

**BULGARIAN SCHOLARS AND CLERICS  
IN THE EUROPEAN POLITICS AT THE END OF THE 14<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY  
AND THE BEGINNING OF THE 15<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY**

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***Rezumat: Savanți și clerici bulgari în politica europeană de la sfârșitul secolului al XIV-lea și începutul secolului al XV-lea***

*Evenimentele din ultimele decenii ale secolului XIV și primele din secolul al XV-lea, legate de cuceririle Imperiului Otoman, au schimbat harta Europei. Savanții și clericii bulgari (ultimii patriarhi de Târnovo – Teodosie și Eftimie, Ciprian – "Mitropolitul Kievului, al Moscovei și al întregii Rusii", Grigore Țamblac – "Mitropolitul moldo-valah" și "Mitropolitul Kievului, al Rusiei și Lituaniei", Grigore Bulgarul – "Mitropolitul Kievului și al Lituaniei", Constantin din Kostenets etc.) au participat în mod activ la politicile bisericești și seculare din Europa. Chiar dacă s-au aflat printre cei mai pasionați susținători ai învățăturilor mistice ale isihasmului, prin viața lor, ei au fost, de asemenea, reprezentanți ai așa-numitului "isihasmul politic", ca răspuns la provocările timpului lor.*

***Abstract:*** *The events in the last decades of the 14<sup>th</sup> century and the first of the 15<sup>th</sup> century related with the conquests of the Ottoman Empire changed the map of Europe. The Bulgarian scholars and clerics: the last patriarchs of Tarnovo - Theodosius and Euthymius, Cyprian – "Metropolitan of Kiev and Moscow and whole Russia", Gregory Tsamblak – "Wallach-Moldovan Metropolitan" and "Metropolitan of Kiev, Russia and Lithuania", Gregory the Bulgarian "Metropolitan of Kiev and Lithuania", Constantine of Kostenets, etc. actively participated in the church and secular policies in Europe. Even though they were among the most passionate supporters of the mystical teachings of hesychasm, through their life they were also representatives of the so-called "political hesychasm", as a response to the turning point of their time.*

***Résumé: Savants et clercs bulgares dans la politique européenne de la fin du XIV-ème siècle et le début du XV-ème***

*Les événements des dernières décennies du XIV-ème siècle et les premiers du XV-ème, ayant liaison avec les conquêtes de l'Empire Ottoman, changèrent la carte de l'Europe. Les lettrés et les clercs bulgares (les derniers patriarches de Târnovo – Théodose et Eutychés, Cyprien – "Métropolitaine de Kiev, de Moscou et de la Russie toute entière", Grégoire Țamblac – "Métropolitaine valaque et moldave" et "Métropolitaine de Kiev, de la Russie et de la Lituanie", Grégoire le Bulgare – "Métropolitaine de Kiev et de la Lituanie", Constantin de Kostenets etc.)*

*participèrent activement aux politiques ecclésiastiques et séculières de l'Europe. Même si ceux-ci se trouvèrent parmi les plus passionnés soutenant des enseignements mystiques de l'hésychasme, par leur vie, ils furent, aussi, les représentants de l'ainsi nommé "hésychasme politique", comme réponse aux provocations de leur époque.*

**Keywords:** *Bulgaria, hesychasm, church and secular policies, Byzantium, monastic communities.*

### Introductory note

The Bulgarian scholars and clerics who lived in the end of the 14<sup>th</sup> – 15<sup>th</sup> century after the Kingdoms of Tarnovo and Vidin fell under Ottoman rule transferred the ideas of the hesychasm of Gregory Palamas and Gregory of Sinai, the language reform of Patriarch Euthymius, and new higher style of Old-Bulgarian rhetoric – “pletienie slovesъ” (weaving words) on the Balkans, the countries in Central and Eastern Europe. Gregory Tsamblak and Constantine of Kostenets went to Serbia, Gregory Tsamblak went into Moldova, Wallachia and Lithuania, Cyprian Tsamblak went into Kiev and Moscowian Russia, etc. They were spiritual students and disciples of the founders of the Byzantine hesychasm - Gregory of Sinai, of the father John of Athos, of Patriarch Callistus, etc. Theodosius of Tarnovo, Euthymius of Tarnovo, Cyprian Tsamblak were direct students of Gregory of Sinai in the hesychastic monastery in the area of Paroria, Strandzha Mountain, on the territory of Bulgaria. Most of them were students of the hesychasts of Athos, especially of the John, and spent part of their lives in Athos as well as in the Constantinople monasteries. Constantine of Kostenets could not find Patriarch Euthymius alive, but he became a student of deacon Andrei who was a disciple and a direct student of the Patriarch of Bulgaria in the school of the Bachkovo Monastery.

### The ideal of a perfect human personality

The Bulgarian clerics and scholars were one of the most passionate disciples and spreaders of hesychasm and at the same time they were also among the most famous clerics in the tumultuous political events in the end of the 14<sup>th</sup> and the beginning of the 15<sup>th</sup> century.

Hesychasm became an official divisions in the Byzantine church and then in the Bulgarian, Serbian, Moldavian, Russian, etc. churches in the end of the 14<sup>th</sup> century after the victory of the Gregory Palamas's mystical theology over the rational division of theology advocated by the disciples of Barlaam of Calabria. A

new type of mysticism was established which was associated with the mystical doctrine of seeing God through “pure prayer” and mystical practices and until reaching the “divine light” as a way toward *theosis*, deification of man. As an ideological division hesychasm preached individual self-awareness and internal humanity and it should contrast to the participation in the external, especially secular, social and political activities. Nevertheless versatile religious and political activities among the most popular hesychasm followers, Byzantines, Bulgarians, etc. was noticed before the Eastern Roman Empire fell under Ottoman rule.

