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*St. Clement of Ohrid, Skopje*

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# **ROAD TO THE RESTORATION OF THE OHRID ARCHBISHOPRIC**

**By Dejan Borisov**

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## **ABSTRACT**

The restoration of the abolished Ohrid Archbishopric did not begin with the processes at the end of the World War II, but immediately after its abolition in the eighteenth century. The restoration of the Ohrid Archbishopric as the Macedonian Orthodox Church is in full accordance with the church tradition and practices established by the other local Orthodox churches in the process of obtaining their autocephaly during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

Key words: Ohrid Archbishopric, Metropolitan Theodosius (Gologanov), Bulgarian Exarchate, Constantinople Patriarchate, Autocephalous United Orthodox Church of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes, autocephaly.

## **1. The Abolition of the Ohrid Archbishopric**

### **1.1. Inter-church Relations of the High Clergy of the Ohrid Archbishopric**

State reforms, the economic growth of the population, as well as the provision of reliable financial inflow in the seventeenth century created conditions for a positive life and activity of the Ohrid Archbishopric within the Ottoman Empire, but the internal church conditions influenced the decline of the authority of the Archbishopric. As in previous centuries, during the seventeenth century, after some bishops transferred from the Constantinopolitan Patriarchate, they came under the jurisdiction of the Ohrid Archbishopric, but most of these bishops changed their jurisdiction due to the increase of their personal property. Furthermore, their behavior towards the flock was not very different from that of the local Turkish tax collectors and clerks, and often these bishops were not appointed according to the traditional church practices and

canons, but they were given to them with intrigues and bribes by the Turkish authorities. Hence the composition of the Synod of the Ohrid Archbishopric was changed, which in turn, would lead some decisions to be made in the domain of the Archbishopric in Istanbul.

After the resignation of the Archbishop of Ohrid, Arsenios, the Synod of the Constantinople Patriarchate addressed a request to *Divan-ı Hümâyûn* (Imperial Council of the Ottoman Empire) to issue a charter (*berat*) for the abolition of the Ohrid Archbishopric, asking to erase this church from all state records, not to accept the requests for its renewal, and for the dioceses of the Ohrid Archbishopric to be placed under their jurisdiction. In return, it promised to pay taxes for those dioceses. Sultan Mustafa III accepted this plea.

## **1.2. Consequences of the Resignation of Arsenios, the Archbishop of Ohrid**

The Macedonian population considers St. Clement of Ohrid as the pillar of the Ohrid Archbishopric, and his cult is respected everywhere within its borders. Although the population complained about the abuse of the high clergy, it helped and treasured the Ohrid Archbishopric since during the time of the Bulgarian and Serbian domination over the Macedonian territories, where it was located in the Turkish, Islamic state, serving as its symbol, for it was the institution around which they gathered and with which they identified themselves as Macedonian Slavs—not as Bulgarians, Serbs, or Greeks. The Ohrid Archbishopric throughout all the centuries of its existence was not just an ecclesiastical institution, but for the Macedonians, it was also a cultural, traditional and national connective tissue.

Soon after the abolition of the Ohrid Archbishopric, the Constantinopolitan Patriarchate changed the indigenous bishops and began the implementation of a denationalization and assimilation policy on the Macedonian population. The new bishops most often did not even

know the language of the flock they had to guide. The liturgical services were performed in the Greek language incomprehensible to the majority of the Macedonian population, and the schools that operated within the churches and monasteries<sup>1</sup> used the Greek instead of the Macedonian language. It was forbidden to use books in the church-Slavic language; they were collected and destroyed.<sup>2</sup>

## **2. The Church in the Macedonian Dioceses in the Nineteenth Century**

### **2.1. Church-school Municipalities and the Constantinopolitan Patriarchate**

After the abolition of the Ohrid Archbishopric, the people realized that if they leave the Church in the hands of the high clergy, they would lose it and could not be identified with it. Thus, the people began to organize themselves in order to keep and preserve the visible manifestations of the Church in the field, that is, church properties and facilities, as well as the local customs and practices. As a result of this self-organization in guilds, which were the largest donors to the Archbishopric, economic and social associations appeared which dealt with ecclesiastical, but also with educational matters. This part of guilds is known as a church-school municipality. The oldest church-school municipality was founded in 1758 in Ohrid.<sup>3</sup> At the

<sup>1</sup> Dejan Borisov, deacon, *The dual ecclesiastical jurisdiction over the eparchy of Skopje in the XIX century and the metropolitan of Skopje Theodosius*, Dessertatio ad Doctoratum, Pontificium Institutum Orientale, Romae 2015, notes 3, 50.

<sup>2</sup> in 1792 Metropolitan of Skopje Zacharius ordered the destruction of Slavic manuscripts from Markov Monastery and the same was done by the abbot of St. Naum Monastery in Ohrid; Metropolitan Gerasim ordered all Slavic monuments and manuscripts from the Monastery Treskavec in Prilep to be destroyed; On July 15, 1850, Naum Marin in Struga, on the order of the Metropolitan Dionysius burnt all Slavic books and manuscripts from the city libraries. Трајановски Александар, “Некои моменти од борбите на македонскиот народ за самостојна црква до 1870 година“, *Весник на Македонската православна црква*, год. XVIII, бр. 3, Скопје 1876, 88-89; Славко Димевски, *Школството, просветата и културата во Македонија во времето на преродбата*, Скопје 1979, 276; Димевски, *За развојот на македонската национална мисла до создавањето на ТМРО*, Скопје 1980, 49-50; Јован Белчовски, *Автокефалноста на Македонската православна црква*, Скопје 1990, 87-88; Borisov, *The dual ecclesiastical jurisdiction over the eparchy of Skopje...*, note 9, 52.

