

DANIEL II, THE ARCHBISHOP OF SERBIA¹

Abstract:

The article deals with the Serbian hierarch Daniel II (c. 1274–1337), whose life led him from being the Abbot of the Hilandar monastery to becoming the Archbishop of Pech. He proved himself a prolific hagiographer, writing many works that were combined in the collection *Lives of kings and archbishops of Serbia*. It contained hagiographies of King Urosh and King Dragutin, Queen Helena and King Milutin, Archbishops Arseny I, Ioaniky I, and Eustathius I. Later, it also included the *Life of Daniel* himself, written by his disciple after the death of his teacher. The *Lives of kings and archbishops of Serbia* created by Daniel are related in content and composition. As a collection, they represent a kind of typological predecessor of the *Book of the Degrees of Royal genealogy*, a monumental collection created in the Moscow state about two and a half centuries later. In addition, Daniel was the author of hymnographic works and, according to the opinion of scholars, took part in the drafting of the *Charter of King Milutin* to the Hilandar monastery.

Keywords:

Archbishop of Serbia, Hilandar monastery, hagiographer, collection of Lives, *Charter of King Milutin* to Hilandar monastery.

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В статье идет речь о сербском иерархе Данииле II (ок. 1274–1337), прошедшем путь от игумена Хиландарского монастыря до Печского архиепископа. Он проявил себя плодовитым агиографом, написав много сочинений, которые были объединены в сборник *Жития королей и архиепископов сербских*. В нем были помещены агиобиографии королей Уроша и Драгутина, королевы Елены и короля Милутина, архиепископов Арсения I, Иоанникия I и Евстафия I. Позднее в него вошло и житие самого Даниила, написанное его учеником после смерти своего учителя. Созданные Даниилом жизнеописания королей и архиепископов Сербских связаны между собой по содержанию и композиционно. Составленный из них сборник является своеобразным типологическим предшественником *Степенной книги царского родословия* — монументального памятника, созданного в Московском государстве около двух с половиной веков спустя. Кроме того, Даниил выступил автором гимнографических сочинений и, по предположению ученых, принял участие в составлении жалованной грамоты короля Милутина Хиландарскому монастырю.

Ключевые слова:

Архиепископ сербский, Хиландарский монастырь, агиограф, сборник житий, грамота короля Милутина.

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Daniel II was an Athonite ascetic, the highest ranking individual in the church hierarchy, writer, diplomat, one of the most influential figures of the Serbian Middle Ages, canonized as a saint by the Serbian Orthodox Church.

He was born into a noble family and, thanks to a good education and his courtly manners, he was invited to the court of King Milutin (Stefan Urosh II), faithfully serving the ruler and providing spiritual support to him until his death. We do not know the ascetic's secular name. He went down in history as Daniel, as he was named when he was tonsured in the monastery of St Nicholas in Konchul around 1300. Later, with the blessing of Archbishop Eustathius, he moved to the monastery of Pech, where he was ordained a priest. About seven years later, at a council convened in Serbia, he was elected abbot of the Serbian Hilandar monastery on Mt. Athos, where, judging by surviving documents, he remained in that capacity until May 1310.

Abbot Daniel showed great personal courage by marshaling the monastery brethren to protect Hilandar from attacks by armed Catalan crusader troops which plundered Athos during raids from 1307 to 1309. The saint, however, did not stay on the Holy Mountain constantly but from time to time left it to carry out various royal missions, including diplomatic ones. Thus, for example, on one occasion Daniel, on King Milutin's behalf, left the Karyes cell of St Sava on Mt. Athos and went to the town of Debrets in Srem to King Milutin's relative, King Dragutin, who then, perhaps not without the influence of the clergyman, adopted a monastic life with the name Theoktist. After his election as bishop of the Banya diocese, the saint moved to Serbia, attended the burial of Queen Helena of Serbia and later wrote her Life.

