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## MILORAD RAJČEVIĆ'S IMPRESSION OF INDIA<sup>2</sup>

“The Knight of the Holy Sepulchre”, Milorad Rajčević (Mala Drenova, 1890 – Lübbecke, 1964), Serbian “world traveller”, embarked on a two-year trip around the world on 14 March 1910. He regularly sent his impressions to the Belgrade newspaper *Mali Žurnal*, having placed a bet with them that he would travel through Europe, Asia, Africa and America and that by the end he would have crossed 120,000 kilometres. In the book *Na Dalekom Istoku (In the Far East)* Rajčević describes his travels through India, from Calcutta (Kolkata) to Bombay (Mumbai) through Varanasi, Allahabad, Kanpur, Lucknow and Madras, which lasted from 12 January to mid-March 1911. Rajčević not only reveals to us the places he visited, but also presents a new space, a space seen as a form of existence of the world with all of its legacy, seen both in diachronicity and synchronicity.

*Keywords:* travelogue, world traveller, *Mali Žurnal*, India, bet, benevolent mediator between two cultures

Milorad Rajčević (Mala Drenova<sup>3</sup>, 1890–Lübbecke, 1964), the “first” Serb<sup>4</sup>

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2 A section of the paper “Milorad Rajčević’s Impression of India” was delivered as the presentation entitled “Impression of India by Milorad Rajčević”, with which I participated in the International Scientific Conference „Србија између Истока и Запада: Наука, образовање, култура, уметност“ / “Serbia between the East and the West: Science, Education, Culture, Arts”, held from September 27th to 29th, 2013 at the Faculty of Philology of the University of Belgrade.

3 *Mali Žurnal* daily of 11 March 1910 stated that he was born in Prokuplje; however, Archbishop Nikolaj Velimirović, who was at the time archbishop in Ohrid, mentions in his book *Autografi znamenitih ličnosti XX veka* that he was born in the village of Mala Drenova. In the book written in German, Rajčević says that he was born in Niš, but, as he had a tendency to “embellish” his biography, claiming he was a count and a student, as well as saying his father was a “financing manager”, it is reasonable to doubt the truthfulness of certain data.

4 Typically of him, it said “the first Serb world traveller”, but Serbian painter from Timisoara Pavel Petrović (1818-1887) was also a world traveller. He had embarked

“world traveller”, is forgotten in spite of the fact that he wrote numerous articles about his travels in *Mali Žurnal* and *The Balkans*, and travel books in Spanish, Serbian, French, and German<sup>5</sup> – his name does not show up in encyclopaedias nor is he in the *Dictionary of Serbian Travel Writing*. When in 1930 Miodrag M. Pešić wrote about our latest travelogues, he did not mention Rajčević, who had published several books, his first book having been published in Spanish in 1918. Rajčević had unexpectedly sunk into oblivion although he had been travelling for twenty years (Rajčević 1931: V), completing four big journeys – the first to the Far East, from Europe and Siberia to Palestine and back to Belgrade. His second journey, from 1913 to 1914, took him to the Americas, travelling from Alaska to Cape Horn. On his third journey, from 1923 to 1924, he travelled extensively throughout Africa. During his fourth big journey, from 1933 to 1934, he found himself in India again, and then he went to Australia, New Zealand, made a stopover in Fiji and Hawaii, and also went to America.

He set out on a trip around the world after he had placed a bet. He left Belgrade on Sunday, 14 March 1910 at 8 o'clock<sup>6</sup>, and he was sup-

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on a long journey in 1844, he stayed in India for two years and lived in Bombay and Calcutta, where he earned a living by painting portraits. In late 1849 or early 1850, he departed for India once again, via Rome, Naples, Alexandria and Cairo. He stayed in Bombay for a few months, then went to Hong Kong. From there he sailed for California, and lived in San Francisco. In mid-November 1851, Petrović departed for Hawaii and in the spring of 1852 he decided to travel to South America. He settled in Valparaiso, he stayed in Chile for a little over one year, then he moved to Lima in 1853. Later he lived in America and received American citizenship. He also spent two years in Australia. He visited India in 1885, and died in Rome two years later.

5 His first book was published in Spanish – *Biografía e impresiones de los viajes del mundo a través del famoso Milorad de Raitchevitch. Explorador mundial. Publicista serbio*. Valencia: Imp. Hermanos de Marco, 1918 and in the French language – *Du Caire au Cap*. Paris: Editions Pierre Roger, 1929 and *Sous le Soleil de l’Afrique*. Bucuresti: Édité par l’Auter, 1931; two books were published in the German language: *Autogramme berühmter Staatsmänner Persönlichkeiten und aus aller Welt. Gesammelt von Milorad Raitchevitch 1910-1947*. Hannover: Gebrüder Jän-ecke. 1948, as well as *Biographien und Autogramme berühmter Staatsmänner und anderer Persönlichkeiten des 20. Jahrhunderts. Persönlich gesammelt von Milorad Raitchewitch*. Bielefeld, s. a. Unfortunately, these books cannot be found in our libraries except for *Sous le Soleil de l’Afrique*.

