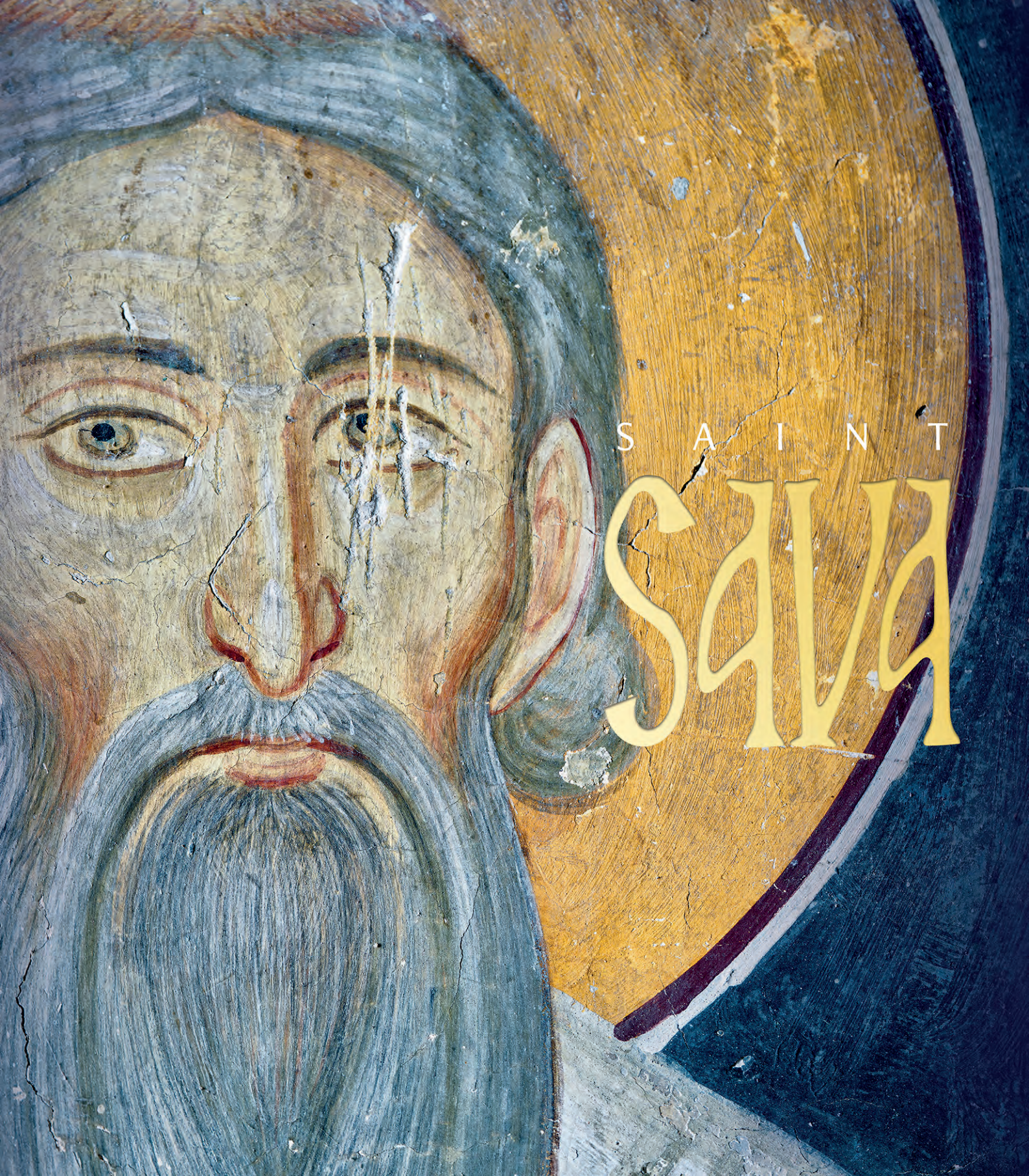
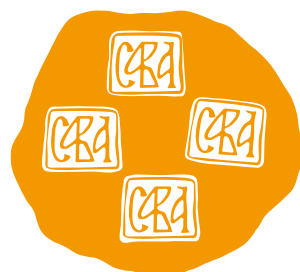




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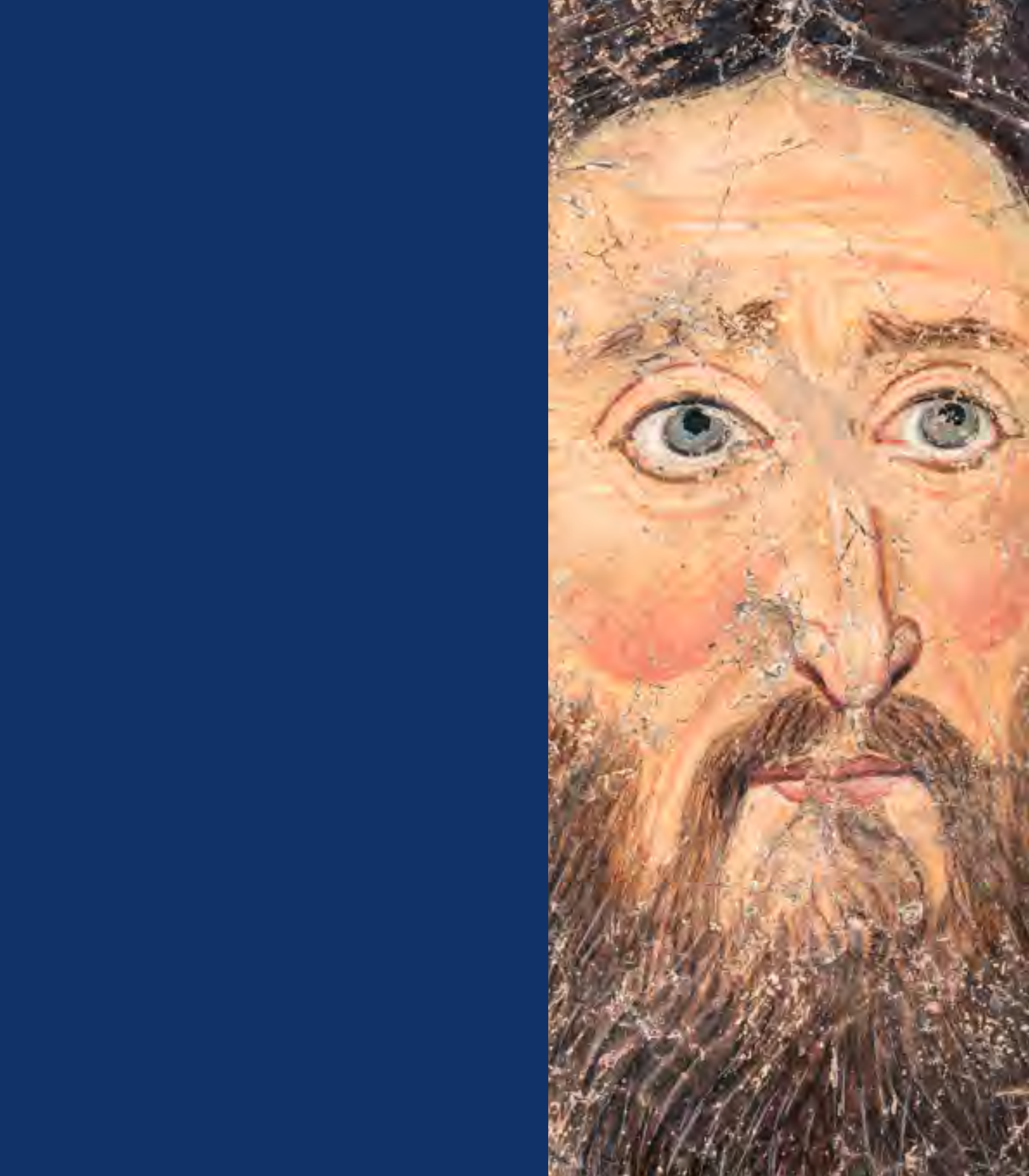


S A I N T

SAVA



Belgrade 2026



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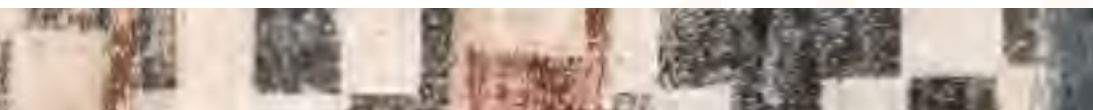
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FOREWORD

Rastko Nemanjić – Saint Sava – is one of those monumental figures in Serbian history who exerted a fateful influence on that history, decisively shaped it, and thus became history itself. Even today, Sava rightfully bears the halo of one of the greatest and noblest symbols of Serbian identity – a holy man to whom, in large measure, we owe the creation and growth of the Serbian name, spirit, and faith through his work, so that, guided by his providence, they could overcome the greatest trials and endure through the darkness of centuries of foreign rule.

A man of steadfast determination, strong mind and inexhaustible energy, Sava exemplified the highest moral and spiritual values a person can possess: he was a dedicated writer of hagiographies and typika, a builder and enlightener, a capable diplomat, a reconciler of his feuding brothers, a tireless traveler, an Athonite, and a Hilandarian – as well as the founder of the autocephalous Serbian Church and the first Serbian Archbishop, wholly devoted to his faith, church and people. All of this was summed up in the person of ascetic nature who subordinated his earthly existence to virtue and spiritual purity, firmly and unreservedly adhering to these commitments until his last breath. This exhibition, the catalogue of which the esteemed reader of these lines now holds, aims to present and bring closer the life and work of Saint Sava to contemporary audiences, especially the youth, and to transmit to them the ray of Sava's saintly legacy, which generations of Serbs have passed on to those who come after them.

The Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts has the exceptional honor and privilege of hosting an exhibition jointly organized with the Serbian Orthodox Church on the occasion of the 850th anniversary of the birth of Rastko Nemanjić – a date that remains etched in historical chronicles, national memory, and tradition, but, I would say, first and foremost in the hearts of all of us, his spiritual descendants and admirers.

President of the Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts

Zoran Knežević



FOREWORD

Every genuine encounter with the Church's tradition goes beyond the scope of mere historical curiosity and becomes an event of spiritual recognition. What was once lived in the truth of faith does not belong only to the past, but is, through the life of the Church, constantly given anew as a possibility for present experience. The personality of Saint Sava, whose work remains alive today in the conciliar being of the Church, should also be understood in this light.

Saint Sava is not only a historical figure and a cultural symbol, but also a witness to a complete way of being in Christ. Asceticism and wisdom, rule and prayer, word and deed – all converge in his person. By establishing the church order and shaping the spiritual life of his people, he laid the foundations that draw their fullness from the liturgical life of the Church. It is precisely in the Holy Liturgy, as the center of every true union, that the measure of his work is found.

The significance of Saint Sava is also reflected in his ability to make the Church's tradition effective at a specific historical time. He received the heritage and, with discernment and responsibility, shaped it in such a way that it became the foundation of spiritual, cultural, and educational life. His work is therefore not captive to the past, but remains open as a signpost and accessible to future generations.

This exhibition, titled after the so often invoked name of the greatest of our people, as well as the accompanying catalogue, arises precisely from the need to perceive that heritage anew and reflect on it. Coming as a *post-feast* of the great Saint Sava jubilee – the 850th anniversary of the birth of Saint Sava, the founder and first primate of our Holy Church – we see this exhibition as the culmination and crown of last year's grand celebration. However, it is not, and cannot be, the final word on this wonderful person. It points to the transforming influence of Saint Sava – from theology and church order to literature and culture. In this sense, organizing such an exhibition is not only a cultural event, but also a form of church remembrance, gathering, and testimony.

Praising the love and care of the organizers of this spiritual and cultural feast – the Museum of the Serbian Orthodox Church and the Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts – we invoke God's blessing and the intercession of Saint Sava on all the workers of these significant and notable institutions, as well as on all people of good will, sincerely wishing that this exhibition will also take a worthy place among the countless gifts that our people have brought to their good father and irreplaceable teacher, Saint Sava.

Serbian Patriarch Porfirije

+ Порфирije

DORDE P. BUBALO

SAINT SAVA: LIFE AND WORK

From the hilltop where Đurđevi Stupovi (the Church of St. George), a monument to Grand Župan Stefan Nemanja's ascension to power, rose into the sky, a view extended over the fertile valley of the Raška River and the first capital of the Serbian Land – Ras. From that place, the already elderly Serbian ruler and his wife Ana raised their prayers to God to grant them another male child, vowing to live in chastity if their wish was granted. And indeed, “given by God,” as Sava's hagiographers Domentijan and Teodosije unanimously attest, a boy was born in 1175 who, at baptism, was given the name Rastko. These two points – the Church of St. George and Ras – are symbols of divine sublimity and earthly transience, and Rastko's choice, from childhood and youth, was unwaveringly on the side of the divine, although, in bringing “his fatherland to great piety,” he had to be agile and resourceful in earthly matters as well.

In the year of Rastko's birth, nothing, at least outwardly, hinted at a major upheaval of Nemanja's time. The Byzantine Empire, under the rule of Manuel I Komnenos, remained the undisputed master of the Balkans. Following Nemanja's failed uprising in 1172, the Serbian land was pacified and forced into submission. In his repertoire of political and military actions, the Grand Župan completely followed the paths taken by his predecessors on the throne, whose reach was defined more by the strength and determination of the Byzantine Empire to defend its power in the areas along the Sava and Danube rivers than by the ardent desire of the Serbian rulers to break away from it. The Emperor's supremacy, however, brought the Serbian land a period of peace and respite, which would mark the first years of Rastko's life. The settled calm



St. Peter's Church in Ras

of his upbringing in the comfortable surroundings of the princely chambers, in the pastoral surroundings of the Raška valley, was disturbed only by the occasional departures of Serbian military detachments that fought for the Emperor on distant battlefields.

Following Emperor Manuel's demise in 1180, the Byzantine Empire sank into a period of civil wars, economic hardships and social turmoil. Stefan Nemanja finally found the opportunity to break free from the Emperor's heavy shadow and expand the territories under his own direct rule. And again, and more frequently than before, the youngish Rastko sent warriors to the battlefields, but now they fought for his father, sometimes with Rastko himself at the head. During the decade in which Nemanja laid the firm foundations of an independent Serbian land, gathering scattered regions and subjects under his scepter, Rastko, judging by what his biographers tell about it, was immersed in the "holy books" and inspired by models of piety and a blameless life. His father, however, steered him along the traditional path of princely maturation – in 1190, when Rastko had



Đurđevi Stupovi Monastery (1170/1171)

just turned fifteen, Nemanja granted him the district of Hum to govern and “to enjoy himself with noble young men.” Behind such a decision, of course, were also state reasons – Nemanja desired to bind Duklja, where he had sent his firstborn son Vukan as governor, and Hum, two border regions with fierce traditions of political independence, more firmly to the central state. Therefore, he could not place the unpleasant burden of governance solely on the shoulders of an inexperienced youth, but surrounded him with his own court advisors to reestablish and strengthen the authority of the Grand Župan on the fringes of the Serbian land. This was all the more necessary because Rastko, gazing at the eternal truths of salvation, neither cared for power nor indulged in the “shameful and harmful songs of youthful lusts.”

Rastko had already let himself be driven by pious aspirations, inspired by the spiritual and physical feats of monks and the monastic way of life. This was an era when monasticism flourished across the Byzantine Empire, especially on Mount Athos, from

where black-robed monks periodically arrived seeking alms and support, and bringing stories of large communities, Athos ascetics, and the spiritual delight of fasting and prayer in the Garden of the Virgin Mary. All of this fueled the young man's desire to devote himself to the monastic life. Rastko's decision to, against his parents' will, go to a monastery and become a monk was accelerated by their intention to have their son married. At the age of seventeen, while staying at his parents' court in Ras, he, on the pretext of going hunting, with his parents' blessing for that excursion – seized the opportunity and secretly separated from his noblemen and companions and fled to Mount Athos. Both of Sava's biographers describe Rastko's escape with a great deal of dramatic detail, but there is no doubt that in 1192 or 1193 he arrived at the Russian monastery of St. Panteleimon, the Old Rossikon, with the firm intention of taking monastic tonsure there. Even the search party dispatched by his grief-stricken parents could neither sway him nor prevent him from donning the rhason and kamilavkion. In fact, the pursuit only gave him the opportunity to send the relentless search party back to his homeland with a lock of his shorn hair and his discarded secular clothing – the ultimate proof of his new life in the fortification of Mount Athos. Tonsured in the chapel of St. John the Baptist at the top of the monastery pyrgos, the new rassophore brother was given the name Sava, after Saint Sabbas the Sanctified, the ultimate model of monastic renunciation and gentleness.

At a time when Nemanja's older sons had resolutely entered the age of political maturity – Vukan assuming the title of king and setting out on the path of independent rule over Duklja, and Stefan marrying the Emperor's niece and establishing himself as his father's heir – the youngest, Rastko, became Sava: a humble and obedient monk on the path of spiritual virtue. He did not stay long in the Old Rossikon. The rumor about the ruler's son's monasticism quickly spread across Mount Athos, and it is entirely possible that Stefan Nemanja, having failed to prevent Rastko from becoming a monk, diplomatically arranged for Sava to be admitted to a larger, more prestigious Greek cenobitic monastery. There was no better choice than Vatopedi, an old and distinguished cenobitic community, known since its foundation as a place where young members of noble families gladly sought monastic solace. Thus, on the Feast of the Annunciation – perhaps the same year that he arrived on Athos – Sava attended the monastery's celebration and accepted the abbot's invitation to join their brotherhood. There, shortly after his arrival, he received the minor monastic tonsure from the hands of abbot Theostyriktus, and thus began his real monastic life on Mount Athos, which he would make the source of his spiritual asceticism and creative inspiration, his second home and sanctuary. Simultaneously obedient to the abbot and the communal rule, and curious and insatiable in his desire to learn and follow the models of monastic renunciation of the Athonite anchorites



◀ Saint Simeon, Mileševa Monastery (1221–1227)

and hermits, Sava, under the watchful eye of his spiritual father Macarius, mitigated the contradictions of his ascetic aspirations and monastic restrictions through relentless work and barefoot pilgrimages across the rugged wilderness of Athos, through diligent study of the Greek language and reading of theological literature, and through charitable deeds and generous endowments with money and valuables sent to him by his father. Among the fruits of Sava's foundational generosity, Domentijan and Teodosije include the lead roof on the monastery's catholicon, its new furnishings, and the construction of the chapels of the Nativity of the Theotokos, St. John Chrysostom and the Transfiguration of the Lord. At Sava's persistent pleas to his parents to renounce the benefits of the ruling position and spend the rest of their lives in the silence of the monastery walls, and to his father in particular to join him on Mount Athos, Grand Župan Stefan Nemanja in 1196 finally abdicated the throne in favor of his son Stefan, precisely on the day of Vatopedi's patronal feast, and he and his wife Ana received monastic tonsure. Of course, Nemanja stepped down from power only after he had introduced his heir into the select circle of the imperial family, headed by Stefan's father-in-law, Alexios III Angelos, and left him an organized, independent state and the foundations of the ruling ideology for the dynasty he himself had created. The monk Simeon first settled at his own endowment in Studenica, and a little over a year and a half later he set off for Mount Athos, in order to fulfill his son's second request – leaving “earthly things to earth” to follow Christ and find “his lost lamb.”



Vatopedi Monastery, Mount Athos

In early November 1197, an unusual procession appeared before the gates of the Vatopedi monastery, consisting of the former Serbian ruler and his loyal servants and nobles, many of whom had chosen to accompany their lord in his monastic asceticism and wanderings. The monk Simeon, already an exhausted old man, finally saw his youngest son again. Before him stood a twenty-year-old man with feet hardened from long walks, a lean, ascetic frame and hands roughened by hard labor; he bore the full hair and beard of manhood, and his eyes were gentle yet determined. His appearance reflected, at first glance, the profundity of his inner transformation. And when the touching reunion, filled with joy and pride, was followed by long conversations between father and son, only then could it be seen in all its grandeur that, as the gifted compiler of the chrysobull of Emperor Alexios to the Hilandar monastery noted, the father preceded the son in this bodily, earthly world, but the son “became the leader in spiritual life to the progenitor of his own bodily existence.” All the decisions and actions that father and son jointly undertook to establish the Serbian monastic community on Athos were actually rooted in Sava’s vi-

sion and his firm and determined will to translate that vision into reality, with deeds as self-confident as his words.

It is hardly an exaggeration to suggest that the era of Sava and Simeon was one of the most brilliant in the history of Vatopedi. With the arrival of the former Grand Župan, their profuse generosity showered the ancient monastery with even greater abundance. Money, valuables, land, vineyards, laborers and livestock began to pour in, and construction projects commenced within the monastery gates, alongside renovations across its broader estates, such as at the church of St. Simeon the God-Receiver, whose tower in Ouranopolis still stands as a testament to Sava's magnanimity today. At the same time, rumors that the former ruler and his son had joined the Vatopedi brotherhood attracted countless devotees and those eager to pursue monastic asceticism in such an environment. Upon hearing the news of Simeon's arrival, abbots from other communities, anchorites, and hermits flocked to the monastery for blessings and spiritual discourse, receiving gifts from the venerable elder. In a short time, the monastery's reputation, wealth, and the size of its brotherhood swelled.

At the end of 1197, Sava and Simeon journeyed across Mount Athos so that the old servant of God, as a new Athonite, could pay homage to its holy relics. The proverbially generous father and son, following the examples of other founders, contributed to the Great Lavra, Iviron and Protaton; yet, it was the ancient, ruined Greek monastery of Hilandar that left the deepest impression on them, striking them as a serene and suitable place for monks to settle once more. Even though they had funded the construction of new dormitories at Vatopedi, and Simeon purchased the right to as many as 50 adelphates to secure food, drink and accommodation for the ever-increasing number of pilgrims, the monastery grew too small for its expanding brotherhood, a significant part of whom were Serbs. To address this, they proposed to the abbot that permission be obtained from the Emperor for the restoration of Hilandar and other abandoned sanctuaries in the Milea area, which would then be subordinated to Vatopedi in order to at least partially relieve its overcrowded dormitories. In early 1198, with the abbot's blessing, Sava set off for Constantinople on his first diplomatic mission to the Emperor and, although his kinship with the imperial family opened doors that remained closed to most, he proved that the trust placed in his diplomatic agility and eloquence was more than justified. Sava returned bearing the Emperor's charter, which officially subordinated Hilandar and its surrounding sanctuaries to Vatopedi, while authorizing him and his father to restore and equip it for monastic life and worship.

It is reasonable to assume that by requesting Hilandar's annexation to Vatopedi, and through Sava's journey to Constantinople, the father and son deliberately set in motion a sequence of events designed to achieve their true ultimate goal: the founding of an

independent Serbian monastery on Athos. Their next step was allegedly guided by divine providence, prompted by an Athonite elder who reminded them that they were not on the Holy Mountain merely to save their own souls; rather, they were meant to build a “harbor of salvation” for all their countrymen who chose the path of monastic renunciation. To accomplish this, however, they needed the backing of the wider Mount Athos community. Sava’s request for Hilandar to be ceded to them so that they could establish an independent Serbian monastic family there was, as expected, rejected by the abbot of Vatopedi. On the other hand, Vatopedi’s sudden enrichment, the rapid growth of its brotherhood, and its soaring prestige – all stemming from the presence of scions of the Serbian ruling house and the Emperor’s relatives – had fueled unease, jealousy, and ill will among other, especially more modest Athonite monasteries, even in the Protos himself. Consequently, Sava, rejected by the abbot of Vatopedi, turned to the Protos and the Council of Abbots, and they wrote a petition to the Emperor to reverse his earlier decision and award Hilandar to the Serbs. Concurrently, the monk Simeon himself addressed the Emperor with the same request. And indeed, in June 1198, Emperor Alexios III issued a chrysobull to Simeon and Sava, granting them Hilandar and its nearby sanctuaries with the right to found a monastery there for the reception of people of Serbian nation, completely free from the authority of both the Protos and the abbot of Vatopedi. Soon after, Simeon petitioned the Emperor for villages, Vlach katuns (pasture settlements) and apiaries along the border of the Serbian land and the Byzantine Empire, and issued a charter to Hilandar regarding this gift. Today, it is believed with good reason that





Hilandar Monastery, Mount Athos

this document is, for the most part, Sava's first preserved literary work, hinting at the full richness of his literary talent.

Although the restoration of the monastery began while it was still under Vatopedi's jurisdiction, the construction work gained significant speed and scope after Hilandar achieved independence, especially since generous aid from Grand Župan Stefan, to whom the founders transferred the founding rights, began to flow from the Serbian land. Hilandar was thus cemented as a hereditary royal endowment of the Nemanjić dynasty. In mid-1198, the elderly Simeon moved to his new monastery. Sava made every effort to ease his father's ascetic hardships in his advanced age, but it was clear the weakened monk was nearing his earthly end. He passed away on February 13, 1199, worthily mourned, with a funeral service given by his son, and was laid to rest in the southwest corner of the naos of Hilandar's cathedral church. The work on the restoration and establishment of the economic independence of the monastery continued thereafter at an unabated pace. Consequently, in mid-1199, Sava set out once more for the imperial capital of Constantinople – "Empress of Cities" – to ask the Emperor for the right to maintain a ship to supply Hilandar and the abandoned Zygos monastery on the border of Mount Athos. Alexios III did not hesitate to meet Sava's requests and on the same occasion permanently awarded him the abbot's staff, which symbolized an exceptional privilege – it exempted the abbot of Hilandar from the obligation to travel to Constantinople to have his election personally confirmed by the Emperor. After the monk Simeon's passing, and with the primary construction tasks well advanced or completed, Sava could devote himself to fulfilling his old desire for hermitic silence, which had not been granted to him at Vatopedi. With this goal in mind, he had probably during his father's lifetime purchased land in Karyes, the administrative center of Mount Athos, and had hermit cells and a small church dedicated to Saint Sabbas the Sanctified, his namesake and monastic model, built there, so that he could retreat to the place and devote himself to asceticism and prayer. Simultaneously, Sava purchased or constructed additional cells and hermitages in Karyes and other areas near the monastery to accommodate other anchorites and hermits. In order to organize, establish, and consistently lead monastic life in the communal Hilandar with its dependent cells, hermitages, and Karyes cell, Sava established written rules in three separate typikons, each tailored to a specific type of monastic asceticism. The *Typikon for the cell of Saint Sabbas the Sanctified in Karyes* was compiled in 1199, using a Greek skete typikon as a template. According to the provisions of the *Typikon*, the cell was entirely exempt from the authority of both the Protos and the abbot of Hilandar. The only binding connection to the parent monastery consisted in the fact that the Karyes hermit had to be elected by Hilandar's abbot and brotherly council from among their own ranks. The *Rules for the Use of the Psalter* were intended for the dependent kelliotes, who separated into hermitages

> Chrysobull of Emperor Alexios III Angelos, Archives of the Hilandar Monastery (1198)

Handwritten text in a cursive script, likely a letter or document. The text is written in dark ink on aged, yellowed paper. There are several lines of text, with some words highlighted in red ink. The handwriting is dense and somewhat difficult to decipher due to the cursive style and fading. The text appears to be a formal or official document, possibly a letter of introduction or a record of a transaction. The red ink highlights certain words or phrases, which may be of particular importance or serve as a signature or seal. The overall appearance is that of an old, well-preserved manuscript.

and cells, individually or in pairs, for the purpose of an ascetic practice in which the reading of the Psalter, prayers and prostrations filled most of their days and nights.

Probably soon after the compilation of the *Karyes Typikon*, perhaps even before the end of 1199, Sava oversaw the writing of a new typikon for the cenobitic community of Hilandar, using the prologue of the *Typikon of the Theotokos Evergetis Monastery* near Constantinople as a template, presumably because he had stayed in that monastery during his sojourns in Constantinople. Sava's modifications to this template reflect his efforts to adapt the *Typikon* not only to the specific conditions of Mount Athos, but also to his own vision for the ideal organization of Serbian monasteries. Moreover, all three of Sava's monastic typikons would be adopted far beyond the borders of Mount Athos and the Serbian land, and, judging by surviving copies, they were utilized most extensively within the Russian Church. Although these typikons were based on Greek models and consist largely of faithful translations, the provisions addressing the unique status and circumstances in Sava's own endowments are entirely his original work. In the *Karyes Typikon*, these original contributions include the opening sections – comprising the arenga, an autobiographical introduction, and regulations on the cell's legal status and the election of hermits – as well as the closing remarks, and in the *Hilandar Typikon*, his original work is found in the introductory chapters, which feature a short biographical note on Saint Simeon, and in Chapter 42, which outlines the relationship between Hilandar and the *Karyes* cell. Through these works, Sava laid the cornerstone of the Serbian legislative tradition.

Collectively, these actions completed the material, legal, organizational and liturgical establishment of Hilandar as an independent Serbian community on Mount Athos. Despite the enormous and effective authority of the former ruler of the Serbian land, the monk Simeon, and the generous financial backing of Grand Župan Stefan, it can nevertheless be said, without exaggeration, that the greatest credit for the foundation and rapid rise of Hilandar undoubtedly belongs to Sava, with his reputation in the monastic republic, his organizational abilities, prudent diplomacy, theological and ecclesiastical-legal scholarship, and inexhaustible energy. By establishing a Serbian monastery within an international monastic enclave like Athos, Simeon and Sava positioned the Serbian people and state as equal and visible members of the community of Christian peoples, thereby revealing their aspiration toward an independent, national Church. Sustained by waves of generosity from future Serbian rulers, Hilandar firmly established itself as one of the most respected and distinguished Serbian monasteries on the Holy Mountain. It became the primary transmitter of Byzantine influence on Serbian theological and legal literature, an inspiration and model for artistic creation, a blueprint for the structure and forms of Serbian monasticism, a seedbed for future Serbian bishops, the most fertile center of original Serbian literary, translation and scribal work, a vital bond of cooperation

and friendship between the Serbian and Byzantine courts, and a spiritual pledge for the salvation of both the dynasty and its people.

No matter how much Sava exhausted his body with fasting, vigils and prayers at the very end of the twelfth and in the opening years of the thirteenth century, which caused him to suffer from a chronic gastric ailment throughout his life, and no matter how much he lived in solitude and silence in the “Courts of the Lord,” he was not destined to spend his earthly days as a hermit monk in his Karyes cell, just as the construction of Hilandar was not the only debt he had to repay for the salvation of his people. What had begun in Hilandar and Karyes had to be continued and completed in his fatherland. Sava could not remain indifferent to the events in the Serbian land and the Byzantine Empire. While, in the first years of the thirteenth century, a civil war raged in the fatherland between his elder brothers, in which Vukan temporarily seized power and subordinated the country to the Hungarian crown, the threatening shadow of the conquering campaign of the Western crusaders loomed over the Byzantine Empire. What seemed impossible to contemporaries, happened – on April 13, 1204 Constantinople, the capital of the Christian empire, fell into the hands of the Crusaders, and most of its territory was partitioned among Western barons and Venetians. The political, ecclesiastical and cultural map of Southeastern Europe changed completely overnight. For the Holy Mountain, now oppressed by the violence of the Latins and the implacability of the Roman Catholic bishops, days of anxiety, temptation and uncertainty began. The following year, Sava could be comforted by the news that, just as he had turned thirty and fulfilled the canonical requirements for being ordained a priest, the fratricidal war in the Serbian land ended and Stefan returned to the Grand Župan’s throne. And indeed, at the persistent urging of Protos Dometios, Sava agreed to be ordained in Hilandar by Bishop Nicholas of Ierissos – first as a hierodeacon, and a day later as a hieromonk. Already in the late summer of 1206, while he was staying in Latin-occupied Thessaloniki due to the monastery’s needs, the Orthodox Metropolitan of Thessaloniki, Constantine Mesopotamites – just a few months before his own expulsion by the Latins – in the church of St. Sophia, probably on the Feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross (September 14), concelebrated by Bishops Nicholas of Ierissos, Michael of Kassandreia, and Demetrios of Ardameria, elevated Sava to the dignity of archimandrite, with the right to wear the epigonation and epimanikia during services.

Since only a protos could claim such rights and honors on Mount Athos, Sava’s elevation to the dignity of archimandrite, with the epigonation as an episcopal sign, indicated his already mature idea of returning to his homeland in order to organize monasticism there according to Eastern Byzantine and Athonite models, provide it with a legal and institutional framework, and unite it under his crozier. We can only assume this was another step towards creating an independent Church. There were, of course, other reasons for



Transfer of the Relics of Saint Simeon from Hilandar to Studenica, detail,
Radoslav's Narthex of the Studenica Monastery, Saint Simeon Chapel (c. 1235)

the decision to leave Mount Athos. The already begun process of canonization of Simeon Nemanja required the translation of his relics to the “by-his-hands created monastery” and mausoleum in Studenica. The subordination of Mount Athos to the jurisdiction of the Latin Bishop of Sebaste, a wicked and ruthless ruler who abused the monasteries and monks with extortion and robbery, added to Sava’s haste to return to his homeland with his father’s body. Since rumors of the turmoil on Athos and its surroundings had reached Sava’s brothers, they also encouraged him in a letter to transfer their father’s relics to the homeland and not expose them to destruction. Consequently, the newly ordained archimandrite set out on an uncertain journey at the beginning of 1207 and, having passed, as he himself says, “through fire and water, and yet I was whole, preserved and unhurt,” he arrived in the Serbian land. His brothers welcomed him in Hvosno, and the solemn procession continued to Studenica, where on February 19, Simeon’s mortal remains were laid in a prepared tomb within the Church of the Holy Virgin. Under the sacred aegis of

paternal authority, peace and harmony were finally consolidated among the previously warring brothers. Ever since receiving his monastic tonsure on Athos, Sava had been spiritually and physically torn between the urge to devote himself to solitary prayer and asceticism and the God-inspired zeal to enlighten his fatherland, strengthen it in the true faith, and place it among the equal participants on the Christian path to salvation and eternal life. He could not refuse his brother's request to remain in Studenica as an archimandrite precisely in order to approach this second ideal through the carefully managed process of canonization of his father. Therefore, it was precisely through Sava's ideas and actions that Studenica was transformed into both the material and spiritual center of the cult of the holy ancestor, the heavenly patron and protector of the people, state and dynasty, the first true Serbian "representative" in the pantheon of Christian saints. While all three brothers acted as joint founders, Sava was undoubtedly the conceptual creator behind the iconographic program for the painting of the Studenica catholicon, completed in 1208–1209. Following Simeon's formal canonization, evidenced by his myrrh-exuding tomb and painted representation, on the anniversary of his death, February 13, 1210, Sava completed the *Service to Saint Simeon*, the definitive script for the liturgical celebration of the new saint, thereby giving his cult a liturgical form and laying the foundations for a fruitful and diverse Serbian hymnographic literature.

The monastic order and spiritual life established at Hilandar and Studenica served as a model and the definitive template for the ideals and organization of monasticism across the Serbian land. The Studenica archimandriate received its own typikon, written according to the same template as the *Hilandar Typikon*, with the necessary regulatory adjustments to account for the peculiarities of the position of Simeon's tomb church, and the addition of a proportionately extensive hagiography of the founder, penned by Sava himself at its beginning. And again, mirroring Athonite models – much like the concept realized through his Karyes cell – Sava constructed hermitages near the monastery, on the cliffs above the Studenica River, for a brotherhood worthy of renunciation and silence. It can be said that Sava's status as an archimandrite symbolized his supreme spiritual and organizational authority over all monasteries and monastic life in the Serbian land, but it also enabled him to take care of Christian enlightenment, organize worship life, and spearhead construction of churches; one may venture to say he wielded quasi-episcopal powers. Among Sava's efforts that paved the way for an independent, autocephalous Church was the construction of the Žiča Monastery and its Cathedral Church of the Ascension, begun around 1210 – though indications suggest the church was originally intended as the eternal resting place of Stefan Nemanjić. While the primary founding rights are attributed to Stefan, Sava's role in the construction of the temple and the conceptualization of its iconographic program is indisputable, as is his influence in altering its purpose, if the Church of the Ascension was indeed

initially conceived as a mausoleum. Evidence suggests that the temple's architectural plan was designed to function as an episcopal center well before Sava departed for his second journey to Athos, and subsequently to Nicaea, from which he would return invested with the dignity of an archbishop. Sava's miraculous healing of the "infirm" in the church itself can certainly be seen as a sign of the realization of this intention; thus, even before its construction, furnishing and decoration were complete, Žiča acquired the status of an exceptionally revered sanctuary.

The two brothers, "collaborators in body and spirit," were the very embodiment of fraternal harmony and the ideal symphony of power. Stefan provided Sava with every possible material and political resource to support his far-reaching aspirations, while Sava served as Stefan's spiritual anchor, wise advisor, and steadfast helper in times of trial. One such threat to the Serbian land emerged from the nobleman Strez, a cousin of the Bulgarian Emperor Boril, who had established a power base along the middle course of the Vardar River, headquartering himself in the Prosek fortress (modern-day Demir Kapija in North Macedonia). Following several years of cooperation, Boril and Strez fell out, prompting the latter to seek protection and aid from Stefan. With his army, the Serbian Grand Župan helped Strez entrench himself at Prosek, but the volatile Bulgarian nobleman did not remain loyal for long, soon adopting a threatening stance towards his benefactor. Stefan tried to avert this new danger through negotiations, and in 1214 he dispatched his brother Sava, who was well-armed with diplomatic experience from the time of the founding of Hilandar. In direct talks held within



Tomb of Saint Simeon Nemanja,
Church of the Holy Virgin, Studenica Monastery

a robber's den high on the cliffs of the Vardar gorge, Sava failed to sway the defiant outlaw toward an agreement, but he apparently succeeded in winning over Strez's disgruntled courtiers. Only this can explain why, on the very night following Sava's departure from Prosek, Strez fell victim to a fatal assassination plot. The following year, Stefan again turned to Sava for counsel and support when facing the imminent danger of a joint attack by the Hungarian king and the Latin emperor. The fraternal consultation proved invaluable, paving the way for a successful diplomatic solution to the impending war.

However, the paramount objective of Stefan's and Sava's joint diplomatic and ecclesiastical-political endeavors was to formalize and round off the independent status of the Serbian land, from which, with the temporary disappearance of the Byzantine Empire in the whirlwind of the Fourth Crusade, even the semblance of the empire's nominal supreme authority had vanished. In place of a unified empire centered in Constantinople, Latin crusaders now occupied the capital, and the unconquered Romans gathered their forces in two rival successor states – one in the northwest of Asia Minor, with its headquarters in Nicaea, and the other in Epirus and Acarnania, with its headquarters in Arta – both striving to expel the Western invaders and reclaim Constantinople. By 1216 at the latest, Sava returned to Mount Athos, seeking to satisfy his lifelong longing for ascetic silence far from worldly affairs; however, the possibility should not be ruled out that he may also have chosen that place to more easily gather intelligence on the political situation in the rival Greek states, assessing the prospects for establishing a local Serbian Church. During this same period, Stefan was waiting for the opportune moment to formalize his independent ruling position with a royal title. The perfect opportunity arose in the autumn of 1217, when Hungarian King Andrew II – an implacable opponent of the elevation of the Serbian land to the rank of a kingdom – departed for the Holy Land on a crusade. The embassy of the Grand Župan, which presented the claims and requests of his master in Rome, was received with great hospitality by the Pope, certainly also because of Stefan's marriage to the Venetian princess Anna Dandolo. Soon after, likely before the end of 1217, papal legates arrived in the Serbian land and crowned the Grand Župan with a royal wreath at St. Peter's Church in Ras. Although the Serbian land had been formally and practically independent since 1204, it was this royal crown that brought a kind of international recognition.

In Sava's attempts to gain ecclesiastical independence, the conflicts between Nicaea and Epirus over the rightful inheritance of the Byzantine imperial and patriarchal legacy worked in his favor. In Nicaea, the titles of emperor and patriarch had been revived under extraordinary circumstances and therefore bypassing centuries-old consecrated customs and canonical frameworks, in order to carry on the imperial and ecclesiastical traditions of the Byzantine Empire, but Epirus disputed the canonicity and legitimacy of the dignities and positions thus acquired, electing its own bishops without the knowledge and

approval of the Nicaean emperor and patriarch. Thus, in 1216, Demetrios Chomatenos, chosen by the Epirus ruler, Despot Theodore Doukas, and not, as had been established in the eleventh century, by the emperor, was appointed and ordained at the see of the Ohrid Archbishopric, the very jurisdiction under which the Serbian land fell. The Epirotes, therefore, refused to recognize the emperor and patriarch in Nicaea; the Nicaeans, in turn, invalidated the authority of the Ohrid Archbishop or any other bishops within the territory of the Epirus state, appointed without the consent of the emperor and patriarch. Aware that he could not hope for the consent of the Archbishop of Ohrid to establish a new particular Church in the territory under his spiritual authority, Sava turned to the emperor in Nicaea – at that time it was Theodore Laskaris, Stefan's former brother-in-law – recognizing his legitimacy, as well as his role as the arbiter of the Church who possessed the right to interfere in matters of its structure, even doctrine, and freely decide on the jurisdiction of church provinces. The authorities in Nicaea, meanwhile, eagerly promoted their imperial and patriarchal rights among the Orthodox Slavic peoples, in a bid to secure their own support and recognition.

In such circumstances, Sava set off for Nicaea in the summer of 1218, undoubtedly after diplomatic preparations and the Emperor's preliminary consent. Following a warm reception and brief negotiations, Sava secured an imperial decree by which the Serbian king's state was separated from the Ohrid Archbishopric and subordinated to the Ecumenical Patriarchate, with a new particular Church established in that area with the status of an independent archbishopric. The Emperor also selected Sava as its inaugural primate and ordered Patriarch Manuel I Sarantenos, assisted by the bishops who happened to be in Nicaea at the time, to ordain him as archbishop. Contrary to long-held historical consensus, recent research has shown, with convincing arguments, that this ordination took place in 1218 – rather than 1219 – at the Church of Hagia Sophia, likely on the Feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross, September 14. Citing the vast distance to Nicaea and the perils of traveling through hostile Latin territories, Sava also requested the right for his successors on the archiepiscopal throne to be appointed and consecrated by a council of bishops of the Serbian Church, that is, that they would not have to go to the imperial capital for confirmation. This was an essential element, and an important feature, of the autocephaly of the Serbian Church. The sole condition attached to this concession was that during services across the sanctuaries of the Serbian Church, the name of the reigning Ecumenical Patriarch had to be commemorated first, followed by that of the Serbian Archbishop.

Thus, by recognizing the imperial and patriarchal titles of the Nicaean ruler and head of the church, Sava obtained concessions that raised and expanded the authority of the Nicaean emperors and patriarchs, while at the same time giving them the opportunity to harm their main rivals, the Despot of Epirus and the Archbishop of Ohrid. Consequently, both sides had



Ordination of Saint Sava to Archbishop, refectory of the Hilandar Monastery (1621–1622)

reasons to be satisfied with the outcome of Sava's mission. With a single imperial decree and the patriarch's signature on the charter establishing the Serbian Archbishopric, the Archbishop of Ohrid was stripped, practically overnight, of nearly half of his jurisdictional territory, and the Serbian land secured full state autonomy by obtaining an autocephalous Church. In Nicaea, Sava took the most important, but only the first, step in founding and organizing an independent Church. Upon returning to the homeland, his first destination was Mount Athos again, where he selected from among his own disciples and the distinguished monks of Hilandar those worthy of episcopal rank and responsible positions in the hierarchy. Since ordinations had not been performed in the Athonite monasteries for years due to the Latin usurpation of neighboring bishoprics, Sava, at the invitation of the Protos and most of the abbots, ordained hierodeacons and hieromonks during his stay on Mount Athos. He then found himself in Thessaloniki, at the Monastery of Philokalos, a community where he was

revered as its second founder; under his supervision, scholars there continued the task of translating and editing the nomocanon collection as the foundational legal code for the newly established Church, a project that would finally be completed back in his homeland in 1219. The essential, unchangeable part of every nomocanon, including Sava's version, was its ecclesiastical regulations: the apostolic rules, alongside the decrees of ecumenical councils, local councils, and Holy Fathers, while the *Prochiron*, a code adopted at the beginning of the tenth century, served as the central source for imperial legislation. Therefore Sava, through the *Nomokanon*, translated into Serbo-Slavonic, transplanted into the Serbian environment not only the sacred canons but also the norms of Roman-Byzantine law, thus providing the legal framework for the dogmatic, canonical and organizational structure of the new Church and the foundations for its strong dogmatic and liturgical unity with other local Orthodox Churches, and especially with the Mother Church – the Ecumenical Patriarchate.

The seat of the archbishopric was established at the Monastery of Žiča, and in addition to the already existing Orthodox bishoprics, whose centers were located on the territory of the Serbian land, new ones were established, covering the entire country with a network of church organization. Upon returning to his homeland, Sava first stayed at Studenica, where on Easter – April 7, 1219 – he began ordaining priests and deacons, and then at Žiča, perhaps precisely on Ascension Day, assisted by those archpriests of the Ohrid Archbishopric who recognized his spiritual authority, he ordained new bishops and, “having instructed them in a godly manner,” dispatched them to their respective dioceses, equipping each with a copy of the *Nomokanon*. Of course, the organization of the newly founded Church could not rest on that alone. Through carefully chosen actions, at a church council held in Žiča on the Sunday of Orthodoxy (the first Sunday of Great Lent), February 16, 1220, Sava ensured that the Orthodox Christian faith was established on a general level by proclaiming the positive dogmas of Orthodoxy and condemning heresy. This was the so-called act of “renewal of the true Orthodox faith,” the Serbian version of the *Synodikon of Orthodoxy*, by which the Orthodox faith, grounded in the decrees of the Ecumenical Councils and patristic heritage, was definitively safeguarded against heretical deviations. Efforts to permeate all facets of life with Christian teaching, ensuring that Orthodox ritual and confession reached the most remote regions and the lowest strata of society, were part of a kind of internal mission, a comprehensive Christianization with a lasting outcome. To this end, Sava charged the archpriests with acting as episcopal deputies with special powers, who examined the degree of Christianization across the country. They were, first and foremost, authorized to bring non-canonical marriages within the framework of Christian morality, utilizing the holy rite of matrimony to bind spouses to canonical restrictions and obligations.

In May 1220, the Ohrid Archbishop, Demetrios Chomatenos, sent a letter to Archbishop Sava fiercely complaining about the violation of his jurisdictional rights. In it,

Chomatenos spoke almost mockingly of Sava's alleged thirst for prestige and worldly affairs, criticizing his apparent abandonment of monastic asceticism. He reminded him that the Serbian land was ecclesiastically subordinate to the Archbishop of Ohrid, that it already possessed its own canonical bishop in Ras, and that if Sava truly cared about episcopal rank, he should have petitioned him as his rightful archbishop. He warned of the canons that forbid bishops of one diocese from interfering in the affairs of another, condemning the illegal extraction of eparchies from Ohrid's jurisdiction – most notably, the uncanonical removal of the Bishop of Prizren. Finally, Chomatenos disputed the canonicity of Sava's ordination, arguing that neither the Emperor nor the Patriarch in Nicaea possessed the legitimacy nor the right based on canons and imperial laws to bear the titles of Roman Emperor and Ecumenical Patriarch. At the conclusion of the letter, which practically dripped with his resentment, Chomatenos threatened excommunication if Sava did not return to a state of obedience to the Mother Church. However, due to the lack of political support from the Epirus ruler Theodore Dukas, Chomatenos's threats went nowhere, so neither Sava, the Serbian Church, nor the Serbian Kingdom suffered any consequences from his displeasure.

According to the testimonies of his biographers, it was Sava who, as archbishop, crowned Stefan with the royal crown, with Domentijan stating that Sava, at some point after the Council of Žiča held on February 16, 1220, sent his envoy Methodius to the Pope in Rome to request a crown for his brother. Historiography remains divided on whether there was only a single coronation, which the papal legates who arrived in the Serbian land with the royal wreath in 1217 had to perform, or whether Sava, as archbishop, crowned his brother again, this time according to the Orthodox rite. The authenticity of Domentijan's account is supported by the fact that Stefan did indeed send Bishop Methodius to Rome during the first half of 1220, as evidenced by an surviving letter of credence. Proponents of this double "wreathing," or coronation, interpret the purpose of this letter as a request for a papal blessing for the crowning that the first Serbian archbishop intended to perform. Whatever the Pope's response was, which we do not know, Sava would almost certainly have executed the rite of coronation and anointment of the Serbian king even without papal consent. This ceremony was probably held on Ascension Day, May 7, 1220, at Žiča, and it was through this ritual that royal power was sacralized, and the state established a complete ideological foundation for its independence. Guided by the brothers Stefan and Sava, the kingdom and the archbishopric became the living embodiment of the Byzantine ideal of a symphony between secular and ecclesiastical power, acting as a permanent integrative force. Within this framework of a unified national state and Church, order and legal life, language and culture, and a distinct tradition and identity were permanently standardized.

The Hungarian king, who since the end of the twelfth century had considered himself entitled to supreme authority over the Serbian land, certainly did not approve of Stefan's

coronation. Upon his return from the crusade at the end of 1218, an unpleasant surprise awaited King Andrew II. Having spent most of the following year on a campaign against Galicia, in 1220 he was finally able to address the situation in the Serbian land. When Hungarian detachments launched attacks on the Serbian border areas, Stefan sought to defuse the threat by once again dispatching Sava on a sensitive diplomatic mission. In the summer of 1220, Sava arrived at the court of the Hungarian king, but the negotiations did not go smoothly. As Domentijan and Teodosije describe the diplomatic skills of their hero, it was only after convincing his hosts of his miraculous powers that Sava managed to persuade the king to cease hostilities against the Serbian land, allowing him to return to his brother with news of a successful peace agreement.

After several years, during which the brothers lived “carefree, having peace on all sides, and at all times asceticizing well in God,” Stefan fell seriously ill with no hope of recovery. Years earlier, upon returning to his homeland as archbishop, Sava had found his brother ill and successfully healed him – as his hagiographers recount – with water blessed by the Holy Cross. This time, however, Sava’s healing intercession brought his brother back from the brink of death only long enough to tonsure him into monasticism. Granting him the monastic name Simon, Sava gently entrusted his brother’s soul “into the hands of his benefactor, Christ.” In contrast to the reliably established date of Stefan’s death (September 24), scholarship remains divided over the exact year – with arguments splitting between 1223 and 1227 – due to a scant number of contradictory sources. Sava then worthily mourned and buried his brother in the Church of the Holy Virgin at the Studenica Monastery, opposite their father’s eternal resting place. At the earliest, a year after his brother’s death, Sava transferred his intact, “inviolable”, and fragrant relics from Studenica to Žiča. The preservation of Stefan’s body, the ceremonial translation, the reception and laying of the relics into a new tomb, and the composition of the first stichera (short liturgical hymns) in his honor all testify to Sava’s intention to establish the cult of King Stefan the First-Crowned, the monk Simon, thereby expanding the basis for the foundation and promotion of the ideology of a saint-bearing dynasty. Since the founder’s charter stipulated that the Church of the Ascension at Žiča must serve as the coronation temple, an equally important concept realized by that translation was that all future kings of the Serbian land would be crowned directly over the relics of the first king, their holy and exemplary predecessor. Furthermore, the holy relics of the first-crowned king were joined with universal Christian relics of the highest rank and prestige, with which Sava had gifted the church at Žiča on several occasions. Alongside these material and symbolic witnesses of Holy History – acting as markers of the sacred foundation of the young Serbian kingdom – the king’s incorrupt body introduced the Serbian people into the ranks of the chosen, God-bearing people.

> Stefan the First-Crowned, detail, Mileševa Monastery (1221–1227)





Monastery of Saint Sabbas the Sanctified, Judean Desert

Sava's authority and composure, as well as the fact that Stefan's eldest son, Radoslav, had received his father's blessing to succeed to the throne, ensured that the transition of power passed without any disturbances. At the Church of the Ascension in Žiča, Sava anointed his nephew and placed a royal crown upon his head. Not long after, he performed the wedding ceremony of King Radoslav and Anna, the daughter of the most powerful ruler in the Balkans, Despot Theodore Doukas of Epirus, although the newlyweds had been betrothed during Stefan's lifetime, around 1219 or 1220. A few years later, Sava undertook a pilgrimage to Palestine, both for personal pious reasons and diplomatic and liturgical ones, and for the regulation of the newly founded national Church. In the

spring of either 1228 or 1229, Sava set sail from Budva for the Holy Land with the desire to pay homage to the sites of Christ's birth, life, and passion, and to visit the renowned centers of Middle Eastern desert monasticism. The itinerary of his first pilgrimage is described in detail by his biographers, Domentijan and Teodosije. From their accounts, we learn that Sava spent most of his time in Jerusalem and its surroundings, visiting the holy sites – the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, Golgotha, the Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem, Holy Zion, the place of the birth and life of the Holy Virgin, the Garden of Gethsemane, the Mount of Olives, Bethany, Christ's hermitage in the Judean Desert, the Jordan River, and the Lavra of Saint Sabbas the Sanctified, in whose metochion Sava most likely stayed while he was in Jerusalem. Journeying beyond Jerusalem, he also visited Galilee, Nazareth, and Mount Tabor. On several occasions, he enjoyed the hospitality of the Patriarch of Jerusalem, Athanasius II, with whose blessing the Church of Saint John the Theologian on Mount Zion was formally ceded to him.

On his return journey, he boarded a ship at Acre and, traveling via Smyrna, most likely arrived in Nymphaeum, where he met the Nicaean Emperor, John III Vatatzes. From there, he proceeded to Mount Athos to visit the monasteries of Iviron, Vatopedi, Hilandar, and Karyes, endowing each of these shrines with the gold and valuables the Nicaean Emperor had granted him for the occasion; understandably, he was most generous toward Hilandar, gifting the monastery a fragment of the True Cross enclosed in a wooden staurotheca (reliquary) that remains preserved there to this day. For his cell in Karyes, he purchased additional land from Abbot Eusebius in order to plant a vineyard on it. He then traveled to Thessaloniki, where he met with Vatatzes's chief rival, King Radoslav's father-in-law, Theodore Doukas, who had been crowned emperor the previous year by Archbishop Demetrios Chomatenos. By paying court to both Greek rulers who claimed the Byzantine imperial inheritance, Sava reinforced the balanced foreign policy of the Serbian land toward the competing Byzantine centers, even though the exact substance of these diplomatic discussions cannot be reconstructed. In addition, Sava brought back from his pilgrimage to the Holy Land more relics, which were essential to the sacred foundation of both the young kingdom and its new particular Church, as well as some elements of the Jerusalem liturgy, with which he had the opportunity to become acquainted at its very source, although he had already integrated them into the liturgical order of the Serbian Church via Mount Athos.

There is no real basis for the belief, not uncommon in historical scholarship and popular representations of the life of Saint Sava, that relations between him and his nephew cooled because at one point, perhaps at the very time when Sava was in Jerusalem, Radoslav wrote to the Archbishop of Ohrid, seeking clarification on certain dogmatic questions. From Demetrios Chomatenos, a bitter opponent of the autocephalous Serbian

Archbishopric and its first head, the Serbian king did indeed receive carefully drafted answers, supported by sacred canons and church tradition. The motivation for Radoslav's action was likely rooted in the fact that the newly established Serbian Archbishopric still harbored doubts regarding the canonical correctness of certain liturgical elements, and in addition, not all dogmatic issues in the liturgical application had been consistently resolved. As Chomatenos was a renowned expert in canon law and liturgical practice, it is unsurprising that the ruler of the state that provided a political framework for the newly established particular Church, would turn to him with the aim of clarifying some issues in these domains. As subsequent events would show, this correspondence posed no threat whatsoever to the independence of the Serbian Archbishopric; on the contrary, Chomatenos's learned answers may certainly have been beneficial to its internal structure and development. Ultimately, if Sava's biographers are to be believed, the good relations between the uncle and his nephew remained entirely undisturbed both before and after the pilgrimage to the Holy Land.

Upon returning to his homeland, where he was solemnly welcomed by King Radoslav, Sava first went to Studenica, where he paid homage to his father's relics, and then proceeded to Žiča, where he conducted a memorial service over the grave of his brother Stefan, likely on the anniversary of his death. In the years that followed, he resided primarily at Žiča, the archiepiscopal center, zealously performing his primatial duties without neglecting his personal monastic asceticism. At that time, a dramatic shift in royal power occurred. In the second half of 1233, the nobility, dissatisfied with Radoslav's rule, carried out a coup and elevated his younger brother, Vladislav, to the throne. This was undoubtedly





Saint Simeon Nemanja, Stefan the First-Crowned as the Monk Simon, Radoslav, and Ana, Radoslav's Narthex of the Studenica Monastery, Saint Simeon Chapel (c. 1235)

influenced by Vladislav's marriage to the daughter of the Bulgarian Emperor John Asen II, who, having defeated the Thessalonian Emperor Theodore Doukas at the battle of Klokotnitsa in 1230, had risen to a leading position among the Balkan dynasties. Although Archbishop Sava initially disapproved of Vladislav's forced ascension, he ultimately crowned the new ruler, accepting the coup as an expression of divine will. Shortly thereafter, having spent fourteen years at the helm of the Serbian Church, he decided to step down from the archiepiscopal throne, selecting and ordaining Arsenije, one of his disciples, as his successor. Sava remained with the new archbishop for a short period, instructing him on how to navigate the immense challenges of his new archpastoral office.

Sensing that his strength was beginning to fail, Sava resolved to set out once more for the holy places of the East. While his first pilgrimage had focused primarily on Jerusalem, this time – as if apprehending that his earthly end was near – he intended to visit all the sacred sites he had been unable to reach before, particularly those renowned for monastic asceticism. He set himself a significantly more demanding itinerary, both in terms of time, geographical distance and the grueling physical exertion required. Boarding a ship at Budva, likely in the early autumn of 1233, Sava sailed via Brindisi to Acre. Along the way, he endured severe tribulations in the form of pirate attacks and a capricious sea, yet he considered these perils worth bearing for the sake of entering Jerusalem once more. There, he reunited with his old friend, Patriarch Athanasius II, and after a brief stay proceeded to Alexandria to meet with Patriarch Nicholas I. Supported by the escort and blessings of his hospitable host, Sava visited the most prominent sites of early Christian skete monasticism in the Egyptian desert, west of the Nile Delta, and, if Domentijan is to be believed, he even descended as far south as the Thebaid, ancient Egyptian Thebes. Upon returning to Jerusalem, where he was once again the honored guest and liturgical concelebrant of Patriarch Athanasius, Sava prepared for a journey to Sinai. Before departing, he penned a letter to Spyridon, the abbot of Studenica; this document reveals that neither the heavy burden of his years, nor his physical fatigue, nor the premonition of imminent death could deter him from his ascetic wanderings. Imbued with deep pastoral tenderness, this letter to Spyridon stands as the first known epistle in Serbian literary history. To reach Sinai, Sava traveled along the old pilgrimage route east of the Dead Sea, but first headed to Cairo, where he received permission and guides from the Egyptian sultan to travel to his destination. After visiting the monastery of St. Catherine, the most revered of the Sinai shrines, he endured the arduous climb to the summit of Mount Sinai. From there, he returned to Jerusalem for a third time, and from there, after exchanging farewells with Patriarch Athanasius, he set off for his homeland.

The first stop on his return journey was Antioch, where the local Patriarch hosted him. After visiting the sanctuaries in the city's vicinity, Sava headed north into the Kingdom of

Lesser Armenia and the Sultanate of Iconium, in order to acquire holy relics, and then, traveling by both sea and land, he eventually reached Constantinople, where he visited the Monastery of the Theotokos Evergetis. On that journey he was already gravely afflicted by illness and profound fatigue; yet, instead of heading straight for Mount Athos, he nevertheless decided to visit the Bulgarian Emperor, John Asen II, who was also the father-in-law of the Serbian King, likely traveling at the Emperor's personal invitation. He sailed from Constantinople to Mesembria (modern-day Nesebar), and from there proceeded on horseback toward the Bulgarian capital of Tarnovo, where, after more than a year of travel, physical exertion and trials, he arrived likely at the end of 1234, exhausted and ill.

Although Emperor John Asen II showered his distinguished guest with immense attention, honors, and every possible comfort, the ailing and exhausted monk was already nearing his end. He managed to celebrate the Divine Liturgy on the Eve of Theophany and, sensing that the moment of his departure was at hand, he dispatched a portion of his entourage back to the Serbian land, laden with the holy relics and eulogiae (blessed tokens) he had acquired throughout his vast eastern travels. The illness overcame him on January 14, 1235, and by order of the emperor he was laid to rest within the narthex of the Church of the Holy Forty Martyrs in the capital city of the Bulgarian Empire. Asen's decision to bury Sava with the highest honors – with the funeral service concelebrated by the Bulgarian Patriarch Joachim – within his own imperial foundation, a church built specifically to commemorate his triumph at Klokotnitsa, aligned with his program to elevate Tarnovo into an imperial and holy city that possessed its own patron saints. The widespread renown of Sava's lifetime miracles and his reputation throughout the Orthodox East provided sufficient incentive for Asen to capitalize on the sudden death of the first Serbian archbishop within his capital and to secure heavenly backing for the Bulgarian Empire. Consequently, it is entirely unsurprising that the Bulgarian Emperor himself took the very first steps toward establishing the cult of Saint Sava.

Naturally, King Vladislav also shared the same opinion as the Bulgarian emperor, and the death and initial burial of his uncle outside the borders of the Serbian land granted him an opportunity to organize and carry out the necessary actions to shape the saint's cult – namely, the exhumation of the relics from their original grave, their solemn translation, and their reinterment in a new mausoleum. The Serbian mission to Tarnovo, described in the biographies of Saint Sava with quite dramatic details, but not without contradictions, put the kinship and alliance between the Serbian and Bulgarian courts to a severe test. The sheer scale of the undertaking is attested by the fact that the King himself, accompanied by a large retinue of dignitaries, set out for his father-in-law's court in Tarnovo, no earlier than 1238. Although the meeting between father-in-law and son-in-law was a joyous and affectionate one, the true purpose of Vladislav's visit presented



Church of the Holy Forty Martyrs, Veliko Tarnovo

both monarchs with a profound trial. Everything proceeded smoothly at the Bulgarian court until the Serbian king announced his desire to translate his uncle's relics back to his homeland to bury them there. Asen was not inclined to give up the sudden blessing offered by the opportunity to host the first Serbian archbishop's eternal resting place within his own endowment in the Bulgarian capital. Despite the commotion and discontent among the emperor's entourage, Vladislav refused to relent, and, through a combination of persistent diplomatic arguments and unsettling, ominous dreams, Asen was eventually persuaded to comply with his son-in-law's requests. Of course, he failed to appease the opposition of his own nobles, so the men of the Serbian king's retinue were forced to exhume the body almost secretly and depart Tarnovo in a hurry. In stark contrast to the lavish ceremonies and joy with which the delegation had initially been welcomed and the meeting of the two rulers was celebrated, the King's men set off on their return journey without splendor or fanfare, slipping away almost like thieves in the night. Vladislav remained behind just long enough to bid a formal farewell to his father-in-law, but he

quickly rushed to catch up with his delegation, seeing that disappointment and anger had spread through the Emperor's court over the decision to allow the translation of Sava's relics to the Serbian land.

Only when it found itself in its homeland, in early May, where it was welcomed by Archbishop Arsenije, bishops and abbots, did the quiet and swift procession assume its true form and nature, befitting the importance of the deceased they were carrying. The solemn and considerably enlarged retinue bearing Sava's "incorrupt" body then headed toward the Mileševa Monastery, Vladislav's royal endowment, where a second tomb had already been prepared for the new saint within the outer narthex of the Church of the Ascension. Vladislav very wisely used his royal prerogative to assign this monastery, which he had built as a family mausoleum, the role of serving as the eternal resting place and focal epicenter for the cult of Saint Sava. Thus, almost overnight, Mileševa rose to second place, right behind Studenica, in the hierarchy of royal foundations across the Serbian land, and Vladislav secured for himself lasting merits in historical memory. Sava's preserved body, which King Vladislav found in the grave in Tarnovo, combined with a miraculous apparition of the relics to a Mileševa monk shortly after the reinterment, served as convincing signs and an unambiguous proclamation of his holiness. The canonized relics were placed in a coffin before the altar, and soon after that, a synaxaric biography of the new saint was composed, while by the middle of the thirteenth century, a proper liturgical service and an extensive biography were penned by Domentijan. Through these steps, the hymnographic and hagiographic foundations for the cult of Saint Sava were laid.

By the close of the thirteenth century, the veneration of the joint cult of Saint Simeon of Serbia (the Myrrh-streamer) and Saint Sava of Serbia, the protectors of the state and dynasty and the source of legitimacy for the ruling monarch, had become established. It was literarily and poetically shaped by Teodosije of Hilandar in his new *Life of Saint Sava*, created by adapting Domentijan's work, as well as in his *Praise of Saint Simeon and Saint Sava*, services and canons. The harmony between the secular and the spiritual in the care for the welfare and souls of the Serbian people was thus reinforced through the joint glorification of father and son, these holy patrons who stood at the beginning of the state and ecclesiastical life of the Serbian land.

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TIHON M. RAKIĆEVIĆ, Bishop of Moravica

ARCHIMANDRITE AND ARCHBISHOP SAVA'S SPIRITUAL CENTERS AND THE NEW ISRAEL

For we see upon us the mercy of God's great providence,
for He has revealed to us a new Abraham, our Holy
Lord Simeon, and a new myrrh-bearing man in the
newborn Israel, that is, in the Serbian land.

Typikon of Saint Archbishop Nikodim, 1319

Following the Battle of Morava in the autumn of 1191, the conclusion of a marriage alliance between the Serbian and Byzantine courts, and the cessation of fighting against the Hungarians, to whose attacks Serbia had been exposed in 1191/1192, a significant period of peace ensued for Serbia. Nemanja's *Charter of Hilandar* states that following these events, his reign was granted "peace and silence" from all sides. A period of stability began for Serbia: "[...] Since my state gained peace and quiet from all sides, I have begun to sharpen my thoughts and instruct my mind that I wish to also care for my soul, to find out among whom I will be counted on the day of the Last Judgment, and how it might be possible for me to receive the angelic and apostolic image [...]." Between the establishment of peace in Serbia and Nemanja's monasticism, more than three years of preparation likely passed, during which Nemanja considered it certain that his son would not return from Mount Athos. Sava's departure, tonsuring, and steadfast commitment to the life on Mount Athos certainly reinforced Nemanja's own decision to choose monastic life. However, God's providence ensured that neither Nemanja's nor Sava's monastic paths would unfold as they had originally envisioned. The monk Simeon would leave the Studenica Monastery – his most important foundation – and go to Mount Athos, while Sava would leave his and his father's



ΑΡΧΗΓ
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Transfer of the Relics of Saint Simeon from Hilandar to Studenica, Radoslav's Narthex of the Studenica Monastery, Saint Simeon Chapel (c. 1235)

Athonite foundation – the Hilandar Monastery – and return to Serbia, where he would oversee the work and construction of two fundamental spiritual centers – at Studenica, as the archimandrite of the community of monasteries, and at Žiča, as the archbishop of the autocephalous local Church.

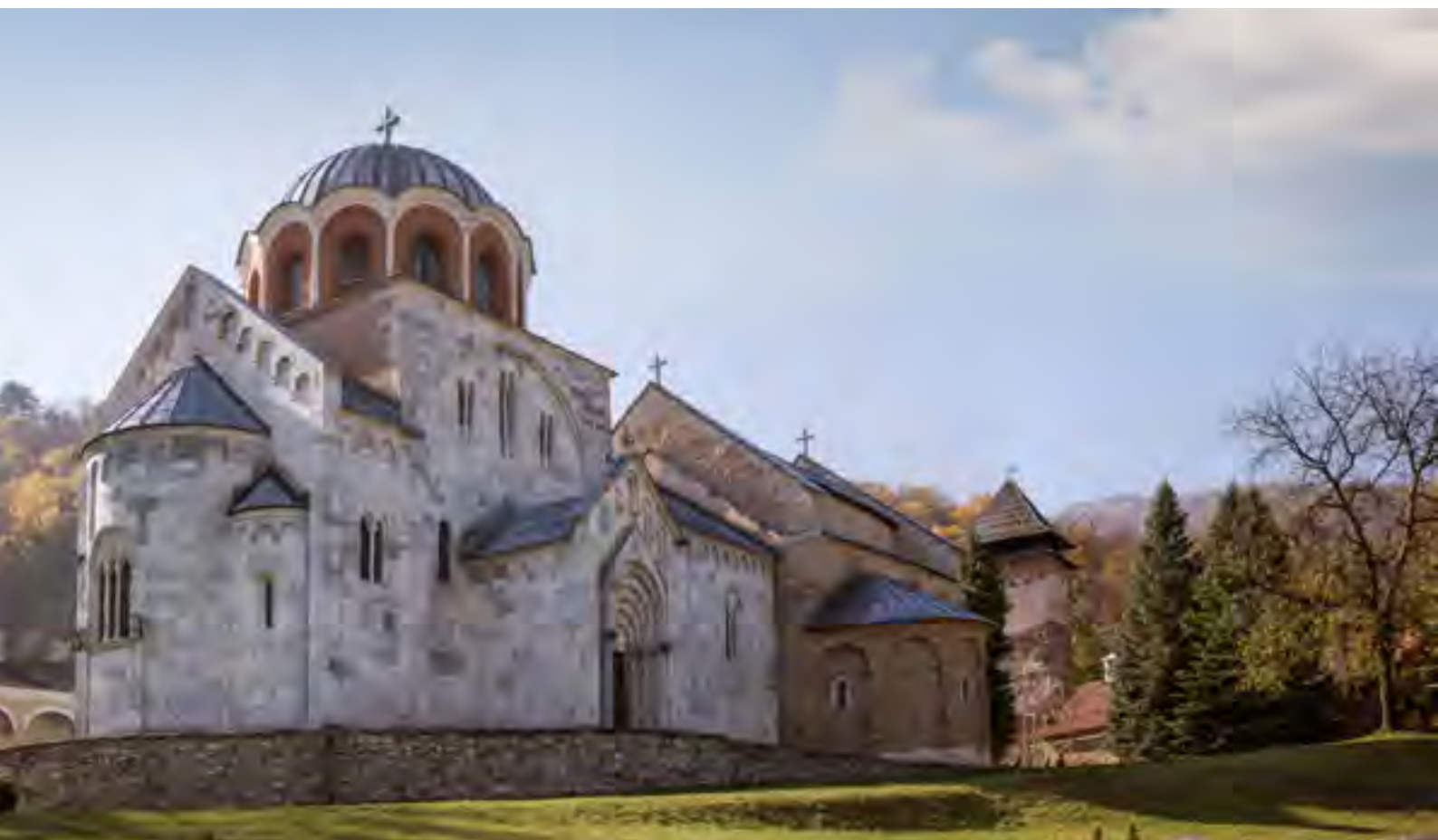


While the monk Sava Nemanjić was practicing asceticism on Mount Athos, and Stefan Nemanja was planning to retire from power and become a monk, the construction of the Studenica Monastery was already well underway. Studenica's construction possessed its own distinct spiritual prehistory, relating to the establishment of a strong bond between the Serbian Župan, Stefan Nemanja, and the Theotokos Evergetis Monastery, an important shrine of Constantinople, the then Byzantine capital. This connection, subsequently sustained by Nemanja's son, the Athonite monk Sava, is mentioned in surviving thirteenth-century sources written by Sava's brother, King Stefan the First-Crowned; Sava's disciple, the monk Domentijan; Domentijan's own disciple, Teodosije of Hilandar, and the Russian Archbishop, Anthony of Novgorod.

On the Fest of Annunciation in 1196, Stefan Nemanja appointed his son Stefan as the Grand Župan of Serbia (r. 1196–1227). This took place shortly after the accession of Emperor Alexios III Angelos to the throne in Constantinople (r. 1195–1203). The new Župan, Stefan, was married to Alexios's daughter, Eudokia, and soon after acquired the high Byzantine court title of sebastokrator. After handing over power to his son, Stefan Nemanja received monastic tonsure from the Bishop of Raška. Shortly thereafter, the newly tonsured



Saint Sava,
King's Church,
Studenica
Monastery
(c. 1314)



Church of the Holy Virgin, Studenica Monastery, last decade of the twelfth century

monk Simeon arrived at Studenica, where he resided as a brother within the monastic community for eighteen and a half months. At Sava's invitation, Simeon departed Studenica on October 8 and arrived at the Vatopedi Monastery on November 2, 1197. The venerable elder lived a deeply ascetic life on Mount Athos for fifteen and a half months, until his blessed repose on February 13, 1199.

The ensuing years were difficult for the Byzantine Empire, marked by the Fourth Crusade and the fall of Constantinople to the Latins and Franks in 1204. Following the fall of Constantinople and the enthronement of a Latin Patriarch, a period began of a "soft"

approach toward the Orthodox with the aim of persuading them to voluntarily recognize the primacy and jurisdiction of the Pope. When this failed, the occupying forces subordinated Thessaloniki and Mount Athos to the papal throne in the autumn of 1206. From then on, the monasteries of Mount Athos were placed under the authority of the Latin bishop of Sebaste, and the threat to the monks and monasteries escalated rapidly.

The disintegration of the Byzantine Empire and the subsequent creation of the so-called Latin Empire and other states under the rule of Western masters were the outcomes of the Fourth Crusade. This collapse triggered a protracted crisis within the Byzantine world and its established order. The state ruled by Nemanja's son Stefan found itself caught between, and within, two monarchical concepts – the Byzantine Emperor and the Roman Pope. As Serbia oscillated between these two concepts, a civil war erupted because in 1202, Vukan, backed by Hungary, overthrew Stefan from power. At that time, the Pope authorized the Archbishop of Kalocsa to place Serbia under his ecclesiastical jurisdiction, but the prelate was unable to implement the mandate, as Stefan had returned to power in the meantime. Furthermore, the Archbishop hardly had any opportunity to extract an oath of allegiance even from Vukan Nemanjić, since the Hungarian king himself had already begun to call himself the King of Serbia. Prior to Saint Sava's return to Serbia, the situation stabilized, but it was only with his arrival that general spiritual prosperity and social progress began.

Having already experienced the deeply unfavorable historical conditions in which the Holy Mountain found itself at that time, but also having received an invitation from his brothers Stefan and Vukan, Sava, carrying his father's relics, set off for Serbia, and on that journey, as he himself noted, he went "through fire and water." Accompanied by a group of monks and bearing Simeon's relics, in early 1207 he arrived in Hvosno, where his brothers welcomed him alongside the nobility and clergy. From there, they transferred Simeon's relics to Studenica, and on February 9 they laid them in a prepared tomb, and then, on February 13, they solemnly celebrated Nemanja's commemoration. In the ensuing period, myrrh-streamings would take place at Studenica, establishing the importance of the monastery, and at the same time serving as proof of Simeon's holiness and providing an exceptional foundation for the development of his cult. Also, we should not forget the very important fact that Archimandrite Sava Nemanjić soon became the head of the Studenica brotherhood. Sava's nearly decade-long tenure in his homeland as Archimandrite and Abbot of Studenica was marked by tireless work and absolute commitment. At Studenica, Sava completed the *Studenica Typikon*, within the framework of which he wrote the founder's *Life of Saint Simeon*, and compiled and shaped the *Service to Saint Simeon*. The cult of Saint Simeon began to develop gradually, later becoming extremely important to the Serbian Church and monarchy, while his grave in Studenica became a visible sign of the permanence of Serbian state institutions.



The Crucifixion of Christ, Church of
the Holy Virgin, Studenica Monastery (1208/1209)





Upper Studenica Hermitage of Saint Sava, first half of the thirteenth century

Abbot Sava oversaw the completion of the monastery complex, including the fresco program for Studenica's cathedral church, after which he added the founding inscription that remains beneath the great dome to this day. It provides vital historical data regarding the monastery's construction, names his father and brothers as co-founders, and concludes by humbly recording his own name: "Remember me, Sava the sinful, who labored here." The inscription reveals that the frescoes were completed in 1209. Like all iconographic inscriptions throughout Studenica, this one was written in the Cyrillic script, in the Serbo-Slavonic language, instead of the previous Greek, which testifies to a cultural and political change. Within this clearly well-thought-out decision, one can discern the

importance Saint Sava had in defining the interests of the Serbian people, their Church and state, as well as in the careful creation of spiritual centers.

