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Heraclea, Pelagonia and Medieval Bitola: An outline of the ecclesiastical history (6th-12th century)

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Abstract: *This study presents my long-term field research on the Early Christian episcopal seat of Heraclea Lyncestis that was located along the ancient Roman Via Egnatia and in the valley of Pelagonia. I discuss various historical sources and topography of the region of medieval bishopric of Pelagonia and Bitola. In addition, I also deal with the Christian cultural heritage in the region. In this work these approaches are within the context of archaeological, historical and ecclesiastical investigation in the sites of ancient Heaclea and modern Bitola.*

Key words: *Heraclea Lyncestis, Pelagonia, Bitola, Prilep, Via Egnatia*

The Early Christian world on the Balkan Peninsula began to crumble already in the fourth century, with the invasions and migrations of the peoples and tribes. Vizigoths disrupted Balkan urban conditions in 378, the Huns of Atilla ravaged in 447 and Ostrogoths in 479. After the year 500 the disturbing catastrophes included an earthquake in 518, which seriously damaged the urban centers. Then came the Bubonic plague of 541-2, which was a terrible disaster of unprecedented magnitude, and other epidemics and catastrophes, which were recorded in 555, 558, 561, 573, 591 and 599.¹ The invasions, epidemics and economic recession badly affected the population and society of the Eastern Roman Empire. Life in Heraclea Lynkestis slowly declined. The Episcopal church was rebuilt in the early sixth century when the latest published coins of Justin II are found. After that period monumental building activity came to an end.

During the reign of Justinian, Slavonic tribes already invaded the Balkan Peninsula. Their first incursions from across the Danube River were in 534, 545 and 549. Then

¹ C. MANGO, *Byzantium, the Empire of the New Rome*, London 1980, pp. 65-68, 70; N. CHEETHAM, *Medieval Greece*, New Heaven, London 1981, pp. 15-16. In order to block the ways of access to Greece, Justinian's engineers constructed, according to Procopius, a chain of fortresses across Macedonia and an impregnable bastion at Thessalonica. A. CAMERON, *The Mediterranean World in Late Antiquity AD 395-600*, London and New York 1993, p. 159. Justinian built a city near of his own birthplace Tauresium named *Justiniana Prima* and another one in Illyricum known as *Justiniana Secunda*.

in 547 they penetrated as far as Dyrrachium on the Adriatic coast and in 550 they reached Thessalonica. Between 584 and 589 they settled the whole Balkan Peninsula. In 591 they again besieged Thessalonika with the Avars and had definitely populated the whole Balkan Peninsula by the time of Emperor Maurice (582-602). The last coins of the Emperor Maurice dated 584/5 were found in Heraclea Lyncestis.²

There is no mention of the Bishopric of Heraclea of Pelagonia in the second half of the seventh century. At the Sixth Ecumenical Council in 680 and the Quinisext Council in 691/692 only the Bishops John and Margaritas of Stobi in Macedonia Secunda were present.³ Around 680, in the area between Heraclea and Cerameia, in the Campus Ceramesius, i.e. the Pelagonian plain between Bitola and Prilep, next to the Slavic tribe of Drugovitians, the Bulgarian Khan Kubrat or Kouver tried to settle a Christian tribe-in-exile, the Thracian Sermesians.⁴ Nevertheless, the remnants of the Christian population in Pelagonia and Heraclea can be traced through the preserved *Notitiae Episcopatum*. Following the list of bishops from the diocese of Macedonia, dated between 787 and the end of the ninth century, the Bishopric of Heraclea appeared amongst the nineteen episcopal cities as a suffragan of the Metropolitan of Thessalonica.⁵ During the reign of Knyaz Boris Michael I (852-889), the Bulgarian Empire adopted Christianity as a state religion in 865. For Knyaz Boris, Christianization was an act of policy through which his Empire would enter into the religious, cultural and political spheres of the Christian Ecumene. So, Boris was baptized by the Byzantine Emperor Michael III (842-867) and he was presented with the territories of Pelagonia and Ohrid

² P. LEMERLE, *Les plus anciens recueils des miracles de Saint Demetrius*, vol. II, Commentaire, Paris 1981, p. 90; V. KONDIĆ, V. POPOVIĆ, *Caričin grad*, Beograd 1977, pp. 463-470; CAMERON, op. cit., pp. 159-160. The sources suggest that in the late sixth century the inhabitants abandoned some cities in favour of safer places. In Heraclea Lyncestis the remaining population retreated to the fortified height of the upper fortress and other smaller fortified places on the surrounding hills. The fortress of Pelagonia was a typical example of such a settlement.

³ F. PAPAZOGLU, *Les Villes de Macédoine à l'époque Romaine*, Athens, Paris 1988, p. 323; J. D. MANSI, *Sacrorum Consiliorum Nova et Amplissima Collectio*, vol. III, Venice 1778, XI, 645 A, 994 D, 993 B; F. DVORNIK, *Les Slaves, Byzance et Rome au IXe siècle*, Paris 1926, p. 91; CHEETHAM, op. cit., p. 17. The Church hierarchy suffered the same fate as the apparatus of the state. Just as there were no more provinces to be administered and taxed, there were no more faithful to be cared for, and many dioceses ceased to exist, except on paper.

⁴ J. V. A. FINE, *The Early Medieval Balkans*, Ann Arbor 1983, pp. 44-49; LEMERLE, op. cit., I/228, II/149-153; R. F. HODDINOTT, *Early Byzantine churches in Macedonia and Southern Serbia*, London, New York 1963, p. 93; K. ADŽIEVSKI, *Pelagonija vo Sredniot vek, od doagjanjeto na Slovenite do pagjanjeto pod turska vlast*, Skopje 1994, pp. 25-26; V. ZLATARSKI, *Istorija na Bulgarskata država prez srednite vekove*, vol. I, Sofia 1918, pp. 174, 207; G. NAKRATZAS, *The close racial kinship between the Greeks, Bulgarians and Turks; Macedonia and Thrace*, Thessaloniki 1999, pp. 46-47.

⁵ J. DARROUZES, *Notitiae Episcopatum Ecclesiae Constantinopolitanae*, Paris 1981, p. 38; A. KAZHDAN, s. v. *Pelagonia*, in *The Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium*, vol. I, New York, Oxford 1991, p. 1619; CHEETHAM, op. cit., p. 22. Parallel with the re-colonization, the Christian Church deployed an intense effort of cohesion. New dioceses were marked out and old ones revived, while the country was covered with newly built churches and chapels, many of them on the site of the former pagan shrines and sanctuaries.

and a church ranked as an independent Archbishopric with Byzantine clergy.⁶ After Christianization, the new church organization and episcopal sees were attested at Dristra, Červen, Belgrade, Philippopolis, Bregalnica, Devol, Ohrid, Serdica and so on. Bishoprics were established in Develtos, Drembica-Velica, Preslav and Strumica. It may be that the former Heraclea of Pelagonia bishopric was reorganized and then included in the Diocese of Drembica-Velica.⁷ In 879 a certain church prelate of Heraclea named John was mentioned.⁸ The Christian Church Fathers may have Christianized certain Ancient Slav customs and syncretized some Balkan beliefs and symbols. The Great Mother Earth Goddess was replaced by the Holy Mother of God; the Slavic Thunder-god Perun by St. Elias; and the god of flocks, Veles or Volos by St. Vlaho or Blasius. The Holy warriors, St. Demetrius and St. George, replaced the famous figure of Thracian Horsemen.⁹

In this period the churches of Rome and Constantinople fought for ecclesiastical domination over the Slavs on the Balkan Peninsula, a process which has lasted until modern times. But, in the year 863, Photios, the Patriarch of Constantinople, organized the Missionaries and Apostles of the Slavs, Sts. Cyril and Methodius, to translate the greater part of the New Testament, liturgical books and scriptures into Glagolitic letters and to train numerous disciples. Later, some of their Slavonic followers were beatified as Fathers of the Church; such were: St. Clement and St. Naum of Ohrid, Gorazd and Angelarii.¹⁰ While they were in Rome to visit Pope Hadrian II in 869, St. Cyril died and was buried in the basilica of St. Clemente.¹¹ After that, the Pope consecrated Methodius as the Bishop of Sirmium (Pannonia and Moravia). In 881/2 St. Methodius was invited by the Patriarch Photius and the Emperor Basil I to Constantinople. He travelled along the Dalmatian coast and over Via Egnatia, passing through the cities of Ohrid, Pelagonia and Thessalonica on his way to the capital on the Bosphorus. On this missionary journey he spent almost two years preaching and teaching.¹²

⁶ M. SPINKA, *A History of Christianity in the Balkans, a study in the spread of Byzantine culture among the Slavs*, Chicago 1933, pp. 29-43; N. ZERNOV, *Eastern Christendom, A study of the Origin and Development of the Eastern Orthodox church*, London 1963, p. 92; B. J. KIDD, *The Churches of Eastern Christendom, from A.D. 451 to the present time*, New York 1973, p. 321.

⁷ R. BROWNING, *Byzantium and Bulgaria*, London 1975, p. 129; F. DVORNIK, *Byzantium, Rome, the Franks and the Christianization of the Southern Slavs*, in *Cyrrilo-Methodiana*, Köln, Graz 1964, pp. 86-125; J. SHEA, *Macedonia and Greece, the struggle to define a new Balkan Nation*, Jefferson, New Carolina and London 1997, pp. 55-59.

