

The Byzantine Emperor and Byzantine Heritage in Southeastern Europe (7th-13th centuries). Remarks on the Imperial Role in Processes of Acculturation

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Abstract: The complex and diversified Byzantine heritage is one of the key elements of both the past and the present in the region of South-east Europe. Beyond the administrative framework of the Empire it emerged as a result of processes of acculturation and appropriation of Byzantine models, in which the Byzantine emperors played a significant role, particularly through support of the Church in gradual processes of evangelization and Christianisation of the “new peoples”, from the 7th century onwards. However, in the process of the establishment of ecclesiastical organisation among the Bulgarians and the Serbs the emperors relied upon Greek and Latin-speaking bishops and administration, and not on the model of Slavonic church culture and organisation. The appearance and dissemination of the legacy of Cyril and Methodius and their disciples in the Bulgarian and Serbian state organisms as important media for the import of Byzantine cultural patterns and the subsequent creation of a Byzantine heritage, was not the work of imperial Byzantine policy, but rather the indirect result of the failure of the mission of Cyril and Methodius in Moravia and the acceptant policies of first Bulgarian and then Serbian rulers who embraced that tradition. The convergent processes of acceptance of the fundamental elements of Byzantine political theory and the ambition to establish independent ecclesiastical organisations among the Bulgarians and the Serbs took place, more often than not, against the resistance and more rarely with the acquiescence of Byzantine actors (between unilateral

and consensual appropriation), proceeding at different rhythms, and taking on different characters. Both, however, were stabilized in the critical period following the Fourth Crusade (1204) with the imperial decisions on the creation of autocephalous Churches in the territory of the Serbian kingdom (1219) and the Bulgarian empire (1235) which established the processes of acculturation of Byzantine models on a firm foundation, supported as they were by the activity of the local lay authorities. This also changed the framework in which, over the ensuing epoch, the influence of the emperors was to manifest in the formation of the Byzantine heritage beyond the boundaries of the Empire itself.

Keywords: Byzantine heritage, Byzantine emperor, acculturation, appropriation, Church autocephaly

The Byzantine heritage is a key component, not only of the past, but also the present in the region of South Eastern Europe (SEE), an important and extensive field for research that can be considered in a long temporal vertical. The extent of the field is a result of duration and complexity of the phenomenon, with its beginnings in the epoch of late antiquity and development throughout the extended Middle Ages, understood as an epoch of long duration, and its consequences in the multi-layered, long-lasting diffusion of diverse cultural patterns, understood in the broadest sense of the term, generated or originating in the Byzantine Commonwealth of a kind and in the Byzantine epoch of Roman history, including its post-Byzantine extension, up to the beginnings of the Modern epoch.¹ The traces of the complex Byzantine Heritage in SEE can be followed in many layers, in the field of archaeology, the material artefacts, sacral art, literature including especially the huge corpus of church literature, legal and political theory and praxis, different customs etc. The Byzantine Heritage, the way it has been studied and understood, also influenced the processes of modernization in SEE. The topic of this text is spatially limited to certain areas of SEE, those that were under the impermanent and relatively short-lived rule of the Roman-Byzantine emperor, where the presence of elements of the Byzantine heritage in them rarely appears as a consequence of their organic affiliation with the empire.² It starts with the beginnings of the medieval period, which in SEE we detect

¹ Conceived as an introduction to a round-table discussion devoted to the Byzantine heritage in South-Eastern Europe, this text was in a way inspired by the seminal study by D. Obolensky, *The Byzantine Commonwealth. Eastern Europe, 500-1453*, London, 1971, and in particular the chapter “Factors in cultural diffusion”. See also a recent discussion of the Byzantine Commonwealth in E. Χρυσός, “Εισαγωγή στην *Βυζαντινή Κοινοπολιτεία* του Ντιμίτρι Ομπολένσκι”, in Ντ. Ομπολένσκι, *Βυζαντινή Κοινοπολιτεία*, Αθήνα 2022, p. 7-14.

² A recent overview of some important aspects of the influence of the Byzantine heritage on the Serbian art is published in the three-volume collective work D. Popović, D. Vojvodić (eds.), *Byzantine Heritage and Serbian Art*, 3 vols, Belgrade, 2016; vol. I. V. Bikić (ed.), *Processes of Byzantinization and Serbian Archaeology*; vol. II. D. Popović, D. Vojvodić (eds.), *Sacral Art of the Serbian Lands in the Middle Ages*; vol. III. L. Merenik, V. Simić, I. Borozan (eds.), *Imagining the Past. The reception of the Middle Ages in the Serbian art from the 18th to the 21st century*. For medieval Bulgaria see: E. Bakalova, M. Dimitrova, M.A. Johnson (eds.), *Medieval Bulgarian Art and Letters in a Byzantine*

in the twilight of the late antique world, from the second half of the 6th and the first decades of the 7th centuries, and which in these areas lasted generally much longer than in those on which the paradigm of historical periodization is usually based. It refers to the role of the Byzantine, in fact Roman emperor of Constantinople, as a factor in the process of diffusion of Byzantine patterns in relevant ethnic, social and state formations of the Bulgarians and the Serbs, and to certain aspects of that role until the first decades of 13th century.

It is perhaps convenient to start with the fact that the era of late antiquity in SEE laid down some elements of the cultural substrate, which would later prove important for the reception of new patterns in future periods. This layer of the substrate was spiritual and religious in nature, generated in the early Christian Church and spread through its early organization. In terms of language, the relative dominance of Latin over Greek in SEE was undermined by the waves of migrations of “the new peoples” in the 6th and 7th centuries, first by the arrival and settlement of large groups of Slavs, and then by individual ethnic groups, Slavic Serbs in the province of Dalmatia and Turanian Bulgars in the provinces of Scythia Minor and Moesia Inferior, as well as the ephemeral influence of the Turanian Avars. According to a much later version of events, formulated in imperial circles in Constantinople in the 10th century, the Serbs, like the Croats, came to the Roman Empire at the invitation of Emperor Heraclius and settled in the province of Dalmatia as part of the military defence system, recognising the supreme authority of the emperor who initiated their evangelization and baptism into the Christian faith by a priest sent from Rome and within the Roman ecclesiastical jurisdiction, which meant in accord with the Latin linguistic formulations.³ It should be recalled that, by that time, the beginning of the 7th century, within the body of the Christian Church of the Orthodox (Chalcedonian) confession, the system of pentarchic jurisdiction of the great and ancient thrones (Rome, Constantinople - New Rome, Antioch, Alexandria, Jerusalem) had already taken shape, albeit with changing boundaries and with certain exceptions, permanent or ephemeral (the autocephalous Church of Cyprus, Justiniana Prima, Georgia), which in terms of ecclesiastical geography originated from the administrative organization of the Empire and its division into prefectures, dioceses and provinces, or was a result of Christian missionaries outside of its boundaries.⁴ It happened that the original Christianization of the Serbs was very

Context, Sofia 2017.

