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*Srpsko zidno slikarstvo u zemljama Lazarevića i Brankovića, knj. I-II*

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and iconography; summary in English

Painting in the lands of the Lazarević and Branković noble families holds an important place in the history of Serbian medieval art. It emerged and developed in the period after the death of the last ruler from the Nemanjić dynasty in 1371 – first in the realms of Prince Lazar (1371–1389) in the north and Vuk Branković (1371–1397) in the south, and then in the territory created by the merging of the lands of these two families in 1412. It was ruled by Stefan Lazarević in the capacity of prince (1389–1402) and despot (1402–1427), until he was succeeded on the throne by his nephew Đurđe Branković (1427–1456). After the short-lived reign of Despot Lazar Branković (1456–1458) and the final Ottoman conquest in 1459, the marks of Serbian statehood disappeared along with the almost century-long tradition of artistic creation.

The long history of academic study and multi-faceted interest of several generations of Serbian and international scholars in the Lazarević and Branković period has yielded many unquestionable results. However, although expanded and yet still incomplete, their findings and experiences have been waiting to be systematized and given a synthetic treatment. The two-volume publication by Tatjana Starodubcev, Associate Professor at the Academy of Arts in Novi Sad, represents a new step in the study of art in the Lazarević and Branković period. The book *Serbian Wall Painting in the Lands of the Lazarević and Branković Families* emerged from her doctoral dissertation awarded (under a somewhat different title) at the Faculty of Philosophy in Belgrade in 2007. The first volume offers a synthetic study, while the second provides a catalogue of monumental decorative programs with illustrations and indices of names, topography and iconography. Impressive both in its length and contents, the book is a remarkable publishing achievement of the Institute of Art History of the Faculty of Philosophy in Belgrade. The very title of the work imposes an obligation and high standards to the researcher, which can be said to have been almost fully met. A great, admirable effort was made in a bid to offer a comprehensive overview of this vast body of monumental art which has survived in 22 churches. The most prominent among them are rulers' foundations (Ravanica, Resava, Ljubostinja), while churches built at the behest of noblemen are the most numerous (Velučje, Nova Pavlica, Rudenica, Koporin, Kalenić, Jošanica, Ramaća); in some cases, members of the clergy (Sisojevac) and even local villagers (Dolac near Klina) acted as ktetors.

Collecting and systematizing this vast body of evidence, as well as a methodologically reliable approach to its synthetic assessment, have proven necessary to render a comprehensive picture of the artistic heritage of the Lazarević and Branković period and its place in contemporary Eastern Christian art. It should be borne in mind that the author encountered many difficulties in her effort to assess this iconographic material as a whole due to the fragmentary nature of these fresco programs as well as the fact that a number of monuments are known to us only from sources. A particularly valuable aspect of the book lies in its detailed treatment of monuments through field research. This research method was supplemented by the author's meticulous study of various written sources and a remarkably extensive bibliography, both of which have contributed to a wide, well-founded understanding of the matter. In regard to the bibliography, it should be noted that the manuscript was ready to go into print as early as March 2012; hence the otherwise comprehensive and exhaustive critical apparatus does not include studies that have been published after this date. The book presented to the reader offers a very valuable exploration of painting, focusing on programmatic analyses and the valorization of its artistic merit, while at the same time explaining the importance of social circumstances and historical developments for its emergence, evolution and shaping.

The book opens with a comprehensive historiographic overview (*Previous Research*, p. 27–54). The first part entitled *Ktetors* (p. 55–124) consists of two chapters. In the first chapter (*Ktetorial Activities and Ktetors in the Lazarević and Branković period*, p. 55–98), the nature of patronage and its essential characteristics are first considered through the prism of architectural solutions (p. 56–57) and written testimonies (p. 57–65). The following sections discuss the social mechanisms of artistic creation, which became much more complex in the Despotate period. In their ktetorial endeavors, the members of the Lazarević family followed the programmatic models of the Nemanjić rulers, carefully elaborating all segments of the layered meanings built into the medieval notion of this duty of Christian rulers (p. 65–67). Along with representative burial churches such as Ravanica (Prince Lazar) and Resava (Despot Stefan), rulers built court churches (p. 67–68) in their new capitals (Kruševac, Belgrade, Smederevo). Surviving sacral architecture and written sources bear evidence to the special bond between Prince Lazar and his successors and the representatives of anchoritic monasticism in Serbian lands (p. 71–73). The rulers expressed their favor by providing material support and commissioning church buildings for monks and eremites; noteworthy examples include the Church of the Presentation of the Virgin at the Ždrelo Monastery in the gorge of the Mlava River and Sisojevac with the Church of the Transfiguration.

