During the 19th and the beginning of the 20th century an important part of Russian propaganda and pro-Russian sentiment on the Balkans was connected with visual culture. Especially sacred visual culture became a powerful tool for spreading the Slavophile ideology. Pro-Russian propaganda was connected with the transfer of icons, church buildings in Russian style and educating Balkan artists in Russia.

Since the Ottoman conquest, Russian emperors donated numerous icons, books and vestments to the Orthodox churches on the Balkans. During the 19th century Slavic charitable committees organized the distribution of books, icons and iconostases among the Balkan Christian population as a sign of Russian support.

Russian ideological and political presence on the Balkans was emphasized through the erection of memorial churches in the Russo-Byzantine style dedicated to the Russian and Balkan soldiers fallen in the wars against Ottomans. In the capital of Bulgaria, Sofia, the church of St. Alexander Nevsky was built according to the design of the architect Alexander Pomerantsev. Russian architect Mikhail Prebrazhensky made a project for the church of St. Vasilije Ostroški in Nikšić/Montenegro. Another important example of Russian visual culture on the Balkans is a church at Gornji Adrovac, dedicated to Nikolaj Rayevski.

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Ideology and Transfer of Art: Russian Visual Culture on the Balkans

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