<sup>3</sup> Димевски, *Црковна историја на македонскиот народ*, Скопје 1965, 92-97; Доне Илиевски, *Автокефалноста на Македонската православна црква*, Скопје 1972, 73-74; Белчовски, *Автокефалноста на*

beginning, these church-school municipalities recognized the jurisdiction of the Constantinopolitan Patriarchate and thereby had their representatives in the *Majlis*, but with the growth of their economic power, they became independent and began to oppose the bishops. For example, one can point out the action of the Skopje church-school municipality that opposed the Metropolitan Anthym in 1799, and during the period from 1823 to 1833, under the influence of this municipality, the Constantinopolitan Patriarchate had to replace five bishops. The demands of the population were for indigenous high clergy, services in Church Slavonic language, epitropes by choice of the population, and that the collection of the bishop's tax was to be controlled by representatives of the population.<sup>4</sup> In 1868, Paisios was installed as the Metropolitan of Skopje, but he was a person unworthy of episcopal dignity, and the population reacted so that on December 4 to November 21, 1869 at the church-people's council in Skopje, "the church-school municipality, together with the indigenous lower clergy and monastics unilaterally rejected the jurisdiction of the Constantinople Patriarchate," and proclaimed an independent church organization, but without high clergy.<sup>5</sup> The population preferred to be in schisms rather than to continue to be subjected to the policies of the Constantinopolitan Patriarchate.

The Skopje church-school municipality was not an isolated case, since this also happened in Strumica (1832), in Serrez and Melnik (1839), in Thessaloniki and Voden (1842, 1848), in Ohrid and Prespa (1843-1851), in Drama (1850), and in Veles (1855), so by late 1869, almost all Macedonian church-school municipalities rejected the jurisdiction of the Constantinopolitan Patriarchate.

*Македонската православна црква...*, 97; Borisov, *The dual ecclesiastical jurisdiction over the eparchy of Skopje...*, 55.

<sup>4</sup> Васил Кънчов, *Избрани произведения., Град Скопие, Сегашното и недавното. Минало на град Велес. Македонија. Етнографија и статистика.*, Том втори, София 1970, 156 - 157.

<sup>5</sup> Borisov, *The dual ecclesiastical jurisdiction over the eparchy of Skopje...*, 66.

Before the final rejection of the jurisdiction of the Patriarchate of Constantinople, the Macedonian population, as a means of achieving its goals, also used the propaganda of the Roman Catholic Church, that is, it threatened to accept Roman Catholicism if the Constantinopolitan Patriarchate did not accept its demands. The transition from Orthodoxy to Roman Catholicism lasted until the moment when the Patriarchate of Constantinople accepted the demands of the population, or at least made a slight shift in that direction.<sup>6</sup>

After 1870, there was an even greater entanglement of the church affairs in Macedonia, since the Turkish government allowed the formation of a Bulgarian Exarchate which claimed to have Macedonian dioceses under its jurisdiction.

## **2.2. Church-school Municipalities and the Bulgarian Exarchate**

In parallel with the process of restoration of the Ohrid Archbishopric, there was a process of gaining ecclesiastical independence from the Constantinopolitan Patriarchate among the Macedonians and the Bulgarians, but the difference was that the Bulgarians had a native high clergy and strong representatives at the Sublime Porte. As a consequence of this, the Macedonian church-school municipalities joined the Bulgarian ones in opposing the Constantinopolitan Patriarchate. A clear explanation is given by the Serbian propagandist, Tihomir Doratević Georgevitch, who writes:

When the Russians entered the lists against the Uniate movement the Serbs were left with but one way of attaining emancipation from the Greeks, and that was to join the Bulgarian movement. This step did not imply Bulgarization, but only a joint struggle against the Greeks for the use of the Slav tongue in the Church [...] That the struggle, which the Macedonians had from the very first waged against

<sup>6</sup> For more see: Димевски, *Римокатоличката пропаганда и унијатското движење во Македонија во втората половина на 19 век сè до 1914 година*, Скопје 1962; Димевски, *Македонската борба за црковна и национална самостојност во XIX век (Унијатското движење)*, Скопје 1988; Атанас Лажовски, *Римокатоличката и протестантската пропаганда на Балканот и во Македонија, во втората половина на XIX и почетокот на XX век*, Манастир „Свети Атанасиј Велики“ Журче, Демир Хисар, 2010.

the Greeks, did not bear a Bulgarian character, nor prove that the Macedonians wished to become Bulgars, is best shown by the adherence of the Roumanians of Macedonia to the Bulgarian cause.<sup>7</sup>

The creation of the Bulgarian Exarchate further complicated the processes of the restoration of the Ohrid Archbishopric by the Macedonian population, since double jurisdiction emerged in Macedonia. The Turkish authorities, using the Ferman of 1870, did not divide the territory, nor the property between the two churches, but they divided only the population:

A Turkish commission was sent down from Constantinople, to which the inhabitants had to declare whether they acknowledged the Exarchate or not. This commission, too, did much to further the Bulgarian cause in Macedonia. It used considerable pressure in order to induce the inhabitants to declare themselves for the Bulgarian Exarchate. It openly threatened that all Macedonians who should refuse to join the Bulgarians would be denounced as agents of Greece and Serbia. By these means the necessary majority was obtained and in 1872 Bulgarian bishops were duly installed in the dioceses of Ochrida and Skoplje [...] a whole army of priests and teachers was sent from Bulgaria to Macedonia. All written matter emanating from the Church and the denominational school communities became Bulgarian [...] Persons who could not write were entered in the osmanlie (papers giving a person's name, surname, religion, nationality, and occupation, and with which every Turkish subject must be provided) as Bulgarians by the Bulgarian priests and schoolmasters. On the strength of these papers the Macedonians were then entered in the official registers as Bulgarians. Thus Macedonia began gradually to be outwardly Bulgarized.<sup>8</sup>

An attempt to restore the Ohrid Archbishopric took place on December 28, 1873 when representatives of the Thessalonica, Voden, Strumica, Dojran, Kukush and Maleshevo church-school municipalities met in Thessalonica and decided to accept a union with the Roman Catholic Church if the Ohrid Archbishopric was restored, but this request was not accepted by Rome.

