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REMARKS ON CAPTIVES AND WARRIORS IN AN OLD BULGARIAN COLLECTION OF MIRACLE STORIES

Abstract. When scholars' efforts are focused on the ethnic, religious and social diversity in certain parts of the Byzantine commonwealth during the middle ages, the hagiographic literature stands out as a key primary source. One such source is a voluminous early tenth-century collection of miracle stories titled *A Tale of the Iron Cross*. Its essential role when trying to uncover data, specific information and truths about Bulgaria's medieval past is undeniable. A number of highly informative records have been found and are well-preserved within the covers of this impressive literary work. Many of them have been used repeatedly in various scholars' academic initiatives and undertakings. However, other *Tale's* records, regardless of their unique peculiarities and immeasurable contemporary information, still remain outside of the main research work when it comes to the subject matter of captivity and warfare.

Keywords: hagiography, Old Bulgarian collection of miracle stories, captives, recruits, warriors, monks and laymen

Introduction

The interest in medieval hagiographic literature from the Orthodox world definitely cannot be labelled as either new, sporadic or limited in the scholarly circles. It is not surprising given the fact that the popular and numerous hagiographical works are the key source of information, especially regarding the historical past of South-eastern Europe during the period. Hence, the attempt to uncover certain aspects and peculiarities through the prism of the relatively voluminous collection of stories, which include miracles of Saint George compiled at the beginning of the tenth century, and known under the name *A Tale of the Iron Cross* (recently also known as *The Tale of the Monk Christodoulos*), should be considered

logical¹. At present, the work in question does not seem to have been fully utilised in such research efforts despite the interesting pieces of information that are recorded in each of its sections. For example, in the very first part of the collection of miracle stories, in an unambiguous phrase it is noted that the *wondrous and glorious miracles and healings of the great, marvellous and glorious martyr George* took place across a very wide geographical area of the Balkans and the Eastern Mediterranean².

On the pages of the *Tale*, the tenth-century hagiographer provides us with the descriptions of many peculiarities, travels, miraculous healings and numerous events concerning the spread of the cult of Saint George in the recently Christianised Bulgarian society at the turn of the ninth and tenth centuries; and, in addition, he provides a broad perspective of the early tenth-century Bulgarian society.

Captives and Captivity in *A Tale of the Iron Cross*

The introductory part and the first of the *Tale's* ten miracle stories – the so-called *Miracle with the Priest's Son*, features the well-known popular motif of the saint's intercession on behalf of those in enemy captivity³. The Old Bulgarian text exhibits a very close parallel to the Byzantine hagiography of that period. It tells of the miracle of Saint Nicholas freeing a young man from Myra, a captive of the Arabs in Crete (so-called *Thaumata tria* [BHG 1355], published by G. Anrich), and of the miracle of Saint George who freed a captive taken in Mytilene/Lesbos (the ninth

¹ *A Tale of the Iron Cross* is a highly remarkable work in the Old Bulgarian literature from the time of Tsar Symeon I (893–927). Hagiographer's decisions regarding the organization of the text, the characters and the thematic scope do not fully correspond to the main line of development of the Bulgarian hagiography in its initial stages from the end of the ninth to the beginning of the eleventh century. Cf. Ив. Божилов, *Българската агиография и византийската агиография*, [in:] ИДЕМ, *Седем етюда по Средновековна история*, София 1995, p. 307–335; *История на българската средновековна литература*, ed. Ан. Милтенова, София 2008, p. 140–141; А. Ангущева, Н. Гагова, Ан. Милтенова, Т. Славова, А. Стойкова, *Книжовността по времето на цар Симеон*, [in:] *Българският Златен век. Сборник в чест на цар Симеон Велики (893–927)*, ed. В. Гюзелев, Ил.Г. Илиев, К. Ненов, Пловдив 2015, p. 242–243. This characteristic is understandable, especially given the issue of the authorship and the recording of the oral narratives of Bulgarian monk(s) in a Greek-speaking milieu. Furthermore, the text was supplemented with Byzantine stories and then subsequently retranslated into Old Bulgarian, ca. 910. The question of the *Tale's* unusual literary history and later additional interventions and abbreviations also should be taken into consideration. Cf. А. Турилов, *Византийский и славянский пласты в „Сказание инока Христодула“*. (К вопросу происхождения памятника), [in:] *Славяне и их соседи. Греческий и славянский мир в средние века и новое время*, vol. VI, Москва 1996, p. 81–99; ИДЕМ, *К изучению Сказания инока Христодула: датировка цикла и имя автора*, [in:] *Florilegium. К 60-летию Б.Н. Флори: Сб. статей*, ed. ИДЕМ, Москва 2000, p. 412–427.

² Б. Ангелов, *Сказание за железния кръст*, Сл 1, 1971, p. 136.

³ *Ibidem*, p. 137–138. (The authors of the present article translated all the enclosed English fragments of the *Tale*).

miracle story in the collection published by J.B. Aufhausen [BHG 691f.])⁴. A. Kazhdan notes in the commentaries on the two Byzantine texts that, beyond the basic similarity, there are essential distinguishing details which make the works sufficiently distinct. Most probably both texts were composed independently of each other, were not related directly, and relied on the circulating stories of miraculous deliverance told and retold by the general public. It is worth reminding that the aforementioned distinguished scholar, with his particular interest in study of the Byzantine literature, seems to accept a later (and, as it were, a more blurred regarding distinct chronological limits) date of the compilation of the miracle-narratives in question. He notes *...the tenth century seems to be more appropriate date for the completion of the "Cretan legends" than the middle of the ninth century as proposed by Anrich for the Thaumata tria and Methodii Encomium*⁵. If Kazhdan's version of such a later dating of the Byzantine texts is correct, then the Old Bulgarian collection of miracle stories raises some questions concerning the direction of textual influences and parallels, given its compilation happened ca. 910⁶.

In the aforementioned first miracle (*Miracle with the Priest's Son*) of the *Tale*, along with the tangible clever use of ready-made creative techniques for completing

⁴ G. ANRICH, *Hagios Nikolaos. Der heilige Nikolaos in der griechischen Kirche. Text und Untersuchungen*, vol. I, Berlin 1913, p. 188–195; J.B. AUFHAUSEN, *Miracula Sancti Georgii*, Leipzig 1913, p. 101–103. Cf. also: St. EFTHYMIADIS, *Greek Byzantine Collections of Miracles. A Chronological and Bibliographical Survey*, SO 74.1, 1999, p. 195–211; IDEM, *Collections of Miracles (Fifth–Fifteenth Centuries)*, [in:] *The Ashgate Research Companion to Byzantine Hagiography*, vol. II, *Genres and Contexts*, ed. IDEM, Farnham 2014, p. 103–142.

