

ТАТЈАНА СТАРОДУБЦЕВ



СРПСКО ЗИДНО СЛИКАРСТВО
У ЗЕМЉАМА
ЛАЗАРЕВИЋА И БРАНКОВИЋА

Татјана А. Стародубцев
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Књиге I и II



Издавач

Универзитет у Београду, Филозофски факултет,
Институт за историју уметности
Чика Љубина 18–20, Београд 11000, Србија
www.f.bg.ac.rs

Студије 12

За издавача

Проф. др Војислав Јелић,
декан Филозофског факултета

Уредник

Проф. др Миодраг Марковић

Рецензенти

Проф. др Бранислав Тодић
Проф. др Миодраг Марковић

Лектура и коректура

Мирјана Карановић

Превод резимеа

Маргита Ивановић

Ликовно-графичка обрада

Ирена Ђаковић

Припрема и шtamпa

Досије студио, Београд

Тираж

300

ISBN 978-86-6427-022-9

Штампање ове књиге потпомогло је
Министарство просвете, науке и технолошког развоја Републике Србије

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САДРЖАЈ КЊИГЕ I

СПИСАК СКРАЋЕНИЦА	7–25
ДОСАДАШЊА ИСТРАЖИВАЊА.....	27–54
КТИТОРИ	55–124
I ЗАДУЖБИНАРСТВО И КТИТОРИ У ДОБА ЛАЗАРЕВИЋА И БРАНКОВИЋА.....	55–98
Изглед грађевина – старо наслеђе и нови обичаји	56
Сведочанства оснивачких повеља и брига о светогорским манастирима и задужбинама Немањића	57
Задужбине владара и њихових сродника.....	65
Придворне цркве у престоницама.....	67
Седишта Патријаршије и митрополија и епископија	69
Владар као заштитник монаштва.....	71
Задужбине духовних лица.....	73
Задужбине властеле	75
Цркве у градовима и селима	81
Манастири и цркве данас непознатих ктитора.....	85
Поглед на место ктитора на друштвеној лествици и њихове задужбине	92
Задужбина као место вечног покоја.....	93
Закључна разматрања	97
II СЛИКА ВЛАДАРА И ЊИХОВИХ ПОДАНИКА	98–124
ПОРТРЕТИ СУВЕРЕНА И ЧЛАНОВА ВЛАДАРСКЕ ПОРОДИЦЕ.....	98
<i>Самостјалне и заједничке слике</i>	112
<i>Под блајословом с неба.....</i>	113
<i>Владар као посредник између поданика и неба</i>	116

ПОРТРЕТИ КТИТОРА ИЗ ВИСОКИХ ДУХОВНИХ И СВЕТОВНИХ РЕДОВА	118
<i>Портретни њлемсѣва – традиције и новине.</i>	120
ПОРТРЕТИ КАО СВЕДОЧАНСТВА О ОБИЧАЈИМА ВРЕМЕНА	123
ПРОГРАМ СЛИКАРСТВА	125-294
I ОСНОВНО УСТРОЈСТВО ПРОГРАМА	125-137
САЖЕТИ ПРЕГЛЕД ПРОГРАМА СЛИКА	125
ОСНОВНА ЗАПАЖАЊА О ИЗБОРУ ТЕМА И ПРОГРАМУ СЛИКА	131
ТРАДИЦИОНАЛНО И НОВО У ИЗБОРУ ТЕМА И ПРОГРАМУ СЛИКА	134
II ЗАМИСАО ПРОГРАМА И ИЗБОР ТЕМА	137-294
ЖИВОПИС У ПРИПРАТАМА	137
<i>Фигуре и њојрсја светѣих</i>	137
<i>Циклуси и сцене</i>	145
<i>Предсѣаве у сводовима, калонѣама и куйолама.</i>	154
ЖИВОПИС У НАОСИМА И ОЛТАРИМА ЦРКАВА	158
<i>Фигуре и њојрсја светѣих</i>	158
<i>Циклуси и сцене</i>	207
<i>Предсѣаве у куйолама и сводовима</i>	233
<i>Сликарсѣиво у олѣарском ѣросѣору</i>	254
<i>Нефѣуралне слике</i>	287
ПРЕДСТАВЕ ДВЕ ГЕНЕАЛОШКЕ ЛОЗЕ	292
УМЕТНИЧКИ ПРИСТУП	295-332
I СЛИКАРИ	296-317
II КТИТОРИ И СЛИКАРИ И ДУХОВНА И ДРУШТВЕНА КЛИМА ЕПОХЕ	318-332
КТИТОРИ И СЛИКАРИ	318
КТИТОРИ, СЛИКАРИ И ПРОМЕНЕ У ДРУШТВЕНИМ ОКОЛНОСТИМА	320
УСТРОЈСТВО РАДИОНИЦА И ПОШТОВАЊЕ ТРАДИЦИОНАЛНИХ ОБРАЗАЦА	322
МЕДАЉОНИ ДУГИНИХ БОЈА	325
ДРУШТВЕНИ ПОЛОЖАЈ И ПОРЕКЛО СЛИКАРА	325
МЕСТО СЛИКАРСТВА ДОБА ЛАЗАРЕВИЋА И БРАНКОВИЋА У СВОМ ВРЕМЕНУ	326
УТИЦАЈ ИСИХАЗМА?	329
УТИЦАЈ ЗАПАДА?	329
НАЗИВ „МОРАВСКА ШКОЛА“?	330
ЗАКЉУЧАК	331

