

Notes on the continuous multi-confessional use of shrines, cult places, Christian relics and springs of holy water in the Republic of Macedonia

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ABSTRACT

Most Medieval and Late Medieval churches were built over or in the vicinity of Ancient temples, synagogues and *domus ecclesiae*, Early Christian churches, or powerful water sources. Shared shrines in the Balkans brought Christians and Muslims together around objects, tombs and sites believed to deliver spiritual protection. Travel writers tell us of how mosques were erected above some churches by pulling the church buildings down or changing the upper part. One of the most prominent travel writers of Ottoman times, Evliya Çelebi, writes that there were 24 Muslim shrines in the town of Štip during the second half of the 17th century, amongst which he mentions the mosque of Husamedin-Paša. The shrine, called the Husamedin-Paša Mosque by the Muslims and the Church of Saint Elijah by the Christians in Štip, is revered equally by both religious groups in the town, and each group claims priority for its use. Examples of religious shrines shared by Christians and Muslims include the Church of St. Nicholas/H'd'r Baba Tekke in Makedonski Brod, the St. Naum monastery near Ohrid. (The large number of Muslim visitors to this shrine, especially at the tomb of Saint Naum, is due to their belief that the face of Saint Naum in the painting entitled 'Saint Naum Reins in a Bear Instead of an Ox' actually belongs to the Bektashi saint, Sar' Salt'k).

When visiting the city of Bitola, Jovan Hadži Vasiljević interviewed the citizens and thus found out that the Church of St. George had been turned into the Nil mosque at the old Pekmez bazaar, while the Church of Resurrection had been turned into the Hazreti Ishak mosque at Bit Pazar, the Church of the Holy Doctors into Zandandžik mosque, and the Church of the Holy Apostles had been turned into the Hajdar Kadi mosque at the Sheep Bazaar. [1]

The urban landscape of old Turkish Skopje (in 1594 or in the early 17th century) can be reconstructed from an illustration by the German painter from Nurnberg, Jakobus Harevin.

Sacred stones for fertility are dispersed throughout Macedonia, among which the most famous are Govedarov Kamen in Sveti Nikole, Crn Kamen in Veles, and Dupen Kamen in the village of Oreovo.

Keywords: churches, holy places, mosques, shrines, cult places, Christian relics, springs of holy water

In the Republic of Macedonia there are over 1,100 churches and monasteries dating from the Middle Ages up to the 19th century, and 131 registered Muslim sacred objects. Over 400 Early Christian churches, usually of the basilica type, have been excavated and at least one new basilica is discovered every year. Most of the Medieval and Late Medieval churches were built over or in the vicinity of Ancient temples, synagogues and domus ecclesiae, Early Christian churches, or powerful water sources. In the first half of the 19th century, Sultan Mahmud allowed the building of new churches where they had previously not existed. Turkish law allowed these new churches to be only 1.5 m above ground. Sometimes the big churches were turned into mosques after certain adaptations, and only a small part of them were given back their primary function in the mid-20th century, such as the Church of St. Sophia in Ohrid or—in the year 2000—the old Church of St. Clement in Plaošnik. In the socialist period, certain large churches and mosques were used as monuments of culture or tourist sites, and some are still functioning as art galleries and part of archaeological and national museums. [2]

In this text I will use the word shrine to denote a site which is thought to be particularly holy, a site that houses a particular relic or cult image that is the object of veneration, or a place where people in need seek spiritual guidance.

The Early Christian episcopal and urban basilicas have usually preserved the container where the relics were placed, while the relics were either removed for security reasons during hard times when the bishops and officers had to leave the territory, or plundered by barbarians. Small “crypt- reliquaries”, containers between 10 and 40 cm deep that were usually placed beneath the altar table, are also frequently discovered in provincial churches. [3]

Some Islamic countries have developed a deep cultural tradition of shrine veneration. For Shia and Sufi Muslims, shrines hold a notable position and are considered places to seek spiritual guidance. The most venerated shrines are dedicated to various Sufi Saints and are widely scattered throughout the Islamic world.