Nevertheless, this “political hesychasm” was spreading among the majority of intellectuals in Byzantium, in Bulgaria and on the Balkans and through their activity throughout the whole Eastern Europe. It contained the rest of the definitions of hesychasm, excluding its radical manifestation as a mystical practice.<sup>1</sup>

The belief that namely hesychasm, as mysticism, drove further the intellectual elite from the current political events and its direct influence on the society had direct relation to the Ottoman conquest was far too simplified. We could ask ourselves what would have happened if the Barlaam’s concept and the rationalism had been accepted and could it affect the loss of state independence and development of the Renaissance in the European East? The question is far more complicated and the interweaving of ideological and political conceptions and events in that era should also be considered.

Actually, Humanism is a concept adopted earlier by the fathers of the church – the Christian *paideia*, improvement of human, but in the East it developed differently – mysticism and internal meditation of human until reaching unity with God and in the West – getting closer to the ancient ideal for perfect human personality. The famous “definition of philosophy” by Constantine the Philosopher<sup>2</sup>: “And later he was asked (by the Logothete) “Philosopher, I would like to know what philosophy is?” And he (Constantine), being much witted, quickly replied: “*Knowledge of the God’s and human things, which teaches as far as a man can approach God and how through his deeds to become image and likeness of the one who created him.*”

It was actually a shortened definition of the Christian *paideia* (*humanitas*). Even Gregory of Nyssa’s stories that describe in detail the concept for the *paideia*

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<sup>1</sup> Г.М. Прохоров, *Исихазм и общественная мысль в Восточной Европе в XIV в.* [Hesychasm and the Social Thought in Eastern Europe in the 14<sup>th</sup> century], Труды отдела древнерусской литературы, т. 23, Ленинград, 1968, с. 86-108.

<sup>2</sup> I. Ševčenco, *The definition of philosophy in the Life of Saint Constantine*, in *For Roman Jakobson. Essays on the occasion of his sixtieth birthday 11 oct. 1956*. Den Haag, 1956, p. 449-457; See Nikolova’s critical review, Св. Николова, *Проблемът за философските възгледи на Константин Кирил* [The problem of the philosophical ideas of Constantine Cyril], in *Кирило-Методиевски студии*, Кн. 5, София, 1988, с. 17-48.

as a forming process of human personality “a way toward unity with God, divine anabasis” do not explain it as good. Similarly to the Cyril’s definition it was also spread through the Dialectics of John of Damascus, translated by John the Exarch, in the chapter “For Philosophy” which later was copied as a separate work and spread in Serbia and Russia.<sup>3</sup>

The doctrine of Gregory of Sinai and Gregory Palamas in the 14<sup>th</sup> century further developed the mystical monastic division of Christianity mainly through teaching *theosis* - deification and the mystical practices to reach it – “practice” and “theory”. The overall approach of man to God can only be achieved at the last stages of upliftment of hesychasts in which “the divine light shines in the human body itself”. This Byzantine system reveals different accents and beginnings of other systems – the idea for the *paideia* (or humanism) and the deification is the final goal of humanistic, scholastic, and radical mystical doctrines as well.

After the victory of the Gregory Palamas’ doctrine at the Synod in August 1341 it gained extreme popularity. Palamas was referred to as “a teacher of righteousness, rule of the holy dogmas, and a pillar of the right faith and the vindicator of the Church”. The clerics borrowed the theological arguments from his stories and strengthened his authority. As a famous theologian he was renowned even by his intransigent opponents such as Patriarch John Kalekas. His ideas defeated the rational theologians and scientists who went into the Italic cities and helped the development of the Renaissance in Western Europe with their activity, collections of Greek manuscripts, translations, and teachings.

Gregory Palamas’ followers made the hesychasm an official division in the Constantinople church and from there it was transferred in Bulgaria and the other countries. Hesychasm influenced the emergence of new ideas in the Byzantine theology, the development of literature and art.<sup>4</sup>

### A political dimension of the hesychast controversy

The main division of the Byzantine theology had the same view on man as the ultimate goal of the Christian *paideia*. Man was called to “know God”, “to participate in his life and to be “saved” not only by the external God’s interference or by the rational knowledge of God’s truths but through *theosis*, becoming one

<sup>3</sup> *Des Hl. Johannes von Damaskus Έκθεσις ἀκριβής τῆς ὀρθοόξου πίστεως*, in *Übersetzung des Exarchen Johanes*. Hrsg. L. Sadik, 1-3 (MLS DV, T. - XVI), Wiesbaden - Freiburg, 1967 - 1983.

<sup>4</sup> R. Picchio, „*Prerinscamento esteuropeo*” e „*Rinascita slava ortodossa*”, in “*Ricerche slavistiche*”, vol. VI, 1958, p. 185-199; Idem, *Die historisch-philologische Bedeutung der kirchenslavischen Tradition*, in “*Die Welt der Slaven*”, Jhrg. VII. H. I, Juni, 1962, p. 21.

with God. This theosis fundamentally distinguishes the Byzantine theology from the Neo-platonic return to the impersonal Unity that was new manifestation of the evangelical life “in Christ”.<sup>5</sup>

The separation of the Byzantium intellectual elite in the dispute between Gregory Palamas and Barlaam is explained as a formation of two parties connected with the new political ideas. The Barlaam party found supporters mainly in a narrow circle of intellectuals Akindin, Nicephorus Gregory, etc., who further turned to the West. The Paleologus Renaissance, as numerous studies have proved, was one of the many Renaissances in Byzantium, i.e. increasing the interest toward Antiquity considering that the antique culture and the secular traditions there never interrupted their development. The Barlaam party rather aimed at introducing new theological ideas in order to help in the negotiations for the unification of the Christian churches.<sup>6</sup>

Depending on the John Kantakouzenos’ auspices, Barlaam presented before the Holy Synod a project for unification of the Churches. In 1335, he was sent as a Logothete of the Emperor in Avignon, but without any official prerogative of the Church.<sup>7</sup> The Barlaam’s movement and the ideas of the numerous Renaissance in Byzantium were not successful not only because of the connections of the clerics with the Roman Church and the West but also because of his attitude toward “Hellenes” and everything “Hellenic”, which in the Christian church was a synonym of “pagan”.<sup>8</sup>

