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IDEOLOGY BEHIND THE NAMING: ON THE ORIGIN OF BASIL II'S APPELLATION 'SCYTHICUS'

Abstract. The paper examines the terminology used by the Byzantine authors of the 10th and 11th century as regards the Samuel's State, which was largely shaped by the Byzantine ideology and momentary aim of the political propaganda. The analysis of the Byzantine sources shows that by the end of the 10th century Basil II became known as "Scythicus", because of his military achievements against Samuel's State. The same context derives from Basil II's verse Epitaph which contains ideological message about the accomplished mission given to Basil II by Christ himself in defeating the "Scythians". Hence, Basil II was known and wanted to be remembered, among other, as the victor over the Scythians, thus designating the enemies coming from the Samuel's State. Following this notion, in his narrative Michael Psellos portrayed Basil II as the vanquisher of the Scythians. Psellos even provided ideological context of the subjugation of the Samuel's State, remarking that by this Basil II actually converted these people and turned them towards God.

Keywords: Byzantium, terminology, ideology, Basil II, Samuel's State, Scythians, Mysians, Macedonians

The paper deals with the issue of terminology used by the Byzantine authors writing in 10th and 11th century and how it was shaped to fit the Byzantine ideology and further manipulated in accordance with the momentary aim of the political propaganda. The complex meaning of the terminology, when applied in Byzantine imperial context, disclose the coordinates of the conceptual frontiers of the Roman (Byzantine) power. Through this conception of the Roman borderland, we should trace the real appellation of Basil II by which he was known during his lifetime and to attempt to reconstruct its meaning reflected in the Byzantine sources.

I will not follow here the usual scholarly debate related to the epithet "Bulgar-Slayer" constructed and attached to Basil II in late 12th century, which projected in 20th century Balkan Wars and the Balkans of the 21st century, turns into an issue

of identity, or more precisely into a political tool for negation of identity¹. Instead, through the exploration of Basil II's appellations, I intend to explore the ideological function of terminology and to understand how it was constructed in 10th and 11th century Byzantium for the purpose of imperial propaganda and further recycled in 12th century.

Within this conceptual framework, there is no need to go into elaborating the arguments of Paul Stephenson, since he convincingly showed that during his lifetime Basil II was known as Porphyrogenitus, receiving the epithet "Bulgar-Slayer" only in late 12th century². I will just refer to the latest opinion of some of the scholars, who objecting Stephenson's view, mainly point to the *Life of John the Younger* who lived in the 11th century, containing a reference that Basil II "received a cognomen", because of the victories against "Bulgarians"³. However, it is known that the author of the *Life of John the Younger* was Theodore Metochites (1270–1332), who in fact composed the text after his exile in 1328 at Didymoteichon, where John the Younger once served as abbot. Accordingly, this *Life* cannot be regarded as evidence that Basil II was considered as the "Bulgar-Slayer" immediately after his victory over Samuel's army at battle of Kleidion in 1014, as some scholars believe⁴. This was merely Metochites' clarification of Basil II's cognomen by which however the emperor became known from the late 12th century.

Turning to political motives, it was the rebellion of the Vlachs and Bulgarians that occurred in 1186 in the area between the Haemus mountains and the lower Danube, that certainly incited a response from the Byzantine establishment, which reacted with attaching the epithet the "Bulgar-Slayer" to Basil II⁵. The historian and statesman, Niketas Choniates, representing the ideological perspective and official rhetoric of the time, narrated a story that Isaak II Angelos (1185–1195) was criticized by the judge (*krites*) Leo Monasteriotes for his premature victory over Asen, the leader of the Vlachs and Bulgars. Monasteriotes complained that by doing so, Isaak had aggrieved the "soul of Basil the Bulgar-Slayer" for casting aside the emperor's *typhikon* in the Monastery of Sosthenion, *where the revolution*

¹ On the issue of the exploitation of the legendary struggle between Basil II and Samuel in the Balkan context, cf. M. B. PANOV, *The Blinded State. Historiographic Debates about Samuel Cometopoulos and his State, 10th–11th Century*, Leiden–Boston 2019 [= ECEEMA, 55].

² P. STEPHENSON, *The Legend of Basil the Bulgar-Slayer*, Cambridge 2003.

