

---

## REVIEWS

---

---

Goran Vasin, *Patriarch Georgije Branković and his era*, Novi Sad: Malo istorijsko društvo, 2014, 345 pages.

(Горан Васин, *Патријарх Георгије Бранковић и његово доба*, Нови Сад: Мало историјско друштво, 2014, 345 стр.)

---

In the history of the Serbian people the church played a prominent role in both the Middle Ages and Modern Age. Its contribution to preserve national identity in the centuries of Ottoman slavery and to free people from it left an indelible mark on Serbian history. The impact of the Primate, Archbishop, Patriarch and Metropolitan, primarily on the history of Serbs in the Habsburg Monarchy, was extremely strong. For more than a century and a half they were the sole representatives of the people, and politicians, until the National Assembly known as the Blagoveštenski Assembly, when they got a strong civil competition, but still remained among the leading Serbian politicians. In addition, they were the spiritual leaders of their people and as such had an important role through which they preserved a religious, linguistic, national and cultural identity. For this reason, it was essential to know this segment of their past in order to understand the history of Serbs living in the Habsburg state. Unfortunately, there were not enough written works in Serbian historiography that would highlight the achievements of certain church prelates, while in many of them, which were created more or less than a century ago, attitudes needed to be revised. In certain segments, further investigation was necessary, as well as evaluation of new results of the Historical science. In that context, writing a book in the field of ecclesiastical history of Serbs in Austria-Hungary was a special challenge and a need of modern historiography.

Considering the abovementioned, the book by Ass. Prof. Goran Vasin, *Patriarch Georgije*

*Branković and his era 1890-1907*, which was published by Malo istorijsko društvo in 2014, represents a significant contribution to the Historical science. It originated from a slightly modified author's master's thesis, defended at the Faculty of Philosophy in Novi Sad in 2008, before the following board: Radoš Ljušić, PhD, Duško M. Kovačević, PhD, Vladan Gavrilović, PhD, and Ass. Prof. Dejan Mikavica (mentor). After the preface and the introductory chapter (*From miletićevac to anđelićevac*) the book is divided into two parts. The first part, *On the throne of the Metropolitan patriarchs of Karlovci 1890-1907*, consists of nine chapters, while the other part, *Patron*, consists of five chapters. In addition, there is a Conclusion, Appendices (a list of priests ordained by Georgije Branković, the Bishop of Timisoara and Patriarch of Karlovci), References and a Name Register.

In the opening chapter *From miletićevac to anđelićevac* (19-39), Ass. Prof. Vasin gives the reader an insight into the center of Serbian political developments in the Austro-Hungarian Empire, through the activity of the Orthodox priest, later Bishop, Georgije Branković. Describing the main discussions at the National-Church Assemblies, the most important bodies of the Serbian church-school autonomy, the author shows the changing political attitudes, importance and influence of the individuals who were the subject of his research. At the beginning of his political activity, Priest Branković belonged to the circle of liberal clergy, so close to Miletić that, according to the author, he was considered the second man of the Serbian National Liberal Party in 1871. He used his experience in education as an advantage to leave his mark in the Assemblies. However, with changing political circumstances in the country, and with Serbian secular parties becoming weaker and weaker, the attitudes of politicians changed as well, including Priest Branković's, who increasingly began to approximate episcopacy, until he stood openly on

the side of the Bishop, and then the Patriarch, German Andelić (1882-1888). On the one hand, it enabled him to progress in the hierarchy because the patriarch, on his personal intercessions, had chosen him for the Bishop of Timisoara (1882), along with the other bishops. On the other hand, it brought him trouble with the new opponents of radicals. For an experienced person such as Bishop Branković, the attacks were nothing new, but they were more intense towards the end of his life, even though, as the author claims, they mostly came with no valid reason and only contributed to the destruction of the Serbian church-school autonomy and the reputation of the church.

The author devotes a separate chapter, *The election of the new primate and the continuation of the split in the church-school autonomy* (43-76), to the election of Georgije Branković to a position of the Patriarch in 1890 and the political struggles which came in the next two years. Since the death of Patriarch German Andelić, the parties were preparing for the confrontation at the next Church-National Assembly, where the new primate should have been elected. During those preparations, especially in early 1890 when the news about convening the Assembly was spread, attacks on Georgije Branković, as one of the most serious candidates for the primate, began. Radicals dominated in that, attacking not only him, but also the liberals of Mihajlo Polit Desančić after the elections, considering them responsible for putting Branković in charge of the Serbian church, at the same time believing that he would crucially contribute to the further destruction of Serbian autonomy. The atmosphere created on the eve of Branković's election only intensified the radicals' intolerance towards the Patriarch in the coming period. *Zastava* kept a close watch on Branković, criticized him, especially because they expected the Church-National Assembly in 1891 which was never held. As the author points out, radicals tried to gain political points by attacking the patriarch at that time, but it was all just a prelude to an even more severe and ruthless struggle in the future.

