

ALEKSANDAR FOTIĆ

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BETWEEN THE DESIRED AND THE POSSIBLE

АЛЕКСАНДАР ФОТИЋ

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ИЗМЕЂУ ЖЕЉА И МОГУЋНОСТИ

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# DESPINA MARA BRANKOVIĆ AND CHILANDAR: BETWEEN THE DESIRED AND THE POSSIBLE

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*As long as she lived Mara Branković was a great patroness of the monastery of Chilandar. But that which she provided for it to obtain after her death surpasses by far any previous donation. Mara's crucial move was the transfer of ktetorship to the Walachian voyvodes. It was much through Mara's care that Chilandar adjusted itself to Ottoman rule.*

During the latter half of the fifteenth century the Athonite monasteries lost nearly all of their major patrons. By that time most of the Balkans had been conquered by the Ottomans. The impoverished Serbian nobility, struggling for its own survival, could no longer be relied on, while the relations with Walachian rulers were only in the process of being established. It was then, more precisely after May 1457, that a set of historical circumstances brought Mara Branković into the broad area of Mount Athos, namely to the Strymon region. From that time until her death on September 14, 1487, the ex-sultana devoted all her energies to support, as much as it was within her power, one of the brightest founts of the Orthodox spirituality. In about a quarter of a century she rose to fame as a great patroness and left an inerasible trace in the history of Athonite monasteries; and not only of Chilandar and St. Paul's, under her care as a hereditary *ktetor*, which is the responsibility she had assumed as the most influential member of the Branković dynasty.<sup>1</sup>

The purpose of this paper is not to draw any final conclusions about the relation of Mara Branković towards Chilandar, but rather to point to a number of directions that future research may take in order to complete the picture of Mara's patronage.

Mara Branković, with the Ottomans known as "lady Despina" (*Despine Hātūn*), thought of herself as the hereditary *ktetor* of Chilandar, as evidenced by a ferman of 1485 relating to a dispute between Chilandar and Zographou over an estate in Komitissa. The motive for an intervention with the Sultan's Court in favour of Chilandar Mara found in her being a "hereditary [exactly: "from the ancestral times"] holder of the endowed monastic places" (... *ebā* "an *cedd mutaşarrıf olduğum manāstırlarıñ vakf yerlerinden*...). To avoid misunderstandings, one of the commonest meanings of the term "*mutaşarrıf*" being a holder of an estate, the one who enjoys an estate, there cannot be a question here of any true ownership of Chilandar and its estates, but rather of an emphasis laid on Mara's *ktetorship* and patronage. Similar Ottoman formulations were also used to denote the support of the Walachian voyvodes for Koutloumousiou: "voyvode's monastery" (*voyvo-*

<sup>1</sup> On Mara Branković and Athonite monasteries, see R. Ćuk, *Carica Mara (Tsaritsa Mara)*, Istorijski časopis, XXV–XXVI (1978–1979) 53–97; V. Boškov, *Mara Branković u turskim dokumentima iz Svete Gore (Mara Branković in Ottoman Documents from Mount Athos)*, Hilendarski zbornik, 5 (1983) 189–214; M. Živojinović, *Svetogorci i stonski dohodak (Athonite Monks and the Ston Tribute)*, Zbornik radova Vizantološkog instituta, XXII (1983) 165–206; V. Demetriades – E. A. Zachariadou, *Serbian Ladies and Athonite Monks*, Wiener Zeitschrift für die Kunde des Morgenlandes, 84 (1994) 35–55. These works contain references to all previously published literature.

*da'nuñ manāstırı*), Dionysiou: “the monastery dependent on me” (*baña müte'allik manāstırdur*), Vatopedi: “dependent on the voyvode” (*voyvoda'ya müte'allik olub*), or for Chilandar itself: “the places of his monastery called Chilandar” and “a monastery of theirs and of their ancestors called Chilandar” (*Filandār adlu kendü manāstrunuñ ... yerleriniñ; mezküraruñ ve ecdādlarınıñ Filandār adlu manāstırınıñ...*).<sup>2</sup> As the charters of endowment granted both by members of Serbian nobility, and Moldavian and Russian rulers employed similar expressions: “that it be called a monastery of Our Lordship” (Да се зовѣт монастирь господства нашега),<sup>3</sup> their use in Ottoman documents should come as no surprise.

