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The Battle od Identity: Abolition of the Archbishopric of Ohrid and the socio-political conditions in the Ottoman Empire

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Abstract: The abolition of the Archbishopric of Ohrid on May 17, 1767 is an act that had a deep impact on the ecclesiastical history of the Balkans. This happened during the Ottoman rule in Macedonia, supported by the Sublime Porte. Since the 14th century the Archbishopric was territorially and administratively under the Sublime Porte, which was not interfering with the ecclesiastical independence, and also provided a range of benefits to the development of local medieval written tradition (especially by literary centres), the continued improvement of church services in Slavic language and the development in other spheres of the cultural and spiritual life. The relationship between the Archbishopric and the Porte got worse in the late 17th or early 18th century, when the Ottoman Empire got weak, and when phanariotes and the Patriarchate of Constantinople strengthened their status in the Empire. The phanariotes improved their financial power and became leaders in trade on the Balkans, in Russia and Europe, and so they acquired a range of different privileges, which made them extremely influential. A serious propaganda was conducted by

them against the Archbishopric of Ohrid, one that produced numerous replacements of archbishops, and finally, they succeeded to achieve their goal – the abolition of the Ohrid Archbishopric.

"The history of the Church of Ohrid is a history of eight centuries spiritual independence, I would say, of the spiritual sovereignty of Macedonia. Autonomous spirit of Macedonia is not new, but was a product of its historical life. It was developed by the autocephalous church of Ohrid" (Ivan Snegarov)[1].

The Archbishopric of Ohrid for centuries was positioned between the most important institutions which left a strong imprint on the history and the destiny of the population on the Balkans. Therefore, the abolition which happened on May 17, 1767, is an act that made deep impact not only on the ecclesiastical, but also on the national history of that area. That happened during the rule of the Ottomans in Macedonia and it was performed by the Sublime Porte. Therefore, it is of great importance to underline the social and political situation of the Orthodox Church, especially in the Archdiocese of Ohrid, that somehow preceded and caused the end of one significant and for centuries independent local Church.

Socio-political situation of Macedonia in the time of Ottoman Empire

The Turkish rule on the territory of Macedonia begins at 1392 and it lasted almost five centuries, until the First Balkan War (1912-1913). The Ottoman Empire created administrative units, an official governmental institution, the so-called millet system[2], a separate legal court pertaining to "personal law" under which a confessional community was allowed to rule itself under its own system. That means that, according to the *millet* concept, the people were bound to their millets by their religious affiliations (or their confessional communities), rather than their ethnic origins. The Orthodox Church was first to be recognized as millet in 1454, as it was the official religion of the conquered Byzantine[3]. The self-autonomous nature

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[1] Иван Снегаров, *История на Охридската архиепископия-патриаршия*, т. 2 (София 1995), VI.

[2] Стивен К. Баталден, *Преиспитување на традицијата: есеи за историјата на православието* (Скопје, 1997), 170-172.

[3] European part of the Ottoman Empire was under Rumelian Milet, which was divided in smaller territorial unites – Sandzaks. On the Macedonian territory there was a Sandzak of Kjustendil (Kratovo, Shtip, Kochani, Nagorichani, Strumitza, Tikvesh, Melnik, Dojran, Slavishte and Gorna Kresna), Sandzak of Ohrid (with the biggest part of

of the millet was facilitated by a delegate from each group; so, Patriarchs represented the Orthodox Church and chief rabbis a Jewish community. The millets had a great deal of power – they set their own laws and collected and distributed their own taxes. The courts were in charge of legal disputes in which both sides were Christian, for example, regarding the marriage, the divorce, the guardianship, the wills and the inheritance of property, and sometimes also trade disputes[4]. All that was required was one's loyalty to the Empire.

The new situation in Balkans and Macedonia resulted not only in administrative and political changes, but also in ethno-religious alternation of the population. Much of the Macedonian population was transferred by force to Asia Minor, while a huge number of Turkish immigrants were transferred to Macedonia, which resulted in ethnic and religious modification of the population (having in consideration that before the arrival of the Ottomans Macedonia was a country with a majority Orthodox Christian population[5].

