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Moses as a Role Model in the Serbian Charters after 1371 Changing Patterns

Abstract: The aspects of the Old Testament figure of Moses highlighted in the charters of post-Nemanjić Serbia, or under the Lazarević and Branković dynasties (1371–1459), testify to a changed attitude towards Old Testament role models. While members of the Nemanjić house such as the archbishop Sava I and the rulers Stefan of Dečani and Dušan look up to Moses as a “religious leader”, a prayerful intercessor before God and a victorious warrior, all of that for the sake of the “chosen” people, the role he is assigned in the arengae of the charters issued by prince Lazar and despots Stefan Lazarević and Djuradj Branković is completely different. In the universal Christian context of the post-1371 arengae Moses figures as a “prophet” and the builder of the Tabernacle — a prefiguration of the Church, thereby epitomizing a major stage in the salvation history of humankind. The role of Moses, as well as that of David, the only other Old Testament figure still referred to in the charters of the period, has a universal, ecclesiologically interpreted, significance. This new pattern of interpreting Moses implies that the ruler’s main virtue now becomes his concern for the “true faith” and the houses of God. The practice of the Nemanjićs as regards selection and interpretation of Old Testament themes is reestablished by the titular despots of the Branković dynasty. In their charters, the first part of the Bible with Moses as a popular leader reassumes a “national” character and becomes part of the ideological apparatus intended to posit the Serbs as a “New Israel”.

Keywords: medieval charters, post-Nemanjić Serbia, Branković and Lazarević dynasties, politico-theological interpretation, arengae, Old Testament, Moses, national leader, actor in salvation history

The medieval ideology of state and society, in its various manifestations, often made use of biblical models in creating the sacral identity of contemporary institutions and political personages.¹ Quoting, paraphrasing and reformulating portions of the biblical text in order to transplant their messages into new contexts, a phenomenon known in modern scholarship as *rewritten Bible*, is not specific only to narrative sources; it also occurs in documents, most of all in the arengae of charters.² The medieval Serbian

¹ There is an ample bibliography on the subject, to mention but two classical contributions: P. E. Schramm, “Das Alte und das Neue Testament in der Staatslehre und Staatssymbolik des Mittelalters”, in *La Bibbia nell’alto medioevo* (Spoleto 1962), 229–255; J. Le Goff, “Royauté biblique et idéal monarchique médiéval: saint Louis et Josias”, in *Les Juifs au regard de l’histoire. Mélanges Bernhard Blumenkranz* (Paris 1985), 160–167.

² On the “rewritten Bible”, see U. Becker, *Exegese des Alten Testaments* (Tübingen 2005), 89.

sources, from biographic-hagiographic literature and wall-painting to the documentary material, make extensive use of biblical metaphors, which is a field of research where much systematic work has already been done by Serbian scholars, especially as regards the ideology of the Nemanjić dynasty.³ Their work has shown that the role the medieval Serbian ideologists assigned to Old Testament figures and events was much more prominent than that of New Testament ones. One of the most important Old Testament characters referred to relatively frequently in the charters is the ancient Jewish leader, prophet and lawgiver, Moses. His reception in the medieval Serbian environment, much like that of any other actor in “sacred history”, depended on politico-ideological and theological trends, as also shown by the examples registered in the extant diplomatic record.

In the political ideology of medieval Europe the biblical figure of Moses carried polysemic symbolism. The basis for comparing Byzantine emperors to Moses was laid by Eusebius of Caesarea. In his *Vita Constantini*, Eusebius likened Constantine’s victory at the Milvian Bridge to the Jewish crossing of the Red Sea under the leadership of Moses (Ex 14).⁴ Byzantine charters made ample use of the “New Moses” motif, portraying the emperor as a lawgiver, rescuer of his people from bondage, and defeater of a stronger enemy, all of that in accordance with the qualities attributed to the Old Testament Jewish leader.⁵ That Constantine, and the subsequent emperors, thought of him as an example worthy of being emulated may be seen from the important role that the staff of Moses played in Byzantine court ceremonial.⁶ The medieval Serbian hagiographies and services used various aspects of Moses’ image in likening members of the Nemanjić

