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The Meaning of the Veneration of the Holy Great Martyr John of Suceava, the Patron Saint of Trade

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Abstract

This work is a critical study of the hagiography of the cult of the Holy Great Martyr John the New of Suceava , (next in the text JN), the Patron of trade. The population performing this cult of Budzhak, follows the example of the Orthodox community of the city of Akkerman, nowadays called Belgorod-Dniestrovsky in the Ukraine. Such a study of the JN cult, not only from the point of view of hagiology, but also of psychology and of sociology of religion, allows to form an understanding of the dynamics of the economic development of the region.

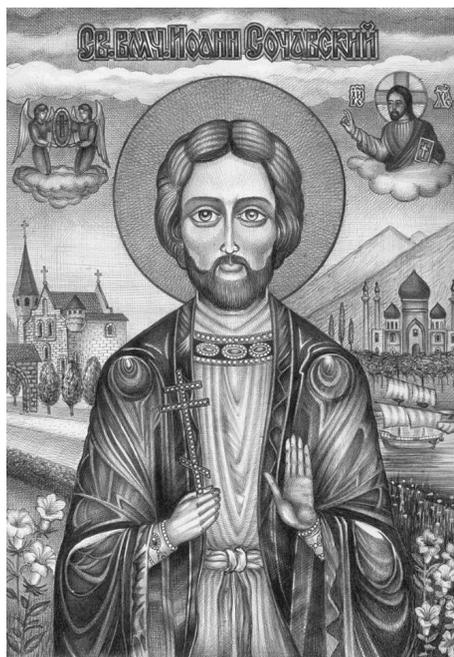
Keywords

Pastoral Theology, Hagiology, Critical Hagiography, Holy Great Martyr John The New of Suceava, Saint John The New

Preamble

Our critical hagiography of the cult JN draws a diachronical/historical review of the political, economical, social, ethnical aspects of human reality that has coagulated at and around the place of JN's martyrdom under its influence. Since this cult has been shared within several Orthodox

Churches and jurisdictions, the overall environment pertinent to this study far exceeds the local boundaries of JN's place of martyrdom. In the Patriarchate of Constantinople, as well as the Patriarchate of Moscow, in the diverse Ukrainian Orthodox jurisdictions, the faithful still today request JN's intercession, in order for the Providence to bow down to their destiny and fortune. And since JN's martyrdom took place at the crossroads of the old North-South amber road, and the old East-West steppe road, our Hagiographic analysis deals inevitably with the conflictual complexity of historical ethnical identities, myths, psychotypes, and languages that have historically fused at this crossroad, which, as an oldest eurasiatic cross bridge, is our towering point of view over time and space, and therefore as well a precursor or type of our multinational or "multi-cultural" modern cities. The scope of an exhaustive of these times and spaces, even if it far extends the limits of our present study, should be kept in mind in the back door of the reader's awareness, but since the Christian folk tradition has been dominant in Budzhak, at least for the last two centuries, spreading in time in our modern contemporary period, and at the other side of chronology into the Middle Ages, we have chosen Orthodox cosmogony, creed, cult, community and moral code, as the referential of our emblematic or iconic hagiographic saga. We analysed and studied the hagiographic text, as well as oral and written evidence of miraculous cases and healings. We reviewed the liturgical hymnography, the legends, the customs and the local rituals. We must stress as important our approach and "method of participatory observation", i.e. our direct participation in rituals and conversations with the cult's performers. The issues raised in these polls dealt with personal perception, attitudes towards evidence of JN's cult, and with its impact on public life.



Well known is the influence of “Byzantine Civilization” on modernity. Its original features were intensively included in historiography of the late 19th, early 20th centuries, and are still relevant today, in principle, as participating to its infrastructure with the main components of the ancient Hellenistic and Greek cultural heritage, the traditions of Roman government and law, the symphonic Christian & Imperial idea, and Eastern Christianity in a larger sense. In principle, there, Byzantine Civilization have merged into our modern world, including the newly emerging fashionable feature of financial priesthood. In the territory of Southern Bessarabia (Budzhak), with inherited so-called “Byzantine-Balkan” roots, the majority of the population, uses JN’s cult for its everyday life.

Orthodox Russian studies show that JN’s life was most probably written around the year 1402 by the monk Gregory, the “abbot of the Pantokrator monastery and the presbyter of the Great Moldovlakh Church”, whom most researchers identify with the future Metropolitan of Kiev, Gregory Tsamblak, a Bulgarian by origin, in connection with the transfer of JN’s relics from Belgorod-Dnestrovsky (Akkerman, Chetate Alba, Mon Castro) to the city of Suceava. This identification has been periodically challenged, but for this work it has little interest at the present time. In particular, the Russian and Bulgarian ethnologist, Yuri Begunov confirmed that JN’s life was written by one of the most prominent students of the Tarnovo literary school in a period between the late XIVth, and the beginning of the XVth centuries, a disciple of the Patriarch Euthymius Turnovo. St. JN’s life has been preserved in a large number of copies of the XVth - XVIIIth centuries. (no less than 60) of predominantly Russian origin¹.

