

mach, Leo the Isaurian (717-741) was reigning. Father Stephen was offered hospitality by the most holy Patriarch Germanos (716-730) and remained there for about one year. The patriarch then sent him into Bithynia to a place called Chenolakkos or "Goose Pond," northeast of Trigleia,¹¹ situated near Moudanion. Father Stephen built a monastery in that place, where he gathered a multitude of monks. He taught and instructed them in the fear of the Lord. He ascended the heights of perfection and came to the "measure of the stature of the fullness of the Christ [Eph. 4:13]." The monks of Chenolakkos always had icons and later supported the restoration of the holy icons by the Second Synod of Nicaea (787). After the ever-memorable Stephen had lived a God-pleasing life, being established and anointed by God Who sealed him and gave him the earnest of the Spirit in his heart [cf. 2 Cor. 1:22], he passed over to that future glory and blessedness. His soul flew from the lower realm to the upper and heavenly abode, being seen by his disciples to ascend in glory and to be conducted into the heavens.

**On the 14th of January, the holy Church commemorates
the holy Martyr AGNES,
who finished her contest in a dark prison.¹²**

**On the 14th of January, the holy Church commemorates
our venerable Father SAVA,
Archbishop of Serbia,
Builder of Hilandar Monastery on Mount Athos.¹³**

¹¹ Trigleia (Triglia; Turk. Tirilye) situated near Moudanion.

¹² This Saint Agnes is not to be confused with the other martyr of the same name, who is commemorated by the holy Church on the 21st of January and suffered martyrdom by fire.

¹³ The Life of this saint was taken primarily from the *Neon Eklogion* of Nikodemos the Hagiorite, which text appears in *The Great Synaxaristes* (in Greek). Collateral sources are noted in the English version.

Father and son, Saints Symeon and Sava of Serbia, are considered the founders of the Hilandar Monastery, but their story does not end here. In addition to Hilandar, both are regarded as joint builders (*ktitores*) of Great Lavra, Iveron, and the main church at Karyes. Saint Sava is also considered one of the builders of other great Athonite monasteries, including Vatopedi, Karakallou, Xeropotamou, and Philotheou. He also built a church belonging to Vatopedi in Prosfori (modern Ouranoupolis) outside Athos, and flanked it with a tower. The donations that both he and his family lavished upon the Athonites are renowned.

Sava (Savvas), our holy father, was from Serbia. His father, Stefan Nemanja,¹⁴ was the pious grand župan¹⁵ of Raška, that is, Serbia.¹⁶ His mother's name was Anna, who also was the scion of royal lineage. At that time, the Serbs attempted to gain their independence from the Byzantines. However, Emperor Manuel I Komnenos (1143-1180) managed to suppress these outbreaks. In 1166 or 1167, Nemanja had been appointed grand župan by Manuel I. With Hungarian and Venetian support, Nemanja rebelled against the Byzantines successfully. Then, in 1172, Manuel I, with a large Byzantine army, attacked Nemanja. Forced to surrender, he was taken captive to Constantinople.¹⁷

In 1183, Nemanja was restored to power as a Byzantine vassal. After the death of Manuel I, Nemanja again rebelled against Byzantium. In alliance with Béla III of Hungary, they invaded Byzantine territory. Though the allies sacked Belgrade, Braničevo, Niš, and Sofia, Nemanja kept control over Niš.

¹⁴ The name Nemanja, where the *j* is pronounced as the *y* in yes, is the same as the Hebrew prophet's name Nehemias (Nehemiah). In 1113, Nemanja was born in Ribnica in Diocleia and reposed at Hilandar on the 13th day of February, in the year 1199.

¹⁵ Grand župan means "satrap" in Byzantine terminology. Note: *ž* is pronounced like *s* in pleasure or Asia. This title is used by the Greek historian Niketas Choniates when referring to Stefan Nemanja. Dimitri Obolensky, *Six Byzantine Portraits*, p. 115.

¹⁶ Serbia was a medieval Balkan state. In Latin sources it is sometimes referred to as Rascia (Rassia, Raxia), derived from the Slavic name Raška. The term "Serbian" appears in 9th C. Latin texts in the form *Sorabi* describing a people living in Dalmatia. Note: *š* is pronounced *sh*.

¹⁷ Nemanja was deserted by his allies, the Venetians and Hungarians. Niketas Choniates comments that when Nemanja observed the emperor was in pursuit, the župan "showed himself in battle...and then hid in the cover of mountain caves which he sealed with stones." It is then recorded that Nemanja surrendered, having prostrated himself at Manuel's feet. Pleading not to be handled cruelly, he was further filled with anguish at the prospect of losing sovereignty over his people and of having his political power transferred to those whom he previously overcame. *Historia*, ed. I. van Dielen (Berlin, 1975), 158. See Obolensky, loc. cit.

Another contemporary historian, John Kinnamos, records that "Nemanja asked that he might gain an audience with him (Manuel) without personal risk. So when the emperor assented, he came and approached the tribunal, with head uncovered and arms bare to the elbow, and feet unshod; a halter was about his neck, and a sword in his hand. He offered himself to the emperor for whatever treatment the emperor willed. Having mercy on him for this, he (Manuel) set the accusation aside. After this success, the emperor departed Serbia, and the grand župan went with him." Joannes Cinnamus, *Historiae*, bk. 6, ed. A. Meineke (Bonn, 1836), 287, 288; *Deeds of John and Manuel Comnenus by John Kinnamos*, tr. C.M. Brand (New York, 1976), 215. See Obolensky, pp. 115, 116.

The grand župan expanded his territory to the east and south, and united Zeta with Raška.



Saints Sava and Symeon

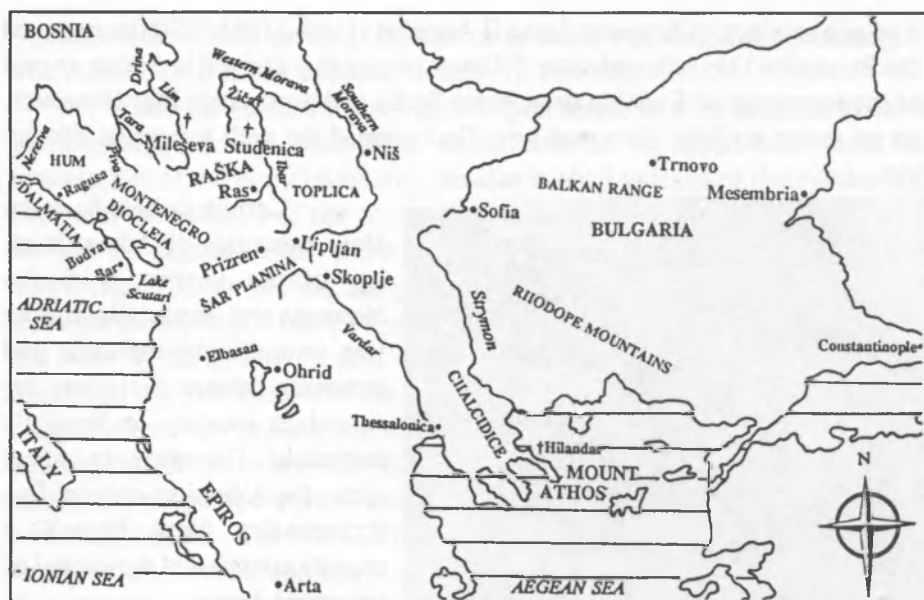
writings. After a little while, he was instructed in all the ecclesiastical books available in his native tongue. He manifested such qualities as understanding, prudence, discipline, continence, humility, and a cheerful disposition, so that all who beheld him loved and revered him. Hence, as the prince increased in age, the more so did his love toward God intensify. He gave himself over entirely to divine love. Nought occupied his mind other than how to please his Creator and Fashioner, God. Day and night he continually prayed, undertaking struggles with fasting, vigils, and diverse voluntary hardships.

One medieval biographer writes that when Rastko was fifteen years old, Nemanja gave him a province to govern near the western borders of the state (Hum or Hercegovina). The pious young man was its provincial governor for two years.

Prince Rastko of Serbia

The imperial couple, Stefan Nemanja and Anna, were devout Orthodox Christians. They had two sons, Vukan and Stefan (born ca. 1165). However, the queen took sick and was no longer able to bear children. Though they had a kingdom and many riches, nonetheless, with tears and fasting, they entreated our holy God to bestow another child unto them. Circa 1170 or 1175, the Lord hearkened unto their supplications and granted them a third child, the ever-memorable Rastko, or Sava in the monastic tonsure.

From his earliest youth, Rastko was first educated in the sacred



Serbia and Her Balkan Neighbors, Ca. 1200

Then, when he was seventeen years old, since he loved virginity, he besought God to vouchsafe him a life according to Christ. The man-loving God would grant the desire of his heart at the appropriate time.

