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CHRISTIAN BYZANTIUM AND FRIENDLY RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN GREECE AND SERBIA

The relationship between Serbia and Greece is developed within the Byzantine Empire and it is based on interaction in various aspects of byzantine culture. Within orthodoxy, Serbia has created great material and spiritual culture such as hagiography, liturgy, hagiology, the neptic practice, the art of mosaics, the architecture of many churches and the organization of monasteries. The old and huge history and contribution of “Hilandari” monastery, which is a Serbian orthodox monastery in Greece, showed the relationship between Greeks and Serbians.

This relationship began back to the ninth century when two Thessalonian monks who loved the Serbian people, Cyrillos and Methodios, wanted to spread the orthodox faith. The byzantine emperor Michael and the orthodox patriarch Fotios entrusted the two young men to transfer the orthodox faith to the Serbians. The two monks investigated a written alphabet showing absolute respect to the Serbians’ oral language. They respected so much the Serbians’ oral language and also Serbians respect the two Greek men that even today Serbians’ language is called “Cyrillic alphabet”. Also, they translated the Gospels and the texts of the liturgy in Serbian and as a result the Serbian people could approach the orthodox faith. This fact not only made it easier for the Serbians to understand their new faith but it also proved the respect that the Greeks showed to the Serbian language. The Serbians found translated books ready for them and this helped their accession to the new religion¹. These translations were the most important element for the creation of a language called “paleoserbian”. The Serbians based on their new alphabet were able to write their own authentic texts².

The establishment of the Serbian church in 1219 is a nodal point for the history of Serbia. The creation of Christian writings, the architectural works

¹ Ταρνανίδης, Ι., *Ιστορία της Σερβικής Εκκλησίας (πανεπιστημιακές παραδόσεις)*, Έκδοση Β΄, Αφοί Κυριακίδη, Θεσσαλονίκη, 1988, 20.

² Χατζηλέλεκας, Δημοσθ., *Η Ιερά Μονή Χιλανδαρίου ως σύνδεσμος φιλίας Ελλάδας Σερβίας*, <http://ikee.lib.auth.gr/record/128724/files/GRI-2012-8222.pdf> (17/5/2016), 5.

and the paintings that mimic the byzantine art was huge at that time³. The production of byzantine culture from the Serbians is associated with the agency of St.Savvas and ‘Hilandari’ monastery.

St.Savvas, who was the son of the first Serbian king-Stefanos Nemanja, as a teenager went to Greek monasteries in Mount Athos with the help of a Russian monk and he established there a Serbian monastery called ‘Hilandari’ monastery⁴. It is derived from historic facts that the orthodox faith unites Russians, Greeks and Serbians. The interaction of St Savvas and the Greek monasteries in Mount Athos was very decisive for him. In these monasteries he met the orthodox faith, he lived along with it and then he transferred it to his country. Essentially he spread the byzantine culture as he had known it in Greece. His success has been extraordinary. The Serbians’ conscious contact with the orthodox faith, the construction of ‘Hilandari’ and ‘Stountenitsas’ monasteries, the ecclesiastical organization and the creation of the Serbian Christian orthodox type are dated back to the age St.Savvas lived. Mount Athos is a place where somebody meets the Byzantine civilization and the authentic orthodox tradition. So St Savvas knew the Byzantine civilization in its centre and also the authentic orthodox faith combined with the authentic orthodox life. We have to notice that Pope Innokentios the third tried to approach the Serbians by taking advantage of the quarrel between St.Savvas’ two brothers (Stefanos and Voukan) after their father’s death (Stefanos Nemanja-Symeon as a monk). In 1199, Pope Innokentios the third convoked a local synod in the aim of detaching the Serbian Church from orthodoxy. However, all the terms of the synod came up against the serbians’ orthodox practices and their liberal ideas. St.Savvas contributed so that the Serbians would remain Christians and his brothers would remain united⁵. Although Catholics have money, power and influences and Serbians could use these advantages for their country, they prefer to remain in the orthodox faith. The Serbian Christian orthodox type has been preserved till today and we can assume that by observing the way that Serbians worship the holy images when they come to Greece. They organize worshipping visits in monasteries and churches in Greece and they are absolutely concentrated to the reverence, they are silent and dressed in a very decent way.

