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**MARTYRS AND THEIR HOLY *LOCI* IN THE BALKAN  
PENINSULA: A PRELIMINARY HISTORICAL-  
GEOGRAPHICAL APPROACH**

The evolution of the Eastern part of the Roman Empire into a separate political and cultural unit can be seen as a process of its differentiation from the Western part, resulting in the transfer of the capital to Byzantium (330 A.D.). This choice brought the Balkan Peninsula closer to the political center and at the same time transformed it into a bridge between the Eastern and Western part. Illyricum, the western part of the Peninsula was organized as an administrative and military unit, with Sirmium (Sremska Mitrovica) as its capital, and it became a region at stake between Constantinople and Rome, since it was controlled politically by the first and ecclesiastically by the second center until the fourth decade of the 8<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>1</sup>

This paper will attempt to examine the process of Christianization in the Balkans, and attention will be paid mainly to the martyrs as a safe indication of the geographical diffusion of Christianity. Of particular interest is the religious and cultural aftermath of its early phase rather than the Roman policy or the reasons for persecution of martyrs, which is a topic well studied. For this reason, our collection of martyr's names, related holy loci and testimonies of their cult aims at the mapping a particular *Balkan phenomenon* – to use the term *avant la lettre* – generally ranging from the 3<sup>rd</sup> and the 6<sup>th</sup> century. The final historical limit is apparent, though the veneration of some martyrs can be traced even later: Not only did the ancient religion officially come to an end during this century – Justinian I (527-565) was the emperor who closed down the School of Athens– but, mainly because of the subversions caused by the incursions of various gentes, the dispersion of the local population and radical demographic changes occurred after the establishment of the Slavs. Taking this upheaval into account, it is apparent why a large number of Balkan martyrs was “forgotten” and a second wave of christianization was instigated, by Rome, by Basil I (868-886), according to Constantine Porphyrogenitus.<sup>2</sup> This historico - geographical

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<sup>1</sup> B. Bavant, Illyricum, *O Βυζαντινός κόσμος*, I. *Η Ανατολική Ρωμαϊκή αυτοκρατορία (330-641)*, Cecille Morrison dir., Polis, Athens 2007, Greek translation, ch. 11, p. 395ff. where the previous rich literature.

<sup>2</sup> *Constantine Porphyrogenitus- De Administrando Imperio*, ed. Gy. Moravcsik,

approach is an attempt to map the relatively slow diffusion of Christianity in the Balkan Peninsula, a necessary pre-requisite for the comprehension of other interacted phenomena of this early period, when the “athlesis” of the martyrs became a *topos* of the Christian belief<sup>3</sup> and a source of symbolisms and of prestige among cities, at local level.

During his reign, Constantine assessed the defects of the former heterogeneous system of Diocletians’ (244-311) Tetrarchy that had become apparent by the crisis of the 3<sup>rd</sup> century and he replaced it with a more centralized and uniform system on the dynastic principle of hereditary succession. He also introduced important changes in civil, military and religious matters: He began the construction of great fortified walls; stabilized the monetary system and changed the army structure. To divide administrative responsibilities, Constantine replaced the single praetorian prefect, charged with both military and civil duties, with regional prefects who only had civil authority. As is well known, under Constantine, Christianity was not the exclusive state religion, but enjoyed imperial preference and its adoption was awarded with generous privileges: clerics were exempted from personal services and taxation, Christians were preferred for administrative posts and bishops were also entrusted with judicial duties<sup>4</sup>. Constantine established the principle that emperors should not settle questions of faith, but should convene Councils for the discussion of doctrine. The Synod of Arles (314), f.i., and the first Council of Nicaea (325) showcased his claim as emperor to be head of the Church too. Under his successors, Christianization of Roman society gradually proceeded. Constantine’s sons banned pagan sacrifices in 341 but did not close the temples, which were later closed, in 356, a decision that did not stop traditional sacrifices. Under Julian (361-63), the temples were reopened and state sacrifices legalized once more. Again, however, this process ended state religious practices –but not the private ones.

An additional feature of the period in question is the formation of a new elite of great magnates who possessed large state estates as well as lands used by allotted to free peasants. Some scholars believe that this phenomenon was almost total, but others argue that many small holdings and free villages remained. At the same time, the available evidence shows that peasants, probably in large numbers, fled out of the reach of tax collectors or sought the protection of patrons. The increasing number of such peasants explains the appearance of serfs attached to the land, a trend institutionalized especially for Illyricum in 371 A.D.<sup>5</sup>.