Whereas the Barlaam party found supporters in a relatively narrow circle of highly educated intellectuals-aristocrats, the monastic party was the main supporter of the Christian universalism. The monastic party had also had strong positions in Byzantium before, especially through the Monastery of Stoudios. The victory of the monastic party, led by Gregory Palamas, of the synods in 1341, 1347 and 1352 and the consecration of Gregory as Archbishop of Thessalonica, and his supporters Isidore Buchiras, Callistus and Philotheos Kokkinos – succes-

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<sup>5</sup> L.H. Grondijs, *The Patristic Origins of Gregory Palama’s Doctrine of God*, in *Studia Patristica*, vol. 5, Berlin 1962, p. 323-328; D. Constantelos, *The Formation of the Hellenic Christian Mind*, in D. Constantelos, *Christian Hellenism. Essays and Studies in Continuity and Change*. Publishing by Aristide D. Caratzas, New Rochelle, New York & Athens, [http://www.myriobiblos.gr/texts/english/Constantelos\\_1.html](http://www.myriobiblos.gr/texts/english/Constantelos_1.html)

<sup>6</sup> J. Meyendorff, *Introduction a l’étude de Grégoire Palamas*, in “*Patristica Sorbonensia*”, 1959, V, 3, p. 78.

<sup>7</sup> R.E. Sinkewicz, *A New Interpretation for the First Episode in the Controversy between Barlaam the Calabrian and Gregory Palamas*, in “*The Journal of Theological Studies*”, 1980, N.S., 31, p. 489-500.

<sup>8</sup> H. Hunger, *Reich der neuen Mitte: Der christliche Geist der Byzantischen Kultur*, Graz, Vienna, Cologne: Styria, 1965, p. 371.

sively becoming patriarchs afterwards, finally affirmed the ideas of hesychasm in Byzantium, as official for the church.

The political ideas of the monastic party won the arguments namely because they were connected with affirming the positions of the Orthodox Church and broadening the influence of the Constantinople church. The party proved to be a leading force for protecting the universal Christian church and the system of the Roman Empire in the conditions of weakening and dying of the secular state power during the Ottoman invasion. Finally, the idea of supremacy of the church over the secular authority, which was present in the whole Byzantine period, mainly legally, not factually, could be accomplished<sup>9</sup>

Led by this ideology the leading monastic party did not resist the attempts for union and seeking help from the West especially in the end of the Byzantium Empire. However, it could accept the union excluding the claims of the Roman church for universal domination as this was the main conflict between Rome and Constantinople. Practically this failed all attempts for union between the churches and the main opposition continued after Byzantium fell under Ottoman rule. The idea of Byzantium after Byzantium was implemented through the politics of the Ecumenical Patriarchate and clerics – the hesychasts.<sup>10</sup>

The last division of the Byzantium policy directly affected the Orthodox countries. Considered as part of the Byzantium community they became again a main target of the Byzantium foreign political and church interests. Having adopted the state and political model of Byzantium, Bulgaria and Serbia were trying to lead the Pax Byzantina, as Simeon, Ivan Asen, Ivan Alexander, Stefan Dušan, not only called themselves “Roman Emperors”, but actually had claims to the Byzantine crown.<sup>11</sup> The Byzantine culture was in the foundation of the transfer of antique values in their patristic interpretation into these countries.

In this respect it was no coincidence that the spiritual elite in Bulgaria and Serbia perceived the ecumenical claims of the Constantinople church as their own and actively participated in their application in the East. Thus they preserved and spread their cultural traditions. The unsuccessful so-called “second South Slavic influence” mainly in the principalities of Kiev and Moscow not only affirmed the language reform of Patriarch Euthymius, designed to introduce a unified spelling system in literature, but completed one of the main stages of the

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<sup>9</sup> J. Meyendorff, *op. cit.*, p. 34-39.

<sup>10</sup> Г.М. Прохоров, *op. cit.*, p. 87.

<sup>11</sup> В. Тъпкова-Займова, *Търново между Ерусалим, Рим и Цариград (Идеята за престолен град)* [Tarnovo between Jerusalem, Rome and Constantinople (The idea of a capital city)], in *Търновска книжовна школа*, Т. 4, БАН, София, 1985, с. 257-259.

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idea for unity in the Orthodox world.<sup>12</sup> In the reform enormous amount of manuscripts were transported and kept.

### Characteristics of the Bulgarian hesychasm

Through the activities of the Bulgarian hesychasts - students and disciples of Gregory of Sinai, the fate of the Orthodox world after the Ottoman conquest could have been another. They perceived the ecumenical Christian idea as their own and actively participated in the European politics of transition not only between the 14<sup>th</sup> and the 15<sup>th</sup> century but of two eras.

The last patriarchs of Tarnovo - Theodosius and Euthymius, Constantine of Kostenets, Cyprian - "the Metropolitan of Kiev and Moscow and all Russia", Gregory Tsamblak "Metropolitan of Kiev, Russia and Lithuania", Gregory the Bulgarian "a Metropolitan of Kiev and Lithuania", etc. - they were the spiritual leaders of their time, without whom the history of the church in this period could not be written.

Guided by their mission to preserve and spread Christianity and Christian culture the Bulgarian hesychasts conducted the policy of the Constantinople Church and the monastic party as a whole but as the letters and documents show they also conducted separate policy.

So Patriarch Callistus in a message written in 1355 to Theodosius of Tarnovo and the Bulgarian monks-hesychasts severely denounced the actions of Theodosius that the liturgies did not mention the ecumenical Patriarch of Constantinople as the most respected in all churches. According to Callistus the Patriarch of Constantinople was the one who, as a last instance of appeal, "straightens, validates and unites" the decisions of the other three patriarchs - the Patriarch of Alexandria, the Patriarch of Antioch and the Patriarch of Jerusalem. So he asked "Isn't it appropriate for the Bulgarian church to refer to him as a Sir, considering that the Patriarch of Bulgaria received his title because of his honour and substantially he does not differ from the metropolitans who are subordinated to Constantinople." This did not prevent Theodosius from consecrating Theognostus of Kiev as Metropolitan in 1352 without the knowledge of the Patriarch of Constantinople. The actions of the Bulgarian Patriarch were in tune with the adoption of the idea of "Tarnovo - the Third Rome" in the reign of Tsar Ivan Alexander.

