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CHURCH SERVICES (AKOLOUTHIA) IN HONOR OF ST. JOHN VLADIMIR IN THE ALBANIAN-SPEAKING WEST BALKANS IN THE CONTEXT OF THE SPREAD AND CONSOLIDATION OF HIS VENERATION

Abstract: The cult of St. John the Vladimir was promoted mainly by two clergymen. First by Kosmas Mavroudes (1643–1701), former Metropolitan of Kitios and Amathunta, in Cyprus, who was to serve from the year 1682 as the abbot of the Monastery of St. John the Vladimir in Elbasan and, in 1693, was elected Metropolitan of Durres. The second person who promoted the cult of St. John the Vladimir was Joasaph, Archbishop of Ochrid (1719–1745). He was responsible for the publication in Moschopolis, on 1742, of many *akolouthiai* (services) for different saints who were honored by the locals. The *Vitae* and *akolouthia* of the Saint John the Vladimir were among these publications. After its first publication in Venice, on 1744 was published another *akolouthia* of the saint in Greek language, that was to be republished, in the same place, in 1858. At the same time, different local artists were invited to paint the interiors of the churches or paint mobile icons with the portrait or cycles of the life of St. John the Vladimir. The critical investigation of the abovementioned *akolouthiai*, seen as diachronic instruments in the political and socio-economical context, aims to analyze, firstly, the reappearance of the cult of St. John the Vladimir in the ottoman period and the popularity that he had in the Albanian milieu. At the same time, the comparing the above instruments with the artistic material heritage of the cult of the St. John the Vladimir mainly in Central Albania, will bring into discussion the theory of a coordinated effort that aims the consolidation of the cult of the saint, but altogether with his promotion and the promotion of other martyr-saints, the resistance against the islamization.

Key words: *St. John Vladimir, relics and reliquary, Post-Byzantine Art, Ochrid Archdiocese, post-Post-Byzantine hagiography, Slavic saints, Greek hymnography, Typography, Islamization*

In the Medieval history of the Balkans, there are some hegemon, like Krum of Bulgaria (803–814), the Tsars Simeon (864/865–927) and Samuel (997–1014), Zupan Stefan Nemanja (1113–1119), Stefan Dushan (1308–1355), George Kas-

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triotte the Scanderbeg (1405–1468) and Vlad Tepesh, prince of Vallachia (1431–1477), who remained ingrained in the memory of the Balkan people and were honored by them. In this paper, we will refer to another historical person, the Prince of Dioclea, John the Vladimir, [Fig. 1] who has remained in the memory of the Balkan people and nowadays is honored as a saint. The honoring of his cult is the best and most characteristic example of the reciprocal influence of a saint in the Balkan territory, mainly in Montenegro, Albania and Western Macedonia.

John the Vladimir has been the ruler of the area known as Dioclea or Zeta, from the year 990 until 1016, that is, during the period of the war between Byzantium and Bulgaria, led by Basil II and Samuel. Even though he defeated the Byzantines several times, Samuel could not conquer Thessaloniki and secure himself an exit to the sea¹. Following the logic, but also guided by the need, he moved toward west, toward Dioclea (Duklja) and Durres (Dyrrachion). While struggling to protect his territories, John the Vladimir made alliance with Byzantium, but when Dioclea was conquered in 997, he was taken captive by Samuel. Under these circumstances, John the Vladimir met the daughter of Samuel, Kosara, with whom he got married, ensuring, thus, not only his hegemony over Dioclea, but also over Durres. After the death of Samuel, John the Vladimir was beheaded, together with his wife, in 1016 by Ivan Vladislav, nephew of Tsar Samuel. Ivan Vladislav had previously killed his savior, Radomir, the son and heir of John the Vladimir, together with his wife². The body of John the Vladimir was initially buried in the church of Bogoroditsa Krajinska (*Prečista Krajinska*) in Montenegro. Later, in 1215, his relics were transferred in Durres and, later, to the Monastery of St. John the Vladimir in Elbasan (Neocastron).

The history of John the Vladimir has been mentioned by John Skylitzes and George Kedrenos, who make an account on the history of their time³. Moreover, this history has been spread from the *Chronicle of the priest of Dioclea*, which is the first and main source for the biography of the saint⁴. This text

¹ A. Kadić, “King Vladimir of Dioclea (Duklja) in south Slavic literatures”, in: *Balkanistica* 8 (1992), pp. 158–169.

² A. Kadić, *King Vladimir of Dioclea*, pp. 158–169. J. Ferluga, *Byzantium on the Balkans: Studies on the Byzantine Administration and the Southern Slavs from the 7th to the 12th centuries*, Amsterdam: Adolf M. Hakkert, 1976, p. 233.

³ H. Thurn (ed.), *Ioannis Scylitzae Synopsis Historiarum*. Series: Corpus Fontium Historiae Byzantinae — Series Berolinensis 5, Berlin: De Gruyter 1973, p. 342.

⁴ R. Elsie, *A dictionary of Albanian religion, mythology and folk culture*, London: Hurst & Company, 2001, p. 139. A. Papageorgiou, *Το Χρονικό του Ιερέα της Διόκλειας: Κείμενο*,

was written in Latin about the end of the 13th century by the Cistercian monk Rüdiger by all means, based on an earlier Bulgarian version of his biography, compiled briefly after his martyr death⁵. The main aim of the Chronicle was to serve to the political ambitions of one of the most powerful people of that time, Pavel Subic (1245–1312), who wanted to create a Croatian Kingdom of the South Slavs. The Biography of Saint John the Vladimir was included in the chapter 36 of the Chronicle, first for didactic reasons, but second while trying to make an approaching point between Subic and the Bulgarians⁶.

Some centuries later, at the end of the 17th century, the *Vita* and the *Akolouthia* of St. John the Vladimir will appear in the Albanian milieu for the first time in Greek language, both in a single edition printed in Venice in 1690 [Fig. 2] and, since then, was republished several times, initially in Moschopolis in 1742, and latter again in Venice in 1774 and 1858.