6 *Mali Žurnal* of 13 March states in bold letters that Rajčević sets off on his journey

posed to cover 120,000 kilometres, travelling for two years, which was a very rare enterprise at the time, not only locally, but globally. He was the only author in our literature, apart from Ljubomir Nenadović, who primarily wrote travelogues. The audience's interest in travelogues in our country exceeded the number of titles in this genre. It was observed in Mostar's *Zora* in 1900 that, although not many works of the genre existed in our literature, the quality of these works was better than in other literary genres (- ć: 76). Ten years later, in 1910, Simo Matavulj noted that it was difficult to explain why travelogue writers were rare in our country despite "being lovingly accepted by the readers" (1954: 544).

As a young man Rajčević said that he had dreamt of a bravura, which some people wrongly called adventure (1931: IV). *Mali Žurnal* points to Rajčević's origin and biography. His father Mihailo Rajčević, an actor, was the famous Neko from the novel *Ivkova slava* by Stevan Sremac. His mother Jelena was also an actress, who played the role of Jolče; she died when Milorad was only ten years old. At the time he set off on his travels his father was a member of the famed theatrical troupe of Fotija Iličić. "Rajčević finished the four years of primary school and two years of secondary education, but after this his parents sent him for apprenticeship with Inchiostri, with whom he spent almost a year" (1910: 1). He had a distinct talent for painting. Writing about his life, Rajčević would later say that he was born into a clerical family, that he chose the wall-painting craft, and that he was taught by the "famous Štiha" and by the "even now popular Inchiostri" (1924: 15).<sup>7</sup> Still, it seems that instead of the wall-painting craft he should have said decorative painting. On another occasion he said that his father had been poor and burdened with family cares and that he could not send him to school. He noted that his father had been an actor and then a tax clerk, and that he himself was a "distinguished literary figure" because his father was Neko from *Ivkova slava* (1931: IV).

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**"on Sunday, 14 March of this year".**

- 7 At the time when Rajčević went to learn the craft, Dragutin Inkiostri (Carlo Inchiostri) was teaching folk ornamentation in Belgrade's Arts and Crafts School. This "design pioneer in Serbia" is also known as a collector of folk ornaments and handicrafts on which he based his work to establish national decorative styles, especially Serbian. The Štiha family were of German origin, and they were well known in Belgrade in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> and the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Fric Štiha was a theatrical painter. At 31 Skadarska Street, on Štiha's house (today it is a part of the "Tri Šešira" restaurant) there is a plaque saying that painter and patriot Vladan J. Štiha (1908-1992), who was a descendant of Fric Štiha, lived there.

At fifteen he went to Vienna, without any money, on foot, where he started to learn the craft with a Viennese court decorator. When he arrived he slept in a shelter in Vienna's third district. His decision to set off on his journey, without any support, illustrates both his determination and courage, but also his self-confidence. In Vienna he noticed a difference, especially in the realm of culture, between his country and the new environment, and it was there that he got the idea of travelling the world and getting to know it. Rajčević came to Vienna in 1905 at the historic moment of accelerated social and cultural changes.<sup>8</sup> It was the turn of the century and Europe was in turmoil. It was also a period when the Old Continent started opening up to other cultures and regions of the world, which inevitably led its inhabitants to question their own values and ideals.

After six months of residence in this city, when he mastered the language he went on a journey to Germany via Salzburg, and then to Paris. In Paris, he worked for three months for the painter Georges Veber, and then travelled through France and Switzerland. He always worked, and when he earned some money he would travel on. Having left Switzerland he arrived in Rijeka, where he got the idea of going on a trip by boat to America. And he did. Due to a leg injury, which he suffered in a race, and because he had no passport, he was sent back to Europe. He stayed in Belgrade only ten days, and then went to Bulgaria and Romania. When he received money from his aunt in Bucharest, he headed towards Jerusalem via Constantinople, Alexandria and Jaffa. Yet, since he could not find a job, he returned to Belgrade, whereupon, two months later, he applied for the trip around the world. He took advantage of the attention given to the case of the fake Crown Prince by local and international magazines; he arrived at the newsroom of *Mali Žurnal* and said that he was the brother of the main initiator of that comedy, i.e. brother of the also fake adjutant.

He had already had experience in travelling. He had spent four years travelling; he had tasted the sweetness of travel and learned to speak five foreign languages. He had got to know Europe, but he had also been to America. When he embarked on his two-year trip around the world he was only twenty years old. Apart from his youthful energy and ambi-

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8 In his biography published in the German language, he wrote that he had arrived in Vienna after graduating in 1907, which is incorrect, but also that he lived in a flat next to Hitler's! He gave this book to his cousin Dragan Šipetić on 8 November 1957, signing it "Eternal world traveller, Serb".

tion, he yearned to introduce his own nation to the world. This was confirmed by his words on departure: "I am a Serb, I am not a materialist, at the heart of the realization of this idea lies something much, much higher, that is, I am determined to show the world that the Serbs can have increased energy, patience and endurance in carrying out heroic feats" (1910: 2). The journey for him was more than formal education, it was his lifestyle, consciously chosen, which had fulfilled him in the most noble way. He says: "Little by little I improved myself by learning foreign languages, history, geography, the ways of the people and countries that I travelled to, and I did all this at my own expense. That way I had a better picture of what I had seen on my travels" (1931: VII). Stanislav Vinaver wisely remarked about a man who is a traveller by vocation that he "never arrives, settles nothing: after one trip he faces another" (1954: 487).

