

Eulogiae Terrae Sanctae of St Sava of Serbia

Abstract: The focus of the paper is on the eulogiae that Sava of Serbia, on his pilgrimage in the Holy Land, sent to the abbot of Studenica, Spyridon: a little cross, a little belt, a little towel and a little stone. In his letter accompanying the gifts, the earliest surviving work of Serbian epistolary literature, Sava points to their prayer and protective function. Sava's eulogiae are looked at against the background of Eastern Christian devotional practices.

Keywords: eulogiae, pilgrimage, Holy Land, St Sava of Serbia

The letter that St Sava of Serbia while on his pilgrimage to Jerusalem sent to Spyridon, abbot of the monastery of Studenica, contains the following lines: "And here is what I've found in this place; I'm giving you, as a blessing, a little cross, to wear it as a memento, and a little belt, for I've laid it onto the Sepulchre. Pray with this cross, wear it always round your neck, even if you have another icon, wear it always. And the little belt, put it on, let it always be around your hips, for I've laid it onto the Sepulchre, the little belt, and the little cross. And I've put together such a prayer that I wish to God every Christian may pray for me in that way! And I'm giving you the little towel I've been given here, now I'm giving it to you as a blessing for your soul and body. And a little stone, which I've found, to serve many a need of yours, and for you to carry it on you."¹ Even though this reference to the eulogiae that St Sava acquired in the Holy Land is the only such in medieval Serbian religious practice and offers variously interesting information, it has not elicited much scholarly attention.² Therefore, Sava's eulogiae by all means deserve a separate essay.

The topic at hand needs to be placed in a broader context, the context of the centuries-old Christian custom of making pilgrimages to the Holy

¹ Sveti Sava, *Sabrani spisi* [Collected Writings], ed. D. Bogdanović (Belgrade: Prosveta & SKZ, 1986), 138; Sava's *Epistle to abbot Spyridon* was preserved in a transcript in the now lost fifteenth-century Paterikon of the monastery of Velika Remeta, and is known owing to the edition by Gj. Daničić, "Poslanica sv. Save arhiepiskopa srpskoga iz Jerusalima u Studenicu igumanu Spiridonu", *Starine JAZU* IV (1872), 230–231.

² See the preface of D. Bogdanović to the *Collected Writings* of St Sava, 19; T. Jovanović, ed., *Sveta zemlja u srpskoj književnosti od XIII do kraja XVIII veka* (Belgrade: Čigoja, 2007), 10.

Land. Its original meaning, essentially unchanged since its inception, is the need for an “exile”, a temporary abandonment of one’s own identity and everyday habits in pursuit of holiness and closeness with the divine. There have been in the Christian world many *loca sancta*, places of extraordinary charisma where the divine force is believed to manifest itself more potently. The most highly revered of them all was the Holy Land, the space made sacred through the presence of Christ himself, and through the actions of the leading protagonists of biblical history. A special status, needless to say, was enjoyed by Jerusalem, a scene of biblical history, a city where the historical memory of Christians was transformed into an eternal, eschatological reality. Scores of pilgrims from all corners of the world who, over the centuries, embarked onto the long and hazardous journey to the Holy Land were led by the firm belief in the possibility of immediate, physical contact with the past and sanctity. This belief opened the way for their empathic participation in the events of biblical history and their “real” partaking in the mystery of the Incarnation and Passion of Christ.³

Pilgrims to the Holy Land were not just partakers in sanctity. They believed they could take “pieces of sanctity” with them back home. These “pieces” were distinctive souvenirs known as *eulogiae* or “blessings” (*benedictiones*).⁴ The notion itself was quite broad. The eulogia could be immaterial and consist in contact with a relic — through kissing, prostrating or any other form of physical contact. It has already been remarked that, unlike the modern tourist whose main motive is “sightseeing”, what the medieval pilgrim considered important was not only the visual but also the tactile aspect of his journey. Exemplary in that sense is the statement of Paulinus of Nola that the “principal motive which draws people to Jerusalem is the desire to see and touch the places where Christ was present in the

