

THE EARLIEST MENTION OF STEFAN NEMANJA
IN BYZANTINE SOURCES

Constantine Porphyrogenitus' work addressed to his son Romanos (*Πρὸς τὸν ἴδιον υἱὸν Ῥωμανόν*, better known under its modern title, *De administrando imperio*¹) is the only medieval source that provides information on the settlement of the Serbs in the Balkans, then part of the Byzantine Empire, during the seventh century.² According to Porphyrogenitus, the Serbs arrived in the region after an invitation by Emperor Heraclius (610-641), who was in need of fighting men to face the threat posed by the Avars.³ More specifically, the *De adminis-*

¹ *Constantine Porphyrogenitus, De administrando imperio*, v. 1 [CFHB 1], Washington, D.C. 1967 — v. 2: *Commentary*, London 1962.

² There must be no confusion between the arrival of the Serbs and the arrival of the Slavs in the Balkan Peninsula. The Slavs appeared in the area north of the Danube in the late fifth century, according to Byzantine sources. See for instance J. Haury – G. Wirth (eds.), *Procopii Caesariensis Opera Omnia*, v. 1-2 (*De Bellis*), Leipzig 1962-1963, b. VII, ch. XIV, §. 22–30; G. T. Dennis – E. Gamillscheg (ed.), *Das Strategikon des Maurikios* [CFHB 17], Wien 1981, b. XI, ch. 4, p. 370¹–386²²⁴; P. Lemerle (ed.), *Les plus anciens recueils des Miracles de Saint Démétrius et la pénétration des Slaves dans les Balkans*, v. 1: Le Texte — v. 2: *Commentaire*, Paris 1979, p. 227²⁸³–234³⁰⁶. See also F. Curta, «Barbarians in Dark-Age Greece: Slavs or Avars?», in: T. Stepanov – V. Vachkova (eds.), *Civitas Divino-Humana in Honorem Annorum LX Georgii Bakalov*, Sofia 2004, p. 513–550; H. Ditten, «Bemerkungen zu den ersten Ansätzen zur Staatsbildung bei Kroaten und Serben im 7. Jahrhundert», in: V. Vavřínek (ed.), *Beiträge zur byzantinischen Geschichte im 9.-11. Jahrhundert*, Prague 1978, p. 441–462; B. Ferjančić, «Invasions et installations des Slaves dans les Balkans», in: *Villes et peuplement dans l'Illyricum protobyzantin. Actes du Colloque organisé par l'École Française de Rome (Rome, 12-14 mai 1982)*, Rome 1984, p. 85–109; P. Lemerle, «Invasions et migrations dans les Balkans depuis la fin de l'époque romaine jusqu'au VIII-e siècle», in: P. Lemerle (ed.), *Essais sur le monde byzantin*, London 1980, p. 265–308; M. Nystazopoulou-Pelekidou, *Σλαβικές εγκαταστάσεις στη μεσαιωνική Ελλάδα*, Athens 1993, esp. p. 11, n. 1 with bibliography; I. Nestor, «La penetration des Slaves dans la péninsule balkanique et dans la Grèce continentale. Considérations sur les recherches historiques et archéologiques», *Revue des Études Sud-Est Européennes* 1 (1963), 41–68; A. Váña, *The World of the ancient Slavs*, London 1983; S. Vryonis, Jr., «The evolution of Slavic society and the Slavic invasions in Greece. The first major Slavic attack on Thessaloniki, A.D. 597», *Hesperia* 50 (1981), 378–390.

³ Regarding the Avars see A. Avenarius, *Die Awaren in Europa*, Bratislava 1974; J. Deér, «Karl der Grosse und der Untergang des Awarenreiches», in: H. Beumann (ed.), *Karl*

trando imperio places the Serbs' original homeland in White Serbia (near the borders of the Frankish state, in Bohemia) and White Croatia.⁴ Two brothers, whose names have not come down to us, left that region after the death of their father, having divided his regal authority between them, and headed towards different directions. One of them entered the territory of the Byzantines, where the emperor initially gave him and his people lands near Thessaloniki, in a place called Servlia.⁵

However, for some reason that Porphyrogenitus does not divulge, the Serbs decided to return to their homeland. They had already crossed the Danube when they had yet another change of heart and asked Heraclius to be granted another region where they could settle. The Byzantine emperor gave them the land between the Sava and the Dinaric Alps, where they remained for good.⁶ This is the way the tenth-century Byzantine emperor presents the arrival of the Serbs in the Balkans.