Rajčević made a break in his travels only during the Balkan Wars. Having fought in the First Balkan War, after the demobilization in 1913 he found himself again in America, but this time he covered the continent from north to south. He was in South America when the Great War, First World War, started, from where he sailed to Europe and spent three and a half years in Spain. Having had to postpone his trips many times, he finally set off for Africa in 1923. He published a two-volume book *Iz žarke Afrike* in the Serbian language showing his impressions, and two books in the French language, *Du Caire au Cap*, which was published in Paris in 1929, and *Sous le Soleil de l'Afrique*, which Rajčević published in Bucharest two years later.

He always travelled alone and proudly wore the national tricolour on his left arm, making every effort to "walk with his head high, as a newspaper correspondent and a gentleman". He was proud that he could "carry for the first time the national tricolour through foreign countries" (1924: 20).<sup>9</sup> His dignified demeanour left the impression that his was a

9 It is interesting that Rajčević printed cards with his image and a text in English that says: "COMMUNICATION

Count Milorad Raitchevitch, a Servian student, 20 years of age, is travelling round the world for a prize of 100,000 francs offered by the Mali Journal of Belgrade. The conditions are that the journey must be completed within two years and the only money employed be raised by the sale of postcards bearing his portrait. He left Belgrade on March 13th, 1910, and has traversed 72,000 kilometres, visiting Montenegro, Turkey, Italy, Switzerland, France, England, Germany, Russia, Siberia, Manchuria, China, Korea & Japan. He has yet to travel 280,000 kilometres." (www.delcampe.net)

“nation of high culture and nobility” (1925: 18). As soon as he came to a place, he would take off his travelling suit, go to a barber’s shop, and then, observing the etiquette, he would put on attire befitting a respectable man. He would then make inquiries as to who the person in charge of the place was and proceed to pay the person his respects, dressed in a jacket or wearing tails. He would then ask the person of influence if he could give a lecture and be recommended to his friends.

Rajčević’s contemporaries describe him as a good-looking, elegant, well-mannered, and refined man. He was decorated for his virtues by His Holiness the Patriarch of Jerusalem with the Cross of the Holy Sepulchre in 1913, which gave him the right to the title “Knight of the Holy Sepulchre”. Wherever he went, he carried with him the cross with the original charter. Journalists of Sarajevo’s *Večernja Pošta* introduced him as a colleague, “editor of Belgrade’s *The Balkans* newspaper” and author of a travelogue written in Spanish<sup>10</sup> (1924: 4). In the dedication to the book *In the Far East*, which is kept in the Library of Matica Srpska, he identified himself as a journalist and a writer. Not only did he give lectures, he also “wrote many articles for various African newspapers”, organized conferences and gave speeches (1924: 10). He spoke several languages fluently – German, English, French, Russian, Spanish, Greek, Italian and half a dozen other languages (s. a.: 13). Having published his stories and travelogues, Rajčević gained a readership in many parts of Serbia. He gave lectures in our country and abroad during his travels. His speeches were direct, based on his rich experience, and probably woven with anecdotes and humour. He aimed to address his audiences – ordinary people – as an ordinary person, to tell them what he had seen with his own eyes. His “road book”, in which he collected the signatures of the prominent people he had encountered on his travels, is also quite interesting, and it was also later published in Serbian and German. Bishop Nikolaj wrote in this book

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10 On the front page of his book in Spanish, *Biografía e impresiones de los viajes del mundo a través del famoso Milorad de Raitchevitch. Explorador mundial. Publicista serbio*, there is a photograph of Milorad Rajčević, and the title which highlights that he was a famous explorer of the world and a Serbian journalist, and that the book contains his biography and his impressions of his travels. In fact, it presents the most interesting pages about his travels around the world as well as in Europe.

that Milorad was the greatest Serbian world traveller, and that the greatest treasure he saw roaming the world was “what he had inherited from his mother: faith in life and the All-present God.” He brought “an entire museum” of diverse artefacts from Africa, and his luggage weighed 700 kilograms. His personal wealth was comprised of stamps from around the world worth half a million dinars.

He fled the country in 1944, because during the war he had worked in Niš as an interpreter for the German organisation Todt, which was a civilian and military organisation that used forced labour. Rajčević was afraid that he would be killed, as it, indeed, happened to his wife Auguste, who was German. Later, after some time spent in Austria, he settled in Germany in Lübbecke, where he married a widow, Maria Magdalena Gast<sup>11</sup>. He died in their house on 28 February 1964.<sup>12</sup> Helmut Hüffmann, who studied the history of this city, states that he was an eloquent man, who had travelled the world, and that some of the old Lübbecke dwellers still remembered his pleasant and striking features in the townscape (2011: 50).

