

Hilandari

Wednesday, 27 December 2006

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Hilandar is a Serbian monastery. It was founded in 1198 by the Serbian Saint Sava and his father, Grand Prince Stefan Nemanja (who later became a monk there, taking the monastic name of "Simeon") of Raška. Because its founders are Serbs and the first monks were of the Serbian Orthodox Church it is also called "The Serbian monastery" and is nowadays the monastery where Serbian Orthodox monks traditionally reside. Today, Hilandar represents one of the greatest shrines for the Serbian people. Hilandar does not have an abbot, but an under-abbot. The Mother of God through her Icon of Three Hands is considered as the abbess.

After the fall of Serbia and Bulgaria under Ottoman rule, the influx of Serbian monks decreased at the expense of Bulgarians, particularly from Macedonia. From the 17th to the 19th century, Hilandar was predominantly Bulgarian-populated: in his account of 1745, the Russian pilgrim Vasily Barsky writes that the monks of Hilandar were all Bulgarians. Ilarion Makariopolski, Sophronius of Vratsa and Matey Preobrazhenski have all lived there, and it was in this monastery that Paisius of Hilandar began his revolutionary Slavonic-Bulgarian History. The monastery was dominated by Bulgarians until 1902.

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In the 1970s, the Greek government offered power grid installation to all of the monasteries on Mount Athos. The Holy Council of Mount Athos refused, and since then every monastery generates its own power, which is gained mostly from renewable energy sources. During the 1980s, electrification of the monastery of Hilandar took place, generating power mostly for lights and heating.

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In 2004, an accident happened when one of the heaters was not turned off and the old, dry wood used to build that portion of the monastery ignited. The fire significantly damaged Hilandar, and about 40-50% of the monastery burned to the ground. It is currently undergoing restoration.

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Among

the numerous relics and other holy objects treasured at the monastery is the Wonderworking Icon of the Theotokos "Of the Akathist", the feast day of which is celebrated on January 12. Since Mount Athos uses the traditional Julian Calendar, the day they celebrate as January 12 currently falls on January 25 of the modern Gregorian Calendar.

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Miracle-working icons within the monastery

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The monastery possesses the Wonderworking Icon of the Theotokos "Of the Three Hands", traditionally associated with a miraculous healing of St. John Damascene around the year 717, According to tradition, while he was serving as Vizier to the Caliph, he was falsely accused of treachery and his hand was cut off. Upon praying in front of an icon of the Theotokos his hand was miraculously restored. In thanksgiving, he had a silver replica of his hand fashioned and attached it to the icon.

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The library holds 181 Greek and 809 Slavic manuscripts, about 20 000 printed books (3 000 in Greek language).

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The monastery contains about 20 working monks.