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UMR 7367 Dynamiques Européennes

UDK: 811.163.41'42(051)

271.22(497.11)

Оригинални научни рад

Примљен: 15.12.2016.

doi:10.5937/socpreg1701135J

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SERBIAN ORTHODOXY BETWEEN TRADITIONAL AND UNIVERSAL VALUES: DISCOURSE ANALYSIS OF THE JOURNAL *ORTHODOXY*

Summary: The authors analyzed a discursive production of the Serbian Christian Orthodox community as it appeared in the Orthodoxy journal, published by the Serbian Orthodox Church. The aim was to identify the discourse producers, i.e. the contributors / article writers and to investigate the nature of discursive strategies used for the preservation of traditional values. The methodological approach of journal analysis is based on the grounded theory and was supported by Castoriadis' conception of social imaginary. After data processing three main matrix codes appears: the codes that refers to the discourse regarding traditional values defended by the discourse producers through the imaginary of 'US' – the narratives on Serbian nation, national culture and national identity; the codes that refers to the discourse regarding the imaginary of 'THEM' – the West, Europe, Western civilization and culture; the codes that refers to the universal values as something disputable through the imaginary of 'US versus THEM' – democracy, tolerance, and human rights. The discourse that creates the imaginary of 'US' is based mainly on the sacralisation of Serbian nation, which leads to the national religionism; the imaginary of 'THEM' is achieved through the essentialization of Western world; the third discourse which confronts 'US vs. THEM' reflects a struggle between traditional and universal values. By questioning the basic principles of Western societies the article writers and contributors in the Orthodoxy journal intended to make difference between 'Us' and 'Them' in order to stay competitive and continue to influence the Serbian society.

Keywords: *Orthodoxy [Pravoslavlje], Serbian Orthodox Church, values, discourse analysis.*

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Introduction

The end of the communist era in Eastern and southeastern Europe, the fall of the Berlin wall and the end of the cold war changed European and world geopolitical reality. One of the important changes for eastern European states that existed under the communist regimes was the 'rehabilitation' of the public presence of Eastern orthodox churches. The communist regimes were relentless towards religious organizations since they were seen as the dangerous adversaries to the communist ideology. The Christian orthodox churches felt a relief and the opportunity to regain social activities, especially political engagement in public sphere, held before the communist regimes took power in countries in question. The Orthodox churches of eastern and southeastern Europe have had a strong relationship with the state (submission, cooperation) whereas the churches are often dependent of the secular power (like in Russia or Serbia). The relations of one particular Orthodox Church with other Orthodox Churches were weak and in this sense they are closer to the protestant churches².

The study of religion in Eastern and Southeastern Europe challenged the scholars in theoretical and methodological aspects of the research. One of the questions that arose was the relationship between religious changes in contemporary Europe and sociological concepts used as a tool of explanation. The approaches used in Western sociology (ex: process of secularization) were thoroughly questioned by Miklos Tomka in his article (Tomka, 2006) where he appealed for a 'different view' of social sciences concerning Eastern Orthodoxy due to its social and historical differences as compared to Western Europe.

The different socio-cultural patterns in Europe separate the 'East' from the 'West'. Tomka arguments his position claiming that the biggest mark of Eastern Europe was delay of modernization (see Stokes, 1989) further combined with a particular socio-religious context: the communist past, limited modernization and the Eastern Orthodox culture shaped social identity in Eastern/central Europe (Tomka, 2006: 253-4). After the fall of communism, the churches in Eastern Europe were broadly supported as new public actors with a crucial and challenging role in respective East European societies (Tomka, 2006: 254). The churches made profit of the tradition of authoritarian rule and non-existence or at best weak level of development of civil society to reclaim important positions in the public sphere after the communist fall.

Eastern Orthodoxy managed to adapt itself to this changed socio-political context and became one of its strongest pillars, pragmatically and symbolically (Tomka, 2006:

2 The reason lays in the autocephalous nature of the Orthodox churches which basically means autonomous functioning of the church: the structural hierarchy doesn't exist likewise it is the case with Roman Catholic Church: every Christian orthodox church has its patriarch or archbishop that represents the highest authority of the Church.

256). Tomka's final argument is based on the distinction between traditional (Eastern European) and post-traditional (Western European) societies that represent two different frames of reference for the research of the religious phenomenon in given society: the nation that exists in the traditional frame and the nation represented in post-traditional terms; first is based on a common history and common values and in this case religion is embedded into the general socio-cultural identity of the nation; second one reflects to a society of humans who do not necessarily share common values and religion in that societies is one possible cultural orientation among the others, personal choice and autonomous part of socio-cultural identity. Tomka concludes with three arguments why conventional sociology 'needs another methodological approach' when dealing with Eastern Orthodoxy:

1. First, standardized methods in the sociology of religion should overcome expressions of Western Christian tradition as basic criteria of religiosity. The present practice of using indicators which derived from a different tradition is inadequate.

2. Western religion is a religion of the mind. With a similar simplification, Orthodoxy is a religion of experience and of artistic enjoyment. In cultures where a monolithic world-view is preserved, an immersion in explicit or implicit religion should be acknowledged as relevant.

