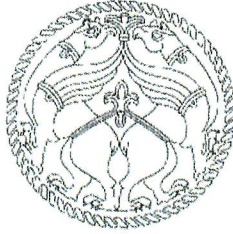


REPUBLIC OF SERBIA



**INSTITUTE FOR THE PROTECTION
OF CULTURAL MONUMENTS**

**REPORT
ON THE STATE OF CONSERVATION OF
MEDIEVAL MONUMENTS IN KOSOVO (SERBIA)
INSCRIBED ON THE WORLD HERITAGE LIST IN DANGER**

MEDIEVAL MONUMENTS IN KOSOVO (SERBIA) (C 724)

The Dečani Monastery

The Patriarchate of Peć Monastery

The Church of the Holy Virgin of Ljeviša

The Gračanica Monastery

Belgrade, January 2022.

REPORT ON THE STATE OF CONSERVATION OF MIEVIAL MONUMENTS IN KOSOVO (SERBIA)

INTRODUCTION	3
THE DEČANI MONASTERY	5
THE PATRIARCHATE OF PEĆ MONASTERY.....	8
THE CHURCH OF THE HOLY VIRGIN OF LJEVIŠA IN PRIZREN	10
THE GRAČANICA MONASTERY	13
ADDITIONAL INFORMATION	14
CONCLUSION.....	14

Introduction

The property “**Dečani Monastery**” (C724) was inscribed on the List of World Heritage in 2004. In 2006, at 30th session the World Heritage Committee decided that the site of the **Dečani Monastery** would be extended by adding three sites, the Patriarchate of **Peć Monastery**, **Gračanica Monastery** and the Church of the Virgin of **Ljeviša** (Decision 30 COM 8B.53). The property “**Medieval Monuments in Kosovo (Serbia)**”, mainly dating from the 13th and 14th centuries, was at same session placed on the List of World Heritage in Danger (Decision 30 COM 8B.54). The Committee requested that the State Party (Serbia) works with UNESCO programmes, with the United Nations Mission to Kosovo (UNMIK) and with the Provisional Institutions of Self-Government in **Priština** in caring for the site.

The **Dečani Monastery**, the Patriarchate of **Peć Monastery**, **Gračanica Monastery** and the Church of the Virgin of **Ljeviša** reflect the high points of the Byzantine-Romanesque and Serbian medieval ecclesiastical culture, with its distinct style of wall painting, which developed in the wider region of the Balkans between the 13th and 17th centuries.

The **Dečani Monastery** was built in the mid-14th century for the Serbian king **Stefan Dečanski** and is also his mausoleum. The church represents the last important phase of Byzantine-Romanesque architecture in the Balkan region. Built in marble, it is the largest of all medieval Balkan churches, and is exceptionally rich in well preserved Byzantine painting and Romanesque sculpture.

The Patriarchate of **Peć Monastery** is a group of four domed churches featuring series of wall paintings. All the churches display an extensive series of wall paintings, but the 13th-century frescoes of the Church of Holy Apostles are painted in a unique, monumental style.

Early 14th-century frescoes in the church of the Holy Virgin of **Ljevisa** represent the appearance of the new so-called Palaiologian Renaissance style, combining the influences of the eastern Orthodox Byzantine and the Western Romanesque traditions. The style played a decisive role in subsequent Balkan art.

Gračanica Monastery was one of the last monumental endowments of Serbian King **Milutin** (1282-1321). The main church of Theotokos with the plan, spatial arrangement, decorative wall treatment and wall paintings together have made it an emblematic structure for Balkan architecture of the 14th century reflecting the spirit of the Byzantine tradition but slight modified by western influence.

During 2021 the four components continued to face serious security issues. Also, COVID-19 pandemic created a new challenge for the female and male clergy living there, enhancing monuments' overall vulnerability.

The property *Medieval monuments in Kosovo* (Serbia) is administered by the Serbian Orthodox Church. The Republic of Serbia, through its institutions, the Ministry of Culture and Media and the Office for Kosovo and Metohija, in cooperation with the Serbian Orthodox Church, is implementing a management plan pertaining to research, conservation and other works aimed at protection of the outstanding universal value of the property, carried out by experts from the Institute for the Protection of Cultural Monuments pursuant to an adopted annual program.

Plans and Programmes for the Management, Research, Protection and Presentation of all components of the property, which is attached to the nomination dossier, is updated with the annual programme of the Institute for the Protection of Cultural Monuments, supported by the Ministry of Culture and Media of the Republic of Serbia.

