

SAINT SAVA OF SERBIA AND ATHANASIOS II, THE PATRIARCH OF JERUSALEM

During his pilgrimages to Palestine, Saint Sava of Serbia had met with the patriarch Athanasios II several times. The two of archpriests met in spring 1229, when Sava came to Jerusalem for the first time.¹ According to the older Sava's hagiographer Domentijan, Serbian archbishop visited the patriarch of Jerusalem immediately after he venerated the Tomb of Christ and other holy places in the Church of the Resurrection.² Sava's younger hagiographer Teodosije adds that the patriarch Athanasios had marvelously received his guest on that occasion, that next day they had celebrated the liturgy in the Church of Resurrection, after which they were feasted at the patriarch's house. Sava gave many gifts to his host, receiving, in return, his blessing that he could perform divine services in the whole area of the Greek Orthodox patriarchate of Jerusalem.³ Sometime later, Domentijan witnesses in the same work that many times two archpriests celebrated liturgy together by the Tomb of Christ and that they became good friends, because of which Sava spent most of his first visit to Jerusalem talking to the patriarch.⁴ Domentijan explicitly mentions three of their meetings: the first one – after Sava's visit to Bethlehem, the second – after he had visited the place of Christ's baptism at the Jordan River and the third – after the archbishop's sojourn in Great Lavra of Saint Sabbas the Sanctified (Mar Saba monastery). Conversations of the two collocutors were dedicated to canonical and liturgical issues as well as to "life which pass quickly".⁵ Meeting of Sava and Athanasios II, after Serbian archbishop had returned from the Great Lavra, was also dedicated to one special issue. Namely, Sava asked his host and the Great Lavra fraternity, led by the hegoumenos hieromonk Nicolas, for the place where to found Serbian monastery in Jerusalem. His request was accepted so

¹ For chronology of the first Sava's pilgrimage v. M. Marković, *Prvo putovanje svetog Save u Palestinu*, *Zograf* 29 (2002–2003), 49–52, 87–88.

² *Domentijan. Žitije Svetoga Save*, red. Lj. Juhas-Georgievska, T. Jovanović, Beograd 2001, 284, 300.

³ *Teodosije Hilandarac. Život Svetoga Save*, izdanje Đ. Daničića, ed. Dj. Trifunović, Beograd 1973, 167.

⁴ *Domentijan*, 286, 296.

⁵ *Domentijan*, 286, 296, 300.

that he got the Church of Saint John the Theologian on Mount Sion.⁶ This was, in fact, former northern chapel of the crusader church of St. Mary of Mount Sion. Before destruction of this famous church (Holy Sion, or former “Mother of all churches”), Christians recognized in the mentioned chapel home of Saint John the Theologian and place of the Virgin’s Dormition.⁷ Monks of the Mar Saba had probably got that chapel from the Melkites of Jerusalem, after the Crusader church of Holy Sion had been destroyed in 1219/1220.⁸ The role of the patriarch Athanasios in granting the church of “Saint John the Theologian” to the Serbian archbishop originated from a canonical right of an archpriest to approve foundation or reconstruction of the monasteries in the area under his jurisdiction.⁹ Also, Athanasios regulated with Sava all issues concerning the new-founded Sion monastery and its fraternity. At the same time, he decorated Sava with the “holy divine honors”.¹⁰ Soon after the affairs had been arranged, the Serbian archbishop venerated the Tomb of Christ once again and, saying goodbye to Athanasios, he left on his trip to the homeland. Teodosije states how on that occasion Sava bought relics of certain saints from the Greek Orthodox patriarch of Jerusalem.¹¹

Next meeting of Sava and Athanasios II occurred five years later, in spring 1234. The first Serbian archbishop, after his arrival to Jerusalem, went to his monastery of Saint John the Theologian on Mount Sion and from there, together with the hegoumenos and fraternity of the Mar Saba who seem to have resided in the mentioned monastery after it had been given to the Serbian archbishop, he went to the Church of Resurrection in order to venerate the Tomb of Christ. Having been informed about his arrival, patriarch Athanasios rushed to see his friend again. Domentijan witnesses that two archpriests sat in the middle of the church, next to the very Tomb, and talked there about political situation in the world and Sava’s journey to the Holy Land. The patriarch gave a sermon before the clergy of the Holy Sepulchre in Sava’s and his disciples’ honor, calling them new apostles, prophets and martyrs. Many citizens of Jerusalem gathered together in the church so that Athanasios took Sava to patriarch’s house where both guest and host enjoyed in “spiritual and bodily joys”.¹² However, Sava

⁶ *Domentijan*, 300.

