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Patterns of Martyrial Sanctity in the Royal Ideology of Medieval Serbia
Continuity and Change

A broad research field such as that offered by the issue of royal sanctity may be approached in a number of ways.[1] Without losing sight of different aspects of royal cults and their place in medieval piety, we have chosen to focus on the political role of a particular cult, that of the royal martyr. The holy king cult to which, in a broader sense, that of *regnans*-martyr also belongs, proves to be a European-wide phenomenon. Reflecting both ideological continuity and change, it varies revealingly with the epoch and cultural environment of the protagonists involved.

Seeking to define the type with more precision, modern scholarship has looked at the personalities of rulers, the *realia* associated with their reigns, and the very acts of martyrdom.[2] Hagiographic portrayal of a ruler and of the style of his rule is based on standardized imagery, that is, on the principles of ideal kingship found in Christian moralizing literature such as Pseudo-Cyprian's treatise and mirrors of kings, a type of writing increasingly popular from the ninth century on. This literature took shape under the powerful influence of the monastic ideal, which profoundly marks the typical portrait of a holy king. Almost as a rule, the hero of a hagiographic narrative is characterized by traditional *virtutes*: noble descent and strict Christian upbringing, a proclivity for asceticism, Davidic *humilitas*, generosity towards the poor, protection for the weak and the sick, the gift of

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[1] The phenomenon of royal saints has been much written about. G. Klaniczay, *Holy Rulers and Blessed Princesses. Dynastic Cults in Medieval Central Europe* (Cambridge, 2000), offers a very good and detailed overview of the ample relevant literature on the subject.

[2] For the martyred ruler type, see a very good study by N. Ingham, "The Sovereign as Martyr, East and West", *Slavic and East European Journal* 17, no.1 (1973), 1-17. On this ruler type in detail, R. Folz, "Les saints rois du Moyen Âge en Occident (VIe–XIIIe siècles)", *Subsidia Hagiographica* 68 (Brussels: Société des Bollandistes, 1984), 23-67, and his "Les saintes reines du Moyen Âge en Occident (VIe-XIIIe siècles)", *Subsidia Hagiographica* 76 (Brussels: Société des Bollandistes, 1992).

teaching showing the true path to salvation, temperance in every way, and exceptional *pietas*. It is this piety that leads the ruler to choose the monastic way of life or practise ascetic discipline. A distinctive group of royal martyrs are those who suffered *pro patria et gente propria*.[3] Notwithstanding this early and very old function of kingship, which finds expression in early ruler cults, the royal martyr primarily is a favourite with the Church and his devotion is expressed in erecting churches, giving donations to monasteries and protecting the clergy. His concern for justice ensures perfect peace, harmony and quietness, the ideals of God's kingdom on earth. Since such conduct confers certain clerical functions upon his kingship, early types of holy kings may be rightly classified as conform to the *rex-sacerdos* pattern.

A feature common to all the cited ruler cults is recognizable in hagiographies where the *passio* of a new martyr as a rule is shaped on the model of Christ's passion. In that sense, somewhat later types of royal martyrs such as the passion-sufferers Boris and Gleb basically fit into the same hagiographic pattern despite their different dates of origin.[4] By the end of the eleventh century the cults of holy rulers had consolidated in Europe as a legitimate form of religious support to kingly authority.[5] Of particular interest in studying the holy rulers' cults is to observe the phenomenon of linking up saintly cults with authority and society.[6] A close link established between sainthood, authority and noble blood becomes a commonplace in all hagiographies.

In that respect, especially important for the development of the holy king concept with the Serbs appears to be the early period of Serbian sovereignty, initially in Zeta, and subsequently in Raška under Stefan Nemanja and his descendants. We shall try to show that Serbian societies, their many distinct features notwithstanding, sought to build the cults of their own holy kings in much the same way as most of Europe. The eleventh

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[3] On this ideal ruler type, see E. H. Kantorowicz, "Mourir pour la patrie (Pro patria mori) dans la pensée politique médiévale", in *Mourir pour la patrie et autres textes* (Paris: PUF, 1984), 105-141.