It seems that Rajčević was familiar with the useful advice Francis Bacon gave in his famous and very widely read essay *Of Travel* (1625) to young travellers starting on their Grand Tour. Bacon is of the opinion that they should have a certain knowledge of the language spoken in the country they are travelling to, that they should be equipped with guides and maps, that they should keep a travel log, that they should not stay too long in the same town while they are in a country, i.e. that they should change their place of dwelling so as to become adjusted to con-

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11 His cousin Uglješa Rajčević, M.A., an art historian, remembers that he lived for a while in Nemanjina Street, that he was married to Selena and that they adopted a girl named Živka, who became a painter and who settled in Paris in the 1950s. Milorad says that the wife he lived with in Niš was Augusta and that she was German (s. a.: 275-276). Uglješa Rajčević remembers him as a handsome, neat, well-dressed man, and that he used to tell impressive stories about the adventures from his travels.

12 It is interesting to mention that in the Belgrade register of deaths, there is a record of a Milorad Rajčević, decorator, born in 1890, who was killed by a shell in 1944, during the bombing of Belgrade. He was married to Ester Kistelek (1883-1951), yet their marriage was probably childless, since after Ester's death their tombs languished in neglect. Their graves were dug over.

stant dislocation and always have a recommendation letter of a distinguished person, which would help them enter the proper social circles. He says that they should make acquaintances, especially of distinguished people, ambassadors and other government officers, and also that quarrels should be avoided. These instructions are addressed to rich young people, because he recommends that one should travel with a tutor or an experienced servant. Bacon gave primacy to the educational trips of the English, which also had the full support of the Crown. This support was not coincidental as many trips to Italy, for instance, had industrial espionage as their aim, and not only the discovering of the beauty of works of art. In the United Kingdom, the former empire “where the sun never set”, the travelogue was, unlike in our literature, one of the leading genres. While Rajčević resided in England he spoke the English language, and had the opportunity to learn about the rich tradition of travel literature. Not only did he make an effort to learn the languages, find out about his route, and change his dwellings, but he also always had good recommendations and was accepted by members of the elite to make it easier for himself to travel further on with the money collected. On the way, he collected local artefacts.

Not only did the editorial staff of *Mali Žurnal* define the route, they also requested that the “world traveller” get a certificate from the local authorities that he was indeed there, and in return they prepared a proper ID and recommendations. It was also indicated that the passenger’s attire needed to imitate the Serbian infantry uniform, with a backpack which “apart from the most necessary medications (aspirin, quinine, iodine, goat’s tallow, etc.) must always contain two pairs of clean “obojci”<sup>13</sup>. He also wrote that he was carrying a good camera and a Browning revolver. Just one day after his departure, on 15 March, he published his first text in *Mali Žurnal* – about how he was welcomed in Kragujevac – and he signed it with “Best regards, M. Rajčević”. After publishing his contribution, the editorial staff noted that the world traveller was hailed from all sides. They even published two short poems dedicated to him by the readers. Travelling around the world used to be very rare in those days.

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13 Linen strips that served as socks wound around feet and ankles. They usually had folklore motifs.



On 20 April 1910, *Mali Žurnal* wrote about *rare world travellers* from Italy, Atillio Zanardi and Eugenio Vianello, who, after placing a bet of 130,000 dinars, had to go around the world in twelve years pushing an open barrel, the dimensions of which were 1.34 x 2 m.

In his book *In the Far East*, he describes his first major journey but not his first journey, when he travelled from Belgrade to Siberia, Japan, Korea, China, Indochina, India, the Arabian Peninsula, and Palestine. It was part of the route that had to be covered after the bet was made with *Mali Žurnal*. In the aforementioned book, after the preface written by Borislav Sl. Minić, one can read the names of the chapters per destination: *Siberia, Japan, Korea, Manchuria, China, Back India, Front India, Ceylon, Arabian Gulf, Persia, Mesopotamia, Syria and Palestine*. He was seen off with due respect, and even a banquet was organized at the Takovo Hotel. A year and a half later he was greeted as a hero near Grocka, a brass band was playing in his honour and carriages were decorated. He remembered that many people had gone out to Smederevo road, and they were also in the streets he was passing through. He arrived in Belgrade on 21 September 1911, and there was an organized welcome on the Sava River bank. The Savić brothers made a film about it, which was shown in their cinema. His journey may also remind us of the famous adventures of Phileas Fogg in 1872, who bet his friends 20,000 pounds that he would travel the world in 80 days. However, Rajčević bet 10,000 dinars that he would travel 120,000 kilometres; he was travelling alone and received 150 dinars per month from the editorial board of *Mali Žurnal*, which was founded by brothers Pera and Božidar Savić<sup>14</sup>.

