

# The Making of the Serbian Academic Community in the Second Half of the Nineteenth Century

## A Prosopography

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**Abstract.** Prosopography, a methodological approach to understanding the biographical regularities and irregularities of a particular social stratum, provides new opportunities for studying national elites and professional groups in Central and South-Eastern Europe. The present study suggests a reconstruction of the process of the making of the scientific and wider intellectual community of the Principality/Kingdom of Serbia in the second half of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Using biographical data about the members of the Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts, one can compile a database of use in examining (inter-)generational changes in the Serbian academic community. Furthermore, one can detect which Serb-populated historical areas outside Serbia that scholars, scientists, and cultural figures of the ‘Balkan Piemonté’ who ushered in the process of modernization came from. Scrutinizing the information on their background and qualifications, one can draw some conclusions concerning the character and peculiarities of Serbia’s scientific, cultural, and social development, the needs of the state, and the tasks and functions it defined for its academic community. One can also make assumptions about the interactions of Serbian academics with the intellectual elites of other states. Last but not least, comparative analysis of the academics’ biographies highlights the role played by the Serbian state, which successfully consolidated its marginal community of intellectuals and turned it into a unified, state-controlled professional structure.

**Keywords:** prosopography, ‘divide of national space’, generations of the national elite, Serbian intellectual community

The interest in personality that arises in science and in society determines the special attention awarded by researchers to the biographies of figures of the past and the present. The study of individual biographies, or personography, is a method familiar to the historian, while prosopography<sup>1</sup> was first applied only in the 1970s

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1 The problem under scrutiny was first approached in Novoseltseva, “Stanovlenie.” This article develops and specifies some observations and conclusions made there.

in works on classical antiquity.<sup>2</sup> According to the founder of the genre, British historian and sociologist Lawrence Stone (1919–1999), it involves “the investigation of the common background characteristics of a group of actors in history by means of a collective study of their lives”.<sup>3</sup> As a result, in addition to facilitating collective portraits based on individual biographies, the method makes it possible to recreate the historical context of the era. Today, prosopography is successfully applied in research into groups of individuals, who share sets of characteristics, such as “social background, participation in a social movement, belonging to some political circles [or] membership in various scientific organizations”.<sup>4</sup>

Thanks to prosopography, research on national elites has gained new impetus because it is the highest strata of society that left behind materials that are more or less suitable for quantitative analysis. The question that arises during the study of a social stratum by means of prosopography is that of the criteria that distinguish the subject of research from other ones. The correct choice of such a group makes it possible to find out what makes it elite, how it marks its advantages in society, and what the mechanisms of social mobility and evolution are.<sup>5</sup>

### Specifics of the Serbian educational tradition before the nineteenth century

Turning to the study of the Serbian academic community, it is important, in our opinion, to characterize the context and features of its making. The conditions under which the formation of the elite in Serbian society took place were quite special. First of all, the latter refers to the ‘divide of national space’<sup>6</sup> during the Austro–Turkish wars of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, Serbs were literally in the line of fire, which predetermined their destiny. After demarcation they resided in the Austrian Empire and the Ottoman Empire as a minority, the only difference being that the privileges granted to them by Emperor King Leopold I during their resettlement were a guarantee of their physical survival, whereas the sultans provided no such guarantee. The Austrian Serbs, referred to as *Prečani*<sup>7</sup> in Russian and

2 *Prosopography of the Later Roman Empire*, a three-volume work containing information on the persons who lived or were supposed to have lived in Rome from AD 240 to AD 641.

3 Stone, “Prosopography.”

4 Iumasheva, “Prosopografija.”

5 Diuma, “Ob izuchenii élit,” 135.

6 The term was proposed by Russian historian Andrej L. Shemiakin. See Shemiakin, “Serby v usloviakh razloma.”

7 From the Serbian *preko* (*преко*) (‘across’, ‘opposite’, ‘beyond’). The name *Prečani* used to denote the Serbs who lived across the Danube and Sava rivers (in the territory of the Austrian Monarchy).

