

The Honor of Saint Paraskevi in Serbia: A Historical-Ethnological Analysis*

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Introduction

In the calendar of saints of the Orthodox Church, there are four women named Paraskevi. The least known of all is Saint Paraskevi, mentioned in the description of the martyrdom of Saint Photini the Samaritan. It is mentioned there that, during the reign of Emperor Nero (54-68 AD), Saint Photini was martyred with her two sons and five sisters, one of whom was Saint Paraskevi. Their memory is honored on the 26th of February.

The second Saint Paraskevi came from Iconium [Konya] in Asia Minor and became a martyr during the reign of Emperor Diocletian (287-305 AD). She is celebrated on the 28th of October, but only by the Russian Orthodox Church.

The third and most well-known throughout the Orthodox world is Saint Paraskevi the Roman, who was martyred during the reign of Emperor

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Antoninus Pius (138-161 AD). Her memory is celebrated on the 26th of July.

The fourth, of whom the honor we will discuss in this article, is Saint Paraskevi from Epivates. She was born in Epivates, Eastern Thrace, in the 10th century, to wealthy and noble Christian parents. From an early age, she was attracted to the ascetic life. Thus, she left her family home early to go to Constantinople and then to Jerusalem and the Jordanian desert. Later, she returned to her homeland, where she remained until her death. Her remains were miraculously found and, from 1231, were carried on a procession throughout the Balkan Peninsula, a fact that contributed to her special honor in these parts. Her memory is honored on the 14th of October¹.

The “Serbian” Origins of Saint Paraskevi

As we’ve mentioned above, Saint Paraskevi’s veneration² is widespread throughout the Balkan peninsula. However, in each place where she is honored, her figure has been “post-codified” to serve local narratives³. That’s because in the context of traditional culture and oral literature, where the veneration of saints is particularly prominent, local saints are generally better accepted⁴. Thus, according to the Serbian hagiographic

1. The reader can find essential information about the four saints bearing the same name, along with extensive bibliography, in: Soutana Lambrou-Papakarmezi, *Άγία Παρασκευή ή Επιβατηνή: αγιολογική μελέτη*, PhD, Department of Pastoral and Social Theology, Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, Thessaloniki 2001, pp. 14-15. Cf. R. Popović, *Kult prepodobne majke Paraskeve – svete Petke u Beogradu*, the recording of the lecture delivered on October 27, 2017, from 00:13:27 to 00:17:54, is available on the website: <https://svetigora.com/otac-radomir-popovic-kult-prepodobne-majke-paraskeve-svete-petke-u-beogradu/> [01/08/2019].

2. It should be noted that in the Office of the Saint, in the Menaion for October, she is referred to as: «ὁσία μητέρα ἡμῶν Παρασκευή» (= our holy mother Paraskevi). The faithful people of Serbia also address the saint as “Saint Paraskevi”, out of great respect and love for her. For this reason, both titles are used in this text.

3. Mirjana Detelić, «Sveta Petka u svojoj zoni usmene književnosti», *Časopis za studije književnosti i kulture Liceum*, knj. br. 5: Kult svetih na Balkanu, Centar za naučna istraživanja SANU, Univezitet u Kragujevcu, Kragujevac 2001, p. 133.

4. Op.cit., p. 124.

tradition, Saint Paraskevi is of Serbian origin⁵. Nevertheless, this cannot be supported by historical facts⁶; is due to the efforts of oral literature narrators to make the saint more accessible to their audience⁷. According to some historians, another possible reason for the idea of Saint Paraskevi's Serbian origin lies in the 19th century nationalist historiography⁸.

The first written testimony for the nickname "Serbian" dates back to 1794; it can be found on the foundation stone on the western outer wall of the Feneč Monastery's church, near Belgrade. Since then, this nickname has often appeared in the inscriptions of churches dedicated to Saint Paraskevi, as well as in liturgical books containing the saint's services, in an ethnic rather than geographical context⁹.

However, it is more likely that the appellative "Serbian" was originally added to Saint Paraskevi as an indication of the place that was housing her holy relics. Thus, due to the numerous transfers of her relics, in addition to the nickname "Epivatini", there are others that do not refer to her place of origin, such as from "Tarnovo", "Iași", or "Belgrade"¹⁰.

5. Justin (Popović), *Žitija svetih za oktobar*, Manastir Ćelije, Valjevo 1998, p. 275. Cf. M. Nedeljković, *Godišnji običaji u Srba*, Vuk Karadžić, Beograd 1990.

6. Regarding the saint's origin and attempts to trace her back to Slavic roots, see Sultana Lambrou-Papakarmezi, *Άγία Παρασκευή ή Επιβατηνή: άγιολογική μελέτη*, *op.cit.*, pp. 127-137.

7. R. Popović, *Kult prepodobne majke Paraskeve – svete Petke u Beogradu*, recording of the lecture, from 00:12:19 to 00:12:55.