3. The difference between semi-deliberate participation and a formalized relation occurs in another respect as well. Belonging and membership are hard indicators in Western sociology, membership which is self-positioning in the framework of a formal organization. Such a self-definition is not typical in Eastern and in Central Europe. People in this region do not feel themselves as 'members', but even then they are no less strongly involved in their churches, just as they are proud Poles, Serbs, Romanians or Russians. In these cultures, religion and denomination, with or without God, are inseparable parts of personal identity (Tomka, 2006).

The sociologist Sergej Flere replied to Tomka's findings and offered an answer to his questionings through a comparative empirical study (Flere, 2008; Flere and Klanjšek, 2008). He concluded that there are important differences between Western and Eastern Christianity in sociological view but that there are 'no need for a special research methodology'. However, the study of Christianity (qualitative and quantitative) may demand particular methodological approaches including the study of the governance of religious entities, their legal status, their political impact, their position in legal system, etc. (Flere, 2008).

Explaining the difference between studying individual and ecclesiastic religiosity in the frame of Serbian Orthodoxy, as well the difference between quantitative and qualitative methodologies, Mirko Blagojević warns that sociological approach to individual religiosity measured through religious consciousness and religious behavior

and the affectedness to the Church as an institution (its dogmas, teachings and activities), should be distinguished (see Blagojević, 2010). That is what we underlining – the fact that the affectedness to Church and its activities doesn't necessarily mean the religiosity of the individuals in this particular case of Serbian Orthodoxy.

The *Orthodoxy* journal and the creators of its discourse

The object of our study is the general discourse appeared in the journal published by the Serbian Orthodox Church (SOC), the *Orthodoxy* [*Pravoslavlje*]. It was established by the patriarchate of the SOC in April 1967 as a popular religious journal and until the beginning of 1990 all the copies of the *Orthodoxy* were distributed through the local ecclesiastical communities of the SOC. In January 1990 journal lived its first free sale distribution when all of the 30000 copies were sold out (see Mileusnić, 1990), and this event was also in tight connection with rising nationalism and political conflicts that led to the disintegration of SFR Yugoslavia (see Ramet, 2002).

The best way to understand the real nature of the *Orthodoxy* is to comprehend the way the *Orthodoxy* is seen by its creators. We will refer to several texts written by chief editors where they explain what is (or is supposed to be) the *raison-d'être* of the *Orthodoxy*. Here, the chief editor stated that even though *Orthodoxy* is a spiritual and religious journal the editorship will not hesitate to publish politically motivated articles if it is necessary and if it considers the religion, spirituality, believers, or the church:

“It must be taken into concern that *Orthodoxy* is a religious/spiritual journal and therefore it is estimated that it will treat mostly religious thematic but it doesn't mean that one couldn't find articles on all the questions important for Serbian people. The journal will avoid everyday politics, would not take a part in political discussions because other existing journals fulfill this needs. However, considering that the entire life of a citizen, whereas ‘citizen’ means also a believer, is penetrated and conditioned by politics, *Orthodoxy* and its editors will not hesitate to have a say on those subjects as well (thematic as restitution of the church property confiscated by communist regime, return of the religious instruction into schools and confrontation with Leninist-Marxist ideology, the return of the faculty of theology into the institutional setting of Belgrade's university). At the end, the politics are not monopolized by anybody. If the subject is related to the interests of the SOC and Serbian Orthodox people we will write about politics, and state and national assembly and government until the injustice is corrected.” (Terzić, 1992a)

In another comment chief editor underlines that *Orthodoxy* is not an official journal of the SOC:

“Concerning the *Orthodoxy*, we are emphasize that this is not the official herald of the SOC and there is no need to consider everything that is published in it as an official position of the church. People from different social stratum are writing and cooperating with *Orthodoxy*, they have their opinions, often different and conflictual concerning particular subjects and questions. Basic criteria for publishing a text are objectivity, truthfulness, well-meaning as if it contributes the unity of Serbian Orthodox people (nation).” (Terzić, 1992b)

Various social actors contribute to this journal and therefore, the positions taken in articles published in *Orthodoxy* cannot be considered as official positions of the SOC. Although the positions on specific topics could be interpreted as ‘different and conflictual’, a very few of them or almost none would express their opinion against the SOC, official positions of the church, or influential church representatives.

At the beginning of the 21st century, the chief editor Radomir Rakić expressed the dilemma whether the content of the journal will keep the ‘spiritual path’ or it will be more convenient to ‘get involved into a dialogue to push up to the surface Christian values and evaluations’ (Rakić, 2002). It was stressed once again that *Orthodoxy* is not an official journal of the SOC and that the editorship estimate that their ‘comments could contribute to hear the other side – a kind of a help for wider ways of thinking and not as an object of disclaim’ of the ‘Orthodox’ way of thinking that appears regularly in the journal.³ Just a few years later, in anniversary issue the chief editor (Popović, 2007) stated that the journal is the ‘herald of the Serbian patriarchy’ and that the main goal of its foundation is religious and moral exaltation of the Christian Orthodox Serbs and their familiarization with religious and church life’. It underlines the struggle of the journal for a public distribution during the communist period.