⁸ V. ARSIĆ, *Crkva Sv. Velikomučenika Dimitrija u Bitolju*, Bitolj, 1930, p. 20.

⁹ SPINKA, op. cit., p. 35; HODDINOTT, op. cit., p. 87; N. ČAUSIDIS, *Mitskite slike na Južnite Sloveni*, Skopje 1994, pp. 324-328.

¹⁰ ZERNOV, op. cit., pp. 91-92; SPINKA, op. cit., p. 46.

¹¹ Sts. Cyril and Methodius brought the relics of St. Clement from the Chersonesos on the Black Sea to the Roman Pope Hadrian II, who placed them under the altar table in the church of St. Clemente in Rome.

¹² ZERNOV, op. cit., p. 92; S. RUNCIMAN, *A History of the First Bulgarian Empire*, London 1930, p. 124; P. R. MAGOSCI, *Historical Atlas of East Central Europe*, Toronto 1993, p. 12, map 4a.

Following St. Methodius' death in 885, his followers Clement, Naum, Gorazd, Angelarii, Sabba and Laurentii were deported from the Moravian kingdom, but they found a cordial reception at the court of Boris of Bulgaria. Thus, Clement and Nahum were sent into the regions of Ohrid, Glavenica and Devol, named Kutmičevica. Very soon Clement's missionary deeds were fruitful and he was ordained as Bishop of Drembica or Velika, a regional church center between Ohrid, Prilep and Skopje.¹³ Consequently, the territory of the former bishopric of Heraclea of Pelagonia was included in the diocese of Drembica-Velika, wherever the exact location of the diocese was, and at some distance from Ohrid. The name of this area and the exact location of the diocese of Saint Clement have been endlessly debated by the Church historians. According to Saint Clement's Extensive Life by Theophylact of Ohrid and the Brief Life of Saint Clement of Ohrid by Demetrios Chomatianos,¹⁴ Saint Clement remained bishop of Drembica-Velika in the period between 893 and 916. He ordained a number of priests, deacons and lay readers; he translated and wrote a number of sermons, hagiographies and hymns. When he died on 27 July 916 in Ohrid, the city was already a leading spiritual center with a Church Slavonic university.

At the end of ninth century a strong spiritual and social movement called *Bogomilism* arose in the Balkans. Manichaeism and the Paulicianism of the Armenian colonists, with Masalianism from Asia Minor, influenced it and it spread all over Bulgaria towards Western Macedonia. The area west of the river Vardar, between the towns of Tetovo, Debar, Skopje, Prilep, Bitola, Meglena, Vodena and Thessalonica, was the stronghold of Bogomilism with its centers on the Babuna Mountain, in the villages of Bogomila and Melnica.¹⁵ As a counter to heretical beliefs, the local rulers

¹³ P. GAUTIER, *Clement d'Ohrid évêque de Dragvista*, in *Rèvue des Etudes Byzantines*, vol. XXII (1964), pp. 199-214; I. SNEGAROV, *Po voprosu o mestonahozdeniem eparhii Klimenta Ohridskago*, in *Actes du XII congrès International d'études Byzantines, Ochride 1961*, Beograd 1964, p. 189; T. TOMOSKI, *Prilog kon topografijata na Klimentovata eparhija*, in *Kliment Ohridski studii*, Skopje 1986; DVORNIK, *Les Slaves...*, p. 316. About the identification of Drembica and Velika: it seems that Drembica was northwest of Prilep, where a fortress Drembica was located. Velika was located at the river Velika (Treska), near Kičevo, and not far from Drembica. Dvornik wrote that St. Clement trained a number of 3500 students, and "Il les envoie, par groupes de 700 environ, dans les 12 regions de la province dont il s'occupait." DVORNIK, *op. cit.*, pp. 314-315, n. 4; G. BALASČEV, *Kliment episkop Slovjanski*, Sofia 1898, who claims that the region of Kutmičevica contained 17 bishops, which latter were concentrated around Ohrid. These were: Ohrid, Velika, Bitola, Kastoria, Glavenica, Servia, Berrhoia, Vodena, Moglena, Bregalnica (Strumica), Skopje and Prizren.

¹⁴ J. B. PITRA, *Analecta Sacra et Classica Spicilegio Solesmensi*, VI, Paris-Rome 1811; MIGNE, PG, vol. 126, coll. 1223-1225; RUNCIMAN, *op. cit.*, p. 86; I. IVANOV, *Bulgariski starini iz Makedonia*, Sofia 1970, p. 133.

¹⁵ Between the seventh and ninth century, some villages around Hlerin/Florina and Prespa were settled with Armenian Paulician colonists. The appearance of Paulician Bogomilism between 927-956 was described in the Extensive life of Saint Clement, in the letters of Patriarch Theophylact of Constantinople to the Bulgarian Tsar Peter, the Sermons of Cosma Presbyterus and so forth. See: D. ANGELOV, *Bogomilstvoto v Bulgaria*, Sofia 1969; Y. K. BETUKOV, *Kosma Prezviter v slavjanskikh literaturah*, Sofia 1976, pp. 299-342; D. OBOLENSKY, *The Bogomils, a study in Balkan Neo-Manichaeism*, Cambridge 1972, pp. 146-148, 162-167; P. CHARANIS, *The Armenians in the Byzantine Empire*, Lisboa

and Church prosecuted the Bogomils and built churches and monasteries connected with their missionary activities in the area. The Bulgarian Tsar Peter (927-970) was a pious Christian and inclined towards the monastic life and therefore started to organize a large number of monastic communities in the area of Ohrid, Prilep, Skopje, Thessalonica and Heraclea-Pelagonia. Because of such monastic activity, this region was known as “The Second Holy Mountain”.¹⁶ Administratively, according to the *De Thematibus* of Constantine Porphyrogenetos, from the first half of the tenth century ‘Herakleia Lakkou’ was amongst thirty-two cities of Macedonia Prima, but Pelagonia was amongst the eight cities of Macedonia Secunda, which further complicates the whole question of Heraclea and Pelagonia.¹⁷ It is very possible that in the tenth century the settlement of Bitola was established mainly as an ecclesiastical and monastic center, based on the previous episcopal and monastic traditions of Heraclea. Its name derives from the Old Church Slavonic *Обитель* meaning a monastic brotherhood, monastery or a center of the diocese, a toponomastic equivalent of the later Turkish *Manastır* or *Toli Manastır*, or *Monasterion* in Greek.¹⁸

Following the death of the Byzantine Emperor John Tzimiskes and the uprising of the Comes (Duke) Nicholas and his sons Samuel, David, Moses and Aaron, the Patriarchate was re-organized, which after some residential changes from Dristra, to Serdika, to Moglena, Vodena and Prespa, was definitely settled in Ohrid.¹⁹ To strengthen his ecclesiastical and political identity, the future Tsar Samuel took the ossuary relics from the Metropolitan church of the conquered city of Larissa in Thessaly in 985/6. The relics belonged to the Bishop St. Achilles, who evangelized the region of Larissa at the time of Constantine the Great and was a participant in the first Council of Nicaea in 325. It seems that Tsar Samuel also took the relics of other saints, such as St. Triphon of Kotor, St. Diodore from Thrace, St. Reginus and St. Oecumenius from the churches of Trikalla and Scopelae.²⁰ He took them to Prespa Lake, where his palaces

1963, p. 55. Some settlements near Hlerin/Florina (Armenohori and Armensko), are of Armenian origin, from the times of Archbishop Demetrios Chomatianos. R. MIHAJLOVSKI, *Bogomils on the Via Egnatia and in the Valley of Pelagonia: The Geography of a Dualist Belief*, in *Byzantinoslavica*, (2014) in press.

¹⁶ OBOLENSKY, op. cit., p. 102. It may be that Bitola and Pelagonia existed at the same time. In 1096 the heretical settlement of Pelagonia was burned and razed by the Crusaders of Bohemund.

¹⁷ Constantino Porphyrogeneto, *De Thematibus*, Pertusi, Vaticano 1952.

¹⁸ G. DYAČENKO, *Polnii cerkovno-slavjanskii slovar*, Moskva 1993, p. 363; T. TOMOSKI, *Kako toponimot ‘Manastir’ se naložil za vtor naziv na gradot Bitola*, in *Makedonija niz vekovite*, Skopje 1999, pp. 463-473; S. ROMANSKI, *Imenata na niakoi makedonski gradove. – 3. Bitolia*, in *Makedonski pregled*, vol. V/4 (1929), pp. 63-70; E. MANEVA, *Prilog kon rešavanjeto na ubicacijata na srednovekovniot grad Bitola*, in *Istorija*, vol. II (1986), p. 71; I. ZAIMOV, *Bitolski nadpis na Ivan Vladislav, samodržec bulgarski*, Sofia 1970, p. 7; B. KONESKI, *Imeto na gradot Bitola*, in *Makedonski mesta i iminja*, Skopje 1991, pp. 87-94; P. SKOK, *Iz toponomastike Južne Srbije*, in *Glasnik Skopskog naučnog društva*, vol. XII (1933), pp. 214, 215.

¹⁹ SPINKA, op. cit., p. 71; M. KIEL, *Art and Society of Bulgaria in the Turkish period*, Assen/Maastricht 1985, p. 284.

