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The Portrayal of Peter in Modern Historiography



The inspiration for undertaking research on the portrayal of tsar Peter in the modern historiography had been the clear disproportionality between what is known about the ruler directly from the source accounts, and the ideas formulated in the academic literature. The model of development of historical understanding, based on the ongoing search for the most convincing explanations of the phenomena and processes, and their subsequent verification, intuitively accepted by scholars of the past, in this case – it would seem – has been failing for decades. This has resulted in an unequivocally negative vision of Peter's reign. The discussions regarding individual facts for a long time had not been affecting the overall evaluation of the tsar, or of his era. The persistence of the 'black legend' of Peter is unprecedented. We may find its foundations in the writings from the end of the eighteenth century, and it was developed in the greatest detail in the works of Petar Mutafchiev (first half of the twentieth century). It only began to be questioned during the late 1960s. Its creation and consolidation were for the most part the result of works written by Bulgarian and Russian scholars.

In the present essay I am not attempting to fully explain this – at first glance surprising – stability of the opinion about Peter in. This would be a task for those researching the Bulgarian revival, the nineteenth-century

Slavophilism, and the intellectual climate of the Bulgarian elites prior to the collapse of communism. I believe that it would provide an additional perspective if one were to study the influence of the national feelings of Bulgarian intellectuals on the stance they have taken towards their own nation's past¹. For the Reader, however, I propose to review the themes that are crucial for the evaluation of Peter: his attitude towards the Byzantines, the Church, of the internal situation of Bulgaria during his reign. I attempted to capture the moment at which particular opinions appeared, present their origins, and find their echoes in the later works. I devoted particular attention to the 'prehistory' of Peter's image; the works that are nowadays forgotten, or rarely cited.

The periodisation that I adopted is intended to facilitate the understanding of the text. Serving as landmarks are the moments that were important for the forming of Peter's historiographic image, therefore there are some differences regarding the periodisation of the development of the Bulgarian and European historiography between the present essay and general works on the subject².

The first sub-chapter begins with an analysis of the relevant passages from the earliest of the works discussed here, that is, the *Kingdom of the Slavs* by Mauro Orbini from 1601. The following two hundred years, during which authors such as i.a. Giuseppe Assemani, Charles du Cange (du Fresne) and Blasius Kleiner had been active, did not bring any notable changes in regard to Peter's historiographic image and the country he ruled. The second sub-chapter covers the relatively short period that was nonetheless crucial for the forming of the basis of criticism of Peter. The most important authors of this era were Paisios (end of the eighteenth century), Yuriy Venelin and Alexandr Gilferding (first half of the nineteenth century). In the third sub-chapter I have presented the works in which

¹ Of the wealth of publication on this subject, I have used below the publications by Albena Hranova and Diana Mishkova. In the context of Peter's portrayal in historiography, a similar line of research was postulated by Georgi Bakalov (see below).

² Vide e.g. *Историография истории южных и западных славян*, ed. Л.В. Горина, И.В. Созин et. al., Москва 1987; В. Гюзелев, *Апология на Средновековието*, [in:] *идем, Съчинения в пет тома*, vol. I, *Апология на Средновековието. Покръстване на българите*, София 2013, pp. 18–224.

the arguments of the historians mentioned above have been developed in accordance with the standards of academic writing, and which at the same time reaffirmed their conclusions. The need for re-evaluation of the appraisals of Peter was signalled during the 1960s; the motives behind it and the attempts at achieving it are discussed in the closing parts of this chapter.

1. Seventeenth to Mid-Eighteenth Centuries

Mauro Orbini

Mauro Orbini, a Benedictine monk from Ragusa (modern day Dubrovnik), may be considered as the author of the first modern history of the South Slavic nations. Writing *Kingdom of the Slavs* (1601) he used numerous sources; his work is a compilation. Considering this, the large volume of the work, as well as the standards of historiography of the time, it should not be surprising that Orbini did not manage to avoid mistakes, factual contradictions, and inconsistencies³. The duplicated account of the battle of Velbazhd is a clear example of the editorial chaos within his text: in the part related to the history of Serbia his narrative is based on a presently unidentified text of west European provenance, while the part about Bulgaria is rooted in the history of Nikephoros Gregoras⁴. Describing Peter, Orbini is almost entirely dependent on his Greek sources. Peter appears on the pages of the *Kingdom of the Slavs* after Symeon's death. Orbini, like Zonaras, makes no mention that Michael was passed over in the line of succession, and moves directly to describing the difficult situation of Bulgaria (starvation and aggressive neighbours), which led to

³ For background on Orbini's work see G. Brogi Bercoff, *Il Regno degli Slavi di Mauro Orbini e la storiografia europea del Cinquecento*, RS 24/26, 1977/1979, pp. 119–156.

⁴ S. Ćirković, *Vorwort*, [in:] M. Orbini, *Il regno degli Slavi*, Pesaro 1601, ed. S. Ćirković, P. Rehder, München 1985, pp. 7–23.

the peace talks with Byzantium and, subsequently, the conclusion of the peace treaty and the marriage between the Bulgarian ruler with Maria–Irene. He omits the details related to emperor Christopher being honoured by being placed ahead of Constantine Porphyrogenetos. Subsequently, along with Skylitzes he describes the rebellion of John and Michael, neglecting or changing some of the details (he does not, i.a., mention that John renounced his monk's frock after arriving in Constantinople). The next point of Peter's biography is the death of his wife, and the renewal of the peace agreement with the Byzantines, strengthened by sending his sons, Boris and Roman, as hostages⁵. There is a chronological break at this point in both Skylitzes and Zonaras, caused by mentioning of the return of both of the brothers after Peter's death, where they opposed the Cometopouloi who were raising rebellion among Bulgarians. Orbini repeats this (likely after Zonaras, which is shown by partially convergent phrasing), but does not realise the anticipatory nature of the interjection. Therefore when (repeating after Zonaras) he tells of the Hungarian raids, he talks of Peter's successor, Boris, as the ruler, clearly thinking that Peter was already dead at the time. This mistake likely stems from lack of further mention of Peter in Zonaras⁶. The primacy of Zonaras as a source for Orbini is also confirmed by a remark taken from this source about a demand from John Tzymiskes to the Bulgarian tsar (in Orbini's text: Boris) to hold back Hungarian raids, and pointing to Bulgarians' refusal as the reason for 'inviting' Svyatoslav to the Balkans by the Byzantine ruler⁷. The presentation of these events was abbreviated in Skylitzes' version in comparison to what we find in Zonaras and Orbini.

Describing Peter's history, Orbini does not comment on it in any way. The dispassionate re-telling of the Bulgarian history is characteristic of this author. What is interesting are the narrative interventions he has made: a simple succession of events (without specifying their distance in time) that links the marriage of Peter and Irene (celebrated in Constantinople)

⁵ M. O r b i n i, *Il regno...*, pp. 426–427.

⁶ For the sake of precision: Peter's name appears two more times in Zonaras' narrative (J o h n Z o n a r a s, pp. 547.9, 560.15). He is mentioned as Romanos' father.

⁷ M. O r b i n i, *Il regno...*, p. 427.

and the rebellions of John and Michael in Skylitzes, in Orbini's version is transformed into the following picture: John attacked Peter during the latter's return journey from Constantinople. Moreover, the summary of the correspondence between the Bulgarian tsar and John Tzymiskes, regarding the holding back of Hungarian raids, is developed by Orbini through a creative use of his source. He first mentions the Hungarian raid on Bulgaria, then the request of Bulgarians directed to the Byzantines for help, and only then talks about the Hungarian raid on Byzantium and Tzymiskes' demand⁸. In Zonaras, the plea made by the Bulgarians is an introspection interwoven into their refusal to meet Tzymiskes' demands. Orbini efficiently ensured his story was cohesive, although this also made it somewhat detrimental to its factual accuracy. A translation by Theophan Prokopovich into Russian was published in 1722 in St. Petersburg, and gained certain popularity⁹.

Cesare Baronio

Writing at nearly the same time as Orbini, the cardinal devoted much less space to the Slavic matters in his multi-volume work *Annales ecclesiastici* (volume X, containing description of the period in which we are interested, was published in 1602). This should not be surprising, since his work was focused on the history of the Catholic Church¹⁰. He mentioned Peter only once in reference to the events of 944, noting his correspondence with

⁸ *Ibidem*.

⁹ Мавроурбинъ, *Кнѣга історіографія початія имене, славы и разширенія народа славянскаго*, Санктпѣтербург 1722; for further literature on this topic see: Дж. Де Л'Агата, *Паисий Хилендарски и руската версия на "Царството на славяните" на Мавро Орбини*, [in:] *Царството на славяните. История от дон Мавро Орбини от Рагуза, абат от Млетския орден*, ed. П. Ватова, transl. С. Тодоров, Е. Попова, София 2012, pp. 17–24; Р. Адinolфи, *"Царството на Славяните" от Мавро Орбини, руският превод на Сава Владиславович и изследванията по въпроса*, Про 24.2, 2015, pp. 309–320.

¹⁰ Р. Пикио, *България в Църковната история на Цезар Бароний*, [in:] *идем, Православното славянство и старобългарската културна традиция*, transl. А. Джамбелука Коссова, София 1994, pp. 587–600; Р. Заимова, *Българската тема в западноевропейската книжнина. XV–XVII век*, София 1992, pp. 75–85.

Paul of Latro¹¹. Peter as the ruler of Bulgaria and politician appears in the critical addition to the *Annals*, written by Antoine Pagi a century later. Baronio's work was translated into Polish by Piotr Skarga and published already in 1603, and subsequently from Polish into Russian (in 1687, published in 1719)¹². This translation, similarly to Russian version of *Kingdom of the Slavs*, is considered to be important for the development of Slavic historiography, including the Bulgarian one, since while composing his own work Paisios was referring to *Annales*.

Charles du Fresne (du Cange)

Charles du Cange included the tale of Bulgaria's history into a larger work presenting the history of Byzantium. The volume in which we are interested was published in 1680. Conveying an overview of Peter's reign he referred to Leo the Grammarian, Skylitzes, Zonaras, *Continuation of Theophanes*, Constantine VII Porphyrogenetos, the *Life of Lucas the Younger* and Liutprand of Cremona. His exposition is highly shortened, and is limited to factography: the conclusion of peace in 927, the marriage of Peter and Irene, the death of Irene, the dispute over Hungarian raids and the summoning of Svyatoslav¹³. The entire passage devoted to the history of mediaeval Bulgaria counts a mere twenty pages¹⁴. Du Cange

¹¹ C. Baronio, *Annales ecclesiastici*, ed. P.A. Pagi, vol. XVI, Luca 1744, p. 46.

¹² М.Е. Никифорова, Бароний, [in:] *Православная Энциклопедия*, vol. IV, Москва 2002, pp. 347–348; G. Brogi Bercoff, *Chrześcijańska Ruś w "Annales Ecclesiastici" Cezarego Baroniusza*, [in:] eadem, *Królestwo Słowian. Historiografia Renesansu i Baroku w krajach słowiańskich*, transl. E.J. Głębicka, W. Jekiel, A. Zakrzewski, Izabelin 1998, pp. 130–145; eadem, *Baronio storico e il mondo slavo*, [in:] *Cesare Baronio tra santità e scrittura*, ed. G.A. Guazzelli, R. Michetti, F. Sforza Barcellona, Roma 2012, pp. 309–323.

¹³ C. du Fresne, *Historia Byzantina duplici commentario illustrata*, vol. I, Lutetia Parisiorum 1680, pp. 313–314.

¹⁴ C. du Fresne, *Historia Byzantina...*, s. 305–324; see I. Konev, S. Topalov, I. Genov, *Charles du Fresne, seigneur du Cange et sa "Series historica et genealogica Regum Bulgariae"*, Pbg 4-3, 1980, pp. 69–85; А. Данчева-Василева, *Шарл Дюканж и средновековната българска история*, ИП 38.4, 1982, pp. 91–102; Р. Займова, *Българската тема...*, pp. 85–96.

dated Peter's ascension to power to 932. We might guess that he correctly calculated the indiction, but relied on the Latin translation of Leo the Grammarian, where the fifth indiction was given¹⁵. Irene's death and the renewal of the Byzantine-Bulgarian peace treaty is dated to year 863. His reading of the Greek sources was more careful than Orbini's. Du Cange noted that Peter was still alive in 867, when the friendly relations between Byzantium and Bulgaria came to an end. Svetoslav's first raid was dated to 968, and the capturing of Preslav by John Tzymiskes to 971.

Antoine Pagi

A French historian, the Franciscan died in 1699. The volumes he was writing near the end of his life that supplemented Baroni's *Annales ecclesiastici* were published in 1702. In parallel to the *Annales*, they were in turn published by Giovanni Domenico Mansi in Lucca in 1736–1759, with the editor's own, less extensive commentary. Pagi's information about the history of the Slavs, including Bulgarians, was far more comprehensive than Baronio's¹⁶, however regarding Peter himself, it would be difficult to form any relatively consistent image of this ruler. This is due to the fact that the author only paid attention to the beginning of Peter's reign and its end in the context of the collapse of the Bulgarian state that immediately followed¹⁷. We may consider to his credit correctly dating Symeon's death and the beginning of Peter's reign to 927. However, Pagi did not put a date to Peter's death. It is only in a comment to the year 973 that he noted: *Petrus ante hoc tempus mortuus errat*¹⁸.

