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THE CULT OF SAINT DIMITRIJ BASARBOVSKI IN THE CONTEXT OF PUBLIC USAGES OF HISTORY IN BULGARIAN AND ROMANIAN PEOPLES

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Abstract:

Saint Dimitrij Basarbovski is a little known Bulgarian saint who is also the protector of the Romanian capital Bucharest, which makes him the natural religious, cultural, and historical unifier of the two Balkan peoples. Interest towards his life and work was first kindled during the era of the Bulgarian National Revival. His holy relics have been preserved and are kept at the Patriarchal Cathedral “St. St. Konstantin and Elena” in the Romanian capital. On the day of celebrating of Saint Dimitrij (27 October) in 2005 on request by the Bulgarian Patriarch Maxim, the Romanian Patriarch Teoctist donated a marvelous gift to the Basarbovski Monastery – an icon with the image of Saint Dimitrij with small pieces from his holy relics interwoven into the texture of the painting. Every year on 27 October thousands of worshipers from Bulgaria and Romania concur to the only operating cave monastery in Bulgaria, the “St. Dimitrij Basarbovski” monastery, near Basarbovo, Rouse region. They congregate to do homage to the patron of the holy cloister who was born there. The holy cloister near Basarbovo keeps the memory of the Saint alive and welcomes thousands of worshipers from both sides of the river Danube.

Keywords: Saint Dimitrij Basarbovski, cave monastery, Rouse, Basarbovo, Romanian Patriarchal Cathedral “St. St. Konstantin and Elena”, Bucharest

Saint Dimitrij Basarbovski appears as a religious, cultural, and historic unifier of the Bulgarian and the Romanian peoples. The interest towards his life dates back to the time of the Bulgarian National Revival, as do the altercations concerning the time of his existence as some evidence points to the end of the Middle Ages.

Although Saint Dimitij Basrbovski remains a little known Bulgarian saint, he played a significant role in Romanian history and culture.

In Romanian historiography the historical martyrology of the life of the Saint from Basarbovo is dated as early as the Middle Ages, during the reign of Kaloyan (1197-1207). Research on the life story of the Saint was started after the relocation of the relics to Bucharest, but none of the claims made can at present be corroborated beyond doubt.¹

One of the earliest historically documented pieces of evidence recording the existence of the monastery is to be found in “Shorter register of hases, ziamets and timars in the Nikopol sanjak”, recorded in 1479/1480, where the “Monastery Basarba” is described as comprising 14 households [“income 1556, ispenč - 350, the remaining (taxes) - 1206 (akçes)”] as “a timar to the Wallachian voivode” (Basarb III the Young Cepeluš, 1477-1482).²

This information provided by some contemporary scholars³ can be supplemented and enriched by documents recently discovered in Turkish archives, where it is expressly stated that in the year 1525 there were 170 households in the village of Basaraba, the residents of six of which were widows, with an income 21 633 akçes. The residents of the village did not pay jizya and ispenč. The cloister is recorded separately from the village. The monks were exempt from avariz-i divanije. The monastery was described as comprising 18 households with an income of 1600 akçes.⁴

It is hardly unlikely for the monastery to have been under the governance of the Wallachian voivodes for long, since in 1542 it was registered with its name St. Dimitrij as belonging to the hases of Mehmet Pasha and generated a revenue of 100 akçes. In the document from this year it is explicitly stated that the monastery was no longer registered with its former name Basaraba. The monks claimed that they were exempt from ispenč and the extra tax avariz. After a check-up was carried out with the older register it was established that the claims of the monks were true and re-registration was accomplished in keeping with

¹ П. Стефанов, *Румънската църква от XIV - XVIII век*: <http://www.pravoslavie.bg/История/Румънската-църква-от-XIV-до-XVIII-век/> - 08.12.2015

² Стр. Димитров, За датировката на някои османски регистри от XV век. – *Ивестия на Българското историческо дружество*, (София), 1968, № XXVI, с.242-243; Извори за българската история, Т. XIII, Серия XV-XVI (Турски извори за българската история, Т. II). София, БАН, 1966, с.193

