

Luka Mičeta

The Nemanjić Dynasty of Serbia

BIOGRAPHIES

Editor
Zoran Kolundžija

Luka Mičeta

The Nemanjić Dynasty of Serbia

BIOGRAPHIES

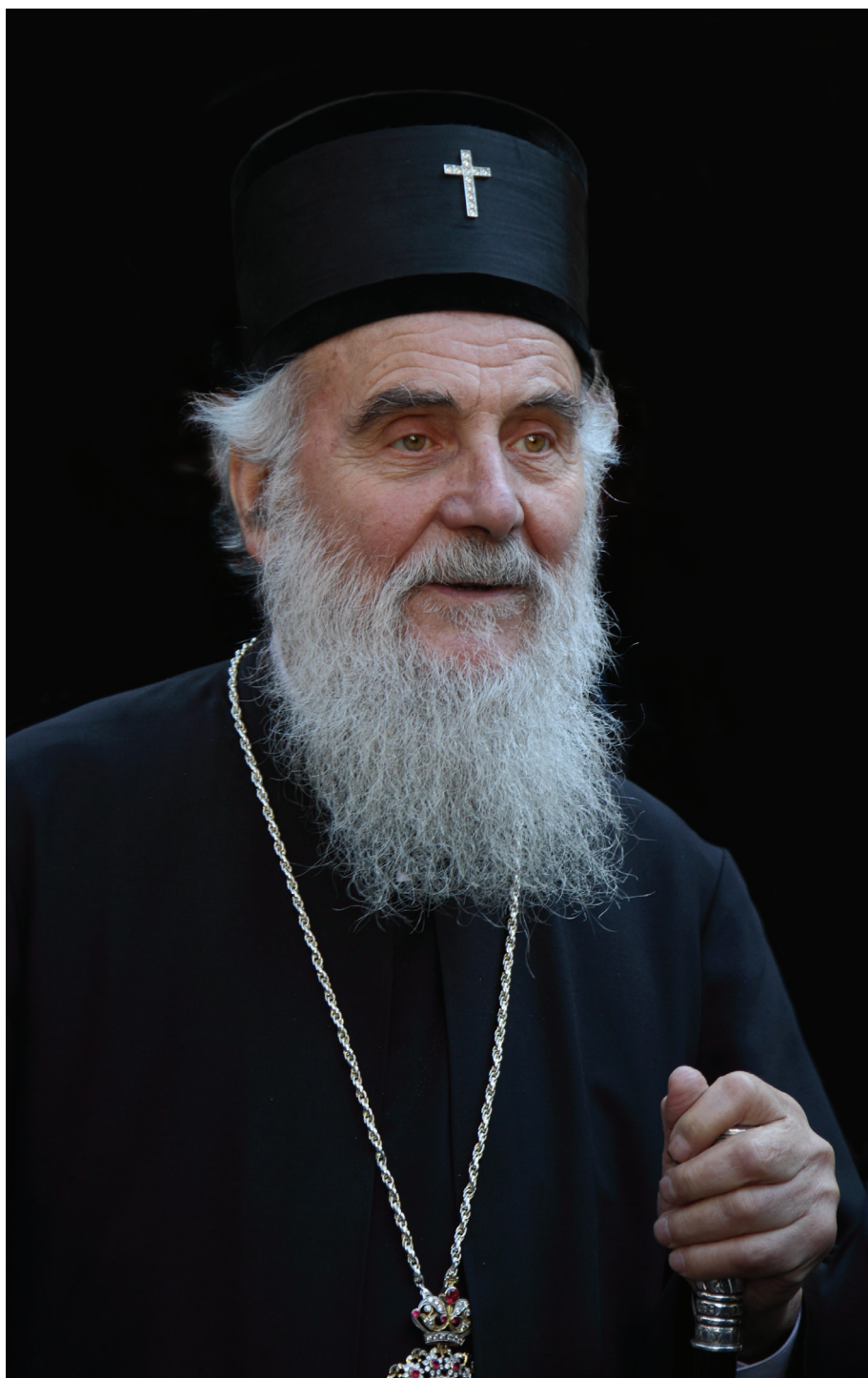


The story of the golden Middle Ages of Serbia

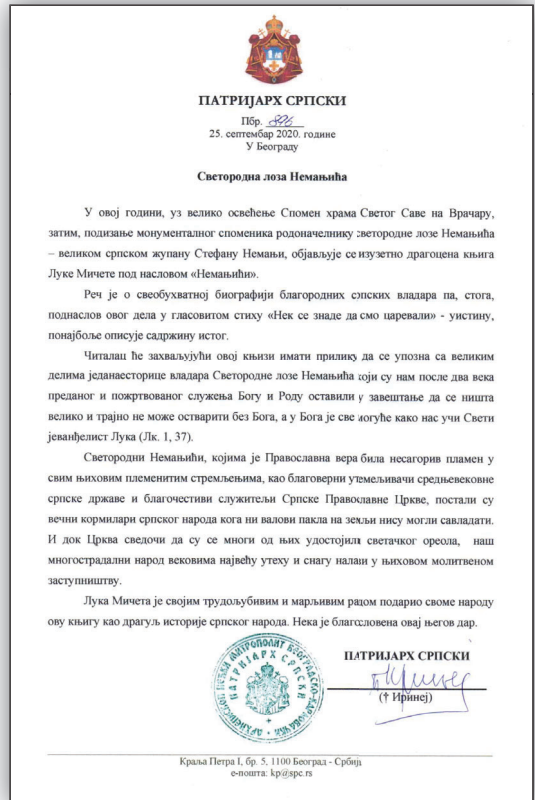
Translated from Serbian by
Angelina Čanković Popović
Goran Petrović (Part Three)



PROMETEJ
Novi Sad



Serbian Patriarch Irinej (1930–2020)



*Letter of Blessing for the Serbian edition
by His Holiness late Patriarch Irinej
(translation below)*

SERBIAN PATRIARCH

Ref.no. 896
25 September 2020
In Belgrade

The Saints-Yielding Nemanjić Lineage

In this year, in addition to the grand consecration of the Memorial Saint Sava's Cathedral at Vračar and, then, the erection of the massive monument to the founding father of the saints-yielding Nemanjić lineage – Grand Zhupan of Serbia Stefan Nemanja, an outstandingly precious book titled “Nemanjići” by Luka Mičeta is to be published.

This is a comprehensive biography of the worshipful Serbian rulers, and therefore, the subtitle of the work from the well-known verse “Let it be known that we used to be an imperial power” actually offers the best description of its content.

Owing to this book, the Reader will have an opportunity to get familiar with the great deeds of eleven rulers from the saints-yielding lineage of the Nemanjićs who have – after two centuries of devoted and self-sacrificing service to God and Kindred – bequeathed to us the awareness that nothing great and lasting can be accomplished without God, for with God everything shall be possible, as the Holy Evangelist Luke teaches us (Luke, 1:37).