Older lists of Slavic-Moldavian origin were rewritten by the famous monk & scribe Gabriel Urik². In the XVIIth century, the JN’s Life was translated into Romanian twice: at the beginning of the century [Bucharest. BAN Romania. Room. No. 34] and later by the Metropolitan of Moldova, St. Barlaam. It was published in the last translation as part of the Teaching Gospel (Cartea românească de învățătură - Cazania lui Varlaam) by Metropolitan Varlaam (Is, 1643), which was reprinted several times later. At the time, translations of JN’s Life into Greek were also carried out: Nikifor, Patriarch of Alexandria, Meletios Sirig, Patriarch Kallinik III of Constantinople (1757), and the Monk Nikodim Svyatogorets. Greek

¹ Бегунов 1977 - Бегунов Ю. К. «Мучение Иоанна Нового» в сборнике 1-й трети XV в. из собр. Н. П. Лихачева // ССл. 1977. № 4.

² Архив СПб. ФИИ РАН. Колл. Н. П. Лихачева. № 364 (1-я треть XV в., без конца)

liturgical texts of John the New were compiled in the 16th century by Justin Decadion (printed in Venice, 1792) and in the middle of the 17th century by the Patriarch Nicephorus of Alexandria (printed in Iasi, 1819)³.

In addition to JN's lengthy Life, Metropolitan Gregory Tsamblak also wrote a short Life "Aflisis" with a leading verse at the beginning of the text. It was read at the 6th ode of the canon during the Orthodox Service of Matins. A. I. Yatsimirsky's statement that "Aflisis" was written in 1534 by Theodosius, the Abbot of the Ascension of the Nyametsky Monastery, has now been refuted by the datation of the Vilnius copy of the document in the 1520s. The Prologue of JN's Life, is not included in all the copies of St JN's Orthodox service, and it is excluded from many Russian copies of the service. In 1534, the Abbot of the Ascension of the Nyametsky Monastery, Theodosius, on the basis of JN's Life, compiled a "Praise to the Holy Great Martyr John the New", which was not distributed in the manuscript usual way (included in the 1574 addition of the Moldavian Service Menaion for May 1467 [RSL. Un d . No. 81], written in Romanian Cyrillic. Thus, the work of such a famous Bulgarian church-statesman as Grigory Tsamblak, whose death in many ways prevented the formation and development of the state on the territory of Moldova, Bukovina and Chervonnaya Rus, requires a separate study, while entering the interest of our study, particularly his wonderful and unique work, "The Torment of John the New"⁴.

In cultural literary and poetic pieces, like the Lives in the editions of the Church Menaion, - JN is called a Belgradian, Belgorodian, Akkermanian, Trebizondian, Sochavsky who died around 1330. So, presumably, we will assume that this year is the starting point in JN's hagiography and cult. Official biographical information about JN is very scarce and limited to the content of the hagiography given below. The Holy Great Martyr John the New of Suceava, lived and was born in the XIVth century, in the city of Trebizond (modern Turkey). According to the written legend, he was a merchant and was engaged in trade, he was a pious and devout man. According to the recorded folk tradition, he was firm in Orthodoxy and merciful to the poor.

In 1330, for the purpose of trade between the Black Sea market towns of Trebizond and Belgrade Bosphorus, he sailed on a ship, the owner or

³ Яцимирский А. И. Григорий Цамблак: Очерк его жизни, адм. и книжной деятельности. СПб., 1904.

⁴ Жития святых святителя Димитрия Ростовского. Т. 1. М., 1997.

