

1870-2018. Russia and the Balkans. The Case of the Unbuilt Orthodox Church in Cetinje, Montenegro

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The process of the creation of the national states in the Balkans in the 19th century was followed by the political reforms and revitalization of church life, that had been suppressed in the Ottoman period. During the 19th century, Serbs, Greeks and Bulgarians, in different periods, have staged uprisings, waged independence wars, gained autonomy, then sovereignty, and were internationally recognized. During their liberation fight, these countries have been supported by the great European powers, above all by Russia, whose assistance was particularly directed towards Bulgaria, the Principality of Serbia and the Principality of Montenegro, aiming to emancipate the Balkan Christians. Following the 1876 – 1878 wars, the 1878 San Stefano Treaty and the Berlin Treaty, the Balkan countries were recognized as fully sovereign states.

The contacts between the region's Orthodox communities, including Montenegrins, and Russia were already long established by the 19th century, having begun in the Middle Ages. During the centuries of Ottoman occupation, these contacts were limited to the aid sent by the Russian emperor, following these churches envoys' plea for help.

At the beginning of the 18th century, at the time of the theocratic ruler Bishop Danilo (the founder of the Petrović-Njegoš¹ dynasty), Montenegro established tighter relations with the Russian Empire. The Montenegrin theocratic state of that time was not recognized by most of the world's states, which meant, that it was treated as part of the Ottoman Empire. Nevertheless, in 1711, the Russian Emperor Peter the Great invited the Montenegrins to participate in the war against the Ottoman Empire.² This marked the beginning of what historiography calls the Cult of Russia in Montenegro.³ This cultural phenomenon was also strong in other Serb areas of the Balkans and spread among the Serbs in the Habsburg Empire. The main element of the expansion of the Russian influence, and thus the creation of the Cult of Russia, was the Patriarchate of Peć, or the Serbian Orthodox Church, with its dioceses spreading from Dalmatia and Montenegro to Buda and Timișoara, from today's northwestern Croatia, to the south in Kosovo and Metohija. The cooperation of Serbian orthodox bishops, monks and priests with the Russian state and church was conducive until the beginning of the 19th century and the beginning of the major uprisings against the Turkish authorities in the Balkans.

Relations in the ecclesiastical and later national state sphere were accompanied by the emergence of intense Russian influences in the visual culture. These influences partially had elements of propaganda, because the Russian Empire aimed to expand its sphere of influence among

1 Russian names in the text are written in their English transliteration. Montenegrin / Serbian names are written in the Serbian version of the Latin alphabet.

2 Montenegrins took active participation in this war and started attacks against some Ottoman castles next to them. This triggered a strong Turkish reaction, counterattack and temporary occupation of the Montenegrin capital of Cetinje. See: Živko M. Andrijašević, "Crna Gora od najstarijih vremena do Balkanskih ratova" [Montenegro from the Earliest Period to the Balkan Wars] in *Istorija Crne Gore od najstarijih vremena do 2003* [History of Montenegro from the earliest period to 2003] (Podgorica: Centar za iseljenike, 2006), 113.

3 Živko M. Andrijašević, "Stvaranje kulta Rusije u Crnoj Gori u XVIII vijeku" ["Creation of the cult of Russia in Montenegro in the 18th century"], *Slovenski glasnik* 1 (1996), 34.

the Slovene Christians in the Balkans. Reverse influences from the Balkans to Russia were considerably fewer, which was understandable, given the situation in the unstable and small Balkan territories, which gradually succeeded in freeing themselves and creating some forms of national states.

The smallest Balkan principality, Montenegro, even before its formal recognition at the Berlin Congress of 1878, had very diverse contacts with the Russian Empire. These relations reached their zenith during the reign of the Montenegrin prince - and later king - Nikola Petrović. During his long reign, this last ruler of the Petrović Njegoš dynasty was the contemporary of the last three Russian tsars, Alexander II, Alexander III and Nicholas II. His special relationship and status with the Russian Empire and the Romanov dynasty is reflected by the fact that he was appointed Field Marshal of the Russian army.⁴ Moreover, he had strong family ties with the Romanov dynasty, his two daughters being married to members of this family, and his son-in-law was Russian Grand Duke Peter Nikolaevich Romanov.

Contacts of Montenegrin rulers and the ties to the Russian monarchy also influenced the new state's visual culture in the 19th century. Since 1870, Montenegro state has constantly turned to Russian assistance, whose influences became noticeable. One of the largest Orthodox churches in Montenegro, the cathedral of Saint Vasilije Ostroški in Nikšić, was erected with extensive Russian support. It had a memorial character as it was erected to commemorate the Montenegrin heroes who died in the war against Turkey in the 1876-1878 war. Russian aid was both financial and in the project design. One of the most famous Russian architects, Mihail Timofeevich Preobrazenski, was engaged in the Nikšić project. He was known, among other things, for designing numerous such buildings for the Russian Orthodox Church in the Diaspora. During his stay in Montenegro, Preobrazhenski made a design in which he tried to reconcile local architectural traditions with contemporary architectural ideas on Russian church construction.

Prince Nikola personally influenced the final project and insisted on displaying the church bell in the usual local architectural form, which was ultimately accepted. At the same time, during the consecration of this project, the country celebrated the forty years of the prince's rule, so besides its original commemorative character, the project's connotations integrated the celebration of the royal anniversary. However, in the collective consciousness, this sanctuary is often remembered as the "Russian Church." The Russian assistance in the field of church architecture and arts was even more visible in its interior design through the many Russian icons, iconostases and other religious objects made in Russia.

In Cetinje, the Montenegrin capital, at the beginning of the 19th century there were only two churches. The first and the older was the so-called the Vlach church (Vlaška crkva), dedicated to the Nativity of the Theotokos (the Nativity of Mary), most probably erected around 1450.⁵ A bit further away was the Cetinje Monastery with its church equally dedicated to the same orthodox holiday, the Nativity of the Theotokos. Considering the urban expansion of the city in the second half of the 19th century, there was a significant need for a larger and wider church which could accommodate more believers, especially during periods of governmental ceremonies and celebrations. The first known plans to erect a larger temple date back to 1869 – 1870 when the famous Serbian architect and professor Dragutin Milutinović (who had studied in Berlin and Karlsruhe) published his draft design for the Cetinje Cathedral.⁶ (Fig. 1)

4 Dušan Vuksan, "Ruski car Nikola II imenuje kralja Nikolu za feldmaršala" ["Russian Emperor Nikolay II Promotes King Nikola to Feldmarshal"], *Zapisi* 22 (1939), 294.

