

THE ORIGINS OF THE JOINT CULT OF ST. SIMEON AND ST. SAVA OF SERBIA BASED ON VISUAL SOURCES

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In medieval Serbia under the reign of Milutin (1282–1321) a new cult came into existence. St. Simeon, the founder of the Nemanid dynasty who took the vows, and St. Sava, his son, the first Serbian archbishop, began to appear together as a saintly pair in charters, hymnography, hagiography, and painting. Although both saints had already been venerated separately earlier, their joint cult was a new phenomenon which emerged at that time.

The main problems concerning the cult are the place it originated, the reasons why, and, consequently, its character. To answer these questions fully one needs to examine the full range of sources, which is not possible here; however, in the framework of one article one can examine a single aspect of the cult. Therefore, I will investigate visual representations of the saintly pair that clearly show a distinction between St. Simeon and St. Sava separately and their joint images and thus demonstrate the way their joint cult was built.

In Serbian art history the problem of the joint cult has already attracted attention; but scholars have mainly emphasized the dynastic component and its state-protective character, grouping together the images where the saints play the role of intercessors for other members of the Nemanid dynasty and those where both saints are depicted as representatives of a monastic community.¹ However,

¹ This article is based on my MA thesis in Medieval Studies, entitled “The Joint Cult of St. Simeon and St. Sava under Milutin. The Monastic Aspect” (Central European University, Budapest 2009). Among the works dedicated to the topic are the following: Marjana Čorović-Ljubinković, “Uz problem ikonografije srpskih svetitelja Simeona i Save” [On the problem of the iconography of the Serbian saints Simeon and Sava], *Starinar* n.s. 7–8 (1956–1957): 77–89; Desanka Milošević, “Srbi Svetitelji u starom slikarstvu” [Serbian saints in old paintings], in *O Srbijaku. Studije*, ed. Đ. Trifunović (Belgrade: Srpska Književna Zadruga, 1970), 178–186; Branislav Todić, “Reprezentativni portreti Svetoga Save u srednjovekovnom slikarstvu” [Representative portraits of St. Sava in medieval painting], in *Medunarodni naučni skup “Sveti Sava u srpskoj istoriji i tradiciji”* [The international conference: “Saint Sava in Serbian history and tradition”], ed. S. Ćirković (Belgrade: Srpska Akademija Nauka i Umetnosti [hereafter: SANU], 1998), 225–249; Cvetan Grozdanov, “Sveti Simeon Nemanja i Sveti Sava u slikarskoj tematici u Makedoniji” [Saint Simeon Nemanja and Saint Sava in painting subjects of Macedonia], in *Medunarodni naučni skup “Sveti Simeon Mirotočivi”* [The international conference: “Saint Simeon the Myrrh-flowing”], ed. J. Kalić (Belgrade: Filip Višnjić, 2000), 319–342; Smilja Marjanović-Dušanić “Molitve svetih Simeona i Save

when placed among the other Nemanids, St. Simeon and St. Sava, still being saints, do not form a special saintly pair, in other words, they are not joint saints, but rather family members. It seems to me that two separate traditions of St. Simeon and St. Sava's iconography existed in medieval Serbia. The first, probably the earliest, was associated with the court cult of St. Simeon as the founder of the state and the dynasty and, consequently, as a protector of the Nemanids. In this case, St. Sava, as the founder of the Serbian church, could be added to St. Simeon, but it was not obligatory. The second case, which I am going to distinguish from other iconographies, implies paired isolated representations of the saints, sometimes grouped with other famous monks. To gather the information about formation of the joint cult one needs to compare these two iconographical types and distinguish their functions.

Dynastic Compositions

Already in the earliest representations of St. Simeon as a saint he was accompanied by his son, the first Serbian archbishop, Sava; however, they were both included in longer rows of the Nemanids and were not distinguished as a pair, i.e., they appeared together occasionally as father and son among other relatives. This is the case of the inner narthex of Mileševa monastery, where St. Simeon and St. Sava, although both haloed and heading the procession of Nemanid family members: Stefan the First-crowned (1196–1227), his sons, King Radoslav (1228–1234) and Vladislav (1234–1243), were not joined as a saint pair (*fig. 1*). At the time of the depiction on the frescoes (1222–1228)² Sava was still alive,³ while Simeon was dead and already canonized.⁴ Moreover, the inscription near Sava's figure marks him as "son of St. Simeon Nemanja," just the same as other figures in the procession of Nemanja's descendants.⁵ Sava, still alive, was depicted with a halo and called "the

u vladarskom programu kralja Milutina" [Prayers of St. Simeon and St. Sava in the royal program of King Milutin], *Zbornik radova Vizantološkog instituta* [hereafter: *ZRI/T*] 41 (2004): 235–250.

² Gordana Babić, "Vladislav na kitorskom portretu u naosu Mileševa" [Vladislav on the donors' composition in the naos of Mileševa], in *Mileševa u istoriji srpskog naroda* [Mileševa in history of the Serbian people], ed. V. J. Đurić (Belgrade: SANU, 1987), 14.

³ Sava died in Trnovo returning home from pilgrimage to the Holy land in 1235; see Ivan Dujčev, "Saint Sabas a Tarnovo en 1235," *Hilandarski zbornik* 4 (1978): 17–29.