The Sublime Porte later also started to apply an intensive conversion to Islam, which was implemented in two stages and in two ways: the first phase was "voluntary" and the second - forced. Namely, the Christians were considered second-class citizens, they were paying higher taxes, they had no right to perform state and military services, they had no right to carry arms, even to wear certain clothes and for various other socio-economic conditions, they were "voluntarily" passing to Islam. But, there were also frequent forced conversions to Islam(e.g. the famous "blood tax") as a result of permanent oppression, like demolition of churches and building mosques instead, prohibition of the use of church bells, kidnapping women and girls, and, finally, collective islamisation of entire Christian villages, especially in western and south-eastern Macedonia[6].

Western Macedonia), later in XVI century were founded the Sandzak of Skopje, Sandzak of Tessaloniki and Pasha Sandzak (Tetovo, Kichevo, Veles, Prilep, Bitola, Enidze-Vardar, Voden, Ber, Serfidze, Hrupnishte, Kostur, Biglishte, Drama, Seres, Zihna, Nevrokop, Demir Hisar).

[4] Crimes, such as treason, murder, theft or rebellion, were under the jurisdiction of the Turkish courts, unless the defendant was a priest (then competence was on the religious courts). In Ottoman court Quran was used as a norm at the trial.

[5] The settlement began in the 15th century to the middle of the 16th century, when people from Asia Minor and nomadic population from Anatolia (Juruks and Konjari) were resettled. Large Yoruk Sanjaks were formed in Ovchepolie and around Thessaloniki. In the cities were placed the representatives of the Ottoman state and religious administration, and the city fortifications were turned into military garrisons.

[6] Александар Трајановски, *Црковната организација во Македонија и движењето за возобновување на Охридската Архиепископија од крајот на XVIII и во текот на*

Christians strongly opposed to this Ottoman agenda, because the change of faith was considered betrayal to God and to the community and, globally speaking, the majority of the Christians in Macedonia changed neither their faith, nor language, or identity[7].

This strong resistance was always supported by the Church and the Archbishopric of Ohrid, in which the people saw the sublime authority. It is necessary to point out that in the absence of statehood, the role of the Church on different levels was extremely significant because it was giving them the strength to preserve their faith and their identity. Therefore, the impact on the Church that happened later was considered also an attack to the identity of the people in Macedonia.

The change of the physiognomy of the population is particularly noticeable in the beginning and middle of Ottoman rule until the end of the 17th and 18th century, when the indigenous class of so called *esnafs* was formed (tradesmen, artisans, handicraftsmen). So, the cities got fully oriental spirit, manifested most clearly through the construction of a number of specific oriental Muslim buildings such as tekkes, mosques, through the clothing, and so on. Unfortunately, the construction of Muslim places of worship was usually to the detriment of existing Orthodox churches. The churches were directly turned into mosques or other Muslim religious buildings, or were simply destroyed. From other hand, permission for a new Christian sacred object or restoration of damaged or ruined Christian building was almost impossible to get. There was an improvement in this regard in the late 18th and early 19th century; it was possible to get permission but under specific architectural standards that had to be complied with concerning its construction, otherwise the structure had to be destroyed[8].

By the middle of the 16th century began a new structuring and realignment of European countries. There were economic, ideological and sociological changes that have caused numerous political and military interventions. During that period, any rivalry between the great European

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XIX век - до основањето на Внатрешната Македонска Револуционерна Организација (Скопје, 2001), 40.

[7] In those places where the religion was changed, the people preserved their language. Some of those who converted to Islam long after were practicing the Christian holidays and customs: they were Christians at home and Muslims outside. Mark Mazower was informing about these and similar examples. Cfr. Марк Мазовер, *Балканот: кратка историја* (Скопје, 2003), 88.

[8] Јован Белчовски, *Историските основи за автокефалноста на Македонската православна црква* (Скопје, 1990), 139–140; Валентина Миронска-Христовска, "Релациите меѓу Високата Порта и Охридската архиепископија во 18 век (причини за приближување и одделување)," *Slavia Meridionalis* XI (2015), 329.

powers was in Ottoman interest[9]. Conditions became even more favourable for the Ottoman Empire after Catholic France became one of its first European allies. While the Greek Orthodox disposition at the beginning was still hostile towards West due to the consequences of the Crusaders, with time it began to change because of the promised assistance in the fight against the Ottomans.

