

REVIEW

For the dissertation of **Radostin Grigorov Grigorov**, full time PhD student, for the award of the educational and scientific degree 'Doctor' in the field of higher education 2. Humanities, professional field 2.2. History and Archaeology, scientific specialty History of Bulgaria (History of Medieval Bulgaria) on the topic '**The Patriarchate of Constantinople and the Bulgarians (14th – mid 15th century)**' under the scientific supervision of Assoc. Prof. Dr. Georgi Nikolov

By Assoc. Prof. Dr. Angel Nikolov, Sofia University St Kliment Ohridski,
Faculty of History, Department of History of Bulgaria

I would like to note at the very beginning of this review that I have known Radostin Grigorov since the years of his studies as an undergraduate and graduate student at the Faculty of History of Sofia University St Kliment Ohridski and I can share that his performances in his student years showed seriousness and deep interest in the studied matter.

Radostin Grigorov was born on May 20, 1994. He finished his secondary education in 2013 at the St Sophia 33rd Language Lyceum in Sofia. In 2017 he obtained a Bachelor's degree in History and Geography at the Faculty of History, Sofia University St Kliment Ohridski. In 2017-2018 he continued his studies under the MA Program 'Bulgarian Middle Ages: state, society, culture' and obtained a Master's degree in history after successfully defending his thesis 'Separatism in the Bulgarian lands north of the Balkans in the second half of the 13th and early 14th centuries'.

By Rector's Order No. RD 20-120/18. 01. 2019, from February 1, 2019 he became a full time PhD student at the Department of History of Bulgaria of the Faculty of History of Sofia University St Kliment Ohridski (Doctoral Program 'History of Bulgaria' – History of Medieval Bulgaria) and worked on the topic 'The Patriarchate of Constantinople and the Bulgarians (14th – mid 15th century)' under the scientific supervision of Assoc. Prof. Dr. Georgi Nikolov. From a presented certificate, signed by the Dean of the Faculty of History, it is evident that R. Grigorov has successfully passed the two compulsory examinations (in his specialty and in English) provided for in his individual study plan. He was dismissed early with the right to defence by Order No. RD 20-2479/ 23. 11. 2019.

The dissertation was discussed at a meeting of the Department of History of Bulgaria at the Faculty of History of Sofia University St Kliment Ohridski held on October 20, 2021.

The doctoral dissertation of R. Grigorov consists of an Introduction, a Review of Research, a Review of Historical Sources, five chapters, a Conclusion, two Appendices, a Bibliography, Periodicals and Serials (list of abbreviations), and has a total length of 253 pp.

In the *Introduction* (pp. 4-5), the doctoral candidate argues the choice of the topic and its chronological scope on the grounds that the relations between the Patriarchate of Constantinople and the Bulgarians in the period of the 14th - mid-15th centuries have not been the subject of independent and thorough study in Bulgarian and foreign historiography. The structure of the work is justified by the thematic-chronological principle followed in its writing.

The review of the scientific research (pp. 6-11) is detailed and exhaustive, some individual omissions will be pointed out later.

The same observation applies to *the Survey of Historical Sources* (pp. 12-18).

Chapter I, entitled *A Brief History of the Patriarchate of Constantinople from its foundation to the conquest of Constantinople by the Ottoman Turks (1st century - 1453)* (pp. 19-58), is structured in four paragraphs. Already in the Introduction R. Grigorov has noted that this chapter is 'introductory and not a personal study' (p. 4). It seems to me that this chapter is unnecessarily broad in chronology and subject matter: in a future publication of the dissertation it would be better to transform it into a fully synthesized sketch of the Constantinopolitan Church's relations with the Bulgarians up to the 14th century, and with an emphasis on the period after the restoration of the Bulgarian Empire by the Assenids.

Chapter II, entitled *Relations between the Bulgarian and Constantinople Churches from the early 14th century until the liquidation of the Patriarchate of Tarnovo and its degradation to the rank of metropolitanate* (pp. 59-118), consists of seven paragraphs. In the first of them R. Grigorov has traced in detail the expansion (and the struggle to maintain the influence) of the Constantinople Patriarchate in the 14th century in relation to (1) the dioceses on the Black Sea coast to the south and north of the Balkan Mountains and the Drastar Metropolitanate, (2) Wallachia, (3) the Philippopolitan and (4) the Vidin Metropolitanates (pp. 59-80). The source material available to us for this period is very fragmentary, and R. Grigorov quite reasonably feels divided in his interpretation of it, especially as regards the problem of the supreme ecclesiastical jurisdiction over the coastal dioceses after their transfer to Bulgarian rule (p. 80). Incidentally, if we turn to the relatively better documented ecclesiastical policy of Stephen Dushan in the territories newly conquered by him under the then jurisdiction of the Ohrid archbishopric and the Patriarchate of Constantinople, we cannot help but be struck by the fact that – similar to the situation on the Western Black Sea coast in the first half and around the middle of the fourteenth century – some metropolitanates for a longer or shorter time were separated from Constantinople and joined to the Serbian Church (Serres, Melnik, Zihna, Philippi, Drama, Christopolis), while others (e.g. the Metropolitanate of Larissa with its 25 subordinate bishoprics) for some special reasons and in view of the local situation remained under the supremacy of the Patriarchate of Constantinople.¹

