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### ICONS FROM THE MUSEUM OF MACEDONIA WITH OTTOMAN PRAYER INSCRIPTIONS

**Abstract:** The paper presents inscriptions incised in Arabic script on three Despotic icons from the collection of the Museum of Macedonia that originate from Marco's monastery in vicinity of Skopje and from the church of St. Archangel Michael from the village Oreovec near Makedonski Brod. With the analysis and interpretation of these works interesting topics are revealed mainly from the aspect of the existence of religious syncretism during the Ottoman period. Although the existence of this type of graffiti is known in science there is no serious research, and the aim of this the paper first of all is to increase the initiative of sharing such data.

**Keywords:** Icon, Prayer, Ottoman inscriptions, Ottoman graffiti, Marco's Monastery, Torbeshs, Synkretism, Cryptochristianity

An interesting phenomenon in research of the known and complex manifestations of the mutual living of the Christian and Muslim population in Macedonia during the Ottoman domination represents the presence of Ottoman inscriptions on the Christian cult objects and edifices. The occasions for raising this issue for this sizeable work are the three icons in the collection of the Museum of Macedonia which originate from Marco's monastery near Skopje and from the church of St. Archangel Michael in the village Oreovec near Makedonski Brod.

The Despotic icons from the church St. Demetrius in Marco's monastery, which are presupposed to be created about the year of 1400-1405 were repainted in 1865. The Ottoman inscriptions on the icons of the Holy Virgin Hodegetria and Jesus Christ Savior and Life Giving Source most

probably were written during this interval. Although an attempt was made to read their contents, the inscriptions were left out from an analytic approach.<sup>1</sup>

Ottoman inscriptions beside on the icons are also found in the catholicon of Marco's monastery for which there was no interest till now. These inscriptions are mixed up with a great number of Slavic inscription and a few Greek graffiti engraved by pilgrims and visitors on the columns under the dome area. Up to beginning of the conservation works that were conducted in 1963, the majority of these inscriptions were hidden under the painted layer from the 19<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>2</sup> In this paper we will present several of these inscriptions as part of the thematic whole.

In reference to the Ottoman inscription on the Despoticon of the Holy Virgin Hodegetria from the late 16<sup>th</sup> or the early 17<sup>th</sup> century brought from the church of St. Archangel Michael from the village Oreovec we have previously given a comment that this may be a type of religious syncretism.<sup>3</sup> Our aim is to attempt to interpret the content of the numerous Ottoman inscriptions and the circumstances in which they were created, namely who wrote them and when.

The reading of the inscriptions on the icons from Marco's monastery is difficult as result of the mixing of the colors and the gesso during the incision of the letters, as well as the mistakes in the writing. For a more objective deciphering of the content we likewise provide an alternative explanation. On the icon of the Holy Virgin (**fig. 1-2**) the inscription is delivered in three rows, just below her right hand palm and decipherable is the following text: Ah Meryem(?) / ah *Şahım ah Rabbiye*(?) / *Aşıkı Mehmed (Muhammed)* – Oh Mary (?) Oh ruler / Oh governess (?) the loving Mehmed (Mohammed).<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Miljković-Peppek P., *An Unknown Treasury of Icons*, City Institute for the Protection of Cultural Monument-Skopje, Skopje 2001, especially 18-19, T. III, IX, where the period of writing of the graffiti is determined to the 16<sup>th</sup>/17<sup>th</sup> centuries.

<sup>2</sup> The sole Slavic graffiti that are located on the upper registers where known by the first researchers of the monastery: cf. Mirković L. - Ž. Tatić, *Markov manastir*, Narodni muzej u Beogradu, Srpski spomenici III, Novi Sad 1925 (with older literature); Ivanov Yo., *Bulgarski starini iz Makedonia*, Sofia 1931 (phototypic publication 1970), 118-127; for the conservation work see: Spirovski S., *Rezultati od konzervatorskite raboti na fresko-živopisot vo crkvata Sveti Dimitrija-Markov manastir*, Glasnik na INI, 2, Skopje 1971, 239-245.

<sup>3</sup> Popovska-Korobar V., *Icons from the Museum of Macedonia*, Museum of Macedonia-Skenpoint, Skopje 2004, cat no. 84.

<sup>4</sup> Alternative reading (M.I.): *Ah Seyyide Şahım / Ah rabbiyem Meryem/ Aşıkı Mehmed* – Oh my governess/ Oh ruler Meryem/ the loving Mehmed. For the consultations regarding the inscriptions we express our sincere gratitude to professor Dr. Metin Izeti (from the Faculty of Art at the Tetovo State University).

