

BEYOND CONSTANTINOPLE: CONSTRUCTING ΧΩΡΑ
IN THE KING'S CHURCH OF STUDENICA

Abstract: This article explores the King's Church of Studenica, and its connections to the Byzantine Chora Church in Constantinople. By examining the architectural and artistic elements of the King's Church, the article argues that King Stefan Uroš II Milutin sought to create a choral experience for the viewer, immersing them in a world of divine beauty and transcendence. Through the use of art and architecture, King Milutin sought to establish his strong cultural and political identity and assure the viewer of his divinity, elevating the prestige of the Serbian Land and its monarch in the eyes of both local and foreign visitors.

Key words: Byzantine architecture, Serbian medieval architecture, King Stefan Uroš II Milutin, Studenica monastery, King's church, Chora church, architectural influences, Χώρα

King Stefan Uroš II Milutin (r. 1282–1321) of the Nemanjić dynasty is renowned for his military conquests, political power, and cultural patronage. In the late 13th century, his reign posed a significant threat to Byzantine supremacy in the Balkans, as Milutin managed to expand his territory and assert his authority over a considerable portion of the Byzantine Empire. His legacy, however, extends beyond his military and political achievements, as Milutin was also a significant patron of the arts and architecture. One of the most notable examples of his cultural patronage is the King's Church of Studenica (1313), a magnificent structure that reflects the grandeur and sophistication of Byzantine aesthetics, while also asserting the identity and ambitions of medieval Serbia (fig.1).¹

While scholars have recognized the significance of this period and its impact on the artistic landscape, starting from 1299, it is important to note that the rela-

¹ Mavromatis 1973: 329–334; Mavromatis 1978: 29 sq; Fine 1987: 219; Ђирковић 1991: 53–67; Максимовић 1995: 267–268; Максимовић 2007: 372–373; Ducellier 2008: 779–802; Станковић 2012: 71–82; Marković 2016: 173 – 184; Marinković 2022: 127 – 139.



FIG.1. King's church of Studenica, photo: Jasmina S. Ćirić

tionship between Byzantium and Serbia, as well as the complex historical context, played a crucial role in what is commonly referred to as the "byzantinization" of Serbia. This is particularly evident in the adoption of Constantinopolitan influences in the architectural and compositional programs of buildings.²

As we closely examine the building components of the King's Church of Studenica and the Chora church of Theodore Metochites in Constantinople, striking similarities become apparent. These similarities are especially significant when considering the broader context of Byzantine and Serbian architectural influences during the Middle Ages. The King's Church of Studenica, constructed as a symbolic space of the Christian universe, has long been a topic of scholarly examination in the field of Byzantine and Serbian architecture. Its intricate design and compositional program demonstrate a deep understanding of Byzantine aesthetics and theology, which were undoubtedly shaped by the influence of Constantinople. Thus, the King's Church of Studenica serves as a tangible representation of the complex historical and cultural relations between Byzantium and Serbia during this time period.³

² Mavromatis 1973: 120–150; Ćurčić 1979: 6; Korah 1987: 99–108; Fine 1987: 222–223; Piltz 2011: 176–185; Ćurčić 2013: 9–32; Stevović 2016: 317 – 322; Ćirić 2015: 206–215; Davidov 2017; Ćirić 2017: 179–186; Ćirić 2021²: 30; Давидов Темерински 2023.

³ For a general overview about the King's Church in Studenica Monastery: Рајковић 1964;

The church's inscribed cross floor plan, vertical thrust,⁴ and octagonal drum with a dome are not only a testament to the artistic and architectural traditions of Byzantium, but also a reflection of King Milutin's imperial aspirations and his desire to elevate the status of his kingdom (fig.2). Its intricate decorative program, including the detailed inscriptions on the exterior,⁵ further illustrate the complex historical and cultural context in which it was created (fig.3, 3a). As such, the King's Church in Studenica continues to inspire scholarly research and public fascination as a remarkable example of medieval architecture and its political and cultural significance.⁶

To understand the compositional considerations behind the King's Church, it is worth noting Vojislav Korać's observation that the church's dome and cube base resemble those of King Milutin's other works, but greatly enlarged. The facades of the church maintain a harmonious balance and are characterized by a blind arcade, which gradually reveals the internal structure.⁷