The second and third paragraphs (pp. 81-84) are devoted to the participation of the Patriarch Simeon of Tarnovo in the elevation of the Serbian Archbishopric to the rank of a Patriarchate (1346) and to the ordination in Tarnovo of the Lithuanian candidate for metropolitan of Kiev, Theodoret, after the refusal of the Patriarch of Constantinople Callistus I to do so at the request of Prince Olgerd (1352). Here I might recommend R. Grigorov, in the eventual publication of the dissertation as a book, to consider a later Russian *Narrative of the Bulgarian and Serbian Patriarchates*, which was produced soon after the 1461 ordination of the second (de facto) autocephalous Metropolitan of Moscow, Theodosius (1461-1464).²

The fourth paragraph (pp. 84-93) deals in detail with the accusations against the Bulgarian Church set out in Patriarch Callistus I's letter to the monks and priests of Tarnovo in 1361. In the course of his exposition, the doctoral student, in line with some authoritative Bulgarian scholars, claims that the Patriarch of Constantinople referred to some decree of his predecessor Germanus II concerning the status of the Bulgarian Patriarchate restored in 1235, which he had in fact 'invented' himself (p. 87). It seems to me that this scepticism is excessive,

¹ Марјановић, Д. Византијски свет и Српска црква у 13. и 14. веку. Нови Сад, 2018, 106-111.

² Текст: Белякова, Е. Обоснование автокефалии в русских кормчих. – Церковь в истории России. Сб. 4. Москва, 2000, 139-161. Датировка: Корогодина М. „Сказание о болгарской и сербской патриархиях“ и происхождение Софийской редакции Кормчей книги. – В: Очерки феодальной России. Вып. 15. Москва – Санкт-Петербург, 2012, 22-44.

since Patriarch Callistus would hardly have had the benefit of an outright forgery – In this case he may have been referring to some text of Germanus which was known in Tarnovo, but which was apparently ignored since it did not form part of the 1235 council decision. Considering the inconsistent policy of John Assen II towards Nicaea after the conclusion of his treaty of alliance with John III Doukas Vatatzes, a statement by the Patriarch in exile of Constantinople about the limited nature of the autocephaly of the Patriarchate of Tarnovo could not surprise us and even seems quite expected.

In relation to Radostin Grigorov's remark that – contrary to what Patriarch Callistus wrote – 'the Bulgarian Church had the right to prepare ointment because this was an inalienable and sacred right for any autocephalous church' (p. 90), I would remind that this issue had in fact already found a positive solution with the privilege of Pope Innocent III of 25 February 1204, by which Archbishop Basil of Tarnovo was made primate of all Bulgaria and Wallachia.³

In the fifth paragraph under the title *The Rise of the Patriarchate of Tarnovo. The Bulgarian Church on Its Own Path of Development* (pp. 93-98), some more general thoughts are presented on the factors that raised the ecclesiastical authority of Tarnovo and weakened the influence of the Patriarchate of Constantinople in Bulgaria, which in fact determined its expansionist policy in the second half of the 14th century as a reaction. In particular, the doctoral student notes: 'In the Bulgarian hagiographic and historical literature of the 13th-14th centuries, the notion that after the conquest of Constantinople by the Latins, the Bulgarian Emperors became supporters and defenders of Orthodoxy' (p. 93; see also p. 96). It remains unclear, however, how this general situation (which is undoubtedly valid for the period after 1235) relates to Bulgaria's nearly three-decade-long union with the Roman Church, even if we assume that in this case it was only a formal recognition of papal primacy.

The doctoral student further postulates that 'in the Orthodox Christian world, the Bulgarian Church followed its own path of development' (p. 97), which passed through the use of the Bulgarian language in worship and literature, the imposition of a Bulgarian cycle on the church calendar and a preference for Bulgarian 'national' (?) saints, independence in the production of myrrh, a mixture of Eastern Orthodox Christianity with elements of (?) of domestic Christianity rooted among the people, which led to the point that 'the Patriarchate of Tarnovo largely 'nationalized' the faith, and the systematic introduction of Bulgarian elements into church life led to the formation of the 'Bulgarian form of faith', which was distinct from the Greek-Byzantine and Roman Catholic' (pp. 97-98). It seems to me that these formulations are too extreme, imprecise in terminology, and vague, especially as regards the 'elements' of domestic Christianity referred to in the text.

