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THE APOCRYPHAL BULGARIAN SERMON OF SAINT JOHN CHRYSOSTOM ON THE ORIGIN OF PAULICIANS AND MANICHEAN DIMENSIONS OF MEDIEVAL PAULICIAN IDENTITY

One of the most interesting documents concerning the early history of Paulicianism in Bulgarian lands is the apocryphal *Saint John Chrysostom's sermon on how the Paulicians came to be*¹. Its text is known entirely or partly from eight copies; the earliest ones are dated back to the 16th century². The best-known variant is the copy from the Adžar collection N326 (17th century), preserved at the Bulgarian National Library³. It was found and published for the first time by Jordan Ivanov, the discoverer of the sermon, in 1922. Since then the Adžar and other copies have been published or quoted in different studies and research works⁴. The meaningful differences between the different copies are insignificant, except for the final passage. According to the Adžar copy, St. John Chrysostom from Petrič went to the Bulgarian land to search for the two “disciples of the devil”, but according to the others, he sent to the Bulgarian land delegates who brought “disciples of the devil” to Petrič⁵. That gives a reason to think that the copies transmitted the text of the initial original relatively correctly. According to Anisava Miltenova

¹ Below in the text I will refer to it as “the sermon”.

² А. МИЛТЕНОВА, *Разобличението на дявола-граматик. (Към историята на старобългарската легенда за произхода на павликяните)*, [in:] *Човек и време. Сборник с научни изследвания в памет на Сабина Беляева*, София 1997, p. 288.

³ Adžar is a village in a mountain part of modern Central Bulgaria – 70 kilometers northeast of Plovdiv. In the 17th century it became a literary center where several famous bookmen and calligraphers worked.

⁴ The sermon is published also in English in “Studia Ceranea”. For that reason I do not give its full text. English translation in: М. ТСИВРАНСКА-КОСТОВА, *Paulicians between the Dogme and the Legend*, SCer 7, 2017, p. 249–251.

⁵ К. СТАНЧЕВ, *Павликяните – ученици на дявола. Бележки относно финала на апокрифния разказ за произхода на павликяните*, [in:] *Vis et sapientia. Studia in honorem Anisavae Miltenova. Нови извори и подходи в медиевистиката*, София 2016, p. 765.

from stylistic and compositional point of view the different copies can be divided in four groups but all of them have originated from common initial source⁶.

In the present article I will try to advance arguments in favor of the following thesis:

- The author of the apocryphal sermon is an ordinary priest or monk from the 13th or 14th century, who lived in the region of medieval Philippopolis/Plovdiv. He was a typical representative of the Bulgarian lower clergy from the Middle Ages: he was literate and familiar with St. John Chrysostom's liturgy but poorly educated in theology and church history. During the Middle Ages ordinary monks and priests became initiators of translation and compilation of a big number of apocrypha that exerted significant influence on Bulgarian culture and on the creation of a phenomenon that can be defined as "popular Christianity/Orthodoxy". Actually, previous researchers maintained a similar view about the origin of the author, the time and place of creation of the sermon⁷. According to some new opinions, the sermon was written in an earlier period – around the end of the 11th or the beginning of the 12th century, and its appearance was *stimulated by real historical events as the Paulician rebellion from 1074 in nearby Philipopolis*⁸.
- The sermon delivers popular pejorative interpretations of Paulician beliefs, historical myths and practices. The author was acquainted with these beliefs, myths and practices not from the Anti-Paulician theological literature but from his environment, and probably from some popular legend of Paulician origin about the history of this heretical group.
- The sermon can give unexpected information about the beliefs of Paulicianism on the Balkans and on their connections with Manicheism.

Authorship, time and place of appearance of the sermon

Up to this moment these problems have been solved by means of the following arguments:

- The obvious historical and theological anachronisms related to the activity of St. Vasilios the Great and St. John Chrysostom, the overall ignorance of the classical Orthodox polemic against dualism and Paulicianism, as well

⁶ А. МИЛТЕНОВА, *Отново за разказа за произхода на павликяните*, ВМд 6, 2015, р. 234–235.

⁷ Й. ИВАНОВ, *Произходът на павликяните според два български ръкописа*, [in:] *Списание на Българската академия на науките*, vol. XXIV, София 1922, р. 26; А. МИЛТЕНОВА, *Разобличението...*, р. 289–290; Д. РАДЕВА, *Павликяни и павликянство в българските земи. Архетип и повторения VII–XVII век*, София 2015, р. 217–218.

⁸ М. TSIBRANSKA-KOSTOVA, *Paulicians...*, р. 232.

as the style of the narrative, indicate that the author was strongly influenced by the apocryphal traditions – a peculiarity that directs to the lower clergy from the Middle Ages. The lack of a similar text in Greek, explicit mentions of the “Bulgarian land”, the phonetic structure of some anthroponyms and oikonoms (appearance of b, č and š) exclude the possibility the sermon to be a translation or a revision of some Greek work⁹. Besides, the Middle Bulgarian literary tradition (11th–14th century) offers other examples of original historical and religious works of obvious popular origin.

- The importance of the place named “Petrič” in the narrative. The discoverer of the sermon, Jordan Ivanov, identified “Petrič” with the medieval fortress Petrič, built in the Rhodope mountains, about 20 kilometers south of Philippopolis/Plovdiv. He advanced several arguments in favor of this identification:
 - The famous Bačkovо monastery, initially inhabited by Georgian monks, was built in the middle of the 11th century in the vicinity of the fortress. The monastery became famous for its miraculous icon of the Virgin Mary, a circumstance that, according to Ivanov, coincides with the story of the miraculous appearance of the Virgin Mary in Petrič in the final part of the sermon.
 - The monastery was found by Γρηγόριος Πακουριανός, a high Byzantine aristocrat who lost his life in the war against the Philippopolis/Plovdiv Paulicians in 1084. On this basis many researchers suggest that the Bačkovо monastery was built as an “Orthodox stronghold” against Paulicianism.
 - The last patriarch of Tarnovo, Saint Euthymius, in 1393 or in 1394 was sent into exile in Bačkovо monastery, where, according to his disciple Grigorij Tsamblak, he faced heretics, probably Paulicians¹⁰. These arguments of Jordan Ivanov were accepted by later researchers who, just like Ivanov, tend to identify the place of appearance of the sermon with the Bačkovо monastery¹¹.

