



Products of Russian Visual Culture in the Treasury of Rakovica Monastery in Belgrade (17th – 20th Centuries)

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RÉSUMÉ : L'article présente une série d'icônes et d'objets liturgiques provenant du trésor du monastère Rakovica à Belgrade, en Serbie. Plusieurs exemples, datant de différentes périodes, témoignent de l'influence culturelle russe sur le milieu local serbe. Le monastère possède six icônes peintes dans le Palais des Armures du Kremlin à Moscou vers la fin du XVII^e siècle. Ces icônes, qui comptent parmi les témoins conservés les plus anciens, nous renseignent sur les relations serbo-russes au sein de la vie religieuse de Belgrade. D'innombrables guerres ont jalonné l'existence du monastère Rakovica, ce qui explique que le trésor soit aujourd'hui relativement modeste. Il comprend, par exemple, quelques icônes russes des XIX^e et XX^e siècles, principalement des artefacts produits en série, sans valeur artistique significative. Toutefois, les revêtements en argent de trois de ces icônes nécessitent une analyse approfondie. Aussi, le trésor comprend-il plusieurs livres liturgiques imprimés à Moscou ou dans la Laure des Grottes de Kyïv, de même que deux objets liturgiques.

MOTS-CLÉS: icônes russes ; objets liturgiques ; Serbie ; Palais des Armures du Kremlin ; monastère Rakovica.

REZUMAT: Articolul discută câteva icoane și obiecte liturgice din tezaurul mănăstirii Rakovica din Belgrad, Serbia. Ele reprezintă exemple din diverse perioade care ilustrează importanța culturii ruse în mediul sârbesc. Mănăstirea deține șase icoane pictate în atelierele din Palatul Armurilor de la Kremlinul Moscovei la sfârșitul secolului al XVII-lea, care sunt printre cele mai vechi exemple păstrate ale relațiilor sârbo-ruse în viața religioasă a Belgradului. Datorită numeroaselor războaie care i-au afectat existența, tezaurul mănăstirii Rakovica este relativ modest. Astăzi, include câteva icoane rusești din secolele al XIX-lea și al XX-lea, dar cele mai multe dintre ele sunt artefacte cu producție de masă, fără valoare artistică semnificativă. Între ele există, totuși, trei icoane de un oarecare interes datorită ferecăturilor lor de argint. În plus, tezaurul include câteva cărți de cult tipărite la Moscova sau la Lavra Pecherska din Kyïv și doar două obiecte liturgice.

CUVINTE-CHEIE: icoane rusești; obiecte liturgice; Serbia; Palatul Armurilor de la Kremlin; mănăstirea Rakovica.

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Since the 16th century, Russia has positioned itself on the map of the Christian world as the protector of Orthodoxy and a destination for all Church representatives in search of spiritual and material patronage.¹ Until the end of the 17th century, especially during the reign of Peter I the Great, Muscovite Russia regularly sent donations to churches throughout the Orthodox Oikoumene. The model of assistance then changed, but it continued to exist despite certain limitations.² Russia had an official right to protect the Orthodox Christians in the Ottoman Empire according to the Treaty of Küçük Kaynarca of 1774. This role was strengthened with the Treaties of

Adrianople (1829) and Hünkâr İskelesi (1833), as well as after the Crimean War.³ The ties between the Serbian Church and Russia can be traced from the monks' visits to Russia to collect financial aid in the 17th century, to the import of a large number of Russian liturgical books and objects and the adoption of the Russian model of the liturgy in the 18th century.

In the 19th and 20th centuries, the import of Russian artefacts continued. More and more local painters and theologians were educated in Russia, and Serbian art started to develop as a result of direct contact with Russian art.⁴ After the October Revolution, many members of the Russian intellectual elite, monks, bishops and artists found refuge in Serbia, strongly influencing Serbian religious life and culture. Nowadays, numerous icons, liturgical books and objects that are found in Serbian

◀ Fig. 1. *Privileges of Peter the Great, 1701. Historical Museum of Serbia, Belgrade.*

Courtesy of the Historical Museum of Serbia, Belgrade.

churches and monasteries originate from the Russian Empire, including the cities of Kyiv and Odessa. Most of them are “lower-quality ‘mass circulation’ icons (*разхожая*),”⁵ from the 17th to the early 20th centuries.

