MOUNT ATHOS AND POLITICAL THOUGHT
IN THE SLAVIC WORLD

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The topic of *Mount Athos and political thought in the Slavic world* can be approached in two ways. On the one side, it is by perceiving the role, importance and influence that Mount Athos had, as a monastic centre, on the development of political thought in the Christian Slavic states, i.e. among the Christianised Slavic peoples. On the other, it would be important to answer the question placed in a reverse perspective: what place was given to Mount Athos in the political thought that developed in the Slavic states, i.e. among the Slavic peoples? On this occasion I would like to comment on two aspects of the said issue: the first is about the specifics of the so-called Russian, Bulgarian and Serbian models, which can be traced from the very foundation of the Slavic monasteries. The second aspect is connected with the territorial inclusion of Mount Athos into the borders of the Slavic states and its adjustment to the "domestic" political and ideological concept (the example of Bulgarian and Serbian rule over Athos).

Contemplating the political aspect of the influence of Mount Athos on the Slavic world should start with the question about what political significance this monastic centre had on the Byzantine Empire itself, in whose territory it was founded. The beginnings of monastic activities on Mount Athos can be traced back to the 9th century; by the middle of that century, Mount Athos had become sufficiently acknowledged as a monastic centre that it was providing shelter for the monks who were arriving from the renowned Olympus. Since the *sigillion* of Basil I the Macedonian, issued in June 883,[1] the Byzantine rulers provided permanent support to the monks of Mount Athos and their monasteries.[2] Like them, the rulers of the Slavic states also took care of the monasteries of Mount Athos in the subsequent centuries. The documents of Mount Athos testify that the rulers of the Rhomaioi continuously promoted the development and protection of the monastic communities on Mount Athos by granting them land and various privileges. This care represented a constant in their internal policies, in which reliance on the monks was one of the more important segments. The political importance of the monastic communities of Mount Athos was especially obvious in the decisive moments for the Empire. One may say that, within

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[1] Actes du Prôtaton, *Archives de l'Athos* VII, ed. D. Papachryssanthou, Paris 1975, n⁰ 1.

[2] Until 1312, Mount Athos was under the control of the Byzantine emperor. After that year, the monastic centre was incorporated into the Byzantine Church organisation and placed under the authority of the ecumenical patriarch. Although the emperor placed the patriarch in charge of the ordination of the *prôtoi* of Mount Athos, the Byzantine rulers continued to take care of the Athonite monasteries after 1312.

Byzantium, Mount Athos represented the pillar of defense of traditional Byzantine Christianity. The significance of Mount Athos especially grew during the late Byzantine epoch, when its territories in the East were gradually falling under Ottoman rule.

The survival and strengthening of the monastic communities on Mount Athos was also significant for the foreign policy of Byzantium. The founding of monasteries by foreign peoples represented a particular way of including other Christian states into the so-called Byzantine "commonwealth".[3] Non-Greek monastic communities from Mount Athos influenced the spread of spiritual, cultural, political and ideological traditions of the Christian Byzantine Empire among the non-Greek peoples and in their states. In this context, Mount Athos undoubtedly had a major, multi-faceted and direct influence on the Slavic states which were formed in the neighbourhood of the Byzantine Empire.[4]

Clearly, Mount Athos was not the only haven for the monks who came from outside Byzantium. Of the monastic centres whose importance chronologically preceded the rise of Mount Athos, one should particularly point out Olympus in Bithynia.[5] During the second half of the 9th and in the 10th century, prominent monks would come from this community to Mount Athos, some of whom had very significant roles in the organization and development of the Athonite monastic centre. Non-Greek monks did not only stay in Byzantine monastic centres, but also had their own monasteries and churches in Constantinople and its vicinity,[6] as well as in other areas

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[3]   D. Obolensky, *The Byzantine Commonwealth, Eastern Europe, 500–1453*, London 1971.

[4]   See D. Zakythinos, Sveta Gora kao zajednica pravoslavlja i težnje za osamostaljenjem, *Hilandarski zbornik* 1 (1966) 33–39; Lj. Maksimović, The Byzantine „Commonwealth": an Early Attempt at European Integration?, *The Idea of European Community in History* I, edd. E. Chrysos – P. Kitromilides – C. Svolopoulos, Athens 2003, 99–109 (serbian transl.: *Vizantijski svet i Srbi*, Beograd 2008, 207–217).

[5]   Certain monasteries on Mount Olympus in Bithynia survived into the 14th century. However, this centre was slowly abandoned because of the advance of the Seljuks, but also because of the development of the monastic centre on Mount Athos, *The Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium* 3, New York – Oxford 1991, 1525. The renowned monastic centres in Palestine and on Sinai, the Great Lavra of St. Sabbas the Sanctified and the Monastery of the Burning Bush (subsequently of St. Catherine), were located outside of the territory of the Empire since the 7th century, see eg. J. Patrich, *Sabbas, Leader of Palestinian Monasticism. A Comparative Study in Eastern Monasticism, Fourth to Seventh Centuries*, Washington 1995, passim; D. Pringle, *The Churches of the Crusader Kingdom of Jerusalem. A Corpus*, vol. II: L–Z (excluding Tyre), Cambridge 1998, 258–268. J. Galey*, Sinai und das Katharinen Kloster*, Stuttgart 1979; I. Ševčenko, The Early Period of the Sinai Monastery in the Light of Its Inscriptions, *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 20 (1966) 55–264.

[6]   Monasteries of non-Greek nations were attested during the 6th century, as well as in the subsequent period, R. Janin, Les monastères nationaux et provinciaux à Byzance, *Échos d'Orient* 32 (1933) 429–438; M. Balard, Amalfi et Byzance (Xe–XIIe siècles), *Travaux et mémoires* 6 (1976) 91.

of the Empire.[7] What was then the specific characteristic of Mount Athos? Did the departure of non-Greek monks from the then well-known Byzantine monastic centres represent an expression of their need for a stricter and more isolated variant of monastic life? The significance Mount Athos would acquire for certain non-Greek peoples, especially the Slavs, in the course of its existence, was not obvious from the start. However, one cannot deny that the longevity of the monastic community on Mount Athos and its survival to the present day, resulted in this centre's becoming especially important, compared with other monastic centres in Byzantine territory. The survival of this monastic centre through various historical epochs, including Ottoman rule, has given this community a special, almost universal significance in the Christian world.

Mount Athos became a monastic centre that was open towards foreigners during the early phases of its development. The biography of Athanasios the Great, the founder of the Holy Lavra, reads that Athanasios' students were members of various nations and tribes and spoke in different languages. They were foreigners who came to Mount Athos from various cities and countries – from "Rome, Italy, Calabria, Amalfi, Iberia, Armenia."[8] In the said biography, which is dated to the beginning of the 11th century,[9] the Slavs are not mentioned among Athanasios' non-Greek students and followers,[10] although at the turn of the 10th and 11th century they were

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[7] The *synkellos* John Tornikios – one of the founders of the Iveron monastery on Mount Athos – owned the monastery of St. Phokas in Trebizond and one monastery in Constantinople, which he ceded in 980 to Basil II, in exchange for the monasteries in Thessalonike and on Chalkidike, Actes d'Iviron I: des origins au milieu du XIe siècle, *Archives de l'Athos* XIV, edd. J. Lefort, N. Oikonomidès, D. Papachryssanthou avec collaboration H. Métrévéli, Paris 1985, 15 (J. Lefort). See also R. Janin, *La geographie ecclésiastique de l'Empire byzantin*, Paris 1953, 264–266; idem, *Les églises et les monastères des grands centres byzantins*, Paris 1975, 293–294.

[8] Vitae duae antiquae sancti Athanasii Athonitae, *Corpus christianorum*, Series Graeca 9, ed. J. Noret, Tturnhout 1982, Sancti Athanasii Athonitae Vita Prima, auctore Athanasio Monacho (=Vita A), 158. l. 6–7, p. 74.

[9] Two biographies of Athanasios the Great have been preserved, the so-called Vita A and Vita B. Vita A is dated to the period before 1025, i.e. to the first decade of the 11th century, and Vita B to the time after 1028 – the end of the 11th century or even later. For more details about this issue, see P. Lemerle, La vie ancienne de saint Athanase l'Athonite composée au début du XIe siècle par Athanase de Lavra, *Le millénaire du Mont Athos 963 – 1963. Études et Mélanges* I, Chevetogne 1963, 89–90; Actes de Lavra I: des origines à 1204, *Archives de l'Athos* V, ed. P. Lemerle, A. Guillou, N. Svoronos, avec la collaboration de D. Papachryssanthou, Paris 1970, 24–30 (P. Lemerle); Prôtaton (D. Papachryssanthou) 69 et n. 69.