³ Т. Моллов, Материали за историята на култа към народния светец Свети Димитър Басарбовски между XVI и XVIII век. : <http://liternet.bg/publish/tmollov/dbasarbovski.htm> - 10.12.2015

⁴ Başbakanlık osmanlı arşivi [BOA], TD 370, p.566; My gratitude goes to my colleague, associate professor dr. Rumen Kovatchev from the National Library „St. St. Kiril and Metodij“ for his invaluable help in translating the documents from Ottoman Turkish. The data for 1525 indicate that the Basaraba monastery in the kaza Černovi (Červen) in the liva (sanjak) Nikbolou (Nikopol), hane 18, whose inhabitants were exempt from paying hardj, ispenč and avariz.

the data from the older register.⁵ The village was registered separately from the cloister. The village numbered 119 Christian households, 1 newcomer, 3 Muslim households, 4 newly arrived and 6 widows. This document already contains trustworthy information concerning the name of the monastery and it is no longer registered as Basaraba, but as Saint Dimitrij.

The special status of Basarbovo becomes obvious from the data in the register from 1564-1565, where three Christian monks are recorded as falconers from the village of Basaraba, nahiiya Černova (Červen). Of these falconers, active was one and the other two (who were his sons) were reserves.⁶ Their number suggests that beside the village, they also probably served at the nearby monastery.

According to an Ottoman document dated 1686, beside Muslims in the Rouse sharia court there were non-Muslims present at the sessions, among whom a few people from Basarbovo are mentioned – the priest Velčo, the shepherd Obreten, Iliya, son of Niko and Nedelčo, son of Bone.⁷

The first notes on the life of the Reverend Dimitrij come from the notable writer of the Bulgarian National Revival, Saint Paisius of Hilendar (Païsiy Hilendârski), in his groundbreaking “Istoriya Slavyanobolgarskaya” written in 1762.

According to Paisius of Hilendar (Païsiy Hilendârski), the Reverend Dimitrij was a modest civilian. He led a simple life, raised sheep and cultivated a small vineyard near a river. He built himself a small cabin there and spent all his life near the river. In his saintly life he followed the rules of God. He was buried at the very spot where he reached the end of his earthly existence. Later God revealed to some people the relics of St. Dimitrij and these were retrieved and taken to the village of Basarbovo, Rouse region and soon healings of various kinds started occurring near the relocated relics. With his simple life St. Dimitrij loomed brightly among the Bulgarian folks and later on God famed him with numerous miracles.⁸

⁵ BOA, TD 439, pp.11-15 - According to the information for 1542 – In the hases of Mehmet Pasha, 3 hanes of monks, 118 heretics, 45 single, 6 widows, 2 persons Jovadža and Čakâr (falconer), income from the village and the three monasteries - 10 115 akçes;

The Anaselik Monastery – one friar – Filotej, income from şira, melon fields and grain in the form of maktu – 75 akçes. The friars at this cloister were exempt from taxes.

Basaraba, also known as St. Dimitar – as the other friars, the ones from this cloister are also exempt from ispenč and avariz (according to the older register, just as the friars claim). The first is Strati, the other one is called Pahomij, income 100 akçes (including grain).

The next monastery [...] - friar, son of the priest Martin, Damijan and Tasu, income 100 akçes , wheat 30 akçes, tithe on beehives 30 akçes, şira 20 wooden pails and tithe on melon fields – 35 akçes .

⁶ Б. Цветкова, Соколарството в Северна България през XV-XVI век, *Годишник на музеите от Северна България*, (Варна), 1978, № IV, с. 77; Б. Цветкова, Соколарството в Никополски и Видински санджак през XV-XVI век, *Годишник на Софийски университет, Исторически факултет*, (София), №.73, 1982, с. 16

⁷ Ел. Грозданова, *Българската селска община през XV-XVIII век*. София, БАН, 1979, с. 98

⁸ Паисий Хилендарски. *Славянобългарска история*. София, Наука и изкуство, 1972, под ред. на Б. Райков, с. 123;

Another legend has it that he was married but childless and after his wife's death he joined the cave monastery near his native village, where he took the vows, worked hard and educated himself into all noble virtues of the brotherhood. Foreseeing his own death, he left the monastery, lied down between two stones at the bank of the nearby river Lom and surrendered his soul to God. In a while a torrential rain hit the area, swept away the two stones, together with the relics of the Reverend into the river, where the relics remained for some time.⁹

