

**Dragoljub B. Đorđević: „ROLE MODELS AND MATES
- SHORT PORTRAITS OF YUGOSLAV SOCIOLOGISTS OF
RELIGION“**

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A very productive sociological writer, Dragoljub B. Djordjević, a sociologist of religion from Niš, full-time professor at the Faculty of Mechanical Engineering in Niš, has recently had a very interesting and a rather unusual text for Serbian sociology of religion published by "Čigoja štampa" from Belgrade. It is a monography drawn of previously published short portraits of his colleagues, teachers, friends and role models, sociologists of religion from the entire region of former Yugoslavia, founders and representatives of one of the better developed sociological disciplines in socialist Yugoslavia. What is unusual about this monography is that it is not just a scientific, sociological review of their contribution to the sociology of religion in former Yugoslavia, but rather a spontaneous, personal view and impression that the author has acquired over thirty years of his successful career as a sociologist of religion. However, conceived in this way, it is not just a book about the pioneers of sociology of religion in a presently non-existing country. It is a book about the author himself, his professional career from his beginnings as a young sociologist in the early seventies of the previous century to a high-profiled and mature sociologist nowadays, his motifs to get involved with a very complex spiritual and social phenomenon, his doubts and dilemmas, roads and side-tracks he took during his research and his productive dialogues with authors whose portraits he has given in this book. It should also be pointed out that the preface to the book was written by one of the best-known Croatian sociologists of religion of middle generation, Siniša Zrinščak, well-known outside Croatia as well, a member of prestigious international professional associations.

The author has intentionally chosen a rather unusual sociological form to present the portraits of the ten sociologists of religion from former Yugoslavia, the writers who have established the sociology of religion in the country and whose work has been necessary for the understanding of the state, ranges and perspectives of the sociology of religion in existing independent states of Slovenia, Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Serbia. Dragoljub Djordjević has intentionally limited the range of his monography: he leaves for the younger sociologists to analyze and assess the specific contributions of the sociologists of religion from the formative period or to valorize the total theoretical and empirical range of the sociology (which Zrinščak managed to do for the Croatian sociology of religion). Because of that, we should not expect from the book what the book, according to the author's intentions, cannot offer: a thorough analysis of important issues and problems of creation and development of a specific sociological discipline in strictly defined historical, social and political circumstances of socialist Yugoslavia. The author's approach is basically essayistic, less scientific, although Djordjević has demonstrated the latter in numerous works from his vast opus.

The portraits of the ten sociologists of religion (Štefica Bahtijarević, Srdjan Vrcan, Nikola Dugandžija, Jakov Jukić, Marko Kerševan, Nikola Skledar, Esad Ćimić, Sergej Flere, Ivan Cvitković and Djuro Šušnjić), some of whom are still alive and some are not, some still active as lecturers or writers and some retired, have been presented by Djordjević in the form of a literary sketch: it is a literary form similar to a short story but less expressive, simplified and more like an informal literary essay, rather intimate in tone and style. That kind of intimacy, I dare say, has greatly encouraged the author to speak up of people he more or less have known well and has been meeting in various scientific meetings and conferences for almost 30 years. His book sends a strong message that the human dimension in relations between scientists from the times that have inevitably gone by is as important as the scientific one. It is a warm story of authorities and their pupils, of science and practical politics, of research and ideology. Naturally, through the story we also get to know the mental constitution of the author: there are unwritten rules in the scientific community that are to be respected, the relations between older and younger scientists which are to be built on mutual respect, responsibility and personal integrity. On these grounds has the author built himself as a professional sociologist, so that can count for his unselfish and constant support to young sociologists. He has always given them chances to express themselves and prove themselves as sociologists, either as their MBA and PhD mentor, or by accepting and publishing their first works, which can largely influence the future careers of these candidates. Of course, interpersonal relations in the scientific community should not be idealized. With his vast experience, Djordjević is certainly aware of that. But he wishes to present that relatively small group of scientists that he him-

self used to belong to in the light of his own conception. And that conception is in every individual case without exception positive, encouraging and always dialogically directed towards solving an important scientific problem or a significant scientific dilemma, and is never directed towards a man, compromise of his character or discreditation of his scientific integrity.