Built in the twelfth century from white marble, Nemanja's catholicon at Studenica is today one of the best-preserved medieval buildings in the world. Its architectural sculpture ranks among the finest achievements of the Romanesque style of its era, while the frescoes from 1208/1209 represent the highest quality painting extant from this period. In addition to the main church, other authentic structures from the time of Saint Sava and Nemanja have also been preserved at Studenica. These include the founder's quarters, the lower levels of the monastic dormitories, the monumental tower, the refectory, and the original lower courses of the defensive walls. The tomb of the Venerable Simeon, the relics of the Venerable Simon (King Stefan the First-Crowned), and the relics of the Venerable Mother Anastasia are all housed within the main church, which was originally conceived as the dynastic mausoleum for the royal family. Furthermore, thanks to Sava's disciple Domentijan, who penned his extensive biography, we possess a recorded sermon delivered by Saint Sava at the Studenica Monastery during his historic tenure as its abbot.

Studenica served as the primary monastery of the Serbian land and the leading see of the Studenica archimandriate, which functioned at the time as a kind of community of monasteries. The abbots of these monasteries participated in the election of the Studenica abbot. As clearly demonstrated in Chapter 13 of the *Studenica Typikon*, the abbots of six specific monasteries oversaw this election and appointment process: St. George in Ras, St. Nicholas in Toplica, St. Nicholas in Kaznovići, the Holy Virgin in Gradac and two monasteries in Dabar – St. Nicholas and St. George. According to the regulations in Chapter 35 of the *Typikon*, these same six abbots, alongside the ruling Serbian monarch, were required to attend the solemn liturgical services held at Studenica on the anniversary of the founder's repose. Among them, the abbot of Studenica occupied a higher position, as indicated by his special title – “the first” abbot, which is confirmed by Chapter 13 of the *Studenica Typikon*. This institutional title has been preserved to this day in the tombstone inscriptions of the first two Studenica abbots – Ignjatije and Dionisije.

This community of sui iuris Serbian monasteries, united under the leadership of the Studenica abbot, was the historical reality of the ecclesiastical organization in the Serbian lands at that time, and in 1219 this very structure became the basis for the establishment of the first dioceses founded by Archbishop Saint Sava. Nemanja and Sava's work in organizing the monastery union (confederation) with Studenica at the head soon transcended its original scope and became part of the process that led towards both the consolidation of Orthodoxy and the survival and strengthening of Serbian statehood. In his *Letter to Spyridon*, the abbot of Studenica, sent from Jerusalem to Studenica towards the end of his life, Sava mentioned abbots who were Spyridon's *partakers*, which, written only a decade



The Studenica Typikon of Saint Sava, Averkije's copy, Chapter 35, fols. 57b–58a, Library of the National Museum in Prague (1619)

and a half after the founding of the Serbian Archbishopric, testified to the monastic tradition that existed in Raška.

The *Studenica Typikon* provides unambiguous testimony regarding Studenica's development as a spiritual center, as well as its role as the site where Saint Sava formally recorded his vision of the Serbian people as the New Israel. Unlike the *Hilandar Typikon* that preceded it, and the *Evergetis Typikon* that served as its model, Sava incorporated unique provisions into the introductory chapter of the *Studenica Typikon*; these provisions regarded the relationship with the population of the Nemanjić state, who were envisioned there as God's people – the New Israel. From a formal point of view, the promulgation and implementation of the *Studenica Typikon* fell within the executive competence of Grand Župan Stefan Nemanjić (the First-Crowned), who had been granted the full prerogatives of the founder in 1196, although the creation of the *Typikon* depended absolutely and exclusively

> The Oldest Copy of the Hilandar Typikon, detail of fol. 1, Archives of the Hilandar Monastery, 1220s

[illegible]



on the autorship of Archimandrite Saint Sava. The fact that the state stood behind the provisions written by a cleric increased their significance and invested these provisions with a distinct authority.

In medieval literature, specific ruling prerogatives were allegorically represented through references to prominent Old Testament figures: Jacob as the leader of Israel, Joseph as the God-chosen righteous man, David as the anointed victor over a stronger enemy, Moses as the God-inspired tribal leader, Joshua as the warrior and conqueror. In the *Studenica Typikon*, more precisely within its introductory chapter – the *Life of Saint Simeon*, Saint Sava calls his father “the second Abraham.” Furthermore, throughout the *Life*, he emphasizes the conceptualization of his own countrymen as God’s chosen people, and it is in this context that he records Nemanja’s words upon abdicating and transferring power to his son, Stefan: “My beloved child, shepherd this Israel of mine, and watch over it [...]” From these Nemanja’s words, it is clear that the founder of the Nemanjić dynasty openly designated the Serbian people as Israel, in the sense of the New Israel.

Shortly before the aforementioned passage, Sava records that Nemanja said: “And now let me, your ruler, go in peace, so that my eyes may see my salvation, which [the Lord] has prepared before the face of all people; a light to bring revelation to the nations and the glory of you, my flock.” This segment clearly paraphrases the Song of Simeon from the Gospel of Luke (Luke 2:29–32), but with one crucial modification—where the Holy Apostle Luke writes “Israel,” Saint Sava substitutes Nemanja’s “flock,” signifying the entire Serbian people. With this alteration, Saint Sava unequivocally emphasizes the comparison of Nemanja’s flock with God’s chosen people – Israel. Furthermore, comparing Nemanja to Simeon the God-Receiver frames the Grand Župan as a man *in whom the Holy Spirit dwells* (cf. Luke 2:25), a man who is “led by the Spirit” (Luke 2:27), and one who recognized where the light of salvation is, and who blessed (cf. Luke 2:29) the path of redemption for his people (cf. Luke 2:32). Consequently, the Serbian people, envisioned as Nemanja’s flock, are placed in a direct comparative relationship with the Old Testament people of Israel. This comparison attributes a prophetic gift to Simeon Nemanja, because he recognizes the blessing upon his people.

Shortly thereafter, still during the transition of power, Nemanja declares: “Therefore, my beloved children, quickly let me go, that I may see the consolation of Israel.” Here, Saint Sava again deliberately links Nemanja with Simeon the God-Receiver, of whom Holy Scripture records that he “was waiting for the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was upon him” (Luke 2:25). Within Sava’s narrative framework, Nemanja recognizes that the Christian faith holds the true light of salvation, ultimately blessing this trajectory for the Serbian people – the definitive path of salvation (cf. Luke 2:29, 32).

Sanctuary of the Church of the Ascension, Žiča Monastery, first half of the thirteenth century



Writing of Sava's monumental labor at Studenica, his disciple, the monk Domentijan, noted: "For verily favored by God is the archimandriate, from which this lover of God founded the great archbishopric, the Savior's house called Žiča, which he began and completed with his pious brother, the Grand Župan, kyr Stefan." These words provide definitive contemporary testimony to the creation of the Žiča Monastery. Consequently, with the full material and political backing of his brother, Grand Župan Stefan, Sava personally supervised and directed the construction of the Žiča Monastery, an undertaking spanning the initial years of his tenure at Studenica until 1215. Describing this same project, Domentijan's own disciple, the monk Teodosije, testifies that Sava began to build "the great church of the Ascension of the Lord in Žiča, which is called the Archbishopric."

During those years, great changes occurred that would affect the future of the Church and the state. In 1217, a papal legate crowned Sava's brother, Grand Župan Stefan, as king, thereby elevating his rank within the hierarchy of rulers of the Western world. At the time, it initially appeared that the Serbian monarch, whose realm stood at a turning point, would never recognize Theodore I Laskaris (1204–1221), who had been crowned by the Patriarch of Constantinople as the Byzantine Emperor in Nicaea. During this exact period, however, the exiled Roman imperial traditions and authority were being systematically restored in Nicaea. Sava's activities in the ensuing years, however, led to the creation of an independent Church. He rethought the position of the Serbian king within the hierarchies of the Western and Byzantine worlds. Amidst the decisive struggle for supremacy between the two parts of the Byzantine domain – the Empire of Nicaea and the Despotate of Epirus – Sava backed the efforts of the Empire of Nicaea to be accepted and recognized as the authentic "Byzantine Empire." Four decades later, in 1261, when the Empire of Nicaea finally recaptured the capital of Constantinople, the historical outcome fully vindicated Sava's early recognition of their legitimacy.

Saint Sava was well acquainted with the historical circumstances in the region. In 1219, the Ecumenical Patriarchate and the Archbishopric of Ohrid were not in liturgical communion, but in a state of undeclared schism. Archbishop Chomatenos of Ohrid refused to recognize Theodore Laskaris as the rightful emperor, and the Emperor and Patriarch of Nicaea, at that moment, rejected the legitimacy of Chomatenos's own ordination. This was, in all likelihood, a consequence of the fact that the Archbishop of Ohrid had not been elected by the Emperor of the Romans, as had been the tradition for two centuries, but had instead been appointed by the ruler of Epirus. The name of the Archbishop of Ohrid, Demetrios Chomatenos, had been omitted from the diptych of the Patriarch of Nicaea, which, at the precise moment when Saint Sava undertook his journey to Nicaea, was a fact of crucial importance.



Church of the Ascension, Žiča Monastery, first half of the thirteenth century

Relying on a two-hundred-year-old tradition of imperial influence over jurisdictional boundaries and the election of the Ohrid primate, Saint Sava traveled to Nicaea, petitioned Theodore I Laskaris, and subsequently received his ordination. The information that Mount Athos recognized Laskaris as its master, and that the Emperor's established prerogatives extended to the appointment of the higher clergy as well, is also contained in Domentijan's description of Sava's visit to Nicaea and Emperor Theodore Laskaris, as a valuable testimony of events that would strongly influence the further development of both the Serbian state and the Church. With the establishment of the autocephalous Serbian Archbishopric, Sava found a canonical model for church organization that respected historical tradition and covered the territory ruled by his brother, King Stefan Nemanjić.

Following his consecration in Nicaea, Saint Sava returned to Serbia via Mount Athos and Thessaloniki, making his way to the newly prepared archiepiscopal seat at the Žiča Monastery. Here, in the Church of the Ascension of the Lord, Sava ordained the bishops of the newly established Serbian archbishopric, and his disciple Domentijan recorded another of Sava's Studenica sermons, which he delivered upon arriving at the "Lavra of the Holy Virgin of Studenica." The sermon was delivered shortly after Archbishop Sava's arrival in Serbia.

When the Serbian archbishopric was founded in 1219, two monasteries of the Studenica archimandriate – the monastery of St. Nicholas in Toplica and the monastery of St. Nicholas in Dabar – became the centers of the newly established Toplica and Dabar dioceses. Similar monastic complexes housed the eparchial seats of several of Sava's other bishoprics, a testament to the indissoluble connection between episcopal centers and monastic communities during the nascent phase of the Serbian Church's history.

The Žiča Monastery became the epicenter of important, even decisive events that elevated this temple and established it as a great spiritual center. The Žiča temple still preserves original frescoes from Sava's time, in particular from the period between Sava's return from Nicaea in 1220 and the conclusion of the reign of King Stefan the First-Crowned in 1227. Furthermore, there is no doubt that Saint Sava influenced the text of the *Žiča Charters*, which in the form of inscriptions still adorn the Žiča church of the Ascension of Christ. Following the death of King Stefan the First-Crowned, "in the great archbishopric" Sava crowned his nephew Radoslav as king and married him to Anna, the daughter of the Epirus ruler Theodore, from the Doukas family.

At the seat of the archbishopric, on the Feast of Ascension in 1221, Saint Sava convened the Great Council of Žiča, attended by clergy and laity. Following the Divine Liturgy, which Archbishop Sava concelebrated alongside his newly ordained bishops, priests, and deacons, he delivered a *Sermon on the True Faith*. The monk Domentijan, who wrote down this sermon, places significant emphasis on his teacher's dogmatic and theological work at this council. This text served as the *Serbian Synodikon of Orthodoxy*, explicitly presenting the conciliar confession of the Orthodox faith and concluding with a solemn proclamation of anathemas against heresy.

In the most solemn liturgical manner, and within its central spiritual institution – the Archbishopric of the Serbian and Maritime Lands at the Žiča Monastery – the new people of God in the Serbian land confessed the purest and deepest Orthodox faith on the day of the Ascension Council.

Saint Sava's significant work at the monasteries of Studenica and Žiča is of exceptional importance. The foundations of the Church that he laid have stood inviolate, while his prudent and thoughtful church diplomacy further reinforced the pillars of the state.

The fact that the Serbian state received a separate and unified autocephalous Church has largely, in terms of religion, overcome the disunity of the Serbs.

Following his first pilgrimage to the Holy Land, which he undertook in 1229, Sava returned to Žiča. Sometime later, he appointed his monastic brother, Arsenije from Žiča, as his successor to the archiepiscopal throne. In 1234, Sava departed from Žiča on a second pilgrimage to the holy places of the East, and on his return from the trip, he reposed in Tarnovo.

However, even after Sava's death, the spiritual centers he had established continued to exist, transferring their cultural and historical significance to their metochia (monastic dependencies) as well. Following his repose, the relics of Sava's successor, Archbishop Arsenije I, were translated to the Church of the Holy Apostles in Peć. This central church of the Žiča Monastery's metochion had been constructed largely through Arsenije's own initiative. Ultimately, when Žiča was burned at the close of the thirteenth century, the Žiča Metochion near Peć became the seat of the Serbian Archbishopric.

On the centenary of the acquisition of autocephaly by the Church of Serbian lands in 1319, within the Peć Monastery – the center of the Serbian Archbishopric – Nikodim wrote in his typikon about the connection between the “newborn Serbian Israel” and the work on the creation of the church organization. The words of the Holy Archbishop Nikodim link this concept of a new, that is, “newborn Israel” with “this great Church of Saint Sava.”

In this regard, the *Typicon of Nikodim* states the following:

“The divine prophets’ prophecies have come to an end. For as Isaiah said: ‘Shine, for your light has come, and lift up your eyes all around and see your children gathered together. For kings will come to your light, and nations to the brightness of your rising.’ After the first Israel had grown weary with unbelief, the prophet also spoke in the presence of the Lord, saying: ‘I will call a people that was not mine, my people, and those not beloved, my beloved.’ Where it was said to them: ‘You are not my people,’ there they will be called sons of the living God. For we see the mercy of God’s great providence upon us, for He has revealed to us a new Abraham, our Holy Lord Simeon, and a new myrrh-streaming man within the newborn Israel, that is, the Serbian land.”



The departure of Saint Sava from Hilandar and his subsequent arrival in Serbia were prompted by various circumstances, but the outcome of that arrival was unique in terms of the spiritual growth of the Serbian people. In his *Žiča Sermon on the True Faith*, Sava reveals that historical circumstances are precisely an integral part of God's providence concerning human salvation. On it, according to the writings of the monk Domentijan, is said: “And the most gracious God [...] according to that same first commandment and in

the same manner according to the teaching and preaching of the Holy Apostles, elevates me to this holy office, wanting through me to ‘fill in the gaps’ of our fathers; and by His Holy Spirit He commanded me to proclaim to you this word of His about your salvation, which you, having heard, preserve with love, so that we too may be partakers of the order of the saints.” Sava’s words, “to fill in the gaps”, in this context mean to supplement, to complete, and to compensate for what is lacking, and at the same time they refer to the theology of the Holy Apostle Paul, who said: “I complete what is lacking in Christ’s afflictions for the sake of his body, that is, the Church” (Col 1:24). Saint Sava teaches at Žiča that Christians should, “like living stones,” be built “into a spiritual house” (1 Peter 2:5). By thus incorporating themselves into “His body, which is the Church,” the very Serbian people to whom he preaches are transformed into a “chosen people,” a “holy nation” called to proclaim “the virtues of Him who called them” (1 Peter 2:9).

As Archimandrite of the Studenica Monastery, Saint Sava prophetically articulated Nemanja’s and his own vision of their people as the New Israel within the introductory chapter of the *Studenica Typikon*. Later, as Archbishop of the Serbian lands, he dynamically expanded this concept at the Žiča Monastery through the public, nationwide proclamation of the *Serbian Synodikon of Orthodoxy* – the ecclesiological designation for his historic *Žiča Sermon*. A century later, his successor on the throne in the Peć Archbishopric expressed the view that Sava’s work at the spiritual centers of Žiča and Studenica, as well as the centers that followed, had successfully flourished throughout the entire “newborn Israel, that is, the Serbian land.” Hence, it can be concluded that the conceptualization of the Serbian people as the New Israel has not remained only Sava’s private vision, but that this ‘newborn Israel’ has been forged through his own merit, primarily within the spiritual centers he established, in order to affirm its lasting endurance by transcending the borders of all the Serbian and Maritime Lands.

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SAINT SAVA AND THE CREATION OF OLD SERBIAN ART

When Saint Sava of Serbia's activities during the first decades of the thirteenth century, highly fruitful across the domains of religious, political and cultural life of Serbia, are viewed in their entirety, it is noticeable that they were predominantly subordinated to one goal. Everything he accomplished in these spheres, even when undertaken for the sake of the well-being of his own soul, led to the self-knowledge of identity, maturation and civilizational growth of the Serbian people within an eschatologically oriented perspective. To the preservation, elevation and salvation of his people Saint Sava also dedicated his tireless and thorough work on the creation of Serbian art within a conceptually and carefully designed framework, attaining a reach it had never possessed before. Undeniably, art had been created across the Serbian lands – both in Raška and Bosnia, as well as in Zeta, Hum, Travunija, and other maritime regions – long before the youngest Nemanja's son stepped into history. It had, however, no permanent direction or a clear program in its formation, and the largely spontaneous interweaving of disparate traditions and styles continued until the end of the twelfth century without a distinct identity stamp that only a true creative breakthrough could imprint. It was during the era of Sava's father, Grand Župan Stefan Nemanja (later Saint Simeon), that, along with the beginnings of the construction of the Nemanjić dynastic and state ideology, artistic creativity also began to display signs of more programmatically based, identity-driven solutions (such as Đurđevi Stupovi near Ras and Studenica). What was then foreshadowed – or rather, created as a nucleus – would be developed into a mature, recognizable fruit and established as a long-lasting, influential model by the next generation, led by

Saint Sava. He was able to assume this role of ideological leader thanks to his many talents, his education and creative spirit, standing as the dynasty's most knowledgeable member in artistic matters.

Sava's readiness to accept leadership stemmed from his broad insight into artistic traditions and contemporary circumstances in the most important centers of Eastern Christian art, his thorough knowledge of Orthodox theology, liturgical practices and needs, as well as his direct participation in many of the Nemanjić dynasty's foundational endeavors. Saint Sava undoubtedly gained his first experiences in encountering great artistic endeavors even before departing for Mount Athos, when as the young Rastko he had observed the construction work of his father's most significant endowment – Studenica. However, before those works were fully completed, he, as a young man, found himself on Mount Athos, the very source of Orthodox spirituality. There, he had the opportunity to become thoroughly acquainted with the architecture, wall painting, icon painting and applied arts of some of the most prestigious monasteries in the Byzantine world, and then to begin his extensive founding activities, executed either independently or alongside his elderly father, Simeon, who joined him toward the close of 1197. There is no doubt that the young and gifted Sava, by then already a monk with some experience and a command of the Greek language, played the pivotal role in these projects. At the Vatopedi Monastery, where he practiced his ascetic discipline and ultimately welcomed his father, he oversaw the construction of three chapels, dedicating them respectively to the Nativity of the Theotokos, Saint John Chrysostom, and the Transfiguration of the Lord (the latter located within the great tower); he also directed the covering of the catholicon with lead, the restoration of the ruined Church of Saint Simeon Stylites in Prosphora, and the expansion and painting of the Vatopedi refectory. Saints Sava and Simeon generously donated and materially assisted the restoration and elevation of other monasteries on Mount Athos, including Iviron, the Great Lavra, Karyes, Philotheou, and Karakallou. At Xeropotamou – originally the monastery of Saint Nikephoros – they acted as “true founders,” thoroughly restoring and painting the catholicon, which they dedicated to the Forty Martyrs of Sebaste. Finally, they began the renovation of the abandoned monastery of Hilandar, a sanctuary designed “to receive people of Serbian origin” who wished to devote themselves to the monastic life. They “decorated and expanded the monastery's catholicon as much as was necessary to honor their fatherland” (Domentijan). Following Simeon's repose, his son completed this extensive renovation, assumed control of and repaired several previously acquired monasteries in the vicinity of Hilandar, in Milea (Zygos, Holy Confessors, Saint George, Saint Nicholas, etc.), and founded and built the cell of Saint Sabbas the Sanctified in Karyes.

Meanwhile, Saint Sava traveled to Constantinople and Thessaloniki – the capital and second-largest metropolis of the great empire, respectively – which were centers of the

› Tower of Saint Sava, Hilandar Monastery, last decade of the twelfth century



most advanced artistic creation of the era and “museum cities,” full of monuments of ancient, early medieval, and Byzantine art. There he could gain a direct insight into the capital’s patterns of solemn cathedral worship and the splendor of the spaces in which it was performed, after he had already become familiar with the much stricter and more modest prayer customs of Mount Athos. By visiting the imperial court of the Angelos dynasty in Constantine’s city, with whom the Nemanjićs shared a marriage alliance, and residing at the nearby Monastery of the Theotokos Evergetis, Saint Sava immersed himself not only in refined metropolitan art but also gained access to the capital’s leading artists. Thus, for example, he undertook works at the Church of the Holy Apostle Andrew – an Evergetis metochion located in the center of the capital – “executing sacred deeds with the imperial masters” (Domentijan). A tireless traveler, eager to learn about everything that was created and nurtured in the vast expanse of the Mediterranean as the cradle of European civilization, Saint Sava would later, literally until the end of his life, visit the holiest shrines of Palestine, imperial metropolises, and monastic deserts. He thus enriched his worldviews and stored impressions in his memory in order to transfer them, through the creative momentum of his own talent, to his fatherland, thereby ennobling and elevating it. That is why, already in 1207, upon his return from Mount Athos to Serbia with the relics of Saint Simeon, he was ready to undertake a massive project to forge an art that would, with its aesthetic program and ideological content, mark an entire epoch and chart the course of a distinct Serbian culture in the future. However, alongside his exceptional talent, great knowledge and vast experience, Sava’s inexhaustible energy and enterprise were vital to this mission, as only they could match the breadth of his vision. As soon as he set foot on his native Serbian soil, the “venerable archimandrite” began a wide range of activities. Many “holy churches in all chosen places,” both “small and large [...] not only stone churches but also wooden ones,” “he began and completed and consolidated the old ones and also built the new” (Domentijan, Teodosije). Yet the most significant and, for Serbian art, fateful fruits of his activity, he left behind in the grand Nemanjić endowments. These were the centers of Serbian spiritual and cultural life at that time – Studenica, Žiča, and Mileševa.



The first very extensive and important work that awaited him was the painting of the Church of the Holy Virgin at Studenica. Today, Saint Sava’s contribution to establishing the thematic program, particular iconographic formulations, and overall artistic framework of that painting, as well as his role in the creation of other monumental ensembles, can be discerned with far greater clarity and precision than ever before. Now we know, or more reliably identify, the specific sanctuaries in which he was directly creatively engaged; we can more easily track the elements they have in common, which are not typ-



Church of the Holy Virgin, Studenica Monastery, last decade of the twelfth century

ical formulations outside that monumental circle; and we better know not only Sava's unique inclinations and understandings, that is, the ideas that occupied him, but also the general mechanisms and customs of artistic creation within the Eastern Christian world. At Studenica itself, Saint Sava left an unambiguous record that, as the archimandrite of that "imperial lavra," he personally supervised the execution of its painting. At the conclusion of the inscription from 1208/1209 inside the drum of the Studenica dome, after emphasizing the founding merits of his father and mentioning his older brothers, he had it recorded in the first person singular: "And remember me, Sava the sinner, who served here." From the way this statement is formulated and the textual context in which it appears, there is no doubt that "service" refers to the care and effort involved in completing and decorating the Studenica catholicon. Those who have studied Sava's handwriting even recognize his ductus in the letters of the Studenica founder's inscription, "drawn after" the archimandrite's template. The very choice of the place for the inscription, highly unusual

by contemporary Byzantine standards, and, due to the reputation of Studenica often repeated in later Serbian churches (Stara Pavlica, Sopoćani, Gradac, Arilje, and perhaps also Žiča and Mileševa), must have stemmed from Sava's overarching conception of the program of the Studenica Church of the Holy Virgin.

It was once believed that Saint Sava influenced only the arrangement of individual segments of that program, rather than the pivotal conceptual design of the thematic whole. It was assumed that the unusual layout was decisively shaped by the fact that the church was dedicated to the Dormition of the Holy Virgin, and that the image of this feast was moved from the western to the northern wall in order to make it more prominent and noticeable. However, it was the western wall that was considered the place of honor for the representation of the Dormition of the Holy Virgin. Therefore, retaining this scene on the western wall had become widely accepted programmatic custom in the mature Byzantine period. Conversely, there was no established practice of moving this scene from the western wall in the program of churches dedicated to the Dormition of the Holy Virgin; rather, such deviations occurred primarily in churches with different dedications. Thus, for example, in the Serbian environment, the placement of the major scenes in the naos of Studenica was consistently replicated at Gradac, dedicated to the Annunciation. In fact, at Gradac, under the undeniable influence of Studenica, an already largely suppressed Middle Byzantine programmatic scheme was applied, with the emphasis on the Crucifixion on the western wall, in order to, among other things, bring it into direct visual connection with the sanctuary, where the liturgical sacrifice based on Christ's salvific passion was performed. This choice entailed the placement of the Nativity of Christ and the Dormition of the Holy Virgin as counterparts on the side walls of the naos, again with a special ideological thread, in order to emphasize the exalted status of the one who gave birth to the God-man. Since such a thematic arrangement represented a considerable archaism at the time of Studenica's decoration, its appearance in Nemanja's tomb church should not be credited to the stylistically progressive Studenica painters. Instead, it is far more fittingly viewed as a deliberate choice made by Saint Sava who, as will be seen and as is well known, had a special prayerful devotion for the representation of the Crucifixion of Christ, frequently placing it in either the primary or secondary focus of the thematic programs he devised. Furthermore, he was inclined to selectively revive suppressed, long-forgotten solutions from the rich treasury of Eastern Christian art with which he was so thoroughly acquainted. By building upon and reshaping these archaic models, Sava successfully transformed them into a suitable ideological platform to articulate his own theological ideas.

Having defined the core ideological pivot of Studenica's thematic fresco program, Saint Sava further elaborated it by carefully designing its secondary segments. He commanded that the lowest register of the naos – specifically on the prominent, wide surfaces

> View of the sanctuary, Church of the Holy Virgin, Studenica Monastery





of the pilasters supporting the dome – be painted with the images of four saints deeply revered by both the Nemanjić dynasty and medieval Serbian society at large. Beneath lavishly rendered painted arches on the eastern pair of pilasters, adjacent to the altar partition, stand Saint Stephen the First Martyr – the protector of Serbian rulers and the state – clad in apostolic vestments, opposite Saint Nicholas, one of Christendom’s most beloved saints, who was uniquely venerated by Saint Simeon and his successors. The widest and most visible surfaces of the western pair of pilasters, facing the central area of the church, are decorated with the images of Saint John the Baptist – one of the most fervent intercessors for humanity – and Saint Sabbas the Sanctified, the namesake, monastic archetype, and protector of the Studenica Archimandrite himself. All four would later be given a prominent place in the Žiča iconographic program, while Saints Stephen, Nicholas, and John would become permanent fixtures within the circle of holy figures granted special reverence in the painted programs of medieval churches commissioned by Serbian rulers, high prelates, and noblemen. Painted on the southwestern pilaster beneath the Studenica dome – directly adjacent to the physical location of Archimandrite Sava’s abbotship seat – the image of Saint Sabbas the Sanctified formed only one component of a much broader, meticulously structured fresco cycle. On the facets of this multi-tiered, stepped pilaster, Saint Sava clustered several other holy figures that bore deep symbolic weight relative to his throne. On the eastern side of the pilaster, directly above the space where the abbot’s throne stood, the Virgin Mary is depicted, designated with the topographic epithet “of Studenica.” This was a potent image of the patroness of the holy monastery and the literal embodiment of that seat; she was the sacred figure whose earthly vicar was, in fact, the abbot enthroned below her image. Immediately adjacent, on the southern face next to the throne, stands a monk bearing a wreath on his head: Saint Josaphat, the Indian prince who, mirroring Rastko Nemanjić’s own biography, renounced worldly power to receive monastic tonsure. Just as Rastko had been introduced to monastic life on Mount Athos by an enigmatic Russian monk, Josaphat had been drawn to Christianity and asceticism by the elder Saint Barlaam. Accordingly, the figure of Barlaam was granted a place on the adjoining surface of the stepped pilaster. Notably, the texts written upon the scrolls held by both figures serve as a dialogue-driven reminder of Josaphat’s dramatic triumph in renouncing his throne for the sake of monasticism. Through this design, Saint Sava skillfully enveloped the Studenica abbot’s throne in a program of fresco icons representing his own spiritual role models and the protectors of the monastery, simultaneously transforming the space into a formal, hierarchical focus for the church and a deeply intimate, private prayer corner. Finally, there is no doubt that on the western wall of the space under the dome, high above the throne, the scene of the Descent of the Holy Spirit upon the Apostles was painted at Sava’s explicit decree. At his



The Crucifixion of Christ, Church of the Holy Virgin, Studenica Monastery (1208/1209)



Saint Barlaam, detail, Church of the Holy Virgin, Studenica Monastery (1208/1209)



later direction, this exact Pentecost scene would also be depicted directly above the archbishop's throne at Žiča.

Along the same southern side of the church, within the western bay of the naos and directly behind Sava's abbotship seat, stands a marble sarcophagus marking the myrrh-streaming tomb of Sava's father and Studenica's first founder, Saint Simeon. The symbolic bridge between these two spaces – the seat where the son governed and the tomb where the father rests – is formed by the frescoed image of Saint Athanasius of Athos, the founder of Athonite monasticism. It was on Mount Athos that Sava and Simeon had reunited, practiced asceticism together as monks, and ultimately concluded their earthly partnership. Therefore, the deliberate selection and prominent placement of Saint Athanasius's image clearly confirms Sava's personal "signature" in formulating the painted program within this specific zone of the church. This depiction has been preserved on a sixteenth-century restoration layer, which almost consistently replicates the original, underlying compositions. Naturally, the figures of the Holy King Stefan Dečanski and Saint Sava as Archbishop – painted directly adjacent to the founder's portrait above the sarcophagus – could not have belonged to the original thirteenth-century schema. Nevertheless, there is no doubt that all the other frescoes executed during this restoration layer above the founder's tomb preserve the strict thematic authenticity of the consecrated original. The founder's portrait is flanked by representations of two stylites: Saint Alipius and Saint Simeon Stylites – the legendary ascetic after whom Saint Sava partially modeled the biography of his own father, the stylite's namesake. Crucially, as previously noted, the two Nemanjićs had earlier renovated the Chapel of Saint Simeon Stylites in Prosphora. Furthermore, Saint Sava's direct hand in shaping the specific triptych of three compositions painted in a row above Simeon's sarcophagus – the founder's portrait, the Myrrh-bearing Women at Christ's

Tomb, and the Baptism of Christ – is evidenced by the fact that this exact sequence of scenes was replicated above the sarcophagus of King Vladislav, Sava's nephew, at Mileševa, within a program undoubtedly conceived by the King's uncle. The conceptual completeness and profound theological meaning of this narrative sequence are uniquely expressive. From this thoughtfully integrated ensemble, it is clear that the founder – depicted as being led by the Virgin Mary toward the throne of Christ the Supreme Judge – harbors the hope that, like all who have “put on Christ” by being “baptized into Christ,” he will be resurrected with Him into eternal life and, thanks to his God-pleasing labor as a monastic founder, he confidently seeks his allotted place in the Kingdom of Heaven. Whether a similar iconographic sequence had already been executed at the temporary resting place of Saint Simeon during the initial decoration of Hilandar cannot be definitively stated. It is known, however, through the explicit testimony of both Simeon's and Sava's hagiographers, that on the Holy Mountain as well – presumably near the original grave of the new founder – his son had similarly commanded the painting of a portrait of Saint Simeon.

For the space of the Studenica vestibules, Saint Sava devised a special program whose ideological foundations would be reflected in some of his later works, leaving a lasting influence on Serbian art as a whole. In the upper zones of the vestibules, he placed a representation of the Passion of the Forty Martyrs of Sebaste on the Frozen Lake – the very saints to whom he had dedicated the renovated catholicon in Xeropotamou – alongside a series of Old Testament scenes, including the Three Jewish Youths in the Fiery Furnace and the Repentance of David. In the lowest zone, primarily on the southern side, he commissioned standing figures of holy hymnographers, the creators of the poetry sung during church services. From this layout, it is clear that he intended the vestibule spaces for groups of singers chanting antiphonally during divine services. Though these spaces were not ideally suited for this purpose, his choice was certainly inspired by the Athonite practice of placing choirs in the side conches of the naos. Conversely, the decorative programs of the sanctuary and the narthex represent fairly standard Byzantine solutions; the sanctuary apse features tiered rows depicting the Liturgical Service, the Communion of the Apostles, and the Virgin of the Sign, while the narthex contains a cycle of Christ's Passion surmounted by the Last Judgment. Hence, at least at first glance, these parts of the thematic program of the Studenica catholicon do not offer definitive proof of Sava's direct influence on their shaping. However, the Communion of the Apostles – a liturgical transposition of the Last Supper – acquired a highly unusual iconographic form here. Instead of reducing the scene to the exact moment the disciples receive the Body and Blood, the fresco presents a broader rite centered on the epiclesis, or the consecration of the gifts. Since this rare iconographic variant of the Communion of the Apostles (referred to in scholarly literature as the “Eucharist”), only slightly varied, also appears in the frescoes of Mileševa



View of the western bay, Church of the Holy Virgin, Studenica Monastery

– a program undeniably conceived by Saint Sava – there is little doubt that its presence in Studenica is also the result of his choice. Furthermore, the depiction of the Eucharistic Christ is omitted from the Studenica Liturgical Service. This matches the renovation layer in Žiča, which largely follows original solutions based on Saint Sava's distinct ideas in both the sanctuary and the naos.



The Communion of the Apostles, detail, Church of the Holy Virgin, Studenica Monastery (1208/1209)

We believe there are more definitive indicators of Sava's influence on the decorative scheme of the Studenica narthex as well. Although completely renovated in the sixteenth century, this space undoubtedly repeated the original layout from the end of the first decade of the thirteenth century. While the inclusion of the Passion cycle in the Mileševa narthex – just as in Studenica – is less telling, Sava's direct influence on the Studenica narthex layout is more clearly evidenced by a unique spatial arrangement. Two scenes from that cycle – the Last Supper and the Washing of the Feet – were lowered to the bottom register and placed directly opposite each other as counterparts. Such a composition is rather rare in Eastern Christian art, and in the entire Serbian medieval painting it occurs only once more: in Žiča. There, at the request of Saint Sava, the Crucifixion and the Descent from the Cross were lowered to the bottom register of the choir spaces, positioned directly opposite each other as counterparts across from his hierarchical throne. Yet, even without these specific iconographic details arising from the same conceptual matrix, it remains evident that a figure who left such a powerful,



The Liturgical Service, detail, Church of the Holy Virgin, Studenica Monastery (1208/1209)

personal imprint on the painting program of the Studenica naos must have also wielded a significant influence over the programs of both the sanctuary and the narthex of the same church.

The service of “Sava the sinful” in completing the work on the arrangement and decoration of Studenica was by no means limited to determining the themes and iconography of the wall paintings of the catholicon. The outstanding painters who, at the beginning of the thirteenth century, represented the avant-garde in the creation of a new stylistic expression of Eastern Christian art, could only have been selected and invited to Serbia by someone as deeply versed in Byzantine cultural trends as Saint Sava. By then, he already possessed considerable experience collaborating with masters of the highest caliber. Having “fulfilled sacred deeds” for a decade prior to the decoration of Studenica by employing “imperial masters” to arrange and adorn church buildings, Sava entrusted the painting of his father’s tomb church – a dynastic mausoleum – to artists who turned the Serbian milieu into a testing ground for the development of the so-called monumental

style of Byzantine painting. Thanks to Saint Sava's unerring ability to choose the best and bring the most advanced painters to Raška for the decoration of Žiča and Mileševa too, the evolution of this international style can be most reliably traced through thirteenth-century Serbian monuments. Primarily through his merits, rural Serbia began its transformation from an artistic periphery into a respected cultural torchbearer. Saint Sava, therefore, was concerned not only with what would be expressed theologically through art, but also with how it would be related or, rather, said. In his desire to endow Studenica with a radiant courtly character, he instructed the artists to paint the frescoes on the eastern side of the church on a light ochre background and to cover the saints' halos with gold in the most prominent scenes. This light, described by Teodosije as "painting with gold" in his brief accounts of Sava's decoration of the Hilandar catholicon, also spilled over into the lettering of the foundation inscription and the signatures alongside the scenes and figures of the most venerated saints in Studenica. In fact, all the inscriptions in the Studenica frescoes shone with the golden Logos of the Cyrillic script, executed consistently in the Serbian vernacular. This represented an exceptional novelty and a particular boldness on Sava's part, given that the spiritual life of Orthodox Christians in Serbia was still taking place under the auspices of the Greek Archbishopric of Ohrid. While still on Mount Athos, Saint Sava had devoted himself to translating typikons and theological writings into Serbian; in Studenica itself, he expanded his literary activity as the nation's first prose writer and poet known by name, composing both a hagiography and a liturgical service for his father, Saint Simeon. The systematic use of Cyrillic inscriptions alongside the holy scenes and figures did not make Studenica painting truly Serbian in only one respect of identity. These inscriptions demonstrated the multilayered importance of the visual arts in shaping a national cultural identity, eloquently testified to Serbia's readiness for the widespread introduction of worship in the vernacular, and echoed that language's cry for its own Church.



The Serbian Autocephalous Church was established in 1219, barely a decade after the decoration of Studenica, precisely due to the merits of Saint Sava. After his older brother, Stefan the First-Crowned, received the royal crown from Rome in 1217, Sava traveled to Nicaea. There, by the will of Emperor Theodore I Laskaris and Patriarch Manuel I Sarrantene, he was ordained as the first Serbian archbishop. The Ascension Church in Žiča, originally built as Stefan's burial church, was chosen as his archiepiscopal seat. Saint Sava's hagiographers explicitly testify that he "began and completed the House of the Savior, called Žiča, with his faithful brother, Grand Župan Stefan" (Domentijan). The construction of Žiča, therefore, could only have begun after Archimandrite Sava returned from Mount Athos to Serbia with the relics of Saint Simeon. In fact, it is certain that Sava and Stefan

did not embark on this massive new undertaking until they had finalized the extensive completion and decoration of Studenica. Positioned high within the drum of the dome, the founder's inscription in the Studenica Church of the Holy Virgin testifies that its fresco decoration was only beginning in 1208/1209. Other works were certainly pending at Studenica, and the brothers did not employ these master artists solely for the catholicon. This is evidenced by the remaining frescoes on the towers of the monastery's western entrance. These towers featured portraits of the founders – Grand Župan Stefan and Grand Prince Vukan – accompanied by dynastic and personal protectors, all executed by the same master painter who worked on the Church of the Holy Virgin. Furthermore, tradition holds that Sava founded other churches and anchorite settlements with small chapels (the Upper and Lower Hermitages of Saint Sava) in the vicinity of Studenica. All of this, combined with the fact that the new grand project required serious preparation, leads to the conclusion that the construction of Žiča began sometime after 1210, but before 1214 and the death of Strez, an event Domentijan narrates immediately following his account of the Ascension Church's construction. The first phase of its building, including vaulting and roofing, must have been completed between 1215 and 1217, before Saint Sava returned to Mount Athos. Indeed, both Domentijan and Teodosije record a miraculous healing of a weak man performed by "Archimandrite Sava" inside the Ascension Church in front of the icon of Christ. This temporary halt in construction was almost certainly necessary to allow the walls of the tall, massive building to settle before fresco application could begin. All construction, stonemasonry, and painting on the main part of the church – which had in the meantime received a new purpose – were finally completed shortly before Ascension Day (May 20), 1221. This followed Archbishop Sava's return to Serbia from Nicaea via Mount Athos and Thessaloniki, and his brief stay at Studenica. Soon after, certainly by 1227, a large outer narthex with a tower was added to the western portion of the church.

Understandably, Stefan the First-Crowned, as ruler, was primarily the patron and founder responsible for financing the construction and decoration of Žiča, while Sava acted as the originator and supervisor of the artistic realization of their jointly determined solutions. Sava's role in the creation of the Ascension Church is presented with particular vividness by Teodosije. He recounts how the archimandrite of Studenica brought "many skilled builders and marble workers," allegedly from the "Greek lands," and that "he himself, dwelling with them, taught them to decorate the church according to his will." The appearance of the Žiča catholicon, as the first church of the mature Raška plan, confirms Teodosije's accounts. The significant innovations and changes introduced during its construction into the programmatically outlined structure – inherited from the earlier foundations of Stefan Nemanja (Đurđevi Stupovi and Studenica) – can be linked most directly to the personality of Saint Sava. Having previously intended the vestibules of the



Church of the Ascension, Žiča Monastery, first half of the thirteenth century

Studenica catholicon to accommodate choirs according to Athonite liturgical patterns, Sava architecturally adapted the side compartments of the space beneath the dome in Žiča for that exact purpose. He retained the rectangular base they possessed in Nemanja's foundations, keeping a depth identical to the measurements of the Studenica vestibules. He expanded them, however, toward the naos and removed the portals on their sides to improve their acoustics. Thus, the "low choir transept" emerged as one of the defin-

ing features of Žiča and subsequent Raška churches. Another enduring innovation is the construction of side chapels, symmetrically positioned next to the original narthex of the Žiča Ascension Church. Here, too, Athonite models were crucial, as Saint Sava had become well acquainted with them at the Great Lavra, Vatopedi, and especially Iviron. Sava adapted the ground plan and dimensions of these chapels to the framework of Raška architecture. By capping them with domes and placing vaulted porches between them and the choir spaces, he achieved a more sophisticated and dynamic architectural composition for the entire building. Sava's influence is equally clear in the choice of their dedication. The spiritual sanction of the Žiča Charter confirms that the southern chapel was dedicated from the outset to Saint Stephen the First Martyr – the protector of the Serbian royal dynasty and the namesake of the founding ruler – while the northern chapel was dedicated to Saint Sabbas the Sanctified, the monastic model and heavenly patron of Sava Nemanjić. A century later, the restored fourteenth-century frescoes within the chapels, featuring cycles from the lives of these two patrons, confirm that these original dedications remained unchanged.

Sava's familiarity with Athonite customs was also crucial for embellishing the plastered facades of the Ascension Church in Žiča with a red, or rather purple, paint. Painting facades red had long been a characteristic feature of monastic cathedral churches on Mount Athos. The master builders of Žiča, whose craftsmanship was of Western origin – as evidenced by the masonry technique and the articulation of the facades with distinct Romanesque-Gothic elements – certainly would not have initiated this exterior painting. However, it was precisely the thoughtful selection of these masters that, while introducing significant innovations, maintained continuity with earlier Raška architecture. Indeed, by retaining the core spatial structure, the floor plan, and the facade articulation system through an organic interweaving of Byzantine (primarily Athonite) and Western traditions, Saint Sava and Stefan the First-Crowned took a decisive step at Žiča in advancing the concepts first conceived at Đurđevi Stupovi and Studenica. By creatively completing and functionally improving these concepts, they brought them to maturity and wholeness. In this way, they created a distinctive architectural model tailored to the Serbian milieu that would influence almost all subsequent medieval Serbian architecture. Only in one major element did Saint Sava deviate from the established design, a choice that has not yet received a satisfactory explanation. Unlike the churches that Stefan Nemanja built from the ground up, the wide sanctuary section of Žiča was originally constructed without separate rooms for the pastophoria (the prothesis and the diaconicon). In earlier Serbian Orthodox architecture, analogies for this layout can only be found in the Church of the Holy Virgin in Toplica and the Cathedral of Saints Peter and Paul in Ras. However, these polyconchal buildings are not close to Žiča in terms of plan or chronology; the original

structure of the former dates to the Early Byzantine period, while the latter belongs to the early Middle Byzantine era.

Contrary to previously held opinions, the rooms of the diaconicon and the prothesis were certainly not added to the central part of the Žiča sanctuary before its initial fresco decoration. This is evidenced, first of all, by the fact that the windows on the side walls of the sanctuary bay – across whose openings the roof beams of the subsequently annexed pastophoria were later placed – remained functional at the time the church was being painted. Only later were these windows walled up and converted into niches. Furthermore, the original layout of the Žiča sanctuary space must have been maintained for some time, as it exerted a clear influence on subsequent Serbian architecture. Indeed, other early Raška buildings – such as Studenica Hvosanska and Mileševa – were built without separate rooms for the prothesis and the diaconicon, undoubtedly under Sava's influence. Like Žiča, all of these churches later received separate pastophoria additions; in the case of Mileševa, this occurred even before its fresco painting was completed during the lifetime of Stefan the First-Crowned (†1227). It follows that Saint Sava himself, who directly assisted his nephew Vladislav in the construction and decoration of his endowment (discussed in greater detail below), relatively quickly abandoned the wider application of the original Žiča sanctuary design. Consequently, a subsequent series of Raška churches based on the Žiča architectural plan – including the Holy Apostles in Peć, Pridvorica, Morača, Sopoćani, Gradac, and Arilje – were built from the ground up with a tripartite sanctuary space.

Žiča acquired the final appearance envisioned by Saint Sava only after the newly ordained archbishop returned from Nicaea, by which time the building's status and function had changed significantly. It had become the preeminent sanctuary in the state: the seat of the head of the autocephalous church and the coronation site for Serbian kings. Domentijan recounts how the first Serbian archbishop, upon returning to his homeland, was overwhelmed with anxiety regarding the establishment of a new ecclesiastical organization and the arrangement of its administrative center. The disheartened Sava was comforted by the Holy Spirit, which addressed him from the heights of Heaven: "He who [...] built his church on an immovable stone [...] will help you [...] to complete your church, the great archbishopric, honorably, with beautiful colors and divine beauties, and to teach your entire people to follow His holy commandments; and the honorable horn of the true faith will rise in your fatherland." It was precisely this ambition – the elevation and salvation of his flock through a national church built upon an apostolic foundation – that Saint Sava pursued when finalising the architectural and decorative program of Žiča shortly after his return to the country. Following the completion of the remaining minor masonry work (such as the porches preceding the chapels and the synthronon within the apse) and

stone-cutting, the fresco decoration of the church commenced under the first Serbian archbishop's close supervision. Unfortunately, almost all the extant paintings within the dome and the space beneath it, with the sole exception of the choir spaces, date from an early fourteenth-century restoration, rather than the original period. However, scholars have reliably established that these later frescoes faithfully repeat the highly specific thematic program of the thirteenth-century originals.

In accordance with an ancient custom that had been neglected during the High Middle Ages, the Ascension of Christ is painted in the dome as a visual summary and final point of the economy of salvation. Saint Sava's decision to place this scene in the dome of the Žiĉa catholicon was certainly influenced, among other things, by the fact that the church was dedicated to the Ascension. The paramount significance accorded to this feast is vividly demonstrated by the unusual arrangement of the remaining decorative scheme, which aligns entirely with this soteriological focus. Immediately below the Ascension, within the sub-dome space, are grouped scenes that are closely related to it in both theme and concept. On one hand, these include events closely preceding or following Christ's return to the Father that were crucial for the establishment and expansion of the Church: the Last Supper, the Incredulity of Saint Thomas, the Blessing at Bethany, and the Descent of the Holy Spirit on the Apostles. Particular attention should be paid to the Blessing at Bethany. The depiction of this event (Luke 24:36–53) – wherein Christ instructs the apostles, commands them to preach repentance to all nations immediately prior to His return to heaven, and promises the coming of the Holy Spirit – constitutes the primary Gospel reading for the Ascension Liturgy. On the other hand, the sub-dome area features events that serve as chronological and dogmatic counterpoints to the Ascension, namely the Annunciation to Zechariah and the Annunciation to the Theotokos. These scenes recall the dawn of grace: God's descent to earth and His assumption of human nature in order to elevate humanity, redeemed by His sacrifice, to heaven (John 3:13; Eph 4:10). Programmatically unified, these images help the viewer more fully comprehend the meaning of the Ascension within the broader framework of salvation. They also visually articulate the foundation history and structural reality of the "holy, catholic and apostolic Church," whose head is the incarnate and ascended Lord Himself. Because this specific thematic program occupied the sub-dome space, most scenes from the cycles of the Great Feasts and Christ's Passion, which completed the story of the economy of salvation, were displaced from their customary locations and pushed to the lower zones of the church, specifically the choir spaces and the western bay.

The unique selection and arrangement of themes within the Žiĉa naos provide a visual reflection of Saint Sava's theology, as articulated in his sermon at the Great Council of May 1221 – an address preserved in the hagiographies by Domentijan and Teodosije.

In this sermon, the first Serbian archbishop outlined the pivotal stages in the economy of salvation, which are mirrored precisely in the Žiča frescoes. Within this framework, he situated the foundation history of the apostolic Church, its celestial-earthly structure, and its expansion among nations – including the Serbs. It was for this very purpose that he himself had been elevated by divine grace to the archiepiscopal dignity, becoming an apostle to his own people through apostolic succession. Thus, at one point in his sermon, he emphasizes: “And [Christ] remained here on earth for forty days after his resurrection; and when he was about to ascend to heaven to the Father, he commanded his disciples, the apostles, saying: ‘Go and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit’ [...] and according to that same first commandment and in the same way according to the teaching and preaching of the Holy Apostles, he elevated me to this holy office, wanting to fill the shortcomings of our fathers through me” (Domentijan). These ideas about the head of the Serbian Church as equal-to-the-apostles, and the soteriological significance of establishing that Church, found a remarkably clear echo in the iconographic program surrounding the archbishop’s thrones in the lower registers of the church. The stasidion of the first Serbian archbishop, positioned against the southwestern pilaster, was flanked by a row of twelve standing figures of Christ’s disciples extending along the walls of both choir spaces. Standing or seated in the midst of this row during the initial part of the liturgy, the Serbian archbishop visibly manifested himself as their true equal. Positioned across from the throne, in the first register of the frescoes, is the Crucifixion – a scene around which the aforementioned apostles gather and toward which Saint Sava, as previously noted, held a profound prayerful devotion. Furthermore, the throne was surmounted by the Descent of the Holy Spirit on the Apostles, painted on the southern wall of the sub-dome space. This arrangement served as another deliberate visual tool to frame the enthroned Serbian archpastor beneath it as a “co-throner” with Christ’s disciples and a fellow partaker in the Holy Spirit. Following a similar ideological thread, a visual and symbolic link was forged between the High Place of the altar and the Last Supper, depicted on the opposite wall of the sub-dome space. This semicircular composition of the apostles gathered around Christ at the center mirrored perfectly the liturgical seating order of the Serbian clergy on the Žiča synthronon. The head of the Serbian Church and his bishops thus appeared as a living reflection of the original Eucharistic gathering in the Upper Room of Zion. In essence, the icon of the Last Supper was sacramentally mirrored within them.

The selection and arrangement of the most prominent representations in the lowest register of the Žiča naos – faithfully repeated during the early fourteenth-century restoration from the older layer – fundamentally correspond to the layout at Studenica. The circle of saints accorded special devotion within the decorative scheme was only slightly



The Crucifixion of Christ, Church of the Ascension, Žiča Monastery (by 1221)

expanded. Figures of Saint Stephen the First Martyr and Saint Sabbas the Sanctified, depicted alongside Saint Demetrius and Saint George, were positioned in front of the altar screen, while figures of Saint John the Baptist and Saint Nicholas were placed on the western pair of pilasters in the sub-dome space. The Ascension Church is further linked to Studenica by the high artistic caliber of its frescoes and the fact that its painting reflects the most advanced stylistic developments of the period. This is clearly evidenced by the preserved original portions of the Žiča frescoes, primarily those in the southern choir. When these backgrounds were still covered by their original light blue lapis lazuli –



a pigment more precious than gold that has since peeled and washed away – they would have closely mirrored the solemn, radiant glow of the Studenica frescoes. Collectively, this evidence demonstrates that Saint Sava remained steadfast in his aesthetic standards, once again inviting leading painters from the greatest centers of the Byzantine world to decorate the Serbian archiepiscopal seat.



The demanding and prominent role of the Ascension Church as the archiepiscopal seat and coronation church soon necessitated the expansion of the building. Consequently, a year or two after the decoration of the church, Saint Sava undertook the construction of a multi-purpose external narthex. Initially begun as a smaller exonarthex, this project was soon abandoned in favor of a significantly larger, two-story structure. The new design featured nine ground-floor bays roofed with groined vaults, alongside a massive, tall tower on the western façade, with a portico that served as the primary entrance. The masonry techniques and the Romanesque stylistic features of the architectural stone sculpture indicate that the builders were of Western origin. However, the precise source of inspiration for such a monumental, two-story narthex remains unclear. In any case, this Žiča exonarthex served as the model for several large external narthexes in first-half thirteenth-century Serbian architecture, including the Radoslav narthex at Studenica, as well as those at Mileševa and the Holy Virgin of Hvosno. Unfortunately, the structure of the exonarthex has suffered severe damage, making it impossible to evaluate its decorative program as a whole. Only the original frescoes in the chamber on the second floor of the tower are well preserved. The presence of six Nemanjić portraits within the segments of the groined vault – including Stefan the First-Crowned depicted as ruler – confirms that the exonarthex was erected and painted sometime before 1227. Alongside these portraits, which feature the First-Crowned, his sons, and Saints Simeon and Sava, the remaining frescoes in the chamber provide clear evidence that the thematic program was conceived by the first Serbian archbishop. As the sole narrative composition, the Crucifixion dominates the eastern wall. Below it stand the figures of the dynastic patron, Saint Stephen the First Martyr, and Saints Constantine and Helena, who hold the True Cross. The lowest register of the southern, western, and northern walls is occupied by fresco-icons depicting saints to whom Sava held a profound personal devotion. Foremost among these are his two monastic models: Saint Sabbas the Sanctified and Saint Theodore the Studite, the authors of the monastic rules that the Serbian enlightener translated as the basis for his own Karyes, Hilandar, and Studenica typikons. As his archiepiscopal models, he singled out fresco-icons of the Three Holy Hierarchs – Basil the Great, Gregory the Theologian, and John Chrysostom – alongside Saint Nicholas of Myra, who was deeply venerated by



The Holy Apostle
Luke, Church of
the Ascension,
Žiča Monastery
(by 1221)

the Nemanjić dynasty. Furthermore, a partially preserved inscription on one of the vault ribs closely mirrors the content of the Studenica founder's inscription. Ultimately, this decorative program contains so many elements intimately connected to the personality of Saint Sava that it suggests he designed this secluded tower chamber as a room dedicated to his own solitude and prayer.



In Serbia, Saint Sava's involvement in artistic design, architecture, and decoration extended far beyond the major church buildings where he personally resided and served; his impact on early thirteenth-century Serbian art was much broader. In addition to establishing numerous stone and wooden churches recorded by his hagiographers, the first Serbian archbishop exerted a direct or indirect influence on the construction and fresco decoration of certain episcopal cathedrals – such as the Holy Virgin of Hvosno – as well as the endowments built by his Nemanjić relatives, most notably Mileševa. Indeed, the stamp of Sava's creative personality is deeply imprinted upon the thematic program, iconography, and artistic character of the Mileševa frescoes. In the decoration of this church, which was built through the efforts of his nephew Vladislav and architecturally mirrored the layout developed for the Žiča archbishopric, Saint Sava deployed a multitude of iconographic elements previously realized at Studenica and Žiča. However, he integrated them into a thematic framework centered on a new ideological pivot. The core of this dogmatically sophisticated scheme positions the images of three major Christian feasts – Christmas (the Nativity of Christ), Easter (the Descent into Hades), and the Savior's Day (the Ascension of Christ) – as the three pivotal landmarks in the economy of salvation. He positioned monumental, multi-registered representations of Christmas (the greatest feast) and Easter (the “Feast of Feasts”) as eloquent counterparts across the northern and southern walls. Concurrently, in accordance with the ideas Sava had already articulated at Žiča, the Ascension occupies the dome. Because Mileševa, like Žiča, celebrates the Ascension as its patronal feast, Saint Sava highlighted the Blessing at Bethany – which is thematically and liturgically tied to the main feast – directly below the dome on the eastern wall of the sub-dome space. Sava returned to his Žiča solutions, adapting them to a different conceptual context, by instructing that the figures of the twelve apostles be painted in the Mileševa choir spaces. Furthermore, on the western wall of the sub-dome space – where the Last Supper is depicted at Žiča – he placed its liturgical transposition, the Communion of the Apostles, within his nephew's endowment. This scene utilizes the rare, distinctive iconographic form of the “Eucharist,” almost precisely mirroring its unique treatment at Studenica.

Saint Sava also transferred his iconographic models from Studenica to Mileševa when he chose to place the Passion of the Forty Martyrs of Sebaste – originally depicted



Mileševa Monastery, first half of the thirteenth century

on the vault of the southern vestibule of Nemanja's mausoleum – onto the vault of the northern choir space at Mileševa. Due to the unique programmatic scheme of the wall paintings in the Žiča naos, this same scene had previously been relegated to the vault of the portico beneath the Žiča tower. Similarly, on the vault of the southern Mileševa choir, the Old Testament scenes depicting the Three Jewish Youths in the Fiery Furnace and the Repentance of David were adapted directly from the Studenica vestibules. Furthermore, the narrative sequence positioned above the sarcophagus in the western bay of Mileševa – marking the founder's tomb through a composition featuring the founder's portrait, the Myrrh-bearing Women at the Tomb of Christ, and the Baptism – fundamentally mirrors the earlier programmatic formula developed at Studenica. Saint Sava's direct and decisive oversight regarding the iconographic themes of Mileševa is further evidenced by several highly specific programmatic elements uniquely tethered to his personal history.



Stefan the First-Crowned, Radoslav, and Vladislav, Mileševa Monastery (1221–1227)

This connection is particularly crucial given the absence of surviving written sources explicitly confirming his ideological patronage at Mileševa, unlike the well-documented accounts for Studenica and Žiča. Notably, the figures of two Russian princes, Saints Boris and Gleb, are depicted within the naos of the Mileševa church. Their inclusion is exceedingly rare within the broader decorative schemes of Byzantine and medieval Serbian churches. It can only be reasonably explained by Sava Nemanjić's personal familiarity with this local cult at St. Panteleimon (Rossikon), the Russian monastery where he originally sought refuge and resided upon arriving on Mount Athos as a young prince. Other holy figures deeply venerated by Sava, such as Saint Sabbas the Sanctified and Saints Barlaam and

Josaphat, were likewise integrated into the Mileševa thematic program. The likeness of Sava's monastic namesake and patron is depicted in the narthex, positioned immediately alongside the formal registry of Nemanjić dynastic portraits – which includes Saint Sava himself. The first Serbian archbishop similarly reiterated his preference for highlighting the Crucifixion within the Mileševa decorative scheme. Though now preserved only in fragments, it was prominently executed on the eastern wall of the narthex as the sole scene in that entire space rendered on a gold ground. Immediately below it, mirroring the arrangement in the upper chamber of the Žiča tower, Saints Constantine and Helena are depicted holding the True Cross. By visually emphasizing the redemptive significance of the instrument of Christ's Passion, the first Serbian archbishop subtly referenced the protective, apotropaic power of the true cross reliquary that the Nemanjić dynasty had recently gifted to Žiča.

The figures of the Holy Emperors Constantine and Helena form only one component of the highly significant and carefully conceived iconographic scheme in the lowest register of the eastern part of the Mileševa narthex. This specific decorative arrangement directly illustrated Saint Sava's political theology. Alongside Constantine and Helena, Sava commissioned a portrait on the southern wall of a young basileus clad in full imperial insignia, his head illuminated by a halo – most likely depicting the contemporary Nicaean emperor, John III Vatatzes. On the northern side of the narthex, a formal lineup displays the figures of the Nemanjić dynasty. The eastern wall features Saint Simeon depicted as a monk, alongside the “holy God-bearer and our father” Sava represented as an archbishop. This inclusion indicates that the Mileševa frescoes must have been executed following Sava's return to Serbia from Nicaea in 1220. Both Simeon and Sava occupy hieratic, frontal positions adorned with halos. Behind them, on the southern wall, stand the portraits of King Stefan the First-Crowned, his heir apparent Radoslav, and the founder, Vladislav. Their figures are slightly turned eastward and lack halos. They are attired in the robes of high Byzantine dignitaries; the first two wear golden wreaths with kamarions, while the First-Crowned alone – as supreme ruler – bears a golden tablion on his chlamys and holds a royal scepter. He could only have been depicted in this specific manner prior to his death in 1227. By establishing this distinct arrangement and iconography for the historical portraits at Mileševa, Saint Sava proved himself a consistent advocate of the Byzantine doctrine of earthly power and its cosmic hierarchy. He had become deeply acquainted with this ideology on Mount Athos, as well as in Constantinople and Nicaea. In accordance with this teaching, the Byzantine emperor was presented as the godlike bearer of authentic authority and the supreme ruler of the universe, while the Serbian king was framed as a subordinate subject – an idealized concept that was far removed from the actual geopolitical reality. Sava, therefore, did not seek to represent political

facts, but rather to subordinate reality to an idealized Roman ideological projection. In doing so, he aimed to firmly root Serbia and its ruler – who had recently received a royal crown from Rome – within the Byzantine hierarchy of states. This strategy established their legitimacy and position within the long-standing system of international relations according to Byzantine sensibilities. While this international network had undoubtedly been severely disrupted by the Crusader conquest of Constantinople in 1204, Sava's time in Nicaea had convinced him of the empire's serious efforts toward restoration. Parallel to this global framing, the Mileševa dynastic row sought to underscore the unbroken continuity of Nemanjić rule and the saintly lineage of the dynasty responsible for both the rise of the state and the autocephaly of the national Church. Thus, under Sava's direct or indirect influence, the foundational model for the Serbian dynastic image was conceived and developed. Its evolution can be traced sequentially from the western Studenica gate, through the upper chamber of the Žiča tower and the Mileševa narthex, and finally to the chapel of Saint Simeon at Studenica. This trajectory is marked by an increasingly pronounced tendency to highlight the very special relationship between secular and spiritual power in Nemanjić Serbia. Ultimately, just as Sava used the Žiča decorative program to justify the establishment of the autocephalous Serbian Archbishopric within universal ecclesiastical history, his carefully designed portrait sequences at Mileševa and later monuments strove to underline the internal and international legitimacy of the ruling dynasty, through which the blood bond was established between the state and the Church as the leader of a unified, eschatologically oriented gathering of the Serbian people.



The work of the two or three extraordinary painters of differing temperaments but closely aligned styles who decorated Mileševa testifies to the conceptual clarity, permanence, and consistent caliber of the primary developmental direction of Serbian art during the first decades of the thirteenth century. It is highly probable that these Mileševa masters, who were predominantly trained in the classicizing Byzantine tradition, were active in the Raška region precisely due to Saint Sava, who steered this artistic trajectory. In these later monuments, the subtly intimated plasticity of the figures and the compressed spatial depth seen at Studenica achieved a convincing fullness of volume and a significantly more sensitive deepening of space. Furthermore, the practice of brightening the most prominent frescoes with a radiant ochre ground – cautiously introduced on the eastern side of the Studenica catholicon – became a defining principle at Mileševa, applied across the entire sanctuary and naos. Concurrently, a painted grid of lines over this ochre background simulated the visual effect of mosaic tesserae. Rooted in the visionary



Saint Sava and
Saint Simeon
Nemanja, Mileševa
Monastery
(1221–1227)



ideas of Saint Sava, these aesthetic standards became enduring values cultivated in subsequent thirteenth-century Nemanjić endowments, including the central portion of the Radoslav narthex at Studenica, as well as at Sopoćani, Gradac, and at least partially Morača. A similar continuity marked the implementation of some specific solutions of thematic programs. Sava's disciple and successor, Arsenije, consistently repeated the Žiča iconographic program when decorating the Church of the Holy Apostles in Peć, just as Queen Jelena transferred the core iconographic centerpiece of Studenica to her foundation at Gradac. Specific thematic and iconographic ensembles from Studenica and Žiča continued to echo within the frescoes of major Serbian churches – such as Sopoćani – even decades after Sava's death. The mature Raška architectural plan, brought to fulfillment by Saint Sava, exerted an even more permanent influence on medieval Serbian art. It was consistently respected throughout the thirteenth century, and its direct or indirect reflections shaped fourteenth-century Serbian architecture at Banjska and Dečani. These echoes re-emerged centuries later in the architecture of the renewed Peć Patriarchate during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, as seen at Majstorovina, Mesić, Velika Remeta, Dobrilovina, Tronoša, Vozuća, Ozren, and Pustinja. While we cannot definitively confirm whether Saint Sava made the initial decision to dedicate the southern chapel of the Studenica narthex to his father, Saint Simeon – a concept later adopted as a model by the founders of Sopoćani and Gradac – it is certain that Sava took the decisive steps in shaping Simeon's cult by codifying the signs of his holy manifestation. Ultimately, Sava's literary compositions provided the theological and narrative foundation for the hagiographical cycles of the Serbian Myrrh-streamer in all of these dynastic chapels. Saint Sava also integrated the cult of Saint Simeon into his iconographic schemes for the Nemanjić dynastic imagery in order to indicate the sanctity of the roots of their lineage.

Even at a time when the first Serbian archbishop's direct influence on the shaping of Serbian art was far less understood than it is today, it was rightly concluded that “the entire thirteenth century, up to Milutin's conquests [...] bears the stamp of Sava's activity,” and that the “impulse” he “gave to our medieval art was so strong” that “for many years, [...] the entire development of our medieval architecture and painting relied on his work” (Đurđe Bošković). To be sure, some of Saint Sava's ideas and solutions were already abandoned or significantly modified during the mature thirteenth century. This shift was a natural consequence of relocating state and ecclesiastical administrative centers, changing cultural influences, the growing prestige and self-consciousness of Serbian rulers and church leaders, and the overall reshaping of ideological frameworks. Consequently, only a selective few of Sava's original solutions survived into fourteenth-century Serbian art. Paradoxically, however, this is precisely where his greatest contribution to determining the nature and trajectory of our early art becomes evident.

By consistently opting for an innovative approach and discarding established models that no longer met the contemporary needs of the environment for which they were intended, Saint Sava irreversibly directed Serbian visual art toward constant creative shifts and evolution in accordance with the demands of the time. Ultimately, not even the sublime authority of his own work could confine the vital power of that generative spiritual movement which constantly changes and exceeds the established forms, and which he himself inspired.

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MILJANA M. MATIĆ

PRESERVATION OF HERITAGE AND SPIRITUAL IDENTITY: ART AND THE CULT OF SAINT SAVA 1459–1690

Following the fall of the Serbian Despotate, the Serbian Orthodox people – who remained at the fallen country's devastated hearth with only the memory of a glorious era of freedom – entered a centuries-long period of life within the Ottoman Empire, marked by a struggle aimed both at preserving physical survival and protecting their ethnic and spiritual identity. The profound changes that occurred in the middle of the fifteenth century heavily impacted both artistic creation and the trajectory of the cult of Saint Sava of Serbia. The once-abundant trends in artistic development mostly dried up; yet, neither the fall of Smederevo nor the collapse of the Serbian Despotate (1459) marked the extinction of Saint Sava's cult, as might have been expected, but catalyzed its flourishing, sparking an even deeper permeation through the fabric of ecclesiastical life and the everyday existence of the Orthodox faithful – a phenomenon especially pronounced during the century-and-a-half-long period following the restoration of the Patriarchate of Peć.

THE FIRST CENTURY UNDER THE OTTOMANS

From church frescoes and icons, the image of Saint Sava as a symbol of the independent, powerful Nemanjić dynasty and the autocephalous Serbian Church met the gaze of oppressed Orthodox Christians – the dhimmis or non-Muslim subjects within the Ottoman Empire – maintaining in them a spark of living faith as they anticipated the restoration of the Patriarchate of Peć, an institution that would ultimately secure their right to freely profess their faith and practice Orthodox rites within a formalized framework.



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A valuable fifteenth-century icon in the treasury of the Hilandar Monastery, depicting Saint Sava of Serbia and Simeon Nemanja, evidences that works worthy of the dynasty's former glory were produced even in times of crisis and declining creative trends. This exceptional piece by a Serbian master is a rare, well-preserved example of icon painting from the period, even though the artist demonstrated insufficient knowledge of Greek orthography when writing the text on Venerable Simeon's scroll. In this composition, Saint Sava is depicted with a solemn, almost ascetic countenance framed by graying brown hair and a straight, medium-length beard. Remarkably, he is shown without a tonsure, and his gaze is directed to the side. Rather than a sakkos, he wears a phelonion decorated with crosses (polystavrion); furthermore, his right hand is not raised in the customary gesture of blessing, but is instead extended prayerfully toward a half-length representation of the Virgin and Child at the top of the panel. Clear traces of overpainting remain visible on the icon.

The Mileševa Monastery was the seat of the Metropolitanate of Herzegovina, from which the throne of the Serbian patriarchs was most frequently ascended after 1557. The monastery was exceptionally wealthy, boasting an active printing press between 1544 and 1557, and – most importantly – housing the relics of Saint Sava of Serbia. The Mileševa monks meticulously preserved everything connected to the saint's life, spanning from oral tradition to various physical artifacts. Among these objects was the archbishop's pastoral staff, believed to have been a gift from the Ecumenical Patriarch to Sava during his stay in Nicaea in 1218 or 1219. This staff, distinguished by a large, precious rock crystal at its tip, was observed in 1589 by the English traveler Fawkes during his visit to Mileševa. The monks brought the staff out before him and his companions, attributing miraculous healing properties to the artifact due to its direct contact with the saint and his relics. Barely two decades after Fawkes's visit, the devastation of Mileševa forced the translation of the staff to the Monastery of the Holy Trinity near Pljevlja, where it received a new silver-gilt coating.

The presence of Saint Sava's relics at the Mileševa Monastery between 1459 and 1690 served as the primary catalyst for the formation and continuous growth of his cult. Under the specific socio-historical circumstances of Ottoman rule, this cult acquired heightened religious significance and a powerful role in safeguarding ethnic identity. There is no doubt that valuable gifts were constantly presented to Sava's relics at Mileševa as an expression of piety. Furthermore, documentary evidence from the late fifteenth century onward confirms that highly prestigious, costly ecclesiastical artifacts were crafted specifically in memory of Saint Sava of Serbia. A few of them have been preserved to this day. At the end of the fifteenth century, the Studenica brotherhood commissioned a luxurious epitrachelion of "Saint Sava of Serbia," intricately embroidered with silver and gold thread. Abbot Vikentije Knežević later purchased this vestment from the Studenica monastic

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Saint Sava, detail of the icon
Saints Sava and
Simeon, Hilandar
Monastery (fifteenth century)



Epitrachelion from the treasury of the Dečani Monastery, details,
Museum of the Serbian Orthodox Church (second half of the sixteenth century)

community for the Krka Monastery in 1824. It was thought that the epitrachelion of “Saint Sava” could be attributed to the saint himself because, following its creation, it was consecrated upon Saint Sava’s relics in Mileševa before being transferred to Studenica, and eventually to Krka in the nineteenth century. However, the fact is that in the treasuries of Serbian monasteries there are several works that, like votive objects, are traditionally linked to the name of Saint Sava, but it is not possible to link them with certainty to Sava or his relics, as they were often created centuries after his remains were burned. This is true, for example, of the “Cross of Saint Sava” in the treasury of the Studenica Monastery. An extraordinary achievement of woodcarving and applied metalwork from the early eighteenth century, this piece was a collaborative effort between a woodcarver from Mount Athos and a Serbian goldsmith and filigree artist from Sarajevo, who together incorporated over two hundred pieces of extremely valuable precious stones into the cross.

As early as the fourth decade of the sixteenth century, the prominent Serbian intellectual and printer Božidar Vuković, who moved to the Venetian Republic due to the Ottoman

invasion and settled in Venice, included the *Service to Saint Sava and Saint Simeon* – accompanied by their respective representations printed from woodcuts, and the designation “Serbian” – in the *Festial Menaion*, one of his most representative publications made in collaboration with Mojsije of Dečani (Patriarchate of Peć, SŠK 20). Vuković’s profound devotion to Saint Sava is further evidenced by his gift of a magnificent banner sent to the Mileševa Monastery to adorn the relics of the first Serbian archbishop. On that occasion, he formally bequeathed all future revenue generated from his book sales to Sava’s burial church.

Despite unstable conditions during the second half of the fifteenth century, monks meticulously copied Sava’s biography, confirming that it remained a highly sought-after and revered text. Dating from this period is a copy of Domentijan’s *Life of Saint Sava*, which is currently preserved at the National Museum in Prague (Šafárik Collection, IX 7 [Š 25]). A similar trend occurred immediately prior to the restoration of the Patriarchate; from the second quarter of the sixteenth century, the *Rules for the Use of the Psalter* (National Library of Serbia, RS 34) attributed to Saint Sava of Serbia have been preserved. These manuscripts, alongside a vibrant scribe tradition, testify to the continuity of Saint Sava’s cult and his enduring importance in the spiritual and cultural life of the Serbian people, even in times of tribulation. The aforementioned codices offer not only literary but also historical confirmation of the resilient bond between tradition and identity, safeguarding the memory of the most pivotal figure in the history of the Serbian Orthodox Church.

THE RESTORATION OF THE PATRIARCHATE (1557) AND A NEW CREATIVE ENTHUSIASM IN CHURCH PAINTING

Upon ascending the patriarchal throne at the ancient stauropegia and seat of the restored Patriarchate, the Mother of Churches in Peć, Makarije Sokolović undoubtedly found the Peć Patriarchate in an unenviable state. More than two centuries had passed since the last extensive works had taken place at the patriarchal see; the shared narthex fronting all three Peć churches was likely the most endangered structure, as Makarije prioritized its immediate restoration and decoration. This portion of the building was secured against further decay, with every viable element both inside and outside meticulously preserved. The open arcades were walled up, and the outer narthex was almost entirely painted. While the original fourteenth-century frescoes from the time of Archbishop Danilo II were carefully kept intact where possible, a new layer of painting was executed that faithfully adhered to the older iconographic scheme.

The renewal of the wall paintings within the outer narthex was completed on September 8, 1565. In the founder’s inscription positioned above the northern door of the narthex, Patriarch Makarije, among other things, characterized his foundational undertaking

as a restoration of both the “Holy Throne” and the “Great Church”: “By the will of the Father and the assistance of the Son and the completion of the Most Holy Spirit, this narthex of the holy and great church of the Patriarchate was built and decorated, with the great effort and good will of the most holy and blessed Archbishop Kyr Makarije, the first patriarch after the second renewal of this honorable and sacred throne of all the Serbian land, Western Maritime Lands and Northern Parts, in the year 7074 [1565], solar cycle 28, lunar [cycle] 5, indiction 9, golden number 8, epact 28, month of September, 8th [day].” Adjacent to the portrait of Makarije, the first patriarch of the Patriarchate after the restoration, the accompanying inscription reads: “Makarije, the Most Reverend Patriarch and Restorer of this Holy Throne.” In the immediate vicinity of this fresco stands the original throne of Saint Sava of Serbia, situated between the entrances to the Church of Saint Demetrios and the Church of the Holy Apostles. This throne is surmounted by a fresco of Saint Sava depicted as the first Serbian patriarch, executed around 1370. However, portraying Sava as a patriarch during the fourteenth century is a historical anachronism; Saint Sava held archiepiscopal, not patriarchal, rank, given that the Serbian Patriarchate was established only in 1346. Consequently, this iconographic choice can be understood as a retrospective ideological and ecclesiastical construct, deliberately designed to elevate his historical status in alignment with the Church’s subsequent institutional development.

