

## ATHANASIOS ANGELOPOULOS

### THE ARCHDIOCESES OF AHRIS AND PEĆ ON THE BASIS OF PATRIARCHAL ACTA EDITED BY K. DELIKANIS (17th/18th CENTURIES)

The Archdioceses of Ahris and Peć in the last two centuries of their existence are linked with the destinies of the two neighboring people, Greeks and Serbs, in the areas of Macedonia and Old Serbia.

Kallinikos Delikanis' documents come to enlighten some of the folds of these relationships and of the existing spiritual situation in the areas mentioned above<sup>1</sup>.

#### *A. The documents' content*

They amount to 100 and are dated from 1662 up to 1767. Most of them refer to the administrative situation of the Archdioceses of Ahris and Peć; others intimate the spiritual links between these two churches and between them and the Patriarchates of Constantinople and Jerusalem. Some others afford information concerning the educational situation in some of the cities under their jurisdiction.

We shall try to analyse all these facts, briefly, in order to draw some conclusions

#### *B. Administrative situation of the Archdioceses of Ahris and Peć*

The documents referred to the administrative regime of these Archdioceses, are characteristic of the great efforts made by both, themselves and the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople in order to insure their autonomy or their independence.

Only when the survival of these churches became impossible, did their subject, almost simultaneously, to the direct jurisdiction of the Ecumenical Patriarchate. The official correspondence between the Archdioceses of Ahris-Peć and the Ecumenical Patriarchate constitutes the proof of the fact.

1. I. K. Delikanis, *Πατριαρχικών Ἐγγράφων τόμος τρίτος*, Ἐν Κωνσταντινουπόλει 1905, σσ. 781-928.

The documents of the codes of these Archdioceses speak about the «most holy Archdiocese of the first Ioustiniani, of Ahris and of all Bulgaria, Serbia, Albania, Second Macedonia, Pontus West» or «of Peć and all Serbia» or «Archdiocese of Ipec, Bulgaria, and all Serbia», and to the fame «Archbishop of Bulgaria, Serbia, Dalmatia maritime, Pontus West and all Illyria»<sup>2</sup>.

In spite of all these, in some interior Acta of the Archdiocese of Ahris, as for example in the memorandums concerning the elections of Archbishops and Metropolitans, the name «Patriarch» is mentioned. For example in the «memorandum of Ahris Ignatius, when Gregorius resigned» there is a reference to «our Archbishop and Patriarch of all Bulgaria and of the first Ioustiniani, Ahris...1963»<sup>3</sup>.

Likewise in the «Confession in ordination of a bishop», the elected bishop says: «In addition I promise all the privileges that this Patriarchal throne of the first Ioustiniani, Ahris possesses...»<sup>4</sup>.

Moreover in the «Thanksgiving of Ahris Zosimas and Patriarch», the same says «to the supreme and Patriarchal throne of the first Ioustiniani Ahris» and «Patriarchate that fell to me»<sup>5</sup>.

2. *Ibid.*, p. 911: «Τίτλος τοῦ Ἀρχιεπισκόπου Ἰπεκίου. Μακαριώτατε καὶ θεοσεβέστατε Ἀρχιεπίσκοπε Ἰπεκίου, Βουλγαρίας καὶ πάσης Σερβίας. Φήμη τοῦ αὐτοῦ. Τοῦ μακαριωτάτου Ἀρχιεπισκόπου Βουλγαρίας, Σερβίας, Δαλματίας παραθαλασσίας, Πόντου Δυτικοῦ καὶ πάσης Ἰλλυρίας ἢ οὕτω Σερβίας, Βουλγαρίας, Δαλματίας, Δραγωνίας παραθαλασσίας καὶ πέραν Δουνάβεως».

3. *Ibid.*, pp. 797-798: «Τῆς ἀγιωτάτης Ἀρχιεπισκοπῆς τῆς Α' Ἰουστινιανῆς Ἀχριδῶν ἄνευ προστάτου καὶ ποιμένος ἐναπομεινάσης... ἡμεῖς δὲ οἱ ἐν τῷ κλίματι τῆς ἀγιωτάτης ταύτης Ἀρχιεπισκοπῆς διατελοῦντες ὑποκείμενοι Ἀρχιερεῖς... ἐψηφίσαμεν καὶ κανονικῶς μετεθέσαμεν ἐνθρονίσαντες Ἀρχιεπίσκοπον καὶ Πατριάρχη ἡμῶν πάσης Βουλγαρίας καὶ τῆς Α' Ἰουστινιανῆς Ἀχριδῶν καὶ τῶν λοιπῶν ἔτει σωτηρίῳ 1693 Αὐγούστου 13 Ἰνδικτ. Α †Καστορίας Δαυίδ, †Δυρραχίου Δανιήλ, †Πρεσπῶν Παρθένος, †Κορυτζᾶς Μακάριος, †Γκόρας Ἀρσένιος, †Κιτιαίων πόλεως Μητροπολίτης καὶ Τοποτηρητῆς Ἀχριδῶν Κοσμάς».