The King's Church facades exhibit a strikingly harmonious balance, with the gradually developed blind arcade serving as the primary motif that reveals the church's internal structure. The exterior walls remain mostly plain, punctuated only by window openings and the vertical angles.⁸ The overall impression of the King's Church is one of geometric simplicity, with a decidedly Byzantine appearance (fig. 4). At first glance, it is clear that the church reflects King Milutin's adoption of an imperial Byzantine policy, which occurred about thirty years after he ascended to the throne in 1282.⁹ Moreover, architecture in the age of King Milutin truly embodied the expression of Constantinopolitan sacrality and essence of sacred space. Milutin's royal iconography and most of décor of all his preserved endowments are contemporary with the Kariye Camii in Constantino-

Радјочић 1966: 105–109; Миљковић–ПепАек 1967: 88–93, 213–7; Ćurčić 1973: 191–195; Кораћ 1986: 97–99; Радјочић 1986: 208–209. A convenient scholarly summary and thought bibliographical listing see also Бабић 1987; Cvetković 1995: 251–276; Кораћ – Шупут 1998: 338–339; Тодић 1998: 326–329. For the church as a model of the Christian universe extended bibliography may be found in Bogdanović 2011: 109–134.

4 So far the most comprehensive study about the King's church Бабић 1987. See also Ćurčić 2016: 62. It is important to stress that this church was built more than two decades after King Milutin ascended the throne. It happened in the process of strong Byzantinisation.

5 Бабић 1987: 21.

6 Ćurčić 2013: 102–108.

7 Кораћ 1986: 99.

8 Ibid.

9 Regarding the significant shifts in his political objectives and religious inclinations cf. Данило 1988: 109–150. Surprisingly, despite the recent historiography on the subject, King church's significance in the architectural timeline during the reign of King Milutin has been almost overlooked in Ousterhout's book. Ousterhout 2019¹: 655–658.



FIG.2. Portrait of King Stefan Uroš II Milutin, south wall of the King's church, photo: Jasmina S. Ćirić

ple which contains potent symbols of political power.¹⁰

The external shape of the church reflects its interior structure: the square plan corresponds to the square naos, the blind arches on the upper facades correspond to the four lunettes, and the square base below the dome corresponds to the supporting pendentives, as is common in many Constantinopolitan churches.¹¹ The apse, appears slightly deeper than a semi-circle on the inside, while on the outside it takes the form of a rectangular truncated structure (fig.5). Similarly, the interior semi-circular niches of the prothesis and diaconicon are transformed into angled projections flanking the central apse on the exterior. However, it is important to note that some roof elements have undergone changes from their original construction, as evidenced by the comparison with the model of the church held by King Milutin, which is painted on the south wall inside the church.¹²

Despite the passing of more than 700 years, the King's Church has remained remarkably intact, with only minor alterations made to its original architecture, thus preserving its authenticity and original design.¹³ The building's facade reflects the distinctive style of Palaeologan architecture,¹⁴ which is characterized by a two-zone division. The upper zone features two broad, unadorned arches that outline the interior arched wall construction and enclose a singular elongated bifora. Below the horizontal cornice that separates the two zones, small windows are positioned on the north and south flanks. Towards the west end of the King's Church, the paired small windows in the lower zone have been replaced by a large portal located beneath the elongated bifora. The interior space evokes the Constantinopolitan image of sacred architecture, featuring a nearly square dome rising from pendentives supported by double arches – the outer arches resting on corner pilasters and the inner ones on consoles. Beneath the soaring dome, reminiscent of a baldachin, the entire area of the church is defined, with the painted Pantocrator at its center (fig.6).¹⁵

10 Vojvodić 2016: 271 – 275.

11 For additional information on the use of pendentives in Byzantine architecture, particularly their Constantinopolitan features cf. Ousterhout 2019¹: 205, 206 sq.

12 Regarding the depiction of the church model held by the ktetor cf. Маринковић 2007: 128 – 129.

13 Refer to the collection of articles which discuss the church and its history spanning around 700 years. Maksimović – Vukašinović 2016.