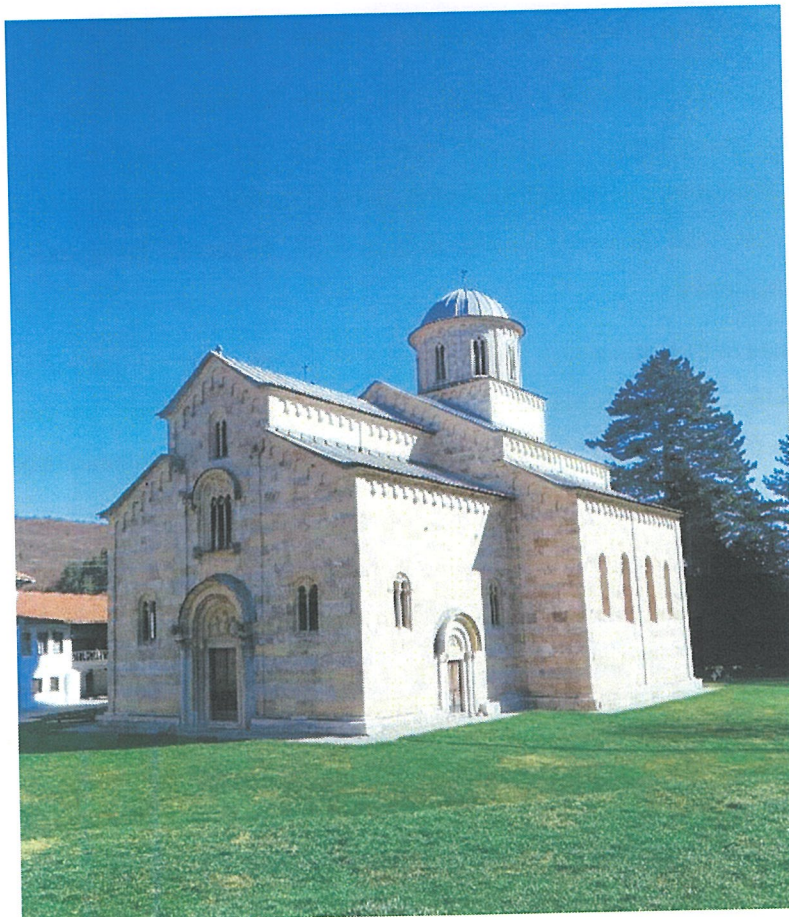


Photo 1: The Dečani Monastery. Photo by Institute for the Protection of Cultural Monuments

The Dečani Monastery

No conservation works were carried out in the Dečani Monastery in 2021. (Photo 1)

There is a pending project for the conservation of wall paintings in the northern parecclesion of St. Dimitrije, prepared by the experts of the Institute for the Protection of Cultural Monuments. In 2021, the Ministry of Culture and Media of the Republic of Serbia allocated the funds for the scaffolding that the Dečani Monastery had purchased.

The monastic community of Dečani Monastery is unable to enjoy the ownership over 24 hectares of monastery property due to a failure to honor the ruling of the highest legal authority of the Provisional Institutions of Self-Government on the territory of Autonomous Province of Kosovo and Metohija of May 20, 2016, annulling the decision of the Special Chamber of the Provisional Institutions of Self-Government of June 15, 2015. Also, letters were sent to international missions operating in Kosovo and Metohija, EULEX, UNMIK, OSCE and the EU Delegation, regarding frequent attacks and incidents on the Serbian Orthodox Church premises and clergy in Kosovo and Metohija, by the Office for Kosovo and Metohija of the Government of the Republic of Serbia. The Republic of Serbia, through the Office for Kosovo and Metohija, provides legal and other appropriate assistance to the Serbian Orthodox Church with a view to protecting the church property in the territory of the Autonomous Province of Kosovo and Metohija. The Office for Kosovo and Metohija actively participates in conducting court and administrative proceedings, collects documentation on the property, in order to regain formal ownership of the property of the Serbian Orthodox Church.

Since 2014, the Dečani Monastery component has been endangered by the plans of the Dečani Municipality to build a road Dečani-Plav (Montenegro). Its route is planned through the buffer zone of the Dečani Monastery and immediately next to the core protection zone. The works performed in 2020 were suspended only after the reaction of the international community. The terrain has still not been restored to its original state, which confirms that the planning of the road building is still not abandoned. (Photos 2 - 4) The access road to the monastery is fenced by the barricades set up by KFOR. For the reason of its constant physical endangerment, the property is still secured by KFOR on a daily basis.