³ From the ample literature on Christian pilgrimage, see B. Kötting, *Peregrinatio religiosa: Wallfahrten in der Antike und das Pilgerwesen in der alten Kirche* (Münster: Regensburg, 1950); E. D. Hunt, *Holy Land Pilgrimage in the Later Roman Empire (A.D. 312–460)* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1982); P. Maraval, *Lieux saints et pèlerinages d’Orient. Histoire et géographie des origines à la conquête arabe* (Paris: Editions du Cerf, 1985); *The Blessings of Pilgrimage*, ed. R. Ousterhout (Urbana & Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1990); A. M. Talbot, “Byzantine Pilgrimage to the Holy Land from the Eight to the Fifteenth Century”, in *The Sabaitic Heritage in the Orthodox Church from the Fifth Century to the Present*, ed. J. Patrich (Leuven: Peeters Publishers, 2001), 97–110; see also the thematic block in *DOP* 56 (2002).

⁴ On *eulogiae*, see B. Bagatti, “*Eulogie Palestinesi*”, *OCP* 15 (1949), 126–166; Maraval, *Lieux saints*, 237–241; G. Vikan, “Byzantine Pilgrim’s Art”, in *Heaven on Earth: Art and the Church in Byzantium*, ed. L. Safran (Pennsylvania State University Press, 1998), 229–266; C. Hahn, *Strange Beauty. Issues in the Making and Meaning of Reliquaries, 400–circa 1204* (Pennsylvania State University Press, 2012), 8–23 and *passim*.

body”.⁵ Yet, eulogiae as a rule belonged to material reality: natural matter such as earth, dust, water or stone, or substances in everyday use such as oil and wax. Unlike the relics in the narrow sense, where the possibility of their being broken into smaller pieces was limited, and so was their distribution, eulogiae — “secondary relics” consecrated through contact with “true” relics — could be endlessly multiplied, thereby becoming available to broad layers of people. The theological doctrine of God’s power being present in each and every particle of the matter that had been in contact with a relic lay at the heart of the belief in the miraculous, notably prophylactic and healing, powers of eulogiae. How strong and widespread this belief was can be seen from the fact that relics and eulogiae became part of everyday life and an important ingredient of popular piety already in early Christian times.⁶ Convincing proofs of the powerful spiritual experience of the pilgrim who possessed them, and of his exceptional status of a “chosen person”, these objects travelled all around the Christian world, at times in quite simple, unadorned “containers”. Yet, the need to ensure that pilgrims can take them home with them gave rise, in the vicinity of some holy places, to entire industries of cult objects — such as leaden or terracotta *ampullae*, votive plaques and stamps with appropriate inscriptions and images — commonly termed “pilgrimage art”.⁷

St Sava of Serbia (1175/6–1236), the first head of the autocephalous Serbian Church and one of the most remarkable figures of the Eastern Christian world in the early decades of the thirteenth century, was well aware of the manifold significance of pilgrimage to the Holy Land, to which his biographers left us more than one enlightening reference. Programmatic in character is the statement of his first biographer, Domentijan (Domentianos), that Sava set two paths for his “fatherland” to follow: besides the

⁵ Translation of the sources in J. Wilkinson, *Jerusalem Pilgrims before the Crusades* (Warminster: Aris & Phillips, 1977), 40.

⁶ Vikan, “Byzantine Pilgrim’s Art”, 229–236; G. Frank, “*Loca Sancta*, Souvenirs and the Art of Memory”, in *Pèlerinages et lieux saints dans l’antiquité et le moyen âge. Mélanges offerts à P. Maraval*, eds. B. Caseau, J.-C. Cheynet & V. Déroche (Paris: Travaux et Mémoires. Association des amis du Centre d’histoire et civilisation de Byzance, 2006), 193–201; A. J. Wharton, *Selling Jerusalem: Relics, Replicas, Theme Parks* (University of Chicago Press, 2006); B. Leyerle, “Pilgrim Eulogiae and Domestic Rituals”, *Archiv für Religionsgeschichte* 10 (2008), 223–237; D. Krueger, “The Religion of Relics in Late Antiquity and Byzantium”, in *Treasures of Heaven. Saints, Relics, and Devotion in Medieval Europe*, eds. M. Bagnoli et al. (New Haven & London 2011), 5–17.

