

**"BULGARIAN CHURCH TRADITION AND
IDENTITY THROUGH THE PRISM OF THE OHRID
ARCHBISHOPRIC AND BYZANTIUM (1019 -
1234)"**

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ABSTRACT

This thesis investigates the role of the Ohrid Archbishoprics in continuing, developing and documenting the Bulgarian Medieval church tradition and it supports the claim that this ecclesiastical center in the city of Ohrid also had certain impact for safeguarding the identity of its flock as being Bulgarians, especially in the conditions of a foreign rule (during the most of the time period pointed out in the title Bulgaria was under a Byzantine domination). The Archbishopric also continued functioning when the Bulgarian state regained its independence and the church primates continued to be Greeks. They strengthened their positions with respect to the Bulgarian and Byzantine rulers and the Ecumenical Patriarch in Constantinople. Nevertheless they kept the traditional line of relative tolerance toward the Bulgarian culture and language of their flock and contributed to the documentation of the history of the Bulgarian Church and the development of the Bulgarian Ecclesia as an institution. The text is based on primary sources like official documents of the Byzantine state and letters written by the Ohrid Archbishops, as well as on secondary literature.

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Introduction

This thesis will deal with the role of the Ohrid Archbishopric in preserving, continuing and documenting the Bulgarian church tradition in the historical period given in the title and with the manner in which the Greek archbishops of this ecclesiastical institution and other Byzantine chroniclers perceived the identity of its Bulgarian flock. As one of the main points of argument in this work I will maintain that the Archbishopric offered conducive environment for the prolongation of the Bulgarian church custom from the times prior to the Byzantine conquest of Bulgaria in 1018 and that it contributed to a significant degree for the documentation of the Bulgarian church history.

Moreover, the Ohrid ecclesia encouraged rather than suppressed the local ethnic, linguistic and cultural self-perception of its Bulgarian congregation, although there are opposing points of view in the scholarly environment concerning this issue. In fact most often the negative mindset towards the Byzantine rule over Bulgaria and the Greek priests in charge of Bulgarian churches prevails in my country nowadays, not just in the academic world, but also in the school textbooks and the common opinion of the people and with this thesis I will aim to quell to a certain extent this myth. Finally, the archbishops of Ohrid and the Byzantine historians assess through their individual observations what it meant to be a Bulgarian in the time scope covered by this thesis.

Of course we cannot speak of a national identity in the premodern times. However, according to Anthony Smith's ethnosymbolist theory¹ "the term '*ethnie*' embodies cultural self-perception in the pre-nationalistic age and it is described as: "human populations with shared ancestry, myths, histories and cultures, having an association with a specific territory,

¹ A school of thought in the study of nationalism that stresses the importance of symbols, myths, values and traditions in the formation and persistence of the modern nation state.

and a sense of solidarity.”² In addition in pre-modern times people could have "double" or even "triple" identity. We will see in the course of this work how the Bulgarian population was referred to in different ways by the Ohrid archbishops who used numerous categories in depicting the Bulgarian speaking populations. Thus they wrote about “Bulgarians,” “citizens of Ohrid” and “Moesians.”³

This thesis will attempt to answer several important questions, like for example which of the factors from Smith’s ethnosymbolist theory listed above are present in the Byzantine notions of what meant to be a Bulgarian inside the diocese of the Ohrid Archbishopric in the specific time frame. Another aim of my research will be to assess in what manner was the Bulgarian church tradition continued and described by the Byzantine ecclesiasts and emperors. I will also strive to reveal how was the status of the Ohrid Archbishopric (a center theme in the first chapter) connected to the identity of the lay Bulgarian population and the church custom in the Bulgarian lands.

Before we try to find an answer to the aforementioned questions, however, it is necessary to conduct an overview of the available bibliography on the issue. As primary sources, I am going to rely on official state documents, issued by the Byzantine emperor Basil, the correspondence and hagiographies written by the Ohrid archbishops and the chronicles left from different priests and historians of the time. Thus for example the sigillia⁴, sealed by the emperor Basil II deal with the status and privileges of the Archbishopric as well as with the number of the dependent population attached to every bishopric. These documents state explicitly that the flock these priests were responsible for was Bulgarian and this was a crucial precondition for the autocephaly and independence of the archbishopric.

² M. Guibernau, *Anthony D. Smith on nations and national identity: a critical assessment*, ASEN, 2004, p.126.

³ Moesia is the region situated between the range of Stara Planina and the Danube River, i.e. in nowadays Northern Bulgaria. It was where the first Bulgarian state was created.

⁴ According to the Oxford Dictionary for Byzantium the term *sigillion* designates a document bearing a seal and used by several chanceries.

The different hagiographies, letters and chronicles, on the other hand, contain valuable information on the various characteristics of the Bulgarians in the Ohrid diocese – their history, ethnicity, language, culture, the lands they inhabited, their church tradition, different saints that contributed to the Bulgarian church history, the Bulgarian writing, etc. Here we can distinguish the two hagiographies of St. Clement of Ohrid written by Theophylact of Ohrid and Demetrios Chomatenos – the most influential and prominent archbishops of the Ohrid church from the chronological period covered by this thesis. These texts convey a lot about the Bulgarian language, the political and ecclesiastical history of the country and create an atmosphere of continuation with both the secular and spiritual past of Bulgaria. The letters, in their turn, reveal a lot about the Bulgarian character of the Archbishopric's flock and the efforts of the archbishops to adapt to its needs, although sometimes their reflections concerning the Bulgarians are not the most flattering, to say the least.

In giving an overview of the secondary literature that will be used in this project we cannot overlook Günter Prinzing's article "The autocephalous Byzantine Ecclesiastical province of Bulgaria/Ohrid." It is one of the most recent pieces written on the topic and it contains comprehensive accounts on the legal position of the Ohrid Archbishopric, its privileges and information concerning some of its most important archbishops. We should also take into account Margaret Mullett's book "Theophylact of Ohrid. Reading the Letters of a Byzantine Archbishop" where the author pays special attention to one of the most prominent Ohrid archbishops – Theophylact and his contribution in preserving and promoting the church tradition of Bulgaria, incorporating the Bulgarian language in the church liturgy, reviving cults of certain Bulgarian saints and the commemoration of old Bulgarian rulers.

This list should be continued with the volume of Ivan Snegarov "History of the Ohrid Archbishopric - since its foundation until the Ottoman conquest of the Balkans." This extensive book, although written in the beginning of the 20th century, is one of the most

inclusive and thorough works dedicated to the Ohrid Archbishopric and it virtually covers every aspect concerning it – its status, the life of its flock, the activity of the archbishops, their connections and attitudes toward the Bulgarian congregation, their relations with the Byzantine emperor and the Ecumenical Patriarch in Constantinople and so on. In addition to this, Snegarov is one of the most prominent adherents of the notion that the Ohrid archbishopric as a whole tolerated the self-awareness, church tradition, literature and culture of the Bulgarian population, guided spiritually by its priests.

We may conclude this brief outline of the secondary sources of the thesis with one short piece of a Macedonian author - Toni Filiposki's "Theophylact and the People of Ohrid: the Issue of the Otherness. He incorporates balance in the narrative as he conveys the Macedonian point of view on the issue and familiarizes the reader with the opposing standpoints of different scholars regarding the positive or negative influence of the archbishopric vis-à-vis its Bulgarian congregation, as already mentioned earlier on.

These sources will be interpreted with a focus on issues like the Bulgarian ethnicity, church tradition, language, etc in order to address the statements and questions posed at the beginning of this introduction. The factors defining identity in the premodern times from the theory of Anthony Smith will be used as a reference point and the literature available will be scrutinized with connection to them. I will also investigate the sources for any information that would disclose links between the status of the Ohrid Archbishopric and the specific way in which its archbishops dealt with their flock with regard to the aforementioned ethno-defining factors in order to achieve the goals of the thesis. The primary sources that I have gathered will primarily be used to this end as they contain first-hand data on the issues of concern and the direct testimonials of the persons living in the particular historical period.

Concerning the scope of the thesis the date 1019 is an important landmark for the history of the Archbishopric and that of medieval Bulgaria as a whole. For the latter it marks the

incipience of the Byzantine rule over the country and as far as the archbishopric is concerned, it is the year of its official institutionalization inside the imperial ecclesiastical network through the first sigillion of Basil II. As it will become clear later on nothing really changed for it from the times that it was within the limits of the Bulgarian state with the exception of the degrading of its rank.

