IMAGINING THE RULER'S GENEALOGY IN MEDIEVAL SERBIA

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The paper explores the ways in which medieval Serbian rulers used various forms of genealogical representations in order to demonstrate their political status or ambition. It is striking that in all of them, ranging from the diverse *lineages*, *painted genealogies*, written *monastic* and *lay genealogies*, the rulers were unavoidably depicted as the heirs to the first dynastic saints. In the first three cases they are descended from Saint Simeon, either in company or without his son Saint Sava, whereas in the latter they are the successors of the holy Emperor Constantine the Great. Hence, genealogies embody the medieval epistemology of origins, understood as the source of value and political right.

Keywords: genealogies, epistemology of origins, imaginative memory, Saint Simeon and Saint Sava, Constantine the Great.

Genealogies announce a filiation of an individual or a family and, therefore, represent a form of a family history. As such, they exist in oral as well as literal societies and act as part of endeavours to assert a family's identity. By placing an origin of a particular household in a distinct time and place, its social status and ambitions, often political ones, are revealed.[1]

Medieval genealogies appear in many forms. They might be told, recited or singed, drawn or written. When written, numerous textual communities made it possible for the word on paper to reach even illiterate people.[2] By definition, they are an independent work with a task to herald the origin of a single person or an entire family.[3] Therefore, any bloodline that appears as part of an epic song or an official document would not be considered as a genealogy per se. However, these notes on ancestors are very important since they represent an intermediate stage from the emergence of the need for familial representation to the actual genre.

[1] L. Genicot, *Les Généalogies*, Typologie des sources du Moyen Âge Occidental fasc. 15, Brepols–Tournhout 1975, 35–37.

[2] These communities require at least one person who can read and transmit the message to others, to whom the text is unreachable. It doesn't exclude orality; it incorporates it in the operational mode of the group. Even though the term was coined for heretical movements, it could be applied to many medieval societies, B. Stock, *The Implications of Literacy. Written Language and Models of Interpretation in the Eleventh and Twelfth Centuries*, Princeton 1983, 88–240; idem, *Listening for the Text. On the Uses of the Past*, Philadelphia 1990, especially chapter I (History, Literature, Textuality) and chapter VII (Textual Communities: Judaism, Christianity and the Definitional Problem).

[3] L. Genicot, *Les Généalogies*, 11–12.

At the same time, genealogies represent a mental structure of the the Middle Ages. That is to say, they embody medieval epistemology of origins, where the true value is grounded at the source.[4] For that reason, in the genealogical thinking origin authenticates and authorizes. Hence, the focus is always on the beginning of the family line, since it defines it as a whole. Furthermore, the ever-present attention aimed at the founders resulted with the constant desire to push back the moment of origin which served to equate social status with antiquity.[5] By encompassing important attitudes of its time, these short works could easily influence great numbers of people.

In medieval Serbia, the rise and inclusion of a family's self-consciousness[6] in statements of political ambitions can be tracked to the third generation of the Nemanjić dynasty (1168–1371). As per usual, it happened in the moments of uneasy ascensions to the throne and internal struggles for power. Following these events, *shortened lineages* became part of intitulations in royal charters, *horizontal lineages* were depicted in rulers' endowments, while the motif of the root of the Tree of Jesse in both also signalled the new idea of legitimate dynasty.[7] All the modes of self-representations had in common that the Serbian kings based the right to rule on the sacredness of their first ruler, Grand župan Stefan Nemanja (1168–1196), later known as Saint Simeon.[8] This focus on the beginning of the family's history encapsulates two complementary beliefs. One mentioned is inherent to the genealogical way of thinking, in which the ancestral figure marks an entire family,

[4] R. Howard Bloch points out that genealogies are part of a larger tendency towards finding the true meaning at the source and at the beginning. It can be found in feudal law, where the older the custom the more legitimate it is; in the world chronicles where history is procreation and with that, an extension of God's Creation etc. On the other hand, they mirror an attitude towards an etymology, where true meaning is always the original one. R. Howard Bloch, Genealogies as a Medieval Mental Structure and Textual Form, *La littérature historiographique des origines à 1500. Tome 1* (*Partie historique)*, Grundriss der Romanischen Literaturen des Mittelalters 11, ed. H.R. Jauss, H.U. Gumbrecht, U. Link-Heer and P.M. Spangenberg, Heidelberg 1987, 135–156.

[5] The tendency towards connecting with the most ancient history possible is the strategy deployed in every type of lineages: family chronicles, literary genealogies, the Old French epic and the representations of the family in stained glass and manuscript illustrations. However, in the Serbian case all of the forms are insofar interrelated that they can only be subject of an investigation as a whole, *Idem*, 145–148.

[6] Georges Duby first included the psychology of family and mental representations in the study of genealogies. G. Duby, Remarques sur la littérature généalogique en France aux XIe et XIIe siècles, *Hommes et structures du Moyen Âge*, Paris 1973, 287–298, p. 287–288.

[7] For these forms of genealogical representations in the context of the later historiographical writings see М. Васиљевић, Настанак српских родослова и летописа као последица друштвених и политичких промена, *Иницијал. Часопис за средњовековне студије* 3 (2015) 95–117, p. 97–98.

[8] This is particularly interesting since the memory of everyone who preceded the rule Stefan Nemanja, including the memory of his father and brothers was repressed, С. Марјановић-Душанић, *Владарска идеологија Немањића. Дипломатичка студија*, Београд 1997, 100–110. On the canonisation of the founder of the dynasty and his cult see, Д. Поповић, О настанку култа Светог Симеона, *Под окриљем светости. Култ светих владара и реликвија у средњовековној Србији*, Београд 2006, 41–73 with older literature.

thus making the Nemanjićs a sacred dynasty. The second belief comprises of *beata stirps* legitimacy, where the suitability to rule is based on the holiness which is atavistically transferred.[9]

Whilst having a holy king in almost every generation, the idea of sacred dynasty continued to be substantial for Serbian political ideology. It remained the greatest means of the ruler's legitimisation that, in turn, motivated the burgeoning importance of familial representation. Consequently, *shortened lineages* became the most prominent part of intitulations and the hereditary sacredness was noted in the series of ruler's hagiographies.[10] The same idea was displayed in the monumental painted *vertical genealogies*, modelled by the Tree of Jesse, which also included dynastic lateral branches.[11] However, it should be noted that in both *shortened lineages* and *vertical genealogies* the current ruler was always forthrightly linked with Saint Simeon. Notwithstanding, the latter also integrated meaning behind the hagiographies of Nemanjićs. *Vertical genealogies* were no longer only oriented towards a legitimisation of a particular ruler but, in addition, carried a message of a long living and sacred dynasty by showing, in picture, every canonised member.