The author has done the portraits of YU sociologists of religion by structuring a certain number of topics common for all the portrayed authors, plus a topic or two typical for the portrait of a particular sociologist. The common topics are: professional promotion, acquaintance with the author, writing cooperation, favourite book, achievements of the “portrayed” sociologist of religion, last meeting and a spark for the sociology of religion for the author in question. Besides these, there is one more topic in all the portraits. It is not specifically stated but we can define it as an important personality trait of the portrayed sociologist. So we can read, with an accompanying explanation, that Srdjan Vrcan is a tough man, that Jakov Jukić is a thankful man and that Djuro Šušnjić, for example is a seductive man. The monography itself is full of important and interesting information on education, career, published works, personal characteristics of the portrayed authors. In this summary, it is, of course, not necessary to go into detail into the biographies of the ten sociologists of religion. We shall dwell briefly on some personality traits of the sociologists that define them not only as professionals but as people as well, and assess the range of their comprehensive work and significance for the sociology of religion of the country that no longer exists.

Therefore we can read that *Štefica Bahtijarević* is a “stout woman”, a sociologist of religion with “a considerate influence”. With the research activity mostly in regard with the research of religiousness and church in Zagreb and Croatia, this authoress has developed versatile lecturing and, in socialist Yugoslavia not less significant, social and political activity. She had the crucial influence on the author of the monography, not only with her formal engagement in his PhD thesis, but the research that *Štefica Bahtijarević* was in charge of was a model for Djordjević’s and all the subsequent sociological research of religiousness in Serbia: scales and indicators of religiousness that she and her team had created for their own research were accepted and elaborated for the research of the Orthodox religion in Serbia. *Štefica Bahtijarević* will make the history of the sociology of religion of former Yugoslavia as a hard-working and productive researcher of religiousness, one of the key role models even for the Serbian sociology that cannot currently claim a systematic monitoring of the religious situation in Serbia.

On the other hand, the author of the monography presents us “a quiet man”, dedicated to his scientific research within his office who avoids the public tumult, politi-

cal activities, media coverage and scientific conferences. That is *Nikola Dugandžija*, a sociologist of religion of "rare imagination". Although judging from his books we can get the impression that his theoretical research was mainly in the field of the sociology of religion, Dugandžija has participated in all the important empirical projects conducted in Croatia. His contribution to the sociology of religion in the research of existing religions, which was a pioneering work in that field in Yugoslavia, as well as in the research of nation and nationalism, atheism and small religious communities has been immense. He has always been willing to take up a topic neglected by our sociology of religion: for example, religion in the consumer society, religious ceremonies and old age making a lasting contribution to the sociology of religion in the territory of former Yugoslavia. Throughout his career Djordjević hasn't established a regular working cooperation with this "quiet man", a Slavonian Serb, a nice and quiet gentleman, mainly due to unfavourable social events in the territory of former Yugoslavia in the early nineties of the previous century, but I would say, due to the differences in character between those two authors as well: while Dugandžija preferred the quiet atmosphere of his office, Djordjević gladly attended all the scientific meetings and conferences all over former Yugoslavia, which helped him make new acquaintances with other scientists and consolidate old ones and encouraged their mutual scientific cooperation.

A "tough man", an exquisite research scientist and polemic *Srdjan Vrcan* (1922-2006), a "sociologist of religion of international reputation", had an extremely fertile and successful career as a teacher and a scientist. His career was not only limited to the territory of former Yugoslavia, but it had international success, particularly after the break up of SFRY. His international reputation was also substantiated by membership in international professional associations, membership in editorial boards of prestigious magazines such as the "Social Compass" magazine dedicated to the religious thematics, and by numerous scientific papers and texts in magazines and special compilations. He was a polyglot, which is rarely a case with younger sociologists. He is one of the authors who founded and academically developed not only the sociology of religion in former Yugoslavia but also the sociology of sport, the sociology of politics and the sociology of elections and election systems. Srdjan Vrcan was not only a role model just to the author of the monography, but to the other younger sociologists as well. And he was their role model because of his adamancy, his objectivity when studying religion and society, his scientific commitment and his moral firmness and consistency. Vrcan's theoretical and empirical research of people's attachment to the religion and church was strictly sociologically directed, documented and regularly reviewed from a broad social and geographical perspective. He well knew the results from the papers of many internationally recognized sociologists of

religion, just as they all knew his work and often quoted on him. His consistently built up sociological approach to religion and the holly has inspired Dragoljub Djordjević to declare a special Vrcan school in the Yugoslav sociology of religion. Although there are certain discrepancies around this idea, Vrcan's approach to the holly, religion and the contemporary society was certainly original, consistently sociological, historically and empirically correct, and on the other side of the definition of religion as a phenomenon *per se*.