The *Orthodoxy* was an opportunity for the Serbian Orthodox Church to communicate openly with Serbian Christian Orthodox believers, whereas the content of this communication was clearly defined, as much as it can be read through the chief editor’s comments. Formally, it is not the official herald of the church but it publishes all the important press releases and other important social and political reactions of the SOC regarding the everyday life. Formally, it is a religious/spiritual journal but it is not denied that politics was/is/will be a subject of publishing policy, namely the politics that treats Serbian nation. The contributions and the contributors are of various origins, but the topics are far from being only of spiritual or religious content.

3 He emphasizes further the success in the modernization of the print design and the online publication, the fact that the Christian Orthodox theological terminology is carefully preserved but also that the Christian Orthodox points of view discussed wider social subjects, like bioethics for example (see Rakić, 2002). From the practical point of view, the online edition of the journal enabled the readers to note the articles and to publish comments. The noting of the articles (from one to five) became a very common practice while the commenting did not really spread among online readers of the *Orthodoxy*.

The everyday national politics appears in the analyzed content of the journal as a part of religious and spiritual commitment to the national cause. That is the reason why we were interested in the content of the articles and in the social background of the contributors to this journal. Therefore, we defined the discourse produced in the *Orthodoxy* as a legitimate source of data for our research.

Surprisingly (or not), the official journal of the SOC can be described as a field of the dispute of two different visions of contemporary Serbia and European societies, the idea of what Serbian society should be ('US'), and what European/Western societies are ('THEM'). Following the above identified senders, we distinguished four types of sent messages that shaped analyzed data and actually created the journal's discourse. These narratives are like frames of references that give credibility to created ideas, depending on the fields of expertise of different message creators.

1. Theological expertise: justification and explanation of the contemporary world, Serbian society, Western societies, and universal values using theological knowledge.

2. Scientific expertise: equally to the theological expertise, scientific expertise had been used, dependently on the scientific discipline and area of specialization of the scholar in question, to justify traditionalist and conservative points of view or to undermine the views on the modern in the produced discourse.

3. Conservative political activist's discourses: justification and defence of the nation using a narrative highly mobilized from traditionalist, conservative, and nationalist sources. The conservative activists/militants come from diverse association, non-governmental organizations, and later political parties that have ideologies strongly based on home-family-church-marriage-patriotism set of values as a dominant paradigm.

4. Believers discourses: justification and defence of the nation using the personal and collective aspects of (Serbian) Christian Orthodox faith.

The 'expertise' has seen as the intervention of the experts in different scientific areas and is used to justify created positions on the ideas about Serbian nation and 'others'. The religious, scientific and political militant's narratives are used as social tools and justifications of the produced Serbian national-centric discourse. It questioning the Western European world views mainly through the problematisation of universal values, but also confronts them. The common ground for all the authors/writers of the articles and contributions in *Orthodoxy* is that they are all united around the idea of Serbian nation and Serbian Orthodox values.

Methodological approach and data coding

The research has been focused on texts and articles published in *Orthodoxy* in the period 1991-2010, with occasional referring to the 1988-1991, the transitory years of the abandoning of socialist regime, i.e. the one-party political system and planned economy. This period includes the transformation of the Serbian society through three different social and political contexts:

- the end of Yugoslav socialist/communist state (1988-1991),
- the authoritarian regime of Slobodan Milošević (1991-2000),
- the period of the transition towards political pluralism, parliamentary democracy and market economy with the (more or less expressed) intention of joining the European Union (2000-2010).

The methodological approach of journal analysis is based on the grounded theory and was supported by Castoriadis' conception of *social imaginary* (Castoriadis, 1975, 2008), which refers to the orientations of social institutions, motives and needs, especially in the context of the existence and usage of – in our case mainly national – symbols, tradition and myths. The grounded theory is a method of qualitative analysis, founded by Barney Glaser and Anselm Strauss, and presented in *The Discovery of Grounded Theory* (1967). They developed this method while defending the qualitative research in social sciences, which was underestimated, and in the shadow of the quantitative research methods of scientific inquiry. The method is based on the fact that the development of the research (the hypothesis), methodologically and theoretically, should emerge from the gathered data, without forcing the interpretation of data. It should equally break off the artificial separation of the theory used in a research and the results emerged from gathered data/terrain. The research process should be seen as a simultaneous and interconnected process of gathering and analyzing data (see also Strauss and Corbin 1990, 1998).

The data filtering was determined by preliminary research on the Serbian Orthodox Church and Serbian Orthodoxy. It is an important first step when the scientific work is based on the grounded theory method: we had to make a thorough selection in each journal issue of those articles whose content correspond to the produced discourse based on our preliminary research. After experimental coding that helped us additionally to organize the data, singled out the three main matrix codes:

- the codes that refers to the discourse regarding traditional values defended by the discourse producers through the imaginary of 'US' – the narratives on Serbian nation, national culture and national identity;
- the codes that refers to the discourse regarding the imaginary of 'THEM' – the West, Europe, Western civilization and culture;

- the codes that refers to the universal values that appear disputable through the imaginary of ‘US versus THEM’ – democracy, tolerance, and human rights.