³ V. J. Djurić, “Slika i istorija u srednjovekovnoj Srbiji”, *Glas Srpske akademije nauka i umetnosti* 338, Odeljenje istorijskih nauka 3 (1983), 118–123; S. Marjanović-Dušanić, *Vladarska ideologija Nemanjića* (Belgrade 1997), 190–233; see also V. J. Djurić, “Novi Isus Navin”, *Zograf* 14 (1984), 5–17; S. Marjanović-Dušanić, “Motiv loze Jesejeve u doba Uroša I”, *Zbornik Filozofskog fakulteta* 18A (1994), 119–126; Ž. Vujošević, “Stari zavet u arengama povelja Stefana Dušana”, *Stari srpski arhiv* 2 (2003), 227–247.

⁴ H. Hunger, *Prooimion. Elemente der byzantinischen Keiseridee in den Arengen der Urkunden* (Vienna 1964), 201; Eusebius uses the same comparison in his book on ecclesiastical history *Istorija Crkve* (Šibenik 2003), 244–245, available in English *Eusebius. Ecclesiastical History and Martyrs of Palestine I–II*, 2nd. ed. (London 1954), eds. H. J. Lawlor and J. E. L. Oulton; on Constantine as a New Moses in medieval art and literature, see A. Grabar, *L’Empereur dans l’art byzantin* (Paris 1936); E. Ewig, “Das Bild Constantins des Grossen in den ersten Jahrhunderten des abendländischen Mittelalters”, *Historisches Jahrbuch* 75 (1956), 1–46.

⁵ Examples in Hunger, *Prooimion*, 201, note 97.

⁶ G. Dagron, *Empereur et prêtre* (Paris 1995), quoted after the Serbian edition *Car i prvosveštenik* (Belgrade 2001), 109–110.

dynasty to him. For example, the aspect of Moses as prayerful intercessor was associated with archbishop Sava I (r. 1219–33) (in Domentijan [Domentianus] and Teodosije [Theodosius]), while the royal pattern of *imitatio Moysi* was usually based on the Jewish leader's military triumphs, the most important of them being his victory over the Amalekites described in Ex 17:8–13.⁷ Thus the campaigns of grand *župan* Stefan Nemanja (r. 1166–96) against Byzantium, the triumph of king Stefan of Dečani (r. 1321–31) over the Bulgarians at Velbuzhd in 1330, and king Dušan's (king 1331–46; emperor 1346–55) successful defence against the Hungarian onslaught in 1335, inspired hagiographers to glorify the Serbian rulers' warlike virtues in terms of Mosaic triumphs.⁸

The same patterns of comparing the Nemanjićs to Moses occur in the diplomatic material. Elements of equating Stefan of Dečani and Stefan Dušan with the ancient Jewish leader used in the foundation charter for the monastery of Dečani (1330) and in the charter appended to the Code of Law (1349) have been recognized and explained more than once.⁹ To these examples another one may be added, namely the portrayal of Sava as a "second Moses" in the arenga of the charter of archbishop Nikodim [Nikodemus] for the *Kellion* of St Sabas at Karyes dated 1321.¹⁰ Just as God had sent Moses to the Israelites in Egypt, so Sava was sent to the Serbian land, to "our race": the former had delivered the Israelites from their bondage to the pharaoh, and the latter delivered the Serbs, as their archbishop, from their submission to idols and showed them the path to orthodoxy.

...КАКО МОИСЕИ ДРУГАГО ВЪ ЮГУПТЬ, КЪ СРЪПСЦѢ ЗЕМЛИ
КЪ СВОКПЛАМЕН'НЫКОМЪ К' НАМЪ ПОСИЛАЕТЪ, НЕ КАКО ИЗРАИЛА

⁷ Domentijan, *Život Sv. Save i Sv. Simeona*, transl. L. Mirković (Belgrade 1938), 193–199; Teodosije, *Žitija*, vol. 5/1 of *Stara srpska književnost u 24 knjige*, ed. D. Bogdanović (Belgrade 1988), 101, 183, where there is an account of how Sava himself emulated Moses during his pilgrimage to Sinai; on Moses as a role model for the Nemanjić rulers, see Marjanović-Dušanić, *Vladarska ideologija*, 218–222.

