

ST CONSTANTINE THE GREAT IN MILEŠEVA REVISITED

The earliest history of monastery Mileševa is still engulfed in mists of uncertainty due to lack of written sources.¹ Much effort has been made in order to decode issues of the site, especially enigmatic archaeology which is conspicuously reflected in irregular ground plan of the church. The corresponding architectural features are therefore usually thought to stand for the remains of an older, heavily remodelled building of Byzantine origin.² If that is the case, such a restoration may have been similar to the one that took place with the monastery church Banja near Priboj, originally a building from the middle Byzantine period, rebuilt and reconceptualized in 14th Century.³

The bibliography on Mileševa wall paintings is also huge, and scholars agree that complex content of its painted programme must have been supervised by the Archbishop Sava I who was crucial political and ecclesiastical personality of the time.⁴ Older frescoes covering both nave and narthex have unani-

¹ For the basic bibliography on Mileševa, see С. Радојчић, *Милешева*, Београд 1967 (20102); В. Ј. Ђурић, *Византијске фреске у Југославији*, Београд 1974, 35-37, 193-194; *Милешева у историји српског народа*, ур. В. Ј. Ђурић, Београд 1987, 69-80; Д. Поповић, *Српски владарски гроб у средњем веку*, Београд 1992, 48-60; Б. Живковић, *Милешева. Цртежи фресака*, Београд 1992; О. Кандић, Д. Минић, Е. Пејовић, *Манастир Милешева. Истраживање и обнова*, Београд – Пријепоље 1995; О. Кандић, С. Поповић, Р. Зарић, *Манастир Милешева*, Београд 1995; Б. Миљковић, *Житија Светог Саве као извори за историју средњовековне уметности*, Београд 2008, 192-198; М. Марковић, *Прво путовање Светог Саве у Палестину и његов значај за српску средњовековну уметност*, Београд 2009, *passim*; *Међународни научни скуп Осам векова манастира Милешева. Зборник радова I-II*, ур. П. Влаховић и др., Милешева 2013.

² Cf. Ђ. Бошковић, М. Чанак-Медић, *Нека питања најстаријег раздобља Милешева*, Саопштења XV (1983) 7-22; Р. Бунарџић, *Прилози за старију историју Милешева*, Ђурђеви Ступови и Будимљанска епрахија. Зборник радова, ур. М. Радујко, Беране – Београд 2011, 343-359; М. Бунарџић, *Археолошка сведочанства о подизању манастира Милешева*, Осам векова манастира Милешева. Зборник радова I, 263-276. Also, see С. Поповић, *Крст у кругу. Архитектура манастира у средњовековној Србији*, Београд 1994, 164-171, 250, 290-294; М. Чанак-Медић, О. Кандић, *Архитектура прве половине XIII века I*, Београд 1995, 117-170.

³ For the monastery church Banja, see С. Пејић, *Манастир Свети Никола Дабарски*, Београд 2009.

⁴ Cf. В. Ј. Ђурић, *Свети Сава и сликарство његовог доба*, Сава Немањић – Све-



Fig 1 Portraits of Nemanids, Narthex, Mileševa

Сл. 1 Портрети Немањића, припрата, Милешева

mously been ascribed to painters that belonged to a Thessalonican workshop from the first decades of 13th Century.⁵ The monastery was held in high esteem by the ruling house of early Nemanids, and it may be best witnessed from its dedication to Christ's Ascension and St Sava's cult. On the other hand, the lavish gallery of Nemanid portraits renders full information for both dating and understanding Mileševa and its sophisticated ideological background (fig. 1).⁶

ти Сава. Историја и предање, ур. В. Ј. Ђурић, Београд 1979, 246-258; М. Ђоровић-Љубинковић, *Улога архиепископа Саве Немањића у оснивању и развијању манастирског комплекса Милешева*, Сеоски дани Сретена Вукосављевића X (1982) 158-162; И. М. Ђорђевић, *Свети Сава и сликани програм Милешева. Гробна концепција програма*, Сеоски дани Сретена Вукосављевића XVI (1995) 153-160; В. Милановић, *О светосавској редакцији ликова светих монаха у припрати милешевске цркве. Прилог истраживању заједничких места у сликаним програмима црквених задужбина Немањића у XIII веку*, *Balkanica XXXII-XXXIII* (2001-2002) 263-293; Б. Тодић, *Ново тумачење програма и распореда фресака у Милешеву*, На траговима Војислава Ј. Ђурића, ур. Д. Медаковић, Ц. Грозданов, Београд 2011, 55-68; Г. Суботић, Ј. Максимовић, *Свети Сава и подизање Милешева*, *Византијски свет на Балкану I*, ур. Б. Крсмановић, Ј. Максимовић, Р. Радић, Београд 2012, 97-106.

⁵ В. Ј. Ђурић, *Милешевско најстарије сликарство. Извори и паралеле*, Милешева у историји српског народа, 27-35 (with bibliography).

