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THE PHENOMENA OF BOGOMILISM IN THE CONTEXT OF HAGIOGRAPHIC LITERARY WORKS

Abstract. Hagiography represents a special literary genre, which primarily deals with the life of the Saint, also providing information on certain historical events. Taking into consideration the complexity of the genre, it is a common impression that the credibility of the historical narrative is debatable and it can oscillate from subjective to objective positions. Thus, the purpose of the article is to reconstruct certain aspects on Bogomilism as a medieval dualistic movement, having in mind the content of hagiographic literary works. In that respect, the focus will be concentrated on the issue whether and to what extent hagiographic literary works can be treated as a relevant source material. Especially if we suppose that the information related to Bogomils can be indirect, incidental, biased, or having a legendary character. Of course, where possible, comparisons will be made with the accounts from the relevant historical narratives. According to the chronological order several examples from the hagiographic literature will be taken, as: *The Short Life of St. Clement*, written by the Ohrid Archbishop Theophylact, *The Life of Hilarion of Moglena*, *The Life of St. Sava*, *The Life of Theodosius of Trnovo* as well as *The Life of John Vladimir*. Despite the difficulty in identifying the authenticity of the historical events, in our case concerning the Bogomilism, hagiographic texts still contain useful material about that how Bogomilism functioned in certain periods and what were the repercussion for the protagonists of the movement.

Keywords: hagiography, *The Short Life of St. Clement*, the Ohrid Archbishop Theophylact, *The Life of Hilarion of Moglena*, *The Life of St. Sava*, *The Life of Theodosius of Trnovo*, *The Life of Jovan Vladimir*, Bogomils/Bogomilism

The term “hagiography” literally means “writing about saints” which refers to the life and deeds of a holy man or woman. It is classified as a specific genre of Byzantine literature, but it also include all kinds of literary works that promote the veneration of saints, including acts of martyrs lives, accounts of translations of relics and miracles, hymnography, including certain historical events.

In principle, hagiographic texts begins with an introduction where the martyr’s life is glorified. The martyr usually came from a wealthy family and after distributing the wealth to the poor he devoted himself to ascetic life. It very often

acquires a legendary character as regards to performed miracles. In fact, demonomania and superstition also comprise part of the peculiarities of hagiographic works¹.

Taking into consideration the complexity of the genre, it is a common impression that the credibility of the historical narrative is debatable and it can oscillate from subjective to objective positions. Hence, one must be very careful, especially when the historical events are reconstructed in our case the questions related to the issue of Bogomilism. It is a common impression that the accounts from the hagiographical works concerning the Bogomil heresy are incidental, incomplete and very often tendentious in a negative sense. Accordingly, the comparison with other historical and relevant sources is necessary in order to provide more authentic presentation of the event.

In *The Short life of St. Clement*, composed by Theophylact, the Archbishop of Ohrid written in the period between 1084 and 1108 it is said: *watch from now on your heritage, because now you have much more and greater power than before, when he was alive. Cast out the evil heresy which after your true death in Christ was kindled as a contagious disease among your flock*². Despite the fact that some historians reject this information from Theophylact as an anachronism, it is evident that it corresponds to the chronological framework. Namely, it is already known that Clement of Ohrid died in 916 and Bogomilism appeared later towards the middle of the 10th century. There is no doubt that the cult of St. Clement was particularly relevant argument for Theophylact to invoke his authority in defense of Orthodoxy. On the other hand, however, it is very likely that the educational activity implemented within the Ohrid Literary School, indirectly contributed to the emergence and development of Bogomil ideas. As a man with multifaceted erudition, St. Clement was well acquainted with the apocryphal texts in the Byzantine literature, and used some of them, thus enriching his preaching-instructive and praiseworthy words, without pretensions to expose heresy. In his work *Word for the Passover* St. Clement repeatedly mentions the motive of Christ's descent into hell, while the *Praise for the Archangels Michael and Gabriel* speaks of the fall of Lucifer and the victory of the archistratig Michael. Those were characteristic topics for the apocrypha and were later implemented in the folklore. There is no doubt that the conceptual platform of St. Clement consisted of involving a large number of students in the educational process in the Slavic language. In this way, literacy was made available to a wider social class, without pretensions to treat it as a privilege of the people with a higher social status. Their immediate engagement in the Ohrid Literary School resulted in promoting 3500 students with theological and literary education. Most of them probably continued their carrier as consistent servants of the Church, supporting the official Christian ideology. However,

