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Two Models of Sacred Space in the Byzantine and Medieval Visual Culture of the Balkans

*The Monasteries of St Prohor of Pčinja and Treskavac**

With eight plates

In memory of my father Krsto Smolčić (1941–2005)

An important part of the Byzantine and medieval visual and material religious culture of the Balkans is devoted to the constitution and shaping of sacred space within monastic centres and fortifications, as well as on the monastery land and property that were part of a consecrated landscape. Different kinds of preserved forms and functions of the sacred space and the sacred topography of the monastery are determined by the monastery's status, the cult fostered in the monastery, the model of monastic anchoritic life and specific geographical and climatic conditions.¹ A sacred spatial entity within the space of a monastery, in a broader sense, is constituted by a number of items of not only cult-symbolic, but also of liturgical-prayer character. Chapels, hermitages, sacred peaks with their chapels and anchoritic abode, painted rocks, wells, the pilgrims' monastery road, and the land combined with the consecrated landscape make up an integral geographical entity with the monastery, confirming by its topography the idea of the heavenly settlement, a New Jerusalem on Earth.

For the medieval *homo religiosus*, sacred space was a bounded and marked space. A space or a region is sanctified when it is marked in a way that overcomes the nature, previous presence, and effects of pagan beliefs and culture. In Christianity the sanctification of the landscape and of nature is the symbolic process of *new birth* and *new life*.² Sacred spaces are the places where holy relics are kept and the birthplaces or burial sites of holy men. Symbolically, such spaces are zones of direct contact between God and man.³ Sacred space also defines the spirit of the place (*genius loci*), which produces different

* This article is a partly revised version of the paper submitted for the 21st International Congress of Byzantine Studies in London. Cf. S. SMOLČIĆ-MAKULJEVIĆ, Sacred Space in Serbian Medieval Culture: the Monastery Treskavac and St Prohor of Pčinja, in: Proceedings of the 21st International Congress of Byzantine Studies, III. Abstracts of Communications. London 2006, 252.

¹ On characteristic holy mountains in Byzantium: A.-M. TALBOT, Les saintes Montagnes à Byzance, in: Le sacré et son inscription dans l'espace à Byzance et en Occident. Sous la direction de M. KAPLAN. Paris 2001, 263–275; EADEM, Holy Mountain. *ODB* II 941; K. BELKE, Heilige Berge Bithyniens, in: Heilige Berge und Wüsten. Byzanz und sein Umfeld. Referate auf dem 21. Internationalen Kongress für Byzantinistik, London 21.–26. August 2006. Ed. P. SOUSTAL (*Veröffentlichungen zur Byzanzforschung* XVI). Vienna 2009, 15–24. On the creation and transfer of various consecrated forms and sacred spaces, sacred time and history: A. LIDOV, Hierotopy. The Creation of Sacred Spaces as a Form of Creativity and Subject of Cultural History, in: Hierotopy. The creation of sacred spaces. Ed. A. LIDOV. Moscow 2006, 32–48. On different models of sacred space dispersion according to universal principal *translatio Hierosolymi*: New Jerusalem. The Translation of Sacred Spaces in Christian Culture. Ed. A. LIDOV. Moscow 2006.

² Principles of the effects of the sacred space on religious persons already ascertained by M. ELIADE, Le sacré et le profane. Paris 1991, 101–138. On other, utopic space see M. FOUCAULT, Von anderen Räumen, in: Raumtheorie, Grundlagentexte aus Philosophie und Kulturwissenschaften. Ed. J. DÜNNE – S. GÜNZEL. Frankfurt 2006, 317–327; G. DIDI-HUBERMAN, Ähnlichkeit und Berührung. Archäologie, Anachronismus und Modernität des Abdrucks. Köln 1999; H. BELTING, Bild-Anthropologie. Entwürfe für eine Bildwissenschaft. München 2001.

³ Theoretical views on contemporary cultural history and anthropology: A. ASSMANN, Erinnerungsräume, Formen und Wandlungen des kulturellen Gedächtnisses. München 2003, 303–305. Postmodern discours and critics of sacred and profane concept in mind

supernatural and complex cultural processes, experiences and events.⁴ In Byzantine culture it is often associated with different wild areas in nature, which provoke the feeling of the sublime due to their dramatic characteristics, but which are also places of divine theophany and miracle-working, another paradise and another heaven.⁵

Research on the sacred culture and Byzantine tradition of the Balkans so far has not sufficiently or entirely explored the multiple spaces both outside and within the monastery property that are part of its cult and devotional practice. The efforts aimed at the studying and argumentative determination of the different shapes of visual and material culture have grounds in cultural history and the *new art history*.⁶ This work is an attempt to include visual sources such as paintings, various material remains that bear witness to the religious devotion (e.g. monastic settlements, cult memorial places), and also medieval written sources, legal documents, charters, hagiographies and prayers in the studies of sacred space.

Two specific models from the Balkan medieval territory are the Monastery of Prohor of Pčinja near Vranje and the Monastery of the Dormition of the Virgin Treskavac near Prilep. Both monasteries have existed since the middle Byzantine period and can be dated with certainty to as early as the eleventh and twelfth century. Together they offer the possibility of studying the different complex structures of sacred topography as a memorial reflection of different cults: the cult of the Holy Anchoret and of the Holy Virgin.

THE CULT OF THE HOLY ANACHORET AND THE SHAPING OF THE SACRED SPACE

The Monastery of the Saint Prohor of Pčinja, to whom the monastery catholicon is devoted, is defined by the cult of the eleventh-century Balkan anchoret (pl. 3a).⁷ Together with Saint Gabriel of Lesnovo, Saint John of Rila and Saint Joachim of Osogovo, St Prohor of Pčinja is one of the four most famous hermits living in the this part of the Balkans during the eleventh and twelfth centuries.⁸ The rise of the cult of Saint Prohor of Pčinja developed with the building of the church where the relics of the Saint were placed during the middle Byzantine period. The cult is attested to in sources beginning in the thirteenth century including his short synaxaric *Life* in Norov Prologue, commemoration in the Orbel Triodion, in

of medieval men and the Biblical concept of sacred space: S. JAPHET, Some Biblical Concepts of Sacred Place, in: *Sacred Space, Shrine, City, Land*. Ed. B. Z. KEDAR – R.J.Z. WERBLOWSKY. London 1998, 55–72, esp. 57–58.

⁴ On cult-geographical influences, cult models and geographical typology in creation of cults see for example the cult of Archangel Michael in Chonai and on Mount Gargano: G. PEERS, *Subtle Bodies, Representing Angels in Byzantium*. Berkeley, Cal. Press 2001, 157–193.

⁵ In Byzantine literature holy mountains are defined as *loci amoeni*: H.-V. BEYER, Der „Heilige Berg“ in der byzantinischen Literatur, I. *JÖB* 30 (1981) 185. For the relation between sanctified nature and the understanding of Paradise in Byzantium see H. MAGUIRE, *Paradise Withdrawn*, in: *Byzantine Garden Culture*. Ed. A. LITTLEWOOD – H. MAGUIRE – J. WOLSCHKE-BULMAHN. Washington, D.C. 2002, 23–35; On pilgrimage to the places of miracle works and healings see A.-M. TALBOT, *Pilgrimage to Healing Shrines: The Evidence of Miracle Accounts*. *DOP* 56 (2002) 153–168.

⁶ In art history a new theoretical approach is offered by K. MOXEY, *The Politics of Iconology*, in: *Iconography at the Crossroads*. Ed. B. CASSIDY. Princeton 1993, 27–31. Significant steps forward in research and methodology are given in the works of the following authors: H. Belting, H. Kessler, G. Peers, A. Lidov and G. Wolf.

