

Religious and Cultural Heritage in Boka Kotorska: The Case of Banja Monastery and its Surroundings

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Abstract: Banja monastery in Risan (Montenegro) is one of the most vital structures of the Serbian Orthodox Church outside the homeland. It is a valuable example of religious, cultural, and artistic features of national tradition and historical development in the Middle Ages. Established in the 12th century, during the period of the Nemanjići dynasty, the monastery throughout its stormy past played a significant role in preserving the spirituality and cultural heritage of the Serbs in the Bay of Boka Kotorska—an area in the Balkans strongly impacted by the Roman Catholic Church from the west and the Islamic religion from the east. The study revealed the cultural-historic features of the monastery and its surroundings, which are of importance for its existence and development. Further, the findings provide a more comprehensive insight into the foundation, items, and activities of the monastery, along with the current sisterhood who strongly contributes to its existence with their faith, devotion, and efforts.

Key words: medieval legacy, Banja monastery, the House of Nemanjići, the Serbian Orthodox Church, religious items and resources, the Bay of Boka Kotorska, Montenegro

Introduction

At the shore of the Bay of Boka Kotorska, in the town of Risan in western Montenegro, there is a medieval Serbian Orthodox monastery, Banja, originally established in the 12th century. Today's church of Saint George was built by archimandrite Atanasije Hilandarac in 1720. It is a single-nave construction with a semi-circular apse on the eastern side and shallow choirs on the northern and the southern sides. Above the portal, on the western façade, there is a niche with

the icon of Saint George, a rosetta, and a small bell tower. Opposite the façade, a steeple was erected in a form of an open belfry with three panes. In the monastery treasury, various valuables are kept—Montenegrin (Boka Kotorska), Russian, and Greek icons, artistic craftworks, and rich library with old ecclesiastical books, mostly of Russian origin. The cascade-shaped monastic complex with terraces, monastic quarters, a pronounced late-Renaissance lookout and the church, and the fenced graveyard, represents a harmonious ambient unit, which is separated from the bay shore by the major highway.¹

The subject of this research is Banja monastery with its surroundings, which, as a cultural-historic whole in the typical ambiance of Boka Kotorska, represents a part of the spiritual and material heritage of the region of Montenegro and of the Orthodox South Slavs, whose elements are inextricably connected.

The Banja monastery and its surroundings are not sufficiently represented in the scholarly literature. The subject has long been neglected in the theoretical and empirical analyses of historians, anthropologists, and geographers, which results in the present poor state of the scholarship. The explanations are numerous, but one of the main obstacles was the lack of written material and original proofs eliminated over time by the various conquests and ideologies in the region, and especially by the leading social and political structures in former Yugoslavia, which displayed limited interest in conservation, revitalization, and history-based research of religious heritage and objects. In this respect, the study aims to present and propose to the scholarly public the significance of the monastery in the culture and religion of this area. Based on original sources, the research is intended to make an original contribution to the existing knowledge of medieval Serbian architecture, monasticism, and culture. This would be achieved through the existing historical facts, the material and non-material heritage of the structure which relates to the historical development and available resources of the monastery, including reliable information obtained from the nuns.

The methods used for writing this paper are field research, literary, cartographic, comparative, and critical method. The primary written literature consulted included the monographs of the extraordinary connoisseur of Banja monastery, Risan and its surroundings, Lazar Drobnjaković,^{2,3} as well as the works of Danilo Kalezić,^{4,5} a voluminous work of Šerbo Rastoder and his associates,⁶ the studies of Branko Radojičić,^{7,8,9} the annotations of prior Dionisije Miković,^{10,11} Savo Nakićenović,¹² and many other authors.

1 Z. Bešić et al., *Istorija Crne Gore—Knjiga 1* (Titograd: Redakcija za istoriju Crne Gore, 1967).

2 L. Drobnjaković, *Risan—prvih hiljadu godina* (Beograd: MJM, 2002).

3 L. Drobnjaković, *Risan i stare risanske porodice* (Beograd: MJM, 2003).

4 D. Kalezić, *Monografija Kotor—Prirodne ljepote i kulturni spomenici* (Zagreb: Grafički zavod Hrvatske, 1970).

5 D. Kalezić (Ed.), *12 vekova Bokeljske mornarice* (Beograd: Monos, 1972).

6 Š. Rastoder et al., *Istorijski leksikon Crne Gore* (Podgorica: Daily Press – Vijesti, 2006).

7 B. Radojičić, *Geografija Crne Gore, Prirodna osnova—Knjiga 1* (Podgorica: DANU, 2008a).

8 B. Radojičić, *Geografija Crne Gore, Društvena osnova—Knjiga 2* (Podgorica: DANU, 2008b).

9 B. Radojičić, *Geografija Crne Gore, Regije—Knjiga 3* (Podgorica: DANU, 2008c).

10 D. Miković, *Ikonopisci Dimitrijevići-Rafailovići* (Kotor: Glasnik narodnog univerziteta Boke, 1935).

11 Dionisije Miković, "Čestica mošti Sv. Đorđa u manastiru Banji u Risnu," *Glasnik narodnog univerziteta Boke* 6/7, no. 1–4 (1940): 30–31.

12 Sava Nakićenović (1913), *Boka—Antropološka studija, Etnografska zbirka. Knjiga HH* (Reprint: Beograd: Fototipsko izdanje, Herceg-Novi, 1982).



Figure 1. Banja monastery in Risan (Photo: M. D. Petrović, 2019)

The present section represents the introducing remarks including a short theoretical background on the monastery, its strong historical bond with the town of Risan, and the historical circumstances of the site. The following sections shed additional light on the key points in the study area and geographical position in order to follow and understand the growth of the monastery itself. Furthermore, the upcoming sections will provide an overlook of the history, architecture, and relics of the monastery in detail, along with important people and events which shaped the long and dynamic chronology of the area.

A Short Historical Context

The history of the monastery is strongly connected with the past and development of its surroundings, especially the tradition and history of the small coastal town of Risan, which is located in the immediate vicinity of the monastery. According to the written sources and findings of material culture, the literature provides the opinion accepted long time ago that the Illyrians are the oldest, autochthonous people of this region, and that in the old times, the bay was called the Bay of Risan (*Sinnus Rhisonicus Kolpos*), named after the town of Risan (*Rhizon*). It is also known that the Greeks colonized the Adriatic coast during the 4th century BC. The town of Risan undoubtedly „attracted“ a large number of Greeks to its environment. According to the archeological findings (ceramics, jewelry, etc.) and various inscriptions, it can be supposed that there was a relatively strong Hellenic influence in this region. During the Roman domination, it is believed that, besides the Roman government and soldiers, merchants were also settled here to maintain the connections with Rome and other places of the large state.

Despite its vitality, the prevailing Illyrian population was gradually assimilated under the influence of Romanization. In the later period, the weakened and poor population withdrew, or they were deported to economically less significant regions. In the 7th century, Risan was populated by the Slavs, before whom the Illyrian-Roman population had migrated to the interior of the Balkans. Later, especially during the 15th, 16th, and 17th centuries, ethnic changes occurred in the composition of the population. In the 17th century, after the Turkish conquests, the structure of the population changed significantly, and, as a part of the plan, several Turkish families settled there, resulting in the Turks making up the majority of the local population in the following several years and decades. After the final liberation of Risan from the Turkish authorities, the Turkish families also left the town, and the Slav population from the hinterland started settling in the town again. The settlement process was gradual after the emigration of the Turks, which can be seen from the data showing that there were only 18 families in Risan in 1720.¹³

In the second half of the 18th century, settlement was much more dynamic. The agrarian population of the hinterland karst regions (Krivošije, Cuce, etc.), due to the poor living conditions, migrated to the littoral during the 18th and 19th centuries, because such a space provided them with more secure and more diverse life resources: Mediterranean agriculture and traditional maritime jobs (shipping, maritime trade, and fishing). Thus, the majority of today's population of this area originates from the Dinaric regions, closer and further hinterland of the Adriatic coast. At the beginning of the 20th century, the families originating from Herzegovina region made up around 55%, and the ones from Montenegro were around 40% of the population, and the structure of today's population is not significantly different.^{14,15} Taking into account that the majority of the newly arrived population is of the Christian Orthodox religion, this had a decisive impact on the development and status of the monastery in the local society, but also on its role in the further historical progress and tradition of Boka Kotorska.¹⁶