In my opinion, the author of the sermon had connections not with the Bačkovо monastery but with the medieval fortress and the town of Petrič. This is confirmed by the following facts:

- The monastery, unlike the fortress/town, is not mentioned in the text of the sermon. Indeed, they are built in the immediate vicinity but in two different places; the distance between them is about 10 kilometers.

⁹ Й. ИВАНОВ, *Произходъ на павликянитъ...*, p. 21.

¹⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 26.

¹¹ Р. БАРТИКЯН, *Византийская, армянская и болгарская легенды о происхождении павликан и их историческая основа*, ВВг 6, 1980, p. 60; А. МИЛТЕНОВА, *Разобличението...*, p. 290; ЕАДЕМ, *Отново за разказа...*, p. 238.

- There is no evidence that the monastery was built as an “ideological stronghold” against Paulicianism or that it subsequently became a similar “stronghold”. Γρηγόριος Πακουριανός explicitly mentioned in the monastery typicon that it was built for the monks who knew “iverian characters”¹², i.e. for Georgian and Armenian (Chalcedon) monks. In the last three centuries the monastery preserved its Georgian character.
- There is no evidence that before Saint Euthymius’ exile at the very end of the 14th century a writing tradition in Old Slavonic or Middle Bulgarian had been developed in the monastery.
- Not only the monastery church but also the main medieval church of the fortress Petrič was dedicated to the Virgin Mary and was known as “the Virgin Mary of Petrič”.
- The stone inscription of the Bulgarian Tsar John Asen II (1218–1241), found in Petrič, testifies that in the 13th century Middle Bulgarian was used as a written language in this place.

Additional conclusions about the cultural profile of the author and the time of appearance of the sermon can be deduced from the text.

- The language of the sermon: according to Jordan Ivanov, some lexemes in the text of the Adžar copy indicates that the sermon appeared in the Middle Ages¹³. Anisava Miltenova accepts the 13th century as the time of its appearance, drawing on the omission of both nasal vowels, a phenomenon dated back to the epoch of Middle Bulgarian¹⁴.
- The orthography of the text: copies from the 16th, 17th and the 18th centuries as a whole follow the norms of Resava spelling¹⁵. This is especially valid for the Adžar copy. Resava orthography was initially introduced in Serbia in the second half of the 14th century, and after the beginning of the 15th century gradually spread across Bulgarian lands, replacing the much more complicated Tarnovo spelling that was dominant in the 12th–14th century. The main differences between both spelling types were the disappearance of the characters rendering the nasal vowels – *ѡ* and *ѣ* the reduction of both er vowels – *ѣ* and *ѥ* to only one er – *ѣ* or *ѥ* in Resava variants. The nasal vowel *ѡ* is most often replaced with *ѡ/оу* (u); actually, this is the common reflection *ѡ > u*, which is typical of Serbian and Croatian but not of Bulgarian. The charter *ѡ* in the Adžar copy appears in the place of the old nasal *ѡ* in all words. A typical example in this respect is

¹² *Typicon Vasuriani*, [in:] *FGHB*, vol. VII, ed. G. САНКОВА-РЕТКОВА et al., Sofia 1968, p. 40.

¹³ Й. ИВАНОВ, *Произходъ на павликянитъ...*, p. 20.

¹⁴ А. МИЛТЕНОВА, *Разобличението...*, p. 290.

¹⁵ Й. ИВАНОВ, *Произходъ на павликянитъ...*, p. 20.

the personal name СЪБОТИН/Subotin, which stemmed from Old Slavonic. However, in the other older copies the same name appears as Sambatie/Samobatie¹⁶, i.e. the copiers attempted at rendering the original pronunciation of ж by means of the characters used in Resava spelling. Therefore, all of these variants appear to be transliterations of an initial ж from the original. Besides, different ers are used in different copies, a circumstance indicating that both ers were presented in the initial variant of the work. All these give serious reasons to think that the sermon was written in accordance with Tarnovo spelling before the end of the 14th century and subsequently transliterated in accordance with the new Resava spelling.

- The analytical constructions: Bulgarian and Macedonian are the only Slavic languages that have experienced transition from synthetism to analytism¹⁷. This process deeply affected their inner structure and led to total transformation of their morphology – decline and disappearance of the case system, infinitive, limited use of participle and adverb constructions, etc. All of these peculiarities are known as “Balkanisms” because they are spread with different intensity and frequency in Albanian, Romanian and Greek. Some of these Balkanisms, such as merger, confusion and omission of case suffixes, replacement of infinitive with да-constructions, appearance of postpositive definite articles, formation of future tense by means of the verbs meaning to have and to want, etc. are known from the earliest Old Bulgarian manuscripts, dated back to the 10th and 11th century¹⁸. Usually similar changes are registered in manuscripts whose copiers broke the principles of the high literary norm (which preserved the synthetic elements) and obviously were influenced by popular vernaculars. A similar phenomenon can be seen in the text of the sermon. For example, there is only one classical infinitive construction – against several да-constructions. These and other language constructions support the view that the author of the text was a representative of the milieu that can be identified with the cultural traditions of popular Orthodoxy.
- The author correctly describes the sequence of different parts of the liturgy of St. John Chrysostom – the most popular in the Orthodox world. He also mentions the throne in the church where St. John Chrysostom officiated. The throne in question most likely is the so called *synthronon* (Συνθρόνον), designated for the representatives of the high clergy during the liturgy. In the 13th–14th century *synthroni* were built in altars of major (the most majestic) churches

¹⁶ А. МИЛТЕНОВА, *Отново за разказа...*, p. 236.

