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TSAR SAMUEL IN THE IDEOLOGICAL CONCEPT
OF THE OHRID ARCHBISHOPRIC:
TRADITION AND INVENTION (11TH – 17TH CENTURY)

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МИТКО В. ПАНОВ. ЦАР САМУИЛ В ИДЕОЛОГИЧЕСКАТА КОНЦЕПЦИЯ НА ОХРИДСКАТА АРХИЕПИСКОПИЯ: ТРАДИЦИЯ И ИЗОБРЕТЕНИЕ (XI – XVII В.)

The paper treats the issue on the reconstruction of the image of Tsar Samuel from the perspective of the Ohrid Archbishopric. The snapshots from the sources starting from Basil II's sigillia and other official acts, reveals that the representation of Samuel was largely shaped in accordance with the ideological concept of the Ohrid Archbishopric. Depending on the political constellation and the momentary aims of the ideological propaganda, Samuel was either recognized as the fundamental ruler and inseparable part of the traditions of the Ohrid Archbishopric, or was completely excluded within the constructed theories about the origin of the Archbishopric. The leading people in the Ohrid Archbishopric constantly modified and constructed the ecclesiastical traditions for the purpose of reinforcing the position and the status of the Archbishopric, in which the Christian saints were also exploited. This tendency also found reflection in the alteration of the original legend about Vladimir and Kosara, that served Archbishopric's pretensions for obtaining the leading role among the Orthodox Christians in the Balkans. Hence, from the reading of the official works composed for or from the Ohrid Archbishopric we can notice the tendency for adapting, constructing and manipulating the traditions emerging from Samuel's political and ideological program, that involved the cults and legends originating in Prespa and Ohrid, wherefrom we receive opposed and distorted images of Samuel. Their deconstruction is the main goal of this paper.

Keywords: Tsar Samuel, Ohrid Archbishopric, Basil II's three imperial charters (*sigillia*).

This paper is focused on the Byzantine ideological concept, or rather the ideological construct, from where we are drawing our understanding about the image and the role of Tsar Samuel in the traditions of the Ohrid Archbishopric. Basil II's three imperial charters (*sigillia*) issued to the archbishopric of Ohrid around 1020, imposes as the starting point for the analysis, since these documents constituted the basis of the Byzantine imperial policy and ideological propaganda that was implemented following the military victory and annexation of the Samuel's State in 1018. The authenticity of the *sigillia* has been questioned by some scholars, based on their late appearance as a copy in the chrysobull of the emperor Michael VIII Palaiologos (1261 – 1282) issued to Ohrid Archbishopric in 1273.¹ However, we can treat the *sigillia* as genuine since these documents reflect the concrete ideological context of the time of Basil II. Complementing the administrative rearrangements in the Balkans in 1019, Basil's primary intention with *sigillia* was to demonstrate that he was incorporating the newly acquired territories of the Samuel's State into the Byzantine ecclesiastical system and framing them within the ideological concept of the Empire.

The prominent role in implementing the Byzantine ecclesiastical policy and ideological propaganda, was naturally given to the Archbishop in Ohrid. This was quite understandable, since the reading of *sigillia* reveals that Basil was actually referring that he was confirming the continuation of the church organization established by Samuel, while retaining its autocephalous status in relation to Constantinople. Basil even strove to create an impression that *sigillia* were actually issued at Archbishop John's own request, who continued to head the Ohrid Archbishopric.² Hence, Basil's reference to Samuel at the end of the first *sigillia* where he noted that he was actually retaining the same economic privileges for the clergy given by Samuel. From the context "all those kleroikoi are to be exempt from oikomodon

¹ The authenticity of the *sigillia*, has been problematized by Stjepan Antoljak, "Ohridskata Arhiepiskopija vo vreme na vladeenjeto na carevite Samuil i Vasilij II," *Istorija* 6, 1 (1970), 35 – 49; Antoljak, "Dali se avtentični onie tri ispravi na carot Vasilij II izdadani vo korist na Ohridskata Arhiepiskopija," in *Srednovekovna Makedonija*, vol. I, 698 – 708. See more recently, Evanthia Konstantinou Stergiadou, "Die Echtheit der Sigilla von Basilius II für das Erzbistum Achrida," *Byzantiaka* 17 (1997), 265 – 284; Konstantinou Stergiadou, "Die Sigilla von Basileios II. für das Erzbistum von Achrida und ihre Beziehung mit den Bistumern von Berroia und Servia," *Orthodoxes Forum* 12 (1998), 5 – 20. Vasilka Tăpkova Zaimova, "The Du Cange Catalogue," in *State and Church: Studies in Medieval Bulgaria and Byzantium*, ed. Vasil Giuzelev and Kiril Petkov (Sofia: American Research Center, 2011), 219 remarks that the *sigillia* should be treated with caution. See also, Tăpkova-Zaimova, "Entre Ochrid et Tirnovo: problemes d'Eglise apres 971," in *Byzantio kai Boulgaroi, 1018 – 1185*, ed. Katarina Nikolaou, Kostas Tsiknakis (Athens 2008), 33 – 34.