[4] J.-P. Arrignon, "L'Inhumation des princes et des saints de la *Rus'* de Kiev", in *Le sacré et son inscription dans l'espace à Byzance et en Occident. Études comparées*, ed. Michel Kaplan (Paris, 2001), 5-11. Cf. also G. Lenhoff, *The Martyred Princes Boris and Gleb: A Socio-Cultural Study of the Cult and the Texts*, UCLA Slavic Studies 19 (Columbus, Ohio: Slavic Publishers, 1989), 32-33, with earlier literature.

[5] F. Graus, "La sanctification du souverain dans l'Europe centrale des Xe et XIe siècles" in *Hagiographie, cultures et sociétés IVe–XIIe siècles*, Actes du Colloque organisé à Nanterre et à Paris 2–5 mai 1979 (Paris, 1981), 561-572.

[6] P. Brown, "Chorotope: Theodore of Sykeon and his sacred landscape", in *Hierotopy. The Creation of Sacred Spaces in Byzantium and Medieval Russia*, ed. A. Lidov (Moscow, 2006), 117-124.

century proves to be "formative" in that respect. It was then that the earliest cult of a holy ruler was shaped, that of Jovan Vladimir of Zeta. Despite a significant ideological gap between the need of the emerging European nations to ensure their place in sacred history by elevating a national ruler to the rank of saint and the situation in Constantinople, certain traditions, central to understanding the ways in which the holy king cult was designed and put into practice with the Serbs, were under a tremendous influence of the ideologically prestigious empire on the Bosporus.

It cannot be a coincidence, then, that it is in the eleventh century that new patterns of the ruler's image rise to prominence. As shown by well-studied Byzantine examples, the link between the cult of saints and authority becomes obvious, and publicly proclaimed in contemporary hagiography.[7] We can observe holy men's increasing repute and importance, their way up on the social ladder, the influence they begin to exert in the field of active politics.[8] Holy men act as spiritual fathers of the leading figures of the secular hierarchy, and their prophetic visions and advice have an effect on the actions of the political elite. The popularity of a monastic vocation in the Eastern Christian world leads to the monastic ideal being embraced by representatives of the highest political circles as early as the tenth century, and it even leaves its mark on the development of the emperor cult.[9]

The said model undoubtedly influenced the cult of emperor Nikephoros II Phokas (963–969), increasingly popular in the Slavic world from the thirteenth century.[10] Owing mostly to the widely-read "Eulogy on emperor Nikephoros II Phokas and his spouse Theophano",[11] the emperor's cult becomes the preferred prototype of the ruler-monk. Contemporary western Lives of martyred rulers meeting their end while praying, at the church door, or performing ascetical practices as emperor Phokas did by sleeping

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[7] For Byzantine examples, see the exceptionally useful volume *The Byzantine Saint: University of Birmingham Fourteenth Spring Symposium of Byzantine Studies*, ed. S. Hackel (Birmingham, 1981), and therein, esp. E. Patlagean, "Sainteté et Pouvoir", 95-97; and R. Morris, "The Political Saint of the Eleventh Century", 43-50. The elevation to sanctity of highest-ranking members of the secular and church hierarchies in Byzantium is observable in the thirteenth century as well; see, in the same volume, R. Macrides, "Saints and Sainthood in the Early Palaiologan Period", 67-87.

[8] On the concept of the holy man, see A. Cameron, "On defining the holy men" in *The Cult of Saints in Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages. Essays on the Contribution of Peter Brown*, eds. J. Howard-Johnson and P. A. Hayward (Oxford, 1999), 27-43.

[9] As shown by the research of P. Magdalino, "The Byzantine Holy Man in the Twelfth Century", in *Byzantine Saint*, 51-66.

[10] Patlagean, "Sainteté et Pouvoir", 99.