5 Ljubomir Kapisoda, *Vlaška crkva [The Vlach Church]* (Cetinje: IP Obod, 1990), 9-14.

6 Svetislav Popović, "Nerealizovani projekti Sabornog hrama na Cetinju iz 1910. i 1934. godine" ["Unconstructed Projects of Orthodox Cathedral Church in Cetinje Dated from 1910 and 1934"], in *Cetinje Monastery of Nativity of the Theotokos*, ed. Predrag Vukic et al. (Cetinje: Svetigora, 2014), 44-46.

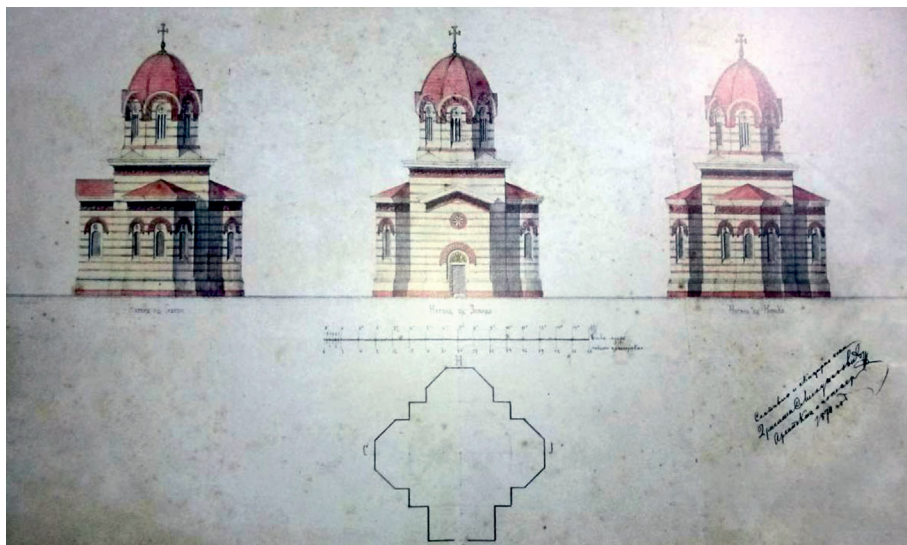


Fig. 1: Milutinović – project for Cetinje Cathedral, 1870

Milutinović visited Cetinje and Montenegro in 1869, according to the decision of the Serbian government⁷ to make himself available to Prince Nikola Petrović for the extensive construction projects he planned. Milutinović was indirectly linked to the Montenegrin capital by the fact that his father, Serbian poet Sima Milutinović Sarajlija was the secretary of the Montenegrin ruler and bishop Petar I Petrović and the educator of his successor, the bishop, ruler and poet Petar II Petrović Njegoš.⁸

For the Montenegrin Prince Nikola, Milutinović drafted a plan for the construction of the town of Danilovgrad.⁹ In his sketches for Cetinje Cathedral dating from 1870, Dragutin Milutinović used the patterns of Serbian medieval architecture which he saw in the Royal Church in the Studenica Monastery. His design had the central bases, developed in the form of the Greek cross, with the dome above the curb. A similar plan was later sketched by Milutinović for the church in Jagodina, Serbia.¹⁰ Although his idea was not further developed, nor was it built, based on the preserved plan and sketch, the author's architectural definition was clear, leaning towards the historicist forms of the so-called Hanzenatic style,¹¹ which in that period just started gaining supporters among Serbian architects.¹²

7 Jovan B. Markus, *Cetinjski manastir Rođenja Presvete Bogorodice* [Cetinje Monastery of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary] (Cetinje: Cetinje Monastery, 2013), 22-24.

8 Milan Dj. Milicevic, *Dodatak pomeniku od 1888, Znameniti ljudi u srpskoga naroda koji su preminuli do kraja 1900. g.* [Addition to the Commemorate Book of the Year 1888, Famous Serbians who Died by the End of 1900] (Belgrade: Cupiceva zaduzbina, 1901), 91-92.

9 Jovan J. Sundecic, "Znatniji događaji u Crnoj-gori tečajem 1869. godine" ["Significant Events in Montenegro in 1869"], *Orlic, crnogorski godisnjak, stari i novi, za prostu godinu 1870*, VI (1871).

10 Sketch was published in a book: Tanja Damljanović et al., *Valtrović i Milutinović, tumačenja* [Valtrovic and Milutinovic, Interpretations] (Belgrade: Historical Museum of Serbia, 2008), 113.

11 "Hanzenatika," in Nenad Makuljević, *Crkvena umetnost u Kraljevini Srbiji 1882-1914* [Church Art in the Kingdom of Serbia 1882-1914] (Belgrade: Faculty of Philosophy, 2007), 224-232; "Teofil Hanzen i neobizantijska arhitektura u Evropi" ["Theophil von Hansen and Neo-Byzantine Architecture in Europe"], in Aleksandar Kadjićević, *Jedan vek traženja nacionalnog stila u srpskoj arhitekturi – sredina XIX – sredina XX veka* [The One Century of Searching for a National Style in Serbian Architecture, the Middle of 19th Century – the Middle of the 20th Century] (Belgrade: GK, 1997), 35-37.

12 "Hanzenovi srpski učenici: Svetozar Ivacković" ["Theophil von Hansen's Serbian Students: Svetozar Ivackovic"], in Aleksandar Kadjićević, *The One Century*, 38-51.

One of the six sketches made by professor Milutinović for the cathedral in Cetinje was sent to Petrograd.¹³

It is not known why the construction of the Cathedral in Cetinje did not begin at that time. The reasons were most likely to be found in the financial difficulties of the Principality. In 1886 – 1890 the Cetinje palace church was erected on Ćipur, while the plan for the construction of the Cathedral persisted. At the end of the century, the Russian Empire decided to build the legation for its mission in Montenegro. Probably due to the special connections between the Montenegrin prince and the Tsarist Empire, Russia was allowed to choose the area of Cetinje for the location of its mission and was endowed with a large property for its construction. In comparison to that, the Italians, although Montenegrin allies, whose dynasty like the Romanovs was closely related to the Montenegrin Petrović dynasty, had to pay for their deed. The foundation stone for the Russian mission was laid in 1900, and the building was almost completed by September 1903. Newspapers of the period announced that the Russian church would follow shortly and that it would be situated near the legation.¹⁴ The St. Petersburg professor of Architecture Pomerantsev arrived in Cetinje on September 6, 1903 and drafted a plan for the Russian church to be built.