⁷ The basic information on history of the monastery and tradition is given in A.S. JOVANOVIĆ, Pčinja. Istorijaska crta iz nove srpske pokrajine. *Glasnik Srpskog učenog društva* 49 (Beograd 1881) 316–345; J. HADŽI-VASILJEVIĆ, Sveti Prohor Pčinjski i njegov manastir. *Godišnjica Nikole Čupića* 20 (Beograd 1900) 55–116; IDEM, Južna stara Srbija. Beograd 1913, 372–387; S. NOVAKOVIĆ, Prilozi ka istoriji srpske književnosti. *Glasnik Srpskog učenog društva* 22 (Beograd 1867) 237–238. In previous research the most detailed insight into the architecture and paintings layers is G. SUBOVIĆ, Slikar Mihailo u manastiru svetog Prohora Pčinjskog. *ZRVI* 34 (1995) 117–137 (with further literature); M. RAKOCIJA, Manastir Svetog oca Prohora Pčinjskog. Vranje 1997, 1–5.

⁸ The key studies for understanding the function of the Holy Man and his perception in Christian culture of the early period is P. BROWN, *The Rise and Function of the Holy Man in Late Antiquity*. *JRS* 61 (1971) 80–101. On Saints and Sainthood in Byzantium in the twelfth century see P. MAGDALINO, *The Byzantine Holy Man in the Twelfth Century*, in: *The Byzantine Saint*. Ed. S. HACKEL. London 1981, 51–66; R. MACRIDES, *Saint and Sainthood in the Early Palaiologan Period*, in: *op.cit.* 67–87.

the *Life* of Saint Joachim of Osogovo, the creation of *Prohor's Service and Life*, and his portraits in monumental medieval painting beginning in the fourteenth century.⁹

There is no reliable data on the founder of the monastery. Historical resources, material and visual culture remains, and the later *Life* of St Prohor¹⁰ offer the possibility of drawing indirect conclusions. The foundation of the catholicon, which was, according to a legend, built by the Byzantine emperor Romanos Diogenes IV (1067–1071), belongs to the middle Byzantine type of the original single-aisled structure of the monastery of Saint Prohor of Pčinja.¹¹ Over the centuries, the monastery and catholicon were renovated several times, but we can firmly state that it was renovated during the rule of tsar Milutin (1253–1321).¹²

Although the short medieval *Lives* – Prologues (thirteenth century) do not include the episode with the Byzantine emperor, the *Life* of Saint Joachim of Osogovo (fifteenth century) and the *Life* of Saint Prohor of Pčinja preserved from a later period (eighteenth and nineteenth centuries) contain the story with the emperor.¹³ The *Life* of Saint Prohor of Pčinja testifies that the Holy Anchores in the Nagoričino wilderness prophesied to the Romanos Diogenes, while hunting in the area of Pčinja, that he would become emperor. When the prediction became true, Romanos Diogenes saw the saint in his dream, who was at that time dead, asking him to keep his promise to build him a small sanctuary, as he had vowed while listening to the prophecy. The emperor had come back from Constantinople to Kozjak and translated the saint's body to the valley where he built a church for the saint.¹⁴ The topic of the prophecy to the emperor or the empress by the monk can be found in Byzantine hagiography and tradition.¹⁵ A similar tradition relates the prophecy of three local monks from Chios to the Byzantine emperor Constantine Monomachos (1042–1055).¹⁶

⁹ K. IVANOVA, Dve neizvestni starobulgarski žitija. *Literaturna istorija* 1 (1977) 61–63; Dj. TRIFUNOVIĆ, Najstariji staroslovenski životopis svetog Prohora Pčinjskog. *Književna istorija* 28 (1996) 359–364; IDEM, Služba Svetom Prohoru Pčinjskom. *Istočnik* (1997) 31–47; S. GABELIĆ, Lesnovo. Beograd 1998, 128–130.

¹⁰ The Church commemorates St Prohor on 19th October, the day of the translations of his relics, known from the thirteenth century – Norov Prologue. On this day St Prohor is mentioned together with St. John of Rila, cf. K. IVANOVA, Dve neizvestni 59. In another Prologue from the thirteenth century with the short *Life* of St. Prohor of Pčinja – cf. I. BOŽILOV – S. KOŽUHAROV, Bŭlgarskata literatura i knižnina prez XIII vek. Sofija 1987, 62 – 15th January was the saint's feastday, cf. Arhiepiskop SERGEI, Polnij mesjaceslov vostoka, I. Vladimir 1901, 15; Jeromonah Hrizostom STOLIĆ Hilandarac, Pravoslavni Svetačnik. Mesecoslov svetih, I. Beograd 1988, 101, 261; R. GRUJIĆ, Skopska mitropolija. Istorijско-statistički pregled, in: Spomenica srpsko-pravoslavnog hrama Svete Bogorodice u Skoplju 1835–1935. Skoplje 1935, 75; L. PAVLOVIĆ, Kultovi lica kod Srba i Makedonaca. Smederevo 1965, 20–33, esp. 28.

¹¹ SUBOVIĆ, Slikar Mihailo 123; JOVANOVIĆ, Pčinja 316–322.

¹² The signature of the painter preserved on the second layer of the painting of the catholicon is giving evidence of the renewal during tsar Milutin's time: SUBOVIĆ, Slikar Mihailo 126.

¹³ The *Life* is saved in later transcripts. On tradition, *Lives* and services see HADŽI VASILJEVIĆ, Sveti Prohor Pčinjski i njegov manastir 60–70; S. NOVAKOVIĆ, Prvi osnovi slovenske književnosti medju balkanskim Slovenima. Beograd 1893, 177–178. The early *Life*, known as „Prologue“ biographies from the 13th century, does not mention the episode with the emperor, cf. BOŽILOV – KOŽUHAROV, Bŭlgarskata literatura i knižnina prez XIII vek 62, 224–225; IVANOVA, Dve neizvestni 57–65. The service in honour of the Saint has been saved in a manuscript from the fourteenth century, cf. S. NOVAKOVIĆ, Pčinjski pomenik. *Spomenik Srpske Kraljevske Akademije* 29 (Beograd 1895) 11–14; TRIFUNOVIĆ, Služba Svetom Prohoru Pčinjskom 33.

¹⁴ HADŽI-VASILJEVIĆ, Sveti Prohor Pčinjski i njegov manastir 69.

¹⁵ Prophecy of holy men is known in Byzantine hagiography: On similarity with the prophecy to the Byzantine queen Anna Dalasene during her visit to holy Cyril Phileotes, see M. MULLET, Food for the Spirit and a Light for the Road: Reading the Bible in the *Life* of Cyril Phileotes by Nikolas Kataskepenos, in: EADEM, Letters, Literacy and Literature in Byzantium. Aldershot 2007, 1–20, esp. 15–17.

¹⁶ As it was noted in the later sources, three monks from Chios, Nicetas, Joseph and John, through divine inspiration, had foreseen the end of Constantine Monomachos' exile and his ascent to the imperial throne. As an act of gratitude for the realized prophecy, Constantine becomes the founder of the Holy Virgin's monastery on Chios. cf. D. MOURIKI, The mosaics of Nea Moni on Chios. Athens 1985, 22; S. VOYADJIS, The Katholikon of Nea Moni in Chios Unveiled. *JÖB* 59 (2009) 229–242.

