

THE TERM ΤΡΙΣΚΑΤΑΡΑΤΟΣ IN BYZANTINE AND SERBIAN MEDIEVAL LITERATURE

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The starting point of this paper is the account of a council against heretics which was held by the Serbian grand zhupan Stefan Nemanja in his dominions in the late 12th century Serbia. Later, in the first half of the 13th century, Nemanja's son and hagiographer, the first crowned king Stefan Nemanjić utilized a specific technical term "thrice-accursed" (τρισκατάρατος – тръклет) in his account of the council that was convened. Our aim is to present the levels of cultural and literary traditions which were transmitted from various Byzantine literary genres, which stem from the attic oratory as far as the 4th century B.C. (Demosthenes' Oration against Aristogeiton), through the literary works of the rhetor Lucian the Sophist in the second century A.D., and which later entered Byzantine tradition through pseudo-Chrysostomian works, and the liturgical and historiographical texts of authors such as Romanos Melodos, George the Monk, and Constantine Manasses. We aim to present both the development in the meaning of the term thrice-accursed in its long historical path from Demosthenes to Manasses, its shift from ancient pagan to Christian semantics and thus utilization in various genres of Byzantine literature, and finally its influence on the genre of Serbian medieval hagiography, especially in the works of Stefan the First-Crowned and archbishop Danilo II in his Lives of Serbian kings and archbishops.

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Key words: “thrice-accursed”, late antiquity, Byzantine literature, Serbia, orthodoxy, hagiography, heresy.

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research about some characteristic features of the 13th-century Serbian literature is the account about the “Council against the heretics” as the “first-crowned” king Stefan Nemanjić portrayed it. Namely, in the *Life of Stefan Nemanja* by his son Stefan the First-Crowned this episode of Nemanja’s struggle for the Orthodox faith in the lands over which he ruled was designated as a specific image of the founder of the Nemanjić dynasty in which he is presented as a “New Constantine” (Marjanović-Dušanić 1997, 290–293). Thus, the *Life* by the first-crowned king Stefan should be read as a highly engaged narrative in the domain of political ideology and of specific literary features which had to promulgate the author’s pretensions to promote himself as a legitimate ruler and offspring of his holy father. Therefore, our aim in this paper is to try to identify modes and manners of narration utilized by the writer and to attempt to find out to what extent the ruling elite of the Serbian society of the early 13th century was connected with various literary traditions of the Byzantine world. We suggest that these connections were strong, they are rooted in the narrative about the “Council against the heretics” in the *Life of Stefan Nemanja* and that through such application of precise terminology, the author managed to embed into his work a long and profound heritage and tradition through utilization of specific terms. Such a method of the author was in fact a complex technique of display of Serbian awareness of the Byzantine orthodox heritage exactly translated from specific and various works of Byzantine literature from different epochs into the milieu of the narrative which Stefan the First-Crowned created in order to offer a specific message of his own legitimacy to rule over Serbia (Stanković 2016, 92–94). Furthermore, this was a specific message that the Serbian state under the Nemanjić dynasty is in every aspect of its life: spiritually, culturally, and politically on the path of an old and correct tradition, which was shaped through the history of the Byzantine Empire until the first decades of the 13th century. Stefan Nemanja himself was a part of this Byzantine political circle, which he demonstrated among other things through his monastic foundations, closely following the established Constantinopolitan / Komnenian ideological models (Orlov and Repajić 2013; Stanković 2013a, 85–89).

In a relatively short account of a new heresy in the state of Stefan Nemanja the term τρισκατάρατος – “trice-accursed” in its verbatim translation into old Slavonic from Greek as *трьклетая ѡресь* appears three times. Stefan the First-Crowned informs us that one of Nemanja’s orthodox soldiers approached and informed him “that an unpleasant belief to you and a thrice-accursed heresy already enroots in your state”. In his response, Stefan Nemanja convokes a synod presided by the bishop Ephtimios of Ras, but in the account, it is the grand zhupan Stefan Nemanja who assumes a leading role. The entire subsequent oration of Stefan Nemanja about his adherence to the Orthodox faith and his struggle to preserve it in his state and within his people portrays him almost in an ecclesiastical role of a bishop.

“And nowise did I think that he is in my domain, but now I listen that this evil and artful has rooted himself in a short time and that he is inflicting blasphemy upon the Holy Spirit, splitting the undividable Deity, like the mindless Arius used to speak, cutting the consubstantial Trinity, as prophesied by the Holy and God-bearing fathers: “Lord, who has torn your tunic?” saying: “Arius the mindless, who cut the Trinity”. Thus, these mindless follow his teaching, not knowing, wretched, that they shall, since they believed as such, descend with that thrice-accursed to the bottom of Hades.”¹

Concluding his concise account about Nemanja’s “Council” and his zealous reaction against the heretics, who remained nameless concerning their identity – they are rather explicitly connected and compared with the first heresiarch Arius “the thrice-accursed” – Stefan the First-Crowned notes that Nemanja threatened “that the thrice-accursed name should never be confessed or mentioned”. The alleged “Arianism” of the anonymous heretics who appeared in Serbia at the end of the 12th century points more to the classicizing manner of the author’s approach in modeling his narrative and of the image of his father, the Serbian grand zhupan, than to the historically truthful account of the real events which probably took place in the days of Nemanja’s rule.² This then brings us to the conclusion that the

1 Stefan Prvovenčani, *Žitije*, 32, 36. (all translations of Serbian medieval sources into English are my own). On the other hand, throughout the *Life* Stefan the First-Crowned refers to his father as “thrice-blessed” (τρίσμακαρ) monk and a saint. Cf. Idem, 68, 70, 72, 100, 102, 106. Classical philologist Milan Budimir in 1969 provided first remarks on the significance of this Greek term and its presence in Serbian translation in the work of Stephen the First-Crowned, later reprinted in: Budimir 1969, 200.