САДРЖАЈ КЊИГЕ II

КАТАЛОГ	7
ПЕЋКА ПАТРИЈАРШИЈА, припрата, Свети Сава први патријарх српски	9–10
ВЕЛУЂЕ	11–25
НЕУПАРА, први слој живописа	27–30
РАВАНИЦА	31–48
НОВА ПАВЛИЦА	49–65
ЉУБОСТИЊА, први слој живописа	67–69
СИСОЈЕВАЦ, први слој живописа	71–74
РУДЕНИЦА	75–87
ЉУБОСТИЊА, други слој живописа	89–98
СТУДЕНИЦА, источна фасада западне куле	99–103
КОПОРИН	105–112
НЕУПАРА, други слој живописа	113–114
ДОЛАЦ код КLINE	115–120
ЖИЧА, Свети Теодор Тирон и Теодор Стратилат	121–123
РЕСАВА	125–146
СИСОЈЕВАЦ, други слој живописа	147–158
КАЛЕНИЋ	159–177
ГРАЧАНИЦА, ђаконикон, портрет Тодора Бранковића	179–182
ДОЛАЦ код Студенице	183–185

САДРЖАЈ

ЈОШАНИЦА	187–204
БЕЛАЈА	205–207
РАМАЋА	209–227
SUMMARY	229–235
ИМЕНСКИ РЕГИСТАР	237–243
ТОПОГРАФСКИ РЕГИСТАР	244–251
ИКОНОГРАФСКИ РЕГИСТАР	252–262
БЕЛЕШКА АУТОРА	263

SUMMARY

SERBIAN WALL PAINTING IN THE LANDS OF THE LAZAREVIĆ AND THE BRANKOVIĆ DYNASTIES

After the death of the last ruler of the Nemanjić dynasty in 1371, the territories of the Lazarević and the Branković families were the most important amongst Serbian political units. Actually, at first there were two states closely connected by kin, one was Prince Lazar's (1371–1389) in the north and the other one was Vuk Branković's (1371–1397) in the south. Following the tragic deaths of Prince Lazar in the Battle of Kosovo and Vuk Branković in a Turkish dungeon, a discord between the two families crept in. It ended when their territories were joined after Stefan Lazarević, Prince (1389–1402) and Despot (1402–1427), made piece in 1412 with his nephew Djurdje Branković, who inherited his throne (1427–1458). The state that was slowly deteriorating under the constant pressure of the Turks, lived off its days during the brief reign of Despot Lazar Branković (1456–1458) when, additionally weakened by the disputes of the members of the Branković family after his death, it fell under the Ottoman rule in 1459.