The *Life* of Saint Joachim of Osogovo, preserved in the transcription from the fifteenth century testifies that the emperor Romanos IV Diogenes built the church of Saint George to Saint Prohor. According to tradition, the emperor also built the church in Staro Nagoričino.¹⁷

The tradition that brings together the cult of the holy anchorite and the Byzantine emperor has risen from the historical testimonies of his presence on the Balkan peninsula. There are narratives and evidence of material and visual culture which testify to the presence of Romanos Diogenes in the Balkans in the period before he became emperor, during the rule of Constantine X Doukas (1059–1067). Contemporaries of Romanos Diogenes, the Byzantine historians Michael Attaliates and John Scylitzes Continuatus, mention him as vestarch and a doux of Serdica (today's Sofia).¹⁸ The same information can be found in the work of Byzantine writer Zonaras, whereas Kekaumenos calls him katepano.¹⁹ The presence of Romanos Diogenes in the Balkans is also proved by the seals belonging to the period between 1055–1065 which were found in the territory of Bulgaria.²⁰ The members of Diogenes' family, especially Constantine Diogenes, Romanos Diogenes' father, were also bound to the Balkans by service.²¹

After he ascended the throne, the emperor Romanos Diogenes visited the Balkans. His presence is confirmed by chrysobulls he issued at that time to the monastery of Saint George near Skopje. Furthermore, the chrysobull of the Bulgarian emperor Constantine Asen (1257–1277) and the one of the Serbian tsar Milutin to the monastery of Saint George in Skopje relate the presence of the Byzantine emperor Romanos IV Diogenes and his donations to this monastery. In the chrysobull to Saint George monastery, the Bulgarian emperor Constantine Asen testifies that the archimandrite Varlaam gave him for inspection the chrysobulls of the former donating emperor, who ruled in this area. Among the emperors donating to the Saint George monastery, appears the name of the emperor Romanos IV Diogenes.²² The emperor is also mentioned in the charter issued by King Stefan Uroš II Milutin to the monastery of Saint George in Skopje in the year 1299–1300.²³ This charter names Romanos Diogenes as the one who donated the

¹⁷ Τόгда некоиемоу отъ бл(а)гоустыиныхъ ц(а)рѣ побевшюу възвнгоути храмъ пр(е)подобномоу въ ние ст(а)го великоμ(γ)τ(ε)νника г(ε)ωργία (IVANOVA, Dve nezvestni 63). The original Byzantine building, the Church of Saint George in Staro Nagoričino, renovated by tsar Milutin, is also, according to the *Life* of Saint Joachim of Osogovo and *Life* of Saint Prohor Pčinjski related to the one emperor, that is to Romanos Diogenes IV. Cf. B. TODIĆ, Staro Nagoričino. Beograd 1997, 25; R. GRUJIĆ, Vlastelinstvo svetog Djordja kod Skoplja od XI–XV veka. *Glasnik Skopskog Naučnog društva* 1 (1925) 47–48.

¹⁸ ὁ βεστάρχηρ Ρωμανὸς ὁ Κωνσταντίνου τοῦ Διογένοϋς ... δοῦξ Σαρδικῆρ ὁ Διογένηρ (Skylitzes Continuatus 121.12 [TSOLAKES]); ὁ βεστάρχηρ Ρωμανὸς ὁ Διογένηρ (Attaliates, History 73, 18–20 [PÉREZ MARTÍN]). On Romanos IV Diogenes see N. BANESCU, Unbekannte Statthalter der Themen Paristrion und Bulgarien: Romanos Diogenes und Nikephoros Botaneiates. *BZ* 30 (1929–1930) 439–444, esp. 440–441; V. MOŠIN, Gramotite na manastirov sv. Georgi-Gorg skopski, in: Spomenici za srednevekovnata i ponovata istorija na Makedonija, I. Ed. V. MOŠIN. Skopje 1975, 119, 184; H.-J. KÜHN, Die byzantinische Armee im 10. und 11. Jahrhundert. Studien zur Organisation der Tagmata (*Byzantinische Geschichtsschreiber. Ergänzungsband* 2). Wien 1991, 225, 242; B. KRŠMANOVIĆ, The Byzantine Province in Change. Belgrade 2008, 195. Serdika (Sofia) is about hundred kilometres from the Pčinja area and today's town of Vranje.

¹⁹ τῷ τῶν βεσταρχῶν ἀξιωματι. Δοῦξ ... τῆρ Σαρδικῆρ (Zonaras 18.10.12 [259–260 BUTTNER-WOBST]); Διογένηρ ... κατεπάνου (Sovety i rasskazy Kekavmena. Sočinenie vizantijskogo polkovodca XI veka, ed. G. LITAVRIN. Moskva 1972, 266).

²⁰ The seals bring together the name of Romanos Diogenes, his titles and functions: strategos (1055), patrikios anthypatos vestes and strategos (around 1060), vestarches and katepano (1064). Cf. I. JORDANOV, Corpus of Byzantine Seals from Bulgaria, vol. 2: Byzantine Seals with Family Names. Sofia 2006, K.M. KONSTANTOPOULOS, Βυζαντιακά μολυβδοβούλλα του ἐν Ἀθῆναιρ Ἐθνικοῦ Νομισματικοῦ Μουσείου. Athens 1917, no 622a; J.-C. CHEYNET, Grandeur et décadence des Diogénai, in: The Empire in Crisis (?). Byzantium in the 11th Century (1025–1081). Athens 2003, 129–131, fig. 6, 7.

²¹ On Constantine Diogenes' various titles and services in the Balkans: Lj. MAKSIMOVIĆ, Organizacija vizantijske vlasti u novoosvojenim oblastima posle 1018. *ZRVI* 36 (1997) 39–41.

²² иже се предъ царство ѡн архимандритъ чьстнаго храма того варлаамъ правила и хрисовсала светыиныхъ и правобѣрныиныхъ царен прѣжде мене бывшииныхъ и краалии: свѣтаго романа царѣ, двогега царѣ, св. петра царѣ, кнр никифора царѣ и протииныхъ, и св. кнр алексна царѣ, калѡѡана царѣ, кнр ѡанола царѣ, кнр тодора царѣ, кнр нсакеѣ царѣ, св. смлеон немана деда царствъ ѡн, батацеѣ царѣ, калнмана царѣ (Spomenici I, 184–185).

²³ видѣ кралевство ѡн правила и оутврѣженниа, хрисовсале светыиныхъ и правобѣрныиныхъ царь и крааль, прѣжде мене бившииныхъ: свѣтаго романа цара наипрѣвааго ктиторѡ светолоу, двогега цара, петра цара, квр никифора цара, и свѣтаго квр алексна цара и свѣтаго смлеона немане, асана цара, батаца цара, калнмана цара, стефана прѣвовѣнчанаго крааля, константина цара и роднтелиа кралевства ѡн краала оуроша прѣвааго, и квр андроника цара палеолога вѣторого (Spomenici I, 210–211).

village of Kozarevo to the monastery, which was confirmed by King Milutin when he listed the monastery's property (pl. 3b).²⁴

Comparative research of historical sources relating the presence of Romanos IV Diogenes on the Balkans and later *vita* of the Saint Prohor of Pčinja show the possibility of historical connection between the byzantine emperor and holy anchorite. The arrival of Diogenes in the region of Pčinja is described in the biography of Saint Prohor and can be correlated with his function as a *doux* of Serdica and his stay in the area of Sofia. His return to the Balkans is confirmed by sources, which inform us that the emperor made a donation to Saint George monastery in Skopje located only about fifty kilometres from Pčinja. Therefore, according to the life of Saint Prohor, Romanos IV Diogenes, during the short period of his rule 1068–1071, translated the body of the holy anchorite and built a church, the future monastery of the Saint Prohor of Pčinja.

How and from what place the body of Saint Prohor of Pčinja was translated can only be speculated. One thing is only certain, that the translation of the saint's relics in the church is connected with miracle-working from the very beginning. The wonder-working of the relics of the holy anchorite and their healing functions are documented in Norov *Prologue-Life* and in the *Life* of St. Joachim of Osogovo.²⁵

Over the centuries, as the memory and the anchorite cult of the church and the monastery housing the saint's relics were honoured, the monastery became the centre of the Saint Prohor of Pčinja's cult. The central site of the cult of Saint Prohor of Pčinja is formed around the part of the church where his relics were translated and housed (pl. 1a). Reverence for the relics was expressed in the form of special architectural structure in the south-western part of the original church, while the reliquary is still located in its eastern part. The continued oozing of myrrh from the wall in his the chapel with the relics is a constant reminder of the miracles.²⁶ The entrance to the space with the relics leads through the architectonic construction in the south wall of the church, which resembles an *arcosolium*.²⁷ The function and importance of this space, except for the architectonic arc-surface, is emphasized by the fresco of Saint Prohor of Pčinja, who is portrayed as an anchorite together with Saint Roman the Deacon (pl. 4a). The fresco belonged to the fifteenth century layer and it is considered to be a renewed painting of the fourteenth century.²⁸ The fresco of the holy deacon Roman invokes the memory of the relationship between Saint Prohor of Pčinja and the Byzantine emperor Romanus IV Diogenes.²⁹

The formation of the sacred centre of the monastery with its side chapels and *catholicon* is not restricted to the site where the relics are kept, but takes place also within the monastic circle. The cult of the saint and the memory of his presence in the wilderness of Nagoričino and Kozjak are cultivated

²⁴ И приложн кралиество чин село козаревко, прѣжде приложеное диогеномъ царемъ (Spomenici I, 218).