Geographical and Cultural-Historic Features of the Study Area

By its features, area, and distinctive relief, the Bay of Boka Kotorska is one of the most interesting natural attractions of the Mediterranean. The mountain of Lovćen on one side, and the mountain of Orjen on the other, surround the Bay of Boka Kotorska, giving it the characteristic layout of one of the most separated parts of the Adriatic coast in terms of relief. The total length of the whole coastline of the Bay of Boka Kotorska is 105.7 km.¹⁷ The Bays of Kotor and Risan make up the inner part, and the Bays of Tivat and Herceg Novi are the outer part of the Bay of Boka Kotorska. The coasts of the inner part are steeper and harder to access, and the outer ones are significantly lower, with relatively milder sides. The inner Boka is physiologically different from the outer Boka, and they communicate with one another through the narrowest part, the strait of Verige (340 m wide). The main transversal drive or the entrance into the Bay of Herceg

13 Lazar Drobñjaković, *Risan—prvih hiljadu godina* (Belgrade: MJM, 2002), 172–77.

14 P. Mijović, *Umjetničko blago Crne Gore* (Belgrade: Jugoslovenska revija, 1980).

15 P. Mijović and M. Kovačević, *Gradovi i utvrđenja u Crnoj Gori* (Belgrade: Archaeological institute, 1975).

16 Drobñjaković, *Risan—prvih hiljadu godina*.

17 B. Ž. Milojević, "Boka Kotorska (Regionalno-geografska ispitivanja)." *Zbornik radova S.A.N. HXVII—Geografski institut 5*, (1953): 1–52.

Novi is 2,950 m wide (Oštro Cape). The outer bay is separated from the Adriatic Sea by Luštica peninsula (568 m), while Vrmac peninsula (768 m) is the border belt between the outer and the inner Boka.¹⁸ Each of the mentioned parts is characterized by the appropriate forms, which are mainly conditioned by the rock composition and the landform.

In the wider area of Boka, the prevailing rocks are carbonate, followed by flysch and mountainous material. Carbonate rocks are represented by limestone and dolomite; they are similar and interconnected in such an amount that it is very difficult to differentiate them.¹⁹ The dominant forms of Boka Kotorska are bays with steep or mild sides, and the relief forms that stand out are the flysch slopes at the bottom of Orahovac-Dobrota karst; the mountainous landscapes are featured especially along the peninsula of Vrmac, as well as the driftwoods in the forms of *poljica* (small fields) in Krtole-Grbalj valley, Sutorin valley and gravel strands with the confluences of periodical watercourses (Ljuta, Škurda, Spila, etc) (Radojičić, 2008c). The limestone-dolomite composition of the rocks conditioned the predominantly karst nature of the relief, which was favorable for fluvial-karst processes. The progress of the corrosive process, even below the sea surface, could be seen in numerous wells that spring, especially at the bottom of the inner bay (Gurdić, Ljuta, Sopot, etc.). The climate conditions are such that the seawater temperature is over 18°C for six months in a year and mostly calm, which means that the sea is favorable for swimming for half of the year and offers extraordinary conditions for the development of water sports (e.g., swimming, rowing, and fishing). Since ancient times, the area of Boka Kotorska has been providing extraordinary conditions for people to live and settle.^{20,21}

The long history of the region of Boka Kotorska (Illyrian and Greek settlements) and drawings of prehistoric people in Lipci cave near Risan point to the ancient settlement of this region. Boka had a tumultuous history, and under the influence of the Roman Empire, the population underwent the process of Romanization. Numerous turbulent events in this area were the reason for significant variations in the number of people, which were the consequences of conquests, wars, and natural disasters. For a long time, the migrations of the population were constant, mainly from the mountainous areas toward the sea, due to the perspective of seamanship in the old times, and tourism today.²²

Speaking about the origin of today's population, especially the most prominent families in the area, the regional variety is evident: the Milutinović family came from Piva; the Subotić family came from Ledenica; the Čučković family came from Bajkove Kruševice; the Jovanović family came from Trebinje; the Kovačić family came from Grahovo; the Krivokapić family came from Kobilje-dol; the Katurić family came from Banjani, the Radović family came from Bjelopavlići in 1962; the Ugrinović family came from Nikšić; the Vidović family came from Grahovo in 1964; the Vjeladinović family came from the region under Golija mountain at the beginning of the 17th century (from the tribe of Filip Višnjic); and the Čatović family came from Trebinje in 1640.²³ Quite notable is the significant emigration of population from the littoral areas of Montenegro to Serbia, i.e., referring to the younger people who go there to study, but

18 Branko Radojičić, *The Geography of Montenegro: Natural Base*, vol. 1 (Podgorica: DASA, 2008a), 84–85.

19 N. Luković, *Boka Kotorska* (Cetinje: Narodna knjiga, 1951).

20 Borivoje Ž. Milojević, *The Dinaric Littoral and Islands in our Kingdom* (Belgrade: The Serbian Royal Academy, 1933), 24–27.

21 Milojević, "Boka Kotorska (Regionalno-geografska ispitivanja)," 1–52.

22 Z. Ivanović, *Gradovi—Komunalni centri Crne Gore* (Beograd: Geografski institut "Jovan Cvijić" SANU, 1979).

23 Nakićenović, *Boka—Antropološka studija*, 399–419.

most of whom do not come back to their hometowns. In 85 settlements in three municipalities of Boka (Herceg Novi, Kotor, and Tivat) the population was 61,432 in 1991, and in 2001 there were 66,679 inhabitants, while according to the last census in 2011, the total number of inhabitants was 70,012. Most of the population are Montenegrins and Serbs, whereas a large number of Croatian people moved to Croatia after 1991.²⁴

In the physiognomy of the settlements, it is notable that they were built under the influence of Greek and Latin builders, and the prevailing style of the majority of preserved historical buildings is medieval: Roman. Today's settlements of the Montenegrin littoral are mostly marked by traditional littoral architecture,²⁵ with thick walls, quite simple, and architecturally very attractive. A favorable mild climate, healthy environment, abundance of fresh water, and the diversity of the Mediterranean flora and fauna enabled the creation of settlements in this region far back in the ancient times, at the beginning of the human race in prehistory. Since then, various cultures and civilizations have been interchanging in this area. The Illyrians were the first intertribal state formation which left many cultural traces on this territory until 168 BC. Boka was later ruled by the Romans, Byzantines, Goths, Hungarians, and the "golden age" was under the reign of the Nemanjići dynasty (from the 12th to the 16th century).

Boka Kotorska was also ruled by the Bosnian king Tvrtko, and for two centuries, the Venetians and the Turks fought for the predominance over the bay. After the fall of Venice, it was owned by Austria (from 1797 to 1805), and then it was controlled by Russia and France. In the following period, it was independent, and the town of Kotor was the center of the republic. It was under the Austrians until 1918, and after the First World War, it belonged to Yugoslavia and the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes. The Second World War was marked by the Italian occupation, and then by the liberation and the new association of the Socialist Republic of Montenegro, as a part of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia.²⁶ In further history, the observed region still belonged to Montenegro, as part of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, the State Union of Serbia and Montenegro; and since 2006 Boka Kotorska has been a part of the independent Republic of Montenegro.²⁷

Due to its numerous natural and cultural-historic resources, Boka Kotorska also enjoys international protection and significance. Since 1979, the region of Kotor and Risan Bays has been protected by the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO),²⁸ which additionally contributes to the significance and attractiveness of this region.

Geographic Position of the Town of Risan and Banja Monastery

Banja Monastery and the town of Risan are located in the southwestern part of Montenegro, on the coast of the Bay of Risan, a part of the Bay of Boka Kotorska.²⁹ Banja monastery is two

24 Jovan Marković and Mila Pavlović, *Geographic Region of Yugoslavia* (Belgrade: Savremena administracija, 1995), 33–39.

25 R. Vujičić and Č. Marković, *Spomenici kulture Crne Gore* (Cetinje: Pres medij Novi Sad i Zavod za zaštitu spomenika kulture Cetinje, 1997).

26 Drobnjaković, *Risan—prvih hiljadu godina*.

27 I. Božić, *O jurisdikciji Kotorske dijeceze u srednjovekovnoj Srbiji* (Beograd: SAN, 1953).

28 J. Martinović, *Desetogodišnjica obnove spomenika kulture na području Kotora pod zaštitom UNESCO-a nakon katastrofalnog zemljotresa* Godišnjak 35/36 (Kotor: Pomorski muzej, 1988).