14 For a broad examination of the architecture during the late 13th and early 14th centuries cf. Buchwald 1986: 303 – 316; Krautheimer 1986: 416 – 428; Velenis 1988: 279 – 284; Kopah – Шлупут 1998: 328 – 341; Ousterhout 2000: 241 – 250; Ćurčić 2003: 65 – 84; Ćurčić 2015: 127 – 140; Stevović 2012: 175 – 190; Stevović 2016: 317 – 322; Stevović 2018; Ousterhout 2019²: 75 – 110. Cf. also Lazarević 2021: 79 – 101.

15 For the idea of canopies and translation of the topic within the iconography of the dome of the King's church cf. Бабић 1987: 66, 129; Taft 2006: 27– 52 (with references). Ivanović 2011: 121, 122.

FIG.3, 3A, 3B. The
apse of the church
and the ktetorial
inscription, photo:
BLAGO fund

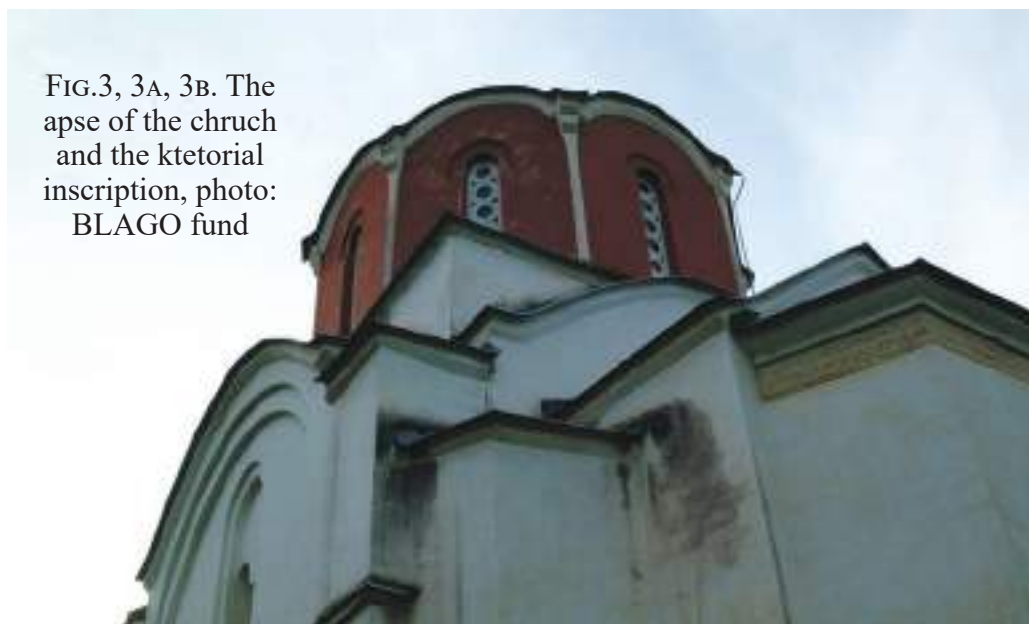




FIG.5. The apse of the King's church of Studenica, photo: BLAGO fund

The plan of the nave of the King's Church bears resemblance to that of the Chora Church (c.1316–1321) and the middle church of Mausoleum of the Palaeologoi in Constantinople,¹⁶ offering a glimpse of the fanciful architectural style of the Palaeologan era. The King's Church, adorned with various ornamental structures and fresco paintings, embodies the Palaeologan decorative program, a characteristic that can also be observed in other churches commissioned by King Milutin prior to the construction of the Chora Church (fig.7).¹⁷

The appropriation of context can be seen in both the architectural and painted structures of the King's Church and the Chora Church. In the Chora Church, the topics dedicated to the Virgin are located in the inner narthex, symbolizing the entrance into the church through which the Logos was born. However, in the King's Church, due to its proportions, the Annunciation, situated on the east wall of the sanctuary as a sort of triumphal arch, serves as an iconic representation of the mystery of the Incarnation (fig.8) and the Nativity is depicted on the south wall.¹⁸ Despite these alterations, the overall impression is that the decorative

16 Ousterhout 2001: 148–150.

17 Бабић 1987: 33; Ousterhout 2000: 241–250.

