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REVIEWS

DUBRAVKA PRERADOVIĆ, ED., *ERMIL I STRATONIK. SVETI RANOHRISČANSKI MUČENICI BEOGRADSKI* [HERMYLOS AND STRATONIKOS. EARLY CHRISTIAN MARTYRS OF BELGRADE]. BELGRADE: INSTITUTE FOR BALKAN STUDIES SASA, 2022, 216 P.

Reviewed by Petar Josipović*

Under the auspices of the Institute for Balkan Studies of the Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts, a study on the cult of the holy martyrs of Belgrade Hermylos and Stratonikos was published last year. It is a collaborative work of a group of authors, experts from different backgrounds, whose research efforts on the cult of the late antique martyrs from Singidunum were guided by the diligence of the editor, Dubravka Preradović, a research associate at the Institute for Balkan Studies of the Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts. Apart from the reviewer's preface and the editor's introductory remarks, the book is divided into three thematic sections. The first deals with history and archaeology, the second with the cult and iconography of the saints Hermylos and Stratonikos, while the third is devoted to hagiography and the liturgical celebration of their cult. These sections are divided into six separate studies whose topics are intended to provide readers, even

those whose interests lie outside this field of study, with an understanding of the complex processes that accompanied the beginning, development and spread of a Christian cult from late antiquity to modern times. Before providing a more detailed overview of the structure of this book, we believe it useful to briefly inform readers about the basic details of the subject.

Saints Hermylos and Stratonikos suffered for Christ in the Roman city of Singidunum in the early fourth century, probably in 315. According to their hagiographies, they were tortured by order of Emperor Licinius and executed by drowning in the Danube. Hermylos was a deacon, while Stratonikos was a Roman soldier, his jailer and a friend who willingly shared the crown of martyrdom with him. Since hagiography

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is a literary-historical genre primarily aimed at portraying individuals with the characteristics of ideal and recognizable Christian saints rather than providing concrete historical details about their lives, such accounts provide little reliable information. One notable exception is the precise information that the bodies of Hermylos and Stratonikos were found eighteen miles downstream from the site of their execution at Singidunum. Pious Christians kept their relics near the site where they were found, and their cult grew and thrived there until the relics were taken to Constantinople due to the Hunnic invasions in the mid-fifth century. The joint cult of the two saints enjoyed extraordinary popularity in the Byzantine capital, as evidenced by the unusual fact that their feast was celebrated twice a year, on January 13 and June 1, a practice reserved for especially highly venerated saints. As for the presence of the relics of the two Belgrade martyrs in the church of Hagia Sophia in Constantinople, there is a single mention of it in the travelogue of the Russian pilgrim Dobrynya, later Archbishop of Novgorod, who visited Constantinople around the year 1200. Since the Crusaders devastated the Byzantine capital in 1204, it is believed that the relics of Saints Hermylos and Stratonikos are irretrievably lost. However, their cult has survived. The veneration of the two early Christian martyrs from Belgrade spread along with the copying and translation of many Constantinopolitan liturgical and other texts, as well as the adoption and adaptation of the iconographic programme of churches in new locations. As a result, the veneration of Saints Hermylos and Stratonikos is documented in medieval Russia and the Balkan Peninsula, especially in medieval Serbia, where its popularity is particularly well attested. Although the memory of the two martyrs began to fade, especially after the fall of the Serbian state in the fifteenth century, traces of their cult remained present in the following centuries. The veneration of Saints Hermylos and Stratonikos was

revived with particular intensity at the beginning of this century, when the Serbian Orthodox Church, in view of their historical importance, revived their cult under quite different circumstances, dedicating to them, for example, one of the chapels in the Church of Saint Sava in Belgrade.

Taking all this into account – on the one hand, the diversity of regions where the cult of Saints Hermylos and Stratonikos was celebrated and, on the other hand, the chronological framework that spans more than seventeen centuries – it is more than clear that the editor and authors of this publication were faced with an exceptionally challenging research task. The decision to trace the history of the cult of these two early Christian martyrs from Belgrade in its entire geographical and chronological framework presented the authors of this book with numerous methodological and heuristic challenges, which to a certain extent influenced the organization of the material presented to the readers. In what follows, we shall attempt to briefly outline the structure of the book by first considering the goals and contributions of each chapter.