⁴ Ljubomir Maksimović, "O godini prenosa Nemanjinih moštiju u Srbiju" [About the date of translation of Nemanja's relics to Serbia], *ZRI/T* 24–25 (1986): 437–444.

⁵ About the inscriptions of the procession see Gordana Babić, *Les chapelles annexes des églises byzantines: Fonction liturgique et programmes iconographiques* (Paris: Klincksieck 1969), 129.



Fig. 1. Mileševa monastery, the inner narthex (1222–1228). St. Simeon, St. Sava and the procession of the Nemanid family members (photograph by the author).

saint” in the inscription. Branislav Todić suggests that these specific features do not refer to Sava’s canonization and veneration as a saint, but rather to his high position in the church hierarchy, his sacred authority.⁶ Thus, in this composition St. Simeon and Sava were unified as the saint and the archbishop (but not as two saints), persons standing close to the Heavenly Arbiter, whose figure was also depicted and is now lost, and interceding for their relatives.⁷

St. Simeon’s chapel in King Radoslav’s narthex in Studenica monastery⁸ shows two processions of the Nemanids in the lower row of frescoes; the first one, headed by St. Simeon, includes rulers (Stefan the First-crowned and his grandson,

⁶ Todić, “Reprezentativni portreti,” 228–229.

⁷ Branislav Todić, “Predstave Sv. Simeona Nemanje, nastavnika prave vere i dobre vlade, u srednjovekovnom slikarstvu” [Depictions of St. Simeon as a tutor in orthodoxy and good rule in medieval painting], in *Sveti Simeon Mirotočivi*, 297, thinks that a figure of the Theotokos may have stood between St. Simeon and Christ.

⁸ For more details about this chapel and its iconography, see Vojislav J. Đurić, “La symphonie de l’État et l’Église dans la peinture murale en Serbie médiévale,” in *Sveti Sava u srpskoj istoriji*, 205–207.

King Radoslav), and the second one, headed by Sava, consists of his heir to the throne, Archbishop Arsenije, and the monk Sava, the grandson of St. Simeon Nemanja, who later also became an archbishop. These processions are depicted similarly; secular rulers turn to a founder of the state and the ecclesiarchs turn to a founder of the church, representing two branches of power. Two additional facts must be mentioned: St. Simeon and Stefan, clothed in monastic robes (they died as monks), have diadems on their heads, which emphasizes their positions as rulers, but Sava, who was still alive when the frescoes were painted (about 1230), has a halo as the first Serbian archbishop, as at Mileševa. Thus, this painting expresses visually the idea of the harmony of the State and Church in Serbia, where two branches of power resided in the hands of one family. St. Simeon and St. Sava are thus contrasted as representatives of these two branches and, consequently, their roles are to establish a legitimate lineage. That is why they could not be represented as just a pair of saints; a representation of other legitimate dynastic members is necessary to express the idea of the inheritance of power.

In Milutin's time the same idea of two branches of power was represented in the narthex of a town cathedral, the Bogorodica Ljeviška in Prizren, constructed between 1306 and 1309.⁹ The narthex of the church presents a gallery of the Nemanides. The west wall is dominated by a portrait of St. Simeon, the dynastic founder, depicted as a monk directly above the main portal. He is flanked by his two sons – St. Sava as an archbishop to his right, and Stefan the First-Crowned as a Serbian king to his left. On both sides this dynastic composition continues with younger members of the dynasty (the son of Stefan, King Uroš I, of whom only the inscription is preserved; Uroš's son, King Milutin in Byzantine-modeled clothing and Milutin's son, a crown prince, Stefan Dečanski) and heirs of the archbishop's throne (archbishops Arsenije, Sava II, Joanikije I, Jevstratije I, Jakov, and Jevstratije II). As can be seen, St. Simeon and St. Sava here are also included in a huge dynastic composition, the main goal of which is to demonstrate the legitimacy of power transmission between the members of the Nemanide dynasty and church heirs. Moreover, St. Simeon is represented as a founder of both branches, at the same time a ruler and a monk, which is represented visually in the displacement of his figure above the entrance, between church and state hierarchs, whom he blesses with both hands. Consequently, in this propaganda-oriented composition in the city cathedral, Milutin did not refer to St. Simeon and St. Sava as a pair of saints, nor as his mediators. Here their appearance together is more or less separable and unthinkable without other members of the dynasty.

⁹ Draga Panić, Gordana Babić, *Bogorodica Ljeviška* (Belgrade: Srpska književna zadruga, 1975), 18–19.

Thus, in the monuments with dynastically oriented programs, St. Simeon and St. Sava appear without being joined in a pair; they were separated as representatives of two branches of power or placed among other members of the dynasty whose depiction was mandatory to show the idea of legitimate power delegation. In other words, it is not possible to say that dynastic interests were the main reason for creating the joint cult or that dynastic implications shaped its character.

Monuments Reflecting the Joint Cult

If, as was stated above, the joint cult of St. Simeon and St. Sava is not reflected in dynastic compositions and did not originate in burial churches of the early Nemanids, then another place of origin should be found. It seems to me that this place was Hilandar, where the saints were unified as ktetor¹⁰ and founders of the monastic community, but not as members of the same dynasty.