HITHERTHO RESEARCH

Review of the hitherto research, which includes the studies published before March 2012 when this book was completed, shows that the frescoes painted during the time of the Lazarević and the Branković dynasties

attracted a significant attention of the researchers. Published field research findings, monographies and especially studies dedicated to various topics – programme, iconographical or iconological considerations of certain motifs, investigations of esthetical trends of the epoch or painters – based on the variety of methods, from narrative to iconographical, iconological, comparative and attributive prove this. Texts, limited in scope because they were either chapters in the books on the Serbian medieval frescoes or the exhibition catalogues on the art of the epoch, were the only all-encompassing presentation of these paintings.

DONORS

The part about the donors is split into two chapters. The first one, ENDOWMENTS AND DONORS DURING THE LAZAREVIĆ AND THE BRANKOVIĆ DYNASTIES, contains an overview on the churches and monasteries established and renovated during the epoch. The appearance of the newly erected structures testifies on a certain respect towards tradition as well as acceptance of masonry customs from the Mount Athos that were new in the Serbian lands. Written sources, mainly chapters, speak on the foundation of certain monasteries and care for the Athonic monasteries and

endowments of the Nemanjić rulers. Special attention is paid on the endowments of the rulers and their relatives, palatine churches in capitals (Kruševac, Belgrade and Smederevo), Patriarchate and Bishopric seats and the ruler as the patron of monasticism as well.

The second chapter bears the title THE IMAGE OF RULERS AND THEIR SUBJECTS. Firstly, the representations of the rules and members of their families in their individual and group portraits are discussed. The ways of presenting the blessing from the heaven and the sovereign as intermediate between subjects and heaven are investigated. Next, the portraits of the donors from the ranks of the ecclesiastical and secular dignitaries are scrutinised with the emphasis on the traditional and innovative features that can be perceived in the representations of the nobility. New sovereigns originating from the gentry echelons had insignia of independent rulers, so characteristics of both noblemen and rulers can be observed. Changes in clothes and signs of power can be found in the representations of the nobility as well. Noblemen, especially the most powerful ones, ceased to wear robes made of textile with decoration that bore hierarchical signs. Relationship with the rulers represented in the portraits witness reliably on their position in the society more than the shape and textile pattern of their robes.

PAINTING PROGRAMME

The part on the painting programme is the most comprehensive and split into two chapters. The first one briefly presents BASIC ORGANISATION OF THE PROGRAMME. A concise overview of the painting programmes is shown first. Next, the primary observations on the selection of the topics are elaborated. Finally, an outline of the traditional and innovative in the choice of themes and programmes in the paintings is provided.

Of course, respect for the usual programme in the church decoration in the East Orthodox world and reduced number of themes in comparison with the paintings from the previous period can be seen. When contrasting the choices of the images in our churches with the themes in the churches decorated under the care of king Vukašin's sons in the southern part of the once vast empire, different approaches in the programme design can be perceived. Completely different initial idea can be seen in the frescoes in the Church of Saint Demetrius in Markov Monastery, whereas it is

somewhat similar in the Church of Saint Andrew on the Treska River.

The second chapter, the most comprehensive one, is titled CONCEPTIONS OF PROGRAMMES AND CHOICES OF THEMES and it is divided into several subchapters.

The first subchapter is dedicated to **the frescoes in narthexes**. It discusses figures in the lower zones, representations of the saints, and cycles and scenes in the upper registers of the walls and paintings on the vaults or the domes. Nova Pavlica, Koporin and Ramaća were erected without narthexes. In the narthexes in Rudenica and Sisojevac there are no fragments of paintings, however in Neupara and Ravanica only vague traces have remained. Paintings in the narthexes in Ljubostinja and Resava are somewhat better preserved and even better in Velučé, Kalenić and Jošanica.

