

## Serbian hagiographies on the warfare and political struggles of the Nemanjić dynasty (from the twelfth to the fourteenth century)\*

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Serbian rulers of the Nemanjić dynasty waged numerous wars from the late twelfth to the mid-fourteenth century. Important source for the study of these events are hagiographies of Serbian rulers and archbishops. The authors of these works were members of the ruling family and dignitaries of the Serbian Church. In this paper I place emphasis on the terminology they used to describe military operations and their participants.

At the beginning it is necessary to point out to general characteristics of hagiographies as a literary genre. The purpose of these compositions was to create the cult of saints. Also, hagiographies aimed to instruct believers about a good Christian life. Therefore, these sources contain many *loci communes* (common places). Hagiographies are biographies of types rather than biographies of persons.<sup>1</sup> The specificity of Serbian hagiographies lies in the fact they were dedicated to

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<sup>1</sup> Dimitrije Bogdanović, *Istorija stare srpske književnosti* [The history of old Serbian literature], Beograd, 1980, pp. 71-72; Đorđe Trifunović, *Azbučnik srpskih srednjovekovnih književnih pojmova* [Lexicon of Serbian medieval literary terms], Beograd, 1990, pp. 70-72.

prominent historical figures. Consequently, their authors could not avoid mentioning significant political events.<sup>2</sup>

The first preserved Serbian hagiographies were composed by Saint Sava and King Stephen the First-Crowned, concern the life of their father Saint Symeon (Stephen Nemanja), who was the ruler of the Serbian state from 1196 to 1196. Sava wrote his work in 1208,<sup>3</sup> while his brother did it eight years later.<sup>4</sup> The following Serbian hagiographer monk Domentian wrote *The Life of Saint Sava* in 1243 or 1254<sup>5</sup> and *The Life of Saint Symeon* in 1264.<sup>6</sup> Another hagiography of Saint Sava was composed by monk Theodosius in the 1320s.<sup>7</sup> The compilation of hagiographies known as *The Lives of the Serbian Kings and Archbishops (Daniel's Anthology)* was created by archbishop Daniel II and his continuators during the first half of the fourteenth century.<sup>8</sup> The most important hagiographies for my research are those of Kings Uroš, Dragutin, Milutin, Stephen Dečanski and Stephen Dušan and archbishop Daniel II in the above anthology. They depicted campaigns of Serbian rulers and their struggles for the throne. However, authors are sometimes silent about some of their military failures.

### **Causes of external and internal wars**

Serbian hagiographers often marked the actions of the devil as the main causes of wars. The examples are the following: Stephen Nemanjić (r. 1196-1228) writes that the devil instigated the brothers of Stephen

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<sup>2</sup> Dimitrije Bogdanović, "Stara srpska biblioteka" [The old Serbian library], in Dimitrije Bogdanović, *Studije iz srpske srednjovekovne književnosti* [Studies on medieval Serbian literature], Beograd, 1997, p. 38; Trifunović, *Azbučnik srpskih srednjovekovnih književnih pojmova*, pp. 61-62.

<sup>3</sup> Bogdanović, *Istorija stare srpske književnosti*, p. 150.

<sup>4</sup> Ljiljana Juhas-Georgievska, "Predgovor" [Introduction], in Stefan Prvovenčani, *Sabrana dela* [Collected works], ed. by Ljiljana Juhas-Georgievska – Tomislav Jovanović, Beograd, 1999, p. XXV; Bogdanović, *Istorija stare srpske književnosti*, p. 153.

<sup>5</sup> Bogdanović, *Istorija stare srpske književnosti*, p. 158.

<sup>6</sup> Bogdanović, *Istorija stare srpske književnosti*, pp. 158-159.

<sup>7</sup> Smilja Marjanović Dušanić, *Sveti kralj: Kult Stefana Dečanskog* [The holy king: the cult of Stephen Dečanski], Beograd, 2007, p. 155.

<sup>8</sup> Gordon Mak Danijel, "Genezis i sastavljanje Danilovog zbornika" [The genesis and compilation of Daniel's anthology], in *Arhiepiskop Danilo II i njegovo doba* [Archbishop Daniel II and his age], ed. by Vojislav J. Đurić, Beograd, 1991, pp. 221-224.

Nemanja to arrest him.<sup>9</sup> The same author notes that his former ally Bulgarian magnate Strez was persuaded by the devil to turn against him.<sup>10</sup> Domentian and Theodosius blamed him as the culprit for the conflict between Stephen Nemanjić and his brother Vukan.<sup>11</sup> The younger of the two writers designated the devil as the father of envy, hatred and lies.<sup>12</sup> According to Theodosius, the devil induced Vladislav to revolt against his brother, King Radoslav (r. 1228-1234).<sup>13</sup> Daniel II notes that the nobility, instructing Stephen against his father King Milutin (r. 1282-1321), was under the influence of the devil.<sup>14</sup> Finally, Daniel's Student points out the same factor as the reason for King Stephen's hatred towards his son Stephen Dušan.<sup>15</sup> Such an explanation of the conflicts was in accordance with the genre of hagiography. The writers tried to show that the main characters were able to withstand the temptations of the devil. Therefore, their victory over them was a sign of God's favour. It can be said that the devil appeared as a spiritual factor of wars.

On the other hand, hagiographers also inform us about other causes of struggles. Stephen Nemanjić testifies that Stephen Nemanja began the construction of the church of Saint Nicholas, but his brothers disputed his right to do it independently. Regardless of the objections, he completed the temple. After that, brothers captured Nemanja and threw him into a cave. Then, the eldest brother became the ruler of the Serbian state.<sup>16</sup> During his reign, Stephen Nemanja waged numerous wars against the Byzantine Empire. As a culprit of the conflict that was fought after 1180, Stephen Nemanjić accused an unnamed Byzantine

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<sup>9</sup> Stefan Prvovenčani, *Sabrana dela*, p. 24.

<sup>10</sup> Stefan Prvovenčani, *Sabrana dela*, pp. 84, 86.

<sup>11</sup> Domentijan, *Život Svetoga Save* [The life of Saint Sava], ed. by Liljana Juhas-Georgievska, Beograd, 2001, p. 172; Teodosije, *Život Svetoga Save* [The life of Saint Sava], ed. by Đura Daničić, Beograd, 1860, pp. 78-79.

<sup>12</sup> Teodosije, *Život Svetoga Save*, p. 79.

<sup>13</sup> Teodosije, *Život Svetoga Save*, p. 177.

<sup>14</sup> Arhiepiskop Danilo i drugi, *Životi kraljeva i arhiepiskopa srpskih* [The lives of the Serbian kings and archbishops], ed. by Đura Daničić, Zagreb, 1866, p. 124.

<sup>15</sup> Arhiepiskop Danilo i drugi, *Životi kraljeva i arhiepiskopa srpskih*, pp. 207-208.

<sup>16</sup> Stefan Prvovenčani, *Sabrana dela*, p. 24.

Emperor, who violated peace with the ruler of Serbia.<sup>17</sup> It is certain that he had in mind Emperor Andronikos I Komnenos (r. 1183-1185) who killed Manuel's son Alexios.<sup>18</sup> For him, Stephen used epithets *angry, one who shed blood* and *foolish*. He added that the Emperor wanted to conquer not only Serbia, but also other countries.<sup>19</sup> Other sources do not confirm such ambitions.<sup>20</sup> In contrast, it is known that King Béla III of Hungary occupied Dalmatia, Croatia, Syrmia, Belgrade and Braničevo in the period between 1180 and 1182, before Andronikos became Emperor.<sup>21</sup> The murder of the young Emperor Alexios II in October 1183 caused a revolt of Byzantine commanders of Braničevo and Niš.<sup>22</sup> These events weakened the Byzantine border defence. King Béla III and Grand Župan Stephen Nemanja took advantage of such a development and penetrated with their troops through Niš to Sofia.<sup>23</sup> According to these data, it is clear that Stephen Nemanjić tried to justify the conquests of his father.

At the end of his work, Stephen Nemanjić describes how Saint Symeon helped him in wars with rivals. First, he notes that the Bulgarian Emperor Borilo (r. 1207-1218) and *Greek Emperor* Henry of Flanders (r. 1205-1216) wanted to destroy the homeland (*otačastvo*) of Saint Symeon and banish him from the state.<sup>24</sup> That action most likely occurred in 1213/1214.<sup>25</sup> King Andrew II of Hungary (r. 1205-1235) and

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<sup>17</sup> Stefan Prvovenčani, *Sabrana dela*, p. 36.

<sup>18</sup> Michael Angold, *The Byzantine Empire, 1025-1204. A political history*, London – New York, 1997, pp. 297-298; Georgije Ostrogorski, *Istorija Vizantije* [History of Byzantine state], Beograd, 1969, p. 371.