Probably the earliest visual evidence of the joint cult of Sts. Simeon and Sava is an icon from Hilandar monastery depicting them as two saints. Here St. Sava, as an archbishop, dressed in a *polystaurion* (a kind of *phelonion*, an outer robe with multiple crosses, worn by bishops until the end of the thirteenth century),¹¹ points at image of the Theotokos, placed above, with the right hand; while St. Simeon, as a monk of a Greater schema,¹² holds an unrolled scroll, showing the Greek text of Psalm 34:11.¹³

¹⁰ The Greek word “ktetor,” directly translated as “possessor, owner,” see *A Patristic Greek Lexicon*, ed. G. W. H. Lampe (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1961), 782. It implies a Byzantine social concept of church/monastery foundation activity, according to which “ktetor” was an original founder (possibly a laic one) of a church institution or the founder’s descendant, who had patronage relations with the institution. At the same time, he was specially venerated by the community of the founded church or monastery; see Karl Krumbacher, “Ktetor, ein lexicographischer Versuch,” *Indogermanische Forschungen* 25 (1909): 393–421, with a review by A. Heisenberg, *Byzantinische Zeitschrift* 19 (1910): 588–589.

¹¹ Lazar Mirković, *Pravoslavna liturgika* [Orthodox liturgy] (Belgrade: Serbian Orthodox Church, 1965), 128–129.

¹² *The Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium*, gen. ed. Alexander P. Kazhdan, vol. 3 (Oxford: OUP, 1991), 1849.

¹³ Usually depicted with an unrolled scroll, St. Simeon is accompanied by the text (“Come, ye children, hearken unto me: I will teach you the fear of the Lord”), here it was initially written in Slavonic. This text probably originated from writings of Domentian, who, describing the ceremony of Nemanja taking his vows, started his speech after entering religion with these words; see Domentian, *Žitije Svetog Save* [The life of St. Sava], ed. L. Juhas-Georgijevska (Belgrade: Inicijal, 2001), 45. Consequently, the words on Nemanja’s

The icon can be dated to the end of the thirteenth or beginning of the fourteenth century according to the character of the inscriptions. After Svetozar Radojčić published it for the first time in the 1950s,¹⁴ a question of dating arose because the figures of the saints had been repainted by a Greek artist in the seventeenth century, while the golden background with a half-figure of the Virgin with Child (in the Nicopea iconographical type), inscriptions (САВА АРХИЕПИС(К) УП(Ь) СРПЪСКИ ПАК (СИМЕ)ОНЪ (Н)ЕМАНА),¹⁵ and even some outlines of the figures remained unchanged.¹⁶

Additional evidence of the icon's relatively early date is the iconographical pattern of St. Sava, who is clothed in a *polystaurion*. As has been noted by Serbian scholars,¹⁷ from the depiction at the church of Bogorodica Ljeviška (1310) onwards St. Sava was more often clothed in a *sakkos* (the upper robe of bishops, with short sleeves, which replaced the *polystaurion* at the end of the thirteenth century)¹⁸ according to a new Byzantine trend in church vestments.

As Svetozar Radojčić¹⁹ has noted, the joint iconography had a continuous tradition on Mount Athos, where icons of Sts. Simeon and Sava associated were painted from the fourteenth to the seventeenth centuries, later replaced by engravings with the same iconography.²⁰ On all these depictions St. Sava is placed on the right side of an icon (the left for a viewer) and St. Simeon is on the left.

scroll usually refer to his monastic way; as the first Nemanide ruler to enter religion, he showed the way for his successors. See also the comments of Marjanović-Dušanić, *Vladarska ideologija Nemanjića* [Royal ideology of the Nemanides], (Belgrade: Clio, 1996), 234–246.

¹⁴ Svetozar Radojčić, “Hilandarske ikone svetog Save i svetog Simeona” [Hilandarian icons of St. Sava and St. Simeon], *Glasnik. Službeni list Srpske pravoslavne crkve* 34, No. 2/3 (1953): 30–31.

¹⁵ Radojčić, *ibid.*, supposed that the inscription near St. Simeon should be read as “СВЕТИ СИМЕОНЪ (ПРАДЕД) (КРА)ЛА (СТ)Ъ(ФА)НА,” but I cannot see a place for such a long text; probably he read the last letters of Simeon's name, -ман_- written in two rows, as the endings of two separate words. Thus, they can be translated as “Sava, Serbian archbishop” and “Simeon Nemanja.”

¹⁶ Sreten Petković, *Ikone manastira Hilandar* [Icons of Hilandar monastery] (Manastir Hilandar: 1997), 47.

¹⁷ Čorović-Ljubinković, “Uz problem ikonografije,” 86; Todić, “Reprezentativni portreti,” 234.

¹⁸ Mirković, *Pravoslavna liturgjika*, 130.

¹⁹ Radojčić, “Hilandarske ikone,” 31.

²⁰ Dejan Medaković, “Istorijske osnove ikonografije sv. Save u XVIII veku” [Historical grounds for St. Sava's iconography in the eighteenth century] in *Sava Nemanjić*, 397–405; Petković, *Ikone*, 50, 60, 151–152, 178.