[11] A critical edition of the text of the Eulogy, E. Turdeanu, *Le dit de l'empereur Nicéphore II Phocas et de son épouse Théophano* (Thessaloniki, 1976).

on jagged stones, as a rule contrast the hero of the Life with his murderer
who profits from the crime and takes power. A well-liked *topos* in such texts
is the murderer's repentance and his assumption of the leading role in the
ensuing process of canonization. In the abovementioned Byzantine text, the
pattern is applicable to John Tzimiskes, who subsequently also receives a cult,
cultivated especially on Mount Athos along with that of Nikephoros Phokas.
In the eleventh century Phokas receives an office, read on 11 December, the
day of his death, honouring him as a martyr, an ascetic, and the bringer of
victory spreading the glory of the Romaion arms. Relevant to the shaping
of the emperor's cultic image was the fact that the monk Athanasios acted
as his spiritual father. An emphasis on this new spiritual lineage and the
ascetical tradition embraced by Phokas accommodate the celebration of the
emperor's sanctity to the frame of current piety and popularity of the cult of
ascetics and martyrs.[12] Subsequent Serbian hagiography and especially the
fashioning of the popular ruler-monk pattern undoubtedly drew upon the
related literary genre cultivated in the Byzantine cultural orbit. It cannot
be an accident that the popularity of the *Eulogy* and *Office* to the emperor,
composed at the Great Lavra and honouring him as an ascetically inclined
ruler close to the Athonite monastic circles, coincides with the growing
popularity of royal monkhood which from the time of Manuel Komnenos
becomes an accepted model in Nemanjić Serbia.[13]

During the eleventh century, cults of royal martyrs arise across
the Slavic world, receiving a most enthusiastic response connected with
the spread of the martyrial and monastic ideals in Byzantium.[14] Careful
comparative analysis of the eleventh-century royal martyrs' cults reveals
significant similarities in the manner of shaping the contemporary cults of

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[12] Imperial sanctity and its connection with the assassination of emperors has been
discussed by E. Patlagean, "Le Basileus Assasiné et la sainteté imperiale", in *Media in
Francia. Recueil de mélanges offert à Karl Ferdinand Werner* (Paris: Institut Historique
Allemand, 1989), 345-359; P. Schreiner, "Aspekte der politischen Heiligenverehrung in
Byzanz" in *Politik und Heiligenverehrung im Hochmittelalter*, ed. J. Peterson (Sigmarin-
gen, 1994), 365-383.

[13] P. Magdalino, *The Empire of Manuel I Komnenos (1143–1180)* (Cambridge, 1993),
chap. "The emperor and his image", 413-488. On the application of the said model in
medieval Serbia, cf. S. Marjanović-Dušanić, *Vladarska ideologija Nemanjića* (L'idéologie
monarchique de la dynastie des Némanides) (Belgrade, 1997), 274-286, and by the
same author, "L'idéologie monarchique dans les chartes de la dynastie des Némanides
(1167–1371). Etude diplomatique", *Archiv für Diplomatik, Schriftgeschichte, Siegel- und
Wappenkunde* 26 (2006), 149-158.

[14] Patlagean, "Basileus Assasiné", 348-349, 372.

St Vaclav, Sts Boris and Gleb, and St Jovan Vladimir, *knez* of Zeta.[15] The cult of St Jovan Vladimir is the earliest royal saint's cult with the Serbs, and it is rightfully set apart from the ideologically consistent whole encompassing the subsequent cults of the Nemanjić rulers. The *Life* of Jovan Vladimir written shortly after his heinous murder in 1016 is now lost. The surviving version, known as the "Legend of Jovan and Kosara", is incorporated into the twelfth-century Latin chronicle *The Annals of a Priest of Dioclea*.[16] The writer of Vladimir's original Life, or the anonymous priest of Bar who composed the chronicle, offers a standard description of the saint's image conforming to the example set by Christ in all of its major points. Although the act of ultimate sacrifice is the main requirement for martyrdom, the Lives of royal martyrs as a rule "introduce" the reader, or the listener, to their prospective sanctity. The *Life* of Jovan Vladimir also makes use of well-proven mechanisms based on recognizable *topoi*. They begin by describing the hero as a child "endowed with all manner of skills and holiness",[17] on whom miraculous signs are manifested. The king is described as a "holy man"[18] and, as such, he refuses to confront the enemy directly, but "withdraws humbly" to the hill of Oblik before Samuil's attack. Even then, besieged on Oblik, the king begins to work miracles (the miracle with a snake). This type of miracles, "performed during lifetime", falls among the expected *topoi* when it comes to the "holy man's" attributes;[19] obviously familiar with the rules of the genre, the writer knowingly builds up the image of a future martyr. Possibly as a result of subsequent interpolations into the original text of the Life, there are surrounding this miracle references to contemporary legends about how Vladimir saved his people with his prayer which God heard and granted.[20] As there is no martyrdom without sacrifice, and no