²⁵ The synaxaric *Life* in Norov *Prologue* from the thirteenth century mentions the miraculous oozing of the myrrh and wonderworking: и въ нде его създаше цр(ь)к(о)въ на рѣцѣ, г(а)големѣн пышна и положише въ нон цощи с[в]ѣт[а]го, еже твореть ищеленниа и до сего д(ь)не (TRIFUNOVIĆ, *Najstariji staroslovenski životopis* 364). Also in the *Life* of St. Joachim of Osogovo we can read: по прѣставлени же сего блаженнаго, стѣ его цощи дѣвнаа и прслабнаа чюдеса сътворяють даже и до дн(е)сь (IVANOVA, *Dve neizvestni* 63).

²⁶ The translation of relics often produced miracles and special devotion to it. On the process of establishing the cult of the Saints and canonic rituals of relics: E. BAKALOVA, *Relikvivi u istokov kulta svjatih*, in: *Eastern Christian Relics*. Ed. A.M. LIDOV. Moscow 2003, 19–37. On relics walled into the parts of the sacred buildings in Byzantium and Medieval Serbia see N. TRETIANIKOV, *Relics in the walls, pillars and columns of Byzantine churches*, in: *op. cit.* 77–84, esp. 78. On relics and their cult since early Christianity: A. LEGNER, *Reliquien in Kunst und Kult: zwischen Antike und Aufklärung*. Darmstadt 1995; A. ANGENENDT, *Heilige und Reliquien: die Geschichte ihres Kultes vom frühen Christentum bis zur Gegenwart*. München 1997. On the cult of body-part reliquaries in the Middle Ages and specific praxis in the western church see C. HAHN, *The Voices of the Saints: Speaking Reliquaries*. *Gesta* 36/1 (1997) 20–31, esp. 28.

²⁷ The similar construction from the fourteenth century exist in the nord wall of the altar space in the church of St. Archangel Michael in Lesnovo. The construction is to be conected with the burial place of the holy hermit St. Gabriel from Lesnovo, cf. GABELIĆ, *Lesnovo* 37, fig. 42, 43, 44.

²⁸ On the fresco layers from 14th century (1316–1317), the time of reign of King Milutin, 15th century (1488/9) and 16th century see: SUBOVIĆ, *Slikar Mihailo 120–137*; RAKOCIJA, *Manastir Svetog oca Prohora 25–36*; B. CVETKOVIĆ, *Terenska istraživanja u oblasti Vranja i Pčinje u 2005 godini*. *Glasnik društva konzervatora Srbije* 30 (2006) 98–101.

²⁹ SUBOVIĆ, *Slikar Mihailo 131*; G. SUBOVIĆ, *Obnova zidnog slikarstva u Svetom Prohoru Pčinjskom krajem XV veka*. *Leskovački zbornik* 29 (1994) 10.

throughout the monastic territory.³⁰ The geographical points that serve as reminders of the stay and work of Saint Prohor, as well as the places described in his *Life*, constitute the sacred topography. The traces of his stay are numerous. After his death, the anchorite saint continues his miracle-working. Miracles happen in the vicinity of his relics, in the church, and also in the places sanctified by his presence. Staying in these places, Saint Prohor made it possible for God's grace to be transmitted to those visiting these sites. The hermit cell in the Kozjak Mountain, where he led his ascetic life and where, according to the saint's *Life*, the Byzantine emperor found his body, as well as the different sacred spaces of the desert, represents such places.³¹ A hermit's cell of small dimensions is still in use and proves the contemporary practice of the cult. The veneration of this place is recorded in the chronicle of the monastery until the beginning of the twentieth century (pl. 4b). The Vita icon of St Prohor of Pčinja, which among other scenes depicts the saint's anchoritic life, testifies that the hermitage on Mount Kozjak was place of memory during the nineteenth century.³²

The continuous presence of the anchorite is witnessed by the traces of his stay and his footprints in the stone (pl. 4c).³³ Representing material traces of the holy presence, these relics deserve a special kind of veneration. The veneration cult of the holy footprint of Saint Prohor of Pčinja, is (as in similar examples from Byzantine culture) based on the belief not only in primary relics, but also in objects and places sanctified by contact.³⁴ The Christian tradition of worship and pilgrimage to the places where Jesus walked and the principle of *imitatio Christi* inspires the veneration of places blessed by the saints or heavenly creatures – in this case, the Anchorite.³⁵ To stay in a sacred place, the place where the hermit stayed during his recluse, is also a kind of contact with the relic itself.³⁶

In the same way, in which a cult develops on the Mount of Olives, where Christ's footprints are preserved and were venerated from the fourth century, a cult space arises around the footprints of the saint anchorite (pl. 5a).³⁷ The veneration of the holy places where the saint used to stay is a defined pattern established by Old Testament tradition. The Lord said to Moses when they met on Mount Sinai: *The place where you stand is sacred land* (II Mos. 3, 5).³⁸

The sacred space of the Saint Prohor of Pčinja monastery is also defined by the fresco-icon of Saint Prohor painted on the rock, located in the woodland in vicinity of the monastery, a place intended for prayer (pl. 1b). The fresco of Saint Prohor – *сты ѡт(а)ць (прохор) пшннскнї* – is found on the pilgrimage

³⁰ On the meaning of the term desert in old serbian written sources and its connection with anachoretic life see D. POPOVIĆ, Pustinja i svete gore srednjo vekovne Srbije. – Pisani izvori, prostorni obrasci, graditeljska rešenja. ZRVI 44/1 (2007) 253–274.

³¹ GRUJIĆ, Skopska mitropolija 78.

³² B. CRVENKOVIĆ, St. Prohor of Pčinja, in: Icon Painting of the Vranje Eparchy. Ed. M. TIMOTIJEVIĆ – N. MAKULJEVIĆ. Beograd – Vranje 2005, 82–84.

³³ The footprints mentions also J.G. HAHN, Reise von Belgrad nach Salonik. Wien 1868, 87–90.

³⁴ On Greek–Roman tradition of footprints, which ambivalent testify the Holy Presence as well as worshippers in the place of the miraculous footprints of Archangel Michael on Mount Gargano: PEERS, Subtle Bodies 164–169.

³⁵ The holy place with the footprints of Christ on the stone on Mount Olive is mentioned as a sacred place and pilgrim destination from the fourth century. For Egeria see: S. Pontii Meropii Pavlini Nolani opera, Epistulae 31,4 (*Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum* 29). P. MARAVAL, Lieux saints et pèlerinages d'Orient. Histoire et géographie des origines à la conquête arabe. Paris 1985, 265–266. On the stone with Christ's footsteps in the report from the Russian pilgrim Danilo from the twelfth century, see Knjiga hoženij, Zapiski russkich putešestvennikov XI–XV vv. Ed. N.I. PROKOF'EV. Moscow 1984, 40, 218. For the later period cf. Zapiski russkich putešestvennikov XVI–XVII vv. Ed. N.I. PROKOF'EV. Moscow 1988, 51–52. About a sixth-century pilgrim who filled his bags with "measures" of Christ's footprints see: G. FRANK, Loca Sancta Souvenirs and the Art of Memory, in: Pèlerinages et lieux saints dans l'antiquité et le moyen âge. Mélanges offerts à Pierre Maraval. Ed. B. CASEAU. Paris 2006, 193.

³⁶ G. WOLF, The Holy face and the Holy feet: Preliminary reflections before the Novgorod Mandyllion, in: Eastern Christian Relics 281–287.

