

THE *METOCHION* OF THE CHILANDAR MONASTERY IN SALONICA (SIXTEENTH – SEVENTEENTH CENTURIES)

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The history of the *metochion* of the Chilandar monastery (Mount Athos) in Salonica during Byzantine rule has been thoroughly researched. The foundation of the first *kellion*, dedicated to St George, is ascribed to St Sava (Rastko Nemanjić, son of the Serbian ruler Stefan Nemanja) and dates back to the first years of the thirteenth century. The Serbian King Milutin renewed the cell (*kellion*) around 1316 when he probably changed its dedication to the 'Church of the Holy Trinity' as it appears in later documents. At about the same time King Milutin made a donation to Chilandar – the important monastery of St Jerusalem in St Paramonos, a district of Salonica near the Golden Gate. Some other buildings in different parts of the town were also under the jurisdiction of the Chilandar *metochion*: buildings in the district of St Minas, the donation of Ioannis Karavas in 1314, some buildings and land the size of one *modios*, bought in 1316 in the district of St Paramonos.¹

After the mid-fourteenth century every trace of the Chilandar *metochion* in Salonica was lost. There is no information as to whether the Chilandar monks owned any property in Salonica before the Ottomans took the city in 1430, but also later throughout the fifteenth and a large part of the sixteenth century. The imperial taxation register and Chilandar's *vakfname* compiled in 1569, both highly reliable sources, testify that there was no monastery property in the city of Salonica.²

The first evidenced property purchase was made in December 1590. The way it was made is an interesting story. In April 1590, hegoumen Arsenije, hieromonk Grigorije, elder Teofan and hieromonk Sava (*papa Arşini ve papa*

¹ M. Živojinović, "The Houses of Chilandar in Thessalonike during the Fourteenth Century", *Studies in Honor of Speros Vryonis Jr.*, New York 1993, vol. 1, 465-72; eadem, "Solunski metoh manastira Hilandara" [Chilandar Monastery's *Metochion* in Thessaloniki], *Zbornik radova Vizantološkog instituta* 37 (1998), 111-19; S. Kisas, "Srpski srednjovekovni spomenici u Solunu" [Serbian Medieval Monuments in Thessaloniki], *Zograf* 11 (1980), 30-34, 41.

² Chilandar Monastery Archive, Turcica (hereafter CHMAT), 11/5; BOA, TT 723, 1053; as well as records from imperial *defters*, CHMAT, 12/37/57, 6/8, 6/10, 6/11, 6/12.

Ligori ve koca Tegoman ve papa Sava) lent 10,000 *akçes* to a certain Elhac Şüeyb, son of İbrahim, with an annual interest rate of 16%. Elhac Şüeyb was obliged to pay them 10,800 *akçes* in six months. As a security for the debt repayment, he pledged his estate in the quarter of the mosque Akçe Mescid. Furthermore, the debt repayment was guaranteed by *Sergo*, son of *Şimo*, and *Andriye*, son of *Lambo*. Since money lending with interest, although legal, was not strictly in the spirit of Sharia, the contract said that the Chilandar monks had purchased the buildings; in this way, moral approbation was provided. The text of this kind of contract, not uncommon at the time, differed from that of a standard sale in the warning that this was a case of 'revocable sale' (*bey bi'l-vefa*).¹ In December, when the time for the repayment expired, Elhac Şüeyb repaid the Chilandar monks with his property instead of money. In order to give the estate transfer a proper legal form, another contract was made in front of the *kadı* of Salonica, this time speaking of an 'irrevocable sale' (*bey-i bat-i kat'i*) for 10,800 *akçes*. In this process, Elhac Şüeyb was represented by his grandson and plenipotentiary Ali, son of Süleyman.²

In addition to the estate, according to the custom, Elhac Şüeyb handed over to the Chilandar monks all the accompanying documents, i.e. ownership deeds. Interestingly enough they preserved the whole history of the property from 1501! The first known owner was a cauldron maker named İshak, son of Abdullah. In 1501 he sold the estate to Mahmud, son of Abdullah for 2,000 *akçes*. After this, the estate came into the hands of Şami Hatun, daughter of Kasım, who sold it in 1515 for 1,000 *akçes* to Dilnüvaz, daughter of Abdullah (in the first *hüccet* she was named Dilber Hatun). After the death of Mahmud, son of Abdullah (probably the one mentioned in 1501), his wife Dilnüvaz and daughter Şahi sold it in 1528 to Aristeno (?) for 3,600 *akçes*. There seems to have been a dispute, since in 1540 Yusuf, son of Musa, a