[10] Cf. Prôtaton 83 et n. 210. The sources did not list any *hegoumenoi* of the Great Lavra of Slavic origin, but this monastery also provided shelter for Slavic monks. Although the Great Lavra definitely preserved its Greek identity to the extent that, according to some opinions, it belonged to the group of Mount Athos monasteries that did not accept Slavic monks, there is still data which indicates that this monastery, too, was closely connected with the Slavs and that, in the 14th, 15th and 16th centuries, it represented a link, in the spiritual and cultural sense, between the Byzantine civilisation and the Slavs; in more details K. Pavlikianov, *Σλάβοι μοναχοί στο Άγιον Όρος από τον 10ο ως τον 17ο αιώνα*, Thessalonike 2002, 73–85.

already part of the Byzantine political and spiritual sphere. Regardless of the political, military, trade and spiritual relations that had evolved for centuries between Byzantium and the Slavs, who primarily populated the region of the Balkans, the institutional establishment of the Slavs on Mount Athos falls in a later period, so one can follow it with certainty only after the first half of the 11th century.

In itself, the presence of non-Greek monks on Mount Athos did not secure an international character for this monastic community. Mount Athos can be referred to as an international monastic centre in the true sense of the word only after the time when the institutional organisation of non-Greek monastic settlements started in the area of Mount Athos. The first such group consisted of the Georgians, who succeeded in founding their own monastery on Mount Athos at the end of the 10th century, which means while Athanasios the Great was still alive. The Iveron, as well as other non-Greek monasteries, which were founded later, were organisationally integrated with the Greek community on Mount Athos headed by a *prôtos*, but in it they preserved their ethnic – non-Greek – identity. The specific character of Mount Athos as a monastic centre was based on this fact.[11]

The Iberian model

The manner of the foundation of the Iveron monastery and the beginning of its rise makes it possible for the so-called *Iberian model* to be defined as a general outline. It is a question, however, whether and in what measure this formula was used in the subsequent cases of founding non-Greek monasteries – Amalfi,[12] the Russian Panteleemon, the Bulgarian Zographou and the Serbian Hilandar. What is certain is that, in all these cases, the founding of a monastery on Mount Athos represented the spiritual expression of the establishment of more intensive military, political and economic ties between the Byzantine Empire and certain foreign peoples, living at various distances from both Constantinople and Mount Athos. The long duration of political, military and economic relations, contacts between representatives of the Byzantine social elite with those of other countries, the occasional creation of family ties between members of foreign dynasties and the Byzantine imperial family, ways of integrating non-Greek nations and their state into the Byzantine political, ideological or even territorial space, etc. – are only some of the factors which enabled and accompanied the founding and rise of non-Greek monastic settlements on Mount Athos.

It is known that the founding of Iveron (979/980) was preceded by the establish-

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[11] Cf. Zakythinos, Sveta Gora 33–34.

[12] After the Georgians, the Amalfitans founded their monastery, which will be left aside in this paper because it was not a so-called national monastery. They were the inhabitants of a town which, in the 10th and 11th centuries, had close ties with Byzantium. About the presence of monks from Italy in the area of Athos, see A. Pertusi, Monasteri e monaci italiani all' Athos nell' alto Medioevo, *Le millénaire du Mont Athos 963–1963. Études et Mélanges* I, Chevetogne 1963, 217–251.

ment of close military and political relations between Byzantium and the Princedom of Tao. Prominent Georgians, representatives of aristocratic families, entered Byzantine military service during the 10th century, which soon made it possible for them, like the Armenians, to become integrated into the Byzantine social elite. Members of the Georgian ruling family were granted Byzantine titles and properties in land. The political and military connection was strengthened by the formation of spiritual and cultural ties. The foundation of Iveron was also preceded by the long-term process of creating closer links between Georgian monks and Greek monks and monastic centres on Byzantine soil. The Iberians were present in the Bithynian Olympus, in Trebizond, as well as in the capital, before they founded their settlement on Mount Athos.[13] The arrival on Athos of John the Iberian and his son Euthymios, who was preparing for future philological work in the Greek monastic environment on Olympus, is usually dated in 965, during the reign of Nikephoros II Phokas.[14] The Iberian monks were initially dependent on Athanasios the Great and enjoyed the hospitality of the Great Lavra, immediately after its founding (963).[15] Thus, the Lavra may be viewed as the domicile monastery, which helped in the founding of a separate monastery for the Iberians after about 16 years.[16] Although the separation was explained with the overpopulation of the Great Lavra, we can assume that this practical reason was actually an excuse for a pre-conceived plan for the creation of a separate monastic identity on Byzantine soil, in the Greek Christian environment. The founding of Iveron was supported by Basil II and the Athonite monastic community, although it was not well-disposed to the non-Greek monks, still accepted the foundation of an independent Iberian monastery. After a while, this monastery provided a connection

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[13] In the legal sense, the actual act of founding the Iveron monastery was based on an exchange of holdings: Tornikios ceded the rights over two Iberian monasteries to Basil II: one in Constantinople and the other, dedicated to St. Phokas, in Trebizond, see Janin, *Les églises et les monastères* 256. It is not known from when and on which basis Tornikios held these monasteries, in more detail Actes d'Iviron, *Archives de l'Athos* XIV, edd. J. Lefort, N. Oikonomidès, D. Papachryssanthou, avec la collaboration de H. Métrévéli, Paris 1985, 24 (J. Lefort). According to tradition, the Georgians had had their monastery in Jerusalem ever since the time of Constantine the Great. It was dedicated to the Sacred Cross and, as a Georgian monastery, was reconstructed around 1050, see Pringle, Churches, II, 33–40.

[14] John the Iberian and his son Euthymios previously stayed on Olympus, where Euthymios learned the Greek and Georgian languages. He later translated Greek Christian texts into Georgian, Iviron I, 20 (J. Lefort).

[15] At the time when the Iberians arrived on Athos, in the Great Lavra, the monastery had close connections with the Byzantine emperor, through its *hegoumenos*. Nikephoros Phokas was the donor of the Great Lavra and this fact led not only to the privileged position of the Great Lavra, but also of Mount Athos as the new Byzantine monastic centre.

[16] A transitional period in its founding was the separation of the Iberian monks, whom the *hegoumenos* of the Great Lavra, Athanasios, allowed to separate and settle in their own *kellion*, which was in the neighbourhood and on the property of the Great Lavra. Since the separation took place after 970, and therefore after the arrival of John Tornikios, a soldier and monk, it is presumed that he initiated that decision; Tornikios obviously possessed excellent organisational skills, in more detail Iviron I, 21 (J. Lefort).

between the Georgians and the Empire. At the end of the 12th century Iveron, together with the Amalfitan monastery, was viewed as a paradigm for non-Greek monasteries on Mount Athos, for the monastic communities διαφόρων γλωσσῶν.[17]

Some of the elements that could be described as the *Iberian model* may be observed, or at least assumed, in the cases of the foundation of the Slavic monasteries on Athos:

– monks of aristocratic origin, members of the wealthy and upper classes, educated as a rule, connected with the domestic and the Byzantine court;

– linkage with the Byzantine elite primarily in the so-called secular sphere, through military service or economic benefits, and then in the spiritual, through the Greek monastic centres in the capital or in some of the Byzantine provinces;

– enjoyment of hospitality in some of the Greek monasteries on Mount Athos (the so-called domicile monastery) until the moment when they decide to found a monastery of their own;

– support from the Byzantine emperor for the foundation of one's own ethnic monastic settlement on Byzantine territory, as a form of reward and/or the closer spiritual and political bonding of an ethnic community and representatives of its social elite with the Empire; this support was accompanied, as a rule, with the issue of deeds of donations to the monastery;

– support from the domestic ruler (primarily economic), enabling the survival of the monastery through the inflow of the necessary number of domestic monks, who maintain the connection between the two states, conveying Byzantine spiritual and cultural models to their own ethnic and political environment, etc.

