

Marija Lakić

Russian and Serbian Sacral Visual Culture in the 19th Century: Russian Donations and the Furnishing of the Orthodox Cathedral in Sarajevo

Orthodox Cathedral in Sarajevo

The Cathedral Church of the Nativity of the Theotokos, situated in the central district of Sarajevo, on the right bank of the Miljacka River, is the city's second Orthodox ecclesiastical structure. Its conception arose in the latter half of the 19th century. The acquisition of land, a primary preparatory step for the construction, extended until 1861.¹ Contemporary Sarajevan authorities, including the vizier, readily granted permission for the church's construction. Concurrently, a request for authorization and financial support was dispatched to Constantinople. Three months later, Sultan Abdulaziz issued a firman and allocated funds for the project.² Conflicting accounts exist regarding the commencement of construction – Hadži Makso Despić, a prominent Sarajevan merchant and member of the church board, attested to the cornerstone being laid on Saint Elijah's Day, in 1862;³ and Metropolitan Sava Kosanović cites 13 June 1863 as the date construction began.⁴ Although the church's structure was completed by 1868, the interior finishing required additional time. Consecration occurred on Saint Elijah's Day in 1872, a date corroborated by both Hadži Makso and Metropolitan Sava.⁵ The construction of the church was undertaken by the renowned

1 H. M. Despić, *Zapisi starog Sarajlije*, edited by: Dragana Tomašević, Sarajevo 2019, p. 57.

2 Ibid, p. 58; S. Kosanović, *Nova srpsko-pravoslavna crkva u Sarajevu*, Bosanska Vila, year 3, No. 17, Sarajevo, 1888, pp. 270-271, reprinted in: *Mitropolit Sava Kosanović, Krstom i Perom, sabrani spisi*, edited by: Episkop budimljansko-nikšički Joanikije (Mićović), V. Maksimović, N. Marojević, B. Šijaković, Nikšić-Beograd 2019, pp. 184-187.

3 H. M. Despić, op. cit. p. 58.

4 S. Kosanović, *Nova srpsko-pravoslavna crkva u Sarajevu*, p. 271.

5 H. M. Despić, op. cit. p. 57; S. Kosanović, op. cit. p. 271.



Fig. 1
Cathedral Church in Sarajevo

builder Andreja Damjanov of Veles.⁶ Prince Mihailo contributed 500 sequins to the construction effort.⁷ The church's construction also benefited from the patronage of merchants across a wide geographical range, including Belgrade, Dubrovnik, Vienna, and Trieste. The remaining funds were provided by the Old Church in Sarajevo and local merchants.⁸

The church is a monumental five-domed edifice, distinguished by a soaring bell tower on its western façade culminating in a gilded cross, surmounting a gilded orb, both donated by affluent women of Sarajevo.⁹ The addition of the bell tower rendered the church taller than nearly all of Sarajevo's minarets at that time.¹⁰ Considered one of the largest Orthodox churches in the Balkans upon its completion, the Sarajevo Orthodox Cathedral was consecrated on Saint Elijah's Day in

6 A. Kadijević, *Jedan vek traženja nacionalnog stila u srpskoj arhitekturi: sredina XIX – sredina XX veka*, Beograd 2007, pp. 47-48.

7 S. Kosanović, op. cit., p. 271.

8 Ibid.

9 S. Kosanović, op. cit., p. 271.

10 Ibid.

1872, by Metropolitan Pajsije. The event, as recounted by Sava Kosanović, drew a vast crowd, including seventy-six priests, six consuls (notably Béni Kállay), and upwards of 10,000 believers.¹¹ The consecration also served as the occasion for the ordination of Sava Kosanović to the rank of archimandrite, conferred by Metropolitan Pajsije of the Dabar-Bosnia Metropolitanate, who marked the event with a suitably ceremonial address.¹²

The Iconostasis of the Orthodox Cathedral in Sarajevo – Donation of Hegumen Ignatius and the Coastal Monastery of Saint Sergius

Within the expansive interior of the cathedral, the monumental iconostasis commands immediate attention. This imposing structure, donated in its entirety by Russia, owes its realization primarily to the efforts of Hegumen Ignatius of the Coastal Monastery of St. Sergius, situated near present-day Saint Petersburg. The primary source for information regarding the creation of the iconostasis and its reception in Sarajevo is the scholarly work of Priest Vladimir Kotlyarov (1929–2022), who later ascended to the position of Metropolitan of St. Petersburg and Ladoga (1995–2014).¹³ Defended in 1958 at the Leningrad Theological Academy, Kotlyarov's paper offers valuable insights into the history of the Coastal Monastery of St. Sergius and notably examines the monastery's philanthropic activities, including the commission and donation of the iconostasis for the Sarajevo Cathedral. According to Kotlyarov, the philanthropic endeavors of the Coastal Monastery of St. Sergius had garnered international renown by the 1870s. This period coincided with the furnishing of the interior of the Sarajevo Cathedral, a process that involved the participation of the Russian Consulate in Bosnia. Upon learning of the church's construction, Hegumen Ignatius resolved to provide the iconostasis. Approximately seventy icons were painted expressly for this purpose, with the Hegumen himself participating alongside the monastery's icon painters.¹⁴ A letter sent by Hegumen Ignatius to Sarajevo in the spring of 1871, accompanying five cases containing seventy-three icons for the iconostasis, a throne cross, and liturgical banners,¹⁵ provides further details regarding the iconostasis's transfer and the reactions it elicited. This letter, imbued with expressions of brotherly love, respect, and gratitude for the opportunity to contribute to the church's construction, offers a valuable insight into the motivations behind the donation. Below is the translation of the letter from the Russian language:

11 Ibid.

12 Ibid, p. 270.

13 V. Kotlyarov, *Troitse-Sergieva pustyn' Petrogradskoy yeparkhii. (Istoricheskiy ocherk)*, in: *Mitropolit Sankt-Peterburgskiy i Ladozhskiy Vladimir, Zhizn' i trudy (k 70-letiyu so dnya rozhdeniya)*, Sankt-Peterburg 1999, pp. 168–379.

14 V. Kotlyarov, *op. cit.*, pp. 288–289.

15 Ibid, p. 289.



Fig. 2
Iconostasis, Thrones, and Pulpit: Interior of the Cathedral Church in Sarajevo

„My dear brothers in Christ,

Your letters, overflowing with brotherly affection, have brought me immense joy. I share your elation and consider myself truly blessed to partake in this sacred celebration alongside you.

My heart has always been drawn to the East and the fate of our Slavic brethren. This lifelong passion compels me to support your noble endeavour, rendering any expression of gratitude unnecessary. Words cannot describe the profound satisfaction I feel in bridging the distance that separates us.

In spirit, I join you in this momentous occasion, the consecration of your holy temple. Though family obligations prevent me from being present in person, I eagerly offer this written greeting.

It was my fervent hope that others in Russia might also contribute to the adornment of your church. To that end, I conveyed this desire to the children of our Tsar, who graciously donated icons for this purpose. By the grace of God, all is now complete. I am sending seventy-three icons, a throne cross, and liturgical banners – consider them a humble gift, requiring no further payment.

I humbly request your prayers and ask that you remember me in your hearts. With deepest affection and respect, I remain your devoted servant and intercessor before God.”¹⁶

The letter written by Father Ignatius reveals much about his character. His words indicate that he was personally involved in icon painting and that the monastery had a dedicated workshop for this purpose. This workshop eventually expanded its activities to include donating icons to Orthodox populations throughout the Balkans. Hadži Makso Despić, a prominent Sarajevan merchant, when speaking about the furnishing of the Sarajevo Cathedral, recounts that the Coastal Monastery of St. Sergius near St. Petersburg also provided icons for a church in Mostar.¹⁷ This underscores the significant support provided by the Russian monastery to Bosnia. While Vladimir Kotlyarov’s paper primarily focuses on the archimandrite’s role in painting the icons, other sources identify Aleksandar Kolchin as another individual involved in the project.¹⁸ Xenia Melchakova’s research in the Foreign Policy Archive of the Russian Empire reveals that Aleksandar Kolchin painted most of the icons for the iconostasis. This finding is corroborated by an 1876 letter from Archimandrite Ignatius to the Serbian Metropolitan, which confirms Kolchin’s authorship of the iconostasis during his residence at the monastery.¹⁹ This likely pertains to the iconostasis created for the mobile military tent-church dedicated to Alexander Nevsky, used by the Russian Volunteer Army in the battlefield, during the Serbo-Ottoman War. This suggests that Kolchin’s work served the spiritual needs of

16 The letter of Archimandrite Ignatius, in addition to the previously mentioned paper by V. Kotlyarov (p. 289), was also published in the seventh volume of the Collected Works of Saint Ignatius Bryanchaninov: *Polnoe sobranie tvorenij Svyatitelya Ignatiya Bryanchaninova*, tom VII, Moskva 2006, pp. 404–405, also in: *Ty moy Bog, ya Tvoy rab... Zhizneopisanie nastoyatelya Troitse-Sergievoy pustyni Arkhimandrita Ignatiya (Malysheva)*, Sankt-Peterburg 2007, pp. 85–86.