8. See I. Ruvarac's critique related to M. S. Milojević, in: I. Ruvarac, «Kritika. I. – O radu Miloša S. Milojevića u Glasniku», *Letopis Matice srpske*, knj. 115, Novi Sad 1873, pp. 172-178: "Mr. Milojević is obsessed with the idea that Serbia is Saint Paraskevi's birthplace, that is, that she was of Serbian descent. However, he is not the only one who has made such speculations. There were others before him, as there are today, and there will be those after us who will believe, along with Mr. Milojević, that Saint Paraskevi is a Serbian saint". Cf. Danica Popović, «Relikvije svete Petke: Gloria Bulgariae - Gloria Serviae», in: *Pod okriljem svetosti. Kult svetih vladara i relikvija u srednjovekovnoj Srbiji*, Balkanološki institut SANU, Beograd 2006, pp. 292-293.

9. J. Maglovski, «O beogradskom kultu svete Petke Srpske i manastiru Feneku», *Zbornik Narodnog muzeja u Beogradu*, t. XVIII-2, Narod muzej u Beogradu 2007, pp. 121 and 127-128, and Danica Popović, «Relikvije svete Petke: Gloria Bulgariae - Gloria Serviae», *op.cit.*, pp. 292-293.

10. It is not uncommon for saints to be given different appellatives depending on the place where their relics are kept; see L. Pavlović, *Kultovi lica kod Srba i Makedonaca*, Narodni muzej u Smederevu, Smederevo 1965, p. 268.

Transfer of Saint Paraskevi's Relics to Serbia

Although it was not unknown until then¹¹, the veneration of Saint Paraskevi flourished among the Serbian people after 1398, when her relics were transferred to Serbia. This event should be placed in the context of a diplomatic mission to Sultan Bayezid I –a rather unusual one during the Middle Ages– which was successfully carried out by two women, the nuns Eugenia and Euphemia, via a third woman, Olivera, daughter of Eugenia and wife of Bayezid I (1389-1402)¹².

Gregory Camblak, who was then the abbot of the Detani Monastery, records this event¹³. Camblak reports that Milica, Lazarus's widow, together with her two sons and Jelena, Uglješa's [Jovan's] widow, visited the sultan. The two women asked him for the saint's relics; although he initially laughed at their request to take with them the "dry bones", he finally granted their wish¹⁴.

11. Tatjana Subotin-Golubović, «Petka prepodobna – Petka mučenica», *Zbornik radova vizantološkog instituta*, br. 45, Vizantološki institut SANU, Beograd 2008, pp. 177-178, and Danica Popović, «Relikvije svete Petke: Gloria Bulgariae - Gloria Serviae», *op.cit.*, p. 287.

12. Eugenia, known as Milica, was the wife of Lazar Hrebeljanović, who was killed in the Battle of Kosovo in 1389. Her son Stefan ruled Serbia from 1389 to 1402 as a vassal of the Ottomans, and from 1402 to 1427 as despot. Milica's daughter, Olivera, was married to Sultan Bayezid I. Euphemia, known as Jelena, was the wife of Despot Uglješa Mrnjavčević [Jovan Uglješa], who was killed in the Battle of Evros in 1371. The immediate reason for the diplomatic mission of the two women was the fact that Bayezid's associates blamed Stefan Lazarević of the failure of the Ottoman campaign in Bosnia in 1398. See V. Ćorović, *Istorija Srba*, Zograf, Niš 2000, p. 272, and Danica Popović, «Relikvije svete Petke: Gloria Bulgariae - Gloria Serviae», *op.cit.*, p. 288.

13. Grigorije Camblak, «Slovo o prenosu moštiju svete Petke iz Trnova u Vidin i Srbiju», in: Grigorije Camblak, *Književni rad u Srbiji*, D. Petrović (ed.), [Stara srpska književnost u 24 knjige], knj. 12, Prosveta i SKZ, Beograd 1989, pp. 117-122. According to the publisher, this account of the transfer of the relics of Saint Paraskevi to Serbia was most likely written in the years 1404/5 (see p. 38), and certainly after 1402, since Camblak refers to Stefan Lazarević with his despotic title (see p. 120). The fact that the placement of the remains in Belgrade is not mentioned leads us to conclude that the sermon was written before 1406/7. See Danica Popović, «Relikvije svete Petke: Gloria Bulgariae - Gloria Serviae», *op.cit.*, p. 289.