¹⁷ Actually, both languages up to the end of 19th century formed a common language space, and their transition to analytism also was common.

¹⁸ И. ДУРИДАНОВ, *Поява на балканизми*, [in:] *Граматика на старобългарския език. Фонетика, морфология, синтаксис*, София 1991, p. 549–557.

where the liturgy was served by metropolitan bishops and the patriarch¹⁹. This indicates that the author knew the arrangement of the altars of metropolitan churches, spaces where only priests or eventually monks were allowed.

- A mention of Cappadocia: according to the sermon, Paulicianism was spread by two disciples of the devil, who came from Cappadocia to the Bulgarian land. However, it becomes clear from the narrative that Paulicians were perceived as an ethnically consolidated community, i.e. the sermon was written in a period when Paulicians had experienced a process of Bulgarisation, but the memory of their connections with Central Anatolia continued to be kept alive. For example, in the 16th and 17th century the origin of Paulicians would be related to an entirely different region, and the memory of Anatolia would be completely lost. On the other hand, the connection of dualistic communities with Cappadocia is proved by one of the most authoritative sources of the Bulgarian Middle Ages – the Sinodyc of Tsar Boril, compiled around 1211 and supplemented with additional information in the 13th and 14th century. In the Sinodyc of Tsar Boril, Peter, the leader of the Bogomil community in Sredets (modern Sofia), is called “Cappadocian” (from Cappadocia)²⁰, a clear indication of his Cappadocian origin. All these indicate that the 13th or the 14th century was the time of appearance of the sermon.

The anachronisms in the sermon – problems of interpretation

In my opinion, the sermon appeared as a contra version of some local Paulician historical narrative or legend, and the anachronisms in the sermon are mirror-images of the anachronisms in the supposed Paulician legend. I will try to reconstruct it below on the basis of the analysis of the text of the sermon and information acquired from medieval sources.

At first glance, the most paradoxical and inexplicable anachronism is the “error” of Saint Vasilios – one of the most popular Orthodox saints, who according to the narrative of sermon was misled by the devil. It is asserted that the devil went to Saint Vasilios and became his clerk or secretary. The exact term used in the text is *граматѣкъ* (gramatik). Petrus Sicilius noticed that Paulicians called their higher priests “companions” and the lower priests “notaries” – secretaries²¹. According to the reports of Catholic missionaries, even in the 17th century Paulicians chose literate people for their priests²² – most probably, this is a continuation

¹⁹ В. ДИМОВА, *Църквите в България през XIII–XIV век*, София 2008, р. 103.

²⁰ М. ПОПРУЖЕНКО, *Синодик царя Борила*, София 1928, р. 68.

²¹ *Petri Siculi Historia Manichaeorum seu Paulicianorum*, Gottingae 1846 (cetera: PETRUS SICULUS, *Historia*), р. 33.

²² ПЕТЪР СОЛИНАТ, *Доклад на софийския епископ Петър Солинат до съборната конгрегация в Рим от 1622 г.*, [in:] Б. ПРИМОВ, П. САРИЙСКИ, М. ЙОВКОВ, *Документи за католическата дейност в България през XVII век*, София 1993, р. 22.

of the tradition of notaries. The Middle Bulgarian word *gramatik* could be used in the meaning of secretary, and it is the same meaning that most likely appears in the text. In my view this is the first indication that the sermon reflects real elements of Paulician religious organizations and belief systems.

The reports of the Catholic missionaries and bishops who converted Paulicians to Catholicism in the 17th century can shed light on this strange appearance of Saint Vasilios. They noticed that Paulicians celebrated the days of typical Orthodox saints, such as Saint Sava and Saint Barbara, and used the Orthodox calendar²³. Besides, they called their ritual of fire “baptism” – “baptism of the fire of Saint John the Baptist”²⁴, an indication that Saint John the Baptist was also worshipped.

It seems that Balkan Paulicians, under the influence of different factors, including former Orthodox Christians converts to Paulicianism, accepted many elements of the Orthodox religious system, especially the cult of saints. Most probably, Saint Vasilios was one of the Orthodox saints incorporated in the Paulician belief system as early as the Middle Ages, and this circumstance attracted the attention of the author of the sermon. Besides the high respect paid by the Orthodox to his personality, two additional arguments can be advanced in favor of this hypothesis:

Saint Vasilios is glorified in the Orthodox Church as one of the three great Cappadocians. He was born in the same region that obviously was connected with the medieval history of Bulgarian Paulicians and Bogomils.

Besides, judging from the legend of Rome, widely spread among the 16th and 17th century Paulicians, they considered their ancient Anatolian religious leaders “kings”²⁵. Indeed, a similar notion to a certain degree corresponds to the historical events in Anatolia and on the Balkans from the 9th–11th century, when Paulicians, led by military commanders, established their short-lived quasi-states and political formations. The anthroponym Vasilios (in Bulgarian *Васил*/Vasil²⁶) stems from the Greek word for king – βασιλεύς. The presence of a Greek speaking population among the Paulicians in Philippopolis/Plovdiv, especially in the 11th and 12th century, is out of the question, but all Paulicians from this period must have known the Greek variant of the title because their military contingents regularly

²³ АНТОН СТЕФАНОВ, *Доклад за посещението на Никополския епископ*, [in:] Б. ПРИМОВ, П. САРИЙСКИ, М. ЙОВКОВ, *Документи...*, p. 482.