17 H. M. Despić, op. cit., p. 59.

18 K. V. Melchakova, „Voin“ na dukhovnom poprishche. Saraevskiy arkhimandrit Savva Kosanovich i ego poyezdka v Rossiyu v 1872–1874 gg, in: *Slavyane i Rossiya: problemy voyny i mira na Balkanakh XVIII–XXI vv*, Moskva 2017, p. 75.

19 *Ty moy Bog, ya Tvoy rab...* pp. 89–90.

soldiers on the battlefield.²⁰ Further supporting Kolchin's association with the monastery, Volume Two of *Peterburg Necropolis* records his burial in 1885 at the cemetery of the Coastal Monastery of St. Sergius.²¹ Father Ignatius's letter reveals further noteworthy details, including the involvement of the children of Tsar Alexander II in funding the creation of the iconostasis. His insistence on refusing any financial compensation for this substantial donation underscores his dedication to the project. This prompts a closer examination of Hegumen Ignatius's life and motivations.

Archimandrite Ignatius Malyshev (1811–1897), affectionately known as “Little One” (*Маленький*) by his fellow monks, the spiritual disciple and close confidant of Saint Ignatius Bryanchaninov, significantly shaped the history of the Coastal Monastery of St. Sergius near St. Petersburg. He served as the monastery's hegumen from 1857 to 1886, succeeding Bryanchaninov himself. Recognizing Malyshev's artistic talent in his youth, Ignatius Bryanchaninov facilitated his training at the Petersburg Academy of Arts. Malyshev honed his skills under the tutelage of prominent Russian painters like Mikhail Ivanovich Scotti and Karl Bryullov. Upon graduating, he dedicated his artistic abilities to creating icons for his monastery. Malyshev personally painted nearly all three tiers of the iconostasis for the Cathedral of the Holy Trinity in Mostar, in addition to seventy icons for the iconostasis of the Church of the Ascension of Christ. Tragically, these works were destroyed during the communist era.²² The numerous Serbs who sought hospitality and guidance at the Coastal Monastery of St. Sergius are a testament to Archimandrite Ignatius's affection for their nation. He extended his support to them in various ways, including providing artistic training to a young man from Sarajevo who later returned home to share his newfound skills.²³ Archimandrite Sava Kosanović, who later attained the rank of Metropolitan, also sojourned at the monastery as an emissary from Sarajevo. As a token of his appreciation, he gifted the monastery a silver candle holder crafted in a local Sarajevo workshop.²⁴ Hegumen Ignatius left an indelible mark on the Coastal Monastery of St. Sergius, where he ultimately found his final resting place. In his final moments, he received a visit from Saint John of Kronstadt, who offered him the prayer of absolution from the Canon for the Parting of the Soul from the Body. Following his death in 1897, Ignatius Malyshev was laid to rest in the Church of the Resurrection of Christ.²⁵

Kotlyarov's paper also reveals that Consul Alexey Kudryavtsev, writing from the Russian Consulate in Sarajevo, responded to Father Ignatius's letter on 12 May 1871. The content of this reply follows below:

20 J. Mežinski Milovanović, *Hram Svetog Aleksandra Nevskog u Beogradu, spomenica povodom stogodišnjice postojanja hrama 1912-2012*, Belgrade 2013, pp. 24-32.

21 Velikiy Knyaz' Nikolay Mikhaylovich, *Peterburgskiy nekropol', tom vtoroy (D-L)*, Sankt-Peterburg 1912, p. 444.

22 About Ignatius Malyshev: V. Kotlyarov, op. cit., pp. 278-301.

23 *Ty moy Bog, ya Tvoy rab...* p. 87.

24 Ibid.

25 V. Kotlyarov, op. cit., pp. 298-299.

“Reverend and deeply respected Father Archimandrite,

I am writing to inform you of the safe arrival in Sarajevo of the five crates containing the icons, along with your heartfelt letter to the Orthodox community. Upon reading and translating your message, our brothers in faith were overcome with profound gratitude. Your generous donation of this magnificent church, unparalleled in the Austrian and Ottoman Empires, and even in the princedoms of Romania and Serbia, has elicited tears of joy – a testament to the admiration and appreciation felt for your remarkable contribution. This outpouring of emotion serves as a powerful reminder of the spiritual and moral bonds that unite the northern, western, and southern Slavic people across nations.

The icons themselves have made a profound impression on the faithful. The sacred images of saints and scenes from the life of the Savior have deeply moved the Bosnian Orthodox community, inspiring piety and religious contemplation.

Currently, the icons remain securely housed within the Consulate. I have explained to the community that their installation must await the thorough preparation and cleaning of the church.

The Orthodox community and its municipality have chosen to defer sending a formal letter of gratitude at this time. They eagerly anticipate your presence at the temple’s consecration ceremony in three months, where they plan to personally present you with a signed testimonial expressing their collective appreciation.

It would be remiss of me not to convey my deepest gratitude for your invaluable contribution to the glory of Orthodoxy in the East, and for upholding the name and honour of Russia. I have already communicated to the Ministry, advocating for official recognition of your merits and efforts.

Furthermore, I have previously written to General-Adjutant Ignatijev, our Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary Ambassador to Constantinople, and the Director of the Asian Department, urging them to bring your extraordinary generosity to the attention of the government. Your unwavering dedication to the Church and Orthodoxy in the East has significantly advanced our mission in the Slavic realm, culminating in this magnificent monument that elevates the stature of Russia.

With a request for your blessing and prayers, I humbly assure you of my profound respect and unwavering loyalty.

A. Kudryavtsev”²⁶

Consul Kudryavtsev’s letter²⁷ vividly illustrates the profound impact of the Russian donation on the Orthodox community in Sarajevo. Furthermore, the Consul identifies Hegumen Ignatius as the driving force behind the iconostasis donation, emphasizing its uniqueness within the Balkan Orthodox context. The depth of gratitude and elation experienced by the Orthodox community in Sarajevo is palpable in their tearful response and the reported surge of piety and religious contemplation. Recognizing the significance of this contribution, Consul Kudryavtsev felt compelled to advocate for proper acknowledgement of the efforts of Father Ignatius in promoting Russia’s

26 V. Kotlyarov, op.cit., pp. 289-291.

27 About the activities of Consul Kudryavtsev: I. Tepić, *Bosna i Hercegovina u ruskim izvorima 1856-1878*, Sarajevo 1988, pp. 41-48.

standing in the Balkans and fostering closer ties between the two Orthodox nations. True to his word, he promptly dispatched a letter to Peter Nikolayevich Stremoukhov,²⁸ Director of the Asian Department, on that same day:

„Your Excellency, most gracious Lord Peter Nikolayevich,

Your Excellency has always expressed gratitude and strived with deep involvement and concern to help our brethren in faith in Bosnia, especially when the assistance concerned moral and spiritual growth.

Therefore, I dare hope that your excellence will be glad to receive with genuine interest the report that the adornment of the grand, five-domed cathedral in Sarajevo is nearing completion, owing in large part to your esteemed patronage and the generosity of the Russian community, particularly Archimandrite Ignatius, superior of the Coastal Monastery of St. Sergius.

The Russian artisans commissioned to install and gild the iconostasis who arrived here last year have completed their work two months ahead of schedule. Their exceptional craftsmanship, worthy of admiration from Russians everywhere and all connoisseurs of art, has led to a further commission for the carving and gilding of the pulpit and archiepiscopal throne. Furthermore, the Consulate recently received seventy-three magnificent icons from Archimandrite Ignatius. These icons, many life-sized, were painted over two and a half years under his supervision at the Coastal Monastery of St. Sergius as a gift for the cathedral's iconostasis. They will adorn the primary tier, complementing other generous contributions. They were accompanied by a letter from the superior of the Coastal Monastery of St. Sergius to the Orthodox Municipality. A copy of this letter, which elicited profound gratitude and goodwill towards Archimandrite Ignatius and all Russians upon its translation, is enclosed for your perusal.

The icons themselves have deeply moved our Bosnian brethren in faith. The images of the saints and depictions from the life of the Saviour have inspired piety and religious contemplation among them.

The icons are currently being safeguarded at the Consulate, awaiting the final cleaning and preparation of the church for their installation.

It is no exaggeration to say that this monumental Orthodox temple is unparalleled within the Austrian and Ottoman Empires, and even the Principedom of Serbia. For the people of Bosnia, both Orthodox and lay, this cathedral stands as a supreme artistic achievement, eternally preserving the name and honour of Russia. Our involvement in this project has generated immense goodwill among all confessions, amplifying admiration for the Russian community.

Therefore, I feel duty-bound to advocate before you for the highest recognition of Archimandrite Ignatius's merits and efforts. Through his diligent mediation and considerable fundraising – the icons

28 The letter published by V. Kotlaryov mistakenly claims that Kudryavtsev was writing to Sukhorukov. About Stremoukhov and the connections of the Asian Department with the Serbian people, lot can be discerned from the PhD thesis: Jovana Blažić Pejić, *Moskovski slovenski komitet i Srpsko pitanje (1858–1875)*, defended in 2021 at the Faculty of Philosophy in Belgrade.

alone exceed 7,000 Rubles in value, and he secured the services of a renowned painter and skilled craftsmen who accepted not more than half the cost of the iconostasis – the cathedral’s interior now stands as a testament to Russian benevolence and solidarity with our Bosnian brethren for generations to come.