It is known that only minor works were done at the seats of the patriarchate, while the shifting of the state center to the north meant that churches needed to be built in new metropolitanates, usually as part of monasteries (p. 69–71). The new social landscape that emerged in changed political and economic circumstances seems to have been more diverse and structurally layered. A sur-

vey of church monuments and all available information on them suggests that ktetorial rights were now acquired by personages who occupied very different positions on the social ladder, i.e. in state and church hierarchy. The aristocratic class and clergy from this social milieu still remained one of the social pillars of artistic production (p. 73–81). Following in the steps of rulers and their relatives, they too prepared their tombs in court and monastic churches they built (p. 93–97). The book gives due attention to the development of cities and the emergence of a new social class, as well as its place in the wider context of ktetorial activities (p. 81–85). T. S. rightly notes that it was in the Lazarević and Branković period that affluent inhabitants of various faiths first appeared as ktetors in major settlements such as Novo Brdo (the Cathedral Church, the Saxon Church of St. Mary), Trgovište (Church 1–3) or Rudnik (churches dedicated to Saint Blaise and Virgin Mary); local villagers often joined forces in a collective donation effort to fund the building and frescoing of churches (Dolac near Klina). A separate chapter discusses churches and monasteries whose ktetors are not attested in any surviving material or written evidence, and which are now mostly in ruins or have been replaced by more recent structures (p. 85–92). The remarkably informative and methodologically consistent sections discussed above offer many useful observations extensively corroborated by a critical apparatus and, in many cases, exhaustive explanations, which can sometimes divert the reader's attention from the main text. In a bid to offer comprehensive insight into the ktetorial projects of all classes of the Serbian society under the Lazarević and Branković ruling houses, T. S. goes beyond the evidence provided by surviving church monuments and supplements her overview by information on endowments known to us solely from various written sources. Hence she concludes that the endowments' size, shape, decoration and dedication varied depending on the ktetor's social class, means and needs, as well as the economic and political situation (p. 97–98).

The second chapter (*Image of the Ruler and His Subjects*, p. 98–124) analyzes all relevant aspects of the ktetorial composition – the most distinctive iconographic expression of the act of endowment. The portraits of the sovereign and the members of the ruling family are discussed in a separate section (p. 98–118). The author's explanation of the nature of Prince Lazar's portraits seems compelling: having extensively analyzed all examples (probably painted in Veluče, then in Ravanica, and posthumously in Ljubostinja), she concludes that they display characteristics typical of both aristocracy and the ruler. Differences in clothing and insignia in these paintings reflect Prince Lazar's rise to power, which is why his portraits are considered first-class sources. However, due to the lack of reliable historical sources, some inconsistencies in the appearance of the prince's costume and particularly his crown remain unresolved and leave room for new research. Similarly, the portraits of Stefan Lazarević, with elements taken from aristocratic and ruling costumes, reflect his despotic dignity (Rudenica, Ljubostinja, Koporin, Resava, Kalenić), as well as the difference in hierarchy compared to his co-rule with his brother Vuk (Rudenica and Ljubostinja). The only verified image of Đurđe Branković, Despot Stefan's successor, has survived