⁵ Cf. A. KAZHDAN, *Hagiographical Notes (5–8)*, B 54, 1984, p. 177–182. At the risk of some speculation and over-interpretation, it may be noted that the circulation of oral accounts at a popular level may also be an understandable, though naïve way of justifying the suspicious, unexpected or inexplicable return of some of the captives. This would be especially likely if it was not in their interest to share details of their captivity, their possible (even if forced) cooperation with the Arabs, renunciation of Christianity while in captivity, or other actions that would expose them to the imperial laws. On the other hand, the idea shared decades ago by Rosemary Morris should not be neglected; namely, even with caution (and perhaps with some bias given the type of texts), in the frequent occurrence of these motifs in hagiographic works, scholars should see an indication that people sought miraculous intervention *because the lay world had failed them: the military had been defeated or shown to be powerless to protect them; their landlords could not or would not provide help, and their own communal solidarities had broken down under the pressure of sudden or unmagable disaster*. Cf. R. MORRIS, *Monks and Laymen in Byzantium, 843–1118*, Cambridge 1995, p. 114. For the struggles in the Aegean and the challenges after the conquest of Crete by the Arabs (ca. 824), with due attention to the Byzantine hagiographical works and reliability of their information see: V. CHRISTIDES, *The Raids of the Moslems of Crete in the Aegean Sea: Piracy and Conquest*, B 51.1, 1981, p. 76–111; M. LEONTISI, *The Byzantine and Arab Navies in the South Aegean and Crete: Shipping, Mobility and Transport (7th–9th c.)*, GA 12, 2017, p. 171–233.

⁶ А. ТУРИЛОВ, *Византийский и славянский пласты в „Сказание инока Христодула“...*, p. 81–99; IDEM, *К изучению Сказания инока Христодула...*, p. 412–427. Cf. also: I. LUNDE, *Slavic Hagiography*, [in:] *The Ashgate Research Companion to Byzantine Hagiography*, vol. I, *Periods and Places*, ed. St. EFTHYMIADIS, Farnham 2014, p. 369–383.

a story, a peculiar note of specificity and an overall general verisimilitude can be detected. In fact, the similarities of this “Byzantine stratum” (if we may use Turi-
lov’s definition) in the Old Bulgarian collection of miracle stories to other con-
temporary Byzantine hagiographic works brings additional advantages. For example,
St. Efhymiadis points out that the motif of miraculous release from captivity is
chiefly intrinsic to the texts written up to the beginning of the tenth century. As
a rule, it is about the rescue of a certain person, and not about a mass deliverance
from the bitter fate of captivity of a group of prisoners. Besides, as far as Asia Minor
and the Aegean are concerned, the intercession of the saint does not become an
occasion for organising an attack or counter-offensive activities against the cap-
tors⁷. Features that are also observed in *Miracle with the Priest’s Son*, supplemented
by the creative decision to describe the release of a captive through the narrative
of another former captive. The story of the monk Kosmas “sets” the *Tale* in a recog-
nizable spatial, temporal and event context⁸. A key moment is the mention of the
reign of Emperor Basil I (867–886) and the notice of a Byzantine *strategos* who
went to Cyprus. The text reads as follows:

My brethren, I was still a child when I was captured, and I served my master for a long time.
And Tsar [Emperor – Y.H., D.K.] Basil appointed my lord to be the *strategos* of a district
which bordered the Saracens. As we approached Cyprus and they began to tell my master:
Here, in this place is the Church of Saint George. A priest serves in it, and his son was cap-
tured by the Saracens...

Язъ, браѣ, егда плѣниша мѧ дѣтська и слѣжи гнѣ мѡемѧ много днѣи. И постави и стратига
црѣвѣ Василии на оукраинѣ ѿ срауинѣ. И придохомъ близъ Кѣпра и науаше повѣдати гнѣ
мѡемѧ: Оѣ мѣсти естъ црѣквѣ стѣго Георгия. И попъ оу неѧ, иже слѣжити ен, и сѣѧ его вѣша
плѣнили срауинѣ...⁹

⁷ St. EFTHYMIADIS, *Chrétiens et sarrasins en Italie méridionale et en Asie Mineure (IX^e–X^e siècle). Essai d’étude comparée*, [in:] *Histoire et culture dans l’Italie byzantine. Acquis et nouvelles recherches*, ed. G. NOYÉ, J.-M. MARTIN, A. JACOB, Rome 2006, p. 613–614.

⁸ For some important details concerning the significance of the collections of miracle stories despite fictional characters in the hagiographical works, see: R. LENNART, *Fiction and Reality in the Hagiographer’s Self-Presentation*, TM 14, 2002, p. 547–552; M. HINTERBERGER, *Byzantine Hagiography and its Literary Genres. Some Critical Observations*, [in:] *The Ashgate Research Companion to Byzantine Hagiography*, vol. II..., p. 25–60; Ch. MESSIS, *Fiction and/or Novelisation in Byzantine Hagiography*, [in:] *The Ashgate Research Companion to Byzantine Hagiography*, vol. II..., p. 313–341; A. ALWIS, *The Hagiographer’s Craft: Narrators and Focalisation in Byzantine Hagiography*, [in:] *The Hagiographical Experiment. Developing Discourses of Sainthood*, ed. Ch. GRAY, J. CORKE-WEBSTER, Leiden–Boston 2020 [= VC.S, 158], p. 300–332; St. EFTHYMIADIS, *Saints and Secondary Heroes in Byzantine Hagiography*, [in:] *Constructing the Saints in Greek and Latin Hagiography. Heroes and Heroines in Late Antique and Medieval Narrative*, ed. K. DE MEMMERMAN, J. VAN PELT, K. STAAT, Turnhout 2023, p. 33–56.

⁹ Б. АНГЕЛОВ, *Сказание за железния кръст...*, p. 137.

The devastating attacks of the Arab pirate squadrons on the southern coasts of Asia Minor and on the islands of the Eastern Mediterranean continued beyond the initial years of the rule of the progenitor of the so-called Macedonian dynasty. In addition, Emperor Basil I (867–886) was not the only ruler of Byzantium who tried to deal with this problem, often by organizing large-scale expeditions. However, one of the significant moments in the questionable naval endeavours of the imperial fleet occurred specifically during the 870s, when a temporary restoration of the Byzantine power over Cyprus was achieved and for a period of seven years it was again part of the Empire. According to the information in the treatise *De thematibus*, associated with the name of Emperor Constantine VII Porphyrogenitus (913–959), his predecessor, Emperor Basil I (867–886), also took the appropriate steps for the full inclusion of the strategic island in the Byzantine military-administrative system, i.e. by creating the theme of Cyprus. This meant the appointment of a *strategos* as well as recruitment and quartering of his *stratiotai* (and probably also with initial efforts regarding the establishment of a local thematic fleet due to the challenges in the Cyprus' waters). This short-lived direct imperial rule over the island ended as early as the late 870s or the early 880s¹⁰.