For five centuries, from the seventh to the twelfth, the Byzantines never lost ultimate control of the Serbian territories. However, the Serbs often showed centrifugal tendencies against Byzantine authority, although the Empire dealt swiftly with whatever separatist attempts were made.⁷ Shortly before the middle of the twelfth century (in 1143), Manuel Komnenos, who was essentially the last powerful ruler of his dynasty, ascended the imperial throne of Constantinople. The coronation of Manuel I (1143-1180) coincided with the intensification of the Serbian rulers' tendencies to break away. Despite the fact that during his reign the efforts of the Serbs proved unsuccessful, the appearance of Stefan Nemanja⁸ to the forefront of Serbian history was a clear sign of Byzantium's inability to retain its direct hold on the region for much longer.

der Grosse, Werk und Nachleben, v. 1: *Persönlichkeit und Geschichte*, Düsseldorf 1967, p. 285–371; W. Pohl, *Die Awaren. Ein Steppenvolk in Mitteleuropa, 567-822 n. Chr.*, München 1988; S. Szádeczky-Kardoss, «Der Awarensturm im historischen Bewusstsein der Byzantiner der 11.-13. Jahrhundert», in: P. Zepos (ed.), *Actes du XVI^e Congrès international d'études byzantines, Athènes, septembre 1976*, v. 4, Athens 1980, p. 305–314.

⁴ On the use of colors as symbols of the points of the compass see J. Needham, *Science and civilisation in China*, v. 2, Cambridge 1956, p. 261–264, and J. BaČić, *Red Sea – Black Russia: prolegomena to the history of north central Eurasia in Antiquity and the Middle Ages*, New York 1995. Regarding the origin of the Slavs see for instance Lemerle, *Miracles*; L. Niederlé, *Manuel de l'Antiquité Slave*, Paris 1923, esp pp. 1–26; Pelekidou, *Σλαβικές εγκαταστάσεις*, pp. 13–15; I. Sorlin, «Slaves et Sclavènes avant et dans les Miracles de Saint Démétrius», appendix III in: Lemerle, *Miracles*, v. 2, pp. 218–234.

⁵ Present-day Servia in Western Macedonia.

⁶ DAI, ch. 327–29.

⁷ See for instance A. Papageorgiou, «Βυζάντιο και Σέρβου: το ζήτημα των εκστρατειών του Ιωάννη Β' Κομνηνού εναντίον των Σέρβων», *Εόα και Εσπέρια* 8 (2008-2012), 353-367, where the question of John II Komnenos' expeditions against the Serbs is examined.

⁸ Regarding Stefan Nemanja see J. L. Van Dielen (ed.), *Nicetae Choniatae Historiae* [CFHB 11/1], Berlin – New York 1975, pp. 158⁸²- 159¹⁷, 434¹⁰⁻³⁵, 531⁷²-532²⁰; S. Hafner, *Stefan Nemanja nach den Viten des hl. Sava und Stefans des Erstgekrönten*, Graz – Wien – Köln 1962. See also *The Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium*, A. P. Kazhdan – A.-M. Talbot – A. Cutler – T. E. Gregory – N. Ševčenko (eds.), v. 1-3, New York – Oxford 1991 (hereafter *ODB*), p. 1948; J. V. A. Fine, *The Early medieval Balkans. A critical survey from the sixth*

Even though Stefan Nemanja (1166-1199) was Manuel I's personal choice for ruler of the Serbs, he was quick to reveal his separatist tendencies. Already in 1171 he was making overtures to the Venetians for an anti-Byzantine alliance and in 1172 he offered his friendship to the German emperor Frederick Barbarossa.⁹ However, those actions did not secure for Nemanja the gains he was hoping for: he was severely defeated by Manuel and was forced to take part in the humiliating triumphal procession the Byzantine emperor had prepared for him in Constantinople.¹⁰

Manuel's death in 1180 was a turning point in the fulfillment of the ambitions of Stefan Nemanja. The fall of the Komnenoi signified the beginning of a course that ultimately led to the Latin capture of Constantinople in 1204. The difficulties that Isaac II (1185-1195), first ruler of the dynasty of the Angeloi, faced against the Bulgarians and Hungarians allowed Stefan Nemanja to expand his territory towards Dalmatia and Duklja. At the same time, he tried to take advantage of the opportunity that arose during the Third Crusade (1189-1192) and form an anti-Byzantine alliance with Frederick Barbarossa. He even went as far as to propose becoming a vassal of the German emperor, but the latter refused the offer. Thus, in 1190 Nemanja was defeated by Byzantine forces in the battle of the Morava. However, even though he had to give back to Byzantium all the lands he had recently conquered, the Serbian ruler was able to hold on to his previous possessions in the region of the South Morava, Kosovo and the coastal cities of Dalmatia which until then were under Byzantine domination. The Byzantine emperor on his part, in order to secure Nemanja's friendship, concluded a marriage alliance between his niece and the Serbian ruler. This marriage proved even more beneficial to Nemanja when Alexios III (1195-1203) overthrew his brother Isaac, which resulted in Nemanja's son being upgraded to son-in-law of a reigning emperor, a family connection that was recognized when the latter awarded the Serbian ruler's son the title of *sebastokrator*.¹¹

