

OPINION

By Prof. Dr. Georgi N. N. Nikolov from Sofia University “St. Kliment Ohridski”,
Faculty of History. Department “History of Bulgaria”

for the dissertation work of Ekaterina Krasimirova Angelova, full-time PhD student at
the Department “History of Bulgaria”, Faculty of History, Sofia University “St. Kliment
Ohridski” “*The Church Policy of Bulgaria between the Unia of Tsar Kaloyan and the
Restoration of the Bulgarian Patriarchate (1204–1235)*”, with scientific supervisor Ass.

Prof Angel Nikolov.

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Scientific area: 2. Humanities.

Professional field: 2.2 “History and archaeology”

Research specialty: History of Bulgaria (History of Medieval Bulgaria)

The procedure of PhD student Ekaterina Krasimirova Angelova was conducted in accordance with the legal requirements, and the necessary deadlines were met.

The topic of the dissertation is an unexplored integral problem of Bulgarian medieval history.

The dissertation consists of an introduction, three chapters, a conclusion, two appendices, a list of references and abbreviations – a total of 179 pp. computer typeset, font 12.

The introduction (pp. 3–20) of the dissertation states the aims of the study, reviews the historical sources used (most published in GIBI and other translated editions), and surveys advances in historiography that lack chronological coherence and critical treatment.

The first chapter, “Church Policy of Tsar Kaloyan: Bulgaria’s Unia with the Roman Church” (pp. 20–60), is divided into two paragraphs. The first of these deals with relations between Tărnovo and Rome in the period from December 1199 to November 1204. Here special attention is paid to the correspondence between the Bulgarian Tsar Kaloyan (1197–1207) and the Roman Pope Innocent III (1198–1216). Ekaterina Angelova has addressed a number of controversial points in the negotiations between the two parties. In particular, attention is drawn to the titles given to the Bulgarian ecclesiastical head and to the Bulgarian ruler. It is unacceptable to claim that by titling Tsar Kaloyan as *αρχων*, Nikita Choniates was expressing

his contempt for the newly established Bulgarian state. On the other hand, it is an accurate view that the rex/ imperator dichotomy is a matter related to the very translation of the two titles used in the letters (p. 41).

In the second paragraph the relations between Bulgaria, the Papacy and the Latin Empire in the period 1204–1207 are examined. E. Angelova points out that even after the conquest of Constantinople, “the Byzantines continued to regard Bulgaria as their greatest and most despised enemy (p. 54). She also concludes that after 1207 the unia “ceased to play an important role in the politics of the Bulgarian rulers until its very end in 1235” (p. 56). As for the death of Tsar Kaloyan, the records of which are subjected to analysis Ekaterina Angelova concludes that the most logical explanation is given by Ivan Dujčev, namely that Kaloyan died of natural causes, and more precisely of pleurisy.

The second chapter “Church policy of the Bulgarian kingdom under the successors of Tsar Kaloyan until the termination of the union with the Roman Church” (pp. 61–108) is divided into three paragraphs. The first of these deals with Bulgaria’s relations with Nicaea, the Latin Empire and the West during the reign of Tsar Boril (1207–1218). Here the political activity of two separatists belonging to the ruling dynasty, the Despot Alexius Slav and the Sebastokrator Strez, is presented in some detail. Some of the controversial issues relating to these personalities are taken up.

The PhD student tries to argue that Tsar Boril was not a usurper (pp. 61–62), going so far as to reject George Acropolitus's account of his blindness, since this contradicts the opinion of scholars of our time (p. 76).

Space is also given to the revolt against Tsar Boril in Vidin. Apart from the opinions set forth, it must be said that there is little literature on this revolt and its dating, and there are clear indications to date it, as various opinions date it from 1210 to 1214.

It is unclear why on p. 76 the title of the Bulgarian ruler („цар българом“ и „цар българом и гръком“) is written in Latin. Here Ekaterina Angelova has expressed the opinion that by his title “Tsar of the Bulgarians”, Tsar Boril did not claim the “Byzantine Emperor” as his predecessor Kaloyan did.

The second paragraph is titled “The Council of Boril – between Unia and Orthodoxy”. Much space is devoted here to when and how the Bogomil doctrine arose and what its nature was.

The author maintains that the Council of 1211 was “Orthodox and against the Unia”. This paragraph describes the redactions and manuscripts of the Synodik compiled at the Council, something that could have been placed in the description of the sources in the introduction of the dissertation.