The integration of the Iberians into the Byzantine environment also had a more drastic political epilogue at the time of Basil II: around two decades after the founding of the Iberian monastery on Mount Athos, the home country of its monks – the Princedom of Tao – was integrated with Byzantine territory after the death of the *kouropalates* David (1000) and organized as a new military and administrative unit under the name Iberia.[18] This development of Byzantine-Georgian relations, supported by the earlier successful integration of the Iberians into the Byzantine military system, made it possible for the Iberians and their venture to be viewed, in a manner of speaking, as the internal affair of Byzantium. Could this be also said for the spiritual integration of the Slavic peoples? The bonding of the Russians, Bulgarians and Serbs with Athos, as well as with Byzantium itself, had its particularities. Depending on the viewpoint and on the time perspective, this bonding could also be viewed as a process that was taking place both inside and outside the Empire.

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[17] Actes de Chilandar I: des origines à 1319, *Archives de l' Athos* XX, edd. M. Živojinović, V. Kravari, Ch. Giros, Paris 1998, n⁰ 3, l. 10–11; cf. n⁰ 4, l. 17. It is interesting that these documents mention only these two, non-Greek monasteries, founded at the end of the 10th century, but not the Slavic monastic settlements, established on Athos before the issue of the said acts – the Russian and the Bulgarian monastery.

[18] C. Holmes, *Basil II and the Governance of Empire (976–1025)*, Oxford 2005, 360 sq.

The Slavs on Mount Athos

Although the Slavs inhabited Chalkidike and its hinterland long before the Greek monastic centre was established on Athos,[19] the earliest information about Slavic monasteries, and even about the presence of Slavic monks on Mount Athos, originate only from the first half of the 11th century. The first monastery whose founder was a Slavic monk was mentioned in 1033/1034. It is assumed that the name of the monastery – Ζελιάνος/Željan – originated from the name of its founder.[20] It has been pointed out that this small monastery, which did not survive the 11th century, represented a Slavic creation from its foundation, unlike the subsequent monasteries on Athos which were first Greek and were only later taken over by the Slavic monks.[21] Unfortunately, there is no information about the brethren of this tiny monastery, but it could hardly be taken as an example of the ethnic organization of Slavic monks within the Greek community on Mount Athos. However, its existence testifies beyond doubt to the inclusion of the Slavs into the spiritual life on Mount Athos. One should not forget that this was the time when the Slavs from the Balkans were already politically and territorially included in the boundaries of the Byzantine Empire, and I will return to the significance of this fact later in the text.

The Russian example – The first Slavic monastery to be attested as a separate ethnic community on Athos was founded by the Russians. The bond between the Russians and Mount Athos existed before the foundation of the Russian monastery on Mount Athos. Antonios, the founder of the oldest monastery in Kiev, visited Mount Athos on two occasions and took his monastic vows there. As the annals read, the Kievopecherskaja Lavra monastery had the blessing of Mount Athos right from the beginning.[22] It is not known at what time the Russian monks arrived on Mount Athos, nor under what circumstances their monastery was founded. We only know that the monastery of *tou Rhôs* is already mentioned in a document from February 1016.[23] This Russian monastery can most probably be identified with the Xylourgou monastery, which is explicitly mentioned as the "Russian monastery" in the act of

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[19] I. Dujčev, Le Mont Athos et les Slaves au moyen âge, *Le millénaire du Mont Athos 963 – 1963. Études et Mélanges* II, Chevetogne 1963, 121–126.

[20] Actes de Saint-Pantéléèmôn, *Archives de l'Athos* XII, ed. P. Lemerle, G. Dagron, S. Ćirković, Paris 1982, n⁰ 2, l. 24–25; l. 41–42. Pavlikianov, *Σλάβοι μοναχοί* 23–31, assumes that the founder of this monastery might have been of Bulgarian origin, while N. Oikonomides, Meždunarodnijat harakter na Sveta gora prez srednovekovieto, *Rodina* 4 (1996) 25, leaves this issue open.

[21] Pavlikianov, *Σλάβοι μοναχοί* 31.

[22] *Povest' Vremennyh Let*, ed. Lihačev, Moskva 1950, I, 104–108; engl. transl.: S.H.Cross, O. P. Sherbowitz-Wetzor, *The Russian Primary Chronicle, Laurentian Text*, Cambridge Mass., 1953, 139–141. I. Smolitsch, Le Mont Athos et la Russie, *Le Millénaire du Mont Athos 963–1963*, I, Chevetogne 1963, 280.

[23] It refers to the Greek signature of Gerasimos, *hegoumenos* of *mones tou Rhôs*, Lavra I, n⁰ 19, l. 37–38.

the Athonite *prôtos* John from 1169.[24] After that year, the name *mone ton Rhouson* or *mone ton Rhôs* was transferred to the monastery of Saint Panteleemon (or the monastery of the Thessalonians), with which Xylourgou merged in 1169.[25] In any event, the inventory of the Xylourgou monastery from 1142 confirms the earlier presence of Russian monks in the monastery, as well as their lively literary activities, since "49 Russian books" are mentioned among the various "Russian" items.[26]

The circumstances under which the Russian monks settled on Mount Athos have not been clarified, but this act must be observed in the context of the Christianisation of Kiev Russia, which was accompanied by the spreading of the monastic way of life. It is not known whether the Russian monks were connected to just one monastery on Mount Athos from the beginning, or if some resided in other monastic settlements.[27] If one proceeds from the year when sources testify to the existence of a Russian monastery (1016), the conclusion is that the beginning of the Russian connection with Athos could be dated to the epoch of Basil II. Like in the case of the Georgians, the spiritual connection between the Russians and Byzantium was accompanied by the earlier establishment of political and military ties. Ever since the times of Constantine VII Porphyrogennetos, attempts were made to launch the Christianisation of Russia, but this process began in the true sense of the word only during the time of Basil. During his reign, relations with Kiev Russia were also strengthened by the (forced) marriage between Prince Vladimir and Princess Anna, the sister of Basil II. Conversion to Christianity was a precondition for this marriage, which provided the Russians with a special position in the community of Christian nations.[28] Did the arrival of Russian monks on Mount Athos represent just one form of *civilising* this northern people, which the Byzantine emperor himself would have had to encourage, for many reasons? Undoubtedly, Mount Athos played a significant role in the Christianisation of the Russians and in their learning about Greek Church literature. However, it should be noted that the significance of the Russian monastic community on Mount Athos exceeded the local – Russian-Byzantine – framework. The Russian monastic community, as the first Slavic creation on Mount Athos, became the seeding ground for the ideas of Mount Athos in the Slavic world, not only through church literature, but also through personal contacts with the rulers of the Slavic states. According to Teodosije's biography of St. Sava, it was a Russian monk

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[24] Pantéléèmôn n⁰ 8, l. 10. It is assumed that the Xylourgou monastery was Russian from the beginning of its existence, or that it had become so over time, by all accounts, before 1142, see ibid. 5.

[25] Pantéléèmôn n⁰ 8, Verso de A, l. 71–72, 76; Verso de B, l. 80–81, 85.

[26] Pantéléèmôn n⁰ 7, l. 25. Pavlikianov, *Σλάβοι μοναχοί* 120, leaves the possibility open that some of these manuscripts, labeled as "Russian," might have been of different origin, e.g. Bulgarian.

[27] Pantéléèmôn 10.

[28] For more details about the first Russian-Byzantine relations and the start of Christianisation among the Russians, see Obolensky, *Byzantine Commonwealth* 239–265.

who led to the arrival of Rastko Nemanjić on Mount Athos.[29] Russian-Serbian relations remained solid in the subsequent period and it is no accident that St. Panteleemon flourished in the 14th century thanks to the support of the Serbian rulers.[30]

The inclusion of the Russians in the Byzantine Christian and political sphere was different from the way in which this took place with the Balkan Slavs – the Bulgarians and the Serbs. Although the Russians were the first to be established on Mount Athos, there was no rivalry with Byzantium either in the political or ideological, or in the ecclesiastical sense. The Russian Church, with its centre in Kiev, had the rank of a metropolis and was dependent on the ecumenical patriarch and on the Byzantine emperor. The Russians did not explicitly strive towards making their domestic church independent in the way the Bulgarians and the Serbs did (they merely attempted periodically to impose their own metropolitan on Constantinople).[31] Moreover, the notion of Empire, which entailed the independence of their church from Constantinople and the founding of a patriarchy, appeared very early among the Bulgarians (in the first half of the 10th century and, with the revival of the Bulgarian Empire, in the 13th) and then among the Serbs (14th century). For this reason, it may be said that Mount Athos primarily had a spiritual influence on the development of Christianity and church organisation among the Russians, as well as on the development of the Russian written word. This was the specificity of the so-called Russian example. Neither did the foundation of the Russian monastery on Athos have the political and ideological gravity that was characteristic of the circumstances that, for instance, accompanied the founding of the Serbian monastery, Hilandar.

