

# The vicissitudes of Dositej Obradović's Enlightenment cult among the Serbs

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In numerous works Paschalis Kitromilides has demonstrated how the acceptance and promulgation of Enlightenment ideas in the Balkans took place in conscious opposition to the spiritual heritage of the area shaped by the traditions of Eastern Orthodox Christianity. This in turn led to the wholesome reinterpretation of the history of its peoples and to a new visualization of their future.<sup>1</sup> Embracing novelty was disquieting for Orthodox Christians because tradition maintained the link with their vision of a past golden age, the venerated harmony of Byzantine spiritual and secular powers that came close to heaven on earth. There were more down-to-earth reasons too, in the fact that the Orthodox clergy and hierarchy enjoyed somewhat privileged status and undisputed leadership over their folk within the Ottoman realm, which for centuries encompassed all of the Balkans.<sup>2</sup> The same principle of privileging religious leaders and fortifying their primacy was later adopted by the Habsburg monarchy where many Orthodox Christians found refuge from the Ottoman conquest or where they fled during numerous wars and skirmishes between the two empires.<sup>3</sup> Moreover, centuries of distinct historical trajectories between the West and (in this case the Balkan) East were marred by conflict. The smaller and weaker side felt betrayed and victimised by the West and by the

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<sup>1</sup> Paschalis Kitromilides, 'The Enlightenment East and West: A Comparative Perspective on the Ideological Origins of the Balkan Political Traditions', *Canadian Review of Studies in Nationalism* 10 (1983), p. 51-70 (p. 55).

<sup>2</sup> The Ottoman Empire was a caliphate clearly and significantly privileging Muslims over Orthodox Christians or any other non-Muslims. Orthodox Christians or the so-called *Rum Millet* nevertheless enjoyed certain rights and were represented by their religious leaders. For the Serbian Church under the Ottomans and the position of its clergy and hierarchy under *Rum Millet* system, see László Hadrovics, *Le peuple serbe et son église sous la domination turque* (Paris, 1947).

<sup>3</sup> See Dinko Davidov, *Srpske privilegije carskog doma habzburškog* [Habsburg Imperial Court's Privileges to Serbs] (Novi Sad, 1994).

eighteenth century developed elaborate discourses and images of its enemy.<sup>4</sup> Finally, the cultural and political reorientation towards the West, brought about in the same period, required a new medium of expression as the existing written language (Old or Church Slavonic) was the preserve of the Church and incomprehensible to the audience which the adherents of the new ideas tried to reach. Inevitably, the search for the new could unfold only via the existing channels provided by the Orthodox Church but along the way the Serbian like all other emerging Balkan elites gradually wore off their old and shared Orthodox (Byzantine) identity. Questioning the Church's monopoly in identity formation and preservation opened the long lasting clash between new secular elites and the Church. While major contours of this conflict are known the following chapter will look in detail of how the life and deeds of one man, Dositej Obradović, came to symbolize the ruptures and new avenues brought about by the Enlightenment for Orthodox Serbs.<sup>5</sup> Towards the end of his life an elaborate cult of Dositej eventually began to take shape. It would dominate the Serbian culture throughout the long nineteenth century. Yet the dramatic events of the twentieth century were accompanied by widespread challenging and rejection of Dositej's Enlightenment cult. As his image continues to shape the views Serbs have of themselves and the world, the following chapter will illustrate the vicissitudes of Dositej's cult with the particular emphasis on Dositej's anticlericalism as a key to its dissemination and reception.

### i. Dositej's Enlightenment

Unlike other Balkan peoples under Ottoman rule, the Serbs encountered the Enlightenment through their Diaspora in the Habsburg Empire, in what is usually

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<sup>4</sup> The Orthodox authors saw the greatest threat in Catholic attempts at Union. For the Serbian context see mine, 'The 'Union' as a Seed of Dissension between Serbs and Croats', in *Konfessionelle Identität und Nationsbildung. Die griechisch-katholischen Kirchen in Ostmittel- und Südosteuropa im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert*, ed. Hans-Christian Maner and Norbert Spannberger (Stuttgart, 2007), p. 211-223.

<sup>5</sup> *The life and adventures of Dimitrije Obradović, who as a monk was given the name Dositej, written and published by himself*, translated from the Serbian, and edited, with an introduction, by George Rapall Noyes (Berkeley, 1953) is an English language translation of Dositej's autobiography containing the most important contextual information. Dositej's importance for Serbian culture is also evident in the fact that he is referred to by his first (monastic) name.

described as its Josephinist or tempered German version.<sup>6</sup> European or Baroque influences in terms of art and culture have also penetrated Serbia through imported books and objects of art during the Habsburg occupation in the first half of the eighteenth century.<sup>7</sup> Furthermore, embarking out of the Ottoman realm Habsburg Serbs obtained the first taste of higher education at the Kiev academy, which was firmly in Russian Orthodox ecclesiastical hands yet undergoing strong Western or Latin scholastic influence.<sup>8</sup> Once back in the Habsburg Monarchy the Kievan alumni founded the first Serbian high schools in 1726 and then in 1731. The Kievan teachers headed by Emanuel Kozačinski were also invited to establish the first Serbian seminary in Sremski Karlovci, the seat of the Serbian Metropolitanate in the Monarchy. Even after the Russians were expelled by Habsburg authorities former Kievan students continued the russification of the Serbian church and language and dissemination of Kievan education model.<sup>9</sup> One of them was Dionisije Novaković, who became a highly esteemed preacher and was elected bishop of Buda on popular demand despite resistance among the hierarchy.<sup>10</sup> His and works of his contemporaries transmitted influences of Western theologians that even a deeply entrenched odium to Catholicism could not prevent.<sup>11</sup> Furthermore, rationalist ideas had spread among the Serbian clergy in the Monarchy via the widely read *Spiritual regulament* of Peter the Great. Dositej Obradović read it as a young novice before he

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6 Paschalis Kitromilides, 'Republican Aspirations in Southeastern Europe in the Age of the French Revolution', in *Proceedings of the Tenth consortium on Revolutionary Europe* Vol. 1, (Athens, Georgia, 1980), p. 275-285, (p. 277).

<sup>7</sup> For Western European political and artistic influences on Orthodox Serbs see Miroslava Kostić, *Jakov Orfelin i njegovo doba* [Jakov Orfelin and his Times], (Novi Sad, 2007); Nenad Makuljević, 'Vizuelna kultura i privatni identitet pravoslavnih hrišćana u 18. veku [Visual Culture and Private Identity of Orthodox Christians in 18th Century]', in *Privatni život u srpskim zemljama u osvit modernog doba*, ed. Aleksandar Fotić (Belgrade, 2005), p. 72-114. and variety of articles assembled in Dejan Medaković, *Zapadnoevropski barok i vizantijski svet* [West European Baroque and Byzantine World] (Belgrade, 1991).

