

Ljubomir Milanović\*

## ILLEGAL TRAFFIC: THE CASE OF THE TRANSLATIO OF ST. NICHOLAS IN BARI

*The building program at the Archbishopric of Peć achieved its final form with the projects undertaken by the archbishop Danilo II (1324–1337). To the south of the Virgin Hodegetria, Danilo II added a parekklesion dedicated to St. Nicholas. During the seventeenth century, Patriarch Maximus (1655–1674 died 1680) decided to build a tomb for himself in front of the chapel and also to restore and re-paint it. Unable to replicate the old program, Patriarch Maksim devised his own, unique program, which was executed by the painter Radul. A fresco cycle dedicated to the life and wonders of St. Nicholas, which include scenes of the translatio of his relics from Myra to Bari in 1087, dominates the chapel and its vault. The motif of the ‘translatio’ of St. Nicholas’ relics, either as an individual composition, or as part of a large cycle of his life and miracles, was not a subject found in Serbian or Byzantine medieval art. The so-called illegal translation, or furta sacra, was never recognized by the Byzantine church in Constantinople. For that reason, the date of the translation was not introduced in the church calendar. It would be accepted in Medieval Russia and later in Serbia, but not depicted. Both orthodox churches accepted the date of translation as May 9<sup>th</sup> / 22<sup>th</sup> and included it in the liturgical calendar. This paper will elucidate the iconographic development of the translation of the relics of St. Nicholas in Serbian post-Byzantine art under the renewed Patriarchate of Peć. The possible origin of the scene in Serbian art will be discussed, as well as a reason for including the feast of the translation of St. Nicholas’ relics in the calendar of the Serbian Orthodox church.*

Keywords: translation, relics, St. Nicholas, Bari, feast

The building program at the Archbishopric of Peć achieved its final form with the projects undertaken by the archbishop Danilo II (1324–1337).<sup>1</sup> Danilo began with the

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\* Author is Senior Research Associate at the Institute for Byzantine Studies, SASA, ljubomir.milanovic@vi.sanu.ac.rs. This article is part of the research on the project No. 177032 (Tradition, innovation and identity in the Byzantine world), supported by the Ministry of Education, Science, and Technological Development of the Republic of Serbia. I would like to thank to my dear friend Dr. Allan Doyle, visiting assistant professor at the University of Arkansas, for his close reading of the text, helpful suggestions, and corrections.

1 The Archbishopric of Peć would be raised to the status of the Patriarchate of Peć in 1346, see B. J. ЂУРИЋ, С. ЂИРКОВИЋ, В. КОРАЋ, *Пећка љајпурјаршија*, Београд 1990, 170.

church of the Virgin Hodegetria (circa 1330) that would house his tomb.<sup>2</sup> To the south of this church, Danilo II added a *parekklesion* dedicated to St. Nicholas.<sup>3</sup> The chapel is a single-nave building with a rectangular base. During the seventeenth century, Patriarch Maximus (1655–1674 died 1680) decided to build a tomb for himself in front of the chapel and also to restore and re-paint it (Fig. 1).<sup>4</sup> At that time, its upper portion was rebuilt and the existing vault was formed.<sup>5</sup> According to the inscription above the door, the painting of the chapel was executed in 1673–1674.<sup>6</sup> Unable to replicate the former program, Patriarch Maksim devised his own, unique one, which was executed by the painter Radul.<sup>7</sup>

The new funeral function of the chapel is emphasized by the large Deesis composition, painted in the upper portion of eastern wall. The iconographic program is based on a desire to invoke prayers and to give moral lessons.<sup>8</sup> In addition to the usual altar themes, only two scenes from the Great Feast cycle – the Annunciation and the Assumption of the Virgin – were selected. A fresco cycle dedicated to the life and wonders of St. Nicholas dominates the chapel and its vault. Comprising twenty-six scenes, the cycle is one of the most detailed in Serbian medieval and post-Byzantine art.<sup>9</sup> The scenes are read from the southeast corner in the upper part of the vault, where the birth of St. Nicholas appears.<sup>10</sup> The cycle occupied three zones on each side of the vault. The majority of the selected scenes were regularly represented in extended cycles of the life and miracles of the saint in both Byzantine and post-Byzantine art, although several are rare.<sup>11</sup>

- 2 For the date of the construction of the church of Hodegetria and more on its plan see, ЂУРИЋ, ЂИРКОВИЋ, КОРАЋ, *Пећка њајријаршија*, 83–91; М. ЧАНАК МЕДИЋ, *Архиепкејџура њрве љоловине XIII века, Цркве у Рашкој*, Београд 1995, 15–87, 17 and 36–37; ЧАНАК МЕДИЋ, *Архиепископ Данило II и архитектура Пећке патријаршије, Архиепископ Данило II и њејово доба*, ур. В. Ј. ЂУРИЋ, Београд 1991, 295–309.
- 3 ЧАНАК МЕДИЋ, *Архиепкејџура*, 42–43; ЂУРИЋ, ЂИРКОВИЋ, КОРАЋ, *Пећка њајријаршија*, 92–114; S. ČURČIĆ, *Architecture in the Balkans from Diocletian to Süleyman the Magnificent*, New Heaven 2010, 667–668.
- 4 Д. ПОПОВИЋ, *Мемориа патријарха Максима, Зборник Мајице српске за ликовне умејносии*, 34–35, 2003, 111–127.
- 5 ЧАНАК МЕДИЋ, *Архиепископ Данило II и архиепкејџура*, 298–300.
- 6 Љ. СТОЈАНОВИЋ, *Сјџари српски зайиси и најџииси 4*, Сремски Карловци 1923, № 6992, 181–182.
- 7 On painter Radul see, З. РАКИЋ, *Радул, српски сликар XVII века*, Нови Сад 1998, 26–41; М. МАТИЋ, *Српски иконоии на љодручју обновљене Пећке њајријаршије: 1557–1690*, Београд 2016, 336–339.
- 8 ЂУРИЋ, ЂИРКОВИЋ, КОРАЋ, *Пећка њајријаршија*, 299–306; ПОПОВИЋ, *Мемориа патријарха Максима*, 121–122.
- 9 Ј. РАДОВАНОВИЋ, *Црква Св. Николе у Пећкој њајријаршији*, Београд 1963, 37; РАКИЋ, *Радул*, 143–150.
- 10 РАДОВАНОВИЋ, *Црква Св. Николе*, 3–42, 14–27; РАКИЋ, *Радул*, 86.
- 11 For the cycle of the life and miracles of Saint Nicholas in Byzantine art see, N. P. ŠEVČENKO, *The Life of Saint Nicholas in Byzantine Art*, Torino 1983, 155–171.

Among these rarities are the Miracle of St. Nicholas and Polovec, and St. Nicholas returning the sight of king Stefan Dečanski.<sup>12</sup>

Particular attention should be paid to the first scene in the second section of the altar, which illustrates the 1087 translation of the relics of St. Nicholas from his grave in Myra in Asia Minor to the Italian city of Bari (Fig 2). Dressed in episcopal vestments with *sticharion*, *phailonion* and *omophorion* and with a Gospel book in his hand, St. Nicholas is depicted on a bier or stand carried on the shoulders of two priests.<sup>13</sup> The priests are clearly visible at each end of the bier and appear to be moving away from a building behind them. A deacon walks past the bier with a censes in his hand. Two deacons precede the cortege holding candles. On the right side, a bishop greets the procession accompanied by a priest and a deacon. Behind them is a large group of people of whom only the tops of their heads are visible. A welcoming group stands in front of a white church with a green roof and a dome where the relics will be laid. In the background stands a large city wall. The composition is identified with an inscription in Old Slavic.

The scene of the *translatio* of St. Nicholas' relics was not found in Serbian or Byzantine medieval art, either as an individual composition, or as part of the cycle of the life and miracles of St. Nicholas.<sup>14</sup> The so-called illegal translation, or *furta sacra*, was never recognized by the Byzantine church in Constantinople, and the date of the translation was never introduced in the church calendar.<sup>15</sup> Although the event was eventually accepted in Medieval Russia and later in Serbia, it was not depicted. Both orthodox churches established the date of the translation as May 9<sup>th</sup> / 22<sup>th</sup> and included it in the liturgical calendar. This paper will elucidate the iconographic development of the translation of the relics of St. Nicholas in Serbian post-Byzantine art under the renewed Patriarchate of Peć.<sup>16</sup> The possible origin of the scene in Serbian art will be discussed, as well as a possible reason for the inclusion of the feast of the translation of St. Nicholas' relics in the calendar of the Serbian Orthodox church.