2 Earlier Byzantine example of literary and doctrinal use of the “Arian argument” in ecclesiastical polemics can be found in the age of Iconoclasm, appearing in theological

author's main preoccupation was actually making a specific image of his father, and thus it is reasonable to approach this narrative in a more scrupulous manner concerning the phrases, terms and literary comparisons which he used in order to shape and present a specific image of the event, which might or might not be a historically truthful account (Todić 2000, 298, 300–301).³ In that sense, the term “trice-accursed” which appears three times and in connection with a proto-heresy like Arianism deserves particular attention, all the more so since it preserves a vast and deep heritage of semantics and meanings within different historical contexts and various literary genres from the Late Antiquity to the Byzantine 12th century.

The term *τρискаτάρατος* is utilized by the ancient orator Demosthenes in his *Oration against Aristogeiton*, and it is the “the only instance of that word in Attic oratory” (Martin 2009, 189). It is a juridical context in which Demosthenes applied the term, directing his accusation against a certain Aristogeiton who utterly breached every norm of law, both secular and divine, of the gods and of the *polis*, and according to Demosthenes, he is, therefore, “unclean” and “trice-accursed”.⁴

The 2nd-century rhetorician Lucian of Samosata further demonstrates the application of the term in pagan Greek literature. As one of the most prolific authors of the age of the Second Sophistic, Lucian utilizes the term *τρискаτάρατος* five times in three works of different literary styles. Together with the work *Philopatris* which some editors are inclined to date in the 10th century and the time of the Byzantine emperor Nikephoros Phokas, a work where our term is present as well and in a peculiar context of designating sophists as “trice-accursed”,⁵ the

writings of the patriarch Nikephoros of Constantinople. See: Nikephoros, *Antirrhetici* I, 285D, 290B.

- 3 Todić argued that the image of Nemanja's “Council against the heretics” will later in the 13th century find its visual impersonation in Nemanjić foundations such as the Sopoćani monastery and in the church of St. Achillius, but with loose historical accuracy, or rather, being shaped in accordance with main ecclesiastical issues of the period. For a historical reconstruction of the account by Stefan the First-Crowned, and detailed argumentation for the historicity of the event, see: Komatina 2016, 165–173. However, it remains an open question why Stefan the First-Crowned avoided naming the heretics as “Bogumils”?
- 4 Demosthenes, *Against Aristogeiton* I, 82. 7–83. 1 (565): “ὁ δὲ ποῖός τις, ὃ ἄνδρες Ἀθηναῖοι, καλοῖτ' ἂν δικαίως ὁ τρισκατάρατος, ὁ κοινὸς ἐχθρὸς, ὁ πᾶσι δυσμενής, ὅτε μῆτε γῆ φέροι καρπὸν μῆτ' ἀποθανόντα δέξαιτο; οὐχ ὁ τοιοῦτος; ἔγωγε νομίζω”. For the authenticity of the oration ascribed to Demosthenes and its content analysed, see: Martin 2009, 182–202.

112 | 5 Lucian, *Philopatris*, 2, 1–7. “τῶν τρισκαταράτων ἐκείνων σοφιστῶν”.

rhetorician from Late Antiquity presents us with yet one more path by which the term “thrice-accursed” made its way into Byzantine literature.⁶ However, it would be useful to note several instances in which Lucian applies the term in his various works and their diverse contexts. Besides the image of a false prophet Alexander of whom we only know through his biography by Lucian⁷ and whom he labeled twice as the one who was τρισκατάρατος,⁸ Lucian mentions a certain tyrant and a king of a peculiar and symbolic name – Megapenthes, and his downward journey to Hades where he finds out that the fate of cobblers may fare better than that of kings. Through the depiction of Megapenthes Lucian managed to present a satirical image of the ephemeral passing of human life and its glories, riches, power and fame – which are all the attributes towards which Megapenthes strived and which his successors shall inherit instead, prospects which Megapenthes himself managed to obtain by means of various transgressions and sins.⁹ Both the descent of

6 In a philological manual composed by Julius Pollux in the second century, a morphological analysis of the term is given in the small chapter entitled *περὶ τοῦ συγχαίρειν* (Julius Pollux, *Onomasticon*, 275, 27–276, 15). We read that the word τρισκατάρατος derives from such terms, which are opposite to happiness, listing them as follows: “ἐπαρᾶσθαι, κατᾶρασθαι καὶ ἐπὶ τούτου δὲ τὸ κατεύχεσθαι, καὶ ἐπεύχεσθαι τάττεται. καὶ τὰ ὀνόματα, ἐπάρατος, κατάρατος, τρισκατάρατος.” We encounter a certain philological recapitulation of the term, with its morphological evaluation in a century when writers such as Lucian have highlighted its significance in their own literary works, utilizing the term and attaching to it multifaceted meanings in various contexts.

