**STANDPOINT**

**of the dissertation**

**on the candidate RADOSTIN GRIGOROV GRIGOROV,**

PhD student in the Faculty of History at Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski",

on topic: **The Patriarchate of Constantinople and the Bulgarians (14th – mid 15th century)**

for obtaining the scientific and educational degree "Doctor",

by **Prof. Dr. Plamen Hristov Pavlov**

/ University of Veliko Turnovo “St. Cyril and St. Methodius”, member of the Scientific Jury/

Professional field: 2.2. History and archeology. Doctoral program: "History of Bulgaria" - History of Medieval Bulgaria

**Supervisor: Assoc. Prof. Georgi N. Nikolov**

**Information about the PhD student and the doctoral program**

The documentation attached in connection with the present procedure testifies that all normative requirements have been met in connection with the training of Radostin Grigorov as a PhD student. The dissertation was discussed and proposed for defense at a meeting of the Department of History of Bulgaria at the Faculty of History of Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski” on October 20, 2021.

It should be emphasized that the presented dissertation is dedicated to an important but insufficiently studied and meaningful topic in the history of the Bulgarian church, state and society in the Middle Ages.

**Information about the dissertation**

The author researches and analyzes in depth and objectively a wide range of scientific problems, discussed more than once in the works of Bulgarian and foreign medievalists, Byzantine scholars and church historians. The presented text has 253 pages, organized with an introduction, an overview of the historical sources and the existing researches, five chapters, a conclusion, two appendices and a bibliography.

In his **Introduction**, the author presents a synthesis of the used research methods and sets goals of the research. The review of the historical sources used on the topic and the existing research has been performed correctly and accurately, with minor omissions.

**The first chapter** of the dissertation is an overview of the history of the Patriarchate of Constantinople from its inception until the end of the Byzantine Empire in 1453. Although at first glance it exceeds the direct parameters of the presented work, this chapter is necessary and, on the other hand, testifies about the author's extensive knowledge and professional awareness in view of research on this fundamental topic. My only significant remark is that the text is at times too "narrative", which is useful in a book, but in this case it could have been done in a different way. This effect is amplified by using in the whole work in the verb past tense, while at least from my point of view it is advisable to apply the present historical tense.

**The second chapter** is devoted to one of the main scientific problems in the dissertation – the relationship between the Patriarchate of Constantinople and the Patriarchate of Tarnovo in the 14th century. The paragraphs in which the content is distributed examine in detail and in-depth a wide range of issues related to the complex relations between the two patriarchates at the background of dynamic, often dramatic political events. The emphasis is rightly on the problem of the dioceses on the Black Sea coast, in the north of the Danube, the controversial issues surrounding the fate of metropolitan centers such as Plovdiv, Vidin and Sofia. Radostin Grigorov carefully and accurately traces the cases in which the dioceses in question belonged to or passed from the spiritual authority of Tarnovo to that of Constantinople. In my opinion, the author should pay attention to cities such as St. Zagora, Sliven, Yambol, and possibly Kran, whose church status remains unclear. The parts dedicated to the relations between Tarnovo and Constantinople with the Serbian Autocephalous Church in Pec (patriarchate after 1346 with the support of Tarnovo and Ohrid), also deserve a positive assessment. This assessment also applies to the exposition which is tracing the conflict situations between the two churches and the fate of the Patriarchate of Tarnovo after Euthymius.

**The third chapter** of the dissertation examines the relations of the Patriarchate of Constantinople with the Bulgarians in the context of political development in the middle and the second half of the 14th century. Both the in-depth knowledge of R. Grigorov and the accents placed in the analysis of some sources and little-known personalities /Gennady the Bulgarian, Nikolai the Bulgarian, etc./ make a very good impression.

**Chapter Four** traces the connections of bishops of proven or presumed Bulgarian origin with the Patriarchate of Constantinople /Ephraim, Cyprian, Gregory Tsamblak, Damian, Theoctist, etc./. The author is careful about the claims of Bulgarian origin in relation to some of these personalities, which is undoubtedly the right approach. On the other hand, nevertheless Radostin Grigorov fully clarifies their connection with the Bulgarian population within Byzantium and Serbia, its spiritual traditions, etc.

**The fifth chapter** is entitled "Participation of Bulgarians in the life of the Patriarchate of Constantinople in the first half of the 15th century". We must especially emphasize the excellent prosopographical "portrait" of patriarch Joseph II, in which the author makes important clarifications with a definite contribution.

In his **Conclusion** Radostin Grigorov summarizes his observations and conclusions. The two **Appendices** to the dissertation are appropriate for the work, especially regarding the first one, which is dealing with the disputes between the Patriarchate of Constantinople and the Ohrid Bulgarian Archbishopric for the dioceses of Vidin and Sofia in the early 15th century. The attached **Bibliography** is accurate and shows excellent knowledge of the topic.

The presented **Abstract** meets the requirements and presents in an appropriate way the content of the dissertation and the results achieved by the author.

**Scientific contributions**

Some of the contributions of the dissertation have been noted, but let's try to summarize them:

- For the first time in the work of R. Grigorov is given a comprehensive analytical review of the relations of the Patriarchate of Constantinople and the Bulgarians in the 14th – mid 15th century, and in the era of the Second Bulgarian Empire in general

- The role of prominent Bulgarians in the history of the Patriarchate of Constantinople is being analyzed

- The complex relations between the two patriarchates and the establishment of the Patriarchate of Tarnovo and its independent development are shown

- Both the cases of opposition and of cooperation and interaction between Tarnovo and Constantinople are presented, especially regarding the fight against heresies

- The role of personalities of Bulgarian origin in the life of the Patriarchate of Constantinople has been fully studied, among which Patriarch Joseph II stands out

- To these contributions we could add the consideration of the dispute between Constantinople and Ohrid over the dioceses of Vidin and Sofia in Appendix 1 – one problem which is most often underestimated by researchers.

Of course, along with the overall positive assessment of Radostin Grigorov, recommendations and criticisms can be made, some of which have already been mentioned in this opinion. In my opinion, in the future publication of this text as a separate monograph, which I recommend, it is better to note more clearly the place of the Athos monasteries, as well as Paroria, in the relations between Tarnovo and Constantinople. In the end, however, the PhD candidate Radostin Grigorov has managed to cover and subject to objective analysis the research topic and its specific projections. A significant part of the considered problems often remain on the periphery of the existing studies, which makes the work of Radostin Grigorov even more necessary. The PhD student has gained serious knowledge of the historical sources on the subject in all their diversity, managing to make the most of the existing information. On the other hand, the author is well acquainted with the existing researches, the work of Bulgarian and foreign scholars, and in many places offers his own observations and conclusions that deserve attention and show the high level of professionalism achieved by the PhD student.

In conclusion, **I strongly vote with a positive assessment for obtaining the scientific and educational degree "Doctor" by Radostin Grigorov Grigorov**, Professional field: 2.2. History and archeology.

11 February 2022

Veliko Tarnovo Prof. Dr. Plamen Pavlov