As Glenn Bowman emphasises, popular assumptions about the fundamental exclusiveness of religious identities, practices and communities are thrown into question by the existence of shared shrines. In the Balkans and the Middle East, these have brought Muslims, Christians and Jews together around objects, tombs and sites believed to deliver spiritual protection and other benefits. [4]

The role of holy water and water sources/springs

Many ancient tribes in Europe, including the Celts, the Germanic peoples and the Slavs, often used water springs as open-air sanctuaries or built wooden or stone temples in their vicinity. Water is essential to all life and plays an important role in many religious rituals. Belief in holy water is not confined to ancient history; rituals associated with wells and springs persist into the 20th century. “Holy wells were often regarded as places of healing, with certain wells associated with particular afflictions. The ‘cloutie

wells' are a survival of this belief. Here, sufferers would hang strips of cloth from trees beside the well, and as the cloth decayed so did their affliction disappear. A number of wells and springs became the sites of religious pilgrimages... People assembled here to drop coins in the water, drink from the well, wish for something and tie a rag to one of the nearby trees. Still today you can pass areas such as these with rags tied to trees near wells!" [5]

In the vicinity of Skopje there are several popular holy water sources or healing mineral water springs, some used already by the Romans in the 2nd century BC. These include the water sources and thermae in Katlanovo, the Church of St George in Krivi Dol, where the residence of the archbishop is, the Church of St. John the Baptist at Kapistec, the Church of St. Panteleimon in Nerezi, the Church of the Holy Virgin in Volkovo (where the water spring is inside the church as it is in the Basilica of St. Vitale in Ravenna). Outside Skopje are the springs and thermae at the Church of the Holy Virgin in Veljusa, at Vodoča near Strumica, Negorci near Gevgelia, and Debarski Banji. The most famous holy water spring and cult place is located in Krivi Dol. The spring here is related to St. George and some scholars (e.g., Jovan Trifunovski) locate the lost Church of St. Georg Gorg where the archbishop's residence now stands and a new church erected after World War II is situated. This spring is visited by many people on the feast day of St. George. [6] In the Ohrid region the sources at St Naum Monastery are especially popular and known to heal eye problems.

The first Friday after Easter is known as Bright Friday (Balaklind celebrates the Life-Giving Spring whose waters (where golden fishes live) were discovered to cure a man of blindness by the future Emperor Leo I (457–474). This feast day is celebrated in Macedonian churches, when festivals and large gatherings are held at places with spring water. In the Monastery of Saint Jovan Bigorski, there is a recently built fenestela dedicated to Bright Friday where, after the liturgy, monks make *littii* and pay their respects to the Mother of God. In the Church of St. George in the nearby village of Rajcica there is a fresco depicting this holiday in which a man is resurrected after being washed with the water of the Holy Virgin. Because the Virgin Mary washed Christ's wounds, people visit water springs with healing water within churches and wash their eyes and face, or throw the water three times behind their backs,

Macedonian folk beliefs regarding water

Macedonian folk beliefs (mythology) regard water and its vicinity as places where various demonic creatures assemble, such as fairies, dragons and devils. Belief in fairies was very widespread and lies behind many toponyms. It is the presence of the fairy that is believed to give the water miraculous and healing power. [7] There are many legends, stories and songs, as elsewhere in the world, which praise the magic and miraculous characteristics of the water. Our Lord is held to be born from a drop of water that fell down on the blade of grass. [8] References to water are scattered throughout Macedonian folk poetry. Any person who erected a drinking fountain is considered to have done a great deed. [9]

Holy water is water that has been blessed by a member of the clergy or a religious figure. Baptism and spiritual cleansing is common among several world religions. In Ancient Greek religion, a holy water called *chernips* was created by extinguishing a torch from a religious shrine in water. In Greek religion, purifying people and locations with water was part of the process of distinguishing the sacred from the profane. [10]

The Torah mentions using holy water in a test for the purity of a wife accused of marital infidelity. A ritual would be performed involving the drinking of holy water. If the wife who participated in the ritual was guilty, she was supposedly cursed to miscarry any pregnancy. If she was still able to bear children, she was presumed innocent.