⁶ В. Ј. Ђурић, *Српска династија и Византија на фрескама у манастиру*

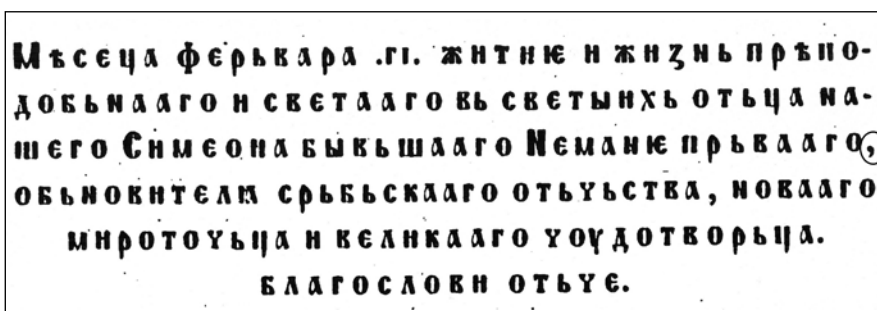


Fig. 2 Headpiece, Vita of St Simeon Nemanja (edition by Đ. Daničić)

Сл. 2 Заглавље, Житије св. Симеона Немање (издање Ђ. Даничића)

If compared to Studenica and Žiža, one may conclude that all of the new successes of the Nemanids were given strong visual expression in their triumphal lineage in the Mileševa narthex, from absence of members of the Vukan's lateral branch of the dynasty to such issues as are newly risen status of the state, royal title, autocephalous church, male heirs, even regional dominance in Hum, won in the war that Stefan the First-Crowned had waged against local nobility.⁷ Moreover, the portrait of a Byzantine Emperor, painted across that of Stefan the First-Crowned, most probably represents the likeness of Alexios III Angelos, once the king's father-in-law, and is the strongest confirmation of importance of Mileševa as a whole.⁸

The focus of this article is imagery on the damaged east wall of the narthex, since remnants of frescoes, preserved on lateral parts of the wall, have recently been identified by prof. B. Todić as traces of the *Crucifixion* scene.⁹ Joint with

Милешеви, Зограф 22 (1992) 23-25; Д. Војводић, *Слика световне и духовне власти у српској средњовековној уметности*, ЗМСЛУ 38 (2010) 36-37, 43-44, 47.

⁷ For the captions beside the portraits, see *Namentragende Inschriften auf Fresken und Mosaiken auf der Balkanhalbinsel von 7. zum 13. Jahrhundert*, hrsg. V. J. Đurić, A. Tsitouridou, Stuttgart 1986, 6-8; В. Ј. Ђурић, *Српска династија и Византија на фрескама у манастиру Милешеви*, Зограф 22 (1992) 23-25; Ђ. Трифуновић, *Натписи уз портрете Немањића у манастиру Милешеви*, Књижевност и језик 2-4 (1992) 91-100; Б. Тодић, *Репрезентативни портрети светог Сава у средњовековној уметности*, Свети Сава у српској историји и традицији, ур. С. Ђирковић, Београд 1998, 229, н. 7. For the period, cf. Lj. Maksimović, *Serbia's View of the Byzantine World (1204-1261), Identities and Allegiances in the Eastern Mediterranean After 1204*, eds. J. Herrin, G. Saint-Guillain, Ashgate 2011, 121-132.

⁸ On this issue, see Б. Ферјанчић, Љ. Максимовић, *Свети Сава и Србија између Епира и Никеје*, Свети Сава у српској историји и традицији, 21-24; Б. Цветковић *Византијски цар и фреске у припрати Милешеви*, *Balkanica XXXII/XXXIII* (2003) 297-309; Љ. Максимовић „Византизми“ краља Стефана Радослава, *ЗРВИ* 46 (2009) 143-144; Тодић, *Ново тумачење*, 67; Суботић, Максимовић, *Свети Сава и подизање Милешеви*, 99-101.

⁹ Тодић, *Ново тумачење*, 64-65. For the fresco fragments which may have belonged to these paintings, cf. Б. Поповић, *Проблем заштите и спајања разбијене слике. Прелиминарни списак фрагмената фресака са два примера рада из Милешеви и Богородице Пречисте из Ждрела*, Гласник ДКС 35 (2011) 114-122, especially 117, 122.



Fig. 3 Headpiece, Vita of St Simeon Nemanja, Ms Одесса 1/97 (536), f. 1

Сл. 3 Заглавље, Житије св. Симеона Немање, Ms Одесса 1/97 (536), f. 1

figures of Sts Constantine and Helena, such an iconography features political theory based on notions of soteriology of both *Crucifixion* and the victorious Cross.¹⁰ The figures of St Simeon Nemanja and St Constantine the Great, juxtaposed on lateral sides of the east wall of the narthex, are the first known or, at least, the earliest preserved proofs of a visual transposition of the New Constantine symbolism in the medieval Serbian art.¹¹ This specific symbolism has been studied on a number of occasions since comparison of actual rulers to St Constantine the Great is found both in imagery and in written sources.¹² The example in Mileševa rests on developed ideological basis duly expressed in contemporary charters and hagiographies, stressing pre-eminence of Nemanja as the first Serbian ruler who was blessed with Divine choice of Jacob, granted to his sons and

grandsons as well.¹³ As I have argued elsewhere, the idea connecting all the portraits of Nemanids in Mileševa is the one of being *the first* in their race, which is actually the crucial notion originating in Christ as the firstborn of all creation,

¹⁰ С. Марјановић-Душанић, *Немањин напрсни крст. Из наше старе инсигнологије*, ЗФФ XVII (1991) 203-215; Ead., *Владарске инсигније и државна симболика у Србији од XIII до XV века*, Београд 1994, 32. Also, for various examples of usage of Cross symbolism in several 13th Century Byzantine monuments, see L. Fundić, M. Kappas, *Stauroproskynēsis: An Iconographic Theme and Its Context*, DChAE 34 (2013) 141-156.