The history of the Serbian Orthodox monastery of Rakovica, located in a Belgrade suburb, is only partially known. We still do not know when it was built, but there are legends that suggest that it was founded by King Milutin, or some other Serbian medieval ruler.⁶ Sources testify that one of the founders or restorers was the Wallachian ruler Radu (most probably Radu the Great).⁷ What is certain is that the monastery had been continuously active since the beginning of the 17th century, except for some interruptions caused by the wars between Austria and Turkey. It was important for the ruling Obrenović dynasty in the 19th century, so they maintained it, adding some buildings and restoring the complex. The Church of the Holy Archangels even became the mausoleum of the dynasty’s cadet branch, because the last living member of the family, Tomanija Obrenović, buried her husband and all of their children there.⁸

The most valuable artefacts of Russian origin in Serbia were once kept at Rakovica, but its treasury no longer reflects Russia’s real impact and presence. The biggest blow to the monastery came after the Russo-Turkish War (1735-1739), in which Russia and the Habsburg Monarchy fought against the Ottoman Empire. Fearing Turkish reprisals for helping the Austrians in the war, the Serbian patriarch Arsenije IV organized a mass exodus of his people, known as the Second Migration of Serbs.⁹ The monks from Rakovica went with them and fled to Fruška Gora, to the monastery of Velika Remeta, which was located on Habsburg-controlled territory.¹⁰ They took the bulk of Rakovica’s movable property with them, and these items were never returned.¹¹ They included over 50 icons, a multitude of books, silver and gilded objects, as well as silk and velvet garments. Some of that property later ended up at the metropolitan’s court in Sremski Karlovci, some artefacts were sold off, and what was left in Velika Remeta was stolen during the Second World War.

Representatives of Rakovica Monastery in Russia.

The first representative of Rakovica Monastery in Russia was Neofit, the newly appointed Metropolitan of Belgrade in 1647.¹² He travelled to Moscow with a letter from the Rakovica monks in which they complained that “at their monastery the church roof was hollow, books were destroyed and vestments were scarce.” In pursuit of financial help, they also gave him an icon of Christ’s Ascension as a gift for the Russian Tsar Alexei Mikhailovich. Metropolitan Neofit and his entourage waited in the border town of Putyvl for three months for the tsar’s reply. Unfortunately, he refused to receive the delegation in Moscow, so they were eventually sent away, but received gifts in money and sable furs.¹³

In 1701, a second delegation was more fortunate. During the Great Turkish War, negotiations between Russian and Turkish delegates were enabled and assisted by the Serbian Patriarch Arsenije III and Serbian monks, including the hieromonk Grigorije from the monastery of Rakovica.¹⁴ Grigorije was fluent in Greek and Turkish so he was entrusted with the task of illegally carrying letters between the Russian emissary Procopius Bogdanovich Voznitsin, who was in Petrovaradin, and Alexander Mavrokordatos, the interpreter of the Turkish repre-



▲ Fig. 2. *Saint Nicholas of Zaraysk*, Spiridon Grigorjev 1687. Gallery of Matica Srpska, Novi Sad. Courtesy of the Matica Srpska gallery.

sentatives in Belgrade.¹⁵ Also, Grigorije was involved in transmitting secret messages and maintaining the connection between the Patriarch of Constantinople and the Russian envoy Yemelyan Ignatievich Ukraintsev. At the same time, he represented Serbian interests and conveyed the demands of the Serbian patriarch to the Russian envoys.¹⁶ In Sremski Karlovci, after seventy-two days of negotiations, on January 26, 1699, a peace was concluded for thirty years between the Ottoman Empire, on the one side, and the Habsburg Monarchy, Poland, and the Venetian Republic, on the other.¹⁷

