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THE CULT OF SAINT PETKA AND THE CONSTANTINOPOLITAN MARIAL CULT

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1. In July 1230 or 1231 AD,¹ soon after his victory in the battle of Klokotnitsa and during a time of good relations with the Latin masters of Constantinople, the Bulgarian tsar John II Asen managed to obtain the relics of Saint Paraskeva of Epivatos. He subsequently arranged for the remains of this holy nun, whose cult was of only regional importance within the Empire, to be translated to Târnovgrade. There the remnants became the object of special veneration, which developed into one of the characteristic traits of Bulgarian spiritual life in the Late Mediaeval period and even during Modern times. This paper will focus on the mediaeval worship of Saint Paraskeva, who became known as Petka of Târnovgrade and was the celestial protector of the capital and the state, and a particular patron of the authorities in the Second Bulgarian Empire. This specific trait of the cult developed further and had its influence in neighboring countries, and most significantly in the Principality of Moldavia. It is precisely in this respect that we find one of the important features in the cult of Saint Petka: it draws closer to the Constantinopolitan cult of Our Lady as the Protector of the City. Thus, the veneration of Saint Petka was considered a characteristic part of the mediaeval conception of people, power and Empire.

As a result, it partially acquired the function of the Marial veneration in Constantinople, which is associated with the celestial basis of the notion of the Ecumenical Empire and the very power of the *basileis*. These topics will be retraced and emphasized in this study.

Clearly, we should also explain why we present Saint Petka in a volume consecrated to the cult of saint rulers and saint warriors. We should of course avoid referring to the citations that represent the holy woman as a "brave and defending commander" (στρατηγός, *BOIEBOΔA*) and the prayers that call on her to intervene in the battle against the infidel foes. The purpose here will be to highlight the ideological sense of the veneration, which is linked to the protection of power and faith. In the Orthodox tradition, it is Our Lady and the saint warriors who protect the terrestrial rulers in their battle against the infidels (we have the examples of the story of the siege of Constantinople in AD 626, many accounts of Saint Demetrius as Defender of Thessalonica and later as protector of the victorious Russian army in the battle of Kulikovo field against the Tartars). In Byzantium and Bulgaria, Saint George is the protector of the imperial army, while in Russia he aids the rulers in their fight against the heresies, which are represented in his iconographical scheme as the dragon lying under his horse. Thus, the cult of Saint Petka develops certain characteristics, which give it an ideological function similar to that of the veneration of the saint warriors in the Balkans and Eastern Europe.

2. It is first necessary to stress *some characteristic features of the Constantinopolitan cult of Our Lady*. This cult began to be recognized as fundamental simultaneously with the Christianization of public life in the Empire during the second

half of the sixth and the beginning of the seventh century. This was a period of seeking (and finding!) a new identity – an identity that could strengthen and save the Christian Roman community. This is also the identity of the savior power, which designates its origins, foundations, and essence. Does this mean we can determine the general traits of the Marial cult in the imperial capital?

For the *Rhomaioi*, the Empire was a holy unity regarded and comprehended from an eschatological perspective as having a special mission in the world and in history. As the first great Christian state and the primordial propagator of the new faith, it acquired an essential role in achieving the divine mission of the salvation of humankind. It is precisely this approach that needs to be applied in the study of the city-protector cult of the Mother of God. It is she who, as human being, gave flesh to Divinohuman and who is the closest to Him. It is for this reason that she is recognized as the celestial protector and intercessor of humanity. It is in this context that we should study the origins of her cult as the defender of Constantinople, which emerged at the end of the sixth and beginning of the seventh century, as well as its further development.² The mission of the Empire was understood on the basis of the detailed philosophy of history. The Romaic theocracy regarded the state as quite similar to the Church in its mission: to prepare and lead men along the path of Salvation to the End of the World and the Last Judgment. Of course, the state never became a *Corpus Christi*, unifying the visible and invisible worlds as only the Church was able. Nevertheless, it had its salvation mission and it was precisely from this mission that the special protection of Our Lady over it and its capital was derived. As is well known, this cult is frequently linked to the siege of the Polis by the Persians and Avars in AD 626 and

to its miraculous salvation.³ While this is indeed an important point, it is nonetheless more the result of, than the reason for the Marial cult.

3. Within this historical and religious framework we will present our observations on *the cult of Saint Petka in Bulgaria as a counterpart to the Marial cult of Constantinople*.

3.1. Firstly, her function was that of the *protector of the imperial capital*. It is well known that the capital of the Second Bulgarian Empire was perceived as a replica of Constantinople, in the same way as Moscow would become later the “Third Rome”. For this reason it was named “Tsarigrad” or “Tsarevgrad” (a translation of *Basileuousa Polis* or Πόλις τοῦ βασιλέως). The clearest expression of these ideas is to be found in the Slavonic translation of the *Chronicle* of Constantine Manasses, made in Bulgaria in the fourteenth century. Târnovgrade is presented as the successor of ancient Rome, replacing Constantinople in the Greek original of the text.⁴ Such a city needed a celestial protector. Naturally, the Marial cult also existed in the Bulgarian capital and was of particular importance, but it was the cult of Saint Petka that became more intimate with the city – as well as with the state and the authorities in general. This veneration, which is quite well attested in the hagiographical and liturgical written sources, has a significance that needs no special confirmation.