¹¹ В. Ј. Бурић, *Три догађаја у српској држави XIV века и њихов одјек у сликарству*, ЗЛУМС 4 (1968) 81, нап. 44; С. Марјановић-Душанић, *Владарска идеологија Немањића. Дипломатичка студија*, Београд 1997, 292-293, 296; V. J. Djurić, *Le nouveau Constantin dans l'art serbe médiéval*, Λιθοστρότον. Studien zur byzantinischen Kunst und Geschichte. Festschrift für Marcel Restle, eds. T. Steppan, B. Borkopp, Stuttgart 2000, 56.

¹² Марјановић-Душанић, *Владарска идеологија Немањића*, 287-302; Djurić, *Le nouveau Constantin dans l'art serbe médiéval*, 55-64.

¹³ Марјановић-Душанић, *Владарска идеологија Немањића*, 191-197.

and the firstborn of the dead.¹⁴ This concept is also contained in *Crucifixion* as central part of the narthex iconography. The eschatological and soteriological meaning of the Crucified Christ and the victorious significance of the Holy Cross are also imbued by notions of *renovatio*, connecting St Constantine the Great and St Simeon Nemanja to Christ as the firstborn ones on the basis of their pre-eminence.¹⁵

The captions written beside figures of both king Stefan the First-Crowned and the Archbishop Sava in the Mileševa narthex render set of information defined in the same manner, by their being the *first* king of the state, and the *first* archbishop of the national church. These captions, being fully extant, provide data for a theoretical reconstruction of the partially preserved caption on the left by the figure of St Simeon Nemanja, reading: “Holy and Venerable Father of Ours Simeon Nemanja (...).” The content of previous captions with emphasis of being



Fig. 4 St Constantine the Great, Narthex, Mileševa

Сл. 4 Св. Константин Велики, припрата, Милешева

the *first*, and figure of St Constantine the Great as the first Christian ruler, do point towards most probable content of the caption beside the Simeon's figure, in the now lost right side part. Due to space and based on analogy to captions beside his sons' portraits, it must have contained similar information, found in a number of Simeon's portraits as well.¹⁶ A valuable clue on his being the first is provided by the headline of his *Vita*, composed by the monk Domentijan, disciple and the closest collaborator of the Archbishop Sava I. However, all editions of the *Vita* have erroneously published this very headline.¹⁷ Instead of

¹⁴ On this, see Б. Цветковић, *Свети Сава и програм живописа у Милешеви: прилози истраживању*, Осам векова манастира Милешева. Зборник радова I, 311-327.

¹⁵ For quoted sources, see *Ibid.*, 322.

¹⁶ Б. Тодић, *Представе св. Симеона Немање, наставника праве вере и добре владе, у средњовековном сликарству*, Стефан Немања – Свети Симеон Мироточиви. Историја и предање, ур. Ј. Калић, Београд 2000, 295-305; Ц. Грозданов, *Свети Симеон Немања и свети Сава у сликарској тематици у Македонији (XIV – XVII век)*, исто, 319-345; С. Петковић, *Иконографија светог Симеона Српског у доба турске владавине*, исто, 381-394.

¹⁷ Cf. Доментијан, *Живот Светога Симеуна и Светога Саве*, изд. Ђ. Даничић, у Биограду 1865, 1; Доментијан, *Животи Светога Саве и Светога Симеона*, прев. Л. Мирковић, Београд 1938, 221; Доментијан, *Живот Светога Саве и Живот Светога*

displaying important ideological construction of Nemanja as the *first renovator* of Serbian homeland, these transcriptions render him as being *Nemanja the First* (fig. 2).¹⁸ But the preserved manuscript copies render the opposite disposition of the comma in this quotation, positioned after the Nemanja's name **С҃МЕЃНА ВЬВШАГО НЕМАНЕ . ПРЪВАГО ОБНОВИТЕЛѢ СРЪВСКААГО Ѡ(Ь) ЧЬСТВА**, (stating actually: *Simeon the former Nemanja, the first renovator of the Serbian fatherland*), and not after the word "former", as can be witnessed from the Vienna copy,¹⁹ and the one from Odessa (fig. 3).²⁰ The syntagma is of crucial importance since it follows basic notions from both Chilandari charters issued by Nemanja and his heir Stefan, but also from all extant versions of Nemanja's Vita, that he had "renovated his fatherland".²¹ Therefore, the now lost right-side part of the Simeon's caption most probably contained similar construction that connects him and his sons in their being the *first*, as can also be found in the Charter roll of Dečani, rendering the three of them in identical way.²² It is significant to note the same construction is found in the Mileševa copy of the collection of vitae compiled by the Archbishop Danilo II (CAHY A 14509, fol. 2v): introductory part of Vita of the king Stefan Uroš I mentions St Simeon Nemanja exactly as being the first renovator and illuminator of his fatherland and the new myroblytos ("prvoga obnovitelja i prosvetitelja otačastva svoga i novoga mirotočca").²³

Such a reconstruction of the St Simeon's caption can be strengthened on the basis of theological premise of the primacy or preeminence from well-known doctrine of Christ as the firstborn one, put forth in the New Testament (Rom. 8, 29; Col. 1, 15; 1, 18; Heb. 1, 6; 11, 28; 12, 23, Rev. 1, 5), but grounded in the Old Testament pattern of Israel as the chosen people (Gen. 43, 33; Ex. 4, 22; Ps. 89, 28; Jer. 31, 9). There are two chapters in Domentijan's Vita of

Симеона, пр. Р. Маринковић, Београд 1988, 237; В. И. Војовић, *L'Idéologie monarchique dans les hagio-biographies dynastiques du moyen âge serbe*, Roma 1995, 369. On this issue, see Цветковић, *Свети Сава и програм живописа у Милешеви*, 321, сл. 4-5.