In the chapter *Between a radical's hammer and anvil* (1892-1897), Ass. Prof. Goran Vasin

explains the essence of the political struggle between the Patriarch and his supporters – conservatives on the one side and radicals and liberals on the other. The Patriarch's attempt to regain the influence of the church in society through the Unique statute failed in the Assembly in 1892, which further deepened the gap with radicals who used their newsletter, *Zastava*, to attack the Primate in an unworthy manner. These attacks resumed after the Assembly, primarily in the context of intensified Hungarization, whereby radicals, particularly their undisputed leader – Jaša Tomić, claimed that the Patriarch and the Episcopate were not doing enough, or did almost nothing against this politics of Budapest, and that the Patriarch also became a traitor of the Serbian people. The author analyzes the means of Hungarization and the main directions in which it took place. He also shows how intensified the influence of the Serbian Patriarch could have been, and of Serbs in general, who made up 2.5% of the total population of the Hungarian part of the state. The main political story was, at that time, concentrated on the issue of civil marriage. Even though Branković was his open adversary, and the author explained and demonstrated the ways in which the Patriarch fought against him, for the radicals he was still the person who had not done enough in that regard. The Episcopate was criticized as well, and that led to an absurd situation in which the patrons of canon become radicals, as opposed to the Episcopate and the Patriarch who had a good theological education and had served the church for a number of years, including Branković for the past four decades. Radicals used every opportunity to demean the Patriarch and insult him in the harshest way, while every positive thing that he had done for the church and people was not mentioned at all, or was mentioned as a passing reference. On the other hand, the author pointed out that the Patriarch came into conflict with the President of the Hungarian government Dezső Bánffy, which only aggravated his position for two years (1895-1897), especially in the context of the affair connected with the cement factory in Beočin (Beočinska kaja), in which he was one of the main protagonists.

In two events the author describes the attitudes towards Serbs in Croatia and the problem of Hungarization. It was an attack on the Patriarch in Zagreb during the Emperor Franz Josef's visit to this city and the organization of the Millennium exhibition. While the conflicts with the politics of Hungarization and the government ended up in the press or in the parliamentary booths, at that time physical assaults and attacks on Serbs were happening in Zagreb. The reason for that was the frustration of Croatian politicians and the Catholic Church because of the participation of Serbs in the government through the notable support of Ban Kuen Hédervári and the economic power of the Serbian people in Zagreb. Displaying the Serbian flag next to state symbols during the Emperor Franz Josef's visit to Zagreb, attended by the Patriarch as well, triggered the attacks on Serbian shops, churches, houses, banks and even physical attacks on Georgije Branković, i.e. his carriage, which was negatively commented in Vienna, Budapest, Belgrade and Serbian press. Radicals, as the most vocal Serbian politicians in Hungary, saw this as the possibility to criticize the church and the Serbian politics in Croatia, and their attitude towards the Patriarch was soon exacerbated in the context of the Millennium, which Branković attended as a member of the Upper House of the Parliament. They were even more bothered by his presence at meetings that were supposed to reactivate the politics proclaimed by The Unique Statute. In such a turbulent atmosphere everyone was preparing for new parliamentary elections and for the elections for the members of the Church-National Assembly planned for 1897.

In the next chapter, *Between two Assemblies* (173-223), Ass. Prof. Goran Vasin follows the political struggles in the field of Serbian autonomy between 1897 and 1902, which announced its further decline. This fight was not seen, as the author notes, only in the case of political issues, but also during the funeral of King Milan Obrenović in the monastery Krušedol. Analyzing radicals' and liberals' newsletters, particularly in the case of the funeral, he pointed to the daily political manner of writing of *Zastava*, its turning into yellow press, which in

a political struggle chose no means to defeat or at least shame its political opponent – Patriarch Georgije. Unlike *Zastava*, *Liberals* and their newsletter *Branik*, also critical of the clergy, showed considerably more tact and understanding of the Church, which they regarded as one of the foundations of national identity. The clashes, which lasted between evidently weak conservatives, radicals and liberals in the period 1897-1902, shook Serbian autonomy, which was seen at the Assembly in 1897, where the fruitless discussions only deepened the gap between the people and the Serbian political elite, as well as among themselves. The result of failed assembly sessions enabled easier Hungarization. Serbian National Radical Party held the Patriarch responsible for that even though, in reality, it was the real reason for the collapse of autonomy, which could be seen even more clearly in the coming period. For the first time radicals went so far as to openly disclose lies and untruths about the Patriarch, demanding his resignation, with the help of Bishop of Vršac, Gavriilo Zmejanović, who accused him of financial fraud. Due to these Serbo-Serbian conflicts it could not be expected that a united and firm attitude would be taken in the fight against Hungarization; strengths were in vain spent on less important issues, concludes Ass. Prof. Goran Vasin.