We will begin the review of these testimonies by mentioning some hymnographic issues, though in approaching them we must keep in mind their origins. The earliest service of Saint Petka is a translation from Greek, and the original text bears ideas from the time before the arrival of the relics in Târnovgrade. This is therefore not entirely relevant to our subject that focuses on the cult as created in the Bulgarian

capital. Testimonies to the cult of Saint Petka as a counterpart of Constantinopolitan Marial veneration are to be found only in some later additions that we will only mention here.⁵ Of course, our attention has to be focused on the so-called “Târnovgrade service” of the saint, which was set up in Bulgaria. The possibility that Saint Patriarch Euthymius was the author of that service⁶ gives further significance to the evidence we obtain from it. We can say that this is the most important, clearest, and most unambiguous source on the cult of the holy woman as a defender of the city, and as such it is a “political” and imperial one.⁷ We will now attempt to describe its essential traits.

Firstly, it must be stressed that, in the text addressing the saint, the Bulgarian capital is called “*your city*”.⁸ This is a reference to Our Lady’s relationship to the imperial city of Constantinople following Akatistos’ tradition. We have already emphasized this relationship and here it serves to underline the similitude of the ideological paradigms with the taking into account of all the conditions coming from this type of reduction – to replace Our Lady by Saint Petka. Thus, the holy woman is implored to guard “*her city*”, in which lie her holy relics⁹. In the fifth ode it is explained that

“Târnovgrade inherited by thee, reverend, a divine deliverance and an approbation and a calm harbor which saves ever from the ferocious calamities of many types and from the attacking furies”.¹⁰

Another essential element in the veneration of Saint Petka is the reference to the fact that *her city* had obtained a fathomless treasure by the arrival of her relics.¹¹ This attitude, which is the origin of the veneration of the relics after 1230, marks the

crucial difference between the cult of Saint Petka among the Bulgarians and the Romanians, on the one hand, and the Greeks, on the other. This difference was quite clear to a man of the Post-Byzantine period. The priest Synadinos of Serrhai proclaimed deliberately that the relics had not done any miracle during their stay in Constantinople because the local Christians there had not venerated them, as the Bulgarians and Moldavians were also later to fail to do.¹² This provides us with the interesting conceptualization of the results of the veneration, and of the cult in general, to which the present study is dedicated.

A comparison of the different copies of the cited service could produce some interesting results. The editor of the text – Stephan Kozhuharov – underlines that what he calls the “Rila copy” contains the greatest number of “Târnovgrade” references. Following this line, we can inquire as to the counterparts to the citation of the name of the Bulgarian capital, or expressions such as *your city*, in the other copies. For example, we find the expression *your slaves*,¹³ which could suggest that the word *city* in liturgical texts does not necessarily designate an agglomeration with its population, administration and so on. The *city* in the texts cited above is identified with *her slaves*, meaning the *believing, devoted and faithful people*. This is equivalent to all of the Christian community, united in the Church on the path to Salvation. In this sense, I believe, the liturgical meaning of the word *city* becomes a worthy subject for a special study.

3. 2. The cult of Saint Petka as a *celestial patron of the power* begins with the translation of her relics to the Bulgarian capital. According to the notions of the time, the arrival of the relics was performed by the will of God,¹⁴ as was every other acquisition of a sacred object. It was clearly seen a manifestation

of divine grace, a divine intervention intended to support the salvation mission of the Empire and its authorities. The Lord protects His city, the capital, and for this reason He allows the relics of the saints to be presented there as transmitters of holiness and grace. The relics thus legitimize the city and become the source of its celestial protection. In such cases, the sovereign who organized the translation (this act is always performed by a monarch) is no more than an executor of God's will, a fact that has much bearing on the essential element of the conception of power based on theocratic ideas.¹⁵

The exaltation of the Empire, as a result of divine intervention in human affairs, is eloquently presented in the hagiographical sources. In reference to Saint Petka, we can mention the narrative of the translation of her relics to Târnovgrade explained in terms of the presence of the Latin power in Constantinople having let her veneration turn to decadence. It was for this reason that the Lord instilled in the heart of the pious Bulgarian tsar the inspiration to transfer the relics in his realm.¹⁶ Some moments of this story are worthy of closer inspection. Firstly, it is a generally agreed fact that the monarch represents not only the central, but is also almost always the unique executor in the translation of the relics. This is presented as a quasi-ecclesiastical service of the sovereign related to the heavenly protection of the Empire and the eschatological Salvation of the people. In the words of the mediaeval scribe:

“He [tsar John II Asen (my note, I. B.)] obtained for himself the better: honor and praise and joy and happiness, invincible help, enforcement of his Empire not only in this age but also in the forthcoming one by the obtaining of our savior saint.”¹⁷

This is the imperial service to the cult of the patron of the people and of the realm. It suggests the ideological schema, the written expression of which is the account of the relics arrival.