Saint Nicholas, Bishop of Myra in Lycia, is one of the most popular and honoured saints in both Eastern and Western Christendom. He is considered the prototype of the bishop-saint, and is venerated as the great *taumaturgos* (θαυματουργός) and the

12 РАДОВАНОВИЋ, *Црква Св. Николe*, 5–14, 17–19.

13 For the insignia of the office of an episcopo, see M. PARANI, *Fabrics and Clothing*, *The Oxford Handbook of Byzantine Studies*, eds. E. JEFFREYS, J. HALDON, R. CORMACK, Oxford 2008, 407–420.

14 ŠEVČENKO, *The Life of Saint Nicholas*, 155–171.

15 ŠEVČENKO, *The Life of Saint Nicholas*, 24. On *furta sacra* see, J. P. GEARY, *Furta Sacra. Thefts of Relics in the Central Middle Ages*, Princeton 1990, 94–103.

16 The Patriarchate of Peć, as a seat of the Serbian Orthodox Church, restored its function in 1557 during the Ottoman occupation, see, S. PEJIĆ, *The Old State in the Foundations of the Renewed Church*, *Byzantine Heritage and Serbian Art, Sacral Arts of the Serbian Lands in the Middle Ages*, eds. D. POPOVIĆ, D. VOJVODIĆ, Belgrade 2016, 515–527.

great intercessor.<sup>17</sup> He lived in the first half of the fourth century.<sup>18</sup> Some of his early acts were recorded in the sixth century *Praxis de Stratelatis* that would later become a source of the saint's iconography.<sup>19</sup> However, his life is interwoven with the life of another St. Nicholas, Abbot of the Monastery of Sion, who became bishop of Pinara and died on December 10<sup>th</sup>, 564.<sup>20</sup> *Vita Nicolai Sionitae* was written by an anonymous monk immediately after his death and includes numerous miracles that Nicholas from Sion performed.<sup>21</sup>

The foundation of the cult of St. Nicholas in Constantinople was already laid in the eighth century. His name is mentioned in a section of the Acts of the seventh ecumenical council (787) retelling the story of a deacon who was visited by St. Nicholas in a dream. This episode gives us not only information regarding an existing cult of St. Nicholas, but also on his depictions in art. The Acts describes St. Nicholas' nocturnal visit. First, the deacon did not recognize the saint, but he later realized that he had previously seen the saint represented on an altar cloth.<sup>22</sup> The earliest record of the saint's deeds comes from the ninth-century Chronicle of Theophanos, who recorded the Arab attack on Myra in 807/808.<sup>23</sup> One of the goals of the attack was an attempt to crush and destroy the saint's tomb but, according to Theophanos, St. Nicholas summoned a fierce tempest that destroyed several vessels. Confronted by this miraculous intervention, the Arabs recognized the power of the saint. The legend of Nicholas was probably compiled and expanded in the wake of the so-called Byzantine picture dispute

17 J. РАДОВАНОВИЋ, *Свети Никола. Животије и чуда у српској уметности*, Београд 2008, 9.

18 Nikolaos of Myra may have been born around 280 in Patara in Lycia and died in Myra on a sixth of December between 342 and 351. It is assumed that he was one of the participants of the First Ecumenical Council in Nicaea in 325 as one of the supporters and defender of Nicaean doctrine. W. C. JONES, *Saint Nicholas of Myra, Bar and Manhattan. Biography of a Legend*, Chicago 1978, 7–43; ŠEVČENKO, *The Life of Saint Nicholas*, 18–22.

19 G. ANRICH, *Hagios Nikolaos: der heilige Nikolaos in der griechischen Kirche: Texte I*, Leipzig 1913, 67–91; ŠEVČENKO, *The Life of Saint Nicholas*, 18, 155–156.

20 He was co-founder and the archimandrite of the Sion Monastery, which must have been located in the area around Myra, ŠEVČENKO, *The Life of Saint Nicholas*, 18. Around the middle of the sixth century, the abbot Nicholas of Philippos, the Metropolitan of Lycia, was appointed Bishop of Pinara, M. GRÜNBART, *Der Heiligen Nikolaus in der Byzantinischen tradition, Nikolaus. Ein Heiliger für alle Fälle. Leben-Legenden-Ikonene. Katalog zur Ausstellung im Ikonene-Museum Recklinghausen 19. October 2013 bis 23. Februar 2014*, ed. E. HAUSTEIN-BARTSCH, Racklinghausen 2013, 11–16.

21 *Vita Nicolai Sionitae*, *Bibliotheca hagiographica Graeca 1347*, ed. F. HALKIN, Brussels 1957, also, ANRICH, *Der heilige Nikolaus I*, 3–55; GRÜNBART, *Der Heiligen Nikolaus*, 12; ŠEVČENKO, *The Life of Saint Nicholas*, 19.

22 P. MAGDALINO, *Le culte de saint Nicolas a Constantinople, En orient et en Occident le culte de saint Nicolas en Europe X<sup>e</sup>–XXI<sup>e</sup> siècle: actes du colloque de Lunéville et Saint-Nicolas-de-Port, 5–7 décembre 2013*, eds. V. GAZEAU, C. GUYON, C. VINCENT, Paris 2015, 41–55.

23 *Theophanes continuates. The Chronicle of Theophanes Confessor Byzantine and Near Eastern History AD 284–813*, translated with introduction and commentary C. MANGO, R. SCOTT, G. GREATREX, Oxford 1997, 663.

(843).<sup>24</sup> The ninth century was the golden age in which the cult spread throughout the Byzantine Empire. Two *vitae* of St. Nicholas, *Vita per Michaëlem* and *Methodius ad Theodorum*, were written in Constantinople at this time.<sup>25</sup> These two texts are very similar and one depends on the other.<sup>26</sup> In the second half of the tenth century, Symeon Metaphrastes wrote another Life of St. Nicholas that would later influence the Latin literary tradition.<sup>27</sup> Once the cult was established in Constantinople, the official Feast of the saint on December 6<sup>th</sup> was celebrated in Saint Sophia. Probably the office was held in the chapel of St. Nicholas which was east of the main sanctuary, near the sacristy (*skeuophylakion*).<sup>28</sup>

Emperor Basil I (867–886) promoted Nicolas' cult in the capital of the Byzantine empire, erecting the church Nea Ekklesia, or the Nea Church, next to the imperial palace, which was consecrated by the patriarch Methodius in 880 and was dedicated to Christ, the Virgin, St. Archangels, the prophet Elijah and to St. Nicholas.<sup>29</sup> Nicholas was also granted the status of a Father of the Church and was one of the fourteen saints whose mosaic portraits occupied gallery-level niches in Saint Sophia.<sup>30</sup> With the diffusion and development of the cult of St. Nicholas in Byzantium and the West, an interest in acquiring his relics arose. The first attempt to translate the saint's body from his tomb in Myra was undertaken by Emperor Basil I. According to Venetian tradition, the emperor tried to remove the body and bring it back to Constantinople; however, the saint refused to be disturbed.<sup>31</sup> The second attempt at the illegal trafficking of the