Individual portraits of Saint Sava in Serbian wall painting from the period 1459–1690 were most frequently positioned within the lower registers of the naos, often paired with representations of his father and the founder of the Nemanjić dynasty, the Venerable Simeon, whether rendered side by side or opposite one another. The prevailing iconographic type depicts Sava as an archbishop without a mitre. Sava was depicted in this way in the monasteries of Saint Prohor of Pčinj (1489), Matka (1497), and Poganovo (1499); in the chapel of Saint Nicholas at the Monastery of the Holy Savior in Kučevište (1501); in the Monastery of Saint Nicholas of Šiševo (1565), the Patriarchate of Peć (1565), and the monasteries of Brezovica near Plav (1567), Studenica (1568), and Budisavci (1568); in the church at Donja Bitinja (1560s), the exterior narthex of Gračanica (1570), and the narthex of Banja near Priboj (1571); in the churches of Saint Nicholas (1577) and Saint John (1570s) at Velika Hoča; and in the monasteries of Trnava near Raška (1579/1580), Nikoljac (ca. 1570), Lomnica (1607/1608), Crna Reka (1599/1600), the Holy Trinity of Pljevlja (1594/1595), and Orahovica (1594); in the churches of Saint Nicholas at Mušnikovo (second half of the sixteenth century), the Holy Healers in Podgrađe (second half of the sixteenth century), Saint Nicholas at Bogoševci (late sixteenth century), and Saint Nicholas at Kijevo near Peć (1602/1603); in the naos of the monastic church at Piva (1604–1605) and the church at Petrovići near Trebinje (1605); in the monasteries of Ježevica (1609), Hopovo (1608), Podvrh (1613/1614), Žurče near Bitola (1622), and Pustinja (1622); in the Piva narthex (1626); in Saint Nicholas’ Church



Saint Sava, Church of the Holy Virgin, Studenica Monastery (1568)

at Morača (1639), Saint Nicholas' Church at the Peć Patriarchate (1673/1674), the chapel of Saint John the Baptist at the Saint Sava tower (1683/1684) and in other churches.

A unique fresco, preserved on the eastern wall of the Piva Monastery narthex, offers a rare variation among the individual representations of Saint Sava. Executed by the iconographer Jovan in 1625/1626, the scene depicts Saint Sava attired as an archbishop, standing before the throne of the Most Holy Theotokos and renouncing the insignia of his princely dignity. These insignia are laid on the ground before him, while he holds a closed Gospel book in his hands, bowing his head toward the Holy Mother and her Son, who extends a blessing in Sava's direction. With this unique composition, the iconographer Jovan clearly intended to emphasize the pivotal moment of the saint's life, when



Saint Sava Before the Virgin with Christ, Piva Monastery (1625/1626)

from being Rastko he grew up into Sava, unequivocally underscoring the transcendent importance of the spiritual realm over all earthly power.

In wall painting, representations of Saint Sava of Serbia are also found within the sanctuary space, both in the scene of the Liturgical Service and within a special iconographic form of representing rows of archpriests. In the mid-fifteenth century, the figure of Saint Sava was included in the decorative program of the church in Dolgaec in Pelagonia, where he is depicted alongside Saint Clement of Ohrid participating in the liturgical service.

At the initiative of the highest-ranking bishops, the conflict with the Archbishopric of Ohrid and the ongoing dispute over the autonomy of the restored see prompted several iconographic innovations in Serbian painting. These included the integration of contemporary patriarchs and metropolitans into the traditional procession of Serbian archbishops and patriarchs – led by Saint Sava – as well as the inclusion of local Serbian and Balkan



Saint Sava and Saint Simeon, Church of Saint Nicholas, Morača Monastery (1639)

saints within the register of standing figures. These visual innovations aimed to legitimize and confirm the independence of the Serbian Patriarchate and its leadership through imagery serving as credible historical testimony. Thus, rows of archpriests can be found in the narthex of the Patriarchate of Peć (1565), at Budisavci (1568), in the outer narthex of Gračanica (1570) and at Morača (1616, 1639, 1642). These frescoes served as a visual reminder of the Patriarchate's three and a half centuries of independence, within which Saint Sava's status as the foundational father of the Serbian Church was indisputable.

In this era, Saint Sava of Serbia was also painted within the theme of the Nemanjić Lineage, which depicted members of the dynasty from Simeon Nemanja down to Uroš V. During the period of Ottoman rule, this specific iconographic program was seldom incorporated in the decorative schemes of churches, appearing only in the monasteries of Orahovica (1594), the Holy Trinity of Pljevlja (1595) and Gradište in Paštrovići (1620).

REPRESENTATIONS OF SAINT SAVA IN WORKS OF ICON PAINTING

Representations of Saint Sava of Serbia were frequently executed on panel icons. Within early modern icon painting, the most prevalent template was a double, full-length portrait of Saint Sava of Serbia alongside the Venerable Simeon – an iconographic formula deeply imbued with the concept of historical and dynastic continuity. Crucially, icon painters rarely separated Saint Sava from Saint Simeon; this remains true despite a small number of independent representations of Sava emerging in the second half of the seventeenth century, such as those found in Lipnica near Bjelovar and in Risan, where an icon depicting Saint Sava alongside Saint John the Baptist is preserved. This iconographic pairing with the Forerunner of the Lord is not an isolated phenomenon; it also occurs on a Russian icon of Saint Sava and Saint Arsenije of Serbia preserved at the Museum of the Serbian Orthodox Church (MSPC 4164). Dated to the very beginning of the eighteenth century, this Russian icon features Saint John the Baptist at its center. This theological analogy between Saint Sava and Saint John the Baptist is rooted in the conceptualization of Sava as a forerunner, and the heavenly intercessor before Christ for the Serbian nation. Beyond these pairings, representations of Saint Sava alongside Saint Nicholas can be found in the sixteenth- and seventeenth-century wall paintings of the Ohrid Archbishopric and across Bulgaria. Within Bulgaria, sixteenth- and seventeenth-century depictions of Saint Sava and Saint Simeon appeared with greater frequency in churches throughout the regions of Kyustendil and Samokov – the seats of dioceses that remained under the jurisdiction of the Patriarchate of Peć until its suppression in 1766.

Within the oeuvre of the iconographer Jovan – the most celebrated seventeenth-century Serbian painter – the double portrait of the founder of the Serbian royal dynasty alongside his son, the first archbishop, remains the most prevalent iconographic theme. Between 1627/1628 and 1644/1645, he executed several versions of Saint Sava of Serbia paired with Saint Simeon. On the lower border of the Christ with the Apostles icon frame from Nikoljac, he first rendered Sava and Simeon as bust-length figures with outstretched arms. A decade later, on an icon from Piva, he painted them as full-length figures with their hands held before their chests. Jovan utilized this same full-length composition for the icons he produced for the Morača Monastery; on one occasion, he grouped the pair alongside Saint Stefan Vukanović and Saint Cyril the Philosopher, while on another, he surrounded their figures with a detailed hagiographical cycle of the life of Saint Sava.

Until the middle of the seventeenth century, icons from Dečani, Crna Reka, Nikoljac, Lipnica, and Krka consistently depicted Saint Sava of Serbia attired in a polystavrion. The iconographer Jovan initially followed this pattern when rendering the first Serbian archbishop in one of his earliest works – the Christ with the Apostles icon from Nikoljac. Over the subsequent decade, however, he developed an iconographic type showing Saint

> Icon of Saint Sava, Saint Simeon, the Holy King Stefan Vukanović, and Saint Cyril the Philosopher, Morača Monastery (1644/1645)





Detail of the scene The Miracle of the Myrrh-Streaming from the Tomb of Saint Simeon, Icon of Saint Sava and Saint Simeon with the Life of Saint Sava, Morača Monastery (1644/1645)



Sava in a dark blue sticharion with potamoi, a richly embroidered sakkos, and a dark blue omophorion. This specific configuration ultimately prevailed from the mid- to late seventeenth century. Jovan first implemented this schema on the throne icon from Piva (1638/1639) and did not change it on his later icons for the Morača Monastery (1644/1645); neither did his students, Andreja Raičević and Radul, on their icons from Busovača – now split between the National Museum in Belgrade (1675/1676; inv. no. 4029) and the Sekulić Collection (ca. 1675/1676). The painter of the Lepavina icon utilized this same template, while variations of Longin's and Jovan's solutions were applied by the master of the Krka icon and the painter Dimitrije on the Risan icon. Notably, the icon of Saint Sava and Saint Simeon from the treasury of the Krka Monastery represents a masterpiece of seventeenth-century miniature icon painting. With the skill of a true miniaturist, the anonymous painter meticulously executed a highly detailed drawing, harmoniously rendering the countenances, vestments, and background in a rich palette.

A celestial segment showing a bust of Christ blessing Saint Sava and Saint Simeon is incorporated as an iconographic motif on Jovan's icons from both Piva and Morača, as well as on the panel from Krka. This motif represents a distinct achievement by the painters of the restored Patriarchate of Peć and their contribution to the final shaping of Nemanjić iconography, symbolically indicating that the spiritual authority of these saints was derived directly from Christ. It eventually became an established component of their standard representation; consequently, between Sava and Simeon on the early eighteenth-century Russian icon from the treasury of the Peć Patriarchate, Christ Emmanuel is likewise depicted blessing both saints from a heavenly segment.

Within the Serbian painting of the restored Patriarchate of Peć, Saint Sava is never depicted with a scepter or attired in a luxurious sakkos. However, the tonsure remains a standard feature within his conventional iconography, omitted only in his portraits on the icons from Crna Reka and Krka. Furthermore, icons from this period usually append only the designation “of Serbia” to Saint Sava’s name. This formula is expanded with the epithet “Miracle Worker” only on the icon executed by Dimitrije Daskal for the Church of Saints Peter and Paul in Risan. That Saint Sava of Serbia could be depicted independently of Saint Simeon, or alongside another saint, is confirmed by a panel painted around 1596 for the Dečani Monastery by the master iconographer Longin – widely considered the finest Serbian painter of the second half of the sixteenth century. Although this icon is now highly damaged, it is certain that the figure depicted next to Saint Sava is not his father Simeon, but most likely Saint Nicholas. Another icon from the National Museum of

Serbia, dated to the second half of the sixteenth century (inv. no. 2050) and traditionally attributed to Longin, is – judging by the somewhat coarser execution of the figures and flesh tones – more likely the work of a painter from his immediate workshop circle.

Evidence of this iconographic variation is found in the fact that, in addition to the traditional double portrait, Saint Sava was also incorporated into the complex composition of the extended Deësis – a scene serving as a concise visual depiction of the Last Judgment. At this Judgment, alongside Christ, the Most Holy Theotokos, and John the Baptist, Saint Sava of Serbia was frequently depicted among the interceding saints during this period. This placement added a new layer of localized interpretation to the foundational meaning of the Deësis, framing Sava as a direct advocate for his nation. Thus, in the Busovača icon of the Deësis with Saints (1654), the painter Andreja Raičević expanded upon the standard Deësis iconography to develop a thematic scheme centered on a row of Holy Serbs



Icon of Saint Sava and Saint Simeon, front of a closed triptych, Orahovica Monastery (first half of the sixteenth century)

alongside prominent Church Fathers. Along the upper and lower borders of the panel frame, he drew deliberate parallels by pairing Saint Nicholas with Saint Stefan Dečanski, Saint Sava with the Holy Apostle Peter, and Saint Simeon with the Holy Apostle Paul.

A single triptych wing – originally flanking a central Deësis panel and now representing the sole surviving portion of the object – is preserved at the Museum of the Serbian Orthodox Church (MSPC 2104). It depicts the Apostles Peter and Paul alongside Saint Sava and Saint Simeon. This piece was executed on Mount Athos during the second half of the sixteenth century and is attributed to a Russian master. The superb mastery of its execution and the inscriptions carved into the frame unequivocally confirm the prominent status that Saint Sava occupied within the Russian monastic community on the Holy Mountain.

The most complex adaptations of the Deësis featuring Saint Sava and other Serbian saints are found on the icons executed by the painter Radul, preserved at the National Museum of Serbia and the Sekulić Icon Collection. On these panels, the Deësis is isolated within an upper register, while the lower register displays the holy rulers of the Nemanjić dynasty. These works demonstrate Radul's characteristic two-tiered horizontal composition, with registers divided by a painted border. On the Sekulić panel, the upper segment contains the Deësis, while the lower segment surrounds the Three Holy Hierarchs with figures of the dynastic founder, Saint Simeon, and the architect of the autocephalous Serbian state and Church, Saint Sava.

On the icon from the National Museum of Serbia, Radul pushed this iconographic blending even further. He elevated both Saint Sava and Saint Simeon into the upper zone of the painted field, positioning them directly adjacent to Christ's throne, just beyond the Virgin Mary and Saint John the Baptist. In the lower register, Radul rendered a miniature, frontal pantheon of Serbian rulers and saints: the figures of Stefan the First-Crowned, Stefan Dečanski, King Uroš, and Prince Lazar, led by the Holy Archdeacon Stephen – the patron saint of both the Nemanjić dynasty and the medieval Serbian state. Some of these figures, such as the young Uroš V, appear for the first and last time within the iconography of the restored Patriarchate of Peć. His inclusion here undoubtedly reflects the seventeenth-century revival of the cult of the last Nemanjić ruler, a phenomenon catalyzed by the *Life and Service* composed in 1442 by Patriarch Pajsije. This connection is firmly corroborated by the epithet “small” utilized in the icon's accompanying signature, a term frequently employed in Pajsije's texts. Across all three of these Deësis icons, the eschatological theme of the Last Judgment is deliberately and ideologically bound to the memory of the medieval Serbian rulers, most notably Saint Sava.

At this juncture, we should recall another significant sixteenth-century work featuring Saint Sava and Saint Simeon, executed at Hilandar. This is a now-lost triptych from the Oravica Monastery, whose central panel originally depicted a frontal representation of the



Virgin enthroned (Kyriotissa) with the Christ Child, flanked by two archangels attired in divitition vestments. The inner faces of the left and right triptych wings featured bust-length portraits of Saint John Chrysostom and Saint George (subsequently retouched), alongside Saint Nicholas and Saint Demetrius, respectively. On the outer panels of the closed triptych, Saint Sava and Saint Simeon were rendered as full-length, frontal figures – both raising their right hands in blessing, which represents a highly unusual iconographic detail.

Exceedingly rare, and therefore uniquely valuable, are the narrative depictions of Saint Sava's funeral service. On a seventeenth-century icon preserved in the treasury of the Peć Patriarchate, this scene is accompanied by the inscription: "The Dormition of Saint Sava, the Serbian Teacher." In addition to the deceased archbishop and the Bulgarian emperor, Ivan Asen II, the funeral is attended by a gathering of bishops, monks, nobles, and laypeople, with none of the figures identified by name. The artist vividly captured the dynamic movements of the officiating priest who stands over Sava's bier, holding a censer aloft in his raised left hand. He similarly emphasized the sumptuously attired young emperor Ivan Asen II accompanied by his courtiers, all set against a panoramic view of the city of Tarnovo in the background.

By contrast, the depiction of the Funeral Service of Saint Sava within the hagiographical cycle on Jovan's Morača icon is highly simplified. It retains only the core narrative elements necessary to illustrate the circumstances of the archbishop's sudden death in January 1235, during his passage through Bulgaria while returning from his second pilgrimage to the Holy Land. The prelate standing above the deceased archpastor remains anonymous, while Patriarch Joachim of Tarnovo, Emperor Ivan Asen II, and the empress approach the bier with bowed heads. The composition of the Funeral Service of Stefan Vukanović, executed on the pedestal of the same Morača icon, is structured in a similar manner.

In iconographic terms, the most sophisticated surviving programs are, without doubt, the hagiographical cycles dedicated to the life of Saint Sava. These have been preserved in only two seventeenth-century examples: the fresco cycle in the refectory of the Hilandar Monastery, and the monumental icon positioned in the western aisle of the Morača naos, placed directly above the tomb of the founder, the Holy King Stefan Vukanović.

The Hilandar cycle of frescoes depicting the life of Saint Sava was painted in the monastic refectory by the iconographer Georgije Mitrofanović between 1621 and 1622. He finished the work on November 16, 1622, "by the will and with the approval of the fathers and brothers of the Hilandar Council, under the father abbot Kyr Hilarion." This hagiographical cycle includes twenty-nine scenes rendered within twenty-six bordered compositions, detailing the following sequence: Rastko consulting with a monk to flee to Mount Athos; Rastko receiving his parents' blessing to go hunting; Rastko eluding his entourage to flee to the Holy Mountain; the envoys of Stefan Nemanja beating the monks while searching for Rastko; the monastic tonsure of Saint Sava; Saint Sava bringing warm bread



Icon of Saint Sava, Saint Simeon, the Holy King Stefan Vukanović, and Saint Cyril the Philosopher, Morača Monastery (1644/1645)

ΣΤΑ ΕΠΙΣΤΗΜΗ ΠΙΝΑΣ

ΕΛΜΟΝΤΙΚΗ ΚΑΘΟΛΙΚΗ





The Death of Saint Sava in Tarnovo, Refectory of the Hilandar Monastery (1621–1622)

to hermits; Saint Sava being captured by bandits; Saint Simeon's arrival at the Vatopedi Monastery; Sava's audience with Emperor Alexios in Constantinople to secure stauropegial status for Hilandar; the death of Saint Simeon at Hilandar; the Theotokos appearing to Sava in a dream to reveal a hidden golden treasure; the miraculous outpouring of myrrh from the relics of Simeon Nemanja; Sava's ordination as a hieromonk; Sava healing a paralyzed man; Sava striking down Strez through prayer; Sava's consecration as archbishop; Sava crowning his brother Stefan as king; Sava invoking a hailstorm through prayer; Sava presenting a bowl of ice to the Hungarian king; Sava administering the Eucharist to the Hungarian king to convert him to Orthodoxy; the death of King Stefan the First-Crowned; Sava being captured by pirates at sea during his journey to Jerusalem; a miraculous trout leaping from the sea to sustain Sava; Saint Sava blessing the water on the eve of Epiphany in a church in Tarnovo; the death of Saint Sava in Tarnovo; the miraculous healing of the monk Neofit at Sava's tomb; King Vladislav petitioning the Bulgarian emperor Ivan Asen II



The Meeting of Saint Sava and Saint Simeon in Vatopedi, Refectory of the Hilandar Monastery (1621–1622)



Scenes from the youth of Saint Sava, detail of the icon of Saint Sava and Saint Simeon with the Life of Saint Sava, Morača Monastery (1644/1645)

for the return of Sava's relics (incorporating Sava's appearance to Ivan Asen II in a dream); and King Vladislav translating the relics of Saint Sava from Tarnovo to Mileševa.

Executed by the iconographer Jovan in 1644/1645, the Morača icon featuring the likenesses of Saint Sava and Saint Simeon represents one of the most complex thematic ensembles dedicated to the first Serbian archbishop. Housed within a lavishly carved, painted, and gilded frame, it contains a hagiographical cycle of twenty-three scenes surrounding an arched upper register that features a bust-length portrait of Christ flanked by Saint Nicholas and Saint Luke. Axially, the central figure of Saint Sava aligns with the representation of Saint Nicholas, while that of Saint Simeon connects with Saint Luke – the patron saint of the local Rovčani tribe. The cycle includes scenes preceding and following Sava's tonsure, his miracles, his repose, and events related to the construction of the Morača Monastery church: Saint Sava conversing with a monk; Saint Sava receiving his parents' blessing to go hunting; his departure for Mount Athos; soldiers beating the monks while searching for the prince; Sava's tonsure in the tower of the Saint Panteleimon Monastery; Saint Sava distributing warm bread to hermits; the Most Holy Theotokos appearing to Saint Sava to reveal a hidden golden treasure; Saint Sava's ordination into the priesthood; the miraculous outpouring of myrrh from the sarcophagus of Saint



Simeon; Saint Sava's consecration as bishop; Sava praying for the death of the Bulgarian nobleman Strez (rendered in two episodes); Saint Sava healing a paralyzed man; Saint Sava crowning his brother, Stefan the First-Crowned, as king; Sava invoking a hailstorm through prayer and sending a vessel filled with ice to the Hungarian king; Saint Sava resurrecting his deceased brother, Stefan the First-Crowned, to tonsure him as a monk; the miracle at sea with pirates, wherein Saint Sava is concealed from bandits by a thick fog; a wave casting a fish onto the ship to sustain the saint; and the Dormition of Saint Sava. Along the center of the lower border, the scenes The Construction of the Morača Monastery and Stefan Consulting with the Master Builder are depicted in a horizontal register, while the medallion on the pedestal features a painting of the Death of Stefan Vukanović.

THE WRITTEN HERITAGE OF SAINT SAVA DURING OTTOMAN RULE

The continuous transcription of Sava's literary works and hagiographies was a primary factor in sustaining the vigor of his cult. The reproduction of the *Life of Saint Sava* continued unabated throughout the second half of the sixteenth century; for instance, a valuable copy of Sava's *Life* penned by the monk Teodosije has been preserved within a compendium

of *Lives and Services to Serbian and Other Saints*. This codex belongs to the collection of the Museum of the Serbian Orthodox Church, specifically hailing from the Radoslav Grujić Legacy (ORG 91). In printed books of that time, there were also widespread depictions of Saint Sava of Serbia, usually depicted together with his father, Venerable Simeon. This is the case with the *Festal Triodion* printed at the Mrkšina Crkva Monastery in 1566.

Following the death of Patriarch Jovan Kantul, and despite the severe crisis engulfing the restored see, the transcription of Sava's works never ceased; on the contrary, with the accession of Patriarch Pajsije to the patriarchal throne, it grew increasingly intensive. In 1615, during the tenure of Abbot Gavriilo, Bishop Theophilus of Buda, and Patriarch Pajsije, the reproduction of the *Nomokanon* – better known as the *Morača Krmčija* – was completed at the Morača Monastery; this manuscript is today preserved at the Museum of the Serbian Orthodox Church (ORG 164). In 1619, the renowned scribe Averkije, a Hilandar monk originally from Herzegovina, transcribed the *Studenica Typikon* alongside the *Life of Saint Simeon* at the monastery's Upper Hermitage. In his colophon, Averkije explicitly testified that the original exemplar had been written by Sava's own hand. This undertaking would prove to be an immeasurably valuable act of preservation, as the fate of the original autograph remains unknown. Through a turn of events, Averkije's copy eventually entered the collection of Josef Pavel Šafárik and is currently housed in the Šafárik Collection at the National Museum in Prague. The dissemination of Sava's textual legacy continued into the 1620s, when an anonymous scribe penned a copy of the *Karyes Typikon* along with the *Rules for the Use of the Psalter*, a codex now preserved in the Archives of the Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts (ASANU 51).

Handwritten books from this era were occasionally richly illustrated. The iconographer Jovan, for instance, created one of the most exquisite double portraits of Saint Sava and Saint Simeon found in seventeenth-century manuscript illumination. This miniature appears on folio 179a of the *Psalter* dated to 1643, which remains one of the most prestigious illuminated codices of the period. Produced in the scriptorium of the Holy



Miniature with the representation of Saint Sava and Saint Simeon, detail of the miniature on fol. 179a of The *Psalter* of Gavriilo Trojičanin, Matica Srpska Library (1643)

Trinity Monastery near Pljevlja by the hand of the renowned scribe Gavriilo Trojičanin, this volume is today preserved at the Library of the Matica Srpska (PP II 19). In this miniature – for which Jovan utilized his own Morača and Piva icons as iconographic models – Saint Sava and Saint Simeon are depicted in a frontal, standing position. While Sava is rendered in an archbishop's vestments, holding a Gospel book in one hand and extending a blessing with the other, Simeon is attired in a monastic rhason and holds a cross in his right hand.

Within the context of Saint Sava's textual heritage, the representations found on metal book bindings are equally noteworthy. On the binding of the *Tetraevangelion* from the Hopovo Monastery (1662), the Deësis is depicted on one side, while on the other side, directly next to the Holy Apostle Peter, Saint Sava is shown within a composition that includes the Holy Virgin with Christ and the archangels, the first apostles Peter and Paul, and Saints Simeon and Sava of Serbia.

During the second half of the sixteenth century, the images of Saint Sava and the Venerable Simeon were also incorporated into the decorative scheme of a highly valuable piece of ecclesiastical embroidery. On an epitrachelion preserved in the treasury of the Dečani Monastery, bust-length portraits of these two holy monks – the founders of the independent Serbian state and Church – are embroidered within a series of medallions alongside the Apostles of Christ.

PRESERVING THE HERITAGE OF SAINT SAVA AT HILANDAR

The legacy of Saint Sava of Serbia was cherished with profound reverence by the monks and clergy of the restored Patriarchate of Peć, the Orthodox faithful under its jurisdiction, and the monastic community on Mount Athos. The brotherhood of the Hilandar Monastery, which also administered the Hermitage of Saint Sava in Karyes, safeguarded for centuries the miraculous icons of the Three-Handed Virgin and the Virgin Galaktotrophousa – treasures that, alongside the paterissa (pastoral staff) of Saint Sava, were kept within the Hermitage of Saint Sabbas the Sanctified in Karyes. The seventeenth century is traditionally regarded as the period when the icon of the Virgin Tricherousa (the Three-Handed Virgin) was translated from Serbia to Mount Athos; according to pious tradition, the icon, carried across the sea, miraculously arrived before the gates of Hilandar in 1661. During that same century, around 1685, a new icon of the Virgin Galaktotrophousa was executed, which today occupies a position on the Sovereign tier of the Karyes Hermitage iconostasis, positioned to the right of the Holy Doors. The accompanying inscription confirms that this panel was crafted through the efforts of Hieromonk Maksim from the Peć



Inscription on the goblet of Tsar Ivan IV Vasilyevich, detail, Museum of the SOC (1558)

Patriarchate, during the tenure of Archbishop Arsenije III of Peć and the Hilandar abbot, Kyr Simeon, who was then residing at the hermitage.

This evidence indicates that the region of Mount Athos – and in particular the Hilandar Monastery and the Karyes Hermitage – functioned as the preeminent center for the preservation and transmission of Sava's spiritual and cultic heritage during the post-Byzantine period. In this context, the connection between the Serbian homeland and the Athonite monastic communities is reflected not only in shared patterns of piety but also in a continuous exchange of artistic models, theological ideas, and cultic practices, which imbued the preservation of Saint Sava's legacy with a broader, supranational significance within the Orthodox world.

THE CULT OF SAINT SAVA IN RUSSIA

Remaining continuously vibrant in collective memory and the liturgical life of the Church, the cult of the first Serbian archbishop over time evolved into a unifying, pan-Orthodox phenomenon. This was especially true from the second half of the sixteenth century

> Saint Sava of Serbia Visits the Shrines in the Holy Land, miniature on fol. 599b of the Russian Imperial Chronicle, National Library of Russia (St. Petersburg), second half of the sixteenth century



onward, as the cult expanded into Russia, Wallachia, Moldavia, and Bulgaria. The veneration of Saint Sava was originally transmitted to Russia thanks to a copy of Teodosije's *Life of Saint Sava*, which the Athonite elder Isaiah presented to Grand Prince Vasily III in 1517, as well as various icons gifted to Russian rulers by visiting Serbian monks. The second half of the sixteenth century marked a particularly significant period for the expansion of Sava's cult in Russia. On September 10, 1558, Tsar Ivan IV Vasilyevich – popularly known as “the Terrible” – sent a massive, gilded silver cup as a gift to the Mileševa Monastery, “where the relics of the first Serbian Archbishop Saint Sava rest.” That the decision to send this offering originated directly in Moscow is explicitly corroborated by the inscription engraved upon the base of the cup: “Given in the imperial city of Moscow.” The first Russian tsar's enduring devotion to Saint Sava is further evidenced by a double portrait of Saint Sava and Saint Simeon, executed in 1564 during the fresco decoration of the monumental Archangel Cathedral in Moscow. The exceptional significance of this depiction of the Serbian people's most illustrious father and his even more illustrious son must be evaluated in light of the fact that their figures were integrated within the framework of the imperial endowment program.

The apex of Saint Sava's cult in Russia is manifested in the richly illustrated *Russian Imperial Chronicle*, a manuscript created in 1568–1576, whose fourth volume, dedicated to the history of the Serbs, features the *Life of Saint Sava of Serbia* by Teodosije. With exceptional care, through miniatures in the watercolor technique, the illuminators of the *Chronicle* rendered the life of Saint Sava across more than two hundred and fifty individual scenes, which is the most comprehensive visual narrative of Saint Sava's life in the entire history of Christian art. The scenes of the cycle trace Sava's life from the genealogy of Simeon Nemanja and Rastko's departure to Mount Athos, through his monastic feats, the founding of Hilandar, his consecration as archbishop, the establishment of the independent Serbian Church and Sava's pilgrimages to the Holy Land, all the way to his repose in Tarnovo and the translation of his relics to Mileševa.

The iconographic program, thus conceived and richly elaborated, testifies not only to the profound reception of the Sava cult within the Russian milieu, but also to its inclusion in the broader ideological framework of the Orthodox imperial idea, in which Saint Sava is recognized as one of the key spiritual authorities.



The abundance and merit of artistic craftsmanship, the diversity of techniques and materials used to depict the image of Saint Sava of Serbia, and the layering and complexity of iconographic ideas, underpinned by deep theological reflection, confirm that the cult of Saint Sava of Serbia in the period from the fall of Smederevo to the Great Migration



The Cross of “Saint Sava”, detail, first half of the eighteenth century

of the Serbs was not only preserved (despite the fact that his relics were burned), but was also greatly enriched and devotedly spread, radiating toward the Orthodox faithful of neighboring countries. By the end of the seventeenth century, Sava’s reputation had far exceeded the borders of Serbian lands in the Middle Ages and the borders of the restored

Patriarchate of Peć, becoming a pan-Orthodox saint whose reputation must have been the pride of the Orthodox community during the time of the overwhelming Ottoman occupation. The role of the Patriarchs of Peć in preserving a kind of covenant of Saint Sava – which is a covenant to preserve the achievements that Sava left to the Serbian Church – was undoubtedly crucial. That role, however, was no less significant than the measure of love and faith of the monks and laypeople who diligently, whether as copyists or as artists and founders, dedicatedly glorified the image and work of the saint, eternally alive in the being of the Serbian people.

In this sense, it can be concluded that the veneration of Saint Sava during the observed period took shape as a dynamic, multi-layered cultural and religious phenomenon, characterized by a peculiar interweaving of liturgical practice, literary production, and visual art. Such a synthesis of various expressions of piety enabled not only the continuity but also the further institutional and spiritual foundation of Saint Sava's legacy within the broader Orthodox context.

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IGOR B. BOROZAN

ART AND THE CULT OF SAINT SAVA: 1690–2025

The historical figure of Saint Sava, known from his biographies by Domentijan (thirteenth century) and Teodosije (late thirteenth or early fourteenth century), relied on established medieval patterns from the very inception, but also on the uniqueness of his identity within the Christian universe. A prince, diplomat, lawyer, writer, traveler, monk, and the first Serbian archbishop, founder of the Serbian Autocephalous Church and member of the holy Nemanjić dynasty, he represents a special phenomenon, not only within the Christian worldview, but also within the secular understanding that places gifted individuals at the epicenter of history. Hence Saint Sava, canonized shortly after his death, has ever since occupied an interspace between spiritual experience and church tradition, on the one hand, and a positivist reading of his figure – and his corresponding historical position in the context of secular tradition – on the other.

Immediately upon his passing, a cult was created around the saint's incorruptible body. In accordance with standard patterns of medieval saintly cults, the body of Saint Sava became the primary basis for celebrating his sanctity. At the same time, art – alongside hagiographical writings – also kept alive the memory of the saint's figure and deeds. From the establishment of his image on the canonical fresco in the Mileševa Monastery (thirteenth century), and then through medieval and late-medieval artistic patterns, both as independent depictions of the saint and representations within scenes related to his lifetime deeds or subsequent miracles, the image of Saint Sava went beyond the frameworks of the conventional saintly cult. This is also evidenced by the celebration of him among various Orthodox peoples, which transcended the peculiarities of the national cult widespread among the Serbs.

The act of burning his relics on the Vračar plateau (in Belgrade) in 1594 led to an even more pronounced reverence for the saint's image. The placement of Sava's image on the rebels' banners in Banat, coupled with the destruction of his earthly remains by the Ottomans, undoubtedly contributed, in addition to his virtuous life and saintly charisma, to the spread of his cult, and a new era in the memory of the saint began. Thus, the barbaric act, motivated by the intent to neutralize the saint's body with the ultimate goal of erasing his name from history, not only strengthened the national consciousness among the Serbs but, so to speak, revived the saint. The missing body of the saint became a symbol of religious and national homogenization, which overcame the impossibility of venerating the destroyed relics. In such a context, the cult of Saint Sava continued to operate, it seems, with even greater intensity, making it possible to revitalize his legacy among the Serbs in new circumstances and in accordance with the religious, social, ideological, cultural, ideological and other frameworks of both the pre-modern and modern eras. Thus, the living folk heritage was woven into the foundations of the tradition and culture of memory, without losing the primarily religious character of the saint's figure; however, it simultaneously opened the possibility for new definitions, that is, for attributing new roles, among which, in particular, his role as protector and patron of education stands out.

RELIGIOUS PATRIOTISM AND THE IMAGE OF SAINT SAVA IN THE AREA OF THE METROPOLINATE OF KARLOVCI IN THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

After the Great Migration of the Serbs in 1690, the cult of Saint Sava was transferred to the soil of southern Hungary. Defined in the Middle Ages as the Laos of God, whose homeland was the Heavenly Jerusalem, the Serbian people moved to a new territory, becoming part of the Habsburg Monarchy. Under the rule of Leopold I, and amid circumstances of religious intolerance and constant threat from the dominant Roman Catholic Church, the Serbian people, or rather the flock, found in their religious elders, especially patriarchs Arsenije III Černojević and Arsenije IV Jovanović Šakabenta, not only spiritual but also political leaders. Through the patriarchs' diplomatic activities, a framework was created for the preservation of their language, religion, and political autonomy, which Emperor Leopold I had promised them.

In an often hostile environment, the Serbs gathered around their religious heads, institutionally uniting around the Metropolitanate of Karlovci (founded in 1708 in Krušedol and relocated to Karlovci in 1713 and renamed accordingly), which, after the abolition of the Peć Patriarchate in 1766, became its successor and thus the sole bearer of the legitimacy of the Serbian people and the guardian of the memory of the glory of the Serbian

medieval state and the dignity of the Serbian Church. Taking care of the religious, educational, cultural and other internal issues of the Serbian people, and also other Orthodox communities, such as the Greeks and the Cincars (Aromanians), the Metropolitanate of Karlovci became an institutional framework for cherishing the memory and maintaining the cult of the members of the saint-bearing Nemanjić dynasty.

In such religious, but also political program, in which the secular and the sacred inevitably intertwined, an important role, according to Vladimir Simić, was played by the holy relics that the Serbs took with them during the migration. With them, they defended their status and justified their privileges as a people of high dignity, but at the same time, they also protected their confessional affiliation, defending themselves from the proselytizing ambitions of Vienna and Rome as well as from the constant pressures of the Hungarian nobility. The holy relics, in addition to their primary religious purpose and spiritual function, thus became symbols of spiritual and political continuity, but also focal points around which the people gathered.

Stored in Szentendre, as the new center of the Serbian people, and then at the Fruška Gora monasteries, which acquired the status of a kind of Srem Holy Mountain, the holy relics defined a new sacral map of the Metropolitanate of Karlovci, becoming identification topos in the new political and social reality. In this context, the role of the hierarchy in the popularization of saint cults should also be understood. The commissioning of hymns of praise, prints and icons, as well as the establishment of a mechanism for pilgrimages to monasteries where holy relics were kept, contributed to the strengthening of the cults of national saints, who became symbols of religious and national identity, with Saint Sava at their very center.

This concept of religious patriotism found a special application in hymnographic writings in which Saint Simeon and Saint Sava – father and son – were once again included in the choir of heavenly saints who protect and guard the country, and thus keep alive a sense of dynastic continuity interrupted by the Ottoman yoke.

Often viewed unfavorably by the Ecumenical Patriarchate, the Metropolitanate of Karlovci found a natural stronghold in the Russian Church, a connection that manifested primarily in the import and use of Russian printed liturgical books. On this foundation, as well as the tradition of older liturgical manuscripts, the *Srbljak* emerged. This specialized liturgical book, whose full title is the *Rules of Prayer of the Holy Serbian Enlighteners*, was compiled and arranged by Abbot Teofan of Rakovac Monastery in 1714. The *Srbljak* contained six services to saints from the Nemanjić lineage: Saint Sava, Saint Stefan the First-Crowned, Holy King Milutin, Saint Stefan Dečanski, and Holy Emperor Uroš; services to Prince Lazar, Saint Stefan Štiljanović and the holy despots from the Branković family were added later, which led to the intertwining of the old Nemanjić lineage with the cult of the Srem saints.

This conceptual framework should be kept in mind when understanding the *Srbljak* and its role. The insistence on tradition produced a new reality. In the proto-modern era, the idea of a pantheon of saints, which also took on a distinct national character, was revived. Serbian saints, as protectors of the tribe and fatherland, defined the Heavenly Jerusalem, but also guarded the geographical space inhabited by the Serbs. Thus, the medieval concept of the chosen people was linked to the modern concept of patriotism, defined as a theological virtue on the basis of which personal and collective identity was established.

Artistic production contributed to the popularization of the *Srbljak*. For the Rimnik edition, the painter Stefan Tenecki created drawings from which Josef Anton Lidl engraved a portrait alongside depictions of various saints. Among those featured was Saint Sava, whose inclusion confirmed, through visual language, his immense reputation and central position within the pantheon of Serbian saints. Zaharija Orfelin took a similar iconographic approach in the 1765 edition of the *Srbljak*, published by the printing house of Dimitrije Teodosije in Venice. Within this group of predominantly Serbian saints, Saint Sava is depicted in full archiepiscopal vestments; the composure and stability of his portrayal underscore the uninterrupted authority of the ecclesiastical hierarchy and the Serbian Church, thereby reinforcing the ideological foundations of the religious and political program of the Metropolitanate of Karlovci. The icon of the Serbian Saints from the eighteenth century, kept at the Museum of the Serbian Orthodox Church, was also painted according to this pattern.

Despite the non-existence of Saint Sava's body, around which a cult site could have been established on the territory of the Metropolitanate of Karlovci, his figure, along with that of Saint Simeon, served as a foundational building block for the formation of artistic programs of wall painting. Thus, as Miroslav Timotijević demonstrated in his canonical study, the Krušedol Monastery – the most important monastery within the territory of the



Joseph Anton Liedl (after a drawing by Stefan Tenecki), Saint Sava, the *Srbljak* of Rimnik, Museum of the SOC (1761)



Jov Vasilievich, wall painting in the narthex of the Krušedol Monastery Church (1750)

Metropolitanate of Karlovci – became the center for the cults of both old and new Serbian saints. The mausoleum of the Branković saints and the bishops of Belgrade and Srem was established as a focal point of Christian patriotism, serving as a symbolic topos for the persistence of tradition and the memory of the origins of the Serbian state and Church.

The space of the catholicon narthex, dedicated to the Annunciation, where the relics of high bishops and saints from the line of the Branković despots of Srem rested, symbolized a premier site of active memory and became a kind of pantheon of Serbian saints. The artistic program followed the function of the narthex; on its eastern wall, the figures of two archbishops were depicted: Saint Sava, in the role of the founder of the Serbian autocephalous Church, and Saint Maksim, who died in Krušedol as the Metropolitan of Belgrade and Srem and whose sarcophagus with relics was located below his representation on the narthex wall. The two saints were painted in the mid-eighteenth century by the

Ukrainian master Jov Vasilievich, who, in accordance with Baroque pictorial poetics, portrayed them to reflect the unity of two lineages; this connection was further emphasized in the narthex by the representation of the holy Nemanjić lineage, which ends with the Branković despots of Srem. This effectively transferred the cult of the gloriously sanctified medieval Nemanjić dynasty to the territory of the Metropolitanate of Karlovci – a process further enhanced by the introduction of the Branković lineage into the same sacred dignity, thereby establishing the legitimacy of the contemporary church hierarchy in the new environment.

The depiction of Saint Sava also appeared within the wall paintings of other prominent monasteries across the Metropolitanate of Karlovci. For instance, Hristofor Žefarović depicted Saint Sava in the sanctuary of the Bođani Monastery church; positioning the saint within a liturgical service scene alongside Maksim Branković further reinforced the symbolic unity between the old and new ecclesiastical hierarchies. Similarly, among the individual standing figures adorning

the naos walls of the Grabovac Monastery church in southern Hungary, the Novi Sad painter Andrej Šaltist also included Saint Sava between 1784 and 1785.

During the eighteenth century, depictions of Saint Sava were also frequently represented in icon painting. Previous research has indicated that Saint Sava was predominantly portrayed as either a bishop or a monk, appearing individually or within group compositions on standalone icons, iconostases, and other ecclesiastical furnishings. He was most often depicted in bishop's vestments, with a vestment, mitre and cross in his left hand, while offering a blessing with his right. Often, a model of a church or the Gospels accompanied the saint, emphasizing his role as the guardian of the faith and the founder of the Serbian Church. Towards the end of the eighteenth century, such portrayals,



Andrej Šaltist,
Saint Sava of
Serbia and the
Holy Prince Lazar,
Grabovac Monas-
tery (1784/1785)

dominant during the Baroque period, gradually gave way to representations of Saint Sava in monastic garb. Under the influence of Enlightenment reforms, the contrite monk was depicted in group scenes, thereby complementing the earlier portraits in which he was shown in archiepiscopal vestments – images designed primarily to validate the authority of the Church and its founder.

In accordance with the liturgical function of the church, icons with the image of Saint Sava manifested the foundations of his cult within the divine service. Aligned with this practice, icons of the two most important Nemanjić saints, Saint Sava and Saint Simeon – depicted respectively in archiepiscopal vestments and the robes of the Great Schema – were painted for the Sovereign tier of the iconostases. Such a placement can also be seen in the Sovereign tier of the iconostasis of the Krušedol Monastery church, painted in 1745–1746 by Jov Vasilievich. Through the inclusion of the standing figure of Saint Maksim, the Serbian Despot, the connection between the Patriarchate of Peć and the Metropolitanate of Karlovci was once again emphasized.

Saint Sava and Saint Simeon also appeared within the Sovereign tier of the Kuveždin Monastery church – a sanctuary dedicated to them – painted in 1772 by the master Janko Halkozović. Furthermore, Saint Sava and Saint Simeon were depicted together on the Sovereign tier icon of the Cathedral Church in Sremski Karlovci; in this latter work, the painter Teodor Kračun particularly emphasized their roles as pivotal figures of the Serbian Church, anchoring its authority within the new spiritual and cultural center of the Serb population north of the Sava and Danube rivers.

These two Serbian saints were also depicted on other zones of iconostases. For instance, they were included on the Holy Doors of the Beočin Monastery church, executed by Janko Halkozović in 1758–1759. Furthermore, they frequently appeared as direct representatives of the chosen people before God. An example of this is the 1785 work by Mojsej Subotić in Velike Bastaje, where they are prominently featured as national mediators within an expanded Deësis composition. Saint Sava and Saint Simeon – along with Saint Simon (or Stefan the First-Crowned) – were also depicted on the socle of the iconostasis of the Jazak Monastery church, the very site where the relics of Holy Emperor Uroš had been kept since the eighteenth century.

The founders of the Serbian state and Church were also depicted on choirs. In 1762, Dimitrije Bačević portrayed Saint Sava on the pulpit of the St. Nicholas Church in Zemun, positioning him alongside the great Church Fathers renowned for their preaching: Basil the Great, Saint John Chrysostom, Gregory the Theologian, and Cyril of Jerusalem. Masters of the Baroque and transitional periods also produced a vast number of portable icons featuring Saint Sava, typically clustered with other holy figures. For instance, in 1746, Georgije Stojanović executed a triptych featuring Saint Sava and Saint Simeon alongside Saint Demetrius

С. СМЕСЛОВ, ПЕРОВ

КЕ. СЕРГИЙ

Д. АРХИЕПИСКОП

СЕРБСКИЙ





Dimitrije Bačević, Saint Sava, pulpit of the Church of Saint Nicholas in Zemun (1762)

on horseback. Under the obvious influence of the Brâncoveanu style, this triptych testifies to the painter's stay in Lesser Wallachia. Similarly, the work of Stefan Tenecki, who in 1764 created four icons, each with three saints, for the Church of St. George in Stari Slankamen, is also of outstanding quality. On one of the icons, in addition to Saint Sava and Saint Simeon, Saint Stefan Štiljanović and Saint Arsenije of Serbia are also depicted. Icons of Saint Sava were also painted outside the borders of the Metropolitanate of Karlovci, demonstrating the far-reaching influence of painters who worked on its soil, the institutional strength of the Metropolitanate itself, and the enduring vitality of Saint Sava's cult across the wider Orthodox world. An example of this is the valuable work of the icon painter Petar Rafailović, a member of the Boka Kotorska icon-painting family, who in 1771 painted an icon depicting Saint Sava, Saint Nicholas and Saint Sabbas the Sanctified.

Representations of Saint Sava and Saint Simeon were also painted by Simeon and Aleksije Lazović, prominent masters from Bijelo Polje. Simeon depicted their images for the Studenica Monastery, while in 1803–1804, Aleksije rendered them on the doors of the Church of Saint Sergius and Bacchus in Podi.

The aforementioned cult of Saint Sava among other Orthodox peoples is further evidenced by a 1739 icon created in Moscow, commissioned by Mateja Pavlov Vladislavić – a relative of the diplomat Sava Vladislavić – and subsequently donated to the Savina Monastery. Of particular importance is the text within its Baroque cartouche, which states that the main body of Saint Sava had been enshrined at Mileševa, and that only his hand remained, preserved at the Patriarchate of Peć.

The medium of printmaking played a particularly important role in maintaining the cult of Saint Sava within the territory of the Metropolitanate of Karlovci and throughout the wider area inhabited by Serbs and other Orthodox peoples. As a medium more suited for mass communication than traditional icons, printed sheets and illustrated books

Teodor Kračun, Sovereign tier icon of Saint Sava and Saint Simeon, Cathedral Church in Sremski Karlovci (1780)



became the primary vessels for popularizing the image of the first Serbian archbishop over the course of the century. The fusion of Orthodox tradition with a new heraldic visual language contributed to their widespread distribution, quickly transcending exclusively religious utility. Disseminated through trade networks amid the rise of more affordable production, these prints eventually evolved into vital cultural artifacts that maintained both sacred and secular traditions, standing as the primary objects for cultivating piety, as well as patriotic sentiment.

In this context, early prints are also examined, particularly those centered on the Studenica Monastery as an important religious topos from the era of the medieval Serbian state. It is precisely the 1733 veduta of the Studenica Monastery that manifests the idea of both religious and political patriotism in the proto-modern era. In addition to the depiction of the monastery, on the left and right sides, the ideological program of Patriarch Arsenije IV is clearly indicated. The depictions of the holy Nemanjić lineage and the heraldic panel with the coats of arms of Serbian lands unambiguously refer to the patriarch as a religious and secular head, and symbolically connect the Metropolitanate of Karlovci with the Serbian medieval state. The depiction of Saint Sava in the row of Serbian saints, of course, also points to the idea of liturgical glorification. In a similar manner, Thomas Messmer designed the print of the Hilandar Monastery in 1755. Above the representation of Saint Sava and Saint Simeon, a miraculous icon of the Three-Handed Virgin is depicted. The cult relic confirmed the key place in defining the symbolic typography of Hilandar, which was confirmed by the ancient figures of the founders of the Serbian medieval church and state.

Even more representative and ideologically pronounced is the 1741 print featuring Saint Sava alongside the saints of the Nemanjić dynasty, a work by Hristofor Žefarović. It was commissioned by Patriarch Arsenije IV following his migration to Karlovci, commemorating the 1741 coronation of Empress Maria Theresa as Queen of Hungary in Požun (Bratislava). Surrounding the Nemanjić figures are the heraldic coats of arms of the Serbian lands, centered around the primary Nemanjić shield; this visual layout undoubtedly reinforced the patriarch's role as the protector of the Serbian people. The central figure of Saint Sava is symbolically identified with the patriarch, who, in a laudatory speech to Maria Theresa inscribed upon the sheet, points out the need to represent the Serbian flock as a political organism within the Habsburg Empire.

In essence, it is about the idea of establishing a balance, or rather the interaction between a Heavenly Serbia, represented by the saints, and an Earthly Serbia, represented by the coats of arms of the Serbian lands, both interconnected through the figures of Saint Sava and Patriarch Arsenije. This program ideologically framed the most famous Serbian Baroque illustrated book – the *Stemmatographia*, printed in Vienna by Hristofor

< Petar Rafailović,
Icon of Saint
Nicholas, Saint
Sava of Serbia,
and Saint Sab-
bas the Sancti-
fied, National
Museum of
Serbia (1771)

Žefarović and Thomas Messmer. The book was printed on October 21, 1741, the exact day Empress Maria Theresa confirmed Arsenije IV Jovanović as patriarch. The emphasized image of Saint Sava, rendered in a representative manner, in full archiepiscopal vestments, served to validate the patriarch's aspirations. The idea of him as the leader of the flock – encompassing not only Serbs but other Orthodox peoples and regions – intentionally mirrored the historical borders of the Nemanjić empire from the era of Emperor Dušan. Saint Sava, as the central figure of the Serbian pantheon of saints, but also as one of the supreme spiritual authorities of the Orthodox peoples, stood as a symbol and guarantor for the preservation of Serbian interests and the interests of the Orthodox peoples in the Habsburg Empire, to which the ideological and visual concept of the *Stemmatographia* was adapted.

The vedutas of the more important monasteries also served the same purpose. Zaharija Orfelin played a special role in this process. His vedutas of the Kuveždin Monastery (1770) and the Hilandar Monastery (1779) were designed to highlight these important monastic centers as a kind of spiritual and national topoi and sites of memory within the collective consciousness. The depictions of Kuveždin – and even more so of Hilandar – underscore the need to link contemporary eighteenth-century holy places with their primary spiritual origins, particularly with Hilandar, whose cult was nurtured among the Serbs in the Metropolitanate of Karlovci throughout the century.

Finally, from the middle of the eighteenth century onward, due to the rise of Enlightenment ideals and an increasingly pronounced trend toward the secularization of society, from which even the Roman Catholic Church was not exempt, the Metropolitanate of Karlovci came under the influence of the Theresian-Josephine educational



Thomas Messmer, The Hilandar Monastery, Matica Srpska Gallery (1755)

reforms, which entailed a continuous reduction in the celebration of Orthodox church holidays. This process was finalized in 1786 during the reign of Emperor Joseph II, when the Synod accepted a truncated church calendar of only twenty-two holidays. In accordance with such practice, but also due to constant caution against waves of proselytism, the high church hierarchs of the Metropolitanate of Karlovci had to adapt. In this, art also played a role. Thus, the *History of Various Slavic Nations* by the Kovilj archimandrite Jovan Rajić, printed in 1794, introduced a radically different visual portrayal of Serbian medieval rulers. The deliberate omission of halos above their heads signaled a process of secularization that did not spare church art either. Contrary to expectations, these restrictions in the celebration of church holidays strengthened the cults of national saints, at the apex of which stood Saint Sava. In this context, and viewed through the prism of Orthodox ritual, church dogma, and the dissemination of icons and prints, Saint Sava, understood as a link between the medieval era and modern times, was established as the most important saint on the territory of the Metropolitanate of Karlovci. The attempt to diminish the sacral significance of Saint Sava paradoxically resulted in his expansion, and it was precisely during this period that the foundations were laid for definiting him as a pivotal figure of Serbian education, culture, and national identity in its modern sense.

THE STATE-FORMING, NATIONAL AND EDUCATIONAL FOUNDATIONS OF THE CULT OF SAINT SAVA AND ITS VISUAL TRANSFORMATIONS IN THE LONG NINETEENTH CENTURY

The transition of the cult and veneration of Saint Sava from the eighteenth into the nineteenth century unfolded naturally, but also in accordance with the context of new political developments. The ramifications of the 1789 French Revolution marked a turning point, and that event itself, with all the necessary caution in drawing general conclusions, ushered the European continent into the modern era. The rise of a bourgeois citizenry as the key element of the social structures of the era and the formation of modern political nations, along with the expanding influence of new media within the public sphere, led to an ever faster flow of information that made the world an increasingly interconnected space.

Identified with this period, the *long nineteenth century*, as defined in modern historiography, was structurally bounded by the great historical event at its beginning and the conclusion of the First World War at its close. Thus, its temporal boundaries also shaped the contemporary understanding of art and culture, which were viewed in close connection with the social, political, ideological, and other frameworks of the era. In accordance with such practices and public policies, the duration of the cult of Saint Sava in the

public sphere inhabited by Serbs on both sides of the Sava and Danube rivers was also observed. Partially inherited from the eighteenth century experience, when the Serbian people lived in interfaith and supranational state systems, the cult rested on previously established structures during the opening decades of the nineteenth century.

A distinct position within the Serbian ethnic corpus was occupied by the Serbs of southern Hungary. Szentendre, Buda, Novi Sad and Sremski Karlovci, as centres of the Serbian elite, were the meeting places of ecclesiastical and especially bourgeois notables who, in accordance with the Enlightenment ideals rooted in patriotism, moral stoicism, personal freedom, and faith in the common good, championed the modernization and progress of a society structured according to the standards of empirical science and critical thinking. At the same time, in line with the rising tide of Romanticism and the empowerment of national movements that denied the universal, classicist ideal of the Enlightenment, a strengthening of national consciousness among the Serbs intensified. Thus, the ideals of Vuk Karadžić, Dositej Obradović, Metropolitan Stefan Stratimirović, and other intellectuals converged, and, ultimately, influenced the definition of Saint Sava's place in the modern cultural and media landscapes inhabited by the Serb population on both sides of the Sava and Danube rivers, but also beyond.

In his autobiographical work *Life and Adventures* (1783), Dositej writes about Saint Sava's exemplary deeds. In accordance with the principles of celebrating great people from sacral and national history, prominent intellectuals and prominent individuals also worked on shaping the cult of Saint Sava.

In the Church of Saints Peter and Paul, the family endowment of the Tekelija family in Arad, a solemn liturgy with a eulogy was celebrated on Saint Sava's Day in 1804. Then, the prominent benefactor and nobleman Sava Tekelija enabled the printing of a church sermon on Saint Sava as the patron saint of the people, which was subsequently distributed to prominent intellectuals within the Metropolitanate of Karlovci. With these acts, the first attempts were made among the Serbs in the nineteenth century to define Saint Sava as a national enlightener. The reduction of the church calendar and the tighter centralization of education under the auspices of the state, as a consequence of the of Maria Theresa's and Joseph II's reforms, enabled the figure of Saint Sava to become inextricably linked with schooling and education. In light of the strategies of the Serbian Enlightenment and the strengthening of the national idea, a school fund was established in Zemun on Saint Sava's Day, 1812. The regulations for the public celebration of Saint Sava were also established; in their formulation, a major role was played by Archpriest Jeftimije Ivanović, who had become acquainted with Sava's cult during his stay at the Kuveždin Monastery. This defined the foundations of Saint Sava's celebration, establishing a dual memorialization – ecclesiastical-liturgical and secular, tied directly to schooling and education. The Christian

understanding of enlightenment, along with the culture derived from the church cult, was permeated with a secular view of enlightenment based on rationalist postulates and positivist norms, which, to a certain extent, *displaced* the figure of Saint Sava from its religious framework during the nineteenth century.

In these diverse ideological frameworks, the foundations of the visual poetics of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries should also be understood. From the Baroque era, with more expressive figures and an emphasized color palette, to the permeation of European influences and late Renaissance traditions, embodied in schematized figures and the use of golden backgrounds, painting moved along the path to more modern classicist foundations that stemmed from the contemporary tendencies of the Vienna Academy of Fine Arts. Thus, the last decades of the eighteenth and the first decades of the nineteenth centuries were marked by painters distinguished by their more restrained style, reduced color, and purified backgrounds: Stefan Gavrilović, and especially Pavel Đurković and Arsenije Teodorović, as the leading painters in the Metropolitanate of Karlovci.

The impact of these masters manifested in the visualization of Saint Sava across numerous churches, where they rendered his image on iconostases, choir stalls, and especially episcopal thrones. Pavel Đurković, a painter from Baja, depicted Saint Sava on the episcopal throne at the church of Saints Peter and Paul in Bela Crkva, a commission executed between 1804 and 1808. The saint was also painted by Stefan Gavrilović on the episcopal throne of the church dedicated to Saint Petka in Surčin, between 1807 and 1809. In a similar manner, with the insignia of archiepiscopal dignity, the saint was also featured on several iconostases by Arsenije Teodorović, including those at the Dormition Church in Vršac (1808–1809), the Church of the Dormition of the Holy Virgin in Veliki Senmikulš (Sânnicolau Mare, 1809), and the Church of the Presentation of the Holy Virgin in Zrenjanin (1816–1817).

In 1815, Arsenije Teodorović executed one of the foundational pieces of early nineteenth century Serbian religious and historical painting. Namely, undoubtedly in collaboration with the learned priest Jevtimije Ivanović, he portrayed the image of Saint Sava on the episcopal throne of the church of the Nativity of the Theotokos in Zemun. Of particular iconographic interest, however, is the scene positioned directly below the main portrait: a depiction of the theme Saint Sava Reconciling His Brothers. Likely created in response to the contemporary uprisings in Serbia, this scene utilized a famous medieval milestone – Sava's reconciliation of the warring brothers Stefan and Vukan over the body of their father – to comment on the current political crisis, underscoring the urgent need for national unity in a very complex geopolitical moment. This introduced an important theme into the Serbian religious painting of the nineteenth century, one that would be frequently reinterpreted in various forms across both sides of the Sava and Danube rivers.



Arsenije Teodorović, Saint Sava Reconciles His Brothers, episcopal throne of the Church of the Nativity of the Theotokos in Zemun (1815)

This initiated the processes of secularizing faith and sacralizing the nation, ultimately leading to the conceptualization of religious painting as historical truth, as introduced into our scholarly discourse by Miroslav Timotijević. Religious paintings within church interiors maintained their primary liturgical and ritual functions, that is, they were adapted to the services performed and the places wherein they were positioned, which often dictated the thematic choices. At the same time, especially when it comes to the saints of the Nemanjić dynasty, they were also determined by the context of national ideology, which, aligned with civic ideals, formed the foundational structure of modern society. Within this framework, artists worthy of the title of history painter created visual representations based on historical sources that were as authentic as possible. A precise understanding of historical costuming, geographical settings, that is, the place of action, and the faithful depiction of historical figures were considered an absolute prerequisite for any painting tasked with educating and moving the public. This established painting as a moral-didactic art form that, through the rendering of emotions embodied in the gestures and facial expressions of the depicted individuals, was tasked with ethically influencing the viewer. At the same time, the emotions that were to be depicted on the characters were not, as in Romanticism, a value in themselves; rather, they were meant to influence the viewer of the painting.

Accordingly, history in a certain sense became a replacement or complement to religion. Growing omnipresent, this historical way of thinking, whether in its romantic-mythical or critical-scientific form, defined the worldview. History became sacred, and the life of the nation within it was established as a measure of values in the present and the driver of the projected future, embodying the concept of “life in the nation”. In this context, Saint Sava’s figure and exemplary work, originally based on historical facts derived from the biographies by Domentijan and Teodosije, served as the basis for placing him within the framework of the national idea. Therefore, church images, that is, religious images in a broader sense, manifested the story with the figure of Saint Sava. This historical narrative is also reflected in painting, as is demonstrated by the theme of Saint Sava reconciling his brothers, which has already been pointed out with the example from the Church of the Nativity of the Theotokos in Zemun. Scenes from the life of Saint Sava, especially those suitable to understanding and engaged processing of the present, became adapted to painting based on a plot and action that, in addition to religious, also had a moral-didactic character adapted to a secular pattern. Historical paintings thus became models and signposts not only in the cultivation of personal piety, but also as recognizable symbols in the service of forging a collective identity.

The transfer of modern understandings from southern Hungary to the territory of insurgent Serbia led to a more contemporary view of the figure and the work of Saint Sava. In this spirit, the scholar Vikentije Rakić wrote the *Troparion to Saint Sava, Archbishop of Serbia*, in 1807 which was also the first poem dedicated to liberated Belgrade. Soon after, the figure of Saint Sava was inscribed on the bell of Karađorđe’s Great School in 1810. The bell was transferred to the Lyceum in 1840, marked by a great ceremony held in Kragujevac. In the young Serbian state, this underlined from the very beginning the importance of Saint Sava as the protector of education and the first Serbian enlightener. Much later, in 1905, the bell was transferred to the newly founded University of Belgrade, thus confirming the continuity of the idea of Saint Sava as the patron of Serbian education and schooling.

The representation of Saint Sava and Saint Simeon, painted in 1813 in the choir of Karađorđe’s church in Topola, can also be seen in light of these developments. The work of the painter Petar Nikolajević Moler, executed in a somewhat naive academic manner, manifested the idea of state and religious continuity restored within the political program of Karađorđe’s Serbia. This painter – one of the Serbian uprising *voivodes* (commanders) who trained in the basics of painting with Stefan Gavrilović in Karlovci – executed a complex iconographic program for the church of Saint George in Topola. Tutored in both the basics of painting and the ideological concepts prevalent in Srem at that time, this insurgent leader served as a conduit modern artistic trends entering Karađorđe’s Serbia.

The figures of the two most revered members of the Nemanjić dynasty, founders of the autocephalous Serbian Church and the Serbian medieval state, served as an identification model for the restoration of the state and Church after centuries of Ottoman subjugation.

The idea of intertwining the religious – and therefore Orthodox – element with the concepts of patriotism and the national idea among Serbs solidified the status of Saint Sava as an identity symbol not only of the Serbian people, but also of other Orthodox populations in the territories inhabited by Serbs. This concept of religious patriotism is embodied in the figures of the first Nemanjićs who, jointly holding a model of the Hilandar Monastery, highlight the enduring significance of this ancient foundation and its pivotal role in the lives of Saint Sava and Saint Simeon. This also symbolically underscores the connection between the ancient imperial Lavra and Karađorđe's church in Topola, the one intended to confirm the idea of restoring the former glory of the medieval kingdom and empire in the new political and ideological program of the insurgent Serbia, under the leadership of the charismatic hero and the first father of the modern Serbian state, Karađorđe Petrović, precisely in Topola, the heart of the new modern Serbian state.

Since that period, the cult of Saint Sava was nurtured both in the modern Serbian state and among parts of the Serbian and other Orthodox populations in southern Hungary. Especially in the Principality – and later the Kingdom of Serbia – the cult acquired state-building significance, while within the territory of the Habsburg Empire it served as a permitted expression of the religious and national distinctiveness of the Serbian community, becoming the foundation of a supranational, yet religiously and ethnically determined cult of the most revered national saint.

Taking into account previous developments, a group of prominent Serbs founded Matica Srpska in 1826, choosing Saint Sava's Day for its annual celebration. The establishment of this oldest Serbian scientific, cultural and educational institution on Saint Sava's Day undoubtedly points to the idea of continuity and preservation of tradition.



Petar Nikolajević Moler, Saint Sava and Saint Simeon, Church of Saint George in Topola (1813)

The ideals of modern enlightenment, grounded in education and faith in the common public good and set on the foundations of scientific positivism, and in this period also of national romanticism, framed Saint Sava as the first Serbian enlightener, so it is not without reason that the foundational principles of Matica Srpska were established precisely on his feast day.

Art continuously mirrored broader religious and cultural trends, so the practice of depicting Saint Sava on icons of the Sovereign tier of church iconostases continued. In 1826, the painter Nikola Aleksić rendered Saint Sava precisely within this section of the iconostasis for the church in Mol. Because this church was dedicated to Saint Sava, it holds particular significance for understanding the ascendance of the cult of Saint Sava within the territory of the Metropolitanate of Karlovci.

The custom of depicting Saint Sava on bishops' thrones also persisted. This visual tradition underscored the deep historical continuity of the Serbian Church, which owes its foundation precisely to Saint Sava. Consequently, each new bishop was, in a figurative sense, likened to the figure of the founder of the Serbian Church in his pastoral capacity.

Konstantin Danil, a leading exponent of Biedermeier-Nazarene visual poetics, painted the saint's image in archiepiscopal vestments for the bishop's throne at the Church of the Dormition of the Holy Virgin in Pančevo, between 1828 and 1835. Danil's undisputed status among church painters in Banat during that period led to his selection for this prestigious project. In collaboration with the learned Pančevo priest Konstantin Arsenović, the painter executed the iconographic program of the iconostasis and accompanying furnishings, establishing through the image of Saint Sava the canonical succession of Serbian hierarchs from the founding of the Church until that time. The incorporation of Konstantin Arsenović's likeness into the portrait representation of Saint Sava reflects the realist tendencies in the work of painters of that period, who sought a model in nature; at the same time, it signals the modernization of ancient figures through contemporary participants, thus emphasizing the concept of bringing ancient themes closer to the nineteenth-century observer. Furthermore, the wealthy Pančevo population and the church community invested significant funds in furnishing the church interior, ensuring that the setting for Danil's depiction of Saint Sava – in this case, the bishop's throne itself – exuded a sense of grandeur and prestige. This contributed not only to the civic pride and dignity of the Serbian citizenry, but also to the elevated status of the Orthodox population and the Metropolitanate of Karlovci within the Austrian Empire.

In the first half of the nineteenth century, the modern concept of the hero was established in European culture and science. The idea of great people entering world

history and leaving behind monumental achievements – undoubtedly supported by the romantic understanding of exceptional individuals – is already evident in Kant’s thesis on the birth of genius. These extraordinary individuals, worthy of history, leave an enduring legacy, and their names, in accordance with the ancient concept of the art of memory, live on forever. This idea was crystallized by the scholar Thomas Carlyle in his famous 1840 lecture series, *On Heroes, Hero-Worship, and The Heroic in History*. Among other things, in his classification of typical hero figures, he singled out the “Hero as Priest” (or hero of faith). These were extraordinary, God-inspired religious leaders, reformers, and founders of church organizations who fundamentally changed the course of history in the field of religious experience.

In any case, this concept soon became known within the Serbian community as well, undoubtedly contributing to an active reinterpretation of the figure of Saint Sava – not only as a hero of faith, but also as a hero of the nation and its education. This shift is demonstrated by the establishment of Saint Sava’s Day (January 14/27) as a school holiday in 1840, by the decision of the Council of the Principality of Serbia made on January 2, and at the proposal of Atanasije Nikolić, rector of the Lyceum in Kragujevac. Following this decree by the Ministry of Education, Saint Sava was proclaimed the patron saint of all Serbian schools. From that point onward, Saint Sava was celebrated with great solemnity, acquiring over time the informal title of the first Serbian enlightener and national teacher. The evocative power of the visual arts was manifest during these celebrations, when in the evening hours, school buildings were illuminated with a banner displaying the image of Saint Sava alongside the Serbian coat of arms.

The formalized, state-wide celebration of Saint Sava in Serbia was instituted the following year, when Prince Mihailo Obrenović decreed that the celebration of Saint Sava’s Day be held “every year, in all churches of Serbia, the feast of Saint Sava, the



Konstantin Danil, Saint Sava, episcopal throne of the Church of the Dormition of the Holy Virgin in Pančevo (1828–1835)



first archbishop and enlightener of Serbia". The tradition of celebrating Saint Sava as a school feast also included cutting of the ritual cake, the distribution of koliva (sweetened boiled wheat), a festive lunch and other forms of festivities. Alongside the liturgical rites, these practices highlighted intertwining of religious and secular celebrations, framing Saint Sava not only as the protector of Serbian education but also as the increasingly prominent patron and protector of the Serbian nation. The celebration of Saint Sava soon spread across all Serb-populated regions. Thus, celebrations were recorded in Šibenik in 1846, in Kotor in 1849, and in other places. The celebration of Saint Sava's Day was revived in Novi Sad after the 1848 revolution, and became established as a school holiday during the sixth decade of the nineteenth century.

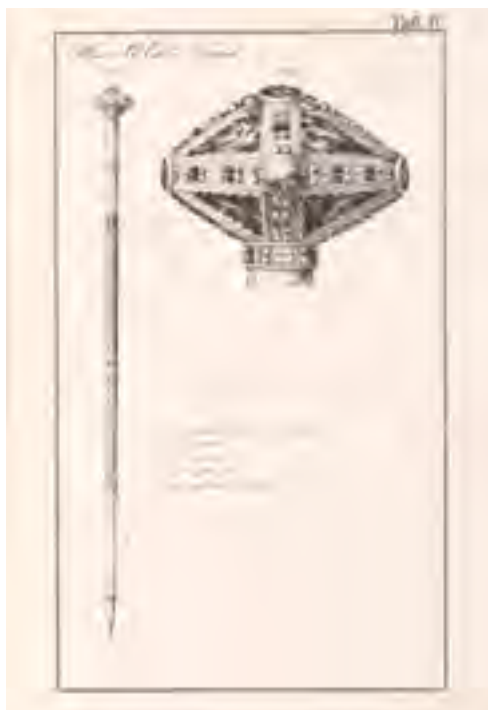
In further shaping the cult of Saint Sava within mid-nineteenth century art and culture, an important role was played by Dimitrije Avramović. Trained at the Academy of Fine Arts in Vienna and, as a painter, close to the Nazarene concept of religious painting related to the German romantic painters' renewal of religious painting, he relocated to the Principality of Serbia at the invitation of Jovan Sterija Popović and Vuk Karadžić. Aligning his work with the historicization of religion and the culture of historicism, which sought to critically study the national past to inspire a contemporary revival of national art, Avramović set out on the path of establishing modern religious painting among the Serbs. His work on the painting of the iconostasis, wall paintings, and interior furnishings of the Cathedral Church in Belgrade (1841–1845) must be understood within this context. In collaboration with the learned Metropolitan Petar Jovanović, Avramović executed a complex iconographic program that gave visual form to patriotic-religious painting among the Serbs, institutionalizing the concept of a symphony between Church and state. On the bishop's throne, he depicted a standing figure of Saint Sava in archiepiscopal vestments, establishing an iconographic type that would be mostly repeated on bishop's thrones and in representations of Saint Sava on iconostases in the following decades.

In line with his reformist activities, Dimitrije Avramović sent an appeal to the Ministry of Education in 1845, asserting: "It [painting] can, over time, illuminate the national church history. There is no place to examine objects of Serbian church history, and that is why we still do not have works depicting Saint Sava anywhere in Serbian churches, as we do not have any other holy ancestors that the Serbian Church celebrates." With this petition, Avramović paved the way for the further historicization of the figure and life of Saint Sava. The need to investigate the historical context, or rather the circumstances of the saint's life, naturally led him to Hilandar. Therefore, Avramović visited Mount Athos, subsequently leaving behind a study entitled *Description of Serbian Antiquities of Mount Athos* (1847), in which he described and illustrated sites and objects related to the life

› Dimitrije Avramović, Saint Sava, episcopal throne of the Cathedral Church in Belgrade (1841–1845)



of Saint Sava. Among other things, he left an illustration of the monastery church of the Presentation, alongside the crozier of Saint Sava, which, according to tradition, he received from the Byzantine emperor Alexios Komnenos. The painter also created one of the earliest renderings of the theme Saint Sava and the Children, albeit executed in the medium of drawing. Relying on previous versions of this famous theme, which originated from the 1838 depiction by Dominik Perlaska and a subsequent variation by Živko Petrović, Avramović continued on this path. Furthermore, Avramović donated a representation of Saint Sava to the Belgrade Reading Room in 1847, and in 1852, he painted another one, which is kept at the National Museum of Serbia, aiming to canonize his visual image for the modern era.



Dimitrije Avramović, The Crozier of Saint Sava, illustration from the book *Description of Serbian Antiquities on the Holy Mount Athos* (1847)

In 1851, the multimedia artist Anastas Jovanović executed, in the medium of printmaking, the representation *Saint Sava Crowning Stefan the First-Crowned*. This work established a canonical model for future treatments of the theme, which simultaneously evoked the golden age of the Serbian medieval monarchy and linked modern Serbian dynasties with their venerated predecessors of the Nemanjić line, thus serving both as an ideological argument and as a means of achieving the legitimacy and political legality of the modern Serbian principality and its later transition to a kingdom. At the center of Jovanović's composition stands the powerful figure of Saint Sava, a depiction undoubtedly shaped in accordance with the gradual heroization of his persona.

During that period, 1851–1852, a cycle of scenes from the life of Saint Sava was created by Pavle Simić, a renowned artist trained in the Nazarene tradition; unfortunately, these works are now lost. In collaboration with Nikanor Grujić, the learned archimandrite of the Kuveždin Monastery, Simić painted the following scenes: *Rastko's Departure to Mount Athos*, *The Tonsuring of Saint Sava*, *Saint Sava's Prayer*, *Saint Simeon Appearing to Saint Sava After His Death*, *Saint Sava Resurrecting his Brother*, and *The Monastic Ordination of Stefan the First-Crowned*. Drawing upon two literary models – Nikanor



Dimitrije
Avramović,
Saint Sava, Na-
tional Museum
of Serbia (1852)

Grujić's work *Sava Nemanjić* and Domentijan's *Life of Saint Sava* – Simić illustrated the life of the saint, thereby transforming it into an edifying story rooted in a romanticized reinterpretation of the historical narrative.

In 1857, Uroš Knežević, a respected painter in the Principality of Serbia, sent a request to the Ministry of Education to paint a representation of Saint Sava as the patron saint of education and Serbian enlightener for schools and educational institutions in Serbia, which would then be massively reproduced through the medium of lithography. The response was positive and the process of multiplying and distributing the saint's image began. This particular picture probably inspired Laza Lazarević to write his short story *The School Icon* (1879), and the image's long duration in its various visual iterations is undoubtedly deeply woven into pupils' personal memories of the encounter with the school icon. The character

on the icon – with penetrating black eyes that seem to follow you everywhere, peering your soul, and urging you to pay attention – is precisely what Laza Lazarević recalls when writing about the school icon of Saint Sava. The encounter with the school icon, or some other celebratory portrait of Saint Sava, is also captured in Aleksa Šantić's poem *Before the Icon of Saint Sava* (1888), the first stanza of which reads as follows:

“From the East, the dawn blue,
With its first ray shines through.
I rose at the morning's light,
And stood by the icon bright,
Saint Sava's icon holy
The Serbian greatest glory.”



Anastas Jovanović, *Saint Sava Crowns Stefan the First-Crowned*, Matica Srpska Gallery (1851)

In 1858, Pavle Simić painted the scene *Saint Sava and the Children*, thus continuing the practice of depicting this theme, and also establishing the foundations for its subsequent variations. In a somewhat subdued and lyrical style, typical of the manner of Serbian painters aligned with the Nazarene visual poetics, in gentle and pastel tones, he depicted the serene saint surrounded by youth. The following year, Dičo Zograf, the most prominent painter of the late post-Byzantine iconographic tradition, painted the image of Saint Sava for the Sovereign tier of the iconostasis at the Holy Trinity Cathedral in Vranje. Through this work, he reinforced the saint's unifying significance within dioceses situated on the peripheries of both the Serbian state and the Serb-populated regions of the Ottoman Empire. A certain number of representations of Saint Sava on iconostases and episcopal thrones, painted over the following decades within the territory of



Dičo Zograf,
Saint Sava,
iconostasis of
the Cathedral
Church in
Vranje (1859)

the Diocese of Vranje, remain a testimony to the idea of Saint Sava as a national symbol and protector of the Serbian flock, as well as to the idea of the continuity of the Serbian Church and its symbols. This particular image, rendered in the iconographic style, in the interweaving of post-Byzantine, Baroque and Rococo poetics, as well as iconographic types from the hermeneias (painter's manuals), stands as a testament to the intersection of various visual poetics and the adaptation of Sava's image to the local environment.

In 1861, at the Annunciation Council in Sremski Karlovci, Saint Sava was proclaimed the patron saint of the Serbian Vojvodina (Duchy), which further established his cult, precisely at a time when the musical notation of the Hymn to Saint Sava – *Let Us Exclaim with Love*, was codified by Kornelije Stanković. This poem by an anonymous author, likely written at the end of the eighteenth or beginning of the nineteenth century, undoubtedly contributed to the popularization of the saint's image across both religious and national contexts, becoming a sensory site of memory dedicated to his glorious legacy.