¹⁵ Charles du Cange d u F r e s n e (*Historia Byzantina...*, p. 313) discussed the dating in the subchapter regarding Symeon: *XXVII Maii, Indict. V (non XV. uti habet Scylitzes)*. The accurate dating is amended according to the faulty Latin translation of Leo the Grammarian by Jacques G o a r (*Theophanis Chronographia et Leonis grammatici Vitae recentiorum impp.*, ed. J. G o a r, F. C o m b e f i s, Parisii 1655, p. 502; reprint: Venetia 1729, p. 398). In the published in parallel Greek text of Leo the Grammarian, we find the correct number.

¹⁶ Р. П и к и о, България..., pp. 587–600.

¹⁷ C. B a r o n i o, *Annales ecclesiastici*, ed. P. A. P a g i i, vol. XV, Luca 1744, pp. 628–629; C. B a r o n i o, *Annales ecclesiastici*, vol. XVI, pp. 161, 193, 210–212, 221–222.

¹⁸ C. B a r o n i o, *Annales ecclesiastici*, vol. XVI, p. 222.

Giuseppe Simone Assemani
(Joseph Simonius Assemanus, Jusuf ibn Siman as-Simani)

Of the wealth of output of this erudite, the custodian of the Vatican Library, and a bishop, of the most interest to us is the third volume of his *Calendars of the Ecumenical Church*, published in 1755 and devoted to the mission of Constantine-Cyril and Methodius, to the Christianisation of the southern Slavs, and the history of the various peoples (among them Bulgarians, Czechs, Khazars and Hungarians) in the ninth and tenth centuries. Chapters six and seven of his volume relate to the history of Bulgaria during Symeon and Peter's reign. The exposition concludes with the subordination of the country to the Byzantine Empire¹⁹. Assemani, like Du Cange, knows nearly all of the basic Greek sources that make a mention of Peter: Symeon Logothete, Leo the Grammarian, *Continuation of George the Monk*, Pseudo-Symeon, *Continuation of Theophanes*, Constantine Porphyrogenetos, Zonaras and Skylitzes²⁰. In chapter three of this volume the author analyses the relations between the Bulgarian ruler and Rome. Brief historical information located in this part of the work, and related to Symeon's death and conclusion of Peace by Peter and his marriage with Irene, was included by Assemani in a quotation taken from Charles du Cange's work and relegated to a footnote²¹. In the same way – by quoting a passage in a footnote – he explained the circumstances in which Nikephoros summoned the Rus against Bulgarians²². According to Assemani, Symeon subordinated the Bulgarian church to the bishop of Rome, and Peter, in concluding the peace with the Byzantine emperor, at the same time chose the union with Constantinople. At the same time the Byzantines, to strengthen the bond between them and the Bulgarians, made their church autocephalic; this, however, Assemani stated, has not

¹⁹ About Asemani and his work, see: М.С. Кискинова, *Предговор*, [in:] Й.С. Асемани, *Календари на Вселенската Църква. За светите славянски апостоли Кирил и Методий*, ed., transl., comm. М.С. Кискинова, София 1987, pp. 6–57.

²⁰ *Ibidem*, pp. 46–47.

²¹ J.S. Assemanius, *Kalendaria Ecclesiae universae*, vol. III, *Kalendaria Ecclesiae slavice, sive graeco-mosche*, Roma 1755, p. 146.

²² *Ibidem*, pp. 155–156.

been respected in the later period²³. Peter was supposed to have returned to the fold of the Roman Church in 967, when the friendly relations with the Byzantines were severed due to Hungarian raids²⁴. The specific exposition of the history of Bulgaria during Peter's reign, in chapters six and seven, has been accomplished by Assemani through quotations from the Greek sources linked with two or three sentence long commentaries. He devoted a lot of attention to chronology. He stands by dating Symeon's death to 927, previously given by Pagi. On the basis of the circumstances of Peter's death provided by Leo the Deacon, he placed it in the year 969. The marriage of Peter and Maria, in turn, was moved to 928²⁵. To relate the rebellion of John and Michael, he quoted *Continuation of Theophanes*; the death of Maria and the renewal of peace are related through a passage from Skylitzes/Kedrenos. The end of peace between Byzantium and Bulgaria is presented in two versions: of Leo the Deacon and of Skylitzes, without a comment on the differences between the two²⁶. Relating later events, he gave primacy to Leo the Deacon, however he also calls upon Skylitzes, and shows the knowledge of Zonaras' work²⁷.

Blasius Kleiner

Our knowledge of this author comes primarily from what he wrote himself in the title of his work. Of unknown origin (Saxon?), he was a head of a Bulgarian monastery of Franciscans in Vințu de Jos in Transylvania²⁸.

²³ *Ibidem*, pp. 146–147.

²⁴ *Ibidem*, pp. 155–156.

²⁵ *Ibidem*, pp. 341–344.

²⁶ *Ibidem*, pp. 364–368.

²⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 368sq.

²⁸ И. Ду й ч е в, *Блазиус Клайнер и неговата "История на България" от 1761 година*, [in:] *История на България от Блазиус Клайнер съставена в 1761 г.*, ed. i d e m, К. Т е л б и з о в, София 1977, pp. 5–21; about the author and his work, see also: W. S t e p n i a k-M i n c z e w a, *Francescani in Bulgaria. Blasius Kleiner: un francescano in viaggio per i Balcani (sulla base della Storia della Bulgaria di Blasius Kleiner)*, [in:] *I Francescani nella storia dei popoli balcanici, Nell'VIII centenario della fondazione dell'ordine. Atti del Convegno Internazionale di Studi*, ed. V. N o s i l i a, M. S c a r p a, Bologna–Padova 2010 pp. 265–278.

In 1761 he completed the *Tripartite Archives of the Illustrious Province of Bulgaria*, which included the history of Bulgaria from the first Bulgarian raids into the Balkans until the fall of Constantinople. Kleiner based his story of Peter on the account from *Theophanes Continuatus*, John Zonaras and John Skylitzes (called here Kouropalates). It is difficult to say whether he had access to a full edition of the sources, or whether he used some source compilation or selection²⁹. His reading of the sources was not particularly scrupulous. He complains, for example, that the 'Continuator of the Roman history' did not state how the conflict between the brothers Peter and Michael ended³⁰, as if he did not notice that the source included the information about the death of the latter. Moreover, he missed the fact that the conclusion of the history of the rebellion, absent in the *Continuation of Theophanes* (the rebels surrendered to the Romans), could be found in Skylitzes' work, with which he was familiar. Kleiner dated the beginning of Peter's reign to 930, Michael's rebellion to 934, and the Bulgarian tsar's death to 963³¹. In the first two cases, the error could have arose during the conversion of the indictions given by the Byzantine authors, and in the case of the tsar's death (he likely repeated the same oversight as Orbini) – he chronologically associated the event itself with the ascension to the throne of John Tzymiskes (the date is correct here). Kleiner's problems with chronology do not end here. At the end of his work he listed the rulers of Bulgaria (and extended all the way to Mehmed the Conqueror) with brief biographical notes. The length of Peter's reign is calculated here to be 39 years³², while the difference between the dates given in the main body of the text is, as can be easily seen, 33 years. It should probably be considered a coincidence that the difference of 39 years would have been reached if Kleiner accepted year

²⁹ I am basing these conclusions on the passages analysed below. The list of studies and source selections used in the other parts of his work has been provided by Ivan Duychev (И. Д у й ч е в, *Блазиус Клайнер...*, pp. 18–19). He also lists among them the previously discussed works of Baroni and Pagi, however these have not made a lasting impression on the way tsar Peter was presented by Kleiner.

³⁰ *История на България от Блазиус Клайнер...*, p. 85.

³¹ *Ibidem*, pp. 84–85.

³² *Ibidem*, p. 150.

969 as the date of Peter's death, which is now commonly considered to be correct. The brief biogram deserves, indeed, more of our attention than the main part of the historical exposition. This is because our author has included in the biographic description his own characterisation of Peter, whom he considered to have been a 'peace-loving and very good' a ruler. Of the historical events, he mentioned Michael's rebellion, likely for its moralising value: a monk driven by lust for power violates the peaceful reign of his brother, and despite gathering numerous people and many boyars, is defeated. In the meantime, Kleiner has likely finished his reading of the sources, since he now knew the ending of this bloody conflict over succession. This author's history remained unpublished until 1977 when the Bulgarian translation was launched, and most likely was not copied by hand either; thus, being almost completely unknown, it did not have any influence on the future development of historiography.

Franjo Ksaver Pejačević

A History of Bulgarians was also written in the latter half of the eighteenth century by Franjo Ksaver Pejačević (1707–1781). Born in Osijek, he was a Croatian historian and theologian, and a provost of the University in Graz. He came from a family with Bulgarian roots. The work being discussed here has never been published in print. The author included in it excerpts from the Byzantine historians along with his own brief commentaries. He also analysed Bulgarian history on the pages of the *History of Serbia*, published in print in 1799. Peter appeared in this work in a list of the Bulgarian rulers. He has been located here in the appropriate place, the beginning of his reign is dated to 930, supposedly following Leo the Grammarian³³, and in the footnote the author listed as a second date 927, following Constantine VII Porphyrogenetos (*De administrando imperio*,

³³ Pejačević made a mistake in calculating the indictions. L e o G r a m m a t i k o s (p. 315), to whom he is referring, talks of the fifteenth indiction, which occurred in 927 (V. G r u m e l, *Traité d'études byzantines*, vol. I, *La chronologie*, Paris 1958, p. 252). His calculations would also have to have been considered erroneous if he, like Charles du Cange, used the Latin translation of Leo the Grammarian by Jacques Goar, which mentioned the fifth indiction (932).

chapter 32)³⁴. He did not specify the end of the reign, and instead noted that in 970 the sons of Peter Boris and Roman were defeated by the Rus and the emperor John Tzymiskes³⁵.

* * *

Further examination of this historiographic tradition would have been pointless. We have shown its uncoordinated beginnings; afterwards it was developing in a more systematic manner. Later authors referred to their predecessors, correcting them or repeating their mistakes, while adding new remarks and evaluations³⁶. In the nineteenth century the number of historical publications significantly increased, and Bulgarian mediaeval studies – primarily thanks to the activity of Russian, Czech and Bulgarian scholars – became an independent area of research; we will examine this in the following sub-chapter. Of the authors discussed above, only Mauro Orbini did not write in Latin (he wrote in Italian), he also stood out in that he worked outside of France and Italy (the same can be said of Pejačević and Kleiner), and like the others, he was a Catholic clergyman³⁷. Near the end of the eighteenth century the situation quickly

³⁴ Constantine VII Porphyrogennetos, *On the Governance of the Empire*, pp. 152–160. The text of the cited edition (by Gyula Moravcsik) does not include any chronological indications.

³⁵ П. Д а н о в а, *Писал ли е Франц-Ксавер Пеячевич история на българите?*, ИБ 20.1/2, 2016, pp. 57–58.

³⁶ Without an in-depth analysis, it would be difficult to evaluate the development of historiography in the non-Slavic Europe of this period in regard to the presentation of the history of Bulgaria. It would seem however that no ground-breaking work that would deserve a more substantial mention has appeared during this period. Either way, John B. Bury, supplementing Gibbon's work in the Bulgarian matters, exclusively cited Jireček, Hilferding and Uspenskiy, ignoring the works of western European historians (E. G i b b o n, *The history of the decline and fall of the Roman Empire*, ed. J.B. B u r y, introd. W.E.H. L e c k y, vol. X, New York 1906, pp. 26–36).

³⁷ Of the early historiographers whose scope included Bulgarian mediaeval history one can also name, for example, Johann Löwenklau (J. L e u n c l a v i u s, *Annales Sultanorum Othimaniidarum*, Francofurtum 1588) a German philologist and historian, a pupil of Philip Melanchthon. Due to the subjects he was examining he did not, of course, mention tsar Peter, therefore his work is not examined in the present study.

changed, the interest in South Slavic Middle Ages became more widespread³⁸. Johann Gotthelf Stritter, a German historian working in Russia, inspired by the plans of developing a history of the world by August Ludwig Schlözer, published an extensive anthology of Byzantine sources (translated into Latin) regarding the history of the peoples of south-western and eastern Europe and of Asia. The anthology was soon afterwards translated into Russian³⁹. The chronological-thematic arrangement he used made his work resemble the *Calendars* of Assemani, although the comments are much briefer and located in the footnotes⁴⁰. In 1782, Ludwig Albrecht Gebhardi published a substantial (over two hundred pages long) *Geschichte des Reichs Bulgarien* as a fragment of the history of Hungary and the surrounding countries (*Geschichte des Reichs Hungarn und der damit verbundenen Staaten*). In the part related to Peter, he cited sources gathered by Assemani and Stritter, their commentaries and Pagi's work⁴¹. Gibbon, writing at roughly the same time, took his information from Du Cange, Baroni with Pagi's comments and from Stritter's source anthology. He did not mention Peter even by name, counting him among the 'feeble successors' of Symeon who, being 'divided and extinguished', led to the collapse of the state⁴². The synthesis of Johann Christian Engel also deserves a mention, having the same thematic range and being of similar

³⁸ Cf. В. Гю з е л с в, *Аннология...*, pp. 151–152.