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[15] On the evolution of the cult of St Vaclav, most exhaustively, F. Graus, *Lebendige Vergangenheit. Überlieferung im Mittelalter und in den Vorstellungen vom Mittelalter* (Cologne, 1975), 159-181.

[16] *Ljetopis popa Dukljanina*, in Stara srpska književnost u 24 knjige [Old Serbian Literature in 24 Volumes], ed. S. Mijušković (Belgrade, 1988).

[17] "The child Vladimir, having ascended to the throne, was growing up endowed with all manner of skills and holiness", *ibid.*, 125.

[18] "The king, who was a holy man, humbly withdrew with his men and ascended to the hill named Oblik", *ibid.*, 125.

[19] For a detailed account of the power of working miracles during lifetime as an important attribute of "holy men", see P. Brown, "The Rise and Function of the Holy Man in Late Antiquity", in *Society and the Holy in Late Antiquity*, (Berkeley–Los Angeles, 1982), 103-152.

[20] Legend has it that even at the time the chronicle was written "indeed, even today, if a man or an animal gets bitten by a snake on that hill, both the man and the animal come

sacrifice without betrayal, following this biblical pattern, the traitor was found in the figure of the local lord who denounced Vladimir to the tsar; he is explicitly described as being "like the traitor Judas". Bidding farewell to his people, the king proclaims himself a good shepherd giving up his soul for his flock. "So my brethren, I would rather give my soul for you all and willingly let my body be mutilated or killed than let you be imperilled by famine or sword."[21] Quite in the spirit of contemporary Lives of martyred rulers, emphasis is not only on making a sacrifice for the people, but also on willingly accepting the sacrifice and consciously choosing the death of a martyr. But Vladimir was not to suffer death immediately; he was shackled and thrown into the imperial dungeon. Even in those conditions, he exercises the exemplary Christian virtues, fasting and praying day and night. Unsurprisingly, a divine messenger appears to him. God's angel announces the course of future events and their fortunate outcome, namely that he is to earn the Kingdom of God and be rewarded with the unwithering wreath of eternal life.

In the cultic veneration of the royal saints of the martyr type, the dramatic climax of the hagiographic narrative is their passive acceptance of a violent death.[22] The underlying idea of this hagiographic pattern is the saint's identification with Christ or the repetition of the sacrifice of Christ, and an identical *imitatio* consistently recurs in the accounts of their style of ruling and catalogue of virtues. Not at all infrequently, even the list of posthumous miracles includes some that in fact are recognizable New Testament motifs.[23]

The scheme of the hagiographic narrative about St Jovan Vladimir shows much resemblance to the contemporary biographies of martyr-saints.[24] At emotional level, the reader's compassion elicited by Gleb's words, "This is not a murder, this is the felling of a young forest," finds its counterpart in the romantic background against which unfolds the love story of prince Vladimir and his rescuer princess Kosara. The description of their marital love is carefully devised: "And thus king Vladimir lived with his wife Kosara in absolute holiness and chastity, loving and serving God

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out alive and unharmed. On that hill, ever since the day the blessed Vladimir prayed till this day, snakes seem to be venomless", *Ljetopis*, 125.

[21] *Ibid.*, 126.

[22] Klaniczay, *Holy Rulers*, 62-113.

[23] S. Marjanović-Dušanić, "Dynastie et sainteté à l'époque de la famille des Lazarević: exemples anciens et nouveaux modèles", *Recueil des travaux de l'Institut d'études byzantines* XLIII (2006), 77-83.