<sup>8</sup> From 1721-1762 at least 28 Serbs attended this academy and thus made the most numerous foreign student group. See Nikola Radojčić, 'Kijevska akademija i Srbi' [Kievan Academy and Serbs], *Srpski književni glasnik* 1913/31. For more on the education of Serbs in the eighteenth century see the chapter by Marija Petrović in this volume.

<sup>9</sup> *Epitom episkopa Dionisija Novakovića*, ed. Vladimir Vukašinović (Pančevo, 2007), p. 17.

<sup>10</sup> His most famous work is the so-called *epitom*, where the main issues of faith are discussed on the question and answer model, very popular among Russian scholastic theologians of the time. The example emulated was the work of Stefan Javorski, *The stone of faith*. See Georgy Florovsky, *Ways of Russian Theology* (New York, 1979), p. 108.

<sup>11</sup> Dimitrije Rucarac, 'Katihizisi u XVIII v [18th Century Catechisms]', *Hrišćanski vesnik* xii/iv (1900).

fled the Hopovo monastery and embarked on his life long journey.<sup>12</sup> From Dositej's recollections of his early years spent in the monastery we also learn about the enlightened bishop of Temišvar/Timisoara Georgije Popović, and amongst his castigation of monastics we find words of praise for Dositej's rationalist hegoumen in Hopovo. Other less known Enlightenment figures among the Serbs who were Dositej's precursors or contemporaries such as Zaharije Orfelin, Jovan Rajić and Simeon Piščević, all evolved from ecclesiastical milieus. Yet this had not prevented them to criticize the Orthodox Church's political and cultural hegemony, its monasteries, numerous empty rituals, lengthy fasting, etc.<sup>13</sup> Finally, Dositej's initial doubts and desire for knowledge were crucially widened through another Orthodox channel, the school of Hierotheos Dendrinos in Smyrna. Nevertheless, Dositej's experience and encounters within the Orthodox Commonwealth motivated him to look for further education westwards, beyond the traditionalist Orthodox institutions through which some of the Western influences were willy-nilly channelled.

The obvious fact that a reformer figure such as Dositej clearly grows out of the Orthodox literary and cultural tradition and is part of a wider trend of enlightened ideas and rationalism permeating the Orthodox world in the eighteenth century is often obfuscated when juxtaposing the two.<sup>14</sup> Dositej first encounters the writings of holy fathers and then those of the Neohellenic enlighteners of his age such as Evgenios Voulgaris, but also those of his teacher in Smyrna. In addition, he is a passionate reader and translator of Hellenic and Roman authors firmly establishing the roots of his rationalism in classical antiquity, in writers such as Euripidis, Xenophon, Socrates and Plato. Similarly, his enthusiasm for Western Enlightenment builds upon earlier reformers and humanists such as Erasmus of Rotterdam or the French Archbishop Fenelon.<sup>15</sup> Moreover, Dositej makes a remarkable effort to

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<sup>12</sup> See Milorad Pavić, 'Geneza Dostitejevih filozofskih pogleda' [Genesis of Dositej's Philosophical Views], *Zbornik Filozofskog fakulteta*, (Beograd), 1962, p. 67-108; Mita Kostić, 'O kvalitetu novih proučavanja Dostiteja kao filozofa' [On New Research of Dositej as Philosopher], *Zbornik Matice srpske za književnost i jezik* Vol. XVII/2, (1969), p. 261-274.

<sup>13</sup> Milorad Pavić, *Istorija srpske književnosti baroknog doba, XVII i XVIII vek* [History of the Serbian Literature in the Age of Baroque XVII and XVIII centuries] (Beograd, 1970).

<sup>14</sup> For other examples how Orthodox world was permeated by Enlightenment ideas see Larry Wolff, *The Enlightenment and the Orthodox World: Western Perspectives on the Orthodox Church in Eastern Europe* (Athens, 2001).

<sup>15</sup> For Dositej as a classical humanist see the article of Nenad Ristović in this volume. For Dositej's in

connect the Byzantine and Orthodox cultural traditions with the Western Enlightenment programme. Despite his criticism of the clergy, time and again Dositej puts his wishes and ideas in the mouths of Orthodox monks and bishops. Inspired, endowed and provoked during his time in Smyrna, Dositej then goes on to Vienna, Leipzig, Halle, Paris and London, seeking to advance his knowledge in the bastions of ideas that only trickled to the Orthodox world in which he had grown up. Embracing and celebrating European, especially English Enlightenment, Dositej eventually transmits its restricted version to his fellow Serbs through the network of merchant sponsors and literati friends which he carefully nourished. His tempered, rationalist and reformist Enlightenment is evident both in his didactic mission and highly utilitarian philosophy.<sup>16</sup> Dositej sees human progress and development and not faith as driving forces of all action. With his own example Dositej demonstrated to his fellow Serbs the benefits of education as the only way to catch up with 'more fortunate nations'. His ultimate goal was to achieve a utopian community of good which should function as a human organism under the wise leadership of an emperor philosopher. The character of Dositej's social and political reasoning lies in its emphasis on responsibility and moral duty of the State and government for the well-being of its citizens. More concretely, Dositej believed it was the role of the enlightened (Habsburg) ruler to lead the Serbs towards civilization and Europe and out of backwardness, superstition and ignorance. In fact, Dositej envisaged for Joseph II a rescue mission for Balkan Christians, which the Emperor earned by the exercise of his enlightened absolutism. Dositej's sympathies for the Emperor remained firm throughout his life and just days before his death Dositej wrote that for all his views he was indebted to the Emperor Joseph of blessed memory.<sup>17</sup>

## ii. Dositej's Myth

This brief summary of Dositej's ideas was presented as a point of departure before turning to their later destiny, namely the analysis of Dositej's 'cult'. As already

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rootedness in the ideas of antiquity see Miodrag V. Stojanović, *Dositej i antika* [Dositej and Antiquity] (Belgrade, 1971).

<sup>16</sup> The origin of his eclectic mixture of Christian, Platonist and Aristotelian ideas as well as those of the German Aufklärung and the Western rationalists were discussed in a number of works. Here let us mention only Dušan Nedeljković, 'Filozof Dositej Obradović', *Letopis Matice Srpske* (1961) Vol. 388/6, p. 424-443.