29 Dušan Martinović, "Risan," *The Gazette of the Serbian Geographical Society* 49, no. 1 (1969): 69–84.

kilometers away from the center of Risan, in the direction toward Perast. Both the settlement and the monastery are in the place where the inland and maritime communications meet, and they have a favorable traffic-topographic and strategic position. Through a small port, Risan is connected with other littoral places by maritime transport, and with the modern land road (Adriatic highway) with other settlements as well.

With hinterland in the north, Risan is also connected by an important natural communication—one of the main communication lines between Boka Kotorska and the inland, which goes over the karst fields of Vilusi and Grahovo and connects it with the northern parts of Montenegro. Risan is located at the crossing of the roads connecting Montenegro with Bosnia and Herzegovina and Croatia. A special advantage is the newly constructed road over Durmitor mountain and via Nikšić toward Herceg Novi. The new road directly connects the coast in the Bay of Risan and significantly improves the geographical position of Risan. Risan is the closest departure station of the buses for Nikšić (76 km) and for the northern part of Montenegro (Šavnik, Žabljak, Pljevlje, etc.). The only railway link is the Subotica–Novi Sad–Beograd–Bar railway, around 85 km away. In Montenegro, there are two international airports, in Pogorica and in Tivat. The international airport in Tivat was built after the earthquake in 1979, and it is only 4 km away from Kotor, and 21 km away from Risan. In relation to other important littoral and continental settlements in Montenegro, Risan is 17 km from Kotor, 24 km from Herceg Novi, 109 km from Ulcinj, 85 km from Bar, 41 km from Budva, 27 km from Tivat, 73 km from Cetinje, and 106 km from Podgorica.³⁰

Due to its favorable connections with seaports and continental hinterland, Risan has always been an important trade spot in the Adriatic region. Even in the earliest periods in history, Risan was the place where the trade with live-stock breeding products, wax, honey, and tar from the hinterland of Boka Kotorska took place, and the port was the place for the import of various fabrics, wine, salt, iron products, soap, and other manufacture products. Moreover, Risan was the place for storing timber from the hinterland, which was then transported to Perast and Kotor, the medieval shipyards in Boka Kotorska.³¹ The traffic and trade circumstances had a favorable effect on the development of the monastery, which became one of the main places of pilgrimage for Orthodox Christians over the centuries. In addition, the monastery maintained intensive connections with other monasteries and churches in the Dinaric hinterland and exchanged knowledge, literature, and supplies.

The History of the Monastery

The monastery of Banja belongs to the Metropolitanate of Montenegro and the Littoral of the Serbian Orthodox Church. According to the historical findings,^{32,33} the structure was erected by the Serbian Grand Prince Stefan Nemanja,³⁴ a founder of the Nemanjići dynasty in the

30 Živadin Jovičić, *The Geography of Tourism* (Belgrade Naučna knjiga, 1981).

31 Bogumil Hrabak, *Business Activities of Shipmen and Merchants from Boka Kotorska in Albania until 1600* (Belgrade: Monument SASA CXXVII, 1986).

32 Bešić et al., *Istorija Crne Gore*.

33 R. Ivanović, "Srednjovekovni baštinski posedi Humskog eparhijskog vlastelinstva," *Istorijski časopis* (1960): 9–10, 79–95.

34 Stefan Nemanja (Serbian Cyrillic: Стефан Немања, c. 1113 or 1114–13 February 1199) was the Grand Prince (*Veliki Župan*) of the Serbian Grand Principality (also known as *Raška*, lat. *Rascia*) in 12th century (from 1166 to 1196).

12th century. In Mustur's text about the monastery,³⁵ it was written that little remained of the building built by Stefan Nemanja, given the fact that the monastery was destroyed and burned several times throughout its history. Also, Jovičević claimed that "... *nothing exists of the original church, but its foundations are known next to the present-day church of St. George*".³⁶ The same author further states that the year 1114 and the name of the Grand Prince were embroidered in gold on the epitachelion who donated it to the "Stieshi" monastery in present-day Romania. This was also later confirmed in research by Šerović.³⁷ Today's church dates from 1720 and it has a relatively modest exterior.³⁸ In 1848, Vuk Vrčević wrote the following about this monastery: "... *and if the monks wanted to enjoy fishing, they could always go without meat...*"³⁹

Banja monastery, which consists of the church, monastic quarters, and the graveyard, was built on a small cape named Banjski Rtac, above the Bay of Risan. It can be reached from two sides—using the steps from the seashore, and by the road to the upper (main) monastery doors.

It was built as the monastery of Saint George (Serb. *Sveti Đorđe* or *Sveti Georgije*), but later it got another name, which it still bears today: Banja monastery. It is believed that the reason for it is that this part of Risan is called *Banja* (Serbian name for spa resort/sanatorium). According to the historical sources,⁴⁰ during the Roman reign, there were public *thermae* in this region, although there are no data in the archeological findings of that time. However, it is believed that the monastery was built exactly on the remains of the temple of Roman Vestals (*Vestal Virgins*), who had to serve in the temple of goddess Vesta (old Roman goddess of home hearth) and keep the fire burning all the time.

According to the folk narrative and written records,⁴¹ the monastery was founded in the 12th century by Stefan Nemanja, who dedicated it to Saint George because, allegedly, with prayer and his help, he came out of the trench on Paun-polje near Uroševac. The second-eldest son of Grand Prince Stefan Nemanja and Princess Anastasija, Stefan Nemanjić⁴² later subjected the monastery to his endowment of Saint Archangel on Prevlaka island near Tivat and bestowed a relic particle of Saint George on the monastery. The tradition says that Nemanja's youngest son, Rastko Nemanjić⁴³ initially brought this holy object to his older brother, King Stefan Nemanjić. When the king once came to Boka Kotorska, he visited Banja monastery, the endowment of his father, Stefan Nemanja, in the monastic brethren of Saint Simeon, and bestowed this holy relic upon him.⁴⁴

35 D. Mustur, "Manastir Banja u Boki Kotorskoj," *Zetski glasnik* 7, no. 85 (1935): 2.

36 A. Jovičević, "Manastir Banja kod Risna," *Zetski glasnik* 6 no. 88, (1934): 3.

37 Petar D. Šerović, "Nemanjići i Boka," *Glasnik Narodnog univerziteta Boke Kotorske* 2 (1935): 1–3, 7–10.

38 S. Vučenić, "The Protection and Reconstruction of the Building Heritage in the Region of the Municipality of Kotor." *Almanac* 35–36, Kotor: The Maritime Museum, 1988.

39 Lazar Drobnjaković, *Risan i stare risanske porodice* (Belgrade: MJM, 2003), 132.

40 Drobnjaković, *Risan—prvih hiljadu godina*.

41 J. Jovanović, *Istorija Crne Gore* (Cetinje: Izdavački centar, 2005).

42 Stefan Nemanjić or Stephen the First-Crowned (Serbian Cyrillic: Стефан Немањић / Стефан Првовенчани; c. 1165–24 September 1228) was the Grand Prince of Serbia from 1196 and the King of Serbia from 1217 until his death in 1228. He was the first king of Rascia, later the Kingdom of Serbia.

43 Rastko Nemanjić or later canonized as Saint Sava (Serbian Cyrillic: Растко Немањић / Свети Сава; 1169 or 1174–14 January 1236), known as the *Enlightener*, was a Serbian prince and Orthodox monk, the first Archbishop of the autocephalous Serbian Church, the founder of Serbian law, and a diplomat.

44 Bešić et al., *Istorija Crne Gore*.



Figure 2. The Church of Saint George, western façade (Photo: M. D. Petrović, 2019)



Figure 3. The main entrance to the monastic complex (Photo: M. D. Petrović, 2019)

When the Turks in Grahovo prepared to conquer Perast over Risan, the priest of Grahovo, Kovačević, sent a note to prior Ivelić in Banja that the monastery was in danger.⁴⁵ The prior and the brethren, together with a number of people, solemnly celebrated *Đurđevdan* (Saint George's Day), and then moved to the monastery of Kosijerovo. They brought with them the holy relic and everything else they could. From Kosijerovo, they moved to the monastery of Tvrdoš near Trebinje in Herzegovina. And when this monastery was devastated by the Venetians so that the Turks could not conquer it, the monks moved to the monastery of Savina near Herceg Novi. Then eleven monks from Banja moved from Savina to monastery of Duljevo in Paštrovići, Saint Martyr and Archbishop Stephen, the endowment of king Dušan Nemanjić and Saint Stephen of Dečani. They left the aforementioned holy relic and all the valuables of Banja in Savina monastery.⁴⁶ The same author further says: "When the honorable and pious old people from Risan told me about that event, I went to the monastery of Savina. I found the holy relic in a small box in front of the icon of Holy Mary in a small church. With the blessing of bishop Vladimir, the day before *Đurđevdan* (Saint George's Day) in 1913, I solemnly handed it to prior Milutin in Banja monastery, where it was welcomed by a lot of people from Risan."⁴⁷ Today, the relic is held in the church of Saint George, where pious people approach it with great awe, and a great many sick people who prayed to God and this Saint have recovered.

