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**Nikon of Jerusalem's Slavonic Reception of St. Isaac the Syrian's
Teaching on Prayer**

MA Thesis in Medieval Studies

Central European University

Budapest

May 2010

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by

Oleg Miroslava Soldat

(Bosnia and Hercegovina)

Thesis submitted to the Department of Medieval Studies,
Central European University, Budapest, in partial fulfillment of the requirements
of the Master of Arts degree in Medieval Studies

Accepted in conformance with the standards of the CEU

Chair, Examination Committee

Thesis Supervisor

Examiner

Examiner

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To my daughter Vasilisa, and my wife Gordana.

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I, the undersigned, Oleg Miroslava Soldat, candidate for the MA degree in Medieval Studies declare herewith that the present thesis is exclusively my own work, based on my research and only such external information as properly credited in notes and bibliography. I declare that no unidentified and illegitimate use was made of the work of others, and no part of the thesis infringes on any person's or institution's copyright. I also declare that no part of the thesis has been submitted in this form to any other institution of higher education for an academic degree.

Budapest, 25 May 2010

Signature

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INTRODUCTION

It is not my intention to treat the whole spectrum of the problem of the authorship, the role, and the meaning of the famous fifteenth-century old Serbian compilation called the *Anthology of Gorica*, extant in the unique manuscript of *Gorički zbornik*, now kept in the Library of the Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts, manuscript No. 446. This important manuscript has never been published. Such a comprehensive effort would amount to an encyclopedic narration of the vast number of topics dealt with in the *Anthology of Gorica*. I will focus my attention on one small part of the *Anthology*, namely, on the role and the place of the so-called *Homily on Prayer* in the *Anthology*. This homily, which constitutes just one small part of the entire *Anthology* (c. 5 folios out of 227), is attributed to St. Isaac the Syrian, even by Nikon of Jerusalem, who is otherwise considered to be the writer of the *Anthology*, for the simple reason of the concept of medieval authorship. The *Anthology* is one long, general letter (*poslanica*) by Nikon of Jerusalem to Princess Jelena Balšić. Writing and sending such anthologies was a common means of literary communication in medieval Europe, including Serbia.¹ That is to say, anthology is a literary genre. In the case of this anthology, its role was both educational and pastoral, since Nikon was probably Princess Jelena's spiritual father. It belongs to the type of "mixed anthologies" (*miješana poslanica*),² which consisted of compilations of various types of literature by many writers. These mixed anthologies covered many different topics and even genres, including geographical, cosmological, biological, and theological texts. The homily on prayer, which Nikon himself states is the work of the great Syrian ascetic St. Isaac of Nineveh,

¹ See Jovan Deretic, *Istorija srpske književnosti* [The History of Serbian literature] (Zrenjanin: Sezam Books, 2007), 69-81; Dimitrije Bogdanovic, *Istorija stare srpske književnosti* [The history of old Serbian literature] (Beograd: Srpska književna zadruza, 1997), 69-89.

² See Bogdanović, *The history*, 15-35.

had a special purpose since Princess Jelena, at the time she received this anthology, had probably developed a strong inclination to a monastic calling. In all probability, she intended to become a nun. She sponsored the building of a female monastery on one of the few small islands of Lake Skadar, the island Beška in the area of Zeta, today's Montenegro. In a few years, by the intercession of the Serbian nobility of the Balšić family, this region became known as the "Holy Mountain of Zeta," meaning another Holy Mountain besides Mount Athos. Later, the famous Kosača-Hranić Bosnian Serb aristocratic family, in the person of the widowed Jelena, took over the role of protector of Orthodox monasteries and monks. When Princess Jelena Balšić Hranić died, she was buried in her monastery, where she had spent much time in the last years of her life. The homily on prayer has special significance since it gives insight into the type of literature which was the most popular at the Serbian and Bosnian court.

In this thesis I will demonstrate, first, that this homily really was written by St. Isaac the Syrian, and, second, I will outline the basic topics in the homily. These topics are important since they refer to editorial principles that may have governed the composition of this compilation. Also, I will translate this homily into English, and, finally, I will try to contextualize this translation.

Chronology	
1902.	Svetozar Tomić buys the manuscript of the anthology in Skopje, Macedonia, from a certain priest, and calls it the <i>Anthology of Gorica</i> (<i>Gorički zbornik</i>)
1907.	Tomić shares information about the <i>Anthology of Gorica</i> with two prominent philologists
1911.	Through Tomić the whole scholarly community in Serbia receives basic information about the <i>Anthology</i>
1921.	At the second assembly of the Royal Academy, held on the 14 November 1921, the famous Serbian Slavist, Aleksandar Belić, recommends the <i>Anthology</i> for publication.
1927.	Stanoje Stanojević analyses one part of the <i>Anthology of Gorica</i>
1942/43	Tomić describes and rewrites the entire <i>Anthology</i> in a modern Serbian transliteration, preparing it for publication. In a short article, Tomić for the first time mentions Nikon of Jerusalem as the definite author of the anthology.
1949.	Tomić offers his transliteration of the <i>Anthology</i> to the Serbian Academy of Sciences.
2000.	The international scientific conference on Nikon of Jerusalem: Time, Personality, Work, and publishing of the same volume, ed. by Bishop Jovan (Ćulibrk)

Figure 1. Chronology

Chapter 1

JELENA BALŠIĆ LAZAREVIĆ HRANIĆ

It is suitable to begin this work with a short narrative about the life of Princess (princeza) Jelena Balšić. She was one of the three daughters of Duke Lazar Hrebeljanović, who died in the Battle of Kosovo (1389.) and became a Serbian national hero and martyr.



Figure 2. St. Duke Lazar Hrebeljanović, fresco in the monastery of Ljubostinja, 1404.³

Jelena's life and work will recur often in the text that follows, so it should be clear from the outset that the context and the circumstances in which the manuscript that is the subject of

³ Taken from http://sr.wikipedia.org/wiki/%D0%A1%D0%BB%D0%B8%D0%BA%D0%B0:Lazar_Hrebeljanovic.jpg (accessed [2. June, 2011]).

this thesis was marked to a great extent by the personality of Princess Jelena (b. between 1366. and 1371). Indeed, she inspired the composition of the *Anthology of Gorica*.⁴ Princess Jelena had a grand political vision, as is testified to by many Serbian historians.⁵ She even initiated a war with Venice in 1405. Moreover, her life and entire political and spiritual activity are relevant in more than one way in the circumstances in which this thesis is being written. The year 2011 marks exactly 600 years from the time when Princess Jelena, as the wife of the Bosnian *Veliki Vojvoda* (Grand Duke) Sandalj Hranić, came to Buda to participate in the general counsel of European nobility. The Hranić family was the second most influential aristocratic family in medieval Bosnia, after the Kotromanići family.⁶ Jelena married twice. Her first husband, Đurađ III Balšić Stratimirović, was leaning towards the Roman Catholic Church. Jelena defended the rights of the Orthodox Church in the coastal regions. They had one son, Balša III, whom Jelena helped after her husband's death in 1403. As already mentioned, she conducted a serious war with Venice from 1405 to 1409.

1.1 The dissemination of the cult of the Nemanjić family in medieval Bosnia

Jelena spent 24 years at the court of her second husband, Grand Duke Sandalj Hranić Kosača. The Kosača family had a lasting impact in forming the ancient territory of Hum into today's Hercegovina (the southern part of Bosnia and Hercegovina) or the Dukedom of St. Sava. This transformation was achieved mainly through the successors and heirs of Jelena's husband, Sandalj, especially Stefan Vukšić Kosača, Sandalj's nephew. It is important to note that the Kosača family was educated in the spirit of the Nemanjić family, which was a kind of canon

⁴ See Svetlana Tomin, and others.

⁵ See for example, Sima Ćirković, *Istorija srednjovekovne Bosanske države* [A History of the Medieval Bosnian State], Belgrade: Srpska književna zadruga, 1967.

⁶ See Sima Ćirković, *ibid.* Vladimir Ćorović, *Istorija srpskog naroda* [The history of the Serbian people] (Banja Luka: Glas Srpske, 2002).

or measure for Serbian, Orthodox rulership. The chief agent of this dynamics of “nemanjization” of the Bosnian Serbian aristocracy was basically Jelena, who, immediately after the deaths of both her husbands, came to have important influence. This was mostly due to the, as was already pointed out, “canonical” status of the family which she belonged to – the Nemanjić. Her father, Duke Lazar, remembered in the ethnic memory of the Serbs as tsar, emperor, was this legitimating personality. Thus, she was the outstretched arm of her late iconic father, Lazar. One of Sandalj’s and Jelena’s courts, called Ključ, was situated nearby today’s Gacko in Hercegovina. Sandalj and Jelena did not spend their entire time in this medieval town and fortress, but at times it was their residence. After the death of her second husband, Jelena devoted herself to monastic philosophy and diplomacy. She frequented Zeta and corresponded with Nikon. She also continued to influence her nephew, Stefan, who became the chief agent connecting Serbian medieval Bosnia with the Serbia of the Nemanjić family. The cult of the ruling and saintly family of the Nemanjić, thus, started to expand northwards, all the way to the area of today’s Bosanska Krajina and Banja Luka, since the Kosača family were *de facto* rulers of Bosnia together with the last Bosnian kings of the Kotromanić family. The remnants of the architectural, spiritual, and political presence of the cult of the rulers and saints of the Nemanjić family are in the monasteries of Bosanska Krajina. The last kings of the Bosnian medieval state sometimes resembled the famous *rois fainéant* of the late Merovingian family. It is worth mentioning, that belonging to this active and influential family, with its prominent position and highly ranked ecclesiastical figures, Jelena and her entourage were in the position to negotiate with foreign states, embassies, and important persons. Thus, she is said to have visited the general council of European nobility in Buda in 1411.



Figure 3. Remnants of the medieval town Ključ today, near Gacko, Bosna i Hercegovina⁷

⁷ Taken from <http://bs.wikipedia.org/wiki/Datoteka:Kljuc.gacko.jpg> (accessed 23. May 2011).