³ *Vita S. Iohannis Iunioris, Acta Sanctorum, Novembris*, vol. IV, ed. H. DELEHAYE, P. PEETERS, Bruxelles 1925, p. 679.

⁴ A. NIKOLOV, *On Basil II's Cognomen 'The Bulgar-Slayer'*, [in:] *Европейският югоизток през втората половина на X – началото на XI век. История и култура. Международна конференция. София, 6–8 октомври 2014 г.*, ed. В. ГЮЗЕЛЕВ, Г.Н. НИКОЛОВ, София 2015, p. 578–584; А. НИКОЛОВ, *Около прозвището на Василий II "Българоубиец"*, [in:] *Хиляда години от битката при Беласица и от смъртта на цар Самуил (1014–2014)*, ed. В. ГЮЗЕЛЕВ, Г.Н. НИКОЛОВ, София 2015, p. 84–91; ИДЕМ, *Между Рим и Константинопол. Из антикатолическата литература в България и славянския православен свят, XI–XVII в.*, София 2016, p. 116–120.

⁵ P. STEPHENSON, *The Legend...*, p. 81–96.

of the Vlachs was prophesized. Isaak dismissed the accusations, deriding Basil II for taking a very long time to suppress the rebels, belching forth empty lies and vain prophecies⁶.

The paradox behind the evidently constructed epithet "Bulgar-Slayer" attached to Basil, led Choniates to state that the emperor was actually not attacking Bulgarians, but the Vlachs. Choniates even based this claim on Basil's prophecy, which was obviously a construction, as was the appellation itself. To complement this notion, Choniates stated that the Vlachs were formerly called Mysians, thus depicting the new enemy state as "Mysia". In this case we have a clear tendency of Choniates to explain the inconsistency of Byzantine terminology as regards the newly introduced epithet "Bulgar-Slayer" attached to Basil II. In this regard, Choniates was speaking about the danger coming from the aspiration of John Asen to take over the *Roman territories and unite the political power of Mysia and Bulgaria into one empire as of old*⁷. It was the soul of Basil that was raised to fight the contemporary Vlachs from Mysia and to prevent them from attacking the Roman territories. Thus, from the understanding of Choniates, Basil II did not slay Bulgarians, but Vlachs.

The danger which was specified by Choniates, was real. Especially, since the constructed epithet "Bulgar-Slayer" actually provided terminological justification for the leaders of the Second Bulgarian Empire for their territorial aspirations. George Akropolites, writing in 13th century, noted that Kaloïannes claimed that he had enslaved the towns and cities as an act of revenge for the evils done by the emperor Basil saying that *since that man was called 'Bulgar-Slayer', he named himself 'Roman-Slayer'*⁸. Kaloïannes' inversion of the invocation of Basil the 'Bulgar-Slayer' is a clear indication of his intention to counter the Byzantine constructed epithet, which was already established in his time. By this he in fact acknowledged that he was using the Byzantine constructed terminology for his own agenda to conquer the Roman territory.

The issue of constructed appellation, brings us back to the original sources from the time of Basil II, when the emperor was confronting the real and not projected enemies coming from the Samuel's State. To make things clearer, one should also have in mind the complexity of the terminology, since Basil II was also known as Macedonian, which was identity label for the Byzantine dynasty as representatives of the Empire. Consulting the works of Constantine VII Porphyrogenitos, we can notice that through the names Macedonia and Macedonians, he conceptualized the borders of the Roman imperial power and justified the kinship

⁶ *Nicetae Choniatae historiae*, ed. J.L. VAN DIETEN, Berlin 1975 [= *CFHB*, 11.1] (cetera: CHONIATES), p. 373–374, 442.

⁷ CHONIATES, p. 373–374, 442.

⁸ *Georgii Acropolitae Opera*, vol. I, ed. A. HEISENBERG, P. WIRTH, Stuttgart 1978, p. 18.15–20, 23.15–19. English translation: GEORGE AKROPOLITES, *The History*, trans. R. MACRIDES, Oxford 2007 [= OSB], p. 133, 140.

and descent⁹. This was especially relevant for Macedonia, that emerged as the cradle of the Samuel's State.