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- 24 The two lives of the saints were fused in one. The earliest preserved text that conflates the two saints is *Vita Compilata*, which was composed, according to Gustav Anrich between 860–975, ANRICH, *Der heilige Nikolaus I*, 211–233; II, 307; ŠEVČENKO, *The Life of Saint Nicholas*, 19, № 11; GRÜNBART, *Der Heiligen Nikolaus*, 13–14.
- 25 The first Life was probably written by Michael the Archimandrite between 814–842, ANRICH, *Der heilige Nikolaus I*, 113–139. The second Life was most likely composed by Methodius, later Patriarch of Constantinople (843–847), ANRICH, *Der heilige Nikolaus I*, 140–150. For more on these two Lives and their writers see, JONES, *Saint Nicholas of Myra*, 16, 46–47; MAGDALINO, *Le culte de saint Nicolas a Constantinople*, 41–55.
- 26 ŠEVČENKO, *The Life of Saint Nicholas*, 21; MAGDALINO, *Le culte de saint Nicolas a Constantinople*, 44–45.
- 27 JONES, *Saint Nicholas of Myra*, 45; ŠEVČENKO, *The Life of Saint Nicholas*, 21, n. 19.
- 28 R. JANIN, Les églises byzantines Saint-Nicolas à Constantinople, *Échos d'Orient*, 31, 1932, 403–418. The Typikon of the Great Church is not precise regarding the topography of the celebration. MAGDALINO, *Le culte de saint Nicolas a Constantinople*, 50–51.
- 29 For the church see, R. JENKINS, C. MANGO, The Date and Significance of the Tenth Homily of Photius, *Dumbarton Oaks Papers*, 9–10, 1956, 125–140, also, P. MAGDALINO, Observations on the Nea Ekklesia of Basil I, *Jahrbuch der Österreichischen Byzantinistik*, 37, 1987, 51–64.
- 30 For the now-lost mosaic in St. Sophia as recorded in the nineteenth century watercolors by Fossati and their dates see, C. MANGO, *Materials for the Study of the Mosaics of St. Sophia at Istanbul*, Washington D. C. 1962, 49–51, fig. 57–59; ŠEVČENKO, *The Life of Saint Nicholas*, 21, № 22; MAGDALINO, *Le culte de saint Nicolas a Constantinople*, 52.
- 31 ŠEVČENKO, *The Life of Saint Nicholas*, 21, n. 23.

saint's body was committed by the Normans in 1087. According to most Western and some Slavic sources, the body of the saint was successfully transferred from Myra to Bari.<sup>32</sup> This act is crucial for understanding the reception and development of scenes of the translation of St. Nicholas in art, in addition to the establishing of his feast day on May 9<sup>th</sup>, dedicated to the event.

The defeat of Byzantium against the Seljuk Turks near Manzikert in 1071, created an unstable political situation in Asia Minor, which affected Myra as well. Two Italian seafaring towns seized the moment and recognized the possible benefits of the transfer of the relics from Asia Minor to Bari or Venice.<sup>33</sup> Bari was the former capital of the Byzantine theme from 876 until 1071 when it was conquered by the Normans.<sup>34</sup> As a Norman city, they needed a new saint protector who would offer protection and economic prosperity through pilgrims, but also would help to distinguish a new government from the former Byzantine rulers. It therefore does not come as surprise that both civic and church dignitaries were involved in the *translatio*.<sup>35</sup> St. Nicholas' relocation to Bari had a profound impact on the history of the city and on the nature of the spread of his cult in the rest of Europe.<sup>36</sup> Four documents written to authenticate the event, two in Latin, one in Russian and one in Greek inform us its significance.<sup>37</sup>

The earliest and most important, *Historiae translationis*, originated from two citizens of Bari, Nicephorus and John the Archdeacon.<sup>38</sup> Though both stories belong to the hagiographical genre, they remain fundamental for the reconstruction of the event and for the interpretation of the historical background.<sup>39</sup> *Tractatus de translatione sainti*

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- 32 P. CORSI, *La translazione di San Nicola da Myra a Bari*, San Nicola, *Splenodri d'arte d'Oriente e d'Occidente*, ed. M. BACCI, Milano 2006, 89–97.
- 33 Venice would later claim that they actually translated the original relics. See GRÜNBART, *Der Heiligen Nikolaus*, 14–15.
- 34 A. G. LOUD, *The Age of Robert Guiscard: Southern Italy and the Norman Conquest*, Harlow 2000, 260–278.
- 35 GRÜNBART, *Der Heiligen Nikolaus*, 13–16; P. MOUGOYIANNI, Confrontation and Interchange between Byzantines and Normans in Southern Italy: the Cases of St. Nicholas of Myra and St. Nicholas the Pilgrim at the end of the 11<sup>th</sup> Century, *Byzantium in Dialogue with the Mediterranean. History and Heritage*, eds. D. SLOOTJES, M. VERHOEVEN, Leiden–Boston 2019, 109–142.
- 36 G. OTRANTO, La translation de saint Nicolas et L'Europe, *En orient et en Occident le culte de saint Nicolas en Europe Xe–XXIe siècle: actes du colloque de Lunéville et Saint-Nicolas-de-Port, 5–7 décembre 2013*, eds. V. GAZEAU, C. GUYON, C. VINCENT, Paris 2015, 125–146, 125.
- 37 The manuscripts containing *Historiae Translationis* of St. Nicholas are numerous. There is no complete list of them but there are probably more than 60, however these four are considered the earliest and most accurate, see Д. ЧОФФАРИ, Перенесение мощей святителя Николая в латинских источниках XI в. и в русских рукописях, ре. А. В. БУГАЕВСКИЙ *«Правило веры и образ кротости...»: Образ свт. Николая, архиеп. Мирликийского, в византийской и славянской агиографии, гимнографии и иконографии*, Москва 2004, 135–164, 154.
- 38 JONES, *Saint Nicholas of Myra*, 176–202; CORSI, *La translazione di San Nicola*, 90.
- 39 It is important to notice that both stories lack a critical edition of their texts and they come to us in later versions, probably with substantial interpolations.

*Nicolai confessoris et episcopi* was commissioned from Nicephorus by the notables of Bari, especially by Lord Curcorius and the magnates of Bari. The work of Nicephorus is characterized by its detailed narrative based upon eyewitness accounts.<sup>40</sup> It is dated either the last decade of the eleventh or the first of the twelfth century.<sup>41</sup> The second text, *Translatio sancti Nicolai episcopi ex Myra*, written by John the Archdeacon, was commissioned by the Archbishop of Bari, Ursus (1080–1089), of whom he was a close collaborator and from whom he had received sacred orders and the dignity of the archdeaconry. It must have been written before the archbishop's death on February 14<sup>th</sup>, 1089.<sup>42</sup> Despite its more rhetorical character, Ursus' text found greater success than that of Nicephorus for a long time and was widely reproduced and epitomized.<sup>43</sup> The third version, the so-called Legend of Kiev, is of Slavic origin and was written by an anonymous Russian. This story was likely compiled in a monastery in the Kiev area around 1090.<sup>44</sup> It is based on a mix of both Eastern and Western sources, but is particularly dependent on Nicephorus' account.<sup>45</sup> The version written by an anonymous Greek is based on both previous *traslationes* of Nicephoro and John, and is probably of a later date.<sup>46</sup>

Nevertheless, according to the Latin legend, in 1087 a group of merchants, sailors and two priests sailed in three ships from Bari to sell grain in Antioch and heard that merchants from Venice intended to steal the body of St. Nicholas.<sup>47</sup> As was the case in many hagiographies, driven by Divine Providence, they discovered the plot of Venetians. The merchants from Bari decided to land in Myra, which had been conquered by Seljuk Turks, and secure the body of the saint themselves. The monks who guarded the tomb pleaded with the sailors not to take the relics. For fear that monks would escape and alarm the city, they were put under strict surveillance. A young man named Matthew then broke the marble of the with an iron mallet and opened the tomb while two priests

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- 40 BHL № 6179 from Vatican MS. Lat. 5074. CORSI, *La translazione di San Nicola*, 90–91. For the English translation see, JONES, *Saint Nicholas of Myra*, 176–193.
- 41 CORSI, *La translazione di San Nicola*, 90. John date it in the same year of translation, see JONES, *Saint Nicholas of Myra*, 194.
- 42 Vatican MS Lat. 477 published in F. NITTI DI VITO, *La translazione delle reliqui di S. Nicola da Mira a Bari*, *Japigia*, 8, 3–4, 1937, 357–366.
- 43 CORSI, *La translazione di San Nicola*, 92. Though probably John borrowed from Nicephorus the texts do not always agree with each other, see JONES, *Saint Nicholas of Myra*, 194. Silvia Slivestro challenge the dating of both texts and argue that probably John had written his text before Nicephorus, see S. SILVESTRO, *Sancti reliquie e sacri furti. San Nicolo di Bari fra Montecassino e Normani*, Naples 2013, 54–55, 137–158.
- 44 G. CIOFFARI, *Storia della Basilica di S. Nicola di Bari, L'epoca normanno-sveva*, Bari 1984, 46–47.
- 45 CORSI, *La translazione di San Nicola*, 90–91; JONES, *Saint Nicholas of Myra*, 198.
- 46 JONES, *Saint Nicholas of Myra*, 197, № 35.
- 47 CORSI, *La translazione di San Nicola*, 89–97. Only the story written by John provides a detail of the number of ships, JONES, *Saint Nicholas of Myra*, 195.

