

Title: Athos in a Sacred Geopoetics of the East European World

Author: Mikhail Nedeltchev and Maria Ogoiska, New Bulgarian University

Agion Oros, the Monastic republic on the Athos peninsula, is extremely actively present at the general sacred geopoetics of the Mediterranean. Millennial is the dialogue, the exchange of people, values and ideas with Sinai, Jerusalem, Cyprus, Rodos and Malta, with the capital cities Constantinople and Rome, with other cities marked by Christian holiness such as Thessaloniki and Ohrid. These are complex relationships in the internal sea of Christianity, multi-flow and at times taking conflicting form, yet they all create a single network where the Holy Mountain has not only been inscribed but has become the source of energies of holiness for centuries.

These problems are explored in the joint paper by Assoc. Prof. Mihail Nedelchev and Ass. Prof. Maria Ogoiska (both of them participants in the long-time project "Athos in Bulgarian Culture and Letters" conducted by the New Bulgarian Studies Department of the New Bulgarian University), along with the specific influence which the monastic republic has exercised upon the Orthodox peoples during the Ottoman rule on the Balkans. These are the second type of relationships, weaving a new network upon the spaces of Greeks, Bulgarians, Serbs, Romanians, Moldavians, Russians. The first part of the paper describes the nature of these socio-cultural networks, the variety of form of presence and participation of the Athonite monks and their disciples in the political and cultural life of the national communities. Presented are also the ways of supporting particular monasteries and the Athos republic in general such as donorship and recruiting of qualified musicians, icon-painters, bookmen. The second part of the paper focuses on a more particular but very important topic: the ways of dissemination of iconographic images from the most important wonder-working Virgin icons, which are the center of specific cults in their respective monasteries. This is another sacred geopoetics of the Orthodox world, which traces the dissemination of copies of the most important wonder-working icons from Thessaloniki to Moscow and the building of particular cults around them. Finally the papers attempts at answering the question why does Agion Oros stay somewhat unknown and almost invisible to the Western man (for example Fernand Braudel has not paid any attention to the Athos peninsula in his illustrious book on the Mediterranean, despite the numerous analogies of peninsulas in it).

Works Cited

www.svetagora.org