to the late twelfth century, Ann Arbor 1983, pp. 234-244; Fine, *Late Balkans*, pp. 1-41, V. Ćorović, «The Nemanjić Family Tree in the Light of the Ancestral Cult in the Church of Joachim and Anna at Studenica», *ZRVI* 14-15 (1973), 191-195; St. Stanojević, Nemanja, *Godišnjica Nikole Čupića* 42 (1933), 93-132.

⁹ In 1176, Manuel's armies were defeated at Myriokephalon in Asia Minor. This event led to the general collapse of his external policy and the creation of an anti-Byzantine alliance, with the participation of the German Empire, Venice and Hungary. See R.-J. Lilie, «Die Schlacht von Myriokephalon (1176). Auswirkungen auf das byzantinische Reich im ausgehenden 12. Jahrhundert», *REB* 35 (1977), 257-275, and P. Magdalino, *The Empire of Manuel I Komnenos 1143-1180*, Cambridge 1993.

¹⁰ See below.

¹¹ Regarding the Nemanja's territorial gains see for instance M. Djurović, *Istorija Crne Gore*, v. 2, Titograd 1970, pp. 5-27, 46-61, 83-84; A. Ducellier, «Albania, Serbia and Bulgaria», in: D. Abulafia (ed.) *The New Cambridge Medieval History*, v. 5: c. 1198-c. 1300, Cambridge 1999, pp. 779-795, here pp. 779-780. On Isaac II see for instance Th. Vlachos, «Aufstände und Verschwörungen während der Kaiserzeit Isaakios II. Angelos (1185-1195)», *Byzantina* 6 (1974), 155-167; Ch. Brand, *Byzantium confronts the West 1180-1204*, Cambridge, Mass 1968, p. 69-116, 241-251; Ph. Malingoudis, «Die Nachrichten des Niketas Choniates über die Entstehung des zweiten bulgarischen Staates», *Byzantina* 10 (1980), 73-134. Regarding the title of *σεβαστοκράτορ* see R. Guiland, *Recherches sur les institutions*

In 1196 Stefan Nemanja appointed his son Stefan as his successor and retired to the monastery of Studenica, which he had founded in 1183. In 1198 he took refuge to Mount Athos, where he founded the Serbian monastery of Hilandar and adopted the monastic name Symeon. The man who used to be known as Stefan Nemanja died on 13 February 1199 in Hilandar. His remains were brought back to Studenica, resting place of all the rulers of the Nemanjić dynasty he had founded.

The reign of Stefan Nemanja was a turning point in the history of the Serbs, even though its significance had not been made clear in his lifetime. During his rule, Nemanja recognized that he was under the dominion of the Byzantine emperor, a situation which entailed both actual and symbolic obligations on the part of the Serbian ruler, who found himself operating within the framework of Byzantine provincial administration. However, the balance of power in the Balkan region had changed. The Byzantine Empire was in disarray, Peter and Asen had created the Second Bulgarian Empire (1185), while Nemanja was busy increasing his power and territories.

But who was Stefan Nemanja and when exactly did he first appear in Byzantine sources? In other words, what do we know (that is, what do our Greek sources know) about his ancestry? Are Desa and Nemanja the same person, as some modern authorities seem to believe? These are important questions that lay at the core of the issues pertaining to the rise of Serbia in the twelfth century and her ultimate emancipation from Byzantium. The aim of this paper is to try and pinpoint evidence in the written sources which might provide answers to the aforementioned questions.