During the most of the time frame given in the title, Bulgaria was under a Byzantine rule, as already mentioned. In the end of the 12th and the beginning of the 13th century, however, the Byzantine domination was overthrown in the Bulgarian lands and in this period the Ohrid Archbishopric was under either Byzantine or Bulgarian jurisdiction and from 1215 to 1230 it was within the limits of the Despotate of Epirus. This period roughly coincides with the time that Demetrios Chomatenos spent in office as an archbishop (1216-1234). He exercised his ecclesiastical authority in the conditions of a fragmented Byzantine empire, following 1204 and the Latin rule over Constantinople. These circumstances enabled Demetrios (although we should not ignore his personal qualities here) to leave his mark as one of the most influential Archbishops Ohrid ever had and we will see why further on.

The year 1204 is a very important watershed in its own, but for the Bulgarian ecclesiastical history it also marks the beginning of a very peculiar event – the union between the Tarnovo Patriarchy in the Northern parts of the resumed Bulgarian kingdom/tsardom with the Roman Catholic Church. This event attached new significance to the Ohrid Archbishopric, but this issue will be discussed in greater detail in the third chapter. As yet another very important development within the time frame of 1019 – 1234 we may point out the period when Theophylact (1089 – 1126?) was functioning as a primate of the Church in Ohrid as his achievements are no less significant than the accomplishments of Demetrios Chomatenos.

As it is apparent from the last paragraphs the institutionalization of the Ohrid Archbishopric, the clarification of its status, privileges and designating the subordinate bishoprics

in its diocese will be issues of high importance in this work. Apart from arranging these considerations, however, the three sigillia from Basil II also deal with the central problems of this thesis – the Bulgarian church tradition and the Bulgarian identity of the flock of the Ohrid Archbishopric. This is why the whole first chapter is dedicated to these documents – from 1019, 1020 and 1025 respectively. We will see how the emperor kept the way the church functioned intact as it did during the time of the Bulgarian tsars and Patriarchs and how he perceived the Bulgarians within the limits of the authority of the Ohrid Archbishopric.

Apart from using the chronological approach in structuring this thesis, it will also be organized thematically for in the second and third chapters I will concentrate mainly on the personalities of certain archbishops – the aforementioned Theophylact of Ohrid and Demetrios Chomatenos. The former never really fully associated with his Bulgarian flock, although in his letters he refers to himself as a Bulgarian. He often considers his surrounding environment as barbaric, crude and repulsive, but this does not prevent him from reviving and intensifying the cults of different Bulgarian saints, including Clement of Ohrid, as well as commemorating certain Bulgarian rulers, and promoting the Bulgarian speech as a language of service, as it is clear from his letters and from the works by Margaret Mullett and Günter Prinzing. Theophylact designates his Bulgarian congregation both as “Bulgarians” and “citizens of Ohrid,” writes about the Macedonian region as a part of a larger Bulgarian state entity and depicts it as a motherland of the Bulgarians inside of it. The second chapter also deals with the differing and sometimes contrasting opinions over the alleged policy of “Hellenization” often attributed to Theophylact as it was implied at the beginning of this introduction.

Another Greek archbishop of Ohrid – Demetrios Chomatenos will be the main focal point in the third and final chapter of the thesis. Apart from his spiritual duties he exercised judicial authority and his political influence was significant as his role in the coronation of the Epirus Despot Theodore Comnenos was decisive. The Byzantine impact on the Bulgarian ecclesiastical

affairs remained strong through Demetrios Chomatenos and the Ohrid Archbishopric, although the rulers of the second Bulgarian Empire were appointing more and more Bulgarian bishops to serve in its diocese.

What is most important for the purposes of this thesis, however, is not the extent of Demetrios's authority, but the fashion in which it was exercised, especially with regard to his Bulgarian flock. In contrast to Theophylact he maintained closer connection with it and his very personality contributed a lot for his popularity as authors like Ivan Snegarov would maintain. According to him Demetrios was deeply concerned with the state of affairs of the people he governed spiritually and for whom he took great care. He used Bulgarian vernacular, incorporated it into Greek texts and wrote extensively about certain Bulgarian saints, referring to them as fathers and enlighteners of the Bulgarians to whom he assigned his own self. Demetrios Chomatenos will wrap up this thesis, but it is first necessary to start with Basil II and his sigillia.

1. Establishment and Status of the Archbishopric

The real significance of the Ohrid Archbishopric in continuing and preserving the Bulgarian church tradition began with the act of the subjugation of the Bulgarian state by Byzantium in 1018 – 1019 when the Byzantine emperor Basil II officially institutionalized its status of Archbishopric inside the ecclesiastical network of the empire. Its rank was most probably downgraded from Patriarchy, a dignity which the Bulgarian church acquired approximately a century before that, when the Bulgarian capital was in Veliki Preslav, nearly 1000 kilometers to the northeast of Ohrid. When Basil II carried out the transformation of the Bulgarian Patriarchate into an archbishopric.⁵ This was a wise political compromise Basil avoided putting the Bulgarian church under the control of the Patriarchate of Constantinople and provided it with far-reaching independence in that he just downgraded it to the status of an autocephalous archbishopric.⁶

⁵ G. Prinzing, “The Autocephalous Byzantine Ecclesiastical Province of Bulgaria/Ohrid. How independent were its archbishops?” In *Bulgaria Medievalis* 3 (2012). (Sofia: Bulgarian Historical Heritage Foundation, 2012), 359.

⁶ Ibid.

1.1. The Autocephaly and the Legacy of Tsar Samuil

The Byzantine emperor Basil II established the Ohrid Archbishopric after his decisive victory over the Empire of Tsar Samuil. There are scholarly debates over the ecclesiastical dignity of the Bulgarian church during Samuil, but authors like Srdjan Pirivatic claim that it was headed by a Patriarch who continued the Bulgarian Patriarchate of the previous Bulgarian capital – Preslav and the city of Dristra.⁷ After changing three cities (Voden Maglen and Prespa), the Patriarchate finally settled in Ohrid around 990, and because of the strategic position of the city, Tsar Samuil established the capital of the state there.⁸

The different character of the church in Ohrid in comparison to the previous seats of the Patriarch is also emphasized by the Yugoslavian scholar Georgii Ostrogorsky in his book “History of the Byzantine State.” The author acknowledges the fact that during that time only Byzantium and Bulgaria maintained a tradition of Tsardom and Patriarchy of their own and that Samuil acquired those traditions fully but on the other hand claims that “[I]n reality his (Samuil’s) Macedonian Empire was substantially different from the erstwhile Bulgarian Empire...The center of gravity shifted completely in Southern and Western direction, as Macedonia, a periphery of the former Bulgarian Tsardom, now represented its actual core.”⁹ Nevertheless Ostrogorsky writes that the previously disbanded Bulgarian Patriarchy celebrated its revival during Samuil’s Tsardom and that after continuous moving it finally settled in the city of Ohrid.¹⁰

If we, however, come back to the question of the status and autocephaly of the church in Ohrid after Basil took over Bulgaria, the only significant limitation over the autonomy of

⁷ S. Pirivatic, *Samuil’s State. Range and Character* (Sofia, Agata – A: 2000). Due to the constant warfare with Byzantium and with the Byzantine Emperor John Tzimiskes having conquered the Eastern parts of Bulgaria, both the Bulgarian Tsar and the Patriarch were moving westward.

⁸ I. Snegarov, *History of the Ohrid Archbishopric – Since its Foundation to the Ottoman Conquest of the Balkan Peninsula*. (Sofia, Publishing house prof. Marin Drinov: 1995 [1924]) p. 13-14.

⁹ G. Ostrogorsky, *History of the Byzantine State*. (München C.H. Beck’s, Verlagsbuchhandlung: 1996). Bulgarian Translation, p. 395.

¹⁰ Ibid. p. 395.

the Ohrid Archbishopric introduced by the emperor was the stipulation that from now on almost certainly by order of Basil himself, the right of appointing or designating the archbishops would be a sole prerogative to the emperor, after three applications for the seat have been submitted by the Ohrid synod.¹¹ Thus Basil appointed the hitherto seating Bulgarian Patriarch Ivan (John) of Debar¹² only degrading his rank to an archbishop. Thus according to Prinzing “[T]here is...no reason to doubt that the church of Bulgaria was intended to possess the status of autocephalous church, even as an archbishopric...the practice of the emperor’s (and not the Patriarch’s) appointment of the subsequent archbishops of Ohrid is a clear indication of the state of *autocephaly*.”¹³ Prinzing also points out that the three sigillia issued by Basil II do not testify explicitly for the autocephaly of the archbishopric of Ohrid, but they indirectly express its independent status and that they deal with the number of bishoprics, clerics and paroikoi¹⁴ from the corvée.¹⁵

Nevertheless in the Addendums by John of Devol¹⁶ from 1118 to the “Synopsis Historion” by John Skylitzes¹⁷ we can find a direct testimonial that Basil corroborated the autocephaly of the Bulgarian archbishopric. We read there that the emperor [*Basil II*] confirmed once again the autocephaly of the Bulgarian archbishopric, as it was during the old Romanos¹⁸ after informing himself from the regulations of the emperor Justinian¹⁹ that the archbishopric is Prima Justiniana²⁰ which he [Justinian] called his birthplace.²¹ Michael’s work also contains information on the Ohrid Archbishops that succeeded John of Debar,

¹¹ G.Prinzing, *The Autocephalous Byzantine Ecclesiastical Province of Bulgaria/Ohrid.*) p. 359

¹² The last Bulgarian to hold the office.

