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POŚWIĘCONE PROF. FRANCISZKOWI SŁAWSKIEMU
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**pod redakcją Marioli Jakubowicz,
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SPIS TREŚCI

| | |
|---|-----|
| Mariola Jakubowicz , <i>Wspomnienie o Profesorze Franciszku Sławskim</i> | 9 |
| <i>Bibliografia prac Profesora Franciszka Sławskiego</i> | 15 |
| Jacek Baluch , <i>Skąd się wziął czeski Filip? Od Josefa Jungmanna do Karela Čapka</i> | 39 |
| Bogdan Walczak , <i>Jak polscy etymologowie definiują zadania etymologii?</i> .. | 45 |
| Wiesław Boryś , <i>Opracowywany słownik etymologiczny rodzimej leksyki chorwackiego dialektu czakawskiego</i> | 55 |
| Katarzyna Jasińska, Dariusz R. Piwowarczyk , <i>Prasłowiańskie *dīl'gostī a hetyckie dalugašti – historia derywacyjna</i> | 73 |
| Marek Majer , <i>Pozostałości praindoeuropejskiego „Systemu Calanda” w języku prasłowiańskim – wybrane przykłady</i> | 81 |
| Жанна Ж. Варбот , <i>О возможных составляющих славянского этимологического гнезда *verb-/*vьrb-</i> | 101 |
| Jerzy Duma , <i>O piciu, pojeniu, upajaniu (się) i napawaniu (się)</i> | 105 |
| Metka Furlan , <i>Besodtvorje in etimologija (s posebnim poudarkom na samostalniku *gospoda ‘domines’/‘domina’)</i> | 115 |
| Alemko Gluhak , <i>Čovjek i drveće – *dǫbъ i *xvorstъ</i> | 131 |
| Liubou Padporynava , <i>Zmiany semantyki morfemu rdzeniowego *gōs- a zmiany motywacji zachodniosłowiańskich fitonimów dialektalnych</i> .. | 149 |
| Любовь В. Куркина , <i>К этимологии некоторых славянских анатомических терминов</i> | 165 |
| Aleksandar Loma , <i>Sanctifying and Sanctioning: The Serbo-Croatian osveta, osvetiti (se) Reconsidered</i> | 181 |
| Николай П. Антропов , <i>Су-дериваты в белорусском этимологическом словаре</i> | 191 |
| Сергей А. Мызников , <i>Диалектная реалья в контексте этимологических исследований</i> | 199 |
| Людвиг Селимски , <i>За этимологията на шест неправилно тълкувани или неясни думи</i> | 219 |
| Тодор Ат. Тодоров , <i>Няколко румънски заемки в български: тофлѝджа, траглѝве, трантѝвам, тулѝстър, тѝлпина</i> | 229 |
| Христина Дейкова , <i>Към контактната этимология в българския език</i> | 235 |
| Eubor Králik , <i>Slk. sobáš ‘Trauung’: prevzatie z maďarčiny?</i> | 249 |

| | |
|--|-----|
| Јасна Влajiћ-Поповић , <i>Словенске ‘заставе’ међу словенским заставама (Како доказати калк?)</i> | 261 |
| Jiří Rejzek , <i>Č. rošetilý</i> | 277 |
| Светлана М. Толстая , <i>К семантической реконструкции лексики ошибок</i> | 281 |
| Валерия С. Кучко , <i>К мотивационной интерпретации некоторых севернорусских слов со значением обмана: гнездо русск. диал. шавать</i> | 299 |
| Ilona Januřková , <i>Staroslověnská slovní zásoba týkající se sexuálního života</i> . | 311 |
| Helena Karlíková , <i>К názvům vysokého, nemotorného člověka v češtině s ekvivalenty v dalších slovanských jazycích</i> | 321 |
| Pavla Valčáková , <i>Sémantická motivace názvů druhého měsíce v roce v indoevropských jazycích</i> | 335 |
| Jana Villnow Komárková , <i>Zur Herkunft des tschechischen Weinbauterminus vich(a) im arealen Kontext</i> | 341 |
| Генадзь Цыхун , <i>Этымалагізацыя гапаксаў у слоўніках славянскіх моў</i> | 357 |

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SANCTIFYING AND SANCTIONING: THE SERBO-CROATIAN OSVETA, OSVETITI (SE) RECONSIDERED*

