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## SAINTS AND CRISES: THE CULT OF ST STEPHEN THE FIRST-CROWNED IN KOČINA KRAJINA (1788–1791) AND THE WARTIME OF SERBIAN REVOLUTION (1804–1815)

**Abstract:** The history of the relics and the cult of St Stephen the First-Crowned, especially the one from the late 18th and early 19th century, shows how crises can bring about the development of a cult and visual culture that accompanies these processes. Carefully guarded during the wars, from Kočina Krajina up to the Serbian Revolution, the relics of St Stephen the First-Crowned shared an unfortunate fate with the people and its army. By building the old church-folk tradition with new legends about St Stephen the First-Crowned and his relics, the insurgents gradually created a symbol of freedom and the renewal of Serbian statehood out of the first Serbian king. After the final liberation from the Turks, his relics became the most important national relics of the state. Visual culture had its place in all of these developments of his cult.

**Keywords:** crisis, relics, St Stephen the First-Crowned, Kočina Krajina, Serbian Revolution

One of the characteristics of early modern Balkan visual culture is the cult of saints. Reverence for a saint's cult was not a novelty, so the older practices continued and further developed during the early modern period. Most importantly, people paid respect to cults of saints in times of great events and crises, such as illnesses, natural catastrophes, and wartime. In turn, different types of crises can also affect the creation, questioning, or development of existing cults (Greene, 2010). Orthodox Christians, especially Serbs in the territory of the Ottoman Empire, paid great respect to

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saints belonging to the Serbian medieval ruling dynasty of Nemanjićs and the monasteries that were the guarding places of their relics. Thus, the relics and the cult of the first Serbian crowned king, St Stephen the First-Crowned, occupy an essential part of Serbian early modern history.

The formation and the establishment of the cult of St Stephen the First-Crowned as the first Serbian royal saint started in the 13th century after Sava Nemanjić (Saint Sava) exposed St Stephen's relics and ceremonially translated them from the Studenica to the Žiča Monastery (Popović, 2013, pp. 578–579; Pavlović, 1965, p. 52). Considering that the Žiča Monastery had been planned to represent the crowning church for all future Serbian kings, the relics of St Stephen the First-Crowned were supposed to play an important role in legitimizing the rule of all upcoming Serbian rulers. This idea of St Sava enabled Serbia under the Nemanjić dynasty to adopt the practices common for medieval European monarchies (Popović, 2013, p. 579). Associating the relics of St Stephen the First-Crowned with the most respectable Christian relics kept in the Žiča Monastery was also important, and had an effect on forming the cult of St Stephen the First-Crowned in the Middle Ages (Popović, 2006, p. 245; Popović, 2013, pp. 578–579). Throughout history, the relics of St Stephen the First-Crowned had been translated 17 times (Pavlović, 1964, p. 65). From the Žiča Monastery, they had been translated to the Sopoćani Monastery, where they were buried in the ground after the battle of Kosovo in the 15th century for safety reasons, until the miraculous “appearance in a dream” of the prior of the Sopoćani Monastery, so they were dug out in 1629 (Pavlović, 1965, pp. 51–53, 56). Soon after being dug out in the 17th century, the previously established cult was enhanced with new church songs (Pavlović, 1965, pp. 53, 56). For safety reasons, during the wartime crises in Turkey, the relics were translated in 1687 from the Sopoćani Monastery to the Crna Reka Monastery (Pavlović, 1965, p. 54; Šakota, 2019, p. 53). A significant moment was their translation to the Studenica Monastery on October 12th, 1696 (Šakota, 2019, p. 57). The Studenica Monastery continuously had a good reputation within the old Serbian Great Lavra in the period of the Ottoman rule and it had been a significant cultural and spiritual center of the Orthodox population, especially in the Serbian ethical area (Šakota, 2019, pp. 43–77). By translating the relics of St Stephen the First-Crowned from the Monastery of Crna Reka to the Studenica Monastery, Studenica became even more significant as an important place of the cult and the center of pilgrimage. Due to its treasure and the relics of St Stephen the First-Crowned, the Studenica Monastery had a reputation in the wider Christian community, which was confirmed through the gifts and help it continued to receive from Russia and Walachia (Šakota, 2019, pp. 44–47, 49–52, 55–57, 58, 70–71). By bringing the relics of St Stephen the First-Crowned to the Studenica Monastery, the church, and national

tradition strengthened, both of which had cultivated the cult of St Stephen the First-Crowned as the symbol of the glorified past and former Serbian statehood (Vinaver, 1954, pp.103–120; Ljušić, 1994). During the Austrian-Turkish and Russo-Turkish wars in the 18th century, the Studenica Monastery with its surroundings represented a significant military and strategic place. Since the Serbs had been involved in the wars on the side of either Austria or Russia, the monastery had been attacked by the Turkish army and there had been a constant fear regarding the safety of the relics of the first Serbian crowned king (Šakota, 2019, pp. 53–54; Stanojević, 2004, pp. 41–47). The constant exposure of the monastery to Turkish vengeance was anticipated with fear of destroying the remains of the first Serbian crowned king and thus taking away one of the greatest objects that reminded of the former autonomy and supported liberation (Pavlović, 1964, p. 65; Vasilić, 1956, p. 45). For these reasons, during the wars for the final liberation from the Turkish rule by the end of the 18th and early 19th century – the Kočina Krajina rebellion (1788–1791), the First Serbian and Second Serbian Uprising (1804–1815), the relics of the first Serbian crowned king St Stephen the First-Crowned had been translated from the Studenica Monastery on several occasions since it was in the war area. The relics had the same destiny as the people and rebel army, which all brought about a true connection between the relics, the cult, and the crisis circumstances. This is precisely when, in the time of crisis, the cult of St Stephen the First-Crowned as the first Serbian crowned king rose, and his relics became one of the most important national relics.