The Reverend Dimitrij made his appearance to a girl from the village of Basarbovo possessed by a fury and promised to cure her if she took out his relics from the river. The girl obliged and the saint's relics were retrieved from the river and laid down into the village church, and the girl was cured. Such miraculous healings became common and various other sufferers were relieved from their illnesses.¹⁰

The Turnovo metropolitan bishop Nikifor¹¹ came to worship the relics with a group of clerics. Among the members of the group was a monk by the name of Lavrentij who while kissing the relics tried to bite a piece but his mouth froze open and remained thus until with tears in his eyes the monk repented.

The next miracle associated with a clergyman concerns the Preslav bishop Joanakij¹² who fell seriously ill and demanded to be taken to the relics of the Reverend Dimitrij. He was laid next to the coffin of the Saint and after holy mass was served he was miraculously cured.

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An Ugro-Wallachian voivode craved after the holy relics of Saint Dimitrij and wanted to have them in his private church. He sent a few boyars on a mission to Basarbovo to retrieve for him the holy relics of the Saint, but the relics could not be moved north, across the river Danube. Amazed by this, the errand boyars were curious to find the reason for the will of the Saint. They put the relics in a cart driven by heifers that had never been harnessed before that moment and let the animals roam free. The heifers took the cart with the relics straight to the village of Basarbovo and stopped in front of the church.¹⁴ The stone in front of which the

⁹ Моллов, *Материали за историята на култа* : <http://liternet.bg/publish/tmollov/dbasarbovski.htm>.

¹⁰ Н. Стоянов, *Краткое сказание за Преподобнаго отца нашего Димитрия Басарбовскаго, коего мощи почивать въ Унгро-Влахискія, въ Букурещ, Митрополитская Църква*. Цариград-Галата. Въ книгопечатницата на Д. Цанкова. 1858., с. 7; *Жития на българските светии*. Славянобългарски манастир „Св. Вмч. Георги Зограф“. Света Гора. Атон, 2002., с. 158-161;

¹¹ И. Тютюнджиев, *Търновската митрополия през XV-XIX в.* Велико Търново, Ровита, 2007, с.293-295

¹² И. Тютюнджиев, *Търновският епископат XII-XXI в.* Велико Търново, Ровита, 2007, с.210

¹³ Стоянов, *Краткое сказание*, с.11

¹⁴ В. Мутафов, *Преподобни Димитрий Басарбовски и неговият скален манастир до Русе*. Русе, Дунав прес, 2002, с.20

procession with the relics of the Saint stopped has been preserved in the grave yard of the village of Basarbovo.

Another interesting piece of information on the story of Saint Dimitrij is provided by the Catholic bishop Nikolo Puliezi, who visited Basarbovo around the year 1764 or 1765. He provides a long description of his travels during which, on his way to Rouse, he passed by Basarbovo, where he saw the relics of Saint Dimitrij. These were kept in a church named after the Saint. He recounts the legends surrounding the life of the Saint and his consecration. According to Puliezi: “I went to examine the body of a saint, a schismatic who had been worshipped for more than three centuries. His name was Dimitrij and he was a shepherd, looking after oxen. I found the body almost intact. It was turned over, the tip of the nose was missing and it emitted an unpleasant odour. I implored after the holy life and the heroic deeds of the saint. (...) The villagers took the body and organized a procession with it. They decided to honour the Reverend as a Saint and numerous schismatics, Greeks, Armenians and heretic gathered to pay their tribute to this so miraculous body that required five pairs of buffalos to be retrieved from the waters of the river. This body rests in a church built in honour of the Reverend, where feasts are organized with animal sacrifices and people eat and drink in order to receive according to their needs blessings and miracles.”¹⁵

In 1774, during the Russian-Turkish war, the Russian General Ivan Saltikov (the Russian–Turkish War from 1768 to 1774) ordered that the holy relics of Saint Dimitrij be taken to Russia.¹⁶ The Bulgarian Dimitar Hadži (Pilgrim) from Bucharest, who served under the General as his interpreter, asked the General to leave the relics in Romania as a compensation for the heavy losses that the country suffered during the war. This happened