The idea of placing the church under the patronage of the Russian mission in Cetinje was partly the consequence of the Russian fear of the influence of the Roman Church. The Catholic influences in Montenegro came from Italy and, indirectly, from Vienna. For many years, the country has been the most loyal Russian ally in the Balkans, so the Russian government wanted to prevent all other influences. The Montenegrin-Italian ties especially developed after the 1896 engagement of one of Prince Nikola's daughters, Jelena, with the Italian prince and later king Vittorio Emanuele III. In 1901, Prince Nikola granted permission for the building of a Catholic church in Cetinje, a decision that was considered untenable both by Russian diplomats and the local Montenegrin Petrović clergy, given that Catholics were almost nonexistent in the city. According to Russian diplomatic archives, Montenegrin Orthodox Metropolitan Bishop Mitrofan Ban and Russian diplomat Scheglov have indeed discussed the topic of Catholic proselytism in May 1903.¹⁵ For the local Orthodox clergy and citizens, fear of foreign interference in the internal affairs of Montenegro existed since the Berlin Congress of 1878, when the country obtained its independence. The government was afraid of the Austro-Hungarian influence on the Catholic inhabitants of Montenegro and it impeded it with a Concordat with the Vatican which was enacted in 1886. This state agreement was considered a kind of treaty between Russia and the Vatican, as the Montenegrin government had almost always consulted with the Russian authorities in the decision-making process.

However, the Orthodox population and clergy feared the Catholic missionary movement in Montenegro, and a strong support to Russian endeavors was seen as a guarantee of faith preservation in the Orthodox population. In this sense, erecting the magnificent Russian church in Cetinje could be interpreted as “counterweight to the ceremonial character of the Catholic worship.”¹⁶ Small Montenegrin traditional churches could not have undertaken such a role. The demands of the Montenegrin Metropolitan Bishop were confidentially transferred to the Russian government, which was very sympathetic and decided to support the construction of the church next to the Russian mission. (Fig. 2) Even the procurator of the Russian Holy Synod, Constantine Pobedonoscev, has made plans for obtaining funds for the building of the church in Cetinje.¹⁷

13 Dragutin Milutinović, “Izvestije o svršenom poslu u Crnoj Gori” [“Reports on Completed Work in Montenegro”], *Istorijski zapisi* 1-2 (1958), 370.

14 “Novo zdanje Ruske carske legacije” [“New Building of the Russian Imperial Legation”], *Glas Crnogorca* 40 (1903).

15 For an overview of the genesis of the idea of a Russian church in Cetinje in Russian diplomatic circles, see: Radoslav Raspopovic, “O planovima za gradnju ruske crkve na Cetinju” [“About the Plans for the Construction of the Russian Church in Cetinje”] *Istorijski zapisi* 1-2 (2000): 193-208.

16 *Ibid.*, 197.

17 Their intention was that the incomes of the monasteries from Bessarabia and Moldova would be redirected to the Cetinje Russian church fund.



Fig. 2: Pomerantsev – project for Cetinje Cathedral, 1904

In the very beginning, Prince Nikola intended to donate the land for the church directly to the Russian legation.¹⁸ The edifice should have been capable to accommodate up to 300 people. The attitude of the Russian diplomat in Cetinje, Sheglov, was that the Russians should fully coordinate the construction and decoration. This was in contrast to the way another Russian church was built in Nikšić a few years ago, which Russia funded and for which it provided the design, but in which Prince Nikola had an important saying.¹⁹ Furthermore, the Russians considered that, similarly to other churches located next to the Russian missions around the world, this religious building should be under the canonical jurisdiction of the Metropolitan Bishop in St. Petersburg.²⁰ They planned to dedicate the new church to the patron Saint Nicholas.²¹

The architect chosen for the commission was Alexander Nikanor Pomerantsev. Born in Moscow, he began his education at the Imperial Academy of Art in St. Petersburg in 1874. Later he became Professor at the Academy and one of the famous Russian architects. According to Russian writings about him, this project was not his first work connected with Montenegro; it is mentioned that the Royal church on Ćipur in Cetinje was built in 1886 according to his design.²² We should also

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ On the 'Russian' church in Nikšić, see: Milos Stankovic, "Spomen hram Svetog Vasilija Ostroškog u Nikšiću" ["Memorial Church of Saint Basilus of Ostrog in Nikšić"], in *Spaces of Memory, Collection of works, tom 1, Architecture* (Belgrade: Faculty of Philosophy, 2013), 125-137.

²⁰ Raspopović, "About the plans," 200.

²¹ Pavel Apolonovič Rovinski, *Crna Gora u prošlosti i sadašnjosti, tom IV, Državni život (1851-1907) - Arheologija [Montenegro in the Past and Present, Volume IV, State Life (1851-1907) - Archeology]* (Cetinje: Izdavački centar Cetinje, 1994), 161-162.

²² During his studies Pomerantsev conducted a study trip to Sicily, where he executed measured drawings of the Palatine Chapel interior in Palermo. In 1888, Pomerantsev became a professor at the Academy. He was a member of the Imperial Moscow Archeological Society since 1890. One of his first projects was the wooden church of St. Nicholas the Wonderworker in the village of Fedoskino near Moscow. In the years 1895-1896 he became the architect-in-chief of the Russian exhibition in Nizhny Novgorod, where he made a master plan for the central, mechanical, Central Asian and artistic pavilion. In the 1888 competition for decorating the Upper Square on Krasnaya Polyana in Moscow, he won the first prize and his building was completed in 1893. In Sofia, between 1904 and 1912, a memorial church of St. Alexander Nevsky was built, dedicated to the fallen Russian soldiers who fought for the liberation of Bulgaria. The initial plan for this church was made by the Bulgarian architect Ivan Bogomolov in 1884. Professor Pomerantsev re-designed the plan in 1898. See: Ilya Pechenkin, "Zodchij Rossijskoj imperii, Obshirnaja geografija arhitekturnogo tvorchestva

mention that this Russian architect was involved between 1904 and 1905 in the commission for architectural competition for the design of the new church of St. Sava in Belgrade.²³