² Heinrich Gelzer, "Ungedruckte and wenig bekannte Bistumerverzeichnisse der orientalischen Kirche," *BZ* 2 (1893), 42; Йордан Иванов, *Български старини из Македония* (София: Държавна печатница, 1931 (фототипно издание София: Българска академия на науките, Наука и изкуство, 1970), 550.

and other eporoi for they were free at the time of Samuel”,³ one gets impression that Basil indirectly recognized that the Archbishopric in Ohrid was established by Samuel. This conception stems also from the fact that it was only Samuel whom Basil noted in the first sigillia in reaffirming the status and the privileges of the Archbishopric. There is no word of John Vladislav who was the last ruler of the state. The sole appearance of Samuel in the first sigillia, the nature of which was to regulate the status and jurisdiction of the Ohrid Archbishopric, further indicate that he was considered by Basil II as the founder of the Church that the emperor was incorporating in the Empire. However, it is also noticeable that Basil carefully avoided any reference of Samuel’s formal title and position within the State that he had conquered. It is quite easy to detect the reasons for this representation, since as far as we know, Samuel did not ask for the legitimization of his title and the Church, nor it was offered to him by the Byzantine political and ecclesiastical establishment.⁴

This impression is supported by John Skylitzes’ description of Basil’s celebration in Constantinople following the subjugation of Samuel’s State. Skylitzes narrates that Basil entered “through the great doors of the Golden Gate and crowned with a crested golden diadem celebrated triumph preceded by Maria, wife of Vladislav, and the daughters of Samuel... Thus he came, joyful and triumphant, and entered the Great Church where he sang hymns of thanksgiving to God then went his way to the palace”.⁵ Clearly, there is no mention of any imperial regalia or military spoils that was displayed during the procession. The reason is easily detectable – the regalia were not granted by the Byzantine emperors to Samuel and thus were considered as illegitimate. Hence, Skylitzes did not mention the presence of Ohrid Archbishop in the procession, whom Michael of Devol only latter included in his additions to the text.⁶ Only Basil’s golden imperial crown was highlighted in description, symbolizing the imperial superiority and prestige. The military spoils were symbolically left in Samuel’s heartland in southwestern Macedonia, with his Ohrid fortress razed and left in ruins as a reminder of Basil’s victory. This imperial

³ Gelzer, “Ungedruckte,” 44; Иванов, *Български старини*, 555: “All those kleroikoi are to be exempt from oikomodon and other eporoi for they were free at the time of Samuel”. English translation from Vasilka Tăpkova-Zaimova, *Bulgarians by Birth. The Comitopuls, Emperor Samuel, and their Successors According to Historical Sources and the Historiographic Tradition* (Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2018), 47.

⁴ For the historiographic debates about the character of the Samuel’s State, see Mitko B. Panov, *Historiographic Debates about Samuel Cometopoulos and His State (10th – 11th Century)* (Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2019).

⁵ Ioannes Scylitzes, *Synopsis historiarum*, rec. Ioannes Thurn, CFHB, Series Berolinensis, V (Berlin and New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1973), 344; John Skylitzes, *A Synopsis of Byzantine History, 811 – 1057*, Translation and Notes by John Wortley (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 344 – 345.

⁶ Skylitzes, *Synopsis*, ed. Thurn, 344; tr. Wortley, 344 – 345.

and ideological image concerning the conquest of the Samuel's State was completely different from John Tzimiskes' (969 – 976) triumphal celebration of the victory over the Bulgarians in 971, where the act of official dethroning took place.⁷

Noticeably, Basil II had to further develop the complex ideological concept in his second sigillum, since he was supposedly asked by the Ohrid Archbishop to integrate additional territories and bishoprics under his jurisdiction. The complexity stemmed from the fact that Basil had to add the territories that also comprised the former Bulgarian patriarchal seat in Dristra. This required elaboration of completely different political content and ideological context, since Basil had to engage in regulating the ecclesiastical relations between the former Samuel's ecclesiastical seat in Ohrid and the former Bulgarian patriarchal seat in Dristra. The Bulgarian church in Dristra had been raised to Patriarchal status at the time of the Bulgarian Tsar Peter (927 – 969) with the political decision of the Byzantine emperor Romanos I Lekapenos (920 – 944), sanctioned by the Senate. When Tzimiskes had conquered Bulgaria in 971 he abolished the Bulgarian patriarchate and replaced it by the metropolitan in Dristra subject to the Patriarch of Constantinople.⁸ Hence, it is understandable why in the second sigillum that required inclusion of additional territories to the Ohrid Archbishopric, Basil II stated that the Ohrid Archbishop “shall possess and govern all Bulgarian bishoprics, as well as all other towns, which were under the power of Tsar Peter and Samuel and were also held by the archbishops of that time”.⁹ Naturally Samuel was again noted in the second sigillia, but this time the inclusion of the former Bulgarian tsar Peter was also required. Both rulers were involved in a context that disclose Basil's intention to demonstrate that he was in fact incorporating the acquired territories of the former Bulgarian Empire (ruled by Peter) and the former Samuel's State (ruled by Samuel) into the Byzantine ideological framework. To use Basil's rhetoric, he was thus ideologically „blending into one the divided parts, and placing under one

⁷ *Leonis diaconi Caloensis historiae libri decem*, ed. Charles B. Hase (Bonn: Weber, 1828), 9. 12 (p. 158 – 159); *The History of Leo the Deacon: Byzantine Military Expansion in the Tenth Century*, Introduction, translation, and annotations by Alice-Mary Talbot and Denis F. Sullivan, *Dumbarton Oaks Studies*, 41 (Washington, DC: Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection, 2005), 293 – 294.

⁸ H. Gelzer, *Der Patriarchat von Achrida. Geschichte und Urkunden*, *Abhandlungen der philol.-histor. Classe der Koenigl. Sachs. Gesellschaft der Wissensch* 20/5 (Leipzig: Teubner, 1902), 38 – 39; Paul Stephenson, *Byzantium's Balkan frontier: a political study of the Northern Balkans, 900 – 1204* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 57 – 58; Florin Curta, *Southeastern Europe in the Middle Ages, ca. 500 – 1250*, *Cambridge Medieval Textbooks*, 39 (Cambridge/New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 240; Srđan Pirivatrić, *Samuilova država. Obim i karakter* (Beograd: Vizantološki institut Srbske akademije nauka i umetnosti, 1997), 38.