The inscription on the icon of Jesus Christ (**fig. 3-4**) is written in six rows on the chimation above his right elbow and reads: *Ah Hüseyin / ah...(?) / Ah şahım ve mülhem, ah agam Rabbi(?) / İbrahim aşıkı Hacı Hasanoğlu / Ruhuna merhum* – Oh Husain Oh...(?) / Oh ruler inspiration, Oh sir and governor / the loving Ibrahim Hadji Hasanoglu / May his sole rest in peace.<sup>5</sup>

With great certainty from the orthography of these two inscriptions we can assume that they were written by a same person and during the same period. Firstly we find arguments in the used terms and the way they were written. In both of the inscriptions the orthography of the graphemes, or the use of certain words for example *şah* and *aşıkı* are repeated and are almost identical. The content of these two inscriptions are very similar and with the same aim. The third indication that they were written by the same person is the style of the writing, no matter of the different names which are mentioned. It is possible that a literate person wrote the inscriptions for someone who was not knowledgeable to write.

Unfortunately in the inscriptions there are no elements which direct to a potential dating. The brief and exclusive religious content of the inscriptions without a single profane element makes the dating even more complicated. Nevertheless the precise and clear use of some grammatical forms that are distinct for the newer period of the historic development of the Ottoman-Turkish language may be of help in the estimated dating of the inscriptions. Firstly we have the correct use of the dative form in the syntagma *ruhuna merhamet*, which in the older Ottoman texts sometimes can be delivered in a locative form. Likewise, there is clear use of the possessive suffixes for first and third person singular, which direct to the conclusion that these inscriptions were created as earliest as the second half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century.

In reference of determining the period of these inscriptions of great use can be the graffiti with similar content incised on the columns in this church. The oldest witnessed graffiti (**fig.5**) that addresses the same person Hadji Hassan, from the inscription on the icon of Jesus Christ is from 1796 and reads: *Ah rabbi, ah şahım / Hacı Hasan / Sene 1211* – Oh Master, oh my ruler / Hadji Hasan / the year of 1211 (1796). This graffiti is of great importance since it determines the period of the origin of the inscriptions and also suggests that he may be Hadji Hassan who was a literate person and wrote the inscriptions on the damaged icons.

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<sup>5</sup> Alternative reading (M.I.): *Ah Huseyn / Ah Ibn Şah / Ah Şeyh ve Şahımız Hacı İbrahim Aşki / Ruhuna rahmet* – Oh Husein/ Oh son of the ruler/ Oh our sheik Hadji İbrim the loving / mercy for his sole.



