

## II

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# Bulgarian-Byzantine Relations during the Reign of Symeon I the Great (893–927)



In order to understand Peter's situation regarding his relations with the empire after his father's death, it seems advisable to begin with a general overview of his father's policy towards Byzantium.

Following Bulgaria's conversion to Christianity in 866, the Bulgarian-Byzantine relations, which had previously been far from harmonious, took on a peaceful, religion-based character. Nevertheless, this state of affairs did not last longer than until the beginning of the 890s: the mutual relations deteriorated under Vladimir-Rasate (889–893) and escalated into an open confrontation under Symeon I (893–927), Peter's father. Having assumed power in 893, Symeon found himself in conflict with emperor Leo VI because of changes in the regulations concerning Bulgarian trade in the Empire; the animosity would ultimately result in the outbreak of war between the two countries<sup>1</sup>. Thus, Symeon had to elaborate a way

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<sup>1</sup> On the causes and course of the war see: Г. Цанкова-Петкова, *Първата война между България и Византия при цар Симеон и възстановяването на българската търговия с Цариград*, ИИИ 20, 1968, pp. 167–200; T. Wasilewski, *Bizancjum i Słowianie w IX w. Studia z dziejów stosunków politycznych i kulturalnych*, Warszawa 1972, pp. 221–223; И. Божлов, *Цар Симеон Велики (893–927): Златният век на Средновековна България*, София 1983, pp. 87–89; i d e m, *Византийският свят*, София 2008, pp. 379–381; i d e m, В. Гюзелев, *История на средновековна България*.

of handling the Byzantines in the early days of his reign. It was no longer possible to pursue the strategy chosen by Boris-Michael after his conversion to Christianity in 866, aimed at preserving peace with Byzantium.

The events of 893–896 show that during the initial stage of his rule, Symeon would deal with the Empire so as to defend the position to which the Bulgarian state (in terms of both territory and prestige) and its ruler had been elevated during his father's reign. The policy he pursued was informed by the belief that the Empire had no right to use the common religion as a justification for its claims to sovereignty over Bulgaria. The title of *ἐκ Θεοῦ ἀρχῶν Βουλγαρίας*, for which Symeon finally settled, can be regarded as an indication of the compromise he decided to accept<sup>2</sup>. In the years that followed, the ruler, taking advantage of the good relations with the Empire, focused on internal affairs. The development of the city of Preslav – the state's new political center – was among his main endeavors, as was his promotion of literature. The latter shows that his efforts were designed to build a sense of national pride and to provide an adequate ideological framework for a country functioning in the Christian ecumene<sup>3</sup>.

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VII–XIV в., София 2006, pp. 246–247, 266–267; N. Oikonomides, *Le kommerkion d'Abydos, Thessalonique et la commerce bulgare au IX<sup>e</sup> siècle*, [in:] *Hommes et richesses dans l'Empire byzantin*, vol. II, VII<sup>e</sup>–XIV<sup>e</sup> siècle, ed. V. Kravari, J. Lefort, C. Morrison, Paris 1991, pp. 241–248; J. Karayannopoulos, *Les causes des luttes entre Syméon et Byzance: un réexamen*, [in:] *Сборник в чест на акад. Димитър Ангелов*, ed. В. Велков, София 1994, pp. 52–64; В. Вачкова, *Симеон Велики. Пътят към короната на Запада*, София 2005, pp. 53–54; И. Билярски, *Фискална система на средновековна България*, Пловдив 2010, pp. 139–140; M. J. Leszka, *The Monk versus the Philosopher. From the History of the Bulgarian-Byzantine War 894–896*, SCer 1, 2011, pp. 55–70; idem, *Symeon I Wielki a Bizancjum. Z dziejów stosunków bulgarsko-bizantyńskich w latach 893–927*, Łódź 2013, pp. 67–98.

<sup>2</sup> И. Йорданов, *Корпус на средновековните български печати*, София 2016, pp. 60–68. The author indicates that, in his seal iconography, Symeon followed the path paved by his father (p. 68). Cf. also Т. Славова, *Владетел и администрация в ранносредновековна България. Филологически аспекти*, София 2010, pp. 236–239.