*By bestowing a decoration upon Archimandrite Ignatius for his achievements, accompanied by an official expression of gratitude from our Ministry, we would duly honour a man whose devotion to the Church and Orthodoxy in the East has significantly advanced our mission in the Slavic world. He has erected a monument worthy of Russia’s name and stature.”*²⁹

This final surviving letter sheds further light on the creation and donation of the iconostasis, revealing the likely financial involvement of the Asian Department in the project of crafting and furnishing the interior of the Sarajevo Orthodox Cathedral, although the precise nature of their contribution remains unclear. This suggests a broader pattern of support for the Serbian Orthodox community in Sarajevo by the Asian Department. This letter provides valuable insights into the construction of the iconostasis, revealing that Russian craftsmen were on-site in Sarajevo in 1870, completing their work two months ahead of schedule. Their exceptional skill in crafting the iconostasis prompted Kudryavtsev to declare the iconostasis a source of pride for both Russians and art enthusiasts. Further details about the craftsmen involved in the creation of the iconostasis emerge from other sources, such as the account of Hadži Makso Despić mentioning twelve carpenters from St. Petersburg who *crafted the door, iconostasis, tables, bishop’s chair, and all other woodwork*. He further notes that while the municipality covered the cost of materials, Consul Kudryavtsev personally financed the craftsmen’s labour. Upon completion of the work, Hadži Makso recounts the arrival of six master goldsmiths who brought gold and spent six months gilding the iconostasis. Only then, he claims, did the principal painter (likely Alexander Kolchin) arrive from St. Petersburg to take measurements for the icons.³⁰ Metropolitan Sava Kosanović’s text provides new details about the iconostasis project, specifically identifying the merchant who oversaw its construction. Metropolitan Sava Kosanović succinctly states: *The temple was built and gilded by Russian craftsmen, for whom the municipality paid 2,000 sequins to entrepreneur Ivanov.*³¹ Xenia Mel’chakova, drawing on documents from the Foreign Policy Archive of Russia, provides further confirmation and details regarding the merchant’s involvement. She identifies the merchant from St. Petersburg as Efim Ivanov, who dispatched five craftsmen to Sarajevo for the installation and gilding of the iconostasis.³² These same craftsmen also constructed the wooden pulpit and bishop’s throne, further contributing to the overall grandeur and visual impact of the cathedral’s interior.

Kudryavtsev asserts that the Sarajevo cathedral’s magnificence is unmatched by any other Orthodox church in the Ottoman or Austrian empires, or even the Principedom of Serbia. In light

29 V. Kotlyarov, op. cit., pp. 291-293.

30 H. M. Despić, op. cit., pp. 58-59.

31 S. Kosanović, op.cit., pp. 270-271.

32 K. V. Mel’chakova, op. cit., p. 75.

of Hegumen Ignatius's crucial role in the cathedral's interior decoration, the Russian consul in Sarajevo appealed to Stremoukhov to ensure the Hegumen received due recognition for his contributions. Kotlyarov's paper confirms the success of Consul Kudryavtsev's efforts. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs, recognizing the philanthropic work of Father Ignatius, supported the decision to award him the second-class Order of Prince Danilo I. This honour, bestowed by the Montenegrin Prince Nikola, was reportedly granted "unanimously."³³

Arrangement of the Iconostasis

The monumental Sarajevo iconostasis exemplifies the well-developed altar screens characteristic of the neoclassical style. Its structure adheres to the traditional horizontal tripartite division established in the 16th and 17th centuries. However, it also incorporates a pronounced verticality reminiscent of Baroque altarpieces, a feature that continued to influence iconostasis design in the 19th century.³⁴

The iconostasis itself features sixty-nine icons mounted on its gilded wooden framework. The conservation efforts in early 2022 undertaken on the iconostasis focused on restoring the gilding, whereas the icons, executed in oil on canvas, were deemed in good condition.

The iconostasis construction is characterized by its understated elegance. The minimal ornamentation serves primarily to delineate the planes showcasing the icons. These classical architectural elements carry symbolic significance, alluding to the Heavenly Jerusalem and its earthly counterpart, the Temple of Solomon.³⁵ As anticipated, given their liturgical significance and symbolic representation of the Gates of Heaven, the Royal Doors received exceptional attention in their design and execution.³⁶ Above the Royal Doors, six arches, each adorned with a carved bas-relief cross, crown the structure. A helical column, culminating in an ornate pedestal supporting a prominent cross, separates the panels depicting Archangel Gabriel and the Mother of God.

Flanking the Royal Doors on each side, twelve icons of individual saints—six on either side—comprise the throne row. All are depicted standing except for Christ and the Mother of God, who are enthroned. While the saints are framed by simple rectangles, the icons of Christ and the Mother of God are distinguished by more prominent arched frames. The icons on the side doors are integrated into the throne row with no visual separation from the other icons. The second tier of the iconostasis features two horizontal rows. The first comprises fifteen icons depicting the feasts of Christ and the Theotokos—five scenes on either side. In the same row, in the central panel above the Royal Doors, the Last Supper is portrayed with two standing figures of Holy Fathers on each

33 V. Kotlyarov, *op. cit.*, p. 293.

34 Cf.: M. Timotijević, *Crkva Svetog Georgija u Temišvaru*, Novi Sad 1996, p. 98.

35 *Ibid.*, pp. 98-99.

36 Cf.: N. Makuljević, *Liturgija, simbolika i priložništvo: ikonostas crkve Svete Trojice u Vranju*, in: *Saborni hram Svete Trojice u Vranju 1858 – 2008*, edited by: Nenad Makuljević, Vranje 2008, pp. 48-49.

side. The uppermost row presents pairs of Old Testament prophets and apostles, surmounted by medallions containing busts of various saints. This vertical axis, originating at the lowermost zone of the Royal Doors, ascends through the depiction of the Last Supper and culminates in a prominent Resurrection scene, establishing it as the visual focal point of the entire iconostasis. This representation is framed on each side with the scenes of Transfiguration and Resurrection, and its upper portion terminates in a semi-circular shape, crowned with seven medallions depicting busts of winged angels. As is customary, the apex of the iconostasis features a gilded cross resting on a spherical pedestal. This detailed description of the icons on the iconostasis of the Sarajevo Orthodox Cathedral comes from the writings of Metropolitan Sava Kosanović:

“The arrangement of the temple is truly remarkable, culminating in a circular motif beneath the cross at its apex. Above the Royal Doors, the icon of the Last Supper is surmounted by depictions of the Transfiguration and Ascension. Between these scenes, a magnificent icon of Christ’s Resurrection extends upwards, showcasing a skilfully rendered sunrise with the angel of light rolling away the stone from the tomb. This central icon is encircled by seven cherubs and seraphs within round medallions, all oriented towards Christ. Below, on both sides of the temple, the first row features various saints, including those of Greek and Slavic origin, also depicted within round frames. The second row, extending parallel from the icons of the Transfiguration and Ascension, presents saints and apostles holding books, all facing the central Resurrection icon. The third row portrays other feasts of Christ, while the lowest tier comprises the despotic icons, including Saint Sava and Saint Arsenius of Serbia. Angels of equal size adorn both doors.”³⁷

Consul Alexey Kudryavtsev, in contrast, offers the following description of the iconostasis:

“The entire iconostasis, including the throne and pulpit, is resplendent in pure gold leaf. Among the icons, all executed by skilled artists, several stand out for their exceptional quality: those depicting Saint Alexander Nevsky, the Serbian enlighteners Saint Sava and Saint Arsenius, the Resurrection of Christ, and the Transfiguration.”³⁸

Analysis of the Iconography and Arrangement of Icons on the Iconostasis

Throne Icons

In the throne tier of the iconostasis, from north to south, the following saints are represented: Holy Martyr Daria, Holy Emperor Constantine, and on the northern doors, Archangel Gabriel, Saint Arsenius of Serbia, Saint Nicholas the Wonderworker, and the Mother of God with Christ. The Royal Doors feature depictions of the Annunciation. Continuing southward, the sequence includes icons of Christ, Saint Ignatius Theophorus, and Saint Sava of Serbia. The southern doors display Archangel Michael, Saint Alexander Nevsky, and Saint Eugene, Bishop of Cherson.

37 S. Kosanović, op. cit., pp. 270-271.

38 K. V. Melchakova, op.cit., p. 76.



Fig. 3
Icon of Saint Arsenije of Serbia



Fig. 4
Icon of Saint Nicholas

imperial garb, consisting of a blue undergarment, a gold-coloured *sakkos* with a jewelled *maniakis* collar and a *loros* adorned with precious stones, and a red cape. His right hand is raised in blessing to the height of his shoulders, while his left, resting on a green pillow, holds a large cross richly embellished with colourful gems. He wears an opulent closed golden crown with a red foundation, decorated with precious stones and topped with an ornate cross. Holy Emperor Constantine is depicted in an interior setting with city walls visible through an opening.