¹⁵ Л. Милетич, Нови документи по миналото на нашите павликяни. *Сборник за народни умотворения наука и книжнина*, София, №21, 1905, с. 83

¹⁶ В. Мутафов, *Една поправка в житието на преподобни Димитрий Басарбовски*. In: <http://www.pravmladeji.org/node/675>. – 18.12.2015. According to Archimandrite Victor Mutafov, in the published historical martyrologies of the Reverend St. Dimitar Basarbovski the same incorrect piece of information is circulated, relating to a Russian general of the name of Saltikov in the Russian-Turkish war from 1768 to 1774. In most research on St. Dimitar Basarbovski it is noted that General Peter Saltikov headed a military campaign in the region of the town of Rouse, but according to most recent findings this was his son General Ivan Saltikov.

I express my gratitude to Archimandrite Victor Mutafov for the clarification about who accomplished the transfer of the holy relics of the Reverend to Bucharest, since in all historical martyrologies it is claimed that this was carried out by the Russian General Peter (Petr) Saltikov, but count Peter Simeonovič Saltikov died in 1772, i.e. two years before the end of the war. What is more General Peter (Petr) Saltikov did not take part in this Russian-Turkish war.

during the office of Metropolitan Archbishop Gregorius II.¹⁷ Since then the holy relics of Saint Dimitrij have rested at the Patriarchal Cathedral “St. St. Konstantin and Elena” in Bucharest.¹⁸

Despite the fact that controversies and contradictions abound in the biography of Saint Dimitrij Basarbovski, it is quite certain that the cult for the Saint came into existence in the XVII century. Ottoman documents bear witness to the fact that the cloister had been functioning in the fifteenth century and that at the end of the seventeenth and the beginning of the eighteenth century the cult for the Saint attracted numerous worshippers and pilgrims who rushed to the monastery to pay their respects to Saint Dimitrij Basarbovski.

Even if we accept that the Saint had lived earlier than was suggested by Païsiy Hilendârski (namely 1685), this would not in any way undermine the Saint’s popularity or the worship he has been surrounded. On the contrary, his fame has spread throughout Bulgaria, the whole of the Balkan Peninsula and has reached Russia. A telling piece of evidence is the taking of his relics by the Russian army on its withdrawal and the insistent pleading of the inhabitants of Bucharest for the relics to be left with them for they had saved them from the plague.

In his monograph “*History of the establishment of the town of Bucharest*”, colonel Dimitar Papazoglou described events at the time thus, „In 1762, as a consequence of the cessation of the sixth reign of Konstantin Mavrokordat, the then Metropolitan Grigore went, together with Mihail Kantakuzi and Nikolae Brakovyvanu, to Petersburg to see the empress Ekaterina to plead with her to help them protect the country which had been devastated by the Turks and the frequent change of sovereigns by Phanari. It was during the office of the same Metropolitan that the Russian troops arrived on 13 July 1777 and that the relics of saint Dimitrij were laid in the bishopric after they were brought from the village of Basarbovo, near Rusčuk. (...) In 1814 an outburst of plague spread through Bucharest and the local clerics decided to take out the relics of Saint Dimitrij and organize a procession along the streets of

¹⁷ *Tiparituridi cara romaneasca in biblioteca Sfantiyli sinod.* Bucuresti. 2009., p. 116; *Slujba Cuviosului Dimitrie de la Basarabov*, ediția a doua, București, 1801, p.40; *Viețile Sfinților*, (27 octombrie), ediția Mănăstirii Neamț, 1809

¹⁸ Жития на светиите. Ред. † Левкийски епископ Партений, архим. д-р Атанасий (Бончев). София, Синодално издателство, 1991 г. In: http://bg-patriarshia.bg/index.php?file=sv_dimitrii_besarbovski.xml; - 18.12.2015

the city. The citizens addressed their prayers to their patron to save them from the plague. Their prayers were answered and there were no further victims to the murderous disease.”¹⁹

This is interesting information that provides insight into the beginning of the cult of the saint. According to colonel Papazoglou: “Since then till the present day, when the country has been swept by calamities or epidemics, grand processions have been organized, at which the holy relics of the Saint were carried and prayers were addressed to the Saint. (...) My father and I, just as all our contemporaries, can bear witness in fear of God, that we witnessed with our own eyes the miracles performed by this Saint.