The saints-yielding Nemanjićs, to whom the Orthodox faith was an inextinguishable flame in all of their noble endeavours, as the devout founders of the medieval Serbian state and pious servants of the Serbian Orthodox Church, became the eternal steerers of the Serbian people that could not be overpowered by the waves of hell on earth. And while the Church vouches for many of them to be worthy of the saintly aureole, our overly-suffering people have for centuries been finding the greatest solace and strength in their conveyance of prayers.

Through his zealous and diligent work, Luka Mičeta has presented his people with this book as a gem of the history of the Serbian nation. Blessed be this gift of his.

SERBIAN PATRIARCH
(† Irinej)

CONTENTS

Acknowledgments	13
Foreword	15
Instead of an Introduction.....	19

Part One THE RISE

THE TIME OF GRAND ZHUPANS OF THE NEMANJIĆ DYNASTY

The First Mention of a State Named Serbia.....	29
Zavida – Stefan Nemanja’s Father.....	32
The Rulers’ Name of Stefan and the Baptism of Stefan Nemanja.....	36
Stefan Nemanja – the Grand Zhupan	39
Stefan Nemanja in Captivity at Constantinople.....	43
Europe and the Cathar Heresy	44
Stefan Nemanja and the Bogomils	47
Stefan Nemanja’s Foreign Policy.....	48
The Negotiations between Frederick I Barbarossa and Stefan Nemanja in Niš	50
Stefan Nemanja’s Defeat at the Morava in 1190	55
Rastko Nemanjić, “the Favourite Son” – from Prince to a Monk.....	58
The Marriage of Stefan Nemanjić.....	64
Stefan Nemanjić on the Serbian Throne	66
Chilandari	72
The <i>Typika</i> of Karyes and Chilandari	74
Stefan and Eudokia’s Divorce	76
Stefan and Vukan’s Fight for Rule.....	79
The Sack of Constantinople.....	84
Translation of Stefan Nemanja’s Relics and the Reconciliation of Brothers	91
The Art and Architecture of Nemanja’s Age	94
Studenica – “The Mother of Serbian Churches”.....	99
<i>The Typikon of Studenica</i>	102
Stefan Nemanjić between Epirus and Nicaea	104
Monk Sava and Dobromir Strez	106

