

THE PROTECTION OF ORTHODOX PATRIMONIA IN TURKEY

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Abstract: *From the current international press we are dealing with current crisis issues, but in addition to focusing on major international and national events, the influence of religion must not be overlooked. In order to preserve religious cohesion, it is essential to protect the Orthodox heritage. As European citizens, it seems normal for us to have rights and to respect our ethnical, linguistic, religious values, etc. We offer rights to national minorities and we support pluralism, including religious pluralism. But, how do the Orthodox people from Muslim countries such as Turkey, feel, for example, from this perspective? The paper is focusing on the study of the Orthodox churches in Turkey, on the attempts by the Greeks from the country of origin (or other Orthodox people) to support the Greeks from Istanbul in order to ensure the protection and survival of Orthodoxy in the cradle of Old Byzantium. It is also important to take into consideration the existence of the Syrian Orthodox Church. The case study is based on the status of the "museum" of Saint Sophia. In many processes of everyday life, religion plays an important role and can influence the system both directly and indirectly through the mentality of the population. Although Atatürk attempted a secularization at the level of the Turkish state, unfortunately, the influence of Muslim religion and diminishing the rights of religious minorities is now increasingly felt. I had chosen this theme, because it seemed an interesting topic, there is not enough research about it in our country, but it is also a worrying topic in the light of the latest events. Also, the events from the European Union's neighborhood have left their mark, influencing its functioning (for example, Turkey was considered a buffer country in the refugee crisis). The paper is focusing on the study of the Orthodox churches in Turkey. The project aims at studying the way in which Orthodox heritage in Turkey is protected. In this respect, the paper is looking at the historical context, at the analysis of the religious minority rights, at the evolution of the status of the churches in that state. Also, it is important to take into consideration the existence of the Syrian Orthodox Church.*

Keywords: Turkey; orthodoxy; cultural heritage; minorities; Saint Sophia

1. INTRODUCTION

The paper aims to study how the Orthodox heritage of Turkey is protected. In this sense, the historical context, the evolution of the status of the churches in the respective state, the situation of the Orthodox religious minorities and the case study are investigated. The problem identified is the increasingly problematic non-observance of all the rights of the Orthodox, as well as the postponement of the restoration by the Turkish state of the churches (a category which mainly includes the postponement of the restoration of Saint Sofia, which currently has a different status). In order to solve this problem, both the efforts of the countries involved in respecting minorities and the efforts of the Turkish community are important.

The presentation of the theoretical part represents an important section that exposes both the interest of the European communities for the Christians in Turkey, as well as the generalities

regarding the Turkish state regarding the heritage of the Orthodox places of worship and will result in the creation of a framework of understanding for the applicative section. The ethnic groups of the Orthodox religious minorities and their percentage will be highlighted. In this way, one will be able to observe better the numerical relation between the orthodox Christians and other religious cults. In this way, you can see how many Orthodox in the Turkish state is Romanians, how many Greeks, Russians or Armenians, etc.

An important role for the Christian communities in Turkey is played by the Syrian Orthodox Church, which is why it analyzes its organization and how it positively influences the activity of Christians.

The status of St. Sofia has changed over time, even functioning as a mosque for a period. The case study analyzes how this status evolved, as well as the rich Christian culture that hides behind the minarets that the Turks raised in order to diminish

its spiritual importance of Christian origin and to reassign it to a Muslim triumph. It cannot be lost sight of the fact that these communities have tried to survive over time and to keep the ancestral religion unchanged. It becomes thus visible how the issue of minority rights in Turkey is approached and what problems the Orthodox have encountered in the efforts to preserve religious heritage.

2. THE CONTEXT

The Balkan space is one par excellence heterogeneous, with a plurality of nations and religions, etc, and in defining a culture it can be very important to have dimensions: substrate layer - cultural layer. It may prove an unconscious collective or an important contribution to the phenomenology of the Balkan spirit, dominated by the psychology of rebirth.