Serbo-Croatian has not preserved the Common Slavic word *mьstvъ* for ‘revenge, vengeance’¹ – what it uses instead are the words *osveta* and *odmazda*.² The latter is a post-verbal noun derived from *odmazditi*, which arose through contamination of *odmastiti* < **otъmьstiti* ‘to revenge’ and *mazda* < **mъzda* ‘payment, pay’. Both *odmazditi* and *odmazda* are not recorded before the midnineteenth century.³ The use of *mьstvъ* ‘revenge’ – as well as of *mъzda* ‘payment’ – was limited to the Serbian and Croatian recensions of Church Slavonic,⁴ whereas in juridical contexts, where the vernacular prevails, the regular expressions of the meaning ‘revenge’ were, from

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¹ Cf. ÈSSIA 21: 172–173 s.v. **mьstvъ* / **mьsta*.

² E.g. Russ. *Страшная месть*, “A Terrible Vengeance,” the title of a story by Nikolai Gogol, is translated as *Strašna osveta*.

³ According to RJA, *odmazda*, *odmazditi* first appear in written epic poems, the verb – in “The Death of Smail-Aga Čengić” (1846) by Ivan Mažuranić, and the noun – in the *Osvetnici* “Avengers” (1861) by Grga Martić (in oral epic poetry, only *osvetiti* (*se*) is used, see note 6 below). In the second edition of his dictionary, published in 1852, Vuk has neither *odmazda* nor *odmaziti* but only *odmastiti*, illustrated with the example *Bog mi odmastio!* “May God take revenge on him!,” for which he refers to the entry *osvetiti* (Vuk: 445). However, the first instances of contamination of *mast-* and *mazd-* occur much earlier in Dubrovnik (*maznik* ‘avenger’ for Church Slavonic *mьstnikъ* in the so-called Vatican Prayer Book, written between 1380 and 1400; *dan od mazde* (or to be read: *dan odmazde?*) *u srce moje*, Isaiah 63:4 in Nicola Ragnina’s *Lekcionar* (a collection of passages from the Bible, started in 1508) for *dies ... ultionis in corde meo* Vulg. In the Septuagint l.c. it reads ἡμέρα ἀνταποδόσεως, which in Church Slavonic is rendered by днь вѣзда(*ja*)nija, *otъdajanija*, whereas *otъmьstvъ* renders elsewhere Gk. ἐκδίκησις, cf. Czech, Polish obs. *odemsta*.

⁴ Serbian Church Slavonic *mьstvъ* δίκη, *otъmьstiti* ἀποδοῦναι, ἀνταμεΐβειν in St Sava’s translation of the Nomocanon, completed in 1219 (LP: 390, 537, where the Ilovica transcript of 1262 is cited). Considering original authors, *mьstvъ*, *otъmьštati* is used by Theodosius of Hilandar (end of the thirteenth century); the verb *mьstiti* and the agent nouns *mьstьnikъ*, *mьstnica*, *mьstitelъnica*, *otъmьstitelъ*, *otъmьstьnica* occur in the sacral context of curse formulas (RKS 2: 100; 251–252).

the very beginning of literacy in Medieval Serbia, *osveta* and the verb *osvetiti*.⁵ In the modern literary language they are the normal way of expressing the notion of revenge, among both Serbs and Croats.⁶ Indicatively enough, in two passages of his “Summary of Christian Teaching”, published in 1583, which is a translation of Peter Canisius’ work *Summa doctrinae Christianae*, Šime Budinić uses two words, *mast ili osveta* to render the Latin *vindicta*. In an analogous way he resorts twice to the pair of synonyms *mazda ili plaća*⁷ to translate a single Latin word for ‘reward,’ which is in one instance *merces* and in the other *praemium*. In both pairs the Church Slavonic word (*mast, mazda*)⁸ is accompanied by a vernacular gloss. This is in accordance with the mixed character of Budinić’s language in this particular work, which is a combination of Ijekavian, Štokavian and Church Slavonic features.⁹ Common to both Štokavian and Čakavian dialects, *osveta* may be considered to be Serbo-Croatian in the full sense of the word, i.e. a lexeme shared by both Old Serbian and Old Croatian,¹⁰ one that still occupies the central position in the semantic field ‘revenge’ in both variants of the common language. The noun *osveta* is borrowed from SerboCroatian

