral. Metropolitan Amfilohije will publish excerpts from these letters. See *Hriste životu moj. Prepodobna Stefanida Skadarska i Bitoljska, Čelija Piperska Monastery*, 2011.

ics, to the aspirations of St. Sava. This movement represents asceticism in its entirety. This makes it something special in the history of our Church. In the true Bogomoljci movement, everything boils down to personal asceticism, especially prayer and fasting... It is an ascetic renaissance and thus an Orthodox one, because Orthodoxy knows no other renaissances than the ascetic one” (Popović, 1980, 283-284).

Through the Bogomoljci movement, the Serbian people in the 20th century revived the ascetic character of their faith, which led them to the Holy Fathers (in this sense we understand the words of Fr. Justin “striving towards the Holy Fathers”), and turned to reading and studying patristic literature. The pioneer in the translation and publication of patristic texts was the journal *Missionary: the organ of the Union of Orthodox Brotherhoods of the Christian People’s Community*⁴³. In the article “Philokalia and spiritual renewal”, we expressed the conviction that it was precisely the Bogomoljci movement that created a favorable climate in the Serbian Orthodox environment for the translation of patristic works, especially ascetic-monastic literature.

“It is not our intention here to present a detailed list of translated and published excerpts from patristic texts, but rather to emphasize the fact that the Bogomoljci movement created a readership for this literature. Without the spiritual renewal initiated by this spiritual movement, these translations and the modest beginnings of a Serbian library of patristic texts would not have been possible” (Aleksić, 2022, 183).

Many spiritual figures emerged from the Bogomoljci movement, who later became priests, monks and nuns. The Christian People’s Community awakened spiritual forces in the Serbian people that had lain dormant during centuries of Turkish enslavement and in the 19th century, when liberal ideas from the West penetrated the Serbs. The revival of the Serbian people through the Bogomoljci movement activated these spiritual forces and introduced a spirit of asceticism into the dormant and in some areas even extinct religious life.

Boginja Mičić (1896-1958)⁴⁴, who was born in Krupanj and also completed her primary school and vocational education there, was one

43 The editor of the missionary was Dr. Radoje Arsović, later the monk Jakov (St. Jakov of Tumane), who, as a good connoisseur of the French and Russian languages, translated parts of the writings of the Church Fathers: St. Anthony the Great, St. Ephrem the Syrian, Abba Isaiah, St. John Chrysostom, St. Dimitri of Rostov. See Srećko Petrović, “A Few Questions regarding Life”, “Work, and Education of St. Jakov Arsović”, *Nicholai Studies*, Vol. I, No 1 (2020), p. 135.

44 The biography of Abbess Jefimija (Mičić) was compiled by the Sisters of Ravanica Monastery under the title “*Biography of Schema Abbess Jefimija, Superior of Ravanica Monastery and St. Petka*”, Ravanica Monastery, Belgrade, 2010.

of these spiritual figures who embodied the spirit of asceticism and the moral renewal of the people. Boginja Mičić joined the Bogomoljci in 1921 in the village of Čukojevac near Kraljevo, where the center of the Bogomoljci movement, the “Union of Brotherhoods of Orthodox Christians”, was founded. Sister Boginja became a zealous missionary and preached throughout Srem, Banat, Bačka and Šumadija. Due to her inspiring sermons, her strict ascetic lifestyle and her ascetic demeanor, she was held in high esteem and spiritual esteem by the people, especially the Bogomoljci⁴⁵. She decided to devote herself entirely to the monastic life and in 1931 went to the Divljane monastery, which at the time was run by the famous Russian abbess Mother Diodora Dokhtorova (1896-1978), where she received the tonsure with the religious name Eugenia in 1932 and later in the same year took on the small schema with the religious name Jefimija. Mother Jefimija received the monastic Hesychastic tradition from her spiritual mother, which she had brought with her from Russia. Abbess Jefimija and her sisterhood moved to Kovilj Monastery in 1933 at the invitation of Bishop Irinej Ćirić of Bačka. In the eight years that the sisters spent there, the monastery underwent both material and spiritual renewal. In September 1933, a large annual Bogomoljci gathering was held at Kovilj Monastery, attended by Patriarch Varnava Rosić of Serbia, Bishop Irinej Ćirić of Bačka and Bishop Nikolaj Velimirović of Žiča. Mother Jefimija also successfully campaigned for the translation of patristic works from Russian into Serbian⁴⁶. However, Abbess Jefimija Mičić demonstrated all her talent, her rich spiritual experience and her mature ascetic practice during the renovation of the Ravanica monastery, to which she moved with her sisters in 1946. The foundation of St. Prince Lazar and the center of the Hesychastic movement in Serbia in the 14th century once again became a spiritual nursery and guardian of the traditions of St. Sava and St. Lazar under the spiritual guidance of the experienced abbess. The spiritual teachings of Mother Jefimija (Mičić), which have been handed down in her published teachings, sermons and letters, bear witness to her deep faith and extensive knowledge of patristic theology and experience⁴⁷. The

45 Even as a laywoman, she stopped eating meat, wore a long black undergarment and had a large scarf in the shape of a monastic veil on her head.

46 Abbess Jefimija translated from Russian into Serbian the teachings of St. Macarius of Egypt, St. Anthony the Great, St. Isaac the Syrian, St. Ephrem the Syrian, St. Simeon the New Theologian, St. Basil the Great, St. Gregory the Theologian, St. John Chrysostom, Abba Dorotheus and the Russian spiritual writers, St. Dimitri of Rostov, St. John of Kronstadt, St. Theophan the Recluse and Abbess Taisia. Dr. Ksenija Končarević, writing about Russian disciples among Serbian monks, appreciates Abbess Jefimija Mičić as “a good connoisseur of the Russian language and a gifted translator of patristic writings” Ksenija Končarević, *Russian Monasticism in Exile*, in “The Young Elder”, p. 16.

47 See *Teachings, Sermons and Letters of Schema-Abbess Jefimija*, Ravanica Monastery near Ćuprija, 2008.

importance of the Bogomoljci movement and how much the Bogomoljci contributed to the spiritual renewal of the Serbian people in the interwar period will only become clear after the Second World War and the takeover of power by the communist atheist regime. The Serbian monasteries and thus the Serbian Orthodox Church lived and survived thanks to the spiritual prestige acquired by the Bogomoljci movement. Many Serbian monasteries were renovated by monks and nuns who emerged from the ranks of the Bogomoljci, and these renewed monasteries welcomed the 1990s, which marked the beginning of the Serbs' return to their faith and national traditions after half a century of wandering through the barren fields of Leninist-Marxist ideology. The event of the return of the relics of St. Prince Lazar of Kosovo to his monastery, the Ravanica Monastery, signaled the beginning of the Serbs' return to themselves, to God, their faith and their ancestral traditions. The monks of Ravanica, threatened by Turkish raids during the Great Migration of 1690 and instructed by the example of the burning of the greatest Serbian relic, the relic of St. Sava, in 1594, took the relics of St. Prince Lazar with them into exile. The monks arrived in Szentendre in 1693, where the holy relics rested for three years before being transferred to the Vrdnik Monastery on Fruška Gora. The monastery was named Ravanica of Srem because of the relics kept there. During the Second World War, due to the destruction of Serbian shrines in Srem by the Ustasha, the relics of Prince Lazar, together with those of Prince Stefan Štiljanović and Emperor Uroš, were transferred to Belgrade on April 14, 1942 and laid in state in the cathedral church. The protopresbyter Dr. Radoslav Grujić played an important role in the rescue of the relics of St. Prince Lazar, as he intervened with the German occupation authorities and ensured that German soldiers accompanied the Serbian commission that took over the relics from the Ustasha-occupied Srem. After the war, he was sharply criticized by the new authorities for this action and branded a "collaborator" with the occupiers. The Holy Synod of Bishops of the Serbian Orthodox Church decided on May 30, 1954 to allow the Saint Prince to return to his Moravian Ravanica, but he waited for another time and a new generation of Serbs who would welcome him to Ravanica. Thus, after almost three centuries of absence, the Saint Prince returned to his domicile on September 9, 1989. His journey to Ravanica began a year earlier, on June 28, 1988, when he set out to visit Serbian lands, Serbian monasteries and cities and to conduct a spiritual examination of the Serbs. That year, the holy relics of Prince Lazar were in Vrdnik Monastery, Ozren Monastery, Tronoša Monastery, Loznica, Petkovića Monastery, Osečina, Valjevo, Čelije Monastery, Lelić Monastery, Bogovađa Monastery, in Lazarevac, Arandjelovac, Topola, Kragujevac, Žiča Monastery, Ljubostinja Monastery, Studenica Monastery, Nova Pavlica Monastery, Gračanica Monastery, Priština, Kuršumlija, Prokuplje, Niš, Lazarica

Church, Gornjak Monastery, Ćuprija. It is important to mention that this time the relics of St. Prince Lazar remained in the Nova Pavlica monastery, as they had been in 1391 when they were transferred from Priština to Ravanica. Since 1207, when Archimandrite Sava Nemanjić, accompanied by monks, set off from Mount Athos to Serbia carrying the relics of his father, St. Simeon of Myrrhusher, this sacred act has signified fraternal reconciliation and repentance among the Serbs, as well as spiritual elevation and strengthening of faith. The arrival of the relics of St. Bishop Nikolai Velimirović from the United States in Serbia on May 3, 1991, when they were brought to the Cathedral of St. Sava and translated to his monastery, the Lelić Monastery, on May 12, should also be understood in this sense. The return of two Serbian saints among the Serbs, one in the spiritual sense, the other in the spiritual and physical sense, has a deeper meaning. The return of St. Prince Lazar to Ravanica before the great trials and sufferings that befell the Serbian people in the 1990s, perhaps no less than the sufferings in Kosovo in 1389, had a cautionary character. It called for national unity, wisdom and political sobriety in the face of impending events. Time has shown how well the Serbs were able to understand and grasp this message from the Saint Prince. The arrival of Bishop Nikolai, the Serbian Chrysostom, marked the return of the Serbs to the faith of St. Sava. Generations of Serbs had grown up in an atheistic spirit, far removed from the Orthodox faith, and many, sadly now completely denationalized, turned to Bishop Nikolai's books to learn from them. Bishop Nikolai once again began to preach loudly to the Serbs, now through his books, which had been banned and inaccessible in Yugoslavia for decades. The arrival of the relics of St. Basil of Ostrog, one of the most venerated saints of the Serbian people, on May 10 and 11, 1996, in Herzegovina, his homeland and the diocese in which he was bishop, was of universal ecclesiastical and national importance. This arrival was the arrival of a father and bishop to children who had recently gone through the horrors and fire of war, to give them comfort and heal their wounds.

Conclusion

The history of the Serbian Church over the centuries and at the end of the 20th century has shown that the reliquaries of saints and the tombs of ascetics are sources of spiritual renewal. In the 1980s, a young monastic brotherhood under the leadership of hieromonk Dr. Artemije (Radosavljević)⁴⁸ gathered in the Crna Reka monastery, around the rel-

48 Artemije Radosavljević unfortunately went into schism as Bishop of Raška-Prizren and formed his own schismatic structure called "Diocese of Raška-Prizren in Exile" He was removed from the leadership of the diocese and retired in 2010 due to ca-

ics of the saint hermit Peter of Koriša. From the Crna Reka monastery, the monks spread out as if from a spiritual beehive and renewed the old Nemanjić monasteries: Đurđevi Stupovi, Sopoćani, Visoki Dečani, Saints Archangels. In the 1990s, young and educated women, attracted by the tradition of Mother Ana (Adžić), a disciple of Bishop Nikolai and one of the most learned Serbian abbesses, came to the Vračevšnica monastery to become nuns. It can therefore be said that in the case of the Vračevšnica monastery, the grave of an ascetic is a source of spiritual renewal.

The Serbian Orthodox identity, which was formed during the reign of the Nemanjić dynasty in the period of economic and cultural prosperity of the Serbian state, retained its basic characteristics even during the Turkish occupation and after the liberation and the formation of an independent nation state. The ascetic character and eschatological orientation of Serbian Orthodoxy proved to be spiritual constants of Serbian identity in the 20th century, above all through the Bogomoljci movement and its spiritual heritage. Any attempt to deconstruct Serbian identity typically begins with an attempt to erase or at least neutralize its Orthodox character. Historical experience shows that the ascetic component of Serbian Orthodox identity, from which the eschatological also arises, is a barrier that protects and preserves Serbian Orthodoxy from its “dilution” and secularization. Therefore, the cultivation and preservation of the ascetic and eschatological character of Serbian Orthodox identity is also a prerequisite for the preservation of the Orthodox identity of the Serbs.

References:

- Aleksić, Marjan (2022): *Clamor del hombre en la era digital: Una mirada desde el Desierto de los Padres*, Albertus Magnus, vol. 13 núm. 1, Bogotá: Universidad Santo Tomás, 49-77.
- Aleksić, Marjan (2022): *Filokalija i duhovna obnova* u Bogoslovski Glasnik, br. 26, Sremski Karlovci, 140-194.
- Bogdanović, Dimitrije (2008): *Jovan Lestvičnik u vizantijskoj i staroj srpskoj književnosti*, Banja Luka: Romanov.
- Burton-Christi, Douglas (1998): *La parola nel deserto*. Scrittura e ricerca della santità, Comunità di Bose: Edizioni Qiqajon.
- Velimirović, Jovan (2013), *Sećanja ep. Jovana Velimirovića na episkopa Nikolaja u Sveštenik Milisav D. Protić, Nikolaj Bio-bibliografija 1880-1941, Sabrana dela I*, Šabac: Manastir Svetog Nikolaja Soko, 607–699.

nonical violations. However, as he did not abide by the decision of the Holy Synod of Bishops of the Serbian Orthodox Church, he was stripped of his episcopal rank and returned to the lay rank, taking the baptized name Marko. The former bishop of Raška-Prizren, Artemije, died in 2020 while living in schism.

- Grejm, Spik (2024): *Sveta Gora među narodima. Duhovno i kulturno rasejanje Svete Gore Atonske*, Beograd: Zadužbina Svetog manastira Hilandara.
- Domentijan (2001): *Žitije Svetog Save*, Beograd: Srpska književna zadruga.
- Episkop Nikolaj (1997): *Ne odbacujte ih* u *Sabrana dela XV*, Šabac: Glas Crkve, 11-14.
- Episkop Nikolaj (2001): *Prolog*, Šabac: Pravoslavna crkvena opština Linc.
- Episkop Nikolaj (2013): *Upokoj, Gospode* u *Sabrana dela IX*, Šabac: Glas Crkve.
- Episkop Hrizostom (1991): *Narodna hrišćanska zajednica* u *Tihi glas*, Beograd: Sveti arhijerejski sinod Srpske pravoslavne crkve.
- Dorđević, Oliver (2014): *Sreten Adžić i njegova kći igumanija Ana*, Gornji Milanovac: Manastir Vračevšnica.
- Jovanović, Milivoje (2024): *Monah Kalist*, Kragujevac: Duhovni Lug.
- Končarević, Ksenija (2022): *Rusko monaštvo u egzilu* u *Mladi starac*, Bijljina: Sinaj, 5-21.
- Marjanović, Dragoljub (2018): *Vizantijski svet i Srpska crkva u 13. i 14. veku*, Novi Sad: Mediterran Publishing.
- Marjanović, Dragoljub (2021) *Sveti Sava, Jerusalim i autokefalija Srpske Pravoslavne Crkve*, u *Glasnik* januar 2021, br. 1, Beograd: Sveti Arhijerejski Sinod Srpske Pravoslavne Crkve.
- Marjanović, Dragoljub (2024): *Sveti Sava i manastir Vatoped*, u *Sveti Sava i Domentijan*, Niš: Centar za crkvene studije.
- Popović, Danica (2002): *Pustinožiteljstvo Svetog Save*, u *Kult svetih na Balkanu*, Kragujevac: Liceum 7.
- Popović, Danica (2007): *Pustinje i Svete Gore srednjovekovne Srbije*, u *Zbornik radova Vizantološkog instituta XLIV*, Beograd.
- Popović, Justin (1980): *Na bogočovečanskom putu*, Beograd: Manastir Ćelije.
- Rakićević, Tihon (2020): *Sveti Sava i Evergetidski manastir* u *Evergetidski tipik*, Kraljevo: Manastir Studenica.
- Sveti Sava (2018): *Studenički tipik*, Kragujevac: Manastir Studenica.
- Sveti Sava (1995): *Hilandarski tipik*, Beograd: Narodna biblioteka Srbije.
- Spik, Grejm (2024): *Sveta Gora među narodima. Duhovno i kulturno rasejanje Svete Gore Atonske*, Beograd: Zadužbina Svetog manastira Hilandara i Društvo prijatelja Svete Gore Atonske.
- Stefan Prvovenčani (1999): *Sabrana dela*, Beograd: Srpska književna zadruga.
- Teodosije (1988): *Žitija*, Beograd: Srpska književna zadruga.
- Cirillo di Scitopoli (2012): *Storie monastiche del deserto di Gerusalemme, Abbazia di Praglia*: Edizioni Scritti Monastici.
- Špadijer, Irena (2014): *Sveti Petar Koriški u staroj srpskoj književnosti*, Beograd: Čigoja štampa.

Snežana V. Jelesijević¹

University of Belgrade
Faculty of Philology
Department of Slavic Studies
Belgrade (Serbia)

ON THE SOURCES OF DOMENTIANUS'
LIFE OF SAINT SAVA AND
ON THE TRANSLATION OF
SOME OF ITS SECTIONS²

The paper provides main information on the importance of St Sava for the shaping of Serbian national identity. It focuses on the meaning of the word “enlightenment,” and the epithet “enlightener,” which is closely associated with the saint. The author also presents an outline of the extant copies of the *Life of Saint Sava* by Hieromonk Domentianus, Sava’s disciple, which represents one of the most important sources of our knowledge about the first Serbian enlightener and his activities – besides the works of the saint himself and the *Life of Saint Sava* by Hieromonk Theodosius. The paper points out the previously identified sources used in Domentianus’ work and identifies the origin of one of them. The author draws attention to hitherto unknown sources, which clarify the meaning of certain places in Domentianus’ *Life of Saint Sava*, thus amending the earlier translations of this work.

Keywords: Saint Sava, enlightener, Domentianus, *Life of Saint Sava*, sources, translation

I. Saint Sava played a decisive role in shaping the identity of the Serbian people.³ As the teacher, the first hierarch and the guide along the path

1 snezana.jelesijevic@fil.bg.ac.rs, ORCID 0000-0002-4325-2262, Assistant Professor.

2 This research was carried out with support from the Science Fund of the Republic of Serbia, #1561, Formation of Serbian Identity and Theoretical Controversies Concerning Attempts of Its Deconstruction – FSITC.

3 This is the topic of our forthcoming paper: “Spomenici ranih istočnoslovensko-srpskih književnih veza kao izvori za proučavanje srpskog identiteta” (“Monuments of Early East Slav-Serbian Literary Relations as Sources for the Studying Serbian

that leads to life, upon arrival, he first enlightened his homeland regenerating it through the Holy Spirit, and he planted his children like olive trees in a spiritual garden, as is sung in the Troparion to Saint Sava.⁴ Hieromonk Domentianus speaks about this in the *Life of Saint Sava* as follows: “Christ raised Sava for the enlightenment of his homeland” (Domentijan, 2001, pp. 12, 13)⁵; “By the power of Thy Holy Spirit, I will enlighten Thy people, who have gone astray through their ignorance of Thee, the true God, and Thou will complete the lack of Thy divine teaching through me, Thy servant, in my homeland,” Sava prays to God (Domentijan, 2001, pp. 24, 25); in his homeland, Sava taught everyone piety (Domentijan, 2001, pp. 26, 27); Saints Simeon and Sava are “eastern lights that illuminate their western homeland through divine wisdom”⁶ (Domentijan, 2001, pp. 97,

Identity”). Our presentation at the *Serbian Identity – Construction and Deconstruction* roundtable discussion, held on September 20, 2024 at the Faculty of Philosophy in Belgrade, was dedicated to the role of Saint Sava, Orthodoxy and the Serbian Orthodox Church in the shaping of Serbian identity.

- 4 We have used the Serbian translation of the largest portion of the troparion, which can be found in Jevtić (2020, p. 32). The troparion we sing nowadays differs to some extent from the version published in the *Service to Saint Sava* by Hieromonk Theodosius of Hilandar in Božidar Vuković’s Festive Menaion (Venice, 1536–1538, p. 9, quire 31; see also in the same edition of the service, published in the modern script in Serbian Church Slavonic and also translated into contemporary Serbian in Trifunović, 1970a, p. 240; Trifunović, 1970b, p. 283) as well as in the oldest and, according to Dimitrije Bogdanović (Bogdanović, 1980, p. 34), the best manuscript of Theodosius’ *Service* – GIM, KhLud. 151, from the late first quarter of the 14th century (Dianova, 1998, p. 132, No. 45), fol. 150b. With minor variations, the troparion also appears in one of the six redactions of the *Service to Saint Sava* that predate Theodosius’ *Service* (for these redactions, see: Bogdanović, 1980, pp. 3–54; see also Simić, 1978, pp. 17–34; Temchin, 2021, pp. 139–151, 161–189; Subotin-Golubović, 2022, pp. 176–201), in the Bratko Menaion and in the Jerusalem Typikon Hil. 165, dated to the mid-14th century (Bogdanović, 1980, pp. 17, 98, 111). The troparion in Theodosius’ *Service* and in the redaction of the *Service* in the Bratko Menaion largely corresponds to the second Sessional Hymn for Matins in one of the redactions mentioned above, the Karyes redaction, where the troparion appears as a “Teacher of Orthodoxy” (Simić, 1978, pp. 37, 43). For more on the troparion to Saint Sava in the redactions of the early *Service*, see Bogdanović, 1980, pp. 50, 52; Simić, 1978, pp. 20, 22, 23. The most recent edition of two of these redactions of the *Service* – the Dormition of Saint Sava (RGB, Und. 75) and the Translation of Saint Sava’s Relics (SANU 339) – can be found in Subotin-Golubović, 2022, pp. 201–222. The dating of Theodosius’ *Service to Saint Sava* varies: it is placed in the middle or in the second half of the 13th century (Trifunović, 1970b, p. 279), probably in the end of the first decade of the 14th century (Bogdanović, 1991, p. 267) after Archbishop Nicodemus’ translation of the Typikon (1318–1319) (Simić, 1978, pp. 20, 30).
- 5 Our translation of the original text both here and throughout the text does not always match the translation in the Serbian Church Slavonic edition we used (Domentijan, 2001). We indicate the pages on which both the Serbian Church Slavonic text and the Serbian translation can be found.
- 6 We assume that *вогодысльно* means “by God’s providence,” “according to God’s design.” See Avanesov, Ulukhanov, 2002, p. 82, s.v. *мысль*.

98), “the nightingales of the divine voice with the watchful eyes of the soul and heart, who awakened with their ceaseless divine songs those who had fallen asleep in sins because of ignorance of divine grace”, and “the rivers of divine springs that gladdened the hearts that were exhausted out of ignorance of the true Life – Christ, our true God” (Domentijan, 2001, pp. 98, 99); “You will teach piety to your homeland and show the examples of virtue to many, and many will come to know the true God through you, and through your blessing they will come to true repentance”, proclaims the late Simeon to Sava, appearing to him in a dream (Domentijan, 2001, pp. 114–116); when he became abbot of Studenica, “as long as he remained there, he did not cease to teach day and night, strengthening everyone in the fear of God and showing examples of virtue” (Domentijan, 2001, pp. 169–170); “imitating his Lord Christ, who adorned the sky with stars, he also adorned the whole homeland with great piety⁷ and holy churches – fields, valleys and hills alike. Where he could not build a church, he placed a cross, so that in every place, the name of God might be glorified, according to the words of David, holy forefather of Christ: ‘In all places of His dominion.’⁸ And so that all the faithful, looking at the holy sign, might always crucify their will to the Crucified One on it – Christ, our true God” (Domentijan, 2001, pp. 169–172).

“The legislator of monks” (RGB, Und. 75, 266a; Subotin-Golubović, 2022, p. 202) and “the teacher of monks, for you enacted into law the true *typika* in the churches you yourself built for the glorification of the Holy Trinity” (Simić, 1978, p. 36) – this is how Saint Sava was called in two versions of the early *Service*.⁹ Monastic life and the liturgy in the Hermitage of Saint Sava the Sanctified in Karyes were organized by the Karyes *Typikon*¹⁰,

7 In the original: *всакииъ* *бл*(а)говѣрѣць (Domentijan, 2001, p. 170). We believe that the first word here means: “one who manifests in full measure, in its entirety” (Avanesov, 1989, pp. 284, 285, s.v. *всакии*).

8 Ps. 102:22 (*Psaltir sa devet biblijskih pesama* [*Psalter with Nine Biblical Odes*], 2012, p. 134).

9 See note 4.

10 Anatolij Arkad'evich Turilov discovered the name of the scribe of the oldest manuscript copy (Turilov, 2014, pp. 233–234), which he considers to be the original, written if not exactly in 1199, then at the latest in 1203–1204 (Jelesijević, 2015, p. 520). – A number of scholars are convinced that Saint Sava is the author or the translator or both of the Rules for the Use of the Psalter (Ćorović, 1928a, pp. XL–XLIV; Mirković, 1934, pp. 66–67; Mirković, 1939a, pp. 20–21; Bogdanović, 1986a, p. 197; Jovanović, 1998, pp. XXVI–XXVII; Jovanović, 1999, pp. 103–109; Savić, 2015, pp. 139–144; Savić, 2020, pp. 515–516; Afanas'eva, 2023, pp. 9, 22). Dimitrije Bogdanović allows for the possibility that Sava “in this case, as with the *Nomocanon* collection, was only the initiator, organizer and supervisor of the translation” (Bogdanović, 1986b, p. 19; the same in Bogdanović, 1991, p. 239; see also Bogdanović, 1991, p. 139). Tat'jana Igorevna Afanas'eva is of the opinion that the attribution of the Rules for the Use of the Psalter to Saint Sava cannot be fully confirmed, since the liturgical terms in it do not correspond to those in the Karyes and Hilandar *Typika*. She links its origin to the

while at Hilandar and Studenica¹¹ – by the Hilandar and Studenica Typika. For the autocephalous Serbian Church, now as archbishop, he wrote the *Zakonopravilo* (Nomocanon) or *Krmčija* (Domentijan, 2001, p. 212)¹², possibly also an abridged version of the East Slavic translation of the Pandects of Nikon of the Black Mountain (Turilov, 2014, pp. 491–496). He left to us “the soul-saving books – the laws of virtue”, as it is chanted in a version of the early *Service to St. Sava* (Und. 75, 270b; Subotin-Golubović, 2022, p. 210)¹³. In Žiča he consecrated the bishops, taught them, gave each of them a nomocanon and sent them to their dioceses (Domentijan, 2001, pp. 223–225). He ordered the convening of a Council at Žiča with the hegumens and monks, priests and deacons and the entire Christian people in order to “proclaim the holy, true faith of Christ and to curse the godless heretics and all those who do not confess Christ, our true God” (Domentijan, 2001, pp.

activities of a circle of translators, authors and followers of Sava in the monastery of Saint Panteleimon on Mount Athos (Afanas’eva, 2023, pp. 19–22). In the overview of the studies on the Rules for the Use of the Psalter in the above-mentioned pages, Vladimir Ćorović also mentions scholars who believe that this typikon is not the work of our saint (V. Jagić, Lj. Stojanović and others). On the editions of the Serbian Church Slavonic copy of the Rules for the Use of the Psalter and its translations, see note 26. Viktor Savić is of the opinion that the “cell rule” from Chapter 27 of the Hilandar Typikon refers to the Rules for the Use of the Psalter (Savić, 2015). For the textual analysis of its copies, which belong to different Slavic language redactions, see Afanas’eva, 2023. The Russian scholar in all probability did not fully understand V. Ćorović’s point of view (Afanas’eva, 2023, pp. 8–9, 21), for whom Sava’s authorship of the Rules for the Use of the Psalter is beyond doubt and is proven, among other things, by textual correspondences with the Hilandar Typikon (Ćorović, 1928a, pp. XLII–XLIV). For Mikhail Nesterovich Speranskiy, however, these are not sufficient arguments in favor of Saint Sava’s authorship; the Russian scholar explains them differently (Speranskiy, 1930, pp. 262–272). According to him, the Rules for the Use of the Psalter appears in Ćorović’s edition of St. Sava’s writings among the works attributed to the Serbian saint, but in the form in which they are preserved, they cannot be definitively attributed to him (Speranskiy, 1930, p. 259), it is not among the works that really originate from Sava (Speranskiy, 1930, p. 271). In the aforementioned edition, however, the Rules for the Use of the Psalter is placed in the Unreliable and Incomplete Works section (Ćorović, 1928b, pp. 191, 199–200), where the editor placed it on the assumption that the only known Serbian copy to him was incomplete (Ćorović, 1928a, pp. XXXIII, XLIV).

11 See note 26.

12 See note 26. Overview of the research on this record and the most important literature on it: Jelesijević [forthcoming].

13 See note 4. Furthermore, the same sticheron in the last edition erroneously states *СЪБРАВШЕ СЕ ДАТН* and *НАДЕЖДАНО ПОГРЪШНАЪ ЕСН* (Subotin-Golubović, 2022, p. 210) instead of *СЪБРАВШЕ СЕ ЧЕДА ТИ* and *НАДЕЖДАЪ НЕ ПОГРЪШНАЪ ЕСН* (Und. 75, 270b). In the first edition, the first example contains an error in the second place: *СЪБРАВШЕ СЕ ЧЕДА ТВОЯ*. The second one was correctly presented (Stojanović, Belgrade, 1890, p. 175). We believe that it should be read as two words *не соушцид’* in: *не соушцид’ бо тѣню попекаъ се есн. нь и* (Und. 75, 270b), rather than *несоушцидн* (Subotin-Golubović, 2022, p. 210), *несоушцидъ* (Stojanović, Belgrade, 1890, p. 175).

225, 226). At this Council, in 1220 or 1221¹⁴, the first Serbian Archbishop Sava would deliver a sermon (Domentijan, 2001, pp. 226–242), known as the Sermon on the True Faith.¹⁵ According to Domentianus, it was recited “on the feast day” during the liturgy after the reading of the Holy Gospel (Domentijan, 2001, pp. 225, 226). Bishop Athanasius Jevtić believes that “the feast day” refers to the day of the temple feast, namely the Ascension of the Lord (Savior's Day or Spasovdan), to whom Žiča is dedicated, as is clear from Theodosius (Jevtić, 2020, p. 97). According to Theodosius' *Life of Saint Sava*, the Council began on Savior's Day, and the Sermon was preached on the following day (Teodosije Hilandarac, 1973, pp. 141–144).¹⁶

Bishop Athanasius Jevtić translated and theologically interpreted the Žiča Sermon from Domentianus' *Life of Saint Sava* (Jevtić, 2020, pp. 125–170).¹⁷ At the beginning of the Sermon, after speaking about apostolic succession in the Church, Archbishop Sava, the successor of the Apostles, emphasizes the importance of true faith and refers “to the well-known gospel and patristic truth about the mutual connection and interdependence of true faith and righteous living” (Jevtić, 2020, p. 150). The central part of the Sermon is an exposition and confession of the true faith, i.e. the divine dogmas, as well as the rejection of heretical teachings and the anathema of the heretics. The Sermon ends with a pastoral exhortation to the flock on the application of the professed true faith in the lives of Christians (Jevtić, 2020, pp. 142–170). Bishop Athanasius recognizes a reflection of the struggle against the Bogomil heresy at the following places: in the words of Archbishop Sava on apostolic succession in the Church, in the expressions and theological clarifications in the confession of Christian dogmas, among which the most important are those on the Holy Trinity and the Incarnation of Christ, and in the concluding part of the Sermon, where the inseparability and unity of true faith and ecclesiastical baptism in the name

14 A number of scholars believe that the council took place in 1221 (Solovjev, 1953, pp. 30, 37, 38, 42, 52, 56; Mošin, 1959, p. 367; Petrović, 2003, p. 30; Jevtić, 2020, p. 74). At one point, Aleksandar Solovjev mentions both dates: “in the year 1221 (or 1220)” (Solovjev, 1953, p. 37). On the same page, the author argues that the council could have been convened by May 1220 (see note 16). According to Bogdanović (1991, p. 256), the council was held in 1220 (Bogdanović, 1991, p. 256).

15 The Sermon from the *Life of Saint Sava* by Domentianus was also translated into Serbian by Bishop Athanasius Jevtić, who supplied an interpretation as well. The translation is preceded by an overview of scholarly opinions on the Sermon and a comparison of its text in Domentianus' and Theodosius' *Lives of the Saint* (Jevtić, 2020, pp. 73–170). Bishop Athanasius also translated two sermons from the same hagiography, which the first Serbian archbishop preached in the Studenica monastery (Jevtić, 2020, pp. 171–205).

16 Some scholars fix this date more precisely as May 21, 1221, the feast of Saints Constantine and Helen (Solovjev, 1953, pp. 40–41; Jevtić, 2020, pp. 106–107).

17 See note 15.

Through his archiepiscopal work in the Serbian land and among the Serbian people, described in Domentianus' *Life of Saint Sava*, Sava fulfilled the prophecy of St. Simeon that he would "teach every godliness" (true piety, Orthodoxy) and "establish his homeland with every good law" (righteous governance), in accordance with God's commandment and "apostolic tradition" (Jevtić, 2020, p. 99).

From the above passages in the *Life of Saint Sava* we also learn something about the spiritual condition of the Serbs before their spiritual awakening: ignorance of God and divine grace, lack of divine instruction, sinfulness, spiritual weakness, lack of true repentance, the presence of unlawful wedlock and the presence of heresy, undoubtedly the Bogomil heresy.²¹ According to the Karyes redaction of the early *Service to Saint Sava*²², he "rescued the people of his homeland from the jaws of the evil wolf" (Simić, 1978, p. 46); he is called an apostle because he pulled his homeland out of the depths of unbelief (Simić, 1978, p. 36); enlightened by God, he was sent as a true apostle to those who were in the darkness of ignorance (Simić, 1978, p. 35), but who wanted to know the true light of God: ПОМАЗА СЕ БЛА(А)Г(О)Д(Ѣ)ТНЮ ПРѢС(ВЕ)Т(А)ГО Д(ОУ)ХА. ТВОРНТИ ЗНАМЕННА И ЧЮДЕСА. ВЪ ЗЕМЛѢ ЖЕЛАЮЩИИ ИСТИННАГО СВѢТА БО(О)ЖИНА ВѢДѢТИ (Simić, 1978, p. 35).

Saint Sava is therefore the first Serbian enlightener. According to the *Dictionary of the Old Russian Language*, просвѣтитель means "one who enlightens spiritually" (Krys'ko, 2012, pp. 144–145, s.v. просвѣтитель). The first Serbian archbishop is described by King Vladislav in the hagiography as a teacher and enlightener of his homeland (Domentijan, 2001, p. 414, 415); in the Chrysobull of King Uroš II Milutin for the monastery of St. Stephen in Banjska (1314, after February 8 – 1316, before March 12), he is described as "a holy God-bearer, equal to the apostles, and a teacher and enlightener of all Serbian and Littoral Lands" (Mošin, Ćirković, Sindik, 2011, pp. 455, 458); in the Charter of Archbishop Nicodemus for the

21 On the Bogomil heresy, see Solovjev, 1953; Ćirković, 1999a–c; Zhavoronkov, Turilov, 2002. See also the sources: the pseudo-epigraphical canon law text *The Commandments of John Chrysostom on Church Law* (Jagić, 1874, pp. 112–113, 115–116, 147–151), the Serbian adaptation of the *Homily of Presbyter Cosmas against the Bogomils* (Bogdanović, 1976a). *The Commandments of John Chrysostom on Church Law* has been associated with St. Sava. The absence of certain lexemes from this record in the *Zakonopravilo* led Yelena Vladimirovna Belyakova to hypothesize that it dates from the earlier, Ohrid period of Slavic literature and literacy. The Russian scholar also provides a bibliography of works on this text (Belyakova, 2020), which we supplement (Solovjev, 1953, pp. 33–37). – Aleksandar Solovjev's opinion that in this period (is the author referring to the already mentioned period of Saint Sava's preaching in 1206–1216?) both Stephen the First-Crowned and the Serbian Church recognized the primacy of Pope Innocent III is unacceptable (Solovjev, 1953, p. 30).

22 See note 4.

monastery of St. Stephen in Banjska (1317, after May 12), Sava is referred to as “lord and teacher, instructor and enlightener and Serbian apostle”, and by the grace of the Holy Trinity, the Serbian land was enlightened and established in the Orthodox faith through his many works and efforts (Mošin et al., 2011, pp. 473, 474); in the Prilep Chrysobull of Tsar Stefan Dušan for the Karyes cell of Saint Sava (1348), he is referred to as “lord and parent and enlightener of our land, honored Sava” (Živojinović, 2008, p. 76). Saint Sava is also called “ours or Serbian teacher and enlightener” by the people (Dimitrijević, 1926, pp. 58, 59, 60).

This enlightenment corresponds most closely to the meaning of the words *просвѣтити* and *просвѣщати* in the *Dictionary of the Old Russian Language*, which means “to instruct in true faith, to make wiser, more virtuous” (Krys’ko, 2012, p. 147, s.v. *просвѣтити*), “to instruct in the spirit of true faith” (Krys’ko, 2012, p. 153, s.v. *просвѣщати*).²³ Bishop Athanasius Jevtić gives the best explanation of the nature of Sava’s enlightenment, through which he enlightened and educated his people. He notes that since the time of Dositej, Saint Sava has been referred to as an enlightener in a sense other than that attributed to him in the Troparion by Hieromonk Theodosius and in other early texts – in the sense of the Anglo-French-German Enlightenment (Jevtić, 2020, pp. 18–19); he is described as an “enlightener and humanist in the sense that began to spread among us after the Enlightenment of Dositej Obradović” (Jevtić, 2020, p. 19). For Sava, this “enlightenment was not only about the human sciences, not even only about the Holy Scriptures, and certainly not about only ‘the light of natural common sense’ as with Voltaire or Dositej, but above all and beyond everything, about the uncreated divine gracious light of the Holy Spirit, who *enlightens and sanctifies* man in the true Church of Christ in the faith revealed by God and in the God-given sacraments and feats full of grace” (Jevtić, 2020, p. 32; see also Dojčinović, 2018, p. 92). This is why the Troparion states: “He enlightened his fatherland by reviving it with the Holy Spirit” (Jevtić, 2020, p. 32).²⁴ He “was saving not only his soul, but also the soul of his people, by enlightening them with Christian illumination and grafting the noble olive tree of Christ onto the wildness of his people” (Mirković, 1939b, p. 8).²⁵

23 Daničić gives only one meaning for *просвѣщати* in the *Dictionary – illustrate*, and for *просвѣтити*, in addition to *illustrare*, also *visum dare* (Daničić, II, 1975, pp. 460–461).

24 See note 4. In the quotation we have followed the troparion, while Bishop Athanasius’ text reads somewhat differently.

25 The people have “preserved in their accounts of St. Sava testimonies of economic, constructional, hygienic and in general, material and physical advances through which St. Sava taught and protected them” (Dimitrijević, 1934, p. 99). See also Dimitrijević, 1926, pp. 16–29.

II. Apart from the works and translations of the saint himself, and the records created through his efforts²⁶, the most valuable sources of our knowledge about Saint Sava and his work are the detailed hagiographies by Domentianus and Theodosius.²⁷

It is known that there are four surviving copies of Domentianus' *Life of Saint Sava* and one fragment: RNB, Gil'f. 54 from the second quarter of the 15th century²⁸; NMP, IX F 7 (Š 25) (148a–433b) from the second half of the 15th century²⁹; CIAI 506 from the 16th century (211a–after folio

-
- 26 Ćorović, 1928b (collected works in Serbian Church Slavonic); Mirković, 1934 (translation of the Karyes Typikon and the Rules for the Use of the Psalter); Mirković, 1939c, pp. 25–157 (translation of the collected works into Serbian); Saint Sava, 1986 (Dimitrije Bogdanović's edition of Mirković's translation, and Bogdanović's translation of the Karyes Typikon and the *Service to St. Simeon*); Bogdanović, 1990 (edition of the original text, translation and phototype edition of the oldest copy or original of the Karyes Typikon); Petrović, 1991 (phototype edition of the Ilovica copy of the Zakonopravilo); Sindik, 1992 (phototype edition of the Studenica Typikon); Jovanović, 1994 (edition of the Studenica Typikon in Old Church Slavonic, and translation); Bogdanović, 1995 (phototype edition, edition in Serbian Church Slavonic, and translation of the Hilandar Typikon); Sveti Sava [Saint Sava], 1998 (collected works in Serbian Church Slavonic with translations into Serbian); Jovanović, 1999 (critical edition of the Rules for the Use of the Psalter collated with Serbian transcripts); Petrović and Štavljanin, 2005 (edition of the Ilovica copy of the Zakonopravilo with variants from three copies); Trifunović, Bjelogrić, Brajović, 2014 (original, translation and photoprint reproduction of the Founding Charter of Hilandar Monastery, copy by Dimitrije Avramović); Savić, 2018 (edition of the 16th-century copy of the Karyes Typikon); Sveti Sava, 2018 (new phototype edition of the Studenica Typikon with a new Serbian translation and translations into English and Russian); Špadijer, 2019 (*Service to St. Simeon*). See note 10. For an overview of St. Sava's written heritage, its manuscript tradition and the history of its research, including information on editions in Serbian Church Slavonic and on translations, see Ćorović, 1928a; Bogdanović, 1986b (the same in Bogdanović, 1991, pp. 231–247); Bogdanović, 1986a, pp. 149–150; Bogdanović, 1991, pp. 134–141; Jovanović, 1998, pp. VII–XXXII; Špadijer, 2014, pp. 13–34. An excellent assessment and overview of a certain number of studies and papers on St. Sava: Jevtić, 2020, pp. 40–73.
- 27 On Hieromonk Domentianus, see Trifunović, 1963; Bogdanović, 1991, pp. 144–146; Trifunović, 2004, pp. 89–114; Juhas-Georgievska, 2001a, pp. VIII–XI; Juhas-Georgievska, 2003, pp. 1–2; Juhas-Georgievska, 2007; Gavryushina, 2007; Špadijer, 2014, pp. 43–51; Špadijer, 2024. – On Hieromonk Theodosius: Bogdanović, 1991, pp. 152–157, 248–270; Špadijer, 2014, pp. 51–72.
- 28 Description in Juhas-Georgievska, 2001a, pp. CXXVIII–CXXIX; Juhas-Georgievska, 2003, pp. 108–112. Dating according to the description in Levshina, 2021, p. 58, No. 56.
- 29 Description in Juhas-Georgievska, 2001a, pp. CXXIX–CXXX; Juhas-Georgievska, 2003, pp. 112–118. Dating and the information about the pages with the *Hagiography* according to the description (Špadijer, Trijić, Rakić, Ranković, 2015, pp. 46–49) and photos.

308)³⁰; ÖNB, Cod. slav. 57 (123a–338b) from 1600–1610³¹; UB Čorović Fgm. 6, around 1340 (1 folio)³².

Two copies contain information about the year in which the *Hagiography* was written. These dates do not match: (6751) 1242–1243 (ÖNB, Cod. slav. 57)³³ and (6762) 1253–1254 (RNB, Gil'f. 54, 221a). Scholars have differing opinions: 1242–1243 (Radojičić, 1954, pp. 26, 40³⁴; Dinić, 1959, pp. 10–12; Bogdanović, 1976b, p. 22³⁵), 1253–1254 (Jagić, 1873, p. 12; Trifunović, 1963, pp. 12, 126; Janković, 1989; Miljković, 2008, pp. 27–29; Špadijer, 2014, p. 46; Špadijer, 2024, p. 669).³⁶

A textological comparison of the transcripts from St. Petersburg (RNB, Gil'f. 54), Prague (NMP, IX F 7 (Š 25)), and Vienna (ÖNB, Cod. slav. 57) led Ljiljana Juhas-Georgievska to the conclusion that the Vienna manuscript comes closest to the original. The Prague manuscript represents a further stage in the development of the text, so to speak its version, while the St. Petersburg manuscript is an redaction of the original text (Juhas-Georgievska, 2001a, pp. CXXXII–CXXXIV; Juhas-Georgievska, 2003, pp. 330–332, 333–334).³⁷ This edition is also represented in the recently discovered Sofia manuscript (CIAI 506) (Jovanović, 2022, pp. 107, 110–111).

30 The first folio of the copy is missing, and a third of the text is missing toward the end of the text. See Jovanović, 2022, pp. 107–115.

31 Description in Birkfellner, 1975, pp. 244–246, No. II/89. See also Juhas-Georgievska, 2001a, pp. CXXVI–CXXVIII; Juhas-Georgievska, 2003, pp. 118–122. According to the monograph by Ljiljana Juhas-Georgievska (2003), the date is provided, and the information about the pages is supplied. According to the description by Gerhard Birkfellner, it is slightly different: 123a–337b (Birkfellner, 1975, p. 246).

32 Bogdanović, 1982, p. 31, No. 244.

33 Domentijan, 2001, p. 430.

34 In the same paper, the author cites information that supports the alternative dating: Radojičić, 1954, p. 21.

35 Both pieces of information are quoted in Bogdanović, 1991, p. 145.

36 Neither of the two years is given preference in Juhas-Georgievska, 2003, p. 2; Juhas-Georgievska, 2007, p. 346.

37 Mihajlo Dinić pointed out the departures and adaptations in the St. Petersburg copy compared to the Vienna manuscript (Dinić, 1959, p. 11). Lj. Juhas-Georgievska also included the *Short Life of St. Sava* in her textological study (RGB, M. 10272, third quarter of the 14th century), in which Dimitrije Bogdanović saw the source for Domentianus' *Life of Saint Sava* (Bogdanović, 1976b; see also Bogdanović, 1991, pp. 144, 153–154, 258). The results of her research confirm the validity of the observations by Ljubomir Stojanović and Vladimir Čorović — the mentioned short hagiography was compiled from excerpts of Domentianus' *Life of Saint Sava*, with some additions (Juhas-Georgievska, 2001a, pp. CXXXI–CXXXII, CXXXIV; Juhas-Georgievska, 2003, pp. 332–333, 334). This conclusion was most likely not accepted in Špadijer, 2014, p. 23.

The Vienna manuscript was published by Đuro Daničić (Domentijan, 1865, pp. 118–345).³⁸ The translation by Lazar Mirković (Domentijan, 1938, pp. 27–217) was based on this edition, taking into account details of the St. Petersburg manuscript (headings, endings, author's notes and significant differences from Daničić's edition), published by Vatroslav Jagić (Jagić, 1873, pp. 8–16; Domentijan, 1938, p. 319). This translation was revised twice by Radmila Marinković (Milisavac, 1970, pp. 117–309; Domentijan, 1988, pp. 55–233).³⁹ Together with a new edition of the Vienna manuscript prepared by Tomislav Jovanović, Ljiljana Juhas-Georgievska provided a new translation (Domentijan, 2001). The Daničić edition was reprinted (Domentijan, 2009, pp. 95–232).

III. One of the sources used by Hieromonk Domentianus in writing the *Life of Saint Sava* is a chapter of *Pareneses* by St. Ephrem the Syrian, as Dragiša Bojović has noted (Bojović, 2004, pp. 141–142). This scholar recently pointed out the influence of the *Homily on St. Ignatius the God-Bearer* by St. John Chrysostom on the *Life of Saint Sava* (Bojović, 2019, pp. 225, 227–228). Dimitrije Kalezić notes a similarity between a passage in one of Saint Sava's sermons and the 44th *Oration* of St. Gregory the Theologian (Kalezić, 1977). The hagiography “also contains several documents in their authentic or partially aestheticized form (e.g. the charter on the proclamation of the autocephaly of the Serbian Church, some epistles, Sava's sermons, etc.)” (Juhas-Georgievska, 2001a, p. XIV).

It seems that the work of Bishop Athanasius Jevtić has gone unnoticed, in which another source used by Domentian for the *Life of Saint Sava* is uncovered (Jevtić, 2020, pp. 18–39). This source is found in the address of Patriarch Athanasius of Jerusalem to Serbian Archbishop Sava during his second visit to the Holy Land. While observing Saint Sava and his disciples, the Patriarch sang the beginning of the Paschal Sessional Hymn in the sixth tone in the Church of the Resurrection of Christ and then transferred its meaning to Saint Sava, counting him among the apostles and true laborers in the vineyard of Christ, whom the Lord himself led to the harvest (Domentijan, 2001, pp. 354, 356; Jevtić, 2020, pp. 28–30). The rest of the Patriarch's sermon contains “well-known words of St. John Chrysostom from his commentary on the Gospel of Matthew (introductory sermon)” (Jevtić, 2020, p. 30), from “the first Homily on the Gospel according to Matthew” (Jevtić, 2020, p. 34). Later in the Patriarch's sermon, there is part of the Good Friday antiphon during Matins (Jevtić, 2020, p. 37; Domentijan, 2001, pp. 356, 358).

38 Daničić himself talks about the changes he made to the edition (Domentijan, 1865, pp. XII–XVII).

39 A summary of the editorial process is given in Marinković, 1988a, pp. 401–404.

After providing the original Serbian Church Slavonic text of the passage from the Patriarch's sermon, which contains the aforementioned parts of hymns and Chrysostom's interpretation among them⁴⁰, Bishop Athanasius translated it into Serbian. He then presented the Greek text of all the borrowings contained in the passage, followed by their translation from Greek into Serbian (Jevtić, 2020, pp. 35–39). Regarding this part of Chrysostom's interpretation, Bishop Athanasius states that these words are "extremely characteristic of the Orthodox understanding of *enlightenment* and the role of an enlightened person" (Jevtić, 2020, p. 30, see also pp. 31–34). It turned out that Chrysostom's interpretation was borrowed from the Pandects of Nikon of the Black Mountain. Nikon had become a monk and spent some time in asceticism at the Monastery of the Most Holy Theotokos on the Black Mountain in the region of Antioch in Syria (Maksimovich, 2018). His Pandects⁴¹ is a comprehensive collection of works by the Holy Fathers and Church Teachers, hagiographies, conciliar and patristic canons, disciplinary-penitential typika and more. Nikon began his work on this collection during the early reign of the Byzantine emperor Constantine Doukas (1059–1067). He intended this work for monasteries that either had no libraries or had lost them due to barbarian invasions (Maksimovich, 2019, p. 402). The first of the two translations into Church Slavonic was produced around the mid-12th century by a Russian translator, probably on Mount Athos. In this translation, the text was considerably shortened compared to the Greek original (Maksimovich, 2018).⁴² Anatolij Arkad'evich Turilov dates the translation to between the mid-11th and late 12th centuries (Turilov, 2014, p. 150).

There are five known Serbian copies of this translation, which is abridged in them. They are all on parchment and can be found in the

40 Bishop Athanasius quoted the original text from the St. Petersburg copy of the *Hagiography* and Daničić's edition of the Vienna manuscript (Jevtić, 2020, pp. 35–36).

41 The term originates from the Greek ὁ πανδέκτης (οἱ πανδέκται), which literally means 'all-encompassing repository (storage)' (Russian: 'всеохватное вместилище'). Originally, this word was used as a translation of the Latin term *Digesta*, referring to the largest portion of Emperor Justinian I's *Corpus of Civil Law* (*Corpus iuris civilis*). Later, this Greek term from Justinian's Digest was transferred to any other encyclopedic compilation (Maksimovich, 2019, p. 402; Poldnikov, 2006, p. 652). See also Lampe, 1961, p. 1001 (literally 'receiver of all' and other meanings).

42 For information on the Russian manuscripts, see Maksimovich, 1998a, pp. IX–XII; Turilov, 2010; Turilov, 2014, pp. 149–150, 162–163. The translation based on the Russian manuscripts has been partially published: Sreznevskiy, 1875, pp. 217–296; Maksimovich, 1998b; Afanas'eva and Levshina, 2010. A critical review of the edition by Izmail Ivanovich Sreznevskiy: Maksimovich, 1998a, pp. VII–VIII. On the lexicon of the translation: Pichkhadze, 2011, pp. 35–36.

following manuscripts: 1) Hil. 175, late 13th century⁴³; 2) Pljevlja 87⁴⁴; RNB, Gil'f. 78 (14 folios)⁴⁵; PB 318 (4 folios)⁴⁶, late 13th to early 14th centuries⁴⁷; 3) RNB, Q.p.I.27, late 13th to early 14th centuries⁴⁸; 4) Moscow, GIM, Khlud. 114 (2 folios — frontispieces in a liturgical collection on paper), late 13th to early 14th centuries⁴⁹; 5) RNB, F.p.I.121⁵⁰; BRAN, 24.4.20 (31 folios)⁵¹; BRAN, 24.4.23 (5 folios)⁵²; NBS 708 (1 folio)⁵³, mid to third quarter of the 14th century⁵⁴. Great credit for the current knowledge of these Serbian copies of the Pandects is due to A. A. Turilov, from whose work most of the given information comes (Turilov, 2014, p. 495; see also pp. 94, 145, 149–153). The Russian scholar assumes that this record, alongside the Nomocanon, was one of the “many legal books on the cor-

-
- 43 Description in: Turilov and Moshkova, 2016, p. 256, No. 516; Bogdanović, 1978, p. 102, No. 175. Edition in the first volume of Pavlova and Bogdanova, 2000. The second volume contains parts of the Pandects published on the basis of Russian copies that were not preserved in the Hilandar manuscript — the beginning was lost (Bogdanović, 1978, p. 102, No. 175), and it breaks off at the 32nd chapter (Turilov, 2014, p. 494) — as well as the sections that were omitted when the Russian translation was abridged.
- 44 Basic information on the manuscript: Mošin, 1958, p. 242, No. 22; Bogdanović, 1982, p. 79, No. 1063.
- 45 Description in: Levshina, 2021, p. 67, No. 79.
- 46 Bogdanović, 1982, p. 42, No. 406. A. A. Turilov determined that PB 318 is part of the Pljevlja 87 manuscript (Turilov, 2014, p. 94; Levshina, 2021, p. 67, No. 79).
- 47 The dating follows the description of RNB, Gil'f. 78 in Levshina, 2021, p. 67, No. 79. The same can be found in Mošin, 1958, p. 242, No. 22; Bogdanović, p. 79, No. 1062; Turilov, 2014, p. 495. On the number of chapters in the Pandects: Turilov, 2014, p. 151.
- 48 Description in Knyazevskaya et al., 2002, pp. 639–641, No. d47; Levshina, 2021, p. 149, No. 255. See also Turilov, 2014, pp. 145, 148, 151–153, 166–168 (edition of the sententiae from “The Honey-Bee”), 210–216, 228–229 (edition of the *Letter of the Athonite Elder Joachim to Studenica Hegumen Spyridon*). See note 50.
- 49 Description in Knyazevskaya et al., 2002, p. 635, No. d45.
- 50 Description: Levshina, 2021, pp. 95–96, No. 147. See also Turilov, 2014, pp. 145, 148, 151–153, 166–168 (variants in the edition of the sententiae from “The Honey-Bee” according to RNB, Q.p.I.27, see note 48), 207–209 (overview of articles following the Pandects), 210–216, 221, 228–229 (variants in the edition of the *Letter of the Athonite elder Joachim to Studenica Hegumen Spyridon* according to RNB, Q.p.I.27, see note 48).
- 51 Bubnov, Likhacheva, Pokrovskaya, 1976, pp. 174–175. See also Turilov, 2014, pp. 145, 148, 204–207, 218–219, 223–227 (edition of “The Teachings of Moses”).
- 52 Bubnov, Likhacheva, Pokrovskaya, 1976, pp. 173–174. See also Turilov, 2014, pp. 145, 149, 221.
- 53 Jovanović-Stipčević, 1988–1989, p. 75; Turilov, 2014, p. 221.
- 54 The dating is based on the description of RNB, F.p.I.121 (see note 50). This codex and RNB, Q.p.I.27 (at least the Pandects and the first group of additional articles) come from a common protograph — the collection of Hegumen Spyridon of Studenica from the first third (quarter?) of the 13th century (Turilov, 2014, pp. 152, 212, 214, 215, 493).

rection of the faith” that Archbishop Sava “copied” for his synodal church at Philokalous Monastery in Thessaloniki (Domentijan, 2001, p. 212; Turilov, 2014, pp. 491–496). “The Pandects, which (alongside the disciplinary part of the Hilandar and the Studenica typika) was a kind of regulator of monastic life, could be seen as the equivalent of the Nomocanon, which was intended for monasteries without an episcopal see” (Turilov, 2014, p. 493). The Pandects in their Serbian version approached the Nomocanon by omitting the instructive and paterical sections. A. A. Turilov traces the origin of this significantly shortened Serbian version back to Saint Sava and his closest circle (Turilov, 2014, p. 493).

The part of the Pandects that served as a source for Father Domentianus can be found in the second chapter, which is preserved in these copies: Pljevlja 87 (4a–4b), RNB, Q.p.I.27 (5b, 4a), and RNB, F.p.I.121 (4b–5a). It bears the title ΖΗΛΩΤ(Ο)ΟΥΤΕΡΑΝΓ(Ο)· Ε(ΚΕ)ΤΑΓΟ ΚΕΚΕ ΟΤ[Υ] ΜΑΤΘΕΑ· (RNB, Q.p.I.27, 5b).⁵⁵ In the left-hand column we reproduce the text of the *Hagiography* according to the last edition of the Vienna manuscript (V). In the notes we indicate the variants from the available manuscripts: the Saint Petersburg RNB, Gil’f. 54 (hereinafter SP), 182b–183a, and the Prague NMP, IX F 7 (Š 25) (hereinafter P), 383a. In the right-hand column, we present the text from the Serbian copy of the Pandects of Nikon of the Black Mountain, RNB, Q.p.I.27 with variants from Pljevlja 87 (P) and RNB, F.p.I.121 (F). Abbreviations with titlos are separated by round brackets, without titlos – by square brackets. The superscript letters are dropped into the normal line. When resolving abbreviations, we use the standard from the *Dictionary of the Old Serbian Language* by Đura Daničić (Daničić, I–III, 1975) here and further in the text. The original punctuation is retained. Superscripts are omitted. If the variants in the Prague and St. Petersburg versions of the *Hagiography* are the same, we quote it according to the Prague version. In the case of identical variants in the Pljevlja and St. Petersburg copies of the Pandects, we cite them according to the Pljevlja version.

Bishop Athanasius rightly remarks when he says of Chrysostom’s text in the *Hagiography* that it is “somewhat abridged” and “most probably quoted from memory, from recollection” (Jevtić, 2020, p. 35).⁵⁶ Father Domentianus does indeed omit part of his source. We also include this part so that our author’s relationship to the source becomes clearer.

55 See also Granstrem, Tvorogov, Valevichyus, 1998, p. 102, No. 295.

56 In the Greek text of Chrysostom’s homily, alongside Noah, Abraham and Job, there is a mention of Moses (Jevtić, 2020, pp. 38, 39), who is missing in both the Pandects and Domentianus (see further).

Changes in the source text used in the *Hagiography* and the corresponding passage in the source are highlighted by a dotted line. Additions in the *Hagiography* compared to the source are underlined with a solid line.

Life of Saint Sava (V)

Истинны^a б(ог)ъ испрѣва. ноевы и авраамъ и вънском[ъ] его. и ковоу ѡбѣ б(ог)ъ. а не писанїем[ъ]^b г(лаго)лаше. нъ самъ собою понеже^c чнстоу^e обрѣте съмысль нх[ъ]. ѡ^d...же^e...ветсѣмъ^f закѣтѣ^d... н въ новѣмъ нашемъ такожде. Ни ап(о)с(то)лом(ъ) бо с(ве)тымъ^e нашимъ оучителем[ъ] вѣда что написано б(ог)ъ. нъ въ писанїи^f мѣсто. д(оу)хов'ноу ю ^gобѣща... дати... нмъ^g бл[а]г[о]д[ѣ]ть: он' ко^h вамъ въспоменеть вса: Т^hак^hо^hд^hе... самъ... пр(о)рок(ом)ъ. гл(а)гол[ав]ыⁱ7. положъ вамъ закѣтъ новъ. н да^j законы мое въ съмысли нх[ъ]. н на ср[ъ]д[ъ]ца^k напишъ вамъ^l. н б[о]удутъ всн наоучени^m б(ог)оуⁿ:

(Domentijan, 2001, p. 356)

Pandects of Nikon
of the Black Mountain

(5b) нбо ноеви и авраамоу и въноукомъ его. н^a ноевоу ѡбѣ^b б(ог)ъ, а^c не писанїи г(лаго)лаше. н^d самъ собою. чнстоу^e обрѣтѣ^f съмысль нхъ. а^g понеже въ самозлобыи^h въпаде сеⁱ д'но всь евренскын родъ. тогда^j прочеи писанїи и скрижаалн. и нже^k смлн^l въспомннаниа^m. н смлн. не въ ветсѣмъⁿ. тьк'мо. с(ве)тнхъ^o. н^p... въ... новѣмъ... нашемъ... закѣтѣ обѣщати^q. ктѣ^r. ни ап(о)с(то)л(о)мъ бо вѣда что написано б(ог)ъ. ноу^s въ писаннн мѣсто д(оу)х(о)въ(4а)ноу ю дати. обѣща бл[а]гол[ѣ]ть. онъ. бо. вамъ. въспоменеть рет(е)... к'са^t. н да оуѣсн. слышн пр(о)рок(ом)ъ. что. рет(е)... б(ог)ъ. положоу вамъ закѣтъ новъ. даю, законы мое въ смыслы нхъ. н на ср[ъ]д[ъ]ца напишоу вамъ. н ^uбоудут[ъ] в'сн наоучени^u б(ог)оу.

(RNB, Q.p.I.27)

^aP, SP: истин'ни бо ^bSP: написанїемъ ^cSP: ч(н)сть ^dP, SP: законѣ ^eP, SP: с(ве)тїиць ^fP: писан'ни ^gP, SP: дати нмъ обѣща ^hP, SP: бл... рет(е). ⁱSP: г(лаго)лавын ^jSP: дамы ^kSP: ср[ъ]д[ъ]цннх[ъ] нх[ъ] ^lSP lacks ^mP, SP: наоучени ⁿSP: б(о)гоу

^aP, F lack ^bP: ѣви ^cP lacks ^dP: ноу ^eF: чнсть ^fat first there was o at the end, which then changed to a semivocalic letter through the addition of a high vertical bar, leaning left on top ^gP lacks ^ho seems to loom above u; ⁱP: самозлобыи ^jF: соу ^jF: тогда ^kF: иже ^lF: снлн ^mthe final letter in P is not visible due to damage on the microfilm or in the manuscript ⁿabove ѣ and partly above u stands a ^oF: с(ве)тнхъ ^pP: ноу ^qP: звиднть ^rF: что ^sF: нъ ^tP: вьсѣ ^uF: боудутъ наоучени в'сн ^vP: боудоу

In the original by Domentianus, we believe it was чнстоу, not ч(н)сть in чнстоу обрѣте съмысль нх[ъ] (see variant *c* in the left and variant *e* in the

57 In the new edition: гл(а)вы (Domentijan, 2001, p. 356). In Daničić's edition: глаголавын (Domentijan, 1865, p. 304).

right column), although one would expect it to be ϣ(н)сть, as it is in the Russian copies (Pavlova and Bogdanova II, 2000, p. 20). The form ϣнстѡу could be explained by the Bulgarian mediation of the East Slavic translation of the Pandects on its way to Serbian literature. In the history of the Bulgarian language, the back nasal assimilated with the back or central semivowel, as evidenced by the spelling of the big *yus* letter instead of the front and back *yer* and vice versa (Mirchev, 1963, pp. 99, 100). To confirm this assumption, it is necessary to examine the language of the Serbian copies of the Pandects.⁵⁸

It seems that, on the basis of the passages from the Pandects, preference can be given to the variant ЗАВѢТѢ in V in relation to ЗАКОНѢ in P and SP (*d*). However, the passage gives preference to the reading P, SP БО РЕЧ(Е) (*h*) over V. In view of the source text, it is possible that in Domentianus' original it was ДАТН НМЬ ѠБѢЩА (*g*), ПОТ ѠБѢЩА ДАТН НМЬ (*V*). The source shows that the reading SP (*n*) could not have been in the original of the *Hagiography*. Later, ДАМЬ from SP (*j*) appeared; copies V and P probably preserve the original reading of the translation: ДАЕ (cf. ДАМ in Russian copies: Pavlova and Bogdanova II, 2000, p. 20).

The text of Domentianus comes closest to the copy of the Pandects RNB, Q.p.I.27 (see right column *a, c, u, v*).

IV. a) We have noted that in the Sermon on the True Faith by Saint Sava, the *Exposition of the True Faith* by St. Michael Synkellos (760 or 761 – January 4, 846)⁵⁹ was used, in a translation found among the supplementary articles of the Old Slavonic Kormchaia (Drevneslavjanskaya Kormchaya), which is also called Ephrem's Kormchaia (Shchapov, 1978, pp. 47–48, 68–72, 98).⁶⁰ This is a translation of the Collection in Fourteen Titles. Only East Slavic copies of the translation are known. Scholarly opinions on the time and place of its creation are divided: Old Russia in the 11th century or Eastern Bulgaria in the 10th century (Shchapov, 1978,

58 We intend to dedicate a separate study to the linguistic features of the Serbian copies of the Pandects.

59 On Michael Synkellos, an iconodule and a confessor of Orthodoxy, see Afinogenov and Prokopenko, 2017, pp. 19–21; Jevtić, 2018, pp. 399–400. The title of the text is taken from the translation from Greek and Serbian Church Slavonic into Serbian in Jevtić, 2018, pp. 400–403.

60 We presented a paper on this topic at the “Saint Sava and Domentianus” International Scientific Conference, which took place on May 26 and 27, 2023 in Niš and Studenica. The paper is being currently prepared for publication. – In the Russian manuscript tradition up to the 14th century, three translations of Synkellos' *Confession of the Orthodox Faith* were known (Thomson, 1991, pp. 22–27; Hajduk-Veljković, 1997, pp. 23–24; Hajduk-Veljković, 1998, pp. 28–29; Bulanin, 2014, p. 244).

pp. 40–116; Belyakova and Turilov, 2015, pp. 52–53; Belyakova, Moshkova, Oparina, 2017, pp. 40–41; Maksimovich, 2021). Studying the lexicon of Ephrem's Kormchaia, Ana Abramovna Pichkhadze came to the conclusion that the translation originated in Russia through the efforts of South Slavic translators (Pichkhadze, 2011, pp. 18–24).

Synkellos' *Exposition of the True Faith* in the Old Russian Kormchaia bears the title: Образ[ъ] праввыя непорочныя христїаньскыя вѣры (Beneshovich, 1987, p. 27). In the available copies of Domentianus' *Life of Saint Sava*, in the part of the *Žiča Sermon* where this *Confession of the Orthodox Faith* by Synkellos was used, there is one unclear passage. After the original text according to the Vienna manuscript (V), with variant readings from P, 299a, and SP, 119a, we provide the translation by Lazar Mirković (LM), the revision of Mirković's translation (LM-RM), the translation by Bishop Athanasius Jevtić (A), and by Ljiljana Juhas-Georgievska (J-G).

V: покл(а)няем(ь) се н чѣстнмь^a образъ прѣс(вє)тыгь^b б(огородн)це: н всет(ь)ст(ь)нынх(ь)^c б(о)жїих(ь)^d оугод'никъ образы^e. д(оу)шев'нѣи отн възвншающе. къ прѣвообразномоу образу^f. н њнедовещнѣа. повѣпоставляюще^g оумь: (Domentijan, 2001, pp. 232, 234)

^aP, SP: чѣстнмь ^bP: прѣс(вє)тїн ^cP: всет(ь)ст(ь)ннхъ ^dP: б(о)жнхъ ^eP: образын ^fSP: подобно ^gP: недовѣщнѣа. повѣпоставляюще; SP: недовещнѣа повѣпоставляюще

LM: "... we venerate the honorable image (icon) of the Most Holy Theotokos and the images of the most venerable saints of God by fixing the eyes of the soul on the primordial (original) image and placing the mind in the incomprehensible" (Domentijan, 1938, p. 130).

LM-RM: differs from LM only in the omission of the words in brackets (Domentijan, 1988, p. 150; also in Milisavac, 1970, pp. 219–220).

A: "We bow down and pay homage to the icon of the Most Holy Theotokos and the icons of the most venerable saints of God, raising the eyes of (our) soul to the prototype and lifting the spirit to that which is incomprehensible" (Jevtić, 2020, p. 133).⁶¹

J-G: "We bow down before the honorable icon of the Most Holy Theotokos and the icons of the most venerable saints of God, raising the eyes of soul to the prototype and lifting the spirit to that which is incomprehensible" (Domentijan, 2001, p. 233).⁶²

61 In the process of translation, Bishop Athanasius used Daničić's edition and the St. Petersburg copy, which was taken as the basis for his translation (Jevtić, 2020, pp. 123–124).

62 The translator relied on Bishop Athanasius Jevtić's translation in an edition older than the one we use (Juhas-Georgievska, 2001b, p. 472).

The phrase *не до вѣщивѣ. повѣпоставляюще оумь* at the end of the quotation remains unclear (see also different readings under *g*). Regarding *не до вѣщивѣ*, Bishop Athanasius writes: “It is difficult to determine which Greek expression this is based on: ἀσκατάληπτα, ἀνεννόητα, ἀνείκαστα, which makes it difficult to understand and translate this Slavic term precisely” (Jevtić, 2020, p. 133). The bishop then refers to the edition of the Synodikon of Orthodoxy (Moshin, 1960, p. 334).

We will now reproduce the relevant excerpt from Synkellos’ *Exposition* according to the Russian manuscript. We will resolve the abbreviations of the diplomatic edition, adhering to the principle mentioned above. In doing so, we follow the standards of Izmail Ivanovich Sreznevskiy’s *Dictionary of the Old Russian Language* (Sreznevskiy, I, 1893; Sreznevskiy, II, 1902; Sreznevskiy, III, 1903). When resolving abbreviated forms of nouns, pronouns and adjectives, we write ъ after the last superscript letter that we lower into the line. The Greek text is given next to it.⁶³

Old Slavic Kormchaia

ѲѲѲ Ѡ ПОКЛАНАЮ С(А) ИКОНѢ ПР(Ѣ)С(БА)ТЫИ
 Б(ОГО)Р(О)Д(И)ЦА Ѡ ВСѢМ(Ъ) Ч(Ъ)СТЪНЫМ(Ъ)
 ДРѢГ(Ъ) Б(О)ЖИ(Н)⁶⁴ Ѡ В[Ъ]ГОД[Ъ]НИК(Ъ)
 ИКОНАМ(Ъ) ЗА НЕ КЪ ЕДИНОМЪ ЕСТЕСТВОМ(Ъ)
 ПОКЛАНАЕМОМЪ Б(О)ГЪ ЛЮБЕЕ РАД[И]
 Д(О)УШЕВ(Ъ)НѢИ ѠТИ ВЗВЫШАИА К
 ПЕРВОБРАЖЕНОМЪ ЗРАКЪ Ѡ НЕ ДО ВЕЩИ
ВЛАПОВ(Ъ) Ѡ НАЧЕРТАНЫ ПСТАВЛЯИАН УМ(Ъ)

(Beneshevich, 1987, pp. 33–34)

<Σύμβολον τῆς ὀρθῆς καὶ ἀμωμίτου
τῶν χριστιανῶν πίστεως

τιμῶ καὶ προσκυνῶ τὴν εἰκόνα τῆς
 ὑπεραγίας θεοτόκου καὶ πάσας τὰς
 σεπτὰς τῶν θεοφιλῶν καὶ θεαρέστων
 εἰκόνας διὰ τὴν πρὸς τὸν μόνον φύσει
 προσκυνητὸν θεὸν ἀγάπην, τοὺς τῆς
 ψυχῆς οφθαλμοὺς ἀναπτερωῶν πρὸς
 τὰς πρωτοτύπους μορφάς, καὶ οὐ μέχρι
 ὕλης καὶ χρωμάτων καὶ χαραγμάτων
 ἰστῶν τὴν διάνοιαν.>

(Beneshevich, 1987, pp. 33–34)

The quoted Old Russian Slavonic text clarifies the obscure passage. In fact, *не до вѣщивѣ. повѣпоставляюще оумь* (V) needs to be properly broken down into words: *не до вѣщивѣ. повѣпоставляюще оумь*. With the help of the Greek text, we translate this passage as: and not to limit the mind to matter and colors. We do not exclude the possibility that the conjunction *и* was used in the *Hagiography*: *не до вѣщивѣ. повѣпоставляюще оумь*. Bishop Athanasius Jevtić translates almost identically the corresponding passage from another translation of Synkellos’ *Exposition of the True Faith*, which appears at

63 This is a “reverse translation” (“обратный перевод”) from Old Church Slavonic into Greek by Vladimir Nikolaevich Beneshevich, who used the edition of the *Confession* of Synkellos based on the BNF copy, Coislin 34 (Montfaucon, 1715, pp. 90–93) and the reports on the councils in Γ. Ράλλη καὶ Μ. Ποτλῆ, Συνητ. Ι (Beneshevich, 1987, p. 27).

64 Above the <и> there is an и written sideways.

the end of the Sarajevo Nomocanon (SC 222, end of the 13th – first third (quarter?) of the 14th centuries⁶⁵),⁶⁶ also using a 16th-century Greek manuscript (Jevtić, 2018, p. 400). The differences between this passage in the Serbian Church Slavonic manuscript and that in the Žiča Sermon probably prevented the bishop from recognizing our source in it: а негыкъмо къ вѣщи шаровнѣи оуставлаю помышленнѣи (Stjepanović, Gligić, 2013, p. 365b) – “and not (as if) my thinking stops only at matter and colour” (Jevtić, 2018, p. 403).

The word “вапь” does not appear in Daničić's *Dictionary of the Old Serbian Language* and in the dictionaries by Ljubomir Stojanović and Vladimir Ćorović, which are attached to the facsimile of Daničić's dictionary (Daničić, I, 1975, p. 102; Daničić, III, 1975, pp. 566, 605, 609). We have not found it in the *Dictionary of Old Church Slavonic* either (Tseytlin, Večerka, Blagova, 1999, p. 108). However, it appears in Miklosich's *Lexicon* (Miklosich, 1862–1865, p. 56, s.v. вапь) and in dictionaries of the Old Russian language (Avanesov, 1988, p. 371, s.v. вапь; Sreznevskiy, I, 1893, cols. 227, 228, s.v. вапа=вапь, s.v. вапь), where it means ‘color’, ‘paint’ (Latin *color*, Russian *краска*). The first example in Miklosich's dictionary comes from a Serbian manuscript copied from the Russian, and the second from a Russian manuscript (Miklosich, 1862–1865, pp. XVII, XIX, 56). Almost all examples from the *Dictionary of the Old Russian Language from the 11th to 14th Centuries* come from records containing lexical Russianisms — the *Life of Theodore the Studite*, the *Cormchaia* of Ephraim, the *Chronicle* by George Hamartolos, the *Prologues*, the “Honey-Bee” (Pichkhadze 2011, pp. 18–24, 26–28, 36–39, 42–44).⁶⁷ A transcription of 16 sermons by Gregory the Theologian with interpretations by Nicetas of Heraclea, from which one example is taken, is not available to us, so we do not know whether the word occurs in Gregory's sermon or in Nicetas' commentaries, which also contain lexical Russianisms (Pichkhadze, 2011, pp. 33–34). One example can be found in a note in a 14th-century

65 Turilov, 2013, pp. 44–48, 52–57.

66 Among the Serbian copies of the Nomocanon of Saint Sava, the *Confession* of Synkellos appears only in the Sarajevo manuscript (Troicki, 1952, pp. 45, 46, 56). This copy of Synkellos' *Confession* and its photoprints were published in Hajduk-Veljković, 1997, pp. 58–66, 69–73. The photoprints of two pages appear in Troicki, 1952, Figs. 10–11. In addition to the translation in the Sarajevo Nomocanon, another translation and a contamination of these two translations are known in the Serbian manuscript tradition (Thomson, 1991, p. 28) or perhaps a new translation (Hajduk-Veljković, 1998, pp. 34–45). These differ from the translations in Old Russian manuscripts from the 11th to 14th centuries (see note 60).

67 The same can be found in I. I. Sreznevskiy's *Dictionary*, which also contains examples from later times.

Leitourgikon.⁶⁸ Is вапъ a word characteristic of East Slavic records?⁶⁹ Could this be the reason why the passage containing this word in the copies of Domentianus' *Life of Saint Sava* is mostly unclear? It is not mentioned in the study by Ana A. Pichkhadze (Pichkhadze, 2011, p. 384).

The source shows that only Bishop Athanasius Jevtić correctly understood and translated тѣстнѣ in тѣстнѣ образѣ прѣс(вє)тыє б(о)городнѣце.

If the Žiča Sermon in the *Hagiography* faithfully reproduces the sermon of the first Serbian archbishop, then he must have used Synkellos' work in it. The use of this source in the Žiča Sermon could indicate that the Old Slavonic Cormchaia was known to the Serbs, or at least to Saint Sava and his disciples.⁷⁰

b) We will now quote another passage from the *Hagiography* according to the Vienna manuscript, with textual variants from P, 197b, and SP, 39a, together with Serbian translations. This time we present the two edited versions of Lazar Mirković's translation: 1LM-RM, 2LM-RM. In the edition and translation by Juhas-Georgievska (J-G), the passages that differ from Mirković's translation are underlined>.