fig. 1



fig. 2

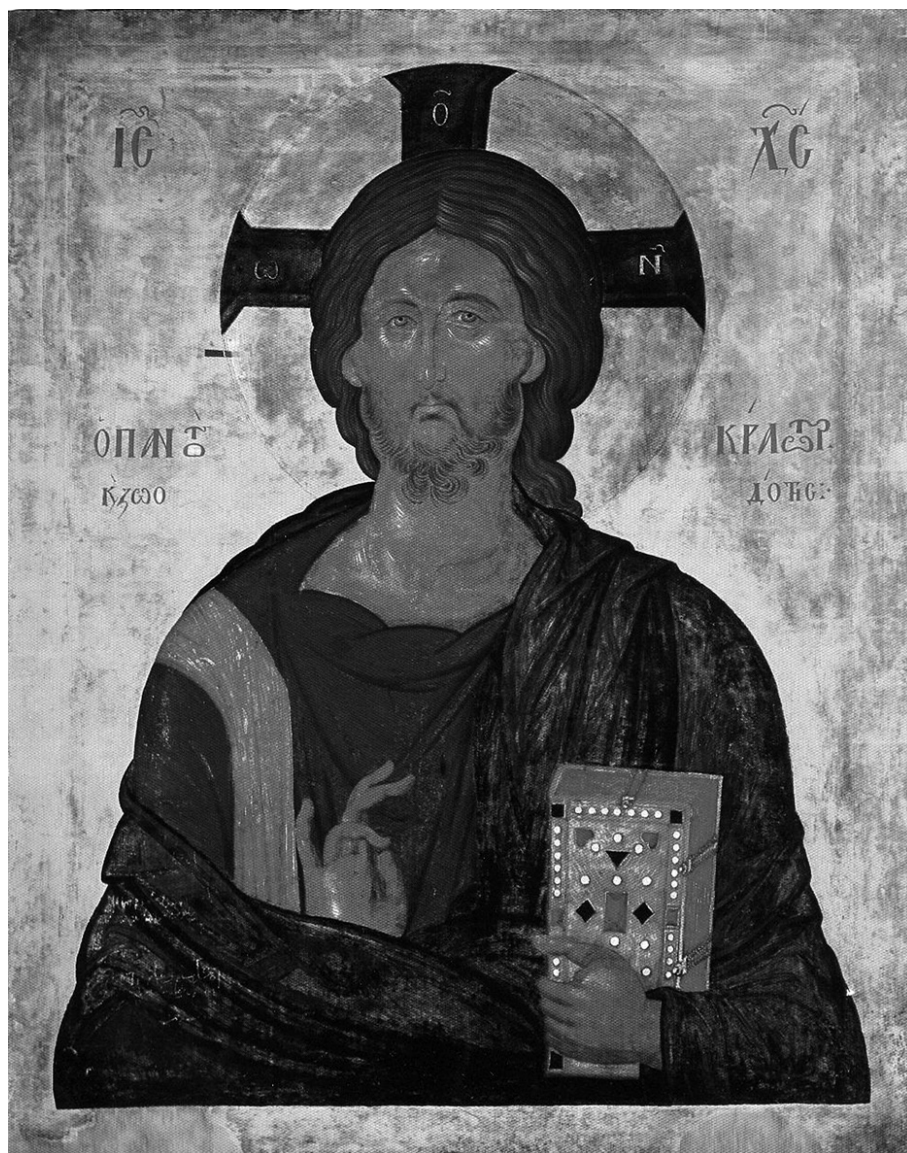


fig. 3



fig. 4



fig. 5



fig. 6



fig. 7



fig. 8



fig. 9



fig. 10

There are two more graffiti from 1808/09 and from 1811 which read: *Ah naçarım Hacı Sefer dır / Aşıkı Ahmed rabb-ı mazlum / Celilim Rabbım Huseyn / 1223* – Oh feeble is Hadji Sefer / the loving Ahmed, the master of the subjugated / my sublime master Husein / 1808/09, and *Meryem Ah Ah 1226* – Mary oh, oh =1811 (**fig. 6-7**). From the undated ones we have chosen several better preserved graffiti: *İşaret* – Isharet, a sign, mark; *Ah şahım / Salih Aşıkı* – Oh my ruler / Salih the loving; *Ah Mustafa aşıkı / ah...* – Oh Mustafa the loving...; *Ah şahım, padişahım / Tahriren fi mah-i Rebiyülevvel* – Oh my ruler, my Padishah / written in the month of Rabi' al-awwal<sup>6</sup>; *Ahşahım Ah hubbanı, O Ali / Ah Agam, Ah Mustafa a şıkı* – Oh, my ruler, oh deeply loved, o Ali / oh my master, oh the loving Mustafa.

The Ottoman inscription found on the gold painted background of the icon from Oreovec on the right side of the Virgin's head is actually the most well known invocation which the Muslims' articulate before the beginning of all their chores, and is cited at the beginning of all the religious Islamic books, as well as the holy Qur'an: *Bismillahi rRahmani rRahim* – In the name of Allah, the beneficent the merciful. (**fig. 8-9**) It is impossible to give a more precise dating of this calligraphic inscription, but as we mentioned it must be related to the attribution of the icon, namely to the end of the 16<sup>th</sup> or the early 17<sup>th</sup> century. It is important to note although the icon was delivered to the museum from the small funerary church of St. Archangel Michael it is very likely it was brought from another church or a monastery nearby.<sup>7</sup>

In the study of the inscriptions of the icons we state certain facts. The three icons belong to the first row of the iconostasis and without them the liturgy service is incapable. The icons of Christ and the Virgin are kissed after the so called Entrance prayers, or the repentance troparions. The subject of the Deesis/the Prayer for salvation of mankind with the customary adjoining icon of St. John the Forerunner created the core of the theme of the Last Judgment.<sup>8</sup> Salvation, the entry in to the Lord's kingdom, where victory over sin and death is accomplished was also expected by the Muslims in Allah's Last Judgment.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Rabi' al-awwal, is the third month in the Arabic lunar calendar.

<sup>7</sup> According to the size of the icon of the Holy Virgin it can fit into the iconostasis; however the icon has no stylistic similarities with the other Despotic icon of Jesus Christ, or with the frescos which date from the second quarter of the 17<sup>th</sup> century.

<sup>8</sup> Babić G., *O živopisanom ukrasu oltarskih pregrada*, Zbornik za likovne umetnosti 11, Matica srpska, Novi Sad 1975, 3-41; Chadzidakis M., *Ikonostas*, Reallexikon zur Byzantinischen kunst, band III, Stuttgart 1978; Mirković L., *Pravoslavna liturgika*, Drugi posebni deo, Beograd 1982, 57-58.