It is also worth noting the way in which the hagiographer delineated two of the most important (from the Byzantine point of view) areas from which the captives came, (which, according to Jeff Fynn-Paul, can also be called *slaving zones*¹¹) – the

¹⁰ Although short-lived, Emperor Basil I's success in this part of the Eastern Mediterranean should not be underestimated. Cf. CONSTANTINO PORFIROGENITO, *De thematibus*, ed. A. PERTUSI, Rome–Città del Vaticano 1952, p. 81.20–24. Cf. also the recent English translation with notes and comments: *The De Thematibus ('On the Themes') of Constantine VII Porphyrogenitus*, trans., praef. J. HALDON, Liverpool 2021 [= TTB, 11], p. 156.

¹¹ Cf. J. FYNN-PAUL, *Empire, Monotheism and Slavery in the Greater Mediterranean Region from Antiquity to the Early Modern Era*, PP 205, 2009, p. 3–40; IDEM, *Introduction. Slaving Zones in Global History: The Evolution of a Concept*, [in:] *Slaving Zones. Cultural Identities, Ideologies, and Institutions in Evolution of Global Slavery*, ed. J. FYNN-PAUL, D. ALAN PARGAS, Leiden 2018, p. 1–19. For the captives' fate in Byzantium as well as for the Byzantine captives both among the Arabs and among the Balkan rivals of the Empire during the period under consideration see: A. KOLIA-DERMITZAKI, *Some Remarks on the Fate of Prisoners of War in Byzantium (9th–10th Centuries)*, [in:] *Atti del Congresso Interdisciplinare di Studi Storici La liberazione dei 'cattivi' tra Cristianità e Islam: Oltre la Crociata e il Ġihād: Tolleranza e servizio umanitario*, ed. G. CIPOLLONE, Città del Vaticano 2000, p. 583–620; Y. ROTMAN, *Byzance face à l'Islam arabe, VII^e–X^e siècle: D'un droit territorial à l'identité par la foi*, A.H 60.4, 2005, p. 767–788; IDEM, *Byzantine Slavery and the Mediterranean World*, trans. J.M. TODD, Cambridge Massachusetts 2009; A. RAMADĀN, *The Treatment of Arab Prisoners of War in Byzantium, 9th–10th Centuries*, Als 43, 2009, p. 155–194; Y. HRISTOV, *Prisoners of War in Early Medieval Bulgaria (Preliminary Remarks)*, SCer 5, 2015, p. 73–105; M. ΛΥΚΑΚΗ, *Οι αιχμάλωτοι πολέμου στη Βυζαντινή Αυτοκρατορία (6^{ος}–11^{ος} αι.): Εκκλησία, Κράτος, διπλωματία και κοινωνική διασταση*, Athens–Paris 2016 (unpublished PhD Thesis); S. WIERBIŃSKI, *Prospective Gain or Actual Cost? Arab Civilian and Military Captives in the Light of Byzantine Narrative Sources and Military Manuals from the 10th Century*, SCer 8, 2018, p. 253–283; M. ΛΥΚΑΚΙ, *L'économie du pillage et les prisonniers de guerre: Byzance, VII^e–X^e siècle*, [in:] *Pillages, tributs, captifs. Prédation et sociétés de l'antiquité tardive au haut Moyen-Âge*, ed. R. KELLER, L. SARTI, Paris 2018, p. 89–102; Y. HRISTOV, *Written Not with Ink but with Tears:*

Balkans, as well as the Northern Black sea area on the one hand, and the Middle East, Southeast and South Asia Minor, and the islands of the Eastern Mediterranean on the other. It should be pointed out that while the latter is described as active and associated with immediate threats of mutual capture and enslavement by the Byzantines and Arabs, the *Tale's* introduction makes a different impression concerning the part of Balkans which was under Bulgarian rule at that time. It is explicitly stated that the monk Kosmas, who told the story of Saint George's intercession on behalf of the captive youth and his miraculous rescue from Arab slavery, was a former captive from the "northern lands" (сѣвѣрьскія страны)¹².

The character of Kosmas seems to be more interesting compared to that of the priest's son. Taking into account the *Tale's* peculiarities, it cannot be stated with certainty whether this is entirely the hagiographer's creative approach, or whether the character was based on a real person with whom he was in contact. In both cases, however, given the mid-ninth – early tenth-century geopolitical realities along the Byzantine borders, there are good reasons to assume that the phrase "northern lands" refers to the Bulgarian territories¹³. The information that he had

Byzantine Civilians in Bulgarian Captivity according to the Letters of Patriarch Nicholas I Mystikos (901–907, 912–925), *Medi* 43, 2022, p. 137–169; G. СИМЕОНОВ, *In Enemy Hands: the Byzantine Experience of Captivity between the Seventh and Tenth Centuries*, *EME* 31.3, 2023, p. 430–458.

¹² Cf. ...a brother, named Kosmas, who was a captive from the northern lands, began to tell... [...брѣ, именемѣ Козма, иже баше плененѣ ѿ сѣвѣрьскія страны, нача повѣдати...]. Cf. also ...Three years ago my father sent me to Cyprus and here they captured us all while we were on the ship. And I was a slave to a Saracen for three years... [...Третіемѣ лѣтѣ въ Кюпрѣ посла ма ѿць мои и тѣ изымаша ны всѣ, елико бѣ насѣ в корабли. И работаше ели срауинниѣ .ї. лѣта]. Б. АНГЕЛОВ, *Сказание за железния кръст*..., p. 137.