³⁹ *Memoriae populorum, olim ad Danubium, Pontum Euxinum, Paludem Maeotidem, Caucasum, Mare Caspium, et Inde Magis ad Septemtriones incolentium, e scriptoribus historiae Byzantinae*, ed. J.G. Strittero, vol. II, Petropolis 1774 (about Peter: pp. 609–616); L.G. Michaud, *Stritter, Jean-Gotthelf de*, [in:] *Biographie universelle, ancienne et moderne*, vol. XLIV, Paris 1826, pp. 44–45.

⁴⁰ Stritter's chronological findings should be mentioned here. In the chronological table of the rulers of Bulgaria (*Memoriae populorum*, p. 458) he dates Peter's reign to 942–967. In the main body of his work, to 942–963. Year 942 would have corresponded with the fifteenth indiction of the following cycle in relation to year 927, however Stritter dates Symeon's death that happened during this indiction to year 941 (*Memoriae populorum*, p. 609). Year 963 as the date of Peter's death comes, of course, from associating it with the death of Maria and the change of the Byzantine ruler.

⁴¹ L.A. Gebhardi, *Geschichte des Reichs Hungarn und der damit verbundenen Staaten*, vol. IV, Leipzig 1782, pp. 76–81.

⁴² Chapter 55 was originally published in the fifth volume (1788), I have made use of a later edition: E. Gibbon, *The history...*, pp. 26–36.

size as Gebhardi's work. Writing about the beginning of Peter's reign, Engel made an interesting comparison, stating that after Symeon's death the political situation in Bulgaria resembled that of France following the death of Louis XIV: outwardly glorious, its internal power exhausted⁴³.

2. Mid-Eighteenth to Mid-Nineteenth Century: The Birth of Native Historiography and the Development of Historical Literature in the Balkans and in Russia

The birth of the modern Bulgarian historiography is determined by the writing of *Slavic-Bulgarian history* by Paisios of Hilendar (1762). The creation and dissemination of this work was certainly a notable social matter in Turkish-ruled Bulgaria⁴⁴. The date of the completion of the work is sometimes considered to be a watershed moment in the history of Bulgarian culture and language⁴⁵. Paisios's work contributed

⁴³ J.Ch. Engel, *Geschichte der Bulgaren in Mösien*, [in:] *idem*, *Fortsetzung der Allgemeinen Welthistorie durch eine Gesellschaft von Gelehrten in Teutschland und Engeland ausgefertigt*, vol. XLIX, Halle 1797, pp. 360–363; for wider background see: Н. Андреева, *България и българите в едно немско историческо съчинение от края на XVIII в.*, [in:] Й.К. Енгел, *История на българите в Мизия*, transl., comm. Н. Андреева, Велико Търново 2009, pp. 5–55.

⁴⁴ М. Дринов, *Отец Паисий, неговото време, неговата История и учениците му*, [in:] *idem*, *Избрани съчинения*, ed. И. Дуйчев, vol. I, *Трудове по българска и славянска история*, София 1971, pp. 163–185 (reprint from 1871); П. Динев, *Паисий Хилендарски*, [in:] Паисий Хилендарски, *Славяно-българска история*, transl. П. Динев, София 1972, pp. 7–31; Н. Генчев, *Българско възрождане*, София 1981, pp. 59–61.

⁴⁵ Е.г. Е. Георгиев, *Паисий Хилендарски – между Ренесанса и Просвещението*, [in:] *Паисий Хилендарски и неговата епоха (1762–1962). Сборник от изследвания по случай 200-годишнината от История славянобългарска*, ed. Д. Косев et al., София 1962, pp. 253–284; Л. Андрейчин, *Из историята на нашето езиково строителство*, София 1977, pp. 49–50; Н. Генчев, *Българската култура XV–XIX в. Лекции*, София 1988, pp. 173–181. Modern scholars made some interesting reservations regarding the significance of Paisios for the development of Bulgarian revival. See e.g. Г. Каприев, *Историографски концепт на Паисий Хилендарски и средновековното*

to reinforcing in the public opinion the awareness and national pride of Bulgarians, and to raising their political aspirations⁴⁶. From the historiographic point of view, Paisios is an epigone of the tradition discussed above, in its worst rendition (he knew Orбини and Baronius from a Russian translation). On the other hand, as a publicist and a populariser, he expressed a new trend that today we would refer to as nationalist⁴⁷. The main factor speaking in the favour of Paisios the historian is the use of indigenous sources that have been unknown to the earlier authors⁴⁸.

историческо мислене, ПУПХБ.НТФ 50/1/A, 2012, pp. 115–126. He argues that the History was not in fact the beginning of the revival, due to its limited influence, and became a symbol post factum, on the wave of enthusiasm of intellectuals and national activists who were ‘discovering’ Paisios from the middle of 19th century.

⁴⁶ П. Диневков, *Паисий Хилендарски...*, pp. 14–15; В. Бонева, *Паисий Хилендарски и неговият исторически текст във възрожденската публичност*, LN 8 (153), <http://liternet.bg/publish8/vboneva/paisij.htm>, accessed: 28.11.2017; М. Димитрова, Д. Пеев, *Из историята на Историята. Преписи и преработки на Паисиевия текст*, ПУПХБ.НТФ 50/1/A, 2012, pp. 50–72.

⁴⁷ An interesting characterisation of Paisios and his work was made by Alexander A. Kotchubinsky who thus commented the first scholarly edition of the *History*: *Неизданная въ своемъ полномъ составѣ подлинная Паисіева “Истiорiя” не какъ историческій материалъ, а какъ памятникъ историко-литературный и по своему значенію въ исторію развитія идеи национальности среди нашихъ соседей Болгаръ, политическій, давно заслуживала быть изданной. Крайне неграмотно писанная (...) не критическая компиляция 40 лѣтняго простаго авонскаго монаха, тѣмъ не менѣе горячимъ чувствомъ патриотическимъ и, составленная умно [съ педагогическимъ тактомъ – Kotchubinsky added later], впервые провела предъ народнымъ сознаниемъ Болгаръ минувшее ихъ долгой и небезславной жизни...* – А. Кочубинскій, *Примѣчаніе*, ЗИООИД 16, 1893, p. 54 (appendix to the edition by Arkadiy V. Longinov). Kotchubinsky’s statement and voices similar to it have been considered by some to be an unwarranted criticism (e.g. П.А. Начовъ, *Забележка за Паисиевата история*, ПСБКА 46, 1894, p. 523; П.А. Лавровъ, *Одна изъ передѣлокъ исторiи Славяно-болгарской iеромонаха Паисіа, сохранившаяся въ ркп. № 1731 собранія проф. Григоровича*, [in:] *Труды восмаго археологическаго съезда въ Москвѣ*, vol. II, ed. П.С. Уварова, М.Н. Сперанскій, Москва 1895, p. 249). It is difficult to provide an unequivocal evaluation of Paisios’ historiographic work, as he was at the same time an ‘un-critical compiler’ and the herald of the Bulgarian revival.

⁴⁸ On the sources used by Paisios see: П.И. Лавровъ, *Одна изъ передѣлокъ...*; В. Велчевъ, *Отецъ Паисий Хилендарски и Цезарь Бароний*, София 1943; R. Pischio, *Gli Annali del Baronio-Skarga e la Storia di Paisij Hilendarski*, RS 3, 1954, 212–233; Н. Драгова, *Домашни извори на “История славянобългарска”*, [in:] *Паисий*

The motive that led Paisios to reaching for the pen was the lack of knowledge of own history among the Bulgarians. If Bulgarians would learn how mighty their state has once been – claimed Paisios – they will stop being ashamed of their own origins, they will raise their heads, and consider themselves equal to the Greeks and other nations⁴⁹. In fact, Paisios was not entirely innovative in his approach. ‘Revivalist’ (national) motives have previously been driving Orbini and Kleiner as well⁵⁰. It was not until Paisios, however, that the exposition of history was subordinated to a non-historiographic aim to such a significant degree (we will be able to study this in more detail while examining the way in which Peter was presented). This goal was to raise the spirits of his countrymen, defy the Greek violence, and only a simplified vision of history presented in the *Slavic-Bulgarian history* had played a ‘revivalist’ role⁵¹.

Paisios of Hilendar

The portrayal of Peter as presented by Paisios is unequivocally negative. According to him, Peter was a ruler who did not succeed in wars, was friendly towards Greeks, and subservient to them. From the start of his reign, the Bulgarian state weakened, because of Peter’s inconsistency and pettiness. Paisios claimed that the only fortunate aspect of the reign was the life and activity of John of Rila with which it coincided⁵². Following the hagiographic narrative (the *Life* by Euthymios of Tarnovo⁵³) Paisios described the would-be meeting of the ruler and the hermit, and the

Хилендарски и неговата епоха..., pp. 307–309; Г.Д. Тодоров, *Историческите възгледи на Паисий Хилендарски*, ИИИ 20, 1968, pp. 95–165; Т. Сџев, *Отец Паисий Хилендарски. Епоха, личност, дело, значение*, [in:] *Идеи, Избрани съчинения върху историята на църквата*, ed. А. Кръстев, Велико Търново 2005, pp. 214–250; Дж. Дел’Агата, *Паисий Хилендарски...*, pp. 17–24.

⁴⁹ Паисий Хилендарски, *История славяноболгарская. Критическое издание с перевод и комментарий*, ed. Д. Пеев, М. Димитрова, П. Петков, transl. Д. Пеев, comm. А. Николов, Д. Пеев, Зограф 2012, p. 60.

⁵⁰ Cf. G. Brogi Vercoff, *Il Regno...*, pp. 121–156.

⁵¹ П. Динев, *Паисий Хилендарски...*, pp. 14–15.

⁵² Паисий Хилендарски, *История славяноболгарская...*, p. 152.

⁵³ Н. Драгова, *Домашни извори...*, pp. 307–309.

exchange of letters which was a ‘considerable gain for the soul’ of Peter. Subsequently, he described the conclusion of peace with the Byzantine Empire, the marriage with Christopher’s daughter, and the rebellion of John and Michael, which he considers to have been not two events, but a simultaneous and long-lasting war between the brothers. The final of the presented episodes is the sending of his sons (Boris and Roman) to Constantinople, and Peter’s death. The history of the breaking of peace with the Byzantines is narrated in a similar way as in Orbin’s text, on whose work Paisios based the entire passage. However, the duration and simultaneity of the rebellions of Peter’s brothers was the Zographian monk’s own invention⁵⁴. This modification is not without significance – it provides good reasons for speaking of the internal discord that leads to the state’s collapse. Paisios introduced some order into Mavrourbin’s exposition, by discarding the remark about the beginning of the rebellion of the Cometopouloi from the account of Irene’s death and renewal of peace that violated the chronology. Unfortunately at the same time there is no remark on this event in the place that would have been appropriate for it – at the beginning of the description of the reign of David and his brothers.

It seems that Paisios is the historiographer who has laid the foundations of the ‘black legend’ of Peter⁵⁵. The threads appearing in his work and the layout of the content herald the later negative opinions about Peter: a weak leader, torpid, and susceptible to Byzantines’ influence, more interested in spiritual matters than in governance; the state, torn apart by quarrels under his rule, started to decline. The argument concerning the lack of unity that led to the catastrophe is also going to be repeated by historians who knew the original accounts of the rebellions of John and Michael, and therefore were also aware of their limited extent. In a similar manner the later historians associated Peter’s lack of wartime

⁵⁴ Паисий Хилендарски, *История славяноболгарская...*, p. 154.

⁵⁵ Cf. Т. Тодоров, *От отрицание към реабилитация. Историографски бележки за цар Петър I (927–969) и неговото време*, [in:] *Писменост, книжовници, книги. Българската следа в културната история на Европа. Материали от петата национална конференция по история, археология и културен туризъм. Пътуване към България. Шумен, 26–28.04.2016 г.*, ed. И. Йорданов, Шумен 2018, p. 86.

successes with his interest in religious matters which, alongside the other descriptions, resulted in the ruler's portrait of an indecisive has-been and a religious bigot.

Jovan Rajić

He completed his extensive work devoted to the history of the Slavs in 1768, and it was published in 1794/1795⁵⁶. According to some, Raijić and Paisios, both Orthodox monk historians, knew each other personally. It is sometimes thought that it was Rajić who, during his stay in Hilendar, introduced Paisios to the sources (the Russian translations of Baroni and Orbini) available in the library in Sremski Karlovtsi that the latter then used extensively⁵⁷. However, more factors set them apart than connected them. Rajić had a clearly superior education to Paisios, having been taught at Sremski Karlovtsi and in Kiev⁵⁸. Aside from the *History...*, his works included a drama, poetry, and theological works. Rajić's historiographic endeavours were not far from the high standards of Du Cange (whom he most frequently quoted) or the other contemporary authors. The greater part of the text devoted to Peter consists of quotations from Byzantine authors: Kedrenos and Zonaras; the author also included Du Cange's translation⁵⁹

⁵⁶ Д. Цанев, *Историята на Раич и нейните български преводи и преработки*, ИНБКМ 14, 1976, p. 181; Б. Желински, *Исотория, памет, народ: историографите на Паисий Хилендарски и Йован Раич*, ПУПХБ.НТФ 50/1/A, 2012, p. 11; more about the author and his work: Н. Радочић, *Српски историчар Јован Рајић*, Београд 1952; Р. Самарцић, *Писци српске историје*, Београд 1976, pp. 29–59; С. Војиновић, *Хронологија живота и рада Јована Рајића*, [in:] *Јован Рајић – живот и дело*, ed. М. Фрајнд, Београд 1997, pp. 7–27.