The state and its sovereign obtain divine protection in two different ways: either the saint prays to God for his grace, or he acts himself as a defender, as warrior defender. Both of these cases are characteristic for the intervention of Our Lady – the first is linked to the very essence of Christianity, while the other took place in some historical events, such as during the siege of Constantinople in AD 626. Both these forms of help are also characteristic for Saint Petka. The prayers of the woman saint protected Bulgaria, and later Serbia (after their translation to that state), and supported the augmentation of piety.¹⁸ A text from the *Vita* written by patriarch Euthymius is particularly noteworthy, because the holy woman is accorded the “glory” of the Bulgarian tsars, bringing them victory, fighting off enemies as a brave commander, sending them away from the city of Tarnov.¹⁹ The *Vita* ends with a prayer to the woman saint to protect the tsar, the Empire and the people.²⁰ This can be summarized eloquently, as follows: Saint Petka takes the people under her wing; she guards the capital, *Basileuosa Polis*; consequently, holiness enters the political power in the Empire, becoming its basis and essence.

The “Târnovgrade service” of Saint Petka contains many citations that confirm the thesis of the saint as celestial protector of the power and of the Bulgarian tsars in particular. The most important prayers addressed to her in this text aim to strengthen the sovereign and assure his victory over the enemy.²¹ The following quotation is most relevant in this regard:

“У Параскеви прѣхвалнаа. крепость бѣди и дрѣжава црѣмь.
даваи на враги безбожніе поведи. матвами своими иже къ гв. и
съхрани прѣбнаа.”²²

The comparison with the Mother of God is significant in this case. In the very next troparion she is appealed to:

“Рѣчи се црѣкаа похвало ... рѣчи се на враги безбожніе поведа...”²³

And, at the end, one of the polyeleic verses reads:

“Твоемъ градъ дарви. бл҃годрѣзновенноу крепость съ црѣмь. и
дажѣ вѣньць прѣбываюци въ вѣки съ нимь.”²⁴

3. 3. The veneration of Saint Petka as a *celestial intercessor* is one of the most important traits of her cult. By the intercession from an eschatological perspective, the cult takes on a number of features of a counterpart to the Marial cult in its functions. It is clear that the existence of the relics in the imperial city testifies to a special type of divine presence, by which God sanctifies the capital as well as the entire Empire, confirming its sacred character. This presence is not pantheistic but personal and Eucharistic in the Church by intermediation of the divine grace.²⁵

To study the topic further, we can refer to the works of the Saint Patriarch Euthymius, who was the central figure in political ideology and state identity formation in this age of consolidation of the orthodox commonwealth. In his writings, he called the body (the relics) of the woman saint the “domicile of God”:

“You are the sacred vessel which contains the true sea [or “the true *myron*” in different copies] – the Holly Ghost.”²⁶

He explained in this manner the miracles of the relics. The mention of Jesus Christ as the “bridegroom” of the saint, as well as the quotation from the vetero-testamentarian book of the *Song of Solomon* in the text of the *Vita*,²⁷ should be interpreted in the same way. The orthodox ecclesiology interprets the bride, cited in this book of Holy Scripture, as an image of the Church. In this sense, I would like to refer to the conception of the Empire as “Church” that I studied in a recently published article.²⁸ We can find God’s presence only in the Church; it is He who is its head. The figure of the bride in the *Song of Solomon* has an ecclesiological interpretation, but we should not disregard Orthodox Mariology, which interprets the vetero-testamentarian temple as a pro-image of Our Lady, as well as the Church. God is present only in His Mother’s body and in the Ecumenical *Ecclesia*. This divine presence is also derived precisely from the consecration of the Empire – the reason being the celestial protection over it. In this sense, the mentioning of the saint as a bride of Christ is very eloquent and cannot only be found in the text of the *Vita*, but also in both her services; the old one²⁹ and that of Târnovgrade.³⁰

Following this idea, we should make special note of the motifs used in considering the Mother of God as an image of the Church as can be found in the text of the Târnovgrade service. They acquire a particular signification in the study of the “royal priesthood”, especially since Our Lady is called in the same text “tsarina, who bore the Tsar”³¹ or “the royal praise”.³² She is the woman who gave birth to Lord, was His palace and His home. The allusions to the Temple, the Arch of Alliance and the Altar of the holocausts are evident³³, and they have their particular importance in the context of the service of a saint who was the protector of authority in

mediaeval Bulgaria.³⁴ This is clearly concerned with both the well-being of the people and their path toward salvation.

It is well known that there are three women saints with the name of Paraskeva-Petka. For the time being we will disregard the fact that their veneration somewhat fused together³⁵, in order to note that they all appear as personifications of the day of Friday.³⁶ In the ecclesiastical tradition, this is the day of the Christ's Passion, of His sacrifice on the Cross for the salvation of the humanity. This is why one of the earliest images of Saint Petka (and even this is as a martyr: Saint Petka the Roman, and not Saint Petka of Epivatos) in an illuminated manuscript dated to the ninth century shows her with the instruments of Christ's Passion in her hands.³⁷ This type of image contains the ideas of salvation and the worldly path to it starting from original sin (as the reason for the loss of life in God for humankind), through the Incarnation and the Sacrifice of the Son of God, by which the innocent expiates the sins of humanity toward the Last Judgment and the salvation of those who adopt the Way, the Truth and the Life of their own free will. All this is necessarily linked to the Marial cult, since Sacrifice and Redemption is obligatorily linked to Incarnation. Only the truthfully incarnated Son of God, only the Logos having truthfully obtained human nature is genuinely able to suffer and to atone for fallen humanity. But the Incarnation is impossible without the Mother of God, who bore the Logos and gave Him flesh. This is the point where the veneration of Friday coincides with the veneration of Our Lady and reflects the Savior mission of the Empire.

