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## THE EULOGY OF SYMEONIC MISCELLANY: THE IMPERIAL PATRONAGE OF THE FIRST SLAVIC ANTHOLOGY

**Abstract.** The essay proposes an interpretation of the eulogy of *Symeon's Miscellany* considering not only the cultural context of the First Bulgarian Empire at the beginning of the tenth century, but also the historical situation and the literary production of the seventies and eighties of the previous century when the Greek original of the *Miscellany* known by the name of the *Soterios* was conceived in Constantinople. This eulogy helps us to better understand the reasons that led to the creation of the Slavic version of this anthology at the time of Symeon. In the Constantinopolitan environment, this anthology was conceived as an adequate tool of the kind required by monks and priests engaged in the education of the laity, with particular focus on the foundations of orthodox doctrine. In the new environment the initiative was taken by Tsar Symeon, who – on the strength of his theological training – assumed a decisive role while occupying the throne by taking responsibility for directly instructing the Bulgarian aristocracy, fully exploiting a tool in the Slavic language that would have been very useful.

**Keywords:** *Symeon's Miscellany*, *Soterios*, First Bulgarian Empire, Tsar Symeon

*In memory of Francis Thomson (1935–2021)*

### Introduction

To interpret the eulogy of Symeon's *Miscellany* we have not only to consider the cultural context of the First Bulgarian Empire at the beginning of the tenth century, but also to analyse the historical situation and the literary production of the seventies and eighties of the previous century when the Greek original of the *Miscellany* known by the name of the *Soterios* was conceived in Constantinople. Both periods, even decades later, appear to be profoundly linked to the biographical events of the first Bulgarian tsar Symeon I and mark the developments that followed the conversion of his father Khan Boris.

### Missionary activity at the time of Patriarch Photius<sup>1</sup>

Photius ascended the patriarchal throne in 858 with the support of the imperial curia and in particular of Bardas, uncle of the young Emperor Michael III, who wanted the deposition of the patriarch Ignatius. Photius then drew up a comprehensive missionary plan, in which the conversion of the Slavs to Christianity would counterbalance the Germanic peoples' adherence to Western Christianity, encompassing the area from the Adriatic Sea to Crimea, in close contact with the northern borders of the empire.

A leading role in this project was to be played by Photius's "close friend" (*fortissimus amicus*) Constantine-Cyril<sup>2</sup>. The establishment of the Macedonian theme and the administration of the so-called *sclaviniae* had already laid the foundations for this project and Constantine-Cyril's brother Methodius, who had at length held the office of archon in a *sclavinia*, was inevitably involved in the process of Christianizing the Slavs in the Byzantine Empire. The Moravian mission of the brothers from Thessaloniki represented a substantial leap in quality compared to the past<sup>3</sup>.

The attitude of the new patriarch towards the mission was very different from the dominant trends in the monastic world, which considered missionary practices with suspicion, so much so that preaching to barbaric peoples was not a priority of the Byzantine church and could even provoke criticism<sup>4</sup>. In his *Bibliotheca*, however, Photius strongly opposed the idea that in preaching to the Gentiles there

<sup>1</sup> On this section, cf. our previous study summarizing the question (*The Constantinopolitan Project of the Cyrillo-Methodian Mission according to the Slavonic Lives of the Thessalonican Brothers*, [in:] *Cyril and Methodius: Byzantium and the World of the Slavs. International Scientific Conference Thessaloniki 2015*, Thessaloniki 2015, p. 51–67), although a more analytical reflection with extensive references to the available bibliography will be published (M. GARZANITI, *Il progetto missionario di Fozio e la missione cirillo-metodiana. Inquadramento storico e prassi missionaria bizantina*, [in:] *La théologie byzantine et sa tradition*, vol. I.2, ed. G. CONTICELLO, in press).

<sup>2</sup> As defined by one of the most prominent members of the papal curia and a close friend of Constantine in Rome, Anastasius Bibliothecarius (*Anastasio Bibliothecarii epistolae sive praefationes*, rec. E. PERELS, G. LAEHR, [in:] *MGH.Ep.*, vol. VII (*Epistolae Karolini Aevi*, V), Hannover 1974, p. 407).

<sup>3</sup> Nearing the end of his career, F. Dvornik perceived the complexity of the project, starting from Photius's role in planning the Cyril-Methodian mission. As the Czech scholar writes: *A very likely missionary activity characterizes the first patriarchate of Photios. The conversion of the Slavs settled in the middle of the Byzantine Empire in Thrace and Macedonia was completed, and during his second patriarchate the Serbs also were entirely won over to Christianity. Photios even included Armenia in his plans for Byzantine religious expansion, as can be judged from his letters. The spread of Byzantine religious influence among the Slavs, which started under the first patriarchate of Photios, yielded as is known, permanent results...* (F. DVORNIK, *The Patriarch Photius in the Light of Recent Research*, [in:] *Berichte zum XI. Internationalen Byzantinisten-Kongress*, vol. III.2, München 1958, p. 53).

<sup>4</sup> Based on such considerations, historians are generally sceptical about any real missionary drive in Byzantium. As J. Shepard wrote: *In fact the evangelistic impulse from Constantinople was more a matter of rhetoric than of sustained missionary endeavors* (J. SHEPARD, *Orthodoxy and Northern Peoples: Gods, Gods and Guidelines*, [in:] *A Companion to Byzantium*, ed. L. JAMES, Chichester 2010, p. 173).

was the danger of “casting pearls before swine”, just as the esteemed patristic exegete Methodius of Olympus seemed to suggest<sup>5</sup>. The Photian project was to have a universal character – ecumenical in the etymological sense of the word – and was to restore Constantinople, the Second Rome, to its historical role as evidenced by some of Photius’s homilies<sup>6</sup>.

In this first phase of his patriarchate (858–867), the project encompassed an area vaster than the Slavic world, from the shores of the Adriatic Sea to Moravia, pushing beyond the Danube, in competition with Rome and the Germanic Empire, extending to the east from Crimea to the Volga and Armenia. In the second phase (878–886), which coincides with the beginning of the Macedonian dynasty, the Photian project seemed to focus more on the surrounding areas, trying to increasingly attract the Bulgarian Khanate into the Byzantine orbit and establishing closer relations with the Danube and Dalmatic area.