Baptism

Holy baptism was accomplished in Christianity by triple immersion in a baptismal font, pools with sanctified water into which consecrated oil, called chrism, was poured. All the actions were performed in the narthex or in the baptistery. The water from the holy spring that was poured into the pool, as well as the spring water that flowed into the pool itself is holy water. Clergymen and initiated Christians would make the ceremonial depuration with this holy water. There was always access to the pool for all the citizens of the town. The people were allowed to draw as much water as they needed and probably to carry it away to their homes. [11] Water, according to the John the Apostle, together with blood, purifies and revitalizes the spirit (John 4:7-13). The living water that Jesus wants to give to the pagan Samaritan woman (John 4:7-15) is the healing power of the human's soul and belief. Personified by the Vitezda pool (Home of Mercy) – a bathing pool located at the Sheep Gate in the North Wall of Jerusalem (John 5:2-7) is also connected to the ceremony of depuration, the healing of the body and the spirit. Another symbol of depuration is the ceremonial washing of Jesus' feet by his disciples (John 13:5-15).

Relics: points of contact between this world and the divine, offering the promise of worldly intercession?

The attention paid to the bodies of saints is also familiar to Jews and to the Jewish scriptures. The burial site of the three Patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, as well as of Joseph, Rachel, King David, and of the prophets Haggai, Malachi, and Samuel, has been venerated continually by Jews since their deaths about 4,000 years ago. Even in the Old Testament, God celebrates with miracles the holy relics of certain of those who were well-pleasing to Him. Thus, in the Old Testament a dead man was resurrected when his corpse touched the holy relics of the Prophet Elisha (2 Kings 13:20-21).

The practice of preserving objects believed to contain virtues because of former associations with important persons or events is very ancient. The Christian cult of relics also started early in connection with the remains of martyrs. After St Ignatius was devoured by lions in 107, with only his larger bones remaining, the bones were carried to his native city of Antioch and kept 'as an inestimable treasure left to the Church by the grace which was in the martyr'. Belief in the efficacy of such relics led to the division

of remains among many churches and believers. Theft, trade, and deception would soon add more relics to the cult.

Early churches were built over the tombs of martyrs. Early Christian *memoria* were covered funerary places that housed the bones of deceased Christians where they were venerated. Relics were housed in a special room called a crypt. Relics and reliquaries were placed under the altar table or in crypts, as part of the *catechesis*.

In 401, the Council of Carthage decreed that all churches not honouring the relics of saints should be destroyed. Where genuine relics were known to exist, Christians confidently expected miracles to take place.

Relics and miraculous healing

In 415 the disinterred body of St Stephen was reported to perform miraculous cures and many pilgrims began to visit his shrine in Jerusalem. It became the custom to carry relics as a means of protection from evil influences. A source often cited for the efficacy of relics is the passage in Acts mentioning how Paul's handkerchiefs were imbued by God with healing power (Acts 19:11-12).

The practice of venerating fragments associated with saints was already widespread in the early 4th century. The liturgical service books, especially the *Menaion*, compiled in the Middle Ages, contain numerous prayers and hymns referring to the pious veneration of holy relics.

During the consecration of a new church, the priest placed the relics on a small plate called a *diskos* (paten) in a church nearby, which was then taken in a cross-procession to the new church, carried 3 times around the new structure and then placed on the altar table as part of the consecration service. Where there is no special room, recesses were constructed under the altar table known as small crypt reliquaries.

The relics of saints are also sewn into the (*THIS IS OK THE WORD MEANS KIND OF ALTAR*) given to a priest by his bishop as a means of granting him permission to celebrate the Sacred Mysteries. It is kept in a high place of the altar and it is forbidden to celebrate the Eucharist without it. Reliquaries could also take the form of a full-body statue or bust-length images of saints.