In the early 1190s, Nemanja attempted to improve relations with Byzantium.¹⁸ He achieved this by having his second son, Stefan, marry

¹⁸ By this time, the territory of the Serbian state extended from the lower reaches of the rivers Morava and Drina in the north to Šar Planina in the south, while in the southwest it included the coasts of Southern Dalmatia and Montenegro. The stretch of the Adriatic coast and its interior was first known as Diocleia and later as Zeta. This annexation in the 1180s added to Raška a sizeable minority which owed allegiance to Rome. A Latin presence in this predominantly maritime region was balanced by Greek jurisdiction over the interior, in the person of the Bishop of Ras, capital of Raška, near Novi Pazar, who was a suffragan of the autocephalous Archbishop of Ohrid.

Moreover, this dualism is reflected in Nemanja's own life. In his native Diocleia, as an infant, he was made to receive the Latin sacrament of baptism by a Latin priest. Later, while still a young child, he was received into the Orthodox Church by the Orthodox Bishop of Ras. See Obolensky, pp. 117, 118. Evidence is at variance whether he was received by the Orthodox Mystery of holy Baptism or by the Orthodox Mystery of Chrismation.

Evdokia, a niece of Emperor Isaac II Angelos (1185-1195).¹⁹ Stefan received the Byzantine title *sebastokrator*.²⁰ Greek monks that arrived in Serbia as part of the entourage of Evdokia drew some Serbs to the monastic life. However, let us return to Saint Sava and how God opened the path to eternal life for him.



Saints Symeon and Sava

Certain fathers from the Holy Mountain of Athos, hearing of the virtues of Stefan Nemanja and, especially, that he was exceedingly merciful and generous toward the poor, resolved to journey to Rastko's homeland. Therefore, to collect alms, the Athonites entered Ras (present-day Novi Pazar), a mountain town and the capital of the grand župan.

Stefan Nemanja, as we mentioned earlier, was a God-fearing man. Though he could well afford to live luxuriously, both he and his family led a simple life in a modestly

appointed residence. When Nemanja was younger, in 1183, he founded the Studenica Monastery in a wooded valley of a tributary of the Ibar near Ušće, in south central Serbia. The church, with its white polished marble, combined architectural features of the Byzantine and Romanesque traditions. Within the monastery enclosure, he had been responsible for commencing the building of the Church of the Virgin and the independent Chapel of Saint Nicholas. Hence, the Athonites chose to request donations of this man. Among the traveling brethren were those of the Russian Monastery or Monastery of the

¹⁹ Nemanja's first military engagement with Byzantium took place in the autumn of 1190, when Emperor Isaac II's army vanquished his troops on the river Morava. Ibid., p. 119.

²⁰ The *sebastokrator* was the highest title, following that of co-emperor and later *despotes*, conferred on the emperor's sons and brothers. *Oxford*, s.v. "Stefan Nemanja" and "Sebastokrator."

This title, no less than the marriage, marked Serbia's incorporation, as an autonomous state, into the Byzantine cultural commonwealth. Obolensky, loc. cit.

Thessalonian, which came to be known as Saint Panteleimon Monastery.²¹ The monks, of Russian descent, were very virtuous.

When the blessed Rastko gazed upon them, he was desirous to enter into conversation with them. After he had done so, he asked them about the monasteries of the Holy Mountain. He also wished to learn of their order and rule, and the conduct of life of the monastics, and whatever else was useful toward his ultimate aim. When he was informed by them, concerning the divine life of the monastics, this promoted further warmth in his heart, so that tears streamed forth from his eyes. After he had wept sufficiently, he said to the elder of the group, "I see, O father, that God knows the depths of my heart and my intention. He has sent thee here to me, the sinner, that thou mayest direct me toward the divine path, because my soul rejoices upon hearing thy divine words, so that I am unable to abide any longer in this erring and misguided world—neither do I wish to behold its fallacies, deceits, and imaginations. Therefore, I beseech thee to instruct me how to leave the vanity of this world, and attain to the same manner of life that thy holiness lives, because my parents are considering having me marry shortly. For this reason, I decided one hour earlier to depart hence and repair to the Holy Mountain. In this matter, O holy father, I ask thine advice."

After listening to him speak, the elder answered, "I perceive, my child, that thine intention is excellent and appointed of God; moreover, I see that the love of God dominates thy soul. Indeed, what thou dost contemplate, thou must do as quickly as possible. I shall be thy traveling companion and guide, until I take thee to the Mountain." Then, contriving a method of escape, Rastko arranged with the elder to meet at a certain place. Rastko then went to his parents, and said to his father, "I heard that such a mountain has much game; and I beg you to give me leave and your blessing to go hunting that I might amuse myself for a short while. I beseech you not to become angry with me." After his father granted him permission and gave him as many menservants as he required, Nemanja blessed him.

The blessed Rastko, with unbounded joy, anticipated his meeting with the elder who went ahead, where he waited for the young prince at a prearranged place. In the meantime, Rastko commanded those in his hunting party to sit a while and wait for him. Rastko then departed and went with the elder into a hamlet, where he changed his imperial garb. They entered some poor home, and Rastko donned beggarly clothing. Thereupon, Rastko and the

²¹ The Russian Monastery then stood about two miles northeast of the present Saint Panteleimon Monastery.

elder set off for the Russian Monastery on the Holy Mountain.²² Once there, Rastko was instructed and trained by that same elder in the monastic conduct of life. The young man, revering his elder, as was befitting, performed with great eagerness and obedience all that was commanded of him.

His parents, in the meantime, wept inconsolably. To every quarter, they dispatched men who were ordered to make an elaborate search, because the parents could not endure being deprived of such a comely, wise, and prudent son whom his father intended to make successor to his kingdom. The grand župan's men were sent everywhere. Among them, three leading men were sent to Athos to conduct an exact examination. It was not long before they learned that a group of recently-arrived Serbs was at the Russian Monastery. Nemanja's armed men sought and found the young prince at this monastery. Though Rastko, with tears, pleaded to be left alone, the Serbian officers would not withdraw. At this juncture, Rastko contrived another plan to elude his father's persistent agents. He told them to rest and wait until the following day.

Then, by night, secretly, the blessed Rastko entered the monastery tower, where he importuned the elder to tonsure him to the Angelic Schema of the monastics. He received the tonsure and was renamed Sava, after the great Palestinian father, Saint Savvas the Sanctified, commemorated by the holy Church on the 5th of December. Afterward, he composed a lengthy epistle to his parents, concerning the end of the age and the blessedness of the saints. He also wrote about the vanity of this world and unending punishments. The following morning, when the Serbs sought Rastko and could not find him, they laid blows upon the other monks to make them reveal his whereabouts. Sava, hearing the shouts and cries of the brethren, appeared before them as a monk. He cast down his gold-embroidered princely robes,

²² The flight of Rastko and the rest of his life are told in four medieval Church Slavonic documents, but with several discrepancies. We, too, will refer to the following:

1. *The Life of Stefan Nemanja*, by Rastko-Sava (ca. 1208). See *Spisi*, s.v. "Save," ed. V. Ćorović (Belgrade-Sremski Karlovci, 1928), 151-175.

2. *Vita of Nemanja*, by son Stefan (1216). See V. Ćorović, "Medjusobni odnošaj biografija Stevana Nemanje," *Svetosavski zbornik*, i (Belgrade, 1936).

3. *Life of Sava*, by Athonite Monk Domentijan (Vienna, 1242/3; St. Petersburg, 1253/4). See Domentijan, *Život svetoga Simeuna i svetoga Save*, ed. Dj. Daničić (Belgrade, 1865).

4. Teodosije Hilandarac, *Život svetoga Save*, ed. Dj. Daničić (Belgrade, 1860; repr. Belgrade, 1973). Cf. C. Müller-Landau, *Studien zum Stil der Sava-Vita Teodosijes* (Slavistische Beiträge, 57 Munich, 1972). The Athonite Monk Teodosije wrote in the late 13th or early 14th C.

together with the hair shorn at his tonsure, and said, "Take these signs away with you: Show them that you found me alive, as a monk of God, with the name of Sava."²³ He then presented the epistle to be given to his parents. Nothing more could be done by the Serbian agents. They remonstrated with the new monk, so that the Serbs and even Sava himself shed tears.

Though Sava was quickly made a monk, this did not occasion prideful thoughts on his behalf. Considering himself the least member in the brotherhood, he submitted to all. However, he remained only a few months at this monastery when, at the Feast of the Annunciation, the hegumen of the great Athonite Monastery of Vatopedi invited the hegumen of Panteleimon to attend. Sava was asked to accompany him. The young Serbian monk made a favorable impression upon the hegumen of Vatopedi, who invited him to remain at the Greek monastery. With the Russian abbot's permission, Sava left for Vatopedi, where he would dwell and struggle for twelve years.