⁷ V., for example, PG 33, 942. About issue of the Sava’s foundation on Mount Sion v. D. Pringle, *The Churches of the Crusader Kingdom of Jerusalem. A Corpus*, III, Cambridge 2007, 211–212; M. Marković, *Prvo putovanje Svetog Save u Palestinu i njegov značaj za srpsku srednjovekovnu umetnost*, Beograd 2009 (in print).

⁸ About the church of Holy Sion and its history v., for example, H. Vincent, F.-M. Abel, *Jérusalem. Recherches de topographie, d’archéologie et d’histoire*, II/3, Paris 1922, 421–481; Marković, *Prvo putovanje* (Zograf 29), 60–61; Pringle, *Churches*, III, 261–287.

⁹ Cf. Marković, *op. cit.*, 74.

¹⁰ *Domentijan*, 300.

¹¹ *Domentijan*, 300; *Teodosije*, 168–171.

¹² *Domentijan*, 354–358. For chronology of Sava’s second pilgrimage v. D. Anastasijević, *Sveti Sava je umro 1236 godine*, Bogoslovlje XI/3 (1936) 237 sqq. Here, on the basis of the itinerary described in Domentijan’s work, it has been convincingly shown that second Sava’s pilgrimage must have started in spring 1234, that the Serbian archbishop spent Great Lent in 1235 (18. II – 7. IV) on Mount Sinai and that he died in January 1236.

soon left to visit Alexandria and desert settlements in its vicinity, but after his return to Jerusalem, sometime in autumn 1234, again he was spending time with the patriarch Athanasios II, discussing canonical and theologian issues.¹³ Two archpriests met for the last time few months later, in spring 1235, after Sava had returned from Mount Sinai. After he had rested from the tiring journey, Sava received for the last time the patriarch's advices, said goodbye to him, to clergy of the Church of Resurrection and monks fraternity of the Mar Saba, and left on a trip for homeland.¹⁴ However, he had never arrived there. On his way back, as it is well known, he died in Tŭrnovo, the capital of Bulgaria, in January 1236.¹⁵

The mentioned statements of two Saint Sava's hagiographers are unique testimonies of meetings between the Serbian archbishop and Athanasios II but, at the same time, they are very important source about that patriarch of Jerusalem because, directly or indirectly, they present certain details about his life, which were not recorded by other sources.

Generally, we do not know much about the patriarch Athanasios II. It is known that he became head of the Greek Orthodox patriarchate of Jerusalem after death of the patriarch Euthymios II and that he finished his life as a martyr at the times of the Khwarezmian Turks' conquest of Jerusalem on 23. August 1244.¹⁶ Exact date of the patriarch Euthymios's death is known according to inscription on his tombstone which is in the Monastery of St. Catherine at Mount Sinai. The inscription is dated 13 December 1223, but together with it, an indiction was inscribed, which corresponds to 1230.¹⁷ In the recent literature it is usually considered that the indiction is correct, which would mean that the patriarch Euthymios II died on 13 December 1230, that is, that his successor Athanasios II began his duty only after the stated date.¹⁸ However, this conclusion cannot be accepted because of Domentijan's and Teodosije's *Vita* of Saint Sava. As it has been shown, in those works it was explicitly stated that at the time of the Serbian archbishop's first pilgrimage to Palestine, Athanasios II has already occupied the chair of the Greek Orthodox patriarchs of Jerusalem. The mentioned pilgrimage of Saint Sava can, quite reliably, be dated in the period between end of April and end of September 1229.¹⁹ In any case, the first Serbian archbishop returned from the Holy Land at least eight months before 13 December

¹³ Domentijan, 368.

¹⁴ Domentijan, 394, 396.

¹⁵ Cf. Anastasijević, *Sveti Sava*, 238–276.