In the chapter *Predominance of Radicals 1902-1907* (223-261), the author mentions two Church-National Assemblies (1902 and 1906/7) and resistance to Hungarization as the backbone of political events. Since the Assembly in 1902, radicals had supremacy in the field of Serbian autonomy until 1910, and thus reached very lucrative positions in committees and institutions. Although the autonomous bodies continued to deteriorate and the financial aspect of the reign of radicals clearly pointed to the great misuse, it did not prevent them to continue with the attacks to Patriarch Georgije. While the attacks and demands for his dismissal were prevented by Emperor Franz Joseph in 1902, a ruthless avalanche of insults and newspaper articles, including a variety of demands for the replacement of the Patriarch in 1906 and 1907, continued to fill the columns of the radicals'

newsletter. Even though the largest part of Serbian cultural and political elites appeared to trust them and publically demonstrated their loyalty to them, radicals, who came to power with the help of Budapest, continued the attacks. It was absurd that they, who managed the funds and contributed to its weakening, demagogically accused the Serbian patriarch for that, even though he was not involved. It was done by disclosing the long forgotten Branković's financial affairs. The author states that, no matter how small the affairs were, they could not benefit the patriarch, but that it had to be taken into consideration what the Primate spent his money on, which he had received by virtue of his position. Ass. Prof. Vasin further elaborates this in the next chapter, concluding this one with the observations of contemporaries – that radicals of Jaša Tomić contributed to the downfall of Serbian autonomy and paralyzed it to that extent that the country had no difficulty to abolish it in 1912 in the context of other external and internal political developments. At the same time, their constant demagogical and sensationalistic writing in the negative tone about the Serbian Patriarch contributed to the damage of the reputation of one of the most important Serbian institutions – The Diocese of Karlovac, and to one of the most important metropolitan positions – the Patriarch.

Patriarch Georgije Branković did not leave a significant mark just on the Serbian political scene; on the contrary, what linked his name to the Serbian politics had long been forgotten, the clue about it remained only in the references and literature, the most significant example being this book. Even today, constructions that had been built thanks to his financial means could be seen. Ass. Prof. Goran Vasin dedicates a special chapter to that (*Patron*, 261-317), where he counts not only the constructions that had been raised, but also all the monasteries which the Patriarch helped. The chapter then points to the special care that the Patriarch dedicated to education or funds. His contribution to this field, which was testified by his contemporaries, was invaluable in comparison with any metropolitan before him, and even all of them together. Even today, Sremski Karlovci, the former seat of the

Patriarchate, has a city center built by Patriarch Georgije. In this chapter, the author points out what the life of the Patriarch like was, i.e. his daily church duties, where and for what reason he served the liturgy. Special attention was devoted to the Patriarch's last days and his death, and news about it was published by all the Austro-Hungarian and Serbian newspapers. Even then, the news shown, depended on the political views of the newspapers owners.

In the Conclusion, the author sums up the attitudes towards Patriarch Georgije Branković and emphasizes his significance once again. All the activities he was involved in were pointed out: in the field of church-school autonomy, as a bishop, patriarch, politician, patron and benefactor. The author states that Branković was not always right, but it was shown that all allegations and frauds his opponents, above all radicals, had accused him of were at the level of the yellow press and untruths, and that his founder's activity could still be seen today. In this way, the author presents an important figure in Serbian history, successfully examining his importance, for the first time in a critical way, contextualizing him in terms of church history, Serbian autonomy and culture. Therefore, this book is recommended to the audience so that they can see the political and cultural scene of the Serbian people in the Austria-Hungary in the last decades of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and the first decades of the end 20<sup>th</sup> century.

**Nenad Ninković**

doi: 10.19090/i.2015.26.202-205

© Faculty of Philosophy, Novi Sad, 2015

ISTRAŽIVANJA 26, 202-205

---

Nikola Samardžić, *The Identity of Spain*, Belgrade: Admiral Books, 2014, 319 pages.  
(Никола Самарџић, Идентитет Шпаније, Београд: Admiral Books, 2014, 319 стр.)

---

Nikola Samardžić, professor at the University of Belgrade, has re-introduced the liveliness in the Serbian historiographical scene with his new book *The Identity of Spain*. Familiar with the history of the Mediterranean, Spain, and the Levante, the author delivers, as he himself claims,