¹³ Ibid, p. 359.

¹⁴ See Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium: “The dependent peasants of a Byzantine monastic economy.

¹⁵ A form of service labor

¹⁶ Bishop of the city of Devol in nowadays Albania.

¹⁷ A Greek historian from the late 11th century.

¹⁸ The Roman emperor Romanos I Lekapenos (920-944).

¹⁹ Justinian I.

²⁰ Justiniana Prima is a city in nowadays Serbia. It is considered to be a home of an ecclesiastical center and that the Ohrid Archbishopric is a legal successor of its diocese.

²¹ Добавки на епископ Михаил Девошки от 1118 г. към „Исторически Свод“ на Йоан Скилица. Addendums from John of Devol from 1118 to the “Synopsis Historion” by John Skylitzes; In V. Gyuzelev, “Sources for the Medieval History of Bulgaria (VII-XV century). In the Austrian Manuscript Collections and Archives.” V. 1, University Publishing Hiuse “St. Clement of Ohrid: Sofia, 1994, p. 56.

whom he calls Bulgarian and primates of Bulgaria, although in reality they were Greek – Leo (1037-1056) and Theodoulos (1056-1065).

Coming back to Basil II, he declares in his first sigillion²² that the Roman state has expanded and that the state of the Bulgarians came under one oxbow (with it). He continues that in consequence of this he confirms that the pious monk John was to be appointed as an archbishop of Bulgaria and to govern the affairs which concern the archbishopric.²³ Further on in the document Basil declares that because he (John) wishes in writing that the emperor determines the clerics and paroikoi, obliged to work for the churches in his diocese, as well as for his subordinated bishops, we gave him this Sigillion of our Tsardom, by which we order: the Archbishop himself to have in the cities of his diocese, i.e. in Ohrid, Prespa, Mokro and Kichevo, 40 clerics and 30 paroikoi.”²⁴ The emperor also designates the dependent population for the bishoprics of the Ohrid diocese and writes that all these clerics shall be free from ikomodion and the other epirees²⁵ as they were freed during Samuil.²⁶

Thus as Prinzing writes “from Basil II’s sigillia (especially the first of them) and emperor’s further measures; it becomes clear that ecclesiastical “Bulgaria” in the shape of the Byzantine archbishopric of Ohrid goes back essentially to the core region of Samuil’s Tsardom and continues the Patriarchate tradition from Samuil’s Bulgarian Empire.”²⁷ From here the author concludes that Basil not only deliberately founded the archbishopric, but also the Ohrid archbishop was included among the “great autocephalous bishops” that are independent from the Patriarch in Constantinople and that according to the Byzantine fashion the Ohrid Archbishopric was seen as a means for the “West Balkan ecclesiastical center of

²² The authenticity of the three sigillia is actually disputed. See G. Podskalsky, “Theologische Literatur Des Mittelalters in Bulgarien und Serbien. 865 – 1450.” (München: C. H. Beck’sche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 2000) 72.

²³ The first sigillion of Basil II for the Bulgarian church after the conquering of Bulgaria. In Yordan Ivanov, “The Bulgarians in Macedonia,” Sofia, 1931, p. 547-562. In “Macedonia. Collection of Documents and Materials.” (Sofia: Publishing House of the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, 1978), p. 46-47.

²⁴ Ibid, p. 47.

²⁵ Types of taxes.

²⁶ Ibid, p. 47.

²⁷ Prinzing, G. The Autocephalous Byzantine Ecclesiastical Province of Bulgaria/Ohrid. page

Ohrid” which was founded by Samuil to preserve its independence and thus the archbishopric was used by the emperor to consolidate his imperial rule.²⁸

The autocephaly of the Ohrid ecclesiastical see is confirmed by some Byzantine authors and Ohrid archbishops from later ages – Theophylact (1089 – 1126?) and Demetrios Chomatenos (1216–1236) (to whom we will come back further on in the thesis). In his letter no. 82²⁹ Theophylact writes to a deacon in the Constantinople Patriarchy that the Ohrid archbishop denies the right of a certain monk from Kichevo to erect a chapel, despite the fact that the ecumenical Patriarch had issued a *stauropigion* for this. In this letter Theophylact qualifies this as an “anti-canonical act” and asserts that the house of prayer was intended to be built in a parish land which belongs to “our” archbishopric. The hierarch excommunicated the monk in question and reproached the Ecumenical Patriarch for interfering in the country of the Bulgarians and declared that the latter did not have the right to ordain in this country because it was granted the right to have an autonomous archbishops and nor did the Patriarch in Constantinople inherit any other privilege with concern to the Ohrid Archbishopric.³⁰ Theophylact continues his diatribe by posing the rhetorical question “who is as backward and stupid as to tolerate among the Bulgarians the presence of the Constantinople exarch and will not treat him as an adulterer, with spirit filled with jealousy.”³¹ Demetrios Chomatenos opposed the acts of the Ecumenical Patriarch in a similar fashion. In his *Ponemata* no. 80 he questions the acceptability of two Patriarchal *stratopegia* in the bishopric of Bothronos and in no. 86³² Demetrios opposes the consecration of Sava in Nicaea as autocephalous bishop of Serbia, an entity which up until then fell under the jurisdiction of the city of Ohrid.³³ We will

²⁸ Ibid, p. 366-367.

²⁹ Paul Gautier ed. Theofylactus (of Ochrida, Archbishop of Ochrida), *Lettres*,. (Association de Recherches Byzantines, 1986).

³⁰ Letters of Theophylact of Ohrid, letter 82. In Georgiev, I. *Sources for the Bulgarian History*, V 4, P. 2 (Sofia, Publishing House of the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences: 1994), p. 179.

³¹ Ibid, p. 179-180.

³² Chomateni *Ponemata*, No. 80, 270, l.120, regest: 164-167; no. 86, 299, l.104, regest: 179-182. In G . Prinzing, “The Autocephalous Byzantine Ecclesiastical Province of Bulgaria/Ohrid. p. 362.

³³ G. Prinzing, “The Autocephalous Byzantine Ecclesiastical Province of Bulgaria/Ohrid. p. 362.

discuss Demetrios Chomatenos in a more detailed manner in the next chapters that will reveal the further strengthening of the position of the Ohrid Archbishops vis-à-vis the figures of the Ecumenical Patriarch and the emperor.

1.2. The Second Sigillion of Basil and the Privileges of the Archbishopric

As previously mentioned the autocephalous/independent status of the Ohrid Archbishopric was an instrument in the imperial policy of Basil II. The document which most clearly demonstrates the privileges which the ecclesiastical institution retained or acquired as the main Bulgarian ecclesiastical institution is the second *sigillion* issued by the emperor in 1020. It reads that after the issuance of the first charter of 1019 the Bulgarian archbishop wanted the production of a new one concerning the bishoprics, unlisted in the first sigillion and the other bishop seats subjugated to him that had been seized from the Bulgarian region and appropriated by adjacent metropolitans.³⁴ The emperor asserts that his Tsardom does not condescend on letting anyone of them (the foreign priests) or their people to advance even by a step inside the limits of the Bulgarian church authority and for that he declared that the present Most Holy Archbishop to possess and govern all the Bulgarian bishoprics, as well as all the other cities that used to be under the authority of Tsar Peter³⁵ and Tsar Samuil and held by the erstwhile bishops.³⁶

Thus Basil sanctions the continuity in territorial and ecclesiastical-hierarchical aspect of the diocese of the Ohrid Archbishopric from the times prior to the Bulgarian subjugation by Byzantium. In other words he wished to keep the existing Bulgarian church tradition as intact as possible and the fact that the Bulgarian archbishops John of Debar was kept in his office until his death is an expression and confirmation of this. Basil justifies this act by saying that it was the result of spilled blood, sweat and labor that this country was given to Byzantium as gift in submission to god whose kindness obviously helped us (the Byzantines),

³⁴ Second sigillion of Basil II. In Y. Ivanov. The Bulgarians in Macedonia, Sofia, 1931, p. 547-562. In "Macedonia. Collection of Documents and Materials." p. 47.

