The influence of the legend of Barlaam and Iosaph in old Serbian literature is reflected at two levels: in the life of St. Sava himself including relations to his father, his older brother and his nephew; and in the knowledge and awareness of later biographers Teodosije and Danilo of parallels between the legend and St. Sava's life. Teodosije's hagiography of St. Sava shows it indirectly through the similarity of language and descriptive metaphors, while Danilo refers explicitly to the legend of Barlaam and Iosaph.

Common features between Barlaam and Iosaph, an apocryphal work in the form of a povest¹ and the life of Sava/Rastko Nemanjić (1175-1235) are the scope of this article.

The Life of St. Sava written by Teodosije, Sava’s biographer, consists in the manner of Barlaam and Iosaph of three parts: (a) Sava’s heritage and his childhood; (b) his activity; and (c) his death and canonization. Rastko, which was Sava’s name before he became a monk, was the youngest son² of the Serbian ruler

² The characterization of Sava and Iosaph as children is similar in lexis and metaphor. Teodosije wrote about Sava: "The child was fair and happy in soul, excelling in studies, amazing with his mind for a child’s age. Everybody kept saying "Something wonderful will happen." Teodosije, Zitije Svetog Save (Beograd: Srpska Književna Zadruga, 1984), p. 8. [The translation from Danilo’s and Teodosije’s Zitije is the author’s.] Damascene describes Iosaph: "... and was as fair and well favored in mind as in body, intelligent and prudent, and shining in all excellencies, to his teachers he would propound such questions of natural history that even they marveled at the boy’s quickness and understanding, while the king was astonished at the charm of his countenance and the disposition of his soul.” John Damascene, Barlaam and Iosaph, trans. G. R. Woodward and H.
(great Župan) Stefan Nemanja and his wife Anna. Stefan and Anna were becoming quite old. Anna had stopped having children; they prayed to God to give them a son who will be "...an inheritor of our country..." and pledged chastity after the child was conceived by divine intercession. Rastko was born in 1175 and died in 1235. Teodosije emphasized Rastko's early religious leanings. When he was fifteen years old his father gave him a region to rule in his kingdom. He did not find any pleasure in his duties as a ruler, nor did he enjoy the pleasurable life of his friends. He devoted himself instead to the reading of holy books. When he was seventeen his parents wanted him to marry, but he refused.

Soon afterwards a monk from Mount Athos, sent by divine providence, came to his father's court, met Rastko and told him about monastic life on Mount Athos. Rastko's imagination was stirred by tales of the ascetic lives of monks living in monasteries on Mount Athos and he decided to leave Serbia and his father's court without his father's knowledge. Under the pretext of going on a hunt, he and the visiting monk left for Mount Athos. His father, Stefan Nemanja, was worried and concerned that his original plans for his son to become a ruler and be married had failed. Alarmed that his son might have chosen to become a monk, he sent his horsemen to apprehend Rastko and bring him back to Serbia. The horsemen reached Rastko in the monastery of St. Pantaleimon on Mount Athos, but Rastko succeeded in putting them off until the act of monastic tonsure was performed. Rastko became the monk Sava. By that time there was no question of bringing Sava back. All that the horsemen could show to his father Stefan Nemanja were his worldly clothes and the locks of his tonsured hair. There was sorrow in the king's court when the sad news arrived. Stefan Nemanja, still unreconciled to his son's decision, wrote to him imploring him to come back. Sava wrote back to his father saying that the only way his father could see him was to follow in his footsteps and come to Mount Athos himself. Stefan Nemanja hesitated for a while, then accepted his son's advice, settled in Mount Athos, and took his monastic name Simeon.

In 1196, after his arrival at Mount Athos, he and Sava visited different monasteries and built the Serbian monastery Hilandar. After his father's death in 1200, Sava left Mount Athos


3. Teodosije, Žitije, p. 6.