⁸ For the victories of Nemanja as a New Moses, see Stefan Prvovenčani, *Sabrana dela*, ed. Lj. Juhas-Georgievska and T. Jovanović (Belgrade 1999), 39; Domentijan, *Život Sv. Save i Sv. Simeona*, 240–241; *Danilov Zbornik* [Daniel's Collection] refers to Stefan of Dečani and Dušan in much the same way, see *Danilovi nastavljači. Danilov učenik. Drugi nastavljač Danilovog zbornika*, vol. 7 of *Stara srpska književnost u 24 knjige*, ed. G. Mak Danijel (Belgrade 1989), 34, 44–45, 76.

⁹ Marjanović-Dušanić, *Vladarska ideologija*, 220–221; eadem, "Elementi carskog programa u Dušanovoj povelji uz 'Zakonik,'" *Prilozi za književnost, jezik, istoriju i folklor* 65–66/1–4 (1999–2000), 15–16; eadem, *Sveti kralj. Kult Stefana Dečanskog* (Belgrade 2007), 305–306, 386.

¹⁰ Edition and commentaries: D. Živojinović, "Akt arhiepiskopa Nikodima I za keliju Svetog Save u Kareji," *Stari srpski arhiv* 4 (2005), 23–50.

УТ ПАИН'ТА И ПА'ВЪ РАБОТИ КГИП'ТСКЫЕ ИЗБАВИТИ, НЪ УТЬ
 ПР'ЪЛЪСТИ ИДОЛЬСКЫЕ И НЕЧИСТИХЪ И МРЬСКИХЪ ЖР'ТВЪ И
 Б'Г'СОВЬСКИХЪ КАПИЩЪ НАС ИЗ'БАВИТИ.¹¹

This pattern of likening Sava to Moses certainly relied on the fact that both were religious leaders. But what was implied as well was the idea of the Serbs as God's chosen people, a "New Israel", which is also observable in the Serbian literature and art of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries.¹² The historico-eschatological parallel with the ancient Israelites is threaded through the whole text of the arenga: God, who once had fed "bread and birds" to those fleeing across the desert, who had "parted" the sea and had drawn water from a rock, now sent Sava, as a "second Moses", to the Serbs, to take his people to the promised land.¹³

Thus, the exemplary figure of Moses in the charters of the Nemanjićs was interpreted in national and dynastic terms until the mid fourteenth century. This also goes for other Old Testament figures, whose "role" in creating an ideal image of the Nemanjić sacral monarchy has largely been examined by Serbian medievalists.¹⁴ In the final years of Dušan's reign, however, the emulation of role models drawn from the ancient Jews' sacred history disappeared from documents, as if Old Testament motifs had lost relevance with the transformation of a "national" state into a "universal" one.¹⁵ They did reappear later, but conveying a completely different message, which is particularly conspicuous in the charters that refer to Moses.

After the extinction of the Nemanjić dynasty in 1371, a theologico-ecclesiological interpretation of Old Testament motifs became predominant. Not that such interpretation had been altogether lacking in the documents of the Nemanjić era. There is an example of "pure" theology involving Moses: the lengthy arenga of king Milutin's (r. 1282–1321) charter for the monastery of Banjska dated 1314–16 which refers to St Stephen the Arch-

¹¹ Ibid., 33.

¹² Djurić, "Slika i istorija", 120–122; D. Gill, "Mit 'izabranog naroda' u staroj srpskoj književnosti", in *Srpska književnost i Sveto pismo* (Belgrade 1997), 97–102; cf. D. Bogdanović, "Politička filosofija srednjovekovne Srbije. Mogućnosti jednog istraživanja", *Studije iz srpske srednjovekovne književnosti* (Belgrade 1997), 125–127; for the examples in hagiography, see Domentijan, *Život Sv. Save i Sv. Simeona*, 71; Teodosije, *Žitija*, 49, 75, 84, 88.

¹³ Živojinović, "Akt arhiepiskopa Nikodima I", 29; the Old Testament references allude to the Hebrew journey from Egypt to the Promised Land: "bread and birds" are evocative of the food God provided in the form of manna and quail (Ex 16); the saving division of the sea took place while the Jews were pursued by the pharaonic army (Ex 14:16–27); helped by God, Moses drew water from the rock at Horeb (Ex 17:6).

