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# **The Medieval Serbian Chancery: Challenge of Digital Diplomatics**

**Digital Diplomatics, Naples 2011**



# New Trends in Diplomatics

**Digital presentation of diplomatic material**

**Reassessment of the process of document-making (the chancery issue)**

# State of Serbian Diplomatics

**Preserved documents begin with late 12th century**

**600 items from medieval Serbia proper**

**Over 80 different authors**

**Three traditions – three languages (Serbian, Greek, Latin)**

**Edition ongoing since 1840**

- **15 larger collections**
- **Many individual editions**



# Problems

**Widely differing and generally substandard edition principles**

**No collection includes all 600 items**

**Over 20% never published in collections**

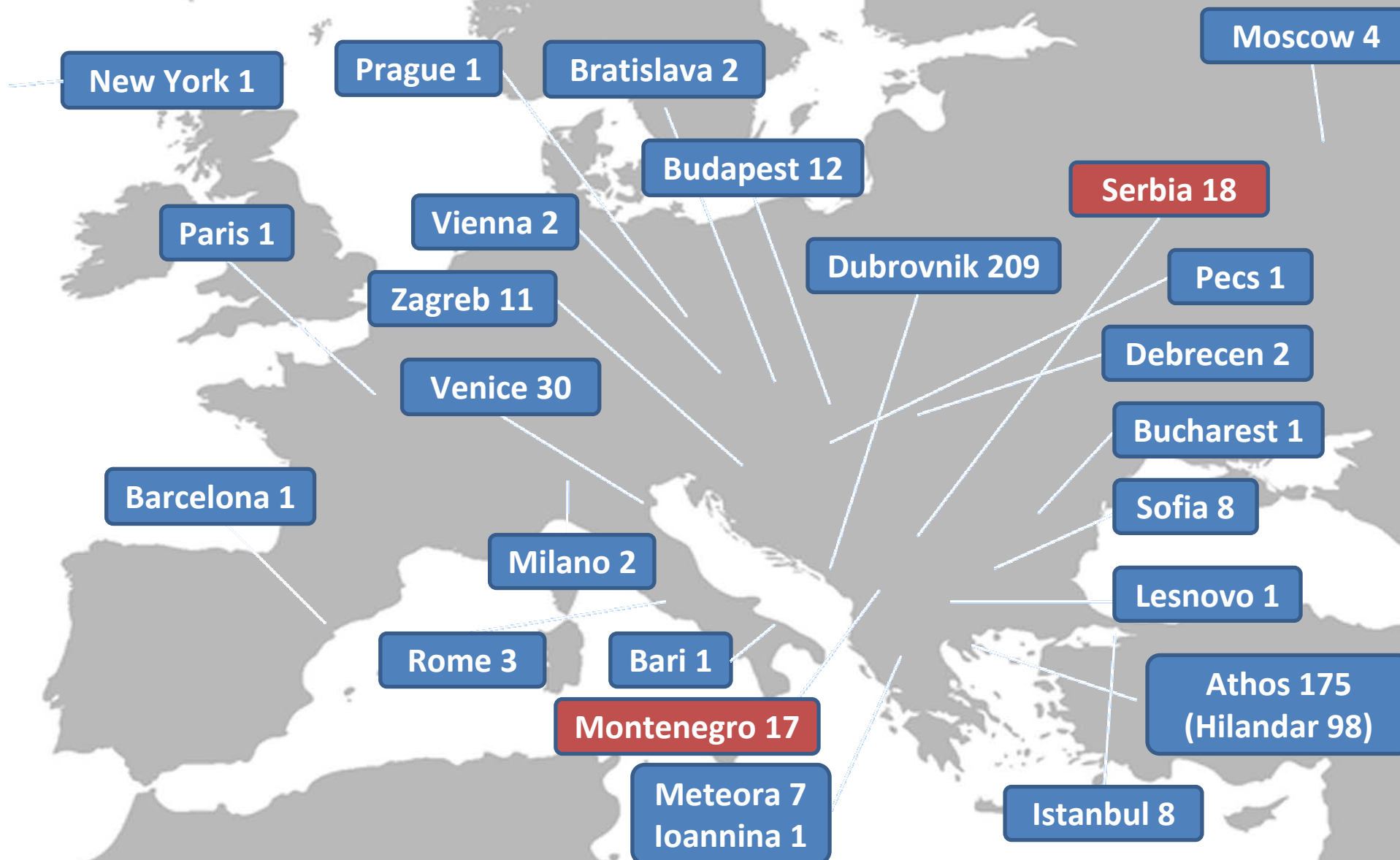
**Several items never published in full or at all**