Over the decades, the celebration of Saint Sava acquired an increasingly national character, and the saint was shaped as an unifying symbol for the Serbian people. Vladan Đorđević also wrote about this in 1867: "There is one day in the year that is celebrated throughout all Serbian lands as an all-national holiday, and that is the day of remembrance of Saint Sava, which is January 14 [O.S.]. From Pest to Peć, from Niš and Timok to the Adriatic Sea, in all four states into which the Serbian people are today divided, and even in all European countries and cities where only a few Serbs meet, Saint Sava is celebrated everywhere." These words confirm the elevation of Saint Sava to the foremost figure of the Serbian pantheon of saints. Despite the well-developed cults of Saint Simeon as the founding father of the Serbian medieval state and the Holy King Stefan the

First-Crowned as the first Serbian crowned ruler, alongside other revered saints of a largely regional character, the educational system undoubtedly established a key place for Saint Sava within both the ecclesiastical system and secular national memory. Consequently, the state-building traditions of the medieval Serbian state, centuries of memory preserved under Ottoman rule, and the new secular system of commemorative celebrations were all united in the saint's persona that became an undisputed figure of both heavenly and earthly Serbia. For this reason, his iconographic image was increasingly depicted individually, while representations that included the figure of his father appeared only sporadically in the following decades.

In 1871, Pavle Čortanović and Adam Stefanović executed, in the medium of lithography, the widely distributed depiction of *The Burning of the Relics of Saint Sava*. By vividly capturing the intense drama of this event, the artists created one of the canonical representations of the nation, which became a staple of popular visual culture across Serb-populated regions.

Over the ensuing decades and into the early twentieth century, a large number of representations of Saint Sava were produced by the painter Stevan Todorović and his associates, including his wife Poleksija, Nikola Marković and others. A leading public and cultural figure of that time in Serbia, Todorović, drawing upon illustrated Bibles, in an academic manner, painted Saint Sava individually on episcopal thrones, as well as within historical compositions on iconostases, as seen, for example, in the Belgrade Church of the Ascension in 1881.

In 1875, Stevan Todorović also painted the scene *Saint Sava Blesses the Serbian Children*. He painted it for the Serbian Orthodox Church Municipality of Perlez, reinforcing the continuity of this specific theme in Serbian art. The powerful figure of the saint became not only a symbol of spirituality but also of the steadfastness and permanence of the Orthodox faith in the past and present. Fourteen years later, in the medium of watercolor and gouache, Todorović made a preparatory sketch for the painting of the same title. The iconographic formulation of the saint's image was preserved, but the artist also inserted scenes from the saint's life into the medallions that connect the decorative frame: *Saint Sava Renounces the Return to His Father's Home*, *Saint Sava Crowns His Brother Stefan*, *Saint Sava Reconciles His Brothers Over His Father's Grave*, and *Saint Sava Receiving His Father Simeon into the Monastic Community*. Through this comprehensive work, Todorović effectively codified a cycle of key scenes from the saint's life, which would be widely adapted in the subsequent decades.

During the ninth decade of the nineteenth century, another important event took place. In 1886, the Society of Saint Sava was founded in Belgrade by leading intellectuals of the era, including Ljubomir Kovačević, and was headed by Svetomir Nikolajević, a professor



Stevan Todorović, Saint Sava Blesses Serbian Children, preparatory sketch for the Serbian Orthodox Church Municipality of Perlez, National Museum of Serbia (1889)

da framed by the national idea, while the central place is occupied by a sculpted double-headed eagle of monumental dimensions, the work of sculptor Petar Ubavkić. This symbol expressed the essence of the activities of the Society of Saint Sava, which held its annual assemblies on Saint Sava's Day, further emphasizing the contribution of the saint as a guiding symbol of the Society's committed social work. In the period between 1914 and 1924, the permanent headquarters of the Society of Saint Sava was constructed. According to the design of the architect Petar Bajalović, the palace was built in the spirit of historicism, and was conceived as a multi-use residential building. Situated on the corner of Dušanova and Braće Baruh streets, the palace was erected with the idea of providing

at the Great School. Its program included cultural and educational initiatives with a clearly defined national overtone. The society played an active role in the distribution of books to Serbian ecclesiastical and educational institutions in the Ottoman Empire (Old Serbia). Of particular note is the assistance provided to the church in Kosovska Mitrovica, which at the time lacked even a copy of the *Srbljak*.

For educational purposes, which included establishing schools for Serbian children outside the territory of the Kingdom of Serbia, the construction of a dedicated dormitory became necessary. Consequently, the Saint Sava House on Dušanova Street in Belgrade was consecrated in 1890. Built according to the design of the distinguished architect Jovan Ilkić, with King Aleksandar Obrenović as the main patron, the building became a site of profound national and educational significance. The building's facade, adorned with the heraldic coats of arms of Serbian lands, testifies to its undoubtedly patriotic mission and an educational agen-

material and financial support for the Society's ongoing activities.

One minor episode from the life of the Society of Saint Sava is highly indicative for understanding its activities. Namely, one of the founders of the Society and a Member of Parliament in 1905–1906 – Andreja Parađanin, received the Society's Diploma in 1889. This ceremonial diploma was designed by the renowned academic artist, Munich student and Serbian academician Đoka Milovanović. The artist designed the diploma in accordance with the ideals of the Society. Above a Pirot kilim as a symbol of the national spirit and its authenticity, he applied the coats of arms of the Serbian lands, surmounted by a crowned double-headed eagle. In addition to this national and monarchical symbol, Saint Simeon and Saint Sava are depicted in medallions on the left and right sides. The diploma is further adorned with scenes of a traditional guslar playing to a gathered crowd, alongside a Serb in a fez holding the national tricolor while surrounded by representatives of Serbs from various regions. Undoubtedly, the national spirit permeates this representation, executed in a decorative manner and with a patriotic charge. A year later, the diploma was enclosed in a decorative and masterfully crafted wooden frame, on top of which was the image of Andreja Parađanin, thus completing the process of the visual inscription of his identity into the life and work of the Society.

This small case study, however, did not end with the shaping of this frame. In 1908, Andreja Parađanin commissioned the famous Swiss watch company Longines to reproduce Pavle Simić's aforementioned 1858 composition, *Saint Sava with the Children*, as an engraved relief on the caseback of a pocket watch—an exceptionally rare, if not unique, occurrence in Serbian applied art. This exceptionally executed representation demonstrates a cross-media adaptation within Serbian art, while reflecting the deep personal devotion of the timepiece's owner to Saint Sava, whose likeness was thus translated onto a highly unusual medium.

It should be noted that the painter Đoka Milovanović was also one of the founders of the Society of Saint Sava. For the Society's needs, he designed a medal, and the *Serbian*



Saint Sava with Children, postcard, (after a painting by Pavle Simić, chromolithograph, after 1871)



Order of Saint Sava, 1st Class of Prof. Dr. Milan Jovanović Batut, workshop Huguenin-Freres (Le Locle, Switzerland), SASA Archives (1927)

medal firms, such as G. A. Scheid and Karl Fischmeister, leading to slight iconographic variations in Saint Sava's portrait. Originally awarded to cultural, scientific, and ecclesiastical figures, the order's criteria expanded in 1914 to include military officers distinguished in the field. Two exceptional diamond-studded examples are known: one was presented to the Russian Empress Alexandra, while the other is preserved at the Smithsonian Institution in Washington.

In 1891, another famous painting of the theme Saint Sava Blesses Serbian Children was created, this time by Đorđe Krstić. In a Symbolist manner and rejecting traditional mimetic realism, that is, idealized imitation of nature, Krstić painted a monumental composition. Ethereal light, an imaginary space, and an unconventional palette defined this scene. The shift in how the children are represented, in comparison to previous versions of this theme, also seems interesting. Krstić transformed the youths into little Serbs from different regions. By dressing them in localized folk costumes, he, in accordance with the idea of integrating national particularities, or rather regions, into a singular identity pattern, namely Saint Sava himself, brought out his vision of national

coats of arms for the building's facade, and around 1885 he painted an icon with a standing figure of the saint in full archiepiscopal vestments for the Church of St. Nicholas in Opovo, demonstrating that painters of the Realist school could successfully adapt their skills to religious painting.

During the ninth decade of the nineteenth century, another important event occurred for the further popularization of the image of Saint Sava and the strengthening of his reputation among Serbs. Namely, in 1883, the Order of Saint Sava was established to reward achievements in education, literature, and the fine arts. The obverse of the medal featured a white enameled medallion depicting Saint Sava in archiepiscopal vestments, with a mitre on his head, framed by a royal crown and a double-headed eagle. The decoration comprised five classes, and following its inception, the insignia of the order were manufactured by various Viennese





Stevan Todorović, Saint Sava, iconostasis of the Church of Saint Nicholas at the New Cemetery in Belgrade (1893–1894)

cohesion, as noted by the painter's contemporary champion and leading cultural figure in Serbia at that time, Mihailo Valtrović: "The thought is pure and clear, and it originates naturally from the idea, fostered among the Serbian people, of Saint Sava as a national enlightener. Its overall structure relies on a pleasingly arranged circle of representatives from all Serbian regions gathered around Saint Sava as a sublime and revered teacher. The feeling of deep reverence for the national saint, noticeable in the posture and gaze, in the body movements and facial expressions of these characters who are presented in the youthful age and in the folk costume, embodies the totality of Serbdom. The feminine aspect is materialized in a young, soulful-looking mother holding an infant, with a young daughter at her side. These soulful and sacred sentiments, which have filled all the represented members of the Serbian people, constitute the narrative content of the painting." Following Valtrović's endorsement,

Krstić's painting was widely reproduced across popular print media (lithographs, oleographs, postcards), thereby gaining great popularity and a prominent place in the collective national memory.

During the last decade of the nineteenth century, Stevan Todorović also created a relatively unusual representation of Saint Sava. Specifically, the artist executed a likeness of Saint Sava within a medallion in the upper zone of the painted iconostasis at the Church of Saint Nicholas at the New Cemetery in Belgrade (1893–1894), serving as a counterpart to the image of Saint Simeon. The bust of the saint is framed by a gilded background – a novelty in Todorović's oeuvre that reflects the contemporary neo-Byzantine and historicist trends in Viennese painting, which heavily informed the artist's style in this instance.

In the middle of the last decade of the nineteenth century, Saint Sava began to be increasingly emphasized in the religious and political program of the Karlovci Patriarchate. In those years, and during the celebration of the 300th anniversary of the burning of the relics of Saint Sava, Patriarch Georgije Branković of Karlovci founded the Saint Sava Fund.

During the last decade of the nineteenth century, two additional significant portraits of Saint Sava were produced. Notably, in 1896, Đorđe Krstić painted the saint's figure for the bishop's throne at the church in Črugar. As an alumnus of the Munich Academy who

Đorđe Krstić, Saint Sava Blesses Serbian Children, National Museum of Serbia (1891)

pioneered modern, Symbolist trends within the Serbian cultural milieu, Krstić presented Saint Sava more as a spiritual vision than as a conventional historical figure. Aligned with the internal logic of Symbolism – which, in its anti-academic stance, sought to reject Renaissance perspective, naturalistic colors, and the dramatic scenic effects of historical painting – Krstić rendered a visionary figure of Saint Sava residing within an otherworldly reality rather than a tangible, real-world space.

Conversely, Uroš Predić, undoubtedly the most significant ecclesiastical painter of the last decades of the nineteenth and first half of the twentieth centuries, rendered Saint Sava for the episcopal throne of the chapel at the Patriarchal Palace in Sremski Karlovci (1897) utilizing a rigorous Academic style that strictly adhered to the rules of decorum. Holding the unofficial title of court painter to the Karlovci patriarchs Georgije Branković and Lukijan Bogdanović, Predić approached the saint through a completely different lens than Krstić, driven by a desire to reconstruct his authentic historical likeness. Thus, at one point, these two painters of conflicting poetics were simultaneously tasked with producing parallel yet distinct interpretations of Saint Sava within the Metropolitanate of Karlovci, confirming the thesis that an artist's rendering of the saint was inherently a reflection of their own creative worldview, bridging the historical past with their contemporary present.

Church architecture also played a prominent role in giving material form to Saint Sava's cult. During the last decade of the nineteenth century, churches dedicated to the first Serbian enlightener were erected in a number of important cities in Europe and America. In the period between 1890 and 1893, the Cathedral Church of Saint Sava was constructed in Vienna. This single-nave temple, designed in accordance with the principles of historicism, was seamlessly integrated into the residential and administrative palace of the Serbian Church and School Municipality. For the Church Municipality, Uroš Predić painted a standing figure of Saint Sava in archiepiscopal vestments in 1912, illustrating the strategic deployment of diverse artistic media to foster the cult of Saint Sava in environments with a significant Serbian community. In America, the first church dedicated to Saint Sava was erected in Jackson, California. Built in 1894 in the local style, it initiated the subsequent sacred cartography of the continent with temples raised in memory of Saint Sava.



Đorđe Krstić, Saint Sava, episcopal throne of the Church of the Ascension of the Lord in Čurug (1896)

Uroš Predić, Saint Sava, episcopal throne of the Chapel of the Patriarchal Palace in Sremski Karlovci (1897)





Andra Stevanović, Church of Saint Sava, Kosovska Mitrovica (1896–1913)

To commemorate the 300th anniversary of the burning of the relics of Saint Sava, the Committee for the Construction of a Memorial Temple was established in 1895. The Committee was headed by Metropolitan Mihailo. The Vračar plateau in Belgrade was selected as the construction site where this proposed monumental temple was to be built. However, due to a severe lack of funds, this idea was abandoned. Instead, a chapel of more modest size was built that same year.

The main point of the program of the Society for the Construction of the Temple of Saint Sava stated the following: “The Society for the Construction of the Temple of Saint Sava is established with the task of realizing the long-standing desire of the entire Serbdom by building a magnificent temple at Vračar, the site where the holy relics of the God-pleasing first Serbian archbishop and enlightener were burned.” Ten years later, in 1905, the first architectural competition for the construction of a memorial temple was announced. The brief called for a monumental sanctuary erected in the Serbo-Byzantine style to honor the patron saint of Serbian schools; however, another two decades would

pass before a subsequent competition was held. Despite the first-place proposal by Svetozar Ivačković, which envisioned a temple modeled after the medieval church of Gračanica, his design was never realized. The commission deemed none of the submitted proposals adequate, effectively stalling preparations for the grand temple's construction.

In 1896, an important event took place – the construction of a temple dedicated to Saint Sava in Kosovska Mitrovica began. The church was erected according to the design of the academic architect Andra Stevanović, representing a synthesis of the Neo-Raška style and the contemporary principles of Neo-Byzantine architecture championed by the Viennese architect Theophil von Hansen. These architectural teachings had been introduced to Serbia by his students, including Andra Stevanović himself. The construction of the temple was celebrated by the poet Aleksa Šantić, who dedicated a patriotic poem to the occasion entitled *To the Serbs in Mitrovica in Kosovo* (1896), from which the following stanzas are excerpted:

“Today kneels the whole of Serbdom
And the cross of honor takes,
While a prayer pure, holy

High-up in the air waves:
Give them, Lord, the steadfast spirits,
To endure the torments’ hold,
To complete their holy deed,
Dedicated to Thee – God;

’Til the splendid temple’s dome
In Thy sun goes shining bright,
And the sacred bells go chiming
With clear sound from the height.”

The obviously strong national charge of the poet’s verses the intense interest with which the Serbian community followed the erection of this temple, which, in addition to its religious significance, also held great national importance. Constructing the temple on this covenant land revived the memory of the days of vanished glory, while signaling the ideals of the Serbian elite, who vigilantly monitored the vulnerable position of the Serbian people within the remaining territories of the Ottoman Empire. Consequently, the choice of Saint Sava as the patron saint of the temple emphasized its national significance, as Serbs – and the broader Orthodox population – primarily through the liturgical expression of their faith, saw Saint Sava as a symbol of national identity.

In a similar vein, an opulent banner designed by Mihailo Valtrović and funded by King Aleksandar Obrenović was manufactured in Vienna in 1899 as a gift for the Hilandar Monastery. Here too, the figures of the founders of the Serbian medieval state and Church anchored a symbolically designed banner that confirmed the ideological program of the last Obrenović rulers, who sought to graft their own shaken legitimacy onto the holy Nemanjić lineage. The focus on Hilandar at that time was not merely an ideological strategy of the last Obrenovićs; it also reflected abroad process of perceiving this ancient topos as Saint Sava's historical point of departure and as a contemporary national topos, particularly during the period when its administration transitioned from Bulgarian to Serbian monks.

At the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth centuries, two notable representations of Saint Sava were produced within the domain of the applied arts. In 1902, Queen Draga Obrenović presented the Cathedral Church in Belgrade with a *katapetasma* (altar curtain) embroidered with the central images of Saint Sava and Saint Simeon. Crafted by the *terzija* (traditional tailor) Svetislav Lj. Kostić after designs by Vladislav Titelbah, this decorative *katapetasma* articulated the enduring prestige of the two revered Nemanjić saints through its rich symbolic language.

At the beginning of the twentieth century, several scenes from the life of Saint Sava were executed on the walls of the monumental Cathedral Church of the Holy Trinity in Negotin (1901). In accordance with the idea of the church walls as an illustrated reader, in addition to the independent standing figures of the holy medieval archbishops and rulers from the Nemanjić line, scenes from the life of Saint Sava were also painted: Saint Sava Renounces Royal Honors to Accept Monastic Tonsure, Saint Sava Receives His Father into the Hilandar Monastery, Saint Sava Reconciles His Brothers, and Saint Sava Crowns His Brother Stefan. In accordance with the idea of a symphony of Serbian medieval spiritual and secular power, as well as the narrative



Mihailo Valtrović,
The Banner of
King Aleksandar,
Hilandar Mon-
astery (1899)





Stevan Todorović, Saint Sava Reconciles His Brothers,
Church of the Holy Trinity in Negotin (1901)

of the golden age of the Serbian state and its Church, representations from the time of Saint Sava became a visual manifestation of the modern Serbian state and its Church, and Saint Sava himself a symbol of the national spirit along the peripheral areas of the Serbian state, particularly within the contemporary Timok Diocese. Bearing witness to the special significance of Saint Sava's image in this region, and particularly within the Cathedral Church in Negotin, is Pavle Čortanović's 1885 painting, *Saint Sava Blessing Serbian Children*.

In a multiethnic environment, the committed national work of Bishop Melentije of Timok had a distinct ethnic overtone; hence, scenes from medieval history centered on Saint Sava played a major role. This overarching iconographic program successfully completed the narrative of the saint's life within the Bukovo Monastery church, where a portrait of Saint Sava had already been rendered on the episcopal throne by Pavle Čortanović in 1888. It is within this specific ideological context that the scene *Saint Sava Reconciles His Brothers* – executed on the vault of the Bukovo narthex in 1902 by Milisav Marković, following the designs of Stevan Todorović – must be understood.

The removal of the Obrenović dynasty from the political scene did not sever the connection between Hilandar and the Serbian monarchy at the beginning of the twentieth



Pavle Čortanović, Saint Sava, episcopal throne, Bukovo Monastery (1888)

century. The ideological program of the last Obrenovići, linked to the monastery as a key national and religious topos outside Serbia, persisted after the arrival of the Karađorđević dynasty. This time the gift came from the other side – the monks of the Hilandar Monastery presented the king with a gift in honor of his accession to the throne in 1903. They presented the monarch with an icon of Saint Simeon and Saint Sava, the work of the Athonite monks of the Russian monastery of Saint Panteleimon. The icon was rendered with a meticulous, almost ethereal realism. The iconographically multilayered artwork depicts the sacred lineage of the Nemanjić dynasty sprouting directly from the holy body of Saint Simeon. At the apex of the composition, positioned above the imperial Lavra of Hilandar, Saint Simeon and Saint Sava are shown jointly holding a model of the primary monastery temple – the ultimate material expression of their shared devotion to Orthodoxy. This royal gift reaffirmed the enduring ideological alliance between Hilandar and the Serbian Crown, independent of dynastic shifts. Furthermore, it demonstrated the cross-cultural reach of the cult of Saint Sava, developed not only among Serbs but also among other Orthodox, in this case among Russian monks.

In 1906, Đorđe Krstić painted an unusual representation of Saint Sava entitled *I Praise Ye, God (Rastko)*. The young Saint Sava, without a beard, and the figure of God, rendered in a kind of non-finito manner within a triangular composition, reflect Saint Sava's interior spiritual state rather than a specific episode from his life. The painting was executed in accordance with anti-academic principles, which underscores its ethereal character. Mihailo Valtrović offered a critique of the work, from which the following observations are particularly noteworthy: "The young monk is overcome by holy enthusiasm and pious devotion. He glorifies God and surrenders himself to Him with his soul, to serve Him with his whole being. To the service of God and His holy house, he sacrifices all the treasures and prestige of the royal house, and the helmet and sword, leaning against the niche... And the young monk, a member of a ruling family, is Nemanja's youngest son, Rastko. In the painting, he is dressed in a robe, and has already been tonsured; he already bears the name Sava."

This episode from the saint's life, depicting him in his youth immediately following his tonsure, seems as if it was based on the famous poem *Saint Sava* (1889) by Vojislav Ilić, in which the verses sing of the event immediately preceding the scene captured in Krstić's painting – namely, the arrival of Rastko Nemanjić in Hilandar:



Milisav Marković, Saint Sava Reconciles His Brothers,
narthex of the church, Bukovo Monastery (1902)

“Who is knocking at this hour, of the night so dark and scary
on the gates of silent, sleepy, Holy Mount monastery? [...]

I abandoned Court and crown, throne and scepter made me weary
I came here to seek enlightenment in this humble monastery. [...]

The old embraced the youngster, on his forehead kiss implanted,
‘We accept you, dear child,’ – he said, ‘your wish and plea have been granted.’

Many ages have since gone by, all this happened long ago,
Many ages have since flown, and many more will yet flow.

But that boy lives even now, deathless, as it is his story,
He was Rastko, son Nemanja’s – Saint Sava, clad in glory.”

A famous poem by Vojislav Ilić and the painting by the Symbolist painter Đorđe Krstić seem to have combined two episodes from Sava’s life into a single act: his arrival at Hilandar and the immediate aftermath of his tonsure. In a kind of Symbolist vision, im-



Russian Athonite workshop, Icon of Saint Sava and Saint Simeon, King Petar's Endowment at Oplenac (1903)

with the intention of faithfully reconstructing the historical event. The scholar Božidar Nikolajević wrote about this: “First of all, when talking about historical paintings, one should know that it is especially difficult to create a Serbian historical painting, because the artist is forced to make assumptions and guesses when it comes to costumes, equipment, furniture, and other things of that kind, since there is almost no positive data. In Todorović’s case, it is clear that he thought about this too, which is particularly evident in the materials (royal mantle, belt, orarion...), which are very carefully reproduced in the painting. He does things as conscientiously as he can. As a prime example of his artistic accuracy, we will mention the church portal, decorated with ornaments from Kalenić, and the external view of the church walls, structured in the Byzantine manner.”

In 1912, Stevan Aleksić, an alumnus of the Munich Academy, presented the theme of the burning of the relics of Saint Sava in a somewhat different manner. In accordance

bued with the pathos of Dark Romanticism, Ilić and Krstić combined word and image and indirectly immortalized the young Rastko’s spiritual transformation into Saint Sava. At the same time, in accordance with Saint Sava’s place as the protector of education, and thus of children, they did not lose sight of his childlike soul in the time before his monasticism, when he was, and in a certain sense remained, an eternal child.

In the second half of the first decade of the twentieth century, two monumental historical compositions dedicated to the life of Saint Sava were created. In keeping with the trend of large-scale formats in European and Serbian painting, conditioned by large, theatrical, scenic representations that in a certain way act as theatrical mise-en-scene, Stevan Aleksić and Stevan Todorović each executed a major work. Todorović’s 1907 painting *The Tonsuring of Saint Sava* was created as a planned composition. Relying on preparatory drawings, the study of historical writings and Sava’s biographies, and the likely use of live models who were photographed and then transferred to the canvas in defined proportions, Todorović executed this historical scene



Stevan Todorović, *The Tonsure of Saint Sava*, National Museum of Serbia (1907)

with the historical reconstruction of the painting and the modern artistic aspirations of Munich Symbolism, manifested by a dramatic red color, he painted this horrible event, elevating it to the status of a patriotic symbol. Consequently, this large, we would say theatrical painting was created at the intersection of narrative and a symbol, in remembrance of the burning of Saint Sava's relics, and as kind of a visual counterpart to the penultimate stanza of Jovan Jovanović Zmaj's poem *Saint Sava*.

At the beginning of the twentieth century, in the territory of the Patriarchate of Karlovci, the position of the Serbian people became increasingly unfavorable, especially in southern Hungary. In such an environment, Patriarch Georgije Branković actively worked to preserve the religious and political rights of the Serbs. The Serbian community countered the pressures of Roman Catholic proselytism and Magyarization through the strategic mobilization of visual art, which to a certain extent became an engaged category in the defense of its own rights, as it had been during the religious and political program of the Metropolitanate of Karlovci in the eighteenth century. Thus, with the idea of defending



Stevan Aleksić, *The Burning of the Relics of Saint Sava*, National Museum of Serbia (1912)

acquired rights, the patriarch commissioned two of the most prominent Serbian artists of the era: Paja Jovanović and Uroš Predić.

Paja Jovanović initially painted the iconostasis for the Cathedral Church in Novi Sad. Concurrently, in 1906 he executed two easel compositions, placed on the side walls of the northern and southern choirs: *Saint Sava Draws the Hands of His Brothers to Reconcile Them* and *Saint Sava Places the Royal Crown on His Brother Stefan's Head*. Done in accordance with historical sources, these works belong to the time when, already



Paja Jovanović, Saint Sava Crowns Stefan the First-Crowned, Cathedral Church in Novi Sad (1906)

from the end of the nineteenth century, a critically intoned historiography was being established in Serbian circles, led by Ljubomir Kovačević, Stojan Novaković and Ilarion Ruvarac. It was precisely with these eminent scholars that Paja Jovanović consulted while preparing to paint his historical compositions.

It is interesting to point out that the original intention to depict Saint Sava on the episcopal throne was abandoned, and Saint Nicholas was depicted instead, which caused dissatisfaction in the distinguished Veljko Mirosavljević, parish priest of the Dormition Church in Novi Sad, who wrote the following in the *Serbian Zion* in 1905: “Only the Serbian Saint Sava was allowed to come to that place. Saint Sava is arguably the most complete ideal of a Christian bishop, a teacher, organizer, administrator, patriotic politician, and man of prayer... and a Serb too! Is there a more suitable and beautiful figure in all of church history to remind the Serbian bishop and the Serbian people of their Christian duties in general, and their episcopal and patriotic obligations in particular? There is none!”

Around 1909, commissioned by Patriarch Lukijan Bogdanović, and undoubtedly in indirect or direct conversations with the learned Archimandrite Ilarion Ruvarac,



◀ Uroš Predić, Saint Sava, episcopal throne of the Church of the Dormition of the Holy Virgin in Perlez (1894–1899)

the painter Paja Jovanović executed three compositions from the life of Saint Sava: Saint Sava Crowning Stefan the First-Crowned, The Burning of the Relics of Saint Sava, and Saint Sava Reconciling His Brothers. Rendered in accordance with the principles of historical positivism, these depictions function as a kind of archaeological masquerade, forming a triptych dedicated to the glory of the historical figure of Saint Sava, but are also understood as engaged scenes that refer to the religious and national sentiment of Patriarch Georgije Branković, providing the reinforcement of the legitimacy of the vulnerable Serbian population – and the broader Orthodox flock – during a period of aggressive Magyarization on the soil of southern Hungary at the dawn of the First World War.

In the first decade of the twentieth century, Uroš Predić continued to paint in the area of the Karlovci Patriarchate. He painted the figures of Saint Sava for the episcopal thrones in the Church of the Dormition of the Holy Virgin in Perlez (1894–1899) and in the Church of the Descent of the Holy Spirit on Apostles in Ruma (1905), in the already standard realistic manner. In 1910, he painted a seated representation of Saint Sava for the magnificent Church of the Transfiguration of the Lord in Pančevo. By depicting him on the episcopal throne as the powerful leader of the Serbian Church, Predić, on the other hand, through the saint's serene and gentle, but also determined gaze, pointed to the multifaceted nature of his personality, to him as an archetypal figure of a good old man and a righteous father, but also as a leader of the Serbian flock. In this period (around 1910), Milan Milovanović, an impressionist painter, also created two depictions of Saint Sava in the modern manner.





Paško Vučetić,
Saint Sava, epis-
copal throne of
the Church of
Saint Paraskeva
in Lapovo (1915)

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Uroš Predić,
Saint Sava,
detail, epis-
copal throne
of the Church
of the Trans-
figuration in
Pančevo (1910)

At the same time, the practice of depicting the young Saint Sava continued in the following period. Thus, on the bishop's throne in the church of St. Paraskeva in Lapovo, the Symbolist painter Paško Vučetić painted a young Saint Sava in 1915. The gentle young man, resembling a troubadour monk, is depicted more as a vision than as a historical figure. In accordance with the artist's vision and his artistic poetics, the saint is depicted as a typical figure symbolizing Saint Sava's eternal youth. Thus, in the difficult days of the war occupation, the image of the saint served as a consolation and a vision offering peace and tranquility, as a kind of light in the darkness of the Great War.

SERBIAN AND YUGOSLAV EDUCATOR:

THE NEW ROLE OF SAINT SAVA IN THE INTERWAR PERIOD

After World War I and the creation of the new Yugoslav state, the Serbian Orthodox Church found itself in new circumstances. Within its borders, the great state largely encompassed the Serbian population, mostly of the Orthodox faith. Thus, the Serbian Church, in accordance with the victorious emergence of the Serbian state from the war, was able to restore the Patriarchate, which happened in 1920. For that occasion, it was necessary to create a panagia for the Serbian Patriarch, and it was made according to the design by the architect Pero Popović and the painter Uroš Predić. The panagia, in the center of which was the image

of Saint Sava in archbishop's vestments, confirmed the continuity of the Serbian Church through the centuries and highlighted the pivotal and founding personality of Saint Sava.

The importance of artistic expression in the depiction of the image of Saint Sava on the panagia of the Serbian Patriarch, as well as the peculiar symbolic meaning of the painted image, which in a symbolic way becomes the embodiment of the founder of the Serbian Church, is also evidenced by the speech of Patriarch Dimitrije on the occasion of his enthronement at the Patriarchate of Peć, at the moment of the presentation of the panagia by King Alexander Karađorđević: "On the panagia is the holy image of our great saint, Saint Sava. I and all my future successors will put this panagia on the chest to look at the image of our saint on it, and we will always remember how great and how holy his legacy is. Which we receive as his successors and the first archpriests of the Church."

The new power of the Serbian Orthodox Church was once again manifested by Uroš Predić. In 1921, this painter of undisputed authority executed two paintings on the theme

Saint Sava Blesses Serbian Children, which eventually reached canonical status – a smaller one for the court, and a larger one for the State Printing House. They were massively distributed in various media, which led to them becoming the most famous paintings on this theme in the public and media space.

Predić depicted the saint with a partially gray beard but fair hair, by which he undoubtedly changed his image, harmonizing it with the then-current Pan-Slavic movement and the search for the ancient Slavs. The depiction of the powerful figure of the saint who receives and unites children from all regions inhabited by the Serbian people also had a socially engaged role, which stemmed from the previous period and the need to unify the Serbian nation into a single whole. The depiction of the Pirot kilim manifested the idea of the genuineness and originality of the national spirit and its expression, thus underlining the role of the saint as a national educator.

The feeling of optimism due to the establishment of the Patriarchate, whose jurisdiction had not been so extensive since the time of the Peć Patriarchate, undoubtedly affected the artists as well. In this spirit, we can also see Predić's representation of Saint Sava for the bishop's throne of the Church of Saint Nicholas in Samoš (1924) in Banat, where the painter presented a powerful figure of the saint, who exudes inner strength, but also a monumental body as a symbol of restored unity.

In 1926, the second competition for the construction of the Church of Saint Sava at Vračar took place. The competition requirements specified that the church must be built in the Serbian-Byzantine style from the time of Prince Lazar. This clearly emphasized the idea of the renewal of traditionalism. The idea of the golden age of the Serbian medieval state and its art rested on the creative imagination of the past. In the ideal forms of the past, configurations were seen on the basis of which contemporary artistic and architectural expression could be shaped. This trend interacted with broader cultural, ideological, social and other frameworks of the time. What individual intellectuals and artists began during the last decades of the nineteenth century, such as Mihailo Valtrović and Dragutin Milutinović, conducting field research and getting acquainted with the medieval heritage, in the interwar period turned into an unofficial credo of public cultural policy. The research of Vladimir Petković and other art theorists and artists provided a framework for the then-current conception of artistic practices that resembled medieval art.

The 1926 competition for the Church of Saint Sava unfolded in this direction. In addition to traditional proposals, which lacked a distinct authorial stamp, several designs stood out for their unique styles: the Krstić brothers' work was notable for its reminiscences of Romantic Expressionism, while Dušan Babić incorporated elements of Expressionism, Art Deco, and Post-Secession; finally, a thread of Expressionism dominated the proposals of both Milan Zloković and Andrej Papkov. The winning proposal was signed by the architect

Panagia of the Serbian Patriarchs, after a design by Pero Popović and Uroš Predić, Palace of the Serbian Patriarchate in Belgrade



Bogdan Nestorović. While most architects opted for a design modeled on Justinian's Church of Hagia Sophia in Constantinople, his more traditionally conceived project, following the example of Gračanica, evoked the architecture of the era of King Milutin. It was not until 1932 that the final design was accepted, entrusting Bogdan Nestorović and Aleksandar Deroko with a joint project modeled after Hagia Sophia. Construction of the temple, based on this design, began at the dawn of World War II. Due to circumstances caused by World War II, as well as the subsequent change in the state system, construction of the temple did not resume for several decades.

The choice of the final project for the Temple of Saint Sava undoubtedly confirms the rise of traditionalism in Serbian art and culture during the third decade of the twentieth century. The holding of the Second International Congress of Byzantine Studies in Belgrade in 1927, attended by world-re-

nowned scholars like Nikolai Okunyeu and Gabriel Millet, serves as a confirmation of this trend. During that period, the Serbian elite had the opportunity to emancipate itself sufficiently from the Western European experience, which had largely educated Serbian artists and architects during the nineteenth and first decades of the twentieth centuries. Sufficiently financially and intellectually independent, living in a large state and sharing the experiences of its past with other nations in a common union, it gained enough self-awareness to embark on the path of designing its own present, based on the trajectory that led to the Middle Ages. In this dialogue with itself, and in a measured consideration of its place in the European ideological and artistic system, the official culture of the Serbian state and court, in cooperation with the traditional part of the elite and state projects, embarked on the path of returning to its roots. The idea of building the Church of Saint Sava was also a pledge of the idea of restoring the past, in a monumental format that

spoke of the civilizational readiness of Serbian culture, the strength of the Serbian and Yugoslav monarchies in the interwar period, and also a utopian image of one's own position on the geopolitical map of Europe. The integrative personality of Saint Sava was finally defined through the idea of building a large church as a symbol of the unity of the Serbian people and a pledge of the perception of its dignity, national identity, and confessional affiliation with Orthodoxy, once formed within the Byzantine Commonwealth.

In light of this, the change in artistic expression in Predić's perception of the image of Saint Sava can be understood. Departing from academic realism, the painter began to represent the saint according to the model of medieval frescoes, thus marking the process of transformation of part of the cultural currents in Serbian art. This was supported by the architectural practice of that period. Based on the design of architect Momir Korunović, the construction of the temple dedicated to Saint Sava in Celje began in 1929. In accordance with his reworking of the Neo-Moravian style, Korunović shaped a harmonious architectural structure, which in 1932 was enriched with donated iconostasis icons by Uroš Predić, featuring an implied representation of Saint Sava. This internal and external unity of the church interior and exterior, built in memory of Saint Sava, speaks of the need to build churches in the peripheral areas of the then state, whose center was in Belgrade. Primarily determined by the needs of Orthodox believers for ritual – and therefore conditioned by its liturgical function – but also by the expansion of state administration and the migration of the Serbian and other Orthodox population into the annexed regions, the church in Celje also responded to the unification of the Orthodox minority within a predominantly Catholic area whose priests expressed their satisfaction with the beauty of the icons, which Uroš Predić also wrote about later as one of the positive effects of his work on the artistic shaping of the church in Celje. The church thus became a measure of the idea of



Uroš Predić,
Saint Sava,
episcopal throne
of the Church of
Saint Nicholas
in Samoš (1924)



Bogdan Nestorović, Project for the Temple of Saint Sava (1931)

The architect Milan Minić designed the church dedicated to Saint Sava in Drvar in the neo-Byzantine and neo-Romanesque style between 1932 and 1934. Adapted to the characteristics of the site, the church is harmoniously inserted into the environment, appearing to be a natural element of that space. Conceptually, it pointed to the increasingly pronounced integrative potential of Saint Sava, who became an indisputable symbol of Orthodox, but also national, Serbian identity.

Despite efforts to begin construction of the Church of Saint Sava at Vračar, as evidenced by the perspective view from 1935, this did not happen. In the same year, due to a delay in the construction of the main church, a smaller one was built. Constructed in the Neo-Moravian style, according to the plan of the Russian architect Viktor Lukomsky, for many decades it was the only church in Belgrade built in honor of the first Serbian archbishop. In line with the return to the Middle Ages, both the shape of the church and the iconostasis were crafted following medieval traditions. The icons on the iconostasis represented stylized saints applied to a golden background, thus striving to make painting independent of European academic influences, which relied on deepened three-dimensional space as a measure of realistic perspective, in which realistic, albeit often idealized, saints were placed.

materializing the concept of integral Yugoslavism, which framed the primarily Orthodox and national identity of the congregation for which it was built, and represented an object consistent with the idea of integration and cultural interpenetration of diverse identities and religions in the then multiethnic and multi-religious state.

The unifying significance of Saint Sava in that period was also confirmed by the construction of the Saint Sava Monastery in Libertyville in 1931. As a religious and educational center of Serbian emigration in America, led by the first American and Canadian bishop Mardarije Uskoković, the church community asked Predić to send paintings for the iconostasis to the newly built church, which the artist did as a gift in 1935, creating, among other things, a representation of Saint Sava for the iconostasis.



Bogdan Nestorović and Aleksandar Deroko, Perspective view of the Temple of Saint Sava, photograph (1935), M. Jurišić Collection

This period saw the peak of traditionalism in art. Around 1930, the process of shaping the large wall mosaic units of the Church of Saint George in Oplenac, the mausoleum of the Karađorđević dynasty, was completed. In addition to the independent mosaic representation of Saint Sava, modeled after the Mileševa fresco, a series of scenes from the life of Saint Sava were also painted on the left column near the iconostasis. The scenes were designed based on the cycle of Saint Sava from the refectory of the Hilandar Monastery, a work by Georgije Mitrofanović from 1622. Otherwise, this series, as well as other depictions, was shaped on the basis of field research that was carried out during the third decade of the twentieth century under the supervision of leading domestic experts, such as Vladimir Petković and Miloje Vasić, as well as Russian émigré artists, among whom were Nikolaj Krasnov and Sergey Smirnov. On this occasion, fresco inscriptions from important medieval monasteries were analyzed, reinterpreted, and later copied to varying degrees in the Oplenac church and other churches on the territory of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia.



Momir Korunović, Church of Saint Sava in Celje, postcard (1929–1932)

The already mentioned cycle of scenes from the life of Saint Sava was executed on the columns supporting the arches in the naos of the Oplenac church. Instead of keeping the original 29 scenes, which Georgije Mitrofanović, relying mostly on Teodosije's descriptions of Sava's life, painted in the refectory of the Hilandar Monastery, the Oplenac artists reduced the cycle to 24. Some of the canonical scenes from the saint's life were left out, such as: The Building of Hilandar, Saint Sava Reconciling His Brothers, and, finally, The Burning of the Relics. Although in those years Teodosije's *Life of Saint Sava* was published by the Serbian Literary Cooperative, and the French scholar Gabriel Millet completed preparations for the publication of an album on the monuments of Mount Athos, while Vladimir Petković dealt with legends about the saint's life in old Serbian wall painting, the Oplenac version, as stated by Miodrag Jovanović, still rested on Mitrofanović's series:

Rastko Hunting With His Entourage, Escape to Mount Athos, Rastko Advising a Monk to Flee to Mount Athos, Rastko Begging His Parents to Let Him Hunt, Rastko's Arrival

at the Roussik Monastery, Sava Bringing Warm Bread to the Hermits, Saint Sava Attacked by Robbers, Simeon Nemanja's Arrival at the Vatopedi Monastery and Meeting His Son Saint Sava, Saint Sava Receives From the Byzantine Emperor Alexios a charter for Hilandar, Death of Simeon Nemanja, The Holy Virgin Appears to Saint Sava and Reveals to Him a Hidden Treasure, Saint Sava Finds Two Hidden Stores, Saint Sava Kills Strez With Prayer, Miracle With the Outpouring of Myrrh From the Relics of Simeon Nemanja, Saint Sava Becomes

a Hieromonk, Patriarch German Appoints Saint Sava as Archbishop, Saint Sava Crowns His Brother Stefan as King, Saint Sava Prays to God to Send Ice From Heaven to the Hungarian King, The Sea Feeds the Sick Saint With Fish, Saint Sava Blesses the Water on the Epiphany in Tarnovo, Death of Saint Sava in Tarnovo, King Vladislav Asks the Bulgarian Emperor to Hand Over the Relics of Saint Sava to Him, Translation of the Relics of Saint Sava From Tarnovo to Mileševa.

The repetition of scenes from the life of Saint Sava was undoubtedly part of a broader artistic and cultural movement connected with the contemporary reinterpretation of the medieval Golden Age, but at the same time it was also part of the dynastic strategy of the ruling Karađorđević family. We have already pointed out that after King Petar came to power, the dynastic ideology became intertwined with Saint Sava and the Hilandar Monastery as a religious, but also a dynastic and national topos. King Petar Karađorđević's visit to Hilandar only solidified this alliance, and in Oplenac it was confirmed by artistic practice. The peak of this alliance, which culminated in the Oplenac mosaic during the reign of King Aleksandar, occurred immediately after his death. Namely, in 1935, on the pillar at the King Aleksandar Gymnasium in Belgrade's Topčider, Uroš Predić painted an unusual representation. In a narrow format, he depicted Saint Sava, modeled after medieval frescoes, before whom the king kneels. The posthumous depiction of the murdered monarch in a prayerful posture, full of contrition, with the insignia of his royal authority laid aside, refers to the placing of



Viktor Lukomski,
The Small Tem-
ple of Saint Sava
in Belgrade (1935)



Saint Sava,
Church of
Saint George
on Oplenac
(before 1930)

the family and the monarch under the protection of the powerful saint. The depiction of the young heir to the throne, Petar II Karađorđević, who, represented alongside the saint, refers to the continuity of the dynasty and the monarchy as a whole, can also be viewed in this light.

During the period of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes / Yugoslavia, several artists of a more modern sensibility also realized their vision of the character and work of Saint Sava. Thus, Vasa Pomorišac and Živorad Nastasijević created a number of scenes from the life of the saint in illustrated publications.

In the interwar period, as well as during the last few decades, architecture played a prominent role in the celebration of Saint Sava's cult, which is convincingly argued in Aleksandar Kadijević's study of the stylistic (diverse poetic) and functional (liturgical) aspects of churches dedicated to Saint Sava. The figure of Saint Sava was also depicted in the medium of sculpture. Thus, in the 1921 issue of the *Illustrated News* ("Ilustrovani list"), a bust of Saint Sava was published, decorated with national flags. It was about the celebration of Saint Sava's Day in the Prilep Gymnasium, which speaks of the continuity of the celebration of Saint Sava's Day in schools, as well as his glorification as a national saint and protector of education. The bust was the work of the drawing teacher Mitrofan Kosjenko and represented, in a realistic manner, the Serbian saint, while its tri-

angular form, taken from the ancient world, pointed to the apotheosis of the extraordinary hero of the community.

Non-Serb artists also gave material form to the power of the cult of Saint Sava during the interwar period, a devotion that extended beyond respect among Serbs and became a visual symbol in the creation of Yugoslav identity. In accordance with the concept of integral Yugoslavism, Saint Sava was depicted by the painter Ljubo Babić and the sculptor Frano Kršinić, who conceived the idea for the medal Saint Sava Blesses the Yugoslavs. In this way, the old theme in which the saint blesses the Serbs was transformed, with modern visual language and strong stylization, into the idea of the saint as the

protector of the Yugoslavs, which to a certain extent coincided with the identification of Saint Sava as a people's tribune, from whose roots the unadulterated spirit and the permanent, organic roots of the three-name people emanate.

Around 1935, an attempt was finally made to establish a new, official image of Saint Sava in accordance with the model of ancient art. The Serbian Orthodox Church commissioned the distinguished Russian artist of the academic tradition, Stepan Koleznikov, to create an image of the saint that would be distributed throughout church and educational institutions as the official representation. The realistic depiction of the saint emerging from a golden background points to a mixture of classical academic teachings with a reinterpretation of medieval heritage, and points to the required model of typification of the saint's image, which will be repeated to some extent by another Russian artist, Vladimir Predojevič, who will similarly present the saint on the iconostasis of the chapel of Saint Simeon in the palace of the Patriarchate of the Serbian Orthodox Church in Belgrade.



Saint Sava Receives the Hilandar Charter from the Byzantine Emperor Alexios, Church of Saint George on Oplenac (before 1930)

IN THE NEW TIME AND MODERN ERA: FROM DISPLACEMENT IN THE PUBLIC SPHERE TO THE COLLECTIVE SYMBOL OF THE NATION

Finally, the Second World War brought a great cataclysm, and the period after it also brought changes to the ideological and state structure. Still, the celebration of Saint Sava was held even in the transitional period. Thus, in 1945, Saint Sava was celebrated in the National Assembly. On that occasion, at the celebration organized by ASNOS (Anti-fascist Assembly of the People's Liberation of Serbia), its president Siniša Stanković said: "It is only right, as demanded by the great historical moment, that our youth celebrate Saint Sava through the battle cry for freedom, brotherhood and equality of the South Slavs."

It is obvious that during the transition of power, and in uncertain internal and external circumstances, the new communist government was keen to present Saint Sava as a symbol of all peoples and ethnic minorities, and to preserve the memory of the unquestionable symbols of previous times during the consolidation of its power. That same year, a celebration of Saint Sava was held in the great hall of the Rectorate in



◀ Vladimir Predojevič, Saint Sava, iconostasis of the Court Chapel of the Serbian Patriarchate (c. 1935)

Belgrade, with the cutting of the feast cake. However, the Communist Party of Serbia sent a letter to schools that Saint Sava's Day should be celebrated without a religious ceremony, but, at the insistence of the Synod of the Serbian Orthodox Church, the celebration in schools was nevertheless held with a religious ceremony. The desire to separate the celebration of Saint Sava from religious ceremonies soon led to the complete abolition of the holiday within the school system, and from 1947 onward, schools worked on Saint Sava's Day.

The celebration of Saint Sava in the new circumstances was difficult, and the artistic expression of his image, as well as the construction of churches dedicated to him, were in decline. However, the depictions related to Saint Sava from 1956, which were located in the dormitory of the Hilandar Monastery, stand out for their quality and expressiveness, typical of the unique style of the multimedia artist Aleksandar Deroko: *Death of Saint Simeon* and *Burning of the Relics of Saint Sava*.

In the following decades, the Serbian Orthodox Church strove to preserve the memory of Saint Sava's role in church and national history. On the occasion of the fiftieth anniversary of the Serbian Patriarchate, in 1970, the painter Svetislav Vuković executed a large-scale painting for the ceremonial hall of the Serbian Orthodox Church in the Patriarchate Palace. It is a representation entitled the *Apotheosis of Saint Sava*, which depicts the saint towering over a row of church dignitaries and the gathered people. Below the representation of Saint Sava, Patriarch German is depicted with bishops, while the idea of starting the construction of the temple at Vračar is illustrated by a depiction of an imaginary project design. The painting also presents various strata of the people. This expanded the usual image of the saint as

the protector of children, who became the unifier of the entire people in the past, present and future. At a time when the profession of faith was confined to the private sphere, placing this monumental painting in a limited, but nevertheless public, space realized the aspiration of the Serbian Church to remain faithful to tradition, thereby confirming its permanence and presence in the modern era.

After a hiatus, Saint Sava's image was reinstated in the public sphere. Following Yugoslav President Tito's death, during the first years of the 1980s, a certain liberalization occurred in the state, which led to the revival of the idea of building a temple of Saint Sava at Vračar. In 1984, during the reign of Patriarch German, this idea was revived, and its implementation began with the chief architect Branko Pešić. In the period after the collapse of Yugoslavia and the introduction of multi-party life, there was a renewed interest in the representation of the image of Saint Sava in art. The impetus was provided by the re-commemoration of Saint Sava in the school system of the Republic of Serbia, starting in 1990. Art played a prominent role in the revival of Saint Sava's cult in the public sphere. In this regard, it is necessary to highlight the sculpture by Miodrag Živković, who presented Saint Sava in the form of a public monument in Prijepolje, thereby emphasizing the cult of the saint that stems from the Mileševa Monastery, which was for centuries the burial place of Saint Sava. Thus, in 1995, a monument was unveiled that combined the traditional design of the figure with a modernist, abstracted framework, thus connecting tradition and innovation into a unique form, relatively speaking, of purified and abstracted modernism. The successful transfer of the Mileševa fresco of Saint Sava from the medium of painting to the medium of sculpture distinguishes this *sculpted fresco*, and makes it proof of the possibility of depicting holy figures in a realistically purified figurative form.

In the year of the installation of the monument to Saint Sava in Prijepolje, the sculptor Drinka Radovanović also created a bas-relief depicting the saint. Five years earlier, the sculptor had also created a bas-relief depicting Saint Sava with wolves. With this, she pointed to another narrative in the vision of Saint Sava, one that is linked to folk legends, fantasy, and the mythological dimension of the saint's image preserved in folk tradition.



Aleksandar Deroko, The Burning of the Relics of Saint Sava, dormitory of the Hilandar Monastery (1956)



Svetislav Vuković, *The Apotheosis of Saint Sava, Ceremonial Synod Hall in the Palace of the Serbian Patriarchate* (1970)

At the end of the century, the churches designed by the architect Predrag Ristić, dedicated to Saint Sava, stood out for their quality and authorial stamp. The church in Hanover, designed in the spirit of the revival of the style of the Middle Byzantine period, was built from 1996 to 2003, and the church in Foča, shaped in the neo-Romanesque and neo-Byzantine style, was constructed from 1994 to 2013.

In the twenty-first century, the construction of a large number of churches dedicated to Saint Sava continued in many cities where Serbian and other Orthodox people live, with the church dedicated to Saint Sava in San Gabriel (1984), near Los Angeles in California, standing out for its harmonious reception of the Serbian-Byzantine style.

In the first decades of the twenty-first century, the image of Saint Sava in the visual arts has been continuously shaped. A series of original icons and paintings has been created, ranging from traditionally conceived expressions inspired by old medieval icons to personal visions of the saint's image. While these personal visions allow for more

expressive styles and a certain freedom, they remain in accordance with Orthodox iconography and dogmatic frameworks. Within the series of these artistic icons, the works of Bishop Tihon Rakićević of Moravica, Jelena Hinić, Goran Jović and others can be recognized, testifying to the thesis that Saint Sava's image is also a reflection of the artists themselves, their visual poetics, and broader religious, aesthetic and ethical worldviews.

Finally, in the year 2025/26, when the 850th anniversary of the birth of the founder of the Serbian Church was celebrated, the work on the interior of his temple, having been roughly completed around 2020, was largely finished. Modeled after the golden mosaics of Hagia Sophia in Constantinople, the magnificent mosaic interior of the monumental church was designed, largely built according to the Nestorović-Deroko project. Upon the idea of the Russian artist Nikolai Mukhin, and in accordance with Orthodox expression and established iconographic patterns from the medieval period, a creative synthesis of Serbian, Byzantine and universal Orthodox painting was carried out in the mosaic technique. It should also be noted that the Temple of Saint Sava acquired the symbolism of the Serbian sacral pantheon. The crypt of the temple, or the Church of Saint Prince Lazar, completed in 2001, was conceived as the burial place of the Serbian patriarchs, the first of whom was Patriarch Irinej Gavrilović (2010–2020). Thus, instead of the physical body of Saint Sava, which was burned at Vračar, this space became the final destination of the later Serbian patriarchs, establishing an indirect connection with the burial place of Saint Sava in Mileševa, where his body had rested from 1237. This marked the end of the long journey of building the temple, and with it a major episode in the celebration and final monumentalization of the figure of Saint Sava, who was thus established as an integrative national topos, a holy man in church tradition and a secular *place of remembrance* in the collective memory of the Serbian people.



Miodrag Živković,
Monument
to Saint Sava,
Prijepolje (1995)



✧ Tihon Rakićević, Saint Sava, private collection (2001)



The development of the cult of Saint Sava among the Serbian people and other Orthodox peoples, from the Great Migration of the Serbs in 1690 to the present day, is inseparable from art. As an important structure for shaping reality, art has been an engaged tool in the formation of the cult of Saint Sava over the centuries, in the pre-modern, modern and contemporary eras. From the ideological definition of Saint Sava to the era of the religious and political program of the Metropolitanate of Karlovci in the eighteenth century, various media, oil paintings and icons, prints and wall paintings in church spaces, defined the foundations of interpreting the saint in art, primarily determined by the liturgical function and the prayerful attitude of the faithful. However, since that time, marked by the effort to preserve the Serbian and Orthodox people in unfavorable political circumstances, the image of Saint Sava in art has become both a symbol of national identity and an expression of religious patriotism.

Such a practice culminated during the long nineteenth century. In the territory of the Metropolitanate of Karlovci, and especially in southern Hungary, as well as in the insurgent Serbia and the subsequent Principality and Kingdom of Serbia, Saint Sava was portrayed as a national hero. At the same time, he also became the protector of Serbian education. Appointed as the first Serbian enlightener, Saint Sava was recognized through the educational system as a pivotal figure in the educational process, especially in the school system, in which his image was imitated through the lithographic medium, but also through religious ritual. Hence, over time, he also became the protector of pupils and students, and his role was primarily defined through artistic perceptibility within educational institutions. Thus, his image



The Temple of Saint Sava in Belgrade, contemporary view

combined the roles of both a secular and a spiritual enlightener, blending two distinct worldviews within a single person. This began the centralization of the image of Saint Sava, who, through the state system and the implied church organization, acquired the characteristics of a religious, but also a state-regulated cult. Since that time, the shaping of the cult of Saint Sava in art and his celebration in the school system seem to be connected.

Accordingly, art has also created a new reality of the saint. Through the various images of Saint Sava, the views of the saint were expressed, conditioned by the different historical and spiritual roles that individuals or entire generations saw in this eternally the same, but constantly changing, living saint. Whether as a young man, or the archetypal figure of an old man, the first Serbian archbishop, or as a young monk, surrounded by Serbian children, Saint Sava was always a historical figure, but also a reflection of individuals and their worldviews.

Artists also tested their visual poetics by artistically shaping the saint's image. From academicism, the old icon painting style, idealistic realism and symbolism, to modern visual poetics, Saint Sava and his image followed the changes and transformations of Serbian art during the nineteenth and first decades of the twentieth century.



< Nikolaj Muhin, Saint Sava,
Temple of Saint Sava in Belgrade (c. 2020)

The churches built in his memory can be understood in a similar spirit. Mostly defined by Serbian medieval building practices and the original solutions of leading Serbian architects, the idea of commemorating the first Serbian archbishop culminated at the end of the nineteenth century with the initiative to build a monumental church at Vračar.

In the interwar period, in the new Yugoslav community, the figure of Saint Sava continued to act as an integral symbol of the Serbian people, but was also assigned new roles, such as the people's tribune and the protector of the new Yugoslav nation. This once again confirmed the thesis about the ideologization of the figure of Saint Sava as a consequence of broader social, religious, ideological, cultural and other frameworks of the time. At the same time, in that period there was also a dynastic attachment to the figure of Saint Sava, which was accompanied by artistic production. What began during the Obrenović dynasty continued during the Karađorđević dynasty, when the image of Saint Sava indirectly became the patron of the ruling house, with special emphasis on his medieval roots and the Hilandar Monastery as the ancient starting point and spiritual source from which the saint emerged. During that period, amid a return to origins and the rise of traditionalism, the Serbian Orthodox Church sought to canonize and shape the image of Saint Sava in both art and architecture, aligning it with medieval artistic solutions for uniform distribution.

Also, during this period, the nineteenth-century practice of linking the modern ruling dynasty to the

holy Nemanjić lineage of Saint Sava and Saint Simeon continued. This was manifested in a deliberate revival of medieval artistic styles, which the contemporary imagination associated with the ideal golden age of the Serbian medieval church and monarchy.

Finally, in the unfavorable political circumstances following the establishment of the second Yugoslavia, the cult of Saint Sava was marginalized and largely restricted to private piety. Although there were valuable works of art that focused on the saint's image, they were the product of individual initiative rather than systemic undertakings, which were impossible under an ideologically different state order.

At the dawn of the disintegration of the SFRY, the idea of building a temple was revived. Suppressed national and religious beliefs slowly manifested themselves in the public sphere, which resulted in the resumption of the works on the temple, the construction and interior decoration of which would be largely completed around 2020, and the temple would become a place for gathering and celebrating Saint Sava, encapsulating both the concept of Christian enlightenment and the idea of a premier *place of remembrance*, shaped by the idea of secular celebration of the memory of the first Serbian enlightener and patron of education. Hence, the works of art and temples erected around the world, dedicated to Saint Sava, have indicated his role as a kind of religious and cultural symbol in modern times as well.

As a central axis of Serbian history and an exemplary spiritual ladder, Saint Sava united diverse identity narratives of both church and state within his persona. Consequently, the ever-evolving interpretations of the past have been harmonized within his multifaceted, unifying personality. Throughout this continuous process, art has served as an active generator, establishing and maintaining the cult of Saint Sava over the centuries.

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CATALOGUE

1. Lintel and jambs of the west Studenica portal

Studenica Monastery, Virgin's Church, c. 1190

Copy, cast by Ante Kučan, 1958 (copied in 1949)

Plaster; 1) 265 × 40 cm; 2) 142 × 42 cm; 3) 142 × 42 cm

Fresco Gallery of the National Museum of Serbia, inv. no. 27_199

Skillfully and richly carved stone sculptures adorn the outer and inner sides of the lintel and jambs of the main, western portal of the Church of the Holy Virgin at Studenica. The relief decorations are designed to present two programmatic units.

In the center of the inner field of the lintel, a figure of Jesus Christ is carved. The inner sides of the jambs contain full-length frontal representations of the apostles – arranged vertically, six on each side. All figures are executed in high relief. The representation of Christ with the twelve apostles corresponds to the compositional scheme of the Mission of the Apostles, a feature commonly found in early Christian art but less frequent in Romanesque architectural sculpture. Christ is depicted on a throne, blessing with his right hand while holding an open book in his left. He is dressed in a chiton and himation. His hair falls to his shoulders, his beard is short, and his head is surrounded by a halo with an inscribed cross, its edge adorned with dotted lead decorations. The representations of the apostles on both jambs are executed in a similar manner and placed within carved rectangular fields; each border on which an apostle stands is supported by a motif of three connected, flowering branches. At the top of the procession (on the lintel), the apostles Peter and Paul are depicted facing

one another. Because these figures lack inscriptions, they must be identified by their iconographic features and stocky, somewhat unbalanced proportions. Like Christ, they are dressed in chitons and himations and bear halos. Each holds a half-opened scroll in his left hand while raising his right to his chest in a gesture of blessing. In addition to the scroll in his left hand, the Apostle Peter holds his recognizable attribute: the keys.

The outer sides of the lintel and jambs of the main portal feature carved vegetal and figurative representations. The lintel displays a vine motif that intertwines as a frieze, forming circular medallions containing figurative elements. First in the series are two frontal representations: the mythological Sirin – a creature in the form of a bird with a human head – and a prancing horse. The Sirin is followed by an eagle with spread wings and another bird, while two fantastic creatures – basilisks – are depicted behind the horse. In the outermost medallions of the lintel are floral motifs that transition naturally into the relief decoration of the doorframe, which is also adorned with a vine pattern combined with acanthus leaves. The vine bifurcates, creating circular fields filled with various vegetal motifs. With the exception of the first three fields in the upper zone of the northern jamb,





which also feature bird figures, the remaining sections of the jambs display only the grapevine motif. The southern jamb features various carved floral motifs within its fields.

The sculptural program of the main Studenica church stands as an excellent example of the interpenetration and synthesis of Romanesque and

Byzantine patterns in Serbian medieval architectural stone carving.

LITERATURE: Максимовић 1971: 64–67; Бабић и др. 1986: 30–31; Тодић 1994: 13–23; Бабић 2019а: 36; Бабић 2019б: 34–35; Бабић 2019в: 89–112.

N. B.









2. Three-light window of the altar apse

Studenica Monastery, Virgin's Church, c. 1190
Copy, cast by Ante Kućan, 1958 (copied in 1949)
Plaster; 400 × 267 cm
Fresco Gallery of the National Museum of Serbia,
inv. no. 27_198

Particularly distinguished by its refined and naturalistic sculpted decoration, the three-light window of the altar apse features the most complex and detailed ornamentation among all the window openings of the Church of the Holy Virgin at Studenica.

The four slender colonettes support the three arches of the window opening. The two central colonettes, which divide the opening into three lights, feature stylized capitals. The high-relief decoration covers the surfaces of the window's lunette and the frame – including the window sill, side jambs, and the archivolt. A motif of simple interlace with doubled acanthus leaves is executed on the window sill. Similar motifs to those decorating the jambs of the main portal are also found on the window frame: a double vine carving that creates circular fields within which various motifs are carved. On the north side, various types of flowers are depicted, while the south side features figurative representations: a siren, a ram with a cross, an eagle, a deer, a boar, a seated male figure holding a vine in both hands, and a dove. The jambs are connected by an archivolt on which the vine carving continues, featuring medallions with leaves and multi-petal flowers. Above the junction of the northern

and central arches, a lion is carved, from whose jaws a double vine with acanthus leaves emerges and develops. Its intertwining strands spread over the surface of the lunette, creating four irregularly shaped circular medallions in its central field. To the right of these medallions, a basilisk is carved, while to the left is a dragon devouring a human figure. Along the lowest zone of the side jambs, supporting consoles in the form of kneeling human figures are carved, which are traditionally interpreted as representing good and bad monks. Due to the position and presence of these consoles next to the three-light window, it is assumed that the original design for the window included an outer frame, of which these lateral figures were an integral part. To this day, the complex iconographic program of the eastern three-light window – especially its symbolism – has been interpreted in various ways. This symbolism is mainly understood in the context of allegorical motifs depicting the struggle between good and evil, virtue and sin.

LITERATURE: Максимовић 1971: 68; Бабић и др. 1986: 31; Ђурић 1988–1989: 7–18; Бабић 2019: 33–34; Бабић 2019в: 89–112; Матић 2019: 188–192.

N. B.

3. Consoles with figural motifs

Studenica Monastery, Virgin's Church, c. 1190

Copies, cast by Dragan Petrović, 1968

Plaster; 23 × 21 cm

National Museum in Kraljevo

In the highest zones of the facade of the Church of the Holy Virgin at Studenica, a frieze of blind arcades runs beneath the attic cornice. The carved blind arcades of the southern and western facades feature sculpted marble consoles adorned with figurative and floral motifs. Among the figurative motifs are human heads of various genders and ages, alongside fantastic and zoomorphic creatures.

Consoles in the form of a lioness's head and two youthful human heads are carved on the arcades within the highest, central zone of the western facade. A pronounced plasticity and finely carved details characterize these figures. The lioness's head with pointed ears is depicted with a wide mouth and visible sharp teeth in its jaws. Her face is characterized by a wide, fleshy, wrinkled snout, and large eyes with lead inserts in place of pupils. The sculptor's intent to faithfully capture the physiognomy and expression of the lioness is reflected in details such as the carved dots in the whisker area and the deep wrinkles on the snout and cheeks. The two youthful human heads exhibit somewhat rougher facial modeling. Given the subtly androgynous nature of their features, they can be tentatively identified as a young woman and a young man. Large lips, wide nostrils, and large eyes with lead pupils are among their defining characteristics. The master delineated

wrinkles and emphasized facial planes using shallow incisions across the forehead, chin, and cheeks. Distinct differences emerge primarily in the stylization of hairstyles: while the male (?) figure has medium-length hair that falls below the cheeks and is combed behind the ears, the female (?) figure features hair parted in the center of the crown that falls evenly over the ears down to the chin.

The second group of figurative representations consists of those on the consoles of the southern facade. Among them is the head of a woman with braids, carved in the highest zone of the narthex façade. Consoles depicting a man with long, wavy hair and a beard, alongside a fantastic creature, are positioned on the facade of the western aisle. Large, almond-shaped eyes with lead pupils, a refined facial structure, and prominent individual features – such as nasolabial folds, wide-open nostrils, and a sharply defined chin – characterize the basic features of the woman's face. Her hair, parted in the center, is combed behind the ears and tied into two braids, with deeper incised lines masterfully imitating individual strands. The master executed the strands of wavy, tightly curled hair and the bearded mustache on the male head with greater meticulousness and emphasis. The modeling of this male head is rougher, featuring intentionally



prominent, oversized earlobes. The fantastic creature, which shares a similarly rough style with the described male head and mirrors elements of the lioness's head from the western facade, differs from the other representations as it sinks its four sharp teeth into the edge of the console.

Similarities in execution, design, and facial expression of the figures can be found in the

sculpted reliefs of southern Italian churches. The connection and transmission of this style to the region likely occurred via the coastal Adriatic cities.

LITERATURE: Максимовић 1971: 71–75; Бабић и др. 1986: 42; Бабић 2019в: 89–112; Матић 2019: 183; Прерадовић 2019а: 38; Прерадовић 2019б: 38–39.

N. B.



4. Parts of the lunette of the north two-light window on the west façade

Studenica Monastery, Virgin's Church, c. 1190

Copy, cast by Rade Pajović, 2024

Plaster, cast; 77 × 19 × 15 cm

National Museum in Kraljevo, inv. no. RP. 04 NMK

In addition to the richly sculpted altar trifora and a series of single-light window openings (monoforae), the Church of the Holy Virgin at Studenica

features twenty-four two-light windows (biforae), two of which stand out particularly on the western facade. The lunettes of the northern and southern biforae on the western facade contain sculpted stone reliefs that, in terms of style and fineness of execution, closely resemble the stone ornamentation of the altar triforium.

Both biforae are recessed into the wall, featuring prominent external archivolts flush with the facade and beveled window sills. In the center of the northern bifora lunette, a branching plant motif forms three circular fields, each filled with three fleshy leaves. To the right and left of this central motif, two facing birds are carved, grasping the upper part of a vine tendril with their beaks.



The meticulous execution of the feathers and the carved “ring” motif with multiple perforations around their necks indicate that these are turtle-doves, a motif carrying profound Christological and symbolic meaning. Along the outer side of the northern bifora’s inner arches runs a band of repeating trefoils, while the inner side features a repeating two-branched palmette motif. The two inner arches are supported by a central octagonal colonnette, which divides the window opening. Single-strand interlace motifs were carved into the corners of the lunette.

Until the mid-twentieth century, both biforae on the western facade were walled up. During conservation work in the Radoslav Narthex and

subsequent archaeological research, a fragment carved with a rosette motif belonging to the southern bifora was discovered, prompting the reopening of both windows to return the fragment to its original position. On that occasion, surviving parts of the northern bifora – which until 1956 had been built into the eastern gable (kalkan) of the Milošev Konak in Studenica – were removed and placed in the monastery lapidarium. Finally, during the 2018 reconstruction of the northern bifora, two fragments of the lunette were reincorporated in situ.

LITERATURE: Ненадовић 1957: 45; Чанак-Медић, Бошковић 1986: 103–105; Дебљовић-Ристић 2017: 25–42; Прерадовић 2019: 41–42.

N. B.

5. Lead window transenna

Studenica Monastery, Virgin's Church, c. 1190
Copy, cast and assembling by Mihailo Paunović, Miroljub
Stamenković, Slobodan Savić, 1987
Glass, lead; 225 × 94 cm
Fresco Gallery of the National Museum of Serbia,
inv. no. 27_1319

Immediately after the construction of the church dedicated to the Virgin Evergetis (Dobrotvorka) at the Studenica Monastery, several single-light window openings (monoforae) were closed with perforated lead sheets. Today, only one example of such a window screen has been preserved at Studenica – a transenna located on the northern wall of the nave, beneath the dome of the church.

The lead sheet is divided into ten vertically arranged circular fields, with two rows of five. It is assumed that the screen originally contained a total of twelve fields. Each circular field was created by drilling perforations into the lead sheet. Using this technique, figurative representations were rendered at the center of each field: the highest zone of the transenna depicts a lion and an eagle with spread wings; below them are two deer; and the central, third zone features two fantastic animals combining the traits of a winged dog and a snake. The fourth zone contains two rosettes,

while the lowest zone features two dove-like birds. All of these figural representations are positioned in antithetical symmetry. In the corners of certain fields, as well as on the petals of the rosettes and the animal figures, larger cutouts house irregularly shaped pieces of multicolored glass – green, red, yellow, light blue, and white. Sunlight penetrated through the stained glass and minute perforations, casting a distinct illumination across the church interior.

This controlled filtering of light created a specific atmosphere inside the church, especially during worship. The interplay of light and shadow was a crucial element in shaping sacred space in medieval art, both in the West and across the Byzantine Empire.

LITERATURE: Радојковић 1961: 19–26; Кашанин и др. 1986: 64–66; Чанак-Медић, Бошковић 1986: 106; Матић 2019: 192–193; Шпехар 2019: 44–46.

N. B.



6. Hilandar Charter

Hilandar Monastery, 1198/99

Parchment, 300 × 400 (Ćorović: 540) mm

Copied from the book: D. Avramović, *Sveta Gora sa strane vere, hudožestva i povestnice*

Matica Srpska Library, inv. no. R19Sr II 23.1

The *Hilandar Charter* was issued to the Hilandar Monastery by Simeon, the former Grand Župan Stefan Nemanja. While the exact date is not recorded, the context of historical events places its creation after June 1198 – when Emperor Alexios III Angelos gifted Hilandar to Simeon and Sava – and certainly before Simeon's death in February 1199. Regardless of the name in the signature (Simeon), the *Hilandar Charter* is considered Saint Sava's autograph; this is indicated by the linguistic and stylistic features of the text when compared to his other writings. Research has also identified nearly identical textual segments shared between the *Hilandar Charter* and Sava's *Life of Saint Simeon*.

The *Hilandar Charter* was preserved at the monastery until 1896, when it was presented to King Alexander I Obrenović alongside the *Miroslav Gospel*. It was subsequently housed in the National Library of Serbia until the First World War, during which it vanished alongside other invaluable manuscripts during the wartime evacuation. Fortunately, based on photographs preserved at the Archives of the Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts and a detailed transcript by Dimitrije Avramović, the document has been published, analyzed, and translated by eminent experts in the fields of Serbian history, law, literature, and linguistics. From a codicological

perspective, Avramović's historical transcript of the charter remains highly valuable.

The original document was written on a parchment scroll in uncial script across 67 lines. The text begins with an arenga, followed by an exposition detailing the rise to power of Stefan Nemanja, his reign, the stabilization of the country, and his eventual departure to Mount Athos after tonsure under the monastic name Simeon. He appoints his son Stefan – the son-in-law of the Byzantine emperor Alexios III Angelos – as his successor to the Serbian throne. Upon arriving on Mount Athos, the monk Simeon finds the Hilandar Monastery church of the Presentation of the Holy Virgin in ruins, observing that “not one stone was left upon another” (Въведеніе в(е)тыѣ и Прѣславніе Блад(н)ице наше Б(о)городице, ндѣже не бѣ камень ость на каменн, ноу разваленъ оодноу). There follows the disposition, in which he enumerates the villages and estates granted to the monastery: the villages of Neprobišta, Momuša, Slamodrava, Retimlje, Trnje, Retivštica, and Trnovac, alongside two settlements in Hoča with their marketplace. He also grants two vineyards, four apiaries (in Trpeze, Dabšor, Godiševo, and Parice) maintained by two men each, the mountain of Bogača, Radovo Sudstvo, and Đurđevo with a total of 170 Vlachs, as well as breeding mares and 30 measures of salt from



Zeta. The text further establishes a strict prohibition against monastery dependents transferring to the service of the Grand Župan, and vice versa. For those who violate this vow by seizing monastic property, Simeon declares a spiritual sanction, warning that God will judge them, and that at the Last Judgment, their adversaries will be the Theotokos and “I, Simeon the sinner” (ѣзъ грѣшникъ симеонъ).

The signature reads: КРЪС(Т) СИМ(Е)ОН(О)ВЪ И ПОДПИСАНІЕ

LITERATURE: Аврамовић 1848: 40–45; Свети Сава 1928: I–IV, 1–4; Свети Сава 1939: 25–28; Мошин 1979: 101–128; Трифуновић 1986: 49–60; Свети Сава 1986: 24–25, 31–33; Свети Сава 1998: XIII; Анђелковић 2020: 230–234, 236.

M. J.



7. Icon of the Virgin Hodegetria

Unknown artist, late 12th century

Wooden support, mosaic, 63 × 44.5 cm

Treasury of the Hilandar Monastery, inv. no. R001

The mosaic icon of the Virgin Hodegetria is the oldest preserved icon in the treasury of the Hilandar Monastery. It dates to the period when the former Grand Župan, the monk Simeon, and his son, the monk Sava Nemanjić, were restoring the Hilandar Monastery on Mount Athos. The Most Holy Theotokos is depicted in a half-length frontal pose. In her left arm, she holds the Christ Child, toward whom she points with her outstretched right hand. The Holy Virgin is dressed in a dark blue maphorion, adorned with a double golden ribbon along the edges. A single golden star is visible on the Mother of God's right shoulder and forehead. The background is composed of golden mosaic tesserae. The inscription $\overline{\text{MH}} \overline{\text{TP}} \overline{\text{OX}}$ and the circular outlines of the halos around the figures of the Mother of God and Christ are executed in a darker hue.

Christ offers a blessing with his right hand outstretched to the side, toward which his gaze is directed. He is dressed in a golden himation over a matching chiton highlighted with red potamoi

(rivers). Within Christ's halo is a cross executed in varying shades of blue. The central and lower portions of the icon are severely damaged, and the original mosaic tesserae are missing.

The icon is most likely the work of a Greek master from Constantinople or Thessaloniki, dating to the late twelfth century, circa 1200. According to Sava's *Life of Saint Simeon*, the monk Simeon requested to be placed before the icon of the Holy Virgin as he commended his spirit to the Lord. While it is widely hypothesized that this mosaic is indeed that very icon, this association cannot be definitively confirmed.

The Historical Museum of Serbia possesses a replica of this mosaic icon of the Virgin Hodegetria (inv. no. KFI 29), executed in 1995 by Snežana Jovčić Olda.

LITERATURE: Ђурић 1966: 16–20; Петковић 1998: 9, 21, 65–66; Đurić 1998: 280–281.

M. M.



8. Staff (crozier) of the Hilandar hegoumenos (abbot), gift from Alexios III Angelos

Originally from Constantinople, 1199
Ebony, jasper, silver, silver-gilt, turquoise, pearl, semi-precious gemstones;
Cutting, forging, filigree, granulation, niello;
Copy, copied by Zvonko Petković, 2024
staff height: 144.5 cm, diameter 2 cm; height of the staff head: 4.5 cm, diameter 7 cm
Hilandar Monastery

Saint Sava received the Hilandar abbot's staff from the Byzantine Emperor Alexios III Angelos during his stay in the imperial capital in 1199, confirming that the newly established Serbian monastery and its brotherhood on Mount Athos had the right to independently elect and appoint their monastic elders. For the Hilandar brotherhood, this act was of immense significance, as previous Athonite practice required a newly chosen abbot to travel to the imperial court in Constantinople to receive confirmation directly from the emperor.

The staff consists of a shaft with a circular cross-section made of ebony wood and a finial made of ellipsoidal jasper stone, attached to the shaft by a gilded silver revetment mount. The cross-shaped lower and upper sections of this mount are connected by a band enclosing the widest part of the jasper stone. A square-cut semiprecious stone, flanked on each side by a smaller circular stone, is set at the center of the mount's upper face; additionally,



a faceted, oval semiprecious stone sits at each junction where the cross-arms meet the central metal ring. The shaft is partially covered with gilded silver sheathing interspersed with smaller metal collars. Furthermore, the metal components of both the shaft and the finial mount were originally decorated with double filigree wires strung with pearl and coral beads. These pearls are only partially preserved today, remaining visible on the central collar of the shaft and on the ring directly beneath the head of the staff. Since this specific decorative technique was widely employed by goldsmiths in the imperial capital during the Middle Byzantine period, the traditional dating ascribed to this abbot's staff is firmly supported by its material characteristics.