The cult of St. John the Vladimir was promoted mainly by two clergymen. First by Cosmas Mavroudes (1643–1701)⁷, a cosmopolitan individual [Fig. 3]. After his graduation from the Greek College of Rome, Cosmas Mavroudes was traveling in the East: in Cyprus, Alexandria, Cairo, Antioch, Syria, Tunisia, Mount Athos, Constantinople, Patmos, etc., but also in the West: Paris, Lyon, Livorno, Rome. In 1674 was elected Metropolitan of Kitios and Amathounta, in Cyprus, but he was not going to stay for long in his bishopric. His vitality and energy will be expanded over Balkans, in Bari, Budva, Shkodra,

Μετάφραση, Σχόλια, τα Πρόσωπα και ο Χώρος, Athens: Armos, 2012, pp. 124–135. S. Pirvatriæ, “Emperor’s Daughter in Love with a Prisoner: Comparing the Stories of Skylitzes and Anonymous Presbyter Diocleae.” in: Juhász E. (ed.), *Byzanz und das Abendland: Begegnungen zwischen Ost und West*, 273–283. Budapest: Eötvös-József-Collegium, pp. 273–283.

⁵ V. Tüpkova-Zaimova, “Un manuscrit inconnu de la vie de st Jean-Vladimir”, in *Byzance et les Balkans à partir du VIe siècle: les mouvements ethniques et les États*, Series: Collected studies 94, London: Variorum Reprints 1979, pp. 178–188.

⁶ Papageorgiou, *ΤοΧρονικό*, pp. 12–23.

⁷ About more info on Cosmas Mavroudes see: “Constantin (Cosmas) Mauroudes” in Émile Legrand, *Bibliographie hellénique: ou description raisonnée des ouvrages publiés par des Grecs au dix-septième siècle*, Paris: Librairie Orientale et Américaine, 1903, pp. 400–405. Z. Tsirpanlis, *Ανέκδοτα Έγγραφα εκ των Αρχείων του Βατικανού, 1625–1667*, Nicosia: Cyprus Research Centre, 1973 (Unpublished documents from the Vatican archives 1625–1667), pp. 187–188. A. Tylliridis (Τυλληρίδης), “Κοσμάς Μαυρουδής Μητροπολίτης Κιτίου, 15 Ιουλίου 1643–15 Ιανουαρίου 1702”, *Κυπριακαί Σπουδαί ΛΗ’-ΛΘ’* (1974–75), p. 54. Z. N. Tsirpanlis, “Contacts between Cypriot monks and the catholic west in the seventeenth century”, *Δωδώνη* 25 (1996), pp. 129–145. A. Hadjikyriacou, “The Ottomanization of Cyprus: Tru-bulent Times of Transition and the Quest for New Analytical Tools”, in: Ümit Devrim (ed.), *Ottoman World: Foundational Coexistences*, Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, p. 9.

Elbasan, etc. In Elbasan, he was going to serve from 1682 as the Abbot of the Monastery of St. John the Vladimir and, in 1693, was elected Metropolitan of Durres. Cosmas, to whom is mistakenly attributed the authorship of the *Vita* of the saint, provided John Papa from Elbasan, who was then living in Venice, with the *Vita* (biography) of the saint and the first *Akolouthia* (service), which was preserved at the monastery and was published after the corrections of Papa and his introduction in Venice on 1690. The full title is: “Ἀκολουθία | τοῦ Ἁγίου ἐνδόξου βασιλέως | καὶ Μεγαλομάρτυρος | Ἰωάννου | τοῦ Βλαδιμήρου καὶ θαυματουργοῦ. | Τυπωθεῖσα δαπάνη τοῦ τιμιωτάτου κυρίου | Ἰωάννου Παπᾶ | τοῦ ἐκτῆς πόλεως Νεοκάστρου | Καὶ παρ’ αὐτοῦ τοῖς ὀμοπατρίοις, καὶ τοῖς λοιποῖς τοῖς μετ’ εὐλαβείας ἐκεῖσε προσερχομένοις ἐκδοθεῖσα.”⁸ (The service of the Saint and glorious king and great martyr John the Vladimir the miraculous. Printed with the expenses of the most honored mister John Papas from the city of Neocastion, and was published by him for his fellow countrymen and everybody else, with devotion and prayer).

Taking into consideration other earlier sources, Vasilika Tupkova-Zaimova, in one of her researches⁹ informs us that she could detect in the catalogue of the manuscripts of the (then) Lenin Library of Moscow (nowadays State Library of Russia), published in 1946, four folios containing fragments of the *Vita* of St. John the Vladimir in Greek, a text that was not much different from the one published in 1742 and 1858 [Fig. 4]. If this manuscript dates at the end of the 16th — beginning of the 17th century, as she claims, then we are confronted with the existence of a written tradition of the *Vita* of the saint written in Greek, before the printed publication of the year 1690¹⁰. This fact reinforces our belief that Cosmas was not the author of the *Bios*, while the manuscript of the *Vita* and of the *Akolouthia* of the saint were present at the Monastery, as

⁸ Ἀκολουθία τοῦ Ἁγίου ἐνδόξου βασιλέως καὶ μεγαλομάρτυρος Ἰωάννου τοῦ Βλαδιμήρου καὶ θαυματουργοῦ. Τυπωθεῖσα δαπάνη τοῦ τιμιωτάτου κυρίου Ἰωάννου Παπᾶ τοῦ ἐκτῆς πόλεως Νεοκάστρου, καὶ παρ’ αὐτοῦ τοῖς ὀμοπατρίοις καὶ τοῖς λοιποῖς τοῖς μετ’ εὐλαβείας ἐκεῖσε προσερχομένοις ἐκδοθεῖσα. Ἐνετίησιν: Παρ’ Ἰωάνν. Ἀντωνίω τῷ Ἰουλιανῷ καὶ τοῖς ἀδελφοῖς, 1690. For the factic data of the edition, see also Émile Legrand, *Bibliographie hellénique: ou description raisonnée des ouvrages publiés par des Grecs au dix-septième siècle*, tome deuxième, Paris: Alphonse Picard et Fils Editeurs, 1894, pp. 479–482. Louis Petit, *Bibliographie des Acolouthies grecques*, Subsidia Hagiographica 16, Bruxelles: Société des Bollandistes, 1926, 121–123.