14. Grigorije Camblak, «Slovo o prenosu moštiju svete Petke iz Trnova u Vidin i Srbiju», *op.cit.*, p. 120.

According to Camblak's testimony, the saint's relics were placed "in the holy church, which is located in their house"¹⁵; this leads us to assume that it was the chapel of the court in the then capital of Serbia, the city of Kruševac¹⁶. The holy relics were probably transferred to the present capital after 1403, when the Hungarian king [and Holy Roman Emperor] Sigismund (1387-1437) gave Belgrade to Stefan Lazarević in return for Serbia's acceptance of vassalage, where the despot moved his seat¹⁷. It is believed that this happened in 1406 or 1407, after the construction of the metropolitan church in the Lower Town, below the castle (the contemporary Kalemegdan), had been completed¹⁸. The saint's holy relics rested there until 1521, when Belgrade fell into the hands of Sultan Suleiman the Magnificent (1520-1566). The relics of the saint, together with those of Saint Theophano and an icon of the Virgin Mary, were then transferred to Constantinople¹⁹. In June 1641, the ruler of Moldavia, Vasile Lupu, transferred the saint's relics to Iasi, where they are kept to this day²⁰.

Saint Paraskevi's Relics in Belgrade

There are no reliable historical records regarding the exact location of the church that was housing the saint's relics. Three hypotheses have been put forward regarding this question:

15. Op.cit., p. 120.

16. Danica Popović, «Relikvije svete Petke: Gloria Bulgariae - Gloria Serviae», op.cit., p. 289.

17. V. Ćorović, *Istorija Srba*, op.cit., p. 278.

18. This is only a hypothesis, as there is no information about the transfer of the relics to Belgrade dating from that period. B. J. Maglovski, «O beogradskom kultu svete Petke Srpske i manastiru Feneku», op.cit., pp. 123 (and note 6), and 131. Cf. D. Ivančević, *Beogradska tvrđava i njene svetinje*, Pravoslavlje, Beograd 1970, p. 127.

19. V. Ćorović, *Istorija Srba*, p. 385; J. Maglovski, «O beogradskom kultu svete Petke Srpske i manastiru Feneku», op.cit., pp. 125, 142; D. Ivančević, *Beogradska tvrđava i njene svetinje*, pp. 42, 128.

20. See Soutlana Lambrou-Papakarmezi, *Άγία Παρασκευή ή Έπιβατηγή...*, op.cit., pp. 70-73.

a. The first –the least likely–, is that the relics were located on the site of the present chapel of Saint Paraskevi. The reason that this theory is not favored is the proximity of the castle's fortification walls (only a few dozen meters away), at a point where, at that time, the erection of buildings was not possible²¹.

b. A second testimony states that the saint's remains were found in the church of the courtyard inside the castle, but this was not possible after 1427, when the city of Belgrade was returned to Hungary, as the castle remained closed to ordinary citizens²².

c. The third, and most likely, hypothesis is that the sacred relics were located in the metropolitan church in the Lower City²³. This is attested to by a letter sent from Metropolitan Theophanes to the Grand Prince of Moscow, Vasily III Ivanovich, in 1508/9²⁴. This letter contains information about Saint Paraskevi's veneration: "When your father (Ivan) was alive, every Sunday we were performing prayers and Divine Liturgies for his health and for Your Highness before the miraculous icon of the Most Holy Theotokos, as well as every Wednesday in front of the miraculous pit of the holy empress Theophano, and every Friday before the miraculous relics of Saint Paraskevi"²⁵.

Today, the chapel of Saint Paraskevi stands in the castle of Kalemegdan; still, we do not possess exact information about when it was built. According to a tradition, in the 15th century, there was a church of Saint Paraskevi in the castle of Belgrade, which was razed to the ground when the city fell to the Ottomans in 1521²⁶. This tradition is based on three documents from the Dubrovnik Archives. The first, dated November

21. Archaeological research was conducted between 1977 and 1997 and its results were published in 2004. See M. Popović, Vesna Bikić, *Kompleks srednjovekovne mitropolije u Beogradu*, Arheološki institut SANU, Beograd 2004.

22. D. Ivančević, *Beogradska tvrđava i njene svetinje*, op.cit., pp. 80-81, and Danica Popović, «Relikvije svete Petke: Gloria Bulgariae - Gloria Serviae», op.cit., pp. 290-291.

23. M. Popović, «Sakralno okruženje Beograda u doba despota Stefana», in: *600 godina manastira Pavlovac*, Gradska opština Mladenovac, Mladenovac 2017, p. 13.

24. Danica Popović, «Relikvije svete Petke: Gloria Bulgariae - Gloria Serviae», op.cit., pp. 290-291.

25. I. Ruvarac, «O svetinjama beogradske crkve 1521. godine», *Glasnik Srpskog učenog društva*, XLIX, Beograd 1881, pp. 1-5. [The translation is ours].

26. D. Ivančević, *Beogradska tvrđava i njene svetinje*, op.cit., p. 130.

12, 1417, it is mentioned that Jakša Vodopija from Dubrovnik received a summons to appear before the court in front of the church of Saint Paraskevi in Belgrade. Then, Vuk Bobaljević, in his will dated November 28, 1457, he leaves twenty gold coins to the church in the Lower Town of Belgrade, where the relics of Saint Paraskevi are located. Finally, Marko de la Bon, in his will dated August 20, 1482, left three gold coins to the church of Sveta Petka in Belgrade²⁷.