The drama of ancient mysteries was founded on sacrificial death and rebirth, and the Balkan religious spirit was constantly characterized by optimism. Trans-community care had a result as a transformation of a personal collectivity for multiplication. Admire the Christian to value the subjective experience of the lives of transcendence, the values of the morals of the communes and the religious language of universalist vocation, and the ancient Greek psychological types have been changed by the metamorphosis of the self into the Christian sense. Moral values such as humility, renunciation, love of neighbor (from Christianity) gave the Balkan culture an impulse to spread extraversion, but also spread tolerance. (Citeia, 2005).

At the end of the thirteenth century and the present century in the fourteenth century, the Turkish union of the Kaia tribe, having the leader of Osman, a conqueror presents positions of the Byzantine Empire, laying the foundations of the Ottoman state and establishing its capital at Bursa. After the disintegration of the Seljuk emirates, the Turks subdued Asia Minor under the leadership of Orhan (1326 - 1359). During the Sultan Murad I (1360 - 1389) the Turks began the conquest of the European continent. Initially in the Romanian Country (1369), later it occupied the present-day city of Edirne in 1371, and during the period of Baiazid Yıldırım (1389 - 1402) and conquered Macedonia, then the Bulgarian countries from Târnovo to Vidin. In 1402, Timur Lenk offered opposition in the region. After the restoration of powers, the areas of Anatolia were conquered. Later they managed to be in Greece, Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Albania. In 1453 they ended the existence of the Byzantine Empire. The conquests

continued with the defeat of the Hungarian kingdom (1526), the siege of Vienna (1529), the occupation of Kurdistan, Mesopotamia (1514 - 1534), Syria, Egypt, Libya, Tunisia, Algeria, etc. in the coming years.

The Ottoman Empire disintegrated as a result of internal decomposition and a lost territorial sea since 1774. (Macrea, 1964: 738 - 739). The struggle of the peoples of the Western Balkans against national and social oppression intensified until the end of the eighteenth century, once it began to remain. Traditionally, modern relationships. The most significant armed action was in 1804 when the Serbs rebelled under the leadership of Karagheorge. In 1815, Serbia became the autonomous principality of Ottoman sub-sovereignty. After the defeat of Turkey in the Russian-Romanian-Turkish war of 1877-1878, Serbia, Montenegro, Bosnia and Herzegovina take care of the redemption in 1876 at the Portion, they gained independence. Croatia remained under Austro-Hungarian control and occupied an occupied area with Bosnia and Herzegovina, and in 1908 annexed them. (Macrea, 1964: 878 - 879).

Subsequently, changes by Mustafa Kemal Atatürk focused on six major directions, namely: the republic, nationalism, populism, statehood, secularism and revolution. The followers are changing and can extend more time during the presentation of Recep Tayyip Erdoğan. It is possible to qualify and present religiously, and abolished institution of religious learning, forbidden behavior, and coverage of women, which are distinct for religions. At the same time, women received voting and candidacy bonuses for parliament. It is a model adopted by the Swiss, Italian and German legislatures, changing, thus, they can be surrounded by religious values spreading liberal principles. (Nasra, 2017). Indirect security, immediately following, by Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople can be reached harmoniously.

It is also known as St. George's Church and is considered one of the most important Orthodox buildings in the world. (Istanbul Tour Studio, f.a). In this framework in 2015 for safe protection and survival of the orthodoxy in Istanbul, the Russian Orthodox through the State Duma deputies and the retrocession of the Holy Sofia to the Orthodox Church. This is declared to be pre-edited for the ownership and coordination of the inter-factional parliamentary group for the protection of Christian values, Sergei Gavrilov. In that situation, there is a Russian-Turkish relationship that is in a "process of resistance", initiative and friendly mutual

proposed being of particular importance. The Russian side considers that it is possible a future reference to the question about St. Sophia, another old Christian world, an old Byzantine cathedral associated with the history of the universal Christian church. Russia should endeavor to participate in the financing, but it wanted, held and implemented them to be above politics. (Ortho Christian, 2015). Besides the edifice of Orthodoxy in Istanbul, St. Sophia, Orthodox faith has been preserved over time and with the help of the Greeks in the Phanar district of Istanbul.