Having successfully completed his diplomatic missions, in a bid to secure a better position and financial assistance for his monastery, Grigorije went to Russia, accompanied by hieromonk Arsenije and a servant. On their way to Russia, the representatives of Rakovica first met with the Wallachian prince Constantin Brâncoveanu, from whom they received a donation charter (*grammata*) through which he donated “a hundred large pieces of salt from a large saltworks” to the monastery. The charter allowed the monks of Rakovica to take the stated amount of salt every September and “to take it to any market to sell or even bring it to the monastery and not be stopped by anyone.”¹⁸ The Rakovica delegation arrived in Kyiv in March 1701, and then, via Baturyn and Putyvl, to Moscow. With their letters of recommendation from Constantin



▲ Fig. 3. *Mother of God with Christ Child and the prophets*, Leontije Stefanov 1687. Monastery Velika Remeta.

Credits: Ivana Ženarju Rajović.

Brâncoveanu, Patriarch Dositheos of Jerusalem, and Ivan Mazepa, Hetman of Zaporizhian Host, from Baturyn, the road to Moscow was wide open.¹⁹

It is not known what kind of gifts Grigorije brought to Russia, but it is known that his entire delegation received generous gifts in money, rubles, and sable fur in Moscow.²⁰ They stayed there longer than they had planned, and returned to Belgrade with a donation charter from Peter the Great (Fig. 1). Such charters were addressed to a senior official who represented the monastery, as well as determined the time interval of future visits to Moscow and members of the delegation. They state how often, for how many years, and how many monks could go to Russia to collect donations for their monastery.²¹

The Rakovica charter is written in ink on fine parchment, and richly decorated with tempera-painted floral ornaments with an abundance of gilding. It enabled Grigorije, and every future hegoumenos (abbot) of Rakovica, to collect aid in Moscow every seven years, with the help of three to four other monks.²² Today, it is kept in the Historical Museum of Serbia. In addition to this charter, the Rakovica delegation received four large-format icons, many liturgical books and textiles.²³ Also, the hegoumenos brought two more icons from Russia, which he intended to place on the Rakovica iconostasis.²⁴

Icons from the Armoury Chamber of the Moscow Kremlin.

Hegoumenos (abbot) Grigorije received four large-format icons as a gift from Peter the Great: Saint Nicholas of Zaraysk, the Mother of God with Christ Child and the prophets, Saint John the Baptist, and the Holy Three Hierarchs, all painted in 1687 in tempera on wood in the Moscow Armoury Chamber, and originally intended for Vatopedi Monastery on Mount Athos.²⁵ The Armoury Chamber was an imperial art centre for artists who painted palaces and churches, decorated various useful objects, furniture, books, made decorations and flags, ornaments on weapons, designed banknotes, as well as painted icons and portraits. When the new Romanov dynasty rose to power, the Armoury Chamber became the centre of imperial art, headed by the renowned painter Simon Ushakov.²⁶

The icon of *Saint Nicholas with the Virgin and Christ* was painted by Spyridon Grigoriev (Fig. 2). He was a student of the patriarchal iconographer Fyodor Yelizaryev and worked in the Armoury Chamber from 1671 to 1696.²⁷ At the bottom of the icon, there is the following inscription: *ЛѢТА ۞ЗРѢГ СІИ СТЫН ОБРАЗЪ ПИСАЛ ИКОНОПИСЕЦ СПІРДОНЪ ГРИГОРІЕВЪ*. Saint Nicholas is represented as a full-length figure surrounded by medallions with images of the Virgin and Christ. His arms are wide open, just like a Virgin Orans, holding a Gospel book in one hand, which represents the famous iconographic type of Saint Nicholas of Zaraysk, who protects from hardship, saves the helpless and afflicted.²⁸