in miniature painting – in his Charter to the Esphigmenou Monastery. The author's comprehensive survey of portraits showing the despots from the Lazarević and Branković families confirms the conclusions previously proposed by Dragan Vojvodić – that the rulers were depicted in garments and insignia not representative of their title, which was also the case with other despots who only formally recognized the suzerainty of the Byzantine emperor but were in fact sovereign rulers of their realms. The same methodological framework was used to analyze the portraits of Princess Milica, who was shown alongside her husband, and of children from ruling families (Stefan and Vuk Lazarević in Ravanica; Todor Branković in Gračanica). Separate sections inform the reader about the main iconographic principles and patterns used to express the legitimacy and lineage of the power wielded by Serbian sovereigns from the Lazarević and Branković families. The author provides commentaries of the iconographic variants of representations of rulers under Christ's blessing from the segment of heaven, as well as corresponding meanings for specific examples (Rudenica, Ravanica, Kalenić, Ramaća, Sisojevac, Ljubostinja, Resava) (p. 113–116). Regardless of historical circumstances i.e. subordination to the Hungarian king or Ottoman sultan, she concludes, in terms of their entitulation and iconography Serbian despots, like Prince Lazar before them, tended to be shown as ideal Christian sovereigns with the markings of supreme power received from Christ. The following section discusses the distinctive ktetorial compositions where the established language of painting shows small deviations in the depiction of relations between the suzerain and his subjects (p. 116–118). Exercising due caution, the author rightly suggests that the representation of Despot Stefan offering the model of the Ravanica or Kalenić church instead of or together with his noblemen does not indicate dual patronage, but was in fact meant to portray the ruler as an intercessor between his subjects and God. Portraits of ktetors from noble families in Nova Pavlica, Veluče, Kalenić, Rudenica, Jošanica and Ramaća are discussed in a brief overview in the second chapter (p. 118–123), which tries to present the titles of the nobility in their hierarchical order. Their aristocratic dignities, usually uncorroborated in written sources, are analyzed from the historical-artistic standpoint – based on the appearance of the garments and markings on them, gestures and postures of shown personages, as well as their relation to the representations of the ruler. In addition, the author notes some novelties in their clothing, which should be seen in the wider context of change in the time of Despot Stefan. The closing chapter (p. 123–124) summarizes the conclusions drawn from her careful assessment of ktetorial images as testimonies about the different customs of the time.

Having presented and explored the key social hypotheses for understanding monumental art in the Lazarević and Branković period, in the main part of the book the author discusses its programmatic characteristics (p. 125–294). First, the chapter *The Basic Program Organization* (p. 125–137) provides a brief overview of the fresco program in surviving churches from this period (Veluče, Neupara, Ravanica, Nova Pavlica, Rudenica, Ljubostinja, Koporin, Dolac near Klina, Church of St.

Theodore Tyron and St. Theodore Stratelates at the Žiča Monastery, Resava, Sisojevac, Kalenić, Dolac near Studenica, Jošanica, Church of the Dormition of the Virgin of the Belaja skete at the Dečani Monastery, Ramaća) (p. 125-131), followed by the chapters *Selection of Themes and the Program: General Observations* (p. 131-134), and *Selection of Themes and the Program: the Traditional and the Innovative* (p. 134-137). In her collective overview and comparative analysis of the thematic contents in these frescoes, the author observes that the churches from the Lazarević and Branković period are characterized by a purified concept with a smaller range of themes, whose exposition is devoid of narration. These general characteristics also indicate the main differences between this approach and the programmatic shaping of monumental painting in the previous period, as well as that of contemporaneous monuments in the southern parts of the former empire, such as the Church of St. Demetrios in Sušica, the endowment of Vukašin Mrnjavčević and his son Marko. The fresco paintings of Ravanica are recognized as the model for many later programmatic solutions. This is particularly noticeable in the selective choice of saints in the lower register. Probably another innovation of so-called Moravan painting adopted from Ravanica. This composition consists of a series of saints' busts in interlocking rainbow-colored medallions, which are usually found in the second register (Resava, Sisojevac, Ljubostinja). Building on the previous part of the book, the chapter *The Program Concept and Choice of Themes* (p. 137-294) exhaustively discusses the thematic program and its disposition in each segment of the churches from the Lazarević and Branković period – their narthexes (p. 137-158), naves and sanctuaries (p. 158-292). In line with the concept and purposes of the book, implementing multiple methods (most notably the iconographic and comparative method), the author presents, explores and interprets the entire body of this iconographic material, explaining the meaning of selected representations of saints, scenes and cycles in the context of both Eastern Christian iconography and individual programmatic concepts. Using wide iconographic comparisons, drawing on the history, development and pervasiveness of themes, delving into the reasons behind their depictions, and offering interpretations of their theological and ideological underpinnings, the author notes and highlights the key features of these programs. T. S. also offers a well-deserved and exhaustive treatment of many questions which, due to the limited length of this review, cannot be discussed here in more detail. The only caveat concerns the order in which the thematic program was presented in the book. Having offered no particular reasons to do so, both the book and the catalogue deviate from the usual sequence of discussing the painted program based on interpreting the symbolism of a church, i.e. its spatial sections.