Upon returning to Mt. Athos, Daniel lived in the tower (pigr) of Hilandar and had as his confessor one of the monks of the Athonite monastery of St Panteleimon, whose inhabitants were then predominantly Serbs. He maintained close spiritual ties with them, but in 1317 he had already received a new appointment and again went to Serbia to the Diocese of Huma (in present-day Herzegovina). Daniel bade farewell to King Milutin before his death, which he took hard and accepted responsibility for the spiritual care of the king's son, Stefan of Dechany. Later, at the request of his master, he performed diplomatic missions in negotiations with the Byzantine and Bulgarian rulers.

After the death of the head of the Serbian Church, Archbishop Nicodemus, a nation-wide Serbian council was convened by King Stefan, at which, on 14 September 1324, Daniel was elected Archbishop of all the Serbian and Pomeranian lands. One of his main aims as archbishop was the construction of churches. The most famous of them was the Church of the Holy Virgin Hodegetria in Pech, which was built in 1328 according to his plan. Along with the churches of St Apostles and St Demetrius, it organically fit into the temple complex of the Pech Patriarchate. The Church of the Ascension of the Lord, built in 1335 in the Monastery of Visoki Dechany, rivals it in beauty and perfection.

The ideas of the saint are probably the basis for the frescoes of the cathedral in Pech, including the so-called “Grape vine of the Nemaniches” (the family tree of the ruling Serbian dynasty of Nemaniches), which was created there on Daniel’s order between 1324–37.

Archbishop Daniel died on 19 December 1337 and was thereafter buried in the Church of the Virgin Hodegetria built according to his plan. Today, in its north-western corner, one can see a marble sarcophagus with the ascetic’s remains.

Saint Daniel proved to be a prolific writer. His name is associated with the compilation of most of the *Lives of the kings and archbishops of Serbia* included in the so-called *Tsarostavnik* or *Genealogy*. This set of written Serbian documents was compiled over several centuries, starting from the fourteenth century. The oldest part of the *Genealogy* was written by Daniel, who composed the Lives of King Urosh, King Dragutin, Queen Helena († 1306) and her sons King Dragutin († 1316) and King Milutin (1282–1321), Archbishops Arseny I, Ioaniky I and Eustathius I. Compared with the lengthy Lives of previous Serbian hagiographers, these works by Daniel are small and are interconnected in content and composition. Between 1337 and 1340 Daniel’s work was continued by his pupil, who composed the Lives of Stefan of Dechany, King Dushan and the *Life of Archbishop Daniel II* himself. At the same time or somewhat later, short notes appeared in the collection about the lives of a number of Serbian kings and archbishops. According to some scholars, Daniel tried to create a kind of Serbian prologue based on the Lives he compiled. *Tsarostavnik* has not yet been fully studied in a textual sense.

In telling about the lives of several generations of rulers from the Nemanich dynasty, Daniel could not ignore their relationships, and hence their everyday conflicts. An account of many events was required primarily to explain the appearance of the next ruler on the throne. That is why in the Lives of Daniel, the images of secular rulers in many ways lose the monumentality that was inherent in 13th century Serbian hagiography. The author does not hide from the reader that his heroes, who spent most of their lives in the world, were not immune to worldly temptations.

Daniel often tries to frame domestic conflicts in terms of an ideological struggle. Thus, in the *Life of King Urosh*, which discussed the king’s difficult relationship with his son Dragutin, when the king did not want to give part of the inheritance due to his son, Dragutin addressed his father with a sermon in the spirit of a Christian creed. However, after some time, Dragutin decided to oppose his father with the aid of an army, that is, he openly flouted the gospel commandments. Only then does Daniel begin to lament over the father and son, who were seduced by transient earthly goods and fell into sin.