My father told me how during the awful plague of 1815 the people took out the holy remains of the Saint and walked throughout the city carrying those around. Then they put the relics in the centre of the town, read prayers and performed blessings of waters. From that day onwards the epidemic started to diminish gradually. Joan Karadzha went back to his palace from the village of Domnešt near the river Saber, where he used to live in solitude”.²⁰

In 1827 a long draught set upon the capital of Wallachia and nearby regions which caused wide-spread famine. Again the relics of the Saint were taken out of the temple and a procession was organized on the streets of Bucharest. A witness, colonel Papazoglou, reports,

„Witnesses to the second miracle were all people living in Bucharest, myself included, at the age of 16. This is how it happened. In 1827 during the reign of Grigore Voda Gika there was a devastating drought. Not a drop of rain had fallen for three months, those three months that water is most needed. (...) The holy Metropolitan Grigorie [Daskala] called for the old father Grigore Gika Prodobni to take out the holy remains of St. Dimitrij and to organize a procession. (...) I, the author of this brochure, was among the throng of people. The priests took turns to carry on their shoulders the chest with the holy remains of Saint Dimitrij. (...) And behold! A miracle! Just as we were leaving, we saw a large cloud coming from the north. When we reached the end of the bridge at Mogoșoya (Kalya Victorei) a torrential rain hit us. The ruler, the boyars, and everybody present got soaking wet. It felt as if we were drenched in buckets of water, but no one seemed to be in a hurry. The procession

¹⁹ D. Papazoglu, Istoria fondărei orașului București . In: http://ro.wikisource.org/wiki/Istoria_fond%C4%83rei_ora%C8%99ului_Bucure%C8%99ti:Capitolul_18 – 18.12.2015

²⁰ Ibid. http://ro.wikisource.org/wiki/Istoria_fond%C4%83rei_ora%C8%99ului_Bucure%C8%99ti:Capitolul_18 – 18.12.2015

was moving ever so slowly. His Highness was riding in front, together with the boyars, but we were not far behind walking in tail. When we reached the church of the holy bishopric, the ruler and the boyars went inside, drenching wet. (...) The Metropolitan said prayers of gratitude in front of the open chest and everybody started bowing to the Saint and kissing his holy remains – from the ruler to the last beggar in the line.”²¹

In 1831 a new outburst of plague attacked the city and forced numerous citizens to leave Bucharest for good. The governor of the divan, the Russian General Pavel Kiseljov, decided to seek again the help of the heavenly patron of the capital of Wallachia. Saint Dimitrij Basarbovski heard the heart-felt prayers of the clerics and the sparse remaining population. As a result from 15 September to the beginning of October, the number of victims of the disease (about 160 per day) drastically decreased and the spread of the plague was successfully taken under control.²²

On 1 May 1870 an angina epidemic burst out in Bucharest. According to doctor Jacob Felix this epidemic was caused by the swamps at the foot of the hill, stretching from the workshops Lemaître to the slaughterhouse of Hadji Mosku from Vitan.

“The countless swarms of mosquitoes worsened the situation beyond control. (...) In these inhuman conditions the people living in the suburb of Foișor, using their priest as an intermediary, asked at the bishopric for the chest with the holy remains of the Reverend Dimitrij Basarbov to be brought to them. At the beginning of July the chest with the holy remains of the Saint was brought to the church in Foișor, established by Samaranda Mavrokordat. The chest was accompanied by his Eminence the bishop and vicar of the holy bishopric, Jeronim, who conceded to the pleading of the people to organize a religious procession with the relics of the Saint. (...) The holy relics remained in the church in Foișor until the next day and Saint Dimitrij with his divine powers cleared the stifling air from the wretched suburb. The fog and the swarms of mosquitoes miraculously disappeared and numerous ill people were cured. The procession with the holy remains of the Saint was portrayed in a lithograph by G. Venrich, which was printed by Dimitar Papazoglu. The lithograph is entitled *The procession of Saint Dimitar, patron of the capital of Romania* and is