From the point of view of the medieval viewer²¹ it meant that St. Sava as an archbishop was more important in the church hierarchy than St. Simeon, who was just a monk. In this way, Hilandarian icons reflect a perception of Sts. Simeon and Sava from an ecclesiological point of view as they fit into the church hierarchy, not in a dynastic or family order, where St. Simeon was the father of Sava (and thus was more important).²²

I would also like to emphasize that here Sts. Simeon and Sava are accompanied by the Virgin as their protectress, placed in the top icon field instead of the more usual figure of Christ in this place. It may underline their belonging to an Athonite monastic community under the guardianship of the Theotokos.²³

In the King's Church in Studenica (1313–1314)²⁴ one can find two corresponding ktetorial compositions in the lowest row of frescos. On the southern wall, King Milutin with a model of the church, and his wife, Simonis, are depicted separated from the figure of Christ by two figures of His ancestors, Anna with the small child Mary and Joachim. There are also five symmetrical figures on the opposite wall, thus, the parents of the Virgin correspond with the two figures of Milutin's ancestors, St. Simeon and St. Sava, depicted offering their hands to the Theotokos holding the Christ child. The Saviour, accepting the prayers of the saints, responds to them with a blessing gesture.

As was noted by Gordana Babić²⁵ and Slobodan Ćurčić,²⁶ the idea of salvation through the intercession of ancestors is expressed here in the entire

²¹ The hierarchical principles of Byzantine painting demanded that everything that was important should be placed on the right side (the left side for a viewer), see [Boris Uspensky] Борис Успенский, "Правое" и "Левое" в иконописном изображении" ["Right" and "left" in icon depiction], in *"Семiotика искусства"* [Semiotics of Art] (Moscow: Jazyki slavyanskih kultur, 2005), 297–303.

²² A similar idea of reversing the natural order of things, when old Simeon became a spiritual son of his natural child, Sava, can be found in the writings of Teodosije: "The laws of Nature are inverted... because the father in flesh and in gray hairs of wisdom, you were a disciple of your son in the spirit of meekness," [Teodosije] Теодосије, *Службе, канони и Похвала* [The services, the canons and the eulogy] (Belgrade: Prosveta, 1988), 330.

²³ Kriton Chrysochoidis, "The Portaitissa Icon at Iveron Monastery and the Cult of the Virgin on Mount Athos," in *Images of the Mother of God*, ed. M. Vassilaki (Burlington: Ashgate, 2005), 133–144.

²⁴ The church is dated according to an inscription on the external wall of the apse: Rajko Nikolić, "Natpis na Kraljevoj crkvi u Studenici" [Inscription on King's church in Studenica], *Saopštenja* 9 (1970): 76–79.

²⁵ Gordana Babić, *Kraljeva crkva u Studenici* [The King's Church in Studenica] (Belgrade: Prosveta, 1987), 186.

²⁶ Slobodan Ćurčić, "The Nemanjić Family Tree in the Light of the Ancestral Cult in the

iconographical system. First of all, the church itself is dedicated to Christ's ancestors, Joachim and Anna, whose figures in mural painting are symmetrically disposed to the pair of Milutin's ancestors, St. Simeon and St. Sava, on opposite wall. Moreover, Milutin insists on his origin in the dedicatory inscription and in text, accompanying the depicting the ruling couple with regalia. Accordingly, Milutin both underlined the legitimacy of his power, inherited from his holy forefathers, and alluded to parallels in the lineage system between the Nemanid dynasty and the genealogy of Christ.

Indeed, the ideological concept aimed at legitimizing Milutin's coming to the throne is expressed through parallelism between the Nemanids and Christ's genealogy. But on the other side, one question remains unanswered, namely, why were St. Simeon and St. Sava not put directly into the same procession with Milutin, as had already happened in another dynastic composition at Mileševa, where these saints headed the line of Nemanid family members (*Fig. 1*)? Why were they depicted turned to the Theotokos instead of being turned toward Christ in advocacy for their ruling heir?

It seems to me that Sts. Simeon and Sava's relative separation from Milutin and association with the Virgin resulted from their veneration as Athonite saints. In fact, their prayers are logically addressed to Her, as the protectress of Holy Mount. Moreover, Mary here is depicted in the iconographical type of the Hodegitria and some icons of the same iconographical type from the late twelfth century may be found at Hilandar monastery, venerated as heritage from Sts. Simeon and Sava.²⁷

In such a way, associated in one compositional group, St. Simeon, St. Sava, and the Virgin represent a kind of Hilandarian iconographical bloc, incorporated into the entire program of the King's Church. Keeping their place in this developed system of dynastic meanings, this separate group also has its own significance, the Athonite saints play the role not just of king's holy ancestors, but generally,

Church of Joachim and Anna at Studenica," *ZRI/I* 14/15 (1973): 194.

²⁷ I.e., a painted Hodegitria icon of 1260s with Christ on Her right hand and a mosaic Hodegitria icon of 1200 with Christ on Her left hand giving a blessing (Petković, *Ikone*, 21, figs 65–71). According to the vita of St. Simeon written by St. Sava, just before the death the saint asked to see an icon of the Virgin "to draw my last breath in front of it," [Saint Sava] *Свети Саво, Сабрана дела* [Collected works], ed. T. Jovanović (Belgrade: Srpska književna Zadruga, 1998), 180. The fourth biographer of St. Simeon, Teodosije, also refers to the icon of the Virgin with Christ when Nemanja is dying: "and joyfully looked at all-pure image of Christ and of all-pure His Mother," [Teodosije of Hilandar] *Теодосије Хиландарац, Живот светог Саве* [The life of Saint Sava], ed. Ђ. Dancić (Belgrade: Državna štamparija, 1973), 58.

as protectors and intercessors for all people with the Theotokos. Therefore, I think that this particular monument represents a transitional stage of the cult, moved by King Milutin from an Athonite milieu to Serbia, where it merged into a dynastic cult of holy ancestors.