A propos the economic situation and development in that period, despite the decline of the economic and social development in general, in the second half of the 15th century the situation in Macedonia was normalized and a prominent advancement in this area was noted [10]. But the economical decline in the Ottoman Empire in the next period began also to reflect on the relation between the Porte and the Archdiocese of Ohrid. The Porte started economic strike against the Archbishopric (e.g. with confiscation of church properties and secession of some dioceses)[11]. The causes for splitting up between the Sublime Porte and the Archbishopric of Ohrid started from that time. . Their relationships worsened, which reached their culmination in the 18th century[12].

In the meantime, the Slavic people on the Balkans were raising their confidence towards Russia because of the assistance it was promising[13], partially due to the decline of the economical power of the Slavic

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[9] It happened after the French king Francis I (1515-1547) asked the sultan Suleiman to attack his rival from Habsburg, Charles V (1519-1556). Барбара Јелавич, *Историја на Балканот осумнаесетти и деветнаесетти век* (Скопје, 1999), 37.

[10] As progressive trends are noted: the development in trade, economic and business development in the countryside, the development of urban economy. Cf. Александар Стојановски, *Македонија во турското средновековие* (Скопје, 1989), 69.

[11] In the early 16th century, the Wallachian Diocese passed under the jurisdiction of the Ecumenical Patriarchate. In 1530, Pavle, Bishop of Smederevo rejected the authority of the Archdiocese. In 1557 the Patriarchate of Pec was restored and the dioceses of Tetovo, Skopje, Shtip and Upper Dzumaja went away. In 1575 the Orthodox from Dalmatia and Venice went under the jurisdiction of the Ecumenical Patriarchate and in the early 17th century, the Archbishopric lost all bishoprics in southern Italy. Cf. *Историја на македонскиот народ*, ed. Александар Стојановски et al. (Скопје, 1988), 83. Валентина Миронска-Христовска, "Релациите меѓу Високата Порта и Охридската архиепископија," 328.

[12] Миронска-Христовска, "Релациите меѓу Високата Порта и Охридската архиепископија," 326-327.

[13] During the Ottoman influence, the relations between Macedonia and Russia have been intensified. If before 13th century the influence was moving from Macedonia to Russia, later the impact was in the opposite direction. Like in all South Slavic peoples, the Russian influence in literature, ornaments, liturgy and architecture was also kept in Macedonia. Ј. Белчовски, "Интересот на Римската црква за источниот Илирк (со посебен осврт кон Македонија)," *Годишен зборник на ПБФ „Свети Климент Охридски"* 9 (2003), 98.

independent Churches. Russia became an Empire and the idea of "Third Rome" on the Russian See was already born[14]. Certainly, that incentive to realize this idea, through which were implemented political interests of Russia, was given by the endangered Orthodox churches. In that period many bishops and clerics went to Russia to ask for financial assistance. Testimonials are the numerous letters and documents which noted what Russia has gained from Balkan's cultural heritage and what was in return given as expected aid.

Since the second half of the 16th century in Macedonia is also present the Roman Catholic influence due to frequent trading links with Venice, Genoa and Dubrovnik, as well because of the poor economic situation of the Archbishopric of Ohrid. The reason was partly in the augmented fanaticism of the Ottoman rulers, who maybe respected the bishops that have been approved by the Sultan, but nevertheless, the pastors were not in a position to protect their people. Therefore, their demands to the West were not only for economic assistance, but also for liberation from the Ottoman power.[15]

There were a series of letters and diplomatic visits to ecclesiastical dignitaries who were seeking help from western countries. An example is that of the Archbishop Athanasius during the Turkish-Austrian war (1593-1606) who visited Italy asking also for military aid and assistance for political liberation from the Ottomans. In the period between 1596-1615 he also visited the Habsburg courts and Dubrovnik seeking military assistance and promising active participation of the population in Macedonia in the possible rebellion.[16]

On the other hand, relations between Russia and the Ottoman Empire were increasingly worsened. In 1684 the Holy League was created in which entered Austria, Poland, Venice and Russia against the Ottoman Empire. Austro-Turkish War and the Karposh uprising (1689) were the further reason for aggravation of the situation in Macedonia. In that period feudal

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[14] On January 23, 1589, after a lot of diplomatic negotiations, contracts, intrigues and deceptions, the Russian Metropolitan Job was consecrated for a Russian Patriarch and the Patriarchate of Moscow officially became autocephalous church, which was confirmed in Constantinople first in May 1590, and then on February 12, 1593. Александар Трајановски, "Врските на Охридската архиепископија со Русија и со Руската православна црква низ грамотите од XVI до XVIII век," *Зборник од Меѓународната конференција „Историја, историографија и настава по историја"* (Скопје, 2007), 167.