The Bulgarian and the Serbian presence on Athos was characterised by another specific circumstance. Namely, the rulers of both these states had temporary authority over the territory of Mount Athos in a certain period. The endorsement of the Byzantine political and ideological model was also reflected in these periods by their support of the monasteries of Mount Athos – the same their role models – emperors

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[29] Teodosije, *Žitije svetog Save*, prev. L. Mirković, redakcija prev. D. Bogdanović, Beograd 1984, 8–9.

[30] The documents from the archive of the St. Panteleemon monastery confirm that the Serbian rulers took care of the monastery, which can be tracked from the time of the establishment of Serbian authority on Mount Athos, during the reign of Stefan Dušan, Pantéléèmôn 157–190 (S. Ćirković). However, the Serbian rulers' connection with Panteleemon was also confirmed in the earlier period, which is shown by the chrysobull of Andronikos II Palaiologos, issued to the Russian monastery in September 1311, which reads that the emperor had assumed the care of the monastery at the request of his "son" and son-in-law, Serbian King Stefan Uroš II Milutin, ibid. n⁰ 10, l. 27–30.

[31] For more details Obolensky, *Byzantine Commonwealth* 296 sq. The so-called Nicaean period (1204–1261) is marked by Byzantium's significant concession regarding the ordination of Russians, and not exclusively Greeks, for the post of the Kiev metropolitan, ibid. 313–314. D. Obolensky gave a detailed description of Byzantine-Russian church relations in the study "Byzantium, Kiev and Moscow: A Study in Ecclesiastical Relations", *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 11 (1957) 21–78 (=VR, *Byzantium and Slavs: collected studies*, London 1971, VI).

of the Rhomaioi – had demonstrated centuries before that.

Still, besides the mentioned similarities between the so-called Bulgarian and Serbian model, Mount Athos differently influenced the development of political and ideological views of these two Balkan nations.

The Bulgarian example – The Bulgarian political ideology found its source in the ideology that originated directly from Constantinople. It seems that this fact dominated Bulgarian-Byzantine relations during the creation of the First and Second Bulgarian empires.[32] Another aspect of the frequent wars the two states waged since the settlement of the Bulgarians in the Balkans (end of the 7th century) was the mutual strengthening of economic, cultural and spiritual ties. In its expansion, the Bulgarian state's political, economic and spiritual aspirations were orientated towards Constantinople. This attitude towards the Byzantine capital, i.e. towards the emperor of the Rhomaioi and the ecumenical patriarch, was expressed during the reign of Symeon (893–927) who, in 913 – i.e. less than half a century after the conversion of his father Boris-Michael (864) and the subsequent comprehensive Christianisation of the Bulgarians (after 869/870) – received the insignia of imperial authority from the ecumenical patriarch himself. The idea of a universal empire thus was not abandoned but rather adjusted by Symeon with his own ambitions and capabilities, based on the then comprehension of the world order in the Christian community. Symeon did not manage to become accepted as "the emperor of the Bulgarians and the Rhomaioi," but his empire, which Byzantium had already recognised by the reign of his successor, Peter, represented a model to which the Bulgarian rulers of the Asen dynasty would return.[33]

During the First Bulgarian State and its most representative rulers – Boris-Michael, Symeon and Peter – the Greek monastic community on Mount Athos was just beginning its rise. The Bulgarians, who *de facto* dominated the Slavic Balkans till the beginning of the 11th century, did not build their spiritual link with Byzantine civilisation through Athos. Still, they too won a special place in that monastic community at one point, by creating institutional ties with the Zographou monastery.

The beginnings of the Greek monastery Zographou are dated to the second half of the 10th century.[34] It is not known, however, when and under what circumstances

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[32] The period of Samuel's empire (976–1018) is specific in the political and ideological sense, although Samuel and his successors relied on the tradition of the First Bulgarian Empire. The rulers of Samuel's state did not have the type of contact with Constantinople which was characteristic of the previous epoch. Samuel's state was in fact dependant on peripheral Byzantine centres and regions.

[33] Symeon was the only Bulgarian ruler to include the term "Rhomaioi" in his title. Ivan Asen II and some of his successors used the title "emperor of the Bulgarians and Greeks," Lj. Maksimović, Grci i Romanija u srpskoj vladarskoj titulu, *Zbornik radova Vizantološkog instituta* 12 (1970) 73 (= *Vizantijski svet i Srbi* 107–108). For more details about the role models of the so-called Second Bulgarian Empire, see I. Božilov, Renovatio Imperii Bulgarorum et Graecorum, *Sedem etjuda po Srednovekovna istorija*, Sofia 1995, 162–215.

[34] The monastery, dedicated to St. George, was erected before 980. The name of the monastery

this monastery became a settlement of Bulgarian monks. A legend from a later period (16th–18th century) places the founding of the Bulgarian monastery in 919, mistakenly connecting this date with the rule of Leo VI and attributing merit for the building of the monastery to three brothers, Moses, Aaron and John, the sons of the Ohrid emperor, Justinian.[35] However, the first known Slavic signature of a *hegoumenos* of Zographou is dated only to 1169,[36] by virtue of which we assume that the beginnings of the Bulgarian Zographou could be sought in the period around the middle of the 12th century, and by all means after 1049.[37] Zographou is not explicitly mentioned as a monastery *ton Boulgaron* until a document from 1286, more than a century later.[38]

Did the Mount Athos community cede Zographou to the Bulgarians or did the Bulgarian monks become numerous enough over time and simply take over the said monastery? In which political context could this event have been placed? Symeon's term as the *hegoumenos* of Zographou, corroborated by a signature from 1169, shows that Bulgarian monks (Slavs) were running this monastery on Mount Athos at least two decades before the struggle for the revival of the independent Bulgarian state began in the region between the Danube and the Haemus (1186). If one bears in mind that the Bulgarians, with their Empire and Church were finally integrated into Byzantine territory in 1018/1019,[39] and that this status did not change until the rebellion of the Asens of 1185, then their settlement on Mount Athos could be viewed as the process of spiritual integration of one *ethnos* within the Byzantine Empire. If we return to a record from 1033–1034 about the first known Slavic monk – the founder of the Željan monastery on Mount Athos – the conclusion is that a major inflow of Slavs to Mount Athos – possibly the subjects of the former state of Samuel, should be sought in the period after 1019, when Byzantium was attempting in different ways to

originates from the occupation of its founder – that of a painter (as was the case, for example, with the Xylourgou monastery – a carpenter) whose name was George. It is assumed that he was the monk George who signed the Tzimiskes *typikon* in 972, Prôtaton 92–93; I. Božilov, Osnovavaneto na svetata atonska bŭlgarska obitel Zograf. Legendi i fakti, *Svetogorska obitel Zograf* I, Sofia 1995, 14–15.

[35] The text is to be found in the so-called chronicle of Zographou, Actes de Zographou, Actes de l'Athos IV, edd. W. Regel, E. Kurtz, V. Korablev, Vizantijskij vremennik 13 (1907), Priložčenie 1, Actes Slaves, n⁰ V, 169–174; Actes Grecs, n⁰ LXVI, 150–157; J. Ivanov, *Bŭlgarski starini iz Makedonija*, Sofia 1931 (1970²) 537–546, Božilov, Osnovavaneto 19 et n. 1.

[36] This refers to the act of the *prôtos* of Mount Athos, John, from 1169, on which there is the Slavic signature of the *hegoumenos* of Zographou – Symeon, Pantéléémôn n⁰ 8, l. 59.

[37] Božilov, Osnovavaneto 16, 18; Pavlikianov, Σλάβοι μοναχοί 33.

[38] Actes de Zographou n⁰ X, l. 6–8, 12–14; cf. n⁰ XII, l. 44–45.