<sup>19</sup> Stefan Prvovenčani, *Sabrana dela*, p. 36.

<sup>20</sup> See: *O City of Byzantium, Annals of Nikietas Choniates*, trans. by H. J. Magoulias, Detroit, 1984, pp. 153-195; Angold, *The Byzantine Empire*, pp. 299-301.

<sup>21</sup> Ostrogorski, *Istorija Vizantije*, 374; Petar Rokai – Zoltan Dere – Tibor Pal – Aleksandar Kasaš, *Istorija Mađara* [The history of Hungarians], Beograd, 2002, p. 57.

<sup>22</sup> *O City of Byzantium, Annals of Nikietas Choniates*, p. 154.

<sup>23</sup> Stefan Prvovenčani, *Sabrana dela*, p. 38; *Istorija srpskog naroda*, vol. I [The history of Serbian people], Beograd, 1981, p. 252.

<sup>24</sup> Stefan Prvovenčani, *Sabrana dela*, p. 80.

<sup>25</sup> Ivana Komatina, "Istorijska podloga čuda Sv. Simeona u Žitiju Simeonovom od Stefana Prvovenčanog" [Historical background of the miracles of Saint Symeon in the Life of Symeon by Stephen the First-Crowned], *Zbornik radova Vizantološkog instituta* 51 (2014), pp. 119-121, 123, 125; Radivoj Radić, "Oblasni gospodari u Vizantiji krajem XII i prvim decenijama XIII veka" [Local lords in Byzantium at the

Henry of Flanders allegedly had the same aim, before Easter of 1215 or 1216.<sup>26</sup> The ruler of Epirus, Michael I Angelos, had smaller ambitions. Namely, he seized the town of Shkodër in 1214, which belonged to the Serbian state.<sup>27</sup> All these struggles were presented as wars for the defence of the homeland.

Unlike Stephen Nemanjić, monk Domentian usually does not mention a worldly motive for waging wars. In his *The Life of Saint Symeon*, he writes that Emperor Andronikos I Komnenos wanted to seize the homeland of Stephen Nemanja.<sup>28</sup> The blame for the war among the sons of Stephen Nemanja was attributed to Vukan, who forcibly seized the throne from his brother Stephen.<sup>29</sup> Although Theodosius's *The Life of Saint Sava* was based on Domentian's work, he was more concrete in explaining the causes of wars. He writes that Vukan was dissatisfied because Stephen Nemanja appointed his brother Stephen a ruler. The eldest of Nemanja's sons announced that he would take revenge after the death of his father.<sup>30</sup> Writing about the conflict between Stephen Nemanjić and Strez, Theodosius notes that the Bulgarian local ruler broke an alliance with the Grand Župan and made an agreement with Greeks and Bulgarians aiming to devastate the Serbian state.<sup>31</sup> Furthermore, the same hagiographer writes that King Andrew II of Hungary was prepared to attack Serbia, since he was envious because of Stephen's coronation for the king of Serbia.<sup>32</sup> The exact time of this campaign cannot be determined. Also, it is not certain that the conflict

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end of the twelfth century and in the first decades of the thirteenth century], *Zbornik radova Vizantološkog instituta* 24-25 (1986), p. 240.

<sup>26</sup> Stefan Prvovenčani, *Sabrana dela*, p. 98; For chronology of this event see: Komatina, "Istorijska podloga čuda," p. 128.

<sup>27</sup> Stefan Prvovenčani, *Sabrana dela*, p. 88; Komatina, "Istorijska podloga čuda," p. 126.

<sup>28</sup> Domentijan, *Život Svetoga Simeuna i Svetoga Save* [The life of Saint Symeon and Saint Sava], ed. by Đura Daničić, Beograd, 1865, p. 22.

<sup>29</sup> Domentijan, *Život Svetoga Simeuna i Svetoga Save*, p. 96.

<sup>30</sup> Teodosije, *Život Svetoga Save*, p. 79.

<sup>31</sup> Teodosije, *Život Svetoga Save*, p. 107.

<sup>32</sup> Teodosije, *Život Svetoga Save*, p. 152.

was related to Stephen's coronation.<sup>33</sup> In comparison with other sources, Theodosius provides more information about the fall of King Radoslav from power. Reportedly, the nobility turned against Radoslav, because of his obedience to his wife, and connected with his younger brother Vladislav.<sup>34</sup> There is no doubt that King Radoslav was under the influence of his father-in-law Theodore of Angelos, the ruler of Epirus (r. 1214-1230). Historians consider that Radoslav's loss of power was associated with Theodore's defeat at the battle of Klokontissa.<sup>35</sup> The new Serbian ruler, King Vladislav (r. 1234-1243) was married to Beloslava, the daughter of Bulgarian Emperor John II Asen (r. 1218-1241), who was victorious in the mentioned battle.<sup>36</sup>

In his hagiographies, Archbishop Daniel II devotes considerable attention to the causes of wars. According to him, King Uroš I (r. 1243-1276) refused to hand over the throne to his son Dragutin, although he promised to do so during his life. Further, he did not agree to grant his son a part of state's territory.<sup>37</sup> At the beginning of the description of King Milutin's (r. 1282-1321) conquests, Daniel II informs us that the Serbian state was narrow and reduced, since Byzantium extended to the town of Lipljan. This Empire allegedly aimed to occupy the whole of Serbia and subjugate King Milutin.<sup>38</sup> It was an obvious intention of the writer to blame Byzantium for the war and thus to justify the King's conquests.<sup>39</sup> Hence he did not mention that Serbia endangered territories of the Empire during the reign of King Dragutin (r. 1276-1282), thanks to

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<sup>33</sup> Stanoje Stanojević, "O napadu ugarskog kralja Andrije II na Srbiju zbog proglašenja kraljevstva" [On the attack of King Andrew II on Serbia because of the proclamation of the kingdom], *Glas Srpske kraljevske akademije* 161 (1934), pp. 120-130.

<sup>34</sup> Teodosije, *Život Svetoga Save*, p. 177.

<sup>35</sup> Božidar Ferjančić, "Srbija i vizantijski svet u prvoj polovini XIII veka (1204-1261)," [Serbia and Byzantine world in the first half of thirteenth century], *Zbornik radova Vizantološkog instituta* 27-28 (1989), pp. 118-120, 123-124, 131-139.

<sup>36</sup> Domentijan, *Život Svetoga Save*, p. 412; Teodosije, *Život Svetoga Save*, p. 178; *Istorija srpskog naroda* 1, pp. 310, 312; John Fine, *The Late Medieval Balkans: A Critical Survey from the Late Twelfth Century to the Ottoman Conquest*, Michigan, 1994, p. 136.

<sup>37</sup> Arhiepiskop Danilo i drugi, *Životi kraljeva i arhiepiskopa srpskih*, pp. 13-16.

<sup>38</sup> Arhiepiskop Danilo i drugi, *Životi kraljeva i arhiepiskopa srpskih*, p. 107.

<sup>39</sup> Vlada Stanković, *Kralj Milutin (1282-1321)* [King Milutin (1282-1321)], Beograd, 2012, p. 71.

Kotanica, who fled from Byzantium.<sup>40</sup> Furthermore, the author says that Greek *evil-minded* noblemen, who were banished from regions seized by King Milutin, initiated the Byzantine counteroffensive. They forced Emperor Michael VIII Palaiologos (r. 1259-1282) to launch an attack against Serbia. The learned writer emphasizes that this ruler rejected the *Christian faith* (Orthodoxy) and took the *Latin faith* (Catholicism).<sup>41</sup> Daniel II thus suggests the spiritual supremacy of King Milutin over his opponent. On the other hand, the Byzantine historian George Pachymeres did not comment on the Emperor's action against Serbs in 1282.<sup>42</sup> The next year King Milutin organized a campaign with his brother Dragutin against Byzantium, which was observed as retaliation against the opponent, according to Daniel II.<sup>43</sup> Thus, he clearly emphasizes the destructive character of this war.

After describing the conquest of Byzantine territories, Daniel II notes the story of the conflict of brothers Milutin and Dragutin with Bulgarian nobles Drman and Kudelin, who ruled Braničevo. The cause of the war was Dragutin's knowledge that they planned to attack his territories. In order to thwart them, he gathered all of his army with the aim to invade Braničevo and expel them from this area.<sup>44</sup> It is noteworthy that Drman and Kudelin might have occupied the Hungarian territories of Braničevo and Kučevo already by the end of 1273.<sup>45</sup> Their territories bordered with Dragutin's area, which consisted of the northern part of Serbia and some Hungarian possessions (Belgrade, Mačva, Usora and Syrmia).<sup>46</sup> Based on Daniel's statement, it is clear that

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<sup>40</sup> *Vizantijski izvori za istoriju naroda Jugoslavije* [Byzantine sources for history of peoples of Yugoslavia], vol. 6, ed. by Franjo Barišić – Božidar Ferjančić, Beograd, 1986, pp. 30-31; Stanković, *Kralj Milutin*, pp. 74, 77-79; *Istorija srpskog naroda* 1, p. 437.