¹ Two almost identical *hüccets* have been preserved with the same date (CHMAT, 12/27/2, 12/27/3). Various interpretations of Koran generally prohibit interest. However, since it turned out to be a necessary tool in economic development, even in the early times of Islamic history, different ways were devised in order to legalise it. In the Ottoman Empire lending money with interest was legal. Sultan orders sometimes limited the interest rate. In 1601 Mehmed III issued a *ferman* prohibiting an interest rate higher than 15% (CHMAT, 8/59). According to *kadı sicils*, at the beginning of the seventeenth century in Kayseri the most frequent interest was 20%. Contracts of this type (*bey bi'l-istiglal* or *bey bi'l-vefa*) were not necessary. Contracts with open reference to interest were not uncommon at all, even between *ulema* members: see N. Çağatay, "Ribā and Interest Concept and Banking in the Ottoman Empire", *SI* 32 (1970), 53-68; A. Sučeska, "Vakufski krediti u Sarajevu (u svjetlu sidžila sarajevskog kadije iz godine 973, 974 i 975 – 1564/65/66)" [*Vakuf Loans and Credit in Sarajevo (from the Sicils of Sarajevo kadı of 973, 974 and 975 – 1564/65/66)*], *Godišnjak Pravnog fakulteta u Sarajevu* II (1954), 343-79; R. C. Jennings, "Loans and Credit in Early 17th Century Ottoman Judicial Records: The Sharia Court of Anatolian Kayseri", *JESHO* 16/2-3 (1973), 183-91.

² CHMAT, 12/27/4 (preserved only on photo, with signature: 6/K/4); A. Fotić, *Sveta Gora i Hilandar u Osmanskom carstvu (XV-XVII vek)* [Mount Athos and Chilandar in the Ottoman Empire (Fifteenth-Seventeenth Centuries)], Belgrade 2000, 328-30.

maternal brother of the said Şahi, had to renounce his claim to the estate. The estate was inherited by Aristeno's son Angelo, who pledged it in 1583 for a loan taken from the *vakf* of the late Aşık Mehmed. Obviously Angelo repaid the debt, but in April 1590 he decided to sell the estate for 10,000 *akçes* to the above mentioned Elhac Şüeyb. Only a few days later, Elhac Şüeyb pledged his new property as a security for a loan.¹ This is a good example of how to interpret numerous Ottoman documents preserved in the Chilandar archives, which at first sight do not seem to have any connection with the monastery.

When the Chilandar monks took it over, the freehold house consisted of three ground floor houses, a well, a baking oven, garden and courtyard (*üç bab tahtani/süfli ev ve pınarı ve fırını ve bağçeyi ve havluyu müştemmel olan mülk menzilimi/evimi*). Its boundaries were the freehold houses of Elhac İshak, son of Mehmed (once mentioned as cotton or wool fluffer – *hallaç*, seven years later as weaver – *culah*), and Hristodulo Hiyari (?), a vegetable garden and a public street. The same inventory and borders were recorded in the loan contract made in late April 1590. However, in the *hüccet* concerning the sale of Angelo's residence to Elhac Şüeyb, drawn up only a few days before, a vineyard (*kürümü; asmaları*) was entered instead of garden and courtyard, and Todori's house was said to have been one of the borders, instead of the vegetable garden. The former inventory was also recorded in Angelo's loan document from 1583.² Clearly the border and inventory could not have changed in a few days; our conclusion must be that the precise entry of this kind of data in a contract was not given much importance. Much earlier *hüccets*, from 1501 and 1515, prove that all three houses were of 'winter type' (*şitevi ev*), meaning they were built of solid materials. In addition, a toilet (*kadem hanesi*) and trees were also recorded.³

A copy (*suret*) from a fiscal survey (*defter*) made in May 1598 (which was not one of the typical *surets* copied after the 'confiscation affair' in 1569, but one that actually reflected the real state of affairs), quoted "a courtyard and a dwelling place (*oda*)" in the city of Salonica.⁴ If this data refers to the estate in Akçe Mescid *mahalle* purchased in 1590, which is highly probable, it is unclear what had happened to the other two houses in the meantime.