Serbian historiography, and the Turkish Serbs, known as *Srbijanci* or *Šumadinci*,<sup>8</sup> were affected by corresponding European or oriental influence of different intensity, but nonetheless preserved the cultural and historical basis of their national identity. This was the foundation for the nineteenth-century national movement that was exclusive in its form and defined two main objectives: creating an independent state and eliminating the 'divide of space' in the future, thereby unifying *Prećani* and *Srbijanci*. It should be emphasized that the 'teamwork' of the latter groups was the key to success: the internal conditions that had been formed in 'Turkish' Serbia by the beginning of the nineteenth century, in combination with ideas of renewal that were maturing during the eighteenth century among the educated Austrian Serbs, created a favourable substrate for the fulfilment of national dream.<sup>9</sup>

During the reign of Maria Theresa, the privileges granted to Austrian Serbs finally transformed into church-school autonomy. Reform in the sphere of education, which was inspired by the thinkers of the Enlightenment and implemented by the monarch who decided to separate schools from the church and bring them under the control of the state, had far-reaching consequences since it marked a significant point when the types of development of the Serbian subjects of the Habsburg Monarchy and the Ottoman Empire diverged. Before the reform, education evolved exclusively within the framework of the Orthodox Church's activities and was approximately at the same low level on both sides of the Danube because elementary literacy was disseminated by parish schools whose number was small. The latter were funded by the personal savings of the church hierarchs and donations from congregations; there were no curricula as such; and the books used for teaching were in Church Slavonic and were sent from the Russian Empire. As a result of the reforms implemented by Maria Theresa and Joseph II, the Serbs in the Habsburg Monarchy had two options. They could continue their existing practice with the permission of the authorities, or they could obtain knowledge and broaden their horizons at secularized state-controlled educational institutions. Moreover, the curriculum offered by *Ratio Educationis* suggested that teaching in primary school should be in Serbian. At the following stages of school education, knowledge of official languages (German, Latin, and later Hungarian) was encouraged but not mandatory, although it offered certain advantages.<sup>10</sup> Serbian historiography is quite ambiguous in its evaluation of the results of the reform. On the one hand, they are viewed as positive because the reform elevated the spiritual development of part of the people to a new level. On the other hand, researchers consider these transformations

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8 From Serbian Šumadija (Шумадија), a historical region in central Serbia. In the nineteenth century, it occupied almost the entire territory of the state.

9 Shemiakin, "Serby v usloviakh razloma," 290.

10 Khavanova, "Opyt sozdaniia pervykh grammatik," 138.

to be a key factor in Germanisation, which posed a serious threat to the preservation of national identity.<sup>11</sup> The realities of the polyethnic Habsburg Monarchy were such that one way or another, from the eighteenth to the early twentieth century, the Serbian ethnic minority was forced to seek balance between the preservation of national values and traditions and integration into imperial society, and coped with this task with different degrees of success. For instance, the stratum of educated clergy became consolidated in the Habsburg Monarchy in the second half of the eighteenth century, the number of officers of Serbian origin increased in the regular army and the regiments of the Military Frontier, and the estates of artisans and merchants grew rapidly, leading to the emergence of their role as a political as well as financial elite. Thanks to the reforms of Maria Theresa and Joseph II, the class of officials of Serbian origin, which was not numerous but influential, had emerged by the end of the century. The peculiarities of the lives of the Serbs in the Habsburg Monarchy made systematic education a necessity; initially, literacy was a practical skill, but later it turned into an internal need. As a result of the modernization of the empire and the transformation of the Serbian community, the intelligentsia, scientists, and scholars alike were singled out in the second half of the eighteenth century and civil national culture began to emerge. The establishment of gymnasia in Sremski Karlovci (Karlóca, Karlowitz; 1791/1792) and Novi Sad (Újvidék; 1810) and the Preperandija teachers' seminary in Szentendre (1812; in 1816 moved to Sombor) facilitated the stable growth of the intellectual stratum in the Serbian community under the Habsburg Monarchy. The graduates of these gymnasia obtained a higher-level education in the universities of Vienna, Pest, and Bratislava (Pozsony).<sup>12</sup>

Sociocultural processes on the territory of residence of the Turkish Serbs in the eighteenth to the early nineteenth centuries were of a different nature. First of all, there was consistent de-elitisation of society because its most active and authoritative stratum moved to the north and took up Austrian citizenship. The highest clergy were traditionally seen as the only legitimate defenders and leaders of the Serbian Orthodox population in the Ottoman Empire, but the abolition of the Serbian Patriarchate of Peć in 1766 beheaded the spiritual leadership of the latter. Social life was limited to relations within the *zadruga*, a closed rural community, patriarchal and static in its development. In the absence of spiritual leaders, forced but natural secularization took place. As Serbian researcher Radmila Radić has pointed out, traditional values and patriarchal morals had deeper roots in Serbian consciousness than religious doctrines. People opposed to dogmas and coercion viewed God as a highly revered partner in work and believed the church to be a form of social organization at the local or state-wide level. In addition to