⁷ A. Grabar, *Ampoules de Terre Sainte* (Paris: C. Klincksieck, 1958); C. Hahn, “*Loca Sancta* Souvenirs: Sealing the Pilgrim’s Experience”, in Ousterhout, ed., *Blessings of Pilgrimage*, 85–96; G. Vikan, *Early Byzantine Pilgrimage Art*, rev. ed. (Washington D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks, 2010) (with a bibliography).

“large and wide” path to Mount Athos, he “restored the most glorious path to Jerusalem, ever preparing all for heavenly life ... desiring that all may be brought to the heavenly kingdom”.⁸ In this way the learned writer emphasizes the notion of Jerusalem as the supreme model of sacredness — a messianic city and a link between Old and New Testament history — as well as the role of that model in the process of sanctifying a collectivity, i.e. of creating a “perfect”, historically legitimate people.⁹ The notion of Jerusalem at the heart of which lies the idea of the heavenly city — eschatological and soteriological in its nature and ultimate purpose — had its physical counterpart, the real Jerusalem and its holy places and relics. According to the biographers, Sava of Serbia had a “genuine desire” to make a pilgrimage to the holy city, and to “honour the saving and life-giving tomb of Christ our God, and all other holy places”.¹⁰ It is worth noting that Sava’s motive for pilgrimage was interpreted in terms of the original Christian idea of *peregrinatio*: as a distinctive form of “exile” which involves leaving one’s own local environment and abandoning all that is “one’s own” to offer veneration to the holy places. It is exactly in these terms that Domentijan’s claim should be understood that Sava thought of himself as being a “stranger on earth”, which was the reason why he decided to follow Christ and to make a pilgrimage to Jerusalem and its holy places, i.e. “to live through this treacherous life and to suffer at least a little in emulation of his Lord”.¹¹

Sava of Serbia made two pilgrimages to the Holy Land, in 1229 and 1234/5. His first journey has recently been given a detailed study, considerably expanding our knowledge about not only his itinerary, the holy places

⁸ Domentijan, *Život Svetoga Save i Život Svetoga Simeona*, ed. R. Marinković (Belgrade: SKZ, 1988), 65 and 197.

⁹ From the ample literature on the issue, see B. Kühnel, *From the Earthly to the Heavenly Jerusalem* (Freiburg: Herder, 1987); B. Flusin, “Construire une nouvelle Jérusalem: Constantinople et les reliques”, in *L’Orient dans l’histoire religieuse de l’Europe. L’invention des origines*, ed. M. A. Amir-Moezzi & J. Scheid (Turnhout: Brepols, 2000), 51–70; R. Ousterhout, “Sacred Geographies and Holy Cities: Constantinople as Jerusalem”, in *Ierotopiia. Sozdanie sakral’nykh prostranstv v Vizantii i drevnei Rusi*, ed. A. M. Lidov (Moscow: Indrik, 2006), 98–116; A. M. Lidov, “Tserkov’ Bogomateri Farosskoi”, in *Ierotopiia. Prostranstvennyie ikony i obrazy-paradigmy v vizantiiskoi kul’ture* (Moscow: Feoritia, 2009), 71–110; on the mechanism of “translating Jerusalem” in the process of creating medieval capital cities, including Belgrade, see J. Erdeljan, “Beograd kao Novi Jerusalem. Razmišljanja o recepciji jednog toposa u doba despota Stefana Lazarevića”, *ZRVI* 43 (2006), 97–110.

¹⁰ Domentijan, *Život*, 170; Teodosije, *Žitija*, ed. D. Bogdanović (Belgrade: SKZ, 1988), 223.

¹¹ Domentijan, *Život*, 170–171; on the original notion of pilgrimage, Cf. the literature cited in n. 3 above.

he visited and the persons he met but also about the influence his firsthand experiences would likely have had on the Serbian architecture and art of the period.¹² At any rate, with his journeys the practice of pilgrimage to the Holy Land was established in Serbia. In later times, this practice, along with a sojourn on Mount Athos, became something of a pattern, a desirable if not mandatory stage in the career of the heads of the Serbian Church.¹³