¹⁸ This erroneous reading can be found in studies such are: М. Благојевић, *О националним и државним интересима у делима Доментијана – Срби изабрани народ*, ИГ 1-2 (1994) 15-16; Марјановић-Душанић, *Владарска идеологија Немањића*, 46-47.

¹⁹ The headline on the first folio from the Vienna copy of Domentian's Vita of St Simeon has already been reproduced in the edition: Доментијан, *Живот Светога Саве и Живот Светога Симеона*, пр. Р. Маринковић, 422.

²⁰ The photograph of the first folio from the Odessa manuscript has been provided due to help by the colleagues in the Archeographic Department in the National Library of Serbia in Belgrade. Also, see Цветковић, *Свети Сава и програм живописа у Милешеви*, 321-323, сл. 6-7.

²¹ Cf. Ђ. Трифуновић, В. Бјелогрлић, И. Брајовић, *Хиландарска повеља Светога Симеона и Светога Саве*, Осам векова Студенице. Зборник радова, Београд 1986, 49-60.

²² Cf. П. Ивић, М. Грковић, *Дечанске хрисовуље*, Нови Сад 1976, 60, 303; М. Грковић, *Прва хрисовуља манастира Дечани*, Београд 2004, 66, 67, 84, 85, Т. 25-41. Also, see Цветковић, *Свети Сава и програм живописа у Милешеви*, 323-324, сл. 8.

²³ I am grateful to staff of the Archive of the Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts for allowing me to consult the manuscript and for providing me with the photographs. For the quotation, cf. Данило Други, *Животи краљева и архиепископа српских*. *Службе*, пр. Г. Мак Данијел, Д. Петровић, Београд 1988, 46.

St Simeon Nemanja that clearly follow the reasoning of primacy of St Simeon as the firstborn after Divine choice. There he is being compared to several Old Testament characters, and with Christ, the New Adam, who is described with syntagmas derived from St Paul's *Epistle to the Colossians* 1, 15-18, as the firstborn of all creation (πρωτότοκος πάσης κτίσεως), and the firstborn from the dead (πρωτότοκος ἐκ τῶν νεκρῶν).²⁴ Both quotations are directly echoed in the mentioned captions and headlines, and conversely in iconography of the east wall of the narthex in Mileševa. The longer one reads: “*Because in truth and according to the sacred scripture, this holy father of ours became the **first-born** in our last race: because Adam in the first genus became the **first-born**, and after him the righteous Noah, another **renovator** of this world, saving the commandment of God and pleasing the Lord he became in his own genus the **first-born**, and after him the great Abraham, called God's friend, then Isaac and Jacob, named Israel by God, and the righteous Job whom the Lord testified to have no similar in the world, and they all became the **firstborns** in their generations, since they firstly believed in the Lord God of all. And after all of them, the New Adam, Christ our true God, came closer to us and sacrificed his own body having being nailed to the cross and suffered death, and by trampling Hades, liberated prisoners and became **the firstborn from the dead**, the father of eternal life, as the Holy Spirit says through the Apostle Paul on the most high **firstborns** of Jerusalem...*”²⁵

This chapter, completely overlooked in the scholarship, is indeed crucial evidence of the state ideology of Nemanja and his heirs in that it introduces Jacob's blessing of the Divine elect royalty. The second one comes right after in the text of the Vita. It not only speaks of Nemanja himself, but completely recreates imagery in the Mileševa narthex in that it stresses Nemanja is leading



Fig. 5 Introduction, Miscellany of Danilo II, Ms SAHY A 14509, f. 1

Сл. 5 Увод, Зборник Данила II, Ms SAHY A 14509, f. 1

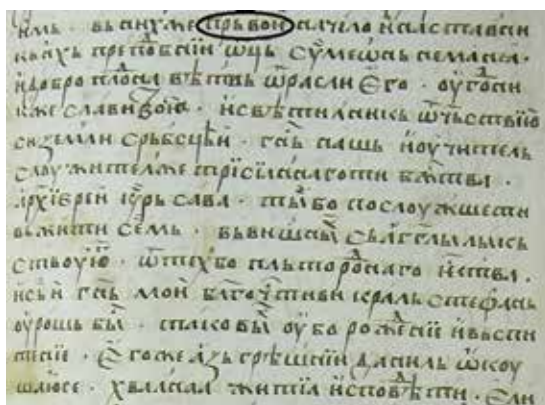


Fig. 6 Vita of King Milutin, Miscellany of Danilo II, Ms SAHY A 14509, f. 53

Сл. 6 Житије краља Милутина, Зборник Данила II, Ms SAHY A 14509, f. 53

²⁴ For this, see Ch. A. Beetham, *Echoes of Scripture in the Letter of Paul to the Colossians*, Leiden 2008, 107, 125-135, 226, 248, 267.

²⁵ Доментијан, *Живот Светога Симеона*, пр. Р. Маринковић, 247.