<sup>3</sup> The search for the past – necessarily pagan – coupled with the efforts to integrate it into the new Christian historical consciousness is reflected both in the small number of extant original works and in the translations. It is no coincidence that the *List of Bulgarian Khans*, containing a mythical vision of the origins of the Bulgarian state, was referred to during Symeon's reign. See e.g.: А. Николов, *Политическа мисъл*

Boris-Michael's death in 907, as some scholars believe, changed Symeon's situation<sup>4</sup>. He regained the complete freedom to rule his country the way he wanted and was given a chance to take his relations with the Empire to a new level, as he apparently became convinced of his right to claim the title of *basileus*. It was apparently in mid-913, as Bulgaria's relations with Byzantium under emperor Alexander deteriorated, that he decided to put this idea into action<sup>5</sup> and proclaimed himself *basileus*, abandoning the previous title of *ἐκ Θεοῦ ἄρχων* – the one approved by Byzantium<sup>6</sup>. In all likelihood, he realized that the Byzantines would not be willing to accept the step he took and that it would inevitably require a demonstration of military power, or even war. Thus, he attempted to take advantage of the opportunity to kill two birds with one stone. First, he utilized the fact that Alexander, by refusing to pay him tribute, had broken the terms of the existing peace treaty. The breach of the agreement by the emperor made it possible for Symeon to shift the blame for the outbreak of the war onto Byzantium. Second, he integrated the issue of the recognition of his new title into the broader demand concerning the tribute in question. In this way, he was able to avoid giving some of the members of the Bulgarian elite a reason to accuse him of taking up arms only in order to satisfy his personal ambitions. The Bulgarians' march on Constantinople in the summer of 913, which turned

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в ранносредновековна България (средата на IX – края на X в.), София 2006, pp. 151–230; ИБСА, р. 375sq; М. К а й м а к а м о в а, *Власт и история в средновековна България VIII–XIV в.*, София 2011, pp. 115–156. These works contain references to various further studies on the issue.

<sup>4</sup> М. В о й н о в, *Промяната в българо-византийските отношения при цар Симеон*, ИИИ 18, 1967, р. 168sq.

<sup>5</sup> For more on Alexander's policy towards Bulgaria see: Н. О в ч а р о в, *Една хипотеза за българо-византийските отношения през 912–913 г.*, Архе 31.3, 1989, pp. 50–57; Р. Р а ш е в, *Княз Симеон и император Александър*, [in:] *id est*, *Цар Симеон Велики. Щрихи към личността и делото му*, София 2007, pp. 32–41; М. J. L e s z k a, *Symeon...*, pp. 118–124.

<sup>6</sup> А. Н и к о л о в, *Политическа...*, pp. 129–139; *id est*, “*Великият между царете*”. *Изграждане и утвърждаване на българската царска институция през управлението на Симеон I*, [in:] *Българският златен век. Сборник в чест на цар Симеон Велики (893–927)*, ed. В. Г ю з е л е в, И. Г. И л и е в, К. Н е н о в, Пловдив 2015, р. 165sq; М. J. L e s z k a, *Symeon...*, pp. 129–133.

out to be an effective manifestation of power, was Symeon's success<sup>7</sup>. Not only did the Byzantines resume paying the tribute, but they also recognized Symeon's imperial proclamation, although the latter was illegal from Constantinople's perspective<sup>8</sup>. Having accomplished all his plans, Symeon could feel satisfied, the more so because he had achieved his goals without shedding a drop of Christian blood. It may have been directly after August 913 that he began using the title εἰρηνοποιὸς βασιλεύς (peace-making *basileus*) on his seals<sup>9</sup>, an appellation that is still the subject of an ongoing debate. According to Ivan Duychev, the title manifested Symeon's political program, an important element of which was to establish peace both with the Empire and within his own country<sup>10</sup>. Ivan Bozhilov maintains that the phrase should be understood as pointing to Symeon's plan to establish a new order (τάξις). The latter, referred to by the scholar as the *Pax Symeonica*, was in his opinion conceived as an attempt to replace or at least balance the existing *Pax Byzantina* in the Christian ecumene. In this plan, Symeon envisaged himself to become the same kind of *pater familias* among the family of rulers and nations that the Byzantine emperor had been; furthermore, the Bulgarians were to assume the role of the new chosen people, who – just like the Byzantines – enjoyed God's protection and were capable of defending Christianity and preserving the cultural heritage of Rome and Greece<sup>11</sup>.

