

Syrian and Armenian Christianity in Northern Macedonia from the Middle of the Eighth to the Middle of the Ninth Century

1. Introduction

The present study will be focused on a phenomenon known relatively long ago but still not fully appreciated — Syrian and Armenian compact communities, not just diaspora appeared in the middle of the eighth century in the northern Macedonia. Now I will not exhaust this topic either. I hope, nevertheless, to provide a “critical mass” of data demonstrating that the relevance of the phenomenon we are dealing with was so far underestimated. The nature of the earliest Bulgarian Christianity is not understandable without its background in local communities of Syrian and Armenian Christians.

The archaeologists and historians of architecture were the first ones to notice the relevance of these communities for the local architecture and, therefore, pointed to some literary witnesses related to their appearance in the lands of the modern Republic of Macedonia. Nevertheless, according to the *a priori* supposition held by the consensus of historians, any somewhat important Church building in the territory devastated by the Avars *ca* 580 and belonged to the Bulgarian kingdom in the time of its conversion in the 860s could not be dated to the period in between these dates.

Oddly enough, I have never met an archaeological study where a possibility of dating a church construction in Macedonia to the eighth or the first part of the ninth century would have been taken seriously. Neither have I met an explicit statement substantiating impossibility of such dating for the territories of the modern state of Macedonia, which were a part of a Christian Empire before the 830s. Such a possibility is never disproved but simply never discussed. The simple question where are the churches of the resettled there Syrians and Armenians is so far never formulated.

My present purpose is, after having summarised the findings and conclusions proposed so far by archaeologists and architecture historians, to review the relevant historical witnesses in an exhaustive manner.

2. The Palaces in Pliska and Their Architects

In 1968, Anatoly Leopoldovich Yakobson (1906–1984) published a seminal paper on the influence of the Syrian and Armenian architectural traditions on the earliest architecture in the Bulgarian Kingdom¹. Then, he was dealing mostly with the early ninth-century palaces in Pliska: Yakobson noticed that these palaces had the closest parallels in palaces constructed in Armenia during the seventh century; these palaces were then recently excavated and not widely known.

Realising that his data are severely limited, Yakobson formulated his conclusion as a new hypothesis but the most plausible among the available ones. His ideas were adopted by Stancho

¹ (Якобсон 1968). This topic has been only briefly mentioned in his posthumous monograph (Якобсон 1987: 103). Yakobson then confirmed his adherence to his earlier hypothesis but still without having new data to substantiate it.

Vaklinov (1921–1978) in his influential book² and by Rasho Rashev in his definitive monograph on the excavations in Pliska³, but still without any additional substantiation.

The main conclusion by Yakobson is worth to be quoted *in extenso*:

Therefore, a direct communication of the Bulgarians with Armenians and Syrians (incidentally, the born masons) would have occurred (and, undoubtedly, did happen) precisely during the period of intensive construction works in the Bulgarian capital Pliska. Direct participation in this construction of Armenian and Syrian architects is more than probable⁴.

According to Yakobson, these Armenians and Syrians who were in contact with the Bulgarian khan's court were the people resettled under Constantine Copronymus (741–775)⁵. He did not discuss the manner in which such contacts would have been effectuated—through the inter-state border between the Byzantine Empire and the Bulgarian Kingdom. These Armenians and Syrians would have hardly been subjects of the khan already in the epoch of Khan Krum (803–814); their territories were conquered by Bulgarians under Khan Presian in the late 830s⁶, that is, certainly later than the palaces in Pliska were built.

Yakobson died in 1984, in the same year when Blaga Aleksova (1922–2007) discovered the two churches in Krupište, Macedonia, near the river Bregalnica and at the site that she identified with that of the city of Raven known from the *Legend of Thessalonica* only⁷. This finding was calling for revisiting Yakobson's hypothesis but neither Aleksova nor few other archaeologists who studied these churches after her recalled Yakobson's 1968 paper.

The new findings in Macedonia substantiate Yakobson's claim very much. Indeed, these “born masons” who constructed palaces for a foreign pagan ruler would have certainly constructed churches for themselves. All Macedonian churches datable archaeologically to the period from the eighth to the tenth century must be investigated as possibly constructed by these Syrians and Armenians in the late eighth or in the first half of the ninth century. For our present study, however, only two localities with three such churches are especially interesting: Strumica with one church and the site of Krupište with two churches.

Apparently without knowing Yakobson's hypothesis, Blaga Aleksova recognised a Syrian pattern in the plan of one church in Krupište and even provided a close parallel with a church in Maipherkat.

The bigger church from two churches in Krupište (Aleksova called it “cathedral church”) has a very similar plan to that of the early seventh-century Theotokos church in Maipherkat⁸. Aleksova, who discovered this church in 1984, and some archaeologists after her⁹ considered this church as a late

² (Ваклинов 1977: 108–109).

³ (Рашев 2008: 87); however, Rashev's reference to predecessors of Yakobson (Fehér, Miyatev, Vasilev) ascribing to some of them (without saying exactly to whom) an idea of Syrian origin of such architecture is not correct.