Petko R. Slavejkov, who was sent in January 1874 by the Bulgarian Exarch Antim and the Russian diplomat, Ignatiev, to determine the situation in Macedonia testified of the revolt of

<sup>7</sup> Tihomir R. Georgevitch, *Macedonia*, London 1918, 147-148.

<sup>8</sup> Georgevitch, *Macedonia*, 149-150.

the imposed Bulgarian jurisdiction: “if the Macedonians are not given their own church, the Uniate movement will appear not only in Thessalonica, Kukush, Dojran, Strumica, Maleshevo, Melnik, Drama and Voden but also in the Veles and Skopje Diocese.”<sup>9</sup>

### **2.3. The Attempt to Restore the Ohrid Archbishopric by Metropolitan of Skopje Theodosius (Gologanov)**

During the nineteenth century, there were several attempts of the Macedonian church-school municipalities to restore the Ohrid Archbishopric, but they were too limited to be successful, and they did not have the support of any high clergy. Metropolitan Theodosius (Gologanov) was the first bishop who tried to restore the Ohrid Archbishopric. He was elected as the Exarchate Metropolitan of Skopje in 1885,<sup>10</sup> but the Turkish authorities allowed him to visit his diocese only on March 27, 1890.<sup>11</sup>

The Serbian, Greek, and Bulgarian governments were afraid of the arrival of this metropolitan in Skopje, since his views on the restoration of the Ohrid Archbishopric were known to everyone even before he came to Skopje. For this purpose, Metropolitan Theodosius cooperated with the Sofia-based student "Macedonian Committee," which fought for recognition of the identity of the Macedonian people, and with Spase Igumanov, a priest from Prilep who tried to register the "Macedonian Orthodox Society."<sup>12</sup>

<sup>9</sup> Александар Трајановски, *Возобновување на Охридската архиепископија како Македонска православна црква и нејзиниот шематизам*, Скопје 2008, 55-56.

<sup>10</sup> О. М. и Б., *Погледъ върху дѣятелността на Българската Екзархия. 1877-1902. г. (По поводъ на 25-годишния юбилей на Н. Блаженство Българския Екзархъ Йосифа I.)*, Leipzig 1902, 24; Михаил Арнаудов, *Екзарх Йосиф и българската културна борба след създаването на Екзархията (1870-1915)*, Т. 1., София 1940, 564.

<sup>11</sup> Архив на СИП - Београд. П-одд. Фонд „М“ и „Д“ – 1890/Т-9. Пов. №. 30, 27 март 1890; Димевски, *Митрополитот скопски Теодосиј – Живот и дејност – (1846-1926)*, Скопје 1966, 74.

<sup>12</sup> Архив на СИП, ПП-одд. „Т“, ред 17 (1891), Препис писама и бекежака м. Теодосија, 48; Државни архив СРС, Фонд: Министерството просвете, Ф. XXXII-201/1887; Државни архив СРС, Фонд: Министерството просвете, Ф. XXXII-202/1887; Димевски Славко, *Митрополитот скопски Теодосиј...*, 63-64.

Although the Bulgarian government was also familiar with the views of the Metropolitan Theodosius for the restoration of the Ohrid Archbishopric, it nevertheless supported his appointment in Skopje, because it was afraid of losing the episcopal charter (*berat*) for the Skopje Diocese, which at that time was the largest. The governments of Great Britain, Austria, Italy, and Germany also supported his appointment in Skopje.<sup>13</sup> Although he formally declared loyalty to the Bulgarian Exarchate, in practice, on the third day of his arrival, he began to replace directors of the schools loyal to the Bulgarian Exarchate.<sup>14</sup>

In September 1890, Metropolitan Theodosius went around the Skopje Diocese, and the people manifested their support in the town of Shtip where 20,000 people from Shtip, Veles, Tikvesh, Radovish, Strumica, and Maleshevia welcomed him.<sup>15</sup> In Shtip, Metropolitan Theodosius convened a People's Assembly at which the leaders of the church-school were appointed and the school principals in Shtip and Novo Selo were changed; this also happened in Kochani and Sveti Nikole. Metropolitan Theodosius also visited Kumanovo where the people met him with flowers in the streets.<sup>16</sup> Then he visited Tetovo, where he was so warmly welcomed that some Muslims said even if the Sultan himself had arrived, he would not be

<sup>13</sup> “The Sultan’s Concessions To The Bulgarian Government, Sofia , 21 July”, *The Times*, 26 July 1890, London (online archive, 12.03.2012); Димевски, *Црковна историја на македонскиот народ*, Скопје 1965, 148; Лажовски, *Римокатоличката и протестантската пропаганда на Балканот...*, 173.

<sup>14</sup> ЦДА – Софија, Фонд №. 176, оп. 1, а.е. 596, л. 3, М. Теодосиј до егзархот, №. 21, 10 август 1890; ЦДА – Софија, Фонд №. 176, оп. 1, а.е. 596, л. 4, М. Теодосиј до егзархот, телеграма, 10 август 1890; ЦДА – Софија, Фонд №. 176, оп. 1, а.е. 596, л. 5, М. Теодосиј до егзархот, №. 22, 11 август 1890; ЦДА – Софија, Фонд №. 176, оп. 1, а.е. 596, л. 6, М. Теодосиј до егзархот, №. 23, 12 август 1890;<sup>14</sup> ЦДА – Софија, Фонд №. 176, оп. 1, а.е. 596, л. 7-12, М. Теодосиј до егзархот, №. 24, 11 август 1890; ЦДА – Софија, Фонд №. 176, оп. 1, а.е. 596, л. 13-19, М. Теодосиј до егзархот, №. 25, 18 август 1890; ЦДА – Софија, Фонд №. 176, оп. 1, а.е. 596, л. 20-26, Егзархот до м. Теодосиј, №. 1123, 18 август 1890; ЦДА – Софија, Фонд №. 176, оп. 1, а.е. 596, л. 27, М. Теодосиј до егзархот, №. 27, 21 август 1890; Димевски Славко, *Митрополитот скопски Теодосиј...*, 84-89; Илиевски, *Автокефалноста на Македонската православна црква*, 81.