In the lower register, next to the *portraits* of the donors and rulers, *saints* were represented, especially those that were considered as protectors. On the *west wall*, no saints that were usually painted by the door can be observed. On the *east wall*, in the lunette above the entrance leading to the naos, the images of Christ or the Virgin can be seen. Next to them, in prayer, the Virgin, Saint John the Baptist, Peter and Paul as well as Saint John the Theologian were often represented. *Saint monks and hermits* were sometimes painted in the narthexes. In Velučé, where many tombs of the members of the donor's family were found, it seems that the painted saints express their faith in intercession of the holy protectors. *Saint Nicholas, Saints Contantine and Helen and Saint Paraskeve* and two *martyrs* are presented. Next to them and in the upper zones of the walls, there are scenes from the elaborately conceived *Last Judgement*. Different topics are placed in the upper registers of the walls in the narthexes in the endowments of Prince Lazar's family members. Remainings of the presentations of the *Ecumenical Councils* can be observed in Ljubostinja as well as in Resava, where the traces of the scenes of the painted *Calendar* are visible. The upper zones in the Kalenić narthex are occupied with *the cycles of the Virgin and Christ's Childhood*. They are joined into a whole and continuously narrate a story about the church patron and her role in incarnation of Christ. In the Jošanica narthex, there are *scenes with saint monks and hermits*. It seems that they don't shape a cycle dedicated to a saint, but present events from the lives of some famous monks and hermits. The vaults and domes above the narthexes have been

mainly destroyed over time. Only in the Jošanica dome, the paintings have been wholly preserved. There are *saint poets* in the pendentives which are represented in Kalenić too. The painting of the Jošanica dome is dedicated to the celebration of the Virgin as the medium of incarnation, the prophecies that announced her as well as the concisely expressed history on the foundation of the Christian church and its first days.

It seems that the choice of saints represented in the narthexes was mainly based on those that were considered as the most valued intermediaries for the salvation of the human race. The majority of the topics that remained in the paintings in the upper registers of the walls was represented in the narthexes in the Balkan churches during the 14th and the beginning of the 15th century and only scenes from the lives of monks and hermits remain almost unique.

The second subchapter is dedicated to **the paintings in the naoi and the altars of the churches**, the representations of saint, the cycles and the scenes, the images in the domes and the paintings in the altar space as well as the non-figural frescoes. Finally, the presentation of two genealogical trees in the Studenica monastery is considered.

In the churches decorated during the Lazarević and the Branković dynasties, *saint warriors* are numerous. Besides them, *saint monks and hermits* were often painted. *Saint poets* form a separate group within saint monks in Ljubostinja. On the other hand, stylites, the zealous followers of ascetic life, were mainly posted in the doors, windows or pilasters.

Saints Symeon Nemanja and Sava of Serbia were often depicted. In order to represent themselves as heirs of the old dynasty and strengthen the relationship with the Church, the Lazarevićs cherished the cult of the two Serbian saints. *Saint Stephen the Protomartyr* was painted sometimes. He had a very important cult in Serbia as a protector of rulers. He was painted next to the two Serbian saints in Veluče and Nova Pavlica and nearby the portraits of the sovereigns in Koporin and Ramaća. On the other hand, although the notion of the ruler as the New Constantine was stressed in order to show the legitimacy of the power of Despot Stefan, it seems that *Saints Constantine and Helen* were not represented as often as before.

In the churches in the Serbian lands, following the Byzantine tradition, *Deisis* was often painted by the *iconostasis*. Nevertheless, during the period of the Lazarević

and the Branković dynasties, it was rarely represented. Neither *Christ* nor the *Mother of God* were often presented by the iconostasis, nor *Saint John the Baptist*. In the west part of the naos, *Saints Peter and Paul*, *Archangels Michael and Gabriel* were sometimes painted, as well as *female saints*, which were rarely depicted at the time and whose biggest gallery can be seen in Nova Pavlica.

Saint anargyroi were mainly posted amongst the busts of saints or in the windows. Saints Panteleimon and Cosmas and Damian were quite often painted whereas Saints Cyrus and John were seldomly represented. There are no preserved images of Saint Hermolaios, Saint Panteleimon's teacher. Saint Panteleimon's counterpart in Resava and Kalenić is Saint martyr Gobdelas, the son of the Persian king. In the upper zones, *saint bishops* were sometimes painted, whereas Saint Lazarus in Dolac by Klina, Saint John the Eleimon and Saint Nicholas in Kalenić, and unidentified holy bishop in Ramaća were painted in the lower register. *Old Testament figures*, according to the tradition, were portrayed in the upper registers of churches. Only few can be identified with certainty. Ananius, Azarius and Misael and Saints Joachim and Anne, as well as the Old Testament priests in sacerdotal garments are among those that can be identified. *Holy martyrs* were numerous and represented in various places in the churches. Their images are mainly damaged, inscriptions are destroyed and mostly those painted in larger groups can be identified. Saint Gobdelas, who became significant only during the Lazarević epoch, can be spotted sometimes among them.