The discourses that reveal those three principal axes of coding were supported by the contextual codes, that helped us understand the direct connection between the produced discourse and social/political reality in Serbian society in the examined period (1991-2010). The contextual codes arose from the relationship of the SOC and Serbian Orthodoxy with *Serbian history* and *sacred territory*.

The core of the three models presented here are those three concepts that are directly related to the core categories, the categories that directly define the concepts. The core categories are defined through a complex relationship of the most relevant subcategories that defined them through the grounded theory coding process. The concepts are presented as three strategies developed in the analyzed discourse, three policies that are a direct answer to the starting hypothesis. The first concept – the imaginary of ‘US’ – is directly constructed on the basis of four core categories of Serbian nation, Serbian (national) identity, Serbian (national) culture, and traditional values. Those core categories are constructed on a complex relationship between different subcategories – identity, nation, Europe, Kosovo, the importance of the SOC (for Serbian society), Eastern Orthodox values, Croatia, Svetosavlje, mythology (Figure 1). The relationship indicates the hierarchy between concepts, categories, and subcategories, whereas the theoretical saturation of basic categories creates a definite core category.

Figure 1. First concept: the imaginary of ‘US’.

The first concept describes the imaginary of Serbian nation (octagon in the middle of the figure 1) and is represented through four core categories – Serbian identity, Serbian Orthodoxy, Serbian culture, and traditional (Serbian) values (four triangles pointing into the octagon) that were the result of the complex crossed analysis with multiple subcategories (the most important subcategories are presented in the squares in figure 1). The relationships between the concept, categories, and subcategories are defined by arrows.

Figure 2. Second concept: the imaginary of 'THEM'

The second concept describes the imaginary of the West in a more general way (the octagon in the middle of the figure 2). Three main categories represent the second concept – categories of Europe, West, and Western culture (the triangles pointing to the octagon) were developed through the process of cross-referenced coding (the main subcategories are presented by the squares in Figure 2).

Figure 3. Third concept: the imaginary of ‘US vs. THEM’

The third concept describes the way the first two imaginaries are met and confronted on the level of universal values. The concept of ‘US versus THEM’ is analyzed through three core categories of democracy, tolerance, and human rights (the pointing triangles), and the most important subcategories (the squares).

Results of the analyzed discourses

The imaginary of ‘US’: a sacralised nation and a national religionism

As we pointed out, the idea of the Serbian nation created in the *Orthodoxy* was analyzed through three aspects: the national values, the national culture, and the national identity. The traditionalistic national values are conceived as the only pertinent set of values destined to the Serbian people, whilst (post)modern or liberal values are neglected. The tradition manifests through the reinvention of ‘sacred’ and ‘surviving’ characteristics of customs and strong reference to the past (i.e. important and usually tragically historic events). It presents the system of traditional values of Serbian people as the only set of values suitable for Serbian society with two dominant elements: a ‘secular’ part of the tradition (traditional family) and ‘spiritual’ part of the tradition in the sense of respect for and adherence to the fundamental principles of (Serbian) Orthodox Christianity. The second important mark of the idea of national values is

hidden in the instrumental character of traditional values whereas the discourse is used to fortify Christian Orthodox faith and Serbian Orthodox Church as spiritual and institutional ‘supervisor’ of the national values. Three important elements of traditional values as means are: the Christian Orthodox symbolism as *visible values* that confirm the presence of SOC in the public sphere; overlap of national and religious in the case of Serbian people and Serbian Orthodox Christianity; the Serbian Orthodox Church perceived as a national value itself also embedded in tradition; all this lead to the divinization of a nation and its transformation into the ‘testimonial community’.

The notion of Serbian national culture as seclude and authentic, different from other cultures, especially Western/European culture, is a worldview created in the analyzed discursive narrative of the *Orthodoxy*. This world-view pretends to dominate the public sphere and public discourse and want to impose itself as a dominant vision of Serbian national culture. It belongs to the continuum of the fundamental political confrontation present in Serbian society since the creation of modern Serbian state, the confrontation between advocacy of national state and civic state.

What can be concluded from the concept of the uniqueness of Serbian national identity is its obligatory character, because for all the Serbs or those who declare themselves as Serbs or of Serbian origin it is understood that they belong to the Serbian Orthodoxy. Those Serbs who reject this uniqueness of the ‘national identity’ cannot claim that they belongs to the Serbian national corpus because the Christian Orthodox faith is the content of Serbhood. In the same time the traditional belonging without believing offers a historical depth of the existence of the nation and refers to what we previously analyzed as traditional national values of Serbian nation.

The important part of national identity is Kosovo – a “sacred territory”, cultural and spiritual condition of Serbian people, a point of national unification and orientation. The analysis of the discourse on Kosovo myth demonstrate how it became a connecting tissue of three parts of the Serbian national imaginary – national values, national culture and national identity. As a national value Kosovo is perceived as a ‘Serbian Jerusalem’, Christian land sacrificed in the Battle of Kosovo (1389) for higher purpose, that is the ‘heavenly kingdom’ of Serbia. As a part of national culture Kosovo is primarily seen through monasteries, churches, endowments, monuments and other material traces of ecclesiastic and religious culture. These material traces are also important part of Serbian national identity and because of that Kosovo will be the spiritual and symbolic space of Serbian people forever.