11 Ninković, "Reforma srpskog školstva," 178–79.

12 Jakovljević, "Začeci srpskog školstva," 520.

socioeconomic factors, the Kosovo Myth also significantly influenced the spiritual development of the Turkish Serbs: like Prince Lazar Hrebeljanović, when choosing the 'kingdom of heaven' citizens consciously embarked on a path of asceticism.<sup>13</sup> Therefore, there was no need for education as such; society was content with the minimum knowledge needed for everyday life. The centres of literacy were concentrated in monasteries and churches.

The First Serbian Uprising (1804–1813) gave impetus to the spread of elementary and scientific literacy among the Turkish Serbs. Dositej Obradović (1739/1743–1811), who arrived from Vienna and was the best educated Serb of the time, became the first patron of public education: it was at his initiative that the foundation of the public education system was laid, and Velika Škola was founded with the assistance of Ivan Jugović (1772–1813). Velika Škola was the first higher educational institution in the country and terminated its activities in 1813 because of the suppression of the First Serbian Uprising. Nevertheless, the achievements of the Serbian Revolution<sup>14</sup> in the sphere of education were not lost and many of the initiatives were brought to completion in autonomous Serbia thanks to the personal involvement of Prince Miloš Obrenović (1817–1839, 1858–1860). The first gymnasias and semi-gymnasias started to appear after 1830 when, in compliance with Hatt-i Sharif, Serbs obtained the right to open national schools. The Lyceum, the first higher educational institution in the autonomous principality, was founded in Kragujevac in 1838. The young state sought to educate and train educated citizens for service to the fatherland, while the nascent administration was in urgent need of a professional cadre. Under the circumstances, it was quite natural that the Serbian government hoped to obtain assistance from educated compatriots on the other side of the Danube and addressed the authorities of the Austrian Empire with a request to facilitate the departure of Serbian subjects who desired to pursue a career in the principality. In most cases, Vienna approved this in the hope that it would be able to influence Serbia's politics through its subjects, or it would at least lead to the presence of lobbyists there. The Austrian Serbs who were invited by the government of Miloš Obrenović made up the first generation of the intelligentsia of the young state.<sup>15</sup> Thanks to their efforts, the Society of Serbian Letters (*Društvo srpske slovensnosti*) was founded in 1841. It was the first learned organization in Serbia, headed by Jovan Sterija Popović (1806–1856), a playwright, pedagogue, and organizer of cultural and scientific life.

13 Radić, "Verska elita i modernizacija," 156.

14 The Serbian Revolution is the term introduced by Leopold von Ranke in 1829 to denote the period in Serbian history that included the First Serbian Uprising (1804–1813), Hadži-Prodan's Rebellion (1814), and the Second Serbian Uprising (1815). Later, historiography adopted a wider timeframe and included the period of the official recognition of the Serbian state in 1815–1835.

15 Trgovčević, "Generacije intelektualaca."

### Factors involved in the assembly of the academic community

A considerable amount of historiography is devoted to the processes of formation and functioning of the national elite. The foundation for the research was laid by the work of Ljubinka Trgovčević (1948–2022), who identified three generations of Serbian intelligentsia in the nineteenth century. There is a claim entrenched in historical science that before the revival of statehood in the nineteenth century the role of the elite was played exclusively by the Austrian Serbs, and later, in the autonomous principality and the independent kingdom, this function was taken over by the natives of Serbia. This occurred due to the turnover of generations and the fact that by the middle of the century the Serbian state had ‘brought up’ the new strata of the prominent learned, and no longer needed the assistance of compatriots—natives of the Habsburg Monarchy. However, one can assume that the recruitment of the elite was more convoluted. It also appears that an important role in this process was played by the state, as the authorities of Serbia made great efforts to form an intellectual elite. Based on the example of a group of professional scientists and scholars, the present study makes an attempt to research the channels and mechanisms of recruitment and follow the career trajectories of the former intellectuals, which gives us an opportunity to understand in what way the scientific academic community was formed in particular, and to reveal regularities and trends related to the national elite in general.