¹⁴ See note 3 above.

¹⁵ Vujošević, "Stari zavet u arengama", 246.

deacon as patron saint of the monastery church.¹⁶ Likening St Stephen to Moses, it emphasizes, however, that God honoured him more than the Old Testament Jewish leader. Moses had been deigned worthy to see God “from the back” (Ex 33:21–23), while the Christian protomartyr was granted the privilege to see “the heavens opened” and “the Son of man [Christ] standing on the right hand of God” (Acts 7:55–56).

...и сего паче Моисея прославамак, не бо такоже Моиси
заднаа Божиа видѣ въ камени, нь доуха светаго испльнень
и лицемь тако ангель... небеса штвараема и оутца сѣдещаа и
сына...¹⁷

This example, however, remains lonely not only in the pre-1371 period, but also after 1371, when the emulation of the ancient Jewish leader consistently follows a different pattern.

The role Moses plays in the post-Nemanjić documents is neither a military victor nor a prayerful intercessor for his people before God any more. Namely, the charters issued by the rulers of the Lazarević and Branković dynasties (1371–1459) refer to Moses’ aspect as religious leader and prophet who, at God’s command, had built the Tabernacle — a prefiguration of the Church.¹⁸ In the arenga of prince Lazar’s (r. 1371–89) foundation charter for the monastery of Ravanica, dated 1380/1, this motif occurs in the exposition of God’s plan for the Church.¹⁹ In the earliest stage of salvation

¹⁶ Edition: Lj. Kovačević, “Svetostefanski hrisovulj”, *Spomenik Srpske kraljevske akademije* 4 (1890), 1–10.

¹⁷ Reading after *Srpski diplomatar* 25 (under preparation).

¹⁸ The presence of this motif in king Dušan’s charter for the monastery of Treskavac issued in 1342 (?) has already been pointed to in Vujošević, “Stari zavet u arengama”, 242: Moses placed in a context characteristic of the documents issued by the Lazarevićs and Brankovićs deepens the already raised doubts about the authenticity of the charter, the arenga of which may be of a later date. The groundwork for the Tabernacle–Church typological model in Christian exegesis was laid in the Pauline Epistle to the Hebrews 8:2; 9. Being the dwelling place for divine presence, the Tabernacle, and the Ark of the Covenant inside it, is interpreted as prefiguring the Virgin as well, cf. *Leksikon ikonografije, liturgike i simbolike zapadnog kršćanstva*, ed. A. Badurina (Zagreb 1979), 338; cf. also Irmoi in Tone 4 sung on the feasts of the Presentation of the Virgin and Annunciation, where the epithet the “ensouled shrine of God” is used to describe the Virgin, and Be-atitudes in Tone 8 sung at the liturgy, where the Virgin is described as the “Ark of the New Covenant”, *Zbornik crkvenih bogoslužbenih pesama* (Belgrade 1971), 156, 273; 64. On the depiction of the Tabernacle in religious art, see M. Gligorijević–Maksimović, “Skinija u Dečanima: poreklo i razvoj ikonografske teme”, in *Dečani i vizantijska umetnost sredinom XIV veka*, ed. V. J. Djurić (Belgrade 1989), 319–337.

¹⁹ Edition and commentaries: A. Mladenović, *Povelje kneza Lazara* (Belgrade 2003), 49–127.

history, the leading role was played by Moses, who was given the Law and ordered “by the Holy Trinity” to set up the Tabernacle (Ex 26:30):