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14 Pera Savić graduated from the Vienna Academy and Božidar graduated philosophy from the Lyceum in Belgrade, and then he studied medicine in Vienna, Berlin and Zurich, but interrupted his studies for lack of money. There were five brothers, all of them educated, and they had one sister. The Savić brothers were the owners of the Modern Cinema. In 1911 they commissioned a young Austrian, Karl Freund (who later won an Oscar for Best Cinematography in 1937). He organized their film laboratory and made several documentaries: *From the Belgrade Promenade, From Jewish Quarters and From Dorćol, Easter Races in Banjica* and others. In Belgrade and in the province they made many film journals, as well as the feature film *Poor Mother* (1912), a melodrama. The film production of the Savić brothers has not yet been found.

Rajčević stepped on Indian soil after 11 month of travelling, and he presented his impressions in the chapter titled *Front India*. He described the two biggest cities in most detail – Calcutta, the capital of the West Bengal state, and Bombay, the capital of the Maharashtra State, which is the most populated Indian state after Uttar Pradesh – his starting and finishing points. He visited four cities in the state of Uttar Pradesh: the holiest Hindu city Varanasi, then Allahabad, Kanpur and Lucknow. From Lucknow he went to Madras, which he does not describe. It was the city where he boarded a ship to Bombay. He did not plan the stages of his Indian experience: he decided to examine the situation once he got to Calcutta and try his luck, as, according to him, “he always did so” (1930: 180). News about Rajčević, the world traveller, preceded him wherever he went. In Calcutta, newspapers published his photographs and descriptions of his travel routes, and this was also the first thing he mentioned in his writings about the city. He also presented his hosts, while in the second paragraph he mentioned that Calcutta “leaves a strong impression”. He made a visit to the governor and gave us a detailed description of the governor’s residence, which he saw as a “real fairy-tale house”. “I was thrilled watching this luxury, beauty and great splendour, and above all amazed by the decoration and good taste”. He was equally impressed by the view of the sea from the windows of the palace: “I have never seen a more beautiful panorama” (1930: 189). Rajčević talks about two issues, noting down major differences and a pronounced dichotomy between the life of Europeans and their colonial architecture on the one hand, and the daily life of the local population on the other. He may have enjoyed moving in European circles, but he did not forget to remind us that the United Kingdom “infiltrated into India”, dominating it completely. He rightfully uses the word “infiltrated” and he states that, as a rule, the English used the feuds between Indian leaders to come to power and to make the same rulers their subjects in order to increase their own wealth. Describing the attire of both sections of Indian society, Rajčević writes about women, their appearance and clothes, and the importance these have for their social status.

Rajčević continued his travels on a motorcycle that was presented to him. He was supposed to cover 400 English miles to Varanasi. (As far

as we know, he was the only one of our travelogue writers who used this vehicle in the early twentieth century.) While he was in India, he measured distances mostly in miles, rarely in kilometres. He also described the landscape he rushed through on his motorcycle, and the houses of the local people, or as he put it, "the natives". His use of the word "native" points to the influence his hosts had on him, i.e. to their Eurocentric view of the world. As a twenty-year-old man, Rajčević was susceptible to influences, but the question is to what degree his value system was affected. He noted that the *natives* he met were good and peaceful people, but that they were also naked – "as on the day they were born". "They would approach me humbly. Many bowed before me, and many fell on their knees touching my feet with their foreheads" (1930: 201). "Woven mats are their only floor covering and their only pieces of furniture. As for kitchen utensils, they have wooden vessels for storing water and also some wooden bowls. Their diet consisted of fruit and vegetables." [...] "The concept of family is unknown to them. There are no marriages, i.e. they do not get married. A man takes a wife, lives with her, and they have children". He observed that people were satisfied with little and had learned to live frugally (1930: 203). He also gave a very short description of Indian and European quarters of Varanasi, "the holy city of India". He did not forget to point out the ever-present dichotomy, the difference between Indian and European parts of the city. He saw merchants as a mixture of the Hindus and the Europeans, "like Jews, gypsies and the like". (It is unclear whether this is his personal opinion or just the public opinion at the time.) He marvelled at artisans' skilful workmanship which resulted in amazing creations, such as the famous cashmere scarves, colourful printed silk fabrics, silk brocade with gold or silver threadwork, carpets, jewellery, and goldsmiths' and other wares. Rajčević always emphasized what was most important – that the Ganges is a holy river and that Benares is a sacred city. "Varanasi is for Hindus what Mecca is for the followers of Mohammed and Jerusalem for Christians. It is the centre of pilgrimage, where people come from everywhere as they do in Kaaba" (1930: 203).