³ *Constantine Porphyrogenitus De administrando imperio*, ed. G. Moravcszik, Washington D. C., 1967 (= *DAI*), cap. 29-36, p. 122-165. T. Živković, *De conversione Croatorum et Serborum. A lost source*, Belgrade, 2012; П. Коматина, *Константин Порфирогент и рана историја Јужних Словена*, Belgrade, 2021.

⁴ В. Феидᾶς, *Ὁ Θεσμός τῆς Πενταρχίας τῶν Πατριαρχῶν*, vol. 1, Athens, 1969; vol. 2, Athens, 1970; vol. 3, Athens, 2012; M.-H. Blanchet, F. Gabriel, L. Tatarenko (eds.), *Autocéphalies. L'exercice de l'indépendance dans les Églises slaves orientales (IX^e-XXI^e siècle)*, Rome, 2021.

limited in scope, restricted probably only to the highest social stratum, and needed a second and a more massive wave in the centuries to come.⁵

At the very time the Serbs entered the political and cultural organism of the Roman Empire it was undergoing profound changes elsewhere. The Arab conquests during the 7th and 8th centuries made a highly significant contribution to the geostrategic orientalizing of the Empire, and to its cultural Hellenization, i.e. Byzantinization, embodied in the strengthening of the role of predominantly Greek-speaking Constantinople as the political and ecclesiastical centre of an Empire which itself was predominantly Grecophone as well. Further impetus in this respect came with the permanent loss of Rome, which until as late as the mid-8th century was a constituent part of the Empire. The Byzantinization and linguistic Hellenization of the Roman Empire significantly influenced the character of the acculturation of the SEE region. However, although reduced, cultural diglossia and polycentricity did not disappear. This is evident in two very important acculturation processes in SEE - the Christianization of the Bulgarians and another wave of the Christianization of the Serbs, which occurred almost simultaneously.

In both processes the institution of the Roman Byzantine emperor played a key role. In general, Byzantine missionary work was diarchic in character and the clergy always acted with the support of the imperial authority.⁶ In the course of the early Bulgarian ethnogenesis, namely the merging of the Turanian Bulgars with the local, predominantly Slav population, the evangelization and Christianization of the Bulgarians began in 864 with the baptism of their ruler Boris, whose godfather was Emperor Michael III. The new wave of evangelization and Christianization of the Serbs began after 867, as part of Emperor Basil I's policy towards the different Slavic communities of Dalmatia, in an early phase of the Serb ethnogenesis.⁷ The Christianization of Bulgaria had, in the first phase, a Grecophone linguistic character, with a very brief episode of transferal to Roman jurisdiction, which

⁵ Lj. Maksimović, "The Christianization of the Serbs and the Croats", in A.-E. Tachiaos (ed.), *The Legacy of Saints Cyril and Methodios to Kiev and Moscow, Proceedings of the International Congress on the millennium of the conversion of Rus' to Christianity, Thessaloniki, 26-28 November 1988*, Thessaloniki, 1992, p. 167-184; cf. П. Коматина, *Црквена политика Византије од краја иконоборства до смрти цара Василија I*, Belgrade, 2014, p. 261-285. A significant archaeological find from the Roman province of Dalmatia, the baptistery of Prince Višeslav, with an inscription in Latin, can be linked, with some reserve, to the written source data about a Serbian prince of similar or the same name, dating from the late 8th or early 9th centuries, see *DAI*, p. 154. This archaeological artifact is most often attributed to an otherwise unknown Croatian prince and included into the Croatian Christian cultural heritage, cf. M. Matijević-Sokol, "Krsni zdenac Hrvata. Paleografsko-epigrafska raščlamba natpisa sa krstionice kneza Višeslava", *Croatica Christiana Periodica* 59, 2007, p. 1-31.

⁶ S. A. Ivanov, "'With the Emperor's Help': An Open-Handed Mission and Byzantine Diplomacy", in A. Δεληκάκη (ed.), *Διεθνές Επιστημονικό Συνέδριο Κύριλλος και Μεθόδιος: Το Βυζάντιο και ο Κόσμος των Σλάβων, 28-30 Νοεμβρίου 2013*, Thessaloniki, 2015, p. 87-91.

⁷ В. Гюзелев, *Покръстване и християнизация на Българите*, Sofia, 2006; И. Божилков, *История на средновековна България*, Том II, *Християнска България*, Sofia, 2017, p. 4-42; Lj. Maksimović, "The Christianization..."; cf. П. Коматина, *Црквена политика Византије...*, p. 261-285.

could not have had any lasting consequences in terms of cultural Latinization or Romanization. The early church organization in Bulgaria was under the jurisdiction of the Patriarchate of Constantinople.⁸ On the other hand, the early Serb ethnic space was under the jurisdiction of the Papacy, i.e. of Latin speaking bishoprics of the Adriatic littoral which during the time of Basil I briefly operated within the framework of Constantinople's ephemeral ecclesiastical jurisdiction and not that of Rome.⁹ However, our understanding of the character of this phase of the Christian acculturation of the Serbs is extended somewhat by the archaeological remains of the churches. These indicate the direct influence of Constantinople models in the early 9th century, perhaps most notably in the case of St. Peter's Church in Ras (today in the suburbs of Novi Pazar, modern Serbia), also known as the church of the Holy Apostles. St. Peter's Church is the best preserved testimony to the direct influence of the cultural patterns of Constantinople in the Serbian ethnic space of the early Middle Ages.¹⁰

The role of the Roman-Byzantine emperor in the acculturation of both the Bulgarians and the Serbs had, it seems clear, another important aspect, though in the main it can only be discussed on the hypothetical plane. Namely, given the place and role of the Roman emperor in the Church, it is natural to assume a liturgical commemoration of his name both in the churches lying within the Empire proper, and also in churches that lay within the jurisdiction of Constantinople but beyond direct imperial authority.¹¹ Both at the level of their real relationship and in terms of the Byzantine political conceptions, the Bulgarian and Serbian rulers were not of the same rank. The Bulgarian prince was an independent ruler, his authority was of Divine origin, while the Serbian princes were appointed by the Byzantine emperor and sent their written orders. Thus it was natural that the Christianization of the Bulgarians should have begun with the creation of kinship between the rulers,

⁸ A. Nikolov, "The Bulgarian Church in the 9th-10th Century", in *Autocéphalies*, p. 139-159.