The ‘Hilandari’ monastery was a Greek monastery established in the tenth century by the Greek George Hilandaris and it was dedicated to St.Symeon the Theodox. Later the monastery was abandoned and in 1198 emperor Alexios the third assigned it to the Serbian king Stefan Nemanja and to his son Ratsko, who

³ Γόνι, Δημ., *Ιστορία των ορθοδόξων Εκκλησιών Βουλγαρίας και Σερβίας*, Έκδοση Β΄, Παρουσία, Αθήνα, 1999, 212

⁴ Χατζηλέλεκας, Δημοσθ., *ibid*, 30

⁵ Σαρσάκης, Ι., *Η αυτοκρατορία της Νίκαιας και η Σερβική Εκκλησία, Άγιος Ιωάννης Γ΄ Δούκας Βατάτζης και Άγιος Σάββας Α΄ Αρχιεπίσκοπος Σερβίας Κείμενο του (Καστροπολίτη) Ιωάννη Α. Σαρσάκη Εισαγωγή στο ιστορικό πλαίσιο*, Edit Πενταπόσταγμα 3/1/ 2016, <http://www.pentapostagma.gr/2016/01/%ce%b7-%ce%b1%cf%85%cf%84%ce%bf%ce%ba%cf%81%ce%b1%cf%84%ce%bf%cf%81%ce%b9%ce%b1-%cf%84%ce%b7%cf%83-%ce%bd%ce%b9%ce%ba%ce%b1%ce%b9%ce%b1%cf%83-%ce%ba%ce%b1%ce%b9-%ce%b7-%cf%83%ce%b5%cf%81%ce%b2%ce%b9.html#ixzz49PysTp6O> (22/5/2016)

became monks⁶. King Stefan as a monk was named Symeon and Ratsko was named Savvas⁷. The reconstruction of the monastery required a lot of money which were sent from Serbia by Savvas' brother, Stefan the second⁸. The friendship developed between Serbians and Greeks is obvious: the Greek monastery is assigned to Serbians and the Serbians put up funds for it. The 'Hilandari' monastery's monks played an important role in the formation and development of the relationship between Serbian leaders and byzantine emperors⁹. For example, the emperors Andronikos the second and Andronikos the third refer in their bulls that the Serbian monks satisfied many of their requirements by their diplomatic attitude¹⁰. When monk Savvas and monk Symeon restored the 'Hilandari' monastery, they sent monk Methodios back to Serbia and he persuaded the Serbian prince to assign to the monastery 9 villages in Prizreni, grasslands, vineyards, apiaries and some stock-farmers for the reconstruction and the preservation of the monastery. 'Hilandari' monks' intervention restored peace in the serbobyzantine borders within Milutin's reign¹¹. Serbian abbot Daniel and monk Nikodimos enforced the spirit of peace that Christianity teaches when they were called in a council in Constantinople and they reconciled king Milutin and king Dragutin who were in a civil quarrel. Also the Serbian Court offered military force in Byzantium in a war with the ottomans. Serbians were behind Byzantium when there was need. Emperor Andronikos the second donated the village Kouzti in 'Hilandari' after Milutin's request¹². Monk Kallinikos's contribution to the pacification of the relationship between Serbia and Byzantium and this is the reason that the emperor donated to 'Hilandari' a smaller monastery in Kamenikaia in Serres in 1321. Certainly, the bishop of Serres Athanasios along with his wife called Kallinikos their spiritual father¹³. We ascertain the interaction between Serbians and Greeks since the Greeks Christianized the Serbians and the Serbians become spiritual fathers even for Greeks. The relationship between Greeks and Serbians was sealed with the marriage of Milutin's son (king Uros the third) with Constantine's Porfirogennitou granddaughter, Maria Palaiologou. Monk Matthaïos from 'Hilandari' monastery made this match¹⁴. The mediation of monk Matthaïos in this marriage proves the great respect that Byzantines showed to the monastery and their wish to be related with the Serbians.

