

## **Branislav Cvetković**

### **Franciscans and Medieval Serbia: the Evidence of Art**

Sporadic presence of the Franciscans in medieval Serbia was due to the latter's strict Orthodox Orientation. However, during the 13<sup>th</sup> C. their activity has been significant as their main benefactor was the Serbian queen Helen, herself of the Western origin. The sources provide various data on her restoring Roman Catholic monasteries in the Littoral, and she built her own foundation, the monastery Gradac, in Gothic style. The friars assisted royalty to combat heretics. In the 14<sup>th</sup> C. contacts would lessen although the chief architect of Dečani was Vita, the Franciscan friar again. In the 15<sup>th</sup> C. with the Ottoman advance, the religious strife between the Orthodox Christians on one side and the Roman Catholic Christians on the other unfortunately became more serious which may have resulted in extreme visual propaganda as argued by an enigmatic fresco in the monastery Jošanica. On the other hand, there were other, more interesting examples with mixed Eastern and Western elements as in the Virgin's church in Mržep (Gulf of Kotor).