captain of which (according to another narrative, another merchant on the ship) was probably a Catholic from Venice, (according to other narratives from Genoa), but in connection with the 1054 schism between the western Roman Church and the Orthodox Church, nurturing hostility towards the Greek Orthodox Church. According to the legend, the Catholic captain (or the merchant ship owner) entered into a dispute (we assume about the Christian faith) with the merchant JN. During the specified public dispute on the ship, still according to legend recorded by Gregory Tsambalak (we assume dealing with theological subjects of life, philosophical truth and the advantages of the eastern worldview over the western one in Byzantium, during the decline of the empire), the ship's captain was put to shame by the merchant John of Trebizond. The conversation (we assume about philosophy and theology) took place in front of witnesses, and the captain, defeated in debate, nurtured an angry retaliation against JN. During the stopover of the ship in Belgrade Bosphorus (the modern Belgorod-Dnestrovsky), this captain met the mayor of the time, a man of Turkic origin, and a fire worshiper, and told him that there was a scholar on his ship who also wanted to become a fire worshiper, i.e., a pagan follower.⁵ The mayor of the city, that at the time was not any longer under Byzantine rule, honorably invited JN to join the fire worshipers, and to curse Christ and proclaim that He is not God. Saint JN, according to popular legend, at the reception with the mayor secretly prayed, calling for the help of the One who said: "When they will lead you to betray you, do not worry in advance what to say to you, and do not ponder; but what will be given to you at that hour, speak, for you will not speak, but the Holy Spirit"⁶. As the recorded folk tradition has it, the Lord God Jesus Christ gave him the courage and understanding in order to reject all the claims of Zoroastrianism and other heterodox doctrine, and firmly confess the Orthodox faith in God. After that, as recorded in the official hagiography, Saint JN was so severely beaten with sticks that his whole body was torn to pieces, and his flesh flew in pieces under the blows⁷. The holy martyr JN prayed during torture,

⁵ Жития святых святителя Димитрия Ростовского. Т. 1. М., 1997.

⁶ Библия. Марк, 13, 11. Москва. 1987.

⁷ Zoroastrianism is the religion of revelation, revealed by Ahura Mazda through the prophet Zarathushtra. According to the Zoroastrian tradition, Zarathushtra, the son of Powushaspa from the Spitam clan, lived 258 years before Alexander the Great (in the 7th - 6th centuries BC), shortly before the rise of the Achaemenid empire. Researchers for the most part attribute the time of Zarathushtra's activity to the turn of the 2nd and 1st millennia BC. (Kryukova, 2005).

thanking Christ the God-Man for such torments, who made him worthy of shedding his blood for Him and wash away his sins, committed during his merchant life in Byzantium. Then, as is recorded in his Life, Saint JN was chained and dragged into prison. In the morning, the mayor gave orders to bring Saint JN again, then the martyr appeared before him with a bright and cheerful face that shone with joy. The fearless martyr rejected the repeated offer to renounce Christ with the same firmness, denouncing the ruler of the city as an instrument of Satan, that is, the creator and ruler of negative forces in the world. Then he was again beaten with sticks so that all his insides were exposed and even the organs of his body were visible. The people who were present could not bear such a terrible sight and began to shout indignantly, denouncing the ruler of the city, so inhumanely torturing a defenseless person. The ruler of the city, having stopped the beating, ordered to tie the great martyr JN by the legs to the tail of a wild horse and drag him through the streets of the city, a trace of JN blood was still visible on the ancient street between the excavations of the ancient city of Tire and the medieval fortress, until the beginning of the 21st century. The official Life tells that the residents of the Jewish neighborhoods especially mocked JN the martyr, and threw stones at him, shouting abusive words, and finally, one of them grabbed a sword, ran after the horse and caught the dragged saint JN and cut off his head. The body of the great martyr JN with his severed head laid until the evening, and none of the Christians dared to take JN's body. At night, according to eyewitnesses, as is recorded in the Lives and folk tradition, over the body, and later over JN's relics, a luminous pillar and many burning lights resembling the light of lamps were seen. As it is mentioned, in the Lives and the recorded popular legend as well, three luminous men were incensing over saint JN's body, and people heard the angels singing, like in the liturgical hymns of the Old Testament Psalms.

One of the local Jewish Akkerman inhabitants, thinking that Christians came to take the the great martyr JN's remains, grabbed a bow from his house, wanting to shoot an arrow at them, however, as the historical story tells, the invisible power of God immobilized him, so that with the onset of morning, the vision above JN's relics disappeared, while the bow shooter continued to stand motionless. After he told the assembled inhabitants of the city about the night vision and the punishment of God that had befallen upon him, he was immediately freed from his invisible bonds. Having

learned about what had happened, the mayor allowed to bury the great martyr JN's remains.

The body was buried at the local Greek church on the banks of the estuary. According to JN's Lives, this event took place between the 1330s and the 1340s. The captain or merchant ship owner, who had denounced JN into an undeserved torment, repented and decided to secretly take the relics to his homeland in Italy, but the great martyr JN, appeared in a dream to the priest of the Greek church of the city of Belgorod-Dnestrovsky, consecrated in the name of the holy prophet John the Baptist, prevented this by ordering the priest to hide his body and head. In Akkerman (Belgorod-Dnestrovsky), JN's relics had reposed for 70 years, and then, in 1402, the Moldovan king, Alexander the Good, transferred them to his capital Suceava, where they are to the present day. As we already know, when the glory and fame of the miracles of the great martyr JN reached Moldova, Alexander the Good made an agreement with the Genoese from Akkerman, who agreed to give up the relics of the holy great martyr JN for money, and he, in turn, presented them to the Moldavian Metropolitan, and JN's relics were then placed in the metropolitan Cathedral of Mirutsy, as the folk tradition has recorded it in JN's Lives. JN's life, miraculous healings and events, as well as his church service, were compiled by the learned monk Grigory Tsamblak, a Bulgarian by birth⁸. Both Christians and heterodox pilgrims to the tomb of Saint JN tell about many miraculous phenomena, not only from historical literary sources, but also at present.