If the differences between Constantinople and Tarnovo were really so deep, it is unlikely that R. Grigorov would have found enough material to write the next (sixth) section of the second chapter under the title *Spiritual Rapprochement and Interaction between the Patriarchates of Tarnovo and Constantinople. Common struggle against heretical movements* (pp. 98-110). Quite rightly, the doctoral student states that the closest spiritual ties between the Patriarchates of Constantinople and Tarnovo were realized thanks to the teaching of the Hesychasts, which became the official doctrine of both churches in the second half of the fourteenth century (p. 101). The role of Mount Athos as a hotbed of Hesychasm, with which the life paths of virtually all prominent Byzantine and Bulgarian clerics during this era are linked, is traced (pp. 103-104). Finally, it is assumed that 'at the time of Patriarch Euthymius and Emperor John Shishman there was a change in the relations between Tarnovo and the Patriarchate of

³ Fontes Latini historiae Bulgaricae III, p. 329.

Constantinople', since at that time (along with the opposition) there was 'closeness and mutual respect' (p. 110) between the two churches.

The last seventh section of Chapter Two is devoted to the liquidation of the Patriarchate of Tarnovo and its degradation to the rank of a metropolitan see (pp. 110-118), characterized as 'the logical conclusion of the relations between the Bulgarian and the Byzantine Church in the preceding era' (p. 116).

Chapter III under the title **The Relations between the Patriarchate of Constantinople and the Bulgarians in the Context of the Political and Ecclesiastical life in the Balkans (1340s – end of the 14th century)** (pp. 119-131) consists of seven sections, which are short essays on individual specific cases: the participation of John XIV Kalekas in the negotiations for the surrender of Shishman to the Bulgarian Emperor John Alexander (1341); the Synodal decision confirming the treaty between John V Paleologus and John Alexander (1355); the expulsion of the Bulgarian monk Gennadius from the Great Lavra of St. Athanasius on the Holy Mountain by order of Callistus I; the journey of Callistus I to Serres to the sister of John Alexander Elena (1364); the letter of Patriarch Philotheus I Kokkinos to John Alexander (1364); the attitude of the Patriarchate of Constantinople towards the Bulgarian rulers in the Ἐκθροῦς νέα; the oath of Nicholas the Bulgarian to the Ecumenical Patriarch to reject Islam and return to Orthodoxy (1391).

Chapter IV. The Relations of the high Bulgarian clergy with the Patriarchate of Constantinople outside the Bulgarian lands in the second half of the 14th – the middle of the 15th century (pp. 132-160) is structured in two sections: *clerics of certain Bulgarian origin* (the Serbian Patriarch Ephraim and the Kiev metropolitans Cyprian and Gregory Tsamblak) and *clerics of presumed Bulgarian origin* (the Serbian patriarchs Ioannicius, Sava IV and Spyridon, the Trapezund metropolitan Theodosius, the Moldovan metropolitan Damian and Isidore of Kiev). P. Grigorov has correctly highlighted the great disagreements in contemporary historiography about the origins of a number of well-known ecclesiastics of the first half of the 15th century, but it seems to me that he should be even more critical, especially with regard to Isidore of Kiev and his companion and successor Gregory (Metropolitan of Kiev, Galicia and all Russia) - as a number of researchers note, the indications of their Bulgarian ancestry seem dubious insofar as they come from late, 17th-century, sources created in the specific atmosphere of the clashes between the pro-Orthodox and the opposing pro-Uniate propaganda in the Ukrainian lands in the years following the proclamation of the union of the Kievan Metropolitanate with the Roman Church at the Council of Brest in 1596.

Chapter IV. The Relations of the high Bulgarian clergy with the Patriarchate of Constantinople outside the Bulgarian lands in the second Half of the 14th - middle of the 15th century. (pp. 132-160) is structured in two sections: clerics of certain Bulgarian origin (the Serbian Patriarch Ephraim and the Kiev metropolitans Cyprian and Gregory Tsamblak) and clerics of presumed Bulgarian origin (the Serbian patriarchs Joannicius, Sava IV and Spyridon, the Trebizond metropolitan Theodosius, the Moldovan metropolitan Damian and Isidore of Kiev). P. Grigorov has correctly highlighted the great disagreements in contemporary historiography about the origins of a number of well-known ecclesiastics of the first half of the 15th century, but it seems to me that he should be even more critical, especially with regard to Isidore of Kiev and his companion and successor Gregory (Metropolitan of Kiev, Galicia and all Russia) – as a number of researchers note, the indications of their Bulgarian ancestry seem

dubious insofar as they come from late, 17th-century, sources⁴ created in the specific atmosphere of the clashes between the pro-Orthodox and the opposing pro-Uniate propaganda in the Ukrainian lands in the years following the proclamation of the union of the Kievan Metropolitanate with the Roman Church at the Council of Brest in 1596.⁵

Chapter V entitled *Participation of Bulgarians in the life of the Patriarchate of Constantinople in the first half of the 15th century* (pp. 161-178) is an essay on the activities of the Patriarch Joseph II of Constantinople (1416-1439), with an emphasis on his participation in the Council of Ferrara-Florence.