The first to attempt resistance against Byzantine domination during the reign of Manuel I was Uroš, Vukan's son or nephew. He is mentioned for the first time by Anna Komnene¹² as one of the hostages Vukan surrendered to Emperor Alexios I Komnenos in 1094. After the death of Vukan (probably around 1115), Uroš returned to Rascia and was elected Grand Župan. During his rule (c. 1115-1140s) he tried to formulate his own independent foreign policy and rid himself of the influence of the Byzantine Empire, if we are to judge from the support he gave during the 1120s to Đorđije against the pro-Byzantine ruler of Duklja and from the fact that around 1129 or 1130 he married his daughter Jelena to Béla, future king of Hungary (1131-1141). His successor,

byzantines, v. 1-2, Berlin 1967, v. I, p. 5, 38, v. II, p. 10, 30–31, 111 n. 307, 280–283; A. Hohlweg, *Beiträge zur Verwaltungsgeschichte des Oströmischen Reiches unter den Komnenen*, München 1965, pp. 25–30, 36; L. Stiernon, «Notes de titulaire et de prosopographie byzantines. A propos de trois membres de la famille Rogerios (XII^e siècle)», *REB* 22 (1964), 223–224. According to these researchers, the title *σεβαστοκράτωρ* was introduced by Alexios I and it did not have any real authority, except if combined with a military or administrative dignity. The reason behind the introduction of this title was that the emperor wished to grant to his brother Isaac a title higher in rank than that of *caesar* and lower than that of *basileus*. The title remained in use during the Palaiologan dynasty.

¹² Annae Comnenae, *Alexias*, D. R. Reinsch – A. Kambylis (eds.), [CFHB 40/1 and 40/2], Berlin 2001, b. IX, ch. 10, p. 280⁸⁻¹²: ἐκεῖνος δ' εὐθὺς τεθαρρηκῶς προσεληλύθει συνεπαγόμενος τοὺς τε συγγενεῖς καὶ ἐκκρίτους τῶν ζουπάνων καὶ προθύμους ὀμήρους τοὺς αὐτοῦ ἀνεψιαδεῖς τῷ αὐτοκράτορι παραδέδωκε, τὸν τε Οὐρεσιν καλούμενον καὶ Στέφανον τὸν Βολκάνον καὶ ἑτέρους τὸν εἰκοσιν ἀριθμὸν ἀποπληροῦντας

Uroš II (1145-1161),¹³ formed an alliance with Hungary and the Normans, but ultimately failed to avoid defeat at the hands of Manuel I's troops. After overthrowing Uroš II, Manuel installed as Grand Župan first Beloš and then Desa.

Desa¹⁴ was župan of Duklja (1148-1162) and Serbia (1149-1153, Grand Župan 1153-1155 and 1162-1166). He was the son of Uroš I,¹⁵ župan of Rascia. In 1148 Desa attacked Radoslav of Duklja and became the region's župan with his elder brother, Uroš II, as overlord; both brothers were under the dominion of Byzantium. The twelfth-century historian John Kinnamos refers to Desa being proclaimed Grand Župan by Emperor Manuel I in 1162: βασιλεὺς δὲ τὸν ὕστατον ἀδελφῶν μετὰπεμπτον θέμενος, ὃς Δεσὲ μὲν ἐκαλεῖτο Δένδρας δὲ χώρας ἤρχεν, ἡ Ναισσῶ ἐν γειτόνων ἐστὶν εὐδαιμόνων καὶ πολυάνθρωπος, τὰ πιστὰ τε παρ' αὐτοῦ λαβὼν ὅπως ἀνόθευτον αὐτῷ τὸ τῆς δουλείας σχῆμα ἐς τὸν πάντα τῆς ζωῆς φυλάξῃ αἰῶνα, πρὸς δὲ καὶ ὡς παντάπασι Δένδρας Ῥωμαίοις ὑπεκστήσεται, ἦν καθάπερ ἔφην καρπιζόμενος ἦν, ἀρχιζουπάνον ἀνέτεν.¹⁶

Paul Magdalino and more recently Averil Cameron, apparently following the views of earlier scholars, identify Desa with Stefan Nemanja, founder of the Nemanjid dynasty.¹⁷ However, no evidence exists to support the aforementioned identification. John Fine and Paul Stephenson both disagree with the identification of Desa with Nemanja,¹⁸ but they do not offer any arguments.

The truth is that little argumentation is necessary in order for someone to accept the view of Fine and Stephenson, since both main Byzantine sources on Nemanja and Desa are clear enough. John Kinnamos describes the deposi-

¹³ On Uroš II see A. Meineke (ed.), *Ioannis Cinnami Epitome rerum ab Ioanne et Alexio Comnenis gestarum*, Bonn 1836, p. 113¹⁰⁻¹⁶. See also Fine, *Early Balkans*, pp. 236-239; idem, *Late Balkans*, pp. 2-3, P. Stephenson, *Byzantium's Balkan frontier. A political study of the northern Balkans, 900-1204*, Cambridge 2000, p. 245.