This complex picture of Photius’s action appears – albeit in a downsized form, especially for political reasons – in the *Letter to the Eastern patriarchs* in which the Patriarch of Constantinople testifies to his commitment to defence of orthodox doctrine against any heresy, but always within a specific historical and geopolitical context that most commentators ignored, reducing it to a mere theological disquisition. Indeed, at the beginning the patriarch speaks of the traditional heresies condemned by the seven Councils, while also extolling the return of the Armenian Church to orthodoxy. The central part of the letter is devoted to the Bulgarian Empire. Here Photius expounds several key doctrinal issues, such as fasting on Saturday, the question of the procession of the Holy Spirit, and the marriage of the clergy. These issues were not proposed in an abstract manner, but in the context of a dangerous spread of heterodox doctrines from the West and taking into account the efforts, crowned with success, to bring the Bulgarian Empire into orthodoxy through a new catechesis. The confirmation of the providential divine plan is shown in the conversion of the barbarian “Ros” population, who accepted the Christian faith and welcomed a bishop sent from Constantinople. The letter ends with an invitation to the Eastern patriarchs to acknowledge the Seventh Council which had stigmatized iconoclasm<sup>7</sup>.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. PHOTIUS, *Bibliothèque*, vol. V, ed. R. HENRY, Paris 1967, p. 107–108. S.A. Ivanov develops this interesting topic, referring to the testimony of Theophanes Continuatus (С.А. ИВАНОВ, *Византийское миссионерство. Можно ли сделать из “варвара” христианина?*, Москва 2003, p. 144–145).

<sup>6</sup> Cf. in this regard B. Schultze’s essay on the worldview as testified by his homilies (B. SCHULTZE, *Das Weltbild des Patriarchen Photios nach seinen Homilien*, Kai 15, 1972, p. 101–115).

<sup>7</sup> Cf. *Photii Patriarchae Constantinopolitani Epistulae et Amphilochia*, vol. I, rec. B. LAOURDAS, L.G. WESTERINK, Leipzig 1983 [= BSGR], p. 39–53 (Ep. 2). Our opinion differs from the interpretation offered recently by M. HURBANIĆ (*The Byzantine Missionary Concept and its Revitalisation in the 9<sup>th</sup> Century. Some Remarks on the Content of Photius’ Encyclical Letter Ad Archiepiscopales Thronos per Orientem Obtinentes*, Bsl 62, 2005, p. 103–116), which is entirely oriented towards a political interpretation of Byzantine missionary activities.

The wide spread of Byzantine Christianity promoted by Photius under the auspices of several emperors during both the first and second phases of his patriarchate called for a solid theological reflection, based on the Bible and patristic thought. The first exposition can be found in his *Letter to Khan Boris*. In general, this letter is examined solely to compare it with the long letter from Pope Nicholas to that same Boris, considering it within the tradition of so-called *specula principis*. In fact, as was observed, the patriarchal letter falls more clearly within the discourse of Christian education in the form of anthology<sup>8</sup>. Nobody, it seems, has connected this letter with the Byzantine missionary strategy at the time of famous patriarch<sup>9</sup>. After a brief introduction on the “salvation of the soul”, Photius presents the Niceno–Constantinopolitan Creed and the story of the seven Councils, with the condemnation of various heresies. In the second part, the *Letter to Khan Boris* contains several moral reflections and only finally recommendations on good governance.

A similar structure, but with a much more complex articulation, can be found in a miscellany that was probably written in Constantinople a few years later, the *Soterios*. In our opinion, it is one of the best proofs of the theological thought underpinning the Constantinopolitan missionary project<sup>10</sup>. Its first Slavic version is the so-called *Symeon’s Miscellany* (first quarter of 10<sup>th</sup> century), the oldest manuscript witness of which is the *Izbornik 1073*<sup>11</sup>.

### The contents of the *Miscellany*<sup>12</sup>

Regarding the contents of the work, it has been written:

In fact an analysis of the contents of the florilegium reveals it to be no chance collection of snippets of knowledge, but a well-planned and carefully compiled work built up around Anastasius Sinaita’s *Interrogationes et responsiones de diversis capitibus a diversis propositae*.

<sup>8</sup> Cf. P. ODORICO, *La lettre de Photius à Boris de Bulgarie*, Bsl 54, 1993, p. 83–88.

<sup>9</sup> For a more detailed reflection cf. M. GARZANITI, *La missione cirillo-metodiana e la Lettera del patriarca Fozio al khan Boris. Per una ricostruzione della strategia missionaria bizantina*, Cyr 22, 2021 (in press).

<sup>10</sup> On the dating of the work see *infra*.

<sup>11</sup> Cf. the recent edition, which contains the Greek text, edited by P. Janeva, as well as the corrected Slavic text compared to the previous edition (*Симеонов сборник (по Светославовия препис от 1073 г.)*, vol. III, *Гръцки извори*, ed. П. ДИНЕКОВ, П. ЯНЕВА, София 2015). For an introduction to the manuscript tradition of *Soterios* by P. JANEVA, cf. *Симеонов сборник...*, p. 9–110. On the project for a new edition of the Greek miscellany, cf. M. DE GROOTE, *The Soterios Project Revisited: Status Quaestionis and the Future Edition*, BZ 108.1, 2015, p. 63–78.

<sup>12</sup> In this section we refer to our previous study summarizing our thesis (M. ГАРДЗАНИТИ, *Миссионерское наследие Кирилла и Мефодия и Симеонов сборник*, КМс 25, 2017, p. 305–316), but especially to the reflection presented at the round table on the “functionality of the Slavic manuscript tradition” held at the International Congress of Slavists (Belgrade 2018) until now unpublished.

The first section consists of ten prefaces to Anastasius' *Interrogationes* summarizing the Christian faith in a very logical order... Then follow Anastasius' *Interrogationes* in their commonest redaction in 88 questions. Once again, the selection and order of the questions follow a logical order... The final section of the florilegium consists of 24 appendices to Anastasius' *Interrogationes* once again no mere random selection...<sup>13</sup>

Unfortunately no one has studied this logical order which, in my opinion, is justified in the light of the Byzantine missionary project.

The first part outlines the doctrine of the Trinity through patristic reflections, exploring the themes of the Niceno-Constantinopolitan Creed, emphasizes the necessity of faith and presents the decisions of the first six ecumenical Councils. Its structure closely resembles the *Letter to Khan Boris*.

The central section consists of the collection of questions and answers of the Pseudo-Anastasius, out of which the first 23 and few others date back to Anastasius himself. It is a collection of 88 questions and answers that circulated in Greek, also as an autonomous text, which bring together four different collections of questions so that this work could be considered a collection of collections<sup>14</sup>. The first 22 questions concern ethical issues while those following attempt to resolve exegetical problems regarding the Old Testament (23–53) and the New Testament, first the Apostolic Letters (54–61) and then the Gospels (61–88). Compared to Anastasius's original text, the work of the Pseudo-Anastasius is characterized by a large number of biblical and patristic quotations following the answer<sup>15</sup>. We must remember that Photius, as a savant, was famed above all for his collections of texts and quotations, starting with his famous *Bibliotheca*. Nevertheless, it is much more interesting to compare the *Soterios* with another work by the Constantinopolitan patriarch, the *Amphilochia*. This text, which belongs to the same genre of erotapocritical literature, contains not only various issues related to the *Soterios* but even some of the same of Anastasius's questions and answers<sup>16</sup>.