However, the main place for the joint cult was Hilandar monastery; initially built by St. Simeon and St. Sava together in 1198, it was renovated by King Milutin in 1317–1321.²⁸ The first church contained a new tomb of Nemanja, who was continuously venerated²⁹ even after his relics were transported to Serbia.³⁰ In the renovated monastery the place of Simeon's tomb was preserved.³¹ The problematic issue concerning Hilandar's program is the repainting of 1804, when all the images were covered by a new layer of color, but preserving the iconographical scheme.

The frescoes of Milutin's time contain two donators' compositions and the pair of St. Simeon and St. Sava exists in both.³² The first portrait, placed above the tomb of St. Simeon at the southeastern corner of the naos, includes St. Simeon (ὁ ἅγιος Συμεών...), St. Sava ((ὁ) ἅγιος Σάβας καὶ κτήτωρ), King Milutin (Στέφανο(ς) ἐν Χ(ριστι)ῶ το θε(ε)ῶ πιστὸς Οὐ̅ρεσις κράλις καὶ(ι) κτήτωρ),³³ and St. Stefan behind him. All the figures stand with their hands extended in the same

²⁸ Miodrag Marković and William T. Hosteter, "Prilog hronologiji gradnje i oslikavanja hilendarskog katolikona" [Additions to questions of chronology of the building and painting of the Hilandar *catholicon*], *Hilendarski zbornik* 10 (1998): 201–220.

²⁹ Danica Popović, "Sahrane i grobovi u srednjem veku" [Burials and tombs in the Middle Ages], in *Manastir Hilandar*, ed. G. Subotić (Belgrade: SANU, 1998), 206. Teodosije expressed the same idea about the tombs of St. Simeon and St. Sava in his Panegyric: "your light and miracle-making tombs, venerating, we are kissing with love, because they were sanctified with your hermit bodies and feathered with curing," Teodosije, *Services*, 757.

³⁰ According to his biographers, St. Simeon's body was transported to Studenica in the eighth year after his death, i.e., about 1206, as suggested by Maksimović, "O godine prenoša," 437–442.

³¹ The problem of the authenticity of the present traditional place of St. Simeon's tomb at Hilandar has been noted by Dragan Vojvodić; he assumed, based on the place of St. Simeon's tomb at Studenica, that the tomb was situated in the same place in the initial Hilandarian *catholicon*, see Dragan Vojvodić, "Hilendarski grob svetog Simeona i njegov slikani program" [The Hilandarian tomb of St. Simeon and its painting program], *Hilendarski zbornik* 11 (2004): 46–47.

³² Miodrag Marković, "Prilozi za istoriju Svetog Nikite kod Skoplja" [Additions to history of St. Nikitas near Skoplje], *Hilendarski zbornik* 11 (2004): 209; Vojislav Đurić, "Les portraits de souverains dans le narthex de Chilandar. L'histoire et la signification," *Hilendarski zbornik* 7 (1989): 109–112.

³³ The Greek inscriptions mean "Saint Simeon," "Saint Sava and the donator," "Stephen, the faithful king in Christ, the God, and donator."

prayer gesture, turning to the East. Therefore their prayers run to God through the intercession of different saints standing on the route between the tomb and the altar. The first among them is St. Nicholas, who “shares” the same pilaster with St. Simeon, being depicted on the south side. This saint, to whom Nemanja dedicated one of his first churches at Kuršumljija, stands frontally with an open book where the words from the Gospel of Matthew (5:16) are quoted: “Let your light so shine [before men]” Miodrag Marković assumed that St. Nicholas could be a part of ktetorial composition and the words in his book could refer to the ktetors.³⁴

Other distinctive features³⁵ of this scene are: an archaic type of composition, absence of insignia of the king’s power, the inscriptions near the figures that do not mention governed lands and complete titles, and displacement of the king’s wife by the king’s saint patron, Stefan. In distinction from the Nemanids’ dynastic processions (Radoslav’s chapel and Mileševa), here all the personages with the same gestures and movements have the same rank, thus Sts. Simeon and Sava are depicted as just the first ones in the procession, but not as objects of veneration. Moreover, St. Sava and Milutin, and possibly St. Simeon, were inscribed with the same status – ktetors. It seems that all these features indicate replacement of the idea of dynastic continuity and inheritance of power, which were frequent in Nemanide portraits, with the idea of ktetorial unity. In other words, all three personages, St. Simeon, St. Sava, and Milutin are depicted here as persons who built or rebuilt the church, but not as political figures or relatives.