recited litanies. The tomb was full of “holy liquid” and a pleasant fragrance arose in the church. Later, one of the priests named Grimoald, collected the bones of the saint, took them from the tomb and wrapped them in his silk cloak from which myrrh dripped. With the help of another priest, they carried the body on their shoulders to the ship. Meanwhile, the relics were placed in the ship in a wooden barrel of the type used for water or wine. The arrival of the translated relics to Bari on May 9<sup>th</sup> was followed by a controversy as to where the body should be laid to rest. The Archbishop temporarily placed the relics in the church of Saint Stephen.<sup>48</sup> Then a citizen decided to build a new church dedicated to St. Nicholas on the spot of the former Byzantine administration center *praitorion* which was immediately demolished. The crypt of the church was finished in 1089, and the body of the saint was solemnly deposited there in the presence of Pope Urban II (1088–1099) who was invited by duke Roger Borsa (1085–1111) and Bohemond, Prince of Taranto (1085–1088).<sup>49</sup>

The usual formula for documents in the *translationes* genre is to provide various justifications for sacred thefts or *furta sacra*.<sup>50</sup> In the case of the translation of St. Nicholas, two types of motivation can be distinguished: one, which refers to some form of divine inspiration and the other, based on more practical reasons. The two Latin sources emphasize that the translation was initiated by the citizens of Bari and by the Pope in Rome. Some scholars, basing their arguments on Latin texts, interpreted the translation as a civic enterprise undertaken by the citizens of Bari. They also find the main motivating factor to be the acquisition of a new religious symbol, and an increase in potential revenue for the city.<sup>51</sup> Silvia Silvestro has argued that the translation was entirely organized by the Norman duke Roger Borsa and Pope Victor III (1086–1087). Both collaborated with the Archbishop of Bari, Ussus and Elias (1089–1105) the abbot of the Benedictine monastery in Bari. The idea was to establish Church reform in the South Italy through the newly established Benedictine Monastery.<sup>52</sup> Penelope Mougoyianni gives us another reason for the theft by viewing it in the broader context of Norman-Byzantine relations. Bari was the home of the catepan, the Byzantine supreme commander, and was an important Byzantine city in the south Italy. The Norman occupation of Bari opened a new opportunity to draw the former Byzantine capital into the Norman, and thus Roman, orbit for Pope Victor and the church of Bari. This explains the involvement of the

48 JONES, *Saint Nicholas of Myra*, 176–193, 196.

49 MOUGOYIANNI, *Confrontation and Interchange*, 111–112.

50 GEARY, *Furta Sacra*, 100.

51 Patrick Geary argues that participants of translation were driven by reasons of economic prosperity and politics, GEARY, *Furta Sacra*, 95, 101–103. Pasquale Corsi has suggested that the main reason translations was to create a new religious center by placing the relics in the place of catepan that for a long time had been the political and military center of Byzantium in South Italy, CORSI, *La translazione di San Nicola*, 96.

52 SILVESTRO, *Sancti reliquie e sacri furti*, 55–59, 201–208.



Norman city's aristocracy and the church dignitaries in the translation. They organized the reception of the relics and the construction of the basilica in the place of a former Byzantine administrative center, *praitorion*.<sup>53</sup> However, maybe the best explanation of the new political and church order, and the justification of the sacred larceny, is provided by a passage from the narrative of the translation written by Nicephorus. Namely, when Barians took the body, the citizens of Myra started crying and asking why they were taking away their holy father who kept them "safe from visible foes" for 775 years. In reply, the Barians said: "Why do you so irrationally flay yourselves for these calamitous happenings? Just as you have said, since the time that holy confessor of God died, 775 years have passed. It is enough that you have had his benefits, not you alone but your progenitors. Now it is his desire to leave here and to shed light on other parts of the world ... It is only right that so important and illustrious a state as Bari should enjoy this great patronage."<sup>54</sup>

While the transfer of St. Nicholas' relics and the establishing of a new pilgrimage site in Bari was celebrated in the West, Constantinople remained silent about this event for obvious reasons.<sup>55</sup> Acknowledging the theft would legitimize the *furta sacra* and, therefore, a new pilgrimage center in Bari.<sup>56</sup> Nevertheless, the attitude of Constantinople regarding the translation of the relics of St. Nicholas did not prevent the spread of his cult all over medieval Europe, even to the borders of the Kievan Rus.<sup>57</sup>

The cult achieved its greatest influence in medieval Serbia during the period of the first ruler of the Nemanjić dynasty in the twelfth century. The Grand Župan Stefan Nemanja (1166–1199) embraced St. Nicholas as one of his patron saints and dedicated his first endowment in Toplica near Kuršumlija ca. 1166–1168 to him.<sup>58</sup> Nemanja's descendants built churches with subsidiary chapels dedicated to the saint within their

53 MOUGOYIANNI, *Confrontation and Interchange*, 116–120.

54 The text comes from the English translation of *translationes* by Nicheporus, see, JONES, *Saint Nicholas of Myra*, 184–185.

55 There is only one Greek source that mentions the translation of the relics of St. Nicholas, but that text is based on a Latin narrative written after the translation. JONES, *Saint Nicholas of Myra*, 197.

56 ŠEVČENKO, *The Life of Saint Nicholas*, 23–24. According to Olga Loseva Greeks in the Despotate of Epirus celebrated the Feast of translation of relics of St. Nicholas, on May 20<sup>th</sup> from the second half of the thirteenth century, see О. ЛОСЕВА, Почитание свт. Николая чудотворца в державе кароля Милутина, *Манасийир Бањска и доба краља Милутина*, ур. Д. БОЈОВИЋ, Ниш – Косовска Митровица 2007, 287–292.

57 OTRANTO, *La translation de saint Nicolas et L'Europe*, 125–146.

58 For the hagiographical source see, *Светии Сава. Житије Свѣфана Немање, Сѣаре срѣске биографије*, пр. М. БАШИЋ, Београд 1924, 4–5. On the church see, ĆURČIĆ, *Architecture in the Balkans*, 492–493; М. МИХАЛЈЕВИЋ, Change in Byzantine Architecture, *Approaches to Byzantine Architecture and its Decoration. Studies in Honor of Slobodan Ćurčić*, eds. M. J. JOHNSON, R. OUSTERHOUT, A. PAPALEXANDROU, Farnham 2012, 99–119, 99–104. In the Life of Symeon Nemanja, written by his other son Stefan the First Crowned, who will later become king, it is stated that Nemanja first built a church dedicated to the Virgin, and then a church dedicated to St. Nicholas, *Свѣфан Првовенчани. Живой Свѣфана Немање, Сѣаре срѣске биографије*, пр. М. БАШИЋ, Београд 1924, 33–34.

endowments.<sup>59</sup> King Stefan Dečanski (1322–1331) had a particular adherence to his cult and dedicated some of the endowments that he built or restored to the saint.<sup>60</sup> Gregory Camblak, in his biography of king Stefan Dečanski, described the Miracle of St. Nicholas that returned sight to the king. This miracle would become popular and appear in Serbian and Russian painted cycles of the life and miracles of St. Nicholas during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.<sup>61</sup> His son, king and later emperor, Stefan Dušan (1331, 1346–1355), dedicated a south *pareklession* to St. Nicholas within his mausoleum in the Holy Archangels monastery near Prizren.<sup>62</sup> The veneration of St. Nicholas had a profound echo both in the content of the Serbian royal charters, as well as in the painted decoration of the Nemanjić endowments, which included cycles of St. Nicholas.<sup>63</sup> Following their rulers, the Serbian nobles and clergy would also dedicate churches to this saint and give him a prominent place in the decoration of their endowments.<sup>64</sup>

Mural cycles of the life and miracles of St. Nicholas were commissioned for churches endowed by the Nemanjić family since the thirteenth century.<sup>65</sup> The number of