7 What is known about the false prophet Alexander is almost entirely based upon Lucian’s account. It appears that Alexander was presenting himself as a priest of Asclepius developing his own reputation as a prophet, an activity from which a special cult appeared. His religious activity is dated between the years 150–170 when he managed to spread his cult beyond the borders of Paphlagonia into Bithynia and Pontus, Galatia, Cilicia and Thrace, and as far as Rome.

8 Lucian, *False Prophet*, 2, 1–8. “I blush for both of us, I confess, both for you and for myself – for you because you want a man thrice-accursed perpetuated in memory and in writing (ἀξιούντος μνήμη καὶ γραφῆ παραδοθῆναι ἄνδρα τρισκατάρατον), and for myself because I am devoting my energy to such an end, to the exploits of a man who does not deserve to have polite people read about him [...]” (All translations of Lucian in this paper are by A. M. Harmon from the Loeb series, other translations from Greek if not explicitly noted, are my own)

9 Cf. Lucian, *The Downward Journey*, 4, 1–23 et passim. Idem, 26, 4 et passim: “All that the thrice-accursed scoundrel did while he was a private citizen I intend to pass over; but when he leagued himself with the boldest men and had got together a bodyguard, and so had set himself over the city and had become tyrant, he not only put to death more than ten thousand people without a hearing but confiscated their properties in each case [...]”

Megapenthes to Hades and the vanity and transience of power and worldly glory are contexts in which the “thrice-accursed” term will later be utilized in both Byzantine and Serbian medieval literature and Christianized literature in a broader sense. It is a striking parallel with the image of the heretics from the account of Stefan the First-Crowned, which “shall descend with that thrice accursed to the bottom of Hades”.

This public aspect of the tyrant’s deeds, the ungodly (ἀσεβής) manner of his rule is obviously highlighted and put forward in the accusations, which is a context which will be the most dominant in the manner of utilization of the term “thrice-accursed” in further literary examples, not only in Lucian, but also in the Christian context of the true faith and heretical deviations of the orthodox faith towards which it will later shift its meaning, already in the sixth century. It is significant to stress that although the importance of the term in various literary contexts in which it appears is in fact only a part of a terminology applied in these literary works, among which terms of both negative and positive connotation such as ἀσεβής, μιαιρός, σωφοσύνη are often used, a connotation which is not far from the later Christianized rhetoric of church fathers and hagiographers. We may in fact state that an entire group of keywords of the Attic, late antique vocabulary is being borrowed and transformed into a new Christian vocabulary, serving the purposes of the new intellectual elites of the Christianized Empire, and its subordinate neighboring countries, such as Serbia in the 13th century.

The idea of *res publica* in which our term appears from Demosthenes and the accusations against Aristogeiton and the depiction of a corrupt tyrant Megapenthes is further utilized in a specific milieu which Lucian additionally develops in the dialogue entitled *The Dead Come to Life, or the Fisherman*, which is again a work, regarding its content, different from the biography of Alexander the false prophet and yet more similar to the dialogue *The Downward Journey*. It is a dialogue in which Lucian establishes an image of his relationship with ancient philosophers such as Diogenes, Plato, Pythagoras – his own alias in this dialogue being “thrice-accursed frankness”, through the words of Demosthenes, (ὁ τρισκατάρατος οὐτοσι παρρησιαδής),¹⁰ and his ridicule of their unworthy successors – philosophers of his own time, which is clearly indicated by the words of caution of the

10 “What sort of men we were in life, Philosophy, you know right well, and I need not discuss that point at all; for who is not aware how much beauty was brought into life by Pythagoras here, Plato, Aristotle, Chrysippus and the others, to say nothing of myself?

impersonation of Philosophy directed towards the ancient philosophers: “Careful! Perhaps his abuse was not directed against Philosophy, but against impostors who do much that is vile in our name”.¹¹

As can be seen in this short summary, the use of the term “thrice-accursed” in Lucian’s literary heritage can be defined as diverse both in the context of various literary genres of his works, and in relation with this, the narrative perspective of the word is applied in several different meanings. Among these, the last example is the reference to the author himself as “thrice-accursed” which is specifically linked to the satirical purpose of his work, and in a wider outlook, this particular instance of author’s self-defining as “thrice-accursed” is a case entirely unique in the history of usage of the term in the later literature.

In the age of the Byzantine emperor Justinian I and with Christian polemics against pagan education, the term becomes a technical one, devised to slander and disregard Hellenic tradition from which it originally appeared (Lee 2000, 255; Macrides 2009, 131 et passim). In such a context church poet Romanos Melodos applies the term in his *kontakion* on the *Pentecost*, where the main motif is the establishment of a new era in the development of God’s *oikonomia* of salvation of the humankind by the descent of the Holy Spirit on the Apostles.

“Surely then wasn’t it granted to them to prevail over all of the languages which they themselves speak? And why do those who speak foolishly from without, love to engage in contentiousness? Why do the Hellenes distend and buzz? Why do they exalt themselves in respect of the thrice-accursed Aratos? Why do they go astray with Plato? Why do they love Demosthenes who is weak? Why don’t they perceive Homer’s work as a faint dream? Why do they babble about Pythagoras, who was righteously put to silence? Why do they not run towards the faithful to whom all Holy Spirit has revealed itself?”¹²

I shall proceed to speak of the insults, which, in spite of our merit, this thrice accursed Frankness has dealt us.” Lucian, *The Dead*, 25, 1 –8 et passim.)