Chapter 2

NIKON OF JERUSALEM AND THE “SWAN’ SONG” OF SERBIAN MEDIEVAL LITERATURE

The last offshoot of Serbian medieval literature was connected with a person who may not even have been a Serbian. This offshoot, Nikon’s legacy, by the very nature of the vehicles that helped it spread – that is, Jelena, her husband and the Bosnian Serbian court – exerted its influence over an area as wide as half of the territory of former Yugoslavia: today’s Serbia, Montenegro, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and parts of Croatia. So, even though Nikon’s legacy has not yet been thoroughly studied, the directions and intensities of its impact might prove to be literally immeasurable. There is a debate in Serbian historiography about the personality of Nikon of Jerusalem. I will try to summarize here the most important questions and the possible answers. The data about Nikon’s life are scarce. Nikon’s activities in Zeta are known with certainty only after 1439. Jelena died in 1433. First, Nikon finished his *Hexaemeron* (Šestodnev) in 1439, which is attested to by his signature giving also the year: “СЛАВА СЪВРШИТЕЛЮ БОГОУ

ВЪ ВѢКН ВѢКОВОУ, АМѢН. Ы ЛѢТ(Ѧ) .СѢ·Ц·Л·Н· СЛАВРЕНН ПНКСОН ІЕРУСАЛИМЦЪ”⁸

Second, there are ample suggestions as to the activities of the monk Nikon in Franc Miklosich’s *Monumenta Serbica*. It seems that Nikon received the so-called great schema tonsure and changed his name from Nikon to Nikandar between 31 August and 25 November 1442. As such, he signed the last will of Jelena on 25. November 1442 in Goričani in Upper Zeta. Jelena signed her testament and attests the presence of this mysterious monk called Nikandar. She writes that

⁸ “Glory to God Who accomplishes everything from ages upon ages. Amen.”

“this testament is written by the hands of my spiritual father, elder Nikandar of Jerusalem”

[illegible]

Konstantin Jiriček is persuaded that this Nikandar was someone other than Nikon, and that there were two monks from Jerusalem. This difficult question cannot be entered into now. I just mention that the latest and most persuasive solution to this problem was offered recently by a Vladimir Balj, which is that Nikon and Nikandar are one and the same person. The question about Nikon's ethnicity has not been settled fully either. Two prominent historians of Serbian medieval literature, Dimitrije Bogdanović and Đorđe Trifunović, are persuaded that Nikon was Byzantine Greek by origin. The reasons for this belief are linguistic, the frequent use of certain Greek words.¹⁰ Some other historians, however, think differently. It is important to say that Nikon of Jerusalem shaped the monastic community of the Holy Mountain of Zeta and he gave "the spiritual, cultural and even political directions for the future centuries."¹¹ His two great manuscripts might be considered as the "swan' song" of Serbian medieval literature due to the fact that, as Dimitrije Bogdanović writes, "with the fall of Smederevo in 1459 it seems that for the Serbs there came the *last times*. With the approaching end of the century together there was felt a certain eschatological epoch, insinuated by certain prophecies about the end of the world."¹² Even the most important Serbian literary historian, Jovan Deretić, in his monumental history of Serbian literature, closes the medieval period of Serbian literature exactly with Nikon.¹³

⁹ “By the hand of my spiritual father Nikon of Jerusalem.”

¹⁰ Vladimir Balj, [The Literary and Copying Activity of Nikon of Jerusalem], 12-18.

¹¹ *ibid.*

¹² Dimitrije Bogdanović, *Istorija stare srpske književnosti* [A History of Old Serbian Literature] (Belgrade: Srpska književna zadruga, 1991), 213.

¹³ Jovan Deretić, *Istorija srpske književnosti* (A History of Serbian literature) (Zrenjanin: Sezam Books, 2007), 35-211.

Chapter 3

ANTHOLOGY OF GORICA (GORIČKI ZBORNIK)

3.1. Codicological description

The manuscript of *Anthology of Gorica* (*Gorički zbornik*) is kept as item No. 446 in the Archives of the Library of Serbian Academy of Science as a legacy of Svetozar Tomić. It has not been edited and published to this day. Most of what is known about it come from the short scholarly articles written by Tomić (1919 and 1948), Ćorović (1911), and Radojčić, who translated two letters from it and, especially, from the most recent efforts connected to the interpretation of Anthology that came through the work and personality of Bishop Jovan Ćulibrk. He was the chief agent in organizing the first international scientific conference about the personality and the work of Nikon of Jerusalem. Thus, Nikon, his work and the legacy of Jelena Balšić might be said to have entered the modern focus of the science only recently. The whole manuscript of *Anthology of Gorica* has 273 folios, 24 x 14 cm. The paper is of good quality, smooth and thick, with one horizontal line at the bottom of every folio. The written surface of the text is 16 x 9.5 cm. It is written in black ink, except for the headings and the first letters of the paragraphs, written in red. The words and letters are quite broadly written, averaging five to six words on a line.

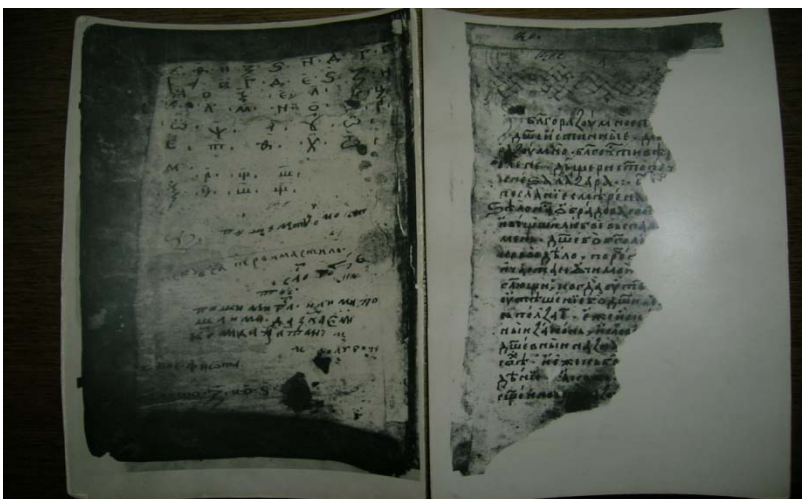


Figure 4. A page from the original manuscript of the *Anthology of Gorica*.¹⁴

Sentences are separated by dots and begin with capital letters only at the beginning of lines. The personal names and the names of the places are rarely capitalized. Paragraphs end with large red dots. Abbreviations, usual to the Slavonic language of any redaction (Serbian, Russian and Bulgarian) for the sake of saving space, are of two types: one concern Biblical names, inherited from Greek texts, which include all hagiographic adjectives such as holy, blessed, martyr, etc. The other type of the abbreviations is Nikon's, when he puts consonants above the words and leaves out the "soft *jer*" (a sound in the historical pronunciation of Serbian, no longer in use). The space between the words is narrow and often unrecognizable, which makes the reading and deciphering of the manuscript difficult. Sometimes transitive verbs are completely blurred or fused together with the transitive ending, for example, *prilagaetese poklanaemsi*. The whole manuscript is written in *ustav* (Cyrilic minuscule), which inclines to *semiustav* (semi-minuscula) and it is written by one hand. (The exception is one medical footnote of five lines at the bottom of folio 15, written by another hand). Since the *Anthology of Gorica* includes both Nikon's and Jelena's writings (Jelena's were copied by Nikon), there is a difference between

¹⁴ Courtesy of Vladimir Balj.

these two styles of writing. Jelena's style is closer to the traditional language of Serbian literature, whereas Nikon's is more individual and less stereotyped.¹⁵ The orthography is close to the standard formed by the reforms of *Resavska škola* (School of Resava). Here and there the wrong morphology is used in declensions, dual forms, and the forms of adjectives. The wooden boards of the cover, damaged by insects, are covered with leather, decorated with geometrical forms; the leather is heavily damaged. The cover barely holds the book together.

3.2. The contents

The manuscript is divided thematically into three parts. The first part (f. 1-15) is damaged; the folios are torn vertically, so it is almost unreadable. This first part begins with Jelena's first letter and ends with Nikon's first answer. The second part (f. 16r-48v) begins with Jelena's second letter, the famous *Otpisanie bogoljubno* (The God-loving answer). Some researchers have compared Nikon's short systematization of monastic philosophy in this manuscript, especially various types of typikons and basic forms of monastic life, with the almost contemporary Russian monk, St. Nilus of Sora (1403-1508).¹⁶ St. Nilus is famous for introducing the Skete-type monasticism in Russia, which was propagated by Nikon on Lake Skadar. Even today one can see the ruins of Nikon's and Jelena's Skete-type monasteries on islands in Lake Skadar.

¹⁵ See D. Bogdanovic, [History] 223-224.

¹⁶ Compare Jovan Ćulibrk, *Uloga duhovnog očinstva po Nikonu Jerusalimcu* [The role of spiritual parenthood according to Nikon of Jerusalem] (available on: <http://www.rastko.rs/cms/files/books/46c44fed2d555.pdf>) (accessed 2. June, 2011]). Bishop Jovan Ćulibrk is one of the most prominent modern researchers of Nikon's legacy. This is his unpublished graduation work from the Theological Faculty in Srbinje, Bosnia and Hercegovina.



Figure 5. Island and monastery of Moračnik, on Lake Skadar, dedicated to the Three-handed icon of the Mother of God (Bogorodica Trojeručica), with a chapel dedicated to St. John of Damascus and a small chapel on the top of the island dedicated to the Transfiguration of the Lord.¹⁷

In the middle of the fifteenth century in the “Byzantine commonwealth” there was a change from traditional, large-scale coenobitic monasteries to this moderate type of monastic organization. In Russia, as I have already noted, it was the work of St. Nilus of Sora, and in Serbia a parallel process was going on in the Holy Mountain of Zeta. In Russia, Skete-type monasticism¹⁸ lasted until the Revolution as the most favored type of monasticism. Perhaps there was a gradual tiredness with traditional, then excessively developed, large coenobitic monasteries, which, especially in Russia, had grown to almost gargantuan dimensions.¹⁹ Growth of physical aspects frequently brought with it impoverishment of spiritual life. The monastic and spiritual reforms such as those of St. Nilus’ may have been an attempt to solve the problems

¹⁷ Taken from http://www.mitropolija.co.me/ustrojstvo/manastiri/manastir_moracnik_1.html (accessed [date]).