<sup>13</sup> F. THOMSON, *The Symeon Florilegium – Problems of its Origin, Contents, Textology and Edition, together with an English Translation of the Eulogy of Czar Symeon*, Pbg 17.1, 1993, p. 45–46.

<sup>14</sup> Cf. D.T. SIESWERDA, *The Σωτήριος, the Original of the Izbornik of 1073*, SE 40, 2001, p. 309. For a modern Bulgarian version of the Greek text cf. *Спасителна книга. Гръцкият оригинал на Симеоновия сборник. книга, произхождаща и съставена от различни речи и душеполезни разкази, наречена "Спасителна"*, ed. П. ЯНЕВА, С. ИВАНОВ, София 2008.

<sup>15</sup> D.T. SIESWERDA, F.J. THOMSON, *A Critical Greek Edition of Question 23 of the Pseudo-Anastasian 'ΕΡΩΤΑΠΟΚΡΙΣΕΙΣ together with the Editio princeps of its Old Bulgarian Translation Associated with Tsar Symeon*, [in:] *Philomathestatos. Studies in Greek and Byzantine Texts Presented to Jacques Noret for his Sixty-Fifth Birthday*, ed. B. JANSSENS, J. NORET, Leuven 2004 [= OLA, 137], p. 578. The publication of the original collection, dating back to Anastasius, is due to M. Richard, who first identified it, with the collaboration of J. Munitiz (*Anastasioi Sinaitae Quaestiones et responsiones*, ed. M. RICHARD, J. MUNITIZ, Turnhout 2006 [= CC.SG, 59]). No one has developed a systematic comparison between the work of Anastasius and the reworking of Pseudo-Anastasius (cf. CPG 7746).

<sup>16</sup> М.В. БИБИКОВ, *Византийский прототип древнейшей славянской книги. Изборник Святослава 1073 г.*, Москва 1996, p. 323–324. Cf. edition in *Photii Patriarchae Constantinopolitani Epistulae*

The final section contains several basic texts for the interpretation of the Bible, including lists of books of the Bible, also indicating their canonicity<sup>17</sup>. The meaning of this section can be understood by referring to some key texts. It begins with a small treatise by Theodore of Raithu on the fundamental concepts of the late-ancient Christological debate, crucial for understanding the Niceno–Constantinopolitan Creed (essence, nature, substance, etc.). The treatise by George Choïroboscus, rightly defined *a guide to the correct interpretation of the figurative language of Holy Scriptures*<sup>18</sup>; the *Chronotaxis of the Lord* with the exact indication of the time and day of the most important events of Jesus's earthly life and also the presentation of the different Roman, Greek, Egyptian and Jewish calendars in relation to these events; the question of the date of Christ's birth; the Decalogue; the index of canonical and forbidden books; the list of prophets and apostles; and, after the doxology, the colophon with the panegyric in honour of the commissioner, which we will now examine; finally, the list of the names of the emperors. It has been observed that the initial prologue and the final section show notable compositional variations in the Greek tradition, with evident editorial interventions that in some respects can alter the purpose of the work.

From the foregoing, it is easy to understand that this work is a well-designed collection of theological texts that go back to the classic tradition of patristic thought. Their arrangement gives rise not so much to a treatise on Christian scholarship in encyclopaedic form, as it is often presented, but rather – above all through the work of the Pseudo-Anastasius – as a collection of exegetical tools necessary for understanding the Holy Scriptures, in terms of both content and form. The *Soterios* was, therefore, intended for theologians who were to teach – or at least learn how to teach – the Christian message on the model of the Eastern Fathers, who placed the Trinitarian mystery and the decisions of ecumenical councils at the centre of their thinking.

In view of its subject and its erotapocritical form, the *Soterios* and its Slavic version constitute an extraordinarily useful text for the training of clergy and especially missionary clergy, whose work was aimed at educating lay people in the different situations of personal and social life through an adequate interpretation of the Holy Scriptures. The title of the work in the Slavic version makes the exegetical and pedagogical function of the miscellany explicit: “Съборъ отъ многъ бѣць.

*et Amphilochia*, vol. I–VI, rec. B. LAOURDAS, L.G. WESTERINK, Leipzig 1983–1988 [= BSGR] (*Amphilochia*, vol. III–VI, rec. L.G. WESTERINK).

<sup>17</sup> To this section we can link a short text that was found in the Slavic version of the commented Book of Job and that belonged to Photius. This is an excerpt from *Amphilochia* (152), which explains different reasons for obscure places in the biblical text. The Slavic translation, bearing witness to high workmanship, is dated at the time of Methodius or the circle of his disciples (A.A. АЛЕКСЕЕВ, *Грамматическая статья патриарха Фотия в славянском переводе*, ТОДЛ 55, 2004, p. 374–378).

<sup>18</sup> F. THOMSON, *A Comparison of the Contents of the Two Translations of the Symeonian Florilegium on the Basis of the Greek Original Texts*, KMc 17, 2007, p. 745.



ТѢЛѢКОВАНИЯ О НЕРАЗУМЬНЫХЪ СЛОВЕСЬХЪ ВЪ ЕВАНГЕЛИИ И ВЪ АПЛѢ И ВЪ ИНѢХЪ КНИГАХЪ ВЪ КРАТЦѢ СЪЛОЖЕНА. НА ПАМЯТЬ И НА ГОТОВѢ ОТЪВѢТЪ”<sup>19</sup>. For this reason the anthology did not contain the most current or complicated theological reflections, but rather traditional patristic thought, especially that of the early centuries, directed to the explanation of the Holy Scriptures in a form suitable for simplified transmission through a series of questions and answers.

It was not until the early nineties that the Greek manuscript tradition of the *Soterios* began to be studied<sup>20</sup>. Albeit with all due caution, there are several clues that help to date the *Soterios* to the 870s–880s, hence in the time of the patriarch Photius. The so-called *Short patriarchal chronicle* contained therein is very important for the dating of the *Soterios*. In a Greek codex of the *Soterios*, a manuscript from Mount Athos (Laura G 115) dating to the 13<sup>th</sup> century, this chronicle ends with a reference to the second ascent of Photius to the patriarchal throne (878)<sup>21</sup>. From this year up to around 886 the young Symeon was living in the Byzantine capital and may have come into contact with the *Miscellany* while he was being educated together with other young people at the Imperial Palace<sup>22</sup>. He himself may even have participated in some way in a phase of its realization, or rather its study.