²⁰ G. SHLUMBERGER, *L'épopée Byzantine à la fin du Dixième siècle*, Hachette et Cie, 1896, p. 618; P. MILJKOVIĆ-PEPEK, *Najstarite svetiteljski kultovi vo Makedonija - osnovi za avtonomna crkva na Samuil*

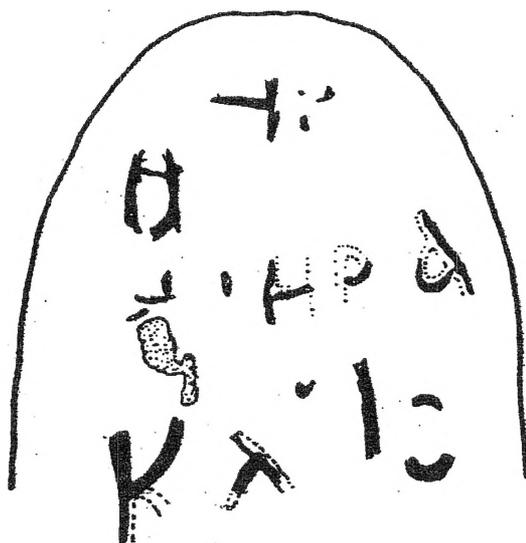


Fig. 1

were on the island of St. Achilles. In the year 985/6, Tsar Samuel rebuilt the large basilica on the lake island of Prespa and dedicated it to St. Achilles. This large imperial basilica had impressive dimensions of 41 m. in length and 23 m. in width, and it was decorated with frescos painted in the late tenth century. When the Russian scholar P. N. Milyukov visited this ruined church in 1907, he noticed three layers of wall painting and the figure of St. Achilles painted on the eastern side of the northern wall.²¹ Later this basilica was the mausoleum of Tsar Samuel's family and it was an ecclesiastical center. Around the conch of the central apse there are two inscriptions, and there are remains of painting in the diaconicon and the north arcade. In the lowest part of the large apse are painted eighteen arches with a list of bishop's thrones, and each one contains the name of one of the sees in the Archdiocese of Ohrid. Amongst the list of eighteen episcopal thrones, Heraclea was listed number six.²² (Fig. 1, Heracleian throne, N. Moutsopoulos)

After the archaeological excavations in 1965 guided by N. Moutsopoulos, the list of episcopal sees was published.²³ One of the last times the see of Heraclea was mentioned

i avtokefalna crkva, in *Zbornik na Muzej na Makedonija*, vol. I (1993), pp. 23, 30-31; C. GROZDANOV, *Portreti na svetitelite od Makedonija od IX-XVIII vek*, Skopje 1983, p. 145; B. ALEKSOVA, *Loca Sanctorum Macedoniae, the cult of martyrs in Macedonia from the 4th to the 9th centuries*, Skopje 1997, p. 56; *Georgii Cedreni Compendium historiarum cui substititur excerpta ex Breviario Joannis Scylitzae Curopalatae*, MIGNE, PG, vol. 122, Paris 1899, p. 168.

²¹ I. SNEGAROV, *Istoriia na Ohridskata arhiepiskopija, ot osnovaniето i do zavladvaniето na Balkanskiia poluostrov od Turcite*, vol. I, Sofia 1924, pp. 34-38.

²² N. MOUTSOPOULOS, *The churches of the prefecture of Florina*, Thessaloniki 1966, pp. 10-11; P. N. MILYUKOV, *Hristianskiya drevnosti Zapadnoi Makedonii*, Izd. Rus. Arh. ist., vol. IV, 1899, p. 52; IVANOV, op. cit., p. 57; M. MULLET, *Theophylact of Ochrid, reading the letters of a Byzantine Archbishop*, Birmingham 1997, p. 237.

²³ N. ΜΟΥΤΣΟΠΟΥΛΟΣ, *Η βασιλική του Αγίου Αχιλλείου στην Πρέσπα*, VI, Θεσσαλονίκη 1989, p. 405; SNEGAROV, op. cit., p. 22. According to I. Snegarov, in the time of Tsar Samuel the Patriarchal diocese

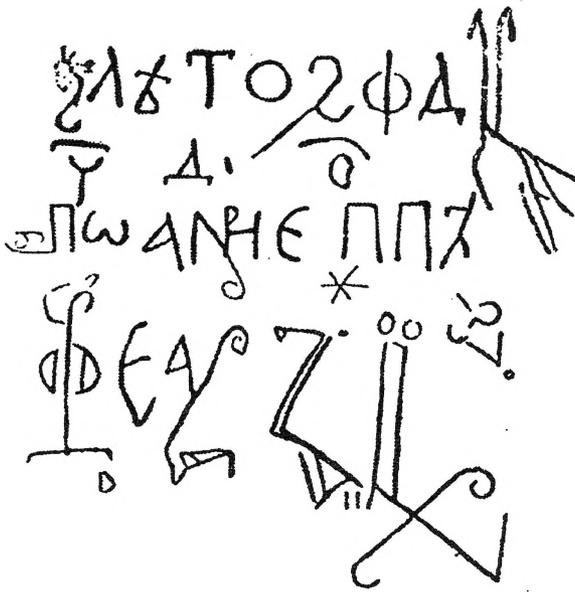


Fig. 2

is in the Eparchial List of St. Achilles' basilica in Prespa, which still had the ancient title of Heraclea. After 1019, the episcopal seat was relocated at the medieval Bitola, few kilometers to the east. As a settlement Heraclea still survived until the beginning of the eleventh century.

Between 1980 and 1986 on the archaeological site of Heraclea another basilica, 'Basilica D, extra muros', was discovered and excavated.²⁴ The building was a sixth century church, but it had a medieval Christian necropolis containing twenty-nine graves. According to E. Maneva, the graves dated from the end of the tenth and the beginning of the eleventh century, which is an indication that Heraclea still had a spiritual importance for the local population.²⁵

Near Prilep, 42 km. north-east of Heraclea, in the medieval suburbia of Varoš, a Cyrillic inscription was found in the monastery of the Holy Archangel Michael. It was written on a marble column that was discovered during the excavations in 1861. This precious epigraphic document is known as "the Varoš Inscription" and it belonged to Bishop Andrew from the year 6504, i.e. 996 AD.²⁶ (Fig. 2, Varoš inscription, I. Ivanov). The title of the Bishop Andrew mentioned in the inscription is enigmatic; it

of Ohrid consisted of fifteen eparchies: 1. Ohrid (and Prespa), 2. Glavenica, 3. Devol, 4. Meglena, 5. Pelagonia, 6. Strumica, 7. Morozdvižd, 8. Velbužd, 9. Serdica, 10. Raška, 11. Niš, 12. Braničevo, 13. Belgrade, 14. Prizren and 15. Lipljan.

²⁴ E. MANEVA, *Srednovjekovnata nekropola kaj bazilikata "D" vo Herakleja*, in *Istorija*, vol. XXII/I (1986), p. 196; ALEKSOVA, op. cit., pp. 239-240; R. MIHAJLOVSKI, *Pregled na hristijanskata istorija na Pelagonija i arhiereite Heraklejsko-Pelagoniski do 1767 godina*, in *Prilozi*, Društvo za nauka i umetnost, vol. 54-55/I (1993), p. 6.

²⁵ E. MANEVA, *Bazilikata "D" od Herakleja Linkestis*, in *Lihnid*, vol. 7 (1988), Ohrid, pp. 51-64; IDEM, *Srednovjekoven nakit od Makedonija*, Skopje 1992, p. 114.

²⁶ IVANOV, op. cit., pp. 26-27; I. GOŠEV, *Starobulgarski glagoličeski i kirilski nadpisi ot IX i XV vek*, Sofia 1961, p. 81.



Fig. 3

may be that he was a bishop of Heraclea, under whose church jurisdiction were Prilep and Varoš. Following the chrysobull of the Byzantine Emperor Basil II issued in 1019, Prilep was in the diocese of Bitola,²⁷ or it may be that in the tenth century the area of Prilep had its independent bishop who was a suffragan of Heraclea. In Emperor Samuel's Tsardom the plain of Pelagonia with its urban settlements and fortresses of Prilep, Bitola, Setina and Debrešte had a very important role. In Bitola were located the palaces of Samuel's son, Gabriel Radomir (1014-1015), where he resided during his short reign. According to the Byzantine historian John Skylitzes, in 1014, as soon as the Byzantine Emperor Basil II had learned of Tsar Samuel's death in Prespa, he marched from Thessalonika to Pelagonia, which he did not devastate, but he ordered that only Gabriel Radomir's court in Bitola (ἐν Βουτέλη) be burnt down. This was the first written document where the name of Bitola appeared.²⁸

A year later, Gabriel Radomir was murdered by his cousin John Vladislav (1016-1018), who succeeded to the throne.²⁹ He rebuilt the fortress of Bitola, an event that was commemorated on a marble slab with a Cyrillic inscription. This epigraphic monument is relatively well preserved and it measures 92 cm. in length, 58 cm. in width and is 55 cm. thick. It was found during the demolition of the Sungur Çavuş Bey Mosque (1435) in 1956, where it was in secondary use as a doorstep at the mosque's entrance.³⁰ Most likely the slab was originally built in above the main gate of the fortress. (Fig. 3, Inscription of J. Vladislav, by I. Zaimov) The inscription describes the building of the fortress of Bitola by John Vladislav, under the protection of the Holy Virgin and the Twelve Apostles. According to the studies of I. Zaimov, the inscription reads as follows:

²⁷ IVANOV, op. cit., p. 28.