The northern side doors feature the painted figure of Archangel Gabriel (СВ. АРХАНГЕЛЪ ГАВРИИЛЪ.). The Divine Herald is depicted with a youthful, beardless face and brown hair cascading over his shoulders. His attire consists of a long white garment embellished with precious stones around the neck and sleeves, covered by a flowing blue cloak. A horologion hangs over his right shoulder, held in his left hand, while his right hand grasps a lily. Archangel Gabriel is portrayed with white wings, his feet resting upon a cloud. The neutral background is punctuated by clouds, alluding to the celestial realm he inhabits. The area surrounding his head is bathed in yellow, symbolizing divine light.

Saint Arsenius of Serbia (СТЫЙ АРСЕНІЙ АРХ: СЕРБСКІЙ) is depicted as an elderly man with a long, flowing grey beard, vested in the ornate robes of an archiereus. He wears a light red cloak fastened below the knees with clasps, and a long, dark green epitrachelion adorned with golden crosses. His golden mitre is intricately detailed. With his right hand raised in blessing, he holds a golden staff in his left.

The icon of Holy Martyr Daria (С. МУЧЕНИЦА ДАРІА.), an early Christian saint, portrays her as a young woman with brown hair partially visible beneath a white veil. She is clad in a long ochre dress and a red cloak, holding a reed-like plant in her right hand and a cross with a detailed depiction of the crucified Christ against her chest with her left hand. The neutral background accentuates the saint's figure, while a thin circular line delineates her nimbus. This minimalist approach to the background and nimbus is consistent throughout most of the throne row icons.

The icon of Holy Emperor Constantine (С. РАВНОПОСТОЛЬНЫЙ ЦАРЬ КОНСТАНТИНЪ.) portrays him as a youthful sovereign with a short brown beard and hair. He is attired in ornate



Fig. 5
Despotic Icons of the Virgin, Christ, and the Annunciation on the Royal Door

Saint Nicholas (С: Николѣй Чудотворецъ.), in keeping with traditional iconography, is portrayed as an elderly man with a short grey beard and hair. He is vested as an archiereus, with a dark blue undergarment, a red cloak, and a green omophorion embellished with golden crosses. The epitachelion is visible beneath. His right hand is raised in blessing, while his left hand holds a closed Gospel book.

A mandatory element of every iconostasis, the icon of the Mother of God occupies the position north of the royal gate. The Mother of God (МР. Фѵ.) is depicted seated on an elaborately adorned throne, cradling the infant Christ in her lap. She is clad in a dark blue gown beneath a red maphorion with golden embroidery along its edges. The Mother of God is holding her Son securely in her arms. The Christ Infant is wearing a white robe covered by a light purple himation. He is holding a folded scroll in his left hand and raising his right hand in blessing. The edges of the throne of the Mother of God are ornamented with Russian-style domes topped with crosses. A star-shaped mandorla encircles the Theotokos, echoing the form of her nimbus. Christ's nimbus, filled with gold, contains a cross delineated by subtle blue lines and inscribed with the letters Θ Ω Π .

The Royal Doors, as is customary, depict the Annunciation. The left wing portrays the winged Archangel Gabriel kneeling, his right index finger pointing upwards towards the dove of the Holy Spirit in the upper portion of the scene. In his left hand, he holds a blossoming lily, symbolizing the Mother of God's purity and immaculate conception. The floor line suggests an interior setting, while the upper half of the composition is dominated by yellow, representing divine light. On the right wing, the Mother of God kneels with hands clasped against her chest, her gaze direct-



Fig. 6
Icon of Saint Sava of Serbia

of Saint Nicholas: a red robe over a brown undergarment, and a dark green omophorion with a gold-embroidered cross and golden edges. The epitachelion is visible beneath. He holds a chained Gospel book with both hands.

The depiction of Saint Sava of Serbia (СЪВЪ СЪВЪВЪ АРХ: СЕРВСКЪЙ.) bears a striking resemblance to that of Saint Arsenius. He too is portrayed with a long, flowing grey beard and vested in nearly identical archiereus robes, including the light red cloak fastened in the same manner as the cloak of Saint Arsenius. His right hand is raised in blessing, while his left hand grasps an archiereus staff with the distinctive double-serpent finial. Atop his head rests an ornately decorated golden mitre. However, instead of the customary epitachelion, Saint Sava's chest is adorned with a portion of the Great Schema vestment, dark red in colour and embellished with three Orthodox crosses and golden cherubs. This unusual combination of monastic and archiereus attire may allude to Saint Sava's ascetic nature and monastic origins.

The southern door features the winged Archangel Michael (С. АРХАНГЕЛЪ МИХАИЛЪ.), depicted as a beardless young man with short brown hair and a golden tiara adorned with a cross. He is clad

ed downwards. Before her stands a wooden pedestal with an open Bible, indicating that she was engaged in reading when the angel appeared.

The south, or right, side of the iconostasis begins with the depiction of Christ (ИИС. ХС.). Like the Mother of God opposite him, he is seated on a dark red pillow upon a throne identical to hers. His image conforms to traditional iconography, with long brown hair and beard. He is garbed in a red chiton and a blue himation. Christ's right hand is raised in blessing, while his left hand supports an open Gospel book displaying verses from John (14:1-6): ДА НЕ СМЪЩАЕТСА СЕРДЦЕ ВАШЕ: ВЪРВУЙТЕ ВЪ БГА, ВЪ МА ВЪРВУЙТЕ. ВЪ ДОМУ ОЦА МОЕГО ОКНТЕЛИ МНОГИ СУТЬ: АЩЕ ЛИ ЖЕ НИ, РЕКАЪ БЫХЪ ВАМЪ. НАУ ОУГОТОВАТИ МЪСТО ВАМЪ. И АЩЕ ОУГОТОВАЮ МЪСТО ВАМЪ, ПАКИ ПРІИДУ И ПОИДУ ВЫ КЪ СЕБЪ: ДА НАДЪЖЕ ЕСМЪ АЗЪ, И ВЫ ВЪДЕТЕ. И АМОЖЕ АЗЪ НАУ, ВЪСТЕ, И ПЪТЬ ВЪСТЕ. ГЛАГОЛА ЕМУ ФОМА: ГДИ, НЕ ВЪМЫ КАКО ИДЕШИ: И КАКОВО МОЖЕМЪ ПУТЬ ВЪДЪТИ. ГЛАГОЛА ЕМУ ИИСУСЪ: АЗЪ ЕСМЪ ПУТЬ И ИСТИНА И ЖИВОТ. Both his mandorla and the one in the despotic icon of the Mother of God are the same. The arms of the cross within his nimbus, containing the letters O W H, are emphasized with a brighter yellow.

Adjacent to the icon of Christ stands the image of Saint Ignatius Theophorus (С. СВЪЩЕННОМЪЩЕННИКЪ: ИГНАТИЙ БОГОНОСЕЦЪ.). The saint is depicted as an elderly man with sunken cheeks, grey hair, and a long grey beard. His attire resembles that

in a long white garment overlaid with a red tunic edged in golden embroidery, the centre bearing a prominent embroidered golden cross. His feet are shod in sandals. In his right hand, Archangel Michael brandishes a sword, its tip engulfed in flames, while his left hand holds a shield.

The icon of Saint Alexander Nevsky (С. БЛАГОБЪР. КНАЗЪ АЛЕКСАНДРЪ НЕВСКІЙ.) portrays him with a short brown beard and hair, attired in a short blue tunic over silver armour. A red mantle with ermine trim drapes over his shoulders, and he wears red boots. His right hand rests on his chest, while his left hand hangs free. To his left stands a pedestal bearing the opulent crown of the Great Prince. The presence of the pedestal suggests an interior setting, while the remaining background is, characteristically, neutral.

The final icon in the throne tier depicts Saint Eugene, Bishop of Cherson (С. СВЯЩ. МУЖЕ ЕУГЕНІЙ ЕПИСКОПЪ ХЕРСОНСКІЙ.). He is portrayed as an elderly man with grey hair and beard, vested in the robes of an archiereus. He wears a red undergarment beneath a green cloak, and a red omophorion adorned with blue crosses. His right hand is raised in blessing, while his left hand holds a closed, chained Gospel book.