Another Greek manuscript testimony offers us further interesting food for thought. The codex Paris. gr. 922, an 11<sup>th</sup>-century manuscript, presents a meaningful dedication to “augusta Eudokia” in the form of a square composed of letters that contain the acrostic: Εὐδοκίας ἡ Δέλτος Αὐγούστης πέλει (f. 4). This figure could be identified as the Empress Eudocia Makrembolitissa (c. 1021–1096), but also as the more ancient Empress Eudocia Ingerina (c. 840–883), an important figure of the Byzantine court in 9<sup>th</sup> century. In the same codex we find the image of the empress and emperor with their offspring, a miniature that could represent Eudocia Ingerina and her consort, later adapted to the new empress Eudocia Macrembolitissa (f. 6). Eudocia Ingerina and her sons Leo and Alexander are represented directly in another codex with the Homilies of Gregory of Nazianzus

<sup>19</sup> Симеонов сборник..., p. 121. J. Vrooland and W. Veder provide a reconstruction of the Slavic title of the work, which they interpret as a free paraphrase of the title it would have had in Greek. The question of the title, especially in comparison with the more varied Greek tradition, should be explored separately.

<sup>20</sup> Cf. F. THOMSON, *The Symeonic Florilegium*..., p. 47.

<sup>21</sup> Cf. М.В. БИБИКОВ, *Византийский прототип*..., p. 317. According to F. Thomson it is plausible to place the first phase of the composition of the work between 867 and 877, during the second patriarchate of Ignatius (F. THOMSON, *The Symeonic Florilegium: an Analysis of its Relation to the Greek Textological Tradition and its Association with Tsar Symeon, together with an Excursus on the Old Believers and the Codex of 1073*, KMc 18, 2009, p. 266sq).

<sup>22</sup> On Symeon’s stay in Constantinople cf. the monographs of Ch. Trendafilov and M.J. Leszka (X. ТРЕНДАФИЛОВ, *Младостта на цар Симеон*, София 2010; M.J. LESZKA, *Symeon I Wielki a Bizancjum. Z dziejów stosunków bułgarsko-bizantyńskich w latach 893–927*, Łódź 2013 [= BL, 15], p. 25–41).

(Paris. gr. 510). The presence of acrostics in the form of a square in the Parisian codex of the *Soterios* also refers to a fashion of the time of Photius, in which word games and figurative poetry were especially popular<sup>23</sup>.

Eudocia Ingerina was the lover of Emperor Michael III, and later, as wife of Emperor Basil (811–886), was the mother of the future Emperors Leo VI and Alexander, and of the patriarch Stephen<sup>24</sup>. The Macedonian dynasty begins with her. She not only belonged to the noble family of Martinakioi, but also had Varangian origins (Ingerina is derived from Ingvar). We must, therefore, assume some relationship, not only with the Balkan Slavic world, but also with the Eastern Slavic world in which the Varangians had settled. We should not forget the threat that this population – in Greek called “Ros” – represented, and above all the triumphal announcement of their conversion which Patriarch Photius, as we have said, expressed in the *Letter to the Eastern Patriarchs*. This letter was written in the same year in which Ingerina became Empress (867)<sup>25</sup>.

Reconstructing these events appears fundamental to understanding the reasons that led to the creation of the Slavic version of the *Soterios* in the capital Preslav at the beginning of the 10<sup>th</sup> century, and to better grasping the meaning of the eulogy dedicated to Tsar Symeon.

### The eulogy of the *Miscellany*

The Slavic manuscript tradition, which must be considered in its close relations with the Greek tradition, is testified by 25 manuscripts (11<sup>th</sup>–17<sup>th</sup> centuries)<sup>26</sup>. In *Izbornik 1073*, the first manuscript testimony of the Slavic version, the text of the eulogy is repeated at the beginning and at the end of the manuscript, and this probably reflects the division of the protograph into two volumes.

The version found at the beginning is in continuous form and closed inside a vignette (f. 2v), with the exclusion of lines 24–25, 27 (26 is missing) which are reproduced above a large miniature of Christ enthroned on the *recto* of the same sheet. The second eulogy is divided into 27 lines and shows some different readings (ff. 263v–264r)<sup>27</sup>. The initial position of the first is consistent with the

<sup>23</sup> М.В. БИБИКОВ, *Византийский прототип...*, p. 307–308.

<sup>24</sup> On this figure, cf. C. MANGO, *Eudocia Ingerina, the Normans, and the Macedonian Dynasty*, ЗРВИ 14–15, 1973, p. 17–27. This question was addressed later by М.В. БИБИКОВ (*Византийский прототип...*, p. 301–307) and D.T. SIESWERDA (*The Σωτήριος...*, p. 300).

<sup>25</sup> Cf. C. HANNICK, *Die byzantinischen Missionen*, [in:] *Kirchengeschichte als Missionsgeschichte*, vol. II.1, ed. K. SCHÄFERDIEK, München 1978, p. 337–339.

<sup>26</sup> Cf. J. VROOLAND, W. VEDER, *О рукописной традиции Симеонова сборника*, ПК 35, 2006, p. 68–80.

<sup>27</sup> R. Nahtigal offered a reconstruction of the Old Church Slavonic text of the poetic composition which was composed in twelve-syllable lines, an adaptation of the iambic trimeter, featuring different caesuras. According to the scholar, the composition follows the tradition of Old Church Slavonic poetry testified by the *Alphabetical Prayer of Constantine of Preslav* and the *Prologue to the Gospel*



Byzantine tradition, as illustrated by the dedication to the emperor that opens the famous *Menologion of Basil II*, which also contains the same number of lines as our eulogy<sup>28</sup>.

The readings of the eulogy text in the later manuscript tradition must also be considered. More specifically, it should be emphasized that only the late manuscript from Cyril of Belozero's monastery (RNB Kir.-Bel. 1/1082, 5/1082, f. 6v) dating to the third quarter of the 15<sup>th</sup> century retains the original indication of the dedication to Tsar Symeon (1445)<sup>29</sup>. In *Izbornik 1073* the eulogy is addressed to the Prince of Kiev Svjatoslav Jaroslavič. Following the dynamics of possible adaptations, an interesting parallel can be established between the *Izbornik 1073*, dedicated to Prince Svjatoslav, and its prototype, dedicated to Tsar Symeon, with the Greek codex dedicated to the Empress Eudocia Macrembolitissa, which adapts a protograph created for Eudocia Ingerina<sup>30</sup>. For the interpretation of the imperial eulogy in the context of the Byzantine and Bulgarian tradition, especially in terms of juridical language, see the original contribution by I. Biliarsky<sup>31</sup>.

Examination of the eulogy's text is based on its latest edition<sup>32</sup>, while also considering the edition by F. Thomson, which presents the text in two columns: on the left the second eulogy of *Izbornik 1073*, and on the right the eulogy of the codex preserved in Cyril of Belozero's monastery<sup>33</sup>.