As the surviving sources clearly suggest, on his journeys in the East Sava put particular effort into acquiring various valuable and holy objects — relics, icons and sumptuous church objects — for which he obviously had a marked affinity.¹⁴ Central to the success of his effort were the circumstances in which the Christian world found itself after the fall of Constantinople in 1204, when the capital city's treasures became the object of not only unprecedented looting but also of a very lucrative trade. The ways in which Sava came in possession of various valuable objects are related in detail by his biographers. In several places they mention sumptuous gifts he was given by the prominent secular and ecclesiastical figures he met.¹⁵ No doubt the most precious of all was a sliver of the True Cross he was given as a gift by John III Vatatzes.¹⁶ Some of the gifts, even though they did not belong to the category of holy objects, were highly valued because their exotic Eastern origin made them difficult to acquire. Such were the gifts of the sultan of Egypt: “balm oil, and a large chunk of valuable aloe wood, and sweet-smelling Indian aromata, confections and dates.”¹⁷ Yet, the sources clearly suggest that Sava, availing himself of the wide array of “goods” offered on the market, “collected” most of the valuables “by purchase”. Domentijan mentions “various eastern holy objects, apostolic honours and patriarchal attires, nice-smelling censers”.¹⁸ Teodosije (Theodosios) goes into more

¹² M. Marković, *Prvo putovanje svetog Save u Palestinu i njegov značaj za srpsku srednjovekovnu umetnost* (Belgrade: Institute for Byzantine Studies, SASA, 2009); see also B. Miljković, *Žitija svetog Save kao izvori za istoriju srednjovekovne umetnosti* (Belgrade: Institute for Byzantine Studies, SASA, 2008).

¹³ Jovanović, ed., *Sveta zemlja*, 94–104.

¹⁴ D. Popović, “A staurotheke of Serbian provenance in Pienza”, *Zograf* 36 (2012), 157–170 (with reference literature); D. Popović, *Relikvija Časnog krsta u srednjovekovnoj Srbiji* (in press).

¹⁵ Teodosije, 242; on the custom of gift giving and its ceremonial significance see A. Cutler, “Gifts and Gift Exchange as Aspects of the Byzantine, Arab, and Related Economies”, *DOP* 55 (2001), 247–278.

¹⁶ Teodosije, *Žitija*, 227; B. Miljković, “Hilandarski Časni krst i stara manastirska stavroteka”, *ZRVI* 38 (1999/2000), 287–297.

¹⁷ Teodosije, *Žitija*, 242.

¹⁸ Domentijan, *Život*, 204 and 218.

detail. Apart from speaking generally about “holy church needs”, he lists “holy church vessels”, “holy vestments”, “golden candlesticks set with precious stones and pearls”. Sava particularly focused on acquiring relics of the saints.¹⁹ Given the Serbian archbishop’s repute, connections and financial standing, it seems quite likely that he had plenty of opportunity to procure some really precious relics of proven origin and authenticity.

The ultimate purpose of Sava’s systematic collecting of Christian objects and relics during his journeys in the East is described by Teodosije: “the holy archbishop, if he found something honourable or holy, he would buy it, intending to take it to his fatherland”. Sava’s motives for these acquisitions should be interpreted in a broader context, above all in the light of his wish to furnish the ruling Nemanjić family’s newly-built foundations with prestigious church objects and relics. On the other hand, given that the archbishop was familiar with the higher, theological significance and ideological function of *ars sacra* objects, it cannot be a coincidence that he put particular effort into procuring highly-venerated Christian relics. The purpose of his undertaking can perhaps be most clearly read from the testamentary instruction he gave on his deathbed in Turnovo, that the collected valuables be taken to Studenica — the royal mausoleum, and to Žiča — the cathedral and coronation church, i.e. two major state and dynasty centres of Serbia at the time.²⁰ The highest point of the programmatic use of relics to emphasize the sacral legitimacy of the Nemanjić dynasty was the programme carried out at Žiča, which involved the most highly venerated Christian relics — those associated with Christ, the Virgin, St John the Baptist, and other eminent protagonists of biblical history.²¹ As is well known, in the context of a new balance of power that was emerging after the demise of Byzantium (1204), such programmes had a particular significance. The “transfer of sanctity”, in its various forms, served the purpose of confirming royal identity, dynastic representation and the legitimacy of the new polities that emerged on the ruins of the Empire of the Romans.²²

¹⁹ Teodosije, *Žitija*, 246–248.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ D. Popović, “*Sacrae reliquiae* Spasove crkve u Žiči”, *Pod okriljem svetosti. Kult svetih vladara i relikvija u srednjovekovnoj Srbiji* (Belgrade: Institute for Balkan Studies, SASA, 2006), 207–232; Popović, *Relikvije Časnog krsta*.