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<sup>12</sup> Д.С. Лихачев, *Некоторые задачи изучения второго южнославянского влияния в России* [Some Tasks of the Research of the Second South Slavic Influence in Russia], Доклад на IV Международном съезде славистов, Москва, 1958, с. 64-65.

In 13<sup>th</sup> – 14<sup>th</sup> century such unity of the educational and cultural centres could not be observed as in the First Bulgarian Empire (the Preslav and Ohrid Literary Schools). In this period, pluralism was more apparent, which is associated with a relatively independent turning of some cities (e.g. Montana) and monasteries (e.g. the Bachkovo monastery) into literary centres. Furthermore, the Tarnovo School not only dominated the cultural life, but it made an overall impact on the activity of literary centres outside of Bulgaria in the 14<sup>th</sup> - 15<sup>th</sup> century.

In the 14<sup>th</sup> century, the hesychasm influenced the most prominent people in Tarnovo from that time, Theodosius of Tarnovo, St. Euthymius of Tarnovo, etc. and most of their students, which put a mark on their interests and established the direction of their works. Hesychasm marked the final stage in the development of the idea of the Christian Paideia as spiritual formation of bringing human personality near God. It influenced as a whole the cultural life and the directions of education in this period of the Middle Ages in Bulgaria. The fact that almost all literary schools were established and built around the personalities of the most prominent hesychastic spiritual leaders - Gregory of Sinai, Theodosius of Tarnovo, Joachim, Patriarch Euthymius, etc. is indicative in this respect.

The traditions of the Tarnovo Literary School continued to exist in 15<sup>th</sup> – 16<sup>th</sup> century through the work of many prominent Bulgarian writers who worked after the country fell under Ottoman rule in and outside its borders and thus they contributed to the development of literature of other nations - Serbians and Russians. They transferred the methods and the educational philosophy of their teachers-hesychasts. The prominent Bulgarian writers such as Constantine of Kostenets, Gregory Tsamblak, Vladislav Gramatik, Mardarij Rilski, Visarion of Debar, etc. showed increased interest in the philosophy and the translation of works with philosophical and theological content. Staying true to the type of literature of the Golden Age when selecting works and forming collections these writers had already been influenced by the Renaissance and humanistic ideas entering the Balkan Peninsula.

The literary schools in the 14<sup>th</sup> – 15<sup>th</sup> century, as well as in the 9<sup>th</sup> – 11<sup>th</sup> century, were supported by the state. The writers implemented the ideas of the “inspirer” of the school, continuing his work, as it was in the Tarnovo School and in monasteries on the Balkans.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Г.А. Ильинский, *Грамоты болгарских царей* [Charts of Bulgarian Tsars], Москва 1911; А. Даскалова, М. Райкова, *Грамоти на българските царе* [Charts of Bulgarian Tsars], София, 2005; В. Марковић, *Православно монаштво и манастири у средњој Србији* [Orthodox monks and monasteries in medieval Serbia], Сремски Карловци, 1920.



## From Theodosius of Tarnovo to Constantine of Kostenets

Due to the dispersion of educational centres in this period and the specific historical moment the reforming activities of St. Patriarch Euthymius were spread by him or by his followers and students in many monasteries and larger urban centres: the monasteries around Tarnovo (the Kilifarevo Monastery, “Holy Trinity”), the Bachkovo Monastery, in the monasteries of Mount Athos, the Rila Monastery, the Resava Monastery (by Constantine of Kostenets), in Žegligovo Monastery by Vladislav Gramatik, in Wallacha by Gregory Tsamblak (in the Monastery of Neamts), in Russia by Cyprian and etc.

The activity of Theodosius of Tarnovo was described in detail in his “Life” as well as the established by him Literary School in the Kilifarevo Monastery near Tarnovo. He was helped building the monastery by Tsar Ivan Alexander. “The devout King Alexander responded to their request first because of his old and strong love to Theodosius, and also because he wanted to enjoy the constant guidance”. This school became very popular and attracted many disciples: “However, the wise Theodosius did not settle with them and attracted many others like a magnet from various places. And that fascinating mountain was filling with many monks. And as the bright stars in the firmament shone, so those virtuous monks shone on the fascinating slope supported by the education and guidance of the wise father. And you can see in them strange and wonderful effort because they wanted to outdo one another in virtues.”<sup>14</sup> Adopting the rules and traditions of the Saint Catherine’s Monastery, the Kilifarevo School became one of the centres for spreading hesychasm not only in Bulgaria but on the Balkans.

Euthymius continued the work of Theodosius in the school founded by him at the monastery “Holy Trinity” near Tarnovo. When he collected “a swarm of students how many, how worthy of such a father...”<sup>15</sup>. There one of the centres of hesychasm was established as well as the reform of Euthymius on liturgical books.

After Tarnovo fell under Ottoman rule Patriarch Euthymius was exiled in Bachkovo. There he established one of the most famous literary schools, which became a centre for training scholars who continued the Euthymius’ reform. In the “Eulogy for Euthymius”, Gregory Tsamblak wrote: “And what did Euthymius do when he was exiled? Catching fish, so loved by all apostles, only that he didn’t

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<sup>14</sup> В.Н. Златарски, *Житіе и жизнь преподобнаго отца нашего Феодосіа* [Passional and Life of our Reverend Father Theodosius], София, 1904, с. 6-8.

<sup>15</sup> П. Русев, А. Давидов, И. Гълъбов, Г. Данчев, *Похвално слово за Евтимий от Григорий Цамблак* [Eulogy of Euthymius by Gregory Tsamblak], София, 1971, с. 226.

try to catch fish but humans. Furthermore he tried every day, every night, every hour. Because people came to him from all over the mountain as the Jewish Jerusalem went to John the Baptist once.”<sup>16</sup>

In many of the larger monasteries schools were established, spiritual circles around a famous spiritual figure. These schools were set up for specific periods of time, as some of them also became popular and gathered students from different parts of the Balkan Peninsula. The schools in the monasteries of Mount Athos became popular – e.g. the established spiritual circle around the Old Man John, who began the reform of the liturgical books and who also educated Euthymius; the school in the monastery in the Town of Cherven, established by Joachim I with the help of the Bulgarian Tsar Asen, a centre for the spreading Hesychasm – Gregory of Sinai’s Monastery of Paroria, etc.