[39] Most of the territory of Samuel's Empire after 1019 was included, in the ecclesiastic sense, within the border of the Ohrid Archbishopric. In the military and administrative context, the territory was divided into several districts, the borders of which are still a point of debate, even nowadays, B. Krsmanović, *The Byzantine Province in Change (On the Threshold Between the 10th and the 11th Century)*, Belgrade – Athens 2008, 191–203.

include the conquered population of Bulgarian-Slavic ethnic structure[40] more close-
ly into its own territorial, political and cultural concept. The moment in which the
Zographou changed from a Greek to a Bulgarian monastery is at least evidence of the
preservation of the Bulgarian ethnic identity within the Greek Empire, but this act
itself could have been the consequence of the numbers of Bulgarian monks on Athos
and the natural need for their grouping into the boundaries of one specific monastic
settlement. One should not overlook the fact that, at that time, the Bulgarians knew
the Iberian, Amalfitan and Russian monastic communities. From the Byzantine per-
spective, the organising of the Bulgarians into one national monastery could have
been viewed as the expression of the development of Bulgarian-Byzantine relations
within the Empire. However, the Bulgarians' gaining political independence and the
rise of the Second Bulgarian Empire was to open a new stage in relations between the
Bulgarians and Mount Athos.

The Serbian example – At the time when the Byzantine universalistic view of
the Christian *oikoumene* was still undisputed (until 1204), the Serbs won a place for
themselves on Mount Athos. Literary tradition, as conveyed by the biographies of
St. Sava and St. Simeon-Nemanja, links the start of the Serbs establishing themselves
on Mount Athos with the spontaneous arrival, i.e. escape of Nemanja's youngest
son, Rastko, to the Russian Panteleemon. However, the personal decision of Rastko
Nemanjić was soon followed by the deliberate spiritual, political and ideological (dy-
nastic) orientation of the Serbian ruling house.

The circumstances that accompanied the Serbs taking over the abandoned and
derelict monastery of Hilandar were illustrated in detail in the sources. Thanks to
this, one can discern certain elements which could represent the so-called *Serbian
model*. From the end of the 11th century, when the centre of the Serbian state moved
from Duklja to the region of Raška, the Serbian rulers pursued, depending on the sit-
uation, an ambivalent policy towards Byzantium – peaceful, which implied submis-
sion and offensive (in which they mainly relied on Hungary), in an effort to become
free from its influence. The drawing of Serbia into the so-called Byzantine sphere of
influence was accompanied by attempts to coax the Serbian rulers into submission by
granting them titles and (or) property in land.[41] A turning point in Serbian-Byzan-
tine relations was the defeat of Stefan Nemanja in the Battle at the Morava (around
1191).[42] The peace treaty signed soon after that marked Byzantine recognition of the
Serbian state and its ruler who, on his part, accepted the order in the hierarchy of
Christian states, in which Byzantium held undisputed supremacy. The marriage be-

[40] About the ethnic structure of the subjects of Samuel's Empire, see S. Pirivatrić, *Samuilova
država. Obim i karakter*, Beograd 1997, 180–186.

[41] Thus, at the time of Manuel Komnenos, Stefan Nemanja was awarded a title and the *župa* of
Dubočica, which he received as a personal and hereditary holding, Stefan Prvovenčani, *Sabra-
na dela*: Žitije svetog Simeona, red., Lj. Juhas-Georgievska, T. Jovanović, Beograd 1999, 20.

[42] Regarding the problem of dating, see M. Marković, Prilozi za istoriju Svetog Nikite kod
Skoplja, *Hilandarski zbornik* 11, 2004, 94 et n. 72.

tween Stefan Nemanjić and Eudokia, the niece of Isaac II Angelos, resulted in the further integration of Serbia into the Byzantine political and ideological system.[43] This family connection led to a new stage in Byzantine-Serbian relations with the accession to the throne of Alexios III Angelos (1195–1203), Eudokia's father. It was during his reign that the Serbs secured a special place in the Christian community on Mount Athos.

The specific nature of the so-called Serbian model lies primarily in the fact that the Serbs' ever closer ties with Mount Athos were connected most directly with the Serbian ruling family. The youngest son of Nemanja, Rastko, fled to Mount Athos soon after the Battle at the Morava. It is assumed that this was in 1192/93, when he was at the age of around seventeen.[44] The biographers of Saint Sava, Domentijan and Teodosije, testify that Nemanja's son first found refuge in the Russian monastery and then became a monk in the Greek monastery of Vatopedi.[45] The change on the Byzantine throne in 1195 led to a change on the Serbian throne, too, so Nemanja stepped down in favour of the emperor's son-in-law and his second son, Stefan Nemanjić. After becoming a monk (1196), Nemanja, or Simeon, spent some time in the endowment of his family, the monastery of Studenica and then, in 1197, he joined his son Sava in Vatopedi. Thus, the two members of the Serbian dynasty, one of them a former ruler and, at the same time, the founder of the dynasty, made sure to secure a special place for the Serbs on the Byzantine Mount Athos.

The actual act of founding a Serbian monastery on Mount Athos is somewhat reminiscent of the so-called *Iberian model*. Just like the Georgians had first enjoyed the hospitality of the Great Lavra, so Vatopedi represented the domicile monastery for the Serbs, from which they separated to found their own. However, Simeon and Sava spent much less time in Vatopedi than the Georgians did in the Lavra. Barely six months passed between Simeon's arrival to Vatopedi (November 7th, 1197)[46] and the ceding of the abandoned monastery of Hilandar to the Serbs (June 1198). The act of founding a special, Serbian monastery, from the legal point of view, took place in stages: Alexios III Angelos first ceded Hilandar and other abandoned tiny monasteries and *kellia* to the Prôtaton, and then, when requested by Sava, he handed them over to Vatopedi; however, at the council of the *hegoumenoi* of the Athonite monasteries, held in Karyes in the spring of 1198,[47] the decision was made for Hilandar to

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[43] It is assumed that Stefan Nemanjić was seen as the heir of Stefan Nemanja already when he married the Byzantine princess.

[44] More details B. Miljković, *Žitija svetog Save kao izvori za istoriju srednjovekovne umetnosti*, Beograd 2008, 36.

[45] Domentijan, *Žitije svetog Save*, red. Lj. Juhas-Georgievska, T. Jovanović, Београд 2001, 14–20, 307–308; Teodosije, *Žitije svetog Save*, tarns. L. Mirković, red. D. Bogdanović, Beograd 1984, 8–9.

[46] For the date of Simeon Nemanja's arrival in Vatopedi see F. Barišić, Hronološki problemi oko godine Nemanjine smrti, *Hilandarski zbornik* 2 (1971) 43.

[47] Chilandar I, no. 3. Barišić, Hronološki problemi 44–46.

be granted to Simeon and Sava, in order to found their own monastery "like the Iberian and the Amalfitan ones," and a request was submitted to the emperor to grant his permission and confirm this act. After the assembly of Karyes, Simeon and Sava, on their part, also asked the emperor, thus supporting the plea of the *hegoumenoi* of Mount Athos. These dynamic activities yielded results and, by June 1198, Alexios III Angelos issued the first *chrysobull* to Hilandar, which defined it as a self-ruled Serbian monastery.[48]

From the moment they took possession of Hilandar, the Serbian ruling family acted in a synchronised fashion to do everything needed for the Serb monastic settlement to become economically stronger and to survive on Mount Athos.[49] Among other things, this resulted in the significant growth of the brethren: at the time of Nemanja's death (1199), around ten monks took up residence in Hilandar, but in 1204, just five years later, this number had reportedly grown to 90.[50] The further development and history of Hilandar showed that the pledge of Nemanja, who left the monastery in the care of his son Stefan and his successors, was fulfilled.[51]

In the time that followed, it turned out that Hilandar had a multi-faceted significance for the Serbian rulers and their state. During the entire Nemanjić epoch, the Serb monastery represented an important element in the development of their ruling ideology: both in the theoretical aspect because, through Mount Athos, the Serbs endorsed the political theory of the Byzantine model, and also as the confirmation of legitimacy they gained as donors by hereditary right.[52] Thus, all of Nemanja's successors, as they came to the throne, assumed donor activities in Hilandar and donated various precious items and holdings in land. The Lazarević and Branković families continued to take care of Mount Athos after the Nemanjić dynasty, as did members of the Serbian medieval aristocracy, who were especially active in this sense since the creation of the Serbian Empire.[53]

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[48] The monastery was intended as a refuge for monks of "Serbian origin", Chilandar I, n⁰ 4, l. 16–17, 28; cf. n⁰ 5, l. 9–10. For more details see ibid. pp. 22–26 (M. Živojinović).