¹³ Of course, we should not exclude the possibility that Kosmas could also be a victim of the slave trade in the Eastern Europe, for which, as is well known, Byzantium and the Arab Caliphate were usually the two final destinations at the time. For the sake of completeness, one can note here that Turilov makes an effort to present Kosmas as coming from Caucasian Iberia, although, as the aforementioned distinguished scholar himself noted, such a statement makes it more difficult to explain his captivity in Byzantium at the time of Emperor Basil I (867–886). Cf. А. ТУРИЛОВ, *Мѣдра Пльсковская и Мѣдра Дръсторская – две Мундраги первой болгаро венгерской войны (география чудес Вмч. Георгия в Сказании инока Христодула)*, [in:] *Славяне и их соседи. Славяне и кочевой мир*, vol. X, ed. Б.Н. Флоря et al., Москва 2001, p. 43–44. Spasova on the other hand expresses skepticism towards such an assumption and draws attention to the fact that the proposed hypothesis of a metathesis of сѣвѣрьскъ (Northern) into иверьскъ (Iberian, i.e. Georgian) is unconvincing, especially against the background of the other uses of сѣвѣрьскъ within the framework of the Old Bulgarian collection of miracle stories which in no way can be associated with Caucasian Iberia. Cf. М. СПАСОВА, *Сказание за железния кръст (превод)*, [in:] *“Сказание за железния кръст” и епохата на цар Симеон*, ed. А. КАЛОЯНОВ, М. СПАСОВА, Т. МОЛЛОВ, Велико Търново 2007, p. 192. It is also significant that in the version of the *Tale* known today the former captive Kosmas in fact is not presented as a traumatized victim. In this sense, his ego/pseudo-ego account is interesting, but it is far from the literature concerning the trauma of captivity. Cf. for example: Ch. MESSIS, *La mémoire di «je» souffrant: Construite et écrire la mémoire personnelle dans les récits de captivité*, [in:] *L'écriture de la mémoire. La littérature de l'historiographie. Actes di III^e colloque international*

served his master for a long time (even since childhood), combined with what we know about the long period of peace between the Empire and Bulgaria, which began after the conversion efforts of Knyaz Boris I (852–889) in the mid-860s, indicates that the beginning of his captivity should be associated with an earlier stage of the Bulgarian-Byzantine relations. These may be the early years of the reign of the aforementioned Knyaz Boris I (852–889). At that time, Empress Theodora (ca. 815 – after 867) was still in charge of the Regency, shortly before her son, Emperor Michael III (ca. 842–867), became a sole ruler, and the Bulgarians tried to take advantage of the situation by raiding and plundering across the Thracian border. The tenth century *Chronicle of Symeon the Logothete* describes the Empress's response to the attacks upon the Byzantine possessions. She reinforced the border units, changing their role from defensive to an offensive one. These troops changed the dynamics of the events and not only met the invaders but attacked the neighbouring Bulgarian territories and despoiled and destroyed settlements and fortifications¹⁴. We may risk some over-interpretation, but it can be added that when captives were kidnapped from the Bulgarian lands in the 850s, it was not only the young age of Kosmas that was the reason for the long service to his master in Byzantium. During the decade in question, the Bulgarian society was still pagan, and although it was not mentioned in the text of the *Tale*, the tension based on a religion was slight or negligible if the enslaved captive youth was a heathen.

Another brief piece of information concerning Kosmas also seems to be relatively informative. Undoubtedly, the period of his captivity was over when he recounted the miraculous intervention of Saint George and the deliverance of

philologique «EMPHNEIA», Nicosie, 6–7–8 mai 2004 organisé par l'E.H.E.S.S. et l'Université de Chypre, ed. P. ODORICO et al., Paris 2006, p. 107–146; P. ODORICO, *Les trois vidages de la même violence: Les trois prises de Thessalonique*, [in:] *L'écriture de la mémoire...*, p. 147–179; A.J. GOLDWIN, *Witness Literature in Byzantium. Narrating Slaves, Prisoners, and Refugees*, Cham 2021, p. 71–140.

¹⁴ *Symeonis Magistri et Logothetae Chronicon*, ed. St. WAHLGREN, Berlin 2006 [= *CFHB*, 44.1], p. 239.148 – 240.153. See the recent English translation *The Chronicle of the Logothete*, trans. St. WAHLGREN, Liverpool 2019 [= *TTB*, 7], p. 181. The tensions between Bulgaria and Byzantium from the first half of the 850s are presented in a different way by Joseph Genesios, Theophanes Continuatus, and in a text related to the *Chronicle of Symeon the Logothete*, known as *Chronicle of Pseudo-Symeon Magister*, part of which was published by Immanuel Bekker in 1838 under the title *Symeon Magister*. Cf. A. KAZHDAN, Ch. ANGELIDI, *A History of Byzantine Literature (850–1000)*, Athens 2006, p. 162–170; W. TREADGOLD, *The Middle Byzantine Historians*, New York 2013, p. 203–224; L. NEVILLE, *Guide to Byzantine Historical Writing*, Cambridge 2018, p. 118–123. These chroniclers do not hide the original hostile intentions but focus on the settlement of relations between the two polities. However, Pseudo-Symeon mentions looting in the themes of Thrace and Macedonia. He also writes about Emperor Michael's march about a decade later, which did not lead to a war because of the decision to impose Christianity in Bulgaria. See *Theophanes Continuatus, Ioannes Cameniata, Symeon Magister [Pseudo-Symeon], Georgius Monachus*, ed. I. BEKKER, Bonn 1838 [= *CSHB*, 33], p. 664.5 – 665.2, 665.11 – 666.6. It is less likely that the compiler of the *Tale* pointed to the events of 863–864 as the starting point of Kosmas' captivity, noting that by the early-870s he had already served for many years.

the enslaved priest's son. The mention of him as a monk means that he was no longer in the state of *alieni iuris*. Otherwise, he could not have been admitted to a monastery and taken monastic vows. However, it is worth noting the way in which he became a monk. The entry of former slaves and captives into the ranks of the clergy after their release and manumission by their masters was not unusual in Byzantium¹⁵. The parts of the *Tale* in question definitely do not fit this pattern. This is especially so if we judge them by the text of the second miracle (*Miracle with the Child*), according to which Kosmas fled from his master in the border region (the Arab border) and returned to his homeland and became a monk¹⁶. If the highly probable assumption that Kosmas came from the Bulgarian lands is true, his escape in this direction is completely understandable. His monasticism after returning to his homeland is also understandable, insofar as it corresponds to the processes which took place in Bulgaria in the 870s–880s, after the conversion to Christianity in 865. Moreover, for those who had learned the Greek language during captivity the adoption of monasticism was a way to gain position in the newly converted society, not least because the newly established Bulgarian archdiocese certainly experienced a shortage of clergy at the local level. Such an interpretation seems somewhat problematic, because of the apparent contradiction years later after his escape and monasticism, Kosmas was again in the Byzantine territory, and in a completely different role. However, this apparent contradiction is only there at the first glance. The hagiographer specifically notes that Kosmas's audience was made up of people who, at the particular moment, encountered each other during their travels. Besides, the descriptions of monks and clergy (who were of different origins) who travelled across the Bulgarian-Byzantine border from the Balkans to Asia Minor and vice versa is entirely consistent with the other data found within the *Tale*¹⁷. In the interest of objectivity, given the complex literary history of the Old Bulgarian collection of miracle stories, another plausible interpretation should not be neglected, either. A later copyist's replacement of *земля сѣа* (this land/country/area, i.e. the monastery area) with the spelling *земля своа* (homeland) may cause a possible mistransmission of this part of the text. To resolve the questions surrounding such a different reading, a look at other copies of *Miracle with the Child* would undoubtedly be helpful. Unfortunately, at this time, they are beyond our

¹⁵ Special attention has recently been paid to a number of details of these occurrences. Cf. with the enclosed bibliography: N. LEIDHOLM, *Parents and Children, Servants and Masters: Slaves, Freedmen, and the Family in Byzantium*, [in:] *The Routledge Handbook on Identity in Byzantium*, ed. M.E. STEWART, D.A. PARNELL, C. WHATELY, London–New York 2022, p. 263–281.