In her introductory remarks, Dubravka Preradović, the editor of the book, briefly but thoroughly outlines the history of previous research on the cult of Saints Hermylos and Stratonikos, and presents its findings as the basis for the new monographic study. Drawing on contributions from experts in various fields, she confidently formulates a body of knowledge of indisputable scholarly value, while at the same time pointing to the contentious issues that marred the efforts of previous researchers, thus laying the groundwork for her own reflections. In this way, the structure of this publication has been indirectly formulated in six complementary studies.

In the role of an introductory text whose primary aim is to situate the martyrdom of Hermylos and Stratonikos in precise geographical and temporal coordinates, Olga Špehar's contribution focuses

on the Christianization of late antique Singidunum. She traces the urban development of Singidunum from its foundation to the first half of the seventh century. The author examines in detail the emergence and growth of an urban centre on the Danubian frontier and traces various processes that shaped its social and religious identity in a period of frequent political discontinuities and ecclesiastical schisms. The martyrdom of Hermylus and Stratonikos is placed in the context of the persecution of Christians, which was particularly harsh during the reigns of the emperors Diocletian, Galerius, and Licinius. Primarily through a comparative analysis, the author looks at the suffering of the Belgrade deacon and his jailer as part of a broader phenomenon, including the very similar executions of Saints Montanus and Maxima, who were also drowned in the Danube to prevent their relics from inspiring a new Christian cult. In this context, the author attempts to re-evaluate the known facts about a late antique burial site in Brestovik, downstream from Belgrade, which earlier researchers believed might correspond to the place where the cult of Saints Hermylus and Stratonikos had originally been founded and celebrated. The translation of their relics and the relocation of their developed cult to the Byzantine capital were prompted by the political and social crisis caused by the ravaging of the central Balkans by the Huns in 441 AD, which also led to Roman Singidunum gradually losing its urban character. Olga Špehar traces the process of decline of the urban core at the confluence of the Sava and Danube rivers until the reign of Emperor Heraclius (610–641), when Singidunum most likely ceased to exist.

The second chapter of this book, devoted to the cult and iconography of Saints Hermylus and Stratonikos, is written entirely by the editor, Dubravka Preradović. In her first contribution, she deals with the presence and dynamics of the cult of Saints Hermylus and Stratonikos in

Constantinople. Following the origins of the cult of the two Belgrade martyrs, she seeks to establish their identity in terms of liturgical celebration and to distinguish them from the saints with the same names recorded in the oldest martyrologies. Having established that these were saints commemorated in Constantinopolitan churches on January 13 and June 1, Dubravka Preradović analyses their hagiographies, which survive in various versions and copies, the most important of which is the pre-Metaphrastian version, apparently written in the sixth century. As for the presence of their relics in Constantinople, however, the sources are not quite clear. Since the only solid information about the remains of Saints Hermylus and Stratonikos comes from the aforementioned Anthony of Novgorod, the author has been able to draw conclusions about their physical presence in Constantinople using comparative analysis: examples of other Balkan saints and the translations of their relics prompted by imminent danger in late antiquity. Given that their cult was developing in Singidunum during the century following their martyrdom, as evidenced by the existence of the pre-Metaphrastian hagiography, Dubravka Preradović rightly concludes that their cult came to the Byzantine capital along with their relics. Information about the dynamics of their liturgical veneration in Constantinople can be found in the *Typikon* of the Great Church and the *Synaxarion* of Constantinople, liturgical compositions preserved in numerous copies. The *Typikon* of the Great Church mentions three churches where their synaxes were held – in January and June in the church of St. Michael the Archangel in Oxeia, and in June in the churches in Phirmoupolis and Spoudaioi. With special attention and erudition, the author also analyses poetic compositions, including the eleventh-century verse-calendar of Christopher of Mytilene and the subtle poems of Theodore Prodromos a century later, which depict the martyrdom of Saints Hermylus and Stratonikos with a lyrical

tone. Finally, Dubravka Preradović also examines the dynamics of the celebrations in honour of Saints Hermyllos and Stratonikos in the monasteries of the capital, which took place a day before those in the churches (January 12), since their commemoration coincided with the afterfeast of Epiphany in the calendar. Concluding her comprehensive contribution, the author carefully points out that the cult of the early Christian martyrs of Belgrade, although honoured in Constantinople with two annual commemorations in three churches, could not flourish outside the Byzantine capital, which means that their liturgical celebration in other parts of the Christian world was limited to commemorations in January and rare representations in art.