<sup>9</sup> Quran Surahs 1:4; Surahs 2:5; Surahs 19: 95; cf. *Enciklopedija živih religija*, ured. K. Krim, R. A. Bulard, L. D. Šin, second edition, Nolit, Beograd 1981, 654.

The incision of the Ottoman inscriptions which deliver prayers do not disturb the images and the original Greek or Slavic inscriptions,<sup>10</sup> to be precise they do not interpose the cult of the Orthodox picture. The invocative Islamic verse on the icon from Oreovec of the Holy Virgin bares this text before the section *Meryem* (Mary) in the Qur'an or Surahs (19), and at this point is very "suitable" since it articulated somebody's intermediary prayer towards the Holy Mother of God.

The Ottoman inscriptions on the columns in Marco's monastery coexist with the aloglothic graffiti. These are personal or instantaneous requests, or simply they notify the presence on the holy site where these visitors possibly donated something as a gesture of gratitude and reverence. In all the cited examples the religious appropriation is apparent.

With the analysis of these inscriptions a question is raised in reference to the identity of these individuals who wrote them. Certainly the revealing of the identity of the scribes is impossible, but according to us there are several elements that may direct to a supposition in relation of their religious provenance. First of all, from the content and the terminology which was used in the inscriptions we can conclude with great certainty that the scribes were individuals who had religious education, more precisely in the spirit of the traditional Islam. Reference to this is the use of the term *aşık* = in love (with God) which is present in the graffiti and on the icons, as well as on the columns. Namely, this attribute implies to the lowest hierarchy of the Bektashi order of the Dervishes, specifically it refers to disciples who have not yet been initiated in the order and are in the phase of preparation. This Muslim *tarikāt* (order) known by the heterodox and the unconventional distinguishing of God, has a special place in the history of mystic Ottoman learnings. Compared to other orders of the Dervishes the main characteristic of this one is in the learning, namely the use of the people's mystic and neglecting the Islamic service to God, even the obligatory prayer. Their approaching to God was achieved through paths and ways that bare elements from the peoples' Islam which were still alive in the old Turkish pre-Islamic beliefs, like shamanism. These beliefs were complemented with elements from the folk Christianity after Christianity was encountered in Anatolia, where Paganism was still alive. As result of the numerous similar elements with the Christian faith in the rituals and the beliefs it can be assumed that within the order of the Bektashi there was no larger a dogmatic interfering so they could address their prayers to the Christian saints and the Christian temples.

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<sup>10</sup> The inscriptions on the icons from Marco's monastery are written in Greek, while on the icon from Oreovec there is also an inscription from the donors written in Slavic, cf. Miljković-Pepok, loc. cit; Popovska-Korobar, loc. cit.

One more component that directs to the possibility that these inscriptions were written by individuals from the Bektashi Dervishes order is the fact that in all the three inscriptions there is mention of the name Hussein (on the icon of Jesus Christ and the graffiti on the column, fig. 4 and 6) and Ali (a graffiti on a column, fig. 6) with a indicative meaning of a “ruler” or “master”. Just after the period of the four righteous caliphs the name of Hussein appears as the grandson of the prophet Mohamed, the son of the caliph Ali who was killed by the first dynasty of the Islamic rulers. After Hussein was killed he had grown to be one of the most important martyrs of the Shiite movement and one of the most important persons in the Islamic mysticism. It is known that the secret learnings of the Bektashi are Shiite. They distinguish the 12-imams, and there central person is Ali who is linked with Mohamed and Allah. As result of this the Dervish order is in a constant clash with the Orthodox and the traditional Islam.<sup>11</sup>

In this context we have to emphasize the tradition of the Bektashism that predominantly exists on the territory of Western Macedonia. More than ten Bektashi tekkes were active till the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century in Macedonia: the H'dr baba tekke at Makedonski Brod, the Dikmen baba tekke in the village Kanatlarci, near Prilep, the Arabati baba tekke in Tetovo, furthermore the tekke of Mustafa baba and Suleyman baba in Skopje, the tekke of Djafer baba in Gostivar, the tekke of Ali baba in Debar, as well as others.<sup>12</sup> It can be assumed that the scribes of the inscriptions may have been members of one of these above mentioned tekkes.