¹⁶ Cf. ...I fled from my master and from that border district, and arrived in my homeland. And I became a monk. [...оудиѣ ѿ гнѣа и ѿ краины тоа, и приидохъ въ землю свою. И быѣ линиѣ]. Б. АНГЕЛОВ, *Сказание за железния кръст...*, p. 139.

¹⁷ Y. HRISTOV, *Travelling and Travellers: Persons, Reasons, and Destinations according to 'A Tale of the Iron Cross'*, [in:] *Voyages and Travel Accounts in Historiography and Literature*, ed. B. STOJKOVSKI, Budapest 2020, p. 33–54.

reach. It is significant that the version ЗЕМЛА ЦІА instead of ЗЕМЛА СВОА also does not contradict the general message of the *Tale*. Not only because Kosmas's escape journey would have been shorter and more feasible, but also because it reveals even more direct parallels with the situation in Byzantium. The flight of slaves and dependents to the monasteries and the adoption of monasticism, and even their rise to the upper levels of the clergy, led to a serious tension with the imperial authorities. Even in the early Byzantine era, the emperors decreed under what conditions and terms fugitive slaves who had taken monastic vows could be returned to their masters, and in these cases the vow and the corresponding cessation of the slave status remained in force. It is hardly a coincidence that these provisions were re-updated in the legal regulations of the second half of the ninth and the beginning of the tenth century (contemporary with the appearance of the *Tale*), in the so-called *Nomocanon* of Patriarch Photios (858–867, 877–886), in the fourth book of the *Βασιλικά* and in *Novels* 9, 10 and 11 of Emperor Leo VI (886–912)¹⁸.

In this regard, despite the use of most likely fictional characters, as far as the question of captivity is concerned one can say that the evolution from a young pagan to an elderly monk (in a monastery attracting pilgrims and traveling monks) closely matches the patterns of the integration of barbarians into the Byzantine society, in which slavery often was mainly an intermediate state, and the conversion to Christianity was a prerequisite of prime importance. The latter is valid even if our assumption that the hagiographer meant that Kosmas was taken from the Bulgarian lands in the 850s is incorrect. The mechanism of integration was also applicable to captives and abductees from Eastern Europe and the Northern Black Sea area who were sold as slaves to Byzantium at the time¹⁹.

It is significant that the hagiographer is very consistent when it comes to the matter of who was liable to be taken captive and enslaved. Within the framework of the *Tale*, there is a description of such relations only between representatives of different religious (and ethnic) groups, but not between co-religionists. The latter applies not only to the former prisoner – the monk Kosmas, or to the

¹⁸ Cf. with the relevant references to *Codex Justinianus* I.3.16 and *Justinian Novel* 5 chapter 2 and *Novel* 123 chapters 4, 17, 35: *Номоканон Константинопольского патриарха Фотия, с толкованием Васальмона*, pars 2, ed. В. НОРБЕКОВ, Казань 1899, p. 422–429; *Basilicorum libri LX*, Series A, vol. I, *Textus lubrorum I–VIII*, ed. H.J. SCHELTEMA, N. VAN DER WAL, Groningen 1955, p. 113; *Les Nouvelles de Léon VI le Sage. Texte et traduction*, ed. P. NOAILLES, A. DAIN, Paris 1944, p. 42–49.

¹⁹ Cf. R. SHUKUROV, *Barbarians, Philanthropy, and Byzantine Missionism*, [in:] *Philanthropy in Anatolia through the Ages: The First International Suna & İnan Kiraç Symposium on Mediterranean Civilizations (March 26–29, 2019, Antalya): Proceedings*, ed. O. TEKIN, Ch.H. ROOSEVELT, E. AKYÜREK, İstanbul 2020, p. 141–152. Cf. also: Y. ROTMAN, *Byzantine Slavery...*; N. LENSKI, *Slavery in the Byzantine Empire*, [in:] *The Cambridge World History of Slavery*, vol. II, AD 500–AD 1420, ed. S.L. ENGERMAN, D. RICHARDSON, C. PERRY, Cambridge 2021, p. 453–481; D. PENNA, *The Role of Slaves in the Byzantine Economy, 10th–11th Centuries: Legal Aspects*, [in:] *Slavery in the Black Sea Region, c. 900–1900. Forms of Unfreedom at the Intersection between Christianity and Islam*, ed. F. ROŞU, Leiden 2021, p. 63–89.

priest's son, who was in Arab captivity in Jerusalem, but also to the subjects of the Bulgarian ruler Symeon (893–927), kidnapped by the Magyars during the war of 894–896²⁰.

It is also worth mentioning that the hagiographer provided a glimpse into another model for the integration of captives into a different religious and ethnic environment. The information in the first of the miracle stories in the *Tale* gives a reason to say that the priest's son is presented in Jerusalem, far from his homeland, as a domestic slave. Judging from the information provided, the process of integrating a Byzantine captive into the household of his Arab master was successful and sufficiently advanced. This was the case to the extent that as a boy he was assigned tasks to be performed independently, even outside of the home where he was a servant. The author explicitly noted that after the miraculous deliverance of the young man through the intervention of Saint George, he was unrecognisable in appearance (i.e. he looked foreign) not only to the other members of the Byzantine society, but even to his own father²¹.

Warriors

When the focus of research efforts is on *A Tale of the Iron Cross*, the theme of war and warriors cannot be avoided. The attempt to glimpse some reminiscences of the military affairs and the network of social relations and dependencies that surrounds warfare in stories devoted to a saint-warrior and a military patron cannot be considered surprising or unexpected. With a view to uncovering a significant deposit of information concerning military affairs in early medieval Bulgaria, it is particularly productive to look both at the well-known *Miracle of Saint George with the Bulgarian Warrior* and at the significantly less studied *Miracle with Clement Who Was Saved by Saint George in War* – the two most voluminous texts within the collection of miracle stories that are devoted specifically to the experience of the combatants and their rescue from captivity and/or death. It is very tempting to define the two fragments of the *Tale*, in their original form, as a type of an oral battle narrative, although of a different kind than the one Dragova writes about²².