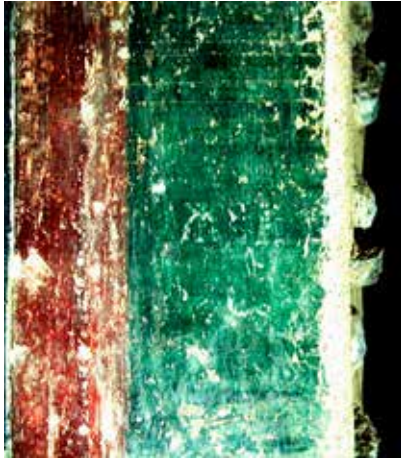


Fig. 7 Traces of an Inscription, Narthex, Mileševa

Сл. 7 Остаци натписа, припрата, Милешева



Fig. 8 Old Fieldwork Photography (funds of the National Museum, Belgrade)

Сл. 8 Стара теренска фотографија (из збирке Народног музеја, Београд)

his own descendents towards Christ and the Heavenly redemption: “*And the venerable father of ours firstly came to believe truly in God, the Lord of all, and showed good way for his children and his homeland, and truly became the first-born of Upper Jerusalem, similar to those saints mentioned above; the venerable father of ours is joyfully going towards the Lord, leading his children with him, because of the many holy bishops and saints, of the holy and the righteous, and shall reside there, with God and all his children in infinite ages, amen*”.²⁶

The notion of firstlings in Mileševa is actually widespread throughout the painted program disclosing special role the monastery played for the early Nemanids. It may be argued also for gigantic figure of St Stephen the Protomartyr, set above the throne in the nave,²⁷ which is the background of the emphasized connection between the figures of St Simeon and St Constantine the Great (fig. 4).²⁸ The same ideas of primacy and renovation appear in the well known *Menaion Office for Sts Constantine and Helena*, spotted by scholars in studying the New Constantine symbolism in medieval Serbia.²⁹ It reads: “*O most glorious one, and wast proclaimed to be the father of all kings, being the first to receive thy robe of royal purple from God.*”

²⁶ Доментијан, *Живот Светога Симеона*, пр. Р. Маринковић, 248. Also see Војводић, *Слика световне и духовне власти у српској средњовековној уметности*, 47-48 who, having quoted these very lines, stresses the Messianic background of the gallery of Nemanid portraits in Mileševa, which the author rightly categorizes as being dynastically motivated, *Ibid.*, 43.

²⁷ Радојчић, *Милешева*, 21, 78, No. 8, T. VII.

²⁸ Радојчић, *Милешева*, 20, 83, No. 18, T. XXXV.

²⁹ Cf. Марјановић-Душанић, *Владарска идеологија Немањића*, 292-293; Djurić, *Le nouveau Constantin dans l'art serbe médiéval*, 56.

O Constantine, thou wast **the first** emperor among Christians to receive thy scepter from God; for the sign of salvation, which was hidden in the earth, whereby thou didst subdue all nations beneath the feet of the Romans, in that thou didst have the life-creating Cross as thine invincible weapon, O blessed one, whereby thou wast brought to our God.

The Creator of the sun and creation, Who was wounded on the Cross, with the stars of heaven drew thee to Him like a radiant star, and invested thee as **the first** with royal dominion. Wherefore, we praise thee, O Constantine, thou most pious emperor, with thy divinely wise mother Helena.

Theotokion - By thy divine birthing, O pure one, thou hast **renewed** the mortal essence of those born on earth, which hath become corrupt in the passions, and hast raised all up from death to the life of incorruption. Wherefore, we all bless thee as is meet, as thou didst foretell, O all-glorious one.”

The same notion of firstlings can also be found with the unique representations of the Russian protomartyrs Boris and Gleb. Being the first canonized martyrs in Russia, the two were compared to St Stephen the Protomartyr, and it has already been suggested that their figures appear in Mileševa under direct influence of the Archbishop Sava I, who is known to have maintained close relations with the Russians.³⁰ The

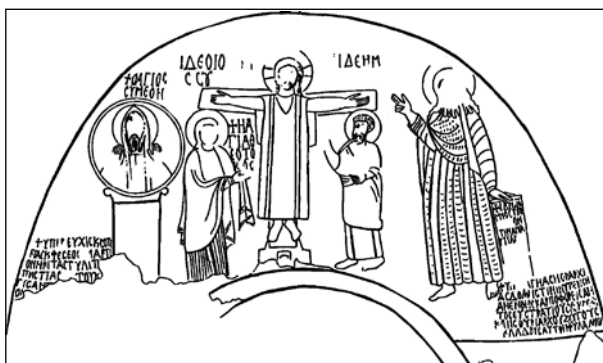


Fig. 9 Crucifixion, Church of St Nicetas the Stylite (after N. Thierry)

Сл. 9 Распеће, Црква св. Никите Столпника (по Н.Тјери)

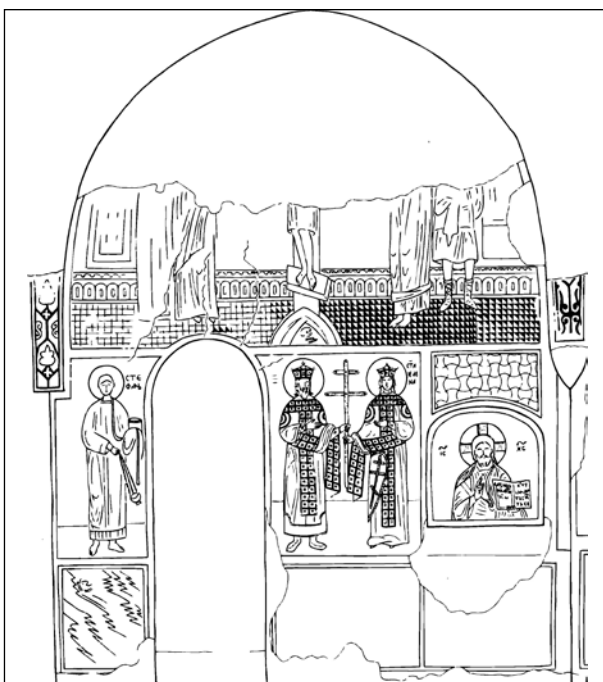


Fig. 10 East Wall, Tower Chapel, Žiča (after B. Živković)

Сл. 10 Источни зид параклиса у кули, Жича (по Б. Живковићу)

³⁰ On this, see И. М. Ђорђевић, *Представе светих Бориса и Гљеба у Милешеви и српско-руске везе прве половине XIII столећа*, Свети Сава у српској историји и традицији, 295-307.

notion of firstling can be found in the *Office for Sts Boris and Gleb* too, given in the words of St Paul's *Epistle to the Romans* 8, 28-39: "Brethren: We know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose. For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be **the first-born** among many brethren. Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified. What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us?"