⁴ (Якобсон 1968: 206): “Таким образом, непосредственное общение болгар с армянами и сирийцами (кстати сказать, прирожденными каменщиками) могло происходить (да, несомненно, и происходило) как раз в период интенсивного строительства в болгарской столице Плиске. Непосредственное участие в этом строительстве армянских и сирийских зодчих более чем вероятно”. This formulation reveals his subjective confidence in what he called his “hypothesis”.

⁵ (Якобсон 1968: 205–206):

⁶ For a detailed discussion of the historical data and historiography, see (Коледаров 1979: 41–42).

⁷ On the *Legend of Thessalonica*, see Lourié forthcoming.

⁸ As well as to the famous but much later (eleventh- or twelfth-century) basilica in Ćurlina [read *Churlina*] near Niš in Serbia: (Алексова 1989: 93, 137; 277, ill. 103; 283, ill. 118 and 119); for the Maipherkat church, see (Grabar 1946: 327 and 617, fig. 92). Aleksova quotes Grabar without addressing directly his source (Bell 1913: 88–92, Pl. XV–XIX).

⁹ (Микулчиќ 1996: 347–348).

ninth- or early tenth-century Bulgarian/Slavic construction. They were facing the choice between a pre-Avaric (pre-580) Byzantine construction and a Bulgarian one. Given that a pre-Avaric date was excluded on archaeological grounds, the Bulgarian alternative was chosen.

In fact, there is a need to take into account the third possibility—that there were some constructions remained from the late eighth- and ninth-century activity of the Armenian and Syrian immigrants. The “cathedral” church in Krupište could be interpreted as a building made not only after the common pattern with that of the church in Maipherkat but also by the descendants of the Byzantine Armenia themselves (Maipherkat/Martyropolis was the second centre of the former Byzantine province Great Armenia after its capital Theodosiupolis/Karin, modern Erzurum). According to the purely archaeological considerations, this church is now dated to the eighth or ninth century¹⁰, which is in the perfect accord with this possibility.

Indeed, a possibility that some post-Byzantine Christian buildings in Macedonia are constructed by these Armenians and Syrians during the century preceding the conversion of Bulgaria in the 860s, is not limited to a unique church, and it should be checked properly by specialists. Let us add that it is still hard to explain why these churches are constructed after non-Byzantine Syrian patterns if they would have been constructed after the conversion of Bulgaria into the Byzantine Christianity.

These observations corroborates Yakobson’s hypothesis on Syrians and Armenians as the constructors of the palaces in Pliska. These palaces, if they were constructed by the masters who belonged to Syrians and Armenians resettled in Macedonia, must have corresponded to some monuments in Macedonia. Not palaces, of course—because there was no need in palaces there,—but what was the most necessary for masters’ own use, that is, churches.

Thus, one can figure out how much Yakobson would have enjoyed Aleksova’s publications on Krupište were he alive then.

3. The Literary Sources

The available literary sources are mostly related to the events of 752/754 (there are some problems with precise dating)—the resettlement of Christian Armenian and Syrian population from two regions of the Arab Caliphate to the depopulated region of the Byzantine Empire near the Bulgarian border. Nevertheless, a part of the sources refers to the early ninth-century situation of the resettled people.

3.1. Theodosiupolis

Theodosiupolis, the former capital of the Roman Armenia, was the most important locality dealt with in our sources.

According to the often-quoted passage of Theophanes the Confessor under AM 6247 = AD 754/755¹¹, the following took place:

ὁ δὲ βασιλεὺς Κωνσταντῖνος Σύρους τε καὶ Ἀρμενίου, οὓς ἤγαγεν ἀπὸ Θεοδοσιουπόλεως καὶ

The emperor Constantine transferred to Thrace the Syrians and Armenians whom he had brought from Theodosiupolis and

¹⁰ (Нацев 2013: 281).

¹¹ The exact date of the event is somewhat problematic, but, at least, it took place within the interval between 752 and 754; cf. bibliography of the discussion in (Łewond 2015: 144, fn. 703; cf. 141, fn. 694; 144, fn. 702).

Μελιτηνῆς, εἰς τὴν Θράκιον μετώκισεν, ἐξ ὧν καὶ ἐπλατύνθη ἡ ἀίρεσις τῶν Παυλικιάνων¹².

Melitene and, through them, the heresy of the Paulicians spread about¹³.

There are parallel communications in Nicephorus of Constantinople, which add some little details to Theophanes¹⁴; we will return to them later.

Theophanes was writing in the early 810s using the materials collected by his friend and another Byzantine chronographer Georges Synkellos¹⁵. This means that the temporal distance from the events described was not especially big; however, the geographical and cultural distance was substantial. The Byzantine authors were certainly well informed about the locality where these migrants were settled within the Byzantine territory. However, we need a help of eastern historians in order to look at the event from an “eastern” point of view evaluating the scale of this migration.