On the way to Allahabad, the heart or garden of India, "the natives were afraid of me and took to flight seeking shelter. Perhaps they disliked my roaring motorcycle, and thought a white man mounted a black devil in order

to drive out its heathen soul.” He further stated that the place was nice and big. “In the middle of it you can see the European quarter”. The focus of his attention was a visit of the king and queen of Burma to an exhibition of Indian products; Rajčević wrote nothing about the products, though. An agent printed 10,000 postcards with his image, included an appropriate inscription, and also put one of his travel books on display in order to sell more postcards. Rajčević refused to be exhibited in a tent as if he were in a circus. He travelled 120 miles to Kanpur, which to him looked “like some summer resort” and whose inhabitants were mostly of European origin. “The people were stepping aside before me with reverence. God knows who they thought I was. The main thing is that no one bothered or touched me. I walked freely and toured the gently rolling hills” (1930: 210). In Kanpur, he described snake charming and commented on the snake trade. He also described the dancing of believers in front of temples. Rajčević watched them in amazement noting that “they do not have our undulating ‘kolo’ dance; instead, they hop, jump around, and as our people would say ‘play silly people’”. He also noted the presence of polygamy and early marriage of women. Women were usually bought or bartered, and therefore “aren’t considered anything other than common slaves” (1930: 213).

After a month-long sojourn in India, he arrived in Lucknow, where he was a guest of Raj Jaun, an affluent and cultured man, who, according to Rajčević, had been educated in Germany and lived in a house decorated in European fashion. Rajčević went on sightseeing trips and hunting expeditions to hunt tigers and leopards with the Raj. Not being casual about the experience, Rajčević states, “Like a good sportsman I like hunting and I hunt readily, but I am not interested in hunts as unsafe as these, hunts which make your skin crawl, and where the danger is immense”. As Raj Jaun organized for him a small but safe caravan, Rajčević travelled on an elephant to Madras, and by ship to Bombay, an interesting city where a foreigner “can see a lot and be surprised” (1930: 230). He noticed that everyone entered the city only from one side, the harbour-side, where the customs office on the quay was located, and that it was possible to exit the city on all sides.

As Rajčević primarily addresses the educated reader, he does not explain the meaning of the word *coolie* in his first post; he will do it in

his last travelogue about Bombay. The text about Bombay bursts with information not only about the city, but also about the way people live and Indian belief and caste systems. Rajčević believes that the people of India, like all primitive peoples, initially worshiped the forces of nature: the Sun, the sky and fire, and that they later switched to worshipping the three new deities: Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva. "From Brahma, the source and the mouth of life, originated Vishnu and Shiva" (1930: 236). However, Rajčević reminds the reader of the culture transfer, i.e. that ancient Indians were well known for their literature, that Europe inherited fables from them, and that Indians studied mathematics, languages, and architecture. He concludes that those Indian days of glory were over and that similar processes were occurring in other Asian nations, "who, before Christ and some time after him, were the centres of progress and education. All this was transferred to Europe, which replaced Asia. The culture of Asia was transferred to Europe, and now it is being transferred back to Asia again". In the final segment of his travelogue, Rajčević depicts Clive, an ordinary clerk, who became a high-powered person through machinations and doing "terrible acts". It is possible that Clive would not have been sentenced, had it not been for the revelation that he had misappropriated some funds of the Crown.

Stories from this trip, as well as descriptions of Milorad Rajčević's stay in India from Calcutta to Bombay through Varanasi, Allahabad, Kanpur and Lucknow, which lasted from 12 January to mid-March 1911, represented a rare direct experience of a Serb, which introduced the culture of the Indian subcontinent to the Serbian reader. In his travelogue, Rajčević not only reveals the places he visited but, more importantly, he presents to us a new space, a space seen as a form of existence of the world with all of its legacy, seen both in diachronicity and synchronicity. Milorad Rajčević's presentation of the Far and Middle East can be perceived as part of the European interest in learning about and discovering the value of cultures of faraway destinations. Jacques Dugast says that the period from 1880 to 1900 is an age of "opening up" of the European continent to other world cultures (2007: 191). In addition to the fascination with Japanese cultural heritage, the traditional culture of India was also being explored; it was another discovery of the late nineteenth century in Europe. By the end of

the 19<sup>th</sup> century writers and travellers had mediated knowledge about the traditional culture of India. Rabindranath Tagore, the first non-European writer to receive the Nobel Prize for literature in 1913, also contributed to this raised interest. The end of the nineteenth century in Europe also witnessed a noticeable Japanese influence in art – Van Gogh was fascinated by the technique of Japanese painters – and the period from 1880 to 1914 saw the discovery of Chinese culture and learning about Indochina, which would also have an impact on European culture.

The colonization process that took place in numerous phases also influenced Europeans and their culture to face cultures of other peoples. Colonization meant the “Europeanization” of the rest of the world, imposing the language and religion of the conqueror, as well as the overall system of values and cultural models; it did not only include political and economic submission. Cultures of other, non-European nations were seen from the dominant European supremacist point of view as less civilized, i.e. of less value compared to the European civilization. Susan Sontag points out that a trip to exotic landscapes always includes the opposition between “us” and “them”, but also that modern travel literature begins when the concept of a civilization has become critical and self-evident, that is, when it is no longer so clear who is civilized and who is not (Sontag 1984: 699). René Rémond, the French historian and political scientist, points to an incredibly accelerated European subjugation of the rest of the world through colonial conquests or trade dominance, and that the process of the “Europeanization of the world” was so strong that this influence is felt even today, the prevailing impression being that “everything starts from Europe and everything goes back to it” (quotation by Dugast 2007: 192). People outside Europe rightfully speak of the Eurocentricity of the world.