It should be pointed out that the main problem in such research is identifying the Serbian academic community in the second half of the nineteenth century. The definition that was developed in the works of Western philosophers that established “the possession of nonmaterial wealth and engagement in science, art, and metaphysical research”<sup>16</sup> as the main features of an intellectual is not quite applicable to the Serbian realities of the nineteenth century: the dominant idea in that milieu was that mental activity that yields practical results was the only kind that was necessary. Serbian scholars have not drawn concrete conclusions about this so far, and have not defined the combination of features characteristic of the intellectual elite of the nineteenth century, thus granting researchers leeway to perfect the terminology. In the present work, the author maintains that the educational framework in the society under study is conditional and proposes the following definition: the scientific intelligentsia refers to a group that includes persons of different social backgrounds who professionally engage in intellectual work and teach at higher educational institutions.

To analyse the process of formation and functioning of the intellectual elite, a database was compiled that contains formalized information on scientists of Serbian

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16 Benda, *Predatel'stvo intelektualov*, 110.

origin in the second half of the nineteenth century (before the outbreak of World War I). The publication *Građa za biografski rečnik članova Društva srpske slovesnosti, Srpskog učenog društva i Kraljevske akademije nauka 1841–1947* [Material for the Biographical Dictionary of the Members of the Society of Serbian Letters, Serbian Learned Society and Serbian Royal Academy 1841–1947]<sup>17</sup> was used as the main source. This was the result of many years work collecting data on the lives and work of Academy members carried out by the Bibliographical Department of the Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts (SASA). In discussing the methodology of prosopographical studies, Hungarian historian Rudolf Paksa noted that sources of this kind are somewhat ‘sterile’ because they contain strictly unified information, but they are also reliable in terms of their credibility. He also argued that the most objective conclusions are those drawn from the study of several thousand biographies. Since this ideal can rarely be achieved in historical studies, a sample of up to a thousand but no less than a hundred biographies can be considered representative. However, the data thus obtained should be correlated with a larger control group.<sup>18</sup>

Data on 280 persons were entered into the database. Many of the latter were not only scientists but also prominent statesmen; through their work they defined the direction of development of the scientific, cultural, and social life of Serbia in the second half of the nineteenth and the early twentieth century. Since the scientific intelligentsia, quite a small social group, is under discussion, the Serbian intellectual elite of the second half of the nineteenth century was selected as the control group. More specifically, the latter are defined as those persons who obtained a higher education who were analysed in a piece of work by Lj. Trgovčević “Generacije intelektualaca ili generacije obrazovanog građanstva u Srbiji 19 veka” [Generations of Intellectuals or Generations of Educated Citizens in Serbia in the Nineteenth Century].<sup>19</sup>

Let us consider the selection criteria in more detail. In addition to the academic degree, the first criterion—the period of life and creative work of the scientists—is directly connected to the chronological framework of our research. The data entered in the database concerned those intellectuals who were active in the period between 1841 (when the Society of Serbian Letters, the first Serbian research and educational organization, was founded) and the outbreak of World War I. Accordingly, this is information about the scientists who were born in the period between the 1790s and the 1880s and comprised three generations of the Serbian intellectual elite of the second half of the nineteenth century.

17 Nikić, Radojčić-Kostič, and Žujović, *Građa za biografski rečnik*.

18 Paksa, “Prozopográfia vagyis »kollektív biográfiai elemzés«.”

19 Trgovčević, “Generacije intelektualaca.”

The application of the criterion that can be conditionally referred to as the presence of Serbian identity is the key point of the research, first of all because it was necessary to develop an algorithm for revealing the ethnic self-identification of the scientists. The author solved this task in two stages. The first stage involved analysis of the available autobiographical materials that were written by the intellectuals—for example, by Minister of Education Dimitrije Matić (1821–1884),<sup>20</sup> a lawyer and philosopher, and president of the Serbian Royal Academy Stojan Novaković (1842–1915),<sup>21</sup> a historian and a diplomat, as well as their profiles compiled later. In this case, the information sought was that on the national and religious self-awareness of men of science. In the absence of direct indications that an intellectual belonged to the Serbian people, their identity was determined according to the principle that only an Orthodox Serb was considered a Serb. Despite the controversial nature of this assumption, a confession of the Orthodox faith that was one of the consolidation features of the Serbian nation in the second half of the nineteenth century.<sup>22</sup>