The eastern chronographers said about the devastation of Theodosiupolis and, at least, a very serious damage to Melitene. They form two groups, Syrian and Armenian.

The representatives of the Syrian group wrote in different languages (Syriac and Arabic) and belonged to different faiths (the Melkite dyothelete and the Severian anti-Chalcedonian) but were not mutually independent. For the period we are interested in their data go back to the lost Syriac chronicle of a Syrian scholar, a court astrologer of the caliph, Theophilus of Edessa¹⁶. He belonged to the Syrian Melkites (Chalcedonian dyothelete, that is, he accepted the Sixth Ecumenical Council of 680/681¹⁷) and died *ca* 785 at the age of ninety. The earliest preserved witness of his work is the world chronicle by Agapius († 941/942; Ἀγάπιος is the Greek calque of his Arabic name Maḥbūb), who was a Melkite (Chalcedonian) bishop of the Syrian Hierapolis (Arabic Manbiḡ, Syriac Mabbug) and wrote in Arabic.

The main point which is interesting for us in these sources is the claim that the population of the city of Theodosiupolis was removed totally. Thus, we read in Agapius:

Then Constantine, the king of Rome, attacked Qālīqlā [Arabic name of Theodosiupolis] and conquered it and took in captivity its population.

تم ان قسطنطين ملك الروم غزا قاليقلا وفتحها
وسبها اهله¹⁸

Then the Arabs soon (in 756/757¹⁹) rebuilt the ruined Theodosiupolis²⁰.

¹² (de Boor 1883/1963: 429.19-22). For the main facts and bibliography related to the Byzantine historians referred to in the present study, one can consult the recent reference book by Leonora Neville (Neville 2018).

¹³ (Mango, Scott 1997: 593). Tsankova-Petkova's supposition that the name Theodosiupolis could design here Syrian Reš 'Aynā whose Byzantine name was also Theodosiupolis (Бешевлиев, Цанкова-Петкова 1960: 269, прим. 18) is untenable, especially in the light of the Eastern chronicles (s. below) which clearly point out Theodosiupolis in Armenia.

¹⁴ Nicephorus, *Breviarium* 73 (Mango 1990: 144/145) txt/tr.; *idem*, *Antirrheticus* III, 72 (written between 815 and 828); *PG* 100, 508 D–509 A.

¹⁵ Cyril Mango puts forward a plausible hypothesis that the *Breviarium* as an *œuvre de jeunesse* de Nicephorus written in the 780s; his sources were identical or very similar to those available to Theophanes through Georges Synkellos (Mango 1990: 11–12).

¹⁶ The reconstruction of his work provided (in translation) by Robert G. Hoyland (Hoyland 2011) is very useful but, as we will see, could not be used without checking the original texts. For the mutual relations between the sources of the Syrian (in both Syriac and Arabic) and Armenian chronographers on the Iconoclastic epoch, see esp. (Gero 1973: 199–209) (Appendice 4).

¹⁷ If the sympathies of Michel the Great and the anonymous author of the *Chronicle to 1234* to Constantine Copronymus (s. below) go back to him as their common source (which is quite possible but not certain), we have to suppose that he shared iconoclastic convictions, that is, he considered himself in communion with the pre-787 Byzantine state Church.

¹⁸ (Vasiliev 1912/1982: 278). English translation from Arabic here and below is mine.

¹⁹ For this date, see (Тер-Гевондьян 1977: 100). There is an English translation of (Тер-Гевондьян 1977): (Ter-Ghewondyan 1978).

²⁰ (Vasiliev 1912/1982: 279).

“pious emperor”²⁶. The Syrian chronicles, which authors were also sympathetic to Constantine, called this operation as “taking in captivity”, thus emphasising its forcible character.

Nicephorus of Constantinople—albeit in his later work only—described the same events in a heavily biased manner: according to him, Constantine never led wars against the non-Christians (although earlier Nicephorus himself described such wars against the pagan Bulgarians²⁷), and, therefore, he attacked these cities of Armenians and Syrians only because they were Christian. (Thus, Nicephorus denied even the obvious fact that this military operation was directed against the Caliphate.) Constantine persuaded these Christians to accept his troops peacefully and, then, broke his oaths and forcibly took the captive population to Thrace. “I think that for breaking these oaths the Thracian region is taking revenge today (ὦν τῆς παραβασίας δίκας τὸ Θρακικὸν πέδον, ὡς οἶμαι, τιννύει τὸ σήμερον)”, concluded Nicephorus with an allusion to the ongoing or quite recent wars with Bulgaria (807–815)²⁸. One has to mark that the reference to the current warfare theatre in Thrace makes clear that the removed people were settled in the basin of the river Struma (Strymon) or nearby.

Indeed, Nicephorus’ whole later account looks as an anti-iconoclastic mythology, especially in the light of Nicephorus’ own information in the *Breviarium*. However, this Nicephorus’ opinion could reflect a Byzantine view on the presence of Armenians and Syrians among the population of the theatre of the Byzantino-Bulgarian wars in the first third of the ninth century.