¹ CHMAT, 1/6, 1/9a, 1/18a (*Altio bin Tonaka*), 1/26b (*Aliteno Konaka. Aliseno*), 1/81a (*Angelo veled-i Alisteno Konaka*), 1/96a (*Angelo veled-i Asetiyo*), 12/27/2, 12/27/3. Aristeno's (?) name obviously caused problems for Ottoman scribes.

² *Ibid.*, 12/27/4, 12/27/3, 12/27/2, 1/96a, 1/81a. Long before this, in 1540 and even 1528, two houses were in excellent condition (*mamur*), while one of them was ruined (*harab*). The borders were İshak's and Hızır's *mülks* and a public street (*ibid.*, 1/26b, 1/18a). In 1501 and 1515 its borders were another house belonging to the cauldron maker İshak, son of Abdullah, the *mülks* of the cauldron maker Hayreddin and of Yanasi, and a public street (*ibid.*, 1/6, 1/9a).

³ *Ibid.*, 1/6, 1/9a; Fotić, *Sveta Gora*, 331.

⁴ CHMAT, 12/12/15.

In the next case, Chilandar monks bought an estate from a certain Ömer Bey (once mentioned as *beşe*), son of Abdullah, towards the end of May 1622. In exchange for 14,000 *akçes*, the monastery became the owner of three ground floor houses, a well and a courtyard with fruit and fruitless trees in the *mahalle* called 'Wide Road' (*Yassı Yol*). On this occasion the brotherhood was represented by Nikifor, son of Stojko, hieromonks Ilarion, Strati, T(e)odor and elder Nikifor (*Nikofor veled-i İstoyko ve papa Ilarion ve papa İştrati ve papa Todoro ve Koca Nikofor*). The freehold residence (*mülk menzili*) was in the vicinity of the existent *metochion* (provided that the houses bought in 1590 were still in their possession), since 'Wide Road' *mahalle* was situated next to Akçe Mescid *mahalle*. The residence was bounded by Stamata's *mülk*, a private street, and a public street on two sides.¹

As in the previous case, together with the estate, the Chilandar monks obtained documents preserved by the previous owners. The first known owner, Dimo, son of Todor (elsewhere named Dimo, son of Dimo), pledged the same estate to Mustafa Bey Evrenosi's *vakf* shortly before 1584 as a surety for a 1,500 *akçe*-worth loan. Then, in January 1584, he sold it to Manolo, son of Nikola, for 6,000 *akçes*. Since he repaid the debt to the *vakf* two months later, the pledge contract was annulled. After Manolo's death the estate was inherited by his progeny, his son Sanako (?) and his daughter Zafire. Towards the end of December 1619 they decided to sell it to Zguro (*Uzguro*), son of Nikola, for 15,000 *akçes*. A day after the sale, Zguro pledged the property for a loan from *şeyhü'l-kurra* Osman Efendi's *vakf* for 10,000 *akçes*, with a 15% interest rate. Exactly three years later, which indicates that probably the reason was his debt, Zguro sold the property to the afore-mentioned Ömer, son of Abdullah, for 12,500 *akçes*. After six months, at the end of May 1622, the property was already in the hands of the Chilandar monks.²

A short history of the houses in Wide Road *mahalle* has been given here, in order to show that they were really bought no sooner than in 1622, which rules out the possibility of a continual ownership of the property since Byzantine times. Furthermore, the documents go some way to filling in the information of the sale contract. From them we can find out that the houses were of the 'winter type' (*şitevi*), and that they had also a porch (*hayat*), a toilet (1584) and a baking oven (1619) in the yard. The mentioned fruit-bearing trees were fig and mulberry trees (1584). Even the boundaries were not always the same. Just half a year before the purchase, the property was bounded by Todoro and Novako's *mülk*, and a public street from two sides. Before that, in 1619, in the space of two days, two completely different

¹ Ibid., 12/27/5.

² Ibid., 12/27/1, 1/82a, 2/127a, 2/127b, 2/139a, 12/27/5; Fotić, *Sveta Gora*, 332.

boundaries were registered: first, the *mülks* of Tavil Mehmed Bey (from two sides), of Ömer, son of Abdullah, and of *papuçcu* Manol, and then, a day later, just one property, that of the salt seller (*tuzcu*) Todoro, and public streets from three sides!¹ Since it is undoubtedly the same property, the conclusion must be that the boundaries mentioned in the *hüccets* were only provisional, as in the case of the property in Akçe Mescid *mahalle*.