Mara Branković was a remarkably far-sighted woman. Obviously, she had no illusions left that the Branković could ever again rule the Serbian state. As for Chilandar, she did not count upon any help from the Branković of Srem, too preoccupied with the problem of their own status. It may be that Mara did not have best relations with a branch of her family. It is noteworthy that in the charter of 1466 granted to Chilandar and St. Paul's, Mara did not name all her relatives when requesting from the monasteries a regular yearly memorial service. She omitted her nephew, the ruling despot Vuk, as well as her own brother, the former despot Stefan.<sup>4</sup>

By turning to the Walachian voyvodes Mara passed over the despot family of Branković, next in line to take on *ketorship*. However, it eventually turned out to be right, because after Mara's death, the help of the Branković, despite their good will, was short-lived and dependent on a number of unpredictable circumstances. Sources give evidence of Mara's contacts from her court at Ezova with Vlad the Monk (Walachian voyvode 1481; 1482–95). Such a relationship had almost certainly been established back under Vlad's predecessor, Basarab III Țepelus (1477–81; 1481/82). Walachia had by then acknowledged Ottoman suzerainty. Apparently very convincing, Basarab's request was granted by the sultan in 1481: Chilandar was given tremendous tax relief. Not only that its six major metochia were exempted from paying tithe, which was replaced by an annual lump sum (*maķ-tūc*), but the very lump sum was cut down by half. This reduction of tax liabilities meant a saving of almost 3,000 *akçes* a year for at least half a century!<sup>5</sup> The former privilege was subsequently granted to other Athonite monasteries as well, but the latter, to the best of our knowledge, to none. Although no evidence can confirm that Basarab's action had been prompted by the Despina, her next moves render such a hypothesis fairly plausible.

The first charter granted to Chilandar by Vlad the Monk ensued only in November 1492, after the death of Mara's sister Kantakuzina. The charter contains his testimony relating how Mara, in anticipation of her end, “asked him, as her own child”, to take on the care of Chilandar. She reminded him that the monastery, “reduced to poverty by the Serbian nobility and its blessed *ketors*, was eventually left to her care alone”. Two courteous phra-

<sup>2</sup> Chilandar Monastery Archive, Turcica, box 7, document 3 (further: CMAT, 7/3). The ferman is published (Boškov, *Mara*, 206). My translation of the quotations to an extent differs from that done by Boškov. On the reliance of Chilandar and other monasteries on Walachian voyvodes, see P. Lemerle et P. Wittek, *Recherches sur l'histoire et le statut des monastères athonites sous la domination turque*, Archives d'Histoire du droit oriental, III (Wetteren 1948) 420–430; E. A. Zachariadou, *Ottoman Documents from the Archives of Dionysiou (Mount Athos) 1495–1520*, Südost-Forschungen, XXX (1971) 8–13, 31–32; G. Salakides, *Sultansurkunden des Athos-Klosters Vatopedi aus der Zeit Bayezid II. und Selim I.*, Thessaloniki 1995, 72–74; V. Boškov, *Dokumenti Bajazita II u Hilandarü (Sveta Gora) (Documents of Bayezid II at Chilandar, Mount Athos)*, Prilozi za orijentalnu filologiju, XXXI (1982) 138–139, 152–153; CMAT, 1/1a.

<sup>3</sup> See, for instance, the charter granted to Esphigmenou by the despot Jovan in 1499 (Fr. Miklosich, *Monumenta Serbica spectantia historiam Serbiae Bosnae Ragusii*, Vienna 1858, 542–543).

<sup>4</sup> R. Čuk, *Povelja carice Mare manastirima Hilandarü i Sv. Pavlu (Tsaritsa Mara's Charter Granted to the Monasteries of Chilandar and St Paul)*, Istorijски časopis, XXIV (1977) 113.