The icon of the *Mother of God with Christ Child* (Fig. 3) and the prophets was painted by Leontij Stefanov, as stated in the inscription at the bottom of the icon: *ЛѢТА ۞ЗРѢГ ПИСАЛ СЕН СТЫН ОБРАЗЪ / ИКОНОПИСЕЦ ЛЕОНТИЕ СТЕФАНОВЪ*. Stefanov is mentioned in the registers of the Armoury Chamber from 1676 to 1688.²⁹ A monumental figure of the Virgin sitting on a throne and holding the Christ Child on her lap takes up the central part of the icon. On both sides, there are six oval medallions with figures of the prophets. They all have written scrolls in their hands, as well as different symbols glorifying the Virgin and the Incarnation. This theme has been known in religious art since the 14th century as *The Prophets foretold you*.³⁰ The icon is now kept in the monastery of Velika Remeta and revered as a miracle worker, and has its own liturgical service, composed by Bishop Hrizostom in 1982. Its celebration on August 24 (September 6) was established by the Bishop of Srem, Andrej Frušić, in 1983.

The icon of *Saint John the Baptist* was painted by Ivan Maksimov (Fig. 4), one of the most famous students and associates of Simon Ushakov. He painted portraits and icons, dabbled in the applied arts and became famous for painting miniatures in *Царский титулярник* (1672), *Книга избрания и венчания на царство цари и великого князя Михаила Федоровича* (1627) and *Толковое евангелие* (1678).³¹ At the bottom of the icon, under the saint's feet, there is the inscription: *۞ЗРѢГ ПИСАЛ ЗОГРАФЪ ІОАН МАКСИМОВЪ*. This icon represents Saint John with wings, as an angel of the desert and an angelic messenger of Christ's incarnation. The depiction includes important symbols such as Christ the Lamb in the chalice (Melismos) held in his hands, a tree with an axe, and excerpts from the Gospel that verbalize the image. Combining two basic iconographic types into one, the icon strongly emphasises sacrifice and repentance.

The icon of the *Holy Three Hierarchs* (Fig. 5) is one of the earliest preserved works of Tikhon Ivanov. After the



death of his father, Ivan Filatov, who painted the Church of the Assumption in Moscow and the Church of the Holy Trinity in the Kazan Monastery, Tikhon Ivanov distinguished himself as an imperial icon painter. He is considered one of the most faithful followers of Simon Ushakov. After the death of the latter, he became the first icon painter on the payroll of the Armoury Chamber, where he can be traced from 1687 to 1708. Ivanov primarily painted icons commissioned by members of the ruling dynasty.³² The inscription under the feet of St Gregory the Theologian reads: “#зрѣго пїсаа зогрѣ тїханъ ївановъ”. The icon shows Saint Basil the Great, Saint Gregory the Theologian, and Saint John Chrysostom, all painted on the same background as the above-mentioned Saint Nicholas by Spyridon Grigoriev.

We assume that the unsigned icons brought by the *hegoumenos* were also painted in the Armoury Chamber. One is the icon of the Mother of God of Tikhvin (Fig. 6), and the other is an icon of Christ (Fig. 7), both with accompanying donor's records.³³ On both icons, the in-



scriptions are positioned at the bottom, on the painted border. On the icon of the Virgin it is stated: поменї гдї рабѣ твоєгѣ грїгорїа ѿроумїа ѿроднїтеле єго (“O Lord, remember your servant hieromonk Grigoriye and his parents”).³⁴ The icon of Jesus Christ states almost the same: поменї гдї рабѣ грїгорїа ѿроумїа ѿроднїтеле єго (“O Lord, remember your servant hieromonk Grigoriye and his parents”).

Due to their large format, as well as exceptional workmanship and beauty, after Rakovica's monks fled to Velika Remeta, the Russian icons were given a prominent place in the interior of the church. The abbot's icons became despotic icons on both sides of the iconostasis. To the left of the Mother of God was the icon of Saint Nicholas of Zaraysk, and to the right of Christ was the icon of Saint John. The icons on the iconostasis were cleaned in 1850, at the time of the restoration of the new church, and placed in the golden frames in which they are still kept today.³⁵ They stayed in Velika Remeta until 1941 when the Independent State of Croatia occupied Srem in the Second World War, and almost all the monasteries in



Fruška Gora were severely damaged. Velika Remeta was plundered and destroyed, and some of its property ended up in Zagreb in 1941, in the Croatian State Museum of Arts and Crafts.³⁶

After the war, some icons were transferred to the Museum of the Serbian Orthodox Church in Belgrade, and from there to the treasury of Krušedol monastery. Since 1958, three of those icons have been in the Matica Srpska Gallery. The Mother of God with the prophets was returned to Velika Remeta, and now has its own following. The abbot's icon of Christ is also in Velika Remeta, but in the winter chapel in the residence. The icon of the Virgin with Christ is kept today in the Museum of the Serbian Orthodox Church in Belgrade.