¹⁸ Skete is one of the three main types of the Greek Orthodox monasticism, besides eremitic and coenobitic. Skete-type includes some characteristics of both other types, and it stands in a middle between them, as a relative solitary and half communal way of life. It is usually considered as an advanced type of monasticism, compared to coenobitic. St. Nilus and Nikon consider it as a best, middle way between the two.

¹⁹ For example, the monastery of St. Cyril of Belozersk in the north of the Russia.

brought about by a gradual secularization of monasticism.²⁰ Nikon's and Jelena's Skete monastery on Lake Skadar was not destined to become such an overwhelming centre as Nilus' monastery was, but it shows all elements of skete philosophy in itself. Finally, St. Isaac's teachings and writings were always deemed especially worthy for ascetics in far away deserts and Sketes, and are even to this day. After the death of both her husbands, Jelena at this time had already developed a monastic calling. After an introduction, Nikon writes to her about coenobitic and anachoretic monastic life, about hesychasm (*tihovanje*), charity, and so on. The homily of Saint Isaac about prayer naturally and thematically falls into this second part and Nikon himself quotes, gives or translates this classic of monastic literature about prayer.

The third and the longest part (49-272 f.) of the anthology comprises many different answers, sometimes given without a precise question from Jelena, many essays, and quotations on different subjects. It is basically a kind of encyclopedia, touching on as many subjects as was possible to obtain or get to in this epoch. History is an important subject. The subject of Nikon's historicism covers basic materials of sacred history. It resembles Augustine's narration of sacred history from his *City of God*. Thus, Nikon narrates about Genesis, Adam and Eve, original sin, about Cain, Abel, and Seth, about the Flood and the Tower of Babel, the division of the nations, the beginning of idolatry, about Abraham, Melchizedek, and Nebuchadnezzar. It can be said that Nikon's narration begins with elementary factual events and goes deeper into the purely Christian, providential side of history. He builds up imperial [word choice—what do you mean here? in depicting the gradual development of the Christian Empire under Constantine. This, of

²⁰ Compare [Dalibor Petrović] Далибор Петровић. *Stjažatelji i nestjažatelji u ruskoj crkvi 16. vijeka* [Possessors and non-possessors in the Russian Church of the 16. century](Foča, 2007); [E. V. Romanenko] Е. В. Романенко, *Нил Сорский и традиции русского монашества – Нило-Сорский скит как уникальное явление монастырской культуры Руси XV-XVII вв* [St. Nilus of Sora in the tradition of the Russian monasticism, St. Nilus' Skete as an unique phenomenon of the monastic culture in the fifteenth century Russia]. *Исторически вестник* 3-4 1999): 90-93.

course, is important since he writes not to an ordinary woman, but to one of noble origin. He mentions Julian the Apostate, Apostle Taddaeus, the veneration of the True Cross, icons and dogmas concerning their veneration. The Emperor Constantine holds a prominent place here. Nikon writes about the transfer of the capital to the East and about the founding of Constantinople, the New Rome, about the construction of the first churches in the new capital, about the young Emperor Constantius, about St. Helen, Constantine's mother, who had the temple of Aphrodite destroyed and the church of Resurrection built in its place; about the Christianization of the Georgians and the Armenians. Having packed the whole chronicle of the Christian Empire into a short narrative, Nikon places especial stress on the moment when Emperor Heraclius established the Ecumenical Patriarch. He mentions the legend of St. Andrew the Apostle in the ancient city of Byzantium; the first Patriarch Metrophanes (304/7-314) to whom, according to Nikon's account, the other three of the four patriarchates were subordinated; and the First Ecumenical Council in Nicaea. It seems that Nikon cautiously leads the attention of Princess Jelena to the subject of a practical Christian life and monasticism. Thus, he mentions the Church Fathers, the founders of the monastery on Mt. Sinai, Egypt, and Palestine. The development of monasticism in Constantinople, under the Emperor Theodosius is mentioned next. A prominent place, as always in Serbian medieval literature, is held by the Three Hierarchs: St. Gregory the Theologian, St. John Chrysostom, and St. Basil of Caesarea. The vast number of names and topics mentioned in this compendium might one day throw considerable light on the question of what an ideal Serbian medieval library looked, as Bogdanović, describes in his famous book.²¹ In any case, it is clear that at least the Serbian nobility was not unfamiliar with the Holy Hierarchs of the Church and their teachings, which is regarded today as high academic

²¹ Dimitrije Bogdanović, *Studije iz srpske srednjovekovne književnosti* [Studies from medieval Serbian literature] (Belgrade: SKZ, 1997), 5-80.

theology. Their works circulated in the body of well-established translations of the works of the Church Fathers. The freedom with which Nikon quotes St. Isaac in the part of the manuscript with which I am dealing here, the freedom and familiarity with which he goes through the original Greek Isaac, quoting, combining various different sentences and parts of sentences, might be taken as a sign that either certain parts of the original Isaac, or the whole corpus, had been known previously in the Slavic-speaking world. In any case, it is known that one masterful and influential translation had already been achieved, that of Pseudo Dionysius the Aeropagite, completed by the famous monk Isaija. The culture of translation was, I assume here, very developed. The familiarity with which Isaac is being cited in the manuscript even creates a sort of a problem, as I will try to show later. These translations were made for an educated audience which read circulated them. Jelena Balšić was clearly such a person. After general and sacred history, next Nikon discusses Jelena's genealogy. This might be taken as a standard part of this type of medieval epistolography, written for and to someone belonging to an influential family. Jelena belonged to the most influential Serbian family in Serbian history, the Nemanjić family, because, through her mother her lineage could be traced back to the Nemanjić family. Nikon considers the entire lineage as one of holy rulers, repeating a standard practice in medieval dynastic cults.²² Naturally, the most important segment of this genealogical part is devoted to the two most influential representatives of the Nemanjić family. This family is called myrrh-gusher and of sacred origin, thus repeating the standard epithet of the founder of the family, Stefan Nemanja, later St. Symeon the Myrrh-Giver (1113-1199), with ample reference to the other holy

²² See Gabor Klaniczay, *Holy Rulers and Blessed Princesses: Dynastic Cults in medieval central Europe*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007).

founding member of the family, Saint Sava. Nikon even includes short version of the hagiography of Stefan Nemanja's *Vita*.²³

After the genealogical part is a liturgical and eschatological part. Nikon speaks about Holy Communion in the form of bread and wine, and about the state of the souls of the dead. He concludes this part with a few words about the service for the dead. Then follows a kind of the philosophy of history part concerning the providential role of the Ishmaelites, the followers of Muhammad, and the Tatars. A standard *topos* here is the divine and historical opposition between the sins of the Christians and the divine punishing wrath. An important part, to which one might say everything mentioned so far leads, is the Rule of anachoretic life. Rules are intended both for monks and laypersons. This monastic rule was intended for a Skete on the Gorica Island in Lake Skadar, where Jelena founded a church dedicated to the Holy Mother of God.

²³ See Vladimir Balj, *Literary activity*, 92-96.



Figure 6. The Serbian medieval Nemanjić dynasty, Dečani fresco, fourteenth century (nine standing images: 1 row from the bottom: St. Sava, St. Nemanja, St. Stefan the First Crowned; 2nd row: St. Kings: Dragutin, Milutin and Uroš I; 3rd row: St. Uroš the Feeble, Emperor Dušan, St. King Stefan of Dečani)

It is worth noting that Nikon considers fasting (the four great church fasts during the year and every Wednesday and Friday) as a clear sign of Orthodoxy. Breaking the fasts is a Latin vice and even connected to a sin against the true teachings on the Holy Trinity.²⁴ Nikon lists several additional Church Fathers, Ecumenical Councils, and enumerates some heresies. The next chapter, dedicated to natural sciences, again, begins with a narrative of sacred history concerning the creation of the world. Then Nikon gives short passages in which he quotes information about the shape and size of the Earth and the Earth's position among the other cosmic bodies. As everything else in the anthology, this version of cosmology is very Bible-oriented.

²⁴ [Atanasije Jevtić,] Атанасије Јевтић, *Исповедање вере Никона Јерусалимљанина* [Confession of the faith of Nikon of Jerusalem] In *Никон Јерусалимац – вријеме, личност, дело* [Nikon of Jerusalem – time, personality, work], ed. Bishop Jovan Ćulibrk, (Cetinje: 2004), 259-269.

The last chapter of the anthology is probably the most interesting. It is a medieval travelogue, Nikon's account of his journey to the places of the Holy Land, almost modern in its style. It is interesting to see that this piece of writing uses liturgical style and language exclusively. This is Eucharistic language and anagogic semantics, broadened and expanded to include sacred geography, that is, a description of places of special importance for Christians. It might be said to be a prolonged Eucharist service. Nikon's manuscript ends with the confession of his sins and his asking for the forgiveness. At the very end there is a short prayer to the Mother of God, with the usual petition requesting from Our Lady that this book may be protected from anybody who might steal it or otherwise misuse it. At the final bottom there is the date of writing and a signature: "the humble Nikon."

