

ARTISTIC ACTIVITY AND THE STRUGGLE FOR SURVIVAL
OF THE SERBIAN CHURCH DURING THE SIXTEENTH AND
SEVENTEENTH CENTURIES

The independent Serbian states disappeared during the 15th century under powerful Turkish onslaughts: after the fall of Smederevo, a fortified town on the Danube, in 1459 the Serbian despotat was swept from the historical scene, and the same fate befell Zeta-Montenegro four decades later¹. The destiny of the Serbian states was shared by the Serbian Church: soon after 1459 (probably in 1463)², Patriarch Arsenije died, and with his death the independent Serbian church organization seems to have ceased to exist. I say «seems» because we know so little of the history of the Serbian Church during the hundred years following the middle of the 15th century that even today accounts of this period must be highly conjectural. We do not know when and how, but it is certain that the Archbishopric of Ohrid assumed jurisdiction over many, possibly all Serbian episcopates³. This is not surprising in view of the fact that the Archbishopric of Ohrid had fallen under the Turkish domination as early as the end of the 14th century and had already established good relations with the new authorities and ensured its recognition. After the fall of the Serbian Church it succeeded in persuading the Porte to recognize its jurisdiction over the former Serbian Patriarchate by appealing to its former rights, dating from before the 13th century. There is some evidence that the seats of certain episcopates—such as Mileševa or Smederevo—had con-

1. On the fall of Serbian states, see *Istorija Crne Gore* (A history of Montenegro), Vol. II, Part 2, Titograd, 1970, pp. 333-347; *Istorija srpskog naroda* (A history of the Serbian people), Vol. II, Beograd, 1982, pp. 303-313, 414-430, *et passim*.

2. M. Purković, *Srpski patrijarsi srednjeg veka* (Serbian patriarchs of the Middle Ages), Diseldorf, 1976, pp. 154-156.

3. I. Ruvarac, *O pećkim patrijarsima od Makarija do Arsenija III* (Serbian patriarchs from Makarije to Arsenije III), Zadar, 1888, pp. 3-10; L. Stojanović, «Srpska crkva u medjuvremenu od patrijarha Arsenija II do Makarija» (The Serbian Church in the period from Patriarch Arsenije II to Makarije), *Glas SKA*, Vol. CVI, Beograd, 1923, pp. 113-131; M. Purković, *op. cit.*, pp. 157-164 (with earlier literature).

siderable importance not only as ecclesiastical centres, but also as centres of artistic activity. There are, however, slight traces of this in existing records and works of art⁴, so that it is not possible to say with certainty what sort of relationship had existed before the middle of the 16th century between artistic activity and the efforts of the Serbian Church to preserve its national identity within a state with an alien religion. In any case, it is not very likely that such efforts could have been successful. The Archbishopric of Ohrid certainly did not encourage the assertion of the national features of the subordinated Serbian Church. Therefore the representations of St. Sava of Serbia and of his father Simeon, formerly Stefan, the founder of the Nemanjić dynasty, which can be found on church frescoes of that time⁵, and the persistent practice of inscribing frescoes in Serbian (Prohor Pčinjski, Ajdanovac, Poganovo and others) should be merely taken as intimations that such tendencies did exist⁶.

The situation changed suddenly and radically in the middle of the 16th century, in 1557, when Constantinople granted independence to the Serbian Church. Peć became its centre again and its first leader was Makarije Sokolović, a relative of Vizier (later grand Vizier) Mehmed-pasha Sokolović, a Serb converted to Islam⁷. From that time onward, for at least a hundred and fifty years, the Serbian Church was a resolute leader of its people scattered over the extensive territory of the north-western part of the Balkan Peninsula. Since it was the only spiritual force of its people and the only legal representative of the nation in dealing with the Turks, the Serbian Church had great historical responsibility and its activity coloured the entire history of the Serbian people of that period.

Being at the head of the people — a situation quite normal in the

4. Very few monuments of Serbian art from mid-15th to mid-16th century have been preserved and the evidence they provide for the study of this epoch is rather scant.

5. G. Subotić, «Ikonografija svetoga Save u vreme turske vlasti» (The iconography of St. Sava in the time of the Turkish rule), in *Sava Nemanjić - Sveti Sava*, Beograd, 1979, pp. 343-345.

6. Even in churches which are known to have been painted by Greek masters (Poganovo 1499, Banjani near Skopje 1549) the inscriptions are in Serbian, and only occasionally does a Greek inscription appear.

7. S. Petković, *Zidno slikarstvo Pečke patrijaršije 1557-1614* (Wall painting of the Patriarchate of Peć, 1557-1614), Novi Sad, 1963, pp. 22-24 (with earlier literature).

Turkish theocratic state — the Serbian Church had to deal not only with the dangers threatening itself, but also with those which threatened the Serbian people.

The most direct threat were the constant, although not aggressive efforts of the Turks to convert to Islam as many of their Christian subjects as possible. These efforts were inspired by the wish to impart a greater unity to the Turkish state and to ensure the fulfilment of the dream of the triumph of the only true religion. The Serbian Church had to resist this, because it would mean not only the loss of its believers (and, consequently of its *raison d'être*), but also the loss of the national identity of the Serbian people.