The initiative to remodeling and restoring the sacred buildings in Kalemegdan dates back to April 6/18, 1867, the day of the symbolic handover of the castle keys to Prince Michael Obrenović of Serbia. In the same year, the Turkish and Austrian gunpowder magazine was converted into a church dedicated to the Nativity of the Virgin Mary, known as “Ružica”²⁸. There are no references to the chapel of Saint Paraskevi in historical sources. The only historical records and artifacts that have been survived are one photograph from the Historical Archives of Belgrade²⁹, a sketch by the painter Luka Mladenović³⁰ and a description in the book by D. Ivančević³¹.

27. J. Maglovski, «O beogradskom kultu svete Petke Srpske i manastiru Feneku», op.cit., pp. 123-124 and 139-141. Archaeological findings and other historical sources lead to the conclusion that this is the temple where the holy relics were kept and not the one dedicated to Saint Paraskevi. On the other hand, J. Maglovski believes that this is the Holy Monastery of Feneč, near Belgrade, also dedicated to Saint Paraskevi, where merchants from Dubrovnik usually spent the night on their business trips to the area.

28. D. Ivančević, *Beogradska tvrđava i njene svetinje*, op.cit., pp. 79-80 and 88-90.

29. *Verski objekti u Beogradu, projekti i ostvarenja u dokumentima Istorijskog arhiva Beograda*, Exhibition Catalogue, Đurđa Borovnjak (ed.), Istorijski arhiv Beograda, Beograd 2013, p. 41.

30. Z. Nikolić, «Beogradske priče: Svetlo pravoslavlja sa špica Beograda», *Vječernje novosti* (6/10/2016). The sketch is accompanied by the following text: “As a young art student, I studied day and night and fell seriously ill with pneumonia in 1926. My mother was bringing me here every Friday, and in this little church of Saint Paraskevi, after a year, I was completely cured. Then I painted it with my own hand, and since then I have been coming here regularly, especially and with great respect during the feasts of Saint Paraskevi”. [The translation is ours].

31. “Before the current chapel was built, there used to be another one on the hillside above. The only thing that was visible from the outside, was only a door with a cross above it. Stairs led down to the chapel. At the end, a small corridor led to a spring of clean, cool water. The walls on both sides were decorated with icons”. See D. Ivančević, *Beogradska tvrđava i njene svetinje*, op.cit., p. 130 [The translation is ours].

The construction of Saint Paraskevi's current chapel, located just below the church of "Ružica", began in 1935, was based on a design by architect Momir Korunović. On the feast day of Saint Paraskevi, October 14/27, 1937, it was inaugurated in the presence of the Patriarch's assistant, Bishop Savva Trlajić. The frescoes that adorned the walls of the chapel since 1948 were the work of Momir Korunović, while since 1983 they have been covered by mosaics made by the painter Đuro Radulović³². The chapel houses a part of the holy relics of Saint Paraskevi (two fingers of her right hand), which are displayed for veneration every Friday. No information has been preserved in Serbian sources as to "how", "when", and on what occasion they were given to the Church of Serbia.

Hagiological and Hymnological Works Dedicated to Saint Paraskevi

The early hymnological and hagiographic texts in Old Slavonic are translations from Greek, just as subsequent Slavic texts are also linked to Greek models³³.

The first testimony related to the existence of a hagiographic text about Saint Paraskevi is provided by the Byzantine canonist Theodore Balsamon, who reports that Patriarch Nicholas IV Mouzalon (1147-1151) burned a *Life* of the saint because of its content. He then commissioned the deacon Basil to write a new *Life* of hers, which to this day remains unidentified. However, he claims that Vasilikos's work has been translated into Old Slavonic³⁴.

32. D. Ivančević, *Beogradska tvrđava i njene svetinje*, op.cit., p. 130-132; B. Vujović, *Beograd u prošlosti i sadašnjosti*, Draganić, Beograd 1994, p. 110.

33. Sultana Lambrou-Papakarmezi believes that this is a further proof of the Greek –and not Slavic– origin of Saint Paraskevi (*Άγία Παρασκευή ή Επιβατηγή...*, op.cit., p. 25).

34. However, Sultana Lambrou-Papakarmezi believes that the Slavic text is not an accurate translation of the saint's life, but simply a summary of it. For more on this, see: Sultana Lambrou-Papakarmezi, *Άγία Παρασκευή ή Επιβατηγή...*, op.cit., pp. 18-20 and 26-28.

Another important text is the *Χρονική Διήγησις*, by an unknown author, written in Old Slavonic, which contains information about the discovery of the saint's tomb in Kallikrateia, as well as the subsequent transfer of her remains to Tarnovo in 1231³⁵.

According to the researchers, the earliest copy of the Saint Paraskevi's service is preserved in the so-called *Menaion of Dragan*³⁶, which is dated in the 13th century. The Life it contains is the so-called *Προλογικὸς Βίος*, which is believed to be a translation of a Greek *Life* into Bulgarian. The description of the transfer of the relics to Tarnovo was added in the original text³⁷.