⁶ Ibid, 7

⁷ Dimitrije Bogdanovic, Vojislav J. Djuric, Dejan Medakovic στο Chilandar, *The Holy Mountain*, Editor Monastery of Chilandar in cooperation with Jugoslovenska Revija, 1997, 36

⁸ Καδά, Σωτ., *Το Άγιον Όρος, Τα μοναστήρια και οι θησαυροί τους*, Εκδοτική Αθηνών Α.Ε., Αθήνα, 56-57

⁹ Χατζηλέλεκας, Δημοσθ., *ibid*, 42

¹⁰ Mirjana, Zivojinovic, *Οι μοναχοί της Μονής Χιλανδαρίου σε ρόλο διπλωματών μεταξύ της σερβικής αυλής και του Βυζαντίου, Σπαράγματα Βυζαντινοσλαβικής κληρονομιάς, Χαριστήριο τόμος στον καθηγητή Ι. Χρ. Ταρνανίδη*, Εκδ. Αφών Κυριακίδη, Θεσσαλονίκη, 2011, 30

¹¹ Χατζηλέλεκας, Δημοσθ., *ibid*, 44

¹² Ibid, 46

¹³ Mirjana, Zivojinovic, *Istorija Hilandara*, In 83

¹⁴ Mirjana, Zivojinovic, *Οι μοναχοί της Μονής Χιλανδαρίου σε ρόλο διπλωματών μεταξύ*

This marriage became the reason for the Serbians to be closely related to Byzantium. Besides, another marriage had become the reason for Serbia to relate to the empire of Nice in Minor Asia, which was the most important part of the Byzantine Empire after the fall of Constantinople in 1204. It is about the marriage of Stefan, who was the brother of St Savvas, with Evdokia, who was emperor's Alexios the third daughter and sister of the first emperor's of Nis wife¹⁵. The marriages between Serbians and Byzantium prove the friendly relationship and both' willing to continue and rather strengthens this relation.

The influence of Byzantium appears intensely in art. The medieval Serbia follows all the artistic changes that take place in Byzantium¹⁶. Typical example is the icon of the Admission of Virgin Mary which is located in 'Hilandari' monastery. This was a creation of a Serbian hagiographer in 1320 and it has a Serbian inscription with the headline "Assumption of Virgin Mary". Its dimensions are 0,96m X 1,09m it has extraordinary design and realistic description. It is thought that it represents the Serbian and the byzantine hagiography of the beginning of the 14th century in the best way¹⁷. Serbians follow all the changes about hagiography that took place in the 14th century in Byzantium. Some of them are the details of the daily life, more persons in the icons and imitation of classical faces. For example, in the "Assumption of Virgin Mary", we can recognize a lot of persons in the icon such us Ioakim, Anna, Simeon, also Jewish virgins who attend to Assumption and also angel Gabriel who forebodes Annunciation (fig. 1). Jewish virgins have classical faces and they seem to move. All the persons seem to move. The colors are light such us green, light blue, light red, beige, light brown etc. In the same period we see similar hagiographies in Macedonia. For example, in the church of Virgin Mary in Zevgostasio of Kastoria there is a similar scene of the "Assumption of Virgin Mary"¹⁸. Jewish virgins also follow Ioakim, they seem to speak each other and to move (fig. 2). Their dresses are in light colors such as green, light blue, light red, light grey and the wall behind them is beige (fig. 3). Their faces are classical with an oblong nose, long fingers and a small mouth. They are five and they keep candles¹⁹ but in Hilandari monastery the Jewish virgins are seven and they keep candles too. Ioakim and Anna, Maria's parents, look each other and they seem to speak in Kastoria's and in Hilandari's hagiographies. So we conclude that there are similar hagiographies in Serbian and Greek churches. It is due to the common Byzantine characteristics. In fact it is great to meet the similar hagiographies in Greece and Serbia and it makes Serbians and Greeks feel like in their home.