3.3 Original and translation of the homily on prayer

	Slavonic	English
1.	Zrj, ako l0stvica c(ar)s(t)vã onog, v7nour7 tj es(t7) s7kr7vena v7 d(ou){j tvoj. S(ve)t(o)g Isaaka rekou teb0 o m(o)l(j)tv0	Behold that the ladder of that Kingdom is within you hidden in your soul. I <i>will</i> relate to you Saint Isaac's teaching on prayer.
2.	Tako gl(agl)et(7) s(ve)t°j, egla hoſe{ pom(o)ljtjse m(o)litvoĚ, ~jstou m(o)l(i)tvou prjte`j eljka tj es(t7) sjla.	The Saint says the following: When you want to pray truly, obtain the pure prayer as much as it is possible for you:
3.	pone` (e) egla na~n0{j m(o)ljtj se, j prjdet(7) m°sl7 n0kaia tÛ`da,	for, when you begin to pray and there comes some foreign thought
4.	jlj pohot0nã v7~esom7, togla ne~jsta gl(agl)etse ona m(o)l(j)tva.	or desire for anything, then, this prayer is called impure.
5.	lane`e wt(7) ne~jstjh7 v7znese na `r(7t)v' njk7 g(ospod)nj e`e es(t7) s(e)rdce, oumn°lj `r(7t)v' njk7.	Because it brought an offering from the impure things to God's altar, which is the heart, the intelligible altar.
6.	Se bo vjdjm7, Đko v7negla s(v0)ũn' njk7 ougtovtjse, j na m(o)l(j)tv0 stanet	For, whenever the priest will have prepared himself, and stands in prayer,
7.	ou bl(a)gsr7d0e b(o)`(es)tvnoe j molese j s7bjrae oum7	in divine benevolence, and starts to pray, and recollects his mind

8.	togla nadhodjt7 d(×)h7 s(ve)t°j na hl0b7 j vjno v7zlo`en' noe na `r7(t)v(e)nj k7	then the Holy Ghost descends upon the bread and wine placed unto the altar.
9.	N7 a`á m0sto ~jsto, a ne skor7mo aũe lj `(e) n0s(t7) zenjca o-ese d(ou){e tvoee ~jsta, da ne dr7zne{j v7zr0tj na kroug7 s(o)lncŮ	But this, only if the place is pure, and not dirty. And if the pupil of your soul's eye is not pure, do not dare to look to the sunshine
10.	N7 prjte`j smi renã j jspovdanã srd(e)-no0 pone` (e) a`á t0lo v7 gr0s0h7 obr0tse	but rather acquire humility and the confession from the heart. For, if the body is found to be in sins,
11.	razm°{lenã d(ou){j ne pr0staEt7 tekou`á v7 m°slj. Ům7 s7mou`án7 ne mo`e(t7)	the thoughts of the soul do not cease flowing in the intellect. A confused intellect cannot
12.	oub0gnoutj zabvenã j pr0moudrĩs(t7) svoĚ hoũet7, jlj opravdaet se, jlj s7gr0{aet7	escape forgetfulness and wants its own wisdom and either justifies itself or falls into sin.
13.	a`e ne oum7 zdrav7 dver7, takovomou ne řitvr7zaet7	If the intellect is not healthy, to such a one the door will not open.
14.	t0lesn°j trou7d7 krom0 ouma ~jstotj, Đko bes-edna outroba, i s7sca souha.	The corporeal work without the purity of the mind is like a childless womb or like a dry breast.
15.	p'ten'c7 bez(7) krjlou es(t7)oum7 v7nov0 iz7{ed{j wt(7) s7pletenã str(a)stej pokaanãem7.	The mind who through repentance has just escaped from the complication (intertwining) of the passions is like a wingless nestling,
16.	j eũe na zemlj le`jt'dobrod0t0lh vhd0nã ne ouvjd0 nj`e ~Ěstvã sp(o)dobj se, Ě`e sout krjl0 oumŮ	and still lies on the ground, because it has not yet seen the(virtue) of vision and has not yet acquired the perception, which are the wings for the intellect,
17.	jm°`e prjblj`aet se n(e)b(e)sn°m(7), j wt(7)hodjt7 wt(7) zeml7n°h(7)	by which it approaches those heavenly and leaves those earthly.
18.	ne mo`et7 ~(e)l(ov0)k7 ste`atj Ůpovanã k7 bo(g)u, aũe ne pr0`de s7vr7{it(7) vol= b(o)`ã po-estj	One cannot obtain the hope in God unless he first had fulfilled the commandments of God's will.
19.	mnogaũj bo m°sl7 bl(a)ge mo`et(7) s7tvorjtj, krom0 d0l7 t0lesn°h(7).	The mind can fulfill many good things even without corporeal deeds.
20.	d0anã t0lou krom0 pe-alj s7m°sla, Đko`e t0lo bezd(ou){no es(t7).	The works of the body without the compunction of the mind are just like a soulless body.
21.	j`e po b(o)z0 razoum7, c(a)r7 es(t7) v7s0m7 `elanãem7 j	<i>The</i> reason which is according to God is a king to all desires,
22.	tamo pr0b°tj v7 prjle`n0 d0lanãj e`e v7 vjnograd0 sr(7)dca svoegp	and it dwells there in the ardent activity, which is in the vineyard of its heart.
23.	pet(7) t°souũ, l0(t7), jlj malo m7n7e, jlj	For five thousand years, or a little less, or

	pa-e segg wbraz ^o razouma mjr ⁷ okr ⁷ mlâhou	more than this, the representations of the mind governed this world,
24.	j wt(7)noud ⁷ glavou svoË ~(e)l(ov0)k ⁷ wt(7) zempl= i o`Ûtjtj ⁷ kr0post(7) zj`djtela svoeg ne v7zmo`e.	and the people were not capable of raising their head from the earth, nor of perceiving the power of their Creator,
25.	donde` (e) v7sË nam ⁷ v7sã v0ra j svobodj nas(7) wt(7) trÛda zeml ⁷ nag ⁷ d0lanã	until faith shone upon us and released us from the work of the earthly activity
26.	j wt(7) pokorenã souetnag ⁷ s ⁷ v ^o sostjË tou n7b ^o vaËSËË	and from the enslavement to vanity, with a majesty that had not existed here before.
27.	SkrwvjSã `e v0r ^o , n(e)bo j zemlã ne v7m0Sæet ⁷	The treasures of faith neither heaven nor earth can receive
28.	Razoum ⁷ pr(j)sno wbraz ^o jSËt(7), ko stra`j ste`avaËSjm ⁷ egg	Reason always searches for representations which are inspiring it to vigilance.
29.	V0ra slou`jt ⁷ posr0d0 b(oga j s(ve)tjh(7), tajnj nejzre-en`n ^o j	Faith serves as a mediator between God and the saints, through the unspeakable mysteries.
30.	t0lo d0laet(7) v(7) desn ^o ih(7) j {oujh(7) ravno.	The body is acting both in those (deeds) on the right and in those on the left.
31.	S7m ^o sl ⁷ `e åko `e es(t ⁷) v7 est(est ⁷)v0 ^o svoem ⁷ , ne d0jstvouet(7) v7 n7m ⁷ razoum ⁷ .	As long as the intellect as long is in its natural state, reason does not operate in him.
32.	Donelj` (e) mjrovj rabotaËt(7) skrwvnaa tvoa, sjr0~7 v7 pr0b ^o vanã mjrsk ^o h(7) stoj{j	As long as your hidden self is operating for the world, which means, as long as you dwell in the worldly affairs,
33.	j v7n0{njm ⁷ ~(e)l(ov0)ko (m ⁷) d0lae{j d0lo b(o)`je v7nour7{nj `e e`ã besplodvn ⁷ es(t ⁷).	you are doing Gods work only through your outward man, the inward man is still fruitless (2.Cor 4:16).
34.	jbo plod(7) egg wt(7) sl7z7 na~jnaet se j	Because, its fruit takes its origin in the tears.
35.	togla ouv0sj, åko jzjde s7m ^o sl ⁷ tvo ⁷ , wt(7) t7mnjce mjra segg j polo`j nogu svoã, , v7 {estvje novag ⁷ v0ka	Then you will know that your mind has left the prison of this world and you have placed your feet upon the pathway of the world to come.
36.	Don`de` (e) oubo ne sm0rjtse ~(e)l(ov0)k ⁷ , ne prjeml7t ⁷ m7zdou svoeg d0lanã,	Until a man does not humble himself, he would not receive the wage for his work.
37.	M7zda `e ne d0lanjË daet se, n7 sm0renjË	Because, the wage is given to humility and not to his efforts.
38.	~(e)l(ov0)k ⁷ mnog(7)pe-alovnj ⁷ , krot7k ⁷ j ml7~aljv ⁷ b ^o tj ne mo`et ⁷ .	The man with many worries can not at the same time be humble and meak.
39.	krom0 bo bespe-alã, sv0t ⁷ v7 d(ou){j tvoej ne	For, without absence of worries you should

	pojŠj	not seek the light in your soul.
40.	AŠú oubo ne oustra{jt(7) sm°sla strah7 g7enskj, v7 lĚbov7 b(o) `jĚ prāj7j `elanaĚ ne mo`et7.	If the mind first has not feared the terror of hell, he cannot approach with his will the love of God.
41.	4l° `e, ~(e)l(ov0)-e b(o) `jj, aŠú hošē{ j s7 B(o)gm7 jsprav7j d(ou){ou svoĚ0 to	Thou, o man, if thou wilt to direct thy soul towards God,
42.	S7 radostjĚ tecj, na pr0dle`eŠj teb0 podvg7, v7zirae na na-elnjka v0ri , j s7vr'7{jtela js(ous)a4	flee with every eagerness to the next ascetic discipline looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith. (Heb12:2)
43.	K7 sjm7 `e poj`j past°ra, poj`j kr7mite°la poj`j vra-a, poj`j ou-itela.	Besides, search for the shepherd, search for the helmsman, search for the physician, search for the teacher.
44.	Past°r7, pojstjn0 es(t7) j`e pog°b{ee ovce slovesn°e zloboĚ svojm7 Pot7`anām7 j m(o)l(j)tvoĚ vz°skati j napraviti v7zmog7.	The true shepherd is he who with his zeal and prayer can search out and direct the rational sheep that were killed by the evil.
45.	Kr7mjtel7 es(t7) j`e kr0post7 oumnouĚ wt(7) b(o)ga j svojh(7) trĚlov7 prjem7.	The helmsman is the one who has received intelligible vigor from God and his efforts.
46.	ne t7~jĚ wt(7) lĚt°h(7) vl7n7, n7 j wt(7) samā toe bezdn° korabl7 jstr7gnoutj v7zmog7	He has succeeded to rescue this ship not only from evil waves, but from this very abyss.
47.	Vra~7 es(t7) j`e t0lo j d(ou){Ůbez(7) ez° jm° nj edjnog° `e plastjra tr0bouet7 o njh	Physician is the one who is not afraid for the soul and body and who doesn't need any more medical treatments for his soul and body.
48.	Ou-jtel7 pojstjn0 es(t7), j`e oumnoe napisanā ouv0d(0)nā pr7stom7 b(o) `ām	The true teacher is the one who has received from God intelligible writing written by God's finger,
49.	rek{e d0jstvom7 prosv0Šúnā, wt(7) togo) prjem, i pro~jjh(7) knig7 neoskoud7n7 b°v7	that is, through the operation of the illumination given by God, and does not need any other book.
50.	V0m(7) `e j jn°e w(t)ce, ā `(e) pojstjn0 narjcatj pod(o)baet7 jnoke.	We know for other fathers as well, that are worth to be named monks.
51.	jh`e j v7zor7 ka`et7 agla souŠa bo) `ja.	Even their face shows that they are the angels of God,
52.	ih`e gl(agl)j s(ve)šēn' n°e d(ou){am7 sout7 j`e	and their words are a sanctification to the souls,
53.	na g7rah7 āko na n(e)b(e)sh7 sout7, j `jvout7 s aglj ravno, bez(7) pr0stanā b(o)ga slavet7.	Dwelling in the mountains, as if in the heavens, and live equal to the angels, glorifying God unceasingly, together with angels, always celebrating God;