At the second stage of solving the task, in the absence of information on the belonging of intellectuals to the Serbian people, the author applied the mechanism of checking the national identification of scientists and scholars according to place of birth and death. The ascertainment of the Serbian self-awareness of the scientists who were born and died on the territory of the Principality of Serbia, Old Serbia, southern counties of the Kingdom of Hungary, and Bosnia and Herzegovina caused no difficulties. Complications arose when it was necessary to determine the identity of the intellectuals who were born in the areas where Serbs resided in the Kingdom of Croatia, Slavonia and Dalmatia and the territory of the Military Frontier. Referring to a demographic map of their settlement pattern in the second half of the nineteenth century,<sup>23</sup> the author defined the identification of a native with Serbia according to a certain settlement according to the prevalence of Serbs or Croats in the region.

The fact that science in Serbia has deep national roots became obvious at the stage of the quantitative analysis of this information. For rapid development, the country needed professional personnel whose ranks were joined by the subjects of the three states where Serbs lived—the Principality (Kingdom) of Serbia, the Austrian Empire (Austria–Hungary), and the Ottoman Empire. The majority of scientists and scholars (36.8 percent, 103 persons) came from Southern Hungary. They obtained a basic education in Serbian at parish schools but could continue

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20 Dimitrije Matić, a Serbian philosopher, legal historian, and Minister of Education from 1868 to 1872.

21 Stojan Novaković, a Serbian politician, historian, philologist, and Minister of Education of Serbia from 1873 to 1875, and from 1880 to 1885 president of the Serbian Royal Academy.

22 For more, see *Russkie o Srbii i serbakh*.

23 Krestić, *Historija Srba u Hrvatskoj i Slavoniji*.

their education at German and Hungarian gymnasia<sup>24</sup> and then enter the higher educational institutions of the Habsburg Monarchy or go abroad. Many of them applied their knowledge in the service to the young Serbian state. There is no doubt that the information contained in the database offers no opportunity to determine the range of the intellectuals' motivation, but historiography identifies the following reasons for moving to Serbia and further activity there. Some of the intellectuals pursued the idea of national revival and unification which had been cherished in the intellectual circles of the Habsburg Monarchy since the late eighteenth century; others saw career prospects or, being prosecuted by the authorities, fled the Austrian Empire, while some of them crossed the Danube to make a living from intellectual rather than physical work. In general, they were important links in the process of modernization, for which the authorities of the principality employed 'Austrian' compatriots in their service.<sup>25</sup>

Scarcely fewer were natives of the Principality (Kingdom), *Srbijanci* (*Šumadinci*) (33.6 percent, 94 persons) who took the initiative from *Prećani* in the late 1850s and early 1860s. The proportion of the subjects of the Ottoman Empire was smaller: from the region of Old Serbia (8.2 percent, 23 persons), from Bosnia and Herzegovina (5 percent, 14 persons), Grenzers or Granichary (7.5 percent, 21 persons), and natives of other regions of the Habsburg Monarchy (7.9 percent, 22 persons) and Montenegro (0.7 percent, 2 persons). The data thus obtained appear logical: the Austrian Serbs gained the opportunity to obtain an education, including higher education, much earlier, which is why in the aggregate they made up more than half of the scientific intelligentsia as a whole.

Nevertheless, quantitative analysis shows the gradual decrease in their number from the first generation to the third: in the first generation, subjects of the Habsburg Monarchy comprised 58 percent; in the second, 45 percent; in the third, 18 percent. These proportions reflect the consistent decrease in *Prećani* from the political, economic, and social spheres of life of the Principality of Serbia due to "anti-Swabian" campaigns. The Austrian Serbs, who were called *Švabi* (Swabs) or *Nemačkari* (Germans) by the Turkish Serbs, were targets of aggression, but discrimination against them was a means of protesting the policy of the authorities. In the late 1830s and early 1840s, society viewed professionals invited from the Habsburg Monarchy as bureaucrats who were taking the places of *Srbijanci* to serve the rule of Miloš and Mihailo (1839–1842, 1860–1868) Obrenović. The opposition demanded their immediate banishment and replacement with native personnel. After the coup d'état and the establishment of the regime of the Defenders of the Constitution, with Alexander Karađorđević (1842–1858) on the throne, the *Prećani* who wanted to