Based on the assumption that more freedom was allowed in the decoration of narthexes, the author has established that the painted decoration of these spaces in each of the churches represented a separate ensemble, testifying to the identity of its ktetors, their milieu, the circumstances of the time or the purpose of the narthex (Velučé, Ljubostinja, Resava, Kalenić, Jošanica) (p. 137-158). Thus the carefully selected prominent intercessors for the salva-

tion of humankind in the bottom register could include Sts. Peter and Paul (Velučé, Ljubostinja, Kalenić), as well as the rarely occurring St. John the Baptist (Ljubostinja). The themes and function of the western structures of churches, which were also used for funerals, certainly include the Last Judgment (Velučé) and the depictions of the Ecumenical Councils, which appeared in the endowments erected by Prince Lazar's family members (Ljubostinja, Resava), continuing the programmatic tradition about the symphony of ecclesiastic and secular power previously fostered by the Nemanjić rulers. The author notes that the Byzantine and Serbian tradition of showing the Life of the Virgin in monastic churches dedicated to her received a special expression in Kalenić: an extensive cycle including scenes from Christ's childhood. A unique example of a scene showing the life of monks and hermits in Jošanica led the author to offer a wider interpretative context for the presence and meaning of this theme, which was to become more widespread and extensive in the Balkans in the Palaeologan period. Examining the Jošanica frescoes in relation to older works (their closest counterpart being the Hilandar example), the author found that paterika (Lives of the Fathers) served as the main source for illustrating the lives of holy monks and eremites. She underlines that the essence of this question cannot be fully understood without taking into account monastic views which in the last decades of the 14<sup>th</sup> century tended to focus on anchoritic spiritual inclinations.

The frescoes that once graced the vaults and domes above narthexes have been irretrievably lost in most churches. However, owing to the surviving frescoes in the dome of the narthex at Jošanica, the author still manages to inform the reader about the loftiest achievements of art in this period and the theological knowledge and church hymnography its creators had drawn on. As a whole, this remarkably complex concept, which includes rows of apostles and prophets with depictions of holy melodists, celebrates the Mother of God as the intercessor in the Incarnation, as well as in the establishment of the earthly church. The visualized blend of poetic images and prophetic visions inspired the author to reexamine the place where this composition was usually depicted in older Byzantine examples and the relationship between the selected subject and the dedication of the Jošanica church.

The same methodological approach was used to offer valuable observations and reach reliable conclusions in the thorough treatment and interpretation of frescoes in the naves and sanctuaries of churches from the Lazarević and Branković period, which are discussed in the following chapter of the first volume (p. 158-294). Having carefully examined the surviving parts of these thematic programs (the contents of which cannot be fully reconstructed due to their fragmentary state of preservation), the author notes all important changes and innovations that gradually and often under the influence of liturgical interpretation and contemporaneous theology shaped the demands of the ktetor and his advisors during the creation of these painted ensembles. In line with the long-standing practices of decorating Orthodox churches, the figures in the lower and upper zones, pillars and window frames needed to include representatives of the most prominent groups of saints such as warriors (shown in the most

conspicuous places and in large numbers) and hermits. Among the latter, images of Sts. Barlaam and Ioasaph had special programmatic value and were depicted in the immediate vicinity of the ruler's portrait in multiple cases (Ravanica, Koporin, Resava, Ramaća). The author seems particularly interested in the national pantheon of saints embodied in the portraits of the holy pair – St. Simeon as the progenitor of the Nemanjić dynasty and St. Sava as the first Serbian archbishop (the narthex at Peć, Ravanica, Veluče, Nova Pavlica, Rudenica, Koporin, Kalenić, Ljubostinja). Another noteworthy conclusion is that the early images of holy Serbs display closer ties to state and church ideology, while later examples tend to equate them with other, widely venerated Eastern Christian saints, outlining the gradual changes in representing the harmony between the two branches of power in the Serbian Despotate. Similar considerations include representations of the ideal rulers – Sts. Constantine and Helena. They did not appear in Lazarević and Branković churches as frequently as before, while the focus on establishing programmatic links between their images and portraits of sovereigns and their subjects gradually faded. On the other hand, the author shows that the Deesis – the key iconographic expression of prayer for the salvation of humankind in Orthodox art – was not as important in the programmatic concepts of Moravan churches (and was depicted only in Veluče and Nova Pavlica). Not even the most prominent saints such as St. Stephen the Protomartyr or St. Nicholas – traditionally painted along the sanctuary screen – were shown in their usual place. This chapter also offers interesting observations about Sts. Peter and Paul, archangels Michael and Gabriel, female saints, the Holy Anargyroi, bishops, Old Testament personages and numerous martyrs, supplemented by overviews of older examples in Serbian monumental painting and the identification of previously unnoticed examples (e.g. St. Zosimas and Mary of Egypt etc.). Building on the previous iconographic results of Smiljka Gabelić, the author notes and explores an important novelty – the rise of the cult of St. Gobdelaha, the son of the Persian king Shapur II, and his depiction among the individual figures in the lower parts of churches that are believed to have been in the care of Despot Stefan (Ljubostinja, Resava, Sisojevac, Kalenić). No less important is the observation about the content of the cult of this saint who was venerated as a martyr and holy healer, as shown by individual examples. T. S. convincingly argues in favor of the hypothesis that the rise of his cult must have been preceded by the appearance of an extensive hagiography of St. Gobdelaha in the Serbian milieu in the second half of the 14<sup>th</sup> or early decades of the 15<sup>th</sup> century, thereby opening the question of the importance of this highborn saint of kingly lineage for Despot Stefan.