<sup>17</sup> *Dela Dositeja Obradovića* (Belgrade, 1911), p. 569.

indicated this cult began to take shape already in the years before Dositej's death and was at the core of the Serbian culture in the nineteenth century reaching its peak just before the First World War. Like any other cult it was based on a 'myth'. Myth is often used colloquially to refer to a false story but the scholarly use of the term generally does not pass judgment on truth or falsehood and is rather interested in its power to bind a community together as its sacred narrative. Similarly, the use of the word cult is usually pejorative but here it is neutral and borrowed from the sociology of religion to denote the movement which arises spontaneously around novel beliefs and practices. Historian Mita Kostić, in his comprehensive study of Dositej in historical perspective, pointed at Dositej as the first creator of his myth as he forged events and personalities in his autobiography.<sup>18</sup> One of Kostić's conclusions is that Dositej's sympathies for Joseph II stand clearly against the prevailing national hero interpretation, which portrayed Dositej as a champion of liberty, democracy and equality. For the sake of historical accuracy, Mita Kostić also established that the educational and church reforms Dositej promoted were in fact the deed of Joseph's mother Maria Theresia.<sup>19</sup> Namely, key changes concerning the Serbs in the Monarchy were undertaken already from 1769-1779 under the supervision of her appointee Baron-Graf Koler, who chaired the so-called Ilyrian deputation.<sup>20</sup> Most importantly, the Theresian reforms ensured a twist from Russian to German influence by establishing Serbian schools with state provision and supervision. As a result of the Theresian reforms the so-called Gymnasium opened in the Metropolitanate seat of Karlovci in 1778, followed by several other high schools, which provided venues and practical means for education to the Serbian bourgeoisie.<sup>21</sup> No wonder Dositej's first followers were recruited among educated Habsburg bureaucrats and clergymen - Jovan Muškatirović, Emanuel Janković, Avram Mrazović, Atanasije Stojković, Lukijan Mušicki, and Pavle Solarić. Like Dositej they translate, compile, edit and adjust Western European Enlightened authors, but also publish textbooks, especially

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<sup>18</sup> Kostić, Mita. *Dositej Obradović u istoriskoj perspektivi XVIII i XIX veka* [Dositej Obradović in Historical Perspective of XVIII and XIX centuries] (Belgrade, 1952).

<sup>19</sup> Kostić, *Dositej*, p. 37-51, 252-253.

<sup>20</sup> For a detailed account see Mita Kostić, *Grof Koler kao kulturnoprosvetni reformator* [Count Coller as Cultural and Educational Reformer] (Belgrade, 1932).

<sup>21</sup> Milan Kosanović, 'Serbische Eliten im 19. Jahrhundert. Selbstwahrnehmung und Zielsetzung zwischen Tradition und Modernisierung', in *Serbien in Europa: Leitbilder der Moderne in der Diskussion*, ed. Gabriella Schubert (Wiesbaden, 2008), pp. 61-72.

in natural sciences, which Dositej only hinted at. Working in the spirit of their teacher these men slowly constitute the cult of Dositej and implicitly of the Enlightenment in Serbian bourgeois culture of the nineteenth century. Soon after his death Dositej earned the title of the second Serbian enlightener as Saint Sava had already been acknowledged as the first founder and enlightener in Serbian history and enjoyed canonical status.<sup>22</sup> According to Kostić, Dositej was the key figure in the ideological formation of the Serbian bourgeoisie, which he demonstrated by making plain the inextricable links to the bourgeois milieu from which Dositej stemmed and which financed him throughout his life and celebrated him thereafter.<sup>23</sup> Finally, Kostić showed how the struggle of Serb merchants and craftsmen for the recognition of their status of ethnic-religious minority in the Habsburg monarchy coincided with their emancipation from the Orthodox church, later fuelled by demands to elect their priests and bishops and the general rise of a critical stance toward religion.

Following in Kostić's footsteps, another important work by Wladimir Fisher appeared recently in German.<sup>24</sup> It was the first book to focus solely on Dositej's cult rather than his oeuvre or its context.<sup>25</sup> Fischer questions the usual portrayal of Dositej 'founding' the Serbian modern literature or culture as myth-like whereby telling the story of foundation and remembering the founder(s) is a way of imagining and creating a homogenous community across time and space. Furthermore, the cult hailed Dositej as precursor of the Serbian language reform and predecessor of Vuk Karadžić.<sup>26</sup> This view, Fisher reminds us, is not accurate as it blurs the differences between their projects. Dositej's language and his 'people' were not the same as the

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<sup>22</sup> For the cult of Saint Sava see mine, 'Nationalism in Construction: The Memorial Church of St. Sava on Vračar Hill in Belgrade', *Balkanologie*, Vol. VII/2 (2003), p. 47-72.

<sup>23</sup> On Dositej's cult see Kostić, *Dositej*, p. 253-288.

<sup>24</sup> Wladimir Fischer, *Dositej Obradovic als burgerlicher Kulturheld. Zur Formierung eines serbischen burgerlichen Selbstbildes durch literarische Kommunikation 1783-1845* (Frankfurt am Main, 2007). See also his, 'The Role of Dositej Obradović in the Construction of Serbian Identities During the 19th Century', *Spaces of Identity* Vol. I/3 (2001), p. 67-87.

<sup>25</sup> Among countless works in Serbian on Dositej there is little analysis or contemplation on Dositej's legacy or cult status. Somewhat exceptional but based on a rather random selection is recently published Bojan Đorđević, 'Recepcija kao ideologija' [Reception as Ideology: Dositej and his Work in a Cultural-Historical Context], in *Delo Dositeja Obradovića 1807-2007* (Belgrade, 2008), p. 335-343.

<sup>26</sup> For Karadžić see Duncan Wilson, *The life and times of Vuk Stefanović Karadžić, 1787-1864: literacy, literature and national independence in Serbia* (Oxford, 1970).

language and people of Vuk Karadžić. Whatever Dositej claimed, his was neither the language of the peasants, nor of the Serbs in Ottoman Serbia or Hercegovina, the language in which Vuk published his books in the first half of the nineteenth century. Instead, Dositej's writings were intended for Serbian elites in the Habsburg Empire. Using the idiom of these elites, found in everyday correspondence of the time or in the hand-written poetry of the Serbian petty bourgeoisie, Obradović only paved the way for the nineteenth-century language reform by establishing 'the people' and 'their language' as positive notions in discourse.<sup>27</sup>

In addition, Fisher contended that the Dositej myth, constructed during the nineteenth century, complied much more with the culture-hero narrative model than his original autobiography. At its core is the often told story about Dositej leaving the traditional realm by fleeing from the monastery, travelling the world and then returning to bring back the Enlightenment to his fellow Serbs. Dositej's escape from the monastery was in its significance compared to Mohamed's escape from Mecca to Medina and identified as a turning point or caesura in Serbian history.<sup>28</sup> Analysing connections between the genre and contents of Dositej's *Life and Adventures*, Fischer discerned its basic narrative pattern in fact as the combination of the culture hero, the noble savage stories and the story of discovery. Dositej first acquires classical (Greek) knowledge and then enters the centres of Western, more advanced civilization and enlightenment where his enthusiasm resembles that of the noble savage narration. It is only the last part of his life when he decided to return and spread the word of Enlightenment to the Balkans and his imaginary Serbian homeland – the part not even described in his memoirs – which secured Dositej his later idealized status. Namely, by joining the Serbian insurrection against the Ottoman Empire (1804-1812), Dositej played a key role in securing a dominant influence of Habsburg Serbs in Serbia, whose society was traditionally full of suspicion and contempt for Serbs from the Monarchy, usually identified with the Germans. In the mythological interpretation of the later cult construed around him, as Fisher points out, the hero or Dositej assumes a Western hegemonic perspective instead of doing what the noble savage is supposed to

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<sup>27</sup> Both in the preface and after-word of the first part of his autobiography, Dositej calls on the 'learned Serbs' to publish books in the *prostonarodni* (simple folk) language. For this argument see Fischer, 'The Role', p. 72.