[15] Миронска-Христовска, "Релациите меѓу Високата Порта и Охридската архиепископија ", 329.

[16] *Документи за борбата на македонскиот народ за самостојност и за национална држава*, т. 1, ред. Х. Андонов-Полјански et al. (Скопје, 1981), 145.

anarchy and banditry dominated, the people began to leave the villages to move to the cities, which in the 18th century led to the change of the ethnic structure of the cities.[17]

In the early 18th century (1711) Peter the Great needed the Christians from the Balkans, when he started to wage a war against the Ottomans. The complexity has increased because of the interest of Russia in Greek regions, especially the economic ones. The relationship between Russia and the Ecumenical Patriarchate was on quite satisfactory. In addition to the Russian policy for achieving its goal - the division of Ottoman territory –were the acquired rights and privileges provided by the previous peace agreements. . Probably, one of the most important was the stipulation for the appointment of consuls, who were usually Greeks, having offices in major cities across the Greek provinces.[18]

In the second half of the 18th century, the Greek colonies in Europe became one of the richest and they actually ran the trade with the Ottoman Empire. They have taken three quarters of French trade with the Orient, and a similar situation was in Russia, Austria, Germany and Italy[19].

In the Ottoman period, the churches and the monasteries were the largest carriers of the culture and the tradition. The monasteries were the main moving forces in which were noticed intensive literary and educational activities. From the 18th century the monks also began to open urban schools.

Of particular importance in this period is the emergence and development of so called *damaskin* tradition, which enabled the use and spread of the speaking language of the people in Macedonia. The work in the scriptorium centres and the maintenance of the liturgy in Slavic language were not prohibited and thus, the people were able to preserve the written and spiritual cultural and historical heritage.[20]

Also, the popular and folk literature was created and handed over from generation to generation, without prohibition regarding themes and motifs. In fact, "the Church and the oral poetry were intermediaries between

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[17] Миронска-Христовска, "Релациите меѓу Високата Порта и Охридската архиепископија," 331.

[18] Јелавич, *Историја на Балканот*, 93; Миронска-Христовска, "Релациите меѓу Високата Порта и Охридската архиепископија во 18 век", 332.

[19] Блаже Ристовски, *Столетија на македонската свест* (Скопје, 2001), 92.

[20] Миронска-Христовска, "Релациите меѓу Високата Порта и Охридската архиепископија", 325.

medieval history and rural culture"[21]. However, it is worth mentioning that the book had also an important place in the cultural life of the Islamic world. Back in the early period of the Turkish rule in Macedonia were also created oriental libraries in mosques, medresas and tekkes (the literary fund of these libraries consisted mainly of books with religious content).[22]

Notable was also the development of the painting; the impact of the oriental elements was enhanced in carving ; visible traces were left in the architecture; the folk song and the church Byzantine chanting remained dominant in the development of musical culture.

The Archbishopric of Ohrid in the Ottoman Empire until the abolition in 1767

At the beginning of Ottoman rule on the Balkans, there were five Orthodox Autocephalous Churches: Ecumenical Patriarchate, the Patriarchate of Pec, the Patriarchate of Trnovo, the Archbishopric of Ohrid and the Metropolitanate of Montenegro. Shortly after the conquest of the Balkan Peninsula, the Patriarchates of Pec and Trnovo were abolished and the Ohrid Archbishopric and the Patriarchate of Constantinople were extended at their cost. Although they conquered all territory of Macedonia, the Turks did not assault the independence of the Archbishopric of Ohrid. That means that even thought Macedonia was territorially and administratively under the Ottomans, spiritually the territory was (in some way) independent, because the Sublime Porte was not interfering with the ecclesiastical sovereignty, thus providing a range of benefits to the development of local medieval written tradition (especially by literary centres, as mentioned), the continued improvement of church services in Slavic and the development in other spheres of the cultural and spiritual life.[23]

So, despite the impact of the foreign factor on the overall life, and despite the articulated religious, social, linguistic and cultural otherness, the ordinary people succeeded to preserve their identity.

The Archbishopric of Ohrid was one of the leading independent Churches in Eastern ecumene. "It was characterized by its high inter-Balkan's

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[21] Стеван К. Павловић, *Историја Балкана 1804–1945* (Београд, 2004), 32–36.