It should be mentioned that these properties, both the one in Akçe Mescid and the one in Yassı Yol *mahalle*, had been in Muslim hands before Chilandar monks bought them, and that this fact did not pose any problem. We can also see that during their history both properties changed hands several times and were owned by both Christian and Muslim owners. In accordance with that is the fact that they were not surrounded by properties held exclusively by the adherents of one faith alone. Chilandar monks did not mind choosing *mahalle* with mixed population in Salonica for their dwelling, nor having Muslim neighbors which certainly would have a significant impact on their life style. They did not worry that performing service inside the house would in any way offend Muslim neighbors and cause serious 'inconvenience'.

From 1622 until the end of seventeenth century Chilandar's *metochion* in Salonica was mentioned only once. The document refers to the property as a *konak*, which might mean that the center of the *metochion* was a wealthy residence, rather than an ordinary house. Towards the end of seventeenth century, while the Holy League War was still going on, Ignatios, the Metropolitan of Salonica, made a claim on the inheritance of a Chilandar monk who died in "the monastery *konak* in Salonica, which have belonged to them from time immemorial" (*nefs-i Selanik'de manastır-i mezbur rahiblerinün kadimi mahsus konakları olub*). Chilandar monks argued that he had no right to it, since they had obtained sultanic orders stating that the property of a dead monk belonged to them. Ignatios was known for extorting money over the approved limits, as it is also known by complaints of Salonica citizens. The Chilandar monks submitted their case to the Imperial Divan. In June 1698 the Sultan sent an order to the *vezir* in charge of the *sancak* of Salonica and to the *kadı* of the same city, in order to ban the Metropolitan from troubling the monks on this matter.²

¹ *Ibid.* Before 1584 the borders were the *mülk* of Fatma, daughter of Abdullah, and from three sides public streets (CHMAT, 12/27/1, 1/82a).

² *Ibid.*, 8/97. Citizens of Salonica submitted complaints in 1697 and 1715 (I. K. Vasdravellis, *Historika archeia Makedonias*, vol. A: *Archeion Thessalonikes 1695-1912* [Historical Archives of Macedonia, vol. A: The Archive of Salonica 1695-1912], Thessaloniki 1952, 37-38, 125-26). Ignatios was the Metropolitan of Salonica from 1696 to 1727, see *ibid.*, 20-21; L. Petit, "Les Evêques de Thessalonique", *Echos d'Orient* 5/5 (Avril 1902), 213-14. The main problem remains unresolved: where does an inheritance smaller than 5,000 *akçes* go – to the Patriarch or to the monastery. We have documents that confirm both answers, which could indicate that in some periods Athonite monasteries were exempted from giving inheritance in cash, less than 5,000 *akçes*, to the Patriarch or the Metropolitan (On inheriting the possessions of deceased monks, see Fotić, *Sveta Gora*, 84-85).

The neighboring *mahalles* of Akçe Mescid and Yassı Yol were, roughly speaking, in the south-eastern part of Salonica, to the south of present-day Egnatia Street, and to the west of the eastern city walls. The *mahalle* of Akçe Mescid is located precisely: its core was in the middle of present day Palaion Patron Germanou Street, by Navarinou square. Until now, what was known about Yassı Yol was that the 'street' was situated in the area of former Hippodrome, narrowing into the present day Romanou Street. The assumption is that the street passed through three *mahalles*: Tuzlu Çeşme, Aya Kostantin, and Kebir Manastır.¹ The Ottoman documents preserved in Chilandar Monastery undoubtedly prove that at least between 1584 and 1622 there was a separate *mahalle* under the name of Yassı Yol. However, they do not provide information as to which precise area the *mahalle* occupied.