²¹Ibid.,In:http://ro.wikisource.org/wiki/Istoria_fond%C4%83rei_ora%C8%99ului_Bucure%C8%99ti:Capitolul_18

²² *Sfântul cuvios Dimitrie Basarbov cu sfintele moaște la București. Viața istoricul moaștelor minunile acatistul paraclisul. Ediție îngrijită* L. S. Desartovici, București, Sophia, 2009, pp.109-114

dedicated to His Eminence bishop Jeronim, the vicar of His Grace the Representatives of Romania”.²³

There is yet another interesting historic fact which unites the peoples of Bulgaria and Romania religiously, politically and culturally. In 1877 The Russian-Turkish war of liberation began (the war of independence for Romania). The Romanians took active part and prayed to Saint Dimitrij to send them help in their fights. We have evidence from the time of the War for Independence of 1877 for the help granted by the will of Saint Dimitrij to the Romanian people. In his chronicle Petre Izpiresku wrote down all that happened at the time:

„The ruler gave orders for preparations to be made for crossing the river Danube. For this purpose the Romanian military officers built a bridge over the river Danube from Korabiya to Izlaz. It was a magnificent and deeply moving scene on the day of departure. (...) The grandsons of the soldiers from 1396 from Nikopol and those of 1444 from Varna crossed the Danube under a waving flag, to the accompaniment of music, ready to face the Turkish scourge and free themselves from the yoke that had been oppressing the Romanian people for centuries.

The Metropolitan of Bucharest, the first in order, demanded that the holy relics of Saint Dimitrij be taken out from the bishopric and be taken on a procession throughout the capital. He ordered for public prayers to be held and vigils organized in every church in the country so that God could take mercy on the Christians and help them win. Such vigils and public prayers were organized until the fall of Pleven.

We have further evidence for the help of Saint Dimitrij left to us from this war. At that time there was an old colonel living in Bucharest who had served many long years in the Romanian army. He had seven sons and they were all out there at the battle field. The poor father feared that his sons would perish on the battle field, but he had a strong faith in God and put all his hope in the belief in the help of Saint Dimitrij. (...) The war came to an end and with the prayers of the great wonder worker all seven sons of the colonel came back home safe and sound. There is no way to describe the joy of the old father, his gratitude to the Saint, and all his words of praise addressed to the Reverend. When there is faith, anything is possible.

Pure and light is the blessing of your gifts, Saint Dimitrij, and we beg you to protect with your kindness our families, when you secretly come among us and show us the way that leads to the Kingdom of Heaven.”²⁴

²³ Ibid., p. 116

²⁴ Ibid., pp. 116-120

There is another information about the Saint in the context of public usages of History in Bulgarian and Romanian peoples in the end of the nineteenth century. According a Romanian author who can be recognized only with the initials D.K.P.: “The village of Basarbovo is located at a twenty-kilometre distance from Rouse, on the slope of a hill at the foot of which the river Lom meanders in a few eddies. This is the birth place of St. Dimitrij whose relics rest in Bucharest Bishopric. While he lived in his native village he was called simply Dimitar, but when he found a home in the good, jolly and vainglorious Romania he changed his name to Dimitru Basarbov. (...) On the day of celebrating Saint Dimitrij all barren women from far and away gather at the well, and after the priest says a pray, they drink water from the well and in ten months their happy husbands invite relatives and friends to a baptizing ceremony!”²⁵

In 1950 The Holy Synod of the Romanian Orthodox Church took a decision that Reverend Dimitrij be proclaimed a saint and celebrated in all churches throughout the country. The first country-wide celebration took place on 27 October 1955.

The service for the proclamation of the cult for Saint Dimitrij Basarbov started on the night of 25 October when the chest with the holy remains of the Saint was taken out of the church. After a procession headed by people carrying the chest with the remains, the chest was laid in the yard of the bishopric, under a ciborium.²⁶

According to official information: “Throughout the whole of the following day (26 October) believers came to bow and pay their respects to the holy relics of the Saint. Signalled by the tolling of bells, the vigil began at 18.00. and the service was performed by a group of priests and acolytes, led by His Grace Metropolitan Efrem. The bishopric was brimming with believers who performed most of the songs at evening mass and the vigil ended at about 22 o'clock.

