

SUMMARY

"THE PRINCE OF PHILIPPOPOLIS":

THE UNKNOWN DESPOTES ALEXIOS SLAV

IN THE LIGHT OF NEW SOURCES AND DISCOVERIES

Kalin Yordanov Kirilov

Йорданов, К. „Принцът на Филипопол“: непознатият деспот Алексий Слав в светлината на нови извори и открития. София, 2022 г., издателство „Wunderkammer“, 324 с., твърда корица, ISBN: 978-619-92254-0-0, ISBN: 978-619-7179-29-3.

[Yordanov, K. „Printsat na Filipopol“: nepoznatiyat despot Aleksiy Slav v svetlinata na novi izvori i otkritiya. Sofiya, 2022, „Wunderkammer“ Publishing, 324 p., hard cover, ISBN: 978-619-92254-0-0, ISBN: 978-619-7179-29-3.]

As usual, when dealing with Bulgarian medieval history, we are left with many unknowns and more questions than answers. This monograph is an attempt to shedding light on the unknown aspects of an otherwise relatively well-known figure from the Bulgarian and the Balkan history in the early 1200's through the prism of some new sources, archaeological discoveries and challenging historiographical hypotheses. A journey into a forgotten world which reveals new, unexpected and curious perspectives on the history of despotes Alexios Slav (Sthlabos) and his relations with the independent principality of the failed usurper of the Bulgarian throne and a Byzantine separatist of Bulgarian origin Ivanko-Alexios and also with the Latin Duchy of Philippopolis. A large-scale, interdisciplinary study that is related to the history of this prominent Bulgarian nobleman of the Asanid family, tracing his appearance on the historical scene, his relations with the Latin Empire of Constantinople, the Bulgarian Empire and the neo-Byzantine state in Epiros, his policy towards the Church and his involvement in the struggle for the Byzantine legacy. A study focusing on the genealogy, the ancestry and the coat of arms of this remarkable independent Bulgarian ruler and Frankish vassal from the early 1200's, as well as on the subject of the genesis, the borders and the fall of his vast autonomous territorial principality situated in the region of Northwestern Thrace, the Rhodope Mountains and Eastern Macedonia and occupying a central and strategically important position on the geographical and the political map of the Balkans in this dynamic era. The monograph is part of a larger study dedicated to the Latin Duchy of Philippopolis – a relatively small and short-lived Crusader lordship, established in the Western part of the Upper Thracian Plain and on the

Northern slopes of the adjacent Central Rhodope Mountains as a consequence of the Fourth Crusade.

This interdisciplinary study is based on the collection, study, analysis and interpretation of new documentary and narrative primary sources, less-known epigraphic monuments and popular iconographic masterpieces. As well as on the results from some new archeological surveys and the stratigraphic, anthropological and genetic analysis, expertise and conclusions related to them. But also on the revision of some established historiographical statements based on a new approach towards well known historical sources through a detailed linguistic analysis. Thus the present study aims to illuminate the personality of despotes Alexios Slav, the processes which led to the formation of his autonomous principality and its Church, the problem of the investiture which led to his transformation into a legitimate ruler, a vassal and son-in-law of the Latin emperor of Constantinople Henry of Fladers (1206-1216), as well as the problem of his knightly initiation, his family crest and his integration into the circles of the higher Frankish feudal aristocracy in the Balkans. The monograph exposes the events and the circumstances which led to Alexios Slavs' detachment from the orbit of the Latin Empire of Constantinople, his political reorientation towards the ruler of the neo-byzantine state of Epiros and emperor of Thessalonica Theodore Komnenos Doukas Angelos (1215-1230), and finally his fatal clash with the Bulgarian emperor John Asen II (1218-1241), his own death and the fall of his principality. Last but not least, among the tasks set by this study is the revision and the elucidation of the problems related to the genealogy and the blood line of this remarkable independent Bulgarian ruler, his direct ancestors and descendants.

The result of this study is a curious, intriguing, bold and challenging account of the beginnings and the early stages of local separatism and regionalism, which marked the history and the development of the Balkan-Byzantine societies until the time of the Ottoman invasion of Southeastern Europe. A story about the birth and the decline of regional principalities and empires, about the meeting and the clash of the Bulgarians and the Byzantines with the Crusader Frankish knights and the Latin clergy, about the fierce struggle for the Byzantine legacy and the Church property between the secular Frankish, Greek and Bulgarian magnates and the Latin high clergy, about the the aspirations and the expansion of the Latin Church in Romania (Byzantium) and the defense of Orthodoxy, about the mutual knowledge of the "other" in the Balkans at that time, about the influence and penetration of Western European feudal traditions, chivalric symbolism and courtly culture among the Balkan-Byzantine vassals of the Latin empire of Constantinople and about the ephemeral touch of the Gothic aesthetics and cultural

fashion to the world of the Bulgarians from the 13th century. A look at the restoration of the Bulgarian political statehood from the perspective of a powerful, ambitious and pragmatic noble family related by blood to the ruling Asanid dynasty in Tarnovgrad but also competing with it for the Bulgarian crown. A story about the creation of a parallel Bulgarian state in the region of Northwestern Thrace, the Rhodope Mountains and Eastern Macedonia liberated from Byzantine rule as a result of Ivanko-Alexios' revolt and secession from the Byzantine Empire and the state-building efforts and legitimist strategies of his successor despotes Alexios Slav. A look at the emergence of a new dynasty originating from a collateral line of the Asanid family and rivalling its main branch in Tarnovgrad that for nearly four decades established its autonomous power over these lands in Thrace and Macedonia which were compactly and predominantly populated with Bulgarian but also with Greek population. A story about a medieval Bulgarian "Game of Thrones", about a long-standing and smoldering family feud turned into a bloody vendetta which marked the life and rule of several generations of the House of the Asanids and led to a deep rift between two collateral branches of this powerful Balkan family. The story of the unknown despotes Alexios Slav and an attempt to shedding light on some partially and slightly affected, obscured, concealed or omitted aspects of his biography and of the history of his family in the medieval narrative, documentary, epistolary, epigraphic and iconographic monuments. An attempt to unraveling several symbolic political assassinations committed some 800 years ago, to uncovering a forgotten family crest and to disclosing the enigma of the person behind a silent ktetor's portrait. A story about the raw beauty of a forgotten but fascinating world through the prism of new and curious historical sources, exciting archaeological discoveries and challenging historiographical hypotheses.

The starting point for the present study was the discovery of two curious documents from the chancellery of Pope Honorius III hitherto unknown to Bulgarian historiography. They proved to be an undoubtedly important and valuable source for the Bulgarian-Latin relations from the first quarter of the 13th century, as well as for the relations between the secular feudal lords and the high clergy in Latin Romania in the context of the struggle for the Byzantine legacy and the Church property at that time. A source that sheds new light on the history of the Latin Duchy of Philippopolis and its rulers, but also the past of the region of Northwestern Thrace, the Rhodope Mountains and Southeastern Macedonia. The detailed analysis of these newly discovered sources illuminates one of the most interesting and crucial periods in the political career of despotes Alexios Slav, while filling in some curious gaps in his biography and revealing his previously unknown conflict with the interests of the Roman Catholic Church

and its expansion in the region of Southeastern Macedonia and Southwestern Rhodopes after the crusader conquest of Byzantium, his secession from the orbit of the Latin Empire of Constantinople, his political reorientation as an ally of Theodore Komnenos Doukas Angelos of Epiros, his departure from Tsepaina and the final transformation of Melnik into a new capital of his autonomous principality. The comparative analysis of the information from these newly discovered documents and from some already known narrative sources presents Alexios Slav not only as a ruler of the Rhodopes and Eastern Macedonia but also as a legitimate lord of Philippopolis and its region under Latin suzerainty. A fief and a dowry which he received by his suzerain and a father-in-law, emperor Henry of Flanders. As his loyal vassal and son-in-law Slav seems to have ruled his vast autonomous territorial principality with the title "Prince of Philippopolis" by which he appears in Pope Honorius III's correspondence from this period in relation to the murder case of the political assassination of the Latin Archbishop of Philippi. These important conclusions reveal for the first time that as a lord of Philippopolis Alexios Slav was not only a successor of Ivanko-Alexios and Rainier of Trith but also a predecessor of Gerard of Estreux. This means that between 1208 and 1218 Alexios Slav was the second legitimate ruler of the Latin Duchy of Philippopolis. A curious and hitherto unknown fact that sheds new light on the history and the specifics of the Frakokratia in Northwestern Thrace which undoubtedly requires a revision of the historiographical ideas about the history, the chronology and the list of the rulers of this short-lived crusader Balkan lordship, as well as of its geographically, historically and politically determined and inevitable strong connection to the Rhodopes region.