Phanar is an area in the middle of the Golden Horn in Istanbul's Fatih district. The streets in the area are full of historic wooden houses, churches, and synagogues from Byzantine and Ottoman times. Its name comes from the Greek language and means lantern. During the Byzantine period of the city was placed a column-shaped monument that was surrounded by a lantern. After the fall of Constantinople on May 29, 1453, the Phanar neighborhood became the home of most Greeks who remained in the city. The Greek inhabitants were called Phanariots. In 1599 the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople moved to the area and is still located there. Therefore, Phanar is often used as a stereogram for the Ecumenical Patriarchate just as the Vatican is used for the leadership of the Roman Catholic Church.

Under the Ottoman rule, the Ecumenical Patriarch was responsible, as an ethnographer, for all Orthodox in the Ottoman state, assuming all administrative and legal responsibilities in civil cases concerning Orthodox Christians. Thus, the Fenar was the center of the Orthodox Christian culture under Ottoman rule. So, the chair of the Ecumenical Patriarch is St. George's Cathedral. The Greek Phanar Orthodox College was founded in 1454 and is located near the cathedral. In the sixteenth century a Greek school, the Great School of the Nation, was established. This is a high school nowadays for the ethnic Greeks living in Istanbul.

3. THE ANALYSIS OF THE RIGHTS OF RELIGIOUS MINORITIES

The social changes created by the existence of a minority in a society are best seen if the dominant group's power considerations maintain the minority's existence. If power and material exploitation are not present, the dominant group is often generous or lacking in concern to allow the minority group to follow its path, which can often create incentives for social change. For example,

while the strong dominant group in society wants the accumulation of wealth or the maintenance of political ancestry, the weak minority group can focus on acquiring knowledge, which in the long run becomes stimulants of social change. Tolerance is most often practiced by groups that control power, and the result is their destruction in some cases. Historian Edward Gibbon supported this idea in studies on the relations between Romanians and Christians in the card of the later stages of the Roman Empire. (Rose, w.y).

By clearly specifying the differences between people, but with the same rights, minorities are supported, regardless of their type.

There may be a level of subjectivity in the debates on ethnicity and religion. In the relationship between majority and minority, several factors influence. In addition to the demographic and sociological aspects, the distribution of power must not be lost sight of. (Brie, 2011: 11 - 12). In the case of discussions on religious minorities, the EU has prioritized discussions on the agenda for effective integration. (Horga, Brie, 2011: 13). The issue of minority rights is taken seriously in the member states, but also in the case of EU candidates.

According to the 2018 census, Shiite Muslims are in the Turkish state at 80.5%, Shiite Muslims 16.5%, Koranic Muslims 1%, spiritual but not religious 1%, others 0.8%, Christians 0.2 - 0.3%. (***, 2017). Among the Christian denominations we can mention the following religious orientations: Eastern Orthodox, Armenian Apostolic, Syrian Orthodox, Catholic, and Protestant).

There is also an important Jewish community made up mainly of Jews from Sephardi, and within Judaism, there is a small community, Ashkenazi. (United Nations Population Fund, 2006). Throughout history, there have been various events that have made their mark on the demographic structure of the country.

The First World War, the genocide of Syrians, Assyrians, Greeks, Armenians, and Chaldeans, the exchange of population between Greece and Turkey (Andriotis, 2008), and the emigration of Christians (Greeks, Armenians, etc.) to foreign countries (especially in Europe and America), which actually started at the end of the 19th century and they grew in the first quarter of the 20th century, especially during the First World War, they gradually led to demographic changes. (Middle East Quarterly, 2001). Taking into account the relatively current international crises, there were more than 200,000 - 320,000 people with different Christian denominations, accounting for about 0.3% of the

population of Turkey (Central Intelligence Agency, 2007), including an estimated 80,000 Eastern Orthodox. (Doğan & Yavuz, 2008) There have been no significant changes since the census.