24 Konstantinović, "Vom Werden einer Metropole," 23–27.

25 For more, see Popović, "Srbi iz Južne Ugarske."

stay in the country were required to renounce their Austrian citizenship and take out Serbian. If they refused to change their citizenship, they were subject to criminal prosecution after the expiration of a maximum five-year stay in the country.<sup>26</sup> In truth, it should be mentioned that this trend affected science, creative work, and education to a lesser extent because the Serbian system of education was almost entirely dependent on teachers who had arrived from the Austrian Empire. To corroborate this fact, historian Petar Krestić cites the following example: “During the first academic year 1838/1839, all teachers at the Lyceum were [...] natives of Austria. In 1849, seven of the eleven professors were Prečani. A balanced proportion [was] established only by 1860 when only half of the fourteen professors came from Southern Hungary and only four of the remaining seven were born [on] the territory of the Principality of Serbia.”<sup>27</sup>

The rapid decrease in the number of Austrian Serbs among the third generation of intellectuals was caused by changes in circumstances in the late 1870s and early 1880s. According to historian Miloš Ković, the main factor involved political, economic, and cultural tension between Serbia and Austria–Hungary, which determined the general attraction of the political elite of the principality to Western European powers and chronic rejection of everything associated with Central Europe (i.e., Austria–Hungary) in line with this milieu in the 1850s–1870s. Relations sharply deteriorated in 1878 as a result of the occupation of Bosnia and Herzegovina by Austria–Hungary. Initially, authorities of Serbia tried to adapt to the growing power of the neighbouring empire, as Prince Milan Obrenović (1868–1889, king since 1882) was the most loyal Balkan ally of the Habsburgs. By contrast there was a growing sense of imminent danger in society. The opposition took advantage of this sentiment: radicals called for resistance to the further expansion of Austria–Hungary, and the dependence of Serbia on Russia.<sup>28</sup> Due to the state program of support and training of professional personnel, including scientists, by that time it had become possible to reduce intellectual dependence and the need to invite Serbs from Austria–Hungary.

It is also significant that the opposition included representatives of the second generation of Serbian intelligentsia who had received an education predominantly in France and Switzerland. The activity of the second generation of Serbian academics declined from the 1850s to 1870s. It was quite a small group of Serbs (only 350 persons)<sup>29</sup> who finished school in the Principality, which was at that point based on the national tradition of education. Many of them obtained their academic degrees

26 Popović, “Srbi iz Južne Ugarske,” 882.

27 Krestić, “Political and Social Rivalries in 19<sup>th</sup>-century Serbia,” 78.

28 Ković, “From Vienna to Paris,” 58–59.

29 Nemanjić, *Na tragu porekla srpske inteligencije XIX veka*, 61.

at the universities of Paris<sup>30</sup> and Vienna—this is why in their homeland they were called *Parizlija* (Parisians) and *Bečlija* (Viennese), which to some extent reflected the ironically condescending attitude of the majority of Serbs in the middle of the nineteenth century towards ‘foreign’ lifestyles and scholarships.<sup>31</sup>

The main source of our research does not allow us to retrace the changes in the worldviews and self-identification that occurred with the young intellectuals during the years they spent abroad. However, at our disposal are memoirs and autobiographies of several scientists who described their student years as a time of fulfilling the tasks assigned to them by the fatherland. For example, Dimitrije Matić wrote: “In our childhood and youth, we study in order to become useful to ourselves and to others, to make our contribution to the common good. Even as a student of the Lyceum, I thought [about] how I could help our Principality...”<sup>32</sup> Autobiographies and memoirs of scientists show that young Serbs led quite an isolated life in Western European countries, keeping in touch mostly with Russian emigrants, thus they did not adopt the cultural values of the West. The main task of these people was to assimilate scientific achievements and to bring them to Serbia without changing spiritually.<sup>33</sup>

As far as the specialization of the students abroad is concerned, the example of this generation reveals the following trend: they studied those disciplines that were most needed by Serbian society. Heidelberg and Berlin offered the best legal education in Europe; to study history and philosophy, one went to Paris; Vienna was famous for turning out brilliant engineers and architects; Switzerland was a Mecca for medicine, and Russia trained outstanding military personnel.<sup>34</sup> Twenty-two percent of Serbian intellectuals studied law; 20 percent philosophy, history, or ethnography; 19 percent natural science disciplines; 17 percent technical and applied sciences (primarily mining).<sup>35</sup> In the example of the second generation of the academic community, we can see some subdivision of area of study by region: social sciences, humanities, and literature were the specialities of the natives of the Principality of Serbia and Herzegovina within the Ottoman Empire; mathematics and mining were chosen by subjects of the Austrian Empire (Austria–Hungarian Monarchy since 1867), and theology was the choice of Montenegrins, most of whom were in holy orders.