<sup>5</sup> CMAT, 7/2 (published by Boškov, *Dokumenti Bajazita II*, 152–153), 1/1a, 1/15, 7/7a (summary in: *ibid.*, 150/ n° 13), 7/13 (published by V. Boškov – D. Bojanić, *Sultanske povelje iz manastira Hilandara (Sultan's Charters at the Monastery of Chilandar)*, Hilendarski zbornik, 8 (1991) 201–204. The privilege of being exempted from paying tithe has already been pointed (Boškov, *Dokumenti Bajazita II*, 138–143).

ses Mara had used in her request to Vlad, and then set down in the charter (“нас въ мѣсто своихъ чедѣ възлюбивши” and “такъ своя чедѣ помолвивши”), have given rise to a whole theory about her “adoption” of Vlad the Monk. In polite and respectful communication, however, it meant but an admissible degree of intimacy in expressing one’s particular sympathy. The same goes for Vlad’s addressing Mara as “our lady, empress and mother”.<sup>6</sup> (Although they definitely were not related, Mehmed the Conqueror himself called Mara “mother”, and Bayezid II “grandmother”.) An “adoption” that never took place cannot be the reason for Vlad’s accession to *ktetorship*. Vlad accepted it as much on account of Mara’s authority and Chilandar’s repute as in order to add weight to his own and the distinction of his dynasty by ranking alongside the former emperors and old nobility. Mara’s request to Vlad may have been her most fruitful move in favour of Chilandar: his charter provided a regular annual subsidy (*obrok*), reconfirmed by many of his successors in the centuries to come.

All her assets, both movable and immovable, Mara Branković bequeathed to Chilandar and St. Paul’s, and in such a manner that the former was to receive three and the latter two portions. By her charter granted on May 21, 1466, she bequeathed the two monasteries with the villages of Ezova and Mravince with all their income. It is clear from the text that Mara had fulfilled all legal requirements, supplied witnesses and obtained six Ottoman documents, so as to preclude any subsequent contestation of the bequest. Mara’s apportionment is confirmed by the 1469 *hüccet* issued by the *kādī* of Serres, actually a *vakf-nāme*, the charter of bequest. Mara applied the very ratio to all her assets: to gold, silver, textiles, clothes and, which is particularly interesting, to *mülks* and livestock.<sup>7</sup> If a *mülk* (property in full possession) also meant land in absolute ownership or even villages, which might have been the case at the time, then Mara’s previous charter ought to have been incorporated into the relevant clause of the *hüccet*. Mara’s charter, however, remains the only source referring to an estate held by Chilandar at Ezova and Mravince or, more precisely, to her intention to provide an estate for Chilandar. There is no other evidence to confirm that Chilandar held real property in the two villages! If it did, it seems almost impossible that not a single reference to such an estate can be found in more than 500 Ottoman documents preserved at Chilandar and relating to the period from the 15<sup>th</sup> to the end of the 17<sup>th</sup> century. Not a single house, meadow, vineyard, mill or any other immovable are referred to even in the reliable and detailed registers of Chilandar’s property composed in the process of confiscation and redemption of monastic property in 1568/69.<sup>8</sup>

It has been widely agreed in literature that Chilandar and St. Paul’s were donated with Ezova and Mravince in 1466.<sup>9</sup> Nowhere has it been specified, however, that these are

<sup>6</sup> Vlad’s charter is published in: *Documenta Romaniae Historica, B. Țara Românească, I* (1247–1500), București 1966, n<sup>o</sup> 235. The assumed “adoption”, insisted upon by P. Ș. Năsturel in a number of contributions and, finally, in a book (P.Ș. Năsturel, *Le Mont Athos et les Roumains. Recherches sur leurs relations du milieu du XIV<sup>e</sup> siècle à 1654*, Roma 1986, 125–127), has eventually been embraced by V. Boškov (Boškov, *Dokumenti Bajazita II*, 139–140; idem, *Mara*, 191).

<sup>7</sup> Čuk, *Povelja*; Boškov, *Mara*, 193 (unfortunately, the *hüccet* preserved at St. Paul’s is not published, just quoted).