⁵ In chronological order: *osveštati* 1216, *osvetitelj* 1233, *osvetiti* since 1284, *osveta* since 1330; the exact meaning of Old Serbian attestations within their contexts are discussed below. In the traditional language of oral epics, (*o*)*svetiti* (*se*) is the only verb for ‘to revenge, avenge,’ cf. the decasyllables cited in Vuk: 469 s.v.: *Danas ću vas, braćo, osvetiti, / osvetiti ili poginuti – Dobro sam se paši osvetio*; the same is true of long verse epic poems (“bugarštice”), e.g. *Neg oć’ li me ti svetiti, ali ću se sam osvetiti?* (Bogišić 1878: 82 (No. 7), recorded in the Bay of Kotor at the beginning of the eighteenth century).

⁶ As for *odmazda*, it is today confined to ‘reprisal,’ (*iz-*)*vršiti odmazdu na nekome* ‘to take reprisal against someone’; the verb *odmazditi* is obsolete.

⁷ Slavonised as *plašta*, which is the form of the single Church Slavonic attestation of the word, taken from a (Croatian) Glagolitic source, in Miklosich’s dictionary, where also the only real Old Serbian *plaća* from MS is cited (LP: 571).

⁸ More precisely: Croatian Glagolitic; in this phonetic shape, with *a < v*, Miklosich (LP: 388, 390 s.vv. *мвзда, мвстѣ*) has these words from Šafařík’s “Monuments of Glagolitic literature,” whose sources were the printed Glagolitic missals from 1483 (*v mastv*, 1 Peter 2:14 = *ad vindictam*, εἰς ἐκδίκησιν, Šafařík 1853: 83) and from 1528 (*mazdu*, Matthew 20:8 = *mercedem*, μισθόν, Šafařík 1853: 85).

⁹ With some Czech and Polish admixtures. A native of Zadar, Budinić previously wrote in his Čakavian ikavian vernacular, but for the translation of the catechism of the Catholic Church he chose another dialectal basis, which was initially labelled as “Serbian” (*nella lingua serviana*, in a Vatican document from 1581) and simply as “Slavic” (*slovinski*) in the final version, printed both in Cyrillic (“Serbian”) and Latin script. Arisen from the proselytic efforts of the papal policy towards the Orthodox in the northwestern Balkans, the *Summa nauka Hristijanskoga* remains one of the first steps toward creating the literary Serbo-Croatian language. Cf. Fine 2006: 236.

¹⁰ One Dalmatian author of the Renaissance who used it was Marko Marulić, a Čakavian author writing in the early sixteenth century. Cf. Čakavian dial. *ðsveta, osvētīt* Brač ČDL 1: 755, *ðsveta, osvētīt* *se* Vrgada (Jurišić 1973: 144). The word is largely used in the Štokavian vernaculars, e.g. *ðsveta, osvētīt(se)* Zagarač, Montenegro (Čupić, Čupić 1997: 304), *osvétit* ‘to consecrate; to avenge somebody’ Bunjevci, Bačka (Peić, Bačlija 1990: 221).

into Macedonian and Slovenian, but has no other Slavic parallels; the same is true of the verbal *osvetiti (se)* in the above-mentioned meanings. However, SerboCroatian has a homonymous verb meaning ‘sanctify, consecrate’, which is of Common Slavic pedigree – **obsvētiti*, denominal from **svētъ* ‘holy, saint, sacred’ (ĖSSIA 30: 102–103). The question is whether this is simply an accidental homonymy or if there is a genetic relationship between the two verbs. Most of the interpretations proposed so far are based on the assumption of a peculiar and variously reconstructed semantic development of **svētъ*.