⁹ Gelzer, “Ungedruckte,” 44; Иванов, *Български старини*, 555 – 556. English translation from Tăpkova-Zaimova, *Bulgarians by Birth*, 48.

yoke the boundaries, without in any way infringing upon the rules well established by those who have ruled before us”.¹⁰

Basil II was consistent in avoiding to designate Samuel with the formal title, which was not the case with Peter whom he titled as Tsar.¹¹ We may easily find the reasons for the different labelling having in mind that Peter’s title emanated from the legitimacy obtained from the Byzantine emperors, who had also the right to abolish it, as Tzimiskes triumphantly did in 971. That is why Peter was carefully chosen, not Simeon or other rulers of the former Bulgarian state, nor the dethroned Boris II. Samuel on the other hand acted completely independently from the Byzantine emperor and did not request nor obtain any legitimacy from Constantinople. Seeing from this perspective, it become understandable why Basil strove to construct the continuity of the Byzantine ideological superiority with respect to Samuel’s Church, which obviously did not exist in reality. This ideological objective was achieved in the second sigillia with the construction of a fictive notion of the alleged unprecedented consecutive transfers of the archbishops from the former Bulgarian patriarchal seat in Dristra, abolished by Byzantium in 971, to Triaditsa (Serdica), Vodena, Moglena. Basil rounded this obvious construct by noting that at last he has found in Ohrid “the present Archbishop”.¹² Only a quick look at this passage, shows that Prespa, as the first capital of Samuel’s State and the initial seat of his Church, did not appear among the cities to which the archbishops were allegedly transferred. The scholars have neglected this omission, explaining only that the purpose of the sigillia was not to include all the cities where the seat was transferred for shorter or longer time.¹³ Treating the transfer of the seats as an undisputed fact, the scholars use the mid-12th century document so-called *Du Cange list*, composed by the Ohrid Archbishopric John IV (Adrian) Komnenos to support and complement the second sigillia.¹⁴ However, by this they actually use another construct to show that the ecclesiastical itinerary did include Samuel’s seat in Prespa as a place of the alleged transfer of the archbishops.¹⁵

¹⁰ Gelzer, “Ungedruckte,” 44; Иванов, *Български старини*, 555 – 556. English translation from Tăpkova-Zaimova, *Bulgarians by Birth*, 48.

¹¹ Сърджан Пириватрич, “За Самуил след Самуил (Представа за цар Самуил и приемниците му във византийските извори от XI – XII в.),” *PBg*, 27/1 (2003), 94 – 99.

¹² Gelzer, “Ungedruckte,” 43 – 44; Иванов, *Български старини*, 560 – 561.

¹³ Pirivatrić, *Samuilova država*, 154.

¹⁴ Иванов, *Български старини*, 564 – 568. Translated excerpts in English, Tăpkova-Zaimova, “The Du Cange Catalogue,” 209 – 235.

¹⁵ Scholars differ on the destiny of the Bulgarian patriarchate after Tzimiskes’ conquest of Bulgaria in 971. The dominant opinion among scholars is that the traditions of the Bulgarian church were preserved on the basis of the unprecedented consecutive movement of the expelled Bulgarian patriarchs from Dristra that finally settled in Ohrid. On this view see recently Иван Божилов, *Българската архиепископия XI – XII век. Списъкът на българските архиепископи* (София: Гутенберг, 2011), 50 – 57, who assert that the Bulgarian church maintained

The context of sigillia actually reveals that Basil intentionally avoided mentioning Prespa – the seat of the Samuel’s Church – which is problematic in itself and confirms the constructed nature of these documents. Basil obviously wanted to impose an image about the archbishops appointed by Samuel as wanderers who did not have established residential seat. Basil’s erasing of the very existence of the Samuel’s seat in Prespa, suggest that the ecclesiastical transfer of the seats from Dristra to Ohrid was invented for the purpose of constructing the fictitious continuity of the Byzantine ideological superiority. This superiority derived from the involvement of the Byzantine emperors in the abolition of the Bulgarian Empire and

its independence after 971. Pirivatic, *Samuilova država*, 148 – 160 argue that after 971 the Bulgarian Patriarch in Samuel’s state simply took the tradition of the Bulgarian patriarchate of Preslav and Dristra. Pirivatic’s view was accepted by Günter Prinzing, “The autocephalous Byzantine ecclesiastical province of Bulgaria/Ohrid. How independent were its archbishops?,” *Bulgaria Medievalis* 3 (2002), 358 – 359 who argues that “if Samuel elevated the first hierarch of the church in his empire to patriarch, without having obtained the consent of the Ecumenical Patriarchate, then the reference to tradition probably lay in the fact that he, as tsar, had followed Romanos’ I procedure in doing so”. See also, Bojana Krmanović, “O odnosu upravne i crkvene organizacije na području Ohridske arhiepiskopije,” in *Vizantijski svet na Balkanu*, vol. 1, ed. Bojana Krmanović, Ljubomir Maksimović, Radivoje Radić (Beograd: Vizantološki institut Srpske akademije nauka i umetnosti, 2012), 33 – 35. For the alternative view that the church organization created within Samuel’s State based in Prespa and Ohrid was completely independent from the Bulgarian church traditions and was recognized as such by the Roman Papacy, see Стјепан Антољак, “Охридската архиепископија во време на владеењето на царевите Самуил и Василиј II,” *Историја* 6, 1 (1970), 35 – 49; Антољак, *Средновековна Македонија*, vol. I (Скопје: Мисла, 1985), 507 – 517. The same opinion is maintained by Бранко Панов, *Средновековна Македонија*, vol. III (Скопје: Мисла, 1985), 726; Б. Панов, *Македонија низ историјата*. Проучувања на македонската историја и култура (Скопје: Менора, 1999), 79. See also, Јован Белчовски, *Охридската архиепископија од основањето до паѓањето на Македонија под турска власт* (Скопје: Култура, 1997), 77 – 89. Most recently Angeliki Delikari, “Die Situation im Nord-West Makedonien während der Regierung des Basileos II., die sogenannte Kirche des Zaren Samuel und die Gründung des Erzbistums von Ohrid,” in *Европейскиот југоизток през втората половина на X – почетокот на XI век: историја и култура: меѓународна конференција, Софија, 6 – 8 октомври, 2014*, ed. Васил Гюзелев, Георги Н. Николов (Софија: Българска академия на науките, 2015), 236 – 243, observes that Samuel maintained the existing church organization in Macedonia, which was during his reign most probably under the jurisdiction of the Roman church. She argues that the Archbishopric of Ohrid was established by Basil II in 1018 while the title Archbishop of Bulgaria, actually “corresponded to the name of the Byzantine theme of Bulgaria and had no connection with the Bulgarian church itself”. Hence, her conclusion that Ohrid Archbishopric was neither a continuator of the Bulgarian church, nor it continued the Church of the ephemeral Samuel’s state (Delikari, *H Arhiepiskopi Ahridon kata ton Mesaiona* (Thessaloniki: University studio press, 2014), 75 – 103. What can be deduced from the sources with certainty is that Tzimiskes officially abolished the Bulgarian patriarchate in 971 and that the subsequent accounts of the Byzantine authors refer only to the Church within Samuel’s state having a status of an Archbishopric.