Around the same time as these far-reaching changes happened, the notion of the founder of dynasty suffered a significant modification, where Saint Simeon welcomed the company of his son, first Serbian archbishop, Saint Sava. The association of the two very popular and complemental cults rested on the ideal of the symphony between the temporal (secular) and spiritual authority, embodied in one sacred family. It was a long process that included not only liturgical texts, but also royal documents and frescoes in monasteries-endowments.[12] As a result, they formed the cult of a "holy two" and became the bearers of the motif of the "holy root".

Following the painted family trees and various representations of the ruler as an heir to the saints, written genealogies were presumably created during the reign

[9] On the right to rule based on the affiliation in late Middle Ages see A. Vauchez, „Beata stirps": sainteté et lignage en Occident aux 13e et 14e siècles, *Famille et parenté dans l'Occident médiéval*. *Actes du colloque de Paris* (*6–8 juin 1974*), ed. G. Duby et J. Le Goff, Rome 1977, 397–406. Author and R. Howard Bloch both pointed out that the Tree of Jesse was intellectual and pictorial model for the family's self-representation and legitimisation, R. Howard Bloch, Genealogies as a Medieval Mental Structure and Textual Form, 150–151.

[10] М. Васиљевић, Помени предака у повељама Немањића и легитимизација власти, *Иницијал. Часопис за средњовековне студије* 1 (2013) 77–96, p. 83–90. The idea of the holy dynasty is expressed in the series of hagiographies meant to be a "Serbian prologue", promulgated by the work of archbishop Danilo II and his Continuators, Д. Богдановић, *Историја старе српске књижевности*, Београд 1980, 175–180.

[11] Four of these monumental genealogies are saved: in Gračanica, Pećka patrijaršija, Dečani and Matejče. On the transformation of the painted genealogies Д. Војводић, Од *хоризонталне* ка *вертикалној* генеалошкој слици Немањића, *Зборник радова Византолошког института* 44 (2007) 295–312.

[12] See detailed study of the process of the merging of these cults in: С. Марјановић-Душанић, Молитве светих Симеона и Саве у владарском програму краља Милутина, *Зборник радова Византолошког института* 41 (2004) 235–250.

of the last Emperor Stefan Uroš V (1355–1371).[13] Penned under the influence of numerous traditions of depicting the holy lineage, at that time genealogies seemingly didn't have as big political use as before.[14] Further, they were not typical examples of the genre in naming only the family members. On the contrary, they often noted major endowments of Serbian rulers and sometimes brought little biographies.[15] They were all linked by the principle of hereditary succession that served as a structural division of text and a symbol of the passing of time. Therefore, dynastic history was, in fact, history of the holders of the Serbian crown.[16] Finally, the notion of time embodied in procreation marked the transition from liturgical and cyclical to linear time.[17]

The recurring subject of genealogies, next to the naming family members, was almost always connecting the ruler to the renowned churches and monasteries he founded. By naming, often falsely, founders, the sacral topography of Serbian lands was created.[18] The same function had the designation of Serbian bishoprics. Thus, we can note that they were written in church surroundings that highly valued these endeavours. Meanwhile, the secular events are very rarely mentioned; only the royal (1217) and imperial (1346) coronation, which marked a noteworthy change in the status of the Serbian rulers, found their place in these texts.[19] Therefore, they are called *monastic genealogies*.

[13] Most of them were published in Љ. Стојановић, *Стари српски родослови и летописи*, Сремски Карловци 1927, 1–59, with genealogical notes that were included in chronicles on subsequent pages, and Ђ. Сп. Радојичић, Из старе српске подунавске књижевности 1. Родослов сремских Бранковића с краја XV века, *Годишњак Филозофског факултета у Новом Саду* 3 (1958) 159–170.

[14] On the first written genealogies and the circumstances under which they were composed see М. Васиљевић, Настанак српских родослова и летописа, 98–100.

[15] This was the case in most of the European genealogies in Middle Ages. Gradually the content expanded so that female members were mentioned as well as foundations of monasteries, the places of burials and important events. Very rarely they brought only the names, L. Genicot, *Les Généalogies*, 22–23. On the way in which variation, broadening of content and correction in contrast to the mere reproduction form the boundaries of the genre; and on the relation between the constitutive and accompanying function of the genre structure: H. R. Jauss, Theorie der Gattungen und Literatur des Mittelalters, *Generalités*, Grundriss der Romanischen Literaturen des Mittelalters 1, hrsg. M. Delbouille, Heidelberg 1972, 107–138, p. 109–121.

[16] Interestingly, Leah Shopkow shows how dynastic histories grow out of institutional history, in some cases an institution with which family is closely associated, in other cases a political territory. Occasionally, they also acquire exemplary function, L. Shopkow, Dynastic History, *Historiography in the Middle Ages*, ed. by D. Mauskopf Deliyannis, Leiden-Boston 2003, 239–249.

[17] G. Spiegel, Genealogy: Form and Function in Medieval Historical Narrative, *History and Theory* 22/1 (1983) 43–53, p. 50–51. About the liturgical and chronological time during Middle Ages see J. Le Goff, *Histoire et Mémoire*, Paris 2001, 130–131.

[18] One of the oldest texts actually bear the title **Родословїе свѣтыхъ ктиторь и господь срьбскыхъ** (Genealogy of holy ktetors and Serbian rulers), Љ. Стојановић, *Стари српски родослови и летописи*, 2.

[19] The similar case can be found in medieval France, where the first genealogies emerged in private monasteries and/or necropolis of princely families and, therefore, noted specific content that appealed to its population, G. Duby, Remarques sur la littérature généalogique en France, 294.

At the same time, one important shift is mirrored by them. In contrast to the *vertical genealogies*, canonised family members were not all depicted as saints. Of course, the deeds of devotion were celebrated, but these texts do not promote the continual sacralisation of the dynasty. The only two who were mentioned as saints, even though rarely together, were St. Simeon and his son St. Sava. Even further, they are the only ones who receive biographical chapters.