Scenes from the *Great Feasts Cycle* were placed in the vaults and upper registers of the walls. In every church, the episodes were arranged according to a specifically conceived order. They were mostly arranged according to the usual pattern, with Annunciation, Dormition and Ascension in the regular places, except for Neupara. Due to the shape and height of the church building in Veluče, early events of the cycle narrative were placed on the surfaces of the walls under the dome. In the two churches, the scenes from other cycles were added to the Great Feasts, Holy Women at the Sepulcher in Ravanica and Deposition from the Cross in Kalenić. Sometimes, the Great Feasts were represented together with the images of Passion. Among the images of Passion, Descent into Hades in Veluče and Descent of Holy Spirit in Rudenica were placed. Finally, the scenes of the Great Feasts and Passion were put together in the same registers in Koporin and Ramaća.

The Cycle of *Christ's Passion* was almost regularly presented. Rare are the churches where the cycle was not painted. Ravanica (where the Last Supper and Washing of the Feet were placed in the lower zone of the sanctuary), Sisojevac and Kalenić are among those whereas it is not known whether it was portrayed in Neupara. The cycle often occupied one register or parts of two or even three registers. It appears it was the most comprehensive in Velučé, followed by Koporin, Rudenica and probably Resava, somewhat concise in Nova Pavlica, Ramaća and possibly Ljubostinja and even more concise in Jošanica.

The cycle of *Christ's Ministry* which describes *Christ's miracles and parables* was almost as often presented as the Passion cycle. It was represented in Ravanica, Nova Pavlica, Ljubostinja, Resava, Sisojevac and Kalenić. It began with the illustration of the Christmas sticheron in Ravanica and Sisojevac. Next to it, in both churches, there was a scene of Christ Among the Doctors which has been preserved in Resava too. During this period, *Christ's Parables*, which were seldomly portayed in monumental paintings, were represented. They are especially numerous in Resava where they took a zone in both choirs. Christ's Ministry was placed below the Great Feasts and the Passion cycles as it was a custom. This was the case with Nova Pavlica, Ljubostinja, and Resava, which had more cycles. However, the paintings in Ravanica, Sisojevac and Kalenić show that the programmes which contained Christ's Ministry and the Great Feasts appeared at the time.

The cycles describing the *Virgin's Life and Christ's Childhood* were far less represented. They have been preserved in Resava only. However, the events from the Virgin's Life were not disregarded. Instead of the cycle, two important events from her childhood, the *Birth of the Virgin* and the *Presentation of the Virgin*, were often portrayed. During the Lazarević and Branković epoch, they were painted more than ever. They can be seen in Velučé, Ravanica, Nova Pavlica, Kalenić and Ramaća.

On the other hand, scenes from the lives of the saints can be found only in Ramaća. It is likely that the unknown donors considered *Saint Nicholas* as their protector. In the comprehensive cycle, numerous miracles were painted, however they were not narrated in chronological order. The regular scenes from the beginning and the end of the saint's life were not painted. Lastly, the *Stoning of Saint Stephen the Protomartyr* was presented. Due to numerous reasons, it is considered to be connected with the rulers' portraits, the busts of Saints

Barlaam and Joasaph and the figure of Saint Stephen the Protomartyr in whose vicinity it was set.

Almost all mentioned churches have the domes whereas Ravanica and Resava have four small domes above the corners. The frescoes in the domes are poorly preserved. There are no traces of painting in Sisojevac. In Velučé, Neupara and Ljubostinja there are only remnants in the lower part of the drums. The paintings in the calottes of the domes in Rudenica, Koporin, Kalenić, Jošanica, Ramaća and in five domes in Resava are missing. The frescoes are well preserved in Ravanica and Nova Pavlica only.