## The Relics of St Stephen the First-Crowned in the Period of the Kočina Krajina Rebellion (1788–1791)

The last Austro-Turkish war in the period 1788–1791 brought hope of liberation among the Serbs, so their massive participation on the Austrian side transformed into a national uprising. This war was named the Kočina Krajina rebellion after the leader of Serbian volunteers, Koča Anđelković. The Serbs in this war were organized into volunteering squads – the Freikorps, which were under the command of Austrian generals (Pantelić, 1930; Merenik, 2004, pp. 27; Stanojević, 2004, pp. 45–47). In both this and the previous wars that took place in the 18th century, the people from Studenica took part on the Austrian side (Vasilić, 1957, p. 24; Milićević, 1867, p. 74; Vukićević, 1907, p.76; Kašić, 1986, p. 29). Having found out about their cooperation with the Austrian army, the Turks prepared the attack on the Studenica Monastery (Vasilić, 1957, p. 24; Vukićević, 1907, p. 76). The Metropolitan of Raška, Joanikije, warned the Archimandrite of Studenica, Vasilije Radosavljević, about the Turkish intentions. Vasilije

left the Studenica Monastery on January 6, 1790, together with the monks accompanied by the Freikorps, carrying the part of the monastery treasury and the relics of the St Stephen the First-Crowned (Vukićević, 1907, p. 76; Milićević, 1867, p. 75; Šakota, 2019, p. 77). On January 7 the Turks attacked the Studenica Monastery, burned it, and stole the remaining monastery valuables. After the demolition of the Studenica Monastery during the Migrations in 1690, this was the greatest devastation of the monastery and its treasury (Vasilić, 1957, p. 24). According to one of the most prominent participants in the First Serbian Uprising Petar Jokić, among the Freikorps accompanying the relics of the Saint King was Đorđe Petrović – Karađorđe, the later leader of the First Serbian Uprising (Jokić, 1980, p. 157). Immediately before receiving this most honored position to accompany the relics, Karađorđe had a reputation of a hero among both the Serbs and the Turks, which he demonstrated in battles led by captain Radič Petrović (Pantelić, 1980, p. 84). A magnificent accomplishment of his was the murder of the Turk Lomigora in the battle of Požega, who was held impossible to be killed with the usual lead bullet. Karađorđe murdered him with a bullet made of silver, brass, and lead buttons from his shirt (Đurić, 1980, p. 20). The Turkish army was demoralized after the death of their leader and Karađorđe became a great hero (Đurić, 1980, p. 20). This role of the prominent hero in the battles against the Turks brought him the responsibility for the relics of the King Saint during the refugee exodus through the war area. Karađorđe's role in this translation of the relics of St Stephen the First-Crowned was of the utmost importance for the sequence of legends later, during the First Serbian Uprising. These legends connected him with the King Saint and played a great part in the formation of his ruling ideology (Pavlović, 1964, p. 65). The relics of the King Saint were brought to Karanovac, staying there eight days, just to be translated to Jagodina on January 17, 1790 (Vukićević, 1907, p. 76; Milićević, 1867, p. 75). The relics were ceremonially attended in Jagodina by 10,000 soldiers guided by the leader of the Freikores, officer Mihailo Mihaljević (Vukićević, 1907, p. 76). On this occasion, fifty cannons were fired in honor of the King Saint, and convicts with death sentences were granted amnesty (Milićević, 1867, p. 75; Šakota, 2019, p. 78). The relics were then carried from Jagodina to Smederevo with the additional Mihaljević's convoy of 500 soldiers. From there, they were carried over Grocka to Belgrade, which was held to be safe due to it being under Austrian rule since 1789 (Milićević, 1867, p. 75; Šakota, 2019, p. 78). We know that Karađorđe brought the relics safely to Belgrade, but we do not know how long he had stayed there and when he was returned to his command (Vukićević, 1907, p. 76). The ceremonial arrival of the relics was organized in Belgrade on February 1, 1790, by the Metropolitan Dionisije and the clergy, after which the relics were placed in the Church of the Holy Archangels Michael and Gabriel (an Old Orthodox



**Fig. 1:** Belt with silver buckles, a gift from Ilija, and Toma from Klisarnica in 1790. (source: Šakota, M. (2019). *Studenička riznica*. Beograd.)

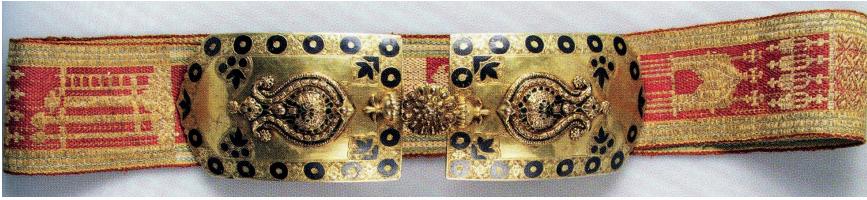
Church) in front of the iconostasis (Radosavljević, 2007, p. 179; Milićević, 1867, p. 75; Rakić, 1815, p. 14; Šakota, 2019, p. 78). The Metropolitan Dionisije ensured the relics to be guarded by the chosen monks eligible for the duty, and to the Archimandrite of the Studenica Monastery, Vasilije, he gave the golden cross as a gift (Rakić, 1815, p. 14; Radosavljević, 2007, p. 179). The relics were kept safe in Belgrade until the Turks entered the city again, so the monks of Studenica, worried for their safety, hit the road again on September 10, 1790, retreated to Austrian territory, to the Vojlovica Monastery near Pančevo, carrying the relics with them (Milićević, 1867, p. 75; Rakić, 1814, p. 14–15; Veselić, 1957, p. 24; Šakota, 2019, p. 79; Makuljević, 2006, p. 60). The Metropolitan Dionisije organized a holy accompaniment of the King Saint's relics from Belgrade to Banat in 1791, where the Serbian people received them with celebration and litany, cannon fire, and bell ringing (Rakić, 1815, pp. 15–16; Radosavljević, 2007, p. 179). Wherever the relics had passed at the time, amid the warfare and general insecurity, contemporaries such as the Hieromonks of Studenica, Vićentije Velimirović, and Vićentije Rakić, witnessed their holy reception by the army, clergy, and the people (Rakić, 1815, pp. 13–14, 16; Milićević, 1867, p. 75). The mere fact that 500 soldiers led by Mihaljević followed the relics of the King Saint from Jagodina to Smederevo stands as proof of the great respect and significance of the relics of the first Serbian crowned king among the Serbs. Although the translation of the relics of St Stephen the First-Crowned was performed out of necessity, provoked by the war crisis, it also represented a certain emulation of medieval translations of relics that were done as part of the celebration, with litanies, psalms, people gathering, celebrating, and giving contributions to the relics (Popović, 2006, p. 245). Following the earlier tradition, the relics were given contributions on a smaller scale out of personal devotion, motivated by different needs, faith in their holiness, protection, and help in times of war (Vasilić, 1956, pp. 46–47; Vasilić, 1957, p. 24). Thus, among gifts were silver buckles (paftas) donated by Ilija and Toma from Klisarnica in 1790 (Fig. 1) and a nacre artophorion made by a man called Rista Ristić (Vasilić, 1957, p. 24).