The Eastern Empire was largely spared the difficulties faced by the West during the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> centuries, due, among other reasons, to its established urban network and greater financial resources, which made it possible to placate invaders with tribute and pay barbarian mercenaries. A close relationship be-

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Dumbarton Oaks 1967, ch. 29, 70-75 and vol. II *Commentary*, F. Dvornik et al., University of London 1962, p. 103.

<sup>3</sup> See, f.i., Vita S. Auxentii, *Patrologia Graeca* vol. 114, 1425 “Στάδιον γάρ εστιν και άθλησις και μαρτύριον ο βίος παντός Χριστιανού ...”.

<sup>4</sup> J. V. A. Fine, *The Early Medieval Balkans A Critical Survey from the Sixth to the Late Twelfth Century*, The University of Michigan Press, 1983, p. 16-20.

<sup>5</sup> N. Svoronos, *Η Βυζαντινή επαρχία Πέντε μαθήματα*, Athens 1991, p. 39.

tween the state and the church was established and a tradition of consensus policy (“oikonomia”) was developed conforming to the ideal of “Peace of Church”<sup>6</sup>. On the contrary, the “militant” church predominated in the West Europe. For these reasons, focusing on the organizational aspect of the Balkan Peninsula – political and military, an inchoate peace endures during Constantine’s reign<sup>7</sup> until 376 A.D., when the Goths, forced by the Huns, sought and took refuge in the Empire’s territory, which led to the friction of Illyricum from Thrace by the settlement of Goths. Between 315 and 317 Constantine acquires the titles of *Gothicus Maximus* and *Carpicus Maximus* after his victory over the Goths and Carpians. Because of the Empire’s budgetary deficiency, his policy against them was not aimed at their submission but at their exclusion from the borders. The defeated Sarmatians, after their civil war, settled in Thrace, Scythia, Macedonia and Italy, aided by Constantine continuing the well-known Roman policy. This same policy will be implemented, with a new content and in a wider scale, from 348 A.D., when his son Constantius (337-361) will accept Christian Goths under their bishop Ulfila to be settled in the Nicopolis ad Istrum region. Byzantium, applying in its external policy the new Christian ideology as well, would try henceforth not only to control and oust the barbarian tribes from its *limes* but also to devitalize, convert and even assimilate them. Despite the economic, social and demographic development that the aforementioned regions met with, in the first half of the 4<sup>th</sup> c., the long period of peace between Goths and Byzantium also had its adverse aspect. The military and state administration of Thrace led to inertia because of a feeling of safety. So, from the reign of Valens onwards, began – not surprisingly – the countdown of the Peninsula: malversation and cupidity from the “refugee” Goths, total disarrangement of the army, erosion and collapse of the fortresses, indifference and lawlessness of the regional commandants etc. All these parameters disproved the Emperor’s expectations in respect of the benefits that the Empire would accrue from the presence of *foederati* Goths: cheap labor in the deserted and uncultivated lands, manning of the provincial army and preservation of its borders. The rebellion of Fritigen’s Visigoths, followed by the onward march eastwards of a consociation of Ostrogoths, Huns and Alans, raised the greater military, political and social disruption that the north-Balkan regions had ever met with. Both the provincial and urban populations suffered by the incursions<sup>8</sup>. During the 4<sup>th</sup> c. the Visigoths, incapable of conquering towns and fortresses, ravaged rural districts. Consequently, the northern regions of the Empire were ravaged and depopulated, its characteristics and cohesion disfigured, the economy disorganized and commercial activity was suspended. At the end of the century the

<sup>6</sup> P. Brown, *The world of Late Antiquity (150-750)*, Athens 1998, p. 134-157 (Greek translation).

<sup>7</sup> Sofia Patoura, Contribution à l’histoire des provinces nordiques de l’Empire (IVe-VIe s.) Sources littéraires, *Σύμμεικτα* 6 (Athens 1985), p. 315-51.

<sup>8</sup> S. Patoura, Les invasions barbares en Illyrie et en Thrace (IVe-VIe s.): conséquences démographiques et économiques, *Communications Grecques présentées au Ve Congrès intern. des Etudes du sud-est européen, Belgrade 11-17 sept. 1984*, Athens 1985, p. 191-210. E. Chrysos, *Το Βυζάντιον και οι Γότθοι Συμβολή στην εξωτερική πολιτική του Βυζαντίου κατά τον Δ’ αιώνα*, Thessalonica 1972.

Huns appeared again, with different demands. They did not want to settle down in Byzantium. Their ultimate goal was the West. To fend them off, Theodosius provided them with subsidies and favored Constantinopolitan merchants to trade with. Throughout the 5<sup>th</sup> c., various nomads – of Turkic and Slav origin – overran the Empire: Avars, Slavs, Antes, Cutrigurs, Utigurs and other *gentes* immigrated into it. They wanted to settle down into the Empire so as to be safe, since new and more powerful *gentes* appeared at the Empire's borders.