11 Cf. Lucian, *The Dead*, 15, 19–21.

12 Romanos Melodos, *Cantica Genuina*, 49. 17, 1–10: Οὐκοῦν ἐδόθη αὐτοῖς πάντων περιγενέσθαι δι’ ὧν λαλοῦσι γλωσσῶν; Καὶ τί φιλονεικοῦσιν οἱ ἔξω ληροῦντες; Τί φυσῶσι καὶ βομβεῦουσιν οἱ Ἕλληνες; Τί φαντάζονται πρὸς Ἄρατον τὸν τρισκατάρατον; Τί πλανῶνται πρὸς Πλάτωνα; Τί Δημοσθένην στέργουσι τὸν ἀσθενῆ; Τί μὴ νοοῦσιν Ὅμηρον ὄνειρον ἀργόν; Τί Πυθαγόραν θρυλλοῦσι τὸν δικαίως φιμωθέντα; Τί δὲ μὴ προστρέχουσι πιστεύοντες οἷς ἐνεφανίσθη τὸ πανάγιον πνεῦμα;

An explicit severance with the old classical heritage is a strong motif expressed in this kontakion. Romanos included three famous learned men of Antiquity, Homer, poet Aratos of Soli and the orator Demosthenes into his list of proscribed ancient philosophers and learned men. So we might think that he could have transmitted the term τρισκατάρατος from the oration *Against Aristogeiton* while designating Aratos as “thrice-accursed” most probably because of the possibility for an adequate word play with the name and the term (“πρὸς Ἄρατον τὸν τρισκατάρατον”), but even more important, since Apostle Paul cited (in order to slander?) Aratos in his *Address to the Athenians* in the Areopagus – the cradle of Hellenic learning – both Paul and Aratos were natives of Cilicia.¹³ Later, due to Apostle Paul’s quotation of Aratos, Eusebios and Clement of Alexandria also utilized the same quotation for their own theological argumentation, certainly due to Paul’s apostolic authority. However, in the age when the Platonic Academia in Athens was closed, it was Romanos Melodos who broke with such a tradition of utilizing classical knowledge in Christian discourse labeling Aratos as “thrice-accursed” and thus ousting him from possible future citing among Christian authors. Such polemic with the classical Hellenic tradition presents a well-known Christian approach and relationship with the heritage of classical antiquity that entered church poetry as well as other genres of Christian literature. Disapproval of Demosthenes, in this specific example, presents a particularly interesting case from the viewpoint of our research on the utilization of the term “thrice-accursed”, since its historical existence, as evidenced by the sources, begins with the written oration attributed to Demosthenes. One notices Romanos’ rhetorical play with the phrases he used to transmit a specific message in his kontakion and the way the term “thrice-accursed” was utilized in that sense, that it was for the first time applied in a complex literary form.¹⁴ Thus it can be said that Romanos Melodos managed to appropriate the term for the benefices of Christian polemic with the Hellenic thought in order to present a new outlook and ideology in the 6th cen-

13 Cf. Possanza 2012, 83; Lamb 1848, 7 was the first one to notice the possibility of Apostle Paul quoting from Aratos’ *Phaenomena* in his *Address to the Athenians* as Apostle Luke presented it in Acts 17, 28: “For in him we live and move and have our being. As some of your own poets have said, ‘We are his offspring.’” Cf. Aratus, *Phaenomena*, 380, 1–5: “Ἐκ Διὸς ἀρχώμεσθα [...] πάντα δὲ Διὸς κεκρήμεθα πάντες. τοῦ γὰρ καὶ γένος εἰμέν’”

14 “[...] πρὸς Ἄρατον τὸν τρισκατάρατον, πλανῶνται πρὸς Πλάτωνα, Δημοσθένην ... τὸν ἀσθενή, Ὀμηρον ὄνειρον.”

tury, thus shaping a new meaning of the expression and directing it towards a completely new utilization in the upcoming centuries in the works of Byzantine historians, even if his *kontakia* were surpassed in the 7th century by *kanons* such as the ones composed by Andrew of Crete (Kazhdan 1999, 46–52, 54).

However, in the context of textual transmission and diffusion of the term “thrice-accursed” from the Greek-speaking world to the old Slavic literature, one other work is of importance for our research. Namely, sermon *De pseudoprophetis* ascribed to John Chrysostom, but in fact a pseudo-Chrysostomian work from the 7th century, which emerged in the Bulgarian translation in the 10th and later emerges in the Serbian Athonite monastery of Hilandar in the 13th century in the so-called *Zlatostruy* (*Chrysorrhoeas*) collections (Dimitrova 2014, 23–24; Whealey 1999; Thomson 1982, 10, 45–48).¹⁵ Sermon *De pseudoprophetis* brings the term “thrice-accursed” in context designated to indicate heresy versus Orthodox Christian doctrine and thus it is of importance for a proper understanding of the account by Stefan the First-Crowned since it obviously fits into the specific milieu of the narrative.¹⁶

In the pseudo-Chrysostomian *De pseudoprophetis*, the term τρισκατάρατος acquires its main medieval meaning, in which it will be mostly used in various literary genres throughout later Byzantine literature. This sermon marks an even stronger break with the multifaceted meanings it had had previously, in the Attic and late antique literary tradition, even with the context in which it was used in the *kontakion* of Romanos Melodos. From the pseudo-Chrysostomian sermon on false prophets, although we should bear in mind the similar but non-Christian context

15 Two copies of the *Zlatostruy* collection at the Hilandar monastery are preserved under the signatures: Hilandar 386 (last quarter of the 13th cent.), and Hilandar 382 (end of the 13th cent.). Cf. Bogdanović 1978, 150–151, 152. See also Miltenov 2013, *passim*, where material of Serbian provenance in the reconstruction of the *Zlatostruy* has a significant place.