18 The Annunciation, in particular, is a pivotal moment in the story of the Incarnation, as it marks the point at which the Word (Logos) becomes flesh. Its placement at the triumphal arch of the church emphasizes its importance and connection to the sanctuary and the sacrifice of Christ's body and blood. Kalavrezou 2005: 103–116.



FIG.6 View of the dome and pendentives, King's church in Studenica, photo: BLAGO fund

program of the Chora Church has been skillfully adapted to fit within the smaller confines of the King's Church, resulting in a beautifully crafted "jewel box" of a church. Like the Chora Church, the painted structures within the King's Church represent a sophisticated combination of architectural forms and religious iconography, creating a unique artistic and spiritual atmosphere. The spatial ambience and airiness of the King's Church can be attributed to the refined classicism of contemporary art produced in Constantinople, which is evident in both the architectural structure and painted decoration. In their pursuit to express the ideas of their time through the language of sacred art, the ktetor and architect sought inspiration from the capital city. One of the powerful references can be seen in the southern window inscription in the naos, which is skillfully etched in a courtly manner.

The small pillar of bifora bears the name of the ktetor, positioned above his portrait, while the western side features his given name, **Uroš**, and the northern side is believed to have read "**King**" (fig.10a, 10b). The black color of the letters echoes the crosses in the Virgin's church in Studenica, showcasing a distinct Byzantine visual narrative.¹⁹ The use of etched lettering in the Byzantine style was not only present in the King's church but also in other contemporary churches

¹⁹ These carved black crosses are noted in the architrave line of the west portal between narthex and nave of the Virgin's church of Studenica. Previously we analyzed putting of the pectoral crosses in the Chora church. Cf. Ćirić 2021: 41–51. A study about the crosses carved in this portal is forthcoming.