<sup>7</sup> On the Bulgarian expedition against Constantinople see: Д. Ангелов, С. Кашев, Б. Чолпанов, *Българска военна история от античността до втората четвърт на Х в.*, София 1983, pp. 266–268; M.J. Leszka, *Symeon...*, pp. 134–137.

<sup>8</sup> On the conditions of the agreement in question see: А. Николов, *Политическа...*, pp. 130–139; M.J. Leszka, *Symeon...*, pp. 138–158.

<sup>9</sup> И. Йорданов, *Корпус на средновековните български печати...*, pp. 68–73. The inscription is an acclamation. The same inscription can be found in the *Book of Ceremonies* by Constantine VII Porphyrogenetos (I, 77, p. 373). Bozhilov (*L'ideologie politique du tsar Syméon: pax Symeonica*, BBg 8, 1986, pp. 82–83) provides other examples of the term being used in Byzantine texts.

<sup>10</sup> I. Duyčev, *Relations entre Slaves méridionaux et Byzance aux X<sup>e</sup>–XII<sup>e</sup> siècles*, [in:] idem, *Medioevo bizantino-slavo*, vol. III, *Altrisaggi di storia, politica e letteratura*, Roma 1971, p. 188.

<sup>11</sup> И. Божилов, *Цар...*, pp. 114–115; idem, *L'ideologie...*, pp. 81–85. Symeon must have carried out the program in several stages. First, the ruler was to obtain Byzantium's

Bozhilov, however, appears to be taking his idea of the *Pax Symeonica* too far: one is inclined to doubt the validity of ascribing such a deep meaning to a formula originating in imperial Byzantine acclamations, the more so because the Bulgarian scholar associates it more with Charlemagne than with Byzantium<sup>12</sup>. The interpretation offered by Duychev, and shared by other scholars such as Jonathan Shepard<sup>13</sup> and Rasho Rashev<sup>14</sup>, is considerably more compelling. By using the term εἰρηνοποιός to refer to himself in 913, Symeon sent a clear message: he wished to be perceived as a ruler who established peace with Byzantium. It should be borne in mind that his contemporaries considered peace to be a supreme value – as Nicholas Mystikos put it, *it brought with it nothing but good and was pleasing to God*<sup>15</sup>. Symeon was perfectly aware of this, which led him to use the motive in his propaganda.

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consent to use the imperial title. His next steps involved marrying his daughter off to Constantine VII, being granted the status of his guardian (*basileopator*) and, consequently, acquiring influence over the empire's government. My criticism of the view that Symeon strove to obtain the title of *basileopator* can be found in: M. J. L e s z k a, *Symeon...*, pp. 144–146. See also: Н. К ъ н е в, *Стремя ли се българският владетел Симеон I Велики (893–927 г.) към ранг на византийски василеопатор?*, [in:] i d e m, *Византинобългарски студии*, Велико Търново 2013, pp. 111–119.

<sup>12</sup> И. Б о ж и л о в, *Цар...*, pp. 113–114; i d e m, *L'ideologie...*, pp. 83–84. Bozhilov refers to the title used by Charlemagne, which included the adjective *pacificus* ('the one who brings peace'). The Bulgarian scholar claims that the title was used with reference to the Frankish Empire, which the ruler created by conquering the lands of Bavaria, Saxony and the kingdom of the Lombards, as well as by subjugating the Slavs, the Avars and the Muslims in Spain. Even if this was the case, the fact remains that Bozhilov is silent about the route by which this element of Carolingian political ideology would have reached the court in Preslav and become an inspiration to Symeon. On Carolingian political ideology see: W. F a l k o w s k i, *Wielki król. Ideologiczne podstawy władzy Karola Wielkiego*, Warszawa 2011, *passim*.

<sup>13</sup> J. S h e p a r d, *Symeon of Bulgaria-Peacemaker*, [in:] i d e m, *Emergent elites and Byzantium in the Balkans and East-Central Europe*, Farnham–Burlington 2011, pp. 52–53.

<sup>14</sup> Р. Р а ш е в, "Втората война" на Симеон срещу Византия (913–927) като литературен и политически факт, [in:] i d e m, *Цар Симеон...*, p. 94.