⁹ The traces of Latin ecclesiastical toponomastics in the early Serb ethnic space, as well as the traces of Latin in Serbian ecclesiastical terminology, are certainly the consequence of the jurisdiction of the Latin speaking bishoprics of the Adriatic littoral, but is not possible to date more precisely either their appearance. Hypothetically, these linguistic traces should be older than the 10th century, cf. A. Лома, "Рани слојеви хришћанских топонима на старосрпском тлу", *Ономастолошки прикази* 11, 1990, p. 1-18, 11, 16; Т. Живковић, *Црквена организација у српским земљама (рани средњи век)*, Belgrade, 2004, p. 116-122.

¹⁰ M. Marković, "Beginnings of Artistic Activity in the Serbian Lands (9th-11th Century)", in D. Popović, D. Vojvodić (eds.), *Sacral Art of the Serbian Lands in the Middle Ages, Byzantine Heritage and Serbian Art*, II, p. 147-163, 147-149; more details in M. Marković, D. Vojvodić, *Church of the Holy Apostles Peter and Paul in Ras*, Novi Sad, 2021, p. 85-121.

¹¹ R. F. Taft SJ, *A History of the Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom*, Vol. 4 *The Diptychs*, Rome, 1991, p. 1-6, 134, 161-163, 168; Ch. Nassis, "Calling Him by Name with the Voice of Strangers: The Commemoration of a Civil Ruler Beyond His Realm as Observed in Eastern Orthodox Liturgical Practice", in B. Groen, D. Galadza, N. Glibetić, G. Radle (eds.), *Rites and Rituals of the Christian East*, Leuven, Paris, Valpole Ma., 2014, p. 423-444, 423-426.

whereas in the case of the Christianization of the Serbs it was just as natural that such kinship was not possible.¹² However, in so far as the spirit of contemporary ecclesiology and interrelations can be discerned, it would seem that the episcopal liturgies in both cases had to contain *polychronia* for the ruling orthodox Roman-Byzantine emperor, without whom, after all, they would not exist.

Starting and accelerating the process of Christianization of Bulgarians and Serbs, as an element of imperial policy, and building the earliest ecclesiastical organizations among them (episcopal among Bulgarians and parochial among Serbs) formed the basis of more complex forms of acculturation in the Christian key. At the end of Basil I's reign, it must have seemed, at least from Constantinople, that in the Bulgarian case this would take place through the medium of the Greek language, and in the Serbian regions through Latin. The turnaround came as an indirect, unplanned, and it would seem, unwanted consequence of imperial policy. The arrival in Bulgaria in 886, of a group of expelled disciples of St. Cyril and Methodius, who had been sent to Moravia in 863 by Emperor Michael III and Patriarch Photius, and their subsequent work under the patronage of Khan and Knez Boris and later his son Simeon, saved their work on the creation - in terms of the language and script - of a distinctive Slavonic Christian culture.¹³ All the indications are that the activities of Saints Cyril and Methodius cannot be linked to Bulgaria before the arrival of their disciples in 886. It follows from this that imperial policy did not aspire to the creation of a Slavonic culture in Bulgaria and that the emergence of the traditions of Saints Cyril and Methodius there, especially of the corpus of ecclesiastical literature written in the Glagoljica alphabet, cannot be linked to the imperial policy. Since Constantinople had to be aware of the importance and potential of the Slavonic ethnic stratum in Bulgaria, it follows that the Empire deliberately avoided interconnecting the mission of Cyril and Methodius in Moravia with the Christianization of Bulgaria, relying exclusively on the power of the Grecophone episcopal network established after 870, when it was decided by the Synod of Constantinople that Bulgaria should belong to the jurisdiction of Constantinople and not Rome. The decision of the Synod of Constantinople in 880 obliging the patriarch not to consecrate an archbishop for

¹² F. Dölger, "Der Bulgarenherrscher als geistlicher Sohn des byzantinischen Kaisers", *Известия на българско историческо дружество* 16-17, 1939, *Recueil Peter Nikov*, p. 219-232 (= F. Dölger, *Byzanz und die europäische Staatenwelt*, Darmstadt, 1964, p. 183-196); G. Ostrogorsky, "The Byzantine Emperor and the World Hierarchical Order", *The Slavonic and East European Review* 35, 1956, p. 1-14; cf. also the discussion of G. Prinzing, "Byzantium, Medieval Russia and the So-called Family of Kings. From George Ostrogorsky to Franz Dölger's Construct and its Critics", in A. Alshanskaya, A. Gietzen, Chr. Hadjiafxenti (eds.), *Imagining Byzantium. Perceptions, Patterns, Problems*, Mainz, 2018, p. 15-30.

¹³ A.-E. Ταχιάος, *Κύριλλος και Μεθόδιος. Οι θεμελιωτές της αρχαίας σλαβικής γραμματείας*, Thessaloniki, 1992; see also *Διεθνές Επιστημονικό Συνέδριο Κύριλλος και Μεθόδιος: Το Βυζάντιο και ο Κόσμος των Σλάβων*. For the creation of an early corpus of liturgical books of the Byzantine ritual in Bulgaria see A. M. Пентковский, "Славянское богослужение византийского обряда и корпус славянских богослужебных книг в конце IX – первой половине X веков", *Slovéne* 2, 2016, p. 54-120.

Bulgaria is often understood as a part of the process of granting the autocephaly of the archbishopric. However, the outcome was probably a degree of the autonomy of the archbishopric, which would mean that the Emperor had the right to appoint the archbishop of Bulgaria, who afterwards would be consecrated at the regional synod.¹⁴ In any case, the reception of Byzantine patterns in Bulgaria was, in the coming decades, a matter for local decision-makers, most notably the Bulgarian Khan, later Knez Michael Boris, and his son, first Knez and finally Emperor Simeon.¹⁵ Then, if not earlier, a new alphabet was created - Cyrillic, which gradually suppressed the older Glagolitic script¹⁶. There followed a fruitful period of work on translations and writing of liturgical and other ecclesiastical literature in Preslav and Ohrid. As the new capital of the state, Preslav in the time of Simeon developed under the strongest influence of Constantinople. The predominantly mimetic character of this young Slavonic Christian culture was an important factor in the emergence of Simeon's imperial ambitions. Initially, in 913, he aimed at participating in imperial rule in Constantinople and even at its conquest by military means, but over time, and especially after Simeon's death in 927, these ambitions receded into the reality of a regional Bulgarian Empire. It is important to point out that the Roman-Byzantine Emperor Romanos Lekapenos recognized the imperial title of Simeon's son and successor Peter.¹⁷ Also, by the decision of Romanos Lekapenos, the archdiocese of Bulgaria achieved autocephaly, and its head was honoured with the title of patriarch, like that of Constantinople and the other occupants of the great thrones.¹⁸ The imperial decisions were part of a peace treaty, the axis of which was the marriage of the emperor's granddaughter Maria and the Bulgarian emperor Peter, solemnised in 927, which made the Bulgarian ruler a member of the Byzantine imperial family and his wife the theoretical co-ruler with her husband.¹⁹ However, these phenomena - the

¹⁴ П. Коматина, *Црквена политика Византије...*, p. 324; A. Nikolov, "The Bulgarian Church...", p. 144; the arguments for a later date of granting the autocephaly see in S. Pirivatrić, "Some notes on the Byzantine-Bulgarian Peace Treaty of 927", *Byzantinoslovaca* 2, 2008, p. 40-48.