²⁰ Б. АНГЕЛОВ, *Сказание за железния кръст...*, p. 141.

²¹ Something more, the hagiographer deliberately notes that the unrecognisable and unexpected returnee was summoned for interrogation by the authorities. Cf. Б. АНГЕЛОВ, *Сказание за железния кръст...*, p. 137–138.

²² Н. ДРАГОВА, *Старобългарско войнско сказание от IX в.*, ПБФ 8, 1991, p. 156–167; ЕАДЕМ, *Войнско сказание в старобългарската литература от Симеоновата епоха (IX–X в.)*, СЛ 25–26, 1991, p. 47–57. Cf. also: S. McGRATH, *Warfare as Literary Narrative*, [in:] *A Companion to the Byzantine Culture of War, ca. 300–1204*, ed. Y. STOURIATIS, Leiden–Boston 2018 [= BCBW, 3], p. 160–195; P. SOPHOULIS, *War and Identity in Early Medieval Bulgaria*, [in:] *War and Collective Identity in the Middle Ages: East, West, and Beyond*, ed. Y. STOURIATIS, Leeds 2023, p. 87–98.

The information about the development of the Bulgarian-Byzantine war of 894–896 (which after the inclusion of the Magyars on the side of the Empire and the Pechenegs joining as Bulgarian allies grew from a bilateral conflict into a larger-scale clash) is duplicated in both narratives. Nothing is mentioned about the campaign against Byzantium, but details about the initial heavy defeats by the Magyars and the subsequent, far more successful, Bulgarian counter-offensive are provided. Against the background of this general similarity, the two warriors described are quite different from one another. In fact, with a certain dose of caution, but also without hesitation, one can say that this peculiarity in the texts seemingly has not been given due attention by scholars; or, at least, it deserves some additional commentary. For example, one such subject is the upper age limit for mobilisation in the early medieval Bulgarian armies. However, one can discuss such a limitation and identify which conscripts were able to benefit from it and depart from the various types of armed forces due to old age. Generally, finding such details, even when focusing on a specific historical event, such as the clashes with the Magyars described in the mentioned *Tale's* stories, is an exception for medieval Bulgarian history. When it comes to age, dates of birth and other such information, there are rare instances where they can be found even for the ruling family, members of the aristocracy and the clergy, and the situation becomes even more complex when research efforts concern the wider social strata. However, it must be recognized that the *Tale* provides an opportunity to speak about generations. Thanks to a number of passages, both in the mentioned *Miracle of Saint George with the Bulgarian Warrior* and *Miracle with Clement Who Was Saved by Saint George in War*, as well as in other fragments of the collection, greater precision can be achieved regarding the age estimates of those described in the hagiographical work under consideration. Attempts in this direction were made relatively long ago. In the 1940s, Duychev made several points in his comments on the *Miracle of Saint George with the Bulgarian Warrior*. He noted that the Bulgarian warrior described in the story must have been about thirty years old during the campaigns against the Magyars. A decade later, while paying attention to an unknown until that moment fourteenth-century copy of *Miracle of Saint George with the Bulgarian Warrior*, Snegarov offered different calculations²³. The sound reasoning of these scholars needs to be corrected. They relied on the two known chronological landmarks: the conversion of 865 and the war of 894–896. However, both of them had solely the information from the aforementioned miracle story, which is understandable, since their comments were made before it was discovered that the text is part of the Old Bulgarian hagiographical collection, known under the

²³ Ив. Дуйчев, *Из старата българска книжнина*, vol. I, София 1943, p. 210–212; Ив. Снегаров, *Неизвестен досега препис от разказа „Чудо с българина Георги“*, ИИБИ 3–4, 1951, p. 295–296; ИДЕМ, *Старобългарският разказ „Чудо на Свети Георги с българина“ като исторически извор*, ГДА 4(30).2, 1954–1955, p. 217–233.

name *A Tale of the Iron Cross*. In this case, this information is essential, because in another part of the *Tale* – , the hagiographer wrote that the Bulgarian warrior George was already married when he converted to Christianity in the mid-860s²⁴.

Taking into consideration this detail, approximate calculations can be made about the age of the warrior. Certainly, it should be taken into account that the exact age at which people entered into a marriage during the pagan period in the early medieval Bulgaria is not known. However, the fact is that the work being examined here was written by a monk or priest. Because of this, we can suppose (although with reservations) that the author of the text would not have had in mind the marital capacity other than the minimum required according to the canonical legal restrictions in the Orthodox world. In other words, the Bulgarian warrior described in the *Tale* was at least about forty-five – fifty years old in the mid-890s during the campaign against the Magyars. Given the demographic processes in Southeastern Europe during the early Middle Ages, this was quite an old age, especially in view of what is known about life expectancy at that time²⁵. George's wife must have been of similar age. Again, in view of the demographics of the time, it is very likely for a married couple of a similar age profile to have adult sons and daughters, and even grandchildren. However, there is not even a hint of such details in the *Tale*. Although the narrative in *Miracle with the Bulgarian Warrior* and *Miracle with the Woman* (fourth and fifth of the miracle stories in the version of the Old Bulgarian collection under review) does not provide an opportunity for describing heirs, in the details concerning married couple's renunciation of the secular life (in the text of the sixth story, the so-called *Miracle with the Furious Adolescent*), the situation is different. While accepting the monasticism, the settlement of property issues should inevitably include heirs, children and grandchildren, of course if there were any. The idea that the family was deliberately presented as childless arises. This is probably one of the techniques by which the hagiographer additionally aimed at highlighting the sense of difference between the two veterans: George and Clement. The contrast stands out even more when looking at the information in *Miracle with Clement*. He also survived the battles with the Magyars, but it is specifically noted that Clement had many children and relatives who were in his immediate surroundings²⁶.

²⁴ Cf. Б. АНГЕЛОВ, *Сказание за железния кръст...*, p. 145.

²⁵ For women, this age is even 5 to 8 years lower. Cf. for example: Н. КОНДОВА, Сл. ЧОЛАКОВ, П. БОЕВ, *Палеодемографски данни за населението в средновековна България*, ИИАИм 2, 1978, p. 27–34; Н. КОНДОВА, Сл. ЧОЛАКОВ, *Динамика на демографските процеси в средновековна България*, БЕГ 1(15).5, 1990, p. 25–32; ПДЕМ, *Антропологични данни за физическия тип продължителността на живота и заболяемостта на една средновековна популация от Добруджа*, БЕГ 3(18).3, 1993, p. 45–54.