The foundation of the monastery during the 12th century was also confirmed by the record in *Studenica tipik* (an important Serbian medieval document from the 13th century), when the prior of Banja monastery was invited to take part in the election of the prior of Studenica. The monastery of Banja belonged to the parish of Hum at that time, which was one of the old, medieval parishes of the Serbian Orthodox Church. At that time, Boka Kotorska was a special natural border between the parish of Hum and the parish of Zeta, which spread along the coast line a bit more to the south (from Kotor southward to the town of Lezhe in today's Albania).⁴⁸ The parish of Hum was founded in 1219 by the first Serbian archbishop Saint Sava for the regions of Hum (Zahumlje) and Travunia, with the center in the monastery of Mary of Ston in Ston, at that time, the capital of Hum (today's Croatia). Until the end of the 13th and the beginning of the 14th century, the bishops of Hum ruled from Ston. However, after the death of the Serbian king Milutin Nemanjić (1321), during the battle between Stefan Dečanski and Constantine over the throne, the Bosnian ban Stjepan Konstantin took the rule over Hum. On that occasion, the bishop of Hum, Danilo, escaped from Ston and settled in the monastery of the Holy Apostle, near today's Bjelo Polje (northern Montenegro), where he was also given the necessary land for living. In 1324, bishop Danilo was replaced by Stefan, as a newly elected bishop of Hum, but he could not take his throne in Ston, which remained under the Bosnian rule. Thus, king Stefan Dečanski handed over the church of the Holy Apostle Peter on the Lim river to him for enjoyment, where the diocese of Lim was later established and it was named Petrovska (Post-Herzegovina).⁴⁹ During the times of the first Bosnian king Tvrtko I, when the monastery of Mileševa also fell under the rule of Bosnia, the special metropolitanate was founded in Mileševa for Hum

45 R. Samardžić, "Jugoslovenski narodi u srednjem veku." in *Opšta enciklopedija Larousse*, (Beograd: Interexport, 1973).

46 Miković, "Čestica mošti Sv. Đorđa u manastiru Banji u Risnu," 30–31.

47 Ibid., 17.

48 Š. Rastoder et al., *Istorijski leksikon*.

49 Dimitrije Bogdanović, "The transformation of the Serbian Church," In *Историја српског народа*, vol. 1., edited by Dragoslav Srejić et al. (Belgrade: Srpska književna zadruka, 1981), 315–27.

and Bosnia, to which the parish of Dabar also belonged for some time. In the 15th century, when Stefan Vukčić Kosača got the title “Duke (*herzeg*) of Saint Sava” and Hum got the name Herzegovina, since when this parish has also been called “Hercegovacka”. Before the fall of Herzegovina under the Turkish rule, the names of two bishops of Hum (Mileševa) are well-known.⁵⁰ The first one crowned Tvrtko I in Mileševa in 1377, and the second one was mentioned in 1466 and 1471 by the name of David. In the same period, the monastery of Banja became a part of the parish of Herzegovina, the center of which, after the fall of Herzegovina under the Turkish rule, finally settled in the monastery of Tvrdoš near Trebinje.⁵¹ After that period, only a few documents were left about the monastery, and it is believed that the church of Saint George was burned and deserted several times, and then it was newly restored and painted.

Newly Built Monastery Structure during the 17th and 18th Century

On May 15, 1654, when the people from Perast caused a hard defeat of the Turkish army while defending their town, the Turks, on their way back to Risan, destroyed the monastery to the ground and burned several houses in Risan. The monks were informed about the Turks’ intentions through a certain priest Kovačević from Grahovo, so they moved all the valuable items to Tvrdoš monastery in Herzegovina, from which they were later taken to Savina monastery near Herceg Novi, to be finally returned to Banja monastery by archimandrite Dionisije Miković.⁵² As Banja monastery (*Bagna Monastiri*), it was marked on the drawing of Giovanni Grimani from 1701 (“The Bay of Kotor with Herceg Novi and Risan”).

Immediately after the liberation of Risan from the Turks in 1684, the inhabitants of Risan wanted to restore, that is, to build the monastery on the foundations of the demolished one, and Vrčević wrote that they were moved by the unexpected arrival of the Russian archimandrite Metodije to Risan who saw that there was no monastery for 4,000 Orthodox people in the community of Risan.⁵³ They fulfilled their wish at the beginning of the 18th century. That was when Petar Kordić from Risan built the altar on the very foundation of Nemanja’s endowment. Since then, many citizens of Risan and the monks worked on the restoration of the monastery. This was recorded by “Pamjatnik”, in the wooden frame with glass, which is kept in the altar of the Church of Saint George. In 1718, Atanasije Hilandarac, the archimandrite, was appointed as the administrator of the monastery, with the right of the lifelong government. The construction of the church and the central cell was finished in 1720. In the same year, on Đurđevdan, the church was consecrated, and the first liturgy was served.

The icons of the iconostasis were painted in 1775 probably by Petar Dimitrijević-Rafailović, a zoographer from Risan, and according to some authors, Petar and Vasilije Rafailović did it during the time of prior Mojsije Dešković. About this iconostasis, Dionisije wrote the following: “The holy doors are similar, but to the golden doors in the Church of Saint Luka in Kotor... I was sorry when a Czech, an academy-trained painter Franjo Cigler, had to replace them with the

50 Radomir Ivanović, “The Medieval Heritage Properties of the Hum Eparchial Nobility,” *Historical Magazine*, no. 9–10, (1960) 79–95.

51 Radoslav Grujić, “Humarka eparhija,” In *National Encyclopedia* vol. 4 (Zagreb: Bibliografski zavod D.D., 1925).

52 Drobnjaković, *Risan—prvih hiljadu godina*.

53 Vuk Vrčević, *Crkve i manastiri u Hercegovini*, 1848.

new ones when working on the new iconostasis. There is no inscription on the new doors. There is no name, neither of the artist nor mine, on the new iconostasis. I have put only the inscription: “Glory to God! The year 1912. When the Serbs revenged Kosovo.”⁵⁴ The upper cell (*kelija*) was built by Petar Kaluderović from Luštica in 1793, and hieromonk Nikodim Jovanović, the former priest of Kotor, born in Sarajevo, built the lodge and the lower cell from 1793 to 1810. The Austrians badly damaged the monastery during the uprisings in Krivošije in 1869 and 1882.

Due to the visible damages, the church was restored again in 1902, and in 1909 the cells were reconstructed and equipped with furniture. In the First World War, the Austrians placed their garrison and hospital in the monastery and took away the church bells. After the war, prior Dionisije Miković restored the monastery again with the help of a great benefactor Vaso Čuković from Risan.⁵⁵ Thanks to the efforts of the member of the national assembly, Mirko Komnenović, from Herceg Novi, the government allotted 12,000 dinars from the two-year budget, Gavro Đurković donated 2,000 *tiglas* (*tegola* – roof tiles), and Dionisije himself donated his own 2,000 dinars, so in 1928, the lower cell and the lodge were covered with “first-class French tigla”, and next year, the other cells and the kitchen were reconstructed thanks to the help worth 30,000 dinars donated by the Risan benefactor Vaso L. Čuković. Vaso also donated one of the two big bells worth 30,000 dinars and gave 300,000 dinars in 1930 to recover the road leading from the main road Risan-Perast to the monastery doors. The old citizens of Boka, mostly sailors from Risan, as well as others, used to bring various gifts from their travels and to donate money.⁵⁶

The monastery was visited several times by bishops Vasilije, Petar I Petrović Njegoš and Petar II Petrović Njegoš. It was recorded that bishop Petar I served the liturgy in the church of this monastery on Đurđevdan 1808, during his stay in Perast at the house of the church benefactor Georgije Đurković. In 1834, it was also visited by Vuk Stefanović Karadžić⁵⁷ when he was in Risan for the first time, as well as by many other visitors, among whom were the important people from both earlier and modern times. They left their impressions in the visitors’ remembrance book of this monastery.