The national identity, culture and values are ‘defended’ through the *Svetosavlje*, the national and political ideology created in the interwar (1930s) period that emphasizes a conflictual nature between universal Christian values and a particular variant of ‘national’ values that Orthodoxy estimates as an essential part of Serbian national

identity.⁴ All in all, we are dealing with a variant of a civil religion – *a religious nationalism* – where the Serbian nation itself takes sacred and self-transcendent character, becoming the object of reverence. Religious nationalism implies zealous patriotism, glorification of national heroes and sacralisation of national purposes – real or pretended.

The final conclusion should be understood as an attempt to put into perspective the results of the imaginary of the Serbian nation and to compare it with the Israeli case, because of the methodological resemblance in the processes of secularization/de-nationalization and struggle between ethnic and civic ideals of modern society. In contemporary Israel, as it is the case in Serbia, nationalism and religion are tightly entangled; the central dilemma is whether we should talk about a Jewish/Serbian state or a state of citizens of Israel/Serbia.⁵

Uri Ram (Ram, 2008) compared the religionism (religion composed with ‘ism’, a word that refers to religion as ideological doctrine) to nationalism and secularism in order to understand the relation between secular and national in Israel society and the way they immerse into collective identities. Ram distinguishes four models where nationalism and religionism meet in different degree of interaction:

1. *Strong nationalism/weak religionism*. This is the case of a dominant and energetic secular nationalism. Culturally, it may appropriate some existing religious symbols, but it remoulds them to fit the new secular national culture (or “civic religion”). Institutionally, religious institutions (houses of prayer, schools, courts etc.) are either entirely separated from the state (e.g. France) or subordinated to it (e.g. Turkey).

2. *Strong nationalism/strong religionism*. This is the case of a fusion between strong nationalism and strong religionism, which creates a kind of indissoluble mesh of “religious nationalism” (e.g. Irish Catholicism; Palestinian Hamas; Israeli-Jewish Block of Faithful).

3. *Weak nationalism/weak religionism*. This module represents a polity which is not founded upon strong pre-political “primordial” or inscriptive, national or religious, communal identity, but is rather constitutionally or “contractually” oriented (the USA – rendered ideally – is perhaps the closest existing exemplar, but in different manner some other West-European nations may count as cases in point). There are privatized religious versions of this option, e.g. Reform Judaism and transnational versions of spiritualism such as New Age trends.

4. *Weak nationalism/strong religionism*. Historically, this combination represents premodern and thus pre-national cultures in which religion was pervasive as a com-

4 The Serbian language and Cyrillic alphabet also served and serve as a tool of the definition of the national culture and identity.

5 On civil religion and ethnic questions in Israel see Liebman and Don-Yehiya (1983), Yiftachel (1999), Kopelowitz (2001).

munal identity (e.g. Judaic Diaspora). Presently, this combination can represent a type of communal “post-nationalism” or a transnational fundamentalism (e.g. Al Qaeda). (Ram, 2008: 59-60)

Ram concludes that contemporary Israeli political culture is split between 2) - religious nationalism and 3) - liberal constitutionalism which could be concluded equally for Serbian political culture, especially in the post 2000 period. The struggle between national and civic is represented through the ongoing debate whether the imaginary of Serbian culture as nationalist (*Orthodoxy*) is a legitimate path of social and cultural development. We will develop further this struggle through out following parts of this research, namely within the imaginaries of Western culture, democracy, and human rights.

Another issue is a nationality question – the dilemma of Jewish or Israeli nationality (also see Handelman, 1994). Once again, religion plays a political role of a dominant nation. “Jewish” nationality is related to an inherent inscription (belonging is by family of birth) and Israeli nationality is potentially universal and equal to all but the state of Israel does not recognize the “Israeli nationality” because such nationality may potentially include Arabs as well as Jews. Therefore the religion serves as a shield against formation of civic society and is used by state as a policy of ethno-nationalism – Judaism is a shield deployed against the formation of Israeli nation or civic nationalism in Israel. In the case of Serbia, the nationality issue is slightly different – several national minorities are present in Serbian state⁶ and on the other hand significant Serbian minorities are present in neighbor states (Croatia, Bosnia, and Montenegro). The Serbian nationality would represent therefore a belonging to the Serbdom – a corpus of Serbian population that is Christian Orthodox and lives in different states – a Serbian people, while a Serbian citizenship would refer to a corpus of people living in Serbian state. The boundaries of Serbian people are religiously defined and more blurred while Serbian citizenship concept often implies an existence of double nationalities in both ways for Serbian people living outside Serbian state and for national minorities living in Serbia (ex: Hungarians, Croatians, Kosovo Albanians) (see Vasiljević, 2011a, 2011b).

