



Religious Patronage as an Instrument of 'Soft' Political Power during War: Russian Donations to Orthodox Communities in the Ottoman Empire

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One of the basic features of the propaganda mechanism of the Russian Empire's policy in the Balkans between the 18th-early 20th centuries was the support and consolidation of the Orthodox communities within the Ottoman Empire. The study of the written sources and material sources in Greece, Serbia, Bulgaria, Romania attest three categories of donations during Russo-Turkish wars of the 18th and 19th centuries:

- official gifts provided by state/church institutions
- private offerings made by warriors or the clergy
- foundation of memorial churches in honor of the fallen Russian soldiers in the war of 1877-1878.

They functioned not only as objects of worship, but also as 'tools' of soft political power, representing one of the many 'invisible' aspects of war in the modern era.

- 1 Pectoral cross, 18th c. Treasury of the St. John the Theologian Monastery, Patmos (Photo: G. Makkas)
According to the monastery's oral tradition, the cross was offered to the Monastery of St John the Theologian on Patmos as a gift from Catherine the Great during the Russo-Turkish War of 1768-1774.
- 2 Medal "To the defender of Orthodoxy"-a, b, 1768. Treasury of the St. John the Theologian Monastery, Patmos (Photo: G. Makkas)
In 1768, the St Petersburg Mint struck a special medal entitled "To the Defender of Orthodoxy", created specifically to reward Greeks who rebelled against the Ottoman Empire and supported Russian troops.
- 3 Church St. Nicholas (Giurgiu, Romania) (Source: Wikimedia commons)
A mosque converted to an Orthodox church during the Russo-Turkish War 1828-29.
- 4 Church of the Holy Trinity, Gornji Adrovac, Serbia (photo: Teodora Anđelković)
The church was built in honour of Colonel Nikolaj Rajevski, who fell in battle on 1 September 1876 at Golo Brdo, Gornji Adrovac.
- 5 Chalice cup and paten, 1897. Ecclesiastical Museum of the Metropolitan Church, Rethymno (Photo: Maria E. Fragkopoulou)
A complete set of liturgical vessels was donated to the Metropolitan Church by the Holy Synod of Russia when the Prefecture of Rethymno was under Russian control (1897-1909).



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