Although in 1789 and 1790 Belgrade, Šabac, Valjevo, Požarevac, Karanovac, and Kruševac were liberated, the events in Europe led to the war ending unfavorably for the Serbs. Due to the pact between England and



**Fig. 2:** Silver reliquary of Dragić Radosavljević, 1792.  
(source: Šakota, M. (2019). *Studenička riznica*. Beograd.)

Prussia, and the alliance made between Turkey and Prussia, Austria was forced to sign a peace treaty with Turkey and left Serbia to the Turks again by the articles of the Treaty of Sistova in 1791. The disappointment among the Serbs was humongous (Merenik, 2004, p. 27). The Treaty of Sistova guaranteed the general amnesty of the Serbs for taking part in the war on the Austrian side, which should have led to a peaceful life under Ottoman rule. The legal acts brought in 1793, 1794, and 1796 contributed to this and defined the principality's autonomy (Pantelić, 1927; Merenik, 2004, p. 28). Re-establishing the state of peace on the territory of the Pashalik of Belgrade and the Sanjak of Novi Pazar enabled the renovation of the Studenica Monastery and return of the relics of St Stephen the First-Crowned from exile. Immediately after signing the Treaty, the monks from Studenica and the people, especially those of the Nahiyah of Studenica, wanted to have the relics returned, but this was also the wish of the Turks who saw this as a possibility of calming the people down (Vasilić, 1957, p. 24; Stojančević, 1988, p. 537; Kašić, 1986, p. 29; Vukićević, 1907, pp. 346, 382). The presence of the relics in Studenica was for all a symbol of calming the crisis. Thus the Metropolitan of Raška, Joanikije, asked for permission to have the relics of St Stephen the First-Crowned retrieved from the territory of the Metropolitanate of Karlovci (Austria) to Studenica in his letter sent from Novi Pazar to Sremski Karlovci to the Metropolitan Stevan Stratimirović, on September 12, 1791. He regarded the Studenica Monastery as an ancient royal Serbian Lavra and believed it would be neglected if the relics were not returned (Vukićević, 1907, p. 382; Kašić, 1986, p. 29). The return of the relics had practical and ideological aspects. After the wars in the 17th and 18th centuries, together with the last Austro-Turkish war, many old Serbian monasteries were left abandoned and ruined, such as Đurđevi Stupovi, Sopoćani, Banjska, Pavlica, Gradac, Pridvorica (Stojančević, 1988, p. 537). Along with Dečani and



**Fig. 3:** Jerusalem belt from 1783 with gilded buckles as a gift from Jovanka Hadži Nikolinica from 1793. (source: Šakota, M. (2019). *Studenička riznica*. Beograd.)

the Patriarchate of Peć, the Studenica Monastery had the pilgrims, the valuables, and great reputation among Orthodox Christians, especially Serbs from all Serbian areas under Ottoman rule, owing to the relics of St Stephen the First-Crowned and valuable monastery treasury (Stojančević, 1988, pp. 536–537). In both the Pashalik of Belgrade and Sanjak of Novi Pazar, it was the biggest pilgrimage center and the only functional (“pojušči”) monastery of all the medieval monasteries (Stojančević, 1988, p. 537). Without the relics of St Stephen the First-Crowned, its income and reputation would have surely declined. The monastic connections with faraway Russia established in the earlier centuries under the Ottoman rule, together with the abundant support of the monks from this country also had a great impact on the Studenica Monastery’s image in a wider political and national plan for the liberation from the Turkish rule (Stojančević, 1988, p. 536). By having the ferman (a royal decree) of the sultan for the renovation, together with other permits of the Turkish authorities, the Studenica Monastery regained all the rights it had had before the war (Stojančević, 1988, p. 537; Vasilić, 1957, p. 25). The monastery’s renovation started in 1798 and lasted until the end of 1799 (Kašić, 1986, p. 29, Šakota, 2019, pp. 80–83). The translation of the relics back to Studenica over Pančevo started on December 1, 1791, and ended on February 5 the next year (Vasilić, 1957, p. 25; Šakota, 1988, pp. 74–76). On their way to the Studenica Monastery, the relics were held for some time in the Rajinovac Monastery near Grocka (Radosavljević, 2007, p. 381; Milićević, 1867, p. 16; Veselić, 1867, p. 14, Rakić, 1815, p. 16). The monastery was renovated due to the accommodation of the relics. The arrival of the King Saint’s relics to the monastery and its renovation by the monks of Studenica with a local prince, Stefan Dimitar Stefanović, were all memorized as events of enormous importance (Radosavljević, 2007, p. 381; Veselić, 1867, p. 14).