⁹ V. Tupkova-Zaimova, *Un manuscrit inconnu*, pp. 178–188.

¹⁰ V. Tupkova-Zaimova, *Un manuscrit inconnu*, pp. 178–188. A paleographic analysis on the publication was presented by the colleague Victor Nedeski on his paper “New discoveries for the hellenophone hagiographic and hymnographic tradition about Saint John Vladimir”, in this conference.

Joan Papa pretends in his introduction: “I wrote to the most reverend ... Mister Kosmas ... who is the abbot of the Monastery of the Saint ... begging him ... to give me the Akolouthia of the Saint together with his Vitae, *since they are found there*, so I can bring it to the press”¹¹.

The *Vita* and the *Akolouthia* of the year 1690 is found between the pages 3 and 51 of the edition. The emblem of the publishing house is seen at the title page. The Akolouthia is decorated with two engravings of the saint, work of Isabella Piccini¹². The first engraving is found on page four [Fig. 5]. There the saint is depicted with royal clothes, bearing a crown on his head. In the right hand, he has the characteristic cross that symbolizes martyrdom, while in the left he holds his head. Some images of John the Vladimir have been included in the publication entitled *Stematografija*, of the well-known Serbian painter and engraver Hristofor Žefarović, published in Vienna in 1741¹³. The same scene has been used one year later, in 1742, to design the engraving with scenes from the life of the saint, which was printed on the expenses of the merchants of Moschopolis, which latter circulated also as a separated engraving¹⁴.

The second engraving [Fig. 6], found on page 47 of the edition, portrays Saint John the Vladimir dressed in a long robe, with a royal mantle, lied on kind of skenoma (σκήνωμα); he bears a crown, while his head is resting on a pillow. The theme of this scene is inspired by the content of the *Stasis of the Magnifications (Megalynarion)* of the Akolouthia. The iconography of the saint, developed in the form of illustrations in the Akolouthia of the year 1690, will become the source of reference for latter iconographic models in a number of

¹¹ *Ακολουθία* 1690, pp. 5–7.

¹² E. Drakopoulou, “No. 47: Saint John Vladimir and Scenes from His Life”, in: Anastasia Tourta, (ed.) *Icons from the Orthodox Communities of Albania*, 136–42. Thessaloniki: Kapon Editions, 2005, pp. 136–142. 889–900. Ch. Walter, “An Icon of Saint John Vladimir at Mount Sina”, in: Maria-AspraVardavaki, (ed.) *ΛΑΜΠΗΔΩΝ. Αφιέρωμα στηΜνήμητηςΝτούλας Μουρίκη*, vol. 2, Athens: Polytechnic University of Athens Press, 2003, pp. 889–900. R. Lozanova, “Images of Slavic Saints in Moschopolis and Vithkuqi-Albania”, *Les Saints slaves dans l’histoire de l’Église chrétienne; Annuaire de l’Université de Sofia “St. Kliment Ochridski”*, Centre de Recherche Slavo-byzantines “Ivan Dujcev”, t. 92 /11/2002, Sofia 2003, pp. 177–188, ill. 332–351. K. Giakoumis, “An Unpublished Icon of St. John Vladimir and a Typological Classification of the Saint’s Imagery”, *Church Studies*, v. 13 (2016), pp. 169–208.

¹³ D. Papastratou, *Χάρτινες Εικόνες, Ορθόδοξα Θρησκευτικά Χαρακτικά 1665–1899*, vol. III. Athens 1986, 241–249. D. Davidov, „CopperplateengravingsofHristofor Žefanovič forGreekclients”, in: *Μεταβυζαντινά χαρακτικά, Πρακτικά Επιστημονικής Ημερίδας, Θεσσαλονίκη* 1999, 21–32. E. Drakopoulou, *Saint John Vladimir*, p. 138.

¹⁴ E. Drakopoulou, *Saint John Vladimir*, p. 136–141.

monuments not only in Albania, but also in the wider area, in Ochrid, Bulgaria, Hungary, Mount Athos, and also Mount Sinai¹⁵.

The brief content of the Akolouthia is:

- pp. 5–6: Foreword [Fig. 7]
The Publisher of the Akolouthia, Joan Papas, in his foreword mentions the collaboration with the abbot of the Monastery of St. John the Vladimir, Cosmas the Cypriote that we mentioned above; Cosmas furnished him with the manuscript of the *Vita* and the *Akolouthia* of the Saint. After being equipped with the manuscript, Joan Papas declares that, before the book was sent to print, he made the necessary corrections and additions.
- pp. 20–33: After the third Ode of the *Canons* follows the reading from the *Vita* of the saint.
Inc. *Συγκαλεῖ σήμερον ἡμᾶς, ὃ θεῖονκαίειρόν σύστημα τῶνφιλεόρτων.*
- pp. 36–42: Synaxarion of the feast of the saint.
Inc. *Οὗτος ὁ ἐν βασιλεύσινάγιώτατος καὶ ἐνδοξότατος Ἰωάννης.*
- pp. 46: Verses honoring the saint.
Inc. *Κλέος Βασιλέων καὶἀγλάϊσμαθεῖον μαρτύρων.*
- pp. 47–51: Stasis of the Magnification of the saint.
Inc. *Αἰγενεαἰπάσαι, μακαρίζομέν σε, Βλαδίμηρε τρισμάκαρ.*

Finally, the book concludes by publishing, with mistakes and disfigurations, the ktitoric inscription [Fig. 8], that commemorates the rebuilding of the central church of the Monastery of St. John the Vladimir in year 1382 by the Albanian prince Karl Topia, after an earthquake that destroyed it in 1380. After the fire that happened at the Monastery on March 14th 1944, the epigraph in three languages (Greek, Latin and Slavic) was transported and nowadays is housed at the National Historic Museum in Tirana [Fig. 9]¹⁶.