The danger of Islamization was all the more insidious because conversion was not — except rarely and later on — carried out under compulsion; people were allured to Islam by desirable privileges. In the territory of the Patriarchate of Peć the situation was worsened by the fact that some of its regions, such as Bosnia and Herzegovina, had been scenes of religious conflicts between Bogumils, members of the Orthodox Church and Catholics in former centuries. Islam could — and did — take root more readily in such religiously unstable regions.

The Patriarchate of Peć naturally resisted these Turkish endeavours. It did so by paying promptly its taxes, by making various presents in money, and in various other ways⁸. It was especially difficult to persuade the ordinary believer, dejected by poverty and deprived of all rights, to persevere in the old religion. Little could be done by word of mouth alone, i.e., by sermons: apart from the highest dignitaries of the Patriarchate of Peć and the few learned monks in large ecclesiastical centres, ordinary clergymen, particularly those in villages, (where the greatest number of the believers lived), were themselves poorly educated and could give but little encouragement to their parishioners⁹. It was therefore in art that the leaders of the Serbian

8. It is known, for example, that during the reign of Selimus II churches had to pay special taxes to save themselves from demolition. B. Djurdjev, «Prodaja crkava i manastira za vreme vlade Selima II» (The sale of churches and monasteries during the reign of Selimus II), *Godišnjak Istoriskog društva Bosne i Hercegovine*, IX, Sarajevo, 1958, pp. 241-244.

9. Some Western travellers speak with contempt on Orthodox priests in Serbia. P. Matković, «Putovanja po Balkanskom poluotoku XVI veka» (Travels in the Balkans in the 16th century), *Rad JAZU*, Vol. LXII, Zagreb, 1882, p. 60. Speaking of a Serbian priests, named Lazar, in 1578, Gerlach says that he is a

Church saw an especially suitable and powerful means to influence the consciousness of the people and inspire them to remain faithful to the religion of their ancestors. This was the reason why so many church buildings were restored and adorned with wall paintings, icons and liturgical requisites after 1557¹⁰. Churches with their comparatively rich interiors became centres in which subjugated Christians could gather and which were to them focal points of a world different from that offered by their Moslem lords.

Painting played a very important role in the endeavours of the leadership of the Serbian Church to protect their believers from the allurements of conversion. The wall decoration, which was the most conspicuous feature of the interiors of churches, was especially valuable in this respect.

Much careful planning went into the iconographic programme of major monastic churches, and even small, village churches show evidence of thoughtful selection of subjects.

In the case of major undertakings, the subject matter was prescribed by the Patriarch, the bishops or abbots well grounded in theology. In minor churches a certain role was also played by painters, but they obviously followed the spirit and conceptions of the leaders of the Patriarchate of Peć.

The subject matter of wall paintings included the usual figures of eminent saints, the most important Christian feasts, scenes from Christ's life and passion, cycles with scenes from the life of the Virgin and of the most distinguished saints, such as St. Nicholas and St. George. However, Serbian saints and Serbian subjects were also represented on wall paintings, in accordance with the mediaeval traditions. St. Sava of Serbia with his father Simeon of Serbia is represented in every church without exception, and Stefan Dečanski is also a frequent subject in the painting of the second half of the 16th century¹¹. During the 17th century other members of the Nemanjić dynasty were

dye by trade, and when he describes a village priest, he remarks that he cannot be distinguished from peasants but by his long hair and cap. Č. Mijatović, «Pre trista godina» (Three hundred years ago), *Glasnik SUD*, Vol. XXXVI, Beograd, 1872, pp. 209, 212, *et passim*.

10. Wall paintings dating from the period 1557-1614 have been preserved in almost seventy churches, and their number must have been considerably greater originally. S. Petković, *op. cit.*, pp. 161-214.

11. *Ib.*, pp. 82-84; G. Subotić, *op. cit.*, pp. 345-351.

added to these Serbian saints¹². Moreover, in 1622 the life of St. Sava of Serbia was shown in twenty-nine scenes in the refectory of Chilandar, the monastery on Mount Athos founded by himself and his father¹³. Following the 14th century representations of the Nemanjić dynasty, Serbian paintings from the end of the 16th century introduced figures of Serbian rulers either in dynasties (Orahovica, 1594) or among the standing figures in the first zone (Trojica Pljevaljska, 1595; Gradište, 1620; Peć, 1634)¹⁴. Figures of eminent Serbian saints, especially St. Sava and St. Simeon, are also common on icons and covers of liturgical books. Moreover, the representative icons of Stefan Dečanski (1577) and St. Sava (1645) show scenes from their lives in considerable detail, following the 14th century biographical texts of Grigorije Tzamlak and Theodosius¹⁵. This insistence on Serbian subjects had a definite purpose: worshippers were to be continually reminded that they had a glorious past and mighty rulers who were devoted to the Church and who had even earned saintly haloes. This gave them strength to endure their hard everyday life and also filled them with hope in the return of pristine power. At the same time, these weekly encounters at regular church services, baptisms or funerals with the figures of lordly saints-rulers strengthened, albeit half-consciously, their determination to remain loyal to the Orthodox Church, which identified itself with the national being of the Serbian people.