²⁸ T. TOMOSKI, *Butella Civitas Pelagoniae*, in *Istorija*, vol. II (1980), Skopje, p. 19; ROMANSKI, op. cit., p. 68; ZLATARSKI, op. cit., pp. 743-745; S. ANTOLJAK, *Samuel and his state*, Skopje 1985, p. 111.

²⁹ ADŽIEVSKI, op. cit., pp. 41-47; ZLATARSKI, op. cit., pp. 750-754; ANTOLJAK, pp. 115-124.

³⁰ ZAIMOV, op. cit., pp. 9, 149.

*“In the year 6523 of the creation of the world (1015 AD), this castle was rebuilt, built and made by John, Bulgarian Autocrat, with the help of and the prayers to Our Lady, the Holy Virgin, and for (obtaining) the protection of the Twelve Apostles and (the two) Supreme Apostles...”*³¹

From the inscription it is evident that in the eleventh century the patron saints of Bitola were the Holy Virgin and the Twelve Apostles, especially the Two Supreme Apostles, St. Peter and St. Paul.³² It seems that the cult of the Holy Mother of God - Pelagonitissa and the cult of St. Peter and St. Paul had very strong roots in Heraclea and Bitola. It is known that in the thirteenth century a monastery of the Holy Apostles existed in the area, and an early funerary chapel dedicated to St. Peter and St. Paul was rebuilt in 1876 on the Bukovo cemetery, near the ruins of Heraclea Lyncestis.

The Autocrat of Bitola, John Vladislav, ruled for a short period, trying to deal a counter blow at the Byzantines, but he fell at the siege of the fortress of Dyrrachion in 1018. His name was connected with the martyrdom of Prince Vladimir who was married to Tsar Samuel's daughter, Kosara. Following the Life of Saint Vladimir and the accounts of Skylitzes and the Priest of Dioclea (Pop Dukljanin), the pious Vladimir was decapitated by the orders of Tsar Vladislav on 22 May 1015. The legend or hagiography of the prince St. John Vladimir of Zeta was printed in 1742 as “Akolouthia of St. John Vladimir” in Moscopolis, when Ioasaph was Archbishop of Ohrid. The author of this hagiography informs us that St. Vladimir was assassinated by soldiers at the Pass of Derven on the Egnatian Way, between Prespa and Bitola. The memory of St. Vladimir's martyrdom was so strong in this area, that later it inspired another Muslim legend of Hasan Baba decapitated in the seventeenth century. His mausoleum and tekke were erected on the western outskirts of Manastir/Bitola, near the old main road to Ohrid.³³

The body of St. John Vladimir, or “Shin Gyon” (=Saint John), was buried in the church of St. Mary in Krayina, at the Skadar Lake, but after 1215 it was removed to the monastery of “Shin Gyon” in Elbasan. In about 1381, the local Albanian lord built a monastery, where the remains of St. John Vladimir were still kept and honored by the Orthodox Archbishopric of Ohrid. Nowadays, he is still venerated by the local Christians and Muslims as a Saint and Martyr in the area of Albania, Macedonia and Montenegro.

³¹ IBIDEM, pp. 14, 155; V. MOŠIN, *Bitoljska ploča iz 1017 godine*, in *Makedonski jazik*, vol. XVII (1966), Skopje, pp. 51-61; I. BOŽILOV, s. v. *Bitolski nadpis na Ivan Vladislav*, in *Kirilo-Metodievski enciklopedija*, vol. I, Sofia 1985, pp. 96-118; B. KONESKI, *Makedonski mesta i iminja*, Skopje 1991, pp. 81-93; G. DIMOVSKI-COLEV, *Srednevekovnata položba i ime na Bitola*, in *Zbornik na Društvoto za nauka i umetnost*, Bitola 1980, pp. 543-559.

³² According to T. Tomoski, the patron saint of medieval Bitola was St. Nicholas. See: TOMOSKI, *Kako toponimot 'Manastir'...*, pp. 463-473; MIHAJLOVSKI, op. cit., p. 6; V. KRAVARI, *Villes et villages de Macédoine occidentale*, Paris 1989, p. 313, n. 12; MANEVA, op. cit., p. 113; ADŽIEVSKI, op. cit., p. 138. But, according to the local legends compiled by M. Cepenkov, and following the Archbishop of Ohrid, Demetrios Chomatianos, the well-known monastery in Bitola was dedicated to the Twelve Apostles.

³³ GROZĐANOV, op. cit., pp. 203-211; ANTOLJAK, op. cit., p. 106, 116-117, n. 952, 954; MILJKOVIĆ-PEPEK, op. cit., p. 25.

Between 1017 and 1018 the Byzantine army of Basil II devastated the Pelagonian Valley and therefore in 1018 the governors of Pelagonia, Morozdvidz and Liplyan came to Mosynopolis to surrender their cities to the Emperor.³⁴ After the definitive conquest of Tsar Samuel's realm, the territory became a part of the Eastern Roman Empire and political and administrative changes were made. Recently a lead seal of the Protospatharios was found in the Museum of Ioannina.³⁵

+ ΚΕΒ - ΗΘ ΤΟ CO - ΔΟΥΛΟ Π - ΕΤΡΟ Α - ΠΑΘ.
+Κ(ύρι)ε Β(οή)θ(ει) (ῶ) σ(ῶ) δού(ω) Πέτρω (πρωτο)σπαθ(αρίω).

On the reverse the inscription continues in additional four lines:

Κ, , ΚΥΡ, - ΒΗΤΟΛ, [S] - ΓΙΒΑ. - ΤΟ ΠΑ.-
κ(αί) Β(ασιλικῶ) κουρ(άτορι)Βητόλ(ης) καὶ Ἱγιβά(του) τῷ Πά(ρδω) ³⁶

It can be translated as: God help your servant the Imperial protospatharius and curator of Bitola and Gyavato, Petar.

It is the third time, after the Chronicles of John Skylitzes and John Vladislav's marble plaque, that the name of Bitola was mentioned, altogether with the Gyavato Pass, which was on the Via Egnatia. Peter was the first tax administrator who ruled over the region of Bitola in the period between 1018 and 1030.

The Emperor Basil II brought down the status of the Patriarchate to an independent Archbishopric named after Justiniana Prima and as "of the whole of Bulgaria", neither abolishing its autocephaly nor reducing its scope.³⁷ Therefore, the Emperor personally granted three Golden Charters or Chrysobulls in the subsequent years 1019, 1020 and 1020-1025 to the Archbishop's See of Ohrid. In the first Chrysobull, which was issued in 1019, the bishopric of Bitola was mentioned:

"And the bishop of Bitola shall have in Pelagonia, Prilep, Debrešte and Veles fifteen clerics and fifteen parishes." ³⁸

³⁴ ANTOLJAK, op. cit., p. 125; ZLATARSKI, op. cit., p. 732; I. IVANOV, *Severna Makedonia, istoričeski izdirvanja*, Sofia 1906, p. 76.

³⁵ W. SEIBT, *Ένα μυστηριώδες μολυβδόβουλλο των αρχών του 11' αιώνα στα Ιωάννινα: ΚΟΥΡΑΤΩΡ ΒΗΤΟΛ (ΗΣ) ΚΑΙ ΗΓΙΒ (ΑΤΟΥ)*, in *ΝΙΚΟΠΟΛΙΣ Β', Πρακτικά του Δευτέρου Συμποσίου για τη Νικόπολη (11-15 Σεπτεμβρίου)*, Πρέβεζα 2007, pp. 583-586; R. MIHAJLOVSKI, *Čirkulacija na vizantiskite pečati kako prilog kon ubikacijata na srednovekovna Bitola*, in *Macedoniae Acta Archaeologica* 21 (2014), in print.

³⁶ SEIBT, op. cit., p. 581.

³⁷ SNEGAROV, op. cit., pp. 22-23; S. DIMEVSKI, *The Archbishop of Ohrid*, in *From the past of the Macedonian people*, Skopje 1969, p. 62.

³⁸ «Καὶ τὸν ἐπίσκοπον Βουτέλεως εἰς τὴν Πελαγονίαν καὶ εἰς τὸν Πρίλαπον καὶ εἰς τὸν Δευρώτην καὶ εἰς τὸν Βέλεσσον κληρικοὺς ̅ε̅ καὶ πάροικους ̅ε̅.» In the text of the First Chrysobull, Bitola was a Bishop's see that ruled over Pelagonia, Prilep, Debrešte (a fortress on the road between Prilep and Kičevo) and Veles (a town on the river Vardar) with 15 clerics and 15 parishes, as servants and

It is evident that after 1019 the ancient bishopric of Heraclea was transferred to Bitola, the new ecclesiastic center in the region. As a third-grade diocese, the eparchial borders were between the eparchies of Ohrid, Morozdvidz and the right bank of the river Vardar.³⁹ Amongst the twenty four dioceses of the Archbishopric of Ohrid, the Bishopric of Bitola/Pelagonia was one of the most ancient. As church historian Kidd remarks: "... The Archbishopric of Ohrida lost its independence and was handed over to be ruled by a Greek Archbishop and clergy. He maintained intact the rights and area of its jurisdiction as it had been in the times both of Peter and Samuel; which therefore included thirty bishoprics and towns, such as Ochrida, Kastoria, Monastir and Skopje (Uskub) in Macedonia; Sofia and Vidin in Old Bulgaria; Belgrade, Nish, Prizren and Rasa in what is now Jugoslavia; Canina (above Avlona), Cheimara, Butrinto and Joanina in South Albania and Northern Epirus; and Stagi (the modern Kalabaka) in Thessaly... In 1020 these thirty bishoprics contained 685 ecclesiastics and 655 serfs."⁴⁰

In the period that followed, the establishment of the Bishopric of Bitola under the jurisdiction of the Archbishopric of Ohrid, a sufficient number of churches and monasteries were built in the area. Following the local legends, Bitola was an important monastic center with numerous churches, chapels and spiritual communities: "Around seventy churches and monasteries were located on both sides of the river Dragor, with their own mills, and above the Black Bridge (Kara Köprü), a cathedral church was situated."⁴¹ But we should keep in mind that the numbers were exaggerated as a result of the popular mythology.