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and can be placed in the milieu of Tsar Symeon and John the Exarch (R. NAHTIGAL, *Rekonstrukcija treh starocerkvenoslovanskih izvornih pesnitev. III. Pohvala bolgarskemu carju Simeonu (893–927)*, [in:] *Razprave 1. Filozofsko-filološko-historični razred, Akademija Znanosti in Umetnosti v Ljubljani*, vol. I, Ljubljana 1943, p. 83–95). A more recent study by B.S. Angelov takes into account its division into lines (Б.С. АНГЕЛОВ, *Похвала царю Симеону*, [in:] *Изборник Святослава 1073 г. Сборник статей*, ed. Б.А. РЫБАКОВ, Москва 1977, p. 247–256). Subsequently, new detailed analyzes were published, accompanied by new editions and reconstructions, by A.S. Ľ'vov (А.С. ЛЬВОВ, *Исследование Похвалы великому князю Святославу и царю Симеону*, [in:] *История русского языка. Исследования и тексты*, Москва 1982, p. 162–197) and К. Кувев (К. КУЕВ, *Похвалата на цар Симеон – реконструкция и разбор*, Pbg 10.2, 1986, p. 3–23). For a general introduction to the eulogies dedicated to the Bulgarian Tsar Symeon and the most recent bibliography, cf. А. МИЛТЕНОВА, *Похвали за цар Симеон*, [in:] *Кирило-методиевска енциклопедия*, vol. III, ed. П. ДИНЕКОВ, Л. ГРАШЕВА, С. НИКОЛОВА, София 2003, p. 229–232. The most recent reconstruction was proposed by W. VEDER (*Преслушвайки една похвала*, [in:] *Пение мало Георгию. Сборник в чест на 65-годишнината на проф. д-рн Георги Попов*, ed. М. ЙОВЧЕВА et al., София 2010, p. 358–366).

<sup>28</sup> PG, vol. CXVII, col. 20–21. Cf. R. NAHTIGAL, *Rekonstrukcija treh...*, p. 83.

<sup>29</sup> Cf. photographic reproduction in К. КУЕВ, *Похвалата на цар...*, p. 12.

<sup>30</sup> Cf. М.В. БИБИКОВ, *Византийский прототип...*, p. 309–315; ИДЕМ, *К датировке греческого прототипа Изборника Святослава*, [in:] *О чем поведают архивы... Российско-болгарские отношения и связи*, Москва 2011, p. 164–165. The dynamics of recycling and their political significance has been underlined by W. VEDER, *Преслушвайки...*

<sup>31</sup> Cf. I. BILIARSKY, *Word and Power in Mediaeval Bulgaria*, Leiden–Boston 2011 [= ECEEMA, 14], p. 231–233, 242–246.

<sup>32</sup> *Симеонов сборник...*, p. 118, 119, 1205, 1213.

<sup>33</sup> The edition is accompanied by a useful English version based on the verse form of the second eulogy of *Izbornik 1073*, but it also considers the readings from the manuscript of Cyril of Belozero's

First, we need to reconstruct the structure of the eulogy which, in addition to the proem and the epilogue, has a central section divided into three parts:

- Proem, ll. 1–6
- Central part, ll. 7–23
- *Section I*, ll. 7–9
- *Section II*, ll. 10–16
- *Section III*, ll. 17–22
- Epilogue, ll. 23–27

The proem (ll. 1–6) is addressed directly to the sovereign, “great among the emperors (ВЕЛИКИН ВЪ ЦАРИХЪ, l. 1)” and “mighty lord (ДРЪЖАЛИВЫИ ВЛАДЫКА)”<sup>34</sup>, taking the Byzantine tradition as a model, and solemnly expresses the commissioner’s desire to spread the message present in the *Miscellany* by adopting an important biblical expression: “I desired with desire” (ЖЕЛЪВНИЕМЪ СЕ ВЪЖДЕЛѢХЪ, Lk. 22: 15)<sup>35</sup>. This reminiscence is characterized by alliteration (l. 2) and in the most ancient testimonies by the repetition of the verbal prefix in the noun. The object of desire is to reveal (ОБАВИТИ) the hidden meaning of “concepts”, or rather of the “hidden senses (ПОКРЪВЕННЫЯ РАЗУМЫ)”<sup>36</sup>. These are hidden deep within the books of the Holy Scriptures, which are the main subject of the anthology’s questions, books that are “complex to penetrate (МНОГОСТРЪПЪТЪНЫХЪ)”. In the illustration of the object of desire (ll. 3–4) we can recognize a biblical echo, in particular of the Pauline expression of the “hidden mystery” (ТАИНЫ СКРОВЕННЫЯ, Eph. 3:9)<sup>37</sup>, but

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monastery and of the first eulogy of *Izbornik 1073* (F. THOMSON, *The Symeonian Florilegium...*, p. 270–272, cf. also ИДЕМ, *Byzantine Erotapocritic Literature in Slavonic Translation with Special Attention to the Important Role Played by Anastasius Sinaita’s Interrogationes et responsiones in the Conversion of the Slavs*, В 84, 2014, p. 413–414).

<sup>34</sup> K. Kuev places the date of composition of the eulogy and of the entire *Miscellany* around 915 based on the imperial dignity of the Bulgarian ruler and considering the *Lëtopisici vkratčë* (*Chronicon breve*), which follows the eulogy of the *Miscellany*, in which the Byzantine rulers Constantine and Zoe are mentioned last (К. КУЕВ, *Похвалата на...*, p. 13).

<sup>35</sup> R. Nahtigal instead refers to the use of the lemma in 2 Cor. 9: 14. For the text of the Gospels we refer to the traditional edition of the *Codex Marianus* by V. Jagić (*Codex Marianus. Quattuor evangeliorum versionis palaeoslovenicae Codex Marianus glagoliticus characteribus Cyrillicis transcriptus*, ed. V. JAGIĆ, Berlin–Petersburg 1883, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Graz 1960).

<sup>36</sup> Regarding the verb ОБАВИТИ, R. Nahtigal refers to its presence in John the Exarch’s *Hexameron*. Today, thanks to the *Cyrrilometodiana portal*, we can see more precisely in the work of the medieval Bulgarian writer the syntagm ОБАВИТИ РАЗУМЫ in reference to Moses ([http://histdict.uni-sofia.bg/trmdict/trm\\_show/t\\_00812](http://histdict.uni-sofia.bg/trmdict/trm_show/t_00812), 21 XI 2020). After this verb L’vov, albeit with difficulty, reads an s which could indicate the reading СЪКРЪВЕННЫЯ (А.С. ЛЬВОВ, *Исследование...*, p. 166, 174–176). This reading recalls the form of the adjective used in the Holy Scriptures in relation to what is “hidden”, unlike the reading ПОКРЪВЕННЫЯ which would refer to what is “covered” (see below).

