

Stefan Uroš II Milutin Nemanjić (1282–1321)

Subjects: [Art](#)

Contributor: Čedomila Marinković

King Stefan Uroš II Milutin Nemanjić (1282—Donje Nerodimlje, October 29, 1321) was a Serbian medieval king, the seventh ruler of the Serbian Nemanide dynasty, the son of King Stefan Uroš I (r. 1243–1276) and Queen Helen Nemanjić (see), the brother of the King Stefan Dragutin (r. 1276–1282) and the father of King Stefan Dečanski (r. 1322–1331). Together with his great grandfather Stefan Nemanja, the founder of the Nemanide dynasty, and his grandson, Emperor Stefan Uroš IV Dušan, King Milutin is considered the most powerful ruler of the Nemanide dynasty. The long and successful military breach of King Milutin, down the Vardar River Valley and deep into the Byzantine territories, represents the beginning of Serbian expansion into southeastern Europe, making it the dominant political power in the Balkan region in the 14th century. During that period, Serbian economic power grew rapidly, mostly because of the development of trading and mining. King Milutin founded Novo Brdo, an internationally important silver mining site. He started minting his own money, producing imitations of Venetian coins (*grosso*), which gradually diminished in value. This led to the ban of these coins by the Republic of Venice and provided King Milutin a place in Dante's *Divina Commedia*. King Milutin had a specific philoktesia fervor: He built or renovated over three dozen Serbian Orthodox churches and monasteries not only in Serbia but also in Thessaloniki, Mt. Athos, Constantinople and The Holy Land. Over fifteen of his portraits can be found in the monumental painting ensembles of Serbian medieval monasteries as well as on two icons.

King Milutin

Serbian medieval kingdom

King's Church Studenica

Monastery of Staro Nagorčino

Monastery of Gračanica

Nemanide's Genealogical Tree

King Stefan Uroš II Milutin Nemanjić was born around 1254–1255 ^[1] (p. 53) as the second son of King Uroš I Nemanjić (r. 1243–1276) and Queen Helen. According to the newest research, besides elder brother Dragutin and sister Brnj(a)ča, King Milutin probably had another elder brother, Stefan, who passed away as a child and was buried in the catholicon's nave of Studenica Monastery ^[2] (p. 94). The life of the young prince Milutin—before his ascension to the throne of Serbia in 1282—is not very well known because of the almost total lack of Serbian historical sources of that time. According to *Lives of Serbian Kings and Archbishops* by his contemporary Archbishop Danilo II, a conflict broke out between his father King Uroš I and his brother King Stefan Uroš Dragutin in 1276. King Uroš I abdicated and died less than 2 years later in the region of Hum. Six years later, following a riding accident, King Dragutin abdicated in favor of his younger brother during the council of Deževno (1282). Recently, these biographical facts were questioned by Vlada Stanković, who assumes that instead of the common belief about the reign of Dragutin from 1276 to 1282 and the subsequent first reign of Milutin till 1299, there was a “peculiar (ruling) collegium” of Kings Dragutin and Milutin, and their mother Queen Helen that lasted from the abdication of the King Uroš I in 1276 to the peace agreement with Byzantines in 1299 ^[1] (p. 69). Their mutual appearance proves this assumption in the fresco ensembles of the churches in monasteries of Gradac, Đurdjevi

Stupovi and Arilje, as well on the two icons and the founder's inscription of the restored Benedictine abbey of Sts. Sergius and Bacchus near Shkodër on the Boyana River ^[3] (p. 97).