- 59 P. ŠPENAR, M. TOMIĆ ĐURIĆ, *Architectural, Artistic and Archaeological Traces of the Cult of St. Nicholas in Medieval Serbia, En orient et en Occident le culte de saint Nicolas en Europe X<sup>e</sup>–XXI<sup>e</sup> siècle: actes du colloque de Lunéville et Saint-Nicolas-de-Port, 5–7 décembre 2013*, eds. V. GAZEAU, C. GUYON, C. VINCENT, Paris 2015, 229–256, 108–110.
- 60 Григорије Цамблак. *Књижевни рад у Србији*, приредио Д. ПЕТРОВИЋ, превод Л. МИРКОВИЋ и др., Београд 1989, 65–67; С. МАРЈАНОВИЋ ДУШАНИЋ, *Свети краљ. Култи Стефана Дечанског*, Београд 2007, 284–285; ŠPENAR, TOMIĆ ĐURIĆ, *Architectural, Artistic and Archaeological Traces*, 240.
- 61 Григорије Цамблак. *Књижевни рад*, 52–53, 58–59. For the iconography of the miracle see, РАДОВАНОВИЋ, *Црква Св. Николе*, 17–18, С. ПЕТКОВИЋ, *Зидно сликарство на јодручју Пећке папирјаршије 1557–1614*, Нови Сад 1965, 83; С. ПЕТКОВИЋ, *Живот Стефана Дечанског на руским минијатурама и фрескама XVI и XVII века, Дечани и византијска уметност средином XIV века: међународни научни скуп поводом 650 година манастира Дечана, септембар 1985*, ур. В. Ј. ЂУРИЋ, Београд–Приштина 1989, 415–427.
- 62 D. PRERADOVIĆ, LJ. MILANOVIĆ, *Pan-Christian Saints in Serbian Cult Practice and Art, Byzantine Heritage and Serbian Art, Sacral Arts of the Serbian Lands in the Middle Ages*, eds. D. ROPOVIĆ, D. VOJVODIĆ, Belgrade 2016, 103–117, 108–110. Dušan also restored two churches dedicated to St. Nicholas, Д. ВОЈВОДИЋ, *Прилог проучавању цркве светог Стефана у манастиру Дуљево, Саопштења*, 39, 2007, 83–99, 91–92, with sources and earlier literature.
- 63 РАДОВАНОВИЋ, *Свети Никола*, 15–17; ŠPENAR, TOMIĆ ĐURIĆ, *Architectural, Artistic and Archaeological Traces*, 246–249.
- 64 PRERADOVIĆ, MILANOVIĆ, *Pan-Christian Saints*, 108–110; М. И. ЂОРЂЕВИЋ, *Зидно сликарство српске власице*, Београд 1994, 90, 134, 145, 150, 163, 166, 170, 172, 183, 185, 186, 188. Miodrag Purković encountered around 75 churches dedicated to St. Nicholas during the medieval period, А. М. ПУРКОВИЋ, *Попис цркава у старој српској држави, Скопје 1938*, 34–40. New archaeological research has added even more to this number, see Т. СУБОТИН ГОЛУБОВИЋ, *Култ Светог Николе у средњовековној Србији, Христијанска агиологија и народни вјеровања, Сборник в чест на т.н.с. Елена Коцева*, ур. А. МИЛТЕНОВА, Е. ТОМОВА, Р. СТАНКОВА, София 2008, 29–38, 32–33.
- 65 ŠPENAR, TOMIĆ ĐURIĆ, *Architectural, Artistic and Archaeological Traces*, 246–249; РАДОВАНОВИЋ, *Свети Никола*, 15.

painted cycles and scenes included in these cycles increased during the fourteenth century. However, scenes depicting the translation of the relics were never featured in painted narratives of St. Nicholas. The main reason for this is probably the fact that the Serbian cycles strictly followed the Byzantine model whose conservative iconography did not follow a specific text.<sup>66</sup> The selection of episodes in the cycle were based on different hagiographic texts of Greek origin which, for obvious reasons, never included the translation of the relics.<sup>67</sup> The oldest scenes from the cycle of St. Nicholas in Byzantine art were painted around the eleventh century in a triptych in the Monastery of Saint Catherine on the Sinai Peninsula. The same monastery also preserves the oldest *vita* icon, which depicts the figure of St. Nicholas in the center encircled by about sixteen scenes from his life.<sup>68</sup> Narrative cycles of St. Nicholas were painted on the walls of churches in Byzantium dating from the late twelfth century.<sup>69</sup>

After a period of vacancy after the Ottoman occupation the Serbian Patriarchate of Peć was finally restored in 1557.<sup>70</sup> During the period of restoration between 1557 and 1766, the cult of St. Nicholas strengthened and many churches were dedicated to him.<sup>71</sup> At the same time there was a general rebirth of artistic production with many new churches being built and old structures restored and redecorated. Painted cycles of the life and miracles of St. Nicholas continued to be commissioned for churches dedicated to him as well as on *vita* icons.<sup>72</sup> The earliest example of a St. Nicholas cycle that included the translation of his relics in Serbian post-Byzantine art is found in the church of St. Nicholas in Podvrh near Bijelo Polje and dates from 1613–1614.<sup>73</sup> This tells us that the feast of the translation of his relics was officially celebrated in Serbia at that time. This raises the question of how and when the feast was introduced in Serbia and how doing it served to legitimate his *furta sacra*.

In the Life of St. Symeon (Stefan) Nemanja composed by his son, Serbian *sebastokrator*, and later king, Stefan the First Crowned (1196–1228), there is a record of the

66 N. ŠEVČENKO, St. Nicholas in Byzantine Art with and Appendix on the Texts in Mss Vienna, ÖNB Theol. Gr. 148, *En orient et en Occident le culte de saint Nicolas en Europe X<sup>e</sup>–XXI<sup>e</sup> siècle : actes du colloque de Lunéville et Saint-Nicolas-de-Port, 5–7 décembre 2013*, eds. V. GAZEAU, C. GUYON, C. VINCENT, Paris 2015, 75–103, 85.

67 ŠEVČENKO, *The Life of Saint Nicholas*, 155–157.

68 The icon is dated in the late twelfth century, ŠEVČENKO, *The Life of Saint Nicholas*, 29–31.

69 ŠEVČENKO, *St. Nicholas in Byzantine Art*, 84–85.

70 PEJIĆ, *The Old State*, 515–527.

71 А. М. ПУРКОВИЋ, Светитељски култови у старој српској држави према храмовном посвећењу, *Бојословље*, 14, 2, 1939, 156–174.

72 ПЕТКОВИЋ, *Зидно сликарство*, 33–64.

73 А. СКОВРАН, Црква Манастира Светог Николе у Подврху, *Манасијир Свјетой Николе у Подврху 1606–2006*, ур. Г. МАРКОВИЋ, Београд 2006, 111–161, 131; А. СКОВРАН, Црква Св. Николе у Подврху код Бијелог Поља, *Стијаринар Н.С.*, 9–10, 1958–1959, 355–366, 364–365.

first gift sent by Nemanja to the church in Bari.<sup>74</sup> In order to show their respect for St. Nicholas, other Serbian rulers would generously send gifts to the cathedral in Bari, the center of the cult of the Myrlician miracle worker.<sup>75</sup> This indicates that they were aware of the translation of relics and had accepted Bari as its new cult site. According to some preserved synaxaria, there is a possibility that the feast of translation of St. Nicholas relics in Serbia was celebrated from the mid-thirteenth century, if not before.<sup>76</sup>

The feast probably infiltrated medieval Serbia from two sides. Tatjana Subotin-Golubović has proposed that it could have been introduced directly from southern Italy, or possibly, indirectly from Russia via monks from Mount Athos.<sup>77</sup> Being at a crossroads between East and West, medieval Serbia felt the impact of both sides in multifarious ways. During the rule of the Stefan Nemanja, Serbia had a somewhat tense relationship with the Byzantine empire. Despite strong cultural, political and church influences from Byzantium, Serbia also developed connections with the pope in Rome, especially over its mainly Catholic coastal territories.<sup>78</sup> One of the reasons for accepting Bari as a new cult site of St. Nicholas may have been to provide a counterbalance to Byzantine power and move out from the Byzantium's shadow, and establish an independent state and church.