<sup>15</sup> N i c h o l a s M y s t i k o s, 16, pp. 108, 110; 17, p. 110; 23, p. 160. The way in which the issue of peace was treated in Byzantium has been covered by: С. Н. М а л а х о в, *Концепция мира в политической идеологии Византии первой половины X в.: Николай Мистик и Феодор Дафнопат*, АДСВ 27, 1995, pp. 19–31; J. H a l d o n, *Warfare, State and Society in the Byzantine World*, London 1999, pp. 13–33; J. C h r y s o s t o m i d e s,

In 913, it seems, Symeon hoped to build a lasting peace with Byzantium; however, it was not long before he realized that his plans were difficult to carry out. The changes in the composition of the regency council, to be presided over by widowed empress Zoe Karbonopsina, forced him to search for new ways of securing stable, peaceful relations with Byzantium (the council ruled the Empire on behalf of Constantine VII, and the changes in question were introduced at the beginning of 914). It may have been at that time that Symeon, or one of his advisors, came up with the idea of a marriage between the members of the ruling dynasties of Bulgaria and Byzantium<sup>16</sup>. The Byzantines did not accept the offer; nor, it seems, did they confirm the terms of the 913 agreement (although they probably did not terminate it either)<sup>17</sup>. Be that as it may, Symeon found himself confronted with the necessity of reorienting his plans. It appears that, until 917, he still believed that maintaining peace was possible. However, the aggressive policies of Byzantium, which resulted in the outbreak of the war<sup>18</sup>, finally made him change his attitude towards the Empire and redefine the parameters of Bulgaria's participation in the Christian community.

Thus, Symeon took up the gauntlet thrown by the Byzantines. For more than six years, he waged war against Byzantium – in Byzantine territory<sup>19</sup>. His first significant victories (especially the battle of Anchialos) left him convinced that he was in the position to demand that Byzantium

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*Byzantine Concepts of War and Peace*, [in:] *War, Peace and World Orders in European History*, ed. A.V. Hartmann, B. Heuser, London–New York 2001, pp. 91–101; P.M. Strässle, *Krieg und Frieden in Byzanz*, B 74, 2004, pp. 110–129; K. Marinow, *Peace in the House of Jacob. A Few Remarks on the Ideology of Two Biblical Themes in the Oration 'On the Treaty with the Bulgarians'*, BMD 3, 2012, pp. 85–93.

<sup>16</sup> M.J. Leszka, *Symeon*..., pp. 142–144.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibidem*, pp. 160–163.

<sup>18</sup> On the causes and course of the 917 war see: В.Н. Златарски, *История на българската държава през средните векове*, vol. I/2, *Първо българско Царство. От славянизацията на държавата до падането на Първото царство (852–1018)*, София 1927, pp. 380–388; Д. Ангелов, С. Кашев, Б. Чолпанов, *Българска военна...*, pp. 268–272; И. Божилов, *Цар...*, pp. 121–126; *idem*, В. Гюзелев, *История...*, pp. 255–256; J. Shepherd, *Symeon*..., pp. 34–45; M.J. Leszka, *Symeon*..., pp. 167–185.

<sup>19</sup> On this period in the Byzantine-Bulgarian relations see: Д. Ангелов, С. Кашев, Б. Чолпанов, *Българска военна...*, pp. 272–277; И. Божилов, *Цар...*, pp. 126–144; *idem*, В. Гюзелев, *История...*, pp. 256–260; M.J. Leszka, *Symeon*..., pp. 187–217.





Seal depicting Symeon I the Great with the inscription:  
 Συμεών ἐν Χριστῷ βασιλεὺς Ῥομέων, Bulgaria, ca. 921.  
 Drawing (after R. Rashchev): E. Myślińska-Brzozowska

recognize Bulgaria's unique status in the Christian world. A symbolic representation of the way in which his approach had changed was his assumption of a new title – *basileus Romeon* (βασιλεὺς Ῥομέων), i.e. *basileus of the Rhomaeoi* – the same as the one borne by Byzantine rulers<sup>20</sup>.

<sup>20</sup> И. Йорданов, *Печати на Симеон, василевс на Ромеите (?–927)*, ВМЗ 2, 2011, pp. 87–97; idem, *Корпус...*, pp. 73–81. We have a significant number of this type of *sigilla* (27). They bear the following inscription: Συμεών ἐν Χριστῷ βασιλεὺς Ῥομέων (*Symeon in Christ basileus of the Rhomaeoi*). Particularly noteworthy is the fact that they also contain the formula Νικοπτου λεονιπτο πολὰ τὰ ἐ[τη] (*to the Victory-maker the Lion-like many years*). Contrary to the phrase 'creator of peace,' probably introduced in 913, the new type of seals emphasizes Symeon's military victories – or, to put it more broadly, the military aspect of his imperial power. See also: К. Тотев, *За една група печати на цар Симеон*, [in:] *Общото и специфичното в Балканските народи до края на XIX в. Сборник в чест на 70-годишнината на проф. Василка Тѣпкова-Заимова*, ed. Г. Бакалов, София 1999, pp. 107–112.