<sup>8</sup> In a copy of the 1527 census register (CMAT, 6/1) and in the 1529 feerman (CMAT, 7/17, summary in: Boškov – Bojanić, 178/n<sup>o</sup> 25) mention is made of a Chilandar’s *çiftlik* at Ezova. These documents, however, offer no new information; namely, the *çiftlik* in question, misplaced here within the Ezova, is a well and long known *çiftlik* that belonged within the synora of the village of Munuhos (ancient Eunuhos). The mistake is obvious from the very name the *çiftlik* was given in the first document: “The *çiftlik* of the said monastery named Yemenuhova, within the Ezova village synora” (*Çiftlik-i manâstır-i mezbûr be-nâm-i Yemenühova der sinör-i karye-i Ejova*). In the ferman, the only missing of “six pieces of land” – well-known from recurrent confirmations of their privileges (Kutsi, Iorgila, Munuhos, Zdravikion, Provlaka and Koruna near Ierissos) – is the one at Munuhos; but, in return, there appears the Ezova one of the same size and liable to the same taxes as the one at Munuhos! All “six pieces of land” are ascertained in: CMAT, 7/13 (published by Boškov – Bojanić, 201–204), 7/14 summary in: *ibid.*, 176/n<sup>o</sup> 22), and 7/16 (summary in: *ibid.*, 177/n<sup>o</sup> 24).

<sup>9</sup> Čuk, *Povelja*, 106; idem, *Carica Mara*, 89; M. Ursinus, *An Ottoman Census Register for the Area of Serres of 859 H. (1454–1455)? A Reconsideration of the Date of Composition of Tahrir Defteri TT 3*, Südost – Forschungen, XLV (1986) 33; G. Subotić, *Manastir Svetog Pavla, Kazivanja o Svetoj Gori*, Beograd 1995, 134.

likely to have been bequests intended to become the monasteries' property only after Mara's death. Many elements of the charter clearly show that it is the charter of bequest, not of donation. Between the other indications there is a clause: "as I had put down in writing that these villages pass to the monasteries after my death" (цко съм јаа записала како да вѣдаѡ ѡван села монастиромъ по моѡни смърти).<sup>10</sup>

However, the revenues of whole cluster of villages, known as "the villages of lady Despina" (*kurā-yi Tesbine Hātūn*), Ezova and Mravince among them, had been partly (?) seized, step by step, and the structure of ownership had been changed starting from c. 1476. The dispossession of land was not a move directed against Mara personally. It was part of an extensive land reform carried out by Mehmed II in those years. Mara remained at Ezova until her death provided for from some other source of income. If Ezova and Mravince did not remain her *mülk* estates, it is fairly certain that they had never in their entirety been a property of the two Serbian monasteries. It is confirmed by many later sources. Ezova and Mravince with some other nearby villages were included in imperial domain in 1500, and between 1501 and 1505. they became *vakf* villages, whose revenues were donated to the newly founded *vakf* of Bayezid II in Istanbul.<sup>11</sup> The seizure of villages does not overrule the possibility that the monasteries were endowed with some smaller estates situated within the synora of these villages. Mara's bequest simply could not be administered because the sultan had annulled all imperial orders and certificates previously issued.

If it is not known whether Chilandar ever had any possessions at Mravince and Ezova, St. Paul's certainly had. Mara's charter of bequest set aside, St. Paul's metochion at Mravince can only be traced in sources from the year 1500 and thereafter until the late 18<sup>th</sup> century. Of course, the monks were the holders with the status of *re'āyā*, not of *sīpā-hīs*.<sup>12</sup> What really happened may remain a secret forever. Nonetheless, it may be worthwhile to put forward a few assumptions. Perhaps Mara managed in the last moment to assign a portion of one of her estates to St. Paul's, naturally, not in the status of a "master of the land" as she had intended to. If that was the case, why nothing went to Chilandar? The metochion of St. Paul's at Mravince and that of Chilandar at Munuhos shared a common boundary. On the assumption that the synora of the neighbouring villages had underwent a change, the presumed property at Mravince donated to Chilandar may have been added to the monastery's already existing, large and old, metochion at Munuhos. Or simply, the origin of St. Paul's metochion at Mravince may have had nothing at all to do with Mara Branković.

<sup>10</sup> Čuk, *Povelja*, 113.