In other words, *monastic genealogies* open with lives of father and son. As expected, it starts with a description of the piety of Stefan Nemanja, his baptism and ktetorship of many churches. During the listing of his major endowments, it is said that he built the monastery Studenica for his remains "where until these days his holy relics lie and stream myrrh for the ones who approach them with faith".[20] The ensuing text tells the famous story of him leaving the earthly kingdom in order to become a monk, his life on the Mount Athos with his son Sava and the erecting of monastery Chilandar. These acts inspired his older brothers to the same deeds, which led to making false links between person and founding.[21] In the oldest texts, after these lines, Stefan Nemanja was compared to "musician, prophet and Emperor David".[22] In fact, the Serbian župan fulfilled the destiny of David who was, by the grace of his humility, King of Jews. The biography is concluded with the statement that Stefan Nemanja ruled by the Grace of God, stating his official title and the lands over which he reigned.

As seen above, the holiness of St. Simeon was mentioned in connection to his mausoleum Studenica, thus intertwining his sainthood and the church as an intrinsically holy place. In other words, the holy relics seemed to serve as an additional sacralisation of the famous monastery.[23] Moreover, it sent another eminent and noteworthy message. By his sainthood, the Serbian crown becomes holy itself, thus marking newly acquired independence of Serbian state.

The following biography of Sava set the stage for the story of the church independence. His life as a monk and his endeavours are represented so that the mounting to the archbishop seat became the only possible outcome of his pious life. As a result, the naming of the dioceses of Serbian archbishopric, including the ones that became part of it later,[24] is the highlight of his biographical section.

[20] **...себѣ же и своимь мощемь вь оупокоєнїе, идеже и до нынѣ чьстние и свѣтїе моци его пребивають невредимѣ и миро многочьстно благовоно истачають вьсемь сь вероу пристоупающимь**…, Љ. Стојановић, *Стари српски родослови и летописи*, 18–20.

[21] For example, in genealogies Zavida is brother of Stefan Nemanja and he founded church of St. Peter and Paul on river Lim. *Idem*, 20–21. Zavida was father of Grand župan Stefan Nemanja and his brother Miroslav was ktetor of the famous church.

[22] …**испльнишѣ се на немь глаголи светаго певца пророка цара Давида**…, *Idem*, 20–23. On the King David as a means of legitimisation during the rule of younger Stefan Nemanja and as a model of ideal ruler see С. Марјановић-Душанић, *Владарска идеологија Немањића*, 100–110, 197–209.

[23] This is probably the reason why some of the manuscripts leave out the mention of his sanctity, noting only that he was buried there, Љ. Стојановић, *Стари српски родослови и летописи*, 19, 46 and many of the later genealogical notes.

[24] Such as bishoprics of Braničevo and Belgrade, *Idem*, 26–27.

Sava's holiness was either related to the focal point of his cult, monastery Mileševa, or to the naming of the third archbishop and his nephew.[25] It is interesting that this mention had the same function as the acknowledgement of the sainthood of his father. In this case, Serbian church was sanctified and, furthermore, the king's title itself, since Sava was the one who carried out the coronation of his brother Stefan, again highlighting the independence of Serbian rulers.

We see that the prominent biographies of dynastic saints served as the means of sanctification not only the dynasty but also the state, church and the king's crown. The rest of the text is comprised of mentions of their successors and their major endowments, so the contrast between the beginning and later parts is conspicuous. Additionally, another remark will prove that the focus on the founders reflected the belief that they were the bearers of dynastic sacredness. Other holy kings were almost never named as such, even though they had widespread cults. For instance, whilst naming endowments of King Stefan Uroš II Milutin (1282–1321) and his son King Stefan Uroš III Dečanski (1321–1331), it is said they built them also for their remnants.[26] It's possible these were echoes of their cults, but that didn't go hand in hand with the genealogical way of perceiving history, so they remained in the background.[27] Therefore, these dynastic histories met the function of traditional historiography, where the continuity was endurance of the origin, whilst uniting all three time dimensions.[28]

The short form of these genealogies made them transferrable either as single texts or as parts of particular manuscripts. Probably thanks to various textual communities at monasteries and princely courts, they obtained a major role in social and political life. The shift in their use is apparent in the next redaction of Nemanjić's family tree. Existing genealogies were employed by Bosnian ban Tvrtko Kotromanić (1353–1377, king 1377–1391) in order to uphold his growing ambition for the title of a king, which he later claimed. In practice, he based his hold on the conquest of some Serbian territories, but that required an ideological explanation. Since he was related to the famous dynasty through a female relative, his branch of the family was added to the existing text. Hence, he was depicted as

[25] *Idem*, 28–29.

[26] *Idem*, 31–33. For example: **Сьи роди…Стефана крала, третїаго Оѵроша, иже сьзда красноѵю црьквь светаго вьзнесенїа господна при реце Би(стри)це, Дечани, идеже чьстнїе мощи его почивають**. (He bore…King Stefan Uroš III, who built entrancing church of The Holy Ascension on the river Bistrica, Dečani, where his revered remains rest)

[27] This will change in later redactions, thanks to the reactualisation of the cult of king Stefan Uroš III Dečanski. *Idem*, 34. Afterwards, with many interpolations and mixing of historiographical genres others were also called holy, but that was part of another process not related to the imagining of ruler's genealogy. For these developments, illustrated on a particular genealogical note see М. Васиљевић, Генеалогије између историје и идеологије: пример порекла кнегиње Милице, *Историјски часопис* 65 (2016) 77–99, p. 94–96.