In his etymological dictionary Petar Skok considers no less than three possible motivations. In two instances (Skok 2: 574 s.v. *òsveta*; Skok 3: 370 s.v. *svēt*) he assumes an original sanctity of revenge, concluding from the Montenegrin proverb *ko se ne osveti, taj se ne posveti* ‘who did not take his vengeance, cannot be sanctified’ that to avenge a misdeed was conceived as a divine prerogative (*prerogativa božja*) and as a sacred debt (*sveta dužnost*) of man respectively. In the third place Skok supposes that underlying the SCr words is the basic, preChristian meaning of **svētъ* ‘mighty, strong,’ as reflected in the Romanian Slavisms *sfînt* ‘holy; mighty, powerful’, *osfinti* ‘to support, defend, help, use,’¹¹ and interprets *osvetiti* as ‘to become strong enough to fulfil the duty imposed by revenge.’¹²

Another explanation for the shift from ‘sanctify’ to ‘revenge’ has been offered by Toporov, who assumes *osveta* to have resulted from a profanation of the pagan idea of sacrifice as an exchange between man and God.¹³ This interpretation was subsequently accepted by Trubachev (ĖSSIA 30: 102–103 s.v. **obsvēta*), together with Toporov’s argumentation against Trubachev’s own attempt at analysing *osveta* as **ot-svēta* ‘desacralisation.’¹⁴

¹¹ It is generally considered a variant of the Slavonism (*o*)*sfinti* ‘sanctify’ < Church Slavonic (*o*-)*svētiti*. The verb *osfinti*, used by the Moldavian Metropolitan Dosoftei in his verse psalter from 1673, is today obsolete, as are the noun *osfinteală* ‘help, assistance’ and the verb *a să sfinti* ‘win, carry off the victory’ cited by Skok l.c.; for the original semantics of **svētъ* he also refers to the element **svēto* in Common Slavic proper names and theonyms (Skok 3: 370–371; cf. recently ESJS 15: 910 s.v. **Svētoplōkъ*).

¹² “U denominalu na *-iti* od *svētъ* s prefiksom *o* izražava se isto što i u *obogatiti (se)*, *osiromašiti* »postati, biti jak = koji može izvršiti dužnost, što je nalaže osveta«...” (Skok 3: 371).

¹³ Toporov 1989: 48 (note 98): “... Принесение жертвы одновременно и наказание–кара и возмещение (: *месть*), дающее помощь (ср. рум. *osfinti* ‘освящать’ и [*osfinti*] ‘оказывать помощь’, заимств.), покров, защиту, освобождение ... и в обоих этих случаях – освящение Иначе говоря, ðсвета и под. в этом контексте скорее отсылает к использованию **svēt-* в связи с жертвоприношением и к готск. *hunsl*, нежели к представлениям о мести в «кавказском» смысле, со всеми отрицательными коннотациями современного человека. То, что ðсвета все-таки и просто, а иногда и только ‘мест’, – результат профанизации смысла слова (‘возмещение’ – ‘месть’), его «ухудшения», наметившегося разрыва с идеей священного.”

¹⁴ “лишение силы святости,” Trubachev’s redactorial suggestion cited by Toporov l.c., who objects that the simple form *svetiti* also means ‘to revenge’; however, I do not share Toporov’s judgment

The alternative approach consists in separating SCr (*o-*)*svetiti se* from *svetъ*, **(ob-)svetiti* and connecting it with the Czech *vetiti se*, Upper Sorbian *vjećić so* ‘to avenge on, avenge oneself,’ which is considered to be a German loanword. Concisely formulated by Machek (1968: 686 s.v. *veta* 1^o), this etymology was seriously taken into consideration by myself twenty years ago.¹⁵ Although it is semantically plausible, it entails formal difficulties that I presently find insurmountable. If we assume an original **vet-*, there is no good explanation for the initial *s-* in Serbo-Croatian.¹⁶ On the other hand, *osveta*, *osvetiti* has been intuitively associated by the speakers of Serbo-Croatian with the lexical nest of *svet* ‘holy’ from an early date. There is further evidence which can be added to the proverbial expression cited above. In its first attestation from around 1330, the noun *osveta* is abbreviated under a titlo: *ωσ̄т̄оу* (Acc.), the same way as is normally the case with the adjective *с̄т̄ьиу* = *светьиу* ‘holy, saint’ and its derivatives.¹⁷ Moreover, King Stephen the First-Crowned (Stefan Prvovenčani) uses the iterative *osveštati* ‘to protect’ (see below), whose phonetic shape – with *št* instead of Old Serbian *ć* < **tj* – is obviously modelled after Serbian Church Slavonic *osveštati* ‘consecrate’ (< OCS *osvēštati*), whereas in a charter allegedly issued by his brother St Sava of Serbia¹⁸ the word *osvetitelj* ‘protector’ is coined on the pattern of *свѣтитель* > *свѣтитель* ‘bishop; saint’¹⁹ and other Slavonic nomina agentis in *-telъ*.