Icons with silver revetments.

The Rakovica treasury includes several Russian icons from the 19th and 20th centuries, but most of them are mass-produced artefacts. However, in this category, there are three icons of some interest due to their silver revetments. These are two icons of the *Virgin with Christ Child* and one of the *Holy Mandylion*, all believed to have the apotropaic power of their prototypes. Like in other parts of the Balkans under Ottoman rule in the 19th century, there were many copies of miracle-working Russian icons, and even though the faithful usually knew nothing about their histories, they believed in their protective powers.³⁷ Silver revetments (*riza*, *oklad*), along with votive adornments, had various interpretations in Russian culture. They could be seen as an integral part of the icon and an element of the holistic spiritual experience, but also as redundant accessories that literally fetter the icon and its spiritual significance.³⁸



◀ Fig. 4. *Saint John the Baptist*, Ivan Maksimov 1687. Gallery of Matica Srpska, Novi Sad.

Courtesy of the Matica Srpska gallery.

◀ Fig. 5. *Holy Three Hierarchs*, Tikhon Ivanov 1687. Gallery of Matica Srpska, Novi Sad.

Courtesy of the Matica Srpska gallery.

➤ Fig. 6. *Mother of God with Christ Child*, unknown author. Museum of Serbian Orthodox Church, Belgrade.

Courtesy of the Historical Museum of Serbia, Belgrade.

▲ Fig. 7. *Jesus Christ*, unknown author. Monastery Velika Remeta.

Credits: Ivana Ženarju Rajović.

Both icons of the Virgin are copies of the miracle-working icon of the *Mother of God of Kazan*.³⁹ Their revetments are not of the same type. One has relief decoration with a combination of neoclassical and Baroque elements, along with zirkons on haloes connected by floral ornaments (Fig. 8). Its stamps have survived – the initials of the goldsmith, T. S. (T. C.), year of 1852, purity mark of 84 gold coins (*zlotnik*) and a rather faded stamp of the city of Moscow, showing Saint George killing the dragon. The other Kazan icon has a plain cover with engraved signatures *ѡѢ Ѣ8 КАЗАНСКА* (Fig. 9). The garments of the Virgin and Christ are covered with filigree, while their halos are made in the technique of cloisonné enamel in red, blue, white, and turquoise. These are typical for the very end of the 19th century. At the bottom of the metal cover, a purity mark of 84 gold coins and the initials PR (IIP) are present.

The Russian icon of the *Mandylion* from the Rakovica treasury has a plain revetment with relief parts that



▲ Fig. 8. *Mother of God of Kazan*, 1852. Monastery Rakovica.
Credits: Ivana Ženarju Rajović.

▼ Fig. 9. *Mother of God of Kazan*. Monastery Rakovica.
Credits: Ivana Ženarju Rajović.

▼ Fig. 10. *Holy Mandilion*. Monastery Rakovica.
Credits: Ivana Ženarju Rajović.



emphasise the corners in a neo-Baroque but simple shape (Fig. 10). Christ's face is painted in a naturalistic style, and the veil on the revetment has the form of a fabric with upper ends tied in knots, and with fringes in the lower part. The knots come from the Orthodox iconography of the 16th century, where two angels hold a towel in their hands.⁴⁰ The halo around Christ's head is embossed with radial rays and the initials OWH over them. In the lower part of the towel, there is a ribbon with the inscription: *нерукотворенныи образъ гдѣиши еіа хрѣста*.

Chromolithographs by Yefim Ivanovich Fesenko.