[28] J. Rüssen, Annäherung: Funktionstypologie der historiographischen Narration, *La littérature historiographique des origines à 1500. Tome 1* (*Parte historique*), 40–49, p. 42–44.

an heir of the Nemanjićs, holders of the Serbian crown and rulers of the Serbian lands.[29] This separate genealogical note demonstrates several distinct features of genealogies. The first one is the almost inevitable political use of lineages in the contest for power and ideological heritage, which is not a solely Serbian phenomenon.[30] Related to that is the reversion to the female relatives in the absence of the male ones as the transmitters of family's charisma.[31] The last feature is their dynamics and constant changing in nearly every generation, their potential "living" quality.[32]

This quality is most notably visible in the next stage of the development of genealogies. Since the Serbian prince and despot Stefan Lazarević (1389–1427) is the last person mentioned in numerous texts, it is around his reign or shortly after that we can date them. One of the many functions of new genealogies is the portrayal of the Despot Stefan as a legitimate heir of Stefan Nemanja. The motif is depicted by naming his mother Princess Milica a descendant of Prince Vukan, the older son of Grand župan Nemanja (compare Fig. 1 and 2). Even though this short lineage, added to the text after the time of ban Tvrtko, is probably falsification, it is important because it shows the relevance of genealogies in a person's representation.[33]

Secondly, by adding a text at a beginning these genealogies display the notable transformation of the approach to a family's past. The forefather of Serbian rulers was found in the family of the holy Emperor Constantine the Great. According to genealogies, the Serbian dynasty originated from Constantia, sister of Constantine the Great, who was married to his co-ruler Licinius.[34] From him to the Nemanjićs there are two generations: Licinius – Bela Uroš – Techomil – Stefan

[29] Also, it is striking how swift the transformation of these texts into an ideological tool was. On the reorganisation of genealogies M. Васиљевић, Настанак српских родослова и летописа, 99–101. With that, king had a long line of royal predecessors; he belonged to royal tradition. Therefore, his genealogy constituted his legal title to rule. On this function of genealogies D.N. Dumville, Kingship, Genealogies and Regnal Lists, *Early Medieval Kingship*, ed. By P.H. Sawyer and I. W. Wood, Leeds 1997, 72–104.

[30] L. Genicot, *Les Généalogies*, 36. Here, the history, expressed by genealogies, becomes a by-product of politics, B. Guenée, Y a-t-il une historiographie médiévale?, *Revue Historique* 258/2 (1977) 261–275, p. 267.

[31] The similar cases where female relative connected dynasties, whether it was true or fabricated: B. Guenée, Les généalogies entre l'histoire et la politique: la fierté d'être Capétien, en France, au Moyen Âge, *Annales. Économies, Sociétés, Civilisations* 33/3 (1978) 450–477, p. 461–464. Also see note 51.

[32] L. Shopkow, Dynastic History, 227–228. Every transcription was usually a new redaction, L. Genicot, *Les Généalogies*, 27–28.

[33] The various sources mention undefined kinship of Princess Milica with the dynasty, but they do not confirm the lineage Vukan-Milica. Hence, it was probably fabricated, М. Васиљевић, Генеалогије између историје и идеологије: пример порекла кнегиње Милице, 77–99.

[34] For example: **Сь же благочьстивыи царь Конъстантинь присваѥть къ себѣ цара Лїкїнїа, вьдаваѥть емоу сестроу своюю Конъстанътїю вь женоу іего**…(This pious Emperor Constantine arrogated to himself Emperor Licinius and gave him his sister Constantia for a wife), Љ. Стојановић, *Стари српски родослови и летописи*, 4.

Nemanja. The textual model for the genealogy was probably found in the Italian work *I Reali di Francia* (*The Royalty of France*), a compilation of songs and romans by Andrea da Barberino. The book four is in fact roman *Buovo d'Antona*, whose many episodes take place in Sclavonia, the territory of the contemporary Serbian state.[35] The connection to the present-day Serbian region is presumably the reason for popularity of *The Royalty of France*, since we find translations of this work in old Serbian at the turn of XIV and XV centuries. The genealogy can be found at the end of a sixth book, where Constantine the Great is an ancestor of French, English and Hungarian royal lines. There it is said that Constantine married his sister to his co-Emperor Licinius.[36]

With this, *monastic genealogies* were transformed into the *lay genealogies*.[37] They were usually written under the influence of the favoured courtly romans which for the most part dealt with antique histories, as in the Serbian case.[38] Even these recreations of classical civilisations in the image of medieval society served elevating past and present into a kind of atemporal equivalence, where present was furnished with ancient antecedents.[39] Consequently, under the influence of the renowned courtly literature, the heroic founders were picked among the most prominent protagonists of these works, creating a new sense of legitimacy, power and prestige.

Accordingly, Licinius was chosen as an ancestor of Serbian rulers most likely because he was born in the province of Moesia Superior, which was the new social, political and cultural heart of the Serbian state. Probably bearing in mind this connection, in genealogies Licinius was said to be Serb.[40] By placing Serbian

[35] The connection with this work was made by Н. Банашевић, Летописци о пореклу Немањића, *Прилози за књижевност, језик, историју и фолклор* 21/1–2 (1955) 5–13. *Buovo d'Antone* was one of the most popular western romans in Balkans, and for that was often transcribed separately from entire work, idem, *Циклус Марка Краљевића и одјеци француско-италијанске витешке књижевности*, Скопље 1935, 11–15.

[36] A. da Barberino, *I Reali di Francia*, a cura di G. Vandelli e G. Gambarin, Bari 1947, 564.

[37] On the emergence of *lay genealogies* see М. Васиљевић, Настанак српских родослова и летописа, 108–111.

[38] Foreign literature in the XIVth and XVth centuries came across trading routes of Adriatic coast, where Italians were in contact with Catholic population from Dubrovnik, who in turn traded with hinterlands. During that time, we find many translations of the popular books such as *Roman of Troy*, *Tristan and Isolde* and already mentioned *I Reali di Francia*. The translations in modern Serbian language *Роман о Троји; Роман о Александру Великом*, прир. Р. Маринковић, Београд 1986; *Повест о Тристану и Изоти*, прир. И. Грицкат, Београд 1988. For some of the romans it is not known whether they were translated from Greek or Italian, which is the case with the *Roman of Alexander*: *Српска Александрида*, прир. Р. Маринковић и В. Јерковић, Београд 1985; Р. Мариновић, *Српска Александрида. Историја основног текста*, Београд 1997.

[39] G. Spiegel, *Romancing the Past. The Rise of Vernacular Prose Historiography in Thirteenth-Century France*, Berkeley and Los Angeles 1993, 104–105.