The important conclusions related to the analysis and the interpretation of these new primary sources raise the reasonable question about the genealogy of despotes Alexios Slav and the genesis of his autonomous principality, as well as of his relations with Ivanko-Alexios and his independent principality situated in the same region of Northwestern Thrace, the Rhodope Mountains and Southeastern Macedonia less than a decade before Slav's first appearance in the historical sources. The examination of this important issue illuminates the problem of the descent and the ancestry, the pedigree and the early history of this remarkable autonomous Bulgarian ruler and even the circumstances of his death and the question of his offspring, thus offering new perspectives towards the clash between despotes Alexios Slav and the Bulgarian emperor (tsar) John Asen II and the fall of Slav's principality. The gathering of many evidences of varied nature leads to a reliable, strong, and convincing conclusion about the direct blood relationship between Ivanko-Alexios and Alexios Slav as a father and (illegitimate) son, which

thus outlines Slavs' genealogy and the processes associated with the genesis and the fall of his principality. This can only mean that although hypothetical and challenging the direction of this study is valid and correct and that the argued theses correspond to the historical reality, which for one reason or another has been concealed or has been reflected only partially, vaguely and indirectly in the primary sources of the era.

The prosopographical, genealogical and geopolitical picture revealed by the conclusions of this study differs from the traditional historiographical ideas about the origin, the genealogy, the history and the death of despotes Alexios Slav and the end of his principality. The conclusions drawn here also shed new light on some of the processes, events and personalities associated with the pivotal and dynamic times of deepening political crisis manifested in the endemic disintegration and the rising separatism and regionalism that engulfed the Byzantine Empire during the Angeloi dynasty until its final disintegration under the blows of the Fourth Crusade and the subsequent Latin, Neo-Byzantine and Bulgarian *renovatio imperii*. At the same time they outline the process of the formation of a new Bulgarian state, parallel to the Empire of the Bulgarian tsars in Tarnovgrad, founded within the liberated territories around Philippopolis in Northwestern Thrace, the Rhodope Mountains and Eastern Macedonia as a result of Ivanko-Alexios' revolt and secession from the Byzantine Empire and the state-building efforts and legitimist strategies of his successor despotes Alexios Slav. They also reveal the emergence of a new Balkan dynasty which established its autonomous power over these lands. Originating from a collateral line of the Asanid family this dynasty was rivalling its main branch in Tarnovgrad and was related and allied to its foes from the Byzantine and the Latin imperial families in Constantinople, Thessaloniki and Arta. We allow ourselves to call it *the dynasty of the Alexises*.

The rebellious spirit of this Bulgarian noble family and its dynasty and also the pursuit of freedom and independence of the Bulgarians from its subordinate lands was preserved and continued to thrive after the death of Ivanko-Alexios and the conquest of his principality by the army of the Byzantine emperor Alexios III Angelos (1195-1203). Only four years after his disappearance from the historical scene, in the context of the turbulent and pivotal events that led to the collapse of Byzantium and the emergence of the Latin empire of Constantinople, the primary sources begin to notice indirectly the emergence of the silhouette of a new political entity in the Rhodopes region. A political figure which entered the contemporary chroniclers' direct visual field only in the summer of 1208 when its authority and succession over these territories was legitimized by the restoration of the relations and the ties with the Empire of

Constantinople through its vassalship and kinship with Henry of Flanders, the second Latin emperor of Constantinople. The geographically determined central position of Alexios Slav's principality in the Balkan Peninsula, whose borders soon overlapped with those of the former domain of Ivanko-Alexios, determined despot's far-sighted, flexible, pragmatic and sometimes opportunistic political behavior associated with constant maneuvering between the major political factors in the Balkans at that time and maintaining a fine balance between Constantinople, Tarnovgrad, Thessaloniki and Arta, without being fully committed to any of these local powers. Slav's political behavior followed the state model established by Ivanko-Alexios and ensured the political longevity and stability of his principality in an extremely turbulent and dynamic era. At the same time by avoiding the binary distinction and opposition between "Bulgarians" and "Byzantines" in the administrative and ecclesiastical structures of his autonomous principality Alexios Slav built a kind of border identity which was a combination of the two elements. This also applied to the formation of an almost independent structure and a somewhat independent ecclesiastical organization and administration in his lands which seems to have been under his patronage and influence, without being dependent on the Orthodox or the Latin Patriarchate of Constantinople at that time. While being a vassal and a son-in-law of the Latin emperor Alexios Slav was moderately open to the Frankish cultural influences coming from Constantinople and Thessaloniki without being a latinophile, as evidenced by his open opposition to the Roman Church's aspirations for the Archdioceses of Serres and Philippi in Southeastern Macedonia and Southwestern Rhodopes and by his active participation in the struggle for the Byzantine ecclesiastical legacy and possessions between the secular feudal lords and the high clergy in Latin Romania at the time.

However, in the end it seems that Alexios Slav's descent and his blood relations, enmity and rivalry with the Asenid dynasty in Tarnovgrad, as well as the inevitable choice of political side during the military conflict between the Despotate of Epiros and the Bulgarian empire in 1230, predetermined his dramatic demise and the fall of his autonomous principality which after his death was conquered by his first cousin tsar John Asen II of Bulgaria. These events marked the annexation of the Rhodopes region and Eastern Macedonia to the Bulgarian Empire, an aim to which the predecessors of the latter, tsar Kaloyan (1197-1207) and tsar Boril (1207-1218) aspired in one way or another. At the same time they put an end to a long rivalry between two parallel Bulgarian states and their ruling dynasties existing in synchronicity in the Bulgarian North and South, born of the pursuit of liberation of the old Bulgarian territories from Byzantine rule, their secession from the Byzantine Empire and the restoration of the Bulgarian

empire. This was also the dramatic end of a blood feud between two collateral branches of the Aseneid House claiming the Bulgarian crown which was simmering for nearly four decades.

New archeological excavations in Slav's capital led to the discovery of his family tomb ten years ago. This raised the crucial question of the circumstances surrounding despotes Alexios' death and the fall of his principality. The presence of a heraldic sgraffito ceramic vessel with an image of a heater-shaped shield displaying a Frankish style coat of arms in the ktetor's family tomb at the Holy Trinity Chapel of Panagia Pantanassa Monastery in Melnik, identified as a mausoleum of despotes Alexios Slav and his family, is remarkable and raises a number of important questions in its turn. The numerous analogues of similar heraldic images from 13th-14th c. displayed on akin underglaze heraldic sgraffito pottery which emerged in the Latin East during the Crusader era, i.e. the Middle East, the Eastern Mediterranean and the Balkans (in the lands of The Kingdom of Jerusalem, the Principality of Antioch, the Kingdom of Cyprus, The Principality of Achaea (Morea), the Genoese colonies along the Ionian coast of Asia Minor and the Hohenstaufen and the Angevin domains in Southern Italy) and which also became especially popular in Western Europe in 14th-16th c., leaves no doubt about the heraldic character of the image displayed on the sgraffito ceramic cup from Melnik. The archeological context of the find which was used as a grave inventory in the ktetor's family tomb and even more the identification of the individuals buried there are raising the reasonable question of the symbolism, the origin and the relation of the Frankish style crest to the family and the domain of despotes Alexios Slav, who seems to be the first and probably the only Bulgarian ruler of this era who was knighted and acquired a personal, family and seignorial coat of arms thanks to his investiture as a vassal and a son-in-law of the Latin emperor in Constantinople. In any case the presence of heraldic sgraffito ceramics in a contact zone such as Melnik is an extremely interesting fact that raises the issue of the penetration and the impact of certain Western European feudal traditions, chivalric symbolism and courtly culture within the court of the Latin vassal despotes Alexios Slav and offers new perspectives towards the Bulgarian-Frankish relations during the first third of the 13th c.