<sup>15</sup> Весник „Новини“, I/11 септември 1890, бр. 2, Цариград, 1.

<sup>16</sup> Архив на СИП – Београд, ПП-одд. „И“, ред 17 (1890)/I, ПП. №. 4, 7 ноември 1890; Димевски, *Митрополитот скопски Теодосиј...*, 91-92.

welcomed so enthusiastically. Because of this, Esad Pasha of Tetovo ordered Theodosius removed from the city.<sup>17</sup>

In December 1890 and January 1891, an election for new representatives of the population in the church-school municipalities took place, with supporters of the Bulgarian Exarchate removed from the bodies of the church-school municipalities,<sup>18</sup> and the same happened to the principal of the Exarchate school in Skopje. In addition, the Metropolitan also replaced the teachers brought from Bulgaria.<sup>19</sup>

In response to this, the Bulgarian Exarch Josef offered Theodosius an annual salary of 12,000 levs, paid in full by the Bulgarian Exarchate,<sup>20</sup> but he rejected it and continued his work by opening a department using Slavonic letters at the Turkish printing plant in Skopje<sup>21</sup> and removing the Bulgarian language from the schools: "the language in which the children will study will be their mother tongue, the Macedonian language."<sup>22</sup>

In the context of the restoration of the Ohrid Archbishopric, Metropolitan Theodosius wrote in his letter to Archimandrite Dionysius:

<sup>17</sup> Бранислав Светозаревик, *Српската и бугарската црковно-училишна пропаганда во Тетово и тетовско 1860-1903*, Скопје 1996, 38; *Документи за борбата за самостојност и национална држава*, Том I, УКИМ, ФФИН, Скопје 1981, 288-291; Димевски, *Митрополитот скопски Теодосиј...*, 98-101.

<sup>18</sup> Архив на СИП, ПП.-одд. „Г“, ред 7, ПП. № 359, 24 декември 1890; ДАРМ, Ф. ТАН (1890), Д. 6, а.е. 7; ЦДА, Ф. 176, оп. 1, а.е., 596, л. 33, Егзархот до Скопската црковна општина, № 34, 17 јануари 1891; Весник Новини, „Какво прествляват изборите в Скопската епархия?“, I, бр.21, 4 јануари 1891, 3; Димевски Славко, *Митрополитот скопски Теодосиј...*, 100.

<sup>19</sup> ДАРМ, Тетовско архиерејско намесништво, Ф. 498, а.е. 1.14/1, Митрополитот Теодосиј до архиерејскиот намесник Серафим, № 137, 18 февруари 1891, Скопје; ДАРМ, Кривопаланечко архиерејско намесништво, Ф. 497, а.е. 1.38/41, Митрополитот Теодосиј до архиерејскиот намесник Ѓорѓи, № 173, 2 март 1891, Скопје.

<sup>20</sup> ЦДА, Ф. 246, оп. 1, а.е., 50, л. 128, Егзархот до митрополитот Теодосиј, № 1436, 31 октомври 1891; Димевски, *Митрополитот скопски Теодосиј...*, 108.

<sup>21</sup> In August Metropolitan Theodosius printed new textbooks: Reader, Law of God and Calculating [Mathematics] and with a circular message he ordered them to be used in all schools in the diocese. Each of the textbooks had to bear the seal of the Metropolitan, and textbooks which were not sealed could not be used in the schools. The textbooks were free of charge. ДАРМ, Архиерејско намесништво Крива Паланка, Ф.497, а.е. 1.53/56, Митрополитот Теодосиј до архиерејскиот намесник Ѓорѓи, №. 427, 7 август 1891, Скопје; ДАРМ, Тетовско архиерејско намесништво, Ф. 498, а.е. 30/1, Митрополитот Теодосиј до архиерејскиот намесник Серафим, № 427, 7 август 1891, Скопје; ДАРМ, Архиерејско намесништво Крива Паланка, Ф. 497, а.е. 1.65/68 (65/1), Митрополитот Теодосиј до архиерејскиот намесник Ѓорѓи, №. 627, 24 октомври 1891, Скопје; Borisov, *The dual ecclesiastical jurisdiction over the eparchy of Skopje...*, 253, белешка 311.

<sup>22</sup> Трајановски, *Црковната организација во Македонија...*, 224.

The clash between Metropolitan Theodosius and the Exarchate is not of a personal nature, as the Exarchate wants to present it. The Metropolitan believes that Macedonia deserves its own independent church by restoration of the Ohrid Archbishopric, the oldest church in the Balkans, founded by Emperor Justinian and known as Justiniana Prima.