This sudden move to a Greek monastery was God's providence working in young Sava's life. At Vatopedi, since Greek was all that was spoken and chanted in the services, at length, Sava learned the Greek tongue perfectly. He also read at the divine offices and sang in the choir. As a result, he immersed himself at the monastery's rich library where manuscripts of the Greek fathers were preserved.

Returning for a moment to the day of Sava's tonsure, we resume with the Serbian officers who returned to Ras and the royal couple, to whom the chief officer presented Sava's epistle. Upon reading the epistle, they wept exceedingly and mourned the loss of their son; yet the letter also made an indelible impression upon his aged and doting parents. By his God-inspired words, he drew his beloved parents to compunction, so they too began to contemplate the monastic life for their final years.

After Nemanja composed himself, he responded to Sava by asking that he return home for a visit. Moreover, out of his love for God and his son, Nemanja desired that his son succeed in his chosen life and new country. Therefore, he sent him gifts for distribution among Sava's fellow ascetics on Athos.

After receiving the blessing of Vatopedi's hegumen and that of the *protos* (the head of the monasteries),²⁴ the holy Sava distributed his father's largess among the great coenobitic monasteries, but he did not overlook the hermits and the dwellers in the cells and small monasteries (*kellia*). As a bee

²³ Panagiotes Christou, *The Holy Mountain*, p. 75.

²⁴ The *protos* (lit. "the first monk") of Mount Athos was elected by an assembly of monks at Karyes. Assisted by the *hegumenoi* (abbots), he administered justice and had disciplinary powers over the monks of Athos.

collecting honey amid the choice flowers, so Sava stored up for himself the precious teachings and experiences of the monks and the monasteries that he visited. He not only showered gifts upon them, but also partook of their way of life. The imperial donations included gold, liturgical vessels of gold and silver, rich embroideries, and brocades. Though Sava preferred traveling barefooted, he did not neglect to give as gifts beasts of burden for riding and transporting goods.

The brotherhood of Vatopedi, of course, also benefitted greatly. Saint Sava not only oversaw the construction of residences, buildings, and three chapels, but also participated by laboring physically.²⁵ In fact, Sava built a place to dwell for both father and son. Though ten of his twelve years had already passed at Vatopedi, Sava had not laid eyes on his father. They did, however, correspond, wherein each would ask the other to come for a visit. Then, in a final letter, Sava was stern with his father, warning him not to set aside his invitation another time, or "abandon the hope of seeing me in the next life."²⁶

The many seeds of piety that Sava planted in the souls of his mother and father, God granted to come to fruition. Anna resolved to become a nun, and received the Angelic Schema at a woman's monastery. As the Nun Anastasia, she lived a God-pleasing and sanctified life, up to the time of her blessed translation unto the Lord. The saint's father, Nemanja, in March of 1196, abdicated in favor of Stefan the First-crowned, while giving the governance of Zeta to Vukan. The latter ruled them as king of Dalmatia and Diocleia. Nemanja then received the monastic tonsure from Bishop Kalinik, taking the name Symeon. He then repaired to the monastery that he founded, Studenica. After Nemanja's abdication and tonsure, Stefan's ascendancy as grand župan would later be opposed by Vukan, the elder brother of Stefan and Saint Sava.

While abiding at Studenica for about eighteen months, Symeon followed the rule and order of the monastery. His stay was not without benefit to this monastery. Symeon gave it a sound economic base, appointed Hieromonk Dionysios as abbot, and also arranged for his own grave. The temple of the Virgin at Studenica, as his burial church, was built of finely dressed local marble. After he had arranged all these things, the holy Symeon set his mind toward the Holy Mountain and his beloved and youngest son Sava. In November of 1197, the elderly Monk Symeon, at eighty-four years of age,

²⁵ Saint Sava endowed Vatopedi with many other things, too difficult to enumerate, so that he was accorded the title of "The second founder of Vatopedi," after Emperor Theodosios the Great in the 4th C. See Velimirović, *The Life of Saint Sava*, p. 22.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 23.

arrived at Vatopedi. He was welcomed with great rejoicing and reverence by the brethren. The old man, indeed, had not come empty-handed. He brought rich presents from Serbia to distribute to everyone, including gifts for the churches, useful articles for the brethren, and horses and mules.

All the years that Sava spent building, he did not neglect his asceticism. As he practised mental prayer, calling upon the name of our Savior, saying, "Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy upon me," the demons were scourged, as he sought to be brought "to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of the Christ [Eph. 4: 13]." Yet, now, after ten years of waiting and praying, at twenty-seven years of age, he would behold his aged father again. Upon meeting, overcome with emotion and longing, they fell into each other's embrace, shedding a torrent of tears between them. However, not only those of Vatopedi greeted the former and renowned grand župan and soldier, founder of the Nemanjid Dynasty and the independent Serbian state, but also the *protos*, abbots, and monks from all the monasteries came to greet the Monk Symeon.



Saint Symeon Nemanja

It was Symeon's desire to live with his son who, years earlier, prepared a dwelling place for the both of them.²⁷ Thereupon, both holy men remained and dwelt together a sufficient time and led wondrous lives. Through their generosity, Vatopedi was also a recipient of many improvements, including three more churches, new hospices, and new vineyards. This

²⁷ There appears to be a discrepancy regarding when the Monk Symeon took his monastic vows. Bishop Nikolai Velimirović (p. 25) records that Bishop Kalinik tonsured Nemanja on the 25th day of March, in the year 1196. However, Nikodemos the Hagiorite states that Nemanja received the Angelic Schema from his own son; he even remarks that as Symeon was Sava's physical father, yet Sava was Symeon's spiritual father. See *The Great Synaxaristes* (in Greek), vol. i, p. 306 and vol. ii (5th ed., 1978), p. 334, n.1. Perhaps what is meant is that Symeon received the highest monastic grade, the Great and Angelic Schema, from Saint Sava.

did not distract Symeon and Sava, who struggled daily with fasting, all-night vigils, and prayers. In a little while, both became masters of continence and temperate in the passions of the flesh. They attained the summit of virtue, more so than all the fathers found on the Mountain. Thus, they became worthy vessels of the All-Holy Spirit. Since the good report of their virtue incited many Serbians in their former homeland to join them as monastics, it could be seen, every day, that the Serbian group on Athos was increasing. It soon became evident that they needed to build their own monastery.

Hence, the holy fathers fasted a sufficient number of days and kept vigil with fervor to our Lady Theotokos. They invoked her that she might direct them to the holy will of God and where to build the monastery. By divine vision, this was revealed unto them. The new Grand Župan Stefan II requested the fathers at Vatopedi to give his father and brother the ruined settlement of Hilandar,²⁸ in an area about twelve miles northwest of Vatopedi called Meleon, not far from the north coast of the peninsula. The gift was ratified by the chrysobull of Emperor Alexios III (1197), who was their in-law.²⁹ By special edict, Alexios transferred Hilandar and its surroundings from the jurisdiction of the *protos*, and placed them under Vatopedi's hegumen. Protos Gerasimos and the abbots of many of the minor monasteries were against the assimilation of the small monastic houses by the large monasteries. Therefore, they intervened in favor of Hilandar remaining independent. Emperor Alexios was persuaded and made it an independent monastery, stipulating that it should be a gift in perpetuity to the Serbs.³⁰ Therefore, in June of 1198, Alexios III canceled his earlier *sigillion*, an imperial document with his seal. He submitted Hilandar and its surroundings to Vatopedi, placing it under the authority and management of Symeon and Sava. Hence, they now had a monastery that was independent and self-governing for their people on the northeastern side of the peninsula.

As soon as father and son settled at Hilandar by July of 1198, they commenced the reconstruction and expansion of the existing buildings. Stefan II also contributed an enormous amount of gold and silver toward enlarging the coenobium. Though the strength of the aged Symeon was waning quickly, they both built a new church and added a refectory. Sava, of course, hired

²⁸ The name Hilandar or Chelandari first appears at the end of the 10th C. Its founder was probably George Chelandrios ("the Boatman"), the author of an official Act of the Mountain dating from that period. By 1015, it was deserted and had been handed over to the Kastamonitou (Konstamonitou) Monastery, located in the interior of the peninsula, between Docheiariou and Zographou. *Oxford*, s.v. "Hilandar."

²⁹ The wife of Stefan II, the grand župan, was Evdokia, Alexios' daughter.

³⁰ Sotiris Kadas, *Mount Athos*, p. 87; Christou, loc. cit.

many artisans to build not only the church, but also the cells and other needful structures. Symeon, in 1198, probably with Sava's input, drafted the monastery's earliest foundation-charter. In 1199, at Sava's k Ellison in Karyes, he composed a *Typikon* based on the rule of the Evergetis Monastery at Constantinople,³¹ which is still in force. Sava, with his father's approval, appointed Hieromonk Methodios as the superior. The new and beautiful church, which they built from the foundation at their own expense, was dedicated to the Entrance of the Virgin Mary into the Temple, which the holy Church celebrates on the 21st of November.³² Not much time passed before other Serbians, both noblemen and menservants, took their monastic vows at Hilandar.