⁵⁷ Cf. Д. Рајков, *Историјеска судба на македонските българи. Свидетелства за българското възраждане в Македонија*, София 1997, p. 91; an opposite opinion: Т. Сџбеv, *Отец Паисий...*, p. 209; Л. Илиева, *Паисий Хилендарски и Йован Раич*, [in:] *Светът е слово, словото е свят*, ed. М. Костова-Панайотова et al., Благоевград 2016, pp. 115–122.

⁵⁸ Д. Цанев, *Историята на Раич...*, pp. 184–185; Р. Заимова, *Подходът на българския писател към историческата тема (XVIII век)*, ИБ 5.1, 2001, pp. 98–99.

⁵⁹ A full list of sources used by Rajić is provided by, i.a., Dimitar Tsanev (Д. Цанев, *Историята на Раич...*, pp. 189–190). Instead of the original text of Du Cange's *Historia Byzantina* Rajić used an edition supplemented by Ján Tomkáš and

into his narrative. In addition, Rajić cited Mavrourbin (Oribini in the 1722 translation). Part of the author's interjections linking fragments of the sources turns out to be a re-narration of Orbini, e.g. the beginning of paragraph 3 telling of Irene's death and the events that followed it⁶⁰.

The evaluation of events related by Rajić does not take much space in his work, with the telling of facts dominating. Some of the expressed judgements have simply been taken by Rajić from his sources, however there are also passages in which his personal opinions can be seen. It was he who titled chapter eight, devoted to the period after Symeon's death: *О умаленіи кралества болгарскаго* (*On the fall of the Bulgarian kingdom*)⁶¹, and the period of Byzantine dominance of Bulgaria (Rajić talks here of the time between the removal of Boris from power and the emergence of the Cometopouloi, dated to 976) he referred to as: *плачевное подданство* (*lamentable subjection*)⁶². Regarding the divisions pointed out by Paisios (who was grieving for Bulgaria that fell under Greek dominion), Rajić described them in the same vein near the end of his exposition of the country's history: uneducated Bulgarians started to neglect the common good; instead, selfishness has taken root in them. For this reason many of the Bulgarians were overtaken by the lust for power, which led to discord, this in turn resulted in disorder, then in feuds, infighting and final destruction⁶³.

Both of the authors discussed in this part of the work exerted strong influence on the nineteenth century historiography. However, they are discussed first not only for chronological reasons. They were often copied and published – in adapted form and summaries. Their imitators and

(C. du Fresne, *Illyricum vetus et novum sive historia regnorum Dalmatiae, Croatiae, Slavoniae, Bosniae, Serviae atque Bulgariae*, Posonium 1746).

⁶⁰ И. Раић, *Исторія разныхъ славенскихъ народовъ наипаче Болгаръ, Хорватовъ и Сербовъ изъ тмы забвенія изытая и во свѣтъ историческіи произведенная*, vol. I, Виенна 1794, p. 405.

⁶¹ *Ibidem*, p. 400.

⁶² *Ibidem*, p. 409.

⁶³ These motifs were not alien to the contemporary historiography, the author also recalled here a similar opinion stated by Orbini – *ibidem*, pp. 494–495. See Д. Раићков, *Историческа съдба...*, pp. 90–91.

continuator will be discussed here together. We will thus infringe upon the chronological order of the present exposition, to which we shall return in the subsequent sub-chapter, discussing the beginnings of the critical reflection on the Bulgarian Middle Ages.

Paisios and Rajić's continuators, the beginnings of Bulgarian textbook publishing

The publishing of Atansiy Nesković's history of Bulgaria, modelled on Rajić's work, in 1801 was funded by Bulgarian merchants. The book must have gained considerable interest; the book had its second print in the same year, third one in 1811, and in 1844 its full Bulgarian translation was published by Petar Sapunov⁶⁴. Subsequently, Georgi Ikononov published his own version of the text⁶⁵. In the introduction, Nesković listed as his source, beside Rajić, Stritter's work. He named both the authors as the greatest authorities in Slavic history. In reality, he made considerable use only of the former's work, the latter being mentioned – we may guess – to make a better impression on the readers and sponsors of the publication⁶⁶. The passage regarding Peter was left with practically no changes compared to Rajić's original in both Nesković's and Sapunov's versions (I had no access to Ikononov's publication)⁶⁷.

The first Bulgarian history to be printed in Bulgarian is the *Brief History of Bulgaria* by Hristaki Pavlović⁶⁸. It contains a greatly abbreviated

⁶⁴ Д. Цанев, *Историята на Раич...*, pp. 204–205.

⁶⁵ Д. Райков, *Историческа съдба...*, p. 91.

⁶⁶ Д. Цанев, *Историята на Раич...*, pp. 206–207.

⁶⁷ А. Нескович, *Исторія на славенно-болгарскогъ народа изъ г. Раича исторіе и нѣкихъ историческимъ книгъ*, Буда 1801, pp. 121–126. An incorrect dating of the death of Romanos Lekapenos (on the page 124 the year is given as 983) should be considered a result of a printing error. А. Нескович, *Исторіята на славенно-болгарскѣа народъ изъ исторіята на г. Раича и нѣкои исторически книги составлена (...)*, transl. П. Сапунов, Букурещ 1844, pp. 122–128 (the translator duplicated here the incorrect dating).

⁶⁸ Х. Павлович, *Разговорникъ греко-болгарскій за оныя, кои-то желаятъ греческій языкъ да се научат, при кого-то и една кратка Болгарска история приложисе*, Белградъ 1835, pp. 88–99.

exposition of history (11 pages!) based on the information and chronology from Rajić's work. The author devoted half a page to Peter, on which he listed the most important facts from the ruler's life: the ascent to power, threat from the neighbours, the peace with Byzantium, the renewal of peace with Nikephoros Phokas, the sending of his sons as hostages, and the breakdown of peace caused by the Hungarian raids⁶⁹. Nine years later Pavlović published a redacted version of Paisios' *History* (the so-called *tsarstvenik*). The author repeated, without particular fidelity but also without substantial alterations, Paisios's passage regarding Peter. The tsar's characterisation was supplemented by a comment that the ruler was pusillanimous, and that this was the deciding factor that led to his friendship with the Greeks, and his submissive attitude towards them⁷⁰. He omitted the remark regarding Irene's death. This particular moment of the development of Byzantine-Bulgarian relations was presented as a re-entering into a peace agreement with the Greeks, coinciding with the rebellion of Peter's brothers⁷¹. It is a pity that Pavlović did not consult the abbreviated history of Bulgaria, based on Rajić, he published nine years earlier to somewhat order his exposition.

Pavlović's *tsarstvenik* was intended for school education. A similar, popularising goal motivated Dragan Tsankov, who published his *Overview of Bulgarian history* in the *Mesecoslov* [Calendar – J.M.W.] for 1857, based on the works of 'foreign' historians – as he himself stated⁷². His text is an important *novum*, for it acknowledged the achievements of the contemporary Bulgarian studies conducted in Russia, that will be presented below. The text was later re-printed as a standalone textbook titled *A short overview of Bulgarian history* (first printed in 1866). It was highly popular, and its fifth edition appeared already in 1870⁷³.

⁶⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 93.

⁷⁰ Х. Павлович, *Царственик или исторія болгарская*, Будим 1844, pp. 34–35.

⁷¹ *Ibidem*, p. 35.

⁷² Д. Цанков, *Единъ погледъ върху българската исторія*, [in:] *Месецословъ за 1857 г.*, vol. I, Цариградъ 1857, pp. 60–130.

⁷³ Cf. Д. Мишев, *България в миналото. Страници из българската културна история*, София 1916, p. 327.

Peter's history is presented in this work in an abbreviated form⁷⁴. The author clearly pointed out the internal divisions and fighting (rebellions of Peter's brothers) as the causes of Bulgaria's downfall⁷⁵. 1860s and 1870s brought further publications of textbook nature. The work of Dobri Voynikov was published in 1861 in Vienna⁷⁶, and Todor Shishkov's history appeared in 1873 in Istanbul⁷⁷. Although both of the authors cite Paisios of Hilendar (in Hristaki Pavlović's redaction), the base source of their knowledge and attitudes towards the past were contemporary historical works. Dobri Voynikov listed Yuriy Venelin, Pavel Šafárik, Jovan Rajić, Spiridon Palauzov and, in addition, as a source of knowledge about the *less well known antiquities and folk legends* he also mentioned (alongside the *tsarstvenik*) the work of Georgi Rakovski⁷⁸. His relation regarding Peter has been strongly influenced by Venelin. Voynikov, writing about the causes of the gradual downfall of the state pointed to the divisions at the Preslavian court, rebellions and expansion of the Serbs, Hungarians and Croats, Byzantinisation and the opposition to the Greek influence from part of the Bulgarian elites, Peter's weakness and submission to his wife, etc. Shishkov's relation is less hostile towards Symeon's successor, follows the facts more closely; the author is more sparing in offering his opinions – in this regard, the work resembles Dragan Tsankov's text, to which he referred in several places. Alongside it, he also cited other sources: e.g. Kedrenos and Leo the Deacon, as well as other studies, such as the *History of Bulgarians in Moesia* by Johann Engel. What is interesting, Shishkov stated that John's rebellion started when Peter was returning from Constantinople after his wedding with Maria-Irene. It is worth recalling that this detail was introduced into historiography by Orbini, whose work, in a Russian translation, may also have been used by our author.

⁷⁴ Д. Цанков, *Единъ погледъ...*, pp. 100–101.

⁷⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 101.

⁷⁶ Д. Войниковъ, *Кратка българска исторія*, Вѣна 1861. On Peter: pp. 104–110.

⁷⁷ Т. Шихков, *Исторія на българския народъ*, Цариградъ 1873. On Peter: pp. 167–170, 183.

⁷⁸ Д. Войниковъ, *Кратка българска исторія*, p. VII.

Yuriy Venelin

In the first half of the nineteenth century a new direction of scholarship of mediaeval Bulgaria was born, and we will tentatively refer to it as ‘critical’⁷⁹. While we accept Paisios as a symbol of changes in historiography, these did not relate to the manner of writing (here, Paisios is strongly conservative, not to say reactionary), but rather motivation. The ‘new’ that arrived with the works of Yuriy Venelin was based on moving away from the copying and compiling of chronicles in favour of constructing historiographic narratives of the author’s own design, based of course on more – or less – in-depth source analysis. The history works of this trend resemble modern writing in regard to their composition, in the degree to which the exposition of history is shaped by the author’s intentions. Paisios, for example, who was writing to cheer the hearts of his countrymen, made only one clear intervention that served this purpose in which he at the same time altered the facts regarding Peter; the major part of his works is a paraphrase of ‘Mavroubin’, who in turn compiled works of Byzantine chroniclers. In Venelin’s case, the re-narrating of the facts, proclaiming opinions and substantiating them are proportional to what we are used to from reading modern-day historical publication. Critical historiography can be considered a direct predecessor to the Bulgarian academic historiography which, with Marin Drinov’s work, in the second half of the nineteenth century encompassed the native mediaeval history. In Venelin, we observe a tendency to speculative thinking and constructing

⁷⁹ In some approaches, it is only Marin Drinov who *is considered the first representative (along with the Czech Konstantin Jireček) of the ‘critical-historical method,’ who had overcome the Romantic phase in Bulgarian historiography* (D. M i s h k o v a, *The Afterlife of a Commonwealth: Narratives of Byzantium in the National Historiographies of Greece, Bulgaria, Serbia and Romania*, [in:] *Entangled Histories of the Balkans*, vol. III, *Shared Pasts, Disputed Legacies*, ed. R. D a s k a l o v, A. V e z e n k o v, Leiden–Boston 2015, p. 191; the author cites here papers by Petar Nikov and Ivan Duychev). It is difficult to define the moment when the ‘Romantic phase’ was overcome. Diana M i s h k o v a (*ibidem*, p. 192) states writing about Zlatarski: *it is astonishing how much he had inherited from the notions of the Romantic generation of historians and from the ‘national’ construal of Byzantium* [she refers to Byzantine influence on Bulgaria – J.M.W.], *which had taken shape between Paisiy and Drinov*.

complex hypotheses, so prevalent in the work of modern historians. The aim of such activity (as much for Venelin as for our contemporaries) is most frequently the filling of the gaps in knowledge. For example: Venelin devoted much attention to the Bulgarian-Rus relations, and considered it valid to also comment on their state during the early period of Peter's reign (let us stress here that the sources do not shed any light whatsoever on this topic). He built a logical chain of events: Rus, Bulgaria's close neighbour, maintained lively contacts with her, not limited to trade. Could it therefore have kept neutrality when facing Bulgaria split into two (Venelin was thinking here of Michael and John's rebellions)? Since the Byzantines supported the ruler, would his opposition not have sought help from the North? The factor that Venelin considered to have been decisive in tipping the Rus into taking a side in the Bulgarian rebellions was the commencement of raids on the Byzantine Empire by Igor. He supported his conclusion with a rhetorical question: where else would the hostility between Byzantium and the Ruthenian prince have originated?⁸⁰

Venelin's most important historical work, the *Critical study of the history of Bulgarians* was published, posthumously, in 1849 in Moscow⁸¹. Chronologically, it encompasses the period from the moment the Bulgarians appeared in the Balkans until Svyatoslav's invasion (968). In 1853, the work's translation into Bulgarian by Botyo Petkov (the father of Hristo Botev) was published in Zemun. The original edition was severely cut by the Russian censor, Fyodor Golubinsky⁸².