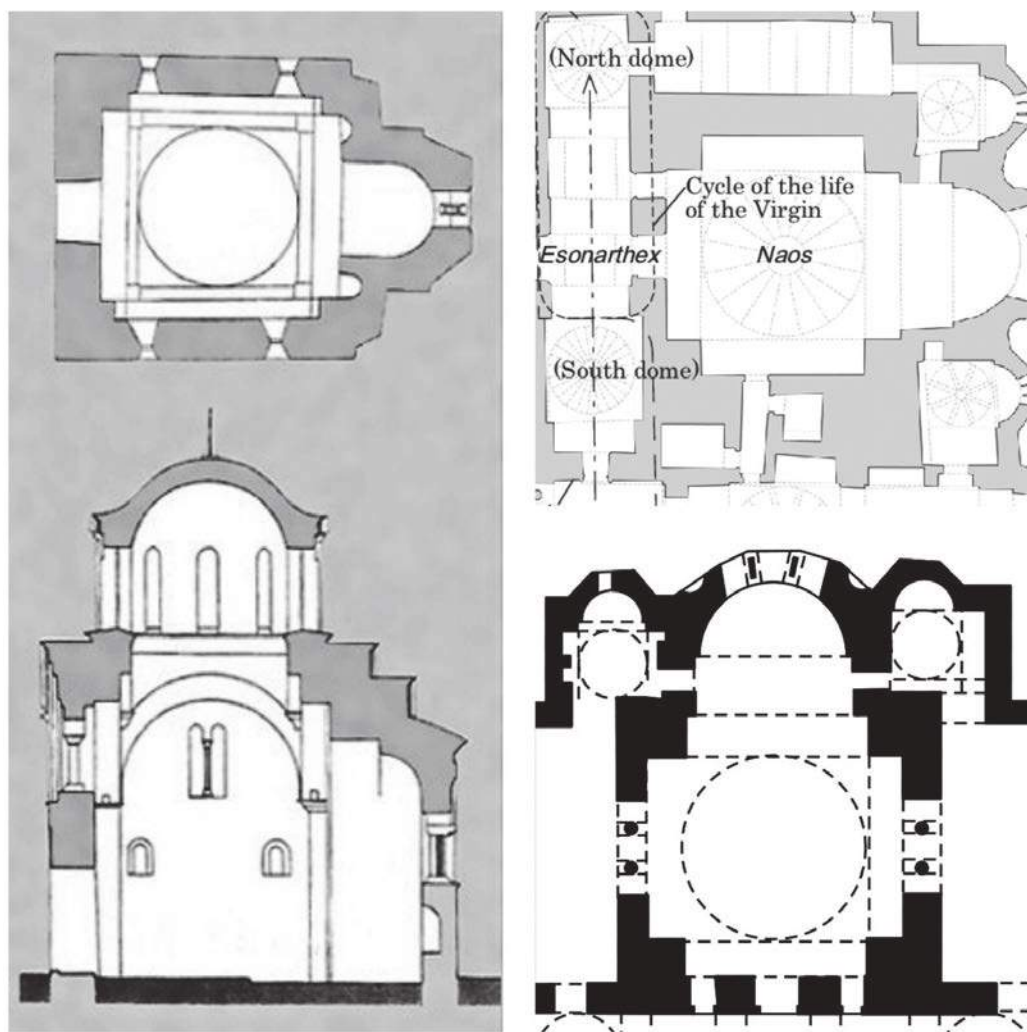


FIG.7. Plan of the King's church and the naos of the Chora church, plans: Jasmina S. Ćirić

such as Staro Nagoričino and Gračanica (fig.11, 12).²⁰

The King's desire to incorporate the Constantinopolitan visual narrative into the design of his churches is demonstrated by the use of etched lettering on the capitals of bifora. By incorporating this tradition, the King showed his contemporaneity with the artistic trends of Constantinople and even innovated and pioneered some architectural features. His attention to detail and artistic innovation further emphasizes his commitment to creating a church that reflected the refined classicism of contemporary art produced in Constantinople.²¹

²⁰ Окуњев 1929: 120; Петровић 1981: 105–114; Бабић 1987: 29.

²¹ About the phenomena of classicism in Byzantine society, identity, and art see: Mathews 2010; Matiello 2018: 9–32.



FIG.8. The Annunciation, King's church of Studenica, photo: BLAGO fund

It was common for ktetors to incorporate their names into the design of their commissioned buildings. In the case of King Milutin's church, the placement of his monograms at the pillar of bifora may have been a deliberate attempt to connect his name and image with the divine light of Christ. Light played a significant role in medieval Christian art and architecture, symbolizing the presence of God and the divine nature of Christ. By incorporating his monograms into the pillars of biforas, King Milutin may have sought to associate himself with the divine light that illuminated the church. This artistic choice reflects a longstanding Christian tradition of using light as a symbol of Christ and his divine presence. For example, the Gospel of John describes Jesus as the "light of the world" (John 8:12), while the Book of Revelation depicts the heavenly city of Jerusalem as shining with the "glory of God, and its radiance was like a most rare jewel" (Rev 21:23). By placing his monograms in this prominent location, King Milutin was likely making a statement about his own power and authority, positioning himself as a figure whose light and influence radiated throughout the church.²² This aligns with the broader artistic and theological trends of the medieval period, in which

²² The use of light in religious symbolism is not new. In fact, the Bible contains several references to the importance of light in conveying the divine presence. In the Book of Psalms, it is written: "The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear?" (Psalm 27:1) Similarly, in the Gospel of John, it is stated: "In him was life, and the life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it." (John 1:4-5).



FIG.9. The Nativity, King's church of Studenica, south wall, thirg register, photo: BLAGO fund

rulers and patrons sought to position themselves as agents of divine power and grace, and to use art and architecture as a means of communicating this message to their viewers.²³

Monograms first appeared in public monumental settings in Constantinople during the 6th century. The late Roman imperial princess Anicia Juliana (461/3–527/9) had a variety of personal monograms carved in the marble piers of the

²³ A similar example of the King being associated with light can be seen on the west facade of St. George Church in Staro Nagoricino, where the King is related to the cryptogram ΦΧΦΠ. On an interpretive basis, it is possible to connect them with the Liturgy of the Pre-Sanctified Gifts, which points to the True Light, the Joyful Light that illuminates every believer who enters the temple and that victory over the enemy will be given to all those who strive. The cryptogram ΦΧΦΠ has been interpreted as a reference to the phrase "Φως Χριστού φαίνει πᾶσι" (Phos Christou phainei pasi), meaning "The Light of Christ shines upon all." Ћирић 2020: 312–313 An extensive study on this brickwork ornament is in preparation.