Łewond’s picture of the resettlement of the entire Christian population of Theodosiupolis and its neighbourhood taking with them a part of the True Cross is certainly a *translatio urbis*. It is somewhat at odds with not only the Byzantine but also the Syrian chronographers who considered this operation as forcible. Łewond’s ultimate sources, however, would have been the closest to the resettled population itself—at least, in its Armenian part.

3.2. Melitene... and Theodosiupolis again

For the operation against the Melitene, we have witnesses of Syrian historians; Łewond did not mention it.

²⁶ Tim W. Greenwood does not realise the real difficulty of this evaluation of Constantine by Łewond: “What is so striking about this passage is the positive assessment of Constantine V; for an iconoclast emperor to be described as ‘pious’ is most unexpected. It has also proved difficult to interpret. It may derive from an underlying source [that remains unknown to us. — *B. L.*] and been retained by error by Łewond but this contention is conjectural” (Greenwood 2012: 140). Łewond himself was not an iconoclast (cf. his positive mentions of icons in chapters 5 and 16), but the iconoclasm of Constantine’s father Leo has had roots in the very official teaching of the late seventh- – early eighth-century Armenian Church (van Esbroeck 1995). Therefore, it would have been hardly considered as especially criminal by an educated clergyman of the Armenian Church. The attitude toward the Council of Chalcedon was, however, a true problem... Michael the Great (*Chronicle* XI, 24) has also esteemed Emperor Constantine V: “The Chalcedonians hate this Constantine and call him icon-hater [ܩܘܨܩܢܐܘܬܐ; a rendering of εἰκονομάχος?] because he convened this council [of 754. — *B. L.*] in which he determined that one should not worship icons and anathematised John, George of Damascus and George of Cyprus [in fact, John of Damascus, George of Cyprus, and Germanos of Constantinople. — *B. L.*], for they maintained the doctrine of Maximus [the Confessor; the council of 754 also maintained the same doctrine, but it was considered heretical not only by the Monotheletes but also by the anti-Chalcedonians “monophysites”. — *B. L.*]. King Constantine was a cultured man, who adhered firmly to the mysteries of the orthodox faith, which is why the Chalcedonians hated him”; tr. from (Hoyland 2011: 292–293) with changes; cf. original in (Chabot 1899–1924: vol. 4, 473) and Chabot’s translation with notes in (Chabot 1899–1924: vol. 2, 521). The anonymous Jacobite author of the *Chronicle to 1234* (ch. 183) characterised Constantine as “a man wise and fearful to the enemies” (ܩܘܨܩܢܐܘܬܐ ܕܩܝܫܐ ܕܥܝܠܐ ܕܥܝܠܐ); (Chabot 1916/1953: 336); cf. Chabot’s tr. (Chabot 1937: 262). For a positive image of Constantine in the Armenian and Syriac chronography, see, in more details, (Gero 1977: 176–178 and 179–188), Appendices 2 and 3 respectively.

²⁷ Nicephorus, *Breviarium*, 73 (Mango 1990: 144/145) txt/tr.

²⁸ Nicephorus, *Antirrheticus* III, 72; *PG* 100, 508 D–509 A.

Theodosiopolis in the same passage where he mentioned Melitene, and, in his account, it looks that there were two different campaigns of Constantine Copronymus in different years, one against Melitene and “Claudia” and later another one against Theodosiopolis. As to the *Chronicle to 1234*, it knew only one campaign, against Melitene and “Claudia”, without knowing anything about Theodosiopolis. Michael and the anonymous author of the *Chronicle to 1234* were certainly sharing a common source on Melitene and “Claudia”⁴¹, whereas, most probably, Michael used as well some other source on Theodosiopolis⁴², which was ultimately going back to Theophilus of Edessa.

Such an exaggeration of the role of the modest town Claudias in featuring the resettled population becomes especially striking if we accept—as Stephen Gerö does⁴³—Chabot’s emendation of ܟܠܘܨܐ to ܟܠܘܨܐ in the account of the failed Constantine Copronymus’ attempt to conclude a Church union with “the captive inhabitants of *Claudia* [*ms* ܟܠܘܨܐ]”⁴⁴, where the two sides allegedly discovered that, at least, they share the same faith⁴⁵. Here the entire resettled population is equated with the inhabitants of “Claudia” *tout court*. Even if this is a metonymical *pars pro toto*, such a metonymy would have had some reason to become understandable to the readers. In fact, if there was a unique city that would have had right to be chosen for naming the homeland of the migrants, it was certainly Theodosiopolis. Nevertheless, there is a serious reason to suppose that the correct emendation of ܟܠܘܨܐ would be ܡܪܥܫܐ “Mar’aš”, that is, Germanicia Caesarea; we will discuss this possibility later (section 3.4).