The holy Elder Symeon was now eighty-six years old. He lived a righteous and God-pleasing monastic life. Knowing that his translation was imminent, he instructed his son to bury him, in due time, at the grave that he had prepared earlier at Studenica. Saint Sava, writing his father's biography, gives us the following account: "My father said, 'My child, bring me (the icon of) the most holy Mother of God, for I have made a vow to yield up the

³¹ When Saint Sava traveled to Constantinople, at his father's behest, to secure the chrysobull of Alexios declaring Hilandar independent, he stayed at the Monastery of the Holy Virgin Evergetis, that is, the Benefactress, which is located outside the city walls. See Velimirović, p. 33. Moreover, Evergetis regarded both Symeon and Sava as among their monastery's greatest benefactors and builders (*kititores*). See Obolensky, p. 132.

The *Typikon* or Constitution, drawn up by Sava, using Evergetinos as a model, appointed two overseers, the hegumen (abbot) for spiritual matters, and the *æconomos* (steward) for administrative and business affairs. Upon the repose of the abbot, he was to be replaced by the steward, and the brotherhood would elect a new steward. See Christou, p. 76. Saint Sava's *typikon* included detailed rulings on the Liturgy, Confession, Communion, fasting, clothing, conduct inside church and the refectory, and the monastery's autonomy. See Obolensky, loc. cit.

³² The katholikon (main church) of Hilandar is reputed to be one of the most lovely churches on Athos. The original katholikon, built in 1198, was replaced in 1303 by a new and larger church erected with the donations of King Milutin (1282-1321). The last addition to the main church, from 1396, was an exonarthex donated by Prince Lazar Hrebeljanovich (d. 1389). Frescoes in the main church were painted in 1303 by iconographers who adorned churches in Serbia at that time, though now they are under more recent layers of frescoes. Icons in the exonarthex were executed in the 19th C. Adjacent to the katholikon, east and slightly to the north, is the Tower of Saint Sava. Today, only the lower portion is from his time; whereas, the upper part is from the days of King Milutin. Saint George's Tower is also from the time of the saint. Mateja Matejic, *The Holy Mount and Hilandar Monastery*, pp. 30, 31.



Saint Symeon

spirit in front of her.' And when his command had been carried out, toward the evening, he said, 'My child, do me a service of love; clothe me in the rason appointed for my funeral and place me in the same sacred position in which I shall lie in my coffin. Spread matting on the ground. Lay me upon it and place a stone under my head, that I may lie here until the Lord should come to visit me and take me hence.' I did all this, even as he commanded. And all of us who looked on wept bitterly.... He received the salutations of all the brethren and, with love in his heart, asked everyone's forgiveness and blessing. When night had fallen, they all took their leave of him; and, after receiving his blessing, they returned to their cells to do what they had to do and rest a little. I and a priest whom I had kept with me remained by his side all that night. At midnight, the blessed father fell silent and spoke to me no longer.

"When morning came and the singing of the Praises began in the church, the blessed father's face was suddenly illumined, and he looked up to heaven, and said, 'Praise God in His sanctuary, praise Him in the firmament of His power [Ps. 150:1].' I said to him, 'Father, whom dost thou see as thou speakest these words?' He looked at me and said to me, 'Praise Him for His mighty acts, praise Him according to the multitude of His greatness [Ps. 150:2].' And when he had said this, he, straightaway, yielded up his godly spirit and reposed in the Lord."³³ The date of his repose was the 13th day of February, in the year 1199.

With the death of his father, Sava went into seclusion and increased his ascetic contests with extreme fasting. In Karyes, the holy man had purchased a hermitage, a hesychasterion, where, in the company of one or two other monks, he retired to a life of solitary prayer. Though he was vouchsafed heavenly visions, he also succumbed to a perpetual disease of the spleen. In one of his visions, his father appeared to him and said, "Thou shalt be honored with two crowns, one ascetic and the other apostolic; and both of

³³ Sava, pp. 169, 170; Obolensky, pp. 138, 139.

us shall enjoy everlasting bliss."³⁴ By this sacred appearance, Sava understood that he should return to Hilandar for the one-year memorial of his father.

In the spring of 1199, Sava undertook a trip to Constantinople seeking to increase Hilandar's revenues. In June, Alexios issued another chrysobull confirming the rights of the builder Sava and the full autonomy of Hilandar. The monastery also received land and the buildings of the abandoned monastery of Zygon on Athos' western edge. Hilandar also was granted permission to own a tax-free boat to help transport supplies.³⁵

At his father's one-year memorial, the blessed Sava invited the *protos* of the Mountain and the reverend fathers. They conducted a vigil on behalf of the blessed soul of Sava's father. Then, during the doxology, such an ineffable fragrance emitted from the grave of Saint Symeon that it permeated all of the monastery. The fathers approached the grave and beheld myrrh gushing from out of the tomb. Thereupon, they glorified God Who glorifies those that glorify Him. The sacred Sava received great joy in his soul, because the blessed repose and sanctified relics of his father were glorified.

Thereafter, he gave himself over to even greater fasts and vigils; and, in a prodigious fashion, he applied himself in other contests of asceticism that are impossible to describe. Since it was not meet that such virtue should be kept concealed, by God's œconomy, the righteous Sava was made manifest unto all. Daily, many came seeking his spiritual teachings and instructions. Among those that came for counsel was Protos Dometios of the Mountain, though he, too, was a virtuous and Spirit-bearing elder. Not only Dometios, but the other monastery heads as well, regarded the venerable Sava as their chief counselor. Indeed, without his opinion, no matter was decided, since the grace of the Holy Spirit, dwelling within Sava, enlightened his mind so that he uttered all that was beneficial to the soul and toward salvation. In fact, he was so beloved that they enjoined him to accept the dignity of the priesthood. Though they attempted to compel him, the humble-minded Sava would simply say that he was unworthy; and, oftentimes, he would even conceal himself. Finally, so as not to appear disobedient, and perceiving that it was God's will, he said, "Let the Lord's will be done." As a result, he was ordained a deacon and a priest in his monastery by the then Bishop of Ierissos, Nicholas.³⁶

Then, the Archbishop of Thessalonike, Constantine Mesopotamites, hearing of the virtues of the priest-monk from Hilandar, after much entreaty,

³⁴ Velimirović, p. 40.

³⁵ *Acts de Chilandar*, no. 5, pp. 11-15.

³⁶ The Bishop of Ierissos had no jurisdiction over Mount Athos. However, he was authorized, if requested, to ordain Athonite monks to the diaconate and priesthood. Obolensky, p. 133.

brought him to Thessalonike. They conversed for a number of days, whereby the hierarch received immense spiritual profit. Not only Constantine, but also



Saint Sava

other bishops, clergy, and layfolk were instructed thoroughly by Sava's soul-benefitting teachings. Hence, the archbishop, in concert with his bishops and all the clergy, decided to elevate him to a higher dignity on one Sunday. Therefore, while the saint was preaching to the people in the main church of the city, Hagia Sophia, suddenly, though he did not want it, he was made an archimandrite by three bishops and Archbishop Constantine. The holy man, due to the excessive honor and reverence they bestowed upon him, departed secretly and returned to his monastery.

In the year 1204, when the Crusaders plotted to assassinate Emperor Alexios V Doukas Mourtzouphlos (1204), they failed. After planning another assault on the city, on the

12th of April, both Crusader and Venetian forces attacked the sea walls of Constantinople on the side facing the harbor of the Golden Horn. The Byzantine defenders successfully beat them back, but the Latins returned. After they had scaled the walls, they entered the city and cruelly sacked it. Thousands of Orthodox were slain or taken captive; thousands more fled the capital. A Latin emperor was crowned, Baldwin of Flanders (1204-1205).

Then, in 1205, a young Byzantine nobleman, Theodore I Laskaris,³⁷ the son-in-law of former Emperor Alexios III Angelos,³⁸ rallied the remnants of Constantinopolitan aristocracy and the hierarchy. He organized a government-in-exile across the Straits of Nicaea.³⁹ After the Latin takeover

³⁷ Theodore Doukas Laskaris (d. 1221) composed the famous Service of the Great Supplicatory Canon to the Most Holy Theotokos, as well as another salutary canon to her, published in the *New Theotokarion* of Nikodemos the Hagiorite.

³⁸ Laskaris married Anna Angelina, Alexios III's daughter.