The transfer of the relics had been organized by Gregory Tsamblak. On this occasion Gregory Tsamblak, who at the time was the Exarch of the Patriarch of Constantinople in the capital of the new state Suceava, uttered a solemn sermon on the life and exploits of the martyr JN. In order to confer to his capital Suceava a strong political and mystical significance, Alexander the Good translated JN's relics to Suceava, and consequently, for a large majority of the inhabitants of this territory, JN officially became the saint patron of Bukovina, and was then acknowledged as a great martyr and saint by the entire official Orthodox Church. Thus, JN's cult spread at the beginning of the XVth century, and was instrumental for the voivode Alexander the Good in order to forge the unity of his people, and promote the development of the economy and trade, to allow the creation of the state, so that from that time on, JN's cult became popular as the mystical

⁸ Rusin Journal Librar 2015, Nr. 1.

patron of trade, of Bukovina and of Bessarabia and of the inhabitants of these regions.

Thus, when asked about the geography of the cult, it can be concluded that JN's cult spread on the one hand, along the trade routes from South to North, from Constantinople to Novgorod, encompassing Bessarabia, Bukovina, Chervona, Western and Muscovite Rus, and on the other hand, from West to East, from the Balkans to Northern America. Nowadays, the official Church spread of the cult captures the territories of modern Odessa, Chernivtsi, Lviv, the Transcarpathian regions of Ukraine, the Bialystok region of Poland, the entire European part of Russia (St. Petersburg and Moscow), the Moldovan part of Romania, and individual settlements of immigrants in the United States in the state of New Hampshire, and in Canada, in the Lachine area in Montreal and Winnipeg.

In addition to the official book, JN's cult is associated with the creation of images, in the form of Orthodox icons and frescoes, sometimes sculptures. The Saint depicted on the icons is a middle-aged man with a rather short, thick beard, in mundane clothes of his time, with a cross in his right hand and a sword in his left, i.e. the symbols of his special holy Christian martyrdom, and sometimes with other symbols, such as a palm branch. JN's individual representations are present in the murals of Moldavian churches next to holy warriors, for example, as in the cathedral of the Voronet monastery in Romania⁹.

Engravings depicting JN are also to be found, for instance in the printed Apostle from Targovishte (image from the year 1610) and in the headpiece of the "Teaching Gospel" in Yassy by Metropolitan Varlaam (image from the year 1643). In the medieval art of Moldova of the XVth - mid- XVIIth centuries, a number of pictorial compositions dedicated to JN's torture are also to be found. The oldest (probably from the second half of the XVth century) is a cycle of 12 embossed reliefs on a gilded silver shrine of the great martyr, which is now in the church of the great martyr George, in the monastery of St. John the New in Suceava (transferred from the old metropolitan church of Mireuci), where start the processions of the cross around the city of Suceava. In temple murals, JN's life cycles are still preserved to this day, for instance in the Church of the Great Martyr George the Victorious of the Voronets Monastery (1547), in the Church of the Resurrection of the Lord in the Sucevitsa Monastery (early 17th century) and in the Cathedral in the city of Roman (1648). The first 3 cycles

⁹ See image of Icon on the top of article.

(including the reliquary with the relics in Suceava) consist of 11 scenes of torture and posthumous miracles (their sequence varies). One hagiographic cycle consists of 15 compositions (4 end scenes are devoted to the story of the unsuccessful attempt of Catholics to steal the relics of saint JN). The inscriptions of the images are a short retelling of the corresponding fragments of JN's Life¹⁰. All the depicted hagiographic cycles end with the scene of the transfer of JN's relics to Suceava. The tradition of including JN's life cycle in the temple murals had been preserved in the XVIIIth - XIXth centuries, as evidenced by the paintings of the Cathedral of the Monastery and the Church of the Sihestria-Sekului skite¹¹.