[24] N. W. Ingham, "The Sovereign as Martyr", *Slavic and East European Journal* 17, no. 1 (1973), 1-17; Arrignon, "L'Inhumation des princes", 5-11.

day and night." The king's virtuousness, a common motif in the accounts of a prospective saint's reign, also reveals itself in his perfect rule over his people, consistent with David's psalm about the fear of God as the beginning of all wisdom. This is not only the wisdom of a monk, but indeed of a statesman. In the twelfth century, when the *Annals of a Priest of Dioclea* was composed, the image of a martyr-ruler gradually becomes accommodated to the then popular chivalrous ideal.[25] In the text itself this process is observable in the description of the late ruler as an avenger garbed in knightly armour. Instead of a knight, it is God's angel that delivers coup de grace to the enemy, whereby the saint's murderous image becomes sublimated, which is a well-known hagiographic motif. Typical of the eleventh century in all of its details, and comparable with similar cults from the Slavic world, the cult of this royal saint undergoes a change in the twelfth century as regards the image of the exemplary ruler. The martyrial cults of holy kings emerge in medieval Serbia only in the fifteenth century, under the influence of completely different motives. They become fitted into a changed cultic framework and bear little resemblance to the eleventh-century cults of martyrs.

The cults of national royal saints associate domestic dynasties with the Old Testament-based traditions of God-chosenness, which play a central role in the processes of securing political legitimation for ruling houses.[26] At the turn of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, we can see both the national and universal relics being used for raising an awareness of chosenness, observable in expanding the sacred realm as the fatherland's prayerful shield. In that sense, all-Christian relics, especially those of Constantinopolitan provenance, become integrated into domestic traditions.[27] Such processes are widely observable in the Byzantine commonwealth: in shaping the concept of the capital city;[28] in the cults of patron saints adopted;[29] in a changed piety the public display of which is very well documented in texts created for the

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[25] G. Klaniczay, "L'image chevaleresque du saint roi au XIIe siècle" in *La Royauté sacrée dans le monde Chrétien*, eds. A. Boureau and C.-S. Ingerflom (Paris, 1992), 53-61.

[26] For the Serbian example, see Marjanović-Dušanić, *L'Idéologie*, 60 and *passim*.

[27] Marjanović-Dušanić, "Dynastie et sainteté", 90-92.

[28] On the shaping of the concept of the capital city, see B. Kühnel, "The Use and Abuse of Jerusalem" in *The Real and Ideal Jerusalem in Jewish, Christian and Islamic Art*, sp. issue of *Jewish Art* 23 (1997/8); J. Erdeljan, "Belgrade as New Jerusalem", *Recueil des travaus de l'Institut d'Etudes byzantines* 43 (2006), 97-110.

[29] D. Popović, "Mošti svetog Luke – srpska epizoda" (The Relics of St Luke – the Serbian Episode), in Eadem, *Pod okriljem svetosti* (*Under the Auspices of Sanctity*) (Belgrade: Institute for Balkan Studies, 2006), 287-291.

purposes of ephemeral spectacles;[30] and especially in an insistence on the concept of a polysemic *translatio* recognizable as central both in the political and in the religious shaping of a new world. This concept of "translation", variedly viewed, and distributed over a vast area from Venice to Moscow, is expressed in the translation of both the sacral essence and of its various manifestations. It is observable in the widespread practice of translating relics – ranging from the relics of patron saints of cities to *palladia* of states, and from constructing new capital cities to translating the idea of a New Jerusalem[31] and a New Constantinople,[32] proper to the Slavic inheritors of Romaion Orthodoxy.[33]

It is against this historical background that in the Serbian society of the late fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries new cults of royal saints emerge and become included into martyrologies as the then prevailing literary genre. The most interesting issue here is the manner of creating the holy kings' *memoria* in conformity with the notion of cult proper to the late medieval sensibility.[34] Expressive of the interests of the environment that is creating the cult, the carefully constructed *memoria* reflects most of all a coupling of the highest church hierarchy and political authority. In the case of a particularly popular cult of a martyr saint, prince Lazar