[40] In older manuscripts, he is "some nobleman Serb, named Licinius" and in later ones he is "Serbian emperor", Љ. Стојановић, *Стари српски родослови и летописи*, 6–7. Of these notes in the context of the Late Antique heritage, С. М. Ћирковић, Путеви и токови рецепције античког наслеђа у средњовековној Србији, *Трећа југословенска конференција византолога. Крушевац 10–13. мај*, ур. Љ. Максимовић, Н. Радошевић и Е. Радуловић, Београд–Крушевац 2002, 1–8, p. 7.

identity in Late Antiquity, the sense of continuity of the rule over a Serbian land was created. This new view of dynastic history shows that the political identity is hereditary just as virtue and that it goes against the general sense of discontinuity. In such way, the recuperation of the past becomes a process of self-definition.[41] The need for this kind of reinvention was born in the present-day political trials and constant wars with the Ottomans, which resulted in the gradual decrease of the territory of Serbian despotate. By re-expressing a paradigm of origin, understood as the source of value and political right, an attempt to nullify the actual decline is revealed.[42]

However, even though Licinius is named as the male ancestor of Serbian dynasty, the central figure of these genealogies is Constantine the Great for is the one who, as a forefather, receives an entire biographical section.[43] Although the content of chapters differs from manuscript to manuscript, the main focus is on the civil wars he undertook against his co-rulers: Maximian, Maxentius and Licinius.[44] As could be expected, the Battle of the Milvian Bridge had a distinguished place in the portrayal of Emperor Constantine. With that he becomes "the champion of a new faith, pious, meek and stealthy ruler".[45] Moreover, few note the foundation of Constantinople and the trip to Jerusalem his mother Jelena took to find the True Cross.[46]

What is striking in this chapter is that Licinius remained the negative character in the story of Constantine the Great. He was the prosecutor of Christians, torturer of his daughter Irina (in some texts daughter of the holy emperor) and others. After the prolonged tolerance of such actions, he was decapitated by Constantine himself. We see that the official narrative of the deeds of Constantine the Great was not changed in the favour of the ancestral figure of Licinius. He remained the personification of the prosecutions, which were, according to these texts, over after his death. This brings us back to the exemplary

[41] "…the creation of a sense of continuity between the classical past and medieval present was an act of intellectual will…It required, as a basis for its success, the conversion of the "other" represented by the ancient world into a fictive "sameness"…into a medieval identity", G. Spiegel, *Romancing the Past*, 103.

[42] *Idem*, 224–225.

[43] It is interesting that even one Albanian nobleman Konstandin Muzaka used this genealogy in order to show how, by being related with the Serbian dynasty, his family descendent from Emperor Constantine, Н. Банашевић, Одјеци Запада у српској књижевности средњег века, *Живи језици. Часопис за стране језике и књижевност* 1/1–2 (1957) 5–14, p. 13.

[44] One of the later genealogies dedicates a lot of attention to the marriages that connected all four rulers into one family, Љ. Стојановић, *Стари српски родослови и летописи*, 2–4.

[45] **Сьи Конъстанътинь царь бысть моужь благонъравеїмь кротькь, тихъ, любе благочьстїе, пособе родоу хрїстїанскомоу**. *Idem*, 6.

[46] This was probably the reflection of the cults of St. Constantine and his mother Jelena. These subjects were recently examined several papers in: *Константин Велики у византијској и српској традицији*, прир. Љ. Максимовић, Београд 2014.

functions of dynastic histories, which provided both models to imitate and to avoid.[47]

Moral stance in the approach to a family's past was one of the most prominent traits of the *lay genealogies*. [48] There, the commendable predecessors displayed virtues that their heirs should embody. Yet again, it is demonstrated that different parts of any given genealogy can have different social function.[49] Hence, we can see why Constantine the Great is the one who received the biographical chapter and why was he considered an ancestor.[50] By being related to the most Christian ruler, also a saint, Prince and Despot Stefan Lazarević could not have had a better role model and more illustrious forerunner.

Since the most important connections between Constantine the Great and Despot Stefan were made by women, they were also maternal genealogies. Maternal genealogies were, in fact, a frequent occurrence in Medieval Europe. They appeared most often in *lay genealogies* whenever there were no male siblings to transmit lands and noble blood.[51] Furthermore, by means of typological interpretations between distant past and present, Stefan Lazarević was equally an heir of Constantine the Great and of Nemanjićs.[52] To illustrate the importance of this idea, it will be pointed out that Prince Lazar, husband of Princess Milica and father of Despot Stefan, was not even mentioned, even though, after his decapitation at the battle of Kosovo in 1389, his cult was one of the greatest means of legitimisation of his son.[53]

The following parts of genealogy also give interesting insights into the ways in which genealogies were constructed. The son of Constantia and Licinius is named Bela Uroš, whose name was philologically interpreted. He is said to have had white hair and that he married the daughter of the French king Anna.[54] This

[47] L. Shopkow, Dynastic History, 241–244.

[48] G. Duby, Remarques sur la littérature généalogique en France, 295–298.

[49] D.N. Dumville, Kingship, Genealogies and Regnal Lists, 87–88.

[50] On the transformations of the ideological systems under the influence of foreign cultures G. Duby, Histoire sociale et idéologies des sociétés, *Faire de l'histoire*, sous la dir. de J. le Goff et P. Nora, Paris 1986, 147–168, p. 153–154.

[51] Even though many women appear in the first written genealogy of Nemanjićs, they were mostly foreign princesses who didn't bring any land. What these mentions meant to the text was probably emphasizing the affiliation between Serbian and foreign ruling families, thus creating a larger European family of dynasties. Maternal genealogies are only the ones where female member "change the course of history". One of the prominent examples are many noble lineages where Emperor Charlemagne was made an ancestor of many families, idem, Structures de parenté et noblesse dans la France du Nord aux XIe et XIIe siècles, *Hommes et structures du Moyen Âge*, 267–285.

[52] G. Spiegel, Political Utility in Medieval Historiography: A Sketch, *History and Theory* 14/3 (1975) 314–325, p. 321.

[53] С. Марјановић-Душанић, Династија и светост у доба породице Лазаревић: стари узори и нови модели, *Зборник радова Византолошког института* 43 (2006) 77–95, p. 77–83.