⁸⁰ Ю. Венелин, *Критическія изслѣдованія объ исторіи Болгаръ: Съ прихода Болгаръ на Оракійскій полуостровъ до 986 года, или покоренія Болгаріи Великимъ Княземъ Русскимъ, Святославомъ*, Москва 1849, pp. 269–270.

⁸¹ For information about the author, his work and contacts with Bulgarian intelligentsia, as well as with other Russians researching Bulgarian history (i.a. Vassil Aprilov and Spiridon Palauzov) see: Д. Цанев, *За Българите. Чуждата историческа българистика през XVIII–XIX век*, София 1981, pp. 80–95; idem, *Ю. Венелин и българската възрожденска историография*, ИБИД 26, 1984, pp. 193–200; Е. Дроснева, *Три етюда за Венелин*, ИБИД 26, 1984, pp. 201–207; М. Велева, *Юрий Иванович Венелин в българската историография*, ИБИД 26, 1984, pp. 171–191; Д. Цанев, *Българската историческа книжнина през Възраждането. XVIII – първата половина на XIX в.*, София 1989, pp. 31–33.

⁸² Д. Цанев, *За Българите...*, pp. 91–93.

Venelin's writings turned out to have been a breakthrough, not only from the perspective of the historical research into mediaeval Bulgaria, but also regarding the portrayal of Peter himself. Let us begin with the quantitative matters: Venelin devoted nearly ninety pages to Peter's reign,⁸³ and to this day his study remains the most extensive work regarding Bulgarian political history in the years 927–969, although it has to be said that a considerable part of this volume was filled with discussions on topics of secondary importance to the chapter's main subject.

Venelin is the author of many of the hypotheses regarding Peter which, although devoid any solid (or even any at all!) source basis, became nested in Bulgarian mediaevistics. The Russian ethnographer and historian had a negative opinion of Peter as a ruler, and subjected his narrative to substantiating it. The telling of the history of Peter's reign begins with a categorical statement that in 927 Peter was still a minor, and that George Sursuvul served as the regent. On this basis, he makes conjectures: the ascension to throne of Symeon's younger son was a result of Sursuvul's intrigues, and it succeeded thanks to Byzantine support. Byzantines preferred Peter, a mere 'lamb' on the throne, to one of his fine brothers (*молодцы*) – John or Michael⁸⁴. Venelin subjected his fantasising, as I mentioned before – and which we are going to examine further – to the notion of Peter's weakness, and pursued this through arguments assuming on the part of the participants of the events a high causal role, nearly complete knowledge, and politicisation. In the Russian historian's vision, the Byzantines have the appropriate tools to exert influence that leads to placing Peter on the throne; they know he will be a 'weak' and 'peace-loving' ruler (let us remind here that Venelin thought Peter to have been a minor at the time!), and consistently pursue the agenda of reinforcing their influence while desiring the weakening of Bulgaria. George Sursuvul

⁸³ Bulgarian editions: Ю.И. Венелин, *Критически издѣянія за исторіѣ-тъж бѣлгарскѣ. Отъ прихождение-то на Бѣлгарѣ-ты на Оракийскый полуостровъ до 968 годинѣ, или до покорение-то Бѣлгаріѣж отъ Великий Князь Русскый*, vol. II, transl. Б. Петков, *Земунъ* 1853, pp. 112–198. In the Russian original the part regarding Peter is a few pages shorter, which is a result of a different lettering density: Ю.И. Венелин, *Критическія изслѣдованія...*, pp. 261–342.

⁸⁴ *Ibidem*, pp. 262–263.

has a comparable position of a 'демиург', and uses Peter to realise his own political ambitions. The youthful ruler is not being brought up to be a statesman, but instead is provided with various distractions and entertainments which are intended to draw him away from the matters of state⁸⁵, he is to remain a marionette whose strings are pulled at first by Sursuvul, and later by Maria-Irene. In Bulgaria, facing Sursuvul's rapacity and the strengthening of Byzantine influence, there was a build-up of dissatisfaction, which resulted in the rebellions of Michael and John. The political conflicts were presented by the Russian historian as a rivalry between two groups: the Bulgarian, warlike, whose programme was being realised by Symeon, and the pro-Byzantine, led by the regent. Venelin reversed the chronological order of the rebellions that we know from the sources, first presenting the usurpation attempt of the elder of Peter's brothers⁸⁶. In Venelin's view, John's rebellion lasted longer and was more significant, as it turned into a civil war with an involvement of outside powers, which led to a considerable weakening of the state. It is the supposed internal division of Bulgaria that Venelin considers to have been the cause of its downfall during the 940s. During that time, new states are born on Bulgarian territories: Hungary, Croatia and Serbia.

Могли ли Болгаре, народъ царствующий, если руки ихъ свободны
были отъ всякаго посторонняго занята, допустить возмущение
и отпадение сихъ малыхъ и несилныхъ народовъ? Могли ли Сербы
и Кроаты сбить съ себя иго, если бы Болгаре не заняты были раздо-
ромъ между собою?

According to Venelin, this period brought about the blow that proved to have been fatal to Bulgaria⁸⁷.

The Russian historian stated that the Rus' intervention against the supporters of Peter and the Byzantines, aiming to support John, lasted from 938 until 943. One of its episodes was the maritime expedition of

⁸⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 265.

⁸⁶ *Ibidem*, pp. 266–268.

⁸⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 279.

the Rus' on Constantinople in 941. The journey of Maria-Irene, noted by the sources discussing this period, was most likely caused by the Rus' activities. Venelin did not specify whether Maria journeyed to ask for assistance, seek shelter from the war, or simply to see Romanos⁸⁸. While the war was taking place in Bulgaria, a rebellion aimed at the transferring of power to Constantine erupted in Byzantium. It was associated with the events happening in Bulgaria, and was supported by the Anatolian Bulgarians⁸⁹. Venelin dated the end of the rebellion to 943, and as he himself stated that nothing can be said about the events of the war events during the rebellion's final stages; it was also not known through what deceit the tsar's brother was arrested. John's transportation to Constantinople is presented as a course of action agreed by the two courts⁹⁰.

After the civil wars Bulgaria needed good relations with Rus and Byzantium. Peter's feeble reign quenched the hopes of the nation, which was used to enterprising rulers, for rescuing the country. Peter subordinated himself to Maria's whims. While she was in the position of a Bulgarian ruler, she remained Greek at heart, and served as a tool for realising Byzantine interests. The people did not like this tsaritsa, for the other 'queens', although being Bulgarian themselves, did not meddle in politics. Bulgarians wanted the tsar's son to be named after Peter's father (in Venelin's text – Vladimir), however Maria did not agree to this, for he caused too much harm to the Greeks, and for this reason their sons bore the names of their great-grandfathers. Peter submitted to Maria regarding their sons' upbringing and allowed them to be sent to Constantinople, where they were visited by their mother every year⁹¹. The weak and passive reign, the presence of the heirs to the throne in the empire's capital, where they wallowed in opulence, caused discontent which led to the uprising of the Cometopouloi. Venelin stressed that it may have also been partly caused by Peter's other weaknesses and mistakes, which went unnoticed by the Byzantine source authors⁹².

⁸⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 285.

⁸⁹ *Ibidem*, pp. 290–292.

⁹⁰ *Ibidem*, pp. 295–297, 301.

⁹¹ *Ibidem*, pp. 326–327.

⁹² *Ibidem*, pp. 329–331.

The work's Bulgarian translation, larger than the original due to lack of Russian censorship cuts and additions, in the part relating to Peter is exactly equivalent to the Russian printed version. There is one terminological difference that deserves a mention: where Venelin referred to the Bulgarian ruler as a 'king' – 'король'⁹³, Petkov used the term 'tsar – 'царь'⁹⁴.

Spiridon Palauzov

The mid-nineteenth century was a period of vigorous development of Russian research on mediaeval Bulgaria. Important works by Spiridon Palauzov have been published during the 1850s⁹⁵. Peter appears in these only episodically, and is not discussed at any appreciable length. We do however find Palauzov's interesting opinion on this ruler in the *Tsar Symeon's era* (1852). Contrary to the nearly consistent opinion of the contemporary historiographers, he did not seek the causes of the state's weakness in some kind of personal disposition or negligence of the Bulgarian tsar, but claimed that: *Peter, under the protection of his uncle Sursuvul, managed to postpone Bulgaria's collapse for several years*⁹⁶. The Russian scholar had anticipated the calls for *Peter's rehabilitation*, which became the *locus communi* of modern historiography, by nearly a century. Palauzov did not substantiate his position in any way. Perhaps he did not think it through in depth. Where he devoted more attention to the question of Bulgaria's downfall (*European south-west in the fourteenth century*, 1858), he considered the time of Peter's reign as wasted from the perspective of development of the state, suggesting negligence on the part of those in power. At the same time he contrasted the clear sense of direction and decisive foreign policy of Byzantium with the lack of ambition of the

⁹³ *Ibidem*, p. 267.

⁹⁴ Ю. И. Венелин, *Критически издѣянія...*, p. 118.

⁹⁵ For more information about this author see: Х. Коларов, В. Гюзелев, *Спиридон Николаев Палаузов (1818–1872)*, [in:] С. Палаузов, *Избрани трудове*, vol. I, ed. Х. Коларов, В. Гюзелев, София 1974, pp. 7–73; М. Велева, *Спиридон Палаузов – историк на Средна и Югоизточна Европа*, [in:] С. Палаузов, *Избрани трудове*, vol. II, ed. М. Велева, София 1977, pp. 7–46; Д. Цанев, *Българската историческа...*, pp. 163–181.

⁹⁶ С.Н. Палаузовъ, *Вѣкъ болгарскаго царя Симеона*, Санктпетербургъ 1852, p. 54.

Bulgarians (abandoning of Symeon's ideas). He also considered Peter's reign to have been the beginning of the *dominance of the Roman-Greek element in Bulgaria*⁹⁷.

Alexandr Gilferding

Alexandr Gilferding was writing the same time as Palauzov; he can be distinguished from the already discussed Russian authors by the fact he sought to provide a comprehensive view of history of the Southern Slavic Orthodox states: Bulgaria and Serbia⁹⁸. In 1855 he published *Writings on the history of Serbs and Bulgarians*, which were later (1868) published in a supplemented and redrafted version in a volume of *Collected works*, under the title *The history of Serbs and Bulgarians*.

The vision of Peter's reign that Gilferding offers resembles in many respects the one outlined by Venelin. Gilferding is equally negative about the ruler, however the critical remarks are differently focused. He reconstructed facts with much greater care, and as a rule, he keeps his narrative much closer to the information provided by the sources, without indulging his imagination to such an extent. Nonetheless, also here we can find bold hypotheses that have no grounding in the accounts from the discussed period.

Gilferding presented the times of Peter in a decisive and unequivocal manner as a time of collapse. Much like Peter did not resemble his father (not having inherited his prowess, fierceness and bloodlust, as the Russian historian characterised the ruler following the description from the *Life of Luke the Younger*), so the Bulgaria of his time did not resemble the one that came before it. The ambition, thoughts of conquering Byzantium and creating indigenous Christian and Slavic culture (просвѣщеніе) are abandoned. Bulgaria became powerless and devoid of vitality. Gilferding, however, claims that such a situation could not have come about exclusively due to an individual's (the ruler's) weakness and the rapacity of the

⁹⁷ С.Н. П а л а у з о в ъ, *Юго-Востокъ Европы в XIV столетии*, Санктпетербургъ 1858, pp. 47–48.

⁹⁸ Cf. Д. Ц а н е в, *За Българите...*, p. 109.

neighbouring countries, but that it was also considerably influenced by the dynamic of the country's inner life. In this, Symeon was among those responsible, as through his active policy he depleted the state's resources. Another reason for Bulgaria's downfall was the breaking of unity with the other Slavic nations, which was caused by the Hungarians who, settling in Pannonia, separated the Southern Slavs from those in the West, and by the mistaken (aggressive) policy of Symeon towards Croatia and Serbia. Remaining in isolation from their Slavic brethren, Bulgarians were inevitably ensnared by Byzantium⁹⁹. Peter, according to Gilferding, was responsible for the cultural decline. During his reign the spiritual activity of Bulgarians faded away. The intellectual tradition was sufficiently undeveloped and fledgling that without the court's care it ceased¹⁰⁰.

The life of John of Rila was for Gilferding a premise to criticise the contemporary relations within Bulgaria. The times of John were in some way a period of prosperity for Bulgaria (*полнѣйшее благоденствие*), there was a long-lasting peace, and the country enjoyed a high political standing. Could Bulgaria's internal state, already influenced by Byzantium, have been so hopeless (*неутешительный*) that John and the other hermits preferred to reject any contact with their nation?¹⁰¹ In any case, the pauperisation of the spiritual life in the Bulgarian Church that followed Symeon's enlightened era was obvious and undoubtable to Gilferding¹⁰².