Along with the cycle of the Great Feasts, as a rule most churches from the time of Prince Lazar and his successors feature scenes from the narrative of the Passion and Death of Christ, which are arranged in the sanctuary and naos so as to correspond to the order of Gospel readings in liturgies during the Holy Week. Although represented in a more limited number, in some cases the cycle of the Ministry of Jesus was given more programmatic prominence than the Passion (Ravanica, Sisojevac, and Kalenić). Some key novelties are also noticeable in

their thematic content. The cycles of the Ministry in Ravanica and Sisojevac are particularly interesting: unlike all other known examples, they open with a composition of a hymnographic nature – an illustration of the Christmas sticheron celebrating the incarnation of the eternal Logos. The example from Prince Lazar's endowment is also unusual because it includes the First and Second Testimony of John the Baptist, scenes usually excluded from the Ministry in the Serbian milieu. This led T. S. to hypothesize that the lost frescoes in their immediate vicinity could have included the Baptism. She notes that it was not until the Lazarević period that the Serbian milieu became interested in the scene of the Feeding of the 5,000 (the loaves and fish miracle which appears in Ravanica, Resava, Sisojevac, and Kalenić). This period saw increased freedom in the programmatic shaping of the Ministry of Christ. The focus on some segments of this cycle, e.g. Christ's parables, have resulted in rich and thematically well-rounded ensembles such as the one in Resava. In contrast, churches erected and frescoed under the Lazarević and Branković families tend to express veneration for the Mother of God in much more concise programmatic solutions than was previously the norm. This is aptly illustrated by the fact that the Life of the Virgin with scenes from Christ's childhood was featured only in Resava – in the naos of the grandest endowment erected by a ruler, while scenes celebrating the greatest two of the feasts of the Theotokos – the Nativity and Presentation of the Virgin – can be said to have been depicted routinely in different spatial arrangements (Veluče, Ravanica, Nova Pavlica, Kalenić, Ramaća). T. S. proposes that the programmatic model for this solution was found in the Athonite tradition, reminding the reader of the strong presence of Athonite spirituality in the Serbian milieu of the time. Hagiographical cycles were not awarded a more prominent place in the programmatic concepts of churches discussed here. Although in this period ktetors usually chose St. Nicholas as the patron saint, the cycle of the famous wonderworking bishop of Myra was painted only in Ramaća. The same church features the only example of the Stoning of Saint Stephen, which the author rightly associates with portraits of rulers and the depiction of St. Stephen the Protomartyr in its immediate vicinity.

Dome programs were conceived to acknowledge the dominant tradition in Eastern Christian art, directly continuing the models developed in the late Palaeologan period (p. 233–254). The thematic concept in the central domes includes the Evangelists, Christ's acheiropoieta, angels, Old Testament personages, and the Heavenly Liturgy with the bust of Christ Pantokrator and the Heavenly Powers, while the small domes (Ravanica, Resava) feature the ancestors of Christ, with the Bodiless Powers, various images of Christ, and the Virgin above them. The most conspicuous detail indicating that the frescoes of the Lazarević and Branković period belong to the wider learned streams of the period which drew on Antiquity as a source of artistic inspiration is found in the personified images of the Holy Wisdom alongside the Evangelists (Ravanica, Nova Pavlica, Ljubostinja, Resava, Jošanica, Ramaća, and possibly Neupara). The spacious drums of the domes have accommodated the largest and most diverse galleries of Old Testament personages in Serbian

medieval art, which are believed by the author to replicate the patterns and concept behind the visualization of Christ's bodily ancestors implemented in King Milutin's endowments. The most noteworthy in terms of its iconography among the themes in the vaults of the main dome is the image of the Holy Trinity, which is shown as the bust of a three-headed angel in Ramaća. The only analogy for this image is found in a representation of the same name in the skete of the Dormition of the Virgin in Belaja.