<sup>41</sup> Arhiepiskop Danilo i drugi, *Životi kraljeva i arhiepiskopa srpskih*, pp. 109-110.

<sup>42</sup> Stanković, *Kralj Milutin*, p. 77.

<sup>43</sup> Arhiepiskop Danilo i drugi, *Životi kraljeva i arhiepiskopa srpskih*, p. 112; *Istorija srpskog naroda* 1, p. 441.

<sup>44</sup> Arhiepiskop Danilo i drugi, *Životi kraljeva i arhiepiskopa srpskih*, pp. 114-115.

<sup>45</sup> Aleksandar Uzelac, *Pod senkom psa: Tataři i južnošlovenske zemlje u drugoj polovini XIII veka* [Under the shadow of the dog: Tatars and South Slavic lands in the second half of thirteenth century], Beograd, 2015, p. 119.

<sup>46</sup> Mihailo Dinić, "Oblast kralja Dragutina posle Deževo" [Territories of King Dragutin after Deževo], *Glas Srpske akademije nauka* 203 (1951), pp. 76-80; Đura Hardi, "Gospodari i banovi onostranog Srema i Mačve u XIII veku" [Lords and bans of

the Serbian ruler began the hostilities, although the hagiographer accused Bulgarian nobles of doing exactly that.<sup>47</sup> Aleksandar Uzelac considers that Dragutin's mentioned attack occurred during the second half of the 1280s.<sup>48</sup>

The penetration of Bulgarian local lord Shishman to the territory of King Milutin was a response to the clash of Serbian rulers with Drman and Kudelin. It seems that this war took place around 1293.<sup>49</sup> However, Daniel II concealed the true reason for this action and wrote that the Bulgarian ruler was envious of king's state.<sup>50</sup> Shishman's defeat triggered a reaction of his suzerain Tatar Khan Nogai, who wanted to occupy the Serbian state, according to the same author. Then, he nevertheless explained that Nogai's campaign was instigated by those who first attacked the Serbian king.<sup>51</sup> This statement indicates that Daniel II understood the main reason behind the conflict.<sup>52</sup>

At the end of the 1310s King Milutin hired a detachment of Turkish mercenaries. These troops played an important role at the end of the civil war between Milutin and Dragutin.<sup>53</sup> At one point they turned against the king. Milutin's hagiographer testifies that the *Persians* wanted to kill the king because they saw glory, greatness and wealth of the Serbian state.<sup>54</sup> Soon after, King Milutin twice sent military aid to Byzantine Emperor Andronikos II Palaiologos (r. 1282-1328), who entered in the conflict with his former Turkish mercenaries. Daniel II emphasizes that the Byzantine emperor requested help from the Serbian ruler, when he was informed about king's victory over the Turks.<sup>55</sup> The next Andronikos' invitation for help came to King Milutin when,

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Syrmia Ulterior and Mačva in the thirteenth century], *Spomenica Istorijskog arhiva "Srem"* 8 (2009), p. 77.

<sup>47</sup> Uzelac, *Pod senkom psa*, pp. 205-206.

<sup>48</sup> Uzelac, *Pod senkom psa*, p. 206.

<sup>49</sup> Uzelac, *Pod senkom psa*, pp. 215-216.

<sup>50</sup> Arhiepiskop Danilo i drugi, *Životi kraljeva i arhiepiskopa srpskih*, p. 117.

<sup>51</sup> Arhiepiskop Danilo i drugi, *Životi kraljeva i arhiepiskopa srpskih*, p. 120.

<sup>52</sup> Uzelac, *Pod senkom psa*, pp. 219-220.

<sup>53</sup> Arhiepiskop Danilo i drugi, *Životi kraljeva i arhiepiskopa srpskih*, pp. 143-144, 354; *Vizantijski izvori za istoriju naroda Jugoslavije* 6, pp. 182-183.

<sup>54</sup> Arhiepiskop Danilo i drugi, *Životi kraljeva i arhiepiskopa srpskih*, p. 143.

<sup>55</sup> Arhiepiskop Danilo i drugi, *Životi kraljeva i arhiepiskopa srpskih*, p. 145.



according to the same writer, the emperor believed that Turks could have threatened his life.<sup>56</sup> The Byzantine sources confirm participation of Serbian troops in operations against Turks during 1312 and 1313.<sup>57</sup>

The unnamed Student of Daniel brings interesting data about the causes of wars in hagiographies of archbishop Daniel II, King Stephen Dečanski and King Stephen Dušan. In *The Life of Archbishop Daniel II* he paid great attention to the attacks of the Catalan company on Mount Athos, especially the Hilandar monastery. At that time Daniel was hegoumenos of this Serbian monastery. Although, he did not mention clearly it can be concluded that the aim of their attack was to pillage Athonite monasteries.<sup>58</sup> Indeed, in middle of 1307 the Catalans were left without food supply and decided to attack the Holy Mountain. Moreover, they wanted to get rich.<sup>59</sup>

One of the few Serbian sources about the war between brothers Milutin and Dragutin is *The Life of Archbishop Daniel II*. The author of this work points out that Dragutin tried to overthrow his brother and appoint his son Urošić to be a king.<sup>60</sup> It may be noted that the unnamed writer skipped to explain the prehistory of the dispute over inheritance of the Serbian throne. The war between brothers lasted from 1301 to 1312.<sup>61</sup>

The most important political event of the reign of King Stephen Dečanski (r. 1321-1331) was the battle of Velbazhd in July 1330. Writing about the cause of this struggle, his hagiographer wrote that Bulgarian Emperor Michael III Shishman (r. 1323-1330) forgot the help and love of his father-in-law King Milutin. His aim was to harm the king's fatherland and put his throne in the Serbian state.<sup>62</sup> After the victory over the Bulgarian army, King Stephen Dečanski organized an attack

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<sup>56</sup> Arhiepiskop Danilo i drugi, *Životi kraljeva i arhiepiskopa srpskih*, p. 146.

<sup>57</sup> *Vizantijski izvori za istoriju* 6, pp. 184-188; *Istorija srpskog naroda* 1, pp. 460-461.

<sup>58</sup> Arhiepiskop Danilo i drugi, *Životi kraljeva i arhiepiskopa srpskih*, p. 340.

<sup>59</sup> Mirjana Živojinović, "Žitije arhiepiskopa Danila II kao izvor za ratovanja Katalanske kompanije" [The life of Archbishop Daniel II as source on the warfare of Catalan company], *Zbornik radova Vizantološkog instituta* 19 (1980), pp. 254-256.

<sup>60</sup> Arhiepiskop Danilo i drugi, *Životi kraljeva i arhiepiskopa srpskih*, p. 357.

<sup>61</sup> Mihailo Dinić, "Odnos kralja Milutina i Dragutina" [Relations between Kings Milutin and Dragutin], *Zbornik radova Vizantološkog instituta* 3 (1955), pp. 56-80.

<sup>62</sup> Arhiepiskop Danilo i drugi, *Životi kraljeva i arhiepiskopa srpskih*, p. 178.

against Byzantine Emperor Andronikos III Palaiologos (r. 1328-1341) who was an ally of Michael Shishman.<sup>63</sup> The battle of Velbazhd was a consequence of complex political relations among Balkan states during the 1330s. Namely, Michael Shishman and Andronikos III concluded an alliance against Serbia, but Daniel's Student did not mention that the Serbian king tried to occupy Ohrid in the spring of 1330. It seems that this action influenced the subsequent conduct of the Byzantine emperor towards Stephen Dečanski.<sup>64</sup>

Finally, Daniel's Student informs us about the causes of the wars, which were led by King and Emperor Stephen Dušan (r. 1331-1355) during the first years of his reign. As the main reason of the king's conquest of Byzantine territories he states that Stephen Dušan intended to take revenge on the *Greek emperor*, who broke the peace with his father.<sup>65</sup> However, this may be one of the reasons for Dušan's actions. Namely, it is certain that the Serbian nobility was an important instigator of the king's aggressive policy. The king had to respect requirements of the nobility who played a crucial role in his rise to power in 1331.<sup>66</sup> *The Life of King Dušan* ends with a description of a Hungarian attack on Serbia. As a reason for this campaign the author points out that King Charles I Robert of Hungary (r. 1301-1342) felt envy towards the Serbian king and his state. He tried to exploit the occupation of King Dušan at the southern borders of his state.<sup>67</sup> This conflict occurred between November 1334 and January 1335. The warring parties clashed over the control of the region of Mačva.<sup>68</sup>

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<sup>63</sup> Arhiepiskop Danilo i drugi, *Životi kraljeva i arhiepiskopa srpskih*, p. 196.