JN's hagiographic icon, from the 1730s, which for a long time had been considered as the image of the Martyr John the Warrior, has survived. This icon came from the chapel named after JN in the Moscow Church of the Grebnev Icon of the Mother of God, written in honor of the heavenly patron of Tsarevich John Mikhailovich, and probably for the consecration of the throne on May 29, 1635 in Moscow. JN is depicted in full-length in a blue chiton, girded with a striped sash, and in a red cloak. He holds a cross in his right hand, a scroll in his left. The middle figure is surrounded by 16 stamps with detailed inscriptions on the background: "The Nativity of John", "Baptism", "Discussion of faith with an Italian merchant during his voyage to Belgorod", "The merchant informs the governor of the city about John's desire to renounce the faith", "John is brought to the ruler, and he professes Christianity", "John is beaten with sticks", "John before the ruler after torture", "John is imprisoned", "John before the ruler again refuses to renounce his faith" (image lost), "John tied to the horse by his legs, and dragged around the city", "the Beheading", "Angels singing over John's body", "A certain Jew wanted to shoot light-looking men", "John's funeral service", "John's buriAlso in 1628, the icon painter Nazariy (possibly Nazariy Savin) painted, by order of Archimandrite Varlaam, who came to Moscow with an embassy, for Tsar Myron Barnovsky, the icon "Martyrs George and John the New with the marks of torment" (unclear, according to the dictionary of icon painters Kochetkov, the torment of George, JN or both), however, Patriarch Filaret of Moscow (1553-1633) decided that it was "not painted according to merit" and the image was not sent to the

¹⁰ Бакалова, Елка. Цамблаковото „Мъчение на свети Йоан Нови“ в румънската монументална живопис от XVI–XVII век. – XV, 1991, No 4, с. 56–77. 1-4

¹¹ Бакалова 1991: 74

Moldavian principality and the further history of the icon is unknown¹².

So, the cult of the Holy Great Martyr JN has spread at the present time in all local Orthodox Churches, that is, all over the world, primarily in Ukraine, the Balkans, and then from Eastern Europe it spreads to the north of Russia, in the holy altar of JN in the Verkospassky Cathedral of the Moscow Kremlin. JN's cult spreads to North America, and Canada. In Montreal, in the Lashin region, immigrants from Bukovina built a wooden church for JN's Orthodox cult. In Winnipeg, JN's church was built by immigrants from Ukraine, in the state of New Hampshire, JN's church was built by immigrants from Romania. In the Patericon, written by Archimandrite Ioannikiy (Belan) in Romanian, there are many witnesses of miraculous healings from blindness, dumbness and paralysis that took place in the 1960s, through church prayers addressed to Saint JN.

The Lives, and the liturgical akathist and canon, contain very few elements about St JN's merchant life. According to an unspoken Orthodox tradition, it is not customary to talk about the financial aspect of church life. However, since the times of the Jerusalem temple, cash flows were like the circulatory blood system in the ancient Jewish, and then Jewish Temple, and after the Nativity of Christ, in the Christian church. JN's torment, and then the diffusion of JN's cult, had a great economic significance in the life of ethnic groups, first the Akkermans, and then for all the inhabitants of the regions where he was venerated.

The Christian topography of Cosmas Indikopleustes, an Egyptian monk, already shows in the VIth century the importance of extensive connections through navigation and travelling, and of the knowledge of languages and geography indispensable to trade, as building blocks of the information system of human civilisation in his time, as well as in JN's times which structurally had not yet experienced the metamorphosis under the forces of the industrial revolution, and of the post modern communication revolution in virtual space and noosphere, through the use of the Internet nowadays¹³. The study of hagiographic narrative and language, allows to unambiguously conclude that the wide diffusion of JN's cult was mostly driven by JN's hagiographic torment, as a historical fact, and constituted a symbolic figure and type of the fall of Constantinople, in the history of

¹² Бакалова 1991: 74

¹³ Kozma Indikoplov . Book called Kozma Indikoplov: Old Rus . per. according to the manuscript in 1495. Prepare . V. S. Golyshenko , B. F. Dubrovin. M .: Indrikis , 1997. p. 48

our civilization, if we consider both episodes of the XIIIth century and of the XVth century, when Constantinople's commercial margin was shared between, on the one hand, the Venetians and occidental christianity, and the ottomans and eastern traders on the other hand. JN's very personal life and body, were destroyed, while his property, as well as his traded merchandise on the boat, i.e. all belongings of the merchant JN, were looted by the perpetrators of JN's murder, the mayor and the captain of the ship.