4. *The similarity of the cult of Saint Petka with the veneration of Our Lady* is a secondary point and took place after the translation of her relics in Târnovgrade being clearly linked to this event. The woman saint was venerated in

Byzantium only as a holy nun who preferred virginity in Christ than life in that age. In her *Vita* there is nothing to inspire any development toward such a form of veneration to correspond with the Marial cult, with the obvious exception of the fact that she was a woman representing the very idea of virginity. The veneration of women saints is in some sense almost never linked to that of Our Lady. This is not an exception: as male saints are in a certain sense *imago Christi*, so women saints and nuns and anchoresses are *imago Virginis*. This assertion becomes clear in Christian art.

At this point of the research, we will pay special attention to the historical context and that within the framework of the frescos of the church [the frescos of Arbore (Moldavia)] where we find the first known painted cycle of the *Vita* of Saint Petka.³⁸ This monument provides very interesting material for our study. The frescos of the life-cycle are linked to representations of various eschatological, biblical, Marial and other scenes. Of particular note are the representations of the Akatistos hymn to *Theotokos* that include the scene of the siege of the imperial city of Constantinople in AD 626 and its miraculous salvation by the Mother of God. Most remarkable is the fact that the emphasis is placed on this scene of the aforementioned external ecclesiastical frescos of Moldavia from the eighteenth century.³⁹ Situated during the historical rule of Petru Rareș, they reveal a religious and political meaning through their attempt to argue on behalf of power in the principality. It is precisely in this sense that the representation of victory over the Persians and Avars in AD 626 at Constantinople and the entire cycle of the Akatistos hymn are most significant.⁴⁰ This is an important conclusion because of the particular implication of the Marial cult in the Orthodox tradition whose clearest written expression is the Akatistos itself. In as far as this study is dedicated to the parallelism between

the veneration of Saint Petka and Marial devotion, we need to pay attention to the spiritual and compositional context of the representation of the scenes of her life and above all to the correlations with the illustration of the Akatistos and the siege of the imperial Polis. Sorin Ulea highlights the military and political meaning of the frescos. The scene of the translation of the relics of the woman saint to Târnovgrade is situated on the southern part of the western front of the church and thus adjoins the scene presenting the siege of Constantinople. In Ulea's view, both scenes are united in an ideological and thematic unit.⁴¹ Evidently, this is a glorification of the capital of the Orthodox Empire, the "Eye of the Christian world", as well as of the victory over enemies thanks to divine grace. Thus, the obtaining of the relics and the victory over the enemies of Christianity, both united, enabled the veneration of Saint Petka of Epivatos (later "of Tarnov") in a direct correlation with the cult of the Mother of God as the Defender of the City. I mean here, of course, the functions of both cults in Bulgaria and, later, Moldavia, as the veneration of the celestial protectors who identify state and power in the conception of the Orthodox Empire.

E. Bakalova has convincingly proved that the textual basis of the life-cycle of saint Petka in Arbore is her *Vita*, written by Saint Patriarch Euthymius.⁴² Moreover, both cycles – in Arbore and in Roman – ended with the arrival of the relics at Târnovgrade, neglecting all subsequent movements. It was this city, the glorious capital of the Asen dynasty, which received the treasury – the body of the woman saint – and obtained by it protection from enemies and glory of its rulers.⁴³ This was the same protection the imperial city of Constantinople obtained from the Mother of God, the Intercessor of Humanity. All these observations refer to the mediaeval Bulgarian tradition

and eventually to the Constantinopolitan tradition. It is based on this that I have used the example of post-Byzantine art in Moldavia in order to clarify the conception of power in the Second Bulgarian Empire.

We must therefore now return to the written texts in order to try and find some counterparts and resemblances to the tradition of the Akatistos hymn. The kontakion of the sixth ode of the Târnovgrade service of Saint Petka reads:

“Кѡ глѧ Й. Пѡ ВЪЗЪВРАНОЕ ВОЕВОДѢ :- ВЪЗЪВРАНОИ И БЛАЖЕН
ЗДѢСНИЦИ. БЛАГОДАРСТВЕНЮ ПЕСНЬ И МОЛБЕНЮ. ННА ПРИНОШОУ ТИ
ГРѧ ТВОИ (variant: “РАВЫ ТВОИ”) БЛАЖЕНАА. НЪ ЯКО ИМВЦИ ѿ БА
КРЪПОСТЬ НЕПОВѢДИМОЮ ѿ ВСѢ ИСКШЕНЕИ. ИЗБАВЛАН МЕ ВСЕГДА.
ДА ЗОВЪ ТИ. РАЧИ СЕ МТИ ПРѢХВАЛНАА (variant: “ПРѢПОБНАА”):-”⁴⁴

This is, clearly, a quotation from the Akatistos.⁴⁵ It is employed as a musical model, but also it testifies the parallelism of the veneration of the Mother of God and that of Saint Petka in this special sense as protectors of the imperial city. In comparing this with the services of other saints venerated in Bulgaria during the same period, we ascertain that there were no similar features such as those we find in the cult of Saint Petka. This type of quotation is also untypical for the text of the service translated from Greek. In the Rhomaic milieu the cult of the nun saint from Epivatos has no characteristic as protector of the Empire and the power of the *basileis*. These observations prove again that the political side of the veneration of Saint Petka has its roots in the Constantinopolitan cult of the Mother of God as the protector of the city, which was developed as its replica after the arrival of the relics in Tarnov.