Patriarch Euthymios of Veliko Tarnovo (1375-1393), on the orders of Tsar Ivan Shishman of Bulgaria (1371-1393), wrote the *Life of Saint Paraskevi*³⁸. Since Grigorije Camblak was a student of Saint Euthymios, he probably brought the *Life* of the saint with him to Serbia. This became a model for later Serbian *Lives* of the saint, which were also supplemented by the transfer of her relics and the evolution of her veneration. The modern Serbian version of Saint Paraskevi's *Life* belongs to Saint Justin (Popović)³⁹; it is a combination of various versions of the saint's life, from medieval times to the present day⁴⁰.

35. It is preserved in the parchment codex of the second half of the 14th century, from the Collection of A. Hludov, no. 162, ff. 141v-143r, as part of the sequence of the Saint Paraskevi of Rome. For more information regarding this text, see in: Soultana Lambrou-Papakarmezi, *Άγία Παρασκευή ή Επιβατηνή...*, *op.cit.*, pp. 20-22 and 23-25.

36. Codex Zographensis no. 54.

37. See more on this in: Soultana Lambrou-Papakarmezi, *Άγία Παρασκευή ή Επιβατηνή...*, *op.cit.*, pp. 22-23.

38. This *Life* was written in 1393, the year that Veliko Tarnovo fell into the hands of the Ottomans and the year that Patriarch Euthymios passed away, or shortly before. It is a typical hagiographic work. It contains descriptions of the saint's death, her burial, and the miraculous discovery of her relics, as well as some details about the transfer of the relics that are not mentioned in earlier hagiographic texts. It is preserved in a 15th-century manuscript kept at the Romanian Academy of Sciences, no. 151. For more information and the relevant bibliography, see in: Soultana Lambrou-Papakarmezi, *Άγία Παρασκευή ή Επιβατηνή...*, *op.cit.*, pp. 30-38.

39. Justin (Popović), *Žitija svetih za oktobar*, *op.cit.*, pp. 275-283.

40. D. Petrović, «Camblakova literarna delatnost u Srbiji», in: Grigorije Camblak, *Književni rad u Srbiji*, *op.cit.*, pp. 37-43; Danica Popović, «Relikvije svete Petke: Gloria Bulgariae – Gloria Serviae», *op.cit.*, pp. 272, 283. As for the later *Lives* of Saint Paraskevi, which did

The earliest testimony of the existence of a service dedicated to Saint Paraskevi is provided by the *Χρονική Διήγηση*. Its author mentions that, on the occasion of the transfer of the saint's relics to Veliko Tarnovo in 1231, her *Life*, service, and encomium were translated into Old Slavonic from the Greek originals that were brought from Kallikrateia⁴¹. A copy of this liturgy is preserved in the so-called *Menaion of Dragan*, and the first translation into the Serbian dialect of the Old Slavonic language was based on it⁴².

Of course, several authors contributed to the formation of the current Serbian Service at different times, as it becomes evident by the changes in the text, adapted each time according to the fate of the relics or the transformations in the local expressions of veneration addressed to Saint Paraskevi⁴³. One could undoubtedly argue that the four stichera that are preserved in the *Menaion* of Božidar Vuković, which was printed in 1538, and refer to the transfer of the saint's holy relics to Serbia, have been written by Grigorije Camblak. Apart from the subject matter, indirect evidence is also provided by its overall composition, its literary style, and the ideas that can also be found in other works by the same author⁴⁴.

not significantly influence the Serbian versions, we must refer to the *Life* of Matthew Myreon, which dates back to the early 16th century, and the *Life* of Meletios Syrigos, from approximately the same period. See in: Sultana Lambrou-Papakarmezi, *Άγία Παρασκευή ή Επιβατηνή...*, *op.cit.*, pp. 38-54.

41. See Sultana Lambrou-Papakarmezi, *Άγία Παρασκευή ή Επιβατηνή...*, *op.cit.*, pp. 88-89, and then other services and hymns written in Bulgarian, Greek, and Romanian.

42. It constitutes part of the festive monthly from the end of the 13th century, which is kept in the Archives of the Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts, no. 361. Cf. D. Petrović, «Camblakova literarna delatnost u Srbiji», in: Grigorije Camblak, *Književni rad u Srbiji*, *op.cit.*, pp. 43-44 and 125-127; Danica Popović, «Relikvije svete Petke: Gloria Bulgariae - Gloria Serviae», *op.cit.*, p. 286; J. Maglovski, «O beogradskom kultu svete Petke Srpske i manastiru Feneku», *op.cit.*, p. 134 and note 76.