Gilferding emphasised that the image of Peter's reign was 'sad', which was supposed to be attested by the strong Byzantine influences, the split between the Christian government and the supporters of the old beliefs, a stagnation in the spiritual life, inertia in foreign matters, and extremely rapidly-progressing collapse (*страшная быстрота въ паденіи*). Peter's reign, reported Gilferding, began with the rejection of the thought of

⁹⁹ А.Ф. Гильфердингъ, *Исторія сербовъ и болгаръ*, [in:] *idem*, *Собрание сочинений*, vol. I, С.-Петербургъ 1868, pp. 111–113.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 121.

¹⁰¹ In the 1855 edition, Aleksandr Gilferding (А.Ф. Гильфердингъ, *Письма объ исторіи сербовъ и болгаръ*, Москва 1855, pp. 170–171) formulated this passage in a somewhat more decisive manner: *Difficult times have come in Bulgaria, if its sole Apostle of Christianity rejected any contact with the nation!*

¹⁰² А.Ф. Гильфердингъ, *Исторія сербовъ и болгаръ*..., pp. 129–130.

conquests, and ends with the state being unable to repel an enemy in its very heart. Peter was passive in his policies: when taking the reins of power, he gave up on revenge on the Croats for his father's death, and soon after did nothing to keep Serbia under his influence¹⁰³. However, Bulgaria's downfall could not be ascribed to an incidental influence of an individual: neither to Peter, nor Maria, nor Peter's brothers, nor to Sursuvul. They may have only been the midwives of what resulted from Bulgarians' national life (*что было подготовлено общим ходом болгарской жизни*)¹⁰⁴. Gilferding judged the development of the Bulgarian state during Boris and Symeon's times as too hasty, unstable, unnatural and unhealthy. He considered this to be a characteristic of Bulgarian history and presented 'rises' of Bulgaria's political significance in other historical periods. He suggested that the underlying cause of this weakness of Bulgaria was the fact that the country (as the only Slavic state to have emerged like this) was created through conquest, and was artificially conglomerated from two nations¹⁰⁵.

3. Historiography after the 1850s

3.1. Classical Historiography on Medieval Bulgaria

Marin Drinov

This scholar's work significantly contributed to the development of institutional humanities in Bulgaria. In 1869 he was one of the founders of the Bulgarian Literary Society in Brăila, Romania, and subsequently its chairman for many years. After the liberation of Bulgaria in 1878, the institution was moved to Sofia, and in 1911 transformed

¹⁰³ *Ibidem*, p. 134.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 136.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibidem*, pp. 137–138.

into the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences. In the Provisional Russian Administration in Bulgaria Drinov acted as the Minister of Popular Enlightenment and Spiritual Affairs. His far-reaching organisational and academic activity earns him the title of the father of modern Bulgarian mediaeval studies¹⁰⁶. Konstantin Jireček and Vassil N. Zlatarski remained under his strong influence¹⁰⁷.

A broader presentation of Peter can be found in two of Marin Drinov's works: *The beginnings of Samuel's state* published in 1875–1876 in two parts, and *Southern Slavs and Byzantium in the tenth century* published in 1875. In the former, Drinov's aim was to rectify and complement the views on the political situation in which Samuel's state was created. In the introduction to the paper he declares that he will look in more detail into the internal processes that occurred in Bulgaria during Peter's reign, and the course of the Rus-Byzantine war in Bulgaria and its political consequences. Regarding the part of the work that is of the most interest to us, about Peter, the original goals were realised only in a very limited way, and the corrections cover the factual details. The same applies to the latter work. Drinov's arguments remain within the canon of Venelin and Gilferding's criticism, he emphasises the weakness of Peter's character, the way in which the tsar was influenced by the Byzantines, abandoned Symeon's ambitions, was interested in spiritual matters rather than those of state, etc.¹⁰⁸ Peter supposedly handed over the government to the nobles, first and foremost George Sursuvul, who put his personal interest ahead

¹⁰⁶ For an outline of the social and academic work of Marin Drinov, see: П. М у т а ф ч и е в, *Маринъ Дриновъ*, Прос 4.6, 1939, pp. 675–684; И. Д у й ч е в, *Приносът на Марин Дринов в областта на българската историография*, [in:] М. Д р и н о в, *Избрани съчинения...*, pp. 7–34; Б. А н г е л о в, *Марин Дринов*, [in:] *КМЕ*, vol. I, pp. 614–616; Л. Г о р и н а, *Марин Дринов – историк и общественный деятель*, Москва 1986; V. G j u z e l e v, *Marin Drinov (1838–1906). Begründer der bulgarischen Slawistik und Mediävistik*, Pbg 17.4, 1993, pp. 107–126; Д. Х р и с т о в, *Историографски корени на Дриновото творчество*, ИП 71.1/2, 2015, pp. 32–45.

¹⁰⁷ V. G j u z e l e v, *Marin Drinov...*, p. 108.

¹⁰⁸ М. С. Д р и н о в, *Началото на Самуиловата държава*, [in:] i d e m, *Съчинения. Трудове по Българска и Славянска история*, ed. В. Н. З л а т а р с к и, vol. I, София 1909, pp. 323–324; М. С. Д р и н о в, *Южные славяне и Византия в X вѣкѣ*, [in:] i d e m, *Съчинения...*, pp. 431–433.

of the public. Aware that without an outside help he will not be able to hold on to power, he began to closely co-operate with the Byzantines. The direction in which this has taken the matters of state aroused the anger of the people, who rebelled against the ruler for the first time merely a year after the beginning of his reign¹⁰⁹. The crown was supported by the clergy, pleased by the rapprochement with the Byzantines. Peter returned the favour by granting them privileges, and the clergy found themselves wallowing in wealth and luxury. Infected by greed and concerning themselves with material matters, the priests neglected their pastoral duties, which created a space for the development of the Bogomilist heresy¹¹⁰. The heresy was directed against both the Church hierarchy and the state government. The latter topic has previously been developed by Gilferding who, in the second edition of his work, based his analysis (similarly to Drinov) on the account of Cosmas the Priest.

Drinov dates the Cometopouloi rebellion (in his text, the leader of said rebellion is one Shishman¹¹¹) to 963. Explaining its success in the western part of Bulgaria he stated that it was there that the hatred for the ineffectual ruler was the strongest. Petar Mutafchiev later developed this thought in a creative manner, claiming that the healthy cultural traditions of Bulgarians have been preserved in these regions, and have not been affected by the rot of Byzantinisation, 'radiating' from the capital¹¹². Drinov, to a greater extent than his predecessors, puts responsibility for the collapse of the state on Peter. While Gilferding was partly justifying the ruler, by pointing out that the state he inherited was already exhausted, the Bulgarian historian adopted a contrary position, and considered Bulgaria in 927 to have been flourishing¹¹³. Drinov broadly developed the argument of Peter's naivety and short-sightedness, which has previously

¹⁰⁹ М.С. Д р и н о в, *Началото...*, p. 325.

¹¹⁰ *Ibidem*, pp. 325–326.

¹¹¹ The fictitiousness of Shishman has only been uncovered by Vassil N. Zlatarski (В.Н. З л а т а р с к и, "Тъй наречените грамоти" на Пинция и неговия син Плезо, ГСУ 15/16, 1919/1920, pp. 1–54).

¹¹² П. М у т а ф ч и е в, *История на българския народ (681–1323)*, ed. В. Г ю з е л е в, София 1986, p. 222.

¹¹³ М.С. Д р и н о в, *Началото...*, p. 320.

been constructed by the aforementioned Russian scholar, and by Spiridon Palauzov¹¹⁴. The Byzantines were to have been perfidious allies. Soon after concluding the peace in 927 they initiated a consistent policy of backing out of the concessions made towards Bulgaria. This can be attested by their support for the Serbian separatism. Drinov blames Peter for not having perceived this warning sign, as the tsar faithfully kept his own commitments. Peter has seen through the Byzantines' dishonesty only near the end of his life, but by that point it had been too late¹¹⁵.

Konstantin Jireček

The work of this exceptional Czech Slavist, while it may be considered a milestone in the development of the historiography of mediaeval Bulgarian history (it was published in four languages: Czech, German, Russian and Bulgarian), did not add much to the way Peter was being presented¹¹⁶. Jireček's attitude is critical of the ruler, and very similar to Drinov's position. The state's collapse that began during his reign was largely influenced by the character of the monarch, who was 'neither a politician, nor a warrior'. His place in history was among the saints and hermits. The state was in reality governed by his uncle George Sursuvul. The government did not represent the entire nation, but only one part of it, and interests of that group¹¹⁷. The culture entered a period of decline, which made room for an expansion of new teachings – the Bogomilism. The heresy was at its core an act of defiance against the clergy's support

¹¹⁴ А.Ф. Гильфердингъ, *Исторія сербовъ и болгаръ...*, pp. 134–135; С.Н. Палаузовъ, *Юго-Востокъ Европы...*, pp. 47–48

¹¹⁵ М.С. Дриновъ, *Южные славяне и Византия...*, pp. 438–439; С.Н. Палаузовъ, *Юго-Востокъ Европы...*, pp. 47–48.

¹¹⁶ On Konstantin Jireček and the significance of his historical works see e.g.: Д. Ангелов, В. Паскалева, А. Пантев, *Константин Иречек и българската историческа наука*, ВНР 1.2, 1973, p. 61–70; П. Петров, *Иречеквата "История на българите"*, [in:] К. Иречек, *История на българите*, ed. П. Петров, София 1978, pp. 7–26; Д. Цанев, *За българите...*, pp. 126–129; a bibliography of works about this scholar: Н. Казански, *Константин Иречек (1854–1918). Публикации за него*, ИП 70.5/6, 2014, pp. 88–96.

¹¹⁷ К. Иречек, *История на българите...*, pp. 198–199.

for the weak ruler, and his pro-Byzantine tendencies. The development of eremitism was in opposition to the official Church, whose priests surrounded themselves with luxury. The most outstanding representative of the ascetic trend was John of Rila¹¹⁸. The Byzantines used the period of peace to prepare the conquest of its new neighbour¹¹⁹. The Czech historian also repeated other themes present in the historiographic image of Peter, without particularly developing any of them. In the notes made with the thought of preparing a second edition of the *History of Bulgarians* he diminished somewhat the personal responsibility of the ruler for the state's collapse, pointing out the excessive territorial growth of Bulgaria during Symeon's times and the unfavourable, non-central, location of the capital¹²⁰.

Vassil N. Zlatarski

Vassil N. Zlatarski, as the author of an exceptionally detailed monograph on Bulgaria's history (intended to encompass the entirety of the mediaeval period, but brought up only until 1280) may be considered to have been the most outstanding historian of his time¹²¹. While his ideas naturally became somewhat dated as the scholarship progressed, new sources were uncovered, and the critique of the ones that have been known for a long time was further developed, they are still often taken under consideration, commented and discussed in modern historic works.

¹¹⁸ *Ibidem*, pp. 202–204, 210, 467.

¹¹⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 200.

¹²⁰ *Ibidem*, pp. 198–199.

¹²¹ On the course of his life and scholarly activity see e.g.: П. Н и к о в, *Васил Златарски*, ИИДС 14/15, 1937, pp. 1–27; J.F. C l a r k e, *Zlatarski and Bulgarian Historiography*, SEER 15 (44), 1937, pp. 435–439; М. В е л е в а, *Васил Златарски като историк на българската историческа наука*, ИБИАД 32, 1978, pp. 305–313; Е. Д р о с н е в а, *Златарски, Рънсиман и историята на първата българска държава*, ИБИАД 32, 1978, pp. 331–339 (the indicated volume of the periodical also includes other interesting papers about Vassil N. Zlatarski); Д. Н а й д е н о в а, *Едно неосъществено издание на Пространното житие на Климент Охридски: Васил Н. Златарски и българската кирилометодиевистика*, ВМд 6, 2015, pp. 257–276.

Vassil N. Zlatarski comprehensively expounded on Peter's times¹²². He devoted the most attention to political history. While in his detailed considerations he put forward some new hypotheses and proposed new solutions, the overall evaluation of Peter is traditional. As the author himself observed, it is not important to find out what the Hungarian-Bulgarian relations looked like exactly in those times: whether Bulgarians were neutral regarding Hungarian raids on Byzantium, or whether they themselves were their victims, when the conclusion could only be one: Bulgaria, weakened under Peter's reign was not able to oppose the Pannonian warriors¹²³. Zlatarski, somewhat differently than his predecessors, developed the argument of the social polarisation in Bulgaria. He shifted the emphasis from cultural matters to economic stratification between the people, and the boyars and senior clergy. In Zlatarski's framing of the events, the intensification of the Byzantinisation, the deepening of social inequality and popularisation of quietist religious movements that have proven tragic for the Bulgarian statehood have already been occurring during Symeon's times; however, their negative consequences only appeared in full during his successor's reign¹²⁴.

Steven Runciman

The British historian developed the argument about Peter's weakness, presenting him as a tsar-monk, a person without character, directed first by his wife (the leader of the peace party), and after her death by the warlike boyars. Runciman described him as a good man, but a bad ruler. The nation's demobilisation is examined in the context of the religious ferment that engulfed the country, and the appearance of the Bogomil heresy: *The decline and fall of her first Empire [i.e. Bulgaria] came very largely from the unceasing labours and increasing strength of the followers*

¹²² В.Н. Златарски, *История на Първото българско Царство*, vol. I/2, *От славянизацията на държавата до падането на Първото царство (852–1018)*, ed. П. Петров, София 1971 (first print: 1927), pp. 495–563. Cf. Т. Тодоров, *От отрицание...*, p. 87.