Pomerantsev's design and sketches for the independent Russian mission church in Cetinje correspond with the Neo-Byzantine tendencies in Russian architecture of the second half of the 19th century. His work is considered to be part of the late historicism, a period which represents the transition from the "pseudo-Russian" national-romantic to more modern tendencies.²⁴ This project included the central structure with the inscribed cross, the main dome above the curb and with distinctive Russian cubes ending. This project can be cautiously associated with his projects of 1899 and 1904 for the Alexander Nevsky Church in Moscow.²⁵

Architect Pomerantsev considered that the intended location was inadequate, because the temple would not be visible. Consequently, together with other members of the Russian mission, he decided to buy a plot opposite to the donated one. As early as 1904, Pomerantsev completed his design, but the construction of the Russian church did not start, due to disagreements between Prince Nikola and the Russian Monarchy. These disputes arose during the Russian-Japanese War, when Prince Nikola began his military cooperation with Italy and, at the same time, visited Vienna. The Russian diplomatic archives mention Prince Nikola's very negative attitude regarding this project for the Russian church and concerning the fact that it would not be under the jurisdiction of the Montenegrin metropolitan. The ruling Prince considered this as an insult to the Montenegrin clerical jurisdiction. Russian diplomats even reported the alleged very negative attitude of Cetinje citizens towards the independent Russian Orthodox Church center. Prince Nikola asked the Russian diplomats to allocate these funds to the construction of the Cetinje Cathedral for all Orthodox Christians. Through his requests to the Russian emperor Nikolay II, the Montenegrin prince succeeded to stop the construction of the church as part of the Russian mission, and instead advanced the idea of the construction of the Cetinje Cathedral.

After 1908, the Montenegrin-Russian relations were again very good and the idea of erecting the Cathedral in Cetinje was again on the agenda. The Montenegrin sovereign visited Petrograd in March that year and the events which followed the Austro-Hungarian annexation of Bosnia and Herzegovina would again push Montenegro toward Russia.²⁶

During this period several designs for the construction of the Cathedral emerged, with the idea to be financed by the Russian emperor and government. The last of these designs that will stay in effect until 1910 was drawn up by Momčilo Tapavica, a Serb from Vojvodina. He completed his studies of architecture at the Technical College in Budapest, receiving a scholarship from Matica Srpska. Although he designed several representative projects, he is remembered in the Serbian memory as the first and only Serbian athlete who participated in the first Olympic Games of 1896 in the Austro-Hungarian team, where he also achieved remarkable successes.²⁷ In 1908

Aleksandra Pomeranceva, *raznoobrazie zadach i stilisticheskikh reshenij sootvetstvujut imenno takomu opredeleniju* ["The Architect of the Russian Empire, The Comprehensive Geography of the Architectural creations of Alexander Pomerantsev"], *Moskovskoe nasledie* 2, 38 (2015): 80-82.

23 Nenad Makuljević, *Crkvena umetnost u Kraljevini Srbiji 1882-1914* [Church Art in the Kingdom of Serbia 1882 - 1914] (Belgrade: Faculty of Philosophy, 2007), 237-238.

24 Mihail Allenov, *Russkoe iskusstvo XVIII - nachala XX veka* [Russian Art from the 17th Century to the Beginning of the 20th Century] (Moscow: Trilistnik, 2000), 228-230.

25 <http://blogpechenkin.blogspot.com/2015/>, last accessed 29.05.2018.

26 We should not overestimate the degree of disagreement between the Principality of Montenegro and the authorities of the Russian Empire, since the reign of Petar II Petrović Njegoš Montenegro was referred to significant Russian financial assistance. This assistance was once very important, even crucial, especially at the time of the so-called "the hungry years", when Montenegrin agriculture was failing to achieve sufficient produce. See: Andrijašević, "Crna Gora," 237-239.

27 About Momčilo Tapavica's sports success see: Milan Nešić, „Momčilo Tapavica, Učesnik prvih Olimpijskih igara modernog doba” [“Momčilo Tapavica - Participant in the First Olympic Games of the Modern Age”], *Vojvođanski prostori u kontekstu evropske istorije, Zbornik radova* 2 (2014): 353-361.

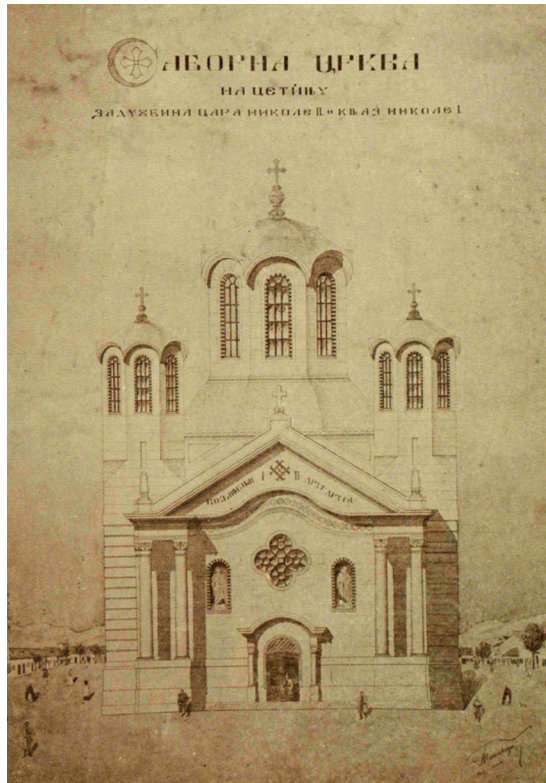


Fig. 3: Tapavica – project for Cetinje Cathedral Church, 1908-1910

he arrived in Cetinje at the invitation of the Prince Nikola, and there he participated in several important construction projects.²⁸ (Fig. 3)

The project that Momčilo Tapavica drafted for the Cathedral Church in Cetinje, which was supposed to be the endowment of Russian emperor Nikolay II and the Montenegrin Prince Nikola, was the third most famous version of this temple, next to the ones from 1870 and 1904. According to the preserved sketches, Tapavica used the elements of the Serbian-Byzantine style in the design of the upper zones and cubes and an eclectic addition of the neo-Renaissance extension to the western (inlet) side that rested on four pillars and had a tympanum above. Since Tapavica left niches with two sculptures on the west side, it is clear that he was under the influence of the solutions often used in the Central European architecture of the Catholic Circle, as sculptural decorations were very rare in Serbian church art. The lack of a more detailed project hinders clearer evaluations of his plan.