²⁴ *Fr. Petri Bogdani Bakšić, episcopi Gallipoliensis et coadiutoris Sophiensis, de statu ecclesiae suae relatio accuratissima cum notis cuiusdam in margine adpostis L. A. 1640*, [in:] EUSEBIUS FERMEŃDZSIN, *Acta Bulgariae ecclesiastica ab a. 1565 usque ad a. 1799*, Zagrabiae 1887 [= MSHSM, 18], p. 80.

²⁵ *Philippus Stanislavov de Pavlićianorum origine eorumque libris sacris secundum vulgi opinionem quaedam enarrat XXXIX. A. 1636, 3. Augusti, Orešće*, [in:] EUSEBIUS FERMEŃDZSIN, *Acta Bulgariae ecclesiastica...*, p. 42; Д. РАДЕВА, *Павликяни...*, p. 380–381.

²⁶ Б. ЯНЕВ, *Система на личните имена в българския и немския език*, Пловдив 2009, p. 331.

took part in the military campaigns of Byzantine emperors. Moreover, according to the testimony of Anna Comnena, Alexis I Comnenus was in personal contact with the leaders of the Paulician community in Philippopolis/Plovdiv²⁷. On this basis it might be suggested that the initial variant of the supposed Paulician legend mentioned the title king (βασιλεύς), which, subsequently in the 13th or 14th century, after the complete Slavisation of Paulicians and the acceptance of worship of saints, was reinterpreted as the name of the great Cappadocian theologian Saint Vasilios. Probably this provoked the emergence of some typical folklore stories that became a basis of the sermon and that had circulated among the Bulgarian speaking Orthodox Christians long before its appearance.

Another folklore interpretation of real facts is the story of elimination of the devil during a liturgy officiated by Saint John Chrysostom. On the one hand, it resembles the traditions of church exorcism, but on the other hand, in my opinion, it appears to be a reflection of some popular explanation of the fact that Paulicians rejected and did not attend liturgy; probably many people in the 13th and 14th century thought that Paulicians avoided liturgy because of the demons that possessed them. However, as we can see below, the entire narrative about the role of Saint John Chrysostom can be a reinterpretation of another initial narrative.

The anthroponyms in the sermon

Four anthroponyms included in the narrative can also shed light on the Paulician belief system. According to the sermon, the two disciples of the devil, after their coming to Bulgarian lands, changed their original names and adopted the apostolic names of Paul and John. Replacement of anthroponyms and oikononyms with the personal names of Saint Paul's disciples and with the designations of the churches founded by Saint Paul was a regular practice in the Anatolian period of Paulician history²⁸. Therefore, the author of the sermon correctly described a typical Paulician tradition that was probably introduced on the Balkans. However, even the discoverer of the sermon and its first researcher, Jordan Ivanov, notices that these names coincide with the names of the legendary founders of Paulicianism, Paul and John²⁹. According to Petrus Sicilius, who mentioned these first Paulician leaders in the 9th century, they were the sons of a woman named Kalinika from Samosata. Kalinika was an adherent of Manicheism and taught her sons the principles of Manicheism. After that she sent them to preach Manicheism. It is interesting that Petrus Sicilius, just like the anonymous author

²⁷ ANNA COMNENA, *Alexias*, [in:] *FGHB*, vol. VIII, ed. M. VOJNOV et al., Sofia 1972 (cetera: ANNA COMNENA, *Alexias*), p. 139.

²⁸ PETRUS SICULUS, *Historia*, p. 48–49.

²⁹ Й. ИВАНОВ, *Произходъ на павликянитъ...*, p. 29.

of the sermon, asserts that Paul and John spread the teachings of the devil in some settlement named Episparis³⁰. There is no evidence that the author of the sermon had read the work of Petrus Sicilius or these of later Byzantine authors. The above mentioned coincidence resulted from the common model of perception of Paulicianism, shared by medieval Orthodox Christians.

In my view, the appearance of these two names in the work of Petrus Sicilius and in the Bulgarian sermon was due to the fact that Paulician leaders with similar names really existed in the oral or written traditions of Paulicians. This is also confirmed by a Bulgarian folksong where two mythological oronyms, the land of John and the land of Paulicians are mentioned as synonyms³¹. In the same song it is said that people inhabiting this land did not believe in God, did not visit churches and did not take communion³². However, nothing can be said about how Bulgarian Paulicians in the 13th or in the 14th century perceived John and Paul – as persons identical with the apostles Saint Paul and Saint John or as preachers different from them. Evolution in the Paulician conception of their own leaders' identity cannot be excluded either.

The real names of Paul and John – Subotin and Šutil, also raise certain questions. In the literature there are two opinions about the etymology of the name Subotin. According to Hrach Bartikyan, it is a Slavonised form of the Armenian personal name Sembat³³. It seems that the above mentioned variants of the name, Sambatie/Samobatie, also support this hypothesis.

However, the Slavic origin of Subotin also seems completely possible. This is the well-known Bulgarian name Säbotin. It comes from the Old Slavonic word for Saturday (see above), and up to the present day continues to be in use in the Bulgarian anthroponym system³⁴. In this case the name might indicate that Paulicians had a special attitude to Saturday. It can reflect some specific Paulician interpretation of different gospel texts where Saturday is commented, such as Mathew 12:1–8, 12:9–14, 12:11, 12, Mark 2:23–28, 3:1–6, Luke 6:1–5, 6:6–11, etc., or even influence exerted by the Old Testament (see below).

The second name Šutil does not have a Slavic origin and cannot be attributed to any of the Balkan languages. The initial š excludes the mediation of Greek in the transfer of this name to Middle Bulgarian. The hypothesis of Hrach Bartikyan that the name is a Bulgarian adoption of the proper name Šeti, mentioned in a medieval Armenian legend also considering the origin of Paulicians³⁵, does not seem

³⁰ PETRUS SICULUS, *Historia*, p. 27–28.