¹ Д. ДРАГОЈЛОВИК, В. АНТИК, *Богомилството во средновековната изворна граѓа*, Скопје 1980, р. 160.

² *Гърци извори за българската история*, vol. IX.2, София 1994, р. 41.

there were also some who, expanding their theological-ideological conceptions, tried to find a new spiritual expression often in opposition to the official ideology³. This speaks in favor of the supposition that the process of education in the Ohrid Literary School was not reduced to a passive reception of the dogmas of Christianity, but indirectly influenced the possibility of creating a critical attitude reflected in their exegesis. Education and literacy certainly encouraged skepticism, which evolved into constructive criticism, especially when it came to interpreting gospel principles⁴. Given the popularity of the image of St. Clement and his strongly established cult in Ohrid and respected among the citizens, Theophylact of Ohrid over a century later tried to project him in his own time as an authority in the suppression of the heretics. By doing this, he did not take into account that perhaps the heirs of the work of St. Clement emerging from the Ohrid Literary School, contributed to the appearance of Bogomilism as an alternative spiritual phenomenon and folk religion. Or, possibly he deliberately opposed them, by writing the *Life of the cult of the former great educator and spiritual leader*.

The account from *The Life of St. Clement* about the existence of the “evil heresy” largely coincide with those in the correspondence of Theophylact, which occurred in the period from the end of the 11th and the beginning of the 12th century, when the Bogomilism in Macedonia intensified⁵. In this context, it should be noted that Theophylact certainly avoided speaking openly about Bogomilism, among others, not to give a *greater place to the suffering of the people*⁶. Addressing the panipersevast Brienius, Theophylact speaks of a certain Lazarus who wanted to *free himself from the yoke of the parish*, inspired by *freedom-loving thoughts*⁷. In fact, based on this rather subtle testimony, it is possible to assume that Lazarus was close in his convictions to the Bogomils, who were categorically against the ecclesiastical and political establishment, but at the same time demonstrated more open ideas on many dogmatic-theological issues⁸.

The Bogomil movement continued to exist with the same intensity during the reign of the Byzantine Emperor Manuel I Comnenus (1118–1180). The first information about the dispersion of Bogomilism in the Moglena region in this period can be found in *The Life of St. Hilarion of Moglena*⁹, written in Old-Slavonic language.

³ М. АНГЕЛОВСКА-ПАНОВА, *Богомилството во духовната култура на Македонија*, Скопје–Прилеп 2004, p. 67.

⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 68.

⁵ *Vita S. Clementis Bulgariae archiep.*, XXIX, [in:] PG, vol. CXXVI, ed. J.-P. MIGNE, Paris 1864, coll. 1237D–1240. Б. ПАНОВ, *Македонија низ историјата*, Скопје 1999, p. 61.

⁶ Б. ПАНОВ, *Теофилакт Охридски како извор за средновековната историја на македонскиот народ*, Скопје 1971, p. 350.

⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 350.

⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 352; Б. ПАНОВ, *Богомилското движење во Македонија одразено во писмата на Теофилакт Охридски*, ГЗФФ 28, 1976, p. 182.

⁹ More about the historical value of the *Life*: Я.М. ВОЛСКИ, *Богомилите в светлината на Житието на св. Иларион Мъгленски от Патриарх Евтимий Търновски*, Pbg 4, 2013, p. 74–81.