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[30] A good example is the so-called Smederevo office to the translation of the relics of St Luke (Ms no 165, Library of the Patriarchate, Belgrade) first published by Ilarion Ruvarac in 1868, the latest edition edited by T. Subotin-Golubović, "Sveti apostol Luka, poslednji zaštitnik srpske zemlje" in *Čudo u slovenskim kulturama*, ed. D. Ajdačić (Novi Sad, 2000), 167-179, with earlier literature; cf. Eadem, "Smederevska služba prenosu moštiju svetog apostola Luke" in *Srpska književnost u doba Despotovine* (Despotovac, 1998), 133-156. Cf. also the office to St Theophano (published by K. Ivanovna in *Arheografski prilozi* 10/11 (1988/9)), 83-106; cf. Đ. Trifunović, *Ogledi i prevodi XIV–XVII vek* (Belgrade, 1995), 37.

[31] Claims to the role of a New Jerusalem were laid, apart from Moscow, by Tirnovo and Preslav or Prague and Aachen. On Kiev seen as the second Jerusalem, see the interesting recent study by V. Richka, *Kiiv – Drugi Yerusalim* (Kiev, 2005), 95-96.

[32] B. Flusin, "Construire une nouvelle Jérusalem: Constantinople et les reliques" in *L'Orient dans l'histoire religieuse de l'Europe. L'invention des origins*, eds. M. Amir Moezzi and J. Schneid (Brussels, 2000), 51, 53, 57, 68.

[33] Telling are the well-studied examples of the *translatio Hierosolymi* idea related to Tirnovo and Moscow, two capitals shaped on the model of Constantinople. Cf. V. Tapkova-Zaimova, "Tarnovo mezhdu Erusalim, Rim i Tsarigrad" (Ideyata na prestolen grad), *Tarnovska knizhovna shkola* 4 (1985), 249-261; I. Bozhilov, *Sedem etyuda po srednovekovna istoriya* (Sofia, 1995), 201-203; cf. also above n. 5.

[34] A. Vauchez, "Saints admirables et saints imitables: les fonctions de l'hagiographie ontelles changé aux dernièrs siècles du moyen age?" in *Les fonctions des saints dans le monde occidental (IIIᵉ–XIIIᵉ s.)*, Actes du colloque organisé par l'Ecole française de Rome avec le concours de l'Université de Rome "La Sapienza" (Rome, 1991), 161-172.

– celebrated sufferer of the Battle of Kosovo – the *memoria* draws upon two crucial points: the violent death of the hero murdered after the battle, and the halo of martyrdom acquired by a death suffered in defence of the fatherland against the infidel; both elements derive from the practice of emulating Christ, so important in founding a saintly cult. Another significant phase in the veneration of saints involves manifestations of miracle. A change, both in structure and in manners of expanding the area envisaged for miracles, is observable in a changed model of sanctity. An integral and essential component of the medieval mentality is the fundamental belief in the omnipresence of the supernatural and its continual intervention in the world of the living.[35] Thus miracles are the most important manifestation whereby a close connection between the earthly and the heavenly comes to be defined.[36] Devotional compositions written for the intended founding of his cult associate his posthumous *miracula* with instances of healing, and with his role as his successors' intercessor before the heavenly assembly of martyr saints coming to aid and ensuring victory in the field of battle.[37] The prince's hagiographers and writers of offices insist on the martyr's crown that his death, and especially his decapitation, earned him. His powers as a saint are expected in prayers.

Setting up the new saint's *memoriae* also involves creating an appropriate sacral space essential to the cult. Not only a matter of a space in the church, it is a three-layer phenomenon comprising a particular way of marking the place of death, a carefully designed funerary whole centred on the original grave, the translation and deposition of the body in another grave, and, finally, the composition of eulogies outlining the main features or type of the sanctity in the making. This drift away from the previous martyr-ruler patterns in Serbian tradition has its reasons, and is basically a result of the establishment of a new pattern. The new cult does not fall within the familial or dynastic type of sanctity, because it is not intended as a source of a new holy dynasty. What Lazar acquires through his martyrdom is personal sanctity. It is to do with the legitimation of his successors and their consolidation in power. Prince Lazar's grave, in his foundation at

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[35] P. Brown, *Authority and the Sacred. Aspects of the Christianisation of the Roman World* (Cambridge, 1995).

