

SPIRITUAL AND CULTURAL HERITAGE  
OF THE MONASTERY OF STUDENICA  
PAST, PERSEVERANCE, CONTEMPORANEITY

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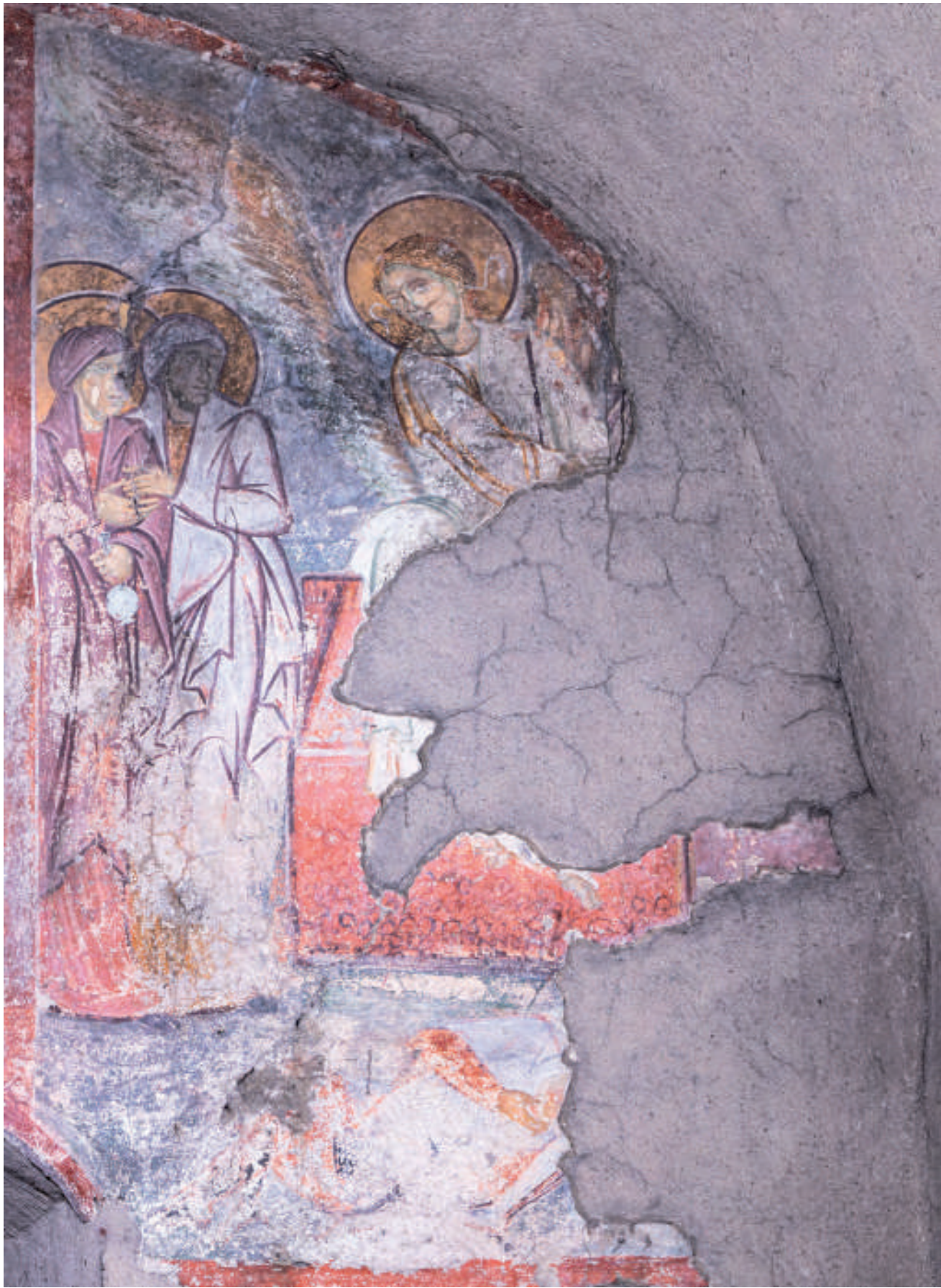


## 26. THE MYRRH-BEARERS AT CHRIST'S SEPULCHRE

Studenica, Church of St. Nicholas, ca. 1235, copy  
 Copied by Dušan Mihailović, 1958.  
 Casein tempera on canvas, 160 × 132 cm  
 Gallery of Frescoes of the National Museum in Belgrade