Then we cannot fail to notice that JN's martyrdom can be seen as a complete kenosis not only spiritual but also tangible since JN's martyrdom provoked the loss of all his assets financial, commercial, as well as the loss of his body. The veneration of JN's relics in a larger sense, glorifies the defender of the Orthodox faith, but also redeems what had hitherto been silently condemned by the moral code of the Church, i.e. money and trade, somehow removing them from the sphere of guilt for the sake of combat against the heterodox. JN's orthodox venerators have all the better spread his cult, since, as perhaps also merchants themselves, doctrinal and commercial fight was united in JN's symbolic martyrdom, against eastern and western heterodox who were also trade competitors. If we have in mind the social structure of the indo-european tripartition, and the doctrinal and teaching responsibility of the bishop in the Orthodox Church, while trade and finance belong to the third state, and since kings were called bishops of the outside, we may venture to introduce the notion of a symbolic bishop of the third state, i.e. of material life, in the person of the megalomartyr JN, (Christ is a great priest in the order of Melchizedech (Heb. 6:20), i.e. a king and a priest at the same time, but here we might also take as an iconic prototype the figure of Christ as a carpenter which also draws all the symbolics of architectural temple building in post and beams) bringing him closer to the social condition of the vast majority of his venerators, which no doubt explains his fame as a holy martyr, and the speed of diffusion of his cult over a very large territory, all the easier since in him, the economic struggle participates to the defence of the faith, and is not any longer nurturing guilt. And here we must recall indeed that if Christ has chased the changers from the Temple this is because of the Old Testament prohibition of interest on loans, whereas trade profits are not condemned in the Holy Scriptures, because, contrary to the profit of the money changers, it is not devoid of risk. The notion of risk is here central, since it pervades

the real economy, the infrastructure of which is human agricultural toil or work that produces the raw materials transformed further in arts and crafts, etc... , and links it to a cosmogony where the earth was given to humanity by God to ensure its prosperity. The paradigm risk/absence of risk not only separates traders and changers, but, in a larger sense, real economy on the one hand, and virtual financial economy on the other hand, the profits of which are drawn from the real economy in a form of general parasitic plunder. With Christ the Carpenter, JN's martyrdom means that opposition to plunder, since Venetians and Turks have probably shared his goods after his death, in the way Christ's garments were shared post mortem by the soldiers. In his *Venezia e i Turchi*, (G.C. Sansoni Editore, Firenze, 1975), Paolo Preto describes these relations from the Venetian point of View, almost without any Turkish sources, and none whatsoever coming from other parts of the world. This Western ethnocentrism can also be seen as a continuation of the Roman understanding of the barbarian for those not included in the Roman Empire. But in a larger sense, it is opposed to a genuine human fraternity that rests upon universal causes, against any ethnic exclusivism. These ideas no doubt are associated and delineate a line of separation and opposition in human cosmogonies.

The hagiographic narrative of JN's cult is to be considered in a larger sense in a context following the cleavage of the paradigm described supra, and for this the 1453 fall of Constantinople plays an iconic role. On the one hand there is Christ and the Byzantine Orthodox God and state that fell under the combined exterior pressure of Western European Powers and the Ottoman Empire. Byzantium, the great organiser of eurasian trade and logistician of trade routes, was destroyed as a state. As the old Juridic principle has it, "the dead seize the living", even when these living are the killers. And as an outcome of the Turkish 1453 seizure of Constantinople, with Western passive acceptance, Byzantine trade profits had historically been shared between Turks and Venetians. Perhaps globally along the lines of the Venetian usual contract of *Colleganza*, where the passive and active shareholders invested respectively two and one third of the project, while sharing the profits evenly (in Freddy Thiriet, *Romanie Vénitienne*)¹⁴.

Along the lines of this paradigmatic pattern, JN's maritime cargo, after his doctrinal apologetic disputes, was divided between the Venetian owner

¹⁴ Е. Н. Никулина. Агиология. Курс лекций. ПСТГУ. 2012. С. 238 https://azbyka.ru/otechnik/Zhitija_svjatykh/agiologija/

of the ship and the Turkish mayor, after JN's slander and execution. The strength of this hagiography and of JN as a holy figure is due to the fact that not only it is emblematic of a geopolitical and confessional conflict between Byzantium on the one hand, and the Turks on the other hand, but also that it has Christ Himself as a prototypical figure. JN's life reflects Christ's life, the God-Man, Who was slandered, oppressed, killed, his clothes being divided between His torturers (Luke 23, 34), and acquires a prophetic influence on the subsequent history of this region. In both the official or formal and the folk or popular versions of JN's martyrdom hagiographic narrative, the ship on which JN sailed was a figure of the Church (and, in our view, of God, Christ, and of the whole Roman [Byzantine] Empire as well), which we can infer from the fact that the polemic discussions dealt with apologetics of Christian cosmogony, i.e. faith in God and its defines from an Orthodox perspective.

We can reach such a conclusion after our study of JN's cult, especially since in the hagiography, of the modern or late period. The figure of the merchant was present elsewhere in Orthodox hagiography, for instance, in the early 19th century, the holy Reverend Seraphim of Sarov, who was a merchant in his youth, and who used trade terms and definitions in theological and liturgical comparisons during his spiritual conversations, for example with the merchant Motovilov.