³¹ М. ТСИВРАНСКА-КОСТОВА, *Paulicians...*, p. 239.

³² *Сборникъ за народни умотворения, наука и книжнина*, vol. III, *Пъсни периодически и религиозни*, София 1890, p. 3.

³³ Р. БАРТИКЯН, *Византийская...*, p. 61.

³⁴ С. ИЛЧЕВ, *Речник на личните и фамилните имена у българите*, София 1969, p. 472.

³⁵ Р. БАРТИКЯН, *Византийская...*, p. 61.

convincing. There is no evidence that the Armenian legend was known in Bulgaria. It is very short, and its subject is completely different from that of the sermon; the name Šeti is female, and in other modern translations is given as Seti³⁶. Besides, there are phonological problems referring to the adoption Šeti>Šutil supposed by Bartikyan.

The name could be related to the Syriac word šwdl, šwdl' (šuddāl, šuddālā) – lure, bite³⁷, and in this case it could be regarded as a Syriac pejorative designation of Paulicians, also accepted by Bulgarians. In the 9th and 10th century there were direct contacts between the population of the First Bulgarian tsardom and the Syrian migrants in Thrace, which exerted influence on the vocabulary of Proto-bulgarian and Old Slavonic³⁸.

However, in 1922 Jordan Ivanov suggested another hypothesis that was not given consideration by later researchers. He noticed the great similarity between Šutil and Šatil (Šatil), the name of the son of Adam in the Manichean mythology, and supposed the existence of a connection between both names³⁹. Actually, Šatil is the Arabic variant of the Manichean Seth⁴⁰, but names of obvious Arabic origin are registered among Paulicians inhabiting Philippolis/Plovdiv in the 11th century⁴¹. In this case the name Šutil should be ascribed to a specific Manichean layer in the Paulician anthroponymy. Vague reminiscences betraying Manichean influence can be noticed in different parts of the sermon.

The traces of Manicheism in the sermon and in the belief system of Paulicianism

There are several passages in the text of the sermon resembling moments of Mani's biography. The first one refers to the assertion that the devil (called Paul) who became a bookman of Saint Vasilios wrote books that drew attention with their beauty and perfection. Mani also wrote a lot of books and was remembered

³⁶ Д. РАДЕВА, *Павликяни...*, p. 515.

³⁷ J. RAUNE SMITH, *Compendious Syriac Dictionary*, London 1903, p. 561.

³⁸ This problem, as well as the traces of the contacts with a Syriac speaking population in the Old Slavonic and Middle Bulgarian monuments, I discussed in a separate article – *Syriac Loanwords in the Language of the Protobulgarian Epigraphy, Old and Middle Bulgarian Manuscripts*, published in Бe 57.1, 2018, p. 2–18. Besides, there is archeological evidence of the Syrian presence in Bulgaria as early as the 8th century. For example, the oldest palace in Pliska, the main Bulgarian residential center in the 8th and 9th century, has its closest analogies in the palaces of the Umayyad dynasty in Syria (С. ВАКЛИНОВ, *Формиране на старобългарската култура VI–XI век*, София 1977, p. 156–159).

³⁹ Й. ИВАНОВ, *Произходъ на павликянитъ...*, p. 30.

⁴⁰ S. LIEU, *Manicheism in the Later Roman Empire and Medieval China. A Historical Survey*, Manchester 1985, p. 17.

⁴¹ That is the name Κοῦσίνοϛ/Kusin recorded by Anna Comnena: ANNA COMNENA, *Alexias*, p. 139. Most probably Κοῦσίνοϛ/Kusin is an adoption of the Arabic Ḥusayn or of some of its variants – Husseyn, Husein, etc.

in the Iranian world as a renowned calligrapher and artist⁴². Moreover, if we accepted the hypothesis about the existence of a preceding Paulician legend that provoked the appearance of the sermon and that this supposed legend initially mentioned not Saint Vasilios but some variant of the Byzantine title βασιλεύς, then the parallels with Mani's life become obvious. It is well known that he was in a close relationship with the king of Iran, Šapur I, and even joined the king's retinue, where he spent ten years⁴³. In the court of Šapur I he wrote his book *Šapurkan*, dedicated to the king. In this book Mani presented the main principles of his new religion⁴⁴.

This hypothesis might also shed light on the other essential anachronism in the sermon – the strange interference of a personage named after Saint John Chrysostom, who appears in the narrative not as a theologian and preacher but as a patriarch of Constantinople. Probably the prototype of this personage is the supreme Mazdeic priest Kartir or Kardel, who, after the death of Šapur I initiated a persecution against Mani that led to Mani's death⁴⁵. The episode in the church might reflect some folklore version of the trial against Mani, which gained popularity in popular Orthodox environment.

The third passage is the most indicative. This is the description of the brutal and cruel execution of Paul and John, which entirely coincides with that of Mani⁴⁶. The assertion of the author of the sermon that Paulicians considered it martyrdom gives serious reasons to think that medieval Bulgarian Paulicians celebrated the death of Paul and John, but this celebration was realized in a Manichean matrix.

On the basis of all of these similarities, the following elements in the supposed Paulician legend could be reconstructed:

- The appearance of a religious preacher named Paul, who became a companion or “notary” of some “king from Cappadocia” and spread the Paulician faith in his court. Probably Paulicians identified him with Saint Paul the apostle.
- This apostle has written a lot of books that attracted the attention of king with their beauty and perfection.
- Subsequently he clashes with the high priest or priests, and as a result of this is convicted and murdered.

⁴² Й. МИЛЕВ, *Средновековни източни поети*, София 1973, р. 470, 475.