By taking the local legends into consideration, and through the archaeological excavation undertaken by G. Filipovska and P. Srbinovski during the period of 1978-1980 at the locality known as *Kale Bayir* (in Turkish: "the Fortress Hill"), the foundations of a medieval church were discovered.⁴² The archaeological site is located on the 'Bayir' hills, north of Bitola, which overlook the river Dragor valley and the Pelagonian plain. It was apparently part of the medieval settlement, protected by ramparts and primitive fortifications. The church building was a large structure with a total length of 23,6 m. and a width of 20,16 m. The church proper represented a transitional type of cross-domed basilica or ambulatory church, with an inscribed Greek cross. Its nave was

dependant peasants. See: IVANOV, *Bulgarski...*, pp. 547-562; OFEICOFF, *La Macédoine, au point de vue ethnographique, historique et philologique*, Philippopoli 1887, pp. 187-205; SNEGAROV, op. cit., vol. I, p. 162; E. GOLUBINSKII, *Kratkii očerk istorii Pravoslavnih cerkvei*, Moskva 1871, p. 61.

³⁹ I. IVANOV, *Eparhiite v Ohridskata arhiepiskopija prjaz nachaloto na XI vjak*, in *Spisanie na Bulgarskata akademija na naukite*, vol. I (1912), Sofia, pp. 109-110; GOLUBINSKI, op. cit., p. 62; SNEGAROV, op. cit., p. 162.

⁴⁰ KIDD, op. cit., p. 324; GOLUBINSKI, op. cit., pp. 89-106; DARROUZES, op. cit., pp. 152-153, 371-372.

⁴¹ M. TEVFIK, *Kratka istorija Bitoljskog vilajeta*, Manastir 1912, p. 16; M. CEPENKOV, *Predanija*, vol. 7, Skopje 1972, pp. 119, 222; J. HADJI-VASILJEVIĆ, *Grad Bitolj*, Beograd 1911, pp. 19-20.

⁴² G. FILIPOVSKA, P. SRBINOVSKI, *Pregled na arheološkite istraživanja na srednevekovniot period vo Bitola 1978-81*, in *Zbornik na trudovi 2-3* (1980-81), Zavod za zaštita na spomenicite na kulturata, muzej i galerija, pp. 111-121.

divided into three bays, with three protruding polygonal apses: the central one, with a diaconicon and prothesis in the two side chapels. (Fig. 4, the 'Kale bair' church plan, Z. Sterjov) The narthex was divided from the nave by a wall and two towers framed the western façade, which indicates a presence of an additional exonarthex. There is a probability that the towers functioned as bell-towers. The walls of the church were built of coarse stone and mortar in combination with brick. The thickness of the walls and lateral supports indicate barrel vaults and a central cross-dome. This type of cross-domed church flanked by annexes on the northern and southern sides, and two towers on the western side, appeared often in variations in church buildings in the Balkans and in Asia Minor. There are examples at "Fifteen Martyrs of Tiberiopolis" in Strumica from the end of the ninth century and beginning of the tenth century,⁴³ the church of Patleina (Bulgaria) from the year 907,⁴⁴ the northern church of Fenari Isa Cami or Church of Constantine Lips in Constantinople from 907, the Bodrum Cami c. 920 in Constantinople⁴⁵ and the church at Dereagzi in Turkey.⁴⁶ According to Filipovska and Srbinovski, this medieval church in Bitola chronologically belonged to the period between the tenth and the beginnings of the eleventh century.⁴⁷ The whole excavated area at Kale Bayir was a medieval fortress occupying an area of 500 m. by 190 m. and it was razed between the eleventh and fourteenth century.⁴⁸ This hill dominated its surroundings and had the best range of vision to the west and to the Egnatian road leading to Ohrid, to the northeast towards Prilep and to south-southeast towards Hlerin/Florina.⁴⁹ This medieval complex was a part of the legendary chain of citadels and fortifications on the hilltops around Bitola. They controlled the valleys of

⁴³ P. MILJKOVIĆ-PEPEK, *Hristijanska arhitektura kaj makedonskite Sloveni od pred sredinata na XIX vek do 1018 godina*, in *Kliment Ohridski Studii*, Skopje 1986, pp. 225-237; R. OUSTERHOUT, *Beyond Hagia Sophia: Originality in Byzantine Architecture*, in *Originality in Byzantine Literature, Art and Music* (ed. by Littlewood A.R.), Oxford 1995, pp. 167-185. Another example of such a transitional variant is the church of Panagia, Episkopi, Eurythania in Greece, from the second half of the 8th century to first half of the 9th century. See: P. VOCOTOPOULOS, *Church Architecture in Greece during the Middle Byzantine Period*, in *Perceptions of Byzantium and its Neighbors (843–1261)*, (ed. by O. Z. Pevny), New York 2000, pp. 154–155.

⁴⁴ R. KRAUTHEIMER, (Revised by R. Krautheimer and S. Čurčić), *Early Christian and Byzantine Architecture*, Penguin Books 1986, pp. 369-374.

⁴⁵ KRAUTHEIMER, op. cit., pp. 355-358.

⁴⁶ J. MORGANSTERN, *The Church at Dereagzi, its date and its place in the history of Byzantine Architecture*, in *Actes du XIVe Congrès International des études Byzantines 1971*, Bucarest 1976, pp. 385-394; IDEM, *The Byzantine church at Dereagzi*, New York University 1973.

⁴⁷ FILIPOVSKA, SRBINOVSKI, op. cit., pp. 111-121.

⁴⁸ G. FILIPOVSKA-LAZAREVSKA, A. GJORGIEVSKA, *Materijalnata kultura vo Bitola od X-XI vek*, in *Bitola niz vekovite*, vol. I, Bitola 1998, pp. 11-19.

⁴⁹ G. FILIPOVSKA, P. SRBINOVSKI, *Rezultati od istražuvanjata na lok. Kale Bitola vo 1978*, in *Macedoniae Acta Archaeologica*, vol. 6 (1980), Skopje 1983, pp. 111-120. I am very grateful to Mr. Srbinovski for his expertise.

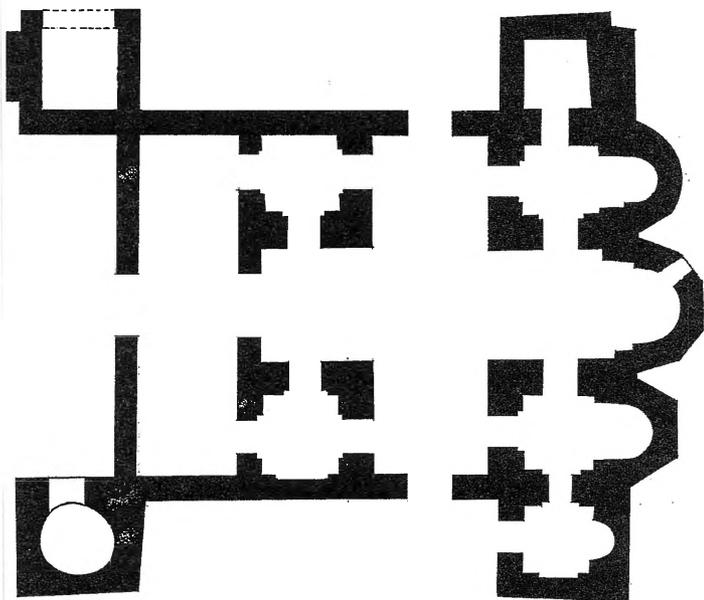


Fig. 4

the Dragor and Šemnica rivers, the Egnatian way and its junction in Bitola. At the end of the nineteenth century, Petrov described them as “Bora kale” fortifications.⁵⁰

During the eleventh century, which was a period of armed conflicts, revolts and the First Crusade, the region of Pelagonia was heavily devastated. In 1040 a rebellion by Tsar Samuel’s grandson Peter Delyan erupted against Byzantine taxation and fiscal oppression.⁵¹ This rebellion collapsed in 1041, but famine in the countryside caused another revolt in 1072. At the head stood George Voytekh and Constantine Bodin. The insurgents defeated the Byzantine army of the Dukes Nikephoros Karantenos and Damianos Dallassenos and captured Niš, Skopje, Ohrid and laid siege to the fortress of Kastoria. Michael Saronites, a Magister and Dux of the West, suppressed this revolt. A lead seal recently found in the area of Heraclea Lyncestis is related to the events in 1071 and it could be concluded from it that Pelagonia was an important military post and had the status of a kastron. Michael Saronites’ army consisted of mercenaries, Franks and Allemani who in turn devastated Samuel’s cathedral church of St. Achilles in Prespa.⁵² In 1083 the Normans of Southern Italy led by Robert Bohemond landed at Dyrrachion, capturing Kastoria, Meglena and the fortress of Pelagonia, that was taken by the assault of Bohemond’s armored Celts and Normans.⁵³

⁵⁰ Gj. PETROV, *Materiali po izuchvaneto na Makedonija*, Sofia 1896, p. 120; Lj. LAPE, *Podatoci na Gjorče Petrov za starinite vo Skopjskiot i Bitolskiot okrug*, in *Zbornik posveten na Dimče Koco*, Skopje 1975, pp. 107-113.