The design of Momčilo Tapavica was presented just before the celebration of the 50 years on the throne of Montenegro in 1910 of Prince Nikola, a very important anniversary for the Petrović dynasty and the planned raise of the Principality to the rank of Kingdom. Organized in August 1910, the jubilee was supposed to upraise the reputation of the Montenegrin dynasty and of Prince Nikola, while, at the same time, pointing to its inextricable connections with the Russian court and the Romanov dynasty. (Fig. 4)

²⁸ In Tapavica available biographies it is mentioned that he worked projects for the building of Montenegrin bank and the building of the German mission in Cetinje, see: Lazar Rakić, *Nadalj - do 1945 [Nadalj - until 1945]* (Novi Sad: Matica srpska, 1988), 123; Consult: Nešić, "Momčilo Tapavica," 358.



Fig. 4: King Nikola's ceremonial laying the foundation stone in August 1910

The Official Montenegrin State Gazette published in August 1910 “The Agenda of the Celebration of the fiftieth anniversary of the reign of his Royal Highness the Prince Nikola I Petrović-Njegoš.” On the third day of the celebration, after the military parade, a telegram of Russian Tsar Nikolay II was read out loud, congratulating the anointment of the Montenegrin king and informing him that he has been appointed Field Marshal of the Russian army, which was the greatest army rank of the Empire.²⁹

In the speech that Prince Nikola gave in the Montenegrin Assembly on the occasion of his acceptance of the Royal Crown he emphasized the sacrifices made by Montenegrins for the Serbian idea and pointed out the help of fraternal Russia in particular:

Both progress in the country and the reputation of it outside could only be achieved by the virtues of My people. They gave their hands, which scattered with a sword; the strength that moved the mountains, the heart, which was beating for the Serbs; they, at last, gave birth to sons who did not put a shadow over the heroic glory of their ancestors. Glory and eternal rest to our ancestors! Only with such a nation could I succeed, and with the fraternal help of Orthodox Russia.³⁰

The delegation sent by the Russian Tsar Nikolay II that came to Cetinje, on the occasion of the proclamation of the kingdom in August 1910, arrived in Cetinje four days after the coronation of King Nikola. It was led by the Great Prince Nikolay Nikolaevich, with his wife Anastasia and his son Sergei. Anastasia was actually the daughter of King Nikola.³¹ In the reports of Russian colonel Parensov it is written that the Montenegrins were happy that the Russian delegation

29 “Svečani dani Crne Gore” [Glory Days of Montenegro Principality], *Glas Crnogorca* 36 (1910).

30 “The speech of King Nikola in the National Assembly during the Crowning Ceremony,” *Glas Crnogorca* 36 (1910).

31 Also members of the Russian delegation were infantry general P. Parents, Colonel Rostov, Captain Baron Volf, Colonel Nirod and Doctor Malam, see: “Dolazak ruske delegacije na Cetinje povodom proglašenja Crne Gore za kraljevinu” [“Arrival of the Russian delegation to Cetinje on the Occasion of Proclamation of Montenegro Principality for the Kingdom”] *Istorijski zapisi* 3-4 (1990): 110.



Fig. 5: The foundation stone with inscription

Fig. 6: King Nikola in Russian uniform during celebration in August 1910

was a little late because they could fully devote to it.³² The crowning of the Montenegrin king culminated when several ships with over 400 Russian soldiers and sailors pulled in the port of Bar in September 1910. They put up an ephemeral spectacle when, in the evening, electric lamps decorated the ships and marked each vessel with the initial N I (Nikola I) and the crown above the letters.³³

King Nikola received the rank of General-Field Marshal and the Marshal Scepter on August 21, 1910. This appointment was a great honor because this rank was the highest in the Russian army. The elder son of King Nikola, Danilo (the Crown Prince) was appointed Major General, while sons Mirko and Peter became Lieutenant Colonel and, respectively, lieutenant of the Russian army. Previously, in 1889, King Nikola had become honorary commander of one of the Russian regiments which was renamed the XV Shooting Regiment of His Majesty the King of Montenegro, Nikola I. The head of the Russian delegation, Grand Duke Nikolai Nikolaevich Romanov, handed over to King Nikola the scepter and appointment in the building of the Government House in Cetinje, where for this occasion a raised throne was built.

Interestingly, he received his award wearing the Russian Marshal uniform. Dressed in the Russian uniform was also the Montenegrin Crown Prince Danilo.³⁴ Upon completion of the ceremony at the Government House in Cetinje, the officials proceeded to lay the foundation stone for the Cathedral Church, planned to be a gift from the Russian emperor. (Fig. 5) Consecration of the foundation stone of the new Cathedral Church was carried out by the Metropolitan Bishop Mitrofan and the clergy between the Government House and the Biljarda (Njegoš castle).³⁵

³² Ibid., 109.

³³ Archival source: The district administrator informs the Montenegrin Minister of Internal Affairs about the second day of his stay with Russian soldiers, 05.09.1910. (CG DA 1 CET MUD-f.103), see: *Obnova crnogorskog kraljevstva i jubilarne svečanosti 1910, zbornik dokumenata* [Renewal of the Montenegrin Kingdom and the Jubilee Celebration 1910, Collection of documents] (Cetinje: Državni arhiv, 2010), 133.

³⁴ Jovan B. Markus, *Kraljevina Crna Gora: spomenica jubileja 1910* [The Kingdom of Montenegro: A Jubilee Memorial 1910] (Podgorica: Narodna misao, 2010), 196-197.

³⁵ Ibid., 198-199.

Standing next to the Russian Great Prince at the moment of laying the foundation stone, King Nikola exclaimed, "Long live the Russian Emperor!"³⁶ The inscription on the cornerstone read the following: "This temple was constructed on August 21, 1910 by Russian Tsar Nikolay II, during the rule of King Nikola." (Fig. 6)

Paradoxically, even after these events, the building of Cetinje's Cathedral was not speeded up. It was announced that construction would begin in the spring of 1911,³⁷ and then in 1912.³⁸ According to historian Radoslav Raspopović, in early 1912, due to the visit of the Montenegrin king to Russia, a Committee for the construction was formed. Professor Alexander Pomerantsev, who was supposed to sign the construction contract, also attended the first meeting of the Committee.³⁹ The Russians envisioned that all works were to be managed by the Russians. According to sources, it is unclear whether the Tapavica Plan was the main choice. Although preparatory actions were carried out on the ground, in October 1912 the First Balkan War started, leading to the complete stop of the works. The Second Balkan War, and then the First World War, completely hindered the construction of this church. The connection with Tsarist Russia and its financing of this project was interrupted by the 1917 Revolutions of and the abdication of the Emperor Nikolay II.