The wordplay with the adjective *trismet* < Church Slavonic *tri-svetъ* ‘τρισάγιος’ served as the basis for coining *trismetva* ‘threefold revenge.’²⁰ The decisive piece of evidence would be provided by the nasal reflected in the Romanian words cited by Skok, but a direct connection between them and *osveta*, *osvetiti* is rather doubtful.²¹

that the prefixless verb is primary (‘первоначальный’) in this meaning; about its secondary character see below.

¹⁵ Loma 1998: 156–157, where a sixth-century A.D. borrowing from West Germanic into “Common Serbian” is assumed.

¹⁶ Neither of the two solutions I offered twenty years ago – a prefixal *sъ-* as in Church Slavonic *сѣмьстѣникъ* ‘ultor’ (LP: 937; Serbian, fifteenth century), Croatian old *smast* ‘revenge’ (Zrinski, seventeenth century) or the epenthesis of *s* in *ob-s-vetiti* – now seem to me worth considering. On the contrary, however, regarding the Romanian evidence in favour of **(ob-)svet-* I still have a reservation, see note 22 below.

¹⁷ It is thus written in the first of the Dečani chrysobulls; in the third one, the spelling is unabridged: *ωсветоу*, as it is in Miklosich’s edition of the second chrysobull, which was subsequently lost, cf. Ivić, Grković 1976: 69, line 374; 138 (= MS 66); 277, line 2946. For the full context see below.

¹⁸ On the authenticity of the document in question see note 29 below.

¹⁹ In the former meaning it is used by St Sava himself, in his “Life of St Symeon”.

²⁰ It is recorded as a “new vernacular word” by Zore 1893, but occurs already in the 1860s in Martić’s *Avengers*, see note 4 above (RJA 18: 674).

²¹ Rom. *osfinti cuiva* ‘to help someone’ does not match SCr *osvetiti* semantically or syntactically; the dative of person is governed only by SCr reflexive *osvetiti se komu* ‘to take revenge on someone’, whereas the transitive *osvetiti* ‘to avenge’, historically ‘to protect, to set free’ is constructed with the accusative, see below.

Now, as I share what appears to be the common view that *osveta* is etymologically ‘consecration’, I shall try to contribute to the discussion by pointing out a parallel semantic development in the Latin juridical language. It is the derivational chain going from *sacer* ‘sacred, votive, holy’ via its denominative *sancire* ‘to confirm, ratify solemnly, consecrate’ to *sanctus* ‘sacred, inviolable, venerable, august, divine, holy, saintly’ and *sanctio*, *-onis* ‘law, decree, sanction.’²² In the Roman law, *sanctum* is defined as that which is defended and protected from the injuries of men,²³ *sanc-tioned*: “We properly call those things holy (*sancta*) which are neither sacred (*sacra*) nor profane, but which have been confirmed by some sanction (*sanctione quadam confirmata*), hence the laws are holy (*sanctae*), for the reason that they are based upon a certain sanction; and anything that is supported by a certain sanction is also holy, even though it may not be consecrated to God.”²⁴ In other words, *sanctio* is legal protection under threat of penalty.²⁵ The parallelism between *sancire* : *sanctio* and **osvętiti* : **osvęta* > *osveta* is almost complete if we assume that the basic meaning of the SCr word is ‘sanction’ and not ‘revenge,’ and a thorough analysis of its Old Serbian attestations seems to confirm this assumption.

In the above mentioned first attestation of the noun *osveta* King Stephen of Dečani obliges his successors to provide assistance and legal protection to the monastery he founded (and which became eponymous of him): *da jęgože bogъ izvolitъ kraljevъstvovati po mnę ... na togo vъzlagaju vsaku pomoštъ i osvetu*.²⁶ In a document of the same kind issued some hundred years earlier, the *odgovoritelj*, i.e. the person responsible for preserving the newly established legal status of the monastery, is also supposed to be its *osvetitelj*, i.e. protector against any injury (*obida*).²⁷ The Old

²² The adjective *sanctus* is originally a perfect passive participle of *sancire*, and *sanctio* – a verbal noun derived from the same verb.