The second ktetorial composition is situated on the eastern wall of the inner narthex. It is still partly covered with the nineteenth-century painting, but the iconography has been preserved. Here, above the entrance to the naos, the Theotokos with the Child are represented sitting on the throne and adored by two angels. On pilasters on both sides of them stand St. Sava and St. Simeon Nemanja, whose original inscription has survived – “ὁ ἄ[γιος] Συμεὼ[ν] ὁ Νεεμῶν [καὶ] κτή[τωρ].” Behind them, on the groups are depicted: on south side, Andronikos II Palaeologos (1282–1332) (ΑΝΔΡΟΝΙΚΟΣ ΕΝ ΧΩ ΤΟ ΘΩ

³⁴ Miodrag Marković, “Prvobitni živopis glavne manastirske crkve” [The initial painting of the main monastery church], in *Manastir Hilandar*, ed. G. Subotić (Belgrade: SANU, 1998), 236.

³⁵ These features were already mentioned by Dragan Vojvodić, “Ktitorski portreti i predstave” [Ktetorial portraits and depictions], in *Manastir Hilandar*, 46–52, but without the proper conclusion. In contrast to my opinion, he thinks that here the role of St. Simeon, as the “forebear of the dynasty” is “to intercede for his descendant and entire his nation with the saints and God” (Ibid., 52).

ΠΙΣΤΟΣ ΒΑΣΙΛΕΥΣ ΚΑΙ ΑΥΤΟΚΡΑΤΟΡ ΡΩΜΑΙΩΝ Ο ΠΑΛΑΙΟΛΟΓΟΣ) and King Milutin (ΣΤΕΦΑΝ ΕΝ ΧΩ̄ ΤΟ ΘΩ̄ ΠΙΣΤΟ(Σ) ΟΥΡΕΣΙΣ ΚΡΑΛΗΣ· Κ(ΑΙ) ΠΕΡΙΠΟΘΗΤΟΣ ΓΑΜΒΡΟΣ Τ8 ΚΡΑΤΕ8 Κ(ΑΙ) ΑΓΙ8 ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΣ ΑΝΔΡΟΝΙΚ8 Τ8 ΠΑΛΑΙΟΛΟΓ(8) Κ(ΑΙ) ΚΤΗΤΩΡ ΤΗΣ ΑΓΙΑΣ ΜΟΝΗΣ ΤΑΥΤΗΣ)³⁶ accompanied by St. Stefan, and on the north side the royal heirs, Andronikos III Palaeologos (1328–1341), Stefan of Dečani (1321–1331) and the young, the future czar, Dušan (1331–1355).³⁷ The ktetorial dedicatory inscription, placed under southern part of composition, was rewritten³⁸ in 1804 and contains some mistakes, which have led historians to discuss the date of the monastery renovation for several years.³⁹

This complex composition consists of three scenes. The central part is an adoration of the Virgin which includes the two first ktetors, whose pointing gestures refer to the Theotokos. The southern group combines ideas of delivering power with the second ktetorial right.⁴⁰ Here, both the emperor and the king are depicted in full regalia, with an entitulation, and indication of family relations.⁴¹ The scene itself represents the moment of Andronikos giving Milutin a golden bull confirming the Serbian right to own the monastery, which indicates the hierarchical relations between the Byzantine and Serbian rulers as sovereign and dependent (and also father-in-law and son-in-law), the latter building a monastery on the lands of the former.⁴² Probably it was borrowed from Byzantine political ideology, which considered all kings as a kind of family headed by a *pater familias*,

³⁶ The Greek inscriptions mean “Saint Simeon Nemanja and ktetor,” “Andronikos in Christ the God the faithful emperor and the autocrat of the Romans, Palaiologos,” “Stephen, the faithful king in Christ, the God, and the much beloved son-in-law of a ruling and saint emperor, Andronikos Palaiologos, and the ktetor of this joly monastery.”

³⁷ About the identification of these historical personages see: Đurić, “Les portraits,” 109–121. He also supposes that portraits of Stefan of Dečani and Dušan were added in the 1330s.

³⁸ According to Marković and Hosteter, “Prilog hronologiji,” 206, footnote 23, some parts the text are a kind of paraphrase of the original phrases, but the structure is unchanged.

³⁹ About these debates see the historiography written by Marković and Hosteter, “Prilog hronologiji,” 201–204. Generally, the most accepted date for the finishing of all renovation work was between July and 29 October 1321, see Đurić, “Les portraits,” 109–112.; Marković and Hosteter, “Prilog hronologiji,” 207–208.

⁴⁰ Marko Popović, “Les funérailles du ktitor—aspect archéologique,” in *Proceedings of the 21st International Congress of Byzantine Studies, London, 21–26 August 2006*, vol. 1, ed. F. K. Haarer et al. (Burlington: Ashgate, 2006), 99–121, see especially 118–120.

⁴¹ Đurić, “Les portraits,” 106–108.

⁴² Branislav Todić, *Serbian Medieval Painting: The Age of the King Milutin* (Belgrade: Draganić, 1999), 60.

the Byzantine emperor; other monarchs, depending on the significance and might of their states, were placed as close or distant relatives.⁴³ The third group also represents the idea of a legitimate inheritance of power; here the heirs of both ruling houses are depicted with their full regalia, indicating their status. The son of Milutin, Stefan of Dečani, is inscribed as a ktetor, which implies that a ktetorial right was also regarded as a kind of legacy. As may be seen in this composition, St. Simeon and St. Sava are not linked with dynastic groups by strictly political iconography; they are even visibly separated from these two groups, being placed on the pilasters. Moreover, the scenes on the north and the south do not demand the existence of such additional iconographical meaning as the intercession of the saints with the Virgin. All three parts are also unified in the same composition; however, placed above the southern group scene of *Wisdom hath builded Her house* (Proverbs 9, 1–18)⁴⁴ in terms of ktetorial activity and church building. Thus, Sts. Simeon and Sava address their prayers to the Theotokos as first founders and saints, while Milutin builds his ktetorial right on their precedent.