43. Danica Popović, «Relikvije svete Petke: Gloria Bulgariae - Gloria Serviae», *op.cit.*, pp. 291-292.

44. Grigorije Camblak – *Književni rad u Srbiji*, *op.cit.*, pp. 43-44 and 125-127; Danica Popović, «Relikvije svete Petke: Gloria Bulgariae - Gloria Serviae», *op.cit.*, p. 286; J. Maglovski, «O beogradskom kultu svete Petke Srpske i manastiru Feneku», *op.cit.*, p. 134 and note 76.

In Serbian, there are also three Salutations to Saint Paraskevi and a Canon or request, which is read on Fridays in the chapel of Kalemegdan, when part of her relics is displayed for prostration. A sequence of Salutations was composed by Saint John of Shanghai (Maximovich) in the ecclesiastical Slavonic language, which was later translated into Serbian. Another one was written by Elder Eupraxia, abbess of the Holy Monastery of Saint Paraskevi in Izvor, near the town of Paraćin⁴⁵. Two other services are translations from Romanian into Serbian⁴⁶.

Confusing between the Two Saints

The faithful in Serbia often confuse Saint Paraskevi with Saint Paraskevi of Rome. However, as it is mentioned in the *Χρονική Διήγησις*, initially, and until the hymns for Saint Paraskevi the Epivatini have been translated from Greek into Slavonic, the faithful used the hymnal texts for Saint Paraskevi of Rome. Furthermore, in Serbia, the transfer of the relics of Saint Paraskevi from Tarnovo to Belgrade and the commemoration of the martyrdom of Saint Paraskevi of Rome celebrated on the same day, July 26/August 8, with the result that excerpts from the respective services are read consecutively. This fact causes even greater confusion between the two saints, to the point of being identified. Thus, the feast of Saint Paraskevi of Rome (July 26) is known among the wider populace as “Paraskevi of Summer”, while that of Saint Paraskevi (October 14) as “Paraskevi of Autumn”⁴⁷.

45. See Monahinja Evpraksija (Cvetković), *Tri akatista: prepodobnoj materi Evpraksiji, svetoj velikomučenici Jefimiji, prepodobnoj materi Paraskevi*, Manastir Ravanica 1975.

46. See *Prepodobna majka naša Paraskeva*, ed. R. Marković, transl. A. Bugarski, Udruženje građana hodočasnika *Raša*, Indija 2007, pp. 17-32 and 33-44 respectively.

47. Tatjana Subotin-Golubović, «Petka prepodobna – Petka mučenica», op.cit., pp. 177-190, and J. Maglovski, «O beogradskom kultu svete Petke Srpske i manastiru Feneku», op.cit., p. 148.

Saint Paraskevi in the Popular Serbian Tradition

Both according to the *Lives* and according to tradition, after the recovery of the relics of Saint Paraskevi, miracles are performed, which are also common for other saints: restoration of sight, hearing, healing from paralysis or infertility, as well as healing from other diseases⁴⁸. A common theme in Byzantine hagiography is the appearance of saints in the dreams of righteous people, which in the case of Saint Paraskevi are more frequent and more intense than in the case of other saints⁴⁹.

The motifs associated with the desert and water are characteristic of the Saint Paraskevi feast. Female desert monasticism is certainly not as widespread in the Orthodox tradition as the male one is. In fact, during the time when Saint Paraskevi lived, she may have been the only case⁵⁰. As for the significance of water and springs in mythology, there are detailed scientific analyses and interpretations, which can be summarized in three basic symbolic concepts: Water is a source of life, a means of spiritual and ritual purification, as well as a source of rejuvenation⁵¹. In the old Slavic religion, water sources were ritual places to which healing properties were attributed. After the Christianization process, these properties became associated with the veneration of certain saints. In Serbia, for example, many springs and holy sites have been named after the Virgin Mary, Saint Sava, the first archbishop of Serbia, or Saint Paraskevi⁵². The latter's most famous holy spring, of a total of about ten⁵³, is located in Belgrade,

48. Danica Popović, «Relikvije svete Petke: Gloria Bulgariae - Gloria Serviae», op.cit., pp. 273-274; M. Bosić, *Godišnji običaji Srba u Vojvodini*, Prometej, Novi Sad 1996, pp. 385, 387; *Srpski mitološki rečnik*, Š. Kulišić, N. Pantelić, P. Ž. Petrović (eds.), Nolit, Beograd 1970, p. 257; *Enciklopedija narodnog života, običaja i verovanja u Srba na Kosovu i Metohiji*, T. Vukanović (ed.), Beograd 2001, p. 418.

49. Danica Popović, «Relikvije svete Petke: Gloria Bulgariae – Gloria Serviae», op.cit., p. 273.

50. Op.cit., pp. 273-274.

51. *Rečnik simbola*, A. Gerbarn, Ž. Ševalije (eds.), Stylos, Novi Sad 2004, pp. 1048-1055.