Dositej Obradović, a great traveller who stayed in various places during his many years of travelling, found the meaning of travel in the moral of the fable *The Passengers and the Poplar*, “When we get to know other people’s places, then we can judge our own...” (2011: 156). For an author, experiencing other places yields a different insight, i.e. affirmation or denial of one’s own identity. At the same time, a travelogue is a reflection of its author, who, by selecting the events, people and experiences that

are important and interesting to him, reveals something about himself and about others. Rajčević, like other authors of travelogues, pointed to the cultural differences he encountered. But, although he is a benevolent intermediary between two cultures, he is also prone to accepting certain stereotypes. Nevertheless, it is obvious that for him the main obstacle in getting to know the ancient lands more intimately was his inability to understand the local population's language. Rajčević formed his picture of India not only on the basis of his own impressions, but also on the basis of communication he had with the Europeans and educated Indians who spoke a major foreign language. It does seem that Rajčević did not engage in conversation with ordinary people. Still, his general impression of the Indians was positive. He noted the two parallel worlds existing at national and local levels in Europe and India alike. As an observer, Rajčević was, of course, accustomed to that which belonged to the European, Balkan, and Serbian culture, but he was a man who understood and benevolently accepted as legitimate the different ways of life and different customs.

Rajčević's articles about travel were created in the moment, on the road. Reviewing Rajčević's travelogues, Vladimir Gvozden notes that they "contain an adventurous matrix" (2011: 83), and that his hectic itinerary had an impact on the pace of his narration, "leaving little space for detailed narration about the events or depictions of the landscape" (2011: 89). Nevertheless, when Rajčević was not rushing to meet the requirements imposed on him by the bet, or during his moments of rest, he was able to devote himself to writing, to describe life in Bombay, for instance, filling the pages of his Indian travelogue with descriptions of Indian life. Just by reading them, no one could assume that they had been written by a young man of twenty, who was not a writer by profession.

For Rajčević, India, both *Front and Back*, is "a treasure trove, whose natural resources and products are enjoyed throughout the world." It is the land of immense wealth (1930: 238), different religions, nations, and languages. As his last written sentence says, "But India has completely fallen under the influence of Great Britain." This *but* also points to Rajčević's position regarding the status of India. As someone coming from a country that had been enslaved for centuries, a country that was impoverished and whose development and progress had been impeded, he could easily put

himself in the shoes of the people of India and understand what was happening to their country. This *but* says that he was sorry the current circumstances were unfavourable for them – it demonstrates his empathy.

The part about India from the book *In the Far East* was also presented in order to point to whether or not our author was familiar with the travel book written by Prince Božidar Karađorđević<sup>15</sup>, who had travelled to India before him in 1897 and published his travelogue *Enchanted India* (1899), which was at its time a best seller. His contemporaries wrote that the Prince's travelogue was "a real discovery of this magical empire that so many others before him had described, but failed to shed light on the mysterious aspirations of its inhabitants" (Janković 2010: 10). Rajčević spent time in London and Paris. Had he spoken the English language, had he lived in Vienna six months before, where our prince had left a trail in artistic circles, one could expect him to have heard about the aforementioned travelogue. But even though they visited some of the same places, their experiences differed; therefore, there is no indication that Rajčević had read the Prince's travelogue. Božidar Karađorđević travelled much longer and visited many more places, and he did not have a route he had to stick to, nor did he have deadlines to meet. He arrived in India from the west, landing in Bombay, while Rajčević arrived from the east, setting foot on the Indian subcontinent in Calcutta. Rajčević was delighted with Calcutta and Karađorđević's first sentence about the city was that it was: "An aggressive capital!" The Prince was more focused on the presentation of the architecture, the landscapes, the atmosphere, and the privileged position of the English and other foreigners. As a young man, Rajčević tended to put himself first: how he was received, whom he met, etc. Their

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15 Prince Božidar Karađorđević (Paris, 1862 – Versailles, 1908), artist, one of the pioneers of modern art critique in the world and travelogue writer, was taught in the best European schools. He finished secondary school and obtained a law degree in Germany, and graduated from École nationale supérieure des beaux-arts and the Conservatoire musique de Paris in Paris in the early nineties of the nineteenth century; he lived in Vienna and studied music. His travelogue on India, *Enchanted India* (1899), was published first in English and then in French – *Notes sur l'Inde* – but it still has not been translated into Serbian. In addition to his native Serbian, he spoke German, French, English, Italian, Russian, and one of the Indian dialects – Brahman – which he learned for the purpose of the journey.



positions were very different, one travelled free of worries about money, while the other travelled after placing a bet, on a modest budget, and the only thing they had in common was their intellectual curiosity.