The subsequently inserted silver revetment upon the shaft bears an inscription executed in the niello technique which, based on its paleographical and linguistic features, dates to the eighteenth century.

This inscription states that the staff was a gift from Emperor Alexios Komnenos to Saint Sava of Serbia, noting the year 1181 as the date of its creation (сѣй жез(а)ъ даровалъ ц(а)р(ъ) алексѣи комніенъ с(вѣ)том(ъ) сербскоу савк(ы) въ знакъ ц(а)рскіе власти поставлати ермѣна самовластна ꙗко лѣта ѿ хр(и)ста: 484: [“This crozier was given by the Emperor Alexios Komnenos to the holy Serbian Sava, as a sign of imperial power to appoint an independent abbot”]). Historians assume this chronological data was likely the result of an eighteenth-century copyist misreading or misinterpreting the original Greek inscription.

Modeled after the original Hilandar abbot's staff, Professor Zvonko Petković executed a replica in 2024 which, like the authentic artifact, is preserved today within the Hilandar Monastery.

LITERATURE: Аврамовић 1847: 13; Аврамовић 1848: 48; Миловановић 2008: 266–267; Миљковић 2008: 83–84; Миљковић 2015: 127–137.

N. B.





9. Studenica's founder inscription

Studenica Monastery, Virgin's Church, the ring beneath the dome's drum, 1208/1209

Copy, copied by Zoran Jovanović, 2019

Canvas, casein paint

Treasury of the Studenica Monastery

In the mid-twentieth century, a founder's inscription was discovered in the sub-dome area of the Church of the Holy Virgin at Studenica, establishing the precise completion date of the monastery's frescoes as 1208/1209. Although Pavel Jozef Šafárik had observed part of this inscription a century earlier during his travels through Serbia in 1846, his records remained unpublished for the next 150 years. He had noted: "Beneath the dome of the large church, the remains of a former inscription are visible, from which only the words *εΙΣΙΑ ΚΝΕΖΑ ΒΛΥΚΑΝΑ ВЪ ЛѢТО ۶۷۱* ["of Prince Vukan, in the year 6717"] can be deciphered, which presumably indicate that in the year 6717 from the creation of the world, or 1209 AD, this church was by Prince Vukan, brother of Stefan the First-Crowned." Shortly after Šafárik's visit, a restoration of the damaged frescoes commenced, and the painter Živko Pavlović from Požarevac was hired for the project. During this process, the inscription was misinterpreted; Pavlović and his associates erroneously concluded that the church had been painted during the reign of Stefan Nemanja and then repainted under his son Vukan in 1205. They recorded this inaccurate observation in a new inscription within a cartouche on the southern wall of the church.

As Šafárik's discovery of the inscription remained unknown until the end of the twentieth

century, the knowledge about the existence of the founder's inscription was reached at the time of extensive research at Studenica during the 1950s. The nineteenth-century overpainting was removed, uncovering both the original thirteenth-century layers and the sixteenth-century fresco restorations. Along the lower edge of the dome, to the right of the representation of the Holy Mandyllion (the Image Not Made by Hands), an inscription runs in a circle using, written in large letters 10–12 cm in size, which reads: *† сєн · прѣс(вє)ты храмь · прѣѹнс(т)не владѹи҃ице наше б(о)городице · създанъ бысть велєслав(н)ъ(м)ъ с.....ъ...ъ...лє · велѣмъ жоупаномъ н съ(вато)у(ц(а)ра) гр(ъ)у(ъ)ск(аг)о кѹрь алѣксьє · стѣфаномъ · неманею · прныємъшоѹмоу а҃нгельскы ѡбра(зъ · с)имеѡноу мѣнихоу · съв.....лабьна...л. (а) (ъ)вєланєга кнєза влѣкана · въ лѣто · пѣѹи · рнѣдикта · бѣ · н мєнє работавьша.. .. (ѣ)тє саву грьѣшнаго* ("This most holy temple of our Most Pure Lady, the Mother of God, was built by the glorious [...] Grand Župan and in-law of the Greek Emperor, Kyr Alexios, Stefan Nemanja, who received the angelic habit as Simeon the monk. It was completed by the [...] glorious lord [...] Grand Prince Vukan in the year 6717, the 12th indiction. And remember me, Sava the sinful, who labored here."

Initially, the patronage over the decoration of the Church of the Holy Virgin was attributed to

† СЕИ ПЪЛЪХАМЪ ПРЪТЪ СЕВЛААЛУ

Н СЕИ ПЪЛЪХАМЪ ПРЪТЪ СЕВЛААЛУ

СОЛЛАВЪНЪ ПЪЛЪХАМЪ ПРЪТЪ СЕВЛААЛУ

Н ПЪЛЪХАМЪ ПРЪТЪ СЕВЛААЛУ ПЪЛЪХАМЪ ПРЪТЪ СЕВЛААЛУ

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Vukan, owing to the explicit mention of his name. It was only the explanation proposed by Đorđe Trifunović that successfully elucidated the signature within the inscription: *и мене рабѡтавъша(го помѣн)(ѣ)те саву гърѣшнаго*. Based on the corpus of medieval Slavic manuscripts, Professor Trifunović concludes that “the verb *rabotati* is not synonymous with *raditi* (to do/make something), but rather signifies – to be *enslaved* or to *serve* (someone or something).” In this way, the Archimandrite of Studenica, Sava, places himself among the spiritual servants overseeing the construction and decoration of the Church of the Holy Virgin. The adjective *sinful* is not unusual within Sava’s signatures, since in his own writings he characterized himself as a *sinful, wretched, unworthy, lazy monk*. His contribution to the decoration of Studenica is further manifested in the selection of Serbian-Slavonic inscriptions, which constituted a bold choice within the canonical jurisdiction of the Archbishopric of Ohrid, particularly when considering the fact that the painter was Greek. As Đorđe Trifunović noted, and as Irena Špadijer subsequently confirmed through a further analysis of the scribal errors within the inscriptions, the copyists of these texts were likewise Greek. Such an autonomous course of action in the selection of language underscores the high status that Sava enjoyed within the Byzantine world at that time.

LITERATURE: Мандић 1956: 39–41; Трифуновић 1967: 6–7; Ђурић 1979: 245–261; Ђорђевић 1986: 5; Трифуновић 1986a: 4; Шафарик 1993: 18; Шпадијер 2006: 517–522; Суботић и др. 2015: 25, 35–44; Живковић 2019г: 48–49; Савић 2020: 521; Матић, Анђелковић 2022: 307–326.

M. J.

10. Iconographic program around the abbot's throne in the Virgin's Church at Studenica: Virgin of Studenica, Saint Josaphat, Saint Barlaam, Saint Sabbas the Sanctified

Studenica Monastery, Virgin's Church, 1208/09

Copy, copied by Zdenka Živković: 1) 1986, 2) 1986, 3) 1988, 4) 1986

Canvas, casein paint: 1) 248 × 70 cm, 2) 250 × 66 cm,

3) 248 × 70 cm, 4) 250 × 85 cm

Fresco Gallery of the National Museum of Serbia,

inv. no. 27_783; inv. no. 27_1309; inv. no. 27_1331; inv. no. 27_1308

The abbot's throne of the Church of the Holy Virgin at Studenica, dating from the first decade of the thirteenth century, was originally positioned in the corner of the multi-tiered southwestern under-dome pilaster. The preeminent status of this seat was further emphasized by a carefully designed fresco program executed in the lower register of the southwestern pilaster.

That the abbot's throne was once located at this spot, resting against the eastern side of the mentioned pilaster, is shown by cuts on the marble cornice of the base and traces of the stone structure's supports in the floor. This is further confirmed by the text of the thirteenth chapter of the *Studenica Typikon*, which relates to the installation of the monastery's abbot and describes the order and manner in which this rite is carried out. According to the prescribed rule, following the liturgy, the Gospel was placed upon the altar table, and the abbot's staff was set beside the icon of the Holy Virgin.

The Bishop of Raška and the elders of other monasteries would then hand the Gospel to the newly elected abbot and escort him to the Holy Doors. From there, the Serbian ruler would lead him to the Virgin and, "from her hands," present the staff to the abbot. Previous scholarship suggests that the physical staff was displayed alongside a highly revered fresco icon of the temple's patroness, the Virgin Kyriotissa, bearing the epithet "of Studenica," painted directly above the throne on the eastern side of the southwestern pilaster.

The Holy Virgin (с(вє)|та|ѧ в(о)роуаи)ца стѸ|де|ни|у|ц(к)а|ѧ) is depicted in a full-length frontal pose, standing upon a golden footstool (supedion). She is attired in a blue tunic and a red maphorion, holding the Christ Child before her with both hands. In her right hand, she also holds a white handkerchief. The Divine Infant is depicted frontally in a seated position, holding a scroll in his left hand while offering a blessing with his right. Surrounding the



patroness of the church are three other holy figures who served as primary spiritual models for Saint Sava of Serbia.

Directly south of the Virgin, across two adjacent faces of the pilaster near the throne, are representations of Saint Josaphat (с(кє)т|ы нѡ|а(с)аф|ъ) – the young Indian prince who renounced worldly power to become a monk – and Saint Barlaam (бар|ла|ам|ъ), the elderly desert hermit who instructed him in the Christian faith. A parallel narrative of abandoning worldly status characterized the life of Rastko Nemanjić, who closely identified with the young Josaphat. Consequently, these two saints were granted a prominent visual position flanking the abbot's throne occupied by Saint Sava.

Saint Josaphat is depicted as a youth with short hair and a medium-length beard, dressed in a rhason with an analavos, wearing a hoop-like circlet upon his head. He extends his right hand in prayer toward the Holy Virgin while holding an unrolled scroll in his left, which reads: † є | в'са ѡс|тави|х'ъ · и вѣ|саѣдѣ|ствоу|ю вл(а)д(ы)|цѣ х(р)с(т)ѣ | да оу|хѹхъ ж|елає|маго | :- (“I have left all this and am following the Lord Christ to find what I desire”). Barlaam is depicted as an old man with long gray hair falling over his shoulders and a full beard. In his left hand, he holds a scroll dialogically linked to Josaphat's inscription: † ҃єдо | нѡаса|фє · ѡс|тави та|ѣн' нѡє | ц(а)р(ь)ствѣ|ю · и при|емѣъ к|р(ь)стѣъ | пос'а|ѣдѣи | х(р)с(т)ѣъ : | † (“Child Josaphat, leave the perishable kingdom and, having received the cross, follow Christ”).

On the northern face of the southwestern pilaster, beneath a painted, ornate arch, stands Saint Sava the Sanctified (с(кє)т|ы са|ва) – the desert-dweller whom Saint Sava of Serbia sought to emulate. The saint is depicted as a bald old man with a gray beard, attired in monastic robes. His right hand is raised to his chest in a blessing gesture, while his left hand holds an unrolled scroll displaying a passage from the funeral hymns (*stichera*). According to Saint Sava's *Life of Saint Simeon*, these very words were uttered by Stefan Nemanja prior to his relinquishment of the throne and monastic tonsure: † вѣ ист|инѣ соу|ѣта всау|ѣскаѣ · ж|итиє бо єє| сѣнѣ и сонѣ ннѹто же| бо мєтєтѣ| сє всакѣ з|емлѣнын| єгда и всѣ|мирѣ при|ѡбрѣ|щєм|ъ| тогда и вѣ| гробѣ вѣсє|анимѣ сє :- (“Truly, all is vanity, and life is a dream and a vision; every man strives in vain, for when we have gained the world, we then inhabit the grave”).

It was precisely Saint Sava of Serbia who, during his tenure as abbot of the Studenica Monastery – and most notably during the liturgical services – occupied this abbot's throne, which was surrounded by the aforementioned iconographic representations. This complex and highly sophisticated programmatic layout was, in all likelihood, executed according to his direct theological conception.

LITERATURE: Ђурић В. 1995: 491–498; Тодић 1997: 41; Радујко 2012: 47–64; Живковић 2019: 67, 202–203, 235, 381–387; Живковић 2019а: 59–60; Живковић 2019б: 62; Свети Сава 2024: 78–80.

N. B.







11. Paterissa (pastoral staff / crozier) of “Saint Sabbas the Sanctified”

Modern replica, 2025–2026

Wood, bone; turning, carving, etching

Height: 130 cm

Hilandar Monastery

The Serbian painter Dimitrije Avramović, while staying on Mount Athos in 1848, recorded a tradition connected with a specific pastoral staff (*paterissa*) and Saint Sava of Serbia.

During his first pilgrimage to the Holy Land in 1229, Saint Sava visited the Mar Saba monastery (the Great Lavra), which had been founded in 483 by the Palestinian hermit Saint Sabbas the Sanctified. Tradition states that prior to his repose, Sabbas the Sanctified decreed that his crozier—the *paterissa*—be positioned beside the iconostasis of his monastery’s primary church, prophesying that a namesake would arrive from the West, a monk of “imperial lineage” who would claim his pastoral staff. The legend continues with an account of Sava’s prayer before the monastery church’s altar, where the staff moved on its own and ended up in his hands. Upon his return, Saint Sava brought this relic to Mount Athos, where it was preserved for centuries in a cell dedicated to the Transfiguration of Christ near Karyes, a cell

popularly known as “Paterissa.” Today, it is housed in the treasury of the Hilandar Monastery.

The staff of Saint Sava of Jerusalem consists of a long shaft and a grip at the top. The slightly curved grip, together with the shaft, forms a “T” shape. The total length of the staff is 130 cm. The central part of the handle is made of wood that tapers toward the ends. Added to both ends are white bone finials in the shape of a stepped cylinder that gradually narrows and ends in a rounded ball. Carved segments made of the same bone are strung over the wooden shaft: five nodes between which are ringed, divided cylinders. Within the ringed fields, a zigzag motif can be seen in places. Modeled after the original, a modern replica was made in 2025, which is also owned by the Hilandar Monastery.

LITERATURE: Аврамовић 1847: 72; Аврамовић 1848: 79; Марковић 2009: 148–160; Миљковић 2015: 136–137.

N. B.





12. Inscription on the lintel of the portal of the Virgin's Church at Studenica

Studenica Monastery, Virgin's Church, lintel of the portal leading from the narthex to the naos, 1208/1209

Copy, copied by Mirko Odalović and Stojanka Samardžić, 2019

Lapidarium of the Studenica Monastery

At the time of the wall-painting of the Church of the Holy Virgin in Studenica (1208/1209), a depiction of the Holy Virgin with Christ was executed within the lunette above the entrance leading from the narthex to the nave. As part of the original iconographic program, this image was carefully copied during the 1586 renovation. The text inscribed below, within a rectangular marble block, reads: В(о)ЗЛЮБИХ(ь) · КРАСОТОУ ДОМЪ ТВОЕГО · ХОДАТАТЕ

ПРѢД(ь)ЛАГАЕ(мь) Б(о)ГОРОДНЦЕ ДВ(ѣ)РН НЕБЕСНА · ОТЬВРѢН НАМ ДВ(ѣ)РН МИЛОСТИ СВОЕ·ЕИ ВЛАД(и)ЦЕ (“I have loved the beauty of Your house, intercede before the Heavenly Mother, that she may open to us the doors of divine mercy”). Crosses are carved flanking the text on the left and right sides. The letters, crosses, and the vines framing the Virgin and Christ were originally highlighted in gold leaf, which has since vanished.



The inscription opens with the eighth verse of Psalm 26 (“Lord, I have loved the beauty of Your house”) and continues with a prayer to the Holy Virgin as the “gate of heaven,” asking her to be an intercessor and to “open the doors of Her mercy,” mirroring liturgical troparia. It is the Holy Virgin herself who, with her arms outstretched, symbolically opens the entrance to the church naos.

On the other side of the same wall, namely on the western wall of the naos, is painted one of the most sublime representations of the Crucifixion within the broader context of Byzantine art.

LITERATURE: Николић 1987: 70, сл. 30; Tatić-Djurić 1988: 198; Erdeljan 2011: 98; Ђирић 2015: 352–353, п. 39; Живковић 2019в: 62–63; Матић 2019: 151–198.

M. J.

13. Archbishop's staff (crozier) of "Saint Sava,"

13th century (?), restored in the 17th century

Silver, gilt, quartz, semi-precious gemstones, pearls; forging, engraving, filigree, repoussé, cutting, etching, granulation

Staff height: 144 cm, head height: 10 cm, head diameter: 5,5 cm

Treasury of the Mileševa Monastery

According to the testimonies of his hagiographers, Domentijan and Teodosije, Saint Sava of Serbia received an archiepiscopal staff from the Ecumenical Patriarch during his consecration at Nicaea in 1219. Together with the act of presentation, this gift symbolically confirmed the acquisition of his title as the "Archbishop of all Serbian and Maritime Lands."

Several sources today tell of the fate of the bishop's staff which, by tradition, belonged to Saint Sava. One of them is linked to the notes of the English travel

writer Fawkes. He recorded in 1589 that the monks of the Mileševa Monastery at that time brought out a staff for him and his fellow travelers with a top shaped like a "beautiful crystal apple." Some of those present then "rubbed" their eyes with it, believing in its healing powers. The staff's miraculous powers were believed to stem from its close contact with the saint's body, and it is highly probable that the staff had been placed beside Saint Sava's relics following his repose in Tarnovo. However, unlike his relics, which were



burned by the Ottomans at Vračar in 1594, the pastoral staff remained safely under the protection of the monastery. Following the total destruction and ruin of the Mileševa Monastery in 1782, the staff was moved to the Holy Trinity Monastery in Pljevlja.

The current appearance of the staff is the result of modifications executed during the first decade of the seventeenth century. Specifically, in 1608, through the initiative of the Trinity Monastery's Ecclesiarch Longin and Paraecclesiarch Visarion, the staff received a new gilded silver sheathing, with an anonymous master encasing both the original wooden shaft and its older mounting. The staff consists of a long stem and an oval silver finial, richly adorned with filigree, pearls, and faceted semiprecious stones. The metal finial encases what is believed to be the authentic, polyhedral rock-crystal sphere. In addition to heart-shaped and floral filigree work, the finial features four rhythmically arranged openings whose upper registers are arched. These apertures are rhythmically arranged, while their central portion is profiled with a Saracenic arch motif, which is

discernable within the very contour of the openings. The lower register of the finial features a solid, unperforated structure. A rock-crystal sphere is visible through the executed perforations. Repoussé verses in honor of Saint Sava and the Ascension of Christ are symbolically chased along the handle and the remainder of the shaft; this further indicates a connection to the monastery and the Mileševa brotherhood, as the verses extolled both the church dedication and the Serbian saint whose relics rested within the temple for over three centuries.

Today, this historic pastoral staff is once again preserved in the treasury of the Mileševa Monastery. In 2016, working directly from the original artifact, goldsmiths Simon and Marsel Čiviljak created an exact replica, which is now at the Historical Museum of Serbia.

LITERATURE: Косановић 1871: 178; ССЗН 1902: 1608; Радојковић 1966: 76–77; Ђоровић-Љубинковић 1977: 297; Петковић 2008: 41–42; Милосављевић 2010: 265–266; Миљковић 2015: 134–135; Вујновић 2019: 268, 272.

N. B.



14. Fragments of the fresco-portrait of Stefan and Vukan Nemanjić

Studenica Monastery, west tower, c. 1210

Fragment with the image of Grand Župan Stefan; 57 × 59 cm

Fragment with the image of Grand Prince Vukan; 52 × 91 cm

Treasury of the Studenica Monastery

Following the completion of the wall paintings inside the Church of the Holy Virgin, the workshop's chief master executed portraits of Saint Sava's older brothers – Grand Župan Stefan and Grand Prince Vukan Nemanjić – around 1210. These portraits formed part of the iconographic program of the Studenica Monastery's western entrance gate.

Two fragments, which originally belonged to a larger portrait composition, were depicted upon the surface of the north tower's convex wall, where today only a segment of the lower register of the figural representations remains discernable. During the conservation and structural consolidation of the western entrance in 1968, the two aforementioned fragments featuring the visages of the two Nemanjić rulers were uncovered and transferred to the monastery repository; they are preserved today within the Studenica treasury.

Stefan and Vukan Nemanjić were depicted against a blue background, shown in a three-quarter pose facing right, toward the east. Stefan is represented as a middle-aged man with dark brown hair and a medium-length beard, his hands outstretched in prayer and his gaze directed eastward. Upon his head, the Grand Župan wore a hoop-like circlet from which two strands of dangling gems – prependicularia

– descended. He was attired in a blue-violet tunic beneath a red chlamys, which was bordered with gold bands decorated with pearls and precious stones. Positioned next to him was Vukan, depicted with straight dark hair receding above a wrinkled forehead. He wore a tunic and chlamys matching Stefan's in color, though Vukan's chlamys featured a contrasting blue lining. Based on the lower portion of the fragment still preserved on the tower wall, it is assumed that Vukan's left hand was raised to chest height in a gesture of prayer.

The fresco program on the other walls of the western entrance gate included other figural representations such as Christ, the Holy Virgin, and various saints. Among them, on the wall of the south tower facing Sava's brothers, were images of Saint Stephen the First Martyr, the patron saint of the Nemanjić dynasty, and a holy warrior, probably Saint George. In front of the two Nemanjić brothers, leading the procession on the north tower, it is believed that their father, Saint Simeon the Myrrh-Streamer, was also depicted.

LITERATURE: Бабић и др 1986: 62–63; Ђурић 1988: 125, 130–132; Миљковић 2002: 183–188; Војводић 2019a: 49–52.

N. B.





15. Karyes Typikon

1199; Copy from the first quarter of the 13th century
original seal from 1199 (a cross-shaped seal impression)
with the monogram **СВ** in four fields), 42 × 38 mm
Parchment, manuscript; 740 × 110–170 mm
Archives of the Hilandar Monastery, inv. no. AS 132/134

Finding a spiritual role model in his namesake, Saint Sabbas the Sanctified, Sava Nemanjić resolved to establish a hermitage on Mount Athos, featuring a church dedicated to this Palestinian saint, where he himself could spend time in solitary retreat. The *Karyes Typikon*, in addition to prescribing strict rules for fasting and worship, serves as the founding document for this cell. Written in accordance with the established rules of medieval diplomacy, the text opens with an arenga quoting the words of the Holy Apostle Paul. It continues

with an exposition in which the author recounts his journey to the Holy Mountain, the restoration of the Hilandar Monastery, and the subsequent establishment of the hermitage: По сем же пакы оустворихъ тоуиже оу Бораховици мѣсто безымявню, с(ве)т(а)го и пр(ѣ)под(о)бнаго ѿ(тъ)ца нашего савы въ жилище двѣма или тремъ (“I have also established a place of refuge in *Orahovica*, a holy and suitable place for the cell of our Sava, comprising two or three rooms”).

The institutional autonomy of this hermitage is unequivocal and explicitly emphasized as such:



“Therefore, I give this commandment, so that everyone may know: neither the abbot of our holy monastery, nor any other of the brethren, shall disturb the one who lives in this cell of Saint Sava.” Furthermore, Sava prescribes a strict protocol for selecting the monks who will reside there after his death. He dictates that he will choose his direct successor himself, who is “to reside there until the end of his life, without being replaced by anyone.” For subsequent generations, the abbot and the monastery brotherhood were to choose a “God-fearing

man suitable to occupy the cell.” This rule was later modified in the *Hilandar Typikon*, where Sava allowed for the removal of his successor should he prove unworthy of the cell.

The *Karyes Typikon* also outlines rigorous rules for fasting and liturgical life. On Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays, the consumption of oil and wine is strictly forbidden, whereas on Tuesdays and Thursdays, they are permitted; on all these weekdays, monks eat only once a day. On Saturdays and Sundays, two meals are allowed, consisting of “fish,

cheese, and everything else.” During Great Lent, oil and wine are permitted only on Saturdays and Sundays, while during the Nativity Fast and the Fast of the Holy Apostles, dietary restrictions are kept “as on other days, according to our usual prescriptions.” Detailed guidelines for the liturgical cycle follow, regulating Matins, Vespers, the Midnight Office, and the Divine Liturgy. The exceptional rigor of these rules is reflected in the mandate that the entire Psalter must be read sequentially within a single day. Yet, alongside these unalterable demands, Sava injects fatherly compassion, granting the freedom to adapt “as much as one’s strength allows,” noting that “regarding drink and food: if it happens that someone dear to you arrives to comfort you, then let the fast be broken – except on Wednesday and Friday.”

The *Karyes Typikon* ends with a petition requesting that everything be carried out exactly as it is written. The spiritual sanction invoked against the disobedient is severe: “[...] let him be cursed and bound by the Holy Trinity – the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit – and by me, a sinner. And may he not be forgiven either in this age or in the age to come.”

Although scholars have debated whether the surviving scroll is the original autograph or the oldest copy, Sava’s authorship of the text remains undisputed. In this copy, as in later transcripts, his authentic signature ends the text: *Сего ради писахъ и подписахъ си свое роукописание (въ лѣтѣ) 6707* *Всѣхъ послѣднихъ Сава грѣшникъ* (“For this reason, I wrote and signed this with my own hand [in the year 6707]. The least of all, Sava, the sinner”). While the exact year is preserved only in later transcripts, paleographical and codicological analysis has firmly established the factual accuracy of this chronological data.

LITERATURE: Свети Сава 1928: IV–VIII, 5–13; Мирковић 1934: 52–61, 67; Свети Сава 1939: 15; 25–28; Свети Сава 1986: 14–16, 37–40; Свети Сава 1998: XIV–XVII; *Карејски шиишк* 1985; Савић 2020: 513–530; Бубало 2025: 66–115.

M. J.







16. Saint Sava

Mileševa Monastery, Church of the Ascension, 1221–1227
Copy, copied by Naum Andrić, 1962
Canvas, casein paint, 240 × 103 cm
Fresco Gallery of the National Museum of Serbia, inv. no. 690

The monumental composition that extends across the northern part of the eastern wall and onto the northern wall of the narthex of the Church of the Ascension at Mileševa depicts a procession of five members of the Nemanjić dynasty, including the first Serbian Archbishop, Saint Sava. He is shown alongside his father, Saint Simeon Nemanja, who leads the procession. Adjacent to them on the northern wall are Stefan the First-Crowned and his sons, Radoslav and Vladislav, the latter depicted holding the founder's donor model.

The portrait of Saint Sava from Mileševa is among the oldest surviving representations executed during his lifetime. Saint Sava is depicted in a full-length, near-frontal pose as a middle-aged man with dark brown hair falling to his ears, touched with gray, and a medium-length beard. His head bears the monastic tonsure and is encircled by a painted halo. The master painter rendered Sava with large, blue, almond-shaped eyes, an elongated face, and prominent cheekbones. He is vested in a white polystavron adorned with black crosses, beneath which a sticharion and epitrachelion are visible, while an omophorion decorated with red crosses is draped over his shoulders. He holds the Gospel book in his left hand and offers a blessing with his right. Flanking his head, traces of the identifying inscription remain

visible: СЪНН БГОНОСАЦЪ И ОУ(Ъ)ЦЪ НАШ(Ъ) САВА ПРВ(Н) АРХИЕПЪПЪ ВСЕХ(Ъ) РАШКНХЪ И ДИОКЛИТЪСКИХЪ ЗЕМЛЪ СЪНЪ СЪТАГО СИМЕОНА НЕМАНА (‘‘The saint God-bearer and our father Sava, the first archbishop of all the lands of Raška and Dioclea, son of Saint Simeon Nemanja’’).

This monumental portrait, rendered with the defining attributes of a high hierarch and head of the Serbian Church, occupies a preeminent position within the dynastic line. By employing a hieratic scale that renders Saint Sava physically larger than the surrounding secular rulers, and through his deliberate posture and gesture, the painter emphasized the archbishop's supreme importance, visually asserting the subordination of secular authority to spiritual power.

The stylistic features of this portrait and the wider thirteenth-century fresco cycle – whose iconographic program was overseen directly by Archbishop Sava I – point to master painters working in the tradition of the major Eastern Christian centers of the era, such as Constantinople, Nicaea, and Thessaloniki, with whom Sava would have interacted during his extensive travels.

LITERATURE: Радојчић 1963: 20, 30; Ђурић 1974: 35–37; Милошевић 1979: 286–288; Ђурић 1992: 17–19, 22; Тодић 1998: 227–230; Војводић 2010: 43; Војводић 2015: 57–58; Војводић 2019: 321–323.

N. B.

17. Icon of Christ Pantocrator

Unknown artist, third quarter of the 13th century

Tempera on panel, gilding, 116 × 85 cm

Treasury of the Hilandar Monastery, inv. no. R003

The icon of Christ Pantocrator was most likely located on the templon screen of the Hilandar Katholikon during the reign of King Uroš I, prior to the architectural remodeling under King Milutin. Widely regarded as a masterpiece of thirteenth-century icon painting, it is dated to circa 1260. Before modern conservation interventions, the dimensions of the icon measured 124 × 90 cm.

Christ is depicted half-length and frontally, offering a blessing with his right hand while holding a closed Gospel book in his left. The volume features a luxurious binding adorned with pearls and precious stones of various shapes and colors, secured by prominent clasps. He is attired in a dark red chiton and a dark green himation. The background was originally completely gilded, with

the halo delineated by a simple incised outline. At the top of the painted field is the abbreviated $\overline{\text{IC}} \overline{\text{XC}}$ monogram. The flesh tones were meticulously modeled using soft brown shadows, with the illuminated areas accentuated by fine white highlights.

Preserved as a direct counterpart to this piece is a half-length icon of the Virgin and Child, executed by the same workshop and master, though it has suffered extensive damage. Based on their stylistic traits, both icons are closely associated with the early Palaiologan Renaissance and find direct visual analogies in the masterfully executed frescoes of the Sopoćani Monastery.

LITERATURE: Петковић 1998: 24, 67–71; Đurić 1998: 280; Tatić-Đurić 1984: кат. бр. 4; Todić 1998: 219–220.

M. M.









18. Icon of the Theotokos Odigitria (the Virgin Hodegetria) with Christ

Unknown artist, third quarter of the 13th century
Tempera on panel, gilding, 117,5 × 77,5 cm
Treasury of the Hilandar Monastery, inv. no. R002

The icon of the Virgin Hodegetria was most likely located on the templon screen of the Hilandar Katholikon during the reign of King Uroš I, prior to the architectural remodeling under King Milutin. Widely regarded as a masterpiece of thirteenth-century icon painting, it is dated to circa 1260.

The Holy Virgin is depicted half-length, cradling the Christ Child with her right arm while extending her left hand in a gesture of prayer. She is attired in a brown maphorion, beneath which her dark tunic and light blue coif (Greek cap) are visible. The edge of the maphorion is adorned with a gilded ribbon. Christ gazes to the side, dressed in an ochre-colored chiton and himation highlighted across the entire surface by linear chrysography (gold *assist* hatching). He offers a blessing with his right hand while holding a scroll in his left. The expressions of the Virgin and Child are thoughtful and melancholic. In the upper left corner of the icon, a small fragment of the original inscription remains visible.

The flesh tones are executed in warm hues, accentuated by red tones and fine white highlights that

impart a softness to the expression. These shadows are significantly softer than those found on the companion icon of Christ.

The background was originally completely gilded, and the circular outlines of the halos were executed using delicate punchwork. Due to structural damage to the original wooden support and portions of the painted layer, the icon underwent extensive conservation treatment, which involved transferring and stabilizing the surviving fragments onto a new support base.

Preserved as a direct counterpart to this icon is a half-length representation of Christ, executed by the same workshop and master. Based on their stylistic features, both icons are closely associated with the early Palaiologan Renaissance and find direct visual analogies in the masterfully executed wall paintings of the Sopoćani Monastery.

LITERATURE: Петковић 1998: 24, 67–71; Đurić 1998: 280; Tatić-Đurić 1984: cat. no. 5; Todić 1998: 218, 220.

M. M.





19. Hilandar Typikon

13th century

Parchment, manuscript; III + 39 fol.; 205 × 140 mm

Copy

Archives of the Hilandar Monastery, inv. no. As 156

Following the foundation of the Hilandar Monastery, it became essential to establish the regulatory statutes governing monastic life among the brotherhood of the newly established Serbian lavra. Although largely based on a translation of the *Evergetis Typikon*, Saint Sava's authorial contribution to the *Hilandar Typikon* remains undisputed, as he completely adapted specific chapters to align with his own vision for the community. The choice of this literary prototype was unusual; one would typically expect an Athonite typikon to serve as the blueprint for the *Hilandar Typikon*. Instead, Sava selected the regulations of the Monastery of the Most Holy Theotokos Evergetis located near Constantinople, an institution where he had personally resided during his diplomatic visits to the Byzantine capital.

The *Hilandar Typikon* outlines precise rules governing the liturgical cycle, regular confession, dietary guidelines during and outside of fasting periods, the tonsure of new monks, and the election of the abbot alongside other monastic offices such as the ecclesiarch and the oikonomos (steward). It also regulates healthcare within the monastery hospital, the distribution of alms, burial rites, and various facets of daily life at Hilandar. In the opening chapter, Sava exhorts the brotherhood on the supremacy of prayer, love for God and neighbor, and the

necessity of scriptural obedience: “[...] one should leave everything and follow his commandments.” He leaves the monks a covenant to maintain mutual support and to pray for the monastery's founder, “our God-fearing father and teacher Simeon the monk, not forgetting my own unworthiness.” The subsequent chapters detail the physical restoration of the deserted Hilandar complex and the repose of Simeon Nemanja, referencing the monastery's founding charter for legal clarity and noting that the initial community comprised Abbot Methodios and nine monks. These are followed by strict guidelines for worship, confession, communion, refectory conduct, fasting, and the celebration of Dominical and Marian feasts. In Chapter 12, Sava asserts the absolute freedom and institutional independence of the monastery, pronouncing a severe spiritual sanction against anyone violating this autonomy: “May he be anathema, as the divine apostle said, and may the curse of the 318 Holy Fathers be upon him, and may he be the successor of Judas the traitor.”

With the exception of Chapters 1, 2, and 3, the remaining sections are primarily transcribed from the *Evergetis Typikon*. However, Chapter 42 – which serves as a supplement to the *Karyes Typikon* – constitutes a complete novelty compared to the Byzantine prototype. It pertains entirely to the hermitage



in Karyes; herein, the provisions of the *Karyes Typikon* are ratified, and further clarifications are appended regarding the selection of its inhabitants, with the injunction “that there not be appointed one who serves for bodily rest, or again an illiterate person, or one who trades therein, but rather that he be chosen who desires to walk the narrow path and enter through the narrow gate.” The *Typikon* concludes with Chapter 43, mirroring the closing contents of the *Evergetis Typikon*, which provides a

pastoral instruction for the spiritual edification of the brotherhood: “You shall read this *Typikon* at the beginning of each month during your meal, for the sake of the remembrance of what has been commanded you and for the benefit of your souls.”

LITERATURE: Свети Сава 1928: VIII–XIII, 14–150; Мирковић 1934: 52–61, 67; Свети Сава 1939: 17–19; Свети Сава 1986: 14, 16–18, 43–86; Савић 2015: 139–147; Савић 2020: 513–530; Ракићевић 2020; Бубало 2025: 75–88.

M. J.

20. Letter to hegoumenos (abbot) Spiridon

Written in the Holy Land, 1233

Published in: Đ. Daničić, *Poslanica sv. Save arhiepiskopa srpskoga iz Jerusalima u Studenicu igumanu Spiridonu*, Starine JAZU, IV, 1872, pp. 230–231, based on a copy of the *Paterikon* from the Velika Remeta Monastery (now lost)

During his second journey to the Holy Land, Sava wrote a letter to the abbot of the Studenica Monastery, Spiridon. Đuro Daničić noted that he had examined this letter inside a copy of the *Paterikon* from the Velika Remeta Monastery, where it was preserved on three sheets of paper pasted together. Since this manuscript is now lost, contemporary interpretations of the *Letter to Abbot Spiridon* rely entirely on Daničić's historical edition – a source similarly utilized by Vladimir Ćorović, Lazar Mirković, Dimitrije Bogdanović, Tomislav Jovanović, and other prominent scholars of Saint Sava's literary corpus.

The *Letter to Abbot Spiridon* possesses an intimate, epistolary tone; in the strictest sense of the term, it is not exclusively a formal literary work. Sava informs Spiridon – whom he affectionately addresses as “my sweet child” – about the progress of his journey. He recounts that after venerating the holy sites and the Holy Sepulchre, he and his entourage fell ill, as “the fatigue of the journey overtook them.” Sava sends a blessing to the abbot and the brotherhood, signing himself as: *пръвыи архієпископъ вѣсєє срьбскыѣ земли сава грѣшнѣи* (“Sava, the sinful first archbishop of all the Serbian lands”). Along with the letter, he sends the abbot sacred gifts, providing explicit instructions on how they should be kept: “With this pectoral cross, pray; always wear it around your neck, even if you possess another icon – wear this one always. And gird yourself with this little belt, that it may remain perpetually

about your loins, for I have laid both the little cross and the little belt upon the Tomb [of Christ]. I also give you a napkin that was presented to me here, so that it may bring a blessing to your soul and body. Finally, I send a pebble that I found, that it may serve your many needs and that you may carry it with you.” In the subsequent passages of the letter, Sava outlines his plans to travel onward to Alexandria and Mount Sinai. This itinerary confirms that the document was drafted during his second pilgrimage to Jerusalem, corroborating the accounts in the *Lives of Saint Sava* by Domentijan and Teodosije, which explicitly state that he visited Alexandria during his second journey.

The letter concludes with a spiritual exhortation quoting the Gospels according to Matthew and Mark (Matt. 16:26; Mark 8:36): “Beware, my sweet child, that you do not break any of my covenants. For what does it profit a man if he gains the whole world, yet loses his own soul?”

Regarding the signature reading *САВА, пръвыи архієпископъ*. (“Sava, the first archbishop”), Daničić asserts that it was likely originally written with the designation “of Serbia,” though that part is no longer legible in the transcript.

LITERATURE: Свети Сава 1928: XXIX–XXXIII, 187–189; Свети Сава 1939: 20; Свети Сава 1986: 19; Свети Сава 1998: XXV–XXVI; Јонић 2019: 389–398.

M. J.

21. Festal Menaion with the Service to Saint Simeon

13th century

Parchment, manuscript; 163 fol.; 214 × 150 mm

Archives of the Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts,

inv. no. ASANU 361

Based on Domentijan's *Life of Saint Sava*, Sava composed the *Service to Saint Simeon* in 1200, on the first annual commemoration of his father's repose. Later scholars of Saint Sava's literary corpus, however, date the composition of the Service to his return to Studenica in 1207. Relying on Byzantine models and adhering strictly to the rules of ecclesiastical poetry, Sava wrote parts of the *Service to Saint Simeon* based on the model of the *Service to Saint Simeon Stylites*. This was a standard practice when composing liturgical services and canons for newly canonized saints, where structural blueprints were drawn from pre-existing services and hagiographies. The service, as a genre, comprises a complex arrangement of various hymnographic texts (stichera, troparia, kontakia, and canons) organized in a precisely defined liturgical order.

The oldest surviving copy of Sava's *Service to Saint Simeon* is preserved in a *Festive Menaion* within the manuscript collection of the Archives of the Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts. The text was first noticed by Miloš Milojević in 1871 and subsequently described in the *Gazette of the Serbian Learned Society* (*Glasnik Srpskog učenog društva*). Because Milojević was prone to exaggeration and fabrication – as documented by prominent contemporaries like Ilarion Ruvarac – he was not reliable

in the presenting of conclusions. His discovery was met with sharp criticism, particularly his assertion that the manuscript was written “by the hand of our Equal-to-the-Apostles enlightener and teacher, St. Sava,” and that Sava's authentic signature appeared at the end. The only elements taken seriously were the facsimile pages he published, which allowed future researchers to analyze the source material objectively. Only after Pavle Popović and Vladimir Ćorović compared Milojević's facsimiles with newly discovered copies of the *Service to Saint Simeon* found in Bulgarian manuscript repositories did they conclude that Milojević was correct regarding Sava's authorship. Shortly after the publication of Ćorović's study, a chest of old manuscripts belonging to Milojević was uncovered in the Directorate of War Booty, one of which was this very *Festive Menaion*.

Although the manuscript is not the original protograph, as Milojević had claimed, the text is considered a copy of that prototype. Prior to its discovery, all known services dedicated to Saint Simeon on February 13th had been the later, reworked versions by Teodosije, which explicitly integrated references to both Simeon and Sava. The discovery of this specific manuscript – bearing the rubric on leaf 69: Мѣца тог(о) въ ѿ днь прѣпод(о)бнаго оца нѣшего ѿмѣоуна новаго сръбьскаго (“On the thirteenth day



of the same month of our venerable father Simeon, the New Serbian”) – opened up entirely new possibilities for studying Sava’s original *Service*, unadulterated liturgical text. With this pioneering hymnographic and poetic masterpiece, Sava successfully laid the structural foundations of a distinct medieval Serbian liturgy, a legacy upon which his

successors and other writers of medieval Serbian literature would later rely upon.

LITERATURE: Свети Сава 1928: XXI–XXIX, 176–186; Свети Сава 1939: 19; Трифуновић 1970: 271–272; Свети Сава 1986: 25–28 ; Трифуновић 1990: 327–329; Свети Сава 1998: XXIII–XXV; Шпадијер 2016: 131–151; Шпадијер 2016a: 244–245.

M. J.

22. Bratko Menaion

Presbyter Bratko, disciples Nikola and Radoslav, 1234–1243,
the second quarter of the 13th century, and first half of
the 14th century

Parchment and paper, manuscript; 299 fol.;

245–247 × 168–175 mm

Belgrade, National Library of Serbia, inv. no. NBS Rs 647

The development of the cult of Saint Sava during the first centuries following his repose is evidenced by the composition of the liturgical offices preserved in the codex known as the *Bratko Menaion*. This manuscript collection, named after the scribe of its first section – Bratko (роукою грѣшныиъ прѣѣзвѣтероуъ брѣтъкоуъ [“By the hand of the sinful presbyter Bratko”]) – comprises proper Services for September, October, and November, alongside festive Services spanning from December to August. The codex is composed of four distinct textual units executed across different chronological periods, dating from the reign of King Vladislav (1234–1243) to the last quarter of the fourteenth century.

The manuscript is written primarily on parchment, with several sheets of paper bound into the final section of the codex. These paper leaves bear a watermark (an ox; cataloged by Vladimir Mošin and Seid Traljić under no. 1588 in *Filigranes des XIIIe et XIVe ss.*), based on which the paper is dated to circa 1350. Conversely, the creation dates of the parchment sections were determined through systematic paleographical analysis. The manuscript’s illumination features two narrow, interlaced headpieces on leaves 1b and 124b; the initials are small and simple, executed in red ink, with only a few displaying modest ornamentation.

When the text of the *Bratko Menaion* was first analyzed at the end of the nineteenth century, researchers established that it contained a hitherto unknown *Service to Saint Sava*. Early scholarly consensus initially attributed the copying of this specific Service to the thirteenth century. However, subsequent paleographical analysis demonstrated that the section of the codex containing the *Service to Saint Sava* was actually executed by the scribes Nikola and Radoslav around 1330.

The *Service to Saint Sava* begins on page 246 under the rubric: М(ѣ)с(ѣ)ца. генвар(а). въ .ѧ̅. д(ь)нь. с(вѣ)т(а)го и прѣп(о)д(о)бнаго о(т)ца н(а)шего с(вѣ)т(и)т(ѣ)ла Х(ри)с(то)ва савы, прѣваго архиеп(и)с(коу)па сръпскаго (“In the month of January, on the fourteenth day, the commemoration of our holy and venerable father, the hierarch of Christ, Sava, the first archbishop of the Serbian lands”). The structural complexity of this Slavic Orthodox office reflects the strict regulations prescribed by ecclesiastical typika. As a liturgical volume, a Menaion contains the proper texts celebrating a saint on a specific day of the year, supplemented by readings drawn from the Octoechos, the Book of Hours, and the Holy Scriptures. The *Service for the Dormition of Saint Sava* within the *Bratko Menaion* stands as one of the oldest surviving offices dedicated to the first Serbian archbishop. It illustrates the



evolutionary trajectory of Slavic hymnography as it adapted Byzantine traditions under the increasing influence of Jerusalem liturgical practices. This type of Service can be traced back directly to Saint Sava's introduction of Jerusalem customs into Slavic worship, a liturgical reform explicitly documented by his biographer, Domentijan: *Бѣселеньское прѣвѣе приелъ законоположеніе и выше пакы иеросалимьскаго исправленіи, и обоє добре съложивъ, и отъ обоє лоуѣше преѣбриакъ оутѣрждааше на прѣбываніе выноу боудоуште; и тако спѣаше, исправляе црковьное оутѣрженіе и законьное исправленіе* "He was the first to merge the ecclesiastical statutes of Constantinople with the correction of the Jerusalem Rule, beautifully composing a unified tradition from the best choices of both monasteries during his stays

there, thereby establishing a fortified order for the Church"). The original compiler of this Service remains anonymous, though it is highly probable that he belonged to the monastic circle at Mileševa.

The *Bratko Menaion* vanished during the First World War during the evacuation of the National Library of Serbia. Fortunately, unlike many other invaluable medieval manuscripts that were lost forever, it resurfaced in Germany, where it was eventually purchased and safely returned to Serbia in 1969.

LITERATURE: ССЗН 1902: 27, бр. 58; Mošin, Traljić 1957: no. 1588; Доментијан 1965: 282; Симић 1974: 102; Богдановић 1980: 4, 7, 14; Штавлианин-Ђорђевић и др. 1986: 340; Богдановић 1988: 9–37; Убипарип 2016: 245–248; Темчин 2021: 139–151; Суботин-Голубовић 2022: 182–184.

M. J.

23. Nomokanon, Dečani copy

Early 14th century

Parchment, manuscript; 285 fol. (127 bis)

300 × 210 mm

Treasury of the Dečani Monastery

inv. no. Dečani 110

The Dečani copy of the *Nomokanon* of Saint Sava (the *Krmčija*) dates to the early fourteenth century. This codex was discovered by Lazar Mirković during his systematic indexing and description of the Dečani Monastery's manuscript repository between August 2 and 19, 1447, at which time he roughly dated the volume to circa 1335. He noted that the manuscript was "written on parchment, in a pure uncial script in red and black ink, representing the Serbian recension of Church Slavonic from the fourteenth century." Mirković also leaned on the historical probability that King Stefan Dečani, while supplying the newly established monastic library with essential volumes, commissioned this very copy of the *Nomokanon*. He thus regarded the completion of the monastery's construction in 1335 as the final year for the execution of the *Dečani Krmčija*, believing the text was written shortly before this date. However, since the dating of parchment manuscripts relies primarily on systematic paleographical analysis of the script, the authors of the modern *Description of Cyrillic Manuscript Books of the Dečani Monastery* refined Mirković's timeline, shifting the copying of the codex to the very end of the reign of King Milutin, circa 1320.

When Saint Sava traveled to Thessaloniki to gather the books from which he would compose the

church rule book after securing the autocephaly of the Serbian Church, he soon began assembling this extensive code of laws, as it was equally vital for both the Church and the Serbian state. The calligraphic uncial script in which the Dečani copy of the *Krmčija* was executed – featuring titles and initials in red ink without excessive ornamentation – underscores the solemn gravity of the text. While the initials are generally simple, several are more elaborate, featuring stylized branches, loops, and interlace patterns. These initial letters are geometric in type, characterized by triangular terminals typical of the scripts from the reign of King Milutin. To direct the reader's attention to critical passages – such as the opening of specific canons – the scribes deployed specialized markers, including four dots arranged as a cross, or an "X" with dots and lines between the arms. For the same purpose, the scribe occasionally executed combinations of oblique and wavy lines adorned with dots. Furthermore, at the outer margins of certain pages, the text features manicules (drawings of a pointing hand) extending toward the script block.

The *Dečani Krmčija* was executed by two distinct scribes: the first working on folios 1–150b, and the second from folio 151 to the end. Neither the initial nor the final folios have survived, resulting in major lacunae; the introductory chapters are completely



missing, alongside several Apostolic canons on the opening leaves. The codex abruptly breaks off at Chapter 56, missing its final section as well as the remaining concluding chapters (57–64). As Mirković noted in his initial study, the textual content closely mirrors that of the slightly older Raška copy.

The volume underwent extensive conservation and restoration at the Republic Institute for the Protection of Cultural Monuments (RZZSK) in Belgrade in 1963, as documented on the interior front cover. Aside from a few later marginal glosses, the manuscript contains an intriguing scribal note executed in red ink on folio 67: *мѣха полнѣа* (“a fly licked it”). Lazar Mirković hypothesized that “a fly landed on

the wet ink of his letters and consumed it.” However, Sergije Troicki interpreted this gloss differently, suggesting that the copyist was simply being “too accurate,” because the Dečani manuscript itself contains no text loss or faded letters at this juncture, the marginal note must have been a direct transcription of a physical warning that originally existed inside the damaged exemplar from which the *Dečani Krmčija* was being copied.

LITERATURE: Троицки 1952: 35–39; Свети Сава 1986: 18–19; Свети Сава 1998: XI–XII, XXVII, XXIX; Богдановић и др. 2011: 455–462; Мирковић 2015: 15, 377–385 (376–384); Бубало 2025: 89–100.

M. J.



24. Sundial

Studenica Monastery, Virgin's Church, first decade of the 13th century (?)

Copy, copied by Milica Rakočević, 2019

Marble, carving; 47 × 46 × 20 cm, radius 21 cm

Lapidarium of the Studenica Monastery

Along the western section of the southern portal of the Church of the Holy Virgin at Studenica, at a height of 4.1 meters – aligned with the outer archivolt of the portal's lunette – a gray-white marble block was integrated into the masonry, upon which a sundial was subsequently incised. As the oldest surviving sundial in Serbia, it is executed in the form of a semicircle. From its central point, incised lines radiate outward to divide the arc into twelve equal temporal hour sectors. Within the center of each sector, along the margin of the dial, are incised the literal characters of Old Church Slavonic alphanumeric notation, ranging from *az* (а) to *ita* (и). Due to damage sustained by the masonry course, one-quarter of the sundial was compromised – specifically three sectors bearing the notation characters *і*, *аі*, and *к* – along with the shadow indicator in the form of a slender metallic rod: a horizontal gnomon that was positioned at the central axis of the semicircle and anchored at the junction of the two marble blocks. The incised dial is intentionally off-center across the width of the stone block, shifted rightward toward the upper masonry joint to facilitate the precise installation and adjustment of the gnomon. Based on

the epigraphic execution of the numerical characters and their paleographical traits, the sundial is dated to the late twelfth or early thirteenth century. It is believed that the Byzantine tradition of making sundials was brought to our region by Saint Sava, and that his knowledge of time measurement contributed to the creation of the sundial on the southern façade during his stay at the monastery and his planning of the Studenica frescoes. Based on the precision and the carving technique, the execution of the dial is attributed to a master craftsman working within a local workshop. The earliest prototypes of shadow clocks, such as the example found at Studenica, originated in ancient Egypt. They persisted throughout antiquity, and their use subsequently spread into medieval Europe, including the Serbian lands. Although a temporal hour system was utilized within the region, sundials such as the Studenica exemplar possessed a far more symbolic significance for medieval society than a practical, utilitarian value.

LITERATURE: Тадић 2002: 31–41; Тошић, Тадић 2004: 29–43; Тадић 2019: 43–44.

N. B.



СВЯТЫЙ
САВВА
ПРЕСВЫТЫ
ЦНЬИ

АРХИЕП
СВЯТЫЙ
САВВА
КЕЗЕЛАН
ИПОМОСКИ

СВЯТЫЙ
САВВА
СОНЕ

25. Saint Sava, Archbishop of Serbia

Studenica Monastery, King's Church, c. 1314
Copy, digitally printed on canvas
Museum of the Serbian Orthodox Church

The portrait of Saint Sava from the King's Church at Studenica belongs to a larger fresco ensemble executed in the lowest register of the southern and northern walls of the naos. Positioned on the northern wall directly opposite the donor portraits on the southern wall – where King Stefan Uroš II Milutin and Queen Simonida are presented before Christ by the church's patrons, Saint Joachim and Saint Anne with the infant Holy Virgin – Saint Simeon Nemanja and Saint Sava are depicted offering prayers to the ultimate Intercessor, the Most Holy Theotokos holding the Christ Child. Flanking the representation of Saint Sava is Saint George, a holy warrior to whom King Milutin frequently prayed before entering battle.

Sava is represented as an elderly man with gray hair combed behind his ears and a long, completely silver beard divided into two rounded strands. His crown bears the monastic tonsure and is encircled by a painted halo. With its elongated proportions, pale complexion, high forehead, large almond-shaped eyes, and long, slightly aquiline nose, the portrait in the King's Church conveys a striking impression of physiognomic authenticity. The saint is clad in magnificent hierarchal vestments: a sticharion adorned with epimanikia (cuffs) decorated with pearls, a polystavrion, and an omophorion featuring black crosses. In his left hand, he holds

a Gospel book richly embellished with pearls and precious stones, while his right hand is extended in a gesture of prayer toward the Holy Virgin and the infant Christ. His supreme archiepiscopal dignity is further underscored by the identifying inscription: *сѣѣ сава прѣвосвѣщенныи архиепископъ все сръбскѣ земли и поморскѣ* ("Saint Sava, the Most Reverend Archbishop of all Serbian and Maritime Lands").

The prayerful gestures of Saint Simeon and Saint Sava show that these ancestors of King Milutin had a special role in protecting and interceding before God. Simultaneously, as members of the holy-born Nemanjić dynasty, they are depicted opposite the ancestors of Christ, Saints Joachim and Anne, thereby emphasizing the concept of divine lineage and drawing a typological parallel between the two sacred genealogies. This carefully calculated fresco cycle inside the King's Church was executed by the Thessalonican master Michael Astrapas and members of his workshop – a painter who, under the direct patronage of King Milutin, decorated many of the sovereign's foundations.

LITERATURE: Тодић 1998a: 44; Марјановић-Душанић 2004: 235–248; Војводић 2015: 69; Војводић 2016: 253–255; Марковић 2016: 173–183; Томић 2019: 109–113; Томић 2019a: 113–115; Бабић 2020: 196–206.

N. B.





26. Throne of “Saint Sava”

Patriarchate of Peć, Archbishop Danilo’s narthex, between 1330 and the last quarter of the 14th century
Copy, copied by Aleksandar Filipović, 2026
Ruddy Rugova stone, gray Banjica stone, grayish-white marble, light yellow marble
64 × 59 × 69 cm

The throne of Saint Sava is located within the narthex of the Patriarchate of Peć, a foundation commissioned by Archbishop Danilo II (c. 1324–1337). The throne is positioned against the eastern wall of the narthex, specifically situated between the entrance to the northern Church of Saint Demetrius and the northern doorpost of the primary monastic Church of the Holy Apostles – traditionally known as the House of the Savior. Along with the stone benches that run along the inner perimeter of the wall, this seating arrangement constitutes an integral part of the narthex’s original medieval furnishings.

The throne is placed on its own pedestal, upon which rests the upper structure consisting of a low seat, armrests, and a backrest. A stone footstool used to stand beneath it. The throne is composed of several slabs made of different types of stone: ruddy Rugova stone, gray Banjica stone, and gray-white and light yellow marble. It features simple forms and clean surfaces, completely unadorned except for the natural patterns of the stone. Only the side walls at the corners were once decorated with so-called apples – namely, short octagonal pillars topped with heads in the form of segmented domes. The differences in the stone and the way the parts are processed indicate that not all

components were made at the same time, probably because the throne had to be repaired over the centuries.

Given that the ceremonial frame for the entrance to the Holy Apostles is made of the same gray-white marble as parts of the throne of Saint Sava, there is an opinion that it was originally part of a seat that existed before the construction of the narthex. According to this view, it had an insigniary role; when the older church seat was transferred to the new location in Peć, it served as a symbol of the continuity of the ecclesiastical institution, especially since the see of the Church was transferred from the Žiča Monastery to Peć during the reign of King Milutin.

The throne of Saint Sava and the co-throne – that is, the stone benches – clearly testify to the purpose and significance of the Peć Patriarchate, specifically its outer narthex, which served as a council hall. It is known that church-state councils were held there in 1374 and 1375, a practice that continued later. The throne and benches were probably primarily intended for the patriarch and hierarchs of the Serbian Church, but they may also have served the abbot of the monastery, the brotherhood, and the faithful. Symbolically, though at a later date, the throne became linked



to the person of Saint Sava, the founder of the Serbian Orthodox Church. Above the throne itself is a full-length depiction of Saint Sava as patriarch, while in the immediate vicinity is a later portrait of Patriarch Makarije Sokolović, who is described

in the inscription next to his image as the “restorer of this holy throne.”

LITERATURE: Радујко 2020: 125–160 (with earlier literature).

N. S.



27. Icon of the Three-Handed Virgin (Tricherosa)

Unknown artist, mid-14th century

Tempera on wood, gilding; gilt revetment; forging, casting, repoussé, etching; 111 × 91 cm

Hilandar Monastery, Church of the Presentation of the Holy Virgin

Copy; Temple of Saint Sava in Belgrade

The wooden support is painted on both sides and has a groove in the lower part, indicating that the icon was intended to be carried in liturgical processions. Through a subsequent modification, the icon was inserted into a newer frame that carries the revetment.

The icon of the Holy Virgin of the Three Hands (Tricherosa) served for centuries as the palladium of all Serbian lands, and the cathedral church in Skopje was also dedicated to it. According to tradition, it originally belonged to Saint John of Damascus, whose severed right hand was miraculously healed after he prayed before it. This same tradition states that Saint Sava brought the icon from Damascus, and that it later resided in the Studenica Monastery for a time. From there, it miraculously reached Mount Athos in front of the Hilandar Monastery in 1661, carried on the back of a donkey and by sea. Recent research has indicated that the original icon of the Virgin of the Three Hands no longer exists; the claims of the tradition are not corroborated in the *Lives of Saint Sava* written by Domentijan and Teodosije, and the icon currently displayed in the proskynetarion is of a later date. It was likely replaced during the eighteenth century by the current icon, which is a replica of the fourteenth-century original created during the reign of Emperor Dušan.

The icon of the Virgin of the Three Hands is located in the naos of the main monastery church, within the proskynetarion along the eastern face of the southwestern pier near the abbot's throne. In the center of the painted field on the front side, the Mother of God is depicted waist-high, clad in a dark maphorion bordered by a gold-woven ribbon, beneath which she wears a coif (Greek cap). She gazes directly toward the observer. A golden star adorns the forehead of the maphorion, while a fringed golden ribbon sits on her upper arm. In her right arm, she cradles the Christ Child, toward whom she points with her outstretched and raised left hand. Christ looks toward his Mother, holding his right hand in front of his chest while grasping a scroll in his left. He is attired in a light blue chiton with floral ornamentation, an ochre and orange clavis and belt, and a golden himation. Within his nimbus, a cross is painted in light blue tones against a gilded background. At the height of the Holy Virgin's shoulders is the abbreviated inscription $\text{ΜΡΗ ΘΥ}...$, as well as ΑΗ..Η , the surviving portion of the epigraph that identifies the image as the Hodegetria (Guide). Above the figure of Christ, the monogram IC XC is written. In the lower right corner of the icon, the outlines of a third hand are visible. The gilding of the halos of the Virgin and Christ differs in tone from the rest of the



background. The frame of the icon is slightly raised, and traces of removed metal appliques and mounts that once adorned the halos, forehead, and maphorion remain visible on the painted surface.

On the reverse of the icon, Saint Nicholas is depicted from the waist up in a frontal pose. He is vested in a dark red phelonion with an omophorion, offering a blessing with his right hand while holding a closed Gospel book in his left. The edges of the phelonion's collar are trimmed with a gold-woven ribbon, which matches his epimanikia (liturgical cuffs). The omophorion is decorated with two dark crosses accompanied by the inscription $\Phi \chi \Phi \text{ ni}$ ("The Light of Christ enlightens all"). Saint Nicholas is depicted as an elderly man with gray hair, a full beard, and a prominent forehead. Visible nail holes on the halo show where the chain was attached along the nimbed outline and onto the saint's head. The signature is written in vermillion in Greek: O AGY NIKOAAO . The background is entirely gilded, and a red border runs along the outer edge of the panel. Stylistically, the representations of both the Virgin with Christ and Saint Nicholas are executed in the tradition of the Palaiologan period.

On the front of the icon, over the representation of the Virgin and Child, sits a luxurious gilded revetment from 1862, richly decorated with precious stones, to which a third hand has been added beneath the Virgin's right hand. There is no such revetment on the reverse. At the bottom of the frame, along the lower edge, is a naturalistic depiction of the Holy Prophet Jesse (*Пророкъ Їссен*) lying horizontally, with a vine full of leaves and fruit branching from his body. Within the medallions formed by the

intertwining vine strands, figures of seated prophets are depicted; from the bottom right, these are Samuel, Hosea, Malachi, Amos, Nun, Daniel, Zephaniah, Obadiah, and Zechariah, surmounted by Christ; from the bottom left, they are Ezekiel, Jeremiah, Moses, and Haggai. At the top of the frame is a waist-high representation of God the Father, Lord of Hosts, flanked by the prophets Elijah and Nathan on one side, and Habakkuk and Jonah on the other. A third silver hand is depicted in the lower left corner, and a cherub occupies each corner of the frame. In the medallions near the image of the Virgin, the monogram MP. AY. is engraved, while IC. XC. appears above Christ. Inside Christ's halo, the inscription O O N is formed of diamonds.

Based on the inscription on the revetment beneath Christ's feet, it is known that it was donated for the health of Paraskeva, Mikhail, Elena, John, and their children, as well as Nadezhda, Nikolay, and their children, Maria, Olga, Natalia, and their relatives: *о здравіи Параскевіи Микхаіла Елены Іоанна и чадъ ихъ. Надежды Николая и чадъ | ихъ царін ольги наталін и сродниковъ ихъ.* In the lower right corner of the silver revetment is the stamped maker's mark (Ф. К. ФЕРХОВЦЕВЪ) of the St. Petersburg workshop of Fyodor Andreevich Verkhovtsev (1804–1868), a prominent jeweler, factory owner of liturgical silver vessels and reliquaries, and a well-known philanthropist.

LITERATURE: Мирковић 1936: 83–94; Ђурић С. 1995: 100–113; Турилов 1996: 510–525; Петковић 1998: 26–27; Миљковић 2007: 224–228; Татић-Ђурић 2007: 565–592; Радовановић 2017: 173–188.

M. M.



28. Icon of the Virgin The Milkmaid (Galaktotrophousa)

Unknown artist, circa 1685

Tempera on panel, gilding; 120 × 84 cm

Saint Sava Hermitage in Karyes, altar screen

Copy

Church of the Intercession of the Most Holy Theotokos
in Belgrade

On the altar screen in Karyes, the icon of the Holy Virgin – as the sacred center of Sava's hermitage – occupies a central place to the right of the Holy Doors. According to a later tradition, the icon was painted by the Holy Apostle and Evangelist Luke, and Saint Sava received it during his pilgrimage to the Holy Land at the Monastery of Saint Sabbas the Sanctified in Jerusalem. It was granted alongside the pastoral staff of Saint Sabbas and the icon of the Three-Handed Virgin (Tricherousa), in accordance with the sixth-century will of the monastery's founder.

In the center of the slightly recessed painted field, the Virgin The Milkmaid (Galaktotrophousa, Virgo lactans) is depicted breastfeeding the Christ Child, holding him with both hands, her gaze directed toward the viewer. She is attired in a maphorion rendered in light orange and red tones, beneath which she wears a light green tunic decorated with silver floral and vegetal motifs. The collar and cuffs of the tunic are adorned with a golden border embellished with small and large precious stones. A narrow golden ribbon runs along the edges of the maphorion, inscribed with the red-lettered text of the exaposteilarion of the Great Canon of the Theotokos. On the forehead and shoulders of the Mother of God are star-shaped, gilded metal ornaments affixed to the wooden support. Flanking her

head, where the gold-leaf inscription ΜΗΡ ΘΥ Η ΓΑΛΑΚΤΟΤΡΟΦΟΥΣΑ is written, there were two silver plates bearing the usual monograms of the Most Holy Theotokos prior to conservation. Two angels are shown lowering an open golden crown onto the head of the Virgin.

Christ is dressed in a green chiton and an orange himation highlighted with golden floral and vegetal motifs. He holds his mother's breast with both hands, which is exposed below the right edge of the maphorion at shoulder height. Flanking Christ's head is the monogram ΙϞ ΧϞ, and within his halo is written: Θ Θ Η. The flesh tones of the Most Holy Theotokos and the infant Jesus are carefully modeled in azure, ochre, and brown hues.

In the nineteenth century, the halos of the Holy Virgin and Christ were covered with silver sheeting featuring radiatingly decorated edges and gilded details, which were removed during the most recent conservation campaign. Prior to this conservation, a gilded silver crown mount was attached to a semicircular, raised, rayed halo frame in place of the painted crown. Christ's halo was similarly decorated with a gilded silver mount.

The background was originally light green, but today it is dark blue. A light green and purple border runs along the slightly raised edge of the panel.





On the inner light green border, dating to circa 1685 when the current painted layer was executed, is a three-line inscription mentioning the Peć hieromonk Maksim Daskal: † съ ... ѿ ... нѡ ... ѡх ... (†еромонахъ | Маѡвѡ даскал(ъ) ѡт патрїаршѣ пекс(к)їе при архїеп(иско)п[ѡ] пекс(к)ѡмъ кѡ[р] Арсенїю | | нгѡменѡ хилан' дарскомъ кѡр ѡмѡн[ѡ] въ лѣтоо зрї. то[гда] быв[ѡ]шѡ ми на пос(т)ници с(вѣ)т(а)го саве("With [...] I, Hieromonk Maksim, a teacher from the Patriarchate of Peć, under the Archbishop of Peć, Kyr Arsenije, and the Abbot of Hilandar, Kyr Simeon, in the year 7190, then being at the Hermitage of Saint Sava"). Based on this epigraphic evidence, the visible painted layer of the icon dates to the late seventeenth century. The subsequent installation of this icon on the iconostasis at the beginning of the nineteenth century concluded a comprehensive renovation of the hermitage that began in the late eighteenth century.

Conservation and restoration work carried out in 2004 and 2005 successfully restored the icon to its original appearance.

Today, one of several historical copies of this Virgin Galaktotrophousa icon is preserved at the Church of the Intercession of the Most Holy Theotokos in Belgrade.

LITERATURE: Мирковић 1938: 14–32; Зековић, Гулан 2010: 147–149; Miljković 2011: 177–184.

M. M.

29. Reliquary of the True Cross

Athonite or Thessalonican workshop (?)

Second half of the 14th century

Copy, copied by Goran Ristović Pokimica, 2025

Wood, silver-gilt, pearl, quartz, semi-precious and precious gemstones; filigree, stone-setting, repoussé; 36 × 18,5 × 2,2 cm

Historical Museum of Serbia, inv. no. 32

During the first decades of the thirteenth century, Saint Sava – in his desire to amass a rich treasury for the Žiča Monastery – acquired a large number of relics, among which was a fragment of the True Cross. This reliquary was preserved at Žiča until 1290 when, due to a destructive Cuman raid, the see of the Serbian Archbishopric was officially transferred from Žiča to Peć.

The reliquary of the True Cross was transferred to Peć alongside the rest of the monastic treasury, where, in the mid-fourteenth century, it received a new silver-gilt revetment. Shaped as a double-barred (patriarchal) cross, the reliquary is constructed from a wooden core encased in richly decorated, gilded silver plating. The lavish ornamentation of the casing, executed in the filigree technique, features various geometric, heart-shaped, and vegetal motifs. Both faces of the reliquary are further embellished with pearls and semiprecious and precious stones. Each arm of the cross features a central gemstone flanked by four pearl beads. On the front face of the lower cross-bar, an oval rock crystal is set directly over a cross-shaped opening through which particles of the relic remain visible. A smaller cross-shaped aperture, likewise revealing fragments of the True Cross, is repeated on the upper cross-bar. Engraved around these openings

are traditional cryptograms: ΦΧ–ΦΠ (“The Light of Christ illuminates all” around the lower aperture) and ἸϞ ΧϞ ΗΗ ΚΑ (“Jesus Christ conquers” around the upper aperture).

The lower shaft of the cross extends into a handle, bearing an inscription in Old Serbian stamped onto an applied gilded silver sheet: СЅВ<А> ПР[Ъ] БН АР(Ъ)ХНѢП(НСКО)ПЪ <Н> ПАТРИАРХЪ СРЪПСКН (“Sava, the first Serbian archbishop and patriarch”). Because the epithet “Saint” was omitted before Sava’s name, and the title of patriarch was appended to his original archiepiscopal rank, scholars believe the internal relic was personally donated by Sava during his lifetime, whereas this newer exterior revetment was executed in the second half of the fourteenth century – most likely following the formal reconciliation between the Serbian and Constantinopolitan Churches in 1375. It is highly probable that the donor was the contemporary Patriarch of Peć, who sought to revive the memory of the relic’s original founder.

During the Ottoman invasions of the fifteenth century, the Peć relics came into the possession of the ruling Branković dynasty. Amidst imminent danger, Jelena Branković handed over the reliquary of the True Cross, among other treasures, to her father, Despot Thomas Palaiologos. Following his flight to



Italy, he ceded the relic to Pope Pius II. Today, this historic reliquary commemorating Saint Sava of Serbia is preserved at the Diocesan Museum in Pienza. In collaboration with the Historical Museum of Serbia, goldsmith Goran Ristović Pokimica executed an

exact replica of the True Cross reliquary based on the original artifact in 2025.

LITERATURE: Чанак-Медић и др. 2014: 55–63; Поповић 2018: 55–87, 119, 150.

N. B.

30. Collection of Serbian Vitae and the Hilandar Typikon of Monk Marko

Monk Marko, c. 1370/75

Paper, manuscript; 326 fol., 268 × 210 mm

National Library of Serbia, inv. no. Rs 17

The collection, preserved at the National Library of Serbia under inventory number 17, boasts an extraordinary custodial history alongside its highly significant textual content. Presumed to have been executed at Hilandar, where it was originally housed, this manuscript arrived at the end of the nineteenth century in the possession of the then Bishop Dimi-trije (later the first Patriarch of the unified Serbian Orthodox Church), who was preparing an edition of the *Hilandar Typikon* for the Serbian Royal Academy. This transfer is verified by a surviving loan receipt signed on June 14, 1896, which remains in the Hilandar archives today. This fortunate circumstance ultimately saved the manuscript through a direct breach of standard library protocols: the codex was later loaned out to the historian Vladimir Ćorović for private study. By remaining outside the main National Library building in Belgrade during the outbreak of the Second World War, the volume miraculously escaped the devastating April 1941 German bombing campaign. It stands as the only manuscript from the library's invaluable pre-war collection that was not incinerated in the resulting firestorm; following the post-war reconstruction of the repository, it was catalogued under the signature Rs 17. Regrettably, fate was less kind to Ćorović himself, who perished in a plane crash shortly thereafter.

The manuscript was executed on paper using brown and dark ink, while brazilwood ink (*varzilo*) was deployed for prominent text passages, titles, and initial letters, though it has significantly faded over time. The folios measure 205 × 135 mm, with the text block arranged in 24 lines per page, exhibiting a standardized Raška orthography and a highly uniform calligraphic uncial script. Although several leaves are missing, the surviving codex underwent extensive conservation treatment at the National Library of Serbia in 1967. The text was transcribed by the humble monk Marko, as evidenced by his barely legible colophon on folio 326b: *Грѣшнынъ тахъ монахъ(ъ) Марко* ("The sinful, humble monk Marko"). The interior back cover preserves the historical glosses of later readers; one note indicates that the book was read from beginning to end in 1732 by the icon painter Akim Marković, who recorded that he "found great benefit in it" (*многъ ползъ в немъ обрѣтохъ*). Another marginal note references a certain metropolitan whose identity remains lost to time. Of the original illuminations, only a single decorative headpiece has been preserved on folio 284. It is executed as a narrow, rectangular band filled with circles and interlocking geometric strands; the interiors of these roundels are decorated with four-petaled flowers set against an ochre background. The entire



composition is framed by a wavy border adorned with beads, featuring elegant half-palmettes in the upper corners. While the initials are generally simple and modestly embellished, the innate calligraphic grace of the script yields an overarching impression of harmonious, austere beauty. Scholars assume that each major textual division originally opened with a similar illumination, but those leaves – and consequently the opening rubrics of the other works – have unfortunately been lost.

The initial work in the collection, the opening of which is missing due to a lacuna, is Domentijan's *Life*

of Saint Simeon. This is followed on folio 96 by the *Life of Saint Sava* by Teodosije, which transitions on folio 255 into Teodosije's *Praise of Saint Sava*. The codex concludes on folio 284 with Saint Sava's *Hilandar Typikon*.

The titles and authors of the texts included in this collection represent the most significant figures and works of medieval Serbian literature.

LITERATURE: CCЗН 1903: бр. 4215; Радојичић 1961: 159–168; Богдановић 1978: 128–129; Штављанин-Ђорђевић и др. 1986: 340; Јовановић Т. 1998: 237; Шпадијер 2016б: 245–248.

М. Ј.



31. Saint Sava, “First Patriarch of Serbia”

Patriarchate of Peć, outer narthex, c. 1370

Copy, digitally printed on canvas

Museum of the Serbian Orthodox Church

Above the stone throne of Saint Sava in the narthex of the Patriarchate of Peć monastery – a foundation of Archbishop Danilo II – adjacent to the northern jamb of the entrance to the Church of the Holy Apostles, a full-length portrait of Saint Sava of Serbia was executed around 1370, during the primacy of Patriarch Joanikije. He is depicted in the guise of a medieval prelate, with shoulder-length brown hair and a full, chest-length brown beard. The saint's countenance has sustained damage, and the eyes have been completely effaced. He is vested in the patriarchal hieratic insignia: a white sticharion with potamoi (rivers), an epitachelion, and a purple sakkos embroidered with golden rinceaux, interspersed with white pearls and bordered by crosses. Additionally, he wears an omophorion decorated with black crosses containing embroidered Greek cryptograms. Within the arms of the cross on the right shoulder, the inscription reads IC X(C). Within the arms of the cross on the left shoulder, it reads Φ X(ΦΠ). On the chest cross, the inscription reads Α Π Μ ΣΤ.

With his left hand, Saint Sava supports the omophorion, while his right hand holds a gem-encrusted,

pearl-adorned golden cross featuring three horizontal bars. His head is adorned with a purple kalyptra – a medieval episcopal mitre with a flared profile – which is divided vertically into three zones by golden bands. These registers feature medallions depicting the Christ in Glory flanked by angels with veiled hands in an attitude of adoration before the Savior. The entire vestment is embellished with pearls and precious stones, with a golden cross affixed to the central segment. A light veil depends from the kalyptra down the nape of the saint's neck. A golden nimbus encircles his head, flanked by inscriptions designating his patriarchal rank: С(В)ТЫ САВА ПРВЫ ПАТРИАРХЪ | СРПСКЫ ✦ (“Saint Sava, the first patriarch of Serbia”). The attribution of this title constitutes a historical anachronism, reflecting the contemporary legitimization crisis between the Serbian Church and the Patriarchate of Constantinople regarding the autocephaly and status of the Serbian Patriarchate.

LITERATURE: Петковић 1982: 27–29; *Загужбине Косова* 1989: 37; Радужко 2020: 130–159.

