**STATEMENT**

by Prof. Dr. Kazimir Popkonstantinov

for the dissertation work of **Radostin Grigorov Grigorov**, full-time PhD student, for the award of the degree of Doctor of Education in the field of higher education 2. Humanities, professional field 2.2. History and Archaeology, scientific specialty History of Bulgaria (History of Medieval Bulgaria) on the topic

**"The Patriarchate of Constantinople and the Bulgarians (14th - mid-15th centuries)"**

written under the scientific supervision of Assoc. Prof. Dr. Georgi Nikolov,

Sofia University St. Kliment Ohridski

**Relevance of the thesis**

The topic is a challenge for every ambitious young researcher. A challenge because the source material for it in our libraries and archives is not at the desired level. Mr. Radostin Grigorov has shown maximum perseverance, ability to take advantage of his training to be able to cope with the huge source base, specialized literature. The topic of the dissertation is extremely important, as it is closely related for tens of years with accumulated enough source material, which allows to proceed to a study devoted to the relations of the Patriarchate of Constantinople and the Bulgarians in the period of the mid-14th and 15th centuries. This relationship can be well understood by a researcher very familiar with the process that began in an earlier era and continued into the period noted by the doctoral student in all the Eastern churches under the jurisdiction of Constantinople. The choice of the topic, as the doctoral student himself notes, was born out of the lack of a complete or partial study of the relations between the Patriarchate of Constantinople and the Bulgarians in the Middle Ages. I will note that the work is timely, although it is limited to a narrower chronological framework, since as Mr. Radostin Grigorov rightly notes "a study of the entire period of these relations would be too extensive and voluminous". On the other hand, it is known, as I noted at the beginning of my statement, that the 14th and 15th centuries in Bulgarian historiography remain problematic and understudied. In shaping the work, the doctoral student skilfully uses the thematic-chronological principle. The colleague Radostin Grigorov has managed not only to touch upon a number of issues closely related to church relations, but also to discuss tolerantly with some of the scholars of these issues.

It is also very impressive that the PhD student has not been content with studying only the known source material, but also takes part in the study of unpublished ones. In many respects, some of them became available precisely because of his perseverance and preparation. The development of such a dissertation is impossible without a certain level of theoretical knowledge and the ability to use it appropriately, without undue enthusiasm, but only to clarify the tasks at hand. The subject chosen is topical because it provides answers to a number of questions closely related to the changes in demographics that have influenced the relationships addressed in the dissertation. The dissertation was discussed at a meeting of the Department of History of Bulgaria at the Faculty of History of Sofia University St. Kliment Ohridski held on 20. 10. 2021. The proposed doctoral dissertation of R. Grigorov consists of an Introduction, a Review of Scientific Research, a Survey of Historical Sources, five chapters, a Conclusion, two Appendices, a Bibliography, a Periodical and Series (list of abbreviations), and has a total length of 253 pp.

In the Introduction (pp. 4-5), the doctoral candidate argues for the choice of the topic and its chronological scope on the grounds that the relations between the Patriarchate of Constantinople and the Bulgarians in the period of the 14th - mid-15th centuries have not been the subject of independent and thorough study in Bulgarian and foreign historiography. The structure of the work is justified by the thematic-chronological principle followed in its writing.

**Degree of knowledge of the state of the problem**

In the search for new approaches to the development of the topic, my colleague Radostin Grigorov used the interdisciplinary method. In his opinion, the neglect of certain groups of sources not only undermines the quality of any work, but also casts doubt on the results obtained and hence unjustifiably absolutizes the scope and effects of events in the chronological span of the 14th-15th centuries.

**Relevance of the chosen research methodology and the stated aim and objectives of the dissertation**

Having familiarised myself with the substance of the dissertation as a whole, I have found that there is the necessary consistency of the development and structuring approach adopted. The dissertation has as its topic an area little explored in this country and by its very title shows a strong claim to be a contribution to scholarship. The dissertation was written with exceptional clarity. The theses were formulated accurately, in a way that allows for verifiability of their historiographical reliability and analytical argumentation. An original position in the field of current research has been defended distinctly. A task successfully accomplished in this reconstruction was the delineation of the historical context. The other great merit of the dissertation is the excellent balance between historical-interpretive and systematic-methodological approaches. The research methodology and the research toolkit used encompass several approaches of working in relation to the properly stated aim and objectives of the research - comparative, historical, analytical and statistical.