Upon their return to the Studenica Monastery, the relics received contributions from the people. A man named Dragić Radosavljević brought as a gift a silver reliquary in 1792 (Fig. 2); Jovanka Hadži Nikolinica gave gilded buckles in 1793 (Fig. 3), and the same gifts came from a wom-

an named Anđa, while Petar and Rista contributed a belt with buckles. Ana and Nikola Milošević brought the asterisk as a gift, and Agna from Ljevković brought an embroidered epimanikia (Vasilić, 1957, p. 25). In the period of the monastery's renovation, Serbs from Sarajevo sent plenty of gifts. Most prominent among them was a tradesman family of Hadži Jovo Vuković, which financed the renovation of the residences in the Studenica Monastery and the building of the fountain (Stojančević, 1988, p. 536–537; Kašić, 1986, p. 25; Šakota, 2019, p. 83). From the late 1799 and by the beginning of 1806, the Studenica Monastery was again established as the center of the spiritual and social life of Serbs in Turkey, especially in the Sanjak of Novi Pazar (Stojančević, 1988, p. 537). It remained like that when the First Serbian Uprising started in the Pashalik of Belgrade in 1804.

The reasons for the translation of relics from the war area during the Kočina Krajina rebellion were the fear of Turkish revenge and the possible destruction of relics of the first Serbian king, which would take away the memory of former autonomy and the hope for freedom. Sharing the same warfare destiny with the people, the relics had direct contact with the people and its army fighting for freedom on the Austrian side – these were, in times of Kočina Krajina, the frames which represented an essential base for confirming the cult of St Stephen the First-Crowned during the First Serbian Uprising and using it for national and political purposes. It was during the Serbian Revolution that the relics became of the utmost importance and the patron saint for Serbian insurgents and the rebel state.

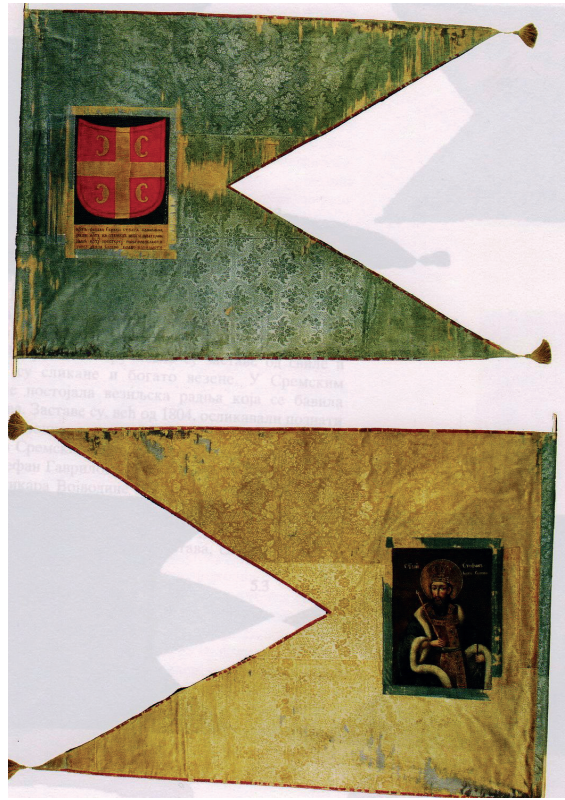
## The Cult and the Relics of St Stephen the First-Crowned during the Wartime Period of the Serbian Revolution (1804–1815)

After a short period of peace, starting from 1801, a new wave of terrors and a new crisis emerged. The return of janissaries and dahijas to the Pashalik of Belgrade, the murder of Hadži-Mustafa Pasha, and the usurping of the legal empire rule, the ending of the principality's autonomy, and the slaughter of the Serbian princes (*knez*) provoked a fierce resistance among the Serbian population. The circumstances brought to the indispensable organized defense of the Serbs in the Pashalik of Belgrade in 1804, which evolved into the First Serbian Uprising (1804–1813) (Merenik, 2004, p. 28; Stanojević, 2004, pp. 49–70; Ljušić, 2008, pp. 63–67).



In starting the Serbian revolution, a vital ideological frame for it was the tradition of the old Serbian state. At the beginning of the Uprising, the insurgents had not taken into consideration the question of reforming the old Serbian state (Ljušić, 1994, p. 38; Vinaver, 1954, p. 107). However, the success in the battles against the Turks and banishing them from the Pashalik of Belgrade, increased the self-assurance and the territorial claims within the insurgents, and renewed the medieval tradition of the independent state (Ljušić, 1994, pp. 24–25, 38–41, 46; Vinaver, 1954, pp. 108–115). Thus, the first Serbian crowned king, St Stephen the First-Crowned, became the medieval symbol of the Uprising. His relics were at the Studenica Monastery at the time when the Uprising started (Ljušić, 1994, pp. 24–25, 38–41, 46).

At its mere beginning, a legend spread – one that connected Karađorđe Petrović, the leader of the Uprising, with the King Saint. The legend spoke of a dream in which St Stephen the First-Crowned talked to Karađorđe encouraging him to start an uprising against the Turks, thereby making him the future leader (Pavlović, 1964, p. 65; Đurić, 1880, p. 8; Ljušić, 2018, p. 279–280). Upon beginning the Uprising, the legend was spread by Janićije Đurić, a prominent figure of the Uprising, Karađorđe's friend and a clerk (Đurić, 1880, p. 8–9). The legend of Karađorđe's dream and some unusual forces of nature – “sky circumstances” (nebeske pri-like) that were taking place years before the Uprising above the Pashalik of Belgrade – all these were believed to be a sign from the saints that the time for liberation had come (Pantelić, 1954, p. 89–101). The direct, personal experience that Karađorđe had with the relics of the King Saint, while he was a part of their convoy during the Kočina Krajina rebellion, and the dream, were both the bases for a personal and ideological connection with St Stephen the First-Crowned. This is confirmed by a visual shaping of Karađorđe's military flags, which could be related to the prophecy dream. The flags were made somewhat around the start of the Uprising. The first flag, which has not been preserved, was made by the painter Stefan Gavrilović in 1804, as written on the flag (Ljušić, 2018, p. 280–281; Samardžić, 1983, p. 38). Together with the representation of a two-headed crowned eagle with the lily and the portrait of St Archangel Gabriel wearing the military uniform, there was also writing on the flag taken from the 9th and 10th line of the eighth chapter of the Book of Isaiah, who emphasized the battle for freedom in the name of Christianity (Vukićević, 1912, pp. 2; 268; Ljušić, 2018, p. 280; Samardžić, 1983, p. 38; Petrović, 1954, pp. 142–143). Another flag of Karađorđe connected to the legend of the dream contained a portrait of St Stephen the First-Crowned (Samardžić, 1983, p. 39; Ljušić, 2018, p. 284; Perović, 1954, pp. 143–145).