Besides using such indirect, but, we believe, intelligible messages, the Church did not hesitate to employ more direct means to avert its believers from conversion to Islam. Shortly after the restoration

12. S. Petković, *op. cit.*, pp. 84-86.

13. V. Petković, «Legenda sv. Save u starom živopisu srpskom» (The legend of St. Sava in early Serbian painting), *Glas SKA*, Vol. CLIX, Beograd, 1933, pp. 5-62; Z. Kajmaković, *Georgije Mitrofanović*, Sarajevo, 1977, pp. 238-255 (with earlier literature).

14. R. Grujić, «Starine manastira Orahovice u Slavoniji» (The antiquities of monastery Orahovica in Slavonia), *Starinar*, Vol. XIX, Beograd, 1939, pp. 27-32; S. Petković, *Manastir Sveta Trojica kod Pljevalja* (Monastery of St. Trinity near Pljevlja, Beograd, 1974, pp. 50-51; Veljko Djurić, «Fresko slikarstvo manastira Gradišta u Paštrovićima» (Fresco painting of monastery Gradište in Paštrovići), *Istoriski zapisi*, Vol. XVII, Part 2, Titograd, 1970, p. 279; S. Petković, «Kult kneza Lazara i srpsko slikarstvo XVII veka» (The cult of Prince Lazar and the Serbian painting of the 17th century), *Zbornik za likovne umetnosti*, Vol. 7, Novi Sad, 1971, p. 87.

15. V. Petković, *op. cit.*, pp. 3-76.

of the Patriarchate of Peć Patriarch Makarije restored the narthex in Peć and had it repainted soon afterwards (1565)¹⁶. He commissioned a representation of St. Georgije of Kratovo, who suffered death in Sofia in 1515 because he refused to accept Islam, to be painted on that side of the pilaster which is easily seen from the usual, southern entrance to the church¹⁷. The aim of Patriarch Makarije is clear—he wished to impress upon the beholder the sacrifice made for the Orthodox Church by a Christian who was a goldsmith at Kratovo, a town in his patriarchate. Georgije of Kratovo had died only half a century earlier—some of his contemporaries were still living and he had already secured for himself a place among the eminent saints from the early centuries of Christianity. But the dignitaries of the Serbian Church did not stop at that: a few years later, about 1568, Georgije of Kratovo appears even in the first zone of the inner narthex of monastery Studenica, flanked by Aleksios the Godly Man and John Kalevitos¹⁸. The example thus set by the leaders of the Serbian Church and by the monks of such a renowned monastery as Studenica was followed throughout the territory of the Patriarchate of Peć: Georgije of Kratovo, the martyr who had recently perished in Sofia, appears on the walls of many churches and even on some 16th and 17th century icons¹⁹. His figure in churches was the most direct appeal to the worshippers to persevere in their ancestral religion, for it reminded them of the goldsmith of Kratovo, who had earned a place among the most revered saints by resisting compulsory conversion to Islam.

The Serbian Church was not, however, faced only with the danger of losing its members through conversion to Islam. Its position on the outer verge of the Orthodox world made it exposed to persistent pressure of the Roman Curia, which wanted to form a union with it and thus absorb it.

This pressure was especially strong on the Adriatic coast. Papal emissaries proffered financial help and gave promises for a crusade of Western Europe against the Turks. The temptation was hard to re-

16. S. Petković, *Zidno slikarstvo*, pp. 119-122, *et passim*.

17. *Ib.*, pp. 87-88.

18. *Ib.*, pp. 88, 168.

19. S. Petković, «Ruski uticaj na srpsko slikarstvo XVI i XVII veka» (Russian influence on the Serbian painting of the 16th and 17th centuries), *Starinar*, Vol. XII, Beograd, 1961, p. 104.

sist, and the Serbian Church occasionally gave ground for hope that it might be persuaded to recognize the Pope as the supreme head of Christendom. In return, it demanded the promised financial aid and, especially, assistance for the liberation from the Turks. But both parties were thoroughly insincere in these negotiations²⁰. Only in some sees in the territory of the Patriarchate of Peć which were exposed most to the persistent propaganda of Rome (Herzegovina, monastery Morača)²¹ was there some genuine vacillation as regards the acceptance of the union with the Catholic Church.

In any case, the Serbian Church had to face this threat, and the means it used in averting it were, among other things, the written word and works of art. It is noticeable that among the theological works translated or, more frequently, transcribed at that time there was an increased number of those directed against the so-called Latin heresy²². These books were, however, addressed to the few literate and fewer learned man of the time. Works of art had a greater, though indirect, appeal.

In order to shield its believers from the allurements of the aggressive religious propaganda of Rome, the Serbian Church decided to follow very consistently its former art traditions. As a result, the Patriarchate of Peć was very conservative in comparison with the other Balkan churches²³. Fear of the union with the Catholic Church was not the only reason for that, but it was certainly one of the most important ones. Except in a few cases, Serbian painting does not accept new subjects or new details in the traditional compositions before the 18th century. Its distrust of all innovation is illustrated by

20. The most detailed account is J. Radonić, *Rimska kurija i južnoslovenske zemlje od XVI do XIX veka* (The Roman Curia and the South Slavonic countries from the 16th to the 19th century), Beograd, 1950, pp. 43-283, 301-329, *et passim*.

21. *Ib.*, pp. 301-308, 318-323, 350-357, *et passim*.