ПРѢБЕЗНАЧЕНАА ТРОИЦЕ... ИЖЕ ЗАКОНЪ ПОЛАГАЕИ МОУСЕСЪ, ПОВЕЛѢ
СЪТВОРИТИ СВѢТІЮ...²⁰

Further below, other “key actors” in that history are also mentioned: the apostle Peter as the “corner stone” of the Church (using a quotation from Mt 16:18), and the “pious kings” whose devoted care of churches is emulated by the Serbian prince who is now erecting his foundation. In this and other original arengae of prince Lazar’s charters an idea prevails which was virtually non-existent in those issued by the Nemanjićs: the salvation of all peoples gathered into the Church of Christ. It is conveyed through some previously unexploited Old Testament motifs in three analogous arengae, those of the charters for the Athonite monasteries of Great Lavra (1375/6 and 1381) and Hilandar (1379 ?), and for the nobleman Obrad Dragosaljić (1388), where the divine plan for the Church is described in a concise and articulate manner: the prophets, “illuminated by the spiritual light”, foresaw the future, as testified by the words of the “*prophet*” David that “all the nations shall come and worship before thee, O Lord” (Ps 86:9). And this came to pass in the Church that gives hope of a future life.²¹ A somewhat different arenga is found in the charter for the monastery of Ždrelo (Gornjak), which briefly paraphrases Genesis 1–2 on the creation of the world and man as an introduction to the promise of salvation to all humankind.²² In all these texts, the issuer, prince Lazar, expresses his personal wish not to be denied God’s grace promised to all humankind, but he also emphasizes his regal responsibility to uphold the “true faith”. This ideological content of the arengae originating from prince Lazar’s chancery was developed by the highest ranks of the Serbian Church, which becomes obvious if they are compared with the thematically and expressively similar charters: of monk Dorotej [Dorotheus] for the monastery of Drenča (1382) and of patriarch Spiridon [Spyridon] to the nobleman Obrad Dragosaljić (1388).²³

²⁰ Ibid., 52.

²¹ Edition and commentaries: Mladenović, *Povelje kneza Lazara*, 17–21 (Great Lavra, 1375/6); 129–138 (Hilandar); 171–175 (Great Lavra, 1381); 201–208 (Obrad Dragosaljić).

²² Edition and commentaries: Mladenović, *Povelje kneza Lazara*, 23–40.

²³ Edition and commentaries: Mladenović, *Povelje kneza Lazara*, 177–190 (Drenča); 209–214 (patriarch Spiridon’s charter). The monastery of Drenča was granted charters both by the prince and by the patriarch, but they have not survived. Several patriarchal confirmations of the princely charters are known, which testifies to the two leaders’ close cooperation in chancery practice, cf. F. Barišić, “O poveljama kneza Lazara i patrijarha Spiridona”, *Zbornik Filozofskog fakulteta* 12–1 (1974), 357–377.

Moses placed in the same universally Christian context can be found in the charters of despots Stefan Lazarević (r. 1389–1427, from 1402 as despot) and Djurdj Branković (r. 1427–56) issued to the Great Lavra on Mount Athos.²⁴ The arenga of Stefan’s charter of 1407 opens with a story of the Old Testament Tabernacle (there called *Sen* instead of the term *Skinija* used in the fourteenth-century charters), set up at God’s command by “the great of the prophets”, Moses.

...ВЕЛИКЫИ ВЪ ПРОРЦѢХЪ ПРОВЪРАЗОУЕ МОУСИ, НИКАКОЖЕ
НИКОМОУЖЕ НЕСЪДАТНОУ БЫТИ ВЪ СЪСТАВАНІЕ ВЕТХУИХЪ УНОЕ
ЗАКОННЫЕ СѢНИ ВЪРАЗНОИ НІІАШНОИ, ВСЕМОУ СЪ’НМОУ СІУВЪ
ІІЛКВЪ ПОВЕЛѢВАЕТЪ ЮЖЕ НА ГОРѢ СИНАИЦѢИ ВЪРАЗНѢ
СЪТВОРИТИ СКАЗОУЕ БГ, САМОМОУ МОУСЕУВИ ЗАКОНПОЛАГАЕ РЕЧЬ
ЗРИ, СЪТВОРИШИ ВСА ПО ВЪРАЗОУ ПОКАЗАННОМОУ ТИ НА ГОРѢ...²⁵

The motifs from Exodus (25 and 26) combined with the Christian interpretation from Hebrews (8:2–5) lay emphasis on the exegetic type Tabernacle-Church, which is followed by a passage on the God-pleasing work of building and adorning churches: just as the ancient Jews used to make donations to their Holy, so the “pious kings” in the Christian world erect and make donations to churches in the hope of being rewarded by the “Universal Lord”. The issuer follows their example and makes a donation to the Athonite monastery. A somewhat broadened version of the same arenga, in Djurdj’s charter of 1452, describes the role of Moses in salvation history even more explicitly. In “His ineffable mercy and love for man”, God has always shown concern for the wellbeing of humankind. Thus, in the *Old Testament* He had commanded the Jewish leader to set up the Tabernacle as a prefiguration of the “heavenly *Sen*” (Church) which He built upon Peter in the *New Testament* (another quotation from Mt 16:18). The way “Moses served” God has been emulated by the “Christ-loving kings” in their hope of eternal life, and the issuer follows in their footsteps by becoming the second *ktetor* of the Great Lavra.