<sup>11</sup> M. T. Gökbilgin, *XV-XVI. Asırlarda Edirne ve Paşa Livâstı. Vakıflar – Mülkler – Mukataaalar*, Istanbul 1952, 140, 143–146 (and accordingly: N. Filipović, *Princ Musa i šejh Bedreddin*, Sarajevo 1971, 316, fn. 405); I. Beldiceanu-Steinherr, *Les illusions d'une princesse. Les sort des biens de Mara Branković*, Frauen, Bilder und Gelehrte. Studien zur Gesellschaft und Künsten im osmanischen Reich. Festschrift H.–G. Majer, Istanbul (in the press); E. Balta, *Les Vakıfs de Serrès et de sa Région (XVe et XVIe s.)*, Athènes 1995. On the reforms carried out by Mehmed II, see N. Beldiceanu, *Recherches sur la réforme foncière de Mehmed II*, *Acta Historica*, IV (1965) 27–39. The fact that the villages once owned by Mara were called "the villages of lady Despina" even after 1478, and at least until 1489/90 (Gökbilgin, 146; Ö. L. Barkan, *894 (1488/1489) yılı Cizyesinin Tahsilâtına âit Muhasebe Bilânçoları*, *Belgeler*, I, 1 (1 Ocak 1964) 46), does not mean she really enjoyed the property. It appears to be quite clear from the very fact they were called so for at least two years after her death.

<sup>12</sup> Boškov, *Dokumenti Bajazita II*, 141; Başbakanlık Arşivi, Kâmil Kepeci, Ahkâm Defteri, No. 61, s. 264; BBA, TT 723, s. 1054; CMAT, 11/5, 11/IV, 12/7/20; E. Balta, *Les Vakıfs de Serrès et de sa Région (XVe et XVIe s.)*, Athènes 1995, 163, 303, 315 (defters BBA, TT 167 and 403). Besides St. Paul's, an estate at Mravince was held by Xeropotamou in the course of the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries, while Kastamonitou and Stavronikita had estates at Ezova (BBA, TT 723, s. 1051, 1059; Ἀρχιμανδρίτης Συμεών, Ἱστορική ἀλήθεια ἥτοι ἔλεγχος τῶν ὑπὸ τοῦ γέροντος Ἱεροθέου Δοχειαρίτου δημοσιευθέντων ἐν βιβλιαρίῳ ὑπὸ τὸν τίτλον <Μονῶν τοῦ Καλλιγράφου> πραγματευομένων περὶ τῆς ὑφισταμένης ὀριακῆς διαφοράς μεταξύ τῶν ἱερῶν μονῶν Κωνσταντινίτου καὶ Δοχειαρίου, ἐν Ἀθήναις 1932, 16; Ν. Οἰκονομίδης, Ἱερά Μονή Σταβρονικήτα. Κατάλογος τοῦ Ἀρχείου, *Σύμμεικτα*, 2 (1970) 443; Balta, 163, 165–166, 303, 315).

Whatever may be the case, the fact remains that the clauses of Mara's charter of bequest could not have been put into effect the way she had planned them to be. If Chilandar obtained in some other way any part of the estate, even a tiny bit of what Mara had meant for it and even for a very short time, no trace of it has been found either in contemporary or later sources. However, the question of possible Chilandar's property at Ezova and Mravince remains open. Just an attempt has been made here at its reconsideration from different perspectives.

Mara did intend all her movable assets for Chilandar and St. Paul's, as confirmed by the 1469 *vakfnāme*. The question arises, however, as to whether her will was fully administered. Upon her death, her sister Kantakuzina was left behind, whose other actions confirm that she continued to act in keeping with Mara's wish; of course, within her, undoubtedly modest, means. And yet, after Kantakuzina's death, before the beginning of December 1491, as their legally proclaimed heiress appeared Jelena, the last queen of Bosnia, wife of the late king Stefan Tomašević and daughter of the despot Lazar Branković. During the winter and spring of 1491/92, as a citizen of the Ottoman state, and thus supported by the authorities, she managed to pull two valuable icons out of the Great Lavra, claiming that they had not been donated but only deposited for safekeeping. She also filed a suit against Xeropotamou, though without success, and tried to procure for herself the disposal of the "Ston income", which Dubrovnik successfully contested. Mara had made an effort to protect her bequest even by the Shari'ah, which is why she had obtained the Ottoman writ (*hiuccet-vakfnāme*). However, it is not clear from the document whether the bequest embraced the "entire" property or just one-third of it. The bequest of entire property was liable to contestation because the Shari'ah gave legal heirs the possibility of claiming two-thirds of the inheritance. There is no information to confirm that Chilandar and St. Paul's had ever had a dispute with Jelena. It should be kept in mind, however, that the monks regarded her as "an evil woman", if for no other reason than for her interference with their right to the "Ston income".<sup>13</sup>