It is a very well-known fact that several marriages of King Milutin made him a strong opposition both of Serbian Orthodox and Roman Catholic churches. However exaggerated in number, the marriage alliances of King Milutin were part of overall changes in Serbian politics during the second half of the 13th century and the very complex political relations that Serbia had with Byzantium, Hungary and Bulgaria of that period ^[1] (p. 53). Although the final list of Milutin's spouses is still to be established, some recent researchers have proposed Milutin's marriage curriculum. According to common knowledge, King Milutin's first wife was a certain Serbian noblewoman who identified with Jelena (Helen) and whom King Milutin, after a certain time, expelled "for no reason and against her will" ^[4] (p. 58). After that episode, and in the changing political environment, Milutin married the daughter of sebastokrator John II Angelos, ruler of Thessaly ^[1] (p. 48). When King Stefan Dragutin dethroned their father Stefan Uroš I in 1276, Milutin married (previously Catholic nun) Elisabeth, the sister of his brother's wife Catherine who, after another political turmoil and the end of their marriage at an unknown date, returned to Hungary. According to some documents still preserved in the Archives of Dubrovnik, King Milutin remarried again in 1284, this time to the daughter of the Bulgarian tsar George Terter, Anna ^[1] (p. 67). In 1298, as a result of a huge Byzantine military defeat, Emperor Andronikos II Palaiologos promised a marriage alliance of his 5-year-old daughter Symonis to the Serbian ruler King Milutin ^[1] (pp. 94–106). The Orthodox Diocese in Constantinople opposed the marriage because of the king's previous marriages and the vast age difference, but the Byzantine Emperor was determined to do so. In late 1298, he sent his trusted minister Theodore Metochites to Serbia to conduct the negotiations. On his part, King Milutin too was eager to accept this marriage and divorced his wife, Anna Terter. Princess Symonis and King Milutin's marriage was celebrated in Thessalonica in the springtime of 1299, and the couple departed for Serbia ^[5] (p. 457). As a wedding present, Byzantines recognized Serbian rule north of the line Ohrid—Prilep—Štip. King Milutin became a son-in-law of the actual Byzantine Emperor, which triggered an overall Byzantinization of Serbian society ^[6]. Just after a peace treaty with the Byzantine Empire was signed in 1299, disputes began between Milutin and his brother Stefan Dragutin. War broke out between the brothers and lasted, with sporadic cease-fires, until Dragutin's death in 1314. By 1309, Milutin appointed his son, future king Stefan Uroš III Dečanski, as governor of Zeta (present-day Montenegro) ^[7] (p. 176). This meant that Stefan Uroš III Dečanski was to become heir to the throne in Serbia and not Dragutin's son Stefan Vladislav II as it was agreed at Deževno Council. King Stefan Uroš II Milutin died in Donje Nerodimlje on October 29, 1321. Barely 3 years after his death in 1321, King Milutin was proclaimed a saint, although he never took a monastic vow as all his ancestors on the throne of Serbia before him did. His feast day is celebrated on 30 October/12 November.

References

1. Stanković, V. *Kralj Milutin (1282–1321) (King Milutin (1282–1321); Freska: Beograd, Serbia, 2012.*

2. Ječmenica, D. *Nemanjići drugog reda (The Second-rate Nemanides)*; Filozofski fakultet: Beograd, Serbia, 2018.
3. Erdeljan, J. Two inscriptions from the church of Sts. Sergius and Bacchus near Shkodër and the question of text and image as markers of identity in Medieval Serbia. In *Texts/Inscriptions/Images*; Moutafov, E., Erdeljan, J., Eds.; National History Museum: Sofia, Bulgaria, 2017; pp. 97–110.
4. Komatina, P. O prvom braku kralja Milutina (About the first marriage of King Milutin). *ZRVI* 2020, XVII, 45–59.
5. Ostrogorski, G. *Istorija Vizantije (History of Byzantium)*. In *Narodna knjiga*; Alfa: Beograd, Serbia, 1998.
6. *Byzantine Heritage and Serbian Art I, Process of Byzantinisation of Serbian Archeology*; Bikić, V. (Ed.) SANU: Belgrade, Serbia, 2016.
7. Ćorović, V. *Istorija Srba (History of Serbs)*; BIGZ: Beograd, Serbia, 1989.

Retrieved from <https://www.encyclopedia.pub/entry/history/show/52211>