The iconographic content of sanctuaries in the Lazarević and Branković churches (p. 254-287) is based on liturgy and the dogma of God's incarnation. The programmatic core of these spaces includes the Virgin in the semicalotte, Communion of the Apostles below her, and the Officiating Bishops with Christ the Lamb of God. Tracing the various layers of these contents, the author concludes that the highlighting of some details in this ensemble was used to carefully create subtle meanings pertaining to the most important questions in the liturgical practice of the time. Thus she proposes that the main themes of 14<sup>th</sup>-century liturgical theology – Christ as the High Priest and the relation between the heavenly and earthly church – were given their most emphatic expression in the iconographically layered composition Communion of the Apostles (Ravanica). There is no doubt that direct liturgical influence is also apparent in the unique and underexplored theme on the altar apse in Ramaća. However, due to the questions that remain unresolved, the fragmentary pattern flanked by three approaching bowed angels on each side – the scene depicted between the Communion of the Apostles and the bishops – will surely continue to attract the attention of scholars. The programmatic tradition of depicting national leaders was continued here and hence Sava of Serbia was shown co-officiating with the Holy Bishops in Resava and possibly Ravanica. The author also notes the narrative and liturgical layer in the representation of the dead Christ, a motif often shown in the altar of the sanctuary, admittedly without trying to elucidate all aspects of this theme in the painted programs of churches from the Lazarević and Branković period (Nova Pavlica, Rudenica, Koporin, Kalenić, Jošanica, Belaja, Ramaća). In line with the evolution of the idea of Christ as the High Priest, she notes that the most frequently depicted Old Testament personages are high priests, while the choice of Old Testament prefigurations of the Eucharist is highly selective (Hospitality of Abraham and the Sacrifice of Isaac, Three Youths in the Fiery Furnace). In the Christological and Theotokological cycles that also partially covered the sanctuary, the Passion of Christ and Christ's post-Resurrection appearances are particularly noteworthy, and both incorporate liturgical meanings which are emphasized in the programmatic concept of these churches (Velučje, Ravanica, Koporin, Resava, Kalenić, Jošanica). Another remarkable example is found in Neupara: four festal scenes above the altar (Annunciation, Nativity, Baptism, and Transfiguration), which the author assumes could have been the result of the ktetor's wishes. The book also presents her views on non-figurative images (p. 287-292), which were included in these extensive programs. Painted crosses with apotropaic cryptograms are discussed from a functional point of view, and valuable observations are offered about the liturgical meaning of Christ's sacrifice

which these representations assume when they are depicted in the sanctuary. The author suggests that the monk Sisoje played a role in formulating the concept behind the most prominent group of leafed crosses with torture tools, implementing a solution characteristic of cave churches in the Eastern Christian world. The last section of the chapter on painting programs *Representations of Two Genealogies* (p. 292-294) briefly discusses the Tree of Jesse and the Tree of Serbian Rulers depicted on the eastern façade of the western entrance tower at the Studenica Monastery. Although she believes that the dominant view in Serbian scholarship, which claims that these paintings belong to the corpus of art from the Despotate period, needs to be reexamined, T. S. does not offer a more in-depth explanation of the problem. Recent research by Dragan Vojvodić has reliably shown that the Tree of Jesse and the Nemanjić Family Tree belong to an earlier period, i.e. that they were painted in the time of Stefan Dušan.<sup>1</sup>