To my opinion, “Claudia” (ܟܠܘܨܐ) appeared here as a corruption of the Syriac equivalent of the Arabic name of Theodosiopolis—or maybe it is a corruption of the original Syriac toponym for Karin that has been later preserved in Arabic; the Arabic name of the city would have been borrowed in Syriac. Indeed, Arabic قاليقلا would correspond to Syriac ܡܠܝܩܠܐ⁴⁶. These forms, especially the latter, would have been easily corrupted to ܟܠܘܨܐ, especially in the mind of a Syrian writer who knew well the Melitene region and was interested in it rather than that of Theodosiopolis. The name of Theodosiopolis is perfectly fitting with the context. Nevertheless, this “Claudia” appeared as a corruption of a source ultimately going back to the same Theophilus of Edessa.

3.3. The Faith of the Resettled People

⁴¹ The best candidate among their known sources would be, of course, the lost Syriac *History* of Ignatius, metropolitan of Melitene († 1094); cf. (Gero 1973: 201–202). Both Michael’s passages quoted above, however, belong to the central column of his *Chronicle*, which contents was tentatively identified by Gerö with the lost *Chronicle* of Dionysius Tel Maḥre (773–845, Jacobite Patriarch of Antioch in 818–845), who, in turn, followed Theophilus of Edessa knowing him first-hand; the contents taken from Ignatius was tentatively identified by Gerö with the inner column of Michael (Gero 1973: 205–208). Therefore, there are two possibilities: (1) either the central column of Michael contains some material of Ignatius as well or (2) the author of the *Chronicle to 1234* deliberately omitted the account on the campaign against Theodosiopolis, whose existence we have to postulate, in this case, in Ignatius. The third possibility—that the confused account on “Claudia” belongs to Dionysius Tel Maḥre—remains highly unlikely (due to his direct knowledge of Theophilus of Edessa and no specific attraction to the Melitene region).

⁴² I wrote “most probably”, because the *argumentum ex silentio* does not authorise us to exclude a possibility that the author of the *Chronicle to 1234* deliberately omitted the whole account related to Theodosiopolis.

⁴³ (Gero 1977: 179, fn. 6). Without an emendation, one would understand ܟܠܘܨܐ as Mūd, modern Turkish Mut, historical Claudiopolis in Isauria, but such a location is certainly unfitting with the context pointing to Syria.

⁴⁴ (Chabot 1899–1924: vol. 2, 523, n. 2; cf. vol. 4, 473 inner column).

⁴⁵ (Chabot 1899–1924: vol. 4, 473–474), see the full translation and an analysis of the account in (Gero 1977: 179–181).

⁴⁶ This form is, however, hypothetical. What we read in Syriac sources, are forms with the intermediary *-n-*, such as ܡܠܝܩܠܐ (Michael the Syrian, to whom this name was Greek; he himself used the name Theodosiopolis) or ܡܠܝܩܠܐ and ܡܠܝܩܠܐ (Pseudo-Dionysius Tel Maḥre, Bar Hebaeus); cf. (Chabot 1899–1924: vol. 4, 473 middle column; vol. 2, 521, n. 8).

Theophanes' mention of the Paulicians is not without interest to us, because it might reveal some tensions in religious matters with the population mentioned, although we know that it was in a large part Chalcedonian. Nina Garsoïan did not object to this Theophanes' opinion on the penetration of Paulicianism into the Balkans, although without, of course, considering this resettlement as the only or the principal way⁴⁷. Indeed, it is quite likely that, among the resettled people, there were some Paulicians. Nevertheless, in Armenia, the Paulicians were a minority. Regardless of the possible contribution of these hypothetical Paulicians resettled in the Balkans by Copronymus, the majority of the resettled population was sharing the main confessions of their homeland. These confessions were Severian Monophysitism and Monothelete Chalcedonism.

Theodosiopolis/Karin became in 631 the place of another (after 591) epochal council when the mainstream Armenian Church headed by Catholicos Ezra accepted the union with the Byzantines and the Council of Chalcedon⁴⁸. This Theodosiopolis council became a major event in the Monothelete strategy by Emperor Heraclius⁴⁹. In 701, Theodosiopolis fell to the Arabs. Theodosiopolis will be never regained by the Byzantines until the successful siege by general John Kourkouas in 949⁵⁰. These historical facts mean that, to the time of Theophanes, the population of Theodosiopolis never received a proper "anti-Monothelete treatment", which the population of Byzantium received, at least, after the final condemnation of the Monotheletism in 714⁵¹. It is also obvious that some part of these resettled population belonged to some "monophysite" factions (at least, to the Severian Jacobite, but some other are not to be excluded⁵²). Thus, the population removed from Theodosiopolis and Melitene was certainly problematic from the viewpoint of Theophanes' Byzantine Orthodoxy.

Another Byzantine chronographer, Gregory the Monk ("Hamartolos") who wrote after Theophanes without being especially depending on him and often following the same source (Theophilus of Edessa) more carefully⁵³ preserved, as it seems, a more realistic approach, when the resettled people were considered simply as Christians, without any dogmatic charges, and their resettlement was evaluated as a positive act, despite the overall negative attitude toward Constantine Copronymus. All this means that, if not for George himself, then, at least, for his source (presumably, Theophilus of Edessa), this resettled population was mostly orthodox.