The practice to send Bulgarian boys to study abroad, in Constantinople and in Rome, and to later train them for senior church clerics also continued in this period. Such was the case with the two Bulgarian boys sent by Tsar Kaloyan in Rome - Basil and Bethlehem (one of them was the king’s son), “to learn Latin” in respect to the concluded union. On the other hand, the preparation of the higher clerics was completed after residing in different famous monastic schools in Constantinople and Mount Athos.

This can be assumed because of the data in the life of St. Romil of Vidin. “Because it wasn’t appropriate of such a good offspring not to be familiar with the scriptures of the divine doctrine, he was given by his parents to study with a teacher. Since he obeyed his teacher, as it was appropriate, he surpassed all children who had come before him in the school. And the fact that he not only surpassed them, but he also taught them to discard the usual children’s games and unreasonable gatherings was most surprising.” Probably the school in Vidin was either private or church. There children of different ages were trained, as besides the teacher, the older children educated and guided the younger ones. Training from the early age of 7 is mentioned in the lives of other saints. For example, in the Life of Kozma Zografski it was written: “When an offspring reached 7 years of age, he was given to study reading and writing first in his native Bulgarian language and then in Hellenic-Greek dialect”<sup>17</sup>. In some cities there were Greek schools or in the Bulgarian ones Greek was taught. This independency in the policy of the Bulgarian church in the 14<sup>th</sup> century was manifested in the ac-

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<sup>16</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 228.

<sup>17</sup> *Пространно житие на Ромил Видински от Григорий Доброписец* [Romil of Vidin’s Life by Grigoriy Dobropisets]. Прев. Кл. Иванова и М. Спасова, in *Стара българска литература*, Т. 4, *Житиенписни творби*, София, 1986, 89-108.

tivities of the Bulgarian-Hesychasts during the Ottoman conquest and the fall of the Bulgarian state.

Constantine of Kostenets not only brought the Euthymius' reform in Serbia and established the Resava literary school, but he often participated in the church politics in the principalities of Lazar and Uglješa. The scarce information about the life of Constantine of Kostenets, contained mostly in his works – “Explanatory Exhibition of letters”, “Life of Stefan Lazarević” in the passage of the Lovech Collection of 16<sup>th</sup> century, etc. shows that he travelled to Palestine and Mount Athos. The Bulgarian writer of the 15<sup>th</sup> century Constantine of Kostenets brought to Serbia Euthymius' spelling reform. As most researchers suggest, Constantine kept his secular image. His book “The Saga of the Letter” (“Explanatory Exhibition of Letters”) revealed most comprehensively the system, the method and the specifics of education in medieval Bulgaria and Serbia in the 15<sup>th</sup> century. This work is rather a “book for teachers”, i.e. a guide for teachers, but on the other hand Constantine of Kostenets revealed very important information about the medieval education in Bulgaria.

There is only one copy of the “Saga of letters” dated 1645 in the Sremski Karlovci. Based on it, however, the summarized version “Word for letters” was written and spread, which was more widespread and kept in more transcripts as it was even proven that some of them date back in the 15<sup>th</sup> and the 16<sup>th</sup> century, i.e. they are older than the extended version<sup>18</sup>.

Constantine of Kostenets was the only Bulgarian writer who was given the name “Philosopher”. In the Bulgarian medieval literature the only person being given the same title was Constantine the Philosopher - Cyril. Having this title in medieval Bulgaria is quite unclear. From the scarce information about the life of Constantine of Kostenets, which he gave for himself in “The Saga of the Letters” we can assume that he studied some time with deacon Andrei (or Andronicus), one of the disciples of the Patriarch Euthymius in Bachkovo: “The aforementioned Constantine ... They say he was a student of a person called Andrei – one of the students of Euthymius, the former Patriarch of Tarnovo... then Euthymius was in exile in Stenimacha where he died .... when this Constantine arrived at the monastery he found a few of the Euthymius' students but Euthymius was no longer alive.”

Probably this education was only part of the in-depth preparation of Constantine of Kostenets, which he received in Byzantium. He was very familiar with the Greek language, which we assume from the translations of his texts which had philosophical and natural scientific content. His rich general culture and lore

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<sup>18</sup> К. Костенечки, *Съчинения. Сказание за буквите* [Stories. Saga of letters]. Изд е подготвено от А.-М. Тотоманова, София, 1993, с. 70-71.

only confirm this assumption. Considering that there are no more specific details, researchers believe that the title “philosopher” was given to him in Serbia, in the courtyard of Stefan Lazarević.

Y. Trifonov believes that Constantine of Kostenets worked in the Diocese of Plovdiv and that he was close to Metropolitan Damian<sup>19</sup>. K. Kuev, after data analysis of “The Story”, concludes that Constantine ran from Bulgaria (1410-1411) during the robbery of Musa in Thrace. Musa attacked and beheaded Valko, Stefan Lazarević’s brother, captured and killed Damian, the Metropolitan of Plovdiv. Left without support, Constantine went to Belgrade, in the court of Despot Stefan Lazarević. Then Constantine was sent by the despot in the Serbian Patriarch to study. He traveled to Palestine and left (translated) an itinerary of the holy places “A travel to Palestine”. He probably went through Mount Athos, but only for a short time, and returned to Belgrade, where he was appointed as teacher. After the death of the despot (in 1427), Constantine left Belgrade and then after wandering for some time went to the monastery “Holy Trinity”, the Resava Monastery, where he probably wrote some of his stories – “Life of Stefan Lazarević” – praise for the ruler and for Serbia which he felt as a second homeland, “Explanatory Exhibition of Letters” (Saga of the Letters), the summarized version of the saga - „Словеса вкратце” (“Word of letters”), his cosmographic story, etc.