The last remark concerns the territorial boundaries. Ram claims that “Jewishness has transmuted in Israel into a nationalist territorial cult. The land and the nation have turned into the primary principles of the new Jewish religionism, delegating God and religious faith as such to a third priority.” (Ram, 2008: 69) The cult of the land/territory or the sacralisation of the land is equally a common principle in the case of Serbia – Kosovo is seen as Serbian Jerusalem (that is detected in *Orthodoxy* discourse as well) – a direct correlation between those two religious nationalism (Abrazović,

6 On national minorities in Serbia see Ilić (2010), Maksimović and Petrov (2014).

2010), or as Ram concludes the process is rather seen as a nationalization of religion than religious nationalism with the same result – creation of national religion (Ram, 2008: 69).

The imaginary of ‘THEM’:

Perception of the ‘other’ through the essentialization of Western world

The imaginary of Europe is constructed through the definition, negation and confirmation. Firstly, the Western Europe/civilization is conceived as Christian – it is Europe’s definition in the *Orthodoxy*. The insisting on the Christian aspects of Europe as defining element of contemporary Europe reveals the nature of the discourse – it is a defensive nature that aims to protect Serbian Christian Orthodox actors, namely the SOC. However the notion of Europe used in the analyzed discourse could refer to its different ‘images’, especially to geographical and geopolitical which are commonly used. To see and understand the broader picture of the discourse on Europe we will follow the discourse on Western Europe/civilization.

Secondly, Western Europe or the European civilization is *negated* in the sense that Europe abandoned its Christian roots: the decline of (Christian) European civilization, the post-Christian period of European civilization, Europe as Euro-America and Euro-union clearly shows the negation. It also shows the different starting point for the perception of the West plays a crucial role in the determination of the imaginary of the Western civilization.

Thirdly, the only possible way to be in Europe is to accept its Christian roots and Christian future. The defensive stance of Christian Orthodoxy, the Eastern Christianity in whole, regarding the Western (European) Christianity and Western Europe/West is a part of a strategy employed by Eastern Christians to defense their proper positions. The anti-Western attitude shows Christian Orthodox responses to the contemporary World. The imaginary of the relationship between Europe and Serbia could be defined as ambiguous – at one side Europe rejects Serbia, on another Serbia is inseparable part of Christian Europe.

The imaginary of Western culture has been presented through four steps. First phase intended to show what the Western/European culture/civilization represents for the Serbian Christian Orthodox community. Western culture is seen as materialist culture in a consumer society – consumption and mass culture are the strongest marks of the Western culture. Further, it is reduced to its material capacities. The incorrect implementation of the system of the protection of human rights, democracy and liberty is seen as a consequence of the Western cultural decline. The founding values of human society were ideologised and misused in the frame of the contemporary Western culture. Finally, “the death culture” is a surname for a Western culture in its late period

of decay. The system of the protection of human rights pushed to the extreme denies Christian Orthodox vision of the World. The social teachings of Christian Orthodoxy and bioethics as a result of recent scientific research are confronted on many fronts – abortion, homosexuality, trans-sexuality, euthanasia. Women rights and feminist movements are equally contested.

Those results confirm the imaginary of Western culture as a global culture that seeks to subordinate Serbia to the economic, political and cultural interests of the West (Volčić, 2005: 163). When speaking on democracy it means to speak on consumerist type of democratization,

“which does not necessarily auger democracy, peace or a resuscitated public sphere. An NGO activist said that ‘in the West, Nationalism is viewed as something backward and uncivilized. We think the real danger is not Nationalism, but artificial global consumer capitalism’. Furthermore, the West is portrayed as seeking to marginalize Serbia even further. Western NGO workers are viewed as Western modernizing missionaries who are ‘working hard in every country trying to develop the market economy to serve European interests’. Again, the West embodies what the interviewees articulated as a kind of democratic totalitarianism.” (Volčić, 2005: 164)

The discourse produced in the *Orthodoxy* is not an isolated type of discourse, as it is confirmed in Volčić’s research, where “the most common images of Serbia and the West encountered among the interviewees was one envisaging the West not as culturally superior, but culturally inferior” (Volčić, 2005: 165). The anti-Western discourse in *Orthodoxy* is founded in the confrontation with “modern” developments in Western World. These modern developments spread in second part of 20th century, such as new social (feminist and ecological) and fundamentalist movements (religious and ethnic) and were a reaction to the weakening of “traditional” nation-states, above all the decoupling of its basic components – citizenship, collective identities, and the construction of public spaces and modes of political participation.

The Serbian Christian Orthodox community, being a communal religious community presents itself as diametrically opposed to the modern program in order to reinforce the Serbian national collective identity that had weakened in the spirit of the transformation of modern nation-state in the late decades of the 20th century. Shmuel Eisenstadt studied the relations of Western and non-Western approaches to the modernity claiming that these movements have reconstituted the problem of modernity in new historical contexts, in new arenas. The major concern is the relation “between their identities and the universal themes promulgated by the respective hegemonic

programs of modernity (and particularly the relation with presumed hegemony of American culture)” (Eisenstadt, 2003: 129). In the case of *Orthodoxy*, we are dealing with the reconstruction of the Serbian national collective identity that emphasizes a discourse of confrontation between Western civilization/culture/religion and the Western cultural program of modernity as dominant worldwide. As Eisenstadt pointed out:

“They promulgate a remarkably confrontational attitude to the West, to what is conceived as Western, and attempt to appropriate modernity and the global system on their own modern, but non-Western often anti-Western terms. The confrontation with the West does not take with them the form of searching to become incorporated into the new hegemonic civilization on its own terms, but rather to appropriate the new international global scene and the modernity for themselves, for their traditions or ‘civilizations’ – as they were continually promulgated and reconstructed under the impact of their continual encounter with the West.” (Eisenstadt, 2003: 130)

The ongoing encounter with the West as a ‘dialogue between maternities’ is not the unique characteristic of Serbian Orthodoxy; it is rather the case of Christian Orthodoxy in general due to its ‘natural’ defensive stance when dealing with the Western World and particularly with the processes of Europeanization, European integration and enlargement of the EU in Eastern Europe. Willfried Spohn claims that the revival of nationalism and religion in Eastern European States

“has been confronted with growing opposition and tensions between the Western European secular-cultural integration modes. In addition, the contemporary wave of globalization with growing immigration and intensifying inter-civilizational interactions has contributed to increase tensions between secularized Latin Christian Europe, revived Christian Orthodox Europe and the Islamic civilization.” (Spohn, 2009: 362)

The imaginary of ‘US vs. THEM’: a struggle between traditional and universal values

The crucial point of the imaginary of Western world is making difference between ‘Us’ and ‘Them’ in order to stay competitive. This is accomplished by bringing into question the basic principles of Western societies. The analysis of the imaginaries of democracy, human rights, and (religious) tolerance created by the members of the Serbian Christian Orthodox community in the narrative of the *Orthodoxy* aimed at measuring in what degree those civil values are accepted as constitutive values of the

Serbian society during the period 1991-2010. We sought to answer the question of whether a concept of ethnic nation-state, defined in the imaginary of 'US' and strongly referencing to the collective identity, can accept and implement those universal values, referencing primarily to the individuals as citizens, regardless of their ethnic/national identity.

The imaginary of democracy demonstrated the complexity of understanding democracy as universal value. The socio-historical context played and still plays an important role in the creation of the connections between *democracy for 'US'* (i.e. ethnic community), and the democracy in universal sense of meaning. First, Western democracy is seen as a "demonocracy" that culminated in the perception of democracy as usage of pure force against the oppressed people, a NATO democracy. The stereotypization and oversimplification of the imaginary of the 'Other' (Western democracy) reached its peak in 1999 due to the violent break up(s) of former Yugoslavia that ended with the NATO bombing of Serbia. The perception of NATO after NATO intervention in Kosovo in 1999 strengthened the division between Western and national imaginaries and further deteriorated the vision of the Western/EU/USA.

The response to the negative imaginary of Western democracy was a positive and 'right' imaginary of Christian democracy. The Christian Orthodox responses to the individualism and pluralism, proved complicated since the values and rights of (ethnic) community stand before the values and rights of the individuals. The symphony between Church and state, the advocacy of parliamentary monarchy for political, theological, and historical reasons, 'spiritual' values of Eastern Orthodoxy and distrust toward Western democracy, those are the characteristics of the Serbian vision of democracy – a democracy for 'US'. The ethnocentric vision deals with democracy through the scope of Serbian nation: Serbian democracy is good / Croatian democracy is bad, Christian Orthodoxy is pure / Western democracy is defective. Those characteristics strengthen the intergroup cohesion of the Serbian community and devotion to the purpose of maintaining of the defensive and closed vision of the Serbian society and Serbian national culture. For the SOC and Serbian Christian Orthodox community it means an obligation to abandon the point of view that understand pluralism as an ethnic, religious or national differentiation and instead to adopt the point of view that understands pluralism as competition.

The imaginary of human rights of the Serbian Christian Orthodox community follows the ethnocentric view on democracy: it is defined by the (factually privileged) position of the Christian Orthodox majority and its established relationship with all the national and religious minorities and their minority rights within the Serbian society. The question of national minorities and theirs rights collided with the perception of the Serbian Christian Orthodox community that emphasizes the values and

interests of the (national) community to the detriment of the individual interests of the members of that community. The ethnocentric view on human rights, examined in the examples of Croatia and Kosovo, demonstrated the mechanisms of subjective selectivity: human rights of the Serbian people are endangered, while no reference has been made to the violation of human rights of the non-Serbian population. The cultural relativisation of the concept of the universal human rights should be understood through the optics of the understanding of cultural particularities of the non-Western world. The universal human rights are acceptable if individual is incorporated into (any) communitarian concept developed by Christian Orthodoxy. In the sense of ethnocentric view, the concept of universal human rights is reduced to the level of ethnic community, which does not guarantee their convincing conception and application.

The imaginary of (religious) tolerance demonstrate the way how the main non-Orthodox Christian confessions (Roman Catholic, Muslim, and Jewish) are perceived in contemporary Serbian society in the sense of coexistence. *Orthodoxy* raises questions of cultural and religious rights, but direct answers were not found in the analyzed narrative of the journal because the imaginary of religious other is strongly connected to the already mentioned ethnocentric view. Also, a willingness to coexist with institutionalized and traditionally present religions does not mean at the same time the acceptance of the freedom for any kind of religious practices, and especially not for their dissemination in Serbia.