22. Dj. Radojičić made a special study of these accounts in «Jedan srpski izvor Vasilija Nikoljskog iz Donje Rusije» (A Serbian source of Vasilije Nikoljski of Lower Russia), *Godišnjak Istoriskog društva Bosne i Hercegovine*, Vol. II, Sarajevo, 1950, pp. 83-88; «Ruski i srpski tekst Vasilija Nikoljskog iz Donje Rusije» (The Russian and Serbian texts of Vasilije Nikoljski of Lower Russia), *Istoriski zapisi*, Vol. IX, Part 1, Titograd, 1953, pp. 204-210; «Stari srpski pisci ukrajinske narodnosti» (Old Serbian writers of Ukrainian nationality), *Književna zbivanja*, Novi Sad, 1967, p. 272.

23. S. Petković, *Zidno slikarstvo*, pp. 154-155, *et passim*.

the fact that unusual subjects or non-traditional iconographic features were not adopted even when they emanated from such countries as Greece or Russia, whose orthodoxy was above suspicion. Compositions such as Massacre of the Innocents or Exaltation of the Holy Cross were popular in northern Greece, but they cannot be found in the territory of the Patriarchate of Peć — the sole exception being the monastery of Novo Hopovo, the nave of which was painted by Greek artists in 1608²⁴. Similarly, representations of the Virgin's Veil do not appear before the 18th century, apart from a painting in the narthex of monastery Gračanica, which was modelled after a Russian icon²⁵. The iconographic detail of the Virgin kneeling in front of the newborn Christ in the representations of Nativity does not appear either on wall paintings or icons in the territory of the Patriarchate of Peć, except in occasional works done by painters from Greece (e.g. at Tutin, 1647). Iconographic traditions were guarded with almost fanatic jealousy.

Similarly, wall paintings, icons and miniatures persistently imitated the style of 14th century models. This is especially noticeable in the painting of the second half of the 16th century, which means immediately following the restoration of the Patriarchate of Peć²⁶.

This extreme mistrust of all innovations as possible Western traps for the union with the Catholic Church explains perhaps the apparently strange attitude of the leaders of the Patriarchate of Peć towards printed books. From about 1520 onwards there began considerable printing activity²⁷ in Serbian monasteries (Rujan, Gračanica, Mileševa, Mrkšina crkva), in towns (Goražde, Belgrade, Skadar), and, especially, in Venice²⁸. This period of intensive printing of Serbian

24. M. Milošević - O. Milanović, «Crkva sv. Nikole u manastiru Novo Hopovo» (The church of St. Nicholas in monastery Novo Hopovo), *Rad vojvodjanskih muzeja*, Vol. IV, Novi Sad, 1955, pp. 255-273; S. Petković, *Zidno slikarstvo*, pp. 93-104, 204-207, *et passim*.

25. S. Petković, *Zidno slikarstvo*, pp. 102-104.

26. *Ib.*, pp. 112-113, *et passim*.

27. An important stage in the history of the Serbian printed book is the printing activity in Cetinje, Montenegro, in 1494 and 1495. For a detailed account see D. Medaković, *Grafika srpskih štampanih knjiga XV-XVII veka* (The graphic art of Serbian printed books of the 15th-17th century), Beograd, 1958, pp. 88-110, *et passim* (with earlier literature).

28. For these books see D. Medaković, *op. cit.*, the description on pp. 195-212, 222-229.

books was brief and lasted only to the seventh decade of the 16th century—until the restoration of the Patriarchate of Peć. The books published after 1557—those printed at Skadar in 1563, at Mrkšina crkva in 1562 and the Venetian reprints²⁹—represented the continuation of the earlier printing activity. It could have been expected that the Patriarchate of Peć would develop further this activity for the increased needs of the great ecclesiastical revival, but this did not happen. It is quite certain that it preferred the traditional multiplication of books by transcription to the new technique of printing, taken over from the West.

The suspicions of the leaders of the Serbian Church must have been particularly aroused by the illustrations in these books, especially those printed in Venice. The greater number of illustrations was modelled after the icons of Cretan masters³⁰, especially those from the church of San Giorgio dei Greci in Venice³¹, but some woodcuts were of a conspicuously Western, Catholic origin (the representation of the Trinity in the prayer-book of Božidar Vuković, 1536; the figure of St. Matthew in the Service Book of Jerolim Zagurović, 1554-1570; King David in the Psalter of J. Zagurović, 1569, and others)³². The Serbian church leaders must have been particularly suspicious of a book such as the Euchologion of Vićenco Vuković from 1547³³. This book contains, at the bottom of large central illustrations, sixteen vignettes, taken from an unprinted book of Pseudo-Bonaventura's *Meditationes Vitae Christi*, which are in a completely Western style of iconography³⁴. Printed

29. *Ib.*, the description on pp. 212-222, 229-232.

30. D. Medaković, «Die italo-kretische Malerei und die serbische Graphic des 16. Jhs», *Actes du XIIe Congres international des Etudes Byzantines* III, Beograd, 1964, pp. 251-255.

31. S. Petković, «Poreklo ilustracija u štampanim knjigama Božidara Vukovića» (The provenance of the illustrations in the printed books of Božidar Vuković), *Zbornik za likovne umetnosti*, Vol. 12, Novi Sad, 1976, pp. 119-135.