4. *Ibid.*, pp. 799-800: «...ἐπόμενος ἔσομαι τῆς Καθολικῆς καὶ Ἀποστολικῆς Ἐκκλησίας καὶ τῷ Μακαριωτάτῳ μοι Αὐθέντῃ καὶ Δεσπότῃ κ.κ. Ἰγνατίῳ τῆς Α' Ἰουστινιανῆς Ἀχριδῶν καὶ πάσης Βουλγαρίας, Ἀλβανίας καὶ τῶν λοιπῶν Πατριάρχῃ σὺν τῇ ὑπερτελεστάτῃ αὐτοῦ ἀγίᾳ Συνόδῳ... Πρὸς τοῦτοις ὑπισχνούμαι τὸ κατὰ δύνάμιν κατ' ἔτος τέλος πρὸς σύστασιν καὶ βοήθειαν τῆς Μεγάλῃς Ἐκκλησίας. Ἐτι δὲ ὑπόσχομαι ἅπερ κέκτηται προνόμια ὁ πατριαρχικὸς οὗτος θρόνος τῆς Α' Ἰουστινιανῆς Ἀχριδῶν...».

5. *Ibid.*, pp. 804-805: «Εὐχαριστία Ἀχριδῶν Ζωσιμᾷ †Πατριάρχῃς. Ἐπειδὴ ἐκ Θεοῦ ὀδηγηθεῖσα ἢ θεία καὶ ὑπερτελεστάτη Σύνοδος τῶν Ἱερωτάτων Μητροπολιτῶν καὶ θεοφιλεστάτων ἐπισκόπων... τῆς καθ' ἡμᾶς ἀγιωτάτης Ἀρχιεπισκοπῆς τῆς Α' Ἰουστινιανῆς Ἀχριδῶν... ἐμβιβάσαι με εἰς τὸν ὑπέρτατον καὶ Πατριαρχικὸν θρόνον τῆς Α' Ἰουστινιανῆς Ἀχριδῶν... καὶ κυβερνᾶν τὸ τοῦ Χριστοῦ λογικὸν ποιμνιον καὶ τὴν θεόθεν λαχοῦσαν μοι Πατριαρχίαν...».

Elsewhere, Zosimos addresses «Zosimas by the grace of God Archbishop of the first Ioustiniani, Ahris, Serbia, Bulgaria, Albanitia, Second Macedonia and Patriarch of the rest»<sup>6</sup>.

The same is noticed from the side of the Serbian Archbishops also. For example, Archbishop Arsenius, on the emblem of the Archdiocese of Peć says: «Arsenius by the grace of God Archbishop of Peć and all Serbia, Bulgaria, Maritime, Dalmatia, Bosnia, Croatia, Banat, Temisvar, Danube, and all Illyria Patriarch»<sup>7</sup>.

These appeals of the Patriarchal honor don't possess any canonical support, they are desirable domestic trends without any canonical reflection. For this reason in a «Special Encyclical of the Ecumenical Patriarch Kallinikos B'» at 1693, we have a reference to the «autonomous Archbishops who are they of Ahris, of Cyprus, of Iberia and of Peć», due to an usurpation of the «patriarchal» surname, by the former Archbishop of Ahris Meletios in Russia<sup>8</sup>.

### C. Spiritual relations

In addition to the administrative situation, the spiritual links between these two Churches deserve to be mentioned as well. Our documents mention characteristically the great spreading of the honorary cult of the Serbian Saint John Vladimir in Macedonia and Epirus, where mainly the Archdiocese of Ahris was geographically extended.

6. *Ibid.*, p. 837: «Ζωσιμᾶς ἐλέω Θεοῦ Ἀρχιεπίσκοπος τῆς Α΄ Ἰουστινιανῆς, Ἀχρειδῶν, Σερβίας, Βουλγαρίας, Ἀλβανιτίας Β΄, Μακεδονίας καὶ τῶν λοιπῶν Πατριάρχης... 1707».