СІЕ БОЖІЕ ПОВЕЛѢНІЕ И МОУСЕУВО СЛЪЖЕНІЕ ИЗЪВЪРАЖЕНІЕ ГЛАГОЛЮ
УНО БЛАЖЕННѢИШИИ И ХРИСТЪЛЮБИВѢИШИИ ЦАРІЕ СЪМОТРИВШЕ...²⁶

Ecclesiological themes predominate even in the other documents issued by these two rulers. The charters of Stefan Lazarević for the Athonite

²⁴ Edition and commentaries: A. Mladenović, *Povelje i pisma despota Stefana* (Belgrade 2007), 237–253 (Stefan Lazarević); S. Ćirković, “Dve srpske povelje za Lavru”, *Hilandarski zbornik* 5 (1983), 91–100 (Djurdj Branković).

²⁵ Reading after D. Anastasijević, “Srpski arhiv Lavre Atonske”, *Spomenik Srpske kraljevske akademije* 56 (1922), 11.

²⁶ Ćirković, “Dve srpske povelje”, 94.

monasteries of Hilandar (1392–1402) and Great Lavra (1394/5 and 1398, where the issuer is Stefan's mother Evgenija [Eugenia]) and for Hilandar's *pyrgos* of St Basil (1394–1402) make use of prince Lazar's abovementioned arenga and its providential motif of the Church of Christ (prophecy through Ps 86:9).²⁷ Adherence to the Church and hope of salvation constitute the central theme in the original lengthy arenga of the reigning family's charter to Dečani (1397–1402).²⁸ The charters of Djuradj Branković fully rely on despot Stefan's programme for their ideologico-theological themes, and reiterate almost all formulae from Stefan's arengae.

The cited examples show that the ideological mainstay for the post-1371 rulers of Serbia was the "Orthodox faith" and the Church of Christ bringing salvation to "all peoples". Conformed to that context, the role of Moses became that of the Tabernacle builder. As such, he was a role model not as a national leader, warrior or prayerful intercessor, but as one who takes care of the "Church" and "true faith".

Moses as a role model reassumed national-dynastic connotations in the age of the titular despots of the Branković dynasty, who in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries, by which time Serbia had already been conquered by the Ottomans, administrated their estates in Srem [Syrmia] as vassals to the king of Hungary. In emulation of the Nemanjićs, their documents elaborated the chosen people idea based upon the Old Testament. A remarkable example is the arenga of the charter issued to the monastery of Hilandar by despotess Angelina, with her sons Djordje and Jovan, in 1496.²⁹ It glorifies "the God of Israel" for having shown the Serbian race the path to salvation through "our holy fathers Simeon and Sava". Just as Moses had led "the Jewish people" out of Egypt and "ushered" it into the promised land, so they enlightened their people by pulling it out of "the sea of passion", setting it free from heresy and strengthening it in its faith in the Holy Trinity, and showed it the way to the heavenly kingdom.

... АКОЖЕ ДРЕВЛЕ РОДЪ СВРЕНСКИИ МОИСЕОМЪ ОТЪ РАБОТЫ
ФАРАОНОВЫ ПРОВЕДЪ СКВОЗЪ ЧЕРМНОЕ МОРЕ И ВВЕДЕ ВЪ ЗЕМЛЮ
ОБЪТОВАНИА. ТАКО И СІИ ПРЕМУДРІИ СВЪТИАНИЦЫ ОТЪ МОРА
СТРАСТЕН ИЗВЛЕКШЕ НАСТАВИВШЕ ВЪ ЦАРСТВО НЕБЕСНОЕ.³⁰

²⁷ Edition and commentaries: Mladenović, *Povelje despota Stefana*, 155–162 (Hilandar; cf. M. Šuica, "Povelja kneza Stefana Lazarevića kojom se Hilandaru prilaze crkva Vavedenja Bogorodičinog u Ibru", *Stari srpski arhiv* 3 [2004], 107–123); 223–228 (Great Lavra, 1394/5); 229–235 (Great Lavra, 1398); 163–173 (Pyrgos of St Basil).