32. D. Medaković, *Grafica*, pl. XXXIII, LXXIV, LXXXVIIa. Some of these woodcuts reappear in other editions, particularly those of Venetian books (see pl. LXX, LXXVII, XCIV. Cf. also pl. XXXVII, 1. LXIII, LXXIX, LXXXVII, LXXXVIII, XCIII, XCIII, XCV, CVI and others.).

33. *Ib.*, pl. LXIII-LXXII.

34. S. Petković, «Ilustracije Meditationes vitae Christi od Pseudo-Bonaventure u jednoj srpskoj štampanoj knjizi XVI veka» (The illustrations of Pseudo-Bonaventura's *Meditationes Vitae Christi* in a Serbian printed book of the 16th century), *Zbornik Svetozara Radojčića*, Beograd, 1969, pp. 253-265.

books containing such illustrations were contrary to the Orthodox conceptions and the leaders of the Serbian Church put a stop to the printing of books in the second half of the 16th century. This does not mean that the books already printed were withdrawn, because there was a great demand for liturgical books, but they were gradually dropped from use. Finally, it is also worth mentioning that among the illustrations from printed books which were used as models for wall paintings, book covers or miniature paintings there is not a single one which departs from the traditional Byzantine iconography³⁵. Not before the 18th century did late Baroque decorative elements and Western iconography penetrate into the Serbian art under the influence of Russian and Ukrainian printed books³⁶.

The fate of the printed book and its illustrations reflects the profound and deliberate conservatism of the leaders of the Serbian Church resulting from their mistrust of all innovations that could bring the Serbian Church into the fold of the Roman Curia³⁷.

Possible islamization of its believers or union with the Catholic Church were undoubtedly the greatest problems of the Patriarchate of Peć and they were naturally reflected in the field of art. But other circumstances in which the Serbian Church found itself during the Turkish rule also found an expression in the works of art. The mutual relations of the Patriarchate of Peć and the Archbishopric of Ohrid are especially interesting in this respect.

It has already been mentioned that the Archbishopric of Ohrid,

35. B. Radojković, «Ilustracije srpskih štampanih knjiga XVI veka kao priručnici starih srpskih zlatara» (Illustrations of Serbian printed books of the 16th century as handbooks of old Serbian goldsmiths), *Zbornik Muzeja primenjenih umetnosti*, Vol. 11, Beograd, 1967, pp. 59-73; S. Petković, «Uticaj ilustracija iz srpskih štampanih knjiga na zidno slikarstvo XVI i XVII veka» (The influence of Serbian printed books on the wall paintings of the 16th and 17th centuries), *Starinar*, Vol. XVII, Beograd, 1966, pp. 91-96; Z. Kajmaković, «Uticaj stare srpske grafike na zografa Vasilija» (The influence of old Serbian woodcuts on zoograph Vasilije), *Zbornik za likovne umetnosti*, Vol. 2, Novi Sad, 1967, pp. 235-242.

36. D. Medaković, «O srpskom baroku» (On Serbian Baroque), *Putevi srpskog baroka*, Beograd, 1971, pp. 57-69; M. Kolarić, «Osnovni problemi srpskog baroka» (The basic problems of the Serbian Baroque), *Zbornik za likovne umetnosti*, Vol. 3, Novi Sad, 1967, pp. 250-270; D. Davidov, *Srpska grafika XVIII veka* (Serbian graphic art of the 18th century), Novi Sad, 1978.

37. S. Petković, *Zidno slikarstvo*, pp. 36-37.

which had already had good relations with the Porte, seems to have succeeded in extending its authority over all the Serbian bishoprics after the Turkish conquest of Serbia. After the restoration of the Patriarchate of Peć in 1557, the Archbishopric of Ohrid felt deprived of its influence and undoubtedly made efforts to persuade the Porte to repeal the decree granting independence to the Serbian Church. The Serbian Church, on the other hand, struggled to preserve its newly won independence. In such circumstances a conflict between Ohrid and Peć was inevitable. The available historical sources tell us little about the development of this conflict, but it may be safely assumed that the disagreements between the two Balkan Churches were reflected in the field of art, too.

The first sign of the confrontation of the leaders of the two churches is the absence of Greek painters in the territory of the Patriarchate of Peć in the second half of the 16th century. Greek painters seem to have been employed in only two or three out of about fifty churches in which wall paintings from this period have been preserved (the Church of St. Apostles at Mušnikovo near Prizren, 1563/64; the Church of St. Nicholas in the village of Šiševo near Skopje³⁸, 1565). Since Greek painters had a greater share in the painting of Serbian churches in the preceding period, there can be no doubt that commissions were withheld from them in the ambitious undertakings in the territory of the Patriarchate of Peć during the decades immediately following the restoration of 1557.

At the same time, figures of Peć archbishops and patriarchs began to appear in greater number in the first zone of wall paintings in the foundations of Peć patriarchs and other church dignitaries. Figures of former church dignitaries had not been uncommon in ecclesiastical centres and bishoprics³⁹, but now much greater emphasis was laid on such representations. Six archbishops and six patriarchs who had governed the Serbian Church from the 13th to the beginning of the 15th century were painted in 1565 in the first zone on the western and eastern walls in the narthex of the Patriarchate of Peć. They include both canonized and uncanonized representatives of the Serbian

38. *Ib.*, pp. 142-143, *et passim*.