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<sup>11</sup> Hasluck F. W., *Christianity and Islam under the Sultans*, ed. M. M. Hasluck Vol. II, Oxford, 1929; Birge K. J., *The Bektashi Order of Dervishes*, London, 1965; Inalozik H., *Osmansko carstvo*, Beograd 1974, 280-281; Elezović Gl., *Derviški redovi muslimanski*, Skoplje 1925; Palikruševa G., *Derviškiot red Halveti vo Makedonija*, Zbornik na Štipskiot Narodni muzej br. 1, Štip 1959, 105-119; Palikruševa G. et K. Tomovski, *Les Tekkes en Macédonie aux XVIII<sup>e</sup> et XIX<sup>e</sup> siècles*, Estrattodaghi Atti del Secondo congresso internazionale di arte turca, Napoli 1965, 204-211; Stojanovski A., *Dervendzistvoto vo Makedonija*, Skopje 1974, 50-59; Čehajić Dž., *Derviški redovi u jugoslovenskim zemljama sa posebnim osvrtom na Bosnu i Hercegovinu*, Orijentalni institut u Sarajevu, posebna izdanja XIV, Sarajevo 1986, passim; Mikov L., *Izkustvoto na heterodoksnite muslimani v Bulgaria (XVI-XX vek)*, *Bektaši i kazlbaši-alevii*, BAN, Institut za folklor, Sofia 2005; Izeti M., *Tekovite na tesavufot*, Zdrženie za kulturna afirmacija „Skofia“- Tetovo, Tetovo 2008.

<sup>12</sup> Palikruševa G. et K. Tomovski, loc. cit.; Stojanovski A., *Edno potvrdeno predanie*, Muzejski glasnik na Istoriskiot muzej na Makedonija br. 4, Skopje 1979, 53-57; Čehajić, op.cit. 173-177; Koneska E., *Dilemi okolu istorijata na crkvata Sv. Nikola ili H'd'r baba turbeto vo Makedonski Brod*, Glasnik br.1, Institut za nacionalna istorija, Skopje 2006, 161-167; Koneska E., *Pregled na bektasiskiot derviški red vo R. Makedonija*, in: *Balkanite. Meždu tradiciata i modernizma*, BAN, Institut po balkanistika, Sofia 2009, 229-255.

The second important indication that may refer to the origin of the scribes is the fact that these icons originally belonged to the region of Marco's River and the area of Makedonski Brod (Dolno Poreche), regions which were inhabited in the past and currently by an Islamized Slavic population. These inhabitants are known by the name Torbeshs or Slav origin Muslims who accepted the Islamic faith after the arrival of the Ottomans. While this population is greater in the area of Marco's River in the villages (Pagarusha, Kolichani, Cvetovo, Umovo, Drazhilovo), the Orthodox village of Oreovec in its vicinity has only the villages of Plasnica and Preglovo which have a dominant Torbesh population. Characteristic for this population is that after accepting the Islam faith they kept their native language and for a long time they were devoted to their old Christian faith. This affection in their spiritual life was displayed by the dual faith, namely the Crypto-Christianization which was the most distinct and long lasting phase after the acceptance of the Islam faith. The phenomenon of the dual religion is characterized by the attempt to preserve the bond with the old religion, by secretly cherishing the Christian customs and beliefs. The new Muslims kept their Christian names and used them in secrecy, in their homes they retained icons of the Christian domicile saints-protectors, they celebrated the Christian feast in secrecy and also in secrecy they baptized their children and held weddings. Long after the acceptance of the Islamic faith they did not stop going to their churches which were nearby and there they lighted candles and prayed to the Lord. Even today, there are numerous customs and beliefs from the everyday life of these Muslims in which we can recognize the Christian and Pagan origins.<sup>13</sup>

In the surrounding of Marco's monastery near Skopje and the church of St. Archangel Michael at Oreovec near Makedonski Brod inhabited by Muslim population where the dual-faith had a long presence has directed us to suppose that the authors of the inscriptions were inhabitants of these regions. One of the indications for the period when these inscriptions on the icons were

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<sup>13</sup> Hadzivasiljević J., *Muslimani naše krvi u Južnoj Srbiji*, Beograd 1924, 25-39; Trifunovski F. J., *Za torbešite vo Porečieto na Markova reka*, Godišen Zbornik, kn. 4, Filozofski fakultet na Univerzitetot vo Skopje, Skopje 1951, 3-10; Palikruševa G., *Islamizacija na torbešite i formiranje na torbeškata subgrupa*, unpublished doctoral thesis, Skopje 1965; Matkovski A., *Islamizacijata kako pacifikacija na Debarskiot kraj*, Bigorski kulturno-naučni sobiri, (Gostivar 1971), Gostivar 1973, 225-234; Zirojević O., *Islamizacija na južnoslovenskom prostoru: dvoverje*, Srpski genealoški centar, knj.10, Beograd 2003. For a more in depth study of the process of the Islamization see: Gjorgiev D., *Naselenieto na makedonsko-albanskiot graničen pojas (XV-XVI vek)*, Institut za nacionalna istorija, Skopje 2009.