³⁹ Nicaea, a city of Bithynia, is the modern Turkish city of İznik. It is situated at the eastern end of Lake Ascania (İznik Lake), fifty-eight miles southeast of Istanbul.

of Constantinople, Theodore, circa 1208, was crowned as "Emperor of the Rhomaioi (Romans)," in order to perpetuate the Byzantine monarchy.⁴⁰

After the fall of the City, the *protos* of Athos sent the blessed Sava and the heads of the monasteries to Laskaris, the founder of the empire of Nicaea and its emperor, with regard to necessary matters facing the Holy Mountain Athos. Though the precise nature of these matters is unclear, more than likely, the inroads made by the Latins were necessarily a main topic. This is because Boniface of Montferrat, and now marquis of Thessalonike, wielded his authority over Athos by the first half of 1205. Italian clergy pressured the monks to accept papal authority and practises of the Latin Church. In the summer of 1205, Cardinal Benedict, Innocent III's legate at Constantinople, placed the monasteries under the jurisdiction of the Latin bishop of Sebasteia. Then, after he had built himself a castle (Frangokastro) on Athonite territory, he pillaged and terrorized the monks with the help of Frankish barons. Unarmed monks were tortured in the hope of uncovering monastery treasures.⁴¹

The emperor, with the entire senate, and even the patriarch and the body of priests, were then situated in Nicaea, the new capital of Byzantine power. When Saint Sava arrived in Nicaea and met with Laskaris, his kinsman through marriage, the emperor desired not so much to meet Saint Sava due to their kinship, as because he was extremely desirous to behold this preeminently virtuous man. Therefore, he rejoiced exceedingly upon beholding the holy Sava, whom he rendered great attention. As Laskaris conversed with the holy elder, marvelling at his virtue, he regarded him with profound reverence.

Despite the Athonite embassy to Nicaea, the Athonites were made to endure four years of unconscionable spoliation and injury by the Latins. Saint Sava tells us that the Latins "even invaded us and that holy place; and there

⁴⁰ Serbia, meanwhile, had within her borders Orthodox and Roman Catholics. Her coastal provinces were under the Latin archbishopric of Bar; the interior, including the bishoprics of Ras, Prizren, Lipljan, and Niš, belonged to the Archdiocese of Ohrid. The center of the autocephalous archbishop, Ohrid, lay inside the Greek principality of Epiros, which was founded after 1204 by the Byzantine nobleman Michael Angelos Komnenos. Though Michael owed a token allegiance to the emperor of Nicaea, his half-brother and successor Theodore challenged the Nicaean leadership. In December of 1224, Theodore seized Thessalonike from the Latins. Soon after, he was crowned "Emperor of the Rhomaioi," by Archbishop Demetrios Chomatianos. Hence, a second Byzantine empire-in-exile was founded. Obolensky, p. 149.

⁴¹ Ibid., pp. 134, 135.

was great turmoil."⁴² Only after the joint action of Innocent III (1198-1216) and the Latin Emperor Henry of Flanders was the Bishop of Sebasteia deposed and exiled for the enormity of his crimes against the Athonites. In 1213, the Athonite monasteries even appealed to the pope for protection. Though it was no more than an administrative formality, the Mountain was granted the protection of both Innocent III and Emperor Henry, until their deaths in 1216. Afterward, the Athonites looked to Nicaea for protection, much to the dissatisfaction of the new pope, Honorius III (1216-1227).⁴³

Oddly, the fall of Constantinople in 1204 made it possible for the Serbian state to grow. Vukan, Nemanja's eldest son, urged on by his Roman Catholic wife and court dignitaries, resented that his younger brother Stefan was made grand župan. Civil war erupted when Prince Vukan attacked Stefan with a mercenary army and Hungarian support. The assaults took place on a number of occasions, until Vukan thrust Stefan out of their homeland. Desiring to be crowned, Vukan had promised Pope Innocent III fidelity to the papacy. By the grace of God, the Hungarian archbishop, due to internal strife within Hungary, was prevented from entering Serbia to crown Vukan and bring the Serbians under the papacy. Thereupon, thanks to an invasion by his Bulgarian allies, Stefan struck Vukan again and succeeded in driving him back to his coastal provinces. Stefan regained his throne after four years of fratricidal struggle.⁴⁴ At length, Stefan and Vukan desired to declare a permanent reconciliation. In order to bring this about, they decided to invite their youngest brother, Sava of Hilandar, whom they also asked that he return with the miraculous relics of their father, Saint Symeon.

Twenty years had passed since Sava left home. Directed by God, the holy man was resigned to return at his brothers' behest. Moreover, Sava had promised his father, when the latter was living, that he would return his relics to Studenica Monastery. After eight years, the tomb of his sanctified father was opened. Saint Symeon's august relics were found intact. Therefore, Saint Sava made the journey to Serbia during the winter of 1206-1207. Once there, early in 1207, the relics were escorted with great solemnity by Saint Sava and Stefan to Studenica. Prince Vukan and his family were also present when the relics were interred in the marble tomb that Nemanja prepared many years prior to his entry on Athos. Saint Sava tarried awhile at Studenica, where he became reconciled with his two older brothers. When the 13th of February arrived, the day of commemoration of Saint Symeon, holy myrrh began to flow from the relics, from which many miracles were wrought.

⁴² Ibid., p. 135.

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Velimirović, p. 47.

Now it was Stefan's wish that his brother Sava remain as superior of Studenica. Sava was the senior non-Greek churchman in Serbia. He agreed and set about building the spirituality of the Serbian people. As an apostle, to combat the inroads of the papists and the Bogomils,⁴⁵ he went preaching and proclaiming Orthodoxy to his people. Stefan, prompted by Sava, also decided to build a great new monastery of his own at Žiĉa, near the confluence of the Ibar and the Morava. Saint Sava brought architects and marble workers from the Greek land.⁴⁶ During the years that Sava was in Serbia, he not only compiled his saintly father's biography and composed a service in his honor, but also maintained a correspondence with the brotherhood at Hilandar and with Serbian princes. Also, during those ten years in Serbia, the holy man wrought miracles, healing people by prayer or laying on of hands or anointing them with the sweet-smelling holy oil that suffused the relic of Saint Symeon.⁴⁷

During this time, Stefan divorced his first wife, Evdokia.⁴⁸ For reasons of state, he later married the fanatical Roman Catholic Anna, the granddaughter of the Venetian Doge Enrico Dandolo (d. 1205), who played a leading role in the conquest of Constantinople in 1204. Prompted by his new bride to be a crowned king, and surrounded by the antagonistic Latin kingdoms of Constantinople, Hungary and Bulgaria, the grand *župan* agreed to be crowned by Pope Honorius III. Thus, in 1217, Pope Honorius III sent a special delegation with royal insignia and crown that he might confer upon Stefan the title of king. Sava strived to prevent his brother's coronation by a papal legate. He understood that his sister-in-law, Anna, planned to have her husband crowned a Roman Catholic king and, thereby, hoped to convert the Serbs to Roman Catholicism. Though it is not clear, it appears that, in protest,

⁴⁵ Bogomils were a dualist and neo-Manichaean sect that denied most of the basic doctrines of Holy Orthodoxy, including the incarnation.

⁴⁶ Later, as archbishop, he brought trained iconographers from Constantinople to adorn the temple at Žiĉa. There is no doubt of the saint's personal share in the building and decoration of the church. Žiĉa was to become the model for other great 13th C. churches of the Raška school. Also, as the first seat of the Archbishop of Serbia, it became the country's most hallowed shrine. Teodosije, 97, 98, 141; Obolensky, p. 137.

⁴⁷ Velimirović, pp. 64, 66.

⁴⁸ Stefan repudiated his Byzantine wife. According to Choniates, both parties accused each other of infidelity. Stefan turned his wife out of the house, virtually naked, dismissing her in disgrace to go forth as a wanton. It was Stefan's brother Vukan who provided her with clothes and an escort to Dyrrachium. She returned to Constantinople with a splendid retinue dispatched by her father, Emperor Alexios III. See Niketas Choniates, 531, 532; Obolensky, p. 140.

Sava departed.⁴⁹ When he left Serbian soil for Hilandar, the miraculous and healing myrrh of Saint Symeon ceased to flow.

Not much time passed before Stefan sent a letter to Sava at Hilandar, requesting his return; for he believed only then would the myrrh continue flowing. Saint Sava responded by writing an epistle that was to be opened and read over the tomb of Saint Symeon at Studenica. It was only then that the myrrh resumed flowing.⁵⁰

Next, Stefan wrote Sava another letter expressing his aim toward the independence of the Serbian Church. A Latin patriarch was set up in Constantinople, and another was in Bulgaria during the reign of Kalojan (1197-1207). After the Fourth Crusade, Boniface of Montferrat became marquis of Thessalonike. His territory encompassed Macedonia and western Thrace, and he had interests as distant as the Peloponnesos. Moreover, after this crusade, Greece was easily conquered by the Franks. The following Frankish states were established: the principality of Achaia (Morea), the duchy of the Archipelago, the lordship of Athens and Thebes, and Evia (Euboea, Negroponte). Serbia was surrounded, because the Vatican oftentimes incited her northern neighbors to conquer and latinize her. The Serbs needed their own independent Orthodox Church, especially since the œcumenical patriarch was living in exile at Nicaea. Stefan needed strong Church backing.