<sup>37</sup> We cite the Slavic version according to *Gennady’s Bible* (*Библия 1499 года и Библия в синодальном переводе с иллюстрациями*, vol. VIII, *Библия. Книги Священного писания Ветхого и Нового Завета*, Москва 1992, p. 276).

for the origin of the concept reference must be made to the parable of the hidden treasure (сѣкровищу сѣкрѣвѣноу, Mt. 13:44), which in turn refers to the treasure of the scribe (Mt. 13:52), the subject of extensive reflection in the *Miscellany*<sup>38</sup>. In the Gospels, the term *разоумны* always recalls the search for the meaning of the Holy Scriptures (тѣгда отврѣзе имъ оумъ да разоумѣютъ кѣнигы, Lk. 24:45).

In a manner pertinent to the overall content of the *Miscellany*, the question of deep interpretation – that is, of the spiritual sense – of the difficult passages of the biblical books comes to the fore, clearly recalling the Slavic title of the work. In l. 5 *многострѣпѣтѣныхъ*, in our opinion, does not correspond to “obscure”, but to “complicated” or “crooked”, as attested by its use in the Gospel of Luke (1 *вждѣтъ стрѣпѣтнаѣ въ праваѣ*, Lk. 3:5)<sup>39</sup>. The Slavic version of the Chronicle of Malala, preserved in the *Archivsky Chronograph*, speaks of the translation of the Old Testament books in relation to the New Testament – a translation commissioned by the Bulgarian Tsar Symeon – precisely in terms of the figurative interpretation that characterizes the exegesis of Fathers of the Church: *Книгы заветѣа бжїа ветха(г) сказыюще шбразы новаго заветѣа истинноу соущоу. преложеныа ѿ гре(ч)ска(г) языка в словенскыи* (Арх. f. 199r)<sup>40</sup>.

The “wise Basil” (l. 6) does not refer to books, as is generally believed, but to the following phrase, “in interpretations” (*въ разоумѣхъ*). The Father of the Church is therefore introduced in relation to the “senses”, the “concepts”, with a precise connection to the previous l. 4. The correct translation would then be “in the interpretations of the wise Basil”, designating Basil the Great as the chief exegete of the Scriptures. The indication of Basil, one of the authors of the *Miscellany*, mentioned first in the anthology, should therefore be interpreted as a reference to one of the most authoritative writers understood metonymically as a reference to all the authors of the work. Thus, the recurrent criticism of the anonymous composer of the eulogy for ignoring the contents of the *Miscellany* loses its meaning<sup>41</sup>.

<sup>38</sup> Question 75 (65) offers an extensive apologia of the Holy Scriptures that sets the Old and New Testaments in close relationship and focuses on the concept of wisdom with quotations from the books of Proverbs, Sirach and Wisdom, through the mouth of Solomon, and of the Pauline doctrine starting with the First Letter to the Corinthians and continuing with the Letters to the Romans and the Colossians (M. GARZANITI, *Хошѣ пѣть словесъ... Parlare in lingue e insegnare nella tradizione esegetica bizantina ai tempi di Cirillo e Metodio*, КМс 26, 2018, p. 19–28).

<sup>39</sup> Cf. R. НАНТИГАЛ, *Rekonstrukcija treh...*, p. 90. In the Holy Scriptures the noun *стрѣпѣтъ* can even have a positive meaning referring to architectural complexity (cf. Ex. 35, 35, in И.И. СРЕЗНЕВСКИЙ, *Материалы для словаря древнерусского языка по письменным памятникам*, vol. III, Санкт-Петербург 1906, p. 562–563).

<sup>40</sup> Cf. К. КУЕВ, *Похвала на...*, p. 6; Д. ПЕЕВ, *Заглавката на Григорий, презвитер мних на всички църковници на българските църкви, и Именникът на българските ханове*, LLi 5, 2007.

<sup>41</sup> F. THOMSON, *The Symeonian Florilegium...*, p. 283. In his most recent article on the *Miscellany* F. Thomson offers a different explanation, starting from the observation that at the beginning of the codex there is no separation between the title of the work and the following text by Basil the Great (F. THOMSON, *Byzantine Erotapocritic Literature...*, p. 417–418).

From this point of view, Basil the Great assumes the role of representative of patristic exegesis. His portrait, moreover, can be recognized in the first of the medallions of the authors of the *Soterios* that frame the image of the Empress Eudocia and her consort in the aforementioned Parisian manuscript (Paris. gr. 922, f. 6).

The central part of the eulogy (ll. 7–22) begins with the entrusting of the task to the translator who, however, admits his own inadequacy. This traditional *topos humilitatis*, expressed by the readings  $\text{H}\text{N}\text{E}\text{M}\text{O}\text{Y}\text{D}\text{P}\text{O}\text{Y} / \text{H}\text{E}\text{K}'\text{C}\text{H}\text{H}\text{E}\text{K}$  (original reading creates an antonymy with the expression “wise Basil”). The operation of translating from Greek was also interpreted as a simple transcription from Glagolitic to Cyrillic<sup>42</sup>. However, the context seems to confirm that we are dealing with a translation since it speaks of the effort to maintain the “same identity of the senses ( $\text{TPO}\text{Ж}\text{Ь}\text{C}\text{T}\text{B}\text{O}\text{ P}\text{A}\text{3}\text{O}\text{Y}\text{M}\text{Ь}$ )” of the discourse in the new version. The emphasis is on the method of translation ( $\text{H}\text{H}\text{AKO}$ ), that is, the preservation of the exegete’s meaning. The pronoun  $\text{E}\text{TO}$  would therefore refer to Basil. This confirms once again the meaning assumed by the term  $\text{P}\text{A}\text{3}\text{O}\text{Y}\text{M}\text{Ь}$ , which is now linked to reflection on the practice of translation. This reflection is clearly expressed in the so-called *Macedonian Cyrillic Fragment*, which A. Vaillant in his commentary identified with the preface to the lectionary version of the Gospel<sup>43</sup>. A.S. Lvov rightly noted the translated meaning of the participle  $\text{H}\text{A}\text{B}\text{Ь}\text{D}\text{A}\text{Ш}\text{T}\text{E}$  (l. 9) in the sense of “observe”, “preserve”, but in this case the close relationship with the verb  $\text{B}\text{Ь}\text{D}\text{A}\text{E}\text{T}\text{H}\text{H}$  in the sense of “watch” illustrated in several evangelical parables should be emphasized.

The second section of the central part (ll. 10–16) opens with the image of the “industrious bee” ( $\text{B}\text{Ь}\text{Ч}\text{E}\text{Л}\text{A}\text{ Л}\text{Ю}\text{B}\text{O}\text{Д}\text{Ь}\text{Л}\text{Ь}\text{H}\text{A}$ ), which we can find in Holy Scriptures (Prov. 6:8, but only in the version of the *Septuagint*) and to which Saint Basil had dedicated his reflections in the *Hexameron* (Homily VIII), later resumed in the fifth oration of John the Exarch’s *Hexameron*<sup>44</sup>. The metaphor, which confirms the centrality of Basil the Great’s thought, does not serve to explain the complex work of those who created the *Soterios*, but the process of instruction and catechesis promoted by Symeon himself. The idea was indeed to gather the best from the various writings cited in the work, to assimilate this within a “heart of magnanimous

<sup>42</sup> Cf. reflection on the concept of  $\text{P}\text{Ь}\text{Ч}\text{Ь}$  in F. THOMSON, *The Symeonic Florilegium...*, p. 274.