¹⁵ И. Божилов, *История на средновековна България...*, II, p. 42 sq, 69 sq; idem, *Цар Симеон Велики (893-927): Златният век на средновековна България*, Sofia, 1983; M. Leszka, *Symeon I Wielki a Bizancjum. Z dziejów stosunków bulgarsko-byzantyńskich w latach 893-927*, Łódź, 2013.

¹⁶ For the creation of the Glagolitic script in the context of the Byzantine mission to Moravia and the later creation of the Cyrillic in Bulgaria see J. Signes Codoñer, "New Alphabets for the Christian Nations: Frontier Strategies in the Byzantine Commonwealth between the 4th and 10th Centuries", In A. de Francisco Heredero, D. Hernández de la Fuente and S. Torres Prieto, *New Perspectives on Late Antiquity in the Eastern Roman Empire*, Newcastle upon Tyne 2014, p. 116-162, 152-158.

¹⁷ J. Shepard, "Bulgaria: the other Balkan 'empire'", in T. Reuter (ed.), *New Cambridge Medieval History*, III, c. 900 – c. 1024, Cambridge, 1999, p. 567-585.

¹⁸ A. Nikolov, "The Bulgarian Church in the 9th-10th Century", p. 146-148.

¹⁹ J. Shepard, "A marriage too far? Maria Lekapena and Peter of Bulgaria", in A. Davids (ed.), *The empress Theophano. Byzantium and the West at the turn of the first millennium*, Cambridge, 1995, p. 121-149; M. J. Leszka, K. Marinow (eds.), *The Bulgarian State in 927-969. The Epoch of Tsar Peter I*, Łódź – Kraków, 2018.

Bulgarian Empire and the Autocephalous Patriarchate, are the result of feedback in the process of acculturation, more precisely the appropriation of the supreme patterns of political theology of the Roman Byzantine Empire, which inspired the talented Bulgarian ruler, who was actually educated in Constantinople in his youth, of course with the consent of the ruling emperor.²⁰ In this way, two significant precedents were created. The notions of the empire and the patriarchate were embedded in the principles of political theory of the Bulgarians, while the Roman-Byzantine emperor and his patriarch of Constantinople had shown themselves ready to accept them because they were not powerful enough to abolish them.

Here too, the question of the relationship of the Church in Bulgaria to the institution of the Roman-Byzantine emperor is worth considering, given his role in the Church in general, and especially its role in the incorporation of the patriarchate of Bulgaria as an autocephalous organism into the body of the Church. It can be assumed that after 927 a liturgical commemoration of the ruling Byzantine and Bulgarian emperors was introduced in Bulgaria, the traces of which can be seen in certain later sources.²¹ Be that as it may, however, it was precisely the imperial will, under changed circumstances, that was behind the decision to conquer the Bulgarian empire, demote its ruler and dethrone its patriarch in 971. The rebuilding of the Bulgarian Empire, with the uprising of the Cometopuli brothers in 976 and the coronation of Samuel as emperor in 997, proved to be temporary however, and was finally liquidated by the conquests of Basil II in 1019.²² The conquest of Bulgaria and the inclusion of the territory of the former empire into the Byzantine administrative organism also created the conditions for ecclesiastical reorganization in the conquered areas, behind which, again lay the imperial authority.

In the oldest traditions of the activities of the students of Cyril and Methodius after their exile from Moravia, there is no information on their activities in Serbian or in Croatian areas. The emergence of their influence in the area of early Serbian ethnogenesis, as in the Bulgarian case, cannot be tied to the politics of Constantinople, or more precisely, there is no evidence to support such a conclusion. The mission of Cyril and Methodius in Moravia over time led to the creation of the ephemeral papal project of the Latin-Slavonic church, under the jurisdiction of the Roman see. According to one passage from the Life of St. Methodius, immediately after Cyril's

²⁰ J. Shepard, "Manners maketh Romans? Young barbarians at the emperor's court", in E. Jeffreys (ed.), *Byzantine style, religion and civilization. In Honour of Sir Steven Runciman*, Cambridge, 2006, p. 135-158 (= J. Shepard (ed.), *Emergent Elites and Byzantium in the Balkans and East-Central Europe*, Variorum Reprints, Farnham, 2011, XII).

²¹ С. Пириватрић, "Први преноси моштију светог Ивана Рилског. Неколико запажања о историјском контексту догађаја", in С. Куюмджиева (ed.), *Рилският манастир – история, памет, духовност, Доклади от Международна научна конференция, 28 септември – 1 октомври 2017 г. Рилски манастир*, Sofia, 2018, p. 18-30, 22-25.

²² С. Пириватрић, *Самуилова држава*, Belgrade, 1997, p. 31-168; И. Божилов, *История на средновековна България...*, II, p. 159-192; D. Hupchick, *The Bulgarian-Byzantine Wars for Early Medieval Balkan Hegemony*, s.l., 2017, p. 247-319.