Two hagiographic works are dedicated to this saint: *The Story about the Transfer of His Relics to Trnovo* and *The Extensive Life*, written by the Patriarch of Trnovo, Euthymius in 14th century, which is considered as a source for Bogomilism. From the position of an author, Euthymius aspired to create a typical character for a typical idea – the fight against the heresies of his own time – in order to protect the official Orthodox theological-dogmatic conception¹⁰. Most of the *Life* refers to the polemics of St. Hilarion in relation to the heretical teachings of the Manichaeans and the Armenian Monophysites, addressing in that context the questions concerning the body of Christ, communion, the cross, fasting, and the like. This part of the *Life* was extracted in a form of a special transcript in the Collection from 17th century, folio 241b–245a (Belgrade, SANU no. 147), entitled *Polemics of St. Hilarion, Bishop of Moglena*. It should be noted that this is not a short version of the biography of the saint, but simply, the extracting of the part with polemical content resulted in typologisation of the *Polemics* (Prenie), representing a specific genre in which it is debated with the opponents of the Christian faith¹¹.

The accounts on Bogomilism in the extensive *Life* are in significantly smaller scale. Its author, Patriarch Euthymius, while composing the work used the Slavic translation of *Panoplia dogmatika* by Zigabenus, in which the part about the Bogomils from the Byzantine original was not translated. In that sense, this hagiographic composition cannot be treated as a direct source, but as an indirect one containing reference to Bogomilism. In accordance with the current scholarly knowledge, the extensive version of the biography of St. Hilarion of Moglena was registered in Panegyric from 1430, also included in the Collection of Vladislav the Grammarian from 1469 and in the Collection of the anonymous author from the second quarter of the 16th century¹². Namely, being appointed bishop of Meglen between 1133 and 1142, St. Hilarion

discovered that a considerable part of them were Manichaeans, Armenians and Bogomils, who were reviling him and plotting against him; they were trying in the dark to shoot the righteous of heart, despoiling and leading astray the orthodox flock, like beasts of prey. Having seen that they were daily increasing in number, he suffered great sorrow and prayed earnestly from his heart to almighty God to stop their inveterate tongues.

As a spiritual activist, who reacted from the position of official Christianity, St. Hilarion sought to convince heretics of the inaccuracy of their teachings, insisting on the importance of dogmas from the point of view of the official religion.

¹⁰ К. ИВАНОВА, *Житие на Иларион Мегленски*, СЛ 1992, р. 159; И. ВЕЛЕВ, *Едно ново навраќање кон текстуалната типолошка поставеност на хагиографските состави за св. Иларион Мегленски*, [in:] ИДЕМ, *Кирилometодиевската традиција и континуитет*, Скопје 1997, р. 229–230.

¹¹ И. ВЕЛЕВ, *Едно ново навраќање...*, р. 229.

¹² Д. МИЛОВСКА, Ј. ТАКОВСКИ, *Македонската житијна литература IX–XVIII век*, Скопје 1996, р. 53.

After realizing that the number of adherents of Bogomilism was growing, he *often preached to his people, teaching and strengthening them in the Orthodox faith*¹³.

Interestingly, Hilarion managed to convert many Paulicians and Monophysites to Orthodoxy, but it is evident that only the Bogomils managed to resist this process. In fact, Hilarion did not succeed in suspending the Bogomil heresy. This was due the fact that by this period Bogomilism had already been established within the Byzantine Empire with a concrete and standardized way of acting.

The extent to which Bogomilism was present at that time is evidenced by the fact that emperor Manuel I Comnenus himself *almost deviated from our pious faith if it was not supported and established by the dogmatic teachings of Blessed Hilarion*¹⁴. After overcoming the temptation, the Byzantine emperor ordered *the whole Bogomil heresy to be cleansed from the flock and that those who wholeheartedly obey the pious dogmas to receive and include them in the chosen flock, while those who do not obey and remain in their wicked and abominable heresy, to keep them far away from the flock of the Orthodox*¹⁵. However, the dilemma remains whether Manuel I sought only to excommunicate the heretics, as it is noted in the *Life*, or he acted in the direction of their physical elimination. Especially, considering that Theodore Balsamon in his *Nomocanon*¹⁶ stated that during the reign of Manuel I many Bogomils were burned at the stake. There is no doubt that the practice of the Church to merely anathematize the heretics was significantly disrupted and replaced with physical elimination by burning at the stake, which was introduced as a form of punishment in the Orthodox world by Emperor Alexius I Comnenus (1081–1118)¹⁷. Such a punishment largely corresponded to the methods characteristic to the western Inquisition.