Future for Religious Heritage, the European network for historic places of worship, which is a member of the European Heritage Alliance, nominated the Dečani Monastery to the *7 Most Endangered Programme 2021*. The Board of Europa Nostra, based on the opinion expressed by the Advisory Panel of the *7 Most Endangered Programme*, stated: "This is the only

monument in Europe under such robust international military protection for a continuous period of 20 years. Yet, it constitutes a monument of outstanding historical and cultural importance for Europe and the world, as confirmed by its World Heritage status”.



Photo 2: Construction works on the road Dečani – Plav through the Dečani monastery buffer zone, August 2020. Photo by Institute for the Protection of Cultural Monuments

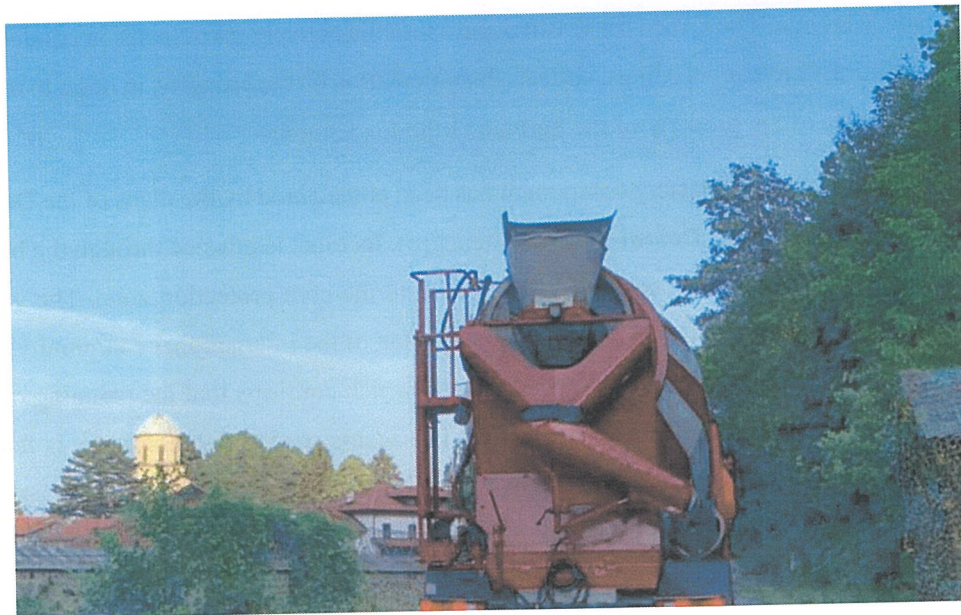


Photo 3: Heavy machinery engaged in road construction near the Dečani Monastery, August 2020. Photo by Institute for the Protection of Cultural Monuments



Photo 4: Main Road construction near the Dečani Monastery, August 2020. Photo by
Institute for the Protection of Cultural Monuments

The Patriarchate of Peć Monastery

In the Patriarchate of Peć Monastery, from May to October 2021, roof reparation, on the church of St. Apostle, was carried out (Photos 5 and 6). The lead cladding was damaged enabling humidity to enter through the cracks thus endangering the wall paintings in the church. The cladding was replaced with lead plates over the nave of the church and the associated bays on the south side towards the church of St. Mother of God, and on the north side towards the church of St. Dimitrije.

A water fountain was placed inside the gate and a place for visitors. (Photo 7).

A bilingual information board (1.50 x 2.00 m) with the plan of the Patriarchate of Peć Monastery has been placed inside the entrance gate to the monastery (Photo 8).

The works were carried out with funds provided by the Office for Kosovo and Metohija of the Government of the Republic of Serbia.

For the reasons of its constant physical endangerment, the property is still secured by the local police forces on a daily basis.