In Rajčica there is a relic of the hand of St. George (a patron of the monastery), while in St. Jovan Bigorski there are many relics brought by the abbot from Holy Mount Athos and relics donated by believers (like the piece of the Holy Cross). People also visit churches and monasteries housing icons considered miraculous. In the Orthodox Church, icons are understood not only as representations of saints, angels, Christ or the Virgin Mary, but also as God's revelation. In the St. John Bigorski monastery, there is an icon of St. John the Baptist that is believed to be miraculous. In the monastery, the monks keep A Book of Miracles, a notebook (kept by Father Dositej since 1995) with sixteen written testimonies of experienced miracles.

Koneska says: "People usually come to the monastery in order to pray for conception and safe delivery. That is why they bring votive offerings that symbolize gained grace: a figurine of a child or of a cradle. There are also some other testimonies of recovery (one of a woman suffering from kidney inflammation, one of a lame man),

though less frequent. Visitors come to the monastery to pray or ask for prayer, to take some consecrated water or to stay overnight in the monastery.

Sharing shrines

The sharing of shrines by members of two religions was common in the Balkans during the Ottoman period and afterwards. Furthermore, it is a known practice in various parts of the world, including amongst Muslim and Hindu communities in India, and amongst religious communities in Palestine.

Holy places in Orthodox Christianity are visited frequently by Orthodox as well as Muslims—especially Macedonian Muslims—since everyone, irrespective of confession, can pray or ask a priest for a prayer FOR VARIOUS MATTER, OR REASONS OR NEED in various intentions. It is related to the belief in the miraculous power of icons and relics recognized by Orthodox theology. These practices performed by Muslims are explained differently, depending on the interlocutors' religious affiliation and their theological knowledge. Sometimes it is named Crypto-Christianity or bi-confessionalism to justify their practices of visiting churches and observing both Christian and Muslims festivities. They perceive the traditions of Islam as backward and condemn some of their religious and customary activities. Georgieva talks of a system of coexistence. Both groups consider neighbourliness as important value and try to maintain peaceful coexistence by paying and receiving visits, exchanging festive food and respecting each other's customs. On the other hand, they perceive the tradition and religion of the other group as inferior. "Those two codes of coexistence control each other in local communities and it is completely worked out by those communities." [12]

The Church St. Nicholas/H'd'r Baba Tekke in Makedonski Brod is a special example of a religious shrine shared by Christians and Muslims. According to Christian belief, the shrine was originally built as a church of Saint Nikola. The Muslims, on the other hand, believe the shrine was founded as a *tekke* (dervish monastery) by the mythical Bektashi saint, H'd'r Baba, and that his tomb (*turbe*) lies in the south-western part of the structure. Both religious groups visit the shrine throughout the year, with the largest number of visitors coming not on St. Nicholas' day but on the 6th of May, Saint George's Day, also called H'derlez. The shrine serves both as a church and a *turbe*. The carpets, as well as the Muslim pictures of saints and tapestries hung on the walls and around the tomb, are removed on the 5th and 6th of May and temporarily stored elsewhere. Rugs and other items (Muslim paintings, photographs, prayer beads, candles, etc.) are put back in place by the custodial personnel of the church prior to visits from several dervish orders, such as the Bektashi, Halveti, and Sunni, who come to celebrate the H'derlez festival. Each order visits the shrine separately. [13]

The present-day church of the monastery of St. Naum near Ohrid was erected on the foundation of the Church of the Holy Archangels built by Saint Naum around AD 900. Over time, the church underwent complete rebuilding. The frescos in the church were painted in 1806 and the frescos in the St. Naum chapel containing the tomb of Saint Naum in 1800. The three thematic units of the chapel fresco feature the life and miracles of Saint Naum. [14]

The extraordinary popularity and large number of visitors at this shrine throughout the whole year, especially on the Feast Day of Saint Naum (July 3), is due to the Christians' deep faith in the miraculous and healing power of Saint Naum. According to the monastery's records, the monastery even had a sort of working hospital in and around 1662.