**Fig. 4:** The Flag of leader Karadjordje Petrovic with the image of St. Stefan the First-Crowned and Serbian coat of arms, 1804.  
(source: Historical Museum of Serbia)

The flag was made of blue and pale-yellow brocade, with two feathers and tassels (Fig. 4). The front side of the flag was light-blue, red, and golden, and its back side was yellow. On the yellow side of the flag, there was a painting of the icon of St Stephen the First-Crowned signed as the Serbian king (Fig. 5). On the other side of the flag, there was a painting of a golden Serbian cross against a red background, and below it was the text of Džefarović's *Stemmatografia* interpreting the Serbian coat of arms (Samardžić, 1983, p. 39; Ljušić, 2018, p. 284). Owing to its stylistic similarities with the flag of St Archangel Gabriel, this flag is also considered to be a work of Stefan Gavrilović and dates back to 1804. It is believed that the flag was sewn and embroidered by a famous embroideresses from Karlovci (Ljušić, 2018, p. 284; Petrović, 1954, p. 142). Making flags with the saints' portraits followed an older practice rooted in Christian flags – *khorugv* or banners (Solunac Jović, 2004, pp. 160–165; Samardžić, 1983, pp.



**Fig. 5:** The Flag of leader Karadjordje Petrovic, detail with the image of St. Stephen the First-Crowned, 1804.(source: Ljušić, R. (2018). *Vojvode i vojvodski barjaci. Vojno uređenje ustaničke Srbije (1804–1815)*. Beograd.)

37–38; Stošić, 2006, pp. 184–185). These flags were supposed to embolden insurgents with patriotism and protect them (Solunac Jović, 2004, p. 165). The heraldic marks, portraits of the saints and suitable texts on these two flags, bore testament to the beginnings of Serbian statehood, God's support and protection. The symbols that the creator of the flag had used pointed to the battle that helped recover Serbian medieval statehood and to Vožd Karađorđe as a fighter for the Christian faith and the legal heir of St Stephen the First-Crowned (Ljušić, 2018, pp. 280, 284). In general, the rebels' flags contained numerous symbols of the state of Nemanjićs (Ljušić, 1994, p. 39; Petrović, 1954, pp. 140–156). Along with the belief in the legend of the dream and the flag of St Stephen the First-Crowned, the insurgents represented themselves as legitimate heirs of old Serbian lands (Pavlović, 1964, p. 65; Vinaver, 1954, pp. 11–15). If we add to this the preparation for Karađorđe's coronation later on, and getting on Holy

anointing oil from Russia it is justifiable to suppose that the coronation would be similar to that of St Stephen the First-Crowned. (Ljušić, 1994, p. 39; Ljušić, 2018, p. 285).

The priests and the monks that took part in the Uprising felt that a new government was about to arise, one which would be regarded as the heir of the state of Nemanjićs. Gerasim Georgijević, a former monk from the Studenica Monastery, later the Episcopo in Šabac, in his work *Significant Events of Modern Serbian History* describes the Uprising as the renewal of the idea of courage (*čojstvo*) displayed at the Kosovo field and an idea of the return of the lost state (Georgijević, 1838, pp. 14–16). That is why the clergy and the monks asked for medieval privileges for their monasteries, having anticipated upcoming changes. They also asked for the affirmation of the manors and privileges, and in this process, the great role was that of tradition, monastery treasuries, the relics, and their reputation (Pavlović, 1964, p. 65; Vinaver, 1954, pp. 109–110). In these ideological processes during the First Serbian Uprising, a vital role was played the destiny of the Studenica Monastery and the relics of St Stephen the First-Crowned, since the monastery with these relics had been the most crucial spiritual, cultural, and pilgrimage center in the warfare area. The Nahiyah of Studenica and Studenica itself were liberated in 1806 and became an important military stronghold, from which the insurgents forced the Turkish army toward Novi Pazar (Stojančević, 1988, pp. 538–539; Šakota, 2019, pp. 84–86). The monks of the Studenica Monastery took an active part in the Uprising, especially the Archimandrite Melentije Nikšić. (Kašić, 1986, p. 30; Marković, 2019, p. 252; Durković-Jakšić, 1986, pp. 276–279). The insurgents were in contact with the monastery, the monastery's brotherhood, and the relics all the time (Kašić, 1986, p. 30; Stojančević, 1988, pp. 543–544). At the beginning of March 1806, being the chief of the liberated Nahiyah of Studenica and a part of the Sanjak of Novi Pazar, captain Radič Petrović sent a ship, a prize of war, as a gift to the King Saint and Studenica (Stojančević, 1988, p. 540, Vasilić, 1957, p. 25; Durković-Jakšić, 1986, p. 277).