Let us now scrutinize a similar citation in the *Vita* of Saint Paraskeva, written by patriarch Euthymius. I quote from the text:

“Ты еси Българьмь красота, застоупница же и хранителница; о тебе царіе наши хвалет се; твоимъ застоупленіемъ всѣмъ радоующимъ насъ въспрѣшемъ; о тебе градъ нашъ оутврѣждает се и свѣтлоу поставляетъ побѣдоу. Колиці многожды царіе и варвари въсхотѣше твои славныи градъ Тръновъ озлобити и безвѣсти сътворити, въ немже всѣхъ твоихъ лежить тѣло; нь ты, какоже нѣкъи храбрыи воевода тѣхъ лица посрамлена отгнала еси крѣпостію, данною ти от твоего жениха Христа.”⁴⁶

We find here not only the cult of the defender of the city, but also the protector of the tsars, of their authority and their army. It candidly quotes that the holy woman, whose honored body lies in the imperial city, brings to the Christian sovereign and to his virtuous army a “glorious victory” over the Barbarians. Of particular note is the expression “brave commander” or “*stratēge*” (храбрыи воевода). We already find it in the text of her service translated as *възбраннзи воевода* (“defending commander”), while she is called *Взбраннаа ... застъпница* (“defending ... intercessor”). There are many reasons to see this text as significant. One reason is because it testifies to the vision of the saint directly intervening in the world’s historical events – similar to the intervention of the Mother of God during the siege of Constantinople in AD 626. More importantly, we should underline that this is an obvious quotation from the Akatistos Hymn, in which she is referred to in the same manner.⁴⁷ Following the Rhomaic conceptions, the divine grace descends on the imperial city through the very intercession of Our Lady.⁴⁸ Thus, the Empire and its authorities obtain legitimization of their power and their identity. Of course, Our Lady is protector of the rulers of Bulgaria, and she is not deprived of this function. She also legitimizes the power. The Mother of God remains the main intercessor for humanity, but as a part of the reduction of the

models in the periphery of the Byzantine Commonwealth, we should highlight the intermeditation of Saint Paraskeva-Petka, the holy nun whose cult took on, in a certain sense, some features of the Marial cult. To conclude this review of the similarities of the veneration of Saint Petka and that of *Theotokos*, we can quote again from the text of Saint Patriarch Euthymius, who referred to Saint Petka as the “vessel containing God”:

“Ты еси съсудъ, приемши истинное мѣро, еже есть доухъ
святъи...”⁴⁹

There is no human being – other than the Mother of God, the image of the Temple and the Arch of Alliance – who contained in her body the God’s Word.

5. As the above quoted text hopefully demonstrates, the cult of Saint Petka began among the Bulgarians, a tradition that later passed to the Serbians and Romanians. After the translation of her relics to Tarnov, her veneration obtained its specific internal logic as counterpart and substitute of the imperial city-defender cult of the Mother of God (videlicet, a cult which legitimized and identified the power as being “protected by God”). It is this logic development that also determined the subsequent fate of the cult. Here we might ask questions as to the spontaneous character of this development: was it provoked by the Bulgarian authorities as an intentional policy of the state and the ecclesiastical elite? It is known only that the tsar went to great pains and made much diplomatic effort to obtain the relics. It is also important to bear in mind the historical context of the translation; it took place immediately after the battle of Klokotnitsa when Bulgaria

became the dominant power in the Balkan Peninsula. All these proofs show the particular value of the acquisition of the relics in an ideological sense. It should also be stressed that the importance of any *translatio* is a function, a result of the character of the cult of the holy man or woman. In the present study we have tried to define the cult of Saint Paraskeva-Petka as a Bulgarian (or “Balkan”) counterpart of the Constantinopolitan city-protector cult of the Mother of God. This means it was the counterpart of the veneration of Our Lady as the intercessor and protector of man facing Her Son; that it is she who will be our intercessor at the end of the history, at the Last Judgment, but also along the terrestrial path of humanity. This was the reason for protecting the Empire, which – as we have already noted – retains a particular signification in the history of salvation beginning with the Fall, and passing through Incarnation and Redemption, in order to reach its final objective.

Thus, I would insist that, as a counterpart to the Marial Constantinopolitan cult, the veneration of Saint Petka determines the special signification of the city and the country, which received her relic within the framework of the Christian world – or at least the position they pretended to possess! Of course, when studying this topic we must be aware of all the profanization and reduction of these claims in the peripheries of the Byzantine Commonwealth. In this special case, they are demonstrated by the substitution of the cult of the Mother of God with that of the holy anachorete from Epivatos.