[54] "Belo" in Serbian means white. The information of the marriage with French princess also points out to the *I Reali di Francia* as a source for the genealogy, Н. Банашевић, Одјеци Запада у српској књижевности средњег века, 13–14.

leads us to the dynasty that ruled in Serbian lands in the XIth and XIIth centuries, either Grand župan Uroš I (1112–1145) or Grand župan Uroš II (1145–1161).[55] The name Bela implies either son-in-law of Uroš I, Hungarian king Bela II (1131–1141), or župan's son Beloš, a prominent figure at the Hungarian court. Thus, a collective memory played a substantial part in the creation of these texts.[56] Moreover, his character was tailored to the following rulers by stating the he founded a church dedicated to Nemanjić's dynastic saint, Saint Stephen the Protomartyr. Through Bela Uroš and Tehomil, antique emperors and Nemanjićs were related through a kind of genealogical elision, which in real time spanned for over 800 years.[57]

The aim at the creation of the connection between distant beginning and present can be explained by the work imaginative memory. The term denominates a specific reflection of the past that is both creative and inventive, which evokes often fantastic transformations of reality. That way, imaginative memory implies a dialectic relationship of continuity between two temporal spaces. In moments of stress, threatened existence or independence or in times of general discontinuity groups concentrates on self-definition.[58] By creating continuity, sometimes by rediscovery of the past, the identity is settled and some of the frustrations are calmed. Here the origins too concentrate the constitutive power of imaginative memory.

As it becomes obvious, *lay genealogies* represent a work of imaginative memory in every aspect described. Another facet of imaginative memory is that it was usually fairly easily influenced by objects. The memorials as physical objects could have played an important role in memorializing the past by attaching a commemorative meaning to them.[59] Any type of memorial, such as relic or, rather, the reliquary, could have been a catalysator in creations of foundation legends, hence providing the community with a new identity. It seems that this was also the case with *lay genealogies* in Serbia.

It is known that the right hand of Emperor Constantine the Great was placed in Belgrade, the capital of Serbian despotate. Rebuilt around 1402–1404, the new centre of the state was a site where the old ideological concepts gave way to the

[55] *Историја српског народа 1. Од најстарији времена до Маричке битке (1371)*, ур. С. Ћирковић, Београд 1981, 198–208 (Ј. Калић).

[56] On the collective memory and potential historical background reflected in genealogies Љ. Стојановић, *Стари српски родослови и летописи*, CVI.

[57] On the reduction of the family members: D.N. Dumville, Kingship, Genealogies and Regnal Lists, 87.

[58] Amy Remensnyder created a term imaginative memory in order to examine monastic founding legends in Medieval Southern France. A.G. Remensnyder, *Remembering Kings Past. Monastic Foundation Legends in Medieval Southern France*, New York 1995, 1–4.

[59] Eadem, Legendary Treasure at Conques: Reliquaries and Imaginative Memory, *Speculum* 70/1 (1996) 884–906.

universal, byzantine, ones.[60] This meant that relics were the crucial means of the sacralisation of the city. Remnants of St. Petka, the holy empress Teophano and the emperor's right hand were placed in Belgrade next to the old icon of the Virgin Mary.[61]

Even though the texts from that time do not speak of the emperor's right hand, the reliquary with the Serbian inscription was saved; now placed at The Kremlin Museum.[62] It was taken from Belgrade by Sultan Suleiman the Magnificent and given to Patriarch Jeremiah I of Constantinople. After that, Patriarch Jeremiah II gave it to Emperor Feodor I during his visit to Moscow in 1588. Three canticles of the Feast of Saints Constantine and his mother Helen, celebrated on May 21, are still to be seen on the reliquary. This narrative reliquary could have acted as a stimulus for extracting a genealogy from a beloved roman, in order to make the first Christian emperor a forefather of Despot Stefan Lazarević. Hence, the new relationship between the relic and the despot's legitimacy was created. This shows the power of imaginative memory to re-inscribe the meaning of the monument.[63]

The deeper message behind the constructed genealogy might be revealed in the contemporaneous *Life of Despot Stefan Lazarević* by Konstantin Kostenečki. Written in the years of 1433–1435, this biography is dedicated to Despot Stefan, who wasn't yet canonised, even though the text suggests that there were plans for it. Probably because of the undefined status of the protagonist, this work represents a conflation between genres of biography and hagiography. The title is the one that heralds a life of a saint, such are the ruler's traits he embodies, the miracles following his death and demands for his life to be written. These parts of the text could form a typical life for Synaxarion, the liturgical text for the potential feast. On the other hand, the majority of *The Life* is a historical account of the rule of Serbian despot. The tension between possibly conflicting segments is mirrored by the author himself. He notes that he wrote as a "chronographer with all that follows".[64] Additionally, in order to reconcile these segments, he shaped the events

[60] С. Марјановић-Душанић, Династија и светост у доба породице Лазаревић, 77–95. Author points out that the crucial period in defining new ideological concepts was the time of establishing Belgrade as capital.

[61] For the program of sacralisation of Belgrade, which was essentially Constantinopolian see Ј. Ердељан, Београд као Нови Јерусалим. Размишљања о рецепцији једног топоса у доба деспота Стефана Лазаревића, *Зборник радова византолошког института* 43 (2006) 96–110; eadem, *Изабрана места. Конструисање Нових Јерусалима код православних Словена*, Београд 2013, 169–189, with older literature.

[62] Е. А. Моршакова, Ковчег для десницы святого царя Константина, *Христианские реликвии в московском Кремле,* ред. А. Лидов, Москва 2000, 126–128.

[63] Amy G. Remensnyder also insists on the interstices between relics and reliquary, where the latter could interpret the meaning of the former, but that in turn itself could be reinterpreted by memory, A. G. Remensnyder, Legendary Treasure at Conques, 886–890.

[64] **Лѣтописьць сь прочиими вьсѣми**, Константин Философ и његов Живот Стефана Лазаревића деспота српскога, по двема српско-словенским рукописима, изновице издао В. Јагић,

in order to protect the image of Despot Stefan as an ideal ruler and protector of all Christians. Because of that, the loose attachment to historical truth marks the entire work.

The introduction of *The Life of Despot Stefan* consists of a two-part eulogy. The first panegyric is dedicated to despot himself, while the next one is a laudation to the Serbian lands, people and, in the end, the ruler's lineage.[65] During the laudation, Konstantin Philosopher mentioned two Serbian saints, Simeon and Sava. Their accolade stood for the opening of genealogy that became the pinnacle of the entire prelude. The author announced that he wanted to find the cause for the appearance of Sava, who was equal-to-the-apostles. Then, he wrote that the God saved the blood of Constantine the Great in order to accomplish the imperial and apostolic deeds.[66] And just as Abraham waited for 430 years for a promise to be fulfilled, so did the line of the first Christian emperor.