An examination of the saints depicted in the throne row reveals a discernible pattern in their selection and arrangement. Christ and the Mother of God occupy their customary central positions. They are flanked by prominent Holy Fathers from the early centuries of Christianity: Saint Nicholas and Saint Ignatius, placed opposite one another. While Saint Nicholas, a universally venerated figure in Orthodoxy, frequently appears on iconostases, the inclusion of Saint Ignatius may hold particular significance. It could be interpreted as a tribute to the patron saint of Father Ignatius Malyshev, the Hegumen of the Coastal Monastery of St. Sergius responsible for the iconostasis donation. The next pair of saints, the first two Serbian archbishops, Saint Sava and Saint Arsenius, underscores the deliberate consideration given to the intended recipients and destination of the iconostasis. This selection of Serbian saints reflects a conscious effort to tailor the iconographic program to the local context. Following these are the side doors, adorned with depictions of the archangels Michael and Gabriel. As guardians and protectors, archangels are traditionally positioned near entrances, explaining their placement on the side doors of the iconostasis or above doorways.³⁹ Following the archangels, the next pairing presents two prominent figures within the order of holy rulers: Holy Emperor Constantine and Saint Alexander Nevsky. Emperor Constantine, as the first Christian ruler, serves as a model for all subsequent Christian monarchs. Saint Alexander Nevsky, on the other hand, holds a position of unique importance as Russia's foremost national saint among rulers. His prominent placement within the iconostasis can be interpreted in two ways. Firstly, it may reflect a desire to promote the veneration of Russian saints and extend Russian influence within the Orthodox communities of the Balkans. Secondly, it could be seen as a tribute to the reigning Tsar Alexander II, Saint Alexander Nevsky's namesake and patron saint, whose family contributed to the creation of the icons. The final two icons in the throne row depict Holy Martyr Daria and Saint Eugene, Bishop of Cherson. Their presence is noteworthy, as these saints are not typically featured in this

39 M. Timotijević, op. cit., p. 110.



Fig. 7
Icon of Saint Simeon of Serbia

prominent position on iconostases. Given that despotic icons are often donated, it is plausible that the choice of these particular saints reflects the devotional inclinations of the donors, who may have held a special reverence for Saint Daria or Saint Eugene. Saint Eugene, an early Christian missionary, disseminated the faith in the region that would eventually become Russia. Although Russia did not yet exist as a unified state during his time, it's likely that Russians later used his presence to establish a narrative of Christian continuity within their history. This could explain his depiction among the throne row of icons.

Additionally, according to information found in one of the sources, Metropolitan Sava Kosanović, in his discussion of the despotic icons within the Sarajevo iconostasis, observes: *“On the walls, flanking the doors are icons of Saint Simeon the Myrrh-flowing and Saint Sergius of*

*Russia, whose uniform dimensions precluded their integration into the main iconographic register.”*⁴⁰ The Icon of Saint Simeon was recently identified in the treasury of the Mileševa Monastery, while the location of the Icon of Saint Sergius remains unknown. Interestingly, another Serbian saint, the founder of the Nemanjić dynasty, was also depicted in this Russian monastery. If the pairing of Saint Simeon and Saint Sergius was intended to evoke a parallel with other paired saints in the iconostasis, their shared monastic identity may suggest they served as exemplars for both Serbian and Russian monastic communities. Alternatively, each saint may hold independent significance. Saint Simeon, as noted, holds specific relevance for Serbian church. Saint Sergius, a pivotal figure in Russian monasticism, merits inclusion as patron of the monastery where the icons were executed.

40 S. Kosanović, op. cit., p. 270.

Great Feast Icons

The second zone of the iconostasis features a register of icons depicting the feasts of Christ and the Mother of God, flanked by four Holy Fathers, and culminating in the Last Supper above the Royal Doors. These icons are arranged from south to north in the following sequence: the Descent of the Holy Spirit upon the Apostles, the Nativity of Christ, the Presentation of Christ in the Temple, the Baptism, the Entry into Jerusalem, Saint John Chrysostom, Saint James, Brother of the Lord, the Last Supper, Saint Basil the Great, Saint Gregory the Theologian, the Nativity of the Mother of God, the Annunciation, the Presentation of the Mother of God in the Temple, the Dormition of the Mother of God, and the Exaltation of the Holy Cross.

The Descent of the Holy Spirit scene centres on the Theotokos, depicted seated on a bench with her gaze directed upwards. Eleven apostles are arranged around her in varying spatial planes, while the upper zone features the Dove of the Holy Spirit amidst flames. All figures are rendered with golden nimbuses.

The Nativity of Christ (Рождество Христово) adheres to established iconographic conventions. The newborn Christ (Иис. Хрс.) lies within the manger, flanked by the kneeling figures of the Mother of God and Joseph. The Theotokos (МР ФВ) is depicted with her arms crossed over her chest. Joseph, on the other hand, is shown holding a blossoming staff in one hand, while the other rests on his chest. The bright skin tone of Christ and the luminous sheets he is draped in draw the viewer's attention to the centre of the composition. He is depicted with outstretched arms and a halo rendered as emanating rays of light.⁴¹ An ox and a donkey occupy the background.

The significant Christian feast that follows the Nativity is the Presentation of Christ in the Temple (Сретение Господне). The painting depicts the Mother of God, Joseph, Simeon the God-receiver, Anna the Prophetess, and the infant Christ. The kneeling Theotokos occupies the foreground, with Joseph positioned before her on the first step leading to the temple. Anna the Prophetess, in the middle ground, observes the aged Saint Simeon, who stands before the temple door cradling the Christ Child in the background.

The subsequent painting portrays the Baptism of Christ. This event is depicted within a landscape setting, with Saint John Chrysostom positioned so that his right hand is resting atop Christ's head while his left hand is pointing towards Christ. Christ is depicted leaning forward in the Jordan River, a white sheet covering his right hand and thighs. In the background, two winged angels are shown carrying the sheet. The Holy Spirit, symbolized by a dove, is painted at the top of the composition.

The final feast depicted in the north section of the iconostasis is the Entry of Christ into Jerusalem. Christ is shown mounted on a donkey. In the foreground, we can identify the Apostle Peter holding a palm branch, walking alongside Christ. Following them are the remaining apostles and a

41 On the nimbus painted as rays of light, see: N. Makuljević, *Crkva Svetog Arhangela Gavrila u Velikom Gradištu*, Veliko Gradište, 2006, pp. 185–186.



Fig. 8
Icon of the Baptism of Christ



Fig. 9
Icon of the Last Supper

crowd of people bowing to Christ and laying their garments on the path he is about to tread. In the background, the painted walls of Jerusalem are visible.

A distinct section of the cycle comprises the images of the Holy Fathers John Chrysostom and Jacob, the Brother of the Lord. These figures are visually separated from the Great Feasts and the Last Supper by architectural elements, such as pillars. Saint John Chrysostom (С. ЇОАННЪ ЗЛАТОУСТЬ.), depicted in archiereus vestments, is characterized by his short brown hair and beard. In his left hand, he holds an open, blank scroll, while his right hand is opened and raised to shoulder height. Saint Jacob, the Brother of the Lord (С. ЇАКОВЪ БРАТ. ГОСПОДЕНЬ.), is similarly depicted wearing the vestments of an archiereus. He is portrayed as an older man with a bald head and a grey beard. He holds an open book in his left hand, his right index finger raised. Both saints are oriented to the right, facing the Last Supper.

Positioned above the Royal Doors and distinct from the other icons, the Last Supper adheres to traditional iconography. Christ occupies the centre of a semi-circular table, flanked by six apostles on either side. His left hand rests on bread, while his right hand blesses. A chalice sits before him on the table. The apostles are depicted with sombre expressions, Saint John embracing Christ on

his right and Peter positioned to his left. In the foreground, a pedestal before the semicircular table supports a jug of water and the towel used by Christ to wash his disciples' feet before dinner.

Saint Basil the Great and Saint Gregory the Theologian, like the aforementioned Holy Fathers, constitute a distinct pairing. Saint Basil the Great (с. ВАСИЛІЙ ВЕЛИКІЙ.) is depicted with brown hair and a long brown beard, clad in archiereus vestments, and holding an open, unwritten scroll in both hands. Saint Gregory the Theologian (с. ГРИГОРІЙ БОГОСЛОВЪ.), with short grey hair and beard, is similarly attired and holds an open, unwritten code in his left hand, gesturing towards it with his right.

Following the icon of Saint Gregory the Theologian is a series of feasts. The first, on the right of the iconostasis, is the Nativity of the Mother of God. Saint Anna is depicted reclining on a bed, cradling the newborn Mary. Beside the bed stands Saint Joachim, depicted as an elderly man. In the foreground, three girls prepare water for bathing the Mother of God in a large vessel.

The Annunciation, rendered in the traditional style, follows. The scene unfolds indoors, with the Archangel Gabriel and the Mother of God positioned before an open window revealing a landscape vista. The winged archangel holds a lily in his right hand, while the Mother of God kneels opposite him. An open book rests on the table between them. The composition is illuminated from above, where the Dove of the Holy Spirit emits a ray of light towards the Mother of God.

The Presentation of the Mother of God in the Temple follows on the next canvas. In the foreground, the half-length figures of the Virgin Mary's parents, Saint Anna and Saint Joachim, are prominent. Anna holds an offering of white doves, with Joachim positioned behind her. The Mother of God, clad in a white robe and with hands clasped at her chest, ascends the stairs towards the high priest, who stands between two deacons and extends his hands in welcoming and blessing Mary. Two additional figures observe the scene from the background amidst architectural elements.

The Dormition of the Mother of God is depicted next. In the foreground, we see an apostle observing the deathbed where the Mother of God lies. Opposite him, a priest is depicted reading from an open book. At the centre of the composition, the Mother of God is depicted lying on a funeral bier. Her eyes are closed, and her hands are clasped and resting on her stomach. Several apostles surround the Mother of God, observing her lifeless body. Women are depicted weeping nearby. Above the funeral bier, a figure of Christ is seen ascending through the clouds, his arms outstretched towards the Mother of God.

