



MONASTERY SOPOĆANI

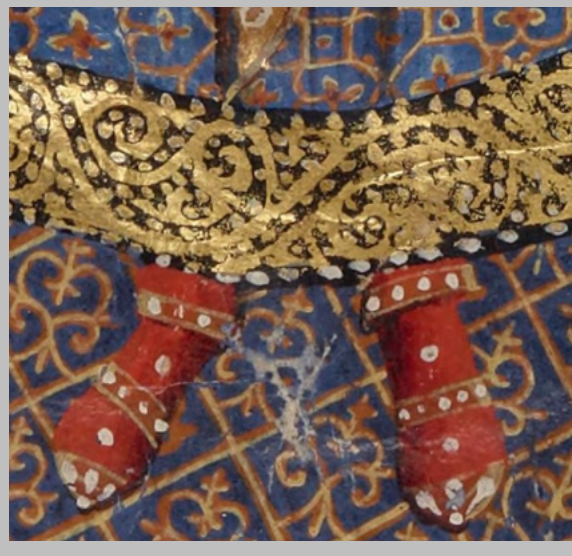
BLAGO Fund continues with the preservation of Serbian culture and heritage

MONASTERY SOPOĆANI

The **Sopoćani Monastery**, a foundation of King Urosh I, was built in the second half of the 13th century, near the source of the river Raška in the region of Ras, the centre of the Serbian medieval state. The most certain year of building is 1265. The church is dedicated to the Holy Trinity.

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The completion of the painting of the main parts of the church can be indirectly dated to between 1263 and 1270. Archbishop Sabbas II, who became the head of the Serbian Orthodox Church in 1263, is represented in the procession of archbishops in the altar of the Sopoćani church. Sopoćani frescoes are considered by many experts on Orthodox Christian art as the most beautiful frescoes belonging to the Serbian Orthodox Church.

In the 16th century the monks had to leave the monastery on several occasions because of the Turkish threat, but they always returned to it. During one of these departures they took the coffin with the body of King Steven the First-Crowned to the Monastery of Crna Reka (Black River) in Kosovo. The church lost its roof, and the outer narthex was partly demolished. The end of the 16th and the beginning of the 17th century was a period of great prosperity for Sopoćani. All damages were repaired at that time.

The Turks burnt and demolished the monastery in 1689 and carried off the lead from the church roof. After this tragedy the monks did not return to it, and it remained deserted for over two hundred years, until the 20th century.

The rare travellers who visited it in the 18th and 19th centuries recorded that it lay in ruins. The church slowly decayed: its vaults caved in, its dome fell down, and the remains of the surrounding buildings were covered with rubble and earth. During 20th century monastery is renewed and today is settled by numerous and very active brotherhood of monks. The fact that most of Sopoćani frescoes many consider as a miracle. The beauty presented in this archive survived more than 2 centuries of extreme meteorological circumstances and despite that conserved all of its glory.



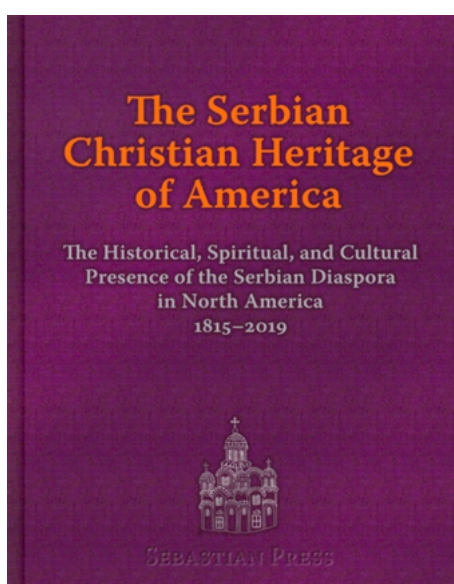
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