54.	ne pekouŠú se jmOnã s7bjratj nj bl7steŠjmj se rjzamj krasouĚ`e.	Who are not trying to acquire possessions; nor are doming themselves with beautiful cloths,
55.	N7 po vse ~as°, ako v7 g=en0 ogn7n0j vre` iako `e s7 n(e)b(e)s7 gospod)a zret7, na soud7 gredouĭa.	But who, in every moment, as if thrown in the fiery Gehenna, as if they were watching the Lord coming from the heavens to the Judgment.
56.	J sl7z° `e j skr7b° voln°e, kto jspov0st7. Drouzj `e j sk°taĚŠe se, ako `e pavl7 re-(e)	And the waves of tears and sorrows, who can tell? And the others, as Paul said,
57.	V7 g7rah7 j v7 propasteh(7) zeml7n°h(7) lj{aem°, v7s0h(7) sv0ta seg7 bl(a)g°h(7) jm`e n0s(t7) v(7)s7 mjr7 d(o)s(t)ojn7	They wandered in mountains, in dens and caves of the earth, being destitute of all the riches of this world, of whom the world was not worthy. (Heb 11:38)
58.	ov° `e po dv0ma jlj trje pr0b°vaĚt(7) v7 edjn0d(ou){aj	Others then, dwell in two and in three in the oneness of the soul,
59.	po sr0d(7) seb0 h(rjst)a nose`á po pjsannomou a`á slou-jt se komou jh(7) po nŭ dj, v7 grad0 jlj na tr7z0 obr0stj se	having Christ amongst themselves, as it is written (Matt 18:20). If it happens to anyone of them to go to town and public places,
60.	to zakrjv{e ljce j ponjk{e dolou potr0bnaa tvoret7 ne gnou{aĚ`á se mjra <ko eretjcj	they hide their faces and looking on the ground, they do what is necessary; not despising the world as heretics;
61.	N7 wt(7) veljkag smi renã ned(o)s(t)ojn° sam°j sebe tvore`á na ~(e)l(ov0)k° gledatj	But out of great humility thinking of themselves to be unworthy to look upon people;
62.	V7sakoe houlj oudal`{e se, samj se osou`daĚ`á sam° sebe houle`á znamenãem7 ~(e)stnag7 kr(e)sta prosv0`áĚ`á v7nour7n<g7 j v7n0{n<g7 ~(e)l(ov0)ka.	having removed from themselves every blasphemy, judging themselves, cursing themselves, they illuminate by the sign of the precious cross both their inward and the outward man (2Cor 4:16).
63.	aũe slou-jt se poznanom7 b°tj wt(7) kog(o), to ako wgnĚ jizbegaĚt7 slav° ~(e)l(ov0)~7sk°e	and if it happens that someone recognize them, they flee from the people's honor as if from the fire;
64.	v0d(ou)ũe pjsannaa e`e v7 ~(e)l(ov0)ch7 v°soko, mr7zko es(t7) pr0d(7) b(o)gm7 .pro-e, e`e `jit°e jh(7) kto mo`et7 jspov0datj4	knowing the Writ that which is highly esteemed among men is abomination in the sight of God (Lk. 16:15). And as to the rest of their way of life, who can describe it?
	Tebe `e sjce v0`áĚ, j sl°{j	I write you this and you please listen.
65.	j`e oubo wt(7)vr7`enãem7 zeml7n°h7 ve`j, po~7l7 esj sebe o h(rjst) n7 v7s'acĩ m7 pope-(e)nãem7 j pot7ũnjem7	You, who through renouncing of earthly things, have devoted yourself to Christ, but with every diligence and eagerness
66.	S7tvorj ako da v7zmo`e{j obr0stj mou`a, nepr0l7`enna prjgotovl`ma na jno~7skoe`jtje	achieve that you may find a father free from illusion; ready to monastic life;

67.	dobro razoumovaĚ á nastavlatj v7se hot0 á po b(o)z0 `jtel'stvovatj	capable of having a good understanding for educating those who want live according to God,
68.	raste á v7 dobrodot0leh7 wt(7) svojh7 d0l7 sv0d0tel'stvo jmŮ á	who has grown in the virtues, having testimony from his own deeds,
69.	e`e k7 b(og)ou lĚbv0 razoum7 jmuŮa b(o)`(es)tvn°ih7 pjsanġ	Who, through his love towards God has acquired the understanding of the divine Scriptures,
70.	nesrebolĚbjva ne jm0telna bezml7vna b(o)glĚbjva nj`álĚbjva negn0vljva	Without covetousness, without belongings, without worries, God-loving, loving the poor, not irascible,
71.	Nezlopomnjtel< mnoga na s7zjdanĚ prjblj`aĚ ġh(7) se emou	Unmindful of evil toward the many people who turn to him for instruction,
72.	ne t7`slavna ne g7d0ljva nelaskatel<0 ne kol0bjma	Not vainglorious, not proud, not flattering, not fainthearted,
73.	nj-to`e pa-e b(og)a pr0dpo-jtaĚ á j aŮe posp0{enĚm7 b(o)`jem7,	Who does not prefer anything to God. If, with God's help,
74.	pojskav(7) takovag wbr0`Ěj wt(7)daj sebe emou, v7sou volĚ svoĚ wt(7)rjnouv7 wt(7) seb0 7<ko da obr0`Ěj se <ko s7slĚd7 ~jst7	you search and find such a person, then, give yourself to him, having cut all of your will from yourself in order to find yourself a clean vessel.
75.	V7lagaema v7 teb0 bl(a)ga ne vr0'doma s7blĚdae na svoĚ pohvalŮj sla(vo)u	He will preserve those riches installed into you without any harm, unto praise and glory.
76.	Po jstjn0 ~(e)l(ov0)ka, dobrodot0l'mj oubo sv7t0`a se, ~(e)l(ov0)kom`e houda ávlaema, sv0tla oubo`jtjem7 pr0moudra`e razoumom7,	Because, who has found the man who truly shines with his virtues, who shines with his way of life,
77.	sm0rena d(ou)hom7 kto vjd0 pohvala bo pravednikou wt(7) gospod)a	who is wise in his knowledge, who is humble in his spirit, and who seems low to other men?
78.	Sjm7 v7s0m7 dobrodot0lem7 h(rjsto)s(7) es(t7) jstjmn°j b(og)7 nam	With all these virtues, Christ is our true Lord
79.	wbraz7j pravjlo j nastavnjk7, j poda'tel7 j ou~jtel	icon and rule and teacher and giver and father.
80.	wt(7) sjh(7) sv0tl°e objt0lj seb0 s7stavjm7 j jzr0dno nebesnoumou	From these let us make to ourselves radiant dwellings

81.	c(a)rĚ s7tvorjm7 prĚmalj`e i c(a)rsk ^o j boudet(7) pro-ee hram7 na{ m ^o sl7n ^o j	and let us build wonderful indwelling, to the heavenly King, that our intellectual temple may be heavenly temple forever,
82.	Ďko da v7zmo`em7 po w{7stvĕj nam7 wtsoudĚ v0~n ^o e objt0lj postjgnoutj e`ej boudj. Amjn7.	That we may in after life reach heavenly homes, may it be. Amen.

Chapter 5

HOMILY ON PRAYER

5.1. Introduction to the modern era

The mixed compilation of medieval texts from 1440/1441, under the title *Anthology of Gorica*, (*Gorički Zbornik*), written/compiled by Nikon of Jerusalem, belongs to the “post-Hesychast”²⁵ world. If this anthology is considered Hesychastic in its role and nature, then it can be situated in the context of what the Russian historian Prohorov called the “third wave” of the Hesychastic movement.²⁶ This “wave” was the phase of the final crystallization of the social impact, sphere, and role of the Hesychastic and spiritual heritage. At this stage, the fluctuating dynamics and dialectical combativeness of the theological debates settled down into fixed social roles, often even institutions. The same conclusion can also be drawn from the single most comprehensive annotated bibliography of Hesychasm ever produced, that of Sergey Horujy.²⁷ The role of prayer and of various teachings on prayer – so eponymous and crucial for the Hesychasts – in the fifteenth century and in the world of Nikon is still important, which can clearly be seen from the fact that St. Isaac was translated and incorporated in this single most important piece of Serbian writing of the High Middle Ages. Although it may be important to answer the philologico-historical question of whether Isaac had been translated already or whether there were compilations of Isaac’s writings circulating at that time, which most probably was the case, I am not seeking an answer to this question here and now. The question that intrigues me most in this study is the following: What was the need to incorporate these bits and

²⁵ Compare [Prohorov, G. M.] Г. М. Прохоров, *Русь и Византия в эпоху Куликовской битвы* (Russia and Byzantium in the epoch of the Battle of Kulikovo) (Moscow: Byzantine library, 2000.) 45-132.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Sergey Horujy, S. Hesychasm: *An Annotated Bibliography*, Moscow, 2004.

pieces from Saint Isaac's homilies into something that, by this time, had already started to distance itself from the standard medieval textual structures? Being post-Hesychastic in its intent, this kind of literature and this epoch toned down the main Hesychastic tenets, which were fading away gradually, giving way to something new. A kind of Hesychastic atmosphere, if one might call it that, inseparable from the family and the circle in which Princess Jelena was brought up,²⁸ was still present in medieval Serbia, and bit later on in medieval Bosnia, but there were some new tones and tendencies. Do they resemble movements from the West? Looking into the general scope, content, and aim of the *Anthology of Gorica*, shows that much space is devoted to the interest in clear knowledge; this "clear knowledge" had been frowned upon a bit earlier, in the first waves of Hesychasm.²⁹ Quasi-encyclopedic interests are characteristic of the *Anthology*, so it is considered a Serbian late medieval encyclopedia.³⁰ One might deduce from the typikon which Nikon wrote for the skete on Lake Skadar, from the "Homily on Prayer" and from Jelena's epistles that in reality, both Nikon and Jelena were imbued by the hesychastic [word choice. spirit?]. However, neglecting the encyclopedic form and nature of the *Anthology* might mean overlooking the role of other types of literary taste. It seems reasonable to me to suggest the existence of a wider audience for this new type of literature, broader than just two or three important persons. The existence of such a new audience and circle might throw some new light on possible bifurcations of the standard, fixed, literary and spiritual genres of Serbian medieval taste. Thus, the *Anthology* is unique in the way that it fuses together conservative elements of writing and thinking with the new forms and styles. The older and more traditional elements were usually spiritually monastic-centered, whereas these new ones are encyclopedic

²⁸ Serbian court of Duke Lazar, was in Kruševac.