Christian hagiography, generally, seldom includes holy merchants, and in our opinion, this also a reason why the Orthodox Church elevated JN to the rank of a great martyr, and focused greatly upon the ideological aspects of his life exploits that were important to Her in her ongoing geopolitical and religious struggle. As is well known, the Holy Scriptures of the Old Testament and of the New Testament as well, prohibit usury. However, as we hinted it above already, in the field of trade, which has its own risks, profit is permitted and blessed by the Church, whereas in the Holy Scripture of the New Testament, Jesus-Christ the God-Man chased away the merchants from the Jerusalem Temple, and in this showed the separation between the traders or merchants and the money changers.

If we take the theory of the three functions of the French historian of religions and linguist Georges Dumézil in the Indo-European society, which is based upon the three estates, the priests, the nobles/aristocrats/warriors and this sin charge of the material or real economy, then as far as the study of JN's cult is concerned, one must consider that in the three-

partied societies of the Middle Ages up to the fall of monarchies, traders and merchants, while belonging to the third estate, where also a link between these three functional estates in society. Traders and financiers were not precisely popular at the time. JN's hagiography was used by clerical authority (priests) in order to point at the uniqueness of his martyrdom which elevated JN, a merchant, to holiness, also within the socially dominant class of the Priests, since his cult had become ecclesial, a cult that was instrumental in shaping the worldview of the Valachian Slavic people composed of the three classes or estates identified by Dumézil, i.e. the aristocrat/nobility/warriors, peasants, cattle breeders, as well as the Priesthood which usually came from the third estate.

Saint JN's Hagiography or life tells us about the Genoese or Venetian captain/owner of the ship (both being interchangeable for the Valachian people), when JN sails at sea, about the Zoroastrian Bugeac, the ruler of the White City, and about the Jewish beheader of the merchant JN. Seldom Orthodox hagiography includes such a diverse cosmopolitan mixture of participants in its hagiographic legend or narrative written in order to base the veneration of the holy martyr within his cult.

As we saw already the hagiography or life tells us that during a trip at sea, a Venetian/Genoese merchant and saint JN had an ideological or doctrinal dispute. Trade issues were most certainly not dealt with in the dispute between the JN and the ship owner. But if insert JN's life in the broader historical perspective of the philosophical and anthropological disputes between Western and Eastern christianity, that took place after what is generally considered as the official separation of the Western Church from the Orthodox Church in the 11th century, we cannot fail to notice that sixty years before the emergence of JN's cult, the Council of Lyon had convened in 1272. Then, the Byzantine and the Pope gathered in order to heal the schism between the Western Church and the Orthodox Eastern Churches organised in Patriarchates (Constantinople, Antioche, Alexandria, Jerusalem, and Moscow *de jure* in 1589, but *de facto* after the Council of Ferrare Florence in the end of the 1430's when the Grand Duke expelled the unionist Isidore by Jonas). Michael VIII, the Byzantine emperor who recovered Constantinople, seized by the Franks and the Venetians in 1204. The old dispute over the Filioque again became central in the conciliar negotiations in Lyon, and the Greeks departed from the Orthodox Nicene Creed: the addition of the Filioque to the Nicene

Creed was proclaimed three times at the Council of Lyon, in exchange for the illusion of a military help against the expansion of the Turks on Constantinople. This Council of Lyon was a preliminary form of the Union of Florence and Ferrara, which took place fifteen years before the Turkish capture of Constantinople in 1453. Then in Florence in the XVth century the purity of Orthodoxy was defended by the holy father of the Church, Saint Mark of Ephesus, who did not sign Union document to the greatest dismay of the Pope. After the Union of Lyon, in the end of the XVth century, Orthodoxy was also defended by the Holy Father of the Church, Gregory II of Cyprus, Patriarch of Constantinople, who led the Byzantine reaction that followed when the Lyon Union decision of 1274 was officially rejected by an imperial decree and a conciliar decision of the Church of Constantinople at the Council of Blachernae in 1285. Thus, in his Tomos, the Holy Father of the Church, His Holiness Patriarch Gregory II of Cyprus, proclaimed the Orthodox teaching of Grace from the point of view of such a science as theology, that is, within the framework of the eternal relationship of the Three Persons of God, the Most Holy Trinity before the Creation of the world. Less than half a century later, the Holy Father of the Church, St. Gregory Palamas, proclaimed the Orthodox teaching about Grace from the point of view of economy, i.e. grace manifestation in the world, after the Creation. His doctrine of grace, a.k.a. hesychasm, was accepted by the Council of Constantinople in 1351, which closed the conflict with the Western Calabrese monk Barlaam, which had begun twenty years before, just at the moment of Saint JN's martyrdom. Thus, the old controversy about the "Filioque" between the Western and the Eastern Churches, which arose at the beginning of the 9th century, and that already had found an Orthodox dogmatic answer with the Patriarch Photos at the end of the 9th century, and a definite conciliar doctrinal statement of the Orthodox teaching on Grace by the holy Fathers of the Church, Gregory II of Cyprus and Gregory Palamas of Thessaloniki, after the Lyon Council which was afterwards considered by the Orthodox as a false council. The dispute on the ship at sea, between the Genoese merchant and saint JN most certainly had included the Filioque controversy, and the disagreement that most certainly arises between the disputers at sea led to the tragedy of torment and death, revealed in Saint JN's life.