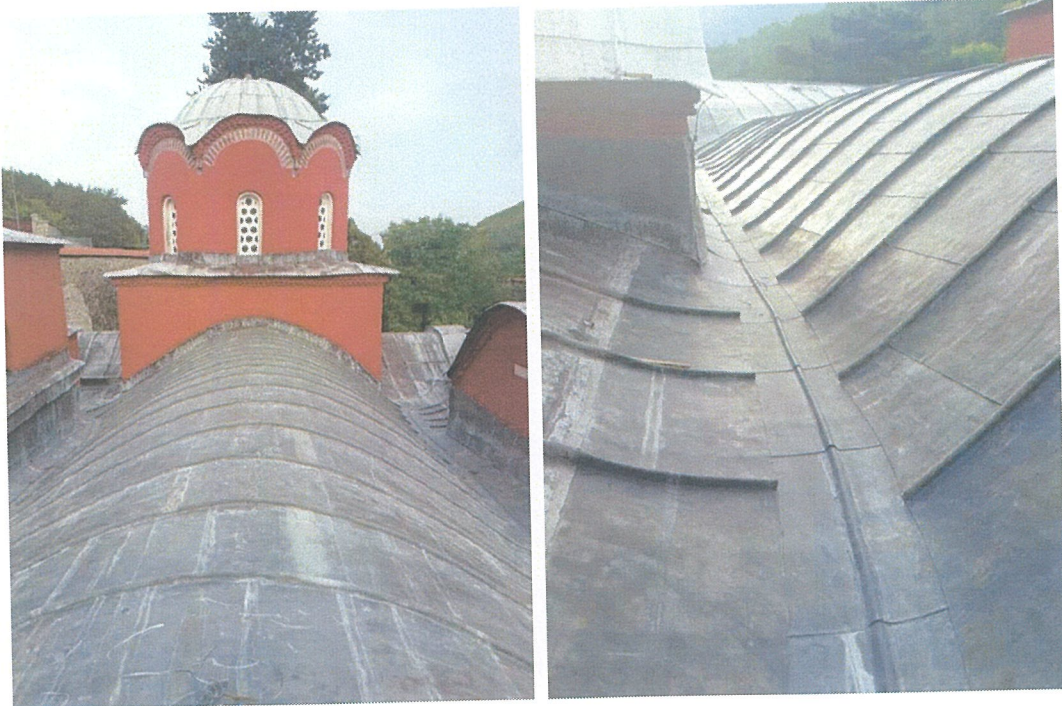


Photo 5 and 6: Roof repairs on the church of St. Apostle in the Patriarchate of Peć Monastery; photos by Institute for the Protection of Cultural Monuments



Photo 7: A water fountain inside the gate and a place for visitors; photo by Institute for the Protection of Cultural Monuments



Photo 8: A bilingual information board with the plan of the Monastery; photo by Institute for the Protection of Cultural Monuments

The Church of the Holy Virgin of Ljeviša in Prizren

For the Church of the Holy Virgin of Ljeviša in Prizren (Photo 9), experts from the Institute for the Protection of Cultural Monuments have prepared the projects for: 1) works on the ongoing maintenance of the church and the church gate; 2) the placement of electrical installations for the lighting of the altar partition, which will be carried out after obtaining the consent from the World Heritage Center; 3) conservation and restoration works on wall paintings.

The project of conservation and restoration works on the wall paintings was developed based on research works carried out in 2021. Physical-chemical analyzes of the colored layer were conducted using the techniques of optical microscopy in reflected visible and ultraviolet light, electron microscopy with energy-dispersive spectroscopy and infrared spectroscopy.

In the buffer zone of the Church of the Holy Virgin of Ljeviša in Prizren, changes were observed in the immediate vicinity of the property. There is a busy road next to the church, and the allotments in the immediate vicinity are privately owned. In the period from the end of May to September 1, 2021, a new constructed building was noticed on the allotment next to the church contrary to the zoning regulations of the Republic of Serbia. (Photos 10 - 13).

For the reason of its constant physical endangerment, the property is still secured by the local police forces on daily basis (the church is still surrounded by barbed wire fence - Photo 9).