<sup>64</sup> *Vizantijski izvori za istoriju naroda Jugoslavije* 6, pp. 334-335. More about political relations among Balkan states before the battle of Velbazhd: Marjanović-Dušanić, *Sveti kralj*, pp. 287-296.

<sup>65</sup> Arhiepiskop Danilo i drugi, *Životi kraljeva i arhiepiskopa srpskih*, p. 222.

<sup>66</sup> Božidar Ferjančić – Sima Ćirković, *Stefan Dušan: kralj i car (1331-1355)* [Stephen Dušan: king and emperor (1331-1355)], Beograd, 2005, pp. 50-51; Georgije Ostrogorski, "Dušan i njegova vlastela u borbi sa Vizantijom" [Dušan and his nobility in the struggles with Byzantium], in *Zbornik u čast šestogodišnjice Zakonika cara Dušana* [Volume in the honour of six hundred years of the Dušan's code], ed. by Nikola Radojčić, Beograd, 1951, pp. 81-82, 86.

<sup>67</sup> Arhiepiskop Danilo i drugi, *Životi kraljeva i arhiepiskopa srpskih*, p. 227.

<sup>68</sup> Ferjančić, Ćirković, *Stefan Dušan*, pp. 58-60.

Based on presented data it can be concluded that Serbian hagiographers very briefly noted the causes of wars. Thereby they omitted information that could negatively portray actions of the main character of the hagiography. On the other hand, their opponents were denoted as *lawbreakers, unreasonable persons*,<sup>69</sup> who acted under the devil's influence. Describing the internal conflicts, authors especially underlined the spiritual causes of the struggles. They strived to justify conquests of the Serbian monarchs and therefore described their campaigns as defensive wars.

### **Descriptions of political struggles and military operations**

Serbian hagiographers usually did not describe the courses of military operations in detail. The exceptions in this respect are the works of Daniel II and his Student. Their hagiographies of King Milutin, King Stephen III and King Stephen Dušan contain characteristics of rulers' historiographies.<sup>70</sup> Consequently, the authors paid much attention to the wars waged by their heroes. It needs to be underlined that their information is often not comparable with other sources.

Saint Sava briefly reported about Stephen Nemanja's conquests, presenting them as renewal of his inheritance.<sup>71</sup> His tale relates to Nemanja's wars against Byzantium in the period from 1180 to 1190.<sup>72</sup> The Serbian Grand Župan Stephen Nemanjić gives more data on the political activities of his father. As I have already noted, he describes the conflict between Stephen Nemanja and his older brothers. According to

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<sup>69</sup> Stefan Prvovenčani, *Sabrana dela*, pp. 36, 82, 84, 86, 88; Domentijan, *Život Svetoga Save*, p. 174; Domentijan, *Život Svetoga Simeuna i Svetoga Save*, pp. 15, 20, 22, 96; Arhiepiskop Danilo i drugi, *Životi kraljeva i arhiepiskopa srpskih*, pp. 199, 228.

<sup>70</sup> Marjanović-Dušanić, *Sveti kralj*, p. 166; Danica Popović, "Sveti kralj Stefan Dečanski" [Holy king Stephen Dečanski], in Danica Popović, *Pod okriljem svetosti. Kult svetih vladara i relikvija u srednjovekovnoj Srbiji* [Under the auspices of sanctity. The cult of holy rulers and relics in medieval Serbia], Beograd, 2006, p. 144; *Danilovi nastavljači. Danilov učenik, drugi nastavljači Danilovog zbornika* [Daniel's continuators. Daniel's student, others continuators of Daniel's anthology], ed. by Gordon Mak Danijel, trans. by Lazar Mikrović, Beograd, 1989, p. 22.

<sup>71</sup> Vladimir Ćorović, *Spisi svetog Save* [Records of Saint Sava], Beograd, 1928, pp. 151-152.

<sup>72</sup> *Istorija srpskog naroda* 1, p. 258.

Stephen, he achieved victory over them thanks to the divine help. First, Saint George rescued him from the cave into which he was thrown by his brothers. The defeated rivals found support on the territory of the Byzantine Empire. The brothers hired there Greek, French and Turkish soldiers and invaded the Serbian state. Thanks to God and Saint George, Stephen Nemanja defeated them near the village of Pantin. The eldest brother drowned in the river during the retreat.<sup>73</sup> It is considered that these events occurred between 1166 and 1168.<sup>74</sup> The author clearly emphasizes that the help of God and Saint George was a crucial factor for Nemanja's success. He expressed gratitude to the holy warrior Saint George by building a monastery dedicated to this saint.<sup>75</sup> The marching of rival army and the course of the decisive battle were not described in the Stephen's work.

Similarly to Sava, Stephen Nemanjić generally presented the results of his father's wars against the Byzantine Empire. Truly, he mentioned that Stephen Nemanja acted together with the king of Hungary in the first stage of war. In his description Stephen initially accentuates the capture of towns in the southeast, which were entirely destroyed according to him. At the end of this part of the text, he stated that Stephen Nemanja converted the glory and wealth of the occupied areas and towns into the "wealth and glory of his fatherland, great lords and his men."<sup>76</sup> The quoted phrase later became a commonplace in the hagiography's description of wars. It seems that the writer wanted to underline the positive outcome of the struggle. Also, this sentence points out the significance of the nobility, which was rewarded by the ruler. A separate section is dedicated to the conquest of the coastal province of

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<sup>73</sup> Stefan Prvovenčani, *Sabrana dela*, pp. 24, 26, 28, 30, 32.

<sup>74</sup> *Istorija srpskog naroda* 1, p. 209.

<sup>75</sup> Vojislav Đurić, "Posvete Nemanjinih zadužbina i vladarska ideologija" [Consecration of Nemanja's foundations and ruler ideology], in *Studenica u crkvenom životu i istoriji srpskog naroda: Simposion Bogoslovske fakulteta u čast osamstogodišnjice manastira Studenice* [Studenica in church life and history of Serbian people: Symposium in honour of eight hundred years of monastery of Studenica], ed. by Pribislav Simić, Beograd, 1987, p. 17.

<sup>76</sup> Stefan Prvovenčani, *Sabrana dela*, p. 38.

Duklja.<sup>77</sup> Nemanja's success is shown as a restitution of the fatherland, which was held by Greeks. Further, the author emphasizes that Stephen Nemanja exterminated Greeks in this area, while his men remained unharmed.<sup>78</sup> In this way Stephen depicted the conquest of Duklja as a just war against foreigners. Hence, Stephen Nemanjić did not mention that his father repressed Duklja's ruler *knez* Michael, whose uncles were Nemanja and his brothers.<sup>79</sup> A conflict with a cousin did not fit into the concept of a just war.

Stephen Nemanjić only briefly presented his conflict with brother Vukan over the throne. In a letter to his brother monk Sava, he noted that Vukan along with foreigners (*inoplemenci*) devastated the fatherland and took power. The situation changed in favour of Stephen, "since God and Saint Symeon were on his side."<sup>80</sup> The described events lasted from 1202 to 1204 or 1205.<sup>81</sup> It is interesting that Stephen did not specify the identity of the foreigners who supported Vukan. The other sources testify that the King Emeric of Hungary (r. 1196-1204) supported Vukan during this war.<sup>82</sup> Previously it was thought that the Bulgarian attack on Serbia in 1203 was directly related to Stephen's return to the throne.<sup>83</sup>

The other wars described in Stephen's work relate to his reign. Their outcomes were presented as miracles of Saint Symeon. His son first illuminated the attack of Bulgarian Emperor Borilo and Latin Emperor of Constantinople Henry of Flanders on Serbia in 1213 or 1214.

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<sup>77</sup> Duklja was the name for one of the maritime part of the Serbian state. See: Sima Ćirković, *The Serbs*, Malden, 2004, p. 32.

<sup>78</sup> Stefan Prvovenčani, *Sabrana dela*, pp. 38, 40.

<sup>79</sup> Tadija Smičiklas et al., *Diplomatički zbornik Kraljevine Hrvatske, Dalmacije i Slavonije. Codex diplomaticus regni Croatiae, Dalmatiae et Slavoniae*, 18 vols., Zagreb, 1904-1990, vol. 2, p. 115; Ivana Ravić, "Pismo barskog episkopa Grgura splitskom kanoniku Gvalteriju. Prilog datiranju Nemanjinog napada na gradove u Duklji" [Letter of Bishop Gregory of Antivari to Canon Gualterius of Spalato. Contribution to dating of Nemanja's attack on the towns in Duklja], *Stari srpski arhiv* 10 (2011), pp. 184-189.

<sup>80</sup> Stefan Prvovenčani, *Sabrana dela*, pp. 72, 74.