Church in 971, which necessitated mentioning tsar Peter and Bulgarian Patriarchy in Dristra in the second sigillia. The image of wandering archbishops in Samuel's State added to the created illusion of unbroken line of ideological dominance. It was obviously non-existent in reality since Samuel's Church was established and acted in complete independence from Constantinople.

However, the question remains why Basil II and the people around him choose the precise itinerary of the alleged transfer of the seat to Serdica – Vodena – Moglena – Ohrid. Since we are dealing with the invention it is impossible to give a proper answer, apart from assuming Basil's ideological motives behind it. Still, if we look closely at the available sources, the invented transfer of the seat of the archbishops may mirror Basil's war itinerary of the conquests of the Samuel's State following the battle of Kleidion and the death of Samuel. This impression stems from Skylitzes' reference about Basil's military campaign in 1015 where we notice the same itinerary of the conquests of Vodena, Moglena and Ohrid.¹⁶ Triaditsa (Serdica) is not listed among the cities taken by Basil during this campaign. However, Skylitzes' obscured testimony does not rule out that Basil also took Serdica during the year of 1015. What we have from Skylitzes' testimony is that in 1015, Basil sent detachment "against the stronghold of Triaditsa under the command of Xiphias, who razed all the open country and then took the stronghold known as Boio by storm".¹⁷ Describing the events that occurred the following year, Skylitzes states that Basil II "left the capital and went to Triaditsa where he encamped before the fortress of Pernikos". After the unsuccessful siege of Pernikos that lasted for eighty-eight days, Basil "withdrew, empty-handed, and fell back on Mosynoupolis".¹⁸ This passage shows that Basil used the itinerary Constantinople-Mosynoupolis-Triaditsa before arriving in Pernik, which does not preclude the possibility that Serdica was already taken by the Byzantines in 1015. Moreover, there is no reference of Serdica further in Skylitzes' narration, nor it is mentioned among the cities that surrendered to Basil II in 1018. We hear from Skylitzes only about "the famous city of Pernik and 35 other fortresses ruled by Krakra" that finally surrendered to the emperor in 1018.¹⁹ Serdica had especially strong symbolic military meaning for Basil having in mind his humiliating defeat that took place after the unsuccessful siege of the city in 986. The city also provided important ideological message, being the place where the well know church Council was conveyed in 343 by the sons of Constantine the Great. Thus, the inclusion of Serdica in Basil's invented transfer of the seats only raised the victorious image of the emperor in both military and ideological context.

¹⁶ Skylitzes, *Synopsis*, ed. Thurn, 352; tr. Wortley, 333 – 334 (Vodena and Moglena); Skylitzes, *Synopsis*, ed. Thurn, 353; tr. Wortley, 335 (Ohrid).

¹⁷ Skylitzes, *Synopsis*, ed. Thurn, 354; tr. Wortley, 335 – 336.

¹⁸ Skylitzes, *Synopsis*, ed. Thurn, 355; tr. Wortley, 336.

¹⁹ Skylitzes, *Synopsis*, ed. Thurn, 357; tr. Wortley, 338.

Be as it may, the sigillias are a clear example of how the ecclesiastical issues were involved in providing ideological support for the imperial order and propaganda. Basil's aim was to demonstrate that in restoring Byzantine political and ecclesiastical authority, he was actually re-establishing order and continuity of the ideological supremacy from his predecessors. Order was clearly achieved through the conquest of Samuel's State, which had illegally emerged from the "apostasy" against the Byzantine emperors when Samuel's Church was established and existed without the blessing of Byzantium. Hence, with Basil's sigillia the Archbishopric in Ohrid was not only described, but it was also acquired and presented as rightfully belonging to Byzantium.