Despite the dramatic death of both Ivanko-Alexios and Alexios Slav (and his family) as well as the decline and the fall of this Bulgarian dynasty and its autonomous principality in Northwestern Thrace, the Rhodope Mountains and Eastern Macedonia which survived for more than three decades, the blood line of the House of the *Alexises* does not seem to have been completely interrupted. Curious traces of some of its prominent heirs and descendants can probably be found in the second half of the 13th c. and the first half of the 14th c. in one of the

most representative monuments of the elite medieval Bulgarian art of this period – the Boyana Church. They are associated with several generations of patrons (ktetors) of this remarkable Orthodox temple. Some curious Latin influences and elements of Gothic aesthetics could be recognized in the style of its exquisite frescoes without doubt. Particularly significant in this respect is the new hypothesis on the descent and the identification of the noble patroness (ktetress) of the Boyana Church sebastokratorissa Desislava as a presumed daughter of despotes Alexios Slav and the daughter of the Latin emperor Henry of Flanders, as well as the assumption about her kinship with two later patrons of the same church from the end of the 13th or the first half of the 14th c., bearing the personal names of Ivanko and Slav which are characteristic of the dynasty of the *Alexises*. This intriguing hypothesis is presented here for the first time.

Without a claim of completeness and with no desire of imposing the outlined historical picture as the only possible and objective interpretation of the primary sources we conclude this study with a clear awareness that proposing a full-blooded reconstruction of the past is an impossible task. Nevertheless, we hope that the current research will be contributing to the Bulgarian and Balkan medieval history and will provoke new studies that would raise Lethe's veil and would shed even more light on the history of the autonomous principality of despotes Alexios Slav, his family and his own personality, as well as on the history of the short-lived Latin Duchy of Philippopolis and the Bulgarian-Latin political, ecclesiastical and cultural relations during the period of the Frankokratia in the Balkans, on the identification of the founders and the patrons of the Boyana Church and the Metropolitan Church of St. Nicholas in Melnik, as well as on the history of separatism and regionalism in Southeastern Europe in the 12th-14th c.

Bibliography (abbreviations, sources and studies):

In the attached lists of sources and scientific literature, the most frequently cited publications are listed: from the sources - 90 and from the scientific literature - 337.

Appendices:

The Latin texts of the letters of Pope Honorius III of August 11, 1217 and May 29, 1218, 2 maps, 1 genealogical panel, and 24 pages of 57 color and 16 black-and-white illustrations with commentary.

Name and Geographical Index

SUMMARY

THE CRUSADES: RELICS & MIRACLES

Pilgrimage, Adventure and Relic-hunting

in the Orient in the 11th to 13th Centuries

Kalin Yordanov Kirilov

Йорданов, К. Кръстоносните походи: реликви и чудеса (Поклонничество, авантюра и лов на реликви в Ориента XI-XIII в.). София, 2015 г., издателство „Изток-Запад“, 672 с., ISBN: 978-619-152-604-8 (мека корица), ISBN: 978-619-152-613-0 (твърда корица).

[Yordanov, K. Krastonosnite pohodi: relikvi i chudesa (Poklonnichestvo, avantюра i lov na relikvi v Orienta XI-XIII v.). Sofiya, 2015, „Iztok-Zapad“ Publishing, 672 p., ISBN: 978-619-152-604-8 (soft cover), ISBN: 978-619-152-613-0 (hard cover).]

During the High Middle Ages the Cult of Relics played an important role in the the Pilgrimage movement and the Crusades, and in the creation of the Latin East. This Mediaeval cultural phenomenon manifested itself across much of the life of *Catholic and Orthodox Christian*, Islamic and Judaic societies in the Eastern Mediterranean and Western Europe in that epoch, affecting religion, ideology, both war and peace, politics, diplomacy, economics, commerce and the arts. Relics helped to construct cultural bonds and mediated in interconfessional relations between these otherwise separate worlds, remote each from the other.

Indeed, the Crusades catalyzed the processes, events and factors which came together to form the comprehensive nature of that bonding phenomenon. The Pilgrim and Crusader movements themselves originated from within the phenomenon and by the same token were dependent largely on it. The history of the Crusades was closely aligned to that of the most important living relic of Christianity - the Holy Land and its precious sacred sites and treasures. At the root of the Crusading ideology of the Latin West lay the liberation, protection and worship of the Holy Sepulchre and the Christian sanctuaries and relics in Syria and Palestine. These objects of veneration became at once motive, task, purpose, and sacred vow of the new, armed Pilgrimage. The Crusaders even adopted one of the most precious relics of Christianity - the Holy Cross of the Lord's Passion - as their sacred symbol and emblem.

At the end of the 11th Century, the Islamic threat and the misfortunes of the Eastern Christians brought into being the First Crusade. Their desperate cry for help along with the loss of the Holy Sepulchre and the desecration of the most precious Christian shrines in the East by infidels, and the menace to Constantinople gave rise to a wave of compassion, piety and determinations among the Latin Christians. Emergent Crusader propaganda then adopted and exploited these same motivations, they soon becoming a successful model in raising all the subsequent armed pilgrimage expeditions to the East in the 12th and 13th Centuries.

The holy relics played an important role in the preparation of these undertakings, from campaign recruitment, resourcing and funding to the rituals of taking up the cross, the making of the crusader oaths and vows, and the spiritual preparation of the pilgrims. Relics accompanied the crusaders on their way from Europe to the Orient, anchored pilgrim faith and led them into battle. Through all their trials and tribulations in the Holy Land, the Crusaders reposed utmost trust in their relics, which thus played an important role in the survival of the expeditions and in the establishment of the Latin states in the Eastern Mediterranean.

Some of the most significant episodes in the history of the Crusades and the Latin East would be delineated by the discovery, the acquisition – in many instances, the theft - and the loss of holy relics. They came to symbolize both the triumph and failure of the Crusades and the rise and fall of the 'Frankish' states in Syria, Palestine and the Aegean. As noted, the existence and meaning of Christian relics shaped ideology, politics, diplomacy, conflict, trade, religion and the arts, and they contributed much to the political, religious, social, economic and cultural life of Latin society in the Levant, whose existence depended largely on the Pilgrimages to the Holy Land, exclusively nurtured in turn by the Cult of Relics.

On occasions, relics were parlayed in dangerous political manoeuvres. Ultimately, they were pledged in sealing the fate of the Holy Land and the Frankish presence in the Eastern Mediterranean. The Latin East's very existence depended largely on the Christian Pilgrimage, so that the fall of Jerusalem in 1187, with attendant loss of the Holy Sepulchre and the relic of the Holy Cross, along with that of a huge part of Outremer ('Overseas') and its numerous sanctuaries and relics, brought about an essential transformation in this outpost of Christianity. Following the Third Crusade, there was an evident reflux of the Pilgrim movement from Syria and Palestine, with the interest of subsequent crusaders diverting to alternative relic sources and repositories in the Christian East (for example, Cyprus and Byzantium) in a symptomatic and understandable way.

The hunt for relics, their acquisition and their transfer from the Orient to Western Europe invariably attended the entire Crusader movement, but the most spectacular and extensive display of *furtum sacrum* (holy theft) in the history of the Crusades in the Eastern Mediterranean came with the conquest of the Byzantine capital Constantinople by the armies of the Fourth Crusade in 1204. During the 12th Century, the returning crusader was assured of prestige and public approbation who brought with him sacred treasures from the liberated Jerusalem. In like fashion, following the conquest of Constantinople the *furtum sacrum* and carriage to the West of relics from the former Byzantine Empire was perceived as decent and appropriate compensation for a crusader vow given in default to the Holy Land. For more than five decades thereafter, that 'holy' plunder continued alongside the Latin empire's existence.

This inexorable and systematic plunder and distribution of holy relics from Byzantium, Syria and Palestine necessarily led to the depletion of the resource in the Christian Orient. That loss of *raison d'être* in turn caused, and this despite the desperate and heroic efforts of the last crusaders in the 13th Century, a reflux and outflow of pilgrims from Outremer and attendant fading of the Crusade movement. The decline and ultimately the demise of the Latin Empire of Constantinople and the Frankish states in the Holy Land inevitably followed. Figuratively speaking, the Franks of the Levant chewed through the roots of the wonderful and precious fruit tree that their forebears – the first crusaders – had planted and with their own blood had nurtured in the deserts of Outremer.