<sup>81</sup> *Istorija srpskog naroda* 1, pp. 268-270; Stanoje Stanojević, "Hronologija borbe između Stefana i Vukana" [The chronology of the struggle between Stephen and Vukan], *Glas Srpske kraljevske akademije* 153 (1933), pp. 97-101.

<sup>82</sup> *Istorija srpskog naroda* 1, pp. 268-270; Stanojević, "Hronologija borbe," pp. 97-101.

<sup>83</sup> Stanojević, "Hronologija borbe," pp. 99-100; Stanojević, "Stevan Prvovenčani" [Stephen the First-Crowned], *Godišnjica Nikole Čupića* 43 (1934), pp. 17-18.

They penetrated to the town of Niš. The *Grand Župan* did not oppose them by force, but asked God, Virgin Mary and Saint Symeon for help. Then, at midnight Saint Symeon appeared in front of his opponents. The soldiers were overwhelmed with fear and during the retreat they killed each other.<sup>84</sup> The next time Saint Symeon helped his son was when he confronted the local Bulgarian lord Strez, who was Stephen's former ally. To prevent his attack on Serbia, Stephen sent him his brother Sava to negotiate. Sava's attempt to change his attitude remained without success. Thereafter Stephen Nemanjić testifies that Saint Symeon killed Strez as Saint Demetrius stabbed his cousin Bulgarian Emperor Kaloyan (r. 1196-1207).<sup>85</sup> The figure of Saint Symeon was constructed on the model of Saint Demetrius. The Serbian saint was shown as a protector of the homeland in the same way as Saint Demetrius was the patron of Thessaloniki.<sup>86</sup> The murder of Strez most probably occurred in 1214.<sup>87</sup> During the same year Saint Symeon made another "negative" miracle, according to his son Stephen. Namely, the *Grand Župan* sought help from him against Michael I Angelos, who occupied his town of Shkodër. Afterwards Saint Symeon asked Saint George for help. Embodied in the person of one of Michael's servants, he killed the ruler of Epirus.<sup>88</sup> Historians have established that Michael I Angelos was killed in 1214.<sup>89</sup> The last of Symeon's miracles depicted by Stephen relates to the attack of King Andrew II of Hungary and Henry of Flanders on Serbia. The rivals of Stephen Nemanjić planned to meet in Niš and attack the Serbian state. Stephen Nemanjić prayed for help from Symeon at his grave. Holy myrrh began to pour from the tomb as a sign of his support

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<sup>84</sup> Stefan Prvovenčani, *Sabrana dela*, pp. 80, 82.

<sup>85</sup> Stefan Prvovenčani, *Sabrana dela*, pp. 84, 86, 88; Marjanović-Dušanić, *Sveti kralj*, pp. 113-114.

<sup>86</sup> Danica Popović, "O nastanku kulta svetog Simeona" [On the formation of the cult of Saint Symeon], in *Stefan Nemanja – Sveti Simeon Mirotočivi. Istorija i predanje* [Stephen Nemanja – Saint Symeon Myrobletos. History and tradition], ed. by Jovanka Kalić, Beograd, 2000, pp. 359-360; Marjanović-Dušanić, *Sveti kralj*, pp. 113-114.

<sup>87</sup> Komatina, "Istorijska podloga čuda," p. 126; Radić, "Oblasni gospodari u Vizantiji," p. 240.

<sup>88</sup> Stefan Prvovenčani, *Sabrana dela*, pp. 88, 90, 92.

<sup>89</sup> Ferjančić, "Srbija i vizantijski svet," pp. 109-110; Komatina, "Istorijska podloga čuda," p. 126.

to his son. Together with his brother Sava, the *Grand Župan* rose against the Hungarian ruler. Shortly thereafter emissaries of King Andrew II offered peace negotiations to Stephen Nemanjić. They made an agreement during a meeting in the town of Ravno.<sup>90</sup> Further, the Serbian ruler points out that Henry of Flanders did not accomplish his intentions. Saint Symeon defended his country and Henry had to leave the Serbian territory.<sup>91</sup> It is assumed that these events happened in 1215 or 1216.<sup>92</sup> Stephen's main intention was to emphasize the role of Saint Symeon as the protector of the Serbian state.<sup>93</sup>

The monk Domentian presented many wars of Serbian rulers, but he did not convey much data about the course of military operations. Also, it is obvious that he took information from previous writers, notably Stephen Nemanjić. Thus, he describes the war between Stephen Nemanja and his brothers in a similar fashion. However, Domentian gives some interesting details. In his words, the army of Nemanja's brothers at Pantin consisted from a multitude of horsemen. In connection with this battle he states that more of Nemanja's rivals drowned in the river Sitnica than were killed by weapons.<sup>94</sup> His description of wars against Byzantium that were led by Stephen Nemanja does not contain new facts.<sup>95</sup>

On the other hand, Domentian's literary works dedicated to Saint Simeon and Saint Sava are among the most important narrative sources about the civil war between Stephen and Vukan. The description of the war is shown through a letter of *Grand Župan* Stephen to his brother monk Sava. The basis of the story is the same as in Stephen's text, but he notes the suffering of the population due to the attack of foreigners (*inoplemenci*). He notes that one part of the people was killed, while another part was taken into captivity or lost their property. After the expulsion of foreigners, the country was hit by famine, which was worse than the attack of foreigners, according to Domentian. The learned writer emphasizes that the country was full of dead men and therefore

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<sup>90</sup> Stefan Prvovenčani, *Sabrana dela*, pp. 100, 102, 104.

<sup>91</sup> Stefan Prvovenčani, *Sabrana dela*, p. 106.

<sup>92</sup> Komatina, "Istorijska podloga čuda," p. 128.

<sup>93</sup> Popović, "O nastanku kulta svetog Simeona," pp. 359-360.

<sup>94</sup> Domentijan, *Život Svetoga Simeuna i Svetoga Save*, pp. 9-20.

<sup>95</sup> Domentijan, *Život Svetoga Simeuna i Svetoga Save*, pp. 22-23.

they had to be buried in grain pits. These were the reasons why Stephen Nemanjić invited his brother Sava to bring the relics of Symeon to Serbia, hoping that his father would protect their state from attacks of foreigners.<sup>96</sup> This description was the first Serbian medieval source which pointed out the destructive consequences of military operations.

The same author presents the conflict between the Grand Župan Stephen Nemanjić and Strez in the *Life of Saint Sava*. Domentian's story does not contain many historical data, but offers some interesting details that cannot be found in Stephen's work. According to his description, Strez broke the God's commandment and *Gospel's brotherhood* when he attacked the Serbian ruler. Furthermore, the author points out that Sava was instructed by his brother to indicate to Strez the significance of brotherhood and the oath before God.<sup>97</sup> These statements indicate that Stephen's and Strez's alliance was strengthened by brotherhood.<sup>98</sup> Sava's hagiographer also notices important information about Strez's murder. This event was described as a result of Sava's prayer to God. Allegedly, the Bulgarian lord ordered that Sava would be found when he understood the reason for his wound. Strez wanted Sava to pray for him, but his men did not find the Serbian monk.<sup>99</sup> This miracle was attributed to Saint Symeon in Stephen's work.<sup>100</sup>

The monk Domentian testifies that King Stephen Nemanjić again engaged his brother Sava when King Andrew II of Hungary attacked Serbia. As in the previous case, Sava unsuccessfully tried to convince Stephen's enemy to cease the military operations. Thereafter he proved that God was on his side. Namely, his prayer to God caused

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<sup>96</sup> Domentijan, *Život Svetoga Simeuna i Svetoga Save*, pp. 93-99.

<sup>97</sup> Domentijan, *Život Svetoga Simeuna i Svetoga Save*, pp. 172, 174.

<sup>98</sup> Radivoj Radić, "Sveti Sava i smrt oblasnog gospodara Streza" [Saint Sava and the death of the local lord Strez], in *Sveti Sava u srpskoj istoriji i tradiciji* [Saint Sava in Serbian history and tradition], ed. by Sima Ćirković, Beograd, 1998, p. 53; *Leksikon srpskog srednjeg veka* [Lexicon of the Serbian Middle Ages], ed. by Sima Ćirković – Rade Mihaljčić, Beograd, 1997, p. 527. More about brotherhood in medieval Serbia: *Leksikon srpskog srednjeg veka*, pp. 526-527; Panta Srećković, "Čin bratovoreniju" [The act of brotherhood], *Glasnik srpskog učenog društva* 63 (1885), pp. 274-287.

<sup>99</sup> Domentijan, *Život Svetoga Simeuna i Svetoga Save*, pp. 176, 178, 180.