¹²³ В.Н. Златарски, *История на Първото...*, p. 518.

¹²⁴ *Ibidem*, pp. 498–499, 520–524. Cf. D. Mishkova, *The Afterlife...*, p. 194.

of Pope Bogomil¹²⁵. In his argument, the remark about the *wave of religious activity which swept over the whole country* (strongly inspired by the ruler), and about crowds entering the monasteries, gains similar significance¹²⁶. Near the end of the passage related to Peter the author partially lifts the burden of responsibility from the ruler for the tragic finale that occurred two years after his death: *his task had been almost impossible; he had inherited a weary kingdom, and he had not been strong enough to hold it together*¹²⁷.

Petar Mutafchiev

The black legend of Peter found its fullest expression in the works of this learned historiographer. For Mutafchiev, Peter and his times serve to showcase the weakness of the Bulgarian spirit. Mutafchiev's works are strongly marked by national feelings, most apparently among the active academic historians of his times. He was convinced of the momentous historical role that Bulgaria had to play, and the high position his fatherland deserved to have within the European family of nations. He associated with 'Bulgarianness' these qualities for which the warlike Symeon or Samuel could be praised, and saw the sources of weakness in the departure from the native ideals and giving in to the 'Byzantine corruption'¹²⁸.

The reflection on Peter's reign and the circumstances of the downfall of the Bulgarian state in Moesia occupied an important place in Mutafchiev's works. The Bulgarian tsar appeared in many of his works; I will mention only the most important ones here. In extensive papers: on the Rus-Bulgarian relations (1931) and Hungarian-Bulgarian relations (1935) Mutafchiev explained many questions related to Peter's policy, especially the events that took place near the end of his reign, and during the brief reign of his successor. In the papers we can find astute source analyses, well-reasoned reconstructions of events, attempts at penetrating the motives of the main actors participating in the contemporary

¹²⁵ S. Runciman, *A History of the First Bulgarian Empire*, London 1930, p. 196.

¹²⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 189.

¹²⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 204.

¹²⁸ П. Мутафчиев, *История на българския...*, pp. 201, 208–209, 222.

international politics in the Balkans. It is interesting that Mutaфchiev did not make a wider use of the materials he gathered when providing an overall evaluation of Peter. While the actions attributed to the ruler by the Bulgarian historian are rationally explained¹²⁹, Mutaфchiev's view of Peter as a politician appears to be detached from the presented historical discourse and is unequivocally negative. Peter was to have been at fault primarily because of the way in which he failed to take action. The list of reasons that added to the negative portrait of Peter, established by his predecessors, was repeated by Mutaфchiev in these early articles with practically no changes¹³⁰, and later, in particular in the posthumously published *History of the Bulgarian nation*, was creatively expanded further¹³¹. It might appear strange that the historian who so soberly analysed sources, and so scrupulously verified hypotheses present in the literature of the subject (he was blamed for being hyper-critical)¹³², trusted the traditional historiography in such a fundamental question, and did not notice how far it became separated from the sources that were supposed to confirm it. The key to understanding Mutaфchiev's stance is the fact that in addition to being a professional historian, he was also a social activist and a publicist¹³³. The repeating of the commonly held arguments regarding Peter

¹²⁹ In particular: i d e m, *Маджарите и българо-византийските отношения през третата четвърт на Х в.*, [in:] i d e m, *Избрани произведения*, ed. Д. Ангелов, vol. II, София 1973, pp. 466–468.

¹³⁰ П. Мутафчиев, *Съдбините на средновековния Дръстър*, [in:] i d e m, *Избрани произведения...*, pp. 50–59 (first print: 1927); i d e m, *Маджарите...*, p. 469; i d e m, *Руско-българские отношения при Святославе*, [in:] i d e m, *Избрани произведения...*, pp. 241–248; cf. also: i d e m, *Лекции по история на културата*, ed. И. Илиев, София 1995, p. 95.

¹³¹ I d e m, *История на българския народ...*, pp. 200–209.

¹³² Cf. В. Гюзелев, *Живот и научно творчество на Петър Мутафчиев (1883–1943)*, [in:] П. Мутафчиев, *История на българския народ...*, p. 15.

¹³³ Many studies were devoted to the person and works of Petar Mutaфchiev, see e.g.: В. Гюзелев, *Петър Мутафчиев*, София 1987; Р. Гандев, *Животът и делото на проф. Петър Мутафчиев*, ГСУ.ЦК 86, 1993, pp. 95–107; collected papers: *Професор Петър Мутафчиев познат и непознат*, ed. Т. Попнеделев, Й. Соколов, София 1997; *Историкът като изследовател, гражданин и човек. Сборник с материали от конференция, посветена на 130-годишнината от рождението и 70-годишнината от смъртта на проф. Петър Мутафчиев (1883–1943)*, София 2016.

by Mutafchiev was definitely not an unintentional act. The existing portrait of this Bulgarian ruler perfectly fit into Mutafchiev's thinking about the patterns that governed the history of Bulgaria and the state of the nation's contemporary affairs. Writing about Peter, he extensively developed the idea of the destructive role of Byzantinisation in Bulgaria's history. Deeply steeped in foreign models, the rulers moved away from the nation, lost sight of its true needs, and stopped being its true leaders. There was no shortage of those who sought their own gain rather than the common good. The people succumbed to hopelessness, and as a result of this demobilisation the state started to decline¹³⁴. Convergent ideas can be found in Mutafchiev's journalistic texts, which included his diagnoses of the situation of the country and the moral crisis from which it was suffering¹³⁵. The history he was writing was intended to be a lesson and a warning. Mutafchiev's works have indeed been perceived in this manner, as rousing the patriotic spirit, by his contemporaries¹³⁶. Coloured with nationalist sentiments, views that Bulgaria attained a position it was due in the Balkan Peninsula during the reigns of the victorious Symeon or John Assen II¹³⁷

¹³⁴ Е.г. П. М у т а ф ч и е в, *Към философията на българската история. Византизизмът в средновековна България*, ФП 3.1, 1931, pp. 27–36, cf. D. M i s h k o v a, *The Afterlife...*, pp. 235–239.

¹³⁵ On the weakness of the elites, the rule of careerists, cultural crisis and the susceptibility to external influences, see: П. М у т а ф ч и е в, *За културната криза у насъ*, Прос 1.4, 1935, pp. 385–397.

¹³⁶ The memories about Petar Mutafchiev have been formulated in this spirit in the volume of 'Prosveta' devoted to him in 1943, e.g.: Г. К о н с т а н т и н о в ъ, *Проф. Петър Мутафчиев. 4. V. 1883 – 2. V. 1943*, Прос 8.10, 1943, pp. 577–582; И. Д у й ч е в ъ, *Обаянието на проф. Мутафчиев*, Прос 8.10, 1943, pp. 583–586.

¹³⁷ П. М у т а ф ч и е в ъ, *Де, кога и как се е губил българският народ до днес*, ОП 1.12/13, 1928, pp. 208–219; cf. В. Б е ш е в л и е в ъ, *Източната половина на Балканския полуостровъ като жизнено пространство в миналото*, Прос 8.10, 1943, pp. 601–609. The appropriate context in which one may examine the views of the contemporary Bulgarian historians on the historical role of the Bulgarian state is to be found in the disappointments with the so-called 'national disasters' that occurred during the early twentieth century, cf. А. Х р а н о в а, *Историография и литература. За социално конструиране на исторически понятия и Големи разкази в българската култура XIX–XX век*, vol. II, *Животът на три понятия в българската култура: възраждане, средновековие, робство*, София 2011, pp. 241–252.

were convincingly associated with a negative portrayal of Peter by Georgi Bakalov¹³⁸.

It would seem that it was the highly fervent love of the fatherland, which the Bulgarian historian has also demonstrated by shedding his blood during the second Balkan war¹³⁹, that influenced his instrumental treatment of Peter. In his exposition of the Bulgarian history of the tenth century the didactic effect had greater significance than the historical truth.

* * *

In the works discussed above, there is apparent a certain fixed pattern of writing about Peter. Its sources can be traced back to the output of Paisios of Hilendar, who presented the ruler as a weak commander, compliant towards the Greeks, seeking contact with monks. The sources of the story regarding social polarisation can be seen as early as Mauro Orbini, who interpreted the discord between the people as the cause of the state's downfall. The works of Yuriy Venelin and Aleksandr Gilferding were an important impulse for directing the development of this model. In evaluating the tsar, later historians did not go beyond the limited arguments defined in the works of their predecessors and used them in a similar way – to depict the ruler's weakness. At the same time, regarding factual material, we can see a clear development, consisting of the unification of the historiographic vision with the sources that have undergone a rational critique. It needs to be emphasised that the highly important elements of the negative portrayal of Peter and his era (such as Byzantinisation, favouring the monks and deep religionism, moral crisis or divisions within the society) appeared in the historiography prior to the uncovering of the most important sources that could have possibly confirmed this image. Writing about Maria-Irene aggressively propagating Byzantine cultural models, Venelin likely had no knowledge of the letter of Aretas, which

¹³⁸ Г. Бакалов, *Цар Петър (927–970) и неговото време*, Ист 1.2, 1992, р. 11; cf. И. Билярски, *Небесните покровители: св. цар Петър*, ИБ 5.2, 2001, р. 32.

¹³⁹ В. Гюзелев, *Петър Мутафчиев...*, р. 12.

indirectly shed light on the tsarina's intentions of leading a 'civilising mission' among Bulgarians. Similarly Gilferding, in the first edition of the history of Serbs and Bulgarians, when he was writing about the deep moral crisis engulfing Bulgarian society, did not quote the *Sermon* of Cosmas the Priest – he only referred to it in the expanded edition. The later historians (i.a. Marin Drinov or Konstantin Jireček), who blamed Peter for the deep religiosity and lack of interest in the matters of state, have already known of his canonisation¹⁴⁰, they knew the story of the failed attempt at meeting with John of Rila, but did not know (or did not accept) the hypotheses regarding Peter's literary activity, his devotion to the spiritual matters, which found the most clear 'confirmation' in the contents of his service¹⁴¹. The claims that Peter took part in literary creativity are based primarily on identifying him with Peter the Monk, an Old Bulgarian author of words of advice¹⁴². This idea however has no serious basis in the extant source material¹⁴³. Moreover, already Venelin considered the tsar to have been insufficiently engaged in governance. Not having sensed his religiosity and unaware of his cult, he claimed that his courtiers were proffering

¹⁴⁰ A fragment of the service in Peter's honour was published in 1852 by Viktor Grigorovich (В.И. Григорович, *О древнейших памятниках церковно-славянских*, ИОРЯС 1.3, 1852, pp. 97–99). The Russian Slavist correctly identified the Peter praised in it with Symeon's heir. One of the earlier scholars – Alexandr Vostokov, saw here instead Peter-Theodore, a tsar of Bulgaria of the later twelfth century. The second part was published in 1920 by Pyotr Lavrov (П.А. Лавров, *Нова служба царю бугарскоме Петру*, ЖФ 1, 1913, pp. 34–37). Subsequent editions of the service can be found in i.a.: Й. Ивановъ, *Български старини из Македония*, София 1931, pp. 383–394; С. Кожухаров, *Проблеми на старобългарската поезия*, София 2004, pp. 75–79.

¹⁴¹ Konstantin Jireček (К. Иречек, *История на българите...*, p. 198) signalled his knowledge of these hypotheses only in the notes prepared for the second edition of the *History of Bulgarians* (notes published posthumously in 1929).

¹⁴² See, e.g. Й. Иванов, *Български старини*, pp. 385–386; Е. Георгиев, *Литература на изострени борби*, София 1966, pp. 20–21.

¹⁴³ The same name and the fact of taking monastic vows by both men, the identification of Peter the author with Peter the tsar in the late Rus' tradition, and the hypothetical similarity of interests do not settle the matter. On the problems with dating the works of Peter the Monk, see this work, Part Two, Chapter VII, point 2. A full review of the arguments that appear in this discussion has been made by Rumyana Pavlova (Р. Павлова, *Петър Черноризец. Старобългарски писател от X век*, София 1994).

to him pleasures of a layman¹⁴⁴. The negative opinion of historians of Peter as a ruler came earlier than the evidence of his weakness, and directed interpretation (and sometimes also dating, as we may suppose in the case of Peter the Monk) of the newly discovered sources.

The period after World War II brought at first a crisis, and later, in the 1960s, a considerable increase in the number of published works on the mediaeval Bulgaria¹⁴⁵. The trend, with a considerable delay, also encompassed Peter's era. The majority of the works that were created during this period and the ideas which were formed within them have found a sufficient reflection in the other parts of this monograph, and for this reason I will not discuss them here. I will only bring to attention two tendencies present in the research that are exceedingly important for the shaping of Peter's image in the contemporary historical literature.

3.2. Peter's Rehabilitation

The calls to 'rehabilitate' Peter, to remove from him the burden of responsibility for the state's collapse, are characteristic to historiography of Peter's era created in the last quarter of the twentieth century. Chronologically, the first to form this tendency was Vassil Gyuzelev who, in his 1968 article, pointed out that it would be inappropriate to claim that Peter's government was passive on the international stage, and that the Bulgaria in his day was defenceless in face of external incursions. Gyuzelev supported this view using the contents of an inscription from 943, which in his interpretation confirmed the effectiveness of the Bulgarian border defences against a Pecheneg raid, which was mentioned by *Russian Primary Chronicle*¹⁴⁶. The cited work may be considered a faint herald

¹⁴⁴ Ю. В е н е л и н, *Критическія изслѣдованія...*, p. 265.