⁴⁹ Both ancient hagiographers, Domentijan and Teodosije, describe the coronation at length. Obviously, Sava and Stefan did not mention it in their biographies, dated 1208 and 1216, respectively. Domentijan (pp. 245-248) contends that Sava sent Bishop Methodios, a disciple, to Rome. He was instructed to request a royal crown that Sava might crown his brother. The pope is alleged to have complied.

Teodosije (pp. 141-152) leaves out all reference of Rome and the pope. According to him, only Saint Sava crowned his brother at Žiča in 1220. See Obolensky, pp. 142, 143.

Bishop Nikolai Velimirović (p. 69) remarks, "Some modern historians maintain that Sava left Serbia because of his conflict with his brother's court." Though ancient hagiographers record this scene differently, we agree with Bishop Nikolai who says, "Nevertheless, we think the modern historians may be right."

Most historians have concluded that Saint Sava was completely unsympathetic with Stefan's pro-Roman policy, and this prompted his departure from Serbia and return to Athos. See Obolensky, pp. 146, 147.

⁵⁰ At Hilandar, today, behind the abbot's throne, among the elders' prayer-stalls, is the silver tomb of Saint Symeon, from which a vine has sprouted. Its fruit, dried by the brotherhood, exerts a miraculous influence against barrenness for those who partake of it with faith and reverence. Even to the present day, many have begotten children in this manner. Christou, p. 78; Andrew Simonopetritis, *Holy Mountain: Bulwark of Orthodoxy and of the Greek Nation*, pp. 59, 60.

After much prayer, Sava, with a group from Hilandar, entered a ship and sailed to Nicaea to see Emperor Theodore Laskaris and Patriarch Manuel I Sarantenos (1215-1222). The Byzantines, meanwhile, were combating the crusaders on one side and the Seljuk Turks on the other. Nonetheless, during Theodore's lifetime, he dealt both enemies crushing blows; therefore, neither dared crossing the Sea of Marmara. When Saint Sava and the emperor met again, their meeting was cordial. Sava spoke to him about the Serbian people and their need for an independent church and their own archbishop. The emperor then called in the patriarch, who spoke with the saint concerning Serbia and how it lacked an archbishop. Sava urged him to ordain one of his monks from Hilandar as archbishop. Now the patriarch and Sava discussed this matter for a



The Consecration of Saint Sava

sufficient number of days. The patriarch then went to the emperor, and the two of them decided that the holy Sava should be Archbishop of Serbia. Though Sava did not seek the office for himself, they were insistent that he be elevated to the apostolic dignity of the episcopacy. Indeed, many days passed, and Sava would not give place. Finally compelled to do as they wished, Sava was ordained by the patriarch. This consecration gave great joy to the emperor on that day. The new Serbian archbishop's first request was that future Serbian archbishops might be elected and consecrated by Serbian bishops. Though at first they hesitated, Archbishop Sava received a *grammata* (official document) from Patriarch Manuel authorizing this in 1219. Only one condition was imposed: in Serbian churches, the Byzantine patriarch was to be given precedence over all other bishops in liturgical commemoration.⁵¹

The new archbishop then gave himself over to even greater struggles and contests. First, he stopped briefly at Athos and then Thessalonike in the autumn of 1219. He stayed at Philokales Monastery, where he was considered

⁵¹ Obolensky, p. 151.

one of its builders. It was here that he copied many books of law and compiled his *Nomocanon*.⁵² It was to become the basic constitution of the Bulgarian and Russian Churches.⁵³ Archbishop Sava returned to his see where he instructed his flock daily, teaching them the word of the Gospel and a life according to Christ. The Orthodox faithful were strengthened by his sermons and the example of his virtue. Many heretics, by the grace and sweetness of his teachings, turned from their heresy to piety. Thus, in but a little while, the unbelievers and heretics of his see became Orthodox. All revered Saint Sava as their only shepherd and teacher.



Saint Sava

His episcopacy was not without troublesome incidents. With determination and subtlety, he defended the autocephalous Serbian Church against papal claims. He protected Bosnia from Bogomil influence. The archbishop also ward off the continuing efforts of Demetrios Chomatianos, Epirot Archbishop of Ohrid, to place Serbia under his diocese. When Saint Sava organized his archdiocese in Žiĉa, his first act was the selection and consecration of bishops from among his disciples. He set up eleven bishoprics, and some of them were based in monasteries. Three of them—Ras, Prizren, and Lipljan—were claimed by the Archdiocese of Ohrid. The Greek incumbents were replaced by Sava's Serbian bishops. Other

disciples were ordained archpriests, acting as his "exarchs" or delegates. They were sent into the provinces to stamp out pagan traditions among the rustics.⁵⁴ Together with defending the Church from outside attack, he was busy building and adorning the majestic monastery church at Žiĉa, dedicated to Christ the Pantocrator. The Feast of Ascension was the day on which the monastery church celebrated.

In 1220, at Žiĉa, Saint Sava persuaded the Serbs that Stefan should receive the crown of kingship. The holy Sava maintained his father's policy of creating a viable Serbian state. As the archbishop performed the divine Liturgy, he consecrated, anointed, and crowned his brother, crying aloud, "Long life to Stefan, the first-crowned King of Serbia!" The following day,

⁵² *Nomocanon* (*Krmĉja* or *Kormĉaja Kniga*, "Book of the Pilot").

⁵³ *Ibid.*, p. 155.

⁵⁴ Domentijan, 243-245; Teodosije, 151; Obolensky, p. 156.

when the saint served Liturgy, he made more comprehensible to the people the word of the Gospel. He then exhorted King Stefan and the nobles to recite the Creed and pledge obedience to the canons of the holy Seven Œcumenical Synods and two local synods. All complied.

Circa 1220, Archbishop Sava, as a well-reputed diplomatist, persuaded King Andrew of Hungary not to attack Serbia. At the same time, Archbishop Demetrios Chomatianos of Ohrid, whose see lay in the principality of Epiros, challenged Sava as Nicaea's man. In a letter, he refused to recognize Sava's elevation to the episcopacy. He charged the holy man with luxurious living instead of showing stability on Athos. He also cited canons which, he believed, Sava broke. Though Chomatianos was civil to the patriarch, he was hostile to the Nicaean government throughout the 1220s. He questioned the legitimacy of Laskaris, though nearly every former Byzantine citizen, with the obvious exception of the Epirots, admitted that the empire, for the time being, was in Nicaea, until the Laskarids could regain their heritage, Constantinople. At length, the embroilment between the patriarchate, Chomatianos, and Sava gradually dissipated. The autocephaly of the Serbian Church was recognized by other Orthodox Churches.⁵⁵

In 1228, King Stefan's health deteriorated. It was his desire to become a monk as his father and two brothers had done.⁵⁶ Nearing death, he called out for his brother Sava to come to Ras. However, the archbishop arrived too late, for Stefan already passed away. Sava then prayed to God to restore the soul of his brother that he might tonsure him and that his brother might name his successor. The Lord hearkened unto His faithful slave and returned the soul of Stefan. Stefan arose and spoke, naming Radoslav, his eldest son, as successor. The archbishop then garbed his brother with the Angelic Schema of the monks and changed his name to Simon.⁵⁷ The relics of the Monk Simon and first-crowned King of Serbia were laid to rest near his father Saint Symeon. The coronation of Radoslav was performed by Archbishop Sava at Žiĉa in 1228.

In 1230, Saint Sava resolved to make that long-desired pilgrimage to the holy land. Leaving his diocese in good order, he traveled southward.

⁵⁵ Obolensky, p. 161.

⁵⁶ Vukan, or the Monk Theodosios, took monastic vows. He was buried at Studenica beside his father. See Velimiroviĉ, p. 106. Thus, within the royal family, the youngest son, then mother and father, with two other sons, became monastics.

⁵⁷ Saint Stefan (in monasticism Simon) is commemorated by the holy Church on the 24th of September. Circa 1231, Saint Sava, at the annual memorial service for his brother, opened the tomb. The relics of the monk-king were found intact and fragrant, attesting to his sanctity. Saint Sava translated the relics to the Monastery at Žiĉa.