39. G. Babić, «Nizovi portreta srpskih episkopa, arhiepiskopa i patrijarha u zidnom slikarstvu (XIII-XVI v.)» (Series of portraits of Serbian bishops, archbishops and patriarchs in the wall paintings (13th-16th century), in *Sava Nemanjić-Sveti Sava*, Beograd, 1979, pp. 319-330.

Church⁴⁰. Although this may seem an exaggerated number of figures, it can be understood in view of the fact that the monastic complex of the Patriarchate of Peć was the seat of the then reigning Patriarch Makarije, whose founder's portrait is also shown among the Serbian patriarchs. About ten figures of Serbian archbishops and patriarchs were painted in Gračanica, which is an episcopal seat, during the restoration of wall paintings in its narthex in 1571⁴¹. This can be understood in view of the fact that the restoration of this narthex was financed by three members of the Sokolović family, one of whom, Makarije, was patriarch at that time, while another, Antonije, was to succeed him in that office. Several Serbian archbishops appear on the restored wall paintings in the village church of Budisavci near Peć (1568). This might appear strange if we did not know that the re-painting of the church was commissioned by Makarije, the Patriarch of Peć⁴².

The great emphasis laid on the representations of Peć archbishops and patriarchs immediately after the restoration of the Patriarchate in 1557 was obviously a reflection of the disagreements with the Archbishopric of Ohrid. The appearance of such a large number of figures of Serbian archbishops and patriarchs, even in a small monastic church as that at Budisavci, was a direct reply to the aspirations of the Archbishopric of Ohrid to govern Serbian sees. The numerous leaders of the Serbian Church from the 13th to the beginning of the 15th century served to assert the right of the Serbian Church to an independent ecclesiastical organization and to show that it was more than three and a half centuries old⁴³.

The paintings of Serbian saints Sava, Simeon, Stefan Dečanski and others had a similar purpose. By representing them often (the former two in almost every church), the Patriarchate of Peć wanted to show that a church whose independence was established by a saint,

40. S. Petković, *Zidno slikarstvo*, pp. 84-85; G. Babić, *op. cit.*, pp. 331-333. The figures chosen were those of the first archbishops at the head of the Serbian Church (to 1316), and of the first patriarchs of the Patriarchate of Peć (to 1409).

41. S. Petković, «Slikarstvo spoljašnje priprate Gračanice» (The painting of the exonarthex of Gračanica), in *Vizantijska umetnost početkom XIV veka*, Beograd, 1978, pp. 208-209.

42. S. Petković, *Zidno slikarstvo*, p. 169, *et passim*.

43. *Ib.*, pp. 84-85.

and which could boast of other canonized members had a right to continued independence.

The direct conflict of Ohrid and Peć after 1557, with its repercussions in the iconography of painting, did not last long. Already at the turn of the 17th century they were reconciled by their joint efforts for the liberation from the Turks. Although the Archbishopric of Ohrid and other ecclesiastical centres did not recognize the rank of patriarchate to the Serbian Church⁴⁴, they seem to have been united by their common fate. This was immediately reflected in the field of art. Already in the opening years of the 17th century large groups of Greek painters came to work in the territory of the Patriarchate of Peć. Moreover, they worked on the most ambitious undertakings: they painted the vast nave of monastery Piva in 1604/1606, and they also worked on the equally spacious nave of monastery Novo Hopovo in 1608⁴⁵. From that time on, until well into the 18th century, they worked without any hindrance in Serbian lands. On the other hand, the tendency to represent groups of Serbian archbishops and patriarchs became less pronounced after the seventh decade of the 16th century. The brief conflict between Ohrid and Peć was no longer directly reflected in the iconographic programme of Serbian churches.

As the preceeding discussion shows, during the 16th and 17th centuries the Serbian Church made considerable use of works of art in its endeavours to avert the dangers threatening it, especially conversion of its believers to Islam and union with the Catholic Church. Paintings, and, indirectly, even church buildings, were more important and influential than the written word, since very few people were literate. Usually we do not talk much of the didactic character of mediaeval paintings, or if we do, we limit ourselves primarily to the representa-

44. It is typical that in 1592 the Patriarch of Constantinople mentions, in an epistle addressed to the Orthodox believers of western Russia, the archbishops of Ohrid, Cyprus and Peć. *Akty odnosjaščiesja k' istorii južnoj i rapadnoj Rossii*, Vol. I, S. Peterburg, 1863, No 210. Paul of Aleppo, a member of the suite of Patriarch Macarios of Antioch, describes in 1654 Gavriilo, the Patriarch of Peć, whom he met on his way to Moscow. He says derisively that Gavriilo pretends to be a patriarch although he is in fact merely an archbishop. *Putešestvie anti-ohijskago patriarha Makarija v' Rosiju v' polovine XVII veka* oppisannoe ego synom' arhidiakonom' Pavlom Aleppskim'. *Perevod s' arabskago* G. Murkosa, byp. I-V, Moskva 1896-1900, 114.

45. S. Petković, *Zidno slikarstvo*, pp. 151-155, et passim.

tions of Last Judgment. However, the Serbian Church of the period from 1557 to the end of the 17th century, led by competent patriarchs, knew that they represent a powerful instrument of propaganda and used them in response to certain contemporary developments and as a shield against religious ideas alien to it. Hence it may be concluded that art in general, and painting in particular, played a considerable role in the defence of the Serbian Church from external dangers during the 16th and 17th centuries, and that, in addition to its primary purpose, it helped preserve the national identity of the Serbs in the hard times of the Turkish domination.