In the aftermath of the First World War, the political situation in the Balkans, even in Montenegro, changed significantly. Based on the decisions of the so-called "Podgorica Assembly" Montenegro merged with the Kingdom of Serbia, and the Petrović dynasty was dethroned. The area of the former Kingdom of Montenegro was organized as the administrative unit of the newly established Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenians under the name Zetska oblast, and later Zetska Banovina (since 1929). At the time when the former and today's Montenegrin capital of Cetinje became the center of the Zeta Banovina, Montenegrin-coastal Metropolitan Bishop and administrator of the Rasko-zahum diocese Gavriilo Dožić addressed in January 1930 a letter to Yugoslav King Aleksandar.⁴⁰ The letter writes at the beginning: "Your Majesty is aware that Cetinje does not have a cathedral, which has caused great scarcity to date, and until now, when Cetinje has become the capital of Zeta Banovina, this scarcity will be even greater."⁴¹

With the permission of the Yugoslav King Aleksandar, the grandson of the dethroned King Nikola, once again started working on the re-selection of the project design and the construction of a "new" Cathedral church in Cetinje. The location was moved to a hill called Tablja above the Cetinje monastery, which allowed the church to be seen from a great distance. It was decided to dedicate the church to the Holy Apostles Peter and Paul. The competition was opened, which caused great interest. It was won by two professors of the Faculty of Architecture in Belgrade Branko and Petar Krstić. Their project was approved in 1935. (Fig. 7) The basis of their project was the interpretation of the so-called Serbian-Byzantine style, with a central one-floor plan and a three-part altar.

36 When King Nikola finished laying the foundation stone, he still said, "May the name of God be glorified in this temple, and let the flame of our gratitude to the Tsar of Orthodox Russia always burn in cresset."
"Svečani dani Crne Gore" ["Glory Days of Montenegro Principality"] *Glas Crnogorca* 37 (19 August 1910).

37 *Cetinjski vjesnik* 100 (December 18, 1910).

38 *Cetinjski vjesnik* 107 (March 31, 1910).

39 Raspopović, "About the plans," 206.

40 Metropolitan Dožić addressed King Alexander Karadjordjević through communication with court martial Aca Dimitrijević. King Alexander received a letter on January 13, 1930, see: Jovan P. Popović, *Desilo se tu i okolo, njima i nama [It happened here and around, to them and to us]* (Belgrade: Kosmos, 2004), 16-19.

41 "A small monastery church, built by Blessed in death Bishop Danilo at the very beginning of the eighteenth century, still serves today as a cathedral, in which prayer can barely gather up to fifty souls! Prior to the Balkan War, certain works were taken to build a cathedral in Cetinje. Russian engineer Preobrazhenski (Pomerantsev, a/n) made a plan and already marked a place for the church. All this work remained as an idea, due to the wars that had started then. After liberation and unification, I constantly thought about building a cathedral in Cetinje, and, in that thought, I came to one of the ways in which, in my opinion, a cathedral in Cetinje could be built ..."

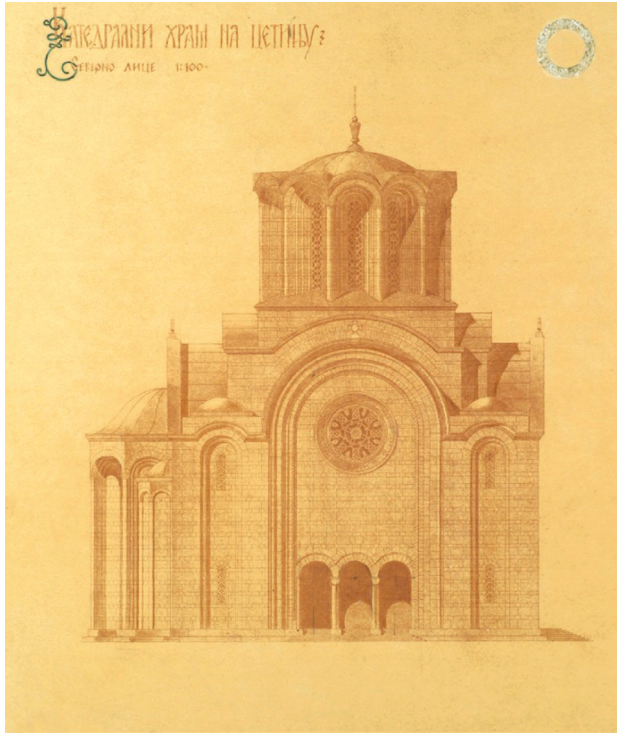


Fig. 7: Krstić Brothers project for Cetinje Cathedral, 1935

A year earlier, the location on the hill had been set. The Metropolitan Bishop of Montenegro, Gavriilo, persistently promoted the idea.⁴² The assassination of King Aleksandar in Marseille in 1934 significantly slowed down the execution of works. Due to many turbulences in the country, the construction progressed slowly, and by 1941, when Germany and Italy attacked Yugoslavia, the church was only finished up to the window level. Between the two wars there were plans to transfer of remains of Montenegrin King Nikola and Queen Milena, who died in exile, but because of the incompleteness of the church until the Second World War, this intention was postponed to the end of the 20th century.

The construction of the cathedral in Cetinje was completely pushed aside during the second half of the twentieth century. By the end of the Second World War, the new state was formed by the Communist Party of Yugoslavia. The ideological atheism and anticlericalism of the new rulers prevented any further construction works on the Cathedral because the Orthodox Church in Montenegro (the same as in the rest of the SFR Yugoslavia) suffered extensive expropriations and nationalizations.⁴³ These dramatically reduced the economic power of the Church. According to the available testimonies, the already built parts of the church were dismantled in the 1950s and used for local construction works. It is believed that the site was definitely abandoned in 1951, when the remaining carved stones were used by local authorities for the construction of

42 "Iduće godine na Cetinju će se podići velelepna pravoslavna katedrala" ["Next year a great Orthodox cathedral will be built in Cetinje"], *Zetski glasnik, List za narodnu prosvjetu i privredu* 52 (1934).