At the beginning of 1941, higher church authorities decided that Banja should become a nunnery, and it has remained such until today, so that the nuns could train for their Samaritan service in the newly built hospital in Risan. In November 1944, during the battles of the First brigade of Boka and the Second Dalmatian brigade against the Germans for the liberation of Grkavac, Ledenice, and Risan, the doors of the monastery were opened by prioress Savatija, so that a lot of people from Risan, mostly women, children, and elderly people, found their shelter there, and the soldiers wounded in battles were brought here and then transported to Gornji Orahovac. On that occasion, all the monastery property remained intact.⁵⁸

Banja monastery, in its recent history, belongs to the Metropolitanate of Montenegro and the Littoral since the Holy Synod of the Kingdom of Montenegro (December 29, 1918) decided that the Metropolitanate of Cetinje should again be included into the renewed Serbian

54 D. Miković, *Ikonopisci Dimitrijevići-Rafailovići*.

55 Miković, “Čestica mošti Sv. Đorđa u manastiru Banji u Risnu,” 30–31.

56 Drobñjaković, *Risan i stare risanske porodice*, 233–40.

57 Vuk Stefanović Karadžić (Serbian Cyrillic: Вук Стефановић Караџић; 6 November 1787–7 February 1864) was the most prominent Serbian philologist, anthropologist, and linguist. He was the most influential reformer of the modern Serbian language, also known as “the father of Serbian folk-literature scholarship.”

58 B. Radojičić, *Geografija Crne Gore, Društvena osnova* (Knjiga 2) (Podgorica: DASA, 2008b).

Orthodox Church, together with other metropolitanates and dioceses which represented the canonical heritage of the Patriarchate of Peć.⁵⁹ According to the new division from 1929, carried out by the Serbian Orthodox Church, the official name was changed to the Metropolitanate of Montenegro and the Littoral, which exists even today.

The Architecture of the Monastery

Besides the natural potentials and wealth of the monastery treasury, a significant role in the overall attractiveness of Banja monastery is played by the architecture of its buildings. In order to present the harmony of the architectural relations of the structures of Banja monastery, it is necessary to describe its appearance and the characteristics of the style of the monastery.

As a beginning of the architectural analysis, it can be noted that the monastery forms its architecture completely in harmony with the rocky surroundings. The monastery and the nature are complementarily united. By its morphological character, the monastery represents a group form. The structures are clearly positioned in space and under the right angle, and thus they form big inner yards, which, observed together, make horizontal plains on various height levels.

This provides the whole inner space with the dynamics, which combines with the silent way of monastery life and, together, they make an interesting and original cultural-historic whole. The buildings, as well as the dispositioning of the inner yards, meticulously follow the spatial characteristics of the rocky soil they are on. For that reason, the architecture of the monastery comes into full light. The architecture of the primary masses (cubes, cones, pyramids, etc.) form the monastic spatial units and refined relations.⁶⁰ The urbanistic arrangement of the monastery is baroque, because it is organized along the big and longitudinal axis. If the base of the monastery is observed, its spatial principle—symmetry—can be noticed. The vertical axis, which divides the whole space into two equal parts, starts with the central annex of the building on the lowest level, and finishes with a small church of Saint George on the highest level of the monastic. The church is logically located because it represents the main motif of the whole urbanistic-architectural complex.

The main axis—the axis of the monastic complex, finishes with the altar apse, which strengthens the impression of the whole, because a visitor has a clearly defined moving direction from the beginning to the end, from the entrance gate to the altar, from the real world to the world of spirituality and enlightenment. The impression arisen in a visitor when the spatial sequences change as they climb to the final and visually unchanged aim, the small church, is baroque. In the past, famous examples of strongly defined axial directions from the Mayan architecture in Central America, over the Egyptian sacral architecture of temples, to possibly the most similar example to the one of Banja monastery: Spanish Steps in Rome. These statements can be claimed and stood up for with certainty because the axis is extremely clear and strong in the space. The primary geometry of the building was transferred to the primary geometry of the yard, with which extraordinary logic and the impression of the entirety of a complex are achieved. The monastery was so meticulously spatially planned to the tiniest details. The archi-

59 Drobñaković, *Risan i stare risanske porodice*, 233–40.

60 Vujičić and Marković, *Spomenici kulture*.

texture and the surrounding space are in such a cohesion, and the impression of the entirety is inevitable.

Within the whole architecture of the monastery, two spatial plans interchange: horizontal and vertical. The horizontal one comprises the yards and the character of the architectures of the buildings themselves, whereas the verticality is achieved by various height differences between the buildings and the levels of the yards, i.e. the dispositioning between them. The impression of verticality is additionally emphasized by the existence of the two bell towers. One of them is in the church itself, on the front façade of the church, and the other one, on the right side of the church, at the end of the highest rectangular yard. This is, among other things, a very common feature of baroque architecture and urbanism.⁶¹

The architectural-urbanistic solution is certainly baroque, but the architecture of the monastery is the mixture of several styles, as a consequence of the history of the monastery, climate, and presence of other dominant artistic styles of this region: baroque, byzantine, and roman- esque. All the architectural elements within which the style of a structure is determined are extremely nicely and harmoniously matched. The structures within the monastery are *the Church of Saint George, the Old Monastic Quarters and Cells, the Terrace – lodge, the New Monastic Quarters, and the Bishop's Chamber*.

The Church of Saint George is baroque in style, which is evident from the bell tower, the main foyer, window wreaths on the altar apse and in the choirs. The altar apse is semi-circular, whereas the choirs have all the characteristics of Raška ecclesiastical school^{62,63} so that certain contrast and inconsistency can be noticed.

The church is a single-nave structure, with the spatial arrangement of a basilica, in the shape of a Latin cross. With the main nave, the cross-hall forms a cross, not in the middle of the main nave of the church, but a bit lower, closer to the altar apse. The church has no narthex, but the naos is entered directly from the main door.

What is also very impressive about the church is its modesty that fills every detail of the structure, both its exterior and its interior. The altar is also modest in dimensions, but it is very interesting because its appearance perfectly fits the architecture of the church. It is often the case in littoral churches that the contrast and inadequacy of the architectures of the churches with their pompous, and often disproportionate altars are the reason for the lack of spatial and visual unity. However, in Banja monastery and the Church of Saint George, that harmony is complete. The vault of the church is semi-spherical and there are no frescoes on it.⁶⁴

Next to the church there is a graveyard where the old families of Risan have their tombs. On the western side is the grave of Nikola Jovov Petrović Njegušić (as it was written on the big, vertically placed gravestone), born in Risan on March 14/15, 1819, who died in Perast on June 9, 1868, and who was an uncle of King Nikola I Petrović. On the gravestone there is an engraved poem by Jovan Sundečić in the Church Slavic language and its translation into Italian, dedicated to this "Njegušić".

61 Jovanović, *Istorija Crne Gore*.

62 N. Bondarenko, "Special Aspects of the Serbian Monuments of the Raška Architectural School of the 12th–Mid 14th Centuries," In *2nd International Conference on Culture, Education, and Economic Development of Modern Society (ICCESE 2018)*, edited by Eric McAnally et al. (Amsterdam: Atlantis Press, March 2018),: 649–51.

63 M. Dragović et al., "Geometric proportional schemas of Serbian Medieval Raška churches based on Štambuk's proportional Canon," *Nexus Network Journal* 21, no. 1 (2019): 33–58.

64 Veselin Masleša, ed. *Evlija Čelebija: The travel book excerpts about the Yugoslav countries* (Sarajevo: Veselin Masleša, 1979).



Figure 4a,b. The bell towers in the monastery yard (Photo: M. D. Petrović, 2019)

On the upper arch part of the gravestone, there is an engraved royal coat of arms of the Petrović dynasty. This part broke and fell during the earthquake on April 15, 1979, and it is still leaning against the grave even today. The tradition says that, when he was buried, some of the documents of the deceased were also placed in the grave.⁶⁵ On the northern wall of the church, there are plates with the inscription: “Here lies O. Hrisantije (Risto) Nikolajević, the prior and the national benefactor, born in Sarajevo in 1796, who died in 1876. Mention, Thee, Lord, the Archimandrites Svetogorski Atanasije Metodije, Priors: Vasilije, Mojsije, Petronije, Inokentije, Ger-

⁶⁵ Drobnjaković, *Risan i stare risanske porodice*, 233–40.



Figure 5. The front façade of the Church of Saint George (Photo: M. D. Petrović, 2019)

asim, Monks: Kirilo Maksim, Arsenije, Nikodim Josif, Pahonije, Sava Maksim. Erected by prior Gerasim Čečur stavrophor and prioress Suša”.