By definition, the lineage could not be considered a proper genealogy, since it is not an independent work; but, its relation to the examined ones makes it recommendable for the analysis. As with the previous ones, it opens with a brief history of Constantius Chlorus and the description of his conversion to Christianity in Britain. However, the author abruptly switched from naming his co-rulers to the mention of his children. Here it is said that Constantia was married to Licinius, the Serb, whereas the rest of the genealogy follows the described examples.

What is interesting is that in eulogy Constantine was represented as the first Christian ruler, equal-to-the-apostles, sacred emperor, protector of faith and builder of the most famous capital in the world, Constantinople.[67] Throughout the rest of *The Life*, the author insisted on the comparison between Stefan and Constantine, especially during the description of Belgrade, whilst the two capitals are also compared. That is why Belgrade is dedicated to the Virgin, why it is called "emperor's city", had seven mounts and was the image of the Heavenly Jerusalem. The building of Belgrade was considered one of the greatest accomplishments of Despot Stefan, just as Constantinople was of Constantine. Moreover, first Christian

Гласник Српског ученог друштва 42 (1875) 223–328, p. 327. Also, on another place, author addresses to reader and listener that his text is like the one vý carýstvýnўhý knigahý lätopisaniihý, which implies his model for the writing were universal and imperial crhonicles, *Idem*, 262. On the universal chronicles see, K. H. Krüger, *Die Universalchroniken*, Typologie des sources du Moyen Âge Occidental fasc. 16, Brepols–Tournhout 1976.

[65] N. Radošević, Laudes Serbiae. The Life of Despot Stephan Lazarević by Constantine the Philosopher, *Зборник радова Византолошког института* 24–25 (1986) 445–451.

[66] Константин Философ и његов Живот Стефана Лазаревића, 255–258. It is not known whether Konstantin the Philosopher wrote the first and lengthy genealogies. The only thing that can be confirmed is that he is responsible for the short version we find in *The Life*, Ђ. Сп. Радојичић, Константин Филозоф и стари српски родослови, *Зборник института за проучавање књижевности* I, Београд 1951, 57–61.

[67] On Constantine the Great as a prefiguration of Serbian rulers: С. Марјановић-Душанић, Нови Константин у српској писаној традицији средњег века, *Константин Велики у византијској и српској традицији*, 81–98 with older literature.

emperor is the one who leaves a legacy of the apostolic deeds to be carried out, which was done by St. Sava, thus reminding us of the former *monastic genealogies*. We see that the notion of the holy root or, even more, two holy roots, was presented in more detail.

What is interesting, however, is that all of them, Constantine the Great, Saint Sava ad Stefan Lazarević, lived in the time when the Christianity was threatened. This comprises another message of *The Life*. Just as the first two saved it, so will Despot Stefan deliver Christians from the Ottomans, Muslim conquerors. In that way, the historical consciousness presents itself as a correlation of the memory of the past, the meaning of the present and the expectations of the future.[68] In addition, relating Stefan Lazarević and Emperor Constantine here served a presentation of Serbian despotate as an inheritor of Byzantine empire.

Written after the death of Despot Stefan, ideological implications of *The Life* were of importance for his heir, Despot Đurađ Branković. As a nephew of Despot Stefan, his bloodline became as sacred as the Lazarević's one.[69] In subsequent years, additional branches of the families of new despots were added to the genealogies. In later centuries, the content was mixed with the one of stemmas and of chronicles, thus creating a hybrid text.[70] But, in its essence, the message behind genealogies remained the same.

In the end, we can see that no matter the type or the form, in medieval Serbia the rulers' genealogies were always envisaged in the same way. Rulers always represented themselves as descendants of saints, whether it was in *shortened lineages* in charters, *painted* or w*ritten genealogies*. In the first two cases, the predominant focus was on the holiness of the founders, but this was followed as well by continual sacralisation of the dynasty. In the case of *monastic genealogies*, the entire ruling family was depicted as descending from the oldest saints in their bloodline. With the further development, in *lay genealogies*, the saint emperor was chosen as an ancestor, thus creating two holy roots. Finally, these genealogies helped remembering Nemanjićs as a sacred dynasty in the following centuries.

[68] J. Rüssen, Annäherung: Funktionstypologie der historiographischen Narration, 41–42.

[69] On the place *The Life* and the official charters had as a means of legitimisation of despot Đurađ, М. Васиљевић, Генеалогије између историје и идеологије: пример порекла кнегиње Милице, 87–91.

[70] See note 27.

