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**OPINION**

on

the doctoral dissertation of Radostin Grigorov

on the topic of:

**„The Tsarigrad Patriarchy and the Bulgarians (XIV – middle of the XVth century)”**

for the awarding of the degree of “doctor” in 2.2. „History and archeology” (Doctoral program: “History of Bulgaria – Medieval Bulgarian history) by the scientific jury of Sofia University “Sv. Kliment Ohridski”

*This opinion piece is prepared on the basis of a Decision of the first meeting of the scientific jury by which I was appointed and have agreed to provide an opinion piece on the proposed dissertation.*

1. **Information regarding the doctoral candidate**

Radostin Grigorov graduated in “History and geography” at Sofia University “Sv. Kliment Ohridski” in the Historical faculty in 2017. His master’s degree was in the Master’s Program “Bulgarian Middle Ages: state, society, culture” in 2018 and from the middle of the next year is a regular PhD student attached to the cathedra of “History of Bulgaria” at the same faculty. During his PhD studies he finished a nine-month Erasmus+ specialization at the Yanina University, where he manages to finish an intense Greek language course. He also managed to finish the dissertation text before his three-year education period ran out with several months to spare. All of this shows that Radostin does not waste his time, which is admirable.

1. **Information regarding the dissertation and narrative summary**

First of all I welcome the choice of topic in the area of church-historical problematics with which the Bulgarian historical science returns to its roots. I like the intrepidity of such a young mand to engage such a challenging question and for that I also congratulate the scientific advisor.

The dissertation contains 253 pages. It is separated in an Introduction which includes: an overview of the scientific publications and a review of the historical sources, Five chapters with subchapters, a Conclusion, Appendixes and Bibliography (Sources and scientific publications). The text contains 637 footnotes.

The title of the dissertation is clear and accurately formulated. The text is written in a good Bulgarian language and grammatical errors are almost absent. It is clear, has a logical coherency and demonstrates a good academic style. All remarks that I have made during the internal discussion of the dissertation have been noted in the text presented for the public defense.

In the First Chapter the doctoral candidate offers a brief overview of the history of the Tsarigrad Patriarchy (40 pages). It has an introductory character and in that sense, I accept the author’s decision to include this part in the text. It bears mentioning that whenever such a volumous history of such an important institution is undertaken there is always the risk for something to pass unmentioned. Despite this the colleague has clearly defined the different periods in the history of the Tsarigrad Patriarchy until the fall to Ottoman rule and has managed to do so well within the confines that the research has provided. At the end of the chapter there seems to be a technical error – the XV and not the XVIth century is mentioned: “The Christian church no only did not manage to unity in opposition to the other-believing but would have split once again during the XVth c. during the Reformation” (p. 57).

The Second chapter, which is key for the dissertation, the inter-ecclesial relationship between Turnovo and Tsarigrad are examined, the disputed dioceses, the struggle for power, the emergence of new Patriarchies and a drive towards autonomy and autocephaly of some more peripheral areas. It must be mentioned that the dioceses up until the New time are not viewed in a national-political aspect. It is possible for the territory to be ruled politically by one state and remain at the same time a part of the diocese of a different Local church, This is not only not fatal but demonstrates the otherworldly or above-worldly character of the Church, which also reflects on the institutional structure and rule. Of course from a canonical standpoint the Tsarigrad Patriarchy is in the most fortuitous position as it is First-among-equals after the falling away of Old Rome in 1054 and especially after 1204. Also at the lack of an Ecumenical Council the initiative and voice of the First-among-equals is decisive. And it is exactly in this situation that the multiplication of autocephalous dioceses begins – Turnovo, Serbian Patriarchy, Hungaro-Wlachian metropoly etc. That the Eastern ecclesiology is radically different from the papal is another question and one that often eludes researches, led in that direction by the abundant literature that views and interprets the Western understanding for the structure of the Church. Despite that I would insist that we should not view Turnovo and Tsarigrad as equal combatants – the First-among-equals is not Turnovo.

As it has become very popular to talk about this topic recently, we should mention something outright: the Turnovo Patriarchy as a near autocephalous dioceses to Tsarigrad is in the way of the ecclesio-political ambitions of the Empire. This is before all else due to the zeal in the confession of the faith and the maintaining of the Tradition without any compromise – unlike Tsarigrad. In this sense Turnovo becomes even more of a obstacle when the “wisdom of the Latins” comes in vouge in the New Rome (second half of the XIII – XIVth c.). The multiplication of separate local churches with the fall of Turnovo I see as a positive process, which will in turn bear fruit during the Ottoman period. This process should not be viewed one-sidedly.

In this chapter I would highlight the section (pp. 84-92) devoted to the critical assessment of the Letter of patriarch Kallistos I – a true apology on the autocephaly of the Turnovo Patriarchy. Congratulations!

The last tow chapters are devoted to Bulgarian churchmen that have received hierarchical acclaim outside of Bulgaria. They are a clear sign of the prestige that the Bulgarian ecclesial and spiritual tradition at that time. This is also seen in the homilies of St. Patriarch Evtimii – to be a Bulgarian at that time means to bear an erudition and ecclesial piety, garnered with canonical devotion. Even a cursory glance among the primates of that time reveals that they are all distinguished Bulgarian churchmen – Patr. Ephrem the Bulgarian, Cyprian and Gregory Tsambalak, the hungaro-wlachian metropolitans etc. This is due to the fact that then, and ever since, Bulgarians are seen as “experts” on the establishment and leadership of autonomous local churches. To this day a large part of the Polish Orthodox Church has its roots from Bulgarian and her Church.

In the Conclusion the researched questions and the found answers through the sources are correctly summarized. The author objectively notes that during the tense period in question there are also moments of fruitful collaboration.

The Appendices I see as appropriated and accurate.

For the writing of the dissertation abundant source material is used as well as numerous scientific publications. The impressive in size Bibliography is also pleasantly supplanted with a considerable amount of Greek-language literature.

1. **Scientific Merits**

The Dissertation in in question definitively has scientific merit, which can be outlined in several aspects:

First, as a merit I see the filling of a of a void in Bulgarian research on the period in question in the correlation offered here – Tsarigrad Patriarchy – Bulgarians.

Second, within the context of the question posed here I see as having merit the highlighting of the role of the Bulgarian churchmen-hierarchs of that period, especially the place and role of the Tsarigrad Patriarch Joseph II.

Third, I see as having merit the effort of the author to outline a complex picture of the relationship between the Tsarigrad and Turnovo Patriarchies based on the available sources. It is important to note that within the Tsarigrad Patriarchy there are contradictions at that time which makes her carried out ecclesial policy very inconsistent and its tracing difficult even from the most experienced researchers. Here I highlight the authors seriousness towards objectivity in showing not only the conflicts but also the collaboration between the two ecclesial centers at that time.

I have no common publications or any other conflict of interest with the author.

1. **Conclusion**

The proposed dissertation text is professionally carried out research which contributes to the theme. The work falls within the requirements for the awarding of the degree of “doctor” in 2.2. “History and archeology” (Medieval Bulgarian history). This allows me to support the dissertation and to call on the other members of the scientific jury to vote in favor of Radostin Georgiev’s work.

St. Theodore of Tyre and St. Roman of Turnovo

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