<sup>28</sup> Vatroslav Jagić quoted in Kostić, *Dositej*, p. 24.



do: either assimilate or become a passive recipient.<sup>29</sup> Applying Gramscian interpretation, Fisher shows how Dositej's hegemonic role in Serbian culture nourished itself on the repressive and dominating discourse of centralized state authority, the supremacy of ruling classes, and finally a hegemonic attitude towards neighbouring 'underdeveloped' peoples and lower classes. What Dositej's cult does, according to this interpretation, is putting the Habsburg Serb middle and upper class readers of his work and followers of his ideas in a superior position with the task of educating the remaining Serbs and all those who understood the Serbian language. Finally, Fisher demonstrates that Dositej was not firmly based in the common people as usually presented in many works in the relevant literature.

Quite the opposite: Dositej called for the abolition of old customs he generally deemed superstitious, but these were usually habits of the lower classes or common people. Dositej's hegemonic allure is also evident in descriptions of his last and most celebrated years after he moved to Belgrade in 1807. It was there in the future capital of Serbia that he ended his lifelong journey four years later. In Belgrade Dositej was welcomed by Serbian political elites - the leader of the uprising Karađorđe and members of the newly established *Ruling Council*. Not surprisingly, given his earlier sympathies for the Habsburg Emperor, Dositej develops a close relationship with the authoritarian ruler of the Serbian uprising. The praise for Karađorđe and his rule are recorded both in Dositej's letters and later recollections of contemporaries after his cult was already established.<sup>30</sup> How local Serbs felt about Dositej at the time was not recorded. This leaves us with the Habsburg Serbs, 'whose account lets the indigenous Serb elites appear as savages full of admiration for the wise man from the north'.<sup>31</sup> Dositej was like a 'fox among wolves and lions,' one witness noted.<sup>32</sup> In fact, most anecdotes about Dositej's life, real or invented, recall only these four last years of Dositej's life in Belgrade and the superior impression that the well-travelled, wise and educated man left on the peasant rebels of Serbia.<sup>33</sup> According to one widely

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<sup>29</sup> Fischer, 'The Role', p. 78.

<sup>30</sup> See Andra Gavrilović, *Dositej u Srbiji 1807-1911* [Dositej in Serbia 1807-1811] (Belgrade, 1902), p. 19-26.

<sup>31</sup> Fischer, 'The Role', p. 78.

<sup>32</sup> Kostić, *Dositej*, p. 265-67.

<sup>33</sup> Borivoje Marinković, *Dositej u govoru i tvorbu: Zbirka zapisa i anegdota* [Dositej in Speech and Action: Collection of Records and Anecdotes] (Belgrade, 1961).

circulated story, Dositej refused to write the history of the uprising as he would have to say the truth and account for all the infighting and bad blood among the insurgents, the aforementioned ‘wolves and lions’. Another time he saved a scribe accused for theft from certain death in the hands of insurrection leaders by insisting on Serbia’s need for literate men. The wise man from the North is especially lauded for his modesty and charitable disposition though all of it is based on hearsay rather than historically proven records.<sup>34</sup> Nonetheless legends prove Dositej’s impact on Serbia and no wonder that one of the laudatory speeches after his death exclaimed: ‘Dositej came to Serbia and Serbia was transformed’.<sup>35</sup>

### iii. Dositej’s Cult

The cult of Dositej took on already during his life but grew steadily only after the re-publication of his works in Pest in 1810s and 1820s. The second generation of his Habsburg followers – Georgije Magarašević, Dimitrije Tirol and Gligorije Vozarović carried the cult over to Serbia in 1830s. This became possible only when Serbia received autonomous status within the Ottoman Empire and opened its first regular schools and reading rooms. Still the newly acquired intellectual and reading public was mostly formed by immigrants from the Habsburg Empire. Vozarović, who was a learned bookbinder, began publishing Dositej’s complete works in Belgrade in 1833, the first such endeavour in Serbia. Sima Milutinović Sarajlija, the greatest Serbian poet of the period and yet another Habsburg Serb in Belgrade, praised Vozarović’s efforts as a resurrection of Dositej’s legacy in a poem:

As long there is Sun and shiny Moon  
The Night and the Light of Day  
Every Serb man and woman and child  
Will not cease to praise Your name.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> Branko Zlatković, ‘Kazivanja i zapisi o Dositeju Obradoviću’ [The Stories and Records of Dositej Obradović in Uprising Serbia], in *Delo Dositeja Obradovića 1807-2007* (Belgrade, 2008), p. 291-304.

<sup>35</sup> The literal translation would be ‘Serbia transfigured’. There is an obvious link to Jesus who transfigured on a Mount Tabor. Dositej is also said to come to Serbia in August of 1807 on the day of Transfiguration. See Gavrilović, *Dositije*, p. 74.

<sup>36</sup> Quoted in Jovan Pejčić, *Kultura i pamćenje* [Culture and Memory] (Belgrade, 1998), p. 75.

This hero worship of Dositej wandered from northwest to southeast and broadened its target group with cheaper and more accessible editions as Fisher demonstrates. Wealthy Serbs commissioned oil paintings or copperplates with Dositej's image. Most notably for the cult formation Vozarović renovated Dositej's grave on the right side of the western portal of Belgrade's cathedral where he carved some famous words attributed to Dositej's last will – *Here lie his Serbian bones. He loved his people. Long live his memory!*<sup>37</sup> The cult also became official as the first ruler of autonomous Serbia, Prince Miloš Obrenović (1780-1860), made sure that Dositej's bones are placed in front of the new Cathedral Church of Belgrade that he built in 1837 in neo-Classical style and which was later turned into the pantheon of Serbian heroes. The style of the Belgrade Cathedral Church is also an illustrative example of a process whereby autonomous and then independent Serbia during the long nineteenth century slowly but surely shifted from the Post-Byzantine and Ottoman to the Habsburg Central European (mostly German) culture circle. The new Serbian elite of the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries was literally made in the Habsburg Monarchy.<sup>38</sup> Their identity was shaped by the Enlightenment reforms of Maria Theresa and Joseph II, which radically changed the administration of the Orthodox church, modernized the educational system, and introduced books printed and censored in Vienna to replace those previously imported from Russia. Furthermore, the language reform of Vuk Karadžić, the key issue in Serbian culture in the nineteenth century, was greatly inspired by the Habsburg's state censor of Slavic books and court librarian, Jernej Kopitar. The Church immediately rejected it fearing the Latin influence and isolation from Orthodox Russia, but by the 1860s Karadžić's reform was triumphant. By that time almost every Serbian intellectual was also a devoted Darwinist and positivist.<sup>39</sup> The pronounced Western orientation of Serbian culture by the end of the century is evident in the writings of its greatest minds, such as historian Stojan Novaković and literary critic Jovan Skerlić, both worshippers of Dositej. In his study of the eighteenth-century Serbian literature, most notably Dositej,

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<sup>37</sup> Ibid, p. 78-80.