¹⁶ About the patriarch Athanasios II v. J. Pahlitzsch, *Athanasios II, a Greek Orthodox Patriarch of Jerusalem (c. 1231–1244)*, in: *Autour de la première croisade*, ed. M. Balard, Paris 1996, 465–474; idem, *Graeci und Suriani im Palästina der Kreuzfahrerzeit. Beiträge und Quellen zur Geschichte des griechisch-orthodoxen Patriarchats von Jerusalem*, Berlin 2001, 259–270.

¹⁷ *Vtoroe puteshestvie arhimandrita Porfiriia Uspenskogo v Sinaiskii monastyr' v 1850 godu*, St.-Peterburg 1856, 246.

¹⁸ V. Grumel, *La chronologie des patriarches Grecs de Jérusalem au XIII^e siècle*, *Revue des études byzantines* 20 (1962), 197–199; G. Fedalto, *Liste vescovili del patriarcato di Gerusalemme I*, *Orientalia christiana periodica* 49/1 (1983), 18; Pahlitzsch, *Athanasios II*, 465–474; idem, *Graeci und Suriani*, 259–270.

¹⁹ M. Marković, *Prvo putovanje* (Zograf 29), 49–52, 87–88.

1230 because both Domentijan and Teodosije state that he, on his way back from the pilgrimage, met with Theodor Komnenos Doukas in Thessalonica.²⁰ That meeting must have happened before the beginning of April 1230, when the mentioned ruler of Epiros and emperor of Thessalonica was defeated and taken prisoner by Bulgarians in the Battle of Klokotnitsa.²¹

Thus, from Sava's *Vitae* it would appear that Athanasios II was at the patriarch's throne in spring 1229. Furthermore, it could be concluded that on the inscription on his predecessor's tombstone, the year was correct and not the indiction, which means that the patriarch Euthymios II died on 13 December 1223. It would follow that Athanasios II inherited him either at the very end of 1223 or, more probably, at the beginning of 1224.

Another important datum from the Serbian sources concerning the Greek Orthodox patriarch of Jerusalem is Domentijan's statement that Athanasios II, at the time of Sava's visit to the Holy Land in 1229, was the head of the church of Resurrection and the Holy Sepulchre.²² That statement was certainly reliable. Because of the pope's interdict imposed on Jerusalem immediately after it had fallen into the hands of excommunicated Frederick II, since spring 1229 there was no catholic clergy in the city.²³ On the other hand, unlike 1099 when the crusaders had conquered Jerusalem for the first time, the Greek Orthodox patriarch did not have to leave the city after the establishment of Latin power in February 1229. Moreover, he managed for some time to preserve jurisdiction over the most important holy places in Palestine, which the Orthodox patriarchate of Jerusalem had regained after Muslim persecution of the Latin clergy in the time of Saladin (1187).²⁴

²⁰ *Domentijan*, 312, 314; *Teodosije*, 173. On his return trip to Serbia, Sava visited, firstly, emperor John III Doukas Vatatzes, probably in Nymphaion at the end of July or the beginning of August of 1229, and then met with Theodor Komnenos Doukas, probably at the end of August or the beginning of September of 1229. Cf. M. Marković, *op. cit.*, 79–88.

²¹ About the Battle of Klokotnitsa v., for example, V. N. Zlatarski, *Istoriia na bŭlgarskata dŭrzhava prez srednite vekove*, III, Sofia 1940, 338–342; D. M. Nicol, *The Despotate of Epiros*, Oxford 1957, 109–111; A. Stavridou-Zafraka, *Nikai kai Epeiros ton 13o aio-na*, Thessaloniki 1990, 82–83. For the date of battle v. *Ryccardi de Sancto Germano notarii, Chronica*, ed. C. A. Garufi, Bologna 1937 (*Rerum italicarum scriptorum*, t. VII/2, fs. 2), 166; cf., also, Nicol, *op. cit.*, 110; D. Polemis, *The Doukai. A Contribution to the Byzantine Prosopography*, London 1968, 89; B. Ferjančić, Lj. Maksimović, *Sveti Sava i Srbija između Epira i Nikeje*, in: *Sveti Sava u srpskoj istoriji i tradiciji*, red. S. Ćirković, Beograd 1998, 23.