V: Н^a възвратнста се въ монастырь скон ватопедь. прохаждающа^b мѣста^c с(вє)та^d и домы прѣс(вє)тыє б(о)городнѣце. н(є)б(є)с(ь)на^e чл(овѣ)ка земльна^f аг(ь)г(є)ла. краѣ тыхаго смѣренїѣ дош[ь]дшьє^g. ^hдо того нстоваго принш[ь]дшьє^{ih}. еже ѿ сп(а)сѣнїн' д(оу)ше свое^k пещи се нма. ^lпо р(є)чєнїю г(осподь)ню^l. нн^m ѿ чєсом'же земльнол(ь)ⁿ пєкоуща се. егож[є] страны^o мнра сєго нщоушь^p. нъ тѣтїю нщоуща єднн(о)го ц(а)р(ь)ства н(є)б(є)с(ь)наго и прав[ь]ды єж[є] и обрѣтоста:~

(Domentijan, 2001, p. 80)

^aSP lacks ^bSP: прохаждающа ^cP, SP: села ^dSP: с(вє)таа ^eP: н(є)б(є)с(ь)наа ^fP: и земльна; SP: земльна ^gP: дошд[ь]ша; SP: дошд[ь]шаа ^hSP lacks ⁱP: прїншд[ь]ша ^jP: сп(а)сєнн ^kSP: своеє ^lSP lacks ^mSP: и нн ⁿSP: зем'льнынх' ^oP: странїн ^pP, SP: нщоутъ; in Daničić's edition it is нштоутъ

68 See also the *Dictionary of the Living Russian Language* (Dal', 1880, p. 164, s.v. вапна) and the *Dictionary of Russian Folk Dialects* (Sorokoletov, 1969, p. 39, s.v. Вап, s.v. Вапа). The *JAZU Dictionary* contains the word "vap" — meaning 'boja' ("color") — and refers to its occurrence in "Old Slavic as *varъ* and in Slavic as *vep* (Musulin, Pavešić, 1971–1972, p. 556, s.v. 4. vap). Reference is made to the use of this word in Šulek's *Croatian-German-Italian Dictionary of Scientific Terminology*, where "vap" is marked as originating from Russian (Šulek, 1874, p. 181). Could the claim that this word exists in Old Church Slavonic be related to its presence in Miklosich's *Lexicon*?

69 "The primitive Proto-Slavic adjective is preserved in Russian Church Slavonic *varъ* (12th century) and means 'color', *povapiti* »dealbare«" (Skok, 1973, p. 565, s.v. vápno).

70 A review of opinions on the relationship between the Nomocanon of Saint Sava and the Old Slavonic Cormchaia: Jelesijević [forthcoming].

LM: "... they returned to their monastery of Vatopedi, passing through holy places and the dwellings of the Most Holy Theotokos — heavenly men, earthly angels — having reached the limits of quiet humility and having come to the truth, that they should care for the salvation of their souls (Serbian: "за спасење душе своје"), according to the word of the Lord, not caring for anything (Serbian: "чем") earthly sought by those who are not of this world, but seeking the only the Kingdom of Heaven (Serbian: "но иштући јединога царства небеснога") and its righteousness, which they actually found." (Domentijan, 1938, p. 63)

1 LM-RM: "... they returned to their monastery of Vatopedi, passing through holy places and the dwellings of the Most Holy Theotokos — heavenly men, earthly angels — having reached the limits of quiet humility and having come to the truth that they should care for the salvation of their souls, according to the word of the Lord, not caring for anything earthly sought by those who are not of this world, but they sought the only the Kingdom of Heaven and its righteousness, which they actually found." (Milisavac, 1970, p. 153)

2 LM-RM "... they returned to their monastery of Vatopedi, passing through holy places and the dwellings of the Most Holy Theotokos.

Heavenly men, earthly angels, having reached the limits of quiet humility and having come to that which is true — that they should care for the salvation of their souls, according to the word of the Lord, not caring for anything earthly sought by those who are not of this world, but seeking only the Kingdom of Heaven and its righteousness, which they actually found." (Domentijan, 1988, p. 87)

J-G: "... they returned to their monastery of Vatopedi, passing through holy places and the dwellings of the Most Holy Theotokos — heavenly men, earthly angels, who had reached the limits of quiet humility, having come to the truth, that they should take care of the salvation of their souls (Serbian: "о спасењу своје душе"), according to the word of the Lord, not caring for anything (Serbian: "чему") earthly, which is sought by those who are not of this world, but solely seeking the only the Kingdom of Heaven (Serbian: "већ само тражећи једино царство небеско") and its righteousness, which they actually found." (Juhász-Georgievskaja, 2001, p. 81)

In the LM-RM editions, we have not marked the deletion of the comma after "truth" and "Lord" in 1LM-RM with a lowercase letter, nor the change in sentence structure in 2LM-RM. We have also not pointed out the capitalization of 'Most Holy' in the J-G translation, which is much more different from LM-RM than LM.

We noticed an inconsistency in the J-G translation, which we discovered by comparing it with the original text:

по р(е)тєнію г(осподь)ню. нн ѿ тєсом'же земљнои(ь) пекоуѡша се. егѡж[е] страны
днра сєго ншоуѡшь

“according to the word of the Lord, without worrying about anything earthly, which those who are not of this world seek.”

We understand that ερα[ε] refers to the *earthly*, and the earthly is precisely what those who are not of this world do not seek. It is possible that the translators understood the text differently, and indeed the translation can also be interpreted in this sense: that those who are not of this world do not want to concern themselves with anything earthly. The translators probably understood the word страны to mean *foreign, strange*. In Old Church Slavonic, the term странънъ, странънын carries meanings such as ‘foreigner’, ‘stranger’ or ‘heathen’ (Tseytlin et al., 1999, p. 628, s.v. странънъ). The same meaning can be found in the *Dictionary of Old Serbian* (Daničić, III, 1975, p. 182) and in the *Dictionary of Old Russian from the 11th to 14th Centuries* (Krys’ko, 2016, pp. 593–594; see also Sreznevskiy, columns 540–541).⁷¹ If the translators understood страны in this way, we would expect that at least one of the three copies of the *Hagiography* should contain two н characters. Our opinion is that here страны is the nominative plural form of the word страна, meaning ‘pagans’ or ‘heathens’ (Krys’ko, 2016, pp. 584–585, s.v. страна). It turns out that this part of the text was taken from the Gospel of Luke, 12:29–31, as “the word of the Lord”, as noted by Hieromonk Domentianus. He expressed verse 29 in different words, while mostly preserving the text but omitting the second part of verse 30. We provide the verses from the Gospel as found in the Four Gospels, RNB, Gil’f. 2 in Serbian Church Slavonic, from the second quarter to mid-14th century⁷², 149a–149b:

И БЫН НЕ НИЩЕ ЧТО ИМАТЕ ЧАСТИ И ЧТО ПИТИ, НЕ ВЪЗНОСИТЕ СЕ. ВЪСЕГО БО СЕГО СТРАНЫ МНРА СЕГО НИЩОУТЬ. ОУТ(Ъ)ЦЬ ЖЕ ВАШЪ ВЪСТЬ ЯКО ТРЪБОУЮТЕ СИНЪ. ОУБАЧЕ НИЩЕ Ц(А)Р(Ъ)СТВІА БО(О)ЖНА. И СЕ ВЪСЕ ПРИЛОЖИТЪ СЕ ВАМЪ.

“And do not seek what you will eat or what you will drink, and do not be worried. For all these things the nations of the world seek, and your Father knows that you need these things. But seek the kingdom of God, and all these things shall be added unto you’ (Holy Scripture, New Testament, 2020, p. 162).

Therefore, the translation should read: “... according to the word of the Lord, without worrying about anything earthly that (or what) the Gentiles of this world seek”.

A very similar passage from the Gospel of Matthew, 6:31–33, reads:

71 See also other meanings: Krys’ko, 2016, pp. 593, 594–595; Sreznevskiy, cols. 540, 541.

72 Description in Levshina, 2021, p. 37, No. 15. This is a liturgical tetraevangelion of Serbian origin. It appears in Serbian literature from the 13th century onwards (Aleksyev, 1999, pp. 173–174). The page numbers are given according to the foliation on the lower margin.

Не пѣѣте се оубо г(лаго)люще, что ѣды или что пиемъ, или чимъ одеждимъ се. всѣхъ бо снхъ(ь) языкъ ищутъ. ищите же прѣжде ц(а)рствѣнѣ б(о)жѣнѣ и правды его, и сннъ вса приложетъ се вамъ (RNB. Gil'f. 2, 166)

“Therefore do not worry and say: What shall we eat, what shall we drink, what shall we be clothed with? For after all these things do the Gentiles seek; and your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you. (Holy Scripture, New Testament, 2020, p. 20).

Hieromonk Domentianus has combined parts of these two passages from the Gospels, since the first passage does not have the “righteousness of his own”.

These passages from the New Testament in Domentianus' hagiography were not identified by Stanoje Stanojević and Dušan Glumac (Stanojević and Glumac, 1932, p. 154). Radmila Marinković, however, recognized the use of Matthew 6:33 (Marinković, 1988b, p. 336).

V. Finally, we would like to suggest another interpretation and translation of a word in the *Hagiography*. After the Council of Žiža, the first Serbian archbishop appointed his disciples as protopresbyters and sent them around his homeland to perform marriages for the unmarried. He instructed them on how to accomplish this task. This passage from the Vienna manuscript (V) is presented below together with text variants from P, 307, and SP, 125a, as well as translations into Serbian.

Б: събыратн^a въ цр(ь)ковь все^b. старце же^c и срѣдовѣчнѣе. и младые мѡуже и жены. и д^dвсе дѣтн^d елицн^e бѣхоу рождени^f от[ь] нхъ[ь] без[ь] бл(аго)с(ло)венїа законнаго. скоупивше нхъ[ь] под' окрнль родителю своею. и тако вѣнчавахъ нхъ^g по единнолюу кождоⁱ нхъ[ь]^h. тако да б[оу]доутъ^j всн бл(а)гос(ло)венн въ нме г(осподь)нне: (Domentijan, 2001, p. 244)

^aSP: събирающе ^bSP: все въ цр(ь)к(о)вь ^cP lacks ^dP, SP: в'соу дѣт'цоу ^eSP: елико ^fP: рожденин; SP: рождена ^gP, SP lack ^hSP: кождо нхъ по единнолюу ⁱP: каждо ^jP: боудоу

LM: “... to gather in the church all — old, middle-aged and young men and women, as well as all children born of them without lawful blessing, having placed them under the protection of their parents, and so they wed each of them individually, so that all may be blessed in the name of the Lord” (Domentijan, 1938, p. 135).

LM-RM: same as in LM (Milisavac, 1970, pp. 224–225; Domentijan, 1988, p. 155).

J-G: “... to gather in the church all — old, middle-aged, young men and women and all children born of them without lawful blessing, having placed them under the protection of their parents and to wed all of them in this

way, one by one, so that all may be blessed in the name of the Lord” (Domentijan, 2001, p. 245).

In all three manuscripts, the word *окрнль* appears, which is translated as “protection.” What does this word mean in the original text?

In Daničić’s *Dictionary of the Old Serbian Language*, the word *окрнль* is defined as ‘gremium’ — 1) ‘*krilo*’ (‘the part of the human body from the abdomen to the knees in a sitting position’)⁷³; 2) ‘*krilo*’ in a figurative sense a) care, protection, attention, security; b) depth, womb, center (Divković, p. 459). The dictionary provides only one example from the *Life of Saint Sava* by Theodosius, which agrees in content with the passage quoted from Domentianus’ *Hagiography*: *възыскаюште нже яко поганыка*⁷⁴ *кромлѣ благословенїа н молнтвы жены поелшнхъ, н снхъ вѣнчавати повелѣваесть, аште же въ старости, н дѣти такovyн ндоуште боудутъ, н снхъ подь окрнль матере прнети, н съ нндн вѣнчати се* (Daničić, 1975, p. 22).

In the *Dictionary of the Old Russian Language from the 11th to 14th Centuries*, the word *окрилъ* is defined as coat, cloak, cape or mantle (Russian: *накидка, плащ*). There is only one example from a late 14th-century Russian manuscript containing 16 sermons by St. Gregory the Theologian with commentaries by Nicetas of Heraclea (Ulukhanov, 2000, p. 113, s.v. *окрилъ*). This word can also be found in Sreznevskiy’s dictionary, where other meanings are ‘coat’ and ‘robe’ (Russian: *манїиия, одежда*). One of the examples in Sreznevskiy’s work comes from an 11th-century Russian manuscript containing 13 sermons by St. Gregory the Theologian (Sreznevskiy, 1902, column 648), namely from the *Funeral Oration for Basil the Great* (RNB, Q.p.I.16, 88b; Budilovich’, 1875, p. 68). It seems likely that in the example from the *Dictionary of the Old Russian Language from the 11th to 14th Centuries*, „окрилъ“ is in the same place, in the same sermon.⁷⁵ It is assumed that the translation of the 13 homilies was produced in Bulgaria in the 10th century (Bruni, 2004, p. 29). It is assumed that another liturgical collection of 16 homilies by St. Gregory the Theologian was translated in Bulgaria at the turn of the 10th and 11th centuries, with the first translation of eight homilies common to both collections being revised. This translation of the liturgical collection has survived only in East Slavic manuscripts, where it contains commentaries by Nicetas of Heraclea (Bruni, 2004, pp. 124–127). In this translation, the *Funeral Oration*

73 This meaning is given according to Stevanović et al., 1978, p. 569.

74 In Daničić’s edition of the *Life of Saint Sava* by Theodosius: *поганыкы* (Teodosije Hilarandrac, 1973, p. 151).

75 The GIM copy, Syn. 954, from which the above example is taken (Avanesov, 1988, p. 29; Ulukhanov, 2000, p. 113), could not be consulted. The word “окрилъ” can be found on fol. 158b, within the *Funeral Oration on St. Basil the Great* (No. 43). See Bruni, 2004, p. 139.

for *Basil the Great* also contains the word “окриль” (TSL 8, 14th century⁷⁶, 282b). Both the translation of the 13 homilies and the translation of the 16 homilies may have been known to the Serbs.⁷⁷ In the *Dictionary of the Old Russian Language from the 11th to 14th Centuries*, at the end of the *окриль* entry, there is a cross-reference to *оскриль*, defined as a type of outerwear worn over other clothing (Russian: *вид верхней одежды*) (Ulukhanov, 2000, p. 164, s.v. *оскриль*; see also Sreznevskiy, 1902, column 720, s.v. *оскриль*, i.e. long robe, Russian: *длинная одежда*).

We believe that the translators of Domentianus' *Life of Saint Sava* replaced the word “окриль” with a Serbian word with almost identical pronunciation, without taking into account one of its meanings that comes close to the definition in the dictionaries of the Old Russian language: ‘something that envelops, wraps, covers; a blanket, a covering’ (Pešikan et al., 2006, p. 495).

With this meaning of the word “окриль” the *Hagiography* suggests a picture of the betrothed standing under their cloaks while their children stand and walk under them.

A similar interpretation of this word can be found in Theodosius' translation of the corresponding passage from the *Life of Saint Sava*: “And if they are of age and have such children, they shall take them under their mother's folds and marry in their presence” (Teodosije, 1984, p. 145).

Our aim was to gain a deeper understanding of the personality and work of Saint Sava and his role in shaping the identity of the Serbian people. We used Domentianus' *Hagiography* of the saint and the early hynography dedicated to him as our primary sources. It turned out that uncovering the sources used not only by Hieromonk Domentianus, but possibly also by Saint Sava himself, helped clarify certain passages in the *Hagiography* and to restore the original text. The discovery of new sources increased knowledge about the authors who used them and about Serbian literature of their time.⁷⁸

76 Bruni, 2004, pp. 139–140.

77 According to current knowledge, the Serbian manuscripts contain only the revised translation of the 14th-century liturgical collection of 16 homilies of Gregory the Theologian, with or without the commentaries of Nicetas of Heraclea (Bruni, 2004, pp. 125, 126–130). An overview of the Serbian copies: Bruni, 2004, pp. 132–134, 137, 149–152. The term “okril” also appears in the same place in this corrected translation (Deč. 92, year 1351, fol. 77b; manuscript description in Bogdanović et al., 2011, pp. 373–376).

78 We express our gratitude to Dr. Sergej Macura, Assistant Professor in the English Department, for a careful editing of the translated text. We are also indebted to Dr. Jelena Janković and Dr. Nenad Ivanović, Research Associates of the SASA Serbian Language Institute, for solving some dilemmas and problems that emerged during the process of translation.

List of Abbreviations

BNF	Bibliothèque nationale de France, Département des manuscrits (Paris)
BRAN	Biblioteka Rossiyskoy akademii nauk (Sankt-Peterburg)
Coislin	Le Fonds Coislin (BNF)
Deč.	Zbirka rukopisa manastira Visoki Dečani (Visoki Dečani)
Gil'f.	Sobraniye rukopisey A. F. Gil'ferdinga (f. 182) (RNB)
GIM	Gosudarstvennyy istoricheskiy muzey, Otdel rukopisey i staropechatnykh knig (Moskva)
Hil.	Zbirka rukopisa manastira Hilandara (Hilandar)
Khlud.	Sobraniye A. I. Khludova (f. 86795) (GIM)
M.	Muzeynoye sobraniye (f. 178) (RGB)
NBS	Narodna biblioteka Srbije
NMP	Národní museum (Praha)
PB	Patrijaršijska biblioteka (Beograd)
Pljevlja	Manastir Svete Trojice, Pljevlja
RGB	Rossiyskaya gosudarstvennaya biblioteka, Nauchno-issledovatel'skiy otdel rukopisey (Moskva)
RNB	Rossiyskaya Natsional'naya biblioteka, Otdel rukopisey (Sankt-Peterburg)
SANU	Arhiv Srpske akademije nauka i umetnosti (Beograd)
SC	Stara crkva Arhangela Mihaila (Sarajevo)
Sin.	Sinodal'noye sobraniye (f. 80370) (GIM)
TSIAI	Ts''rkovno-istoricheski i arkhiven institut (Sofiya)
TSL	Sobraniye Troitse-Sergiyevoy lavry (f. 304.I) (RGB)
UB Ćorović Fgm	Univerzitetska biblioteka „Svetozar Marković“ (Beograd), Fragmenti osnovne zbirke starih rukopisa
Und.	Sobraniye V. M. Undol'skogo (f. 310) (RGB)
ÖNB	Österreichische Nationalbibliothek (Wien)

References

- Afanas'eva, T. I. (2023). Ustav o penii Psaltiri i yego vliyaniye na slavyanskuyu traditsiyu etoy bogosluzhebnoy knigi XIII–XIV vv. *Slověne* XII (1), 7–41
- Afanas'eva, T. I, Levshina, Z. L. (2010). Pandekty Nikona Chernogortsa v rkp. RNB, Grech. 70. U: A. M. Moldovan, Y. V. Kagarlitskiy (red.) *Lingvističeskoye istochnikovedeniye i istoriya russkogo yazyka. 2006–2009*, Moskva: «Drevlekhranilishche», 104–157
- Afinogenov, D. Y, Prokopenko, L. V. (2017). Mikhail Sinkell. U: Patriarkh Moskovskiy i vseya Rusi Kirill (red.) *Pravoslavnyaya entsiklopediya* XLVI (19–21). Moskva: Tserkovno-nauchnyy tsentr «Pravoslavnyaya entsiklopediya»
- Alekseyev, A. A. (1999). *Tekstologiya slavyanskoy Biblii*. S.-Peterburg: Izdatel'stvo «Dmitriy Bulanin»
- Avanesov, R. I. (gl. red.) (1988). *Slovar' drevnerusskogo yazyka (XI–XIV vv.)*. Tom I. Moskva: «Russkiy yazyk»
- Avanesov, R. I. (gl. red.) (1989). *Slovar' drevnerusskogo yazyka (XI–XIV vv.)*. Tom II. Moskva: «Russkiy yazyk»
- Avanesov, R. I, Ulukhanov, I. S. (gl. red.) (2002). *Slovar' drevnerusskogo yazyka (XI–XIV vv.)*. Tom V. Moskva
- Belyakova, Y. V. (2020). Zapoved' Ioanna Zlatousta o zakone tserkovnom (k probleme rasprostraneniya kanonicheskikh pamyatnikov). *Stephanos. Retsenziruyemyy mul'tiyazychnyy nauchnyy zhurnal. Proyekt filologicheskogo fakul'teta MGU imeni M. V. Lomonosova* III (41), 27–33
- Belyakova, Y. V, Moshkova, L. V, Oparina, T. A. (2017). *Kormchaya kniga: ot rukopisnoy traditsii k pervomu pechatnomu izdaniyu*. Moskva – Sankt-Peterburg: Tsentr gumanitarnykh initsiativ
- Belyakova, Y. V, Turilov, A. A. (2015). Kormchaya kniga. U: Patriarkh Moskovskiy i vseya Rusi Kirill (red.) *Pravoslavnyaya entsiklopediya* XVI (52–58). Moskva: Tserkovno-nauchnyy tsentr «Pravoslavnyaya entsiklopediya»
- Beneshevich, V. N. (1987). *Drevneslavyanskaya kormchaya XIV titulov bez tolkovaniy*. Podgotovlen k izdaniyu i snabzhen dopolneniyami Y. K. Begunovym, I. S. Chichurovym i Y. N. Shchapovym. Pod obshchim rukovodstvom Y. N. Shchapova. Sofiya: Izdatel'stvo Bolgarskoy akademii nauk
- Birkfellner, G. (1975). *Glagolitische und kyrillische Handschriften in Österreich*, Wien: Österreichische Akademie der Wissenschaften
- Bogdanović, D. (1976a). Srpska prerada Kozmine besede u Zborniku popa Dragolja. *Balkanica* VII, 61–90
- Bogdanović, D. (1976b). Kratko žitije Svetoga Save. *Zbornik Matice srpske za književnost i jezik* XXIV (1), 5–32
- Bogdanović, D. (1978). *Katalog ćirilskih rukopisa manastira Hilandara*. Beograd: Srpska akademija nauka i umetnosti, Narodna biblioteka SR Srbije
- Bogdanović, D. (1980). *Najstarija služba Svetom Savi*. Beograd: Srpska akademija nauka i umetnosti

- Bogdanović, D. (1982). *Inventar ćirilskih rukopisa u Jugoslaviji (XI– XVII veka)*. Beograd: Srpska akademija nauka i umetnosti
- Bogdanović, D. (1986a). Propratni tekstovi. U: Sveti Sava (1986). *Sabrani spisi*, 145–206
- Bogdanović, D. (1986b). Sveti Sava. U: Sveti Sava (1986). *Sabrani spisi*, 9–28
- Bogdanović, D. (1990). *Karejski tipik Svetoga Save*. Obnovljeno izdanje. Beograd: Srpska akademija nauka i umetnosti, Narodna biblioteka Srbije, Matica srpska
- Bogdanović, D. (1991). *Stara srpska književnost*. Beograd: Dosije, Naučna knjiga (Istorija srpske književnosti, 1)
- Bogdanović, D. (prir.). (1995). *Hilandarski tipik. Rukopis CHIL AS 156* (1995). Priredio D. Bogdanović. [Pogovor Lj. Juhas-Georgievska]. Beograd: Narodna biblioteka Srbije, Zavod za međunarodnu naučnu, prosvetnu, kulturnu i tehničku saradnju Srbije
- Bogdanović, D, Štavljanin-Đorđević, Lj, Jovanović-Stipčević, B, Vasiljev, Lj, Cernić, L, Grozdanović-Pajić, M. (2011). *Opis ćirilskih rukopisnih knjiga manastira Visoki Dečani*, knjiga prva. Priredila N. R. Sindik. Beograd: Narodna biblioteka Srbije
- Bojović, D. (2004). Domentijanove pozajmice o ljubavi. *Prilozi za književnost, jezik, istoriju i folklor* LXX (1–4), 139–142
- Bojović, D. (2019). Domentijan i Sveti Jovan Zlatousti: simbolika sunca. U: D. Bojović, K. Matić (ur.) *Vizantijsko-slovenska čtenija*, II. *Zbornik radova sa Međunarodne naučne konferencije, održane 24. novembra 2018. godine na Univerzitetu u Nišu*. Niš: Centar za vizantijsko-slovenske studije Univerziteta u Nišu; Međunarodni centar za pravoslavne studije, Niš; Centar za crkvene studije, Niš, 225–231
- Bruni, A. M. (2004). *Θεολόγος. Drevneslavjanskiye kodeksy Slov Grigoriya Nazianzina i ikh vizantijskiye prototipy*. Moskva – Sankt-Peterburg: Izdatel'stvo «Nestor-Istoriya» SPb II RAN (Rossiya i Khristianskiy Vostok. Biblioteka, vypusk 6)
- Bubnov, N. Y, Likhacheva, O. P, Pokrovskaya, V. F. (1976). *Pergamennyye rukopisi Biblioteki Akademii nauk SSSR. Opisaniye russkikh i slavyanskikh rukopisey XI–XVI vekov*. Leningrad: Izdatel'stvo «Nauka»
- Budilovich'', A. (1875). *XIII slov'' Grigoriya Bogoslova v'' drevneslavjanskom'' perevodn po rukopisi Imperatorskoy Publichnoy Biblioteki XI veka*. Sankt-peterburg'': Tipografiya Imperatorskoy Akademii Nauk''
- Bulanin, D. (otv. red.) (2014). *Katalog pamyatnikov drevnerusskoy pis'mennosti XI–XIV vv. (Rukopisnyyknigi)*. [Sost. D. M. Bulanin, A. A. Romanova, O. V. Tvorogov, F. Tomson, A. A. Turilov]. Sankt-Peterburg: «Dmitriy Bulanin»
- Ćirković, S. (1999a). Babuni. U: S. Ćirković, R. Mihaljčić (prir.) *Leksikon srpskog srednjeg veka (27–28)*. Beograd: Knowledge
- Ćirković, S. (1999b). Bogomili, Bogumili. U: S. Ćirković, R. Mihaljčić (prir.) *Leksikon srpskog srednjeg veka (51–52)*. Beograd: Knowledge

- Ćirković, S. (1999c). Krstjani. U: S. Ćirković, R. Mihaljčić (prir.) *Leksikon srpskog srednjeg veka* (333–334). Beograd: Knowledge
- Ćirković, S. (1999d). Kudugeri. U: S. Ćirković, R. Mihaljčić (prir.) *Leksikon srpskog srednjeg veka* (340). Beograd: Knowledge
- Ćirković, S. (1999e). Patareni. U: S. Ćirković, R. Mihaljčić (prir.) *Leksikon srpskog srednjeg veka* (496–497). Beograd: Knowledge
- Ćorović, V. (1928a). Predgovor. U: Ćorović, V. (prir.) (1928b). *Spisi Sv. Save*, I–LXIII
- Ćorović, V. (prir.) (1928b). *Spisi Sv. Save*. Beograd – Sr. Karlovci: Srpska Kraljevska Akademija
- Dal', V. (1880). *Tolkovyy slovar' zhivago velikoruskago yazyka*. Tom'' pervyy. Vtoroye izdaniye, ispravlennoye i znachitel'no umnozhennoye po rukopisi avtora. S.-Peterburg, Moskva: Izdanie knigoprodavtsa-tipografa M. O. Vol'fa
- Daničić, Đ. (1975). *Rječnik iz književnih starina srpskih*, I–III. Fototipija izdanja iz 1863–1864. godine. U trećem delu prilozi Ljubomira Stojanovića, Vladimira Ćorovića i Đorđa Trifunovića. Priredio Đ. Trifunović. Beograd: „Vuk Karadžić“
- Dianova, T. V. (1998). Osobennosti bumagi rukopisey. U: A. I. Shkurko, V. L. Yegorov (red.) *Istoricheskomu muzeyu – 125 let. Materialy yubileynoy nauchnoy konferentsii* (113–133). Trudy Gosudarstvennogo Istoricheskogo muzeya, Vyp. 100. Moskva
- Dimitrijević, prota St. M. (1926). *Sveti Sava u narodnom verovanju i predanju. Jedna od lako ostvarljivih dužnosti prema prosvetitelju našem*. Beograd: Štamparija „Sv. Sava“
- Dimitrijević, prota St. M. (1934). Sveti Sava kao narodni učitelj. *Bratstvo XXVIII*, 89–111
- Dinić, M. J. (1959). Domentijan i Teodosije. *Prilozi za književnost, jezik, istoriju i folklor XXV* (1–2), 5–12
- Divković, M. (1900). *Latinsko-hrvatski rječnik za škole*. Izdanje drugo. Zagreb: Troškom i nakladom Kr. hrvatsko-slavonsko-dalmatinske zemaljske vlade
- Dojčinović, D. (2018). Sava kao nastavnik: areopagitsko čitanje Domentijana (I). U: G. Jovanović (ur.), *Srednji vek u srpskoj nauci, istoriji, književnosti i umetnosti*, IX. *Naučni skup Despotovac–Manasija, 20–21. avgust 2017*. Beograd: Narodna biblioteka „Resavska škola“, Despotovac; Institut za srpski jezik SANU, Beograd, 87–92
- Domentijan (1865). *Život Svetoga Simeuna i Svetoga Save*. Na svijet izdao Đ. Daničić. Biograd: u Državnoj štampariji
- Domentijan (1938). *Životi Svetoga Save i Svetoga Simeona*. Preveo L. Mirković. Sa predgovorom V. Ćorovića. Beograd: Srpska književna zadruga
- Domentijan (1988). *Život Svetoga Save i Život Svetoga Simeona*. Priredila R. Marinković. Prevod L. Mirković. Beograd: Prosveta, Srpska književna zadruga
- Domentijan (2001). *Žitije Svetoga Save*. Predgovor, prevod dela i komentari Lj. Juhas-Georgievskia. Izdanje na srpskoslovenskom T. Jovanović. Beograd: Srpska književna zadruga

- Domentijan (2009). *Život Svetoga Simeona i Život Svetoga Save*, 1. *Izvorni i gramatički obrađen tekst. Prema izdanju Đure Daničića (Beograd, 1865)*. Beograd: Službeni glasnik (Đ. Kostić). Kvantitativni opis strukture srpskog jezika, knjiga I. Srpski jezik od XII do XVIII veka)
- Gavryushina, L. K. (2007), Domentian. U: Patriarkh Moskovskiy i vseya Rusi Aleksiy II (red.) *Pravoslavna entsiklopediya XV (598–600)*. Moskva: Tserkovno-nauchnyy tsentr «Pravoslavna entsiklopediya»
- Granstrem, Y. E, Tvorogov, O. V, Valevichyus, A. (1998). *Ioann Zlatoust v drevne-russkoy i yuzhnoslavyanskoy pis'mennosti XI–XVI vekov. Katalog gomilii*. S.-Peterburg: «Dmitriy Bulanin»
- Hajduk-Veljković, D. (1997). Izloženiye o pravovernoj veri Mihaila Sindela. *Arheografski prilozhi XIX*, 23–73
- Hajduk-Veljković, D. (1998). Zum *Libellus de fide orthodoxades* Michael Synkellos in der kirchenslavischen Überlieferung. *Zeitschrift für Slavische Philologie LVII/1*, 28–49
- Jagić, V. (1873). Opisi i izvodi iz nekoliko južnoslovenskih rukopisa. *Starine V*, 8–21
- Jagić, V. (1874). Opisi i izvodi iz nekoliko južno-slovenskih rukopisa. *Starine VI*, 60–156
- Janković, Ž. (1989). Prilog datovanju Domentijanovog dela. *Glasnik. Službeni list Srpske Pravoslavne Crkve LXX (1)*, 17–18
- Jelesijević, S. (2015). Karejski tipik u prepisu jeromonaha Arsenija Suhanova. U: B. Miljković, D. Dželebdžić (ur.) *ΠΕΡΙΒΟΛΟΣ. Zbornik u čast Mirjane Živojinović*, II (513–526, [i 4 nenumerisane stranice sa snimcima]. Beograd: Vizantološki institut Srpske akademije nauka i umetnosti
- Jelesijević, S. Spomenici ranih istočnoslovensko-srpskih književnih veza kao izvori za proučavanje srpskog identiteta [u štampi]
- Jevtić, episkop Atanasije (2018). *Patrologija*. Knjiga treća. *Sveti oci i crkveni pisci Istoka od 4. Halkidonskog do 8. Fotijeve Vaseljenskog Sabora (451–881.g.)*. Beograd, Trebinje, Los Anđeles: Episkopije Zahumsko-Hercegovačka, Zapadnoamerička i Pravoslavni Bogoslovski fakultet Univerziteta u Beogradu
- Jevtić, episkop Atanasije (2020). *Sveti Sava i Kosovski zavet. Kosovski zavet i Sveti Sava*. Beograd: Hrišćanska misao, Hilendarski fond, Zadužbina „Nikolaj Velimirović i Justin Popović“
- Jovanović, T. (1998). Sveti Sava. U: Sveti Sava (1998). *Sabrana dela*, VII–XXXII
- Jovanović, T. (pri.) (1994). *Studenički tipik. Carostavnik manastira Studenice*. Knjigu priredio, preveo i pogovor napisao T. Jovanović. Beograd: Narodna biblioteka Srbije, Zavod za udžbenike i nastavna sredstva – Beograd
- Jovanović, T. (1999). „Ukaz za držanje Psaltira“ Svetoga Save u hilendarskim prepisima. *Naučni sastanak slavista u Vukove dane XXVIII/1*, Beograd: Međunarodni slavistički centar, 103–119
- Jovanović, T. Ž. (2022). Novi prepis Domentijanovog žitija Svetog Save. *Prilozhi za književnost, jezik, istoriju i folklor LXXXVIII*, 107–115

- Jovanović-Stipčević, B. (1988–1989). Srednjovekovno pisano nasleđe u zaostavštini Ljubomira Kovačevića. *Arheografski prilozi* X/XI, 71–81
- Juhas-Georgievska, Lj. (2001a). *Književno delo jeromonaha Domentijana*. U: Domentijan (2001). *Žitije Svetoga Save*, VII–CXXXIV
- Juhas-Georgievska, Lj. (2001b). Komentari. U: Domentijan (2001). *Žitije Svetoga Save*, 435–505
- Juhas-Georgievska, Lj. (2003). *Život Svetog Save od Domentijana. Istorija teksta*. Beograd: Srpska akademija nauka i umetnosti
- Juhas-Georgievska, Lj. (2007). Domentijan. U: Č. Popov (ur.) *Srpski biografski rečnik*, 3 (346–347). Novi Sad: Matica srpska
- Kalezić, D. M. (1977). Jedna Domentijanova pozajmica iz Grigorija Bogoslova. U: D. Bogdanović, B. Jovanović-Stipčević, Đ. Trifunović (prir.). *Zbornik Vladimira Mošina*. Beograd: Savez bibliotečkih radnika Srbija, 143–145
- Knyazevskaya, O. A, Kobayak, N. A, Lifshits A. L, Tikhomirov, N. B, Turilov, A. A, Shelamanova, N. B. (red.) (2002). *Svodnyy katalog slavyano-russkikh knig XIV v., khranyashchikhsya v Rossii, stranakh SNG i Baltii. XIV vek*. Vypusk 1. Moskva: «Indrik»
- Krys'ko, V. B. (gl. red.) (2012). *Slovar' drevnerussko goyazyka (XI–XIV vv.)*, Tom IX. Moskva: „Russkiy yazyk“
- Krys'ko, V. B. (gl. red.) (2016). *Slovar' drevnerusskogo yazyka (XI–XIV vv.)*, Tom XI. Moskva: „Azbukovnik“
- Lampe, G. W. H. (1961). *A Patristic Greek Lexicon*. Oxford: Oxford University Press
- Levshina, Z. L. (2021). *Rukopisi serbskogo pravopisaniya Rossiyskoy natsional'noy biblioteki. Katalog*, Sankt-Peterburg: Rossiyskaya natsional'naya biblioteka
- Maksimovich, K. A. (1998a). Predisloviye. U: Maksimovich, K. A. (1998a). *Pandekty Nikona Chernogortsa v drevnerusskom perevode XII veka (yuridicheskiye teksty)*, VII–XIV
- Maksimovich, K. A. (1998b). *Pandekty Nikona Chernogortsa v drevnerusskom perevode XII veka (yuridicheskiye teksty)*. Moskva: «Yazyki russkoy kul'tury»
- Maksimovich, K. A. (2018). Nikon Chernogorets. U: Patriarkh Moskovskiy i vseya Rusi Kirill (red.) *Pravoslavnyaya entsiklopediya* LI (44–48). Moskva: Tserkovno-nauchnyy tsentr «Pravoslavnyaya entsiklopediya»
- Maksimovich, K. A. (2019). Pandekty. U: Patriarkh Moskovskiy i vseya Rusi Kirill (red.) *Pravoslavnyaya entsiklopediya* LIV (402–403). Moskva: Tserkovno-nauchnyy tsentr «Pravoslavnyaya entsiklopediya»
- Maksimovich, K. A. (2021). Sintagma kanonov. U: Patriarkh Moskovskiy i vseya Rusi Kirill (red.) *Pravoslavnyaya entsiklopediya* LXIV (77–78). Tserkovno-nauchnyy tsentr «Pravoslavnyaya entsiklopediya»
- Marinković, R. (1988a). Beleška o ovom izdanju. U: Domentijan (1988). *Život Svetoga Save i Život Svetoga Simeona*, 401–407
- Marinković, R. (1988b). Komentari. U: Domentijan (1988). *Život Svetoga Save i Život Svetoga Simeona*, 327–397

- Miklosich, Fr. (1862–1865). *Lexicon palaeoslovenico-graeco-latinum*. Vindobonae: Guilelmus Braumueller
- Milisavac, Ž. (ur.) (1970). *Stara srpska književnost*, I. Predgovor, izbor i redakcija D. Pavlović. Domentijan: Život svetoga Save, redakcija i komentari R. Marinković. Novi Sad, Beograd: Matica srpska, Srpska književna zadruga (Srpska književnost u sto knjiga, knjiga 1)
- Miljković, B. (2008). *Žitija Svetog Save kao izvori za istoriju srednjovekovne umetnosti*. Beograd: Vizantološki institut Srpske akademije nauka i umetnosti
- Mirchev, K. (1963). *Istoricheska gramatika na b'lgarskiy ezik*. Vtoro izdaniye. Sofiya: Nauka i izkustvo
- Mirković, L. (1934). Skitski ustavi sv. Save. *Brastvo XXVIII*, 52–67
- Mirković, L. (1939a). Uvodne beleške o spisima Sv. Save i Stevana Prvovenčanoga. U: Mirković, L. (prev.) (1939c). *Spisi Svetoga Save i Stevana Prvovenčanoga*, 15–22
- Mirković, L. (1939b). Predgovor. U: Mirković, L. (prev.) (1939c). *Spisi Svetoga Save i Stevana Prvovenčanoga*, 7–11
- Mirković, L. (prev.) (1939c). *Spisi Svetoga Save i Stevana Prvovenčanoga*. Preveo L. Mirković. Beograd: Državna štamparija Kraljevine Jugoslavije
- Montfaucon, B. de (prir. i prev.) (1715). *Bibliotheca Coisliniana, olim Segueriana*. Parisiis
- Moshin, V. (1959). Serbskaya redaktsiya Sinodnika v Nedelyu Pravoslaviya. Analiz tekstov. *Vizantiyskiy vremennik XVI*, 317–394
- Moshin, V. (1960). Serbskaya redaktsiya Sinodnika v Nedelyu Pravoslaviya. Teksty. *Vizantiyskiy vremennik XVII*, 278–353
- Mošin, V. (1958). Ćirilski rukopisi manastira Sv. Trojice kod Pljevalja. *Istoriski zapisi XIV* (1–2), 235–260
- Mošin, V, Ćirković, S, Sindik, D. (2011). *Zbornik srednjovekovnih ćiriličkih povelja i pisama Srbije, Bosne i Dubrovnika*, knjiga I. 1186–1321. Beograd: Istorijski institut Beograd
- Musulini, S, Pavešić, S. (ur.) (1971–1972). *Rječnik hrvatskoga ili srpskoga jezika*. Dio XX. Zagreb: Jugoslavenska akademija znanosti i umjetnosti
- Pavlova, R, Bogdanova S. (2000). *Die Pandekten des Nikon vom Schwarzen Berge (Nikon Černogorec) in der ältesten slavischen Übersetzung*. Edition von R. Pavlova und S. Bogdanova. Mit winem Aufsatz von R. Pavlova, aus dem Bulgarischen von R. Belentschikow. Teil 1–2. Frankfurt am Main, Berlin, Bern, Bruxelles, New York, Oxford, Wien: Lang (Vergleichende Studien zu den slavischen Sprachen und Literaturen, Bd. 6)
- Petrović, M. M. (prir.) (1991). *Zakonopravilo ili Nomokanon Svetog Save*. Ilovički prepis. 1262. godina. Fototipija. Priredio i priloge napisao M. M. Petrović. Gornji Milanovac: Dečje novine
- Petrović, M. M. (2003). Sveti Sava kao sastavljač i prevodilac Zakonopravila – srpskog nomokanona. *Istorijski časopis XLIX*, 27–45

- Petrović, M. M, Štavljanin-Đorđević Lj. (prir.) (2005). *Zakonopravilo Svetoga Save, 1*. Priredili i preveli M. M. Petrović, Lj. Štavljanin-Đorđević. Beograd: Istorijski institut
- Pešikan i dr. (2006). *Rečnik srpskohrvatskog književnog i narodnog jezika*, knjiga XVII, Beograd: Institut za srpski jezik
- Pichkhadze, A. A. (2011). *Perevodcheskaya deyatel'nost' v domongol'skoy Rusi. Lingvisticheskiy aspekt*. Moskva: Rukopisnyye pamyatniki Drevney Rusi
- Poldnikov, D. Y. (2006). «Digesty» Yustiniana. U: Patriarkh Moskovskiy i vseya Rusi Aleksiy (red.) *Pravoslavnaya entsiklopediya XIV (652–657)*. Moskva: Tserkovno-nauchnyy tsentr «Pravoslavnaya entsiklopediya»
- Psaltir sa devet biblijskih pesama* (2012). Prevod crkvenog grčkog i slovenskog Psaltira Episkop Atanasije, umir. Hercegovački, 2. dorađivano izdanje, Trebinje – Vrnjci: Manastir Hilandar; Manastir Gračanica; Manastir Cetinjski; Manastir Tvrdoš; Bratstvo Sv. Simeona Mirotočivog
- Radojičić, Đ. Sp. (1954). O starom književniku Teodosiju. *Istoriski časopis IV (1952–1953)*, 13–42
- Savić, V. (2015). Ustav za držanje Psaltira i Hilendarski tipik. U: B. Miljković, D. Dželebdžić (ur.) *ΠΕΡΙΒΟΛΟΣ. Zbornik u čast Mirjane Živojinović*, I (139–147). Beograd: Vizantološki institut Srpske akademije nauka i umetnosti
- Savić, V. (2018). Prepis Karejskog tipika iz XVI veka (AHS 134/135). U: A. A. Turilov, T. Subotin-Golubović, I. Špadijer, N. Dragin, D. Grbić, K. Mano-Zisi (ur.) *Scala paradisi. Akademiku Dimitriju Bogdanoviću u spomen: 1986–2016 (288–324)*. Beograd: Srpska akademija nauka i umetnosti
- Savić, V. (2020). Ustavi Svetoga Save. *Letopis Matice Srpske DV (4)*, 513–530
- Shchapov, Y. N. (1978). *Vizantijskoye i yuzhnoslavjanskoye pravovoye naslediyе na Rusi v XI–XIII vv.* Moskva: Izdatel'stvo «Nauka»
- Sveti Sava (1998). *Sabrana dela*. Priredio i preveo T. Jovanović. Beograd: Srpska književna zadruga
- Sveti Sava (2018). *Studenički tipik*. Urednici M. Anđelković, arhimandrit Tihon Rakićević. [Prevodilac i autor dodatnog teksta M. Anđelković]. Manastir Studenica
- Sveto Pismo. Novi Zavjet Gospoda našeg Isusa Hrista*. (2020). Prevod Komisije Svetog Arhijerejskog Sinoda Srpske Pravoslavne Crkve. Beograd: Sveti Arhijerejski Sinod Srpske Pravoslavne Crkve
- Simić, P. (1978). Karejska služba Svetom Savi. *Bogoslovlje XXII (XXXVIII) (1–2)*, 17–66
- Sindik, N. R. (prir.) (1992). *Studenički tipik. Carostavnik manastira Studenice*. Knjigu priredila i pogovor napisala N. R. Sindik. Beograd: Narodna biblioteka Srbije, Zavod za udžbenike i nastavna sredstva – Beograd
- Sindik, N. R. (1999). Sinodik. U: S. Ćirković, R. Mihaljčić (prir.) *Leksikon srpskog srednjeg veka (668–670)*. Beograd: Knowledge
- Skok, P. (1973). *Etimologijski rječnik hrvatskoga ili srpskoga jezika*. Knjiga treća. Uredili M. Deanović i Lj. Jonke. Suradivao u predradnjama i priredio za tisak V. Putanec. Zagreb: Jugoslavenska akademija znanosti i umjetnosti

- Solovjev, A. (1953). *Svedočanstva pravoslavnih izvora o bogomilstvu na Balkanu*. Sarajevo: Štamparski zavod „Veselin Masleša“
- Sorokoletov, F. P. (red.) (1969). *Slovar' russkikh narodnykh govorov*, vypusk četvertyy, Leningrad: Izdatel'stvo «Nauka»
- Speranskij, M. (1930). Po povodu novogo izdaniya pisaniy Savvy serbskogo. *Byzantinoslavica* II/2, 259–274
- Sreznevskiy, I. I. (1875). Svědčēniya i zamětki o maloizvěstnykh'' i neizvěstnykh'' pamyatnikakh'', *Sbornik'' Otdědeniya russkago yazyka i slovesnosti Imperatorskoy Akademii nauk''* XII, Sanktpeterburg'': Tipografiya Imperatorskoy Akademii Nauk'', 1–400 (zasebna paginacija)
- Sreznevskiy, I. I. (1893). *Materialy dlya slovarya drevne-russkago yazyka po pis'mennym'' pamyatnikam''*. Tom'' pervyy. Sanktpeterburg'': Tipografiya Imperatorskoy Akademii Nauk''
- Sreznevskiy, I. I. (1902). *Materialy dlya slovarya drevne-russkago yazyka po pis'mennym'' pamyatnikam''*. Tom'' vtoroy. Sanktpeterburg'': Tipografiya Imperatorskoy Akademii Nauk''
- Sreznevskiy, I. I. (1903). *Materialy dlya slovarya drevne-russkago yazyka po pis'mennym'' pamyatnikam''*. Tom'' tretiy. Sanktpeterburg'': Tipografiya Imperatorskoy Akademii Nauk''
- Stanojević, St, Glumac, D. (1932). *Sv. Pismo u našim starim spomenicima*. Beograd: Srpska Kraljevska Akademija
- Stefan Prvovenčani (1999). *Sabrana dela*. Predgovor, prevod dela i komentari Lj. Juhas-Georgievsk. Izdanje na srpskoslovenskom T. Jovanović. Beograd: Srpska književna zadruga
- Stevanović, M, Pešikan, M, Nikolić, B, Gortan-Premk, D. (1978). *Rečnik srpskohrvatskog književnog i narodnog jezika*, knjiga X, Beograd: Institut za srpskohrvatski jezik
- Stjepanović, S, Gligić, jeromonah Serafim (prir.) (2013). *Sarajevski prepis Zakonopravila Svetog Save iz XIVvijeka. Fototipija*. [Dobrun]: „Dabar” Izdavačka kuća Mitropolije dabrobosanske
- Stojanović, Lj. (1890). Stari srpski hrisovulji, akti, biografije, letopisi, tipici, pomenici, zapisi i dr. Pribrao ih Ljub. Stojanović. *Spomenik* III
- Subotin Golubović, T. (2016). Serbian *Synodikon*. The Serbian adaptation of the *Synodikon of the Feast of Orthodoxy*. In: G. Alberigo, A. Melloni (eds.) *Corpus Christianorum. Conciliorum Oecumenicorum Generaliumque Decreta, IV/1: The Great Councils of the Orthodox Churches Decisions and Synodika. From Constantinople 861 to Constantinople 1872* (469–496). Turnhout: Brepols Publishers
- Subotin-Golubović, T. (2022). *Kultovi svetih i pisana reč u srednjovekovnoj Srbiji*. Beograd: Čigoja štampa
- Sveti Sava (1986). *Sabrani spisi*. Današnja jezička verzija L. Mirković, D. Bogdanović. Priredio D. Bogdanović. Beograd: Prosveta, Srpska književna zadruga
- Špadijer, I. (2014). *Svetogorska baština. Manastir Hilandar i stara srpska književnost*. Beograd: Čigoja štampa

- Špadijer, I. (2019). *Počeci srpske himnografije. Savina Služba Svetom Simeonu*. Beograd: Čigoja štampa
- Špadijer, I. (2024). Zapisi u Šestodnevnu iz 1263: o mogućem vremenu Domentijanove smrti, U: D. Bojović, J. Stošić (ur.) *Sveti Sava i Domentijan. Zbornik sa Međunarodne naučne konferencije održane 26. u 27. maja 2023. godine u Nišu i Studenici*(669–686). Niš: Centar za crkvene studije, Univerzitet u Nišu
- Špadijer, I, Trijić V, Rakić Z, Ranković Z. (2015). *Srpske rukopisne knjige u Češkoj*. Beograd: Biblioteka Srpske Patrijaršije, JP Službeni glasnik
- Šulek, B. (1874). *Hrvatsko-njemačko-talijanski rječnik znanstvenoga nazivlja, osobito za srednja učilišta*, I. pola, Zagreb: Tiskom Narodne tiskare D^{ra} Ljudevita Gaja
- Temchin, S. Y. (2021). *Serbskoye rukopisnoye i pechatnoye bogosluzhebnoye naslediyе XII–XIX vekov: istochnikovedeniye i kul'turnyye svyazi. Nauchnaya monografiya*. Belgrad: Institut serbskogo yazyka SANU; Podgoritsa: Matitsa serbskaya – Obshchestvo chlenov v Chernogorii, Vil'nyus: Institut litovskogo yazyka
- Teodosije (1984). *Житијује Свѣтѡи Саве*. Preveo L. Mirković. Prevod redigovao D. Bogdanović. Beograd: Srpska književna zadruga
- Teodosije Hilandarac (1973). *Život Svetoga Save*. Izdanje Đure Daničića priredio i predgovor napisao Đ. Trifunović. Beograd: Đorđe Trifunović
- Thomson, F. J. (1991). Les cinq traductions slavonnes du *Libellus de fide orthodoxa* de Michelle Syncelle et les mythes del'arianisme de saint Méthode, apôtre des Slaves, ou d'Hilarion, métropolit de Russie, et del'existence d'une Église arienne à Kiev, *Revue des études slaves* LXIII/1, 19–54
- Trifunović, Đ. (1963). Domentijan. U: V. Popa, Đ. Trifunović (prir.) *Domentijan* (9–38). Izabrao V. Popa. Priredio Đ. Trifunović. Beograd: Nolit
- Trifunović, Đ. (prir.) (1970a). *Srbljak: Službe. Kanoni. Akatisti*. Beograd: Srpska književna zadruga
- Trifunović, Đ. (1970b). *O Srbljaku. Studije*. Beograd (Poseban otisak iz knjige *O Srbljaku* u izdanju Srpske književne zadruge, Beograd 1970)
- Trifunović, Đ. (2004). *Sa svetogorskih izvora*. Beograd: Službeni list SCG
- Trifunović, Đ, Bjelogrić, V, Brajović, I. (2014). Hilendarska osnivačka povelja Svetoga Simeona i Svetoga Save. U: Špadijer, I. (2014). *Svetogorska baština. Manastir Hilandar i stara srpska književnost*, 193–213
- Troicki, S. (1952). Kako treba izdati Svetosavsku krmčiju (Nomokanon sa tumačenjima). *Spomenik* CII
- Tseytlin, R. M, Vecherka, R, Blagova, E. (red.) (1999). *Staroslavjanskiy slovar' (po rukopisyam X–XI vekov)*. 2-ye izdaniye, stereotipnoye, Moskva: Izdatel'stvo «Russkiy yazyk»
- Turilov, A. A. (2010). Pandekty Nikona Chernogortsa v Sinayskom sbornike-palimpseste XIII v. U: A. M. Moldovan, Y. V. Kagarlitskiy (red.) *Lingvisticheskoye istochnikovedeniye i istoriya russkogo yazyka. 2006–2009*, Moskva: «Drevlekhranilishche», 100–104

- Turilov, A. A. (2013). O datirovke i proiskhozhdenii dvukh serbskikh pergamennykh spiskov Svyatosavvskoy Kormchey. *Slavyanskiy al'manakh* 2012, 43–63
- Turilov, A. A. (2014). *Issledovaniya po slavyanskomu i serbskomu srednevekov'yu*. Beograd: Chigoja shtampa
- Turilov, A. A, Moshkova, L. V. (2016). Katalog rukopisey afonskikh obiteley. Vtoroye, ispravlennoye i dopolnennoye izdaniye. Belgrad: Chigoja shtampa
- Ulukhanov, I. S. (gl. red.) (2000). *Slovar' drevnerusskogo yazyka (XI–XIV vv.)*. Tom VI. Moskva: «Azbukovnik»
- Zhavoronkov, P. I, Turilov, A. A. (2002). Bogomil'stvo. U: Patriarkh Moskovskiy i vseya Rusi Aleksiy II (red.) *Pravoslavnaya entsiklopediya V (471–473)*. Moskva: Tserkovno-nauchnyy tsentr «Pravoslavnaya entsiklopediya»
- Živojinović, D. (2008). Velika pilepska hrisovulja cara Stefana Dušana Karejskoj keliji Svetog Save (Hil. 149), *Stari srpski arhiv VII*, 71–90

Ana S. Vuković¹

Institute of Social Sciences
Belgrade (Serbia)

THE ROLE OF SAVA VLADISLAVIĆ IN THE AFFIRMATION OF SERBIAN IDENTITY

The first part of the paper contextualizes the formation of Serbian identity on the basis of the socio-historical position of Serbs in Dalmatia. The identity of Sava Vladislavić and Serbs under the Venetian Republic is analyzed as paradigm of Serbian national identity. Then, based on the attempts to deconstruct Serbian identity, through the analysis of stereotypes, personal and collective identity is considered. The aim of this paper is to point out the survival of identity in different historical circumstances and cultural environments. The diversity and multifaceted activity of Vladislavić indicates the richness and ability of a soul that, in consistency with its identity, is not a stranger wherever it is in the world, as the spirit of cosmopolitanism is expressed in the fullest way. In the conclusion of the paper author states that the characteristics of Sava Vladislavić's personality are the basis for the paradigm of Serbian identity.

Keywords: Sava Vladislavić, identity, identity deconstruction, stereotype, culture, cosmopolitanism.

Introduction

The social position of the Serbs in Dalmatia is one of the most striking historical examples of how Serbian identity manifested itself and the many ways in which its continuity was hindered². The geographical posi-

1 research associate, annvukovic@yahoo.com; <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-9089-4049>

2 The text is the result of work on the project "Formation of Serbian identity and theoretical controversies concerning attempts of its deconstruction", funded by the Science Fund of the Republic of Serbia within the *Identity* Program, project number 1561. Part of the paper was written as part of the research program of the Institute of Social Sciences for the year 2025, which is supported by the Ministry of Science, Technological Development and Innovation.

tion of the Serbs in Dalmatia, their dependent relationship with the major states, especially in the 17th and 18th centuries, and their existence within the Roman Catholic sphere of influence show that maintaining Serbian identity was a challenge. The most important role of the Serbs in Dalmatia was, with brief interruptions, warfare on behalf of the Republic of Venice. In this region, they “were the bearers of warfare and military history of Venice, as they formed a significant part of the population in Dalmatia and the Bay of Kotor and participated in three wars between the Republic of Venice and the Ottoman Empire: the Cretan War (1645-1669), the Morean War (1684-1699) and the war of 1714-1718. During the Cretan and Morean Wars, the Serbs enjoyed a certain degree of self-government within the Venetian state under the leadership of their commanders (*serdar*) and brigand gangs (*harambaša*)” (Jačov, 1984, p. 7).

For their proven bravery and military achievements, the Serbs received land and a few prominent personalities received estates and titles. However, despite this role, the influence of Orthodoxy (as the most significant marker of Serbian identity at the time) was systematically pushed back, because “until the Cretan War (1645-1669), the land in Venetian Dalmatia was owned by large landowners, including the Roman Catholic Church” (ibid., p. 105). As a reward for their military service, Serbian peasants were given the right to cultivate land, but under restricted conditions, including taxation and other obligations.

The social situation of the Serbs in Dalmatia was never favorable, mainly because of their inability to provide for themselves, the frequent years of poor harvests, and the loss of their warrior status (after the end of three wars). The inertia of the Venetian Republic in the face of the fact that many families in Dalmatia were dying of hunger left them powerless in the face of levies and injustices. They were “the *exploited sudicio*³ of Venice — having lost their status as warriors, they were unable to resist oppression. Fifty years of peace gradually and finally led the once untamed warrior to secure his existence through agriculture, fishing and trade. Rebellions and uprisings, as were common at the beginning of the 18th century, therefore failed to materialize. Instead, emigration to other countries became the response to injustice and intolerable conditions” (Jačov, 1984, p. 105). The people of Dalmatia were exploited by everyone, and “the Venetian authorities in Dalmatia treated their subjects ruthlessly” (ibid., p. 105).⁴

3 *Sudicio*, (ital. unclean, dirty, indecent), *Italian-Croatian or Serbian dictionary*, Školska knjiga, Zagreb, 1980.

4 The hostility towards the Orthodox Serbs was also felt in Dubrovnik during this time, as their burial policy shows: “In fact, the Dubrovnik government did not allow Orthodox Serbs to be buried on Dubrovnik territory until the 19th century out

The level of education and the opportunities for Serbs in Dalmatia to receive a formal education were also extremely limited. During the almost constant wars between the Republic of Venice and the Ottoman Empire in the 17th century, there was no systematic schooling and no “organized Serbian schools”. However, the clergy took on the role of educators and ensured the continuity of literacy, “as each priest and monk passed on to the youth what he had learned himself” (Jačov, 1984, p. 117).

In addition to the unresolved economic issues, “Venice did not solve the question of religious freedom for its Orthodox subjects” (ibid., p. 131). There were no schools under Venetian rule, apart from a few village schools that were introduced during the Austrian occupation and were exclusively Italian. Nobody protested against this, “the Serbian element, which also did not protest against these conditions in the country, was nevertheless concerned about its church” (Bakotić, 1938; 1991, p. 16-18). The Orthodox Church was not officially recognized, and the Serbs did not have “their own bishop in the country, instead they were subject to the authority of a bishop in Venice. Furthermore, Catholic bishops took part in the administration of the Orthodox Church in Dalmatia, under the pretext of legitimate guardianship. (...) Moreover, during the rule of the Venetian Republic in Dalmatia, an active campaign was conducted aimed at converting the Serbian-Dalmatian population to Catholicism” (ibid., p. 17).

The Serbs in Dalmatia were deprived of a favorable socio-economic status, the right to a broader education and the free practice of their Orthodox faith, while at the same time they were constantly faced with pressure on their identity and survival. However, “despite all the hardships endured by the Serbs in Dalmatia (...) they welcomed the fall of the Venetian Republic with strength”, as they took care of education and sent capable young men to continue their studies in “the great cultural centers of Europe (the Age of Enlightenment)” (Jačov, 1984, p. 131).

Characteristics of Sava Vladislavić’s identity as part of the Serbian identity

To explore a few definitions that define what identity is, we looked in two dictionaries in search of an answer. In everyday language, but also in public discourse and beyond, this word — and many others — is often used in a slightly different sense. For example, the *Dictionary of the Serbian Language* (Matica srpska, 2011) says about identity: “A set of char-

of religious exclusivity; instead, the deceased were taken to Herzegovina for burial” (Dučić, 2020, p. 68).

acteristic features that distinguish and differentiate one person or object from others”. Similarly, the *Dictionary of Serbo-Croatian Literary and Vernacular Language* (Volume VII, SANU, 1971) contains an almost identical observation regarding the meaning of this word (under 1. a.): “The sum of characteristics that distinguish and differentiate a person or object in general from others”.

A more detailed analysis of all the characteristics of Sava Vladislavić’s identity would require a more extensive study, so here we will only highlight the most important social roles and characteristics that indicate that Sava Vladislavić is an indispensable historical figure for the affirmation of Serbian identity. In the personality of Sava Vladislavić (1660[?]-1738), a Herzegovinian from the Gacko region, the most rebellious part of this country under Turkish rule, and in the spiritual framework in which he grew up, the best characteristics of Serbs were embodied, characteristics that can still be seen in some places today.

Vladislavić’s stay and activities in Constantinople can be reconstructed, as Dučić writes, on the basis of his connection to Luka Barca, an important Dubrovnik diplomat, who “refers to Sava in Edirne and Constantinople several times in his letters to the Dubrovnik government” (Dučić, 2020, p. 78).

“(…) Luka Barca and Sava Vladislavić were in close and frequent contact in Constantinople and certainly also collaborated, which could have been of great importance during the Morean War, when Dubrovnik and Herzegovina were also at stake. (...) The people of Dubrovnik were benevolent towards Turkey during the Morean War and supported it against the Christian and cultured Venice, of course for their own understandable state reasons, while Sava Vladislavić, as we shall see, on the contrary, worked for the downfall of Turkey, although (ibid., p. 79) he did not wish Venice success in Herzegovina and Dalmatia, which were also threatened by the same Republic of Sant Marco” (ibid., p. 80).

The cosmopolitan spirit of a polyglot with a broad education is also reflected in his work as a translator. After Mauro Orbin, a native of Dubrovnik, had written *The Kingdom of the Slavs* (1601) in Italian, Count Sava Raguzinski published an abridged translation of this work into Russian in St. Petersburg in 1722. The translation “was available to Slavic historians at the time when they were shaping the current picture of European history and the place of Slavic peoples in it, but it did not help much to avoid the predominant insignificant role of Slavs in the picture of the ancient and medieval world” (Antić, 2016, p. 7). Sava Vladislavić’s interest in translating the famous work by Mauro Orbin, *The Kingdom of the Slavs*, from Latin into Russian, as well as his later role in uniting the Serbs

in Dalmatia and Montenegro with Russia, show that Vladislavić wanted to emphasize that only the unification of the Orthodox lands could improve their position and make the Serbian identity independent from the pressure of powerful states. The basic idea of Sava Vladislavić was therefore the unification of all Slavs in the war against Turkey with the help of Peter the Great and thus the liberation of Serbian identity.

Sava Vladislavić was a versatile personality who was well versed in various fields: geography, military (military strategy), intelligence, diplomacy and negotiation, communication and even financial matters. Particularly noteworthy is his diplomatic activity, which is summarised in the book (report) *Secret Information on the Strength and Condition of the Chinese State* (Vladislavić, 2022), which emerged from his diplomatic mission to China and the success of this mission, for which he was responsible as a high-ranking diplomat and advisor to the Russian Emperor, as he managed to secure the Treaty of Kyakhta, which was the guarantor of peace between the two great powers for almost two centuries (Dučić, 2020). In *Secret Information on the Strength and Condition of the Chinese State* Vladislavić proves his excellent writing qualities, his analytical skills and his ability to gather all the necessary facts about the Chinese Empire. Moreover, through this diplomatic activity we get the first maps of the Chinese and Russian empires, detailed descriptions of the representatives of Chinese dynasties, diplomatic customs in this part of the world, power struggles and conflict resolution, the division of provinces and even vivid observations about the city of Beijing, descriptions of houses and how they were built, where servants lived and where lords and their wives resided. This report by Sava Vladislavić can be categorised as a comprehensive sociological analysis of the social and state conditions of a country.

A true cosmopolitan with a deep affiliation to his Serbian roots, he had unusually good language skills, a keen sense of following important social events in any European or Turkish environment and acquired friendships with prominent people from the courts. Due to his position and status in Russia, he was undoubtedly the right-hand man of Emperor Peter the Great on various occasions, and in 1725 Empress Catherine I awarded him the title of Count (Дучић, 2009; Dučić, 2020). He was a “loyal friend and collaborator of the Emperor” and at the same time a “patriot of Russia and its enslaved Herzegovina” (Dučić, 2009, p. 2). Vladislavić lived in the imperial palace, which is now one of the buildings of the Hermitage, the Russian empresses were godmothers to his children at their baptisms, and he was buried in the imperial crypt (Теравчевић, 2017, p. 22; Dučić, 2020).

As an advisor, Vladislavić was a negotiator in Peter the Great's (Russia) war with Turkey. He also had the role of a negotiator as an advisor to

the Russian Emperor when he travelled to Dubrovnik in 1716 and was absent for six years to see his family and deliver a letter from Peter I the Great to the Dubrovnik Senate. During these six years, one of Sava Vladislavić's most important missions was "negotiating with Pope Clement XI to settle the relations of the Catholic Church in Russia, as they had reached an untenable situation" (Dučić, 2020, p. 239). At that time, his campaign to build an Orthodox church in Dubrovnik failed, and after unsuccessful attempts to build a church, the Dubrovnik Senate did not allow it, so Vladislavić "took his family to the Bay of Kotor, i.e. he left Dubrovnik and never returned to the city of St. Blaise" (Dučić, p. 248).⁵

The letter from Emperor Peter I, which Vladislavić delivered to the Dubrovnik Senate, was of great political importance, regardless of the issue of the Orthodox Church in the city of St. Blasius: "It is considered the first contact of Imperial Russia with the Republic of Dubrovnik (...) this beginning of relations, which did not break off almost until the disappearance of the Dubrovnik state, was established solely by the merit of the Serb Sava Vladislavić" (Dučić, 2020, p. 249).

Before moving on to the next chapter on stereotypes about Serbian identity, let us give an overview of the interpretation of the term *Illyrian*, since Sava Vladislavić also used *Illyrian* as part of his name. Also in the *epistle* of St. Paul to the Romans, it is mentioned: "by the power of signs and wonders, by the power of the Spirit of God, so that from Jerusalem and all around as far as Illyricum I have fully preached the gospel of Christ" (Bible, 2019).

Then, in the first chapter "The Origin of the Serbian people in Croatia and Slavonia" (Grujić, 1989, p. 13–87), important data on the conditions under which the Serbs lived in this area are presented. At this point, we will only refer to historical data on the term *Illyrian*.

Based on secret information from Cardinal Leopold Count Kolonić (Primate of Hungary) about a petition from the Serbian Patriarch Arsenije III. Čarnojević, which was submitted to the imperial court in 1706 "for the confirmation and protection of national privileges", the cardinal writes in a negative tone about the Orthodox and states, among other things: "(...) It is therefore necessary to make an effort, but without much noise and offense, to gradually unite this *Illyrian or Rascians (Serbian) people* with the Roman Church, from which it is not very different anyway."⁶ Elsewhere,

5 On the other hand, an important fact is that Vladislavić demonstrated religious tolerance towards the Catholics in Russia, because "in Russia he was a true father to the Catholic emigrants there and their community", for which he was honored by the Pope (Dučić, 2020, p. 253).

6 Grujić refers: "Orig. in Latin, in the Court War Archives in Vienna, under no. 151 ex 1707"

as one of the many proofs that the people of Bosnia were considered as Serbs, it is mentioned that “we have two excellent records for the Serbian name in Bosnia from the history of the Dalmatian Serbs” and that around 1744 Bishop Matija Karaman wrote against the Orthodox Serbs in Dalmatia: “(...) at the time of the The Great Turkish War (in Serbian: *Bečki rat*) there was no *Serbian bishop* in the area of Zadar, but the entire upper area was inhabited by Serbs (*di Serviani*) who had come from *Bosnia* at that time.” In 1759, the Orthodox Serbs from Dalmatia asked the Venetian Provveditore General for Dalmatia and Albania to grant them a bishop “of our *Slavic-Serbian language* (people)”, and they explained how they were: “*Slavic-Serbs* from many provinces, especially from *Bosnia and Herzegovina* and from all of *Illyricum*” (Grujić, 1989, pp. 23–24).

The author provides data on the widespread use of the Serbian language at that time and the fact that the Serbian language was not only the official and vernacular language of Serbia and Bosnia, but also the diplomatic language of the Turkish, Hungarian and Romanian courts in the 15th and 16th centuries.⁷ It is emphasized that “when negotiating something with the people of Dubrovnik or among themselves, they always had two scribes (*gíaka*) in their community — one for Serbian and one for Latin” (*ibid.*, p. 37). The same work also mentions variations of the name: “until the so-called ‘age of nationalities’, from which time we were always referred to as Serbs in official documents — as we had been called since the 17th century, but very rarely and usually always in connection with the name Rascians or Vlach, and later with *Illyrian*” (*ibid.*, p. 37).⁸

7 Grujić refers to V. Jagić, *Historija književnosti*, p. 146.

8 With regard to the pressure on language and identity, the case of Dubrovnik is also interesting, which Mitrović cites in his book *Srpstvo Dubrovnika* (The Serbian Identity of Dubrovnik): “When it was decided to suppress the Serbian identity in Dubrovnik and its surroundings, measures were taken in several directions. The main goal was to colonise Dubrovnik with Croatian settlers. Of course, this also affected Konavle, the cradle of Serbian tradition and the Serbian language in this part of the Serbian land. The parish priest of Grude, the central village of Konavle, Jozo Crnica, had the task of turning the inhabitants of Konavle into Croats and proving to them that they had no connection to the Herzegovinians and Montenegrins, although many of the inhabitants of Konavle knew exactly from which places their ancestors had come to the Konavle field. This Croatianization even affected the Institute of St. Jerome in Rome, which suddenly lost its *Illyrian* name and was replaced by a *Croatian* one. A protest against this change came from Dubrovnik and the surrounding area, signed by almost 400 Serbian Catholics (Mitrović, quoted from *Dubrovnik* 1901, no. 38). This number of Serbian Catholics in Dubrovnik is the best proof of their national strength even at the beginning of this century. What’s more, the Pope returned the institute to its old name, even though some Croats threatened to convert to Orthodoxy.” (Mitrović, 1992, pp. 245-246).

Until the end of his life, Vladislavić did not forget the spiritual framework from which he came and his roots. He donated and supported Orthodox monasteries (Dučić, 2020), and at the end of his life, the Count and high-ranking diplomat of Imperial Russia Sava Raguzinski (as he was called after Ragusa [Dubrovnik], from where he came to Russia via Turkey) and Sava Illyricus officially requested that his rightful surname — Vladislavić — be recognized and returned to him. “(...) Sava himself was designated on all official documents (marriage certificate), the decree on the Russian title of count and finally on his tombstone in Petrograd as Sava Lukić Vladislavić, i.e. as the son of Luka (...)” (Dučić, 2020, pp. 46–47).⁹

Stereotypes about Serbs and Serbian identity: attempts of (de)construction

As mentioned in the previous chapter, although the Serbs in Dalmatia formed the backbone of the Venetian army in three wars, the Venetian Republic did not allow “enthusiasm” among the Serbs towards the potential highlighting and separation of the Serbian identity in the religious and cultural sense. After the wars and the loss of a significant part of the population, the process of deconstruction of identity began; the Serbs in Dalmatia were to be reduced to peasants and shepherds who were forced to lay down their arms and pay taxes (Jačov, 1984).

The experience of being a person worthy of respect is the way in which resistance to annihilation and individual and collective reactions to negative stereotypes that are not based on real facts is formed. Only through dialogue¹⁰ is it possible to rethink both one’s own stereotypes and stereotypes about the “other”. Without this identity component, there is no way to understand positive and negative stereotypes, because stereotyping is in fact a reduction of several characteristics of a people to a single simplified figure that is supposed to represent its essence. However, when there is a

9 The fact that Empress Anna Ivanovna had him embalmed by her personal physician after his death and that he was subsequently buried with full honors in the Church of the Annunciation of the Alexander Nevsky Monastery, where members of the Romanov dynasty and several Russian dignitaries also rest, testifies to the esteem and prestige that Sava Vladislavić enjoyed in Russia. Empress Anna Ivanovna and Princess Elizabeth Petrovna, the younger daughter of Peter the Great and future empress, attended the solemn funeral and paid their last respects to Sava Vladislavić (Tepavčević, 2017, p. 146).

10 For more on this, see: A. Vuković, “Dijalog kao manifestacija moći”, in *Svet i Srbija – izazovi i iskušenja*, S. Grk (ed.), Institute of Social Sciences, 2017.

negative essentialization of the “Serbian mind” and thus of Serbian history, the Serbian people and Serbian society, together with the repetition of the main negative stereotypes about Serbs, which become entrenched as negative autostereotypes, the only consequence can be the demand for a change of identity, as an escape from the fatalistic determinism of the “wrong” origin and culture (Vuković, 2024). Yet “surely only those who have a personality and feelings of their own know what it means to escape them” (Eliot according to Gavrilović, 1963, p. 41). But it should be noted that “certain nations are not natural (spontaneously formed) entities, but have been created (produced, constructed) by certain people — politicians, soldiers, merchants or clergymen (intellectuals).” Those who created them can also dismantle (deconstruct) them again (Antonić, 2024, p. 80).

We will highlight some negative and positive stereotypes about Serbian identity in the context of the given historical period. An example of the formation of very negative stereotypes about Serbs (Serbian identity) in Dalmatia and a strong role in their deconstruction was expressed in the actions of Vićentije Zmajević, the Archbishop of the Roman Catholic Church in the Republic of Venice. He attended the *College of the Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith* in Rome, where he completed his studies in philosophy and theology, and was later ordained a priest. Pope Clement XI appointed him Archbishop of Bar and apostolic visitor of the Catholic Church in Serbia, Albania, Macedonia and Bulgaria in 1701 (Bartl according to Jačov, 1984, p. 42).

Signs of the deconstruction of Serbian identity are highlighted in his work *The Mirror of Truth*. In it he declares that the Serbs are “apostates”, “Dalmatia is contaminated by the arrival of the Serbian people” and “the Serbian faith is worse than all heresies”, the eighth chapter of Zmajević’s writing refers to the “errors of the Serbian schism” (Jačov, 1984, pp. 42-56). When analyzing the history of the Serbian people, Zmajević writes about the characteristics of Serbian identity: “The Serbs are ancient Serbs or Servi. After fleeing from Asian Sarmatia, Emperor Heraclius took them in as servants of the state in the Mediterranean part of Illyricum, which was later called Serbia. A cruel and bloodthirsty people, dark and savage by birth, passed from darkness into the light of the Gospel during the reign of Emperor Basil the Macedonian, replacing their darkness enslaved by birth with the noblest light that came from baptismal regeneration and faith in Christ. In their fortunate early days they were Catholics and Romans. But when, with the changes in the Eastern Empire, they became masters instead of servants, they became negligent in religion; they became as unfaithful to the ruler as they were traitors to the faith. Continuing in their weakness, sometimes united with the Greeks, sometimes with

the Latins, always flamboyant and always unstable, they finally succeeded in establishing a patriarchy in their empire and in further infecting the state with clumsy and weak persons in teaching authority. Ignorance has always prevailed in the Serbian clergy, a fertile source of black smoke that would obscure the beautiful splendor of the Church of God. Serbia has never had schools, sciences or books, except those for ecclesiastical use” (Jačov, 1984, p. 45). Given the fact that Vicentije Zmajević was Archbishop of Bar and apostolic visitor of the Catholic Church in Serbia, Albania, Macedonia and Bulgaria, his influence and contacts with dignitaries of the Republic of Venice, the Republic of Dubrovnik and the Roman Catholic clergy made his writings a powerful tool in the deconstruction and intention to completely eradicate the Serbian identity in Dalmatia.

The process of deconstruction and disappearance of identity implies an understanding of the relationship between the present and the future; “the difference between the present and the past, however, lies in the fact that the conscious present represents the consciousness of the past to an extent and in a way in which the past can never show that it is conscious of itself” (Eliot according to Gavrilović, 1963, p. 36).

There is not much data in the archives about the everyday life of the Serbian population in Dalmatia. Jačov has highlighted and written several important entries on the positive stereotype of Serbian identity and folk customs in Dalmatia: Hospitality and dignity; the home and life in it; songs and gusle; blood revenge; superstitions at the burial of the dead; proposal of a girl and weddings; traditional clothing (men and women).

Considering the topic and the limited space in the paper, we will only mention what was recorded about hospitality and dignity as a positive stereotype of Serbian identity¹¹, “Serbs ‘consider it their duty to lose for friendship even their life’ because ‘they highly value their honor’”. Their most important characteristics are ‘sincerity and seriousness’. They ‘never humiliate themselves to the point of begging anyone who passes through their country’. It is enough to ‘treat them humanely to receive all possible attention and warm friendship from them’. Fortis often got lunch from someone he had never seen before and whom he could not imagine ever seeing again.” Like the people, the monks of the Krka monastery proved to be ‘very hospitable’. ‘Orthodox Serbs came to this monastery with great respect, although their poverty did not allow them to bring rich gifts’” (Jačov, 1984, pp. 122-129).

11 Jačov uses the following sources for this information: *Giustiniana Winne contessa degli Orsini e Rosenberg, I Morlachi, Padova, 1798* and *Fortis Alberto: Viaggio in Dalmazia I-II, Venezia, 1774*.

The positive stereotypes about Serbs also include the description by Benedikt Kuripesić, a traveler in Bosnia, from his travelogue *Across Bosnia to Constantinople*, which was written in German. He speaks of the characteristics of the Serbs: “*The same Serbs whom we met as Christians showed us much love*”, and although they “groan” in “the heavy Babylonian captivity and centuries of servitude”, “they are so strong in spirit that they even encourage and uplift the imperial envoys: “We ask you to be steadfast in the Christian faith, to act as we do, who hold fast to our law in every adversity” (Grujić, 1989, p. 32). Of course, Sava Vladislavić, who was highly respected and distinguished by the outstanding qualities of the Serbian people, refuted these negative stereotypes through his merits and deeds.

Conclusion

If we consider identity as a fundamental signpost through existence and the affirmation of one’s own integrity and meaning, then Sava Vladislavić stands as one of the most remarkable examples of this in the context of European cultural heritage. Both individually and collectively, the preservation of identity is synonymous with the defense of life itself — a life that may be temporarily lost but eternally gained, echoing the earliest Christian ideals. Indeed, the preservation of identity represents the most profound defense of life, rooted in faith, honor, integrity, the preservation of traditions, and the rejection of compromises born of momentary weakness. Equally significant is the fact that identity is deeply interwoven with truth, which enriches its meaning and purpose and elevates it to the highest ranks of human dignity. In society — understood as a balanced and organized whole — and before the individual, identity occupies a place of utmost value. The question of identity is neither a fleeting whim nor the product of aimless mental wanderings. It is not a frivolous game, an instrument of manipulation or a populist means of mobilizing people for ephemeral goals. Above all, identity is a constant and essential guide — both for the routines of daily life and for the upheavals of extraordinary social movements. The diverse and multifaceted work of Sava Vladislavić reveals the depth and capacity of a soul that never feels as a stranger anywhere in the world. In harmony with its identity, this soul embodied cosmopolitanism in its truest sense. Taking into account all the characteristics we have highlighted—the intertwining of personal and collective identity—Sava Vladislavić emerges as a pivotal figure in the history of the Serbian people and one of the most distinguished personalities to have contributed to the affirmation of Serbian identity.