The final canvas depicts the Exaltation of the Holy Cross. Half-length portraits dominate the foreground, including a young man bearing a lit candle and several other attending faithful. The most prominent figure is Patriarch Macarius, resplendent in archiereus vestments. He raises his right hand towards the cross behind him while grasping a staff in his left. Beside him, Empress Helena kneels in a cloak with ermine fur and a crown. The patriarch, empress, and the cross between them are elevated above the other figures. Architectural elements complete the background.

Based on the described sequence of feast icons, we can conclude that the Christological feasts are predominantly depicted on the northern side of the iconostasis, and that they generally adhere

to a chronological order (Nativity, Entry into the Temple, Baptism, Entry into Jerusalem), with the exception of Pentecost, which initiates the cycle. The Mother of God's feasts and the Exaltation of the Holy Cross are situated on the southern side of the iconostasis. It is likely that a mistake occurred during the arrangement of the icons on the iconostasis. The icon depicting the Annunciation appears to have been misplaced, as it should ideally precede the Presentation of the Mother of God to maintain the chronological sequence of the cycle of the Mother of God. The scenes exhibit academic principles, employing multiple planes and deep perspective. A comparison with the despotic icons suggests the feast icons were executed by a different artist, one characterized by a looser, more expressive brushwork and less emphasis on individual figures. The Last Supper dominates the centre of this register, flanked on either side by the Holy Fathers. The Last Supper, as the foundational event of the Eucharist and the Holy Liturgy, provides context for the selection of flanking saints. Today, the Liturgy of Saint John Chrysostom is commonly celebrated, while the Liturgy of Saint Basil the Great is used on specific occasions. The Liturgies of Saint Jacob and Saint Gregory the Theologian are rarely performed. Each of these saints is depicted holding a scroll, reflecting the original practice of writing liturgies on scrolls.

The Apostolic and Prophetic Icons

Above the feast row of icons on the Sarajevo Orthodox Cathedral iconostasis, there are twenty apostles and prophets arranged in five distinct visual groups on either side. Each visual field is further accentuated by a medallion placed above each pair of prophets or apostles. These medallions contain half-figure portraits of various saints. From north to south, the following prophets and apostles are depicted: Holy Prophet Jeremiah (С. ПРФ. ІЄРЄМІА), Holy Prophet Daniel (СТЫЙ ПРФ: ДАНИИЛЪ.), Holy Prophet Jonah (С. ПРФ: ІОНА.), Holy Prophet Zachary (С. ПРФ: ЗАХАРІА), Holy Apostle Jude of James (СТЫЙ АПЛЪ ІУДА ІАКОВЪ.), Holy Apostle James (СТЫЙ АПЛЪ ІАКОВЪ.), Holy Apostle Mark (СТЫЙ АПЛЪ МАРКЪ.), Holy Apostle John (СТЫЙ АПЛЪ ІОАННЪ.), Holy Apostle Thomas (СТЫЙ АПЛЪ ФОМА.), Holy Apostle Paul (СТЫЙ АПЛЪ ПАУЛА.). Further on, on the south or right side of the iconostasis, the series continues: Holy Apostle Peter (СѦТАГО АПЛА Петра.), Holy Apostle Andrew (СТЫЙ АПЛЪ Андрей.), Holy Apostle Matthew (СТЫЙ АПЛЪ Матѣй.), Holy Apostle Simon (СТЫЙ АПЛЪ Сидонъ.), Holy Apostle Bartholomew (СТЫЙ АПЛЪ Бартоломей.), Holy Apostle Philip (СТЫЙ АПЛЪ Филиппъ.), Holy Prophet Elijah (С. ПРФ: ІЛІА.), Holy Prophet Aaron (С. ПРФ: ААРОНЪ.), Holy Prophet Isaiah (С. ПРФ: ІСАІА.), Holy Prophet Habakkuk (С. ПРФ: АББАКУМЪ.). All prophets and apostles are oriented towards the centre of the iconostasis, focusing on the icons of the Transfiguration, Ascension, and the central, dominant icon of the Resurrection of Christ.

The prophets and apostles conform to established iconographic conventions. Prophets Zachary and Aaron are depicted wearing the distinctive archiereus headgear, with Aaron also holding a staff. Daniel, portrayed as a beardless young man, wears a Phrygian hat. The prophets carry scrolls, while the apostles hold either open or closed codices. When viewing this group of saints from the



Fig. 10
Icon of Saint Mitrophan of Voronezh

centre of the iconostasis, the Princes of the Apostles, Peter and Paul, occupy the central positions to the north and south respectively. This separation and placement within the apostolic row reflect a long-standing tradition in iconostasis design.⁴² The remaining apostles are arranged around the central figures, with prominence given to the Evangelists. The outermost sections of the iconostasis are occupied by Old Testament prophets.

Saints Painted within Medallions

Above the figures of the apostles and prophets, a series of medallions contain depictions of various saints. Arranged from north to south across the iconostasis, these medallions feature: Holy Mar-

tyr Paraskevi, Holy Great Martyr George, Saint Demetrius, Metropolitan of Rostov, Saint Eugenia the Great Martyr, Saint Alexis, Metropolitan of Moscow. On the south side of the iconostasis, the sequence continues with: Saint Mary Magdalene, Saint Prince Vladimir, Saint Mitrophan, Bishop of Voronezh, Saint Great Martyr Demetrius, Holy Martyr Alexandra.

In an attempt to determine the sequence and relationships between the saints depicted in this row, we will examine the medallions on both sides of the iconostasis. The outermost medallions, located at the northern and southern extremities, depict female saints – Holy Martyr Paraskevi (С. МҮЕННИЦА ПАРАСКЕВА.) and Holy Martyr Alexandra (С. МҮЕННИЦА АЛЕКСАНДРА.). The existence of three saints named Paraskevi within the Christian world has led to the intermingling of their respective cults.⁴³ Assuming the artist intended to depict Saint Paraskevi of Iconium, a connection with the Holy Martyr Alexandra readily emerges. Both suffered martyrdom, hailed from noble families, were contemporaries, and faced persecution under Emperor Diocletian. Holy Martyr Alexandra, Diocletian's wife, is closely associated with the cult of Saint George. Her royal status is emphasized by the crown she wears, while Saint Paraskevi is depicted with a headscarf covering her brown hair.

Subsequently, the iconostasis features Russian saints: Saint Demetrius, Metropolitan of Rostov (С. ДИМИТРИЙ МИТРО. РОСТОВ.) to the north, and Saint Mitrophan, Bishop of Voronezh (С. МИТРОФАНІЙ

42 M. Timotijević, *Crkva Svetog Georgija u Temišvaru*, p. 114.

43 T. Subotin – Golubović, *Petka prepodobna – Petka mučenica*, in: *Zbornik radova Vizantološkog instituta XLV*, Beograd 2008, pp. 177–190.



Fig. 11
Icon of Saint Eugenia

politan of Moscow (С. Алексій Митропо: Московскій.), is depicted on the northern side, while Saint Mary Magdalene (С. Равноапос. Марїа Магдалина.) appears on the southern side. Behind them, the medallions feature Saint Great Martyr Eugenia (С. Преподоб. М҃. Е҃вгенїа.) to the north and Saint Prince Vladimir (С. Равноапос. Кнѣзь Владимѣръ.) to the south. The original intention was likely to position the two prominent saints of the Russian Church, Saint Alexius and Saint Vladimir, nearest to the feast icons, with the two female saints placed behind them. Saint Vladimir, a revered figure in the Russian Church for his role in the adoption and dissemination of Christianity in Russia, is depicted with a grey beard and a princely crown. Saint Alexius appears as an elderly man with a long grey beard and a white klobuk adorned with a golden cross. Saint Mary Magdalene, like Saint Paraskevi, is portrayed with a fair face and a headscarf revealing her hair. Saint Eugenia, a nun, is shown in the attire of the Great Schema.

The Central and Tallest Part of the Iconostasis

The Sarajevo iconostasis culminates visually in the large-scale depiction of the Resurrection of Christ. The depiction of the Harrowing of Hell, a common theme in medieval art, was abandoned during the Baroque period. Instead, the focus shifted to Christ's triumphant resurrection from the sealed tomb, which often became the central motif of the iconostasis. This approach gained wide-

Еписко. Воронежскій.) to the south. Both were archiereus and contemporaries. Saint Demetrius conforms to typical iconography, depicted as a middle-aged man with a thick black beard and wearing a white epanoklimavkion. Saint Mitrophan also adheres to established iconography, portrayed with a greying beard and the large koukoulion of the Great Schema, indicating his monastic rank and the name Macarius bestowed upon him.