³⁷ On the tradition and the cult of the holy feet of Saint Sava of Serbia in Montenegro see B. OTAŠEVIĆ, Savine stope. Andrijevac 1996, 46.

³⁸ The angel told Jesus Navin: The place you stand upon is sacred (The Book of Joshua 5, 15). Psalms indicate respect and pilgrimage to the places where the Lord lived: Bow to the place where His feet stood (Ps, 131). On forming the cult places and the meaning of the place of Saint Archangel Michael at Mount Gargano: PEERS, Subtle Bodies 169. On pagan tradition which was used since the 4th century within the shrine on Mount of Olives: B. KÖTTING, Fußspuren als Zeichen göttlichen Anwesenheit. *Boreas* 6 (1983) 200–201.

road leading along the river to the monastery. It gives evidence of the specific practice of consecration of space present on the Balkans since the Middle Ages. It is a frontal, standing figure of the saint, holding the cross in his right hand, while the palm of his left hand is open to the viewer. He is wearing a characteristic monk's garment, with a dark blue inner cassock, purple cloak and analabus, thus denoting the megaloschema monastic status (pl. 1c).³⁹ The koukoulion covering his head falls to his shoulders. Regardless of the damage caused by humidity (the fresco is outdoors, on the rock next to the river), the painting style of the fresco itself and the unveiled body parts of the saint indicate the fine craftsmanship and skill of the master and also that it was painted at the same time as the medieval paintings in the monastic catholicon.⁴⁰ The characteristics of the portrait of Saint Prohor of Pčinja on the rock in the vicinity of his monastery are similar to the medieval presentation of saints in Staro Nagoričino and Lesnovo.⁴¹ The cult of the saint in the period when Serbia was under the rule of Ottoman Empire testifies to different iconographic models of saints' portraits in the widespread territory of the Balkans.⁴²

In its vicinity, in the same forests, there is a stone well, the water from which is said to be beneficial (pl. 5b).⁴³ Saint Prohor's sojourn in the Pčinja area influenced toponyms – such as the name of the mountain *Starac* (Geron, Old man). On this mountain the Holy Father was staying in the church which is considered the oldest in the whole area.⁴⁴ The memorial places of the saint's presence are preserved not only in the topography of Pčinja, but also in the monastery of Saint George in Staro Nagoričino.⁴⁵ The influence of Saint Prohor Pčinjski's cult on the topography of the Pčinja, Vranje and Nagoričino regions can be compared with the influence of Saint Sava's cult on the topography of medieval Serbia, which has already been studied.⁴⁶

MOTHER OF GOD AND THE FORMATION OF THE HOLY MOUNTAIN

The cult of the Mother of God of Treskavac – *Богородице Трѣска(вѣске)* – and complementary forms of monastic life define another example of the sacred space in the Monastery of the Dormition of the Virgin in Treskavac (pl. 5c). The sacred space is formed, according to a vertical principle, from the holy peak to the monastery, hermitage and finally the pilgrim road (pl. 6).

³⁹ Like this representation of Saint Prohor Pčinjski in the church, cf. SUBOVIĆ, Slikar Mihailo 131.

⁴⁰ A subscriptio from the later period, perhaps 19th c. "St Holy Father Prohor, pray to God for us" testifies that the fresco was renovated. Similar style characterizes the fresco rock painting on the pilgrim road to the monastery of St. Archangel Michael in Prilep and the fresco of the church of St Archangel Michael from the second half of the fourteenth century (at 1371). Cf. G. SUBOVIĆ, *Ohridska slikarska škola XV veka*. Beograd 1980, 42.

⁴¹ TODIĆ, *Staro Nagoričino* 118; GABELIĆ, *Lesnovo*, 129–130, fig. 56; I. M. DJORDJEVIĆ, *Zidnoslikarstvo srpske vlastele udoba Nemanica*. Beograd 1994, 155.

⁴² C. GROZDANOV, *Portreti na svetitelite od Makedonija od IX–XVIII vek*. Skopje 1983, 159–180, fig. 55, 57, 58. On St Prohor, monastery and cult in late period see N. MAKULJEVIĆ, *Icon Painting of the Vranje Eparchy 1820–1940*, in: *Icon Painting of the Vranje Eparchy* 33; M. ČURČIĆ, *Crkva Uspenja Presvete Bogorodice u Sobinama – Sveti Prohor Pčinjski*, in: *op. cit.* 59–61. For the portrait on the seal from nineteenth century see HADŽI-VASILJEVIĆ, *Južna stara Srbija* 381.

⁴³ The Life of Saint Prohor of Pčinja mentions also the water in the vicinity of place of his anachoretic sojourn, cf. HADŽI-VASILJEVIĆ, *Sveti Prohor Pčinjski i njegov manastir* 67.

⁴⁴ Writing travellers such as Hahn are giving evidence that the old road to the monastery led over this mountain and next to this church, which is assumed to be the Saint Luke's Church originally built by the emperor Romanus Diogenes (HAHN, *Reise von Belgrad nach Salonik* 206; *Spomenici* I 133). The future systematic archeological research should state precisely the time of the creation of this church, which according to the remains belongs to the Byzantine architecture.

⁴⁵ Also in the sacred space of the St George monastery in Staro Nagoričino the Prohor hermitage is preserved. Cf. HADŽI-VASILJEVIĆ, *Sveti Prohor Pčinjski i njegov manastir* 71–80; GRUJIĆ, *Skopska mitropolija* 74.

⁴⁶ G. ŠKRIVANIĆ, *Ime Svetog Save u toponimjstici srpskih zemalja*, in: *Sveti Sava*. Beograd 1977, 367–374; N. MAKULJEVIĆ, *Održavanje i obnova vere: Pravoslavni hramovi u gornjem Polimlju tokom novog veka*. *Mileševski zapisi* 7 (Prijeplje 2007) 160.

The monastery was founded during medieval times on the antique sacred place of Kolobaise and on the temples of Artemis of Ephesus and Apollo Euthanatos, from the second century (pl. 7a).⁴⁷ Treskavac itself is situated on the slopes of the Babuna Mountain, and its holy peak called Zlatovrh rises over the medieval town of Prilep.⁴⁸ Since the mid-Byzantine period, the monastery has fostered a strict monastic typikon that King Stefan Dušan compared to the rules obeyed on the holy mounts of Athos and Sinai.⁴⁹ As an important place of the Mother of God of Treskavac, the monastery has been under the patronage of Byzantine rulers, which can be proven with certainty since the rule of Andronicus II and Michael IX. The charters of Treskavac issued by King Dušan and the renovated medieval fresco paintings of rulers' portraits in the main monastery entrance from the nineteenth century give evidence of the Byzantine rulers who were the donors of this holy place.⁵⁰

According to the inscription above the main monastery entrance next to the portraits of Byzantine rulers Andronicus II – ANTPONHKOC (sic!) EN X(PICT)Ω [.....] [ΤΩ Θ(Ε)]Ω ΠΙΣΤΟΣ ΒΑΣ[ΙΛΕΥΣ..... ΚΑΙ ΑΥΤΟ]ΚΡΑΤΩΡ ΡΩΜΑΙ[ΩΝ ΚΟΜΝΗΝΟΣ Ο ΠΑ]ΛΑΙΟΛΟΓΟΣ – and Michael IX – ΜΗΧΑΗΛ (sic!) EN X(PICT)Ω ΤΩ Θ(Ε)Ω ΠΙΣΤΟΣ ΒΑΣΙΛΕΥΣ ΚΑΙ ΠΑΝΤΟΚΡΑ[ΤΩ]Ρ (sic!)⁵¹ ΡΩΜΑΙΩΝ ΚΟΜΝΗΝ[Ο]Σ Ο ΠΑΛΑΙΟΛΟΓΟΣ⁵² – which contains a recognizable signature of the Palaiologos dynasty, including the adjoining surnames of the previous Byzantine dynasties, we can indirectly conclude when the Treskavac monastery was renovated in the Middle Ages.⁵³ There are several examples of similar signatures, characteristic of the written documents from the years between 1294 and 1314–1316, in the legal Byzantine documents issued for the needs of other monasteries on Mount Athos, as well as

⁴⁷ On the history of the monastery see B. BABIĆ, Na marginama manastira Treskavca. *Zbornik za likovne umetnosti matice srpske* 1 (1965) 23–29; IDEM, Manastir Treskavec so crkvata sv. Uspenie Bogorodičino, in: *Spomenici za srednevekovnata i ponovata istorija na Makedonija*, IV. Ed. V. MOŠIN. Skopje 1981, 37–45; S. SMOLČIĆ-MAKULJEVIĆ, Sakralna topografija manastira Treskavca. *Balkanica* 35 (2004) 289–293; M. GLIGORIJEVIĆ-MAKSIMOVIĆ, Slikarstvo XIV veka u manastiru Treskavcu. *ZRVI* 42 (2005) 77–80; S. SMOLČIĆ-MAKULJEVIĆ, Monastery Treskavac (in print).