Obviously, themes of the firstborn, the elect, the chosen, the preeminent, all fully resonate in the prearranged context. Therefore, it is important to note

that the notion of primacy of St Simeon Nemanja can be found in many more instances in the previously mentioned Miscellany of the Archbishop Danilo II. In introductory lines of the collection (САНУ А 14509, fol. 1) Nemanja is referred to as "прѣваго начелника" (fig. 5) i.e. the *first foreman*.³¹ In the King Milutin's vita (САНУ А 14509, fol. 53) the hagiographer refers to Nemanja as "прѣво начело и наставникъ" (fig. 6), i.e. the *first principle and teacher*.³² Lastly, St Simeon Nemanja is also given one more significant title, that of "прѣвопрѣстольникъ" i.e. the *first throne holder*, derived from the Greek protothronos, in the Vita of the Archbishop Joanikije (САНУ А 14509, fol. 156v).³³

The highly reasonable proposition put forth by prof. B. Todić that the east wall of the Mileševa narthex was originally covered with the huge scene of *Crucifixion*, similarly as on the west wall of the nave

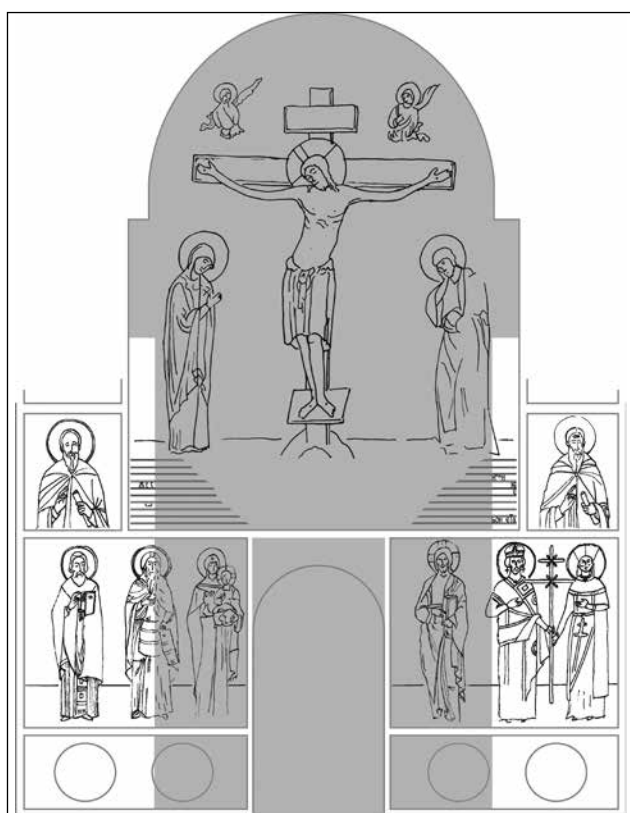


Fig. 11 East Wall, Narthex, Mileševa (theoretical reconstruction)

Сл. 11 Источни зид, припрата, Милешева (теоријска реконструкција)

³¹ Cf. Данило Други, *op. cit.*, 43.

³² Cf. Данило Други, *op. cit.*, 110.

³³ Cf. Данило Други, *op. cit.*, 188. For this too, see М. Радужко, „Престо Светог Симеона“, *Зограф* 28 (2000-2001) 62.

in Studenica, opens up questions regarding content of the other lost areas, especially those in the first zone. Despite destruction of large area of this wall, its lateral remnants are still covered with fresco layers the lower parts of which are painted green and the upper parts yellow in imitation of mosaic tesserae. It is important to note that on the lower green register there are still traces of ten lines of inscriptions on both sides of the wall which have not been recorded in scholarship on Mileševa wall paintings. The palaeographic characteristics of the several preserved letters indicate they apparently belong to 13th Century (fig. 7), and that were written by the same scribes who did other captions in the church. Their state of preservation is not much changed if compared to old fieldwork documentation that is kept today in the National Museum in Belgrade (fig. 8).³⁴

Though it may seem unusual to find an inscription of such a scale on lower part of a scene, it is actually not so, especially in view of a number of captions from 13th Century churches collected by Sophia Kalopissi-Verti.³⁵ At the moment it is not yet clear whether the caption had explanatory meaning in regard to the *Crucifixion* scene, or was ktetorial, which can be deduced only after a more thorough analysis and minute research for which a scaffolding structure is needed. It would not be impossible therefore that the inscription may originally covered whole width of the wall and that its content was of hymnographic type. On the other hand, it may have also been of dedicatory nature due to proximity of the portraits of Nemanids, in which case such a long text might have connected them to adjacent figures of St Constantine the Great, and/or the Byzantine Emperor, with similar overtones as in the lines from the Nemanja's vita quoted above. If so, the reason to put the caption at this position must have been the absence of space above the door between the narthex and the nave, since it can be argued the now lost portal must have been of the same type as the one, still extant, between the exonarthex and the narthex.³⁶ Before any conclusion can be made, it is fair to note one important example from Cappadocia. In the church of St Nicetas the Stylite, there are two ktetorial captions of both the founder and the patron bearing triumphal connotations connected to the *Crucifixion*, that are written at the lower side of the *Crucifixion* scene (fig. 9).³⁷

Importance of the Holy Cross and of the *Crucifixion* for the Archbishop Sava I is already noticed in scholarship, especially regarding the Holy Cross relic which may have been positioned in front of the *Crucifixion* scene in the Žiča north choir, painted unusually in the first zone.³⁸ Therefore, disposition of the *Crucifixion* in Mileševa must have been identical as in the so-called Sava's chapel in the tower of Žiča, with Sts Constantine and Helena shown beneath the

³⁴ I am grateful to staff of the National Museum in Belgrade for allowing me to consult the fund.