In 1471 Mara Branković endowed St. Paul's with an enormous estate on Provlaka, which she had bought from Esphigmenou for 30,000 *akçes*.<sup>14</sup> If she preferred Chilandar to St. Paul's at all or at least cared equally for them, the inevitable question arises as to whether she also made sure for Chilandar to obtain a larger metochion. The answer may be found in her intervention at the Sultan's Court in 1485/86, when she pledged her authority pleading for Chilandar in its dispute with Zographou over the enormous metochion in Komitissa. The dispute was settled in favour of Chilandar. The size and boundary of the metochion were fixed according to a counterfeited charter of the emperor Dušan, then accepted as an unequivocal evidence. In the centuries to come, the outcome of this dispute, set forth in formal Ottoman documents, gave Chilandar the only legal ground on which to defend its right to hold this, the most often disputed, of its metochia. If it had not been held, entirely or partly, by Chilandar prior to the dispute—and no original source can re-

<sup>13</sup> Boškov, *Mara*, 193; Demetriades – Zachariadou, 35–55; Živojinović, 186; Đ. Tošić, *Ponašanje bosanske kraljice Mare (Jelene) u izbjeglištvu* (The Bosnian Queen Mara (Jelena)'s Behaviour in Exile), Zbornik radova X kongresa SIJ, Beograd 1998, 393–398. Here and there in literature authors have noted that the portion of a property bequeathed to those who were not legal heirs was not to exceed one-third of the inheritance (A. Fattal, *Le statut légal des non-musulmans en pays d'Islam*, Beyrouth 1958, 142; J. Kabrda, *Le système fiscal de l'Eglise orthodoxe dans l'Empire ottoman (d'après les documents turcs)*, Brno 1969, 85). The *fervā* issued by the grand *müfti* Ebussuud, however, confirms quite clearly that this was possible provided that the heirs gave their consent (M. E. Düzdağ, *Şeyhülislām Ebussuûd Efendi Fetvaları Işığında 16. Asır Türk Hayatı*, İstanbul 1983<sup>2</sup>, n° 452).

<sup>14</sup> Κρ. Χρυσσοχοΐδης, 'Ιερά Μονή 'Αγίου Παύλου. Κατάλογος τοῦ 'Αρχείου, Σύμμεικτα, 4 (1981) n° 29; Boškov, *Mara*, 193–194. It is noteworthy that there is also a sales contract where Mara is not mentioned – it was made by St. Paul's and Esphigmenou in 1469, and concerns the purchase of the metochion for 50,000 *aspras* (Χρυσσοχοΐδης, n° 30 – Greek original; D. Sindik, *Srpske povelje u svetogorskom manastiru Svetog Pavla* (Serbian Charters in the Athonite Monastery of St. Paul), Miscellanea (Mešovita grada), VI (1978) 201–202 – Serbian translation).

veal the origin of the delimitation such as recorded in that charter – it is quite probable that it was Mara's influence that decided the outcome of the suit.<sup>15</sup>