³⁵ Son of Simeon, predecessor of Samuil.

³⁶ Second sigillion of Basil II. In Y. Ivanov. The Bulgarians in Macedonia, Sofia, 1931, p. 547-562. In "Macedonia. Collection of Documents and Materials." p. 47.

combining into one the separated parts, without changing in any aspect the regulations that were instituted by the Tsars that were reigning before us.³⁷

Here the emperor stresses on the tradition and continuity once again. He writes further that because even when they (the Byzantines) became possessors of the country they still preserved unharmed its rights which were confirmed by their official documents. Basil also declares for the present Most Holy Archbishops of Bulgaria to have an eparchy as large as it used to be during Tsar Peter and to possess and govern all the Bulgarian bishoprics, not just the ones that were mentioned in the first sigillion, but also those that were skipped and not specified together with the others, as well as those that are declared by the present sigillia and listed by name – to them and to the rest Basil grants clerics and paroikoi.³⁸

The emperor orders further that the bishop of Dristar would have in the cities of his eparchy and the cities around it 40 clerics and 40 paroikoi because during Peter's Tsardom this eparchy had shone with an archbishops dignity and after this its archbishops transferred from one place to another, one of them in Triaditza,³⁹ the other one in Voden and Maglen⁴⁰ and consequently Basil encountered the present archbishop in the city of Ohrid. For this reason the sevastocrator ordered for Ohrid itself to have an archbishops and a bishop to be ordained for Dristar.⁴¹ It is further decreed that the Most Holy Archbishops of Bulgaria shall possess not only the listed bishoprics, but also the ones inside the limits of Bulgaria that were omitted due to forgetting, if any.⁴² The sigillion goes further asserting that the archbishops in question shall control all the other cities that were not mentioned in the charter and that he shall collect canonicon from them, as well as from the Vlachs throughout Bulgaria and from the Hungarians around the Vardar River.

³⁷ Ibid, p. 47.

³⁸ Ibid,

³⁹ Nowadays Sofia.

⁴⁰ In today's Northwestern Greece.

⁴¹ Second sigillion of Basii II. In Y. Ivanov. The Bulgarians in Macedonia, Sofia, 1931, p. 547-562. In "Macedonia. Collection of Documents and Materials." p. 47.

⁴² Ibid, p. 47-48.

The archbishops had to also be honored by all the strategoi⁴³ as well as by the rest of the officials and archons. They were not allowed to interfere neither in his affairs, nor in the business of the Bulgarian monasteries, church, nor in any type of ecclesiastical service and shall not meddle him his subordinate most god-loving bishops and would not impede them in order not to inflict upon themselves the severe and ruthless wrath of our Tsardom.⁴⁴ This document (as well as the first sigillion) is complemented by a third one from 1025. It adds three more bishoprics to the diocese of the Ohrid Archbishopric – Servia, Stag and Vereya.⁴⁵ Basil II declares that they fall into bounds of Bulgaria and that with the present sigillion they are placed as subordinate to the Bulgarian Archbishopric and receive the respective number of clerics and paroikoi.⁴⁶

Despite some disagreements in the scholarly circles it is most likely that the Ohrid Archbishopric continued the ecclesiastical and Patriarchic tradition of the previous sees of the Bulgarian church. The act of its degrading from Patriarchy into Archbishopric by emperor Basil II is viewed as a political move, aimed at consolidating the imperial authority in the newly conquered territories for Byzantium as the clerical center in nowadays Macedonia preserved its autocephaly and even independence from the ecumenical Patriarch as demonstrated at the beginning of the first chapter. The only restriction imposed by the emperor of the archbishopric is the act of appointing the new archbishops among the candidates, selected by a synod, but this procedure concurs with the custom in the church-state relations in Constantinople. This status is indirectly affirmed in the three sigillia, issued by Basil that also specify the exact number of subordinate bishoprics and the amount of

⁴³ Military generals.

⁴⁴ Ibid, p. 48.

⁴⁵ The first two in nowadays Northern Greece and the latter is today's city of Stara Zagora in Southeastern Bulgaria.

⁴⁶ Ibid, p. 48.

dependent population, belonging to each one of them. Thus the Ohrid archbishop was placed among the “great autocephalous bishops,”⁴⁷ heads of autocephalous and independent churches. As we saw, this reality is confirmed by later Byzantine authors and Ohrid archbishops themselves, like Theophylact and Demetrios Chomatenos in their letters.

We find testimony concerning the autocephaly of the Ohrid Archbishopric in the addendums of Michel of Devol to the History of John Skylitzes. Michael’s text informs us that Basil II confirmed the autocephalous status and asserts that the ecclesiastical institution had the same rank during the previous Byzantine emperors. The author also testifies that emperor Justinian I the Great himself that the archbishopric identifies with Justiniana Prima – the place of his birth. Another important information that can be extracted from these addendums is that Michael refers to the successor of the first Ohrid archbishop – John of Debar as primates of Bulgaria.

Back to the official documents, issued by Basil II - the first sigillion asserts that the church shall be freed from certain taxes as it was the situation during the reign of Tsar Samuil which is a sign that the emperor wish to preserve the Patriarchal tradition of the Bulgarian rulers before him (as maintained by authors like Günter Prinzing). The second sigillion, in its turn, contains the privileges of the Ohrid archbishopric and the continuity from the previous Tsars – Peter and Samuil is restated as the Ohrid ecclesiastical see was to continue ruling over the same bishoprics as during the times of the Bulgarian Tsars. This document also officially expands the diocese of the archbishopric by complementing the list of the bishop seats it presides over both with the ones that were omitted in the first sigillion and those who were seized by foreign political and religious figures. Here the Byzantine sevastocrator also distinguishes the Bulgarian flock of the Ohrid archbishops and other ethnic groups which were also subjected to paying certain taxes to ecclesiastical center – Vlachs and Hungarians

⁴⁷ Beck H.-G., *Kirche und theologische Literatur im byzantinischen Reich*, (Munich 1959), *Geschichte* (see n. 13), 131. In Prinzing, G. “The Autocephalous Byzantine Ecclesiastical Province of Bulgaria/Ohrid. p. 366.

in particular. Basil further emphasizes the privileged position of the archbishopric by declaring that various state and church dignitaries should respect the authority of the Ohrid archbishops and that no one, including the Patriarch in Constantinople shall interfere in the affairs of the Ohrid see and obstruct its activities unless they want to experience the wrath of the emperor. The third and final sigillion concludes the list of the dependent bishoprics of the Ohrid diocese.

From the issue of the official status of the Archbishopric we will proceed with the life and deeds of particular archbishops who contributed to a large degree for our knowledge of the history of the Medieval Bulgarian church in the following parts of this thesis. Thus I am about to investigate how a certain individual figure took advantage of this status and privileges in order to leave a trace as one of the most influential Ohrid archbishops – being at the same time a continuator and champion of the Bulgarian ecclesiastical tradition, as well as someone who shared his view on his Bulgarian flock in the end of the 11th and beginning of the 12th century. This man is Theophylact of Ohrid – a Greek archbishop, a prolific author and a person who left a great deal of information on these issues in his abundant letters and one hagiography, which will be scrutinized in detail in the next chapter of this thesis.

2. A Greek but a Bulgarian by a Miracle – Theophylact of Ohrid

The archbishop of the city of Ohrid and whole of Bulgaria Theophylact Haphaistos (1089 – 1126?) wrote to the Byzantine empress Maria⁴⁸ that he was arriving to the Bulgarians, allegedly a real Constantinopolitan, but by a miracle, a Bulgarian who smells like rotten, like they (the Bulgarians) smell like animal skin.⁴⁹ Theophylact's attitude towards the Bulgarians throughout his writings is not kind to say the least. On top of his bad relations with his Bulgarian flock, it is said the latter made him start drinking.⁵⁰ Despite this complicated character of his affairs with the Bulgarians and the pejorative connotation of the term "Bulgarian" that he sometimes introduces, Theophylact has left a great deal of information on the history of Bulgaria and the Ohrid Archbishopric. His texts can help us to better comprehend the Byzantine perception of the Bulgarians at the time and what features distinguish a Bulgarian in the eyes of a Byzantine, like for the example belonging to the Bulgarian people or speaking Bulgarian language that the author writes about. He also associates the Bulgarians with the places they inhabit – the Bulgarian land or the city of Ohrid of which they are citizens. Among the works that we can distinguish here are his letters and "The life of St. Clement of Ohrid." They were written during the time when Theophylact held his office as Archbishops of Ohrid and they contain information on the Bulgarian history (secular and ecclesiastical) from the end of the 9th and the beginning of the 10th century, as well as on the age, contemporary to the author. Secondary literature like Margaret Mullet's "Theophylact of Ohrid. Reading the Letters of a Byzantine Archbishops" will also be used.