The architecture of the *old monastic quarters and cells* is represented in the traditional littoral architecture of Montenegro.⁶⁶ Its characteristics are ornamental simplicity and elegance, small windowpanes, flat wall surfaces and the two-nave roof. The material is always stone, which makes these houses aesthetically perfect regarding the fact that they ideally fit in the surroundings.

Besides the church and the bell tower, *the terrace-lodge* represents the most interesting architectural element which cannot be classified into any specific architectural style. It is a mixture of several styles, which were very skillfully combined here so that the original whole could be achieved. Regarding the position of the Lodge, in comparison with the old quarters, and taking into consideration the differences in their style, it can be said that the Lodge was built later and then connected with the Old quarters. The lodge has extraordinary importance within the whole composition because it represents the extension of the main axis of the monastery, which provides an additional impression of the linear movement within the monastic toward the main Church of Saint George.⁶⁷ The styles that could be recognized in the Lodge are: byzantine, baroque, and pseudo-byzantine,⁶⁸ because some of the architectural elements were taken from

66 Vujičić and Marković, *Spomenici kulture*.

67 Jovanović, *Istorija Crne Gore*.

68 Dragović, M., Čučaković, A., Bogdanović, J., Čičević, S., & Trifunović, A. (2019). Triangular proportional scheme and concept of the two Serbian medieval churches. In *ICGG 2018-Proceedings of the 18th International Conference on Geometry*



Figure 6. Monastery graveyard (Photo: M. D. Petrović, 2019)

Egyptian architecture, as well as the style of the traditional architecture of the littoral houses of Montenegro. In this way, it can be noticed that the architectural assembly of the Lodge itself is highly monastic and interesting. It provides a fantastic view of the Bay of Boka Kotorska, which is why the size of the windowpanes is justified. The wall surfaces of the Lodge were made in the style of the traditional littoral architecture of Montenegro,⁶⁹ the main characteristics of which are: flat surfaces and the use of stone as a construction material. Finally, for this monastery, the whole Lodge reflects the lavish baroque style which additionally shows the connection with the architectural whole and the style harmony of the monastery.

The New Monastic Quarters are baroque in their architecture, and the main entrance and “*škure*” (windowpanes, shutters, blinds) are the best proof of it. The baroque elements are simple and elegant as well, but they are also the most expressed in comparison with the whole monastic.

The rhythm of the windowpanes gives the façade a strict look, but the color is extremely vivid and open so that the whole structure reflects an interesting contrast between the liveliness and applied consistency, as well as the seriousness of the monastic life. Here is also the main entrance to the monastery, which is exceptionally beautiful, even though very modest, and elegant, also baroque in style. The key stone that is located at the top of the arch of the front door

and Graphics: 40th Anniversary-Milan, Italy, August 3-7, 2018 18 (pp. 677-689). Cham: Springer International Publishing.

69 Vujičić and Marković, *Spomenici kulture*.



Figure 7. The northern façade of the new monastic quarters (Photo: M. D. Petrović, 2019)

enhances the solemnity, as well as the whole proportion and size of the front door itself.⁷⁰ The architecture of the *bishop's chamber* is also represented in the traditional littoral architecture of Montenegro⁷¹. Its characteristics correspond to the characteristics of the Old monastic quarters (modesty and elegance, small windowpanes, flat wall surfaces, and two-ridge roof). The material used for its construction is the local stone, as for the other accessory structures.

Iconostasis and the Treasury of the Monastery

The iconostasis and the monastery's treasury are also highly valuable for mentioning in the manuscript. The current state of the items is very well preserved, but not sufficiently presented to the scientific audience and general public. In this respect, this section will stress more on the importance of each representative item currently conserved by the monastery with a special focus on epitrachelion as a unique spiritual and artistic rarity of the monastery. The selected items will be discussed as the historically most precious resources in the monastery. The discussion will start with the holy doors of the monastery from the 18th century, accompanied by the Dimitrijević-Rafailović school's multi-scene icon (with nine episodes), and large icon in three parts (a triptych) as one of the most valuable icons in the monastery. It continues with the presentation of the new monastery iconostasis from 1912 and finishes with very precious artistic items—

70 Drobnjaković, *Risan i stare risanske porodice*, 233–40.

71 Vujičić and Marković, *Spomenici kulture*.

epitrachelion (Greek: επιτραχήλιο – around the neck; τράκxελος – neck, collar) and bracelets, woven with gold and silver threads and with embroidered saints' faces.

The holy doors of the monastery were made on April 22, 1775, during the times of archbishops Savo Petrović and Arsenije Plamenac and the prior of Banja monastery, Mojsej Dešković.⁷² The icon painter did not sign his name, probably because of the lack of space. Similar icons make the viewers believe that this work was also done by somebody from Dimitrijević-Rafailović family from Risan. The holy doors are similar, but with more gold-plated details, when compared with the holy doors in the Church of the Holy Apostle Luka in Kotor.

High-quality work of Dimitrijević-Rafailović school from Risan is presented on the icon with nine smaller episodes (multi-scene icon) from the saints' life and 46 saints, where it is interesting that it is dominated by *domestic saints*, which represent a novelty in iconography.

The episodes that are presented on the icon are the following: God's christening, Archangel Michael, Lazarus's resurrection (Lazarus's Saturday), Saint Nicolas, Saint George and Saint Marina, Three Holy Hierarchs, Theodore Tiron, Eastern Friday, Cosmas and Damian, and the name of the ninth icon is illegible because that part of the icon is damaged. At the top of the holy doors there is a cross, the holy cross, and below it, on the left and the right wing of the doors, there are the Holy Prophets Saint David and his son Solomon.

In the middle of the former old iconostasis there was a large icon in three parts (a triptych) on yew wood, one of the most valuable icons in the monastery. On the right side there are Holy Apostles Peter and Paul. On the left side, at the top, Saraot, and at the sides the Holy Archangels Gabriel and Uriel. Below the Saraot, the Savior was painted, and at the sides, Holy Mary, and Saint John the Apostle. This icon is 69 cm high and 1.17 m long. On it, besides the already mentioned, Saint Nicholas, Saint Basil the Great, the Holy Great Martyr Demetrius, and others, smaller in size were painted, so that the icon depicts 46 saints in total. There is no inscription, but it is supposed that it was painted by the same artist as the one of the holy doors in 1775. The icon is kept in the monastic dining room.⁷³

The new iconostasis of Banja monastery was made in 1912, by the academy-trained painter Franjo Cigler from Czechia, and its dominant style is baroque. Four icons are depicted on the holy doors—the two lower ones are bigger, and the two upper ones are smaller. On the left side of the doors, the bigger icon represents the Holy Archangel Gabriel, and the lower and smaller one depicts Solomon the Prophet. On the right side of the doors, the lower (bigger) icon depicts the Mother of God (Mother Mary), and the lower and smaller one depicts David the Prophet.

On the left and the right side of the main holy doors, there are smaller holy doors. On the left one is Saint Stephen Archdeacon, and on the right is Saint Archangel Michael. Around the main and the small holy doors, in two levels, there are the icons of Saint John the Baptist, Holy Mary, Transfiguration of Jesus, Saint Spiridon, Jesus Christ, Christ's Resurrection, Saint George the Great Martyr, and Holy Father Nicholas.⁷⁴

Banja monastery owns a very rich monastic treasury where old books, religious objects, old icons, etc. are kept. Banja monastery in Risan keeps very precious *artistic ecclesiastic embroidery—epitrachelion* (Greek: επιτραχήλιο – around the neck; τράκxελος – neck, collar) and the

⁷² D. Miković, *Ikonopisci Dimitrijevići-Rafailovići*.

⁷³ Ibid, 27. >

⁷⁴ Drobnjaković, *Risan i stare risanske porodice*, 233–40.



Figure 8. The monastery holy doors by P. Rafailović, 18th century
(Source: <http://www.bokokotorskaslikarskaskola.rs/manastir-banja/>)

bracelets, woven with gold and silver threads and with embroidered saints' faces, where the ones on the epitachelion are decorated with pearls on the halos around their heads so that it contains more than 400 beads.⁷⁵ The epitachelion and the bracelets were exhibited at the Cultural-historic exhibition in Kotor in 1934.