¹⁴ Regarding Desa see Fine, *Early Balkans*, pp. 237-244, 298; Stephenson, *Balkan Frontier*, pp. 122-123, 244-245, 250, 266-267; M. Blagojević, «Srpske udeone kneževine», *ZRVI* 36 (1997), 57-58, here p. 55-56 and n. 42; T. Živković, «Dioclea between Rascia and Byzantium in the first half of the 12th century», in: T. Živković, *Forging Unity: the South Slavs between East and West, 550-1150*, Belgrade 2008, pp. 293-312, here pp. 300-301, 311 n. 39; idem, «Zavida's sons», in: *Forging Unity*, pp. 313-334, here pp. 327-328 and 334 nn. 62, 64.

¹⁵ Regarding Uroš I see Fine, *Early Balkans*, pp. 226, 233-236, 298 (with some differences in the timeline of his reign); Magdalino, *Empire*, pp. 54-55 does not believe that Helena's marriage to Bela was aimed against the Byzantine Empire. See also J. Lešny, «Stefan Zavida als Sohn von Uroš I. und Vater von Stefan Nemanja», *Südostforschungen* 48 (1989), 37-49; Živković, «Dioclea», pp. 293-312, here pp. 298-301; idem, «Zavida's sons», pp. 313-334, here pp. 317-320, 323-329.

¹⁶ Kinnamos, p. 204¹⁵⁻²¹. The translation of the passage is by Ch.M. Brand, *Deeds of John and Manuel Comnenus by John Kinnamos*, New York 1976, pp. 155-156: *The emperor caused to be summoned the last of the brothers, who was called Desa and ruled the region of Dendra, a prosperous and populous one near Naissos. After he [Manuel] had received pledges from him that for the whole period of his life he [Desa] would preserve pure the condition of obedience to him, and in addition that he would entirely abandon to the Romans Dendra, which as stated was fruitful, he [Manuel] named him grand župan.*

¹⁷ Magdalino, *Manuel*, p. 79; A. Cameron, *The Byzantines*, Malden – Oxford – Victoria 2006, pp. 172-173; F. Chalandon, *Les Comnène. Jean II Comnène (1118-1143) et Manuel I Comnène (1143-1180)*, Paris 1912, pp. 391-392.

¹⁸ Fine, *Late Balkans*, pp. 2-3; Stephenson, *Balkan Frontier*, p. 267, n. 46.

tion of Desa in 1165 or 1166¹⁹, while Nicetas Choniates also refers to the same incident: *Οὗτος δὲ τὸν Δεσὲ μετελευσόμενος, ἑαυτοῦ γενόμενον κακουργότερον, τὴν ἐς Σερβίαν ὥρμα τραπέσθαι. ἀλλ' ὁ Δεσὲ καὶ πόρρωθεν ἐπιτηρῶν τὰ πραττόμενα, μάλιστα δ' ὅπερ ἦν δεδιώς, μὴ τι ἀηδὲς πάθοι καὶ ἀπενκταῖον βασιλέως εἰς τὴν ἑαυτοῦ χώραν παρεμβalόντος, πέμψας ἐς βασιλέα ἐνδοθῆναί οἱ καθικετεύει τὴν ἐς αὐτὸν ἀπαθῆ ἄφιζιν. ὡς οὖν εἶχεν ὁ ἤτησεν, ἀφίκετο δορυφορίας μετέχων σατραπικῆς καὶ ἐς θεῶν τῷ βασιλεῖ καταστάς τὸ δολιόφρον τῆς γνώμης κατονειδίζεταί καὶ οὕτως ὡς ἄσπονδος ἀποπέμπεται.*²⁰

The cause of this confusion between Desa and Nemanja obviously stems from the fact that Kinnamos' next reference to the Serbian Grand Župan contains no names. Kinnamos describes the humiliation of Nemanja by Manuel in 1172, but without naming him: *ὁ δὲ βασιλεὺς ἐπειδὴ Βέλαν ἐπὶ τῆς ἀρχῆς κατεστήσατο, ἐπὶ τὸ Σερβίων ἐτρέπετο ἔθνος, ἀμυνεῖσθαι τῆς τόλμης αὐτοῦ προθυμούμενος. ἀλλ' ὅπερ θαυμάζειν αἰεὶ ἔχω, οὕτω τὸ στράτευμα ἠθροιστο πᾶν, καὶ βασιλεὺς χιλιάσιν ὀλίγαις διὰ τινων ἐρυμῶν καὶ ἀποκρήμων χωρίων εἰσελάσας ἐπὶ τὴν χώραν τῷ ἀρχιζουπάνῳ συμμίζειν ἠπείγετο. ὁ δὲ καίτοι μυρίαν πανταχόθεν ἑαυτῷ χεῖρα συστησάμενος σύμμαχον ἔφηνε μὲν τὸ πρῶτον, ὡς δὲ τὸ δέος αὐτοῦ τὴν ψυχὴν ἐπολιόρκει, πρέσβεις ἐς βασιλέα πέμψας κακῶν ἀμνηστίας ἐδεῖτο τυχεῖν. Πείθειν δ' οὐκ ἔχων, ἀλλὰ τῆς ἐς αὐτὸν ἠτέτο παρόδου τέως ἀκινδύνου τυχεῖν. ἦκε τοίνυν βασιλέως ἐπινεύσαντος, καὶ εἰσῆει παρὰ τὸ βῆμα, ἀκαλυφῆς τε κεφαλὴν καὶ χεῖρας εἰς ἀγκῶνα γυμνούμενος, ἀνυπόδετος μὲν πόδας, σχοῖνος δὲ οἱ τοῦ τραχήλου ἐζῆπτο, καὶ ζῖφος κεχείριστο, ὅπη βούλοιο χρῆσθαι βασιλεῖ ἑαυτὸν παρεχόμενος.*²¹