The second clergymen who contributed to the honoring of St. John the Vladimir was the eminent hierarch from Korça, Joasaph, initially elected in

¹⁵ For achronological list of artworks with St. John Vladimir and for the related bibliography, see: K. Giakoumis, *An Unpublished Icon of St. John Vladimir*, Appendix 1–3, pp. 178–207, where relevant bibliography can be found.

¹⁶ Th. Popa, *Mbishkrimetë Kisha venë Shqiperi*, Tirana: Akademia e Shkencave, 1998, inscr. 2–5, pp. 49–52. M. Labi, *Gjon Vladimiri. Princiqë u bë Shenjt (sipas Burimeve Arkivo-re)*. Tiranë: Muzeu Historik Kombëtar, 2015, pp. 14–18.

1706 bishop of the Prespa region, and later, in 1709, elected Metropolitan of Koritza and Selasphoros, while on February 4th 1719 was elected Archbishop of Ochrid (1719–1745), administrating also the Mitropolis of Korça and Selasphoros¹⁷. The veneration of St. John the Vladimir was spread during that time while the Archbishopric of Ochrid was being renovated and which, under the administration of Ioasaph was transformed into an important spiritual and cultural factor of the time, through two eminent centers: Ochrid and Moschopolis¹⁸. Joasaph was responsible for the publication in Moschopolis, in 1742, of many *Akolouthiai* for different saints who were honored by the locals. The *Vitae* of the Fifteen Martyrs of Strumnitsa (1741), Saint Erasmus of Ochrid (1742), Saint Naum (1742), Saint Nicodemus of Berat (1742), the Seven Saints (1742) and of Saint John the Vladimir (1742) were among these publications¹⁹.

Even though, in general, the text of the Akolouthia of Moschopolis (1742)²⁰ is consentient with the first Venetian edition of the year 1690, still there are some variations between them. Namely, the edition of the year 1742 does not include: 1) The *introduction of John Papas*, the editor of the Akolouthia of the year 1690; 2) The readings from the *Biblical texts*; 3) The *Vita* of the saint that should had been found after the 3rd Ode of the Canons; 4) The *Verses* that honor the saint; 5) The *Stasis of the Magnifications* of the saint. On the other hand,

¹⁷ A. Rembeci, *The Codex of the Holy Metropolis of Korça and Selasphorus: Edition and Historical Documentation (17th–19th centuries)* (in Greek), Corfu: Ionian University, 2009, pp. 115–131. Μιχαήλ Τρίτος, „Στοιχεία για την προσωπικότητα του Αχριδιών Ιωάσαφ”, in: Αθανάσιος Αγγελόπουλος (ed.), *Χριστιανική Μακεδονία: Πελαγονία-Μιά άλλη Ελλάδα-Θεσσαλονίκη-Αχρίδα*, Θεσσαλονίκη: University Studio Press, 2004, pp. 422–456. A. Bryer, „People Get the Heroes and Martyrs They Deserve”, in: P. Thomo, G. Bushaka (eds.), *2000 Years Church Art and Culture in Albania*, Tirana: KOASh, 2005, pp. 62–64.

¹⁸ M. D. Peyfuss, *Shtypshkronja e Voskopojës, 1731–1769. Shtypja e libra vedhe adh urimi ishenjtorëvenë Patriarkanën e Ohrit (Die Druckerei von Moschopolis, 1731–1769. Buchdruck und Heiligenverehrung im Erzbistum Achrida)*, Tiranë: Shtëpia e Librit & Komunikimit, 2002, pp. 168–178.

¹⁹ M. D. Peyfuss, *Shtypshkronja e Voskopojës*, 91–180. On the anastatic reprints of the Akolouthiae of the Moschopolis printing house, see: Приредил. Христо Меловски, *Москополски зборник, пролошки житија на светици*, Bibliotheca Miscellanea Byzantino-Macedonica, 1.2, Скопје: Догер. 1996. (Faksimil névy da niemoschopolského zborníka z r. 1741.) dhe A. E. Tachiaos, *Cyrrillomethodianum X*, Thessalonique: Association Hellénique D'Etudes Slaves, 1986.

²⁰ Άκολουθία τοῦ ἁγίου ἐνδόξου βασιλέως καί μεγαλομάρτυρος Ἰωάννου τοῦ Βλαδιμήρου καί θαυματουργοῦ. Venice: Glykys, 1742 and 1774 [Legrand, *Bibliographie Hellénique*, 18 e siècle, I, pp. 284–190, no. 286; II, pp. 184–185, no. 796*], republished on: *Cyrrillomethodianum* 10 (1986), pp. 163–187.

the edition of the year 1742 has a very important addition regarding its author. Unlike the edition of the year 1690, the edition of 1742 has an additional Ode, the 9th Ode, comprised of some additional troparia. Exactly at this part of the text, following the tradition, with the *acrostika* of the troparia, the author has added his name: *Daniel* (ΔΑΝΙΗΛ)²¹ [Fig. 10], writing it through the initial letters of each troparion. The same person, Daniel, appears in the same way, in the same place, even in the Akolouthia of the year 1774 and 1858²², published again in Venice, on expenses of the merchants from Moschopolis.

Louis Petit and Émile Legrand have mentioned Theodore Hadjiphilipides (1730–1805), the scholar originated from Elbasan, who had studied at the New Academy of Moschopolis, as the author of the *Stasis of the Magnifications* in the Akolouthia of the year 1690 and, as a result, also that of the year 1742²³. This claim cannot be based on reality, since Theodore Hadjiphilipides lived most of his adult life in the second half of the 18th century. Also, the *Stasis of the Magnifications*, that supposedly were written by Hadjiphilipides, are not present in the edition of the year 1742, as we mentioned earlier. For this reason, we strongly support that the author of the *Stasis* is our newly found Daniel.