The start of the Crusader movement opened a new chapter in the history of relic hunting. From the end of the First Crusade, a wealth of evangelical and biblical relics from the Orient started pouring into Western Europe with the returning crusaders. That flood of Eastern relics into the Latin world at the beginning of the 12th Century produced a mass hysteria across the West, in which there arose and flourished several extreme manifestations of the Cult of Relics.

The extent of transfer of relics from the Frankish colonies in the Eastern Mediterranean into Western Europe during the Crusades presaged and may be compared with the export of gold from the New to the Old World following the discovery of America. As with that rush for 'West Indies' gold in the 16th Century, satisfying the clamour for holy treasures of the Orient inevitably led to saturation and oversupply of the 'relic market' in Europe and in turn to deflation in the value of the commodity. Moreover, the flood of Eastern relics during the Crusades provided fertile ground for widespread speculation, fraud, forgery and other illicit dealings in relics from the Holy Land and the Aegean. Such nefarious practices also occurred

in the East, where on the eve of the Crusades and during the Latin occupation the fraudulent reproduction of relics reached monstrous proportions.

Examples of such fraudulent replication of Eastern relics are manifold. They include the multiplication of the heads of St. John the Baptist, St. James the Apostle, St. Anna, St. Protomartyr Stephen, St. George the Martyr and St. James the Persian, and of the the bodies of St. Nicholas, St. Theodore Stratilate, St. Simeon the Prophet and St. Zechariah. So also with replication of relics of the Passion of Christ and of the Virgin Mary. This thriving fraud with relics from the East spawned the appearance of ever more bizarre 'relics' in the Latin West, including the tears and the breath of Christ preserved in crystal vessels, the umbilical cord, locks of hair and even a tooth from the Infant Jesus, the milk of the Blessed Virgin, the sword and shield of St. Michael the Archangel, deployed in his defeat of Satan, the spear with which St. George slew the dragon, and suchlike.

There had to be and there was a backlash. The flagrant commercialization of the Cult of Relics and the attendant unscrupulous practices unleashed in the Latin world after the crusader conquest of Jerusalem and Constantinople first aroused the anger of the monastic communities in the West, whose criticism of the abuses became increasingly scathing.

By the end of the first decade following the retirement of the Fourth Crusade, a new ecclesiastical movement had emerged, for the reformation of the Cult of Relics and curtailment of the fraud. Culmination of that movement came with Pope Innocent III's decisions and decrees at the Fourth Lateran Council in Rome at the end of 1215.

The need to verify relics conveyed from the Holy Land and Romania (the Byzantine/Latin empire) by crusaders and pilgrims, and to legitimize their acquisition and transfer, brought forth the invention of a specific literary tradition which integrated already known hagiographical and historiographical genres in presenting the history of individual relics and the circumstances of their acquisition and transfer from the East and their adoption in the ecclesiastical communities in the West. The kernel of this tradition were the *translatio* (an account of the acquisition and transfer of relics) and the *furtum sacrum* (an account of a 'holy theft' of relics). They were created either as separate accounts and treatises or as part of hagiographical and epistolary texts and historical chronicles, and would often be presented during the annual liturgical celebration of the acquisition of a given relic.

Typically, authentication came from the lips of the very crusaders and pilgrims who had acquired the relic and brought it from the East. The introduction of these genuine, exaggerated

or completely fictional stories into a traditional literary genre which served the particular ideological and liturgical needs of the religious and secular authorities across the Latin East and West inevitably subjected the process to schematisation and stylization, based on a system of certain topoi. This system was not strictly established and binding but typically included a topos (or a combination of topoi) concerning the causes and circumstances of the acquisition and transfer of relics and the verification of their authenticity. Most of these accounts used as a template the earliest known story of the quest for relics of the Lord's Passion by the Empress Helena in the 4th Century. The Venetian accounts in particular (and all the Italian accounts in general) form and follow a specific subgenre tradition of their own, using as a pattern the story of the holy theft of the body of St. Mark the Evangelist and its transportation from Egypt to Venice in 827. The story was fundamental to the political and the Crusader ideology of the Venetian Republic.

The modes of relic and sacred treasure acquisition from the East as described in all these *translatio* and *furtum sacrum* accounts are limited in scope: as spoils of war; a grant or gift; a reward for service; a confiscation; a purchase (in case of sale) or a redemption (in case of pledge or capture); as a (re)discovery (*inventio*); and as a holy theft, which might have involved violence in the name of a holy mission. The actors in these accounts are always directly or indirectly related to the Crusades and the Pilgrimage movement, or to the Oriental Latin states, being contexts in which their actions are perceived as sacred in principle. The accounts are invariably located in the Eastern Mediterranean (the Holy Land or the Aegean) and in most cases the *mise-en-scene* is an alien confessional environment (Christian Orthodox, Jewish or Muslim), typically projected as forsaken and devoid of Divine grace and the protection of indigenous saints and patrons. This either because of recent conquest and desecrations by miscreant infidels or because of the sins and dishonour of the resident Eastern Christians, who have thereby forfeited the privilege of safeguarding the relics.

In these schematized tales, presentation of such circumstances usually suffices to legitimize the transfer of the pertinent relics to their new environment (generally in Western Europe but also in the Latin East), where they will be honored in a more proper and dignified way. Attendant secrecy, conspiracy, fraud, and sometimes violence are all elements of the holy theft, which is often carried out under cover of darkness. And they all are very characteristic of this particular literary tradition. Other typical topoi are the visions, the appearances of saints and the wonderful interventions of Christ, the Virgin Mary, individual apostles and saints, and deceased crusaders, who invariably declare their will for the discovery and taking away of the

sacred treasures and provide the 'holy thieves' with specific guidance and instructions on where and how to find, appropriate and worship their relics. Other topoi are the thieves' passionate prayers of propitiation to the relevant saint, for approval of and support in rendering the holy theft and the transfer of his (or her) relics.

Typical also are the miracles accompanying the discovery, appropriation and transfer of the relics, including topoi such as the surmounting of great difficulties during the identification of the tomb or holy place where the relics were kept and during their appropriation; the incorruption of the saintly body; the emanation of characteristic fragrant aromas, fluids and bright lights from the relics, signifying the saint's approval and support; the secondary appearances of the stolen saint, who confirms the authenticity of the abducted relic or requires its indivisibility, sometimes warning against or punishing the unworthy, dishonest or sloppy execution of their holy will; the miraculous triumph through the intercession of the saint and his relics over obstacles and perils during the transfer of the relics by land and sea (storms at sea, enemy ambush, pirates, mountain robbers, etc.)

There were miracles also to be recounted that followed from the reception of the sacred treasures into their new ecclesiastical community. In particular, the resumption of peace and political, social, economic and spiritual well-being, and prosperity within the country; the miraculous healing of the sick, lame, and demonized; the fruits of common prayer over the holy relics in reference to natural disasters and plagues; and miraculous triumph in trial by fire (*ordalia*) and relic survival in the flames, either by design, where the aim is to prove the authenticity of a relic, or during accidental fire in the church or cathedral hosting the relic.

All these miraculous interventions are presented and accepted as a manifestation of Divine will and as confirmation of the saints' approval of the acquisition and transfer of their relics. They become a major mechanism for the justification and legitimization of the 'sacred sacrilege' and an instrument for verification of the relic's authenticity, whilst also serving to reject its fraudulent imitation or replication.

Belief in these miracles in the Western ecclesiastical communities helped to build the authority, role and importance of the Oriental relics within the new cultural context and this notwithstanding the inherent impossibility of their maintaining, in spite of their popularity amongst Christians in general, the same functions, importance and value accorded them by the Eastern Christians and the orientalized Franks in the Eastern Mediterranean. In time, the Cult of Relics attending some Eastern saints, who had been completely unknown in the Latin world before the

Crusades, became so popular as to overshadow the prestige of a number of quite popular cults of Western saints. Carried over from the Orient, these sacred treasures imposed the veneration of evangelical and biblical relics upon the cult of relics of the Roman saints widely worshiped across the West to that point, and contributed to a rapid foundation, validation and promotion of many new pilgrimage sites in Western Europe, as centers of these newly-adopted cults. And the Christian relics brought from the Eastern Mediterranean significantly influenced the shaping of these new pilgrimage centers. The enormous revenues from pilgrim donations and the annual fairs organized around these new sanctuaries helped fund local economies and infrastructure. As well, the Eastern sacred treasures carried by the returning crusaders impacted measurably on Western European religious art and architecture in the 12th and 13th Centuries. Certain artistic patterns and forms from Byzantium and the Holy Land were incorporated into the aesthetics of the Romanesque and Gothic styles of Western Europe.