When Macedonians ecclesiastically separate from the Bulgarians and other religious and national propaganda, they will stop their activities in Macedonia. Because of this, Metropolitan Theodosius takes steps with the Turkish authorities to restore the Ohrid Archbishopric for all Macedonian dioceses. According to the plan, the restoration of the Ohrid Archbishopric should be made in the following way:

1. First, the Sublime Porte should issue a Ferman for the restoration of the Ohrid Archbishopric, which was unlawfully abolished in 1767. The restored Ohrid Archbishopric will include all Macedonian dioceses;
2. The Sublime Porte will also issue charters (berats) for bishops, future metropolitans of the dioceses; the charters (berats) for the Macedonian dioceses issued to the Patriarchate and the Exarchate will be withdrawn, and further religious and national propaganda will be banned, including the Serbian national propaganda;
3. The Patriarchate of Constantinople will be asked to recognize the Ohrid Archbishopric which will be in canonical unity with it, and if this does not happen we will act in the same way as the Exarchate: we will declare autocephaly, even at the price of schism;
4. The high clergy of the Ohrid Archbishopric will be composed only of bishops Macedonians:
  - Archbishop of Ohrid - Metropolitan Theodosius until his canonical election,
  - Skopje Diocese - Metropolitan Theodosius,
  - Veles Diocese - Archimandrite Damaskin (currently the abbot of the monastery Veljusa in Strumica),
  - Pelagonia diocese - hieromonk Methodius,
  - Debar Diocese - hieromonk Kozma Prechistanski,
  - Voden Diocese - hieromonk Hilarion (from the Zograph Monastery),
  - Nevrokop Diocese - hieromonk Dionysius (currently in Sofia),
  - Serres Diocese - Archimandrite Nikola,
  - Strumica Diocese - Archimandrite Hariton Karpuzov,
  - Dojran-Kukush Diocese - Bishop Lazar Mladenov,
  - Thessalonica Diocese - Bishop Nil Izvorov.
5. The Ohrid Archbishopric, as an autocephalous church, will take on all the competences of the existing churches (Constantinople Patriarchy and the Bulgarian Exarchate), especially in the area of education.<sup>23</sup>

After all this, the Bulgarian government and the Bulgarian Exarchate demanded from the Sublime Porte, Metropolitan Theodosius, to be brought to Istanbul. In response, the Metropolitan

<sup>23</sup> Borisov, *The dual ecclesiastical jurisdiction over the eparchy of Skopje...*, 263-264.

began negotiations with the Constantinopolitan Patriarchate through the Greek consul in Skopje. But his demands for the restoration of the Ohrid Archbishopric were rejected.<sup>24</sup> Parallel to this, on December 3, 1890, Metropolitan Theodosius began negotiations for entering in union with the Roman Catholic Church through the restored Ohrid Archbishopric. Having learned the inconsistency of the Macedonians in the unions, the Roman Catholic Church did not rush with its response.

After this, the Synod of the Exarchate formed a commission composed of three members who made the decision to appoint Archimandrite Maxim for the new Metropolitan of Skopje.<sup>25</sup> After the removal of Theodosius from Skopje, the population of Skopje, Tetovo, Gostivar, Ohrid, Prilep, Veles, Serres, and Kostur protested, demanding Theodosius to be returned to Skopje. The church-school municipality of Veles began negotiations with the Constantinople Patriarchate to return to its jurisdiction,<sup>26</sup> and the church-school municipality of Skopje threatened to accept a union with the Roman Catholic Church.<sup>27</sup> In Kostur, the exarchal church-school municipality rejected the jurisdiction of the Exarchy and discarded the Bulgarian language, and used the vernacular language of Kostur in schools, having created for this purpose a complete Macedonian dictionary and grammar.<sup>28</sup> The inhabitants of Bitola and Prilep acted similarly. In Ohrid, a society was formed which was named after the last Archbishop of Ohrid,

<sup>24</sup> Љубен Лапе, *Одбрани текстови за историјата на македонскиот народ*, 2 дел, Скопје 1976, 297; Зоја Богдановска, „Животниот пат на Скопскиот митрополит Теодосиј и неговата дејност во Куманово и Кумановско“, *Музејски гласник*, Год. IV, бр. 7-9, Куманово 2002, 178.

<sup>25</sup> ЦДА - Софија, 176, оп. I., а.е. 596, дел XI, Егзархот до Синодот, № 791, 16 мај 1892; Димевски, *Митрополитот скопски Теодосиј...*, 159.

<sup>26</sup> Димевски, *Митрополитот скопски Теодосиј...*, 166; Архив на СИП - Београд. ПП. - одд. „И“ ред 217 (1892), ПП. № 311, 30 мај 1892; Архив на СИП - Београд. ПП. - одд. „И“ ред 217 (1892), № 312, 31 мај 1892.

<sup>27</sup> Ванчо Ѓеорѓиев, *Петар Поп Арсов, Прилог кон проучувањето на македонското национално движење*, Скопје 1997, 38.

<sup>28</sup> Трајановски, *Црковната организација во Македонија...*, 232; Блаже Ристовски, „Народната култура во изградбата и афирмацијата на македонската национална мисла“, *Гласник на ИНИ*, XII/3, Скопје 1975, 79-99.

Arsenius. The purpose of the society was to restore the Ohrid Archbishopric.<sup>29</sup> Protests were also held in Serres, and its church-school municipality also sent a delegation with a request for the rehabilitation of Metropolitan Theodosius.<sup>30</sup> According to the Turkish newspaper, *Sabah*, the population of Ohrid and Tetovo massively rejected the jurisdiction of the Bulgarian Exarchate.<sup>31</sup> On February 23, 1892, Archimandrite Maxim was ordained a Metropolitan of Skopje, and the Bulgarian commercial agent in Skopje, Vladimir Rumenov, testified that two large neighborhoods refused to recognize him as their bishop.<sup>32</sup>

In 1910, when the Skopje Diocese would again have no bishop, at the request of the Skopje population, and in cooperation with the teachers, Petar Pop Arsov and Krste P. Misirkov, Metropolitan Theodosius ran for bishop in Skopje. Seven of the nine vicariates supported his candidacy, and only two accepted the candidacy of his opponent, Archimandrite Neofit. But the Synod of the Bulgarian Exarchate threatened Theodosius that if he did not withdraw his candidacy, his episcopal rank would be taken away.<sup>33</sup>

### **3. Macedonian Dioceses in the Twentieth Century until the Restoration of the Ohrid Archbishopric**

#### **3.1 Macedonian Dioceses in the First Decade of the Twentieth Century**

At the end of the nineteenth century, Macedonian dioceses were divided between two jurisdictions, the Constantinopolitan Patriarchate and the Bulgarian Exarchate, but in practice,

<sup>29</sup> Трајановски, *Црковната организација во Македонија...*, 231.