ζύ της σερβικής αυλής και του Βυζαντίου, *Σπαράγματα Βυζαντινοσλαβικής κληρονομιάς, Χαρυστήριος τόμος στον καθηγητή Ι. Χρ. Ταρνανίδη*, Εκδ. Αφών Κυριακίδη, Θεσσαλονίκη, 2011, 331

¹⁵ Σαρσάκης, Ι., *Η αυτοκρατορία της Νίκαιας και η Σερβική Εκκλησία*, *ibid.*

¹⁶ Χατζηλέλεκας, Δημοσθ., *Ibid*, 56

¹⁷ Σρέτεν Πέτκοβιτς, Σλαβομίρ Ματέιτς, *Εικόνες Ιεράς Μονής Χιλανδαρίου*, Ιερά Μονή Χιλανδαρίου, Άγιον Όρος, 1997, 27

¹⁸ Σίσιου, Ιωάννη, *Οι σκηνές των Μεγάλων εορτών και των Παθών στο Ναό της Παναγίας Ζευγοστασίου Καστοριάς*, Nis and Byzantium XIV, Editor M. Rakocija, (Nis 2016), 397

¹⁹ *Ibid*, 410

At the same age in Fyrom there was an icon of Virgin Mary made by John Damascene in the 8th century which was either repainted or copied in the 14th century and it was placed in a temple dedicated to Virgin Mary Triherousa²⁰. We understand how easily the worship of Virgin Mary Triherousa is transferred to Fyrom. In the icon Virgin Mary has three hands, the third one is silver as John Damascene used to do (fig. 4). The icon is decorated with a lot of gemstones. The gemstones are emerald, deep blue, bright red. In Byzantium they used to decorate with gemstones John Damascene's Virgin Mary Triherousa and we note that Serbian do the same. Sir Xatzilelekas concludes that there was close collaboration between 'Hilandari' monks and Greek byzantine hagiographers²¹. A great Serbian hagiographer in the 17th century was George Mitrophanovits who was a monk in 'Hilandari' monastery and made the hagiographies of the Annunciation and the icons of prophets David and Solomon and also the icon of Christ and other murals in the temple of the monastery. Characteristic of Mitrofanovits is the soft painting tones which are mixed in harmony²². Looking at the icon of the Annunciation, we notice the light colors such as beige, light blue, very light brown (fig. 5). We also notice the movement that persons have: Angel Gabriel moves his right hand and his right leg and Virgin Mary moves also her right hand and her left leg. The Annunciation has Greek letters on it. In the icon of prophets David and Solomon there are also Greek letters (fig. 5). The colors are light red, beige, light brown, gold and black in order to contrast. The gold color is used because David and Solomon were Kings. The movement is clear in this icon too. Mitrophanovits follows the standards of the Macedonian hagiographers.

A Serbian hagiographer made the hagiographies of St. Dimitrios the Thessalonician and his friend Nestoras and the icons' inscription was in the Serbian language²³. We also can find Greek inscriptions in the churches in Serbia and especially in Nis even today. It matters because of the Greek hagiographers who came and decorated churches in Nis. We ascertain the relationship of acceptance developed between Greeks and Serbians and its association with the orthodox faith and the byzantine culture. The firmness of the Serbians in byzantine culture is demonstrated from the fact that 'Hilandari' monks did not hire hagiographers who did not keep the traditional byzantine models²⁴. It seems that the Orthodox Byzantine Tradition is very important for Serbian monks. The oldest icon in Hilandari monastery is a mosaic of the 12th century. The mosaic is "Virgin Hodegetria" made of a Greek artist and with Greek inscription "MP ΘΥ [M(HTH)P Θ(EO)Y Mother of God]" (fig. 6). The Greek hagiographer came from Constantinople or from Thessalonica. He uses thick black lines to contrast with the gold color. Mary's eyes are very big and her hand and fingers are also long. He also uses thick black lines to underline the

²⁰ Σρέτεν Πέτκοβιτς, Σλαβομίρ Ματέιτς, *Εικόνες Ιεράς Μονής Χιλανδαρίου*, Ιερά Μονή Χιλανδαρίου, Άγιον Όρος, 1997, 27

²¹ Χατζηλέλεκας, Δημοσθ., *ibid*, 59

²² Σρέτεν Πέτκοβιτς, Σλαβομίρ Ματέιτς, *ibid*, 42.

²³ Χατζηλέλεκας, Δημοσθ., *ibid*, 66

²⁴ *Ibid*

nose and eyes. Mary wears rather black dress and little Christ wears gold with brown. The fond of the mosaic is gold and the contrast with black and brown is amazing. The expressiveness of the eyes is great.