Further impact of the cult of Eastern relics could be found in the shaping and flourishing of the *chivalric* ideology in Western courtly culture and literature during and after the Crusades. The theme of a knightly quest for occult relics in the East was reflected in the appearance of the Holy Grail romances between the late 12th and early 13th Centuries. Some of these romances were gestated in the courts of certain crusader barons from Western Europe and the Latin East and clearly drew a connection between crusading and relic hunting. Nonetheless, the idealised image of the knight errant devoted in his quest for the Holy Grail is quite different from the historical image of the 'holy thieves' and relic hunters from the age of the Crusades, as described by their contemporaries.

During their lifetime and indeed after their deaths, the Crusaders laid the foundations for new Christian cults. These zealous hunters, collectors and in due course guardians of sacred relics became in their turn not only the heroes of the Crusades but also their holy martyrs and saints. The veneration of their tombs and of their miraculous relics laid the groundwork for new cults across the Balkans, the Aegean, the Eastern Mediterranean and Western Europe that endured over the ensuing centuries.

It was the Crusades and their attendant connection with the Holy Land and its sacred treasures which provided the peoples of the West with a unique opportunity to touch – intimately - the sacred living history of Christianity. Viewed in this light, the Crusades were a proxy pilgrimage for Westerners back to a sacred time and space where they could experience personal contact with evangelical and biblical sites, events and actors. The holy relics were abstract mediators that curved the linear time and space. They connected the evangelical and

biblical times to the present and built a direct link between the Holy Land and the fatherland, and between this world and the other world.

The unshakeable conviction of the Crusaders that they were the conductors and performers of God's will and providence infused their mission with a conscious supernatural context where the boundaries dispersed between the sacred and the profane, and between the explicable and the miraculous. In their own eyes, the Crusaders were the new Israelites traversing the deserts of Syria and Palestine, led by the sacred relics of the Lord's Holy Spear and True Cross (the Ark of the New Covenant), who fought relentlessly for their new Jerusalem and met with joy the halo of holy martyrdom. As both followers of and heirs to the deeds of the saintly Byzantine emperors, the Crusaders re-discovered and restored the Relics of Salvation to the Holy City, becoming thus the new recognized and legitimate defenders of the Holy Land and the Holy Sepulchre, and the guardians of their spiritual treasures.

Nearly two centuries of intensive and systematic exploitation, plunder, fragmentation, distribution, transfer and destruction of the relics of the Holy Land and Byzantium - in which western Crusaders and pilgrims, Frankish colonists from the East, religious and military orders, Italian maritime republics, Muslims, and Eastern Christians all took an active role - eventually led to the exhaustion of the Latin Orient's sacred resources. By the same token, the huge transfer of relics from the East led to the gradual transformation of the Latin West as the new Promised Land. The systematic migration of the spiritual treasures of the Orient to safer and more accessible homes in Europe, combined with the loss of Jerusalem and Constantinople, then followed by the inability to recover the Holy Land and the military failures of the Crusades during the 13th Century, led to the abatement of pilgrimage to Outremer, the cessation of the Crusades and, inevitably, a sunset on the Frankish realms in the Eastern Mediterranean.

Bibliography (abbreviations, sources and studies):

The attached lists of sources and scientific literature indicate the most frequently cited publications: from the sources - 143 and from the scientific literature - 262.

Appendices:

214 black-and-white illustrations with commentary.

Name index

ABSTRACT

Bulgarian Folklore Relicts from the Time of the Frankokratia in North-Western Thrace

Kalin Yordanov

Йорданов К. / Yordanov K.. Български фолклорни реликти от времето на Четвъртия кръстоносен поход и франгократията в Северозападна Тракия. [Bulgarian Folklore Relicts From the Time of the Fourth Crusade and the Frankokratia in North-Western Thrace]. Известия на Националния исторически музей [Proceedings of the National Museum of History], XXXII, Национален исторически музей - София. Издателство "Уникарт", София, 2020, ISSN:1311-5219, с. 355-373.

[Yordanov K. Balgarski folklorni relikti ot vremeto na Chetvartiya krastonosen pohod i frangokratiyata v Severozapadna Trakiya. [Bulgarian Folklore Relicts From the Time of the Fourth Crusade and the Frankokratia in North-Western Thrace]. Izvestiya na Natsionalniya istoricheski muzey [Proceedings of the National Museum of History], XXXII, Natsionalen istoricheski muzey - Sofiya. Izdatelstvo "Unikart", Sofiya, 2020, ISSN:1311-5219, s. 355-373.]

The historical sources reveal that the Latin Duchy (Ducatus) of Philipopolis, which emerged as an immediate consequence of the Fourth Crusade, existed for about a quarter of a century before it was finally absorbed by the Bulgarian kingdom right after the Battle of Klokotnitsa (1230). Despite its brief existence, this relatively small Crusader lordship, established in the western part of the Upper Thracian Plain and on the northern slopes of the Central Rhodopes mountain still managed to leave a bright and lasting impact in the collective memory of the Bulgarians by leaving durable vestiges of its existence that can be traced in Bulgarian folklore, language and art. Although the search for these remnants in Bulgarian folklore suffers from the lack of explicitness and factual concreteness, due to the largely relative, contingent and abstract nature of the ethnographic and linguistic sources, they still complement the information from the primary narrative sources and the archaeological evidences, thus creating a more complete and vivid image of this poorly studied but extremely interesting period of Bulgarian, Balkan and European history.

ABSTRACT

A Reflection of the Fourth Crusade in the Frescoes of the Boyana Church (1258/1259)

Kalin Yordanov

Йорданов, К. Едно отражение от Четвъртия кръстоносен поход в стенописите на Боянската църква (1258/1259 г.). Годишник на Софийския университет "Св. Климент Охридски". Център за славяно-византийски проучвания "Проф. Иван Дуйчев", 100 (19), Университетско издателство "Св. Климент Охридски", 2019, ISSN:1311-784X, с. 48-67. [Yordanov, K. Edno otrazhenie ot Chetvartiya krastonosen pohod v stenopisite na Boyanskata tsarkva (1258/1259 g.). Godishnik na Sofiyskiya universitet "Sv. Kliment Ohridski". Tsentar za slavyano-vizantiyski prouchvaniya "Prof. Ivan Duychev", 100 (19), Universitetsko izdatelstvo "Sv. Kliment Ohridski", 2019, ISSN:1311-784X, s. 48-67.]

As a continuation of Grabar's study of the Latin reflections and influences on the iconography of some of the Boyana Church's mural paintings, the paper further examines the impact of the Fourth Crusade in particular, in reference to "The Miracle at Sea" scene from the Life cycle of St Nicholas of Myra in the Boyana Church. This particular scene of the Life of St Nicholas is very common and typical of Byzantine and Balkan Medieval iconography. However, what distinguishes the particular scene in the Boyana Church from the Canon of Medieval Orthodox Art are the details of the image that have no analogue in the contemporary Byzantine and Balkan iconography. These unique details, which, however find direct analogues in the Western European narrative and iconographic sources of the same age, indicate and attest not only to a distinct and certain Latin artistic influence, but at the same time also reveal a vivid image of the Franks, who had come to the Balkans with the Fourth Crusade in the beginning of the 13th century and had conquered Thrace, Macedonia, Thessaly, Attica, Peloponnese and the Aegean islands, and who were in complete control of the waters of the Adriatic, the Aegean and parts of the Western Black Sea at that time. An image that for half a century seems to have been stratified and moulded in the collective consciousness and in the collective memory of the Orthodox Balkan and Bulgarian population in particular to such an extent so as to be reproduced thus distinctly and recognizably and in such historically correct and authentic manner as we can find it in "The Miracle at sea" scene in the Boyana Church. An obvious reminiscence which

reflects the memory of the Fourth Crusade and of the relations between the Bulgarian rulers of the region of Sredets (Sofia) and their immediate Latin neighbors – the Dukes of Philippopolis in the first quarter of the 13th century, of which not only the local epic folklore tradition attests, but also monuments of Bulgarian medieval art such as the Boyana church frescoes. The concentration of these vivid and intense collective memories of the Franks of the Ducatus of Philippopolis in the region of Sofia Valley is hardly accidental. It is a clear indication and indirect evidence of immediate, intense and long-lasting relations between two different worlds in a frontier contact zone – a subject of which the primary narrative sources provide only too vague and oblique evidences or did not mention at all.