²² From the ample literature on the subject, see B. Flusin, “Les reliques de la Sainte-Chapelle et leur passé impérial à Constantinople”, in *Le trésor de la Sainte-Chapelle* (Paris: Réunion des musées nationaux, 2001), 20–31; S. Mergiali-Sahas, “Byzantine Emperors and Holy Relics”, *JÖB* B. 51 (2001), 41–60; A. Eastmond, “Byzantine identity and relics of the True Cross in the thirteenth century”, in *Vostochnokhristskies relikvii*, ed. A. Lidov (Moscow: Progress Traditsia, 2003), 204–216; H. Klein, *Byzanz, der Westen und das “wahre” Kreuz: Die Geschichte einer Reliquie und ihrer künstlerischen Fassung in Byzanz*

This overview, somewhat lengthier, of the pilgrimages of the first Serbian archbishop and his acquisitions seems a pertinent framework for discussing the actual topic of this paper: the Holy Land eulogiae that St Sava sent to the abbot of Studenica. The “souvenirs” listed in the letter to abbot Spyridon — the little cross (крстыць), the little belt (помясьць), the little towel (оуброуцьць) and the little stone (камнцьць) — were objects very different from Sava’s precious acquisitions in nature and purpose, especially from the famed relics intended as instruments of representation, dynastic as well as ecclesiastical. These eulogiae belonged to the domain of private piety and their intended function was protective and prophylactic. The fact is telling in itself that the nouns denoting all four eulogiae are in diminutive form. This does not simply suggest their small size, but rather their distinctive, private nature. It is well known that wearing an “amulet” or an apotropaic object was a widespread custom in the Byzantine world, deeply rooted in the tradition of Greco-Roman magic. Carrying such objects next to the body was believed to protect against evil spirits, illness and all manner of perils.²³

Let us take a quick look at each of the four eulogiae. The little cross, which is at the top of the Serbian archbishop’s list, has since the earliest Christian times been the most commonly used “lucky charm”. The form and craftsmanship of this piece of “religious jewellery” ranged from the simplest shape and material to ornamented encolpia and sumptuous pectorals enclosing a relic. Research, archaeological most of all, has shown that crosses were frequently worn together with other protective “charms”, encolpia in particular. Very popular from the twelfth century on, and especially in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, were rectangular or round encolpia, in fact small icons worn next to the body. These favourite artefacts of private and popular piety were believed to protect their owners, inciting them to prayer at the same time.²⁴ It is exactly along these lines that Sava’s message

und im Abendland (Wiesbaden: Reichert, 2004), passim; E. Bozóky, *La politique des reliques de Constantin à Saint Louis* (Paris: Beauchesne, 2006), 120–169.

²³ G. Vikan, “Art, Medicine and Magic in Early Byzantium”, *DOP* 38 (1984), 67–74; E. Dautermann, H. P. Maguire & M. J. Duncan-Flowers, *Art and Holy Powers in the Early Christian House* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1989); *Byzantine Magic*, ed. H. Maguire (Washington D. C.: Dumbarton Oaks, 1995); B. Pitarakis, “Female Piety in Context: Understanding Developments in Private Devotional Practices”, in *Images of the Mother of God: Perceptions of the Theotokos in Byzantium*, ed. M. Vassilaki (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005); *The Occult Sciences in Byzantium*, eds. P. Magdalino & M. Mavroudi (Geneva: La Pomme d’or, 2006).