A parallel for the composition of the central part with two ktetors and the Virgin can be found in so-called “Svenskaya” icon of the enthroned Theotokos with Antonije and Theodosije from Kievo-Pečerskaya Lavra (now is in the State Tretyakov Gallery in Moscow).⁴⁵ This is the earliest depiction of the Lavra’s founders from 1288; they are placed on each side of the Virgin (Antonije on the right and Theodosije on the left), who holds the Christ-child, blessing the saints with both hands. Both saints wear great-schema costumes and hold scrolls with texts about monastic life. In this case they are also joint as founders of a monastery dedicated to the Virgin, the Kievo-Pečerskaya Lavra. Thus, one can assume that the iconographical representation of the enthroned Virgin, bracketed by two saint ktetors was typical for a joint cult of saint monastery founders.

The same concepts of ktetorship and legislation as separate but interdependent activities which were noted in the narthex painting can also be found in the dedicatory inscription,⁴⁶ where firstly, St. Simeon and St. Sava are glorified

⁴³ George Ostrogorsky, “The Byzantine Emperor and the Hierarchical World Order,” *The Slavonic and East European Review* 35 (Dec., 1956): 1–14; Herbert Hunger, “State and Society in Byzantium,” in *Epidosis. Gesammelte Schriften zur byzantinischen Geistes- und Kulturgeschichte* (Munich: Editio Maris, 1989), 251–252.

⁴⁴ About this proverb and Milutin as Solomon see Todić, *Serbian Medieval Painting*, 60.

⁴⁵ Каталог Государственной Третьяковской Галереи, Древнерусское искусство X–начала XV века [Catalogue of the State Tretyakov Gallery. Old Russian art from the tenth – the beginning of the fifteenth century] (Moscow: GTG, 1995), 70–71 (Cat. 16).

⁴⁶ The following translation of the dedicatory inscription was made from the text published in *Spomenici za srednovekovnata i ponovata istorija na Makedonija* [Monuments of medieval

as the first ktetors, founders of the church, and at the same time as religious teachers.⁴⁷

Our God-bearing and most blessed fathers, teachers and tutors of all the Serbian land, the new myrrh-flowing venerable Simeon with his beloved son Sava, the first archbishop of all Serbia, kindled with divine love, with a great deal of labor and sweat built from the ground the church in the name of the most holy Theotokos, in the place called Hilandar...

Further, the second ktetor, Milutin, underlines the legitimacy of his power (“now, after some time, by the grace of God, I, Stefan Uroš, have inherited the Serbian kingdom from my fathers”), his kinship with the Greek emperor (“son-in-law of the Greek emperor Andronikos”) and continuity in

trying to fulfill many things which were left over after having lived before me my forefathers and fathers, as my sovereign Christ God wants it, I destroyed the church because of it being narrow, and have built this new one, and have painted it in the name of Theotokos and Her honorable presentation.

He then applies for intercession to the Theotokos (“But, O, our Lady, accept my humble offering and beg your Son and our Lord not to deprive me of His kingdom”). Thus, St. Simeon and St. Sava again, just as in paintings, are considered the first ktetors and unified because of this, while political implications are connected with the figure of Milutin, who regarded Hilandar as an inheritance of the Nemanids that permitted them to receive the intercession of the Virgin and salvation at the Last Judgment.

As a result, the iconographical conception standing behind the Hilandarian paintings and ideology, reflected in the dedicatory inscription, demonstrates that primarily St. Simeon and St. Sava were venerated and consequently unified as the first ktetors, building the monastery together and glorifying it with their sanctity and miracles, starting with myrrh flowing from Nemanja’s relics. In Hilandar they were always inscribed as ktetors, without long dynastic entitulations, and in the dedicatory text only their building activities are mentioned; thus, they were regarded as ideal founders, showing, as “teachers,” the way of salvation for their descendants through ktetorial activities. At the same time, in the whole complex of Hilandarian monuments, King Milutin is depicted as a pious ruler, a dependent

history of Macedonia], vol. 1, ed. V. Mošin (Skopje: Arhiv na Makedonija, 1975), 304.

⁴⁷ Todić, “Predstave Sv. Simeona,” 295–304, thinks that this expression refers to both guarding orthodoxy and showing the good way for descendants, becoming a monk.

of the emperor, following the ideal ktetorial example established by the first founders on his way to salvation.

The monument completing the list of early joint depictions of St. Simeon and St. Sava is the church of St. Nikitas, built by Milutin in 1299–1300.⁴⁸ The territory where the monastery is situated was captured by the Serbian king during the Byzantine campaign in 1282–1284 and later he held it as the dowry of his Byzantine wife. Because of this, all Milutin's actions concerning these lands were formally approved by his father-in-law, Andronikos II Palaeologos. About the end of 1307, Milutin granted the monastery as a metochion (a land possession) for the Hilandarian pyrgos (a hermitage tower), Chrusia,⁴⁹ but as early as 1321 the monastery of St. Nikitas became a possession of Hilandar itself.