References

- Antić, D. P. (2016). „*Realna dimenzija Kraljevstva Slovena Mavra Orbinija*”, predgovor u: M. Orbini *Kraljevstvo Slovena*, Beograd: Ganeša klub.
- Antonić, S. (2024). *Demontaža kulture: prilozi za sociologiju srpskog društva*, treće izd. Beograd: Catena Mundi.
- Bakotić, L. (1939). *Srbi u Dalmaciji od pada Mletačke republike do ujedinjenja*. <https://www.uzzpro.gov.rs/doc/biblioteka/digitalna-biblioteka/1939-Srbi-u-Dalmaciji-od-pada-Mletacke-republike.pdf>
- Bakotić, L. (1991). *Srbi u Dalmaciji od pada Mletačke republike do ujedinjenja*. Beograd: Apolon Ko., (drugo izdanje).
- Dučić, J. (2020). *Grof Sava Vladislavić*, Beograd: BeoSing.
- Дучич, Йован (2009). Граф Савва Владиславич-Рагузинский. Серб-дипломат при дворе Петра Великого и Екатерины I, Серия «Славянская карта» Текст предоставлен правообладателем, http://www.litres.ru/pages/biblio_book/?art=24720859 Граф Савва Владиславич-Рагузинский. Серб-дипломат при дворе Петра Великого и Екатерины I / [пер. с серб. В. Н. Соколова]. Скифия; Санкт-Петербург.
- Gavrilović, Z. (ur.) (1963). *T.S. Eliot: izabrani tekstovi*, Beograd: Prosveta.
- Grujić, P. M. (1989). *Apologija srpskoga naroda u Hrvatskoj i Slavoniji i njegovih glavnih obeležja*, Beograd: Prosveta.
- Mitrović, J. D. (1992). *Srpstvo Dubrovnika*. Beograd: Srpska književna zadruga i Zavod za udžbenike i nastavna sredstva.
- Biblija (2019). *Poslanica sv. apostola Pavla Rimljanima*, 15; 19, prevod Komisije svetog arhijerejskog sinoda, SPC: Biblijsko društvo Srbije.
- Rečnik srpskoga jezika* (2011). „Identitet”, Novi sad: Matica srpska.
- Rečnik srpskohrvatskog književnog i narodnog jezika* (1971). Odrednica „Identitet”, Beograd: SANU, knjiga VII.
- Tepavčević, M. (2017). *Srpsko-ruska susretanja*. Novi Sad, Beograd: Udruženje Srba Hercegovaca i prijatelja u Srbiji i Svet knjige.
- Vladislavić, S. (2022). *Tajna informacija o snazi i stanju kineske države*, Beograd: Radio-televizija Srbije.
- Vuković, A. (2024). “Identitet i stereotipi”, *Sociološki pregled / Sociological Review*, vol. 58, no. 4, pp. 1073-1085. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5937/socpreg58-52137>
- Vuković, A. (2017). „Dijalog kao manifestacija moći”. U: *Svet i Srbija – izazovi i iskušenja*, S. Grk (ed.) Beograd: Institut društvenih nauka, pp. 215-228.
- Jačov, M. (1984). *Venecija i Srbi u Dalmaciji u XVIII veku*. Beograd: Istorijski institut i Prosveta.

Marinko V. Lolić¹

Institute of Social Sciences

Belgrade (Serbia)

ACTUALIZATIONS AND RELEVANCE OF DOSITEJ'S THOUGHT ON SERBIAN IDENTITY

Against the background of recent research on the historical events that shaped the 1980s and 1990s and the current debates on the new and future position of Serbia in Europe, the author explores the various ways in which Dositej's Enlightenment ideas remain relevant today. In the discussions on the formation of a modern Serbian identity in the context of the centenary of his death and the erection of a monument to the great Serbian Enlightenment philosopher. The disputes and challenges to various aspects of Dositej's work, which either diminish or emphasize its fundamental importance, show that even under significantly changed historical and social conditions, Dositej remains a central point of literary, philosophical, theological and general ideological debate/war on the problem of Serbian identity. Using the example of the debates surrounding the Dositej monument, the reasons why Dositej is a writer about whom Serbian culture has repeatedly reflected and thought critically are shown. His concept of a nation based not on religion but on language (culture), the rejection of outdated forms of tradition, the ideas of the Enlightenment, the belief in reason and a culture that brings people closer together, the creation of a reading public sphere, the foundations of the sphere of the modern public sphere, are topics of extraordinary importance, over which the contemporary Serbian intellectual elite is deeply divided and often fiercely conflicted. Dositej is seen by some as an innovator and patriot, by others as a traitor to Serbian tradition. In the controversy surrounding Dositej, which has been going on with varying intensity for almost two centuries and repeats itself according to a predetermined pattern, his name is still associated with the name of Vuks. In recent discussions, however, the relationship between the two prominent representatives of Serbian modernism is usually not seen as a relationship of chronological and ideological continuity, in which Vuk would have realized Dositej's goals,

¹ research assistant, marinkololic@gmail.com.

but as the bearer of two parallel, diametrically opposed ideological and cultural models. However, this is not just a long-ago dispute in our cultural history: the author explores the various ways in which Dositej's Enlightenment ideas remain relevant today, forced to choose, sometimes between its own cultural heritage and Europe, and today between the European Union and its tradition. This particular entanglement, which ambivalently connects Dositej and Vuk, occasionally sharpens all controversial issues of Serbian modernization and modernity, because the names Dositej and Vuk still symbolically stand for two incomparable forms of Serbian modernization, and around them still revolves the problem that plagues Serbian society, the Serbian state and Serbian culture: How to join the European family of nations without losing national identity is a question of our time, not just Dositej's.²

Keywords: enlightenment, enlightener, “heroes of pen and sword”, monument, identity

The most recent bibliography on the literary and philosophical work of Dositej Obradović, published in 2017 by Vladimir B. Živanović (Živanović, 2017), which covers the period from the first known printed record of Dositej from 1785 to 2010, contains 3833 bibliographic units. In the last ten years, after the completion of this bibliography, at least a thousand texts of various literary and scientific genres have been published about the greatest Serbian enlightener.

A significant number of these works were created on the occasion of Dositej's anniversaries – marked from the beginning of the last century; the centenary and sesquicentennial of Dositej's death (1811–1911, 1811–1961), the bicentenary of Dositej's birth (1739, 1740–1940), to the first decade of the 21st century, which celebrated the bicentenary of Dositej's arrival in Serbia (1807–2007).

However, Dositej's anniversaries themselves have not significantly influenced the revival³ of our enlightener's ideas. The reasons for this are certainly deeper and more complex, and we cannot engage in their consid-

2 The paper was written as part of a research project FSITC 1561: “Formation of Serbian identity and theoretical controversies concerning attempts of its deconstruction”, supported by the Science Fund of the Republic of Serbia

3 Some researchers, such as Predrag Jašović, are of the opinion that “at the beginning of the 20th century, a celebratory tone often prevailed on the occasion of the jubilee and the national attribution of Dositej's work was emphasized ‘in view of the preparations for great events that were to bring national liberation’ Even though little was written about Dositej between the two world wars, writers were guided by non-literary, ideological criteria” (Jašović, 2016: 167).

eration at this time. Nevertheless, anniversary manifestations have clearly pointed out the main achievements and limitations of previous research on Dositej's opus, outlined the main directions of further research, and indicated new movements in the interpretation of Dositej's literary and philosophical works and their different impacts, not only in our environment but also in the broader (South Slavic) surroundings⁴ and in the wider European context (Lolić, 2012). It is very important to note that Dositej's anniversaries were not only the affair of professional associations but also of state and church institutions, which did not want to leave Dositej only to the institutions of science and culture. This fundamentally marked a specific relationship to Dositej and his enlightening mission, which, despite various political, social, and cultural changes, has remained to this day, a subject of dispute, not only in our humanities and social sciences but also in the broadest cultural public. However, commemorating the anniversaries of our most famous enlightener was important for understanding his work and the subsequent role of the Dositejevci in promoting the Dositej line in our literature, philosophy, and culture.

In this paper, attention will be drawn to the erection of a monument during the centenary of Dositej Obradović's death. It is about marking the first major and perhaps most significant anniversary in modern Serbian culture, an event that can help us better understand the complex character of Dositej's work, the time in which it was created, and some important issues and disputes about the complex reception of his thought, which constitutes a significant element of Serbian modern identity.

The centenary of Dositej's death in 1911 was undeniably an event in our contemporary cultural history of multiple significances, not only in terms of some essential aspects of Dositej's enlightening activities but also in determining the nature of Serbian modern cultural identity. Major anniversaries of prominent figures like Dositej Obradović represent an opportunity to summarize the results of previous research on his work and a good opportunity to highlight the impressive rise of Serbian culture and the establishment of its key educational and cultural institutions. Therefore, on the occasion of commemorating the centenary of Dositej's death, the highest circles of the Serbian state and church hierarchy initiated an

4 Zoran Jovanović emphasizes in his article *Dr. Branko Gavella on Dositej's Centenary* that "these very anniversaries of Dositej in 1911 formed the introductory part of the Zagreb-Belgrade *Almanac*, which was dedicated to the 'Memory of Dositej Obradović, the first great fighter for national unity', with contributions by Vatroslav Jagić, Stojan Novaković, Marko Murko and Jovan Cvijić. The author points out that "from today's historical perspective, the introductory part of the *Almanac* is of multiple interest, as it anticipates the celebrations of the bicentenary of Dositej's birth in 2011" (Jovanović, 2010: 657); cf. (Novaković, 1962).

effort to involve all our leading educational, publishing, and cultural institutions in marking the great anniversary of Dositej. Evidence that this initiative was well received can be seen by the decision of the Serbian Literary Cooperative to publish in its prestigious *Blue series*⁵, a collection of works dedicated to the personality and work of Dositej Obradović, and one of the most respected Serbian magazines, *Serbian Literary Herald*, devoted an entire issue to the writer of *Život i priključenija*. During the preparation of the Dositej jubilee, the Serbian Orthodox Church⁶ also made a statement, which was a clear sign that in the meantime, the negative attitude towards Dositej in church circles had softened, and the Church would participate in the commemoration of Serbia's most prominent Enlightenment thinker.

The culmination of this manifestation was supposed to be the placing and ceremonial unveiling of Dositej's monument⁷. This undertaking was preceded by many long-standing polemics and debates about the nature and character of public national monuments to prominent figures of Serbian science, culture, and politics, which were conducted during the 19th century and significantly influenced professional, aesthetic, and moral criteria and shaped the modern cultural identity of the Serbian people, their culture, and state. From a historical perspective, it could be said that it is no coincidence that these events had their finale at the beginning of the last century, marking the end of a great era in Serbian history and culture. It is well known that the historical period from 1903 to 1914 is called the "golden age" of the Serbian state and society. In a symbolic sense, this is also demonstrated by the example of the very complex reception of Dositej's enlightening work in Serbian contemporary culture. Erecting the monument at Kalemegdan symbolically signifies the canonization of one form of theoretical reception of the philosophical and literary work of our enlightener and its introduction into the pantheon of the Serbian intellectual elite.

5 T. Jovičević, *Dositej in Kolo*, (2022: 215–216).

6 "Before the celebrations of the centenary of Dositej Obradović's death, the Serbian Church published an article 'The Church and Dositej – On the centenary of Dositej's death' This article served as a kind of official announcement of the Serbian Church's participation in the celebrations, as well as an expression of its attitude towards Dositej himself and his thoughts and actions" (Janić, 2014: 39).

7 The circumstances surrounding the centenary of Dositej Obradović's death are generally well researched, while studies on the Dositej monument are less frequently mentioned, although they are of extraordinary importance, not only for the understanding of our modern art, but also for the Dositej lineage in modern Serbian culture and the concept of modernity in general. Cf. *In front of the Dositej monument* (Popović, 2021: 7–11). Cf. (*Serbian Literary Herald*, 1910: 319–320; 714–719; 1911: 495; 572; 816; 975).

According to research by contemporary art historians, the discussions about the character of Dositej's monument and its pantheonization lasted long, almost a little more than a century, and were also part of the debate about changing the figure of the national hero. It could be said that this is not only part of the debate about the culture of memory of the Serbian people but also partly belongs to the European pantheonization of great figures of the European Enlightenment movement, of which Dositej was a prominent representative in Southeast Europe⁸. "Within the thoughts expressed in their polemical texts, writers Ljubomir Nenadović and Matija Ban in Belgrade during the second half of the 19th and the first decades of the 20th century erected a series of public national monuments of various characters... which gradually transformed the capital of the Kingdom of Serbia into an open urban pantheon" (Timotijević 2001: 39).

An illustrative example of such perceptions is the monument commissioned to mark the centenary of Dositej Obradović's death. The creation of the monument was entrusted to the Croatian sculptor Rudolf Valdec. At first glance, it can be noticed that it belongs to the type of monuments erected in honor of *writer-heroes*. Thus, Valdec's sculpture "consistently matches the primary reception of Dositej's character in Serbian culture at the end of the 19th and beginning of the 20th century" (Same, 2001). However, "In the deeper layers of its symbolic speech, layers are revealed that indicate that Dositej's character on Valdec's monument is based on the interpretation of the hero of the pen as a traveler, who walks the labyrinthine path of life in search of knowledge" (Same, 2001).

On the initiative of Jovan Skerlić, the Serbian Literary Cooperative in early 1909 launched an action to commemorate the centenary of Dositej's death. Stojan Novaković⁹ and Jovan Skerlić, who planned a series of ceremonies, headed the Celebration Committee, which aimed to erect a monument to the great national enlightener in Belgrade. The Committee set the conditions for the competition in which all Yugoslav artists could participate, and the monument was to represent Dositej's figure in natural size.

Twelve artists responded to the competition called by the Committee. It is interesting to note that the most famous Yugoslav (oriented) sculptor Ivan Meštrović did not participate in the competition. His absence was

8 The Austrian historian Wolfgang Schmale in his book *Geschichte der modernen Aufklärung. Gesellschaftliche Orientierungen im Zeitalter des Globalismus vom 19. bis zum 21. Jahrhundert* critically examines the global aspects of Enlightenment and Enlightenment ideas in the context of contemporary theories of neo-colonialism. The author devotes a separate chapter of the book to critical reflections on the culture of remembrance from the perspective of the pantheonization of great Enlightenment figures. Cf. (Schmale, 2024: 100–106)

9 (Vojvodić, 2012)

explained by Meštrović's engagement in preparing an exhibition in Rome. The three top prize-winning authors at the competition were T. Rosandić, S. Roxandić, and R. Valdec. The winner of the competition was Rudolf Valdec, a Croatian sculptor, who was well-known in the Serbian environment at the time for his pro-Yugoslav orientation.

The Committee planned for the "most beautiful place in Belgrade" (Terazije¹⁰), the monument to Dositej to be unveiled on September 1, 1911. However, due to a later dispute about the location where the monument should be placed, the ceremonial unveiling of the monument was postponed to the spring of the following year. Since consensus was not reached even the following year, the monument was unveiled only on May 27, 1914, on the eve of World War I.

The comparison between warriors and writers as national heroes, in European culture has its roots in antiquity. This idea begins with Homer and Achilles and has a long and glorious tradition. However, for Serbian 19th-century society, it was new and was yet to gain citizenship in the national cultural consciousness of the Serbian people, which was formed after liberation from Turkish rule.

It is quite clear that such a change in a small cultural environment that had just begun to create its modern political and cultural institutions was not easy to carry out. To implement such an idea, it was necessary to change the entire moral didactic code based on theological virtues and replace it with new moral values of public virtues. Dositej systematically discusses these virtues in *Sovjeti zdravog razuma* (1784) in the fifth chapter entitled "On Virtue." In a letter to Bishop Šakabenta, Dositej from Leipzig writes about the education of the people as a heroic patriotic virtue, citing some Old Testament examples about it. In the twelfth chapter of *Sobranija raznih naravoučiteljih veščeja*, Dositej talks about "love for the homeland" (Obradović, 2010). In this way, our enlightener was the first in Serbian modern culture, along with the figure of a warrior, to set up the figure of a poet¹¹ as an equal national hero. Dositej Obradović in his treatise *On the Proper Reverence for Science* highlights: "How much would the ancient knights lie buried and remain in eternal darkness and oblivion without Homer and without Pindar, without Virgil and without Horace" (Obradović, 2010: 315–316)!

10 In the draft of the celebration and later in the proclamation written by J. Skerlić, numerous cultural manifestations are mentioned on the occasion of the Dositej anniversary, but the erection of a monument is always mentioned first. Cf. (S.K.G. 1910: 319; 714; 716)

11 For Dositej, the term poet has the old meaning of "doctus poeta", according to which poetry was synonymous with wisdom. Cf. (Obradović, 2010: 315–316)

Although this has been considered a commonplace in European literature, often cited, it was a real novelty in Serbian written word, and the first strong indication of the secularization of "Serbian culture, which previously had a predominantly religious character" (Timotijević, 2001). The authority of the poet as a national hero of the new era, viewed in a broader European context, reached its peak during the revolutionary events of 1848 and 1849. However, the political status of Serbs in Austria-Hungary was still such that the idea of erecting a monument to the poet Lukijan Mušicki and the leader of the First Serbian Uprising, warrior Karađorđe, could not be realized.

Writer Ljubomir Nenadović, speaking about the greatness and significance of Karađorđe and Dositej in our history and culture, highlights the old parallel that "both are great in our nation, that one with a rifle in his hand awakened the nation to its consciousness and fought for the liberation of the homeland: and the other with a lyre in his hand taught us to love the language and faith" (Nenadović, 1985: 141). The difference in the choice of the type of national hero of the new era to whom a monument is erected reflected the different political circumstances in which the Serbs lived. The Principality of Serbia, although still under the supreme authority of the Ottoman Empire, managed to achieve internal political freedoms to a large extent, so Prince Alexander Karađorđević believed it was possible to initiate an action to erect a monument to the warrior. In the political life of Serbs in Austria-Hungary, such freedoms had not yet been achieved, and they could express their national idea only "by erecting a monument to the poet, a fighter for language and faith" (Same, 1985). However, it should be kept in mind that the authority of the poet as a national leader and hero of his time in the 19th century had already lost its real significance, although this theme has not disappeared from our poetry¹².

New understandings of the national hero were articulated in the Serbian environment on new moral and aesthetic principles in the 1870s, which Svetozar Marković defined in his essay *Reality in Poetry*, speaking about the immaturity of contemporary (Serbian) poetry to the current social and political moment¹³ (Marković, 1987: 89 – 92). Following the new understandings of the national hero in Serbian culture in the last decades of the 19th century, the figure of the poet was gradually replaced

12 One such vivid example is the poem *Sword and Lyre* by Ognjeslav Utješinović Ostrožinski.

13 "I stated in the article *Singing and Thinking* that poetry in our country is understood in a backward way, and therefore the kind of poetry that I called 'spiritual onanism' there, and which fully deserves this name, is created in our country" (Marković, 1987: 90).

by the figure of a rational enlightener of the nation, embodied by Dositej Obradović's enlightening work. At the end of the 19th century, when the movement of the United Youth¹⁴ lost its strength in our cultural public, there was a revival of the reputation and wide popularity of Dositej Obradović, which grew into a kind of cult, culminating in the celebration of the centenary of his death in 1911.

This change is the result of a prolonged process of cultural and political maturation of Serbian society, reflected in the numerous initiatives of the Serbian cultural elite, launched during the 19th century in connection with the erection of public sculptural national monuments. Although most of them were not realized, they clearly outline the complex change in the cultural consciousness of modern Serbs in the process of shaping the figure of the ideal hero in Serbian culture of the new era.

In the circle previously reserved for poets, the figure of the writer-enlightener was introduced. This process, in which the change of figures of the national hero takes place, in our culture is best illustrated by the history of attitudes towards the idea of erecting monuments to Lukijan Mušicki and Dositej Obradović¹⁵.

Although he was not the chairman of the Committee for the Commemoration of the Centenary of Dositej's Death, Skerlić was the main driving force, *spiritus movens*, in the endeavor to erect a monument to the first Serbian Minister of Education. As a member of the Management Board of the Serbian Literary Cooperative and the Committee for the Commemoration of the Centenary of Dositej's Death, Skerlić saw his participation in erecting the sculpture/monument as the completion of an earlier begun general recognition of the spiritual unifier of a divided nation.

Skerlić was a fervent advocate of public monuments as an expression of the democratization of art. In the foreword to the *Serbian Literary Herald* of March 16, 1911, which was entirely dedicated to the celebration of the centenary of Dositej's death, Skerlić emphasizes: "... he (Dositej) did more than anyone else to create the modern Serbian soul." (Skerlić, 1911: 27).

14 Although Dositej no longer enjoyed the prestige of the United Youth of Serbia during the period of its strongest activity, he nevertheless retained the status of a giant that the "United Youth of Serbia ... celebrated as a member of the Serbian Holy Trinity together with St. Sava and Vuk Karadžić and developed his broad and always topical national ideas" (Skerlić, 1986:48).

15 There were several attempts to erect a monument to Dositej Obradović. Danilo Medaković's initiative in 1850 to erect a monument to Dositej in Novi Sad was rejected by the church and the monument was not erected. Medaković later went to Zagreb, and the United Youth Movement of Serbia showed little interest in Dositej's ideas. It was similar in Belgrade. There was an idea that one of the six parks should be dedicated to Dositej. Cf. (Timotijević, 2001: 42)

For his belief that the task of true art is to be linked to the general ideas and ideals of its time, Skerlić sought confirmation in the art and urbanity of ancient classical and Italian Renaissance cities, which during their rise erected a series of public monuments to prominent figures.

The composition of the work of the first-prize-winning author Rudolf Valdec was evaluated by the Commission as "Dositej imagined as a traveler whom some supernatural force, awakened within him, boldly moves forward. His eyes are directed towards a lofty goal, which his feet are to carry him to. A book under his arm and a pen in his hand indicate his noble mission. It is felt that the path he clears before himself leads to glory and eternity"¹⁶. The Commission suggested to the author that the words: "Learning as he goes, looking into the centuries"¹⁷ could be quite fittingly inscribed below the statue. The sculptor took the Commission's suggestion, and these words were carved on the front side of the base of the monument.

If the history of the reception of Dositej's work is judged by the standards of our most authoritative literary critic Jovan Skerlić, it becomes clear why Rudolf Valdec was the first-prize winner at this competition. The model of the monument that he submitted to the competition Commission largely represented the embodiment of Skerlić's interpretation of Dositej's work and his understandings of art. Viewed from the perspective of Skerlić's literary criticism, the solution by Toma Rosandić was based on contemporary understandings of public monuments in the spirit of Secession, which in our country was represented by Ivan Meštrović, and the solution by Simeon Roxandić was based on European sculptural practice from the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th century, which made full use of the old language of allegories and personifications. For Skerlić's understanding of aesthetic criteria, it could be said that the first solution was too modern, and the second, too traditional. Viewed in this context, art historian Miroslav Timotijević considers that "Valdec's solution (is) in the basic concept of its design rested on the language of natural symbols, as a universal and understandable language, which, according to Skerlić's understandings, contained the necessary feature of democracy, which is of primary importance for public monuments" (Timotijević, 2001: 46).

On the front side of the monument, a dedication is carved: "To Dositej Obradović, the grateful Serbian people," and on the back, the writer's motto taken from his *Letter to Haralampije*: "Therefore, I will write for

16 According to Timotijević: *From the exhibition of models for the Dositej monument* (2001: 46)

17 (ibid., 46)

the mind, for the heart, and for the human nature, for the brothers Serbs, whatever their law and faith” (Obradović, 2018: 41).

The motto, *Learning as he goes, looking into the centuries*, represents one of the key ideas on which Valdec’s sculpture “Dositej” shown as *homo viator*¹⁸ rests. The other idea on which Valdec’s sculpture is based is the thought of the writer-hero, which was cultivated in European culture, and which Dositej transferred to Serbian literature and culture with his autobiographical treatise “*Život i priključenija*”. The backbone of Dositej’s autobiography is based on the interpretation of two different senses of travel (Timotijević, 2001; Lompar, 2000; Gligorijević, 2001). He begins his life journey as a believer – a pilgrim guided by private piety, and ends it as a writer-enlightener – a traveler, who fights for the general national good. In this sense, Dositej’s clothing on Valdec’s sculpture has a purely symbolic meaning, as it underlines a clear difference between a pilgrim and a traveler.

Dositej at the beginning of his autobiographical treatise “*Life*”, in the spirit of traditional scholastic literature, describes and interprets his arrival in Hopovo as reaching earthly paradise, but facing monastic life, he discovers that he was mistaken and embarks on a journey that ultimately ends in Belgrade. Some researchers believe that this journey, however, does not rid the theme of travel of its old religious foundations. Dositej’s raised head on Valdec’s sculpture is not only an expression of the self-awareness of the hero of our time in deeper foundations implies the old idea of the protection of divine grace, which leads the chosen one through the labyrinthine path of life.

The labyrinthine nature of the world and his life journey Dositej exposed in a letter to Bishop Šakabenta which he sent from Leipzig on July 5, 1784. Interpreting the apparent chaos of his travels, Dositej in this letter emphasizes: “This is not at all incidentally to see countries and cities, but very roundabout and askew. Herein lies the secret because in everything in God’s and human creation, a straight line does not make beauty. Many and complex are necessary, and especially circular and wave-like” (Obradović, 2010: 352). Dositej, however, believed that not only human life but also man himself, has a labyrinthine character: “...everything, not only beauty, but also the well-being of the human body consists in a circle. The head, tongue, nose, eyes, forehead, eyebrows, cheeks, ears, mouth, and other parts down to the little toe of the foot – all are circular” (Same: 352)!

Rudolf Valdec, while modeling Dositej’s sculpture, seems to have had his thoughts in mind. There is almost an ideological correspondence between Dositej’s letter and “Valdec’s sculpture based on the doctrine ut

18 Cf. (Prole, 2023: 32)

pictura poesis, which even in the 19th century had not lost its significance" (Timotijević, 2001: 48). Precisely on the figure of the pilgrim, the late Middle Ages developed an entire allegorical genre (Same: 49).

It is well known how strongly emphasized in the entire Dositej's opus is the symbolism of the book (Popović, 2021; Marinković, 2008). This element of his philosophical and literary discourse is recognizable in photographs and on Dositej's portraits. However, on Valdec's sculpture, Dositej's relationship with books is not interpreted in the usual context of *vita contemplativa*, present in newer portraits by Arsenije Teodorović. Between Teodorović's portraits and Valdec's sculpture "Dositej", there is a fundamental difference. Valdec's sculpture is not based on the understanding of a humanist who, in isolated solitude, indulges in literary studies. It shows Dositej as the embodiment of the principle based on the idea of *vita activa*, shaping the sculpture on the conventions cultivated within the tradition of depicting "pilgrims and traveling pedestrians" (Gligorijević, 2017: 1).

. . .

All sections of the path on Dositej's life journey do not have the same significance. Dositej himself particularly emphasized the importance of some points of his very long journey in time and space. Given the beginning of Dositej's journey, it seems paradoxical, but one of the key points of his very long journey, both in time and space, was Belgrade. Moreover, some of his interpreters believe that "the chosen life principle of Dositej Obradović was most consistently implemented by deciding in 1806 to leave Trieste for his last journey to rebellious Belgrade" (Timotijević, 2001). The importance given to this decision during the celebration of the centenary of Dositej's death is evidenced by the fact that this last period of his life is dedicated to a very extensive discussion in the Memorial published for this occasion (Vukićević, 1911: 89–149). Dositej is depicted on the monument as a traveler, who having passed through the "labyrinth of the world arrives at the spiritual center – insurgent Belgrade" (Timotijević, 2001: 50).

During the initiative to celebrate Dositej's jubilee, the location for placing the monument was not precisely determined. The Announcement of the Committee for the Celebration only stated that the monument would be placed "at one of the most beautiful places in Belgrade" (Same, 50). According to some, this most beautiful place was "on the refurbished Terazije," and according to others, in "Terazije Park" (Same, 52). However, none of these proposals was accepted, so the monument was placed in

the square in front of the main alley of Kalemegdan, opposite today's City Library. Thus, Dositej was brought into direct connection with Karađorđe, the leader of the First Serbian Uprising, to whom a monument was erected in the same alley a year earlier. Thus, Dositej became an "active hero who in real life fought shoulder to shoulder with Karađorđe, one with the pen, the other with the sword" (Same, 54). By erecting Karađorđe's and then immediately Dositej's monuments, the main Kalemegdan alley became *Via Triumphalis*, the path of the victorious political and spiritual ascent of the capital Belgrade. This purpose of the main alley of Kalemegdan began to be acquired during the last decade of the 19th century when numerous busts of prominent Serbs were erected along its entire length. However, it acquired its full modern, urban form in the second decade of the 20th century, by erecting monuments to the creators of the modern Serbian state and modern Serbian culture, Karađorđe and Dositej¹⁹.

During World War I, Karađorđe's monument was demolished and destroyed, and in the 1930s, Dositej's monument was moved to the Academic Park. Thus, the noble idea of the main alley of Kalemegdan as a triumphant path of Serbian glory, which at the beginning of the 19th century was traced by two national heroes, Karađorđe and Dositej – one with a sword, and the other with a quill, completely disappeared from Belgrade's urbanism, but also from public consciousness, almost for a century.

About the inadequate position of Dositej's monument in the Academic Park, according to the opinion of the informed, "it is necessary to speak as a betrayal of its pictorial, ambient, and symbolic power" (Gligorijević, 2001: 28). In its current location, where it has stood since 1930, it is quite clear that this monument is "marginalized, its power restrained, reduced to a sorrowful, condensed gem" (Same, 28). Given the pictorial-spatial features and symbolic significance of this monument, we can agree with the opinion of art historian Ljubomir Gligorijević that the decision of the urban planning authorities of Belgrade to move Dositej's monument to the Academic Park was wrong, because reducing Valdec's "Dositej" "to a successful decoration of the park is not only an urban planning mistake but a national sin" (Same, 28).

It should be noted that several newer projects dealing with the arrangement of Studentski Trg represented an extraordinary opportunity, unfortunately not utilized, to "bring out Dositej's monument on Student-

19 However, this idea is already quite old. Matija Ban emphasized it in the mid-19th century in his polemic on the erection of a monument to Karađorđe. "By emphasizing the importance of public national monuments, he shows contemporaries and descendants the noble deeds of greatness... so the ancient Romans were convinced that the main street of their capital, where most people walked, was flanked on both sides by monuments of great Roman men from all civic professions" (Ban, 1985: 131).

ski Trg in front of the park.” This gesture would, (for “Dositej” somewhat less than a century, spent in the Academic Park), as Gligorijević says, be equivalent to “removing the veil from him, a gesture of his rediscovery” (Same, 28). The foundation for his initiative Gligorijević finds, not only in the “historical significance” but also in the symbolic multivalence of Dositej’s sculpture, his enlightening mission and thought, which by “directly addressing all generations (...) with its pictorial qualities (...) is capable, not only to decorate the square, but to turn the square into an institution of spontaneous association with the decisive moments of Serbia’s cultural-historical past” (Same, 28). Gligorijević rightly suggests that “on Studentski Trg below the main gate of the park, opposite the university buildings, whose founder is Dositej, there is a place²⁰ for his monument which would finally, in proportion to its significance, its nature, and value participate in the beauty and everyday life of the city” (Same, 28).

A good example is the solution by Sreten Stojanović, who managed to make Njegoš’s monumental figure sovereignly preside over the plateau of the Faculty of Philosophy. Similarly, Valdec’s “Dositej,” if it were placed on *The Students’ Square* in front of the oldest university building in Serbia, the main university complex of Belgrade, would impressively illustrate the act of “bringing knowledge as good news” (Same, 28). With its beauty and symbolic meaning, his sculpture is capable of marking, sanctifying, celebrating the place where it is located, offering a vivid, constant, encouraging, and most touching encounter with Dositej’s figure²¹ (Same, 28).

Cultural manifestations marking the jubilee of Dositej Obradović in 1911 show how much, at the beginning of the last century, the personality and work of the greatest Serbian enlightener, despite latent and in some moments quite open conflict with the Church, were accepted and highly valued in all layers of Serbian society. The highest institutional level at which posthumous honors were paid to Dositej Obradović on that occasion clearly testifies, not only to the maturation of the national consciousness of the significance of his enlightening work for Serbian modern culture but also to the moment when it seems that Serbian society in the work of its greatest enlightener discovered a guidepost and the path²² by which it stepped into its European future.

20 The Italian art historian Stefano Aloe (Aloe) is of the opinion that “the location of the monument ... is no less symbolic than its compositional code, usually in an open urban space where many people move every day. Often monuments become the center or landmark of entire urban units, such as parks, squares, hills...” (Aloe, 2019).

21 Mark Lewis, who deals with the problem of public monuments, tries to consider “the presence of public monuments and official public art in relation to the question of permanent presence, memory and visibility” (Lewis, 1990:24). Cf. (Aloe, 2019)

22 Cf. (Konstantinović, 2018; Ljubinković, 2005)

However, the outbreak of World War I, and the change in the state framework, new European and global, cultural and political movements, in our public again initiate the re-examination of Serbian identity²³, and thus the idea of enlightenment and Dositej's place and significance, not only in Serbian but also in Yugoslav modern culture. The twilight of the idea of Europe in the 1930s triggered new attacks by Serbian critics of the West on Dositej as our first "great Westerner." The most forceful attacks came from the circle of Serbian intellectuals who were close to or belonged to the Serbian Orthodox Church²⁴. In Serbian interwar debates about the "twilight of Europe" and the search of European humanity for a way out of the spiritual crisis of the time, marked by the deepest "eclipse and "destruction of the European mind" in the broadest cultural public, fundamental questions about our ideological, cultural, and political orientations were considered, and demands were placed for a radical critical re-examination and redefinition of Serbian cultural identity.

References:

- Avramović, Z. (2006). *Aporije obrazovanja za demokratiju*. Beograd: Institut za pedagoška istraživanja
- Aloe, S. (2019). Spomenici i kultura: tendencije u konstruiranju povijesnog pamćenja u suvremenoj Rusiji i uloga književnosti. *Sic*, 2 (9), 0 – 0
- Ban, M. (1985). Spomenik Karađorđu. In: D. Tošić (eds.) *Ideje i rasprave o Karađorđevom spomeniku u dokumentima srpske štampe 1857. godine* (125–167). Beograd: Godišnjak Muzeja grada Beograda
- Vojvodić, M. (2012). *Stojan Novaković u službi nacionalnih i državnih interesa*. Beograd: Srpska književna zadruga
- Vukićević, M.(1911). Poslednjih pet godina života i rada Dositeja Obradovića. In: J. Skerlić (eds.) *Spomenica Dositeju Obradoviću* (89 –149). Beograd: Srpska književna zadruga
- Gligorijević, Lj. (2016). Apel 1, 2, 3... *Srpski književni list* vol. V/XV (16/121), 1, 28) [In Serbian]

23 "The formation of identity and the cultural content of education in Serbia were not identical in the past two centuries. In the 19th century, it was knowledge that contributed to the development of national identity. In the 20th century, with the founding of the Yugoslav state, education for Serbian identity changed to education for Yugoslav identity" (Avramović, 2006: 53). Cf. (Milanović, 2019: 65–67; Stefanović, 2010: 7)

24 The most recent, concise overview of philosophical and theological critiques and debates of the 1930s on the Enlightenment and the crisis of the European idea by prominent Serbian intellectuals is provided by Bogoljub Šijaković. (Šijaković, 2019).

- Živanović, V. (2017). *Bibliografija radova o Dositeju Obradoviću*. Disertacija, Beograd: Filološki fakultet
- Janić, J. Đ. (2014). *Dositej i dositejevština*. Beograd: Srpska književna zadruga
- Jašović, P. (2016). *Uvod u dositejologiju*. Beograd: Bookland
- Jovićević, T. (2022). Dositej u Kolu. In: D. Lakićević (eds.) *Plave oči srpske književnosti. Kolo SKZ kao ogledalo razvoja srpske književnosti i jezika* (204–234). Beograd: Srpska književna zadruga
- Konstantinović, R. (2018). Putovanje kao čin kulture. In: Tešić, G. (eds.) *Veličina i prokletstvo. Od Dositeja do Škerlića i Matoša*, (15 – 19). Šabac: Fondacija „Stanislav Vinaver“
- Lompar, M. (2000). Duh prosvetćenosti u srpskoj autobiografiji. In: P. Pijanović (eds.), *Život i delo Dositeja Obradovića*, (429–434) Beograd: Zavod za udžbenike i nastavna sredstva
- Lolić, M. (2012). Uloga časopisa *Misao* u razumevanju srpskog prosvetiteljstva u evropskom kulturnom kontekstu. In: T. Jovićević (eds.) *Tradicija prosvetćenosti i prosvetćivanja u srpskoj periodici (197 – 211)*. Beograd: Institut za književnost i umetnost.
- Luis, M. (1990). Šta da se radi. *Treći program radio Beograda*, II (85), 23–27
- Ljubinković, N. (2005). Put kojim nismo pošli – beseda o Dositeju. In: N. Grdinić (eds.), *Dela, Dositej Obradović* (436 – 441). Beograd: Biblioteka grada Beograda
- Marinković, B.(2008). *Tragom Dositeja*. Beograd: Službeni glasnik
- Marković, S. (1987). Realnost u poeziji. In: D. Nedeljković (eds.) *Celokupna dela*, knj. 2 (89 – 92). Beograd; Narodna knjiga
- Milanović, Ž. (2019). *Književnost i identitet: između potčinjenosti i slobode*. Beograd: Službeni glasnik
- Nenadović, Lj. (1985). O spomenicima. In: D. Tošić (eds.) *Ideje i rasprave o Karađorđevom spomeniku u dokumentima srpske štampe 1857. godine* (141–143). Beograd: Godišnjak Muzeja grada Beograda
- Obradović, D. (2018). *Život i priključenija. Pismo Haralampiju*. Beograd: Miba Books
- Popović, P. (2021). *Izabrane kritike. Prosvetiteljstvo u srpskoj književnosti*. Beograd: PortaLibri
- Prole, D.(2023). Prosvetćeno stranstvovanje filozofa: Dositejevo rađanje 0u novom svetu. *Arhe XX* (39), (11 – 37)
- Škerlić, J. (1911). Stogodišnjica Dositeja Obradovića. *Srpski književni glasnik*, knj. XXVI (6)(417 – 422)
- Škerlić, J. (1986). Dositej Obradović. *Izabrane kritike*, (37–53) Beograd: Vuk Karadžić
- Škerlić, J. (1962). Dositejev jezik. In: M. Leskovac (eds.) *Dositej Obradović* (188–192). Beograd: Srpska književna zadruga
- Stefano, A. (2019). Spomenici i kultura: tendencije u konstruiranju povijesnog pamćenja u suvremenoj Rusiji i uloga književnosti. *SIC*, No. 2 – Yer 9 (6),

- Stefanović, M.D.(2010). Venecijanski ples Dositejeve reči. In. M. D. Stefanović (eds.) *Dositej Obradović. (7–23)*. Novi Sad: Izdavački centar Matice Srpske
- Timotijević, M. (2001). Heroj pera kao putnik: tipološka geneza javnih nacionalnih spomenika i Valdecova skulptura Dositeja Obradovića. *Nasleđe*, (3), 39 – 56 [In Serbian]
- Šijaković, B.(2019). *Svetosavlje i filozofija života*. Novi Sad: Pravoslavna reč
- Šmale, V. (2024). *Istorija modernog prosvetiteljstva. Društveni orijentiri u eri globalizma od 19. do 20. veka*. Prevela s nemačkog M. Matic. Beograd: Clio

Sources:

- Srpski književni glasnik (1911). Proslava Stogodišnjice Dositeja Obradovića, knj. 24 (4): (335 – 337)
- Srpski književni glsnik (1911). Proslava Stogodišnjice Dositeja Obradovića, knj. 24 (6): (417 – 495)
- Srpski književni glasnik (1910). Proslava Stogodišnjice Dositeja Obradovića knj. 24 (8): (653 – 655)
- Srpski književni glasnik (1910). Proslava Stogodišnjice Dositeja Obradovića knj. 24 (10): (815 – 816)
- Srpski književni glasnik (1910). Proslava Stogodišnjice Dositeja Obradovića, knj. 24 (12): (974 – 975)

Zoran Kindić¹

University of Belgrade

Faculty of Political Sciences

NIKOLAI'S INTERPRETATION OF THE MEANING OF SERBIAN HISTORY

Convinced that all of nature and human history is subject to a cosmic moral law and that the Holy Scriptures provide the key to understanding the destiny of a people – the best example of which is the Jewish people – St. Nikolai of Serbia approached the interpretation of Serbian history as if it were a sacred drama. Thanks to St. Sava and St. Simeon the Myrrh-Streamer, the Serbian people were entrusted with the task of serving Christ as a chosen people. The imperative to become a holy nation implies a world-historical mission to serve other nations, as well as an uncompromising fight against evil and injustice on earth. Bishop Nikolai divides Serbian history into three periods, each of which was characterized by struggles: The golden age of the Nemanjić dynasty was characterized by struggles for glory; the period of enslavement was a struggle for survival, for the preservation of national identity; and the third period was a struggle for liberation. He interprets Lazar's decision for the Kingdom of Heaven, which he made on behalf of the entire nation, as the strongest expression of the general meaning of Serbian history. Contrary to those who believe that the wheel of Serbian history stopped in Kosovo and that the tragic St. Vitus' Day (Vidovdan) of 1389 has obscured our history, Bishop Nikolai argues that we have legitimized ourselves as a great nation in the spiritual sense thanks to our repeated, visibly affirmed commitment to the Kingdom of Heaven. St. Vitus' Day is the most significant day in Serbian history because it represents a spiritual height from which our entire history can be viewed. It is a day that has not passed, but continues to unfold in the consciousness of the Serbian people. The attitude towards St. Vitus' Day is an unmistakable measure of a person's nature, a sign of whether someone is committed to the earthly or the heavenly realm. The purpose of the centuries-long Serbian enslavement is the purification of the national soul, which itself was endangered by the sinfulness of the nobility. The motto "Fight for the holy cross and golden freedom" best characterizes the essence of the Serbian people. Although he himself was fascinated by the Yugoslav idea, after the genocide of the Ustasha, Bishop

1 full professor, zoran.kindjic@gmail.com, ORCID logo 0000-0002-2442-6941

Nikolai will argue that the Serbs should strive for an alliance of the Orthodox Balkan peoples, relying on Russia. He believed that the Serbs had the task of rising above East and West, of bringing the East to baptism and the West to conversion.

Keywords: meaning of history, chosen people, holiness, St. Vitus' Day, serving Christ, national soul, sacred drama

Introduction

Not only ordinary people but also some philosophers occasionally think that historical events are ultimately chaotic, that there is actually no meaning in history². They consider it to be, as Hegel would say, not only a “mad, foolish happening”, but also a “battlefield on which the happiness of nations, the wisdom of states and the virtue of individuals have been sacrificed” (Hegel 2006, 27). Schopenhauer, on the other hand, was of the opinion that history cannot be a science because historians merely record individual events. They are unable to recognize deeper, general laws because they actually do not exist, since everything that happens is merely a chaotic manifestation of blind, irrational original will.³

In contrast to ordinary historians, who strive for a faithful record of the facts and are usually unable to recognize the deeper meaning behind visible historical events, the peculiarity of philosophers of history lies in their attempt to understand the meaning of seemingly chaotic, incoherent events. They believe that history remains misunderstood if they do not

2 The text was written as part of the research conducted with the support of the Science Fund of the Republic of Serbia for the project FSITC 1561: “Formation of Serbian identity and theoretical controversies concerning attempts of its deconstruction”.

3 Based on Aristotle, Schopenhauer believes that “poetry has contributed more to the understanding of the essence of man than history” (Schopenhauer 1986, 378). According to him, history is not a true science, because “the sciences always speak of genera, history of individuals.” Since history, in contrast to science, which arrives at knowledge about the general, only deals with the individual and the transient, “it knows everything only imperfectly and half” (ibid., 379). Schopenhauer is extremely skeptical of the philosophy of history, especially that of Hegel. He never misses an opportunity to refer the followers of Hegel, “who consider the philosophy of history to be the main goal of all philosophy”, to Plato, “who tirelessly repeated that the object of philosophy is that which is unchanging, that which remains eternal, not that which is now one way and later another” (ibid., 381). The great pessimist is particularly disturbed by the speculative construction of a “world plan according to which everything is directed to the best goal”, for it is precisely in the attempt to construct history as a whole, with a beginning, middle and end as well as a meaningful coherence, that Schopenhauer sees not only a mere illusion, but also a petty bourgeoisie characteristic of eudaemonists and superficial optimists, who usually proclaim “the poorest earthly happiness” as the goal of history (ibid., 382-383).

recognize the common thread of reason that runs through history. One of the greatest philosophers of history, Hegel, claimed that he would base his interpretation of world history on empirical facts, making only one assumption: that what happens in history is rational. Thanks to this assumption, he was able to justify evil in history and interpret it as progress in the consciousness of freedom.⁴

Our great spiritual luminary, St. Nikolai of Ohrid and Žiča, agrees with the philosophers of history that it is not enough to know historical facts in order to understand history. Even at a young age, he held the view that he was to maintain throughout his life: "Even if a historian knew all the facts of world history, he would understand nothing if he did not connect all this ballast of facts with the idea of God or morality." However, his appeal to the cosmic moral law and God's providence distinguishes him from secular philosophers of history, who also look down on those who limit themselves to merely collecting historical facts. Monk Nikolai, despite his admiration for Western culture in his youth, does not hesitate to boldly formulate the following thought: "No profane philosophy of history is worth anything." Knowing that such a stance would provoke violent reactions, he emphasizes that Homer and Sophocles understood "the history of the world better than three quarters of modern thinkers". Although Nikolai does not immediately state the reason why he believes that the great ancient literary figures are superior to contemporary philosophers of history, who are characterized by a firm belief in the prevailing material basis of historical events, it is not difficult to conclude that their advantage lies in interpreting these events in the light of the dependence of human destiny on deities who care not only whether they are respected by men or not, but also whether they are faithful to the divine moral law.⁵ Undoubtedly, Nikolai believes that the "prophets and sages of the East" understood the history "better than Homer and Sophocles" because they did not insist on the anthropomorphic reactions of the offended and angry deities, but on the impersonal automatism of the negative consequences of man's

4 According to the great German philosopher, the idea (God's scenario) and human passions are two necessary constitutive moments of historical events – "the one is the foundation, the other the weft of the great carpet of world history that is spread out before us" (Hegel 2006, 30). Karl Löwith rightly notes that Hegel's idea of the ruse of reason is a secularized version of the Christian doctrine of providence. See Löwith 1990, 85.

5 In the ancient tragedies, the inevitable consequence of *hybris* is the suffering of those who consciously or unconsciously violate the moral law. Ancient historians interpreted events according to a cyclical understanding of time, as a "periodic, circular movement within which the cycle of changing fortunes is determined by the balance of *hybris and nemesis*" (Löwith 1990, 32).

sin against the moral law.⁶ “The mysterious essence of history is sacred” (Nikolai 2013b, 329-330), Nikolai emphasizes, recalling that all ancient philosophers of history agree on this. However, although it is characteristic of all major world religions to believe that the entire universe “serves the moral law of God” (Nikolai 1996a, 80), that “there are no social laws that are independent of the moral law” (ibid., 44), that historical events thus depend on its observance or non-observance,⁷ he believes that the biblical, especially the Christian understanding of history is superior to that of other religions. For in contrast to the cyclical understanding of time of the Far Eastern religions and their insistence on the impersonal law of karma or the exaggerated necessity in Islam (*kismet*), the biblical view of history is based on the belief in God’s providence. “All nature and all human history depend on a single moral law” (ibid., 44), and the creator and guardian of this law is the Almighty, who is characterized by infinite love and who, even if he allows demonic forces to punish us, does so for the good of our souls and our salvation.

What was and remained a constant in Nikolai’s interpretation of history from the very beginning was his conviction that Holy Scripture provides the key to understanding the fate of a nation.⁸ Whether God shows a particular people special favor, whether it is a chosen people, depends first and foremost on the relationship of that people to the moral law established by God. “God’s Word, recorded in the Holy Scriptures of God, teaches us that the happiness or unhappiness of a person, family, posterity and society depends on the fulfillment or trampling of God’s moral law” (ibid., 45). Strange as it may seem, it is certainly no coincidence that so much is said in the Old Testament about the history of the Jewish people, for the study of this history can be very instructive for everyone. This is exactly what the inspired words of St. Nikolai of Serbia confirm: “Under the prism of God’s moral law, the prophets and chroniclers inspired by God describe to us the fate of the people of Israel from the beginning to the end. (...) The history of this people was not forced into the Holy Book of God by chance and aimlessly, as many Western theologians and critics

6 Regardless of whether the cosmic moral law is called *rta* or *dharma*, anyone who violates it is automatically punished for it. The Indian all-seeing god Varuna is an enforcer of punishment for violating the cosmic moral law rather than its creator and defender. See Hoheisel 2002, 37.

7 “Whether a society is blessed or cursed depends on whether it fulfills or tramples on God’s moral law in small and large ways. A society grows and progresses and lives happily when it is under God’s blessing; it falls, perishes and disappears when it is under his curse” (Nikolai 1996a, 47-48).

8 When he speaks of fate, Nikolai, as a Christian, is certainly not thinking of a blind fate, but of a fate that is “providential, planned and just” (Nikolai 2013b, 653).

think, but purposefully, by the highest providence, to illustrate the effect of the divine moral law, for the instruction of all peoples" (ibid., 32). If we look at the time when the Jewish people were ruled by judges, we will easily notice that it is characterized by "three main events that took place continuously and alternately. These three events are: Israel's apostasy from God, God's punishment in the form of enslavement among strangers, and the people's repentance with a cry to God for deliverance; then apostasy again, then punishment, then repentance with a cry; then the same thing again and again" (ibid., 33).⁹ Since God's law is universal, we can also apply this pattern to the interpretation of the history of other peoples.

Nikolai's attitude to the three epochs of Serbian history

In various, often casual interpretations of Serbian history, which are presented in sermons or attempts to briefly introduce it to foreigners, Nikolai does not deviate from its division into the Nemanjić period, the period of enslavement and the struggle for freedom, which is victoriously traced in the First Serbian Uprising.¹⁰ Although he knew that the Serbs already had not only a state but also saints before the golden Nemanjić era, he did not want to engage in interpretations for which there is not enough relevant historical evidence and which should still be the subject of thorough and comprehensive scientific research. Thus, St. Nikolai of Ohrid and Žiča modestly says that the historical destiny of the Serbian people is clear "only from Nemanja onwards", that is, only a tenth of our history, but this is enough to recognize not only its greatness but also its deeper meaning. Although he avoided writing about the period before Nemanjić, especially the dark pagan period, and even claimed that it was good for the Serbs that they were not burdened by their pre-Christian civilization,¹¹ he

9 Cf. Nikolai 1996b, 188.

10 Convinced that history as such "is not a senseless jumble, but a very skillful and very consistent weaving", the Serbian Chrysostom emphasizes that this can be seen particularly clearly in the example of Serbian history, which is "classical in the clarity and definiteness of its features" It is characterized by three periods: "domination, enslavement, liberation" (Nikolai 2013z, 298).

11 In Nikolai's opinion, "the very limited knowledge of our history has a good side" because, unlike the peoples who pride themselves on a good knowledge of their distant past, but who are sometimes divided within themselves because they glorify their pagan heroes and philosophers on the one hand and Christian saints on the other, the Slavs know "only their baptized history". As if anticipating the present-day efforts of some researchers of our distant past who, in their zeal to rehabilitate the Serbian pagan tradition, often emphasize it at the expense of the Saint-Savian tradition, St. Nikolai of

dared to point out the hidden connection between the Serbs and the Indian people. On several occasions, he pointed out the connection between the Serbian and Indian people, recalling that other nations are not able to use the word *Srb*, but resort to forms such as *Serb*, *Sorab* and the like, which in his opinion is a sign of a deeper linguistic and ethnic connection between the Serbs and the Indian Aryans.¹² What he was unwilling to explicitly state as his own point of view, Nikolai conveyed through his literary characters in the *Indian Letters*. After repeating that “no people in Europe (and perhaps in the whole world) has *r* as a vowel except the Indians and Serbs”, the Indologist Dr. Jevtim¹³ makes a bold claim: “The word *Serb* is of Sanskrit origin and its exact meaning is not known” (Nikolai 2013g, 715). In support of the connection between the Serbs and India,¹⁴ and even the assumption that the Serbs came to these lands from India, Nikolai quotes the words of his teacher and friend Dimitrije Mitrinović,

Žiča and Ohrid writes: “Our pagan, pre-Christian past is without clarity and without glory. All our glory lies in the time of baptized history” (Nikolai 2013b, 654).

- 12 After pointing out that the *Srb* name is “the only national name in Europe whose meaning has been lost”, which according to him is not accidental, because “the Serbian name is a mystery, hidden and profound, like the entire destiny of the Serbian people”, St. Nikolai of Serbia reminds that in contrast to the “linguistic poverty” of Western nations, which “have no *r* as a vowel and were therefore forced to put the *e* before the *r* in order to be able to pronounce” the name *Srb*, apart from the Serbs on the Eurasian continent, “only the Indians have an *r* as a vowel”, which indicates their connection. Not only did the Serbian ancestors adopt “many words, ancient Indian, Sanskrit,” from India, but there is also a certain similarity between the Indian belief in karma and the Serbian belief in fate (Nikolai 2013b, 653).
- 13 Apparently, this figure refers to the Serbian Indologist Pavle Jevtić, who translated the *Bhagavad Gita*, among other things.
- 14 Nikolai’s literary character, Dr. Jevtim, claims: “We Serbs are part of the great India. (...) Fate separated us from India before the birth of Christ and led us to the Balkans via Europe and Western Asia. But although we are physically separated, spiritually we have never separated from our ancient homeland of India” (Nikolai 2013g, 714). See also: *ibid.*, 711, 716, 720. In any case, the Serbian-Slavic-Indian-Iranian common origin (and communication) is no secret in science, as they are linguistically and culturally very closely related (“satem”) groups. According to the prevailing scientific view, which has recently been genetically confirmed, the Aryans invaded India and Iran – as a result of migrations whose starting point was in what is now Europe, exactly where the Slavic peoples are today – and subjugated the indigenous population. Moreover, contacts between the populations of these areas apparently continued later, and the old Serbian ethnonym is also present in Asia, as evidenced, for example, by the numerous Sarbani in present-day Afghanistan and Pakistan; this refers precisely to the areas where, among others, the aforementioned Aryans came a long time ago and spread widely in the (later) Indian, Iranian and other surrounding areas where Indo-European languages were or are still spoken. Otherwise, the question of the original homeland of the Slavs remains open. There are three main theories about the original homeland of the Slavs: Danube-Pannonian (Balkan), Middle Dnieper and Vistula-Oder (Piper 2008, 127–136; see also Todorović et al. 2015, 146–147).

who believes that “the Serbs racially and psychologically unconsciously carry India within them” because they “themselves originally come from India” (ibid., 738).¹⁵

But let us return to Nikolai's division of Serbian history into the aforementioned three periods, the “*Nemanjić era, the enslavement and the liberation*”. According to the great Serbian spiritual luminary, each of them “contains within itself the cause and nourishment for the next period”, as Serbian history is an organic whole connected by a unique spirit in which the aforementioned periods are interwoven. The golden age of the Nemanjić dynasty is characterized by the creation of “a partly original, partly adopted culture”. The Serbian state adopted much from the Roman Empire, but thanks to the holy Nemanjić dynasty, especially St. Sava and St. Simeon the Myrrh-Streamer, the Serbian people created their own identity and achieved the long-awaited symphony of state and ecclesiastical power in Byzantium.¹⁶

The great župan Nemanja recognized that the Serbian people were facing two strong forces, Constantinopolitan Panhellenism and the Roman pantheocracy, which opposed the establishment of Serbian national and religious identity, and demonstrated a commendable ability to gradually strengthen Serbia's independent position. Although he “perhaps unconsciously and spontaneously or semi-consciously marked out the path to the future of his people”, his importance is immense, as his efforts enabled

15 In the meantime, modern genetic research has shown a connection between the Serbian people (as well as the Slavs in a broader sense) and the Indian peoples, especially the descendants of the highest Indian castes. Namely, haplogroup R1a represents the “basic Indo-European haplogroup directly linked to the emergence of the Indo-European linguistic-cultural and ethno-cultural phenomenon” (Todorović and others 2014, 103). This haplogroup is typical both in the Slavic ethnic context (and for the Serbs, noting that the common ancient indigenous name for the Slavs was apparently once Serbs; see e.g. Todorović and Aksić 2022, 36–37) and for the basic Indo-Europeans, and is also widespread in the Indian subcontinent, especially among the highest castes, where the corresponding common ancestral heritage is likely to be strongest (see e.g. the book: Kljosov 2013). The current diversity of the variants of haplogroup R1a among the Slavs on the one hand and the Indian and Iranian peoples on the other is a logical consequence of the time that has passed since the separation of these groups from a single matrix. The branch R1a-Z645, which is most typical for Slavs and Indians today, testifies to their common origin.

16 Bishop Nikolai uses the metaphor that Nemanja gave the Serbian state the body and St. Sava the soul. See Nikolai 2013d, 402. The creation of a symphony between these two authorities, between whom there was no conflict, was facilitated by the fact that their bearers were closely related. Bishop Nikolai emphasizes that God decided “that at a historical turning point in Serbian history, two brothers should act as national leaders, one as a spiritual and the other as a secular ruler, Archbishop Sava and King Stefan” (Nikolai 2013b, 662). The goal of both the spiritual and secular authorities was the same – to serve Christ.

his son Sava to “fully clarify and pave this path, crystallize the general ideas of his father and practically implement them in a perfect internal organization of the Serbian people” (Nikolai 2013v, 657). St. Sava understood that the prerequisite for building an unshakable national identity was the establishment of an independent Serbian Church in an independent state. Thanks to the won autocephalous Church, Serbian rulers and bishops will strive in the future to realize the idea of their spiritual predecessor that Serbs will become a holy people, which will contribute to the Serbian state becoming an unshakable bastion of Orthodoxy.¹⁷ Although the Serbian state will continue to exist for several decades after the fateful Battle of Kosovo and will even develop economically and culturally to some extent, the Battle of Kosovo heralds the end of this golden era. The famous words of Bishop Nikolai: “St. Sava’ Day and St. Vitus’ Day are two eternal Serbian holidays. The first teaches us the way of perfect life through faith, the second the way of perfect death for faith” (Nikolai 2013k, 83), express his conviction that St. Prince Lazar embodied the Saint-Savian covenant in practice and offered his compatriots a model of behavior under the difficult conditions of centuries of slavery.

What was created in the golden age of the Nemanjić dynasty as “a contemporary need of the time”, above all the magnificent foundations of the Serbian rulers and nobility, “built for prayer and gratitude to God”, will serve “in the time of slavery practically exclusively for the salvation of the Serbian nation”. With regard to the famous symbolic “representation of the church as a ship of salvation”, Nikolai emphasizes that it is precisely in Serbian history that it is most clearly confirmed. “In the midst of the general Ottoman flood, the Serbian people were saved in these only ships of salvation that remained to them from their emperors.” Those who did not want to be saved in them, who chose a different, easier way of

17 Since all Balkan peoples were exposed to aggressive Roman Catholic proselytism as well as to the claims of the Patriarch of Constantinople for their unconditional submission to him, Bishop Nikolai believes that the invaluable importance of St. Sava not only for the Serbs, but also for all Orthodoxy, is that he created “from the Serbian Church, from the Serbian people, a bulwark against aggressive clericalism”. St. Nikolai of Serbia even believes, that “the time will come when all Balkan peoples will call St. Sava the savior of Orthodoxy”. The world-historical mission of St. Sava, who “created an independent national church in Serbia, independent of both the Vatican and the Phanar”, also encouraged other Balkan peoples and the Russians to do the same and thus “save the entire Orthodox Balkans and Russia, and thus the entire Orthodox East, from clericalism” (Nikolai 2013b, 282). The Serbian rulers will continue in their loyalty to Orthodoxy in the footsteps of Sava. Bishop Nikolai emphasizes that the holy king Milutin saved the Greek people “from uniatization during reign of one of the Palaiologi” (Nikolai 2013b, 663), and that the despot Đurađ Branković refused to allow Serbian church dignitaries to attend the church council in Florence, which was to lead to uniatism, i.e. the subordination of the Orthodox to Rome.

self-preservation, opted for faith conversion and thus gradually lost their Serbian identity. In Nikolai's opinion, the entire Serbian history is characterized by fighting. "While in the first period the *struggle for glory* is the guiding principle, in the second period the guiding principle is the *struggle for survival* and in the third period the *struggle for freedom*" (Nikolai 2013v, 328). Nikolai does not see the difficult, centuries-long period of slavery, in which the Serbian people remembered their past greatness, repented of their sins and dreamed of a better future, exclusively in a negative light. Although the Serbian people at that time "lived mainly in the past and least of all in the present", and although one would expect them to be seized by apathy, "the spirit of our people was not unproductive and passive", as the magnificent folk poetry proves. It is an expression of the unshakeable belief that the resurrection of the Serbian people is possible.¹⁸ But much more important than the artistic creations produced by the Serbian national soul was the deep national repentance for the sins committed, which presupposed that the national soul was purified and ready to face the future time. And this came when the Serbian people were the first of the enslaved Balkan peoples to rise up on their own in the struggle for liberation. When Nikolai wrote about these three periods in 1913, he was aware of the fact that the time of the struggle for freedom was in full swing. The Serbian Chrysostom rightly emphasizes this: "The struggle for freedom is still underway, this period is not yet over." The following history will prove him right. Although Nikolai believed at the time of the founding of the state of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes that the third period was almost complete, that the Serbs could peacefully build their culture in the newly founded country, he later realized that he was wrong, that Yugoslavia was fatal for the Serbs,¹⁹ that it would have been much better if the Serbs had focused on the idea of creating an Orthodox Balkan federation instead of sacrificing themselves for non-Orthodox brothers.²⁰

18 Nikolai used a successful metaphor when he emphasized that "our blind minstrels preserved the soul of the Serbian people through the cold winter of slavery to the spring of freedom" (Nikolai 2013d, 376). By singing of the Serbian commitment to the Kingdom of Heaven in their epic creations, in their "national psalms" (ibid., 392), the blind Serbian minstrels, the bearers of the theologically formed Kosovo Covenant, seemed to compensate for their lack of physical sight with spiritual sight, as if they also saw the bright future that lay ahead of them.

19 Nikolai's belief in the Yugoslav idea is evident in his assertion that Serbs, Croats and Slovenes are "one and the same nation by language, blood and fate and by their desires" (ibid., 401). After the sobering experience of the behavior of the "brothers" during the Second World War, Bishop Nikolai claims that Yugoslavia represented "for the Serbian people the greatest deception, the most severe convulsions and the most shameful humiliation it has ever experienced and survived in its history" (Nikolai 2013b, 681).

20 Faced with the ingratitude of the liberated South Slav brothers and, above all, with the incomprehensible genocide of the Serbian people, Nikolai will later see the sacri-

Regardless of the clear change of opinion about the Yugoslav idea, Nikolai will not question the periodization of Serbian history that was already made in 1913. These three periods are characterized by three clearly distinct yet essentially connected acts: the first is growth and fall, the second redemption and the third resurrection. The Serbian Chrysostom summarizes what has been said: “Few national histories have such clear periods, such defined colors and such unity, both technically and ideologically, as a whole and in parts, as our history.” The reason for this is that our history is indeed “a truly great drama”, and this implies that it is “*a sacred drama*”. Secular fact collectors are not able to see this, unlike theologians who, like Nikolai, can only agree that it is: “a drama of sin, suffering and resurrection” (Nikolai 2013a, 20). Keeping in mind the suffering and sacred character of Serbian history, the words of St. Nikolai of Ohrid and Žiča seem to admonish those who would approach it in a vulgar materialistic way: “The history of the Serbian people can be written not only with ink, but also with blood and tears of the heart” (Nikolai 2013v, 665).

Logic and meaning of Serbian history

In order to verify the validity of Nikolai’s conviction that Serbian history is a sacred drama, it is necessary to consider the arguments that the Serbian Chrysostom puts forward in support of his thesis. The very word *drama* indicates that Serbian history is essentially different from the history of those peoples who are accustomed to a carefree life and to whom God has not assigned a significant task. Convinced that “in art, drama occupies the first place”, the Serbian Chrysostom points out that we can be proud of our history because it is “not some vaudeville or novella, but a drama, *deep in content, clear and beautiful in form*” (Nikolai 2013a, 22). Sometimes he even equates it with tragedy as the highest dramatic form.²¹ There is no doubt that many secular historians would agree with Nikolai’s

of Serbian identity in favor of Yugoslavism as a detour from which we must return to reaffirm our national and spiritual identity. He reminds us that the process of alienation of Serbs from their national essence already began during the time of the old Yugoslavia. This is best illustrated by the status of the two largest Serbian national holidays, St. Sava’ Day and St. Vitus’ Day, which were no longer treated as state holidays for the sake of internal peace, to “please the minority and supposedly preserve the state”, but were transferred to the exclusive jurisdiction of the Serbian Church. In the old Yugoslavia, “by despising the Serbian name, St. Vitus’ Day was also despised”. By abandoning St. Vitus’ Day as a state vacation, our politicians “insulted the Serbian majority in both worlds and neither pleased the minority nor preserved the state. They sacrificed the kingdom of heaven to the idol of the earthly kingdom and a ‘day of truce’ and ‘day of unification’, the great St. Vitus’ Day” (Nikolai 2013a, 80-81).

21 See Nikolai 2013b, 673, and Nikolai 2013d, 412.

statement that Serbian history is tragic, as the Serbian people have suffered much more than other European nations, even significantly more than the suffering Russian people.²² One of the reasons for this suffering can certainly be the geographical location of the Serbian people. As has been repeatedly stated, Serbs built their house on a busy road, they are located on the demarcation line between East and West and are therefore exposed to the devastating effects of the mutually opposing forces.²³ But although the geographical location of the Serbian people has largely determined their fate, it is much more important, at least in Nikolai's opinion, to see the spiritual fact that the Serbian people are a people chosen by God, that they have been assigned a special, world-historical mission.²⁴ Being a chosen people, as the fate of the Jewish people shows, is not a comfortable privilege.²⁵ Unlike some Western nations who, citing Old Testament motives, believe they have a right to be ruthless towards others because of their alleged chosenness,²⁶ the Serbs were taught by St. Sava

22 Sometimes St. Nikolai of Ohrid and Žiča compares the difficult fate of the Serbian people with that of Job: "The fate of the suffering Serbian people is more similar to the fate of the long-suffering Job than to the fate of any people in the Christian world. He was beaten in property and body, but God preserved his soul" (Nikolai 2004, 140).

23 See Justin 2001, 212. Nikolai claims that the causes of our tragedy are the same "as the causes of the tragedy of every human hero: our geographical location and our inner characteristics" (Nikolai 2013d, 412). The inner characteristic of Serbian people is the commitment to the Kingdom of Heaven, of course not by every Serb, but by those who are truly bearers of the Serbian spirit, founders, transmitters and guardians of the Serbian identity.

24 Even if it may seem to some that chosenness is unreasonable and depends only on the inscrutable will of God, if we connect the chosenness of the Jewish people with the virtues of its patriarchs (Abraham, Isaac and Jacob) and with the spiritual greatness of Moses and David, we could come to the conclusion that God pays particular attention to the moral and spiritual condition of the patriarchs when electing a people. Although God loves all people and all nations, "as it was said of the apostle John that Jesus loved him especially, God shows his love especially to those to whom he gives great tasks in the drama of human history." In a way, the Serbs have earned their chosenness because the founders of the Serbian state were saints: Nemanja, Sava and Stefan. In support of the belief of St. Nikolai of Ohrid and Žiča that Christ "assigned a great task to the Serbian people, a great mission among the nearer and more distant peoples" (Nikolai 2013b, 655), it can be said that certainly no people in the world, except the Serbs, can boast of a holy dynasty. Although during the tragic Serbian history it sometimes seemed that the Serbian essence resembled a felled tree, almost a stump, the spiritual juices of the healthy root of Saint-Savaism allowed a renewal so that the felled tree could branch out and become green again. See Nikolai 2013a, 42. It seems that the special role of the Serbian people on this planet stems from the fact that the noble branches of the ruling Nemanjić dynasty grow on the vine of Christ.

25 Whom God loves most, he punishes most severely when he proves unfaithful. "According to the measure of the knowledge of God is also the measure of punishment" (Nikolai 2004, 38) when someone sins.

26 Even before their arrival on the American continent, the English Puritans identified themselves with the chosen Jewish people who had been commissioned by Jehovah

that their chosenness requires great efforts to become a holy people, that it is their task to serve both God and other peoples, to fight against evil and injustice and to contribute to the realization of freedom, peace and justice on earth.

Although the young Rastko has fled to Mount Athos for his own salvation, as a monk Sava, who becomes a vessel of the grace of the Holy Spirit, he will have four concerns in mind: how to save himself, how to help his relatives to be saved, but also how to help his people and other peoples to become worthy of God's grace. Being filled with the grace of the Holy Spirit, St. Sava showed great love for his neighbors, and a neighbor for him was every human being, even an enemy, so that his concern for salvation encompassed all of humanity. The aforementioned concerns developed naturally and logically "in concentric circles", with "Christ the Redeemer at the center".²⁷ In addition to his fervent prayers, the monk Sava also expressed his concern for the Serbian people by being willing to come to Serbia and establish the people there in the Orthodox faith. On several occasions, Bishop Nikolai emphasized that St. Sava's program was to "make the Serbian people a holy people" (Nikolai 2013a, 64),²⁸ and to this purpose he not only fought with God's help for the autocephaly of the Serbian Church, but at the Council of Žiča he made a covenant with the Serbian people in the teaching of the true faith in order to put the principles of the New Testament into practice. Like many others, St. Nikolai of Žiča and Ohrid rightly regards St. Sava as the spiritual father of the Serbian people,²⁹ who spiritually founded the Serbian national essence, and everything that will happen in further Serbian history will either confirm

to exterminate the sinful Canaanite natives. Therefore, they had no qualms about taking their land from the natives and exterminating them.

27 See Nikolai 2013j, 693-695.

28 See Nikolai 2013b, 134. The Serbian Chrysostom emphasizes that St. Sava showed "his people" holiness as "the last and highest ideal of the human race given by God". He not only spoke about this ideal, but "with his whole being he revealed to the people this human ideal of holiness, which is embodied in himself" (ibid., 205).

29 Bishop Nikolai calls St. Sava "the spiritual and moral parent of the Serbian people" (ibid., 211), referring primarily to Domentian. Domentian backs up his insight that St. Sava was the spiritual father of all Serbs, including his own biological father, with a number of interesting facts from his life. In Domentian's opinion, St. Sava made the Serbian people into a new Israel. He compares him to Moses and even claims that the Serbian spiritual father surpassed the great prophet who made a covenant with God on Sinai on behalf of the Jewish people. While Moses was only a seer of God, St. Sava was a bearer of God because the fullness of the grace of the Holy Spirit dwelt in him. See Domentian 1988, 209-215. St. Sava's sacrificial love for the Serbian people, which recalls the willingness of St. Paul the Apostle to cut himself off from Christ for the sake of his carnal kinsmen (Rom. 9, 3), is poetically expressed by Bishop Nikolai in the *Liturgy of Heaven* when he remarks that the Serbian intercessor before God's

the Saint-Savian covenant or betray it, which will result in inevitable suffering, whose aim was to bring the people to repentance in adversity and return to the right path of service to Christ.

Since it is almost universally recognized that St. Sava laid the spiritual foundation for the Serbian people and determined its historical path, there is no doubt that Lazar's "assent to the Kingdom of Heaven, which (...) was performed in the name of the whole people, (...) is the strongest expression of the general meaning of our history and its regulating idea" (Nikolai 2013a, 48).³⁰ In contrast to those who, looking at historical events from a frog's-eye view, believe that Kosovo, a synonym for our commitment to the Kingdom of Heaven, has set us back, that the "wheel of our history" was stopped there, that, if it had not been for this fateful battle, "we would be a great people today" (ibid., 15), that on that tragic St. Vitus' Day in 1389 a fatal darkness descended on our history that has not been dispelled to this day, Nikolai claims exactly the opposite. He recalls that the St. Vitus' Day is certainly not by chance "the greatest glory of the Serbian people",³¹ and emphasizes that the St. Vitus' Day is "a day and not a night, and indeed a *Day*" (ibid., 16). The designation of Day of St. Vitus' as a day with a capital D is justified, as it is a holy and not an ordinary day. St. Vitus' Day is "the most significant day in our history", not only because of an event that happened once, however significant it may have been, but because it still continues to take place in the con-

throne says: "I would gladly be in hell, / So that the Serbs may return to God" (Nikolai 2013l, 595).

- 30 Almost all interpreters of Saint-Savaism and the Kosovo covenant agree on this. While Žarko Vidović believes that the mystery of Serbian history is "the secret mystery of Christ, Saint-Savian covenant, which was given at the Žiča Assembly and also confirmed by the Kosovo Covenant" (Vidović 2009, 45), Metropolitan Amfilohije emphasizes that "the entire history of the Serbian people up to our days can only be properly understood in the light of the Kosovo Covenant as the fullness of Saint-Savaism" (Radović 2009, 371). Commitment to the Kingdom of Heaven is a feature of the entire Serbian history, especially the golden Nemanjić era. St. Nikolai of Ohrid and Žiča rightly emphasizes "that the Serbian people chose the Kingdom of Heaven through St. Sava at the beginning of the creation of their earthly kingdom, and again chose the Kingdom of Heaven through St. Tsar Lazar at the beginning of the destruction of their earthly kingdom" (Nikolai 2013b, 182).
- 31 The very fact that Kosovo is "the largest grave of Christian martyrs killed in a single day" and that "the celebrants honor the death of their saint" and not the day of his physical birth, since it was precisely through his passage into the Kingdom of Heaven that he earned the right to intercede for them before God's throne, clearly shows why "the entire Serbian people celebrate and glorify St. Vitus' Day". The celebration of St. Vitus' Day is not an expression of our supposedly masochistic attitude towards defeat, but rather an awareness of our spiritual victory. "By glorifying the great army of Kosovo martyrs, we celebrate not the defeated but the victors, not the dead but the living" (Nikolai 2013a, 16).

sciousness of the Serbian people, because its heavenly light reveals the essence of everyone. St. Vitus' Day is, in fact, "an immense spiritual height from which one can survey our entire history, backwards and forwards" (Nikolai 2013d, 130).³² Perhaps the Serbs would be a more numerous people if it had not been for that fateful battle that resulted in centuries of slavery under the Turks, but they would certainly not be a great people, because greatness is a spiritual category. After reminding us that no Christian nation "in history has what the Serbian people have, they do not have *Kosovo*" (Nikolai 2013a, 14), Nikolai rightly emphasizes: "The seeds of the heavenly kingdom sown by Saint Sava have sprouted luxuriantly and grown large. The rich fruits of this seed were harvested in the field of Kosovo" (ibid., 17). Although he adhered to the traditional popular belief that the Battle of Kosovo ended with a Serbian military defeat,³³ he believes that the Serbs subsequently won a spiritual victory because they were worthy of martyrs' crowns for populating the heavenly Serbia. Referring to the Kosovo covenant, which was theologically shaped above all by the merit of Danilo the Third and the monks of Ravanica, Nikolai writes: "A whole armed people as a single Christian martyr, obedient to the providential will of the All-Seeing One, takes upon itself the bitterness of death, not as bitterness, but as life-giving medicine" (ibid., 15). Thanks to this medicine, those who did not taste it at that time, by the remembering the spiritual greatness of their ancestors, will also be able to preserve the Serbian national identity, despite the extremely difficult conditions of slavery under the Turks, despite the threat of the cunning plans of the Latins to uniate them. Nikolai points out that Kosovo is "the culmination of the dramatic action in our history" (ibid., 21), and proudly says: "It is *Kosovo* that has made us a great people. It is our national Golgotha and at the same time our national resurrection, spiritually and morally." For just as Byzantium was increasingly affected by the corruption of its elite, which manifested itself in a selfish struggle for particular interests so that the process of corruption affecting the Serbian nobility would not spread to the people, God allowed the Serbs to lose their state

32 The exaltation of St. Vitus' Day, its interpretation as the culmination of the Saint-Savian spirit, is a constant not only in Nikolai's interpretation of Serbian history, but also in his view of the world. For him, "St. Vitus' Day is light, not darkness; the light of the heart, reason and patriotism. St. Vitus' Day is not a lowland, but a height" (ibid., 75).

33 Modern historians have shown that the earliest accounts of the battle in Kosovo do not speak of a Serbian defeat. In their opinion, the battle either ended in a draw or in a Serbian victory, based on the medieval understanding that the side that leaves the battlefield is considered defeated. But even if the battle in Kosovo is considered a Serbian victory, it is undoubtedly a Pyrrhic victory, because unlike the mighty Ottoman Empire, the Serbian people were unable to recover quickly enough from the consequences of this bloody battle.

so that the national soul could be purified through centuries of slavery. Moreover, in Kosovo we were given “a gallery of knights of faith, honesty and self-sacrifice” and there “the moral decay of the Serbian people was halted” (ibid., 15).³⁴

Deprived of the state, exposed to violence and various temptations to convert, the Serbian “people endured and endured everything thanks to Kosovo and the Church. The Church was an interpreter of *Kosovo* and *Kosovo* was an interpreter of everything that happened before and after the fall of the earthly kingdom of Serbia. With the help of these two faithful interpreters, people understood the essence of freedom. They understood that freedom is a gift from God, that it is a sanctuary and that it is inseparable from the venerable cross. Whoever violates the venerable cross violates freedom, and vice versa, whoever violates freedom violates the venerable cross. Freedom is a sanctuary, hence the name: sacred freedom. Freedom is given to men like a clean cloth; whoever soils it must wash it with tears and blood” (ibid., 43).³⁵

Nikolai, like many other authors, claims that suffering is the “central fact of our history”. In the conviction that “a life without suffering (...) is shallow” and superficial because it is almost always directed towards worldly goals, he glorifies suffering not for its own sake, but only for Christ. In contrast to the banal suffering of those who do not defend ideals, who do not serve God, Serbian suffering is ultimately meaningful and sublime. Nikolai points out that such suffering “makes a history sacred, a drama sacred” (ibid., 21), reminding us that “the period of national

34 In his famous religious-philosophical essay *The Covenant of the Tsar*, Bishop Nikolai presents the captured Prince Lazar as he speaks to the angel of God on the eve of his execution. While more and more fallen crucified banners can be seen on the battlefield, the angel tells him that the sinful Serbian nobility “has long trampled on and dishonored this holy sign.” To Lazar’s question as to why God gives victory to those who mock the cross, he receives the answer: “If the baptized dishonor the cross through their lawlessness, the All-Seeing One allows the unbaptized to dishonor it even more.” The angel comforts him, however, that both his and Serbia’s Golgotha will end with a resurrection. The Serbs will be enslaved “under unbaptized masters for as many centuries as ancient Israel was enslaved under the Pharaoh of Egypt” so that the honorable cross can fill the national soul. Just as the pillar of fire led the Jewish people from Egyptian slavery to the Promised Land, “a cross lifted up from the Kosovo field to heaven will lead your people through the desert of slavery. It will shine for them, guide them and bring them to the promised land of freedom – not only earthly, symbolic and temporary freedom, but also true, immortal and angelic freedom” (Nikolai 1996b, 260-262).