In such conceptions of terminology reflecting the notion of geography of Roman belonging¹⁰, we should trace the real appellation of Basil II. Key question that imposes itself is do we have a source which would provide clear attestation how Basil II himself represented his victories over the enemies of the empire. We are fortunate to have Basil's verse epitaph, portraying the victories of the emperor:

The emperors of old
 allotted to themselves different burial-sites: some here, others there;
 but I, Basil the purple-born,
 erect my tomb in the region of Hebdomon.
 Here I rest, on the seventh day, from the numerous toils
 I bore and endured on the battlefield,
 for from the day that the King of Heaven called upon me
 to become the emperor, the great overlord of the world,
 no one saw my spear lie idle.
 I stayed alert throughout my life
 and protected the children of the New Rome,
 valiantly campaigning both in the West,
 and at the outposts of the East,
 erecting myriads of trophies in all parts of the world.
 And witnesses of this are the Persians and the Scyths,
 together with the Abkhaz, the Ismaelite, the Arab and the Iberian.
 O man, seeing now my tomb here,
 reward me for my campaigns with your prayers.¹¹

⁹ M.B. PANOV, *The Slavs and the Conceptual Roman Borderland in Macedonia*, [in:] *Continuation or Change? Borders and Frontiers in Late Antiquity and Medieval Europe. Landscape of Power Network, Military Organisation and Commerce*, ed. G. LEIGHTON, Ł. RÓŻYCKI, P. PRANKE, London–New York 2022, p. 59–80.

¹⁰ For the use of classical terms by which the Byzantines related their subjects in the 11th and 12th century Balkans to the former provinces and conquests of the Roman Empire, thus “projecting an ideology of geographical ownership”, cf. P. STEPHENSON, *Byzantine Conceptions of Otherness after the Annexation of Bulgaria in 1018*, [in:] *Strangers to Themselves. The Byzantine Outsider, Papers from the Thirty-second Spring Symposium of Byzantine Studies, University of Sussex, Brighton, March 1998*, ed. D.C. SMYTHE, Aldershot 2000, p. 245–257; IDEM, *Byzantium's Balkan Frontier. A Political Study of the Northern Balkans, 900–1204*, Cambridge 2000, p. 77–79; A. KALDELLIS, *Ethnography after Antiquity. Foreign Lands and Peoples in Byzantine Literature*, Philadelphia 2013, p. 116–117.

¹¹ S.G. MERCATI, *L'epitafio di Basilio Bulgaroctonos secondo it codice Modense Greco 144 ed Ottoniano Greco 344*, [in:] *Collectanea Byzantina*, vol. II, Bari 1970, p. 232–234; IDEM, *Sull'epitafio di Basilio II Bulgaroctonos*, [in:] *Collectanea Byzantina*, vol. II..., p. 226–231. English translation by M.D. LAUXTERMANN, *Byzantine Poetry from Pisides to Geometres. Texts and Contexts*, vol. I, Wien 2003 [= WBS, 24.1], p. 237. See also the English translation by P. STEPHENSON, *The Legend...*, p. 49; IDEM, *The Tomb of Basil II*, [in:] *Zwischen Polis, Provinz und Peripherie. Beiträge zur byzantinischen Geschichte und Kultur*, ed. L.M. HOFFMANN, A. MONCHIZADEH, Wiesbaden 2005, p. 230–231.

If we are dealing here with the real attestation that Basil II wanted to be remembered as the victor over the enemies of the Empire, which without doubt included Scythians named as enemies coming from the Samuel's State¹², next thing to do is to seek in other sources for the clue whether he was known as such during his lifetime.

There would be no better source to find than someone who was metropolitan, diplomat and writer, and furthermore writing directly to Basil II using the precise appellation. We have all this in the name of Leo the metropolitan of Synada and his surviving letters addressed directly to emperor Basil II. In Leo's letter addressed to Emperor Basil II in the early 996, he states:

The emperor was the greatest of these, the emperor who was returning from a brilliant and incomparable victory; who was missed and longed for because of the long time, he labored in adversity in order to secure the complete victory; who, because of his achievement, was brilliant and celebrated and did not disdain the appellations 'Scythicus'...
 Along with you, farewell to that portion of the bureaucracy that renders you satisfactory and efficient service and everyone whom you yourself, perceptive judge of character that you are, deem worthy of the greeting. Don't, however, spare a single Scyth, not even the little boy his mother carries in her womb, but annihilate and destroy them all together.¹³