N. S.

32. Icon of Saint Sava and Saint Simeon

Hilandar Monastery, sanctuary space

Unknown artist, 15th century

Tempera on wood, gilding; 45 × 35 cm

In the slightly recessed center of the icon, Saints Simeon and Sava of Serbia are depicted in full-length formats. Saint Sava, identified by the fragmentary inscription *САВА* *ІАРЬ* *ХНЄ* *ПНЄ* *...* *П...* *С...* *П...* *...* *Н*, is represented as a prelate with brown hair and a matching beard. His gaze is directed in profile, and he holds a closed Gospel book in his left hand, while raising his right hand before his chest in a gesture of intercession. He is vested in a sticharion with potamoi (rivers), an ochre polystavrion, and an omophorion, with a gonation (epigonation) visible on his right side. He is shown bareheaded. Adjacent to him, Saint Simeon, designated by the inscription *...НН* *І* *...* *НН* *І* *НН*, is depicted as an elderly monk of the Great Schema with an elongated gray beard and hair. He wears a light brown habit with a dark blue analavos and a dark brown mandyas, his head covered by a dark blue cowl. Looking directly toward the viewer, Simeon raises his right hand before his chest, while his lowered left hand unfurls a scroll bearing the text *ДѢТЕ ТЕРНААКЪ* *САТЕМЪ* *ФОН* *КІРЪ* *ДІАДЪ* *...* *Н*. The halos of Saints Sava and Simeon were executed by incising double concentric circles into the gilded

layer. Positioned between the two saints in the upper register is a bust-length depiction of the Virgin and Child. Of the accompanying inscription, only *ΘΥ* is extant. The Mother of God is clad in a red maphorion and, mirroring Christ's posture, directs her gaze toward Saint Sava. The Christ Child is attired in a blue chiton and a red himation. The background is entirely gilded; an underlying earlier stratum visible beneath the current gilding points to subsequent historical interventions. The panel was originally obscured by a silver revetment that exposed only the painted visages and hands, which themselves underwent overpainting in the mid-seventeenth century.

While historiography traditionally assigned the icon to the mid-seventeenth century, its stylistic treatment and iconographic nuances firmly recontextualize the work within the fifteenth century.

Today, the collection of Hilandar Monastery also includes a modern replica of this icon, executed in 2010 by Branislav Petrić.

LITERATURE: Петковић 1998: 47–48, 146–147.

M. M.







33. Epitrachelion of “Saint Sava”

late 15th or early 16th century

Satin silk, gold and silver wire, dyed silk thread, metal;

151,5 × 23 cm

Treasury of the Krka Monastery, inv. no. 2301–221

The epitrachelion, which is considered one of the most precious items in the Studenica treasury and traditionally attributed to Saint Sava, has been part of the treasury of the Krka Monastery since 1824. According to the inscription made in ink on the mount, it was purchased for the Krka Monastery by the abbot Vikentije Knežević (1772–1828): КѸПИ Пронг. ВѸКЕНТІЙ КНЕЖЕВИЧЪ СПІТРАХІЛІЙ С. САВЪН СЕРБСКАГО ЗАБѢТЬ СВОЕЙ ОБИТЕЛИ ЛѢТА 1824. ПРЕНЕСЕНЪ ИЗЪ МНѢСТЫРА СТУДЕНИЦЫ (“Bought by Proig[oumenos] Vikentije Knežević, the epitrachelion of S[aint] Sava of Serbia was brought to his community in the summer of 1824 and transferred from the Studenica Monastery”).

A comparative analysis of liturgical textile items has established that the epitrachelion of the Krka Monastery cannot be older than the end of the fifteenth and the beginning of the sixteenth centuries. This also rejects the assumption that it may have belonged to Saint Sava. However, there remains room for research into whether this epitrachelion originally belonged to the Studenica Monastery or was perhaps found on the relics of Saint Sava in the Mileševa Monastery before they were burned, which could possibly explain the origin of the aforementioned belief. An entry on a handwritten Paterikon brought to Mileševo from Mount Athos in 1585, which curses anyone who dares to

appropriate any of the gifts from the ark of Saint Sava, could indicate the origin of this belief. In other words, everything that arrived as a contribution to the ark of Saint Sava was in some way treated as if it belonged to him.

As an object of high artistic achievement, rich in ornamentation, it stands out for its beauty, skill, and precision of workmanship. It is made of two halves, joined by silver filigree buttons, of satin silk which is completely covered with embroidery with parallel gilded threads. In this way, the background is separated from the figurative representations and ornaments.

The signatures are embroidered in Greek but are damaged in many places, which makes it difficult to identify the saints depicted on the epitrachelion. The collar is embroidered with the scene of the Hospitality of Abraham, a representation that is rarely found on epitrachelia. This is followed by figurative representations of the Old Testament prophets, the Annunciation, Kings David and Solomon, the evangelists, and the holy fathers. They are depicted in pairs, sixteen figures on each half of the epitrachelion, in arcades of a broken arch, with a column in the middle embroidered in the form of a braid. The space between and around the arcades is decorated with palmettes and branches with a rosette in



the center. The composition in which the saints are placed in arcades is often present in the creation of epitachelia of the sixteenth century, but the placement of the saints in pairs under the same arch is a unique example for that period. First, an unidentified deacon and prophet are depicted, Saint John the Baptist and Moses. Along with the Annunciation, the prophets David and Solomon are depicted as those who announced the sinless conception of the Lord Jesus Christ. Next, in pairs, are: the Apostle John (Ιω[άννης]) and the Apostle Peter (Πετρ[ος]), the Apostle Paul (Πα[υ]λ[ος]) and the Apostle Luke (Λ[ου]κ[ας]), Saint Basil the Great (Βασ[ίλειος]) and Saint John Chrysostom (Χρ[υ]σοστομ[ος]), Saint Gregory the Theologian (Γρηγο[ριος]) and Saint Nicholas (Νικο[λας]), two unidentified bishops, Saint Athanasius (Αθανασ[ιος]) and Saint Peter (?) (Πε[τρος]), Saint Gregory of Nyssa (Γρηγο[ριος]) and Saint Athanasius (Αθανασ[ιος]), five unidentified bishops, and Saint Cyril of Alexandria ([Κ]υρ[ιλλος]). At the very bottom are: Saint Stephen the Promartyr ([Σ]τεφ[ανος]) and Saint Hilarion (Ιλ[αριον]), Saint Cyprian (?) (Κ...) and Saint Romanus the Deacon (Ρομα<v>[ος]).

Although the embroidery is dominated by gold and silver thread, natural, ochre, green, and black silk was used for the figures, framing, and details. Each pair of saints is separated from each other by horizontal partition friezes in which swastikas, hooked shapes, and a “S” ornament alternate. In the lower part of the epitachelion, below the representations of the saints, a decorative frieze is embroidered consisting of two fields of unequal size. The upper field is divided into smaller square fields filled alternately with swastikas, hooked stylized volutes, and a hooked “S” ornament. The lower one is embroidered with an interlacing ornament. The lower edge of the epitachelion is decorated with eight tassels of dark red color, four on each half, with golden knots at the top. In an effort to cover



the entire surface of the epitachelion with ornaments, the author of this handicraft also covers the edges of the epitachelion with stylized “S” shapes, which is another of its peculiarities.

LITERATURE: ССЗН 1902: 234; Мирковић 1940: 42; Стојановић 2005: 9–44; Радосављевић 2019а: 206–207; Медаковић 1987: 223.

Z. O.



34. Life of Saint Sava by Domentijan

Second half of the 15th century

Paper, manuscript; 449 fol.; 210 × 140 mm

Copy

National Museum in Prague, Šafárik Collection IX 7 (Š 25)

The Athonite monk Domentijan composed the *Life of Saint Sava* in the solitude of the Karyes Hermitage shortly after the archbishop's demise. Unlike his *Life of Saint Simeon*, which surviving copies unequivocally date to 1263/64, two of the three extant codices of the *Life of Saint Sava* record conflicting chronologies – namely 1242/43 and 1253/54 – whereas the third omits a colophon entirely (an additional fragmentary copy from Sofia was discovered within a fifteenth- to sixteenth-century manuscript, lacking chronological data). Regarding the definitive dating of Domentijan's hagiographical work, contemporary scholarship generally favors the later terminus.

Drawing upon precedents within Serbian hagiography – specifically the biographical works composed by Sava and Stefan Nemanjić dedicated to their father – Domentijan advanced the genre by injecting a distinct poetic dimension. Operating as Sava's self-styled “last disciple” and inspired by his personal acquaintance with the first Serbian archbishop, Domentijan possessed ample ideological and literary impetus. Through this literary monument, he surpassed his predecessors in both narrative volume and compositional complexity. Beyond its biographical utility, the *Life of Saint Sava* operates on profound poetic, theological, and moral-didactic registers.

Domentijan weaves intricate theological exegesis and moral reflections into a highly stylized hymnographic register, leveraging profound religious fervor to encomiastically laud the primordial Serbian saints. Furthermore, he chronicles Sava's itinerancy in meticulous detail, panegyricizing him as a charismatic prelate who elicited universal veneration.

The National Museum in Prague preserves an essential copy of Domentijan's *Life of Saint Sava* within its manuscript repository. This codex is executed in the Serbo-Slavonic recension using a semi-uncial script featuring elements of tachygraphy; the primary text is written in carbon-based black ink, while the initial block capitals are rubricated in vermilion. The text of the *Life of Saint Sava* spans folios 148a–433b. Deposited within the historical collection of Pavel Jozef Šafárik – a vital repository for the study of the manuscript heritage of the Serbian people – this textual witness remains of paramount importance as one of the few surviving copies of Domentijan's literary corpus.

LITERATURE: Доментијан 1865; Доментијан 1938; Доментијан 1988; Доментијан 2003; Миљковић 2008: 26–29; Јовановић 2023: 107–115.

M. J.

35. Life of Saint Sava by Teodosije

1550/60

Paper, manuscript; 387 fol.; 200 × 138 mm

Museum of the Serbian Orthodox Church, inv. no. MSPC

ORG 91

Following Domentijan, the subsequent biographer of Saint Sava was likewise an Athonite monk, Teodosije. As he explicitly states in his prologue, he composed “the life and exploits in the desert with his father, and separately the travels, and partly also the narration of the miracles of our holy father Sava, the first archbishop and teacher of Serbia, which was narrated by the venerable Domentijan, hieromonk of the monastery called Hilandar, and written by Teodosije, a monk of the same monastery.” This *Life* was first identified by Đura Daničić; however, owing to a damaged title in the copy Daničić consulted – which is now lost – significant scholarly confusion arose regarding its authorship. Daničić initially attributed the text to Domentijan in 1860, but he corrected this error after discovering a complete codex of Domentijan’s *Life of Saint Sava* in Vienna, which he subsequently published in 1865.

The exact year of compilation for Teodosije’s *Life* remains elusive. Nevertheless, cross-referencing available historical sources allows his life and literary output to be situated within a definitive chronological framework. Based on the scholarly assessments of Bojan Miljković and Irena Špadijer, weight is given to Teodosije’s internal evidence that his narrative was “transcribed by the venerable Domentijan, the monk and prefect of the monastery called

Hilandar” (сказано прѣподобнымъ доментіаномъ инокомъ и презвѣтеромъ монастыря Хиландарь нарицаемого). This statement implies that Domentijan and Teodosije were contemporaries at Hilandar, and that Teodosije drew directly from Domentijan’s oral testimonies regarding Saint Sava. Consequently, this allows the composition of the work to be assigned to the second half of the thirteenth century. Furthermore, a reasonable terminus ante quem is established by the earliest known textual witness: the now-lost copy executed by the scribe Teodul in 1335/36.

A sixteenth-century copy of Teodosije’s *Life of Saint Sava* is preserved within the *Collection of Vitae and Divine Services to Serbian and Other Saints*, held in the Museum of the Serbian Orthodox Church as part of the Radoslav Grujić Legacy. Based on its watermarks, the manuscript is dated to circa 1550/60. The text is executed in carbon black ink using a semi-uncial script that exhibits early cursive tendencies, complemented by modest rubricated initials. The text of the *Life* spans folios 1–214b, with lacunae occurring on folios 212–213; the initial folios of the text are entirely missing.

LITERATURE: Теодосије 1860; Суботин-Голубовић 1999: 222; Миљковић 2008: 26–32; Шпадијер 2010: 3–16; Мошин и др. 2017: 142–145; Јовановић 2021: 49–77.

M. J.

[illegible]

36. Festal Menaion

1538

Venice, printing press of Božidar Vuković

Printed by Mojsije of Dečani

Printing completed on January 19, 1538

Paper, printed book, 432 fol.; 285 × 210 mm

Museum of the Serbian Orthodox Church,

inv. no. PP SŠK 20

The printing house of Božidar Vuković commenced operations in 1519 in Venice – then the preeminent global center of typographic innovation – and throughout the sixteenth century, produced some of the most aesthetically refined early Serbian books. Vuković's *Festive Menaion* (*Praznični minej*) stands as the definitive monument of early Cyrillic printing. Unlike contemporary Serbian presses (such as those in Belgrade, Mileševa, and Goražde), which were notoriously ephemeral, Vuković's workshop achieved institutional longevity. Following Božidar's demise, printing activities were sustained by his son, Vičenco Vuković; subsequently, later printers – including Stefan of Shkodra, Jakov of Kamena Reka, Jerolim Zagurović, Jakov Krajkov, and Bartolo Dinami – relied upon his typographical materials and woodcut matrices. Vuković entrusted the technical execution of this extensive liturgical compendium to the hieromonk Mojsije Dečanac.

Although Vuković laments in his preface to the *Festive Menaion* that he was forced to reside “in the western, Italian region, in the great Roman heresy” and was prevented from returning “to his homeland, due to the great Ismaili abuse,” he steadfastly preserved his allegiance to his Eastern Orthodox faith and cultural lineage. He corroborates this ideological commitment in the volume's colophon,



articulating a desire to “bring these printed letters to his homeland” to remedy “the lack of holy books, whose [number] has been reduced by peoples of other faiths.” His confessional fidelity is further substantiated by his testamentary bequest, which granted a deluxe, personalized copy of the *Festive Menaion* – printed on vellum, gilded, and bound in leather – to the Hilandar Monastery. His support for the cult of Saint Sava is evidenced by a golden banner (*barjak*) he dispatched to the Mileševa Monastery, the repository of the first Serbian archbishop's holy relics, alongside financial donations generated from his Venetian book sales.

Vuković integrated the proper liturgical offices dedicated to regional Serbian saints – specifically



Saints Sava, Simeon, and Stefan of Dečani – into the core framework of the *Festive Menaion*. The first two *services* were composed by the thirteenth-century hagiographer Teodosije, whereas the *Service for Saint Stefan of Dečani* was authored by Grigorije Camblak. The typographic layout is enhanced by woodcut illustrations; notably, Saints Sava and Simeon are depicted together, a visual pairing designed to emphasize the structural unity of spiritual and secular authority. This paired iconographic treatment was well-established by the early modern era, as the oldest surviving panel icon depicting both saints together dates to the fifteenth century and is preserved at Hilandar. In the woodcut, both saints are shown frontally in full-length

formats. Saint Sava is represented as a prelate, his arms extended laterally at shoulder level, holding a Gospel book in his left hand while offering a blessing with his right. Saint Simeon is depicted in monastic garb, grasping a cross in his right hand. They are designated by the accompanying Cyrillic titulus *Сѣн Савѣ и Сѣмѣон сръпскы* (“Saints Sava and Simeon of Serbia”). The dimensions of the composition are 67 × 71 mm.

LITERATURE: Радојчић 1953: 30–31; Медаковић 1958: 29–30, 137–138, сл. XLVIII 2; Плавшић 1959: 174–182; Пет векова српског штампарства 1994: 85–86, 144–145, 286; Лазич 2022: 196, 205, 216, 219, 227, 238, 255–258, 262, 291–301.

M. J.

37. Rules for the Use of the Psalter

Second quarter of the 16th century

Paper, manuscript; 15 fol.; 205 × 155 mm

National Library of Serbia, inv. no. Rs 34

Manuscript No. 34 in the collection of the National Library of Serbia preserves a copy of the *Rules for the Use of the Psalter* (*Ustav za držanje Psaltira*) authored by Saint Sava. The text is executed across fifteen extant folios measuring 205 × 155 mm. Given that the vast majority of surviving witnesses of this *Rules* are found embedded within copies of the *Psalter with a Sequel* (*Psaltir s posledovanjem*), this specific manuscript was likely extracted from a more comprehensive compendium. This structural layout is substantiated by its explicit initial incipit: ΟΥΚΑΖ(Ь) ΧΟΤΕЮЩИ(Ь) ΔΡ(Ь)ЖАТИ ПСАЛТІРЬ СЬ (“Instruction for those who wish to use this Psalter”), indicating that these liturgical directives were originally transcribed as an introductory or concluding apparatus to the psalter text proper.

Archimandrite Nićifor Dučić first attributed the authorship of the *Rules for the Use of the Psalter* to Saint Sava in his 1884 monograph, *Antiquities of Hilandar* (*Starine hilandarske*). Subsequent philological and historical research corroborated this hypothesis, demonstrating a profound textual correspondence between the *Rules* and the structural mandates of both the *Hilandar Typikon* and the *Karyes Typikon*. This attribution is further supported by the text's lexical and syntactic profiles, which align seamlessly with the securely attested authentic literary corpus of Saint Sava. The humilific formulations utilized by the author to characterize himself – such as “the

sinful monk Sava” (грѣшнаго ѿннихъ савоу) and “how unworthy, lazy, and bad the monk Sava [is]” (азъ же недостойни и лѣнныи и хѣды ѿннихъ(ъ) савѣ) – constitute well-established stylistic *topoi* frequently deployed throughout his authentic administrative writings. Vladimir Ćorović conclusively demonstrated that approximately one-third of the *Rules for the Use of the Psalter* text features direct textual concordance with the opening chapter of the *Hilandar Typikon*. Furthermore, the rigorous asceticism governing liturgical recitation found in the *Karyes Typikon* explicitly mirrors this decree, which mandates that the entire Psalter be recited within a single twenty-four-hour cycle; it concurrently dictates that should any monks prove so zealous in their continuous prayer as to conclude the recitation ahead of schedule, they are encouraged to immediately recommence the cycle.

Manuscript No. 34 was formally accessioned into the repository of the National Library of Serbia in 1943. It entered the national collection as a donation from Serbian prisoners of war who had been repatriated from the wartime internment camps at Nuremberg.

LITERATURE: Дучић 1884: 52–55; Свети Сава 1928: XL–XLIV, 199–202; Мирковић 1934: 61–67; Свети Сава 1939: 20–21; Штављанин-Ђорђевић и др 1986: 65–66; Свети Сава 1986: 19, 139–143; Свети Сава 1998: XXVI–XXVII; Савић 2015: 139–147; Савић 2020: 515–516; Бубало 2025: 74–75.

M. J.

38. Goblet of Ivan the Terrible

Moscow-based workshop (?), 1558

Silver-gilt; casting, punching, repoussé, and engraving

Goblet height with the base: 6.5 cm, rim diameter: 18 cm,
base height: 1.5 cm, base diameter: 8 cm

Museum of the Serbian Orthodox Church,

inv. no. MSPC 1925 (originally in the treasuries of
the monasteries of Mileševa and Kuveždin)

The silver goblet, a gift from the Russian Tsar Ivan IV Vasilyevich “the Terrible,” is one of the most precious objects from the historical treasury of the Mileševa Monastery. This substantial circular vessel, with a total height of 6.5 cm and a diameter of 18 cm, stands on a low pedestal 1.5 cm high and 8 cm in diameter. It is gilded on the inside and richly decorated using techniques of casting, stamping, engraving, and punching. The central part, which is separated by a twisted circular border from two differently decorated, concentric bands of floral ornaments, depicts a winged griffin with gaping jaws. Around the griffin is a scrolling vine ornament with leaves and flowers. The first band of floral ornamentation surrounding this central image is narrower and features a repeating tulip motif in strict symmetry. This band is separated from the second by a thin, beaded line of pearls. The second, wider band is richly decorated with lush vines, flowers in full bloom, buds, tulips, and pomegranates in an oriental, *rumi* style.

Along the exterior rim of the goblet is a chased inscription: *Сію чашѣ сътвори благочестиви и христілюбиви царь и кнезь великы Іоан въ манастирь глаголемы Милешева, идеже почивают мощи прѣва архієпископа сръпскаго светаго Сави, лѣта 3. 3. 3. месеца септемвриа . І днь* (“This goblet was fashioned by the pious and Christ-loving tsar and grand prince for

the great monastery of Mileševa, where the relics of the first Serbian archbishop, Saint Sava, rest, in the year 7067, in the month of September, on the fourteenth day”).

The inscription confirms that the goblet was donated by Tsar Ivan the Terrible in 1558 to the Mileševa Monastery, the resting place of Saint Sava’s relics. The information that it was manufactured in Moscow is also found on the outside base of the goblet: *Данъ оу царствующель граде Москве* (“Given in the imperial city of Moscow”). Although originally donated to Mileševa, the goblet shared the fate of many other historical items from the monastery treasury and, due to wartime displacement and migrations, changed its location over time. Eventually, it was preserved at the Kuveždin Monastery, which is also dedicated to Saint Sava. As part of the Kuveždin treasury, it was exhibited at the Budapest World Exhibition in 1885. After the Kuveždin Monastery was severely damaged during World War II, the goblet of Ivan the Terrible was salvaged, purchased, and transferred to the Museum of the Serbian Orthodox Church in Belgrade, where it is still kept today.

LITERATURE: Валтровић 1886: 94; ССЗН 1902: 189; Мирковић 1931: 45; Радојчић 1963: 45; Постникова-Лосева 1971: 67-68; Медаковић 1987: 226; Милеуснић 2001: 60; Милосављевић 2010: 112-113; Грујић 2012: 36; Матић и др. 2022: 164-165.

Z. O.







39. Part of a triptych with images of Saint Sava and Saint Simeon

Unknown Russian artist, second half of the 16th century
Tempera on wood, gilding; silver, silver-gilt, enamel; casting, repoussé, etching, filigree, pseudo-filigree; 7 × 7.4 cm
Museum of the Serbian Orthodox Church, inv. no. 2104

Of the original triptych, in the center of which was likely a representation of the Deësis with Christ enthroned, only the right wing remains. The wooden support is enclosed by a decorative border of vegetal inlay made of cloisonné gilded filigree with light green, dark green, and dark blue enamel, as well as pseudo-filigree. This wooden panel and its decorative border are inserted into a metal base that still preserves its side hinges, a clasp, and a top suspension ring. Beneath metal halos made of pseudo-filigree, the figures of the Holy Apostle Peter, Saint Simeon of Serbia, Saint Paul the Apostle, Saint Sava of Serbia, and Saint Nicholas are depicted in a three-quarter pose, turned toward the left, where their gazes are directed. The signatures identifying the figures are engraved on a metal plate attached to the upper edge of this triptych wing: *аго петръ прѣбѣнъ сѣмѣо аго павелъ савѣ аго николасъ* ("Saint Peter, the Venerable Simeon, Saint Paul, Saint Sava, Saint Nicholas). The Apostle Peter features a short gray beard with matching short hair and eyebrows; he looks to the left, extending his left hand in prayer while holding a scroll in his right. He is attired in a dark blue chiton and an ochre himation. The Apostle Paul is depicted as bald with a light brown beard, dressed in a dark blue chiton and a white himation; he looks to the left while holding a closed codex in both hands. Saint Simeon the Serbian is shown as

a gray-haired elder dressed in a light green monastic cloak, a dark blue analavos decorated with red crosses, and an ochre mantle. He wears a dark blue cowl with a red cross on his forehead, and black shoes. Saint Sava the Serbian is depicted as an elderly bishop with short gray hair and a medium-length gray beard, holding a closed Gospel book with gilded covers in both hands. He is vested in a dark green sakkos decorated with foliate motifs, bordered along the sleeves and hem by a wide golden band set with precious stones. Over the sakkos, he wears a large white omophorion with black crosses, and red shoes on his feet. Positioned behind Sava is Saint Nicholas, whose iconography follows the established tradition: he features a short gray beard and mustache, a prominent forehead, and short gray hair. His right hand is extended in prayer to the left, while his left hand holds a closed Gospel book with a golden cover. He is dressed in a dark blue sticharion, a gold-woven epitachelion finished with red tassels, and an ochre-colored phelonion decorated with pearls along the edges. Over the phelonion, he wears a white omophorion with black crosses, and red shoes. The background is painted olive green in the lower section, while the upper section is gilded.

LITERATURE: Вујновић 2019: 333–334, сл. 213.

M. M.







40. Founder's portrait of Patriarch Makarije Sokolović

Patriarchate of Peć Monastery, outer narthex

1565

Copy, digitally printed on canvas

Museum of the Serbian Orthodox Church

During the renovation of the painting of the outer narthex of the Monastery of the Patriarchate of Peć, which was completed on September 8, 1565, in the eastern bay of the outer narthex, on the eastern wall, a full-figure portrait of Patriarch Makarije Sokolović was depicted on a pilaster on the northern side.

Patriarch Makarije is facing to the right, toward the Most Holy Theotokos, who is painted on the adjacent northern pilaster of the eastern wall, next to the entrance to the Church of the Holy Apostles, in a frontal pose and in full figure. The Christ Child, in the arms of the Most Holy Theotokos, is facing Patriarch Makarije and blessing him with his right hand. Makarije is depicted as a man of mature years, with a gray beard and brownish-gray hair that falls in curls down his neck under a richly decorated mitre that he wears on his head. He is dressed in a sticharion with rivers and an epitachelion, over which he has a richly embroidered dark red sakkos whose ends are edged with pearl ribbons. Over the sakkos he wears a white omophorion with dark brown sewn crosses. In his hands, the donor holds a painted representation of the narthex and an unrolled scroll. On the left and right sides of his halo is inscribed: МАКАРИЈЕ ПРѢО(СВЕ)ЩЕННИ ПАТРІАРХЪ | <И ОБНОВИТЕЛЬ С(ВЕ)Т(А)ГО ПРѢСТОЛА СЕГО ("Makarije, the Most Holy Patriarch and Restorer of the Holy Throne"). Below the painted





model, the attendant holds an unrolled scroll with the text of a prayer addressed to Christ, the beginningless King, in his left hand, begging Him to accept his offering and bestow upon him love for humanity: *†в(а)д(ы)ко мон и(со)у(се) х(рист)е, сло и соушество о(т)ъиее и ц(а)рѣ безначел'не. прїими мое сїе приношенїе· и дароуи нам(ь) обычное свое ѣл(о)в(ѣ)колюбіе вѣч'нихъ бл(а)гъ. м(о)л(и)твами рождьшєе м(а)терѣ. и въсѣхъ с(вѣ)тихъ(ь) бл(а)гоугодїв'шихъ ти:~* (“My Lord Jesus Christ, power and substance of the Father and King without beginning, accept this offering of mine, and grant us your usual love of humanity and eternal goods; through the prayers of the mother who bore you and of all the saints who have pleased you”).

The donor's representation is surmounted by a monumental, half-length representation of the Most Holy Theotokos within the semicircular lunette of the portal. The Mother of God is marked

with an inscription as “Merciful and Loving of Man” and depicted with her hands outstretched in a gesture of prayer. Going south, on the eastern wall, on a pilaster opposite the Most Holy Theotokos, on the south side of the entrance to the Church of the Holy Apostles, Christ the Almighty, the Just Judge, is depicted, holding in his hands an open Gospel on which is written the text of the Gospel according to Matthew (7:1–2): *не на лица соудыте, на правед(а)нь сѣдъ соудыте· имьже бо сѣдомь соудїте сѣдїте вам(ь) те:~* (“Do not judge by appearances, but judge with righteous judgment; for with what judgment you judge, it shall be judged unto you”).

LITERATURE: Петковић 1965: 84–85, 119–122, 162–163; Petković 1965: 238–241; Петковић 1983: 353–359; Ђурић, Ђирковић, Кораћ 1990: 255–268, 284–286; Matić 2018: 185–188; Матић 2019а: 228–236; Радужко 2020: 122–160.

M. M.

41. Festal Triodion

Printed by hieromonk Mardarije, printing press at the Mrkšina Crkva Monastery, 1566

Paper, printed book, II + 216 fol.; 310 × 210 mm

Museum of the Serbian Orthodox Church, inv. no. MSPC 190

Following the closure of the Belgrade printing house of Radiša Dmitrović and Trojan Gundulić – where he had printed the *Belgrade Tetraevangelion* in 1552 – Hieromonk Mardarije returned to Mrkšina Crkva. It is in the colophon of this first Belgrade printed book that we learn Mardarije originally came from the “monastery called Mrkšina Church, near Montenegro.” There, he continued his work of printing Serbian books, publishing the *Festal Triodion* in 1566. The following year, the church was demolished and the monks abandoned the monastery, while the fate of the printing press remains unknown.

The *Festal Triodion* contains several woodcut illustrations that accompany its liturgical content: the Crucifixion, the Resurrection, the Ascension, and the Descent of the Holy Spirit on the Apostles. Serving as an introductory headpiece above the text, a rectangular frame measuring 140 × 75 mm encloses a composition centered upon Christ Pantokrator. Shown frontally and attired in a chiton and himation, Christ extends his right hand in a gesture of blessing while holding a closed Gospel book in his left. His halo bears the traditional Greek cryptogram $\Theta \bar{\omega} \Pi$ (“He Who Is”), supplemented by the christogram IC XC on either side. Positioned to his left is Saint Simeon in monastic robes, turned



slightly toward Christ, toward whom he extends his hands in prayer. Symmetrically positioned to Christ's right is Saint Sava, likewise shown with his hands outstretched toward Christ and represented in episcopal vestments. The figures are identified by the accompanying inscription: $\text{СѢ́ СИМЕОН И СѢ́ САВА СРЬБСКЫ}$ (“Saint Simeon and Saint Sava of Serbia”).

LITERATURE: Стојановић 1902: 451–453; Медаковић 1958: 55–56, 81, 164–169, table CXX; Плавшић 1959: 126–129; *Петтї векова срїської шїамїарсїва* 1994: 149–150, 201, сл. 98; Немировский 1995: 122–172.

M. J.

СѢДЕНІЯ СРЪДНОУ

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42. Russian Imperial Chronicle

Illustrated history of Russia and the world in 10 volumes,
1568–1576

Paper, manuscript; 9745 fol., 375 × 275 × 15 mm

Saint Petersburg, National Library of Russia,

inv. no. OCPK F.I.V. 233

The cult of Saint Sava in Russia has been present since the thirteenth century and reached its full momentum in the sixteenth century during the reign of Tsar Ivan IV Vasilyevich (“the Terrible”). Intensive spiritual ties between Serbian and Russian lands were established through Serbian artists, nobles, and church dignitaries who, fleeing the Ottoman conquest, took refuge in Russia, bringing with them liturgical objects and manuscripts. Among these books, as a gift to Grand Duke Vasily III, the elder Isaiah brought a copy of Teodosije’s *Life of Saint Sava*, which served as the foundational source for the illustrated account in the chronicle.

The exceptional reverence that Ivan IV held for Serbian saints was also conditioned by his genealogy: through his mother, Elena Glinskaya, he was a descendant of the Serbian noble Jakšić family, as his maternal grandmother was Ana Jakšić Glinska. Upon becoming the first Russian tsar, Ivan IV commissioned the creation of a monumental illustrated history of the world from the Creation to the fifteenth century, alongside Russian history up to 1567. This work, known in Russian as the *Illustrated Chronicle Manifold* (*Лицевой летописный свод*), is traditionally referred to as the *Russian Imperial Chronicle* in Serbian literature. More than forty illuminators collaborated on this undertaking,

executing over 16,000 miniatures across more than 9,000 folios.

In the fourth volume of the chronicle, a distinct and unique section is dedicated to the Serbs, focusing extensively on Saint Sava of Serbia, the Serbian royal lineages, and the Battle of Kosovo. This exceptional space granted to Serbian history testifies to the deep spiritual, cultural, and political ties between medieval Serbia and Russia, as well as the prominent place that Serbian tradition held in the self-consciousness of the Russian state. The life of Saint Sava is depicted with exceptional care in more than two hundred and fifty scenes, representing the most extensive and comprehensive visual cycle of the saint’s life in the history of Christian art (by comparison, the Hilandar refectory contains twenty-nine scenes, painted in 1622). The cycle is based on Teodosije’s *Life of Saint Sava* and follows his life from the genealogy of Stefan Nemanja (Saint Simeon) and Rastko’s departure for Mount Athos, through his monastic asceticism, the founding of Hilandar, his archiepiscopal service and the establishment of the autocephalous Serbian Church, to his pilgrimage to the Holy Land and his blessed death in Tarnovo. The narrative is constructed, as Milovan Vitezović noted, in concise and dignified sentences, intoned as a discourse of dedication. This hagiographical cycle





is integrated into the broader genealogies of Serbian rulers within the chronicle and culminates with an account of the Battle of Kosovo, thereby positioning Saint Sava as the spiritual foundation of Serbian history. Saints Simeon, Sava, and Prince Lazar held a preeminent place among the saints venerated by Ivan IV, as confirmed by their prominent placement within the fresco program of the Cathedral of the Archangel in the Moscow Kremlin.

The illuminations were executed in watercolor on high-quality paper, which contributed to the remarkable preservation of this monumental work. The miniatures were painted with meticulous detail, occasionally combining several narrative episodes within a single composition. The depicted architecture,

monastic settings, and urban landscapes all exhibit a distinctly Russian aesthetic, even though they faithfully follow the core narrative of the Serbian tradition. This artistic synthesis visually integrated the figure of Saint Sava into the spiritual and cultural landscape of Muscovite Russia.

The *Russian Imperial Chronicle* was bound in ten volumes, which are today preserved across several cultural and academic institutions in the Russian Federation.

LITERATURE: ССЗН 1902: бр. 429; Победова 1965; Радојичић 1965: 283, 289; Богдановић 1975: 250; Петковић 1979: 358, 365; Мањагин, Танић 2004: 141–260; Витезовић 2012: 9–30.

M. J.



43. Icon of Saint Sava and Saint Simeon

Unknown artist, second half of the 16th century
Tempera on wood, gilding; 32.5 × 25 × 2.1 cm
National Museum of Serbia, inv. no. 26_2050

In the slightly recessed center of the icon, Saint Sava of Serbia and the Venerable Simeon are depicted in full-length frontal poses. Sava is depicted as a mature bishop with a medium-length brown beard, brown hair, and a tonsure. The signature next to his image is only partially preserved: сѣв(ѣ) <с>...<а> | сръб... He is dressed in a sticharion with potamoi (rivers), beneath which are visible the epitrachelion, sakkos, and a large omophorion. The white sakkos is edged with gold-woven ribbons, of which the ribbon in the lower part is the widest and is decorated with gold crosses inscribed in a blue geometric square motif. The omophorion has three black crosses with gold outlines. Sava blesses with his right hand in front of his chest, while in his left hand, extended to the side, he holds a closed Gospel book with a richly decorated cover.

The Venerable Simeon, signed near the image as ст... сѣмѣонъ | ...ъцѣ, is depicted as an old monk of the Great Schema with a long gray beard, holding a three-pointed golden cross in front of his chest in his right hand and a scroll in his left hand, on which is the text: † ѿца | ѿца въ | злюбѣи | ннаа, въ(ъ)звѣлѣи | нте г(оспода)а | съ мнѡю | въ кѡпѣ ("My beloved children, magnify the Lord with me together"). He is dressed in a light brown robe with a dark

green analavos decorated with gold details, over which he wears a dark brown mandyas with a gold line along the edge. On his head, he wears a dark green cowl with a gold cross on his forehead.

The halos of both saints are executed by punching. The background is dark green in the lower part, while the upper part is gilded, as is the wide frame of the icon itself. Along the outer edge, traces of a thin dark red border, which once existed, are partially visible.

This work came to the National Museum of Serbia in 1951, but its provenance is unknown, although it is assumed that it could be the Hilandar Monastery on Mount Athos. The icon has been attributed to the iconographer Longin in recent literature and has been rightly dated to the second half of the sixteenth century. However, although the treatment of the figures, and especially the clothing, may support the thesis of Longin's authorship, the modeling of the characters using extremely dark shadows and a certain roughness in expression, one might say, do not fully match Longin, which is why the icon could rather be attributed to a master from his circle.

LITERATURE: Nitić 2001: 200–201, cat. no. 119 (with earlier literature).

M. M.



44. Epitachelion with images of Saint Sava and Saint Simeon

Second half of the 16th century

Dark red satin silk, goldwork, embroidery with multicolored silk thread; 138 × 32 cm

Treasury of the Dečani Monastery, inv. no. TE-1

The epitachelion with the depictions of Saint Simeon and Saint Sava is the oldest preserved textile item in the treasury of the Dečani Monastery. It is the product of a Serbian workshop from the period after the restoration of the Peć Patriarchate and the peak of applied arts. Based on the inscription at the bottom, it is known that the epitachelion came to Dečani as a gift to this monastery and Saint Stefan of Dečani from members of the Dmitrić family

(Peja, Neda, and Luka): *си епитрахѣл приниложи цркѣ дечанскои стѣмоу краљу пеѣ и неѣа и лука димитриѣки въ кѣинове нхъ въспоми́наніе* (“this epitachelion was donated to the Dečani Church of the Holy King by Peja, Neda, and Luka Dmitrić, for their eternal remembrance”). However, the exact year of production for the Dečani epitachelion is unknown. Stylistically, this epitachelion is highly similar to the Studenica epitachelion. Although it is considered



more complex in composition, the draftsmanship on the Dečani epitrachelion is less skillfully executed. It is also very similar to the epitrachelion of Jelena Crnojević and Dimitrije Gvozdenov from 1553, which was housed in the Grgeteg Monastery until 1941 and is now kept at the Museum of the Serbian Orthodox Church. Through a comparative analysis of several embroidered objects and their stylistic characteristics, the epitrachelion from

Dečani has been dated to the second half of the sixteenth century.

It is composed of two vertical halves made of dark red silk satin, which are connected by buttons. It is embroidered with gilded thread and silk thread in dark red, green, blue, violet, ochre, and black in several shades. The stitching includes chain stitch and couched laid work, secured in zigzag and diagonal patterns. On the collar is embroidered the

A close-up photograph showing a red and white striped fabric, possibly a flag, draped over a textured, light-colored surface. The fabric is on the left, and the textured surface, which looks like a coarse fabric or paper, occupies the right and bottom portions of the image.

Z. O.



45. Nomokanon, Morača copy

Morača Monastery, 1615

Paper, manuscript; 347 fol.; 430 × 275 mm

Museum of the Serbian Orthodox Church, Legacy
of Radoslav Grujić, inv. no. MSPC ORG 164

The Morača Monastery was an important center of the cultural and spiritual life of the Serbs during the period of the restored Peć Patriarchate, throughout the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. The location of the monastery contributed to the fact that councils and assemblies of the most prominent national and ecclesiastical representatives were held there. At that time, work was underway to restore the monastic complex, which had been destroyed at the beginning of the sixteenth century; due to a lack of funds, this reconstruction was protracted and gradual. Along with the destruction of the church itself, the library also suffered, having certainly been well-stocked with manuscripts prior to that event. Subsequently, the restoration of the book collection began, which was also beset by unfortunate circumstances in later times: manuscripts were transferred to other churches and monasteries, some were destroyed in a fire in the residence of the Morača archimandrite, and the largest number vanished during visits by researchers of the early Serbian written heritage, when many volumes disappeared without a trace. Archimandrite Nićifor Dučić was in Morača at the very time when Vuk Karadžić, Vuk Vrčević, and the Risan priest Vuk Popović were preparing to collect books from this monastery,

an acquisition that amounted to “two horse loads.” Dučić found only one valuable manuscript – the *Krmčija* (*Nomokanon*).

Dučić described the *Morača Krmčija* on two occasions, in 1866 and 1877. As he states, the text was written in a purely Serbian script, a hand that resembles printed books. In the most recent description by a group of authors (Mošin et al.), the script is defined as a legible, elegant semi-uncial, of the Serbian redaction. The scribal notes that Dučić transcribed were located on pages 709 and 711; however, these pages have not been preserved. Today, the *Morača Krmčija* manuscript consists of 347 leaves, or 700 paginated pages. The beginning and the end are missing, including the folios containing the notes. Dučić’s work on studying the Morača copy remains highly significant, because from these now-lost records, we learn the date and place of the manuscript’s copying, as well as the date of composition for its original protograph. The mention of Patriarch Pajsije Janjevac is not surprising, considering that he tirelessly furnished churches with manuscripts, icons, and liturgical objects. The place of production was the Church of the Dormition of the Most Holy Theotokos on the Morača River, during the tenure of the abbot, Archimandrite Gavriilo, in 1615 (Dučić miscalculated



the date as 1613). It was transcribed from an exemplar written in 1252, during the time of the Budimlja bishop Teofil, one of the “twelve bishops appointed by Saint Sava in the young Serbian kingdom.” The warning written at the end – pronouncing an anathema upon anyone who takes the book out of the monastery without the blessing of the abbot and the brotherhood – did not deter subsequent generations, and its itinerary after leaving the monastery was turbulent and obscure. In the following years, the *Morača Krmčija* disappeared from the monastery and ultimately entered the

manuscript collection of Radoslav Grujić, which is now an integral part of the Museum of the Serbian Orthodox Church. Following restoration and conservation treatment carried out at the National Library of Serbia, the manuscript was bound in a new casing, and the leather from the original binding was affixed to the new one.

LITERATURE: Дучић 1866: 181–187; Дучић 1877: 27–28; Троицки 1952: 62–63; Мошин 1960: 553–554; Петковић 1986: 51–52; Мошин и др. 2017: 221–224; Мартиновић 2020: 75, 90.

M. J.

46. Studenica Typikon and the Life of Saint Simeon in the Tsarostavnik (Genealogy) of the Studenica Monastery

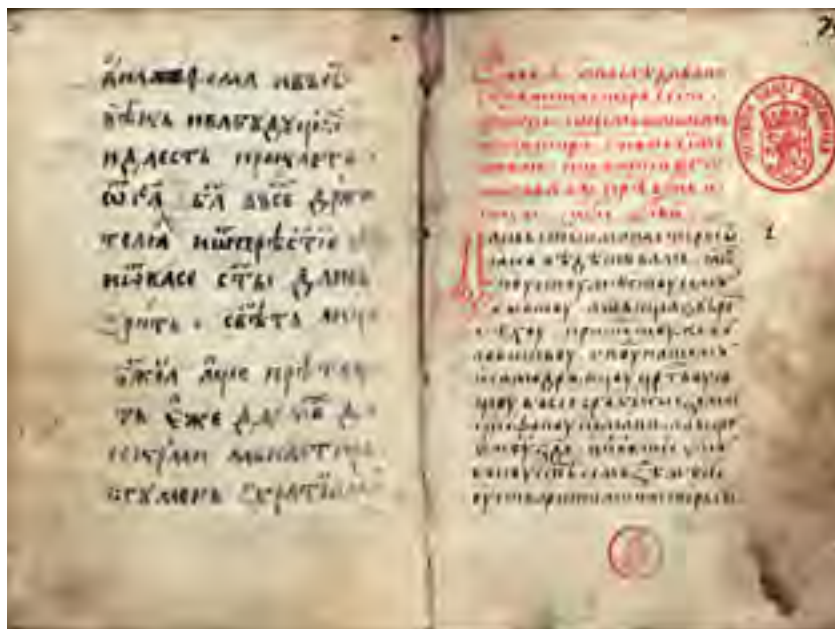
Studenica Monastery, the scribe Averkije, 1619
Paper, manuscript; XVI + 172 fol.; 155 × 105 mm
Copy
National Museum in Prague, Šafářík Collection,
IX H 8 (Š10)

The only surviving Serbo-Slavonic copy of the *Studenica Typikon* and the *Life of Saint Simeon* by Saint Sava is preserved at the National Library in Prague, within the Šafárik collection. The famous scribe Averkije transcribed part of this composite manuscript (convolute) in 1618/19, the oldest section of which is dated to the last quarter of the sixteenth century, while several leaves were written in the eighteenth century.

In Averkije's copy, the works are bound in the following order: the *Studenica Typikon* (ff. 1a–71a), the *Studenica Charter* (ff. 74b–78b), and the *Life of Saint Simeon* (ff. 79a–117a). As Viktor Savić notes in his work on the dating of the exemplar from which Averkije copied these compositions, in an “ideal structure” of a legal compendium on the founding of a monastery and the prescription of the rules of life within it, the logical order of the texts would dictate that the act of the founder on the establishment of the monastery (the charter) comes first, followed by the biography of the founder presented in the third person, and finally the rules of life and worship in the monastery (the *typikon*). Nadežda Sindik believes that Averkije, as an expert on liturgical texts, could not have made such an error, and that a later rebinding of the codex led to the displacement of the compositions contained within it.

Given that the short *Life of Saint Simeon* is contained in the second and third chapters of the *Hilandar Typikon* (fol. 6a: слово ѿ оу наслѣдѣнии сѣте)аго сего манастира), it can be concluded that it was arranged similarly in the original *Studenica Typikon* – that is, that the *Life* was located at the beginning (the commencement of the *Life* on fol. 79a: слово ѿ оу наслѣдовани сѣте)аго манастира сего). An innovation in relation to the *Hilandar Typikon* is the *Studenica Charter*, which is included in Averkije’s copy. In the *Studenica Typikon*, Sava expanded the short biography of his father that he had previously integrated into the *Hilandar Typikon*. Following the Byzantine hagiographical tradition, Sava presents biographical details from Nemanja’s life prior to his monastic profession, and shifts focus – for pedagogical and moral-didactic reasons – to his monastic exploits, emphasizing his renunciation of the throne and secular rule for the sake of the kingdom of heaven.

We obtain information regarding the date and place of execution from the scribe's colophon on folio 71b: Ёѣн типикъ сирѣѣ(ѣ) ѡбразникъ(ѣ). с(в)ѣт(а)го савы срѣ(ѣ)бъскаго, прѣпис(а) се, въ лѣт[о], зѣркѣ. ("This Typikon, that is, the rulebook of Saint Sava of Serbia, was transcribed self in the year 7127," i.e., 1618/1619) въ пещерѣ с(в)ѣт(а)го савы посѣ(ѣ)ща (?). бѣ бо прѣжде насѣ(ѣ) съпис(а)нъ рѣкоу с(в)ѣт(а)го савы, въ лѣт[о] рѣи(ѣ) (!) ѡѣн



(“[...] in the cave of Saint Sava the hermit. For it was before us written by the hand of Saint Sava, in the year 6708,” i.e., 1199/1200) прѣстави с(е) г(о)с(по)д(н)нѣ сїмѣон(ъ): И да никтоже забавляет и прѣвращает многы бѣ соут(ъ) рѣчи прости въ сем[ъ] номоканѣне (!), нѣ сѣло пользны. того бѣ радї повелѣ с(в)етын прочитати на зач(а)ло кождо м(ѣ)с(е)ца. явѣ яко да оутвѣрждают(ъ) се сл[о]ужителе и мы всѣх не забываим[ъ] любов(ь) с(в)ет(а)го. вѣдѣ яко онѣ имат[ъ] нам[ъ] соудїти. яко и ап(о)с(то)лы бї, їс(р)аилеком[ъ] колѣн[о]м, а иным[ъ] езыком[ъ] не соудет[ъ]. и семѣ свѣдокъ, с(в)еты никон(ъ). нѣко и съ с(в)еты нам[ъ] ап(о)с(то)лѣ ес(тъ). г(о)спод(н) тог(о) м(о)л(н)твами покры нас(ь), нѣко и тѣ м(о)лит(ъ) се за ны. Прї нгоуменоу кїрѣ Феофила[о]у ѿт явленных[ъ] (“[...] Lord Simeon passed away. And let no one delay or distort, for many are the words simple in this Nomokanon, but deeply beneficial. For that reason, the Saint commanded to read at the beginning of each month, clearly so that the ministers may be confirmed and we all unforgetting of the love of the Saint. I know that he has to judge us, as the Apostles the twelve, the tribes of Israel, but other nations he will not judge. And to this is witness, Saint Nikon. For even with the Holy

Apostles he is for us. Lord, by his prayers cover us, for he prays for us. Under the Abbot Kyr Theophilos, from the revealed [writings]).

The Averkije portion of the manuscript is written in black ink, while the initials, titles, and rubrics within the text are executed in vermillion. The language belongs to the Serbo-Slavonic recension, the orthography follows the Resava school, and the script is a semi-uncial with elements of tachygraphy. Regarding ornamentation, only simple geometric initials in red stand out in Averkije's copy, some decorated with wavy lines or foliate branches at the terminal ends. In 1735, on folio 1a, the Studenica Monastery was sketched in black ink.

This significant convolute represents a unique combination of medieval ecclesiastical-legal and hagiographic writing, marking the historical origin of these genres in Serbian literature.

LITERATURE: Богдановић 1980a: 149–151; Синдик 1988: 200–203; Ракићевић 2015: 451–469; Шпадијер и др. 2015: 85–89; Свети Сава 2018: 29–56; Савић 2019: 385–429; Ракић 2019: 191–192; Савић 2020: 518–521.

M. J.

47. Collection with the Karyes Typikon and the Rules for the Use of the Psalter

1620/30

Paper, manuscript; 37 fol.; 210 × 150 mm

Archives of the Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts,

inv. no. ASANU 51

The Archives of the Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts preserve a fragment of the *Collection*, which contains the *Karyes Typikon* and the *Rules for the Use of the Psalter*. On folio 31, the text of the *Karyes Typikon* begins: *Начело прѣмудрости страхъ г(о)с(под)нѣ, разумъ(ъ) же бѣгъ всемъ творещимъ(ъ)* (“The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and a good understanding belongs to all who practice it”). From folio 35, the *Rules for the Use of the Psalter* begins: *Сказъ хотѣшому дръжати ѱалтирь съ* (“An instruction for him wishing to hold [use] this Psalter”).

Daničić published this copy in its entirety in *Književnik* in 1866, concluding that it was written in recent times and that the scribe, “as I judge by the paper and the writing, lived in our century.” Ljubomir Stojanović, describing the manuscripts and old printed books of the Serbian Royal

Academy, states under number 110 that this manuscript belongs to the Serbian recension and dates from the fifteenth or sixteenth century. The large discrepancy in dating occurred due to the desire of the copyist to be as faithful as possible to the original from which he copied – although written in the seventeenth century (around 1620/30), the language retained archaic features, such as the etymologically correct use of *yat* (ѣ) and the correct use of the jers/semi-vowels (with rare examples of vocalization). Daničić attributes these deviations to the time of composition of the original text, and not to the scribe of this Academy’s copy.

LITERATURE: Daničić 1866: 139–142; Стојановић 1901: no. 110; Свети Сава 1928: V, XL–XLI; Савић 2018: 299–322; Бубало 2025: 72.

M. J.

СКОБІ ХОТѢШОУ ДѢЯТЬ ЧАСТИ ЕІ

Бого поспѣи и похвалѣнныи и полюбленныи
и щирѣиши · всемоу мироу свѣтила ·
и землемыслии · и бѣны члвч · и спрѣ
кѣ шестого дѣла прѣдѣла и по чѣстивокати
на дѣише · и бл҃гостию бж҃іею просвѣти
ише · и х҃а въселѣише кѣ прѣкраснѣе и
ише · чѣсто раи жнѣтїа и · на дѣакола по
бѣдоу показаше · и того многими и
сѣкоушеи и ражнѣи · и ѡдолекше
емоу, паче злата и сѣкоуше ла сїаю · на
спѣе спѣга оубѣише · и не веи сѣак
па злата крнѣ жмыслѣи вѣтеише
на пѣа възлетѣише · ꙗко б҃го парїи
ѡрлн · на мѣ ѡстакнѣише оуспѣакъ б҃го
прѣдѣлаго пѣлїа и · поумыленїе мо
литвы, и мѣе га мѣтнѣа сѣвѣ сѣ
творнѣе · **Ѡ**кѣ бо и часы сѣмежоу
часни поахоу и сѣмѣтнѣамн · и сѣста
внѣише и зборїе ꙗлмы сѣмѣтнѣамн ·



48. Cycle of the Life of Saint Sava

Hilandar Monastery, refectory, 1621–1622

Painter Georgije Mitrofanović

Fresco copies, copied by Ivan Dikij, Boris Obraskov, Vladi-

mir Predojević, Nikola Majendorf, and Viktor Ševcov, 1965

Fresco Gallery of the National Museum of Serbia

In the refectory of the Hilandar Monastery, the iconographer Georgije Mitrofanović painted a cycle of frescoes depicting the life of Saint Sava of Serbia in 1621–1622, completing the program on November 16, 1622, “by the will and with the approval of the fathers and brothers of the Hilandar monastery council, under the father abbot, Kyr Hilarion.” Mitrofanović was also the ktetor of the entire project of decorating the refectory, all of which was carried out under the care of Georgije Mitrofanović, “who labored hard on this work.”

The entire Hilandar cycle of the life of Sava includes twenty-six compositions with twenty-nine scenes. Each composition is bordered by a decorative band. The youth of Saint Sava is depicted in seven episodes in the second register of the eastern wall, running from north to south, through the scenes: Rastko consults with a monk to flee to the Holy Mountain (с(вє)ты съвєща съ ннокѡм[ъ] бежати въ ц(вє)тѣю гѡрѡ); Rastko takes his parents’ blessing to go hunting; Rastko deceives his entourage and flees to the Holy Mountain (с(вє)ты посла вѡнни съгнати зѣвѣи сам[ъ] же берѣ се ютъ въ с(вє)тѣю гѡров); the envoys of Stefan Nemanja beat the monks while searching for Rastko; the tonsure of Saint Sava in the Russian monastery (с(вє)ты постриг[ъ] се въ мѡнастирь рѣскомь); Saint Sava brings warm loaves of bread to hermits

(пр)несе ѡ(тъ)цѣмъ топлѣ хлѣбы); and Saint Sava is captured by robbers (⟨...⟩еше с(вє)таго разбѡйници). Other scenes are related to Saints Simeon and Sava, including Sava’s travels, miracles, diplomatic missions, death, and the translation of his relics: Saint Simeon arrives at the Vatopedi Monastery (с(вє)тї сѡмѡнь прїе въ мѡнастирь вафѡпед); Sava’s intervention with Emperor Alexios III Angelos in Constantinople to declare the Hilandar Monastery stauropegial; the death of Saint Simeon in Hilandar (ѡспенїе с(вє)таго сѡмѡна); the ascension of the holy saint; the Holy Virgin appearing to Sava in a dream and revealing to him two treasure chests (яви се в(ѡ)городѣца стомѣ и показа емѣ две скровищи); the miracle of the outpouring of myrrh from the relics of Simeon Nemanja (... нїе ѡ мѣронизантї стго сѡмѡна); Sava becomes a hieromonk (херѣтонїа с(вє)таго савѣї); Sava heals the paralytic (с(вє)тї їсцѣлы раслабленнаго); Sava kills Strez with prayer (с(вє)тї мѡитвою збѣї стрѣзѡа); Sava becomes an archbishop (с(вє)тї поставлаетсе архїепископомь при ц(а)рѣ фѣѡдорѣ ласк патріархѣ германь); Sava crowns his brother Stefan as king (с(вє)тї вѣнчають стѣфана на краѣство); Sava invokes a hailstorm with prayer (с(вє)тї мѡитвою съведѣ град); Sava gives the Hungarian king a bowl of ice (с(вє)тї ѡдаде вѣликъ съѡда града); Sava administers communion to the Hungarian king, converting him to Orthodoxy (с(вє)тї ... краѣлю ...);





the death of Stefan the First-Crowned (с(к)ѣтъї въскрѣси оумръша брата); Sava is captured by pirates on his maritime journey to Jerusalem (с(к)ѣтъї морѣмъ шьствѣеть маглою тасюю съхраненъ бѣѣ отъ разбонникъ); the sea feeds Sava with trout (с(к)ѣтъї ... благою къ гѣ со моря пакырьмъ послана бѣѣ емоу); Saint Sava blesses water on the eve of the Theophany in the church in Tarnovo; the death of Saint Sava in Tarnovo (оуспенхѣ с(к)ѣтаго савѣ въ трънѣ); the healing of the monk Neofit at the tomb of Saint Sava (с(к)ѣтъї исцели неѡфита); King Vladislav asks the Bulgarian emperor Ivan Asen II to return the relics of Saint Sava to Serbia (part of this scene includes the appearance of Saint Sava to

Ivan Asen in a dream) (кралъ владѣславъ проси ѿ ц(а)ра ющи с(к)ѣт(а)го); and King Vladislav transfers the relics of Saint Sava from Tarnovo to Mileševo (прѣн... ѿ ющѣмъ стго савѣ).

The Gallery of Frescoes of the National Museum in Belgrade preserves copies of these fresco scenes from the *Life of Saint Sava* in the Hilandar refectory, which were executed in 1965 by artists Ivan Dikić, Boris Obraskov, Vladimir Predojević, Nikola Majen-dorf, and Viktor Ševcov.

LITERATURE: Петковић 1933; Кајмаковић 1977: 56–64, 191, 238–255; Матић 2025: 358–403.

М. М.

49. Psalter of Gavrilo Trojičanin

Holy Trinity Monastery near Pljevlje, the scribe Gavrilo
Trojičanin, the miniaturist: iconographer Jovan, 1643
Paper, manuscript; I + 300 fol.; 194 × 140 mm
Matica Srpska Library, inv. no. RR II 19 (RR II 178)

In the seventeenth century, Serbian printing slowly died out, so that for the next eighty years, book reproduction once again relied exclusively on copying. Scriptoria were, according to established tradition, associated with churches and monasteries. One of the most important copying centers during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries was located in the Holy Trinity Monastery near Pljevlja. Among the many noted scribes of this period, Gavrilo Trojičanin stood out in the scriptorium of the Holy Trinity in Pljevlja, with more than ten copied books. Psalters are by far the most prevalent among the titles of Gavrilo Trojičanin's books. This information is not surprising if we consider the fact that the *Psalter* was printed in the first Serbian printing house in Cetinje in 1495, and that it was also the last book of the old Serbian book printing, printed by Bartolo Ginami in Venice in 1638. The words of Saint Sava about the importance of this liturgical book were deeply engraved in the consciousness of the Serbian people. He emphasized the importance of reading the entire Psalter in the course of a day and night in the *Karyes Typikon*: "And what remains of the Psalter, recite it either during the day or at night, only so that the Psalter is sung for one day and night," and a little later in the *Rules for the use of the Psalter*, where he instructs the brethren to "sing the Psalter for the night and day," and, in the event

that they zealously finish reading the Psalter during the day, "then go back from the beginning and begin and finish. For the Psalter is never finished."

The manuscript *Psalter* of Gavrilo Trojičanin retains the tradition of decorating the Psalter, which was present throughout the Middle Ages. As a skilled scribe, he was previously credited with the ornamentation of manuscripts. However, later studies have led to the conclusion that he left the decoration of books to artists, painters. The author of the miniature with the depictions of Saint Sava and Saint Simeon on folio 179 is Jovan, a famous painter of the seventeenth century. Miniatures with the depictions of the prophet David and Saint George are also attributed to him.

Saint Sava and Saint Simeon are depicted in a standing, frontal pose, and the entire composition is framed by a green border. Saint Sava stands on the left and is dressed in ornate episcopal vestments, bareheaded, with brown hair and a long, brown-gray beard. He is blessing with his right hand, holding a closed Gospel book in his left. Next to him stands Saint Simeon, with a long, gray beard, dressed in a monastic habit; he holds a cross in his right hand. The background is gilded in the upper register and olive green in the lower register. Jovan found inspiration for this miniature in his own painting – the icons of Saint Sava



and Saint Simeon from Morača and Piva. The Psalter of Gavriilo Trojičanin is one of the most beautifully decorated books of the seventeenth century.

LITERATURE: Грбић 1992: 8; Васиљев 1992: 48–49, 51; Грбић и др. 1993: 8, 28–37; Ракић 2016: 403.

M. J.

50. Charter of Radu Leon to the Mileševa Monastery

Bucharest, May 29, 1665

Parchment 420 × 400 mm

Museum of the Serbian Orthodox Church, Legacy of Radoslav Grujić, inv. no. D16

The Wallachian Voivode (Duke) Radu Leon (1664–1669) issued a charter to the Mileševa Monastery, by which he committed to providing an “obrok” of 10,000 aspers, as well as 1,000 aspers to the monks who would travel to collect this donation (in monastic charters, the term “obrok” carries the meaning of a gift or endowment). The cult of Saint Sava spread across Wallachia and Moldavia, and the profound significance of the fact that his relics reposed there is clearly reflected in the text of this charter, wherein Radu Leon states that he is granting the donation to the Mileševa Monastery “where the body of Saint Sava reposes.”

The charter to the Mileševa Monastery contains the usual elements of monastery charters. At the beginning, the Old Testament text of the Books of Moses is quoted. The intitulation follows, in which the ruler presents himself as “pious, orthodox, Christ-loving,” then mentions his father, “the great, very good, old, deceased Jo(van) Stefan the Voivode.” He undertakes to make an annual contribution to the monastery, and to carry out this vow for the rest of his life. In return, he requests that he and members of his family, as well as previous donors, such as Radu Šerban and Matei Basarab, be remembered in the prayers and during the proskomidia by the monastery brotherhood. When listing witnesses, he gives

us an insight into the wide range of positions at the Wallachian court, such as the great ban, the courtier, the logotet, the treasurer, the spatary, the locksmith, the bed-maker, the cupbearer, the steward, the commissar, the servant, and the baker.

The dating and signature come at the end: the charter was written in Bucharest, from “Adam,” that is, from the creation of the world on May 29, 7113 and from the birth of Christ in the year 1665. The signature reads: ІѠ РАДѦЛ ВОЕВОДА Б(Ѧ)ЖЬЮ А(Н)А(Ѧ)ТЇЮ Г(Ѧ)СП(Ѧ)А(А)РЪ ЗЕМЛЕ ВЛАШКО (“Io Radu, Voivode, by the grace of God, Prince of Wallachia”).

The charter was written on parchment, in black ink, in the Old Slavonic language of the Wallachian recension, in a semi-uncial script. The initial is made in a floral and geometric interweaving. In a circular medallion, above the text, an eagle with spread wings is depicted, with a cross above its head. A seal is attached to the charter. On the left is a note in German, written during the inventory of documents in Sremski Karlovci in the eighteenth century, but Jakobi and his associates incorrectly stated that the gift amount was 2,000 aspers.

LITERATURE: Петковић 1979: 374; Котарчић 1987: 267–277

M. J.





Handwritten text in a Gothic script, likely a liturgical book or a manuscript. The text is written in black ink on parchment. The script is dense and fills most of the page. There are several lines of text, some of which are written in red ink (rubrication). The text is arranged in a single column, with some lines indented. The parchment is aged and shows some staining and wear.

A large, ornate initial 'A' in gold and red, decorated with floral and foliate motifs, marking the beginning of a text block. The initial is written in a Gothic script and is the largest and most decorative element on the page. It is followed by several lines of text in black ink, with some rubrication in red. The initial is decorated with intricate patterns and colors, including gold, red, and green. The text is written in a Gothic script and is dense and fills most of the page.





51. Icon of Saint Sava and Saint Simeon with the Life of Saint Sava

Icon painter Jovan, 1644/45

Egg tempera on wood, gilding, woodcut; 251 × 174 cm
(size of the original)

Morača Monastery, Church of the Dormition of
the Holy Virgin, western bay of the naos

Copy, copied by Boban Veljković, 1995–96

Historical Museum of Serbia, inv. no. 30

The icon with the life of Saint Sava of Serbia is a monumental work of large dimensions, located in the western bay of the Church of the Dormition of the Holy Virgin, the main church of the Morača Monastery. It is fixed from the back to a massive wooden beam that is placed as a tie-beam between two walls. It is located above the grave of the founder, Stefan Vukanović, son of Vukan Nemanjić. It is one of the most significant and artistically successful creations of the iconographer Jovan, a Serbian painter of the mid-seventeenth century, and is dated by an inscription to 1644/1645. In the center of the icon, Saints Simeon and Sava of Serbia are depicted in full-length formats, while around this field is a border frame depicting twenty-three compositions illustrating seventeen scenes from the life of Saint Sava, painted in continuo on the upper side of the frame and partially on the lower side, while they are separated into individual registers on the sides.

The icon is housed in a luxurious, gilded, wood-carved frame. The pedestal is decorated with a carving emerging from two vases and interwoven with vine leaves, bunches of grapes, and a medallion in the middle. Two columns decorated with large flowers rest on the base, topped with capitals on which the horizontal panel is decorated with a carved motif of a vine with leaves and bunches of grapes. The

construction is finished with a band of palmette decorations. The painted field is enclosed in a separate, also gilded, carved frame that is recessed in relation to the main frame structure. A semicircular arch of multi-lobed interweaving is supported on two pillars decorated with lace-like woodcarving, in each of whose corners a flower is woven into the carving. In the center of the painted panel, the figures of Saint Sava (С(В)ѢТЪ САВА СРЪБСКЫ) and Saint Simeon Nemanja (С(В)ЕТЪ СѢМЕОНЪ СРЪБСКЫ) are depicted frontally. Saint Sava is depicted as a man of mature years, with dark hair with a tonsure on the crown and a dark beard of medium length. He is vested in a sakkos with a dark blue omophorion, under which a sticharion with potamoi (rivers) of the same color and an epitachelion can be seen. He blesses with his right hand in front of his chest, while in his left he holds a closed Gospel book. Saint Simeon is dressed in a monastic habit with an analavos, over which he wears a cloak buttoned at the chest. On his head, he wears a cowl with the cryptogram of Christ (Ѡс Ѡс – нї ка). In his right hand, he holds a purple cross with a long handle, and in his left, he holds an unrolled scroll: прїиде | те чєда | и послах | шанте | мене ст | рахх г(ппола)ню | нахѣх | вн · (“Come, O children, listen to me; I will teach you the fear of the Lord”) (Ps. 34:11). At the end of the text written on the scroll, the year of the icon’s creation

is recorded (ѿ ѿ ѿ r, i.e., 7153, or 1644/45), and the painter's name is hidden in the cryptogram · ѿ ѿ ѿ ѿ ѿ ѿ ѿ ѿ (resolution: съписа юаннь зюграф помени господѣ ["Written by Jovan the Zograf, remember him, O Lord"])). The upper part of the background is gilded. Around the central field are arranged twenty-three scenes from the life of Saint Sava. In the semicircular top of the field is a frontal bust of Christ blessing the saints. Next to him are Saint Nicholas and Saint Luke, who are shown in a three-quarter position, half-length, with their heads bowed and their hands extended toward him in a gesture of prayer. In the register below, six scenes are depicted in a row: Saint Sava talking to a monk (сѣѣшавъ съ ннѡкомъ бѣжати въ црквию горѣ), the parents' blessing for going hunting (благословеніе вѣзмиаетъ ѡт рѡтителѣ ловити звѣри), his departure to the Holy Mountain (пославъ конни съгнати звѣри. съмѣ бѣгъ се емиаетъ въ црквию горѣ), soldiers beating monks (послани же по цркт[а]гѡ м[о]н[а]хѣ бияхъ), Sava's tonsure in the pyrgos of the monastery of St. Panteleimon (црктѣ постригъ се въ пиргѣ мѡнастыря цркта пантелѣимѡн[а]), and Saint Sava distributing warm bread to hermits (црктѣ топліе хлѣбѣ подавае същимъ въ пѣстинѣхъ). Along the left and right sides of the border frame around the central field, from left to right (except for the scenes in the third row) and from top to bottom, in separate compartments partitioned by borders, the compositions alternate: the Holy Virgin appears to Saint Sava and reveals to him the treasure of gold (яви се црктѡмъ б[огороди]ца и показа емоу скровище); the ordination of Saint Sava into the priesthood (црктѣ поставиаетъ се на свѣщенство); the miracle of the outpouring of myrrh from the reliquary coffin of Saint Simeon (чюдо ѡ мѡронзлнтію црктаго сѣмѡна); Saint Sava is appointed as archbishop (црктѣ поставиаетъ се архіеп[иско]пѡмъ), and Saint Sava praying for the death of the Bulgarian nobleman Strež (црктѣ ц[а] въ мѡлнтѣ се · црктѣ мѡлнтѡю оуспѡрштѣ стрѣзѡ). The compositions of Saint Sava healing the paralytic (црктѣ исцѣлѣн раслабленѡ) and Saint Sava crowning his brother Stefan the First-Crowned (црктѣ вѣнчѡваеъ брата стѣфана на краљство) are placed within one compartment, and they are followed by: Saint Sava (ц[а])

ба) invoking the hailstorm through prayer (МОЛНТКОМ
НЗАНИКА ГРАД (МОЛ(Н)ТВОЮ С(КЕ)ТЫ ГРАД СЪВЕДЕ) and sending
a vessel with the hail to the Hungarian king (ПОСЛА-
ЕТА КРАЛЮ ОУГРНИНЪ СЪСЪДЪ ПАЛЪНЪ ГРАДА) – in the hands of
one of the envoys is a message beseeching him to
restrain the storm: ПОМИЛОУИ С(КЕ)ТЫ ЗА НЕНЗГІѢХОУМЪ; and
Saint Sava resurrecting his deceased brother, Stefan
the First-Crowned, to tonsure him (С(КЕ)ТЫ САВА ВЪСКРЕСИ
БРАТА ОУМЪША ДОНЪДЕЖЕ П(О)СТРИЖЕ ЕГО). Along the bottom
of the icon frame, the final events from the life of
Saint Sava are depicted: the miracle at sea with pi-
rates (Saint Sava is hidden from the robbers by thick
fog) (С(КЕ)ТЫ САВА ВЪ МОРИ ТЛЪСТОЮ МАГЛОЮ СЪХРАНЕНЪ БЫ(СТЬ)
ОТ РАЗБОНИКЪ); A wave of the sea throws a fish onto
the saint's boat (С(КЕ)ТЫ ШАСТВОУЕ МОРЕМЪ КЪ НЕРОСНАМЪ
МОРЕ РНЕВЪ ЕМУ ДАРОНОСИТЬ), and the death of Saint Sava
(ОУСПЕНІЕ С(КЕ)ТАГО САВИ СРЪБЪСКАГО). The dormition of Saint
Sava, who is lying on a bier, is attended by Patriarch
Joachim of Tarnovo and Tsar Ivan Asen II with his
tsarina. In the middle of the lower side of the rim, a
series of historical scenes are painted: the construc-
tion of the Morača Monastery (КРАЛЪ СТЕФАНЪ С(Н)НЪ КЕ-
ЛНКАГО КНЕЗА ВЪЛК(А)НА СЪЗНАЕТА ХРАМЪ ОУСПЕНІА Б(ГО)РОДИЦЕ
НА РЪЦЕ МОРАТИ), and Stefan consulting with the pro-
tomaster (СЪВѢТА КР(А)ЛЪ ТВОРИТЪ СЪ ПРОТОМАНСТОРОМЪ). The
medallion on the pedestal depicts the composition
the Death of Stefan Vukanović, which takes place in
front of a church that does not resemble the one in
Morača. On the lower edge of the carved frame is an
inscription with the names of the icon's commission-
ers – the Morača abbot Luka, the Zeta metropolitan
Pajsije Kolašinović, the docheiarios Silvestar Laza-
rević, and the donor (ktetor), the hieromonk Jefrem
from the village of Lepenac, who paid the costs of
its creation (БЛАГОВОЛЕНІЕМЪ НИЖЕ ВЪ ТРОНИЦІ СЛАВНАГО БОГА
СЪДѢЛА СЕ И ПОПИСА СЕ ИКОНА СІА ПОВЕЛЕНІЕМЪ И ПОДЪВНГОМЪ ОУЦА
НГЪМЕНА КВР АСКЕ РАВНИАНННЪ ТЕРМОНАХЪ СЪ БРАТІАМН. СЕИМЪ ЖЕ
БЫС(ТЬ) ДѢЛЪ НАСТОАТЕЛЬ И ФІОТОРЪ КВР ЕФРЕМЪ, ТЕРМОНАХЪ ОУ
СЕЛА ЛЕПЕНЦА, БОГЪ ДА ГА ПРОСТЫ, ПРИ КВР ПАВСЕЮ ПАТРІАРХЪ, И
ПАВСЕЮ МІТРОПОЛИТЪ КОЛАШИНОВИЧЪ, ТЕСКАНСАРХЪ КВР НИКИФОРЪ, И
ДОФУАРЪ БЫС(ТЬ) КВР СИЛВЕСТАРЪ ОУ ЛАЗАРЕВИЧЪ, · ⷆ · ⷑ · ⷒ · ⷓ · ⷔ ·
ТОГДА И КЕЛІА СЪГРАДИ СЕ 8 ПОПОВОН НИКИ (“By the good will
of God praised in the Trinity, this icon was made and





painted by the command and labor of Father Abbot Kyr Luka Ravnjanin, hieromonk, with the brothers. And to this matter superior and donor was Kyr Efrem, hieromonk from the village of Lepenica, may God forgive him, under Patriarch Kyr Pajsije, and Metropolitan of Kolašin Pajsije, ecclesiarch Kyr Nikifor, and docheiarios was Kyr Silivestar from Lazarević, [in the year] 7153; then also a cell was built in the priest's field").

A scaled-down replica the icon of Saint Sava and Saint Simeon with the life of Saint Sava was

executed for the Historical Museum of Serbia in 1995–1996 by Boban Veljković.

LITERATURE: ССЗН 1902: бр. 1397; *Средньовековна уметносћ* 1969: 61–62, cat. no. 71; Кајмаковић 1977: 354–356; Кајмаковић 1977a: 101–104, fig. 1; Петковић 1986: 99–101, fig. 50–52; Поповић 2006: 26, 66, fig. 4–5, table XII; Симић-Лазар 2006: 69–93, fig. 1–13 (with earlier literature); Петковић 2009: 165–166; Тодић 2013: 259–267; Матић 2017: 476–477, cat. no. 266, fig. 175.

M. M.





52. Icon of the Obsequies of Saint Sava – Maccabean Martyrs

Unknown artist, fourth decade of the 17th century

Egg tempera on wood, gilding; 44 × 33,6 × 2,5 cm

Treasury of the Patriarchate of Peć Monastery, inv. no. 61

In the central field on one side of the icon, the Obsequies of Saint Sava (January 14/27) is depicted, identified by the inscription *ХСПЕНІЕ С(КЕ)ТАГО САВЪ[Ї] СРП(С) КИН НАДЪИТЕЛЪ* :. Over a purple funeral bier covered with a white, patterned cloth, the funeral service is performed by an archbishop (likely Arsenije I), who is shown reading from an open Gospel book while vested in a phelonion and omophorion. Standing next to him is the Bulgarian Tsar Ivan Asen II, represented with a short brown beard and hair; he wears a divitision with a loros, and a closed crown rests on his head. In the background, bishops, monks, nobles, and commoners all display expressions of deep grief. One cleric holds a censer in his raised left hand, touching it with his free hand. On the right side, the city walls and roofs are visible, while on the left stands the façade of a tall building topped with a triangular gable. Inscribed upon the funeral bier is a donor's inscription stating that the icon was funded by Dorotej Polatar, a high official at the patriarchal court: *ДОРОТЕЈ ПОЛАТАР СІЮ ИКОНЪ ПЛАТИ* :.

On the reverse side of the icon, the central field depicts the seven Maccabean martyrs (*СК(Е)ТЫИ МАКАВЕЇ* :.) in full-length formats: Abim, Antonius, Gurias, Eleazar, Eusebonus, Alimus, and Marcellus (August 1/14). Three stand in the first row, followed by two in the second and third rows respectively. All are dressed in tunics and cloaks, holding crosses in their right hands and wearing martyr's wreaths on their heads. In the upper left corner of the painted field, their teacher Eleazar is depicted, and in the right, their mother Solomonia, who suffered martyrdom alongside her sons. At the top of the panel is Christ (*ІС ХС*, bearing the traditional *ΩϞϞ* within his nimbus), enveloped in a double, rhomboid-shaped mandorla. He extends both hands to the sides in a gesture of blessing. The background and the frame of the icon are entirely gilded.

LITERATURE: Василић, Теодоровић-Шакота 1957: 7, cat. no. 7; Бурић и др. 1990: 298, fig. 196, Матић 2017: 456, cat. no. 204.