The third paragraph of this chapter is devoted to the ecclesiastical policy of the Bulgarian kingdom under John Asen II. The biography of this ruler is traced, assuming that in 1207 he was between 8 and 11 years old. On p. 87 E. Angelova states that his first wife was of Russian origin and bore the name Anna, and on p. 91 specifies that John Asen II’s first marriage was not legitimate. A special place is devoted to relations with the Primate of the Roman Church and the ruler of the Epirus, Todor Komnenos. Positively, one can appreciate the dissertation's attempt to describe the dioceses newly annexed to the Bulgarian Church after the Battle of Klokotnitsa, namely the Preslav, Ohrid, Philippi, Mesemvria, Velbāzhd, Braničevo, Naisos, Belgrade, Vidin and Syar dioceses mentioned in the Synodik of the Bulgarian Church.

The third chapter, “Breaking the Unia with Rome” (pp. 109-139), is also divided into three paragraphs. In the first of them, the relations between the main political factors in the Balkans in 1228–1230 are examined.

The second paragraph of this chapter is devoted to the return of Bulgaria to the bosom of Orthodoxy. Here the process of breaking the union is discussed in some detail, but the reasons for its termination are not made clear, apart from the claim that it no longer suited the interests of the Bulgarian state. It is strange why Christopher is said to have acknowledged John Asen II's “imperial” title rather than using the Bulgarian term “tsarist”. The Hungarian attack, against Belgrade, Braničevo and Vidin, is traditionally dated to 1232, without mentioning another opinion which refers the events to 1228. Ekaterina Angelova discusses in detail the events leading to the restoration of the Bulgarian Orthodox Patriarchate at a church council in 1235 in Lampsak. Her conclusions, however, would have been very different had she drawn on the article of В. Гюзелев. *Възобновяването на Българската патриаршия през 1235 година в светлината на историческите извори. – Във: Великите Асеновци. Сборник с доклади от конференция, посветена на 830 години от въстанието на братята Петър и Асен, началото на Второто българско царство и обявяването на Търново за столица на България и 780 години от легитимното възобновяване на Българската патриаршия. Велико Търново, 2016, с. 155–169.*

The third paragraph of the dissertation is devoted to the ecclesiastical policy of Bulgaria during the reign of John Asen II after the Council of Lampsak. In this part of the dissertation Ekaterina Angelova has made a detailed presentation of the events related to the Bulgarian Church and its diocese. Outside the topic, but still related to it, the question of the date of the death of the Bulgarian Tsar John Asen II is addressed. According to the logical evidence presented, he died not on 24 June 1241, but several months later, at the end of 1241 or in 1242.

The conclusion of the dissertation (pp. 140–141) summarizes the results of the study.

The first annex deals with the relations between Serbia and the Roman Church. It has a place in the theme of the thesis and sheds further light on the policy of the Roman Church in the Balkans. The second appendix, entitled “A General Sketch of the Ecclesiastical Policy of Bulgaria towards Hungary in the First Half of the Thirteenth Century”, to some extent repeats what has already been written in the preceding chapters and is more like a small article on the subject.

The attached bibliography largely reflects the historical sources and scientific literature used.

No elements of plagiarism were noted in the dissertation.

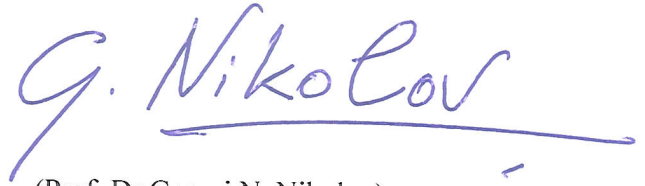
The author’s abstract is presented according to the requirements and correctly reflects the content of the thesis.

Some remarks can be made to the dissertation thus presented:

1. On p. 50 note. 217 refers to the wounding and death of Count Louis de Blois, not of the Emperor Baldwin.
2. The clarification of the title primas of the Bulgarian church head would be considerably clearer if the article of the *G. Prinzing. Entstehung und die Rezeption der Justiniana Prima-Theorie im Mittelalter. – Byzantinobulgarica, V (1978), S. 269–287.*
3. There are many inaccuracies and errors in the scientific apparatus and citation of sources and scientific literature.
4. Numerous spelling and typographical errors.

Notwithstanding the remarks thus made, the author of this opinion believes that Ekaterina Krasimirova Angelova meets the necessary requirements to be awarded the educational and scientific degree of DOCTOR and votes for it with conviction.

Sofia, 30.04.2024



(Prof. Dr Georgi N. Nikolov)