death (February 14, 869), Pope Hadrian II sent Methodius to Prince Kocelj, a Slavic ruler in the Diocese of Pannonia as a teacher for him but also for all the Slavic lands.²³ This information, taken at face value, testifies to the grand scale of the project. It was at this same time, in 873, that the Pope attempted to incorporate the area under the rulership of the prince of Serbia Mutimir into the jurisdiction of the restored diocese of Pannonia, i.e. under the authority of Bishop or Archbishop Methodius, but it is not known what response the Pope received from the Serbian Prince.²⁴ It is probable that, in ecclesiastical matters, Serbia, like most other Serbian lands, remained attached to the ecclesiastical centres of the littoral, at that moment under the ephemeral administration of Constantinople, but otherwise tied more closely to Rome. The relative underdevelopment of the ecclesiastical organization in the Serbian territories in the first two centuries after their conversion certainly did not favour more intensive dissemination of Slavic literacy, for the simple reason that the bishoprics, as centres of local ecclesiastical administration, undertook the acquisition, transcription, and dissemination of the necessary liturgical texts. There are no records that would testify to the existence of episcopal church organization in the *archontia* of Serbia at the time of the restoration of the Pannonia diocese, ca. 870, nor in later decades. The influence of Cyril and Methodius reached the Adriatic hinterland, by now unknown means, and was suppressed in the diocese of the Archbishop of Split during the 10th and 11th centuries, but not eradicated. Rome's occasional efforts to suppress the Slavonic in divine service certainly need to be hypothetically contextualized within the full scope of the competent jurisdiction. On the other hand, we can assume that there were significant influences from the neighbouring Bulgarian Archdiocese based in Preslav, and the later Bulgarian Patriarchate in Dristra, and cultural centres there, especially Ohrid, through the Diocese of Ras as a probable link for the spread of Slavonic worship and the Cyrillic alphabet in Serbia, the earliest testimony for which dates to the reign of Emperor Peter, and the Serbian prince Časlav.²⁵ Around 950, an archdiocese was established in Dubrovnik with a scope of jurisdiction in the Slavic hinterland, that is, the then Serbian areas of Zahumlje, Serbia (including Bosnia) and Travunia.²⁶ It may be assumed that the archbishopric consisted of a corresponding network of episcopal sees.

²³ А.-Е. Таχιάος, *Κύριλλος και Μεθόδιος...*, p. 147 sq.

²⁴ П. Коматина, *Црквена политика Византије...*, p. 276-282.

²⁵ С. Пириватрић, “Тирилметодијевске традиције и српске области пре постанка аутокефалне цркве у краљевству Немањина 1219. године”, in J. Радић, В. Савић (eds.), *Свети Тирило и Методије и словенско писано наслеђе (863-2013)*, Belgrade, 2014, p. 103-124, 103-107. For the use of Byzantine and Latin liturgical books in the Serbian areas see А. М. Пентковский, “Славянское богослужение и церковные организации в сербских землях в X-XII веках”, in *Стефан Немања у хијерархијама земаљских владара, Стефан Немања – преподобни Симеон Мироточиви*, ур. М. Радујко, Београд – Беране 2016, p. 35-61.

²⁶ И. Коматина, *Црква и држава у српским земљама од XI до XIII века*, Belgrade, 2016, p. 65-68.

The restoration of direct Byzantine rule over the conquered Bulgarian Empire and further to the west of it after 1019, during the period that followed, a new political framework for church life, and thus also for issues of language and script in state administration as well as in worship. Emperor Basil II imposed a provincial organisation consisting of the *katepanate* of Bulgaria, the *theme* of Sirmium and the *theme* of Serbia, an administrative unit the exact position of which is still a bone of contention among scholars.²⁷ In terms of church organization, the Emperor determined the new rank and scope of the jurisdiction of the former Bulgarian Patriarchate, now the Bulgarian or Ohrid Archdiocese – a regional church which, at the level of legal theory, had its roots in the archdiocese of Justiniana Prima, founded in 535 AD. The Archdiocese of Ohrid with its center at the cathedral of St Sophia was an extremely significant factor in acculturation to Byzantine patterns over a geographically wide, albeit very variable area, and over a very long period of time, extending deep into the 18th century (1767).²⁸ In addition to the strongly expressed ideological aspect, the Archdiocese of Ohrid had its own cultural model. It is believed that at first it had both a Slavonic and a Greek linguistic character, the exact balance of which it is today impossible to determine and which was subject to change. At the time of the first Archbishop John, it would appear that the use of Slavonic was slightly greater than at the time of his successor Leo, when the relationship changed in favour of Greek. Be that as it may, we know of a number of Slavonic manuscripts whose origin is linked to the area of the Archdiocese of Ohrid after 1019. Certainly the fact that significant literary works of the Bulgarian Empire from the 9th and 10th centuries, known to a large extent precisely on the basis of Serbian transcripts of the 13th and 14th centuries, and only rarely of the twelfth century, testifies against the earlier understanding of radical Hellenization in the territory of the Archdiocese of Ohrid.²⁹ The Byzantine emperor stood behind the efforts for consolidation of the

²⁷ Љ. Максимовић, “Организација византијске власти у новоосвојеним областима после 1018. године”, *Зборник радова византолошког института* 36, 1997, p. 31-44; P. Stephenson, *Byzantium’s Balkan Frontier. A Political Study of the Northern Balkans, 900-1204*, Cambridge, 2000, p. 62 sq.; П. Коматина, “Србија и Дукља у делу Јована Скилице”, *Зборник радова византолошког института* 49, 2012, p. 159-184; И. Божилов, *История на средновековна България...*, II, p. 194-220; А. Добычина, “Под одним ярмом с Византией: болгары и болгарские земли в составе Византийской империи (1018-1185)”, in А. Николов (ed.), *Българско царство. Сборник в чест на 60-годишнината на доц. д-р Георги Н. Николов*, Sofia, 2018, p. 476-497.

²⁸ Б. Тодић, “Архиепископ Лав – творац иконографског програма фресака у Светој Софији Охридској”, in Љ. Максимовић, Р. Радић, Б. Крманоновић (eds.), *Византијски свет на Балкану, I. Охридска архиепископија у византијском свету*, Belgrade, 2012, p. 119-136; А. Δηληκάρη, *Η αρχιεπισκοπή Αχρίδων κατά τον μεσαιώνα. Ο ρόλος της ως ενωτικού παράγοντα στην πολιτική και εκκλησιαστική ιστορία των Σλάβων των Βαλκανίων και του Βυζάντιου*, Thessaloniki, 2014, p. 75-103; S. Pirivatrić, “Between Constantinople, Rome and Ohrid. Notes on the Church Organization in Serbian Principalities from 1019 to 1219”, in *Διεθνές Επιστημονικό Συνέδριο Κύριλλος και Μεθόδιος: Το Βυζάντιο και ο Κόσμος των Σλάβων*, p. 655-664.