²⁸ Mladenović, *Povelje despota Stefana*, 391–398.

²⁹ Edition: K. Nevostrujev, "Tri hrisovulje u Hilandaru", *Glasnik Srpskog učenog društva* 25 (1869), 274–277.

³⁰ Ibid., 274–275.

This form of *imitatio Moysi* used to portray the founders of the Serbian State and Church — Sts Simeon (Nemanja) and Sava — as national leaders fitted into the ideology of the Brankovići of Srem. By assuming care of the monastery of Hilandar as a national shrine and by referring to its sainted *ktetors*, they sought to point up their continuity with the medieval state of the Nemanjići.³¹ In that sense, the arenga had a programmatic character because the parallel drawn between the ancient Jews and the Serbs encompassed virtually the entire histories of the two peoples. The opening relevant metaphor associating Moses with Simeon and Sava finds its counterpart in the concluding biblical prefiguration of the Serbian despots' exile in a foreign land: the Jewish diaspora embodied in three (in fact four) young men in Babylon (Dn 1 and 3) who “abide by the laws of their fathers”. So now the representatives of the Serbian people, reliving the fate of God's biblical people, make a donation to Hilandar, hopeful that “God will bethink Him of His mercy ... and make us heirs of our fatherland”, and await salvation as a New Israel.

* * *

The case study into the reception of the Moses figure in the medieval Serbian diplomatic sources reveals the varied politico-theological interpretation of the Old Testament resulting from the local environment's changing attitude towards the Old Testament setting as a model of ideology and action. The charters of the Nemanjići interpret the Old Testament in dynastic and national terms. The monarchy is headed by the monarchs who are likened to Old Testament leaders, whereby they become incorporated into the biblical framework of sacred history and their realm and people become a New Israel. The Old Testament characters used as *exempla* are portrayed in the light of their historical roles. Thus, the Moses figure with its multifaceted symbolic potential is used under its different aspects: for Sava, as “deliverer of his race”, for Stefan of Dečani, as prayerful intercessor in the battle against the enemy, and for Dušan, as victorious warrior. With the extinction of the Nemanjić dynasty, the emulation of the models derived from the sacred history of the ancient Jews disappears from the charters, and the Old Testament assumes a universal Christian meaning.³² The only Old Testa-

³¹ K. Mitrović, “Povelja despota Djurdja Brankovića o prihvatanju kitorstva nad Hilandarom”, *Stari srpski arhiv* 5 (2006), 235–236; cf. D. Bogdanović, “Srpska književnost između tradicije i hronike svoga vremena”, in *Istorija srpskog naroda* II (Belgrade 1982), 496–498.

³² On the new ideological patterns promoted under the Lazarević dynasty, see S. Marjanović-Dušanić, “Dinastija i svetost u doba porodice Lazarević: stari uzori i novi modeli”, *Zbornik radova Vizantološkog instituta* 43 (2006), 77–95.

ment figures retained in the documents issued by prince Lazar and despots Stefan Lazarević and Djuradj Branković are David and Moses, but no longer portrayed as embodying the many aspects of the exemplary ruler, but as meta-historical actors in God's plan for the salvation of all peoples in the Church of Christ. Accordingly, David features as one of the prophets, while the role of Moses becomes limited to that of the builder of the Tabernacle which prefigures the Church and thus anticipates divine grace as revealed in the New Testament. The bearer of political and sacral identity is neither the state nor the holy dynasty any longer, but the Church as a community of all believers. On their way to the promised grace, the issuers of the charters no longer emulate Old Testament rulers and leaders; instead, their models are "Orthodox kings". National and dynastic connotations become "restored" to the Old Testament by the Brankovići of Srem. Their role models are Sts Simeon and Sava, "our holy fathers" who set their people on the salvific path, just as Moses had delivered the Jews from bondage and showed them the way to the promised land.*

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