Part Two THE GOLDEN AGE

THE NEMANJIĆES AS THE SOVEREIGNS OF ALL SERBIAN LANDS

Anna Dandolo, the First Serbian Queen	113
The Coronation of the First King of All Serbian Lands, Stefan Nemanjić	117
Gaining of Autocephaly for the Church of Serbia	122
Death and Canonization of Stefan the First-Crowned	131
Stefan the First-Crowned – As a Writer and the Founder of Žiča . . .	135
<i>The Nomocanon, or The Rudder</i>	139
Žiča and Its Relics	141
King Radoslav and Archbishop Sava	147
1229: Sava's First Pilgrimage	151
Basileus John III Vatatzes and Sava	157
Vladislav Replaces Radoslav on the Serbian Throne	159
Sava's Stay in Serbia and His Second Journey to the Holy Land . . .	161
Sava's Epistle to Hegumenos Spiridon	166
Sava's Expiration at Tarnovo and the Translation of His Relics to Serbia	167
Uroš I – Nemanja's Third Grandson and the Fourth Serbian King . .	170
Uroš I and Dubrovnik	173
The Contribution of King Uroš I of Serbia to the Liberation of Constantinople from the Latins	176
The Attempt to Marry Milutin to Byzantium's Princess Anna	180
George Pachymeres about the Serbia of King Uroš	181
King Uroš I and the West	183
Byzantium, Serbia and Bulgaria	188
Uroš I and Dragutin: A Conflict between Father and Son	190
The Monasteries of Sopoćani and Gradac	192
Dragutin's Coronation and Abdication	194
Milutin Accedes to the Throne	200
Serbia and Venice – Milutin and Dante	202
Milutin – an Adversary of Byzantium	205
Byzantium's Expedition against Serbia	206
The Joint War Efforts of Milutin and Dragutin	209
King Dragutin and Hungary	212
The Confronted Interests of Dragutin and Milutin	215
All the Spouses of King Milutin	217
One Marriage and Two Empires	220
The Turks in the Service of King Milutin	226

Milutin's Assistance to Byzantium in the War against the Turks	228
Dragutin and Milutin at War.	230
The Reconciliation of the Serbian Kings	233
Chilandari in the Time of King Milutin	236
The Relationship between King Milutin and His Mother-in-Law, the Byzantine Empress Irene.	238
Milutin's Conflict with His Son Stefan.	241
The Death of King Dragutin	243
King Milutin's Death and Stefan Dečanski	248
King Milutin as a Founder/ <i>Ktitor</i>	252
Milutin's Infirmary in Constantinople.	258
King Milutin's Epitaphios.	260
The Cult of, and the Service to, King Milutin	261
King Milutin and the Bulgarians	266
The Second Marriage of Stefan Dečanski and His War against Dubrovnik	269
The Battle of Velbazhd	272
The Death of Tsar Shishman of Bulgaria.	275
The Discontented Serbian Noblemen.	277

Part Three ELEVATION TO EMPIRE

THE FIRST AND THE LAST SERBIAN TSARS: DUŠAN THE MIGHTY AND UROŠ THE WEAK

Dušan's Victory over Stefan Dečanski	283
The Death of Stefan Dečanski.	284
Emperor Dušan and the Cult of Stefan Dečanski.	287
The Miracles of Stefan Dečanski.	292
The Holy King Stefan Dečanski and the Roman Catholic Church . .	295
The Monastery of Visoki Dečani	298
Dušan's Ascension to the Throne	303
The Byzantine Defector Syrgiannes and His Fate.	309
The Meeting of King Dušan and the Byzantine Emperor Andronikos III	313
Kantakouzenos' Escape to Serbia	315
Friendship Put to the Test – The Case of the City of Veria.	322
Clash at the River Vardar.	324
Dušan's Alliance with the Regency of Constantinople	328
Dušan – the Lord of Mount Athos	330
The Marriage of Dušan and Helena	333
The Byzantine Emperor's Description of the Serbian Empress	336