The *evangelists*, often followed by the *personifications of the Wisdom*, were placed in pendentives. The personifications were represented as maidens (in Ravanica, Resava, Jošanica, Ramaća and probably Neupara) or as angels (in Ljubostinja, Nova Pavlica and possibly Velučé and Koporin). Only in Kalenić they were certainly not presented. Between the Evangelists, two Christ's images not made by hand and other representations were placed. *Mandylion* on the east side and *Keramion* on the west side were usually presented. In Nova Pavlica, Rudenica and Koporin all spaces between the Evangelists were reserved for them. On the south and north sides, other images were usually portrayed – buildings (in Velučé), a segment of the sky with the Hand of God (in Ravanica, Resava and Kalenić) and the busts of angels (in Jošanica).

The *Old Testament figures* were painted in the drums. According to the customs, a row of prophets was sometimes presented (in Velučé, Nova Pavlica, Koporin and Ramaća). The Old Testament figures, on the other hand, were often painted in two rows. They were represented in full figure in both rows (in Ravanica, Resava, Kalenić and probably Neupara and Ljubostinja) or up to the waist in the lower register (in Rudenica and Jošanica). Many righteous were presented, so Aaron and Moses, Samuel and Zechariah the Elder equipped with the vestments of the Old Testament priests and recognisable symbols were often portrayed. *Christ's ancestors* were sometimes painted in the lower zones of the drums or small domes. They were presented in the dome of Jošanica, probably Rudenica and in the small domes of Ravanica and Resava.

The image of the *Heavenly Liturgy* can be seen above the drum in every dome where the painting has been better preserved (in Ravanica, Nova Pavlica, Resava, Kalenić, Jošanica and Ramaća). In the upper parts, various *Asomatoi* were sometimes presented. The angels

and the thrones were painted in Nova Pavlica. Asomatoi were placed also in the drums of small domes in Ravanica and Resava. The images in the calottes of the small domes have been preserved only in Ravanica where Christ Emmanuel, the Virgin, Christ Ancient of Days and Archangel Michael can be seen, whereas the images in Resava have been severely damaged. Of course, *Christ Pantocrator* was above all these representations. His image was portrayed in the calotte of every central dome, but only small traces have remained in Ravanica and Nova Pavlica.

The central themes in the sanctuaries were, of course, communicated by the usual presentations in the altar apses. The images of the *Virgin with the two Archangels* in their semidomes have been preserved completely or in traces in Ravanica, Nova Pavlica, Koporin, Resava, Jošanica, Belaja and Ramaća. The *Communion of the Apostles* was often painted in the middle register. It has been preserved in Veluće, Ravanica, Nova Pavlica, Rasava, Kalenić and Ramaća. It was not presented in Koporin, Jošanica and Belaja, and it is not known whether it was portrayed in Rudenica. Among these paintings, the one in Ravanica should be pointed out – Christ, clad in archbishop robes, stands in front of the holy table and blesses with both hands whereas the Apostles are receiving communion from an angel priest and an earthly priest. In the lowest zone of the apses, the *Holy Liturgy* was always painted and it continued into the side parts of the sanctuary. Besides Saints John Chrysostom and Basil the Great, Gregory the Theologian and Athanasius the Great, followed by Cyril of Alexandria, Nicholas and John the Merciful and sometimes Saint Spyridon, Gregory the Miracle-maker and Gregory of Nyssa were painted. Occasionally, Saint Sava of Serbia would join them. *Holy Deacons* were often presented in the sanctuary and a unique scene can be found in Ramaća. Saint Deacons Nikon and Nikanor and Saint John Precursor Kephalphoros can be seen in the lower register of the north wall. All three of them are approaching the niche of the prothesis. Nikanor is censuring as deacons do at the service of prothesis.

As usual, in the niches of the prothesis and diaconicon, saint deacons and sometimes holy bishops were presented, however during the Lazarević and Branković epoch, *Dead Christ* was painted more often than ever. He was regularly placed in the niche of the prothesis as examples in Nova Pavlica, Rudenica, Koporin, Kalenić, Jošanica, Belaja and Ramaća show. The Mother of God was shown in the niche of the diaconicon in Nova

Pavlica and Kalenić. She was presented in the prothesis in the niche in the north wall in Rudenica and together with her dead son in Jošanica and Ramaća as well as Belaja where they are joined by Saint John and a myrrh-bearer woman.