<sup>43</sup> Cf. A. VAILLANT, *La préface de l'Évangéliste vieux-slave*, RES 24, 1948, p. 5–20; A. МИНЧЕВА, *Македонски кирилски лист*, [in:] *Кирило-методиевска енциклопедия*, vol. II, ed. П. ДИНЕКОВ, Л. ГРАШЕВА, С. НИКОЛОВА, София 1995, p. 595–598, for the presentation of the different interpretative positions.

<sup>44</sup> Cf. BASILII, *Homelie IX in Hexameron VIII*, 4 in PG, vol. XXIX, col. 172–176; for John the Exarch’s *Hexameron* cf. *Das Hexameron des Exarchen Johannes*, vol. I, ed. R. AITZETMÜLLER, Graz 1958; K. КУЕВ, *Похвалата на...*, p. 21. I. Biliarsky rightly noted the use of the image in the *Chronicle* of Constantine Manasses (mid-12<sup>th</sup> century), in relation to the Emperor Theophilus’s love of books (I. BILIARSKY, *Word and Power...*, p. 245).

thought (ВЕЛЪМЫСЛЪНОЮ СРЪДЪЦЕ)”, compared to the honeycomb, and then distribute it to the recipients, highlighting the goodness of the message. The reading СЪТЪТЪ (honeycomb) of the second eulogy of *Izbornik* (in Kir.Bel. 1/1082 we read СТРЕДЪ) recalls the image of Psalm 18: 11 (СЛАЖДЪША ПАЧЕ МЕДА И СЪТА)<sup>45</sup>, as well as the reading of the majority text of the Gospel of Luke (24: 42: ОТЪТЪ ВЧЕЛЪ СЪТЪТЪ) and is present in the text of the *Izbornik*<sup>46</sup>. This process is described by adapting the traditional metaphor of the bee, which thus becomes an image of Symeon who instructs the boyars through these teachings. It is important to underline that the image does not refer to the composition of the codex, but to its use by those who knew Greek and hence to the work of mediation, aimed not at monks and clerics but at lay dignitaries of the court (boyars, БОЛАРЫ) who, as recipients of this message, are invited to understand the profound meaning of their thoughts (ВЪРАЗУМЕНИЕ ТЪХЪ МЫСЛЕМЪ, l. 16), with an evident echo of the evangelical expression of the “key of knowledge” (КЛЮЧЪ РАЗУМЪНИЮ, Lk. 11: 52)<sup>47</sup>. The description of the court of Symeon of Bulgaria referred to in the *Hexameron* of John Exarch (sixth oration) comes to mind<sup>48</sup>.

Through the same image the anonymous author therefore underlines that his translation had been preceded by oral transmission in the milieu of the imperial court, and at the same time clearly highlights that the anthology comprises extracts from different books and that it contains a plurality of interpretations (species and colours of flowers).

In the third section of the central part (ll. 17–22) the figure of Ptolemy is directly compared to Tsar Symeon. However, it should be noted that the comparison with the pagan sovereign is not related to faith, but to the desire (НЕ ВЪРОИЖ НЪ ЖЕЛАНИЕМЪ) to collect books (СЪБОРА ДЪЛА), an expression of an inner feeling that recalls the preface. These are of course the “divine books” (БОЖЕСТВЪНЫИХЪ КЪНИГЪ), in a definition that refers not only to the Holy Scriptures, but inevitably also to the exegetical reflections of the ecclesiastical writers present in the *Miscellany*<sup>49</sup>. These books are “very venerable” (МНОГОЧЪСТЪВЪНЫИХЪ, *lectio faciliior* in *Izbornik*) or rather “in many portions” (М’НОГОЧАСТЪНЫИХЪ, *lectio difficilior* in Kir.-Bel. 1/1082). The Bulgarian sovereign filled his residence with them, earning an “eternal memory (ВЪЧЪНОЮИЖ ПАМАТЪ)” in posterity. The reference probably unites two exponents

<sup>45</sup> Cf. А.С. ЛЬВОВ, *Исследование...*, p. 182 (with reference to the Sinaitic Psalter). In the same line we find the expression “ВЪЖДЕЛАНА ПАЧЕ ЗЛАТА” which recalls the proem of the eulogy, but also the following lines with the image of Ptolemy (l. 18).

<sup>46</sup> Cf. К. КУЕВ, *Похвалата на...*, p. 10–11.

<sup>47</sup> Cf. А.С. ЛЬВОВ, *Исследование...*, p. 184.

<sup>48</sup> Cf. *Das Hexameron...*; К. КУЕВ, *Похвалата на...*, p. 21.

<sup>49</sup> On the relations between the Holy Scriptures and the complex of “sacred” or “divine” books, cf. М. ГАРДЗАНИТИ, *Библейские цитаты в церковнославянской книжности*, Москва 2014, p. 119–122.

of the Ptolemy dynasty: Ptolemy I, founder of the Alexandrian Library, and above all Ptolemy II, promoter of the Greek version of the *Septuagint*, which again refers us to the context of the translation of biblical texts<sup>50</sup>.

In the Epilogue, ll. 23–27, the anonymous author hopes that the memory of posterity – essentially reminiscent of the pagan tradition – will become a reason for the future reward of the crown “of the blessed and the saints (БЛАЖЕНИХЪ И СЪБЪИХЪ ЛЖЖЪ)” in the world to come. In this eschatological vision, while on the one hand the value of the earthly crown is diminished, on the other an otherworldly perspective is offered. In the formulation of the first eulogy of *Izbornik*, even though the penultimate line is missing (l. 26), the expression of the appeal that characterizes the sermons is evident in the reading “of your soul (ДЪШИ ТВОЮИ)”.

This eulogy seems to us, therefore, to be entirely consistent with the purpose of the work. The *Soterios* was to be the result of a project conducted by several people<sup>51</sup> and, as we have reiterated, was aimed at theological education and was to be used by monks and priests to teach the laity. In the Slavic translation, as the eulogy attests, the orientation to the secular world is maintained, but it is interesting to note that the mediation is carried out by the commissioner himself, a layman, albeit in possession of a theological culture, who acts as a mediator of the message, i.e., collects the necessary ideas to then introduce them and explain them in his instructions to the boyars. Basically, this recalls the direction of the education in Constantinople of Symeon, who was destined for an ecclesiastical career.