43 A brief overview of the relations between the Communist authorities and the Orthodox Church, see: Šerbo Rastoder, "Crna Gora u XX vijeku" ["Montenegro in the Twentieth Century"], in *Istorija Crne Gore od najstarijih vremena do 2003* (Podgorica: Centar za iseljenike, 2006), 450-454.

other public buildings. As stated, during the communist government, the government did not shy away from the disposal of church property. In Montenegro, the most important example was the construction of a mausoleum for bishop and poet Peter II Petrović Njegoš on the peak Lovćen above Cetinje. The previous Orthodox chapel in which Njegoš's remains were buried was demolished and in its place the government constructed a massive civil complex, despite the opposition of the Orthodox Church and of a large number of intellectuals and public figures.⁴⁴

An intensive atheistic campaign initially led by the communist state authorities in the Socialist Republic of Montenegro and Yugoslavia resulted in reducing the number of church goers and the need for the construction of new churches fell drastically. After the first democratic elections in the 1990s, the Metropolitan of Montenegro began the restoration of church life. For the fifth time, the idea of erecting the Cathedral in Cetinje was revitalized in 1993, under the administration of the current Metropolitan Bishop of Montenegro, Amfilohije Radović.⁴⁵ Due to the Balkan wars during the last decade of the twentieth century, this idea has not been further developed.

On May 21, 2006 a referendum was organized for the restoration of the Montenegrin independence and the departure from various state communities with Serbia after almost 88 years. With the renewal of its independence, Montenegro has fully embarked on Euro-Atlantic integration with the aim of joining the European Union and the NATO alliance. Paradoxically, in the post-referendum period, there was a huge influx of capital from the Russian Federation to Montenegro, most often through the sale and purchase of real estate on the coast.⁴⁶ These investments significantly influenced the number of Russian tourists and visitors in Montenegro and Cetinje in particular, with, among others, the emergence of the so-called religious tourism. The tours include visits to the Cetinje monastery which is one of the most important religious sites and a center of sacral relics which were brought from the Imperial House of Romanov before the beginning of the Second World War: the hand of St. John the Baptist, the particle of the Holy Cross and the icon of the Virgin Philermose. As a consequence, the idea of erecting the cathedral in Cetinje resurfaced as a place that would unite these relics, since the first two are in the Cetinje monastery, and the third in the National Museum in Cetinje.⁴⁷

Significant difficulties for the implementation of this idea emerged from the ideological and national heterogeneity of people taking important positions in the church and state institutions. Identity problems among the Orthodox population in Montenegro have their roots in the period after the First World War. These problems did not exist before, because the official Montenegrin state policy considered liberation and national integration and the unification of all Serb populated regions as their goal. Montenegrin rulers have inherited Serbian traditions, considering Montenegro as one of Serbian states. The roots of identity problems lied in the controversial way of integration of the Montenegrin state into the new Kingdom of SHS. The problem was of inter-dynastical nature because the crown was taken over by the Karađorđević dynasty instead of the dethroned Montenegrin King Nikola Petrović. Until his death King Nikola lived in exile in France and was not allowed to return to Montenegro by the new government of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes. All these problems led to the military uprising of the supporters of King Nikola Petrović in January 1919, a rebellion that was soon suppressed by the new authorities.⁴⁸

44 *Sumrak Lovćena, dokumenti I prilozii o sudbini Njegoševe kapele na Lovćenu 1845-1971* [Twilight of Mt. Lovćen, Documents and Contributions to the History of Njegoš's Chapel at Lovćen 1845-1971] (Beograd: Eparhija Banatska, 1989).

45 Popović, "Unconstructed projects," 46.

46 <https://www.nytimes.com/2008/11/01/world/europe/01balkans.html>, last accessed May 30, 2018; <https://www.forbes.com/sites/kenrapoza/2015/11/30/despite-montenegros-westward-ho-russian-investment-unlikely-to-dissipate/#1120caed5f7c>, last accessed May 30, 2018.

47 <http://www.pcnen.com/portal/2007/05/31/za-tri-svetinje-bice-sagradena-crkva-na-cetinju/>, last accessed May 30, 2018.

48 Šerbo Rastoder, "Crna Gora u XX vijeku" ["Montenegro in the Twentieth Century"], in *Istorija Crne Gore od najstarijih vremena do 2003* (Podgorica: Centar za iseljenike, 2006), 299-314.

Today, many scholars, journalists, politicians and citizens have a completely different view of Serbian or Montenegrin or Serbian-Montenegrin identity.⁴⁹ The Montenegrin Metropolitanate under the Metropolitan Bishop Amfilohije inherits the historical Serbian-Orthodox identity of Montenegrins and is pro-Russian,⁵⁰ while the official state policy is secular, but with the tendency to build a new separate Montenegrin identity more oriented towards the Western values of the so-called Euro Atlantic Integration. The official state authorities cooperate with a non-canonical community - the Montenegrin Orthodox Church,⁵¹ which, in view of its functioning, additionally complicated relations with the Montenegrin Metropolitanate as a part of Serbian Orthodox Church.⁵² These non-cohesive ideas prevented the agreement on raising the Cetinje cathedral, although there was the possibility that the Russian financial, logistic and artistic support would be available.

It can be said that the idea of building a Russian church today is the most realistic since 1870 from the financial point of view, but at the same time the most doubtful from ideological point since Montenegro became a NATO member on June 5, 2014.⁵³ The Montenegrin government itself saw this moment as a historical moment.⁵⁴ Regarding the construction of the cathedral in Cetinje and the potential financial and organizational Russian aid, the biggest obstacle emerged after the introduction of economic sanctions against the Russian Federation by Montenegro.⁵⁵ This caused a whole set of mutual counter-measures that Russia and Montenegro had taken against each other,⁵⁶ which culminated in the alleged "state coup" in in 2016, for which the Montenegrin prosecution accused Russian parastatal structures.⁵⁷

The idea of constructing the Cathedral Church in Cetinje emerged around 1870, and even after 150 years it was not completed. Through this period there were two continuous factors related to this issue: the Russian influence and the attitude of the Montenegrin official authorities. Their relationships largely determined the fate of this project. From an architectural and artistic point, all four elaborated projects (1870, 1904, 1910, 1935) had their basis in the then cultural and political milieu. Although it seemed that a century ago the traditional friendship between the Russian Empire and the Montenegrin people was strong enough to bring this project to a successful fruition, insurmountable difficulties repeatedly emerged. The most significant were the First and Second World Wars. One of the difficulties was the unwillingness of the Montenegrin ruler that in his capital, someone else (in this case, the Russians) would manage a kind of separate religious institution, as in the case of the plans for the church in 1904 – 1905. This misunderstanding led to the change and genesis of the Russian idea. From the independent Russian church, the objective developed into the Cathedral for all Orthodox believers in Cetinje. Today, after the restoration of the Montenegrin state in 2006 and intensive ties with the Russian Federation after 2006, it seemed that this project was still viable, but insurmountable difficulties emerged again in the form of Montenegro's membership in the NATO alliance.