7. See, Sv. Dušanić, *Dve beleške patrijarha Arsenija IV u letopisu Pečkog Manastira*, Beograd 1980, p. 6: «Arsenij božieju milostiju pravoslavnij arhiepi-skop Pekskij i vseja Serbij, Bolgarij, Pomorija, Dalmacij, Bosnii, Horvatskoj, Banata, Temišvarskago, oboj poljdunaja i cjelago Ilirika Patriarh AΨME».

8. Delikanis, *Ibid.*, pp. 795-796: «Καλλινίκου Β΄ Περὶ τῶν ἐν τῷ Ἱεραρχικῷ τῆς Καθολικῆς καὶ Ἀποστολικῆς Ἐκκλησίας τάγματι Πατριαρχῶν... Τοὺς δ' αὐτονόμους ἀρχιεπισκόπους οἵτινες εἰσιν ὁ Ἀχρειδῶν, καὶ ὁ Κύπρου, καὶ ὁ τῆς Ἰβηρίας, καὶ ὁ Πεκίου, κατὰ διαφόρους καιροὺς, ἐπ' αἰτίας τισὶ φιλοτιμήσαντα πῆ μὲν βασιλέων σπουδάσματα πῆ δὲ καὶ Συνοδικαὶ διασκέψεις ἰδίαις ἀρεσκείαις, ἀπλῶς τοὺς τοιούτους Ἀρχιεπισκόπους ἐποίησαν καὶ ὠνόμασαν, καὶ τοῦτο μόνον ἔχουσι ὄνομα καὶ οὕτω λέγονται καὶ οὕτω γράφονται, δηλονότι ἀρχιεπίσκοποι· τῆς δὲ Πατριαρχικῆς ὀνομασίας ξένοι παντελῶς ὑπάρχουσι καὶ ἀμέτοχοι, καὶ μήτε ἐν τοῖς διπτύχοις ἔχουσι χώραν, μήτε τῷ Πατριαρχικῷ καταλόγῳ συντάσσονται». See also Delikanis, *Ibid.*, pp. 929-1058, Ἱστορικαὶ Σημειώσεις περὶ τῆς Ἀρχιεπισκοπῆς Ἀχρειδῶν.

In the area of Elvasan-Neokastron, during that particular period, there was a monastery of Saint John Vladimir, known as fragmant, miraculous and great martyr. The honorary cult of Saint John Vladimir is justified here, because the Saint was murdered by the Bulgarians the moment he has coming out of the church, in Prespa, around 1016<sup>9</sup>.

The particular spiritual links between the Archdiocese of Peć and the Patriarchate of Jerusalem and Constantinople have to be mentioned as well. Three documents are particularly interesting.

One of them is that of the Patriarch of Jerusalem Dositheos at 1706, addressed to the former Archbishop of Peć Arsenios, in which he recommends the preservation of the unity of the Archdiocese of Peć, in order to prevent the infiltration of papacy among the Orthodox Serbs, so that the same will not happen in Serbia as it occurred in Croatia, Calabria and Erdelion<sup>10</sup>.

Of the same content is also the letter of the Ecumenical Patriarch Athanasios E' to the metropolitans of Batzika and Fruska at 1709 to support the unity of the Archdiocese of Peć, being under its canonical jurisdiction<sup>11</sup>.

Finally, remarkable is the document of the Ecumenical Patriarch

9. *Ibid.*, pp. 866-868.

10. *Ibid.*, pp. 905-910. «Φανερόν δὲ ὅτι ἡ ἐνότης τῶν Ἀρχιερέων δὲν εἶναι δυνατὸν νὰ φυλαχθῆ χωρὶς τοῦ συνδέσμου τῆς εἰρήνης, ὅστις ἐστίν, ὡς εἴρηται, ὁ ἐκάστης διοικήσεως θρόνος, εἴτε Πατριαρχικός, εἴτε Ἀρχιεπισκοπικός. Καὶ ἐκ τούναντιον, ὅσοι Ἀρχιερεῖς ἐχωρίσθησαν μετὰ τῶν κατ' αὐτοὺς ἐπαρχιῶν ἀπὸ τῶν προεδρευόντων τῆς διοικήσεως ἐκάστου θρόνου, κατ' ὀλίγον ἐξέκλιναν τῆς εὐσεβείας, καὶ τέλος ἐκατήντησαν εἰς τὰς πονηρὰς ἐκκλησίας τῶν αἰρετικῶν, καθὼς εἶναι μερικοὶ ἐπίσκοποι εἰς τὴν Ἰαβρῆτιαν καὶ Καλαβρίαν καὶ Ἐρδελίαν ὅπου, ξεχωρισθέντες τῶν κατ' αὐτοὺς προεδρευόντων θρόνων, ὑπέπεσον εἰς τὸν παπισμὸν».