¹⁴⁵ В. Г ю з е л е в, *Апология...*, pp. 187–188, for more detailed study on the development of Bulgarian historiography in this period see: M. P u n d e f f, *Bulgarian Historiography, 1942–1958*, AHR 66.3, 1961, pp. 682–693.

¹⁴⁶ В. Г ю з е л е в, *Добруджанскіят надпис и събитията в България през 943 г.*, ИП 24.6, 1968, pp. 40–48.

of the change in historians' attitude towards Peter¹⁴⁷. It lacked a deeper reflection on the existing academic literature on the era of Symeon's successor to become an effective call for a general revision of ideas about the period. Such fundamental considerations were only brought about on the international arena by the analysis of John Van Antwerp Fine from 1978¹⁴⁸, and in Bulgaria itself a somewhat more cautious program paper by Petar Koledarov, published four years later¹⁴⁹. In his text, Fine pointed to the lack of actual source basis that would confirm the negative opinions of Peter's reign. He called for a verification of the hypotheses regarding the social, economic and political crises that supposedly occurred during Peter's times. He stands on the position of cognitive minimalism and proposed to abandon making hypotheses when these are evoked primarily by historian's frustration caused by the lack of reliable information. *Thus, sad as it is, it is better to avoid the fictitious answer; historians must be satisfied with elucidating the major questions and problems and then answering them to the limited extent allowed by our fragmentary sources*¹⁵⁰. Fine's methodological postulates have not been realised for a long time after his text was published. The conclusions directly associated with Peter, however, parallel to those proposed by Vassil Gyuzelev ten years earlier, have been generally well received by historians¹⁵¹. Half a century after

¹⁴⁷ Cf. Т. То д о р о в, *От отрицание...*, pp. 88–89.

¹⁴⁸ J.V.A. F i n e, *A Fresh Look at Bulgaria under Tsar Peter (927–69)*, ByzS 5.1/2, 1978, pp. 88–95.

¹⁴⁹ П. К о л е д а р о в, *Цар Петър I*, BC 51.4, 1982, pp. 192–207.

¹⁵⁰ J.V.A. F i n e, *A Fresh Look...*, p. 95; the American historian repeated the key arguments in the monograph: *The Early Medieval Balkans: A Critical Survey from the Sixth to the Late Twelfth Century*, Ann Arbor 1983, pp. 159–188.

¹⁵¹ An early expression of the changes in the way Peter was presented in Bulgaria are the works of Petar Koledarov (П. К о л е д а р о в, *Политическа география на средновековната българска държава*, vol. I, От 681 до 1018 г., София 1979, pp. 50–53; i d e m, *Цар Петър I...*, pp. 192–207), and a later one – papers of Georgi Bakalov (Г. Б а к а л о в, *Цар Петър (927–970)...*, pp. 11–15) and of Plamen Pavlov (П. П а в л о в, *Две бележки към "Беседа на недостойния презвитер Козма срещу новопоявилата се ерес на Богомил"*, Пр.Сб 4, 1993, pp. 225–239). As for works in English, a more balanced or positive portrayal of Peter and his age can be found in i.a.: J. S h e p a r d, *A Marriage Too Far? Maria Lekapena and Peter of Bulgaria*, [in:] *The Empress Theophano: Byzantium and the West at the Turn of the First Millennium*, ed. A. D a v i d s, Cambridge 1995, pp. 121–150;

the process of 'rehabilitating' Peter in historiography, we may essentially acknowledge that the process has now been completed. The repeated calls for unbiased evaluation of this figure are on the one hand associated with the considerable authority of historians such as Vassil N. Zlatarski or Petar Mutafchiev, and on the other are a symptom of the same inertia and conservatism in historical research that have negatively affected Peter's portrayal for over a century, from the mid-nineteenth to the latter half of the twentieth century¹⁵². Nonetheless, the arguments taken from the historiographic canon are still being uncritically invoked, such as for example the belief in Peter's particular religiosity, his exceptionally favourable treatment of the monks, the progressing social divisions, moral crisis etc. This time, they do not serve to criticise the monarch, but either remain neutral in regard to his overall evaluation, or form a part of his positive portrayal¹⁵³. It is not uncommon for historiographic arguments

M. Whittow, *The Making of Byzantium, 600–1025*, Berkeley, Los Angeles 1996, pp. 292–293; P. Stephenson, *Byzantium's Balkan Frontier. A Political Study of the Northern Balkans, 900–1204*, Cambridge 2001, pp. 24–25, 47–51; F. Curta, *Southeastern Europe in the Middle Ages, 500–1250*, Cambridge 2006, pp. 227–238. For the earlier works, presenting a critical view of Peter, it is worth mentioning e.g.: R. Brownig, *Byzantium and Bulgaria. A Comparative Study across the Early Medieval Frontier*, Berkeley, Los Angeles 1975, pp. 68–71, 160–165, 181–184, 194.

¹⁵² Recently, the need for rehabilitating Peter was discussed by Pavlov (П. Павлов, *Управлението на цар Петър (27 май 927 – 30 януари 969)*, [in:] Г. Атанасов, В. Вацкова, П. Павлов, *Българска национална история*, vol. III, *Първо българско царство (680–1018)*, Велико Търново 2015, pp. 403–404).

¹⁵³ E.g., the socio-political and economic crises and the existence of two competing groups among the Bulgarian elites were discussed by Bakalov (Г. Бакалов, *Цар Петър...*, pp. 14–15). The supposed moral crisis and passivity in foreign policy were written about by Ivan Bozhilov (И. Божилев, *България при цар Петър (927–969)*, [in:] idem, В. Гюзелев, *История на средновековна България VII–XIV век*, София 1999, pp. 281–289, 291–293). From this perspective, the paper by Pavlov from 1993 is particularly interesting (П. Павлов, *Две бележки...*, s. 231–233). In it, the author used the arguments about Peter accepting Byzantine models and the progressing economic disparity during his times to put forward his own idea: that Peter most likely issued laws limiting the enrichment by boyars, following in the footsteps of the contemporary Byzantine emperors. The praise of Peter contained in the text is a mirror image of earlier criticisms (Mutafchiev harshly criticised Peter for not reacting to the social stratification) and remains equally poorly justified. In his later work about Peter (*Управлението на цар Петър...*) the Bulgarian scholar abandoned such speculations. An almost

to remain in such a disassociation from the sources, as it happened with the works of the older historians, although the modern authors usually show greater caution in creating their own ideas. In recent years, there has been a crop of works following the rule of ‘Fine’s razor’. Regarding the socio-political issues, it is worth drawing attention to the comprehensive text of Plamen Pavlov regarding Peter, in the third volume of *Българска национална история* (2015)¹⁵⁴. A good examples of such analysis are papers – the first, on the relations between Peter and the Church published a year later by Mirosław J. Leszka and the second, written by the same author in collaboration with Kiril Marinow concerning the widely presented scholarly controversies on tsar Peter’s reign¹⁵⁵.

3.3. Peter’s Place in the Historical Memory and Political Ideology

At the beginning of the twenty first century, a new and most interesting area of research regarding Peter appeared in the Bulgarian mediaeval studies. It focuses not on the ruler himself or his era, but on his cult, his place in the political ideology, and the portrayal in the memory of mediaeval Bulgarians. Peter appears as someone exceptional by the sheer fact of being proclaimed a saint. Intriguing information about him can be found in sources of liturgical and hagiographic nature, and in historical-apocalyptic texts. The honourable place of tsar Peter in the minds of the mediaeval Bulgarians is indicated by, for example, adopting Peter’s

entirely traditional vision of Peter’s reign was adopted by e.g. Gennadiy G. Litavrin (Г. Литаврин, *Христианство в Болгарии в 927–1018 гг.*, [in:] *Христианство в странах Восточной, Юго-Восточной и Центральной Европы на пороге второго тысячелетия*, ed. Б. Флоря, Москва 2002, pp. 134–137) in a work published in 2002, he stopped short only of a simplified evaluation of the ruler.

¹⁵⁴ П. Павлов, *Управлението на цар Петър...*, pp. 403–451; i d e m, *Общество, Църква и култура (927–1018). Богомилството – “великата българска ерес” в средновековния свят*, [in:] *Българска национална история...*, pp. 617–640.

¹⁵⁵ M. J. Leszka, *Rola cara Piotra (927–969) w życiu Kościoła bułgarskiego. Kilka uwag*, VP 36, 2016, pp. 429–442; i d e m, K. Маринов, *Спорные вопросы правления болгарского царя Петра I (927–969)*, Pbg 41.1, 2017, pp. 23–39.

name by the leaders of the anti-Byzantine uprisings of the eleventh and twelfth centuries, such as Delyan, Constantine Bodin or Theodore, proclaiming their aspirations to take power¹⁵⁶. The high significance of the figure of Peter for the development of political ideology in Bulgaria can be concluded from the way in which he was associated with the emperor Constantine I the Great in the *Tale of the Prophet Isaiah* and the *Prologue Life of John of Rila* from the *Dragan's Minei*¹⁵⁷. These themes have been extensively developed and motivated in Ivan Bilyarski's works¹⁵⁸, however they have also been taken up by other scholars¹⁵⁹. The most problematic

¹⁵⁶ Georgi Bakalov (Г. Бакалов, *Цар Петър...*, p. 15) has pointed out this fact before. As regards Delyan, we cannot exclude that 'Peter' was his baptismal name.

¹⁵⁷ И. Билярски, *Небесните покровители...*, pp. 36–39.

¹⁵⁸ *Ibidem*; a somewhat altered English version of this paper: idem, *St. Peter (927–969), Tsar of the Bulgarians*, [in:] *State and Church: Studies in Medieval Bulgaria and Byzantium*, ed. V. Gjuzelev, K. Petkov, Sofia 2011, pp. 173–188; idem, *Покровители на Царството. Св. цар Петър и св. Параскева-Петка*, София 2004; idem, М. Йовчева, *За датата на Успението на цар Петър и за култа към него*, [in:] *Тангра. Сборник в чест на 70-годишнината на акад. Васил Гюзелев*, ed. М. Каймакова et al., София 2006, pp. 543–557; idem, *Le Tsar sur la montagne*, [in:] *Histoire, mémoire et devotion. Regards croisés sur la construction des identités dans le monde orthodoxe aux époques byzantine et post-byzantine*, ed. R.G. Păun, Seyssel 2016, pp. 53–71.

¹⁵⁹ Д.И. Польшвинный, *Царь Петр I и его правление в культурной традиции средневековой Болгарии*, [in:] *Славяне и их соседи. XX конференция памяти В.Д. Королюка. Становление славянского мира и Византия в эпоху раннего Средневековья. Сборник тезисов*, ed. Г.Г. Литаврин, Б.Н. Флоря, О.А. Акимова, Москва 2001, pp. 97–99; Д. Чешмеджиев, *Няколко бележки за култа към цар Петър I (927–965)*, [in:] *Християнската традиция и царската институция в българската култура*, ed. В. Бонева, Шумен 2003, pp. 23–37; idem, *Култът към цар Петър I (927–965): манастирски или държавен?*, [in:] *Лубав према образувану и вера у Бога у православним манастирима.. 5. меѓународна Хиландарска конференција. Зборник изабраних радова I*, ed. Р. Матејић et al., Београд–Columbus 2006, pp. 254–255; А. Николов, *Политическа мисъл в ранносредновековна България*, София 2006, pp. 233–287; Б. Николова, *Цар Петър и характерът на неговия култ*, *Pbg* 33.2, 2009, pp. 63–78; С.А. Иванов, *Общественная мысль в Болгарии в XI–XIII вв.*, [in:] *Власть и общество в литературных текстах древней Руси и других славянских стран (XII–XIII вв.)*, ed. Б. Флоря, Москва 2012, pp. 95–102; Д.И. Польшвинный, *Царь Петр в исторической памяти болгарского средневековья*, [in:] *Средновековният българин и "другите". Сборник в чест на 60-годишнината на проф. дин Петър Ангелов*, ed. А. Николов, Г.Н. Николов, София 2013,

in this research is the question of how the way Peter was represented in the mediaeval Bulgarian tradition related to the actual, true nature of his reign¹⁶⁰. Are these scattered remarks a sufficient basis for making reflections on Peter's role in the development of political and religious culture of the tenth century Bulgarians? The literary portrayal of the ruler that we find in the texts associated with his cult, the hagiography of the contemporary anchorites, quasi-historical legends and other literary antiquities are not necessarily related to the deeds and character of the historical Peter. At the same time it would have been difficult to entirely ignore the testimony of so many – largely independent from one another – sources, perceiving them merely as a tangle of topoi, accidents and unbelievable fantasies. Developing a universally accepted position in this matter is likely to take considerable time, if it is possible at all, as the source material does not allow for a clear-cut solution to the problem.



pp. 137–145; М. К а й м а к а м о в а, *Култът към цар Петър (927–969) и движещите идеи на българските освободителни въстания срещу византийската власт през XI–XII в.*, ВМд 4/5, 2013/2014, pp. 417–438.

¹⁶⁰ Cf. И. Б о ж и л о в, *Българското общество през 14. век*, Пловдив 2014, pp. 154–159.