²⁴ B. Pitarakis, *Les croix-reliquaires pectorales byzantines en bronze* (Paris: Picard, 2006); B. Pitarakis, “Objects of Devotion and Protection”, in *Byzantine Christianity*, ed. D. Krueger (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2011), 164–181 (with a bibliography).

to Spyridon: “Pray with this cross, wear it always round your neck, even if you have another icon”, should be interpreted.²⁵ Sava does not fail to emphasize, and twice, that he has laid the little cross — and the little belt — on the Lord’s sepulchre. As we have already said, tactile contact with the holy was an essential element of pilgrimage, for such physical contact was believed to be the source of charismatic spiritual strength. The belief in its “transmittability” is convincingly illustrated by the eulogiae from illustrious holy places: the earth and dust from around the column of St Symeon Stylites, the oil from the lamps on the grave of St Menas, the dust-manna from the grave of St John at Ephesos, the *myron* from the grave of St Demetrios of Thessalonike etc.²⁶ Moreover, objects consecrated through contact with a highly revered ascetic, one enjoying the status of a holy man, were also considered to be eulogiae.²⁷

Yet, contact with the Lord’s sepulchre, the most highly venerated “contact relic” of Christendom, provided a eulogia with exceptional charisma and protective powers, and its owner with particular respect. The still living practice of laying various objects on the Lord’s tomb is referred to in many written sources. Thus, for example, Gregory of Tours (sixth century) notes down that the earth around the sepulchre is being sprinkled with water and shaped into small balls which then are distributed across Christendom.²⁸ One of the best known testimonies is left by an anonymous pilgrim from Piacenza (sixth century). He describes the custom of bringing earth into the edifice of the Lord’s sepulchre so that “those who enter can take it with them as a blessing”, and then describes the preparation of holy oil through contact with the relic of the True Cross.²⁹ Many later sources also refer to various objects consecrated through contact with the

²⁵ Sveti Sava, *Sabrani spisi*, 138.

²⁶ Maraval, *Lieux saints*, 237–241; Vikan, “Byzantine Pilgrim’s Art”, passim; J.-P. Sordini, “Nouvelles eulogies de Syméon”, in *Les saints et leur sanctuaire à Byzance: textes, images et monuments*, eds. C. Jolivet-Lévy, M. Kaplan & J.-P. Sordini (Paris: Publications de la Sorbonne, 1993), 25–33; see in *DOP* 56 (2002): P. Maraval, “The Earliest Phase of Christian Pilgrimage in the Near East (before the 7th century)”, 63–74; C. Foss, “Pilgrimage in Medieval Asia Minor”, 129–151; and C. Bakirtzis, “Pilgrimage to Thessalonike: The Tomb of St. Demetrios”, 175–192.

²⁷ This is documented in the case of St Lazaros of Mt. Galesion: the *eulogiae* received from his hands were considered to grant Lazaros’ blessing and protection, Cf. R. Greenfield, *The Life of Lazaros of Mt. Galesion: An Eleventh-Century Pillar Saint* (Washington: Dumbarton Oaks, 2000), 162–165, 203; R. Greenfield, “Drawn to the Blazing Beacon: Visitors and Pilgrims to the Living Holy Man and the Case of Lazaros of Mount Galesion”, *DOP* 56 (2002), 213–241.

²⁸ Translation in R. Van Dam, *Glory of Martyrs* (Liverpool University Press, 1988), 27.

²⁹ Wilkinson, *Jerusalem Pilgrims*, 83; Vikan, “Byzantine Pilgrim’s Art”, 234–235.

holiest of Jerusalem's relics, above all the oil from the many lamps that were burning there all the time, but also bands and pieces of textile of the exact size as the tomb on which they were laid.³⁰ Being able to cling closely to the holy, textiles were especially suitable eulogiae, and it is not surprising that they frequently figure as such in the sources.³¹ Sava's brief description does not give us a clue as to the material from which the "little belt" he laid on the Lord's sepulchre was made. Nonetheless, that it must have been an extraordinary gift follows clearly from his words to Spyridon, "put it on, let it always be around your hips".³² We have no particulars of the "little towel" either, or of the holy relic to the action of which it was exposed, but we have the important piece of information that Sava received it as a gift — which was part of the usual religious practice in the Holy Land, especially when distinguished persons were involved. Equally indicative is Sava's message that he is sending Spyridon the "little cloth" "as a blessing for the soul and body", which contains the literal translation of the word "eulogia" into Old Serbian (БЛАГОСЛОВЕЊЕ).