created is the fact that the process of Islamization of the population had finished and they settled the region during the second half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>14</sup>

The heromonachos Kiril Pejčinović, who was a hegúmenos of Marco's monastery had incised an inscription on the north-west column inside the church in 1801, and in his well known work created while he was here "Ogledalo" (Mirror) he likewise gives a mention of the Torbesh population.<sup>15</sup> His sermons can not be excluded from his environment in which he lived and it is interesting how he uses his language, he employs Turkish words to be more persuasive in the preaching the true Orthodox principle. Alongside the different synonyms he uses them largely as stylistic variations, for example the Virgin is *Sultana* (Governess) or *Rijal* (The Knowledgeable one); for Christ the appellations *Saybia* (Master), *Kurtuliya* (Savior), *Afendya* (Infinite ruler), or a Lord who is a strong *Cenk* (warrior).<sup>16</sup>

It is necessary once again to mention the Bektashi Dervish order when we speak about the acceptance of the Islamic faith in these regions. Namely the spiritual influence of this order is considered as one of the most significant elements in the conversion of the Christian population. The mistrust of the Islam which existed among the Christians in the villages was overcome particularly by the members of this *tarīqah*. The Islam of the Bektashi which was "diminished" by the numerous Christian and Pagan elements that were close to the traditional beliefs and were easily accepted by the illiterate Christian population which had been economically weakened. The transition to such Islam which did not enforce special obligations and a meant transition from one folk culture with a tradition full of numerous Pagan customs and beliefs, into another one which was packed with similar beliefs and customs and generated certain privileges and an easier life. This was actually an act of rationalism and not a question of belief of a certain religious dogma. The recognition of the Islam faith in this approach had preserved many of the elements from the old belief which were widely practiced for the dual faith, as well as the religious tolerance that was present outside the larger town centers has directed us above all basically to the prospect that from this newly Islamized

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<sup>14</sup> Hadzivasiljević, op.cit., 25, 29-30; Trifunovski, op.cit., 3-6 (the inhabiting of the Torbesh population that originate from region of Dolna Reka began in the second half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century and continued till the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century).

<sup>15</sup> Koneski B., *Kiril Pejčinović, Slovo za praznicite*, Skopje 1956 – republished in Koneski B., *Za literaturata i kulturata*, kn. IV, *Izbrani dela vo sedum knigi* (second supplemented edition), Skopje 1981, 19-58.

<sup>16</sup> Koneski, op.cit., 33, 51; Jašar-Nasteva O., *Od leksikata na Kiril Pejčinović*, Simpozium „Kiril Pejčinović i negovoto vreme“, Tetovo 1973, 93-103

population especially were recruited many of the members of the Bektashi Dervish order. Thus the members of this tarīqah with such ideological origin were also spiritually free to visit the Christian temples and to address prayers to Mary and Jesus. For them God was one for them and the paths towards him were numerous and different.<sup>17</sup>

Like in Christianity the factor of miracles and legends which are connected to healing are a common ground in the heterodox Islam.<sup>18</sup> The miracles may be also understood in relation to Marco's monastery if we consider several brief data's and informations that reflect the atmosphere of the local population at the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century and the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The erection of the west porch is considered to be the work of two Pashas from Skopje and is related to the legends about their healings in the monastery, namely with a warning from the great saint Demetrius.<sup>19</sup> During this period the Despotic icons were not yet repainted and their spiritual suggestion was strengthened with the appellations of the Holy Virgin *The guide on the route to the salvation*, Christ Savior and Life giver; St. John the Forerunner *Herald of repentance from the Constantinople Petra*, Demetrius *Merciful* and Archangel Michael *The Lords' Frightening guardian* brought about an impressive and frightening feeling for each person standing before them. The historic context of the monastery strongly present and alive in the folk memory as an endowment of king Volkashin and King Marco and the icons which were a

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<sup>17</sup> It will be interesting to research the churches and the monasteries in the East part of Macedonia where there is not such a strong traditions of the Bektashi Dervish order and there are no inhabitants of the Islamized population and to determine if there is a similar phenomenon regarding the Ottoman inscriptions on the icons and the walls of the monasteries. For the time being we have no such knowledge.

<sup>18</sup> In reference to Macedonia we like to remind of the "mixed" shrines: the monasteries of St. Nahum near Ohrid and of the Holy Immaculate Virgin near Kichevo, the church of St. Nicholas which at the same time is a turrbe (tomb) of H'dr baba at Makedonski Brod, and the mosque of Husamedin pasha in Shtip which for the Christians at the same time is the church of St. Elijah: Koneska E. - R. Jankuloski, *Shared Shrines*, Macedonian Centre for Photography, Skopje 2009, with selected literature).