<sup>38</sup> Miloš Ković, 'From Vienna to Paris: Serbian Elite between Central and Western Europe (1878-1914)', in *Serbien in Europa: Leitbilder der Moderne in der Diskussion*, ed. Gabriella Schubert (Wiesbaden, 2008), p. 53-60, (p. 53). See also Traian Stoianovich, 'The Pattern of Serbian Intellectual Evolution', *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 1 (1958/9), p. 257-272.

<sup>39</sup> Ković, 'From Vienna to Paris', p. 57.

Skerlić wrote: ‘In this century, with speedy pace, Serbs leave Balkan barbarian and medieval darkness, enter an organized European state, join the ranks of modern peoples, establish their own education and create their own secular literature.’<sup>40</sup>

Worthwhile noting is also that Dositej Obradović and the first Serbian enlighteners wholeheartedly accepted the ideas of Freemasonry whose ranks they joined mostly while studying at German Protestant universities.<sup>41</sup> For the next one and a half century, masonic lodges in Southern Hungary and Serbia were nurturing the ideas of the Enlightenment and the French revolution and in their ranks included even some of the most senior Orthodox church dignitaries.

Yet by the late nineteenth century the path taken by educated and westernized Serbian elites began to be challenged, most notably by early Socialists and so-called Radicals.<sup>42</sup> Replacing Western imports with the ideas originating among Russian Slavophiles they promoted utopian notions of village communes and/or extended family –*Zadruga*. The most important challenge however was the rise of confessional nationalism, which determined the destiny of Dositej’s cult, making anticlericalism the most contested and paradoxical aspect of the ideas of Dositej and the Serbian Enlightenment.

#### iv. Dositej and Religion

There has been a long debate on Dositej’s religious views and whether or not he expounds Orthodox or deist ideas or whether he even rejects God and faith altogether. Beyond doubt is the principal aim of at least the first part of his autobiography, which was to show the uselessness of (Orthodox) monasteries, ignorance, laziness and wastefulness of monastic life.<sup>43</sup> With this derision of monastic

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<sup>40</sup> Jovan Skerlić, *Srpska književnost u XVIII veku* [Serbian Literature in the 18th Century] (Belgrade, 1966), p. 17.

<sup>41</sup> Bratislav Stamenkovic, Slobodan G. Markovich, *A Brief History of Freemasonry in Serbia* (Belgrade, 2009), pp. 29-31. The most famous and widely used portrait of Dositej Obradović was painted by Arsenije Teodorović in 1794 and framed by a medaljion. Above it an all-seeking eye is situated, while the portrait itself is framed with a snake eating its own tail (the so-called Ouroboros). See also Kostić, *Dositej*, p. 233.

<sup>42</sup> For more on early Serbian Socialists and Radicals, as the first popular political party in Serbia was named, see Augusta Dimou, *Entangled Paths Towards Modernity* (Budapest, 2009), p. 59-156.

<sup>43</sup> On abuse and simony of clergy see Kostić, *Dositej*, pp. 150-154 and Tihomir Ostojić, *Dositej u Hopovu* [Dositej in Monastery of Hopovo] (Novi Sad, 1907).

life Dositej sowed the seeds of a long lasting and very rich anticlerical tradition in Serbian literature, with many of its great writers basking in it (Jovan Jovanović Zmaj, Stevan Sremac, Đura Jakšić, Petar Kočić, Mihailo Lalić, Živojin Pavlović and others). Dositej's recollections or anecdotes about the clergy and his ridicule of aspects of Orthodox piety featured in almost every issue of journal *Javor*, edited by celebrated poet Jovan Jovanović Zmaj from the 1860s to the 1890s.<sup>44</sup> No wonder that all attempts at reforms of liturgy and against the powers of the hierarchy and clergy were inspired by Dositej.<sup>45</sup> Among Dositej's followers, influenced by Protestant notions of piety, Orthodox Christianity as professed by the Church hierarchy and the clergy of the day was bitterly mocked and criticized for superstition, corruption, simony, servility, monastic begging, extortion of levies from the people and especially the hierarchy's indifference and hostility to education and learning.<sup>46</sup> In the nineteenth century Serbian secular intellectuals desired a Protestant coloured mission in order to purify and reform the Church or bring it back to what they believed was its evangelical authenticity and simplicity. As one of the Serbian literati, Petar Matić wrote to Vuk Karadžić in 1852, reporting on the upheaval caused by Vuk's Bible translation to vernacular:

All the monks rose to kill the beast that dared enter into their secrets and disclose them to the world. They are still so foolish to believe that our faith is mysticism and that it would disappear if unveiled. Oh fools! They know not that the Christian teaching is the purest moral and that by learning it our people can only get enlightened, better and happier. European education began only from the time when the Christian teaching was translated into vernaculars; from the times when people learned the evangelical truths and began to think freely about their faith. These truths are so general and clear, so much based on human reason that everybody who lives according to them becomes and must become a Christian even though he can be a Jew, Turk, Brahman or adherent of Dalai Lama. It is his deeds that make him a

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<sup>44</sup> See mine 'Jovan Jovanović Zmaj and the Serbian Identity between Poetry and History,' in *We, the People. Politics of National Peculiarity in Southeastern Europe*, ed. Diana Mishkova (Budapest, 2009), p. 273-305.

<sup>45</sup> Kostić, *Dositej*, p. 282-283.

<sup>46</sup> Kostić, *Dositej*, p. 140-158. Paschalis Kitromilides described similar conflicts erupting early on in Smyrna, a centre of Greek religion and scholastic learning, in his 'Religious criticism between Orthodoxy and Protestantism. Ideological consequences of social conflict in Smyrna,' in *XVI Internationales Byzantinistenkongress Akten II/6. Jahrbuch der Österreichischen Byzantinistik* 32, no. 6 (Vienna, 1982), p. 115-124.