In architecture we notice that in the age of reconstruction of the monastery by king Milutin, construction workers marble masons and other technicians came from Constantinople and Thessalonica to 'Hilandari'. The catholic of the monastery was built from the Serbian King Milutin in 1303 and it remains still today (fig. 7). Still today remain also the amazing mosaics there are on the ground (fig. 10). The mosaics were decorated in 1321. We can recognize the Byzantine architecture in the catholic. It has a lot of domes, bows, decorative bricks, double-light windows, columns and piers (fig. 8). Especially the decorative brick is very widespread in this century. It is nice as its dark red color makes contrast with stone's white color. In this century the temples have a lot of windows, mostly double-light windows or triple-light windows. The architecture of 'Hilandari' monastery had significant influence in the Serbian architecture²⁵.

Byzantium influenced the Serbians in the hygiene section too. The welfare services were very developed in Byzantium. The byzantine hospitals along with the Christian spirit of philanthropy not only healed patients but they also offered training to new doctors. In the famous hospital of Pantokratoras monastery in Constantinople the specialized staff overcame the 100 people for 50 patients. It also had a pharmacy with many pharmacists who prepared medicines by themselves. In this hospital in the 10th century a successful lithotripsy in the bladder with special catheters took place²⁶. Also, many women doctors and nurses were giving their services in the gynecological wards in the monastery's hospital. The Serbian monks in 'Hilandari' mimic this form of philanthropy and tender against the patient. A guest room was built next to the monastery in order to host foreign monks, a ward was constructed inside the monastery and a monk had taken over the responsibility to nurse other sick monks. The nursing was in accordance with the latest medical methods of west Europe and based on the classical methods of Hippocrates, Galinos etc²⁷. We underline that they used the latest medical methods. Recently (2015), a new clinic was constructed in 'Hilandari' monastery in Mount Athos. Patients, monks and constructors, who work for the restoration of the monastery's buildings, have the ability to visit this new therapeutic centre. This hospital tradition dates back to 1200, as referred to the monastery's files, when the first Serbian hospital was opened. Milivoj Randić, who is the supervisor of the institution in 'Hilandari' monastery, explains that the monastery continued the tradition of having a special department for the sick and the elderly since St. Sava's age. In agreement with

²⁵ Ibid, 74

²⁶ Σερδάκη, Ευαγγελία, *Ο πολιτισμός του Βυζαντίου*, [http://www.slideboom.com/presentations/944745/%CE%9F-%CF%80%CE%BF%CE%BB%CE%B9%CF%84%CE%B9%CF%83%CE%BC%CF%8C%CF%82-%CF%84%CE%BF%CF%85-%CE%92%CF%85%CE%B6%CE%B1%CE%BD%CF%84%-CE%AF%CE%BF%CF%85-%CE%BA%CE%B1%CE%B8%CE%B7%CE%BC%CE%B5%CF%81%CE%B9%CE%BD%CE%AE-%CE%B6%CF%89%CE%AE%20\(21/5/2016\)](http://www.slideboom.com/presentations/944745/%CE%9F-%CF%80%CE%BF%CE%BB%CE%B9%CF%84%CE%B9%CF%83%CE%BC%CF%8C%CF%82-%CF%84%CE%BF%CF%85-%CE%92%CF%85%CE%B6%CE%B1%CE%BD%CF%84%-CE%AF%CE%BF%CF%85-%CE%BA%CE%B1%CE%B8%CE%B7%CE%BC%CE%B5%CF%81%CE%B9%CE%BD%CE%AE-%CE%B6%CF%89%CE%AE%20(21/5/2016))

²⁷ Χατζηλέλεκας, Δημοσθ., *ibid*, 12

the monastery, there will be general and specialized doctors from Serbia in this clinic. So, we assume that clinics in the Serbian monastery were influenced by the practices of the clinics in Constantinople. There's no doubt that the Christian philanthropy based in the orthodox faith is common in Constantinople and in Athos, in "Pantokratoras" and in "Hilandari". The tradition comes from the early Christian ages when Christ and His Apostles took care of sick people and they gave them health. St Basil also mimics Christ's practice. As he was a doctor, he took care of the sick in the hospital he had organized. In 10th century we have the hospital in "Pantokratoras" monastery, then in "Hilandari" and now again in "Hilandari". The big church of St Dimitrios in Thessaloniki was used also as hospital during the World War II. We meet the same tradition and practice in Constantinople, in Thessaloniki and in Serbians. The interest about people is common and it is related with the orthodox faith and life.