**Difficult access to documents**

# Dispersion of Serbian Diplomatic Material in Serbia and Montenegro



# Dispersion of Serbian Diplomatic Material



# Consequences in Diplomatic Studies

**Inability to establish general criteria of document Authenticity**

**Inability to define the concept of Serbian medieval chancery**

**Traditional view of the chancery as an institutionalized general pattern of document-making neither conclusively proved nor disproved**



# Solution Options

**Printed collection and/or digital database**

**Ongoing printed *Serbian Diplomatory* project**

**Digital database – texts, pictures and  
extensive diplomatic analysis**



# **Digital Database and the Concept of Chancery**

**Chancery vs addressee**

**Involvement of addressees in document-making**

**Commentary suited to research of chancery issue**

**Chancery = repetitiveness**

**Defining repetitive document features**

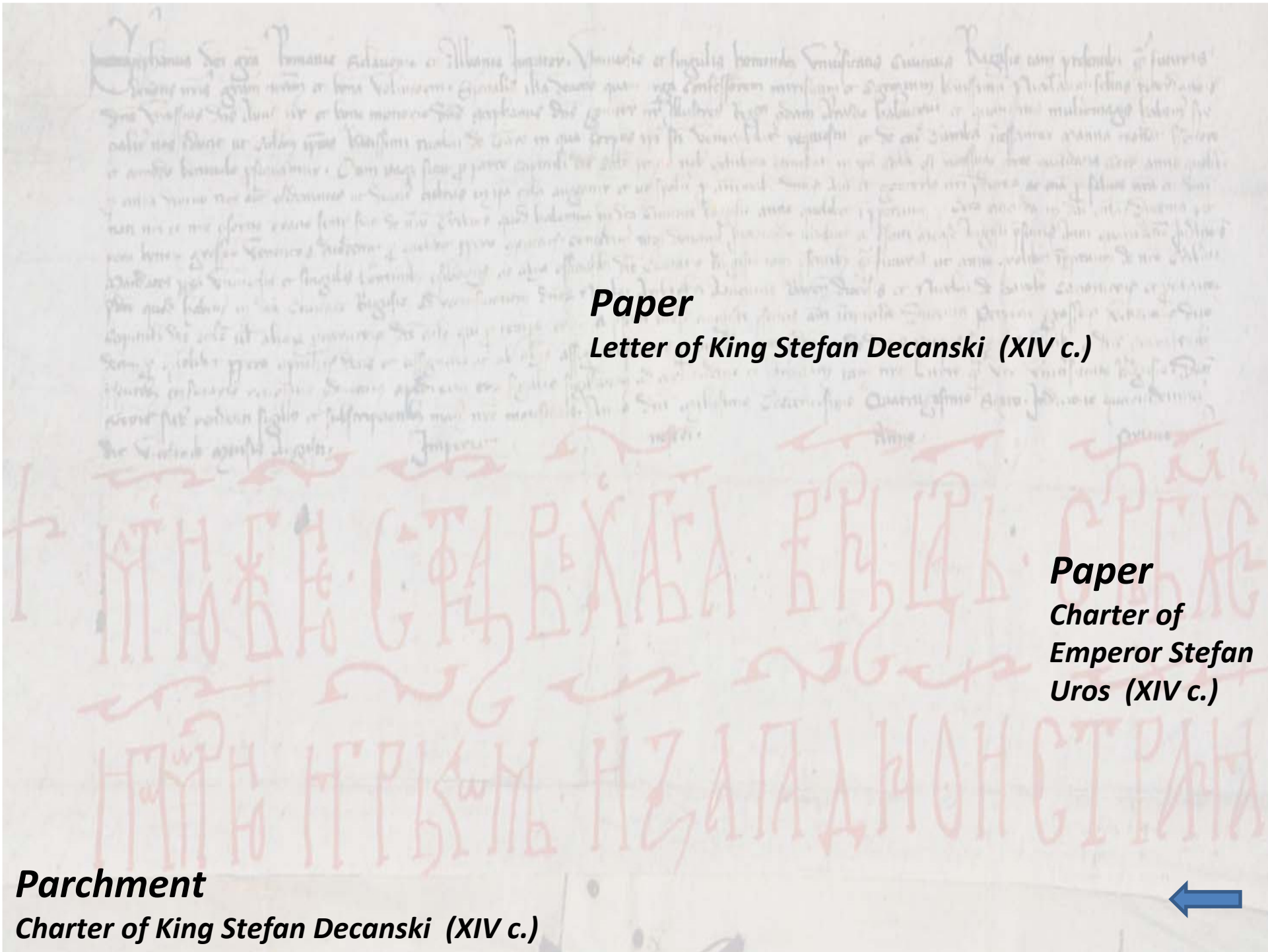
**Digital processing of repetitive features**