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The eighteenth and nineteenth-century Ottoman documents preserved in Chilandar Monastery could provide answers to various questions, such as: Was there continuity in the possession of certain estates? Where were they situated? What was their connection to the Chilandar *metochion* and the little church dedicated to St Sava (Nemanjić), well known from the end of nineteenth century? The *metochion* and the little church still exist in 1, Kamvounion Street, but not in the same building. In earlier times Yassı Yol or 'Wide Road' began at this very spot. It is possible that the present *metochion* grew exactly in the area of the estate bought in 1622 or in its immediate vicinity. Although there is no mention of the church in the documents, it probably existed at least in a modest form. Bearing in mind that the Chilandar's medieval *metochion* could have been in the immediate vicinity, it is very likely that the monks, even if they had lost the *metochion* at some stage (between mid-fourteenth century and 1590/1622), kept the vivid memory of it and its location; so vivid, in fact, that they bought an estate in the same location and finally, after perhaps more than two centuries, returned there. If this is so, it can truly be said, as had already been assumed before the discovery of Ottoman documents, that, even though with a long interruption, the core of the *metochion* has stayed in the same place from its foundation to the present day.

¹ V. Dimitriadis, *Topographia tes Thessalonikes kata ten epoche tes tourkokratias, 1430-1912* [The Topography of Salonica Under Turkish Rule], Thessaloniki 1983, 60-63, 143.

THE OTTOMAN EMPIRE,
THE BALKANS,
THE GREEK LANDS:
TOWARD A SOCIAL AND
ECONOMIC HISTORY

STUDIES IN HONOR OF JOHN C. ALEXANDER

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CONTENTS

Preface	7
Bibliography of John C. Alexander (Alexandropoulos)	9
Abbreviations	11
Contributors	12
Iakovos Z. Aktsoglou, <i>Population in the Province of Trabzon (Vilayet-i Trabzon) According to the Yearbook (Salname) of 1286/1869-70</i>	13
Antonis Anastasopoulos, <i>Albanians in the Eighteenth-Century Ottoman Balkans</i>	37
Helen Angelomatis-Tsougarakis, <i>A Berat of the British Consul of Salonica (1719)</i>	49
Melek Delilbaşı-Hatice Oruç, <i>The Properties of Fatima Sultan in Ioannina in the Sixteenth Century</i>	61
Suraiya Faroqhi, <i>The Ottoman Empire Confronting the Christian World (1451-1774): A Discussion of the Secondary Literature Produced in Turkey</i>	89
Aleksandar Fotić, <i>The Metochion of the Chilandar Monastery in Salonica (Sixteenth – Seventeenth Centuries)</i>	109
Eleni Gara, <i>Marrying in Seventeenth-Century Mostar</i>	115
Eleni G. Gavra, <i>The Zincirli Mosque in Serres</i>	135
György Hazai, <i>An Ottoman Document Concerning the History of Salonica</i>	157
Anastasios Iordanoglou, <i>Social Welfare in Selanik (Salonica) During the Tanzimat Period (1839-62)</i>	161
Olga Karageorgou-Kourtzis, <i>Aspects of Education in the Peloponnese from 1810 to 1820 According to the Peroukas Archives from Argos</i>	173
Machiel Kiel, <i>Livno (NW. Bosnia): From Hamlet to Ottoman Sancak Capital at the Edge of the Muslim World (1469-2006)</i>	185
Elias Kolovos, <i>Beyond 'Classical' Ottoman Defterology: A Preliminary Assessment of the Tahrir Registers of 1670/71 Concerning Crete and the Aegean Islands</i>	201

Phokion P. Kotzageorgis, <i>Haric Ez Defter and Hali Ane'l-Reaya Villages in the Kaza of Dimetoka/Didymoteichon (Fifteenth-Seventeenth Centuries): A Methodological Approach</i>	237
Sophia Laiou, <i>Some Considerations Regarding Çiftlik Formation in the Western Thessaly, Sixteenth-Nineteenth Centuries</i>	255
Heath W. Lowry, <i>A Note on Three Palaiologoi Princes as Members of the Ottoman Ruling Elite</i>	279
Demetrios Papastamatiou, <i>Tax-Farming (İltizam) and Collective Fiscal Responsibility (Maktu) in the Ottoman Southern Peloponnese in the Second Half of the Eighteenth Century</i>	289
Marinos Sariyannis, <i>Law and Morality in Ottoman Society: The Case of Narcotic Substances</i>	307
Vasileios D. Siakotos, <i>A Venetian Version of a Hatt-ı Şerif for the Town of Patras</i>	323
Gilles Veinstein, <i>Autour du berat de Pouqueville, Commissaire de France à Jannina (1806)</i>	333
Elizabeth A. Zachariadou, <i>The Sultanlic Residence and the Capital: Didymoteichon and Adrianople</i>	357