Reverting to foreign *gentes*, during the 4<sup>th</sup> c. of note is the Christianization of the Goths, which also can be traced by several martyrs who suffered martyrdom not at the hands of pagan Romans but by their co - religious orthodox members of their own community<sup>9</sup>. As is well known, the treaty signed between the Goths and Constantine apparently created the necessary circumstances for the new religion, in its arian version, to be spread amongst them. Ulfilas was consecrated bishop in 341 to serve the Christian communities in “Goth land” (Γοτθία)<sup>10</sup>. He tried to organize his *national church* following the Byzantine hierarchy and taught the gospel in Gothic, Latin and Greek – something testifies to his flock's multi-lingualism. His missionary activity, however, was interrupted in 348 by Athanarihus' first persecution of Christians. The majority of martyrs were from the orthodox community, according to *Martyrologia* and ecclesiastic writers<sup>11</sup>. The Acts of St Saba's martyrdom offer useful information regarding orthodox believers from “Goth-land”<sup>12</sup>. Arianism, however, became the established religion for Goths, after Valens' intervention, when Fritigernis (an opponent to Athanarihus), also, asked for refuge in the Empire. Non-Christian writers plead that the Goths deluded Byzantine authorities by pretending to be Orthodox and preceding bishops and monks. Whether this proposition is accurate or not, it must be pointed out that christianization of the Goths was probably a political decision affiliated to the external policy practiced by the Empire. The role of the Church in this area is of political significance and often obliged the emperors to negotiate or even to compromise in relation to the claims of the

<sup>9</sup> Ecclesiastic writers of the 5<sup>th</sup> c., mainly Sozomenos and Philostorgios, refer to christianization of the Goths and of contiguous to them people, but describe it as adventitious and accredit it to the Christians captivated by the Goths. Captives, however, were not the only ones who facilitated the christianization of the Danube region. Greek colonies in the area contributed to its diffusion. Consequently, the character of the christianization along the Danube must be considered of Greek and Eastern origins. The existence of Christians in the districts of Lower Mysia and Minor Scythia at the beginning of 4<sup>th</sup> c., when Diocletian launched Christians' persecution, is attested to *Acta Sanctorum* where martyrs' names from the corresponding area are recorded.

<sup>10</sup> Chrysos, *Βυζάντιο και Γότθοι*, op.cit., p. 46-103, 109-169. N. Zečević, *Византија и Готи на Балкану у IV и V веку*, Beograd 2002.

<sup>11</sup> S. Patoura, Χριστιανισμός και Ιεραποστολική δράση στα Βαλκάνια κατά τον 4<sup>ο</sup> αιώνα, *ΣΤ' Πανελλήνιο Ιστορικό Συνέδριο Πρακτικά*, Thessalonica 1985, p. 19-32. Eadem, Η Διάδοση του Χριστιανισμού στα πλαίσια της Εξωτερικής Πολιτικής του Βυζαντινού κράτους (4<sup>ος</sup>-5<sup>ος</sup> αι.), *Βυζαντινός Δόμος*, Athens 1987, p. 215-237.

<sup>12</sup> On the Passion of St Sabas (+April 12, 372) see P. J. Heather, *Goths and Romans 332-489*, Oxford 1991, p. 219 and 97. Also P. Nasturel, Les actes de St. Sabas le Goth (BHG, 3, 1607) *Histoire et archéologie, Revue des Etudes sud-est européennes* 7 (Bucarest 1969), 175-85.

local ecclesiastic authority<sup>13</sup>. Later, at the beginning of the 6<sup>th</sup> c., the political role of the Church and monasticism<sup>14</sup> in the north *limes* appears more severe for the state. Count Vitalian of the *foederati* manipulated the anti-monophysit movement of the monks from Scythia Minor. His rebellion, that disrupted the reign of Anastasius, for five years, had, ostensibly, a religious character, though its motives were political, aiming at the seizure of power.