The Church of St. Nicholas in Studenica (Nikoljača), built to the south-east of the Church of the Mother of God, was erected by an unknown ktetor and decorated with frescoes in the fourth decade of the 13<sup>th</sup> century. The church's wall paintings have suffered heavy damage with time. A few scenes and individual figures of the original fresco are now left. One of them is the compo-

sition of the *Myrrh-bearers at Christ's Sepulchre*, depicted on the southern part of the western wall of the naos, right next to the scene of the *Resurrection of Lazarus*, with a red border separating them. The *Myrrh-bearers at Christ's Sepulchre*, a composition based on an event recounted in all of the four Gospels (Matthew 28: 1–8, Mark 16: 1–7, Luke 24: 1–2, John 20: 1–7), was part of the cycle of the Great Feasts originally depicted in the church. The iconographic solution of the scene was customary at the time when the fresco was painted. The picture shows the moment when the three Myrrh-bearers are approaching the Lord's tomb from the left. The female saint painted at the very edge of the border carries a vessel in her hand, with myrrh to anoint Christ's dead body. There is only a fragment of the nimbus re-



maining of the figure of the third Myrrh-bearer, which indicates her presence in the visit to the holy tomb. An angel in a white garment, sitting on a rectangular red stone, is shown in front of the holy women. With his head turned towards the Myrrh-bearers, he holds a sceptre in his left hand, while pointing with his right hand to the empty tomb, once visible on the right side of the scene. His left wing is very large and spreads out and above the holy women, creating the impression that the angel has just landed at Christ's tomb. The image of the angel is of considerably larger proportions than the figures of the Myrrh-bearers, even though he is painted in the same level as they are. At the bottom of the composition, where the fresco painting has suffered heavy damage, one can distinguish the contours of sleeping guards.

The fresco was executed on a blue background, in the late Komnenian linear style. Firm, confident and solid strokes outline the contours of the figures and the folds of the garments. On the faces and hands of the participants, one can observe the modeling of the carnations in lighter and darker ochre tones with nuances of green. The effort of the artists to introduce movement into a static scene, by means of their cascading folds, is visible. The amazement and apprehension of the holy women at the appearance of the angel is suggested in their movements, gestures and the expressions on their faces. The Myrrh-bearer closest to the angel is shown fearfully clinging to the other holy woman, clutching her left hand with both hands. Based on the artistic features of the wall paintings in the Church of St. Nicholas in Studenica, it has been concluded that the same group of artists also painted the oldest frescoes in the Virgin of Ljeviša in Prizren (around 1220–1230).

REFERENCES: Đurić, 1961, 63–76; *Studenica*, 1986, 86–87 (Babić); Kašanin, Čanak-Medić, *Manastir Studenica*, 1986, 179–180 (Todić); Čanak-Medić, Todić, 2011, 117–121 (Todić).

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## 27. ST. JOHN THE FORERUNNER

Studenica, Church of St. Nicholas, ca. 1235, copy  
Copied by Zdenka Živković, 1969.  
Casein tempera on canvas, 80 × 56 cm  
Gallery of Frescoes of the National  
Museum in Belgrade

The Church of St. Nicholas in Studenica (Nikoljača) was frescoed by unknown artists in the fourth decade of the 13<sup>th</sup> century. Today, only fragments remain of the original painted, including an image of St. John the Forerunner. As one of the most venerated and renowned saints and a great protector of Christians, he is depicted on the southern side of the northern pilaster in the naos. The preserved bust shows the saint in semi-profile, his head elongated and slightly inclined, against a blue background. The original bust of the Forerunner is believed to have been part of the Deesis composition. Next to the head of the saint with its nimbus is the inscription *с(в)ѢТЪ Ю(АНЪ)*. St. John's face is an impressive achievement by a gifted artist. In the painter's procedure, one can discern characteristics of the late Komnenian style. The artist took special care to depict a face with the expressive features of a portrait: large almond-shaped eyes, a long, thin nose and prominent, rose-tinted cheekbones, with dark brown, curly hair falling to his shoulders, and a short beard divided in locks of the same colour. The ochre of the carnation is modeled with green shadows and white accents, creating a remarkable expressiveness in the face of St. John. The Forerunner's austere, ascetic face reveals a remarkable inner strength and the thoughtful concentration is expressed by the look in his eyes. The representation of St. John in the Church of St. Nicholas in Studenica has been said to possess certain similarities with the wall paintings in the Church of the Virgin Ljeviška in Prizren, and so the painters of the Nikoljača are considered to have painted the oldest frescoes preserved in Prizren.

REFERENCES: Đurić, 1961, 63–76; *Studenica*, 1986, 86–87 (Babić); *Manastir Studenica*, 1986, 179–180 (Todić); Čanak-Medić, Todić, 2011, 117–121 (Todić).

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## 28. VUKAN'S EVANGELION

Manuscript from Ras, 1196–1202,  
most probably 1200–1202, digital preview  
Parchment, 189 fols., 25.3 × 19.7 cm  
The National Library of Russia, St. Petersburg, F. p. I. 82  
parchment, 1 l. (after p. 181), 27.0 × 21.4 cm  
Library of the Russian Academy of Sciences,  
St. Petersburg, 24.4.2 (Srezn. 49)

Vukan's Gospel is a full *aparakos*, the second oldest among Serbian *aparakoses*. As opposed to Miroslav's