[49] Sava, Simeon-Nemanja and Stefan Nemanjić, who is considered to be the donor of the monastery, looked after the development of Hilandar, Stefan Prvovenčani, *Sabrana dela*: Žitije svetog Simeona 56–60. See also the list of holdings Simeon donated to Hilandar, Dj. Trifunović, V. Bjelogrlić, I. Brajović, Hilandarska osnivačka povelja svetoga Simeona i svetoga Save, *Osam vekova Studenice*, Beograd 1986, 55.

[50] According to the Hilandar *typikon*, Sava, *hegoumenos* Methodius and "nine other monks" were staying in Hilandar at the time of Nemanja's death (Sveti Sava, *Sabrana dela*, red. T. Jovanović, Beograd 1998: Hilandarski tipik 28), or, as it reads in another place, "14 more monks" (Sveti Sava, *Sabrana dela*: Žitije svetog Simeona184). Cf. Miljković, *Žitija svetog Save* 94 n. 271.

[51] Stefan Prvovenčani, *Sabrana dela*: Žitija svetog Simeona 56.

[52] M. Živojinović, *Istorija Hilandara I: od osnivanja manastira 1198. do 1335. godine*, Beograd 1998, 118, 147–158. S. M. Ćirković, Hilandar i Srbija, *Manastir Hilandar*, ed. G. Subotić, Beograd 1998, 37–43; Lj. Maksimović, Hilandar i srpska vladarska ideologija, *Osam vekova Hilandara*, Beograd 2000, 9–16 (= *Vizantijski svet i Srbi* 179–189).

[53] I. M. Djordjević, *Zidno slikarstvo srpske vlastele u doba Nemanjića*, Beograd 1994, 28; M.

Hilandar also had great practical meaning for the Serbian state. It is known that since it had become autocephalous (1219), the Serbian church organisation relied upon the monks of Hilandar. Sava Nemanjić appointed the first Serbian bishops from among the members of the Hilandar brethren.[54] In later times, many Hilandar *hegoumenoi* became Serbian bishops and archbishops. Moreover, Hilandar showed itself to be a kind of Serbian diplomatic centre in the territory of the Greek Empire, so its *hegoumenoi* often carried out diplomatic missions at the court in Constantinople for the Serbian rulers.[55]

The specific character of the Serbian example is particularly illustrated by one more significant fact – that representatives of the Serbian political elite did not only donate to the monasteries land located in the Byzantine areas which were included in the borders of the Serbian state after the conquests, but also land on Serbian home territory. In it, the granting of land was not limited only to Hilandar (which received the first such holding from its founder, Simeon Nemanja) but to other monasteries of Mount Athos, such as the Greek Great Lavra and the Russian Panteleemon. The *oikonomoi* of these holdings were sent from the monasteries of Mount Athos, which enabled the creation of a more lasting and direct connection between the Athonites and the local, Serbian population and bureaucratic apparatus.[56]

Inclusion of Mount Athos into the "domestic" concept: the examples of Bulgaria and Serbia

The idea about the creation of a separate Serbian monastery on Mount Athos and the speed with which this was accomplished show that, at the end of the 12th century, the positioning of non-Greek monks on the Byzantine Athos was already viewed as a nation, state and its ruler occupying a prestigious place in the Christian world. On the other hand, the idea of national uniqueness was quite developed during the 12th century. Both of these aspects were demonstrated after 1204, when the Balkan Slavs – first the Bulgarians and then the Serbs – incorporated Mount Athos in a more obvious way into their own political and ideological agendas.

The fall of Constantinople, the disintegration of the Greek Empire and the founding of the Latin states on Byzantine territory, changed the political and ideological perception of the Slavic rulers. On the political level, this change was reflected primarily in the fact that the Bulgarians, with Ivan Asen II (1218–1241) on the throne, joined the struggle for the Byzantine heritage on an equal footing with

Živojinović, Vlastelinstvo manastira Hilandara u srednjem veku, *Manastir Hilandar*, ed. G. Subotić, Beograd 1998, 79–90; Ćirković, Hilandar i Srbija 37–43.

[54] M. Janković, Episkopije Srpske crkve 1220. godine, *Medjunarodni naučni skup Sava Nemanjić–Sveti Sava, istorija i predanje*, ed. V J. Djurić, Beograd 1979, 73–83.

[55] See, e.g., V. A. Mošin, M.A. Purković, *Hilandarski igumani srednjeg veka*, Beograd 1999².

[56] Actes de Lavra IV, *Archives de l'Athos XI*, edd. P. Lemerle, A. Guillou, N. Svoronos, D. Papachryssanthou, avec la collaboration de S. Ćirković, Paris 1982, 130–132; Pantéléèmôn 14–16; M. Živojinović, *Istorija Hilandara* I, 219–225; eadem, Vlastelinstvo, 79–90.

the Greek contenders. After conquering Thessalonike in late 1224, the despotes of Epiros, and then the emperor of Thessalonike, Theodore Komnenos Doukas, expanded his authority in Macedonia, Thrace and Chalkidike. Although there is no information about Theodore's relation towards the monasteries of Mount Athos (there are no known charters issued by him),[57] it is beyond doubt that, in the said period, Mount Athos affirmed itself, in a wider ideological and political sense, as the most significant universal Christian spiritual centre of the late Byzantine epoch. It is important to note that, for advocates of the Eastern rites, Mount Athos won this authority despite the difficult circumstances during the time of Latin rule and the most probable, temporary, formal digression from the Eastern Christian model.[58] In the battle for the Byzantine heritage that took place in the European part of the former Empire during the first half of the 13th century between the Greek states – the Empires of Nicaea and Thessalonike, in which the Bulgarian Empire with Ivan Asen also became involved, the relationship towards Mount Athos, in a certain way, became an indicator of true, universal, imperial authority. Having defeated Theodore in the battle at Klokotnitsa in April 1230,[59] Ivan Asen, after occupying most of the Thessalonian Empire, included Mount Athos into the territory of his state. In an attempt to strengthen his legitimacy over the new possession, Ivan Asen went to Mount Athos in that same month of 1230 and, like the emperors of the Rhomaioi, bearing gifts for the more important monasteries: not only the "domestic" Zographou, but also the Greek ones – the Great Lavra, Vatopedi, Iveron and the Prôtaton itself.[60] This was the first time that a foreign ruler assumed such a position towards Mount Athos. The acquisition of a part of territory and, with it, the rights which had undisputedly belonged to the emperors of the Rhomaioi until 1204, was expressed in the titulature of Ivan Asen, "emperor of the Bulgarians and Greeks," which is confirmed in Bulgarian, but not in Greek documents.[61] The ambition of the Bulgarian ruler did not stop at

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[57] B. Ferjančić, Sveta Gora i epirski Andjeli, *Hilandarski zbornik* 8 (1991) 19–35.

[58] M. Živojinović, Sveta Gora u doba Latinskog carstva, *Zbornik radova Vizantološkog instituta* 17 (1976) 77–92.

[59] This battle took place most probably in the first half of April 1230, see Ryccardi de Sancto Germano notarii, Chronica, ed. *C. A. Garufi*, Bologna 1937 (Rerum italicarum scriptorum, t. VII/2, fs. 2), 166.

[60] I. Božilov, *Familijata na Asenevci (1186–1460). Genealogija i prosopografija*, Sofia 1994, 86; cf. M. Laskaris, Vatopedskata gramota na car Ivan Asen II, Bŭlgarski starini XI, Sofia 1930; Actes d'Iviron III, *Archives de l'Athos* XVIII, edd. J. Lefort, N. Oikonomidès, D. Papachryssanthou, V. Kravari, avec la collaboration de H. Métrévéli, Paris 1994, 6–7; Actes de Vatopédi I: des origines à 1329, *Archives de l'Athos* XXI, edd. J. Bompaire, J. Lefort, V. Kravari,, Ch. Giros, Paris 2001, 14.