However, such an approach is featuring only the original Gregory's text written between 845 and 847 and now preserved only in a unique eleventh-century manuscript *Coislinianus* 305⁵⁴. A very similar (for this part of the *Chronicle*) recension is preserved also in a fourteenth-century South Slavic (Bulgarian?) translation⁵⁵, which original was the second recension of the *Chronicle* datable to the period from 847 to 867 and completely lost in Greek. The two earlier recensions were replaced, in

⁴⁷ (Garsoïan 1960: 46, fn. 77 *et passim*).

⁴⁸ See (Lange 2012: 571–575), with further bibliography, including the discussion of the exact date of the council.

⁴⁹ See esp. (Garitte 1952: 278–350).

⁵⁰ For the historical frame, see (Тер-Гевондян 1977).

⁵¹ After the first condemnation of the Monotheletism at the Sixth Ecumenical Council in Constantinople, 680–681, it was re-established as the official confession of the Empire during the reign of Vardan-Philippikos (711–713) and eventually condemned at the council of Constantinople in 714. For the religious history of the period, see, e.g., (Auzépy 1995).

⁵² Such as the Severian Paulianist; cf. (Lourié 2017).

⁵³ Cf. especially (Afinogenov 2012).

⁵⁴ This text is unpublished. I will quote it according to the provisional unpublished edition prepared by Dmitry Afinogenov, to whom I express my deepest gratitude. For the details of the textual history of the *Chronicle*, see especially (Афиногенов 2004) [French tr.: (Afinogenov 2004)], (Afinogenov 2018), with further bibliography.

⁵⁵ Published phototypically according to one manuscript dated to 1386. See the quoted fragment at (*Льтовникъ* 1881: f. 347^v).

Byzantium, with the third one, the so-called *Vulgate*⁵⁶, which became extremely popular. It is datable to the period shortly after 867, most probably before 886⁵⁷. Here, a dogmatic charge appeared but it is limited to the standard Monophysitism. It is especially interesting to us that the Byzantine editor referred to the Armenian and Syrian Monophysites in Thrace as his contemporaneous.

Original Text of Gregory the Monk [with Variant Readings in Slavonic]	The <i>Vulgate</i> Text of the <i>Chronicle</i>
<p>εἰ δέ τι μικρὸν καὶ οὐ πᾶν ἀξιόλογον [и не зѣλω достоино оукориѣнѣ] ἔδρασεν, τοῦτό ἐστιν. τοὺς γὰρ πρὸς ἀνατολὰς οἰκοῦντας βαρβάρους ἀκηκοῶς περὶ τοὺς οἰκείους ἡγεμόνας διαστασιάζοντας καὶ πρὸς τὸν ἐμφύλιον πόλεμον ἀσχολουμένους, ληστρικώτερον πῶς μᾶλλον ἢ στρατηγικώτερον ὡς λήσων ἐπιῶν τοῖς τῆς Ἀρμενίας χωρίοις τῶν ἐκείνη φρουρίων αἶρει ὁμολογία τῶν προσοικούντων· οὐ γὰρ ἐχθρῶν ἀλλοφύλω ὑπηντήκει πῶποτε, ἀλλὰ τοὺς αὐτοὺς Ἀρμενίους καὶ Σύρους χριστιανούς ὑπάρχοντας διὰ λόγου καὶ ὀρκομοσίας ἐπὶ τὴν Θράκην μετήγαγεν.</p>	<p>Τῶν δέ γε Σαρακηνῶν κατ' ἀλλήλων μαχομένων ἀκούσας ἐκστρατεύει πρὸς τὰ μέρη τῆς Συρίας καὶ διὰ τὴν τοιαύτην πρόφασιν τε καὶ ἄδειαν προσλαβόμενος λόγῳ τοὺς συγγενεῖς αὐτοῦ Ἀρμενίους καὶ Σύρους αἰρετικούς εἰς τὸ Βυζάντιον μετώκισεν, ὧν οἱ πλείους οἰκοῦντες ἐν τῇ Θράκῃ μέχρι νῦν Θεοπασχίται κατὰ Πέτρον εἰσὶ τὸν δεῖλαιον.</p>
<p>Nevertheless, if he accomplished (, at least,) anything insignificant and not especially remarkable [<i>Slavic</i>: and not quite worthy of disapproval], it is the following. After having heard that the barbarians living in the east are quarrelling about their leaders and are preoccupied with the civil war, he somewhat like a robber rather than a warrior, as if hiding himself, came upon regions of Armenia, overtaking the guards therein with approval of the local population. Thus, he did never confront foreign enemies, but (, instead,) (operating) with word and oaths⁵⁸, he translated to Thrace these Armenians and Syrians themselves, who were Christians.⁵⁹</p>	<p>But after having heard that the Saracens were fighting between themselves, he marches out to areas of Syria, and taking advantage of the situation and safety, took his relatives Armenians and Syrians, heretics and resettled them in Byzantium. Many of them are living in Thrace until now, being Theopaschites according to Peter the cursed⁶⁰.</p>