Dušan's Imperial Title.....	340
Dušan – the First Serbian Emperor.....	345
The Relationship Between the Church of Serbia and the Patriarchate of Constantinople.....	350
Dušan's Coronation.....	353
The Latins and Dušan's Coronation.....	356
Anathemisation of Emperor Dušan.....	358
Empress Helena and Emperor Dušan in the Holy Mountain.....	359
Hesychasm – the Foundation of Orthodoxy.....	363
Gregory Palamas and the Serbs.....	369
Murad – Emperor Dušan's Undestined Brother-In-Law.....	370
Emperor Dušan and Popes Clement VI and Innocent VI.....	374
Emperor Dušan and Bosnia.....	381
Byzantium, Emperor Dušan, and the Turks.....	385
The Death of Emperor Dušan.....	387
Emperor Dušan as a Legislator.....	388
Emperor Dušan as a Ktitor.....	394
The First Years of Emperor Uroš's Rule.....	399
The Conflict Between Emperor Uroš and Simeon Nemanjić.....	403
Separatism of the Regional Lords.....	406
The Ottoman Invasion.....	419
Despot Jovan Uglješa and the Patriarchate of Constantinople.....	421
The Battle of Maritsa.....	425
The Death of Emperor Uroš – When “the Serbian Empire... Ceased to Exist”.....	429

SUPPLEMENTS

The Nemanjić Lineage.....	436
The Major Endowments by the Nemanjićes.....	441
States and Rulers.....	473
Afterword.....	479
Selected Bibliography.....	493
Index of personal names.....	537
Index of toponyms.....	561
About the Author.....	571



To my son Aleksandar Mičeta


Acknowledgments

Long ago, Robin Collingwood concluded that the historical past is “the past re-enacted”. It is this very thought of the famous British philosopher and historian which in the best way explains the Nemanjić Age in the history of Serbia.

In this attempt of mine to familiarize the Reader with the significance and the age of the Nemanjić Dynasty – with “the past re-enacted” *hic et nunc* – I have enjoyed help by the eminent Serbian medievalists through their precious advice and support: I am deeply grateful to Mirjana Živojinović, Jovanka Kalić, Ljubomir Maksimović, Siniša Mišić, Radivoj Radić, Marko Šuica, Oliver Tomić, Srđan Pirivatrić, Aleksandar Uzelac, Marko Aleksić, Tamara Ognjević.

For the timely finish of this book, the Author is obliged to generously helpful Veselin Jevrosimović, President of *Comtrade Company*, Zvezdan Terzić, Director General of *FC Red Star*, Mirko Petrović, Chairman of Executive Board at *Dunav osiguranje* Insurance Co., Milovan Klačar, owner of *Eurocem Co. Ltd.*, Darko Bajčetić, President of *MOJ KIOSK Group*, Nebojša Čović, President of *FMP Konzorcijum Ltd.*, as well as to Miodrag Sovtić, my schoolmate, to whom – like in my case – the love for history was conveyed, with great passion and no lesser strictness, by the famed teacher of the First Belgrade Grammar School Mirko Vlahović.

* * *

Special thanks of the Author are due to Vladimir Lučić, MBA, General Manager / CEO and the company  **Telekom Srbija** that made the appearance of this book in its English edition possible.



*Monument to Stefan Nemanja in Belgrade,
sculpture by Alexander Rukavishnikov, unveiled on Jan. 27, 2021*

Foreword

A WORK OF PERENNIAL VALUE

The medieval Serbian history is inextricable from the Nemanjić Dynasty. Over the period of somewhat more than two centuries of the dynasty's rule over the Serbian lands (1166–1371), these lands reached their political zenith and flourished socially, culturally and economically. As adept and adroit politicians, capable and seasoned military leaders, patrons of the Church and arts, founders of magnificent endowments and rulers with state-building vision, the Nemanjićs left indelible imprints behind.

To write biographies of some rulers from the Nemanjić Dynasty is a highly demanding task. It implies professional knowledge of a historian, story-telling skill of a writer, exploratory spirit and the power of imagination. To write a biography of a dynasty is incomparably more demanding. It necessitates the awareness of the spirit of the time and of the geographical region, the European and Mediterranean frameworks of the Serbian history, the geopolitical situation, the role of the Church(es) and spirituality in the life of the medieval man, but also the capacity to discard the challenges and frustrations of the present day so as not to transfer these onto an age of remote past.