⁴⁸ On the holy peak Zlatovrh: SMOLČIĆ-MAKULJEVIĆ, Sakralna topografija manastira Treskavca 304–307.

⁴⁹ АЩЕ БО КЪТО ПОХВАЛИТЬ ЖИТНІЕ ННОКОДЪ ЖИВОУЩИИДЪ ВЪ СНАНЦЪХЪ ГОРЪ НАН ВЪ ГОРЪ СВЕТЪН АФОНЪЦЪХЪ, ДА ПОХВАЛИТЬ ЖЕ И СІХЪ ЖИТНІЕ И ОУСТАВЪ НЕ ХУДЪШЕ, (Treskavac, charter I, 1 [Spomenici IV, 77–78]). On the forms of organization of monastic life on Mount Athos presented through the concrete legal and economic relations within the institutions of Mount Athos and relations of monasteries and kellia: M. ŽIVOJINOVIĆ, Svetogorske kelije i pirogovi u srednjem veku. Beograd 1972. On establishing the Athos monasticism and on types of monastic life and organization see R. MORRIS, The Origin of Athos, in: *Mount Athos and Byzantine Monasticism*. Birmingham 1994, 37–46. On complementary relations between coenobitic and anchoritic life on Athos cf. D. PAPAHRISANTU, Atonsko monaštvo. Beograd 2004.

⁵⁰ ИЗВОЛИХЪ СЕМОУ ЦОНАСТІРІОУ ДАТИ ХРИСОБΟΥΛΗ СВОИ ПО ОБРАЗУ ДРЕВНИИХЪ ЦАРЕН ГРЪЦККИИХЪ И БЪЛГАРЪСКИИХЪ, (Treskavac, charter I, 1 [Spomenici IV, 78]).

⁵¹ I am very thankful to Mirjana Živojinović (Institute for Byzantine Studies Belgrade) for her help in reading the inscription. We could only suppose that it was the mistake in transcript of titule in 19th century and that the word αὐτοκράτωρ was replaced with the word παντοκράτωρ. Jordan Ivanov reads the inscription: (Μιχαήλ) παντοκράτωρ Ῥωμαίων Κομνηνός ὁ Παλαιολόγος. J. IVANOV, Bŭlgarski starini iz Makedonija. Sofia 1931, 67.

⁵² The commentary of charters of Andronikos II for the land in Presnica (Strumica region) from 1293 refers to the temporary use of signature with surnames of previous byzantine rulers. Archives de l'Athos. Actes de Chilandar I des origines à 1319. Éd. diplomatique par M. ŽIVOJINOVIĆ – V. KRAVARI – Ch. GIROS. Paris 1998, 145. Dölger restricts the use of this practice with 1315: F. DÖLGER, Regesten der Kaiserurkunden des oströmischen Reiches von 565–1453, IV. München 1960, 47. P. SCHREINER, Palaiologen. *LexMA* VI 1629. On Palaeologos family yet A. KAZHDAN, Palaiologos. *ODB* III 1557–1560. On Andronikos II see *PLP* 9, 81–83 (no. 21436).

⁵³ Signatures with surnames of the previous Byzantine dynasties: +Ἀνδρόνικος ἐν Χ(ριστ)ῶ τῷ Θεῷ πιστὸς βασιλεὺς καὶ αὐτοκράτωρ Ῥωμαίων Δούκας Ἄγγελος Κομνηνός ὁ Παλαιολόγος for example in Charter n° 89 from June 1298, cf. Archives de l'Athos. Actes de Lavra II, de 1204 à 1328. Éd. diplomatique par P. LEMERLE. Paris 1977, 76; on demand of Chilandar for land property on the Mount Athos and Macedonia (Chrysobull n° 17 from 1299, cf. Actes de Chilandar I 171); on demand of tsar Milutin for the village of Kucovo in Strumica region (Chrysobull n° 29 from 1313) see Actes de Chilandar I 208; +Μιχαήλ ἐν Χ(ριστ)ῶ τῷ Θεῷ πιστὸς βασιλεὺς καὶ αὐτοκράτωρ Ῥωμαίων Δούκας Ἄγγελος Κομνηνός ὁ Παλαιολόγος (Charter from year 1310, cf. Archives de l'Athos. Actes d'Iviron III, de 1204 à 1328. Éd. diplomatique par J. LEFORT. Paris 1994, pl. XXXVI, a 72); charter with the surname of previous royal family from year 1300: Michael IX ratifies the village Kastriin to King Milutin (Actes de Chilandar I 180).

on coins issued at that time.⁵⁴ The renovation testified by the portraits of Byzantine rulers, corresponds to the time of King Milutin's donations to the Treskavac monastery.⁵⁵

Owing to the cult of the Virgin of Treskavac, the monastery became a pilgrimage centre in the Middle Ages, and even the members of the Serbian ruling family, such as King Uroš, son of King, later Emperor, Stefan Uroš IV Dušan (1308–1355), were sent on the pilgrimage there.⁵⁶ In accordance with a Byzantine practice, this cult was most probably connected to the wonderworking icon whose existence may be indirectly deduced from the written sources. This icon of the Mother of God of Treskavac has not been preserved, but it is mentioned in King Dušan's charters to Treskavac. Likewise, the Mother of God of Treskavac was called upon for help and is mentioned in prayers dating from the 14th century, together with the rest of the wonderworking icons.⁵⁷ What proves the presence of Mother of God is not such an icon of the Mother of God of Treskavac, but also the miraculous healings of the believers and her „footsteps“, which are still heard in the monastery.⁵⁸

The undecorated cave church in the immediate vicinity of the monastery, on the road to the holy peak, as well as the remains of the anchorite abodes and hermitages indicate the forms of ascetic life.⁵⁹ As the thirteenth-century anchoritic life on Mount Athos described by the medieval writer and the biographer of the Serbian St Sava, the monk Theodosius states, the monks “live in the high mountains together with deer, *have the heavens for their church* and look at the image of Christ within their own soul”, nature and the sacred life form a harmonious living space in the Treskavac mountain.⁶⁰

Painted rocks representing specific places designated for pilgrims' prayer mark the old medieval stone-paved road from Dabnica village to the Treskavac monastery. There are two images of the Mother of God on these painted rocks, in accordance with the cult fostered in the monastery. These paintings guide believers to the church. Although the paintings, judging by the style and the similarity with the paintings in the church, were renovated in the nineteenth century, their iconography indicates a medieval model.⁶¹ One of the icons of the Mother of God on the rock near the monastery belongs to the iconographic model of the Virgin Paraklesis (pl. 7b, 2a). The iconographic pattern of the Virgin Paraklesis from the rock in Treskavac is characteristic for the Byzantine painting style from the twelfth century.⁶² This image incorporates the idea of the Virgin as the heavenly intercessor and pleader. The fresco-icon on the medieval road from Dabnica to Treskavac represents a half-figure picture of the Mother of God – Hodegetria (Mother of God who shows the way) (pl. 2b). Iconography sublimates her symbolic and liturgical worship, as quoted in the eleventh oikos of Akathistos hymn: „Rock which gives water to those thirsty of life,⁶³ The Holy Virgin, the rock of all Saints and comfort to the monks”, but also the Mother of God, as a protectress of “high mountains” and as the Virgin of Treskavac, is worshipped in the prayer

⁵⁴ For example on some coins of Andronikos II and Michael IX beneath the Virgin and title ΑΝΔΡΟΝΙΚΟΣ ΕΝ ΧΡΙΣΤΩ ΤΩ ΘΕΩ ΠΙΣΤΟΣ ΒΑΣΙΛΕΥΣ ΚΑΙ ΑΥΤΟΚΡΑΤΩΡ ΚΟΜΝΗΝΩΣ Ο ΠΑΛΑΙΟΛΟΓΟΣ. P. GRIERSON, *Byzantine Coins in the Dumbarton Oaks Collection and in the Whittemore collection*, V. Washington, D.C. 1999, 130, 131; W. WROTH, *Imperial Byzantine Coins in the British Museum*. London 1908 (Reprint Chicago 1966) 618–619, pl. LXXIV/18, LXXV/2.