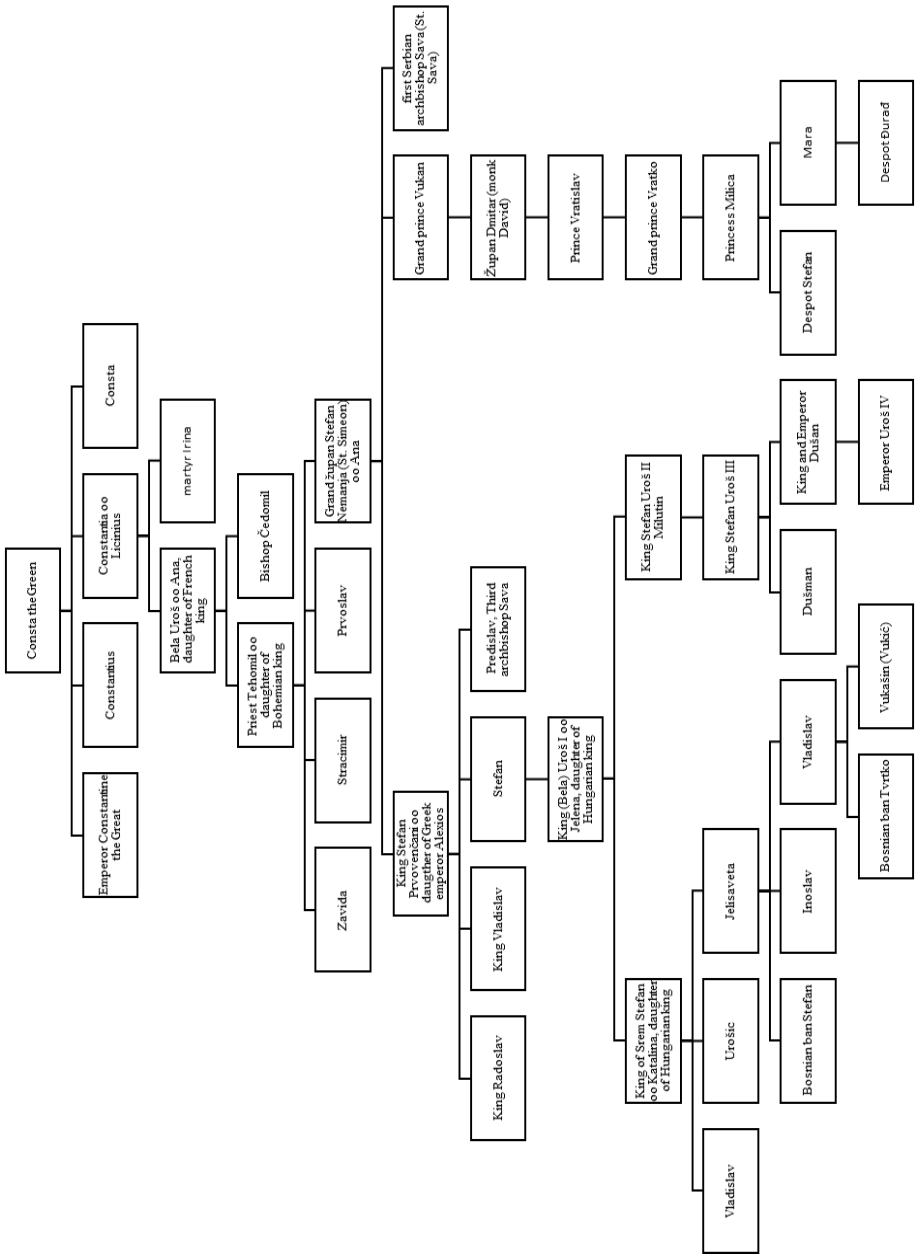

Fig. 1. Genealogies around 1430 (texts differ minimally). Family members are noted in the order of appearance.

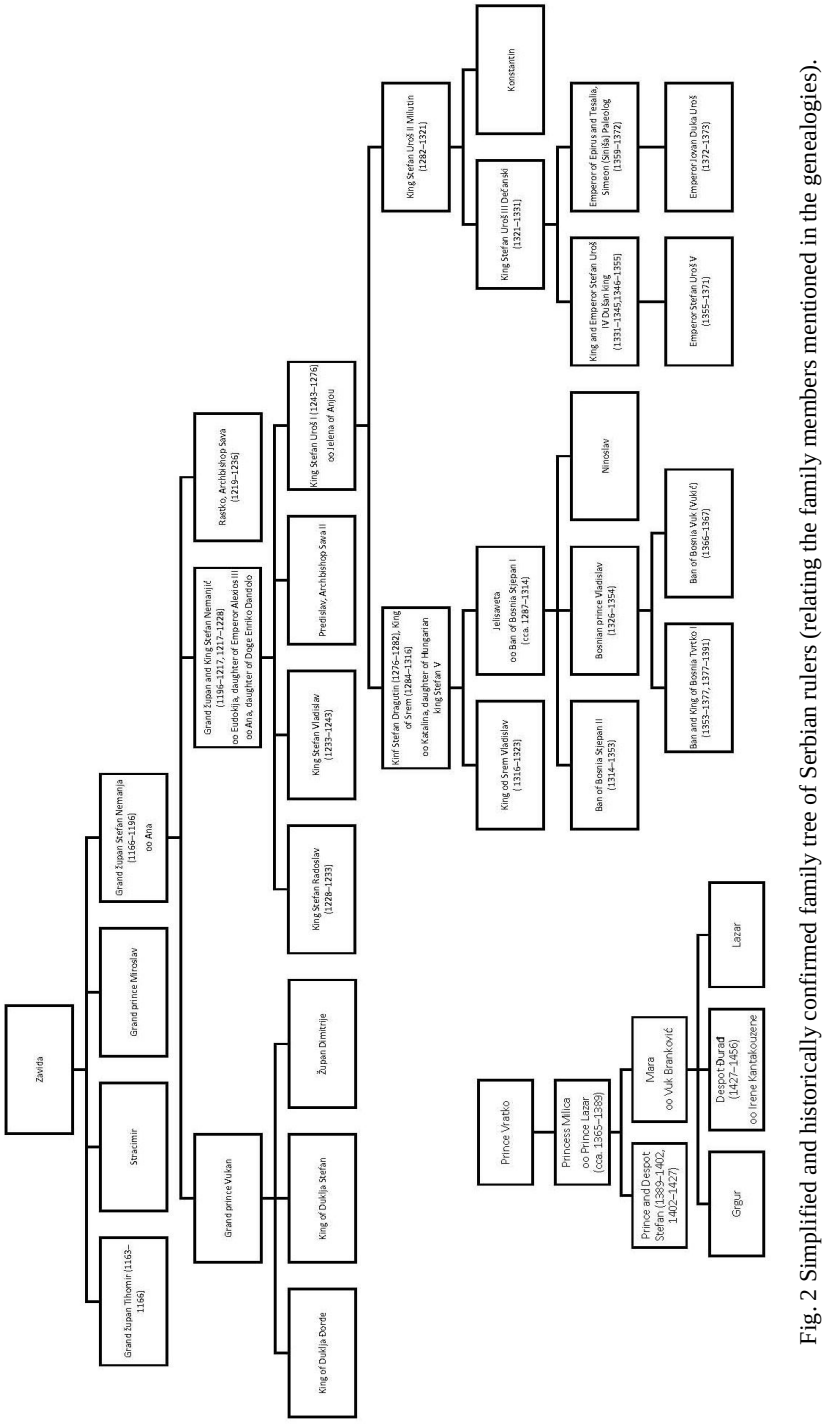

Fig. 2 Simplified and historically confirmed family tree of Serbian rulers (relating the family members mentioned in the genealogies).