<sup>19</sup> Towards the late 18<sup>th</sup> century "Gamzi pasha" (!?) abandoned the idea of pulling down the temple and erected a stone parapet about 1830, while Havzi pasha after the scary dream about the saint- equestrian discarded the idea of melting the lead roof and gave away a large quantity of oil and erected the porch with stones brought from Makresh near Kumanovo (Mirković - Tatić, op.cit., 2, 6). It is notable to mention that during this period on the route Skopje - Kumanovo a well known Bektashi tekke was found of Karadja Ahmed and which during St. George's feast day had immense visitations by the Christians (Hasluck op. cit., 582).

bequest of a Byzantine empress are related to the well known Constantinople monastery of Petra and no doubt created certain legends.<sup>20</sup> The presence of the holy remains and the precious reliquaries were comprehensible for the distinguished monasteries and once these icons were kissed they gave ease to the different believers in a miraculous way.<sup>21</sup> The captions in the old manuscripts at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century inform us about long-lasting stars<sup>22</sup>, which often were interpreted as a miraculous celestial signs and so forth.

In context of our research we can enhance our work with the Ottoman inscriptions found on icons. A very good example is the icon of Christ's Nativity and the Slaughter of the Innocent Children of Bethlehem from the monastery of St. Nahum near Ohrid.<sup>23</sup> **(fig.10)** Beside the unusual iconography this icon from the 19<sup>th</sup> century is especially important to us because of the inscription-legends written in Greek and in Arabic language.<sup>24</sup> This icon is a one more enrichment in acknowledging the relations of the Muslims with this specific monastery,<sup>25</sup> and confirms that they also bestowed their domestic/family icons.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> It was believed the church housed an imperial tomb as result of the donors portraits that are located in the south-west part of the church, however this assumption has not been confirmed archeologically (Мирковић-Татић, op.cit.; Nošpal-Nikuljska N., *Markov manastir - monument kako dokument niz istorijata*, Spomenici za srednovekovnata i ponovata istorija na Makedonija, vol. I, edited by V. Moshin, Arhiv na Makedonija, Skopje 1975, 401-415). A more in-depth study for the historical context of the icons from Marco's monastery see: Miljković-Peppek, op.cit., 11, 25-26 (for the monastery of St. John the Forerunner-Petra were a hospital and hostel were located), 53-56 (for the donors of the icons, the empress Elena Paleologus, the daughter of Constantine Dragash who together with King Marco were killed at Rovine in 1395).

<sup>21</sup> At the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century only the remains of St. Glykeria were kept in a silver box in the alter (Mirković L., *Još nešto iz Markovog manastira kod Skoplja*, Glasnik Skopskog naučnog društva, knj. 1, Skoplje 1925, 303).

<sup>22</sup> Polenaković H., *Prilozi za zapoznavanje na Kirila Pejčinović*, Godišen Zbornik, kn. 5, Filozofski fakultet na Univerzitetot vo Skopje, Skopje 1952, 1-12.

<sup>23</sup> Georgievski M., *Golemite praznici vo ohridskiot ikonopis od XV-XIX vek*, Ohrid 1998, cat.no. 3, without illustration. We express our sincere gratitude to the colleague Milcho Georgievski from the NI Institute and Museum - Ohrid for the information and the photos.

<sup>24</sup> The Greek inscription-legend is written with red paint above the dome of the cave in which the Nativity is depicted, while with white paint is the Arabic script that clarifies the birth of the Messiah, and certain figures (the wise men, the shepherd and the angel) and the slaughter of the innocent.

<sup>25</sup> Since the 1820's very often the Bektashi from Korçë and its surroundings visited the monastery of St. Nahum the Miracle Maker and Healer, and by the Muslims population this saint was identified with the saint Sary Saltuk (Hasluck, op. cit., 436, 546, 583).

In spite the consultation with several competent colleagues from the neighboring Balkan countries we have no substantiated informations of similar syncretistic manifestations, but certainly this is not exclusive expression to our region.<sup>27</sup> More valid conclusions may be given when the other examples will be studied in the corpus of Ottoman inscriptions in the Christian temples.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> About the keeping of icons in the homes, cf. Matkovski, *Islamizacijata kako pacifikacija na Debarskiot kraj*, 226 (with examples from Borye- near Korčë); Zirojević, op cit. 21-22. The Travelogue of Johan Han from 1863 gives an account about the endowments of the Turkish women to the monastery of St. Nahum so their children can be healed or they gave oath to the saint, likewise the monastery was traditionally under the patronage and protection of eminent Muslims (Husayn-bay), cf. *Makedonija vo delata na stranskite patopisci*, 1850-1864, ed. A. Matkovski, Misl, Skopje 1992, 631. In this context we like to mention the icon in the Belgrade museum collection with the depiction of St. Elijah in a cave, whose traditional Orthodox iconography received Greek-Ottoman caption with Arabic script, cf. Tatić-Đurić M., *Ikona sa orijentalnim natpisom u zbirci Narodnog muzeja u Beogradu*, Zbornik Narodnog muzeja XI/2, Beograd 1982, 7-14, fig. 1, for the icon it is concluded that „nonetheless the icon was created in a Islamic environment by an artist who still had vague remembrance of his Greek- Orthodox origin“.