At this hour many believers queued to bow to the holy relics of Saint Dimitrij Basarbov. The queuing believers moved in two streams stretching from the main entrance of the Bishop's palace to the cross of Brânkovyanu at the foot of the hill and they were all carrying lit handles and it looked as if a necklace of shimmering lights was encompassing the hill of the bishopric. The believers kept paying their respects to the saint till late after midnight.”²⁷

²⁵ Румънски пътеписи от XIX век за българските земи. Съст. Марина Младенова, Н. Жечев, София, ОФ, 1982, с.215 – An author who can be recognized only with the initials D.K.P., „A week in Turnovo“ (probably the year is 1895).

²⁶ *Biserica Ortodoxă Română*. Buletinul Oficial al Patriarhiei Române, București, 1955, №11-12, pp.1203-1204

²⁷ *Ibid.*, pp.1203-104

On the day of celebrating of Saint Dimitrij (27 October), the court of the bishopric was bursting with the numbers of believers who patiently awaited their turn to kiss the holy relics of the saint.

“At 9.30 to the toll of the bells, the high hierarchs led by his Beatitude patriarch Justinian and his Beatitude Bulgarian patriarch Kiril, as well as by his Grace archbishop Athenagora al Thyafirelor, all came out of the castle and headed towards the church. The procession was joined by his Eminence the Metropolitan Gregorij of Leningrad and of Novgorod, and their Graces Hrisostom al Filippilor, Sofroniy Târnovski, Iacob al Atticei and Megarei, Tit Simedrea, Efrem Enačesku; their Eminences Bishops Jacob from Malta, Palladie al Volîniei, Anthim Targoviștyanu, Teoktist Botoșanyanu, Venyamin Niștor; the clerics from international delegations, the bishop’s and metropolitan’s counsellors, professors from the institute of Theology, including the Rector, Prof. Joan G. Koman, archpriests from the capital, priests and monks. The Ministry of Culture was represented by Marin Sulika.

After the high hierarchs descended the stairs, they bowed to the relics of the Saint which his Beatitude Bulgarian Patriarch Kiril was sprinkling with rose water.”²⁸

According to official information: “The Holy Mass commenced after the vigil, performed by their Beatitudes the patriarchs Justinian and Kiril, His Grace archbishop Athenagora al Thyafirelor, Their Eminences the Metropolitan of Leningrad and Novgorod and Hrisostom al Filippilor, the Reverend father Konstantin Nečaev, the Reverend archimandrite Benedict Giuș and by some acolytes.

After the end of Holy Mass, the high hierarchs, accompanied by tolling bells, went out of the church and headed towards the place where the chest with the relics of St. Dimitrij stood. After he ascended the stairs of the patriarchal palace, his Beatitude Romanian patriarch Justinian made the following speech.”²⁹ In this way The Romanian Orthodox Church took a decision that Reverend Dimitrij be proclaimed a saint and celebrated in all churches throughout the country.

Saint Dimitrij Basarbovski has united Bulgarians and Romanians culturally and religiously from the Revival to the present day. His holy relics have been preserved and are kept at the Patriarchal Cathedral “St. St. Konstantin and Elena” in the Romanian capital, where he is honoured and commemorated as its patron and protector.

On 27 October 2005 on request by the Bulgarian Patriarch Maxim, the Romanian Patriarch Teoktist donated a marvelous gift to the Basarbovski Monastery – an icon with the

²⁸ Ibid., pp.1203-1204

²⁹ Ibid., pp.1203-1204

image of Saint Dimitrij with small pieces from his holy relics interwoven into the texture of the painting. The holy cloister near Basarbovo keeps the memory of the Saint Dimitrij alive and welcomes thousands of worshipers from both sides of the river Danube who seek help and hope forever and ever.

Every year on 27 October thousands of worshipers from Bulgaria and Romania concurse to the only operating cave monastery in Bulgaria, the “St. Dimitrij Basarbovski” monastery, near Basarbovo, Rouse region. They congregate to do homage to the patron of the holy cloister who was born there.