As a journalist by vocation and occupation, and an explorer of the past and historian in terms of his interests and curiosity, Luka Mičeta has responded to those professional requirements more than successfully.

Broad public has known him for a long time as the biographer of some rulers from the Nemanjić Dynasty. Over the past seven years, he has published some exceptionally attention-grabbing books about the founding father of the Dynasty, Stefan Nemanja, about his son Stefan the First-Crowned, who elevated Serbia to a hereditary kingdom, followed by those about King Milutin, whose capability of a statesmen was known far beyond the Serbian borders, about Stefan Dečanski, 'the most unfortunate' of the Serbian kings whose life was marked by eventful and

tremendous temptations, and about Stefan Dušan the Mighty, the first Serbian emperor, who expanded the state borders farther than any one of his predecessors. The last one in the series of these books is devoted to Saint Sava, the founding father of the independent Church of Serbia, the originator of the autonomous Serbian literature and the first identified-by-name Serbian legislator whose legacy formed the spiritual identity of the Serbs for a limitless time.

Announced by the Author in a modest wording as a kind of 'breviary', that is, a completion of the earlier books on the rulers of the glorious, saints-yielding Serbian dynasty, this work now in the hands of the Readers is much more than that.

'Armed' with the historians' method, inspired by his spirit of an investigator, erudition and – moreover – his identifiable talent of a man of letters, Mičeta reveals to his Readers the brilliant side of the Nemanjićs, yet also their other, darker side, marked by occasional intrigues and conflicts among the members of the Dynasty.

That is but just the first in a row of qualities that characterize the work. It is important to say that – across the pages which follow below – Mičeta pays attention not only to the most prominent rulers, but also to those members of the Dynasty who are mostly neglected or marginalized in the general historical surveys and works of popular science. That is the case with Nemanja's eldest son Vukan, Milutin's younger son Konstantin who should have succeeded his father on the throne but tragically lost his life in the struggle for rule, as well as with many other, male and female, figures from the Nemanjić lineage.

A lot has been written about the personalities of the Serbian queens and empresses: they not only tied the royal/imperial courts of the Nemanjićs to other ruling houses of the then-contemporary Europe, but asserted themselves in political activities, diplomacy, as endowment-founders and book lovers. With their energy and competences, they would sometimes outperform their husbands.

The book before the Reader's eyes now not only rectifies the specific historical injustice made to some individuals of the Nemanjić lineage and the Serbian female consorts in that age, but also broadens insights of historiography into the domain. For instance, Mičeta persuasively shows that the proposal of the marital bond between the families of Emperor Dušan and the Ottoman Emir Orhan – which was soon given up, though – had

envisaged the marriage of the Serbian emperor's daughter and the emir's son Murad, the same Murad, Ottoman sultan, who was several decades later killed in the Battle of Kosovo. Interestingly, professional historians have failed to give attention to this intriguing detail.

In this brief foreword we shall not mention all the details and curious facts that will be detected and discovered by the Readers on the upcoming pages. What needs to be emphasized is the fact that, like the other works by the same Author, this one is characterized by a careful and critical approach to historical sources and reliance on the rich related choice of bibliographical items that include works of both senior and younger generations of historians. Due to this choice, the inquisitive readers will have an opportunity to understand and get insight into a long gone age when the Nemanjić Dynasty practised their rule and creative powers, and, moreover, to discern historical facts from numerous fallacies and myths which have mostly appeared in our time in connection with the members of the Nemanjić lineage.

The writing manner of these biographies of the Nemanjićs is light and enthusiastic. They are gripping, like historical fiction. On the other hand, they are entirely grounded on historical sources and the knowledge about the past, thus building up a meticulously documented work, one of perennial value and one worth occasional rereading. One can freely say that, due to the said qualities, this book has crowned Mičeta's studies in the Middle Ages and his personal growth – from a biographer of individual Nemanjićs into a true life-historian of the most glorious Serbian dynasty and the 'Golden Age' of Serbia.

Aleksandar Uzelac, Ph.D.