FIG. 10A, 10 B, The Stylites and inscriptions; Stefan; Uroš; photo: BLAGO fund

church she commissioned in Constantinople, Hagios Polyeuktos; just a decade later, monograms naming the Eastern Roman Emperor and Empress Justinian I and Theodora (r. 527–565) were likewise carved into the architecture of the monumental cathedral Hagia Sophia, specifically the basket capitals atop its columns. Paul the Silentiary in his dedicatory Ekphrasis of Hagia Sophia describes one such monogram: “the carver’s tool has incised one symbol that means many words, for it combines the names of the Empress and Emperor.”²⁴ The Byzantine custom of incorporating monograms into pillars predates the Chora church, as seen in Justinian’s Hagia Sophia, Ephesus, and Justiniana Prima. Other important Byzantine structures, such as the church of the Holy Apostles and the church of St. Mary of Blachernae, also feature monograms in their architecture. Monograms continued to be used in Byzantine architecture throughout the Middle Byzantine period and were often used as a way for patrons to assert their authority and leave their mark on the built environment.²⁵ Capitals with inscribed monograms from the time of Andronikos II are also displayed in the Archaeological Museum of Istanbul. Notably, similar monograms to those found in the museum are also found in the nave of the Chora parekklesion, made of brick or painted and attributed to Theodore Metochites (fig. 13a, 13b, 13c).²⁶

These similarities in structure, style, composition, and inscriptions between King’s church and Chora demonstrate the clear relationship between the two

24 Bardill 2004: 48–49; Mango 1972: 87.

25 Eastmond 2016: 219–235.

26 Бабић 1987: 29 for references cf. footnote 15.



FIG.11. The monogram of King Milutin, the ktetor of the church of St. George in Staro Nagoričino (near Kumanovo, Republic of North Macedonia), capital of the northwest column, photo: Jasmina S. Ćirić

buildings. The practice of placing inscriptions on horizontal cornices at the apse was another Constantinopolitan custom²⁷ that influenced the design of the King's church. Such cornices were not commonly used on the facades of the Serbian churches before Milutin's time, but they were in use in Constantinople as early as the 10th century, as seen at the north church of Constantine Lips.²⁸ This tradition was continued by Byzantine architects in the 14th century, as seen in the south church of Constantine Lips, pareklesion of Pammakaristos and the south chapel of Chora. The horizontal cornice found at the King's church reflects the influence of this tradition on the design of the church.²⁹

The question arises as to whether King Milutin's artistic ambitions went beyond

simply incorporating contemporary art trends from Constantinople into his churches. Did he perhaps employ some of the same artists who were later commissioned by Metochites when he assumed the role of ktetor and reconstructed Chora? Was the Chora church itself a model for King Milutin, serving as a source of inspiration for his own architectural and artistic endeavors? These questions highlight the artistic concerns of the King and his active role as a ktetor in shaping the visual and architectural landscape of his Kingdom.³⁰

27 James 2007: 188–206.

28 For Early Byzantine tradition cf. Connor 1999: 479–527. For additional cases of epigrams, cf. Talbot 1999: 75–90; Drpić 2016: 202–214; Ousterhout 2019¹: 600, 605.

29 Бабић 1987: 21–23. For the cornice of the Constantine Lips church and idea of the apse cf. Ćirić 2023: 77–102.

30 To enhance the legitimacy of his rule, King Milutin employed architectural references to



FIG.12. The monogram of King Milutin in Gračanica, photo: BLAGO fund

Extensive historical evidence suggests that the rebuilding of Chora under Metochites took place after the construction of King's church, Virgin Ljeviška church, and Staro Nagoričino.³¹ This evidence includes detailed accounts from contemporary sources, such as chroniclers and travelers, as well as architectural analysis of the two structures. Furthermore, the timing of the rebuilding of Chora aligns with the period of Metochites' ktetorship, during which he is known to have undertaken several significant building projects in Constantinople.³²

The year 1313 marked a significant turning point for King Milutin, as he began construction on his church, signaling his commitment to the imperial ideas of Constantinople.