**Dissertation data**

The author has chosen as the structure of his work a division into five main chapters, preceded by a review of historical research and sources. **First** is the introductory chapter, which presents the history of the Patriarchate of Constantinople from its foundation until the conquest of Constantinople by the Ottoman Turks in 1453. **The second chapter** deals with the relations between the Patriarchate of Tarnovo and the Patriarchate of Constantinople in the fourteenth century. It rightly focuses on the problem of the dioceses along the Black Sea coast, north of the Danube, and the controversies surrounding the fate of metropolitan centres such as Philopopolis/Plovdiv, Vidin and Sofia. The colleague Radostin Grigorov correctly traces and reflects the cases in which the dioceses in question belonged or passed from the spiritual authority of Tarnovo to that of Constantinople. **The third chapter examines** the relations between the Patriarchate of Constantinople and the Bulgarians from the 1340s to the end of the century in the context of political and ecclesiastical life in the Balkans during this period. In **the fourth and fifth chapters**, the doctoral student has studied the relations of the Patriarchate of Constantinople with individual personalities of Bulgarian origin. These are mainly high-ranking clergymen of definite or presumed Bulgarian origin who developed their activities outside Bulgarian lands, as well as Bulgarians who participated in the life of the Patriarchate of Constantinople in the first half of the 15th century. Patriarch Joseph II is particularly impressive, presenting important details of a definitely contributory nature. I should note here that during our archaeological survey of the monastery of St. John the Forerunner on the island of St. Ivan in 2013 we discovered, the only one so far in our country, a lead seal from the 12th century, whose submitter was from the monastery of Philanthropos (Constantinople). The seal illustrates the contacts between the Patriarchal Monastery of St. John the Forerunner and the monastery of Philanthropos, destroyed by the Latins and rebuilt by Patriarch Joseph II, which is evident from the source quoted by Radostin Grigorov: "εἶναι πορνογένης τοῦ Σουσμάνου τοῦ βασιλέως ἀνεκαίνισε δὲ τὸν Φιλάνθρωπον ἐντὸς τοῦ Βυζαντίου". I will not enter into the discussion in which scholars translate the last part of the attribution in another way: “Descended from the Philanthropinoi of Constantinople”. The text is at variance with such an interpretation. At the end of the dissertation two appendices are added: the dispute between the Patriarchate of Constantinople and the Archbishopric of Ohrid over the Vidin and Sofia dioceses in the early 15th century. This structure fully corresponds to the fulfillment of the aims and objectives of the work and shows the doctoral candidate's ability to synthesize his observations from different perspectives. The nature of the topic also implies an "imbalance" of the length of the respective chapters. The chronology of relationships draws on rich and varied material. It is in this direction that one should look for one of the first contributions of the doctoral candidate in the choice of the topic. For this reason, the author has had to deal with a bibliography that is considerable in size and heterogeneous in terms of languages, in which documentary and narrative sources are included. All the theoretical requirements for dissertations have been met: a clear structure, with the individual parts subordinated to the overall theme; convincing conclusions, thanks to a combination of the empirical and the analytical. I would add that I am very impressed by the good style, high professional and linguistic culture, a quality that is not to be overlooked.

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**Scientific contributions**

In general, it should be noted that such research is too rare in Bulgarian historiography. In parallel, the role of prominent Bulgarians in the history of the Patriarchate of Constantinople is analyzed, the role of personalities of Bulgarian origin in the life of the Patriarchate of Constantinople is fully explored, among whom Patriarch Joseph II stands out, as evidenced by the overall analytical review of the relations of the Patriarchate of Constantinople and the Bulgarians in the 14th - mid-15th centuries. This is what shows that the PhD student demonstrates a very good knowledge, in most cases in detail, of historical events and sources, which enables him to develop an informative basis for analysis in the individual chapters. In the discussions he is tolerant, lacking aggressiveness.

Based on my overall impression of the dissertation and based on the foregoing, I believe that the dissertation "The Patriarchate of Constantinople and the Bulgarians (14th - mid-15th centuries)" reveals good professional skills and meets the legal requirements for defence, which gives me reason to vote positively for Radostin Grigorov to be awarded the degree of Doctor of Education in the field of higher education 2. Humanities, professional field 2.2. History and Archaeology, scientific speciality History of Bulgaria (History of Medieval Bulgaria).

Veliko Tarnovo, 18. 02. 2022 г.

Prof. Dr. Kazimir Popkonstantinov