³⁵ Cf. S. Kalopissi-Verti, *Dedicatory Inscriptions and Donor Portraits in Thirteenth-Century Churches of Greece*, Wien 1992, 66-67, 69-71, fig. 30-33, 35-36.

³⁶ Cf. Радојчић, *Милешева*, 13, 34 (colour reproduction on this page).

³⁷ N. Thierry, *La Cappadoce de l'antiquité au Moyen Âge*, Turnhout 2002, 126-128, Sch. 44.

³⁸ On this, see Д. Поповић, *Sacrae reliquiae Спасове цркве у Жичи*, Манастир Жича. Зборник радова, пр. Г. Суботић, Краљево 2000, 17-33.



Fig. 12 Hyperpyron of Alexius III Angelos

Сл. 12 Златник Алексија III Анђела



Fig. 13 Seal of Alexius III Angelos

Сл. 13 Печат Алексија III Анђела

crucified Christ (fig. 10).³⁹ This analogy includes St Stephen the Protomartyr too, thus resting on the same set of ideas regarding firstlings and Divine pre-eminence.⁴⁰

Since the destroyed door to the nave apparently did not have a large lunette, it must have been of similar size as the one to the exonarthex, as well as doors from other churches of the period. It means the original lower part of the wall had certainly enough space to include one more figure on its both sides flanking the door. Iconographical logic of the program points to suggestion that these figures must have been those of Christ and the Virgin,⁴¹ and that the latter must have had the role of a mediator.⁴² If close analogies in Bojana and Arilje are taken into account, it is highly plausible to hypothesize that the figure of Jesus Christ may have been represented standing next to St. Constantine and the figure of the Virgin Mary next to St. Simeon Nemanja (fig. 11).⁴³

The emergence of Sts Constantine and Helena in the program of the narthex fits its complex iconography structured around the monumental scene of the *Crucifixion*, and based on the symbolism of the Holy Cross,⁴⁴ which was widely practised within royal iconography throughout Europe and Byzantium.⁴⁵

³⁹ Б. Живковић, *Жича. Цртежи фресака*, Београд 1985, 12 (III 1, 3).

⁴⁰ For these wall paintings, also see Б. Тодић, *Иконографска истраживања жичких фресака XIII века*, Саопштења XXII-XXIII (1990-1991) 25-40.

⁴¹ Цветковић, *Свети Сава и програм живописа у Милешеви*, 319.

⁴² Тодић, *Представе св. Симеона Немање*, 297.

⁴³ Е. Бакалова, *За константинополските модели в Боянската црква*, Проблеми на изкуството 1 (1995) 10-21, esp. 18-19; Д. Војводић, *Зидно сликарство цркве Светог Ахилија у Аршју*, Београд 2005, 165-166, 294-296, Т. XXIII, 25, 26.

⁴⁴ Cf. W. T. Woodfin, *Celestial Hierarchies and Earthly Hierarchies in the Art of the Byzantine Church*, *The Byzantine World*, ed. P. Stephenson, Routledge 2010, 305-306, fig. 23.1.

⁴⁵ А. Markopoulos, *Constantine the Great in Macedonian historiography: models and approaches*, *New Constantines. The Rhythm of Imperial Renewal in Byzantium, 4th-13th Centuries*, ed. P. Magdalino, Ashgate 1994, 159-170, esp. 168, n. 70. Also, for usage of reliquaries of the Holy Cross such is the one now in the city of Cortona, see A. Frolov, *Les reliquaires de la Vraie croix*, Paris 1965, 82, 96, 101, 159, 218, 233, No. 146, fig. 40; K.

The victorious significance of the Holy Cross for early Nemanids may also have been prompted by the contemporary religious issues in the Balkans.⁴⁶ That is why figures of St Constantine and his mother holding the Holy Cross have special meaning in Mileševa due to the very timing which encompasses a number of successful events leading Serbia up in the state hierarchy. The Serbian ruling family is accompanied not only by the first Christian Emperor St Constantine the Great, but also by the first Byzantine emperor who became blood related to the Serbian dynasty.

In that sense even issues of insignia in Mileševa are easier to grasp. Differently costumed royals can be fully understood if put into the scheme of mutual correlation. The Nemanids are shown wearing Byzantine court costume of the chlamys type, the robe used not only by aristocracy but on special occasions by Emperor as well.⁴⁷ The costumes on the portraits of Nemanids are in accordance with their status as related to the Byzantine Emperor (Alexios III Angelos) and St Constantine the Great, who are dressed in the loros type, and therefore should be seen more as a matter of the accepted convention than the costume actually worn by them.⁴⁸ The combined representations of chlamys and loros in the Mileševa narthex have analogies in iconography of the Alexios III Angelos, who laid himself strong political emphasis on Constantine the Great both on his coinage and seals. His silver and gold coins were minted with symbolic nuances in representing relationship of Alexios III with Constantine the Great, where the former is shown either wearing loros or the mantle type of costume, while the latter is always in the loros (fig. 12).⁴⁹ It is even more