By proclaiming himself *basileus* of the *Rhomaioi*, which must have taken place between the beginning of 921 and October–November 923, he indicated that he would neither recognize Romanos Lekapenos (whom he considered a usurper) as the leader of the Christian ecumene nor accept the role of his ‘spiritual son’.

What was the meaning of Symeon’s assuming the title of *basileus*? Scholars are divided on this issue. Some have claimed that Symeon strove to capture Constantinople and, by taking the place of Byzantine emperors, to build a form of universal Bulgarian-Byzantine statehood<sup>21</sup>. According to others, he wanted to be recognized as the ruler of the Byzantine West (the lands owned by Byzantium in Europe)<sup>22</sup> or even as the successor of the Roman emperors who had ruled the western part of the Roman Empire<sup>23</sup>.

It does not seem likely that Symeon’s goal was to capture Constantinople and to turn it into a capital city to be used as a base from which his Slav-Greek state would be governed. Even in the period of his greatest victories, he did not undertake any serious operation that could lead to the seizure of Byzantium’s capital (his plan to threaten it by forging an alliance with the Arabs went awry<sup>24</sup>). He considered Preslav the center of his state. He put a lot of effort into developing and beautifying the city; collecting relics was one of the ways in which he tried to raise it to the position of a religious center<sup>25</sup>. Would he have acted in this way if he had been blinded by the idea of taking over the Byzantine capital?

<sup>21</sup> F. D ö l g e r, *Bulgarisches Cartum und byzantinisches Kaisertum*, ИБАИ 9, 1935, p. 57; G. O s t r o g o r s k i, *Avtokrator i samodržac*, [in:] i d e m, *Vizantija i Sloveni*, Beograd 1970, pp. 303–318.

<sup>22</sup> Р. П а ш е в, *Втората...*, p. 93.

<sup>23</sup> В. В а ч к о в а, *Симеон...*, *passim*.

<sup>24</sup> К. С. К р ъ с т е в, *България, Византия и Арабският свят при царуването на Симеон I Велики*, ВМд 3, 2012, pp. 371–378; M. J. L e s z k a, *Symeon...*, pp. 200–201.

<sup>25</sup> This aspect of Symeon’s policy is stressed by: A. N i k o l o v, *Making a New Basileus. The Case of Symeon of Bulgaria (893–927). Reconsidered*, [in:] *Rome, Constantinople and Newly-Converted Europe. Archaeological and Historical Evidence*, vol. I, ed. M. S a l a m o n et al., Kraków–Leipzig–Rzeszów–Warszawa 2012, pp. 101–108. Preslav became the center of the cult of Boris-Michael, Bulgaria’s first Christian ruler, canonized soon after his death. His grave, it is believed, was located in the chapel of the so-called Royal Church (М. В а к л и н о в а, И. Щ е р е в а, *Княз Борис I и владетелската църква на Велики Преслав*, [in:] *Християнската култура в средновековна България. Материали от*



Or should Symeon's use of the title in question be interpreted in terms of an appeal to the tradition of an emperor independent of Constantinople, conventionally referred to as the emperor of the West<sup>26</sup>? Unfortunately, it is impossible to give a positive answer to the question either – there is no evidence indicating that the Bulgarian ruler attempted to invoke the tradition of a western center of imperial power. The lack of such evidence has even been noted by Vesselina Vachkova<sup>27</sup>, who recently advanced the notion of Symeon as a ruler of the West (in the sense of the western part of the Roman Empire).