The third study in this publication deals with the representations of Saints Hermyllos and Stratonikos in the medieval art of the Eastern Christian world. Dubravka Preradović first focuses on their depictions in Byzantine liturgical manuscripts, among which the Menologion of Basil II (976–1025) stands out for its exceptional craftsmanship. In this manuscript the two Belgrade martyrs are shown drowning in a river, which is a direct visual reflection of the hagiographic text. Although the scene of their martyrdom is most commonly depicted in surviving sources, in some illustrated manuscripts they are shown as martyrs clad in tunics and cloaks with a *tablion*, and Hermyllos is depicted in one manuscript wearing a deacon's robe. However, their depictions in Byzantine manuscripts are by no means exhaustive when of their portrayal in medieval art. The author analyses with special attention several preserved calendar icons from the Monastery of St. Catherine on Mount Sinai, in which, among others, the early Christian martyrs from Belgrade are appropriately depicted. In the monumental medieval painting of the Eastern Christian world, Saints Hermyllos and Stratonikos have been present since the middle of the eleventh century, when they were portrayed

in St. Sophia Cathedral in Kyiv. With the exception of Studenica whose fresco decoration, completed in 1208/9, contains a portrait of St. Hermyllos – nothing precise can be said about the representation of St. Stratonikos – the author emphasizes that they were not portrayed in other churches in medieval Serbia until the fourteenth century. Only then did their portraits appear in Staro Nagoričino, Gračanica, Peć and Dečani as part of the Calendar, although in some cases nothing more can be said about them than that they existed, since they were damaged beyond recognition in later centuries. Taking into account the fact that both saints were also painted in the Lazarević family foundations, Ravanica and Manasija, Dubravka Preradović rightly points out that almost all of their representations that date back to the fourteenth century belong to Serbian art, mentioning only the notable exception of those from the church of St. Nicholas in Platsa in the Peloponnese. Finally, the author also focuses on the shaping and standardization of their iconographic types in post-Byzantine painting, a process that is clearly not yet complete, as contemporary examples from Serbia show.

Taking into account all that has been mentioned, it is quite clear that Dubravka Preradović's two studies, which form the basis of this publication, offer the most comprehensive overview to date of the development, spread, and dynamics of the cult of Saints Hermyllos and Stratonikos in the Eastern Christian world. This is a significant achievement in systematizing existing knowledge and a remarkable advance in bringing new insights. The following three contributions, dealing with the hagiography and liturgical celebration of the feast of the Holy Martyrs of Belgrade in Constantinople, form a coherent thematic unit and support the findings presented in the previous studies in this book.

In the study devoted to the extant texts of the *passio* of Saints Hermyllos and Stratonikos, Darko Todorović first defines the

stylistic and typological features of this genre and describes its emergence, its literary-historical significance, and Metaphrastes' efforts to stylize hagiography in the Byzantine empire. In the case of the early Christian martyrs of Belgrade, which is an exceptional rarity in Byzantine hagiographical literature, a pre-Metaphrastian hagiography has survived whose content and structure have not been affected by abridgements and adaptations to the needs of *synaxarion vitae*, thus preserving its original narrative core. Moreover, Darko Todorović's translation of the *passio* of Saints Hermylos and Stratonikos into modern Serbian offers contemporary readers a nuanced experience of late antique martyrdom on a linguistic level, enabling them to bridge the centuries separating us from this phenomenon.

Lazar Ljubić, the author of the text devoted to the memory of Saints Hermylos and Stratonikos in medieval Constantinople, faced the challenging task of reconstructing the dynamics of the cult of the Belgrade martyrs within the annual liturgical cycle on the basis of the preserved Constantinopolitan *typika*, both from churches and from monasteries. Through a careful analysis of a considerable number of available manuscripts of the *Typikon* of the Great Church, the author has been able to establish that the commemoration of Hermylos and Stratonikos took place on January 13 and June 1 in three churches of the capital. His contribution to the subject also consists in the fact that he has been able to partially reconstruct how their cult was celebrated in Constantinople, based on the preserved troparion dedicated to the Belgrade martyrs and a note from the same codex, which indicates similarities with the order of service of Saints Sergius and Bacchus. Lazar Ljubić's research also focuses on the study of monastic *typika*, especially the *Typikon* of Alexios Stoudites, named after the author who was the abbot of the Studion Monastery, and the Evergetis *Typikon* from the late eleventh century, in which a practice different

from that in the churches of the capital was noted. Due to a calendar overlap with the afterfeast of Epiphany, the commemoration of Saints Hermylos and Stratonikos took place on January 12, along with the commemoration of the Holy Martyr Tatiana of Rome. On the basis of the relatively few surviving sources, the author manages to reconstruct the dynamics of the liturgical celebration of the early Christian martyrs of Belgrade in the Byzantine capital and shed light on yet another aspect of their cult.