The anonymous editor of the *Vulgate* provides us with a realistic picture of how the resettled population looked like in the eyes of a ninth-century Byzantine anti-iconoclast. Macedonia was conquered by Bulgarians in the early 840s, and so, this point of view was rather a remoted one. Nevertheless, the anonymous author, unlike his Byzantine followers, did not claim that the heresies of the migrants in Macedonia and of Constantine were the same (this claim occurred for the first time in the paraphrase of this *Vulgate* passage in the *Chronicle* of Symeon the Logothete [ch. 122, 5], composed after 948 and certainly before 1013⁶¹, and then became often repeated in Byzantine historiographical works).

The authentic George provided, however, much more positive picture, going to an account closer to the events of the 750s.

For the sake of completeness, it is interesting to quote one more witness of Nicephorus, from his post-815 work, pertaining to the faith of the resettled people:

⁵⁶ Quoted according to the critical edition (de Boor 1904/1978: 752).

⁵⁷ See (Afinogenov 2018) and another paper by Afinogenov under preparation.

⁵⁸ Cf. the above account of Nicephorus mentioning oaths as well.

⁵⁹ I omit the final where it is said that Constantine with his army took to flight from a limited contingent of Muslim troops.

⁶⁰ Nina Garsoïan is hesitating which Monophysite patriarch, whether Peter the Fuller or Peter Mongus is meant here (Garsoïan 1960: 46, fn. 77). In fact, the mention of “Theopaschites” points to Peter the Fuller, Patriarch of Antioch (three times between 469/470 and 488), who introduced the “Theopaschite” formula “Who was crucified for us” into the Trisagion and provoked a new Christological schism.

⁶¹ (Wahlgren 2006: 190): the resettled “heretics” μέχρι τοῦ νῦν τὴν αἵρεσιν τοῦ τυράννου διακρατοῦσιν “hold on to the heresy of the tyrant until now”. For the disputed question of the date and the authorship of the work as well as for the ramification of its derivatives, see (Wahlgren 2006: 3*–8*).

Given that *mwr*' is somewhat identical—on the level of metonymy—with Melitene, it must be another important locality of a neighbouring region of Syria. Indeed, Germanicia is a good candidate, given that it was the centre of a no less important Syrian Jacobite diocese than Melitene.

The balance of probabilities leads me to the conclusion that, for Ignatius of Melitene and his source, the people resettled in Macedonia were Syrians from the regions of Melitene and Germanicia of Caesarea; ܡܘܪܝ is to be emended to ܡܘܪܝܢ. Historically, some migration from the region of Germanicia under Constantine Copronymus is not to be excluded. However, we still do not have any reliable source on it. Ignatius of Melitene lived in the eleventh century, and even his source would have been relatively late. If this source has been shared with Symeon Logothete, it must be roughly datable to *ca* 900. The temporal gap with the 750s was sufficient for replacing, out purely ideological or Church political reasons⁶⁷, the Armenian region of Theodosiupolis with another Syrian region.

3.5. *Translatio urbis*

From the eastern chronographers it becomes clear that the population of the Theodosiupolis and Melitene regions was resettled without dissolution within the local people but preserved as compact groups. Nicephorus confirmed this impression saying that they created new cities in “Thrace”, which Emperor Constantine successfully defended against Bulgarian attacks⁶⁸. This place is especially important to us and needs to be quoted in more details. As a historical source, the *Breviarium* of Nicephorus is reliable. Here we have a witness that the immigrants to Macedonia established new towns (in plural):

...Κωνσταντίνος ἤρξε δομείσθαι τὰ ἐπὶ Θράκης πολισματα, ἐν οἷς οἰκίζει Σύρους καὶ Ἀρμενίους, οὓς ἔκ τε Μελιτηναίων πόλεως καὶ Θεοδοσιουπόλεως μετανάστας πεποίηκε, τὰ εἰς τὴν χρεῖαν αὐτοῖς ἀνήκοντα φιλοτίμως δωρησάμενος. ταῦτα τοίνυν οἱ Βούλγαροιὸς ἐπολιζόντο θεασάμενοι, φόρους ἤτουν παρὰ βασιλεῖ δέξασθαι.

...Constantine started building towns in Thrace in which he settled Syrians and Armenians, whom he had transferred from Melitene and Theodosiupolis and bountifully endowed with all necessities. When the Bulgarians saw these towns founded, they demanded taxes from the emperor.

What follows is the history of the successful war led by Constantine against the Bulgarians for defending these towns. It will be never recalled by Nicephorus in his post-815 polemical works.