²³ *Sanctum est quod ab iniuria hominum defensum atque munitum est*. Aelius Marcianus (early third century A.D.), *Regularia* IV, cited in the *Pandects* I 8, 8 (Scott 1932).

²⁴ *Quod enim sanctione quadam subnixum est, id sanctum est, et si deo non sit consecratum*. Ulpianus († 323 A.D.), *Ad edictum* LXVIII, cited in the *Pandects* I 8, 9, trans. C. P. Scott (Scott 1932).

²⁵ Commenting on the above cited passage, Benveniste writes: “On voit en tout cas que *sanctum*, ce n’est ni ce qui est «consacré aux dieux», qui se dit *sacer*; ni ce qui est «profane», c’estàdire ce qui s’oppose à *sacer*; c’est ce qui, n’étant ni l’un ni l’autre, est établi, affermi par une *sanctio*, ce qui défendu par une peine contre toute atteinte ...” (Benveniste 2: 189).

²⁶ For the spelling *os(ve)tu* in the first variant of this charter, see note 18 above.

²⁷ The passage reads: *de ne porabošten(o) budetъ sije svetoje mesto, i ne koim uzrokomъ ustvorętъ ju metohiju arhiepiskupi ... nъ da prębivajetъ u vsakoj božъstvъnej svobode otъ koje gode ine obide, i da mu jestъ odgovoritelъ i osvetitelъ arhiepiskupъ* (MS: 18 = ZSPP 1: 127). It comes from the charter issued in 1233 by the archbishop Sava I (St Sava of Serbia) to St Nicolas’ monastery on the Vranjina island in Lake Skadar, exempting it from the jurisdiction of the bishopric of Zeta. The original document being lost and the existing editions based on later transcripts, its authenticity is questioned (ZSPP 1: 126; see the following note).

Serbian verb *osvetiti* (with its iterative *osveštati*, see above) is best interpreted as ‘put someone or something under legal protection against the violence of someone’, with the direct object in the accusative and the complement in the ablatival genitive with the preposition *ot / od*: *Podbdržestumu mi vlast̃ jęgo, i osveštajuštu ot̃ vsęh̃ obideštih̃ jęgo* ‘Since I supported his rule and protected him from all who injured him’ (1216);²⁸ *i zato molimo gospod̃stvo vi budi ti milost̃ opraviti naam̃ i osvęti nas̃ odṽ njęga* ‘and that is why we ask your lordship to do us a favour and to protect us from him’ (1422).²⁹ In the latter case, the translation ‘set us free from him’ would also be possible, and it is the meaning of the verb when used with *ot* and genitive of a thing: *i ine vlahe izbbrah̃ ot cr̃kvnih̃ vlah̃, da pasu kobile cr̃kovne ... togo radi osvęti ih kraljevstvo mi ot vsęh̃ rabot̃ malih̃ i velikih̃ kraljevstva mi* ‘and I choose other herders (*vlas̃i*) to graze the mares belonging to the church ... and for that reason my Royal Majesty set them free from all services, either big or small, due to my Royal Majesty’.³⁰

To sum up, according to our earliest evidence as provided by the thirteenth–fourteenth century Old Serbian sources, *osvęta*, *osvetiti* originally had nothing to do with the notion of revenge but referred to a legal sanction in general with various contextual nuances.³¹ Unparalleled in other Slavic languages, the development ‘consecrate’ > ‘sanction’ seems to have more than a typological parallel in the above mentioned Latin *sancire*, *sanctus* and *sanctio*; there are good reasons to suppose that the Serbo-Croatian terms are calqued on the Latin ones, either the noun **obsvęta* on *sanctio*, with *ob-* conveying the perfectiveness of the Latin word, or **(ob-)svętiti*, *-svętjati* on *sancire*. As for the latter possibility, one might object that the construction of *osvetiti*, *osveštati* with *ot*, *od* + genitive in Old Serbian does not match that of

²⁸ A dative absolute. RKS 2: 232, from the “Life of St Symeon (Nemanja)” by his son Stephen the First-Crowned; the story goes about the Bulgarian prince Strez, Stephen’s former vassal. Compare *ot̃ vsęh̃ obideštih̃* with *ot̃ koje gode ... obide* as the implicit complement to *osvetitel̃b* in the previous example (note 28; for *obida* ‘iniuria’ see below). Notice, in both cases, the tendency to adapt a vernacular word to the Church Slavonic literary standard (*-št* instead of *-ć* here, the suffix *-tel̃b* there). The similar use of *osvetiti* by two Nemanja’s sons can be put forward as an argument in favour of St Sava’s authorship of the contentious Vranjina charter – or at least it implies an early forgery, not to be dated later than the thirteenth–fourteenth century.