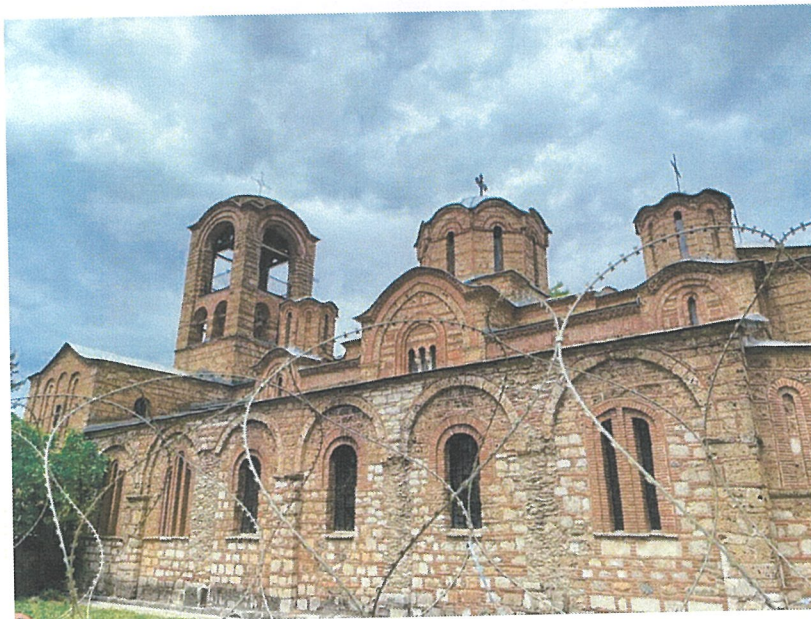


Photo 9: The Church of the Holy Virgin of Ljeviša in Prizren; photo by Institute for the Protection of Cultural Monuments



Photos 10 and 11: Heavy machinery engaged in a new construction on the plot next to the Church of the Holy Virgin of Ljeviša in Prizren; photos by the local priest.



Photos 12 and 13: A new construction on the plot next to the Church of the Holy Virgin of Ljeviša in Prizren; photos by the local priest.

The Gračanica Monastery

No conservation works were carried out in the Gračanica Monastery in 2021.

In 2021, the Institute for the Protection of Cultural Monuments published a bilingual publication *Gračanica, Chronicle of the Painting and Conservation Works 2010–2018* (Photo 14) by Miroslav Stanojlović, work manager (ISBN 978-86-6299-040-2). The printing of the publication was financed by the Ministry of Culture and Media of the Republic of Serbia. The publication presents in detail all the restoration and conservation work on the wall paintings in the church, and the procedures are lavishly illustrated with photographs, plans and other graphic attachments from the documentation prepared during the said works. The publication bears witness to the transformation of the condition of the wall painting, after the application of quality conservation procedures and modern methods of restoration, that can be noticed by visitors.

Experts from the Institute for the Protection of Cultural Monuments continue their monitoring tasks.

For the reason of its constant physical endangerment, the property is still secured by the local police forces on daily basis.



Мирслав Станојловић

ГРАЧАНИЦА
ХРОНИКА СЛИКАРСКО-
КОНЗЕРВАТОРСКИХ РАДОВА
2010–2018

Miroslav Stanojlović

GRAČANICA
CHRONICLE OF THE PAINTING
AND CONSERVATION WORKS
2010–2018



Photo 14: Stanojlović, M. (2021) *Gračanica, Chronicle of the Painting and Conservation Works 2010–2018*, Belgrade: Republic Institute for the Protection of Cultural Monuments.

Additional Information

In June 2021, the Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts in Belgrade organized a scientific conference "Protection, Preservation and Affirmation of the Serbian Cultural Heritage in Kosovo and Metohija." The conference was dedicated to determining and analyzing the current state of Serbian cultural heritage in the Autonomous Province of Kosovo and Metohija, both tangible and intangible, considering long-term threats to its survival, forms of endangering, challenging, and falsifying its origin and determining necessary scientific and professional conditions (infrastructural, organizational, technical and staff) for its study, documentation, presentation, affirmation, and preservation. The conference was attended by experts in the field of heritage protection, historical sciences, ethnology, linguistics, and law. Conference proceedings of the findings presented at the conference is under preparation.¹

Conclusion

As it was the case in the previous reporting years, the general state of Serbian churches and monasteries in Kosovo and Metohija province, including this World Heritage site, is still far from the satisfactory level. There is no freedom of movement secured for Serbs that affects also their unhindered access to these holy places. Furthermore, in addition to numerous security incidents targeting the Serbian cultural and religious heritage in Kosovo and Metohija, the problem of serious administrative barriers imposed by the Provisional Institutions of Self-Government in Pristina for monastic communities of the Serbian Orthodox Church are still present and worrisome. In addition, distortion of historical facts and negation of any connection of these monuments with the Serbian people and the Serbian Orthodox Church is unfortunately becoming established matrix that is further contributing to endangerment of these components of this World Heritage site.

¹ <https://www.sanu.ac.rs/en/protection-preservation-and-affirmation-of-the-serbian-cultural-heritage-in-kosovo-and-metohija/>