While the introduction of the feast of the translation of the relics may have come directly from Bari via the missionaries who delivered the gifts of the first Nemanjić to the Church of St. Nicholas, the text of the service of the translation of the relics probably came indirectly through transcribed Russian manuscripts during the renewal of the Patriarchate in Peć in the sixteenth century. The translation of the relics of St. Nicholas from Myra to Bari was accepted and celebrated in Russia from the eleventh century.<sup>79</sup> The Russian account of the transfer, the so-called Kiev Legend, was

74 *Стефан Првовенчани. Живої Стефана Немање*, 43–44; С. МАРЈАНОВИЋ ДУШАНИЋ, *Владарска идеологија Немањића*, Београд 1997, 260.

75 Б. МИЉКОВИЋ, *Немањићи и Свети Никола у Барију*, *Зборник радова Византјолошкої инстїтутїуи*, 44, 1, 2007, 275–293, 275–293; ШРЕНАР, ТОМИЋ ЂУРИЋ, *Architectural, Artistic and Archaeological Traces*, 236–239.

76 ЛОСЕВА, *Почїиание свїи. Николая*, 287–292. The number of manuscripts that witnessed the Feast of translation of relics of St. Nicholas will gain in number during the period from king Milutin's reign (1282–1321) and his descendants king Stefan Dečanski and king Stefan Dušan, see СУБОТИН ГОЛУБОВИЋ, *Кулїи Свеїїої Николе*, 31, № 1.

77 СУБОТИН ГОЛУБОВИЋ, *Кулїи Свеїїої Николе*, 31.

78 D. VOJVODIĆ, *On the Boundry Among Worlds and Vultures—the Essence and Space of Serbian Medieval Art, Byzantine Heritage and Serbian Art, Sacral Arts of the Serbian Lands in the Middle Ages*, eds. D. POPOVIĆ, D. VOJVODIĆ, Belgrade 2016, 13–40; B. KRSMANOVIĆ, Lj. MAKSIMOVIĆ, *Byzantium in Serbia—Serbian Authenticity and Byzantine Influence, Byzantine Heritage and Serbian Art, Sacral Arts of the Serbian Lands in the Middle Ages*, eds. D. POPOVIĆ, D. VOJVODIĆ, Belgrade 2016, 41–55.

79 A. MUSIN, *Le “second avènement” de saint Nicolas: les origines du culte d'un saint et sa transformation en Europe de l'est du XI<sup>e</sup> au XVI<sup>e</sup> siècle, En orient et en Occident le culte de saint Nicolas en Europe X<sup>e</sup>–XXI<sup>e</sup> siècle: actes du colloque de Lunéville et Saint-Nicolas-de-Port, 5–7 décembre*

almost-contemporary with the translation itself. The event encouraged the veneration of the miracle-working Nicholas and was marked by a special Feast day on May 9<sup>th</sup>. The feast would later include a service for the translation of the relics. The earliest known Slavic transcript of the service comes from a fourteenth century manuscript (Соф. 382) now in the National Library of Russia in Saint Petersburg.<sup>80</sup> In Serbia, however, the earliest text of the service is preserved in manuscripts from the late sixteenth century. Serbian monks likely encountered the Russian version of the service after the renewal of the Patriarchate of Peć, through exchanges of manuscripts and printed books. The service and the feast gained popularity during the seventeenth century.<sup>81</sup> This late popularity of the service could be one of the reasons for the inclusion scenes of the translation of relic in the cycle of St. Nicholas.

The scene of translation from the church of St. Nicholas in Peć shows the standard iconography of *translatio* scenes established during the early period in Byzantium. Based on the model of the roman imperial *adventus* or triumph ritual, scenes of the *translatio* could depict several different stages such as: *synanthesis*, or the triumphant meeting of relics upon their arrival at the city; the *propompe*, where locals were shown gathering around the relics and accompanying them into the city; or, the *apothesis*, which involved the deposition of the relics in the designated church or place.<sup>82</sup> In Peć, the painter Radul depicted the moment of *propompe*. The scene shows two deacons with candles

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2013, eds. V. GAZEAU, C. GUYON, C. VINCENT, Paris 2015, 195–226. The oldest manuscripts that mention May 9<sup>th</sup> as a day of celebration of the feast date from the thirteenth century, see O. В. ЛОСЕВА, *Русские месяцесловы XI–XIV вв.*, Москва 2001, 102.

- 80 In Russia, the feast of the translation of St. Nicholas' relics on May 9<sup>th</sup> was set in the period between 1087 and 1090, possibly through the daughter of the Grand Prince of Kiev Vsevolod I Yaroslavich (1078–1093) Eupraxia– Adelaide, the wife of Emperor Henry IV, who was present at this event, see В. И. ЛЕГКИХ, *Развитие гимнографии в славянском мире: Служба на преставление святителя Николая Мирликийского и на перенесение мощей свт. Николая из Мир Ликийских в Бари в славянской рукописной традиции XII– начала XVII веков*, Москва – Санкт-Петербург 2010, 105–176, also В. И. ЛЕГКИХ, *Некоторые особенности становления службы на перенесение мощей святителя Николая, «Правило веры и образ кротости...»: Образ свт. Николая, архиеп. Мирликийского, в византийской и славянской агиографии, гимнографии и иконографии*, ре. А. В. БУГАЕВСКИЙ, Москва 2004, 370–380. Without sufficient reason, Archimandrite Leonid has suggested that in 1091–1096 Ephraim II of Pereyaslav (1091–1097), the Metropolitan of Kiev, established this Feast in Russia, as he himself was a direct observer of the events, see М. КРУТОВА, *Святитель Николай Мирликийский в русской исследовательской традиции, Богословский сборник Вып. 3. ПСТБИ*, 1999, 197–221, 197–221.
- 81 Т. СУБОТИН ГОЛУБОВИЋ, *Српско рукописно наслеђе од 1557. године до средине XVII века*, Београд 1999, 234–235; А. А. ТУРИЛОВ, *Исследования по славянскому и сербскому средневековью*, Београд 2014, 174–176.
- 82 G. K. HOLUM, G. VIKAN, *The Trier Ivory, 'Adventus' Ceremonial, and Relics of St. Stephen*, *Dumbarton Oaks Papers*, 33, 1979, 113–133; LJ. MILANOVIĆ, *The Politics of Translatio: the Visual Representation of the Translation of Relics in the Early Christian and Medieval Period, The Case of St. Stephen*, PhD dissertation, not published, Rutgers University, New Brunswick 2011, 41–45.

in their hands walking in front of the coffin with the body of the saint, characteristic of the *propompe*. This stage usually includes acclamations of psalms as well. During this procession, the relics were preceded by a high-ranking person, a bishop or a ruler, as is represented on the Trier ivory.<sup>83</sup> In Peć, however, instead of leading the procession, Radul depicted a bishop accompanied by a group of people. They stand together in front of the church as part of the welcoming reception.

Radul painted three cycles dedicated to the life and miracles of St. Nicholas. Besides the fresco painting at Peć, two examples are found on icons. His first cycle of St. Nicholas appears on an icon from the church in Podvrh, Bijelo Polje in 1664–1665 (Fig. 3).<sup>84</sup> The icon is of a regular, *vita* type with the full figure of the saint in the middle surrounded by 18 episodes from the saint's life. The top and the bottom frieze has five undivided scenes. The translation of his relics is represented in the middle of the bottom frieze. The iconographic model used here was repeated later in the composition in Peć. As in Peć, the icon from Podvrh depicts two priests carrying a large coffin with the saint's body along with a deacon with a censes walking by it. The only difference is that the latter scene is simplified and does not show the welcoming reception for the relics. Radul used a similar solution for the composition on a second icon from the church in Nikoljac, dating from 1676–1677 (Fig. 4). Here, the frontal figure of St. Nicholas is surrounded by 16 fields divided with a red line.<sup>85</sup> The episodes showing the translation of St. Nicholas appear in the bottom row. The composition differs from the first icon painted by Radul only in the buildings in the background. In Nikoljac, the solemn procession passes a long fortification that probably resembled the city walls, while the icon from Podvrh features several buildings, one of which may have been the city gate.