It can be inferred that an error occurred in the placement of the icons on the iconostasis, specifically regarding the order of the following two pairs of saints. In the final medallions, positioned closest to the icons of the Transfiguration and the Ascension, Saint Alexius, Metro-

spread popularity in church painting by the late 19th century.⁴⁴ The Resurrection of Christ adheres to the iconographic model prevalent in late 19th-century church painting.⁴⁵ The composition centres on Christ, draped in a flowing white sheet that rises above the tomb, depicted as a large, sealed rectangular stone. A circular nimbus surrounds Christ's illuminated figure. He raises his right hand and carries a flag in his left. Wounds mark his right hand, right rib, and feet. Equally well-illuminated is the figure of a winged, flying angel depicted beneath Christ's feet. The angel, gazing directly at the observer, gestures with his right index finger toward Christ, symbolically proclaiming His victory over death.

The Resurrection scene is flanked by depictions of the Transfiguration to the north and the Ascension to the south, surmounted by seven medallions containing winged angels. These flanking canvases are half the size of the Resurrection. The Transfiguration portrays Christ frontally, clad in white robes with arms outstretched and raised, amidst the prophets Moses and Elijah. All three figures stand upon clouds. Below, the apostles Peter, John, and Jacob are depicted in various poses. The Resurrection of Christ is depicted in two distinct segments within the painting. The upper section portrays Christ in a red chiton and blue chimation, standing with outstretched arms on a cloud. Light, rather than a nimbus, emanates around his head. The lower section presents Christ's disciples and the Mother of God painted in varying spatial planes. Most of them are gazing upwards towards the Heaven and Christ, their expressions serene and subdued as is typical of the Transfiguration scene.

Seven medallions depicting angels encircle the Resurrection scene in a semi-circular arrangement, forming the uppermost register of the iconostasis. A central and uppermost medallion presents an angel facing forward, while three medallions on either side portray angels in three-quarter profile, oriented to the right or left respectively. As with the medallions depicting saints, these angels appear against a blue background. Iconographic conventions are observed: angels are beardless, with long hair and white wings. Metropolitan Sava identifies them as cherubs and seraphs.⁴⁶ An analysis of their attire, coupled with the doctrine of the seven archangels, suggests the artist and designer of the iconographic program intentionally depicted this specific angelic order.

Above the central medallion, the iconostasis screen narrows to its apex, culminating in a spherical pedestal that supports a cross. This entire section, like the rest of the iconostasis, is gilded. The cross bears minimal ornamentation on its centre and arms. This configuration, with the cross resting on a spherical pedestal, sometimes entwined with a snake, is common in iconostasis design and carries multiple symbolic interpretations.⁴⁷ The cross atop the iconostasis symbolizes *the guardianship of the universe, the beauty of the Church, and the glory of God, standing in defiance of disbelief*.⁴⁸

44 M. Timotijević, *Srpsko barokno slikarstvo*, Novi Sad 1996, p. 322.

45 Cf.: N. Makuljević, *Crkva Svetog Arhangela Gavrila u Velikom Gradištu*, p. 187.

46 See pp. 11-12.

47 A. Kostić, *Država, društvo i crkvena umetnost u Kneževini Srbiji (1830 – 1882)*, p. 293.

48 N. Makuljević, *Crkva Svetog Arhangela Gavrila u Velikom Gradištu*, p. 193.

Pulpit and Thrones

It appears that the craftsmen employed by merchant Efim Ivanov of St. Petersburg undertook two separate trips to Sarajevo. Their initial visit in 1870 involved several months of work constructing the wooden framework of the iconostasis. They subsequently returned in the autumn of 1871 to create the wooden pulpit and the hegumen's and archiereus thrones.⁴⁹ Whether they made a third trip specifically for the gilding or completed the gilding after constructing the pulpit and thrones remains unclear. All liturgical furnishings crafted by the St. Petersburg artisans are gilded with pure gold, as documented in a letter by Alexey Kudryavtsev.⁵⁰ These liturgical furnishings occupy the nave. The pulpit, accompanied by the hegumen's throne, stands adjacent to the northeast pillar, while the archpriest's throne resides opposite.

The hegumen's throne and pulpit form a cohesive unit, with an intervening space between them. The throne is surmounted by a dome crowned with an Orthodox cross. A carved medallion in the relief in front of the pulpit depicts a chalice emitting rays. Elevated on a wooden staircase that wraps around the pillar, the pulpit is accessed by a set of stairs. A wooden pedestal shaped like an open Gospel book provides a surface for priests to hold the Gospel or liturgical scrolls during sermons.

Opposite the pulpit stands the archiereus throne, elevated on three steps. This throne also culminates in a dome topped with an Orthodox cross, supported by twin helical columns. Arches adorn the front and sides, each surmounted by an Orthodox cross on a spherical pedestal. A distinctive feature of the Sarajevo archiereus throne is the icon of Christ suspended above the backrest on a cloth, with a silver halo applied. This image of Christ differs stylistically from the icons on the iconostasis, raising questions about its origin – whether it was a later addition, perhaps a gift from Russia, or an original component of the throne.

Metropolitan Sava describes the arrangement of the pulpit and thrones as follows:

“A gilded throne for the metropolitan stands beside the right pillar. Near the left column, opposite the metropolitan's throne, a small, gilded table was initially designated for the archimandrite but later assigned to the earthly commander. Adjacent to this, by the left column, stairs ascend to the middle of the pillar. Here, above the archimandrite's table, a richly ornamented pulpit displays an open golden book, a place for the Gospel from which the deacon reads and preachers deliver sermons. The centre of the pulpit features a gilded chalice illuminated by sun rays, symbolizing the vessel of life. This arrangement is symmetrically aligned with the metropolitan's throne, which is adorned with gilded crosses.”⁵¹

49 K. V. Mel'chakova, op. cit., p. 75.

50 Ibid, p. 76.

51 S. Kosanović, *Nova srpsko-pravoslavna crkva u Sarajevu*, p. 170.

Russian Donations Collected by Archimandrite Sava Kosanović

Much has been written about the personality of Sava Kosanović (1839 – 1903), theologian, teacher, Archbishop of Sarajevo and Metropolitan of Dabar-Bosnia.⁵² In the context of this paper, we will concentrate on Kosanović's journey and sojourn in Russia between 1872 and 1874, undertaken to gather donations for the recently completed church in Sarajevo.

The construction and subsequent furnishing of the Sarajevo Cathedral incurred substantial costs. Despite numerous donations from various sources, including the significant contribution of the iconostasis from Russia, the church still lacked sufficient funds, icons, vestments, liturgical vessels, and books for its proper functioning. Metropolitan Sava Kosanović notes that following the consecration, the church faced a debt of 3,500 sequins.⁵³ Following two unsuccessful attempts to secure permission for travel to Russia, the Sarajevo Orthodox Municipality finally received approval for their third request in September 1871.⁵⁴ The Holy Synod of the Russian Orthodox Church granted approval for the fundraising mission in February 1872, followed by the endorsement of Emperor Alexander II in May of the same year.⁵⁵ In October 1872, Archimandrite Sava Kosanović embarked on his journey to Russia, bringing with him a significant relic: the right arm of Saint Thecla. Donated in 1730 to the Church of Saint Archangels in Sarajevo by Patriarch Arsenije IV Jovanović, this relic remains there to this day.⁵⁶ Archimandrite Sava Kosanović was accompanied on this mission by the esteemed Sarajevo merchant Hadži Makso Despić. They encountered immediate challenges upon arriving in Russia. Prior to their departure, an article in the newspaper *Jedinstvo* alleged that they were spies. This claim, subsequently reprinted in the St. Petersburg newspaper *Golos*, created a negative impression on the Holy Synod.⁵⁷ Despite initial support and numerous testimonies refuting the accusations, the Metropolitan remained unconvinced. Consequently, Sava Kosanović was denied accommodation at the Saint Alexander Nevsky Lavra and forced to seek assistance from the local populace. This significantly hindered the early stages of his mission.⁵⁸ Fol-

52 A comprehensive study on Sava Kosanović was written by: V. Maksimović, *Mitropolit Sava Kosanović 1839 – 1903*, Dobrun – Sarajevo 2003; recently the writings of Metropolitan Sava were published with the entire bibliography: Mitropolit Sava Kosanović, *Krstom i perom, Sabrani spisi*, edited by: Episkop budimljansko-nikšićki Joanikije (Mićović), Vojislav Maksimović, Nikola Marojević, Bogoljub Šijaković, Eparhija budimljansko-nikšićka, Institut za teološka istraživanja, Nikšić - Beograd 2019.

53 S. Kosanović, *Nova srpsko-pravoslavna crkva u Sarajevu*, p. 170.

54 J. Blažić – Pejić dedicated an important chapter in her PhD thesis to Archimandrite Sava's trip to Russia, and Ksenia Mel'chakova wrote a paper on the same topic: J. Blažić – Pejić, *Moskovski slovenski komitet i Srpsko pitanje 1858 - 1875*; K. V. Mel'chakova, op. cit.

55 J. Blažić – Pejić, op. cit., p. 362.

56 R. J. Čajkanović „Kratki životopis svete prvomučenice i ravnoapostolne Tekle”, in: *Dabro-bosanski istočnik*, godina 3, Br. 21 – 22, Sarajevo 1889, pp. 345–347.