In Turkey, regarding the rights of minorities, the pseudo-consultative policy was used following requests and pressures from the European Union. Turkey has created a responsive image to meet the criteria, but in fact, it has not created any significant support measures in the accession negotiations process and has continued its traditional policies for minorities. The Turkish state started cooperation with the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, but within the cooperation, the main basis was to support tolerance and eliminate discrimination against Muslims. Secondly, there are restrictive measures regarding work and, implicitly, minorities are discriminated against (Toktaş, Aras, 2009:697), including religious ones.

Unfortunately, the Romanian authorities do not know what the number of Orthodox Romanians in Turkey is or do they estimate it vaguely. Following the decision to build a mosque in Bucharest, it was tried to find out more information about the Orthodox Romanians in Turkey. The Romanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs has no way to identify the Romanian citizens based on belonging to one religion or another because they are not obliged to declare their religion within the embassy. Thus, he cannot draw up any record according to their religion. The State Secretariat for Cults declared that the Secretariat has no powers with regard to non-country believers. The Patriarchate, however, estimates that there are approximately 14,000 Orthodox Romanians in the Istanbul region and that hundreds of thousands of Romanians are passing through Turkey, most tourists annually. Father Sergiu-Marcel Vlad, of the Parish Church of Paraschevi Pikridion in Istanbul, said that during the big holidays it is necessary to keep the service in the courtyard because a large number of believers participate. The Romanians from our country have been involved since 2002 so that those in Istanbul receive land for the cemetery in the Kilyos area on the outskirts of Istanbul. The cemetery was received as a reciprocal reaction to the fact that the Romanian state offered to the Turkish-Tatar community various lands in Dobrogea. The Romanian cemetery has an area of 3000 square meters and is located about 40 km away from the church. Also, on the basis of reciprocity, there were discussions regarding a new Romanian church after the decision to build a mosque in Bucharest. (Ilie, 2015).

1. THE STATUS OF CHURCHES

Regarding the general framework of the church structures, in the Romanian Orthodox Church, but also in the other Orthodox churches, the bishops are divided into several administrative steps; the patriarch is the ruler of the whole Patriarch, he is the greatest bishop, but not from the point of view, but administratively; later, the Metropolis is the next in the church administration. Nine metropolises belong to the Romanian Patriarchate, six in the country and three in the diaspora. These are run by one metropolitan, with the only exception that the Metropolitan Church of Muntenia and Dobrudja is also led by His Holiness Father Daniel.

The metropolises consist of archbishops and bishops, and the archbishops are the most important bishops in a metropolis and are led by archbishops. For example, in the Metropolitan Church of Muntenia and Dobrudja there are three archbishops: the Archbishopric of Bucharest, the Archbishopric of Targoviste and the Archbishopric of Tomis. Also, the one that extends over the residence of the metropolitan is also governed by it.

Abroad there is the Metropolitan Church of autonomous and old-style Bessarabia and the Exarhat of the Plains based in Chisinau, with an archbishopric and three bishops. Also, it would be worth mentioning the Romanian Orthodox Metropolitan of Western and Southern Europe with an archbishopric in Paris and two bishops, one in Rome and another in Madrid, which also deals with Portugal, but also the Romanian Orthodox Metropolitan, of Germany, of Central Europe. and the North with an archdiocese in Germany and a bishopric of Northern Europe in Stockholm.

There are also the Romanian Orthodox Archdiocese of the two Americas, based in Chicago, the Romanian Orthodox Bishopric of Australia and New Zealand in Melbourne, as well as representatives of the Romanian Patriarchate: Romanian Settlements from the Holy Places (Jerusalem, Jordan, and Jericho), The Romanian Orthodox Parish in Sofia (Bulgaria), as well as the Representation of the Romanian Patriarchate to the European institutions (Brussels). (Aniculoaie, 2009).