Evidence drawn by various textual and archaeological sources, though quite insufficient, shows an interesting aspect of christianization as a spiritual and political phenomenon. In Tomis (Constanța) the discovery of a great edificial cluster at the old port, dated from the 4<sup>th</sup> c. gives an idea of the newly-christianized “mercantile activity”: Two kinds of epigraphs existed on early - Byzantine amphorae excavated from the port. Among other information, signs are evident which reveal the attempt of the Byzantine Empire to diffuse Christianity where an official conversion, at least in the lower social strata, had not yet occurred. Amphorae with Christian symbols were also found in Istria, Dinogetia, Sucidavea etc.<sup>15</sup>. Anonymous martyrs are mentioned in Tomis as well as in Axiopolis, Noviodunum, Dinogetia.<sup>16</sup> Accredited with an ecumenical character, the state encouraged the new religion to be spread among the rural population and nomads too. Odessos, too, is a city that clarifies the way the Empire not only transformed the religious profile and role of the big centers but also diffused Christianity into their hinterland: A number of Christian graves found in the towns’ *necropolis*, a 4<sup>th</sup>-c. *basilica* and four more of the 5<sup>th</sup> c.<sup>17</sup>, give evidence of the areas’ Christianization. If we take into consideration the above-mentioned bishops’ elevated status and the degradation of local *curiales*, it can be alleged that the new religious role undertook by cities did not pertain exclusively to the ecclesiastical authority. In the Eastern districts of the Empire the ecclesiastical structure was transformed because of a newly-developed mediate type of settlement, *κώμη* (town), which was characterized by social cohesion and endurance to historical transmutations. That caused rural areas to be integrated directly into the geographical region and economic influence of the city. In Illyricum such an ecclesiastic institution did not exist, as far as we know. The choice of cities transformed into Episcopal Sees relates in part to their economic and political/ military role<sup>18</sup>. This fact reflects the pace and mode that city

<sup>13</sup> Emperor Valens exiled bishop Vetatrimon, because he refused to go over to Arianism, but he was soon forced to bring him back to his bishopric.

<sup>14</sup> P. Brown, *The world of Late Antiquity (150-750)*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., Athens 1998, p. 88-122 (Greek translation). E. R. Dodds, *Pagan and Christian in an Age of Anxiety*, Athens 1995, p. 115-159 (Greek translation).

<sup>15</sup> S. Patoura, Βιοτεχνική παραγωγή και Συναλλαγές στις Ελληνικές Αποικίες της Δυτικής Ακτής του Εύξεινου Πόντου (4<sup>ος</sup>- 6<sup>ος</sup> αι.), *Α’ Διεθνές Συμπόσιο «Η Καθημερινή ζωή στο Βυζάντιο»*, 15-17 Sept. 1988, Athens 1989, p. 279- 290.

<sup>16</sup> D. C. Giurescu, *Histoire illustrée des Roumains*, Bucarest 1981, 95-6.

<sup>17</sup> B. Nikolova, The Church of Odessos - Varna between Byzantium, the Bulgarian Tsardom and the Patriarchate of Constantinople, *Études Balkaniques* 1998, nos 1-2, p. 93-98.

<sup>18</sup> M. Rouché, Autopsy of the West: The early 5<sup>th</sup> century, *The Cambridge illustrated History of the Middle Ages I (350-950)*, ed. R. Fossier, Cambridge University Press, 1989, p. 43-47.

structure transformed from Roman/ Pagan to Medieval/Christian. Christianity was propagated on a wider scale resulting in the development and consolidation of status of the Church. From this point of view, the transformation of cities into *dioceses* was a multi - dimensional phenomenon decided by central governance, and not an ecclesiastical matter.

In the above - mentioned administrative, military, socio - economic and demographic framework, Christianity as an ideological cohesive device started playing a fundamental role in the cohesion of the Empire among its subjects as well as between them, the subjects, and the new - comers. At this time, the bishop – and not the military leader – was presented as a protector of some cities in danger, usually with the help of the local martyr/ saint. Henceforth, the administrative system of *provinces* constituted the model structure to be followed by the ecclesiastical system formation: The bishop' see was located in the capital of the *province*. After the Council of Serdica (343) a bishop headed each city. In this way, early Byzantine cities acquired one more function: apart from administrative and military centers they also became ecclesiastical ones charged, among other responsibilities, with spreading Christianity in their hinterland and even outside the Empire's borders. These institutional changes brought structural urban changes: the center of the city was totally transformed, since basilicas were erected at the place of the Roman *forum*. Taking into account the establishment of Christianity as well as the strong connection of the Church with the State, which was never disrupted during the Empire's existence, let us trace the dispersion of martyrs throughout the Peninsula. In other words, let us examine the diffusion of the new religion on a micro-scale – from the cities towards their hinterland. The analysis of such historico-geographical evidence from this less populated part of the Empire, which has only been partially attempted until now,<sup>19</sup> can provide an image of a dynamic politico - religious process well known mainly through the rich documentation concerning wealthy oriental provinces.