After the first edition of the year 1690 in Venice, the Akolouthia in Greek of St. John the Vladimir was to be published for a second time in 1774 in Moschopolis and later in 1858, but this third and last time in Venice²⁴ [Fig. 11]. During the same period, different local artists were invited to paint the

²¹ According to our research, without considering it exhausted, on the aforementioned time period there are two persons bearing the name Daniel: Daniel Demetrios Philippides (Δανιήλ Δημήτριος Φιλίππιδης, 1750/55–1832) and Daniel Moschopolites (Δανιήλ Μοσχοπολίτης, 1754–1825). Both of them can be considered excluded, because they are born after the publication of the Akolouthia. About Daniel, the Metropolitan of Korça (1759–1766), see the paper of the colleague Victor Nedeski “New discoveries for the hellenophone hagiographic and hymnographic tradition about Saint John Vladimir”, in these proceedings.

²² *Ἀκολουθία τοῦ ἁγίου ἐνδόξου βασιλέως καὶ μεγαλομάρτυρος Ἰωάννου τοῦ Βλαδιμήρου καὶ θαυματουργοῦ*. Τυπωθεῖσα δαπάνη τοῦ τιμιωτάτου Κυρίου Ἰωάννου Παπατοῦ ἐκ τῆς πόλεως Νεοκάστρου. Πρὸς τὸ παρέχουσα ἰδιωτῶν καὶ τοῖς λοιποῖς τοῖς μετ’ εὐσεβείας ἐκεῖσε προσερχομένοις. ἀσφδ’. Ἐνετίησιν, 1774. Παρὰ Νικολαῶ Γλυκεῖτῳ ἔξ Ἰωαννίνων. Con Licenzade Superiori. [Petit, *Bibliographie des Acolouthies grecques*, 121–123].

²³ Legrand, *Bibliographie Hellénique*, 17 e siècle, II, pp. 479–482, no. 637, Petit, *Bibliographie des Acolouthies grecques*, 121–123.

²⁴ *Ἀκολουθία τοῦ ἁγίου ἐνδόξου βασιλέως, καὶ μεγαλομάρτυρος Ἰωάννου τοῦ Βλαδιμήρου καὶ θαυματουργοῦ*. Τυπωθεῖσα μὲν πρῶτον δαπάνη τοῦ τιμιωτάτου Κυρίου Ἰωάννου Παπατοῦ ἐκ τῆς πόλεως Νεοκάστρου· νῦν δὲ ἀνατυπωθεῖσα κατὰ τὴν ἔκδοσιν τοῦ Γλυκύτου 1774 ἀναλώμασι τῶν εὐσεβῶν Κυρίων Ἰωαννικίου Ἀρχιερέως, Γρηγορίου Ἡγουμένου, Ἰωάννου Τζούφκα, Κωνσταντίνου Συμεῶνος, Ἀθανασίου Ἰακώβου, Γεωργίου καὶ ἰοῦ Ἰωάννου Κρούνιτζ, τῶν λε-

interiors of churches or the portable icons depicting biographical circles of St. John the Vladimir.

The editions of the *Vita* and the *Akolouthia* of St. John the Vladimir were, mainly, addressed to the Christians of the wider Albanian territory and “τοῖςλοιποῖς τοῖςμετ’ εὐλαβείας ἐκέισε προσερχομένοις” (“to all those that in hopefulness make pilgrimages [at the Monastery]”²⁵). The period when the aforementioned texts were published coincides with the same period when the Orthodox Christians were confronted with two problems: the *continuous Islamization* and the *uniatism*. These two problems were threatening the integrity of the Orthodox communities in Albania. We will refer only to the first topic²⁶, respecting the space available.

During the first years of the Ottoman invasion, Islam in Albania did not recognize wide spreading, while the opposite happened latter. On the newly conquered territories of Albania did not settle large Muslim populations, as it happened in Thrace, eastern Bulgaria and in Macedonia. During these first decades of the Ottoman conquest, Islam in Albania was represented by administrative and military centers, where the Muslim population was smaller than the half of the total number of the inhabitants²⁷.

The pressure of Islamization begun to grow during the 17th century²⁸, especially after the war between Russia and Turkey at the beginning of the 18th century. The ottomans started to consider the orthodox population as an alley of

γομένων Κορῶνα. Ἐν Βενετία, ἐκτοῦ Ἑλληνικοῦ Τυπογραφείου τοῦ ἀγίου Γεωργίου, 1858. [Petit, *Bibliographie des Acolouthies grecques*, 123].

²⁵ *Ἀκολουθία 1690, 1774, 1885*.

²⁶ A general view of the Islamization of the Albanian milieu can be found on: O. J. Schmitt (ed.), *Religion und Kulturimbalbanischsprachigen Südosteuropa*. Frankfurt am Main: Lang, 2010, where relevant bibliography can be found.

²⁷ About the Islamization of the Albanian milieu during the first period of the Ottoman conquest (until the 16th century), see: K. Giakoumis, „The Orthodox Church in Albania under Ottoman Rule (15th–19th century)”, in O. J. Schmitt (ed.), *Religion und Kulturimbalbanischsprachigen Südosteuropa*, pp. 69–110. D. Egro, „Islam and the Albanian lands (XVth–XVIIth Century)”, in O. J. Schmitt (ed.), *Religion und Kulturimbalbanischsprachigen Südosteuropa*, pp. 13–52, where the aforementioned bibliography is also found.