Despite the fact that the serious scholarly debate surrounds the authenticity of *The Life of Hilarion of Moglena*, there is still a high possibility that Bogomilism in the 12th century was particularly active in this area, which corresponds with the established cult of the saint who struggled against the heretical movements in Moglena. In fact, the Church had used the cult of the saint as a mechanism against the possible re-emergence of any kind of heresy in the Moglena eparchy. The development of the cult of St. Hilarion of Moglena can be traced on the basis of fresco paintings and icons. The oldest example of his portrait is identified in the church of St. Nikita, near Skopje. The portrait was painted in 1484 during renovations of the church, built by King Milutin. The second known example is preserved

¹³ В. АНТИЌ, *Локални хагиографии во Македонија*, Скопје 1977, р. 69; М. ГЕОРГИЕВСКИ, *Македонски светци*, Скопје 1997, р. 136.

¹⁴ Д. МИЛОВСКА, Ј. ТАКОВСКИ, *Македонската житијна...*, р. 137.

¹⁵ *Ibidem*, р. 138.

¹⁶ D. OBOLENSKY, *The Bogomils. A Study in Balkan Neo-Manichaeism*, Cambridge 1948, p. 229.

¹⁷ More about the methods of punishment see: A.P. ROACH, M.A. PANOVA, *Punishment of Heretics: Comparisons and Contrasts between Western and Eastern Christianity in the Middle Ages*, Исто 47.1, 2012, р. 146–170.

at the Church of Mother of God at Studenica and was painted in 1568. It is important to say that the portrait of St. Hilarion of Moglena was not included in the original painting programs, but was painted later during the renovations of these two churches because of the strength of his cult and its importance, especially during the period of Ottoman rule in the Balkans. It should be emphasized that the portraits of St. Hilarion were identified also in Bulgaria, what speaks in favor of widespread nature of his cult among the Orthodox inhabitants of the Balkans under the Ottoman Empire¹⁸.

Interesting testimonies about Bogomilism can also be found in *The Life of St. Sava*¹⁹, written by his student and follower Dometian in 1242/1243 (according to the Viennese manuscript) or in 1253/1254 (according to the Leningrad manuscript). According to Chapter 18 of the *Life*, titled *Teaching of St. Sava for the true faith*, the saint referred to the Orthodox interpretation of the Holy Trinity, tackling many other aspects characteristic for the Orthodox Christianity²⁰. In fact, Dometian's text provides a detailed description of the Council of Zhicha and Sava's address about the true Orthodox faith, in which he challenged the dualism of the unnamed heretics, their nihilism towards the real incarnation of Christ, the cult of the Virgin, the honorable cross, the seven Ecumenical Councils, etc.²¹ In fact, the accounts related to the Bogomilism are presented very subtly and mainly derive from the context. Dometian with an extraordinary literary maneuver presents the efforts of St. Sava for defending the true Christian values as opposed to those of heretics. In fact, he did not mention "concrete heretics", but insists on the Orthodox interpretation of certain dogmatic determinations, which have a completely different meaning in heretical communities²². It is assumed that Dometian used the *Sermon of Presbyter Cosmas* for this part of the *Life*, especially since the order of the dogmatic determinations largely coincides in both parts.

The Life of St. Sava by Theodosius represents a successful literary composition of an already narrated story. In fact, as he himself points out, he rewrote

¹⁸ М. МАРКОВИЋ, *Одблесци култа Илариона Мегленског у поствизантијској уметности на Балкану*, ЗМслу 32–33, 2002, р. 220.