Hesychasm, as part of JN's spiritual cult, quickly spread in Eastern countries and caused a revival of the Orthodox Faith in terms of spiritual

prayer, communion with God, asceticism and eldership/starchestvo, and genuine revival of the Church in Romania, Serbia, Byzantium, Bulgaria and Mosovite Russia.

The akathist to the Holy Father of the Church Spyridon, whom the Balkan peoples love so much, the great Orthodox saint and wonderworker, whose intervention in the Cathedral of Nicea in the IV century served as a miraculous refutation against the heresy of Arius, whose cult is widely known and has already been studied by scientists of humanitarian universities in Moscow, in particular, mentions the old doctrinal opposition between the Eastern and the Western Churches, which was instrumental to the modern opposition in the conscience of Orthodox believers against Catholicism. In its 12th Ikos one can read: "Rejoice, you, who prevented the ruler from building a church for himself, in which mass was celebrated with unleavened bread. Rejoice, you who brought a cruel death on the Venetian ruler. Rejoice, You who made his portrait burn with lightning speed in his palace in Venice. Rejoice, you who put to shame the apostasy and false teaching of the West. Rejoice, you who confirmed to people that only the Orthodox faith is true and leads to salvation, rejoice, O Spiridon, the wonderworker!"¹⁵

Saint JN's hagiography or life is a witness to the false denunciation of the Genoese merchant to the Zoroastrian ruler, according to which JN wanted to accept the pagan faith. This plan of the slanderer is a symbol of the false Unions of the Western and Eastern Christians in Lyon and Florence-Ferrara, where the Byzantine empire bartered the purity of the Orthodox doctrinal teachings in order to preserve their rule and wealth. The decapitation of the Holy Martyr by a Jew at the end of his life shows the paradigm in which the ideological doctrine is a pretext for the Genoese/Venetian, Zoroastrian Turks and Jews of that time, whereas their real goal was the seizure of the goods of the merchant and holy great martyr John of Trebizond the New.

Similarly, we can consider this hagiography or life, as a symbol of the fate of the Roman (Byzantine) Empire, conquered by the Ottomans in 1453, as an event of world-historical significance, the consequence of which was the sharing between the Western European and Turkish merchants of the trading profits, that had been previously been controlled by Byzantine trade. In this commercial war, it can be considered that the Western Renaissance

¹⁵ Akathist to Saint Spyridon of Korfu, Greece.

was born in Constantinople in 1453. Saint JN's life, and then the extension of his cult, symbolises in a larger sense the fate of the Byzantine Empire, captured by the Ottomans in 1453. The subjects of the Roman Empire (Byzantium), that is, merchants and financiers, were very surprised when they were called Byzantines, and then even rejected the name of Greeks, since they always considered themselves subjects of the Roman emperor (*Bazileis ton Romaïon*), who lived in the New Rome, built by the Roman Emperor Constantine, on the ruins of the ancient village of Byzantium. Even after the capture of Constantinople by the Turks in 1453, JN's cult served the Orthodox population to preserve and strengthen their former byzantine identity, i.e. belonging of old to the Roman civilization, then to Romania, what we mean by the widespread name of *Orbis Romanus*, in contrast to Gothia, in a broader sense, from barbarians of any kind.

Saint JN is revered as the Orthodox patron saint of merchants, primarily because he does not renounce Orthodoxy and firmly does not accept apostasy from Jesus-Christ the God-Man, at the cost of the loss of all his belongings, and of a terrible suffering, and then of death. In the cult of the saint JN we can very clearly see that, for Orthodox merchants and various business people today, (merchants being seldom present in Orthodox hagiography), greed and selfishness must be subordinated to the faith in God, because when there is no faith, then, there is no real wealth and men are lost¹⁶.

¹⁶ Very Rev. Felix DOVGAN, *Veneration of the Holy Great Martyr John The New of Suceava, the Patron Saint of Trade, (1330-2018)*. Fully human, theological anthropology and human flourishing in the XXIst century. ISEC. UTSNYC. 2018. <https://www.isecny.org/2018-conference>