ABSTRACT

Robert of Clari's Enigmatic Collection of Constantinopolitan Relics

Kalin Yordanov

Йорданов, К.. Енигматичната колекция от константинополски реликви на Робер дьо Клари. *Bulgaria Mediaevalis*, 9, 1, Фондация "Българско историческо наследство", 2018, ISSN:1314-2941, с. 433-438.

[Yordanov, K. Enigmatichnata kolektsiya ot konstantinopolski relikvi na Rober dyo Klari. *Bulgaria Mediaevalis*, 9, 1, Fondatsiya "Balgarsko istorichesko nasledstvo", 2018, ISSN:1314-2941, s. 433-438.]

The need to verify relics conveyed from the Holy Land and Romania (the Byzantine/Latin empire) by crusaders and pilgrims, and to legitimize their acquisition and transfer, brought forth the invention of a specific literary tradition during the High Middle Ages which integrated already known hagiographical and historiographical genres in presenting the history of individual relics and the circumstances of their acquisition and transfer from the East and their adoption in the ecclesiastical communities in the West. The kernel of this tradition were the *translatio* (an account of the acquisition and transfer of relics) and the *furtum sacrum* (an account of a 'holy theft' of relics). They were created either as separate accounts and treatises or as part of hagiographical and epistolary texts and historical chronicles.

As an addition to an already published article the current paper suggests that the case of Robert of Clari's Chronicle of the Fourth Crusade and the occasion for its creation may be interpreted as an attempt of justification of the concealed “furtum sacrum” of this crusader and historian, committed during or after the conquest of Constantinople in 1204. In this relation the paper examines the origin of the curious relic collection of Robert of Clari, a crusader knight from Picardy and a chronicler of the Fourth Crusade, which he brought back to his homeland from Byzantium after the conquest of Constantinople in 1204.

ABSTRACT

Pilgrims, Crusaders and Relic Hunters: From the 'Holy Theft' and the Forgery of Relics to the Quest for the Holy Grail

Kalin Yordanov

Йорданов, К. Поклонници, кръстоносци и ловци на реликви: от „свещената кражба” и фалшификацията на мощи до търсенето на Граала. Християнство и култура, 3 (130), Фондация „Комунитас”, 2018, ISSN:ISSN 1311 – 9761, с. 105-121.

[Yordanov, K. Poklonnitsi, krastonostsi i lovtsi na relikvi: ot „sveshthenata krazhba” i falshifikatsiyata na moshti do tarseneto na Graala. Hristiyanstvo i kultura, 3 (130), Fondatsiya „Komunitas”, 2018, ISSN:ISSN 1311 – 9761, s. 105-121.]

During the High Middle Ages The Cult of Relics played an important role in the Pilgrimage movement, the Crusades & the Latin East. The start of the Crusader movement opened a new chapter in the history of relic hunting. From the end of the First Crusade, a wealth of evangelical and biblical relics from the Orient started pouring into Western Europe with the returning crusaders. That flood of Eastern relics into the Latin world at the beginning of the 12th Century produced a mass hysteria across the West, in which there arose and flourished several extreme manifestations of the Cult of Relics. The extent of transfer of relics from the Frankish colonies in the Eastern Mediterranean into Western Europe during the Crusades presaged and may be compared with the export of gold from the New to the Old World following the discovery of America. As with that rush for 'West Indies' gold in the 16th Century, satisfying the clamour for holy treasures of the Orient inevitably led to saturation and oversupply of the

'relic market' in Europe and in turn to deflation in the value of the commodity. Moreover, the flood of Eastern relics during the Crusades provided fertile ground for widespread speculation, fraud, forgery and other illicit dealings in relics from the Holy Land and the Aegean. Such nefarious practices also occurred in the East, where on the eve of the Crusades and during the Latin occupation the fraudulent reproduction of relics reached monstrous proportions. The flagrant commercialization of the Cult of Relics and the attendant unscrupulous practices unleashed in the Latin world after the crusader conquest of Jerusalem and Constantinople first aroused the anger of the monastic communities in the West, whose criticism of the abuses became increasingly scathing. The need to verify relics conveyed from the Holy Land and Romania (the Byzantine/Latin empire) by crusaders and pilgrims, and to legitimize their acquisition and transfer, brought forth the invention of a specific literary tradition which integrated already known hagiographical and historiographical genres in presenting the history of individual relics and the circumstances of their acquisition and transfer from the East and their adoption in the ecclesiastical communities in the West. The kernel of this tradition were the *translatio* (an account of the acquisition and transfer of relics) and the *furtum sacrum* (an account of a 'holy theft' of relics). They were created either as separate accounts and treatises or as part of hagiographical and epistolary texts and historical chronicles.

Further impact of the cult of Eastern relics could be found in the shaping and flourishing of the *chivalric* ideology in Western courtly culture and literature during and after the Crusades. The theme of a knightly quest for occult relics in the East was reflected in the appearance of the Holy Grail romances between the late 12th and early 13th Centuries. Some of these romances were gestated in the courts of certain crusader barons from Western Europe and the Latin East and clearly drew a connection between crusading and relic hunting. Nonetheless, the idealised image of the knight errant devoted in his quest for the Holy Grail is quite different from the historical image of the 'holy thieves' and relic hunters from the age of the Crusades, as described by their contemporaries.

ABSTRACT

The Mysterious Relic Collection from Constantinople of Robert of Clari

Kalin Yordanov

Йорданов, К.. Загадъчната колекция от константинополски реликви на Роберт дьо Клари. *Mediaevalia*, 8, 2016, ISSN:1314-2755, с. 46-52

[Yordanov, K. Zagadachnata kolektsiya ot konstantinopolski relikvi na Rober dyo Klari. *Mediaevalia*, 8, 2016, ISSN:1314-2755, s. 46-52]

The paper examines the origin of the curious relic collection of Robert of Clari, the renowned crusader knight from Picardy and a chronicler of the Fourth Crusade, which he brought back to his homeland from Byzantium after the conquest of Constantinople in 1204. In 1213 he donated 54 Constantinopolitan relics to Saint Peter's Church in the Benedictine Abbey in Corbie in Picardy. The eight years gap between his return from the East (before April 1205) and the date of his donation of relics to Corbie, as well as Robert of Clari's surprising silence on the matter and the lack of information on the circumstances of the relics' acquisition in his Chronicle, which otherwise is quite elaborate in details, probably suggest the remorse and unclean conscience of the crusader knight and historian, who seems to have taken the secret of his mysterious collection of Byzantine relics to the grave in 1216.

ABSTRACT

Portrait of a Noble Lady of Bulgarian-Frankish Origin (An Attempt of Identification of the Patroness of the Boyana Church)

Kalin Yordanov

Йорданов, К.. Портрет на една знатна дама от българо-франкски произход (Опит за идентификация на ктиторицата на Боянската църква). *Късносредновековните Балкани. Сборник в чест на доц. д-р Снежанка Ракова.*, Университетско издателство на Югозападния университет "Неофит Рилски", 2022 (под печат), 48 стр.

[Yordanov, K. Portret na edna znatna dama ot balgaro-frankski proizhod (Opit za identifikatsiya na ktitoritsata na Boyanskata tsarkva). Kasnosrednovekovnite Balkani. Sbornik v chest na dots. d-r Snezhanka Rakova., Universitetsko izdatelstvo na Yugozapadniya universitet "Neofit Rilski", 2022 (under print), 48 pages.]