[61] The titulature was confirmed in four documents: in the Vatopedi Charter (Laskaris, Vatopedskata gramota; A. Daskalova – M. Rajkova, *Gramoti na bŭlgarskite care*, Sofia 2005, 29), on the gold seal, in the Dubrovnik Charter (ibid. 30) and on the Stanimaka inscription, see in more detail Božilov, Renovatio Imperii Bulgarorum et Graecorum 188 et nn. 132–135 (with bibliography); 189–194. The Asens did not assume the title of "emperor of the Rho-

giving donations to the monasteries. The idea of placing Mount Athos under the ju-
risdiction of the Patriarch of Tŭrnovo (which would have increased the significance
of the Bulgarian Church and its head) brought Asen into conflict with the monks of
Mount Athos.[62] The dispute was not solved until 1235, with the Treaty of Kallipolis
under which the emperor of Nicaea and patriarch, in protecting the autonomy of
Mount Athos, actually protected their right to the Byzantine heritage.[63]

In the mid-14th century, during the reign of Stefan Dušan, the role which
Mount Athos had in building the political and ruling ideology and in the further
spiritual development of the Balkan Slavs was expressed in a much more drastic fash-
ion. After Dušan captured Serres (September 1345), a 26-year period of Serbian rule
over Mount Athos began (1345–1371). The relationship between Stefan Dušan and
this monastic centre was characterised by several concessions on both sides. I shall
mention only two on this occasion, which were unprecedented in the context of the
customs, and the political and ideological views of that time: the agreement Dušan
made with the monks of Mount Athos in 1345 and the recognition of Dušan's title
of emperor.[64]

In November 1345, Dušan issued a general chrysobull to the monasteries of
Mount Athos, which confirmed all of the monastery's holdings and privileges, as well
as the autonomy of Mount Athos.[65] This act would not have been so unusual, had
it not been preceded by negotiations between the monks and the Serbian king.[66] It
is obvious that merely taking control of the territory of Athos was insufficient for
this monastic centre to accept the political change, so their acceptance was stipulated
with the signing of an agreement that was binding for both sides. Vowing to honour
the traditional organisation of Mount Athos, Stefan Dušan in return elicited reogni-
tion of his position as ruler: the monks consented to mentioning the king's name
during the liturgy, but still reserved the right to put the name of the basileus of the
Rhomaioi first. Although Mount Athos territorially became a part of the Serbian
state, in the spiritual and ideological sense, and even practically, it remained bound

maioi" which renders their rulers' titulature different from that of Symeon – "emperor of the
Bulgarians and the Rhomaioi", for more details Maksimović, Grci i Romanija 73.

[62] Prôtaton, Appendice I, b.

[63] With the Treaty of Kallipolis, the Bulgarians were granted permission to revive the patriarchy,
which represented a major privilege. Nicaea made this political concession in an attempt to
prevent the connection between, at that time, the strong Bulgarian state and the Greek Princi-
pality of Epirus. Cf. Obolensky, *Byzantine Commonwealth* 314. For negotiations at Kallipolis,
see also Živojinović, Sveta Gora u doba Latinskog carstva 87–88.

[64] Another precedent is the eight-month (August 1347–April 1348) stay of the Serbian imperial
family – Dušan, his wife Jelena and son Uroš – on Mount Athos, in greater detail, D. Korać,
Sveta Gora pod srpskom vlašću (1345–1371), *Zbornik radova Vizantološkog instituta* 31
(1992) 118 –122.

[65] *Grčke povelje srpskih vladara*, ed. A. Solovjev – V. Mošin, Beograd 1936, n⁰ V, 28–35 (VR:
London 1974).

[66] In more detail Korać, Sveta Gora 45–49, 51, 105.

to the Byzantine Empire. However, it harmonised its further existence with the new balance of power, accepting the Serb ruler and providing legitimacy to his conquests and position as a ruler, with respect for the order of hierarchy in the Christian universe. This dualism of the new – Serbian and the old – Byzantine authority over Mount Athos was expressed with varying intensity and depending on circumstances. If one bears in mind that the *prôtos* of Mount Athos, accompanied by representatives of the Athonite monasteries, attended the coronation of Stefan Dušan as emperor in Skopje in April 1346,[67] one may rightfully raise the question of whether the Athonite monastic community accepted Dušan, at least for a short period, not just as emperor, but as the sole or, at least, the primary emperor.[68] If, on this occasion, we leave aside the consideration of Dušan's title as ruler, one should reiterate that he never attributed to himself the title of „emperor of the Rhomaioi" (just as the case was with the emperors of the Second Bulgarian Empire), but, in the Serbian version of his titulature – as king and emperor – he used the terms „Greeks" or „Greek lands", while in the Greek version, besides Serbia, the term „Romania" was also mentioned.[69] The fact that Stefan Dušan did not insist on the authentic and traditional form of the Byzantine rulers' titulature could be interpreted in a number of ways – one even being that he did not contest the centuries-old hierarchical order in the Christian universe, although he justified the origin of his imperial crown in the same way as his predecessors, the emperors of the Rhomaioi.[70] On the other hand, although the monks of

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[67] The coronation was attended by the Serbian and Bulgarian patriarchs, with arch-hierarchs, „the arch-hierarch of the Greek throne" (possibly the Archbishop of Ohrid), the *prôtos* of Mount Athos, whose name is unknown, „with all the *hegoumenoi* and all the elders of the assembly of Mount Athos", *Zakonik cara Stefana Dušana 1349. i 1354,* ed. N. Radojčić, Beograd 1960, 144.

[68] It is not known whether the Athonites, during one period of Dušan's reign, abandoned mentioning the name of the emperor of the Romaioi. The assumption exists that after the coronation and, especially, during his stay on Mount Athos in the winter of 1347/1348, he was recognised as the only „official ruler" on Mount Athos, M. Lascaris, Actes serbes de Vatopedi, *Byzantinoslavica* 6 (1935/1936) 167–168; Korać, Sveta Gora 57.

[69] For more detail see Maksimović, Grci i Romanija 61–78. "Romania" was already incorporated in Dušan's Greek signature at the time when he was still a king, ibid. 75.

[70] About Dušan's imperial title, see study Lj. Maksimović, L'Empire de Stefan Dušan: genèse et caractère, *Travaux et mémoires* 14 (Mélanges Gilbert Dagron), Paris 2002, 415–428 (serbian transl.: *Vizantijski svet i Srbi* 191–206). Although Dušan, undoubtedly, expressed his aspiration towards endorsing Byzantine models in various ways – which is visible in the introductions of his charters to the monasteries of Mount Athos, in the use of the *menologion*, as well as in the closing chapter of the *Zakonik cara Stefana Dušana* (pp. 143–144) the Serbian autocracy was not only based on ruling by the grace of God, but it also relied on other elements. The canonisation of the majority of Serbian rulers, the comprehension of the Nemanjić dynasty as one that was of sacred origin, the view of Serbia as the "New Israel" and its ruler from the conceptual position that was somewhat closer to the original, Old Testament sense, represent only some of the elements that distinguish the political and ruling ideology of the medieval Serbian state from the Byzantine model. For more details about this issue S. Marjanović–Dušanić, *Vladarska ideologija Nemanjića. Diplomatička studija*, Beograd 1997, 60–99.

Mount Athos demonstrated support of his imperial coronation by attending it, and called him their lord and emperor, there is no information that they ever addressed him as *basileus ton Rhomaion*.[71]

The dualism of authority over Mount Athos – Serbian and Byzantine – continued to survive for both practical and ideological reasons: the Serbian conquests never encompassed all the territories where the holdings of the monasteries of Mount Athos were located, whose monks, by the nature of things, had to turn both to the emperor in Constantinople and to their new master, in order to protect them; on the other hand, the *basileus ton Rhomaion* did not abandon his traditional right to show grace to the community of Mount Athos. (His care did not diminish with the fact that, as of 1312, Mount Athos was excluded from the imperial jurisdiction and placed under that of the ecumenical patriarch). Stefan Dušan did not contest this right of the emperor, either, so the dualism of authority over Mount Athos also extended to the secular and political sphere: it was at the request of the master of Mount Athos, Emperor Dušan, that John V Palaiologos issued a chrysobull in July 1351 to the Serbian Hilandar,[72] which represents the only official Byzantine document that recognised Dušan's imperial title, which was limited to Serbia.[73] It seems that when necessary the joint Serbian-Greek care for Mount Athos was accepted by everyone – both the Byzantine and the Serbian ruler, as well as the monks of Mount Athos, who communicated with the ruler in Constantinople throughout the period of Serbian rule (until 1371).