49 <https://www.britannica.com/place/Montenegro>, last accessed May 30, 2018.

50 <http://www.vijesti.me/vijesti/amfilohije-hoce-li-se-vratiti-crna-gora-sama-sebi-dace-bog-u-novoj-godini-971519>, last accessed May 30, 2018.

51 Rastoder, "Montenegro in the Twentieth Century," 299-314.

52 <https://www.blic.rs/vesti/drustvo/protest-zbog-gradnje-nove-mitropolije-spc-na-cetinju/b1cdelb>, last accessed May 30, 2018.

53 <http://balkans.aljazeera.net/vijesti/crna-gora-postala-clanica-nato>, last accessed May 30, 2018.

54 <https://twitter.com/VladaCG/status/871806864668975106/photo/1>, last accessed May 30, 2018.

55 Because the Montenegrin state joined the EU and adhered to the US sanctions introduced against Russia during the Ukrainian crisis.

56 <http://www.bankar.me/tag/rusija-uvodi-sankcije-crnoj-gori/page/2/>, last accessed May 30, 2018. <http://mondo.me/a494643/Info/Crna-Gora/Patrijarh-ruski-Kiril-zabrinut-zbog-Crne-Gore.html>, last accessed May 30, 2018.

57 <https://www.slobodnaevropa.org/a/latvija-banke-rusija/29258907.html>, last accessed May 30, 2018.

The historical and artistic observation of this topic, with a historical-narrative method and contextualization, enables us to see the unbroken line of attempts to build an orthodox church. The architectural and artistic circumstances had the least influence or at least were the less controversial ones. The contemporary media coverage of this problem confirms that church art and architecture as a part of visual culture in Montenegro is still very relevant and in the spheres of public interest. The construction process of the Cetinje Cathedral is a specific ephemeral spectacle which lasts very long and is most probably still not finished.

Almost a 150-year-long process of construction and re-reconstruction the Cetinje Cathedral with the help of Russia underlines a complex relationship between art and politics in the Balkans. As such, church architecture was suitable for the demonstration of a state and national ideology.⁵⁸ Within the Montenegrin visual culture, during the process of reconstruction and building of churches at the end of the 19th century, it is evident that Montenegrin Prince Nikola was often guided by the perceptions of historicism, which is in line with the general trends of Serbian visual culture also present in other Serb populated areas.⁵⁹ This was also emphasized in sermons of the then Montenegrin Metropolitan Bishop Mitrofan Ban, who clearly underlined the connection with the Serbian Middle Ages.⁶⁰ The Russian project for the Cathedral in Cetinje, although not belonging to the architectural Serbian Middle Ages, was sufficiently authentic in the sense of Orthodox Christianity, since it came from Imperial Russia.⁶¹ Russia was the protector of the Principality of Montenegro and was most commonly perceived as a friend in all Serb-populated areas. Although Prince Nikola was not in haste to construct the church, the intention to do it was constant and it did not materialize only due to the outbreak of the Balkan Wars and World War I. The destiny of the Cetinje Cathedral had a different context in the interwar period. Cetinje was no longer the capital of an internationally recognized state, therefore, the priority for the construction of the church was different than before. Nevertheless, the construction began, but the assassination of King Alexander and the outbreak of the World War II several years later, significantly changed the course of construction and ultimately stopped this process. Imperial Russia disappeared after the 1917 October Revolution, so that foreign assistance also evaporated. The already mentioned post-war communist circumstances completely stopped the building of the Cathedral, and finally the construction site was destroyed. The most recent period of Montenegrin history, which began from the moment of the breakup of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, marked certain changes towards the church architecture. However, antagonisms between the Montenegrin and Montenegrin-Serbian identity, and the communist-non-religious identity, resulted in the lack of unanimous support to the Orthodox Church on Cetinje. Nevertheless, the re-emergence of Russian influence at the end of the first decade of the 21st century had an impact on the renewal of the idea, which this time had realistic prospects. To a certain extent, the issue of identity became again a stumbling block for its construction – after the outbreak of the crisis in Ukraine and the increasing antagonism between Russia and the West, the process of Euro-Atlantic integration of Montenegro became an obstacle for the Russian influence. Furthermore, given the ever present Russian-Serbian links in the sphere of Orthodoxy and the obvious antagonism of the ruling elites against the Serbian church in Montenegro, the project was completely removed from the sphere of architecture and church art and transferred exclusively onto the field of politics. It is possible to conclude that the characteristic of architecture to outlive contemporary politics in fact forced politics to prevent the implementation of a project and that in this case politics managed to win over architecture.

58 Nenad Makuljević, *Umetnost i nacionalna ideja u XIX veku: Sistem evropske i srpske vizuelne kulture u službi nacije* [Art and National Idea in the 19th Century: European and Serbian Visual Culture in the Service of Nation] (Belgrade: Zavod za udzbenike i nastavna sredstva, 2006), 182-192.

59 An interesting example of architectural reflections to the Serbian medieval past can be found in various churches, such as those in Kraljevi and Andrijevića, built in the north of the Montenegrin Principality at the end of the 19th century, which echoed the style of the church of the Morača monastery, the endowment of the Nemanjić dynasty. See: Irena Zarić, Miloš Stanković, "Crkva vaznesenja Gospodnjeg u selu Kralje" ["The Church of the Ascension in the Village of Kralje"], *Mileševski zapis* 7 (2007): 180-181.

60 *Besjede mitropolita Mitrošana* [The Sermons of Metropolitan Mitrofan] (Cetinje: Svetigora, 1999), 188.

61 This was not an isolated example, since similar cases are also present in the construction of churches in Niksic, Andrijevića, Sarajevo, Gornji Adrovac, Kumanovo, etc.

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Fig. 2: Courtesy of Jovan Markuš, Cetinje

Fig. 3, 4, 5, 6: Jovan B. Markuš, *Kraljevina Crna Gora: spomenica jubileja 1910* (Podgorica: Narodna misao, 2010), 197, 197, 196, 194