¹⁹ Saint Sava was born in 1175 as Rastko Nemanjić, he was the third and youngest son of the Serbian Grand Prince Stefana Nemanja (1113–1199). He became a monk in 1191 in the monastery of Hilandar and was named Sava. He was a Mount Athos monk, hieromonk, and abbot of the monastery in Studenica, the first Archbishop of the Serbian Church, a diplomat, writer and legislator. He is one of the most important figures in Serbian history, and his cult has been cherished for centuries among the Serbian people and beyond in the Balkans. See: С. МИЛЕУСНИЋ, *Свети Срби*, Крагујевац 1989, р. 40–53.

²⁰ More about the strategy of St. Sava in subjugating the heresy see: А.Р. РОАСН, *The Competition for Souls: Sava of Serbia and Consumer Choice in Religion in the Thirteenth Century Balkans*, Гл 50.1, 2006, р. 149–156.

²¹ Д. ДРАГОЛОВИЋ, *Богомилство на Балкану и у Малој Азији*, vol. II, Београд 1982, р. 55.

²² Д. ДРАГОЛОВИЋ, В. АНТИЋ, *Богомилството во средновековната...*, р. 121.

The Life of St. Sava according to Dometian's instructions, probably during the period between 1290 and 1292. Actually, the literary innovation lays in the fact that Theodosius presents the same story in a different way, using a new sentence structure and compositional processing of the text. Referring to the question of heresies, Theodosius identified their followers as *vicious, dark in light, ignorant of the truth... And he prayed a lot to those who were in the heresies that he commanded and taught them to return to the orthodox apostolic church, promising imposts and gifts*. But, for those who refused to return to Orthodoxy, punishments such as persecution and anathema were envisaged²³.

The Life of Theodosius of Trnovo, written by the Patriarch of Constantinople Callistus is also an important source for the period of 14th century, and in that respect for the existence of Messalian and Bogomil tendencies of Mount Athos. Probably it was composed during Callistos' last months of life and has to be regarded as one of his last works. A passage, *to us, on Mount Athos, suggests that Callistos wrote the Life in an Athos monastery during the winter of 1363–1364*²⁴. At that time the Holy Mount was under Serbian control as it is confirmed by several Serbian *protoi* and from other historical data, concerning not only Chilandar and Karyes, but also other monasteries, including Lavra²⁵. Its historical value, especially in terms of provided information about the Bogomilism, this work can be compared to the *Sermon of Presbyter Kozma*.

In fact, Theodosius of Trnovo and the biographer Callistus were trained together in the hesychastic practices of Gregory of Sinai on Mount Athos, which means that they knew each other. The *Life* contains information that

there was a nun in Thessaloniki called Irene. Residing in Thessalonica, she passed herself off as if living in purity, but furtively and secretly she was a perpetrator of all kinds of impurity and vileness. When the monks discovered what kind of woman she was, many of them began to meet together where she was living. She, the totally unclean one, had mastered the entire Messalian heresy, which she taught in secret to all those who visited her for the sake of impiety. Because the heresy became widespread, many monks were affected by the error, and when they went, in separate groups, to the holy mountain of Athos, they offended the monasteries there with poverty and begging²⁶.

²³ Д. ДОЈЧИНОВИЋ, *Теодосије. Житије Светога Саве*, Бања Лука 2016, p. 187–193.

²⁴ A. RIGO, M. SCARPA, *The Life of Theodosius of Trnovo Reconsidered*, [in:] *Byzantine Hagiography. Texts, Themes and Projects*, ed. A. RIGO, M. TRIZIO, E. DESPOTAKIS, Turnhout 2018 [= B.SBHC, 13], p. 481.

²⁵ A. RIGO, *Il Monte Athos e la controversia palamitica dal Concilio del 1351 al Tomo sinodale del 1368*, [in:] *Gregorio Palamas e oltre. Studi e documenti sulle controversie teologiche del XIV secolo bizantine*, ed. IDEM, Firenze 2004 [= OV, 16], p. 14.