The presence of numerous Muslim visitors at this shrine, and especially at the tomb of Saint Naum, is due to their belief that the face of Saint Naum in the painting entitled 'Saint Naum Reins in a Bear Instead of an Ox' actually belongs to the Bektashi saint Sar' Salt'k, a dervish with a conical hat. The two-wheeled chariot in which St Naum sits is pulled by a deer and a lion, which are traditional Bektashi animal symbols. Ibrahimgil assumes that this place is one of Sar' Salt'k's tombs. [15]

Aleksiev states that the legends about Sar' Salt'k describe a legendary figure very similar to the mythical and immortal H'z'r. Salt'k bore his name, performed the same miracles, appeared in the form of a Christian saint, and assisted Muslim armies in battle. The figure of Salt'k represents a synthesis of already established models: he is a holy dervish miracle-worker, an Islamic warrior (gazi), and an epic hero. His cult was not specifically associated with one location, and he appears in many places throughout the Balkans, such as the monastery of St. Naum. Thus Muslims visit this monastery and bow before the tomb of Saint Naum believing that it is the tomb of Sar' Salt'k. [16]

Ibrahimgil writes that, for the peoples of the Balkans, the relationship they have toward Islam is to a large extent connected to Sar' Salt'k. According to some, Sar' Salt'k moved with more than 700 Ottoman families to the Balkans to carry out his missionary work. This is not confirmed by any written document, but instead only attested by local lore, narratives, and turbes. In the Balkans, Sar' Salt'k is known not only as a historical and theological figure but also as a legendary hero. According to legend, as a result of Sar' Salt'k's successful conquests in the 13th century, a dervish tekke was founded on the place of today's monastery of St. Naum. However, aside from the tomb, there is no other material evidence proving that this is a tekke of Sar' Salt'k.

During the festival on the 3rd of July, visitors camp out on the shore of Lake Ohrid near the springs of Crni Drim River and in other open areas on the monastery grounds. The holiday is attended by many people from different religious and ethnic communities from various parts of Macedonia. Believers arrive on July 2 to spend the night at the monastery. A large number of the visitors are Muslim Roma.

A somewhat more distinct shared shrine is the Mosque of Husamedin-Paša in Štip, built at the beginning of the 16th century, venerated both by the Christians and the Muslims in the town. Several authors state that the mosque was probably constructed on the site of an older Christian temple, a church dedicated to Saint Elijah. Zirojević proposes that, at the time of the Ottoman conquest or some time later, the Church of St. Elijah was torn down and the Husamedin-Paša Mosque was built in its place. The neighbourhood of this mosque is listed in the census records of 1570–1573 among the neighbourhoods registered in the town of Štip. The mosque was new and the census record lists the names of the employees working at the mosque. [17]

One of the most prominent travel writers of Ottoman times, Evliya Çelebi, writes that, during the second half of the 17th century in the town of Štip there were 24 Muslim shrines, among which he mentions the mosque of Husamedin-Paša. About this shrine he writes: "...an artistically built mosque with a stone minaret. It is covered with lead and sits on the top of a hill." It is interesting that the author does not mention that the mosque was built on the place where there was previously a Christian shrine, although he states that another mosque in the town of Štip, Fetic Mosque, which at the time of the Ottoman conquest was a church, was later converted into a mosque, to which a mihrab was added (Çelebi (1967), 339–344). [18] The mosque was active till the end of World War II. In 1953 the building was restored and for a while it served as gallery space for the town museum. After 1956, the edifice did not have any particular function (Pavlov (2005), 170). In recent times, the town's Christians have visited the mosque to celebrate the festival of Saint Elijah's Day on the 2nd of August.

