

## ***Manastir Mileševa***

Country or territory:  
SERBIA AND MONTENEGRO  
REPUBLIC OF SERBIA

Name of organisation  
compiling the information:  
Institute for the Protection of  
Cultural Monuments of Serbia, Belgrade

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Name and address of building(s) or site:



MANASTIR MILEŠEVA, Mileševo,  
Prijeopolje

Inventory reference number(s):

CR – SK 161, 1947/78;

Main date(s):

1218/19 (Years of building); 1237 (Laying of  
St. Sava earthly remains); 1544 (Mileševa  
printing mill started); 1863/68 (Restoration  
of the Monastery)

Current use(s):

Orthodox Monastery

Significance:

The Mileševa Monastery is an architectural historical monument, but also an archaeological site where systematic research started in 1980. The archaeological findings of the past years are modest in amount, but of great significance for the understanding of the history of the monastery and its monastic life.

From the architectural point of view, the church belongs to the “Ras” mediaeval style. The building has a typical layout, with slanted facade walls (northern and southern) toward west, and a composition of exceptional harmony and balanced proportions.

The Mileševa Monastery is one of the most remarkable spiritual and artistic centres of the Serbian people. Despite its continuous deterioration over many centuries, it preserved a fair part of the original frescoes, which today stand out in their great beauty and original expression. Among the main motifs represented (13<sup>th</sup> century) are the Christian dogma, portraits of the rulers of the Nemanjić Dynasty: Simeon Nemanja, King Stefan Prvovenčani and sons Radoslav, Vladislav and especially Saint Sava.

Systematic archaeological research started in 1980 and resulted in significant knowledge about the spatial structure of the monastery. Remains of buildings from the 13<sup>th</sup> century and parts that were built in later reconstructions in the 15<sup>th</sup>, 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> century were also found. Beside residential buildings, the foundations of the surrounding wall were found, as well as an entrance tower in the southeast, a tower in the north, remains of a monastery refectory etc., contributing to the original spatial distribution of the monastery.

Some more recent buildings are also preserved: the little dormitory (1864), the big dormitory (1884) and the water mill (1865), with its restored wooden bridge over the Mileševka River. The little dormitory is an original architectural accomplishment of exceptional value, due to its

spatial and functional organisation and construction characteristics, as well as the quality of its craftwork in wood carving.

From the time of its foundation, the Mileševa Monastery is an important spiritual and cultural centre with scriptorium and library where original works of Serbian literature were copied. In 1544, one of the first printing houses was established here. It is also a Mausoleum, as it contains the grave of St. Sava, which is visited by a large number of pilgrims. Owing to the development of a cult of St. Sava, the area acquired importance, rulers were crowned in the Monastery (Tvrtko in 1377) and Mileševa became the centre of Serbian spirituality, culture and tradition. It was respected by Moslems, who believed in the healing powers of the remains of St. Sava.

A fairly preserved natural environment adds to the character and beauty of the Monastery. The immediate surroundings of Mileševa, in fact, are dominated by the canyon of the river Mileševka, with mediaeval fortifications on the rocky top and monastic cells high above the river. The entire area is protected as a natural, cultural and historic complex.

#### Categories of significance:

Of outstanding national importance

The Mileševa Monastery is a cultural property of exceptional national significance (the Protection Service believes that, if certain conditions were met, this cultural property could be nominated for inscription on the List of the World Heritage.)

#### Categories of ownership or interest:

The Monastery Mileševa is the property of the Serbian Orthodox Church and is the most important church of the orthodox community in the valley of the Lim River.

#### Documentation and bibliographic references:

##### Bibliography

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5. Svetlana Mojsilović-Popović, *Istraživanje srednjovekovnog manastira – manastir Mileševa*, Saopštenja XV (1983) 25-33.
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14. Emina Zečević, *Istraživanje grobnice kralja Vladislava*, Saopštenja XXII-XXIII (1991) 113-126.
15. Srbojjub Živanović – Vojislav Letić, *Mošti srpskog kralja sv. Vladislava Nemanjića*, XXII-XXIII (1991), 127-129.
16. O. Kandić – S. Popović – M. Lukić, *Manastir Mileševa, konzervatorski i istraživački radovi 1986-1991*, Glasnik 16 (1992), 91-95.
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18. O. Kandić, S. Popović, M. Lukić, *Manastir Mileševa, istraživački i konzervatorski radovi u 1992. godini*, Glasnik DKS 17 (1993), 73-86.

#### Condition:

The Monastery Church – The building is in good condition after the conservation works. Minor interventions are still needed on the facade, on walls above the pavement, changing of windows in order to improve the ventilation of the inside space.

Little dormitory – Not in satisfactory condition; there is damage in the roof cover, wooden elements, parts of horizontal structures and plumbing installation.

Big dormitory – Apart from the big facade walls, the other parts of construction are worn out, especially the roof and horizontal structures. The building awaits full reconstruction after an archaeological research is carried out.

Old inn – The building is protected with a temporary roof construction. Repair and revitalisation started and about 15% has been completed.

Monastery complex – The Monastery area is seriously endangered by illegal building at the mouth of the rivers Mileševka and Kosatica; the illegal execution of a fish pond changed the morphology of the space on the west of the river mouth; the mini hydro power plant is endangered by illegal interventions on the mill; works on the road immediately by the monastery walls are not finished, leaving piles of mud and stones; a cafeteria and cooperative building does not fit in that space by its purpose and especially by its inadequate look – its demolition is foreseen.

Environment – There is a tendency towards the expanding of illegal building of individual houses. The fortified town of Mileševac is in bad condition and interventions are needed to prevent the collapse of all of some portions of the walls.

#### Risk:

The main risk to the monumental complex of the Mileševa Monastery are the illegal and unprofessional works undertaken by the management of Mileševa Eparchy. There is a risk, also, from illegal building that is not sanctioned and could affect the landscape.

#### Technical assessment and costing:

Planned activities for the Monastery Mileševa mainly consist in conservation. The objective is to protect the above-mentioned values, the proper re-use of the buildings and ensure their adequate presentation. Conservation works should be followed by activities to control illegal construction as well as the elaboration of appropriate urban planning instruments.

Ownership:

The Monastery is a property of the Serbian Orthodox Church.

Occupation:

The monument is continuously occupied. A religious building in public use.

Management:

The Mileševa Eparchy is responsible for the management of the site.

Summary:

The complex is of exceptional historical, aesthetic and religious importance. It is partially conserved, with considerable risk of losing its authenticity in the near future, due to the lack of adequate care. The risk concerns also the natural environment.

Sign. and date:

Miladin Lukić  
March 5, 2004