The *Conclusion* (pp. 179-183) correctly sums up the doctoral student's observations that have been commented on so far. Further, *Appendix 1* (pp. 184-190) on the dispute between the Patriarchate of Constantinople and the Archbishopric of Ohrid over the Dioceses of Vidin and Sofia at the beginning of the fifteenth century is added, as well as *Appendix 2* (pp. 191-197), which is a list of the bishops and patriarchs of Constantinople up to the middle of the fifteenth century.

The dissertation concludes with an impressive *Bibliography* (pp. 198-252).

My general impression of R. Grigorov is entirely positive, and along with this I cannot but note the extremely precise execution of the text in terms of style and spelling. Of course, I could also make some recommendations, such as, for example, in the eventual publication of the work as a book, to use the standard modern edition of the Old Bulgarian marginal notes⁶ at the expense of the outdated, though still relevant, edition of I. Duychev. To the very comprehensive bibliography I would also suggest to add the useful study by Fr. Thomson on Gregory Tsamblak.⁷ The system of citation chosen by the doctoral student, although formally acceptable, is inconvenient for the reader.

The dissertation autoabstract fully and accurately reflects the main content of the thesis, and the attached list of scientific contributions gives an objective picture of R. Grigorov's achievements. The two scientific publications submitted by the doctoral candidate satisfy the legal requirements. As can be seen from the protocol and the opinion of the scientific supervisor Assoc. Prof. Dr. Nikolov, the dissertation does not contain elements of plagiarism and correctly reflects the previous achievements on this topic with proper citations. It is also noteworthy that during his PhD studies in the period October 2019 – June 2020, R. Grigorov has successfully undergone Erasmus+ training at the Faculty of History and Archaeology of the University of Ioannina, Greece.

⁴ Полное собрание русских летописей. Т. 40. Густынская летопись. Санкт-Петербург, 2003, 134; Leon Kreusa, Obrona jedności cerkiewnej, albo dowody, któremi się pokazuje, iż grecka Cerkiew z łacińską ma być zjednoczona. Wilno, 1617, 61 (= Русская историческая библиотека. Т. IV. Санкт-Петербург, 1878, 233); Захарий Копыстенский, Палинодия, 1621 (= РИБ IV, 1029).

⁵ Hannick, Chr. Isidore de Kiev. – In: Dictionnaire d'histoire et de géographie ecclésiastiques. Ed. R. Aubert. T. 26. Paris, 1997. Col. 197; Флоря, Б. Григорий. – В: Православная энциклопедия. Т. 12. Москва, 2006, 562-563 (the author notes that Gregory's nickname 'the Bulgarian' is known only from the works of pro-Uniate writers of the 17th century and admits his confusion in later sources as the successor of Isidore of Kiev with Gregory Tsamblak); Акишин, С. Митрополит Исидор Киевский (1385/1390–1463). Екатеринбург, 2018, 34, 36-37 (assumes that in the 16th century the Dominican historian Alphonsus Ciaconius (1530-1599) mistakenly confused Isidore of Kiev with Metropolitan Isidore II Glabas of Thessaloniki (1379-1393), and therefore attributed to him an origin from the city of Thessaloniki which made other authors, such as the Friar of the Greek Catholic Basilian Order of Saint Josaphat Ignatius Kulczynski (1694-1747), to consider him a Bulgarian).

⁶ Христова, Б., Караджова, Д., Узунова, Е. Бележки на български книжовници. X–XVIII в. Т. 1 (X–XV в.). София, 2003.

⁷ Thomson, F. Gregory Tsamblak – the man and the myths. – Slavica Gandensia, 25, 1998, № 2, 5-149.

Based on the above, I believe that the dissertation ‘The Patriarchate of Constantinople and the Bulgarians (14th – mid 15th century)’ reveals good professional skills and meets the legal requirements for defense, which gives me the reason to vote positively for Radostin Grigorov to be awarded the degree of ‘Doctor’ in the field of higher education 2. Humanities, professional field 2.2. History and Archaeology, scientific speciality History of Bulgaria (History of Medieval Bulgaria).

Sofia, February 17, 2022

Reviewer:

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Angel Nikolov