²⁹ А. А. Турилов, *Межславянские культурные связи эпохи средневековья и источниковедение истории и культуры Славян. Этюды и характеристики*, Moscow, 2012, p. 126-165, 136-165 [=

Church organization in the diocese of Bulgaria through endowment activities and by strengthening the cults of local saints, including John of Rila and Prohor of Pčinja. This was the case with Romanos IV Diogenes, who seems to be the founder of the monastery of Saint Prohor, who issued a charter for the monastery of Saint George Gorg in Skopje and who was also connected to the local translation of the relics of St. John of Rila from the Episcopal Church in Serdica to the Church of St Luke. It is possible that establishing of the celebration of the two saints, John and Prohor, on the same day 19th October is also connected to such efforts. The reference to the defeat of heretical teachings in the partially reconstructed Church service to St John of Rila, written in Serdica, is connected to the saint's function as a defender of Orthodoxy against heretics, particularly at the time of the revolt of the Paulicians in 1073 or 1078.³⁰ A little later, under the wing of the Ohrid Archdiocese, the memory on the concern of Prince Boris for the construction of a network of bishoprics was cultivated by the Archbishop Theophylactos.³¹ The appearance of more Bulgarian monks at the Zograf Monastery on the Holy Mountain of Athos from the mid-11th century and their relative numerical dominance by the end of the 12th century should also be seen as a consequence of imperial policy towards the conquered Bulgarian empire after 1019, but also as part of the Empire's policy of establishing monasteries of "different languages" on Mount Athos, although the monastery, according to the present evidence, at that time still was not officially labelled as Bulgarian.³²

At the western borders of the Archdiocese of Ohrid and the Metropolitan Archdiocese of Dyrrachion lay the area of the Pope's jurisdiction. Under conditions of weakening of Byzantine rule in the Balkans and strengthening of the influence of Hungary and the always complex relations between the emperors of Constantinople and their patriarchs with the Roman Pope, especially after the gradual rupture in the Church after 1054, the issue of jurisdiction, and within it the use of language and script among the Serbs, became determined to an even greater extent by general circumstances. The variability of national and ecclesiastical borders, along with ethnogenetic processes, shows that the terms *Slavia Latina*, or in other words *Slavia Catholica*, and *Slavia Orthodoxa*, in fact technical terms of more recent date that were intended to demarcate the division of the Slavonic Christian world according to

После Климента и Наума (славянская письменность на территории Охридской архиепископии в X – первой половине XIII в.), in Б. Н. Флоря, А. А. Турилов, С. А. Иванов, *Судьбы кирилло-мефодиевской традиции после Кирилла и Мефодия*, St. Petersburg, p. 76-162, 136-143].

³⁰ Д. Чешмеджиев, "Кратки белешки за култа на св. Прохор Пшински в Средновековна България", *Старобългарска литература* 41-42, 2009, *Юбилеен сборник в чест на 60-годишнината на Красимир Станчев и Александър Наумов*, p. 150-163, 157-158; С. Пириватрић, "Први преноси моштију светога Ивана Рилског...", p. 18-30, 25-28.

³¹ D. Obolensky, *Six Byzantine Portraits*, Oxford, 1988, p. 34-82, 59 sq.

³² Б. Крсмановић, "Значај Атона и Охридске архиепископије у политици Василија II на Балкану", *Зборник радова византолошког института* 49, 2012, p. 87-112; cf. Н. Икономидис, "Международният характер на Света гора през средновековието", *Родина* 4, 1996, p. 23-28, 26.

the criterion of the liturgical language, certainly had unstable and even overlapping content in their formative years which ended with the organization of church life in the area of the dioceses of Dalmatia and Bulgaria during the 11th century.³³ In the mid-eleventh century, the Serbian territories were under the local hegemony of Duklja and the supreme authority of Byzantium, and overwhelmingly influenced by the church's coastal Latin speaking, then Roman Catholic sees of Dubrovnik, Bar, Kotor, Ston and Split. Within Duklja, which in the meantime became a kingdom and a vassal of the Pope, the archdiocese of Bar was created, it is believed in 1089.³⁴ The episcopal see of Ras belonged to the area of the Archdiocese of Bulgaria both before and after 1019, and represented the extreme western point of the reach of its cultural policy, that is, of Greco-Slavonic liturgical practice. The conquest and inclusion of Ras, as the episcopal seat of the Orthodox Church, in the kingdom of Duklja, was of great importance for the later political and cultural history of the Serbian territories. The decline of Duklja was paralleled by the rise and independence of Serbia, now based in Ras, where the direct Byzantine rule was only ephemerally established about 1122, during the reign of Emperor John II Komnenos.³⁵

An important aspect of the mentioned political processes during the 12th century was the attitude of the Archbishops of Ohrid towards the Serbian Grand Župans and members of the ruling family in general, since the Archdiocese was, among other things, a means of pursuing imperial policy and protecting its interests. The connection of the Byzantine emperor, the Archbishop of Ohrid and the Bishop of Ras with the local Serbian rulers would ultimately lead to a change in cultural orientation and the attachment of a large part of the Serbian lands to the Orthodox Byzantine model. Recently scholars have argued that it was in fact Archbishop John (Adrian) Komnenos, a close relative of the Emperor and an advocate of the theory of the connection between the Archdiocese and the ancient seat of Justiniana Prima, who was responsible for establishing the personal relationship between Stefan Nemanja and Emperor Manuel I Komnenos. An extremely important element of the policy pursued by the Archbishops of Ohrid was the encouragement of the endowment activities of the Serbian co-rulers, Župans and princes, sometime after 1155.³⁶ On the basis of the appearance of the first monumental endowments, we can assume a close

³³ M. Garzaniti, "Slavia latina und Slavia orthodoxa: Sprachgrenzen und Religion im Mittelalter", in U. Knefelkamp, K. Bosselmann-Cyran (eds.), *Grenze und Grenzüberschreitung im Mittelalter. 11. Symposium des Mediävistenverbandes vom 14. bis 17. März 2005 in Frankfurt an der Oder*, Berlin, 2007, p. 256-269.

³⁴ S. Pirivatrić, "Between Constantinople, Rome and Ohrid...", p. 659-660; cf. contra И. Коматина, *Црква и држава у српским земљама...*, p. 140-144.

³⁵ S. Pirivatrić, "Between Constantinople, Rome and Ohrid...", p. 660-662.