35 Vladimir Dvorniković rightly emphasized that in the difficult times of enslavement, when the Serbian people temporarily lacked educated priests, the Kosovo cult “became a true national religious culture, began to fulfill the vital function of religion and became the true backbone of national vitality” (Dvorniković 2023, 148).

slavery deepened our history and gave it dramatic grandeur.”³⁶ Nikolai reminds us that no modern nation “has paid a higher price for its place on God’s planet” than the Serbian one, that the history of the Serbian people is characterized by suffering due to the struggle for freedom and justice, and proudly declares: “We can be satisfied with our history. It is great – greater than us. Because it was created by someone other than us. It was created through us by the one who can make both an ‘honorable vessel’ and a ‘dishonorable vessel’ out of the same clay. We can be satisfied that God has made us an honorable vessel” (ibid., 22).

What happens when an honorable vessel is soiled or even defiled? It is not thrown away, but carefully and thoroughly cleaned, if possible. In a similar way, God, whose highest attribute is love, has dealt with the Serbian people in the course of their turbulent history and has often led them “through fire and water” (Ps. 65:12).³⁷ By assigning them the role of “the main bearer of Christianity in the world” (Nikolai 2013a, 40) in order to stand on the right side of history and initially withstand the blows of the forces of evil, the Almighty ensured that the Serbian people produced holy souls and great personalities, for only in this way could they fulfill the great tasks entrusted to them. Of course, although the Serbs sometimes astonished the world with their willingness to suffer for their ideals and contributed significantly to the victory of light over darkness, they also experienced defeats, especially when they were content with the laurels of victory. Thanks to repentance, however, they rose again and testified to everyone that they are God’s people and that St. Nikolai of Ohrid and Žiča rightly gave the Serbian people the name Theodoulos or Christodoulos.

As justification for boldly giving the name of the servant of God to an entire people and not just to a prominent individual, Bishop Nikolai offered his interpretation of the essence and meaning of Serbian history, which in his opinion represents “an incomparable epic of crystallization of personal and national character, an epic of zeal, struggle, suffering and glory”, all “under the sign of the cross and freedom” (Nikolai 2013v, 654).

36 In Nikolai’s opinion, “Serbian history provides general proof of how the suppression of the body leads to the rebirth of the soul.” Of course, only if the suffering, penitently understood as an expression of God’s justice, is accepted without grumbling. “The more the Serbian body was tortured, the more the Serbian soul rose” (Nikolai 2013đ, 382).

37 Comparing God to a blacksmith and people to iron, Bishop Nikolai notes that the blacksmith “sometimes rejects the iron first if it does not seem suitable to him”, and sometimes “he throws it into the fire and forges it again to make something good out of it.” Since God knows the spiritual potential of the Serbs, although they often forget their mission, He did not reject them “after the first glow, but threw them into the fire many times” in order to “forge something useful and glorious” out of the Serbian people (Nikolai 2004, 287).

Pointing out that “we have never (...) fought only for miserable survival in the world”, nor “only for earthly pleasures”, the Serbian Chrysostom concludes that we have always fought “for what makes a life worthwhile – for the honorable cross and golden freedom” (Nikolai 2013e, 623-624). Since many individuals and nations invoke the cross and freedom, St. Nikolai considered it necessary to explain what the Serbs actually mean by the honorable cross and golden freedom. He first remarks: “The sign of the cross is dependence on God, the sign of freedom is independence from man” (Nikolai 2013v, 654), and afterwards emphasizes that this is not just any invocation of the cross and freedom, because unfortunately the symbol of the cross has fallen into disrepute in the course of history,³⁸ and freedom has degenerated into the indulgence of unbridled passions and thus into the bondage of sin. In order to distance themselves from the distorted, criminal cross and the cheap, dirty freedom, the Serbs have sworn on the Cross of Honor and the Golden Liberty for centuries. The golden freedom implies that it is something valuable and precious in the eyes of the Serbs, that it is “dear, pure and bright”.³⁹ It is certainly no coincidence that the Serbs almost always emphasized the crusader flag in the fight for freedom.⁴⁰ This fact alone indicates that, for the Serbs, freedom is essentially always linked to loyalty to Christ.⁴¹

Having established an inseparable link between the Cross of Honor and golden freedom, St. Nikolai of Serbia proudly emphasizes that the “fundamental and continuous line of Serbian history in the last 800 years” can be formulated as “SERVICE TO CHRIST”. Knowing full well the objections to be expected, that it is highly inappropriate to claim that an entire people, especially over a long period of time, served Christ, Bishop Nikolai admits that many Serbs, especially the leaders blinded by egoism,

38 The behavior of the crusaders and colonizers led to the cross becoming a hated emblem in the eyes of non-European peoples, and its bearers were referred to as white demons. See Nikolai 2004, 157.

39 If we know that gold is a symbol of immaterial light, then golden freedom means freedom from sin, spiritual freedom, which is a characteristic of transfigured man.

40 During the Banat uprising against the Turks in 1594, the Serbs carried the image of St. Sava on their flags. There is basically no essential difference between the image of the greatest Serbian saint and the sign of the cross, because it was St. Sava who embodied the Christian values of his people the most.

41 St. Nikolai of Ohrid and Žiça emphasizes that “no people except the Serbian has such a positive and clear motto: For the venerable cross and golden freedom, which would be a criterion for all events and all occurrences” (Nikolai 2004, 214). The Serbs blame no one but themselves for their suffering. They know that God was always with them when they were faithful to the covenant of fighting for the honorable cross and golden freedom, and that they were punished when the cross darkened and freedom was reduced to serving their own passions.

have occasionally forgotten this service, but that it was always been a minority: “The majority of the Serbian people never deviated from this basic line” (Nikolai 2013v, 654). If the Serbs were to deviate significantly from their God-given mission, fate would “scourge the Serbs with torment and suffering” (ibid., 655), something that no other people except the Jewish people has experienced in its history, for to whom much is given, much is required (cf. Lk 12:48). Bishop Nikolai emphasizes that the Serbian people voluntarily and spontaneously turned to Christ and received baptism in several waves. With Christ, the Serbian people “entered into a covenant when they were baptized in his name and enlightened and ennobled by his teaching.” This covenant, which was fully sealed at the church-state council in Žiča in 1221, was based on love, not interest. In Nikolai’s estimation, it would be difficult to find another people who “gave themselves to Christ with such love and followed him with such trust” as the Serbian people did. “But Christ also showed an indescribable love for the Serbs.” It is precisely in this indescribable love of Christ for the Serbian people that Bishop Nikolai sees the “key to the great suffering of the Serbs through many centuries. He who has little love for someone punishes his unfaithful friend with a small punishment. And those who has great love punish their unfaithful friend even more”. Pointing out that “everything great, holy and glorious that the Serbs have (...), all came to them from Christ” (Nikolai 2004, 109), Bishop Nikolai does not fail to note with regret that “the covenant of love for Christ has been trampled underfoot by the Serbs, if not by all, then by many, and not just once, but many times”. Therefore, the Serbs “have been so terribly beaten, as only the offended love of God knows how to beat an unfaithful friend; beaten not to kill, but to pull them out of the covenant with the devil” (ibid., 110) in order to lead them to repentance and remind them of their world-historical mission.

To symbolize the weight of the Serbian historical path, Bishop Nikolai says that it “leads along the edge of a dangerous cliff over an abyss.” If realism and calculation had characterized the Serbs in their history, if they had perceived how great the danger really was, “they would have been terrified and quickly fallen and perished” when they looked down into the abyss, but they “looked upwards, to heaven, to God, the giver of destiny”, and “trusting in Him” they went where few others would dare. On this dangerous path over the abyss, some fell, some left the path out of fear, but “the majority of the people always returned to the path” (Nikolai 2013v, 673), convinced that this arduous path always leads to the goal despite all trials, for Christ Himself is the guide on this thorny path.

It is characteristic of the Serbs that they equate their fate with that of Christ, which, as we know, is characterized by Golgotha and the resur-

rection. Bishop Nikolai explains how the Serbs were able to endure the enormous suffering because they recognized the deeper meaning of suffering: "They believed that Christ himself would repeat his fate through the Serbian people. This vision made the centuries of suffering bearable and the insatiable death easy." Bishop Nikolai says about the Serbs' attitude towards Christ: "For the Serbs, Christ was the real meaning of life and struggle, of suffering and death and freedom and renewal and work" (ibid., 675).⁴² Just as the Son of God came into the world to serve, the Serbs understood their historical mission as service to Christ and thus to their neighbor. Although God has assigned to every people "two circles of activity, for themselves and for others", not every people is equally gifted, so not every people is expected to do the same. Since, in Bishop Nikolai's opinion, the Serbian people are "gifted by God with many talents", "much is required of them". They are asked to "put their house in order and help their less gifted neighbors to put theirs in order" (ibid., 677), which the pious Serbian people have almost always been happy to do. Since obedient service to God perfects a person spiritually, Bishop Nikolai concludes: "Service to Christ has ennobled the Serbian people and made them the most soulful and human people in the world." Of course, "this does not mean that there have been no bad people among the Serbs." Just as "the most perfect language has irregular verbs", it is inevitable that there have been, are and will always be Serbs who are unworthy of their name. "But however repulsive the examples of such Serbs may be, they represent tragic episodes on the right path of an entire nation" (ibid., 678).⁴³

42 As a symbol of the Serbian willingness to suffer for the sake of Christ, Nikolai quotes the famous words of the Holy Great Martyr Avakum the Deacon: "A Serb belongs to Christ, he rejoices in death" (Nikolai 2013d, 381).

43 Although secular historians often tend to emphasize the internal conflicts over the throne which occurred even within the Nemanjić dynasty itself, between brothers or between father and son, they stop halfway because they forget to point out that the Nemanjićs later deeply "repented of their sins" and died "as penitents", as the example of Dragutin best proves. In order to atone for his sins, especially those of rebellion against his father, he subjected himself to the strictest ascetic discipline as a Teoktist monk. The intact relics of many members of the Nemanjić dynasty are eloquent testimony to the fact that God forgave their sins. See: Nikolai 2013b, 664-665. Nikolai's opinion that the intelligentsia, alienated from the Serbian people, who are basically healthy, brought from the West the seeds of moral and spiritual disease that infected and corrupted the Serbian national essence, agrees with the opinion of Archibald Reiss. Although he admired the courage and nobility of the Serbian soldiers based on the experiences of the First World War and claimed that "the Serbian people possess moral qualities that surpass the moral qualities of many other peoples" (Reiss 2004, 31), Reiss did not fail to point out the weaknesses of Serbian intelligence. He notes that the Serbian student were returning from the West "to the country with a certain scientific baggage, but their natural abilities, inherited from their ancestry, were more

Bishop Nikolai is of the opinion that Serbian nationalism, which is based on the idea of St. Sava, is fundamentally different from most European nationalisms: “Serbian nationalism is universally Christian, never narrow-minded and foolish chauvinism” (ibid., 667). In order to distinguish such nationalism, which is based on love for Christ, from narrow-minded Western European nationalism, St. Nikolai of Ohrid and Žiča says that it is a “gospel and organic nationalism” (Nikolai 2013b, 222).⁴⁴ What is characteristic of St. Sava’s nationalism could be formulated as follows: “Establishing one’s own house and helping every nation to establish its house with the surplus of its strength and wealth.” Following the example of their spiritual father, St. Sava, Serbs are ready to serve all nations of the world in a spirit of brotherly Christian love. In view of this Serbian trait and bearing in mind what Dostoevsky said about the mission of the Russians,⁴⁵ Bishop Nikolai boldly asserts: “The Serbs are the only bearers of this ideal, which has so far been largely realized, and apart from the Serbs, only the Russians are members of the Orthodox family of the peoples of God on earth” (Nikolai 2013v, 667).

Nikolai’s assessment of the spiritual state of the Serbian people and anticipation of future historical events

When interpreting Serbian history, St. Nikolai of Ohrid and Žiča also tended to look into the future, so that it can rightly be said that “his historical narratives sometimes took the form of prophecies” (Bigović 1998, 356).⁴⁶ Convinced not only of the missionary role of the Serbs as bearers

or less clouded by the bad things they had seen, which was not mitigated by the good things they had not noticed” (ibid., 44). Over time, they became more and more arrogant, looked down on the peasants from above and lost their sense of patriotism.

44 Bishop Nikolai reminds us that the Serbs have almost always defended only their own people, that Dušan’s claim to a great multinational empire is an exception, a betrayal of the meaning of Serbian history. “From St. Sava to Dušan, the Serbian people had a nation-state. Dušan deviated from the Saint-Savian ideal, created an empire and thus prepared the demise of the fatherland, that is, the nation state. In our case too, the empire ruined the fatherland, the nation state, as has often been the case in history. To conquer or to be conquered is equally disastrous for the nation-state” (Nikolai 2013b, 219).

45 Convinced that the Russian people are characterized by “striving for the universal and the pan-human”, Dostoevsky claims that “the vocation of the Russian man (...) is pan-European and global.” Since, in his opinion, “the Russian heart, more than the heart of any other people, is predisposed to universal, pan-human fraternal union”, it follows that to be a true Russian is “to be a brother to all men, (...) to be a *pan-man*” (Dostoevsky 1982, 448-449).

46 Looking back at Nikolai’s interpretation of the meaning of “past events”, Bigović notes that he also predicted “the future, and infallibly” (ibid.). In contrast to the premoni-

of the true Christian spirit towards all the peoples of the world, but also of their close connection with the Indian people, he believed that the Serbs would be the nation that would lead the Indians to Christ. Unlike the arrogant British, who do not see them as equals, the Serbs will help them with brotherly love to find the right spiritual path.⁴⁷

In view of the Serbian people's narrowness between East and West, which could be fatal for their survival, Nikolai tried to investigate whether what is a potential source of problems can at the same time be a great creative challenge, for he suspected that the very geographical position of the Serbian people, as well as their centuries-long arduous struggle to preserve their identity on the battlefield of civilizational opposites, implies a task set by God. Nikolai came to the conclusion that the Serbs have a spiritual mission to rise above the one-sidedness of East and West and to endow the world with a wholesome synthesis. Although he speaks of the Balkans in the famous essay *Above East and West*, he primarily has the Serbian world-historical mission in mind. Although geographically located between East and West, the Balkans can rise above the one-sidedness of the two opposing poles thanks to Orthodoxy.⁴⁸ The East is interested in the spiritual

tions and rational anticipations of the young Nikolai, who was still enthusiastic about ecumenism and dreamed of the realization of the Yugoslav and Pan-Slavic idea, the mature Nikolai, who had gone through the ascetic spiritual school on Mount Athos, acquired the gift of foresight and was indeed often able to predict future events.

47 Although there is a real spiritual thirst in India, Roman Catholic and Protestant missionaries have been sowing Christian seeds in vain for three hundred years. It is of no use, for "where the cross precedes the sword, there the cross is hated" (Nikolai 2013d, 782). In the *Indian Letters*, Mitrinović states his assumption: "From Serbia, India would receive the salvific gospel of the kingdom of heaven." In addition to the aforementioned conviction that "the Serbs racially and psychologically unconsciously carry India within them" and that this kingship would help them in preaching Orthodoxy, true Christianity, Mitrinović cites the fact that "Serbia has no material or political interest in India" as further reasons for believing in the success of Serbian missionary work, so that the inhabitants of India could believe in its sincerity. What qualifies the Serbs as preachers of Christianity is also the fact that they are "the only people in Europe who, over thousands of years, in all conflicts and wars, have decided and spoken out for the kingdom of heaven and not for the earthly", which is actually "the essence of the Gospel of Christ" (ibid., 738). In contrast to the downright racist behavior of the British and French towards soldiers from their colonies of black and yellow ethnicities, Serbian soldiers treated them with brotherly love. Bishop Nikolai recalls that they invited them to their Slavic feasts, socialized with them and visited them when they were ill: "The Serbs regarded the blacks as human beings and treated them like human beings" (Nikolai 2013b, 223).

48 Observed as ideal-type, the East is characterized by a striving for transcendence, concern for the soul and inner peace, while the West is materialistic, physical and dynamic. The East fights for the invisible, the West for the visible. And just as he was convinced that a harmonious synthesis of East and West was realized in the person of

sphere, but is unfortunately enslaved by demonic forces and knows nothing of the God-Man Christ. The materialistic West, which concentrates on the exploitation of nature, does not believe in entities of the invisible sphere and is therefore so susceptible to demonic whispers. According to Bishop Nikolai, Christian Serbia has “the apostolic task of bringing the East to baptism and the West to conversion” (Nikolai 2013i, 808).

After the harsh experience of the genocide against his people convinced him of the falsity of the Serbian people’s frivolous Yugoslavian adventure, Bishop Nikolai hoped in his later years that the Serbs would return to Karađorđe’s idea of a community “of Orthodox peoples in the Balkans.” The idea of Karađorđe, which was carelessly and thoughtlessly rejected, “is now coming to the fore”, Nikolai said. The political goal of the Serbs must be: “An alliance of all Orthodox peoples in the Balkans with the support of Orthodox Russia. And all this not for the sake of the earthly, but the heavenly kingdom, not for the glory and greatness of the state, but for the service of Christ God. Theodulia of the peoples of the same faith would be the meaning and the program of this history.”

Since every “great and salutary idea (...) is realized slowly and laboriously and usually with the martyrdom and blood of its initiators”, Bishop Nikolai does not expect the goal to be reached quickly, because the prerequisite for its realization is its acceptance by all Orthodox Balkan peoples. However, as unlikely as it seemed, he expected that other peoples would accept it “if the Serbs first accept it with heart, soul and mind”. The vision that St. Nikolai of Serbia had at the end of his life was: “The empire of the Balkan peoples with the empire of Holy Russia” (Nikolai 2013v, 681).⁴⁹ To achieve this, it is necessary to emancipate oneself from foreign, Western,

Saint Sava (Nikolai 2013b, 215-216), Bishop Nikolai believed that the Serbian people could show everyone the salutary middle way.

49 At the time when St. Nikolay of Serbia spoke about it, it seemed that such a thing was pure fantasy, that it was unattainable, because at that time all Orthodox countries, except Greece, were under communist rule, the end of which was not even in sight. Today’s historical events, which point to an almost inevitable open conflict between the Western countries and Russia, make the realization of this idea quite possible. If more than two decades ago some thought that the late Nikolai was exaggerating in his criticism of Western Europe (cf. Bigović 1998, 371-372), the spiritual devastation that is increasingly afflicting the post-Christian West seems to prove him more and more right every day. In the prophetic-sounding text “Russia and Serbia”, which can be found in Nikolai’s legacy, it says that first the little Serbia-Falcon, playing the flute, will proclaim a new word, and then the future legacy Russia-Bear will growl and proclaim this word vigorously. “Falcon and bear, flute and tambourine” are symbols of both Serbia and Russia and of future events. Serbia’s role is to awaken and sensitize the dormant Russia. “The spark will not come from Russia. It is a great *torch* that will be lit by a spark from afar” (quoted from: Dimitrijević 2018, 6). Based on the events of recent decades, it seems that the Serbian people, thanks to their resistance to the

non-Orthodox ideas and once again accept service to God. Furthermore, a “clear vision of the heavenly kingdom of God as the ultimate goal of the earthly journey and existence of all servants of God, both peoples and individuals” is required. In light of these three principles: Emancipation from Western theomachists ideas, which includes repentance for deviating from the originally laid out path, theodulia and eschatological vision, it is possible to reach the envisioned goal, and it is not a mere utopia, as evidenced by Nikolai's words that “these three principles constitute the core of the history of the Serbian people from the great Nemanja to our days” (ibid., 684).

To conclude the discussion of Nikolai's interpretation of Serbian history, it should be noted that, like his view of Western European culture, it will always be controversial. For those who are alienated from the essence of their nation, who dream of Serbia's integration into the European Union, who want to distance themselves from the supposedly insufficiently civilized Balkans, Nikolai's words sound not only like an expression of romantic intoxication with their nation, but also like the expression of a kind of anti-enlightenment, orthodox obscurantism.⁵⁰ However, even if he may have occasionally exaggerated in his praise of the Serbian people and overestimated its world-historical mission, he always had the heavenly Serbia in mind, hovering above the earthly Serbia and preventing it from forgetting its historical-eschatological role,⁵¹ despite empirical evidence

West, have enabled the great Russian people to become aware of and prepare for the upcoming battle with the planetary forces of evil.

50 When we read what St. Nikolai of Serbia writes about the Serbian people, someone, especially someone who is alienated from the Serbian national essence, might think that he idealizes the Serbian people completely unjustifiably, overlooks their faults and distorts reality. But if we distinguish between the concept of the Serbian essence and its sometimes undoubtedly unworthy historical manifestations, we will have more understanding for Nikolai's glorification of the greatness of Serbian history, one of whose functions is, by using bright examples of great Serbs, to lead to repentance those unworthy of their own history, who chose the earthly rather than the heavenly kingdom. Nikolai, as Bishop Atanasije rightly states, “loved his Serbian people very much, but he never idolized them. He was not a blind idolater of the people, but a sincere patriot, a sober patriot.” If we know the difficult historical circumstances in which he preached about St. Prince Lazar, Miloš and the meaning of Serbian history, we should better understand why he was “sometimes romantically enraptured by his people”. But he also “saw their weaknesses and faults, individual and general, and pointed them out publicly” (Jevtić 1992, 338). It is enough to read his *Heavenly Liturgy* to see the sharpness with which the Serbian Chrysostom denounced the Serbs who were forgetting their mission and the legacy that St. Sava had left them.

51 Convinced that “the kingdom of heaven holds the earthly kingdom”, Bishop Nikolai was of the opinion that caring for one's own soul is the highest act of patriotism. He urges Serbs: “Let everyone return to God and to themselves, let no one be outside of God and themselves, lest he be overwhelmed by the terrible darkness of strangers

that often did not support his views. Just as the Jewish people, despite their disputes with God, will never cease to be the chosen people because their ancestors gained God's favor, so the Serbs will not cease to be, thanks to the sacred foundation on which their state rests. Let us remember that it was founded by Saints Nemanja and Sava, and that many saints later served it, whether on the ruling or the ecclesiastical throne.

In his effort to explain to foreigners and ourselves who the Serbs really are, Bishop Nikolai explains: "We are the descendants of the heroes of Kosovo who sacrificed themselves for the Cross of Honor and golden freedom; spontaneous and lush branches of the national tree that was cut down to the trunk in Kosovo, and the trunk was cut close to the root. This tree did not wither because the blood of the cross-bearing martyrs revived it. The felled trunk did not wither because the heavenly kingdom chosen by the Knights of the Cross gave it the strength to green and sprout branches" (Nikolai 2013a, 42). Nikolai's vivid depiction of the nature of the Serbian spirit can also help us to recognize the great danger that threatened the Serbian people. Although the tree was physically threatened by external enemies several times throughout Serbia's turbulent history, and at times it even seemed as if the Serbs had all but disappeared, it always revived thanks to the spiritual roots of St. Sava and St. Lazar. However, attempts have long been made to destroy and eradicate the spiritual roots of the Serbs, leaving only a lifeless, withered trunk of the Serbian people. Changing our consciousness, "enlightening" and Europeanizing us was once naively attempted by educated Serbs after their return from the West. In contrast to their well-intentioned, albeit completely misguided, project of Europeanization, which involved renouncing their spiritual roots,⁵² today this project is an integral part of the vicious agenda of the post-Christian West, implemented by its native representatives. In numerous articles, the Serbian Chrysostom has warned of the danger posed by the de-Christianized West. Although even in his youth, when he still believed in the strength of the West, he warned that turning away from Christ was

with a beautiful name and colorful clothes. Let everyone who is a Serbian patriot strive to attain the kingdom of heaven, through which alone the earthly kingdom can be preserved for a long time" (Nikolai 2004, 26-27).

52 Heroic Serbian people "stood upright and did not allow itself to be bent by Asia for almost 500 years", and when it finally freed itself from Turkish slavery and followed the Western, anti-Christian-oriented culture, "it bent under the influence of Europe in fifty years" (Nikolai 2004, 242). The Serbian intelligentsia, enchanted by Europe, "was latinized and separated itself with all its soul from its people and its straight historical line." Although it spoke of the rights of the people, "in word, pen and deed it turned the people away from the kingdom of heaven and bound its soul to the riches of the earth and the colorful ashes of this transitory world" (Nikolai 2013b, 669).

a spiritual aberration, in his mature and especially later years, exposing the godless West became almost an obsession⁵³.

Following the path of the Russian God-seekers, Bishop Nikolai, who has observed the spiritual sickness of Western Europe that can be traced back to the rejection of Christ, sadly states: "All of Europe smells of death" (Nikolai 2014, 258).⁵⁴ Its fall into papal and Protestant heresy, which followed the apostasy from the Orthodox Church, gradually led to the triumph of materialism and atheism. The reference to the spiritual deception of the secularized Serbs, who wanted to be an integral part of the West,⁵⁵ always served Nikolai as an incentive to repeatedly call Serbian intellectuals to repent and return to the path of Saint Sava. In contrast to their fashionable idolatrous attitude towards Western European culture, he emphasizes the original health of the Serbian peasant, who is largely immune to the charms of the West.⁵⁶ Convinced of the need to distance himself from the seriously ill patient who is unaware of his illness, let alone the saving cure, St. Nikolai of Ohrid and Žiča emphasizes: "Serbia is a neighbor of Europe, but Serbia is not Europe. It should help Europe if it wants to and can, but it should not be absorbed into Europe and lose itself in Europe" (ibid., 114). But Serbia can only help Western Europe if it helps itself first, if it reflects on its mission and regenerates itself spiritually after thorough repentance. Instead of renouncing the absolute truth in the name of tolerance and superficial ecumenical brotherhood, the Serbs, confirmed in it,

53 Bishop Nikolai is of the opinion that Europe should be grateful to Christ for all that it has. However, it is not only ungrateful, but in its pride even rejects Christ. St. Nikolai of Serbia says of the state of pagan Europe: "Satan held European humanity in bondage until Christ appeared." He not only healed the seriously ill organism of European humanity, but also gave "the baptized peoples of Europe power over the whole earthly globe, so that as the baptized they baptize, as the sanctified they sanctify, and as the educated they teach their darker and weaker brethren" (Nikolai 2004, 94). Unfortunately, instead of being "a light to the world, it has clothed itself in darkness" because it "has itself fallen into idolatry" (Nikolai 1996b, 228). Although it prides itself on its power and scientific discoveries, (Western) "Europe no longer produces saints" (Nikolai 2014, 171). The contempt of Asian and African peoples for materialist, imperialist Europe is reflected in the derogatory term "white demonry" that they give it. Bishop Nikolai not only claims that in the form of Western Europe "pagan Rome has risen again", but even prophetically hints at what will happen to it if it does not turn back: "The inflated bubble is about to burst" (ibid., 157-158).

54 See Justin 1999, 446-447.

55 Many Serbs who went to study in the West acquired secular knowledge there, but forgot that this was not spiritual wisdom, and so they carelessly began to bring the seeds of infection with anti-Christian ideas back to their homeland. Having learned there "to drink from artificial wells, they hated the clear springs of their homeland" (Nikolai 2004, 243).

56 See: Ibid., 105.

should unwaveringly bear witness to it with their own lives. “The task of Orthodox Christians is not to lag behind the heretics, but to bring them back to the right path” (ibid., 244), which they will not be able to do if they are not confirmed in the Truth.

Bishop Nikolai says about catastrophic state, in which not only Europe but also the world finds itself, that “God is waiting in our time for a nation” that repents and humbles itself in order to be transformed and reborn “to serve all other nations with the service of love, the light of truth and the example of purity.” Although he himself is aware of the difficulty of the task, but is convinced that the Serbian people are “the bravest of all peoples”, Bishop Nikolai encourages them to follow God’s call and reminds them of the symbolism of the cross-bearing banners that have been waving for centuries in the struggle for the honorable cross and golden freedom: “Your Golgotha past shows you the way there. All the depths of your sufferings and all the heights of your visions drive you to this mission. All your saints and heroes (...) bless you on this path” (ibid., 283-284). Nikolai dismisses the hesitation to accept the call by claiming that such a task can only be undertaken by a much more powerful and numerous nation by pointing out that the so-called great nations have become weak because of their apostasy from Christ. Although it is not difficult to agree with the insight that the world “needs an example of health and spiritual vitality”, and also the fact that the Serbs are eaten away by the same European disease, Nikolai replies to the Serbs that what for the Europeans “is a disease of the lungs and brain, for you is a disease of the skin. Return to your spiritual baths and you will be healed”. St. Nikolai of Ohrid and Ziča advises the Serbian people that the spiritual bath to happiness is within reach: “Bathe three times and you will be healed: firstly in your heroic and martyr history (...); secondly in your simple but brave people and thirdly in your wonderful national church” (ibid., 285).⁵⁷ Whether the Serbs will listen to the “greatest Serb after St. Sava”⁵⁸ remains to be seen.

Despite the apocalyptic darkness that is increasingly looming over the planet, it is likely that we are not yet reached the end of history. Although the sinful planet will in all likelihood be engulfed by a great and terrible fire, those who survive without betraying Christ will be transformed and reborn. In light of the impending suffering on the planet due to the inevitable clash of good and evil forces, it is imperative for Serbs to remember

57 Despite the great temptations to which the Serbian people would inevitably be exposed if they were to follow God’s call in these difficult times, Bishop Nikolai has no doubts about his decision. That is why he tells the Serbs: “If the Creator of heaven and earth, the Lord of hosts, has a purpose for a people, then no one in the world can thwart his purpose except that very people” (Nikolai 1996b, 160).

58 Justin 1998, 537-539.

both their glorious past, their Saint-Savian and Saint-Lazarian identity, and their world-historical mission, for only in this way can they survive the great trials to come. Remembering Nikolai's interpretation of the meaning of Serbian history serves precisely to awaken our national consciousness and strengthen our will to truly be what God intended us to be.

Literature

- Bigović, Radovan (1998): *Od svečoveka do Bogočoveka: hrišćanska filosofija vladike Nikolaja Velimirovića*, Beograd: Društvo raška škola
- Vidović, Žarko (2009): *Istorija i vera*, Beograd: MST Gajić
- Dvorniković, Vladimir (2023): *Duša Balkana*, Beograd: Catena mundi
- Dimitrijević, Vladimir (2018): *Soko i medved: Srbi i Rusi na putu Gospodnjem*, Kragujevac: Duhovni lug
- Domentijan (1988): *Život Svetog Save i Život Svetog Simeona*, Beograd: Prosveta – SKZ
- Dostojevski, Fjodor M. (1982): *Dnevnik pisca 1877 – 1881*, Ljubljana: Partizanska knjiga, Beograd: Izdavačko publicistička delatnost
- Jevtić, Atanasije (1992): *Sveti Sava i Kosovski zavet*, Beograd: SKZ
- Justin, Ćeljski (1998): *Praznične besede*, Beograd: Naslednici Oca Justina – Valjevo: Manastir Ćelije
- Justin, Ćeljski (1999): *Put bogopoznanja / Filofske urvine*, Beograd: Naslednici Oca Justina – Valjevo: Manastir Ćelije
- Justin, Ćeljski (2001): *Pravoslavna crkva i ekumenizam / Svetosavlje kao filosofija života*, Beograd: Naslednici Oca Justina – Valjevo: Manastir Ćelije
- Kljosov, Anatolij A. (2013): *Poreklo Slovena. Osvrti na DNK-genealogiju*, Beograd: Miroslav
- Löwith, Karl (1990): *Svjetska povijest i događanje spasa*, Zagreb: A. Cesarec – Sarajevo: Svjetlost
- Nikolaj, vladika (1996a): „Nomologija“, u: *Izabrana dela u 10 knjiga*, knjiga III, Valjevo: Glas Crkve
- Nikolaj, vladika (1996b): „Rat i Biblija“, u: *Izabrana dela u 10 knjiga*, knjiga III, Valjevo: Glas Crkve
- Nikolaj, vladika (1996v): „Carev zavet“, u: *Izabrana dela u 10 knjiga*, knjiga III, Valjevo: Glas Crkve
- Nikolaj (2103a): *Kosovo i Vidovdan*, Beograd: Štamparija Makarije – Podgorica: Oktoih
- Nikolaj (2013b): *Sveti Sava*, Beograd: Štamparija Makarije – Podgorica: Oktoih
- Nikolaj, episkop (2013v): „Srpski narod kao Teodul“, u: *Sabrana dela*, knjiga V, Čačak: Glas Crkve
- Nikolaj, episkop (2013g): „Indijska pisma“, u: *Sabrana dela*, knjiga V, Čačak: Glas Crkve

- Nikolaj, episkop (2013d): „Iznad Istoka i Zapada“, u: *Sabrana dela*, knjiga V, Čačak: Glas Crkve
- Nikolaj, episkop (2013đ): „Duša Srbije“, u: *Sabrana dela*, knjiga III, Šabac: Glas Crkve
- Nikolaj, episkop (2013e): „Srbija u svetlosti i mraku“, u: *Sabrana dela*, knjiga III, Šabac: Glas Crkve
- Nikolaj, episkop (2013ž): „Besede pod gorom“, u: *Sabrana dela*, knjiga IV, Čačak: Glas Crkve
- Nikolaj, episkop (2013z): „Nove besede pod gorom“, u: *Sabrana dela*, knjiga IV, Čačak: Glas Crkve
- Nikolaj, episkop (2013i): „Iznad greha i smrti“ u: *Sabrana dela*, knjiga IV, Čačak: Glas Crkve
- Nikolaj, episkop (2013j): „Četiri brige Svetoga Save“, u: *Sabrana dela*, knjiga X, Šabac: Glas Crkve
- Nikolaj, episkop (2013k): „Misli srpske“, u: *Sabrana dela*, knjiga XIII, Šabac: Glas Crkve
- Nikolaj, episkop (2013l): „Nebeska liturgija“, u: *Sabrana dela*, knjiga XI, Šabac: Glas Crkve
- Piper, Predrag (2008): *Uvod u slavistiku I*, Beograd: Zavod za udžbenike
- Radović, mitropolit Amfilohije (2009): *Sveti Sava i Svetosavski zavjet*, Cetinje: Svetigora
- Rajs, Rudolf Arčibald (2004): *Čujte Srbi!: čuvajte se sebe*, Ciriš – Beograd: Fondacija „Dr Arčibald Rajs“, Šabac: Eparhija šabačko-valjevska
- Sv. Nikolaj Ohridski i Žički (2004): *Kroz tamnički prozor*, Zrenjanin: Petrovgrad
- Sveto pismo Staroga i Novoga zavjeta: Biblija* (2012), Beograd: Sveti arhijerejski sinod Srpske pravoslavne crkve
- Teodosije (1984): *Žitije Svetog Save*, Beograd: SKZ
- Todorović, Ivica i drugi (2014): *Komparativni analitički osvrt na najnovija genetska istraživanja porekla Srba i stanovništva Srbije – etnološka perspektiva*, Beograd: Glasnik Etnografskog instituta SANU LXII (2)
- Todorović, Ivica i drugi (2015): *Etnologija i genetika – preliminarna multidisciplinarna istraživanja porekla Srba i stanovništva Srbije*, Beograd: Etnografski institut SANU, Društvo srpskih rodoslovaca „Poreklo“
- Todorović Ivica, Aksić Nina (2022): *Srbi u Rumuniji I – etnološka istraživanja i sinteze: nasleđe, kultura, poreklo*, Temišvar – Beograd: Savez Srba u Rumuniji, Etnografski institut SANU
- Hegel, G. V. F. (2006): *Filozofija istorije*, Beograd: Fedon
- Hoheisel, Karl (2002): „Das Problem des Leidens in den Religionen“, u: *Wozu das Leid? Wozu das Böse? Die Antwort von Religionen und Weltanschauungen* (hg. Hermann Kochanek), Paderborn: Bonifatius
- Šopenhauer, Artur (1986): *Svet kao volja i predstava*, II, Novi Sad: Matica srpska

Dobrivoje Ž. Stanojević¹

BIBLICAL STYLE AND SERBIAN IDENTITY IN BORISLAV PEKIĆ'S NOVEL "THE GOLDEN FLEECE"²

Imitation, parody and irony of biblical style by the characters — Serbs, future Serbs and their interlocutors — in Borisav Pečić's *The Golden Fleece* creates a unique contextual framework for the interpretation and understanding of Serbian identity. This enriches the rhetorical level and expresses the power and importance of the biblical discourse in shaping the characters of the Serbs. The novel also contains pastiche quasi-biblical passages that illustrate the internal polemics of the discourse used to portray the characters' traits. The paper approaches the analysis of the actual artistic debate on the significance of the biblical style in shaping the depicted public opinion and modern Serbia. The mythological-philosophical-anthropological basis of the novel and the Serbian characters in personal reflection, self-reflection and the reflection of other characters is considered. In doing so, Borisav Pečić is far from an aesthetic impressionism in the design of the characters, which is approached in the process of understanding Serbian perseverance. The biblical style here serves as a self-examining irony that enriches the meaning and problematizes the most important facts of the depicted elements of an ethnos. The meaning of biblical stylistic elements is often determined in an ironic self-relation to the depicted elements of individual identity that are important for marking group-cultural integrities. Thus, the frequent biblical structuring of Serbian characters' statements receives its parallel, contrasting parodic flow. The unique world of Serbian characters is broken down into simpler parts in a specific relation to the biblical style, effectively presenting a meaningful dilemma about the validity of ossified elements of identity. The work also focuses on the level of biblical resonance that recontextualizes traditional identity values. In *The*

1 full professor, dobrivoje.stanojevic@fpn.bg.ac.rs, ORCID ID: <https://orcid.org/0009-0004-2461-0775>

2 This text was written as part of a research project FSITC 1561: "Formation of Serbian identity and theoretical controversies concerning attempts of its deconstruction", supported by the Science Fund of the Republic of Serbia.

Golden Fleece, the biblical style and the elements of Serbian identity are recoded – from the unambiguous unquestionability of the sources to the complexity of the novelistic discourse, in which the aforementioned values are illuminated from new angles. In this way, various elements of identity are effectively confronted, illuminated and enriched.

Keywords: biblical style, identity, discourse, irony, parody, polemical character, Borisav Pekić.

Introduction

Borisav Pekić has taken up many sections of history in his novel *The Golden Fleece*. As Stojan Novaković, the author of the first history of national literature, would say, he has depicted “the development (both) progressive, (and) backward or regressive” (Novaković, 1871, V), as well as the most characteristic elements of the religious life of the characters, that is, the necessary biblical discourse that marks and determines the rhetorical position of the characters. The depiction of a *development* that can be simultaneously *backward* and *forward* is one of the oxymoronic poetic cornerstones of Borisav Pekić’s approach to Serbian identity. Antimetabolic *backward development* and *progressive regression* are the basic principles of the approaches to identity in *The Golden Fleece*. According to this inherent concept, identities can only be approached as a kind of forward *reflection*. It is about reading the past with constant projections into the future and at the same time approaching the present and future with constant critical insights into diachrony. *Backward-looking* can refer to a certain regression of values, but also to a specific reflection on religious traces.

In this novelistic system, the great religious ideas with their accompanying rhetorical frameworks are seen in a new light, especially the conflict between East and West. The often ironically observed, contrastingly positioned ritual actions aim to shed light on the context in which a broader, often antithetically positioned image of identity initially emerges of the Serbs from the characters grappling with the new environment in which they find themselves and to which they want to belong. The ironically positioned critique is motivated by an eristic conflict between the husband, a still-living Greek Cincar Simeon, and the wife, a dead but unburied Serbian Tomanija, who argues from the bier in a long otherworldly delay with her husband who is critical of the Serbs. His irony bears the age-old traits of a constant evaluation, even a kind of judgement for the requirements of personal family decisions. This is closely related to the expression of various religious discourses and styles, of which the biblical is the most

frequent, influential and burdensome. Biblical style is a constant of these identities, a kind of meta-context that colors all other identity factors. "One of the most important goals of all literary studies is to find out how the creator of an artistic work succeeds in representing in the simplest way what is most complex in the world and in human life." (Loloć, 2023: 71). Is there anything more complex than questions of identity? The distinction between sacred and everyday identity issues, different notions of *soul* and *spirit*, the reshaping of mythical and biblical personalities into new characters, the ironic observation of cults, festive and commemorative rites serve to broadly ground time, space and state in the shaping of Serbian identity:

He (the narrating family spirit – D.S.) does not abandon the mission, the outcome of which he doubts. He does not turn his back on the city, from which, as if from a gigantic shell of an antique gramophone, reconciled in a profane, animated tone, intoxicating sounds of Christmas psalms, "Heilige Nacht" by the Catholic Turijaški and "Roždestvo Tvoje" by the Orthodox Njegovan, East and West, Orient and Occident, blend their animosities into a touching scene of forgiveness and goodwill for one evening. (TGF, 1, 30)³

The imaginary Family Spirit observes and confronts all forms of contrasting styles in the novel. It "holds the whole of Romance Studies" (Lazić, 2016: 244) together like connective tissue, but also the construction of identity. On the one hand, it is an effectively motivated examination of the origin of biblical doubt and the religious conflicts that rest in the Christmas festival described. The Serbian spirit is largely located in a specific family and recognizable historical circumstances. It is accompanied by biblical, Old Testament and New Testament echoes. Obviously there is an awareness of a kind of superordinate life. And Heidegger (Martin Heidegger) claimed that "people never start from scratch" (Koprivica, 2009: 14). Often because they do not know where the beginning is. The essence of the religious impulse in the novel is not taken arbitrarily, but in the act of direct observation of the two confronted and uprooted sides. Although these religious endeavors try to displace each other, Pekić confronts them at the threshold where they originated, at the Christmas moment when they cannot avoid encounters. During encounters, they cannot avoid conflicts. Religious charges in a closed circle of rhetorical opposites suggest conflicts between polarized points of view. In this confrontation, it is not the dominant discourse of modernity that prevails, but above all traditional religious discourses that have their roots in the biblical style. Hence the importance of Pekić's irony in depicting the hostility that touches the *window of forgiveness and goodwill*:

3 All emphasis in the text, unless otherwise indicated, is by the author of the paper. The novel *The Golden Fleece* is referred to below only by the initials TGF.

In 1769, the question in Moskopolje was HOW TO SURVIVE? And the times were indeed unbearable. Perhaps better than when Simeon, fleeing from the Janina Vilayet, erected a cross before every horizon, under which lay buried in tatters the remains of his Epirote family, his Roman past and his earthly existence, in order to ride to Moskopolje accompanied by a black dog on a donkey, apparently alive but actually dead. (...) (TGF, 1, 31)

The constitution of the identity of Simeon, the future Serb, and the existing Serbs is based on the multivalent symbolism of the cross. Religious life thus characterizes cultural life. The cross is a sign of crucifixion, but also of resurrection, cultural awakening and special decisions. Survival under the sign of the cross is a characteristic of the “historical metaproze” process (Lukić, 2006: 112). Liberation from old habits of perception, but also the importance of cultural aspiration for Simeon to approach the next Serbian entity. The motif of the cross thus becomes an identity-forming factor that is reflected in many proverbs and sayings of various religious beliefs, where it is also said, phraseologically ossified, that everyone carries their cross. In literature, the motif of the cross is immortalized in the verses of Ivan Mažuranić in the epic *Death of Smail-age Čengić* (1846, a year before the publication of *The Mountain Wreath* in a Related Romantic Spirit), when he describes the gathering *on Cetinje, on the Black Mountain: A small band rises / On the Cetinje of the Black Mountain, / It is small but brave, / In it scarcely a hundred heroes, / Not chosen heroes / By looks nor beauty, / But by heroic heart; / Who will strike / Not at ten to flee, / But at two to slash; / Who will die / For the honorable cross to be baptized with, / For the honorable cross and golden freedom.* (“Gathering”)

Identity conversions

In shaping the symbolism in this way, the attention of the narrative energy moves in two directions simultaneously. This contributes to the final contrast, which indicates a functionally confusing paradox. One direction of meaningfulness aims at the possibility of rethinking the meaning and significance of the cross, the other at the center of the identity embodied in the cross. The cross is one of the basic motifs of ancestral commemoration and a template for the development of a broader, predominantly Byzantine, pattern of identity. The cross, an important symbol of identity for Serbs at the time, acquires a broad external and internal meaning in the novel and becomes an obsessive image of remembrance, whose meaning is indirectly transferred to places where it does not directly appear.

The use of *biblical* passages at the beginning of all seven books of the novel is motivated by the creation of stylistic constructions that are thematically and linguistically reminiscent of the biblical style. This provides a broader framework for understanding the *often-converted* (Lompar, 1999: 432) identity of the Serbian characters. Pekić often quotes passages from the *Holy Scriptures* verbatim, sometimes interspersed with textual additions in which he retains the authentic biblical style, and at certain moments he quotes a non-existent passage in which the biblical style is imitated very convincingly.

The ultimate goal of using and modifying the biblical text is to synthesize all the styles used. Therefore, this style has metaphorical-symbolic properties that establish the image of Serbian religious identity and its connection with the Church. The biblical style thus gains importance and becomes leading in the stylistic hierarchy of the novel. However, Pekić does not follow the stereotypes, but offers various dilemmas and answers to the Serbian identity through elements of the biblical style. However, the references to the *Bible* do not fall by the wayside. For example, some of the speeches of various characters and even the narrator's speech are often associated with the characteristics of this style:

*For there is a time for everything. **There is a time of freedom and beauty. There is a time of slavery and will. Beauty is a disease of the will that must be killed.*** (TGF, 1, 453)

The anaphoric memory of one of the characters, Kir-Iasije, from the "Book of Kohelet" (chapter 3) is more psychological and stylistic than thematic. The biblical style becomes a metaphorical communication about Kir-Iasije's character traits, his thinking, his psycho-emotional activities, his pragmatic behavior, his biblical allusions and his reveries. Finally, it reveals a particular serenity and an exceptional temperament based on biblical experiences. With this functional undercurrent of the novel, the psychological and religious profile of Kir-Iasije as well as his experience with the Serbs is effectively determined. The information about the nature of this character's affectivity is given rather hidden in the subtext of the biblical style, but not so hidden that it could not be noticed. For the hero builds his experiences on knowledge from the *Bible* and arrives at general statements: *beauty is a disease of the will that must be killed off*. As if there is no real identity. As if it contradicts *life after death and eternal life*. At first it is an ironic, amphibious interpretation. Should *beauty* or the *will* be killed? Does *beauty* only come after the killing of the will and the all-encompassing relief? Is the act of killing a condition for the arrival of *beauty*? Pekić seems to occasionally *desacralize* the biblical style and the

existing image of the self-exalting Serbian identity (Nikolić, 2019: 17) in order to problematize and reconstitute it.

Moreover, the data on the inherited and accepted style of the characters are also deliberately paralogized data on the poetics and style of the novel. The biblical style is thus presented in the function of representing Serbian identity in the form of a suggestive stylistic triad:

First, a general statement is made (*everything has its time*); 2. Then, an unexpected conclusion is derived and pairs are listed (*freedom – beauty, slavery – will*); 3. Finally, the elements of various pairs are surprisingly and unexpectedly brought together in the form of a paradoxical paralogical conclusion (*Beauty is a disease of the will that must be killed*). This motif from the *Book of Kohelet* appears frequently in the novel, especially when it comes to the Serbs:

PHILIP: (...) *There is a time for everything. There is a time for the 'how' and a time for the 'what'. There is a time for freedom and beauty. And a time for slavery and will. This, by chance, is a time for slavery and will...* (TGF, 2, 395)

Through the repetition of the same motif and the functional *multi-plication of aporias* (Ricoeur, 1993: 28) in small variations and allusions to truth and appearance, new psychological information is expressed about Philip, a hero reflecting on a similar theme in 1941. Although the information about his psychological profile is apparently less clearly formulated, the subjectivization of his statement is expressed to the maximum precisely on the basis of the biblical style. As the formulation is repeated, it has a graduated, nuanced informativeness. The aim of this informedness is not to shock, but to question. Since it points to a timeless connection between the signs, it contains a special identity statement about the origin. On the stylistic-rhetorical and poetic level of the novel, a similar response is given to the challenges of the biblical undercurrent. Now two temperaments, two psychologies, one of which is Serbian, are seamlessly observed in their diachronic and stylistic connectedness. Thus, the narrative rhythm of TGF is aligned with the biblical rhythm and forms new meaningful and rhythmic sections of the novel. The symbolic similarity of the language of the various heroes emphasizes their identity affinity. One, who approaches the Serbian ethos, reflects on beauty and death, the other, the Serbian, on slavery and will. The mutual projection of two stylistic patterns creates a multi-layered interpenetration of different, sometimes disparate identities.

The second part of the stylistic triad is enriched with another pair (*time for the how and time for the what*), and then a conclusion is drawn that is in fact a repetition of the presence of the last pair (“this is a time of slavery and will, *by chance*”). The irony of *chance* relativizes the Serbian

identity framework shaped by the biblical style and deepens the polemic further. In this way, the biblical style and the ideas of identity are enriched and further developed. Biblical stylistic genesis carries with it an element of non-literary premise and a committed aural patina, but also a significant power to influence literary imagery, as it is "infused with emphatic patterns of repetition and anaphora characteristic of rhetorical prose." (Frye, 1979, 383):

"Why there is a time for everything, Simeon. There is a time of freedom and beauty. There is a time of slavery and will. Beauty is a disease of the will that must be killed." (TGF, 3, 83)

The almost identical formulation of Kajsunizade and Kir-Iasije, which is repeated in the third book of *The Golden Fleece*, transforms the information about the psychological profile of a hero into a mythical symbolic pattern. The affective context of the statements mentioned is clearly different. Emotions are mixed with reflections and elements of paradox. The biblical undercurrent in the novel serves the purpose of coloring feeling with reflection in the first example; contemporizing thought in the second example; stimulating biblical dialog in the third example and leading to a possible answer to the specificity of the Serbian discourse on slavery and will:

Why should beauty be a disease of the will?

Because it poisons us, because it does not allow us to think. (TGF, 3, 84)

The biblical style deliberately colors the characters' reflexivity by alternately facilitating and complicating the conclusions, almost always contrary to expectations. The speech becomes an almost gnomic allusion. Its ellipticality is characterized on the one hand by philosophical precision, on the other by multivalent arbitrariness. A similar approach can be found in the novel of the Ring composition *Zeit der Wunder*. It is about a parallel "walk through the history of exegesis" (Jerkov, 1992, 934), the desacralization of the biblical text and the constant examination of the identity cornerstones of the characters.

The structure of the biblical and narrative styles is not clearly separated, although elements of both are recognizable. Precisely where the clear elements of the biblical style are (*Everything has its time*), the boundary between the different stylistic parts is not sharpened, but is gradually lost. This is done by breaking up sentences or pairs of sentences and adding new elements from a different reflexive context, that simulates the biblical style and changes the meaning considerably. The biblical style expresses itself again and again in the form of a deductive, polemical stylistic triad that sharpens and self-evaluates identity attitudes:

1. First, the introductory clichéd biblical section is repeated in the form of a generalized thesis;
2. The thesis is then tested using concrete examples;
3. New conclusions are drawn on the basis of the examples.

When fewer elements of the original biblical style are present in the novel, when there are already selected recognizable parts, the use of biblical pathos is more varied and the patterns of contextualization more interesting. As far as the presence of biblical style in TGF is concerned, one can speak of a purposeful rhythmic and meaningful superstructure in the description of the characters' identity, but also of an effective parody in various forms of dialog and monolog. Pekić is not so much interested in *biblical* fertility cults and ritual festivals, but in stylistic symbolism and a kind of "inverted Bible" (Ahmetagić, 2006: 59). The author is also not concerned with the intrusive allegorical nature of the text (as in *Time of Miracles*, for example), but with a broader stylistic-rhetorical, archetypal and cultural context. Only then does the ironic potential of the biblical style reveal itself, which the author aims at in describing the contextual framework of Serbian identity. But the biblical style is the highest point of emotionality and reminiscence, as well as a particularly perceived intellectualism, finally a particularly synthesized wisdom climax that implies "cracks of divergence" (Milić, 2023: 14) and an effective confrontation.

Anaphoricity of Biblical style and figures of repetition

It should be borne in mind that anaphoricity on the macro level of the novel *The Golden Fleece* is mostly a stylistic device to indirectly represent Serbian identity. This is done not only through the constant recourse to biblical myths, but also by quoting verses by Apollonius of Rhodes from the *Argonautica* at the beginning of each book. Even more extensive mottoes at the beginning of the books, also with anaphoric constructions, are taken, in a somewhat modified form, from the *Revelation of John*. In the order of stylistic force, anaphora and other figures of repetition carry the symbolism of constant renewal. After all, every identity is based on the motifs of *repetition*. There is no identity if there is no renewal of identity matrices, just as it can hardly exist authentically if there are no *shifts* of repetition.

In view of all this, the Bible in TGF has the characteristics of an indirect myth about Serbian identity and several, often contradictory, symbolic fields of action. Biblical tone, motifs and turns of phrase constantly refer to the blending of different narrative forms and particular styles. In this

way, the mythical-poetic orientation is justified and the existing discursive stratification. Pekić's stylistic-romantic idea of depicting Serbian identity is based on a national longing for the theological power of myth and the mythical power of religion. Therefore, there are quasi-biblical stylistic segments in the novel, in which a kind of internal, hidden debate about style as a constitutive category of identity is conducted with recognizably suspicious-ironic restraint.

It is necessary to concretely examine the desacralization of biblical style inherent in Pekić as a moment of variability of Serbian identity that seeks to change everything it touches. The occasional concealment of desacralizing elements of ironic criticism, which was not so important for other stylistic areas, can be explained by the desire to avoid misunderstandings about identity and to divert attention from the mythical-philosophical basis of the novel. By frequently quoting the *Bible*, Pekić wanted to distinguish the biblical style from other styles and give it a prominent place in the depiction of Serbian identity. In this endeavor, the author of TGF is far removed from esthetic impressionism, a priori schemes, stylistic formalism and mere obedience. He often gives the biblical style the role of a self-examining, ironic stylistic autonomy that can well approximate the phenomena of the strength of identity of the Serbian characters.

Although apparently differently characterized, sometimes almost lyrically intoned anaphoric styles in TGF often confront, collide, but in many cases also harmoniously complement each other in a fictional prophetic inspiration. Anaphors are often used to find related identity correspondences or serve as a kind of stylistic and "psychological interview" (Mustedanagić, 2002, 76). Even in a single chapter, it is easy to identify places where meaning is created by mixing various anaphoric biblical stylistic codes that go beyond the familial framework and reach the level of metaphysics characterized by the Old Slavonic terms:

Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy...

Blessed are the cruel, *for they need no mercy!*

Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God...

Blessed are the filthy-hearted, for they have nothing to lose!

Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God...

Blessed are the murderers, for they will be called avengers!

Blessed are those who are persecuted for the sake of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven...

Blessed are those who can be driven out of nothingness! (TGF, 6, 67-68)

Anaphoric parts of the statement are part of the biblical style. Pekić contrasts the content of the biblical prayer statements with pairs of value

opposites. They indirectly refer to Serbian identity dilemmas and certain events in the novel in which the Serbian characters are involved. This results in contrasts of highly allusive pairs (*merciful – cruel, pure of heart – filthy of heart, peacemaker – murderer, persecuted – unrepresentable*), which have very specific symbolized connections to identity realities and certain stylistic-rhetorical sequences of the novel. The reader is irrevocably condemned to carefully trace and scrutinize associative circles in relation to Serbian identity. Anaphoric statements are compared with ideas from other diachronic structural sequences and different stylistic layers thanks to repetition. The meaning of biblical stylistic elements is determined in an ironic relation to identity recognitions and a kind of affirmation of individuality through the wholeness of biblical style. Thus, the frequent biblical monostructuring of statements receives its parallel, ironic hidden current via the so-called “Serbian spirit” (Milić, 2023). The unique world of the heroes embodied in prayer is broken down into opposites. They raise dilemmas of identity, worries, misguided interpretations and the question of meaning. The connection to the biblical and “serbianized” quasi-biblical style remains primarily at the level of sound, but also at the level of meaning, the elements of purposeful pastiching, the parody of Babylonian confusion, resolution and showing the possibility of understanding different meanings of the values represented. It is an attempt to introduce biblical teleology and the biblical understanding of the world, and then to surreptitiously examine it. Thus, by quoting precognitive visions of John the Theologian in hidden epigrams, the narrative takes place in related tones:

Haji regretted these reproaches very much, and ashamed of his selfishness, he tearfully told them how once, long ago, when this threshold did not yet exist in Belgrade, a man who was in great distress had sought rest on it and was driven away, that no one knew of this sin except him, Haji, that man and now them, but that something so unforgivable, as long as he is able to think wisely, will never be repeated again on the threshold of Njegovan home.

(...) *Half an hour later, the reparation of earthly injustices was already in full swing, the **fisticuffs provided authenticity** and the exclamator's comments, insofar as they were recognizable due to **heavy drunkenness**, provided a certain **philosophical brilliance**, just as **elaborate doctrines** provide historical plunder.* (TGF, 5, 253-254)

Keeping in mind the foundations of Serbian identity, the establishment of monasteries, the proclaimed Svetosavlje, hospitality, the blatantly ironic turn in relation to the proclaimed biblical instructions speaks of the need to reflect on the literalness of the applied values. One could conclude that the elaborated biblical and religious teachings related to parts of Ser-

bian identity ensured the suffering of Serbs and possibly the suffering of others under the elaborated teachings of the Serbian people. It is difficult to see the completeness of the interpretation here. The subject of identity is endless. It is difficult to find parameters for a correct understanding. There is little room for correct judgment, but the field of allusions is constantly open.

Serbs are seen in this context (though not without residue and not all Serbs) as, among other things: 1. correctors of earthly injustices; 2. prone to quarrels; 3. prone to commentary; 4. prone to heavy drunkenness; 5. occasionally *philosophical brilliance*; 6. susceptible to plunder; 7. prone to looting 8. victims of *elaborate doctrines*; 9. possible creators or implementers of elaborate doctrines; 10. with selective historical awareness in all this...

Biblical style as parabasis

In Borisav Pekić's novel *The Golden Fleece*, the possibility of emphasizing the equality between the biblical and the real is ironically negated from the narrator's point of view, on the macropoetic level of the text, between the novelistic and the apparent. In fact, it is a point of view located between irony and allegory, a so-called parabasis insertion as a special "rhetorical device" (Milić, 1997: 106). Thus, thanks to the predominance of anaphora and parabasis, the biblical style is subject to constant recoding. From the unambiguous prayer formula, it is transformed into the complexity of the identity story, which is somewhat reminiscent of a Rorschach blot. In this way, the divine and the diabolical are inseparable in the Serbian and, through the juxtaposition of their points of view, lead to an effective identity polemic of the text and to a kind of cognitive development.

A special identity theory of communication is indirectly realized in TGF. The stylistic-rhetorical and identity system of the novel therefore occupies a place of honor among the aspects of this work to be considered. There are frequent and complex interweavings of stylistic and rhetorical procedures which, among other things, are intended to lead to a cognitive and possibly to a kind of enlightened-identity epiphany. The cognitive possibilities of frequent repetitions and meanderings of meanings, changes, modifications and re-examinations of identity positions are explored anew. The conditional-cybernetic aspect of the narrative lies in the fact that a stylistic procedure in the process of meaningful coupling only receives feedback on its communicativeness when it is used as an integral part of a certain rhetorical procedure. The artistic effectiveness of

anaphora as a stylistic procedure is thus only recognized in the context of a hidden speech act or an embedded micro-gene via the identity narrative. The search for the true shape of Serbian identity, for all its conditionality and apparent form, first implies answers to the accompanying meanings.

In the stylistic system of the novel, in which the meanings are organized in this way, an attempt is made to establish the principle of contrast between the parts of the anaphoric system. This is because it is necessary to suggest the meaning of the six-century-old history of the Serbs that is being narrated, so that identity is shaped in an eristic confrontation on more, at least on “two levels” (Radonjić, 2016: 79). The anaphora introduces a valorizing repetition. It implies, from its seemingly narrow perspective, similarities or even impossible identities. On a broader level, in conflict with other elements of the statement that spring from the structural scheme of the anaphora, the anaphora transforms them into their opposite. Identities exist, in fact, to dramatize differences more strongly. To be identical in different times and spaces is to differ and to coordinate differences through the *non-identity of seemingly related repetitions*. The principle of stylistic differentiation of identical-sounding, anaphoric, repetitive sequences thus leads to an understanding of the importance of the need to analyze elements of disharmonization and antithetics of the ever-emerging and ever-recurring six-century-long formation of Serbian identity, which is crossed between the barely reconcilable sides of the *earthly* and the *heavenly*, the material and the sublime. Therefore, the heroes whose actions are described by biblical anaphors often have no personal meaning and no character of their own, even if it does not quite seem so. Pekić’s story of Serbian identity is a hidden art of reconciling historical contradictions. Heroes are often metonymic mythical and biblical projections, dialogical mediators. They only acquire their identity-forming meaning in relation to other heroes and biblical allusions. In this respect, the unity of meaning and stylistic diversity of the anaphora is also significant for the establishment of identity. The unity of identity is expressed in a hidden prayer tone that gradually grades the knowledge of identity:

“He knew:

Eis tin Polin, woe to the city in which there is nothing to tear down (...)
Kyrie Eleison!

Woe to the city that is no longer (...) unanimous and one, but is divided into thirteen small villages, between which weeds and thorns grow, snakes lie and the wind blows the dust of old Byzantine glory! (...)

Woe to the city that is defended by mercenaries, sons of those who desecrated it, and to freedom that is guarded by hirelings, sons of those who took it for Jerusalem! (...)

Woe to the city whose trade is run by a stranger, where strangers earn (...).

Woe to the city where it is more profitable to parasitize than to work (...).

Woe to the city where interest, if you are not quick, becomes another loan overnight (...).

Woe to the city in which the salary of officials is measured in gold coins, and that of merchants, craftsmen and workers, even if they are the best, in silver coins, in which there is as much silver as in a Turk's faith! (...).

Woe to the city whose sons are not stronger, better, wiser and richer than their fathers, who do not understand the present, do not respect the past and do not know the future! (...)

And above all, woe to the city and the country that do not expand, but whose history is the preservation of what others have acquired, the spending of what others have earned, the demolition of what others have built, and the loss of what others have conquered!

Amen! (TGF, 6, 69-70)

The anaphoric and gradual rhythm of the climax (the climax is only one form of enforced repetition) requires new approaches to identity and possible renewable meanings. Through the constant repetition of the phrase **woe to the city** and the prayer formula in Greek, it heads towards the climax of the last movement and the concluding, Serbian amenation from a special biblical narrative:

Nothing new under the dome of heaven! everything that is, has already been; and everything that will be, is already now! ("Book of Ecclesiastes")

When Master Simeon reflects in an agonistic monolog on the meaning of family agonautics and admonishes them with the Old Testament laconicism of the Babylonian king Belshazzar (*mene mene tekel upharsin*; counted, numbered, weighed and divided) from a biblical perspective. A particular understanding of the world is full of distrust and incompatibility:

(...) (... for just as from 1789 to 1815 the history of France was u p s i d e d o w n the history of Europe, so the family story about the Simeons is only u p s i d e d o w n the narrated story about Serbia and the Serbs), through which our national destiny could become clearer and more natural and thus more inevitable. (TGF, 2, 124).

The anaphora draws attention to the importance of repetition and indirectly refers to the permanence and surprising viability of the conclusions presented. Pekić constructs the anaphora perspective in such a way that the same identity phenomena can be viewed from different time-space perspectives and are thus not identical. This results in the creation of a richer affective scale of Serbian and Serbian-Cincar-Njago-Njegovan characters, as well as the partial concealment of irony. The irony is

suppressed, but ultimately has a stronger effect as a kind of allegory, since the irony “inevitably refers to a social environment” (Jankelević, 1989: 42) and a particular identity. The repetition of seemingly identical or similar content causes the emergence of a protest tone, which is transformed from a prayer of stylistic genesis into a kind of curse. The retelling of the same and the pointing out of similarities of a related cause-effect complex in different frames of meaning and different stylistic tonalities creates an effective multivalence. Pekić already defined such a narrative model in *The Pilgrimage of Arsenije Njegovan*:

(Perhaps) writers are old sorceresses who, this time at their own command, make a wax model of this world in order to burn it immediately in the hope that the real one will be better. (Pekić, 1984: 96)

Numerous stylistic antitheses loaded with irony and paradox (*nothing to tear down – ruins, treading – work, wheat – scents, interest – credit, gold – false silver coins, fathers – sons...*) complement each other thanks to anaphoric beginnings and become stylistically congenial. Moreover, such repetitions, similar phraseological turns of phrase, build up a recognizable ironic-reflexive image of identity.

The seemingly unambiguous anaphoric construction *woe to the city* creates different relationships between form and content by incorporating the Greek language as an element of “alienation” that reinforces the meaning already achieved. The anaphoric parallelism thus created brings parts of different languages, Serbian and Greek, into an equal acoustic-meaningful and identity-creating, almost simultaneous relationship. Antithetical images expand the text’s horizon of understanding, opposites are balanced, and apparent identities are brought to the limits of conflict.

The above examples of anaphoric *repetition* show that different linguistic-stylistic levels are not only the result of mutual competition and parody, but also special supra-stylistic levels that complement and enhance each other. Neither the anaphora in Serbian (*woe to the city*) nor the anaphora in Greek (*Kyrie eleison*) have the same meaning when considered individually and interpreted in context. By mixing them together, a new, much more specific meaning is created. At least two significant features of the linguistic and stylistic layering of the anaphora used in the biblical style can therefore be recognized:

1. First, the transfer by the narrator of the poetic ideas and mythical obsessions of the identity-marked heroes. In this way, the reader’s expectations, attitudes and judgments are overlooked by the constant need to “make a model out of two waxes”;
2. This is followed by the possible influence on perception and the reference to the change in the biblical rhythm-meaning code.

One could thus say that the anaphora in TGF has a clearly biblical origin, aimed at outlining the broader framework of identity migrations of Serbian unity. One can be both a believer and a non-believer among Serbs, but anaphora achieves this 'oceanic feeling' (Freud, 1969: 264) that allows for a constant reexamination of identity that is not given once and for all.

Anaphoric structures constructed in this way reveal the full complexity of the novel and identity at the thematic-ideal, motivational, mythic, rhythmic, symbolic and compositional levels. The anaphora is a figure of repetition, just as events are often repeated on the symbolic level. Sometimes the repetition is almost identical, sometimes opposite. "Sometimes symbols in Pekić's texts overlap in meaning and sense with biblical ones, but the similarity ends there because the messages are diametrically different." (Lazić, 2016, 220-221)

TGF thus also stylistically becomes a travesty of the Serbian identity myth and a kind of parody of the *Bible*. In contrast to the messages of the gods, which come from above downwards, life is celebrated in the opposite direction. In this way, the narrative, mythical and biblical topography intermingle in a grotesque way, precisely through the anaphora that provides a poetic justification. Pekić thus uses the process of renaming symbols and shows the flip side of the mythical world. In this way, the biblical world is also seen with new, Serbian eyes of identity.

Conclusion

At the center of the anaphoric style that Pekić constructs in *The Golden Fleece* (TGF) is a complex stylistic-rhetorical system of interweaving different worlds. The interweaving *repeats* the same or related passages, suggesting an identity anaphora. However, the same words, when articulated differently, do not have the same effect, highlighting the difference between the similar and the similarity between the different stylistic clichés. The anaphora thus often characterizes a biblical atmosphere and space. The characters' perspectives and styles coalesce into a global image of identity, from which the symbolic space of the novel is viewed more comprehensively. Pekić masterfully confronts traditional and modern narrative forms and sketches a timeless space from different perspectives, in which the protagonist's point of view is simultaneously favored and questioned. Thus, the novel alternately stretches through passive and active experiences of ironic identity *repetition*, asserting that life is a calculation, as is God and his judgment, just as it says in the "Gospel of Matthew":

For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also. (Ahmetagić, 2006: 54-55)

Through the symbolic reinterpretation of the biblical symbols and the stylistic genesis, the Serbian identity topoi are indirectly called into question. Pekić's figure of the implicit narrator reinterprets the biblical dogmas and captures those layers of Serbian identity that are directly linked to the Bible. The theme of salvation is constantly being re-evaluated, and with it the identities associated with it, such as the Serbian idea of Piedmontism and indirectly the "chosen people" This suggests the need to re-evaluate any ossified system. Anything that is ossified can become a dogma which should be subjected to irony and doubt. Pekić dissolves the biblical form and stylistic genesis, but also the petrifications of meaning that can quickly become dystopian systems. This is a constant feature in all of Pekić's works, the "struggle against mythical consciousness" (Milošević, 1984: 4-5). Serbian identity thus becomes the center of the demythologization under consideration. It unfolds on a stylistic level through the depathetization of biblical stylistic genesis and gradually explores new segments of Serbian identity.

With sharp contrasts of hidden-ironic affinities, Pekić points out occasional disproportions and reversals in the evaluation of Christian ideas. This gives reason to reinterpret the Serbian mythopoetic identity horizon. Often against a hidden biblical background, Pekić gives Serbian identity a meaning that tends towards universality of meaning. "With this author, history is the reflection of myth in the mirror of time." (Pijanović, 2009: 141)

In TGF, there is a constant reevaluation of Christian dogmas and biblical mythopoetics. In this way, every ossified system of evaluation is symbolically called into question. The old identity "has lost its dominion, its former status and power, as a result of which it loses confidence and clearly senses that much has changed and that it is no longer the master" (Antonić, 2021: 195). In fact, no judgment is given forever.

The biblical style in Pekić's work evokes the memory of a mythology that does not necessarily have to be of biblical origin. Sometimes it is a quasi-biblical style and a metaphorization of biblical symbolism. She moves towards the symbolization of the fundamental postulates of "the highest goals" of Serbian identity in connection with the themes of the New Testament, as in the work *Time of Miracles* (1965). Biblical archaisms and parabolisms in Pekić's novel *The Golden Fleece*, especially when used anaphorically, carry significant symbolic-metaphorical values, sometimes even to the point of seeming negations of fixed determinants of Serbian identity. These meanings must be constantly checked in a direct comparative analysis with ironized parts of biblical texts in which Serbian iden-

tity features are not emphasized. Serbian identity in the novel *The Golden Fleece* sees life largely through biblical eyes and thinks in biblical terms, including a kind of "Serbian eschatology" (Milić, 2023: 25). Finally, the Pilate question: but where does the truth of identity lie? Or must we "be content with a relative truth" (Kindjić, 2024: 111)? "Relative truth" is the truth about relativity or the relativity of truth? So the *Bible* is present in *The Golden Fleece*, even if occasionally the impression arises that biblical eschatology is missing.

Literature:

- Antonić, Slobodan (2021), *Iskušenja radikalnog feminizma*, CATENA MUNDI, Beograd.
- Ahmetagić, Jasmina (2006), *Antropopeja – biblijski podtekst u Pekićevoj prozi*, Draslar partner, Beograd.
- Jerkov, Aleksandar (1992), *Pekićeva povest nekazanog*, Stvaranje, Priština.
- Kindjić, Zoran (2024), *Suočavanje sa (zlo)duhom nihilizma*, EUO eparhije Žičke, Kraljevo.
- Koprivica, Časlav (2009), *Biće i sudbina, Hajdegerova misao između uzornosti i vremenitosti*, Zavod za udžbenike i nastavna sredstva, Beograd.
- Lazić, Nebojša (2016), *Vreme i prostor u „Zlatnom runu“ Borislava Pekića*, Univerzitet u Beogradu, Beograd.
- Lolić, Marinko (2023), *Priča Miladina Ćulafića, priroda, humor, detalj, Biografija i Bibliografija*, Partenon, Beograd.
- Lompar, Milo (1999), „Duh prosvetćenosti u srpskoj autobiografiji“, u *Život i delo Dositeja Obradovića*, Zbornik radova sa naučnog skupa SANU (15-17. Decembar, Beograd – Srmeski Karlovci), Zavod za udžbenike i nastavna sredstva, Beograd.
- Milić, Novica (2023), *Kritika srpskog uma*, Most Art, Beograd.
- Milošević, Nikola (1984), "Borislav Pekić i njegova mitomahija", u *Uspenje i sunovrat Ikara Gubelkijana / Odbrana i poslednji dani*, predgovor *Odabranim delima Borislava Pekića*, "Partizanska knjiga", Beograd.
- Nikolić, Nenad (2019), *Identitet srpske književnosti*, SKZ, „Partenon“, Beograd.
- Novaković, Stojan (1871), *Istorija srpske književnosti, pregled ugađan za školsku upotrebu*, Izdanje i štampa državne štamparije, Beograd.
- Pijanović, Petar (2009), "Dvojnički diskurs u Pekićevom romanu *Uspenje i sunovrat Ikara Gubelkijana*", u "Poetika Borislava Pekića, preplitanje žanrova", Zbornik radova, ur. Petar Pijanović i Aleksandar Jerkov, "Službeni glasnik", "Institut za književnost i umetnost", Beograd.
- Milić, Novica (1997), *A B C dekonstrukcije*, Narodna knjiga, Beograd.
- Frojd, Sigmund (1969), *Iz kulture i umetnosti*, Matica srpska, Novi Sad.

- Frye, Northrop (1979), *Anatomija kritike*, prevod Gige Gračan, „Naprijed”, Zagreb.
- Jankelevič, Vladimir (1989), *Ironija*, Izdavačka knjižarnica Zorana Stojanovića, Sremski Karlovci.
- Lukić, Jasmina (2006), “Novi istorijski romani I istoriografska metaproza na Balkanu”, *Anali Borislava Pekića* br. 3, Beograd.
- Mustedanagić, Jasmina (2002), *Groteskni brevijar Borislava Pekića*, Stilos, Novi Sad.
- Ricoeur, Paul, Pol Riker (1993), *Vreme i priča (Temps et recite)*, 1. tom (1983), prevod s francuskog Slevise Miletić i Ane Moralić, Izdavačka knjižarnica Zorana Stojanovića, Sremski Karlovci – Novi Sad.

SOURCES:

- Pekić, Borislav (1978-1986), *Zlatno runo (1-7)*, Prosveta, Beograd.
- Pekić, Borislav (1984), *Hodočašće Arsenija Njegovana*, Zavod za izdavanje udžbenika, Beograd; Solaris, Novi Sad.

Vladimir Milisavljević¹

Institute of Social Sciences

Belgrade

THE *PALANKA* AS AN IDENTITY METAPHOR AND ITS HISTORICAL PRECONDITIONS

This article explores certain aspects of Konstantinović's controversial book *The Palanka Philosophy* that have not yet been sufficiently researched. In the first part, I argue that some traits that Konstantinović attributes to the unfortunate "spirit of the *palanka*"—allegedly characteristic of the Serbian mentality—remain incomprehensible unless we consider the unacknowledged influence of French social and literary thought on his conceptual framework. This analysis reveals that Konstantinović projected concepts and themes from Durkheim's sociology—such as "collective representations" and "the primacy of society over the individual"—onto his metaphorical definition of the tribal and patriarchal "spirit of the *palanka*." In the second part, I propose an answer to the question of the preconditions of the Balkan *palanka* as a historical phenomenon, which Konstantinović did not address. Rather than treating the "spirit of the *palanka*" as a universal phenomenon, as Konstantinović and his followers do, I seek to understand the phenomenon of *palanka* and its "spirit" in its uniqueness, as a historical singularity that emerged along the shifting border between conflicting empires. Such an approach challenges the tendency to view the *palanka* with disdain, as the antithesis of the "open world," as well as the Balkanist notion of the *palanka* spirit as an eternal and inescapable marker of Serbian identity—an idea for which Konstantinović provided an important ideological foundation.

Keywords: Balkanism, identity, empire, Konstantinović, *palanka*, world

The publication of Konstantinović's *The Palanka Philosophy* (*Filosofija palanke*, 1969) marks a turning point in the long and com-

1 Principal research fellow, vladimir.milisavljevic@yahoo.com, ORCID: 0000-0002-6841-9751

plex history of the word *palanka* (“small town”).² Ever since, this term has become a metaphor for a particular aspect of the collective identity of the Serbian people—its alleged tendency toward closedness and even hostility toward anything foreign or external, as well as its resistance to what represents its “otherness.” This “otherness” is, in turn, metaphorically referred to as the “world,” “the “West,” “Europe” or universal “history.” *The Palanka Philosophy*, along with its lasting influence in ideological and political discourse, stands as one of the most prominent attempts to “deconstruct” Serbian identity—an attempt that, as is well known, has sparked significant controversy.

The identity dimension of Konstantinović’s work is already hinted at in its opening sentence: “Our experience is *palanka*-like”. This statement expresses a self-identification while simultaneously signaling the author’s distance from what he refers to with the first person plural. As for the controversies, it suffices to recall that Konstantinović’s book was made a must-read for every civil-society-oriented intellectual and even labeled the “Bible” of the “Second Serbia”; on the other hand, it was also fiercely contested and positioned at the heart of the “spirit” of self-denial and autochauvinism that characterizes the Western-oriented Serbian elites.

I do not intend to provide an exhaustive interpretation of Konstantinović’s work or offer a comprehensive history of its reception or the polemics it provoked (for an overview of this controversy and a critique of the concept of *The Palanka Philosophy*, see Antičić, 2008). Instead, I aim to pose some questions based on certain motifs of the book that have been little explored or perhaps overlooked. How did the word *palanka* become a metaphor for a spiritual state and a milieu? Why is the *palanka* and its “spirit” understood as synonymous with the spirit of nationalism, even National Socialism, as well as with stubborn resistance to modernization and Europeanization? And finally, what can the word *palanka* and its history tell us about ourselves, the “*palanka*-dwellers” of the Balkans, who should not remain the way we are, and about our relationship to the “world”? By exploring these questions, I hope to show that behind the apparent antithesis between the “narrow-minded *palanka*” and the “broad world” lies their deeper affinity, even if that affinity does not necessarily imply harmony.