<sup>100</sup> Ljiljana Juhas Georgiveska, "Komentari" [Comments], in Domentijan, *Život Svetoga Simeuna i Svetoga Save*, pp. 465-466.



thunderstorms which produced hail. Then, the king of Hungary bowed to Sava because of the mentioned miracle and asked the monk to pray for him. The author concludes the story by saying that the king fulfilled all of Sava's pleas.<sup>101</sup> The exact date of this war cannot be determined. On the basis of Domentian's data it is clear that the campaign took place at an unknown time after 1217.<sup>102</sup> Precise chronological information was not substantial for Domentian. His main intention was to highlight the miracles of Saint Sava, while military operations remained in the background.

Theodosius's work *The Life of Saint Sava* contains some information that cannot be found in Domentian's hagiography. It must be noted that Theodosius was not a contemporary of the events described. Therefore, his data must be taken with great caution. The way in which he presents the conflict between Stephen and Vukan confirms this remark. The author points out that Vukan, along with many foreign people (*inoplemenici*), attacked his brother several times, but was unsuccessful each time.<sup>103</sup> He did not mention that at one point Vukan overthrew his brother from the throne. Indeed, hereinafter Theodosius states that Stephen wrote to Sava that his country became prey to foreigners.<sup>104</sup> Similarly to Domentian, he notes famine as the result of this war. Furthermore, he adds that many people emigrated to foreign lands due to hunger.<sup>105</sup> He thus emphasizes the negative consequences of Vukan's actions.

Especially interesting is his description of the conflict between the *Grand Župan* and Strez. At the beginning of this narrative, the author says that Sava was not guilty of Strez's murder.<sup>106</sup> In accordance with other sources, Theodosius states that the Serbian ruler tried to prevent the attack through negotiations of his noblemen with the Bulgarian lord. These attempts were unsuccessful. Afterwards, Stephen gathered troops for a battle, but Sava offered to negotiate with Strez in order to avoid

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<sup>101</sup> Domentijan, *Život Svetoga Simeuna i Svetoga Save*, pp. 252, 254, 256, 258, 260, 262, 264, 266, 268, 270.

<sup>102</sup> Stanojević, "O napadu ugarskog kralja," pp. 120-130.

<sup>103</sup> Teodosije, *Život Svetoga Save*, p. 80.

<sup>104</sup> Teodosije, *Život Svetoga Save*, p. 81.

<sup>105</sup> Teodosije, *Život Svetoga Save*, p. 81.

<sup>106</sup> Teodosije, *Život Svetoga Save*, p. 101.

bloodshed. Sava warned Strez about the fate of those who offend the oath. Since the Bulgarian lord did not want to give up on the war, the Serbian hieromonk prayed to God that he should experience revenge. Strez was stabbed in the night by a young man. According to Theodosius, Strez's men did not find Sava thanks to the help of God. One part of Strez's soldiers returned home in fear of an attack by the Serbian army. Some prominent nobles of the Bulgarian lord came to Sava and told him what had happened.<sup>107</sup> Historian Radivoj Radić noticed that Theodosius's description indicates that Sava was involved in a conspiracy against Strez.<sup>108</sup> It should be noted that only this hagiographer mentions the presence of Serbian troops near Strez's camp. This information testifies that the Serbian ruler was ready to fight. Nobles who informed Sava about Strez's death wanted to join Stephen's army,<sup>109</sup> which may indicate that the Serbian ruler was previously in contact with them.

The conflict between King Stephen the First-Crowned and King Andrew II of Hungary was presented by Theodosius differently in comparison to Domentian. Theodosius writes that the Hungarian ruler cancelled the peace and declared war on Stephen through his nobles. Further, the hagiographer points out that King Andrew II gathered many Hungarians and Cumans with the aim to subjugate the Serbian state. King Stephen told his brother about the threats which he received and asked him to negotiate with the king of Hungary. His description of the unsuccessful negotiations and Sava's miracle is similar to Domentian's text. However, the continuation of Theodosius's story contains some unbelievable information. First, the author states that the king decided to live in peace with the Serbian ruler and asked forgiveness for what he said previously. Under Sava's influence he allegedly rejected Catholicism and converted to Orthodoxy.<sup>110</sup> It is quite clear that King Andrew II did not change his religion. These data had a function to stress Sava's virtues and his great influence on contemporaries.

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<sup>107</sup> Teodosije, *Život Svetoga Save*, pp. 107-112.

<sup>108</sup> Radić, "Sveti Sava i smrt oblasnog gospodara Streza," pp. 56-58.

<sup>109</sup> Teodosije, *Život Svetoga Save*, p. 112.

<sup>110</sup> Teodosije, *Život Svetoga Save*, pp. 152-158.

The course of the war between brothers Radoslav and Vladislav is presented only in Theodosius's work. As has already been mentioned, the writer says that the nobles abandoned King Radoslav and supported his younger brother Vladislav. Theodosius's main character unsuccessfully tried to reconcile them. Radoslav was defeated and fled to the town of Durrës (Durazzo) on the Adriatic coast. The commander of this town took his wife and wanted to kill him. Finally, Radoslav returned to Serbia where he became a monk thanks to Sava.<sup>111</sup> The other sources testify that Radoslav remained in Dubrovnik after the defeat in the battle for the throne. Also, it is known that he became a monk, but the circumstances of this process are not known.<sup>112</sup> In addition, there are indications that Radoslav's spouse Ana returned to Serbia together with her husband and became a nun.<sup>113</sup>

Archbishop Daniel II dedicates much attention to military operations in his works, particularly to wars led by King Milutin. In accordance with the genre of hagiography, he emphasizes God's help to the Serbian rulers during campaigns. The struggle for the throne between King Uroš and his son Young King Dragutin is the first war that was presented in *The Lives of the Serbian Kings and Archbishops*. The author notices that Dragutin turned to the king of Hungary, his father-in-law, to help him in the fight. The Young King gathered an army made up of Hungarians and Cumans. Then, Daniel says that Dragutin again asked his father to give him a part of the state. The King's refusal was identified as a cause of Dragutin's attack. The decisive battle ended with a victory of Dragutin who became the new king of Serbia.<sup>114</sup> The writer's

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<sup>111</sup> Teodosije, *Život Svetoga Save*, pp. 177-178.

<sup>112</sup> *Istorija srpskog naroda* 1, p. 310; Mihailo Laskaris, *Vizantiske princeze u srednjovekovnoj Srbiji: prilog istoriji vizantiskosrpskih odnosa od kraja XII do sredine XV veka* [Byzantine princesses in medieval Serbia: contribution to the history of Byzantine-Serbian relations from the end of twelfth century to mid-fifteenth century], Beograd, 1926, pp. 48-51.

<sup>113</sup> Stojan Novaković, "Srpski pomenici XV–XVIII veka" [Serbian monuments from the fifteenth to the eighteenth century], *Glasnik Srpskog učenog društva* 42 (1875), p. 30; Laskaris, *Vizantiske princeze u srednjovekovnoj Srbiji*, pp. 51-52; Mihailo Dinić, "Domentijan i Teodosije" [Domentian and Theodosius], *Prilozi za književnost, jezik, istoriju i folklor* 25/1-2 (1959), pp. 6-7.

<sup>114</sup> Arhiepiskop Danilo i drugi, *Životi kraljeva i arhiepiskopa srpskih*, pp. 16-18.

intention is to justify the behaviour of the young king, but he made some factual errors. Namely, Dragutin's father-in-law King Stephen V (r. 1270-1272) was not alive when Dragutin came to power in 1276.<sup>115</sup> After the death of King Stephen V, Hungary went through a turbulent period as a result of the conflicts among its most powerful nobles. The Hungarian territories along the border with Serbia functioned as separate territories.<sup>116</sup> The question is whether Dragutin could get any help at all from Hungary at that time. Also, Daniel missed to point out that Dragutin had the title of a young king, which meant that he was designated as successor to the throne.<sup>117</sup> It is interesting that Daniel did not convict him of using foreign troops.

At the beginning of his rule, King Milutin launched an offensive against Byzantium in 1282. His hagiographer notes that when the king gathered all of his soldiers he received blessing from the Archbishop and other prelates. During this campaign Milutin conquered some regions in Macedonia including the city of Skopje. The author states that all of these lands were annexed to Serbia by the king who "turned the glory and wealth of this state into the wealth and glory of his own and his great lords (*velmože*) and people."<sup>118</sup> We can recall that Stephen Nemanjić used a similar assertion for the conquest of his father. Additionally, Daniel II stresses that all citizens and nobles were subjugated to Milutin. Above all, he banished Greek nobles who incited the riots.<sup>119</sup> This allegation explains how the Serbian ruler consolidated his power in the conquered areas. It is almost certain that the Serbian nobility received possessions that previously belonged to Byzantine nobles.

The aforementioned nobles are marked by Daniel as the initiators of a Byzantine counteroffensive. According to the same author, Emperor Michael VIII Palaiologos gathered an army composed of Greeks and foreigners (Tatar, Turks and others). However, the emperor died at the

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<sup>115</sup> Pál Engel, *The Realm of St Stephen. A History of Medieval Hungary, 895–1526*, London – New York, 2001, p. 107.