16 Additional path through which our term could have entered the Serbian literary production of the 13th century may as well be the *Life of Constantine the Philosopher* where the utilization of the term is attested once in regard to his and his brother Methodios’ mission among the Moravian Slavs, at which time they were faced with a strong opposition and resistance by the Frankish clergy of the Roman church. This was explained by the envy of the “thrice accursed devil”, who, having entered into *his vessels*, stirred up the revolt against Greek missionaries. Cf. *Żywoty*, K XV, 69, n. 340. The *Life of Constantine* was composed probably by his brother Methodios in the 9th century, drawing heavily on Greek sources, see: ODB I, 507 (P.A. Hollingsworth) and Komatina 2014, 193; Dvornik 1956, 81–92.

of the utilization of the term in Lucian's *Alexander the false prophet*, the term is specifically used in regard to heresies, or rather as a tool to designate and mould an image of heresiarchs, beginning from Symon the Magician, Mani, Arius, and later on iconoclast emperor Leo III and patriarch John the Grammarian. However, prophet Muhammad and the Turks in general in late Byzantium were referred as "thrice-accursed" as well.

The sermon on false prophets by Pseudo-John Chrysostom can be dated as the earliest source in which the term "thrice-accursed" appears in order to indicate heresy as contrary to true Christian doctrine. The sermon develops an idea of heresies and heresiarchs appearing in Church, as predicted by the Apostles. The author heavily relies on quotations from Holy Scriptures, especially on the epistles of Peter, Paul and John the Theologian, thus shaping a specific narrative. In this narrative, the author, who most probably wrote in the first half of the 7th century (Whealey 1999), at a time heavily burdened by the Monothelete controversy, calls the first heretic, Symon the Magician, whom Apostle Peter managed to overthrow and defeat his teaching, "thrice-accursed".

What the author of this sermon particularly insists upon, in general, but also in the example of the encounter of Apostle Peter with Symon the Magician in Rome, is Peter's readiness to confront the false prophet and to strive for the true faith. This is exactly the same motif in the story about the heresy which appeared in the Serbian state of the grand zhupan Stefan Nemanja, as Stefan the First-Crowned presented the account, almost fulfilling the call of the anonymous author of the sermon for imitating (μίμησις) of the deeds of Apostle Peter in the presentation of his father's struggle for the true faith, at least on the literary level. While on the other hand, in the context of the literary method of Stefan the First-Crowned, we could possibly assume his imitation of Pseudo John Chrysostom and his vocabulary.¹⁷

17 *Pseudoprophetis*, 559. 19–25: "Μιμήσασθε τὸν μακάριον ἀπόστολον Πέτρον, πῶς ἐν τῇ Ῥώμῃ τοῦ τρισκατάρατου Σίμωνος βλασφημοῦντος, καὶ λέγοντος ἑαυτὸν εἶναι τὴν δύναμιν τοῦ Θεοῦ, οὔτε κὰν πρὸς ὥραν ἐσιώπησεν, ἢ ἀνεβάλλετο, ἀλλ' ἐλέγξας, καὶ ψεύστην αὐτὸν ἀποδείξας, καὶ ληστήν καὶ ἀντίθεον, ρίψας αὐτὸν τῇ ἀπωλείᾳ παρέδωκεν." The path of reception of the term into Serbian literature could be searched for amongst manuscripts of Russian origins in Mount Athos as well, both in the old Russian monastery of Rusik and in the Hilandar monastery where the oldest Slavic manuscripts are of Russian origins and date from the 12th century. The term "thrice-accursed" is attested in one of the most significant Russian medieval chronicles: *The Tale of Bygone Years*

The significance of this sermon on false prophets for our topic is additionally valued since two other most prominent bearers of the τρισκατάρατος title in later Byzantine historiography, and both Bulgarian and Serbian apologetic literature and hagiography are Mani and Arius. Both are placed in context of the sermon, where Symon the Magician is designated as the “thrice-accursed” originator of every heresy, thus standing at the beginning of a line of heretics which Pseudo John Chrysostom lists as appearing in later church history, explicitly naming: Markion, Valens, Mani, Julian the Apostate, Arius, Nestorius.¹⁸

Both Mani and Arius are significant for the analysis of the passage on the “Council against heretics” in 13th century Serbia. Historical background suggests that the group was indeed of Manichaean dualist origin. Stefan the First-Crowned applied the image of a perpetual heretic – heresiarch Arius (Wiles 1996, 53–54) in his narrative in order to construct not so much a true historical image of the council itself, but an image of his father – the grand zhupan, as a ruler who was similar to Constantine the Great in specific key elements, and according to the spiritual ideal as promulgated in the sermon *De pseudoprophetis*.