Did the dualism, present in the secular sphere, have its equivalent in the spiritual

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[71] The following documents created in Dušan's time and after his death confirm that the Athonites recognised Dušan's imperial title: the act of the Prôtaton of December 1347, Actes de Chilandar. Première partie: Actes grecs, publiés par L. Petit, Viz. Vrem. XVII, Priloženie 1, St. Peterburg 1911 (repr. Amsterdam, 1975), n⁰ 135, l.1–2, 14–15, 26–27; the act of the Prôtaton from 1375 (ibid. n⁰ 156, l. 12–13, 16–17); the *Brebion* of the Prôtaton from the end of the 14th century (for more details I. Djurić, Pomenik svetogorskog protata s kraja XIV veka, *Zbornik radova Vizantološkog instituta* 20, 1981, 148–149).

[72] In more detail Lj. Maksimović, Byzantinische Herrscherideologie und Regierungsmethoden im Falle Serbien. Ein Beitrag zum Verständis des byzantinischen Commonwealth, *POLY-PLEYROS NOYS. Miscellanea für Peter Schreiner zu seinem 60. Geburtstag*, München – Leipzig 2000, 186–187 (serbian transl.: *Vizantijski svet i Srbi* 170–171).

[73] Actes de Chilandar I (L. Petit), n° 138, l.7. John V issued this chrysobull at the time when he was in Thessalonike, since his opponent, John VI Kantakouzenos (1347–1354) was in Constantinople. The issuing of the chrysobull to Hilandar and the recognition of Dušan as the emperor of Serbia represents a concession by John V, which strengthened the alliance with the Serbian ruler at the given moment.

In the context of the hierarchy established in 1351 (Serbian monks from the Hilandar monastery – the Serbian emperor and the then true lord of Mount Athos – the Byzantine emperor), one should also mention the hierarchy established in relations between the Serbian and the Bulgarian emperor in April 1346: after Dušan's coronation, Bulgarian monks from Zographou addressed the Bulgarian emperor Ivan Alexander, who intervened with Emperor Dušan on their behalf, Actes de Zographou n⁰ XXXVII (Actes grecs); *Grčke povelje srpskih vladara* n⁰ IX, 64–71.

one? There is no data indicating that Mount Athos had particular obligations towards the patriarch in Peć.[74] Dušan's general chrysobull did not interfere with the custom of the ordination of the Mount Athos *prôtos*, although it is unknown whether the *prôtoi* should have come to Constantinople to confirm their title. Dušan personally took care of Mount Athos, using the authority of this all-Christian monastic community, both for strengthening his own power in the areas captured from Byzantium and for improving his reputation in the domestic, Serbian, environment.

Even though a favourable memory of the Serbian emperor Dušan has been preserved in the tradition of Mount Athos,[75] it is not exactly known what view the monks held about him after he had come into conflict with the patriarch of Constantinople. The problem of the so-called Kallistos anathema will not be considered on this occasion, but one should note that nowadays, there are grounds for the revival of the earlier thesis – that the excommunication of the Serbian emperor, the patriarch and his arch-hierarchs did not take place in 1350,[76] but later, most probably in the autumn of 1352.[77] There is no data that would reveal whether the conflict with the patriarch of Constantinople had brought about a change in the relations between Emperor Dušan and the monks of Mount Athos, although it has been noted that, after June 1352,[78] Dušan issued no charters to the monasteries of Mount Athos, except those issued to the Serbian Hilandar, at the assembly in Krupišta (1355). His death (December 1355) hastened the disintegration of the Serbian Empire, but Mount Athos remained under Serbian rule and within the so-called state of Serres until 1371. During those 15 years and, especially, during the reign of despotes Jovan Uglješa (1365–1371), the Serbian influence on Mount Athos grew even stronger.[79]

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[74] The conflict between the Greek and the Serbian church was about the holdings in Macedonia which, after the conquest, became parts of the Serbian state, but it had no connection with Mount Athos.

[75] According to Korać, Sveta Gora 116, 120, the only negative assessment of Dušan's rule over Mount Athos was preserved in the so-called chronicle of Zographou, which reads that, in 1351, Dušan destroyed six Zographou chrysobulls, for which he would soon pay the penalty, *Grčke povelje srpskih vladara* n^0 XLV, l. 227–229.

[76] This opinion, which is mostly accepted in literature, was presented by G. Ostrogorski, *Serska oblast posle Dušanove smrti*, Beograd 1965, 129–130 (=Sabrana dela IV: *Vizantija i Sloveni*, 592–593).

[77] V. Mošin, Sv. Patrijarh Kalist i Srpska crkva, *Glasnik srpske pravoslavne crkve* 27 (1964) 202. In recent times, hypothesis was put forward by Srdjan Pirivatrić at the IV National Conference of Byzantine Studies (Belgrade, October 27–29, 2005) in a statement entitled "The Serbian Empire in the Works of the Late Byzantine Historians". See also, S. Pirivatrić, The Death of Tsar Stefan Dušan: A Contribution to the Issue, *Byzantium, new Peoples, new Powers: the Byzantino-Slav Contact Zone, from the Ninth to the Fifteenth Century,* edd.M. Kaimakamova, M. Salamon, M. Smorag Różycka, Cracow 2007, 292–293.

[78] S. Pirivatrić, Srpsko carstvo u spisima poznovizantijskih istoričara (unpublished statement from the IV National Conference of Byzantine Studies, see n. 77).

[79] A small number of Uglješa's charters have been preserved, but it is known that he was especially fond of the monastery of Vatopedi and, naturally, Hilandar. In more details Ostrogorski,

The Serbs participated in the central management of Mount Athos in greater numbers, while despotes Jovan Uglješa made sure to enable Serbian monks to have a more significant participation in the work of the court of the Serres metropoly. During his reign, the first attempt was made towards a reconciliation between the Serbian Church and the Church of Constantinople, limited to the territory of the Serres state (1368, 1371). Ultimately, reconciliation, finalised at the time of prince Lazar (1375), confirmed the connection between the monks of Mount Athos and the Serbian state. The reconciliation between the two churches, first at the time of despotes Uglješa and then under prince Lazar, was encouraged by the Serbian spiritual circles that were closely connected with Byzantium and the monasteries of Mount Athos.[80] On the other hand, the care of the Serbian political elite for the monks, their donations to large monasteries, the reconstructions of small and derelict monasteries, as well as the attempts at reconciliation with the Church in Constantinople, were an expression of the spiritual and political aspiration towards uniting the Balkan Slavs and Greeks within the Orthodox Christian world, jeopardised by the advance of the Ottomans.

The penetration by the Ottomans into the Balkans opened a new chapter in the history of Athos. Although this period is beyond the thematic framework of this paper, I would like to recollect that the fact that they were politically and militarily in jeopardy, prevented the Balkan Slavs from providing significant protection to Mount Athos. The fall of Bulgaria (1393) was followed by that of Constantinople (1453) and subsequently the Serbian despotate (1459). Mount Athos also fell under Ottoman rule, but its separate identity remained preserved within the borders of the new Empire.[81] In this period, the Wallachian and Moldavian princes became the most important patrons of this monastic centre and, in the second half of the 16th century Russian assistance became more and more significant.[82]

The Slavs' connections with Mount Athos, shaped at the time when monasteries, with a special – Slavic identity, were formed there under the aegis of the Byzantine Empire, were beyond doubt multi-faceted. Although there were significant differences between the Russians, Bulgarians and Serbs in the way in which they perceived Mount Athos, one cannot contest that this monastic centre was and has remained to this day the spiritual source of Orthodox Christianity for the Slavs. Mount Athos was one of the legacies of the Byzantine Empire through which the Slavs were included into Byzantine civilisation. While adjusting the political and ideological concepts to their local needs, the Slavs joined in the life on Mount Athos in different periods,

Serska oblast 113 sq; Korać, Sveta Gora 127 sq.

[80] R. Mihaljčić, Kraj Srpskog carstva, Beograd 1975 (repr. 2001) 183–189; D. Bogdanović, Izmirenje srpske i vizantijske crkve, *O knezu Lazaru*, Beograd 1975, 81–91 .

[81] In more details A. Fotić, Sveta Gora i Hilandar u Osmanskom carstvu (XV–XVII vek), Beograd 2000, 24–87.

[82] ibid. 182–240.

bringing new vitality to this Greek environment with their customs and views. After the disappearance of the Byzantine Empire, its traditions remained preserved in the Slavic world largely thanks to the renown and significance Mount Athos had gained among the medieval Slavic states.