Вајцман, *Цариградске иконе*, Idem et al., *Иконе*, Београд 1981, 13, 36; A. Cutler, *The Hand of the Master. Craftsmanship, Ivory, and Society in Byzantium (9th – 11th Centuries)*, Princeton 1994, 20-21, 36-37, pls. I, II; N. Oikonomides, *The Concept of 'Holy War' and Two Tenth-Century Byzantine Ivories*, Peace and War in Byzantium: Essays in Honor of Geore T. Dennis, S. J., eds. T. S. Miller, J. Nesbitt, Washington D. C. 1995, 77-79. ill. IV, V; H. Klein, *Die Staurothek von Cortona im Kontext mittelbyzantinischer Kreuzreliquiarproduktion*, Byzantinische Elfenbeine im Diskurs, eds. G. Bühl, A. Cutler, A. Effenberger, Wiesbaden 2009, 167-190; R. S. Nelson, "And So, With the Help of God": *The Byzantine Art of War in the Tenth Century*, DOP 65-66 (2011-2012) 183-186, fig. 13, 14.

⁴⁶ Cf. A. P. Roach, *The Competetion for Souls: Sava of Serbia and Consumer Choice in Religion in the Thirteenth Century Balkans*, Glasnik Instituta za nacionalnu istoriju Skopje 50, 1 (2006) 141-157.

⁴⁷ M. Parani, *Reconstructing the Reality of Images: Byzantine Material Culture and Religious Iconography (11th – 15th centuries)*, Brill 2003, 12-18; J. L. Ball, *Byzantine Dress. Representations of Secular Dress in Eighth- to Twelfth-Century Painting*, New York 2005, 29-35.

⁴⁸ Cf. B. Cvetković, *The Painted Programs in Thirteenth-Century Serbia: Structure, Themes, and Accents*, Orient et Occident méditerranéens au XIII^e siècle. Les programmes picturaux, eds. J-P. Caillet, F. Joubert, Paris 2012, 161-162, fig. 5-6. For symbolism of mantles, cf. Б. Цветковић, *Плашт српских деспота у 15. веку. Прилог проучавању*, Византијски свет на Балкану. Књига II, ур. Б. Крсманивић, Љ. Максимовић, Р. Радић, Београд 2012, 551-562.

⁴⁹ A. R. Bellinger, Ph. Grierson, *Catalogue of the Byzantine Coins in the Dumbarton Oaks Collection and in the Whittemore Collection, Vol. 4, Part 1*, Washington D.C. 1999, 397-419.

interesting on one Alexius' seal, where Constantine the Great in the loros costume holds the cruciform scepter, while Alexius III in the mantle costume holds labarum (fig. 13).⁵⁰

From all said thus far it is clear that the wall paintings in the Mileševa narthex are complex set of sophisticated notions masterfully incorporated into political theory of the Nemanid dynasty. Though damaged in significant portions, it may nevertheless be argued that Mileševa had unusually important role for its patrons. A number of questions are yet to be answered. One that must be dealt with most urgently regards the captions, the traces of which are still discernible on the lateral parts of the east wall of the narthex.

Бранислав Цветковић
ЈОШ ЈЕДНОМ О СВ. КОНСТАНТИНУ ВЕЛИКОМ У МИЛЕШЕВИ

Рад је посвећен анализи иконографског програма оштећеног источног зида припрате у цркви манастира Милешеве. Пажња је најпре усмерена натписима уз ликове Немањића, као и теоријској реконструкцији текста уз фигуру св. Симеона Немање. Полазећи од тога да портрете Немањића у милешевској припрати повезује црвена нит, идеолошка премиса о *првенству*, указује се на превиђен део у заглављу житија св. Симеона Немање од Доментијана, који старија издања нетачно преносе употребом погрешне интерпункције. С обзиром на друкчије читање по изворном тексту Бечког и Одеског рукописа, текст натписа уз св. Симеона могао је имати конструкцију попут оне из заглавља: *први обновитељ српског отачаства* или неку сличну која је садржавала ознаку *први*, а која би била компатибилна с натписима уз *првог* архиепископа Саву и *првог* крунисаног краља Стефана, али и с портретима *првих* хришћанских владара, Константина Великог и царице Јелене. Текст доноси низ других примера у којима се користи речена премиса о Немањином првенству и њему као обновитељу. С обзиром на поменуте одељке из Житија, она се ослања на новозаветне и старозаветне поставке које се налазе у основи владарске идеологије Немањића и Христу као изходишту овоземаљске власти. У њима се такође налазе и поставке које Немању као првенца везују за Христа као прворођеног свег створења и прворођеног из мртвих. У том смислу се тумачи програм источног зида припрате, прихвата се претпоставка да се у горњим деловима зида налазила монументална сцена Распећа и у том смислу се предлаже реконструкција тематике зида. У тексту се такође указује и на остатке натписа чији се трагови уочавају на бочним деловима источног зида, на зеленој основи доњег регистра претпостављене сцене Распећа. У оквиру теоријске реконструкције зида претпостављено је да су првобитно уз портал наоса били приказани Христ, крај фигуре св. Константина и Богородица, уз фигуру св. Симеона Немање.

⁵⁰ J. W. Nesbitt, *Catalogue of Byzantine Seals at Dumbarton Oaks and in the Fogg Museum of Art*, Washington D.C. 2009, No. 96.1; G. Zacos, A. Vegler, *Byzantine Lead Seals*, Glückstadt 1972, no. 110b.