Indicatively, Basil did not name any of his predecessors, which provided the space for further reshaping of the ideological construct. However, Samuel's role as regards to Ohrid Archbishopric was clearly ascertained. Samuel was mentioned two times although not being the last ruler of the State. On the other hand, the mention of the Bulgarian Tsar Peter, instead of Simeon or Boris II, further symbolized the Byzantine ideological superiority. This way the territory that was added with the second sigillia to the jurisdiction of the Ohrid Archbishopric was clearly marked, by which Basil noted that he was granting the Archbishop diocese as large as "that under Tsar Peter". However, obviously Basil II was not following Peter, but Samuel in continuing the privileges of the Samuel's Church and the practice of appointing archbishops independently from Constantinople. By this, the Byzantine emperor indirectly recognized the autocephalous status of Samuel's Church, by proclaiming it as a seat of the newly established Byzantine ecclesiastical diocese that he had conveniently named "Bulgaria" to demonstrate the imperial superiority over the divided territory that he was blending into one.²⁰

Basil's well-developed ideological construct became the basis for the implementation of the Byzantine policy in the Balkans via the Ohrid Archbishopric that became one of its key instruments. However, as is the case with all the constructs, Basil's was also shaped and adapted in accordance with the momentary political agenda and in compliance with the objectives of the imperial propaganda. Hence, it was already revisited in the altered ambient of the end of 11th and beginning of 12th century, following the rebellions in the Balkans that aspired to restore Samuel's State. The work of Theophylaktos of Ohrid shows that from the end of 11th and beginning of 12th century Samuel was tendentiously avoided in respect to traditions of Ohrid Archbishopric. Even Samuel's role in building the Church of St. Achilles in Prespa was silenced by Theophylaktos. Possibly, this has to do with the fact, which

²⁰ On the term "Bulgaria" as an imposed terminological construct as regards to Samuel's State, see M. B. Panov, *The Blinded State*, 28 – 100.

Theophylaktos himself recognized, that he was received by the citizens in Ohrid, with „martial victorious songs” which clearly echoed Samuel’s time.²¹

The deliberate silencing of Samuel’s role in relation to Ohrid Archbishopric in the official work and rhetoric of the leading people of the Archbishopric, can also be explained with their tendency to connect with older traditions and the Byzantine emperors before Basil II. Thus, apart from linking the traditions with the cult of St. Clement, the Ohrid Archbishops starting from Theophylaktos traced even older origins that stretched back to Justinian I’s time. Emperor Justinian I (527 – 565) and his Archbishopric Justiniana Prima provided more solid arguments in justifying the old rights of the Archbishopric, by which the continuity of the ideological superiority in the Balkans was demonstrated. An illustrative example of the propensity of linking Ohrid Archbishopric with Justiniana Prima is the work of Michael of Devol, who was acting as a bishop in the Macedonian town of Devol in the early 12th century. In his interpolations to Skylitzes text, Michael presented his own ideological understanding of the Byzantine ecclesiastical policy implemented by Basil II in regards to the Ohrid Archbishopric:

The emperor again confirmed that the <arch>bishop[-ric] of Bulgaria was autocephalous as it had been formerly under Romanos the Elder. This was because he drew a conclusion from the constitutions of the emperor Justinian that it was Justiniana Prima which that emperor claimed to be his fatherland and which then had Kastellion as its bishop.²²

From this short passage one can clearly notice that towards the end of the 11th and beginning of the 12th century, Basil’s ideological construct had already been revised to include Justiniana Prima. Comparison with Basil’s sigillia reveals another important aspect. Michael of Devol states that it was Basil II who had confirmed the autocephalous status of Ohrid’s archbishopric, at the same time referring to the emperor Romanos I Lekapenus who in fact recognized the status of the Bulgarian patriarchate, abolished in 971. What the bishop of Devol was referring to is that Basil actually confirmed the status of Ohrid Archbishopric established by Samuel, as formerly did Romanos with the Bulgarian patriarchy. To this end, he invoked the rights deriving from Justinian I and his Justiniana Prima, differentiating the Basil’s act from that of Romanos Lakapenos’. Hence, the interpolation of Michael of Devol can be interpreted as the tendency for exemplification of the older origin and independent status of the Ohrid Archbishopric, not as the reference for its equitation with the Bulgarian patriarchy. Michael of Devol in fact followed Basil’s sigillia

²¹ Theophylaktos of Ohrid, *Letters*, ep. 6, ed. Gauter, 147 – 149. See also, B. Panov, *Teofilakt Ohrid kako izvor za istorijata na makedonskiot narod* (Skopje: Kultura, 1971); Pirivatrić, *Samuilova država*, 210.

²² Skylitzes, *Synopsis*, ed. Thurn, 365; tr. Wortley, 345.

in creating a fictitious notion of continuity of Byzantine ideological superiority. However, we can notice clear difference in Michael of Devol's interpolation, which created an impression that Basil II established an order following the annexation of Samuel's State on the basis of political and ecclesiastical rights that emanated from Justinian's time, not from his recent predecessors. This modification was used for demonstrating the old ecclesiastical rights of Byzantium over the Ohrid Archbishopric, that was autocephalous and independent from Constantinople and different from the former Bulgarian patriarchy.²³ In this way Ohrid Archbishopric's ideological superiority was asserted, without engaging with the complicated ecclesiastical arrangements emanating from Samuel's State, initially constructed with Basil's sigillia. Basil's concept of creating an illusion of the continuity of Byzantine ideological superiority with the established ecclesiastical order through the Ohrid Archbishopric, was clearly no longer satisfactory and needed further justification. That required additional construction of the traditions as regards to Ohrid Archbishopric, with the purpose of demonstrating that its autocephalous status confirmed by Basil II, was not based on the act of Romanos I, but emanated from the rights given by Justinian I. With the addition of older traditions to Samuel's church, Byzantine ecclesiastical establishment from the end of 11th and beginning of 12th century tried to provide additional arguments for acquiring the Ohrid Archbishopric and its traditions, using as a basis the ideological construct of Basil II.