The last of the four "souvenirs" is quite interesting. Namely, the "little stone" was not a gift and it was not in contact with any particular holy relic. As Sava says himself, he "found" it — apparently somewhere along the way from one Jerusalem's holy place to another. So, in a sense, this eulogia bears the most personal imprint and communicates an innermost feeling. Incidentally, stones from the Holy Land, especially from Jerusalem, were the most usual but no less valued type of eulogiae. In this case, an "ordinary" piece of natural matter assumed "extraordinary" and supernatural qualities — not only by virtue of the immanent holiness of the locality whose integral part it was, but also by virtue of the way believers perceived it or, more precisely, by virtue of the immense religious fervour and veneration that they infused into it. The substance had a symbolic meaning and an emphatically biblical connotation as well. The rock on which Christ built the church (Mt 16:18) was a universally understood symbol of firm, unswerving faith and, also, a personification of the apostle Peter, while the "spiritual rock" from the First Epistle to the Corinthians (10:4) was a metaphor for Christ himself.³³

³⁰ Bagatti, "*Eulogie Palestinesi*", passim; Maraval, *Lieux saints*, 237–241.

³¹ Bagatti, "*Eulogie Palestinesi*", 131–132; Maraval, *Lieux saints*, 238; Frank, "Loca Sancta", 194; the relationship between textiles and relics has been discussed by M. Martiniani-Reber, "Le rôle des étoffes dans le culte des reliques au moyen âge", *Bulletin du CIETA* (1992), 53–58; C. Metzger, "Textiles and the cult of relics", *Antiquité Tardive* 12 (2004), 183–186.

³² Sveti Sava, *Sabrani spisi*, 138.

³³ On the stones from the Holy Land, see Bagatti, "*Eulogie Palestinesi*", passim; S. Lerou, "L'usage des reliques du Christ par les empereurs aux XI^e et XII^e siècle", in *Byzance et*

How popular and venerated this type of eulogiae was can be seen from the fact that some were enshrined in sumptuous reliquaries. Certainly the best known of these is the small wooden chest (made in Syria or Palestine in the sixth century) which enshrines stones collected from a number of sites associated with the central gospel events. Each of the stones bears a “tag” of origin, and has its visual equivalent in the scenes painted on the lid of the chest.³⁴ Small stone fragments from the Holy Land were sometimes kept in encolpia, and in staurothekai, together with particles of the True Cross.³⁵ Such reliquaries, needless to say, were rare and prestigious objects affordable only by members of social elites. Stones, on the other hand, were there for all to take, even the humblest pilgrim. Available in virtually limitless quantities, yet possessing extraordinary qualities, and easily transportable, these small stones were more than Holy Land memorabilia, they were considered a sort of amulets.³⁶ Sava’s message to Spyridon, that the stone he is sending him should serve “many a need” of his, and the advice to “carry it on him”, should be understood along these lines.³⁷ Sava’s gesture calls to mind associations that go far beyond his own time and its motivations. Understandably enough, close similarity between the medieval and contemporary liking for simple, “elementary” Holy Land memorabilia, especially for stone of diverse types, provenance and degrees of crafting, has already been noticed and commented.³⁸ Notwithstanding all differences, the basic impulse of the medieval pilgrim and the modern tourist has one thing in common: the

les reliques du Christ, eds. J. Durand & B. Flusin (Paris: Association des amis du Centre d’histoire et civilisation de Byzance, 2004), 177–182; J. Robinson, “From Altar to Amulet. Relics, Portability and Devotion”, in *Treasures of Heaven*, 111–116.

³⁴ G. Morello, “Il Tesoro del Sancta Sanctorum”, in *Il Palazzo Apostolico Lateranense*, ed. C. Pietrangeli (Firenze: Nardini, 1991), 90–105; for a selected bibliography, see catalogue entry no. 13 in *Treasures of Heaven*, 36.

³⁵ A. Frolov, *La relique de la Vraie Croix. Recherches sur le développement d’un culte* (Paris: Institut français d’Études byzantines, 1961), 260, 277, 315 and 347; see also Lerou, “L’usage des reliques du Christ”, 178; especially famous is the twelfth-century reliquary of Constantinopolitan provenance, today in the Louvre, which enshrines a stone from the Lord’s Sepulchre, Cf. J. Durand, “La Pierre de Sepulchre”, in *Le trésor de la Sainte-Chapelle*, 72–75.