⁵¹ ZLATARSKI, op. cit., vol. II, pp. 55, 56, 77; ADŽIEVSKI, op. cit., pp. 68-74.

⁵² L. MANDIĆ, R. MIHAJLOVSKI, *XIth century Byzantine seal from Heraclea, near Bitola*, in *Révue des Études Byzantines*, vol. 58 (2000), pp. 273-276.

⁵³ KRAVARI, op. cit., p. 38; ADŽIEVSKI, op. cit., pp. 76-78; Anna Comnina, *Aleksiada*, (transl. I. N. Liubarski), Moskva 1965, p. 506.

In the period between 2003 and 2008, within the framework of the project “Ubication of Medieval Bitola” some archaeological excavations were executed at the Yeni mosque (built in 1553-54). As a result, the foundations of a medieval basilica were uncovered dating from the eleventh to the fourteenth century. Several objects were excavated as well, a double sided pectoral medallion, two silver rings and two lead seals, all from the eleventh century. The first seal has a bust on the obverse of the Virgin Mary (MP||ΘΥ) with Infant Jesus. On the obverse there is a six line inscription:

+ ΘΚΕ.ΒΘ|ΘΕΟΔΩΡΟ|ΒΕCΤΑΡ.Ο|ΤΟ C...
 +Θ(εοτό)κε Β(οή)θ(ει) Θεοδώρω Βεστάρχω τω C...

It can be translated as: Mother of God, help Theodore Vestiarches of S...⁵⁴

Theodore Vestiarches was a high ranking military commander during the eleventh century. It may be a seal belonging to Aaron Theodor, Strategos of Taron in Armenia.

The second lead seal is with the bust of St. George dressed as warrior and a shield in his left hand and a spear in his right hand. On the reverse an inscription in five lines is preserved:

ΑΘΛΗΤΑ|CΩΖΕΤΗΝ|ΓΡΑΦΗΝ|ΤΩ ΜΑΓ|ΓΑΝ.
 Άθλητά, σῶζε τήν γραφήν τοῦ Μαγγάνη.

In translation: Martyr, protect the writings of Manges.

At the beginning the word “Athlete” is used for St. George and to protect the writings of George Manges, the protoproedros of the Synod in Blachernae at Constantinople in 1094 and a secretary of the emperor Alexios Komnenos I.⁵⁵

Both lead seals found by the archaeological excavations at Yeni mosque indicate that in the second half of the eleventh century medieval Bitola gained an importance as an ecclesiastical and administrative-military center over the ancient Heraclea Lyncestis and the military camp of Pelagonia.⁵⁶

At this time and later the Ohrid Archbishopric lost some of its privileges and the eparchial territories granted to it by Emperor Basil II. The metropolitans of Silistria and other eastern dioceses were severed from the Ohrid Archbishopric and placed directly under the jurisdiction of Constantinople. These privileges were not restored until the time of the Emperor Manuel I Komnenos (1143-1180).⁵⁷ The events of the later eleventh century led to the need for the pacification and reconciliation of the local population in the Archbishopric of Ohrid. The sixth Archbishop, Theophylact

⁵⁴ R. MIHAJLOVSKI, *Byzantine seals unearthed by the archaeological excavations at the Yeni mosque*, in *Journal of the Australian Early Medieval Association*, vol. 6 (2010), pp. 41-51.

⁵⁵ R. MIHAJLOVSKI, *The Yeni mosque in Bitola in the light of the most recent archaeological information*, in *Patrimonium.mk*, vol. 3-4, 5-6 (2008-2009), pp. 183-188.

⁵⁶ IBIDEM, pp. 47-51.

⁵⁷ SPINKA, op. cit., pp. 91-94.

Hephaistos, was a key player in this and one of the most remarkable ecclesiastical figures at the time. Coming from Constantinople, after 1088/9, he was a pupil of Michael Psellos, the celebrated eleventh-century Constantinopolitan theologian, a church hierarch, expert in Homer and the author of *The Life of Saint Clement of Ohrid*.⁵⁸ His letters, mainly written in Ohrid, are a valuable source of his political and ecclesiastical activities, in which the bishopric of Pelagonia and its eleventh century history are included. In one of his letters from 1091, he described the 'themata' of Pelagonia as a deserted area, with its population devastated by the wars.⁵⁹ In another letter, he requested from the local authority, a man named Romanos Straboromanos, that the village of Mogila, near Bitola, an old residency and property of the church, should be returned to his jurisdiction.⁶⁰

In his letters number L 12, M 39, M 41, Theophylact addressed the unknown bishop of Pelagonia, as a suffragan and friend. He encouraged him to read the Holy Scriptures; he advised him about the changeover of local governors and authorities and arranged an introduction for him to the Patriarch of Constantinople.⁶¹ Between 1097 and 1105, Theophylact had strife with the tax collectors in his Archdiocese and finally he was forced to flee from Ohrid to Pelagonia where he sought refuge.⁶² In letter number M 41 he described how one of his servants, Lazar, probably a Bogomil, started to campaign against him. Lazar assembled a group of supporters in order to lay their case before the emperor in Constantinople. For the same reason Theophylact fled again to Pelagonia, asking for temporary refuge at the bishop's residence.⁶³

The historical sources confirm the strong presence of Bogomils during the eleventh and twelfth centuries in this area. Following the hagiography "The Life of St. Hilarion of Moglena" written by Euthymius, Patriarch of Trnovo in the fourteenth century, the area of Meglen and Pelagonia was a stronghold of the Bogomil doctrine. Saint Hilarion fiercely persecuted the numerous heretics in the region, who were Manichaeans, Paulicians and Bogomils.⁶⁴

⁵⁸ M. ANGOLD, *Church and Society in Byzantium under the Comneni, 1081-1261*, Cambridge 1995, p. 158; A. KAZHDAN, s. v. *Theophylactos*, in *The Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium*, vol. 2, New York, Oxford 1991, p. 2068; M. LE QUIEN, *Oriens Christianus*, Paris 1840, p. 83.

⁵⁹ Archbishop Theophylact wrote to the Duke John of Dyrrachion about the conditions in one part of his diocese that had been trampled over time and time again by Normans, Byzantines, Pechenegs and Crusaders: "I could not hold back my tears. In the church the people no longer sing, the candles remain unlit; the bishop and clergy have been forced to flee, and the townsfolk have left their houses to live hidden in the woods and forests..." See: J. J. NORWICH, *Byzantium, the decline and fall*, New York 1996, p. 1108.

⁶⁰ D. OBOLENSKY, *Theophylact of Ohrid*, in *Six Byzantine portraits*, Oxford 1988, p. 51; ADŽIEVSKI, op. cit., pp. 95-98. F. CHALANDON, *Essai sur le règne d'Alexis Comnène (1081-1118)*, Paris 1900, p. 292.

⁶¹ MULLET, op. cit., p. 352; P. GAUTIER, *Theophylacte d'Achrida lettres, introduction, texte, traduction et notes*, Thessalonique 1986.

⁶² OBOLENSKY, op. cit., p. 55; B. PANOV, *Srednovekovna Makedonija*, vol. 2, Skopje 1985, pp. 373-375.

⁶³ ANGOLD, op. cit., p. 161; PANOV, op. cit., p. 375.

⁶⁴ OBOLENSKY, *The Bogomils...*, pp. 223-226; SPINKA, op. cit., p. 99; CHARANIS, op. cit., p. 55, V. NERSESSIAN, *The Tondrakian movement*, Allison Park, Pennsylvania, 1988, pp. 1-36, 51.