# External Features

## Relevant to the Chancery Issue: Serbian Case

- Writing material
- Format
- Watermark
- Language
- Script
- Ink color
- Graphic marks
- Seal



**Paper**  
**Letter of King Stefan Decanski (XIV c.)**

**Paper**  
**Charter of Emperor Stefan Uros (XIV c.)**

**Parchment**  
**Charter of King Stefan Decanski (XIV c.)**



Handwritten Latin text in a medieval script, likely Gothic or similar, with some red ink used for initials or headings.

**Landscape**

**Charter of Bosnian King Stjepan Dabisa (XIV c.)**

**Portrait**

**Charter of Emperor Stefan Uros (XIV c.)**



*(Faint Latin text from a 14th-century charter)*  
 Stephanus Dei gratia Romanus imperator...  
 Stephanus Dei gratia Romanus imperator...  
 Stephanus Dei gratia Romanus imperator...

*(Faint red text, likely a title or date)*  
 Imperator... Anno...

In nomine Domini Amen  
 Stephanus Romanus Imperator...  
 Stephanus Romanus Imperator...  
 Stephanus Romanus Imperator...

**Pear**  
**Charter of Emperor Stefan Uros (XIV c.)**



Handwritten Latin text in a medieval Gothic script, likely a charter or legal document. The text is dense and covers the upper portion of the page.

Large block of text in red ink, featuring a mix of Latin and Greek characters. The text is arranged in several lines, with some characters appearing to be stylized or combined. This is the Greek translation of the Latin text above.

**Greek**

**Charter of Emperor Stefan Dusan (XIV c.)**

**Latin**

**Charter of Despote Djurdj Brankovic (XV c.)**



Handwritten Latin text in a medieval script, likely Gothic or similar, with some red ink used for initials or headings.

