

# THE FIGHT FOR COSMOGRAPHY IN SERBIA DURING THE LAST DECADES OF THE XIX CENTURY

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**Abstract.** In this paper is presented a survey of efforts to include cosmography and astronomical contents to a wider extent in the educational system of Serbia during the last decades of the XIX century.

No doubt, persons appearing as synonyms for such a development of astronomy (cosmography) and astronomical propaedeutics in this period and, consequently, gave the highest contribution to its fine – for the existing circumstances – reputation are: Milan J. Andonović (1849-1926), professor of geodesy at the Grand School and Belgrade University and the founder of the Institute of Geodesy and of the first private Academy for Geodesy and Civil Engineering, honorary member of the Royal Academy of Sciences; Milan Nedeljković (1857- 1950), professor of astronomy and meteorology at the Grand School and the founder and director of the Belgrade Observatory; and Jovan Dragašević (1836-1915), Professor of comparative geography and ethnography at the Grand School, Professor of cosmography, geography, history and stilistics at the Military Academy, General Staff colonel, member of the Society of Serbian "Slovesnost" and of the Serbian "Educated" Society and, finally a honorary member of the Serbian Academy of Sciences, recognised as a poet, story writer and dramatist; Djordje Stanojević (1858-1921), Professor at the Military Academy and Professor of physics at the Grand School and Belgrade University.

Here some relevant episodes from their work concerning the cosmography debates are briefly and critically considered.

In this paper it is shown that in a very important segment of the scientific progress of late XIX century - that concerning astronomy - Serbia did not want to stand behind the scientific forces of that time. Already then, in the Serbia under the Obrenović dynasty, the importance of education in the field of natural studies for the spiritual and intellectual well-being of young generations was quite clear and almost indisputable. The only question concerned which parts of the total body of studying nature should have priority. That astronomy (under the name of "Cosmography") succeeded to find "a place under the Sun" is, above all, a merit of brave and far-seeing persons, such as Andonović i Nedeljković. From the outcome of the struggle for cosmography morals can be drawn which, no doubt, are topical even today.