The list of saints in the areas of Illyricum, Macedonia and Thrace begins with a significant number of martyrs who were active mainly in cities and whose veneration survived in the following centuries. We can trace their holy *loci* along the Adriatic coast (Corfu, Butrint, Dyrrachium, Apollonia, Vlora etc.),<sup>20</sup> along the Danube where big cities/ castra were built to shelter military garnisons (Singidunum Durostorum, Novae etc.), near the Danube's delta (Noviodunum, Dinogetia, Axiopolis, Tomis etc.), along the Black Sea coast as well as in Thrace (Druzipara etc.). Martyrs are also attested at the big centers alongside *Via Egnatia* and the axes connected Thessalonica with either Belgrade or Constantinople. Additionally, were also reported to have been in big cities/ ports of the lower part of the Peninsula. The transfer of the cult of St Demetrius from Sirmium to Thessalonica, probably in 441, is evidence showing the loss of the north part of the Peninsula not only for Byzantium but for

<sup>19</sup> H. Delehay, *Les origines du culte des martyrs*, Bruxelles 1933, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. J. Zeiller, L'expansion du christianisme dans la péninsule des Balkans du I<sup>er</sup> au V<sup>e</sup> siècle, *Revue internationale des Etudes Balkaniques* I (Belgrade 1934-35), p. 414-9.

<sup>20</sup> A case of a recorded hermit in Brač, dating from 396, is also noteworthy here, J. Belamarić, *Ranokršćanski Spomenici otoka Brača*, Split 1994, p. 15.

Christianity too (see n.31). The examination of some other martyrs lead us to maritime itineraries – from Carthago, in the south Mediterranean coast, as well as from Rome and Aquileia, on the opposite Adriatic shore, which reveals the importance of the sea not only in terms of trade but in facilitating religious communication too.

What follows is a list of the names of the *Balkan martyrs* together with the name of the city/ region, where they suffered their martyrdom, and the persecuting emperor. The present catalogue contains only the most representative *martyrs* recorded for the Balkan Peninsula. Names of martyrs not dated or others from unknown places have been avoided. Emphasis has been given to the ones related with concrete cities around main arteries. However, in this case, too, we had to drastically limit their number such as the ones connected with Thessalonica<sup>21</sup>, a city considered as “martyroploutistos” (fig.1): Jason and Sosipatros - Corfu<sup>22</sup>. Therinus [Decius (249-250)], Donatus [Theodosius (379-394)] - Butrint (Bouthroton). Asteius [Trajan (98-117)] (confused with Asterios of Salona)<sup>23</sup> and the seven holy martyrs: Peregrinus, Lucianus, Pompeius, Hesychnus, Papias, Saturninus, Germanus<sup>24</sup> - Dyrrachium. Isavrios - Apollonia (see n.22). Marina. Martin of Tours [Honorius] born in Hungary, he later lived for a time in Dalmatia. Stephen [Tiberius]. Marinus<sup>25</sup> [Diocletian] -he came from the island of Rab, Adriatic Sea. Cantianus [Maximian] - Aquileia. Anastasius [Diocletian] his body was transported from Aquileia to Salona, according to his Passio, to the Mausoleum of Marusinac built by the matron Asteria<sup>26</sup>. Cyprian - Carthage. His relics were found under the altar of the early Christian church excavated at Gata, Dalmatia<sup>27</sup>. Therapon<sup>28</sup> [Valerian] has been transported to the *thema* of

<sup>21</sup> G. Mikragiannanitis, Ακολουθία πάντων των εν Θεσσαλονίκη διαλαμψνάντων αγίων, *Γρηγόριος Παλαμάς* v. 73, no 732 (March-April 1990), 329-68.

<sup>22</sup> B. Kindt, La version longue du récit légendaire de l'évangélisation de l'île de Corfou par les saints Jason et Sosipatros Entre mythe et réalité, *Analecta Bollandiana* 116 (1998), 253-95.

<sup>23</sup> A. Bryer, Saint Asteios and the Amphitheatre Chapel in Dyrrhachion, *Θυμίαμα στη μνήμη της Λασκαρίνας Μπούρα*, v. I, Athens 1994, p. 41-45. Also Cv. Grozdanov, Saint Astios de Dyrrachion dans le peinture du Moyen Âge, *Αφιέρωμα στη μνήμη του Σωτήρη Κίτσα*, Thessalonica 2001, 79-89.

<sup>24</sup> R. Elsie, Albania Countries and the Cultures, *Balkanistica* 13 (University of Mississippi 2000), p. 35-58.

<sup>25</sup> W. Miller, The Republic of San Marino, *The American Historical Review* 6, 4 (July 1901), p. 633-649.

<sup>26</sup> At the Mausoleum, the martyr-burial remained in use “until 395, when it was destroyed during a barbarian incursion... the saint's remains transferred to an adjoining basilica, built specifically to house them”, J. Ward-Perkins, Memoria, Martyr's Tomb and Martyr's Church, *Akten des VII internationalen Kongresses für Christliche Archäologie, Triest 5-11 Sept. 1965*, Città del Vaticano 1969, 7.