M. M.











53. Icon of Saint Sava and Saint Simeon

Unknown artist, mid-17th century

Tempera on wood, gilding; 22.6 × 17.6 × 2.4 cm

Treasury of the Krka Monastery, inv. no. 307

In the slightly recessed central field, Saint Sava and Saint Simeon Nemanja are depicted frontally in full-length formats. Saint Sava (identified by the partial inscription (... ..KA) is represented as a younger man with dark hair and a thick beard of medium length. He is vested in a polystavrion with an omophorion, under which a sticharion with potamoi (rivers) and an epitachelion are visible. He offers a gesture of blessing with his right hand before his chest and holds a closed Gospel book in his left. Saint Simeon (C(KE)TЪ(I) | C(KE)TЪ(I) | HЪ) is depicted as an elder with an elongated gray beard, attired in the light-colored habit of a Great Schema monk with a cowl on his

head. He holds his right hand raised before his chest with his palm turned toward the viewer, while his left hand holds an unfurled scroll bearing the text: ΠΡΟΪΝΔΕ | ΤΕ ΨΑΔΑ | ΠΟΛΟΥ | ΣΑΙΤΕ | ΜΕΝΕ ΣΤ | ΡΑΧΟΥ | Γ(Ο)ΠΟΔ | ΝΙΟΥ ("Come, O children, listen to me; [I will teach you] the fear of the L[or]d")(Ps. 34:11). At the apex of the field is a semicircular segment of the sky enclosing a bust-length representation of Christ imparting a benediction with both hands. The halos are embellished with relief stucco details.

LITERATURE: Медаковић 1988: 123; Чоловић 2006: 134.

M. M.

54. Tetraevangelion

Hopovo Monastery, 1662

Paper, wood, brass; manuscript; I + 280 fol.; 280 × 195 mm
Museum of the Serbian Orthodox Church, inv. no. MSPC 173

The *Tetraevangelion* from the Hopovo Monastery was bound in a metal cover in 1662 and subsequently restored in 1705, as recorded in the scribal notes. Based on its watermarks, the manuscript is dated to 1622. The first inscription appears on folio 1a: *Сіе сѣое ѿвѣліе перѣѣ списано и оковано бысть лѣта мїровытїя 7170 хрѣстова же 1662. — послѣдн поручено быятсе пакн обновлено сталося 1705 лѣта хрѣва. свѣдѣтелствѣщнцѣ подписецѣ* (“This Holy Gospel was first written and bound in a metal cover in the year of world-creation 7170, and of Christ 1662. Later, it was entrusted to be again renewed, which was done in the year of Christ 1705. By testifying signature”).

The second inscription spans folios 1a. 1–4b: *Сне ѿвѣліе монастїра Хопова понових(ь) га и украсих(ь) оверето его поручена азъ никѣфор(о) іеромѣ въ лѣт(о) хрѣстї 1705 м(есе)ца юнї дї при ігуменѣ кѣр никонѣ іеромѣ(онахѣ)* (“This Gospel of the Monastery of Hopovo, I renewed it and decorated it, I found it ruined, I, Hieromonk Nikifor, in the year 1705, month of June 14, under Abbot Kyr Nikon, hieromonk”).

The book covers (revetments) are made of gilded silver, decorated using casting and openwork perforation techniques. The identifying labels are in the Serbian recension of Old Church Slavonic. On the front cover, the composition is divided horizontally into two registers, with the upper segment occupying one-third of the space and the lower occupying two-thirds. The upper register features representations of the Deësis: the Holy Virgin, Christ

enthroned, and Saint John the Baptist. In the central area of the lower register, the following scenes are intertwined within a scrolling foliate vine: the Entry into Jerusalem forms the base, surmounted by the Transfiguration, above which a circular medallion encloses the Virgin and Child. Flanking these central motifs are the four Evangelists, depicted in pairs of two on the left and right sides. The interstitial space surrounding these representations is embellished with semi-precious stones.

The reverse of the revetment features a similar compositional layout with the following representations: in the upper register in the center is the Virgin and Child, flanked on her left and right by the Archangels Michael and Gabriel. In the lower register in the center is Saint George on horseback slaying the dragon, with two saints positioned below him. On the left are the Apostle Peter and Saint Sava, and on the right are the Apostle Paul and Saint Simeon (?). Arranged in three lines at the baseline is the following inscription: *сіе сѣое евангелїе хправи хажн софронїе іермонахъ мон(аст)нрѣ хоповѣ хрѣсто в бѣчкерекѣ м(есе)ца іуна и кѣкомѣ кѣю* (“This Holy Gospel was made by Hadži Sofronije, hieromonk of the Hopovo Monastery. Fabricated in Bečkerek in the month of June, and forged for the ages”). The space between the representations is filled with semi-precious stones.

LITERATURE: Радојковић 1958: 74, сл. 35; Јанс 1973: 29–30, сл. 12; Станковић 2003: 55–56.

M. J.









55. Deësis with Serbian saints

зограф Радул, 1675/1676. год.

темпера на дасци; 46,2 × 31,7 × 2,4 цм

Народни музеј Србије, инв. бр. 25_4029

The slightly recessed painted field is divided horizontally into two registers by a red border band. The upper register depicts the Deësis with the inclusion of Saint Sava of Serbia and Saint Simeon Nemanja. Centered in this register is Christ (Ϡ ϣ bearing the traditional ω ϣ η within his nimbus) seated upon two cushions on a wide, carved, high-backed throne, with his feet resting on a suppedion (footstool). He offers a gesture of benediction with his right hand raised before his chest, while his left hand supports a closed Gospel book resting on his lap. Positioned behind the throne in three-quarter profiles facing Christ are the Holy Virgin (Б(ГО)РОДНИЦА) and Saint John the Baptist, their hands extended in an attitude of supplication (deesis). Flanking the throne, Saint Sava and Saint Simeon Nemanja are represented in frontal, full-length poses. Saint Sava (identified by the inscription Ϡ(ΒΕ)ΤΥ СΑΒΑ) features a tonsure on his head, dark hair, and a dark beard of medium length. He is vested in a sakkos with an omophorion, beneath which a sticharion and an epitachelion are visible; he blesses with his right hand in front of his chest while holding a closed Gospel book in his left. Directly below his feet, a gold ktetor (donor) inscription records the names of the patrons and the year of the icon's creation: ⲥⲓⲁ ⲛⲓⲕⲟⲛⲁ ⲕⲁⲩⲏ

ВЕРКОВО(ЕБА) | Н ХАЦН ГАРН(ЛА) (<.) · В(А) Л(КТО) · З · Р · П
· А · (“This icon belongs to Hadži Vukoje and Hadži
Gavrilo <..> In the year 7184”, i.e., 1675/76). Saint
Simeon (с(вѣ)ты сѣмеоны) wears a monastic cowl on
his head, a habit with an analavos, and a mandyas
(cloak). He grasps a cross in his right hand and an
unfurled scroll in his left bearing the text: прїде|те
че|да н по|слаш|а|н|те | мєне с|трахъ | г(оспод)|ню на|оу|тѣ вѣ
 (“Come, O children, listen to me; I will teach you
the fear of the Lord”)(Ps. 34:11). In the lower reg-
ister, Archdeacon Stephen, King Stefan the First-
Crowned, Stefan of Dečani, Tsar Uroš, and Prince
Lazar are depicted in frontal, full-length formats.
Archdeacon Stephen (архидіаконъ стѣфанъ) wears a
sticharion with liturgical cuffs (epimanikia) and
an oration; in his lowered right hand he holds a
censer, and in his left a liturgical model of a Zion
in the form of a single-nave church. King Stefan
the First-Crowned (прковѣнчаны краля), Stefan of
Dečani (краль децаньскы), Tsar Uroš (оурошы маан),
and Prince Lazar (кньзь лазаря) are attired in poly-
chrome divitisia with a loros, the terminal ends
of which they support in their left hands. In their
right hands, they hold white sceptres surmount-
ed by a cross, and their heads are adorned with
closed crowns (stemmata). The young, beard-
less Uroš holds a scroll in his left hand, and his



crown features hanging pendilia. The upper portion of the background behind all depicted figures is entirely gilded, as is the wide frame of the icon itself.

LITERATURE: Томић-Тривунац 1964: 345-357; *Средњовековна уметност* 1969: 64, cat. no. 75; Петковић 1971: 88, 92-94; Ракић 1998: 167-168, cat. no. 31 (with earlier literature), сл. XVI; Матић 2017: 510, cat. no. 377.

М. М.



56. Cross of “Saint Sava”

Unknown artists, first half of the 18th century
Athonite workshop (woodcarving), Serbian workshop
(revetment)
Woodcarving, repoussé, cutting, filigree, inlay
Wood, silver-gilt, semi-precious and precious gemstones;
28 × 20 × 63 cm
Treasury of the Studenica Monastery, sign. 7

The treasury of the Studenica Monastery houses a processional blessing cross (throne cross) executed at the beginning of the eighteenth century, which was retroactively attributed to Saint Sava in the mid-nineteenth century. Its imposing dimensions (measuring 63 cm in height) and exceptional aesthetic execution, particularly the meticulous precision of the woodcarving, distinguish it from contemporary ecclesiastical crosses in Serbian monastic collections, making it unique. It consists of two structural components: a micro-carved wooden core, attributed to a master craftsman from Mount Athos, and a gilded silver and gold filigree frame, executed by a Serbian metalsmith and filigree artist. The liturgical object was originally a votive gift from an anonymous merchant from Sarajevo.

On each face of the cross, six scenes from the cycle of the Great Feasts are carved, alongside figures of the Evangelists seated before their writing desks (cathedrae). One side depicts the Annunciation, the Nativity of Christ (left arm), the Anastasis / Descent into Hades (at the intersection of the arms), the Raising of Lazarus (right arm), the Presentation of Christ in the Temple, and the Descent of the Holy Spirit upon the Apostles. The reverse face depicts the Baptism of Christ, the Entry into Jerusalem (left arm), the Crucifixion (at the intersection of the arms), the Presentation of the Most Holy Theotokos (right arm), the Transfiguration, the Ascension, and the Apostles

Peter and Paul. The micro-carving is masterfully executed, exhibiting highly refined craftsmanship characterized by dynamic figural compositions set against dense architectural backdrops featuring domes, towers, canopies, and staircases.

The gilded frame of the cross constitutes a significant work of art in its own right, exhibiting remarkable technical virtuosity and lavish ornamentation. It is executed using a variant of the cloisonné wire enamel technique, though the cells (cloisons) are not filled with vitrified glass paste but are left open directly over the underlying metal support sheet. The shaft (neck) of the cross is embellished with three knops (nodules) entirely enveloped in fine gilded filigree. The base is executed in repoussé stamped, gilded silver, composed of six semicircular lobes decorated with alternating embossed medallions featuring seraphim heads, inverted arcades with stylized floral and avian motifs, and intricate filigree rosettes. The base is particularly elaborate, exhibiting strong stylistic affinities with the base of the historical Cross of Emperor Dušan preserved at the Visoki Dečani Monastery. The opulence of this cross is further enhanced by seventeen large and 188 small semi-precious stones embedded across its surface.

LITERATURE: Васиљић 1957: 44, fig. 8a and 8b; Шакоџа 2015: 110–111; Мереник 2019: 311–113; Марковић 2019: 66, 103–104.

N. S.

57. Deësis with Saint Sava and Saint Simeon

Stefan Likić, 1721

Orahovica Monastery, Slavonia (Croatia)

33 × 23 cm (wood-carved panel), 32.5 × 22.5 cm (woodcut print)

(impression by Veljko Mihailović, academic painter from

Belgrade)

Museum of the Serbian Orthodox Church, inv. no. MSPC 4279

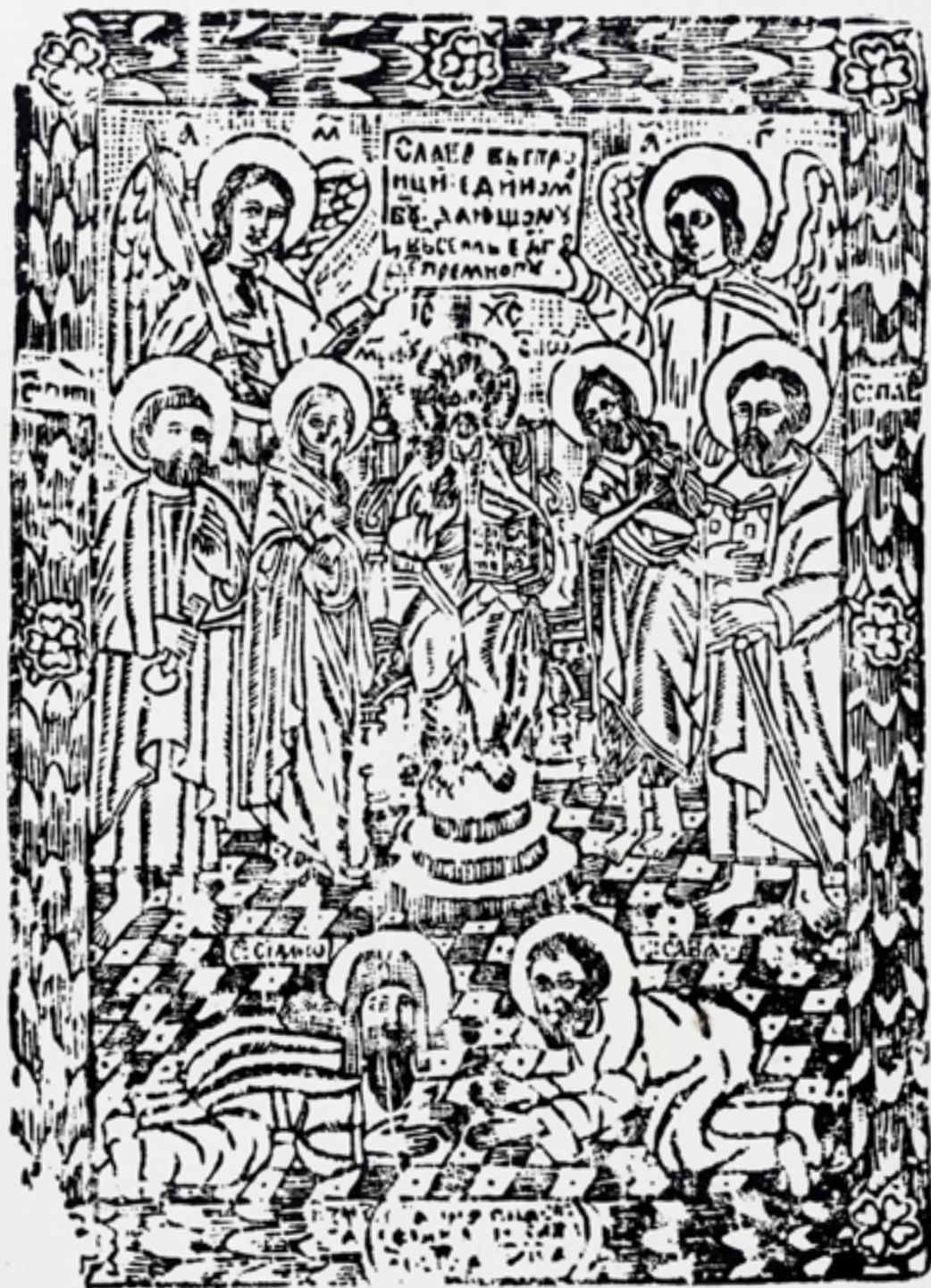
and inv. no. MSPC 3642

The representation of the Deësis is enclosed by stylized palmette leaves, with simple floral motifs at the corners and along the midpoints of all four margins of the frame. This composition forms the central register of the woodcut and is highly distinct for its iconographic inclusion of Saints Sava and Simeon in proskynesis (prostration) before the throne of Christ. Saint Sava is attired in simple monastic garb rather than his typical archiepiscopal vestments; he is depicted with short hair, a beard, and a mustache, identified by the accompanying titulus ⲉ: Ⲙⲁⲃⲁⲛ. Saint Simeon is similarly represented as a Great Schema monk and is designated by the inscription ⲉ: Ⲙⲓⲙⲉⲟⲛ. The two saints face one another in an attitude of adoration. The floor is executed as a checkered pavement of alternating black and white tiles, enhanced by hatching and stippling techniques. The throne of Christ is elevated by a three-tiered dais and is richly ornamented. Christ extends his right hand in a gesture of benediction, while his left hand supports an open Gospel book displaying the text: ⲡⲣⲓⲁⲅⲉⲧⲉ ⲃⲁⲗⲟⲥⲟⲗⲟ ("Come,

ye blessed"). He is flanked on the right by the Most Holy Theotokos and Saint Peter, the latter holding a key in his right hand. To the left stand Saint John the Baptist and Saint Paul, who carries a book in his right hand and a sword in his left. Hovering above this assembly are the Archangels Michael – holding a raised sword in his right hand – and Gabriel, supporting a scroll that bears the text: *СЛАВА ВЪ ТРОИЦИ: ЕДИННОМУ(8) БЪЗ ДАЮЩОМУСЯ ВСЕЛЪМЪ БЛАГОУСПЕШНОМУ*: ("Glory to the one God in the Trinity, who gives great grace to all. [Amen]"). Centered along the lower margin of the frame is the artist's signature and date: *НЗРѢЗА | СІА ШАНПА СТЕФАНА ЛИКИЧА | ЛѢ Р: 7171 КѢ*. ("This plate was cut by Stefan Likić, in the Year of the Lord 1721"), alongside the museum inventory number MSH 667, dating from its tenure in the collection of the Historical Museum of Croatia (Department of the Museum of Serbs in Croatia).

LITERATURE: Грујић 1939: 40–41; Медаковић 1964: 8; Давидов 2006: 250–251; Петковић, Петронијевић 2006: 48–49.

N. S.



58. Studenica Monastery with Saint Sava and Saint Simeon

Gottfried Dorst (?), 1740

Donor: Nikolaj Antonij Prodanović

Copperplate engraving

50.1 × 35 cm (paper), 35.7 × 26.5 cm (print)

Museum of the Serbian Orthodox Church,

inv. no. MSPC 3601/1

Within the monastery precinct, surrounded by dense trees, the Church of the Holy Virgin is presented from a southern perspective, oriented from left to right – from west to east. The engraver relies heavily on generalized architectural conventions, rendering the church recognizable primarily by its overall proportions. Notably, the artist positions the highly visible western entrance as if it were situated on the south facade of the church. Adjacent to the church, a walled monastic cemetery is shown, dotted with traditional grave markers featuring standard Orthodox crosses. In the sky hovering directly above the church, a bust-length figure of the protective Holy Virgin is depicted within a radiant solar disk, extending both hands in a gesture of maternal benediction. A standing full-length image of Saint Sava occupies the upper left corner of the composition, while a corresponding standing figure of Saint Simeon aligns symmetrically in the upper right register. Suspended between them, just below the upper frame margin, an unfurled scroll bears the primary inscription: Сей образъ написаный Црѣкѣа и Сщѣнными обители и Великѣа Лавры Серекѣа Студеницы храмъ

о ѹспѣніе Престѣа Дѣвы Бѣцы, Иже бысть создана Бл҃гочестивыи и пѣрвыи Црѣи серекскѣи Стефаномѣ Неманомѣ : На ретѣнномѣ во иноцѣ Свмесономѣ монахо-мъ новнмѣ мнроточемѣ въ лето а ѡ м... (“This image shows the imperial, sacred, and Great Serbian Lavra of Studenica, the Church of the Dormition of the Most Holy Virgin Theotokos, which was founded by the pious and first Serbian King, Stefan Nemanja, named in monasticism as the new monk Simeon the Myrrh-streamer, in the year 1740...”). The entire visual composition is enclosed by a narrow decorative border composed of a stylized bay-leaf vine. Running directly below the lower border margin, a ktetor (donor) inscription records: Сей иконѣ бысть ктиторѣ Гѣдр Николой Антоній Продановичѣ (“The donor of this icon was the Lord Nikolaj Antonije Prodanović”). Along the bottom right edge, a partially damaged Latin signature indicates the printmaker’s identity, with only the name Gottfried Dorst remaining legible.

LITERATURE: Давидов 1983: 341, fig. 186; Давидов 2006: 257–258; Кучекович 2019: 347–348 (with earlier literature).

N. S.



59. Saint Sava with Serbian saints from the House of Nemanja

Hristofor Žefarović, 1741, Sremski Karlovci – Vienna
Copperplate engraving on paper, colored, lined on canvas
405 × 48.8 cm (paper), 383 × 46.7 cm (print)
Matica Srpska Gallery, inv. no. GMS/U 2410

Saint Sava with the Serbian Saints from the House of Nemanja constitutes a symbolic congratulatory message from the Serbian Patriarch Arsenije IV Jovanović Šakabenta to the Habsburg Empress Maria Theresa on the occasion of her coronation as Queen of Hungary on June 25, 1741. This event occurred shortly after the Patriarch's flight from Peć and Belgrade and his subsequent settlement in Sremski Karlovci. Although the actual coronation liturgy was performed by the Roman Catholic Primate of Hungary, Archbishop Imre Esterházy, the Patriarch devised a complex allegorical counter-narrative. In this composition, the Serbian saints, led by Saint Sava and representing the heavenly kingdom (Heavenly Serbia), bestow their blessing upon the Empress. On behalf of the Serbian nation, the Patriarch greeted her with panegyric verses. Saint Sava is depicted frontally as the preeminent, central figure, extending both hands in a gesture of paternal benediction. Positioned before him is the Holy Table, upon which are arranged a chemise-bound Gospel book, a blessing cross, a diskos with an asterisk (star), a chalice, an episcopal mitre, and a dikerion with a lighted candle. Flanking Saint Sava in the first register to the right are Saint Sava II, Saint Archbishop Nikodim, Saint Stefan Nemanja (Simeon), and Saint Anna-Anastasiya. To his left stand Saint Arsenije, Saint Archbishop Jefrem, Saint Stefan the First-Crowned, and Saint

Jelena. In the second register are Saints Teoktist, David, Stefan Rapavi, Vladislav, Milutin, Stefan of Dečani, Tsar Uroš, and Prince Lazar. Hovering directly above this assembly is the Holy Spirit, depicted as a nimbate white dove within two concentric circles of divine light from which celestial rays emanate. Centered beneath the Holy Table is a crowned heraldic shield bearing a white double-headed eagle positioned over a crescent moon. This central emblem is encircled by the historical coats of arms of Serbia, Raška, Bosnia, Bulgaria, Albania, and Herzegovina, which collectively delineate the concept of Earthly Serbia. This combined armorial display represents the wider realm of the Nemanjić Empire. Through this sophisticated allegorical schema, the Patriarch not only legitimized the crowning of Maria Theresa as Queen of Hungary but conceptually linked the Habsburg monarch to the historical legacy of the Nemanjić dynasty, framing her as its legitimate earthly protector. Ultimately, the Patriarch's objective was to utilize this theological-political synthesis to secure imperial privileges, ecclesiastical legitimacy, and security for the Serbian people within the Habsburg Monarchy.

LITERATURE: Давидов 1983: 25–27; Краут 1985: 55–63; Давидов 2006: 257–258; Давидов 2011: 23–24, 84–87; Симић 2012: 63, 78–80.

N. S.



60. Stemmatalographia

Hristofor Žefarović, Thomas Messmer, 1741, Vienna
Copper-etched book; 20 × 16.5 cm
Museum of the Serbian Orthodox Church, inv. no. MSPC 1118

In the *Stemmatalographia* – the most highly sought-after book of its era, published in Vienna in 1741 by Hristofor Žefarović and Thomas Mesmer based on an ideological concept conceived by the Serbian Patriarch Arsenije IV Jovanović Šakabenta – folio 3a (f.3.) features engraved portraits of Saint Sava, the first Serbian archbishop and founder of the autocephalous Serbian Orthodox Church, alongside Archbishop Sava II, one of the primary successors to the archiepiscopal throne. The saints are depicted in a nearly identical iconographic fashion, vested in lavish episcopal robes adorned with scrolling foliate motifs, surmounted by patriarchal mitres and halos, and wearing panagiai upon their chests. They are distinguished primarily by their accompanying tituli: the first archbishop is designated as СѢЙ СѦВА, Ѧ, архієпискѣ сѣрбскѣ, whereas his successor is labeled С, СѦВКА, Ъ. архієпискѣ сѣрбскѣ. Furthermore, Saint Sava I holds an open Gospel book in his left hand displaying the Johannine text, Ѧзѣ есмѣ пастирѣ добрый Ѧ дѡшѣ (“I am the good shepherd...”), while offering a gesture of benediction with his raised right hand. Saint Sava II holds a closed Gospel book in his left hand while similarly extending his right hand in blessing. Beneath the portrait border in the lower left corner appears the monogram С, Ч, К, Ж which likely refers to Žefarović’s authorship of the volume’s artistic design. Alongside the holy Serbian



hierarchs Sava I and Sava II, twenty-four other national saints are represented within the volume to collectively delineate the concept of Heavenly Serbia. The *Stemmatalographia* was concurrently conceived as a heraldic armorial collection, displaying the historical coats of arms of the various lands and provinces over which Patriarch Arsenije IV claimed spiritual jurisdiction. These boundaries represented the idealized, canonical borders of the Serbian Church, which were conceptually mapped onto the medieval imperial borders from the reign of Emperor Stefan Dušan. Consequently, the volume also features a prominent equestrian portrait of Emperor Dušan encircled by these identical regional coats of arms, thereby projecting the parallel concept of Earthly Serbia. Patriarch Arsenije IV envisioned the *Stemmatalographia* as a visual historical textbook



intended for both the Serbian nation and Empress Maria Theresa, as well as for multi-confessional contemporary observers. Its ultimate purpose was to glorify the medieval Serbian past and bolster Serbian national, religious, and political consciousness within the framework of the Habsburg Monarchy. The *Stemmatographia* thus functioned as an ideological bulwark of Serbian religious and national

autonomy in the Habsburg lands, a program in which the founder of the Serbian Church was deliberately accorded a primary position among the first saints of the iconographic cycle.

LITERATURE: Давидов 1983: 16–17; Давидов 2006: 280–285; Давидов 2011: 141; Симић 2012: 80–85.

N. S.

61. Triptych with the Deësis, Saint Sava, and Saint Simeon

Georgije Stojanović, 1746

Tempera on wood

35 × 44 cm (central panel), 14 × 37 cm (side panels)

Matica Srpska Gallery, inv. no. GMS/U 0310

The central panel of the 1746 Deësis triptych features the intercessory supplication of the Holy Virgin and Saint John the Baptist before Christ Pantokrator, executed on a gilded background. Christ is seated upon a cushion on a wide, lavishly carved Baroque throne, vested in opulent red and gold episcopal robes with corresponding red footwear resting on a *suppedion* (footstool), his head surmounted by a purple and gold patriarchal mitre. He extends his right hand in a gesture of benediction while supporting an open Gospel book directed toward the viewer with his left; the text displays a quotation from Mark 8:34: Рече г҃ъ | нже хоу|ет по мнѣ ѡтї да ѡбѣ|ржетсѧ | себѣ и вѣ|зметъ крстѣ | свѡй и по | мнѣ грѣдѣтъ ("Whosoever will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me"). Positioned to the right of the throne is the Holy Virgin, attired in a blue chiton and a red maphorion featuring an embroidered, pearl-lined hem and the traditional stars emblazoned upon her forehead and shoulders. Oriented slightly in three-quarter profile toward Christ, she places her left hand over her chest while holding an unfurled prayer scroll in her lowered right hand. Symmetrically positioned to the left of the throne is Saint John the Baptist, who holds a corresponding intercessory scroll in his left hand, mirroring the Virgin's supplication for the salvation of sinners.

Directly behind them, resting their hands on the high backrest of the throne, are the Archangels Michael and Gabriel. Above this earthly-celestial register, within an open segment of the heavens, the Holy Trinity is represented seated upon clouds. God the Father is positioned on the right, depicted as an elderly patriarch with a triangular nimbus, clad in a rich red robe and a dark blue mantle; his right hand gestures toward Christ on the throne below, while his left hand supports a golden scepter and an imperial orb. To his right is Jesus Christ, God the Son, offering a blessing with his right hand while supporting the Holy Cross against his left shoulder. Between them hovers the white dove of the Holy Spirit with outspread wings, enclosed within a red rhomboid frame with prominent gilded borders from which radiant celestial rays emanate. The Trinity is encircled by cherubim depicted as winged infant heads. Along the raised structural frame of the central panel, the Apostles Peter (holding a key) and Paul (bearing a sword) are positioned laterally, with the interstitial frame space embellished with gilded floral ornaments. The side wings of the triptych are divided horizontally into two registers, yielding four autonomous pictorial compartments. The upper register of the left wing depicts Saint George mounted on a rearing white horse, slaying the dragon and



liberating Princess Alexandra. The lower register features Saints Nicholas and Charalambos. On the upper register of the right wing, Saint Demetrius is shown on a rearing bay horse with a raised saber, defeating the Bulgarian Tsar Kaloyan. The lower register depicts Saint Simeon Nemanja in the habit of a Great Schema monk alongside Saint Sava, who is vested in episcopal robes mirroring those of Christ Pantokrator on the central throne. Sava extends his right hand in a gesture of benediction.

The architectural joinery and wooden support of the icon are uniquely ornamented. The upper margin of the central panel is finished with a wood-carved, two-tiered broken arch, a motif seamlessly replicated on the upper contours of the

flanking wings to form a harmonious silhouette when opened. The triptych is supported stably by a stepped, two-tiered pedestal base. A partially damaged artist's signature is located along the lower edge of the pedestal beneath the central panel. The exterior faces of the closed wings display a large cross surrounded by standard protective cryptograms: ЦС / ІС ХС / ННКА / ѿ ѿ ѿ / к к к / х х х / ѿ ѿ ѿ / ГА. This Deësis triptych stands as one of the final documented works within the artistic corpus of the iconographer Georgije Stojanović.

LITERATURE: Голубовић 1990: 47–48; Шелмић 1977: 81–82; Вучковачки-Савић 1957: 64–65; Симић 2025: 429–430.

N. S.

62. Absolution certificate of Patriarch Atanasije of Peć

Unknown artist, 1747

Copperplate and print

 $35.5 \times 26.2 \text{ cm}$

Donor: Patriarch Arsenije IV Jovanović Šakabenta

Museum of the Serbian Orthodox Church, inv. no. MSPC 3628

The print containing the *Absolution Certificate of Patriarch Atanasije of Peć* was commissioned by his predecessor, Patriarch Arsenije IV Jovanović Šakabenta, during the latter's tenure as Metropolitan of Karlovci. It was executed amidst complex historical circumstances following the Second Great Migration of the Serbs, a period during which communication between the Patriarchate of Peć and the Metropolitanate of Karlovci was severely disrupted and a Greek prelate, Patriarch Joanikije II, ascended the patriarchal throne of Peć. His successor, Patriarch Atanasije II, during his brief primacy at the head of the Serbian Church, faced the increasingly difficult position of the Serbian population under Ottoman rule and the Church's struggle to preserve its autonomy from the encroaching jurisdiction of the Patriarchate of Constantinople. Within this context, Atanasije established a strategic connection with Arsenije IV, who, adapting the Western concept of Catholic indulgences, commissioned the production of copperplate engravings of absolution certificates (*syghorochartia*). These documents were intended to grant spiritual absolution to penitents as a canonical alternative to anathematization or excommunication from the ecclesiastical community.

The custom of issuing certificates of indulgence has been documented within the Catholic Church

since the eleventh century as a form of spiritual redemption mediated through monetary contributions, pious acts, or prayer. Within the Eastern Orthodox context, this practice appeared early, as evidenced by a surviving document from 1463, in which Patriarch Joachim of Constantinople issued an absolution certificate to the Russian Grand Duke Vasily II. The vast majority of extant Orthodox examples date from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, including the absolution prayers issued under the authority of the Serbian Patriarchs Maksim, Arsenije III Čarnojević, Arsenije IV Jovanović Šakabenta, and Mojsije Rajović.

An anonymous master engraved the copperplate containing the text of this *Absolution Certificate*. In the upper register of the composition, three equal rectangular fields enclose iconographic representations: the Ascension of Christ is centered, flanked by Saint Sava on the left and Saint Simeon on the right. The typographic text commences with the formal name and title of the prelate: АѦАНАСИИ БЖІЮУ МЛСТІЮ АРХІЕПСКПЪ ПЕКСКІН И ВСЕН СЕРБАЛИН И БОГАРИН И ВСЕГО ИЛЛ҃ВРИКА ПАТІРІАРХЪ (“Atanasije, by the grace of God, Archbishop of Peć and of all Serbs and Bulgarians, and Patriarch of all Illyria”). The text continues with the proper liturgical prayer of absolution, leaving a blank space for the insertion



of the penitent's name. Centered along the bottom margin is an engraved replication of the patriarchal seal, bearing the Cyrillic text: БЖІЮ ЦЛТІЮ ПАТРИАРХЪ СРБСКІН ЧЕТВЕРТЫН ("By the grace of God, the fourth Serbian Patriarch"). The entire composition is enclosed on three sides by a decorative border band embellished with foliate scrolls. A single

blooming rosette is centered along each section of the border, with a stylized leaf anchor positioned at each of the four corners.

LITERATURE: Руварац 1905: 53–55; Руварац 1922: 264; Давидов 1983: 72, cat. no. 18; Трифуновић 1990: 197–198; Петковић, Петронијевић 2006: 100–101.

М. Ј.

63. Studenica Monastery with Saint Sava and Saint Simeon

Unknown artist, Moscow, 1758

Copperplate engraving

31.5 × 41.5 cm (plate), 31.5 × 41.5 cm (print)

Impression by Veljko Mihailović, academic painter from Belgrade

Museum of the Serbian Orthodox Church, inv. no. MSPC 3622 and inv. no. MSPC 06/4036

The commissioners of this copperplate engraving were Archimandrite Konstantin and Hieromonk Pajsije, together with the monastic brotherhood of the Studenica Monastery; however, the original copper printing plate remained part of the Metropolitan Treasury in Sremski Karlovci until World War II. Centered within the upper composition are two angels carrying a copy of the icon of the Dormition of the Most Holy Theotokos. Above this icon runs the inscription: Прѣ(с)тноѡ знаменїѡ їкони сто ѹспенскїа ктѣторскїа ст҃а денїтескїа древнїа; со оръжена и оупрашена въ лѣто дрѹ и дрїи года ѡбновленїаа. The lower register of the composition depicts the Church of the Dormition of the Holy Virgin of the Studenica Monastery, oriented from west to east. Mirroring the perspective seen in the 1740 Studenica print, which projects the church from a southern viewpoint, the highly visible western portal faces the viewer with similarly stylized architectural elements. The structure features five crosses, each resting upon a recumbent crescent moon. Flanking the church are full-length representations of Saint Simeon the Myrrh-Streamer and Saint Sava. Sava is identified by the *titulus*: с҃ын савка первын архїєїскпъ всѣхъ сербскн(хъ) и подорскнхъ земли сынъ сїмѡна (“Sava, first Archbishop of all Serbian and Maritime lands, son of Simeon”). He is vested in lavish episcopal robes adorned with scrolling foliate motifs, surmounted by an episcopal mitre

and a halo. He holds a closed Gospel book in his right hand and a palm branch in his left. To the right of his feet, discarded upon the ground, lie an imperial crown and scepter, symbolizing Sava’s renunciation of princely honors and secular power. Symmetrically, Saint Simeon is depicted in the habit of a Great Schema monk, his head encircled by a radiant nimbus from which celestial rays emanate; his own discarded royal insignia similarly rest at his feet. Centered below the figures and the monastery’s church is an unfurled scroll displaying the heraldic coat of arms of the Nemanjić dynasty, which features a central double-headed eagle encircled by the individual armorial shields of the Illyrian lands. To the right of this heraldic display, the inscription reads: Изобразиса сїе изображенїѡ с҃быа Цр(с)кїа Саворнїа Цр҃квы и Лавры | с҃то ѹспенскїа ст҃а денїтескїа с проїтїи с образы и знаменїемъ Цр(с)кїи | котораа создана Первымъ Цр҃емъ | сербскн(м) Стефаномъ Немано(м) нже по | слѣди нарече(н) с҃їмѡнь нѡвый Мїропѡчєць сербскїи въ лѣто с҃ѣѣ. со҃и | ниса нжданїенїѡ(м) братства настоанїемъ архїмандрїта Константїна | студеницкаго и Пав҃са еромонаха ст҃а денїцкаго. (“This image, depicting the Holy Imperial Cathedral Church and Great Lavra of the Dormition of Studenica, with other icons and the imperial emblem, which was built by the first Serbian King, Stefan Nemanja, later called Simeon, the New Serbian Myrrh-Streamer, was made in the year



1758. It was created at the expense of the brotherhood, under the supervision of Archimandrite Konstantin of Studenica and Hieromonk Pajsije of Studenica"). To the left of the coat of arms is written: Стефанъ Неманъ основатель | црѣтва серскаго его Цр(с)каа По|орода и наслѣдники именованнѣи | здѣ и еце некомпорѣи въ народе | славеносервскоу | грѣзъ прехъ соти и ѿ. лѣтъ непрелѣнно самодержавно Црѣтвоваша. Которѣи междѣ | протѣи и разниши своимъ знаменѣи | ми, и ради правн Црѣтѣа Двоглавнаго | Бѣлаго орла с кринками въ червленомъ | полы положенаго такоже здѣ зрѣнса нѣтъи ("Stefan Nemanja, founder of the Serbian empire. His Imperial Family and successors, named here, and certain others among the Slavo-Serbian people, ruled independently and without change for 330 years. These rulers, among their other various emblems, and by imperial right, possessed a double-headed white eagle with lilies, placed on a red field, just as is seen here"). Flanking

the central register on the left and right margins is a vertical row of ten small oval medallions with Baroque-influenced, stylized floral frames. These medallions contain waist-length portraits of notable national saints: Saint Jelena, Saint Prince Lazar, Saint Sava III, Saint Arsenije, Saint Sava I, Saint Ana-Anastasija, Saint Stefan Uroš, Saint Tsar Uroš, Saint Stefan Teoktist, and Saint Stefan Simon. The entire border framework is accentuated at all four corners by protruding elements of an identical stylized foliate ornament. In the lower part in the middle is the inscription: Бѣ лѣто 4711 года М(с)ца Априла : въ Цр(с)твующемъ Градѣ Москвѣ ("In the year 1758, in the month of April: in the Imperial City of Moscow").

LITERATURE: Давидов 1983: 73; Петковић, Петроније-вић 2006: 98–99; Давидов 2006: 356–357; Радосављевић 2019б: 349–350; Марковић 2022: 33–55.

N. S.



64. Rules of Prayer (Pravila molebnaja), also known as the *Srbljak* of Rimnik

Copperplates by Joseph Anton Lidl

Printed at Rimnik (Râmnicu Sărat) in 1761, issued by

Sinesije Živanović, Bishop of Arad

Paper, printed book; 267 fol.; 210 × 150 mm

Museum of the Serbian Orthodox Church, inv. no. PP SŠK 78

In the eighteenth century, Serbian typography experienced a significant revival. Unlike earlier centuries of Serbian printing, which yielded only two secular editions alongside a predominantly liturgical output, the typography at Râmnic (Rimnik) in Wallachia during the mid-eighteenth century focused heavily on books of a profane or educational nature. However, a major exception occurred in 1761 with the printing of the *Srbljak* – a monumental liturgical compendium collecting the proper services dedicated to regional Serbian saints. The woodcut and copperplate illustrations within this landmark edition faithfully reflect the evolving aesthetic and iconographic traditions of eighteenth-century Serbian graphic arts.

A copy of this book is kept at the Museum of the Serbian Orthodox Church, as part of the library of the Peć Patriarchate. From the inscription at the beginning of the book, we learn that it was a gift from the Bishop of Arad, Sinesije Živanović, who was also responsible for printing the *Srbljak* in Râmnic: *ко сѣишю Патріаршію ѿпекскю Сербскю Смирненн Сѣнесін Еп(ис)опъ Арадскін ко даръ от своего тѣла за мѣтѣхъ присиаетъ. Подписанъ 12. Іюніа 763 у вершцѣ* (“To the Most Holy Serbian Patriarchate of Peć, the humble Sinesije, Bishop of Arad, sends this as a gift

from his own labor for the sake of prayer. Signed on June 12, 1763, in Vršac”).

The copperplate illustration of Saint Sava was executed by Joseph Anton Liedl, based on a model by Stefan Tenecki. The composition, measuring 136 × 163 mm, is located between folios 134 and 135. Saint Sava is depicted standing, turned slightly to the right. He is vested in full episcopal robes, richly decorated with gold embroidery, with a mitre on his head. He blesses with his right hand, and in his left he holds an open Gospel book with the following text: *азъ есмь пастирь добрый и ѡшѣлюю полагаю за овци* (“I am the good shepherd, and I lay down my life for the sheep”). Saint Sava is designated by the titulus: *Сѣын Савва, первын Архїеп(ис)копъ Сербскін* (“Saint Sava, First Archbishop of Serbia”). Below this composition is the text: *Іерарха предивна и Перкопастыра Сербска земли славить та, и ѡхъ кратїра, Корене свята Неманска вѣтвь Сѣшю Савво, Племєне же и славна рода сербска славо* (“The Serbian land praises thee, O wondrous hierarch and first shepherd, vessel of the Spirit, holy branch of the sacred Nemanjić root, Saint Sava, the glory of the lineage and illustrious Serbian people”).

LITERATURE: Паланичанин 1976: 78–79; Чурчић 1976: 43; Давидов 2006: 392, cat. 198/10, fig. 336.

M. J.

65. Icon of Saint Stefan Štiljanović, Saint Simeon, Saint Sava, and Saint Arsenije

Stefan Tenecki, Church of Saint Nicholas in Stari Slankamen, 1764

Tempera on wood; 66 × 50 × 2 cm

Matica Srpska Gallery, inv. no. GMS/U 6461

One of the four icons painted by Stefan Tenecki in 1764 for the church in Stari Slankamen, located on the eastern slopes of Fruška Gora, is the icon of the Serbian saints preserved at the Matica Srpska Gallery under the title Saint Stefan Štiljanović, Venerable Simeon the Serbian, and the Holy Serbian Archbishops Sava and Arsenije. In the eighteenth century, the image of Saint Sava was most frequently included within group representations of saints without individual emphasis. Such icons are distinct; the selection of saints depicted together was carefully curated to reflect the liturgical needs of the specific church or the mandate of the commissioner. It also indicates which saints were most venerated locally, whose relics were preserved nearby, and whom the Church prioritized within the liturgical life of the community. These panels were generally smaller in scale and intended for manual veneration and kissing. On this icon by Tenecki, Saint Sava does not stand out visually, as all the saints are depicted with equal compositional weight. Starting from the left, the painter first presented the Holy Despot Stefan Štiljanović, a middle-aged man with long gray hair, a beard, and a shoulder-length mustache. He is attired in golden royal robes embroidered with foliate motifs, an ornate collar, and liturgical cuffs (epimanikia) decorated with precious stones and

pearls. On his head he wears a Baroque royal crown of gold and dark fabric, decorated with pearls and rubies, and surmounted by a golden cross. He rests his left hand on his chest while holding a golden scepter in his right. Only his lower feet are visible, clad in black boots embroidered with golden floral motifs. The relics of Saint Stefan Štiljanović were preserved during the eighteenth century near Stari Slankamen, in the Šišatovac Monastery on the western slopes of Fruška Gora. Adjacent to him is the Venerable Simeon the Serbian, depicted with a long gray beard as a monk of the Great Schema in a black monastic habit. At chest height, he holds a golden blessing cross in his left hand, while his right hand holds an unfurled scroll containing a quotation from the thirty-third Psalm: “Come, little children, listen to me: I will teach you the fear of the Lord.” Tenecki positioned Saint Sava third in the series, represented in opulent episcopal vestments woven with gold and silver thread. On his head he wears a Baroque mitre made of gold over a dark fabric base, decorated with pearls and precious stones. On his chest he wears a golden pectoral cross and a panagia featuring a representation of Christ Pantokrator enthroned. He holds a closed Gospel book in his left hand while offering a gesture of benediction with his right hand. Last in the series, Tenecki



painted Saint Arsenije in rich episcopal vestments adorned with silver and gold embroidery. On his head he wears an elaborate Baroque mitre made of gold over a purple fabric base, decorated with pearls and precious stones. On his chest he wears a golden pectoral cross and a panagia featuring a representation of the Virgin Platytera (Wider than the Heavens). In his left hand he holds an episcopal crozier topped by a cross flanked by two opposed

serpents, while his right hand is raised at chest height in a gesture of blessing. The ground upon which the saints stand is rendered simply in black, while the background behind the figures is painted gold. The saints are represented with golden halos.

LITERATURE: Давидов 1970: 348–351; Микић 2005: 33–54; Тодић 2013: 163; Симић 2025: 429–430.

N. S.

66. Icon of Saint Sava, Saint Simeon, and Saint Arsenije – Baptism of Christ

Stefan Tenecki, the Krušedol Monastery, 1766

Tempera on wood; 31 × 20 cm

Museum of the Serbian Orthodox Church, inv. no. MSPC 4050

The double-sided painted icon featuring the Baptism of Christ and three Serbian saints, preserved in the collection of the Museum of the Serbian Orthodox Church, originally belonged to the Katholikon of the Krušedol Monastery. It constitutes one of six icons executed by Stefan Tenecki in 1766 under the patronage of the Bishop of Vršac and Caransebeș, Jovan Georgijević. The three national saints depicted together are Saints Sava, Simeon, and Arsenije. The Venerable Simeon the Serbian is represented in the center with an elongated gray beard, depicted frontally as a monk of the Great Schema in a black monastic habit. He raises his right hand before his chest in a gesture of benediction while holding a simple monastic staff in his left hand. To his right stands Saint Sava, depicted with shoulder-length brown hair and a matching beard. He is oriented slightly toward Saint Simeon with his head subtly inclined, looking directly toward the viewer. He is vested in an opulent red sakkos detailed with gold liturgical cuffs (epimanikia) and a border band set with pearls and precious stones. His white omophorion features large green crosses and a gold border, while his green epigonation is decorated with a white cross, a gold border, and terminal tassels. He wears a golden panagia over his chest and a golden episcopal mitre with a green fabric base,



decorated with gold medallions and precious stones. In his right hand, raised at chest height, he holds a golden blessing cross, while his left hand supports a closed Gospel book. To the left of Saint Simeon is Saint Arsenije, turned in a three-quarter profile toward Saint Simeon, at whom he directs his gaze. He is represented as a middle-aged prelate with long, wavy brown hair and a beard. He is vested in a dark green sakkos embellished with foliate embroidery, gold epimanikia, and a hem set with pearls and precious stones. His white omophorion features golden crosses and a gold border. He wears a golden panagia on his chest and a golden episcopal mitre with



a green fabric base, adorned with pearls in a more minimalist decorative scheme than Sava's mitre. He places his right hand over his chest while his left hand holds a pastoral staff (crozier). The windows in the background indicate that the scene is set within an interior space. At the feet of Saint Simeon, a heraldic achievement is presented on a golden shield, incorporating the armorial symbols and initials of the donor, Bishop Jovan Georgijević (By the Grace of God, His Grace the Bishop of Caransebeș, Vršac,

Lugoj, etc). The heraldic motif consists of a white Maltese cross positioned within a green vertical oval, surmounted by a mitre and encircled by a pastoral cross, all resting upon a cross-staff and a bishop's crozier. The painter's initials, S. T., are located in the lower right corner of the icon.

LITERATURE: Микић 2005: 33–64; Тимотијевић 2008: 184–187; Симић 2025: 410, 429, 433.

N. S.

67. Kuveždin Monastery with Saint Sava and Saint Simeon

Zaharija Orfelin, 1772

Copperplate engraving

52.5 × 73.5 cm (plate), 78 × 106 cm (paper), 50.3 × 70.5 cm (print)

Museum of the Serbian Orthodox Church,

inv. no. MSPC 3155 and inv. no. 4051

The Katholikon of the Kuveždin Monastery is dedicated to Saints Sava and Simeon. During the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, this monastic complex functioned as one of the preeminent centers for the dissemination of the cult of Saint Sava among the Serbs within the Habsburg Monarchy. Zaharija Orfelin represented the monastic compound and its principal church in a copperplate vedute from a southern perspective, positioned at the center of the composition within the undulating and forested Fruška Gora landscape. The print also includes the nearby monasteries of Đipša and Šišatovac, alongside the village of Divoš, arranged according to their actual geographical distribution; this accuracy supports the scholarly consensus that Orfelin executed the preliminary sketch in situ. This graphic work is considered a significant historical document in Serbian art history, as it authentically records the architectural state of the Kuveždin church prior to its destruction during World War II. In the upper register of the composition, five equal rectangular compartments feature iconographic representations arranged from right to left: Saint Sava, the Protection of the Most Holy Theotokos, Christ the Savior, Saint Nicholas, and Saint Simeon the Myrrh-Streamer. The vedute was executed concurrently with the structural renovation of the

church and the painting of the new iconostasis by Janko Halkozović in 1772. Within the Sovereign tier, the iconostasis featured these identical icons arranged in the exact sequence seen in the copperplate engraving. In replicating this iconographic program, Orfelin supplemented the core patronal figures of the Kuveždin Monastery with the icon of Saint Nicholas, the patron saint of the Đipša Monastery, which was then administered as a dependency (metochion) of Kuveždin. Furthermore, the ktetor (donor) inscription on the vedute states that this representation of the Kuveždin Monastery – honoring the holy Serbian enlighteners Simeon the Myrrh-Streamer and Saint Sava, alongside its metochion, the Đipša Monastery – was created with the blessing of Metropolitan Jovan Georgijević. It was produced under the financial patronage of Dimetrije Monasterlija, a citizen of Pest, who gifted the print to the monastery for his commemoration, in 1772, during the administration of Abbot Kiril Jovanović. The inclusion of the first Serbian sovereign and the first archbishop within the pictorial schema, combined with their explicit prominence in the dedicatory text, directly reinforced the monastery's institutional lineage, elevating its status among the faithful and investing the site with an enhanced degree of sacrality. The copperplate engraving was



likely intended for distribution as a votive gift of gratitude to donors and financial contributors on the occasion of the monastery's renovation.

LITERATURE: Давидов 1983: 33; Краут 1985: 80; Давидов 2006: 302–303; Петковић, Петронијевић 2006: 92–93; Симић 2013: 113, 174, 236–238.

N. S.

68. Hilandar Monastery with Saint Sava and Saint Simeon

Zaharija Orfelin, Beočin – Sremski Karlovci, after 1779

Copperplate print on silk

54 × 75 cm (plate), 51.2 × 73.5 cm (imprint)

Museum of the Serbian Orthodox Church,

inv. no. MSPC 0056

The copperplate engraving on silk depicting the Hilandar Monastery is unsigned, but its authorship is unanimously attributed to Zaharija Orfelin (sometimes designated as pseudo-Orfelin) based on iconographic solutions that align with his authenticated graphic corpus. The only known extant copy of this print on silk was executed from a second state of the printing plate, which was modified to include a Greek inscription positioned beneath the vedute of the monastery's katholikon. The print can be dated to the period after 1779, the year Orfelin engraved the initial state of the plate. The production was initiated through the efforts of Atanasije Obradović, a Hilandar monk who traveled to the Habsburg Monarchy to secure financial contributions for the structural restoration of the monastery, at which time he commissioned the engraving from Orfelin. The fabrication and printing costs were defrayed by Stefan Roža, a nobleman from Eger (Jegra), and Vreta Jovanović of Moschopolis (Moskopolje). Orfelin evidently adapted the architectural layout of the monastic compound from either a 1764 Viennese or a 1757 Muscovite copperplate print, supplementing the core composition with depictions of saints and biblical narratives. The katholikon of the Imperial Lavra of Hilandar, positioned at the center of the composition,

is dedicated to the Presentation of the Most Holy Theotokos. Consequently, a representation of this feast is placed directly above the architectural vedute on the left, balanced on the right by a depiction of the monastery's patronal feast and the miraculous icon of the Theotokos Tricherousa (Three-Handed Virgin). Along the vertical margins of the print, two parallel decorative registers depict evangelical scenes and individual saints, structurally representing the dedications of the secondary churches and chapels belonging to the monastic complex. Through this design, Orfelin mapped the sacred topography of the entire monastery rather than merely its principal church. The left vertical register encloses the Annunciation, the Archangels Gabriel and Michael, the Apostles Peter and Paul, Saint Sava II (Archbishop of Serbia), Saint George, and the Holy Forty Martyrs. The right vertical register contains the Nativity of the Theotokos, Saint John the Baptist, Saint Nicholas, the Great Martyr Demetrius, and the Holy Martyr Tryphon. The apex of the composition features a representation of the Coronation of the Virgin by the Holy Trinity, flanked by the full-length standing figures of Saints Sava and Simeon. They are prominently positioned at the absolute summit of the engraving, designating their historical status as the ktetors (founders)



of the Hilandar Monastery. One year after the execution of this plate, Orfelin produced his famous independent copperplate engraving dedicated to Saints Sava and Simeon.

LITERATURE: Давидов 1971: 164–166; Давидов 1983: 33; Краут 1985: 80; Давидов 1997: 9; Давидов 2006: 302–303; Петковић, Петронијевић 2006: 92–93; Симић 2013: 14, 127, 242–244.

N. S.

Св. Савва
Архипкоу
Сергій



Покрова Пре







69. Icon of Serbian saints

Unknown icon painter, second half of the 18th century

Tempera on wood; 44 × 31.5 cm

Museum of the Serbian Orthodox Church, inv. no. MSPC 452

The icon of Serbian saints, which is now in the permanent exhibition of the Museum of the Serbian Orthodox Church in Belgrade, was executed using the tempera technique on a rectangular wooden panel. It was modeled after the illustrations of Serbian saints in the Râmnic (Rimnik) edition of the *Srbljak* from 1761. Its foundational prototype is a copperplate engraving by the famous engraver Zaharija Orfelin, published in the *Srbljak* in 1765 at the printing house of Dimitrije Teodosije in Venice. This introductory page of the aforementioned *Srbljak* depicts fifteen figures of Serbian saints arranged across thirteen medallions.

Like the engraving by Zaharija Orfelin, the structural core of the composition of the icon of Serbian saints consists of thirteen oval medallions depicting the bust-length figures of Serbian saints surrounded by stylized floral decoration of Baroque form. The miniature busts of the Serbian saints are meticulously painted on a gilded background, integrated with floral decoration in the form of foliate tendrils. Around the irregularly shaped central medallion, the busts of the Serbian saints are arranged in smaller oval medallions. Above all the medallions, tituli containing the names of the saints are inscribed.

In the central part of the icon, within the largest medallion, Saint Simon the Serbian king is

depicted, vested in the robes of a Great Schema monk with a panakamilavka on his head, a scepter in his right hand, and a cross along with a scroll bearing a text in his left hand. In the vertical register on the left side, from top to bottom, medallions enclose bust-length images of Saint Stefan the Despot, Saint King Milutin, and Saint Emperor Uroš in their royal robes. Saint Stefan the Despot holds a scepter in his left hand, Saint King Milutin holds a cross in his right hand, and Saint Emperor Uroš holds a cross and a palm branch in his right hand as a symbol of martyrdom. Below them is a collective medallion containing three waist-length figures: Saints Athanasius the Great, Maksim the Archbishop, and Cyril of Alexandria, who are represented in episcopal vestments with mitres on their heads.

On the right side, from top to bottom, there are medallions enclosing the busts of Saint Arsenije, Archbishop of Serbia, in episcopal vestments with a cross in his right hand and a scepter in his left. Below are the busts of Saint King Stefan of Dečani, with a cross and a palm branch in his right hand and a scepter in his left. Below is a medallion with the image of Saint John the Despot in royal vestments with a scepter in his left hand, and at the very bottom is Saint Simeon the Myrrh-Streamer in monastic habit.

С. САВА АРХ: СЕРБСКІИ



КНАЗ СЕР

ПМТИ АА
ЦАР СЕР



Above the central medallion is a bust of the Holy Prince Stefan Štiljanović with a cross in his right hand. Below the central, largest medallion is the image of Saint Sava, Archbishop of Serbia, depicted in episcopal robes with an *omophorion* and a patriarchal mitre on his head, blessing with his right hand and holding an open Gospel book in his left.

Below the medallion of Saint Sava, on the left side is a bust-length figure of the Holy Prince Lazar, holding his severed head in his left hand and a cross in his right as a symbol of martyrdom. On the right is a medallion depicting the Holy Mother Angelina attired in a monastic habit.

At the very apex, in the central part of the icon, a bust-length image of Jesus Christ is depicted emerging from the clouds, imparting a benediction. In the lower part of the icon, under the central medallion, the formal title inscription is written: ИЗОБРАЖЕНІА СЃІХ СРБСКИХ ЦАРЕН, КНАЗЕН, ДЕСПОТОВЕ, И АРХІЕПИСКОПОВ ГДѢИ ЗА РОД И ОТЕЧЕСТВО СВОЕ МОЛЯЩИСА: ("Representations of the holy Serbian

kings, princes, despots, and archbishops, praying to the Lord for their people and fatherland").

The compositional iconographic solution relies on a Baroque decorative artistic style that was modeled on Orfelin's copperplate engraving from the *Srbljak*. Although he completely repeated the iconographic pattern of Zaharija Orfelin, the unknown master of the icon of Serbian saints sought to make his own contribution to the inclusion of national saints in Serbian icon painting. He achieved this through the meticulous modeling of miniature figures of Serbian saints and a warm chromatic palette on a gilded background. He refined the template with a subtle painterly treatment, affirming this characteristic artistic motif through the figures of the most significant saints of Serbian national self-consciousness.

LITERATURE: Давидов 2006: 318–319; Икона 2011: 162, 199; Симић 2012: 67–70, fig. 15; Симић 2025: 410–412.

V. K.

70. Icon of Saint Stefan of Dečani, Saint Sava, and Saint Simeon

Priest Stanoje Popović, Šišatovac Monastery, 18th century

Tempera on wood, gilding; 36.5 × 25.5 cm

Museum of the Serbian Orthodox Church, inv. no. MSPC 4020

In the slightly recessed central field of the icon, Saint Stefan of Dečani, Saint Sava, and Saint Simeon of Serbia are depicted frontally in full-length formats. On the left is Saint Stefan of Dečani, represented as a middle-aged man with long chestnut hair, a beard, and a medium-length mustache. He is dressed in royal attire: a dark blue divitision and a red sakkos with a golden decorative loros. He holds a Baroque scepter in his right hand and a cross in his left. On his head is a closed golden crown. Around his head is a golden halo bordered by a red line. Above the halo is the titulus: СЪТЪ СТЕФАНЪ КРАЛЪ ДЕЧАНСКІН : (“Saint Stefan, the King of Dečani”).

In the center of the painted field is depicted Saint Sava of Serbia: СЪТЪ СЪВВА СРЕСКІН ОУЧИТЕЛН (“Saint Sava, the Teacher of Serbia”). He is vested in a dark blue sticharion, a golden epitachelion, a red sakkos with gold embroidery, and a light blue large omophorion decorated with golden crosses, alongside a decorative gold-embroidered epigonation. He blesses with his right hand, and in his left he holds a closed Gospel book with a richly decorated cover. The saint is depicted with a richly ornamented mitre on his head, chestnut hair, a beard, and a mustache. Around his head is a golden halo bordered by a red line.

On the right side is depicted Saint Simeon of Serbia: СЪТЪ СЪМЕОНЪ СРЕСКІН, with a gray beard and mustache, dressed as a monk of the Great Schema in a habit with a monastic mantle (mandyas) and a cowl on his head. In his right hand, he holds a pastoral staff. Around his head, he has a golden halo bordered by a red line.

Below the feet of all three saints is the dedicatory inscription: ПОМЕНИ ГДН РАБА ТВОЕГО МАКСИМА (“Remember, O Lord, Thy servant Maksim”).

The characteristic iconography of the saints depicted on the panel, along with a recognizable style in the traditional manner of post-Byzantine Orthodox iconography, links the authorship of this work to the eighteenth-century iconographer – the priest Stanoje Popović. The depicted figures are static, painted with emphasized linear graphicism and symmetry. The draftsmanship is rigid, the coloring is vivid, and the modeling is flat with stylized floral elements. The flesh tones are painted in warm shades, over which there are occasional highlights of white.

LITERATURE: Момировић 1977: 13–19; Васић 1978: 332, сл 11; Лесек 1992: 23–26; Шелмић 2003: 219–232; Стошић 2006: 43, 169; Симић 2025: 427–428, 431.

V. K.







71. Icon of Saint John the Baptist with Saint Sava and Saint Arsenije

Unknown Russian artist, 18th century

Tempera on wood, brass; 27 × 23.5 × 3 cm

Museum of the Serbian Orthodox Church, inv. no. MSPC 4164

The valuable icon, the work of an unknown Russian master, arrived at the Museum of the Serbian Orthodox Church in the mid-twentieth century from Sremski Karlovci. The wooden support is decorated along the rim with a metal panel featuring a raised outer edge, on which a foliate wreath motif with buds has been carefully executed using casting and stamping techniques. In the center of the upper edge is a medallion with the remains of a frontal, bust-length representation of Christ imparting a benediction laterally with both hands.

In the painted field, Saint John the Baptist, Saint Sava, and Saint Arsenije of Serbia are depicted frontally in full-length formats, their gazes directed toward the right. Saint John the Baptist is represented as an ascetic with dark brown hair falling in curls down his shoulders, a short brown beard, and a mustache. He is attired in a camel-hair tunic and an orange himation, with sandals on his feet. He offers a gesture of blessing with his right hand before his chest, while his left hand holds an unfurled scroll bearing the text: *покаѣ | сѣа приѣ|живося | вѣль цр|ствѣ нѣ|сїѣѣ ѹ|же | бо се|кѣра | вѣ|нѣѣ | к|ѣренн др|ѣва лѣ|ж | нѣѣ* ("Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand; for the axe already lies at the root of the tree").

The saints adjacent to Saint John are unsigned, but, judging by the iconography, the figure to the right of the Baptist can be identified as Saint Sava, and the figure to his left as Saint Arsenije. Saint Sava

is depicted as a prelate of mature years with a long brown beard, short brown hair, and a tonsure. He is blessing with his right hand while supporting a closed Gospel book in his left. He is vested in a sticharion with potamoi (rivers), a light-colored sakkos decorated with gold motifs and trimmed with gold-woven bands set with pearls and precious stones, and an omophorion bearing three black crosses and finished with red tassels. He wears red shoes on his feet.

Saint Arsenije of Serbia is similarly represented as a prelate with a long dark beard, short dark hair, and a tonsure. He blesses with his right hand while supporting a closed Gospel book in his left. He is vested in a sticharion with potamoi (rivers), a dark green sakkos decorated with gold motifs and trimmed with gold-woven bands set with pearls and precious stones, and an omophorion bearing three black crosses and finished with red tassels. He wears red shoes on his feet. The lower portion of the background illustrates a landscape overgrown with low vegetation, while the upper section is light red with gray clouds on the horizon. At the absolute apex of the painted field is a dark green sky dotted with white clouds, with the Sun positioned in the left corner and the Moon in the right. Based on its stylistic treatment, the icon can be securely dated to the eighteenth century.

LITERATURE: Unpublished.

M. M.



72. Icon of Saint Sava and Saint Simeon

Unknown Russian artist, 18th century

Tempera on canvas impregnated on wood, gilding;

27.2 × 23 × 2.6 cm

Treasury of the Patriarchate of Peć Monastery, inv. no. 84

In the center of the painted field, Saint Sava and Saint Simeon of Serbia are depicted in full-length formats within a rocky landscape. Positioned in a three-quarter profile, they face each other while extending their raised hands in prayerful intercession toward Christ Emmanuel (Ἰϥ ϣϥ), who is represented frontally and bust-length within a celestial segment of the sky. Saint Sava of Serbia is depicted as a young prelate with brown hair, a matching beard, and a furrowed forehead. The inscription designates him as the first Serbian archbishop and wonderworker: α(ε) τη сава первѣ архієпископ | сербскы ...отворец. He is vested in a sticharion with an epitachelion, over which he wears a luxuriously embroidered, gold-woven polystavrion. In his left hand, he holds a closed Gospel book. Saint Simeon is depicted as an advanced ascetic of the Great Schema; he wears a light-colored monastic habit with an analavos, covered by a dark mandyas (cloak), and has a cowl on his head. He is designated by the inscription as “the Myrrh-Stream-er”: Преподобни Сѣмнио... | пскѣи ми...отст.... In his lowered left hand, he holds an unfurled scroll bearing

the text: прїидете | ѣдоу по | сѣшете | мене и стра | хѣ г(о)по)даню | наутѣ вас (“Come, ye children, hearken unto me: I will teach you the fear of the Lord”). Both saints have gilded halos that were once decorated along their borders, matching the frame of the icon itself. The painted layer has darkened over time. Christ Emmanuel is enveloped by clouds within a semicircular section of the sky, extending both hands laterally in a gesture of blessing. The wooden support is damaged along its perimeter.

The icon is the work of a Russian master of the eighteenth century. His style is characterized by a refined draftsmanship with numerous carefully executed details. The figural proportions are harmonious, and the modeling is soft, with occasional translucent azure glazes. The expressive, portrait-like depictions of the founders of the Nemanjić dynasty contribute to the strong, emotional expression of the work.

LITERATURE: Матић 2017a: 474–475, cat. no. VII.11.

M. M.





73. Saint Sava

Dimitrije Avramović, 1852

Oil on canvas; 110 × 69 cm

National Museum of Serbia, inv. no. 1008

The icon of Saint Sava, executed by Dimitrije Avramović in 1852, depicts the first Serbian prelate frontally in a full-length format, vested in modern-era episcopal robes adorned with the insignia of archiepiscopal rank: a mitre, a crozier, and a pectoral cross. The saint is represented as an elder with gray hair, a mustache, and a beard. He offers a gesture of benediction with his raised and extended right hand, while his left hand, covered by a liturgical napkin (*encheirion*), supports a crozier; the summit of the staff features two confronting serpents flanking a small episcopal mitre, from which a rosary depends. Saint Sava features a radiant nimbus around his head. He is positioned within an interior space defined solely by a tiled pavement and a single pilaster on his right side. Above his head, the titulus reads: *С: СЛВКА А. АРХІЕПСКЪ СЕРБСКІЙ*. Dimitrije Avramović established this definitive canonical iconographic type of Saint Sava for the episcopal thrones of churches throughout the Principality of Serbia, a program initiated with his icon for the episcopal throne of the Belgrade Cathedral Church (1841–1845). The 1852 icon of Saint Sava exhibits strong iconographic affinities with the Cathedral Church version. The saint's posture is identical,

with the sole exception that the figure on the cathedral throne imparts a trinitarian blessing with three fingers rather than an open palm. The episcopal vestments differ only in their chromatic palette and specific decorative details. Avramović formulated this visual type of Saint Sava through rigorous empirical and artistic field research of historical models, particularly within the monasteries of Mount Athos. He maintained that “Serbian church history cannot be depicted without knowing the authentic image of Saint Sava.” He constructed this contemporary visual identity of the saint by analyzing medieval frescoes and material culture, translating these elements into the aesthetic framework of the Nazarene movement. This style, integrated into the Orthodox canon, utilizes pastel tones to create idealized, serene hagiographical portraits. Avramović executed the 1852 representation of Saint Sava according to these identical artistic principles. The artist monogrammed the reverse of the panel: D. A. 1852.

LITERATURE: Мирковић, Петровић 1953: 7; Коларић 1966: 360–364; Васић 1970: 13–14, 21, 36–47, 72, 97; Петровић, Блануша 2015: 43; Борозан 2025, 466–469.

N. S.

74. Saint Sava with Children

Pavle Simić, 1858

Oil on canvas; 82,5 × 126 cm

Matica Srpska Gallery, inv. no. GMS/U 6104

Pavle Simić's painting *Saint Sava with Children* is executed in a large format and represents the most revered Serbian saint surrounded by children. Simić shaped the composition by varying the existing iconographic prototypes known in Serbian painting. Starting from the first depiction of the saint surrounded by children, painted in 1838 by Dominik Perlaska, painters, in accordance with their own aesthetic programs, shaped this motif, which became highly popular at the end of the century. In accordance with the increasingly pronounced connection of Saint Sava with education, of which he officially became the patron saint in 1840, Pavle Simić depicted the saint with a liturgical book in his left hand, while he blesses with his right. By surrounding him with children holding books, the painter materialized the idea of Saint Sava as the first Serbian educator, which was in accordance with the civic ideal of spiritual, but also secular, education as the foundation of the modernization and emancipation

of society. The saint is depicted in an idealized ecclesiastical space, which refers to his spiritual and institutional role as the founder of the autocephalous Serbian Church. The representation is executed in accordance with the pictorial poetics of German and Austrian Romantic painters, the so-called Nazarenes, whose teachings the painter adopted during his studies at the Vienna Academy of Fine Arts. Their stylistic features were reflected in soft tones and pastel colors, such as pink and ochre, as well as in sentimentally modeled figures that evoke meditation and encourage the viewer to become absorbed in observing these serene representations. All these features are also present in Simić's representation of Saint Sava, which speaks to the contextualization of general trends in religious art within Serbian art in the mid-nineteenth century.

LITERATURE: Микић, Шелмић 1979: 103.

I. B.



75. Saint Sava Blesses Serbian Children

Stevan Todorović, 1875

Oil on canvas; 72 × 125 cm

Serbian Orthodox Church Community of Perlez

Stevan Todorović called this painting Saint Sava Receives Children and Parents for Instruction and mentioned it in his *Autobiography*, where he listed *My Compositions from Folk Life*. In professional literature, the painting is better known under the general title used for this theme by all painters – Saint Sava Blesses Serbian Children. Todorović depicted Saint Sava as a robust, corpulent figure with a youthful countenance, featuring portrait characteristics of Sava's image from Mileševa, but depicted in a realistic manner, with darker, thick hair and a beard, in magnificent modern-era episcopal vestments. The realism of the idealized representation is enhanced by the sakkos and omophorion, which are painted as if embroidered with silver and gold thread, so that they almost shimmer. On his head, Saint Sava wears a mitre made of burgundy cloth, decorated with a gold casing, a cross, and a medallion with an indistinguishable saint. In his left hand, over a green liturgical napkin (encheirion), he holds upright and firmly a gilded metal crozier, which terminates at the top with two confronting snakes, between which is a cross. This representation depicts Sava's moral, visionary, motivating, protective, and enlightening authority. This impression is also given by the fact that he is much taller than the numerous children

surrounding him. He embraces the child with his right hand; the child kneels, looking up prayerfully with a left hand on their own chest. They are located in an ecclesiastical space, which is depicted only with a semicircular arch that rests on carved capitals and, like a frame, highlights and encircles Sava's figure. At his feet, one step lower, books are depicted on the ground. Stevan Todorović painted the icon Saint Sava Receives Children and Parents for Instruction for the Serbian Orthodox Church Municipality of Perlez, while the National Museum of Serbia in Belgrade also keeps a smaller draft titled Draft for the Perlez Municipal Elementary School in Banat from 1888, accessioned under inventory number 1123 as Saint Sava. Executed in gouache and watercolor on canvas, this work repeats the icon from 1875 but contains in the medallions on the frame the following representations: Saint Sava Renounces the Return to His Father's Home, Saint Sava Crowns His Brother Stefan, Saint Sava Reconciles His Brothers Over Their Father's Grave, and Saint Sava Receives His Father Simeon into the Monastery.

LITERATURE: Тодоровић 1951: 81; Јовановић 1976: 198–199, 202–208; Кусовац и др. 2002: 176, 186, 236; Борозан 2025: 480.

N. S.





76. Icon of Saint Sava and Saint Simeon with scenes from the life of Saint Sava

Unknown Russian artist, first half of the 19th century

Revetment by Ivan Avdejev, 1857

Tempera on wood, gilding; silver, casting, repoussé;

35 × 30 × 3 cm

Treasury of the Studenica Monastery

The profiled silver frame, executed using stamping and casting techniques, almost completely obscures the central painted field, leaving only the figures and the flesh tones visible. In the central field, Saint Sava and Saint Simeon Nemanja are depicted frontally in full-length formats, surmounted by a cast representation of the Holy Trinity on the frame – comprising God the Father (Г(ОСПО)ДЬ САБАОТ), God the Son (ІС ХС), and the Holy Spirit – whose tituli are engraved on the metal. Saint Sava is depicted as a person of mature years, with gray hair and a medium-length gray beard. His gaze is directed upward, toward the Holy Trinity, with his right hand raised before his chest in a gesture of benediction, while his left hand supports a long crozier. He is vested in a sakkos with a large omophorion. On his head, he wears a silver mitre topped with a cross, decorated with two pearls and three semi-precious stones. A radiant halo extends into the field. To the left of the saint's figure is the titulus: САВВА СЕРБ[СКИЙ]. The Venerable Simeon is depicted as a monk of the Great Schema vested in a monastic habit with an analavos and a mandyas (cloak), with a cowl on his head. In his raised right hand, he holds a rosary topped with a cross, while his left hand holds an unfurled scroll displaying the text: ТЕРПИТЕ УБО БРАТНА МОЛ. To the right of the saint's figure, which is encircled by

a radiant silver halo, is the titulus: СИМЕОНЪ СЕРБ[СКИЙ]. In the background of the figures, the metal revetment (*riza*) depicts a plain landscape with two trees on the horizon.

Within a separate compartment on the left side of the icon, the opening scene from the Life of Saint Sava is depicted, in which an anonymous monk discourses with Rastko regarding the Holy Mountain of Athos; the accompanying inscription designates him as “Saint Sava the Serbian Prince” (САВВА КНЕЗ СЕРБСКИНЪ ПРИЗВАША ННОКЪ САВВА СЕРБСКАГО И ПЛАГОЛА О СВЯТОМ ГОРЕ АФОНСКОМ). Sava is represented as a beardless youth in military uniform, attired in a short tunic, a breastplate with a cloak, and a helmet, listening attentively to the elder monk standing before him.

Below the central field of the icon is depicted the scene of the Ordination of Saint Sava as Archbishop of Serbia (ПОСВЯЩЕНІЕ С. САВВА ВО АРХИЕПИСКОПЫ). Sava is represented in the center of the composition as a mature prelate with gray hair and a medium-length gray beard, standing with his head inclined before the hierarch performing his anointing, who is vested in a sakkos with an omophorion and a golden mitre. He is surrounded by a collective of bishops, priests, deacons, monks, and two solemnly dressed laymen witnessing this holy act. Within a separate painted compartment on the right side of the icon,

the episode of the Apparition of the Holy Virgin to Saint Sava, Archbishop of Serbia is depicted (явленіє б(о)жен м(а)т(е)рн с(в)е томіс саве арх(х)неп(н)скопс. Свети Сава (савва арх(неп)скопъ) се(рбскн)) is represented as a monk with a cowl (koukoulion) on his head while kneeling, with outstretched arms and an upward gaze, praying to the Holy Virgin. She stands upon a cloud just above the ground, shown full-length in a three-quarter profile turned to the left. The halos, sections of the garments, and insignia of all depicted figures are gilded.

On the reverse of the icon is a metal plate with an engraved text stating that the icon was consecrated on September 17, 1857, by the Moscow Metropolitan Filaret (Drozdov) (1782–1867) as a gift to the Studenica Monastery: аѡнѣ. г сѣнтѣбрѣ 17 днѣ. икона сіѣ освѣщена филаретомъ мѣтрополитомъ москoвскимъ для обѣтан студѣнцы къ сербѣн. The metal fittings, bearing the hallmark stamp of the workshop of master Ivan Avdeyev, also date from the same period: н а 1857.

LITERATURE: Шако́та 1988: 247 cat. no. 13; Матић 2019б: 387–389, cat. no. 231.

М. М.







77. Saint Sava Blesses Serbian Children

Đorđe Krstić, 1891

Chromolithograph on paper, lined on canvas

95 × 63,5 cm

Matica Srpska Gallery, inv. no. GMS/U 3704

In 1891, Đorđe Krstić painted the monumental composition *Saint Sava Blesses Serbian Children*, which is now kept at the National Museum of Serbia. Following in the footsteps of earlier representations of Saint Sava with children, especially that of Stevan Todorović from 1875, Krstić presented Saint Sava as the protector of education, as indicated by the gathered children. The children depicted are dressed in costumes characteristic of different regions of the Serbian people, and the representation also has a strong national overtone, emphasizing the integrative role of Saint Sava as a unifying national symbol. In addition to his spiritual role, the saint is thus defined as a national hero, becoming the embodiment of the idea of uniting the fragmented parts of the Serbian people.

Mihailo Valtrović also writes convincingly about this, commenting on Krstić's painting. As a leading figure of the Serbian cultural scene during the last decades of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and an active supporter of Đorđe Krstić's painting, Valtrović recognized in this composition an intellectual value, based on the vision of Saint Sava as a national educator and exemplary patriot around whom all of Serbdom gathers.