The liberated part of the Sanjak of Novi Pazar together with Studenica and the Nahiyah of Studenica were not under Serbian rule for long. In the battles for Novi Pazar, the Serbian army was defeated by Sulejman Pasha Skopljak, who came from the Eyalet of Bosnia to help the Turkish army. The rebel army under the control of Radič Petrović was defeated near Studenica. The monastery was under a great threat since the Turks knew that Radič was situated in it and that the Archimandrite of the monastery was one of the leaders of the countrymen from the Nahiyah of Studenica in the Uprising (Stojančević, 1988, p. 541). Having seen the sufferings in the

nearby villages and within the population caused by the Turkish revenge, the monks of Studenica fled the monastery on March 30, 1806, carrying the movable valuables and the relics of the King Saint (Stojančević, 1988, p. 541; Georgijević, 1838, pp. 17–18). At Demeronja, on March 30, 1806, prince Milić Lučić and priest Nikola Kostić wrote about the state of affairs in the front near Studenica and informed about the state of the Studenica Monastery. They confirmed that the Turks had made a demand through their messenger that the people of Studenica bow to the Turkish rule, and that they had threatened to destroy the monastery completely if the saint was not returned (Perović, 1977, p. 172–173; Georgijević, 1838, p. 542). Since the monks of Studenica defied to obey, the great ravage and burning down of the monastery took place a day after the brotherhood fled the monastery, taking the relics with them (Perović, 1977, p. 173<sup>6</sup>). Gerasim Georgijević, a monk from Studenica and a witness of the events, stated that being in the refugee exodus on the mountain of Đakovica, he could see along with other people the ravage and burning of the monastery (Georgijević, 1838, pp. 18–20; Šakota, 2019, p. 86). Carrying the relics along the Ibar River and across Morava, the brotherhood from Studenica came with the rest of the refugees to Šumadija five days later, where they settled in the Vračevšnica Monastery (Georgijević, 1838, pp. 21–22; Rakić, 1815, pp. 17–18; Stojančević, 1988, pp. 542, 546–548; Šakota, 2019, p. 87; Radosavljević, 2007, p. 264; Ljušić, 1994, p. 39; Pavlović, 1964, p. 65; Čeliković, 1998, p. 90). Here was the main seat of the Soviets, the leaders of the Uprising, and thus the relics were guarded by the rebel army as the vital relics of the country (Makuljević, 2006, p. 60). The relics stayed at the Vračevšnica Monastery until the end of the First Serbian Uprising in 1813.

The translation of St Stephen the First-Crowned's relics to rebel territory in 1806 contributed to the popularization of his cult among the insurgents (Ljušić, 1004, p. 39). During the time that the relics of the King Saint were at the Vračevšnica Monastery, some significant events happened here related to the political destiny of the rebel state. The physical presence of the relics in these events, their connection with the actual events, symbolized the saint's protection of the insurgents and their state. In the Vračevšnica Monastery on September 17, 1810, a meeting was held between Karađorđe and the duke from Rudnik Milan Obrenović, the Archimandrite Spiridon Filipović, and Dositej Obradović, to reach an agreement upon future political and military actions (Čeliković, 1998, p. 90). From there the Archimandrite of the Studenica Monastery, Melentije Nikšić, went to Russia in 1811 as the rebel emissary, successfully com-

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6 The correction of the dating from the earlier literature is given in the explanations on page 173.



**Fig. 6:** The Gospel, a gift from the Russian Tsar Alexander 1811, with a chained cover from 1813. (source: Šakota, M. (2019). *Studenička riznica*. Beograd.)

pleting the political mission for the insurgents and bringing back gifts for the Studenica Monastery (Pavlović, 1964, p. 65; Vasilić, 1957, p. 26; Stojančević, 1988, p. 547). Among these gifts was a pectoral cross of Alexander the Emperor and the Evangelie from Kyiv chained later in 1813. (Fig. 6) (Šakota, 2019, p. 90). One of the most significant assemblies was held in the Vračevšnica Monastery “at the King Saint” on August 15/27 in 1812 on a holiday – the Dormition of the Mother of God (Golubica, 1843–1844, pp. 210–211; Veselić, 1867, p. 24; Ristić, 1955, pp. 132–133; Pavlović, 1964, p. 66; Ljušić, 1994, p. 39; Stojančević, 1988, p. 546). Here, close to the “King Saint,” Karađorđe checked on the army and performed a military exercise (Ljušić, 2018, p. 285). Then the members of the Assembly in front of Karađorđe and the Russian emissary, count Ivelić, swore over the relics of St Stephen the First-Crowned to stay loyal to the Russian tsar and accepted the articles of the Treaty of Bucharest. Making an

oath over relics had a long tradition and the strength of an unbreakable promise. (Pavlović, 1964, p. 66; Vinaver, 1954, p. 117; Čeliković, 1998, pp. 90–91; Šakota, 2019, p. 90).

During the time that the relics of the King Saint had stayed at the Vračevšnica Monastery, the insurgents took care of the material state of the brotherhood of Studenica and brought the gifts to the relics and the Studenica Monastery. At the fraternity of Studenica's appeal, Karađorđe lent them the land to mow at Kalipolje as long as the fraternity would stay at the Vračevšnica Monastery (Stojančević, 1988, p. 548). He made a document in Topola on July 14, 1807. This document enabled the monks of Studenica settled in the Vračevšnica Monastery to take crops from villages near Studenica "that were serving the King Saint," in order to support themselves (Vinaver, 1954, pp. 109–110; Pavlović, 1964, p. 90; Kašić, 1986, p. 30; Šakota, 2019, p. 87). During his visit to Studenica in 1808, he also made some contributions (Stojančević, 1988, p. 548; Milićević, 1867, p. 76). Along with Karađorđe's name and the names of his sons Aleksije and Aleksandar and his wife Jelena, other contributors to the Studenica Monastery and the relics of the King Saint were other rebel leaders and their kin – Milan, Miloš, and Jovan Obrenović, the home of Lazar Mutap, the home of Antonije Pljakić and Stanoje Glavaš, as well as Vujica Vulićević and his brother Milivoj (Milićević, 1867, p. 76; Durković-Jakšić, 1986, p. 280). In 1810 it was noted that the hieromonk Maksim renovated the silver kivot for the relics in the Vračevšnica Monastery (Vasilić, 1957, pp. 26–27).