Despite the obvious lack of evidence, Mara has been thought until recently to have stood behind the transfer of the old "Ston income" to Chilandar and St. Paul's. The payment of this tribute (500 hyperpera) to the monastery of Sts Archangels Michael and Gabriel in Jerusalem was an obligation Dubrovnik had taken towards emperor Dušan in 1350 and which it had regularly fulfilled since. The transfer of the tribute, later known as the *milostinja* (alms) or *sv(ij)ecá* (candle), to the two Athonite monasteries is referred to in the so-called Mara's charter of 1479, an obvious forgery made in 1500 or somewhat earlier. The tribute reassignment certainly fit into the picture of Mara's well-known activity as a *ktetor*. There is no evidence, however, of her having been behind it, no contract with Dubrovnik or any record of the monks of the two monasteries in the Dubrovnik books after 1479. Rather, it seems that the monks themselves, with a considerable support from the grand vizier Ahmed-Pasha Hersek-oglu, arranged the transfer in 1500. Sometime about 1500 they complained to the grand vizier of Dubrovnik's failing to fulfill the obligation. In substantiation of the complaint, they submitted the false charter of the empress Mara. Whether he was aware of the forgery or not, Ahmed-Pasha obviously acknowledged the charter as a genuine and thus incontestable proof. His "friendly advice" that Dubrovnik should resume regular payment of the tribute, naturally enough, admitted of no decline. That is why it is only since 1500/1501 that Dubrovnik books contain entries referring to Chilandar and St. Paul's as the tribute beneficiaries. This certainly does not overrule the possibility that Mara, who had succeeded in reassigning the payment to herself since 1465, forwarded the money to the Athonite monasteries and not to the Jerusalem one. If she had been doing so, as well as her sister Kantakuzina later, the operation was not given legal form and thus could not last long after their deaths. The interference of the "evil woman" shows it well. It should be said that it was only after the death of Jelena, Mara's and Kantakuzina's official heiress, that the monks set out to transfer the tribute. In accordance with the established protocol, they had since been coming every two years to Dubrovnik to raise their 1,000 hyperpera (in the first half of the sixteenth century worth 292 ducats and 28 silver dinars). They shared the tribute after the model set for the rest of Mara's property: Chilandar received three portions and St. Paul's two. Although sometime in the seventeenth century the sum diminished more than twice, the two monasteries continued to receive, mostly regularly, the *sveća* for more than three centuries, probably until the French occupation of Dubrovnik in 1806 (the last preserved note dates from 1792)<sup>16</sup>

On Mount Athos, legends last long and not seldom have a grain of truth in them. One of those legends speaks about the empress Mara's wish to visit St. Paul's. It relates about her sailing to the shore and landing with her retinue and gifts. Somewhere half way to the monastery, the Virgin came to her in a vision with the warning not to violate the Statute of Mount Athos strictly forbidding women to set foot on the monastic foreland. Mara made a halt there. The monks came out to meet her and solemnly received the gifts. Mara returned on board. At the place she had had the vision, a small church was later built and its walls painted with the scenes of their encounter. In the beginning of this cen-

<sup>15</sup> CMAT, 12/37/43 (summary in: Boškov, *Dokumenti Bajazita II*, 148–149/ n<sup>o</sup> 2), 7/3 (published in: idem, *Mara*, 206), 11/1 (published with incomplete translation in: *ibid.*, 206–208), 12/37/42 (published in: *ibid.*, 208–209), 7/4 (published in: *ibid.*, 209). On the dispute, see Boškov, *Mara*, 200–203 and A. Fotić, *Dispute between Chilandar and Vatopedi over the Boundaries in Komitissa (1500)*, 'Αθωνικά Σύμμεικτα, 7 (1999) 97–106.

<sup>16</sup> Živojinović, 165–206. Živojinović has been the first to show that on no factual ground can the reassignment of the "Ston tribute" to the two monasteries be ascribed to Mara Branković. See also S. Čirković, *Hilandarska sveća u Dubrovniku* (The Hilandar Candle in Dubrovnik), *Nastava istorije*, IV, 8 (1998) 5–19. Mara's false charter and Ahmed-Pasha's letter are published in: Miklosich, 520–522, 545–546.

ture, a powerful torrent tore the church down. The edifice was rebuilt in 1928. The legend has not been confirmed by original sources so far.<sup>17</sup>

It was much through Mara's patronage that Chilandar adjusted itself to Ottoman rule. The monastery must have enjoyed her great help during her lifetime; but that which she provided for it to obtain after her death surpasses by far any previous donation. It is at this point less important to find out what happened with her property and whether her will was fully administered. Mara's crucial move, proof of all her farsightedness, was her commending Chilandar to the Walachian voyvodes. In the centuries to come the monastery was thus provided for with a more or less regular income. Even after Mara's death, Chilandar knew how to make a good use of her name and repute, as evidenced by the successful transfer of the "Ston tribute".

There is much left to say about Mara's patronage of Chilandar and other Athonite monasteries. This is best confirmed by some newly discovered, mostly Ottoman, documents in a few Athonite monasteries. Unjustly neglected until recently, the Ottoman documents have proved not only to be a highly useful supplement to our knowledge of the history of Mount Athos in the fifteenth century, but also capable of changing the historians' rooted conceptions.