The absence of an eponymous reference to Nemanja on the part of Kinnamos is not due to the former being identical to Desa, since it is clear that the latter had already been deposed in 1166: *ταῦτα πυθόμενος βασιλεὺς οὐκέτι μέλλειν ἔγνω, καὶ τοίνυν ἐπὶ δίκην καλέσας αὐτὸν, ἐπειδὴπερ ἐκράτει, τῶν κατηγορῶν αὐτῷ καὶ συνειδότην κατὰ πρόσωπον ἰσταμένων ἤδη καὶ θεατριζόντων τῷ ἀνθρώπῳ τὴν ἀπιστίαν, τότε μὲν ἐν τῷ ἀσφαλεῖ οὐ σὺν ἀτιμίᾳ τοῦτον ἔσχε· ταφρεῖα γὰρ τὴν σκηνὴν αὐτῷ περισχῶν κατὰ τὸν ἐν τοῖς χαρακώμασι νόμον ἐτήρει, ὡς ἀπ' ἐκείνου λοιπὸν Δεσὲ χάρακα τὸν τόπον ὀνομασθῆναι (οὕτω γὰρ τὴν ταφρεῖαν ἰδιωτίζοντες ὀνομάζουσι οἱ πολλοί)· ὀλίγῳ δ' ὕστερον ἐς Βυζάντιον πέμψας ἔμψυρον ἐν παλατίῳ κατεστήσατο.*²² in fact, before that Manuel Komnenos had already offered Desa a chance to return to Byzantium's sphere of influence: *ὁ δὲ δύστροπός τε καὶ ἰσχυρογνώμων ἐφαίνετο ἐπὶ μακροτέραις τε ταῖς ἐλπίσιν ὠχεῖτο καὶ εἰς τὴν ἐπιούσαν τὴν ἀφιζὶν ὑπισχεῖτο. ὁ μὲν οὖν βασιλεὺς διὰ ταῦτα, ἐπειδὴ πρὸς τῇ Ναιῖσῳ ἐγένετο, ἔνθα ταῖν ὁδοῖν ἀμφοτέραιν ἢ μὲν ἐπὶ τὴν Σερβικὴν ἄγει, θατέρα δὲ ἐπὶ Ἰστρον καὶ γῆν τὴν Παιονικὴν, ἐν μεταίχμῳ τὴν στρατοπεδεῖαν ἐπῆξατο, Δεσὲ δὲ τὸν ἐπικρεμάμενον ἤδη κίνδυνον αὐτῷ συνιδὼν τὸ περὶ αὐτὸν*

¹⁹ Kinnamos, pp. 212¹⁸-214⁴

²⁰ Choniates, p. 136⁴⁷-54. For a translation of the passage see H.J. Magoulias, *O City of Byzantium, Annals of Niketas Choniates*, Detroit 1984, pp. 77-78.

²¹ Kinnamos, p. 287¹¹-24. For a translation of the text see Brand, *Deeds*, p. 215.

²² Kinnamos, pp. 213²⁰-214⁴. For a translation of the text see Brand, *Deeds*, p. 162.