³⁶ S. Ćurčić, *Architecture in the Balkans from Diocletian to Süleyman the Magnificent*, New Haven – London 2010, p. 402-402, 492-493; M. Marković, "On the Trail of Unique Solutions – Serbian art in the 12th Century", in *Sacral Art of the Serbian Lands in the Middle Ages*, p. 165-181, 167-168; for the year see С. Пириватрић, "Манојло I Комнин, 'царски сан' и 'самодршци области српског престола'", *Зборник радова византолошког института* 48, 2011, p. 89-118, 101-102.

relationship (symphony) between Byzantine and Serbian chieftains and the local bishops, the suffragans of the Archbishop of Ohrid – the bishops of Niš and Ras. The political role of the Byzantine Orthodox bishop in Ras is evidenced, at the earliest, by information about the “second baptism”, i.e. the anointing of Stefan Nemanja – Saint Simeon, which must have occurred in the first half of the twelfth century, at the time when his family returned from Duklja to Ras, i.e. from Roman Catholic into Greek Orthodox jurisdiction. In the following period this role was even more pronounced, the Bishop of Ras participated in important events such as the trial of the heretics and the transferral of secular authority, and his involvement must be assumed in the endowment activity of Stefan Nemanja, undertakings that fundamentally changed the course of Serbian history up to that point and took it in a new direction. With their endowments, the regional rulers achieved a prominent social role, identical to that of the Byzantine governors, such as Alexios Angelos Komnenos, a relative of the emperor and the founder of St. Panteleimon’s church in Nerezi near Skopje, erected almost simultaneously with Nemanja’s church of St. Nicholas in Toplica (in today’s Kuršumlija). In 1172 Nemanja was imprisoned by Manuel Komnenos and taken to Constantinople as a part of an imperial triumph of a kind, but his sojourn at the court of the emperor had lasting consequences in the terms of his personal acculturation, influenced by the emperor himself.³⁷ Some thirty years later this relationship between emperor and vassal took on a new quality. Along with the decline of real imperial power in the Serbian hinterland of the Adriatic and the analogue rise in the power of the Serbian ruler the old vassal/office-holder relationship gave way to a one of kinship, at the initiative of the Byzantine emperors. By marrying his middle son and heir to a Byzantine Princess, Stefan Nemanja became a relative of the ruling emperors, first Isaac II and then Alexios III Angelos, and within that new framework, sometime between 1192 and 1195 the construction of Studenica Monastery, Nemanja’s most important endowment in the country, was completed. Taken as a whole, the complex meanings of this foundation represent a most striking example of the importation and creative adaptation of supremely Byzantine patterns.³⁸ The last decade of the 12th century and the first two decades of the 13th century witnessed the period of deep Serbian acculturation with Constantinople patterns. This was a consequence of the political circumstances and attitudes of the ruling families and of personal choices, but also of deliberate imperial decisions.

Stefan Nemanja’s youngest son, Prince Rastko, left his position as ruler of Hum (approx. present-day Herzegovina) and went to Mount Athos, ca. 1192, to become

³⁷ M. Marković, “On the Trail of Unique Solutions...”, p. 179.

³⁸ J. Erdeljan, “Studenica. All Things Constantinopolitan”, in I. Stevović (ed.), *ΣΥΜΜΕΙΚΤΑ. Collection of Papers in Honor of the 40th Anniversary of the Institute for Art History*, Belgrade, 2012, p. 93-101; M. Živković, “Studenica: the Funerary Church of the Dynastic Founder – the Cornerstone of Church and State Independence”, in *Sacral Art of the Serbian Lands in the Middle Ages*, p. 193-209. For the chronology see С. Пириватрић, “Хронологија и историјски контекст подизања манастира Студенице”, *Зограф* 39, 2015, p. 47-56.

the monk Sava, a member of the monastic family of the distinguished Vatopedi monastery. Soon after, in 1196, Stefan Nemanja abdicated power in favour of his son Stefan Nemanja (Nemanjić), the son-in-law of the ruling Byzantine emperor and holder of the exalted court title of *sebastokrator*, then entered the monastery of Studenica, taking the name Simeon, later joining his youngest son in Vatopedi 1197. In 1198, father and son also requested the right from the Byzantine emperor to restore the abandoned monastery of Hilandar.³⁹ Obviously, the emperor Alexios III wanted to bind the emerging Serbian dynasty with multiple ties to the Empire. Most important of all was the establishment of a Serbian monastery on Mount Athos, since in the following decades and centuries Hilandar was to be an extremely significant factor in Serbian acculturation with Byzantine models, on several important grounds: in terms of shaping of the saintly cults – beginning with those of Saint Symeon Nemanja – the organization of worship, monastic and church organization in general, then ecclesiastical literature, linguistically based on the legacy of Cyril and Methodius, as well as sacred art in general, and finally legal culture and political theology. In addition, over the coming decades, a significant number of Serbian bishops and church leaders were moulded on the Holy Mountain and in the house of Hilandar.⁴⁰ The development lines opened by the founding of Serbian Hilandar led, through a complex set of ecclesiastical and political circumstances, in the context of the outcome of the Fourth Crusade and the temporary disappearance of the Orthodox Roman Empire after the conquest of Constantinople in 1204, to the creation of a fully autonomous i.e. autocephalous Church in the Nemanjić domains, the first archbishop of which was the monk of Athos, Archimandrite Sava Nemanjić. His ordination was performed in Nicaea in 1219 by the ecumenical Patriarch Manuel and his synod, at the behest of Emperor Theodore I Laskaris. The imperial factor, acting within the authority of the Orthodox emperor as epistemonarches of the Church, established under the dynasty of Komnenoi, was decisive in the creation of the Autocephalous regional Church whose role was also the sacralisation of the autocratic royal authority through the rite of ecclesiastical coronation.⁴¹ From its very beginnings it proved to be a powerful medium for the autonomous and creative adoption of cultural patterns from the Byzantine Empire, as well as from other, primarily Western, Latin lands in

³⁹ М. Живојиновић, *Историја Хиландара*, I, Belgrade, 1998; Г. Суботић (ed.), *Манастир Хиландар*, Belgrade, 1998.

⁴⁰ С. Ђирковић, “Хиландар и Србија”, in *Манастир Хиландар*, p. 35-48, 35-36; В. Krsmanović, “Mount Athos and Political Thought in the Slavic World”, in I. Iliev *et al.* (eds.), *Proceedings of the 22nd International Congress of Byzantine Studies Sofia, 22-27 August 2011*, vol. I, *Plenary papers*, Sofia, 2011, p. 145-166, 156-159.

⁴¹ See Љ. Максимовић, С. Пириватрић (eds.), *Краљевство и архиепископија у српским и поморским земљама Немањића. Тематски зборник у част 800 година проглашења краљевства и аутокефалне архиепископије свих српских и поморских земаља Немањића*, Belgrade, 2020; S. Pirivatrić, “The Autocephalous Archbishopric of Serbia. A short survey of its foundation”, in *Autocéphalies*, p. 179-207; cf. И. Коматина, *Црква и држава у српским земљама...*, p. 247-300.

the Nemanjić state.⁴² Thus, in the case of the first Nemanjić rulers, the adoption of Byzantine forms took place largely through the process of consensual appropriation.