<sup>27</sup> Jasna Jeličić-Radonić i suradnici, *GATA Crkva Justinijanova doba*, Split 1994. The spread of St Cyprian's cult outside the borders of his native region, the transfer of his relics to Dalmatia and the construction of the church are issues worth-examining in accordance with the Roman ecclesiastic policy and, maybe, with the nearby Salona.

<sup>28</sup> Hélène Ahrweiler, Les Problèmes de la Géographie historique Byzantine, *Proceedings of the XIIIth International Congress of Byzantine Studies*, London 1967, p. 469.



Two martyrs 3<sup>rd</sup> c. - Tulcea (ancient Almyris).<sup>35</sup> Lupus [late 6<sup>th</sup> c.] - Novae, Mysia Second. Clement<sup>36</sup> [early 6<sup>th</sup> c.] - Cherson. Mocius [Diocletian 287/288] and Zoticus (came from Rome) - Byzantium.<sup>37</sup> Procope [5<sup>th</sup> c.] - Naissus.<sup>38</sup> Alexandrus [late 4<sup>th</sup> c.] - Druzipara, Thrace.<sup>39</sup> Fifteen martyrs - Tiberiopolis<sup>40</sup>. Filippus and Hermes -Adrianopolis. Severus and Memnon - Bizya, Thrace. Maximus, Theodotus - Thrace<sup>41</sup>. Agathonikos - Selymbria. Alexandrus - Pydna (see n.39 and 42). Alexandrus (fig.1)<sup>42</sup>, Dionysius, Alfeion, Zosimos, Markos [Diocletian], Matroni,<sup>43</sup> Agapitos, Nikolaus, Ioannis, Matron [6<sup>th</sup> c.], Chioni, Irene, Agape - Thessalonica. Afktos, Tavrion, Mokios, Theoktistos [Diocletian] - Amphipolis. Ignatios, Zosimos, Roufos - Philippoi. Vassa with her sons Theognius, Agapius, Pistus - Edessa. Akakius, Traianus, Sozon, Gavdentius - Stobi. Glyceria<sup>44</sup> [Maurice (582-602) and Heraclius (610-41)], Forty holy martyrs - Heraclia. Florus and Laurus - Constantinople or ancient settlement of Ulpiana (south of Prishtina). Eleutherius [Hadrian (117-138)] - Messina and Illyria (he lived in Vlora). Anthony [Valentinian III (449-458)] - Ohrid. An inscription found at Sykourio, Thessaly (today at the Byzantine Museum, Athens) gives five martyr's names of which four are readable: Ioannis, Loukas, Andreas,

<sup>35</sup> Ρωμαϊκό οχυρό στον Δούναβη, *Γεωτρόπιο* Sept. 21, 2002.

<sup>36</sup> Chr. Walter, *Pictures as language. How the Byzantines exploit them*, London 2000, p. 352-365.

<sup>37</sup> Fr. Halkin, Une passion de Saint Mocius martyr à Byzance, *Analecta Bollandiana* 83 (1965), p. 5-22. M. Aubineau, Zoticos de Constantinople nourricier des pauvres et serviteur des lépreux, *Analecta Bollandiana* 93(1975), 67-108. T. S. Miller, The Legend of saint Zotikos according to Constantine Akropolites, *Analecta Bollandiana* 112 (1994), 339-76.

<sup>38</sup> *Tabula Imperii Romani Naissus-Dyrrachion-Scupi-Serdica-Thessalonike*, Ljubljana, Slovenska Akademija Znanosti i Umetnosti, 1976, p. 89-90 "basilique à trois nefs avec martyrium".

<sup>39</sup> "Άγιος Αλέξανδρος Ζουπαρών", Delehaye, *Les origines du culte*, op.cit., p. 243, n.3-6. See also here n.39.

<sup>40</sup> Theophylactus of Ohrid, *Οι δεκαπέντε μάρτυρες της Τιβεριουπόλεως*, preface V. Katsaros, ed. Zitros, 2008.

<sup>41</sup> V. Velkov, Hagiographic data on the History of Thrace in the IV<sup>th</sup> c. (Passio SS Maximi Theodoti et Asclepiodotae), *Roman Cities in Bulgaria. Collected Studies*, Amsterdam 1980, p.137-49.