This epitachelion was mentioned in *Serbian Magazine* for the year 1864, where it was said that it originated from the times of Saint Sava. The archimandrite of Banja monastery, Dionisije Miković, a well-known and respected writer, a devoted guard of these valuables and other monastic holy objects for many years, told the people who were present at the above-mentioned exhibition a story which says that this epitachelion with bracelets was in Mileševa monastery, where the relics of Saint Sava were lying, until they were later taken from the monastery by a priest to keep them in his home. Before he died, he handed these valuables to his successors to keep them and told them to take them to any monastery where the Turks did not rule in case of the threat of Turkish invasion. The successors of this priest turkized, but they kept these valuables as holy things and lit candles before them until 1775, when one of them took them to Nikšić to a certain priest, who was a gunsmith and fixed guns. This priest, in fear that the Turks

⁷⁵ During our visit to Banja monastery on 1 August 2017, Mother Haritina Petruševska enabled us, for the needs of the research and writing this paper, to have a personal insight and to take photos of this, and other valuable monastic objects, which is why we would like to express our deepest gratitude for such trust.



Figure 9. Multi-scene icon by P. Rafailović, 18th century (Photo: A. Paprenica Petrović, 2019)



Figure 10. Triptych icon by P. Rafailović, 18th century (Photo: A. Paprenica Petrović, 2019)



*Figure 11. The icon of Holy Mary with Christ by P. Rafailović, 18th century
(Photo: A. Paprenica Petrović, 2019)*

could sequester these valuables, sent them to Grahovo, to priest Šćepan Kovačević, to take them to Banja monastery in Risan, where the Turks did not rule. Kovačević handed them to the prior of Banja, Vasilije Ivelić, and he gave him twenty Venetian golden coins for them. Ivelić, in his last will from January 7, 1793, left the epitachelion and the bracelets to Banja monastery, which was, according to tradition, founded by Stefan Nemanja and he cursed anybody who would take them away from the monastery.⁷⁶ According to other sources,⁷⁷ it is believed that the epitachelion and the bracelets were actually the gift of the County ruler Stroja, and his wife, the County woman-ruler Sima, to Stenešta monastery in 1606, and that they were later sent to Banja monastery in Risan.

The epitachelion is very unusual in shape, because it is not connected, but it is similar to a deacon's orarion, and ends with two tassels on both of the sides. In the middle of the epitachelion, in the circled area, there is an embroidered figure down to the waist of the Christ with a crown on his head, decorated with perls, where he blesses with both hands. The inscription is

ИС ХС

This painting, where the Christ was depicted only down to his waist was done as such due to the small width of the epitachelion. On one side, next to the Christ, along the length of the

⁷⁶ Vasko Kostić, *Prvo humanitarno društvo Južnih Slovena „Sveti Đorđe“* (Beograd: Stručna knjiga, 1998).

⁷⁷ Petar D. Šerović, "Starinski epitrahilj i narukvice u manastiru Banja." *Glasnik narodnog univerziteta Boke, Kotor*, 16.



Figure 12. The icon of the Entombment of Christ by P. Rafailović, 18th century
(Photo: A. Paprenica Petrović, 2019)



Figure 13. Ecclesiastic embroidery – epitachelion (Photo: A. Paprenica Petrović, 2019)



Figure 14a,b. Details of the epitrachelion (Photo: A. Paprenica Petrović, 2019)

epitrachelion there is an embroidered figure of the Mother of God with the arms stretched forward toward the savior as a sign of prayer. The inscription is

MP ΘV

On the other side is Saint John the Forerunner with his hair down his back. His inscription is

СТИ

Below the face of the Mother of God, there is an embroidered face of the Holy Apostle Peter, who is holding a scroll in his right hand and the left hand is raised for blessing. The inscription is

СТИ
ПЕ
ТР Ъ

On the other side of the epitrachelion, turned toward Saint Peter is the face of the Holy Apostle Paul. It is depicted without hair at the top of his head. He is blessed with his right hand and holding a book in his left hand. The inscription is

СТИ ПаВЕЛ

Below Saint Peter is Saint Basil the Great, who is depicted with a long, black beard. He is blessing with his right hand and holding the Gospel in the left. The inscription is

СТИ
ва
силіе

On the opposite side is Saint John Chrysostom with a short beard. This saint is wearing a sakkos, whereas all the other archpriests are wearing a phelonion. There is also an unusual omophorion. He is blessing with his right hand, and holding the Gospel in the left. His inscription is:

СТИ злат

Below Saint Basil there is an embroidered face of Saint Athanasius, who was depicted with full beard. The saint is holding the Gospel with both hands and raising the omophorion. His inscription is:

СТИ а ѿ а N а
СІЕ

On the other side is Saint Gregory the Theologian, with the right hand raised in blessing, and in the left hand wrapped in phelonion, he is holding the Gospel. His inscription is:

СТИ ГРИ
БГО ГО
СЛО РИ
В Е

Below Saint Athanasius is Saint Spyridon depicted with his distinctive cap on his head. He is holding the Gospel in his left hand, and the omophorion is thrown over the arm and the raised phelonion, so that his epitachelion can be seen. His right hand is on his chest. His inscription is:

СТИ РИДО
СПИ НЪ

On the other side, below Saint Gregory is the face of Saint Nicolas with the omophorion thrown over his left arm, so that his epitachelion can be seen. He is blessing with his right hand and holding the Gospel in his left hand. His inscription is:

СТИ Ла
НИКО Е

Below the face of Saint Spyridon, there is the embroidered face of the County ruler Stroja, and below Saint Nicolas, the face of the County woman-ruler Sima. Both the county ruler



Figure 15a,b. The details of the epitrachelion (Photo: A. Paprenica Petrović, 2019)

and woman-ruler—certainly husband and wife—are depicted in their solemn, very interesting clothing and with the caps on their heads, as they are kneeling with their arms stretched out in a prayer.

Above the face of the County ruler Stroja, there is an inscription:

ЖПАН СТРОЕ ВЕСТОЛМИЮЪ

Above the face of the County woman-ruler Sima, there is an inscription:

ЖПАНИЦА ЕГОСИМА

The epitrachelion originates from 1606, and it can be immediately noticed that it is a hand-craft from the Vlach countries. Especially successfully made are the faces of the saints, which were skillfully done and all of them have their own characteristics. A similar epitrachelion, most probably of the same origin, can be found in the Museum of Prince Pavle in Belgrade.⁷⁸

So far, not very much has been written in detail about the bracelets or about the saints depicted on the epitrachelion. On one of the bracelets, there is the embroidered Mother of God with a cap on her head, below which her hair can be seen. She is holding baby Christ in her arms, and he is holding a scroll in his hands. Below her feet is a cushion. The inscription is

⁷⁸ V. Kostić, Kostić, *V. Prvo humanitarno društvo Južnih Slovena „Sveti Đorđe“*.

MP ΘV

There is an angel on both sides, probably Archangels Michael and Gabriel, with their heads solemnly bowed and with their arms stretched toward the Mother of God and Christ in prayer. There are no inscription next to the images of these two archangels. On the other bracelet, “Deisis” is depicted, similarly to the one on the epitachelion. In the middle is the face of Christ who is sitting and holding the Gospel in his hands, and his feet are on the cushion. His halo is cross-shaped (divided into three parts), and on the other side is the inscription:

IC XC

On the right side is Mother of God with the inscription:

MP ΘV

On the left side is Saint John the Forerunner with his long hair and inscription:

ΩΓ Ιω

both of them in the distinctive deisistic posture. There are no perls on the bracelets, and the work is equal to that on the epitachelion, so it is noticeable that they make one whole.

In Banja monastery, in a small silver reliquary (chest) the relic particle of the Holy Martyr Saint George is kept. On the reliquary, there is the following inscription: *μοψи светого великомдченика геωργиа бише ω(ко) Ране епхфαιНе пѣши*. It is believed that Saint Sava brought this holy object to his brother King Stefan the First-Crowned Nemanjić. When the king once came to today’s Boka, he visited his endowment, the monastery of Saint Archangel Michael on Prevlaka. Then he also visited Banja monastery, the endowment of his father Stefan Nemanja, and brought this holy relic as a present, which is kept in this place even today.

Eminent Priors of the Monastery

Banja monastery has had numerous priors and prioresses, but it is necessary to emphasize those from the past which are considered to have left an important trace in history with their life and work. Also, due to the social and political circumstances of that time, they contributed a lot to the survival and reconstruction of the monastery.