Jakov Jukić (1933-2006), that thankful man, a lawyer by profession, the name well-known in the European sociology of religion, is the author of phenomenological orientation. As uncommon as it is for a lawyer who spent almost his entire working life in a Croatian wood processing company to be the leading sociologist, it is equally unusual that he used to write all his works under the name of Jakov Jukić that was familiar to all in the sociological circles with his real name being Željko Mardešić, a fact that he revealed only in his advanced age. Although Jukić was a practising catholic, he studied religion, and catholicism itself, in an objective and critical way. On that account he should be a role model to young sociologists and religionists who want to approach their subject of research scientifically. But not just on that account alone: his contribution to the sociology of religion is unavoidable, his style of writing is original, his analyses of the religious phenomenon and the holly in general are documented and convincing, based on the literature in original English, French, Italian and German. Due to his influence and his backbone orientation in the study of the religious phenomenon, Djordjević feels that it can be talked about Jukić's school in the sociology of religion in the territory of former Yugoslavia. Besides Jukić, this orientation involves Djuro Šušnjić, Esad Ćimić, Nikola Dugandžija, Nikola Skledar and Zorica Kubirić. Jakov Jukić, a quiet, calm and thankful man, a proclaimed catholic believer, was a true advocate of religious tolerance, culture, peace and reconciliation. Everyone who knew the man personally benefited from that unusual experience.

Marko Keševan, according to the author of the monography, a "mysterious and quiet" man, a non-typical Slovenian, but a smart polemic, is "a sociologist of religion of penetrating insight". With an internationally successful scientific and academic career and political activity in socialist Yugoslavia, Marko Kerševan is one of the best-known and most productive Slovenian sociologists. A larger number of his texts have been published in western magazines in many languages. He was also open to scientific and magazine cooperation with university centres in socialist Yugoslavia. He took religion as a specific expression of people's perception of the world and he made a significant contribution to the study of the relationship between religion and culture in the Slovenian society. His rather original comprehension of religion in our sociology of religion has caused a very productive discussion and criticism, for example by

Srdjan Vrcan or Esad Ćimić. The polemic was significant because it questioned the legitimacy of strictly marxist tradition within anthropology, sociology, psychology and psychoanalysis. For that kind of lunge Keršovan's apprehension of religion was important if not crucial in the sociology of religion in the socialist Yugoslavia.

Nikola Skledar, a tall, blond man from Zagorje (Croatia), a man who knows how to enjoy life, is a philosopher and a sociologist of religion of "far reaching impact". His approach to the religious phenomenon is interdisciplinary. He writes about the boundaries of theological sciences, philosophy and the sociology of religion. Basically, his approach to religion is anthropological: that kind of approach suggests that the religion is man's creation that needs to be approached from various aspects. The sociological approach is useful, but by no means universal. That approach needs to be upgraded by theological, philosophical, anthropological, psychological, historical and politicological approaches. Religion is a complex, dynamic and polyphonic creation, so hypostatizing just one approach inevitably leads towards empiricism and sociologism. Such methodological attitude and constant emphasis on the complementary approach to religion and church is his contribution to the sociology of religion. Although many may think that the obvious sensual nature of this author may get in the way with his commitment to science and personal integrity, there is no evidence to support the claim. There is time for everything, so our professor is a scientist when he needs to be one, connoisseur of life, but also an honourable, decent, cooperative and friendly person.

Esad Ćimić, that joker from Herzegovina, a "brisk man" with turbulent professional life and a wandering professor through university centres of socialist Yugoslavia, is a "sociologist of religion of authentic thought". During mid-sixties of the previous century, in the heat of establishment of sociology in Yugoslavia as an academic discipline and its separation from historical materialism and independence, Ćimić was the first author with PhD degree in the sociology of religion. Publishing a large number of papers in scientific publications, Ćimić did a great deal to popularize sociology as a profession with numerous public lectures, media appearance and presence in daily newspapers and periodicals. Ćimić is one the best-known sociologists of religion from former Yugoslavia. He had numerous papers published, and, unlike other sociologists during the period, translated into Russian, Hungarian, French and Italian. Three candidates at foreign universities even acquired their PhD degrees by studying his sociological work. He uses certain phrases that are colloquial in the scientific community as titles of his books: for example, the drama of atheization or politics as destiny. Ćimić formed a distinguishing view of religion *per se*, understood religion not only as a social and historical but as an anthropological and psychological fact as well, distinguished roots and foundations of religion, elaborated typology of religiousness

and atheistic, presented certain methodological instructions for the research of the religious phenomenon and valued the work of his colleagues with intellectual fairness. One of the greatest sociologists of religion in former Yugoslavia was a very interesting, charming, self-critical person of a witty spirit, always ready for jokes, humour and imitations.