²⁹ Gregory Palamas, in the first triad in his *The Triads in the defense of the Holy Hesychasts*, dealing with the topic of gaining knowledge, writes that the overzealous determination to gather knowledge is "Hellenic heresy".

³⁰ Compare Vladimir Balj, op. cit., 67-92.

and educational, striving for a new type of knowledge. Thus, spiritual fatherhood blends with educational parenthood and a book written in a traditional monastic style becomes an educational tool for propagating certain new trends and currents. This was the threshold of a new era. In the midst of classical monastic and ecclesiastical *topoi*, one also finds in the *Anthology* treatment of purely geographical, biological, topographical, and other subjects. This fusion of two trends, it seems to me, probably reflects the ambiguous political, geographical, and ecclesiological positions of both Nikon and Jelena. At times Jelena was in close contact with Venice. She had lived on the Western-oriented Dalmatian coast; she is even said to have visited Buda as a representative of Serbian Bosnian nobility. In any case, the medieval town fortress Ključ, where Jelena lived with her husband, was situated at the crossroads of different spheres and influences. Nikon, on the other hand, although an Eastern Orthodox monk and ecclesiastical figure of the first rank, must have been exposed to strong doses of the then emerging Renaissance mentality on his travels back and forth from the Holy Land to Serbia, Zeta, and Dalmatia. Zeta, Lake Skadar, and his monastery were not that far away from Italy either. Thus, it is not strange that it is possible to detect certain new tones or currents in the *Anthology*, responding to new expectations of this type of literature, which probably was produced not only for Jelena and the monastic circle around her, but for other people as well. This was most natural. An odd and quite significant thing is that Nikon considered Isaac's monastic teachings on prayer not only as *spiritus movens* for triggering a monastic calling and for educating monks, but for educating lay people, too. Apparently there were aristocratic lay people deeply interested in this type of literature. The new, modern, Renaissance tensions that finally brought about a decline of monasticism wherever they took root firmly, were probably mitigated in the old Serbia and Bosnia by the high political wall built up around Serbia by the Ottoman conquest.³¹ Was not this

³¹ See Ivo Andrić, *Duhovni život Bosne pod turskom okupacijom* (The spiritual life of Bosnia in the period of

inclusion of St. Isaac's "Homily on Prayer," even though quite organic to the natural development of Jelena and her relatives, a forecast and warning of the things to come? Was it not, finally, an attempt to encircle the whole spectrum of "external education," which Gregory Palamas in his *Triads* considers a Hellenic heresy,³² in a framework of safe Orthodox philosophy? If this was the case, then, apart from being a forecast and warning, the inclusion of this homily was a sort of quality control check for the education of one princess, a safeguard against heterodoxy, and a vouchsafing of the true philosophy. Thus, it seems to me that both the *Anthology* and the "Homily on Prayer" inserted in it have a double aim and effect. On the one hand, the general scope and structure of the *Anthology* reflects an emerging new mentality, one that resembled contemporaneous Western movements. The main characteristic of this mentality was the need for knowledge, namely, of a specific kind, not only about salvation and the soul, but about the world, life, the cosmos, and history. One might say – natural knowledge. On the other hand, the inclusion of the homily on prayer, considered the quintessence of Orthodox spiritual teaching,³³ indicates a thirst for spiritual life and a need for continuing the patristic tradition in the Orthodox Church. In its structure, this homily is compilation. There are a few rather apparent questions to ask:

- 1) How organic is this homily in the total scope of the *Anthology*?
- 2) Why make such an insertion?
- 3) What does the fact that it was precisely St. Isaac's teaching that was inserted reveal about the author and the recipient of the *Anthology* and their intellectual milieu?

Ottoman occupation). This is Ivo Andrić's doctoral dissertation. He is generally accepted as a foremost authority on the subject of Bosnia and Hercegovina.

³² See footnote 25.

³³ Compare Sergey Horujy, *Hesychasm: An Annotated Bibliography*, 84-86.

- 4) Which criteria might have led the author(s) to choose precisely these specific excerpts from the teachings of St. Isaac to insert into the *Anthology*?

The last question addresses the most important problem: What was the controlling and organizing principle for the selection of sentences, thoughts, bits and pieces of St. Isaac's teachings? What is controlling and organizing principle of this homily, seen from a contextual, philological, philosophical, and theological perspective? The discussion that follows will try to give partial answers to these questions.

5.2. Thematic analysis

The homily on prayer is an anthology within an anthology. It represents an anthology of various different thoughts from the writings of St. Isaac the Syrian put together and made to look like one homily. The thoughts do not come from one homily. In some cases parts of different sentences are fused together. This means that this anthology of Isaac's thoughts was made deliberately. The question arises: What was the function of this homily and what was the organizational principle behind the compilation of this homily? A thematic analysis is necessary to show that the words that make up the text of the "Homily on Prayer" really came from St. Isaac the Syrian. I think that it can safely be said that the sentences comprising the "Homily on Prayer" belong to Isaac the Syrian. From the very beginning of my research I felt that that this problem of genuineness or otherwise should be considered the governing research question of this thesis, although I felt that this idea was not going to be productive. From the moment when the citations from Isaac were de-constructed and the way the homily was composed was established, showing that this indeed a compilation from St. Isaac's text in its Greek translation, my research could be redirected to more contextual problems, some of which I noted above. The thematic analysis of this homily is an effort to reconstruct the total plan of Nikon's teaching on

prayer from the small pieces that he has assembled from Isaac in this homily. The homily begins with a legitimization of the authority of teaching through saintliness. It is sort of promise of the reenactment of St. Isaac's teaching on prayer: "I will relate to you St. Isaac's teaching on prayer. The Saint says the following: ..." (line 1 – 2, my translation). The first sentence is the only sentence that comes from Nikon himself. Apart from the end of the homily, which is taken, strangely enough, from St. John of Climacus, all the other sentences are excerpts from Isaac. Nikon calls St. Isaac simply *the Saint Svet'oj*, thus showing the recipient, Jelena, a clear closeness to the saint himself, typical for the genre and style of the period. Someone called "*the Saint*" is someone who, by the simple fact of being a saint, is entitled to be quoted from and to give authority to someone else, so that Princess Jelena should receive these words with a clear conscience and straightforward obedience. The call for obedience and the pedagogical purpose of the homily (and the whole *Anthology*) stem from the hagiological note, which is stressed from the onset. This pedagogical and instructional purpose, like the pastoral dimension of the homily, was always to be kept in mind.³⁴

5.3. *Anagogical drive*

The function of both the prayer and the homily about prayer is clearly indicated at the very beginning of the text: "Behold that the ladder of that Kingdom is within you hidden in your soul" (l. 1-2). This sentence, which is the hallmark of the authorship of St. Isaac, reveals the purpose of the homily. The direction of the soul and the instruction of the homily are anagogical, pointing first downwards into the soul and then upwards, from the soul. Jacob's ladder invoked at the beginning of the text of the homily, just as prayer giving wings to the soul, inspired by

³⁴ Compare Jovan Ćulibrk, op. cit. 8-12, 12-19.

Plato's *Phaedrus* (249-2252), is a standard patristic *topos*.³⁵ Everything that follows later in the homily illustrates this double movement of the soul: first inwards, then onwards, or upwards. This sentence, which stands even before the author's statement of the purpose ("I will relate to you St. Isaac's teaching on prayer"), is the organizing principle of the selection of various different sentences or parts of sentences from Isaac's numerous homilies. This sentence is a defining principle according to which certain thoughts are chosen for this anthology. He[who? Nikon?] is clearly within the genre. The whole *Homily*, thus, is not only about prayer, which becomes important later on, but about reaching the Kingdom of Heaven. Prayer is a means for this.

5.3. Spiritual interiorization

The first organizing and intellectual principle of the text of the homily is the spiritual immanentism of St. Isaac's spirituality. Saint Isaac is considered by some authors as quite an optimistic Father, who is benevolent and "man-friendly," or "brotherly-friendly."³⁶ For some reason, however, Nikon seems to have decided not to include these famous sentences from Isaac which became the hallmark of his style, such as the famous thought about love.³⁷ Syriac spirituality at times was braver than Byzantine or Latin spirituality in describing the interior dynamics of spiritual life. The homily on prayer revolves around an axiom without which much of it would not make sense: the Kingdom of Heaven is within us (ἐνδοθέν σου ἐστί) in the most substantial way. It is within us, but it is hidden in the soul (κεκρυμμένη ἐν τῇ ψυχῇ σου). The whole spiritual activity of a person consists of unearthing this hidden treasure. This principle

³⁵ So for example in St. John Climacus. See [Lestvičnik, Jovan Sv] *Lestvica* (The Ladder). (Manastir Hilandar: 2000.) 188-185. In this passage, St. John the Climacus calls prayer similar to St. Isaac, *the mother of all virtues*.

³⁶ Vidoslov, Alfeev, Ava Justin, Vidoslov (No. 94), 23.