⁴³ Е. СМАГИНА, *Манихейство по ранним источникам*, Москва 2011, р. 44; М. ТАРДИО, *Манихейството*, София 2001, р. 30 (trans. from French: М. ТАРДИУ, *Le manichéisme*, Paris 1997).

⁴⁴ Е. СМАГИНА, *Манихейство...*, р. 45.

⁴⁵ *Ibidem*, р. 49–50.

⁴⁶ М. Tsibranska-Kostova, also drew attention to this similarity: М. TSIBRANSKA-KOSTOVA, *Paulicians...*, р. 243.

- His disciples, Paul and John, went to Bulgarian lands and started to spread the Paulician faith and the writings of Paul.
- Finally, they are executed, but their martyrdom is remembered by their followers.

However, a similar hypothesis requires a more detailed investigation of Manichean elements in Paulicianism. Below I will try to summarize them.

The traces of Manicheism in the belief system of Paulicianism

In a recently published article, drawing on Petrus Sicilius' evidences, I tried to summarize the elements of Paulician religious practices and beliefs that can be ascribed to Manichean heritage. I restricted them to one prayer recorded by Petrus Sicilius⁴⁷ and to the information that the leader of the Paulicians, Sergius, presented himself as the Paraclete⁴⁸ – most probably that was a kind of religious legitimation taken from Manicheism, although other religious movements also knew similar phenomena⁴⁹. However, a more careful and detailed investigation of the available sources can enlarge the supposed scope of Manichean influence on Paulicianism.

- The strange myth referred to the origin of rain recorded by Petrus Sicilius⁵⁰ stays very close to Manichean views on the same topic⁵¹ and most likely appears to be their variant. Petrus Sicilius explicitly underlines the fact that he learned about this myth not only from rumors but also from Manichean books⁵².
- He also speaks about the belief in the incarnation of souls – after his death man can be reincarnated in a plant he had destroyed during his life⁵³.
- Petrus Sicilius tells about some strange way of using figs⁵⁴. It is remarkable that Saint Augustine in his *Confessions* pays special attention to the Manichean notions of the consumption of this fruit (3.10)⁵⁵.
- Another strange piece of information provided by Petrus Sicilius is that Paulicians in Tephrike invoked air demons and *their extremely loathsome fig tree*⁵⁶.

⁴⁷ PETRUS SICULUS, *Historia*, p. 23–24.

⁴⁸ PETRUS SICULUS, *Historia*, p. 40, 46.

⁴⁹ Е. СМАГИНА, *Манихейство...*, p. 195–197.

⁵⁰ PETRUS SICULUS, *Historia*, p. 25.

⁵¹ Е. СМАГИНА, *Манихейство...*, p. 410–411.

⁵² PETRUS SICULUS, *Historia*, p. 25.

⁵³ PETRUS SICULUS, *Historia*, p. 23.

⁵⁴ PETRUS SICULUS, *Historia*, p. 24.

⁵⁵ AUGUSTINE, *Confessions and Enchiridion*, trans. et ed. A.C. OUTLER, London 1955, p. 39, <https://www.ling.upenn.edu/courses/hum100/augustinconf.pdf>

⁵⁶ PETRUS SICULUS, *Historia*, p. 16.

Patriarch Fotius is more detailed on this problem – he notices that Paulicians invoked air demons when they *celebrated the mystery of their abominable fig tree*⁵⁷. Both authors assert that these air demons were the same who were invoked by somebody Terebinthus, who, changing his name to Buddas, went from Judea to Persia. He was a follower of Scythianus, the author of the most important books of the Manichean canon. Subsequently, Mani inherited the books of question through Terebinthus' widow⁵⁸.

This tangled story appears to be a short variant of one of the most important anti-Manichean works – the so called *Anti-Manichean legend*, whose prime source is Acta Archelai⁵⁹. The researchers share the opinion that the legend reflects the connections of Manicheism with Buddhism⁶⁰. It is well known that Buddha was recognized as one of the Manichean prophets, and in the eastern branches of Manicheism Mani himself was even called Buddha⁶¹. The influence exerted by Buddhism on Manicheism continues to be a controversial problem⁶², but in the case of “the mystery of the abominable fig tree”, a connection with the Buddhist Bodhi Tree, a large and very old sacred fig tree, might be suggested.

- There are obvious traces of the sun cult spread among Anatolian and Balkan Paulicians since the very beginning of their history. The Armenian Catholicos John (Hovhan) of Ohzun at the beginning of the 8th century noticed that Paulicians said collective prayers to the sun⁶³. According to Medieval Arabian authors, the sect of Paulicians was *composed partly of Christians, partly of fire worshipers*⁶⁴. Another Armenian author from the 11th century called Paulicians “Sons of the sun”⁶⁵. The sun cult might have originated from different sources, but one of them must have been Manicheism. For example, prayers to the sun and the moon were included in the Manichean prayer book⁶⁶. John (Hovhan) of Ohzun mentions the Paulician prayers to the sun in the context of their burial ceremonies⁶⁷, but the sun in Manichean mythology appears to be the place

⁵⁷ Photii Patriarchae Constantinopolitani Narratio de Manichaeis recens repullulantibus, [in:] Р. БАРТИКЯН, *Источники для изучения истории павликианского движения*, Ереван 1961 (cetera: РНОТИУС, Narratio), p. 174–175.

⁵⁸ PETRUS SICULUS, *Historia*, p. 15–17; РНОТИУС, Narratio, p. 174–175.

⁵⁹ Е. СМАГИНА, *Манихейство...*, p. 54.

⁶⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 62–65.

⁶¹ *Ibidem*, p. 324.

⁶² *Ibidem*, p. 323–324.

⁶³ Выдержки из речи “Против Павликиан” католикоса Йоана Одзунского, [in:] Р. БАРТИКЯН, *Источники...*, p. 110.