<sup>27</sup> We know from literature that there is graffiti of a verse from the Persian poet Hafiz – on a fresco in the outside narthex in the well know church of the Holy Virgin of Levishka in Prizren from 1306/7 (Panić D. - G. Babić, *Bogorodica Ljeviška*, Srpska književna zadruza, Beograd 1975, 9, fig. 7). In reference to the first part of the Hafiz's verse that reads: „The pupil of my eye is for you a nest, (honor us with an entrance, this home is yours)“, it is assumed that this is giving praise to the beauty of the fresco paintings. However we believe that the graffiti because of its location near the Last Judgment can be explicated as a metaphoric prayer for salvation.

<sup>28</sup> In the church of the Holy Sophia in Ohrid there are Ottoman inscriptions, however according to our observation of the photo documentation of the art historian Milcho Georgievski the dozen inscriptions written with paint and pencil on the west wall in the north porch as well as on the dado in the central apse area for now do not give informations that these inscriptions had prayer qualifications.

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## ИКОНЕ СА ОСМАНЛИСКИМ МОЛИТВЕНИМ ЗАПИСИМА ИЗ МУЗЕЈА МАКЕДОНИЈЕ

### Резиме

У раду се презентују записи са арапским писмом, урезани на три престоње иконе које потичу из Марковог манастира код Скопља и цркве Св. арханђела Михајла у селу Ореовецу близу Македонског Брода. Анализа и тумачење њиховог садржаја, као и околности у којима су записи настали, отварају интересантне теме, најпре с аспекта верског синкретизма у османлиском периоду.

Запис на Богородичиној икони из Марковог манастира гласи: *Ах Марија (?)*, *ах владичице*, *ах господарице (?)*, *љубљени Мехмед (Мухамед)*. На Христовој икони је текст: *Ах Хусеине*, *ах... (?)*, *ах господару и надахнуће*, *ах господине и господару*, *љубљени Ибраим*, *Хаџи Хасаноглу*, *покој му души*. На основу ортографије одређених графема и речи, конкретне и јасне граматичке форме карактеристичне за млађи период историјског развоја османско-турског језика, како и према стилу писања, претпостављамо да су записи на иконама настали око 1405. били писани истом руком, најраније током друге половине XVIII века или нешто касније. Одређивању времена помажу и датирани графити сличног садржаја са стубова у наосу манастирске цркве. Најстарији којег запажамо је из 1796, док су други из 1808/9. и 1811. године.

Запис на икони Богородице из села Ореовеца је најпознатија исламска инвокација: *У име Бога, Свеопштег Доброчинитеља, Милостивог*. Калиграфски исписани графит би требало датовати свакако после настанка ове иконе (крај XVI - почетак XVII века), вероватно у касни XVIII или рани XIX век.

У циљу ближег разумевања ове појаве посебно се разматрају следеће теме и чињенице: 1. Функционално значење иконостасних икона (литургиска пракса, идејна повезаност са Страшним судом) и религиозна апропријација османлиских графита; коегзистенција с алоглотским хришћанским записима сличног садржаја на стубовима цркве Марковог манастира и однос муслимана према познатим манастирским средиштима; фактори чудотворства и легендарности у хетеродоксалном исламу. 2. Бекташиска традиција у Македонији и могућа повезаност са овим и

другим графитима кроз њихову терминологију. 3. Торбеши и њихова концентрација у области Маркове Реке и Македонског Брода у XVIII и XIX веку; двоверство и криптохришћанство као карактеристична и дуготрајна фаза њиховог духовног живота после исламизације.

Синкретистичка појава није ексклузивна за ово балканско подручје. Када корпус османлиских записа у хришћанским светилиштима буде темељније истражен, тек тада би се могли доносити валиднији закључци. Иницијатива о размени сличних података основни је циљ овог рада.

**Кључне речи:** икона, молитва, османлиски натписи, османлиски графити, Марков Манастир, Торбеши, синкретизам, криптохришћанство

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