²⁶ Б. АНГЕЛОВ, *Сказание за железния кръст...*, p. 147–151. The reasons for such a lack can be varied, depending on the creative vision of the hagiographer. A wide range of writing solutions are included here. From a narrative saturated with fictional characters, to the realization of the narration

At first glance, the passages discussed above seem to have nothing to do with military conscription in the Bulgarian society in the late ninth – early tenth centuries. However, looking at the data in the *Tale*, a question may now be posed: why the apparently old (by medieval standards) man participated in the war? Addressing this issue will reveal interesting points. As has been mentioned, the *Miracle with Clement*, unlike the *Miracle with the Bulgarian Warrior*, has hardly attracted the scholars' attention. This is mainly due to the fact that the specific historical information concerning early medieval Bulgaria's political and church history in the fragment of the *Tale* referring to Clement does not appear to abound in details. However, the connection between the two stories is tangible, especially given their early-tenth-century compilation within a large collection with a complex structure, along with a common chronological and event framework. Such a peculiarity makes the parallel study and comparison of the two texts more than reasonable, and in fact necessary.

Concerning the narrative about Clement, it includes some specific details that shed light on the social background of the army in the late ninth century²⁷. In fact, in the studies devoted to military affairs in early medieval Bulgaria sufficient space is given to the comments concerning the presence of unfree and dependent peasants or city dwellers in some detachments. However, given the vague and insufficient information in the majority of available sources, scholars are limited in what they can say with certainty on this subject²⁸. It is important to emphasise that the *Tale's* stories are among the narratives which make it possible to overcome, at least partly, the aforementioned uncertainty. Clement's rescue is presented in a rather different context to that of George. While George was rescued after the battle was over, after the surviving participants scattered and fled, Clement, who is said to be fighting around the Bulgarian ruler Symeon (893–927), is described in the midst of the battle at the moment when the Magyars prevailed and he found himself isolated from his unit. The hagiographer pointed out Clement's initial misapprehension: the rescued warrior assumed that his savior was someone from the

by building "collective" characters, resting in part or entirely on the personal experiences of people with whom the author was in contact. Cf. Ch. MESSIS, *Fiction and/or Novelisation in Byzantine Hagiography...*, p. 314–315, 326–334. The hagiographer described a childless family, but did not mean the one that lost its heirs in the course of the Magyar raids in 895–896. The latter does not seem likely, since according to the data, the village of the Bulgarian warrior was beyond the reach of Magyar raids. Cf. К. СТАНЕВ, *Влияние на унгарските нашествия от 894–896 г. върху миграционните процеси в българските земи*, Мин 4, 2008, p. 9–24; Я. ХРИСТОВ, *Едно пътуване през Източна Стара планина (по данни от „Сказание за железния кръст“)*, ИРИМГ 2, 2014, p. 70–77.

²⁷ Б. АНГЕЛОВ, *Сказание за железния кръст...*, p. 148.

²⁸ Cf. for example: Ш. АТАНАСОВ et al., *Българското военно изкуство през феодализма*, София 1958, p. 41–52; Д. АНГЕЛОВ, Ст. КАШЕВ, Б. ЧОЛПАНОВ, *Българска военна история. От античността до втората четвърт на X век*, София 1983, p. 136–137; *История на българите*, vol. V, *Военна история на българите от древността до наши дни*, ed. Е. АЛЕКСАНДРОВ, Д. ЗАФИРОВ, София 2007, p. 57–72.

entourage of the boyars he knew. Moreover, the description does not refer to some kind of ordinary camp servants, but to obviously trained bold people who were actively involved in the heat of the battle and took on responsible and dangerous tasks²⁹.

The above-mentioned details further deepen the idea of the difference between the two warriors described in the miracle stories. George did have dependent farmhands in his household. According to the information, the warrior did not belong to the aristocracy, but he was a wealthy owner of a relatively large farm with workers and servants. As for the clearer highlighting of the social status and public position of the Bulgarian warrior George, a look at a manuscript (a *Prologue*) kept in the Archive of the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences – so-called *N 73* (BAS), is particularly productive. The manuscript contains two of the *Tale's* stories – a full (long) redaction of the *Miracle with the Bulgarian Warrior* (folia 355b – the first two lines of 358a) as well as the *Miracle with the Shepherd Bitten by a Snake* (folia 358a – 359b). From line 13 to line 17 of folio 356a a very unambiguous phrase emphasises that George did not have (and did not acquire) a high position in the recently Christianised Bulgarian society and did not belong to the aristocracy or the ruler's milieu. In the record in question it is also specified that the Bulgarian warrior was a member of a conscripted unit of self-armed and self-equipped horsemen:

...Father, I have never ever had a rank at all, any, and I have not lived where the knyaz lived, but outside and with my spear I fought...

...Азъ оуѣ нѣсмь сана ималъ. николиже никоувоже. ни ѣсмь жилъ гдѣ и князь живѣше. нѣ вънѣ и своимъ копѣемъ воува̑...

– reads this illustrative passage of the unabridged text³⁰.

There is a slight discrepancy in the quoted passage in the publication of the story by Angelov. The text is as follows:

...Father, I have never ever had a rank at all, any, and I have not lived where the knyaz lived, but outside and with my horse I fought...

...Азъ оуѣ нѣсмь сана ималъ николиже никоувоже, ни ѣсмь жилъ гдѣ и князь живѣше, нѣ вънѣ, и своимъ конемъ [instead of копѣемъ – Y.H., D.K.] воува̑...³¹

²⁹ Б. АНГЕЛОВ, *Сказание за железния кръст...*, р. 148.

³⁰ ИВ. СНЕГАРОВ, *Старобългарският разказ...*, р. 226.

³¹ Б. АНГЕЛОВ, *Старославянски текстове: 1. Нов препис на старобългарския разказ „Чудото с българина“; 2. Разказ за пастира, ухапан от змия*, ИИБЛ 2, 1955, р. 171–172. Before accusing either scholar of inaccuracy or carelessness in reading the text, or giving too much importance to the

(ВЪ ЛЮДЕХЪ). At first glance, these details are not significant, but when considering the specific problems concerning the social profile of the combatants from the miracle stories, they are of key importance. Without focusing on the details in question, it would not have stood out that the Bulgarian warrior George completed the military service in person and alone, along with others like him in the conscripted unit. None of his household servants accompanied him either on the first or the second campaign against the Magyars, regardless the fact that given his description he was not young during the war of 894–896.