In the altar area, the *Old Testament figures* were presented. They were mainly placed in the upper zones and therefore they have been much damaged. They can be spotted in Ravanica, Sisojevac and Ramaća. The scenes from the *Old Testament events* were also painted. Abraham's sacrifice and Three boys in the fiery furnace can be seen in Resava as well as in Sisojevac where the Hospitality of Abraham can be discerned. These three stories were interpreted as types of Christian Bloodless Sacrifice, so they were often painted in the altar. The cycle of *Christ's Appearances after Resurrection* can be found in the sanctuaries. It can be seen in Resava, Kalenić and Ramaća. Setting this cycle in the sanctuary can be justified by the symbolism given in the theological interpretations to the altar space and service held therein. Its liturgical meaning was specifically underscored by placing certain scenes in the altar apses. On the other hand, modest buildings, where liturgies were not held, got somewhat different paintings. Parts of two such buildings, where only traces of the altar painting remained, have been preserved – the chapel by the tower in Ravanica and the upper room of the Virgin church in Dolac by Studenica.

Nonfigural paintings have been preserved in some churches. Crosses with cryptograms surrounded by floral motifs were placed in the lunettes of the doors of the Ljubostinja narthex and in the lower parts of the sanctuary in Sisojevac. Belief that they have the power to protect and save from the evil was the reason why they were often placed in the doors and windows, so the setting above the doors of the Ljubostinja narthex was a fruit of the old tradition. When they were painted in a sanctuary, they adopted the meaning of that space. The crosses like these were always represented on the antemensia. Besides, the texts of the Byzantine theologians and the liturgy itself were impregnated with the thoughts on the identification of eucharistic sacrifice and sacrifice on the cross. Finally, the crosses were painted in the buildings for funeral purposes as a symbolic expression for heavenly settlements in the eschatological realm. Two such crosses, flanked with floral motifs and triumphal cryptograms, were painted in the funeral church in Dolac by Studenica.

Finally, severely damaged frescoes assumed to have been painted during the time of the Despotate have been preserved in Studenica. It is not determined when they were made. One should not rule out the possibility that they were created earlier. Respecting the considerations elaborated in the research so far that has not been disputed, these paintings have been included in this book. The frescoes are located on the east façade of the entrance tower. The traces of the *Tree of Jesse* in the southern part and the *Tree of the Serbian Rulers* in the northern part, as well as the fragments of Christ's bust and angels' figures have remained. Interpretations based on the statement that these frescoes belong to the period of the Despotate could lead to wrong conclusions. However, it should be taken into consideration what messages they would convey if they indeed belonged to this epoch. By the *Tree of the Serbian Rulers* the members of the new dynasty would represent themselves as the legitimate heirs and successors of sovereigns who previously took care about the state and true religion. Being painted in the monastery endowed by the founder of the old dynasty, Great Joupán Stefan Nemanja, whose relics were kept there, this image would bear a special meaning and express an ideological basis for the rule of the new dynasty. However, these observations, which might have been put out boldly, remain just presumptions on the possible meaning of the mentioned paintings.

ARTISTIC APPROACH

The part dedicated to artistic approach is divided into two chapters. In the first one, entitled *PAINTERS*, aesthetic features of the paintings in each church are presented in chronological order. Common approaches of the painters who worked together are listed, their talents and education are assessed, and the way they shared the duties is considered by separating personal artistic handwriting of the painters and highlighting recognisable details of each painter. Where possible, their works in other churches have been identified. Such is the case with the painters who decorated Ravanica and Resava.

The second chapter, *DONORS AND PAINTERS AND SPIRITUAL AND SOCIAL CLIMATE OF THE EPOCH*, is divided into several subchapters dedicated to various topics. The preserved paintings from the Lazarević and Branković epoch suggest that the gifted painters, educated in the renowned workshops, worked for the rulers, ecclesiastical dignitaries and the nobility of the highest

ranks. The relatives of the sovereigns hired somewhat less talented painters who can be compared with those who satisfied the taste of some monastic circles and well-off nobility. The painters with even less talent also worked for monks and low-ranked noblemen. However, such consideration, although based on the preserved frescoes, is rather generalised. It looks as if there was no space for examples such as the paintings in Velučé or Dolac by Klina. The turbulent climate of the epoch certainly posed different expectations and had impact on the social and financial status of the donors in these altered circumstances. Preserved frescoes mirror the changes the state was dealing with. The paintings flourished during the pinnacle of the power of Prince Lazar, the second part of the reign of Stefan Lazarević and the beginning of the rule of Djurdje Branković. During these periods, most gifted painters were hired not only by the sovereigns but also by the powerful noblemen as well as the common peasants. On the other hand, the crisis can be sensed in the years immediately before and after the Battle of Kosovo (1389) and the first fall of the Despotate under the Ottoman rule (1439–1444) when the painters with modest talents were engaged.