²⁸ Generally after the victory of the Christian Spahis of Epiros in the war of the Ottomans against Erivan in 1635. From the years 1620–1650, Islamization had been spread so much, that the Christian population of Albania had fallen from 350.000 to 50.000. This situation forced the roman bishop of Antibari, Bicci, to write under panic that there was a danger that in 10 years all Albanians might have been converted to Islam. Κ.Γαρίτσας, Ο Νεκτάριος Τέρπος και το έργο του. Εισαγωγή, σχόλια, κριτική έκδοση του έργου του Πίστις, Θήρα: Εκδόσεις «Ο Θεσβήτης», pp. 87–92.

the Russians and increased the measures of forced conversion to Islam²⁹. The decadence of the Empire and the corruption of the local governors increased the oppression³⁰. Another factor that encouraged conversion was the lack of local clergymen³¹. Nevertheless, the main reasons for the conversion were maltreatment, discrimination and taxation. The conversion of the orthodox population to Islam became massive during the 18th century. During the 17–18th century the efforts of the orthodox to stop conversion were coordinated in three directions: 1) mission through education, while enforcing and encouraging the orthodox not to give up; 2) bringing attention, through visual arts and iconography, to the models of those people who protected faith; and 3) by promoting and publishing the biographies and services of the local saints and martyrs.

The missionary action is clearly present through the activity of two important personalities of that time, Nektarios Terpos³² from Moschopolis and Saint Cosmas of Aetolia³³. Saint Cosmas was active in Southern Albania between the years 1775–1779, concluding his mission with his martyrdom in 1779. While Nektarios Terpos, who was the abbot of the Monastery of Ardenica for a certain period of time, spread his activity in the area of Shpat and Berat. While on refuge from persecution in Italy, he published in 1732 his work “Πίστις” (*Faith*),

²⁹ According to a report offered by a person named Constandis Vrionis, on January 27th, 1637, the order clarified that “those romioi who own feuds, should be converted, if they want to keep their position; on the contrary, they will be confiscated” (Giakoumis, *The Orthodox Church in Albania*, pp. 69–110; K. Sathas *Ελληνικά Ανέκδοτα*, v. 1, Athens, nr. 126.). One of the sources that confirms this reality is Evlya Celebi, who on 1670/1 reports about the conversion to Islam of a garrison in the fortress of Zhulat, who earlier were Christians, i. e., the guards of the garrison were forced to convert to Islam, if they wanted to maintain their position (Evllya Çelebi, 1902: 27). See also: T. W. Arnold, *The preaching of Islam: A History of the Propagation of Muslim Faith*, London, Luzac & Co. 1935, p. 115.

³⁰ On the so called “Codex of the church of Delvina”, it is mentioned that on 1635, when “the sons of unfaithful and darkness” did grow in numbers, they came in the neighborhoods of Gjinalleks, Kalopodhates (craftsmen producing shoe moulds) and of the Papoutsis (craftsmen producing shoes), confiscating the churches and converting them to mosques “to the glory of their religion”, forcing, thus, the Christians who were not Muslims, to move to another neighborhood. Θεμιστοκλέους Μπ., «Κώδιξ του ναού της πόλεως Δελβίνου», *Ηπειρωτικά Χρονικά* 5 (1930), p. 58.

³¹ Γαρίτσας, *Ο Νεκτάριος Τέρπος*, p. 87. P. Thëngjilli, *Rentafeudaledheevolumiisajnjë vjese shqiptare: shek. xvii-mesiishek. xviii*. Tiranë: Shtëpia Botuese e Librit Universitar. 1990, pp. 71–78, 96.

³² On the life of Nektar Terpo, see: Γαρίτσας, *Ο Νεκτάριος Τέρπος*, where the related bibliography is found.

³³ On the life of Nektar Terpo, see: Μ. Α. Γκιόλια, *Ο Κοσμάς Αιτωλός και η εποχή του*, Αθήνα, 1972, where relevant bibliography can be found.

which contains theoretical and practical examples that are easy to understand, extracted from different liturgical books (theory) and from biographies of saints (practice), borrowed from the synaxaries of the Church. This second practical part aims to bring forward examples of inspiration that would strengthen the resistance against Islamization³⁴. An important role is given to local martyrs (St. Astios, Bishop of Dyrrachion, Danax of Avlona, Nicodemus of Berat), offering to the Christians of the same areas the examples of individuals who lived in the same place, who did not abandon the religion of their forefathers³⁵.

Upon this transitory period, during the 18th century a generation of painters became noticed: the hierodeacon Constantine of Spatheia, the painters Tsetiri³⁶ from Grabova and the family Zografu from Korca³⁷. Their art constitutes the most prominent example of painting dedicated to the religion, inherited by the ancestors. The book *Faith* of Nektarios Terpos became an orientation for them in their iconographic programs that were applied at the interior of churches. The saints and martyrs of the book could be read through the visual art of iconography. Among those images is present, also, St. John the Vladimir [Fig. 12], who has been accurately detected by the colleague Konstantinos Giakoumis in one of his researches on the typological classification of the appearance of saint³⁸.

At the end, the gap created by the lack of reference to other local and well known saints connected to Moschopolis, that are strangely missing from the *Faith* of Nektarios Terpos, who are not unfamiliar to Terpo and the Christians of the region, comes to be fulfilled with its publishing activity by the press of Moschopolis³⁹. Out of the 21 known publication of Moschopolis in 38 years, not

³⁴ Γαρίτσης, *Ο Νεκτάριος Τέρπος*, p. 73.

³⁵ About an analytic table of the martyr saints mentioned on the work Πίστις, see: Γαρίτσης, *Ο Νεκτάριος Τέρπος*, pp. 225–281, 503–506.

³⁶ Ioannis Sisiou, “The Work of John Tzetiri in Velegrad”, in: *Art And its Role in the History: Between Durability and Transient — Isms*, International Thematic Proceedings dedicated to the Memory of prof. Miodrag Jovanović, Kosovska Mitrovica: 2014, pp. 255–274. E. Moutafov, “Ioannes Tsetiris from Grabovo or Jovan Chetirevic Grabovan” in *Topics in Post-Byzantine Painting. In Memory of Manolis Chatzidakis*, Athens 2002, pp. 217–228. E. Drakopoulou, “Peintres de l’espace grec et balkanique: les conditions de leur acceptation et de leur réception”, *idem*, pp. 101–139.