11. *Ibid.*, pp. 912-915: «Ἱερώτατοι μητροπολίται Φρούσικας καὶ Μπάτζικας οἱ ὑποκειμενοὶ τῷ ἁγιωτάτῳ θρόνῳ Πεκίου, ἐν ἁγίῳ Πνεύματι ἀγαπητοὶ ἀδελφοὶ καὶ συλλειτουργοὶ ἐντιμότατοι κληρικοὶ, ὁσιώτατοι καθηγούμενοι τῶν ἱερῶν καὶ σεβασμιῶν μοναστηρίων, εὐλαβέστατοι ἱερεῖς ἐνδοξότατοι γενεράλιδες, κνέζιδες καὶ καπετανεῖοι χρήσιμοι ἄρχοντες καὶ πραγματευταὶ καὶ λοιποὶ εὐλογημένοι χριστιανοὶ τῶν αὐτῶν ἐπαρχιῶν... ἐντελλόμεθα ὑμῖν καὶ πᾶσιν τοῖς αὐτόθι χριστιανοῖς, ἵνα ἀποτινάξαντες ἀφ' ὑμῶν τὴν μέχρι τοῦ νῦν ἀταξίαν, ἀσύμφορον καὶ ἐπιβλαβῆ οὖσαν ὡς ἀντικειμένην τοῖς ἱεροῖς κανόσι καὶ νόμοις, δελεῆτε καὶ αὐθις τὴν προτέραν ἔνομον καὶ κανονικὴν, καὶ διὰ ταῦτα θεάρεστον καὶ ἐπαινετὴν, εὐπειθειαν καὶ ὑποταγὴν, ἣν εἶχον ἐξ ἀρχῆς οἱ αὐτόθι ἄρχιερεῖς πρὸς τὸν κατὰ καιροὺς ἀρχιεπίσκοπον Πεκίου κύρ Καλίνικον... καὶ μνημονεῦητε τοῦ κανονικοῦ αὐτοῦ ὀνόματος ἐν ταῖς ἱεραῖς τελεταῖς καὶ ἀκολουθίαις καὶ τιμᾶτε, καὶ ἀγαπᾶτε, καὶ διευλαβεῖσθε τὴν αὐτοῦ μακαριότητα...».