If we turn our attention to the manner in which Stefan the First-Crowned uses the term “thrice-accursed” in his account, we should note again that it was the decision of the Council that “the thrice-accursed name should never be confessed or mentioned.” We have seen in the cases of Romanos Melodos and Pseudo-John Chrysostom that both attach the term to a specific name, Melodos to the ancient Greek poet and astronomer Aratos, and the author of *De pseudoprophetis* to Symon the Magician. Later Byzantine chronicles, such as the *Concise Chronicle* of George the Monk, who wrote after 870 (Treadgold 2013, 114 et passim), also attach the term to certain personalities from the history of antichristian persecutions, such as Emperor Nero, and more significantly, to heretics Arius and Mani. Moreover, we believe that in such a context the application of the term in the *Life of Stefan Nemanja* should be searched for. George the Monk writes:

“(During the reign of Aurelian) the abominable and thrice accursed Mani appeared, demonically imitating Christ and the Holy Spirit, on which account he was bringing with him twelve disciples like Christ, and collecting every evil

(*Povest' vremennykh let*) from the early 12th century, one of its Byzantine sources being the *Chronicle* of George the Monk. See in: Sreznevsky 1912, 1017.

18 *Pseudoprophetis*, 560, 7–20. On Markion and Mani cf. Runciman 1982⁵, 8–18.

from all the heresies, he entered the land of the Romans from Persia, due to God's dispensation."¹⁹

George the Monk also left an account of the First ecumenical council convened by Emperor Constantine. In this account, George the Monk gives a brief theological recapitulation of Arius' heretical doctrine, with a convenient short introduction "such were the doctrines of this sacrilegious and thrice-accursed."²⁰

George the Monk, Suida, Constantine VII, George Kedrenos and Joel the Chronographer all share the same quotation on Mani as a "thrice-accursed" false prophet, or rather borrow from each other, transmitting this idea in their works through the course of four centuries. Joseph Genesios seems to utilize the term in a different context and story, while Kedrenos also uses it in different contexts at least one more time but again transmitting the content borrowed from George the Monk, and once more concerning Arius, again borrowing from George the Monk, who also mentions Arius as "thrice-accursed". John Zonaras utilizes the term again in connection with Mani, but it seems not to be dependent of the narration of George the Monk (Treadgold 2013, 338, n. 5).²¹

Thus, the *Concise Chronicle* of George the Monk stands at the basis of this middle Byzantine tradition, which, however, remains in connection with the older one as expressed in Pseudo-John Chrysostom and can be credited for later paraphrases or direct quotations of parts of his history. Since George the Monk utilized a vast and diverse material of older histories, hagiographies, and sayings of the holy fathers, it is possible to suppose that the term τρισκατάρατος entered his work via one or several of these now lost works, if not from Pseudo-John Chrysostom.

Utilization of the term "thrice-accursed" among the Byzantine authors does not limit itself to George the Monk and his later copyists. Joseph Genesios

19 George the Monk, *Chronicle*, 467, 20–468,5: "[...] ἐφ' οὗ Μάνης ὁ μιὰρὸς καὶ τρισκατάρατος ἀνεφύη Χριστὸν ἑαυτὸν καὶ πνεῦμα ἅγιον ὁ δαιμονιώδης μορφαζόμενος. διὸ καὶ μαθητὰς ἰβ' ὡς ἂν ὁ Χριστὸς ἐπαγόμενος καὶ ἐκ πάσης αἰρέσεως εἶ τι κακὸν ἐρανισάμενος ἐκ Περσίδος εἰς τὴν Ῥωμαίων γῆν κατὰ θεοῦ συγχώρησιν εἰσέφρησεν." Compare with: *Suidae*, 147, 1–5 where the anonymous author copies verbatim the passage from George the Monk.

20 George the Monk, *Chronicle*, 504, 21–22: "ἦν δὲ τὰ δόγματα τοῦ ἀσεβοῦς καὶ τρισκατάρατου ταῦτα." Cf. George Kedrenos, *Synopsis historion*, 1. 501, 8–9. who follows the exact words of George the Monk.

21 *Excerpta Historica*, 1. 141, 2–1. 141, 5 noting "Ἐκ τῆς χρονικῆς ἱστορίας Γεωργίου μοναχοῦ in chapter περὶ ἀρετῆς καὶ κακίας;" George Kedrenos, *Synopsis historion*, 1. 455, 10–1. 455, 15; John Zonaras, *Epitome*, 3.157,25–3.158; Joel, *Chronographia*, 34, 1–2.

and Constantine Manasses used the term to describe iconoclast patriarchs and emperors,²² thus expanding the range of influence of the term among the Byzantine readership and obviously influencing Slavic authors, such as the compilers of the Synodicon of Boril, or the writers of the Slavic *Life of Constantine – Cyril* which all utilize the term “thrice-accursed” in their own desired contexts.²³

However, beside such strict theological and ecclesiastical context of the application of the term in Byzantine literature, and in the *Life of Stefan Nemanja by Stefan the First-Crowned*, there exists a more secular notion of its utilization in later Serbian hagiography, in connection to political relations of the Serbian kings with neighboring nations in the 14th century. Namely, in the *Life of king Stefan Milutin* written by the archbishop of the Serbian church – Danilo II, the term “thrice-accursed” appears several times, but now in a significantly different context, in order to politically and ideologically slander the newly arisen enemies of both Byzantium and Serbia – the Turks, and Bulgarians as well. Being a son in law of the Byzantine emperor Andronikos II Palaiologos from 1299, Milutin entered into close relations with Byzantium (Stanković 2012, 91–132). According to archbishop Danilo II, it was the Byzantine emperor who by God’s intervention received a thought, to ask for the Serbian king’s military aid against the Turks who were at that time raiding Byzantine lands: “After a short time a meek and a sacred thought came to the heart of this holy and ecumenical emperor, lord Andronikos. For it was God who inspired his mind with a thought to proclaim such imperial secret to this pious and Christ-loving king (Stefan) Uroš, seeing how that small remnant of the aforementioned thrice-accursed heresy, I mean the unclean Persians, are committing great malice and meanness towards his state.”²⁴ In this paragraph, possible parallels can be made with the account about the “thrice-accursed” Mani