²⁹ The Ragusans complain to the Grand Duke Radosav Pavlović about his man who had humiliated one of their noblemen and confiscated his home. This use is also attested in the Renaissance literature of Ragusa, cf. RJA 9: 307.

³⁰ 1303/1304, a charter issued by King Milutin to the Hilandar monastery; two transcripts of the same document use the verb *osvobod̃i* instead of *osvęti* (ZSP 1: 376–377).

³¹ E.g. sanctioning may consist in compensatory confiscation: in a letter of the Serbian king Milutin from 1288, sent to Tvrtko, the governor (*župan*) of Popovo polje, with the instructions concerning the king’s man Urse, whom the Ragusans deprived of his ship and merchandise (*dręvo i z dobitkom̃*), Tvrtko was ordered to make it up to Urse (*osvęti ga*, *impt.*) by confiscating Ragusan property (ZSP 1: 284).

sancire, which is never constructed with *ab aliqua re / aliquo*. On the other hand, in the two first Old Serbian attestations the complements are *obida* ‘iniuria’ and *obiděti* ‘iniuria afficere’ (*osveštajuštu otv ... obideštihъ* 1216, *otv ... obide ... osvetitelъ* 1233) and it is in the most general sense against a legal injury that a sanction is directed, cf. the classical definition by Marcianus: *sanctum est quod ab iniuria hominum defensum atque munitum est*.³² The phrase *sanctione munire* was common enough in Medieval Latin, thus, with the complement *ab iniuria*, it may have provided the model for the Old Serbian construction. Presumably the calquing started with **obsvēta* > *osveta* as a verbal noun derived from *obsvētiti* > *osvetiti* ‘sanctify’ to translate Latin *sanctio* being a derivative from *sancire*, and ended in *osvetiti* ‘to sanction’ as a denominal formed from *osveta* to render Latin *sanctione munire*.

The presumed calque must have taken place at an early date. In the seventh century the Serbs and the Croats migrated to a part of the Eastern Roman Empire where Latin was the official language at the time. Consequently in their new homeland they had some chance of becoming acquainted with the basic terms of the Roman law as codified by Justinian I some hundred years before, among them *sancire*, *sanctus* and *sanctio*, whose above-cited definitions are to be found in the Justinian’s Digest (*Pandects*; Scott 1932).³³

Only as of the fifteenth century did *osveta*, *osvetiti* (*se*) enter the semantic field of ‘revenge’. The verb is used transitively for the first time with the object ‘bloodshed’,³⁴ whereas the noun *osveta* occurs in a peace treaty formula together with the terms *krv* and *vražda* both related to the custom of blood feud.³⁵ The reflexive form *osvetiti*

³² Aelius Marcianus (early third century A.D.), *Regularia* IV, cited in the *Pandects* I 8, 8 (Scott 1932).

³³ A derivation of Old Romanian *osfinti* ‘to help’ from Old Serbian would imply a borrowing earlier than the denasalisation of ę in the Serbo-Croatian linguistic area, which can be roughly dated to the turn of the first millenium, but there can hardly be a special connection between the two meanings (see above).

³⁴ *Molimo budi ti milostъ tuj krvъ neporočnu našega vlastelina dostojnomъ opravomъ poiskati i osvetiti* (Pucić 1858: 113). A letter sent in 1401 to Stephen Ostoja of Bosnia by the Ragusans, complaining that their nobleman had been slaughtered and his money stolen by the king’s nephew. Thus the *krv neporočna* ‘innocent blood’ refers here to deadly bloodshed (cf. Pucić 1858: 82); the king is requested to prosecute (*poiskati*) and punish (*osvetiti*) the crime in a satisfactory way, cf. *oprava* ‘judicium, satisfactio, absolutio’ RKS 2: 224, *poiskati sudomъ* ‘to sue’ Dušan’s code (RKS 2: 343; § 150).