This official correspondence addressed personally to emperor, clearly shows that the appellation "Scythicus" was ascribed by Leo of Synada to Basil II for his military victory against the "Scyths", meaning the Samuel's army. The genuineness of the appellation "Scythicus" is reflected in the harsh and unusual words for the Metropolitan, calling Basil II *not to spare a single Scyth, not even the little boy his mother carries in her womb, but annihilate and destroy them all together*. Since

¹² M.D. LAUXTERMANN (*Byzantine Poetry...*, p. 237–238) equalizes the Scythians with the Bulgarians as an enemy of the West, apart from others of the East. Interestingly, he points to the verb μαρτυρῶ, indicating that the conquered enemies in fact "testify" the political legacy of Basil II, by admitting their defeat and recognizing his overlordship. P. STEPHENSON (*The Legend...*, p. 49–51) remarks that the classicizing term Scythian was used by the Byzantines to refer to any norther Barbarian people and, although not clear in this case, probably is "used to mean the Bulgarians". He also observes that Basil II alludes only to Scythians, "not mentioning Bulgaria", while Abkhazia and Iberia as annexed to the empire by Basil, warrant special mention in his epitaph, signifying great prestige that accrued from empire's eastern reaches. However, it is quite obvious that the names Bulgarians and Bulgaria were not used by Basil II in his epitaph, which would simply mean that he did not name the Samuel's State as such. Instead, Basil rather used the name Scythians from which he also received his official appellation during his life and used it for the eternity. This was not noticed by the scholars.

¹³ LEO OF SYNADA, *Epistle*, 54, 8–13; 54, 45–49, [in:] LEO OF SYNADA, *The Correspondence of Leo, Metropolitan of Synada and Syncellus*, ed. et trans. M.P. VINSON, Washington DC 1985 [= *CFHB*, 23; *DOT*, 8], p. 87–91.

Leo of Synada was addressing his letter directly to Basil II, it is notable that the Scythian terminology for designating the Samuel's State and its subjects was used in official communication in the late 10th century, from where the appellation of the emperor actually derived.

A corresponding representation, from quite different perspective, is present in the fictitious epitaph to Nikephoros II Phokas in the interpolated text in Skylitzes, attributed to the poet John of Melitene and composed most probably in 988/989:

[...] A bitter sight; good ruler, rouse yourself!
Take footmen, horsemen, archers to the fight,
The regiments and units of your host –
For Rus', fully armed, assail our ports,
The Scyths are anxious to be slaughtering
While every people does your city harm¹⁴.

The fictitious epitaph by John of Melitene can be interpreted as propaganda directed against Basil II, describing the events following the year of 985/986¹⁵. It certainly reflects the conventional Byzantine terminology at the time, including "Scyths" as a designation for the Samuel's State, that was officially used and thus reflected in the sources.

Hence, it is not mere a coincidence that the same terminology can be found in Byzantine contemporaries of Basil II and Samuel, such were Leo the Deacon and John Geometres. By naming the enemy army coming from the Samuel's State as Scythians or Mysians, they were clearly using the terminology to conceptualize the borderland of the Empire¹⁶. It comprised the "land of the Macedonians"¹⁷ that belonged to the Romans and represented by the Macedonian emperors, but was endangered by the new rising star – Samuel Cometopoulos who also claimed the "Macedonian land"¹⁸. In this conceptual framework, Basil II the Macedonian

¹⁴ IOANNES SCYLITZES, *Synopsis historiarum*, rec. I. THURN, Berlin–New York 1973 [= *CFHB.SBe*, 5] (cetera: SCYLITZES), p. 282; JOHN SKYLITZES, *A Synopsis of Byzantine History, 811–1057*, trans. J. WORTLEY, Cambridge 2010, p. 270.

¹⁵ M.D. LAUXTERMANN, *John Geometres – Poet and Soldier*, B 68, 1998, p. 356–380; IDEM, M.D. LAUXTERMANN, *Byzantine Poetry...*, p. 235–236, 305–316.

¹⁶ M.B. PANOV, *The Slavs and the Conceptual...* (in print).