57 Hadži M. Despić, op. cit., pp. 61 – 62; S. Kosanović, *Nova srpsko-pravoslavna crkva u Sarajevu*, p. 171; J. Blažić – Pejić, op. cit., p. 365 - 366; X. V. Mel'chakova, op. cit., p. 78.

58 J. Blažić – Pejić, op. cit., p. 366.

lowing these unfortunate events and the return of his passport, Makso Despić departed Russia. He documented these experiences in his characteristic style: “*I had to make ten daily trips to the main police station in Liteine, St. Petersburg, pleading for my passport so I could return. The police director repeatedly insisted, ‘You aren’t going to the border, you’ll go to Siberia, you’re Ottoman spies.’ Before finally retrieving my passport, I had spent 200 roubles. Arriving in Vienna brought immense relief – I felt at home, free, and joyful.*”⁵⁹

Throughout his time in Russia, Sava Kosanović received crucial support from the Moscow Slavic Committee and Nil Alexandrovich Popov, maintaining consistent correspondence and benefiting from their valuable guidance.⁶⁰ Acknowledging Popov’s invaluable assistance to their emissary, the Sarajevo Orthodox Municipality expressed gratitude for his instrumental role in facilitating the successful collection of donations in Russia.⁶¹ Archimandrite Sava also highlighted his contribution: “*For that success (collection of donations, author’s note) we owe the highest gratitude to Mr. Nil Popov, professor extraordinaire at the Moscow University, who offered (to Sava, author’s note) his warm recommendations.*”⁶²

Information regarding Archimandrite Sava’s fundraising success in Russia comes from various sources and requires further verification. The archimandrite himself reported obtaining a substantial collection of books, vestments, liturgical vessels, icons, and over 2,000 sequins.⁶³ Alexey Kudryavtsev, in a letter to Count Ignatyev, reports that Sava amassed 4,500 roubles and approximately ten cases filled with liturgical books, objects, and priestly vestments.⁶⁴ V. Maksimović provides yet another figure, stating that Kosanović gathered 1,870 ducats, equivalent to 114,111 groschen.⁶⁵ J. Blažić-Pejić adds to these accounts, noting that Kosanović successfully gathered over 7,000 roubles and a considerable quantity of church items, which he dispatched to Sarajevo with Popov’s assistance.⁶⁶ While J. Blažić-Pejić identifies some financial donors, information regarding those who contributed church items remains scarce. Hadži Makso does mention Countess Vorontsova, who donated a phelonion for Christ’s grave valued at 12,000 roubles.⁶⁷ Archimandrite Sava enjoyed a warm reception in Saratov. Bishop Joannicius welcomed him to the Spaso-Preobrazhensky Monastery. The Moscow Slavic Committee reported that 30,000 people venerated the relics of Saint Thecla, even noting the occurrence of miracles. Sava conducted a *moleben* at a women’s monastery, where the hegumen, Mother Olympiada, experienced a remarkable recovery from a severe illness following the liturgy. As a sign of gratitude for the healing of the hegumen, the nuns donated

59 H. M. Despić, op. cit., p. 62.

60 More detailed information about this can be found in the aforementioned chapter of J. Blažić – Pejić’s PhD thesis.

61 J. Blažić – Pejić, op. cit., p. 380.

62 S. Kosanović, op. cit., p. 171.

63 Ibid.

64 J. Blažić – Pejić, op. cit., p. 382.

65 V. Maksimović, op. cit., p. 20.

66 J. Blažić – Pejić, op. cit., p. 379.

67 H. M. Despić, op. cit., p. 59.



Fig. 12
Chalice

a *riza*⁶⁸ to the Sarajevo church, adorned with pearls and precious stones.⁶⁹ During his stay in Kazan, Archimandrite Sava received approximately 500 roubles in silver, along with numerous church items, myrrh, an archimandrite's cross, and vestments.⁷⁰ Among the notable donations, Nil Popov gifted Kosanović two shrouds, one designated for the church in Sarajevo and the other for the church in Vareš.⁷¹ Furthermore, Bishop Leonid contributed twenty copies of the Book of Psalms.⁷²

The available information confirms that Sava Kosanović acquired numerous liturgical items for Sarajevo in addition to financial aid. The Museum of the Old Church in Sarajevo houses many exhibits of Russian origin, some of which likely arrived due to Archimandrite Sava's efforts. A detailed insight into the exhibited items and possible documentation could not be obtained.

The Sarajevo Cathedral still utilizes a chalice of Russian origin. Based on its craftsmanship and inscription, it is likely that this chalice was donated to Sava Kosanović during his fundraising trip. This large silver chalice features four medallions on the cup, depicting half-figure portraits of Christ, Saint John the Baptist, the Mother of God, and the Cruci-

68 The Russian dictionary gives two definitions for the word *riza*: 1. Liturgical vestments, 2. Frame for an icon. From the context, it can be assumed that donation was in the form of a frame.

69 About the mentioned events in Saratov see K. V. Mel'chakova, *op. cit.*, p. 79.

70 *Ibid.*, p. 80.

71 J. Blažić – Pejić, *op. cit.*, p. 372.

72 *Ibid.*, p. 380.

fixion. The chalice's central medallion portrays Christ frontally, his right hand raised in blessing and his left hand holding an orb and cross. Flanking him, the Theotokos and Saint John the Baptist, depicted in three-quarter profile, form a Deesis composition. The Theotokos is depicted with her arms folded and head lowered, while Saint John holds a cross and touches his chest. The Crucifixion image depicts a skull beneath a crucified Christ. The areas around the medallions are decorated with crosses. Above the medallions, an inscription presents the prayer recited during communion: ТѢЛО ХРИСТОВО ПРИИМТЕ ИСТОНИКА БЕЗСМЕРТНАГО ВКУСИТЕ [*Taste the Body of Christ, Taste the Fountain of Immortality*]. The foot of the chalice exhibits intricate decoration, and its edge bears an inscription in italics: *С. П. Бургъ За упокой Маріи 26. Янв 1873. г* [*S. P. Burg for the repose of Maria, 26 Jan 1873*]. The inscription confirms that the chalice was crafted during Sava Kosanović's time in Russia, further supporting the theory that he acquired it there. Interestingly, a very similar chalice, featuring the same arrangement of saints and inscription, was produced two years later in a Moscow workshop. This later chalice is currently housed in the treasury of the Church of the Holy Trinity in Vranje, Serbia.⁷³

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The presented data and description of the Russian items within the Sarajevo Cathedral allow for several significant conclusions. The monumental three-zone iconostasis, a major donation from Russia, testifies to that country's power and its intention to assist their Orthodox brethren in Sarajevo by furnishing the newly built temple. As one of the largest and most admired churches in the Balkans at the time, the Sarajevo Orthodox Cathedral held significant prestige. Russia's involvement in such a prominent project served to expand its influence and enhance its reputation in the Balkan region. Despite some information regarding the donor and potential contributor to the iconostasis, Hegumen Ignatius from the Coastal Monastery of St. Sergius near St. Petersburg, the exact details of the commission remain unclear. The Russian Consul to Sarajevo likely informed the Moscow Slavic Committee about the need to furnish the church, thereby alerting Hegumen Ignatius. This suggests that the Russian consul played a key role in facilitating the commission. His advocacy probably led to the engagement of craftsmen from St. Petersburg to construct the iconostasis, pulpit, and thrones in Sarajevo, and to gild the church furnishings.

An analysis of the iconostasis's iconography reveals a careful selection of saints. The inclusion of the first two Serbian archbishops in the throne area indicates a deliberate intention to create a work specifically for the Serbian people. However, they remain the only Serbian national saints depicted, as space constraints precluded the incorporation of the icon of Saint Simeon of Serbia, which had also been sent. Notably, Russian saints are represented in far greater numbers. Given the iconostasis's location and the craftsmen involved, the selection of saints appears reasonable.

73 V. Dautović, *Riznica crkve Svete Trojice u Vranju*, in: *Saborni hram Svete Trojice u Vranju (1858 – 2008)*, edited by: Nenad Makuljević, Vranje 2008, pp. 165–166.

However, the abundance of Russian saints might also indicate an intention to promote their veneration beyond Russia's borders. The icons, executed in the academic style, likely involved multiple craftsmen, although only Hegumen Ignatius and the monastery's icon painter, Alexander Kolchin, are known by name.

Along with Hegumen Ignatius and Russian diplomats, Archimandrite Sava Kosanović was instrumental in furnishing the church. He journeyed through Russia, gathering financial and liturgical donations. Despite the hardships of this long trip, Sava's efforts were successful. The relics of Saint Thecla, which he carried with him, inspired religious devotion and respect from the Russians. Although sources mention several items donated by Russians to the Sarajevo Church through Sava, only one has been identified. It remains to be seen what further information could be discovered through more detailed on-site investigations and examination of archival materials.

In conclusion, we observe that the construction and furnishing of the Sarajevo Cathedral represented events of immense cultural, political, and religious significance. One can only imagine the atmosphere in Sarajevo upon the arrival of the monumental iconostasis, complementing the grandeur of the newly built church. The consecration in 1872 marked a pivotal moment in the lives of Sarajevo's Orthodox community. Despite the city's turbulent history, the church and its interior stand remarkably well-preserved to this day.

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