In all the versions painted by Radul, the body of the saint is exposed to viewers. This was not a characteristic feature of the Byzantine *translatio* iconography, but evidence of Western influence.<sup>86</sup> This iconographic model, however, was present in Serbian medieval art from the thirteenth century, when it was painted for the first time in the cycle of St. Symeon Nemanja in the Studenica monastery.<sup>87</sup> Usually the decision to expose the body could be attributed to a desire to show the incredulity of a relic, or to emphasize that the body is not just a corpse but retained divine agency and able to

83 LJ. MILANOVIĆ, Delivering the Sacred: Representing *Translatio* on the Trier Ivory, *Perceptions of the Body and Sacred Space in Late Antiquity and Byzantium*, ed. J. BOGDANOVIĆ, Oxon – New York, NY 2018, 106–123.

84 СКОВРАН, Црква Манастира Свeйтої Николе у Подврху, 156; СКОВРАН, Црква Св. Николе у Подврху, 364–365; МАТИЋ, Српски иконопис, 338.

85 С. ПЕЈИЋ, Црква Свeйтої Николе у Никольцу, Београд 2014, 36–37; РАКИЋ, Рагул, 32–33, 170; МАТИЋ, Српски иконопис, 231.

86 MILANOVIĆ, *The Politics of Translatio*, 46–51.

87 The first image showing the translation of his relics was painted in 1233–34 in the chapel dedicated to St. Symeon Nemanja adjoined to the narthex of the main katholikon in the monastery of Studenica, MILANOVIĆ, *The Politics of Translatio*, 228–234.

perform miracles. The notion that God was able to preserve the bones or an entire corpse, led to the legend of the indestructible life, according to which the bodies of those martyred were miraculously restored and the bodies of certain saints remained uncorrupted.<sup>88</sup> The incorruption of the saints was understood as a sign that some of them were blessed with divine power even before they died. That the power of the saints was still active even after their death gave them a paradoxical status of being neither fully dead nor alive. This allowed them to remain present and active in everyday life.<sup>89</sup>

A possible reason for Radul's inclusion of the translation of the relics in his St. Nicholas cycles could be artistic and literary influences from Russia. Scholars have already noted that in the painted narrative of St. Nicholas from Peć, Radul included a scene with the Miracle of St. Nicholas and Polovec that was unusual for Serbian medieval, or post-Byzantine painting and is based on Russian literature.<sup>90</sup> As noted above, following the renewal of the Patriarchate of Peć, there were increased contacts between Serbian monks and Russia. Struggling to raise the funds needed to reconstruct and redecorate old churches, the church sent emissaries to Russia seeking assistance. In addition to financial aid, Serbian monks in Russia received various sacred vessels, icons, manuscripts and printed books.<sup>91</sup> With the frequent departures of Serbian monks to Russia in the sixteenth century, certain Russian cults of saints, and feasts began to be transmitted to Serbia. Serbian painting under Turkish rule shows tendency to preserve the traditional forms and character of art from the medieval Serbian state. Russian influence on Serbian post-Byzantine painting mainly is found in details of iconography. Even when influenced by Russian models, Serbian painters, almost as a rule, returned to older Russian models where they easier could find points of contact with their native artistic preferences.<sup>92</sup>

In Russian medieval art, the scene of the translation of the relics of St. Nicholas was not included in his narrative cycles before the fourteenth century.<sup>93</sup> The popularity of the feast of the translation was not prominent during previous centuries and only started spreading from the fourteenth century onwards, when we begin to see a proliferation

88 A. ANGENENDT, *Corpus incorruptum: Eine Leitidee der mittelalterlichen Reliquienverehrung, Saeculum*, 42, 1991, 320–346.

89 W. C. BYNUM, *The Resurrection of the body in Western Christianity, 200–1336*, New York 1995, 222; MILANOVIĆ, *The Politics of Translatio*, 37–41.

90 РАДОВАНОВИЋ, *Светии Никола*, 65–66, 74–79.

91 Printed books were donated more after the second part of the seventeenth century when printing gained popularity in Russia, С. ПЕТКОВИЋ, *Руски утицај на српско сликарство 16 и 17. века, Стиларијар Н.С.*, 12, 1961, 91–108, 105.

92 С. РАДОЈЧИЋ, *Везе између српске и руске уметности у средњем веку, Зборник Филозофској факултетија Универзитетија у Београду*, 1, 1948, 241–258, 251; ПЕТКОВИЋ, *Руски утицај на српско сликарство*, 91–108.

93 The cathedral in Yaroslav's Courtyard in Novgorod was dedicated to the feast of the transfer of the relics of St. Nicholas in 1113, so there is a possibility that the church housed a depiction of the feast. If so, it would be an early example of the visual representation of the translation of St. Nicholas' relics,

of texts on the service of the translation as well as hymns dedicated to the saint.<sup>94</sup> The earliest known depictions of the translation as part of St. Nicholas' *vita* cycle in Russia, are found on icons. The scenes are usually a concise version, showing the *synanthesis* phase with simple iconography representing two, or more rarely, four men or priests, who carry a closed coffin with relics. In most cases they move toward a building with a simple opening designating city gates, such as depicted on the icon of St. Nicholas of Zaratisk from the first half of the fourteenth century from the Rostov–Suzdal school, now in The State Tretyakov Gallery in Moscow.<sup>95</sup> The iconography could vary in the details; for example, instead of depicting a simple city gate, a church in which the relics would be housed could be shown. Usually, a welcoming crowd led by a bishop with deacons would be included, as on the icon of St. Nicholas from the Moscow School dated around the second half of the fourteenth century, which is also now in the Tretyakov State Gallery in Moscow (Fig. 5).<sup>96</sup> During the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, the number of narrative icons with scenes from life and miracle of St. Nicholas in Russia grew and would be fully developed in the seventeenth century.<sup>97</sup> Later examples followed the iconography established in the previous century with some minor changes: either the bishop is represented as a part of the procession walking beside the coffin, or the place where they are heading is more elaborately depicted with the city walls in the background. On some icons, a welcoming reception is represented in front of the city gate as on the icon from Rostov school now in the Arkhangelsk Fine Arts Museum from the end of fifteenth or beginning of the sixteenth century.<sup>98</sup>

The earliest surviving image of the translation of the relics in wall painting is found in the cycle executed in 1502 by the painter Dionisius in the chapel of St. Nicholas at the Virgin of the Ferapontov Monastery.<sup>99</sup> In the scene, two young men carry a coffin on

И. А. ШАЛИНА, Сцена пренесение мощей святого Николая в древнерусской иконографии, *Искусство христианского мира*, 6, 2002, 89–98, 93.

94 ЛЕГКИХ, *Развитие гимнографии в славянском мире*, 110–111.

95 И. Д. СОЛОВЬЕВА, К вопросу об агиографических источниках житийной иконографии св. Николая Мирликийского в древнерусской иконописи XIV–XV столетий, *Искусство христианского мира*, 10, 2007, 282–289; *Иконопись из собрания Третьяковской галереи*, Москва 2006, 124–127.

96 В. Н. ЛАЗАРЕВ, *Русская иконопись от истоков до начала XVI века*, Москва 2000, 83–84, 363, cat. № 86; *Иконопись из собрания Третьяковской галереи*, 94–95.

97 А. А. РЫБАКОВ, Иконография святителя Николая Чудотворца в иконописи Русского Севера XVII–XVIII вв., «*Правило веры и образ кротости...*»: *Образ свт. Николая, архиеп. Мирликийского, в византийской и славянской агиографии, гимнографии и иконографии*, ре. А. В. БУГАЕВСКИЙ, Москва 2004, 493–513.

98 *Иконы Русского Севера: Шедевры древнерусской живописи Архангельского музея изобразительных искусств*: в 1. Москва 2007, cat. № 5, 70–77.