[22] *Историја на македонскиот народ,* ed. Александар Стојановски, Иван Катарџиев, Данчп Зографски, Михаило Апостолски (Скопје, 1988), 103.

[23] Миронска-Христовска, "Релациите меѓу Високата Порта и Охридската архиепископија", 329.

unifying power and tolerance between peoples"[24], being respected and having high authority.

Ohrid was esteemed spiritual centre and this attitude of the Sublime Porte towards the Archdiocese was also due to the confidence to the archbishops of Ohrid the Porte had, who were good diplomats and officially loyal to the Empire. Much earlier, the Sultan Murad I (1362-1389) gave an advice to his son Bayazid I to maintain good and friendly relationship with non-Muslim clergy, especially with the Christians: "Keep them and respect their religious rites; appreciate their religious leaders: patriarchs, metropolitans and bishops"[25].

Therefore, the Government had its own representative - khadi, who was the mediator between the Archdiocese and the Porte. "During the election of a new Archbishop or ordination of a bishop or a metropolitan, with mediation by the khadi, a special *berat* for every bishop was issued, after a tax (peshkesh) was paid. And this peshkesh – a gift for the Sultan, was constantly increasing.[26]

During the 15th century, the Archbishopric of Ohrid succeeded to expand its borders by inclusion of the diocese of Sofia and Vidin, and later has united Wallachia and Moldavia and some orthodox communities from Italy and Dalmatia. In the 16th century, however, the Archbishopric of Ohrid lost their dioceses as a result of the renewal of the Patriarchate of Pec (1557) by Macarius, brother of the Grand Vizier Mehmed Pasha Sokolovic. In the lost dioceses were also some cities of the Macedonian territory (Tetovo, Skopje, Shtip, Upper Dzumaja, Morozdov and Razlog). Previously the jurisdiction of the Archbishopric was limited by the Ecumenical Patriarchate by subtracting the south-eastern dioceses (including the cities of Ber, Thessaloniki, Dojran, Serres and Drama).

Despite the frequent changes in the boundaries of the Archbishopric during entire time of the Ottoman rule, the jurisdiction of Ohrid included nine metropolises: Kostur (Kastoria), Pelagonia-Bitola, Strumica, Kocani-Albasan, Belgrade (Albanian), Voden, Drach, Greben and Sasania, and five dioceses: Debar-Kicevo, Veles, Prespa, Meglens and Upper Mokren in Drimkol.

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[24] Иван Снегаров, *История на Охридската архиепископия-патриаршия*, т. 2 (София, 1995), V.

[25] Снегаров, *История на Охридската архиепископия-патриаршия*, 3.

[26] Александар Трајановски, *Црковната организација во Македонија и движењето за возобновување на Охридската архиепископија од крајот на XVIII и во текот на XIX век – до основањето на ВМРО* (Скопје 2001), 24. Миронска-Христовска, "Релациите меѓу Високата Порта и Охридската архиепископија", 322.

Still, in 1572 in Constantinople, local Council was held at which it was decided to seek from the Sultan Mehmed II to abolish the Patriarchate of Ohrid, Trnovo and Pec. Later, in 1585, the Archbishop Gabriel, together with the Patriarch of Alexandria Sylvester and the Patriarch of Antioch Joachim, with a decision of the Council detronized the Patriarch of Constantinople, Pachomius II, and elected Teolipt II to be a new Patriarch.

All of that was permitted by the Ottoman Empire, because through the Archdiocese of Ohrid, the Sublime Porte partly realised a certain goal: weakening the influence of the spiritual authority of the Ecumenical Patriarchate. Such behaviour of the Porte toward the Archdiocese was also due to their rivalry against the Roman Catholic Church and both the increase and the reinforcement of the Archbishopric actually formed the hoop (band) against the penetration of Catholicism.

To this good relationship and cooperation between the Porte and the Archbishopric of Ohrid certainly contributed the non-participation of the Archbishopric in the negotiations for a union (1437-1439) between the Byzantine emperor John VIII Palaeologus and Patriarch Joseph Roman with the Roman Catholic Church[27]. Another reason for rapprochement between the Porte and the Archdiocese can be possibly found in the time of reigning of Sultan Mehmed, the Conqueror, in the 15th century, who showed great respect for the cultural tradition of enslaved peoples and sought to create a satisfied Christian population, so decided to permit to the Orthodox Church to elected the Head by the Holy Synod, and only after that to approve him, not interfering with the election at all (at the beginning)[28]. The full independence of the Archbishopric of Ohrid under Ottoman rule and the independent election of the archbishop is recorded also by Nathaniel form Ohrid; he wrote: "almost from the 11th to the end of the 16th century, all spiritual and ordinary writers are mentioning the archbishops of Ohrid as independent"[29].