Visiting the Mountain again, he enjoyed the company of the fathers at his monastery. After a few days, he gathered all the brethren and told them of his great yearning to worship at the all-holy Tomb of our Lord. After he taught them and received their prayers, he set sail for Palestine. With God's help, he arrived within a few days. He was received by the Patriarch of Jerusalem, Athanasios II (1224-1236), who concelebrated with the saint that Sunday. The patriarch asked the archbishop to bless the people and preach unto them. The patriarch, clergy, and faithful possessed such love and reverence toward Sava that they did not want to be separated from him. Every day, they came to hear his soul-benefitting teachings.



Tricherousa

While the archbishop was in the holy land, with much devotion and compunction, he venerated all the churches, shrines, and sacred sites. The holy man bestowed many alms and worked charitable deeds in the holy land.⁵⁸ At the all-holy Sepulcher of the Lord, he shed an abundance of hot tears. The saint then left the holy city and went toward the Judaeen Desert and the lavra of his namesake, Saint Savvas the Sanctified. In accordance with the prophecy of Saint Savvas the Sanctified, it was foretold that, in the distant future, his namesake, an archbishop of a western country, would come to the monastery. Saint Savvas the Sanctified had be-

queathed his staff and two precious icons of the Theotokos, known as "The Theotokos of the Three Hands" (Tricherousa)⁵⁹ and "The Milk Giver." Thus, Archbishop Sava of Serbia received these precious gifts.

Afterward, the saint left the holy land and entered a ship bound for Nicaea. Emperor Theodore and Patriarch Michael had reposed. The new

⁵⁸ Of his many benefactions and charitable works, Saint Sava bought the Latin-held Church of Saint George at Acre, belonging to the Monastery of Saint Savvas the Sanctified. In Jerusalem, the saint bought, after expending a great deal of gold, the Islamic-held Upper Room wherein our Savior celebrated the Mystical Supper. See Velimirović, p. 110.

⁵⁹ The Theotokos icon, known as "She Who Has Three Hands," now hangs behind the abbot's throne at Hilandar. This is the icon before which Saint John of Damascus prayed when his hand was severed upon the instigation of the notorious iconoclast Leo; the hand was miraculously restored. In honor of this restoration, Saint John fashioned a hand to the icon, as a votive offering of thanks to the Theotokos. See the Life of Saint John of Damascus, commemorated by the holy Church on the 4th of December.

emperor, Theodore's son-in-law, was John Doukas Vatatzes (1222-1254).⁶⁰ When John succeeded him to the imperial throne, he was an ardent protector of all victims of wrongdoing, a bastion of justice, and a fount of mercy, so that he was surnamed "the merciful." Likewise, he was a zealot of piety and Orthodoxy, and was the cause of many Jews receiving holy Baptism during his reign. Having a desire to unite east and west, he called for a dialogue. Pope Gregory IX (1227-1241) sent legates to a meeting presided over by Germanos the New, Patriarch of Constantinople (1223-1240). Peace between the groups was thwarted when the westerners refused to remove the addition of the Filioque from the Symbol of the Faith.

Vatatzes rejoiced at beholding Saint Sava, and received him with exceeding reverence and honor. He glorified God that he was able to receive his blessing. His wife, the Empress Irene Laskaris, also revered the elder. Thereupon, the royal couple named Saint Sava their spiritual father. After the saint tarried a few days at Nicaea, he decided to go again to the Mountain. Since Sava was his spiritual father and distantly related, Vatatzes vouchsafed him a portion of the honorable Cross, other sacred relics, and precious vessels. Vatatzes then commanded that the archbishop be borne to his monastery by a royal ship. By divine help, Saint Sava arrived at Hilandar. He presented the honorable Cross with the other holy relics, and whatever else was bestowed by Vatatzes, to the brotherhood of the monastery.⁶¹ He also brought the Icon of "The Theotokos of the Three Hands" and gave it to the brotherhood, to be regarded as the "Hegumene (Abbess) of Hilandar." After abiding there a sufficient time, he guided and instructed the fathers in a God-pleasing manner. Saint Sava appointed a virtuous monk as hegumen to shepherd the flock, and then returned to Serbia.

The holy man went to his jurisdiction, where he shepherded the flock in a God-pleasing fashion. He illuminated all of Serbia with the bright beams of his virtues and his divine teachings. He preserved and kept them unharmed from the noetic wolves, wisely directing them into the heavenly sheepfold. However, since that area of the Balkans was so riddled with heresies, the saint entered into other provinces where he taught them apostolically. Going from place to place, he led both the heretics and impious to true piety.

⁶⁰ Saint John is commemorated by the holy Church on the 4th of November.

⁶¹ Among the treasures at Hilandar, there are two crosses incorporating fragments of the true Cross, a gift of the Emperor John III Vatatzes, and another cross studded with precious stones. The first is a silver and gilded cross with precious stones; the other is an ancient Byzantine cross with transparent gems within which are seen icons of the Lord and the Theotokos. Also from our Lord's Passion, Hilandar possesses tiny slivers of the relics of the crown of thorns, the reed, and the shroud.

However, Serbia and the Balkans were changing, and a new generation came into power. King Radoslav, brought up by his Greek mother Evdokia, married a Greek princess, Anna Doukas, daughter of Prince Theodore Komnenos Doukas Angelos of Epiros, in 1228.⁶² The people despised both him and his wife. Therefore, when his father-in-law was taken prisoner and blinded by Asen II, the royal couple fled. After his wife abandoned him, Radoslav sought his uncle's help. Archbishop Sava made him a monk, and Radoslav took the name of John.

Now the former King Stefan, the first-crowned, also had three other sons, Vladislav, Uroš,⁶³ and Predislav.⁶⁴ Hence, with Radoslav out of the country, the group around Vladislav desired to make him king. Though the saint was far from enthusiastic about Vladislav becoming king, he desired to preserve the unity of his nation; therefore, he crowned his nephew. A marriage between Vladislav and the daughter of Asen II, Bjeloslava, was also arranged.

In 1234, Saint Sava was again contemplating resigning and making a second pilgrimage to the holy land. He also desired to select a successor. Enlightened by God, he selected Arsenije, a worthy priest-monk and ecclesiarch whom Sava had trained from his novitiate at Žiča. Archbishop Arsenije would shepherd the flock in a wise and God-fearing manner for the next thirty years.

Thereafter, the saint entered a vessel bound for the holy land. When his ship experienced a raging storm at sea, the saint prayed and, making the sign of the Cross, he commanded aloud in the name of Jesus that the winds and sea be calm. God hearkened to his request, and therefore they were able to sail without incident to Acre in Palestine. Upon arriving in the holy land, the saint, for a second time, worshipped at the Holy Sepulcher. Whatever cities the saint passed through, he taught and strengthened the Christians there through many miracles. Once again, he bestowed alms upon the poor and those in need. However, for the sake of brevity, we cannot narrate the miracles that he wrought.

⁶² After conquering Thessalonike (1224), Adrianople (1225), and Thrace, and taking them from the Latins, Theodore Angelos was crowned as emperor by Archbishop Homatijan of Ohrid, an enemy of Saint Sava who desired to be patriarch. Theodore would have gone on to take Constantinople, but, in the battle of Klokotnica (1230), he was defeated and captured by the Bulgarian tsar, John Asen II (1218-1241), who allowed the Bulgarian Church to remain under papal auspices.

⁶³ Stefan Uroš would succeed to his deposed brother Vladislav's throne and become King of Serbia from 1243-1276.

⁶⁴ Predislav took monastic vows and, at length, became Archbishop Sava II of Serbia.

The saint also visited the Patriarch of Alexandria, who received him as a brother. While the saint was in Egypt, he visited all the important churches and bestowed alms and gifts among the poor. The saint also made a pilgrimage to Sinai and Saint Katherine's Monastery. After he had dwelt there for a short time, he left a large sum of money. Afterward, the saint again went through Jerusalem and then on to Baghdad, Antioch, and Armenia, leaving gifts at the monasteries. From there, he passed through the dangerous territories of Kurdistan and of the Seljuk Turks.

Finally, the saint and his entourage set sail for Nicaea. The sea passage proved difficult for Saint Sava, who suffered from seasickness and physical exhaustion. Finally, they were received by Emperor John Vatatzes and the empress. Again, the holy man preached in the Nicaean churches and bestowed alms upon the poor. He persuaded both emperor and patriarch to agree to recognize the Bulgarian patriarch.⁶⁵ Moreover, he pleaded for the pardon of King Asen who, previously, turned to Roman Catholicism, but later abjured his apostasy.

The last country that Saint Sava would travel through was Bulgaria. When he landed at Mesembria, the Nesebŭr promontory in the Black Sea, King Asen sent servants and horses to escort the Serbian party to Tŭrnovo (Tŭrnovo), the royal capital. Upon their arriving in the capital, Sava and his entourage were greeted warmly by Asen and Patriarch Joachim. The archbishop was quick to inform them of the willingness of the Nicaeans to grant amnesty to Asen and recognize the Bulgarian patriarchate. Saint Sava also gave them rich ecclesiastical presents from the east. The holy man was rendered exceeding honor and genuine love by the Bulgarians. As the saint tarried among them, he wrought no small benefit among the people through his gifts and charities.