<sup>30</sup> Трајановски, *Црковната организација во Македонија...*, 232; Borisov, *The dual ecclesiastical jurisdiction over the eparchy of Skopje...*, 276-277.

<sup>31</sup> Светозаревик, *Српската и бугарската црковно-училишна пропаганда...*, 38; Borisov, *The dual ecclesiastical jurisdiction over the eparchy of Skopje...*, 277.

<sup>32</sup> В. Руменов, *Положението на българцината в Скопската епархия и дейтелноста на сѐрбската пропаганда (секретно)*, с.а., 17; Димевски, *Митрополитот скопски Теодосиј...*, 168.

<sup>33</sup> ЦДА, Ф. 246, оп. I, а.е. 203, 66-67, Синодот до Иванчов, 27 март 1910; Димевски, *Митрополитот скопски Теодосиј...*, 176; Borisov, *The dual ecclesiastical jurisdiction over the eparchy of Skopje...*, 283-286.

there were not two but three jurisdictions, since the clergyman of the Belgrade Metropolitanate was the head of the Skopje Diocese under Constantinopolitan jurisdiction. In the period from 1890 to 1897, the Bulgarian Exarchate managed to acquire charters (*berats*) for Skopje, Ohrid, Veles, Nevrokop, Bitola, Debar, and Strumica. Thus, the ecclesiastical situation of the Macedonian population became increasingly complicated. This situation did not have influence only on the ecclesiastical institutions, but also exerted assimilatory propaganda by Greece, Bulgaria, and Serbia, which reached its culmination during the Balkan Wars of 1912-1913 when the territory of Macedonia was divided into four parts.

Immediately after the Ilinden uprising (1903) in Macedonia, Greece sent its paramilitary bands known as *Andarti*. Their coordinator on the ground was Metropolitan of Kostur, Germanos (Karavangelis), and the ideological organization was by the means of the so-called "Macedonian Committee," which had its affiliates in Thessaloniki and Bitola, and was led by L. Kormilas and D. Kalageris.<sup>34</sup>

Serbia began its propaganda in Macedonia in the middle of the nineteenth century, through the establishment of the "Education Board" in Belgrade (1868), the goal of which was to establish Serbian schools in Macedonia and send teachers. After the Congress of Berlin (1878), it also printed Serbian textbooks for Macedonia and around that same time, the Patriarchate of Constantinople required appointment of Serb bishops in the Macedonian dioceses. In 1886, the society "St. Sava" was founded which organized "St. Sava's Evening School" and "St. Sava's Two-year Preparatory School." The first was for Macedonian migrant workers in Serbia, and the second was for teachers who would be sent to Macedonia. In addition to educational propaganda, Serbia, like Greece, also had its own paramilitary units in Macedonia.

<sup>34</sup> Борисов, „Црковната состојба и туѓите пропаганди во Македонија во XIX век“, *Годишен зборник*, Книга 12, Православен богословски факултет, Скопје 2006, 174.

Bulgaria implemented its policy in Macedonia through the Bulgarian Exarchate, and like Serbia and Greece, it also had its military units in Macedonia.

In his memoirs, James Johnston Abraham wrote about the role of these military units of Greece, Serbia and Bulgaria in Macedonia in the period before the Balkan Wars:

Barclay and I and a stray Englishman, a mining engineer from up-country, were dining with the Consul that night. The Consul smiled gravely. „Nationality in Macedonia is largely a question of religion,“ he said. „At one time all these people belonged to the Greek Church, and so were classed as Greeks, though often they could not speak a word of Greek. Then the Serbian Orthodox Church was recognized by the wily Turk, who wished to divide the Christians, and people of this church were considered Serbs. Of course, the Serbs soon began propaganda to expand their Church; and the priests of the two sects started fighting over the bodies of the infants, inveigling them into their separate schools. Then the Bulgars took a hand. Their Church--the Exarch--is slightly different, and people who are „Exarches“ are considered Bulgars. The Greeks and Serbs do not recognize the Exarch, and so both churches mutually excommunicate one another“.

The Engineer smiled at some memories. „I remember in the old days, that is some five to ten years ago, wandering bands of Komitadgi used to convert whole villages to the Greek, Serb or Bulgar Church by the sword.“ Noting my surprised look, he continued. „I know. It sounds almost incredible. But it's true. Those who did not convert were simply pillaged or even occasionally slaughtered by their fellow Christians. The Turks looked on and smiled. It suited their policy splendidly to have these Christians love one another in this way. As a rule they connived alternately at the doings of one or other side, as suited them; but when things became too lively they fell on both impartially, and there was another Macedonian massacre to horrify Europe. How the Turks must have smiled! “

„But are these Macedonian people really different racially? “ I asked.