ἀναλαβῶν στράτευμα ἐς τὸ Ῥωμαίων ἀφικνεῖται στρατόπεδον. Βασιλεὺς δὲ εὐ-
μενῶς τε αὐτῷ προσηγάθη καὶ τὰ εἰκότα τετίμηκεν. ἀλλ' ἔοικεν γλώσσης μηδὲν
αἴσχιον εἶναι κακόν.²³

Therefore, there is no way that the Grand Župan who is mentioned in 1172 is identical to the one deposed six years earlier. The absence of Nemanja's name in Kinnamos is due either to the Byzantine historian's lack of information or, more probably, to the fact Kinnamos did not wish to name yet another Serbian ruler who had caused trouble to the hero of his story, Manuel I, and who was (yet again) the emperor's unfortunate personal choice. In the end, Manuel managed to bring this insubordinate vassal to heel as he did with the others. What is more, if we take into consideration the fact that John Kinnamos did not live to see the evolution of Nemanja into one of the Byzantine Empire's main enemies, we see that there was no reason for the historian to name someone who seemed to have yielded to the supremacy of Manuel I.

Nicetas Choniates picks up the thread of the narration at Desa's dethronement. After the Grand Župan was overthrown, Choniates proceeds in the following book of his *Διήγησις Χρονική* to the first (and less than flattering) mention of Stefan Nemanja (what follows is the Greek text, while an English translation will be provided in the next paragraph): ἠκηκόει γὰρ ὁ τῶν Σέρβων σατράπης (ἦν δὲ τότε ὁ Νεεμᾶν Στέφανος) ὑπὲρ ὃ δεῖ θρασύτερος γέγονε καὶ κακόσχολος ὧν τις ἦγεται σοφὸν τὸ περίεργον καὶ τὴν ἐπιθυμίαν τρέφων ἀκόρεστον καὶ πρὸς τὰ ἐκεῖ πάντα διαπλωθῆναι φιλονεικῶν τοῖς ἐκ τοῦ αὐτοῦ φύλου βαρῦς ἐμπίπτει καὶ ζίφει τὸ γένος μέτεισι, μῆτε μὴν τὰ οἰκεῖα εἰδῶς μέτρα Χορβατίαν ὑποποιεῖται καὶ πρὸς ἑαυτὸν ἐπισπᾶται τῶν Δεκατάρων τὴν κυριότητα.²⁴ The phrase in parenthesis (ἦν δὲ τότε ὁ Νεεμᾶν Στέφανος) is used by the historiographer in order to make clear which of the Serbian rulers is being mentioned, since this is the first time that Choniates refers to Nemanja. Had the author known, or at the very least assumed, that Desa and Nemanja were the same person, he would have mentioned it either when he was referring to Desa, with a phrase often used by Byzantine historians («ἀλλὰ ταῦτα μὲν ὕστερον»), or when he was mentioning Nemanja's name, with an addition («ὁ Δεσῆ»). However, Choniates uses neither of these modes to identify Desa with Nemanja. On the contrary, his *Διήγησις* goes on to use the name *Νεεμᾶν* exclusively whenever mention is made of the Serbian ruler's actions. Therefore, neither John Kinnamos nor (much less) Nicetas Choniates believe that Desa and Nemanja are one and the same.

Despite the fact that court panegyrists played an important role in the Komnenian era, celebrating as usual the emperor's victories on the field of battle, there is not a single mention of Nemanja in any of their works – and this in spite of Manuel's success in curbing Stefan's separatist tendencies and leading him humiliated to Constantinople in order to participate in the emperor's triumph. Thus, the first actual mention of Nemanja by name in a contemporary Byzantine source is that by Nicetas Choniates. The latter was either disinterested in – or, more probably, unaware of – Nemanja's lineage and that is why he does not provide a single clue about it. The fact that he had no information regarding

²³ Kinnamos, p. 213¹⁻¹⁰. For a translation of the text see Brand, *Deeds*, pp. 161-162.

²⁴ Choniates, pp. 158⁸²⁻¹⁵⁹⁹¹.