⁴⁸ Wife of the Byzantine Emperor Michael VII Doukas (1071-1078) and later of Nikephoros III Botaneiates (1078 – 1081).

⁴⁹ Letters of Theophylact of Ohrid, letter 4. In I. Georgiev, "Greek Sources for the Bulgarian History, V 4, P. 2" Publishing House of the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences: Sofia, 1994, p. 83.

⁵⁰ D. Lang, "The Bulgarians (Ancient Peoples and Places, 84, London, 1976), 72. In Mullett, M. "Theophylact of Ohrid. Reading the Letters of a Byzantine Archbishops." Variorum: Birmingham, 1997, p. 269.

2.1. The Life of St. Clement of Ohrid

Theophylact's hagiography of St. Clement is dedicated to one of the most prominent Bulgarian saints, a disciple of the saints Cyril and Methodius and associated with the creation of the Glagolitic and Cyrillic scripts. In part 4 of Clement's hagiography Theophylact writes that Cyril and Methodius created an alphabet for the Bulgarian nation (γένος) following the Christianization of Bulgaria (864-865) during Prince Boris I and translated the Scriptures in Bulgarian language (ἡ βουλγαρικὴ) so that the Bulgarians could achieve a spiritual growth.⁵¹ Theophylact writes that the Bulgarian land was illuminated by blessed fathers and teachers who shone with their teachings and their miracles.

Concerning the language, we read in parts 5 and 6 of the hagiography that the fact that Greek was unintelligible for the Slavic or Bulgarian people (nation/race) was considered a great misfortune by the saints. The inability of the Bulgarians to understand the scriptures was the reason for their inconsolable grief and Cyril and Methodius turned to the Consoler who's first gift were the languages and beseeched him to help them discover an alphabet, corresponding to the difficulty of Bulgarian tongue so that they could translate the divine writings into the idiom of the people. They achieved it after they indulged themselves in strict fast and continuous prayers.⁵² It gets clear from part 7 that after receiving this much desired award they devised the Slavic alphabet, translated the divinely-inspired scriptures from Greek into Bulgarian and made sure they passed the godly knowledge to their most able students.⁵³

⁵¹ The life of St. Clement of Ohrid. In I. Georgiev, *Greek Sources for the Bulgarian History*, V 4, P. 2" Sofia Publishing House of the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, 1994, p. 16.

⁵² Ibid, p. 12.

⁵³ A. Milev, *The Greek Hagiographies about Clement of Ohrid*. (Sofia, 1966). In "Macedonia. Collection of Documents and Materials." p. 72.

Theophilact's narrative over the way he understood the linguistic realities in the lands of his diocese continues in parts 62 and 66 of the Life of Clement of Ohrid. Here the author writes that Clement was appointed by Tsar Simeon⁵⁴ as a bishop of some city of Drembica and thus Clement became the first bishop to preach in Bulgarian language. He elaborated simple and straightforward words for all the festivities, containing nothing profound and wise, but ones that are comprehensible even for the most uneducated Bulgarian and with them he fed the souls of the more simple-minded Bulgarians. "Thus Clement delivered to us, the Bulgarians (here Theophylact calls himself a Bulgarian) all that concerns the Church and that is used for glorifying god's memory and that of the saints."⁵⁵ This care for the pasture was complemented by architectural pieces. Part 67 testifies that Clement built a monastery in Ohrid and added to it a church that was later transformed into an Episcopal cathedral. This meant that there were three churches in Ohrid – one synodal and two that belonged to St Clement that were a lot smaller than the synodal church, but more beautiful with their oval, rounded shape.⁵⁶

⁵⁴ Bulgarian ruler (893-927).

⁵⁵ The life of St. Clement of Ohrid. In I. Georgiev, *Greek Sources for the Bulgarian History*, V 4, P. 2 p. 35.

⁵⁶ Ibid, p. 36.

2.2. The Letters of Theophylact

Margaret Mullett further demonstrates Theophylact's occupation with tracing the Bulgarian history (including the ecclesiastical one). In her book "Theophylact of Ohrid. Reading the Letters of a Byzantine Archbishops" she argues that Theophylact was "converted" to "Bulgarian national culture"⁵⁷ and that he did a prolific work as a translator. The author maintains that it was for an appointee of Theophylact – Bishop Michael to copy the history of Skylitzes, who added to it very important information on the rule of Tsar Samuil and a mention that the Ohrid Archdiocese was a continuation of the autocephalous see of Prima Justiniana.⁵⁸ Theophylact was also interested in the local religious cults – of the Virgin, the XV Martyrs, St Achilleios.⁵⁹ As Mullett writes: "[D]oubt may still persist about the *Lives* attributed to him (Theophylact), but when a late-eleventh to twelfth century building phase turned up at the church of the Fifteen Martyrs at Strumica,⁶⁰ its excavators had no difficulty in connecting it with the antiquarian interests of Theophylact of Ohrid."⁶¹ Mullett continues with the claim that the Ohrid archbishops encouraged the cult of Achilleios in the city of Prespa,⁶² a place which according to her words was "so imbued with the aura of Samuil."⁶³

Besides his contribution in illuminating and complementing the local church tradition and history, in some of his letters Theophylact also testifies about the language of liturgy in the lands of his diocese - more precisely in the Bishopric of Bregalnica⁶⁴ where the church service was conducted in Bulgarian: "[A]nd so, as they were praising god and blessing, they

⁵⁷ M Mullett, *Theophylact of Ohrid. Reading the Letters of a Byzantine Archbishop*. p. 271.

⁵⁸ G Prinzing, "Entstehung und Rezeption der *Justiniana Prima* - Theorie im Mittelalters." In: *Byzantinobulgarica* 5 (1978), 277-302. Günter Prinzing: *Justiniana Prima*. In: *Lexikon für Theologie und Kirche*. 3. Auflage

⁵⁹ *Ibid*, p. 273.

⁶⁰ M. Popovic, "Continuity and Change of Byzantine and Old Slavonic Toponyms in the Valley of the River Strumica (FYROM)," in: *Geographical Names as a Part of the Cultural Heritage*, ed. P. JORDAN, H. BERGMANN, C. CHEETHAM, I. HAUSNER (Wiener Schriften zur Geographie und Kartographie 18). Wien 2009, 173-175.

⁶¹ *Ibid*, p. 273.

⁶² V. Bitrakova, *Golem Grad: Prespa, Skopje* 2011

⁶³ M. Mullett, *Theophylact of Ohrid. Reading the Letters of a Byzantine Archbishop*. p. 273.

⁶⁴ Aleksova, B. "Episkopijata na Bregalnica: prv slovenski crkoven i kultirno-prosveten centar vo Makedonija" ("The Bregalnica Archbishopric: the First Slavic Church and Cultural-Educational Center in Macedonia"), Prilep 1989.

came to Bregalnica...and a clergy, trained in Bulgarian was nominated in the divine temple in the city in order to seat there and to constantly perform the sacred chants.”⁶⁵

Despite the aforementioned benefactions by Theophylact and his subordinate priests with respect to the local culture and church tradition of their flock, there are in fact differing opinions among the scholars on the manner in which Theophylact treated his Bulgarian pasture, whether and to what extent he was exercising a policy of Hellenization. The Macedonian author Toni Filiposki distinguishes two main groups of such scholars. He calls the first group the “older scholars” who maintained a “one-sided” stance with concern the negative attitude of Theophylact that he expressed towards the native population and their country.⁶⁶ The role and behavior of Theophylact is seen as along the lines of “intentional and deliberate Hellenicising” of the Ohrid church as well as an attempt of assimilation of the different peoples, including the Bulgarians, that were subjects of Byzantium.⁶⁷

Among such scholars we can include Petar Petrov and Hristo Temelski, whose position will be analyzed in the next chapter as well as B. Panov who adopted the viewpoint supporting the deliberate systematic assimilation of the population, together with the “Greekicisizing” of the Ohrid Archbishopric.⁶⁸ This point of view is contradictory to the understanding of Margaret Mullet with which we already got acquainted in the last pages and the sources provided in the thesis clearly work in support of her and other authors who share similar opinions.