Among the most important Orthodox churches in Turkey can be specified: St. Andrew's Church in Krisei (transformed into mosques), Chora Church (museum), Church of Christ Pantocrator (transformed into mosques), Church of Christ Pantepoptes (transformed into mosques), Palace of Athiocos (ruins), the Church of the Virgin of Pharos (ruins), Gastria Monastery (transformed into

mosques), Saint George Church (active), Saint Irina (museum), Saint Sofia (transformed into mosques, now a museum), Saint John's Church The Baptist (transformed into a mosque), Stoudios (ruins), St. John's Church The Trullo Baptist (transformed into a mosque), St. Mary of Blachernae Church (active), St. Mary of the Mongols Church (active), Bulgarian St. Stephen Church (active), The Church of St. Demetrius in Feriköy (active), Turkish Orthodox Church (active), Saint Muceniță Paraschevi Church (active). Of all, St. Sophia has the largest historical load. It is said that Justinian built St. Sofia in order to overcome it in beauty. In 1400 and 1600 it suffered a deterioration process. (Darlymple, 2013: 60). The Holy Sofia or the Church of the Holy Wisdom is a landmark in the history of architecture. Byzantine architecture is highlighted inside with mosaics and is represented by marble columns and coatings of great artistic value. The temple itself was very rich and beautifully decorated, the architects of the church were Isidor of Miletus and Anthemius of Tralles, who studied geometry at the University of Constantinople. These influences spread and resisted in Orthodoxy, in Catholicism, but also in the Muslim world.

Saint Sofia has a central dome of 31 meters, slightly smaller than in the Pantheon. There is an optical illusion and the dome seems to be suspended in the sky through an uninterrupted archway that is located on arched windows. Windows help the interior full of colors to be flooded with light, and the vault is supported by pendants, ie four triangular sections that solve the problem of placing a round base on a square shape. The weight of the dome is transmitted through pendants to four massive pillars in the corners. At the western end, that is, at the entrance and at the end of the east, that is, at the liturgical part, the arched openings are extended by semi-domes, in turn, suspended on exedra. The string of architectural elements is unparalleled in antiquity.

The structure was severely damaged by earthquakes. The dome collapsed after an earthquake in 558, and its replacement gave way in 563, but there were other partial surprises in 989 and 1346.

For more than 900 years Saint Sophia represented the chair of the Patriarchate of Constantinople, but also the main venue for imperial ceremonies. At the fall of Constantinople in 1453, the church was transformed into mosques by Ottoman Turks, under Sultan Mehmed II. The iconographic mosaics of the church were covered with plaster because Islam considers blasphemy the representation of human forms. For about 500 years, Istanbul's main mosque was the inspiration

for the Ottoman mosques in Constantinople such as Şehzad, Suleyman and Rustem Pasha. (Orthodoxwiki, 2013). In 1935 he acquired the status of the museum. It was included in the UNESCO World Heritage List among the other monuments of the historical center of Constantinople in 1985. (Ortho Christian, 2015).

5. CONCLUSIONS

In short, it seems that Muslims, already a majority in some countries and political minorities "retrievable" in other countries, they expand and will expand continuously to enjoy all the political, social and economic benefits that this position offers. Although long ago only the majority population was 100% privileged, then by the emphasis on human rights in the West, they made minorities a valuable category in certain countries, both politically and socially, but also economically, although Turkey is not a country open to other religious minorities, the connection between it and the European Union has determined will make various small efforts to support including Orthodox Christians. The numerical relationship between Orthodox Christians and other religious cults has been observed. They do not have a significant share (only 0.2%) but compared to the population of Turkey which large, their number cannot be neglected, yet they do not have the rights that other Christian communities have. In countries with a solid democracy, the status of St. Sofia has changed over time, even functioning as a mosque for a period. The rich Christian culture that hides behind its minarets that the Turks raised to diminish its spiritual importance of Christian origin is evident in the containers. This is an important symbol. Christian communities have tried to survive over time and not to change their ancestral religion despite various oppressions. Although there are not many in number compared to the territory of the Turkish state or the number of believers, the churches in the former Ottoman area work and manage to leave under their dome faithful who do not shy away from asserting their religious identity in a predominantly Muslim country.

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