Fig. 1. Emperor Stefan Dušan and King Stefan of Dečani, monastery of St. Trinity, Pljevlja, 1595.

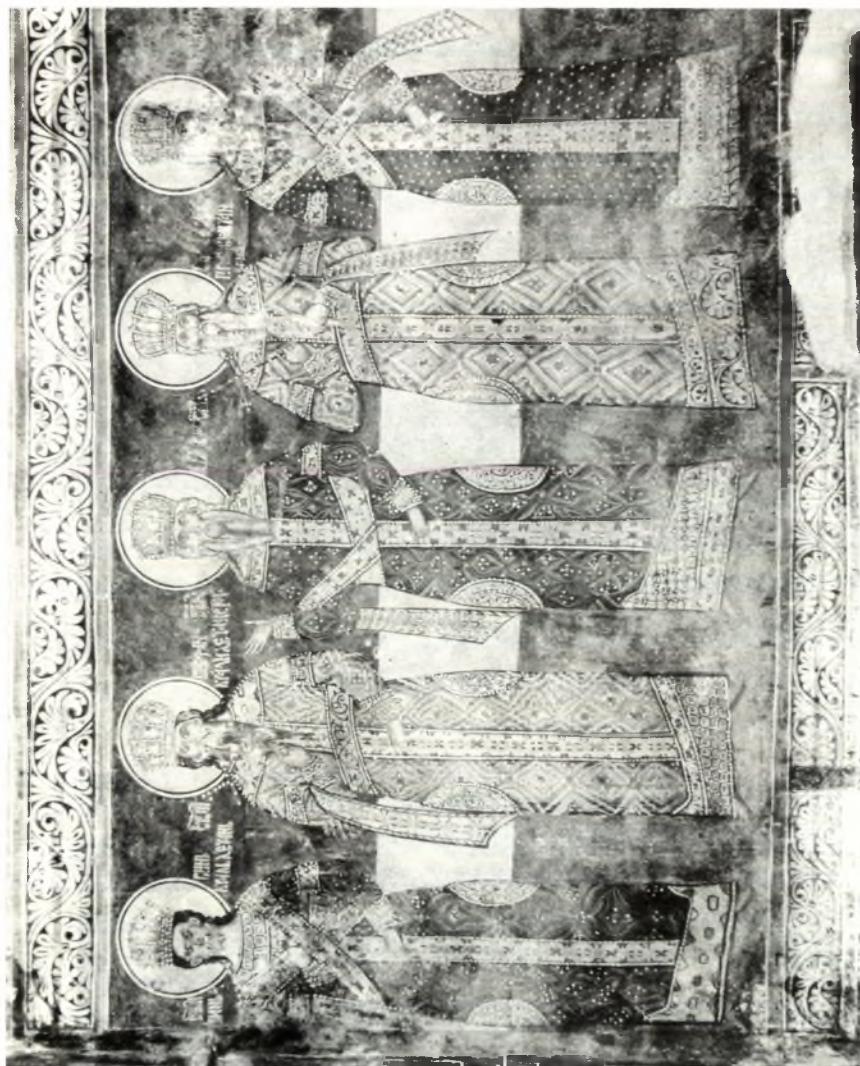


Fig. 2. Serbian Kings, church of St. Apostles, Pečka Patrijarsija, 1634.



Fig. 3. St. Sava of Serbia with the scenes of his life, detail of an icon, monastery Morača, 1645.



Fig. 4. St. Georgije of Kratovo, narthex, monastery Pečka Patrijaršija, 1565.



Fig. 5. Massacre of the Innocents, monastery Novo Hopovo, 1608.