Husamedin-Paša Mosque is a typical example of the Early Constantinople style of Ottoman sacred architecture of the early 16th century. The northern side of the mosque is dominated by a simple porch with a three-domed construction, while on the western side there is a partially preserved octagonal minaret. On the same side in the courtyard is the grave of the sheikh Muyhudin Rumi Baba. The turbe has been completely restored, meaning that its original construction cannot be determined (Pavlov (2005), 175). The shrine, called the Husamedin-Paša Mosque by the Muslims and the Church of Saint Elijah by the Christians, is revered equally by both religious groups in the town, and each group claims priority for its use. The representatives of the Islamic religious community in Štip, as well as local Muslims, consider the mosque their holy place of worship, arguing that the edifice possesses all the necessary features of any mosque. The Muslims of Štip are predominantly followers of the Halveti dervish order; they attend mosque and also practice Sunni rituals. Most of them declare themselves to be Turks and they speak Turkish among themselves, though members of the other ethnic and religious groups in the town call them Roma. These Muslims visit the tomb of Medin Baba several times a year and perform the prescribed ritual practices. The turbe is also visited by members of other religious groups, including Sunni Muslims and followers of other dervish orders, as well as some Christians. In 2006, the Muslims in the town reopened the mosque and began to hold religious services there. The local mullah of the only active mosque in Štip claims resolutely that the shrine belongs to the Islamic religious community and that it should be used exclusively by Muslims. He believes that the Christians there have enough churches where they can celebrate Saint Elijah's Day. However, he is willing to concede that Christians could observe the festival of Saint Elija in the mosque's courtyard if it means so much to them. Despite this view, some of the local Muslims call the mosque and the whole tract of land it is situated on 'Sveti Ilija' (St. Elijah). [19]

E. Koneska says that shrines used by members of different religious communities are quite common throughout Macedonia, with most of them are located in western Macedonia, due to its highly ethnically and religiously mixed population. Yet this mixture of ethnicities is a very modern phenomenon dating only from the 1970s

onwards. She continues: "The centuries-old tradition of sharing the same shrines on Macedonian soil in practice refutes the superficial belief in the exclusive nature of ethnic identity and the inevitable separateness of religious communities. On the contrary, these shrines, as well as other similar examples throughout Macedonia, assert the existence of a culture of interethnic and intercultural cohabitation in the best possible manner, and reflect the cherishing of mutual, civilization-based values created through centuries on these territories." [20]

Wonder-Working Icons (*Holy Virgin Prečista, St. John, Bigorski...*)

There is a holy water spring in the Monastery of the Holy Virgin Prečista in Kichevo. Legends tell of a "self-migrating" (or "flying") icon. According to legend, the icon moved from the original site (First from the monastery of Knezino) of the monastery, thereby indicating where the monastery was to be rebuilt for the third time following its destruction during Saracen raids in 1843. It always hung on the same bush under which a holy water spring springs out. In 1873, Abbot Theodosij went to Constantinople to search for a license to build a temple dedicated to Virgin Mary and succeeded to obtain it.

The festival of the patron saint of Holy Virgin Prečista is attended by several thousand people, some of whom come from as far away as Prilep, Bitola, Ohrid, Resen, Gostivar, Tetovo, and Debar. On the night of September 20, Muslims, mainly from Romani families, as well as some Albanians, are present at the festivities. Women crawl through the stone entrance above the spring under the holy icon of the Virgin Mary. There is a widespread belief among ordinary devotees that the western part of the church was actually built for and belongs to the Muslims. The local Christians generally show a great deal of understanding and tolerance toward the presence of Muslims at the shrine. [21]

Continuous usage of holy places

Travel writers, including the famous Turkish travel writer Evliya Čelebija, tell us much about how mosques were erected above churches, either by pulling the church buildings down or changing the upper part. When visiting the city of Bitola, Jovan Hadži Vasiljević interviewed the citizens and thus found out that the Church of St. George had been turned into the Nil mosque at the old Pekmez bazaar, while the Church of Resurrection had been turned into the Hazreti Ishak mosque at Bit Pazar, the Church of the Holy Doctors into Zandandžik mosque, and the Church of the Holy Apostles had been turned into the Hajdar Kadi mosque at the Sheep Bazaar.