⁵⁵ SMOLČIĆ-MAKULJEVIĆ, *Monastery Treskavac* (in print).

⁵⁶ ЧУДОТВОРИЦЕ ГАЛОГЕЦА ВЪ ТРЕСКАВЦИ (Treskavac, charter III [Spomenici IV, 143]).

⁵⁷ SMOLČIĆ-MAKULJEVIĆ, *Sakralna topografija manastira Treskavca* 293–299.

⁵⁸ SMOLČIĆ-MAKULJEVIĆ, *Sakralna topografija manastira Treskavca* 296, n. 37.

⁵⁹ SMOLČIĆ-MAKULJEVIĆ, *Sakralna topografija manastira Treskavca* 299–307.

⁶⁰ The description of life of the monks on Mount Athos is part of the *Life of St Sava of Serbia of Teodosije of Chilandar*, cf. *Stare Srpske biografije*. Ed. D. BOGDANOVIĆ. Beograd 1968, 80.

⁶¹ Judging by the style, the paintings were renovated at the time when the inner callotte of the narthex was painted in 1849, cf. B. BABIĆ, *Manastir ot Treskavec so crkvata sv. Uspenie Bogorodičino* 44.

⁶² On iconography of the presentation of the Virgin Paraklesis on the example of the 12th century icon: M. TATIĆ-ĐURIĆ, *Steatiska ikonica iz Kuršumlje*, in: *Studije o Bogorodici*. Beograd 2007, 9–24. On the same iconography typ, representation and function of fresco or icon of Virgin and examples associated with epithet Eleousa from Cyprus see for example: J. COTSONIS, *The Virgin and Justinian on Seals of the Ekklesiokdikoi of Hagia Sophia*. *DOP* 56 (2002) 53, Fig. 15, 16.

⁶³ C. A. TRYPANIS, *Fourteen early byzantina Cantica (WBS 5) 34 (11,11)*. Cf. L. M. PELTOMAA, *The Image of the Virgin Mary in the Akathistos Hymn (The Medieval Mediterranean 35)*. Leiden–Boston–Köln 2001, 10–11.

in the Serbian Euchologion dating from the mid-fourteenth century.⁶⁴ The Virgin on the rock is a substitute of Daniel's high mountain from which Christ tore Himself away (Daniel, II) and which is in the psalms called the mount where the Lord loved to abide (Ps. 68,16). Fresco-icons on the rock surrounding the Treskavac monastery create an invincible protection and recall the Heavenly Kingdom and invocation of the help of the Mother of God.⁶⁵ The visual parallel of this outdoor painting phenomenon in Byzantine art is undoubtedly the icon of the Mother of God on the rock from the vision in Nabucodonosor's dream in the Chludov Psalter.⁶⁶

Icons on the rock on the Treskavac Mountain are evidence of the medieval practice preserved in the Balkans through to the present. The medieval fortress and the town of Prilep prove that the cult function of medieval rock painting has survived to contemporary times. The most famous example is the monumental icon of the Holy Warrior on the road leading to the Monastery of Saint Archangels in Prilep (pl. 8a, 2c).⁶⁷ The Holy Warrior is represented on the horse, with shield and full warrior's arms. Although the figure is rather damaged, which makes it difficult to identify the saint, the work of a skilful artist can be recognized on the preserved fragments of the shield (pl. 8b). The presentation of the horseman demonstrates its similarity with the iconography of Saint Demetrius on the facade of the Treskavac monastic catholicon. The remains of fresco and "sgraffito" painting found in the medieval fortress of Prilep, dating from different periods, represent evidence of the continuity of this practice. Among the preserved remains of fresco painting on rocks and open spaces in the medieval Prilep fortress, the most prominent is the carefully polished and finely crafted lunette located at the steepest and unreachable terrain on the top of the Prilep fortress. This lunette, with traces of plaster and red colour, is witness to the once existing fresco icon and fresco painting.⁶⁸

Icons on the rock and the consecration of natural spaces represent a complex phenomenon in the religious experience of the Middle Ages. As opposed to defining monastery borders by using natural markers such as stones, putting icons on the natural border markers is a process of sacralisation of the territory. It is a religious experience, both during the creation of the icon and during devotional practise.

The decrees of the Second Nicaean Council (the seventh oecumenical assembly in 787) defined consecration of open space and roads by engraving crosses and placing icons. It is firmly decreed "that the honourable and life-giving Cross be put in holy churches of God, on clerical ware and robes, on walls and boards, in homes and on *the roads*, as well as the holy icons of the Lord, Jesus Christ the Saviour and immaculate Mother of God".⁶⁹ Monastic Lives, for example that of Saint Lazaros of Mount Galesion, the eleventh-century holy stylite – that is, from the same period as Saint Prohor of Pčinja – offer only

⁶⁴ Lj. KOVAČEVIĆ, Nekoliko primera stare srpske književnosti. *Starine Jugoslavenske Akademije Znanosti i Umjetnosti* 10 (Zagreb 1878) 280–282.

⁶⁵ S. RADOJIĆ, Epizoda o Bogorodici-Gori u Teodosijevom „Životu sv. Save“ i njena veza sa slikarstvom XII i XIV veka, in: IDEM, *Tekstovi i freske*. Novi Sad 1965, 114–127.

⁶⁶ M.V. ŠČEPKINA, Miniatury Chludovskoj psaltyri. Moscow 1977, 64; A. CUTLER – J.-M. SPIESER, *Das mittelalterliche Byzanz*. München 1996, 60, fig. 37.

⁶⁷ Archimandrit Antonin, a careful researcher of antiquities, mentions this depiction of the horseman, stating that it is very old and that it was preserved in spite of the atmospheric conditions to which it was exposed. He also writes that it is the representation of the horseman and that at that time the inscription O A – indicating ó ἅγιος – was still visible, cf. Poezdka v' Rumeliju archimandrita Antonina člana sotrudnie Imperatorskogo Russkogo Archeologičeskogo Obščestva. St. Petersburg 1879, 330. The first one who started scientific research about the paintings on the rocks in this area was SUBOTIĆ, *Ohridska slikarska škola XV veka* 42. Cf. also GABELIĆ, *Lesnovo* 194.

⁶⁸ On medieval fortifications in Prilep, built between the 11th and the 14th century: M. POPOVIĆ, Les fortresses dans les régions des conflits byzantinoserbes au XIV^e siècle, in: *Byzantium and Serbia in the 14th Century*. Athens 1996, 75, 79–80, fig. 4, 3.