⁶⁴ З. БУНИЯТОВ, *Из истории Кавказской Албании VII–VIII вв.*, [in:] *Вопросы истории Кавказской Албании*, Баку 1962, p. 76.

⁶⁵ Р. БАРТИКЯН, *Источники...*, p. 53.

⁶⁶ Е. СМАГИНА, *Манихейство...*, p. 87.

⁶⁷ *Выдержки из речи...*, p. 110.

of purification of human souls⁶⁸. Finally, the “Sunny Christ” presented in a late Armenian legend as the supreme god of Paulicians⁶⁹ might have a connection with Radiant Jesus from the Manichean pantheon⁷⁰.

- Petrus Sicilius in his work quoted passages from Sergius’ letters. In one of these passages Sergius writes that he believes in four apostles and prophets⁷¹. Most likely Sergius had in mind the so called “short or classical range” of the Manichean apostles, including Buddha, Zoroaster, Jesus and Mani himself⁷². It is possible for Mani in the religious notions of Sergius to have been replaced with Saint Paul.

However, we cannot be completely sure of the chronological correctness of some of the above evidences. For example, Petrus Sicilius speaks about the prayer, incarnation of souls and the origin of rain in the part of his book where he criticizes original Manicheism and the teachings of Mani. Indeed, he also notices that Constantine-Silvan rejected the myth of rain⁷³, which might be regarded as additional evidence that the myth had been spread among Paulicians. Besides, the Buddhist/Manichean origin of the celebration of “the mystery of the fig tree” is doubtful. It might have stemmed from some agricultural holiday celebrated in Syrian lands⁷⁴.

Conclusions

The sermon reflects popular level conflicts between Orthodox Christians and Paulicians in Bulgarian lands in the 11th–14th century. Most likely, it appears to be a contra version of some Paulician “myth of identity”. These circumstances determined the contents, style and language of the sermon, as well as the appearance of flagrant anachronisms that resulted from folklore interpretations of some of the taboos, beliefs and historical myths of Bulgarian Paulicians from this period; of course, these myths must have contained a big number of anachronisms too.

In spite of all of these shortcomings, real facts referring to the medieval Paulician myths of identity can be deduced. As a whole, the sermon material indicates that these myths were developed in Manichean frameworks, although they cannot be considered Manichean in the classical meaning of this term.

⁶⁸ Е. СМАГИНА, *Манихейство...*, p. 128; М. ТАРДИО, *Манихейството...*, p. 85.

⁶⁹ Д. РАДЕВА, *Павликяни...*, p. 515.

⁷⁰ Е. СМАГИНА, *Манихейство...*, p. 128.

⁷¹ PETRUS SICULUS, *Historia*, p. 49.

⁷² Е. СМАГИНА, *Манихейство...*, p. 116, 305.

⁷³ PETRUS SICULUS, *Historia*, p. 31.

⁷⁴ This information seems doubtful because of the climatic conditions in Tephrike. It is found in modern North Eastern Turkey (modern Turkish city of Divriği) on 1200 m above sea level and climate is extremely unsuitable for fig trees.

In my opinion, the most important problem is how the traces of Manichean influence on Paulicianism must be interpreted. The available information about early Paulicians allows several levels of religious beliefs and practices to be outlined. The first one refers to Macrionism; in my opinion, this is the most visible and the strongest level that determined the character of Paulician dualism and doctrine. The roots of the group of notaries and companions must be sought in the Macrionist preference to the scriptures of Saint Paul the Apostle. The early Christians who accompanied and helped Saint Paul during his missionary journeys and in his correspondence must be the prototype of this Paulician “clergy”.

The second level is connected with Manicheism; it seems hidden and scattered in different beliefs, practices and myths. At this stage of our knowledge it can be asserted that medieval Paulicianism seems like conscious Marcionism imposed on subconscious Manicheism. A similar conclusion coincides with Petrus Sicilius' information that an Armenian named Constantine-Silvan erased the Manichean books from the Paulician canon and imposed only the ones from the New Testament – gospels and Apostolic letters⁷⁵. It seems that at the time of Constantine-Silvan and his successors the Paulician community experienced some kind of religious reform that excluded the classical Manicheism from the official religious doctrine. That is confirmed by the information that Paulicians in the mid-9th century spurned connections with Manicheism⁷⁶ and without problems said anathemas against Mani, Paul and John⁷⁷. Petrus Sicilius, in one of his sermons against Paulicians, noticed that all Paulicians, men and women alike, knew the gospels and apostolic scriptures by heart, and even slaves, in spite of the fact that could not speak Greek well, knew them⁷⁸. This testifies not only to the big popularity of the scriptures in the Paulician environment but also to their obligatory memorization – the latter could be regarded as an indication for their recently and even forcible introduction among Paulicians. This assumption as is confirmed by the data from Petrus Sicilius' history. Judging from them Paulicians were introduced to the gospels and the apostolic scriptures thanks to Constantine-Silvan's activities.

This strange mix of Marcionism and Manicheism can find a satisfactory explanation if we address the unclear moments in Petrus Sicilius' work. There is a certain logical and historical incoherence in the narrative about the early history of Paulicianism. For example, the historical continuity between Manicheans Paul and John on the one hand and Constantine-Silvan on the other is more than obscure. Besides, Sergius' appearance seems like “deus ex machina”.

⁷⁵ PETRUS SICULUS, *Historia*, p. 31–32.

⁷⁶ PETRUS SICULUS, *Historia*, p. 2.

⁷⁷ PETRUS SICULUS, *Historia*, p. 5, 32; ФНОТИУС, *Narratio*, p. 168.

⁷⁸ *Petri Siculi Sermi I, II, III adversus Manicheos dictos etiam Paulicianos*, [in:] Р. БАРТИКЯН, *Источники...*, p. 79.