22 Genesisius, *On the Reigns*, 4. 58, 27–59, 35: “[...]εικονιστής ἐκ νεότητος ὁ τρισκατάρατος καθεστῶς καὶ μονῆς τῶν ἀθλοφόρων Σεργίου καὶ Βάκχου τῆς βασιλεῦσιν ἀφωρισμένης προβάθμιος”. Constantine Manasses, *Chronicle*, 179, 4182–180, 4191 iconoclast Leo III as a thrice-accursed emperor (“τρισκατάρατος οὗτος αὐτάναξ Λέων”).

23 *Borilov sinodik*, 151, 155 where a “thrice-accursed and god hated heresy of the Bogomils”, and “the thrice-accursed Bogomil” are anathematized; Mošin 1970, 278, 301, 319, 328, 337. Bulgarian emperor Boril summoned a council of the Bulgarian church against the Bogomils in 1211. See: Runciman 1982⁵, 95.

24 Arhiepiskop Danilo, *Životi kraljeva*, 146. Compare with George the Monk’s reference to prophet Mohammad as “thrice-unhappy” and “thrice-accursed implacable enemy of God and men”. George the Monk, *Chronicle*. II, 703, 5–704, 14. “ὁ δὲ τρισάθλιος καὶ τρισκατάρατος καὶ τοῦ θεοῦ καὶ τῶν ἀνθρώπων ἄσπονδος ἐχθρός.” Cf. also Kedrenos, for the same passage: George Kedrenos, *Synopsis historion*, 742, 22–23.

who entered the state of the Romans from Persia, given by George the Monk. In designating the Turks as Persians, Serbian author applies the term in a familiar manner and accordance with the previously established Byzantine tradition that was vested into dogmatic polemics against Manichaeans and Muslims as well. In yet another account of the archbishop Danilo II a certain Bulgarian ruler envying upon the patrimonies of the Serbian king, collected an army against “this Christ-loving: He collected the thrice-accursed heresy of the Tatar nation and his soldiers, and suddenly entered with his army fell upon the state of this pious king, as far as the place called Hvosno.”²⁵

Hagiographical mode of narration that Danilo II utilized in his *Lives of the Serbian kings and archbishops* corresponds largely with the modes of Byzantine court rhetoric. In particular, the *Life* of King Stefan Milutin, which assumes a central place in the entire volume particularly, has strong notions of author’s close compliance with the rhetorical instructions by Menander the Rhetorician regarding the issue of promulgating a *basilikos logos* (Radošević 1991, 245–246).²⁶ Thus, the application of the “thrice-accursed” term in his narrative points not only to a continuation of a specific literary tradition founded probably by Stefan the First-Crowned, but also reveals its own high dependence on Byzantine rhetoric in its various elements and utilizes the term in Serbian cultural background in a new and original manner.

The Greek term *τρискаτάρατος* and its various and wealthy heritage of utilization from the Attic oratory in the time of Demosthenes, through the 2nd century sophists who used it in various contexts and literary genres, to the time when it was established in the middle Byzantine period as a technical term of Byzantine churchmen and historians, presents a tool for designating, or rather, reprimanding of heretical doctrines and heresiarchs such as Symon the Magician, Mani and Arius. The exact path of transmission of the term “thrice-accursed” into Serbian medieval literature is not quite clear. But this vast Byzantine heritage which existed by the time when Stefan the First-Crowned wrote the *Life* of his father, was vested in both doctrinal and literary tradition, and as such not only made its way into

25 Arhiepiskop Danilo, *Životi kraljeva*, 117. George the Monk, *Chronicle*. II, 703, 5–704, 14. “ὁ δὲ τρισάθλιος καὶ τρισκατάρατος καὶ τοῦ θεοῦ καὶ τῶν ἀνθρώπων ἄσπονδος ἐχθρός.” Cf. also Kedrenos for the same passage: George Kedrenos, *Synopsis historion*, 742, 22–23. (Reference to prophet Muhammad)

26 For the making and composition of the *Lives of the Serbian Kings and Archbishops* see: Gordon McDaniel 1991.

Serbian literature, but was probably understood with its potential of transmitting, underlying and stressing of a message intended to be put forward. Such was the story about the “Council against the heretics” in Serbia during the reign of grand zhupan Stefan Nemanja. The “thrice-accursed” term in its Slavic translation made its way as a specific word which could underline key messages of the author, and in this specific instance, it was Stefan Nemanja’s resemblance with Constantine the Great and with his heroic efforts in his struggle for the true Orthodox faith, in which Arius was a major heretical figure, most prominent among all the heretics, and designating the heresy, most probably of a dualist Manichaean provenance, and applying to it the term “thrice-accursed”, in a literary and narrative level, thus placing it in a long line and tradition of both Byzantine orthodox doctrines and literary legacies.