<sup>116</sup> Engel, *The Realm of St Stephen*, p. 108.

<sup>117</sup> Milka Ivković, "Ustanova 'mladog kralja' u srednjovekovnoj Srbiji" [The institution of 'young king' in medieval Serbia], *Istorijski glasnik* 3-4 (1957), p. 60; *Istorija srpskog naroda* 1, p. 352.

<sup>118</sup> Arhiepiskop Danilo i drugi, *Životi kraljeva i arhiepiskopa srpskih*, pp. 108-109.

<sup>119</sup> Arhiepiskop Danilo i drugi, *Životi kraljeva i arhiepiskopa srpskih*, p. 109.

beginning of the campaign. After the funeral, Daniel notes that Michael's prominent cousins undertook an action against the Serbian king. Their troops penetrated all the way to the towns of Lipljan and Prizren, but did not inflict great damage to Serbia and returned to Byzantium. One detachment of Tatars unsuccessfully tried to pass the river of Drim. The hagiographer points out that Milutin got the head of the Tatars' commander as a special gift.<sup>120</sup> Based on data of George Pachymeres, it may be concluded that this campaign occurred in the spring of 1283.<sup>121</sup> Byzantine authors Pachymeres and Nicephorus Gregoras testify that the main aim of this expedition was pillage.<sup>122</sup>

In the autumn of 1283 King Milutin together with his brother Dragutin organized a campaign against Byzantium. Daniel writes that during this warfare their army broke through to the Mount Athos at the beginning of 1284. Thereafter Dragutin returned to his country. Later that year King Milutin again attacked Byzantium and occupied new territories.<sup>123</sup>

Dragutin's first action against Drman and Kudelin finished unsuccessfully, because their country was well fortified.<sup>124</sup> Further, the author notices that Bulgarian nobles with Tatars and Cumans attacked Dragutin who was forced to seek help from his brother. Together they conquered Braničevo and Kučevo and banished Drman and Kudelin from these regions. The occupied territories were incorporated into Dragutin's state.<sup>125</sup> This military operation occurred in 1292.<sup>126</sup> These developments caused a reaction of local Bulgarian lord Shishman who attacked Milutin's state in 1293. Their army penetrated to Ždrelo near the seat of the Serbian Archbishopric. Milutin's hagiographer notes that Shishman's troops were defeated thanks to the prayers of Saint Symeon, Saint Sava and Saint Arsenius (the second Serbian Archbishop). Then, King Milutin undertook a counterattack during which he occupied all of

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<sup>120</sup> Arhiepiskop Danilo i drugi, *Životi kraljeva i arhiepiskopa srpskih*, pp. 109-112.

<sup>121</sup> *Vizantijski izvori za istoriju* 6, pp. 31-32; *Istorija srpskog naroda* 1, p. 440.

<sup>122</sup> *Vizantijski izvori za istoriju* 6, pp. 31-33, 164-165; *Istorija srpskog naroda* 1, p. 440.

<sup>123</sup> Arhiepiskop Danilo i drugi, *Životi kraljeva i arhiepiskopa srpskih*, pp. 112-114; *Istorija srpskog naroda* 1, p. 441.

<sup>124</sup> Arhiepiskop Danilo i drugi, *Životi kraljeva i arhiepiskopa srpskih*, p. 115.

<sup>125</sup> Arhiepiskop Danilo i drugi, *Životi kraljeva i arhiepiskopa srpskih*, pp. 115-116.

<sup>126</sup> Uzelac, *Pod senkom psa*, p. 210.

Shishman's territories, including his capital city of Vidin. The writer underlines that the Bulgarian lord asked the Serbian king to make peace. They reached an agreement according to which the king returned the occupied areas to Shishman, who married the daughter of Serbian noble Dragoš.<sup>127</sup> These descriptions show that Daniel II presents in a different way the defensive and offensive wars of King Milutin. The help of God and Serbian saints have a far more important place in the author's narrative of defensive warfare.

At one point the Turkish mercenaries threatened King Milutin who defeated them thanks to his bodyguards.<sup>128</sup> When Byzantine Emperor Andronikos II Palaiologos first sought help from Milutin against these Turkish mercenaries, the Serbian king sent him his relatives and bodyguards. According to Daniel, the king's soldiers uprooted the towns of enemies and took their wealth for themselves.<sup>129</sup> The Byzantine sources recorded that the Turks were defeated by the Byzantines, Genoese and Serbs near Gallipoli.<sup>130</sup> The next time the king decided to gather all his soldiers, as testified by the same author. He appointed Grand Voivode Novak Grebostrek as commander of these troops. The Serbian soldiers successfully fought against the Turks in the area of Anatolia. Emphasizing their military skills, Daniel notices that they destroyed the enemies and their towns. The motive of taking wealth and glory is again described.<sup>131</sup> The charter of Emperor Andronikos II from October 1313 confirms that Milutin's troops fought on the soil of Asia Minor.<sup>132</sup>

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<sup>127</sup> Arhiepiskop Danilo i drugi, *Životi kraljeva i arhiepiskopa srpskih*, pp. 117-119.

<sup>128</sup> Arhiepiskop Danilo i drugi, *Životi kraljeva i arhiepiskopa srpskih*, pp. 143-144.

<sup>129</sup> Arhiepiskop Danilo i drugi, *Životi kraljeva i arhiepiskopa srpskih*, p. 145.

<sup>130</sup> *Vizantijski izvori za istoriju 6*, pp. 184-188; Stojan Novaković, *Srbi i Turci XIV i XV veka* [Serbs and Turks in fourteenth and fifteenth centuries], Beograd, 1960, pp. 90, 98-99, 107-112; Konstantin Jireček, *Politička istorija do 1537. godine* [Political history until 1537], *Istorija Srba* [History of Serbs], vol. 1, Beograd, 1952, p. 198; *Istorija srpskog naroda 1*, 460-461.

<sup>131</sup> *Vizantijski izvori za istoriju 6*, pp. 146-148.

<sup>132</sup> *Archive de l'Athos XX. Actes de Chilandar*, vol. 1: *Des origins à 1319*, ed. by Mirjana Živojinović – Vassiliki Kravari – Christophe Giros, Paris, 1998, pp. 205, 207; Stanković, *Kralj Milutin*, pp. 128-129; Novaković, *Srbi i Turci XIV i XV veka*, pp. 80-81, 108.

The conflict between King Milutin and his son Stephen is depicted without many details in *Daniel's Anthology*. Allegedly, many of Milutin's prominent nobles turned to his son Stephen. It may be noted that the writer does not mention military operations, but emphasizes that the king was trying to persuade his son to give up on the campaign. In the end, Stephen surrendered to his father who blinded him.<sup>133</sup> It is obvious that the author aims to justify the actions of the king. Presumably, Stephen's revolt began no later than the end of February 1314.<sup>134</sup>

Archbishop Daniel II was the first author who clearly stressed the key role of the nobility in military operations. This was a consequence of the fact that the nobility gained strength during the reign of King Milutin. Theodore Metochites noted that the nobles in border areas were opponents of an agreement with Byzantium at the end of the thirteenth century, because they wanted to obtain loot.<sup>135</sup> At this time nobles began to build fortifications, as a testimony of their material wealth.<sup>136</sup>

Daniel's Student extensively reports on the military success of Serbian rulers. He is the only Serbian hagiographer from the time of the Nemanjići who notes the exact dates of some events. Also, this author presents many details about troop movements. This can be seen in his description of the battle of Velbazhd. The writer informs us that Bulgarian Emperor Michael Shishman moved with his army from Trnovo. On the other hand, King Stephen III of Serbia ordered that all his soldiers gather at Dobrič Polje in Toplica, where he expected the battle to be fought. However, the king was informed that the Bulgarian army from Vidin moved to Zemen. Further, the author narrates that the Serbian ruler arrived near Zemen via the monastery of Staro Nagoričane where he prayed to Saint George for help. The next few days both sides exchanged missions among themselves. During that time some Serbian nobles who were late joined the king's army. According to Daniel's Student, on the night before the battle King Stephen Dečanski asked God

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<sup>133</sup> Novaković, *Srbi i Turci XIV i XV veka*, pp. 124-126.

<sup>134</sup> Marica Malović, "Stefan Dečanski i Zeta" [Stephen Dečanski and Zeta], *Istorijski zapisi* 41/4 (1979), p. 19; Marjanović-Dušanić, *Sveti kralj*, p. 236.

<sup>135</sup> *Vizantijski izvori za istoriju* 6, p. 97; Ostrogorski, "Dušan i njegova vlastela u borbi sa Vizantijom," pp. 80-81.