At the end of this study it is necessary to take heed of a statement by D. Obolensky concerning the cult of Saint Demetrius of Thessalonica. According to his words, during Late Mediaeval times, the sovereigns of certain Orthodox states expressed their pretensions to the heritage of the

Constantinopolitan Empire. The ideas of *Renovatio Imperii* were used to support the thesis of the Empire's *Translatio*, which passed in connection with the cult of Saint Demetrius.⁵⁰ This announcement is very interesting, all the more so since such processes passed in Bulgaria in the initiation of the movement of the Asen dynasty.⁵¹ G. Valtchinova drew attention to this thesis in her study of the cult of Saint Petka,⁵² though she considered it too presumptuous to look for such parallel traits in the veneration of the woman saint from Epivatov. Nevertheless, this is the general thesis presented in this study – the imperial character of the cult of Saint Petka among Southern Slavs and Romanians (or at least “political” and *princiar* among the latter). As we have seen, it acquired precisely this type of character in Bulgaria under certain concrete historical circumstances. In my view, there is no doubt as to the political significance of the *Translatio* of saints' relics;⁵³ however, it was in fact the function of the concrete cult of Saint Paraskeva-Petka that determined its continuation, diffusion and importance – not the movement itself. It was precisely this function, as a counterpart to the imperial Marial veneration, which promoted the woman saint from her status as local saint in Thrace to that of protector of states and peoples. Thus, the saint became one of the religious foundations and arguments supporting the sacred character of the Second Bulgarian Empire. In the periphery of the Byzantine Commonwealth, it was reduced to the veneration of a simple saint and not the Mother of God, but it still obtained immense importance for the “political theology” of Southern Slavs and Romanians during the Late Middle Ages. Of course, there was no need for such a veneration of the saint in the Greek milieu, where the veneration of Our Lady as the savior of the city continued. This fact determined the marginal character of the

cult of Saint Petka in Constantinople, not only before the arrival of her relics at Târnovgrade, but also during their stay in the imperial city from 1521 to 1641.

Nevertheless for the Bulgarians, Serbians, and Romanians, the arrival of the relics was equal to the obtaining of celestial protection for the city and the country that was to establish a particular position for them all over the Christian world. This position, even if not identical to that of the imperial city, the *Basileoussa Polis*, the Eye of the Universe, was at least a remote memory of it.

NOTES

- ¹ St. Kozuharov, "Neizvesten letopisen razkaz ot vremeto na tsar Ivan Asen II", *Literaturna misal*, XVIII, 2, 1974, p. 134.
- ² A. Cameron "The Theotokos in Sixth-Century Constantinople", *Journal of Theological Studies*, N. S., XXIX, 1, 1978, p. 99 sq.; R. G. Păun, " 'La couronne est à Dieu'. Neagoe Basarab (1512-1521) et l'image du pouvoir penitent", in P. Guran (ed.), *L'empereur hagiographe. Culte des saints et monarchie byzantine et post-byzantine*, Bucarest, 2001, p. 199 sq.
- ³ Fr. Barisić "Le siège de Constantinople par les Avars et les Slaves en 626", *Byzantion*, 24, 1954, *passim*.
- ⁴ *Srednebolgarskij perevod hroniki Konstantina Manasija*, Sofia, 1988, p. 152.
- ⁵ J. Ivanov, *Bulgarski starini iz Makedonija*, Sofia, 1931, p. 426; *Bulgarskata literature i kniznina prez XIII vek*, Sofia, 1987, p. 98, 103.
- ⁶ St. Kozuharov, "Neizvestno proizvedenie na starobulgarskata poezija", *Starobulgarska literatura*, I, 1971, p. 300-301.
- ⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 296-298.
- ⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 311 (50), 312 (56), 313 (57), 315 (74), 317 (85), 318 (87), 320.
- ⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 296-297, 313 (57), 315 (74), etc.
- ¹⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 310 (42).
- ¹¹ *Ibidem*, p. 310 (42), 312 (56), 319.
- ¹² P. Odorico, S. Asdrachas, T. Karanastassis, K. Kostis, S. Petmezas, *Conseils et mémoires de Synadinos, prêtre de Serrès en Macédoine (XVII^e siècle)*, Paris, 1996, p. 162-166.
- ¹³ St. Kozuharov, "Neizvestno proizvedenie na starobulgarskata poezija", p. 310 (42), 312 (56), 317 (85), 318 (87).
- ¹⁴ For the examples of the Eastern Roman Empire see: N. Baynes, "The Supernatural Defenders of Constantinople", *Analecta Bollandiana*, LXVII, 1949, p. 167-171 ; *Idem*, "The Finding of the Virgin's Robe", *Mélanges H. Grégoire*, 1949, p. 87-95 (= *Byzantine Studies*, London, 1955, p. 240-247).
- ¹⁵ P. Guran, "Invention et translation des reliques - un cérémonial monarchique?" *Revue des Etudes Sud-Est Européennes*, XXXVI, 1998, 1-4, p. 195-229; B. Flusin, "L'empereur hagiographe. Remarques sur le rôle des premiers empereurs macédoniens dans le culte des saints", *L'empereur hagiographe ... cited above* (note 2), p. 51 sq.