²⁶ В.СЛ. КИСЕЛКОВ, *Житието на св. Теодосий Търновски като исторически паметник*, София 1926, p. 14; J. HAMILTON, B. HAMILTON, Y. STOYANOV, *Christian Dualist Heresies in the Byzantine World, 650–1450*, Manchester 1998 [= MMS], p. 283.

Lazarus and a certain Cyril with the nickname Bosota, who spread Messilian-Bogomil tendencies on Mount Athos, are also mentioned in *The Life of Theodosius*. Accusations of decadence were a common practice for representing/displaying the heretics in the hagiographic literature. So, Lazarus was accused of insanity, while Cyril manifested his evil heresy by *blaspheming the holy icons [...] trampling on the sanctuary and the cross of life [...] teaching men and women to renounce their legal marriage*²⁷.

In the context of dispersion of heresy, the priest Stefan, a follower of Cyril and Bosota, is also mentioned. After the Council in Trnovo, held in 1360, led by Theodosius: Lazarus, who perceived his mistake, took to penance until the end of his days. The impious Bosota and his like-minded adherent Stephen remained petrified. For this reason, seeing their false wisdom, the Tsar ordered that their faces should be branded with red-hot iron and expelled them for ever from the confines of his land²⁸. The Council having completed its work and its bright deed accomplished, everyone returned to their place.

Life of Theodosius of Trnovo also mentions that

a monk called Theodorite came to Trnovo from Constantinople, allegedly to heal [the people]. However, as he got to work he began to plant the weeds of iniquity. The weeds were the blasphemies of the iniquitous Akindin and Barlaam. Not only that: he seduced the people with magic and charms. All this he did not only among the simple ones, but even more so among prominent and famous people. In the beginning, [he created] so much evil that the better part of town inclined toward the chasm. He taught them to worship an oak to receive remedy from it and because of that many sacrificed there sheep and lambs, believing in the deception²⁹.

The account from *The Life of Theodosius of Trnovo* largely corresponds to the *History* of the Byzantine historian Nicephorus Gregoras³⁰ who remark that heretics did not preach. They opposed the “holy writings”, rejected the “divine mission of Christ” and disrespected icons. Their teaching was discovered in 1344, and the protagonists, monks Joseph, Gregory, Moses Isaac, David, and Jov, were accused of following the teachings of the Messilians and Bogomils.

Nicephorus Gregoras gives an account of their trial and adds that some of them were given penances, but others were expelled from Athos, while some escaped to Thessalonica, Berrhoea and Constantinople³¹.

²⁷ J. HAMILTON, B. HAMILTON, Y. STOYANOV, *Christian Dualist Heresies...*, p. 283.

²⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 285.

²⁹ K. PETKOV, *The Voices of Medieval Bulgaria, Seventh-Fifteenth Century. The Records of a Bygone Culture*, Leiden–Boston 2008 [= ECEEMA, 5], p. 296.

³⁰ NICEPHORUS GREGORAS, *Historiae Byzantinae*, ed. L. SCHOPENUS, I. BEKKER, Bonnae 1829–1855 [= CSHB], p. 714, 718, 720.

³¹ J. HAMILTON, B. HAMILTON, Y. STOYANOV, *Christian Dualist Heresies...*, p. 53.

Speaking about the spiritual progressing of Gregory Palamas, the Patriarch of Constantinople Philotius in the *Life*, dedicated to him emphasizes that on the way to Mount Athos:

In the winter of 1316–1317 the young St. Gregory Palamas stayed in a monastery on Mount Papikion, 'on the borders of Thrace and Macedonia', where he disputed with some local heretics whom his biographer calls Messalians, but who were Bogomils, because they claimed that the Our Father was the only legitimate prayer and refused to venerate the Holy Cross, both distinctively Bogomil traits.

