

LIFE AND ACTIVITIES OF VASILJE OSKANJAN (1921-1989)

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SUMMARY: The life and scientific, professional and other activities of Vasilje Oskanjan (1921-1989), one-time director of the Belgrade Astronomical Observatory, research fellow of the Belgrade and Byurakan Observatories, are presented, followed by the Bibliography of his works, the list of bibliographical items wherein his name is mentioned and the list of his name's citations in the Science Citation Index in the period 1946 – July 1999.

Vasilje Oskanjan was born on September 2, 1921, in Belgrade, where he received his elementary and secondary education. In his annual report on the Belgrade Observatory's activity in 1950, B. Popović, (1951) relates the astronomy student Oskanjan performing calculator's duties since 1945. In addition, he took up pursuing solar activity by observing the Sun-spots and prominencies. In 1948, while still a student, he entered on regular employment at the Observatory as a calculator, being engaged in the Latitude Service on preparing a catalogue of Talcott pairs. In August 1949 he quits the Observatory in order to finish his studies at the Belgrade University and to serve his military term (Popović 1951).

In 1949 Oskanjan graduated from the Mathematical Faculty, Department of Astronomy, and, on returning from the military in December, 1950, he was appointed assistant in the Double and Variable Stars Service. Put in charge of photometric observations with a visual Graff photometer he began studying the extinction of the Belgrade atmosphere and labouring on the realization of a photo-electric photometer, sufficiently sensitive to meet requirements of stellar photometry. At the same time he was in

the Solar Activity and Occultations Service, taking part in the observations of occultations of stars by the Moon.

In 1952 he was entrusted the Variable Stars Service, established by dividing the Double and Variable Stars Service into two separate services. It is at this time that Oskanjan grew interested in the newly discovered UV Ceti variable stars, red dwarfs with flares. In the night of December 24-25, 1952, Oskanjan observed a sudden increase in brightness of UV Ceti. In less than twenty seconds its brightness grew from magnitude 12.3 to magnitude 6.5, starting thereupon to slowly decrease. Two much weaker eruptions of UV Ceti were observed by him on February 5 and September 28, 1953. Oskanjan was delighted by these observations so much so that eruptive stars became his principal research field. In addition to red dwarfs with flares of the UV Cety type he observed also the Cepheids. On February 1, 1954, the assistant Oskanjan became a collaborator-specialist of the Astronomical Observatory. In 1956 he attended the Symposium dedicated to the inauguration of the Byurakan Observatory, Armenia. It is at this Observatory also that he stayed for acquir-

ing appropriate specialisation, returning from it by mid-February 1959.

In 1955 he attended the 9th General Assembly of the IAU in Dublin. In 1959 he was elected member of the Observatory's Management Committee. On returning from his specialisation he constructed an impulse photometer while proceeding with his preoccupation with the photometry of the eruptive stars and beginning to work on polarimetry of these stars.

In 1960 he founded the Astrophysical Group and started preparations for observing the total solar eclipse of February 15, 1961. He organized very successfully Observatory's expedition that observed this occurrence in the island of Hvar. On June 17, 1961, he defended his doctoral dissertation "Variable Stars of UV Cety Type". In 1964 and 1965 he was Observatory's director. In 1964 he was elected assistant professor at the Department of Astronomy, Mathematical Faculty of the Belgrade University. He was the editor in chief of the journal "Bulletin de l'Observatoire Astronomique de Belgrade", 1964, and the series "Publications of the Belgrade Astronomical Observatory" (No. 10).

In 1966 he moved out to Armenia, joining the Byurakan Astrophysical Observatory, where he was engaged in the Laboratory for the photo-electrical observation of stars. From 1970 up to 1987 Oskanjan conducted the works of the Byurakan Observatory. He continued his studies of the eruptive stars, made research in the distribution of eruptions in time, classified the eruption types on the basis of shapes of curves of brightness variations during eruption, observed the slow brightness changes over time intervals out of eruption (BY Dra). Oskanjan attended numerous international astronomical gatherings such as the IAU General Assembly in Prague, 1967, IAU Colloquium in Budapest, 1969, on non-

periodical phenomena in variable stars, all of the scientific conferences held in this period at the Byurakan Observatory, the centenary celebration of the Belgrade Astronomical Observatory, 1987, etc.

Throughout, he collaborated with the Belgrade Observatory, engaging himself, to take but an example, about ensuring, within the frame-work of this cooperation, the specialisation at the Byurakan Observatory of two Belgrade astronomers: Jelisaveta Arsenijević and Gojko Djurašević.

The Bibliography of works of Vasilije Oskanjan, given in the Appendix, contains 85 items, published in the period 1946 – 1980. In the Scientific Citation Index there appeared in the period 1946 – July 1999, 88 citations relating to 16 Oskanjan's papers. His work on the red dwarfs with flares of UV Ceti type, is related in seven papers with 31 citations. The largest number of citations, 40, are related to his paper from 1977 "An Analysis of the slow light variability of BY Draconis", published in *Astrophysical Journal*. Oskanjan was also a great popularizer of astronomy in our midst. He published a great number of popularizing articles in *Vasiona (Universe)*, [18-20, 24, 26, 31, 32, 35, 37, 40, 44, 46, 47], in *Godišnjak Našeg Neba (Annual of our Sky)*, [21], in *Narodna Armija (People's Army)* [29] and in *Danas (Today)* [45]. Besides, he authored several popularizing books on astronomical subjects [22, 23, 25, 33, 36, 38, 42], and translated from Russian Lyapunov's book "The Conquest of the Universe".

In 1987 Oskanjan left the Byurakan Observatory and began working on the examination of the radio-optical telescope of the Orgovski Polygon of the Institute of Radio-Physical Measurements (radio-telescope's diameter is 50 m, that of the optical telescope is 2.6 m). It is there that he suddenly died on February 11, 1989.

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ЖИВОТ И НАУЧНА АКТИВНОСТ ВАСИЛИЈА ОСКАЊАНА 1921-1989

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