<sup>136</sup> Ivan Đorđević, *Zidno slikarstvo srpske vlastele u doba Nemanjića* [The wall-paintings of the Serbian nobility in the Nemanjić period], Beograd, 1994, p. 131.

to adopt his pleas as he accepted Sava's prayers against Strez. Based on the writer's testimony, it can be concluded that the attack of the Serbian ruler surprised the Bulgarian emperor. Stephen's son Dušan was the commander of one part of the Serbian army. The Bulgarian army was defeated. The hagiographer testifies that Emperor Michael Shishman fell off his horse during the withdrawal. Then, he was killed by Serbian soldiers who sent his body to King Stephen III.<sup>137</sup> The Byzantine sources basically confirm the narrative of the Serbian writer. Indeed, they mention the participation of foreign mercenaries in the king's army.<sup>138</sup> It can be assumed that Daniel's Student omitted this information in order not to cast a shadow over the king's victory. Namely, I have pointed out that Serbian hagiographies had a negative attitude towards the participation of foreign soldiers in the Serbian troops. This was especially important because the writer compares King Stephen with Stephen Nemanja who received help from Saint George.<sup>139</sup>

Shortly after the battle of Velbazhd, King Stephen Dečanski organized a campaign against the Byzantine Empire. His hagiographer notices that Emperor Andronikos III fled before the onslaught of the Serbian King who conquered many Byzantine towns and regions. Also, Daniel's Student emphasized that many Byzantine nobles surrendered to Stephen, together with their towns and areas which he gave to his faithful men.<sup>140</sup>

The nobility also had a significant role in the conflict between Stephen Dečanski and his son young King Stephen Dušan. The unnamed Daniel's Student notes that King Stephen III attacked his son and burned his court under the town of Shkodër. Allegedly, Stephen unsuccessfully tried to capture his son by deception. Then, they

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<sup>137</sup> Arhiepiskop Danilo i drugi, *Životi kraljeva i arhiepiskopa srpskih*, pp. 179-184; Marjanović-Dušanić, *Sveti kralj*, pp. 297-304; Gavro Škrivanić, "Bitka kod Velbužda 28. VII. 1330. godine" [The Battle of Velbazhd on July 28, 1330], *Vesnik vojnog muzeja* 16 (1970), pp. 68-75.

<sup>138</sup> *Vizantijski izvori za istoriju* 6, pp. 208-210, 336-339. The archival documents from Dubrovnik indicate that king of Serbia hired Spanish mercenaries. Cf. Mihailo Dinić, "Španski najamnici u srpskoj službi" [Spanish mercenaries in the Serbian service], *Zbornik radova Vizantološkog instituta* 6 (1960), pp. 20-23.

<sup>139</sup> Marjanović-Dušanić, *Sveti kralj*, pp. 297-298.

<sup>140</sup> Arhiepiskop Danilo i drugi, *Životi kraljeva i arhiepiskopa srpskih*, pp. 196-199.



nevertheless reached an agreement.<sup>141</sup> It was the first phase of the war that took place in late 1330 and early 1331.<sup>142</sup> The agreement proved to be temporary because, according to Daniel's Student, the father continued to hate his son. Stephen Dušan refused to appear before the king and suggested to his nobles to flee abroad. The nobility rejected that proposal. The aristocrats threatened to Dušan that they would support the king if he would not attack him. Together with them he made a foray against Stephen Dečanski. The young king succeeded to capture his father and take power.<sup>143</sup> The decisive attack happened in the second half of August 1331.<sup>144</sup> Taking into account that the author composed *The Life of Stephen the Third* during the reign of Stephen Dušan,<sup>145</sup> it is not surprising that he justified operations of the young king. In a charter from 1333 Stephen Dušan interpreted his rise to power as a result of God's judgment.<sup>146</sup> Byzantine historian Nicephorus Gregoras also marked Dušan's nobility as the initiators of all actions against King Stephen III.<sup>147</sup>

Finally, Daniel's Student describes the military operations of King Stephen Dušan during the first years of his reign. The writer notes that the king gathered all his army when he decided to attack the Byzantine Empire. Further he emphasizes that the Serbian ruler wanted to banish Emperor Andronikos III from his state. When the Serbian troops penetrated to Thessaloniki, the Byzantine emperor came to the city and offered negotiations to Stephen Dušan. The two rulers met on August 26 under Thessaloniki where they concluded a peace agreement. Andronikos III allegedly gave the Serbian king all territories and towns conquered by him, his father and grandfather. Nevertheless, Stephen Dušan returned a part of the territories to the Byzantine emperor. At the end of this part of the text, Daniel's Student informs us that the king

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<sup>141</sup> Arhiepiskop Danilo i drugi, *Životi kraljeva i arhiepiskopa srpskih*, pp. 209-210.

<sup>142</sup> Marjanović-Dušanić, *Sveti kralj*, p. 310; Ferjančić, Ćirković, *Stefan Dušan*, pp. 42-43.

<sup>143</sup> Arhiepiskop Danilo i drugi, *Životi kraljeva i arhiepiskopa srpskih*, pp. 210-213.

<sup>144</sup> *Istorija srpskog naroda* 1, p. 510, note 30.

<sup>145</sup> *Danilovi Nastavljači*, p. 21.

<sup>146</sup> Dejan Ječmenica, "Prva stonska povelja kralja Stefana Dušana" [The first charter from Ston by King Stephen Dušan], *Stari srpski arhiv* 9 (2010), pp. 31, 33; Popović, "Sveti kralj Stefan Dečanski," p. 148.

<sup>147</sup> *Vizantijski izvori za istoriju* 6, pp. 211-212.

achieved these conquests in three years.<sup>148</sup> Byzantine authors also testify that the Serbian army came to Thessaloniki and that Andronikos III and Dušan concluded an agreement near the mentioned town in August 1334. However, on the other hand, they point out that the king successfully fought thanks to the help of Syrgiannes who fled from Byzantium to Serbia.<sup>149</sup> The reason is probably the same as for omitting the participation of foreigners in the battle of Velbazhd.

Soon after the agreement with the Byzantine emperor, Stephen Dušan had to face the attack of King Charles I Robert of Hungary who gathered a large army composed of many nations, according to Daniel's Student. The Serbian king ordered the gathering of all his soldiers when he was informed that the Hungarian ruler crossed the river Danube. Together with his army King Dušan reached the monastery of Žiča where he prayed to God for help. Further, the author stresses that the Hungarian soldiers panicked when they found out that the Serbian king was advancing towards them. They were persecuted by God's angel, as the hagiographer wrote. During the retreat, the majority of Hungarian warriors drowned while trying to cross the river Sava and that was presented as a result of divine intervention.<sup>150</sup> This description is the quite similar to statements of previous Serbian hagiographers about wars. Hungarian charters do not provide information on the outcome of this campaign, which indicates that certainly it was not successful.<sup>151</sup>

## Conclusion

The descriptions of wars of the Nemanjići in Serbian hagiographies contain certain common characteristics. All works were written in accordance with the genre of hagiography. The authors emphasized that Serbian rulers had God's help during the military

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<sup>148</sup> Arhiepiskop Danilo i drugi, *Životi kraljeva i arhiepiskopa srpskih*, pp. 222-226.

<sup>149</sup> *Vizantijski izvori za istoriju* 6, pp. 217-221, 340-347; Ferjančić – Ćirković, *Stefan Dušan*, pp. 53-58.

<sup>150</sup> Arhiepiskop Danilo i drugi, *Životi kraljeva i arhiepiskopa srpskih*, pp. 227-231.

<sup>151</sup> Imre Nagy – Iván Nagy – Dezső Véghely, *A Zichi és vásonkeői gróf Zichy-család idősb ágának okmánytára. Codex diplomaticus domus senioris comitum Zichy de Zich et Vasonkeo*, vol. 1, Pest, 1871, p. 446; Lajos Thallóczy – Antal Áldásy, *Magyarország és Szerbia közti összeköttetések oklevéltára 1198-1526.*, Budapest, 1907, p. 11; Ferjančić – Ćirković, *Stefan Dušan*, p. 59.

operations. Consequently, they depicted their enemies as persons who acted under the influence of the devil. The rivals were marked as lawbreakers, unreasonable and evil-minded men. It should be noted that writers expressed a negative attitude towards the members of the dynasty who had help of foreign troops in internal conflicts. Also, the hagiographers did not mention that some Serbian rulers hired foreign mercenaries against external enemies. Archbishop Daniel II and his Student had a different approach to the topic in comparison to previous writers. That was certainly linked to the fact that his works were dedicated to rulers who significantly expanded the borders of the Serbian state. It can be seen that they stated a lot of geographical information on the movement of troops. Further, these authors pointed out the role that the nobility played in the wars. On the basis of these statements, it can be concluded that the writers of *Daniel's Anthology* were aware that nobles formed the basis of Nemanjići armies.