The urban landscape of old Turkish Skopje (in 1594 or in the early 17th century) can be reconstructed from an illustration by the German painter from Nurnberg, Jakobus Harevin.

Beneath the late 5th or early 6th century three-nave basilica in Studenčišta, Ohrid, there was a spring of holy water dedicated to St. Elijah, which has since dried up.

The Mosque of Husamedin-Paša outside the town of Štip is venerated both by Christians and Muslims. Built in the early 16th century, the mosque is a typical example

of the Early Constantinople style of Ottoman sacred architecture. It is speculated that it was built on the site of an older Christian church dedicated to Saint Elijah.

Archaeological excavations performed in 1975 in the village of Krupište, near Štip, discovered under the post-Byzantine Church of St. Nicholas (1625) a three nave Early Christian basilica with a narthex, dating from the late 5th, early 6th century. The southern facade includes small fragments built-in of parapet or altar slabs and a fragment with a male figure blessing. This figure, according to Aleksova is Christ. She thinks that the remnants of several objects located near a strong water spring indicate that the basilica belonged to an Early Christian complex, where the cult of water was probably celebrated. [22]

In the course of the civil war in Macedonia in 2001, 12 churches and 8 mosques were either demolished or severely damaged (St. George and the Holy Virgin in Matejče, St. Athanasius in Lešok, an old cult place with a 19th century hospital and school, in the vicinity of which Kiril Pejčinović made his own grave), while among the mosques the most valuable was the Čarši mosque in Prilep, dated to 1475, unique in its two-storey balconies).

Sacred Stones for fertility, St. George and Hercules' knot

Sacred Stones for fertility are dispersed throughout Macedonia, among which the most famous are Govedarov Kamen in Sveti Nikole, Crn Kamen in Veles, and Dupen Kamen in the village of Oreovo. They are visited by members of several religions and even visitors from abroad, who seek help to have children, usually on the day of St. George.

Among Byzantine decorative motifs, the Hercules knot became an iconographic symbol and was not a merely abstract decorative motif. It is related to holy places as a mean of protection, and its position on columns has its origin in Judaism, which may be explained with the famous bronze columns named Jahin and Baez in front of the entrance to Solomon's Temple. Kalavrezu Maxseiner thinks that in the middle Byzantine period, according to the position on the columns, the knot not only preserved its ancient protective power but achieved a new and more precise religious meaning. [23] This was so not only in Christian churches but also in Muslim temples, including the Uly Djami in Bursa erected by Byzantine architects and sculptors in 1399, where 12 large columns decorated with Hercules knots support the 20 domes.

The most frequent position of the knot is usually on the iconostasis and the altar, apse windows and western façade windows (St. George, Staro & Mlado Nagoričino), the baldachin of the ambo, the altar table cloth, and in altar fresco painting (St. George, Kurbinovo, St. Sophia, Ohrid, altar fresco painting with the Lamb of Jesus and the Communion of the Apostles). The latter shows it was a sign of the utmost protection in the early 11th century. Its placement on the iconostasis and apsidal windows tells us it was there to protect the sacral space from the outer world that communicates through this opening.

Healing power of art

Medieval hospitals in Europe were operated by religious communities, and piety and faith also played a key role in caring for the ill. In the case of the hospital at Isenheim, Andree Hayum argues compellingly that Grunewald's Great Altar was created specifically for a hospital context and that its iconographic program was intended to serve as part of this spiritual and psychological healing mission. [24] Thus the relics held in the monastery of St. Naum, known for the healing power of its founder, and the nearby springs, the churches of the Holy Virgin and St. Nicholas of Hospitality in Ohrid, must be related to the hospital and the healing context. Thus some art works in the West, as numerous Byzantine icons, performed miracles. It is ok this way

Tourists and visitors to museums and churches in Macedonia also have the possibility, no matter to which congregation they belong, to achieve blessing and healing while looking at and admiring those precious works of art. Since the talent to make beauty is given only to rare ones by God Himself.