2 The text is the result of work on the project “Formation of Serbian identity and theoretical controversies concerning attempts of its deconstruction”, funded by the Science Fund of the Republic of Serbia within the *Identity* Program under the project number 1561. Part of this paper was written within research program of the Institute of Social Sciences for 2025, supported by the Ministry of Science, Technological Development and Innovation.

1. Whose is “our *palanka*”?

Let us leave the word *palanka* undefined for the time being and begin with Konstantinović’s premise that the fundamental characteristic of the *palanka* and its “spirit” is its closedness. The core of Konstantinović’s book is precisely the opposition between this “closedness” of the *palanka* spirit and the “openness” of the world. Konstantinović’s followers would understand this opposition schematically, as an antithesis between Serbian or Balkan provincialism, which resists modernization, and the civilized, modern Europe or the West, which are seen as bearers of progress. With this attribution, the game is already decided. The critic of the *palanka* spirit and its manifestations in Serbian culture and art need only oppose the parochial closedness and narrow-mindedness of the *palanka* and strive to “open” it to the big world, to abolish it as a *palanka* and transform it into a part of the “world”.

However, *The Palanka Philosophy* begins with an intriguing point of doubt—one that even the positive reception of the book failed to take into account. In it, the author reveals the fundamental difficulty of his project. Konstantinović states that it is “certain” that one of the two members of the aforementioned antithesis—the “absolutely open world”—“exists only in the mind of the *palanka*, in its fear of the world.” This suggests that the absolute openness of the world is nothing more than a fiction of the *palanka* spirit. Indeed, in what follows, the antithesis between the spirit of the *palanka* and the open world is at least temporarily relativized—or even dialecticized—by the question that Konstantinović poses: if, according to the initial premise, the world itself is *palanka*-like for the *palanka* spirit, does this not mean, on the other hand, that the *palanka* is “worldly” (Konstantinović, 1991, 8)? Konstantinović sometimes detects the spirit of the *palanka* not only in Balkan provincialism, but also in various attempts of Europeanization and modernization of Serbia—projects that, in their intent, are diametrically opposed to the “spirit of *palanka*” and the efforts to “preserve it forever.” I will address the issue of the influence of the “world” on the *palanka*, including its historical emergence, in the second part of the article. However, it is already clear that the question of the “*palanka*-like character of the world” is one of the core problems of *The Palanka philosophy*, which to my knowledge has been overlooked by its proponents.

Nevertheless, it would be unfair to place the blame solely on Konstantinović’s followers for neglecting the problem hidden behind his statements. The author himself often operates with the contrast between the hypostatized entities of *palanka* and the “world” as if the original

question of the *palanka*-like character of the “world” and its influence on the domestic *palanka* had never been raised. For him, the “open” world of free and active subjectivity, of individuality unbound by social constraints, remains in force as the absolute opposite of the *palanka* spirit and its own world, closed within impermeable borders. This is easily understood: if the fiction of an absolutely open world were not taken as literal truth, Konstantinović’s critique of the *palanka* would lose its normative basis, and his descriptions of the closedness and limitedness of the spirit of *palanka* would be deprived of meaning. However, it will be shown that neglecting the question of the hidden influence of the “world” on the *palanka* spirit does not resolve the problems in Konstantinović’s concept; rather, they are merely postponed or shifted to another level.

The unprepared reader of *The Palanka Philosophy* is easily confused by some peculiarities of this monograph—its structure as well as its language, particularly in the first, systematic or “philosophical” part. This book is certainly not an exemplary philosophical text. What is irritating is not only the occasional incomprehensibility, stylistic awkwardness, irregular sentence structure, prolixity, and repetitiveness, but above all, the lack of precision. Konstantinović’s existentialist prose, which often adopts a Hegelian manner, constantly oscillates between descriptions of cultural and psychological phenomena (such as “style,” “pamphletism,” “madness,” “eroticism,” “boredom”...) which are left undefined, and the treatment of abstract “philosophical” concepts (“subjectivity,” “spirit,” “negation,” “nihilism”...) that lacks rigor, leaving the reader constantly wondering what the author is actually talking about (Antonić, 2008). However, this primarily applies to the main text of the book, i.e., its first part. The second part, deliberately reduced to paratext by the unassuming title (“Notes”)—although it matches the first, “systematic” part in length—is, in contrast, extraordinarily condensed and well-documented. It remains a pleasure to read even today, regardless of whether one agrees with its conclusions. In this section of the book, the author is on familiar ground in the realm of literary criticism and literary history. It is undeniable that he addresses the *palanka* spirit in Serbian poetry with a destructiveness bordering on malice; yet, this malice often turns into an almost affectionate tenderness toward the very works he seeks to dismantle. The most striking examples of this ambivalence are his reflections on Vladislav Petković Dis’s poetic laziness, which suddenly transforms into visionary fantasy (Konstantinović, 1991, 334-348), or the endlessly moving sections on Drainac’s unavailing effort to bring into existence a metropolitan Belgrade that was never there, against the reality of shuttered Belgrade in which he lived (267-277). For Konstantinović, these poets are, of course, perfect embodiments of the

“*palanka* spirit”. However, a careful reading of certain passages in his book suggests that not only good but truly great poetry can emerge from the sublimation of the spirit of *palanka*. The paradox is resolved when one realizes that Konstantinović’s treatment of the *palanka* spirit in Serbian poetry is not a genuine critique of the artistic value of the works born from this spirit, but rather a dispute over their ideological content—the “backward message” they convey—a political and ideological polemic against an opposing “orientation” and “tendency.” The author’s general assertion that the *palanka* is not “in the world” but “in the spirit” (Konstantinović, 1991, 195) is a textbook example of an ideological stance.

However, even this ideological stance on the *palanka* spirit as the substrate of modern Serbian poetry is neither transparent nor entirely unequivocal. This is evident from the motifs in the book’s “main text.” The reader familiar with the polemics surrounding *The Palanka Philosophy* would expect to find in it a critique of the *palanka* spirit as a complex phenomenon that encompasses Serbian or Balkan primitivism, nationalism, xenophobia, atavistic traditionalism, patriarchalism, tribalism, dullness, and deep mistrust of any change brought by “history”. This expectation is not disappointed: all the items on this list do appear in Konstantinović’s inventory of characteristics of the *palanka* spirit, and to a greater extent than is warranted. However, this inventory also includes some concepts that are at odds with the usual invectives against the spirit of the Balkan *palanka*: terms such as “realism,” “determinism,” “rationalism,” “empiricism,” “positivism,” “normativism,” “fetishization of facts,” and, perhaps most importantly, the “primacy of the general” and “collective” over subjectivity and individuality. Konstantinović frequently resumes these themes in a surprising, aestheticizing manner—as the *palanka*’s “dictate of style” over the individual.

Where does this unusual and heterogeneous spectrum of characteristics come from? Some of them could be explained by the influence of Jovan Cvijić’s anthropogeographical analyzes. In particular, Cvijić provided a vivid and accurate description of the realism characteristic of the “central type” of Balkan population in South and Southeast Serbia, Kosovo, and Macedonia, where diligence in trades and crafts (*rabota*) and accumulation of property play a central role, with thrift in words, “restraint, tact and self-control” occupying a prominent place (Cvijić, 1991, 411-415). Konstantinović appears to be inspired by Cvijić’s premises when, for instance, he depicts the “realism,” “rationalism,” and “utilitarianism” of the *palanka* spirit. The same motifs are present in his criticism of Rakić’s poetry, which, according to Konstantinović, is characterized by an extreme effort to control one’s own emotions, self-discipline and personal restraint

(*zapt*)—all of which align with the ideals of the patriarchal value system of “Serbian patriarchal rationalism” (Konstantinović, 1991, 305).³

However, Cvijić’s influence alone does not explain all the listed characteristics of the *palanka* mentality. Further clarifications must be sought in Western social thought and literary theory. One key indicator among the various listed traits is the seemingly paradoxical pairing of “empiricism” and “rationalism,” which is said to define the spirit of the *palanka*. According to Konstantinović’s argument, this pairing signifies the worship of facts (“empiricism”) coupled with the rejection of anything irrational (“rationalism”). The combination of empiricism and rationalism defines the habitus of the *palanka* resident—a conformist wary of anything conspicuous, extraordinary, or unusual—and also explains his “sobriety,” the core attitude of the “petty *palanka*-philosophy” (*čiftinsko-planačka filozofija*). However, we do not encounter the combination of empiricism and rationalism in the native sources upon which Konstantinović based his description of the *palanka*, but rather in the French sociological tradition, where, of course, there is no mention of “our” *palanka*.

It is Durkheim who described his philosophical and sociological standpoint precisely as a middle way between “empiricism” on one side and “rationalism” or “apriorism” on the other. Let me summarize his position. According to the core premise of empiricist epistemology, all concepts are derived from experience, including the fundamental ideas and categories of thought such as space, time, causality, or number. Durkheim agrees with this empiricist premise. However, he argues that empiricism fails to explain the universality and necessity with which these categories impose themselves on the individual. Rationalism, on the other hand, is correct in insisting on the universality and necessity of the fundamental categories of human thought, but it explains them by the erroneous doctrine of innate ideas. According to Durkheim, the true source of the binding nature of fundamental or “essential ideas,” which manifests at the individual level as a subjective “inability to think otherwise,” lies in the authority of society, which endows these ideas with something like a moral necessity. In this way, the Kantian “necessity” and “universality” of fundamental ideas are ultimately explained by the necessity of social life. Invoking such an origin of a priori ideas, Durkheim offers a positive evaluation

3 Cvijić’s broad-mindedness is evident, among other things, in his absence of moralizing. He neither condemns nor devalues the desire for accumulation, which he considers as one of the main characteristics of the Balkan population of the “central type.” On the contrary, he highlights its connection with the spirit of enterprise, composure, and perspicacity, traits observable in individuals of this type, whom he describes as “natural intellectuals.” Furthermore, Cvijić examines how these traits are expressed in lyrical folk poetry of exceptional artistic value (Cvijić, 1991, 413-414).

of conformism and the restrictions imposed on individual freedom, not only on a moral level but also on a cognitive one. For life in society, “collective representations” are necessary: “In order to live, it [the society] requires not only sufficient moral conformism; there is also a minimum of logical conformism, which it can do even less without” (Durkheim, 1990, 24, transl. by author; cf. Durkheim, Mauss, 2017). It is precisely the influence of this Durkheimian doctrine that accounts for one aspect of the essential characteristic that Konstantinović ascribes to the *palanka* spirit: the dictate of style over the individual through “generalization.”

In fact, Konstantinović projected the standpoint of French positivist sociology on the superiority of society over the individual onto what he referred to as the spirit of *palanka*. It is true that he never mentions Durkheim by name. However, he does challenge the point of view of Hippolyte Taine, an author whose historical and aesthetic studies Durkheim saw as anticipating his own standpoint and to whom he dedicated an essay under the characteristic title “Taine’s Rationalist Empiricism and the Moral Sciences” (Durkheim, 1975). It is noteworthy that the first part of the title—the expression “rationalist empiricism”—directly corresponds to Durkheim’s sociological program. Konstantinović, for his part, views Taine’s influence on Serbian literature as disastrous. He is particularly critical of the determinism of Taine’s aesthetic theory, which asserts that “race,” “milieu,” and “moment” (or historical time) shape artistic creation, thereby limiting the freedom and originality of individual artistic expression. This additionally sheds light on why Konstantinović frames the dictate of the society over the individual in terms of the dictate of “style.”

The problem, however, lies in the fact that those social and aesthetic doctrines, that significantly influenced Serbian writers and art theorists, originated in the West. They are certainly not a product of the *palanka* mentality characteristic of the Balkan or Serbian milieu. Quite the contrary, their widespread adoption in Serbia can be attributed to the openness of Serbian intellectuals to ideas from the “broader world.” Konstantinović resolves the resulting difficulty with an adroit maneuver: if positivist and organic doctrines were widely accepted in Serbia, it was because the “ideal of organic culture” perfectly agreed with the *palanka* spirit and its obsession with rootedness, continuity, the general “type,” and the motif of original cultural unity, as well as with the fundamental Serbian patriarchal rationalism (Konstantinović, 1991, 200, cf. 303). Thus, Konstantinović writes the following cryptic lines:

“The sociological positivism of Guizot and Taine is not the source of the doctrine of the type, which coincides (by the very nature of the *palanka* spirit) with the doctrine of the continuous as the only reality and the organic

culture (which forms a unique organism with the community) as the only true culture. This positivism was accepted and had a strong effect precisely because it was preceded by the *palanka* spirit, which, as the spirit of an omnipotent superego, resists history and the ‘world,’ opposing everything that is individually detached, not fused with the community, not absorbed by it. This inevitably gives rise to the spirit of style or stylization, the spirit of generalization of everything individual through style [...] Taine’s doctrine of the milieu’ and the ‘racial’ that predetermine everything individual was uniquely possible and uniquely acceptable for this spirit, precisely as a spirit of generalization through style, as a spirit that strives for the type and looks toward the timeless-mythical, which is always typological: there is no pure timelessness that would be the creation of the individual.” (Konstantinović, 1991, 201, transl. by author)

It follows from this argument that the European deterministic and organic doctrine of the primacy of the collective over the individual found fertile ground in Serbia and took root precisely because it resonated with the inner nature of the *palanka* spirit.⁴ However, the passage also allows for a supplementary interpretation: that sociologism and the “organic point of view”, before being “transplanted” to Serbia, were already “preceded” by the spirit of *palanka* in their country of origin, France, from whose soil they originally sprouted. Incidentally, such an interpretation would be consistent with Konstantinović’s thesis that the spirit of the *palanka*, with “its demand for the ideally closed,” is universally present even in the “open” world (Konstantinović, 1991, 8). While Konstantinović never explicitly draws this conclusion, it is clear that, for him, the spirit of *palanka* remains “our” specificity.

Attempts have been made to link the critique of the *palanka* spirit with poststructuralist or postmodernist currents in contemporary philosophy, and even with the idea of deconstruction itself (Belančić, 2004). However, this connection is misleading. In opposing the “*palanka* spirit,” Konstantinović defends the rights of freedom and the incalculable individual creative act—values that Sartre opposed to the determinism of materialist literary theories. Konstantinović’s emphasis on “discontinu-

4 Taine’s standpoint was highly influential in Serbian literature and literary criticism, yet it was also vigorously disputed, particularly due to his application of scientific methods to national history and the history of literature. Taine faced sharp criticism from Jovan Skerlić—who, for Konstantinović, also epitomizes the “diligence,” “sobriety,” and “utilitarianism” typical of the small-town mentality—especially for his literary-historical determinism, which Konstantinović sees as one of the defining features of the *palanka* spirit (Konstantinović, 1991, 227-229; Samardžić, 1976, 17-21; cf. Pavlović, 1995). It is clear that many of the traits Konstantinović attributes to the *palanka* spirit—a remarkably extensive list—are difficult to find in all the Serbian writers he claims as its representatives.

ity” bears only terminological resemblance to Foucault; it aligns far more closely with Sartre’s vision of the free act, which introduces absolute discontinuity into reality as by a kind of miracle. Furthermore, Sartre’s influence explains the importance given to negation as an unobjectifiable act of the free subject, as well as the attempt to counter the “rationalist” *palanka* mentality with the insight that the open world possesses the character of “chaos,” rather than ordered cosmos (Konstantinović, 1991, 68-70, 75, 196, and elsewhere). On the contrary, in French social science and philosophy, a distinct line of thought begins precisely with Durkheim and extends through Marcel Mauss and Lévi-Strauss to Foucault—the thinkers who sought to emphasize the boundaries of subjectivity, which Sartre had elevated to the absolute. Some of them were influenced by Durkheim’s views on the social origin of a priori ideas, which they developed further. As for Lévi-Strauss and Foucault, they explicitly defended the concept of rationality against the arbitrariness they discerned in Sartre’s notion of absolute individual freedom (see Milisavljević, 2012). Thus, Konstantinović’s book could be read as a French-inspired debate with French ideas. But where, in all this, does “our” *palanka* fit in?

2. *Palanka*, the Balkans, and Balkanism

The Palanka Philosophy could also be interpreted as an expression of extreme “Balkanism”—the disparagement of the Balkans as Europe’s antechamber or its most backward region (Todorova, 1999)—and even of the contempt directed at the innocent inhabitants of small provincial towns that, by misfortune, still bear the word *palanka* in their names. Konstantinović is critical of the idea of a self-reliant Balkanship, to which he opposes the spirit of “Europe,” “history” or “world” (Konstantinović, 1991, 352-356). The denigration of all that is associated with the Balkans as a “liminal region” of Europe is evident in the selective, strategic use of Turkisms in his descriptions of the spirit of *palanka*. The Balkanist attitude is implicit in his disqualification of the *palanka*-like, “rational-empirical” cosmos as a world of petty shopkeepers’ (*čiftinski*) business. The pejorative word “čifta,” which refers to a “philistine” merchant or miser, comes from the Turkish derogatory term for a Jew (*Çifti*). This word and its derivatives (“čiftinstvo,” “čiftinski”) frequently appear in Konstantinović’s descriptions of the *palanka* spirit. Curiously, this striking violation of the dictates of political correctness—unquestioningly accepted in the language policy of Serbian elites who purportedly adhere to the values of “civil society”—has never tarnished the reputation of the author of *The Palanka Philosophy*.

It is difficult to dispute the validity of the objections that critics of the Balkanist discourse might raise against Konstantinović. To prevent such criticism, Konstantinović's supporters often emphasize the argument that *palanka* is a universal possibility, virtually present in any place or time: the *palanka* or *palanka* spirit, as they assert, is not a uniquely Balkan phenomenon but exists everywhere in latent form and can surface at any moment (Belančić, 2004; cf. Konstantinović, 1991, 195). However, this claim is far from self-evident, as evidenced by the almost insurmountable difficulty of finding an equivalent for the term *palanka* in the "world languages" without a significant loss in translation.

The word *palanka*, which consistently carries negative connotations in Balkanist discourse, refers to a local context, though this context is seldom explicitly defined in Konstantinović's work. The gray and gloomy Serbian *palanka* bears little resemblance to the French term *la province*, which denotes the more modest counterpart of the "metropolis," but also carries a pastoral nuance and even evokes, as a proper name, sunny Mediterranean imagery. The French *province* does not suggest only boredom, monotony, and laziness, but also intimacy, tranquility, and closeness to nature—charms often impossible to find in the metropolis. The same applies to other possible French equivalents of *palanka*—*petite ville* or *bourg*: in contrast to the "metropolis," they bring to mind the idea of a peaceful and comfortable life in a small community. However, nothing is positive in Konstantinović's *palanka*. Lost between village and city, it is a space where all intimacy degenerates into mutual surveillance, enforcing conformity and subjugation to collective consciousness. Nature, if present at all, is reduced to mutism and animality (Konstantinović, 1991, 133-137). Konstantinović even asserts that "nature, in whatever form, cannot exist in the *palanka*" (141). Despite a similar etymology, the meaning of Konstantinović's *palanka* corresponds even less to the English or American term *small town*, which is sometimes used to translate the title of his book. In English or American contexts, that term might evoke not only parochialism but also the respectable tradition of local self-government. However, in Konstantinović's vision, the *palanka* stands only for stagnation, rigid conformity, and the suppression of individuality.

I would therefore like to propose an interpretive hypothesis that has thus far remained outside the scope of the interpreters of *The Palanka Philosophy*. The argument of the alleged universality of the *palanka*, often invoked as an alibi against the accusation of autochauvinism, hinders a proper understanding of the relationship between the *palanka* and the "world." On the contrary, the *palanka* should be understood in its uniqueness, by taking into account how its very historical emergence is inscribed in the history of the relations between "Europe" and the "Orient." At the

same time, one must not lose sight of the fact that its place of origin lies in a particular, uncanny form of the “Orient”—which, as is often believed in the West, does not even deserve this name—specifically, the Balkans (Milisavljević, 2009).

Is *palanka* really a Turkish word, as is sometimes assumed, and as Vuk Karadžić believed? A closer examination of this question, which Konstantinović did not address, reveals that the term is not part of the classical Ottoman language. Some authors even suggest that it was adopted into Turkish from Serbian (Novaković, 1878, 267; Zirojević, 1970, 264). As we will see, this could have occurred during the period of conflict between the Ottoman Empire and the Central European powers—the “Great Turkish War.” But what does the word *palanka* originally mean? One of the detailed descriptions of its meaning comes from the architect Branislav Kojić:

“The *palanka* was a field fortification with a square base, each side measuring approximately 100-150 meters. The enclosing wall consisted of sturdy wooden stakes driven into the ground and pointed at the top (palisades). A gate was located on one side, protected by a special tower. Watch-towers stood at the corners of the square. Inside, there were low buildings for housing the garrison and travelers who sought refuge in the *palanka* at night.” (Kojić, 1970, 12, transl. by author)

The *palanka* as a structure thus served both security and transportation functions. Konstantin Jireček also emphasized its role in travel, noting that *palankas* were built to protect travelers in dangerous places and ravines “from Turkish and Christian brigands (*hajduks*)”—danger that was particularly acute from the 17th century onward. From Jireček’s description, which is also cited by Stojan Novaković (Novaković, 1878, 264), it is evident that the most striking feature of *palankas* was their provisional nature, in contrast to the more solid European fortifications:

“Such a *palanka* was by no means a stone castle with round towers surrounded by stone walls, nor a medieval town, but rather a square enclosure made of pointed stakes, interwoven with thorns and branches, and covered with clay. Inside were 8 to 15 Turkish houses, a small military colony, usually with a wooden or stone tower at the center. The heads of slain enemies could often be seen on the stakes. For such a wood-and-mud fortification, a heavy downpour was more dangerous than any band of brigands (*hajduks*).” (Jireček, 1877, 115-116, transl. by author)

This description appears to align with Konstantinović’s portrayal of the *palanka* as a makeshift and painstakingly closed world: his depiction of the *palanka* spirit can be understood as a direct transposition of the *palanka*’s physical characteristics onto the “spiritual” level.

Had he paid closer attention to the etymology of the word *palanka*, which Novaković (Novaković, 1878) insightfully examined, Konstantinović might have found further support for his astonishing thesis that the Balkan *palanka* inherently gravitates toward National Socialist ideology. The term *palanka* (*la palanque*) also appears in 17th-century French, where it denotes a protective or defensive wall made of evenly sized stakes or logs. The same applies to the Italian word *palanca* with a similar meaning, as well as the German *Plankenzaun*. All of them derive from the Latin *phalanga*, which in turn originates from the Greek *phalanx*. The Greek term originally denoted a tree trunk, log or a fence made of them. As early as in Homer, the word came to signify a battle array, and eventually, by the 7th century B.C., it referred to the formation of Hellenic hoplites, tightly packed like tree trunks in a defensive barrier (cf. Detienne, 1999). The word *phalanx* (*falanga*) appears frequently in the last pages of the book, where Konstantinović describes the “phalangist ideology” of Serbian National Socialism—an ideology that, according to him, emerged from the spirit of the *palanka* and its drive for unity and uniformity. However, he does not mention the etymological link between the *palanka* and either the Greek or the fascist *phalanx* (Konstantinović, 376-377, 396). On the other hand, this link suggests a broader, perhaps more significant conclusion: contrary to Balkanist prejudices, the word *palanka* has a purely European origin, tracing its lineage back to ancient Greece. If this is the case, how can we explain the pejorative connotation of *palanka* in modern Serbian—a connotation it clearly held even before Konstantinović’s book?

The explanation of this fact could only be found in history, with one circumstance standing out as particularly significant. The region in which *palankas* appear is difficult to define. It does not correspond to the territory of present-day Serbia or any single national state, as settlements bearing the name *Palanka* exist in Macedonia and Bulgaria, as well as in Croatia (near Zrmanja). Nor is the construction of *palanka*-type structures confined to the geographical Balkans, since they were also built in Central Europe—in Hungary, Serbian and Romanian Banat, and elsewhere in Vojvodina—and even in Wallachia, Moldavia and Ukraine (Zirojević, 1970, 269). This suggests another hypothesis: the vaguely defined area in which *palankas* emerged is determined neither by interstate borders nor by cultural traditions, but rather by a unique convergence of historical circumstances. The *palankas* arose in the contested territory between the great powers, the Ottoman Empire and the West—along the vast corridor through which the *via militaris* ran, the road connecting Constantinople to Belgrade and, beyond it, to Vienna.⁵

5 Metternich made the witty remark that “Asia” already “begins at the *Landstrasse* – the road out of Vienna to the east” (Taylor, 1948, 9).

From the early decades of the 16th century until the late 18th century, the military function of *palankas* remained paramount. Unlike the more robust fortresses of Western Europe, they were temporary and structurally fragile, but their construction was quick and simple. Moreover, *palankas* could be easily linked into networks spanning large areas, which facilitated troop coordination and mobility and provided strategic advantages in military campaigns. However, after the Treaty of Karlowitz (1699), the Ottoman Empire shifted from its expansionist phase—culminating in the failed siege of Vienna in 1683—to a defensive stance, punctuated by occasional reconquests that yielded no lasting gains. At this point, the primary function of *palankas* also became defensive: their primary purpose was hindering the advance of the Western alliance led by Austria. The siege of the Temeschwar *palanka*, conducted by Eugene of Savoy in September and October 1716, where 7,000 Ottoman soldiers were stationed, offers a glimpse into the military significance and the strategic role of these fortifications (*Continuation of the Campaign in Hungary*, 1717, 405–410).

However, the military-strategic aspect of *palankas* is not the only significant one, and it is precisely in this regard that the problematic nature of the Balkan *palanka* emerges. In the vicinity and under the protection of *palankas*, functioning as military outposts, settlements began to emerge in which merchants and craftsmen—Konstantinović's *ćifte*—set up and ran their small businesses. They made their home close to the fortifications designed for the military garrisons, but outside their enclosure (Zirojević, 1970, 267). Thus, the *palanka* evolved from being a solely military-strategic category to one encompassing urban, economic, and social dimensions.

In the case of the *palanka*, the metaphor—the “transfer of meaning”—had a literally spatial sense, as the term came to refer not only to the military fortification beside which the settlement was located, but also to the settlement itself, which retained the name of *palanka* even after the fortification had vanished. Such settlements had their own identity, with borders that are somewhat vague but still recognizable. In the geographical classification of settlements, the *palanka* can be assigned to a type that Cvijić described as the “Turkish-Byzantine” or “genuinely Byzantine” type, and Kojić as the “Old Balkan” type, which predominates in southern Serbia, western Bulgaria, and Macedonia (Cvijić, 1991, 230–232; Kojić, 1976). As Konstantinović notes, the *palanka* stands somewhere “between the village and the town” (Konstantinović, 1991, 7). However, whether a settlement is considered a *palanka* or a village is not determined by its size or population, but by other identity characteristics, which, following Wittgenstein, we could describe as “family resemblances.” Vuk Karadžić, who describes *palankas* as smaller than “*nahiya* towns” (*varoši*, centers of local administration) and “minor towns” (*varošice*)—together with *palankas*,

these all occupy a middle position between cities (*gradovi*) and villages in his classification—also observes that *palankas* are often “smaller than many villages” and “differ from them only in that Turks live in them, that there are one or two stores, and that the houses are closely packed together” (Karadžić, 1969, 23). The inhabitants of *palankas* are not free “citizens,” but are registered as part of the peasantry (*raiya*), regardless of whether they live from agricultural activities, and they remain in this category at least until the next census (Todorov, 1983, 74; Zirojević, 1970, 269). Furthermore, the population of *palankas* exhibits certain psychological traits: Konstantinović’s references to the laziness of the typical *palanka*-dweller resemble Cvijić’s description of the laziness and indolence (*javašluk*) of the Turkish population of the town of Drama in Greece (Cvijić, 1991, 223). This habitus stands in stark contrast to the proactive pioneer mentality that developed in the American West, emerging from a similar settlement type, such as the American fort, whose function, by contrast, was the expansion of empire—or to the resourcefulness and spirit of enterprise of the Russian and Cossack populations along the southern frontier of the Russian Empire (*Cherta*), which, over the centuries, slowly but successfully, pushed the Tatar rule toward the Crimean peninsula (Duffy, 1979, 205-206; Turchin, 2007, 31-55).

Only seemingly timeless or as if “sworn to duration,” as Konstantinović likes to put it (Konstantinović, 1991, 7, 11, 41, 75, 183), the *palanka* has its obscure history, which is a part of a broader history of war between empires or, more precisely, the history of a declining empire. The *palankas* in which Ottoman soldiers were stationed became targets of Serbian insurgent attacks from the early 19th century onward. However, due to the inertia of history, the age of *palankas* did not end with the liberation of Serbia and other Balkan countries from the Ottoman rule—the pace of social and urban history moves more slowly than that of political or military history. Already the Sultan’s Hatt-i Sharif of 1833 contained provisions for the destructions of fortresses that formed the core of the *palankas* (Kojić, 1970, 2, 14). As a result, the Turkish army and population were compelled to move to larger towns, while Christian settlers began migrating to the *palankas*. This process, too, was both gradual and slow. This may help explain why some of the structural features of the *palankas* and their “spirit” remained unchanged despite the demographic shifts. The *palankas* bore the traces of a past that resisted disappearance for a long time: shopkeepers and craftsmen, the *palankas*’ “petty folk,” continued to live and work there alongside numerous newcomers from rural areas. A new and “progressive” element emerged in the form of Serbian civil servants or teachers, craftsmen from Austria-Hungary, and, most importantly, native merchants and exporters, many of whom frequently traveled to

these countries (cf. Cvijić, 1991, 232). Nevertheless, the *palanka* remained a category in the official classification of settlements until the enactment of the Law on settlements (1866), when it was replaced by the term “minor town” (*varošica*)—a term of Hungarian, or rather “European” origin (Kojić, 1970, 7). From that point forward, the *palankas* increasingly came to be viewed as a relic of a past that needed to be erased, gradually acquiring a pejorative connotation. This tendency was further reinforced by the relatively modest success of efforts to urbanize Serbian “minor towns” (*varošice*), which, though no longer called *palankas*, retained their *palanka*-like character.

One can thus discern in the history of the *palanka*, much like in a hologram, the broad outlines of the history not only of Serbia but also of Europe, and even of the world. Konstantinović was mistaken in presenting the *palanka* as a creation of the native spirit. On the contrary, if my conclusions about its origin are correct, the *palanka* has always been at the mercy of the “openness” of the outer world or its “chaos”, and was itself born out of it. However, this openness is not the one found in Konstantinović’s world of free subjectivity, understanding, and tolerance, but rather that of a long-lasting, violent, and destructive conflict. The “closedness” of the *palanka* and the supposed narrow-mindedness of its residents, as described by Konstantinović, can easily be understood as defensive reactions to such a situation—a vital response to a fundamental need for security in the face of the “open world” and its dangers. At the time in question, and for much longer afterward, “open” cities were those that lacked protective walls.

The intricacies of the history of the *palanka* could explain the arrogant disdain for it and its inhabitants. Communism played a role in this disparagement—the critique, whether political or theoretical, of the “petty bourgeois” mentality is deeply tied to contemporary denunciations of the *palanka* spirit. The same holds true for earlier revolutionary nationalism, which sought to free Serbia from its “oriental” heritage. This, too, suggests that the *palanka* was never “outside” world history, nor was it forgotten by it, as Konstantinović claimed at the beginning of his book (Konstantinović, 1991, 7, 16-20, cf. 170-171). The closedness of the *palanka* and the openness of the “world” essentially belong to each other.

Yet another significant theme in Konstantinović’s critique of the *palanka* spirit is his questioning of its supposed effort to preserve the purity of the indigenous and native at all costs, excluding any external influences that might ‘corrupt’ Serbia’s autochthonous and “organic” culture. Konstantinović attempted to document this tendency with numerous examples drawn from literary history. However, one might ask whether he himself remained captive to the motif of autochthony, albeit in its re-

versed form. According to Konstantinović's argument, the root of collectivism which oppresses the individual lies in the patriarchal tribal spirit, in which the organic community unconsciously lives, while the spirit of the *palanka*, placed in the interspace between rural and urban life, consciously strives to restore the "tribe," rather than progress toward the next stage of the "open world." However, the assumption that the *palanka*-dweller is autochthonous—"rooted" in the "tribe" or ethnic group—remains intact in Konstantinović's reasoning. According to him, the Balkan "tribal" spirit is the ground or "soil" in which the stunted tree of the *palanka* grows, and it is this very spirit that is blamed for all evils, as evil could never come from "Europe" or the "open world." Thus, *The Palanka Philosophy* contains an implicit philosophy of history structured by the sequence: tribal spirit—*palanka* spirit—open world. This framework excludes the possibility of attributing positive meaning to anything that does not fit into the cliché of historical progress. Only this positivist notion of linear historical progress allows Konstantinović to stigmatize the *palanka* spirit as a regression to an earlier stage of civilization or as a striving to preserve it.

After these critical remarks on Konstantinović's concept, another question arises: what should we do with our *palanka*? The issue is not about countering the criticism of the *palanka* spirit with parochial narcissism or sentimentality. Any attempt to reclaim the term *palanka* as something affirmative—following strategies used in struggles against racial or gender oppression—would likely fail or be met with derision. However, anyone seeking to oppose the *palanka* spirit in the name of "Europe," "the West," "the world," "progress," or "modernization," should first examine the reasons of their disdain for the *palanka* and try to free themselves from that feeling. This could serve as a step toward a more nuanced understanding of the complexity of Serbian national identity.

Literature

- Antonić, S. (2008). Rodno mesto i tajna Druge Srbije. In Slobodan Antonić, *Kulturni rat u Srbiji* (pp. 207–228). Beograd: Zavod za udžbenike.
- Belančić, M. (2004). *Genealogija palanke*. Beograd: Narodna knjiga/Alfa.
- [Anonymous] (1717). Continuation of the Campaign in Hungary. In *The Historical Register, Containing an Impartial Relation of All Transactions, Foreign and Domestick, for the Year 1716*, Vol. I, London: H.B. Meere.
- Cvijić, J. (1991). *Balkansko poluostrvo*. Beograd: Srpska akademija nauka i umetnosti.
- Detienne, M. (1999). La phalange: problèmes et controverses. In Jean-Pierre Vernant (Ed.), *Problèmes de la guerre en Grèce ancienne* (pp. 157–188). Paris: Éditions de l'École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales.

- Duffy, C. (1979). *Siege Warfare. The Fortress in the Early Modern World 1494–1660*. London and Henley: Routledge & Kegan Paul.
- Durkheim, É. (1975). L'empirisme rationaliste de Taine et les sciences morales. In Émile Durkheim, *Textes 1. Éléments de théorie sociale* (pp. 171–177). Paris: Éditions de Minuit.
- Durkheim, É. (1990). *Les formes élémentaires de la vie religieuse. Le système totémique en Australie*. Paris: P.U.F.
- Durkheim, É., Mauss, M. (2017). *De quelques formes primitives de classification*. Paris: Presses universitaires de France.
- Jireček, C. (1877). *Die Heerstrasse von Belgrad nach Constantinopel und die Balkanpässe. Eine historisch-geographische Studie*. Prag: Verlag von F. Tempsky.
- Karadžić, V.S. (1969). *Srpska istorija našega vremena*. Beograd: Nolit.
- Kojić, B.Đ. (1970). *Varošice u Srbiji XIX veka*. Beograd: Izdavačko preduzeće Građevinska knjiga.
- Kojić, B.Đ. (1976). *Stari balkanski gradovi, varoši i varošice*. Beograd: Izdavačko-informativni centar studenata.
- Konstantinović, R. (1991). *Filosofija palanke*. Beograd: Nolit.
- Milislavljević, V. (2009). Penser les Balkans aujourd'hui: l'orientalisme, le balkanisme, et la question de la modernité. *META. Research in Hermeneutics, Phenomenology, and Practical Philosophy* 1(2), 249–271.
- Milislavljević, V. (2012). Subjektivnost, egzistencija, struktura: uz Marićevu ranu recepciju Fukoovog strukturalizma. *Kultura: časopis za teoriju i sociologiju kulture i kulturnu politiku* 134, 276–296.
- Novaković, S. (1878). Palanka – palanga – poluga – brvenik. *Godišnjica Nikole Čupića* II, 262–269.
- Özgüven, B. (2001). The Palanka: A Characteristic Building Type of the Ottoman Fortification Network in Hungary. In M. Kiel, N. Landman & H. Theunissen (Ed.), *Proceedings of the 11th International Congress of Turkish Art, Utrecht – The Netherlands, August 23–28, 1999* (No. 34), 1–12.
- Özgüven, B. (2009). Palanka Forts and Construction Activity in the Late Ottoman Balkans. In A.C.S. Peacock (Ed.), *The Frontiers of the Ottoman World* (pp. 171–187). New York: Oxford University Press.
- Pavlović, M. (1995). Ipolit Ten na srpskohrvatskom jezičkom području. *Književna istorija* 27(95), 21–68.
- Samardžić, R. (1976). Ipolit Ten kod Srba. *Filološki pregled* 14(1–2), 1–26.
- Taylor, A.J.P. (1948). *The Habsburg Monarchy 1809–1918*. London: Hamish Hamilton.
- Todorov, N. (1983). *The Balkan City 1400–1900*. Seattle and London: University of Washington Press.
- Todorova, M. (1999). *Imaginarni Balkan*. Beograd: Biblioteka XX vek.
- Turchin, P. (2007). *War and Peace and War. The Rise and Fall of Empires*. New York: Plume.
- Zirojević, O. (1970). Palanka. *Vojno-istorijski glasnik* 21(1), 263–271.

Jelena Miljković Matic¹

Institute for Political Studies

Belgrade

SCIENCE OF THE SERBIAN PEOPLE AS A FACTOR OF IDENTITY

Serbian social sciences and humanities have a distinctive character, particularly in the 19th century, where numerous scholars did not adhere strictly to disciplinary boundaries but rather explored a broad intellectual domain encompassing the essence of the Serbian people. Although this phenomenon has been acknowledged, only one author has attempted to provide a comprehensive explanation. However, even recognizing the phenomenon often contains elements of an explanation, as implied by the terminology used to describe it. Some interpret the disciplinary openness of Serbian scholars as a holistic or integral approach, others as multidisciplinary or interdisciplinary work, and some as a reflection of universality or versatility. The sole author who refrains from using predefined classifications and instead seeks to uncover the intrinsic meaning of this scientific orientation considers it an authentic phenomenon, deserving the designation “science of the Serbian people.” This approach is deeply rooted in modern Serbian culture. Its uniqueness lies in the fact that Serbian scholars respect the integrity of the national essence and the culture it embodies, adapting their scientific methods accordingly rather than forcing foreign theoretical frameworks onto their reality.

This perspective is particularly compelling and serves as the focus of our study. We begin by examining examples of Serbian scholars’ disciplinary indeterminacy and demonstrating why existing descriptions fail to fully capture the phenomenon. We then argue that scholars who approach the Serbian people as a unified entity do so based on the traditional spiritual foundation of Serbian identity, particularly as represented by Orthodox Christianity. This foundation establishes the science of the Serbian people as an authentic component of Serbian culture and a crucial factor in national identity. Finally, we distinguish the science of the Serbian people from ethnology, addressing intellectual currents that have opposed research conducted within the framework of the people concept since the late 19th century.

Keywords: Serbian social science and humanities; people; Serbian science of the people; Aleksandar A. Miljković; Serbian identity.

1 Research associate, jelena.miljkovic.matic@ips.ac.rs, ORCID 0000-0001-9084-6461.

Serbian science possesses a distinctive nature, particularly in the 19th century and, to a lesser extent, following the World War. A significant number of scholars did not confine themselves to specific disciplines but instead engaged with broad scientific fields that, elsewhere, were divided into separate social and humanistic disciplines. This phenomenon has been noted repeatedly in studies of Serbian scientific history, yet only one author has provided an in-depth explanation.

Identifying this phenomenon often hints at its underlying causes, which can be inferred from the terms used to describe it. Some scholars have framed Serbian disciplinary indeterminacy as a holistic or integral approach, while others have labeled it as multidisciplinary, interdisciplinary, or universal.

One author, however, sought to understand the intrinsic nature of this scientific orientation without resorting to predefined classifications. He characterized it as an original phenomenon within Serbian science, referring to it descriptively as the “science of our people” or the “Serbian science of the people.” According to this perspective, this scientific tradition is an authentic product of modern Serbian culture and, therefore, an integral part of it.

This interpretation is the most compelling, and we dedicate the following discussion to its elaboration. We begin by examining instances of Serbian scholars’ disciplinary indeterminacy and demonstrating why existing descriptions are inadequate.

Our aim is to highlight the defining features of the Serbian science of the people, emphasizing its orientation toward the spiritual foundations of Serbian culture. This perspective establishes the science of the Serbian people as an integral part of Serbian cultural identity and an authentic factor in shaping modern Serbian identity. We also distinguish it from ethnology, which, despite its literal translation from Greek as “the science of the people,” remains a distinct discipline. Lastly, we address the scholarly opposition to the Serbian science of the people which has been present in scientific research since the late 19th century.

Given that we are addressing a subject that is not widely known, we do not make grand claims but rather propose hypotheses and highlight possibilities for further exploration.

Disciplinary Indeterminacy: Neither Accidental nor Personal

When analyzing the contributions of prominent Serbian scholars, such as Stojan Novaković or Jovan Cvijić, authors typically categorize them by their disciplinary affiliations. However, their work defies strict

classification. These scholars engaged with a wide range of subjects concerning Serbian history and life, striving to uncover as much knowledge as possible.

Most authors writing on Serbian scientific history have acknowledged the disciplinary fluidity of these intellectuals, but often only briefly, using broad descriptors such as “universal scholars” or “multidisciplinary researchers.” Such assessments frequently attribute their wide approach to their exceptional intellectual abilities, implying that it was a matter of personal inclination rather than a systemic feature of Serbian science.

While acknowledging the presence of exceptionally talented individuals in Serbian scientific history, we argue that this phenomenon extends beyond personal genius. The transcendence of disciplinary boundaries is not limited to the giants of Serbian science but is also evident in the work of lesser-known scholars. This suggests that disciplinary indeterminacy in Serbian science is a systemic characteristic rather than a personal trait.

We have previously outlined the various terms used to describe this phenomenon, arguing that none fully capture its nature and significance. The use of a single term to describe such a widespread and defining feature of Serbian science risks reducing it to an incidental occurrence, unworthy of further scrutiny. However, the disciplinary fluidity of Serbian scholars is neither a mere historical curiosity nor solely a feature of individual brilliance. It is a defining characteristic of Serbian scientific tradition, deserving of deeper examination.

Let us examine examples of these various brief assessments and explain why they are not entirely appropriate:

Slobodan Naumović qualified the work of Jovan Cvijić as interdisciplinary when he referred to this scholar as a “pioneer of systematic *interdisciplinary* fieldwork.” Naumović also provides a different assessment when he writes that throughout his career, Cvijić “observed *holistically* the spaces, environments, and communities he later wrote about” (Naumović 2016, 16; our emphasis in italics). Immediately afterward, Naumović explains that in this particular case, *interdisciplinarity* does not remain within the scope of Cvijić’s work but is projected onto *anthropogeography*—the science that Cvijić coined and established to combine knowledge from various fields necessary for the study of Balkan peoples, especially the Serbs. Naumović cites the assessment of Nikša Stipčević, who believes that Cvijić, along with his nation, preceded the famous French historiographical school associated with the *Annales* journal, which also had a pronounced interdisciplinary character, with anthropogeography as an original Serbian scientific school (17).

*

Anthropogeography was closely linked to ethnology from the beginnings of Cvijić's geographical work (Prelić 2014, 85-87). After World War II, it was subordinated to ethnology with the establishment of the Ethnographic Institute, where anthropogeographers worked alongside ethnologists — not an Anthropogeographic Institute, where ethnologists would work. At the Faculty of Philosophy, anthropogeography existed as a subject within the Department of Ethnology, and not vice versa. In the literature on the history of Serbian ethnology, interdisciplinarity thus appears as a characteristic of the work at the Institute of Ethnography, which was founded after the World War, carrying the legacy of anthropogeography. Miroslava Lukić Krstanović and Mladena Prelić assess the work of the Ethnographic Institute in its first decades as *interdisciplinary*, especially the circle of external collaborators of the Institute (Lukić Krstanović and Prelić 2016, 159, 167). External collaborators in scientific work — i.e. amateur researchers — are also a phenomenon that dates back to the heyday of anthropogeography and it testifies that this science had already recognized the concept of 'citizen science' at the time (Prelić 2014, 88; Naumović 2016, 16). They are another expression of the openness and breadth of this science. The two authors also speak of Cvijić's *holistic* approach (Lukić Krstanović and Prelić 2016, 153). They assess Cvijić's work as "inter- and multidisciplinary in many aspects" and emphasize as evidence that several social sciences and humanities in Serbia regard Cvijić as their founder: geography, anthropogeography, sociology, and ethnology (150). Mladena Prelić also writes elsewhere about Cvijić's work as interdisciplinary (Prelić 2014, 91).

*

Radovan Samardžić emphasized that Stojan Novaković was a *polymath* (Samardžić 1976, 195, 247-249), while Srđan Rudić assessed Novaković's work as *interdisciplinary* (Rudić 2018, 82). We will focus here on the assessment of polymathy, which requires a more complex explanation than holism, interdisciplinarity, and multidisciplinary.

Milo Lompar has analyzed polymathy in detail (Lompar 2017). He also speaks of the similarity between polymathy and interdisciplinarity: "There is something of polymathic perspectivism in modern interdisciplinarity," writes Lompar, explaining: "This is the effort to address issues that transcend the boundaries of individual disciplines and to illuminate them from different angles" (15-16). Polymaths and interdisciplinary scholars can thus work in the "no man's land" between and beyond the boundaries of disciplines because they are not confined by the restrictions that keep them within a given disciplinary framework.

Although Lompar recognizes this similarity, interdisciplinarity and polymathy are fundamentally different. In the case of interdisciplinarity, the defined disciplines are the dominant reality to which the researcher adapts, whereas in polymathy, the personality of the researcher dominates with their “undisciplined” perspectives, broad views, extensive knowledge, and diverse interests. Lompar formulated this considering where the center of gravity lies — with the interdisciplinary researcher, whose world is divided into the domains of the different sciences, or with the problem itself, which the “undisciplined” polymath investigates:

“In interdisciplinarity, the point of contact between two disciplines is a non-transitional point, so that the separation of disciplines remains, and interdisciplinarity exists. In modern polymathy, however, the point of contact is a transitional point, subject to the internal forces of the polymathic perspective, which make it an internal dimension of the things studied. In interdisciplinarity, it is still part of the outer edge of things in contact” (Lompar 2017, 15-16).

Moreover, the polymathic approach is not only scientific but also has an aesthetic and philosophical dimension (Lompar 2017, 16-19). Judging someone as a polymath thus means considering the integrity and authenticity of their personality and education, which is fundamentally different from judging them as a scientist who transcends the boundaries of certain disciplines.

With an expanded breadth of his vision, a polymath could be similar to a scientist who approaches things comprehensively. However, unlike the polymath, he is driven toward comprehensiveness by the complex nature of the subject he wants to study, rather than by his own intrinsic peculiar forces. The integrity of the being he observes and studies compels him to approach its understanding in a comprehensive manner.

*

Mirko Grčić counts Jovan Cvijić among the “universal thinkers.” Grčić immediately specifies what he means by this: universal thinkers are people who were concerned with questions of “the emergence and functioning of cultures and civilizations,” which is why they “immersed themselves in the unfathomable complexity of the relationships between nature, man, and society through classical and contemporary representations of time, space, and movement.” Here, according to Grčić’s assessment, Jovan Cvijić finds himself in the company of F. Ratzel, N. J. Danilevsky, O. Spengler, A. Toynbee, P. Sorokin, S. M. Shirokogorov, and L. N. Gumilev (Grčić 2014, 19-20).

Vojislav Radovanović expresses something similar about Cvijić's intellectual breadth, but differently about the subject matter. In this case, the subject is not a theoretically defined civilization, but the geographically defined Balkan Peninsula with its ethnic and cultural diversities. Radovanović sees in Cvijić an “encyclopedic interest in various phenomena and events from the near and distant historical past and present of the Balkan peoples.” Cvijić, according to Radovanović, “has dealt with the most diverse questions with the breadth of a comprehensive and perceptive scientist.” Radovanović finds that in this respect, Cvijić is very similar to Stojan Novaković and Vatroslav Jagić (Radovanović 1958, 164).

*

Here, then, we encounter several terms – universality, diversity of interests, and comprehensiveness – used to describe the interests of scientists, indicating that these authors do not consider them subordinate to the requirements of a previously defined science. One can only be interdisciplinary or multidisciplinary in a scientific system that consists of individual disciplines. Similarly, one can only view the world holistically and integrally if the disciplines have already broken it down into areas of their competence. Scientists with a universal and comprehensive view show no sign of such an after-the-fact reassembly of fragmented science or a theoretically fragmented world. Instead, they perceive a varied reality, rich in diverse and complex beings, things, and processes. This does not mean that these scientists do not do science, but it does mean that for them, the abstraction of problems, hypotheses, and methods does not arise from speculative theorizing, but from the encounter with living reality—as Jovan Cvijić beautifully described in his famous St. Sava speech of 1907, “On Scientific Work and Our University” (Cvijić 1921, 26-29).

Although Cvijić dealt with questions of civilizations and the Balkans, these were not the central concepts of his scientific system, but rather the framework. The central concept was the Serbian people.

The People as an Axiomatic Concept in Serbian Science

Aleksandar Miljković argues that the primary focus of our scientists has been the people: understanding it, studying and documenting its essence, preserving evidence of its way of life, and aiding it in navigating the process of modernization. As a result, the majority of Serbian scientists view reality through the lens of the concept of the “people.” The most accurate

way to describe this concept is as spiritual rather than theoretical, since the people are primarily *experienced as a sense of connectedness with others*. This concept cannot be fully defined within the framework of a science grounded in humanistic ideology, which denies the concept of the spirit.

Due to its spiritual nature, the concept of the people must possess an axiomatic character in science, which grants Serbian science of the people a paradigmatic quality, parallel to that of the humanistic paradigm. In the spiritual paradigm, community is understood as a sense of connection, while in the humanistic paradigm, community is defined through socio-cultural criteria that exist outside the individual. Recently, the basis of belonging has been placed back within the individual, but in a way that substitutes the spirit with an entirely abstract, theoretical concept of identity or ethnicity.

Miljković identified disciplinary indeterminacy as the most important feature of Serbian science when discussing whether Sreten Vukosavljević's scientific work could be classified as sociology, as earlier researchers had suggested. He argued that it is incorrect to apply criteria developed in different scientific contexts—such as the division of scientific thought into disciplines—to S. Vukosavljević and many other Serbian scholars. According to Miljković, Vukosavljević is part of “our scientific tradition, which was initiated by Vuk Karadžić and continued by Stojan Novaković, Val-tazar Bogišić, Jovan Cvijić, Tihomir Đorđević, and others” (Miljković 1975, 15). Miljković later included Milenko Filipović in this group, and with good reason. Filipović continued this scholarly legacy until his death in 1969, thus extending the relevance of this tradition a full decade beyond Vukosavljević, who died in 1960 (Miljković 2010, 83-85; see also Miljković Matić 2018). Miljković elaborates on the nature of this academic tradition: “Can one say that Vuk Karadžić was more of an ethnographer than a rural sociologist, more of a historian of the First Serbian Uprising than a folklorist? Who could draw a clear line in Bogišić's work between works that belong to ethnology, the study of written and unwritten law, and those that belong to sociology?” (16). Hence, all such definitions would be artificial and forced, judged by an inappropriate standard.

Miljković emphasizes the defining characteristic of Sreten Vukosavljević's scientific work: “Sreten Vukosavljević studied our village; it was the exclusive object of his scientific interest, but not within the framework of a specific scientific discipline, such as rural sociology.” Miljković is convinced that Vukosavljević “could never have created what he created” if he had approached his research from the perspective of rural sociology, or “if he had been burdened with the notion that his work had to contribute to the clarification of questions within a clearly defined and delimited scientific discipline” (Miljković 1975, 16).

The works of Vukosavljević, like those of many other Serbian scholars, are neither specifically sociological, nor ethnographic, historiographical, legal, folkloristic, or the like. “They belong to the science of our people”, says Miljković, “and this is the only designation that can be made when the question arises to which scientific discipline they predominantly or entirely belong” (Miljković 1975, 19-20).

The Expression “Science of the People”

The concept of the science of the people has been previously mentioned in the literature, particularly in works dedicated to our ethnologists and anthropogeographers. It has been frequently referenced, precisely because most ethnologists and anthropogeographers focused on studying the people rather than examining scientific theories. Jovan Erdeljanović defined ethnology as the “science of the peoples” (Erdeljanović 1939, 3), which is also the literal translation the Greek word “ethnology” to Serbian.

In her work on the relationship between Jovan Cvijić and ethnology, Mladena Prelić noted and emphasized that the phrase “science of the people” appears multiple times in the literature on Cvijić (Prelić 2014, 91-92). She notes that several authors used the term when writing about Cvijić’s work, but it remains unclear whether they were referring to ethnology or something else.

According to Prelić’s research, this term first appears in the title of Erdeljanović’s text “Jovan Cvijić and Our Science of the People”. In this work, Erdeljanović describes how Cvijić had a “special interest in the people themselves,” that he was characterized by a “deep, sincere love for his people,” and that he had a strong inclination to “penetrate into the inexhaustible depths of folk traditions, folk life, and the folk soul.” However, according to Erdeljanović, Cvijić was simply continuing the work started by Vuk Karadžić, who had himself collected data from the people “about their lives, customs, and characteristics” (Erdeljanović 1927, XIX-XX). Here, we can recognize all the features of the science of the people that A. Miljković noted and emphasized independently of Erdeljanović’s text, apparently not knowing about it.

Mladena Prelić does not interpret Erdeljanović’s text in the same way. She does not conclude that the science of the people should be regarded as an independent Serbian scientific idiom. Prelić examines the relationship between Jovan Cvijić and Serbian ethnology, interpreting Erdeljanović’s writing on Cvijić strictly within this context. Prelić states that “a careful reading reveals” that, when Erdeljanović speaks of the science of the peo-

ple, “he did not mean ethnology” in reference to Cvijić. The basis for this interpretation is that Erdeljanović defined ethnology as the science of the people in the sense of *ethnos*, while “when he speaks of Cvijić’s work, he refers to research on population, demography, and specific, especially anthropogeographical problems” (Prelić 2014, 91-92, 93) – that is, the people in the sense of *demos*.

Mladena Prelić did not go beyond this interpretation, as it was sufficient for her work to determine whether there were grounds to consider Cvijić the founder of Serbian ethnology and whether, in this context, the science of the people refers to ethnology among the authors who used the term when writing about Cvijić. According to this interpretation, the science of the people, in the context of Cvijić’s work, refers to the study of demographic issues. However, we see that Jovan Erdeljanović uses the term science of the people both when describing the ethnology he himself practiced and when describing Cvijić’s anthropogeography and other non-ethnological, more demographic research on the people. It is therefore legitimate to conclude that the authors who use this term understand the science of the people as encompassing all research concerning the people, since they are inherently working with the concept of the people.

None of these authors specifically addressed the theory or reflection on the relationship between ethnology and the science of the people, nor the essence and concept of the people, or the sense of national community as a spiritual connection, culture, and society. Therefore, we believe that Aleksandar Miljković was the first to emphasize the characteristics of the science of the people as a science of “Serbian style and experience” – to borrow the description Bishop Nikolaj used to define Svetosavlje as specifically Serbian Orthodoxy, a characterization that is equally fitting for Serbian science (Bishop Nikolaj 1993, 8) – even though Miljković may not have been the first to use this expression.

As far as we know, Ivan Kovačević (Kovačević 1978, 9, 11-12) was the only author to address Miljković’s thesis of the science of the people as an independent scientific idiom – aside from ourselves here and earlier (Miljković Matić 2018, 45-52). He briefly discussed this interpretation of Serbian science and, in principle, agreed with it, stating that “the traditional ‘science of the people’ or ‘national science’ was in the process of differentiation before the war, but the war interrupted this process” (12).

As Milenko Filipović and other later authors on the history of Serbian ethnology have noted, Jovan Cvijić theoretically and methodologically established the study of the people, which had not been organized in this sense until then, and called it anthropogeography (Filipović 1930, 117-118; 1937, 507). Since “it encompasses branches that belong to both the eth-

nographic and sociological fields” (Daneš 1927, 23), other specific studies began to develop their scientific profile. The specialized disciplines could be linked together through anthropogeography, which preserved the multidimensional approach of the undifferentiated science of the people from the previous scientific period. Therefore, the specialized sciences served as auxiliary sciences in relation to anthropogeography (Prelić 2014, 92), which was the core of the unique scientific system of the “Cvijić School.”

Aleksandar Miljković therefore, only formalized an expression that already existed in the literature and was taken for granted by many scientists who studied the people, especially during the period before the emergence of anthropogeography and the differentiation of Serbian science. In this context, the science of the people should not be understood as a Serbian equivalent of ethnology, which is a specific discipline in the humanistic system of science. For the same reason, it should also not be understood as demography. The science of the people should be understood in its original sense, as intended by its original proponents – those for whom the concept of the people embodied the fullness of the spiritual and historical community.

The Authentic Basis of the Science of the People

A key aspect here is the motivation of scholars to transcend the boundaries set by their diplomas in specific academic disciplines and instead engage in the diverse study of their people. Using the example of Sreten Vukosavljević, Miljković illustrates that the reason Vukosavljević devoted himself to studying the village “was undoubtedly not his theoretical interest, nor the desire to clarify questions that sociology could not solve, but a purely practical one: he wanted to support the development and progress of our village, ensuring that this progress was consistent with, and did not contradict, the way of life and the norms that the people spontaneously created and adhered to” (Miljković 1975, 16-17).

One of the most significant historical examples of such an approach – where modernization is carried out on a scientific basis while respecting the specificity of the culture in which it is implemented – is the Montenegrin General Property Code, published in 1888 and written by Val-tazar Bogišić. The Code was created with the utmost respect for the legal customs preserved by the Montenegrin folk tradition (Đorđević 2011). A similar example can be found in the political ideas of Svetozar Marković, who advocated for the modernization of society based on Serbian folk traditions, particularly the family *zadruga* system. It seems that the feeling of

national community as a historical entity that has been living through its traditional culture was widespread in 19th-century Serbian society – and, by extension, among its scholars.

The patriotic motivation of these scholars is not only reflected in their responsible approach to modernization, which they viewed as the goal of their studies. They pursued two additional goals: discovering the truth about the national essence and preserving its culture from decay and oblivion. The scientific disciplines they studied were oriented towards achieving these goals. This alignment between science and subject reached its peak in Cvijić's anthropogeography as an original Serbian scientific discipline: "Cvijić's anthropogeographic method is highly adapted to the environment in which the research is conducted. Therein lies its strength... It is not certain to what extent it would be possible to apply these methods in other countries," remarked Jiří Daneš (Daneš 1927, 24-25). Miljković views not only anthropogeography but also the entire Serbian science of the people as "an offshoot of our specific national culture, which cannot be integrated into the prefabricated sciences built on other ground" (Miljković 1975, 25).

In his famous study *Youth and its Literature (Omladina i njena književnost)*, Jovan Skerlić argued that the Serbian interest in the people was, in fact, an imitation of German Romanticism, due to Vuk Karadžić's connections with German Romantics (Skerlić 1906, IX-X). A century later, Ivan Kovačević revisited Skerlić's thesis and used Serbian ethnology as an example to demonstrate its validity: he presented ethnology as an instrument of national politics (Kovačević 2001-I, 145; 2001-II, 11; 2005, 11-12).

However, there is a body of historical evidence that Serbian national consciousness and patriotism predates German Romanticism by a considerable margin. This does not mean that there was no influence from abroad on Serbian science. The science of the people emerged as a response from educated Serbs – initially those educated abroad – to the needs of the Serbian people, whose life was undergoing modernization. Their goal was to help the people to understand, preserve, improve, and even critique its characteristics in all dimensions – space, time, society, culture, and spirit.

Modern science itself was a novelty in Serbian culture at that time. Therefore, we would argue that the emergence of science, rather than Romanticism, was the most significant foreign influence that enabled the development of Serbian science of the people. Although Serbian scholars were educated within a foreign scientific system – humanistic and divided into distinct disciplines – they applied their expertise in an original way. They contributed to the renewal of the national essence following the liberation

from centuries of foreign political domination. If we label this orientation as Romanticism, we should do so conditionally, emphasizing that it is an original Serbian Romanticism, naturally emerging from the true historical consciousness of the Serbian people. The Serbian people were not born into modernity, but the peasantry remembered the Orthodox Serbian state.

The Scientific Elite as Part of the People

The Serbian science of the people entails a profound empathy and active engagement of the scientists with their object of study – the people themselves. In other words, scientists are not only accountable to the people as a community, encompassing present generations, ancestors, and descendants, but also loyal to them rather than to any prevailing scientific theory or community. Therefore, the science of the Serbian people serves simultaneously as a seeker of truth, a catalyst of modernization, and a guardian of tradition.

Slobodan Naumović viewed the involvement of scholars in their subject as a form of ideologizing science through the values of Romanticism (Naumović 1998). However, we disagree with the assessment that the Serbian elite broadly adopted the ideology of German Romanticism. Instead, there exists an authentic spiritual sense of national community among Serbs, passed down over centuries through oral and customary traditions, as well as folk and ecclesiastical practices. This enduring sense of community remained vibrant in modern Serbian civil society, and this very continuity was the reason Serbian scientists did not denationalize, despite personally abandoning the traditional way of life. Serbian national sentiment is not an ideology; rather, it is a spiritual experience, as Žarko Vidović describes in his remarkable book *Essays on Spiritual Experience* (Vidović 1989). The Serbian people represent a spiritual community, not a political or ideological one.

Serbian intellectuals truly embodied the role of the national elite, both in the literal and full sense. Even after completing their higher education – often abroad – and attaining high social positions, they remained loyal to their people. While their knowledge and positions distanced them from lower social classes, they nevertheless viewed their elevated status as a means to bring a new socio-cultural dimension to the national being as a whole. The Serbian patriotic elite saw the rise of the bourgeois class as just a part of the entire people's modernization. Petar Vlahović, for instance, emphasizes this when he describes of Jovan Cvijić as “this great national and scientific giant of ours” (Vlahović 1987, 68). Cvijić belonged

equally to both the people and science, e.g. his scientific work did not estrange him from the people.

This point was also recognized by foreign scholar Jiří Daneš, who noted the underdevelopment of class consciousness in Serbian society, which made it conducive to the scientific study of the people: “The mutual relations between the various social groups that make up the people are such that there is no significant difference between town and village. This absence of a sharp division, which in other peoples causes difficulties for researchers from urban environments, allows Serbian scholars to penetrate the intimate aspects of folk life with ease” (Daneš 1927, 23).

Many Serbian scientists did not spiritually separate themselves from the people. They lived their urban lives according to traditional Serbian values, thus remaining an integral part of the people. Therefore, the science of the people took on the character of an ethnic self-examination, one that the entire people could benefit from in all respects. As Anto Babić wrote about Milenko Filipović on his death, he was a “national scientist who did not write and publish his works to increase his scientific value, but to serve as a socially useful guide for understanding and solving the pressing issues of popular life.” Babić added that the future dissemination of Filipović’s works would be the most fitting “monument that the people could erect to a meritorious explorer of the hidden contents of their lives” (Babić 1970, 5).

The scientists who studied the Serbian people were exceptionally hardworking and tireless in their work. Not only in their scientific endeavors, but they also often engaged in other societal roles, whether political or professional, thus making their personal maximum contribution to the life of their people.

The Science of the People as an Authentic Part of Serbian Culture

The foundation of the Serbian science of the people is undeniably rooted in a Christian mentality, reflecting the desire among Serbian scholars to serve their people. As the Lord teaches, serving others is the measure of the love within us (Matthew 20:26-28; John 15:12-15). Love, being central to Christianity, defines humanity’s essence; for “man is created in the image and likeness of God, and if God is love in His essence, then man is love in his essence” (Bishop Panteleimon 2014).

Serbian scholars did not view their academic degrees as mere steps to social prestige, power, or wealth. Instead, their primary focus was on

-serving their people with their knowledge and efforts, fully and effectively. As A. Miljković describes in his work on Sreten Vukosavljević, this motivated them to “to know the people as thoroughly and comprehensively as possible in order to help them in the best possible way.” This desire was not only present in Vukosavljević but in all the scholars who came before him, beginning with Vuk Karadžić (Miljković 1975, 22). This ethos was not limited to applied science but also encompassed the pursuit of two other noble goals: uncovering the truth about the people and preserving their culture from decay and oblivion.

It has been repeatedly confirmed that Serbian culture and mentality are deeply imbued with Christianity. Without the spiritual experience of the national community, Serbian ethnic identity might have dissolved into other peoples when faced with modern challenges. Serbian scholars who studied their people, dedicating themselves to their work by combing through archives or traveling for weeks through difficult terrain, did so with self-sacrificing love. Their commitment echoed the spirit of figures like St. Sava, the Holy Emperor Lazar and his Kosovo warriors, Despot Stefan Lazarević with his “Word of Love,” and the Serbian peasants, who, despite widespread illiteracy, preserved their noble culture across the centuries.

We must not forget and should pay special attention to the self-originating Christian folk movements, such as the Christian Folk Community, more commonly known as the Bogomoljački Movement, which was active during the interwar period. The connection between this movement and Serbian scholars warrants further exploration.

The Orthodox mentality, as the defining characteristic of the Serbian people, motivated and guided the work of these scholars. This serves as the foundation for Miljković’s assertion that the science of the people is “an offshoot of our specific national culture” (Miljković 1975, 25). Therefore, the Serbian science of the people represents an intellectual tradition of an ancient people with a centuries-old national church.

★

Here we will follow Karl Popper’s advice to test our thesis ourselves, and we will recall a piece of research that could be raised as an argument against our explanation of the authentic foundation of Serbian science of the people. Ljubinka Trgovčević’s study *Planned Elite: On Students from Serbia at European Universities in the 19th Century* (Trgovčević 2003) could be cited to argue that Serbian scholars in the 19th century were not driven by spiritual love and moral responsibility for their people. According to Trgovčević, these scholars were educated abroad with state sponsor-

ship, conditioned on returning to serve the nation and contribute to the country's improvement, as Serbia aimed to modernize and align itself with the cultures of Central and Western Europe.

In defense of our perspective, we acknowledge that the feelings of patriotism, national responsibility, and loyalty were certainly nurtured or intensified by state sponsorship. However, it is important to emphasize that many scholars – such as Stojan Novaković, Slobodan Jovanović, Sreten Vukosavljević, Tihomir Đorđević, Jovan Erdeljanović, and Milenko Filipović – were educated independently, at their own expense or in Serbia, and pursued their work driven by a genuine sense of duty to their people. Their commitment was not contingent on state scholarships or obligations. Moreover, as modernization progressed and the Serbian education system expanded, the need for state intervention in guiding the scientific elite diminished.

Thus, the sense of national community and dedication to the people exhibited by these scholars was genuine, not merely influenced by external forces. Their contributions stemmed from a deeply rooted commitment to their nation, embodying the true spirit of self-sacrifice and service.

The Science of the People is Not the Same as Serbian Ethnology

It is important to clarify a key distinction between the Serbian science of the people and ethnology, as this could lead to confusion. Earlier, in the chapter titled “The Term Science of the People,” we examined how Jovan Erdeljanović and Mladena Prelić understood this term.

Although the word “ethnology” is derived from Greek, meaning *the science of the people*,² one might mistakenly assume it is identical to the Serbian science of the people. However, these are distinct concepts. The Serbian science of the people is deeply embedded within Serbian culture, reflecting the spiritual essence of the Serbian national community. It is grounded in a Christian worldview and serves as a tool for the modernization of Serbian culture. In contrast, ethnology originates from a foreign, humanistic scientific framework.

2 Ethnos refers to a natural, biological group, which doesn't necessarily have to be human. Modern Greek culture, when referring to the science that we call ethnology or ethnography, uses the term *laography*. This term emphasizes that it is a science about human groups, as *laos* refers to God's people, that is, humans in the fullest sense of the word, as spiritual beings. For a human group, another term used is *demos*, which refers to a political community, or society, and we recognize it in the term *demography*.

As we have seen, Jovan Erdeljanović used the term “science of the people” in a broader sense, encompassing both ethnology and a more comprehensive study of the people. Other scholars, however, have often used it synonymously with ethnology (Drobnjaković 1948; Vlahović 1987, 15, 67, 133, 184). It is more accurate to say that they employed “ethnology” as a formal, academic term for what was traditionally known as the Serbian science of the people. In more recent discussions of the history of Serbian ethnology, there is generally no distinction between the Serbian science of the people and ethnology. An exception to this is Mladena Prelić’s observation that Erdeljanović did not have ethnology in mind when referring to Cvijić’s work as part of the “science of the people”.

The science of the people, however, is not an independent discipline. It is a term that brings together various studies on the Serbian people, which lacked a defined disciplinary structure in the 19th century. In this context, the term “science” refers to “study” rather than a formal academic discipline. Essentially, the concept of the “people” as a collective entity serves as the guiding framework for all specific research, steering it toward the common goal of understanding the national essence. Milenko Filipović, even in the post-war period when ethnology had inherited anthropogeography, emphasized the importance of this collective understanding. He stated that “knowledge of every country and every people is a task which, in every cultural nation, is sufficient and strong enough to support ethnological studies and maintain institutions dedicated to them” (Filipović 1955, 214). He further stressed that the importance of understanding the people and their country could not be overstated (Filipović 1957, 13).

The concept of the “people” refers to the collective entity that drives, defines, and gives purpose to the study. It encompasses all individuals who share the same national spirit, regardless of socio-cultural divisions, including the scientists themselves. The concept of “spirit” is crucial here, as it enables a true understanding of the people as a unified whole, fostering an unshakeable sense of belonging to the national community.³ For the Serbs, this collective spirit is also Christian, as Christianity has deeply influenced all layers of medieval Serbian culture – peasant, urban, noble, and ecclesiastical – laying the foundation for the Serbian people as a spiritual community, a legacy that endures to this day. Even if Christianity were not a central element for the Serbs, it would remain true that European culture, including Serbian culture, is based on a Christian ethos.

3 Žarko Vidović extensively wrote about spiritual connectedness as the only true and genuine bond among people in his book *Essays on Spiritual Experience* (Vidović 1989), which we mentioned earlier.

*

Surprisingly, although ethnology is officially recognized in the history of Serbian science, it still lacks a clear, universally accepted definition (Stevanović 2017). Therefore, it is essential to clarify the relationship between ethnology and the science of the people.

Ethnology is a distinct discipline. As a separate discipline, ethnology belongs to the humanistic rather than the Christian worldview. This is already evident from the choice of *ethnos* instead of *laos* as the key term (see note 2 here). Humanistic means that the spirit is excluded from the equation, meaning that the national community is considered united on some other basis than the spiritual, on a worldly basis. Even if it is united by the same religion, for humanism religion is a human construct, and thus only one element of culture.

When we revisit Jovan Erdeljanović and his definition of ethnology, it becomes clear that his perspective is rooted in a humanistic, rather than a spiritual, foundation – despite the fact that Erdeljanović himself was an ethnologist within the broader field of the science of the people. According to him, the central scientific question, around which the entire discipline of ethnology revolves, is the basis on which people had united into nations. This is evident in his definition of ethnology, which states:

“Ethnology is the science of the peoples of the Earth. It studies the origin and development of each people, along with all the characteristics and phenomena that make them a people. The ultimate goal of ethnology is, through these investigations, to uncover the laws governing the creation and development of all peoples on Earth, or, in other words, to reveal the laws of ethnic development within humanity.” (Erdeljanović 1939, 3).

The lack of a universally accepted definition of ethnology arises from the absence of consensus within humanism and its secular worldview regarding what constitutes a unified people. Is it a social or cultural characteristic, and if so, which specific cultural elements or criteria should define it? Ethnology is the discipline that seeks to explore and answer this question.

In such a system, the chances are slim for the scientific elite to identify with the entirety of the national being, united by a sense of community that transcends all earthly differences, as spiritual bonds do. As a result, the elite in humanistic sciences often views itself as superior, positioning itself as the observer and researcher of other social or cultural groups. These may include lower social classes, particularly peasants and artisans, ethnic groups defined by cultural traits such as language, customs, or name, or any groups that emerge spontaneously or could be theoretically defined based on abstract criteria – excluding, of course, the scientific community itself as a group.

Ethnology, as a humanistic science, sought to study a people not as a spiritual, but rather as a social or cultural community. In practice, this positions ethnology as the study of the non-elite segments of society. Theoretically, various defining criteria of “people” were explored: language, territory, name, rural life (seen as closer to nature than urban life), illiteracy, adherence to old customs, and so on. Humanistic ethnology is inherently a theoretical discipline, as it must rely on abstract concepts and relationships to fill the gap created by the absence of a spiritual dimension. In contrast, a science that defines the people as a spiritual community is meaningful even without a theoretical framework, since it does not struggle with the core concept of “people” itself, and thus does not need to justify its existence. This approach was embraced by most Serbian ethnologists within the framework of the science of the people, as part of the broader Serbian scientific tradition.

Modernization, among other things, represented the advancement of humanism in the Serbian worldview. Over time, this led to the adoption of a secular perspective, which also influenced Erdeljanović’s definition of ethnology. Alternatively, one could observe a reversal of the traditional order, as seen in Stojan Novaković’s futuristic pro-Yugoslav text *Nakon sto godina* (After One Hundred Years) from 1911. In this work, Novaković imagines how, by 2011, Serbian bishops “transformed former religious proselytism into modern proselytism of patriotism, adding to their religious teachings the command to uphold the unity of the nation as a guarantee for the people’s future and as the most secure foundation of faith itself” (Novaković 1966, 347). In a worldview rooted in humanism, patriotism becomes the foundation for faith, seeing faith as a cultural fact rather than recognizing cultural ties as a reflection of a spiritual connection, which is older and primary.

Opposition to the Serbian Science of the People

The first significant challenge to the Serbian science of the people emerged within Serbian historiography, with Ilarion Ruvarac as the central figure questioning the value of folk traditions as historical sources and their broader significance. While his critique was framed as a pursuit of methodological rigor, and in that sense was justified to some extent, Čedomir Popov’s research revealed that at the core of this debate was a political agenda aimed at erasing Serbian identity. Popov argued that Ruvarac, whom he referred to as a “ruthless destroyer of real or imagined myths of Serbian history,” exhibited “a submissive attitude toward the

state, Austrian and Hungarian authorities.” In his contributions to Serbian historiography, Ruvarac aligned himself with the Habsburg Monarchy, thus undermining the Serbian people (Popov 1999, 7 and 178).

Ruvarac’s maneuver introduced to Serbian historiography scholars whose motivation was driven by “scientific curiosity for its own sake, a form of scientific larpurlartism”, as Alexandar Miljković put it (Miljković 1986, 14). Scholars of Serbian history who did not follow this path, but instead remained loyal to the national community, have yet to receive the recognition in Serbian science and education that truly reflects their scientific and national significance. Today, when we consider the amount of scholarly attention each of these two received, it may appear as though Ilarion Ruvarac is regarded as a greater scholar than Stojan Novaković.

This divide in Serbian historiography became a model for later dichotomies in all of the Serbian identity-related sciences: those who were aligned with the people and those who distanced themselves from the people—not just as a group but also as a concept – a concept which, as Mladena Prelić observed, is “increasingly avoided in scholarship” (Prelić 2017, 231). This division can be seen in various disciplines. In ethnology, for example, the process of anthropologization (Kovačević 2015) steered many ethnologists away from the Serbian scientific tradition and toward Western anthropology. Similarly, in archaeology, the pro-Serbian scientific interpretations of university professor Đorđe Janković were met with hostility (Janković 1998; Marković 2017). In ethnomusicology, the studies of Serbian folk music by Miodrag A. Vasiljević (Vasiljević 1950, 1953, 2003) were largely ignored for over 70 years, with only a few exceptions (among them, we should mention Vasiljević 1988, 185; Marković 2003; Miljković Matić 2010a and 2010b, which represent about half of all the writings on his theories, that are of exceptional importance for the study of the Serbian people). As for other identity-related sciences, the situation in this regard is not personally well-known to us, but it is reasonable to expect that the same process of bifurcation within the discipline occurred there as well: towards the people and away from them.

The opposition to the Serbian identity, carried out through identity-related sciences, is not, however, a completely unexplored topic. It is discussed and debated—less so within official science, but much more in non-institutional science, journalistic essays, and pseudoscience. In principle, we did not intend to delve deeper into this issue here, other than merely mentioning it. Our intention was to look in a different direction, towards the scientific tradition of studying the Serbian people as a spiritual community.

Conclusion

The framework of Serbian science of the people – and the disciplines that later emerged: anthropogeography and other specialized fields of study – is rooted in the concept of the people as a unified entity, with its own spiritual and historical origins and destiny, its characteristics, and its scope across all dimensions. This is a people that evaluates itself by its own standards, which is why we consider the Serbian science of the people to have been a significant factor in shaping Serbian identity.

Although the science of the people no longer exists in its original form, nor in the differentiated form that once centered around anthropogeography as a key part of the authentic Serbian scientific system, we cannot say that it has disappeared entirely. It continues to endure in its spiritual essence: as a sense of belonging among scholars to their people. This orientation runs through the work of many Serbian scholars, even during the period when theoretical research on abstract problems dominated academic institutions. We also belong to that scientific tradition, all of us who, with worry, discuss projects for the deconstruction of Serbian identity.