**Uncial**  
**Charter of Emperor Stefan**  
**Dusan (XIV c.)**

**Chancery script**  
**Charter of Despote Ugljesa**  
**(XIV c.)**

**Semiuncial**  
**Charter of Despote Djurdj**  
**Brankovic (XV c.)**



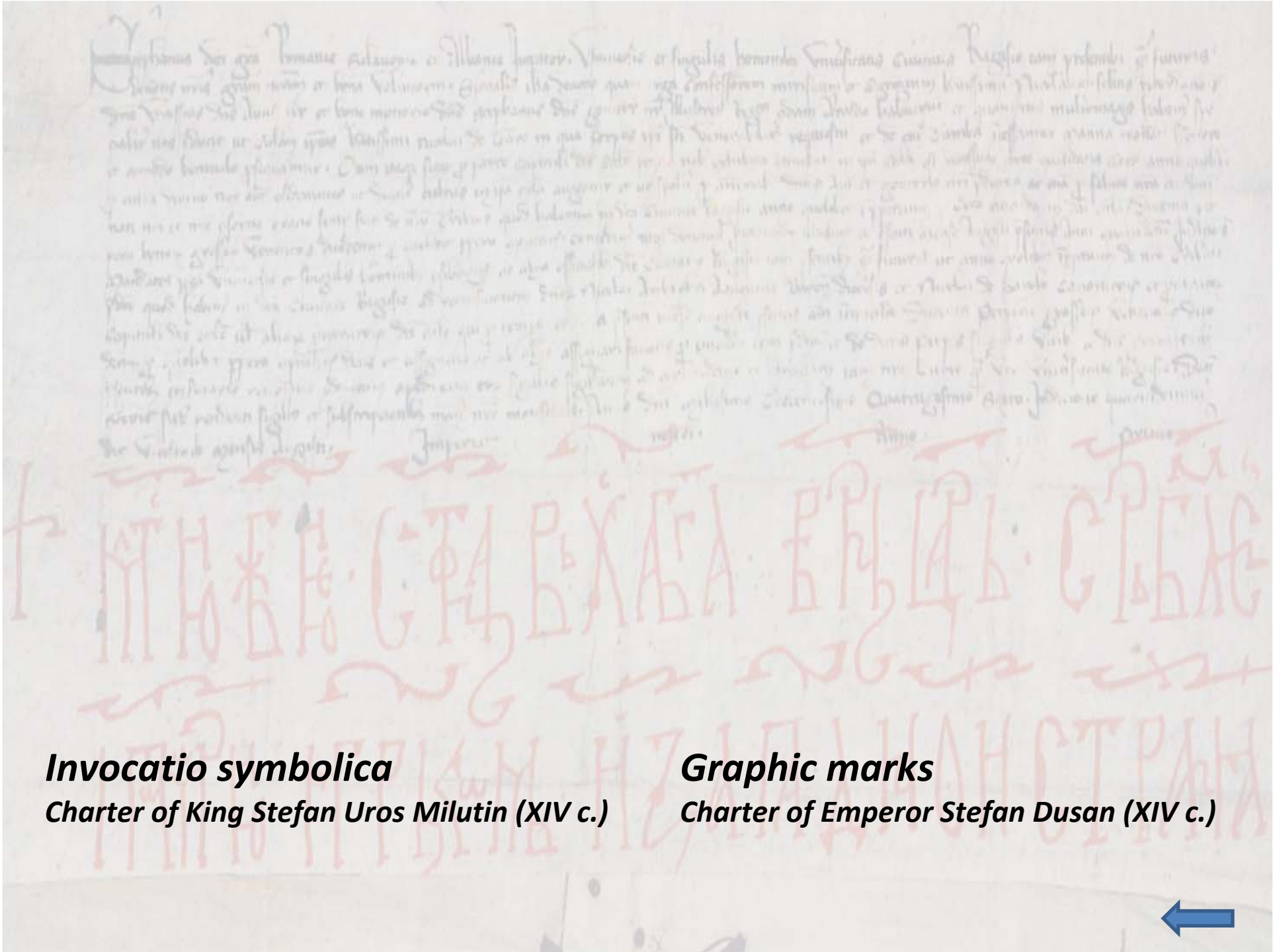
Handwritten Latin text in a medieval script, likely a charter or legal document. The text is dense and covers the upper portion of the page.