The Ohrid archbishop John IV (Adrian) Komnenos is credited for officialising the theory that equated the identity of Archbishopric with Justiniana Prima.²⁴ Komnenos' signature of the Acts of the Council in Constantinople held in 1157 shows that he started to use the title *Iustiniana Prima and All Bulgaria* as an official des-

²³ This explains the criticism of Theophylaktos of Ohrid for the interference of the Constantinopolitan patriarch in Macedonia, arguing "What rights has the patriarch in the land of Bulgaria, he who has no authority to ordain anyone here, nor any other privilege in this land, which had acquired an autocephalous archbishop?" (*Theophylact of Ohrid*, ep. 82, ed. Gautier, 437). See, Curta, *The Southeastern Europe in the Middle Ages*, 286 – 287.

²⁴ On the theory of Justiniana Prima and its ideological connection with Archbishopric of Ohrid, see: Božidar Prokić, "Postanak Ohrskeg Patrijarhata," *Glas srpske kraljevske akademije* 90 (1912), 175 – 267. Günter Prinzing, "Entstehung und Rezeption der Justiniana-Prima-Theorie im Mittelalter," *Byzantinobulgarica* 5 (1978), 269 – 287; Prinzing, "A Quasi Patriarch in the State of Epiros: The autocephalous archbishop of 'Bulgaria' (Ohrid) Demetrios Chomatenos," *ZRVI* 41 (2004), 165 – 182; Prinzing, "The autocephalous Byzantine ecclesiastical province of Bulgaria/Ohrid," 353 – 383. Ruth Macrides, "Bad Historian or Good Lawyer: Demetrios Chomatenos and Novel 131," *DOP* 46 (1992), 187 – 196. Eleonora Naxidou, "An Aspect of Medieval History of Archbishop of Ohrid: Its Connection with Justinijana Prima," *Vuzantinoslavica* 64 (2006), 153 – 167; Илия Г. Илиев, "Димитър, по Божия милост архиепископ на Първа Юстиниана и на цяла България," *Исторически преглед* 1 – 2 (2004), 3 – 39; И. Г. Илиев, *Охридският архиепископ Димитър Хоматиан и българите* (София: Анубис, 2010), 15 – 22.

ignation of the Ohrid Archbishopric.²⁵ He thus promoted the direct linkage of Ohrid Archbishopric to Justinian I and his Justiniana Prima. The *Du Cange List*, most probably written in the mid-12th century by John IV Komnenos, is a clear example how the invented fictitious ecclesiastical continuity in Basil's sigillia was enlarged to include Protogenus from Serdica (bishop from 4th century participating at the Council of Serdica held in 343), the saints Methodius, Gorazd and Clement.²⁶ The inclusion of Prespa as one of the seats of the archbishops, which was not the case with Basil's sigillia, and the exclusion of Moglena and also of David referred to by Skylitzes as the last Archbishop of Samuel's State in Ohrid (replaced by Philip), indicates that the Byzantine ideological construct was being continuously re-adjusted. The initial Basil's constructed ecclesiastical itinerary was obviously not longer satisfactory. In new circumstances there was a need to adjust this construct in reinforcing the status and elevating the position of the Archbishopric in the contemporary affairs of the Balkans, by linking the line of Ohrid Archbishopric with the prominent ecclesiastical figures and saints that stretched back even to 4th century.

Ohrid Archbishops from the 13th century, such was Demetrios Chomatenos (1216 to 1236), continued to reshape and reinforce the ideological construct, by exemplifying the cult of St. Clement and further advancing the direct link of the Archbishopric with Justiniana Prima.²⁷ The Byzantine emperor Michael VIII Palaiologos also emphasized this direct connection, while incorporating the copies of Basil's sigillia in his chrysobull to Ohrid Archbishopric from 1273. This act of re-defining the territory of the Ohrid Archbishopric reveals the emperor's ambition of renewing the Byzantine authority over the autocephalous Serbian and Bulgarian churches. Michael VIII evidently followed Basil's ideological concept in reaffirming the status of Ohrid Archbishopric, to which he added the theory of Justiniana Prima. The message was clear – as Basil II restored the Byzantine superiority in the Balkans through the Ohrid Archbishopric – Michael VIII was doing the same with issuing the sigillias of the celebrated emperor, to which he added Justiniana Prima.²⁸ Indicatively, although the name of Samuel appeared in sigillia, he was not

²⁵ Gelzer, *Der Patriarchat*, 9.

²⁶ Иванов, *Български старини*, 564 – 568. Translated excerpts in English, Tăpkova-Zaimova, "The Du Cange Catalogue," In *State and Church: Studies in Medieval Bulgaria and Byzantium*, ed. Vasil Giuzelev and Kiril Petkov (Sofia: American Research Center, 2011), 209 – 235.

²⁷ Митко Б. Панов, "Светиклиментовите традиции во Македонија низ призмата на Византија," in *Светиклиментовите традиции во Македонија* (Скопје: НУБ, 2009), 61 – 79.

²⁸ Since the original chrysobull has not survived, as was the case with Basil's sigillia, we are reconstructing it from later Greek copies and its Slavic translation from 15th century. The introduction of Michael VIII is reprinted in *Codex diplomaticus arpadianus continuantus*. ed. Gusztáv Wenzel, Monumenta Hungariæ Historica VIII. Diplomataria XIII (Pest: Eggenberger Ferdinánd Akademiai, 1870), 431 – 434. See, also Afanasii Selishtsev, "Zavet pervoi Iustiniani," *Makedonski pregled* 9/2 (1934), 9 – 16; David J. Birnbaum, "A Slavic Translation of the Ohrid Chrysobull of 1273," *Acta Universitatis Szegediensis de Attila József Nominatae. Dissertationes*

mentioned in Michael's introduction to the Ohrid chrysobul. This reflects the continuity in the trend of the Ohrid Archbishops to erase Samuel from the traditions of the Archbishops.