³⁷ G. Tsigaras, *Οι ζωγράφοι Κωνσταντίνος και Αθανάσιος από την Κορυτσά. Τόεργου τουστώΑγιονΌρος (1752–1783)*, Athens 2003, where relevant bibliography can be found.

³⁸ K. Giakoumis, *An Unpublished Icon of St. John Vladimir*, Appendix 1–3, pp. 178–207.

³⁹ For an overview of the different interpretations about the publications in Moschopolis, see M. D. Peyfuss, *Shtypshkronja e Voskopojës*, pp. 168–178, where relevant bibliographies can be found.

less than 19 of them are of religious content, hereupon more than 90%⁴⁰. Out of these 19 publications, 14 are *akolouthiai* of saints, like, for example, of the Seven Saints, the protectors of the region, of the Osios Naoum, to whom the monastery by lake Ochrid is dedicated, as well as those of many other martyrs and neo-martyrs, that were honored in Moschopolis or were originated from the regions, like the neo-martyr Antonios (celebrated on January 17th), the neo-martyr Nikolaos (celebrated on May 9th), Saint John the Vladimir (May 22nd), Saint Erasmus, who is considered to be the first missionary in the region of Ochrid (July 2nd), etc⁴¹.

The critical investigation of the abovementioned *akolouthiai*, seen as diachronic instruments in the political and socio-economical context, aims to analyze the honor of the cult of St. John the Vladimir and the popularity that he had in the Albanian milieu. At the same time, by comparing the above instruments with the artistic tangible heritage of the cult of the St. John the Vladimir, as seen in churches that are found in different regions of Albania, tried to bring forward some suggestions that have not been discussed so far, about the possible existence of a coordinated effort not only connected with the spreading and consolidation of the cult of the saint, but, moreover, connected to his promotion together with other martyr saints, considered as examples of resistance against the challenges that the Orthodox Albanians had to face during the Ottoman conquest, while examining the Islamization of the time.

⁴⁰ M. D. Peyfuss, *Shtypshkronja e Voskopojes*, pp. 91–148. For an overview about the circulation of the publications in Greek language, according to the topics and time periods, see X. Γ. Πατρινέλης, *Τοελληνικό βιβλίο κατάτηντουρκοκρατία (1476–1820): περιλήψεις μαθημάτων*, Θεσσαλονίκη: Α. Π. Θ., 1989, p. 35, according to which, during the 18th century the liturgical works (publications) accounted for about 50% of all publications in Greek language (50% for the first half of the 18th century and 42% for the second one).

⁴¹ M. D. Peyfuss, *Shtypshkronja e Voskopojes*, pp. 91–148. *Cyrrillomethodianum X*, 1986. Меловски, *Москополски*, 1996.



Fig. 1. Anonymous, St. John Vladimir, ca. 55 X 37 cm, late 17th — early 18th century, tempera on wood, Unknown provenance [K. Giakoumis, 2016]

Cosmas Mavroudes
In Cypro, Cynedris et Anatholice

Fig. 3. Signature of Kosmas Mavroudes. (APF — Scrittura riferite nei Congressi: Greci, v. 1 (1622–1700), f. 123r-126v.

Fig. 4. Fragment from the Greek manuscript of the Vitae of St. John the Vladimir. State Library of Russia, f. Viktor J. Grigorovic, n° 167 (820) [Vasilka Tupkova-Zaimova, Byzance, 1979]



Fig. 2. Akolouthiae of St. John Vladimir, printed in Venice in 1690 with the expenses of Ioannis Papas from Elbasan (Neocastron)





Fig. 5. Isabella Piccini, St. John Vladimir, 1690, engraving [Akolouthia 1690]



Fig. 7. Foreword of Ioannis Papas from Elbasan (Neocastron) [Akolouthia 1690]



Fig. 6. Isabella Piccini, Reliquary of St. John Vladimir, 1690, engraving [Akolouthia 1690]



Τὰ παρόντα ὑπάρχουσι γεγραμμένα ἐπ' αἵματι τῆς θύρας
τῆ μαῦ.

Χρὴ γινώσκωμεν, ὅτι ὁ μαὸς ἕτος κατελύθη ἀπὸ σεισμῶν
παμπτελῶς ἕως Σεμελίς, εἰς τὴ διακράτησιν. Ἐν ἡμέ-
ραις αὐτῶν ἐλόγησε πάσης χώρας ἀλβάνης τὴ παρυψη-
λοτάτη πρώτη Κάρλα θεωπία, ἀνεψίς δὲ ἔξ ἁίματος,
ῥηγὸς τῆ φρασίαις, αὐτὸς ἀνωκοδόμησε τὴ πᾶσις τῶν μαὸν
τῆτον τῆ ἀγίῃ Γωάννης τῆ Βλαδιμήρ, ἔξ Θεωματαργῶ. Ἐ-
ἀνήγειρεν αὐτὸν ἐκ Βαθρῶν, μεχρὶ τέλους, ἐκπίτσεως ἔξ ἑ-
σῆς καρδίας. ἀπὸ Χυ γυμνσεως, ἕως οἰκοδομήσεως τῆ μαῦ.
ἔτει α τ π. ἀπὸ δεκτίσεως κόσμησίην. ε ω ς. αὐθεντεύου-
πος δὲ ἕως τοῦτε. κ β. ἔτος. ἰνδικτίομος ἡλῆς Κυκλ. α. σελλῶν.
Κυκλ. ἰδ. ἐκτίθη ὁμαός. ὠρας ἰδ. μεγίτος τὸ ὕψος. ἀπασ-
ραλάκτως εἰσὶν ἕτως γεγραμμένα.

Τ Ε Λ Ο Σ.