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30 For more, see Tatić, “Srpski pitomci na školovanju u Parizu.”

31 Shemiakin, “Sistema narodnogo obrazovanii v nezavisimoi Serbii,” 93.

32 Matić, “Nešto iz mog života,” 193.

33 Perović, “Serbii v modernizatsionnykh protsessakh XIX–XX vekov,” 24.

34 Trgovčević, *Planirana elita*, 40–42.

35 Nemanjić, *Jedan vek srpske stvaralačke inteligencije*, 93.

## Academics or statesmen?

By order of Mihailo Obrenović (1823–1868), the Society of Serbian Letters was transformed into the Serbian Learned Society (*Srpsko učeno društvo*) on 29 July 1864. The mission and objectives of the society were revised. Jovan Gavrilović<sup>36</sup> became president of the society. Scientific activities were compartmentalized into four areas: linguistics and literature, natural sciences and mathematics, history and state sciences, and arts.<sup>37</sup>

The first achievements in different branches of science and arts were made in Serbia in the 1850s and 1860s, but real discoveries seldom occurred. An unflattering assessment of the activities of the Serbian Learned Society was given by Pavel A. Rovinsky (1831–1916), a Russian Slavist and historian, ethnographer, and essayist in a letter to academician Alexander N. Pypin (1833–1904):

“There is no shelter for science here at all; among professors, I know only one who is engaged in science, it is Pančić<sup>38</sup> (a naturalist *iz preka*) [...] There is also one political economist, Mijatović;<sup>39</sup> from [the] professors [...] he was made head of the department at the Ministry of Finance. The rest is dilettantism.”<sup>40</sup>

Indeed, a lot of the Serbian academics combined scientific activities and public office and this was crucial for the development of the country in the second half of the nineteenth century.<sup>41</sup> However, it is not clear what confused Rovinsky about this situation because his colleague Russian Slavist Alexander F. Hilferding (1831–1872) served at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Empire and was consul in Bosnia. Fyodor I. Tyutchev (1803–1873), a Russian poet and essayist and corresponding member of the St. Petersburg Academy of Sciences, was also a diplomat. We see a similar picture with the Austrian Monarchy. Franz Grillparzer (1791–1872), a poet and playwright, and academician at the Austrian Academy of Sciences, served as director of the imperial archives. The ‘father of Czech historiography’ František Palacký (1798–1876) combined political activity with the post of head of the history department of the National Museum in Prague. The examples

36 Jovan Gavrilović (1796–1877), a Serbian historian, politician, and third regent of Serbian Prince Milan Obrenović.

37 Nikić, Radojčić-Kostič, and Žujović, *Grada za biografski rečnik*, 16.

38 Josip Pančić (1814–1888), a Serbian doctor, botanist, and first president of the Serbian Royal Academy from 1886.

39 Čedomilj Mijatović (1842–1932), a Serbian economist, Minister of Finance in the 1870s, and president of the Serbian Royal Academy from 1888–1889.

40 Rovinskij, Letter no. 4. Belgrade. 24.5.1869. *Russkie o Serbii i serbakh*. T. 2., 59.

41 Perović, “Serbii v modernizatsionnykh protsessakh XIX–XX vekov,” 23.

cited above give the author reason to believe that the combination of scientific activity and public office in Serbia was not an 'exception with negative value' among the countries of Central and Western Europe in the nineteenth century: out of 280 men of science, 104 either held various positions in public office or were deputies to the State Council. However, biographical references do not provide detailed information on the career trajectories of the intellectuals, which is why it is not possible to draw definite conclusions about whether scientific activities facilitated the start of political careers, or whether the intellectuals turned to scientific research and teaching at higher-level schools after doing their duty to their fatherland in public office.

The second generation of the clerisy played a key role in the national revival of Serbia primarily because they reconciled the patriarchal way of life with European trends and introduced the country to the achievements of world science and technology. The results of the intellectuals' activities in the 1850s–1870s were not noticeable against the background of general progress, but they had a cumulative effect.