It is possible that King Milutin employed the same artists who were later employed by Metochites when he assumed ktetorship and reconstructed Chora.³³ Historical evidence suggests that King Milutin was driven to establish his strong cultural and political identity by replicating and even transcending the magnifi-

Constantinopolitan models in the construction of the King's Church, emphasizing his connection to the Byzantine legacy. This aspiration is also underscored in the *vita* of Milutin written by Archbishop Danilo II, in which Stefan Uroš II Milutin is depicted as an idealized version of Constantine the Great. Through architecture and self-presentation, King Milutin skillfully positioned himself as a formidable and legitimate ruler in the Byzantine tradition. Kazhdan 1987: 196–250; Marjanović Dušanić 2001: 254; Piltz 2011: 176–185.

31 Ousterhout 1982: 11, 33–35; Ousterhout 2019¹: 656. For datation of Staro Nagoričino cf. То-дић 1993: 26–27. For Ljeviška church: Ненадовић 1963: 25; Панић – Бабић 1973: 39; Ћурчић 2005: 23–35; Ћурчић 2010: 644–646; Lidov 2007: 66.

32 Ševčenko 1975: 25, 27, 53, 90–91; Featherstone 2000; Bazzani 2006: 32–52. Метохит 1986: 64–65, 70.

33 Ševčenko 1975: 90–91.

cence of Byzantine architecture. His pursuit to compete with and overcome Constantinopolitan trends was characterized by a marked inclination towards adopting and promoting specific architectural styles, and in some instances, serving as a trailblazer in their use. As a formidable monarch with familial ties in imperial Constantinople, Milutin had the financial resources and access to talented artists to adorn his churches in the manner of imperial splendor.³⁴

The appropriation of the Chora concept, which captures a cosmological moment through spatial and visual experience in architecture, played a significant role in the design and composition of the King's Church. The suspended position of the choros (χορός), between the dome and the ground, marked the center of the quincuncial earthly cosmos, while the image of the ktetor and his wife, Simonis, represented the harmony and order of the cosmos, the matrix of incarnated Logos.³⁵ The Chora concept embodied the idea of the divine imitation and the philanthropic rule of the King, bringing together the earthly and heavenly realms. Overall, *the chora* concept served as a conceptual model for the King's Church in Studenica, expressing ideas of cosmology.³⁶

King Milutin saw himself as a ruler who continued the work begun by his revered ancestor Stefan Nemanja in solidifying the power of the Serbian state.³⁷ It would have been both possible and appropriate for him to employ architects and visual conventions from the capital in order to enhance the cultural prestige of his realm. By adopting elements of the Constantinopolitan style for his little church, placed next to Nemanja's great one, Milutin sought to demonstrate the continuity of the Nemanjić dynasty's connection with Constantinopolitan court. Moreover, by adorning the church in a truly imperial decor, it would be worthy of its large

34 Метохит 1986: 131.

35 On the idea of the symbolism of incarnated Logos in the King's church and iconography of the south wall which testifies about visual transferring of the prayer of the King and Queen for posterity and the birth of the successor (son) who would inherit the throne in Constantinople cf. Ćirić 2020: 86–88.

36 *Chora* (Χώρα) – village or the capital of an island; container, dwellingplace, or keep (*donjon* or fortress) and the name of the monastery came to be reinterpreted in a mystical sense. In the pendant images at the entrance, and throughout the building, Christ is entitled as ἡ χώρα τῶν ζώντων: The Dwelling-place of the Living, a reference to Psalm 116:9, a verse that appears in the funeral liturgy, a reference to our heavenly reward — here a play on the name of the monastery. About the idea of Χώρα / Chora cf. Isar 2006: 59–90.