## ДЕСПИНА МАРА БРАНКОВИЋ И ХИЛАНДАР: ИЗМЕЉУ ЖЕЉА И МОГУЋНОСТИ

АЛЕКСАНДАР ФОТИЋ

Од када се доселила у Жежево па све до смрти, 1487. године, царица Мара Бранковић, позната као „госпођа Деспина“, прегла је све снаге да у оквиру својих могућности што више помогне православној цркви, нарочито светогорске манастире. Пре свих Хиландар и Свети Павле, о којима је бринула као наследни ктитор, преузевши ту улогу као најутицајнији изданак лозе Бранковића. Њен вероватно најплодоноснији потез учињен у корист Хиландара јесте молба влашком војводи Владу Калуђеру да постане нови ктитор манастира. Сасвим је могуће да је покровитељство влашких војвода зачето још за њена живота, када је Владов претходник Басараб III Цепелуш код султана издејствовао значајне повластице за Хиландар. Прву ктиторску повељу Влад је издао Хиландару тек 1492 године, после смрти Маре и њене сестре Кантакузине. Нема никакве основе за тврдњу да је Мара посинила Влада Калуђера, као што су то неки аутори тврдили. Редовну помоћ, у виду годишњег „оброка“, потврђивали су многи Владови наследници током наредних векова.

Своју имовину, покретну и непокретну, вероватно ипак само један знатан део, а не целокупну, Мара је наменила Хиландару и манастиру Светог Павла. Завештала им је и села Жежево и Мравинце са свим приходима. Међутим, како су јој приходи од тих села (само делимично ?) доцније одузети, и како се променио начин поседовања села, завештање као такво није могло да буде испуњено. Осим Марине даровне повеље, у наредним вековима нема трага никаквим хиландарским некретнинама у синорима Жежева. Ипак, постојање метоха манастира Св. Павла у Мравинцима, познатог од 1500.

<sup>17</sup> On the legend, see St. Novaković, *Carica Mara*, in: idem, *Iz srpske istorije. Istorijske crte iz XV veka*, Novi Sad-Beograd 1966, 202 (1<sup>st</sup> ed. 1893); Đ. Bošković, *Svetogorski pabirci* (Short Notes on Mount Athos), Starinar, XIV (1939) 99–100 (with a photograph); Ćuk, *Carica Mara*, 93; Boškov, *Mara*, 198. From a footnote in Boškov's manuscript referring to the discovery of the Ottoman *hüccet*-permission granted to Mara to visit Mount Athos, R. Ćuk has inferred that the legend is trustworthy. However, the manuscript had undergone ample modifications before it was printed: the published article contains neither the footnote nor any related quotation!



године, наравно само под условом да је његово порекло везано за Мару, неминовно поставља питање да ли је и Хиландар, бар за неко кратко време, држао извесне мање поседе у околини.

Својим великим ауторитетом Мара Бранковић је помагала и заступала Хиландар у кључним споровима везаним за потврђивање огромног метоха у Комитиси 1485/86. године. Резултати поменутог спора, садржани у званичним османским документима, у наредним столећима били су једини правни акти на основу којих су Хиландарци бранили држање свог најоспораванијег метоха. Ако метод у Комитиси и раније није био хиландарски, цео или највећим делом, а о његовом пореклу у том обиму нема сачуваних оригиналних извора, онда је сасвим вероватно да Хиландар тај спор никада не би добио без Марине подршке.

Преусмеравање „стонског дохотка“, доцније познатог као „св(и)јећа“ на манастире Хиландар и Свети Павле, неосновано се везује за Мару Бранковић. Свакако да би такав потез и те како могао да се уклопи у већ познате оквире Марине ктиторске делатности. Међутим, показано је да је њена повеља лажна. Највероватнијом се чини претпоставка да је повеља настала негде 1500. године, да би као доказ била употребљена да се велики везир Ахмед Херцеговић приволи на интервенцију у корист манастира. Дубровчани нису могли да одбију „пријатељски савет“ великог везира, па су од 1500. године почели са редовном исплатом трибута, што је вероватно трајало све до француске окупације Републике 1806. године. То никако не значи да део трибута, који је био њој намењен, Мара за живота није предавала Хиландару и Светом Павлу. Доцније, по њеној смрти, монаси су искористили њен углед да издејствују редовно уживање целокупног дохотка.

Легенда о Марином искрцавању на тло Свете Горе није потврђена никаквим историјским доказима.