Having previously praised Krstić's intellectual painting and his creative renewal of the original, or rather medieval, artistic heritage, Valtrović advocated a Symbolist poetics transferred to the Serbian environment from Munich, the city where Krstić was educated. Such an aesthetic, but also ideological worldview is evident in the composition itself, which deviates from academic principles and an idealized depiction of the real world. Therefore, the event is placed in an imaginary ecclesiastical space, dominated by unconventional, atmospheric colors, such as the brooding greenish hue that permeates the entire painting.

At Valtrović's recommendation, the painting was reproduced in the mass media, in the form of oleographs and postcards, which made it one of the most famous patriotic icons in the Serbian media space from the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. This is evidenced by a series of oleographs throughout the parish network of the Serbian Orthodox Church, as well as the version kept at the Matica Srpska Gallery.

LITERATURE: Макуљевић 2006: 101; Борозан 2018: 122.

I. B.

78. Rastko (I Praise Ye, God)

Đorđe Krstić, 1906

Oil on canvas; 192.3 × 132.8 cm

Saint Sava Seminary, Belgrade

The last painting, *I Praise You, God*, was executed by Đorđe Krstić in 1906, a year before his death. Art-historical literature states that it was long considered lost, but it is now preserved at the St. Sava Seminary in Belgrade, where Krstić taught during the final two years of his life. Secondary sources also mention that the painting is titled *Rastko*, as well as *The Tonsure of Saint Sava*. The artist depicted Rastko Nemanjić in the center of the composition as a beardless youth with long brown hair, attired in a monastic habit, now bearing his monastic name, Sava. His back is turned toward the viewer. He holds written, but illegible folios in his hands, obscuring the text with his fingers. On his left side are painted a purple cloak (mandyas) with ermine fur, trimmed with gold embroidery, a golden sword, and a helmet decorated with precious stones. These are symbols of his princely dignity, but also of the earthly glory and material wealth that Rastko renounced for the sake of serving Christ and receiving the monastic tonsure. With a raised and inspired gaze, he looks at Christ Pantokrator, who, like a vision, sits enthroned before him within an ethereal, heavenly light that radiates from his person. Christ is depicted with shoulder-length brown hair and a shorter brown mustache and beard. He is vested in a pink chiton and a blue himation. He imparts a





blessing with his raised right hand, while with his left hand, resting on his left knee, he holds a Gospel book open toward the viewer. Resembling a medieval manuscript, it is written in vermillion and decorated with a headpiece and initials. Christ is depicted within a semicircular niche constructed of porphyry, pink marble, and a gold-decorated semi-dome, while the stepped doorpost and decorative archivolt evoke those of Studenica Monastery. Next to him sits an elderly monk with a long gray beard, dressed in a black cassock and a golden epitachelion, which features embroidered representations of the Church Fathers. With his left hand, he holds an open book on his lap, while with his right hand he shields his gaze from the intense light, recalling

the iconography of Saint Peter in the Transfiguration of Christ. However, in Krstić's painting, Rastko himself has undergone a transfiguration from the earthly to the saintly realm, completely surrendering to faith. Befitting the choice of theme, the imposing scale of the executed work, and the culmination of his artistic creation – which was admired by the foremost experts of his time – Krstić exhibited his final painting, *Rastko, or I Praise You, God*, to the public in the magnificent halls of the National Museum in Belgrade during that same year.

LITERATURE: Коларић 1977: 23–24, 28, 105; Кусовац 1978: 53; Кусовац 2001: 180, 209, 213; Медаковић 2021: 278; Борозан 2025: 490–492.

N. S.

79. Church of Saint Sava

Floor plan variants and longitudinal section

Konstantin Jovanović, 1898–1899

Pencil, India ink, color pencil on paper; 47 × 61 cm

Belgrade City Museum, inv. no. Ur 10115

The drawing shows the development of the conceptual design of a church building with a central plan and five domes. The building can be characterized as a cross-in-square church (inscribed cross) with five domes and an added narthex with two bell towers, which are also designed in the form of a dome. The central dome is significantly larger than the others, which gives the building the basic character of a single-domed church and emphasizes the centrality of the plan.

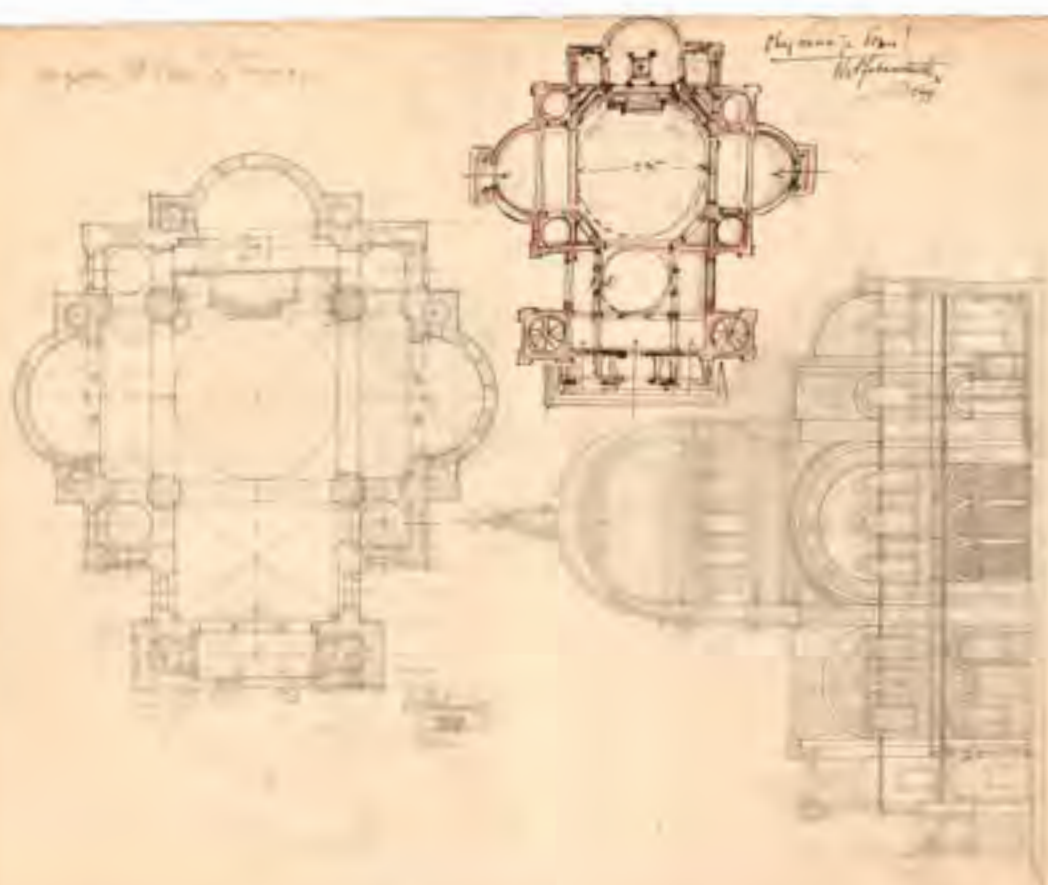
The drawing is large and provides insight into the author's iterative design process through the development of the foundation plan in two different variants, one of which is presented as a technical drawing, while the other can be characterized more as a freehand architectural sketch. The drawing is dominated by a cross-section with a detailed depiction of the interior of the building. Stylistically, the church is characterized by a strong influence of the Hansenite interpretation of Byzantine architecture, which is characteristic of the late nineteenth century in Serbian ecclesiastical

architecture and represents one of the developmental phases of the search for a national style and a return to the historicist models recognized in Serbian medieval architecture.

The monumentality of the building is reflected in the emphasized central dome, characteristic of church structures created under the influence of Hansen school architecture, which assumes a significant primacy in relation to the accompanying domes in the arms of the inscribed cross. In this way, the overall composition becomes more condensed, and the building is read as a single-domed composition, which also points to its monumental significance. This project represents one of the first attempts to deal more seriously with the design competition for the Church of Saint Sava at Vračar, which indicates the length of the protracted process of designing and building the Church of Saint Sava, which continues through various developmental phases to this day.

LITERATURE: Perović 2003: 34.

Đ. M.





80. Coronation of Stefan the First-Crowned

Stevan Todorović, 1899–1900
Oil on canvas; 35.2 × 70.4 cm
Matica Srpska Gallery, inv. no. GMSU 1388

The Coronation of Stefan the First-Crowned, from 1899–1900, is one of several compositionally very similar paintings of this theme executed by Stevan Todorović. Given that it was created immediately before the decoration of the church in Negotin in 1901, that it is smaller and unfinished, and that the two paintings are virtually identical, it is probably a preparatory sketch for the Negotin mural, which was executed on the south wall above the window



but adapted to the arched architecture. The murals in Negotin were executed by Todorović in oil on canvas, which he then marouflaged onto the wall, and then, according to the client's wishes, he still executed them entirely in oil on the wall. He was assisted in the execution by his wife Poleksija, who was herself a talented painter, and Milisav Marković. In his Autobiography, Todorović mentions only one small painting, Saint Sava Crowning His

Brother Stefan, in the list My Compositions from Folk Life. He also painted one that is now lost, but a reproduction has been preserved in *Nova Iskra* from 1903, which, again, only differs from the previous two in minor iconographic details.

In the unfinished painting from 1899–1900, the coronation of Stefan the First-Crowned is depicted within the Church of the Ascension of the Žiča Monastery, in front of the altar partition (temple), which is in the form of a colonnade with decorative capitals connected by semicircular arches. The frescoes on the walls are executed as underdrawings, and unfinished representations of the Virgin and Child, standing figures of saints, and bust-length saints in medallions on columns are visible. In front of the Holy Doors, a dais with three steps is elevated. It is covered with a green cloth and a long carpet, woven in various colors, which descends down the steps into the nave. In the middle of the dais stands Saint Sava, executed only as an underdrawing. He is vested in the rich modern-era episcopal robes of a bishop, with a mitre on his head. He is assisted by concelebrating hierarchs, clergy, and attendants, also executed only as underdrawings. In front of Saint Sava is his brother Stefan, who is kneeling, his right hand placed over his heart in an attitude of pious acceptance, while in his left hand he holds the royal scepter, resting it on the ground. He is enveloped in a long coronation mantle, which is gathered and held by a young courtier at the foot of the stairs. Saint Sava is leaning slightly forward as he places the royal crown on the head of his brother Stefan. The coronation ceremony is attended by a multitude of courtiers, soldiers, commoners, women, and children. Although the painting was left unfinished, from the postures of those present and the elaborate historical clothing, it is evident that the assembly is in a solemn mood.

LITERATURE: Тодоровић 1951: 81; Јовановић 1976: 198–199, 202–208; Кусовац и др. 2002: 64, 248; Борозан 2025: 484–485.

N. S.



81. Diploma of the Society of Saint Sava

Đoka Milovanović, 1886

Lithograph; 46 × 99,75 × 102 cm (framed)

C.C. Meinhold & Söhne, Dresden

Owner: Konstantin Egarić

The painter Đoka Milovanović was one of the founders of the Society of Saint Sava, which, since its founding in 1886, has had a prominent cultural and national mission. For the Society, he designed a medal, as well as the coats of arms of the Serbian lands, painted on the facade of their headquarters in Dušanova Street in Belgrade.

However, his most significant work was the conceptual design for the solemn diploma of the Society of Saint Sava. As a painter inclined toward realism, Milovanović created a complex representation defined by a decorative ethos, depicted in heraldic and ornamental motifs. Using ethnographic material and paraphrases of folklore motifs, he created a composition in the center of which is an open field with a carpet pattern as a background. This field is positioned beneath a crowned double-headed eagle. The upper register consists of a frieze of coats of arms, while the central field is flanked by medallions enclosing the bust-length figures of Saint

Simeon and Saint Sava. This confirms the importance of Saint Sava as the patron of the Society, and at the same time establishes a connection with the foundations of the medieval Serbian Church and state. The spirit of the Middle Ages is also materialized in the ornamentation, created on the basis of the fieldwork of Đoka Milovanović, which represents a synthesis of diverse citations from Serbian medieval architecture and manuscript miniatures.

Of particular importance is the decorative design integrated into the diploma, executed by a priest from Medveđa, at the top of which is the portrait of the young Andrija Parađanin, one of the founders of the Society of Saint Sava and a member of the Serbian Parliament from 1905 to 1906. The diploma was awarded to Andrija Parađanin on Saint Sava's Day, January 14, 1886.

LITERATURE: *Ђока Миловановић 1850–1919*: 40–41, 66.

I. B.

82. Katapetasma of Queen Draga Obrenović

1902

Tailor Svetislav Lj. Kostić and the Artisanal School for Girls, design by Vladislav Titelbah

Velvet, metal wire, silk thread, lined in rep fabric; embroidery and goldwork, faces and hands painted, sowing 330 × 185 cm

Treasury of the Cathedral Church of Saint Michael the Archangel in Belgrade

On the occasion of the twenty-sixth birthday of His Majesty King Aleksandar I, Queen Draga presented the Cathedral Church with a precious gift: a new curtain – a katapetasma for the Holy Doors. On the reverse of the curtain, which is lined with red ribbed silk (grosgrain), a dedicatory inscription was embroidered in gold: “Her Majesty Queen Draga presented this curtain to the Belgrade Cathedral Church in honor of the birthday of His Majesty King Aleksandar I, August 2, 1902.” Presented as a votive offering for liturgical commemoration, this katapetasma is yet another in a series of sacred objects testifying to the highly developed and continuous patronage and endowment activities of the Obrenović dynasty.

The author of the design, Professor Vladislav Titelbach, was, among other things, a passionate researcher and collector of ethnographic material – particularly folk ornamentation – with the specific aim of revitalizing these motifs and preserving them from oblivion. Queen Draga, herself an advocate for the revival of traditional Serbian costumes and ornamentation, as well as an advocate for domestic textile manufacturing, had previously commissioned Titelbach to create designs for both ecclesiastical and fashion items. As the patron of the Belgrade Women’s Society – which, alongside a number of successful institutions, had also established the Artisanal School for Girls for the study of sewing,

tailoring, and embroidery – she engaged its students in this prestigious work. The sections embroidered with multicolored silk thread are the product of their hands, while the gold embroidery (srma) was executed by the Belgrade *terzija* (traditional tailor) Svetislav Lj. Kostić, in whose workshop the katapetasma was fabricated. As a result of this collaboration, and thanks to the generosity of King Aleksandar I and Queen Draga, a series of works were executed between 1901 and 1902, including the shroud for the tomb of Saint Simeon the Myrrh-Streamer, a textile icon depicting the Life of Saint Simon, and the katapetasma for the Holy Doors of the Church of the Holy Virgin at the Studenica Monastery.

The katapetasma of the Cathedral Church is fashioned from cherry-colored Venetian velvet. The silk embroidery and gold-work embroidery, executed in the spirit of historicist art, are combined with painted appliqué, metallic wire, and glass paste cabochons typical of liturgical textile decoration in the second half of the nineteenth century.

The central register of the katapetasma is dominated by the full-length, standing figures of three national saints. Positioned in the center is Saint Sava (св · савѧ · 1 · архієпископъ · српскій ·), vested in episcopal robes and supporting a closed Gospel book in his left hand while imparting a gesture of benediction with his right. Flanking him on the right and left are







representations of Saint Simeon the Myrrh-Stream-er (ск · симео́нъ · миро́тоучи́й ·) and Saint Simon (пр · симео́нъ · мона́хъ ·) depicted as monks of the Great Schema. Saint Simeon the Myrrh-Stream-er supports a structural model of the Church of the Holy Virgin of the Studenica Monastery, while Saint Simon is represented holding a model of the Žiča Monastery. The saints stand upon a dais beneath a three-part architectural arcade; Saint Sava is positioned slightly higher and placed in the foreground, imparting a sense of three-dimensional depth to the entire composition. Hovering directly above Saint Sava within an autonomous circular medallion is the Acheiropoietos (Not-Made-by-Hands) image of Christ (о ѿ н). This medallion is encircled by gold-work embroidery depicting ears of wheat and grapevines, utilizing these traditional Eucharistic and liturgical motifs. The faces and hands of the saints, as well as the Acheiropoietos image of Christ, are rendered in oil paint on silk appliqué, while the rest of the katanas is entirely embroidered.

Within the arched embroidered border flanking the central figures are eight full-length saints – four on each side – who appear to emerge from the gold-embroidered foliate rinceaux. Arranged on the right are Saint Archbishop Nikodim, Saint Basil of Ostrog, Saint Maksim, and Saint Archbishop Evstatije; positioned on the left are Saint Tsar Uroš, Saint King Milutin, Saint Nicholas, and the Holy Mother Angelina. Due to physical degradation over time, their identifying tituli are currently illegible. The lower hem of the katanas is finished with gold fringe. From the moment it was retired from active liturgical use, the textile entered the treasury of the Cathedral Church in Belgrade. It was subsequently displayed at the exhibition “Treasury of the Cathedral Church in Belgrade” from November 20 to 27, 2023.

LITERATURE: АНОНИМ 1901: 682; АНОНИМ (а) 1902: 761–763; АНОНИМ (б) 1902: 3; АНОНИМ (в) 1902: 1–2; АНОНИМ (г) 1902: 333; Вујовић 1996: 173; Трајков 2009: 23–28; Шакота 2015: 215–216; Даутовић 2016: 143–196; Сарић 2018: 8–24; Даутовић 2023: 259.

Z. O.



83. Longines pocket watch with an etching of Saint Sava, 1908

Serial No. 2'007'319

Diameter c. 55 mm, size with the crown and bow: 85 mm

Case: Silver

Caliber: 2154, manual wind, 15 rubies

Invoice date: February 22, 1908

Customer: Antonijewitz & frères (Belgrade)

Inscription on the dial: "LONGINES БРАЋА С.

АНТОНИЈЕВИЋ"

Workshop signature: "HOLY F S"

Owner: Konstantin Egarić

The silver pocket watch by the Swiss brand Longines is an extremely valuable object that transcends its utilitarian function. The reverse of the case features a relief depiction of Saint Sava with children. This group representation is framed by a Cyrillic inscription: "Saint Sava, the first Serbian archbishop and enlightener." The motif is derived from a painting by the distinguished academic artist Pavle Simić, who executed a composition of the same name in 1858. The painting was created in the spirit of sentimental realism and represents one of the earliest variations on the theme of Saint Sava with children, emphasizing his status as the patron saint of education, as indicated by the book in the saint's left hand.

By employing photomechanical transfer of the image onto a metal die, the artistic composition was replicated as a relief representation on the watch case, a rarity within the Serbian context. This first-class artifact of industrial design also possesses significant artistic value, as Simić's painting was transferred to another medium in meticulous detail.

The Huguenin Frères workshop from Saint-Imier in Switzerland, specializing in metal processing – primarily silver and bronze – collaborated with the Longines watch manufacturer. Thus, for the Serbian market, it produced a watch case featuring the representation "Saint Sava and Children." The Huguenin Frères workshop produced the watch case-back on commission from the Longines representative for the Serbian market, Antonijewitz & Frères.

The watch was owned by Andrija Parađanin, a member of the Serbian Parliament (1905–1906) and one of the founders of the Society of Saint Sava (1886). This symbolically confirmed the connection between the watch's owner and the activities of the Society of Saint Sava, serving as personal memorabilia, while also illustrating the role of art in establishing the cult of Saint Sava during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

LITERATURE: Микић, Шелмић 1979: 103.

I. B. and A. E.

84. Saint Sava Reconciles His Brothers

Paja Jovanović, 1909

Oil on canvas

200 × 145 cm

Cathedral Church in Sremski Karlovci

The painting *Saint Sava Reconciling His Brothers* is one of four representations of Saint Sava that Paja Jovanović painted for the Church of Saint Nicholas in Sremski Karlovci, around 1909. The emphasis of the painting is placed on the moment when Saint Sava brings his brother Vukan to the crowned King Stefan the First-Crowned. The painter emphasized Sava's peacemaking role in calming the political crisis – the conflict between his brothers over the throne – which destabilized the medieval Serbian state. Sava is depicted as a middle-aged man with brown hair and a beard, a focused gaze, and a calm expression. He is the only one in the painting with a golden halo around his head, and his face is more brightly lit. He is dressed in a more modest bishop's robe of a lighter yellow color, similar to the robes from the portrait from the Mileševa Monastery. King Stefan the First-Crowned is depicted with gray hair, a mustache, and a beard, with a crown on his head and a serious expression on his face, looking intently at his brother Vukan. He is dressed in a purple royal divitision that falls to the ground, with a golden loros and epimanikia. Over his shoulders, down his back, falls a golden cloak decorated with precious stones. On his feet, he wears purple shoes. The king sits on a carved, gilded throne with legs

in the form of lions. The throne is raised from the rest of the space by two stone steps decorated with carved rosettes. Above the throne is a heavy purple velvet canopy. King Stefan holds the decorated pommel of his sword with his left hand, the blade secured by red cloth scabbards with embroidered gold crosses. The sword is resting on the ground, so that the king is leaning on it. Saint Sava, with a light movement, like support, grabs the king's arm. The king leans toward Vukan on the throne, offering him his right hand with trust. Vukan is shown with his head bowed and his gaze lowered. With a fur hat in his left hand, pressed to his chest like a penitent, he approaches King Stefan with restraint, respect, and submission. His sword is strapped to his belt. Saint Sava uses his left hand to draw Vukan's right hand to the king's hand. The act of reconciliation between the brothers is attended by soldiers with helmets on their heads and spears in their hands. Everyone watches the act of reconciliation between the brothers with full attention.

LITERATURE: Кусовац 1976: 313–317; Тимотијевић, Петровић 2009: 163–166; Кусовац 2010: 175–181; Костић 2013: 33–49; Петковић 2018: 11–15; Стокановић 2024: 210–216; Борозан 2025: 489–490.

N. S.









85. Saint Sava Crowns Stefan the First-Crowned

Paja Jovanović, 1909

Oil on canvas

145 × 200 cm

Cathedral Church in Sremski Karlovci

The Cathedral Church of Saint Nicholas in Sremski Karlovci served as the cathedra of the entire Metropolitanate of Karlovci until the unification of the provincial eparchies into a unified Serbian Patriarchate in 1920. Consequently, during its comprehensive renovation during the first decade of the twentieth century, it was decided to dedicate a small fresco cycle to Saint Sava, the founder of the autocephalous Serbian Orthodox Church. One of the primary themes presented is Saint Sava Crowning Stefan the First-Crowned, which visually encapsulates the ideal symphony (symbiosis) of state and Church as foundational pillars of societal peace and progress. The historical coronation occurred at the Council of Žiča Monastery soon after the Serbian Church secured autocephaly, following the Orthodox, Byzantine rite of royal coronation. Paja Jovanović staged the coronation within an ecclesiastical interior, reducing architectural references to a generic representation of the Church of the Ascension, marked only by a prominent Sovereign tier icon of Christ Pantokrator with a lit votive lamp before it, thereby granting complete priority to the solemn liturgy. Saint Sava stands on the left side of the composition; he is represented as a middle-aged prelate with thick brown hair,

a mustache, and a beard, assisted by a white-haired hierarch and other concelebrating clergy. Sava leans forward as he places the crown upon Stefan's head. The crown is elaborately decorated with precious stones, pearls, and enameled icons of saints, surmounted by a cross. While this crown represents the historicized insignia of the holy Nemanjić dynasty, its form closely replicates the Hungarian Holy Crown of Saint Stephen, which served as Jovanović's most immediate and recognizable visual symbol of legitimate monarchical authority within the Austro-Hungarian imperial space. King Stefan is depicted kneeling upon a red cushion; he is middle-aged, attired in a purple royal divitision with gold-embroidered, pearl-lined cuffs (*epimanikia*), and enveloped in a dark red coronation mantle fastened with golden jeweled fibulae. In the background on the right, an assembly of sumptuously dressed courtiers and soldiers witness the liturgy, greeting the coronation of the first Nemanjić king with raised swords.

LITERATURE: Кусовац 1976: 313–317; Тимотијевић, Петровић 2009: 163–165; Кусовац 2010: 175–181; Петковић 2018: 11–15; Стокановић 2024: 210–216; Борозан 2025: 489–490.

N. S.

86. Burning of the Relics of Saint Sava

Paja Jovanović, 1909

Oil on canvas; 190 × 285 cm

Cathedral Church in Sremski Karlovci

The Burning of the Relics of Saint Sava is the largest composition from a small cycle dedicated to the founder of the Serbian Orthodox Church, which Paja Jovanović painted for the Cathedral Church in Sremski Karlovci. In front of the dark silhouette of Belgrade on the left side of the painting, represented by walls and mosques with minarets, a large blazing pyre is depicted. The relics are not visible on it, but the fire is so great that it has swallowed them, while a Turk covers himself with his hand and retreats from the swirling flames. On the left side are also depicted the Turks stoking the fire, and the leaders on horseback. In the foreground is Sinan Pasha, in beautiful, green clothes, with a turban, restraining the agitated bay horse he is riding. His vengeful gaze is directed toward the Christians depicted on the right side of the painting. They are on their knees, looking sadly toward the pyre. Many are weeping, covering their eyes with their hands. Others are praying with their hands folded in front of their chests. One old man extends his hand toward the pyre, watching in disbelief as the flames engulf the greatest Serbian shrine. At the very right edge of the painting, a tall, strong young man stands out. With his right hand he grips the hilt of a sword, clearly visible on the left. The sword is in its scabbard, which is decorated with

the symbol of a red straight-armed cross. Unable to act, he grimly but resolutely looks at the pyre. In front of him is a hunched grandfather in a coarse tunic, who is pulling his grandson into his embrace, protectively holding his hands in his own. Among the Christians, an old monk stands out, in a monastic robe, with a kamilavka on his head, who looks with pride above the pyre, with his raised hands pointing to the scene in the sky. Thick, black smoke rises from the pyre. Mixing with white clouds, a segment of the sky opens, and Saint Sava himself appears in the golden heavenly sky. He is slightly turned toward the Christians, as if the event of the burning of his relics is not important. He gives the impression of peace, and with his right hand he blesses the faithful, while with his left hand, open palm down, as if addressing them, he gives them hope, patience, humility, and reconciliation. With the composition of the work, viewed from left to right, as well as the arrangement of colors and light, which moves from the Turks in the dark, to the golden and clear sky over the Serbs, then with broad, brisk, and expressive brushstrokes and layers of paint, Jovanović created a dynamic and monumental painting. It moves from a feeling of anger and destruction to a feeling of the beginning of the resurrection of the enslaved people – an economy



of salvation of the faith of all Christians, realized by the monk's raised hands to the sky, the warrior's vow, and the bright faces and calm gazes of beautiful girls in folk costumes, who look toward the golden sky and Saint Sava.

LITERATURE: Кусовац 1976: 313–317; Тимотијевић, Петровић 2009: 163–165; Кусовац 2010: 175–181; Петковић 2018: 11–15; Стокановић 2024: 210–216; Борозан 2025: 489–490.

N. S.





87. Saint Sava Blesses Serbian Children (I)

Uroš Predić, 1921

Oil on canvas; 130 × 93 cm

National Museum of Serbia, inv. no. 577; 4268

Within the expansive oeuvre of Uroš Predić, a pre-eminent master of Serbian academic realism, the composition *Saint Sava Blesses Serbian Children* stands out as a paramount achievement, currently exhibited within the permanent collection of the National Museum of Serbia in Belgrade. Completed in 1921 during the painter's mature period, the work achieved immediate and immense popularity. It was commissioned by the State Printing House of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes for mass reproduction and dissemination across schools and parish communities. At the center of the composition is Saint Sava, who sits enthroned with his head subtly inclined, vested in opulent episcopal robes: a white sticharion, a gold-woven epitachelion, a sakkos with an epigonation, and a large white omophorion adorned with golden crosses. Over his chest hang a panagia and an intricately decorated pectoral cross, while his head is surmounted by a tall golden mitre encrusted with jewels and pearls. Predić represented Saint Sava as an elder with pale skin, white hair, and a long beard, consciously emphasizing his Slavic physiognomy. This ceremonial benediction unfolds within a medieval church interior. The representative episcopal throne is embellished with a carved white double-headed eagle, its semicircular lunette featuring a painted portrait of Saint John





Chrysostom. With his right hand, Saint Sava imparts a blessing upon the gathered youth, while extending his left hand to be kissed by a Serbian mother in regional folk costume who approaches with her young son. Symmetrically to the right, a father nears the throne accompanied by his son and daughter. Flanking the throne are two young acolytes (readers) in red sticharia; one holds an open volume containing Saint Sava's pastoral messages to the children, while the other supports the archbishop's crozier. In the left foreground, an elderly teacher is shown bowing, leaning one hand upon a small table strewn with books and an unfurled scroll, while his other hand holds a volume intended for a young student. In the far left background, a monk stands behind the choir stalls, while the right background features a wall fresco depicting Stefan Nemanja (Saint Simeon) supporting a model of the Church of the Dormition of the Holy Virgin of the Studenica Monastery. Predić himself detailed the formal elements of the work: "As for the color scheme of the painting, it is deliberately cheerful and rich, which may seem too colorful to some; but the flower meadows are also colorful, and that is precisely why they are beautiful, because the colorfulness does not harm the painting, if it is harmonious. Here the subject itself demands richness in color and ornamentation: There is the first Serbian archbishop, the son of the ruler and the brother of the first crowned king of Serbia, there is his bishop's throne, there is a rich lord with noble children, there is a peasant woman in an embroidered dress as is worn, there is a Serbian rug – all of this is in truth full of color

and ornamentation; and what requires more simplicity and ease, such as the clothes of the monk, the old teacher and the little peasant, is also in the painting, giving the eye a rest, establishes a balance in the arrangement of colors." Predić masterfully executes this complex composition according to classical academic tenets, rooted in impeccable draftsmanship, refined plastic modeling of forms, and a balanced compositional layout. By defining each individual figure with psychological depth, the painter delineates the interior space with equal typographic and architectural precision. The palette is enriched by a luminous, refined color scheme composed of pure tones that emphasize tectonic form and material texture, where noble shades of red heighten the festive, solemn atmosphere. This striking monument evokes a profound national and spiritual revival, charting the modern consolidation of the cult of Saint Sava within Serbian history, culture, and education. Explaining the canvas on February 4, 1922, Predić noted: "The painting is intended for schools, and is intended to depict St. Sava as the protector of the church and school or of faith and education, in a simple and noticeable way, so that every viewer, even a child, can easily understand what this painting wants to say. The painting is therefore not historical, but symbolic. It connects the past and the present, not representing any real event, but a symbolic act of spreading education..."

LITERATURE: Јовановић М. 1998: 123, fig. 112; Борозан 2020: 507–508, fig. 12; Мишић С. 2022: 85–86; Борозан 2025: 464, 496; Предић 2025: 39.

V. K.



88. Saint Sava Blesses Serbian Children (II)

Uroš Predić, 1921

Oil on canvas; 165 × 115 cm

Faculty of Orthodox Theology, Belgrade

The second, larger version of the painting *Saint Sava Blesses Serbian Children*, which is now in the Faculty of Orthodox Theology in Belgrade, was created in 1921, as evidenced by the year and the signature of Uroš Predić, written in Cyrillic script, in the lower right corner of the painting.

In his autobiography, Uroš Predić states: “This painting is in the Palace, and the other, the same, but smaller, is in the administration of the State Printing House, which will reproduce it in color for Serbian schools.” Although this version of the painting with several figures gathered around Saint Sava is compositionally identical to the smaller one, some differences can still be observed. They are reflected, first of all, in the depiction of individual figures such as the two young readers in red sticharia on either side of the bishop’s throne, and a girl in the background on the right with a book in her hands and a veil on her head. Compared to the smaller version of the painting, the background is somewhat differently rendered, representing the interior of the church with various ornaments on the walls, as well as other details, such as the crozier held by the reader on the left and the clothes of the nobles.

Compared to the smaller version of the painting, Saint Sava in the center of the composition is

almost identically depicted sitting on the bishop’s throne, dressed in episcopal vestments: a white sticharion, a gold-woven epitachelion, a sakkos with an epigonation, and a large white omophorion with gold crosses. The only difference from the smaller painting is the decorative pedestal on which Saint Sava’s right foot is supported.

Partial changes from the smaller painting are also noticeable in terms of drawing, modeling, execution of details, and color. In terms of the painting style, unlike the smaller painting, which is brighter and warmer in color, this one was painted in a darker color scheme.

This expertly conceived and compositionally balanced painting of realistic interpretation, characterized by sure and precise draftsmanship in an academic manner, symbolizes the importance of moral upbringing, education, and the preservation of faith among young people, which has been passed on over the centuries by Saint Sava, the first Serbian educator and archbishop.

Describing the content of the painting, Uroš Predić states, among other things, that he depicted in the painting: “Two adult students have already been honored to wear the stycharis. One holds the bishop’s scepter, and the other an open book with the words that St. Sava himself wrote: ‘My beloved



children, do not forget your teachings and the orthodox law established by me; for by holding on to them, you will have God as your helper' – thus, words that briefly state the content of the entire

painting, 'teaching' and 'orthodox Law,' school and church."

LITERATURE: Мишић С. 2022: 86; Предић 2025: 39.

V. K.





89. Panagia of Serbian saints

Uroš Predić, 1923

Silver, silver-gilt, pearls, precious gemstones, enamel

11.5 × 9.5 cm, total length with the chain: 64 cm

Palace of the Serbian Patriarchate, Belgrade

On the occasion of the re-establishment of the Serbian Patriarchate in 1920, the Serbian Orthodox Church established a patriarchal insignia called the Panagia of the Serbian Saints, which has since become one of the most significant ecclesiastical symbols of the Serbian patriarchs. Along with other insignia of archiepiscopal rank – the white panakamilavka and the bishop's crozier – it is traditionally presented to newly elected Serbian patriarchs during the enthronement ceremony in the Peć Patriarchate, as a symbol of the spiritual unity and continuity of the Serbian Orthodox Church. The newly elected Patriarch of the Serbian Church wears on his chest the Panagia of the Serbian Saints, made in the form of a chain ending with a massive medallion depicting a full-length frontal representation of Saint Sava of Serbia.

The Panagia of the Serbian Saints was first presented to Patriarch Dimitrije in 1924 in the Patriarchate of Peć by King Aleksandar I Karađorđević, at the ceremony of his enthronement as Patriarch in the re-establishment of the Serbian Patriarchate. On this occasion, when presenting the panagia, the first patriarch of the renewed Serbian Patriarchate, Dimitrije, said: "On the panagia is the holy image of our great saint, Saint Sava. By placing this panagia on our chests and looking at the image of our saint

on it, I and all my future successors will always remember how great and holy his legacy is, which we receive as his successors and the first patriarchs of the Church."

The Panagia of the Serbian Saints is today kept at the Palace of the Serbian Patriarchate in Belgrade, while the drawings for its construction, made in 1923 by the architect Pero J. Popović, are in the Museum of the Serbian Orthodox Church in Belgrade. The Museum also preserves the original art templates for the watercolors of Serbian saints for the Panagia, which were created by Uroš Predić in 1923.

Based on a design by Pero Popović, which consists of one larger central oval medallion, fourteen smaller circular medallions, and two smaller rectangular medallions that end in a semicircle, the painter Uroš Predić created miniature watercolor representations of Serbian saints. This is evidenced by a letter from Uroš Predić dated November 19, 1923, which he sent to the Presidency of the Council of Ministers, in which he states: "By order of His Holiness Patriarch Dimitrije, and in accordance with a previous agreement with the President of the Council of Ministers, I myself created seventeen miniature watercolors of Serbian saints for the new patriarchal 'Panagia,' and personally handed them over





to the President on July 27 of this year. These paintings are now in Paris, where they are being used to make enamel medallions as an integral part of the 'Panagia' designed by Mr. Pero Popović." In the same letter, he states that due to the micro-scale of the paintings, he worked eight to nine hours a day, and that he completed the entire job in a month.

The Panagia of the Serbian Saints is made of silver with gilding, symbolizing purity and primordial dignity, in the form of a luxurious necklace on a chain, with fourteen medallions of small, elegant

circular shapes with a diameter of 3.8 cm, on which are enameled busts of Serbian saints, and two narrow rectangular medallions with a semicircular ending (4.2×5.5 cm), where Saint John the Baptist and the Archangel Michael are depicted in enamel.

This panagia was made in 1924 in Paris, as evidenced by the engraved text on the back of the large oval medallion in the middle, which reads: "KING ALEKSANDAR I AND NIKOLA P. PAŠIĆ, PRESIDENT OF THE GOVERNMENT, TO HIS HOLINESS THE FIRST PATRIARCH OF THE THIRD RENEWED

PATRIARCHATE, MR. DIMITRIJE, ARCHBISHOP OF BELGRADE, 1924.” On the rim of the medallion on the left side are engraved the creators of the panagia: “PROJECT: P. J. POPOVIĆ, ARCHITECT; ICONS: U. PREDIĆ, BELGRADE.” On the right side are the names of the authors of the panagia: “ENAMEL: MR. CROIZET; CREATION: G. AUCOC, PARIS.”

The necklace with medallions of Serbian saints made in enamel is richly decorated with pearls and multicolored precious stones of various shapes and sizes. The applied gems on the panagia symbolize a firm faith in Christ and Christian virtues, while the pearls symbolize spiritual purity. Precious stones and pearls are mostly represented on the central oval medallion – the panagia with four symmetrically arranged decorative crosses surrounded by a double row of pearls. A wreath made of leaves with inserted green gems is placed between the pearls. The panagia ends at the top with a relief episcopal mitre with a cross, which is decorated with multicolored precious stones, while at the bottom there is a relief representation of cherubs in the form of a child’s head with two spread wings.

Medallions with bust-length representations of Serbian saints and medallions with figures of Saint John the Baptist and the Archangel Michael are interconnected by floral decorative elements with crosses in the middle into a single, luxurious whole on which a larger central oval medallion (9.5 × 17.5 cm) with a representation of Saint Sava is hung. The total length of the necklace with chain is 64 cm.

The central oval medallion features a miniature enamel depiction of Saint Sava, the first Archbishop of the Serbian Orthodox Church and Serbian educator, in a standing frontal position. The saint is dressed in ceremonial episcopal vestments: a white sticharion and epitachelion, over which he wears a richly decorated white sakkos and a large omophorion in gold embroidery. The epigonation on his right side and the liturgical napkin (encheirion) for the crozier he holds in his left hand are of the same decorative design. In his raised right hand, he

holds a richly decorated golden cross. Uroš Predić presented Saint Sava as an elderly hierarch with fair skin, light red hair, a medium-sized mustache, and a beard. On his head is a golden mitre with two oval medallions and a cross on top. Around his head is a golden halo. The titulus marks him as the first Serbian archbishop and Serbian teacher.

On the left and right sides of the chain, from bottom to top, in rectangular medallions with semicircular ends, are depicted Saint John the Baptist in full length as a winged cephalophoros standing on clouds, and the Archangel Michael, represented frontally in full length in armor, with a shield and a fiery sword.

In circular medallions, miniature bust-length figures of Serbian saints – rulers – are depicted from bottom to top, with tituli, some of which are illegible due to damage: Saint John Vladimir, Saint Simeon the Myrrh-Streamer, Saint Stefan the First-Crowned, Saint King Milutin, Saint Stefan of Dečani, Tsar Uroš, and Prince Lazar.

On the right side of the chain, from bottom to top, are the busts of the holy Serbian hierarchs: Holy Archbishop Danilo II, Holy Archbishop Nikodim, Holy Patriarch Joanikije, Holy Patriarch Jefrem, Holy Patriarch Makarije, Holy Archbishop Maksim, and Holy Basil of Ostrog.

With the exception of the medallions with the images of Serbian saints, as well as Saint John the Baptist and the Archangel Michael, the chain is richly decorated with stylized decorative motifs. They contribute to the overall harmonious form of this significant ceremonial insignia, which, in addition to spiritual, also possesses cultural, historical, and artistic values. It has particular importance for the Serbian Orthodox Church because it represents the conciliar prayerful intercession of Serbian saints before God and emphasizes the continuity of the Serbian Orthodox Church since the time of Saint Sava.

LITERATURE: Борозан 2020: 508–509, fig. 13; Један век 2022: 11–12, fig. 20; Борозан 2025: 497–498.

V. K.

90. Temple of Saint Sava

Perspective drawing of the design concept
Milan Zloković and Andrej Papkov, 1926
Pencil and Indian ink on tracing paper; 52,5 × 66,8 cm
Belgrade City Museum, Milan Zloković Foundation
Inv. no. LMZ 1936

The design proposed by Milan Zloković and Andrej Papkov in the 1926 competition for the Temple of Saint Sava on Vračar is widely regarded in architectural historiography as the most successful project of the competition. Although the building significantly deviated from the strict conditions prescribed by the competition committee, it simultaneously aligned most closely with the contemporary currents of European monumental ecclesiastical architecture.

The project is characterized by a prominent central dome that dominates the structure, as well as by the circular and semicircular volumes of an explicitly monolithic massing. The primary structure is balanced by an asymmetrically positioned, detached bell tower. The entire church is distinguished by its formal harmony, wherein no single element is overemphasized; instead, the entire composition supports the motif of the central dome, which is articulated in a late post-Secessionist spirit.

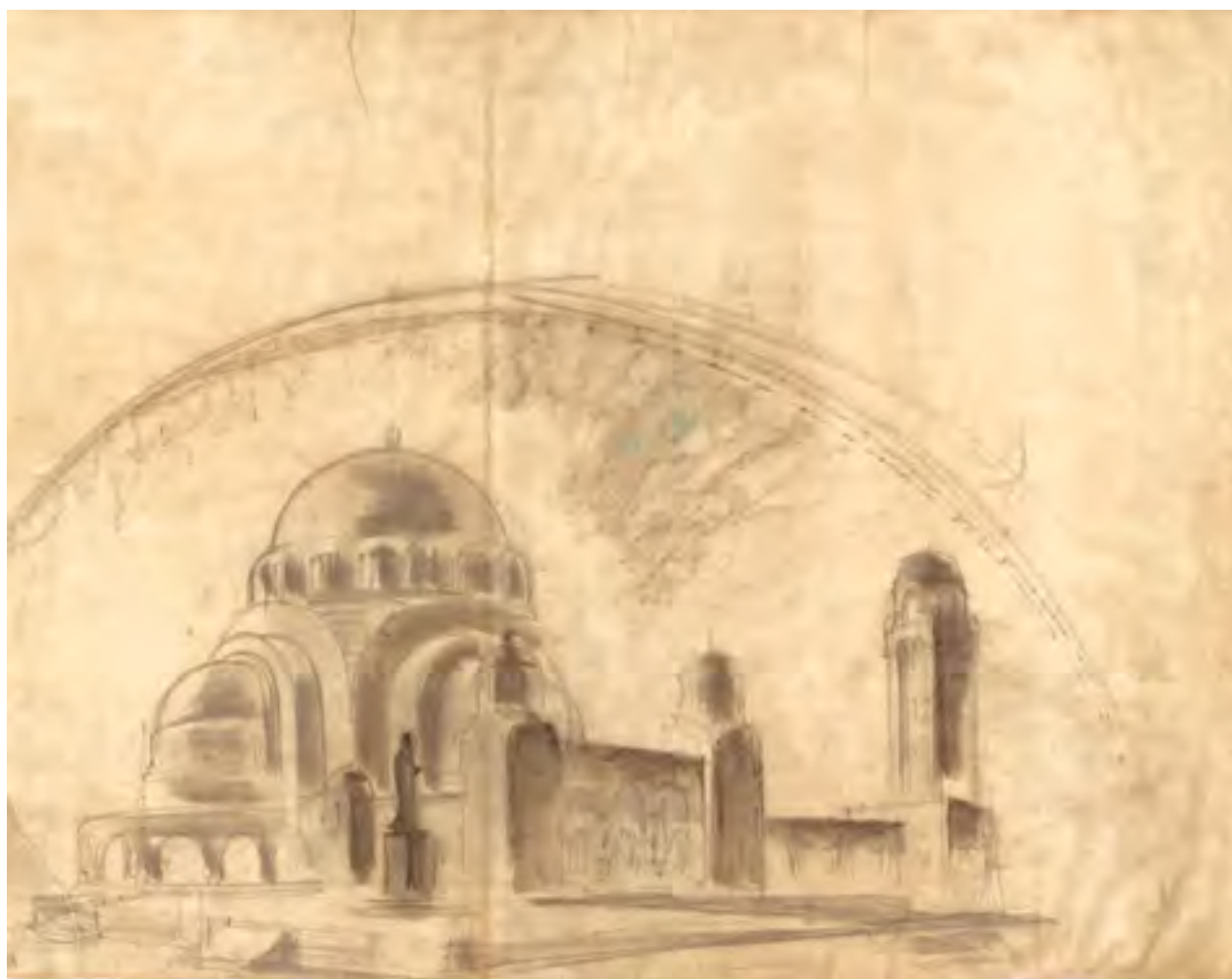
As with several other proposals from this competition, Zloković and Papkov's design incorporates motifs that reference the Church of Hagia Sophia in Constantinople. However, their proposal stands out

for its exceptional refinement and measured historicist interpretation, inflected by modern architectural tendencies. This synthesis underscores not only the monumental importance of the structure but also its civic position within the interwar capital of Belgrade, reflecting the broader geopolitics of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes.

While clearly anchored in medieval Byzantine prototypes, the architecture of the building is distinguished by a pronounced Expressionist character and a certain sober restraint. The church is rendered as a heavy, monolithic, unornamented structure of high sculptural quality, feature-rich with extensive porches and an integrated campanile. Consequently, it aligns fully with the broader trends of European sacred architecture during the 1920s. Furthermore, the project is recognizable by its brilliant draftsmanship and graphic presentation, which enhances its monumentality and highlights the inherent expressiveness of the architectural solution.

LITERATURE: Кадијевић 2007: 215–216; Кадијевић 2019: 225–226; Мишић Б. 2022: 67–68.

Д. М.





91. Temple of Saint Sava

Perspective drawing of the design concept

Petar and Branko Krstić, 1926

Pencil, watercolors, and gouache on paper

Institute for the Protection of Cultural Monuments of
the City of Belgrade

A perspective view of the conceptual design for the Cathedral of Saint Sava on Vračar was drafted by the Krstić brothers as a proposed solution for the design competition announced in 1926. The majority of the entries were subsequently published in the architectural journal *Raška*. The competition brief was formulated with the explicit requirement that participants design their solutions in the “Serbo-Byzantine style from the era of Prince Lazar.”

The project by Petar and Branko Krstić – alongside the proposal by Zloković and Papkov – stands as the most successful design of the competition, even as it significantly deviated from the foundational brief. It is characterized by an imaginative massing that fuses the structure’s longitudinal axis with a highly emphasized central dome. The overall composition is resolved by arcaded colonnades that form open courtyards, alongside an asymmetrically positioned, monumental campanile. This architectural solution can be understood as an elaboration of the Krstić brothers’ previous project designed for the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes Pavilion at the 1925 Philadelphia International Exposition.

The entire design is characterized by an imaginative, Romantic-Expressionist approach inflected

by strong elements of Art Deco design – a stylistic synthesis that characterizes the broader oeuvre of Petar and Branko Krstić. The arcades and porticoes dynamically enliven the proposed project, investing it with the character of a prominent urban church, while the rhythmic rows of windows on the campanile stand out as a particularly unusual motif.

In alignment with the majority of the competition entries, this project features a massive central dome that dominates the structure. The specificity of the solution is further reflected in the tectonic contrast between the central mass of the building – crowned by a dome that develops in stepped stages – and the longitudinal body of the nave, which accentuates the entrance zone, the monumental access staircase, and the narthex. Through its imaginative design and loosely interpreted historicist motifs, the project significantly departed from the prescribed criteria, a factor that ultimately influenced its final placement in the competition.

LITERATURE: Кадичевић 2007: 216; Ignjatović 2016: 261–263; Просен 2023: 258.

Đ. M.

92. Interior of the Temple of Saint Sava at Vračar

Александар Дероко, 1926. год.

туш и акварел; 72 × 74 цм

Двор Патријаршије српске у Београду

The 1926 watercolor depicting the interior of the Cathedral of Saint Sava in Belgrade was executed as part of the graduation thesis of architect Aleksandar Deroko. That same year, Deroko also participated in the architectural competition for the conceptual design of an idealized, monumental temple of Serbian Orthodoxy. Although the first preliminary initiatives for the cathedral were launched in 1879, nearly half a century passed before the opportunity to build materialized. The 1826 watercolor explicitly reflects Deroko's aspirations toward a national, Serbo-Byzantine style in sacred architecture. This stylistic focus is underscored by his handwritten inscription in the upper left corner, which reads in English: *Cathedral Church at Belgrad (Yugoslavia), Middle-ages Serbian style*. In his theoretical texts and design solutions, Deroko expressed an unwavering conviction that the only authentic path for designing Orthodox churches lay in emulating the most accomplished prototypes of medieval architecture. Deroko's conceptual design was awarded a prize in the 1926 competition. Six years later, he was entrusted with the development of the final construction plans for the cathedral – a task he executed in collaboration with Bogdan Nestorović, whose own proposal had won the highest prize in the competition. Deroko's primary mandate was to design the interior layout and sculptural

decoration. Through his competition watercolor of the interior, rendered in ink and shades of monochrome blue wash, he intimately evokes the sacred atmosphere of the Divine Liturgy. He depicts shafts of light streaming through a series of bifora and trifora windows from the lofty, monumental dome onto the faithful gathered in the nave, who are bowed in prayer. The viewer's perspective is positioned within the southwestern portion of the nave. A structurally similar watercolor from 1928, executed in ink and varied ochre washes and preserved at the Palace of the Serbian Patriarchate, depicts a nearly identical interior, with the sole variant being that the viewer stands in the northwestern section behind the perimeter columns. The 1926 watercolor represents the inner walls of the cathedral as unornamented structural surfaces, with the sole exception of the pendentives, which feature painted angels supporting the dome. Deroko depicted the officiating clergy upon the ambo (pulpit) within the solea (pre-altar area), positioned directly in front of the wide-open Holy Doors. The iconostasis is represented as a low stone chancel partition detailed with carved foliate ornamentation and twisted colonnettes that vertically separate the Sovereign tier icons. The blue dome is surmounted by a cross, which lends a sense of sublimity to the central vertical axis of the chancel



screen. Only two Sovereign tier icons are discernible: the Virgin and Child and Christ Pantokrator. The most meticulously detailed feature is a monumental chandelier (choros), whose diameter mirrors that of the dome. It is embellished with a series of wheel-shaped arches and the introductory text of the Lord's Prayer inscribed along the rim: "Our Father, who art

in heaven, hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come [...]." Finally, an effigy of Saint Sava is carved upon the capital of the northwestern pillar.

LITERATURE: Дероко 1925: 300–304; Дероко 1932; Дероко 1939: 27–28; Јовановић 1991: 63–69; Кадијевић 2025: 517–521.

N. S.

93. Order of Saint Sava 1st Class of Professor Milan Jovanović Batut

Huguenin-Frères mint, Le Locle, Switzerland, 1927

Silver, silver-gilt, enamel, moiré silk

8,5 × 5,2 cm (watermark), 10,3 cm (ribbon width),

9 × 8,7 cm (pendant)

Archives of the Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts,

Medal Collection, inv. no. K1-9

The most valuable part of the Collection of Decorations in the Archives of the Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts is considered to be the group of honors awarded to Professor Dr. Milan Jovanović Batut, who received numerous significant decorations and medals during the late nineteenth and first half of the twentieth centuries. He held several classes of the Order of Saint Sava, awarded in recognition of his foundational contributions to the development of modern Serbian medicine, the advancement of public health and hygiene, and the health education of the population. The Order of Saint Sava, 4th Class (Officer), was awarded to him in 1892, followed by the 3rd Class (Commander) in 1896, the 2nd Class (Grand Officer) in 1904, and the 1st Class (Knight Grand Cross) in 1927 – the latter primarily for his role as a founder and the first dean of the School of Medicine at the University of Belgrade (1920). Today, the Institute of Public Health of Serbia “Dr. Milan Jovanović Batut” bears his name.

The Order of Saint Sava, 1st Class, comprises two structural components: a badge (cross) worn on a sash and an eight-pointed silver breast star. The obverse of the badge features a central oval medallion with a representation of Saint Sava. He is vested in episcopal robes – specifically a greenish-blue sakkos

– supporting an open Gospel book in his left hand while holding a blessing cross aloft in his right. On his head, he wears a golden mitre detailed with red medallions, encircled by a gilded halo. This central iconographic portrait is enclosed by a blue enameled oval band bearing the golden Cyrillic motto: *ТРОДОМЪ СКОНИМЪ ВЪСА ПРИОБРЪТЕ* (“By his labor, he acquired all things”). The medallion is superimposed upon a white-enameled Maltese cross with blue borders. Gilded, crowned double-headed eagles are positioned between the arms of the cross, and the entire badge is suspended from a royal crown attached to a white and light blue ribbon. The reverse of the badge features a white-enameled central medallion inscribed with the year 1883, denoting the date King Milan Obrenović instituted the order. The second component of the decoration, the breast star, features an identical iconographic medallion of Saint Sava, without the crown, superimposed directly onto a faceted, eight-pointed silver star.

LITERATURE: Јовић 2002: 14, 16; Ацовић 2013: 94–97; Ацовић 2019: 383; Ацовић 2019a: 36; Крестић, Масалушић 2020: 119; Масалушић, Јовановић 2020: 369–370.

N. S.



94. Order of Saint Sava 3rd Class of Professor Radoslav Grujić

Huguenin-Frères mint, Le Locle, Switzerland

August 15, 1929

Silver, silver-gilt, enamel; 8,5 × 5,2 cm

Museum of the Serbian Orthodox Church, inv. no. MSPC 1219

For his contributions to the establishment and work of the Faculty of Philosophy in Skopje, Professor Dr. Radoslav Grujić was awarded the Order of Saint Sava, 3rd Class (Commander), by a royal decree on August 15, 1929, at the proposal of the Ministry of Education of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes. Because the region of Southern Serbia had faced material and cultural stagnation for centuries under Ottoman rule, the founding of a university center in Skopje as soon as the opportunity arose after World War I is considered one of the most significant educational achievements of the interwar period.

The presentation box and ribbon of the order have been lost. The obverse of the badge features a central medallion with a representation of Saint Sava. He is dressed in episcopal vestments, supporting an open Gospel book in his left hand while holding a raised cross for blessing in his right. On his head, he wears a golden mitre with red medallions and a golden halo. This portrait of Saint Sava is enclosed by an oval blue enameled band bearing the inscription: ТРОМЪДОМЪ СВОНМЪ ВЪСА ПРИОБРЪТЪ (“By his labor, he acquired all things”). The medallion is placed on a white-enameled Maltese cross with blue

borders. Between the arms of the cross are crowned, gilded double-headed eagles; however, the suspension crown is broken and has been tied to the lower part of the medallion. The reverse of the badge features a white medallion inscribed with the year 1883, indicating when King Milan Obrenović first established the Order of Saint Sava on January 23, 1883. When King Milan I instituted the decoration, the reverse originally featured his personal royal cipher (M. I.). This design was altered after the May Coup of 1903 so that King Petar I Karađorđević could continue to confer the honor. The decoration remained a state order until 1945. During the interwar period, the color of Saint Sava’s robes on the medallion was also changed from red to a greenish-blue hue. Because the order was awarded for merit in culture, public education, science, public service, and the Church – and could be given to both civilian and military personnel – the proposal to honor Grujić was formally submitted by the Ministry of Education.

LITERATURE: Ацовић 2013: 94–97; Ацовић 2019: 383; Ацовић 2019a: 36; Радовановић 2022: 55–56, 80.

N. S.





95. Icon of Saint Sava

Stepan Fedorovitch Kolesnikoff, c. 1935

Oil on canvas, gilding; 102 × 55 cm

Palace of the Serbian Patriarchate, Belgrade

The icon of Saint Sava, painted by the Russian emigrant Stepan Fyodorovich Kolesnikov (1879–1955) in the mid-1940s, is located in the Palace of the Serbian Patriarchate in Belgrade, in the main hall opposite the patriarchal throne. Kolesnikov belongs to the generation of Russian émigré artists who left their homeland following the October Revolution, leaving a noticeable mark on the artistic life of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes, especially within Belgrade. Kolesnikov arrived in Belgrade as an established artist, having received his formal education at the Imperial Academy of Arts in St. Petersburg, where he studied under the famous painter Ilya Repin. In Serbia, in addition to creating portraits and landscapes, he also engaged in ecclesiastical painting, producing icons and frescoes for numerous churches and monasteries.

The bust-length figure of Saint Sava on this icon was modeled after the traditional iconographic solutions of medieval Serbian painting. The portrait of Saint Sava is executed on a gold background with decorative elements that imitate gold mosaic tiles. On this panel, Kolesnikov painted Saint Sava in his middle years, shown frontally from the waist up with an energetic posture, regular facial features, a high furrowed forehead, a penetrating

gaze, large eyes, a straight long nose, and sunken cheeks. His face is framed by wavy, chestnut hair, a mustache, and a medium-length beard that widens at the bottom.

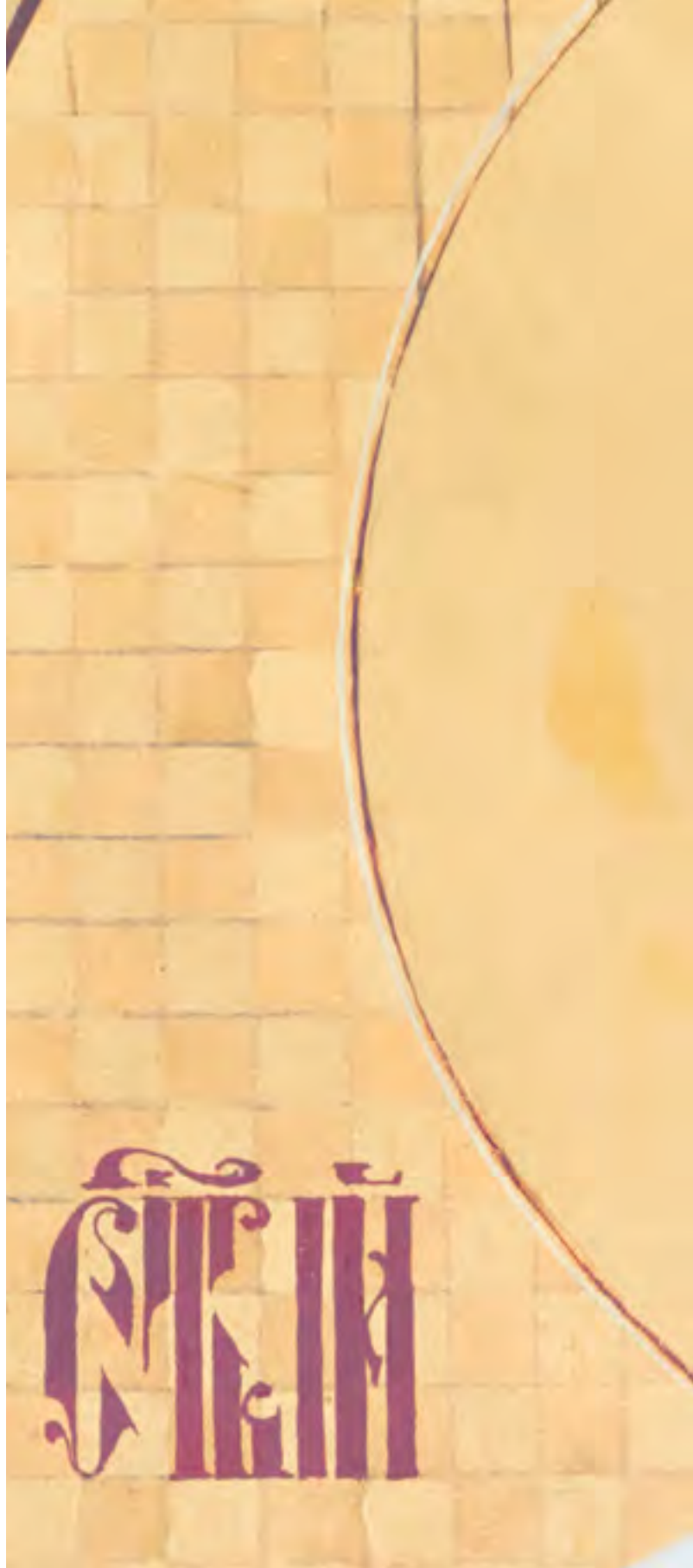
He is dressed in a dark red polystavrion with golden crosses, finished with a golden border decorated with pearls and precious stones. Below the polystavrion, a purple sticharion is visible, featuring gold-woven liturgical cuffs (*epimaniakia*) decorated with pearls. Over his shoulders he wears a large white omophorion with blue crosses and golden borders set with pearls and precious stones. Around his head is a golden halo bordered by a thin burgundy line, flanked on both sides by the inscribed titulus: *СЪВЪН СЪВЪН*. At the top of the icon, on the left and right sides, is a decorative circular rosette with a cross in the middle. Saint Sava is shown offering a blessing with his raised right hand, while in his left hand he holds a closed Gospel book in a richly decorated metal frame.

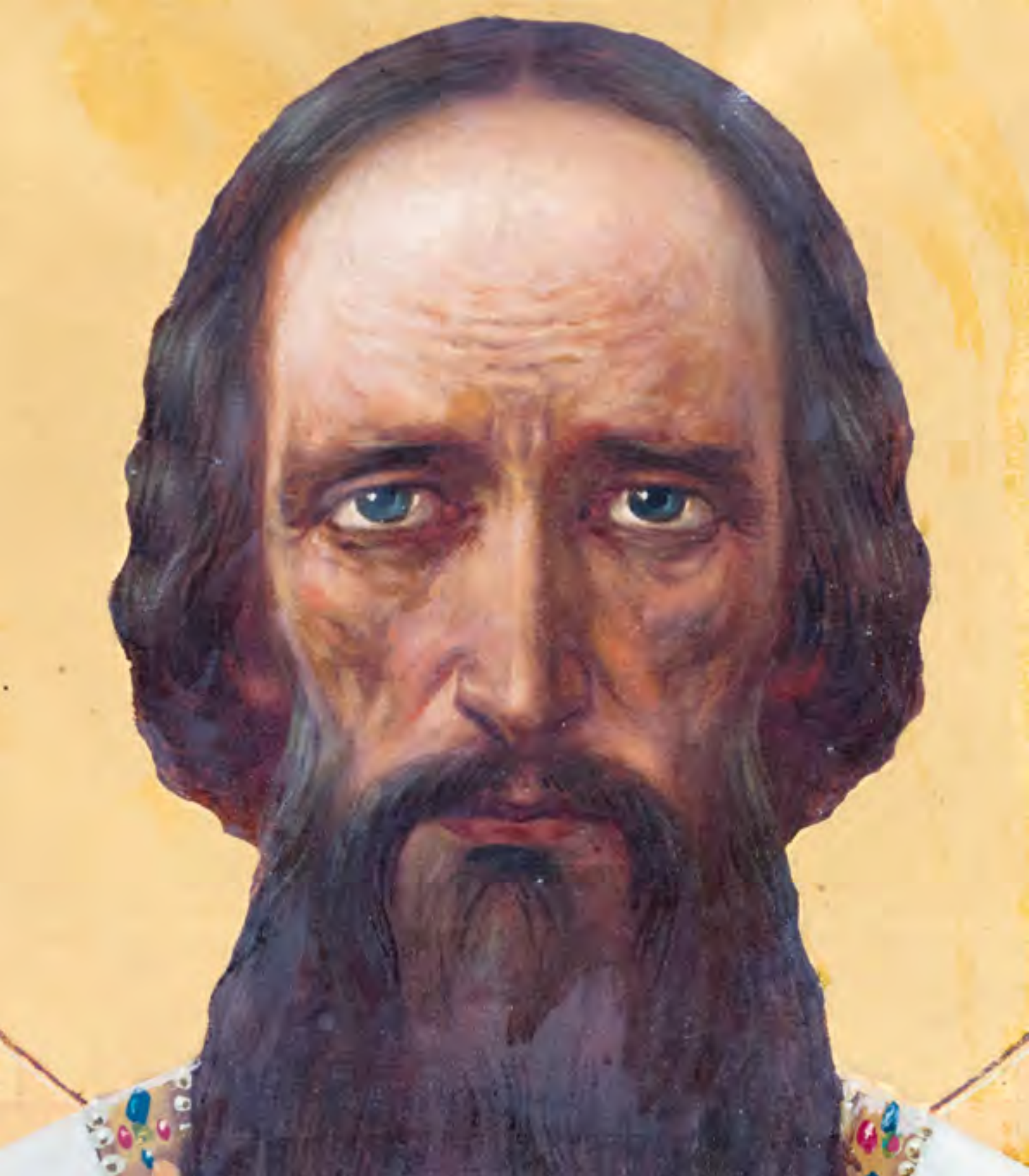
Although this bust-length representation follows the generally accepted iconographic patterns of medieval Serbian portraiture, the icon also reveals distinct Russian-academic and Serbo-Byzantine stylistic influences translated into a contemporary artistic language. Stepan Kolesnikov's portrait of Saint Sava is distinguished by

fine modeling of the figure, an emphasis on psychological expression, precise draftsmanship, and a warm color palette that stands out against the golden background. The confident drawing, skillful modeling, sense of volume, and carefully shaped decorative elements reflect the style of a strong artistic personality who successfully combined traditional and modern techniques. That this icon fit the artistic sensibility of the patriarchal court is evidenced by its mass reproduction for the needs of the Serbian Patriarchate; its printed reproductions on wood were once found in almost every room of the building.

LITERATURE: Вујовић 1978: 49–66; Вујовић 1994: 54–56; Анђелковић 2013: 52–53; Марковић, Межински Милованић 2020: 184–185; *Руска емиграција у Београду*: 59–60; Борозан 2025: 501–502.

V. K.





96. Saint Sava Blesses King Aleksandar

Uroš Predić, 1935

Photomechanical reproduction; 23.7 × 11.2 cm

Collection of Miloš Jurišić, Belgrade

A black-and-white photograph is the only surviving record of the lost painting by Uroš Predić, *Saint Sava Blessing King Aleksandar I Karađorđević*. In this composition, Saint Sava is depicted full-length, with elongated proportions shown in three-quarter profile. He is dressed in episcopal vestments: a sticharion, a narrow sakkos, an omophorion, and an epigonation embroidered with a medallion enclosing a bust-length image of Christ. The saint is represented in his later years without a mitre, featuring a halo around his head, gray hair, a beard, and a mustache, while blessing King Aleksandar Karađorđević with both hands. Next to Saint Sava, on the left, the young Crown Prince Petar Karađorđević is depicted as a boy, looking toward the saint. In the background, on the left side of the painting, a monolithic column with a circular cross-section and base is shown as a decorative element, while dark drapery hangs behind the saint's head. In the immediate foreground on the left, King Aleksandar I Karađorđević is shown kneeling in a prayerful position with outstretched arms. King Aleksandar made great contributions to the re-establishment of the Serbian Patriarchate and the development of the cult of Saint Sava in Serbian culture and art between the two world wars. Clad in a royal mantle, King Aleksandar points with his outstretched right hand to the building of the former King Aleksandar

Gymnasium on Topčider. The King Aleksandar Gymnasium building, originally called the “King Aleksandar I Home for High School Students in Belgrade,” was constructed from 1930 to 1933 specifically for the education of the students of the King Aleksandar I Karađorđević Boys’ Gymnasium. Today, the building houses the Archives of Yugoslavia.

Given that the painting was positioned on a narrow pilaster in the Gymnasium, the composition is quite compact, as seen in the tall and narrow proportions of the canvas. Uroš Predić discussed this in his autobiography: “The painting of St. Sava for the Gymnasium – King Aleksandar’s boarding school in Dedinje – due to the cramped space on the pilaster on which the painting stands, had to be condemned to an inconveniently tall and narrow format. The composition is compact. King Aleksandar, kneeling very close to the foot of the throne, had no room to hold the model of his endowment in his hands, but with his right hand he points to the image of the Gymnasium in the background as it appears in nature, as if the saint had moved his throne to Topčider. *Licentia artistica*. And the clothing of St. Sava had to deviate from the wide, historically prescribed felonion in favor of the narrow ‘sakkos’ from later times.”

Despite all the limiting factors, Uroš Predić resolved the composition with his precise artistic style. Pointing to the traditional connection



between Saint Sava and Serbian rulers, Predić symbolically presented the interwar unity of faith and state through this work.

LITERATURE: Борозан 2020: 510, fig. 17; Борозан 2022: 44; Борозан 2025: 500–501.

V. K.

97. Icon of Saint Sava in Studenica

Goran Jović, 2015

Egg tempera on wood; 29.8 × 34.8 × 3 cm

Studenica Monastery

The icon of Saint Sava in the Studenica Monastery depicts the Archimandrite Sava of Studenica as a young man with thick, shoulder-length brown hair, a tonsure, and a long brown beard that falls down his chest. He is dressed in a pink sticharion beneath an olive-colored monastic robe. He features a dark red halo around his head, and the panel is signed: *Св. Сава арх. српски* ("St. Sava, Archbishop of Serbia"). He sits on a backless chair upon a blue cushion, his feet resting on a hexagonal footstool. With his right hand on his knees, he holds an unrolled scroll while preparing to write with a black quill held raised in his left hand above the scroll. On the left is a lectern holding writing utensils. In the lower right and left corners of the floor, two amphorae are depicted. In the background behind Saint Sava, the Church of the Holy Virgin of the Studenica Monastery is painted on the right side, shown with white marble facades and blue shadows. It is depicted from an eastern perspective, showing the apse with a triforium window and the dome with a cross, which features red paint under the arches around the windows on

a cubic base. To the left, behind Saint Sava, is the Studenica King's Church. Two sides of this building are visible: the front façade, hidden behind the lectern, and the side façade, where only a biforium window is visible. The octagonal dome is also painted, featuring red accents around the drum windows and surmounted by a cross inside a circle. The sky is a darker ochre color. Over both buildings, and stretching behind Sava's figure, a blue veil with brown patterns and fringes at the ends is displayed.

The forms are defined and clear, freely executed in an Expressionist manner without the usual strict adherence to traditional iconographic templates.

The wide outer rim of the icon is painted dark green, into which the white crosses of both churches extend. The slightly raised, thin inner part of the icon frame is painted in a light ochre shade, while the wide outer frame and the edges of the board are painted olive green.

LITERATURE: Unpublished.

N. S.



98. Icon of Saint Sava of Serbia with scenes from his life

Painted by Jelena Hinić, concept design and iconography by Oliver Tomić, 2025

Linden wood panel, egg tempera with 24K gold leaf; 118 × 176 cm

Kovilj Monastery

In the central field of the icon, the image of Saint Sava is closely modeled on his traditional portrait from the Mileševa Monastery (1221–1227). The saint holds a structural model of the Church of the Holy Archangels of the Kovilj Monastery, of which he was the historical founder according to his hagiographical lives and later tradition. To make the church instantly recognizable, the artist used a model of the actual existing building (1741–1749), stylized according to medieval conventions but executed with a greater degree of realism.

In the semicircular segment of the icon directly above the image of Saint Sava, the Synaxis of the Archangels Michael and Gabriel is depicted, honoring the patronal saints to whom the main church of the monastery is dedicated. In circular medallions within the same register are the bust-length portraits of Saint Sabbas the Sanctified and Saint John the Baptist, following the model of the early thirteenth-century frescoes in Studenica (1208/1209), where they are similarly placed in relation to one another. Saint John holds his usual cross-staff, while Saint Sabbas the Sanctified holds the icon of the Theotokos Trichrousa (Three-Handed Virgin), which the first Serbian archbishop received as a gift from the Jerusalem monastery during his Palestinian pilgrimage.

Around the central figure of Saint Sava, on the right and left margins, sixteen scenes from his life are arranged, selected from seventeenth-century prototypes (specifically the Hilandar refectory frescoes from 1621/22 and the hagiographical icon in Morača from 1644/45). The events are arranged in two vertical columns around the main figure of the saint, chronologically ordered from top to bottom, first on the left side and then on the right. On the left are: 1. The Nativity of Saint Sava; 2. The Flight to Mount Athos and the Reception of the Monastic Tonsure; 3. The Meeting with his Father Simeon on Athos; 4. The Repose of the Venerable Simeon; 5. The Second Myrrh-Pouring of the Venerable Simeon and the Reconciliation of the Brothers at Studenica; 6. Saint Sava Writing in the Upper Hermitage; 7. His Ordination to the Episcopal Rank in Nicaea; and 8. The Coronation of his Brother Stefan in Žiča. On the right are: 9. The Resurrection of Brother Stefan; 10. The Enthronement of Arsenije I as the New Archbishop; 11. The Journey of Saint Sava to the Holy Land; 12. The Miracle of the Sea Nourishing Saint Sava; 13. The Repose of Saint Sava in Tarnovo; 14. The Translation of the Relics of Saint Sava to Mileševa; 15. The Posthumous Miracles at the Tomb of Saint Sava; and 16. The Burning of the Relics of Saint Sava at Vračar.



Nine of these scenes have precedents in seventeenth-century cycles, but they have been updated here with new details, especially in terms of historical accuracy. Seven compositions were entirely designed for this occasion: the Second Myrrh-Pouring with the Reconciliation of His Brothers (5), featuring a stylized Maglič Fortress in the background; Saint Sava Writing in the Upper Hermitage (6), with recognizable topographical details, a scene added to the cycle to emphasize Saint Sava's literary work and tendency toward contemplative silence; the Ordination to the Episcopal Rank (7) in Nicaea; the Resurrection of His Brother Stefan (9); the Miracles at the Tomb of Saint Sava (15), located spatially in Mileševa by painted architectural details and temporally situated within the Ottoman period; and the Burning of the Relics of Saint Sava (16). The latter serves as a transposition of the 1912 painting of the same name by Stevan Aleksić into the medieval style, with the addition of Mount Avala, the Belgrade Fortress, and a bust of Saint Sava appearing above the flames inside a mandorla whose outline hints at the architecture of the future Cathedral of Saint Sava at Vračar.

For the devotional context of this icon, the most important element is the large scene extending across the entire width of its lower edge: the Miracle of Saint Sava with Ice in Kovilj. Described in the

saint's *Life*, this narrative had never been illustrated before in Serbian art history. At a time of intense political tension on the brink of war between Hungary and Serbia, with both armies already lined up on the field, Saint Sava intervened to find a diplomatic solution on behalf of his brother Stefan. During negotiations with the Hungarian King Andrew II (r. 1205–1235), he requested that, due to the severe summer heat, ice be put in his wine – a luxury the king did not have with him on the battlefield. Therefore, the saint turned to the Lord in prayer, who sent down from heaven as much ice as was required. Following this divine sign, the Hungarian king met Sava's demands, stopped all hostilities, and granted the saint the privilege to build an Orthodox church at that place within the Hungarian Kingdom. The depiction on the Kovilj icon captures both parts of the story: the miracle of the ice itself on the left and the construction of the first church of the Kovilj Monastery on the right.

In terms of style, the icon basically follows the monumental models of Serbian painting from the first half of the fourteenth century, combined with specific decorative details from the post-Byzantine artistic repertoire.

LITERATURE: Unpublished.

J. H. and O. T.

СРЕТН

САКА

ПРВН СОПСКН

АРХИЕПИСКОП



List of Abbreviations

Глас СКА = Глас Српске краљевске академије

Гласник ДКС = Гласник Друштва конзерватора Србије

Гласник СПЦ = Гласник Српске православне цркве

Гласник СУД = Гласник српског ученог друштва

ДИУС = Друштво историчара умености Србије

ЗЛУМС = Зборник за ликовне уметности Матице српске / Зборник Матице српске за ликовне уметности

ЗМПУ = Зборник Музеја примењене уметности

ЗМСДН = Зборник Матице српске за друштвене науке

ЗМСИ = Зборник Матице српске за историју

ЗМСКЈ = Зборник Матице српске за књижевност и језик

ЗНМ = Зборник Народног музеја

ЗРВИ = Зборник радова Византолошког института

ЛМС = Летопис Матице српске

ПКЈИФ = Прилози за књижевност, језик, историју и фолклор

РЗЗСК = Републички завод за заштиту споменика културе

САНУ = Српска академија наука и уметности

Споменик СКА = Споменик Српске краљевске академије

СПЦ = Српска православна црква

ССЗН = Стари српски записи и натписи I–VI, прир. Љ. Стојановић, Београд 1902–1926.

ХЗ = Хиландарски зборник



ГМКМ = Glasnik Muzeja Kosova i Metohije

SASA = Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts

SOC = Serbian Orthodox Church

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