„In a way, yes and no. They're just Macedonians. The Serb proper and the Bulgar proper are quite distinct races. The Bulgar is not a Slav, though he speaks a Slav language [...] The dialect [The Macedonian language] is equally understood by the Serb and the Bulgar. There's very little Greek in it.<sup>35</sup>

### **3.2 Macedonian Dioceses in the Period of the Balkan Wars and the World War I**

After the division of Macedonia between Greece, Bulgaria, Serbia and Albania, each of these states subjugated the conquered Macedonian territory to their national churches. This meant changing the language of worship, changing the church administration, and in the case of Greece, also banning the use of the Macedonian language by the Macedonians, as well as

<sup>35</sup> J. A., Johnston *My Balkan Log*, New York 1922, 137-138.

identifying themselves as Macedonians. In the part that was occupied by Serbia, the Macedonians were considered Serbs and Serbia implemented its assimilatory policy towards the Macedonian population through the military and police authorities and the church, for which purpose, special delegates were elected under the Belgrade Metropolitan Dimitrije and the Ministry of Education and Religion, and Serbian metropolitans were appointed in Skopje and Bitola. As early as 1913, a special "Decree for the edification of the liberated areas" was adopted, by which Macedonian dioceses under Serbian rule were subjugated to the Belgrade Metropolitan and military-police regime was introduced, but the people refused to cooperate. Vikentije (Krdžić) was appointed Metropolitan of Skopje, and practically all Macedonian dioceses under Serbian occupation except the Skopje Diocese were subordinated to the Metropolitan of Veles and Debar, Varnava (Rosić). Diocesan archpriests and district deputies were appointed and church courts were formed, although there was no canonical ground for this, because the Patriarchate of Constantinople still had the jurisdiction. Church municipalities that were not Serbian were either abolished or proclaimed as Serbian, and on the order of Metropolitan Varnava, Macedonians were also forced to finance the Serbian Četnik organization, "People's Defense." This was actually done in the churches.

In 1914, Serbia began negotiations with the Patriarchate of Constantinople for the Macedonian dioceses, supported by Turkey and Russia. Serbia and Greece agreed that Greek bishops in Macedonia under Serbian rule should be replaced with Serbs, with Serbia to provide for the replaced Greek bishops a lifetime pension. The Bitola bishop would receive 10,000 dinars, the bishops of Dojran, Resen, and Veles-Debar would receive 6,000 dinars each, and the Constantinopolitan Patriarchate would receive 50,000 dinars of subsidies annually, but they demanded 900,000 dinars in one payment. On May 2, 1914, Serbia offered 800,000 dinars to the

Patriarchate, and the payment of pensions to metropolitans who were going to leave Macedonia would also be made through it. On May 8, 1914, Serbian Prime Minister Nikola Pašić asked for the autocephalous status for the Serbian Orthodox Church and the rank of patriarchate, pointing out that if these requests were not accepted, it would be made by force because "the canons are clear when it comes to dioceses which will fall under the rule of another Orthodox state."<sup>36</sup>

All this lasted until 1915 when parts of Macedonian territories were conquered by Bulgaria. As the Bulgarian occupational army approached, the Serbian police and ecclesiastical staff retreated from Macedonia, being replaced with Bulgarians. Neophit became Metropolitan of Skopje (1915-1918). The Bishop of Veles and Debar Varnava fled, and the Bishop of Skopje Vikentije was captured by the Bulgarians and burnt alive.

In autumn of 1918, Bulgaria withdrew and Serbs returned to Vardar Macedonia. According to the Ministry of Education and Religion of Serbia, it was necessary that there was no external church influence in the newly re-occupied areas of Macedonia. At that moment in Macedonia, there was only one Serbian bishop for the whole territory, the Bishop of Veles and Debar Varnava. The Greek Patriarchal bishops were expelled from Macedonia, although the Constantinople Patriarchate still had the jurisdiction.

The 1914 desire and the request of Pašić for autocephaly, now within the newly established Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes began to be realized. On May 25, 1919, the Central Episcopal Council was established, which was supposed to represent this new ecclesiastical body, and a delegation was formed to negotiate with the Patriarchate of Constantinople. Consisting of the diplomat, Panta Gavrilović, Senator Sava Ljubibratić, MP Temko Popović, the priest, Stevan Dimitrijević, Čedomir Mitrović, PhD, Smiljan Piperković,

<sup>36</sup> Драги Костадиновски, *Вардарскиот дел од Македонија под јурисдикција на Српската православна црква (1919-1941)*, Скопје 1995, 21-22.

PhD, the Secretary of the Belgrade Metropolitan, Dimitrij. The negotiations took place during 1919 and as a result, the Constantinopolitan Patriarchate renounced its rights over the dioceses in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Macedonia, for which the Belgrade government paid 1.5 million francs to the Constantinopolitan Patriarchate.

On March 19, 1920, the Patriarchal Synod gave its consent for issuing the Tomos in accordance with the agreement. In this consent among other things, it was stated:

the canonical order and custom is to arrange and regulate the affairs of the church administration in accordance with the political changes that take place [...] the Kingdom of Serbia [...] after the Balkan Wars of 1912 and 1913 and the recently completed World War, with God's blessing has been enlarged and expanded, and now in the united Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes has been elevated, it has also added to its areas the dioceses that are under the rule of our Ecumenical Patriarchate, namely the following Metropolitanates: Skopje, Raška and Prizren, Veles and Debar, Pelagonia, Prespa and Ohrid and part of the Voden Metropolitanate: the Bishopric of Poljane, the Metropolitanate of Strumica [...] The Ecumenical Patriarchate upon the request of the Government and the Church in the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes and taking into account, on one hand, the regulations that apply to the Orthodox Church according to which 'it is customary church affairs to change according to political', and on the other hand, based on the official statements of the Orthodox autocephalous churches, Serbian, Montenegrin and Karlovci, which with joint will and decision has decided and proclaimed in Belgrade on May 13 (26) 1919, unification in one and the same Orthodox autocephalous church under the name "Autocephalous United Orthodox Church of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes" is pleased to adopt, endorse and give its own Blessing with the Synodic decision for ecclesiastical liberation from its rule."<sup>37</sup>

In this way, the Macedonian dioceses under Serbian occupation became part of the Autocephalous United Orthodox Church of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes. The Serbian Church established three dioceses in Macedonia: Skopje, Zletovo and Strumica, and Ohrid and Bitola. At the head of the Skopje Diocese was Joseph (Cvijović), who was later elected as a Serbian patriarch (1950-1958).

<sup>37</sup> Костадиновски, *Вардарскиот дел од Македонија...*, 42-43.