³⁷ [Isaak Sirin, Sv] Св.Исаак Сирин, *Слова подвижнические* (Ascetic homilies) (Moscow: Sretenski monastyr, 2002.) 194.

later acquired great prominence in Hesychastic spirituality.³⁸ In Philotheus, in the *Philokalia*, the whole of spiritual life is described as an unearthing of the “hidden treasure” (line 1 in homily), of the Holy Ghost, of course.³⁹ The grace received at baptism was blurred and lost in the sinfulness of life, but through ascetic discipline and the Church’s sacraments, one can regain this grace in order to enter the Heavenly Kingdom.⁴⁰ In the Hesychastic literature this aim is achieved primarily through the so-called intellectual or “Jesus prayer.” Saint Isaac, even though he is used and quoted by such an authority as Gregory Palamas,⁴¹ dates to the period when there was no clear distinction between a pure, Hesychastic life devoted primarily to prayer, and the rest of the spiritual ascetic struggle. Sergey Horujy and the group of authors gathering the monumental bibliography of Hesychasm from 2004, divide the historical line of the development of the Hesychasm into following periods: 1) Early period of the tradition, “Hesychas before Hesychasm;” 2) Early Syriac Hesychasm; 3) Late Byzantine Hesychasm and the teaching of Gregory Palamas; 4) Hesychasm in Greece from 1453 to the present day; 5) Athonite Hesychasm; 6) Hesychasm in Russia; 7) the Name-Praising Movement; 8) Bulgarian Hesychasm; 9) Hesychasm in Serbia; 10) Hesychasm in Romania; 11) Hesychasm in Georgia.⁴² This division is very telling. It uses not only chronological but also territorial criteria. The most illuminating thing is the fact that Hesychasm existed for quite a while longer than is usually thought. It might be concluded that of all earlier Church Fathers, Saint Isaac belongs to the more Hesychastic-oriented, contemplative, tradition, at least in his Greek version.

³⁸ [Dobrotoljubie] Добротолюбие (Philokalia) (Moscow: Sretenski monastir, 2001) 334-347.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Ibid. especially teaching of St. Theoliptus of Philadelphia is characterized by this element. It seems that this Church Fathers had a great influence on St. Gregory Palamas.

⁴¹ Among others frequently quoted in Triads of St. Gregory are St. Maximus, St. Macarius, Pseudo Dyonisius the Aeropagite.

⁴² See Sergey Horujy, op. cit. 5-13.

5.4. Acquisition

The other important organizing principle of the hermeneutics of the text is the spirit of acquisition. The governing axiom behind this principle is taken from the Gospel of Matthew: “And from the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force” (Matthew 11:12). This *holy violence*, or boldness towards God, applies everywhere. (Pure) prayer is achieved too (l. 2). One goes after it. A priest acquires concentration of thoughts in offering the Eucharist: “For whenever the priest will have prepared himself ... and recollects his mind” (l. 6-7). The acquisition of spiritual gifts, as they are called in the New Testament and many patristic sources, should be gradual (line 10.) The ascension of the soul upwards should also follow this moderate and gradual course. The soundness and healthiness of perception, of the senses, and of the reason, should also be acquired. Hope in God is obtained through specific disciplines. The wage (line 36-37) is acquired, just like that precious instrument of salvation, tears (line 34). While repentance is also a necessary gift (line 15-17), it is not enough unless the person also learns epistemological purity (line 35). Last, but most importantly, a spiritual father has to be acquired first, “with all diligence” (line 43-49). The acquisition of a spiritual father governs everything else. It seems to me that Nikon has interpolated into his anthology this last part from St. John the Climacus (lines 63-82) as the last governing checkpoint: everything else leads to it. Not only that the acquisition of a spiritual father is essential, but Nikon even lists in detail the qualities of a spiritual father. Just as Nikon started by building up the obedience and confidence of his spiritual daughter, Jelena, through the saintly authority of Isaac, now he finishes in the same tone: everything leads to the pastoral element, even prayer, gifts and the sacraments.

5.5. Confessionalism

Humility (ἡ ταπείνωσις, smjrenã) is not only a cardinal virtue, but the whole structure of faith stands upon it. Humility is first to be acquired and only then can man *dare to look to the sunshine*. (1.9-10). First come *confessions of the heart*, (jspovedanã srd(e)-no) and humility smjrenã. From the next part of this sentence, which has not been added in the *Anthology*, it becomes clear what Saint Isaac had in mind. The original sentence, which has been put in the homily, is: “And if the pupil of your soul’s eye is not pure, do not dare to look to the sunshine.”⁴³ The other part of the sentence, which has been left out, throws light on the editorial method of Nikon’s manuscript: “that you may not lose even this small light, which is *simple faith, humility and confessions of the heart and those small deeds that suits your strength*....”⁴⁴ It goes even further in the original: “and that you may not be expelled into the one place of the spiritual creatures. Which is the outer darkness, and out (without) God, the picture of hell, as one who did have courage to come to the marriage in the unclean clothes.” In Nikon’s document, however, this latter part of the sentence does not appear, so one is left in a way with a taste of an almost moralistic precept of what one should do in life. What is even more important is the fact that this enumeration of the “small lights,” in Nikon’s manuscript goes in a different order and has a different meaning. Nikon *interprets* Isaac, by saying: “but rather acquire humility and the confession from the heart” (N7 prjte`ij smjrenã j jspovedanã srd(e)-no.) This clearly shows how free Nikon feels himself with Isaac, on the basis either of some previous translation or of the fact that he used original and translated it himself. In either case, the second part of the sentence does not appear in the Greek original. How important faith is illustrated by a completely different place

⁴³ Ἐὰν δὲ μὴ ἡ κόρη τοῦ ὀφθαλμοῦ τῆς ψυχῆς σου καθαρὰ ᾖ, μὴ τολμήσης, ἀτενίσαι εἰς τὴν σφαῖραν τοῦ ἡλίου

⁴⁴ ἵνα μὴ στερεῇς καὶ αὐτῆς τῆς μικρᾶς αὐγῆς, ἥτις ἐστὶν ἡ ἀπλή πίστις, καὶ ἡ ταπείνωσις, καὶ ἡ ἐξομολόγησις ἡ καρδιακή, καὶ τὰ μικρὰ ἔργα τὰ κατὰ τὴν δύναμιν σου (...)

in the Greek Isaac, which has not been introduced into Nikon's "Homily." In the fifth homily of Isaac in the Russian translation, in the form of question and answer, there is a question of why the Lord almost always encourages us to fight the temptations, but the last line of the Lord's Prayer, nevertheless, says "and leads us not into temptation." The answer goes as follows: "It is said: pray, in order not to fall into the temptation concerning faith."⁴⁵ Even though Nikon changed the word order and omitted second part of the sentence, it can still be said that in writing this compilation he was concerned with dogmatic issues as well. He must have known the ending of the sentence, that in Greek original it deals with the confessional element. It should not be forgotten that one part of the *Anthology* deals with the exposition of true faith as well.

5.6. Epistemological purity and the types of knowledge

Epistemological purity has its negative and positive aspects. The negative aspect of intellectual purity is the absence of thoughts. This cleaning of the intellectual (*noetos*) realm through purity occurs frequently. "When you want to pray truly, obtain the pure prayer as much as it is possible for you." (Tako gl(agl)et(7) s(ve)t^oj, egla hoſe(j pom(o)l)tjse m(o)l)tvoĖ, ~jstou m(o)l(j)tvou prjte`j eljka tj es(t7) sjla.). The purity the author is speaking about is both qualitative and quantitative. In the qualitative, moral sense it is this concentration of the attention with which priest brings the wine and bread to the altar in the Holy Eucharist. "For, whenever the priest will have prepared himself, and stands in prayer, in divine benevolence, and starts to pray, and recollects his mind than the Holy Ghost descends upon the bread and wine placed unto the altar." (Se bo vjdjm7, ako v7negla s(v0)uĕnjk7 ougtovjtse, j na m(o)l(j)tv0 stanet ou bl(a)gsr7d0 b(o)`(es)tvnoe j molese j s7birae oum7 togla nadhodjt7 d(ĭ)h7 s(ve)t^oj na hl0b7 j vjno v7zlo`enoē na `r7(t)v(e)njk7). The first reality that needs purity is the prayer: "When you want to pray truly, obtain the pure prayer." There is,

⁴⁵ St. Isaac the Syrian, *Ascetical Homilies*, (Russian ed.), Moscow: Sretenski monastyr, 2004, 36.

however, one characteristic of this purity: it is not physical or quantitative. It is qualitative and epistemological. The famous Serbian theologian, Justin Popović wrote a whole doctoral dissertation about the gnoseology of St. Isaac the Syrian.⁴⁶ Saint Isaac is a very epistemological Church Father. Several of his homilies deal with what he calls three types of knowledge.⁴⁷ The very presence of thoughts, of *any* thoughts, in the mind of the person who is praying, and especially of the priest while he is offering the Holy Eucharist, is a sign of something impure. These thoughts do not have to be “sinful.” The intellect (um) should be without thoughts. “For, when you begin to pray and there comes some foreign thought, or desire for anything, then, this prayer is called impure.” (pone` (e) egla na-n0{j m(o)ljtj se, j prjdet(7) m°sl7 n0kaia tÛ da, jlj pohot0nã v7-esom7, togla ne-jsta gl(agl)etse ona m(o)l(j)tva). There is a clear connection even between the sanctification of the wine and bread and the mental (intellectual) condition of the priest. “For, whenever the priest will have prepared himself, and stands in prayer, in divine benevolence, and starts to pray, and recollects his mind than the Holy Ghost descends upon the bread and wine placed unto the altar.” “Se bo vjdjm7, Đko v7negla s(v0)ũn’njk7 ougtovjtse, j na m(o)l(j)tv0 stanet ou bl(a)gsr7d0e b(o)` (es)tvnoe j molese j s7bjrae oum7 togla nadhodjt7 d(×)h7 s(ve)t°j na hl0b7 j vjno v7zlo`en’noe na `r7(t)v(e)njk7.” This concentration of the mind goes even deeper. Similar to the Egyptian monastic patristic tradition, represented by St. Macarius of Egypt,⁴⁸ and later on reflected in the Hesychasm of Gregory Palamas, concentration of the mind, no matter how epistemological or intellectual it may be, is essentially a reflection of something even deeper: the heart. Nikon/Isaac says: “But this (recollection-concentration of the mind, shjranã uma), only if the place is pure, and not dirty. And if the pupil of your soul’s eye is not pure, do not dare to look to the sunshine.”