The latter group of scholars, having as a representative R. Katičić, for example, maintain the thesis that during the time of Theophylact the Ohrid Archbishopric defended its laity from the injustices imposed by the secular government, that it strengthened the

⁶⁵ Theophylacti Bulgariae archiepiskopi Historia martyrii XVmartyrum Pgr, CXXVII, col. 208; Yordan Ivanov. “The Bulgarians in Macedonia,” Sofia, 1917, p. 120. In *Macedonia. Collection of Documents and Materials*.p. 70.

⁶⁶ T. Filiposki, “Theophylact and the People of Ohrid”, p. 95.

⁶⁷ Ibid, p.59.

⁶⁸ B. Panov, „Теофилакт како извор“(“Theophylact as a Source”), p. 299-301. In Filiposki, T. “Theophylact and the People of Ohrid,” p. 95-96.

“Bulgarian consciousness” of the population.⁶⁹ According to these authors the Ohrid Church repulsed the attempts of the Ecumenical Patriarchate in Constantinople to destroy the alleged “Bulgarian” character of the church.⁷⁰ The hagiography of St. Clement of Ohrid is considered an evidence for the second group of scholars in defense of their point of view towards the Ohrid Archbishopric as being a benevolent protector of its congregation.⁷¹

I would like to come back to the issue of language and for the purpose I will scrutinize several letters written by Theophylact in which he asserts that the inhabitants of Ohrid are Bulgarians and speak in Bulgarian. Thus in a correspondence with Anemius, a friend of his, he writes how they both completely barbarized themselves, how much he (Theophylact) drank from the glass of vulgarity, being so far away from the countries of wisdom and also how much he had drank from the lack of culture. And so, as they both lived for a long time in the land of the Bulgarians, vulgarity became a close friend and cohabitant of them.⁷² It is not difficult to make analogue between this letter and the one mentioned at the beginning of the chapter where the author addresses Empress Maria, where he was Bulgarian by a miracle, after going to Ohrid from the queen of the cities and it was in Ohrid that he came across many grievances, because of his various sins.⁷³ In yet another letter, this time having the bishop of the city of Vidin⁷⁴ as an addressee, Theophylact tells him not to lose his spirit and not be pusillanimous in the face of the Cuman tribes that were attacking from without. He depicts the inhabitants of Ohrid as much more dangerous than the Cumans for they are assaulting from within the city and if the bishop’s citizens were sly, they were children in comparison to our (the inhabitants of Ohrid) Bulgarian citizens.⁷⁵ Here Theophylact attaches

⁶⁹ R. Katičić, „Korespondencija Teofilakta Ohridskog kao izvor za historiju srednjovekovne Makedonije” (“The Correspondence of Theophylact of Ohrid as a Source on the History of Medieval Macedonia”) Belgrade 1964, p. 183-184. . In: T. Filiposki, “Theophylact and the People of Ohrid,” p. 95-96.

⁷⁰ Ibid, p. 95-96.

⁷¹ Ibid, p. 96.

⁷² PGr. CXXVI, Theophilacti epistola XXI ed. Meursio. In “Macedonia. Collection of Documents and Materials.” p. 71.

⁷³ Ibid, ep. I, ed. Lamio, p. 180-181. In Macedonia. Collection of Documents and Materials. p. 70.

⁷⁴ In nowadays Northwestern Bulgaria.

⁷⁵ Ibid, ep. XVI, ed. Finetti, p. 181. In Macedonia. Collection of Documents and Materials. p. 70.

double identity to the inhabitants of Ohrid – he refers to them both as its citizens of the city and as Bulgarians.

In another letter, this time addressed to the son of the Byzantine emperor Alexios Komnenos (1081-1118) - John Komnenos, Theophylact attributed the region of Ohrid to Bulgaria and described it as a native land to the Bulgarians within it. The church primate warns the royal figure that the area around Ohrid will disappear from Bulgaria sooner than one could expect unless the almighty hand of John takes care of it.⁷⁶ Theophylact writes in the context of the war with the Serbian Zhupan Vulkan (1093-1094) and implores John that less infantry from the region of Ohrid is recruited for this area which according to the Archbishops, is the most sparsely populated, utterly poor and in the most wretched state in comparison to all other regions. Theophylact accentuates on the assertion that the Ohrid region is roadside⁷⁷ and because of that it deserved to be saved and to salvage in its own turn the ones passing by. Theophylact admonishes that if the number of recruited soldiers is not decreased, than the ones who are left would despise their native land as hostile and would embrace the foreign soil and love it.⁷⁸

This chapter demonstrated that the Constantinopolitan Theophylact distinguished the Bulgarian flock in the diocese entrusted to him in ethnic, territorial and linguistic dimensions. The contrast created in his mind between the “civilized” Greek world and the “barbaric” lands he had to govern spiritually only made it easier for him to make such discernments and we could arrive to such conclusions from his correspondence and the Life of Clement of

⁷⁶ Letters of Theophylact of Ohrid, letter 24. In Georgiev, I. “*Greek Sources for the Bulgarian History*, V 4, P. 2” p. 104-105.

⁷⁷ Being located on the old Roman Via Egnatia leading to Constantinople.

⁷⁸ Ibid, p. 104-105.

Ohrid. In the latter Theophylact traces the Bulgarian ecclesiastical history since the Christianization of the state and leaves a detailed contribution to the hagiographic aspect of the Bulgarian past. He speaks of Bulgarian nation (γένος) and language (ἡ βουλγαρική γλῶσσα) in connection with the work of saints Cyril and Methodius and their disciple Clement of Ohrid. The author acknowledges the fact that specific script and alphabets (Glagolitic and Cyrillic) had to be elaborated in order for the scriptures to be adjusted to the particularities of the Bulgarian language.

Besides being Bulgarians, the laymen of the city are characterized as citizens of Ohrid and the settlement itself was pointed out as the legal successor of Prima Justiniana and heir to its diocesan lands as indicated by Margaret Mullett and her book that was investigated in this chapter. Another contribution of Theophylact and his subordinate officials, as pointed out in this book, is the additional information on Tsar Samuil and some local religious cults. Besides complementing the history of Bulgaria, Theophylact is also distinguished as a translator and someone who was “converted to Bulgarian culture” despite some opinions in the Bulgarian historiography that Byzantium at that time was trying to eradicate and extirpate the Bulgarian culture in the lands of his ecclesiastical see.⁷⁹ The care for the Bulgarian flock of the Ohrid Archbishopric is continued with the appointment of priests, trained to perform their service in Bulgarian tongue.

Despite the information in the last paragraph, there are opposing views concerning Theophylact’s policy regarding his Bulgarian congregation, as I demonstrated in the last chapter. The sources available, however, work in favor of the authors who maintain a position that the church in Ohrid was rather creating conducive conditions with regard the tolerance of the ethnic and cultural character of its Bulgarian flock, than attempting to persecute and suppress it. For this reason I agree more with authors like Margaret Mullett,

⁷⁹ See P Petrov, .and H. Temelski, “Church and Church Life in Macedonia.”

Günter Prinzing and Ivan Snegarov on the issue at stake. The work of the latter, however, will be investigated in the next part of the thesis.

Besides the linguistic and ethnic assertions over the identity of the people in his diocese Theophylact views the region of Ohrid as territorially being a part of a larger Bulgarian geographical space and qualifies it as a homeland to the inhabitants, who dwell in a strategic, “roadside” area. The archbishop feared that it could be separated from the rest of Bulgaria and warned the son of the emperor about this potential predicament. The Archbishopric of Ohrid and the other parts of Bulgaria would eventually be lost for Byzantium in the period between 1185 and 1197⁸⁰, but the Byzantine spiritual influence over its neighbor to the North was kept alive as the Archbishops of Ohrid continued to be Greek. Some of them are as prominent as Theophylact – like Demetrios Chomatenos (1216-1234). His inheritance in the ecclesiastical history of Bulgaria, among other issues concerning the Ohrid Archbishopric from the end of the 12th and the beginning of the 13th century, will be examined in the next chapter.

⁸⁰ The year in which Tsar Kaloyan adjoined Ohrid to the Second Bulgarian Tsardom.