Despite his youth, yet owing to his experience gained during previous trips, Rajčević gives the impression of a man open to new worlds and new knowledge. He is not just a young man fond of sports and challenges, but a man with a strong, stable and resolute personality, a man who, despite the state of affairs in his own country and wars, had the will, aspirations and fortitude to complete a journey of his life, which in itself was a creative project. Michel Butor believes that writers of travelogues "travel in order to write, or they travel while writing, because for them, the very act of writing is a journey" (2009: 106). But for Rajčević, the very act of travelling was primary, not the writing, and that is why almost twenty years had passed before the reports on his first major journey were collected in a book. Travel was the purpose of his life, an opportunity to see new countries, but at the same time to represent his own. For him, writing about his travels was both a way to immortalize his own existence and contribute to expanding his readers' knowledge of other cultures. Travelogues are both an image, an impression of the other, but also an image of the author himself. Rajčević's travels were a true enterprise. He aimed high – to be the best mediator between his own country and culture, and other, generally lesser-known cultures and countries.

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**Nada Savković**

## IMPRESIÓN DE LA INDIA POR MILORAD RAJČEVIĆ

### *Resumen*

Milorad Rajčević (Mala Drenova, 1890 – Lübbecke, 1964), primer “viajero por el mundo” serbio, viajó durante veinte años, realizando tres grandes viajes. Sus artículos de viaje se publicaron en los periódicos *Mali Žurnal (El Pequeño Diario)* y *Balkan (Los Balcanes)*, y sus viajes fueron publicados en serbio, francés, español (*Biografija e impresiones de los viajes a través del mundo del famoso Milorad de Raitchevitch. Explorador mundial. Publicista serbio*) y alemán. Se propuso visitar Europa, Asia África y las Américas durante un viaje de dos años que emprendió el 14 de marzo de 1910, y que cubriría 120 000 km. Esto, en ese momento, era de hecho una hazaña rara a escala global y no sólo en Serbia. Tenía sólo veinte años cuando decidió embarcarse en un viaje alrededor del mundo. (Con anterioridad, Rajčević estuvo ya en un viaje de cuatro años que lo fascinó y durante el cual aprendió cinco idiomas.) Siempre viajaba solo y llevaba orgulloso la tricolor nacional en su brazo izquierdo, haciendo todo lo posible por “caminar con la cabeza alta, como corresponsal de periódico y caballero”. Estaba orgulloso de poder “llevar por primera vez el tricolor nacional a través de países extranjeros”. Su conducta de dignidad dejó la impresión de que era de una “nación de alta cultura y nobleza”. Fue condecorado por sus virtudes por Su Santidad el Patriarca de Jerusalén con la Cruz del Santo Sepulcro, que le dio el derecho al título de “Chevalier de St. Grave”. El viaje de Milorad Rajčević a la India, desde Kolkata hasta Mumbai, vía Varanasi, Allahabad, Kanpur y Lucknow, que tuvo lugar del 12 de enero a mediados de marzo de 1911, fue una rara experiencia directa de un serbio que logró acercar la cultura del subcontinente indio al lector serbio. En su libro *Na Dalekom istoku (En el Lejano Oriente)*, describe no sólo los lugares que visitó, sino, más importante, el espacio como una forma de existencia con su patrimonio total, con sus cambios diacrónicos que se extienden a través del tiempo, así como las ocurrencias sincrónicas. Los escritos de Milorad Rajčević sobre el Lejano Oriente se pueden ver en un contexto de interés de los europeos por aprender y descubrir el valor de las culturas lejanas. Rajčević, como otros autores de viajes, señaló las diferencias culturales que encontró. Sin embargo, a pesar de ser un intermediario benevolente entre las dos culturas, también fue propenso a aceptar ciertos estereotipos. Su impresión general de los indios fue positiva. Señaló los dos mundos paralelos que existen en este país y también en Europa. Rajčević era un hombre que entendía y aceptaba con simpatías, como legítimas, las diferentes formas de vida y las diferentes costumbres. Su cuaderno de viaje indio está lleno de hermosas descripciones de la vida india. Con solo leerlas, nadie podía suponer que fueran escritas por un joven de veinte años que no era escritor de profesión. Envío periódicamente artículos para ser publicados en los periódicos *El Pequeño Diario*, y también tuvo que

preocuparse por ser interesante, en sintonía con las sensibilidades de un amplio círculo de lectores, de abstenerse de escribir artículos largos, de satisfacer la curiosidad de los lectores y ser personal. Para Rajčević, el viaje en sí era más importante que la escritura. Los viajes dieron sentido a su vida, la oportunidad de ver nuevos países, pero al mismo tiempo para representar el suyo. Para él, la escritura de viajes era una manera de inmortalizar su propia existencia y contribuir al conocimiento de otras culturas por parte de los lectores. Trató de ser el mejor mediador posible, mediando entre su país y su cultura y la de otros países, en su mayoría poco conocidos.

*Palabras clave:* libro de viaje, viajero por el mundo, *Mali žurnal (El Pequeño Diario)*, India.