In my opinion, the logical interruptions in the work of Petrus Sicilius are due to the fact that in Tephrike he heard and subsequently described the history of different groups connected with different heretical teachings; the most important of them must have been Marcionism and Manicheism. It seems that the early Paulician community included representatives of different heresies but experienced a process of formalization and consolidation of its doctrine around some of the ideas of Marcionism. However, this process was not completed, and many traces of Manicheism were preserved in the religious notions, normative culture, and the oral history of the Paulician community. For example, Patriarch Photios/Pseudo Photios notices that Paulicians paid much bigger respect to Constantine-Silvan than to Paul and John⁷⁹; this evidence indirectly testifies that in the 9th century Paulicians continued to keep the memory of the leaders of their Manichean branch. It is indicative that the sermon, as well as a legend of Bulgarian Paulicians recorded in the 16th and 17th century by the Catholic missionaries, show that Paul, John and Constantine-Silvan held an important place in the myths of identity of Bulgarian Paulicians.

In my view the other levels of Paulician belief system also confirm the hypothesis of the different groups forming the initial Paulician genesis.

The third level refers to the rejection of the holy cross and icons; this may be regarded as a form of religious taboo but cannot be attributed to the influence of classical Marcionism or Manicheism. It is possible for it to have resulted from influence exerted by some unknown heretical group. John (Hovhan) of Odzun mentioned that an iconoclastic group of unknown origin joined Paulicians⁸⁰. A passage from the work of Patriarch Photios/Pseudo Photios gives reasons to think that initially Paulicians did not reject the power of the cross or church baptism⁸¹. Another factor that might have provoked the appearance of these taboos was a radicalization of dualistic teachings or even influence exerted by dualistic groups who had accepted the Old Testament. This assumption is based on the information by the Old Bulgarian bookman John Exarch that “Manicheans” formed their cosmological notions on the basis of specific interpretation of the passages from the book of Genesis⁸². On the other hand, John (Hovhan) of Ohzun also notices that Paulicians used the words of the Old Testament prophets who strove against pagan idols⁸³ as arguments in support of their iconoclasm.

⁷⁹ РНОТИУС, *Narratio*, p. 169.

⁸⁰ *Видержки из речи...*, p. 111.

⁸¹ РНОТИУС, *Narratio*, p. 173.

⁸² ЙОАН ЕКЗАРХ, *Шестоднев*, София 1981, p. 207.

⁸³ *Видержки из речи...*, p. 110.

It is interesting that John (Hovhan) of Ohzun presented Paulicians as continuers of the Massalianism⁸⁴. Probably in this way he explained their rejection of liturgy and church institutions, but some Massalian influence on Paulicians cannot be excluded at all.

The most intricate problem in the system of Paulician religious beliefs is the sun worship. The evidence by Armenian and some Arabian authors about the existence of a similar cult are unambiguous. On the one hand, it might be ascribed to Manichean influences, but on the other hand, it could be connected with the different ethnical components forming the Anatolian Paulician community in the 7th–9th century. For instance, John (Hovhan) of Ohzun notices that Caucasian Albanians⁸⁵ have joined Paulicians⁸⁶. Actually, Hrach Bartikyan asserts that the earliest mention of the Paulician heresy comes from the documents of the local council of the Albanian church held at the very beginning of the 8th century⁸⁷. Some researchers tend to identify the inhabitants of Baylakan, one of the regions of the early medieval Caucasian Albania, with Paulicians⁸⁸, but the arguments in favor of this hypothesis seem uncertain. However, the linguistic analysis of the confessional name, Paulician, directs to Iranian languages⁸⁹, which also indicates connections with territories where the sun worship had long traditions.

Finally, a distinct level of religious beliefs must be connected with the activity of Sergius, who obviously tried to create a religious cult focused on his personality and on his claim that he was the expected Paraclete.

The sermon sheds certain light not only on the folklore interpretations of the history of Bulgarian Paulicians but also on the Manichean dimensions of the medieval Paulician identity, a circumstance that remained poorly explored in past and present investigations. That makes the sermon an important source of the “ideological history” of Bulgarian Paulicians – a problem that is much more obscure and unstudied than their real history.

⁸⁴ *Выдержки из речи...*, p. 111.

⁸⁵ Caucasian people belonged to the Lezgif linguistic group that inhabited the territories of modern Azerbaijan in the Antiquity and the Middle Ages. Some of them accepted Christianity thanks to Armenian mediation during a relatively early period and even translated parts of the New Testament in their language. It is supposed that modern Udis, a small Christian ethnical group in modern Azerbaijan and Georgia, are their descendants. In spite of the early penetration of Christianity in the southern parts of Caucasia, this region has remained under the strong political, cultural and religious impact of Iran for a long time.

⁸⁶ *Выдержки из речи...*, p. 111.

⁸⁷ Р. БАРТИКЯН, *Источники...*, p. 31–33.

⁸⁸ З. БУНИЯТОВ, *Из истории Кавказской Албании...*, p. 75.

⁸⁹ А. ПЕРИХАНИЯН, *К вопросу о Происхождении Павликианства*, ППВ 2, 2011, p. 67–68.

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Abstract. The article deals with one of the medieval Bulgarian sources about the origin of Paulicianism – the so called *Sermon of Saint John Chrysostom on the Origin of Paulicians*. On the basis of linguistic, textological and historical analysis it is concluded that the “sermon” appears to be a popular “contra version” of an unknown Paulician myth of historical and religious identity. It is suggested a reconstruction of this supposed myth and its obvious connections with Manicheism are traced out. Finally the traces of Manicheism in Paulician belief system are discussed.

Keywords: Bogomils, Paulicians, Bulgaria, Manicheism

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