In Belgrade,
on the feast day of the Nativity of the All-Holy Mother of God¹, 2020

¹ That is, on September 21 N.S./8 O.S. The Serbian Orthodox Church still observes the Julian calendar (Old System). – *Translator's note.*

Instead of an Introduction

Then come and receive the sign of holy faith.
Saint Spyridon

Civilisations are not mortal.
Fernand Braudel

The Nemanjićs, the saints-yielding Serbian dynasty, ruled Serbia for somewhat more than two centuries – from the enthronement of Stefan Nemanja² in 1166 until the death of Emperor Uroš V in 1371.

Stefan Nemanja ruled for thirty years (1166–1196); Stefan the First-Crowned for some twenty-nine years (1196–1202 and 1205–1228); Vukan for about three years (1202–1205); Stefan Radoslav for six years (1228–1234); Stefan Vladislav for nine years (1234–1243); Stefan Uroš I for thirty-three years (1243–1276); Stefan Dragutin for six years (1276–1282); Stefan Uroš II Milutin for thirty-nine years (1282–1321); Stefan Uroš III Dečanski for ten years (1321–1331); King and Emperor Stefan Uroš IV Dušan for twenty-four years (1331–1355), and his son, the last of the Nemanjićs on the Serbian throne, Emperor Stefan Uroš V, for sixteen years (1355–1371).

Stefan Nemanja, the founding father of the dynasty, was not only a great ruler but also a great reformer, a visionary. For thirty years he was the governor of the Serbian lands before he, having transferred his authority to his son Stefan, joined a monastic brethren and turned to an

² Aleksandar Loma [Serbian philologist and Indo-Europeanist] thinks that the origin of the personal name of Nemanja “has been questionable for a long time now”, regardless of the fact that it has been known among the Serbs since the 12th century, and, according to the “testimonies provided by the Czech, Lusatian-Serbian and Belarus toponymy, could even be Proto-Slavic”. Although the existence of “the names *Neman* and *Zavid* in ancient time among the Lusatian Serbs indicates a possible gens-implying, that is, dynastic tradition”, the name – Loma says – possibly used to be given to the children born in alien countries (in contrast to the name *Domanëg*, related to *dom* [‘home’] with a prophylactic, protective role).

inner world, to seclusive life, devoted to prayer. He substituted his lustrous cloak with a modest monachal garment, his sword with a cross, his shield with the Gospel Book, the merry and noisy palace with the silence of [the monasteries of] Studenica and Chilandari that echoed stronger than any loud voices. Leaving for the monastery in order to get salvation for his soul, he was saving both his state and his dynasty, infusing new vigour into these. The intrepidity of the warrior and ruler was substituted with no less courage of a monk who in the monastic peace struggled with his own self, far from the eyes of his subjects and buttry cheers.

It was a rise beyond human proportions – on the road to holiness.

In the Holy Mountain [Mt. Athos], he was welcomed by his son Sava, already a highly esteemed monk in the Christian world, distinguished by magical signs, those of a 'God's beacon'. The two most glorious of the Serbian monks were to spend a little more than a year together. In those days they obtained, as "a gift for all times", the "Zion of Nemanja's fatherland" – Chilandari – from the Byzantine emperor. It turned to be the cornerstone of the Serbian spiritual life and culture.

After the passing of Stefan Nemanja, monk Simeon, on the 13th/26th of February, 1199, a unique, centuries-long interlacing of the saint and the ruler began in the spiritual/statesmanship consciousness and, moreover, in the freedom-loving/historical pivotal force of the Serbian nation. One could even say that the glory of monk Simeon's holiness outshined and surpassed the glory of Stefan Nemanja the ruler.

The establishment of the cult of Saint Simeon at the Great Laura of Studenica was the point of departure and the foundation of the rule-related ideology in the dominion of the Nemanjićs. Thus, Stefan Nemanja became a holy ancestor who conveyed the "divine norms" to his subjects – the practice of *imitatio Christi*, which was the prevailing characteristic of the medieval rulers' ideologies.

What Nemanja left to all of his descendants was the message that nothing great and, especially, nothing durable can be achieved without God. For, only that which was built for the glory of the Lord and acquired through the mercy of the Lord has survived, including what the Serbs are today – whether they respect it or not, whether they believe in this or not.

His sons, the first king from the dynastic line Stefan the First-Crowned and the first archbishop of the Serbian Orthodox Church Sava were the propelling force of the statehood-related and spiritual emancipation of