A rare monument that recalls the presence of the Bogomils in Pelagonia is preserved near the village of Velušina, around 12 km. south of Bitola. Besides its numerous churches from different periods, an unknown funerary stele is located on the southern outskirts of the village. This anthropomorphic stele, made out of granite, is a monolith measuring 184 cm. high, 70 cm. wide and 24 cm. thick.⁶⁵ Following the ‘Bogomil theory’ of Alexander Soloviev, the Bogomils, like Cathars and other Neomanichaeans, rejected the realistic images of the Crucifixion, but revered it. The cross was represented in an anthropomorphic or theomorphic form. In Eastern Herzegovina there is a variety of anthropomorphic crosses on tombstones. A similar Bogomil’s funerary stele from the fifteenth century can be seen in Bileća, Herzegovina.⁶⁶

There is other historical evidence about the presence and popularity of Bogomilism in Pelagonia, that existed as a parallel spiritual movement in the area, beside the official Orthodox Church. When the Crusaders of the First Crusade in 1096-1097 travelled over the Balkan Peninsula on the Via Egnatia, they met the Bogomils on their way to Constantinople.⁶⁷ Some of the Crusaders’ chronicles described their travels. Such is the Chronicle of Fulcherius, a participant of the First Crusade in 1096. He marched on the Via Egnatia, passing through the Pelagonian plain: “Afterwards we crossed the mountains and the town of Lucretia (Ohrid), Botella (Bitola), Bofinat (Vodena?), Stella (Pella?), we reached a river called Vardar.”⁶⁸

At the end of the same year, another wave of Crusaders reached the port of Dyrrachion, led by Robert Bohemond and Tancred of Taranto. They crossed over the passes of the Pindus Mountains reaching the town of Kastoria at Christmas. Then they marched northeast towards Pelagonia, where they arrived in January. Following the anonymous writer of *Gesta Francorum et aliorum Hierosolymitanorum*, (The deeds of the Franks and the other pilgrims to Jerusalem) the Crusaders attacked a settlement of heretics in Pelagonia:

“Then we set out and travelled through very rich country, from one village to another and from one city to another and from one castle to another, until we came to Castoria, where we held the

⁶⁵ R. MIHAJLOVSKI, *Bogomils on the Via Egnatia...*

⁶⁶ O. BIHALJI-MERIN, A. BENAC, *The Bogomils*, London 1962, XX, XXIX; R. PORTAL, *Les Slaves, peuples et nations*, Librairie Arman Colin 1965, p. 100; A. V. SOLOVIEV, *Le Symbolisme des monuments funéraires Bogomiles et Cathares*, in *Actes du X Congrès International d’Études Byzantines*, Istanbul 1957, pp. 162-65, plates: XXIX-XXXI; on the plate XXX there are some analogies with crosses number 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14 and 15.

⁶⁷ Pope Urban II (1088-1099) at the Council of Clermont in 1095 preached to the Christian West to rescue the Holy Land from infidels. From Lyon in 1096 the Crusaders Robert of Flanders and Hugh of Vermandua travelled over the Italian peninsula to the Adriatic and Via Egnatia. The second army of Raymond of Toulouse and its spiritual leader the Bishop of Le Puy, Adhemar, marched in 1096 over the Dalmatian coast, then on the Via Egnatia, towards Constantinople. The third army of Robert Bohemond and Tancred of Taranto marched from Southern Italy to Dyrrachion. Between 1096-1097 all of them entered the cultivated lands of Byzantium. M. FOSS, *People of the first Crusade*, New York 1997, pp. 68-69; S. RUNCIMAN, *A History of the Crusades, the First Crusade*, vol. I, Cambridge 1980, pp. 83-143; J. RILEY-SMITH, *The Crusades: A short history*, London 1987, pp. 1-91.

⁶⁸ *Recueil des Historiens des Croisades: Historiens Orientaux*, Paris 1872-1905, vol. III, p. 331.

*feast of Christmas and stayed for some days trying to buy provisions, but the inhabitants would sell us none, because they were much afraid of us, taking us to be no pilgrims, but plunderers come to lay waste the land and to kill them. So we seized oxen, horses and asses, and anything else we could find, and leaving Castoria we went into Palagonia, where there was a castle of heretics. We attacked this place from all sides and burnt the castle and its inhabitants together. After this we reached the river Vardar...*⁶⁹

The third army of Crusaders led by Raymond of Toulouse and the religious leader of the Crusade, the Bishop Adhemar of Le Puy, travelled from Lyon over Dalmatia to Dyrachion and then using the Egnatian Way they reached the Pelagonian plain, where they camped:

*“Having taken the road, the Count Raymond de Toulouse, with efforts lasting many days crossed forests and mountains and the entire region of the Epirotes and at last set up camp, having descended to the region called Pelagonia, which abounded in all kinds of supplies. When the Bishop of Puy, a man whose life is worthy of respect, pitched his tent at some little distance from the camp, with a view to camping more comfortably, he was captured by the attacking Patzinaks.”*⁷⁰

Bishop Adhemar Le Puy, the spiritual guide of the Crusader army, was wounded and captured by the Petchenegs, but he was returned to his army by the swift action of his deeply shocked troops.

Therefore, the Byzantine Emperor Alexius I Komnenos (1081-1118) used Pelagonia as an area for recruiting soldiers for his military campaigns against the Crusaders of Bohemond. In the middle of the twelfth century, Pelagonia also had a military and strategic importance, because for the Emperor Manuel I Komnenos (1149-1155) it was the point where the Imperial base, winter quarters and hunting camp were located.⁷¹ In the chronicles written by the contemporary historian, Nicetas Choniates, Pelagonia was described as “the region suitable for cavalry encampment and for spying on hostile tribes.”⁷² He described the Imperial camp as a place where the contemporary scholars gathered on the invitation of the Emperor Manuel I Komnenos, who himself was gifted with a silver tongue and as a religious scholar wrote catechetical sermons called

⁶⁹ “...Egressi de Castoria, intrauimus Palagoniam, in qua erat quoddam hereticorum castrum. Quod undique aggressi sumus, moxueque nostro succubuit imperio. Accenso itaque igne, combussimus castrum cum habitatoribus suis. Postea peruenimus ad flumen Bardarum.” *Gesta Francorum et Aliorum Hierosolymitanorum*, London 1962, p. 29; S. ANTOLJAK, *Makedonski heretici u zapadnim izvorima 11. i 12. stoljeća*, in *Bogomilstvoto na Balkanot vo svetlinata na naučnite istraživanja*, Skopje 1982, pp. 52-66; RUNCIMAN, op. cit., p. 156; ANGELOV, op. cit., p. 374; Roberti Monachi, *Historia Hierosolymitana*, in *Recueil des historiens des croisades. Historiens occidentaux* III, Paris 1879, p. 745.

⁷⁰ Wilhelm of Tyre, *History of the Crusades*, in *Recueil des historiens des croisades. Historiens Occidentaux* I, Paris 1844, p. 99; ZERNOV, op. cit., p. 104; RUNCIMAN, op. cit., p. 161.

⁷¹ MANDIĆ, MIHAJLOVSKI, op. cit., p. 276; KRAVARI, op. cit., p. 38; A. DUCCELLIER, *La façade Maritime de l’Albanie au Moyen âge, Durazzo et Valona du XIe au XVe siècle*, Thessaloniki 1981, pp. 76-77; Cinnamos Ioannis, *Epitome rerum ab Ioanne et Alexio Comnenis gestarum*, rec. A. Meineke, Bonnæ 1836.

⁷² KAZHDAN, s. v. *Pelagonia*.

Selentia, which he delivered before public audiences. When there was a discussion of a scriptural verse, contemporary theologians were invited; for example, Eustathios of Dyrrachion, Michael of Thessalonica and Nikephoros Basilakes. Sometimes these debates had a dramatic twist:

“It is said that while this doctrinal dispute was being decided in public debate, an unseasonable thunderclap rent the air, deafening the assembly as well as the emperor, who was sojourning then in Pelagonia. A certain man of letters – Elias, who was superior to most of his stations in life, opened a book on the subject of thunder and earthquakes and coming upon the meaning of thunder in a particular sense, gave the following interpretation: ‘The fall of the wise.’”⁷³

As more important sources of the twelfth century we should single out the chronicles by different authors, such as Kinnamos, William of Tyre and the Arab geographer El Idrisi. The Byzantine theologian, secretary of the Emperor Manuel I Komnenos and historian, Kinnamos John (died after 1185), wrote a historical book, *Chronikai*. In his book, which is a valuable source of important historical and geographical information, the ancient town of Heraclea Lyncestis was still mentioned as “...Heraclea of the Mysians, which according to some other language the Romans now call *Pelagonia*...”, which shows how the Byzantine authors were knowledgeable about the topographical changes.⁷⁴

Another contemporary chronicle, the *Historia Rerum in Partibus Transmarinis Gestarum*, written by William, the Archbishop of Tyre (1127-1190), was describing his diplomatic missions as one of the envoys of Amalrich, the King of Jerusalem. In 1168 he travelled to Constantinople and then over the Egnatian Way to the Imperial camp in Pelagonia, where he met the Emperor Manuel I Komnenos. His narrative is an interesting source of Pelagonian history:

“It was on his return from his campaign that we, after overcoming the many difficulties of the road, met him at the city called ‘Butella’, in the province of Pelagonia (in provincia Pelagonia, in civitate quae vulgo dicitur Butella). This place is near the ancient city formerly known as ‘Justiniana Prima’, which was the native place of the most wise, most fortunate and invincible Emperor Justinian. It is now commonly called ‘Acreda’ (Ohrid).”⁷⁵

Another contemporary traveller visited “Butella” in Pelagonia in the middle of the twelfth century. On his travels through the countries of Europe, Al Idrisi, the Spanish Moor, was the famous cartographer of the Norman king, Roger II of Sicily. In 1153, Al Idrisi described his travel itinerary in the Balkans, from Dyrrachion to Salonika.

⁷³ N. Choniates, *O City of Byzantium, annals of Niketas Choniates*, (translated by Magonlias H. J.), Detroit 1984, pp. 119-120; Choniates Nicetas, *Historia*, in *Corpus Fontium Historiae Byzantinae*, vol. XI/2, (Apud Walter de Gruyter et Socios Berolini et Novi Eboraci) 1975, p. 69.

⁷⁴ PAPAZOGLU, op. cit., p. 267; LE QUIEN, op. cit., pp. 81-82.