³⁵ *Da nitko ne usmože ni smiti bude uspomenuti ni iskati krvi n(i) ine osvete ni vražde ni u jedno vrime, do koli stoji svit*, 1405, the peace treaty between the Republic of Ragusa and the king Tvrtko; the same formula recurs with slight variations in the treaties the Ragusans concluded with the Grand Duke Radosav Pavlović in 1442 and Stjepan Vukčić in 1454; both *krv* and *vražda* are connected with the idea of a fine (*globa*) for a violent crime involving bloodshed, especially murder (see the preceding note); they also occur together in an article (§ 103) of Dušan’s code; the difference between them may have consisted in *vražda* implying a collective responsibility. In this context, *osveta* is a broader notion than *krv* and seems to embrace any kind of sanction against bloodshed – including, possibly, the vendetta.

se (komu) ‘avenge on’ emerges at the same time.³⁶ In subsequent centuries, the Turkish rule meant a break with the medieval legislative tradition and contributed to a revival of the customary law. As a result, the use of the reflexive *osvetiti se* spread,³⁷ since often one had to take revenge into one’s own hands, and the meaning of *osveta* narrowed from ‘any legal sanction’ to ‘revenge’ and especially ‘vendetta.’

The old durative *osvećati*, attested only once,³⁸ was replaced, before the sixteenth century, with *osvećivati*, *osvěćujēm*, rebuilt according to a general tendency of SCr verbal morphology,³⁹ and, on the other hand, with *svetiti (se)*, decomposed after the model of *svetiti* ‘to sanctify’ impf. vs. *osvetiti* pf.⁴⁰

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³⁶ In a letter sent in 1401 to Grand Duke Hrvoje by the Ragusans, asking him to help them, together with his suzerain, the king of Hungary, against a certain prince Markul, who had occupied one of their strongholds: *morete takovu člověčicu odolěť i osvetiti se i mnogo većet’ i većet’ od’ njega* ‘you both can overcome such a little man and take revenge even on a much bigger one than him.’

³⁷ In governing a dative object it seems to have been influenced by the older synonym *odmástiti se* < Common Slavic *otъmъstiti sę (komu)*, which, together with *mast* f. < **mъstvъ* ‘revenge,’ after the change *v > a* became obsolete due to the homonymy with *mâst* f. ‘fat,’ *odmástiti* ‘degrease.’

³⁸ 1216, in the Slavonised shape *osveštati*, see above.

³⁹ Cf. *posvećivati* impf. ‘to consecrate, dedicate,’ pf. *posvetiti*, *pos(j)ećivati* beside *pos(j)ećati* impf. ‘to visit,’ pf. *pos(j)etiti*, etc.

⁴⁰ In some early attestations, e.g. *Pod ime od svoga oficija osvećuju se od svojijeh inđurija* I. Držić 305 (RJA 9: 302) the form in *o-* shows the traces of the original meaning, whereas *svetiti (se)* is limited to ‘revenge.’ In the the Mining Code from 1412, *osvetiti* is a false spelling by a late-16th century scribe of *osvětiti* ‘to bring (natural) light (to a mining gallery)’; for a more detailed discussion, see my paper “Glagol *osvetiti* u Zakonu o rudnicima” (“The verb *osvetiti* in the Mining Code”; Loma forthcoming).

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Sanctifying and Sanctioning: The Serbo-Croatian *osveta, osvetiti (se)* Reconsidered

The Serbo-Croatian *osveta* ‘revenge, vengeance’, *osvetiti* ‘to revenge, avenge somebody’, ~ *se* ‘to avenge on, avenge oneself’ is generally considered to derive from Common Slavic **svętъ* ‘holy, saint, sacred’, with some difficulties in interpreting its semantic development. This article offers a thorough analysis of the words in question, focusing on their earliest Old Serbian attestations and resulting in the conclusion that *osveta* was probably calqued on Latin *sanctio*. If true, it provides an early instance of the reception of Roman law among the Southern Slavs.

Keywords: Serbo-Croatian, Slavonic, Common Slavic, Latin; revenge, legal terms; law, Roman, customary.