It is worth mentioning that the Byzantine narratives composed during 12th and beginning of 13th century, exempting those who actually fully copied (George Kedrenos) or rewrote Skylitzes' synopsis (Zonaras and Michael Glykas), or made additions to the original text (Michael of Devol), completely omitted Samuel's name while glorifying the wars of Basil, who became known from the end of 12th century with the epithet "Bulgar-slayer".²⁹ Samuel's name was also quite rarely used by Byzantine authors from the 14th century (Ephraim and Staurakios), although they exploited the image of Basil II and his war victories. The other issue is how and why the leaders of the Second Bulgarian Empire exploited Byzantine narratives and Basil's ideological construct and adapted it, for the purpose of inventing their own state and ecclesiastical continuity. The same applies to the question about the motives of the pope Innocent III (1198 – 1216) to recognize the falsified claim of Ioannitsa Kaloianes (1197 – 1207) in regards to the immediate involvement of the Papacy in crowning of the Bulgarian Tsar Peter, which probably implies to the crowning of Samuel as well.³⁰

After the elimination of the Byzantine Empire by the Ottomans in 1453, the legendary struggle between Basil II and Samuel was neglected in literary tradition. Although absent in the literary texts, the memory of Samuel undoubtedly continued to be maintained, through the cults and legends that originated in the former heartland of the Samuel's State in Ohrid and Prespa, such as St. Achilleios, St. Vladi-

Slavicae, Sectio Lingüistica 21 (1990), 267 – 284. On the dating of the Chrusobull with arguments for the year 1273, see Andreas E. Müller, "Zur Datierung des Chrysobulls Michaels VIII für Ochrid: nicht August 1272, sondern 1273," in *Zwischen Polis, Provinz und Peripherie. Beiträge zur byzantinischen Geschichte und Kultur*, ed. Lars M. Hoffmann (Wiesbaden, 2005), 427 – 432.

²⁹ Paul Stephenson, *The Legend of Basil the Bulgar-slayer* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003). For the opposing view that Basil II was considered as the "Bulgar-Slayer" in the collective imagination of the "Bulgarian" population immediately following the battle of Kleidion, see Angel Nikolov, "On Basil II's cognomen 'The Bulgar-Slayer,'" in *Evropeiskiiat Iugoistok prez vtorata polovina na X – nachaloto na XI vek: Istoriia i kultura, Mezhdunarodna konferentsiia Sofiia, 6 – 8 Oktomvri, 2014*, ed. Vasil Giuzelev, Georgi N. Nikolov (Sofia: Bălgarska Akademiia na naukite, 2015), 578 – 584; A. Nikolov, "Okolo prozvishteto na Vasilii II 'Bălgaroubiets'," in *Hiliada godini ot bitkata pri Belasitsa i ot smărtta na tsar Samuil (1014 – 2014), dokladi ot Mezhdunarodnata nauchna konferentsiia provedena v grad Petrich, 9 oktomvri 2014*, ed. Vasil Giuzelev, Georgi N. Nikolov (Sofia: Gutenberg, 2015), 84 – 91; A. Nikolov, *Mezhdu Rim i Konstantinopol. Iz antikatolicheskata literatura v Bălgariia i slavianskiia pravoslaven svet, XI – XVII v.* (Sofia: Fondatsiia Bălgarsko istorichsesko nasledstvo, 2016), 116 – 120.

³⁰ For the analysis of the representation of Samuel in late Byzantine sources and the tendency for falsification of the alleged involvement of the Papacy in the crowning of Peter and possibly of Samuel, see M. B. Panov, *The Blinded State*, 101 – 146.

mir and Kosara or St. Clement.³¹ The legendary struggle was revived in the Balkan literary production at the time of rediscovering Byzantium and its narratives. The Ragusan monk Mavro Orbini (1563 – 1614), recycled the neglected struggle between Basil II and Samuel through the prism of the western Pan-Slavic world view, acting as a transmitter of Byzantine narratives among the Slavs.

Turning towards the perspective of the Ohrid Archbishopric, the glimpse regarding the representation of Samuel is provided from the *Life and Sermon of St. John Vladimir (Akolouthia)* published in 1690 in Venice.³² In both the Life and Sermon, its author Kosmas, the former metropolitan of Kition in Cyprus and abbot of the monastery of St. John Vladimir in Elbasan, put the emphasis on Vladimir's origin, with a clear intention to demonstrate Saint's direct connection with Ohrid Archbishopric. Kosmas went even further in demonstrating the prestige position of the Ohrid Archbishopric, inventing Vladimir's direct relations with the famous medieval rulers, Simeon and Nemanja. The relation with Samuel as Vladimir's father-in-law was used to project the wide territory ruled by Samuel that encompassed the "Bulgarian, Serbian and German lands, the lands of the Mysians and farther up to the northern countries". By accentuating that Samuel ruled this vast territory from Ohrid, Kosmas also provided direct link and projected the contemporary aspirations of the Ohrid Archbishopric. However, while raising the image of Vladimir, Kosmas was also distorting the historical facts regarding Samuel and his family. Namely, Samuel's daughter was blamed for plotting with her brother against Vladimir, being both Bogomils.³³ Understandably, the original story about the involvement of the Ohrid Archbishop David in the traitorous act of Vladimir's murder, was completely erased. As a result, full guilt was transferred to Samuel's daughter and son, which were deliberately not named. Although Samuel's image was not directly affected, the altered narrative affected the reputation of his closest family.³⁴

³¹ Cvetan Grozdanov, *Portretite na svetitelite od Makedonija od IX do XVIII vek* (Skopje: Republički zavod za zaštita na spomenicite na kultura, 1983), 145 – 159; Grozdanov, "Kultot na car Samoil kon Ahil Lariski i negoviot odraz vo likovnata umetnost," *Likovna umetnost* 8 – 9 (1983), 71 – 84; Grozdanov, "Ahil Lariski vo vizantiskiot i postvizantiskiot živopis," *Zbornik Srednovkovna umetnost* 3 (2001), 7 – 30. Tatjana Subotin-Golubović, "Kult svetog Ahilija Lariskog," *ZRVI*, 26 (1987), 21 – 33; Sašo Cvetkovski, *Portretite na Sveti Jovan Vladimir vo umetnosta na Balkanot od XVII do XX vek* (Skopje: Makedonska akademija na naukite i umetnostite, 2016).