¹⁷ *Leonis Diaconi Caloensis historiae libri decem*, 10, 8, ed. C.B. HASE, Bonn 1828, p. 171; *The History of Leo the Deacon. Byzantine Military Expansion in the Tenth Century*, trans. A.-M. TALBOT, D.F. SULLIVAN, Washington DC 2005 [= *DOS*, 41], p. 213–215: [...] *those arrogant and cruel people, who breathed murder, were harassing Roman territory and mercilessly plundering the land of the Macedonians, killing everyone from youth upwards.*

¹⁸ JOHN GEOMETRES, *Poems*, [in:] *Anecdota Graeca e Codd. Manuscriptis Bibliothecae regiae Parisiensis*, vol. IV, ed. J.A. CRAMER, Oxford 1841, p. 282: [...] *the Macedonian land showed the glow of newly risen star. Why do you uselessly reproach the Scythians when you can see that your friends and allies carry out the same things.* For detailed analysis of John Geometres' poems and his view of the Samuel's State, cf. M.B. PANOV, *The Blinded State...*, p. 39–58.

in fact confronted Scythians or Mysians, receiving by the end of the 10th century the official appellation "Scythicus".

Following the subjugation of the Samuel's State and restoration of large part of the Balkans, Basil II redraw the conceptual boundaries of the empire, that required imposing new terminology to mark the reconquered territories. This resulted in complete terminological distortion. It is a complex issue why Basil II introduced new terminology to reflect administrative and ecclesiastical rearrangement following the subjugation of Samuel's State in 1018. However, it has certainly to do with ideology, since the political and ecclesiastical establishment in Constantinople not only did not recognize the Samuel's State, but treated this polity as illegally emerging from the Roman land. This conclusion is supported by Skylitzes' description of Basil's celebration in Constantinople after the subjugation of Samuel's State. Skylitzes presented an image of Basil *entering through the great doors of the Golden Gate and crowned with a crested golden diadem celebrated triumph preceded by Maria, wife of Vladislav, and the daughters of Samuel [...]* Thus he came, joyful and triumphant, and entered the Great Church where he sang hymns of thanksgiving to God then went his way to the palace¹⁹. There is no mention of any military spoils or imperial regalia regained since they were not granted by the Byzantine emperor to Samuel and thus were considered as illegitimate.

In the recomposed borderland of the Roman empire, the newly introduced term "Bulgaria" marked the administrative and ecclesiastical frontiers, by which Basil II wanted to conceptually frame the Roman territory and to maintain the sense of belonging to the Romans. This was clearly not a terminology that was intended to ascribe the ethnic identity of the inhabitants. Furthermore, as contemporary sources reveal it was not used as designation of the Samuel's State and its subjects. It was a new terminological marker for designating the acquired Roman land.

Basil II's sigillia issued for Ohrid Archbishopric speaks in favor of this argument, revealing that by using the terminology the emperor ideologically framed the newly acquired territories of the former Bulgarian Empire (ruled by Peter and eliminated by Tzimiskes in 971) and the former Samuel's State (ruled by Samuel and eliminated by Basil II). To use Basil's rhetoric, he was ideologically *blending into one the divided parts, and placing under one yoke the boundaries, without in any way infringing upon the rules well established by those who have ruled before us*²⁰. He in fact blended the Roman territories establishing an order, using newly

¹⁹ SCYLITZES, 344; trans. J. WORTLEY, p. 344–345. On the Roman triumphal practice revived in 10th century, cf. M. McCORMICK, *Eternal Victory. Triumphant Rulership in Late Antiquity*, Cambridge–New York–Paris 1986 [= P.P.P.].

²⁰ H. GELZER, *Ungedruckte and wenig bekannte Bistumerverzeichnisse der orientalischen Kirche*, BZ 2, 1893, p. 44; Й. ИВАНОВ, *Български старини из Македония*, София 1931 [repr. София 1970], p. 555–556.

introduced terminology for the territory of the former Samuel's State to demonstrate the ideological superiority²¹.

Official correspondence clearly reveals that Basil II was actually called "Scythicus" during his life and as his epitaph affirm, he wanted to be remembered as victor over Scythians in eternity. This notion is clearly reflected in the works of Michael Psellos, who was born in Constantinople the same year as Basil II conquered Samuel's State. He obtained high positions at the imperial court in the 1040's and later became a monk. As such, he is the best example for representing Byzantine political and ideological perception of the time.