For almost a century the mysterious origins of the patrons of the Boyana Church continue to intrigue the scholars, and despite the many prosopographical attempts and some contributions to its illumination, the issue still remains unclear and open. And while the scarce information from the patron's inscription from 1258/1259 gives the researchers a chance to develop some reasonable hypotheses about the origin of Sebastoktor Kaloyan, the ancestry of his wife Sebastokratorissa Desislava remains quite enigmatic. So far only few vague attempts have been made at its disclosure and they all rely on slight guesses and assumptions that connect her generally with the Nemanja ruling dynasty in Serbia. Realizing that without discovering and attracting new sources, any attempt to illuminate the origins of the enigmatic noble patroness of the Boyana Church is doomed to remain largely in the field of speculation as another page of the corpus of the Boyana legends, the author of the present study aims to shed more light on the problem by giving a new and surprising direction to past searches, offering a hypothesis that may be the key to unraveling the mystery of the Boyana Church's noble patroness. The proposed identification recognizes the noble female founder and patroness of the Boyana Church, Sebastokratorissa Desislava, as a hitherto unknown child from the first marriage of despot Alexius Slav with the daughter of the Latin emperor Henry of Flanders.

ABSTRACT

"Frankish" Coat of Arms from the Family Tomb at the Panagia Pantanassa Monastery in Melnik

Kalin Yordanov

Йорданов, К.. "Франкски" герб от фамилната гробница в манастира "Св. Богородица Пантанаса" в Мелник. Bulgaria Mediaevalis, 11, Bulgarian Historical Heritage Foundtion, 2021, ISSN:1314-2941, с. 195-235.

[Yordanov, K. "Frankski" gerb ot familnata grobnitsa v manastira "Sv. Bogoroditsa Pantanasa" v Melnik. Bulgaria Mediaevalis, 11, Bulgarian Historical Heritage Foundtion, 2021, ISSN:1314-2941, s. 195-235.]

The presence of a ceramic bowl with a heraldic sgraffito decoration representing an image of a triangular knightly shield with a coat of arms, which was recently discovered in the founder's family tomb at the Holy Trinity Chapel of the Panagia Pantanassa monastery in Melnik, is remarkable and raises a number of important issues. The numerous analogues and parallels of similar images of armorial crests depicted on 13th-14th century heraldic sgraffito pottery from the Latin East, the Eastern and the Central Mediterranean and the Balkans (i.e. the Kingdom of Jerusalem, the Principality of Antioch, the Kingdom of Cyprus, the Principality of Achaea (Morea), the Genoese colonies along the Ionian coast of Asia Minor, and the lands of Southern Italy under the Hohenstaufen and Angevin rule), which became also popular in Western Europe during the 14th-16th centuries, leaves no doubt of the heraldic nature of the image depicted on the sgraffito bowl from Melnik and emphasizes its armorial origin. The archeological context of the find used as a burial inventory in one of the graves of the founder's family tomb at the Panagia Pantanassa monastery, and even more the identification of the deceased with despotes Alexios Sthlabos (Slav) and his family, raises further some reasonable questions regarding the symbolism and the origin of the "Frankish" coat of arms from Melnik and its connection with Slav's family and estates. The detailed analysis of Henry of Valenciennes's History reveals that Alexios Sthlabos (Slav) might be the first and probably the only autonomous Bulgarian ruler of this era to be invested with a knighthood and to acquire a personal, family and seignorial coat of arms, thanks to his investment as a vassal and a son-in-law of the Latin emperor in Constantinople. In any case the presence of heraldic sgraffito ceramics in a contact zone such as Melnik is an extremely interesting fact that raises the issue of the impact of the Western European feudal traditions, chivalric symbolism and courtly culture on the despotes Alexos Sthlabos (Slav)' court and offers some new perspectives on the Bulgarian-Latin relations during the first decades of the 13th century.

ABSTRACT

The Case of "*S. Princeps Philippensis*": Two Recently Discovered Letters by Pope Honorius III from 1217 and 1218 as a Source for the Bulgarian-Latin Relations

(Case Study)

Kalin Yordanov

Йорданов, К. Случаят „S., princeps Philippensis“: две новооткрити писма на папа Хонорий III от 1217 и 1218 г. като извор за отношенията между Алексий Слав и латините. *Bulgaria Mediaevalis*, 8, Bulgarian Historical Heritage Foundtion, 2017, ISSN:1314-2941, с. 173-218. [Yordanov, K. Sluchayat „S., princeps Philippensis“: dve novootkriti pisma na papa Honoriy III ot 1217 i 1218 g. kato izvor za otnosheniyata mezhdru Aleksiya Slav i latinite. *Bulgaria Mediaevalis*, 8, Bulgarian Historical Heritage Foundtion, 2017, ISSN:1314-2941, s. 173-218.]

The case study presents for the first time and undergoes a thorough analysis of two historical documents from the chancellery of Pope Honorius III, hitherto unknown in Bulgarian historiography. They constitute an important and valuable source for the Bulgarian-Latin relations of the first quarter of the 13th century, as well as for the history of the conflict over the Byzantine legacy, and in particular over the Church property, between the Latin clergy and the secular feudal lords in the Latin Empire of Constantinople and the Kingdom of Thessalonica at that time. These new sources shed new light on the history of the Duchy of Philippopolis, the region of Northwestern Thrace, the Rhodope Mountains, and Eastern Macedonia, as well as on the personality of the independent Bulgarian ruler and Latin vassal, despotes Alexios Slav. A comparative analysis of the information from these documents and from already known narrative sources reveals Alexios Slav not only as the ruler of the Rhodope Mountains and Eastern Macedonia, but also as the legitimate lord of the region of Philippopolis under Frankish suzerainty, which he obtained through his feudal investiture as vassal and son-in-law of the Constantinopolitan emperor Henry of Flanders. As such, he seems to have ruled his vast three-component autonomous territorial domain with the title "Prince of Philippopolis". With regard to the authority over the domain of Philippopolis, which the despotes received as a fief in the form of a dowry from his suzerain and father-in-law Henri of Flanders, as imperial vassal and ally Alexios Slav appeared to be the successor of both Ivanko-Alexios and Rénier of Trith, but also the predecessor of Gerard of Estreux. This means that between 1208 and 1218, Alexius the Slav was the second legitimate ruler of the Duchy of Philippopolis after Rénier of Trith and before Gerard of Estreux.

At the same time, these newly discovered sources illuminate one of the most interesting and watershed periods in the political activity of the despot Alexios Slav, revealing the specific circumstances that led to his detachment from the orbit of the Latin Empire of Constantinople,

to which he had long been a loyal vassal, as well as to his political reorientation as an ally of the ruler of the neobyzantine state of Epirus Theodore Comnenus, his departure from Tzepaina and the eventual transformation of Melnik into his new capital, besides filling in some essential gaps in his political biography.

ABSTRACT

The New Holy Martyrs: The Cult of the Saints, the Blessed and the Martyrs of the Crusading Movement of the 11th-13th Centuries

Kalin Yordanov

Йорданов, К. Новите свети мъченици: култът към светците, блажените и мъчениците на кръстоносното движение от XI-XIII в.. QUOD DEUS VULT. Сборник в чест на проф. дин Красимира Гагова, Mediaevalia, 2013, ISSN:1314-2755, с. 227-255.
[Yordanov, K. Novite sveti machenitsi: kultat kam svettsite, blazhenite i machenitsite na krastonosnoto dvizhenie ot XI-XIII v. QUOD DEUS VULT. Sbornik v chest na prof. din Krasimira Gagova, Mediaevalia, 2013, ISSN:1314-2755, s. 227-255.]

The doctrine of the "holy war" and the incredible trials of the first crusaders in the Holy Land in the 11th century gave birth to the tradition and the legend of the holy martyrdom of the armed pilgrims, which the crusading ideology and propaganda in the 12th and 13th centuries took up and developed as a specific cult in the religious life of the Latin East and the Latin West. In turn, the Latin historiography and hagiography embedded this cult in a specific martyrological literary subgenre, drawing on certain, characteristic topoi. The Crusaders were the new Israelites who wandered the deserts of Syria and Palestine, led by their sacred relics, fought for their New Jerusalem, and welcomed with joy the halo of the holy martyrdom for Christ's sake. In turn, their burial places and holy remains started producing miracles that attracted the veneration of the local Christian and Muslim communities. Thus the crusading movement of the 11th-13th centuries created a new mystical Christian tradition, producing its own holy martyrs and giving rise to new cults. Ironically, the Crusaders - zealous guardians, hunters, kidnapers and collectors of Christian relics from the Holy Land and Romania (i.e. Byzantine/Latin empire) - through their sacrifice in turn became not only the heroes of the Crusade, but also its holy martyrs, the veneration of whose holy tombs and miraculous relics gave rise to new cults in the Balkans, the Eastern Mediterranean and Western Europe. Some of

these cults were fleeting, others outlived the age of the Crusades and survived into the late Middle Ages, while others that endured over the ensuing centuries and are still alive nowadays.