Nemanja's ancestry did not prevent Choniates from making some rather unflattering remarks. According to the Byzantine author, Nemanja was *a mischievous fellow who deemed meddlesomeness to be shrewdness, Nemanja nurtured an insatiable appetite, eager to expand his territories. He mounted a heavy attack against his own countrymen and pursued them with the sword, and, completely ignoring his own boundaries, he subjugated Croatia and took possession of Dekataroi.*²⁵ Naturally, Nemanja's «meddlesomeness», «shrewdness» and «insatiable appetite» were a reflection of his actions, i.e. the annexation of Croatian lands and Kotor, actions obviously undertaken without the approval of his overlord, Manuel I. It is interesting to note that Choniates avoids stating unambiguously that Nemanja was the emperor's personal choice, keeping in mind the Serbian ruler's later actions, which directly contradicted Byzantine interests. Let us not forget that Choniates composed his *Ιστορία* after 1204, being aware of the transformation of Serbia from a vassal state of Byzantium to an independent power and of the rise of the Nemanjid dynasty, whose founder, Stefan Nemanja, had been hand-picked by Manuel. Furthermore, the Serbian ruler did not stop making trouble for Manuel, even though the latter always succeeded in managing Stefan's troublemaking: *Thus did Manuel deal with Nemanja and prevail upon him to make a pledge of good faith: whenever he observed him straying from the straight and narrow, or acting independently, or entering into an alliance with the king of the Germans, or inclining towards the Hungarians and sharing a common purse and pouch with them, he was more diligent than a shepherd guarding a small flock. And Nemanja feared Manuel more than the wild animals fear the king of beasts; often Manuel led out only the cavalry and commanding his bodyguards, „Follow me,“ crossed the Roman borders and rode against Nemanja at full tilt, restoring conditions in these parts according to his own design.*²⁶ The fact that Manuel had chosen Nemanja as Grand Župan of the Serbs is alluded to by the historian only when the Byzantine emperor has managed to “recall to order” the troublesome vassal; Choniates' exact phrase is: *Lying outstretched (Nemanja), mighty in his mightiness, he pleaded that he not be made to suffer cruelly; he was anguished lest he be removed as sovereign over the Serbs and political power be transferred to those who were more fit to rule, those whom he had pulled down so that he might seize power.*²⁷

In summary, Nicetas Choniates is the first Byzantine author to mention Stefan Nemanja, founder of the Nemanjid dynasty, by name, but without providing any information regarding his ancestry or descent. Choniates limits himself to a brief sketch of Nemanja's personality and a cursory description of the problems he caused to Byzantium. John Kinnamos does not mention Nemanja by name and I think that it has been made clear by now that the only thing Desa and Nemanja had in common was the fact that they both found themselves ruling the Serbs as Grand Župans after they were appointed to the position by

²⁵ Magoulias, *O City*, p. 90.

²⁶ Magoulias, *O City*, pp. 90-91.

²⁷ Magoulias, *O City*, p. 90.

Emperor Manuel I. Nemanja, however, contrary to Desa, succeeded in creating his own dynasty, which two centuries later would lead Serbia out of a five-century subjugation and into her own empire.

Ангелики Папагеоргиу
НАЈРАНИЈИ ПОМЕН СТЕФАНА НЕМАЊЕ У ВИЗАНТИЈСКИМ
ИЗВОРИМА

У науци је и раније дискутовано да ли су Стефан Немања и Деса у византијским изворима XII века исте личности. Раније се сматрало да то јесте случај, међутим новије студије су показале да су Немања и Деса две различите личности. Да ли византијски извори могу помоћи у разрешењу ове дилеме? Када се Стефан Немања први пут појављује у византијским текстовима? Уколико Деса није Немања, ко је он и коју је улогу имао у успону династије Немањића? Наведена питања се разматрају у тексту. Прва историјска личност која је довела у питање византијску доминацију за време Манојла I био је Урош, Вуканов син или нећак. Он је поменут први пут од стране Ане Комнине. Након Вуканове смрти вероватно око 1115. године, Урош се вратио у Рас где је постао велики жупан. Током његове владавине (око 1115 – 1140) покушао је да конституише независну политику и ослободи утицаја византијског Царства, ако је судећи према подршци коју је пружио након 1120. године Ђорђу који се борио против про-византијске владавине Дукљом, као и чињеници да се око 1129. или 1130. године његова ћерка Јелена венчала Белом, будућим краљем Угарске (1131-1141). Његов наследник Урош II (1145-1161) формирао је савез са Угарима и Норманима, али је доживео неуспех са трупама Манојла I. Манојло је прво поставио Белоша потом Десу као великог жупана. Деса је био жупан Дукље (1148-1162) и Србије (1149-1153, велики жупан 1153-1155 и 1162-1166). Он је био сина Уроша I, жупана Рашке.

1148. године Деса је устао против Радослава из Дукље и постао жупан региона под влашћу његовог старијег брата Уроша II. Јован Кинамос помиње проглашење Десе за великог жупана од стране Манојла I, 1162. године. Исти историчар је описао Десино скидање са власти 1165. или 1166. године, а Никита Хонијат је вероватно указао на исти догађај. Пол Магдалино и недавно Еврил Камерон идентификовали су Десу са Стефаном Немањом, оснивачем династије Немањића. Поменута теорија (као и теорија да је Стефан Немања Десин син) оповргнута је у овом раду. Рад је закључен податком да је Никита Хонијат први византијски аутор који помиње Стефана Немању, оснивача династије Немањића, именом али без детаљнијег увида у вези са његовим претходницима или наследницима. Немања је насупрот Деси успео у стварању сопствене династије која је два века касније добила статус Царства.