In the 18th century, the ethnic and religious discrimination became strongly articulated when the Ottoman Empire was particularly considering the concept of the "holy war". The aim was the expansion and defence of Islam, but despite the emphasis on the faith, the purpose was not the destruction of the nations with other religious belief, but their conquest and powerful domination in favour of Islam, a policy that was also led by other

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[27] Славко Димевски, *Историја на Македонската православна црква* (Скопје, 1989), 199.

[28] Јелавич, *Историја на Балканот*, 57–59.

[29] Кирил, Патриарх Български, *Натанаил митрополит охридски и пловдивски (1802–1906)* (София, 1952), 154–156

European nations, when the religion was placed in a political context. The situation worsened with the economic decline of the empire from the 17th century which was strongly reflected in the 18th century[30]. There was a lot of crime, followed by corruption and intrigues in the provinces. To these misdeeds, the Church was, unfortunately, also not immune. For example, in the early 18th century, the price of the peshkesh (the cost of the election of the Patriarch), was amounted to 5,600 pounds of gold[31].

The latter half of the 16th century was characterized by the emergence of a class of rich Greek merchants (of mostly noble Byzantine descent) – Phanariots, who continued to exercise great influence in the administration in the Ottoman Empire's Balkan domains in the 18th century. They succeeded to be appointed to high functions in the Patriarchate and, as representatives of the Orthodox citizens of the Empire, they were also involved in its political and administrative life. So they were not only influencing the policy of the Sultan toward the Orthodox population, but they re-oriented policy of the Patriarchate "from universal to national".[32]

Due to the overall situation in the Empire, the discontent among the Christian population permanently grew. The Phanariots convinced the Porte that they could suppress the riots. At the same time, they managed to expulse the Italian merchants from Constantinople and to strengthen their position, becoming "bankers of the Gate and advisers of the Patriarchate", forming in that way the Phanariot Orthodox aristocracy[33].

Guiding also the administration and the finance of the Patriarchate, they succeeded to take control over the ecclesiastical institutions, as well as to pull out some Hellenized Italian and Albanian families[34]. In return, "the Porte guaranteed them their identity and their feeling for historical length through the unique connection with Byzantium"[35].

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[30] During the 18th century there was an improvement of the financial condition of the Archbishopric of Ohrid, because the Turkish government started to introduce reforms, fearing of failure and collapse, because of the reducing of the Christian population, i.e. the taxpayers. Before that, the royal vizier Mustafa Kjuprili (1687-1689) has diminished Sultan's spending, modified the tax system and allowed Christians to construct new churches. The next vizier, Hussein Kjuprili in 1691 issued the first law - Nizami dzhedid, which regulated the legal status of the Christians. Димовски, *Историја на Македонската православна црква*, 283.

[31] Јелавич, *Историја на Балканот*, 60.

[32] Миронска-Христовска, "Релациите меѓу Високата Порта и Охридската архиепископија," 333.

[33] Павловић, *Историја Балкана*, 26-27.

[34] Јелавич, *Историја на Балканот*, 63.

[35] Павловић, *Историја Балкана 1804–1945*, 37.

Due to the weakened military and economic power, the Porte was forced to accept to meet the European powers on their terms, and for the negotiations was needed high diplomacy. The Greeks has their own representations everywhere and they had excellent knowledge of European languages. Therefore, they had been appointed to perform the function of Dragoman - simultaneous interpreter, a duty of Great Dragoman became something like permanent secretary for Foreign Affairs; the Dragoman of the Navy was the mediator between the great Admiral of the fleet and the Greek islands. They also had governor positions in the two Romanian provinces: Wallachia and Moldova.[36]

The dialogue with the Ecumenical Patriarchate was absent, which was tended to become a leading church in the Balkans and through its dominance to impose the Greek language and culture to non-Greek Christians in the Balkans and thereby to assimilate them, wiping all historical and cultural traces of their existence.[37]

The abolition of the Archbishopric of Ohrid

The Archbishopric of Ohrid was weakened the frequent changes of the archbishops, due to the created tradition of buying the *berat*, the appointing document of the Sultan. Therefore, between 1650 and 1700 at least 19 archbishops were changed on the archbishop's throne and the number of changed metropolitans and bishops was even greater[38].