- ¹⁶ St. Kozuharov, "Neizvesten letopisen razkaz ot vremeto na tsar Ivan Asen II", cited above, (note 1), p. 128.
- ¹⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 128.
- ¹⁸ E. Kaluzniacki, *Werke des Patriarchen von Bulgarien Euthymius (1375-1393)*, Wien, 1901, p. 435; *Stara bulgarska literatura*, IV, Sofia, 1986, p. 382; St. Kozuharov, *op. cit.*, p. 128.
- ¹⁹ E. Kaluzniacki, *Werke ...*, p. 74; *Stara bulgarska literatura*, IV, p. 200.
- ²⁰ E. Kaluzniacki, *Werke ...*, p. 76-77; *Stara bulgarska literatura*, IV, p. 201.
- ²¹ St. Kozuharov, "Neizvestno proizvedenie na starobulgarskata poezija", p. 296 sq. In the second troparion of the sixth ode is written: "Странна въсе и чюнада, твоѡа чюса чтѡа. посоветвешѡи црѣмь. и храниши грѡ свои. и низлагашѡи враги беззѣжнѡе. хотещѡи вранемь", *Ibidem*, p. 311 (50). And inferior in the oikos: "рѡчи се чьсныи царѡи славо", *Ibidem*, p. 313 (57). In the first troparion of the ninth ode: "рѡчи се цркѡе посѡбие неповѣдимѡе", *Ibidem*, p. 315 (74).
- ²² *Ibidem*, p. 316 (76).
- ²³ *Ibidem*, p. 316 (77).
- ²⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 320.
- ²⁵ It would be interesting to compare my observations with the thesis of the presence of the Mother of God at Constantinople. It was claimed this was a real presence testified by the Marial contact-relics, which were in the Polis; see N. Baynes, "The Supernatural Defenders of Constantinople", p. 172-173.
- ²⁶ E. Kaluzniacki, *Werke ...*, p. 73-74; *Stara bulgarska literatura*, IV, p. 200.
- ²⁷ E. Kaluzniacki, *Werke ...*, p. 72 sq.; *Stara bulgarska literatura*, IV, p. 199-201.
- ²⁸ In order to accentuate the parallelism between the cult of saint Petka and that of Our Lady in Constantinople, it serves here to recall the notion of the Mother of God as a image of the Church or the Temple, which is very important for the present study: see J. Meyendorff, *Byzantine Theology (Historical Trends and Doctrinal Themes)*, New York, 1974, p. 21; M. Pliouhanova, *Sjuzety i simvolj Moskovskogo carstva*, Sanct Petersburg, 1995, p. 28; Iv. Biliarsky, "La demeure et la corne de l'Empire", *Orientalia Christiana Periodica*, LXIX, 2003, *passim*.
- ²⁹ J. Ivanov, *Bulgarski starini iz Makedonija*, p. 426, 427, 429, etc; *Bulgarskata literature i kniznina prez XIII vek*, p. 97, 99, 104, etc.

- ³⁰ Obviously, we find far more evidences in this text. The theme of the bride is very well developed. The subject continues in the whole text; see St. Kozuharov, "Neizvestno proizvedenie na starobulgarskata poezija", p. 304 (3, 4), 307 (13), 320, 321.
- ³¹ *Ibidem*, p. 318 (88).
- ³² *Ibidem*, p. 316 (77).
- ³³ *Ibidem*, p. 314 (61), 321.
- ³⁴ About the ideological signification of this images, see: Iv. Biliarsky, "La demeure et la corne de l'Empire", cited above (note 28), p. 194-195.
- ³⁵ This fusion could be the subject of a special study, based even on the confusion of the liturgical readings and of the feasts' dates. The reason for this fusion is the identity of their names, which produced the situation. At any rate, it should be underlined that it is mainly the cult of Saint Paraskeva of Tarnovgrade which englobed the others, since it was clearly more important in the Orthodox Slavic milieu.
- ³⁶ The explanation lies in the Greek and Slavon of the day (Παρασκευή, Петък, Пятница). See Fr. Halkin, "La Passion de sainte Parascève par Jean d'Eubée", in: *Polychronion. Festschrift Franz Dölger zum 75. Geburtstag*, Heidelberg, 1966, p. 228; *Idem*, "Les trois saintes Mercredi, Vendredi et Dimanche", *Analecta Bollandiana*, 86, 1968, p. 390 (it should be emphasized that – following this study – all three holy women who personalize certain days of the week are presented as intercessors for the innocents at the Last Judgement together with Mother of God, *Ibidem*, p. 390 : "l'apocalypse de Sainte Anastasie BHG 1868-70 montre au pied du trône de Dieu quatre femmes veillant sur les enfants innocents : ce sont la Vierge, Ste. Κυριακή, Ste. Τετάρδη, Ste. Παρασκευή); see also : D. I. Mureşan, "Autour de l'élément politique du culte de sainte Parascève la Jeune en Moldavie", *L'empereur hagiographe ...* cited above (note 2), p. 253-254.
- ³⁷ It is precisely that Saint Petka the Roman who is often confused with the other saints bearing the same name, even in the hagiography. See note 35 and S. Der Nersessian, "The Illustrations of the Homilies of Gregory of Nazianzus: Paris. Gr. 510", *Dumbarton Oaks Papers*, 16, 1962, p. 202, pl. 3; E. Bakalova, "La vie de Sainte Parascève de Tîrnovo dans l'art balkanique du Bas Moyen Age", *Byzantinobulgarica*, V, 1978, p. 175-176; *Eadem*, "Zitieto na sv. Petka Tarnovska v kasnosrednovkovnoto izkustvo na Balkanite:", *Rodina*, 1996, 2, p. 57.
- ³⁸ See the two articles signed by Elka Bakalova, cited above (note 37), *passim*.