Fig. 8. The last page of the Akolouthiae with the inscription [Akolouthia 1690]



Fig. 9. The Inscription at the Catha/icon of the Monastery of Saint John Vladimir in their Original Setting [K. Giakoumis, 2015]

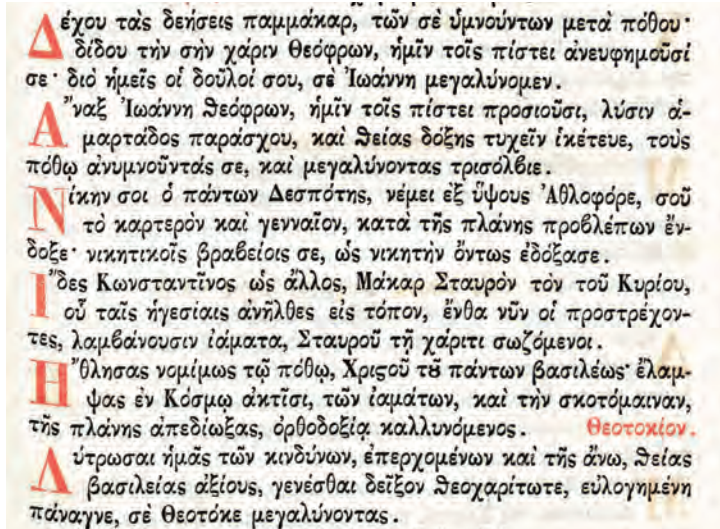


Fig. 10. Δανιήλ — Daniel, the name of author through the initial letters (acrostika) of each troparion



Fig. 11. Akolouthiae of St. John Vladimir, printed in Venice in 1858



Fig. 12. *St. John Vladimir*, 1728, Church of the Archangels Michael and Gabriel, Vithkuq, Korçë (left). George & John Tsetiri, *St. John Vladimir*, 1795, Church of St. Nicholas, wall painting, fresco, Vanaj, Lushnjë (right) [K. Giakoumis, 2016]

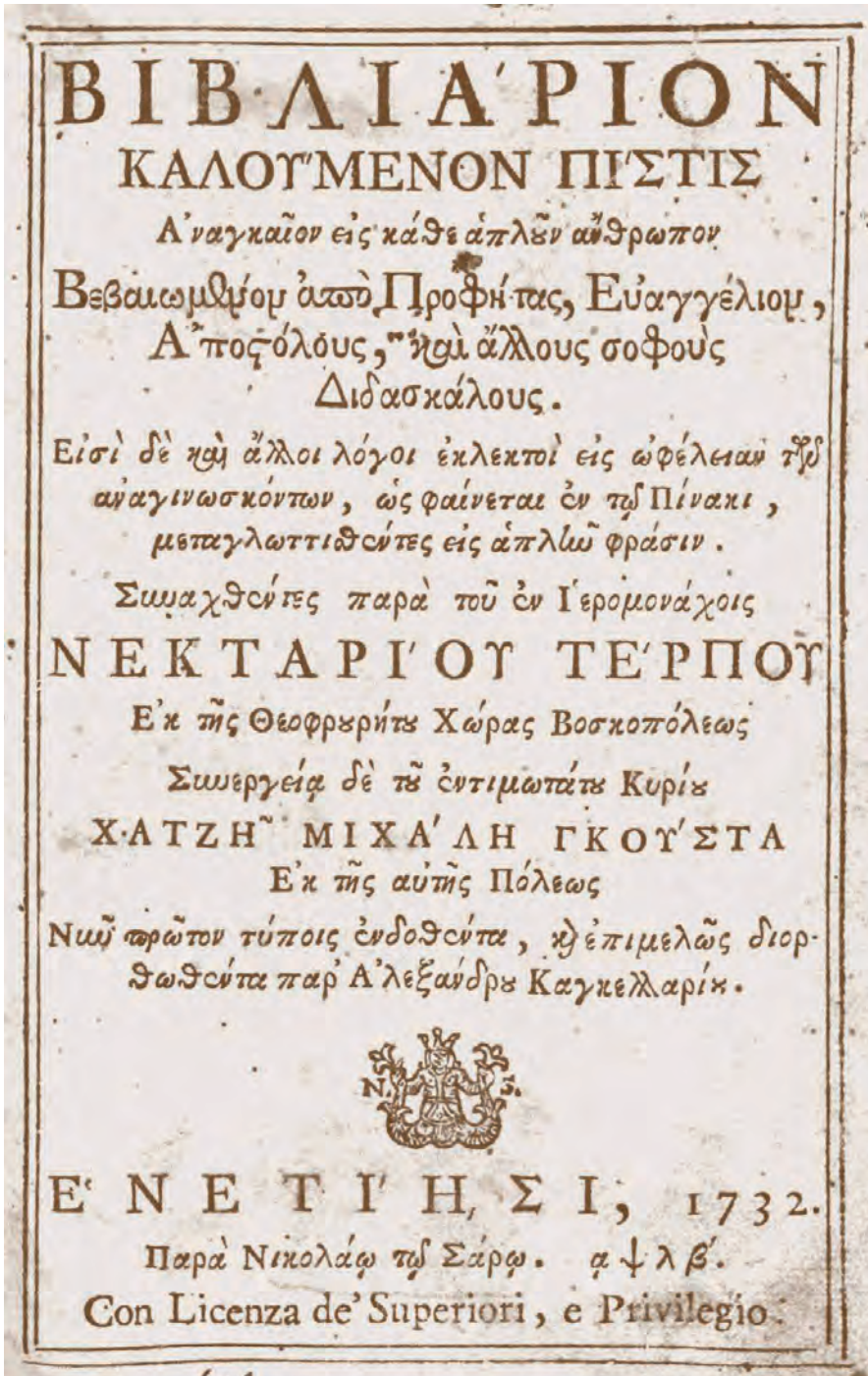


Fig. 13. The title page of the first edition of Faith (1732)



Fig. 14. Location of St. Vladimir's Artworks based on K. Giakoumis, *Typological Classification*, 2016