**Signature**  
Charter of King Stefan Uros Milutin,  
confirmed by Archbishop Sava III (XIV c.)

**Logos-formula**  
Charter of Emperor Stefan Dusan (XIV c.)







**Invocatio symbolica**

**Charter of King Stefan Uros Milutin (XIV c.)**

**Graphic marks**

**Charter of Emperor Stefan Dusan (XIV c.)**



**Sigillum impressum (“Serbian style”)**

**Seal of King Stefan Rodoslav (XIII c.)**

**Figure of St Stephen verso**

**Charter of Emperor Stefan Dusan (XIV c.) →**

**Figure of Christ verso**

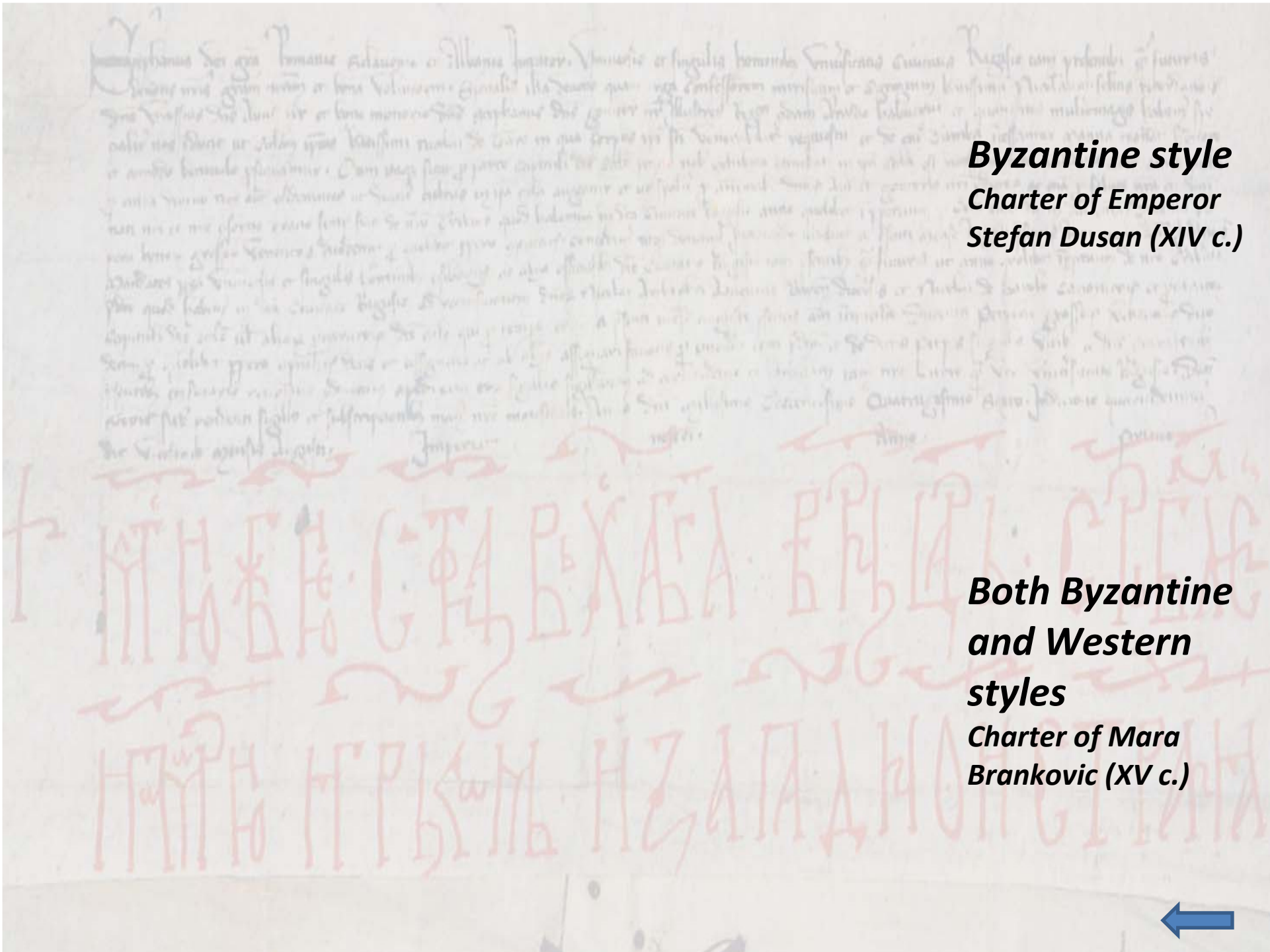
**Seal of Emperor Stefan Dusan (XIV c.)**



# Internal Features

## Relevant to the Chancery Issue: Serbian Case

- **Arenga**
- **Formalized protocol features**  
(intitulatio, inscriptio, salutatio, promulgatio)
- **Text** (expositio, dispositio)
- **Sanctio**
- **Corroboratio**
- **Date**
- **Document creation notice**



**Byzantine style  
Charter of Emperor  
Stefan Dusan (XIV c.)**

**Both Byzantine  
and Western  
styles  
Charter of Mara  
Brankovic (XV c.)**

*Handwritten Latin text in Gothic script, likely a charter or legal document, starting with 'Stephanus dei gratia Romanus pontifex...'*

*Decorative red lines and signatures in Latin script, including names like 'Imper...' and 'Ante...'.*

*Large red Cyrillic text block, likely the beginning of the charter in Old Church Slavonic.*

*Large red Cyrillic text block, likely the main body of the charter in Old Church Slavonic.*

**Document creation notice**  
**Charter of Constantin Dragas (XIV c.)**



# End Product

**Complete diplomatic corpus covered in one collection**

**Reliable text editions**

**Analysis of smaller corpora and individual document features**

**Establishing general criteria of document authenticity**

**Reassessment of earlier results regarding the chancery issue**

**Thank you for your  
Attention !!!**

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