During World War II, Macedonian territories under the Kingdom of Yugoslavia<sup>38</sup> were conquered by Bulgaria and Italy (Albania) (April-May 1941). Just like Serbia, these two states based their authority over the conquered territories on the military and police forces and the ecclesiastical administration. The demarkation line between them was finalized on March 29, 1943. A major part of the territory was under Bulgarian occupation, while only a small part of the western regions was under Italian control.

The Synod of the Bulgarian Exarchate, on April 29, 1941, adopted a decision on the formation of the three dioceses in the conquered Macedonian territories: Diocese of Strumica and Drama headed by the Metropolitan of Nevrokop Boris, Diocese of Skopje and Veles headed by the Metropolitan of Veliko Trnovo Sophrony, and Diocese of Ohrid and Bitola headed by the Metropolitan of Lovcen Philaret. Their deputies and 30 deans were elected and appointed on April 30. At that time in Macedonia, there were 500 Macedonian priests and the Synod decided to bring 200 more from Bulgaria. In order to attract more priests from Bulgaria to the Macedonian dioceses, the Synod decided to increase their incomes by 30 percent, and they were also given property from exiled Serbs and deported Jews.<sup>39</sup> In his report to the Synod of the Bulgarian Exarchate, Metropolitan of Skopje Sophrony, among other things, asked for "a special course for young priests who do not know how to read the Church Slavonic language and hardly speak in Bulgarian to be educated at the Sofia Theological Seminary."<sup>40</sup> On November 19, 1942, with the decision of the Synod, the diocese of Strumica and Drama was abolished.<sup>41</sup>

<sup>38</sup> Kingdom of SCS from 1929 is named as the Kingdom of Yugoslavia.

<sup>39</sup> ЦДА, ф. 791к, оп. 1, е. х. 70, л. 65, 72-74; ВА, R5101/22177, Вл. 159; Слијепчевић Ђ. *Македонско црквено питање*, Минхен 1969, 42.

<sup>40</sup> ЦДА, ф. 791к, оп. 2, е.х. 226, л. 1-3; Шкаровский Виталевич Михаил, *Создание Македонской Православной Церкви в период оккупации республики и первые послевоенные годы* (<http://www.bogoslov.ru/text/457045.html>).

<sup>41</sup> В. Стоянова „Църковно-административната уредба на Македония и Тракия и изборът на патриарх на Българската православна църква“, *Минало*, София 1994, № 4, 149-150; Михаил Виталевич Шкаровский, *Создание Македонской Православной Церкви...* (<http://www.bogoslov.ru/text/457045.html>).

### 3.3 Restoration of the Ohrid Archbishopric

After the capitulation of Italy (September 8, 1943), a religious commission was formed in the liberated territories in western Macedonia, and on 15 October, the headquarters of the People's Liberation Army of Macedonia appointed Velcho Manchevski, the former dean. Macedonian language was introduced in the liberated territories as an administrative language, and teachers who would teach Macedonian were organized.<sup>42</sup> On October 21, 1943, a meeting of priests from the liberated territories was organized in the village of Izdeglavje, Debarca, with the aim of administratively organizing the church in those territories. At the Second Session of Anti-Fascist Council for the National Liberation of Yugoslavia held on November 29/30 1943, Macedonia was recognized as one of the federal units of Yugoslavia. At the First Session of Anti-fascist Assembly for the National Liberation of Macedonia on August 2, 1944, the People's Republic of Macedonia was created. Among the members of this body were also the priests, Kiril Stojanovski, Jovan Gjorgov, and as of October 27, Metodij Gogov.

Based on the decision of the Synod of the Constantinopolitan Patriarchate, dated March 19, 1920, on issuing the Tomos to the Autocephalous United Orthodox Church of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes, "canonical order and custom is to regulate and bring the affairs of the church administration in accordance with the occurred political changes" on October 1944 in the village of Gorno Vranovci, where an Initiative Committee for organizing ecclesiastical life in Macedonia was formed.<sup>43</sup> On March 4-5, 1945, the First Church and People's Council was

<sup>42</sup> Jure B. Zečević, *Die Autokephalieerklärung der Makedonischen Orthodoxen Kirche*, Würzburg: Augustinus-Verlag 1994, 19; Димевски, *Црковна историја на македонскиот народ...*, 215-216; К.Е Скурат., *История Поместных Православных Церквей*, Ч. 1. Москва 1994, 159; Шкарковский, *Создание Македонской Православной Церкви...* (<http://www.bogoslov.ru/text/457045.html>).

<sup>43</sup> Zečević, *Die Autokephalieerklärung der Makedonischen...*, 27; Р. Радић, *Држава и верске заједнице 1945-1970*, Део 1, 1945-1953, Београд 2002, 283.

convened, which was attended by over 300 delegates. Based on church history and tradition, and according to the seventeenth canon of the Fourth Ecumenical Council and thirty-eighth canon of the Quinisext Ecumenical Council, and based on 800 years of continuity and the non-canonical abolition of the Ohrid Archbishopric, the Council adopted a Resolution to restore the Ohrid Archbishopric as the Macedonian independent church with national bishops.<sup>44</sup> The proclamation of the Macedonian Orthodox Church for autocephalous happened at the Third Church-People's Council, held on July 17, 1967, in Ohrid.

## **Conclusion**

The restoration of the Ohrid Archbishopric is not a process that began during World War II, but a process that lasted for 200 years (1767-1967). The Ohrid Archbishopric has always been the connective tissue of the Macedonian nation, and its abolition actually denotes the beginning of its denial. The Ohrid Archbishopric was restored as the Macedonian Orthodox Church in accordance with the well-established church tradition and practice by other Orthodox churches.

<sup>44</sup> Јован, Белчовски, *Црковна историја на македонскиот народ (Книга втора)*, Скопје 2016, 74.