Jeremias, in which is emphasized the orthodox spirit of the Archdiocese of Peć and of the Serbs under this Church. «Ἐπειδὴ τοιγαροῦν καὶ τινες τῶν ἑτεροδόξων, βουλόμενοι ἐξαπατῆσαι τοὺς ἀπλουστέρους ἡμῶν τῶν ὀρθοδόξων ἀνατολικῶν χριστιανῶν, συκοφαντίαν καὶ κατηγορίαν ψευδεπίπλαστον, καὶ ὅλως ἐξω τῶν θυρῶν τῆς ἀληθείας, καὶ πάντῃ ἀνάρμοστον κατὰ τῆς ἱεραῆς Ἐκκλησίας τῆς ἀγιωτάτης ἀρχιεπισκοπῆς Πεκίου καὶ τῶν ταύτης ἀρχιερέων ἐξήνεγκαν, ὅτι δηλαδὴ οὐκ ἔχουσι τὸ φρόνημα τῆς καθ' ἡμᾶς ἀγίας τοῦ Χριστοῦ Ἐκκλησίας, οὔτε ὁμόφρονες καὶ ὁμόδοξοι ἡμῖν τυγχάνουσιν, ὅπερ συκοφαντία ἐστὶ προφανής, καὶ ματαιολογία διάκονος καὶ ἀσύστατος πρὸς ἐξαπάτην τῶν ἀπλουστέρων, ὡς εἴρηται, ἐπινοηθεῖσα· ἡμεῖς γὰρ τὴν Ἐκκλησίαν τῆς ἀρχιεπισκοπῆς Πεκίου, καὶ τὸν ταύτης ἀρχιεπίσκοπον, καὶ τοὺς ἐν αὐτῇ τελούντας ἀρχιερεῖς μετὰ καὶ τῶν ὑπ' αὐτοὺς Χριστιανῶν Σέρβων ὁμόφρονες ἡμῖν οἶδαμεν, φρονούντας τε καὶ δοξάζοντας, ὡς ἀληθῶς, ὅσα ἡ καθ' ἡμᾶς Ἀνατολικὴ Ἐκκλησία φρονεῖ καὶ δοξάζει, τὰ ὅσα δὲ τινες λέγουσι κατ' αὐτῶν καὶ διαβάλλουσι τούτους, ὡς ἑτερόφρονες, συκοφανταί εἰσι ψευδεῖς, καὶ κατηγορίαι μηδαμῶς ἀληθεύουσαι... δηλοποιούμεν... καὶ διαβεβαιούμεν, ὅτι ἡ Ἐκκλησία τῆς ἀγιωτάτης ἀρχιεπισκοπῆς Πεκίου, ὃ τε ἀρχιεπίσκοπος ταύτης, καὶ οἱ ἐν αὐτῇ τελούντες ἀρχιερεῖς, μετὰ τῶν ὑπ' αὐτοὺς χριστιανῶν Σέρβων, ἄνωθεν καὶ ἐξ ἀρχῆς ὑπάρχουσι ὁμόφρονες, καὶ ὁμόδοξοι ἡμῖν, καὶ ἔχουσι τὸ ἡμέτερον ὀρθόδοξον φρόνημα τῆς καθ' ἡμᾶς Ἀνατολικῆς Ἐκκλησίας, καὶ τὴν ὁμολογίαν τῆς Ὀρθοδόξου ἡμῶν πίστεως ὁμολογοῦσι καὶ πιστεύουσι κατὰ πάντα, ὡς καὶ ἡμεῖς. Ἐνθεν τοι καὶ γινώσκοντες αὐτοὺς πάντας ὀρθοδόξους, φρονούντάς τε καὶ δοξάζοντας καὶ στέργοντας πάντα τὰ τῆς καθ' ἡμᾶς Ἀνατολικῆς Ἐκκλησίας δόγματα καὶ διδάγματα, τιμᾶτε καὶ ἀγαπᾶτε αὐτούς, καὶ διευλαβεῖσθε κατὰ τὸ πρέπον καὶ δίκαιον, μηδαμῶς προσέχοντες, ἢ πιστεύοντες ταῖς κατὰ τούτων ἔρεσχελίαις, συκοφαντίαις, καὶ κατηγορίαις τῶν ἑτεροδόξων...»<sup>12</sup>.

#### D. Conclusions

1. The two Archdioceses of Ahris and Peć followed the historical course of their people. This course is parallel and common. Administratively, these two churches preserved almost the same autonomy and independence. Whenever they faced administrative problems and needed any assistance, they addressed the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople, which evidently acted in such a way, so that their independence be preserved. The reasons at the subjection of these two

12. *Ibid.*, pp. 915-917.

Archdioceses to the Ecumenical Patriarchate at 1766 and 1767 are found within them and outside the real intentions of the Mother Great Church.

2. Between the two bordering Archdioceses no administrative problems existed, during that period. On the contrary, in both these thrones, Serb and Greek archbishops changed, according to the canonical principle about local and not national and racial churches; their population was mixed (Greeks, Serbs and Bulgarians).

3. The trends of some Archbishops to be called «patriarchs» had an internal character and not an interorthodox canonical one; they were called patriarchs *ψιλῶ ὀνόματι*. The official patriarchal documents never mention them as «patriarchs» but as «Archbishops». Therefore the aspects of some modern church historians to support today the «independence» of the metropolitan See of Skopje<sup>13</sup>, connecting it with the administrative regime of the shining past of Archdiocese of Ahris, are considered by our sources side as inaccurate.

4. The spiritual links between the two churches are developed through the popular honorary cult of the local Serbian Saint John Vladimir, who was very popular and beloved saint among the Greek and Serbian population of the same Churches of Ahris and Peć. Reminders of this cult are preserved till today.

5. Finally, particular spiritual and administrative links are developed between these two churches and the Patriarchates of Constantinople and Jerusalem. These two Patriarchates contribute in various ways as guardians, to the autonomy of these churches and through this to the strengthening of the orthodox faith of the Greeks and Serbians, which was threatened by the papal propaganda and especially by the Ounia, which ravaged the Balkans during those years.

13. See also 'Αθ. 'Αγγελοπούλου, «Τὸ ἐκκλησιαστικὸν καθεστῶς τῶν μητροπόλεων τῆς Βορείου Μακεδονίας ἀπὸ τοῦ 1913 μέχρι σήμερον», *Μακεδονικά* 15(1975) 28-44.