52. Ž. Romelić, Z. Simić, *Svete vode i druga kulturna mesta u kruševačkom kraju*, Narodni muzej Kruševac, Kruševac 2018, pp. 17-20; Mila Bosić, *Godišnji običaji Srba u Vojvodini*, op.cit., p. 387; L. Pavlović, *Kultovi lica kod Srba i Makedonaca*, op.cit., pp. 311-314.

53. Mila Bosić, *Godišnji običaji Srba u Vojvodini*, op.cit., p. 385.

in the Kalemegdan Castle, above which a chapel was built⁵⁴. Equally well-known are the holy springs in the village of Izvor (which in Serbian means “spring”), near the town of Paraćin, where there is also a female monastery dedicated to Saint Paraskevi⁵⁵, as well as the Feneč Monastery near Belgrade, that it has also been dedicated to her⁵⁶.

It cannot be ruled out that the healing properties of certain holy waters are due to the chemical composition of the water. Protopresbyter Dušan Ivančević, for example, reports that in July 1937, the Yugoslav state chemical laboratory analyzed water from the holy spring of Saint Paraskevi in Kalen and published the results in the newspaper *Politika* on the 16th of October of the same year. This analysis showed that the potassium nitrate contained in the holy water has certain therapeutic properties and that is why it is also used in medicine⁵⁷.

From the travelogues of a Frenchman named Quiclet in 1658 and an anonymous German diplomat in 1719, we learn that people visited the holy spring at Kalemegdan during both the Ottoman and Austrian administration of the castle, probably only on Fridays. The spring dried up during the Austro-Hungarian occupation of Belgrade in World War I. The water began to flow again on February 15/28, 1918, on the feast day of Saint Onesimus⁵⁸.

The Serbian people visited the chapel and the holy water of Saint Paraskevi even during the communist era. After World War II and with the change of regime, the churches in Serbia were deserted. However, on the feast days of the saint, people waited in line to receive holy water. And in our days, the chapel is visited by crowds of people of all religions⁵⁹.

A peculiarity of the Serbian Orthodox religious tradition is a family holiday, called “Slava”. Instead of a name day, Serbs celebrate a saint who is the patron saint of the entire family. Saint Paraskevi is the fifth

54. http://www.spc.rs/sr/crkve_ruzhica_sveta_petka_u_beogradu [15/08/2019].

55. <http://www.svetapetkaizvor.com/> [15/08/2019].

56. <https://www.manastirfenek.com/> [15/08/2019].

57. D. Ivančević, *Beogradska tvrđava i njene svetinje, op.cit.*, pp. 136-138.

58. *Op.cit.*, pp. 138-140.

59. R. Popović, *Kult prepodobne majke Paraskeve – svete Petke u Beogradu*. Recording of the lecture, from 00:55:37 to 00:56:28.

most popular feast day, after Saints Nicholas, John, George, and Archangel Michael⁶⁰. Approximately 240 churches are dedicated to her memory.

The faithful often promised the fast to Saint Paraskevi, usually one week before her feast; then, after confessing, they partake of the holy mysteries⁶¹. In the context of popular piety and folklore, it is also widely believed that Saint Paraskevi is the patron saint of women and therefore, on her feast day, women should not do “female works”, i.e., housework⁶². The well-known Russian ethnologist S. A. Tokarev sees in this belief a parallel between Saint Paraskevi and the goddess of the ancient Slavic pantheon, Mokosh, who shared the same characteristics with the saint in Slavic mythology⁶³.

Many customs related to superstitions and magic have also been recorded. One such custom is the tying of strips of cloth to trees, bushes, or other suitable places near the temple on the eve of the feast of Saint Paraskevi, which the faithful untie the next day and take with them as a blessing. This is mainly done by childless women, who believe that the ribbon “blessed by Saint Paraskevi” will help them to conceive⁶⁴. The custom of sacrificing lambs belongs to the same category. The lambs are first carried three times around the temple on the eve or day of the feast of the Holy Seven Maccabees or Saint Paraskevi. We should note here that this custom is practiced not only by Orthodox Christians but also by Muslims, especially Roma⁶⁵.

The historian Radomir Popović, who served for years as head of the Church of Saint Paraskevi in Kalemegdan, kept notes of the messages

60. A. Radović, «Uvodno slovo», in: R. Nikčević (ed.), *Sveta Petka: Slava srpska i zaštitna vernih*, Mitropolija Crnogorsko-primorska, Svetigora, Cetinje 2009, p. 5.

61. *Srpski mitološki rečnik, op.cit.*, p. 258; Mila Bosić, *Godišnji običaji Srba u Vojvodini, op.cit.*, p. 387.

62. *Srpski mitološki rečnik, op.cit.*, p. 258; Mila Bosić, *Godišnji običaji Srba u Vojvodini, op.cit.*, p. 387.

63. See in: *Srpski mitološki rečnik, op.cit.*, p. 258; Mila Bosić, *Godišnji običaji Srba u Vojvodini, op.cit.*, p. 388; *Slovenska mitologija, enciklopedijski rečnik*, S. M. Tolstoj, Lj. Radenković (eds.), Zepter Book World, Beograd 2001, p. 424.