The treatise “The Saga of Letters” is an apology and defense of Euthymius’ work and reform, but also a passionate polemic with the Serbian and Bulgarian writers who did not follow the norms of the Old Bulgarian liturgical language and thus created conditions for the emergence of new heresies.<sup>20</sup>

In the Lovech collection, an excerpt is preserved from the small prosciniarius “Description of the holy places in Palestine”, which also probably belonged to the translation made by the Bulgarian scholar. The exact Greek prototype of this excerpt has not been found yet.

The story “Fragments of Medieval Cosmography and Geography” was most fully preserved in manuscript of 16<sup>th</sup> century in the so-called Bogishichev’s collection. B. Angelov convincingly proved that this collection was written in the 16<sup>th</sup> century by Vissarion of Debar. Vissarion’s collections – Bogishichev’s and Skopski are similar in content with the excerpts of the Drinov’s Collection.

In “Chronograph Overview” the Russian scientist A. Popov was the first to write that the articles with cosmographic and geographic content of 15<sup>th</sup> – 16<sup>th</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> К. Кувев, Г. Петков. *Събрани съчинения на Константин Костенечки. Изследване и текст* [Collection of Stories by Constantine of Kostenets. Research and Text], София, 1986, 67-73.

<sup>20</sup> К. Костенечки, *op. cit.*, p. 35.

century, manuscript No. 316 (951), a Russian edition of the former Synod library were taken from a collection made by Constantine of Kostenets. The same opinion was expressed but in connection with the articles in Bogishichev's and the Vatican collection, by C. Giannelli.<sup>21</sup>

Nevertheless, so far in most of the works dedicated to Constantine of Kostenets there are only vague opinions. For example, in the latest edition of the "Collected Works" of Constantine of Kostenets - Kuyo Kuev and Georgi Petkov do not even mention the discussion and the existing opinions of scientists. Furthermore, they do not address the issue of authorship of Constantine of Kostenets of the story "Fragments of Cosmography". Perhaps that is why it continues to be issues as a proscinitarius "A Trip to Palestine."<sup>22</sup>

"Fragments of cosmography" were based on the Byzantine source materials, mostly excerpts from the story of Symeon Seth – "Solutiones breves quaestionum naturalium" ("Brief explanation of natural matters"), which was widespread and used as an educational book on the Balkans "almost until recently" and 22 excerpts were taken from it. Four excerpts were taken from the work of Michael Psellus – "De omnifaria doctrina", four from "Hexaemeron" of St. Basil the Great and several other Byzantine sources.<sup>23</sup> However so far a complete Greek manuscript with such content has not been found and therefore we are prone to believe that it was written by Constantine of Kostenets or a disciple of his. This story has to be more confidently connected with the creative work of Constantine of Kostenets, but the research of its content and spreading (manuscripts, transcripts, etc.) is still about to be done.

A closer look at the stories with geographic content still preserved until today from the Middle Ages (unfortunately just a few) cannot reveal if most of them are translations or compilations of Byzantine works. We can assume that the excerpt with geographical description in "Life of Stefan Lazarević" by Constantine of Kostenets<sup>24</sup> was an original. There are also two "Descriptions of the Holy Places in Palestine" by Constantine of Kostenets and Arseny of Thessaloniki based on the Byzantine works, but without direct prototypes. The other works that contain geographic descriptions or travelogues are translations. Probably this contributed to the formation of a similar impression for the geographic knowledge in Bulgaria during the Middle Ages. And indeed, the stories of travel-

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<sup>21</sup> C. Giannelli, *Di alcune versioni e rielaborazioni serbe delle "Solutiones breves quaestionum naturalium" attribuite a Michele Psello*, in "Studi bizantini e neoellenici", Roma, V, 1, 1939, p. 445-468.

<sup>22</sup> К. Кув, Г. Петков, *op. cit.*, с.17

<sup>23</sup> C. Giannelli, *op. cit.*, p. 466.

<sup>24</sup> К. Костенечки. *op. cit.*, p. 72-200.

lers such as in the Arabic countries, Western Europe and other travelogues or of the Russian "Hozhdeniya" (Travellings), did not reach Bulgaria. This does not mean that medieval Bulgarians were less inquisitive than other peoples. Probably similar stories of the Middle Ages in Bulgaria were lost or the translated works satisfied the desire for knowledge for distant lands and peoples. It should be considered that as a whole translated literature is part and parcel of medieval literature, and that these stories have their own life, they become bearers of new and specific values among the Bulgarians and the other Slavic peoples.

Medieval Bulgarian scholars quite naturally selected from the not so rich Byzantine geographical literature those works which were appropriate for the Christian doctrine.

### The Legacy of Cyprian and Gregory Tsamblak

One of the most active participants in the church policy in this period in Europe, mainly in Russia, was Cyprian Tsamblak. He was born in Tarnovo in the prominent Tarnovo family Tsamblakovtsi. He spent some time in Constantinople and Mount Athos and was sent by the Patriarch of Constantinople in Kiev.<sup>25</sup>

Cyprian's activity in Russia was also marked by the idea of the establishment of Christianity and Orthodoxy on these lands as during separate periods when he was non-canonically consecrated as a metropolitan, he acted by himself and was driven by his ideology rather than by imposing domination of the Constantinople Church. So in 1375 Patriarch Philotheos again rose Cyprian by giving him the title "Metropolitan of Kiev, Russia and Lithuania" even before Metropolitan Alexius died, explaining that this consecration, considered non-canonical, was a "great economy" i.e. care for Orthodox population in the lands ruled by the Lithuanian King Olgerd, which Alexius had abandoned, which was the beginning of the intervention in the policy of the Lithuanian church and limitation of the influence of the Catholic Church in this diocese.<sup>26</sup>

The role of Cyprian in his relations with the Moscow Prince Dimitry Donskoy is quite significant. He relied on his relationship with the Byzantine Patriarch Philotheos Kokkinos (1353-1354, 1364-1376), but when the Patriarch was in disgrace, he continued to conduct independent policy. The severe differences

<sup>25</sup> Й. Иванов, *Българското книжовно влияние в Русия при митрополит Киприан* [Bulgarian Literary Influence in Russia in the Period Cyprian was Metropolitan], in Й. Иванов, *Избрани произведения* [Selected Works], Т. 1, София, 1982, 53-110; Н. Панайотова, *Киприан* [N. Panayotova, Cyprian], София, 1981.

