

*Milan Kašanin and his Discoveries in Stone*

*Summary*

This essay is focused on the analysis of the book *Kamena otkrića (Discoveries in Stone)* by the Serbian art historian and writer Milan Kašanin (born February 21, 1895 in Beli Manastir, died November 22, 1981 in Belgrade). Kašanin was one of the leading scholars in the field of the Serbian medieval art and literature. His first texts on the topic date from the mid-1920s. His book on the Serbian medieval literature *Srpska književnost u srednjem veku (Serbian Literature in the Middle Ages)* was published in 1975 and his book on Serbian medieval visual arts, *Discoveries in Stone*, in 1978. A prolific writer with a dozen books on literary history and several published as his own literary works, Kašanin also held distinguished positions of museum curator and director. This includes his appointment as the first director of the Museum of Prince Paul (later the National Museum, Belgrade) in 1939 and in 1952 as the first director of the Gallery of Frescoes (Galerija fresaka, now part of the National Museum, Belgrade). Kašanin wrote extensively on the art practices of various artists, groups and eras, yet his most significant contribution in the field of art history are his numerous texts on the topic of the Serbian medieval visual arts. A number of such texts published in scholarly publications between 1938 and 1969 were gathered under the umbrella title *Discoveries in Stone*. The avant-garde and influential characteristics of Kašanin's *Discoveries in Stone* are three-fold: his methodology in the artwork analysis, his idea of art and literature forming a single cultural entity, and his literary style of scholarly writing. Kašanin's unique methodology used in each of these texts is primarily an art history one. Kašanin applied the analytical process used in observing contemporary artworks to Serbian medieval artworks in the process reconstructing the visual arts environment, as well as the relevant historical circumstances of the era. Largely due to the nature of the Byzantine art practices, Serbian medieval artists mostly created their artworks anonymously and in turn mostly remained anonymous. In his reconstructing the visual art practices of the medieval Serbia, Kašanin naturally could not attempt to give these artists a name, but through his analysis he succeeded in giving them a voice. Owing to this, Kašanin's texts published as *Discoveries in Stone* became influential in the Serbian art history writing. In his texts published in *Discoveries in Stone* Kašanin frequently correlates the Serbian medieval literature with the Serbian medieval visual arts thus creating one whole that cannot be fully analysed and understood if considered apart. In his scholarly writing Kašanin applied his unique literary style. This makes *Discoveries in Stone* a literary work.

*Keywords:* Milan Kašanin, art history, literature, Serbian medieval art.