This was the backdrop against which the third generation of the Serbian academic community 'took off'. That generation was both numerous and successful, which is why the period of the 1880s–1900s may be referred to as the time of the making of classical science in Serbia. Only fourteen percent of scientists in this generation obtained a higher education abroad, primarily in Austria–Hungary or Germany. The geography of educational centres expanded: in pursuit of knowledge, Serbs reached England, Italy, and Belgium. The Serbian government awarded scholarships mainly to the students of military and medical educational institutions, so many scientists paid their tuition fees themselves.

Most of the representatives of this generation were alumni of Velika Škola, which resumed its work in 1863. Classes were taught in three departments—philosophical, technical, and legal. The syllabi of these departments had a lot in common, so the students largely obtained a general rather than a specialized education.

The clerisy of the second half of the nineteenth century was not a homogeneous structure. The education received in different countries determined the range of foreign influence on domestic science. However, the third generation of Serbian scientists managed to develop a method of critical interpretation and further applied knowledge obtained abroad in local conditions. Science ceased to be imitative and achieved autonomy in the cultural and professional sense.

A need arose to develop specialized institutions. In 1884, Minister of Education S. Novaković defined the dissemination of science and literature among the public as the new goal of the Serbian Learned Society. To achieve this, reform of secondary education was carried out—gymnasia appeared, in which the study of social and natural science prevailed. On 1 November 1886, the *Skupština* passed the law on the

Serbian Royal Academy. Botanist Josip Pančić became its president. In the next six months, the administrative and scientific departments were organized—a library, archives, and an accounting department.<sup>42</sup> However, the merger of the Academy of Sciences and the Serbian Learned Society took place only in 1890.

In the same way as in the previous period, Serbian science in the late nineteenth century was not all-embracing. On the other hand, it ceased to satisfy only the needs of the state. For example, the study of the antique historical and cultural heritage of the country began at the personal initiative of the first Serbian archaeologist Mihailo Valtrović (1839–1915). The campaign for the preservation of Trajan's Bridge and Trajan's Plaque (*Tabula Traiana*) went beyond the boundaries of Serbia and acquired international status when Felix Kanitz (1829–1904), an Austrian ethnographer, joined the project in 1888.

The outstanding achievements of Serbs were estimated at their true worth by the world scientific community at the turn of the twentieth century. Noteworthy are the discoveries made by Jovan Cvijić,<sup>43</sup> a geographer and ethnographer, whose research laid the foundations for two disciplines—karstology and Balkan studies. Nikola Tesla (1856–1943), 'the man who invented the twentieth century', is famous for his research on alternating current. To put it simply, one can say that without his inventions the incandescent lamp would be the only electrical appliance in the house of modern men.

The Serbian intelligentsia went through all the stages of development: from their elementary education during the second quarter of the nineteenth century to joining the world scientific community as full members at the beginning of the twentieth. Further, one more transformation took place: the scientists stopped viewing engagement in science as a form of duty to the nation and state. Over time, the treasury of Serbian achievements was filled with original discoveries and research that were inspired by the personal interests of scientists.

However, one cannot ignore the fact that the state remained an 'integrating factor': with the support of the authorities, uncoordinated primitive scientific communities were consolidated into a professional organizations'. Additionally, Belgrade maintained *Matica Srpska*, the oldest scientific and educational centre, which was founded in Pest/Budapest in 1826 and moved to Novi Sad (the 'Serbian Athens') in 1864. Cooperation between *Matica Srpska* and the Serbian Learned Society (Serbian Royal Academy following 1890) resulted in the formation of a unified national scientific and educational space the resources of which could be accessed by any Serb

42 Nikić, Radojčić-Kostič, and Žujović, *Grada za biografski rečnik*, 20.

43 Jovan Cvijić (1865–1926), a Serbian geographer, geologist, ethnographer, president of the Serbian Royal Academy, rector of the University of Belgrade.

regardless of citizenship and social standing. This was the distinctive feature of Serbian intelligentsia as a whole and the academic community in particular that has been pointed out in historiography. On the one hand, the immersion of the spiritual elite into the masses was considered a serious threat to the development of the country,<sup>44</sup> but at the same time it facilitated achievements—somewhat insignificant, but independent and even original—in science, education, art, politics, etc. The latter were closely connected with the people who, in the absence of universities in Serbia, were themselves the first founts of knowledge.

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44 Perović, “Serbiia v modernizatsionnykh protsessakh XIX–XX vekov,” 16–40.

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