[36] A. Vauchez, "Structures et extension du champ miraculeux" in *La sainteté en Occident aux derniers siècles du Moyen Age* (Rome: Ecole française de Rome, 1981), 519.

[37] Relevant sources for this issue have been published in Vol. 3 of *Stara srpska književnost* [Old Serbian Literature] (Novi Sad–Belgrade, 1970): Povesno slovo o knezu Lazaru (p. 118); Pohvala knezu Lazaru od monahinje Jefimije (p. 126).

Ravanica, thus becomes a "holy place", a sacral space of the highest order
where an unrepeatable act of martyrdom is commemorated.[38]

The new holy ruler type takes on a well-defined martyrial character.
Into that mould, shaped for the cult of prince Lazar, is fitted the newly-
established cult of Stefan of Dečani (*Stefan Dečanski*), initiated by the
monastic community of Dečani and its hegumen Gregory Tsamblak.
Tsamblak wrote the king's Life after 1402, the year he had arrived in despot
Stefan's Serbia from Moldavia and become hegumen of the monastery of
Dečani (until 1414, when he was appointed metropolitan of Kiev).[39] Given
that by the time Tsamblak accessed to the hegumen's throne the relics of
Stefan of Dečani deposited in his foundation had become the centre of
a cult for which the existing "dynastic" Life from Danilo's Collection was
not fully appropriate, Gregory wrote the necessary liturgical compositions,
above all a new Life and an office eulogizing a martyr ruler. Students of
Old Serbian literature have long ago observed the unity, in terms of
literary fashioning and internal cohesion, of the Kosovo writings and the
contemporary compositions written for the purpose of two new cults, those
of the holy prince Lazar and the holy king Stefan of Dečani. The view that
it is the same martyriological inspiration of Serbian post-Kosovo literature
resulting in the historical and spiritual motivation for the simultaneous
cultivation of both cults[40] should be fitted into the bigger picture of current
"historiographic" trends, into the time of the first genealogies, precursors
of historical genealogies,[41] or the first Serbian annals – *skazaniye*s –
distinguished by their chronographic style.[42]

In the eleventh and twelfth centuries the cult of royal martyrs in
medieval Serbia assumes features found in the hagiography of the Slavic
world. While arising under the influence of similar developments in
Byzantine hagiography, they form part of broader processes of forming
sacral kingship, which in the underlying ruler cult requires the ruler's

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[38] On the prince's tomb at the monastery of Ravanica, see D. Popović, *Srpski vladarski grob u srednjem veku* (The Royal Tomb in Medieval Serbia) (Belgrade, 1992), 121-127.

[39] D. Bogdanović, *Istorija stare srpske književnosti* [A History of Old Serbian Literature] (Belgrade, 1980), 205.

[40] *Ibid*., 207.

[41] The short text of the first Serbian genealogy appeared in the last quarter of the four-teenth century, between 1374 and 1377. Devoted to the ancestral trees of the Serbian rulers, it seems to have been written for the purpose of legitimizing king Tvrtko's claims to the legacy of the Serbian kings.

[42] Earliest Serbian annals appear in the mid-fourteenth century as Serbian versions of the then translated Byzantine chronicles. On the genre, see Bogdanović, *Istorija*, 210-211.

identification with Christ on several levels, including the level of martyrdom and sacrifice bringing about collective salvation. During the late medieval period, under the impact of historical circumstances turning Serbia into a shield against the infidel, this ideal gradually undergoes transformation into an elaborate programme of the sainted martyr king, whose most important function other than healing is to assure his successors victory in battle. The ideal of the martyr ruler thus conforms to the chivalrous inspiration of ideal kingship in general, but shows distinguishing features connected with the emergence in Serbia of new historiographic genres – genealogies and annals as specific historical chronicles of the early modern age.

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