64. *Enciklopedija narodnog života, običaja i verovanja u Srba na Kosovu i Metohiji, op.cit.*, p. 418.

65. *Enciklopedija narodnog života, običaja i verovanja u Srba na Kosovu i Metohiji, op.cit.*, p. 418 and R. Popović, *Kult prepodobne majke Paraskeve – svete Petke u Beogradu*. Recording of the lecture, from 00:56:36 to 00:58:11.

that people wrote on pieces of paper and left on the icons or in the cracks in the walls of the chapel, addressing their prayers to the saint. He acted in this manner believing that these notes would be useful in future sociological and religious studies. The content of the messages or prayers to the saint is varied; it includes superstitions, trivial matters, but also testimonies of true and strong faith. For example, students address the saint before exam periods, athletes before important competitions, travelers, as well as many patients before or after medical procedures with supplications and thanksgiving⁶⁶.

Saint Paraskevi and Political Ideology

The veneration of Saint Paraskevi the Epivatini is one of the most complex phenomena in the formal rituals of the Balkan peoples, a fact that in some way reflects their historical course and religious perception. In the early phase of its development, Saint Paraskevi's veneration had been local in character and had been mainly based on belief in the miraculous powers of her relics⁶⁷. Subsequently, and throughout the Middle Ages, the saint's veneration was an integral part of the state and dynastic ideology, both in Bulgaria and Serbia⁶⁸. In the *Χρονική Διήγησις* and the *Προλογικὸς Βίος* it is mentioned that the procession with the holy relics of Saint Paraskevi in Tarnovo was welcomed by the king together the patriarch and a large crowd. It was an event that took place under the auspices of the state and ecclesiastical authorities and was undoubtedly of great national importance⁶⁹, as the veneration of the saint had acquired a dynastic-ideological character and role⁷⁰, always in accordance with the medieval belief that the relics of saints protect the state and the king⁷¹.

66. R. Popović, *Kult prepodobne majke Paraskeve – svete Petke u Beogradu*. Recording of the lecture, from 00:52:25 to 00:55:35.

67. Danica Popović, «Relikvije svete Petke: Gloria Bulgariae - Gloria Serviae», op.cit., pp. 272-273.

68. Op.cit., p. 271.

69. Op.cit., p. 276.

70. Op.cit., pp. 278, 286.

71. L. Pavlović, *Kultovi lica kod Srba i Makedonaca*, op.cit., p. 265.

The same applies to the transfer of the saint's remains to Serbia, with certain adjustments to the needs of that particular historical conjuncture⁷². The last period of Serbian state as an independent entity coincided with the gradual disappearance of Christian states. This, of course, affected both the character and the role of the saints' veneration. The prevalence of ecumenical –rather than national– Christian identity, as well as the feeling of solidarity among Christian peoples, has relegated to the background those saints belonging to local royal dynasties and has brought to the fore martyr saints, as well as saints of a more ecumenical character. This is clearly evident in the actions of Despot Stefan Lazarević⁷³, who brought the relics of Saint Paraskevi and the Apostle Luke to Serbia and placed them in the cities of Belgrade and Smederevo, respectively⁷⁴.

Conclusion

During her earthly life, Saint Paraskevi often changed her place of residence, seeking greater ascetic environment, so that she might attain «εἰς μέτρον ἡλικίας τοῦ πληρώματος τοῦ Χριστοῦ»⁷⁵. Even when the Lord illuminated her with the crown of glory and deemed her worthy of incorruptible relics, she did not remain in one place. Her holy relics were revealed to the people and then carried from country to country and from place to place, bearing witness to Christ everywhere. That is why she is much beloved and honored as the patron saint of all the Balkan peoples. At times, her honor was taken on other social and political dimensions, depending on the historical circumstances. Nevertheless, she remained the

72. *Op.cit.*, pp. 286-293.

73. Danica Popović, «Nacionalni panteon – svetački kultovi u temeljima srpske državnosti i crkvenosti», *Sakralna umetnost srpskih zemalja u srednjem veku*, Vizantološki institut SANU, Beograd 2016, pp. 119-131, 130.

74. Danica Popović, «Relikvije svete Petke: Gloria Bulgariae – Gloria Serviae» καὶ «Мошти светог Луке - српска епизода», τῆς ἰδίας, *Pod okriljem svetosti. Kult svetih vladara i relikvija u srednjovekovnoj Srbiji*, Balkanološki institut SANU, Beograd 2006, pp. 271-293 and 295-317 respectively.

75. *Eph.* 4, 13.

protector of the poor and the powerless, the helper of those in need, and the healer of the sick.

Consequently, in the context of popular religiosity and folkloric identity, the veneration of Saint Paraskevi has always remained alive. She is honored as a person of great and special piety by all Christians on the Balkan Peninsula, but also by every good person, regardless of creed or religion.