3. Byzantine Influence Lingers

Before we turn to the personality of Demetrios Chomatenos, however, we need to first pay attention to some broader issues concerning the Balkan and South European religious history as a whole. The rejection of the Byzantine rule over the most parts of Bulgaria meant the revival of the Bulgarian North-Northeast both in political and in spiritual sense, but as already mentioned, the Greek influence in the clerical affairs of Bulgaria never faded. As the new Bulgarian capital was located in the city of Veliko Tarnovo, the local East Orthodox church there was seeking its international recognition and in struggling to achieve this it turned to the Roman Pope. This fact could shed light on the significance the Ohrid Archbishopric it obtained for itself since other religious centers in Bulgaria resorted to the Roman pontiff's assistance in the conditions of the post-Great Schism Europe.

In a narrower regional context the ecclesiastical see in Ohrid was gaining more ground vis-à-vis the Patriarch in Constantinople and the Byzantine emperor and this will be elucidated with some examples from the liturgical activity of Demetrios Chomatenos. Nevertheless the attitude of the archbishops (and other authors from the time) towards their Bulgarian flock did not experience significant shifts as it was distinguished in territorial and philological aspect in a similar fashion to Theophylact of Ohrid. Just like him Demetrios wrote a hagiography of St. Clement of Ohrid and different letters containing valuable information about the ethno-linguistic nature of the population of his diocese. Different reports from other 13th century Byzantine chroniclers like Georgii Akropolites and Theodore Skutariot will also be accounted for in this last chapter of the thesis. As in the previous parts, secondary literature from Ivan Snegarov and other authors will also be relied upon.

3.1. Tsar Kaloyan and Pope Innocent III – the Union with Rome

With the newly established Kingdom of Peter (1185-1197) and Asen (1189-1186) a new Archbishopric was founded in Veliko Tarnovo. Tsar Kaloyan (1197-1207) was trying to acquire recognition for the Bulgarian Archbishopric in Tarnovo⁸¹, but he could not secure such an acknowledgement neither from the Patriarchate in Constantinople nor from the Ohrid Archbishopric and this is why he directly addressed Pope Innocent III (1198-1216), requiring from him an imperial crown and a Patriarchal rank for the Tarnovo Archbishopric. This act demonstrates the ecclesiastical prestige of the Ohrid Archbishopric since the ruler of the independent Bulgarian lands sought a recognition from it.

In the subsequent “diplomatic game”⁸² Tsar Kaloyan wrote a letter to Pope Innocent from 1202, declaring that his predecessors – the Tsars Peter and Samuil, as well as others received their crown from Rome⁸³ - a claim which is not true and dictated by diplomatic considerations. Kaloyan writes that as he is a favorite son of the Roman church, he asks from his mother the crown of a Tsar and the dignity as they were possessed by the old Bulgarian emperors – one was Peter, the second – Samuil, and others who preceded them in their reign.

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Pope Innocent’s reply from the same year reads that in order for him to confirm that what the Bulgarian ruler says is true, he ordered for the registers of the Roman Church to be read carefully and after this was done it became clear that many Tsars were crowned in the

⁸¹ As was as for his imperial dignity as a Tsar.

⁸² The way these events are qualified by I Bozhilov,. and V Gyuzelev,. in their *History of Medieval Bulgaria 7th- 14th Century. VI*” (Sofia Anubis:, 1999), p. 443.

⁸³ Latin Sources for the Bulgarian History, p. 310; Pgr CCXIV, col. 1112-1113, p. 115; I. Duychev, “The correspondence of Pope Innocent III with the Bulgarians”:, \ p. 92.

⁸⁴ Latin Sources for the Bulgarian History, p. 310; Pgr CCXIV, col. 1112-1113, p. 115; , I. Duychev““The correspondence of Pope Innocent III with the Bulgarians.”\ p. 92.

land, subordinate to Kaloyan.⁸⁵ Subsequently in yet another correspondence with the Pope the Bulgarian king refers to the Bulgarian Tsars Simeon, Peter and Samuil as his progenitors.⁸⁶ He expresses his discontent that the archbishop and head of the whole Bulgarian land and of the universal and great Church of Tarnovo was not admitted to proceed to the Pope so that the King's desire could be fulfilled. This had to happen in accordance to the customs of Kaloyan's predecessors – the Tsars of Bulgarians and Vlachs – Simeon, Peter and Samuil, progenitors of Kaloyan and all other Tsars of the Bulgarians.⁸⁷

Yet another correspondence of Innocent III, however, is interesting for us, because the Pope himself confirms that the Bulgarian Tsars received their crowns from the Roman Pontiff in a letter to the Hungarian King Emeric in which he states that the Bulgarian Tsars Peter, Samuil and others were coronated by the Pope in Rome.⁸⁸ He asserts that since old times many Tsars were coronated consecutively in Bulgaria through the apostolic authority, like Peter and Samuil and others after them. Innocent also declares that because the Greeks turned out to be stronger, the Bulgarians lost their imperial dignity and were even forced to be slaves under the heavy Constantinopolitan yoke, until recently two brothers, that is Peter and Kaloyan, descending from the kinship of the previous Tsars, started not so much taking over, but recovering the land of their fathers.⁸⁹ Kaloyan received a royal crown from the Pope and the Archbishop in Tarnovo – the title of Primas and with this the Archbishopric of Tarnovo acceded to a union (with the Papal see) and was deprived of the unity with the Orthodox Church. It was for Ivan Asen II (1218-1241) to break the union with Rome, when the

⁸⁵ Pgr CCXIV, col.1113-1115, p. 116; I. Duychev, "The correspondence of Pope Innocent III with the Bulgarians" In "Macedonia. Collection of Documents and Materials.", p. 92.

⁸⁶ Pgr CCXXV, col. 290-291, p. 6; I. Duychev, "The correspondence of Pope Innocent III with the Bulgarians" In "Macedonia. Collection of Documents and Materials.", p. 92-93.

⁸⁷ Ibid, p. 92-93.

⁸⁸ Pgr CCXXV, col. 413-417, p. 127; I. Duychev, "The correspondence of Pope Innocent III with the Bulgarians" In "Macedonia. Collection of Documents and Materials."p. 93-94.

⁸⁹ Ibid, p. 94.

Archbishopric of Tarnovo was granted autonomy and in 1232 the Tarnovo Archbishop recognized the supreme authority of the Ecumenical Patriarch, by whom he received an ordination.⁹⁰

I allowed myself this slight deviation from the main flow of my narrative in order to convey three important points. Firstly, it showed that the Ohrid Archbishopric had gained a significant amount of ecclesiastical and political weight by the beginning of the 13th century, including in the domain of the interstate affairs, since the ruler of the newly independent Bulgarian lands was denied recognition for his imperial dignity and the patriarchal status of the church primate in Tarnovo. These circumstances, together with the fact that the Bulgarian King failed to enforce his jurisdiction over the Ohrid Archbishopric compelled Kaloyan to turn to the main spiritual rival of the Orthodox Christianity – the Roman Pope and enter into a union with the Catholic Church which lasted approximately two decades.

Secondly, the last paragraph demonstrated that we could speak of the existence of an Ohrid ecclesiastical custom of its own since it exercised its own spiritual policy, independent of the Bulgarian ruler. Moreover, even after the overthrow of the Byzantine rule over Bulgaria the Ohrid Archbishopric continued the Bulgarian Orthodox Church tradition officially, during the Union of the Tarnovo Archbishopric with the Roman Church. And this came after more than a century and a half of Byzantine rule over Bulgaria, when The Ohrid Bulgarian Orthodox Ecclesia was associated mostly with the Ohrid Archbishopric.

Last, but not least, we saw that apart from the Constantinople Patriarchy and the Ohrid Archbishopric, a third major European clerical center recognized the hitherto Bulgarian royal and ecclesiastical tradition – the Roman Catholic Church, through the feather of one of its most influential Popes – Innocent III. Apart from this, the Roman Pontiff refers to the rulers he was writing about in his correspondence as *Bulgarians* and the land they were governing

⁹⁰ Ibid.

as *Bulgaria*, including Samuil and his Bulgaria, which had the city of Ohrid as its center and the Ohrid Patriarchy/Archbishopric as an ecclesiastical authority. This is a convenient moment to return to the latter and concentrate more on its internal affairs through the figure of one of its most prominent and prestigious Archbishops – Demetrios Chomatenos.