The patriarchs of Constantinople had often accused to Sublime Porte the archbishops of Ohrid who were not obedient and who did not work in their interest. Phanariots not only attempted to present the Archbishopric of Ohrid as a tool of Rome, Vienna and Moscow before the Sultan, but also were assuring that the payment of the debts of the Archdiocese was possible only if its dioceses were attached to the Ecumenical Patriarchate, because only Ecumenical Patriarchate, supported by the Phanariots, was

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[36] Јелавич, *Историја на Балканот*, 63-64; Миронска-Христовска, "Релациите меѓу Високата Порта и Охридската архиепископија", 334.

[37] Миронска-Христовска, "Релациите меѓу Високата Порта и Охридската архиепископија", 329.

[38] It is interesting to point out that, as a result of getting the position of the Ecumenical Patriarch by payment, between 1595-1695 the throne of the church was changed 61 times with 31 patriarchs.

able to repay that debt[39]. In addition to those Phanariots' activities, there was a division among the bishops of the Archbishopric. This division was due to the success of the Ecumenical Patriarchate during the 18th century to change the national structure of the high clergy. Thanks to the good relations with the Ottoman Empire, the Patriarchate managed to appoint its own people for bishops in several dioceses of the Archbishopric.

The commenced vicissitudes of the 16th and 17th centuries resulted in a plot. In 1676 the Archbishop Theophane was deposed after he was blamed by seven pro-Greek bishops, which deepened the gap between Phanariots and their opposition - the Autochthonists. The Autohthonists, despite such circumstances, did efforts to preserve the autocephalous status of the Archbishopric of Ohrid[40]. The Archbishop Ioasaph managed 26 years, from 1719 to 1745, to set a heavy blow to Phanariots[41], even to defend

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[39] The accusation that the Archdiocese was deeply in debt and that therefore could not pay itself, but the Ecumenical Patriarchate could, is not convincing, since the Patriarchate was also in debts. Though economically weak, the Archbishopric of Ohrid was still not delaying much in paying the taxes to the Empire and also there were a large number of reach businessmen and artisans who were prepared, if necessary, to help the Archdiocese.

[40] The internal fight between Phanariots and Autochthons was intense. Thus, in the first years of the 18th century the Autochthons succeeded to change the Phanariot Raphael from the throne of Ohrid and on his place to bring German, the bishop of Voden, later followed by the Bishop Ignatius from Berat. But Ignatius was forced to fight not only against Phanariot influence, but also against the attempts of Patriarchate of Constantinople to reduce his diocese. He protested in front of the patriarch of Constantinople against such aspirations, but without success. The Patriarch Gabriel, through Phanariots managed to change Ignatius and to bring Dionysios of Hyos on the Ohrid's throne. The Autochthon's party changed Dionysius and on his place chose the Bishop Zosima for Archbishop again. Soon after, in 1708, Phanariot's party displaced Zosima and appointed Methodius. The Autochthons drove (removed) Methodius and appointed Zosima again. In 1709, with the help of the Turkish government, to which he has promised an increase of the taxes for election of the Archbishop, Dionysius of Hiso banished Zosima and again became Archbishop of Ohrid. Димевски, *Историја на Македонската православна црква*, 285.

[41] Ioasaph, not only found way for due payment of the state taxes, but he also built a new archbishop's court in Ohrid (1730 or 1735). In fact, he managed only to reduce the incurred debt. Later, the Archbishop Methodius was forced to address himself to the Turkish Sultan Mustafa III in order to be released for the debts made by previous archbishops. In 1757 the Sultan, with special screed, forbade creditors to request from Methodius and each new archbishop was released from the responsibility for the debts of the former archbishops, except when it concerned state taxes. With a new decree of November 14, 1759, the Sultan ordered: 1) each new head for its rising on the throne (peshkesh for the berat and eventually for bribery) should personally regulate the costs, without asking money to the church and their bishops; 2) the Porte will not receive statements of the heads against their bishops if they are not approved by the of members of the synod and 3) the policies of the head, which are not confirmed by the Synod, should be considered invalid. Димевски, *Историја на Македонската православна црква*, 284.