In Daniel’s version, his heroes’ path to spiritual revival begins with their recognition of how far they have deviated from the possibility of reconciliation with God and the Church because of their sins. Only then do they completely surrender to the cause of spiritual salvation. Ascetic motifs characteristic of Serbian

hagiography of the 13th and 14th centuries begin to appear in Daniel's depictions of his heroes' asceticism. It consisted not just of charitable deeds in the world — the construction of temples, the protection of widows and orphans and helping the poor. For Daniel, this was only the outward manifestation of their glorification in the Lives. The external virtues of the rulers were a kind of backdrop for him, against which the main "action" unfolded: the spiritual struggles of his heroes with their human weaknesses, passions and sinful thoughts and their sincere repentance for their sins.

The repentant nature of the religious experiences of the heroes in the Lives of *Tsarostavnik* is represented by special literary forms, primarily the characters' internal monologues. A monologue of this kind is found, for example, in the *Life of Queen Helena*: "Woe to me, a sinner, for I have missed the time for my repentance ..." Works such as this reflect the drama of what is happening with the ascetics. The intensity of the saints' repentance over the sins they have committed grows as they realize their end is imminent.

A characteristic of Daniel's heroes is their appeals to their own souls; these are apparently based on the creations of Byzantine hymnographers. For example, in the *Life of Dragutin* there is an example of such a monologue: "O sad soul, o wretched soul, you spent your whole life from youth, without laboring, o soul, the sun has already set, and your days are numbered, sin-loving ..."

The *Life of Queen Helena* is of particular interest. The queen was a Catholic who converted to Orthodoxy, and her virtues earned her the honor of being included amount the host of saints. In Slavic medieval literature, women appear relatively rarely as the protagonists of hagiographic narratives. It should also be noted that the central figure in Daniel's cycle of works on the kings and archbishops of Serbia, according to the general consensus of scholars, is King Milutin. The hagiographer portrays him as a powerful ruler and a glorious commander. In general, the creation of the Serbian *Tsarostavnik* or *Genealogy* by Archbishop Daniel in the 14th century is somewhat reminiscent of another grandiose enterprise in 16th-century Russian literature: *The Book of the Degrees of Royal Genealogy*. Both literary documents aimed at glorifying the homeland as a Christian kingdom though the personalities of secular rulers and church hierarchs sent to it by God.

In addition to hagiographic narratives, Daniel wrote two services dedicated to archbishops Arseny and Eustathius. The first of them surpasses the second in volume and artistic merit.

Researchers believe that, compared to his predecessors, Daniel brought something new to Serbian hagiography: in his writings, there was a more distinct spirit of mystical individualism, clearly manifested in the hesychasm of Athos. Also noticeable in his writings are traces of the ornate decoration of letters and pages.

The *Life of Archbishop Daniel* himself was created by one of his pupils after the death of their teacher in the fourteenth century, but this fact does not give

grounds to assert that the veneration of the ascetic as a saint began in the same century. One piece of relatively recent historical evidence of the cult of Daniel in Serbia is the reference to the gift of an aromatic oil that emanated from Daniel's remains in 1643 by Serbs in Russia to the Russian Tsar Mikhail Fyodorovich. This sacred object was brought to Russia from the Slavic south by the Pech Archimandrite, Centerion, who was at that time in the Russian lands with the aim of collecting "alms," i.e., donations. In the Belgrade *Serblyak* (collection of the Services to the Serbian Saints) of 1860 edition, one can find a service to Archbishop Daniel, written by Metropolitan Mikhail (Jovanovich).

Images of St Daniel are found in early Serbian medieval painting. In the Church of Our Lady of Hodegetria, for example, two images of the saint are preserved. In one of the frescoes dating from about 1337, Archbishop Daniel is depicted together with Nicholas the Miracle Worker, and in the other he appears as a founder, holding a model of the Pech church built on his initiative. The saint is guided by the Old Testament prophet Daniel, leading him to the Virgin Mary. Ancient frescoes (created between 1339 and 1348) with the image of Daniel are also in the Serbian Dechany monastery. Here the saint is depicted as the "second donator" of the monastery. The memory of Archbishop Daniel is celebrated by the Serbian Orthodox Church on 2 January in the new style.

Translated by Igor Kaliganov

WORKS

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ILLUSTRATIONS

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