37 King Milutin's view of St. Joachim and Anna as symbolic doubles of his grandparents, Stefan Nemanja and Ana, was likely rooted in the belief that the holy ancestors of the Nemanjić dynasty were similar to the ancestors of Christ, and thus held a special place in the cultural and religious identity of medieval Serbia. By connecting his family to a divine lineage, Milutin was able to reinforce his claim to the throne and enhance the status of his dynasty. This ideological strategy was common among medieval rulers, who often sought to legitimize their rule by linking their families to religious figures or legends, and demonstrates the complex interplay between religion, politics, and culture in Medieval Serbian Oecumene. Душанић 1997: 148, 151.



FIG. 13A, 13B, 13C. The monogram of Theodore Metochites in Chora church,
photo: Jasmina S. Ćirić

and important neighbor while at the same time doing honor to the founder and to King Milutin himself. This would have served to elevate the prestige of the Serbian Land and its monarch in the eyes of both local and foreign visitors.³⁸

It was previously mentioned that *the Chora* (*Χώρα*) concept means both to occupy a space and to contain something, which means that the content and the con-
38 Cvetković 1995: 251–276.

tainer coincide.³⁹ The point of contact between them is *the zônê* or the space of contact between the womb of the Mother and the body of the Child. In the King's church, *the zônê* is embodied in the south wall, where the content and container manifest the limitless Word visibly. In the middle register of the wall, above the ktetorial composition, the Kiss of St. Joachim and Anna and the Birth of the Virgin Mary are represented. Finally, the idea of conceiving and birth is stressed in the highest register of the south wall where the Birth of Christ appears. Bearing in mind the association of the apse with the Virgin's womb and at the same time the *zônê* between the apse and the south walls, suggests a codified meaning of incarnated Logos and illumination through Him, the vision of the senses: "the Truth will shine, illuminating the eyes of the soul with its own rays."⁴⁰ The depiction of the Annunciation and the Tree of Jesse in the dome, synchronized with the south wall, also contributes to this immersive experience by inviting the viewer to circle with their eyes, connecting the divine lineage of Christ with the holy ancestors of the Nemanjić dynasty.⁴¹ All of these elements come together to create a choral experience for the viewer, immersing them in a world of divine beauty and transcendence. The church itself serves as a symbol of the body of the incarnated logos, just as the Chora church did in Constantinople.⁴² Through the use of art and architecture, King Milutin sought to assure the viewer of his divinity and his chosen nature as the New Constantine.

In conclusion, the King's Church of Studenica serves as a remarkable example of how the Chora concept (*Χώρα*), with its emphasis on immersive experiences and divine imitation, transcends the physical boundaries of Constantinople and finds a new expression in the Serbian Land. Through the interplay of art and architecture, King Milutin created a choral experience that connected the viewer with the divine, ultimately establishing a space that served as a powerful *locus* of divine power and sanctity. As such, the King's Church of Studenica remains a testament to the enduring legacy of *Χώρα* and its transformative power to elevate the human spirit towards the divine.

39 Mondzain 2000: 66.

40 Musurillo 1991: 19–20.

41 Ćurčić 1973: 191–195; Бабић 1987: 187–191; Ćirić 2020: 89–90.

42 Isar 2021: 182, *passim*.

ИЗВАН ЦАРИГРАДА: КОНСТРУИСАЊЕ КОНЦЕПТА ХОРЕ У КРАЉЕВОЈ ЦРКВИ У СТУДЕНИЦИ

У раду се истражује значај концепта хоре у конциповању слике светости цркве Светих Јоакима и Ане у Студеници. Концепт хоре, али истовремено и утицаја храма Христа Хоре, који подразумева прожимање просторног и визуелног искуства у перцепцији архитектуре, по свим приликама долази из Цариграда, чиме краљ Милутин тежи приказивању владарског легитимитета и континуитета не само са својим прецима, већ и са цариградском дворском етикецијом. У тексту су анализирани различити елементи, архитектонски тако и они који припадају зидном сликарству (позиција Благовести, Лоза Јесејева, Пољубац Јоакима и Ане, Рођење Богородичино и Христово Рођење на јужном зиду). Садејство зидног сликарства и архитектонског склопа ствара хорално искуство за посматрача, уосећавањем божанске лепоте и трансценденције.

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