In the first chapter of his *Chronographia* devoted to the reign of Basil II, probably written in the beginning of 1060's, Psellos used the term "Scythians" to refer to Basil's great victories against the enemies. He presented Basil II as exterminating the *barbarians and subjugating them completely*, filling up the imperial treasury with everything that was stored in the treasures of the *Iberians and Arabians, as well as the Celts and everything which was found in the lands of the Scythians; and to say in short the riches of the surrounding barbarians*²². For him, there was no doubt that Basil II fought with the barbarian "Scythians".

When for instance, he wrote about the anti-Byzantine rebellion of the "barbarians" in 1040/1041, led by Peter Deljan, Psellos clearly avoided designating Basil's enemies, referring to them as *people (genos), who after many vicissitudes of fortune and after frequent battles in the past, had become part of the territory (epikrateia) ruled by Romans*²³. He further noted that *prince of emperors, the famous Basil, had deliberately attacked their country and destroyed their power*. Psellos also carefully avoided characterizing the traditions evoked by Deljan or Alusian, noting vaguely that their leaders Samuel and Aaron *recently reigned and ruled over the people*.

²¹ M.B. PANOV, *Ohrid Archbishopric and Ecclesiastical Identity in Byzantium*, [in:] *Proceedings of the 8th International Symposium on Byzantine and Medieval Studies, Days of Justinian I*, ed. IDEM, Skopje 2021, p. 82–92.

²² *Michaelis Pselli Chronographia*, 1, 31, vol. I, ed. D.R. REINSCH, Berlin–Boston 2014 [= Mil.S, 51.1] (cetera: PSELLOS), p. 19–20.

²³ PSELLOS, 4, 39, p. 70–71. It is interesting that the critical editions made by Konstantinos Sathas (*Μιχαὴλ Ψελλοῦ Ἐκατοντητηρὶς Βυζαντινῆς ἱστορίας (976–1077)*, ed. K.N. SATHAS, Paris 1874 [= MBi, 4] and *The History of Psellus*, ed. C. SATHAS, London 1899), contain interpolations of the names "Bulgarians" and "Mysians": τὸ γὰρ δὴ γένος <τῶν Βουλγάρων, πολλοῖς πρότερον κινδύνοις καὶ μάχαις μέρος τῆς Ῥωμαίων ἐπικρατείας γενόμενον, Βασιλείου ἐκείνου τοῦ ἐν αὐτοκράτορσι λάμπαντος <Μυσῶν> λείαν ὃ δὴ λέγεται τὰ ἐκείνων ποιησαμένου· καὶ τὸ μὲν κράτος ἀφελομένου· ὡσπερ δὲ παντάπασιν ἡσθηνηκὸς τῇ τῶν Ῥωμαίων ἰσχύϊ προσερείσαντος, βραχὺν τινα χρόνον τὴν τοιαύτην ὑπομενηκὸς ἦτταν, ἐπὶ τὴν προτέραν ἀλαζονεῖαν παλινδρομεῖν ἐπεχείρησαν. It is noticeable that these interpolations were differently applied or exempted in various editions and translations of the Psellos *Chronography*. Only Iakov N. Liubarskii has translated the text without these interpolations, *Михаил Пселл, Хронография*, trans. Я.Н. ЛЮБАРСКИЙ, Москва 1978, p. 46. Others were either using both interpolations, or they selectively applied them with the intention to clarify of the meaning of Psellos narration, thus distorting it.

This might represent Psellos' legalistic way of delegitimizing the claims of the rebels to the territory, that belonged to Romans.

However, when comparing Basil II with Aaron as the leader of the Samuel's State, he used the exact Scythian terminology. In the extant epitaph of Eirene Pegonitissa, the wife of the caesar John Doukas, the brother of the emperor Constantine X Doukas (1059–1067), Psellos mentioned the war of "Basil the Macedonian" with the "leader of the Scythians, Aaron"²⁴.

The complex term "Scythian autonomy" can be also found in Psellos' oration to the emperor Constantine IX Monomachos (1042–1055)²⁵, which as scholars have shown, could also apply to the territory of the former Samuel's State²⁶.

This impression comes also from his other work *Historia Syntomos*, which was composed as a briefing for the future emperor, which gives it an official character:

Basilius' life comprised the equipping of armies, hurrying to the eastern frontier, unfolding his attack on adversaries, fortifying strongholds, walling cities, destroying the enemy then again rushing to the West, vanquishing the Scythians, arranging this, contriving that²⁷.