²² *Domentijan*, 286, 296, 300.

²³ Catholic clergy returned to Jerusalem only after, in July 1230, the pope and the emperor had reconciled. The patriarch, however, also later, resided in Acre. About the whole issue v., for example, J. Prawer, *Histoire du royaume latin de Jérusalem*, I, Paris 1970, 205–209, 228–229; B. Hamilton, *The Latin Church in the Crusader states: the secular church*, London 1980, 258 sqq; J. Pahlitzsch, *Athanasios II, a Greek Orthodox Patriarch of Jerusalem (c. 1231–1244)*, in: *Autour de la première croisade*, ed. M. Balard, Paris 1996, 465 sqq.

²⁴ About history of the Patriarchate of Jerusalem at times of crusaders v., for example, Hamilton, *op. cit.*, 5–329; J. Pahlitzsch, *The Greek Orthodox Church in the First Kingdom of Jerusalem (1099–1187)*, in: *Patterns of the Past, Prospects for the Future. The Christian Heritage in the Holy Land*, ed. T. Hummel, K. Hintlian, U. Carmesund, London 1999, 195–212; *idem*, *Graeci und Suriani*, 61–297; K.-P. Kirstein, *Die lateinischen Patriarchen von Jerusalem. Von der Eroberung der heiligen Stadt durch die Kreuzfahrer 1009 bis zum Ende*

It has been known from several sources that the Greek Orthodox patriarchs of Jerusalem had jurisdiction over the Mar Saba. Its monks, in difficult times for the Christians, used to stay in their Jerusalem *metochion* which was near the Tower of David. Domentijan and Teodosije witness it was also that way at the time of the patriarch Athanasios II.²⁵ As it has already been mentioned, Athanasios played the important role in granting the church of St. John Theologian on Mount Sion to Saint Sava of Serbia.

According to Domentijan's Vita of Saint Sava, the conclusion is that the Serbian archbishop had, in the Jerusalem archpriest, a learned collocutor with whom he could talk about different topics, including canonical and liturgy issues.²⁶ Domentijan paraphrases one of the patriarch's sermons delivered by the Tomb of Christ.²⁷ Recently discovered and published homily of Athanasios II, read on the Sunday of the Myrrhbearers, shows that the mentioned witnessing of the older Sava's hagiographer must not be interpreted as *locus communis*.²⁸

Finally, one Domentijan's statement also deserves our attention, according to which Athanasios II, like Sava, as a young man took monastic vows.²⁹ This biographical datum about the patriarch of Jerusalem has not been known from other sources.

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СВЕТИ САВА СРПСКИ И ЈЕРУСАЛИМСКИ ПАТРИЈАРХ АТАНАСИЈЕ II

Приликом својих ходочашћа у Палестину свети Сава Српски се у више наврата (1229., 1234. и 1235. године) сусретао с јерусалимским патријархом Атанасијем II. Двојица архијереја постали су блиски пријатељи и често су заједно служили литургију код Христовог гроба. На основу Доментијановог „Житија светог Саве“ рекло би се да је српски архиепископ у јерусалимском архијереју имао ученог саговорника, с којим је могао водити разговоре о различитим темама, укључујући канонска и литургијска питања. Доментијан сведочи, такође, да је Атанасије II имао значајну улогу и у вези са Савином ктиторском делатношћу у Јерусалиму, а из списка старог српског писца непосредно или посредно се могу сазнати још неке појединости из живота јерусалимског патријарха, које су остале незабележене у другим изворима. Осим тога, на основу Доментијановог сведочења може се коначно решити и често расправљано питање датума смрти Атанасијевог претходника на архијерејском престолу у Јерусалиму, патријарха Евтимија.

der Kreuzfahrestaten 1291, Berlin 2002.

²⁵ Cf. Marković, *Prvo putovanje* (Zograf 29), 57 (with sources and literature).

²⁶ *Domentijan*, 286

²⁷ *Domentijan*, 300.

²⁸ For text of that homily v. Pahlitzsch, *Graeci und Suriani*, 270–289, 359–382.

²⁹ *Domentijan*, 286.