³² *Akolouthia tou agiou endoxou basileos kai megalomartyros Ioannou tou Vladimirov kai thaumatourgou. Tipotheisa men proton dapani tou timiotatou Kiriou Ioannou Papa tou ek tis poleos Neokastrou* (Venice: Elenikou tipografeiou tou Agiou Georgiou, 1690), 8 – 45. Stojan Novaković, *Prvi osnovi slovenske književnosti među balkanskim slovenima : Legenda o Vladimiru i Kosari* (Beograd: Srpska kraljevska akademija, 1893), 253 – 270.

³³ The *Service of St. Vladimir* narrates that both Kosara and his brother "were heretics and supported the roots of the poisonous heresy of the Bogomils and Massalians" (*Akolouthia*, 23).

³⁴ See, M. B. Panov, *The Blinded State*, 154 – 161 for more detail about the Samuel's image reflected in Akolouthia.

The broader agenda of Kosma's version of the legend, was the portrayal of Vladimir who following Samuel's defeat, took over the war against Basil II, which ended with his victory. Vladimir instead Samuel, was presented as defeating the army of Basil Porphyrogenitos, after which he became "master of whole Bulgaria, Serbia, Illyricum and Albania". This clearly echoed the contemporary ambitions of the Ohrid Archbishopric and Vladimir's legend enhanced its image among Orthodox believers in the Balkans. Hence, it is understandably why the ambitious Ohrid Archbishop Joasaph II (1719 – 1745) initiated the republishing of the Akoluthia in Moscopole in 1741/42, as part of the collection of the Services of the Saints. St. Vladimir joined other Saints from the heartland of Samuel's State in Macedonia, such as Naum, Clement, Erasmos, Fifteen Martyrs from Strumica, etc. Not surprisingly, from the cultural circle of Ohrid Archbishopric, Saint Nicodemus of Elbasan, was also included.³⁵ This was complementary with pretensions of Ohrid Archbishop Joasaph II to ecclesiastical and political jurisdiction over the Orthodox people of "Bosnia, Serbia, Albania and Macedonia".³⁶ In the situation with the declining Ottoman Empire and increased involvement of Austria and Russia in the Balkans, Vladimir's image as a saint, was more appealing hero than Samuel. Portrayed as a universal ruler who originated from Ohrid area and linked to famous Slavic medieval rulers Simeon, Nemanja and Samuel, Vladimir provided the Ohrid Archbishopric's establishment arguments for demonstrating its continuous historical role in uniting Slavic Orthodoxy. This served Archbishopric's contemporary pretensions for ecclesiastical and political jurisdiction over the Balkans. Regardless of different stories that surrounded Vladimir's life and its influence on the perspective of the local population, he was continuously linked with Ohrid and Prespa. These were the same cities, which were inseparably associated with Vladimir's father-in-law Samuel, whose image was also affected by the legends interpreted and disseminated by the Ohrid Archbishopric.

Hristofor Žefarović's (1690 – 1753) *Stematografia* compiled in 1741 on the order of the Peć Patriarch, Arsenije IV, was a clear response to the ideological propaganda of the Ohrid Archbishopric. Not surprisingly *Stematografia* glorified St. Vladimir, while excluding Samuel from the list of Serbian and Bulgarian medieval rulers.³⁷ The absence of Samuel raises many questions about motives, one of which would be that he was directly associated with the Ohrid Archbishopric, which evidently contradicted *Stematografia*'s ideological message aimed at enhancing the

³⁵ *Moskopolski zbornik: Prološki žitija na svetcite*, tr. Hristo Meloski (Skopje: Doger, 1996). For the visual expression of the ideological concept of Ohrid Archbishopric, see Grozdanov, *Portreti na svetitelite od Makedonija*, 199 – 228.

³⁶ Theresius von Seckendorff, *Versuch einer Lebensbeschreibung des Feldmarschalls Grafen von Seckendorff: meist aus ungedruckten Nachrichten bearbeitet*, vol. 2 (Leipzig: Johann Ambrosius Barth, 1792), 106 – 107.

³⁷ Hristofor Žefarović, *Stematografija ili Izobraženije oružij Illiričeskij* (Vienna: Toma Mesmer, 1741).

image of the Patriarchate of Peć among the Orthodox population at the expense of the Ohrid Archbishopric.

This representation of Samuel changed during the second half of 19th century only after the Slav-Greek political and religious rivalry in the Balkans imposed the necessity of historical justification of the territorial aspirations towards Ottoman Macedonia and the projection of the rights to Ohrid Archbishopric abolished in 1767.³⁸ These circumstances incited the process of rediscovery of the neglected Samuel and his role in the traditions of the Ohrid Archbishopric, which gave rise to new interpretations and constructions. They were imagined, shaped and adapted depending on the political and ideological motives of the Balkan elites, who started to interpret and recycle Basil's ideological construct regarding the representation of Samuel and Samuel's State and Church, while recognizing his important role in the tradition of the Archbishopric in Ohrid.

³⁸ M. B. Panov, *The Blinded State*, 255 – 280.