³⁶ Wharton, *Selling Jerusalem*, 22–24; Robinson, “From Altar to Amulet”, 111–112.

³⁷ Sveti Sava, *Sabrani spisi*, 138.

³⁸ C. Coleman & J. Elsner, *Pilgrimage. Past and Present in the World Religions* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1995); Robinson, “From Altar to Amulet”, 111; characteristic in this sense is a rich internet offer of souvenirs, including crosses and other accessories made from the stone from the Holy Land. One of particularly characteristic ads is posted by *The Jerusalem Stone*: “Keep a piece of the Holy City with you ... And hold her spirit and her soul forever” (www.holylandstone).

urge to bring back home a tangible piece of sanctity as a lasting memento and an effective talisman.

At any rate, the intended purpose of Sava of Serbia's Holy Land eulogiae is noticeably different from his usual approach to the relics of Eastern origin. Namely, as we have seen, the approach of the first Serbian archbishop and main ideologist of the early Nemanjić period was markedly programmatic, the ultimate goal having been to secure the sacral legitimation of the state and dynasty. Judging by the available sources, his motives were much the same when it comes to important eulogiae. A good example in that sense is the *myron* flowing from the grave of his sainted father, St Simeon. The exudation of *myron* was the main manifestation of Simeon's miracle working power and therefore an essential element of the cult of the founder of the dynasty and first Serbian saint.³⁹ The glass vial containing St Simeon's *myron* that Sava, according to his biographers, used in some at once delicate and momentous political situations was a "secondary relic", more precisely, a eulogia.⁴⁰ Its prototype was the ampullae with the *myron* of St Demetrios — Simeon's role model as a saint in several essential aspects, especially that of a "fatherland lover", i.e. the saintly protector of the state.⁴¹ In this sense, the function of that eulogia certainly had an emphatically ideological dimension.

Unlike the examples cited above, the eulogiae that Sava sent to the abbot of Studenica were a personal gift intended for private piety. And his whole letter strikes the same tone — outspoken and chatty, heartfelt and warm. In this first example of the epistolary genre in old Serbian literature, Sava tells his "dearest beautiful son" and "sweet child" about the previous stages of his journey and his further plans, about his visits to holy places, but also about the illness that is affecting him and his retinue because the "laborious travelling" is taking its toll. Even from as far from home as he

³⁹ D. Popović, "O nastanku kulta svetog Simeona", *Pod okriljem svetosti*, 41–73 (with sources and bibliography).

⁴⁰ The glass vial (*staklenica*) containing the *myron* of St Simeon is mentioned by Domentijan, *Život*, 306–307; and Teodosije, *Žitija*, 15 and 159.

⁴¹ On the ampullae with the *myron* of St Demetrios of Thessalonike, see Ch. Bakirtzis, "Byzantine Ampullae from Thessaloniki", in *Blessings of Pilgrimage*, 140–149; Bakirtzis, *Pilgrimage to Thessalonike*, 175–192. On the cult of St Demetrios of Thessalonike, see V. Tapkova-Zaimova, "Le culte de saint Démétrius à Byzance et aux Balkans", *Miscellanea Bulgarica* 5 (1987), 139–146; P. Lemerle, *Les plus anciens recueils des miracles de saint Démétrius et de la pénétration des Slaves dans les Balkans I–II* (Paris 1979); D. Obolensky, "The cult of St Demetrius of Thessaloniki in the History of Byzantine-Slav relations", *Byzantium and the Slavs* (Crestwood NY: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1994), 280–300; E. Russel, *St Demetrius of Thessalonica. Cult and Devotion in the Middle Ages* (Bern 2010).

is, Sava expresses a genuine fatherly concern for Spyridon himself and for the whole monastic community of Studenica.⁴² The emotions emanating from the letter and the selection of Holy Land memorabilia offer a singular glimpse of the “human side” of a man who, in his times, was the holder of highest titles and the embodiment of most important institutions.

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27-57(569.44):929Sava Nemanjić

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⁴² For a brief commentary on this letter see L. Mirković in *Spisi svetoga Save i Stevana Prvoženčanoga* (Belgrade 1939), 20; Bogdanović in *Sveti Sava, Sabrani spisi*, 19; Jovanović, ed., *Sveta zemlja*, 10.

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