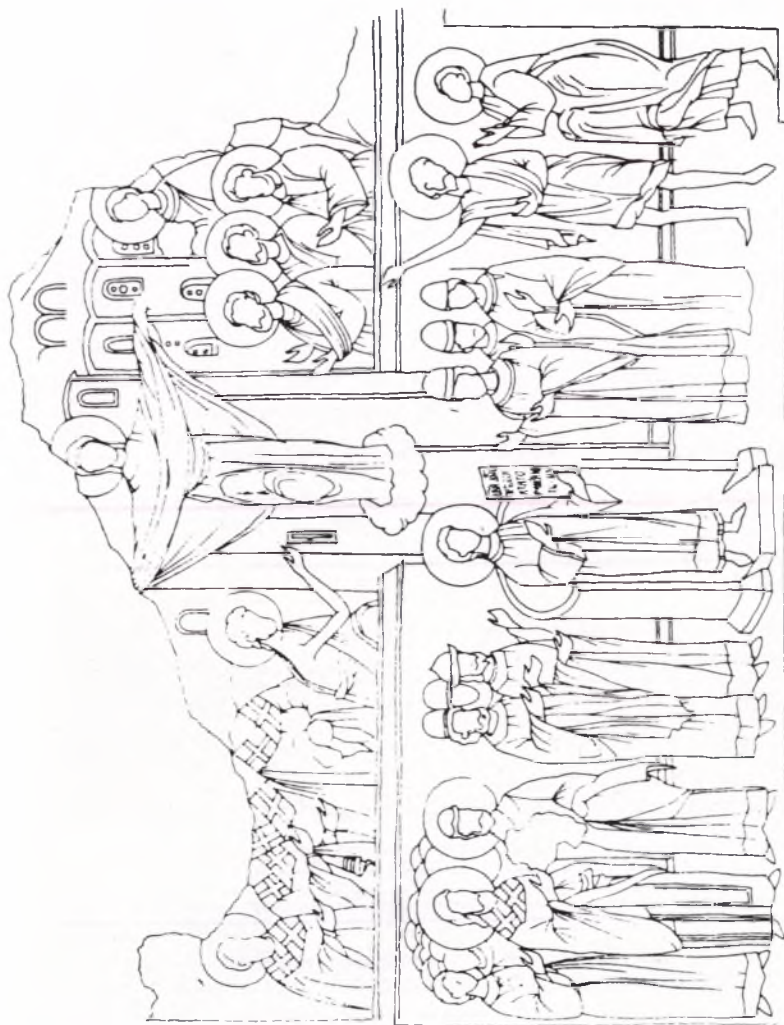


Fig. 6. *Virgin's Veil*, drawing from the fresco painting, narthex, monastery Gračanica, 1570.



Fig. 7. Service Book of Jerolim Zagurović, St. Matthew, woodcut, Venice, 1554-1570.



Fig. 8. Euchologion of Vičenco Vuković, three vignettes, woodcut, Venice, 1547.

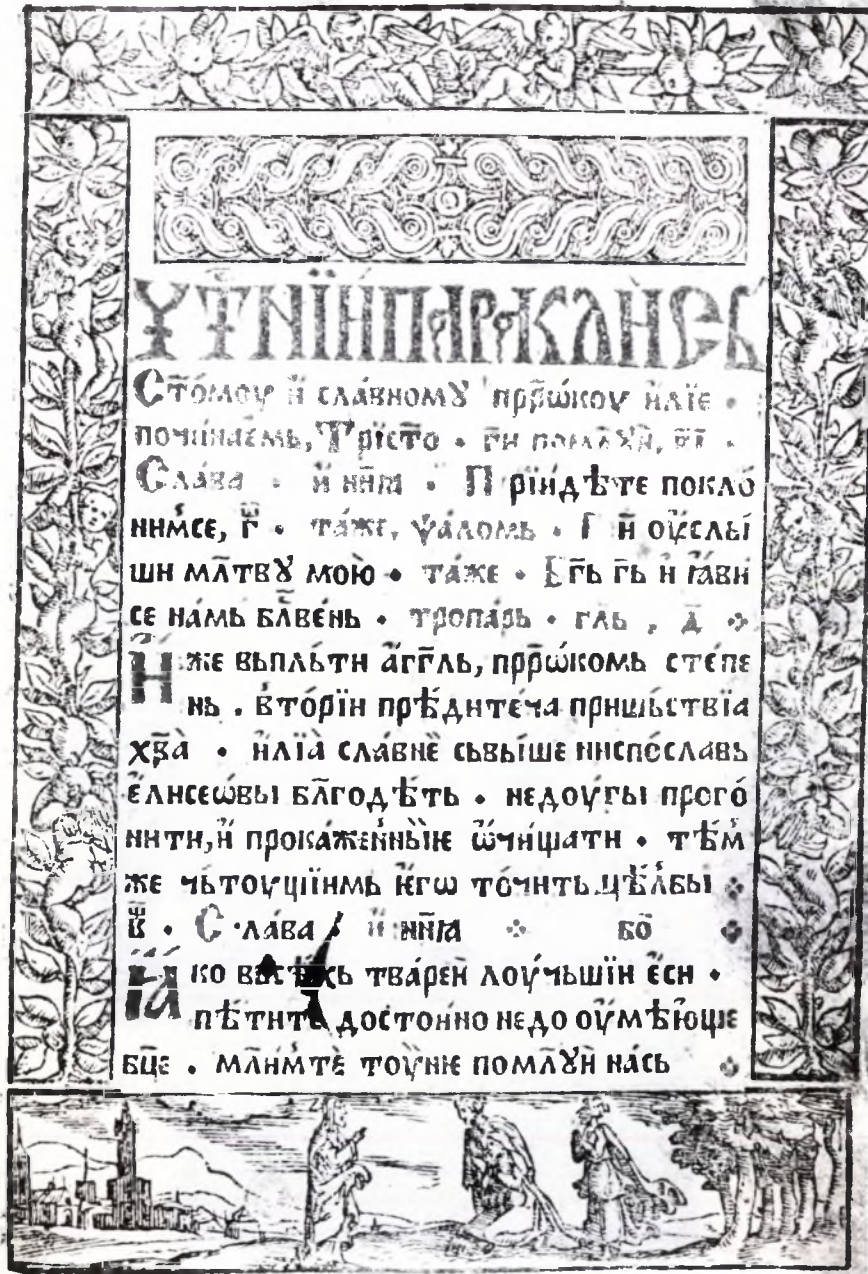


Fig. 9. Euchologion of Vićenco Vuković, a page, Venice, 1547.



Fig. 10. Serbian archbishops, narthex, Peška patrijaršija, 1565.