Concluding remarks

We analyzed a discursive production of the Serbian Christian Orthodox community as it appeared in the *Orthodoxy* journal, published by the SOC. This approach allowed us to identify the discourse producers, i.e. the contributors / article writers and to investigate the nature of discursive strategies used for the preservation of traditional values. Consequently, the diversity of the discourse producers demonstrates the usage of different types of expertise that justify and legitimize the considered concepts. The theological expertise is used to justify and explain the contemporary world, Serbian society, Western societies, and universal values using theological knowledge. The scientific expertise is used to justify traditionalist and conservative points of view or to undermine the views on the modern in the produced discourse. The 'expertise' of conservative political activists leads to the justification and defense of the nation using a narrative mainly borrowed from traditionalist, conservative, and nationalist sources. Finally, the believers' discourses served for (un)intentional justification and defense of the idea of Serbian nation by using of personal, subjective and emotive aspects of Serbian Orthodox faith.

We presupposed that the influence of the SOC, a religious and national institution, is rooted in the attempt to preserve traditional values of Serbian people. In that light, the modern concept of the nation-state and its political and democratic institutions are tolerant towards the SOC insofar as allows it to defend and take care of the preservation of the traditional values in the contemporary Serbian society. But essentially the preservation of traditional values is used as a tool for political and social influence in order to preserve the privileged position of the Serbian Orthodox Church. The public influence of the SOC, being suppressed and silenced during the communist Yugoslav era, reemerged in the 1980's. We argued that a major role in the reactivation of its public role is to be assigned to the Serbian Orthodox community, defined as a community of Serbian Orthodox Christians that is attached to the church and mediates between the secular and religious world. In this sense the ethnic community of Serbian people is *Gemeinschaft* (Tönnies, 2001), determined by the consensus (*Verständnis*) of belonging to the Christian Orthodoxy.

The complexity of the relation between state, nation and national church in the Christian Orthodox world in general, and in Serbia in particular opens new perspectives on studying the phenomena of religion, religiosity and their relations to politics in everyday life. It also refers to the SOC, especially because of its influence on the public sphere, its emphasizing the national aspects of the civic society and neglecting the (national, religious, sexual) minorities for the reasons of Serbian national question.

The last important point of the research is the question of discursive changes during time. The analyzed period (1991-2010) showed that the immutability of the discourse on certain topics persists. Namely, the constructed image of Western world as an artificial 'Other' is confronted to the image of a Serbian nation and Christian Orthodoxy as a genuine 'Self' of European civilization. Conversely, the constructed images of democracy in Croatia, human rights in Kosovo and tolerance towards Roman Catholics in general and Croatian Catholics in particular, demonstrated changes in perception due to the changes of socio-political context. Therefore, the obtained results pointed out that changes in the perception of Serbian society, from national towards civic, are possible and real. The deconstruction of the nation-state imaginary evolves slowly and painfully, as it happens firstly on the level of perception of the universal values, namely democracy, human rights and tolerance. The concept of universality excludes particularity: therefore the vision of those values cannot be perceived through the scope of nation-state. A sustainable Serbian society based on civic premises cannot be achieved without a complete transformation of imaginary of national democracy to a nationally neutral comprehension of the universal values. This task appeals for an opening of the Serbian Christian Orthodox community to the Western world.

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СРПСКО ПРАВОСЛАВЉЕ ИЗМЕЂУ ТРАДИЦИОНАЛНИХ И УНИВЕРЗАЛНИХ ВРЕДНОСТИ: АНАЛИЗА ДИСКУРСА ЧАСОПИСА *ПРАВОСЛАВЉЕ*

Сажетак: Аутори анализирају дискурзивну производњу српске православне заједнице у часопису Православље, који издаје Српска православна црква. Циљ је био да се идентификују произвођачи дискурса, тј. сарадници / писци текстова и да испита природа дискурзивне стратегије која се користи за очување традиционалних вредности. Методолошки приступ анализи часописа се базира на grounded теорији, а подржан је Касториадисовом концепцијом 'друштвено замишљеног'. Након обраде података формирале су се три главне матрице кодова: кодови који се односе на дискурс о традиционалним вредностима које произвођачи дискурса бране кроз имагинарно 'МИ' – наративи о српском народу, националној култури и националном идентитету; кодови који се односе на дискурс о имагинарном 'ОНИ' – на Запад, Европу, западну цивилизацију и културу; кодови који се односе на универзалне вредности као нешто спорно кроз имагинарно 'МИ против ЊИХ' – демократију, толеранцију и људска права. Дискурс који ствара имагинарно 'МИ' углавном се заснива на сакрализацији српског народа, што доводи до 'националне религиозности'; имагинарни 'ОНИ' се формирају кроз есенцијализацију западног света; трећи дискурс који конфронтира 'нас против њих' одражава борбу између традиционалних и универзалних вредности. Довођењем у питање основних принципа на којима су конституисана западна друштва аутори текстова имају за циљ да успоставе разлику између 'нас' и 'њих' како би остали конкурентни и наставили да утичу на српско друштво.

Кључне речи: Православље, Српска православна црква, вредности, дискурс анализа.