himself from attacks of Ivan Ypsilanti[42]. After his death, the hardest moments for survival startedbecause of the sequence of previous political circumstances, especially through the defamations and calumnies of the Phanariots. The Gate began to lose confidence in the Archdiocese. Some dioceses began to choose only Greek bishops and to fight for the leading place of the Archbishopric. So, in May 1763, the Ecumenical Patriarch uncanonically brought the ieromonch Ananias to the throne of the Archbishopric of Ohrid. The elected, however, was not accepted in Ohrid, and he was rejected by the Autochthonists, who appointed Aresny, the previous Metropolitan of Pelagonia as a head.

In fact, the rejection of Ananias was the last act of resistance of the Autochthon's party. The new Patriarch of Constantinople, Handzheri Samuel (1763-1768), posted the Phanariote Evtimiy on the Castorian Catedra, who won over the autochthons in Kastoria. Then, the patriarch Samuel managed to drag to himself several bishops: German from Voden, Anania from Strumica Ananias and Gregory from Greben, as well as several respected citizens of Ohrid. In autumn 1766 the five mentioned bishops together with the archbishop Aresny went to Constantinople and they forced the Archbishop to submit a voluntary written resignation as of January 16, 1787:

> "With this my voluntary and enforced resignation, I declare that – being not able to fix and repair the needs of the Archbishopric, that one by one appeared before us and in our time, and with that I gave no small opportunity to the criminals to attack the name of the Archdiocese and to insult and damage the subordinate bishops of the Archbishopric of Ohrid and its re'aya, and since it is not possible otherwise to save from their hands the land and the Christians, except with the abolition of the Archdiocese of Ohrid - that just because of that I give up on the Archbishopric of Ohrid, except from my former diocese, which I will hold as long as I live, to nurture and satisfy my needs. In mutual agreement with my brothers, saint bishops, is made this my voluntary and enforced resignation, to be recorded in the sacred code of the Great Church of Christ (*January 16, 1767, Arseniy is promising*)"

The Ecumenical Patriarchate, shortly after the resignation of Arseny, obtained a sultan decree that confirmed the abolition of the Archbishopric of Ohrid and also prohibited any complaint or appeal thereof.

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[42] In 1737, the high official of the Sublime Porte - Ivan Ypsilanti, accused the Archbishopric of Ohrid and the Patriarchate of Pec that they were weapons of Austria-Hungary. Белчовски, *Историските основи за автокефалноста на Македонската православна црква*, 76-77.

The Patriarchate went so far as to destroy the memory of the Archbishopric, withdrawing the diocese's see from the city of Ohrid and the Ohrid's diocese (composed of Ohrid, Demir Hisar, Elbasan and Durres) was submitted to Durres (in fact, the diocese was preserved, but only the see was changed). On October 29, 1776 Ohrid was incorporated within the diocese of Prespa, which bishop sometimes carried the title - the bishop of Prespa and Ohrid.

Later, on May 15, 1767 the Synod of the Patriarchate composed an act to demonstrate and justify the procedure with historical and canonical motifs. With this act, the Synod was trying to give following explanation: 1) the Archbishopric of Ohrid was created by its uncanonical separation from the Patriarchate, 2) the Imperial hatti-sherif only established their old canonical condition, and 3) the hatti-sherifwas a legal act.[43]

After the abolition of the Archdiocese, the entire high local clergy was replaced by Phanariotes, who did not know the language of their flock. The liturgy in Slavonic was expelled in the cities, firstly in the cathedral churches, then in all other. But the low clergy remained autochthonic, since it was not very profitable. The ordinary clergy usually came from priestly families, when the son has inherited his father, from whom he was probably prepared for the mission, often without further education.[44]

So, after eight centuries, Ohrid was cancelled by the Patriarchate of Constantinople not only as a centre of an independent church, but also as a bishop's see. In order to erase completely the memory of Archbishopric, the name of the city was also changed from Ohrid to its old name Lihnidos. The Archbishopric of Ohrid ceased to exist. There was not any longer even simple diocese of Ohrid... because there was not Ohrid anymore.

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[43] Димевски, *Историја на Македонската православна црква*, 290-293.

[44] Миронска-Христовска, "Релациите меѓу Високата Порта и Охридската архиепископија", 334.