<sup>42</sup> About the homonymous martyrs of Thessalonica (*Synaxarium Constantinopolitanum*, Nov. 9), of Pydna (in Macedonia, *Acta Sanctorum*, March 14/ *Synax. Const.*, March 13) and of Druzipara (in Thrace), Fr. Halkin, La pretendue Passion inédite de S. Alexandre de Thessalonique, *Mélanges Goosens Roger*, Bruxelles 1954, p. 70-2. *Idem*, Saint Alexandre martyr de Thessalonique, *Byzance et les Slaves, Mélanges Ivan Dujcev*, Paris 1979, p. 213-215. F. A. Demetrakopoulos, Άγιος Αλέξανδρος Πύδνης ή Θεσσαλονίκης, *Ελληνικά* 29 (1976), 267-77. K. P. Charalampides, Μηνολογικές παραστάσεις του μαρτυρίου του αγίου Αλεξάνδρου Θεσσαλονίκης, *Θεσσαλονίκη* 3 (1992), p. 33-41, mainly p.35 miniature from the Menologium of Basil II, St.Alexander's Martyrium (see fig. 1) and p. 39 St. Alexander's of Pydna martyrium painted at the monastery of Theotokos' Dormition in Teskavac, near Prilep 1334-50.

<sup>43</sup> N. Moutsopoulos, Η θέση της άγνωστης μονής της Αγίας Ματρώνας στη Θεσσαλονίκη, *Νέα Εστία* vol. 59, no 1403 (1985), 134-41.

<sup>44</sup> P. Maraval, *Lieux saints et pèlerinages d'Orient Histoire et Géographie des origines à la conquête arabe*, Paris 1985, p. 391-400.



Fig. 2a. (Left up) Crypte near Ilissos-Basilica, Athens [Source: Review Τόλμη, Athens Sept. 2003, (Supplement)]. 2b. (Left down) Cover of a 4<sup>th</sup> c. stone reliquary (“μαρτύριον”), today in Benaki Museum, Athens. [Photo by the author]. 2c. (Right) Inscription at Niculițel, [Source: see n. 16]

Сл. 2а. (лево горе) крипта близу Илосос-Базилике, Атина [извор: Ревизија Тόλμη, Атина септ. 2003, (Додатак)]. 2б. (лево доле) поклопац каменог реликвијара из IV века (“μαρτύριον”), данас у Бенаки Музеју, Атина. [фотографија аутора]. 2ц. (десно) натпис на Niculițel, [извор: видети н. 16]

Leonides. Two martyrs with Leonides [2nd half of 5<sup>th</sup> c.] - Lechaion, their relics were transferred to a crypt near which the basilica of Ilissos river, Athens, was built later (see fig.2a). Codratos [5<sup>th</sup> c.] - Corinth. Saint Andreas [4<sup>th</sup> c.] - Patras. Titus, Cyrillus [4<sup>th</sup> c.], 10 martyrs - Gortyne, Crete. Myron - Rhaukia, Crete.

The above evidence, which cannot be analysed in detail here, shows that until 4<sup>th</sup> c. the most of towns situated along the main trade/ military route *Via Egnatia* and the secondary axes had their own holy shrines, *martyria* or *basilicas*. It is not incidental that they are towns with mercantile activity, economical vigor and sometimes rivalries with nearby centers. The martyrs listed above are people without possessions. Their poverty, however, is a matter of choice, not of inheritance. Their parents were often respectable, sometimes wealthy citizens. They are presented as possessing moral strength and spiritual beauty. From this point of view, they should perhaps be seen as the counter-heroes of the dispossessed and of those for whom the high urban culture of Pagan Late Antiquity had nothing to offer<sup>45</sup>. Since martyrs act largely amongst relatively humble people who have few connections with persons in power and are not influential, their attitude conveys an antithesis to the ideal citizen of classical antiquity. For

<sup>45</sup> Robert Browning, The “Low Level” Saint’s life in the Early Byzantine World, *The Byzantine Saint*, ed. Sergei Hacker, London 1981, p. 117-127.



Fig. 3a. (Left) Mensae martyrum: Perperikon, Bulgaria. 3b. (Right) Sykourio, Thessaly, 4th c. [Photos by the author]

Сл. 3а. (лево) Mensae martyrum: Перперикон, Бугарска. 3б. (десно) Сикорио, Тесалија, IV век [фотографија аутора]

this reason, along with the saints, they played a central role in cultural transformation during the early period. Salvation and sanctity depended, henceforth, on voluntary and sustained chastity. In this cultural and social framework, the martyrs and “holy men”, during such a transitional period, were to be invested with a social function in which they acquired central importance, without being institutionalized<sup>46</sup>. After Galerius’ edict for religious liberty (311), the interdiction of paganism and the legitimation of Christianity as a state religion by Theodosius (395), the new religion diffused regularly throughout the empire.

The religious imperatives of the period were extended to the martyrs, whose feast days became an occasion for the faithful to gather around their tomb (“αγιοδόχος θήκη”), which was usually housed in a crypt (fig. 2a) and was later incorporated in a basilica, placing offerings on the *mensa martyris* (fig. 3a, 3b), praying and commemorating them.