ABSTRACT

A New Look on the Battle of Adrianople (The Military Resources of the Early Latin Empire and the Campaign of April 1205)

Kalin Yordanov

Йорданов, К. Нов поглед към битката при Адрианопол (Военният ресурс на ранната Латинска империя и кампанията от април 1205 г.). *Mediaevalia*, 2, Катедра по "Стара история, тракология и средновековна история" в ИФ на СУ "Св. Климент Охридски", 2011, ISSN:1314-2755, с. 106-148.

[Yordanov, K. Nov pogled kam bitkata pri Adrianopol (Voenniyat resurs na rannata Latinska imperiya i kampaniyata ot april 1205 g.). *Mediaevalia*, 2, Katedra po "Stara istoriya, trakologiya i srednovekovna istoriya" v IF na SU "Sv. Kliment Ohridski", 2011, ISSN:1314-2755, s. 106-148.]

The Battle of Adrianople of 14 April 1205 has long attracted the attention of medievalists and military historians and has been extensively described and analysed in Bulgarian historiography. Traditionally, the Battle of Adrianople has been presented in Bulgarian historiography as a banner of Bulgarian medieval martial glory, and the victory of Tsar Kaloyan (1197-1207) over the Crusaders as proof of the categorical superiority of Bulgarian arms over the Latin "tanks of the Middle Ages". Subjected to the historiographical momentum, popular clichés, such as those about the Bulgarians' destruction of the "flower of the Western European/Latin chivalry" and the Bulgarian "deadly blow" on the newly established Latin Empire, have permanently established themselves in the Bulgarian national consciousness and have gained wide publicity through educational and fiction literature, cinematography and the media.

It is undoubtedly one of the best pages in Bulgarian medieval military history and the victory of Tsar Kaloyan, who in this battle showed himself to be an exceptional strategist and tactician, is indisputable. Is the problem of the significance, the scale, the results and the consequences

of this battle, however, overexposed in Bulgarian historiography, moreover too emotionally and tendentiously? And if the facts of the historical sources were revised, would not the concrete circumstances and historical reality surrounding this battle turn out to be quite different from their presentation in traditional historiography?

This study aims, if not to answer these questions exhaustively, at least to arouse interest in the need for a new reassessment of the events that shook the Balkans in the early 13th century. At the same time, such an attempt is also connected with the much needed revision of the traditional ideas in Bulgarian historiography about the size of the armies of the Fourth Crusade, about the military resources and potential of the early Latin Empire and the organization and composition of its troops, as well as about the nearly decade-long Bulgarian-Latin war, which had just begun with the campaign of the spring of 1205 and the famous battle of Adrianople.

ABSTRACT

The Pilgrimage, the Cult of Relics and the Relic Hunt on the Eve of the First Crusade

Kalin Yordanov

Йорданов, К.. Поклонничеството, култът към реликвите и ловът на светини в навечерието на Първия кръстоносен поход.. *Mediaevalia*, I, 1, 2011, ISSN:1314-2755, с. 6-31.

[Yordanov, K. Poklonnichestvoto, kultat kam relikvite i lovat na svetini v navecherieto na Parviya krastonosen pohod.. *Mediaevalia*, I, 1, 2011, ISSN:1314-2755, s. 6-31.]

On the eve of the First Crusade the phenomenon of the cult of relics and the associated pilgrimage had become deeply rooted in the Christian piety and tradition and had become an essential part of the life, the history and the politics of in the Christian societies in the East and the West. They became the living spiritual link between these two worlds. Moreover, they were at the heart of the emerging Crusading movement and the creation of the Latin East. Just as the pilgrimage to Compostela incited the Burgundians to found the Portuguese county, and as the Norman pilgrimage to Monte Gargano led to the establishment of the Norman kingdom in Sicily and Southern Italy, so the tradition of pilgrimage to the Holy Land laid the foundation of the armed pilgrimage movement to the Holy Land and the creation of the Crusader states in the

Eastern Mediterranean. Moreover, it enabled the Latin East to endure for several centuries and to leave lasting traces in the history of that region.

Many of the pilgrims wished to preserve the memory of the Holy Pilgrimage, this precious moment of their lives, by taking back home a variety of religious souvenirs and pieces of relics from the Holy Places. Particularly precious and desirable mementos were pieces of the Holy Cross of the Lord, stone fragments from the Holy Sepulchre and Golgotha or other sacred sites such as that of the Nativity of Christ in Bethlehem or of the Ascension of Christ in Jerusalem, as well as from the shrines associated with the Virgin Mary, and pieces of relics of various saints from the Holy Land. To the mentality of medieval man, these pilgrimage acquisitions were a justifiable necessity, regardless of the methods, the means and the mechanisms for acquiring them. There were various ways in which the pilgrims came into possession of these bits of sanctity, which they eventually took back to their native lands. The most popular, however, remained the purchase, the exchange, the gift, the "holy theft" and the "invention" (discovery) of relics, and in this respect the 11th century made no exception to the same practice of the previous centuries.

ABSTRACT

The Venetian "Furta Sacra" and the Relic Hunt in Romania

(1204-1261)

Kalin Yordanov

Йорданов, К. Венецианските „furta sacra“ и ловът на реликви в Романия (1204-1261). –В „Западната експанзия на Балканите: военномонашеските ордени и италианските морски републики XII-XV в.“, автори: Александър Николов, Владислав Иванов, Никола Дюлгеров, Симеон Хинковски, Калин Йорданов (Университетско издателство „Св. Климент Охридски“. УХК „Алма Матер“, 2018, ISBN:978-954-07-5020-0, 36)с. 227-263. [Yordanov, K. Venetsianskite „furta sacra“ i lovat na relikvi v Romaniya (1204-1261). –V „Zapadnata ekspanziya na Balkanite: voennomonasheskite ordeni i italianskite morski republiki XII-XV v.“, avtori: Aleksandar Nikolov, Vladislav Ivanov, Nikola Dyulgerov, Simeon Hinkovski, Kalin Yordanov (Universitetsko izdatelstvo „Sv. Kliment Ohridski“. UHK „Alma Mater“, 2018, ISBN:978-954-07-5020-0, 36)s. 227-263.]

The conquest of Constantinople and the Byzantine lands by the armies of the Fourth Crusade became the most spectacular and large-scale manifestation of "furtum sacrum" ("holy theft") in

the entire history of the Crusading movement. The spiritual treasures of the Byzantine capital - the astonishing collections of Christian relics stolen from its monasteries, churches and chapels - were virtually the most precious part of the conquerors' booty. In the eyes of contemporaries it was far more valuable and precious than all the material wealth acquired in the Byzantine capital. A number of historical sources reveal that the Venetians took an active part in the relic hunt in the temples and monasteries of the Byzantine capital during the conquest and readily embarked on the plunder of the churches of Constantinople. The Venetians, who had always shown themselves to be passionate hunters and collectors of Christian relics from the Eastern Mediterranean, were not far behind the Flemish, French, Lombard and German pilgrims in stealing and carrying off the "sacred booty" of the holy war against Constantinople. And if the peak of "furta sacra" ("sacred thefts") among the ranks of the latter group of crusaders was mostly in the first five years after the conquest (1204-1209), the subjects of St. Mark of the Serenissima and of Venetian Romania continued to plunder Byzantine shrines for decades, right up to the very end of the Latin Empire's existence (1204-1261). Unlike the other crusaders, the Venetian Doge and the Venetian patricians and clerics had the advantage of knowing the sacred topography of the Byzantine capital, as well as the Orthodox saints and martyrologies, and, moreover, they could decipher the Greek inscriptions on the reliquaries found during the sack of the City, which enabled them to select and pick out the most significant relics from Constantinople's sacred treasures, which they systematically transferred to Venice.