On the other hand, a view that can be justified is that Symeon strove to weaken Byzantium's position in the Balkans and aimed to capture space in which Bulgaria could play a dominant role. It is in this context that the term 'West' (*dysis*) appears<sup>28</sup>, found in the correspondence of Nicholas Mystikos<sup>29</sup> and in the letters of Romanos I Lekapenos. In the fifth letter, the latter accuses the Bulgarian ruler of plundering the 'whole West' and taking its people into captivity; Romanos adds that, because of his misconduct, Symeon cannot be called emperor of the *Rhomaioi*<sup>30</sup>. The issue of the 'West' appears in the sources once more in the account of the circumstances of Symeon's death. His statue, which is believed to have

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национална научна конференция, Шумен, 2–4 май 2007 г., по случай 1100 години от смъртта на св. Княз Борис-Михаил (ок. 835–907 г.), ed. П. Георгиев, Велико Търново 2008, pp. 185–194).

<sup>26</sup> It is quite remarkable that the sphragistic material at our disposal offers no hint that Symeon used the title of *basileus* of the *Rhomaioi* and the Bulgarians; still, it needs to be stated that this title did reflect the reality, as the Bulgarian ruler's subjects included both *Rhomaioi* and Bulgarians.

<sup>27</sup> В. Вачкова, Симеон..., p. 84. Cf. П. Павлов, Християнското и имперското минало на българските земи в ойкуменичната доктрина на цар Симеон Велики (893–927), [in:] Източното православие в европейската култура. Международна конференция. Варна, 2–3 юли 1993 г., ed. Д. Овчаров, София 1999, pp. 112–114.

<sup>28</sup> On the meaning of the terms *dysis* ('West') and *hesperia* ('western lands') see: В. Вачкова, Симеон..., p. 76; eadem, Понятието "Запад" в историческата аргументация на средновековна България, SB 25, 2006, pp. 295–303.

<sup>29</sup> Nicholas Mystikos, 27, p. 190. In the letter, the patriarch suggests that Symeon wanted to rule over the whole West – which, in the patriarch's opinion, was not possible because *the sovereignty of all the West belongs to the Roman Empire* (transl. p. 191).

<sup>30</sup> Theodore Daphnopates, *Letters*, 5, p. 59.

stood on the hill of Xerolophos, had its face turned westwards<sup>31</sup>. By the 'West,' the three sources in question seem to mean Byzantium's European territories or, more broadly, Byzantium's sphere of influence in the Balkans. Only the first two accounts (not without certain reservations)<sup>32</sup>, coupled with the analysis of certain steps taken by the ruler towards the Serbs and the Croats, can be used to support another view: that Symeon sought the Byzantines' approval of his rule over the territories they had lost to him, as well as their abandoning the competition for influence over the areas inhabited by the Serbs and Croats<sup>33</sup>.

I do not consider it likely that Symeon planned to take over the whole Byzantine west. Rather, in my opinion, he merely wanted to be recognized as a ruler equal to Byzantine emperors in the Balkan sphere; his assumption of the title in question should be regarded as a manifestation of this intention. On November 19<sup>th</sup> (most probably 923<sup>34</sup>), he met with

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<sup>31</sup> Continuator of Theophanes, pp. 411–412; John Skylitzes, p. 221; John Zonaras, p. 473; Pseudo-Symeon Magistros, p. 740.

<sup>32</sup> One is advised to exercise great caution in using the letters of Nicholas Mystikos and Romanos I Lekapenos to determine Symeon's actual demands, as the letters reflect Symeon's diplomatic war with Byzantium. In diplomatic wars, one puts forward far-reaching demands in order to achieve specific goals. Besides, the letters written by Byzantine authors do not necessarily reflect the thoughts expressed in the Bulgarian ruler's original writings. It is worth noting that Nicholas Mystikos is the only author who explicitly addresses Symeon's attempts to establish his rule over the West. All that Romanos I Lekapenos says in his letter, on the other hand, is that he who ravages the lands of the *Rhomaioi* cannot be called their emperor: hence, the letter concerns not so much the attempt to rule the West as the use of the title. If Symeon had actually wanted to take over the *all the West*, why would he have demanded that the Byzantines concede to him lands (known as the *mandria*) which formed a part of this West?

<sup>33</sup> Cf. J. Shepard, *Bulgaria. The Other Balkan "Empire"*, [in:] *New Cambridge Medieval History*, vol. III, ed. T. Rutter, Cambridge 2000, pp. 567–585.