In the treasury of Rakovica monastery, there are two chromolithographs by Yefim Ivanovich Fesenko, titled *View of the Russian St. Andrew's Hermitage on the Holy Mount Athos from the southwest* (1903) and *View of Mount Athos from the north-east* (1908). They are colour lithographs made in the famous printing house founded in 1883 in Odessa, whose owner was the lithographer Fesenko, an honorary citizen of this city. His printing house, based at 47 Rishelyevskaya Street, produced many folk Orthodox books, brochures, and chromolithographs.⁴¹ Among other things, he published the *Album of Images of Holy Icons* (*Альбом изображений святых иконъ*) in 1894, which contains over a hundred different icons that were a source of style and iconography for many church artists. In Rakovica, we found one such example, the icon of the Presentation of the Virgin at the Temple, which was painted after Fesenko's chromolithograph of 1895.

Saint Andrew's hermitage is shown from a bird's eye view, under the protection of the Mother of God and the saints shown in the sky (Fig. 11). The seal was approved by the Saint Petersburg Committee for Spiritual Censorship, and the permission issued by Archimandrite Methodius in 1903 – "Отъ С. – Петербурскаго Духовнаго Цензурнаго Комитета печатать дозволяется. С. – Петербургъ, 23 мая 1903. г. Цензоръ Архимандритъ Меѳодій". The other lithograph shows Mount Athos as a map with numbered monasteries and a legend at the bottom. In

the left corner, there is data for the printing permit from Saint Petersburg Committee for Spiritual Censorship, “Дозволено ценз. С.-Петербургъ, 10 мая 1908. г.”, while the lithographer’s data are in the other corner, “Хромолитография Е. И. Фесенко, Ришель. Ул., соб. д. No. 49 въ Одессѣ”. There is also information such as “Адресъ, Св. Гора Аѳонъ Турція обитель Св. Троицы / Настоятелю іеромонаху Нифонту съ братіей (въ Кареѣ)” (“Address, Holy Mount Athos Turkey monastery of the Holy Trinity, to the abbot hieromonk Nifont with brotherhood (in Karyes)”) and “Адресъ чрезъ г. Одессу галвная почта ящикъ No. 74. / до вѣренному свято-троицкой обители для передачи на / Аѳонъ настоятелю іеромонаху Нифонту съ братіей” (“Address through Odessa main mail box No. 74 assigned to the fraternity of the Holy Trinity monastery for shipments to Athos to the abbot hieromonk Nifont and his brotherhood”). So, it was commissioned by hieromonk Nifont and the fraternity of the Holy Trinity in Karyes.

Liturgical books and objects.

Among the liturgical books and objects of Russian origin in Rakovica monastery, we find only an *Octoechos* (Book of Eight Tones) published in 1831 in the Kyiv-Pechersk

Lavra, a *Gospel Book* published in Moscow in 1872, and two silver utensils. Religious life and liturgical practice in Serbian Orthodox churches and monasteries was impossible to imagine without Russian liturgical books and objects in the 19th century. Therefore, the monastery’s inventory must have had more of them, but the fate of those items is unknown.

The *Gospel Book* was a gift from Tomanija Obrenović, one of the most prominent donors of the monastery in the 19th century. This liturgical book was one of many gifts she donated to the monastery. It was published by the Moscow Synod printing house, revetted with silver in 1874, and donated in 1879. It has some silver hallmarks, such as the initials of the goldsmith АПИ and the assayers mark И-Е. Also, there is a purity mark of 800 zolotniks, and an image of Saint George, a symbol of Moscow.⁴² On the inside of the front cover, there is an oval, horizontally placed silver plate with an engraved dedication: “Сіе Святое Евангеліе / Приложи ся Сіятельство

▼ Fig. 11. View of the Russian St. Andrew’s Hermitage on the Holy Mount Athos from the southwest, Jefim Ivanovich Fesenko (1903). Monastery Rakovica.

Credits: Ivana Ženarju Rajović.





▲ Fig. 12. Small artophorion for communion of the sick. Monastery Rakovica. Credits: Andrej Čukić.

▼ Fig. 13. Artophorion. Monastery Rakovica. Credits: Andrej Čukić.