Christian even if he does not want to become one. Why then, to hide these ideas in mysticism or because of the interests of the clergy? Why not spread them among our people? ... I respect your hard labour and I wish that you continue your efforts to undermine superstition and translate the word of God which was revealed and recorded for the whole world and all peoples and not just for the priests and monks.<sup>47</sup>

The Serbian clergy, on the other hand, saw in these voices a threat to the integrity of traditional religion and believed all reformist arguments would inevitably lead to atheism or conversion to Neo-Protestant sects, a mass occurrence among the Serbs in the second half of the nineteenth century.<sup>48</sup> But what was the place of Dositej and his cult in this increasingly polarizing issue?

Initially, Dositej was spared from outright rejection and condemnation in Church circles. Despite his staunch anticlericalism Dositej remained in close relationship with many, dare we say, enlightened clergymen and bishops. He always believed his criticism was only for the benefit of the people and the Church, never heretic and never out of any material or other interests. Towards the end of his life he still showed interest in the Orthodox world as he attempted to translate the sermons of the archbishop of Astrahan, Nikiphoros Theotokis, which unfortunately remained unfinished. Furthermore, Dositej explicitly demanded to be buried in his monastic robes, which he had abandoned while journeying through Europe. In addition, Dositej's modest and amiable nature, the enjoyment in the company of ladies, temperance and humour placed him safely in the hearts of common people and clergy alike. Last but not least, his decision to come to Belgrade during the Insurrection and spend the last three years of his life there, as we have noted, secured Dositej a long lasting patriotic aura and for long prevented much odium. His actual contribution of setting the first school and being a tutor to the insurrection's leader Karađorđe's son was blown out of all proportion with only scant evidence from his activities and ideas in this period to support. Nevertheless, the fact that he died in Belgrade was celebrated as his final sacrifice on the altar of the patria, which Belgrade-centred Serbia would soon become. Thus it took more than a century for the

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<sup>47</sup> Cited in Golub Dobrašinović, 'Mitropolit Mihailo o Vukovom Novom zavjetu' [Metropolitan Mihailo about Vuk's Translation of New Testament], in *Život i delo mitropolita Mihaila (1826-1898)* (Belgrade, 2008), p. 235-249, here pp. 240-241. This type of confessional relativism is often wrongly attributed to Dositej when in fact it originates from Lessing.

<sup>48</sup> See mine, *Religious Dissent in the Age of Modernization and Nationalism: Nazarenes in Hungary and Serbia 1850-1914* (Wiesbaden, 2006).

Church to articulate and voice its contempt and opposition to Dositej and the ideas he stood for.

Metropolitan Stratimirović, who headed the Orthodox Church in the Habsburg Empire while Dositej published his major works, was long held as Dositej's chief enemy. In reality, their common sense of patriotic duty, though variously seen, seemed to have brought them together at the time of the Serbian insurrection against the Turks, which both supported in their own way. While firmly and publicly opposing Dositej's work and ideas, the Metropolitan's supposed orders of banning or burning of Dositej's books were never found or proven.<sup>49</sup> Similarly, when the Ecumenical Patriarch Anthimos V in the name of his Synod wrote to Belgrade Metropolitan Peter in 1834 asking for the ban of the Greek translation of Dositej's 'The Life and Times' as well as his other 'godless and heretic' work, this warrant was not heeded.<sup>50</sup> In 1850, the plea of the bishop of Upper Karlovac Evgenije Jovanović to Patriarch Rajačić, Stratimirović's successor on the Karlovci throne, to prevent reprinting of Dositej's works also went unnoticed.<sup>51</sup>

Dositej's reception in Church circles was clearly determined by emerging nationalist ideas. The aforementioned conflict between the so-called clericalists and liberals (secularists), as we might call Dositej's followers, erupted fully only in the late nineteenth century in relation to issues of poor ecclesiastical administration, which was endangering the already threatened Serbian autonomy in the Habsburg Empire. Yet parallel to the conflict there was also rapprochement between the two factions as it becomes evident in the formation of the Serbian national pantheon. Around the middle of the nineteenth century, the emerging Serbian nationalist movement adopted two other culture heroes along the previously hegemonic image of Dositej: Vuk Karadžić, language reformer and the hero of the romantic movement, and Saint Sava, remembered as the founder of the Serbian autocephalous church in the thirteenth century and the first enlightener. Despite Vuk's sharp criticism of Dositej and quite different programmes these three figures stood for, they were reconciled for the sake of the nation. Merging

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<sup>49</sup> Predrag Jašović, *Recepcija književnog dela Dositeja Obradovića* [Reception of the Literary Oeuvre of Dositej Obradović] (Pančevo, 2007), p. 169-174.

<sup>50</sup> Mihailo Laskaris, 'O grčkom prevodu Dositejeva 'Života' ' [On the Greek Translation of Dositej's *Life*]. *Prilozi* XVIII (1938), p. 67- 68, Dimitrije Ruvarac, 'Protivnici štampanja Dositejevih dela' [Opponents of Publishing of Dositej's Works]. *Brankovo kolo* (1911), p. 197.

<sup>51</sup> Kostić, *Dositej*, p. 281.

Dositej's myth with Vuk emphasized the language reform aspects of Dositej and neutralized his elitism. Moreover, this blurred the differences between Vuk and Dositej and their opposing ideologies of rationalism and romanticism.<sup>52</sup> Finally, bringing in St. Sava and declaring both St. Sava and Dositej as "enlighteners" revived the Orthodox tradition and neutralized Dositej's anticlericalism. As Fischer pointed out, amalgamating three different culture heroes deprived each of them of any but national meaning.<sup>53</sup> Skerlić noted that when the liberal and nationalist *United Serbian Youth* in 1876 displayed the portraits of the three heroes together at its assembly it actually elevated them to the so-called Serbian Holy Trinity.<sup>54</sup> Nothing illustrates this merging better than the fact that in 1864, Vuk's bones were put to rest next to Dositej's, in front of the Cathedral Church of Belgrade. The highest clergy presided over the translation of both Dositej's and Vuk's earthly remains and thus symbolically acquiesced with their cult if not with their oeuvre. This inaugurated a period of ceasefire for the sake of the nation so to speak. Starting from the late nineteenth century both the Karlovci Metropolitanate in the Habsburg Empire and the Belgrade Metropolitanate in Serbia lost their primacy among the people and basically followed the secular intelligentsia and nascent political parties in converting to nationalism. In this context some criticism of Dositej expressed by the clergy remained rather secret and in private correspondence, like that from the bishop of Montenegro and poet Petar Petrović Njegoš who in a letter to Serbian Prince Miloš deemed Dositej's work 'bitter, poisonous, licentious and blasphemous'.<sup>55</sup> Usually, Dositej was only reprimanded for lack of tact and concern when castigating the monasteries, which were deemed crucial for the preservation of Christianity in the Ottoman Empire.<sup>56</sup>

By 1911, the hundredth anniversary of Dositej's death, his 'bourgeois' cult, as termed by Fisher, reached a climax, with public events, school celebrations, monument

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<sup>52</sup> Ibid, p. 278-281.