99 ШАЛИНА, *Сцена пренесение мощей*, 94; И. А. ШАЛИНА, Летописная запись Дионисия и особенности росписей северо-восточных компартиментов собора Рождества Богородицы Феропонтова монастыря, *Древнерусское и поствизантийское искусство. Вторая половина XV – начало XVI века. К 500-летию росписи собора Рождества Богородицы Феропонтова монастыря*,



their shoulders while the background depicts walls of the Bari fortress inside of which the dome of the church is visible. The procession is followed by a priest (bishop), a deacon and two laymen, one of whom holds the coffin. Parallel with an older iconographic tradition that showed translated reliquaries closed, during the sixteenth century new iconography developed that depicted the saint laying on a bier, or in an open coffin. This iconographic feature would become predominant in later centuries. An unusual icon from the Arkhangelsk Fine Arts Museum from the mid-sixteenth century shows the translation of a reliquary in which a saint sits upright, holding a book in one hand and blessing with other (Fig. 6).<sup>100</sup> This example manifests the visual interpretation of divine agency that is still present in the body of the saint even after he “fell asleep.”

That the inspiration for the inclusion of the scene of the translation of the relics in St. Nicholas cycles came from Russia is perhaps best demonstrated by an example from a small church dedicated to Saint Nicholas located in Podvrh, in the vicinity of Bjelo Polje.<sup>101</sup> According to the inscription on the stone plaque above the main entrance, the church was built in 1606, at the time of the archbishop of Peć, Jovan. There is another fresco inscription, on the west wall of the naos, above the entrance door that testifies to the construction of the church and its decoration. The church was painted between 1613–1614 by a priest named Strahinja from Budimlja.<sup>102</sup> Here, a large cycle of twenty-five scenes represents the life and miracles of St. Nicholas.<sup>103</sup> On the semi-barrel vault on the southeastern side of the narthex one sees a rather interesting representation of his translation from Myra to Bari (Fig. 7). It shows the arrival of the relics by boat and their reception at the city gate. A large part of the composition is taken up by an elaborate ship with a sail, mast, four oars and four passengers, three of whom rest their arms on the coffin of the saint. Such an unusual composition raises the question of which iconographic model was used here. It is interesting to note that a similar composition is found in the manuscript of the Life of St. Nicholas, composed and illustrated in Moscow

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отв. ред. А. И. ЛИФШИЦ, Москва 2005, 163–189, 166; Н. Г. БРЕГМАН, О. В. ЛЕЛЕКОВА, Итоги консервации росписей Дионисия, *Исследования в консервации культурного наследия, Вып. 3, Материалы международной научно-методической конференции, Москва, 9–11 ноября 2010 года*, ред. Р. Х. БЕЛКИНА, Москва 2012, 44–49.

100 ШАЛИНА, *Сцена пренесение мощей*, 94–95; *Иконы Русского Севера*, т. 1, cat. № 52, 256–265.

101 According to Sanja Rajić, the church has recently been rededicated to the translation of relics of St. Nicholas, see, С. ПАЈИЋ, *Циклус Светог Николе у Подврху програмске и иконографске особености, Бурђеви Сјуијови и Будимљанска епархија: зборник радова*, ур. М. РАДУЈКО, Беране–Београд 2011, 615–624.

102 СКОВРАН, *Црква Св. Николе у Подврху*, 355–366, 359. Strahinja’s signature is preserved in the niche of proscenium next to the image of *imago pietatis*, СКОВРАН, *Црква Манасијира Свејтој Николе у Подврху*, 120–121.

103 According to Sanja Rajić, the cycle of St. Nicholas comprises twenty-seven scenes and was the largest in Serbian post-Byzantine art; two scenes are no longer visible, see, ПАЈИЋ, *Циклус Светог Николе у Подврху*, 617.

around the year 1560, probably for the emperor Ivan the Terrible or someone close to him. The scene depicts a welcoming party for a ship bearing a saint's body (Fig. 8). The ship also transports a group of people carrying a coffin which openly displays the body of saint. St. Nicholas wearing his bishop vestments and holding a book with both hands. Beside the saint stand monks with *koukoullion* on their heads. Some additional figures, probably deacons, stand on the shore are holding censers. The type of the ship is similar to the one depicted in Podvrh. The difference between them is that in Strahinja's work, the ship has four oars and the welcoming group on the shore consists of a bishop with a censer and a book, a priest and likely a deacon. Since Radul painted a *vita* icon with a cycle of St. Nicholas for the church in Podvrh, he could have easily seen the painting in the church. Strahinja's work is the earliest example in which we have a depiction of the scene of the translation of the relics of St. Nicholas in Serbian post-Byzantine art. Though his iconography is different, his painting could have inspired Radul to include such a scene in his *vita* icons dedicated to St. Nicholas, as well as in his fresco cycle in Peć.

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As we have seen, the illegal traffic of the relics of St. Nicholas from Myra to Bari, or *furta sacra*, was driven not only by religious reasons but also had deeper economic and political implications. Relics of saints were a powerful symbol of the Christian triumph over death. As Ioli Kalavrezou has pointed out, relics "functioned as instruments of power, investiture and leadership."<sup>104</sup> The translation and elevation of relics became a principal means by which political power and policies were implemented. The authority of the person who performed the ceremony was enhanced. By offering the believer a new path to divine beneficence, relics produced concrete, material rewards for their possessors. Once incorporated into local churches they were enormously lucrative for the people who controlled access to them. Most importantly, saints were vehicles of political will. The presence of the saint would lend legitimacy to the ruling regime, both in their capacity to secure the relics and in the transfer of authority and prestige through their mutual association.<sup>105</sup> Bari became a new pilgrimage site and the center of the cult of St. Nicholas from which it spread all over the medieval Europe. The Byzantine empire remained silent on this phenomenon. However, Slavic countries that were under the protectorate of the Constantinople Church, especially medieval Russia and Serbia, embraced the new cult site and established the feast that celebrated translation of St. Nicholas' relics. In Serbia,

104 I. KALAVREZOU, *Helping Hands for the Empire: Imperial Ceremonies and the Cult of Relics at the Byzantine Court, Byzantine Court Culture from 829 to 1204*, ed. H. MAGUIRE, Washington D. C. 1996, 53–81.

105 A. THACKER, *The making of a local saint, Local Saints and Local Churches in the Early Medieval West*, eds. A. THACKER, R. SHARPE, Oxford 2002, 45–72, 72.

the service of the translation of relics was an important part of the liturgical celebration of the feast on May 9<sup>th</sup> / 22<sup>th</sup>, which would become prominent during the late sixteenth century. The representation of the translation of relics would take an elaborate form in the seventeenth century in the church of St. Nicholas in Peć. Executed by the painter Radul, the scene of translation is not only witness to the celebration of the feast of translation of St. Nicholas, but also testifies to Russian artistic and literary influence. For medieval viewers, representations of *translatio* demarcated a liminal space that permitted a mystical exchange between the earthly realm and the heavenly sphere. Here, in Peć, the scene of *translatio* was a witness to the exchange between similar but also different cultures. *Translatio* of St. Nicholas is thus a bridge between East and West.

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## ILLUSTRATIONS

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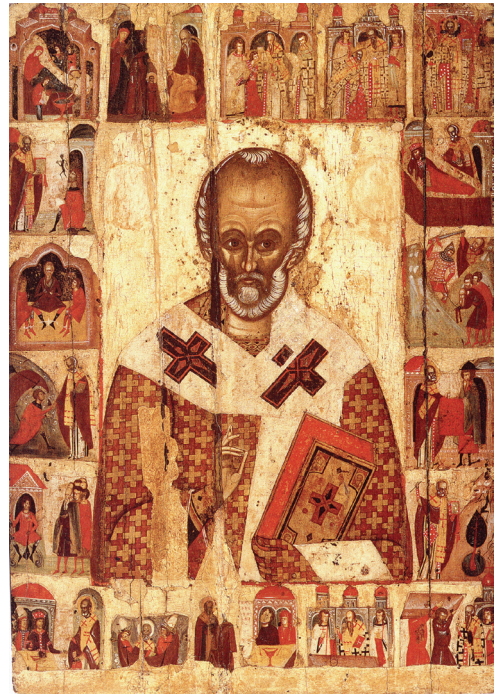


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И положилъ шани въ цркви испіго і ѡлпа ртчи  
 при мѡрѣ . да по слѣшант пекратіа моѡ  
 мѡлѡвы . коліні со творчнхъ дѣствіи  
 николѡе . до ше рѣшѡ мнрскѡ грдѡвѣ  
 грдѡ . ѡне дѣлю вѣтерѡ прінде . и за  
 оутправі по недѣлнннхъ не цѣбан . мѣ .

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