⁴⁶ [Popović, Justin] Јусти Поповић, *Гносеологија Св. Исаака Сирина*, (The gnoseology of Saint Isaac the Syrian) in *Подвижничка слова* (Ascetical homilies) (Belgrade:Obraz svetački, 2006.) p. 471-506.

⁴⁷ In the mentioned Russian edition, 122-128.

⁴⁸ [Makarije Veliki, St.] Макарии Велики, *Духовные беседи*, (Spiritual homilies) (Moscow: Sretenski monastyr, 2002.) 85.

Following the famous place from the Gospel about the distraction of the mind, Isaac says that the incessant flow of thoughts in the intellect, so frequently considered a sign of the richness of intellectual life, is a clear reflection of sinfulness: “Because, if the body is found to be in sin, the thoughts of the soul **do not cease flowing** in the intellect.” (a`ú t0lo v7 gr0s0h7 obr0útse razm°{lenã d(ou){j ne pr0staÈt7 tekou`ú v7 m°slj). There is the chain of impurity, metaphorically speaking. This incessant flow leads to forgetfulness. “A confused intellect cannot escape forgetfulness and wants its own wisdom and either justifies itself or falls into sin.” (Ûm7 s7mou`ún7 ne mo`e(t7) oub0groutj zabvenã j pr0moudrīs(t7) svoÈ houē(t7), jlj opravdaet se, jlj s7gr0{aet7.). A positive aspect of this purity is the mystical accumulation of something resembling beatific vision. Just as the health of the intellect gives an opportunity that the “doors of the Kingdom” might open to him (line 13), so the “complication of the passions” (line 15) “s7pleteñã str(a)stěj” is almost a synonym for the entanglement of thoughts resembling the first and fragile flight of a nestling: nobody knows where will it end (Line 15). The ultimate gift of repentance resembles beatific vision; it is epistemological in structure: “because it has not yet seen the (virtue) of vision” “jt'dobrod0t0lh vjd0nã ne ouvd0.” There is a semantic difference between sense, feeling, and knowledge, much better preserved in the Slavonic -Ěvstv0. But on the higher level of spiritual life, they become one: “and the still not yet acquired perceptions, which are the wings for the intellect” “nj`e -Ěvstva sp(o)dobj se, È`e sout krjlo ouml̃” Reason holds a prominent, almost rationalistic, place in the hierarchy of human faculties. Reason should be above desires (line 21).

5.7. Sacramentalism

Nikon, as a possible Byzantine Greek,⁴⁹ lived in the period that came after the Eucharistic impetus achieved by Nicolas Cabasila and his circle. This sacramentalistic influence was probably there; I think this can be seen from the way Nikon guides Jelena spiritually. It should not be forgotten that the *Anthology of Gorica* was a sort of theological and intellectual new credo made for the high-ranking members of the Serbian and Bosnian nobility interested in spiritual matters. This means that, as has already been pointed, the *Anthology* was a spiritual guidebook. Thus, purity, or absence of thoughts, which is achieved through intellectual vigilance, in Nikon's rendering of Isaac, is immediately connected with the priest, Holy Eucharist, and altar (lines 6-8). Where does this lead? The answer is given in the following lines: "Faith serves as a mediator between God and the Saints, through the unspeakable mysteries." (V0ra slou`jt7 psr0d0 b(og)a j s(ve)tjh(7), tañj nejzre-en'n0j). These "unspeakable mysteries" are probably the Holy Sacraments. The whole effort of the ascetic discipline, which is often in jeopardy of serving its own purpose, is thus contextualized and recapitalized with its own purpose – the Holy Eucharist. As has already been pointed out, this might be connected with the Hesychastic revival of the practice of frequently partaking in the Holy Eucharist. Even though something which might be called a "monastic element" prevails in the text of the homily – Jelena being more than interested in the monastic spirituality – this is a clear indication that, as is said by modern interpreters, "asceticism does not save the soul." Thus, charity, a subject of frequent questions of Jelena in her last years,⁵⁰ is linked to monasticism, monasticism to the "ardent activity of the intellect" (line 22), which is, strangely enough, in the heart (line 22), and this whole activity – to sacramentalism.

⁴⁹ Vladimir Balj, op. cit., 12-18.

⁵⁰ Ibid. 18-24.

5.8. Eshatological spirit

Nikon of Jerusalem and Jelena lived in an exceptionally difficult time in medieval Serbia. It was essentially the Serbian “waning of the Middle Ages,” soon irrevocably changed by the Ottoman invasion. Moreover, as Bogdanović writes, there was more to it than that. In fifteenth-century Serbian literature there were clear signs of eschatological drama.⁵¹ There was the millennial expectation of the end of the world in the 7000th year from the creation of the world, which was to fall in 1491. In many respects, this prophecy proved to be true, at least as far as Serbia was concerned. This “interpretation of the history by the force of the factors that are outside of the history,”⁵² so resembling, for example, the whole eschatological spirit of Russian Tsar Ivan the Terrible one hundred years later, was expressed in a few concise sentences in the *Anthology*.

For five thousand years, or a little less, or more than this, the representations of the mind governed this world, and people were not capable to of raising their head from the earth, nor of perceiving the power of their Creator, until the faith shone upon us and released us from the work of the earthly activity and from the enslavement to vanity, with a majesty that had not existed here before.

(pet(7) t°souĩ, l0(t7), jlĵ malo m7n7e, jlĵ pa~e seg, wbraz° razouma mjr7
okr7mlâhou j wt(7)noud7 glavou svoË ~(e)l(ov0)k7 wt(7) zeml= j o`Ûtjtjúkr0post(7)
zj`djtelâ svoegp ne v7zmo`e. donde` (e) v7sâ nam7 v7sâã v0ra j svobodj nas(7) wt(7)
trÛda zeml7nag d0lanã j wt(7) pokorenã souetnag s7 v°sostjË tou n7b°vaËSËË).

There are, however, obvious differences between Nikon’s intentions in quoting Isaac and some other similar pieces, e.g., that ascribed to Ps. Leo the Wise,⁵³ that inspired the whole literary period, according to Bogdanović. First, a whole section of Nikon’s codex deals with eschatological matters proper. Second, this eschatological drive is Christocentric, it is Incarnation driven: “until faith shone upon us and released us from the work of the earthly

⁵¹ Dimitrije Bogdanović, 213.

⁵² Ibid. 235.

⁵³ Ibid. 213.

activity and from the enslavement to vanity, with a majesty that had not existed here before.”

This part touched the optimism of those who believed in the end of the history through the Incarnation. In a short prelude, Nikon-Isaac gives, for the purpose of Jelena’s education, a theological explanation of what basically amounts to the capital concept of original sin: “For five thousand years, or a little less, or more than this, the representations of the mind governed this world.” This sentence is connected, as I already said, with the prominent position which theological epistemology has in Isaac’s thought, since Nikon-Isaac writes in another place: “Reason always searches for representations which could propel him towards the vigilance.”

(Razoum7 pr(j)sno wbraz^o jŠt(7), ko stra`j ste`avaĖŠjm7 eg).

Chapter 6

CONCLUSION

It is certainly not unusual that one medieval writer would incorporate other authors' works, pieces of work, style, references, words, thoughts, conclusions, and so on. Certain medieval authors had special importance. They were quoted and used in a society that was saturated by the Christian Church and Christian beliefs, as were almost all medieval European societies. These persons are called Church Fathers. Their works represent a common heritage which was at the disposal of anyone who might want to use it for any purpose. The same was true of Nikon of Jerusalem and Isaac the Syrian. I have tried to illustrate in this thesis what might have been the possible principles that guided Nikon's hand in choosing, translating, and paraphrasing, and quoting pieces of the work of St. Isaac. The dynamics of the usage of this Church Father was complicated by a third person, Princess Jelena. Even though outstandingly interested in spiritual issues and literature, she was an exceptional layperson and a ruler of a medieval state. As such, she had to wage wars and collect taxes, something quite far from the typical Hesychast horizon. Nevertheless, her soul was split between complications of worldly passions and other realities. She was not a foreigner to the Hesychastic and monastic world. Her spiritual father, Elder Nikon, offered her a multi-faceted mixed anthology to satisfy her appetite for secular learning. Nikon answered her questions about the state of the deceased. But what about the main and most difficult dilemma: What type of life is better, monastic or worldly? The figure of Jelena's father, Duke Lazar of Kosovo, is already saturated with the dilemma, "to which kingdom to bow your head, to the earthly or to the heavenly?" (*Kojem li se prikloniti carstvu, zemaljskom il' nebeskom*). And, just as St. Lazar gives an answer in the epic poem: "The earthly kingdom is but for a short time and the heavenly everlasting and for eternity" (*zemaljsko*

je za malena carstvo, nebesko vavijek i dovijeka), where poet clearly imitates the Eucharistic genre and style, so Lazar's daughter, Jelena, finally chose the heavenly reality, giving up diplomacy and secular living. Of the two existing manuscripts, The *Hexaemeron* (*Šestodnev*) and the *Anthology of Gorica* (*Gorički Zbornik*), the first is monastically oriented. The second, however, was intended exactly for Jelena. Even though, as I pointed out above, rich in secular and even scientific materials, this manuscript pivots on spirituality as well. My hypothesis was that the *Homily on Prayer* is this centre and focus of the whole spiritual effort to guide Princess Jelena. Thus, she became, as I also mentioned, the out-stretched hand of the "Kosovo legend" of her martyred father and also of the Hesychastic court of her brother, Despot Stefan. Further, through her second husband, Sandalj, she became a vehicle of spiritual and secular legitimization through the cult of the Nemanjić family of the Bosnian medieval court. Finally, and most important, the internal dynamics of the text of the *Anthology of Gorica*, through close reading and comparison, comes to shine a different light. This manuscript stands at the crossroads of epochs, between medieval and modern times. In a way, it gave rise to a modern mentality, not only because of its more "scientific" content. The homily on prayer, thus, comes into the forefront even more. It is by no means accidental where it is. My suggestion is that this teaching on prayer stood as an anchor in an emerging new framework of scientific, epistemological influences. As always, teaching on prayer was in the middle of the field of knowledge of the Greek Orthodox Church.

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