Госпожа / Томнія Еф. Обреновичъ, обители Рако- / вичкой Храма Святаго Архистратига / Михаила 1879. лѣта" ("This Holy Gospel is a gift from Lady Tomanija Obrenović, wife of Jefrem, to the brotherhood of Rakovica and their church of the Holy Archangel Michael, in the year 1879").

The cover of the Gospel is completely silver-plated, with relief figurative, as well as floral and geometric decoration. On the smooth surface of the revetment, on the front cover, an oval field with the Resurrection of Christ is present in the middle. Around it, in the corners, there are round medallions with half-length representations of the evangelists and their symbols. All fields or medallions are connected by interlaces. An oval field with a much more elaborate frame and the scene of the Annunciation adorns the back cover. The edges of the back cover are decorated as well, and there is a round foot in each corner.

Both liturgical utensils in the monastery treasury serve for safekeeping the reserved Eucharist. One is the artophorion, a silver box shaped like a simple church structure (Fig. 13). It has a lid in the form of a hip roof, with a cross at the top and a shallow engraved image of Christ on the front. It has four ball feet and a keyhole in the middle of the front side.⁴³ The other liturgical item is a small artophorion for the communion of the sick (Fig. 12), which could be taken outside of the liturgical space of the church to serve communion to the sick and the dying. It contains miniature liturgical instruments inside – a small chalice with a communion spoon, a box for the presanctified gifts and an ampoule for wine.⁴⁴ Only 14.5 cm high, this box is shaped like the front façade of a domed, cross-in-square church, a common architectural form of Eastern Christian religious structures. A crucifix is engraved on the front, while the reverse features a cross with a crown of thorns. Another prominent feature of the decoration of this box is the characteristic Russian-Byzantine geometric interweaving. It is assumed that this unusual chalice was created later, but the spoon, with its Baroque profile and cross on the top, is from the original set. The box for the consecrated gifts can be pulled out of the tabernacle like a drawer.⁴⁵

The 4 cm high wine ampoule is bell-shaped, without any ornaments, with a screw cap. All items are punched with a hallmark indicating the purity of the silver of 84 *zlotniks*, also known as the Kokoshnik mark. This type of silver mark allows us to date this item between 1899 and 1908,⁴⁶ while the initials of the artist, MV, and the sign of the city of Moscow reveal its place of origin, if not the name of the creator himself.

The impact of Russian visual culture was widespread in the Serbian Orthodox Church, as evidenced by preserved examples in almost every church or monastery. The treasury of Rakovica monastery may not be the best example to illustrate the Russian presence in Serbia. However, in the era of great closeness with Russia, the monastery possessed some gifts from the Russian emperor Peter the Great, the only surviving examples of art from the Armoury Chamber in Serbian monasteries.

Since the monastic treasury was decimated in the subsequent wars, today these icons belong to another monastery. What is left in the treasury are modest examples that indicate the kinds of icons and books that could have been seen and used in Serbian churches in the 19th and early 20th centuries.

Notes:

- 1 The earliest preserved document in the first book of the Diplomatic Office, which testifies to Russian-Serbian ties and Russia's protective role, refers to the journey of monks Atanasije and Joanikije from the Belgrade monastery of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin, at the request of Metropolitan Teofan of Belgrade, in 1509. Долгова, Иванова 2009, p. 50.
- 2 See: Gerd 2020, p. 227-228.
- 3 Јовановић 1990, p. 19; Gerd 2020, p. 228.
- 4 Makuljević 2016, p. 137-148.
- 5 Boycheva 2016, p. 105.
- 6 Архимандрит Рувим 1909, p. 8; Флора 1956, p. 78-79.
- 7 It is confirmed by the donation charter from the Wallachian ruler Constantine Besarab, that is kept in The Archives of SASA in Sremski Karlovci (ASASAK, Collection of charters and diplomas, 1701, 25). It is published in: Флора 1956, p. 78-79.
- 8 Her husband Jevrem Obrenović was the youngest brother of Miloš Obrenović (Miloš the Great), Prince of Serbia from 1815 to 1839 and from 1858 to 1860.
- 9 The first migration took place during the Great Turkish War (1683-1699), when a significant part of the Serbian people from various Serbian areas under Turkish rule moved to the northern and western areas under the rule of the Habsburg Monarchy and the Venetian Republic. This exodus was led by the Serbian patriarch Arsenije III Crnojević.
- 10 Руварац 1906, p. 340.
- 11 Шафарик 1866, p. 234.
- 12 Neofit had already visited Moscow 6 years earlier, in 1641, and, as the Metropolitan of Hopovo, received help for Hopovo monastery. On that occasion, he received liturgical objects and books, vestments, money, as well as a donation charter with which he or another representative of the Hopovo monastery and his servants could return to seek help in 7-8 years. Димитријевић 1922, p. 200-201.
- 13 Долгова 2009, p. 264.
- 14 Костић 1958, p. 87.
- 15 Димитријевић 1901, p. 194.
- 16 Димитријевић 1901, p. 193-194.
- 17 Костић 1958, p. 87.
- 18 ASASAK, Collection of charters and diplomas, 1701, 25; Флора 1965, p. 73.
- 19 Documents concerning this visit to Russia were kept in The Moscow Main Archive of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (МГАМИД), and were published in: Димитријевић 1922, p. 222.
- 20 Grigorije received 45 rubles and 55 rubles, as well as 200 rubles in gratitude for his services to Russian diplomacy. Hieromonk Arsenije received 16 rubles and 30 in sable furs, and their servant 5 rubles. In addition, they received a donation of 100 rubles in sable furs for the monastery.
- 21 Many Serbian monasteries had such charters. Кантерев 1885, p. 133-134; Долгова, Иванова 2009, p. 54, 74-75.
- 22 Шафарик 1866, p. 230.
- 23 Димитријевић 1922, p. 222.
- 24 The icon of the Virgin was published in Момировић 1983: 287, but since then it has not been the subject of other analyses. The icon measures 108.2 x 74.8 x 3 cm. The icon of Christ was found during the last field research campaign in the monastery of Velika Remeta, in the summer of 2020.
- 25 Кантерев 1891, p. 522-523, also available at: www.odinblago.ru/priezd_zamilostineuvat. About these icon see also: Васић 1960, p. 79, 92-93, §. 54; Ракић 1986, p. 128; Makuljević 2016, p. 139.
- 26 Грабаръ 1910, p. 425-254; Антонова, Мнева 1963, p. 378-456; Писарская 1975, p. 9.
- 27 Антонова, Мнева 1963, p. 380; Васић 1960, p. 83; Ракић 1986, p. 135-136.
- 28 Шалина 2009, p. 272.
- 29 Васић 1960, p. 83; Ракић 1986, p. 140-143.
- 30 Милановић 1991, p. 410.
- 31 Антонова, Мнева 1963, p. 388, 408; Ракић 1986, p. 132-134.
- 32 Антонова, Мнева, 1963, p. 408, 424, 432-433; Васић 1960, p. 81, Ракић 1986, p. 138-139.
- 33 The Tikhvin Virgin is a variant of the Hodegetria type, where the Child's right foot is visible beneath his himation. On the icon of Mother of God of Tikhvin see: Lossky 1989, p. 85.
- 34 Момировић 1983, p. 290.
- 35 Ракић 1986, p. 129.
- 36 Ракић 1986, p. 30; Симић 2014, p. 625-626.
- 37 See: Gergova 2016, p. 149-157.
- 38 Shevzov 2007, p. 83-84.
- 39 On the icon of Mother of God of Kazan see: Преображенский 2019.
- 40 Пејић 2003, p. 80; Скоп 2020, p. 632-633.
- 41 Лабйынцев, Щавинская 2017, p. 11-19.
- 42 Вујовић 1973, p. 277-278; Даутовић 2016, p. 162, 194-195.
- 43 Даутовић 2021, p. 611.
- 44 Даутовић 2021, p. 621.
- 45 The box is 4 cm wide, while its depth and height are 2.5 cm each.
- 46 Даутовић 2021, p. 621.

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