Psellos followed this ideological concept in his *Enkomion for Ioannes [Mauropous] the Metropolitan of Euchaita*, highlighting that bishop Leon was then sent out, to *those formerly nomadic Scythians, later called Bulgarians [...]* and *he turned that entire ethnos toward God*²⁸. From this Psellos' account, one gets impression that the subjects of Samuel's State remained pagans and were named "Scythians" up until Basil II converted them in 1018. Since this was clearly not the case, Psellos was actually implying that only after Basil II subjugated the "Scythians", they were integrated in the Empire and thus ideologically became known as "Bulgarians", reflecting the newly introduced name for the Roman territory which formerly encompassed the Samuel's State. Hence, Psellos provided his own understanding of the ideological context of the subjugation of the Samuel's State, remarking that by this Basil II actually put these people under the Romans turned them towards God.

²⁴ *Michaelis Pselli scripta Minora*, vol. I, *Orationes et dissertations*, ed. E. KURTZ, F. DREXL, Milan 1936, p. 60.

²⁵ PSELLOS, *Orationes et dissertations*, ed. E. KURTZ, F. DREXL, Milano 1936 [= OR, 5], p. 22.

²⁶ Cf. Б. КРСМАНОВИЋ, А. ЛОМА, *Георгије Манијакис, име Готделиос и Пселова 'скитска аутономија'*, ЗРВИ 36, 1997, p. 233–263.

²⁷ *Michaelis Pselli Historia Syntomos*, 106, 53–59, ed. et trans. W.J. AERTS, Berlin 1990 [= CFHB.SBe, 30], p. 108–109. On the issue of the authorship of the *Historia Syntomos*, in favour of Michael Psellos, cf. S. PAPAIOANNOU, J. DUFFY, *Michael Psellos and the Authorship of the Historia Syntomos: Final Considerations*, [in:] *Byzantium, State and Society. In Memory of Nikos Oikonomides*, ed. A. ABRAMEA, A. LAIOU, E. CHRYSOS, Athens 2003, p. 219–229.

²⁸ *Enkomion for Ioannes [Mauropous] the Metropolitan of Euchaita*, 69–73, ed. G.T. DENNIS, *Michaelis Pselli orationes panegyricae*, Stuttgart–Leipzig 1994 [= BSGR], p. 146.

This notion corresponds with appellation of Basil II and the ideology implemented by him after the subjugation of Samuel's State reflected in terminological designation of the newly acquired territories. This prompted Psellos to clarify the meaning of the term "Bulgarians" as an imposed administrative and ecclesiastical name to the contemporary people that lived on the conceptually framed territory that belonged to the Romans. From Psellos' legalist perspective, it is understandable why he used Scythian designation for Basil's enemies coming from Samuel's State, at the same time making a distinction from the administrative and ecclesiastical terminology that was established in his own time. By using the Scythian terminology, he was clearly referring to the official appellation of Basil II during his lifetime, deriving from the enemies coming from the Samuel's State that were designated as "Scythians".

Summing up, the analysis of the Byzantine sources reveals that the actual appellation during the lifetime of Basil II was "Scythicus", deriving from the enemies of the Samuel's state which was used in official correspondence in his time. This appellation corresponded with the conceptual borderland of the Romans in Macedonia during the existence of the Samuel's State, which found the reflection in the "Scythian" terminology.

As his epitaph testify, Basil II certainly wanted to be remembered as victor over Scythians and victorious over other enemies such were Persians, Abkhaz, the Ismaelite, the Arab and the Iberian. Although "Scythicus" was supposed to be his eternal appellation, he however became known with the constructed epithet "Bulgar-Slayer" that was attached to him in the late 12th century due to the political and ideological reasons.

Basil was destined to be remembered from his ideological product of constructed terminology, deriving from the redrawn boundaries following the subjugation of the Samuel's State and restoration of the land of the Romans. The later appellation did not reflect the real names of the enemies and the actual appellation of Basil II. However, it became projected terminological reference not only for Basil, but also for Samuel's State and its subjects, which was conveniently exploited in the Balkans for political and ideological motives in the centuries to come.

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