<sup>53</sup> Fischer, 'The Role', p. 78.

<sup>54</sup> Skerlić, *Srpska književnost*, p. 355. United Serbian Youth [Ujedinjena srpska omladina] was one of the first initiatives gathering Serbs from different empires and states in 1870s.

<sup>55</sup> Kostić, *Dositej*, pp. 273-278, Pejčić, *Kultura*, p. 76. Both Njegoš's and Karadžić's resentment were explained off as personal rather than principle matters.

<sup>56</sup> It is the opinion expressed by Vuk Karadžić in his letters to Lukijan Mušicki in 1833 as quoted in Pejčić, *Kultura*, p. 76.

The same opinion was shared by Ami Boué in his *Die europäische Türkei*, Vol. II (Wien, 1889), p. 286.



dedications and a series of publications including the special *Festschrift*.<sup>57</sup> The most prominent Serbian religious thinker of the time, Nikolaj Velimirović, described Dositej as a believer, but Orthodox believer only by birth and inheritance, which helped him to remain with his people and explains his patriotism.<sup>58</sup> But he also lamented that Dositej was a religious positivist and could never achieve the supreme level of faith in God or the need of becoming one with God (*theosis*). Nevertheless, in accordance with the prevalent attitude in the Church, there was a special commemorative service held in all churches ordered by Metropolitan Dimitrije of Belgrade.<sup>59</sup> Amidst all the celebrations it was only bishop of Bačka Irinej Ćirić who in 1911 clearly stated that Dositej transgressed the boundaries of Orthodoxy.<sup>60</sup>

The celebrations of 1911 unfolded just a year before the Balkan wars, which are traditionally regarded as the *prime* example of Balkan nationalism in action. Yet with the trauma of Balkan wars and especially the Great War that followed in 1914, the cult of Dositej faded away together with notions of progress, Europe and civilization. In interwar Yugoslavia, in place of Dositej St. Sava was elevated to the pedestal of the chief Serbian hero, a role which he still safely enjoys.<sup>61</sup> During the Nazi occupation the right wing ideologues and collaborators for the first time completely dismissed Dositej as an ‘internationalist’, ‘murky cosmopolitan’, a traitor who, consciously or not, initiated the process of abandoning Serbian traditions and national spirit.<sup>62</sup> Superficial ideological readings continued after the war albeit in a completely different twist. In Communist led Yugoslavia, Dositej was celebrated as the precursor of Yugoslav unity and atheism, based on his arguments for religious toleration to the dismay of latter day Serbian nationalists. The cult of Enlightenment was thus restricted to satisfy narrow political aims but Dositej's works continued to be published and analyzed. Between 1783 and

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<sup>57</sup> Detailed in Pavle Popović, ‘Dodatak. Proslava Dositeja Obradovića povodom stogodišnjice od smrti’ [The Celebration on the Occasion of the 100th Anniversary of Dositej Obradović's Death], in *Spomenica Dositeja Obradovića* ed. Stojan Novaković (Beograd, 1911), p. 168–173.

<sup>58</sup> Nikolaj Velimirović, *Religija Njegoševa* [Njegoš's Religion] (Beograd, 1911), p. IX.

<sup>59</sup> Kostić, Dositej, p. 165.

<sup>60</sup> Irinej Ćirić, ‘Dositej kao bogoslov’ [Dositej as Theologian], *Brankovo kolo* (1911).

<sup>61</sup> For more on interwar ideology of *Svetosavlje* see Klaus Buchenau, ‘Svetosavlje und Pravoslavlje, Nationales und Universales in der serbischen Orthodoxie’, in *Nationalisierung der Religion und Sakralisierung der Nation im östlichen Europa*, ed. Martin Schulze Wessel (Stuttgart, 2006), p. 203–232.

<sup>62</sup> Đorđević, ‘Recepcija’, p. 337–338.

1989 there were over 200 different editions of Dositej's books.<sup>63</sup> His chief work alone – his autobiography – saw over 50 editions. In addition there were eight editions of his collected works. A recent study by Jašović registered over 2200 bibliographic entries (books or articles) on Dositej.<sup>64</sup> Bibliographic data however hide the fact that Dositej's popularity has long been on the wane. As Serbian intellectual elites, disillusioned with the Yugoslav and Communist experience, began to reorient themselves in the 1980s Dositej's aura dissipated. The last big celebration was held in 1989, on the occasion of 250<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Dositej's birth. Since his birthplace Csakovo (Čakovo) is outside Serbia (as it always was) somebody came up with the idea to erect 'Dositej's house' in Vuk's birthplace Tršić in Western Serbia.<sup>65</sup> Eventually, all the chief Serbian cultural institutions as organizers rallied behind this idea, so much inviting a psychoanalytic interpretation. Dositej needed to be Serbianized and mended with Vuk in an autochtonist, nationalist and antihistorical hysteria, which ruled over Serbia at that time. Whereas before scholars tried hard to prove Dositej's links or rootedness in (Western) Europe, the new trend was to show the Slavic, Eastern Orthodox and medieval foundations of Dositej's enlightenment.<sup>66</sup> The traumatic experience of the wars in the nineteen nineties, which Serb-led forces lost one after the other and which for the first time in modern history confronted Serbia with Western Europe also prompted the search for new heroes. In the recent poll organized by Serbian TV and weekly journal *NIN* eighty thousand people chose the 30 greatest Serbs in history and Dositej was not among them. In the summer of 2009 the Dositej and Vuk Museum, housed in the building where Dositej opened the first high school in Serbia during the insurrection against the Ottomans, was closed due to its absolute neglect and fear of collapse.<sup>67</sup> At the same time the State is financing the construction of hundreds of new unison Byzantine-looking churches including the biggest Orthodox Church in the world dedicated to St. Sava.<sup>68</sup>

## v. Epilogue

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<sup>63</sup> Ksenija Lazić, *Bibliografija Dositeja Obradovića* (Beograd, 1989).

<sup>64</sup> Jašović *Recepcija*, p. 255.

<sup>65</sup> Jašović, *Recepcija*, p. 255.

<sup>66</sup> See the special Dositej's anniversary edition of the literary journal *Gradina* in 1989.

<sup>67</sup> 'Muzej Vuka i Dositeja zatvoren' [Vuk and Dositej Museum Closed], *TANJUG*, 23. 07. 2009.

<sup>68</sup> See mine, 'Nationalism in Construction'.