After signing the Treaty of Bucharest between Russia, the protector of the insurgents, and Turkey on May 28, 1812, the general situation in Serbia rapidly aggravated, which gradually led to the outbreak of the Uprising in 1813. As it was nearing its end, two pieces of news circulated on the battlefield in 1813 – one allegedly spoke of the death of Vožd Karađorđe and the other claimed that the kivot with the relics of St Stephen the First-Crowned was creaking. The latter was interpreted as a clear sign of God's mercy leaving the insurgents and the doom of Serbia (Protić, 1880, p. 308; Pavlović, 1964, p. 67; Ljušić, 1994, pp. 39, 46; Vinaver, 1954, p. 118). These pieces of news demoralized the Serbian army at the battlefields (Pavlović, 1964, p. 67). Even during these unfortunate times, on March 23, 1813, a man from Studenica made an asterisk and thus enriched the treasury of the Studenica Monastery (Šakota, 2019, p. 90). By realizing that the defeat of the insurgents was inevitable, the monks from Studenica ran away to Austria on September 21, 1813, carrying the relics of St Stephen the First-Crowned to the Fenek Monastery near Zemun (Georgijević, 1838, pp. 26–39; Rakić, 1815, pp. 18–20). The whole translation had been arranged

in advance with the Austrian authorities and permitted by the Metropolitan of Karlovci, Stevan Stratimirović (Šakota, 2019, p. 91). In the Fenek Monastery, the relics were met with ceremony (Rakić, 1815, pp. 19–20). The general crisis was additionally aggravated by the fact that Karađorđe had left Serbia on October 3, 1813, followed by most of the leaders of the Uprising (Zlatković, 2011, p. 247). As usual, there were descriptions of the horrible Turkish misdeeds that ensued (Ljušić, 1994, p. 67; Stanojević, 2004, pp. 68–69; Zlatković, 2011, pp. 250–252). Besides Karađorđe and other uprising leaders, around 120,000 people fled to Austria, and around 20,000 people fled to Walachia, leaving Serbia almost depopulated. The few remaining Serbs who stayed had hidden, and with several rebel leaders, there was Miloš Obrenović, the leader-to-be of the Second Serbian Uprising (Zlatković, 2011, p. 249).

In the Austrian territory, the people who emigrated were mostly put into quarantine. It was mandatory to stay in quarantine for 21 days in the Austrian territory for all passengers from Serbia to prevent the spread of the plague brought by the Turkish army from Asia (Stanojević, 2004, p. 68). Due to the great number of refugees, there were regular quarantines in Zemun and Pančevo, but there were also temporary ones in Srem and Banat (Ljušić, 2005, p. 434). Worn down by the famine, and with unfavorable weather conditions, many died in the quarantines (Ljušić, 2005, p. 434; Stanojević, 2004, p. 69). The Fenek Monastery was a place where a part of the Serbian emigration had been quarantined. Among them were Karađorđe and the monks from Studenica carrying the relics of the King Saint. Karađorđe had been quarantined in the Fenek Monastery for security reasons on October 5, 1813, while his family stayed in quarantine in Zemun (Šakota, 1986, pp. 272–273; Ljušić, 2005, p. 432). It was during this period of the highest crisis and Turkish terror in Serbia that the rebel leaders gathered in the Austrian territory in Fenek, having with them the relics of St Stephen the First-Crowned. This is why Fenek became the center of Serbian emigrants. Although it had constantly been under the supervision of the Austrian authorities, the emigrants in Fenek held the political meetings under the excuse that they went there to bow to the King Saint (Pavlović, 1964, p. 64; Ljušić, 2005, p. 433; Šakota, 2019, p. 94). As some of the contemporaries had witnessed, here in Fenek Karađorđe went through a serious personal crisis due to all that had happened (Ljušić, 2005, pp. 432–434). At this time of public, political, and the Vožd's personal crisis, his wife Jelena sent a mantle as a gift for the relics of St Stephen the First-Crowned (Šakota, 1986, pp. 271–274). The mantle was given, as the writing on itself says, in memory of their daughter Poleksija and her dead children (Fig. 7). It was made by Elena, the wife of the superior Vožd Master Georgije Petrović, in 1813 (Šakota, 1986, p. 271). Karađorđe and Jelena's





**Fig. 7:** Mantle for the relics of St. Stephen the First-Crowned, gift by Jelena Karadjordjevic, 1813. (photo by Milica Mirković, Study project of the Treasury of the Studenica Monastery – National Museum Kraljevo, Studenica Monastery)

daughter died right after her children in 1812 and was buried at a church in Topola. During the downfall of the First Serbian Uprising, Jelena made this mantle as a gift to the King Saint out of personal motives, worried for the fate of her family and crushed with pain as a mother. Apart from having the primarily eschatological and soteriological function, giving the mantle could be interpreted in the ruling ideology context. The evidence of this could be found in the name of the contributor on it, who is to be memorized as the wife of the supreme Vožd and Master. Having been made hastily in times of general crisis, the mantle was artistically simple. It was made of silk, embroidered with a silky thread and bordered with golden lace and fringes (Vasilić, 1956, p. 48). It is believed that Jelena made it in the quarantine in Zemun and that she most probably brought it to Fenek between October 26 and 31, 1813, while visiting her husband (Šakota, 1986, p. 274).

While the rebel leaders in the Austrian territory were trying to solve the political status of the Serbian people, and Karađorđe was planning his departure to Russia, the Turkish terror in Serbia partially ceased due to the situation in Europe. After Napoleon's defeat in Leipzig in 1813 and the victory of the Allies, Turkey was forced to pay more attention to Russia and the articles of the Treaty of Bucharest, especially those regarding the Serbs. After this, the Turks granted amnesty to Serbs and started calling out the remaining rebel leaders to give in. This was a period of short-term peace (Stanojević, 2004, p. 69). During the first weeks of 1814, Sulejman Pasha Skopljak, who distinguished himself in putting down the First Serbian Uprising, started the terror all over again in the Pashalik of Belgrade (Stanojević, 2004, p. 69). As a reaction to his actions, the Hadži-Prodan's rebellion broke out (September 27 – December 30, 1814), followed by the Second Serbian Uprising in 1815 under the leadership of prince Miloš Obrenović (Ljušić, 1994, pp. 67–70; Stanojević, 2004, pp. 69–75).