Serbians and Greeks have common civilization, the byzantine civilization. This civilization is about materials (architecture, hagiography, mosaics) and about values and ideals (love, peace, philanthropy, forgiveness). So Greeks feel friendly when they visit or live in Serbia and also Serbians feel friendly when they visit or live in Greece. Jesus Christ and the orthodox faith really unite the two nations. Serbians knew the Catholic faith a lot of times in their history, but they couldn't accept this and they remain orthodox. This fact also unite the two nations and builds mutual trust and support relationships. The support relationships are important as Serbians and Greeks are Balkan nations, so they can cooperate in the economic sector, in the commercial sector etc. Already a lot of Greek study in Serbia medicine, theology etc. and a lot of Serbians study in Greece theology etc. The common Byzantine civilization may be function as the base of wider cooperation between the two neighboring nations.

Conclusions

1. Byzantium performed catalytic influence in Serbian art, architecture, hagiography etc. Greek artists come in Serbia and decorate or paint temples. We can recognize Greeks' works in Serbia even today as the works have Greek inscriptions.

2. Serbian people were connected to Orthodoxy and they still remain in Orthodoxy faith although Catholics had approached them. Serbian 'Hilandari' monastery in Mount Athos is the link between Greece and Serbia. In the monastery there are two basic languages, Serbian and Greek.

3. 'Hilandari' monastery contributed to the preservation of the friendly relations between the Serbians and Byzantium and especially between Serbians and Greeks. Serbian monks matched marriages between Serbians and Byzantium emperors' relatives. Also they had an important role in diplomatic. They always worked to make peace in the whole area.

4. The important marriages between Serbian kings and women who were relatives of the byzantine emperor especially with the mediation of Serbian monks contributed to the maintenance of a friendly climate with Byzantium.

5. The respect that Byzantines and Greeks showed to the Serbian people, culture and to the Serbian Orthodox Church laid the foundations for a climate of mutual trust.

6. The collaboration between Greeks and Serbians is continuous and it is turned to 'Hilandari' monastery, its needs (in art and the production of monuments etc) and its social and spiritual offer (hospital).

7. As Greeks we admire our friends' Serbian orthodox faith and we are glad that they frequently remind it to us in hard times that we move off our faith.

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ХРИШЋАНСКА ВИЗАНТИЈА И ПРИЈАТЕЉСКИ ОДНОСИ ИЗМЕЂУ ГРЧКЕ И СРБИЈЕ

Сврха овог рада је да покаже однос који се развио између Србије и Грчке на основу заједничке православне вере. Истражили смо утицај византијске културе на Србе, а посебно у хагиологији, архитектури храмова, житија светих итд. Допринос српских светаца и монаха је био огroman. Манастир Хиландар на грчкој гори Атос је велика спона између Срба и Грка и његов допринос је веома значајан за хеленизам. У манастиру су се култивисали сви облици византијске уметности (иконографија, архитектура, музикологија, хагиологија, литургија, химнографија) и наставиле су се ширити у целој Србији. Многи од хиландарских монаха су били познати писци и песници, као Дометијан и његов ученик Теодосије, који је написао службу светом Сави и химне по византијском моделу. Копирање и превођење радова писаних на грчком језику био је мост између Срба и Грка. Преписивачка активност српских монаха је помогла да се спасу многи грчки текстови. Преводилачка активност донела је византијску културу и исихазам на српску територију. Тако се традиција исихазма проширила на српском подручју и показала свеце који се славе и у Грчкој. Многи грчки свештеници су били именовани – постављени - у српским покрајинама за време периода Кољивадон. Међусобни утицај Срба и Грка је био толико велики да у манастиру Хиландар говоре два језика, српски и грчки. Такође многи бракови између српских владара са византијским принцезама ојачали су одржавање православља и мира у региону. Православна, вера је била узрок стварања велике материјалне и духовне културе, како у Србији тако и у Грчкој. Упркос периода ривалства између две цркве односи су били и остају, прожети прихватањем јединства и међусобне подршке. Византија, која је успела да уједини велики број људи, а да нису при том изгубили свој идентитет може послужити за пример суживота балканских народа и њихових међусобних утицаја.