Abstract: The Meeting of Stephen Nemanja and Frederick Barbarossa in Niš 1189. Observations on personal bonds in south eastern Europe in the second half of the 12th century. The solemn meeting of Emperor Frederick Barbarossa and Serbian Grand Župan Stephen Nemanja in Niš in 1189 was an important event in the Third Crusade. The latter was seeking to join the political orbit of the German ruler, to take part in the expected future war against Byzantium, and to get approval of the previous as well as future potential Serbian conquests. Analogies have been drawn between the ritual aspects of their summit and similar phenomena happening at the time in the Byzantine and Western world. Vividly staged acts served to regulate and solidify public and personal relations. They were often devoid of feudal connotations, as was the case in Niš. Functional and formal similarities of ritual practices deriving from disparate cultural and socio-political environments made the non-verbal trans-cultural communication between two rulers more aligned.

Keywords: Third Crusade – hominium et fidelitas – Pseudo-Ansbert – Frederick Barbarossa – Stephen Nemanja – South East Europe