As for Clement, he is also said to possess servants (perhaps domestic slaves, rather than dependents – Y.H., D.K.)³⁴. However, the actions of the two warriors after the first march were different. Miraculously surviving, George returned to his home village. Clement also participated in the first ill-fated bloody battle with the Magyars, but after his deliverance, he headed to the fortress of Mădra Drăstarska, where he continued to live and where in fact Bulgarian ruler Symeon (893–927) initially found refuge after the defeat³⁵. The hagiographer gives additional nuances provided by the passages from the texts relating to the military organisation of the units in the early medieval Bulgaria. These lines from the *Tale* have often attracted the attention of scholars. They concern the note that the military squad from George's village numbered 50 men³⁶. Undoubtedly, *The Miracle with the Bulgarian Warrior* provides grounds for such a statement. In the work, apart from the mention of the first squad, defeated by the Magyars and of which only three men returned to their village, there is also a note of another one. What is more, it was formed by men from the same settlement and it was composed of both veterans of the first campaign and new recruits³⁷. It is this fact that arouses interest and is the basis of the claim that the passage has not been fully interpreted. The assumption is that in the eighth–ninth centuries all men from the free peasantry who were fit to bear arms served in the units of the Bulgarian army. However, according to the *Tale*, at least half of George's combat-capable fellow villagers did not participate in the first phase of the war. The enigma that this information poses finds its reasonable solution only if the nature of the recruitment (general and/or territorial) is clarified³⁸, and accordingly, what form of it is recorded in the Old Bulgarian

³⁴ Cf. Б. АНГЕЛОВ, *Сказание за железния кръст...*, p. 147, 149.

³⁵ Cf. В. БЕШЕВЛИЕВ, *Мундрага и Тича-Вичина*, ИНМВ 21(36), 1895, p. 17–23; А. ТУРИЛОВ, *Мъдра Пльсковская и Мъдра Дръсторская...*, p. 40–60.

³⁶ Б. АНГЕЛОВ, *Сказание за железния кръст...*, p. 141.

³⁷ Ив. СНЕГАРОВ, *Старобългарският разказ...*, p. 227; Б. АНГЕЛОВ, *Сказание за железния кръст...*, p. 142, 143.

³⁸ In detail, with a review and comment on the opinions, the problem is presented by Zhivko Zhekov. He emphasises the fact that by the mid- to the second half of the ninth century the decimal organization of the units conscripted on a territorial basis, but with a strong influence of the previous clan-based system, was already established in the Bulgarian state. Cf. Ж. ЖЕКОВ, *България и Византия VII–IX в. Военна администрация*, София 2007, p. 89–97.

collection of miracle stories. In this regard, the data in the *Miracle with the Bulgarian Warrior* and *Miracle with Clement* are particularly informative. The members of the unit in both the stories are presented as associates. In the text about Clement, it is explicitly emphasised that they were not relatives. According to the records about George, as has been pointed out, his only relative was his wife³⁹. Given the information, it seems that the idea of the local-territorial principle of recruitment is more easily acceptable. In this case, a serious difficulty arises when searching for an adequate answer to the question of why not all of the military conscripts from the village had taken part in the first march. In view of the small chronological distance between the two phases of the war it is impossible to accept that the greater part of the members of the second squad were age-unfit to join the previous one. Perhaps the explanations (or at least part of them) are related to the entire nature of the Bulgarian-Byzantine conflict at the dawn of Symeon's rule, which changed from a two-sided into a four-sided one. It seems reasonable that the newly ascended ruler did not see the need to harness all the military might of the state for the initial clash with the Empire. Subsequently, pressured by the events, he managed to do so only during the counter-offensive against the Magyars. With such a development, it is understandable why only some of the conscripted villagers were included in the original military actions described in the *Tale*.

Drawing a parallel with the Byzantine military-administrative districts, the so-called themes, is also tempting. In the interest of objectivity, it is necessary to note that the village of George referred to in the hagiographic work may have been a military settlement, whose inhabitants were obliged to equip and maintain a certain detachment with specific numbers and weapons. The aforementioned "outside", when considering the early-ninth – early eleventh-century realities in Bulgaria, refers not to the capital and the surrounding central inner area of the state, but to the so-called comitates (military and administrative districts); this, too, provides reasons for arriving at such a conclusion. However, before seeing some kind of a Bulgarian equivalent of the Byzantine military organization in these arrangements, we should draw attention to some of its other features⁴⁰. The data from the Old Bulgarian collection of miracle stories do not make a definite connection between land ownership and military conscription, although both warriors were presented as wealthy. Therefore, it can be stated that a stage of advancing social stratification was registered.

With a certain amount of caution it should be noted that, at least as far as the information in the considered primary source is concerned, the obligation to participate in the army was transferred to one part of the population, while the economic efforts in agriculture, animal husbandry and craft production were reserved for another. This idea finds support in the text – the exact number of the unit(s);

³⁹ Б. АНГЕЛОВ, *Сказание за железния кръст...*, р. 142.

⁴⁰ Cf. Ж. ЖЕКОВ, *България и Византия VII–IX в....*, р. 143–321.

the fact that, regardless of manpower losses, the settlement was able to recruit again, and within a short period of time; the fact that dependent farm workers did not participate in the marches; the military unfitness and non-belonging to the military class of some of those described in the *Miracle with Clement*⁴¹.

Conclusion

The information discussed above can only be considered definitive within the context of the particular medieval literary Old Bulgarian collection of miracle stories. However, the described details are significant enough and definitely cannot and should not be disregarded, especially given the early Old Bulgarian record of some of the inherent motives and creative solutions. In fact, the similarity to the emblematic Byzantine hagiographical works of the era and at the same time the sufficient variety of distinguishing notes that demonstrate the erudition and broad vision of the *Tale's* author are impressive.

It is also notheworthy that within the framework of the *Tale* itself there is not even a hint of military action between Bulgaria and the Empire. The hagiographer found it necessary to describe to the audience only the clashes with the Magyars. The information is presented in the first person, as if by an immediate participant and witness. Such a particular feature of the collection of miracle stories might to a certain extent be explained by the special literary life of the work and the possibility that the original version of the veterans' oral war stories were written by a contemporary clergyman relatively soon after the events in question.

Despite the lack of records concerning clashes on the battlefield between the Bulgarians and the Byzantines, the *Tale* provides an opportunity to highlight interesting information about the participants in the war of 894–896. The author explicitly stated that in the Bulgarian armies during the late ninth – early tenth century the conscription was personal, and the conscript could not be replaced. Regardless of social stratification, such an opportunity was denied even to the members of military units who were quite wealthy and had many dependents. The information in the Old Bulgarian collection of miracle stories confirms the operational flexibility of the military command at the beginning of Symeon's reign. In accordance with the tactical decisions and strategic directions of the military strike, both full and partial mobilisation could be implemented. Of particular interest and key importance is the fact that for the conscripts from the provinces, dropping out of the army was not associated with old age.

⁴¹ Б. АНГЕЛОВ, *Сказание за железния кръст...*, р. 141–143, 147–151.

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