Prince Miloš Obrenović intervened at the beginning of the Second Serbian Uprising in 1815 that the monks of Studenica return the relics of St Stephen the First-Crowned to Serbia to boost the morale of the people (Šakota, 2019, pp. 95–96). This shows the ideological importance of having the relics of the first Serbian crowned king present in the Serbian territory since they were a symbol of mitigating the crisis and God's protection. During their stay at Fenek, the people of Studenica followed what had been happening in Serbia regarding the warfare and political events, so right after the end of the Second Serbian Uprising, they wanted to make a return (Georgijević, 1838, p. 39; Stojančević, 1988, p. 549). Since the Studenica Monastery had stayed out of Serbian territory until the Hatt-i-humayun (Hatišerif) of 1833 and was devastated and ruined, the monks of Studenica settled in the Kalenić Monastery along with the relics of St Stephen the First Crowned (Stojančević, 1988, pp. 549–551; Durković-Jakšić, 1986, p. 283; Šakota, 2019, p. 96). Kalenić was not an accidental choice, since it was highly revered among the people and was an important meeting point during the time of the uprisings (Kanic, 1985, p. 631). The relics of the King Saint were ceremonially brought to the monastery on December 28, 1815, and placed in front of the iconostasis (Georgijević, 1838, pp. 70–72; Stojančević, 1988, p. 549; Makuljević, 2006, p. 61). Thus, the Kalenić Monastery became one of the most important monasteries in Serbia, and its façade engraving spoke about bringing back the relics of St Stephen the First-Crowned (Milićević, 1867, p. 48). The need to make this engraving is clear proof of the significance of translating the relics and celebrating the memory of one of the most notable events in Serbian life of that time (Makuljević, 2006, p. 61). Having the relics on the Serbian territory again symbolically meant that the crisis had settled, although politi-

cally the situation was still uncertain until the Hatt-i-humayun (Hatišerif) in 1830 and 1833 when Serbia finally received the status of the Principality under the patronage of the Ottoman Empire, inner autonomy, and defined boundaries (Stanojević, 2004, pp. 76–81; Ljušić, 2004, pp. 2–45).

When the kivot with the relics was placed in the Kalenić Monastery, many people came bearing gifts to bow to the King Saint (Vasilić, 1957, p. 29). Prince Miloš had insisted on renovating the Studenica Monastery since 1824, for he saw the translation of the relics of St Stephen the First-Crowned from Kalenić to Studenica as an essential segment of the ruling, statehood, and national ideology (Durković-Jakšić, 1986, pp. 283–288). Their translation was supposed to symbolize the renewal of the Serbian state. In this context, along with other contributions to the monastery, prince Miloš brought the mantle for the kivot of the King Saint made in Belgrade by Konstantin Stojanović in 1831. It was made of brocade, spliced with silver and gold, bordered with black velvet and golden fringes (Vasilić, 1956, pp. 29, 48).

After Serbia annexed the territory with Studenica in 1833, the final return of the relics of St Stephen the First-Crowned became possible. Their translation from Kalenić to Studenica was organized in 1839 as a celebration that lasted for several days and had a state, religious and national character (Durković-Jakšić, 1986, pp. 302–304). The kivot with the relics was placed in front of the iconostasis of the Church of the Holy Virgin in Studenica. This is where the relics of the first Serbian King Saint gained the status of the most important cult of saints and key national relics throughout the whole 19th century, and all modern Serbian rulers came to bow to them (Makuljević, 2006, p. 61).

This dynamic modern history of the relics and the cult of St Stephen the First-Crowned as explained here, reveals to us the effects of crises on the complex development of the cult and the visual culture that accompanies these processes.

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**СВЕТИТЕЉИ И КРИЗЕ:  
КУЛТ СТЕФАНА ПРВОВЕНЧАНОГ ЗА ВРЕМЕ  
КОЧИНЕ КРАЈИНЕ (1788–1791) И РАТНОГ ПЕРИОДА  
СРПСКЕ РЕВОЛУЦИЈЕ (1804–1815)**

**Апстракт:** Нововековна историја моштију и култа Стефана Првовенчаног, посебно с краја 18. и почетка 19. века показује како кризе могу условити и управљати развојем култа и визуелном културом која ове процесе прати. Брижљиво чуване и склањане током ратних дешавања, од Кочине Крајине (1788–1791), па кроз ратни период Српске револуције (1804–1815) мошти Стефана Првовенчаног су делиле худу судбину са народом и војском поставши тако један од важних актера актуелних политичких дешавања. Надограђујући стару црквено-народну традицију новим легендама о Св. Стефану Првовенчаном и његовим моштима за време Првог српског устанка постепено се ствара од првог српског крунисаног краља симбол слободе и обнове српске државности. У то време ће мошти Стефана Првовенчаног попримити статус светитеља заштитника српких устаника и патрона устаничке државе. Његове мошти током ратних криза бивају симбол бојне подршке за намере устаника у формирању слободне државе, те њихово измештање са устаничке територије симбоички најављује продубљивање кризе – пропаст, док њихово поновно присуство симболише смиривање ситуације и повраћај божанске благодати над српским народом. Зато је њихова судбина током ратова била од велике идеолошке важности за устанике. По коначном ослобођењу од Турака мошти Св. Стефана Првовенчаног постају најзначајнија национална реликвија земље, оставши то кроз читав 19. век.

**Кључне речи:** криза, мошти, Свети Стефан Првовенчани, Кочина крајина, Српска револуција

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