The fathers of the Church placed special emphasis on this new *ethos*<sup>47</sup>, which was so different to the ancient *panēgyreis*. During the 4<sup>th</sup> c., however, which is a “crucial period between Graeco - Roman antiquity and the Byzantine age”, namely when “victorious Christianity came into open contact and conflict with the cultural institutions of the pagan world on the basis of political superiority”, a transformation of the Christian feasts can be detected or rather their “assimilation” to the ancient religious and economic gatherings<sup>48</sup>.

<sup>46</sup> Evelyne Patlagean, Prologue. History of the East: Early fifth century, *The Cambridge Illustrated History of the Middle Ages I (350-950)*, ed. Robert Fossier, Cambridge University Press 1989, p. 104-147.

<sup>47</sup> Delehayе, *Les origins du culte*, op.cit., p. 38-39: “συναθροίζεσθε εν τοις κοιμητηρίοις, την ανάγνωσιν των ιερών βιβλίων ποιούμενοι και ψάλλοντες υπέρ των κεκοιμημένων μαρτύρων...” (Eusebius); “ως το πόλιν όλην ιδείν παγγενή εκφοιτώσαν του άστεος ιερών δε τόπον καταλαμβάνουσαν.” (*Patrologia Graeca* L, 647); “όθεν και επί τας θήκας αυτών έθος ημίν παριέναι και τας ευχάς παρά ταύταις ποιείσθαι, τιμάν τε τας μακαρίας αυτών ψυχάς, ως ευλόγως και τούτων υφ’ ημών γιγνομένων.” (*Patrologia Graeca* XXI, 1096).

<sup>48</sup> Sp. Vryonis Jr, *The Panēgyris of the Byzantine Saint: a study in the nature of a*

This historical-geographical evidence (texts, illustrations and archaeological findings) we have briefly analyzed, gives an insight into the earliest Christian type of holiness, engraved on the inhabited Balkan space. An attempt has been made to map this phenomenon, highlighting the first phase of Christianization as a process rather than as a fully described network. In this process cities and/or ports have priority and a leading role over their hinterland. From the cities along the Adriatic Sea coast to the Black sea shores, in the north, the Roman castra of the Danube, and in the south to the island of Crete, the Peninsula, as an intermediate space, has accepted the new religion, from Rome and Constantinople as well, through the main trade routes and axes. There is evidence of wealthy people, soldiers etc. willing to transform their Roman/ pagan, political and religious, framework, to defend Christianity and die in the above-listed cities. Worth-mentioning was also considered the short-lived "Balkan episode" of the Arian Goths, which also left some martyrs' traces. Finally, though many martyrs will be "forgotten", they will set their seal ("athlesis") on the Christian belief and, at the same time, they will express, at the local level, the prestige or the rivalries of the cities where their bodies – not accidentally – are housed.

Further research could usefully be carried out within this framework.

Елена Гарцоника

МУЧЕНИЦИ И ЊИХОВА СВЕТА МЕСТА НА БАЛКАНСКОМ ПОЛУОСТРВУ:  
УВОДНИ ИСТОРИЈСКО-ГЕОГРАФСКИ ПРИСТУП

Рад се фокусира на хришћанизацију источног дела римског царства и, посебно, Балканског полуострва све до VI века. Ова историјска граница чини се евидентном због радикалних демографских промена до којих је дошло у ширем обиму након првог, несталног, покушаја похришћавања балканске популације.

Фокусирајући се на овај религиозни и политички феномен, извлаче се прилично значајни закључци, узевши у обзир да су субверзије изазване упадима разних племена, дисперзија локалне популације и промене у политичкој структури за време владавине Диоклецијана, били главни разлози који су довели до окончавања хришћанизације, не оставивши за собом друго до различитих мученика. Наше интересовање окренуто је питању да ли су мученици овог раног периода - уз то, и цркве и храмови њима посвећени - повезани са градовима пре него са пограничним областима, важним трговачким центрима или војним заједницама. У складу са расположивим доказима састављамо мапу места где су ови мученици претрпели мучеништво и напослетку трагамо за њиховим социјалним статусом, њиховим начином живота, њиховим интелектуалним и религиозним пореклом. У мањој мери, такође је узето у обзир да се унутрашња структура градова радикално променила до VI века.

Поред студије многих мученика, рад такође укључује нека размишљања о подједнако занимљивој „Балканској особености“, а то је аријанизам раширен међу непријатељским Готима.

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medieval institution, its origins and fate, *The Byzantine Saint, University of Birmingham Fourteenth Spring Symposium of Byzantine Studies*, ed. S. Hackel, 1991, p. 209 ff.