As a conclusion we can point out that during the period of the 14th century the Bogomils acted very subtly, namely hiding themselves behind the ideas of hesychasm, practiced in the monastic circles in the monasteries of Mount Athos, they actually affirmed the Bogomilism³². Despite the obvious differences between the two teachings, they showed some similarities, especially regarding the issue of contemplation, which was resulted with a hypostatic union with God.

In the context of our topics, it should be mentioned the rather controversial *Short Life and Service* of St. John Vladimir, written in Greek by Kosmas, the former Metropolitan of Kitios, on the initiative by John Pappas and published in Venice in 1690, composing the *Akolouthia*³³. The *Life* portrays John Vladimir as being from a royal lineage of pious and orthodox parents, mentioning also the holy martyrs Clement, the blessed Naum, Cyril, Methodius and the other holy equal-to-apostles who turned the people to Orthodoxy and thus away from the Messalian heresy and Bogomil heretics³⁴. Interestingly, Kosma's version of the legend completely distorts the story related to John Vladimir's wedding with Samuel's daughter, presenting it as an arranged marriage between Vladimir's parents and Samuel, who preserved his virginity, completely dedicating himself to God³⁵. Because of this, John Vladimir fell victim of a conspiracy by his wife and her brother, who aspired to take over his empire and to establish heresy, being secret Bogomils. At the moment of the murder, a miracle occurred and the beheaded Vladimir took his head and continued his way. His murderer started to consume his own flesh until he died torn apart, while his wife repented and begged for forgiveness³⁶. The analysis of the *Life*

³² D. OBOLENSKY, *The Bogomilism...*, p. 255; M. ANGELOVSKA-PANOVA, *Turning towards Heresy: Bogomils and Self-Defence*, NMS 63, 2019, p. 90–91.

³³ H. MELOSKI, *Prološko žitije sv. Jovana Vladimira. Dukljanski knez sv. Vladimir 970–1016*, Podgorica 2016, p. 59–64.

³⁴ В. ТЪПКОВА-ЗАИМОВА, *Българи Родом. Комитопулите, цар Самуил и неговите потомци според историческите извори и историографската традиция*, София 2014, p. 132.

³⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 133.

³⁶ M.B. PANOV, *The Blinded State. Historiographic Debates about Samuel Cometopoulos and his State (10th–11th Century)*, Leiden–Boston 2019 [= ECEEMA, 55]; М.Б. ПАНОВ, *Ослепената държава. Историографски дебати за Самуил Комитопулот и неговата държава (10–11 век)*, Скопје 2021, p. 158–159.

shows that the story of the relationship between John Vladimir and Kosara completely deviates from that of the *Priest of Duklja*, where his wife is portrayed as pious follower of Christianity and not as proponent of Bogomils³⁷. In this regard, the question imposes why the author of the *Life* inserted Bogomilism in the story about Saint Vladimir and why he presented Samuel's closest family as proponents of the heresy. Especially, since there is no other source that would support this claim. This could mean that the author was probably referring to the Bogomil traditions present in the Ohrid region in 10th century, which he was projecting in his own time in order to raise the prestige of the Ohrid Archbishopric among the Orthodox subjects as defender of true Christian belief.

To conclude. The analysis of the hagiography speaks about the status and dispersion of Bogomilism in different periods and certain regions in Macedonia and in the Balkans.

According to the established methodology for writing a hagiography, the authors were primarily concerned with the asceticism of the saint, however they always had in mind the historical context. It is interesting to note that saints in debates with heretics have always been gentle and patient, and in the beginning usually used the tactic of persuasion. Dialogue as a tool for converting to Orthodoxy was a priority in the saint's tactics, who was certainly the personification of virtue, justice and wisdom. Most of the excerpted hagiographical accounts correspond to historical narratives, which speaks in favor of their authenticity and relevance. Although, we cannot ignore the general impression that the authors, who were mainly of Orthodox provenance, did not refrain from classifying heresy as evil, wicked, etc.

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