The organisation of the workshops in towns and monasteries, the operation and education of the painters, the ways the donors chose and invited painter groups from far away to work for them, how the donors and their advisors communicated and agreed with the painters and to what extent and how they could affect the appearance of the paintings are the questions that remain unanswered due to the lack of written evidence. It is particularly unknown how the painting manuals were transferred. This poses a problem due to the fact it has been pointed out many times in the literature that certain masters of the epoch had patterns same as those used by their predecessors who worked in the different parts the Orthodox world. These similarities show that the painters from different regions and times had identical patterns in their manuals. Older masters were mainly from Constantinople and Thessaloniki and their concepts were respected by different painters of the younger generations, both Greeks and Serbs who worked for the Dukes of Wallachia and the Serbian rulers and noblemen.

Few are the masters who signed their works or those who can be ascribed certain paintings. Ravanica was decorated by the Greek painters who previously worked in Voden (Edessa) and, it seems, on the Mount Athos. Resava was adorned by the members of a painting workshop which decorated a church in Thessaloniki

that is now dedicated to the Prophet Elias. A small group of painters, led by Teodor, a domestic master who was most likely a monk, worked on the decoration of Rudenica. Ljubostinja was frescoed by a group, with Makarije, a Greek priest, as the lead. It seems that the church in Dolac by Klina was painted by his namesake, hieromonk Makarije from Zrze. In all probability, Kalenić was adorned by Radoslav with his group that might have been settled in some of the bigger towns.

CATALOGUE

In the catalogue, the churches from the Lazarević and Branković epoch where paintings are more or less preserved are listed in chronological order. Each church is assigned with a subchapter. In each heading, there is a

name usually mentioned in the literature, the dedication and the time of the painting. The text provides an overview on the dating hitherto and possible closer determination of the time of painting, since there are no preserved donor inscriptions and foundation chapters are very rare. Description and texts of the inscriptions of the preserved portraits follow. Next, the basic data on the architectural design of the churches is provided. Further, the programme of the frescoes is elaborated. In cases where the paintings are preserved in the narthexes, they are presented first, followed by those in the naos and, lastly, in the altar area. Finally, a concise overview on the painters and basic features of their artistic approaches, note on the language they used for the inscriptions and a brief list of the selected literature are presented.

CIP – Каталогизација у публикацији
Народна библиотека Србије, Београд

061.27:271.222(497.11)-523“13/14“

75.052.033.2(497.11)“13/14“

271.222(497.11)-523

929.52 Лазаревић

929.52 Бранковић

СТАРОДУБЦЕВ, Татјана А., 1966–

Српско зидно сликарство у земљама Лазаревића и Бранковића. Књ. 1 и 2 /
Татјана А. Стародубцев. – Београд : Универзитет у Београду, Филозофски факултет,
Институт за историју уметности, 2007 (Београд : Досије студио). – 332, 263 стр. :
илустр. ; 30 см. – (Студије ; 12)

„Ова књига заснована је на докт. тези одбрањеној на Филоз. фак. у Београду 2007.
год. ...“--> Белешка аутора. – Тираж 300. – Напомене и библиографске референце уз
текст. – Библиографија уз свако поглавље. – Summary: Serbian Wall Painting in the
Lands of the Lazarević and the Branković Dynasties. – Регистри.

ISBN 978-86-6427-022-9

а) Лазаревић (династија) – Задужбине – Србија

б) Бранковић (династија) – Задужбине – Србија

с) Зидно сликарство – Србија – 14в–15в

COBISS.SR-ID 222657036

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ISBN 978-86-6427-022-9



9 788664 270229