<sup>34</sup> Although Byzantine sources appear to be very precise in specifying the year, the month, the day of the week and even the hour of the event, the date is open to debate (cf. S. Runciman, *The Emperor Romanus Lecapenus and his Reign. A Study of Tenth-Century Byzantium*, Cambridge 1969, pp. 246–248). J. Howard-Johnson (*A short piece of narrative history: war and diplomacy in the Balkans, winter 921/2 – spring 924*, [in:] *Byzantine Style, Religion and Civilization. In Honour of Sir Steven Runciman*, ed. E. Jeffreys, Cambridge 2006, p. 348) recently expressed his view on this matter, making a strong case for dating Symeon's meeting with Romanos to Wednesday, November 19<sup>th</sup>, 923.

Romanos I Lekapenos to make peace. Although it seems that the rulers failed to come to a final agreement, they managed to resolve some of the contentious issues, which sufficed for Symeon to cease his hostilities against Byzantium<sup>35</sup>. No source mentions Symeon's aggressive steps against the southern neighbor. Quite on the contrary, there is evidence to suggest that the ruler made active attempts to reach a final settlement with the Empire. According to Todor Todorov<sup>36</sup>, this is indicated by a passage in the oration *On the Treaty with the Bulgarians*, in which Symeon is compared to the Old Testament king David, while the peace with Byzantium is likened to the Temple in Jerusalem<sup>37</sup>. The idea of the erection of the temple was put forth by David/Symeon, but it was implemented by Salomon/Peter. According to the Bulgarian scholar, the author of the oration hinted that it was Symeon who had entered into negotiations with the Byzantines and laid foundations for the prospective peace, while Peter/Salomon simply concluded what his father had started<sup>38</sup>. The marriage between Peter

<sup>35</sup> According to J. Howard-Johnston (*A short piece...*, p. 352), Symeon reached agreement with Romanos on several issues: 1. the war was ended; 2. Lekapenos was recognized by Symeon as Byzantium's legal ruler; 3. Symeon was granted the status of brother of the Byzantine emperor and was given the right to bear the title of *basileus* (of the Bulgarians); still, Symeon's claims to the title of *basileus* of the *Rhomaioi* were not accepted. Certain other matters, especially those regarding Byzantium's territorial concessions, were left for further negotiations. The Bulgarians laid claim to the areas referred to in one of Romanos's letters as the *mandria*. Most likely, the disputed territories included cities on the Black Sea coast, along with their surrounding areas, which – were they to remain in Byzantine hands – would pose a threat to the very core of the Bulgarian state.

<sup>36</sup> Т. Тодоров, "Слово за мир с българите" и българо-византийските отношения през последните години от управлението на цар Симеон, [in:] *България, българите и техните съседи през векове. Изследвания и материали од научна конференция в памет на д-р Христо Коларов, 30–31 октомври 1998 г., Велико Търново*, ed. Й. Андриев, Велико Търново 2001, pp. 141–150.

<sup>37</sup> *On the Treaty with the Bulgarians*, 16, 278.371–378. Cf. K. Marinov, *In the Shackles of the Evil One. The Portrayal of Tsar Symeon I the Great (893–927) in the Oration On the Treaty with the Bulgarians*, SCer 1, 2011, pp. 187–188. In some sources, Symeon is compared with king David due to his fondness for books (on this issue see: П. Рашев, *Цар Симеон – "нов Мойсей" или "нов Давид"*, [in:] *идем, Цар Симеон...*, pp. 60–72). What Symeon and David were to have in common was the fact that neither of them transferred their power to the eldest son.

<sup>38</sup> Cf. the discussion on the topic in: K. Marinov, *In the Shackles...*, pp. 187–188.

and Maria, a Byzantine princess, was one of the key elements of the peace treaty under discussion. Symeon had once rejected the idea of becoming related to the Lekapenoi<sup>39</sup>; nonetheless, after 923, seeing no prospect of forging bonds with the Macedonian dynasty, he changed his stance and was ready to establish kinship with the Lekapenoi. Thus, Peter not only did not betray his father's wishes, but he in fact brought his plans to successful completion. However, that did not happen until a later stage of his rule. Right after his father's death and his rise to power, he took certain steps to show that he was ready to resume hostilities against Byzantium – a move designed to make Romanos I Lekapenos agree to what Peter considered the most favorable peace settlement<sup>40</sup>.



<sup>39</sup> Nicholas Mystikos, 16, p. 10.

<sup>40</sup> It is worth noting that, in the light of recent research, it is no longer possible to claim that Symeon was preparing another expedition against Constantinople shortly before his death. Cf. M.J. Leszka, *Symeon...*, pp. 225–227.