Notes

- [1] Хаџи-Васиљевић (1911).
- [2] This was common in socialist countries (The Archaeological Museum in Sophia uses an old mosque for exhibitions), and even in Turkey, because it would cause a major dispute to use St. Sophia or Kahrie Mosque solely as a church or mosque. So the *modus vivendi* was to turn them into museums or monuments of culture and preserve the interventions of several Sultans. On the other hand, in Greece and Italy where the same site had intensive Early Christian life, during the last decades mostly the Antique building phase has been renovated or conserved, while the other phases are relocated in museums, since the ancient period is the most interesting for tourists and these monuments are the most important evidence of contemporary culture in Europe. For details, see Filipova (2010), 67–83.
- [3] Filipova (2012), 113–130.
- [4] Bowman (2009), 27–52
- [5] Ted Harrison, journalist and publicist. See:
http://www.forteanimes.com/features/articles/5548/holy_waters.html
- [6] Filipova (2001)
- [7] Tanas Vražinovski, *Narodna mitologija na Makedoncite*, kniga I, Skopje - Prilep, 1998, 102–104.
- [8] Tanas Vražinovski, *Makedonska narodna Biblija*, Skopje, 2006, 19.
- [9] Ivan Kotev, *Strumica, Vodata vo narodnata pesna*, 2.
- [10] Walter Burkert, John Raffan, *Greek religion: archaic and classical*, 1991, 77.
- [11] http://www.vatican.va/archive/ccc_css/archive/catechism/p2s2c1a1.htm, (1226)
- [12] Bielenin-Lenczowska (2008).
- [13] Stojanovski (1979), 53–57.
- [14] Грозданов (2004), 8, 69.
- [15] Ibrahimgil, Z. Mehmet (2001), 375–390, 380. Cited by Elizabeta Koneska, *Zaednički svetilišta /Shared Shrines*, http://www.eefc.org/folkloristika_2-2.shtml
- [16] Aleksiev (2001), 37–42.
- [17] Zirojević (1984), 206–308.

- [18] Çelebi (1967).
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Белешки за континуирано мултиконфесионално користење на светилишта, култни места, христијански реликвии и извори со света вода во Република Македонија

РЕЗИМЕ

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*Клучни зборови: цркви, свети места, џамии, светиште, култни места,
христијански реликвии, извори на света вода*

Најголем дел од средновековните и доцно средновековните цркви се изградени врз или во близина на антички храмови, синагоги и domus ecclesiae, ранохристијански цркви или моќни извори на вода. Заедничкото користење на храмовите ги доведува заедно христијаните и муслиманите околу одредени градби, гробници и места каде се верува дека може да добијат духовна заштита. За некои цркви и џамии подигнати врз нив или кај кои горниот дел од црквата е видоизменет дознаваме од патеписци. Еден од најпознатите, Евлија Челебија пишува дека во втората половина од 17 век во Штип имало 24 исламски светилишта, и меѓу нив ја спомнува џамијата на Хусамедин Паша. Светилиштето кое така го нарекуваат муслиманите, а христијаните црква на Св. Илија подеднакво го почитуваат и двете групи и секоја од нив смета дека е нивно. Друг ваков случај е Св. Никола, односно текето на Хадр Баба во Македонски Брод. И манастирот со

црквата на Св Наум крај Охрид го посетуваат муслимани, затоа што веруваат дека над гробот на светецот не е насликан тој, Свети Наум, туку бекташкиот светец Сар Салтук. Верувањето дека има свети камења кои помагаат за плодност е поврзано со голем број камења низ цела Македонија, од кои најпознати се Говедаров Камен кај Свети Николе, Црн Камен кај Велес, Дупен Камен во Ореовец и т.н.

Јован Хаџи Васиљевиќ кога ја посетил Битола ги интервјуирал граѓаните на Битола, и дознал дека Св. Ѓорѓи бил претворен во џамијата Нил, а црквата на Воскресението станала Хазрети Ишак џамија, Светите врачи биле претворени во Занданџик џамијата, Светите Апостоли во џамијата Хајдар Кади.