The last part of the first volume is entitled *Artistic Approach* (p. 295-332) and offers an overview and assessment of the visual idiosyncrasies and artistic values of surviving paintings on a case-by-case basis, while also attempting to delve deeper into the esthetic criteria and taste of the epoch. The first chapter (*Painters*, p. 296-317) provides a chronological survey of all artistic hands and their characteristics, revealing that the art of the Lazarević and Branković period was not uniform in style, but rather represented a stylistically diverse group of different approaches and views on painting. It was created by ethnically diverse artists with varying degrees of education, monks and laymen alike. Some of them are known to us by name: Teodor, Makarije, Radoslav. To sum up, the author has determined that the leading painter of Ljubostinja, priest Makarije, seems to have been Greek, and is not to be confused with hieromonk Makarije from Prilep. She refutes the previous claim that the frescoing of Sisojevac (second layer) and Resava was executed by the same painting workshop from Thessaloniki. On the other hand, she accepts and elaborates the earlier view about the closeness between the artistic expression of the artists who frescoed Resava and the Church of Prophet Elijah in Thessaloniki, and provides a stylistic analysis that supports the claim that the painter and miniaturist Radoslav led the group that painted the frescoes of Kalenić. In the second and last chapter of the first volume (*Ktetors and Painters and the Spiritual and Social Climate of the Period*, p. 318-332), T. S. presents her view of the development of art in light of social circumstances. Hence she concludes that the best achievements were created at the height of Prince Lazar's power, in the second half of Despot Stefan's rule, and in the early years of the reign of Đurđe Branković. Zographs of this time often followed the same models as the mosaicists of the Chora Church in Constantinople and the Thessalonikian artists who frescoed the Virgin Peribleptos in Ohrid. According to the author, these similarities suggest that younger zographs from various milieus and with varying degrees of skill had access to blueprints and patterns from painter's handbooks of leading workshops.

<sup>1</sup> Д. Војводић, *Родословне прегледнице и идеја прародишљивости у манастиру Студеници*, in: *Манастир Студеница - 700 година Краљеве цркве*, ed. Љ. Максимовић, В. Вукашиновић, Београд 2016, 253-265.

In her closing remarks, she concludes that the influence of hesychasm was limited to the shaping of some themes and hence cannot be said to have introduced a new esthetic approach (p. 329). A separate chapter section provides an overview of the nature of the influence of Western art (p. 329–330). At the very end of her book, the author notes the methodological obsolescence of the term ‘Moravan school’ (p. 330–331). The relevance of the first two questions for the painting of the Lazarević and Branković period demands much more attention than they are given in the book, although the concise presentation of the essence of the problem is understandable in light of the length and nature of the publication.

The second volume contains the Catalogue (p. 7–227), a summary in English (p. 229–235), indices of names (p. 237–243), topography (p. 244–251) and iconography (p. 252–262), and the author’s note (p. 263). The contents of all painted programs created in the Lazarević and Branković period are catalogued in chronological order. The entire fresco program of 22 churches is presented in the book. Each catalogue entry contains the disposition of frescoes, inscriptions accompanying ktetorial portraits, a brief note on the painters and their artistic styles, notes on the language of the inscriptions, and a selected bibliography. Selected illustrations make it easier for the reader to follow the material belonging to this corpus of monuments, and include an adequate number of drawings (1–19) and color photographs (1–220). The opening parts of the catalogue texts discuss the dating of a given painting. In this sense, frescoes which can be dated only based on surviving portraits of rulers and ktetors represent a special problem. In view of all arguments previ-

ously presented in scholarship, it is difficult to accept new datings, i.e. the identification of damaged images of rulers proposed by T.S. for aristocratic foundations – Jošanica (between 1447 and 1456) and Ramaća (1457), which she believes were frescoed during the reign of Despot Lazar Branković (1446–1458), Despot Đurđe’s youngest son.

In regard to the organization of the catalogue, despite the abundance of useful information thus provided to the reader, the lack of drawings showing the arrangement of surviving frescoes seems regrettable. A graphical representation would have certainly contributed to better comprehensibility, and would have made the spatial arrangement of paintings more accessible and simpler. Finally, it should be noted that this would have removed the need for redundant repetitions which inevitably occurred as a result of presenting the painted programs in summarized and full-length versions first in the study, and then in the catalogue.

The work *Serbian Wall Painting in the Lands of the Lazarević and Branković Families* assesses, analyzes, and interprets all important aspects of wall paintings created in the period 1371–1459. As such, it is a remarkably valuable academic contribution, which will surely become mandatory reading for scholars of late medieval Serbian art and those whose research interests include the Balkans and, more widely, the Byzantine world. This synthesis underlines all important idiosyncrasies and details, but not to the detriment of the general picture or the key questions necessary for understanding the art of the Lazarević and Branković period.

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