The enormous influence of Byzantine culture and politics on 13th century Serbia is a well known and established fact. However, the impact which the renewal of Byzantine power on the Balkans in the time of the Komneni dynasty had on Serbia, both in political and cultural context, is only now being reevaluated in contemporary Serbian historiography with significant results provided with completely new interpretations of these multifaceted Byzantine-Serbian connections and largely based on insight into contemporary Byzantine narrative sources (Stanković 2013a, Stanković 2016). Multifaceted connections of the new Serbian dynasty with Constantinople, established during the rule of grand zhupan Stefan Nemanja and later deepened by his successors, one of whom was a king – Stefan the First-Crowned, and another an archbishop of the newly established Serbian autocephalous church – Sava Nemanjić, both providing literary heritage important for our topic, might shed new light on understanding what were previously regarded as strictly national issues of Serbian medieval history. Certainly among most significant arguments for this viewpoint is the fact, too often underestimated in Serbian historiography, that it was the Byzantine emperor Manuel Komnenos who reached out to Stefan Nemanja as one among several contemporary Serbian zhupans, making him directly subordinate to and part of the Komnenian imperial household by bestowing him with some “imperial dignity” and an imperial domain.²⁷ This was a relationship that was later secured by a dynastic marriage of

27 Stefan Prvovenčani, *Žitije*, 20. Cf. Stanković 2013b, 348; Maksimović 2008, 164–165. It will take a century in order for another member of the Nemanjić dynasty – king Milutin, to become a son in law of the Byzantine emperor, in 1299.

Nemanja's middle son Stefan with the Byzantine princess Eudocia, the daughter of the later emperor Alexios III Angelos, which was even more reaffirmed by the title of *sebastokrator* that was given to the future successor of the grand *zhupan*, the future first crowned king Stefan. An indirect affirmation of these relations became obvious when grand *zhupan* Stefan Nemanja bypassed his eldest son Vukan and designated the son in law of the Byzantine emperor Alexios III – *sebastokrator* Stefan Nemanjić as his successor. The Nemanjić themselves supplemented all these evidence. Stefan the First-Crowned in his charter for his father's monastic foundation on Athos, the Hilandar monastery, mentions becoming a son in law of the Byzantine emperor Alexios III.²⁸

Such tight political and ideological relations and ties of the Serbian ruling elites of the late 12th and early 13th century with the Byzantine court of the last Komneni and the Angeloi had its obvious reflection in Serbian literary production that was produced again in the circles of the same Serbian ruling elite of the early Nemanjić dynasty. *Lives* of Stefan Nemanja by his two sons, the archbishop Sava, and the first crowned king Stefan Nemanjić carry in many ways specific political or ecclesiastical messages designed to establish both the new dynasty and its main achievements, Serbian kingdom and the autonomous Serbian church. Thus connecting with the classical tradition through appropriate terminology utilized to display significant messages, Stefan Nemanjić additionally displayed both Serbian awareness of Byzantine literary traditions and its heritage in Christian polemics and ideology which was shaping its first ideas in the early 13th century Serbia, and later developed in the 14th century as the Serbian political influence in the Balkans, among the states of Byzantium and Bulgaria rose to the level of empire. On its path, the terminology applied on the specific genre of Serbian hagiography, *Lives of the Serbian archbishops and kings* displayed a complex and Byzantine-influenced rhetoric of narratives, where the term "thrice-accursed" continued its life in a new mode of utilization, for new requirements of the developed Serbian dynastic ideology of king Milutin and the archbishop Danilo II.

28 Stefan Prvovenčani, Hilandarska povelja, 6,7: [...] he left me, his in Christ given child, on his throne and in his Christ given state, me, his beloved son, Stefan the grand *zhupan* and *sebastokrator*, son in law of the God appointed kir Alexios, emperor of the Greeks.

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Rezime**Termin *τρισκατάρτος* u vizantijskoj i srpskoj srednjovekovnoj književnosti**

Polazište ovog rada je izveštaj o saboru protiv jeretika održanog u Srbiji poznog 12. veka pod velikim županom Stefanom Nemanjom. Kasnije, u prvoj polovini 13. veka, Nemanjin sin i životopisac Stefan Prvovenčani upotrebio je specifičan tehnički termin *triklet* (*τρισκατάρτος* – *трьклет*) u svom izveštaju o održanom saboru. Naš cilj je da predstavimo nivoe kulturne i književne tradicije koje su prenošene kroz različite žanrove vizantijske književnosti, a koje potiču još od atičkog besedništva 4. veka pre Hrista (Demostenova Beseda protiv Aristogitona), i radova retora Lukijana Sofiste u 2. veku posle Hrista odakle ulaze u vizantijsku tradiciju kroz pseudo zlatoustova dela i liturgijske i historiografske tekstove autora poput Romana Meloda, Georgija Monaha i Konstantina Manasesa. Nameravamo da predstavimo kako razvoj značenja termina *triklet* u njegovom dugačkom istorijskom trajanju od Demostena do Manasesa, tako i promenu njegovog specifičnog značenja od paganskog termina antike i pozne antike u hristijanizovani polemički termin i njegovu upotrebu u isključivo takvom kontekstu u vizantijskoj književnosti. I konačno, da ispitamo njegov uticaj na srpska srednjovekovna žitija, naročito ona od Stefana Prvovenčanog i arhiepiskopa Danila II u Životima kraljeva i arhiepiskopa srpskih.

Ključne reči: trikleta jeres, vizantijska književnost, Srbija, žitija svetih, pravoslavlje, pozna antika.

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