While the saint was at Tŭrnovo, the Feast of the Theophany was approaching. Asen requested that the archbishop serve and bless the waters. While the saint chanted the Service for the Great Blessing of Waters, the following miracle took place. As he immersed the honorable cross, the waters divided in the midst and stood as a wall on the right hand and a wall on the

⁶⁵ When John Asen II sought patriarchal status for the Bulgarian Church, he turned to John III Vatatzes, the Nicaean emperor. The latter was willing to arrange this in return for a joint undertaking against the Latins of Constantinople. The alliance was sealed with the marriage of Asen's daughter, Helena, to Theodore II Laskaris, heir to the Nicaean throne. As a result, the Bulgarian Church was duly accorded patriarchal rank by a Church council meeting at Kallipolis (1235). *Oxford*, s.v. "John Asen II."

left.⁶⁶ All the spectators who beheld this phenomenon glorified God. The king greatly revered the saint and besought him to tarry there until Pascha, though he would be busy elsewhere with some other matters.

Saint Sava indeed remained, but, after a few days, he fell ill. Foreknowing his repose, he summoned his disciples and instructed them toward salvation. He placed in their care what he had stored up and brought back from the east, including whatever holy relics and other sacred ecclesiastical vessels that he possessed. He then bade them to return to Serbia with the goods for the Serbian churches, King Vladislav, and Archbishop Arsenije.

When the hierarch of Tŭrnovo heard of the saint's illness, he went to see him. Beholding the severity of his sickness, Joachim wished to send a message to King Asen. However, the saint would not permit it but said, "O brother, I beseech thee, neither inform the king nor trouble thy holiness to come here; only go in peace and pray on my behalf that the merciful God bring us together in the upper Jerusalem." Saturday evening, the saint communicated the undefiled Mysteries. His face then shone brightly, and he was filled with gladness and rejoicing. Then he uttered thrice: "Glory to Thee, O God." Afterward, he surrendered his holy soul into the hands of God on the 14th day of January, in the year 1235.

In the morning, as the hierarch, clergy, and people prepared to bury his relics, they perceived an indescribable fragrance. All marvelled and were at a loss where to inter him. Though the king was absent, when he was informed of their quandary, he ordered the interment of the holy one's relics at his own monastery Church of the Forty Martyrs in Tŭrnovo. Thereupon, they buried him there with all due reverence. A few days later, Asen arrived and first went to the tomb of the saint. He placed there a beautiful marble top and an oil lamp, and commanded that it always be lit. God also glorified His servant, when those who suffered from diverse infirmities hastened with faith to his tomb and were vouchsafed cures.

When King Vladislav of Serbia, the son-in-law of Asen, and Archbishop Arsenije, whom the saint ordained his successor, learned of the saint's repose, they sorrowed exceedingly. Yet, when they heard of the miracles worked by the saint, they decided to seek his sacred relics. Therefore Vladislav wrote a letter to his father-in-law, beseeching him to return his saintly uncle to Serbia. Vladislav had his epistle delivered by several Serbian noblemen, so they might take up the relics. However, Asen would not release the relics. Vladislav wrote a second time, imploring Asen for the relics. This time he sent even higher-ranking officials, bearing great gifts. Again, Asen refused and simply answered, "Since the good God, in His œconomy, has

⁶⁶ Cf. Ex. 14:21, 22.

permitted the saint to repose here, it means that He has granted us this treasure; and, therefore, who am I to oppose the will of the Lord?" Therefore, he sent back the nobles, who failed in their mission.

Then Vladislav took his most select nobles and functionaries and went himself to seek the relics of the saint. When they arrived in Bulgaria, Vladislav first went to the tomb of the saint. He wept warm tears, saying, "O saint of God and most revered father of ours, why hast thou loathed us sinners and dost not wish to come to thy homeland where thou hast stood not only as shepherd, but savior also? Thou hast delivered us from the error of the devil and hast directed us to the truth. Thou hast freed thy flock from heresies. Thou hast healed the sick; thou hast delivered us from spiritual death; those in peril hast thou raised up; thou hast adorned the Church with spiritual services, with sacred order, and given laws that were soul-saving.⁶⁷ Therefore, how shalt thou leave us now, O holy one, bereft of the sanctity of thy divine relics? How shalt thou leave us in utter want of the never-emptying treasure of thy divine grace? Shall we waste and pine away, deprived as we are of the sweet fountain of thy wonders? Let it not be, O father, most compassionate! Pity me and overlook my iniquities and those of thy people who have failed thee;⁶⁸ and come unto us, though we be unworthy and sinners; and leave us not bereft of thy presence and protection."

Having prayed thus, Vladislav, afterward, went to his father-in-law. That night, Asen beheld a vision wherein he saw the saint as a lightning-like angel. Saint Sava then commanded Asen to give his relics to his son-in-law to take back to his country. In the morning, King Asen gathered the people, the clergy, and the metropolitan, and revealed what had taken place. Taking his son-in-law, they went chanting, bearing candles and incense, to open the tomb of the saint. O Thy wonders, Christ King! The entire area was filled with an ineffable fragrance. The saint's face shone as the sun. All marvelled and cried aloud, "Lord, have mercy!" Then, making a great procession and offering up supplicatory prayers, the two kings walked and bore the relics outside of Tŭrnovo. Vladislav, sensing tremendous joy that day, continued toward Serbia. As they proceeded, thousands flocked to pay their respects.

To confirm the reconciliation between him and his holy uncle, Vladislav had the relics of Saint Sava interred at a church the king built in

⁶⁷ Saint Sava edited monastic *typika*, liturgical texts, and the Serbian *Nomocanon* (compilations of secular laws and ecclesiastical regulations).

⁶⁸ Bishop Nikolai Velimirović (p. 150) suggests that King Vladislav feared the growing consternation of his people who blamed him for making Archbishop Sava leave Serbia. Vladislav grieved the saint by creating havoc in the royal family through his intrigues and the overthrow of his elder brother, the former King Radoslav.

Hercegovina, called Milešovo (Mileševa) in the valley of the Lim in western Serbia, dedicated to the Pantocrator.⁶⁹ At Milešovo, the precious and august relics were a source of countless cures, both physical and spiritual, for those that flocked there in faith, to the glory of Father, Son and Holy Spirit, the All-Holy Trinity, to Whom is due dominion, honor, and worship unto the ages of ages. Amen.

Hilandar Monastery

By the early thirteenth century, Hilandar was inhabited by ninety monks. The monastery prospered for centuries, receiving colossal contributions from Serbian rulers. Stefan Uroš II Milutin (1282-1321) sought the support of the Church by founding many monasteries and making generous donations to them. Among the fifteen churches and monastic buildings he assisted, in 1303, he replaced the late twelfth century katholikon at Hilandar with a new triconch church with narthex. He also restored the refectory and strengthened Hilandar's fortifications by adding a tower (Tower of Milutin) at the harbor. Originally, the holy Saint Symeon (Nemanja) endowed Hilandar with fifteen Serbian villages. Thus, the monastery became exceedingly wealthy and, by the mid-fourteenth century, owned one-fifth of the Athonite peninsula, plus lands from Macedonia to Serbia, totalling 360 villages or parts of villages! Saint Symeon and Saint Sava also obtained Zig and Prosphora, which they restored. Later, they acquired Saint Basil (Hrusia), Strovilaia, Komitissa, Paparnikion, Kalyvae, and Omologiton. They made sure there would be no problem in supporting Serbian monks. Other benefactors included Palaiologan emperors and Stefan IV Dušan (1345-1355). Prince Lazar Hrebeljanovich (d. 1389) also provided assistance, as did his son Stefan Lazarevich (d. 1427).⁷⁰

⁶⁹ After the conquest by the Turks, the Ottomans tolerated for more than a hundred years the following of faithful who were dedicated to Saint Sava, whom even the local Turkish population came to revere. On the 27th of April, in the year 1595, by order of the grand vizier Koca Sinan Pasha, the relics of Saint Sava were taken to Belgrade, and his wooden reliquary burned on a pyre. A huge flame that soared into the heavens illumined the city by night and could be seen from beyond the Danube. Ibid., p. 159; Obolensky, p. 171.

⁷⁰ In the 15th C., help came from the Brankovi dynasty. Due to the lavish donations of Mara Brankovi, wife of Sultan Murat, the monastery was always filled with Serbian monks. The monastery was completely independent of the authority of both the Byzantine emperor and the *protos* of Athos. Ofttimes, Hilandar's hegumen became Archbishop of Serbia. During the Turkish occupation on Athos, Hilandar received support from the Ukraine, Russia, and Moldavo-Wallachia (present-day Romania), and from enslaved Serbia.