- ³⁹ S. Ulea, "Originea și semnificația ideologică a picturii exterioare moldovenești (I)", *Studii și cercetări de istoria artei (SCIA)*, X, 1963, 1, p. 57-93; *Idem*, "L'origine et la signification idéologique de la peinture extérieure moldave", *Revue Roumaine d'Histoire*, 1963, 1, p. 29-71; *Idem*, "Originea și semnificația ideologică a picturii exterioare moldovenești (II)", *SCIA*, t. XIX, 1972, Nr. 1, p. 37 sq.; E. Bakalova, "Zitieto na sv. Petka Tarnovska ... " p. 66-67.
- ⁴⁰ S. Ulea, "L'origine et la signification idéologique de la peinture extérieure moldave", p. 41 sq.
- ⁴¹ *Idem*, "Originea și semnificația ideologică a picturii exterioare moldovenești (II)", p. 45-46. I had the possibility to see the frescos during my visit in Northern Moldavia and Bucovina in July 2003 and to confirm the author's conclusion concerning the ideological sense of the scenes.
- ⁴² E. Bakalova, "La vie de sainte Parascève..." p. 188 sq.; *Eadem*, "Zitieto na sv. Petka Tarnovska ..." p. 65-67, 81-82.
- ⁴³ S. Ulea, "Originea și semnificația ideologică ..." (II), cited above (note 39), p. 45-46.
- ⁴⁴ St. Kozuharov, "Neizvestno proizvedenie na starobulgarskata poezija", p. 312 (56).
- ⁴⁵ Βαζβρληνιοϛ βοεβοδѣ = Τῆ ὑπερμάχῳ στρατηγῷ - see below (note 46).
- ⁴⁶ "You are the beauty, the intercessor and the protector of the Bulgarians. Our tsars are exalted by you. We can resist to the foes, attacking us, thanks to your intercession! By you our city becomes stronger and is glorified by a bright victory. How many kings and Barbarians wanted over and over again to humiliate and to destroy your glorious city of Tarnov where your most honored body lies. But you as a brave commander (= "stratege", "voevoda") sent off their ashamed faces by the force given you from your bridegroom Jesus Christ!", E. Kaluzniacki, *Werke ...*, p. 74; *Stara bulgarska literatura*, IV, p. 200.
- ⁴⁷ Τῆ ὑπερμάχῳ στρατηγῷ τὰ νικητήρια ὡς λυτρωθεῖσα τῶν δεινῶν εὐχαριστήρια ἀναγράφω σοι ἡ πόλις σου Θεοτόκε· ἀλλ' ὡς ἔχουσα τὸ κράτος ἀπροσμάχητον ἐκ παντοίων με κινδύνων ἐλευθέρωσον· ἵνα κράζω σοι· χαῖρε νύμφη ἀνύμφευτε., E. Wellesz, *The Akathistos Hymn (Introduced and Translated)*, [= *Monumenta musicae byzantinae transcripta*, vol. IX], Copenhagen, 1957, p. LXVIII; C. A. Trypanis, *Fourteen Early Byzantine Cantica* [= *Wiener byzantinische Studien*, Bd. V], Wien, 1968, p. 29.

- ⁴⁸ Fr. Barisić, "Le siège de Constantinople par les Avars et les Slaves en 626", *Byzantion*, 24 (1954), p. 371 sq.; G. Ostrogorsky, *Histoire de l'Etat byzantin*, p. 131; J. F. Haldon, *Byzantium in the Seventh Century*, Cambridge, 1990, p. 355 sq.; N. Baynes, "The Supernatural Defenders of Constantinople", p. 171-177; M. Pliouhanova, *Sjuzety i simvoly Moskovskogo carstva*, p. 23 sq.
- ⁴⁹ E. Kaluzniacki, *Werke ...*, p. 73-74; *Stara bulgarska literatura*, IV, p. 200. In the translation prepared by Klimentina Ivanova following the copy of Zographou we find "sea" (*more*) instead of "myron" (*miro*).
- ⁵⁰ D. Obolensky, "The Cult of St. Demetrius of Thessaloniki in the History of Byzantine-Slav Relations", *Balkan Studies*, XV, 1974, 1, p. 4-5, 17 sq.
- ⁵¹ *Ibidem*, p. 18-19; Iv. Biliarsky, "La demeure et la corne de l'Empire", p. 181 sq., 189 sq.
- ⁵² G. Valtchinova, "'Visages nationaux' du culte de sainte Parascève/Petka d'Epivatos: une approche historico-anthropologique", *Etudes balkaniques*, 2000, 2, p. 105.
- ⁵³ On this topic, see P. Guran, "Invention et translation des reliques – un cérémonial monarchique?" *passim*. Some remarks on this subject are also made by G. Valtchinova, *op.cit*, p. 108-109.