While the image of the bee belongs to the sapiential and monastic tradition, the figure of Ptolemy instead recalls an imperial perspective, with the establishment of a library and the translation of the Holy Scriptures. This not only evokes the duplication in Bulgaria of the most ancient Alexandrian tradition, but indirectly recalls the Byzantine capital with the Library of the patriarchate near Hagia Sophia, where, moreover, Constantine-Cyril himself had worked (VC IV, 15). This library must have been well known to Symeon too, who must have visited it during the years of his education when he was at the Byzantine imperial court. In this perspective, Symeon’s role as commissioner is better explained, without the need to speak of the Bulgarian Tsar as the author of the collection of texts, as has been done in the past<sup>52</sup>. At the same time, this explanation also overcomes the difficulty represented by the reference to St Basil as the sole author quoted in the *Miscellany*,

<sup>50</sup> They are Ptolemy Soter, the progenitor of the famous dynasty and founder of the Library of Alexandria, and Ptolemy II Philadelphus, traditionally believed to have been the promoter of the Greek version of the Bible (F. THOMSON, *The Symeonic Florilegium...*, p. 275; I. BILIAISKY, *Word and Power...*, p. 242–243).

<sup>51</sup> Cf. D.T. SIESWERDA, *The Σωτήριος...*, p. 296.

<sup>52</sup> Cf. D.T. SIESWERDA, F.J. THOMSON, *A Critical Greek Edition...*, p. 570; F. THOMSON, *The Symeonic Florilegium...*, p. 283; П. ЯНЕВА, *Текстология и езикови особености на гръцките сборници – извори за Симеоновия сборник (по Светославовия препис от 1073 г.)*, [in:] *Симеонов сборник...*, vol. III, p. 80.



which would demonstrate lack of knowledge of the content of *Izbornik* 1073 by the anonymous composer of the eulogy.

At the time of Tsar Symeon, the patriarch Nicholas Mystic occupied the chair of Constantinople; he had been a disciple and companion of Photius and in 913 yielded to compromise with the Bulgarian ruler, recognizing him as “Emperor of the Bulgarians”<sup>53</sup>. Probably the reference to ancient Egypt rather than to the Byzantine tradition could also signify the yearning of imperial Bulgaria to overshadow Byzantine mediation in a universal perspective of the Eastern Mediterranean world in which the mythical Alexandria of Egypt emerged. In some respects, a similar orientation is encountered in the treatise *On the Letters* by the monk Chrabr, which exalts the Slavic alphabet even above the Greek since it was created by a saint, and also refers to the *Septuagint* produced in Alexandria (l. 11)<sup>54</sup>. After all, in the short treatise the invention of Cyril and his translations (l. 12) are dated precisely, pursuant to the Alexandrian calculation (863), while according to the Byzantine calculation the year 5508 corresponds to 855, a hardly plausible date.

## Conclusions

The eulogy we have examined therefore helps us to better understand the reasons that led to the creation of the Slavic version of this anthology at the time of Symeon. In the Constantinopolitan environment, when this anthology was conceived an adequate tool needed to be provided for monks and priests engaged in the education of the laity, with particular focus on the foundations of orthodox doctrine linked to traditional patristic thought. This was to be particularly useful for the evangelization of the aristocracy of the pagan peoples approaching Christianity. Thinking in particular of the Balkan and Danubian area, where Latin and Germanic missionaries were active, the concern for the possible influences of the Western tradition starting from the *Filioque* question was evident. This concern, as we know, was shared by Methodius himself in his action in Moravia and is linked to the return to Constantinople attested by the *Vita Methodii* (VM XV), which could be related precisely to the composition of Photius’s theological treatise, the *Mystagogy*, in which the *Filioque* issue plays a central role<sup>55</sup>.

Regardless of whether some passages or fragments of the *Soterios* were previously translated for use by the Moravian church, the Slavic version – produced in the First Bulgarian Empire by translators closely linked to the Methodian

<sup>53</sup> Cf. М.В. БИБИКОВ, *Византийский прототип...*, p. 318. On the complex issue, cf. А. НИКОЛОВ, *Царската титла на Симеон I като историографски и политически проблем*, [in:] *Кръгла маса „Златният век на цар Симеон. Политика, религия и култура“*, ed. В. СТАНЕВ, София 2014, p. 30–40.

<sup>54</sup> Cf. К.М. КУЕВ, *Черноризец Храбр*, София 1967.

<sup>55</sup> Cf. М. GARZANITI, *Methodius between Rome and Constantinople: the Return of the Moravian Archbishop to the Byzantine Capital (Vita Methodii, ch. XIII)*, *Slavica* 89.2, 2020, p. 121–131.

tradition – conveys the same concern expressed by the patriarch Photius in his *Letter to the Eastern patriarchs* on the need for a new catechization firmly built on the basis of orthodox doctrine and in an anti-Latin key<sup>56</sup>.

In the new Bulgarian environment, however, the initiative was taken by Tsar Symeon himself, who – on the strength of his theological training – assumed a decisive role while occupying the throne by taking responsibility for directly instructing the Bulgarian aristocracy, fully exploiting a tool in the Slavic language that would have been very useful. In this sense, one can observe the difference from the Constantinopolitan environment in which the work, although intended for lay people and even dedicated to an august empress, probably Eudocia Ingerina, did not envisage lay people as active subjects. Here we can see the greater protagonism of the ruling house in a context of starker autonomy compared to the local clergy who, at least until the establishment of the Bulgarian patriarchate, depended on the patriarch of Constantinople. In this sense, the figures of the Ptolemies and their desire for knowledge – concretely witnessed by the foundation of the famous Alexandrian library and the translation activity – are not only the generic expression of the oriental model of wisdom but also the confirmation of possible different cultural and religious traditions in the Eastern Mediterranean, of which Anastasius Sinaita was an expression and which flourished in a new form in Bulgaria.

The need for a deeper adherence to traditional orthodox doctrine, but also a broader horizon than the Constantinopolitan world, also allow us to see the fortune of the work in a new light, with the presence of the anthology in Kievan Rus' and the application of the eulogy to Prince Svyatoslav, even if in this case the education remained firmly in the hands of churchmen dependent on Byzantium. At the same time, these characteristics, albeit with specific adaptations, could explain the further diffusion – precisely in Southern Italy starting from the 11<sup>th</sup>–12<sup>th</sup> centuries – of the work in the original Greek in which the memory of Middle Eastern Christianity was kept alive while the pressure of the Latin Church was increasing, and the process of Latinization begun.

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<sup>56</sup> Already several years ago H. Lunt had guessed this when, with regard to the *Miscellany*, he clearly refers to the controversy with the Latins on the Trinitarian doctrine, to the activity of Methodius's disciples in Bulgaria and to the work carried out by Methodius himself in Moravia (H. LUNT, *On the Izbornik of 1073*, HUS 7, 1983, p. 363–364, n. 15).

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