References

- Vasiljević, Miodrag A. 1950. *Jugoslovenski muzički folklor I: Narodne melodije koje se pevaju na Kosmetu* (studija „Tonalne osnove našeg muzičkog folklorā”, 339-390), Beograd: Prosveta
- Vasiljević, Miodrag A. 1953. *Jugoslovenski muzički folklor II: Narodne melodije koje se pevaju u Makedoniji* (studija „Trohejski metrički oblici u muzičkom folkloru naroda Jugoslavije”, XVII-LXXXII), Beograd: Prosveta
- Vasiljević, Miodrag A. 2003. *Narodne melodije s Kosova i Metohije* (studije „Tonalne osnove našeg muzičkog folklorā”, 305-332 i „Struktura tonskih nizova u našoj narodnoj muzici” 333-386), Priredila Zorislava M. Vasiljević, Pogovor Nenad Ljubinković, Beograd: Beogradska knjiga – Knjaževac: Nota
- Vidović, Žarko. 1989. *Ogledi o duhovnom iskustvu*, Beograd: Sfairos
- Vlahović, Petar. 1987. *Pisci naše etnologije i antropologije*, Beograd: Odeljenje za etnologiju Filozofskog fakulteta u Beogradu
- Grčić, Mirko. 2014. *Geografija, kultura i civilizacija*, Beograd: Geografski fakultet Univerziteta u Beogradu
- Daneš, Jirži V. 1927. *Jovan Cvijić*, Preveo s češkog Dr. Milorad Dragić, Beograd: Posebna izdanja Geografskog društva
- Drobnjaković, Borivoje. „Srpska etnografija od Vuka Karadžića do danas”, *Muzeji* 1, 27-39
- Episkop Nikolaj, „Predgovor” u: Arhim. Dr Justin Popović. 1993. *Svetosavlje kao filozofija života*, Valjevo: Manastir Čelije, 7-9

- Episkop Pantelejmon. 2014. „Ako je Bog Ljubav, onda je i čovek ljubav”, Sa ruskog prevela Nataša Jeftić, sajt *Pravoslavie.Ru* na srpskom, 6. novembra 2014, <https://pravoslavie.ru/74944.html> (23. 12. 2024)
- Erdeljanović, Jovan. 1927. „Jovan Cvijić i naša nauka o narodu”, *Cvijićeva knjiga*, Beograd: Srpska književna zadruga, XV-XXXV
- Erdeljanović, Jovan. 1939. *Osnove etnologije*, Beograd: Profesorsko društvo
- Janković, Đorđe. 1998. *Srpske gromile*, Beograd: Sveslovenski savez – NIP Književna reč
- Kovačević, Ivan. 1978. *Naučno delo Sretena Vukosavljevića*, Prijepolje: Radnički univerzitet „Sreten Vukosavljević” Prijepolje
- Kovačević, Ivan. 2001. *Istorija srpske etnologije – I Prosvetiteljstvo i II Pravci i odlomci*, Beograd: Srpski genealoški centar
- Kovačević, Ivan. 2005. „Iz etnologije u antropologiju (Srpska etnologija u poslednje tri decenije 1975-2005.)”, *Etnologija i antropologija: stanje i perspektive*, Zbornik uredila Dragana Radojičić, Beograd: Etnografski institut SANU, 11-19
- Kovačević, Ivan. 2015. *Istorija srpske antropologije*, Beograd: Odeljenje za etnologiju i antropologiju Filozofskog fakulteta Univerziteta u Beogradu
- Lompar, Milo. 2017. *Polihistoriska istraživanja*, Drugo izdanje, Beograd: Catena mundi
- Lukić Krstanović, Miroslava i Mladena Prelić. 2016. „Jovan Cvijić, antropogeografska škola i naučne politike Etnografskog instituta SANU u periodu 1947-1990”, *Jovan Cvijić i srpska etnologija i antropologija*, Uredili Miloš Matić, Mladena Prelić i Marko Pišev, Beograd: Etnografski muzej u Beogradu, Etnografski institut Srpske akademije nauka i umetnosti, Odeljenje za etnologiju i antropologiju Filozofskog fakulteta Univerziteta u Beogradu, 149-184
- Marković, Tatjana. 2017. „Prof. dr Đorđe Janković (1947-2016): Istine zabranjene arheologije 1 i 2, razgovor sa Đorđem Jankovićem, sajt *Novi standard* 31. 01. 2017, Prvobitno objavljeno u magazinu *Zenit* 2013. godine. <https://standard.rs/2017/01/31/prof-dr-djordje-jankovic-1947-2016-istine-zabranjene-arheologije-1/?alphabet=cyrillic>, <https://standard.rs/2017/01/31/prof-dr-djordje-jankovic-1947-2016-istine-zabranjene-arheologije-2/> (16. 12. 2024)
- Miljković, Aleksandar A. 2010. „Ogled o Milenku S. Filipoviću kao istraživaču Makedonije (Južne Srbije) do Šestoaprilskog rata 1941. godine”, *Vardarski zbornik* 7, Urednik Vladimir Stojančević, Beograd: Međuodlajenjski Vardarski odbor SANU, 33-86
- Miljković Matić, Jelena. 2010a. „Etno(muziko)logija i identitet”, *Srpska politička misao* 2/2010, 165-175
- Miljković Matić, Jelena. 2010b. „Definisanje nacionalnog identiteta u delu Miodraga A. Vasiljevića”, *Politička revija*, Br. 2/2010, 427-444
- Miljković Matić, Jelena. 2018. *Milenko S. Filipović i nacionalna nauka*, Beograd: Institut za političke studije

- Naumović, Slobodan. 2016. „Na ramenima džinova: ogled o sudbini naučnog i primenjeno-naučnog nasleđa Jovana Cvijića u savremenoj srpskoj etnologiji i antropologiji”, *Jovan Cvijić i srpska etnologija i antropologija*, Uredili Miloš Matić, Mladena Prelić i Marko Pišev, Beograd: Etnografski muzej u Beogradu, Etnografski institut Srpske akademije nauka i umetnosti, Odeljenje za etnologiju i antropologiju Filozofskog fakulteta Univerziteta u Beogradu, 9-54
- Novaković, Stojan. 1966. „Nakon sto godina”, *Srpska književnost u sto knjiga – Iz srpske istorije*, Novi Sad: Matica srpska, 342-352. Prvo izdanje u: *Hrvatsko-Srpski Almanah – Srpsko-Hrvatski Almanah*, 1911, Zagreb-Beograd
- Popov, Čedomir. 1999. *O istoriji i istoričarima*, Sremski Karlovci – Novi Sad: Izdavačka knjižarnica Zorana Stojanovića
- Prelić, Mladena. 2014. „Jovan Cvijić i prve decenije formiranja i institucionalizovanja etnologije kao nauke u Srbiji”, *Glasnik Etnografskog instituta* LXII/2, Beograd: Etnografski institut SANU, 83-97
- Prelić, Mladena. 2017. „Narod”, *Mali leksikoni srpske kulture: Etnologija i antropologija – 70 izabranih pojmova*, Urednik Ljiljana Gavrilović, Beograd: Službeni glasnik – Etnografski institut SANU, 231-236
- Radovanović, Vojislav. 1958. *Jovan Cvijić*, Beograd: Nolit
- Rudić, Srđan. 2018. „Rad Stojana Novakovića na proučavanju srednjovekovne srpske istorije”, *Stojan Novaković: Povodom sto sedamdeset pet godina od rođenja*, Zbornik sa naučnog skupa, Beograd: SANU, 75-87
- Samardžić, Radovan. 1976. *Pisci srpske istorije*, Beograd: Prosveta
- Sveto Pismo, Novi zavjet Gospoda našeg Isusa Hrista, Jevanđelje po Mateju i po Jovanu
- Skerlić, Jovan. 1906. *Omladina i njena književnost (1848-1871): Izučavanja o nacionalnom i književnom romantizmu kod Srba*, Beograd: Srpska kraljevska akademija
- Stevanović, Lada. 2017. „Etnologija”, *Mali leksikoni srpske kulture: Etnologija i antropologija – 70 izabranih pojmova*, Urednik Ljiljana Gavrilović, Beograd: Službeni glasnik – Etnografski institut SANU, 79-82
- Trgovčević, Ljubinka. 2003. *Planirana elita. O studentima iz Srbije na evropskim univerzitetima u 19. veku*, Beograd: Istorijski institut
- Filipović, Milenko S. 1930. „O etnološkom proučavanju Južne Srbije”, *Godišnjak skopskog Filozofskog fakulteta* I, Skoplje, 117-126
- Filipović, Milenko S. 1937. „Proučavanje sela”, *Pregled*, Knj. XIII, Sarajevo, 163-164, 507-512
- Filipović, Milenko S. 1957. „Cvijićeva antropogeografska škola”, *Geografski pregled* I, Sarajevo, 9-24
- Cvijić, Jovan. 1921. „O naučnom radu i našem Univerzitetu”, *Govori i članci*, Beograd: Izdavačka knjižarnica „Napredak”, 3-49
- Babić, Anto. 1970. „Akademik Milenko Filipović In memoriam”, *Radovi Akademije nauka i umjetnosti Bosne i Hercegovine*, Knjiga XXXVIII, Odjeljenje društvenih nauka, Knjiga 13, Sarajevo, 5-8

- Đorđević, Miroslav Đ. 2011. „Kodifikatorski rad Valtazara Bogišića i Jovana Hadžića”, *Spomenica Valtazara Bogišića o stogodišnjici njegove smrti – Knjiga 1*, uredio Luka Breneselović, Beograd: Službeni glasnik i Institut za uporedno pravo; Niš: Pravni fakultet, 283-299
- Filipović, Milenko S. 1955. „Etnološki (etnografski) rad u Bosni i Hercegovini”, *Pregled – časopis za društvena pitanja* 10, Oktobar 1955, Godina VII, Knjiga II, Sarajevo, 211-215
- Marković, Mladen. 2003. „Miodrag A. Vasiljević – prvih sto godina”, *Novi zvuk – internacionalni časopis za muziku*, br. 22, 21-26
- Miljković, Aleksandar A. 1975. „O Sretenu Vukosavljeviću kao sociologu našeg sela”, *Sociološki pregled* 1, Beograd, 15-26
- Miljković, Aleksandar A. 1986. *Shvatanje o društvu, politici i državi u delu Stojana Novakovića*, Doktorska teza, Niš: Filozofski fakultet Univerziteta u Nišu
- Naumović, Slobodan. 1998. „Romanticists or Double Insiders? An Essay on the Origins of Ideologised Discourses in Balkan Ethnology”, *Ethnologia balkanica*, Vol 2 (1998), 101-120
- Vasiljević, Zorislava. 1988. „Ideje Miodraga Vasiljevića o mogućnosti utvrđivanja autohtonosti međimurskog narodnog pevanja”, *Međimurje* 13/14, 185-195

Slobodan Antonić¹

University of Belgrade
Faculty of Philosophy
Department of Sociology

THE IMAGE OF SERBIA IN INVERSE NATIONALISM

This paper describes the normalization of the image of Serbia as a place of primitivism and evil. This is reflected in terms such as “Stinkland” (“Smrdija”), “Serbiatria” (“Srbijatrija”), “Savageland” (“Gedžovanija”), “Chetnikia” (“Četnikija”), “Serbistan” (“Srbistan”), etc. This negative (self-)essentialization may appear to be the result of hyper-radical (self-)criticism. The subject who makes use of such a discourse, however, positions himself as an exception, as someone who is disgusted by the “unworthy other”, in this case the unworthy, often class-wise underprivileged fellow citizen. Such dehumanizing stigmatization becomes part of a cultural pattern through which the middle and lower classes internalize a sense of inferiority. Thanks to the media, this toxic discourse penetrates deep into society and finds fertile ground among aspirational groups who expect the privileges of the middle and upper classes of the West, the privileged center of the global capitalist system. Through dehumanizing stigmatization, the collective identity of Serbian society is deconstructed and subsequently reconstructed. The frequent use of a particular discourse creates linguistic routines that are widely accepted as collective meanings. Embedded in this discourse is the eternal position of inferiority that justifies colonial rule over a barbaric country and its primitive people. The established self-contempt of the compradors reinforces the colonial position.

Keywords: imagology, negative (self-)stereotypes, stigmatization, cultural patterns, (neo)colonial position, ideology, discourse.

1 full professor, santonic@f.bg.ac.rs, <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-5693-9952>; the article was written as part of research work carried out with the support of the Science Fund of the Republic of Serbia, project FSITC 1561: “Formation of Serbian identity and theoretical controversies concerning attempts of its deconstruction”, and is part of research work financially supported by the Ministry of Science, Technological Development and Innovation of the Republic of Serbia as part of the financing of scientific research work at the University of Belgrade — Faculty of Philosophy (contract no. 451-03-66/2024-03/200163).

In this paper, I describe and explain the normalization of the image of Serbia as “Stinkland”, “Serbiatria”, “Savageland”, “Chetnikia”, “Serbiestan”, etc. The mechanism of such negative self-representation is based on the overgeneralization of certain real shortcomings in Serbian society. Through exaggeration and repetition, these shortcomings become commonplaces of negative (self-)stereotypes, culminating in the portrayal of the state, nation and society as fundamentally pathological.

“Stinkland” (“Smrdija”)

When Croatian choreographer Ronald Savković derogatorily called Serbia “Stinkland”, Sergej Trifunović commented: “I totally understand Ronald, he’s a great guy; (...) a fantastic guy – if he said that, he had his reasons” (Espresso, 2018). Among the images that our *mondialists* project of Serbia, the expression “septic tank” frequently appears as an obligatory expression of the deepest disgust towards the country in which they are forced to live, together with corresponding lexemes related to *toilets*, such as “sewer”, “excrement” (or “faeces”), “cesspool”, “stench” and so on. When Ljiljana Smajlović dared to say that Serbia “is still not the worst place in the world” (N1, 2019), *influencer* “Ksenija” replied: “Ljiljana, this *is* indeed the worst place in the world. It’s a septic tank that’s overflowing” (“Ksenija”, 2019).

Even in serious “civic” media, similar coprophilic tropes are widespread. For example, Ivan Milenković writes in the weekly *Vreme* that “we who live in the state community called Serbia (...) are floating in a viscous mass of unpleasant smell” – “everything here stinks”, because “an entire nation has found itself at the bottom of the civilizational cauldron, soaked in its own feces” or “at the bottom of a sewer” (Milenković, 2023).

Nedim Sejdinović writes in the newspaper *Danas* that we live “in the asshole of Europe” (Sejdinović, 2022), “in a sewage state” (ibid.), “in a pigsty rolling in filth” (Sejdinović, 2020). Biljana Srbljanović muses in the daily newspaper *Blic* that “we are great as a society, except for two problems: We are shit and we lie” (Srbljanović, 2022b), while Republika Srpska “stinks like a genocidal creation” (Srbljanović, 2022a).

For Dragan Bursać, Serbia is “a society in which everything stinks, absolutely everything!” (Bursać, 2021b), while for Kišjuhas Serbia is “neglected and backward, stinking of leprosy and wallowing in dung” (Kišjuhas, 2021a). For Marko Vidojković, “Serbia is literally a garbage state” (Miočić Mandić, 2021), Biljana Stojković complains about living in “the “stale stench of the swamp that is called Serbia today” (Stojković,

2019), and Nikola Samardžić complains about being “stuck in a stinking Kurdish-Vlach kasaba” (Samardžić, 2016).

Pavle Radić is also of the opinion that there is a “general, decades-long stench” in Serbia (Radić, 2021b), which stems to a considerable extent from “the ‘general stench of the regime media’” (Radić, 2023b), while Dinko Gruhonjić, who likes to call Serbia a “pigsty” (Gruhonjić, 2011a; 2020), warns that even the opposition is “competing to see who can stink more” (Gruhonjić, 2020b).

For Vesna Pešić, the problem lies in the “nationalistically contaminated Serbia” (Pešić, 2022), with which Sonja Biserko agrees, speaking of a “general confusion and ‘pollution’ of the entire population” (Biserko, 2004: 64). Dinko Gruhonjić warns that “the stench of clerical nationalism and chauvinism from Belgrade is once again trying to spread in the Balkans”, and quotes an acquaintance who exclaimed in horror: “This stench must stop!” (Gruhonjić, 2020b).

Boris Dežulović writes (Dežulović, 2020a), and Danas dutifully reports on the “stinking St. Sava region” (Dežulović, 2020b), while for Igor Besermenji (*Danas*) “Serbia is a rat pit that will remain so until we destroy their dreams of a Greater Serbia” (Besermenji, 2020).

Where does such language come from? One might think that it stems from the accelerated brutalization of our public discourse, in which the use of toilet expressions has become commonplace. However, it is noticeable that such expressions are almost never used outside of a strictly defined purpose. It is unacceptable when talking about other nations, but acceptable for Serbs; it cannot be used for other societies, but is fine for Serbian society; it is not acceptable for other states, but for Serbia; it is not acceptable for American (European) politicians, but certainly for Serbian...

Besides the toilet discourse, the barbarization of local “Yugoslav” intellectuals, poisoned by anti-Serbism, leads to the essentialization of Serbs as the *most repulsive* (“shit”) and Serbia as a topos of *concentrated repulsion* (“septic tank”).

This negative (self-)essentialization may seem like the fruit of hyper-radical (self-)criticism. However, the autochauvinist supremacist who makes use of such a discourse positions himself as an *exception*, as someone who is disgusted by the *unworthy others*, who demands a radical *cleansing* (sanitary decontamination) of his neighbors.

Such *totalizing, dehumanizing stigmatization* (what could be worse than reducing an entire people to “shit” and a community to a “septic tank”?) is not only offensive, but through constant repetition (“hammering in”) becomes part of an entire cultural pattern. This results in the *internalization of inferiority*, the spread and consolidation of a *sense of*

unworthiness and the creeping consolidation of the “*spirit of the colony as a spirit of self-denial*” (Lompar, 2018: 75).

Foucault (1998: 116) defines discourses as practices that *construct* the objects they speak of, or as a “system of statements that *construct* an object” (Foucault, 2012: 14; cf. Vujošević, 2021: 191). When we speak of Serbs as “shit” and Serbia as a “septic tank”, we are actually constituting an identity. “Frequent use in a particular discourse” creates certain “linguistic routines”, which are then “widely accepted” as “collective meanings” (Vujošević, 2021: 192). Identities are thus constructed precisely through discourse and within a particular discourse (Hall, 2001).

So when we hear the constant refrain that we are “shit”, we do indeed become “shit” in a sense and begin to see ourselves as nothing more than that. Such an image of ourselves, however, is the result of the victory of the narrative of the autocolonial part of our elite over other (self-) visions. The toilet discourse is another “frightening media and practical demonstration of the occupation-colonial power within us” (Lompar, 2016: 119). The narrative of us as “shit” wins – and “*nations are narratives*” (Said, 2002: 11). Based on this statement by Said, Vladušić warns that “national identity is based on the circulation of a corpus of stories within a group” and that Renan’s understanding of a nation’s identity as a “daily referendum” should be read as “the daily confirmation and affirmation of a *system of narratives in relation to others*” (Vladušić, 2019: 144).

Through the “fecalization of Serbs” and the “image of Serbia as a cess-pool” (Ćirković, 2022: 234; 2021: 101), the identity of our cultural and media elite (and lower-status groups aspiring to move upward) is provided with a characteristic element of “hysterical disgust for the homeland” (2021: 91). This is not only a “hyper-trophied Serbian national masochism” (Vučinić, 2012: 56), but also a typical “*trope of colonial self-loathing*” (Ćirković, 2012).

“Serbiatria” (“Srbijatrija”)

In addition to the image of Serbia as a “septic tank”, another common autochauvinist trope is the “narrative of Serbia as a *seriously ill*, basically *incurable* society” (Ćirković, 2022: 236).

Nikola Krstić expresses the idea of “Serbia” as a “psychiatric hospital” (in the sense of an insane *asylum*) with the term “Srbijatrija” (Krstić, 2020; 2021; 2023). In his regular columns in *Danas*, he portrays Serbia as a “patient who does not want to be cured, but on the contrary, like Hannibal Lecter, enjoys his psychopathy” (Krstić, 2023a). Since “common sense no

longer has any place here” (because common sense in Serbia “is “seen as a foreign body”; Krstić, 2023a), which leads to frequent “psychotic episodes” (Krstić, 2023a), the EU must constantly call on Serbia to “stop its madness, like a rabid animal” (Krstić, 2023a).

This image of Serbia as a madhouse is widespread in the discourse of so-called civic Serbia. Biljana Stojković calls today’s Serbia an “infested madhouse” and compares it to the “collective madness of the Third Reich” (Stojković, 2020), Pavle Radić speaks of our “fall from sanity” (Radić, 2023a), and Vladimir Arsenijević believes that “we are dealing with a collective mental illness” (Arsenijević, 2023a). Dinko Gruhonjić explains that in Serbia “citizens cannot be awakened from the nationalist coma” because “there is no magic wand that can solve this madness – because it is indeed a complete madness, an almost collective hysteria” (Gruhonjić, 2023a).

“Serbia has long since detached itself massively from normality”, Gruhonjić continues, and the main cause of this “mental pollution” (Gruhonjić, 2021) is, of course, *Serbian nationalism*, which, as Snezana Čongradin seconds, leaves “lasting consequences in the brain” (Čongradin, 2019). “Serbia is a sick country that has recovered neither from nationalism nor from claims to neighboring territories,” judges Aleksandar Popov (Popov, 2023), “Serbia is a deeply sick society,” agrees Dragan Bursać (Bursać, 2021b), “we are dealing with a sick society”, confirms Dinko Gruhonjić (Gruhonjić, 2011b), “Serbia will remain a sick society for a long time”, “a sick country”, says Jelena Diković (Diković, 2023).

“Who will heal the sick nation?” asks a worried Dragan Bursać, “who will heal the people who have been infected with crime and evil for three decades – millions of them?” (Bursać, 2021a). “Serbia will not give up hatred, threats and sick ideas”, laments Bojan Tončić (Tončić, 2022), “we do not live in a democratic society, but in a deeply sick society”, says Dragana Rašić (Rašić, 2023), Serbia is “a society sick from nationalism, clericalism and anachronistic conservatism” (Radić, 2023c), and has “the status of a sick patient that Europe does not know what to do with, that keeps the whole region in an infected state”, warns Pavle Radić (Radić, 2021a).

“This state of emergency (2020 – S. A.) shows above all how ‘sick’ we are as a society, and the treatment is still pending”, says Brankića Stanković (Stanković, 2020), “Serbia is a sick country today”, writes Aleksandar Fatić in 2022 (Fatić, 2022), but – compared to then – today (2023) “society is even sicker”, claims Dragica Stanojlović (Stanojlović, 2023).

Other images are also used in connection with mental health. Nikola Samardžić says that in Serbia “a process of general mental regression is underway”, which makes us a “political community with special needs” (Samardžić, 2022a), “this society is deeply degenerated”, says Dinko

Gruhonjić (Gruhonjić, 2013), “Serbian society is vertically dysfunctional – from the patriarchs to the hooligans”, says Dragan Bursać (Bursać, 2021b), “Violence here is a cultural code, a psychological mechanism, a means of communication (...) of a dysfunctional society”, claims Staša Bajac (Jorgačević, 2023).

In this sense, Sreten Ugričić emphasizes that “in Serbia, what is impossible elsewhere is possible, what would be unthinkable and incomprehensible elsewhere, while at the same time what is possible and common and natural elsewhere is impossible here” (Ugričić, 2009). Pavle Radić calls this the “nationalist delirium tremens that has persisted among Serbs for over thirty years” (Radić, 2023a).

“We live in an abnormal country”, agrees Milan Ćulibrk (Ćulibrk, 2023), “in a country at war with reality”, adds Teofil Pančić (Pančić, 2023), while in *Danas* we read the headline – otherwise without any basis in the text: – “Boris Liješević directs *Rabies* based on the cult novel by Borislav Pekić, a giant who experienced the madness of his own people” (Radosavljević, 2023).

The preferred pair of opposites of our civil rights activists is “normal – abnormal”, whereby the second term of this pair is always reserved for Serbs and Serbia. Serbia is “a state that has deviated from normality”, says Pavle Radić (Radić, 2023d), “the majority of Serbia is inversely proportional to any kind of normality”, agrees Dinko Gruhonjić (Gruhonjić, 2020b). “In normal countries ...” (Milenković, 2023) – this is how the sentences of our civic thinkers begin, presenting the situation in Serbia as an *abnormal* negative exception.

In Serbia, of course, not everyone is retarded; there are (albeit rare) places and times of normality. “The Center for Cultural Decontamination was an oasis of normality for fifteen years”, emphasizes Dragan Velikić (Velikić, 2010), and from 5 October “until the assassination of Zoran Đinđić (...) Serbia was moving towards a normal country”, which aroused hope in everyone “that we would become a normal country”, notes Kokan Mladenović (Sudar, 2021). But unfortunately, these were and are rare exceptions.

“For 35 years, we have not been able to live like the rest of the normal world”, laments Dinko Gruhonjić (Gruhonjić, 2023c), “we are far from a normal European society”, emphasizes Aida Ćorović (Ćorović, 2023), which is why “no normal person wants to start a family in Serbia anymore”, says Aleksandar Roknić (Roknić, 2023), and *Danas* puts it in a nutshell. Because as long as there is nationalism, “Serbia will never become a normal country”, Bojana Vatić is convinced (Vatić, 2020), which is why “Serbia – Serbian society – cannot return to the normal world”, adds Pavle Radić (Radić, 2023a).

But if we talk about ourselves like this, why should not others do the same? Thus, Miljenko Jergović judges in an interview with *Vreme*: “There is no doubt that Croatia today is a more normal country than Serbia” (Kostić, 2006), while *Slobodna Dalmacija* poses the question that *Danas* likes to follow: “Why is Serbia trying so hard to be an abnormal state again?” (Ljubičić, 2023)².

Thus, “*normality* has become one of the most toxic words in the Serbian language” (Ćirjaković, 2024: 15), “one of the most important camouflage phrases of neo-colonial Newspeak”, through which “resistance is presented as a pathology and deviant thinking as a symptom of illness” (Ćirjaković, 2021: 111).

One might think that the assessment that someone is “not normal” or that something is “not normal” has long since become a cliché in our country that is not worth paying attention to. The difference, however, lies in the fact that here an entire society, or rather *that* specific nation, is persistently and consistently declared abnormal. This is done primarily by our *comprador* (auto)colonial elite (Antonić, 2022) — “the ideological protagonists of our multiple colonization” and “stipendiary protagonists of the globalization ideology” (Lompar, 2016: 110). The problem is that the members of this nomenclature “present Serbian society as an incurable pathology that can only be tamed by *constant Western intervention*” (Ćirjaković, 2021: 138).

As Slobodan Vladušić explains, the comprador elite treats any advocacy of a different way of thinking, any use of a different discourse — other than “discourse” (the only permitted, Western-centric, politically correct narrative) — and any discursive resistance, even the most insignificant *no*, treats as a *disease*, as *madness*, while the bearers of such thinking or discourse are labeled as *sick* and *insane*. “And already a highway leads from the history of madness to surveillance and punishment” (Vladušić, 2018: 114).

This is a rhetorical trick based on a series of unjustified generalizations:

1. Phenomenon *x* is an expression of a social pathology;
2. The government is to blame for the negative phenomena;
3. The government is pathological;
4. Government = state;
5. Therefore the state is pathological;
6. The people tolerate such a government;

2 In the article itself, unidentified “Serbian historians” are quoted as saying that “Serbia is trying so hard to be an abnormal state” and they “wonder if there is any chance at all for [the Serbs] to ever return to a normal path” (Ljubičić, 2023).

7. Therefore the people are pathological;
8. In reality, the whole of society is pathological.

Every step in this argument is flawed because it is based on a *hyper-generalization*. The consequence is the radical expansion of negative (auto)stereotypes that form the core of autochauvinist *culture*. Whenever a negative phenomenon is encountered, it is explained by the *substantial pathology* of the state, the people and society. And so it is today, tomorrow and the day after tomorrow. And so it is in dozens of television programs and on dozens of portals. And so from hundreds of mouths, computers and telephones...

In this way, the dominance of “stereotypes in public discourse is ensured, making any evidence and argumentation superfluous” and enabling “unfounded justifications” (Šijaković, 2018: 38). “The function of stereotypes”, Šijaković explains further, “is to act as *semantic imprisonment*”, they ensure “stigmatization and semantic enslavement” (ibid.). Thus, those “who have the power to dominate the semantic field” influence the public, which is supposed to “build a mental (cognitive) map of reality” (Šijaković, 2018: 38; 43).

It is precisely through this mechanism that the imagology of Serbs as dangerous “madmen” who must be *separated* from the normal world — or given a guardian — is normalized.

But Serbs do not need a guardian, because we are not a stupid people. Moreover, we are much more intelligent than the pro-Western naturalists of our colonial situation make us out to be. This was clearly seen when the war in Ukraine broke out — people immediately recognized who was who and what was what. And they have held on to this conviction to this day (see data from seven opinion polls in Antonić, 2023: 214-217). How difficult that is for some. And how beautiful it is for others...

“Savageland” (“Gedžovanija”)

In addition to the image of Serbia as a *cesspool* and the Serbs as *madmen*, another popular trope in our “civilian” imagology is the depiction of Serbia as a *primitive* and barbaric hinterland.

This kind of supposedly critical self-portrayal — which is of course just snobbish virtue-signaling — is most often formed around the pair *primitive Serbs – civilized world* (where the world = “the West + me”).

The Serbian-Balkans as an incorrigible, anti-European primitive was recognized a long time ago by “saint” Radomir Konstantinović in *The Phi-*

osophy of Parochialism: “Balkan culture is primitive-traditionalist, that is, it is not rationalist and technicist, and therefore its future must not be European under any circumstances” (Konstantinović, 1981: 353).

As Nenad Prokić explains to us, this “backward people” is the one that, despite all the misdeeds of the government, “bears the main responsibility for the general backwardness in Serbia” (D. B. 2020) — “such a people is itself to blame if something goes wrong” (GDF, 2020). “In Serbia, the only thing that seems to be left of Dositej’s entire enlightenment is the potato”, says Aleksej Kišjuhas (Kišjuhas, 2020), which is why we are “a materially and spiritually impoverished society” (Kišjuhas, 2021b). This is of course accompanied by the “diagnosis of a state of collective hypnosis, garnished with simplicity and stupidity. Genetic imbecility, perhaps?” (Tončić, 2021).

“Serbia is a primitive community where the law of the jungle prevails”, reads a headline in *Danas* (Miletić, 2020), “the whole of Serbiatria is still infected with caveman ideas”, observes Nikola Krstić (Krstić, 2023b), “in terms of civilization, we have not moved away from the Middle Ages”, complains Vanja Đurić from N1 (Apro, 2020). Serbia is a “civilizational black hole” (Jovanović, 2019), we are an example of “falling out of civilization” (Radić, 2023a), “we are witnessing a new detachment of Serbia from the civilized world” (Gruhonjić, 2023a), “we are warning citizens that a new isolation from the civilized world is imminent” (Gruhonjić; NDNV 2023), “we are witnessing a return to ethnic barbarism and tribalism” (Kišjuhas, 2022a).

“Cannibalistic barbarians!” — is the title of a text by *Danas*, which reads: “While everything around us collapses and crumbles, we (Serbs) sing and dance like cannibalistic barbarians” (Krstić, 2022a). Although the upcoming elections are “the last chance for Serbia to become a civilized country” (Marković, 2023), this is a fragile hope, considering that, as already observed, “in Serbia, once again, millions of illiterate people decide” (Samardžić, 2008) — here the “inability of the majority to think rationally” (ibid.) is evident. “The people are for the most part half-educated”, agrees Vesna Pešić, which is why “Serbia is a primitive society in European civilization” (Balać, 2020). “*A savage society*” — is the title of her book on contemporary Serbia (Pešić, 2012). We are so obtuse that we do not even understand our situation: “We would starve to death if the EU did not exist”, says Vesna Pešić, and *Danas* underlines this in a headline (Diković, 2022a).

Serbian nationalists in particular are “against everything civilized and modern, and they are trying to keep Serbia in a black hole” (Olenik, 2023). What we are experiencing is a “primitive Serbianism that is un-

bearable” (Radić, 2023e), we are a “Serbian nationalist anti-society”, in contrast to Latinka Perović’s “futile attempts to lead the cattle out of the herd” (Vidojković, 2022).

“Serbian nationalists hate foreign cultures largely because they are uneducated”, Biljana Srbljanović explains the primitive nature of Serbian nationalism: “They do not know any languages — what can we talk about with these people? To be considered for any opinion, you have to know at least two world languages. This is simply elementary mental hygiene” (Alo, 2013).

As our nationalists are, so are our people, and so in Serbia, as Branka Arsić explains in a book originally published in English, “there is “a phrase that Serbs like to say to foreigners: ‘Speak Serbian so that the whole world understands you’” (Arsić, 2003: 330). What can you do when you are dealing with a “morally neglected, ideologically backward, historically illiterate and politically shameless majority” in Serbia (Srbljanović, 2020a)?

In general, the Serbs “seem to be “the only European ‘Indians’ today who are incapable of forming an orderly state and who are deeply at odds with the values of modernity and the West” (Kišjuhas, 2023a). “Serbia does not exist as a modern political community”, agrees Srđan Milošević, it “has none of the content that makes a state a state in the 21st century — it is at the level of a transitional form between a chieftaincy and a proto-state” (Milošević, 2022). And “Serbian society is far from any social foundation”, adds Vojin Radovanović, it is “a society that does not exist, as Svetislav Basara stated a few years ago” (Radovanović, 2022).

Left to its own devices, with a nationalist elite and a primitive people, it is clear that Serbia has no future. It is “without democratic traditions, prone to single-mindedness and autocracy, and with a heavy criminal legacy” (Tomislav Marković, 2023b), while “the whole country has long since become a stage for banditry and brigandage” (Tomislav Marković, 2023a). “Serbian society is a pre-political society”, emphasizes Sonja Biserko (Biserko, 2004: 346), “there are no forces in Serbia that could bring about positive change” (Biserko, 2004: 272).

“The lower classes in Serbia are deeply authoritarian and patriarchal and light years away from the progressive and enlightened left. These classes cannot be the agents of change”, agrees Vesna Pešić (Pešić, 2015). “Serbia has lost the race against time and history, and with it the opportunity to think rationally about its own real interests and to look for solutions that meet the needs of the time,” reads a joint statement by 50 public figures, signed by Sonja Biserko, Dubravka Stojanović, Boško Jakšić, Filip David, Milivoj Bešlin, among others... was signed (Čongradin, 2023).

This creates a rounded image of a primitive country unfit for the modern world that needs a protector — be it in the form of a Westernized elite or foreigners from the West, preferably both. *Embedded* in this discourse is the eternal position of inferiority as a justification for colonial rule over a barbaric country and its primitive people (Šijaković, 2013: 152-153).

Thanks to the media, this discourse penetrates deep into society and finds fertile ground among the aspiring classes who expect the privileges of the middle and upper classes of the West. Members of our middle class in particular easily fall for it, as they usually compare their own country, whose shortcomings they know all too well, with countries where they have been on vacation for three days. Thus, the logic of “if it were not for these primitives of ours, we would be eating caviar and drinking freshly squeezed orange juice on the Brijuni Islands” reinforces the discourse: “Serbs are primitives — Westerners are civilized.” And the prescribed discourse becomes one of the pillars of a widespread culture of auto-chauvinism.

Of course, one of the functions of this discourse is also to confirm the justification of one’s own *class privileges*, because it is a “distinguishing feature intended to confirm class and status hierarchies and dominance” (Ćirjaković, 2021: 214). There is nothing more natural than for the “civilized” to rule over the “primitive”, and anything else — as judge Majić beautifully put it when explaining the monstrosity of the idea of people with only elementary education going on vacation — “is a shuffling of social cards, it is not normal, it does not exist anywhere, it is simply not realistic” (Espresso, 2020).

The second function is to erase the notion that the most under-represented demographic has any say in society and politics — not even that their opinions should be heard in public. Because “why should anyone pay attention to what people who have been successfully portrayed as infantile, neglected, backward, savage or genocidal have to say?” (Ćirjaković, 2021: 154).

And the third function is, of course, the “invocation of the enlightened patronage of a phantasmatic, *orderly West*” (Ćurković, 2012). This is a relic of EU idolatry, which is clung to despite the blatant bankruptcy of Brussels’ power in the Ukraine conflict. In this way, the inferior position aptly described by that senior Brussels official is mentally entrenched: “As soon as a country applies to join the EU, it becomes our slave” (The Economist, 2004: 7).

It is forgotten that the Serbs are probably the only nation in Europe whose independent states have never been ruled by foreign dynasties. These primitive, barbaric Serbs. This “Savageland”.

“Chetnikia” (“Četnikija”)

According to the pens of auto-chauvinism, Serbia is not only a country of madmen (“Serbiatria”) and primitives (“Savageland”), but also a country of criminals and murderers (“Chetnikland”).

“Serbia is a Chetnik state”, explains Đokica Jovanović, where “little Chetniks are even recruited in schools” (Autonomija, 2018). Even during the Second World War, “Serbia was largely quisling”, actually “triple quisling: there were Nedić’s men, Ljotić’s men and Chetniks” (Gruhonjić, 2023d), and today “the majority of Serbia is massively pro-Chetnik, pro-Nedić and, by God, pro-Ljotić” (Gruhonjić, 2019). What we are witnessing is “thirty years of vampirized Chetnikism” (Kišjuhas, 2021c), or “a new ‘vampirization’ of Chetnikism in Serbia” (Gruhonjić, 2023e). Therefore, “Serbia is tired of its rampant Chetnikism”, “tired of bones and skulls in mass graves” (Kišjuhas, 2021a).

“Some may say that people in Serbia are stupid and uneducated, but they recognize the strongest Chetniks on the ground and vote for them — all these decades”, explains Dragan Bursać (Bursać, 2023a). Because not only the government, but also the “Serbian opposition” has its “pro-Chetnik electorate” (Bursać, 2023a), while in Serbian cities “Chetniks and other fascists stink from the walls” (Gruhonjić, 2021b).

Sonja Biserko stated after October 5 that “the Serbian people (...) are facing a confrontation with Chetnikism, which has been swept under the carpet” (Biserko, 2004: 120). Since this did not happen, today we find ourselves in a situation where Dragan Bursać has to warn “that Chetnik terrorist cells in the Balkans will be much more active in 2024”, and that due to the numerous Chetnik terrorists, it is no longer a question of whether Serbia will set off some kind of chain reaction that could lead to a Balkan war, but in what way it will do so. “The only barrier against the tsunami of evil,” Bursać appeals, “is the proactive action of the NATO pact” (Bursać, 2023b).

“The Serbian Orthodox Church is one of the most important creators and pillars (...) of the rehabilitation of Chetnikism”, explains Aleksandar Sekulović, Vice President of the Anti-Fascist Union of Serbia, which is why “we, who are against Chetnikism and historical revisionism, are illegal organizations” (Gušić, 2017).

Of course, such imaginary claims have no basis in reality. Where, when and how was it established that Serbia is a “Chetnik country”? Or that the majority of citizens are “pro-Chetnik”? Where did it come from that today’s Serbia is governed by the monarchist ideology of the King-

dom of Yugoslavia from seventy years ago? There is no doubt that this is a propaganda of somnambulism — from “Chetnik terror cells” and “recruitment of small Chetniks” to anti-fascist “illegal organisations”.

However, the designation of Serbia as a “Chetnik country” does not stem from the nature of the ideology, but from the deep evil inherent in the society and inhabitants of this country.

Serbian society is “unscrupulous and scandalous” (Kišjuhas, 2021d), “dehumanized” (Suša, 2021), “the majority of the public in this madhouse enjoys general lifelessness, misery and bitterness” (Krstić, 2022c), “Serbia definitely no longer knows shame as a feeling” (ibid.), we are “the last stronghold for scoundrels and bloodsuckers” (Krstić, 2021a), we are “the country with the most war criminals per capita” (Gruhonjić; Autonomija, 2023a), we are “Serbia of scum, of nobodies, of criminals, of eugenicists” (Bursać, 2021c), “Serbia, over whose sky flies the black flag of crime” (ibid.).

“The perversion of perception among a large part of the population is indescribable” (Biljana Stojković; Čongradin, 2022), the authorities, with the consent of “a large number of inhabitants of this state, turn them into moral idiots who are incapable of distinguishing elementary good from original evil” (NDNV and HO; GV 2023), “we are simply a nation that kills its own people, and this is one of the few continuities in a nation that is incapable of remembering” (Srbljanović, 2023), “in Serbia, people with a will to discriminate have always been the majority” (Gordana Čomić; Gojgić, 2021: 20:26-20:30), we are a “bestial cave” (Sejdinović, 2022), “a country of rapists” (Dejan Ilić, 2022a), “in Serbia, human life is worth nothing” (Snežana Miletić, 2023), “Serbian society is impregnated with crime and criminality” and “Republika Srpska is an entity founded on crime” (Biserko, 2004: 156; 405).

“Only Serbia is that black hole in which what is grotesque and perverse elsewhere is just normal and desirable” (Teofil Pančić, 2022), “we are the black hole of Europe, a dumping ground of evil, hatred and madness” (Čedomir Jovanović; Jovović, 2022), “Serbian society is made for the worst” (Tomislav Marković, 2023c), we are “a rotten, disoriented society, built on a mountain of corpses” (Marković, 2021), here “the state is a den of thieves” (Marković, 2023c), “with a grotesque system introduced at the Eighth Session and then reinforced by wars”, crime, plunder and destruction” (Marković, 2023d), “the Serbian world is at its core a mass grave and is ruled exclusively by murderers and plunderers” (Kišjuhas, 2022), in Serbia “generations are growing up who can hardly wait to join in the crimes of their fathers” (Kišjuhas, 2021b).

“Serbia has been consistent for 35 years: it has always, with very rare exceptions, sided with evil”, “Serbia’s policy is the vanguard of evil”, “Serbia is a generator of evil in this part of Europe” (Gruhonjić; Autonomija, 2023b). “Serbia is darkness, an almost irrevocably lost Mordor, a devastated, militant and fascist Moscow province in the Balkans” (Boban Batrićević; Antena M, 2024). “The foolish nonsense about a heavenly people has taken root in the masses, and the idea that we are a devilish people, created by Satan in his image to serve him, has no civil rights” – “no one thinks that a perverted creature, evil and corrupt to the core, is a devilish brood” (Tomislav Marković, 2023e).

As a “devilish tribe” and “devil’s brood”, we are a constant danger to all neighboring peoples. And while “some European nations tore down the Berlin Wall, *others* armed themselves” (Kišjuhas, 2023b), because “we are an autocratic society that has always relied on military force” (Latinka Perović, Autonomija 2021), “Serbia is a state that provokes wars” (HO, 2023: 25), not only was “Milošević’s Serbia” among the “criminal states that kill and destroy everything around them” (Tomislav Marković, 2023f), but today “young Serbian blood, fueled and incited by clerical fascists, is being incited to something that could trigger an Armageddon of enormous proportions” (Hanibal Kovač, 2023), which is why “Serbia is the most important disruptive factor in the Balkans” (Vesna Pešić; Beta 2021).

“If the opportunity arises and we somehow miraculously arm ourselves to the teeth, here we are, coming to slaughter you again. And meanwhile we will loot your factories, cars, refrigerators, washing machines and roof tiles and bring them to us” (Gruhonjić, 2023d). Moreover, “Serbia is a Russian-colonial country where the cult of Vladimir Putin and mass support for the killing and destruction of Ukraine reigns” (Tomislav Marković, 2023g), “Serbia is Putin’s Trojan horse in the heart of Europe, a Russian aircraft carrier in the Balkans” (Gruhonjić, 2023d). Therefore, Bursać must strive for “proactive action by the NATO pact” (Bursać, 2023a), because “society has become powerless to deal with the evil it has spawned” (Tomislav Marković, 2023h). “A wrong form of life prevails in Serbia, Serbia is a country that has decided to perish. This decision was not made yesterday, it has always been carefully cultivated” (Nenad Prokić, 2023).

This decades-long (auto)propaganda normalized the portrayal of Serbs as Balkan demons of evil. “Images of an irredeemably bloodthirsty and pathological people have become something normal and expected, a hate speech to which we have become accustomed” (Ćirjaković, 2021: 218). In this propaganda, Serbs today, as in the 1990s, are *vampires* for whom it is only a matter of time before they rise from the grave and once again pounce on their poor, helpless neighbors.

As Tomislav Longinović has beautifully observed, “Western media networks have established the *Serbs* as the postmodern incarnation of vampires”, “as the most terrifying predatory ethnicity in Europe”, “as a collective whose vampiric return from ‘ancient centuries’ deserves only a single, determined and powerful response from what Madeleine Albright calls ‘an army so great’” (i.e. NATO; Longinović, 2003: 64; 67).

The Serbs have been declared a horde outside the law, for whom there is no forgiveness or redemption. To this end, everything that can bear the name “Serbian” has been equated with *Chetnikism* in order to carry out the “*criminalization* of the Serbian position” (Lompar, 2018: 119). As Nikola Malović states, propaganda has brought about the “criminalization of every symbol, tradition, culture, history, existence itself and the entire people; and when an entire people is criminalized, then the *shooting* of that people begins” (Malović, 2020).

The worst thing about this propaganda, which, as we have seen, emanates from a large part of the local media, is not that it gives a permanent alibi to all the surrounding Serbian chauvinisms. The worst thing is that a *culture of auto-chauvinism* has been created in a part of the domestic public by the insane repetition of these abominations (Ćirjaković, 2024: 10; 53; 162-163). In this culture, nothing succeeds except hatred and malice towards one’s neighbor. Nothing can be understood from it — neither the rapidly changing world nor our place in it. A stupid and poisonous culture (Antonić, 2024b; 2008). Sad.

“Serbistan” (“Srbistan”)

It is about the stigmatization of Serbia as an *oriental Kasaba* in the heart of Europe.

This is the title of Sonja Biserko’s book *Serbia in the Orient* (Biserko, 2004), and Aleksej Kišjuhas entitled one of his commentaries “Serbia in Asia?” (Kišjuhas, 2022b) and explains that it is about the “transformation of European Serbia into an Asian Serbistan,” Emilo Pavlović writes about us as “Serbistan” (Pavlović, 2019), and even Pero Jovović contemptuously calls Serbia “Serbistan” (Jovović, 2020), Nikola Samardžić says about Belgrade that it is a “stinking Kurdish-Vlach kasbah” (Samardžić, 2016). Latinka Perović says that “Serbia still has this precinct soul, it had it even during the socialist period (...), but it still has it today” (Perović, 2021), which is why Zoran Vuletić speaks of the “precinct soul of Serbia” and of “Serbia in a cursed courtyard” (Vuletić, 2022) and Nikola Krstić of the “Serbian vilayet” (Krstić, 2021b)...

This “inner orientalism” (Ćirjaković, 2021: 153) of our Second Serbia goes back in part to Konstantinović’s concept of *paroshialism*, as a “code for Ottoman, ‘Serbian’ Serbia”, “one of the synonyms for the anti-European shackles, the ‘empty Turkish’ immersed in the ‘ugly Serbian’” (ibid. 55). Of course, “*internal Orientalism* has the same claims as the original, Western one” — “it justifies domination over supposedly threatening and uncivilized, slandered compatriots” (ibid. 154).

Indeed, the orientalization of the Other in Southeast Europe always implies an implicit self-identification (Bjelic, 2003: 20). It “offers speakers the advantage of placing themselves on a privileged borderline” (Močnik, 2003: 115). This is supported by the essentialist dichotomy of Second Serbian (self-)identification: “we/Europeans – you/Asians/Balkans” — a typical example of a “conceptual scheme that ideologically conveys the supremacy of the ‘West’ over the ‘Orient’” (ibid. 114).

However, the contemporary Serbian case is specific because of its *double orientalization*. This was already noted in the 1990s when, in addition to their Ottoman cultural baggage, Serbs were also associated with Asian brutality in crime (Longinović, 2003: 66). Today, however, the *double orientalization* is found in the specific combination of the lazy and dirty Orient and the wild, violent and Asian Russia.

This was first defined by Sonja Biserko in her book *Serbia in the Orient* (Biserko, 2004). She recognized “two components of Serbian identity – orthodox as delusion and anachronistic-oriental as reality” (74). While the first component is characterized by the “essentially the same attitude of Serbia and Russia towards the West”, the second is characterized by the “‘folklore orgy’ (folk music, kiosks, flea markets) which increasingly dominates our public life” (74). And regardless of cultural differences, both components “permanently steer Serbia away from the West, as they are essentially anti-Western” (74).

Of course, the latest Helsinki Committee report (HO 2023) also emphasizes that “Serbia is closest to Russia”, with which it shares “conservative values, Orthodoxy” (29) as well as “opposition to liberal values, including the ideology of human rights” (355).

According to the Helsinki Committee, the intervention in Ukraine led to a further “Russification of the Serbian nation” (HO, 2023: 372). Serbia was fertile ground for this because there, as in other Balkan societies, “socialism was not an anomaly, but a natural expression of the potential of these societies” (18). Or, as Zoran Vuletić puts it with horror: “Soviet Orthodox Serbia is in the middle of Europe” – as a kind of foreign body (Vuletić, 2022).

Since today there is a “conflict between the Atlantic and Eurasian (Russian) worlds” (Saša Ilić, 2022), Serbia is on the wrong, Asian side of this conflict. As a “demonic replica of Russia”, Serbia is only a “Russian-Asian instrument in Europe” (Boro Krivokapić, 2018). Since Russia is “at war against the Western value system” (Tomislav Marković, 2022) and Serbia is “a Russian vassal state in which the cult of Vladimir Putin rules and the killing and plundering of Ukraine is massively supported” (Marković, 2023g), it is understandable that “Serbia has clearly and unambiguously taken sides in this confrontation” – the wrong side, of course, although “it is too late to change sides, nobody would believe us anyway” (Marković, 2022).

Because “the official and majority Serbia does not want to join the EU and NATO, hates and despises Western civilization” (Nikola Samardžić, 2022b), “anti-Westernism, anti-Americanism and anti-modernism are omnipresent in our society”, and “a large part of the public in Serbia simply cannot stand the West, does not see Serbia in the West, does not want democracy, human rights, secularism, women’s and gay rights” (Kišjuhas, 2022b). “Western democratic countries are reserved for contempt and hatred”, complains Tomislav Marković, “while some gentler, more loving emotions are directed against dictatorial, criminal Russia” (Marković, 2023i). “Serbia did not want Europe, it does not want capitalism, it does not want liberalism”, Latinka Perović despairs (Perović, 2021), “it is clear that today’s Serbia, like almost the entire 20th century, is deeply opposed to the West”, Sonja Biserko agrees (Biserko, 2003: 410).

Lompar makes an excellent observation of the hidden anti-Russian sentiment in Latinka Perović’s Orientalism. He points out that the imprisonment of Đilas under Tito Latinka calls: “Asian violence against Đilas” (Perović, 2015: 266). “Why is the violence that took place in Yugoslavia described as Asian and not communist?” asks Lompar. And he answers: “It is not unreasonable to think that we find a hidden signpost in the author’s depiction of Asianness, pointing to the adjective – Russian” (Lompar, 2016: 200).

The other side of the self-deprecating essentialism and nervous cultural racism practiced through auto-orientalization is the idolization of the West as a totem, which reaches comic dimensions in Serbia. Not only does Jelena Diković (*Danas*) – who is presented in the Croatian Wikipedia as “one of the most important names in Serbian print journalism” (hr.wikipedia, 2024) – write without any discomfort about the USA as “a country that seems to millions of disenfranchised people around the world (and to me) like an oasis in an unjust world” (Diković, 2022b), but the cult of the Occident is also being transferred to such grotesque EU countries as Croatia.

In the Belgrade weekly *Vreme*, for example, Miljenko Jergović's statement that "there is no doubt that Croatia today is a more normal country than Serbia and that Croatian society is on a higher level of civilization than Serbian society" (Kostić, 2006) is taken as completely unquestionable and self-evident. In the newspaper *Danas*, a text is published with the title: "Croatia – so close and yet so far in some elementary civilizational issues" ("A small, beautiful, boring country that minds its own business, which I wish Serbia would become. And yes... a member of the EU"!; Ranković, 2023).

Vlajsa Arsenijević not only authoritatively proclaims "that Croatian literature is more contemporary, more communicative and more entertaining than Serbian literature" (Milanović Hrašovec, 2008), but also that "in Croatia (...) unlike Serbia, there is much more fresh air – Croatia is much more open than today's Serbia, (...) unlike Serbia, less and less inclined to perpetuate bloody delusions from the past" (!?). "I always had a problem with saying: 'Aha, Serbia is five, ten years behind Croatia.' (...) But today! These are really two different paths"! (Arsenijević, 2023b)

The enthusiasm for Croatia goes so far that it is even placed ahead of its own country by completely absurd standards. Dubravka Stojanović says: "Partisan monuments in Serbia are not systematically (destroyed) as in Croatia, but they are very neglected. It is a big question which is worse – because neglected monuments in Serbia look like part of an ugly landscape, part of a garbage dump. In this way, perhaps a stronger message is conveyed because people see it. Children and young people see it and conclude that it is something ugly, something that should be removed" (Karabeg, 2020).

So the systematic destruction of anti-fascist monuments in Croatia is seen as a lesser evil than in Serbia, where they are all untouched but somehow "neglected" — because this neglect actually sends "a stronger message": "children conclude that it is something ugly"? Fantastic!

The culture of constant autostigmatization, including through Orientalism, thus leads to the development of a view that is very similar to the *inferiority complex*. When Vida Ognjenović said goodbye to Isidora Žebeljan, she said: "Thank you for everything you have done for this cultural backlog" (Koprivica, 2021). Cultural backlog?

In fact, the emphasis on alleged cultural backwardness compared to the West successfully replaces "genetic inferiority". What is insufficient for racism in biology appears as the *wrong tradition* in cultural racism: "Cultural backwardness becomes a sign of a lower civilizational standard" (Longinović, 2003: 72).

Of course, this “racism-laden trope of the ‘Balkan mentality’” always has as its flip side “the invocation of the enlightened patronage of a phantasmagorical, ‘orderly West’” (Ćurković, 2012). “Awaiting the arrival of the *enlightened* Western boot” – this is how one could express the logic of our “civil”, self-oriented discourse.

The only thing that the *enlightened boot*, even if it comes from the beloved West, neither ever was nor ever can be...

Inverse nationalism as the normalization of anti-Serbian nationalism

Negative auto-essentialization – “Serbiatria”, “Savageland”, “Chetnikia”, “Serbistan”, “Stinkland” – perceives the entire nation as a monolithic, homogeneous mass of equal quality, culture, will, knowledge and feelings. I have already written about this elsewhere (Antonić, 2024a), but here I would like to give just a few examples that I did not mention there.

Nenad Dimitrijević: “Every person who happens to be Serbian has to deal with the suffering of people who happen not to be Serbs. Every member of the attacked group today has a reason to fear every Serb” (Dimitrijević, 2003).

Dejan Ilić: “She (Latinka Perović – S. A.) had no doubt that the Serbs were mainly to blame for the disintegration of the federal state. (...) As if the Serbs were afraid that others would treat the Serbian minority the way they, the Serbs themselves, wanted to treat the minorities in Serbia” (Ilić, 2022b). “The so-called people (*sic!*) in Serbia are much less divided than they usually say. Kosovo, Ukraine... Serbs are much more united on these issues than any actor in the political sphere wants to admit” (Ilić, 2023);

Branko Kukić: “The current situation in Serbia has remained essentially unchanged for 230 years, i.e. since the First Serbian Uprising in 1804, when the so-called state was founded. I have often said that the biggest problem in Serbia is not the government, but the Serbian people.” “This people is characterized by the fact that it is afraid of the best, the brightest and of new phenomena. This is a reliable sign that we have not merged with European culture” (Matijević, 2023).

Sometimes the term “Serbs” refers primarily to the Serbs in the Republic of Srpska. For example, we take it for granted that one can publish the claim without any editorial reservation (*Danas*): “The UN Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia and the International Court of Justice have established that the Bosnian Serbs committed genocide” (Jan Buruma, 2011). And Biljana Srbljanović writes (*Blic*) that “the only European genocide

after the Holocaust was precisely the responsibility of the Serbs, both from Bosnia and from Belgrade” (Srbljanović, 2020b).

What is additionally frightening for anyone with a longer memory is the fact that our current inverse nationalism – after three decades of spreading and taking root – has arrived where classical anti-Serbian chauvinism stood in the early 1990s.

If we read Zilhad Ključanin’s book *Yes, I despise the Serbs* (1994) today, for example, we find views in it that have now become commonplaces of our autochauvinism:

“Newly composed (folk – S. A.) music is a Serbian invention – so that a Serb can show his lowest instincts” (Ključanin, 1994: 43); “The Serbian intelligentsia still lives in the decasyllable. (...) And the decasyllable is just a forest roar. Unsuitable for the fine ear” (65). “When I once told my dear Professor Muhsin Rizvić that the Serbs were selling a cow to buy Petar Kočić, (suggesting to him, newbie that I was, that the Serbs read more than the Muslims), he replied: ‘What good is it if they play him with gusle!’” (100)

“Serbs hate civilization. (...) Serbs really dream of a pre-civilizational age, of forests and some clearings where Serbs would be the only people” (67). “The Serbs are a cunning people. Davids of Štrpci” (155). “It is not difficult to make someone from the Serbian people a leader. Because everyone feels like a leader. You can take any idiot, put a suit on him and send him to Geneva. Like sending the ‘smartest’ Serbian academic. The same thing!” (78)

“Every ‘honest Serb’, if he wants ‘honest’ to be written without quotation marks, must stand in front of a mirror or in front of a Bosniak” and say: ‘Yes, I belong to a people who committed genocide. I am ashamed of that’” (68). “I would like to see a Serb who honestly admits to me the infamous truth that the Serbian people are genocidal” (85).

“The Serbs have soiled their hands so much that their children are born with bloody fingernails” (62)

“The Serbs are 100% Četniks” (83). “There are no so-called loyal Serbs” (84). “A Muslim gets diarrhea when he kills his first enemy. A Serb gets drunk when he kills a hundred Muslims” (135).

“Serbs should not be studied, they should be despised” (11). “I do not hate the Serbs, I despise them. (...) Contempt is a completely natural relationship to Serbs” (8).

If you look at the aforementioned commonplaces of today’s inverse nationalism – “Serbiatria”, “Savageland”, “Chetnikia”, “Serbistan”, “Stinkland” – you will find the same statements almost word for word as in Ključanin’s 1994 bible of anti-Serbism. Because today, our autochauvinism massively asserts exactly what we almost unanimously considered radical and wrong in the 1990s, as much as we were against Milošević – and – what we could only hear from anti-Serbian nationalists back then:

“You Serbs as a people are collectively responsible for the crimes of recent years. (...) 90 percent of the individuals consciously planned the genocide – and then you collectively formed the attitude, will and action of the Serbs as a people” (Taras Kermauner, 1996). “To be Serbs – this word has become in the mouths of the civilized world something like the name of a pill for vomiting” (Marko Vešović, 1994).

Inverse nationalism has thus brought about the normalization of *anti-Serbism* in Serbia for over thirty years. I remember how repulsive we all found the racist caricature by Jeff MacNelly (1947-2000) in the New Year’s edition of the *Chicago Tribune* (1993). In it, Serbs and Russian Communists are depicted as two pigs wallowing in a septic tank, gazing lovingly at each other (The Media, 1994: 5). But today we have reached a point where our autochauvinists themselves portray Serbs as pigs in a cesspool.

They constantly complain that everything is normal in Serbia that is not normal elsewhere. But a large part of this perversion, insofar as it exists, is precisely the result of inverted nationalism: the complete internalization of completely insane positions has been accomplished. When asked by the N1 journalist why the conflict in the territories of the former SFRY has not calmed down even after three decades, Dušan Čavić (show “Marka Žvaka”) replies: “I think we (Serbs – S. A.) have to ask ourselves – because wherever there is a larger number of members of our, the Serbian people in these regional areas, there are problems. Montenegro and Kosovo are still left” (N1, 2021: 17:14-17:28).

This is an identical answer that the ideologue of the Romanian Iron Guard, Nae Ionescu (1890–1940), gave to the question of why they persecute the Jews everywhere. If the Jews are in conflict everywhere in Europe, he says – in Germany, Poland, Russia, Romania, etc. – “then we must inevitably come to the conclusion that the reasons for the conflict lie in the Jew”, i.e. “the Jew must basically be sick (substanțial bolnav)” (Ionescu, 2021: 115). Therefore, “for the ‘others,’ the suffering of the Jews is only the result of a just reaction to all the evil that the Jews bring among the peoples with whom they live,” explains Ionescu (2021: 118).

The old thesis from the early 1990s that the Serbs are a “disturbing factor” (Franjo Tuđman) was normalized and internalized by the constant repetition in the Serbian autocolonial public to such an extent that it is now taken for granted. The culture of autochauvinism has not only spread, it has become the *definitive matrix* in people’s minds. It is no longer just an ideology, but a genuine *psycho-ideology*. Under these circumstances, remaining normal is already a success.

And remaining normal means not resigning oneself to a discriminated status. Discourse is a place of power, so every battle must be won there first. We have to win it.

Conclusion

Negative (auto)essentialization may seem like the fruit of an overly radical (self-)critique. But the subject who makes use of such a discourse places himself in a privileged position of exception, in the position of the one who abhors the “unworthy other”, in this case the unworthy, often class-underprivileged fellow citizen. Such dehumanizing stigmatization becomes part of the cultural pattern through which it is then internalized as inferiority in the middle and lower classes.

Indeed, the dehumanizing stigmatization of compatriots is generalized in inverse nationalism as a typical “trope of colonial self-hatred” (Ćurković). Thank you to the media, this toxic discourse penetrates deep into society and finds fertile ground in the emerging classes who expect the privileges of the middle and upper classes of the West as the privileged center of the global capitalist system. Especially members of our middle class easily fall for it, as they usually compare their own country, whose weaknesses they know well, with countries where they have been on vacation for three days.

Foucault defines discourses as practices that construct the objects they talk about, or as a “system of statements that construct the object” (Foucault, 1969: 49). By dehumanizing the stigmatization of Serbian society, it is deconstituted and subsequently reconstructed as a collective identity. The frequent use of certain discourses creates linguistic routines that are then accepted as collective meanings. Identities are thus constructed precisely through discourse and within a particular discourse. An eternal position of inferiority is built into the discourse presented, as a justification for colonial rule over a barbaric country and its primitive people. And the established colonial self-hatred ultimately reinforces the colonial position.

References

- Antonić, Slobodan (2024a): „Društveni koreni inverznog nacionalizma“, *Sociološki pregled*, vol. LVIII, no. 4, str. 554-586. <https://doi.org/10.5937/socpreg58-52122>
- Antonić, Slobodan (2024b): *Demontaža kulture: prilozi za sociologiju srpskog društva* Beograd: Catena mundi; 3. izm. i proš. izd. <https://sn.rs/ctpqy>,
- Antonić, Slobodan (2023): *Ukrajinski rat — buđenje Carstva*, Beograd: Catena mundi, <https://sn.rs/04tjt>.
- Antonić, Slobodan (2022): „Kompradori kao deo TNKK: Slučaj Srbije = Compradors as part of TCC: The case of Serbia“, *Sociološki pregled*, vol. LVI, no. 4, str. 1169—1191, <https://sn.rs/szcyc> doi: 10.5937/socpreg56—41448

- Antonić, Slobodan (2008): *Kulturni rat u Srbiji*. Beograd: Zavod za udžbenike. <http://skr.rs/znEa>.
- Arsić, Branka (2003): „Srbi pederi“, *Balkan kao metafora: između globalizacije i fragmentacije*, ur. Dušan I. Bjelić i Obrad Savić, str. 328–351. Beograd: Beogradski krug, <https://sn.rs/gr9i9>
- Bjelić, Dušan I. (2003): „Uvod: Dizanje ‘mosta’ u vazduh“, *Balkan kao metafora: između globalizacije i fragmentacije*, ur. Dušan I. Bjelić i Obrad Savić, str. 17-38. Beograd: Beogradski krug, <https://sn.rs/gr9i9>.
- Vučinić, Marinko (2012): *Druga Srbija: na mrtvoj straži političke korektnosti*. Beograd: Službeni glasnik.
- Vladušić, Slobodan (2019): „Nacionalni identitet i četvrta generacija ratovanja“, u: *Srpski identitetski kriterijumi u procesu globalizacije*, ur. Milimir Mučibabić i Miloš Kovačević, str. 143-155. Beograd: SKPD „Prosvjeta“.
- Vladušić, Slobodan (2018): *Književnost i komentari: uputstvo za oružanu pobunu*, 2. izd. Beograd: Službeni glasnik.
- Vujošević, Anđela (2021): „Uloga medija i konstruisanje negativne slike Srbije u nemačkom magazinu Špigel tokom NATO bombardovanja“, *Lipar: list za književnost, umetnost i kulturu*, god. 22, br. 75, str. 187-207.
- Jonesku, Nae (2021): „Predgovor romanu *Već dve hiljade godina*“, preveo Đura Miočinović, *Gradac*, br. 221-222, str. 115-124.
- Konstantinović, Radomir, (1981): *Filosofija palanke*. Beograd: Nolit.
- Lompar, Milo (2018): *Sloboda i istina: beleške o promeni svesti*. Beograd: Catena mundi.
- Lompar, Milo (2016): *Polihistorijska istraživanja*. Beograd: Catena mundi.
- Longinović, Tomislav Z. (2003): „Vampiri poput nas: gotske maštarije i ‘srbi’“, *Balkan kao metafora: između globalizacije i fragmentacije*, ur. Dušan I. Bjelić i Obrad Savić, str. 57-77; Beogradski krug, <https://sn.rs/gr9i9>.
- Močnik, Rastko (2003): „Balkan kao element u ideološkim mehanizmima“, *Balkan kao metafora: između globalizacije i fragmentacije*, ur. Dušan I. Bjelić i Obrad Savić, str. 98-137; Beogradski krug, <https://sn.rs/gr9i9>.
- Perović, Latinka (2015): *Dominantna i neželjena elita: beleške o intelektualnoj i političkoj eliti u Srbiji (XX-XXI vek)*, Beograd: Dan graf; Novi Sad: Radio-televizija Vojvodine.
- Pešić, Vesna (2012): *Divlje društvo: kako smo stigli dovdje*. Beograd: Pešćanik.
- Said, Edvard (2002): *Kultura i imperijalizam*, prevela Vesna Bogojević. Beograd: Beogradski krug.
- Fuko, Mišel (1998): *Arheologija znanja*, prevod sa francuskog Mladen Kozomara, Beograd: Πλατο; Sremski Karlovci i Novi Sad: Izdavačka knjižarnica Zorana Stojanovića.
- Fuko, Mišel (2012): *Moć/znanje: odabrani spisi i razgovori (1972-1977)*. Novi Sad: Mediterran publishing.
- Hall, Stuart (2001): „Kome treba ‘identitet’?“, s engleskog prevela Sandra Veljković, *Reč: časopis za književnost i kulturu*, br. 64 (10), str. 215-233.

- Ćirjaković, Zoran (2022): *Protiv doma spremni: srpski autošovinizam, njegovi koreni i posledice*. Beograd: Pešić i sinovi.
- Ćirjaković, Zoran (2022): *Neokolonijalna Srbija: država i društvo u vreme Aleksandra Vučića*. Beograd: Filip Višnjić.
- Ćirjaković, Zoran (2021): *Otkrivanje autošovinizma: od pojave do pojma*. Beograd: Catena mundi.
- Šijaković, Bogoljub (2018): „Stigmatizacija, identitet, istorijska odgovornost“, *Letopis Matice srpske*, vol. 502, br. 1—2 (jul—avgust), str. 36—45, <https://sn.rs/yzfis>.
- Šijaković, Bogoljub (2013): *Prisutnost transcendencije: helenstvo, hrišćanstvo, filozofija istorije*. Beograd: Pravoslavni bogoslovski fakultet Univerziteta i Službeni glasnik.

Sources

- Alo (2013): „Biljana Srbljanović o Božoviću: Morbidno ugojeni glumac bi trebalo da razmisli kakvu poruku šalje ljudima!“, *Na dlanu*, 6. septembar, <https://sn.rs/osdk8>.
- Antena M (2024): „Umjesto poziva na skup – Dinko!“, *Autonomija*, 25. mart, <https://sn.rs/e2mg>
- Apro, Danijel (2020): „Nismo se pomerili iz srednjeg veka: novinarka koje kritikuju vlast vređaju i kao žene“, *Cenzolovka*, 18. februara, <https://sn.rs/gbvc0>.
- Arsenijević, Vladimir (2023a): „Mi – kao da smo u kolektivnom mentalnom oboljenju“, Intervju, *Autonomija*, 21. april, <https://sn.rs/lxugf>.
- Arsenijević, Vladimir (2023b): „U Srbiji smo odgojili zastrašujuću generaciju“, *Autonomija*, 30. novembar, <https://sn.rs/cec9o>.
- Autonomija (2018): „Tribina Antifašističke koalicije: Srbija je četnička država“, *Autonomija*, 9. novembar, <https://sn.rs/54n21>.
- Autonomija (2023a): „O ProGlasu: Uvek je važno kada intelektualci i javne ličnosti ne čute, ali...“, *Autonomija*, 11. novembar, <https://sn.rs/mes28>.
- Autonomija (2023b): „Gruhonjić: Srbija nema ni spoljnu ni unutrašnju politiku, ima samo politiku veličanja zločina i zločinaca“, *Autonomija*, 30. jul, <https://sn.rs/iqt2t>.
- Autonomija (2021): „Latinka Perović: Srbija je i dalje nahijsko društvo“, *Autonomija*, 25. jul, <https://sn.rs/di2j9>
- Balać, Radovan (2020): „Tribina u Novom Sadu: Živimo u stanju mafijaške države“, *Danas*, 15. februar, <https://sn.rs/0pazp>
- Besermenji, Igor (2020): „Pacovski špajz“, *Danas*, 28. decembar, <https://sn.rs/i53t7>.
- Beta (2021): „Vesna Pešić: Srbija je glavni uznemiravajući faktor na Balkanu“, *Danas*, 18. decembar, <https://sn.rs/0pijf>
- Biserko, Sonja (2004): *Srbija na Orijentu*. Beograd: Helsinški odbor za ljudska prava u Srbiji.

- Bursać, Dragan (2023a): „Sprema li Srbija novi rat na Balkanu?“, *Autonomija*, 22. novembar, <https://sn.rs/6b8pm>
- Bursać, Dragan (2023b): „Srbija je stvorila `crnogorski scenario` i živi ga zadnjih 35 godina!“, *Autonomija*, 25. septembar, <https://sn.rs/KNPD7>.
- Bursać, Dragan (2021b): „Zlatan balija i država Srbija!“, *Autonomija*, 19. februar, <https://sn.rs/cz6tk>.
- Bursać, Dragan (2021a): „Ko nam to dira naše voljene ratne zločince?“, *Autonomija*, 4. februar, <https://sn.rs/ggkb3>
- Bursać, Dragan (2021c): „Srbiji nema spasa!“, *Radio Sarajevo*, 12. oktobar, <https://sn.rs/zwxhx>
- Buruma, Jan (2011): „Zločini Ratka Mladića“, *Danas*, 1. juni, <https://sn.rs/enqjt>.
- Čongradin, Snežana (2023): „Kojih 50 javnih ličnosti potpisuje najnoviji apel `Stop represiji nad neistomišljenicima`?“, *Danas*, 26. juli, <https://sn.rs/b0i5l>
- Čongradin, Snežana (2019): „Na prostoru takozvane velike Srbije“, *Danas*, 30. maj, <https://sn.rs/3xlld>.
- Čongradin, Snežana (2022): „Od kada je društveno prihvatljivo ubijati decu i počiniti masovne pokolje?: Biljana Stojković o rehabilitaciji Nikole Kalabića“, *Danas*, 8. avgust, <https://sn.rs/o6f7x>.
- Ćorović, Aida (2023): „Zlo se uvijek vraća odakle je krenulo“, *Autonomija*, 17. jun, <https://sn.rs/loi3n>
- Ćulibrk, Milan (2023): „Napadi na novinare potvrđuju da živimo u nenormalnoj zemlji“, *Autonomija*, 31. jul, <https://sn.rs/c7w2n>
- Ćurković, Stipe (2012): „Civilnom scenom do restauracije kapitalizma“, *Teorija iz teretane*, 31. januar, <http://skr.rs/z03j>.
- D. B. (2020): „Večito lizanje ruskog dlana“, *Danas*, 1. mart, <https://sn.rs/19uuiy>
- Dežulović, Boris (2020a): „Spasimo srpske svetinje!“, *Portal Novosti*, 12. januar, <https://sn.rs/dqj5v>.
- Dežulović, Boris (2020b): „Spasimo srpske svetinje!“, *Danas*, 15. januar, <https://sn.rs/9h6ld>.
- Diković, Jelena (2023): „Posrnuće zvano Srbija“, *Autonomija*, 9. jul, <https://sn.rs/vx194>.
- Diković, Jelena (2022a): „Pešić: Pocrkali bismo od gladi da nema EU“, *Danas*, 27. januar, <https://sn.rs/hsnph>.
- Diković, Jelena (2022b): „Muškarci, nemate vi ništa sa mojim telom“, *Danas*, 27. juni, <https://sn.rs/ftltr>.
- Dimitrijević, Nenad (2003): „Život posle smrti: jedan institucionalni pogled na današnju Srbiju“, *Peščanik*, 2. februar, <https://sn.rs/edyao>.
- Espresso (2020): „Nije normalno da ljudi s osnovnom školom idu na more! Sudija Majić nije ni svestan koliko je ljudi uvredio“, *Espresso*, 24. februar, <https://sn.rs/77rz7>
- Espresso (2018): „Sergej brani Hrvata koji tvrdi da je Srbija SMRDIJA i za to ima suludo objašnjenje!“, *Espresso*, 1. juni, <https://sn.rs/gqq8z>

- Fatić, Aleksandar (2022): „Strukturalna patologija koju moramo razbiti“, *Danas*, 13. maj, <https://sn.rs/ieg8a>
- GDF (2020): „XXI tribina Foruma pisaca (FP) i Građanskog demokratskog foruma na temu: Nacionalizam, mitomanija, paraistorija“, *Građanski demokratski forum*, 29. februar, <https://sn.rs/bw195>
- GV (2023) „Građanska Vojvodina: Srbija je sigurna kuća za ratne zločince i njihove simpatizere“, *Autonomija*, 16. jul, <https://sn.rs/3m3io>.
- Gojgić, Ljubica (2021): „Pravi ugao: Gordana Čomić“, RTV, 6. maj, <https://sn.rs/xrxgi>
- Gruhonjić, Dinko (2020a): „Najdosadniji izbori do sada, Srbija duboko u nacionalističkom glibu“, *Autonomija*, 21. jun, <https://sn.rs/cmqek>.
- Gruhonjić, Dinko (2023b): „Igra simbola oko festivala Exit: Srbija spremna za prošlost“, *Al Jazeera*, 13. jul, <https://sn.rs/vpbj9>.
- Gruhonjić, Dinko (2023a): „Američka diplomatija i cijeli politički Zapad čine sa Vučićem istu grešku kao i sa Miloševićem zlikovačkim režimom“, *Autonomija*, 3. oktobar, <https://sn.rs/le9vr>.
- Gruhonjić, Dinko (2023c): „Kada me ekstremisti proglašavaju ekstremistom – znam da radim ispravnu stvar!“, *Autonomija*, 18. jul, <https://sn.rs/q8fja>
- Gruhonjić, Dinko (2023d): „Pakao je na Zemlji, a u ovim našim krajevima ime mu je Vučićeva Srbija“, *Autonomija*, 25. septembar, <https://sn.rs/1xzdv>.
- Gruhonjić, Dinko (2023e): „Stojanović: Srbija ne odustaje od agresivnog programa što je svima znak da bježe od nje“, *Al Jazeera*, 17. oktobar, <https://sn.rs/30rnr>
- Gruhonjić, Dinko (2020b): „Srbija i Bajden – Dosledno protiv razuma i civilizacije“, *Slobodna reč*, 16. novembar, <https://sn.rs/y27aw>
- Gruhonjić, Dinko (2021a): „Nije getoiziranje nacija počelo samo od sebe, već su ga šovinsti planski proizvodili i vodili“, intervju vodila Vanja Šunjić, *Pro-metej.ba*, 30. mart, <https://sn.rs/ivpsw>.
- Gruhonjić, Dinko (2021b): „Stopa izlečenja od nacionalizma je tu negde kao i od heroína“, *Autonomija*, 20. april, <https://sn.rs/7u9w4>
- Gruhonjić, Dinko (2019): Tviter profil, 11. mart 2019, <http://skr.rs/z03W>.
- Gruhonjić, Dinko (2013): „Ko danas pali zastave, sutra će paliti ljude“, *Autonomija*, 14. januar, <https://sn.rs/hh1wk>
- Gruhonjić, Dinko (2011a): „Jesmo li svi bagra?“, *Autonomija*, 15. oktobar, <https://sn.rs/vn4ds>.
- Gruhonjić, Dinko (2011b): „Beograde, laku noć!“, *Autonomija*, 1. oktobar, <https://sn.rs/qatgt>.
- Gušić, Bedrudin (2017): „Aleksandar Sekulović: Genocidnost je kroz istoriju bila bitno obeležje srpskog nacionalizma“, *Helsinška povelja*, 3. mart, <https://sn.rs/aax62>.
- HO (2023): *Srbija: zarobljeno društvo*, Izveštaj Helsinškog odbora, Beograd: Helsinški odbor za ljudska prava u Srbiji, <http://skr.rs/zGIG>. hr.wikipedia (2024): „Jelena Diković“, *Wikipedija* na hrvatskom, <https://sn.rs/6vvyl>.
- Ilić, Dejan (2023): „Kalkulanti“, *Peščanik*, 7. novembar, <https://sn.rs/s55cb>.