The last text in this book, authored by Miloš Jovanović, is focused on the prologue *vitae* of Hermylos and Stratonikos in the Serbian manuscript tradition. By analysing twenty-two Serbian manuscripts, he identifies two different redactions of the hagiography, one in prose and the other in verse. Both prologue *vitae* come from the literary milieu of Constantinople and have an unusual form compared to the rest of the Serbian manuscript tradition. The author notes that the oldest copies of the Serbian version were written in the last quarter of the thirteenth century, while the Bulgarian redaction appeared about half a century later. Having identified the redactions of the prologue *vita* of Saint Hermylos and Stratonikos, Miloš Jovanović presents critical editions of these texts in an appendix and lists the surviving manuscripts in order to provide future researchers with a concrete basis for further study.

All the texts in this volume, which complement one another, are divided into three thematic sections that systematize and expand the existing knowledge about the cult of Saints Hermylos and Stratonikos in the Eastern Christian world, as well as about the general development and spread of early Christian martyr cults in the central Balkans. It is worth noting that this is the first scholarly publication devoted exclusively to the cult of these two Christian martyrs, which makes it an important contribution to future research on related historiographical and hagiological topics. The book is

characterized by a high level of expertise, reflected both in the methodology employed and in the extensive list of sources and literature used. It is enhanced by the rich design with fifty-two carefully selected high-quality illustrations. In the light of all this, it can be confidently said that the monograph on

Saints Hermylos and Stratonikos deserves a prominent place in the libraries both of experts in the history of the cult of Christian saints and of interested readers, who now have the opportunity to acquaint themselves with a truly fascinating and relevant subject in an accessible and comprehensive manner.

ROUMEN AVRAMOV, ALEKSANDAR FOTIĆ,

ELIAS KOLOVOS & PHOKION P. KOTZAGEORGIS, EDs., *MONASTIC ECONOMY ACROSS TIME. WEALTH MANAGEMENT, PATTERNS, AND TRENDS*. SOFIA: CENTRE FOR ADVANCED STUDY, 2021, 316 P.

*Reviewed by Ognjen Krešić**

Studies of the monastic economy established themselves as an integral aspect of economic history, especially of the medieval and modern periods. Furthermore, this area attracted the attention of many specialists in the field of Ottoman studies, owing both to the specificities of the functioning of Orthodox Christian monasteries in the Ottoman political and social framework and to the richness of their archives. It is not surprising therefore that three of the four editors of the volume *Monastic Economy Across Time. Wealth Management, Patterns, and Trends* are experts in the field of Ottoman studies: Aleksandar Fotić, Elias Kolovos and Phokion P. Kotzageorgis.¹ The fourth editor, Roumen Avramov, is an economist who organized the *Research Network Dedicated to the History of the Monastic Economy* at the

Centre for Advanced Study in Sofia. The present volume is a result of several consecutive workshops held as part of that project.

This edited volume deals with the questions that span the period from the fourteenth century to contemporary times. In the context of Roman Catholic monasticism, monasteries had to adapt to several challenges in that period, from the reformist movement to secularization. Medieval Christian Orthodox monasteries in the Balkans found themselves in a different political, cultural, and economic system after the establishment of Ottoman rule over the region. Unlike their western counterparts, from the fourteenth to the nineteenth century, they functioned in a state whose ruling elite did not share their religion. The studies presented in this volume thus cover several centuries and a vast territory, but they revolve around a group of fundamental issues clearly set by the editors. The first is the question of rationality as an aspect of monastic economy management. Further, the question of relations between states and monasteries is scrutinized. Connected with it is the issue of the participation of monks in economic networks, and local and regional markets, as well as their agency in economic endeavours. Lastly, the authors

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