<sup>26</sup> J. Meyendorff, *Byzantium and the Rise of Russia. A Study of Byzantino-Russian Relations in the Fourteenth Century*, Crestwood, New-York, SVS Press, 1989.

between the two – the Russian Duke and Cyprian, were enhanced by the intervention of the Genoese who defended their interests in Russia. After numerous obstacles, the issues were resolved in favour of the Orthodox policy set by Cyprian. He initiated negotiations for stopping the Lithuanian troops from participating in the Battle of Kulikovo thus removing the danger the Moscow Principality to become dependent again by the Golden Horde. Cyprian set the cult to Saint Alexander Nevsky in Moscow because he aimed to strengthen both the Anti-Latin moods and of the opposition against the Teutonic Order.<sup>27</sup>

Metropolitan Cyprian in 1396-1397, proposed in Russia, probably in Lithuania, to convene a synod for church unification. Gregory Tsamblak wrote for Cyprian: “He was nurtured by our country but God gave him to you; and you enjoyed him much and we missed him. You titivated yourself and we mourned for him, and with him you thrived as you grew in the commandments of God!”<sup>28</sup> Cyprian, Metropolitan of Kiev, Lithuania and all Russia, was officially recognized in 1472 for a saint and wonderworker (reverence: 16 Sept. new style).<sup>29</sup>

Cyprian’s activity was continued by Gregory Tsamblak, before that by the Wallach-Moldovan Metropolitan. Gregory Tsamblak born in Tarnovo received higher education and at the end of the 14<sup>th</sup> century became Synkelus (Secretary) at the Patriarchate in Constantinople. In 1401 in the complex military and political situation on the Balkans and the advance of the Ottoman army, he was sent to Suceava, Moldova to Alexander I of Moldavia to inquire about the legitimacy of the consecration of the Moldovan Archbishop Joseph.<sup>30</sup>

Gregory stayed in Suceava and in 1402 he became a preacher at the metropolitan church in the city.<sup>31</sup> The real reason for this was the intensified diplomacy of Byzantium and Constantinople church to unify against the Ottomans. In the next few years Gregory actively participated in the implementation of these plans. He became abbot of the newly built monastery “Christ Pantocrator”, also known as Neamt. There he wrote homiletic works in Bulgarian language, which are preserved in manuscript collections. He also transferred to Moldova the lan-

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<sup>27</sup> *Ibidem*, chapter 9, *Metropolitan Cyprian and the Separatism of Moscow (1376-1381)*.

<sup>28</sup> П. Русев, А. Давидов, Ив. Гълъбов, Г. Данчев. Цит.съч., *op. cit.*, с. 243.

<sup>29</sup> Д. Чешмеджиев, Д. *Митрополит Киприан и култовете на българските светци* [Metropolitan Cyprian and the Cults of Bulgarian Saints], in “*Studi Slavistici*”, 5, 2008, p. 15-30.

<sup>30</sup> Д. Кенанов, *Митрополит Григорий Цамблак – православен проповедник и светител* [Metropolitan Gregory Tsamblak – Orthodox Preacher and hierarch], [www.uni-vt.bg/.../Tsamblak%20-pravoslaven%20propovednik.pdf](http://www.uni-vt.bg/.../Tsamblak%20-pravoslaven%20propovednik.pdf)

<sup>31</sup> R. Theodorescu, *Implications balkaniques aux debuts de la Metropole de Moldavie. Une hypothese*, in “*Revue roumaine historique*”, 1986, № 4, p. 267-287.

guage reform of Euthymius.<sup>32</sup>

In 1406 he became abbot of the Decani Monastery in Serbia. He was then summoned to Moscow by his relative Cyprian Tsamblak, Kiev and Moscow Metropolitan. Tsamblak went in Lithuania, in Vilnius with a recommendation by the ruler of Moldova - Alexandru cel Bun, probably to negotiate with Vitovt – the Grand Duke of Lithuania. There he learned of Cyprian's death. In approximately 1409 Gregory Tsamblak became an abbot in the Plinary Monastery.

After establishing a dynastic union between the Polish Kingdom and Lithuania Principality in 1385, the Lithuanian Duke Jagiello was crowned as king of Poland with a promise to unite the Polish and Lithuanian lands and to choose the side of Catholicism. The contradictions for the church affiliation of the Lithuanian Principality to Rome or to Constantinople strained the relations between the patriarchal and papal throne.<sup>33</sup>

In 1415 in King Vitovt convened the Council of Bishops on which Gregory Tsamblak was elected a Metropolitan of Kiev and Lithuania. This choice was not acknowledged by the Metropolitan of Moscow, Photius Patriarch, and with a decision of the Patriarch of Constantinople Gregory Tsamblak was asked to release the bishop position and was excommunicated from the Orthodox Church.

Gregory was one of the promoters of the union in these difficult years in Europe and he was one of the most active participants in the convened on this matter Council of Constance 1414 – 1418. He participated in the Council as a messenger of the Duke of Lithuania, but refused to sign the union. Gregory struggled for spiritual unification and for canonical peace in the Church.<sup>34</sup>

<sup>32</sup> П. Русев, А. Давидов, *Григорий Цамблак в Румъния и старата румънска литература* [Gregory Tsamblak in Romania and the Old Romanian Literature], София, 1966; P. P. Panaitescu, *La littérature slavo-roumaine des XV-e – XVIII-e ss. et son importance pour l'histoire des littératures slaves*, Praga, 1932.

<sup>33</sup> Д. Кенанов, *Констанцият събор, унията и митрополит Григорий Цамблак* [The Council of Constance, the Union and Metropolitan Gregory Tsamblak], in "Търновски писмена. Алманах за Търновската книжовна школа", No. 2/2009, Велико Търново, с. 180-193; Т. Василевски, *Политическата и културната роля на българите във Великото княжество Литва през XIV и XV век* [Political and Cultural Role of Bulgaria in the Grand Duchy of Lithuania in the 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> century], in Т. Василевски, *България и Византия. IX-XV век* [Bulgaria and Byzantium. 14<sup>th</sup>-15<sup>th</sup> century], София, 1994, с. 183-184.