Dionisije Miković, the prior and archimandrite of Banja monastery, lived and worked in Risan. This respected and prominent priest, historian, writer, poet, and patriot spent almost 60 years of his life in the monastery, from September 16, 1883, to March 4, 1941. He was born on October 12, 1861, in the village of Čelobrdo, above Praskvica monastery in Paštrovići. He was christened as Dimitrije. He attended school in Reževići monastery and lived there as a novice from 1874 to 1879. He became a monk in 1879 and got the name Dionisije. In the same year, he was ordained as a hierodeacon, and then as a presbyter. He was self-educated and acquired ecclesiastical knowledge and general culture, and he also studied German and Russian. His love for books and his natural talent made him an extraordinary monk, and then a prominent writer

and historian as well. He was asked to come to Banja monastery on September 16, 1883, to take over the administration there. He immediately made a lot of improvements, as he wrote “mainly with my own assets”, so he planted and grafted “a lot of domestic and wild trees”. After the First World War, he was helped a lot by the Risan benefactor Vaso L. Ćuković, whom he turned to whenever it was necessary. Dionisije was chosen for the prior in 1891, and thirty years later he was given the title of archimandrite. He was entitled to wear the red lining on his upper cassock in 1909.⁷⁹

Besides the fact that he conscientiously performed his service in this monastery, he also studied historic and ethnographic material, wrote a lot, published and edited literary publications, calendars, etc. In Risan, in 1896, he started and edited “Serbian Magazine, the annual magazine for science, entertainment, and literature”, the first literary magazine of the people of Boka. He printed it in Novi Sad and Dubrovnik. The magazine stopped being published in 1898 when he started the calendar entitled “Boka” in Kotor and worked as its editor. He was a very prolific writer. He published 214 poetry, short stories, travel stories, scientific and ecclesiastical papers, educational-pertinent articles, reviews, overviews, obituaries, etc, and he also left other 244 works in manuscripts. He was awarded on numerous occasions. Serbian king Aleksandar Obrenović awarded him with the Order of Saint Sava (the Knight Grand Cross) in 1899. In 1907, the Serbian Royal Academy rewarded his study about the bishopric of Boka Kotorska with 300 golden dinars. The University of Belgrade awarded him Kolarac’s reward for collecting the unknown folk poems in Boka Kotorska, etc.

When the provincial council of the Red Cross for Dalmatia awarded him with the Gold medal for his devoted work, he refused to receive it, because it came from the hands of the occupiers (Austrian-Hungarians). As a prominent patriot, and citizen of the Austrian-Hungarian Empire at the same time, he was politically prosecuted and sentenced. In 1913, the Court of Kotor sentenced him to five years in prison as a “traitor”, “in enemy’s service”, and “literary propagandist of Grand Serbia”. After the outbreak of the First World War, the Austrian-Hungarian government banished him and imprisoned him in Banja monastery. He helped abandoned and poor children. In the letter he wrote on October 10, 1940, from Banja monastery to Petar Šoć, a journalist from Belgrade, he said: “I have lost my hearing and got ill. I have nothing to be treated with... Thank you for *coperta* (cover) because otherwise, I would not be able to write to you since I swear with God that I do not have a single dinar...”. He also complained to Šoć in his letter from November 2 of the same year, and informed him that he received help from the president of the National Assembly, at the recommendation of Mirko Komnenović, and that the help “made my Christmas joyful... That is all the reward for me from this country, for which I have always worked and suffered”. Then, on February 4, 1941, he wrote: “Everything has ended tragically, I am dying of misery”⁸⁰

He did not want to leave Banja monastery and Risan in his old age. When he was moved to Podlastva monastery near Budva at the beginning of 1941, he appealed to the responsible ecclesiastical authorities and begged them to let him die in Risan, in Banja monastery, but his appeal and wish were not granted. Old and feeble, he received a “cordial goodbye from the people, on Tuesday (March 4, 1941) and left Banja monastery”.

79 Kostić, *Prvo humanitarno društvo Južnih Slovena „Sveti Đorđe”*.

80 Kostić, *Prvo humanitarno društvo Južnih Slovena „Sveti Đorđe”*.

He wrote his last article, “The Letter of Saint Peter of Cetinje” (“Pismo svetog Petra Cetinjskog”) in Risan and sent it for publishing from Duljevo monastery in Paštrovići on March 7, 1941, three days after he had left Risan. “The Voice of Boka” published it in its last issue, a few days before the April War. Very ill, and deeply suffering because of the occupation, he died on June 1, 1941, in Duljevo monastery.⁸¹

On April 1, 1941, prioress *Savatija Šuša*, christened Ana Šuša, came to Risan and stayed there until she died on November 21, 1991. She was born in 1914 in the village of Nunić near Kistanje in Dalmatia. She spent 50 years in Banja monastery, living a modest life, as it suited her, and often in very hard conditions due to poverty. On the same day, together with Savatija, to Risan came sister Natalija (the head of the monastery), Milica Mijušković, and nun Leonida. Then Banja became a nunnery. Milica left the monastery soon after the arrival, Leonida left in 1943, and Natalija in July 1944, so Savatija was there alone. Immediately in 1941, she brought a three-month-old baby Radmila Ilić (daughter of Ilija Ilić and Vidosava Vujičić from Donje Krivošije) to the monastery to raise her there because her mother Vidosava died soon after she was born, on July 12, 1941, and her father was killed by the Italians. Radmila grew up with Savatija, she was educated and got married there.⁸²

With great love and responsibility, this active and honest prioress conscientiously maintained the church and the monastic quarters and took care of valuable objects, furniture, books, icons, and everything else in the monastery. While she was still in good health, she kept a few sheep, goats, or cows, cultivated the gardens of the monastery, and thus ensured provisions for life. She also took care of the greenery in the monastery. It is noteworthy that prioress Savatija, by following the example of archimandrite Dionisije, even though probably unaware of it, partially helped the maintenance of the monastery with her own assets. After the disastrous earthquake on April 15, 1979, when the monastery was badly damaged, she took loans on her own name to finance the necessary repairs of the monastery, and repaid them with her modest wages, and later with her pension. This may be a unique example that somebody repaired the social, in this case, church property, with their personal loans and their own assets, from the damages caused by the earthquake. She was loved and respected in Risan. She also had close friendly relations with a lot of families from Risan. Many people visited her with sincere respect. She was buried in the tomb on the northern side of the monastic church of Saint George. The family saint's day of the Šuša family is Šćepandan (Saint Stephen's Day).⁸³

The merits for today's development of the monastery go to the nuns, who improve this monastic and keep it for future generations with their faith, care, work, and devotion. The Mother of this monastery, nun Haritina Petruševska, born on June 16, 1961, in Skopje, was educated and got a university degree at the Faculty of Philology in Skopje in 1988. She became a nun on March 8, 1992, in Banja monastery. Besides her, today's sisterhood of Banja monastery is made of nuns Grigorija Petruševska, Marta Marinko, Marija Petkovska, and Evgenija Đuković.

81 Drobňaković, *Risan i stare risanske porodice*, 233–40.

82 Kostić, *First Humanitarian Association*.

83 Drobňaković, *Risan i stare risanske porodice*, 233–40.

Conclusion

The Serbian Orthodox monastery Banja in Risan represents an inseparable urbanistic-architectural complex whose richness in style presents in the best way how a certain style stratification can impact the whole impression of the monastery so that we almost physically feel the presence of different times and epochs. This monastery is telling us about it all the time with its history and architecture, and its location is something that is extraordinary.

The monastery has a long and turbulent history—it was demolished, and then risen from the ashes, and always reconstructed thanks to the great love of the people of Risan and its surroundings. The structure proves with its values that it has a lot to boast about and to show to potential visitors, but with the respect of the strict rules of monastic life of the clergy and of the monastic holy place in general. It is there to remind us of the existence of the rich history of Boka Kotorska and to warn today's population that more attention should be dedicated to the sacral structures which have been gathering religious people throughout the centuries. With its anthropogenic characteristics and the natural environment, this unique entirety can be classified to the group of great cultural-historic attractive spots of Montenegro.

This study is highly important because it provides a detailed insight into the heritage of the selected monastery from the Nemanjići period on the territory of present-day Montenegro and reveals the details of the events that later took place in this region. Bearing in mind that historical, geographical, and anthropological research on the monastery, Risan, and its surroundings are still very scarce, this research aimed to contribute to science and point out the importance of the monastery and its valuables to the academic community in order to preserve it for future related research. The monastery and the whole region of Risan represent significant historic, cultural, and architectural resources. For that reason, the relevant institutions and individuals should be put more attention to preserving the area for the new generations.

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