Nicephorus mentioned “towns”, in plural, which were constructed in “Thrace” for the resettled Armenians and Syrians. Moreover, he added that Emperor Constantine “bountifully endowed” these towns “with all necessities” (τὰ εἰς τὴν χρεῖαν αὐτοῖς ἀνήκοντα φιλοτίμως δωρησάμενος). A. L. Yakobson aptly pointed out that Nicephorus said here about “towns” (πολισματα) but not “fortresses” (κάστρα)⁶⁹. It is simply impossible that these towns were without stony churches that would have been no less “bountifully endowed”. The earliest post-Byzantine churches in Macedonia patterned after Oriental prototypes are certainly to be attributed to these Syrians and Armenians and not to Slavs and Bulgarians. The dates of their construction must be later than the 750s but not later than 850s and probably even no later than the late 830s (when northern Macedonia became a part of the pagan Bulgarian kingdom).

⁶⁷ Throughout the whole ninth century, the official (non-Julianist) Armenian Church has been overshadowed with the Syrian Jacobite one, being *de facto* not independent from the Syrians even in her connexions with the Byzantine Church under Patriarch Photius. Cf. (Ter-Minassiantz 1904: 91–93) and, especially (on the activity of Nonnus of Nisibis as the main theologian speaking for the Armenians), (Dorfmann-Lazarev 2004, s. index).

⁶⁸ Nicephorus, *Breviarium*, 73 (Mango 1990: 144/145) txt/tr.

⁶⁹ (Якобсон 1968: 206, fn. 41).

Theophanes in the parallel place⁷⁰ mentioned *κάστρα*—however, without attributing their construction specifically to the needs of the immigrants. These fortresses were certainly build without any *φιλοτιμία* (“bountifulness”). Therefore, these accounts of Nicephorus and Theophanes are only partially overlapping and referring to different types of settlements.

The meaning for the Bulgarian culture of the towns mentioned by Nicephorus was especially undermined due to Vasil Zlatarsky who one-sidedly followed Theophanes and, therefore, considered these Syrian and Armenian immigrants to be Paulicians resettled on border fortresses⁷¹. Zlastarsky’s approach to the data related to these Syrian and Armenian immigrants contributed to the marginalisation of their historical role in the eyes of the modern historians.

4. Concluding Remarks: *Translatio cultus*

The *translatio urbis*, in our case, is applied to Theodosiupolis and not Melitene. Only the population of Theodosiupolis is reported to be removed in full. Even the Syrian chronographers, not only Łewond, acknowledged the preponderance of Theodosiupolis people within the resettled groups. We have to conclude that a “New Theodosiupolis” must have been appeared in Macedonia shortly after 754.

In such circumstances, we have to expect the local cults of Theodosiupolis and Melitene reappeared and reshaped in Macedonia. There is no room here to discuss this ample topic, but one observation should be provided.

An important local cult in Macedonia is that of the Fifteen Martyrs of Theodosiupolis. This Macedonian Theodosiupolis is localised in the modern city of Strumica. According to their *Passion épique BHG* 1149, the leader of their group was some Bishop Theodore (without his see being named), and their commemoration date is November 28⁷². However, in the calendar of Constantinople that is traceable back to the year 900 approximately, on this day is commemorated Theodore, the bishop of Theodosiupolis in the Great Armenia⁷³. This fact alone is sufficient to demonstrate that the “new” Theodosiupolis in Macedonia was a replica of the “old” Theodosiupolis in the Great Armenia (Karin, Erzurum) and not any of the two *Theodosiupoleis* in Asia Minor, as it was thought previously. The local cult of Bishop Theodore of Theodosiupolis in the Roman Armenia, the main figure of the Council of Theodosiupolis in 591, when the Armenian Chalcedonian Church was established and its first Catholicos John was elected⁷⁴, was transmitted to northern Macedonia, where it became the kernel of the new local cult of the Fifteen Martyrs of Theodosiupolis/Strumica.

The cult of the Fifteen Martyrs of Strumica is a complicated phenomenon that must be studied *per se*. However, the above data are sufficiently representative to say that this new cult appeared as a tree planted in the grounds of the earlier cult of Theodore of Theodosiupolis/Karin translated from the Great Armenia to Macedonia.

Abbreviations

BZ — *Byzantinische Zeitschrift*.

CFHB — *Corpus Fontium Historiae Byzantinae*.

⁷⁰ (de Boor 1883/1963: 429).

⁷¹ (Златарски 1918/1970: 267); repeated even by Stancho Vaklinov who was perhaps the first Bulgarian scholar recognising the importance of these immigrants (Ваклинов 1977: 108).

⁷² *BHG* 1199, § 25; (Κιαπίδου 2015: 134); cf. (Христова-Шомова 2012: 321–327).

⁷³ (Delehaye 1902/2002: col. 264).

⁷⁴ See, on Theodore of Theodosiupolis, esp. (Garitte 1969/1980).

CSCO — Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium.

PG — J.-P. Migne, *Patrologiae cursus completus. Series graeca*.

PO — Patrologia orientalis.

TU — Texte und Untersuchungen zur Geschichte der altchristlichen Literatur.

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