It might be too early to tell but Dositej seemed on the way to remain an icon of the educated pro-Western elites only. As if his cult has come full circle and is back with the same following that had initiated it. Few years ago I participated in the foundation of the association of Serbian lecturers and researchers at British universities which was named after Dositej. Similarly, Belgrade intellectuals gathered in a loose group branded as ‘Second Serbia’ hail Dositej as their hero and his poem *Vostani Srbije* (Rise Serbia) was recently performed as their anthem on the special promotion of their radio programme *Peščanik*.<sup>69</sup>

In the meantime, the Serbian Orthodox Church is swayed by rising antioccidentalism.<sup>70</sup> Its most eminent theologians and bishops utter bitter words blaming Dositej for the latter day ‘religious crisis’ among the Serbs and the alleged abandonment of the faith which caused Serbian misfortunes in the twentieth century. Dositej, according to this view, paved the way to ridiculing the faith through secularization, which eventually resulted in the destruction of his people in Titoist Yugoslavia and in the wars in 1990s.<sup>71</sup> The notion of enlightenment is interpreted in binary terms. St. Sava’s enlightenment means acquiring truth and wisdom through faith, whereas Dositej’s is only a superficial search in imperfect human creation, whose truth is only materialist and pragmatic. Along these lines a contemporary Serbian theologian and bishop compared the writings of the eighteenth century Serbian theologians of the Karlovci Metropolitanate to wounds on the body of Orthodox theology.<sup>72</sup> The wounds of “Baroque theology”, as recently defined by the professor of Belgrade theological faculty, were opened in Ukraine but deepened among the Serbs in the Habsburg Empire.<sup>73</sup> Denounced and rejected, Serbian

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<sup>69</sup> The event took place on 28th of June, 2010 and is available to view at <http://www.youtube.com/user/pescanik#p/a>.

<sup>70</sup> For more see Thomas Bremer, ‘The Attitude of the Serbian Orthodox Church Towards Europe’, in *Orthodox Christianity and Contemporary Europe*, ed. J. Sutton and W. van den Bercken (Leuven, 2003), p. 423-430 and Vasilios N. Makrides, ‘Orthodoxe Kulturen, der Westen und Europa: Die eigentlichen Schwierigkeiten einer Beziehung am Beispiel der serbischen Orthodoxie’, in *Serbien in Europa: Leitbilder der Moderne in der Diskussion*, ed. Gabriella Schubert (Wiesbaden, 2008), p. 117-137.

<sup>71</sup> See Atanasije Jefić, *Bogoslovlje Svetog Save* [Theology of Saint Sava] (Vrnjačka banja, 1991) and Amfilohije Radović, *Svetosavsko prosvetno predanje i prosvetčenost Dositeja Obradovića* [Saint Savaian Educational Legacy and the Enlightenment of Dositej Obradović] (Vrnjačka banja, 1994).

<sup>72</sup> David Perović, ‘Srpska barokna teologija’ [Serbian Baroque Theology], *Pravoslavlje* 1005, 1.2.2009.

<sup>73</sup> Vladimir Vukašinović, *Srpska barokna teologija: biblijsko i svetotajinsko bogoslovlje u Karlovačkoj mitropoliji XVIII veka* [Serbian Baroque Theology; Biblical and Mystical Theology in Karlovci

enlighteners are nonetheless justified and exonerated, as they are deemed patriots, who only strove to adjust to the West European culture of the Monarchy and the dominating Serbian bourgeoisie. Confronting and analysing their writings is thought to be the only way of liberating Orthodox theology from the ‘Babylonian slavery’ of Western influences. This approach is accompanied by the full scale revisionism of Serbian history in the Habsburg Monarchy, which portrays the Church as national par excellence and obfuscates the conflicts it had with nationalist parties and the secular intelligentsia.<sup>74</sup>

Apart from the rejection in Church circles the recent appraisal of Dositej’s work in Serbia saw an attempt to repackage it as some sort of ‘Serbian enlightenment’. The chief tool remains his patriotism. In the anthology of 37 studies dedicated to Dositej, delivered in 1999 in the Serbian Academy of Arts and Science, Borisav Krstić Velimirov resolves the issue of Dositej’s pro-Western orientation in the following manner: ‘There is no doubt whether we should enter in the next Millennium with or without Dositej. Definitely with him and to the West. But to the West like returning home as Dositej did...’<sup>75</sup> Similarly, Predrag Jašović praised Dositej as a fortunate synthesis of East and West and appealed to the Church to show more understanding for his religiosity.<sup>76</sup>

Despite all the vicissitudes which Dositej’s legacy and cult lately experienced in Serbia this overview ends on a positive note. In 2004, a successfully privatized pharmaceutical concern, Hemofarm, purchased what is believed to be Dositej Obradović’s birth house in Csakovo, Romania. At the same time it helped establish the Dositej Obradović foundation in Belgrade.<sup>77</sup> In order to commemorate 200th anniversary of Dositej’s ‘transfigurative’ arrival to Serbia in 2007, the foundation published a newly edited and richly illustrated edition of the complete works of Dositej and organized a major conference whose proceedings were published in a

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Metropolitanate in 18th Century] (Belgrade, 2008).

<sup>74</sup> See Radovan Vujošević, *Sukobi liberala i klerikalaca u srpskim narodno-erkvenim saborima u Karlovačkoj Mitropoliji* [Conflicts between Liberals and Clericalists in the Institutions of the Serbian Autonomy in Karlovac Metropolitanate] (Novi Sad, 2004) in contrast to the portrayal of Serbian clergy as pro-Habsburg in Kostić, *Dositej*, p. 78-79.

<sup>75</sup> *Život i delo Dosteja Obradovića* [Life and Oeuvre of Dositej Obradović] (Belgrade, 2000), p. 211.

<sup>76</sup> Jašović, *Recepcija*, p. 263.

<sup>77</sup> Mirjana Dragaš, “Zadužbina ‘Dositej Obradović’”, in *Delo Dositeja Obradovića 1807-2007* (Belgrade, 2008), p. 401-404.

separate volume. The year was marked by several events, coins and stamps with Dositej's image were issued, school children were again invited to write about Dositej and Europe, special TV programmes made... Most importantly, annual celebrations, the so-called *Dositej's Days*, were established in Timisoara, Romania and his house restored and furnished with a permanent exhibition. While the work of the newly established foundation is certainly helping to rescue Dositej from threatening oblivion, Serbian scholars and society as a whole still need to critically assess the impact of the long lasting cult of Enlightenment in Serbian culture and its later rejection<sup>78</sup>.

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<sup>78</sup> The agile Dositej Foundation (Zadužbina Dositej Obradović) organised an international congress in 2011 to mark the bicentennial of his death and its proceedings were published two years later as *Dositej Obradović u srpskoj istoriji i kulturi* [Dositej Obradović u srpskoj istoriji i kulturi] (Belgrade, 2013).