Sergej Flere, nowadays one of the most active sociologists of religion in Slovenia who worked in Serbia for a long time, could also be added to the group of wanderers in professional terms. Being a child of a diplomat, his English is as native as his Slovenian and Serbian, and he can also manage in French and Italian. In 1991 he transferred from Serbia to the University of Maribor. He developed an exquisite international activity and thoroughness in all the segments of his work there. To Dragoljub Djordjević, Flere is “a sociologist of religion of a thorough method”. He paid particular attention to his international career. He had his works published in the most prestigious sociological magazines. Djordjević well spotted Flere’s perseverance on the empirical direction of the sociology of religion, which is one of the main objections that can be made against Serbian sociology of religion. Likewise, Flere was in favour of the interrelation between the sociology and psychology of religion. He insisted on the application of sophisticated techniques and methods in the modern research of religiousness, on international cooperation and competition, on expansion of local boundaries, self-sufficiency and self-isolation. Flere is a sincere, strict, truthful and righteous man. Of all the sociologists of religion, he has come closest to an ideal social scientist.

Ivan Cvitković, a well-known sociologist of religion from Bosnia and Herzegovina, is “a daring man”, a former youth leader and political activist who hasn’t renounced his set of values ever since. Striving for multiconfessional Bosnia in the times of intense conflicts, he kept himself aside and welcomed the peace in Bosnia with moral chastity. Now, in the times of peace, he persistently promotes multi- and interculturalism, interreligious dialogue and ecumenism. He is a “sociologist of religion of comprehensive insight”. Cvitković is one of the most productive scientists in the territory of former Yugoslavia. He has researched various sociological topics and topics from the sociology of religion, and made a significant contribution to the study of historical figures (Krlježa, Stepinac), the Communist Party of Yugoslavia, marxist views, religious panorama of Bosnia and Herzegovina, classic religiousness, world religions, confessional background of the war in Bosnia, the national identity of Croats in Bosnia, etc. Djordjević finds Cvitković to be a pleasant, stout, reasonable and cordial man.

Although we have described Esad Ćimić and Sergej Flere as wandering professors, of all the mentioned sociologists, the description would best suit *Djuro Šušnjić*, an excellent sociologist of religion and a “seductive” man. He was a professor of vari-

ous sociological subjects in many university cities in former Yugoslavia. At the same time he is one of the most significant sociologists of religion and certainly the most significant Serbian sociologist of religion nowadays, the man who set the foundations of the sociology of religion in Serbia during the 70s and 80s of the previous century. Some of his books have become bestsellers of sociological literature: "Fishermen of Human Souls", "Flowers and Soil", "Knowing and Believing It", "Dialogue and Tolerance". He is the author who has confidently moved through various sociological and other fields of research making significant theoretical contribution to the general methodology of sciences, methodology of social sciences, methodology of social research, sociology of sciences, sociology of cognition and sociology of religion. He has particularly contributed to the sociology of religion not only with numerous papers, but with a two-volume book under the title of "Religion". Šušnjić approaches religion with complexity, well aware of the potential and ranges of the sociological approach. Religion could by no means be reduced to a sociological level in explanations and interpretations, but without taking the sociological level into account, it cannot be properly understood, because the history of religion is inseparable from the history of the society that produced it. Djuro Šušnjić is an author with a rather unusual, recognizable, fluttering style of writing in the contemporary sociological literature. He is not the man who can be fascinated by the media, or pompous and international promotion. But therefore he is "a great man", high-profiled intellectual who lives for his ideas and who is an immensely loyal man: one who gets embraced by him should never be worried that would be abandoned by him, for better or for worse.

These are the portraits of the ten sociologists of religion by Dragoljub Djordjević. These sociologists of religion lived or have lived in the territory of former Yugoslavia, and since the 90s in several newly formed, internationally recognized, independent states. If it hadn't been for Dragoljub Djordjević, they would have never been brought together again and put among the covers of the book "Role Models and Mates". Dragoljub Djordjević has thus paid his tribute, and in the same time, has obliged contemporary sociology of religion in the Balkans and young sociologists of religion to collect the vast existing material, to publish and take part in scientific conferences, not only in the territory of former Yugoslavia but abroad as well, to develop working cooperation with their colleagues and to make friends with them, so that this monography could have a worthy sequel with the portraits of some other sociologists in a thirty years time. If they should be half hard-working and ingenious as the "old" ones, it will be enough for them to make the history of the sociology of religion in the Balkans.

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