⁷⁵ E. A. BABCOCK, A. C. KREY (translated by), *A History of Deeds done beyond the sea*, by William, Archbishop of Tyre, vol. II, New York 1943, pp. 347-349; F. CHALANDON, *Jean II Comnène (1118-1143) et Manuel I Comnène (1143-1180)*, vol. I, Paris 1912, p. 396; T. TOMOSKI, *Gradišteto na Srednovjekovna Pelagonija*, in *Makedonija niz vekovite*, Skopje 1999, p. 40; RUNCIMAN, op. cit., pp. 331-332.

Amongst the towns on his way, he visited “Tutili” or “Butili” (Bitola), which he described as “a beautiful and pleasant town, two days east of Ohrid.”⁷⁶

Around the year 1150, the Orthodox Church prelate named Stephen occupied the Pelagonian episcopal throne. His title and name are preserved on the lead seal, which is a part of the Mordthmann collection. V. Laurent published it in 1965.⁷⁷ On the obverse there is an image of the Holy Virgin seated on the throne and on the reverse side there is a metric inscription in six lines:

+ΠΕΛΛΑΓΟ|ΝΙΑCTΟΥ|Α̅Ε|ΔΡΟΥCTΕΑΝΟΥ|
ΡΑΙCΒΕΒΕ|ΙCΚΕΛΓΟΥC|ΥΛΟΓΕ

+ Πελαγονίας τοῦ προέδρου τεφάνου ράξ(ε)ις εβ(αι)οῖς κὲ λόγουc, εοῦ Λόγε .

The well-preserved inscription can be translated as: + Mother of God, Word of God, you authenticate the actions and words of Stephen, Proedros of Pelagonia.

The inscription reveals the name of the Bishop of Pelagonia, Stephen, who was the President (Proedros) of the Pelagonian diocese.⁷⁸ The name of Bishop Stephen is unique. He is the only known prelate of the Bishopric of Pelagonia in the twelfth century. Besides the military and political turbulence and the strong influence of the Bogomil anti-church movement, the Bishopric of Pelagonia firmly preserved its religious dominance in the Pelagonian valley.⁷⁹

⁷⁶ P.-A. JAUBERT, *La géographie d'Edrisi – traduite de l'Arabe d'après deux manuscrits de la bibliothèque Nationale, traduction complète du Kitab Nuzhat Al-Mustaq, ou kitab rujar termine en 1154(548H), “Recreation de celui qui desire parcourir les pays” par Abu'Abd-Allah Muhammad Al-Idrisi, vers 1099-1165, Paris 1836-1840, repr. Amsterdam 1975, vol. 2/286.*

⁷⁷ V. LAURENT, *Le Corpus des Sceaux de l'Empire Byzantin*, vol. V2, Paris 1965, p. 334; G. FEDALTO, *Hierarchia ecclesiastica orientalis: series episcoporum ecclesiarum christianarum orientalium: Vol. 1, Patriarchatus Constantinopolitanus*, Padua 1988, p. 441.

⁷⁸ LAURENT, op. cit., 335/1506. In ecclesiastical terminology ‘Proedros’ was generally a synonym for bishop or ‘president’ of the local church. After the thirteenth century it acquired a more technical canonical meaning. Proedros in this new sense was the equivalent of Administrator. KAZHDAN, s. v. *Proedros*, in *The Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium*, vol. III, New York, Oxford 1991, pp. 1727-1728; According to ARSIĆ, op. cit., p. 20, Bishop Stephen occupied the Pelagonian throne around 1150. Unfortunately, the photo of the obverse, representing the Virgin on the throne was not published in LAURENT, op. cit.; MIHAJLOVSKI, *Pregled na hristijanska istorija...*, p. 8.

⁷⁹ I am very grateful to my colleague Jovica Grozdanovski for his support and help.

Хераклеја, Пелагонија и Средновековна Битола: преглед на црковната историја (од шести до дванаесетти век)

Резимé

Ранохристијанскиот свет на Балканот почнал да опаѓа со преселбите и инвазиите на Готите, Хуните и Остроготите. Сето тоа било проследено со епидемии на чума и земјотреси кои што значително ја намалиле економската моќ на ромејскиот свет. За времето на Јустинијан, словенската инвазија се претворила во трајно населување. Хераклејскиот епископат веќе не се споменува на шестиот Екуменски собор во 680 година, но се споменувал во Нотитија епископатум, помеѓу 787 и крајот на деветтиот век, како суфраган на Метрополитот на Тесалоника. За време на бугарскиот кнез Борис Михаил христијанството било прифатено како државна религија, со што се изменува дијецезалната структура. Во 879 г., се споменува архиепископ по име Јован. Во 881-882 г. Свети Методиј патувал по Виа Егнатија за Константинопол при што поминал и низ Битола. По неговата смрт неговите следбеници Климент и Наум биле примени на дворот на кнез Борис: Климент ја добил епархијата на Дремвица-Велика во чиј состав била и Пелагониската епископија. При крајот на деветтиот век, се зацврстува на оваа територија богомилското религиозно движење кое имало силни корени во Пелагонија и вдолж Виа Егнатија. Истовремено, оваа област била дел од Самиуловото царство и на островот Св Ахил во Преспа биле донесени моштите на свети Ахилиј, свети Регинос, свети Екумениј од Трикала, свети Диодор тракиски, и свети Трифун од Котор. Во апсидата на црквата „Свети Ахилиј“ е сочуван натпис каде се споменува хераклејскиот престол, шести по ред. Во 1980-89 г. Е. Манева ја ископуваше хераклејската базилика „Д, екстра мурос“ која содржеше гробови од X—XI век. Во Варош кај Прилеп е пронајден натписот на епископот Андреј, кој е од 996 година.

Според Јован Скилица после смртта на Цар Самуил, во 1014 г. наследник на круната бил син му Гаврил Радомир, чии дворци во Битола биле запалени од византискиот император Василиј Втори, но не и тврдината. Ова е прво споменување на средновековна Битола во пишан извор. По една година Гаврил Радомир бил убиен од братучедот Јован Владислав кој го презема тронот. Тој ја обновил тврдината на Битола за што оставил мермерен блок со натпис каде

се споменува заштитата на Пресвета Богородица и дванаесетте апостоли. Со Јован Владислав е сврзано и житието на свети Јован Владимир, кој беше погубен и подоцна беше прогласен за светител-маченик. Но, после 1018 г., Битола и пелагониската долина биле вклучени во Византија, во темата Бугарија со седиште во Скопје. Од овој период е пронајден еден печат од Петар, империјалниот куратор и протоспатариј на Битола и Гавато кој управувал со градот и даноците во периодот помеѓу 1018 и 1030 година. Ова е третото споменување на името Битола во овој период.

Во 1019 г. византискиот император Василиј Втори Вулгароктонос ја прогласил првата хрисува со која на битолскиот епископ му се доделуваат Пелагонија, Прилеп, Дебреште и Велес со петнаесет клерици и парици, во состав на Архиепископијата во Охрид. Со тоа Битола станува епископско седиште со бројни цркви, манастири и свои воденици. Во периодот помеѓу 1078 г. и 1080 г. на локалитетот „Кале Баир“ беше пронајдена фортификација и темели од базилика, која според Г. Филиповска и П. Србиновски, базиликата припаѓала на периодот помеѓу X-XI век. Во 1041 г. и 1072 г. регионот бил зафатен од востанијата на Петар Делјан и Ѓорѓи Војтех, за што сведочи печатот на магистерот и дуксот на Западот, Михаил Саронит, кој е пронајден во западниот дел на Хераклеја. Во 1083 г. Пелагонија, Меглен и Костур биле освоени од Норманите на Роберт Бомонд.

Како дел од проектот „Убикација на средновековна Битола“, во поново време беа изведени археолошки ископувања од Т. Јанакиевски и подоцна Г. Филиповска, во Јени-џамија (градена во 1553/1554 г.) при што се откриени темели од постара џамија и голема базилика која датира помеѓу XI-XIV век, како и еден пекторален медалјон, прстени и два оловни византиски печати. Првиот печат е со допојасен лик на Богородица со Христос и натпис кој му припаѓал на Тодор Вестархос, од единаесетти век. Вториот печат е со допојасен лик на свети Ѓорѓи и натпис од единаесетти век. Тој му припаѓал, на Ѓорѓи Манганес, протопроедар од Синодот во Влахернската палата и секретар на царот Алексиј Комнен I.

Во овој период со Охридската Архиепископија управувал архиепископот Теофилакт Охридски. Во своите писма го споменува пелагонискиот епископ, судирите со порезниците, како и борбата околу имотот во селото Могила. Тој имал судири и со богомилот Лазар. Во овој период крстоносците минувале низ Пелагонија, уништувајќи ја непознатата тврдина со еретиците.

Во Пелагониската тврдина императорите Алексиј I Комнен и Мануел I Комнен имале важна воена база, зимувалиште и ловиште. Никита Хонијат го опишува местото и како собиралиште на негови современици-учени луѓе. Средновековна Битола била посетена од географот Ал Идриси, како и од Вилијам - архиепископот на Тир кои оставија вредни записи. Околу 1150 година епископ на Пелагонија бил Стефан, чиј оловен печат е публикуван од Виталиј Лоран. На аверсот е претставена Богородица на престол, додека на реверсот има натпис во шест реда каде се споменува епископот Стефан, кој управувал со Пелагониската епархија. И покрај многубројните тешкотии пелагонискиот епископ, сепак, ја сочувува својата религиозна доминација во овој средновековен центар.