- Ilić, Dejan (2022a): „Proklete devedesete“, *Peščanik*, 4. oktobar, <https://sn.rs/v6dxy>
- Ilić, Dejan (2022b): „Prosvetiteljski zamah Latinke Perović“, *Peščanik*, 13. decembar, <https://sn.rs/ar8cu>.
- Ilić, Saša (2022): „Hod za Rusiju“, *Peščanik*, 30. avgust, <https://sn.rs/8h19c>
- Jorgačević, Jelena (2023): „Nasilje je ovde kulturni kod“, intervju Staša Bajac, *Vreme*, 26. jul, <https://sn.rs/ddchv>
- Jovanović, Bojan (2019): „Srbija je danas civilizacijska rupa“, *Danas*, 1. avgust, <https://sn.rs/kkpf6>.
- Jovović, Pero (2022): „Čeda Jovanović: I sa Rio Tantom i bez, mi smo crna rupa Evrope i deponija zla“, *Nova.rs*, 11. januar, <https://sn.rs/6ynjk>.
- Jovović, Pero (2020): „Nadam se da ćeš umreti od raka i side, pederčino“, *Nova.rs*, 21. decembar, <https://sn.rs/p59rl>
- Karabeg, Omer (2020): „Zašto se Srbija i Hrvatska stide svog antifašizma?“, *Slobodna Evropa*, 6. decembar/prosinac, <https://sn.rs/97lqy>.
- Kermauner, Taras (1996): „Odgovor Nebojši Popovu – Pismo srpskom prijatelju“, *Vreme*, br. 289, 4. maj, <https://sn.rs/iw841>.
- Kišjuhas, Aleksej (2022a): „Novosadisti“, *Danas*, 20. februar, <https://sn.rs/bwcn3>.
- Kišjuhas, Aleksej (2022b): „Srbija u Aziji?“, *Danas*, 9. oktobar, <https://sn.rs/tnc9j>.
- Kišjuhas, Aleksej (2023a): „Albanci sa drveća“, *Danas*, 7. maj, <https://sn.rs/3y1ji>
- Kišjuhas, Aleksej (2023b): „Smrt Vojvodine“, *Danas*, 3. septembar, <https://sn.rs/do26u>
- Kišjuhas, Aleksej (2021a): „Četničko čišćenje“, *Nomad.ba*, 16. novembra 2021, <https://sn.rs/2fmqb>.
- Kišjuhas, Aleksej (2021b): „Vučić je savršeni izraz srpskog društva“, *Autonomija*, 20. jul, <https://sn.rs/6hjsh>
- Kišjuhas, Aleksej (2021c): „Ko je pobedio?“, *Danas*, 23. maj, <https://sn.rs/dlm70>
- Kišjuhas, Aleksej (2021d): „Mirovni profiteri?“, *Danas*, 26. decembar, <https://sn.rs/159zi>.
- Kišjuhas, Aleksej (2020): „Čemu demokratija?“, *Danas*, 28. juni, <https://sn.rs/t7yk6>
- Ključanin, Zilhad (1994): *Da, ja prezirem Srbe*, b. m. i: Biblioteka Ključanin, <https://sn.rs/wbpzv>.
- Koprivica, Jelena (2021): „Hvala ti za sve što si učinila za ovu kulturnu zabit“, *Nova.rs*, 21. decembar, <https://sn.rs/qwvu9>.
- Kostić, Slobodan (2006): „Bez utehe“, intervju Miljenko Jergović, *Vreme*, 1. novembar, <https://sn.rs/iymp>
- Kovač, Hanibal (2023): „Deco vagnerovska, jeste li poludeli“, *Danas*, 27. juni 2023, <https://sn.rs/cn9xj>
- Krivokapić, Boro (2018): „Srbija – demonska replika Rusije“, *Oslobođenje*, 18. novembar, <https://sn.rs/yqdv>.
- Krstić, Nikola (2023a): „Dijagnoza Srbijatrije“, *Danas*, 5. oktobar, <https://sn.rs/6ug06>.
- Krstić, Nikola (2023b): „Pritajeno zlo koje se vraća“, *Danas*, 1. novembar, <https://sn.rs/13fvv>

- Krstić, Nikola (2022a): „Ljudožderski varvari“, *Danas*, 28. septembar, <https://sn.rs/smart>
- Krstić, Nikola (2022b): „Smrt razuma u Vučićevoj Srbiji“, *Danas*, 20. juli, <https://sn.rs/85rvx>.
- Krstić, Nikola (2022c): „Istorija koja ne postoji“, *Danas*, 22. novembar, <https://sn.rs/qfznm>
- Krstić, Nikola (2021a): „Životi koje je pojeo Vučić“, *Danas*, 1. decembar, <https://sn.rs/zomj3>.
- Krstić, Nikola (2021b): „Film koji nije samo o Srebrenici“, *Danas*, 17. decembar, <https://sn.rs/f3jlu>.
- Krstić, Nikola (2020): „Psihoteična Srbija u zoni sumraka“, *Danas*, 17. januar, <https://sn.rs/tcotj>
- „Ksenija“ (2019): Tviter nalog „Ksenija“, 4. septembar, <http://skr.rs/z03u>.
- Ljubičić, Saša (2023): „Slobodna Dalmacija: Zašto se Srbija opet toliko trudi da bude nenormalna država, hoće li se uopšte ikad dozvati pameti?“, *Danas*, 23. oktobar, <https://sn.rs/2lhhu>
- Malović, Nikola (2020): „Svetionik – Rat“, *Pečat*, br. 601, 10 januar, <https://sn.rs/ugdbo>.
- Marković, Goran (2023): „Više nema šta da se izgubi, ovo je poslednja prilika za Srbiju“, *Autonomija*, 8. novembar, <https://sn.rs/cs0ie>
- Marković, Tomislav (2023a): „Duh litija, pustahilik i hajdučija“, *Autonomija*, 16. avgust, <https://sn.rs/bo9bl>
- Marković, Tomislav (2023b): „Vučićeva privrženost Putinu i nesporazumi sa svetom“, *Autonomija*, 12. april, <https://sn.rs/8lbql>
- Marković, Tomislav (2023c): „Masovni ubica na putu do škole“, *Autonomija*, 30. avgust, <https://sn.rs/5cct1>
- Marković, Tomislav (2023d): „Kandidat za novog srpskog vožda: Vuk na mjestu Vučića“, *Autonomija*, 11. jun, <https://sn.rs/esyie>
- Marković, Tomislav (2023e): „Đavolje pleme“, *Autonomija*, 16. avgust, <https://sn.rs/8qq8w>
- Marković, Tomislav (2023f): „Iz Rusije, s ljubavlju: Spomenik Miloševiću u Moskvi“, *Autonomija*, 18. jun, <https://sn.rs/yh1ln>
- Marković, Tomislav (2023g): „Teroristički Dan žalosti“, *Autonomija*, 27. septembar, <https://sn.rs/495uv>.
- Marković, Tomislav (2023h): „Dok brani teroriste, država nema empatije za ubijenu djecu“, *Autonomija*, 10. oktobar, <https://sn.rs/ykdql>
- Marković, Tomislav (2023i): „Srbija na Zapadu i druge američke bajke“, *Autonomija*, 9. oktobar, <https://sn.rs/xy7v3>.
- Marković, Tomislav (2022): „Srbija na prekretnici: Kako smo postali sluge zločinca“, *Al Jazeera*, 21. novembar, <https://sn.rs/zh836>
- Marković, Tomislav (2021): „Fašisti, kvislinzi, ustaše i ostale nevine žrtve“, *Autonomija*, 29. decembar, <https://sn.rs/y0f1u>
- Matijević, Ivana (2023): „Branko Kukić: Ovde se više ne može govoriti o krizi, ovde je reč o moralnom posrnuću“, *Danas*, 11. juni, <https://sn.rs/nsdfs>.

- Milanović Hrašovec, Ivana (2008): „Ko se tamo čita“, intervju Vladimir Arsenijević, *Vreme*, 10. decembar, <https://sn.rs/liona>.
- Milenković, Ivan (2023): „Zašto nam (bre) ide tako loše?“, *Vreme*, 26. jul, <https://sn.rs/0beqi>.
- Milenković, Nadežda (2023): „U ime oca i sina“, *Peščanik*, 23. oktobar, <https://sn.rs/27s8i>.
- Miletić, Snežana (2023): „Ako si čovek...“, *Autonomija*, 10. septembar, <https://sn.rs/h0yhi>.
- Miletić, Una (2020): „Srbija je primitivna zajednica u kojoj vlada zakon jačeg“, *Danas*, 15. avgust, <https://sn.rs/3c7of>.
- Milošević, Srđan (2022): „Skupštinska šarada“, *Peščanik*, 19. septembar, <https://sn.rs/k11kp>.
- Miočić Mandić, Petra (2021): „(Marko Vidojković) 'Srbija je društvo puno glupana i pokvarenjaka, mi smo đubre od države u doslovnom smislu'“, *24 sata*, 9. april, <https://sn.rs/2z6ns>.
- NDNV (2023): „Dinko Gruhonjić na meti napada iz bh. entiteta Republika Srpska“, *Autonomija*, 18. jul, <https://sn.rs/551rp>.
- N1 (2021): „'Marka Žvaka': Raspad SFRJ i dalje traje, ljudi iz regiona taoci“, *N1 Beograd*, 21. jun, <https://sn.rs/ufjfg>.
- N1 (2019): „Smajlović i Stupar o političkoj doslednosti“, N1, 4. septembar, YouTube, <https://sn.rs/84hz8>.
- Olenik, Aleksandar (2023): „Od nestabilne Srbije štetu trpi ceo Balkan a korist ima samo Rusija“, *Autonomija*, 22. april, <https://sn.rs/q0gea>.
- Pančić, Teofil (2023): „Kulturni gnevnik – 19. jun 2023“, *Vreme*, 19. jun, <https://sn.rs/llqm4>.
- Pančić, Teofil (2022): „Otključavanje crne rupe“, *Danas*, 14. maj, <https://sn.rs/c3wo8>.
- Pavlović, Emilo (2019): „Kako se zove država u kojoj živimo?“, *Autonomija*, 14. septembar, <https://sn.rs/tku6b>.
- Perović, Latinka (2021): „Srbija je i dalje nahijsko društvo“, *Autonomija*, 25. jul, <https://sn.rs/ojy4n>.
- Pešić, Vesna (2022): „Prilog raspravi o predsedničkom kandidatu“, *Peščanik*, 17. februar, <https://sn.rs/ao0ys>.
- Pešić, Vesna (2015): „Problemi srpske levice“, *Peščanik*, 30. juni, <https://sn.rs/iicqg>.
- Popov, Aleksandar (2023): „Spomenik Mihailoviću pokazuje da Srbija nije ozdravila“, *Autonomija*, 19. oktobar, <https://sn.rs/sbrlv>.
- Prokić, Nenad (2023): „Svoja guzica i samo za nju suzica“, Forum: portal građanske Srbije,, 9. maj, <https://sn.rs/mkkft>.
- Radić, Pavle (2023b): „Sprdačina sa tzv. nacionalnim jedinstvom, slobodom i zastavom“, *Autonomija*, 16. septembar, <https://sn.rs/g9gg6>.
- Radić, Pavle (2023a): „Hoće li davljenik opet odbiti ruku spasa?“, *Autonomija*, 6. februar, <https://sn.rs/102e2>.
- Radić, Pavle (2023c): „Izliv fašizma na ulice Beograda i Novog Sada“, *Autonomija*, 26. oktobar, <https://sn.rs/nmaqy>.

- Radić, Pavle (2023d): „Podlost i šibicarsko pranje odgovornosti“, *Autonomija*, 6. oktobar, <https://sn.rs/x1s2y>
- Radić, Pavle (2023e): „Sumanuti palikuća pali šibice na buretu baruta“, *Autonomija*, 1. jul, <https://sn.rs/cukws>.
- Radić, Pavle (2021b): „Unutrašnja diferencijacija“, *Autonomija*, 15. maj, <https://sn.rs/hu5jz>
- Radić, Pavle (2021a): „Od politike se ne može pobeći“, *Autonomija*, 7. maj, <https://sn.rs/x3cb>
- Radosavljević, Radmila (2023): „Boris Liješević režira *Besnilo* po kulturnom romanu Borislava Pekića, velikana koji je doživio besnilo sopstvenog naroda“, *Danas*, 12. januar, <https://sn.rs/29c00>.
- Radovanović, Vojin (2022): „Sad ne bi vredelo ni `Srbijo izvini`: Srpsko društvo ne postoji, ali su na protestu ispred Informera udareni temelji“, *Danas*, 2. oktobar, <https://sn.rs/tzcc3>.
- Ranković, Igor (2023): „Hrvatska – tako blizu a tako daleko u nekim elementarnim civilizacijskim stvarima“, *Danas*, 27. juli, <https://sn.rs/rezgi>.
- Rašić, Dragana (2023): „Kada je sistem duboko bolestan, uglavnom stradaju najnemoćniji i najranjiviji“, *Danas*, 16. avgust, <https://sn.rs/j8kyu>.
- Roknić, Aleksandar (2023): „Niko normalan više ne želi da pravi porodicu u Srbiji“, *Danas*, 18. juli, <https://sn.rs/65vww>
- Samardžić, Nikola (2022a): „Memorandumski izbori“, *Portal Analitika*, 15. april, <https://sn.rs/8te29>.
- Samardžić, Nikola (2022b): „Otvoreni Balkan je Putinova zamka“, *Portal Analitika*, 27. maj, <https://sn.rs/trcil>.
- Samardžić, Nikola (2016): „J“ s tačkom“, *Danas*, 16. septembar, <https://sn.rs/rve40>
- Samardžić, Nikola (2008): „O izboru bivšeg i budućeg“, *Danas*, 29. januar, <https://sn.rs/h6nqt>.
- Sejdinović, Nedim (2022): „(Post)izborna šizofrenija“, *Danas*, 8. april, <https://sn.rs/lcvz9>.
- Sejdinović, Nedim (2020): „Mentalna detonacija“, *Danas*, 28. avgust, <https://sn.rs/5394c>.
- Srbljanović, Biljana (2023): „Kriva učiteljica“, *Blic/ Javni servis*, 19. februar, <https://sn.rs/9uhm0>.
- Srbljanović, Biljana (2022a): „Ostavite Novaka na miru“, *Blic/ Javni servis*, 16. januar, <https://sn.rs/r2wzi>.
- Srbljanović, Biljana (2022b): „Papuče za Kosovo“, *Blic/ Javni servis*, 26. juni, <https://sn.rs/u1mli>.
- Srbljanović, Biljana (2020a): „Prijavljen skup“, *Blic/ Javni servis*, 29. januar, <https://sn.rs/jy0k6>
- Srbljanović, Biljana (2020b): „Prećutkivanje“, *Blic/ Javni servis*, 12. juli, <https://sn.rs/xyedq>.
- Stanković, Brankica (2020): „Bolesno smo društvo, tek ćemo se lečiti“, *Nova.rs*, 6. april, <https://sn.rs/0q6zu>.

- Stojković, Biljana (2020): „Režiser, glavni glumac i mi“, *Peščanik*, 4. decembar, <https://sn.rs/d4285>.
- Stanojlović, Dragica (2023): „Broj birača koji uvek glasaju za opoziciju – nije dovoljan“, *Danas*, 9. septembar, <https://sn.rs/87aqu>.
- Stojković, Biljana (2019): „Pobeda Univerziteta u Beogradu“, *Peščanik*, 25. septembar, <https://sn.rs/jz0i9>.
- Sudar, Suzana (2021): „Kokan Mladenović povodom Dana državnosti: Srbija nije država“, *Nova.rs*, 15. februar, <https://sn.rs/mdv7h>.
- Suša, Gordana (2021): „Nož, žica, 011“, *Danas*, 20. januar, <https://sn.rs/8w1sy>
- The Economist (2004): „Passport to prosperity“, *The Economist*, September 25th, pp. 6-9, <https://sn.rs/yftmc>
- The Media (1994): *The Media Happened to be There*, authors Zoran Petrović-Piroćanac, Vesna Hadživuković, Boro Mišeljić, Tomislav Kresović; translator Tamara Rodwell-Jovanović. Milići: Boksit; slika karikature: <https://sn.rs/fsxk7>.
- Tončić, Bojan (2022): „Povratak progonitelja“, *Nomad.ba*, 4. jula, <https://sn.rs/2nyys>
- Tončić, Bojan (2021): „Sve bilo je Kosovo“, *Remarker*, 19. januar, <https://sn.rs/h9m9s>
- Ugričić, Sreten (2009): „Pronađi uljeza“, *Peščanik*, 18. februar, <https://sn.rs/xhxd0>.
- Velikić, Dragan (2010): „Srpska agora“, *Politika*, 15. januar, <http://skr.rs/z03r>
- Vatić, Bojana (2020): „To nije oslobođenje, to je velikosrpski udar – dalje ruke od Crne Gore!“, *Antena M*, 21. decembar, <https://sn.rs/yedhu>
- Vešović, Marko (1994): „Ti još kolješ Koljeviću, a ja sam vazda bio slobodan“, *Vjesnik*, Zagreb, 19. veljače; preštampano u: *Srpske sluge Hrvatske = Servi Croatiae*, priredio Jovan Bošković, Beograd: Naš dom-L'Age d'Homme, 1999, str. 163-164.
- Vidojković, Marko (2022): „Istrebljenje liberalizma“, *Danas*, 15. decembar, <https://sn.rs/kefw>
- Vuletić, Zoran (2022): „Nahijska duša Srbije se boji istine a ne Latinke“, *Danas*, 22. decembar, <https://sn.rs/3oams>.

Milenko Bodin¹

University of Belgrade

Faculty of Security Studies

THE PHILOSOPHY OF IDENTITY AS A DEFENSE AGAINST THE DESTRUCTION OF THE SERBIAN NATION AND THE SERBIAN STATE

In this paper, we will primarily address the philosophical-theoretical relationship between identity and language, focusing on the interpretation of the controversy between ontological and constructivist perspectives. We will try to explain a three-dimensional model of the national identity of the Serbian people. In addition to the philosophical-theoretical aspect, we will also try to outline a possible practical, proactive approach to the problem of research. In this sense, we will point to the potential of ontological theory of (human) safety to counter radical constructivism. Building on this, we will also present the empirical level of problem solving, i.e. the formulation of steps towards practical problem solving. In this context, we will introduce the idea of institutionalizing the discourse responsible for national identity. Towards the end of the argumentation, we will try to formulate the necessary cultural policy in relation to Serbian national identity as a significant aspect of the so-called strategic culture of the Serbian state and as an institutional security culture of Serbian society.

Keywords: philosophy of identity, deconstruction, Serbian people, discourse of national identity, destruction, security culture

According to constructivism, identity is constantly reconstructed through various forms of discourse, the construction of norms in society, the construction of perceptions and the like. Moreover, one cannot, for example, speak of a historically continuous identity, let alone an identity that denotes a natural being (essence).

1 full professor, milenkobodin@fb.bg.ac.rs, ORCID: 0000-0002-1883-9387

Constructivism (and even deconstructivism) can otherwise be very useful forms of philosophical methodology (through the familiar constructions of metaphors or entire theoretical models), as long as they are not absolutized into so-called critical doctrines or “alternatives” that ultimately aim to change philosophy (as philosophy).

For if the concept itself as the basis of thought were understood as a construction, it could not even begin as a construction without some point of determination of the content of that concept, no matter how much it changes in social communication. On the contrary, the social sciences rely on the typology of identity, that is, on the search for what can be called constant in changes or differences. Moreover, as a contribution to the knowledge of the social sciences, these changes are traced through historical processes, which also affects the content of the concepts. Accordingly, the philosophical question of identity is actually the question of the possibility of identifying what the concept encompasses.

Identity and philosophy

Identity is deeply connected with the humanistic sense of culture and at the same time with the essence of the interest in security. And that is dignity and freedom (Fukuyama, 1992). A person's identity mostly implies a set and continuity of essential characteristics by which a human group or individual defines itself in relation to others, thus ensuring its “self-similarity” It is therefore a sense of belonging to a community, a cultural pattern that gives with its “seal” the contours of a figure that bears the characteristics of the personal, since it implies belonging (a pledge of one's recognizability) to the figure as an invisible person.

This in turn enriches the individual and influences self-perception, deepening and expanding the personality. At the same time, each individual's current identity is always composed of a number of components, as the social space of communication implies the overlapping and intersection of different participants in social life. These components can legitimately be seen as different types of identity, but in the humanistic sense of culture, the most important is the one that carries the meaning of humanity and well-being as a source of material and spiritual values. This is the foundation that makes human unity the backbone of cultural transformation into a new value, and this is the identity that encompasses in its meaning both the individual and the collective form of personality, the unity as a constantly emerging entity — the nation. As the bearer of the meaning of cultural identity, it is also part of the civilizational sense of

communication culture and thus changeable and transferable. In addition, identity as a cultural form of recognition in communication and orientation is observed in larger and smaller sub-forms. Thus, one can speak of ethnic, habitual, confessional, social, regional and completely different types, from gender and age to professional and political.

Identity is a measure of man's essential orientation towards "nothingness", his immersion in the anonymity of the givenness of the natural or social order. An additional moment in the development of identity consists in the relationship to the other, to the other and to the other — an idea that is often paraphrased with the concept of difference. Identity is also a social phenomenon through which the meaning that each actor in a relationship ascribes to himself is expressed by ascribing meaning to the other and then again to himself, and so on. Of course, the dynamics of cultural identity and the interactions with politics or complex social processes also lead to targeted action through the so-called strategic use of culture. One of the largest political projects of this kind is the European Union.

It stands for the idea of creating identity not in opposition to difference, but in spite of difference. The "European dialog" is one of the discursive phrases used to legitimize the political project of building a united and free Europe that is not constituted against an eternal enemy, as it has overcome the long-standing enmities within itself.

However, identity in the political life of society is reflected precisely in the definition of difference, which is very strong, and the best known is that "the Other", who observes (and to a certain extent determines) our identity, is defined as friend or foe (C. Schmitt). On the other hand, politically constructed identities, such as the "attempted" EU, can serve to alter or undermine identity, as in the case of any other ideological projection. In this relationship, culture is also of great importance, because the beliefs and ideas that people hold and exchange are the initiators of the goals that certain actors strive for. The processes involved in communicating these beliefs help to explain how identities are formed and maintained; identities, in turn, depend on the interests that actors pursue. The relationship between identity and interests points to the possibility of guiding meaning and even sense of identity, as well as stability in otherwise changeable forms of interests. Social interaction and the exchange of values take place under the sign of the establishment of extended forms of identity, often through interests, but also through the affirmation of essential characteristics of identity as interests in the community.

The likelihood of cooperation or lack thereof, or even conflict, depends on what the actors think of themselves and of others, of their own

identity or the identity of those with whom they are in contact. The role of culture in identity formation is significant because it represents the fundamental civilizational core in the creation of different human identities.

Culture becomes a value in its own right precisely because of its role in the formation of identity, self-similarity and self-awareness. It thus forms the dynamic core of identity, through which values that bring man closer to a higher being than the one he has “found in himself” continue to be recognized and developed. Human identity is formed through the affirmation and exchange of values in a society. The social orientation or the basic social institution, even the social resources of development, determine the cultural pattern.

Identity and the ideology of the “new reality”

At this point, we must ask about the broader philosophical context of the theories mentioned, such as post-structuralism and constructivism, but also about quite new conceptions in security studies that draw on various philosophical positions, such as the concept of securitization, which draws on the philosophy of language and discourse, or the concept of so-called ontological security, which is mediated by certain psychological theories and certainly touches on ontology as a philosophical discipline. It is about the context of so-called essentialism, historicism and philosophical reflection on identity.

The starting point for these questions is the problematization of identity from the perspective of political identity, which arises from legitimizing doctrines, and these in turn from the ideologies of modern times. The question of identity in this context is therefore not originally philosophical in nature, and therefore not what we can call an “identity problem”. This is not about a philosophical questioning of a particular phenomenon framed by the concept of identity. It is about the need to solve a problem that is both theoretical and practical in nature.

And this is the question of legitimacy that runs like a red thread through the meeting of philosophy and ideological thought in the emergence of the modern Western era. Specifically, it is the question of how the understanding of identity, or what it entails, can be reconciled with the advocacy of universal doctrines that in one way or another call into question, if not the concept of identity itself, then its application in the situation of a new order of social and political reality.

The political revolution is most visible in what we know as a revolutionary event or revolutionary process.

However, the revolution takes place at all levels and in all areas of human understanding of the world and man. Nevertheless, it is easiest to speak of a political transformation not only of practice, but also of theory and even of the understanding of identity. “Precisely because the essence of the political community is expressed in its universal form, it can be elevated to the level of a content-neutral entity” (Divjak, 2006). As if the “universal form” were not already present in the form of the political thinking of many communities, which are called upon to reflect precisely their community as one of the forms of the universal form of community. Or does the statement imply that there is a universal form of the universal form of political community that transcends or negates any particularity of the universal form. And this is precisely the idea of ideology, which forms totalitarian forms of thought and frameworks for the realization of the imagined from universal values.

In contrast to this is the fact that the political identity of the community does not exhaust its universal form, because the concept of identity is at least ontologically layered and carries within it the idea of a “formed people” in certain forms of community, but which in the last or first instance gives each individual the opportunity to see this form as a window to the human world. Thus, the overall form of human identity as a particular category is figuratively explained as a world within the world or, analogous to ancient imagery, as a microcosm within the (macro)cosmos. Transferred to the level that is also covered by the holistic understanding of identity, namely its individual level of reflection, the individual person is seen as a microcosm that participates and acts in the shaping and re-shaping of the totality of identity as a profoundly human phenomenon.

To understand the political essence of the identity approach, however, we must not forget that it is the articulation of political justifications for revolution. And revolution is the negation of tradition as something that is the source of identity. Therefore, the abolition of tradition is directly related to the function of justifying the abstract beginning of the establishment of social relations with the political order, which invokes abstract universal human rights of an individual isolated (abstracted) from cultural, ethnic and even economic status.

The “ancien régime”, considered monarchical in Western Europe, was supposedly devoid of attributes of both the political and the community in general. Therefore, people did not form a political community, but possibly a community of subjects of political power.

From the perspective of justification, i.e. the legitimization of the revolutionary order, participation in political power is assumed as belonging and affiliation to cultural or ethnic characteristics. This refers to so-called

origin, which then privileges participation in political life, which can only be compensated for by the material or economic wealth one possesses.

The institutionalization of the revolution required the institutionalization of political will, and this in turn relied on theories and doctrines of legitimacy. As well as on what has already been said, the invocation of abstract human rights and the functionalization of the idea of man as an individual into the abstract citizen of the new society. The abstract citizen refers to the aforementioned concept of man as a construct that characterizes the simultaneous generality of the concept and a kind of personification of the generality. It is what is known as the concept of the concrete general, i.e. the idea of a construct that exists.

Man as a concrete general — an individual — thus testifies to the meaning of this construct, and that is that the English word precisely indicates the property of the construct function. It is the beginning and the end of the construction. Individuo is something indivisible, something fundamental and basic and in this sense analogous to the ancient Greek term atom as the fundamental and final element of the material world or the future substance of all reality. The institutionalization of the new order on the basis of such constructions of legitimacy establishes the primacy of so-called individual rights, so that the supposed political community is built on this basis. The whole perspective of values, morality and the codification of law shifts so that what we call a political community is in fact a political society that serves the individual as an individual and not, as before, the individual in the service of the political society (the order). For this reason, cultural justification must be withdrawn from the sphere of political justification and the advocacy of values that are oriented towards well-being as a fundamental value, i.e. everything that belongs to the primacy of the cultural, national and traditional must be withdrawn from political significance (disempowered in the appropriate image) and relegated to the sphere of the private, as happens with those who lose political power.

On the “critique of ideology”

Similar to the previously explained status of constructivism as a framework for the construction of the subject of the critique of any construction in the form of deconstruction as a quasi-philosophical approach, ideology, i.e. the ideologization of reality, also becomes the object of the “critique” of ideology. This is the merit of Marx, and this is how Marxism is then recognized. Recognition is also not difficult in the context of security studies.

So what is the critique of ideology?

Since every cultural (intellectual) level is nothing other than the superstructure of the only real, material basis of social relations and material production, every cultural product (including philosophy) is a derived “world view” from the “distorted relations of the material basis, i.e. from the established relations of exploiters and exploited, which are also distorted. Ideology is any form of such distorted consciousness. Social constructivism converges with materialism on all levels, but starting from the sign and symbol to the materialism of discourse in general (“the text is everything — there is nothing outside the text”) or to phonomaterialism (Derrida).

All this without committing to the class theory of society, as if it were a question of the relationship of the post-structuralists to a structuralist theory of society. However, materialism has thus become more social than Marxist because, on the one hand, it has freed itself from the ballast of a social theory and, on the other, it has pointed out that all theories are in fact (already) social, so that every (fundamental) social theory is a form of ideology that is criticized.

However, since ideology is totalized, the critique of ideology is ideological. But in the name of what I will comprehensively call social materialism, it becomes a weapon of revolution and the reversal of relations in real—material relations, from which, it is assumed, a new reality is expected, similar to contemporary astrophysics and the “Big Bang”.

In other words: enlightened ideology versus ideological reality. The consequence of the Marxist understanding of ideology is its strong extension to all forms of interpretation of human reality, and secondly, it becomes a legitimate direction of change of everything, but above all of the discourse about it and thus of discourse in general. It is an action that initiates or mobilizes actions in accordance with the desired rationality that emerges from the program of the realization of ideology. Reality is produced in the “head” of the individual according to the mechanisms of guided thinking, which is supported by the social standardization that establishes the world view.

Ideology as the construction of new (revolutionary) identities

In contrast to the above quasi-philosophical, it is necessary to explain the philosophical relationship to ideology.

I believe that the soundest understanding of ideology is in terms of direct (hard) or indirect (soft) influence on thought or thought formation.

On this basis, it is philosophically justified to consider ideology as such thought formation that distorts consciousness through a passive relation to various ideas and their combinations. the “distortion” is a consequence (not an intention) because it does not follow the flow of consciousness, but submits to prefabricated forms of conscious (mental) forms and content. The same applies to the evaluation and formation of judgments about “objective reality” This is at the same time a “softer” understanding of ideology or one outside its framework. This is one of the characteristics of the philosophical critique of ideology alongside what can be criticized as “hard” ideology.

A harder or direct understanding of ideology is associated with the operationalization of ideology in a way of thought that involves the conscious implementation of forms and content of thought, usually in doctrinal models, but also mechanisms for shaping the consciousness of individuals to the whole of society. This application involves the intention to distort consciousness, which is interpreted as a “correction” of consciousness which is already ideological in other ways according to the ideological approach. This opens the door to the discourse of indoctrination, propaganda and targeted hate speech.

From the juxtaposition of the ideological (quasi-philosophical) and the philosophical understanding of ideology, it thus becomes clear that the critique of ideology in social constructivism is based on social materialism and is itself ideological in character, as is an echo of (neo)Marxism on both levels (materialism and ideology). Seen in this light, the quasi-philosophical character of security studies based on social constructivism is confirmed.

On the revolutionary turn — from hatred of the “Other” to hatred of oneself

Such a form of thinking generates hatred structurally, in contrast to the externalizing forms mentioned above, in which the Other is a potential target of hatred. The “structural other” is manifested through hatred because the one who does not correspond to the ideological program in its function is marked in advance (a priori) as an enemy. One of the most famous examples is the National Socialist ideology of the “Final Solution”, i.e. the extermination (annihilation) of the Jews, which has become part of the international culture of remembrance of the terrible crime of genocide through the term Holocaust (best translated as “extermination”).

Something similar did not happen with the hatred that Nazi ideology directed at other “inferior ethnicities”, especially the Slavic peoples, who

were the most terrible and numerous victims of this criminal ideology. I cite National Socialism as an example of the internalization of hatred because it revolutionized not only German society, but also the German understanding of its own national being. Within this ideology, however, hatred is still present in its usual place — on the outside. Thus, under the pretext of fighting communism, the Nazis carried out a genocidal plan against the Slavs on the territory of the Soviet Union.

The structural character of hatred results from the revolutionary character of the ideology in general, which fulfills the above-mentioned meaning, and these are the basic Western ideologies of liberalism, communism, National Socialism and their offshoots. It is about the onto-theological reversal of the understanding of reality, which is understood as an open structure in which the new is the condition of reality because it is processual. It is produced as a “new reality” or a new normality.

This “new” must be able to encompass all aspects of reality, and therefore the revolution has a total (complete) claim and not a particular one, as corresponds to the universalism of the guiding ideas of the revolution. Totalitarianism as a concept with political content is based on totalitarianism (totalism-universalism) on the onto-theological level.

And while the millions of victims of the liberalist revolution of 1789 were the ideological consequence of the use of hate speech, which returned to the discourse of stabilizing the revolution on the social and economic level and not only on the political level. This structuring of the new reality succeeded to a considerable extent through expansion (colonialism) in making hate speech a standardized exterior again, making it fall into oblivion and legitimizing it in cold blood through civilizational progress.

Marxist inauguration of hate speech and communist (self-)destruction of the host

Hate speech and the act of hate were directed against all obstacles determined by the ideological view of reality. In the case of Marxism—communism, ideology is in turn predetermined as aggressive because the view of the entire previous reality of human existence is ideological.

According to them, everything that precedes (or possibly coexists with) the communist ideology belongs to other (in one way or another hostile) ideologies. For this reason, the degree of hatred and the intensity of the corresponding discourse are most militantly directed at immediate enemies — obstacles to the victory of communist ideology.

The internal enemy is structured according to the class theory of society and is recognized in the general tradition. The use of the term “people” is abstract, but definitely directed towards the destruction of the national structure or the social elite, which also originates from this people. The national being emerges from this process (birth) and becomes an institutional aid to the people as a society of different individuals and groups in the understanding of values and life processes. The methodology of internal criticism (“self-criticism”), which the communists developed in order to bring self-knowledge of “internal conditions” to the rank of a historical reckoning with the tradition of society, created the conditions for the revolution with the slogan the worse (for the host) — the better (for the virus of communism).

Thus, typical of the need for identification (and thus support for one’s own condition) of deeply disturbed personalities (sociopaths), the pathological nature of one’s own consciousness is attributed to others, thus covering up one’s own deformity with a false image. This is a further distortion of hatred and language that leads to the justification of mass crimes.

It is obvious that communism, like the other two great ideologies, sees nationalism as the main enemy of the victory of ideology. Therefore, it must be destroyed (destructured, deconstructed, etc.) as a vertical and horizontal link of social relations in the growth of the people into a nation through the dissemination of the foundations for elites (leadership by example) or exemplary values that circulate and have a reflective relationship in consciousness and a so-called feedback relationship or relationship of feedback in social life. In this sense, nationalism is the self-awareness of the life character of one’s own (and other) peoples, which develops in analogy to a living being (organism) in the form of a human being. The nation thus becomes a meaningful whole in the awareness of itself, its rights and duties, which makes it personal both at the level of the individual and (more broadly) at the level of the community.

Ontological-theological connection between politics and identity

With regard to the question of the nature of the question of identity in general in the context of the modern concept of constructivism, we have determined the origin and perspective of this question in the previous part. This has made it a problem area that combines cultural, ethnic, political, but also religious and ideological questions.

All the elements listed, as well as those not listed, have formed and continue to form a complex structure that is largely captured by the con-

cept of the onto-theological basis of politics. In short, this means that there is no politics as public action by people in a community that does not have a decisive point of reference in the aforementioned structure.

What we have seen in the previous part, however, obviously breaks this connection and quite openly and transparently offers revolution as a substitute for the said structure. Recently, in the order that inherits the achievements of the revolution, there has been talk of the so-called depoliticization of the culture of the ethnic milieu and even of religion. The intention is to renew the history of the political and exclusively political legitimization of freedom, to change reality according to the will of the people. To do this, today as then, the connections in the aforementioned structure, which are expressed at all levels of human life, i.e. the recognition of man in the world in general, must be destroyed. There is a word for this recognition, which takes place in both the vertical and horizontal spheres of life, and that is identity.

On the phenomenon of patriotic identity

In order to arrive at a justification of political legitimacy of a revolutionary nature, identity in the human community must be neutralized. It is therefore assumed that every identity is in fact a product of certain interests that have generated it and that structure social and every form of human life. Thus, it is legitimate to advocate the representation of such interests that question or completely neutralize the previous understanding of identity. The extent of the problem can also be seen in the question of so-called patriotism. Patriotism is a form that is ascribed to the relationship of an individual or an entire community to the state in which they live. It is then elevated to a high-ranking social value.

Patriotism contains the idea of the continuity of life, i.e. the idea of man. As the great English thinker Edmund Burke said when he explained what tradition is and from which patriotism arises as the highest value, "it is about the communion of our ancestors, with us who live now, and with the descendants who will live after us" (Burke, 2001). The revolution and all the theories that emerge from it cannot therefore follow the original idea of patriotism, for the simple reason that they represent the idea of discontinuity. However, this example shows the constructivist meaning of any ideology, but also the flip side and ideological sense of the advocacy of constructivism in the social sciences and in political action. The neutralization of identity proclaims discontinuity with the assumptions of identity.

In the same or similar way, patriotism is stripped of its assumptions in the construction of revolutionary thought and becomes a shell filled

with ideological content. This gives rise to so-called revolutionary patriotism, the description of which expresses identification with the new revolutionary order and the state as a republic (following the paradigmatic example of France).

In a more radical form of leftist action on the world-historical stage, within communist-socialist forms, “socialist patriotism” establishes itself as identification with a progressive socio-political system based on Marxist ideology. More recently, in the period of the “triumph of liberal democracy”, as Francis Fukuyama called it, or the stabilization of the ideology of liberalism as a world system, a form of constitutional patriotism appears. In other words, the attempt to develop an identification with the formal structure of state and society.

All these enumerated forms of the concept of patriotism derived from ideological foundations have a so-called artificial structure, which supposedly neutralizes the onto-theological “pre-identity” of political identity, but in reality only brings the same structure to the level of so-called negative freedom, political voluntarism and ultimately naked constructivism.

Traditional (non-revolutionary) definition of the nation (the Serbian case)

In addition to the standard elements of a national identity such as kinship (blood) ties, a common language, customs and beliefs prior to the adoption of the Christian faith, the decisive transcendental characteristics of the newly adopted religion were crucial for the formation of Serbian national consciousness. The transcendence or overcoming of all forms of previous life in the community consisted in the constitution of a new covenant community with God, which brought about a new understanding of the life of the people.

State efforts and political events were oriented towards “higher” goals and values that directed life towards the sacralization of shared experience. This became the criterion for evaluating actions and events in the coming history (written history and oral tradition). The people as an ethnic community recognized themselves in the new identity in faith, in history and generally in spirit.

The decisive moment for the emergence of the Serbian nation was the creation of an autocephalous (self-governing, sovereign) Serbian Orthodox Church. This phenomenon is not recognized in the history of the Western Church, as it is based on universalist claims and the centralized organization of Roman Catholicism. The state formation of the Serbian people had no such significance, as the Serbs lived in several states and were rarely

under one state umbrella. Thus, the Serbian experience of nationhood is inextricably linked (mediated) with the Christian-European preconditions for the articulation and shaping of this experience. In addition to the general context of the Eastern European, i.e. Orthodox, formation of national identity, the work of St. Sava, which sealed the future construction of the Serbian nation, is of crucial importance for the Serbian experience.

The state authority dealt with secular matters, both internal and external, but was based on Christian values, i.e. their interpretation and transmission. It should therefore work towards the survival, stability and progress of the people on the basis of the Christian faith in the various forms of social life. The ruler himself was not only a Christian, but also a protector and defender of the faith. As such, he was crowned by the head of the Church. Incidentally, the church is defined as the community of the Holy Spirit, i.e. as a visible spiritual building (institution) on earth.

The spiritual care of the people meant Christian enlightenment, the integration of Christian values into the life of a particular ethnic community. Participation and belonging to the spiritual community enabled the formation of a different identity that transcended both ethnic and political (secular) identity.

The model of humanist exploration of the nation and its identity in this context should include the human sense of belonging. Belonging that has the dynamic of transfer into a being that has the characteristics of an extended personality, similar to Hobbes' Leviathan in the context of the justification of the political order that emerges from the overcoming of the natural (chaotic) state. In addition to legitimization, what is at stake here, as we have already seen, is the establishment of a new form of identity that transcends ethnicity and moves from the existential to the level of the state as a whole.

Therefore, in the case of Serbia, national security must take into account the collapse of identity, which has proven to be the greatest threat to Serbian security in the past.²

The problem of national identity

What applies to the issue of patriotism comes to full meaning in the issue of nationalism, i.e. the active establishment of national identity in the public life of the people.

By destroying social tradition (including land), a truly revolutionary model of the nation is created, promoting an identity that is in harmony

2 The greatest challenges to the security and even the survival of the Serbian people were the Islamization and Catholicization of significant parts of the Serbian population and the resulting policy of ethnocide and even genocide (author's note).

with the new social and political order. Every citizen of the French Republic is French. This means that every person who accepts the values of the Revolution and the Constitution of the French Republic and lives on its territory becomes a member of the French nation and has the national identity of a Frenchman.

This is where the problem of commitment and freedom in the “political model” of the nation, as some still call it, becomes apparent. Everyone is obliged to accept the values of the Revolution, i.e. the Republic, to be identified as French, i.e. not to be (ethnically?) destroyed as an anti-revolutionary Frenchman or, in modern times, to be declared a foreigner with limited rights. Freedom understood in this way is linked to the deviation from the “old” identity (the identity derived from the old regime), i.e. to the revolutionary zero identity, which is based exclusively on the future in human identity. Freedom understood in this way is also a priori, because it precedes any “choice” of a new identity. Hence the formula of the “declaration of (national) identity” The freedom of choice is actually negative, not positive. Identity is not based on freedom of choice, but on the freedom not to be in a particular identity.

This negativity further means that there are forms of commitment that imply a particular identity that is actually denied. It is tacitly assumed that one could think and speak about identity if there were other forms of commitment or none at all, i.e. if one were supposedly free. This is the way of mixing with other forms of life identity. “I identify (belong) to those who offer me the best living conditions” is one of the well-known phrases of such an attitude.

Civic identity is not identified with the state, but with various identities from social and institutional life that are made possible by the rules (law and constitution) of a particular country. “Constitutional patriotism” is therefore primarily an identification with social identity and only secondarily with the state.

Based on the interest in analyzing the status of identity in security studies, we can distinguish two levels of relativization of national identity. These are state-centered and society-centered. Globalism and multiculturalism contribute to the so-called supra-state and can be labeled as supra-societal identity if we further understand the latter as civil society with a certain dominant cultural matrix. The popular version of this is already known under the term “cosmopolitanism” From the perspective of such views, national identity, represented from the point of view of the tradition of the people, i.e. historical continuity and cultural framework of recognition, is interpreted as ethnic rather than national identity. Due to the predominant Anglo-Saxon (liberalist) character of philosophical concepts and conceptual apparatus, as well as legal and political discourse, there is a codification of inappropriate conceptual relations in everyday language,

not only in academic language. We have seen that the distinctions and forms of articulation of national identity are themselves historically conditioned. And by the politics of self-determination or self-recognition.³

Let us return to today's perception from the beginning. The reasons for the exclusively negative labeling of nationalism lie in the predominance of the (neo)liberal matrix of thought, which equates nationalism with so-called ethnic nationalism or with particularism in the face of the universalist values of liberalist ideology, which is followed by quite modern so-called hybrid ideological forms that support globalization processes. National identity, i.e. nationalism as an affirmative drive of national self-awareness, is the greatest obstacle to any "supra" or "anational" form of political organization. Moreover, national identity is at the center of security concern because it contributes most to defining the security unit.

This, in turn, has a similar bearing on the fact that the determination of security in any social context (even without considering the international context) cannot be articulated without national security.

Nation and ethnos

Within the discourse of liberalism (of which realism is a part), the nation is exclusively a political category. Therefore, the term "political nation" is superfluous. As a result, it is part of the creation of "new realities" on the geopolitical map of the world. The primordial principle of the new realities is the principle of justifying the revolution and the "creation" of all new nations at a lower level of generality, which is also necessary due to the radical change of the "old regimes" or geopolitical interests. This is the reason why liberalism periodically "marched" together with nationalism.

This is also the reason for the politicization of the understanding of national identity as well as for the extrapolation of one's own (liberalist) ideological imprint on the meaning of the phenomenon of the nation and nationalism. Due to the key role of the legitimation mechanism in liberalism, the nation and nationalism are functionalized for the needs of liberalist ideology and then "discarded" as antipodes of the universal and emancipatory capacities of liberalism.

For this reason, liberalism collides latently or actually with the principle of the particularity of national being, which it regards as particular and an obstacle to progress. What is meant by this? Liberalism is primarily based on the negative meaning of freedom, on freedom as liberation. It justifies itself primarily through itself as a formal (a priori) condition (autonomy of the will) for any universal value that can arise from liberation. Accordingly, it fundamentally clashes with any "reality" based on a non-formal, (heteron-

3 See more in (Smith, 1998).

omous) particular manner. The order of liberalism arises, on the one hand, from the negation of what was (particular) and, on the other, from what emerges as reality from a (formal) procedure that reflects generality (pure reason) and not particularity (reason infected with empirical content).

The freedom of declaration, i.e. the choice of national identity, is actually the possibility of leaving one's own, supposedly constructed and imposed identity. With the choice of the "other", however, other obligations are also assumed, which relate, among other things, to the original identity as its (tacit) negation. The discourse on the "declaration of national identity" is interpreted through the prism of freedom of choice, but it (the choice) is not authentically linked to a motif of national identity, but on the contrary is in contradiction to any national identity. And this is a feature of the prevailing (neo)liberal paradigm of philosophical, political and public discourse in general.

The Identity of Discourse as a question of National Security – safety of conceptualization and justification of the propositional thinking

Beyond the classical forms of linking language and the phenomenon of identity, it is often overlooked that the emphasis is not only on the first side of this relationship, but also on the other. I am referring to the fact that it is not just general identity that is least at play here, but rather personal, group and national identity.

I have emphasized this because of the complexity of what I want to focus on.

Besides the importance of preserving what we not coincidentally call mother tongue — a language that even in times of oblivion testifies to the importance of the source of identity through language — this identity in this image and word is tied to the native individual, even more so when the mother tongue is understood in the imagined form of a maternal relationship to the entire nation embodied in a single word — a phenomenon known in the Serbian language as motherland (homeland). Motherland, as we hear, is grammatically feminine, maternal, but in its essence and meaning it is masculine and paternal. This linguistically illustrates the deep connection between personal, group and national identity with the Orthodox Christian faith. It is the idea that a new being is born in the father through the mediation of the mother.

This alone makes it clear that grammar is not enough to understand linguistic forms, but that we need to understand what is known in phi-

losophy as linguistic pragmatics — the use of whole sentences and their structures. So let us go straight to the philosophical level that corresponds to the requirements of language pragmatics as a context of meaning, and that is the concept of discourse.

Without getting too lost in translations, discourse represents a way of speaking that presupposes conversation as a context of meaning. Discourse as such includes in its interpretation not only the syntactic or semantic dimension of a sentence, but also the pragmatic dimension, which is based on the philosophical concept of intentionality. This means that the pragmatic level of expression requires an intentional level of sentence formation — it requires the context of what we want to achieve through the expression. This has been analyzed in philosophy dealing with language as a form of intention, the result of which is the so-called performative act. The connection between intentionality and linguistic form is traced in philosophical reflection on the connection and distinction between thought and language. They cannot be separated, but neither can they be equated (thanks to philosophy and only thanks to philosophy).

Discourse, or conversation, is an additional linguistic-spiritual dynamic, because in conversation not only the use of language but also the way of thinking becomes visible. When discourse is layered, it has long-term effects on the shaping of the so-called broader consciousness of those involved in the conversation and ultimately on the level of public consciousness through public opinion.

Analogous to the well-known issues of influencing the subconscious of an individual or even a group of people, or ideological shaping of consciousness, and even thinking of the crudest forms such as so-called “brainwashing”, the influence on discourse can be multifaceted and operate on multiple levels. By discourse, of course, I mean that which emanates from the mother discourse that we discussed at the beginning.

- A) One of these levels is what I call the theoretical-conceptual network, which is most often recognizable in the structuring of the general discourse, but also through the academic or scientific sub-discourse.
- B) Another well-known level is also linked to the structuring of discourse, but through the processing of particularly interesting aspects of the discourse for the purpose of changing the participants’ identification. These are the so-called narratives, i.e. no longer just the mode of speech or conversation, but the mode of storytelling. For example, the way in which the battle in Kosovo is told — whether it is an invented story or one that has emerged from the oral tradition of the Serbian people that has been passed down through generations.

In the first case, we are dealing with a phenomenon that I call theoretical engagement, with a less visible connection to any ideology. It is a phenomenon that can also be linked to an interest in engaging in a particular geopolitical space.

In any case, it is an attempt to replace a complex conceptual-linguistic structure with one that better corresponds to the understanding of reality of the person involved. One example I would like to cite here is the relationship of understanding or self-understanding through the replacement of the word “nation” with the word “ethnos” In Serbia, this is visible as a process of replacement, especially in the last 20 years. This affects a different understanding of identity, especially when national identity is replaced by ethnic identity.

The second aspect of the phenomenon is the reformatting of existing forms of oral tradition into a new form. It is therefore a subversion of tradition in the truest sense of the word, especially when it comes to identity of historical duration. The aforementioned Battle of Kosovo, for example, would then no longer have a complex but obvious connection to the Kosovo Pact. The insistence on the Kosovo myth as an exclusive narrative implies the interference of untruth and the constant possibility of reinterpretation. This calls into question the ethics of the Vidovdan.⁴ The ethics of Vidovdan, like any ethics, obliges us to adhere to the highest standards. But it is also a constant proactive renewer of national identity. Questioning such a driving force is therefore at the same time a mechanism that undermines confidence in a common identity and consequently calls both personal and national identity into question.

Ultimately, it is about a self-destruction that goes hand in hand with the loss of meaning and self-confidence, and the search for a way out in the foreign or artificial to compensate.⁵

The Entological Theory of (Human) Safety as a Defense Against Destruction - The Concept of Strategy and Security Culture

Strategic rationality of discourse implies that, in addition to the general features of calculability or computability ascribed to the concept of rationality, an awareness of such features of rationality is calculated here. In other words, the strategic rationality of discourse takes into account the difference between what is said and what is intended. This is multiplied in the dynam-

4 Vidovdan is a national day of Serbian Orthodox martyrs who have fallen in the Kosovo battle.

5 See more in (Vuković, 2018).

ics of the relationship to reality. At the same time, reality is accepted, but also appropriated, which opens up the possibility of creating a new understanding of reality and, on this basis, of creating a new reality in place of the previous one, which is usually interpreted as insufficiently rational.

Strategic rationality enables the application of quasi-philosophical or crypto-ideological theories in political and security practice. How is this possible? We will describe the transfer of the conceptual foundations of ideology to the level of tradition, which is universalized as revolutionary and worldwide.

Strategic culture is the basis of strategic engagement and the basis of the so-called soft power of ideological and totalitarian models (discursive matrices), which is expressed in political and (hard) military power, such as NATO or another pact. The idea of strategic rationality, operationalized in strategic culture, is primarily about changing the perception of reality and the status of its segments and elements, especially in the social, political and value-ethical spheres. The ultimate goal of the “soft power” strategy is to achieve the desired orientation in the complex reality and to justify the expansion of “hard power”. It is in the context of the balance between soft power and hard power, in the context of international relations and in particular the relations of the so-called superpowers, that the concept of strategic culture begins to take shape.

This new concept recognizes the possibility of a discrepancy between the strategic-cultural discourse and operational doctrines, as the discourse is often misused by the elites to reinforce their hegemony and authority in defining operational doctrines. Several authors, such as Colin S. Gray and Alastair Johnston, speak of a methodological approach to the concept of strategic culture. Gray (1999) tends to emphasize the cultural context of behavior, while Johnston (1995) takes a positivist approach to the concept and attempts to establish a clear cause-effect relationship between cultural assumptions and behavior. Along these methodological debates, a critical discussion has developed on the content and scope of strategic culture.

On this basis, authors in the field of international relations have assumed that the particularities of national culture form a unique strategic culture as a vision and practice of foreign policy. Thus, national culture forms a “lens of perception” through which the essence of international relations is perceived. National culture is not only the basis of security culture, but also of the culture that responds to the challenges of the strategic culture of other countries — in the form of security culture.

Reflection on the philosophy of security is retained in the scientific application of national security. As a scientific concept, national security examines phenomena that help to create state of entity that we can recognize as a state of national security. It also seeks to find ways to secure, con-

solidate and stabilize this state and human position. Therefore, it identifies current and potential factors that threaten the state of national security. The application of this scientific interest should lead to an operationalization of security culture research.

We have already pointed out that the ideological nature of consciousness-raising, especially that hybridized in the discourse of strategic culture, can pose a threat to the sphere of security culture in terms of identity as a fundamental ontological criterion of security.

Therefore, the institutionalization of national identity values must be defended through institutionalized measures. The strategic culture of the Serbian state must be built both internally and externally.

“Internally”, it is necessary to build an educational system. The emphasis here is on building the content of the so-called national (or identity-related) school subjects, which form the basis for the study of the relationship to one’s own nation and state and do not negate it.

“Externally”, the strategic culture should respond both preventively and in a timely manner to the exploitation of negative stereotypes about the Serbian nation and the Serbian state.

The culture of security itself must be part of the educational system, as well as an institutionalized part of social and cultural institutions that influence the integrity and sovereignty of the Serbian nation and state. In this area, people should be trained to recognize threats to national identity at the discursive, narrative or subversive level, because national identity is the most important measure of the state of national security.

Literature

- Bodin M., *Philosophy of Human Safety and Security vs. Ontological Constructivism*, Albatros Plus, Belgrade, 2024.
- Divjak S., *The Problem of Identity*, Official Gazette, Belgrade, 2006.
- Fukuyama F., *The End of History and the Last Man*, Free Press, New York, 1992.
- Burke E., *Reflections on the French Revolution*, CID, Podgorica, 2001.
- Vuković S., *Serbs in the Western Narrative*, Zoran Stojanović Publishing House, Novi Sad, 2018.
- Smith A., *National Identity*, Library of the 20th Century, Belgrade, 1998.
- Johnston A. I., „Thinking About Strategic Culture“, *International Security*, 19(4): 32-64, 1995.
- Gray C. S., „Strategic culture as context: the first generation of theory strikes back“, *Review of International Studies*, 25: 49-69, 1999.

Ivica R. Todorović¹

Institute of Ethnography SASA,
Belgrade (Serbia)

DECONSTRUCTION OF SERBIAN IDENTITY AND POSSIBILITIES OF DEFENSE (IN THE FIELD OF SPIRITUAL CULTURE)

On this occasion, first of all, in the form of a brief overview, attention is drawn to particularly illustrative ways/models and possibilities of defense (primarily in the field of spiritual culture) in relation to attempts to deconstruct Serbian identity. These attempts are directly related to the phenomenon of Anti-Serb sentiment and genocidal practices being applied against Serbs. From the foregoing, the primary starting points of our approach arise, as well as the corresponding conclusions related to (particularly important and fruitful, but largely neglected) opportunities and specific models of defense. The main intention is to briefly present some of the particularly instructive sub-thematic frameworks, i.e. highlighted aspects and examples related to the issues under consideration.

Keywords: Serbian identity, deconstruction, ways of defense, field of spiritual culture, anti-Serbism, the collective characteristics of Serbs

Serbian identity and attacks against it – elaboration of the introductory framework and basic approaches: Some of the main concepts and starting points. Introductory overview. This text² is a *general overview* and consists of reviews of some particularly revealing conclusions and results

1 scientific advisor, ivica.todorovic@ei.sanu.ac.rs

2 The text was created as part of the project # FSITC 1561 – “Formation of Serbian Identity and Theoretical Controversies Concerning Attempts of Its Deconstruction” within the “Identities” program of the Science Fund of the Republic of Serbia, as well as the work at the Institute of Ethnography SASA, financed by the Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development of the Republic of Serbia, on the basis of the Agreement on the Implementation and Financing of Scientific Research NIO

of the study of Serbian identity, as well as the attempts to deconstruct³ it and the possibilities of its defense, especially in the field of spiritual culture. (More extensive and detailed reflections and extensive literature can be found in the book that emerged from the work on the same project.⁴) From the point of view of our approach and the conclusions of the conducted studies, the main prerequisite for understanding the current situation of the Serbian ethnos is first and foremost a multi-layered understanding of the complex Serbian ethnic identity⁵ and the attempts to undermine it (with particular emphasis on models of anti-Serbism⁶ and genocide, i.e. various violent practices with genocidal undertones applied to Serbs).⁷ In this regard, we point out in a relatively brief form some dimensions of this topic that were of primary importance to us during the work on the relevant project,⁸ while a much more complete picture will be presented in the announced monograph.

The problem of anti-Serbism. The first of these dimensions concerns a problem that has been most evident both in the recent and more distant past and also at the time of writing. It has manifested itself again in recent times under the conditions of the ongoing genocide against the Serbs in the Kosovo and Metohija region and the “silent ethnic cleansing” in other areas, as well as under the conditions of continued cultural and hybrid warfare against the Serbian people, with various accompanying events and processes that are also based on the same principles. In other words, when we talk about multidisciplinary studies of the Serbian ethnos and its culture, one problem of paramount importance emerges above all – why is so little known about the cause and practice of the genocide against the Serbs,⁹ as well as about the circumstances of the deconstruction of Serbian

in 2024, no. 451-03-66/2024-03/200173, dated 05.02.2024. [orcid.org/0000-0002-1492-1607; Scientific Advisor; 1971]

- 3 On the construction and deconstruction of identity, see e.g. in: Despotović 2015, 123–134. See also the texts in the collections: Serbian Identity 2019 (Srpski identitet 2019); On the National Identity of Serbs 2020 (O nacionalnom identitetu Srba 2020).
- 4 The title of our book is “Identity Attacked and Possibilities of Defense”, and it is expected to be published around the same time as this text or shortly thereafter.
- 5 Milosavljević 2002, 22–48; see e.g. Bodrožić 2015; Ekmečić 2017.
- 6 See the study Todorović 2021.
- 7 Gaćinović 2017a; Gaćinović 2017b.
- 8 See the introductory (2) note.
- 9 See especially Antonić 2008. Among other things, anti-Serbism is also omnipresent at the level of the “creative elites” – especially at the levels of universities/faculties and the so-called “liberal media” – at the time of writing, with a particular focus on anti-family and anti-Christian actions. For example, “contemporary leftist views, feminism, the promotion of *queer* theory and similar anti-family tendencies dominate in social science faculties”, and “most social science institutes also assume similar posi-

identity (starting from multidimensional ethnic engineering),¹⁰ although *Anti-Serb sentiment*¹¹ is also widespread in the global sense and is a pervasive phenomenon and a problem of the first order? In terms of very concrete indicators, this phenomenon represents, for example, one of the main causes of the First World War as well as other warlike events that characterized the middle and end of the 20th century.

Identity, geopolitics and the phenomenon of Serbism. In connection with the above, the causes, dimensions and characteristics of the *phenomenon of anti-Serbism* can be understood – within the framework of the results and conclusions of the relevant structural-semantic analysis¹² – primarily when the ideological foundations of Serbian *ethnic, civilizational* and *religious identity* are grasped. In this context, it is important to note that these foundations position the Serbian ethnos *geopolitically* and give it unique characteristics based on the specifics of Serbian origin and history, in accordance with the formation of the corresponding ethnocultural pattern. This also results in the accompanying geopolitically motivated hostilities (in relation to the Serbian ethnos),¹³ both in specific and general dimensions.

In direct connection with the foregoing, therefore, it is precisely the recognition of key facts and content related to the shaping of the *phenomenon of Serbdom* that is of utmost importance (i.e. the Serbian idea and

tions, as these are very popular topics among foreign donors (from foundations to the European Union Delegation to Serbia, USAID or various funds with an explicitly anti-family agenda under the auspices of the UN or UNICEF), so that “a number of academics not only promote this ideology, but some of them also act in public as a kind of moral police, pouncing on any attempt by a serious actor in Serbia to point out problems and open ways to solve them” (Đurković 2019, 39). See also Antonić 2019, 55, 61.

- 10 See the collection *Construction of Synthetic Nations 2024* (Konstruisanje sintetičkih nacija 2024). In any case, “the creation of *synthetic nations*, due to its great historical delay, has created an insatiable need among the promoters of these processes to deconstruct or rather destroy other national identities in order to create the necessary historical, linguistic, cultural, religious, and symbolic content for the new synthetic identity in the phase of its accelerated construction and consolidation” and “the majority of new synthetic identities emerged in the process of destruction and mutilation of the Serbian national identity on the entire territory of the former SFRY” (Despotović 2017, 117). In other words, “the main content of the identity formation of synthetic nations in our region is connected with the processes of deconstruction of the identity of the Serbian nation” (Despotović 2017, 118).
- 11 See Piper 2004, 57–59, 41–42; Ekmečić 2002, 343–365; Mitrović 1991.
- 12 Cf. Todorović 2009, 29; Todorović 2005b, 23–28.
- 13 It is clear, among other things, that synthetic nations that emerge from the deconstruction of the Serbian ethnos and its identity are a *geopolitical product* (see Despotović 2017, 128–129, 118–119). See also Todorović 2008.

the main elements of the basic Serbian ideological systems, as well as tradition and lore in the broadest sense, with special emphasis on concepts stemming from Serbian ethnogenesis and the phenomenology of a very peculiar and ancient ethnonym).¹⁴ The same applies – in connection with the unique and clearly recognizable phenomenon of Serbdom – to the most influential and archetypal *representations of Serbian history* (all referring to the deepest origins) and *projections of the Serbian future* (starting from ideas about the historical mission of Serbia aimed at the “end times”). In this way, *Serbian time and space* are understood as indicators of a unique cultural-civilizational pattern and model of thought and action that emerged within the framework of Orthodox-Slavic civilization.

Models and methods of defense. *The most important rituals and mythical patterns. Serbian rituals and patterns with mythical prefixes*¹⁵ (among which *vows* are particularly emphasized) are also at the center of the aforementioned conceptual system, which essentially determines the Serbian ethnos. They are directly supported by the system of folk customs and symbols, as well as by the particularly impressive Serbian vow system, which is accompanied by other primary Serbian ideological systems. Thus, we are talking here about structures in the field of spiritual culture that connect the most important (Serbian) ideological matrices, so that they can also be considered as a unified whole. All this is also of great importance because it is precisely in the most impressive Serbian rituals and mythical patterns that we clearly recognize the *basic methods of defense in the field of spiritual culture*.

Awareness (of ideological foundations and their negations) and the revival of positive values as key prerequisites for defense. In connection with the above, it is first and foremost necessary to further reflect on some particularly significant foundations of Serbian identity so that we can recognize and most effectively understand the ways of its defense. More precisely, in accordance with this approach – which is also intended in the direction of applied science – it was necessary to draw attention to the most striking problems and possibilities of their solution (within the framework of “response” to attempts at deconstruction) through already existing content, in the sense of raising *awareness* and *revitalizing* the core of Serbian collective consciousness¹⁶ and deeply rooted Serbian value patterns.

14 Cf. e.g. Kobychew 1973, 25–26; Kostić 2000.

15 Cf. Todorović 2019, 95–100.

16 Indeed, “national identity is in fact a daily referendum, a daily confirmation and affirmation of a system of narratives in relation to all others” (Vladušić 2019, 144).

This refers primarily to the most important ideological systems that operate within the aforementioned affirmative phenomenon of *Serbdom*. It is thus about the realm of the *Serbian idea*,¹⁷ i.e. the essence of Serbian ethnocultural expression (which is particularly expressed in the representation of Serbs as the New Israel and God's people and the patterns associated with it).¹⁸

On the other hand, as already indicated, it is necessary to fully perceive and understand the dimensions and characteristics of *de-Serbization* as a phenomenon based on the negation of Serbdom through various features and a unique occurrence in global dimensions¹⁹ in order to unravel the processes and intentions of identity deconstruction. Moreover, in this context, it is important to emphasize the importance of the renewal of *Serbian values*, as well as the *Serbian right to defense*, because even the awareness of this is suppressed in the public due to the constant pressure and omnipresence of Anti-Serb sentiment, genocidal practices and various forms of persistent pressure, i.e. applied cultural, hybrid and network wars.²⁰

Clearly recognizing and naming one's own ethnic, civilizational and religious identity. What else is central to the defense of identity? First and foremost, apart from the examples already mentioned, it is necessary to understand the foundations and bases of *Serbian ethnic identity* and the corresponding, related, deliberately "obscured" ethno-ethnic-genetic space,²¹ which is under attack from various sides, not only materially but also in terms of identity, in order to reinterpret numerous notorious facts that prove the Serbian primordial presence in the corresponding (large) territory in the near and distant past. All this is primarily directly related to the associated (Orthodox-Slavic and Euro-Asian) *civilizational identity* and the understanding of one's own civilizational space.²²

Furthermore, from the point of view of an identitarian approach, it is essential to understand and clearly identify the Serbian *religious identity*,

17 See Todorović 2015a, 194–199, 274–276.

18 See Blagojević 1994; Domentijan 2001, especially on pp. 375–393.

19 Todorović 2021, 145–146.

20 Moreover, hybrid warfare "primarily aims to change the consciousness of the enemy's population and decision-makers in order to destroy the will to fight" (Vladušić 2019, 143).

21 Cf. e.g. Stepić 2001, 247–266; Terzić 2012.

22 When it comes to the *model of a torn country* in modern times, it is precisely the Orthodox countries, or the countries that should belong to the Orthodox civilization, that exhibit corresponding characteristics related to a constant identity crisis, together with a persistent spiritual and social disorder (Despotović 2019, 420–421; Stepić 2016, 430). In any case, one of the reasons for this state is also the lack of a *clear* and *applied* (in everyday life) awareness of one's own civilizational affiliation and cultural order based on appropriate ideological and civilizational principles.

i.e. the religious aspects that are of utmost importance for the existence of the Serbian ethnos. They (the realm of *faith*) primarily shape the corresponding experience of the world and true reality and represent a powerful shield against attempts to destroy identity.²³ Thus, *ethnos*, *civilization* and *faith* appear as key concepts in the development of identity defense strategies.

Ethno-genetic identity and the meaning of the Serbian ethnonym. The entire preceding semantic framework is directly related to the Serbian *ethno-genetic identity*, which is linked to the understanding of the depth of the Serbian past as well as the correct understanding of – the aforementioned real dimensions of the Serbian ethnic,²⁴ ethno-genetic and proto-ethno-genetic space – regardless of the geopolitically predetermined constructivist practices of change. At the same time, the age and distribution of the Serbian ethnic name (along with representations and data that suggest it) continuously constitute some of the main targets of counter-identity attacks,²⁵ as the very facts that point to ethnic antiquity and greatness in the past, are one of the most important foundations of the affirmative Serbian self-image and the “Serbian superiority model”.²⁶

The mentioned attacks are accompanied by attempts to significantly reduce and dilute the original Serbian ethno-genetic (and identity) space for civilizational reasons, but also as a logical core of ethnocultural collection and connection (groupings with Serbian roots). By understanding the inner nature and dimensions as well as clearly naming the Serbian ethno-ethnic-genetic the creation of the Serbian territory and its permanent connection with the Serbian name and identity is one of the most important prerequisites for adequate identity protection.

Strategic long-term and immediate defense systems. Through the previously mentioned (defensive) elements and elementary relations – a systemic framework is created, which we can call the *strategic-long-term model of identity defense*. Moreover, it is directly related to the formation

23 On the destructive processes at this level, see e.g. Đuretić 2008.

24 Cf. the concept of *Natural Serbia*, presented in: Despotović 2019. In the context of this study, the term *Natural Serbia* was adopted by the philologist Petar Milosavljević, as it “proved to be more than appropriate not only for the subtitle of the book and the titles of the chapters, but also for the explanation of the essence of the entity, which was to emerge as a *linguistic-ethnic* and later as a constitutional community of peoples, and later as a *state-legal community of all Serbs*, regardless of their religious or confessional affiliation, which was not on the path of the Austro-Hungarian and Vatican rulers” (Despotović 2019, 7). On *Natural Serbia* and various aspects of the Serbian national question, see also in the same book, especially pp. 221–354.

25 See also in: Todorović 2021, 153–164.

26 On this and related topics, see in: Todorović 2005a, 241–250; Todorović 2015a, 270.

of another system of elementary patterns on which it is semantically based and which we could provisionally call the primary (Serbian) ethnocultural model. In other words, the mentioned system of basic ethnocultural patterns also served as a practical-methodological basis for the identification and analysis of the basic defense models (in the field of spiritual culture) when it comes to methods of stopping the attempts to deconstruct the Serbian identity.

The mentioned and implied models and examples of defense are directly related to another systemic defense framework, which is composed of elements that we could also call *immediate (urgent and primary) defense methods*. They concern the need for the immediate and final abolition of anti-Serbism and the accompanying permanent *genocidal state* in which the Serbs find themselves, and all related contemporary events (but also corresponding long-lasting processes).²⁷ Some of these “immediate defense methods” will be presented more concretely in the following parts of the text, in the form of a kind of concise intellectual treatise conceived as a framework register of the proposed applied defense options. Of course, the whole topic can also be presented much more precisely, in the form of a concise overview of certain (key) elements of the discussed topic, which we have also tried to do in the announced book as well as in other texts related to the relevant project framework.

Some (additional) examples of identity defense. The importance of Serbian vows. In order to show some immediate ways/possibilities of identity defense in the field of spiritual culture, we will start with an illustrative review of one of the particularly impressive Serbian peculiarities, the phenomenon of *Serbian vows*.²⁸ For in addition to rituals (originating from processions and Slavs)²⁹ and content with a “mythical” prefix – in the sense of the original meaning of the term “myth” as “sacred story”, i.e. “sacred truth”³⁰ – they were also of particular importance for our approach and considerations.

27 Cf. some illustrative examples related to the suffering of Serbs in the past, e.g. in: Ekmečić 2017, 17, 160. For example, in relation to the events of the early 19th century: “Even the folk songs contain the fact, which has also been preserved in other ways, that the Dahijas intended to slaughter the adult Serbian population and convert the rest to Islam” (Ekmečić 2017, 160). However, this is only a concretization of a general paradigmatic situation that is typical of Serbian history.

28 This will be discussed in much more detail in the paper: Todorović 2025.

29 Here one should certainly add the liturgy, which – as a central religious rite – is undoubtedly of central importance for the preservation of Serbian (especially religious) identity as well as for the preservation and progress of the Serbian community as a whole.

30 Lič 1982, 65–66; Todorović 2005a, 57–62.

In this regard, in Serbian culture and tradition, *vows* in particular have a significant influence and complex meaning, primarily according to the importance of the Kosovo and Svetosavski vows,³¹ but also other vows, of which the Jasenovac vow³² has been particularly emphasized recently. When looking at the connections between the basic Serbian vows, especially through a structural-semantic analysis, it is found that they are interconnected. Moreover, it can be said that these vows form a *unified system of Serbian vows*,³³ which is of extraordinary importance for the strengthening of Serbian identity patterns.

Within the mentioned system, several specific relations can be observed, which primarily refer to “spatial” (the context of *Serbian ethnic space*) and “temporal” (the context of the *Serbian chronological-historical pattern*, in direct connection with what we could call the *basic model of the Serbian ideological system*) ideational patterns.³⁴

The role of Serbian vows in the present is also very important because of their significance in defining the main Serbian ideas and representations of the historical mission³⁵ and immediate projections of the future through legacies about supreme goals (which determine the meaning of European and world history). In this respect, the system of Serbian vows, as already indicated, undoubtedly plays a key role in preventing attempts to deconstruct Serbian identity.³⁶

Processions and Slava – The Field of Rituals. A particularly clear and effective effect when it comes to the defense of Serbian identity can be seen in the example of some of the most important Serbian rituals, such as *processions* and *slava*. In any case, this has been written about quite extensively in earlier texts that also emerged from the work on the same project.³⁷

31 On the Kosovo vow, see e.g. in: Bodrožić 2015, 105–116. In this context, it is also pointed out that the *Kosovo resolve of the Serbian people* “is not an ideology of defeat and death, but an idea of freedom achieved through conscious sacrifice” (Bodrožić 2015, 105). On the “messianic idea of Kosovo”, see in: Marković 1998, 27–30; for more on this and related topics, see also in: Todorović 2015a, 277–286.

32 See Dimitrijević 2024a; Dimitrijević 2024b.

33 As already announced, see in: Todorović 2025.

34 In a broader sense, these most conspicuous federal patterns are also connected to the above-mentioned elementary ideological context, which we could call the *primary Serbian ethnocultural model*. However, this is a topic for a more detailed study.

35 Cf. also the terms “old Serbian alliances” in: Janković 2015, 19–21.

36 Furthermore, in the context of the Serbian ethnos and its culture, one can certainly speak of a kind of “cult of the alliance”, which plays a central role at the level of the collective psyche; cf. in this sense Vidović 2009, 344.

37 Todorović 2024; Todorović 2023.

The same importance, only in a slightly different form (with a special emphasis on preserving religious identity), is also given to the *liturgy* – parallel to churchliness and the Christian way of life³⁸ – together with baptisms, weddings, funerals and other customs in line with the Orthodox faith and liturgical practice within the Serbian Orthodox Church. This becomes particularly clear – as a practically necessary condition for the survival of identity – in the example of the Serbian diaspora.

A particularly vivid example of processions were the events in connection with the defense of the (Serbian) shrines in Montenegro. Against the backdrop of the attacks on the Serbian Church and the foundations of identity, it was precisely the “processional uprising”³⁹ of the people that showed the extraordinary vitality that can manifest itself in critical moments and crisis situations in the case of synergy between the people and their Church.⁴⁰ Something similar happened in the Republic of Serbia, especially in Belgrade, in connection with the prevention of the so-called “EuroPride”, which was intended to be a gathering, i.e. a parade, with a large number of participants.⁴¹

Similar to processions and the example of the family *slava* (patron saint’s festival), as well as at the level of the local (village, town) *slava/votive*, an effective method of identity defense is also clearly recognizable here. This ritual is directly related to the passing on of the festival from generation to generation, i.e. from father to son, and in its idealized forms has a clearly defined initiatory dimension of the identity type. In this sense, *Slava* is directly linked to genealogical memory, which has recently been revealed in a very stimulating way and has been revitalized by the results of genetic-genealogical research based on new technologies. Thus, among other things, numerous families have reunited in terms of their identity – precisely on the basis of the patronal feast, accompanied by the confirmation of common genetic origin – thus renewing (and significantly complicating) their Slavic royal identity within the Serbian identity. This undoubtedly created and further strengthened another strong identity shield.⁴²

Representations of the past and the future – another particularly important front of defense. Furthermore, of extraordinary importance for the strengthening of central identity patterns are the mentioned *representa-*

38 Thus, the *Kosovo lore* has imprinted on “the Serbian national essence the moral imperative that the moral dignity of the nation is more important than the state and political freedom” (Bodrožić 2015, 107).

39 See Todorović 2023, 62–64.

40 Demonja, Todorović 2021, 250–251, 269–270.

41 See Todorović 2023, especially pp. 69–70; Todorović 2024.

42 On all this, see in: Todorović 2024.

tions of the past and future, with a focus on content defining Serbian origins⁴³ and immediate future projections linked to ideas about the (universal) Serbian mission.⁴⁴ This is directly related to the phenomenon of the existence of specific representations (and “prophecies”) with eschatological overtones concerning the Serbian people and Serbian spaces.⁴⁵

In the mentioned and other contents, the *Serbian land*⁴⁶ often represents a space of essential and global importance, directly related to key events, both in the future and (in parallel) in the deep past.⁴⁷ Thus, this space is seen as a sacred geographical center that unites the most significant, initial and final events, i.e. historical currents in a general sense.⁴⁸ All this is also related to the mentioned representations of Serbs as the New Israel⁴⁹ and other ideological systems that shape and form the structure of Serbian historical existence and Serbian (spiritual, ethnocultural-civilizational and ethnic) space over the centuries, with an emphasis on ideas about the Serbian mission and the role of Serbs – as a specific ethnic personality – in the future.⁵⁰

On the other hand, but in a similar sense in terms of content in relation to the representations of the Serbian future, the representation of the past and origins deserves special attention, as it is an extraordinarily effective tool against attempts to deconstruct identity. Due to the undoubted existence of real facts and circumstances related to the unique Serbian past, it can be said that history is one of the most important Serbian (not only defensive) resources. Its importance of this kind is evidenced, among other things, by the corresponding prefix of frequent inaccessibility and a kind of “forbiddleness” of the mentioned content, which has been strongly imprinted in the Serbian collective consciousness. With regard to the above-mentioned significance and beyond, in our previous studies we have also focused on some related thematic sub-areas, which are also of

43 Cf. Todorović 2021, 161–164.

44 See. Todorović 2015a, 271–273.

45 It has been clearly pointed out that the Serbian people in many respects already in the Middle Ages “developed a special idea of its wholeness and spiritual homogeneity, which was covered by the idea of the ‘people of God’ ” (Bogdanović 1988, 28). See the basic lines of the Serbian projection of the future in: Todorović 2015a, 272–273.

46 On the concept of the “Serbian land”, see e.g. in: Mitrović 1989, 13–15.

47 Todorović 2005a, see e.g. pp. 67–73, 373–376; Todorović 2015a, 200–212, 194–199. On the ideas of the Serbian future and similar topics, particularly instructive examples from earlier editions can be found in: Kazimirović 2006, 365–527.

48 Todorović 2015a, 194–234.

49 Cf. Blagojević 1994; Blagojević 2011, 169–171; Grčić 2011, 191; Bogdanović 1988; Todorović 2015a, 243–286; Todorović 2015b, 71–73. Cf. Domentijan 2001; Camblak 1968, 224; Konstantin Filozof 1997, 158–160.

50 Todorović 2015a, see especially pp. 213–228.

particular importance for the understanding of *Serbian identity formation*, i.e. for a substantial understanding of the origin and ethno-genetic affiliation of Serbs and Slavs.⁵¹

This is directly related to the formation of ideological systems in the Serbian collective psyche that define the deepest Serbian past and historical-philosophical position (starting from those that can be described as a *system of representations about the indigenous people*).⁵² They are also recognized in the analysis as a (potentially) powerful means of identity defense, because the mentioned contents – regardless of different approaches and interpretations – are actually based on old, ever-present ideological patterns and immediate factual evidence. This conclusion is supported⁵³ by both the latest scientific findings and those that were already generally known earlier, but for certain reasons (which we can speak of as causes for the creation of the impression of a “forbidden Serbian tradition” and taboo topics related to the phenomenon of Serbdom) were not adequately evaluated.

Intellectual treatise on the topic of immediate (urgent, primary and far-reaching) methods of defense. Previously, some of the areas and methods of identity defense were presented in the form of brief overviews. While the defense methods indicated are necessary, they are certainly not sufficient. Within the framework of our approach (which includes aspects of applied science),⁵⁴ we have focused primarily on certain (A) *particularly vivid and effective methods and possibilities of defense* in the area of spiritual culture, which essentially determine the identity foundations and starting points of an ethnos.⁵⁵ On the other hand, when it comes to (B) *more immediate or primary methods of defense* – the application of which is necessary to achieve visible results as quickly and directly (and at the same time more widely) as possible – it is necessary to undertake a special review in this direction.