<sup>34</sup> Х. Фай, *Българско културно наследство в Германия – Григорий Цамблак на Вселенския събор в Констанц – 1418 година* [Bulgarian Cultural Heritage in Germany – Gregory Tsamblak at the Ecumenical Council of Constance – 1418], in "Литературна мисъл", № 10, София, 1981, с. 31; Х.-Д. Дьопман, *Митрополит Григорий Цамблак и неговото отношение към римската църква на Констанцият събор* [Metropolitan Gregory Tsamblak and his attitude toward the Roman Church at the Council of Constance], in *Търновска книжовна школа*, Т. 3, София, 1984, с. 382.



At the Council of Constance he was pro alliance with the Roman church, but mostly by preserving the alliance beginning and against the claims for domination of Rome.<sup>35</sup>

Gregory asserted his position in his speech at closing the council. In his speech he defended the ideas of unity and overcoming the differences in the Christian church: "How long, oh most dear priests would you tolerate watching the members of Christ being separated by the alliances and relations? Until when Christ, who is the head of the Church, will be attacked constantly by the members with which he should titivate and rejoice? Where next to jealousy there are the fights, next to the consensus there are ellipticallies, next to experience there is the desire of one party to defeat the other, is not the fight against Christ, who is the head of the Church, obvious? Therefore appropriately Christ was called by Paul – the Head of the Church (Eph 5:23). < ... > How long the unified Christian Church shall be separated in two? And how will the Christian church be called since the union of Christ is not present? Christ unites us through Baptism and the Gospel, and when he went toward voluntary suffering, Father prayed for us and said, "Holy Father, protect them by the power of your name, the name you gave me, so that they may be one as we are one" (John 17:11)"<sup>36</sup>.

Gregory Tsamblak wrote mainly for the aspirations of the times in which he lived, as he gave a lot of information for the church controversies, the intervention of secular authority in church matters, for the failure of the political figures and clerics to see a wider spectrum of the consequences of their actions for the future of most of Europe, where the Ottoman Empire was settling.<sup>37</sup> Gregory Tsamblak died in the Neamt Monastery in the winter of

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<sup>35</sup> Г. Първев, Кр. Банев. *Срещата на Григорий Цамблак с папа Мартин V на събора в Констанц през 1418 г.* [Gregory Tsamblak meets Pope Martin V at the Council of Constance in 1418], in "Исторически преглед", № 5, София, 1982, с. 126; Fr. Miklosich, I. Muller, *Acta patriarchatus Constantinopolitani*, Vol. 2, Wien, 1862, p. 280-285; Ю. К. Бегунов, *К вопросу о церковно-политических планах Григория Цамблака на Констанцском соборе* [To the question for church-political plans of Gregory Tsamblak of the Council of Constance], in Ю. К. Бегунов, *Творческое наследие Григория Цамблака* [The Art Heritage of Gregory Tsamblak], Женева-Велико Търново, Изд. „Буй туръ“, „ПИК“, УИ, 2005, с. 404.

<sup>36</sup> Translation into New Bulgarian by М. Спасова, сп. „Епохи“ [M. Spasova, Magazine „Eras“], Veliko Tarnovo, University Edition, No. 1, 1995, 78-82); Д. Кенанов, *Констанцкият събор*, [The Council of Constanc], p. 190.

<sup>37</sup> Д. Кенанов, *Озареният Григорий Цамблак. По материали от Вилнюските ръкописни и старопечатни сбирки* [The Enlightened Gregory Tsamblak. Materials used from Vilnius Manuscripts and Old Print Collections], Пловдив – Велико Търново, 2000, с. 14-17.

1420. The words: “Tarnovo bore him, Athos nursed him, Kiev took him as a pastor, and here he found peace ...” were written on the epitaph on his grave which is currently missing.<sup>38</sup> In 1458 Patriarch Isidore consecrated his former protodeacon Gregory (the Bulgarian) as metropolitan “of Kiev, Galicia and all Russia”.

## Conclusions

The active participation of Bulgarian intellectuals in the events of the last decades of the 14<sup>th</sup> and the first of the 15<sup>th</sup> century in the European church politics and diplomacy are indicative of the awareness of impending danger, of their responsibility to resist peacefully the invasion of the Ottomans, which interrupted the development of the states of southeast Europe for five centuries.<sup>39</sup>

The firm opinion for the hesychasts as radical mystics and hermits who do not participate in the public life and turn their backs on the major political events of their time can be attributed to the radical followers of this doctrine in the monastic community, but not to the most prominent intellectuals-hesychasts of the end of 14<sup>th</sup> and the beginning of the 15<sup>th</sup> centuries. According to the words of Gregory Palamas, who after the example of Aristotle did not reject but embraced the importance of public activity he wrote: “Farmers give their surpluses to those who are not engaged in agriculture and with the money they receive they buy houses or clothing and the shoemakers by selling shoes and by getting good price for them buy whatever they need. So by mutual communication our lives are arranged: that is why the cities and countries erupt - because man is social creature” (“ὅτι εἶναι «κατὰ φύσιν» (Arist. Pol. A 1252b 13 -17) κοινωνικό ζῶο ο ἄνθρωπος”).

<sup>38</sup> Н. Дончева-Панайотова, *Староруските летописи за Григорий Цамблак* [Old Russian chronicles for Gregory Tsamblak], in *Търновска книжовна школа*, Т. 5, *Паметници. Поетика. Историография*, УИ, Велико Търново [Tarnovo Literary School. Vol. 5. Monuments. Poetics. Historiography], 1994, с. 77-92.

<sup>39</sup> А. Каткуте, *Григорий Цамблак в историографията на XVII век* [Gregory Tsamblak in the Historiography of 17<sup>th</sup> century], in *Българистични проучвания* [Bulgarian Researches], Т. 5, Велико Търново, 1999, с. 63-72.