⁶⁹ Τοῦ τιμίου καὶ ζωοποιοῦ σταυροῦ ἀνατίθεσθαι τὰς σεπτὰς καὶ ἀγίας εἰκόνας, τὰς ἐκ χρωμάτων καὶ ψηφίδος καὶ ἐτέρας ὕλης ἐπιτηδείως ἔχουσης ἐν ταῖς ἀγίαις τοῦ θεοῦ ἐκκλησίαις, ἐν ἱεροῖς σκεύεσι καὶ ἐσθῆσι, τοίχοις τε καὶ σανίσι, οἴκοις τε καὶ ὁδοῖς τῆς τοῦ κυρίου καὶ θεοῦ καὶ σωτῆρος ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ εἰκόνας, καὶ τῆς ἀχράντου δεσποίνης ἡμῶν τῆς ἀγίας θεοτόκου, τιμίων τε ἀγγέλων, καὶ πάντων ἁγίων καὶ δόσιων ἀνδρῶν. J.D. MANSI, *Sacrorum conciliorum nova et amplissima collectio*, XIII. Pais 1901 (Reprint Graz 1960) 377. For English translation see N.P. TANNER S.J., *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils*, I. London 1990, 136.

one of the possible functional explanations of sanctification of the wild and terrifying mountain ranges inhabited by the hermits.⁷⁰ The Life of Saint Lazaros testifies to the materialization of his prayer and mentions the engraving of the symbol of the cross into the rock, providing immediate proof of the monks' relationship with the surrounding area.⁷¹ Painting manuals with their precise instructions for painting icons on the roads and on stones, give practical explanation of the process of painting cult spaces in the open. For instance, the painting manual of Nektarije the Serb from the end of the sixteenth century includes a special chapter of instructions how to paint "signs or faces on stone or on the roads".⁷²

Representing a challenge for expressing spiritual and other cultural needs of man since pre-historic times, rock and stone became in Byzantine and Serbian medieval culture sacred spaces of the anchorites' everyday life, but also sacred spaces for private devotion, as well as places for common prayer. One of the examples in which painting consecrates natural spaces is the well-known case of Latros. The specific geographical-morphological landscape of Latros with its climatic characteristics emphasizes the need to sanctify the landscape in Byzantium. The characteristic rocky landscape of Latros preserves traces of cult practice and images on the rock since pre-historic times.⁷³ After the flourishing of anchoritic life and founding of the monastic colony during the stay of the well-known Byzantine anchorite Saint Paul on Latros (d. 955), material remains of space sanctification were preserved from the Byzantine times – common ones like churches and cave chapels, but also pieces of painted rocks in open spaces with well developed painting themes.⁷⁴ The painted rock had the function of a road sign, of marking the hermit's abode, and of serving as a cult place even in the mid-Byzantine era.⁷⁵

MODELS OF SACRED SPACES IN THE BALKANS

The models of sacred spaces in two monasteries, Saint Prohor of Pčinja and the Dormition of the Virgin in Treskavac, show the differences and similarities between the formation of topographies in monastic surroundings. The diversity in constituting two holy spaces depends on the heritage, the acceptance of the cult of saints within the monastery, as well as its absorption within the framework of a specific cult's geographic area and the form of monastic life. The cult fostered in the monastery determines the specific character of the shaping of the sacred space.

The cult of the saint anchorite, Saint Prohor of Pčinja, defined that the sacred entity is to be spread radially from the centre of the monastery circle. It holds memories and preserves material traces in the

⁷⁰ The Life of Saint Lazaros mentions the consecration of the area as a means of protection from the real danger of the inaccessible terrain. Chanting while climbing the mountain, he came upon a steep passage. In order to pass it, stylite Lazaros said the prayer and made a sign of the cross with his right hand in the direction of the rock. The Life further states that the cross engraved in the rock remained forever visible because the Holy Father ordered that the cross be carved on that particular spot in order to protect future travellers passing this dangerous and steep passage. Cf. The Life of Lazaros of Mt. Galesion: an Eleventh-Century Pillar Saint. Introduction, translation and notes by R.P.H. GREENFIELD. Washington, D.C. 2000, 128.

⁷¹ About the practise of engraving the cross on the rock found on Mount Athos, as well as on the approach to the anchoritic settlements and shrines during Middle Ages see D. AVRAMOVIĆ, Sveta Gora sa strane vere, hudožestva i povestnice. Beograd 1848, 107; D. POPOVIĆ, Srednjevekovne pećine-isposnice u prizrenskom kraju – prethodna istraživanja. *Istorijski časopis* 44 (1998) 135.

⁷² Typikon of Nektarije the Serb from 1599, in: M. MEDIC, Stari srpski priručnici, II. Beograd 2002, 246–247.

⁷³ A. PESCHLOW-BINDOKAT, Frühe Menschenbilder. Die prähistorischen Felsmalereien des Latmos-Gebirges. Mainz 2003.

⁷⁴ R. JANIN, La géographie ecclésiastique de l'empire byzantin. vol. 2: Les églises et les monastères des grands centres byzantins. Paris 1975, 216–240, 441–454; A.-M. TALBOT – A. WHARTON, Latros. *ODB* II 1188–1189; S. GUYER, Die byzantinischen Klöster im Latmos-Gebirge bei Milet. *Klio* 9 (1909) 134–137. A. KAZHDAN, Paul of Latros. *ODB* III 1608; G. SCHIEMENZ, Die Malereien der Paulus-Höhle auf dem Latmos. *Pantheon* 29 (1971) 46–53; U. PESCHLOW, Die Latmosregion in byzantinischer Zeit, in: A. PESCHLOW-BINDOKAT, Der Latmos: eine unbekannte Gebirgslandschaft an der türkischen Westküste. Unter Mitarbeit von Urs PESCHLOW. Mainz 1996, 58–86, Fig. 114, 118; J. PROLOVIĆ, Die Wandmalereien des Klosters Yediler am Latmos, in: Wiener Byzantinistik und Neogräzistik. Beiträge zum Symposium vierzig Jahre Institut für Byzantinistik und Neogräzistik der Universität Wien in Gedenken an Herbert Hunger (Wien, 4.–7. Dezember 2002) (*BNV* 24). Wien 2004, 372–386, Fig. 1 (with further literature).

⁷⁵ A. ZÄH, Die Monumentalfresken von Inçekemer Tas im byzantinischen Karien. *JÖB* 49 (1999) 289–299.

anchorite's dwellings and deeds. The power of his relics defines multiple sacred spaces. The oozing of myrrh, the key proof of his holiness until today, receives special attention in constructing the architectural core. The memory of the sojourn of the holy man in the Pčinja and Kozjak region constructs the sacred space. His preserved footprint and fresco-icon on the rock and his hermitage cell serve as signs of St Prohor's omnipresence and as „the spaces of the holy old man“.

The monastery of the Holy Virgin in the mountain area of medieval Prilep represented protection for the medieval town of Prilep, but also the depiction of a heavenly abode under the protection of the Holy Virgin. The sacred topography of this monastery is formed on vertical principles, which implies connecting the monastery, hermitage cell and the holy peak. Climbing the mountain symbolically represents the road of spiritual ascent and moving closer to God, advocated by the Mother of God. In the monastic centre, under the protection of Byzantine and Serbian medieval rulers, in Treskavac, on the mountain, Holy Virgin is worshipped, while the specific geography of the terrain formed the unique geography of the sacred space. Holy places are formed along the road towards the cult centre and around the mountain peak as a result of constant monastic endeavours. The most significant are cult spaces, rocks on the road with fresco icons of the Holy Virgin, heavenly advocate who directed believers on the right way.

The creation of the sacred spaces in the monastery of Saint Prohor Pčinjski and Holy Mother of God shows the presence of two different approaches. The sacred spaces were constructed on the basis of the vertical and radial systems. The vertical system inherited from the model of the holy Mount Sinai and Athos is present in the monastery of the Mother of God of Treskavac. The radial system may be perceived in the monastery where the saint's relics are kept, like those of St Prohor Pčinjski. In this case, the sacral centre is placed inside the church, where the relics are kept, and it comprises anchorite's dwellings, the monastery itself and the pilgrims' road. The visual culture, both within the framework of the church and outside the monastery, at places of sacral nature, demonstrates the importance of the painting in establishing communication among different worlds. It bears witness to the manner in which memory is preserved by means of communication among the believers, monks and the rest of the world.

The existence of the vertical and radial systems in the construction of holy places indicates a certain complexity in the acts of sacralization of nature and monastery area in the medieval Balkan culture.