As was noted by Branislav Todić,⁵⁰ a ktetorial portrait of King Milutin is absent from the church, although he was at least the donor of the building. Miodrag Marković⁵¹ has suggested that the paintings were ordered not by the king himself, but by the monks of Hilandar after 1321, after the king had died. The possible ktetor of the frescoes could be Danilo, the future archbishop, who was a *begoumenos* (superior) of Hilandar until 1324.

The program of frescoes (*Fig. 2*), executed by a famous team of Thessalonian painter Michael Asurapas,⁵² repeated the iconographical pattern of Milutin's Hilandarian *katholikon*,⁵³ which was the reason for dating the ensemble earlier than Hilandar. Here, Sts. Simeon and Sava are placed on the western part of the north wall among famous monks and ascetics (St. Athanasios of Athos, St. Arsenios, St. Paul of Thebes, St. Anthony, St. Euthymios, St. Sabbas, St. Theodore the Stoudites, St. Stephen the New, and St. Theodosios the Cenobite).⁵⁴ St. Simeon is depicted in the monastic closing of the Great Schema holding a scroll with the

⁴⁸ Concerning all the dates in the history of the monastery see Marković and Hosteter, "Prilog hronologiji," 63–128.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 117–124. For an edition of surviving Greek chrysobulla confirming properties of St. Nikitas monastery, see *Actes de Chilandar I. Des origins a 1319*, ed. M. Živojinović et al. (Paris: Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique Editions, 1998), 172–175, 298–300.

⁵⁰ Todić, *Serbian Medieval Painting*, 346.

⁵¹ Miodrag Marković, "Hilandar i živopis u crkvama njegovih metoha – primer svetog Nikite kod Skoplja" [Hilandar and paintings in churches of its metochions, the example of St. Nikitas near Skoplje], in *Peta Kazivanja o Svetoj Gori*, ed. M. Milosavljević (Belgrade: Prosveta, 2007), 186–190.

⁵² Branislav Todić, "Signatures des peintres Michel Astrapas et Eutyhios. Fonction et signification," in *Αφιέρωμα στη μνήμη του Σωτήρη Κίτσου* (Thessaloniki: University Studio Press, 2001), 648.

⁵³ Marković, "Hilandar i živopis," 180–186.

⁵⁴ Todić, *Serbian Medieval Painting*, 345.



Fig. 2. St. Nikitas' church near Skopje, the northern wall (1321–1324).
St. Simeon, St. Sava and St. Theodosios the Koinobite (photograph by the author).

words of Psalm 33 (see above). St. Sava wears a *sticharion* with striped sleeves and a *sakkos* with crosses; holding a closed codex and giving a blessing with his right hand. The text on Nemanja's scroll is written in Slavonic, while the rest of the scrolls here are in Greek. This peculiarity can be explained by the existence of an established iconographical pattern, transferred onto the wall by the Greek painters. Moreover, the unusual choice of monastic saints, including St. Athanasios of Athos, may explain the implicit ideological message of St. Simeon's and St. Sava's representations. Being put into the same row with the founders of monastic communities, these two saints were compared with other famous examples. In this way, St. Simeon and St. Sava, again united as ktetors and founders of the Athonite monastery, represent the Serbian monastic community among eminent holy ascetics.

According to Miodrag Marković, this iconography was influenced by Hilandar, where the joint cult of the saints already existed. I disagree with

the author, however, who marked this composition as “the earliest surviving example of a particular iconographical decision.”⁵⁵ It seems to me that the joint cult was formed a bit earlier and such examples as the King’s Church at Studenica and the Hilandarian *katholikon* itself (apart from the non-dated icon from Hilandar) demonstrate the process of its development. The example of St. Nikitas, however, belongs to a special iconographical type, where St. Simeon and St. Sava are depicted not just as ktetors, but as ascetics and founders of a monastic community without any dynastic implications, which in some measure existed in monuments ordered by Milutin. I think that this purely monastic iconography already existed on icons (such as the thirteenth- or fourteenth-century icon from Hilandar), which can explain the case of the Slavonic text on Nemanja’s scroll (see above), but, surely, its translation from minor monuments to fresco painting only became possible in the absence of a direct royal ktetor from the Nemanid dynasty, as King Milutin was.

Conclusions

In sum, in Serbian medieval painting there were two different types of representations of St. Simeon accompanied by St. Sava. The first one had dynastic content, but did not imply the unification of the two saints; the connections between them were rather occasional. The second group had a Hilandarian origin and always preserved some reference to this monastic community, where both saints were venerated as monks and ascetics. Therefore, if St. Simeon and St. Sava are present as a joint group, the main reason for this unification lay in their common monastic foundation of Hilandar. In other words, they are glorified as the first ktetors of this Athonite monastic Serbian community, “teachers” showing the way of salvation to those who desired to be monks.

King Milutin, however, adopted this joint cult and the iconography and included it in wider iconographical projects, such as the King’s Church and Hilandar, where this pictorial pattern (St. Simeon in ascetic clothing with a scroll and St. Sava as a bishop with a codex) received some additional meanings from being put into iconographical structures of dynastic character. In some monuments, such as the Hilandarian icon or St. Nikitas’ church, however, this joint iconography preserves its initial purely monastic significance.

⁵⁵ Marković, “Hilandar i živopis,” 180–181.