51 Todorović 2020.

52 See the study Todorović 2005a.

53 This is in line with the already mentioned numerous facts/evidence and references to the age and former size of the ethnos, which originally bore the Serbian ethnonym, as a widespread indigenous (ethnic) self-designation. See e.g. Šafarik 1998, 128–134, 48 ff; Kobychew 1973, 25–26; Rudeljev 1992; Kostić 2000; Budimir 1959, 42–43; Vukčević 2007, 76–79; Janković 2015; Todorović 2015a, 206–212; Todorović et al. 2015, 60–61, 144–145. In a similar context, see also Piper 2008, 128–136; Miljković Matić 2023.

54 Cf. Demonja, Todorović 2019, 134.

55 According to some well-reasoned views, “whether or not a person preserves their national identity depends on the ability to maintain states of consciousness” in which “the narratives that constitute national identity persistently maintain their meaning” (Vladušić 2019, 144).

In this regard, given the current situation, there is a clear need to use all available resources and means, including the whole of society, the Church, the state framework (as far as possible, of course), as well as the available material, spiritual and symbolic resources.⁵⁶ This concerns all aspects of culture – from folk characteristics, language, particularly significant *ethnonyms*, historical facts and tradition as a whole, to Serbian legal systems based on their own civilizational foundations,⁵⁷ and the revival of all identity-forming folk institutions that have been created and preserved over the centuries, as well as those that have yet to be created or renewed.

In accordance with the foregoing – and based on the actually existing circumstances and in order to stop the general geopolitical pressure directed against the Serbs, as well as to prevent the accompanying processes of Anti-Serb sentiment and deconstruction of Serbian identity⁵⁸ – it is necessary to adopt/issue, in various situational and legal contexts and at various levels, inter alia, the following resolutions: 1) resolutions on genocide, the genocidal state and the occupation of Serbian ethnic space, 2) laws and resolutions on anti-Serbism (as well as, on the contrary, the inclusion in the legal framework of points related to the affirmation of Serbism and the right of the Serbian people to free cultural development and demographic progress), 3) declarations and proclamations related to ending anti-Serb practices and related models of genocide/cultural murder. It is more than necessary 4) to ensure – the establishment of institutes, centers, laboratories and organizations dealing with the research of genocide, occupation processes (with neo-colonialism)⁵⁹ and anti-Serbism and the development of methods to counter them. In addition, it is necessary to 5) establish or ensure media and initiatives for monitoring genocide, Anti-Serb sentiment and the mentioned occupation processes and for organized struggle against them (and ensure their continuous work) and 6) ensure the consistent application of the aforementioned *anti-Serbism Law* and other related legal acts and frameworks. It is also imperative to 7) raise the fight against anti-Serbism to a global/world-wide level, together

56 For “in order to emerge and survive as a *community of a sovereign people*, the nation had to build a solid common identity foundation capable of integrating, structuring and inspiring”, and “for such an undertaking it was necessary to involve and organize all or almost all capacities, especially the cultural-educational and state ones, in order to successfully construct a complex identity substrate” (Despotović 2017, 114–115). In this regard, “for this important purpose, it was first and foremost necessary to consolidate a common culture, tradition and customs and to cast them into more solid forms of national history as a product of the collective memory of the new community” (Despotović 2017, 115).

57 See the study Demonja, Todorović 2019.

58 See e.g. Despotović 2019, 374–417.

59 See Antonić 2019.

with 8) consistent reparations, compensation and general reparations for the consequences of the application of anti-Serbism, ethnic and socio-political engineering, i.e. the consequences of the occupation and genocide of Serbs.⁶⁰

All in all, it should never be forgotten that as one of the most important and general results of everything that has happened before, 9) it is precisely a comprehensive *return to the original (identity) state* that is necessary, with the previously emphasized rejection of and compensation for all the consequences of anti-Serbism and the prolonged genocide of Serbs (as well as the current *genocidal state*, which continues in some parts of the Serbian ethnic space)⁶¹ as well as the corresponding system of oppression, destruction and deconstruction of Serbian identity, which is primarily based on ethnic engineering, i.e. de-Serbization.⁶²

It goes without saying that various other activities should also be related to the previous strategies and actions. Thus, all these would be individual, particularly indicative elements of a more comprehensive preliminary outline of what is necessary for a lasting solution, i.e. the complete termination and reversal of the processes of deconstruction of Serbian identity and anti-Serbism, which have been going on for an exceptionally long time and have had disastrous consequences. Finally, it should be emphasized once again that this also applies to the prevention of the concomitant application of ethnic, religious, political and social engineering, i.e. the various forms of de-Serbization, genocide, (“soft” and “hard”) occupation⁶³ and other actions directed against the Serbian people and the development of the corresponding cultural-civilizational model, which are carried out with the aim of destroying it.⁶⁴

The central semantic framework of the consideration (or – instead of recapitulation). In connection with the foregoing, it is possible to mention, in addition to the presented overviews and proposed possibilities, a large number of other immediate examples, research results, data and conclusions that deserve the greatest attention, as well as eminent scholars and intellectuals who have made a greater or lesser contribution to

60 It is not possible to write in detail here about (generally known, but mostly concealed) facts that confirm this; see much more on this in the announced monograph and the accompanying literature. An illustrative example in this sense could be the chapter “Celebrating a Great Crime” in: Jovanović 2016, 99–118.

61 See e.g. Demonja, Todorović 2019, 149–151.

62 See, for example, the works in the collection *Construction of Synthetic Nations 2024* (Konstruisanje sintetičkih nacija 2024), as well as various other studies that deal with this topic, especially in an urgent and emphasized manner.

63 Cf. Despotović 2017, 123.

64 See again Todorović 2021.

deepening various aspects and doubts related to the whole subject. As shown, our efforts focused on determining the most important Serbian identity patterns, and special emphasis was placed on identifying and naming the models on which the attempts to deconstruct Serbian identity are based, as well as the models on which methods of identity defense can be built. As far as these first models (deconstruction) are concerned, in short, it is essential to comprehensively confront the numerous methods and paradigms of *Serbian inferiority* on various levels. They are implemented together with strong and direct attacks both on the Serbian gene pool⁶⁵ and the material basis of life, as well as on the identity and essence of ethnic being,⁶⁶ with a multidimensional and omnipresent manifestation and promotion of Anti-Serb sentiment⁶⁷ in the sense of a universally projected desirable model (of thought, expression and action).⁶⁸

Among other things, our studies attempt to answer the question of why it so often (as is certainly the case today) appears that Serbian identity and tradition is under attack, completely sidelined/neglected and even banned.⁶⁹ In other words, why does one have the impression that they often have negative connotations and that there is some kind of plan or organized system of imposed processes to make them practically, indirectly or directly, undesirable and even forbidden? If this is really the case, another question arises: – what are the possible responses to defend oneself? This is indeed one of the fundamental issues we have been dealing with.

In this sense, it should be recalled that in implementing the given project framework, we have not touched on all but *certain* methods of identity defense, but with a *particular focus* on those that belong to the realm of spiritual culture and that *often had or still have a certain “taboo”* prefix, i.e. “forbidden” or at least “undesirable”, “neglected”, “hardly accessible”. The mentioned emphasis stems from the fact that it is precisely in these areas, and not in others that are seemingly more visible, that the deepest essences of Serbian identity and the core of the basic *Serbian idea* are hidden. In this sense, – when it comes to methods of identity defense, which we have focused on the most in previous reflections and research – Serbian processions⁷⁰ and Serbian vows, genealogical knowledge and the patronal feast (which is still directly forbidden or deliberately suppressed in various places where Serbs live), then very often specific representa-

65 Gaćinović 2017a; Gaćinović 2017b; Todorović 2021, 141–145, 147–148.

66 Cf. e.g. Stojičević 2018; Stojičević 2021.

67 See various direct examples in: Dimitrijević 2010.

68 Todorović 2021, 146–147, 149–152; cf. Demonja, Todorović 2021.

69 Cf. Todorović 2015a, 275.

70 On the suppression of the Serbian litias, see e.g. in: Radić 1995, 188–196; Radić 2002, 229–234; Todorović 2023, 61–62.

tions of the Serbian past and deeper origins, as well as (Serbian and general) projections of the future based on ideas about the mission and eschatological consciousness⁷¹ are experienced. Similarly, it is especially with the Orthodox Christian faith and its civilizational foundations as a whole⁷² that we most often recognize as the main and final targets of the attacks on Serbian identity and tradition.⁷³

In the given conceptual-analytical context – and this applies primarily to the defense models – it was necessary to highlight certain assertions and conclusions that are of utmost importance for understanding the basic semantic wholes and relations associated with this research approach. At the basic level of consideration, this system of relations organized around the central notion of *Serbian identity* could be represented as follows: *Serbdom* (level of ethnic affirmation = formation) – *anti-Serbism* (level of ethnic negation = deconstruction) and *people* (level of ethnic affiliation) – *civilization* (level of civilizational affiliation), with accompanying consideration of the *areas of ethnogenesis* and the *area of faith*. Particularly descriptive relations belong in the same framework: *Ritual – myth/vow* and *past – future* (*representations of the past – representations of the mission/projections of the future*). [Accordingly, another (additional, to a certain extent synonymous, but primarily tripartite) system of relationships can be singled out in a semantically narrow sense, which are interwoven with those mentioned and are of central importance for our considerations: (*Serbian*) *idea – identity – (Serbian) mission; projections related to the semantic axis past – present – future; (“internal”) ethnic space – basic ethno-genetic space (with border areas of ethnocultural mixing) – (“external”) civilizational space.*⁷⁴]

In any case, it should be repeated, the study of the Serbian ethnos and, above all, its identity and tradition – which (often and due to their complexity) are frequently misunderstood, i.e. completely misunderstood, neglected, underestimated and forgotten, sometimes even directly attacked and forbidden – is necessary and extremely necessary, probably today more than ever in the past.

Concluding summary. The article has listed and briefly presented various *strategic-long-term* and *primary-immediate* methods of defense. They are related to the findings on the possibilities of a direct and permanent abolition of *anti-Serbism* (understood as an antipode in relation to *affirmative Serbdom*). From the point of view of our approach, one

71 Cf. Šijaković 2019, 51–53.

72 Cf. Demonja, Todorović 2019, 134–136.

73 See also the study Stojičević 2021.

74 All this could also be illustrated by suitable schematic representations.

of the basic prerequisites for understanding the current Serbian situation and the possibilities of defense is the awareness and understanding of fundamental ethnic, civilizational, religious and ethno-genetic doubts and issues (starting with those directly related to the problem of ethnic engineering,⁷⁵ but also social and political engineering, as well as cultural and hybrid warfare).

Likewise, the determination is essential in relation to the representations of the *Serbian idea* and, above all, in relation to the meaning and objectives of the *Serbian mission*. In this sense, the foundations of identity based on *Orthodoxy*⁷⁶ and the multi-layered folk tradition, which is often interwoven and connected⁷⁷ with it, are particularly important. In the context of the relevant considerations and analyzes, these phenomena appear to be key when it comes to deciphering the primary foundations of Serbian self-awareness.⁷⁸

In this context, insights into the basic structure of Serbian society, viewed in its diachronic and synchronic perspective, are important, with the primary aim of identifying the *significance of ideological systems and ideologies*.⁷⁹ Therefore, when considering identity – and accordingly, when understanding Serbian projections regarding the *future*⁸⁰ – it is necessary to pay special attention to the *past*, as it is one of the most direct ways to recognize primary elements and circumstances that shape complex patterns of Serbian self-understanding. In other words, precisely the mentioned issues of defining and projecting the (Serbian) past and future are of central importance, because it is through identifying the basic models of the Serbian past and future that we come most directly to understanding the essential elements of what we could call the *Serbian idea* and the *Serbian mission*.⁸¹

75 For the most recent work on this topic, see Đurković 2024; Stepić 2022.

76 As M. Ekmečić states – “the construction of a national identity tied to the Orthodox Church was carried out since the loss of independence” with the duration of Turkish rule until 1912 “in the tradition of the medieval Serbian state”, and “Orthodoxy was the most important and fundamental framework of the spiritual space of the Serbian people” (Ekmečić 2017, 19).

77 See Janković 2015, 17–23 and further, 315–321. Moreover, after the adoption of Christianity, “through the persistent preservation of the national language in the new ecclesiastical organization, its cultivation in all cultural spheres and the constant intransigence in the attainment and preservation of freedom, the national consciousness of Serbs was increasingly strengthened and preserved throughout the centuries” (Mitrović 1989, 21).

78 Ekmečić 2017, 14, 19; Mitrović 1989.

79 See Pavićević 2006.

80 See summarized in: Todorović 2015a, 267–273.

81 See Todorović 2015a; Todorović 2015b.

All this is directly related to the relationship with the (other) key manifestations of spiritual culture, starting with its ritual and “*myth-vow*” aspects, which in practice have proven to be very effective and practical means of identity defense, starting with processions and Slavs⁸² and ending with the Serbian vows⁸³ and the key Serbian ideological systems associated with them.

As far as key ideological systems are concerned, it is of primary importance (especially in terms of identity) to recognize the peculiar ideological foundations that have led to the formation of representations of *Serbs as the New Israel* (the chosen people of the New Testament), as well as more or less narrow, still insufficiently researched patterns,⁸⁴ which include partly related, but also complementary-contradictory *notions of the proto-people*.⁸⁵ Here, as the results of the studies carried out show, what is essential for an understanding of the whole subject and the phenomena related with it is what is (for some reason) suppressed and hidden, so that the impression often arises that it is in fact simultaneously (in a qualitative sense, i.e. essentially) *forbidden*. It is precisely there, in the mentioned spheres of the neglected and forbidden, that – as will become apparent after deeper insights – the essential foundations of the primary Serbian identity and cultural pattern often lie, as well as the main methods of defense against identity deconstruction and ethnic destruction.

In direct connection with the above, another additional question logically arises at the very end: what would be the most “neglected” and “forbidden”? The answer is not too difficult and concerns precisely the search for the “great idea” that is constantly present in Serbian thought and tradition. So the answer could be: neglected and almost “forbidden”, similarly to what has happened several times in Serbian history, especially that of which the archetypal layers of Serbian folk tradition as well as the highlights and most representative figures of Serbian spirituality⁸⁶ clearly

82 Todorović 2023; Todorović 2024.

83 See Ković 2019, especially pp. 13–47; Timotijević 2022, 7–31; Vidović 2009; Vidović 2021; Antonić 2022; Kindić 2017, 193, 201–202, 206–207; Reljić 2024; Todorović 2015a, especially pp. 274–286.

84 See Blagojević 1994; Todorović 2010; Ković 2019, 19–23.

85 See Todorović 2005a.

86 Similarly, “the whole vast oral tradition, in which the Serbs, as a suffering and visionary people, are particularly rich, is a tradition which could not fit into the whole world if it were written down” (Velimirović 2001, 247). According to Justin Popović, for example, the main directions and characteristics of the (Serbian) *enlightenment of St. Sava* “can be formulated as follows: (...) Man is a being that can be most ideally and realistically perfected and completed by the God-Man”, and “every human activity: philosophy, science, crafts, agriculture, art, education, culture, gains its lasting value when it is sanctified and conceived by the God-Man” etc. (Popović 1993, 34).

speak, pointing to the uniqueness, specificity and importance of the *Serbian ethnic personality*.⁸⁷ Thus, St. Bishop Nikolai Velimirovich also says, among other things: “And just as Christ assigned an extraordinarily great task to his beloved disciple John, so he assigned a great task to the Serbian people, a great mission among peoples near and far.”⁸⁸

What would this mean when translated into “secular language”? If the *great idea* of the grand, universal mission of the Serbian people is not renewed and revitalized at the level of the Serbian collective consciousness (from the point of view of the Serbian collective psyche this is immanent and necessary), then it – and above all its diaspora⁸⁹ – will disappear over time. And it is precisely in this – i.e. in the renewal and complete revival of the (previously deeply rooted) *idea of the Serbian mission* – that the essence of Serbian identity defense would lie.

References

- Antonić 2008: Slobodan AntoniĆ, *Kulturni rat u Srbiji*, Zavod za udžbenike, Beograd, 2008.
- Antonić 2019: Slobodan AntoniĆ, *Ostati svoj u koloniji: očuvanje srpskog identiteta na periferiji atlantističkog carstva*, in: Srpski identitetski kriterijumi u procesu globalizacije, eds. Milimir Mučibabić, Miloš Knežević, SKPD Prosvjeta, Beograd, 2019.
- Antonić 2022: Slobodan AntoniĆ, *Dva zavetna naroda: Rusi i Srbi*, Catena mundi, Beograd, 2022.

87 Regarding the *national personality*, see Janković 2015, 19–23.

88 Velimirović 2001, 218. Finally, Dostoevsky (in *A Writer's Diary*, in the chapter “A Dream of Reconciliation Beyond Science”) believes that “every great nation, if it wants to remain long alive, must believe that in it and in it alone lies the salvation of the world, that it lives to stand at the head of all nations, to unite them all and lead them all in a harmonious chorus to the final goal, which is destined for them all” (Skopцова 2021, 68; cf. also pp. 65–82). According to Bishop Nikolai, “the destiny of all righteous peoples generally resembles the destiny of Christ, but none so much as that of the Serbian people” (Velimirović 2001, 247).

89 In answer to the question “What should we do?” in relation to the Serbian diaspora, according to some authoritative views, it is first necessary to “identify the geographical distribution and network of capacities of our new migration (intellectual diaspora) in the world”, i.e., “in which regions and countries they work and live”, “what activities” they carry out, “create an electronic register (treasury) of the diaspora”, “maintain daily communication through Internet networks”, “inform us about what they can contribute to, what are the possibilities of their involvement in the country's development”, “recognize their civil and political rights, vote electronically and be elected/have dual citizenship” and, above all, “work on preserving their national identity” (Mitrović 2015, 290). Furthermore, “it is expected that the Serbian intellectual diaspora should and can play the role of new ‘1300 privates’, new ‘young lions’ for the upcoming games and battles” (Mitrović 2015, 290).

- Arsenijević 2002: Matej Arsenijević, *Srb je Hristov (Crtice za uvod u Srbski crkveni zavet)*, in: Nebeska Srbija, ed. Vladimir Dimitrijević, Manastir Svetog Arhidakona Stefana, Slanci, 2002.
- Blagojević 1994: Miloš Blagojević, *O nacionalnim i državnim interesima u delima Domentijana – Srbi izabrani narod*, Istorijski glasnik 1-2, 1994.
- Blagojević 2011: Miloš Blagojević, *Srpska državnost u srednjem veku*, Srpska književna zadruga, Beograd, 2011.
- Bogdanović 1988: Dimitrije Bogdanović, *Politička filozofija srednjovekovne Srbije. Mogućnost jednog istraživanja*, Filozofske studije XVI, 1988.
- Bodrožić 2015: Đuro Bodrožić, *Srpski identitet*, Srpska književna zadruga, Književna zadruga srpskog nacionalnog vijeća, Beograd – Podgorica, 2015.
- Budimir 1959: Milan Budimir, *O starijim pomenima srpskog imena*, Glas SAN, Odeljenje literature i jezika CCXXXVI, Nova serija 4, 1959.
- Velimirović 2001: Nikolaj Velimirović, *Srpski zavet na razmeđu vekova*, Svetigora, Cetinje, 2001.
- Vidović 2009: Žarko Vidović, *Istorija i vera*, RAOB, Zavod za unapređivanje obrazovanja i vaspitanja, Beograd, 2009.
- Vidović 2021: Žarko Vidović, *Srbi i kosovski zavet u novom veku*, Srpski naučni centar, Prijatelji profesora dr Žarka Vidovića, Beograd, 2021.
- Vladišić 2019: Slobodan Vladišić, *Nacionalni identitet i četvrta generacija ratovanja*, in: Srpski identitetski kriterijumi u procesu globalizacije, eds. Milimir Mučibabić, Miloš Knežević, SKPD Prosvjeta, Beograd, 2019.
- Vukčević 2007: Ivo Vukčević, *Slovenska Germanija*, Pešić i sinovi, Beograd, 2007.
- Gaćinović 2017a: Radoslav Gaćinović, *Nasilje nad Srbima u XX veku*, book 1, Euro Book, Beograd, 2017.
- Gaćinović 2017b: Radoslav Gaćinović, *Nasilje nad Srbima u XX veku*, book 2, Euro Book, Beograd, 2017.
- Grčić 2011: Mirko Grčić, *Geografija religija*, Geografski fakultet Univerziteta u Beogradu, Beograd, 2011.
- Demonja, Todorović 2019: Nikola Demonja, Ivica Todorović, *Etnološko-pravni prilog razmatranju i rešavanju problema bele kuge kod Srba*, Etnokulturološki zbornik XXII, Svrljig, 2019.
- Demonja, Todorović 2021: Nikola Demonja, Ivica Todorović, *Verske slobode, Crna Gora i antisrbizam – neki ilustrativni pravno-etnološki osvrti*, in: Temnić, edition Juhorski zapis, eds. Dmtar Atanasov et al, Istorijski arhiv Kruševac, Udruženje za kulturu i umetnost Logos, Kruševac – Svojnovo, 2021.
- Despotović 2015: Ljubiša Despotović, *Geopolitika destrukcije*, Kairos, Sremski Karlovci, 2015.
- Despotović 2017: Ljubiša Despotović, *Globalizacija i geopolitika identiteta*, Kairos, Sremski Karlovci, 2017.
- Despotović 2019: Ljubiša Despotović, *Geopolitika svetosavlja: srpsko nacionalno pitanje u istorijskom rasponu od krštene do prirodne Srbije*, Kairos, Sremski Karlovci, 2019.

- Dimitrijević 2010: Vladimir Dimitrijević, *Mala knjiga velike mržnje / Rečnik srbofobije*, IK Lio, Gornji Milanovac, 2010. (<https://www.vladimirdimitrijevic.com/images/e-knjiga/mala-knjiga-velike-mrznje-recnik-srbofobije-vladimir-dimitrijevic.pdf>)
- Dimitrijević 2024a: Vladimir Dimitrijević, *Četiri srpska zaveta (umesto čestitke o Božiću) uoči Srpske nove 2024*, published on 7. 1. 2024; <https://pravda.rs/2024/1/7/cetiri-srpska-zaveta-umesto-cestitke-o-bozicu-uoci-srpske-nove-2024-godine/>; accessed on 15. 10. 2024.
- Dimitrijević 2024b: Vladimir Dimitrijević, *Kuća u našoj krvi – Jasenovac i srpski logoraški zavet*, Autorsko izdanje, Čačak, 2024.
- Domentijan 2001: Domentijan, *Žitije Svetog Save*, Srpska književna zadruga, Beograd, 2001.
- Đuretić 2008: Veselin Đuretić, *Vatikanski „socijalni inženjering“ na srpskom etničkom području*, u: *Zatiranje Srba u Hrvatskoj*, ed. Bogdan Zlatar, Nikola Pašić, Beograd, 2008.
- Đurković 2019: Miša Đurković, *Rat za porodicu u Srbiji*, Institut za evropske studije, Beograd, 2019.
- Đurković 2024: Miša Đurković, *Konstruisanje nacionalnih identiteta kao instrument geopolitike*, u: *Konstruisanje sintetičkih nacija*, ed. Miša Đurković, Catena mundi, Institut za evropske studije, Beograd, 2024.
- Ekmečić 2002: Milorad Ekmečić, *Srbofobija i antisemitizam*, in: M. E., *Dijalog prošlosti i sadašnjosti*, Službeni list SRJ, Beograd, 2002.
- Ekmečić 2017: Milorad Ekmečić, *Dugo kretanje između klanja i oranja: istorija Srba u Novom veku (1492-1992)*, Evro Book, Beograd, 2017.
- Janković 2015: Đorđe Janković, *Predanje i istorija Crkve Srba u svetlu arheologije*, Hrišćanska misao, Beograd, 2015.
- Jovanović 2016: Bojan Jovanović, *Antropologija zla*, HERAedu, Beograd, 2016.
- Kazimirović 2006: Radovan Kazimirović, *Tajanstvene pojave u našem narodu*, Reprint izdanja iz 1941. godine, Sezam, Beograd, 2006.
- Kindić 2017: Zoran Kindić, *Duhovna dimenzija unutrašnjeg dijaloga*, Nacionalni interes vol. 30, 3/2017.
- Kobychev 1973: V. P. Kobychev, *V poiskah prarodiny slavyan*, Izdatel'stvo „Nauka“, Moskva, 1973.
- Ković 2019: Miloš Ković, *Zaveti*, Catena mundi, Beograd, 2019.
- Konstantin Filozof 1997: Konstantin Filozof, *Žitije Despota Stefana Lazarevića*, in: *Stara srpska književnost – žitija*, ed. Ljiljana Juhas-Georgijevska, Zavod za udžbenike i nastavna sredstva, Beograd, 1997.
- Konstruisanje sintetičkih nacija 2024: *Konstruisanje sintetičkih nacija*, ed. Miša Đurković, Catena mundi, Beograd, 2024.
- Kostić 2000: Lazo Kostić, *O srpskom imenu – mišljenja stranaca*, Dobrica knjiga, Srbinje – Novi Sad, 2000.
- Lič 1982: Edmund Lič, *Klod Levi-Stros*, Prosveta, Beograd, 1982.
- Marković 1998: Marko S. Marković, *Tajna Kosova*, Srbinje – Beograd – Valjevo, 1998.

- Milosavljević 2002: Petar Milosavljević, *Uvod u srbistiku*, Filozofski fakultet u Kos. Mitrovici, Trebnik, Kosovska Mitrovica – Beograd, 2002.
- Miljković Matić 2023: Jelena Miljković Matić, *Teza da su Srbi starosedeooci Balkana nije u neskladu sa hrišćanstvom*, Nacionalni interes, god. XIX, vol. 45, br. 2/2023.
- Mitrović 1989: Jeremija Mitrović, *Narodna svest u Srba*, Narodna knjiga, Beograd, 1989.
- Mitrović 1991: Jeremija Mitrović, *Srbofobija i njeni izvori*, Naučna knjiga, Beograd, 1991.
- Mitrović 2015: Ljubiša Mitrović, *Dijaspore i manjine kao most i akteri saradnje među narodima u eri globalizovanog sveta*, Ishodišta 1, Temišvar / Niš, 2015.
- O nacionalnom identitetu Srba 2020: *O nacionalnom identitetu Srba*, Catena mundi IV, ed. Branimir Nešić, Catena mundi, Beograd, 2020.
- Pavićević 2006: Aleksandra Pavićević, *Na udaru ideologija*, Etnografski institut SANU, Beograd, 2006.
- Piper 2004: Predrag Piper, *Srpski između velikih i malih jezika*, Beogradska knjiga, Beograd, 2004.
- Piper 2008: Predrag Piper, *Uvod u slavistiku 1*, Zavod za udžbenike, Beograd, 2008.
- Popović 1993: Justin Popović, *Svetosavlje kao filosofija života*, Separat – fototipsko izdanje, Manastir Čelije, Valjevo, 1993.
- Radić 1995: Radmila Radić, *Verom protiv vere – država i verske zajednice u Srbiji 1945-1953*, Institut za noviju istoriju Srbije, Beograd, 1995.
- Radić 2002: Radmila Radić, *Država i verske zajednice 1945-1970 I*, Institut za noviju istoriju Srbije, Beograd, 2002.
- Reljić 2024: Slobodan Reljić, *Zavetni Srbi na prelomu epoha*, Pečat 818, 12. jul 2024.
- Rudeljev 1992: V. G. Rudeljev, *O istoriji etničkog imena Slovena*, Catena mundi I, Ibarske novosti, Kraljevo, Matica Srba i iseljenika Srbije, Beograd, 1992.
- Skopcova 2021: Mati Marija Skopcova, *Dostojevski i današnjica*, Biblos Books, Beograd, 2021.
- Srpski identitet 2019: *Srpski identitetski kriterijumi u procesu globalizacije*, eds. Milimir Mučibabić, Miloš Knežević, SKPD Prosvjeta, Beograd, 2019.
- Stepić 2001: Milomir Stepić, *U vrtlogu balkanizacije*, Službeni list SRJ, Institut za geopolitičke studije, Beograd, 2001.
- Stepić 2016: Milomir Stepić, *Geopolitika – ideje, teorije, koncepcije*, Institut za političke studije, Beograd, 2016.
- Stepić 2022: Milomir Stepić, *Istorijsko-geopolitički aspekti (i)reverzibilnosti procesa „etno-inženjeringa“*, in: *Istorija kao instrument geopolitike*, ed. Zoran Milošević, Institut za političke studije, Beograd, 2022.
- Stojičević 2018: Slobodan Stojičević, *Mrežni rat protiv Srba*, Avala pres, Beograd, 2018.
- Stojičević 2021: Slobodan Stojičević, *Hibridni rat protiv Srpske pravoslavne crkve*, Srpsko odeljenje Međunarodnog javnog fonda jedinstva pravoslavnih naroda, Beograd, 2021.

- Terzić 2012: Slavenko Terzić, *Stara Srbija (XIX-XX vek) – Drama jedne civilizacije*, Pravoslavna reč, Istorijski institut Beograd, Novi Sad – Beograd, 2012
- Timotijević 2022: Miloš Timotijević, *Mitovi novije srpske istorije*, Catena mundi, Beograd, 2022.
- Todorović 2005a: Ivica Todorović, *Mitska istina Srba*, Zvonik, Beograd, 2005.
- Todorović 2005b: Ivica Todorović, *Ritual uma – značenje i struktura litijskog ophoda*, Etnografski institut SANU – Posebna izdanja 53, Beograd, 2005.
- Todorović 2008: Ivica Todorović, *O opštem geopolitičkom kontekstu i etničkom identitetu – na primeru Gornjeg Polimlja*, Simpozijum Seoski dani Sretena Vukosavljevića XXIII, Prijepolje, 2008.
- Todorović 2009: Ivica Todorović, *Sveta struktura – traganje za jedinstvenom osnovom kulturnih fenomena*, Etnografski institut SANU – Posebna izdanja 71, Beograd, 2009.
- Todorović 2010: Ivica Todorović, *Maternji jezik sakralne geografije Srba – mitska simbolika Kosova u kontekstu određenja srpskog identiteta i projekcije istorijske sudbine*, in: Kosovo i Metohija u civilizacijskim tokovima 1, Jezik i narodna tradicija, ed. Sofija Miloradović, Filozofski fakultet Univerziteta u Prištini, Kosovska Mitrovica, 2010.
- Todorović 2015a: Ivica Todorović, *Srpska tajna*, Neven, Etnografski institut SANU, Beograd, 2015.
- Todorović 2015b: Ivica Todorović, *Bazični mitski i ritualni obrasci Srba*, Etnokulturološki zbornik XIX, Svrlijig, 2015.
- Todorović 2019: Ivica Todorović, *Srpski mit – prilog opštem sagledavanju osnovnih obrazaca i kodova*, in: Kruševac i okolina u istoriji srpskog naroda, eds. Ivica Todorović et al, Istorijski arhiv Kruševac, Kruševac, 2019.
- Todorović 2020: Ivica Todorović, *Putokazi za rekonstrukciju drevnih idejnih i identitetskih matrica*, Etno-kulturološki zbornik XXIII, Svrlijig, 2020.
- Todorović 2021: Ivica Todorović, *Osvrt na fenomen antisrbizma i neke njegove posledice – važnost, globalna raširenost i opasnost, kontrolisanje prošlosti*, in: Juhorska čtenija – zvezde nad Juhorom, edition Juhorski zapis, eds. Dmitar Atanasov et al, Istorijski arhiv Kruševac, Udruženje za kulturu i umetnost Logos Svojnovo, Svojnovo – Kruševac, 2021.
- Todorović 2023: Ivica Todorović, *Nova ispoljavanja i značenja litija – očuvanje identiteta i sakralizacija prostora i vremena u beogradskom (i širem srpskom) kontekstu*, Glasnik Etnografskog instituta SANU LXXI/2, 2023.
- Todorović 2024: Ivica Todorović, *Načini identitetske odbrane – slava i litije*, Sociološki pregled, vol. LVIII (2024), no. 4, Beograd, 2024.
- Todorović 2025: Ivica Todorović, *Sistem srpskih zaveta*, in: Zavjetni narodi u svjetskoj istoriji – Srbi na prijelomu epoha, ed. Slobodan AntoniĆ, Odjeljenje društvenih nauka – Naučni skupovi knj. 3, Višegrad (Andrićgrad), 2025 (in preparation).
- Todorović et al. 2015: Ivica Todorović et al, *Etnologija i genetika – Preliminarna multidisciplinarna istraživanja porekla Srba i stanovništva Srbije*, Etnografski institut SANU, Društvo srpskih rodoslovaca „Poreklo“, Beograd, 2015.

- Camblak 1968: Grigorije Camblak, *Žitije kralja Stefana Dečanskog*, in: Stare srpske biografije, Chosen and introduced by Dimitrije Bogdanović, Prosveta, Beograd, 1968.
- Šafarik 1998: Pavel Jozef Šafarik, *O poreklu Slovena*, Arhiv Vojvodine, Novi Sad, 1998.
- Šijaković 2019: Bogoljub Šijaković, *O pojmu i krizi identiteta*, in: Srpski identitetski kriterijumi u procesu globalizacije, eds. Milimir Mučibabić, Miloš Knežević, SKPD Prosvjeta, Beograd, 2019.

Ivan Zečević¹
 University of Belgrade
 Faculty of Philosophy
 Department of Sociology



REAFFIRMING THE SERBIAN VISUAL IDENTITY:
 SOCIOLOGICAL AND CULTURAL-HISTORICAL DIMENSIONS
 OF CONTEMPORARY SYMBOLISM

This paper presents an innovative and unconventional form of academic writing that builds a bridge between theory and the visual. It is in the nature of the subject that such a format has emerged spontaneously from the author's preoccupation with sociology and occasional forays into design. At the centre of this work is a simple but powerful premise: Identity cannot exist without its visual representation. The study explores the possibilities of affirming Serbian visual identity through the integration of traditional cultural motifs into contemporary forms of design, fashion, art and everyday objects. Drawing on the theories of representation, material culture and visual sociology, 12 visual examples—both conceptual and graphic experiments—are analysed, ranging from a shirt collar decorated with fresco motifs to sportswear adorned with traditional ornaments. These are analysed as concrete manifestations of cultural change. Methodologically, the work combines an interpretative visual analysis with a sociological consideration of context and use. The central thesis is that the visual identity of a people is inextricably linked to its public and physical representation and that its sustainability in the modern world depends on its ability to be reinterpreted through new cultural media. This work makes a contribution to interdisciplinary cultural sociology by arguing that tradition does not have to be musealised in order to survive. Quite the opposite: it lives on where the visual converges with the social, the beautiful with the meaningful and the past with the future.

Keywords: visual identity, Serbian tradition, culture, design, representation, cultural sociology, material culture, visual analysis

¹ email: ivanzecevic@gmail.com; ivan.zecevic@f.bg.ac.rs; <https://orcid.org/0009-0008-6842-5490>

In an era characterised by globalisation, mass consumer culture and digital media, nations face an ever-increasing challenge: how to preserve and express their identities. We live in an age where both static and moving images permeate our physical and digital environment and where multimedia content has become the defining expression of our time. Visual identities are now produced faster than they can be recognised and they often disappear before we have had a chance to remember them. Today, no one reads manifestos—anymore; everyone sees, wears, shares and shows images. In this visual economy, the question of national and cultural identity becomes more than ever a visual question.

The visual identity of Serbia, which has been—formed over centuries through icons, frescoes, jewellery, architecture and clothing, is increasingly relegated to the realm of the folkloristic or the museum. National identity has not disappeared from the text, but it must be gently awakened in forms, patterns, colours and symbols, in design, fashion, objects and in the space of bodies and things. The reason is simple: if identity remains trapped in the text, it will disappear with the text itself, whose fading is perhaps closer than we dare to admit. In this context, the present work poses a simple but profound question: can Serbian visual identity be brought back to life—not as nostalgia, but as inspiration?

The aim of this study is to show how our identity can be reaffirmed through contemporary symbolic forms—fashion, art, design and popular culture—without sacrificing authenticity and with the potential to communicate meaningfully in a modern framework.

What follows is a theoretical and visual contribution. It is neither a catalogue, nor an essay, nor a manifesto—although in parts it contains all three elements. At its core is the conviction that cultural heritage, if it does not speak in the language of the present, remains confined to the archive. And in order to be able to speak, it must be remodelled, reshaped—but never devalued. This work shows how a fresco can become a necklace, how the face of a saint can appear on a vessel or a sports ribbon, and how a mediaeval ornament can be transformed into the design of a modern shirt. Above all, it shows why this is important—culturally, socially and sociologically.

In a postmodern society in which visual culture is the predominant form of communication, symbols no longer accompany reality—they shape it. As Stuart Hall (1997) argues, cultural identity is not a given; it is created through representation. And in the 21st century, representations are primarily visual. Without an image, there is no presence. Without a visual code, there is no recognition. Against this background, Serbian cultural heritage—especially in the areas of fresco painting, ecclesiastical art, filigree work, textiles and architecture—represents an immense and largely untapped potential. Not only as a repository of cultural memory, but also as a basis for the visual future.

The problem, however, is that this heritage is often—locked away in museums, temples and academic monographs—far removed from everyday life, from young people, from bodies, spaces and movement. This work aims precisely to build a bridge between these two dimensions: between heritage and use, between art and daily life, between tradition and design.

This work attempts to reawaken the cultural artefacts of the past from which our identity was formed—those scattered fragments of belonging scattered across the products of our cultural creativity. It attempts to resurrect them like a broken mosaic, hoping to save our collective memory anchored in identity from digital erasure—and resorts to drastic measures to do so.

From fresco to hairstyle: what this work does

This work combines two seemingly incompatible elements: scientific analysis and visual representation. On the one hand, it draws on sociological, anthropological and cultural theories of identity, representation, material culture and embodiment. On the other hand, 12 concrete visual examples—graphic inserts and images—are used to make conceptual suggestions on how Serbian cultural visual codes could be applied in design, fashion, objects, jewellery, clothing and accessories. This synthesis of theory and practise, of analysis and image—is the centrepiece of the work. It is not just a text, it is a map. A map of the possibilities through which cultural identity can become visually active—and real.

The visual inserts that accompany each theoretical segment are not just illustrations. They are also an integral part of the research. In them, motifs from mediæval Serbia merge with contemporary design: the faces of emperors, kings, saints and historical figures appear in modern forms—medallions, shirts, handbags, jewellery, sportswear. These are not replicas, but representations. They do not take us back to the past, but show what the past might look like today. Each insert is therefore analysed in its own section—not just as a design object, but as a sociological construct that can be seen as a background canvas on which the image is reproduced. The sociology here lies in the subtle invisible fabric.

One of the most important theoretical contributions of this paper is the treatment of identity not only as a historical or cognitive category, but as an embodied one. As thinkers such as Maurice Merleau-Ponty (2012) and Elizabeth Grosz (1994) have emphasised, the body is not just a medium of representation — it is its carrier. When a fresco appears on a shirt or a medallion is worn around the neck, a physical visualisation of history takes place. The individual does not simply think identity—he wears it. He doesn't just identify with the culture—he wears it on his face, in his hair, on a cup, on a fingernail.

This moment of bodily representation is particularly explored in the inserts on cosmetics, sports, children's items, and everyday forms. It shows that cultural identity is no longer captured in words, but lives in form, shape, texture and visual impulse. This paper therefore attempts to think culture beyond the academic space—through life itself, through everyday presence.

The following paper has been written not just for the sake of analysis and theory, but as a call to action and inspiration. Its aim is to provide the reader not only with knowledge, but also with ideas. It is intended to open up a space for new designs, for cultural start-ups, for educational models and public campaigns. It does not offer definitive answers, but tools: how a fresco can become a scarf,

how a *slava* (patron saint celebration) can become a necklace, how the symbols of ancient Serbia can appear in pop culture without losing their depth.

At the same time, the work also raises critical questions: How can we avoid trivialisation? How can we protect the dignity of the sacred in profane spaces? How can we find a balance between fashion and meaning? This is where the theoretical significance of the book lies: it not only offers explanations, but also shows the conditions under which visual identity can be made contemporary—without being consumed in the process.

In contemporary cultural sociology and visual studies, the prevailing view is that identity is not an ‘essence’ that one possesses, but a representation that is produced. As Stuart Hall (1997) puts it, identity is performative: it emerges in the process of representation, in the symbols and narratives that society creates, disseminates and consumes. In this context, visual culture is not only a visualisation of identity—it is its primary site of manifestation.

When traditional Serbian motifs, ornaments, fresco styles or fonts appear in design, they are no longer merely decorative elements: they become vectors of identity. The fabric on which a fresco was once painted is now the collar of a shirt. The medallion of a mediaeval empress becomes a modern pendant. An inscription from the hagiography of St Sava finds its way onto a bowl. These are not only reinterpretations of cultural heritage, but, sociologically speaking, new stagings of cultural presence. As Anthony Giddens (1991) suggests, under modern conditions the individual is constantly “reflexively projecting his identity,” and symbols and objects play a key role in this process.

Today’s society is a society of images, as Jean Baudrillard (1994) long ago suggested with his concept of the simulacrum—in a world where symbols replace reality, the visual becomes the only channel of recognition. For a long time, Serbia has expressed its cultural specificity through language, epic poetry, traditional dress and literature. But today, when visual content is absorbed faster than any textual or oral message, the survival of cultural identity depends on its visibility. Or, as Nicholas Mirzoeff (2011) provocatively puts it: if you are not in the picture, you do not exist in cultural memory.

In this article, therefore, visual identity is not treated as an aesthetic concern, but as a political and cultural issue of the first order. In which formats is the Serbian cultural tradition present in the public space? Where is it recognised? Where is it portable, usable, alive? If the fresco exists only in the church, its reproduction only in the museum and the writing only on diplomas and academic articles, then cultural identity becomes invisible—and thus marginal.

The example of Israel and the Hebrew language—which has been revitalised after centuries and returned to everyday life through design, packaging, art and pop culture—shows that cultural revival is not a question of the size of a tradition, but of its ability to transform. Today, Jewish calligraphic ornaments adorn books, company logos and architectural details. The same applies to Islamic geometry, Chinese symbols and Celtic patterns in contemporary Irish branding. Serbia, with its rich visual heritage, is no less rich—it just hasn’t been

sufficiently reinterpreted through the lens of design.

One of the key innovations in this work is the treatment of concrete objects—shirts, handbags, cups, nails, balls—as cultural texts. Each of these objects represents a materialisation of meaning in the sense of cultural anthropology. As Daniel Miller (2010) claims, each object has a double value: a practical and a symbolic one. A fresco on a cup is not only a “beautiful design”—it is also a means of transferring sacred memories into the realm of everyday life. It is both useful and cultural.

This logic proves particularly valuable when applied to the realm of fashion and body design. Today, visual identity is no longer limited to clothing or flags, but can be found in hair clips, cosmetics and sportswear. In the following pages, we will see how Serbian identity appears on the face, on eyelashes, on handbags, on objects that do not belong to “high culture,” but for this very reason are fertile ground for the spread of cultural sensibility. A decorated nail with a Serbian ornament is not a parody of tradition, but a cultural miniature expressed through a new medium.

The methodology of artistic sociology

The theoretical basis of this work is based on sociological concepts of cultural representation, symbolic power and social memory. Methodologically, visual art is combined as a method of analysis with cultural-historical interpretation and critical sociological reflection. In the spirit of Bourdieu’s (1993) understanding of social space, each object is read as a position within the cultural field—wearing a fresco is not the same as wearing a brand. But each visual motif is also a performance, with its audience, its space and its scenography. At the same time, theoretical analysis is paired with aesthetic intuition: every visual insert is not just a document, but an invitation—to design, to recognise, to act.

The aim is to stimulate broader cultural thinking: To encourage designers, artists, entrepreneurs, educators—even amateurs of visual expression (like the author of this text)—to consider cultural heritage as a space of creative freedom. Not as folklore, but as an archive of motifs that can be recoded in a contemporary context. In this sense, this work is not only sociological, but also a cultural and political act.

As already emphasised, this study is based on the assumption that visual elements of culture play a crucial role in shaping national consciousness—especially in an era dominated by media images and symbolic saturation. On the basis of the 12 selected visual examples, each accompanied by a comparative textual analysis and conceptualised as a contemporary reshaping of Serbian cultural heritage, we attempt to show new possibilities for the (re)construction of identity, belonging and symbolic representation.



Sanctity and femininity (Milica's medallion)

Empress Milica (ca. 1335–1405), wife of Prince Lazar and mother of the despot Stefan Lazarević, is considered one of the most important personalities in mediaeval Serbian history. A symbol of motherhood, female piety, political wisdom and spiritual greatness, Milica is portrayed in history as a saint, poet and diplomatic mediator. Her retreat into monastic life—where she took the name of the nun Eugenia—and her later canonisation by the Serbian Orthodox Church further cemented her symbolic power in Serbian cultural memory.

The medallion with the monogram of Empress Milica, designed as a piece of applied art jewellery, represents an attempt to visually reactualise the national heritage. Its monastic form is graphically framed and preserves the spiritual and aesthetic subtlety of the Orthodox tradition, creating a symbolic link between historical heritage and contemporary cultural identity.

Symbolically, the medallion begins to function—to live—as a 'symbol of identity' for the individual who wears it, while also being recognised by the wider community. The object subtly takes on the role of a symbolic reinforcer of social cohesion, cultural memory and personal belonging to the spiritual and historical heritage of Serbia.

Cultural identity is not static, but is constantly reconstructed through representations, as Stuart Hall argues (Hall, 1997). The medallion of Empress Milica is one such representation—it is not just a reference to the past, but an active proposal for the reinterpretation of our identity. Pierre Bourdieu would call this "symbolic capital", because wearing such a visual form implies the possession of a certain cultural capital and entry into the arena of symbolic struggle, where the consumer aesthetics of the global market meet local cultural codes. It is precisely in this conflict that objects like this become "signs of resistance"—a subtle defence of national identity through aesthetics.

From the perspective of Anthony Giddens' theory of reflexive modernity (Giddens, 1991), the choice of such an object as part of one's personal style reflects the need for continuity in a world characterised by fluidity, fragmentation and the instability of meaning. Visual symbols such as the medallion serve as anchors of identity, as points of stability in a rapidly changing world.

The medallion of Empress Milica thus has the potential to be more than an aesthetic product—it can become a component of cultural identity politics. When integrated into fashion design, school curricula, museum artefacts and public campaigns, it can play a role in the education, cultural literacy and visual culture of younger generations. In this way, it affirms not only a historical figure from the past, but an entire symbolic system that embodies it.



The silent return of meaning (a fresco in weaving)

Frescoes in Serbian monasteries represent one of the most valuable cultural achievements of the Serbian Middle Ages. From *Studenica* and *Žiča* to *Gračanica*, *Sopoćani*, *Dečani* and the Patriarchate of Peć, the Serbian fresco tradition developed its own visual language, combining Byzantine art, theology and local symbolism. These motifs—fundamental iconographies, halos, geometric patterns, burgundy and gold tones, holy gazes—are not only aesthetic components, but also carry complex theological and civilising messages.

A shirt with a collar inspired by this fresco aesthetic illustrates the transformation of sacred art into a secular context—it becomes wearable, alive and active in the modern space. This act not only preserves tradition, but also makes it contemporary.

The shirt as an everyday item of clothing takes on a new dimension in this form—it is not just a fashion item, but a visual sign of cultural orientation. When the collar bears a fresco motif, it becomes a border area between the sacred and the profane, between the body and the iconic text, between identity and presentation.

This kind of integration of traditional imagery into fashion design creates what Roland Barthes (1983) would call a second-order myth—a sign that is no longer merely aesthetic, but ideologically charged. The shirt becomes an expression of the individual desire for rootedness as well as the collective need to represent cultural authenticity in today's world.

In contemporary fashion sociology (Kaiser, 1997; Entwistle, 2000), fashion is no longer seen as an ephemeral aesthetic category, but as a significant space of social communication and identity representation. Wearing a shirt with motifs inspired by frescoes is not just a visual decision, but a cultural statement. It conveys a sense of belonging, respect for tradition and a subtle critique of cultural globalisation and aesthetic uniformity.

From the perspective of Bourdieu's (1984) concept of distinction, such a shirt can represent cultural capital—a form of stylistic distinction based not on brand or price, but on symbolic meaning. In this sense, it becomes an instrument of cultural articulation in the social space and a means by which individuals reconstruct their position in relation to cultural trends.

Furthermore, this type of clothing enters the realm of what Gilles Lipovetsky (1994) calls the integration of the postmodern and the traditional—in a world of free-floating symbols, cultural value is created precisely through the interweaving of meanings and hybrid forms.

The shirt with the fresco-style collar combines the beautiful and the functional, the aesthetic and the symbolic, the contemporary and the traditional, making visual identity something that is literally worn and not just studied.



Symbols of dignity (Theodora's ring)

Queen Teodora Nemanjić was the wife of King Stefan Dečanski and the mother of Emperor Stefan Dušan. Her life path—from a Byzantine princess to a Serbian queen and the mother of a future emperor—epitomises the fusion of two cultural and political traditions, the Byzantine and the Serbian, and thus became an archetype of noble femininity in mediaeval Serbian consciousness.

Although the ring attributed to her is a modern reproduction, it is a visual and material trace of a symbolically dense past. Its design—massive yet refined, adorned with ornaments and symbols that evoke authority, spirituality and status—shows that jewellery is not just a decoration, but also a sign of origin, position and legitimacy.

In traditional societies, jewellery is not only an aesthetic object, but also a symbol of power, legitimacy, the transmission of values and spiritual protection. In this context, the ring functions as a symbol of lineage and sacred duty. In the case of Queen Teodora, its symbolic capital unites several levels: Family, sovereignty, cultural continuity and female identity within a patriarchal social order.

Today, the reproduction of this ring has the potential to serve as a symbol of uninterrupted cultural continuity—it is no longer worn solely for aesthetic reasons, but as a sign of cultural loyalty and personal identification with the national heritage.

From the perspective of cultural sociology, Queen Teodora's ring can be read as a materialised representation of cultural memory. It is an object that makes history tangible, transferable and wearable. It is what Maurice Halbwachs (1992) described as “collective memory in matter”—a form through which the past persists in the present via symbols.

In a society in which visual culture is accelerating and meanings are constantly being reformulated, jewellery takes on a special value as a carrier of stable symbols. As Anthony Giddens (1991) states, under the conditions of reflexive modernity, the individual searches for anchors for his identity in symbolic objects. The ring of Queen Teodora as a visible sign of cultural belonging enables precisely this connection to a deeper meaning—even in societies characterised by increased individualism.

From a gender perspective, such jewellery also contributes to the valorisation of the role of women in history. While modern feminism—notably Judith Butler (1990)—often focuses on the deconstruction of tradition, here we observe the opposite: the reactivation of a powerful female figure from the past as a model for the contemporary affirmation of female dignity within a cultural framework that all too often neglects it.

As a designed object, Queen Teodora's ring has the potential to become a vehicle of cultural emancipation.



RING OF QUEEN TEODORA,
mother of Emperor Dušan
replica, 14th century

Historical memory in motion (walking frescoes)

The use of traditional motifs in contemporary design is not a novelty—it is a reaction to the identity crisis in the age of globalisation. But when such a transformation takes place in the realm of everyday objects—such as a handbag or a tote—a particularly interesting sociological phenomenon arises: the transfer of cultural meaning from the sacred to the profane, from the monastery wall to the arm of a passer-by. A bag decorated with fragments of Serbian frescoes is more than just a fashion accessory; it becomes a wearable part of cultural memory—a kind of visual passport through which the national past is claimed and brought back to life in the present.

The frescoes of mediaeval Serbian monasteries—whether the angelic gaze from Sopoćani or the solemn faces on the walls of *Gračanica*—are not just images floating in the aesthetic void. They are visual narratives of a theological, political and cultural worldview. Transferring these fragments onto a handbag is not just an act of artistic adaptation, but a subtle gesture of repoliticising fashion—because, as Roland Barthes (1983) reminds us, what we wear is never entirely innocent.

From the perspective of identity sociology, such a handbag is identified as a performative symbol. It is not just a reflection of taste, but a particular attitude, a certain message, a personal choice. As Stuart Hall (1997) argues, identities are constructed through differences and contexts—so to carry a handbag with a Serbian fresco motif in the urban, globalised space of Belgrade, Novi Sad or even Vienna or Paris is to make a visual statement. It proclaims cultural belonging and emphasises that the past is not dead—it is recycled, redesigned and revived.

It is important to emphasise that the handbag as an object belongs to a traditional female sphere. In this sense, the design also reflects a gendered intervention: the woman who carries a bag adorned with iconographic fragments becomes the bearer of cultural memory in a world that tends to forget. She refuses to remain a passive and blind consumer of Western aesthetics, but instead draws on her own visual genetic code. There is a parallel here to Judith Butler's (1990) concept of gender performativity—identity in this case is not only lived, but moulded and revealed through visual choices on the body in public space.

In a society dominated by what Zygmunt Bauman (2000) calls „liquid modernity,“ such objects function as condensed forms of stability. A bag with fresco motifs becomes a form of resistance to transience—a “filter of symbolic consistency” in a world where symbols have become cheap and interchangeable. It has the potential to serve as a platform for cultural renewal—when integrated into the education system, gallery programmes or public aesthetics (e.g. diplomatic gifts), it can act as a bridge between past and present. Ultimately, such design refers to what Pierre Bourdieu (1984) called aesthetic politics—it is never a neutral act, but reshapes the symbolic landscape through which the individual moves. The handbag adorned with a sacred image becomes—metaphorically speaking—a personal, mobile iconostasis. Not for praying, but for remembering—for visually strengthening cultural identity in an age of digital amnesia.



Early awakening of identity (the hairpin)

At first glance, it appears to be a simple object—a hair clip of the kind found in any accessories shop. But when this object is shaped according to the contours of the Virgin Mary and Christ or stylised according to a fresco motif, it is no longer a mere ornament, but becomes the bearer of a deeper meaning—a symbolic initiation into cultural identity. The clip takes on the role of symbolic initiation: it becomes the body's first contact with a visual sign of spirituality, at a time when the child is not yet fully aware of the meaning of this sign.

The deep connection between visual identity and childhood is also illustrated by the widespread Serbian tradition of the *Vrbica* holiday. On this day, children—both girls and boys—are given small bells that are tied around their necks with ribbons in the colours of the Serbian tricolour. The jingling follows their movement, and the ribbons bear the colours of the national flag, making these symbols alive and present—not as imposed signs, but as playful, joyful and festive aesthetic objects. Children readily accept them, appreciate them and recognise them as something “of their own.” This sensory experience, in which sound, colour, movement and the festive atmosphere combine to form—a memory, lays the foundation for visual and cultural recognition.

Pierre Bourdieu (1984) emphasised that the cultural habitus is formed through bodily practises, gestures and visual signs that are adopted long before the onset of reflective consciousness. This is precisely why it is important that childhood includes objects such as this hair clip or the three-coloured ribbon—objects that anchor elements of culture directly in the body. Identity is not only learnt through words; it is “worn,” “bound,” “carried.” It is first a sensory and only then a cognitive experience.

Stuart Hall (1997) argued that cultural identity is formed through representation—through ongoing symbolic constructions that give us an image of who we are. The hair clip with the fresco or the ribbon tied with the bell are not museum relics, but representations in motion—ways through which culture reaches the body and becomes part of subjective experience.

From the perspective of gender studies, this example reflects what Judith Butler (1990) calls the performative character of gender: a girl is not predetermined, but becomes one through wearing, acting and choosing. A hair clip depicting the Virgin Mary links female identity with piety, modesty and purity, but also with the symbolic figure of the mother. Depending on the interpretation, this can be criticised or affirmed: While some see it as a restriction, others see it as an alternative to a secular consumer culture that promotes the early sexualisation of girls.

Objects such as the Virgin Mary's hair clip have the potential to establish symbolic patterns that fulfil aesthetic, spiritual and cultural functions later in life. And when such a sensibility takes root in early childhood, visual identity becomes an integral part of one's being.



The sacred in the secular (orthodoxy worn close to the heart)

The celebration of a family's patron saint (*Krsna slava*), is one of the most important and enduring components of Serbian spiritual and cultural identity. It is not just a ritual, but an inherited institution that has been passed down through the centuries. It symbolises not only religious affiliation, but also the continuation of family tradition, historical awareness and social belonging. The icon of the family's patron saint is the visual centre of the family's memory. In its miniaturisation, the family icon takes on a new level of symbolic meaning—as a personal, portable and everyday form of spiritual identification.

From the perspective of cultural anthropology, such an object can be interpreted as a totemic sign—a sign that denotes a tribal, in this case a family structure and condenses values, history, loyalty and belief into a single visual symbol. Although we live in a world where many customs have been marginalised, this form of translating tradition into a modern medium is actually a strategy for cultural sustainability.

In today's society, as has been rightly pointed out, identity is increasingly created rather than inherited. In this sense, wearing a necklace with a miniature icon of a patron saint is not just a passive inheritance, but an active choice. This choice affirms continuity in conditions of discontinuity and spirituality in an age of technological dominance. This necklace is not intended for ritual use, but for everyday life. It “relocates” the sacred to spaces of personal intimacy, work, school, public transport—spaces in which a spiritual symbol becomes a visual sign of one's position in the world.

Furthermore, such an object functions as an intimate medium of cultural socialisation. It does not shout, impose or preach, but it acts. As Bourdieu (1977) writes about habitus, identity is often expressed through unconscious choices and embodied practises—and the necklace with an icon is precisely one of these choices that ‘speaks’ through presence, form and context.

Such things are important because they allow us a new way of visual communication in a global culture that is increasingly filled with empty signs, such as the logos of transnational corporations, which are fast, fleeting and empty. In this visual chaos, the small icon of a family saint worn around the neck becomes a sign of resistance, symbolising contentment, continuity, rootedness and name. It is not a brand, but a testimony. Putting on the emblem of the saint as a necklace is a visible method of remembrance, but it also opens up the tradition to the modern world: to the youth, the city and people who are constantly on the move. The necklace is not just an object, it is a bridge in this respect.

Nevertheless, the act of creation must be done carefully. Even if the form of the icon is changed, its sacredness must be preserved. The difficulty lies in finding the right balance: How to design a necklace that is beautiful and respectful, wearable yet profound, modern and classic? The trick and the key to cultural revitalisation is to find that balance. And at a time when so many people feel lost, this necklace—a humble object—could be the hidden centre of both personal and group identity.

ICON
of the patron saint



The room as a window into the past (fresco at home)

The places where we live are never neutral; they influence how we act, how we feel and even how we see ourselves. In this sense, the interior design of a home is more than just a beautiful sight; it is an extension of your personality. When patterns from Serbian mediaeval frescoes appear on curtains or wallpaper, it's a great example of how cultural memory can be physically present in private, family or public spaces. The curtain is no longer just a useful object, but becomes a way of showing things—an approach from the sacred to the everyday, from the national to the personal and from the past to the present.

Serbian frescoes from the 13th and 15th centuries, especially those in monasteries such as *Mileševa*, *Sopoćani*, *Gračanica* and *Dečani*, are the best examples of the visual art of a spiritual society. The faces of the saints, the architecture of the sky, the meaning of gestures and colours—all these things come together to form a whole that shaped and passed on the cultural identity of a people. When these parts are applied to a cloth, a new kind of art is created: a painting that is no longer to be hung on the wall of a monastery, but on the window of a house, a school or an office. Its sociological significance begins with this act of translation.

Henri Lefebvre (1991) says in *The Production of Space* that every space is socially produced and influenced by power relations, symbols and values that are hidden beneath the surface. When you furnish a room with fresco-inspired curtains, its appearance and meaning changes. It goes from abstract, consumerist and globalised to concrete, inherited and locally anchored. The curtain becomes a wall of memory and a gateway to meaning. It breaks through the uniform appearance of modern homes with a layer of metaphorical depth.

This type of curtain is not only beautiful, but also fulfils a social purpose by passing on values to future generations. Children who grow up with this kind of thing will see Serbian frescoes in their own living room and not in a history book. This early contact with a visual code is important for developing what Pierre Bourdieu called perceptual schemata, i.e. deeply ingrained ways of reading and decoding signals.

And once again we can use Benedict Anderson's (2006) definition of a nation as "an imagined community understood as historically continuous." These visual transformations of real life have a silent political meaning. They fight against forgetting, against cultural amnesia, and they give us a new form of patriotism that is not loud or forceful, but rather quiet, personal and beautiful.



The body as a canvas of identity (the fresco on the promenade)

The T-shirt is a common piece of clothing that people wear every day. It is one of the most direct means by which someone can show their particular beliefs, style or sense of belonging. In today's fashion, the T-shirt is a place for people to express themselves symbolically, from political messages to designer graphics. But when a T-shirt has a fresco pattern, especially one based on mediaeval Serbian art, something more than just design happens. The T-shirt becomes a moving canvas for cultural expression, a personal space for visual patriotism and a visible sign of spiritual remembrance.

The frescoes in Serbian monasteries were created to show the identity of the people who lived there. They are rough, symmetrical, have golden halos and show saints staring at you. Putting them on a T-shirt is both innovative and very powerful. Symbols that were once destined for the sacred walls of a church are now moving through streets, lecture theatres, galleries and other public places. These frescoes are not only an artistic gesture, but also a social statement: they are not relics of the past, they are present.

In social theory, this act can be interpreted as the performativity of visual identity. Just as Judith Butler (1990) explained that gender is performed rather than possessed, cultural identity is also performed—it is staged, shown and inscribed on and through the body. Wearing a T-shirt with a fresco is an open invitation to dialogue: What is it that we are wearing, why are we wearing it and what are we communicating with it?

Pierre Bourdieu (1990) would interpret this clothing as a manifestation of aesthetic differentiation. This T-shirt has a cultural capital, in contrast to branded clothing, which represents a class identification. It has value not because of marketing, a designer's reputation, luxury or references to individual achievement. Its value is derived from the symbolic code that only those with the same cultural background can understand. Therein lies its silent power: it shows that you belong to those who can see beyond the surface.

From the point of view of identity production in postmodern society, in which empty symbols dominate (Baudrillard), the T-shirt with the fresco appears as a return to the fullness of meaning. It is not aesthetics for the sake of aesthetics, but aesthetics for the sake of ethics, history and continuity.

It is also important to point out the dimension of global communication. In a world full of Western symbols, brands and trends, this T-shirt is a subtle form of cultural diplomacy—it speaks without words. On the streets of Belgrade, it might signify pride. In Paris, it might make someone think. In any case, it shows that cultural belonging is not stuck in the past, but is active, agile and clear.

It is a symbol of cultural renewal that combines body and history, style and meaning, youth and tradition. It is not simply worn—it is lived.



New and altered symbols of power (Lazar's button)

In both historical and mythical representations of the Serbian people, Prince Lazar Hrebeljanović is one of the most powerful symbols of national history, martyrdom and political vision. His “button,” a small piece of jewellery that looks like an artefact from the 14th century, is often shown as an icon or fresco. In modern design, it shows a new perspective: how a useful and beautiful object can become a symbolic capsule of culture.

A button is an object that makes no noise. It serves the purpose of closing, connecting and disappearing into its function. But when Prince Lazar's button becomes a decorative object, it undergoes a semiotic change: it is no longer a means, but a testimony. From the perspective of memory anthropology, this button embodies what Aleida Assmann (2011) calls material memory.

In the post-structuralist tradition of cultural analysis, such objects function as intertextual sites of memory—places where history, power, gender and the body intersect. A button becomes a micro-symbol of aesthetics.

From a sociological perspective of material culture (Miller, 2010), a button used as jewellery is classified as an indexical object, as it directly signifies a particular actor, era or event. In this situation, it signifies a shift from the political to the cultural. What used to be a sign of social status is now a sign of belonging to a tradition. This is a change of function, not of meaning: even in its new form, the button still speaks of hierarchy, responsibility and honour.

It is particularly noteworthy that an object previously associated with male dress—a status symbol—has now been redefined as a gender-neutral or even feminine piece of jewellery. This creates an original gender-specific framework for analysis: The transformation of a male-coded symbol into a collective cultural sign signifies a process of de-localisation of gendered power and the democratisation of heritage. This is in line with recent studies on cultural materialism (Barrett & Kuchler, 2008), which show how objects transcend the boundaries of class, gender and function.

The modern design of this button as a piece of jewellery also expresses the idea of visual sovereignty. It adds a sense of formal dignity to modern visual culture by condensing a lot of history into a small, precise detail. This button is an anti-brand because it is quiet, unassuming and full of meaning, unlike today's branding that promotes hyper-visibility.

This button is not just a fastener, it is an anchor in a world that is losing its reference points. It connects the past with the present, the body with history, beauty with morality. It shows that sometimes the simplest details can have the greatest meanings.



BUTTON
OF PRINCE LAZAR
replica,
14th century

Tradition in rotation (the saint on a cube)

The decorative cube, whose sides are decorated with motifs from Serbian frescoes and icons, is an object of exceptional symbolic and educational value. At first glance, it may seem like a decorative toy or an artistic souvenir. But in the dimension of cultural representation, it turns out to be a rotating structure of memory—a miniature temple that the user can touch, turn over, “flip through” like a book without words. Its potential lies precisely in this tactile relationship to the visual content: to make cultural memory both tangible and mobile.

Frescoes and icons have a firm place in traditional Serbian culture—on the walls of churches, in iconostases, on stands. Their placement is hierarchical; their role is spiritual and sacred. When these images are transferred to a cube—an object that rotates, that you touch, that you place on a table—a spatial democratisation of the symbol takes place. They are no longer above us, but in our hands. This shift in the relationship between the viewer and the sacred reveals a new form of communication: intimate, free, ritualistic and yet unobtrusive. According to John Dewey (1934), the aesthetic experience is not confined to galleries or temples—it arises in the interaction between subject and object. The decorative cube becomes the mediator of this interaction: it invites you to touch, turn and rediscover. It “animates” the fresco by setting it in motion. Instead of passive contemplation, a haptic perception is awakened—learning through the hands, through play, through physical memory.

From a sociological point of view, this object can be analysed as a small architecture of memory. It functions as a cubic mnemonic device—an object that activates cultural scripts, historical knowledge and religious images. As Pierre Nora (1989) argues, places of memory emerge precisely when living tradition begins to fade. Such objects function as a response to this fading: they do not restore continuity, but create a new form of connection with the past.

This cube is particularly valuable in an educational context. As Lev Vygotsky (1978) states, learning takes place not only in abstraction, but through concrete, situational practise. This cube can serve as a tool for the cultural education of children: It is a toy that is not only entertaining, but also a narrative device—each side can become the beginning of a story, a lesson, a conversation. The visual identity is therefore not conveyed as information, but as an experience. This object also illustrates how contemporary design can reinterpret traditions in completely new formats. The designer’s ingenuity here is not only aesthetic, but also educational, cultural and even spiritual. At a time when children and adults are surrounded by digital images that disappear in a matter of seconds, this cube invites silence, contemplation, rotation and reflection. It introduces rhythm into cultural communication.

And finally, the cube symbolises wholeness, stability and order. In this sense, this decorative cube has an archetypal power—it is small but complete. It contains the four directions of the world, eight symbols and countless possibilities. If cultural identity is something that is constantly being assembled, rotated and reimagined, then this cube is not just an object, but a metaphor for this very process.



Decorative
CUBES
of various size

Everyday life as history (a good day to identity)

When motifs from Serbian mediaeval frescoes appear on objects associated with habit, routine and banal everyday life, they become media of cultural transmission. The frescoes that were once intended for the walls of sacred temples now “enter” the home and “rest” in the hands of ordinary people—not as icons to be venerated, but as symbols to be lived and unconsciously remind us of their meaning.

This transference of the sacred into the profane, the sublime into the ordinary, the elite into the everyday is an example of what Michel de Certeau (1984) calls the practise of everyday life. Instead of grand gestures to preserve culture, there is a penetration of meaning into the routines of life: it is no longer enclosed in a museum, but circulates.

From a sociological point of view, this means a democratisation of visual identity. As Nicholas Mirzoeff argues in his *Introduction to visual culture* (1999), visual culture is not only what one sees, but also what one uses, consumes and appropriates. A cup with a fresco motif becomes a “sacred object without ritual”—not an object of worship, but one that bears the codes of tradition. Therein lies its strength: it does not compel belief, but offers remembrance. It does not demand piety, but simply presence. And perhaps most importantly, it does not break with everyday—life, but gradually reshapes it.

Such objects are also part of what Pierre Bourdieu (1984) calls the familiarisation with culture through daily practises. What is constantly present, what becomes routine, slowly becomes part of the habitus—a deeply ingrained sense of what is “normal,” “natural,” “ours.” In this sense, a cup with a fresco motif acts as a silent pedagogy of cultural belonging—it does not educate directly, but shapes perception, worldview and the symbolic environment.

Emotional identification is a particularly important dimension. The use of a cup is emotional: it is part of rituals of relaxation, conversation and hospitality. In Serbian culture, a cup of coffee or tea often serves as a medium for socialising. When a fresco appears in this context, it takes on a new life: It transforms from a symbol of prayer into a symbol of community—no less sacred, but present in a different way.

This object also opens up a space for visual diplomacy. As a gift or souvenir, a fresco-painted object becomes a form of cultural mediation. It conveys a message of identity that is not aggressive, but leaves an impression: “This is a part of who we are.” Its value lies not in its price, but in the calmness with which it speaks.

Its design embodies a subdued aesthetic that communicates loudly—but without shouting. Modesty becomes an aesthetic strategy. As George Steiner (1971) wrote: “Tradition does not survive in the way we imagine—it survives in forms that are unobtrusive but never disappear.”

In an age in which porcelain is replaced by plastic and images on objects are reduced to advertising, the cup with a fresco becomes an act of refusal—not against progress, but against oblivion.



Heritage in the unexpected (honour and pride)

When traditional Serbian motifs—frescoes, ornamental patterns or old Cyrillic scripts—appear on hairbands, face stickers, sports balls or decorative nails, a cultural shift takes place that requires careful sociological interpretation. These objects, which are deeply embedded in popular culture, sports, body aesthetics and everyday fashion, take on a new meaning: they become fields of visual representation of national identity in spaces where such a presence was previously absent. We no longer speak of cultural continuity in temples, schools or books, but of belonging in movement—on the playing field, in the face, in the physical performances of everyday life. These objects belong to what Stuart Hall (1997) calls a new cultural hybridity. They are not mere replicas of tradition, but contemporary derivatives—less an act of preservation than a transformation that allows tradition to survive. When an orthodox fragment appears in the gym, does it empower us? Or when a heraldic emblem is embroidered on gloves—does it protect us? What unfolds here is a visual innovation that is not without risk, but harbours immense potential.

In contemporary culture, the body has become a central place of representation. Decorative nails and hairbands are no longer merely aesthetic—in line with Foucault’s (2003) concept of the biopolitics of the body (*biopolitique*), they have become contested spaces in which meanings are negotiated. By placing a traditional Serbian motif in these arenas, a new question arises: can cosmetics be a form of cultural activism? The answer is yes. Because what we are witnessing here is not the commercialisation of tradition, but its mobilisation.

The presence of such symbols in sport is of particular importance. Sport is inherently an arena of visibility—on television, in embodiment, on an emotional level. When an athlete wears a sticker with a fresco detail, it is not just a performance, but a representation. They are carriers of a cultural code, even if they are not aware of it. According to Benedict Anderson (2006), a nation is an “imagined community”—but it is not only imagined in textbooks, but also on stands, in haircuts, on paddles and in gazes. And that is precisely where such visual elements gain their power.

National ornaments as elements of contemporary female (but also male) aesthetics become part of a process that is described in the visual studies as “body branding.” The body is no longer private—it becomes a public platform for identity. But this identity is not imposed: It is chosen, it is play, it is creative expression. And therein lies its cultural value: tradition appears where we least expect it—in spaces of joy, sport, beauty, play. Ultimately, such visual motifs have real emancipatory potential. They liberate tradition from the burden of solemnity and breathe new life into it—in the areas of fun, aesthetics and youth. They speak a new language, but with old roots. It is not about relativising the sacred, but about recognising it in new forms.

If the Serbian state symbols (*ocila*) can “come to life” on the face of a fan, on the hairband of a sportswoman or on the fingernail of a teenager, then they represent a new beginning of cultural expression.



Conclusion: Visual identity on the cultural assembly line

In this paper we have taken a brief look into a corner of the sociological imagination and realised that we live in a time when identity is not spoken, but worn; not known, but displayed; not remembered, but reflexively shaped. It is therefore necessary to fundamentally rethink our traditional concepts of culture, history and belonging. This study has shown that Serbia's visual identity can no longer be understood solely through national symbols, institutional narratives and ritual forms. It must be analysed—and shaped—in accordance with the logic of contemporary visual society: a society in which symbols not only represent reality, but also produce it.

The question of identity today is not only a question of content, but also of form: Through which media does cultural belonging come to life? How is what we are made visible? Where is the space in which tradition is reprogrammed for the future? These are not simple questions, but this work offers a model for an answer: not through a return to the past, but through its creative projection into the present.

The artefacts analysed here were not simply objects—they were symptoms of a possible transformation. Their value lies not only in their visual appeal, but in the potential they carry to reshape social habits: what we wear, what we show, how we present ourselves, what children learn to see as “beautiful,” “ours” or “valuable.” In this sense, visual identity becomes a social practise—not static, but fluid, mobile and negotiated, just like culture itself.

The future of identity in this context is multimedia. If it does not appear in pop culture, in social media, in everyday fashion, in private and public spaces, then identity gradually retreats into the silence of history. That is why one of the aims of this work was to open up a space in which designers, artists, cultural professionals and educational institutions can begin to engage in a reflexive visualisation of cultural heritage.

To do this, we must first overcome the artificial separation between “serious culture” and “popular form” and a further separation between “serious science” and “lived practise.” A queen's medallion on a bunch of keys is no less significant than a museum artefact—it is just used differently. A fresco on a hairband is not a desecration, but a revitalisation—if used with care, knowledge and respect. In this intersection of cult and style, of temple and body, lies a new space for cultural reaffirmation.

If there is one conclusion to be drawn from this paper, it is this: Visual identity is not a question of art, but a question of cultural survival. A nation that cannot be seen does not exist in a world that communicates through images. Serbia has much to show—frescoes, writing, legends, woven patterns, icons, motifs, colours, ornaments and countless other cultural treasures. What is needed is not a new history, but a new format. And this paper is exactly that call—to reformat our heritage for a cultural future.



For further reading and inspiration:

- Anderson, B. (2006). *Imagined communities: Reflections on the origin and spread of nationalism* (Rev. ed.). Verso. (Original work published 1983)
- Assmann, A. (2011). *Cultural memory and Western civilization: Functions, media, archives*. Cambridge University Press.
- Barrett, C., & Küchler, S. (2008). *Art and anthropology: Object cultures in transition*. Berg.
- Baudrillard, J. (1994). *Simulacra and simulation* (S. F. Glaser, Trans.). University of Michigan Press. (Original work published 1981)
- Bauman, Z. (2000). *Liquid modernity*. Polity Press.
- Barthes, R. (1983). *The fashion system* (M. Ward & R. Howard, Trans.). University of California Press. (Original work published 1967)
- Bourdieu, P. (1977). *Outline of a theory of practice* (R. Nice, Trans.). Cambridge University Press. (Original work published 1972)
- Bourdieu, P. (1984). *Distinction: A social critique of the judgement of taste* (R. Nice, Trans.). Harvard University Press.
- Bourdieu, P. (1990). *The logic of practice* (R. Nice, Trans.). Stanford University Press.
- Bourdieu, P. (1993). *The field of cultural production: Essays on art and literature*. Columbia University Press.
- Butler, J. (1990). *Gender trouble: Feminism and the subversion of identity*. Routledge.
- de Certeau, M. (1984). *The practice of everyday life* (S. Rendall, Trans.). University of California Press.
- Dewey, J. (1934). *Art as experience*. Minton, Balch & Company.
- Entwistle, J. (2000). *The fashioned body: Fashion, dress and modern social theory*. Polity Press.
- Foucault, M. (2003). *Society must be defended: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1975–76* (D. Macey, Trans.). Picador.
- Giddens, A. (1991). *Modernity and self-identity: Self and society in the late modern age*. Stanford University Press.
- Grosz, E. (1994). *Volatile bodies: Toward a corporeal feminism*. Indiana University Press.
- Hall, S. (1997). *Representation: Cultural representations and signifying practices*. Sage.
- Halbwachs, M. (1992). *On collective memory* (L. A. Coser, Ed. & Trans.). University of Chicago Press.
- Kaiser, S. B. (1997). *The social psychology of clothing: Symbolic appearances in context* (2nd ed.). Fairchild Publications.
- Lefebvre, H. (1991). *The production of space* (D. Nicholson-Smith, Trans.). Blackwell. (Original work published 1974)
- Lipovetsky, G. (1994). *The empire of fashion: Dressing modern democracy* (C. Porter, Trans.). Princeton University Press.
- Merleau-Ponty, M. (2012). *Phenomenology of perception* (D. A. Landes, Trans.). Routledge. (Original work published 1945)
- Miller, D. (2010). *Stuff*. Polity Press.
- Mirzoeff, N. (1999). *An introduction to visual culture* (2nd ed.). Routledge.
- Nora, P. (1989). Between memory and history: Les lieux de mémoire. *Representations*, *26*, 7–24. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2928520>
- Steiner, G. (1971). *In Bluebeard's castle: Some notes towards the redefinition of culture*. Yale University Press.
- Vygotsky, L. S. (1978). *Mind in society: The development of higher psychological processes*. Harvard University Press.

Digital Extensions:



CIP – Каталогизација у публикацији
Народна библиотека Србије, Београд

323.1(=163.41)(082)

316.722(=163.41)(082)

316.356.4(=163.41)(082)

SERBIAN identity : reaffirmation or deconstruction
/ Slobodan Antonić, Ana Vuković, Zoran Kindić (editors). –
Belgrade : University Faculty of Philosophy, 2025 (Beograd :
Dosije studio). – 302 str. ; 24 cm

Tiraž 500. – "This publication was produced and printed
as part of the project Formation of Serbian identity
and theoretical controversies concerning attempts of its
deconstruction (acronym FSITC, registration number 1561,
Identities program), funded by the Science Fund of the
Republic of Serbia."--> Kolofon. – Str. 7–8: Introduction/
[Slobodan Antonić, Ana Vuković, Zoran Kindić]. –
Napomene i bibliografske reference uz tekst. - Bibliografija
uz svaki rad.

ISBN 978-86-6427-371-8

а) Национални идентитет -- Срби -- Зборници

б) Патриотизам -- Срби -- Зборници

в) Национализам -- Срби -- Зборници

COBISS.SR-ID 173319433