In contrast however, the first Asens, rulers of the Bulgarian-Vlach state that emerged from a local revolt against imperial rule in 1185, who in various ways demonstrated that they were in fact restoring the Bulgarian empire overthrown by the Byzantine conquest of 1019, turned to acts of unilateral appropriation.⁴³ This was already evident in the way the the cult of St. Demetrios of Thessaloniki was adopted and incorporated into the foundations of the political theology of the so-called Second Bulgarian Empire. The two opposing political milieus, Byzantine and Bulgarian, showed over a complete spectrum that they both enjoyed the heavenly protection of St. Demetrios.⁴⁴ Both the Byzantine cults, such as that of St. Demetrios and St. Paraskevi-Petka, and the older Bulgarian cults, such as that of St. John of Rila were incorporated into the structure of the political theology of the restored Bulgarian Empire.⁴⁵ The Bulgarian Patriarchate, restored in Tarnovo during the uprising of the first Asens, accepted union with the Roman Pope Innocent III in the immediate aftermath of the fall of Constantinople to the crusaders in 1204 as a precondition for the coronation of Emperor Kaloyan as king by a Papal legate, but in other aspects, as is shown by the Boril Synodic of 1212, the Bulgarian Church remained true to the rites and customs of Orthodoxy.⁴⁶ The Bulgarian Empire was involved in the struggle to restore the Byzantine Empire, and this competitiveness was accompanied by the occasional emergence of an ambition to conquer Constantinople, as well as

⁴² G. Subotić, Lj. Maksimović, “La Serbie entre Byzance et l’Occident”, *XX^e congrès international des études byzantines*, Collège de France – Sorbonne, 19-25 août 2001, Près-actes I. *Séances plénières*, Paris, 2001, p. 241-250; С. Пириватрић, “Криза византијског света и постанак краљевства и аутокефалне архиепископије свих српских и поморских земаља”, in *Краљевство и архиепископија*, 107-146, 136-139; *Sacral Art of the Serbian Lands in the Middle Ages*, p. 213 sq.

⁴³ П. Павлов, Н. Кънев, Н. Хрисимов (eds.), *Великите Асеневици. Сборник с доклади от конференция, посветена на 830 години от въстанието на братята Петър и Асен, началото на Второто българско царство и обявяването на Търново за столица на България и 780 години от легитимното възобновяване на Българската патриаршия*, Veliko Tarnovo, 2016; A. Madgearu, *The Assanids. The Political and Military History of the Second Bulgarian Empire (1185-1280)*, Leiden – Boston, 2017.

⁴⁴ D. Obolensky, “The Cult of St. Demetrius of Saloniki in the History of Byzantine-Slavonic Relations”, *Balkan Studies* 15, 1974, p. 3-20; V. Tapkova-Zaimova, “Le culte de saint Démétrius à Byzance et aux Balkans”, in V. Gjuzelev, R. Pillinger (eds.), *Das Christentum in Bulgarien und auf der übrigen Balkanhalbinsel in der Spätantike und in frühen Mittelalter*, Vienna, 1987, p. 139-146; Στ. Οικονόμου, “Ιδεολογικές αντιπαραθέσεις στα Βαλκάνια. Η προπαγανδιστική χρήση της λατρείας του αγίου Δημητρίου (τέλη 12ου-13ος αι.)”, *Βυζαντινά Σύμμεικτα* 29, 2019, p. 91-127.

⁴⁵ I. Biliarsky, “La translation des reliques à la capitale du second empire bulgare et les idées du pouvoir”, in K. Stantchev, St. Parenti (eds.), *Liturgica e agiografia tra Roma e Constantinopoli*, Grottaferrata, 2007, p. 329-338; А. Добычина, “Търново и политика перенесения священных реликвий в период становления Второго Болгарского царства (1185-1204)”, in *Великите Асеневици*, p. 52-59.

⁴⁶ И. Божилков, *История на средновековна България...*, II, p. 308-312; И. Божилков, А. Тотоманова, И. Билярски (eds.), *Борилков синодик*, Sofia, 2012.

the ephemeral use of a corresponding ruler's title, containing a specific Byzantine component ("Tsar of Bulgarians and Greeks"). Not until the agreement of John Vatatzes and Ivan Asen in 1235, the final abolition of the Union and the creation of the Autocephalous Patriarchate of Bulgaria did relations between the Roman-Byzantine and Bulgarian empires reach the level of peaceful coexistence and close kinship relations between the rulers, in a way that for a long time separated and confirmed the local imperial character of the Bulgarian and the universal character of Roman i.e. of the Greek Empire.⁴⁷ Ivan II Asen's short-lived status as the earthly ruler of the Holy Mountain after 1230 resulted in his patronage of the major Athonite monasteries, as witnessed by certain surviving documents and traces of others since lost, as well as in a vain attempt to place the Athonite monastic community under the jurisdiction of the Bulgarian Patriarchate. There is no evidence, however, of a strengthening of ties between the Bulgarian ruling dynasty and the Zograf monastery, nor can we speak, in Bulgaria, of any specific influence of Mount Athos on political thought or Church life, as we can with Serbia. The Bulgarian case is far less well-documented than the Serbian, and is inferred mainly on the basis of later documents produced in the ruler's chancery which stress these connections.⁴⁸ Nonetheless, the creation of an autocephalous patriarchate bound to the ruler's court made possible, in the following years, the continuation of autonomous and creative adoption of Byzantine cultural models without significant western, Latin influence.

Thus the convergent processes of acceptance of the fundamental elements of Byzantine political theory and the ambition to establish independent ecclesiastical organisations among the Bulgarians and the Serbs were stabilized in the critical period following the Fourth Crusade (1204) with the imperial decisions on the creation of autocephalous Churches in the territory of the Serbian kingdom (1219) and the Bulgarian empire (1235) which established the processes of acculturation of Byzantine models on a firm foundation, supported as they were by the activity of the local lay authorities. This also changed the framework in which, over the ensuing epoch, the influence of the emperors was to manifest in the formation of the Byzantine heritage beyond the boundaries of the Empire itself.

⁴⁷ В. Гюзелев, *Възобновяването на Българската патриаршия през 1235 г. в светлината на историческите извори*, in *Великите Асеневици*, p. 155-169; И. Божилков, *История на средновековна България...*, II, p. 348-372; В. Гюзелев, И. Илиев, К. Ненов (eds.), *Цар Иван Асен II (1218-1241). Сборник по случай 800-годишнината от неговото възшествие на българска престол*, Plovdiv, 2019.

⁴⁸ В. Krsmanović, "Mount Athos and Political Thought...", p. 159-161; К. Павликианов, "Светата гора Атон по времето на българския цар Иван Асен II", in *Цар Иван Асен II (1218-1241)*, p. 213-220; D. I. Mureşan, "Zographou et la transmission de l'idée impériale bulgare en Moldavie", *Bulgaria Mediaevalis* 2, 2013, *Studies in honour of Professor Vassil Gjuzelev*, p. 705-756, especially p. 705-713.