3.2. Demetrios Chomatenos – a Strong Archbishop and a Fragmented Empire

In chapter 1 I discussed in detail the matters of the autocephaly and independence of the Ohrid Archbishopric, where it became clear that it was autonomous in its affairs and to a great degree independent from the Patriarchy in Constantinople. However, Günter Prinzing calls us to cautiousness, concerning “the independence of the autocephalous archbishops of Ohrid and their freedom of action and that we must bear in mind that they were appointed by the emperors and adopted a (only) a theoretically independent position towards the patriarchs of Constantinople.”⁹¹ The author explains further that in the light of the emperors’ massive powers, it was hardly ever possible for the archbishops to exercise and maintain an actually independent or even opposing policy to the will of the emperor or to act without receiving his clearly articulated consent.⁹²

According to Prinzing it would be more likely that the emperor would take note of the opposing stance of an Ohrid archbishop, without consequently undertaking any further action in connection to the issue in concern and that it is even less probable that the *sevastokrator* might let himself to be convinced by the argumentation of the church primate. In the given power configuration of church-state relations, Prinzing asserts that “Chomatenos was...the only archbishop of Ohrid who knew, so to speak, how to fully exploit the independence resulting *de facto* from autocephaly vis-à-vis a Patriarchate that had been forced into exile in Nicaea⁹³: the political fragmentation of the Byzantine Empire in the period of “Exile,” 1204-1261, and the structural upheavals connected with that offered him a golden opportunity for making his mark.”⁹⁴

⁹¹ Prinzing, G. “The Autocephalous Byzantine Ecclesiastical Province of Bulgaria/Ohrid., p. 371.

⁹² Ibid, p. 371.

⁹³ In the conditions of the Latin rule over Constantinople as an aftermath of the Fourth Crusade.

⁹⁴ Ibid, p. 372.

Prinzing also talks about “restriction of power idea” in connection to Demetrios Chomatenos during the not so strong despot Manuel Doukas of Epiros/Thessaloniki (1230-1237).⁹⁵ Chomatenos was the “leading authority in the field of ecclesiastical jurisdiction” and soon gained power of a “substitute patriarch.”⁹⁶ He “operated a law court in Ohrid, whose surviving dossier of judicial decisions demonstrates that the ecclesiastic administered secular legislation and attracted numerous plaintiffs from a large area of the Balkans outside his immediate diocese.”⁹⁷ Angelov continues with the depiction of a judicial argument in which Chomatenos had to pass a judgment in response to an inquiry by the metropolitan of Dyrrachion Constantine Kabasilas on whether the Byzantine emperor could move bishops from one ecclesiastical see to another. In this particular case Chomatenos used the argument about the “emperor-priest” and responded that “the emperor had the right to move a newly elected bishop from one ecclesiastical see to another as well as to preside over synods and confirm their decisions, to legislate about ecclesiastical affairs and to change the rank of sees in the ecclesiastical hierarchy. Chomatenos concluded that the emperor was a bishop in “every respect apart from officiating the liturgy.”⁹⁸

Apart from his judicial functions Chomatenos played an important role in the coronation and anointment of Thodore Doukas Comnenos in Thessaloniki in 1227. The Byzantine historian Georgius Akropolites documents an event in which Theodoros’s crown was refused by the metropolitan of Thessaloniki Constantinos Messopotamitis, but later placed on his head by the Ohrid Archbishop Demetrios Chomatenos. According to Acropolites Theodoros Comnenos, not being content with his state of affairs seized for

⁹⁵ Cf. D. Simon, *Princeps* (see n. 52), 486–487 and 491–492, with the final remark (492): „Es scheint zumindest erwägenswert zu sein, daß erst das politische und kulturelle Ambiente des Ochrid im 13. In Prinzing, G. “The Autocephalous Byzantine Ecclesiastical Province of Bulgaria/Ohrid. How independent were its archbishopss?” Bulgarian Historical Heritage Foundation: Sofia, p. 372.

⁹⁶ Prinzing, G. “The Autocephalous Byzantine Ecclesiastical Province of Bulgaria/Ohrid. p. 371.

⁹⁷ Angelov, D. *Imperial Ideology and Political Thought in Byzantium, 1204 – 1330* (Cambridge Cambridge University Press, 2007), p. 354.

⁹⁸ Ibid. 359.

himself the imperial dignity.⁹⁹ After he became a master of Thessaloniki and subjugated much Byzantine land, from the one that the crusaders conquered and also from the land that the Bulgarians had conquered¹⁰⁰ he dressed himself with the purple and put on red shoes. The metropolitan of Thessaloniki Constantinos Messopotamitis opposed most relentlessly to this. The Bulgarian Archbishop Demetrios, however, assigned to him the Caesar's diadem, saying that he (the emperor) is independent and is not obliged to give account to any one and for this reason he had the right to anoint for caesars whomever he wanted, wherever he wanted and whenever he wanted.¹⁰¹ Besides elucidating the significance of Chomatenos in the coronation of the despot, here Georgius Akropolites also identifies him as an archbishop of Bulgaria and the newly conquered territory by Theodoros Dukas as previously belonging to the Bulgarians.

No other Archbishop after Demetrios Chomatenos could achieve such a freedom of action on the basis of the autocephaly of his see and his Justinian Prima title¹⁰² and no opportunity like the one from the years 1216-1230 could any longer arise for his successors in the Palaiologan era.¹⁰³ None of them possessed the scope of his action and was not able to reach even tenuously the extent of the influence of Chomatenos in the years to come.¹⁰⁴ Nevertheless, according to Prinzing, the autocephaly of the Archbishopric of Ohrid and Bulgaria remained intact and lasted for a long time, even following the incipience of the Serbian rule over the city in 1334.

After having exhausted the issue of the influence of Demetrios Chomatenos and his role in strengthening the position of the Ohrid Archbishopric, we may proceed with his contributions as a continuer and chronicler of the Bulgarian Church tradition and an author who conveyed his perception of the Bulgarian flock in his diocese in the first half of the 13th

⁹⁹ Georgii Acropolitae Opera, rec. A Heisenberg, I – II, Lipsiae, 1903; Greek Sources for the Bulgarian History, VIII, p.158. In "Macedonia. Collection of Documents and Materials." p. 96.

¹⁰⁰ Here the author most probably refers to the region of Ohrid.

¹⁰¹ Ibid, p. 96.

¹⁰² Demetrios Chomatenos identified his province with Justiniana Prima.

¹⁰³ Prinzing, G. "The Autocephalous Byzantine Ecclesiastical Province of Bulgaria/Ohrid. How independent were its archbishopss?" Bulgarian Historical Heritage Foundation: Sofia, p. 372-373.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid, p. 373.

century. Thus, for example, in a letter to the Serbian king Stefan Radoslav the priest informs the ruler that the population in his eparchy speaks Bulgarian. He talks about the simple, prosaic language, i.e. the vernacular. He testifies that the population in his eparchy speaks Bulgarian.¹⁰⁵ He writes that as he received his questions (from the king), he (Demetrios) will answer to each one of them in accordance with the writings of our holy fathers and with the written and unwritten customs of the church; but not according to our literary language, but through the means of the common, simple and prosaic language, so that the written could be understood well, because with insufficient knowledge, especially of Bulgarian, we cannot interpret or talk, proceeding from logic.¹⁰⁶

Like Theophylact, Demetrios Chomatenos wrote a brief hagiography of St. Clement of Ohrid. According to the author both Clement and the population in the region of Macedonia are Bulgarian.¹⁰⁷ “This great father of ours and enlightener of Bulgaria (Clement),” writes Demetrios Chomatenos, “was descending from the European Moesians, which are also commonly known to the people as Bulgarians.”¹⁰⁸ The author says that clement was the first one, together with Naum, Angelarius and Gorazd¹⁰⁹ who diligently studied the Holy Scripture, translated it with divine assistance into the local, Bulgarian speech by Cyril, truly wise by god and equal to the apostles father of ours and from the very beginning he was together with Methodius, the prominent teacher of the Moesian (Bulgarian) nation to piety and Orthodox faith.¹¹⁰

When the god-like Cyril died after having made aware the Pope of the Rome Adrian of his apostolic service and Methodius was placed as an archbishop of Moravia and Bulgaria

¹⁰⁵ Y. Ivanov, “The Bulgarians in Macedonia,” 1915, p. 148; In *Macedonia. Collection of Documents and Materials.*, p. 90.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid, p.90.

¹⁰⁷ A. Milev, “The Greek Lives of Clement of Ohrid,” Sofia, 1966, p. 175-176. In *Macedonia. Collection of Documents and Materials* p. 90.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid, p.90.

¹⁰⁹ Disciples of Saints Cyril and Methodius.

¹¹⁰ Ibid, p. 90.

by the same Pope.¹¹¹ It was then that Clement was also elevated to the Bishop seat, for he was placed by Methodius to serve as a bishop to the whole of Illyricum and to the Bulgarian people/nation.¹¹² The text reads further that he (Clement) most often resided in the Illyrian city of Lychnidos, which is a center of the surrounding cities and which is now called Ohrid, in the tongue of the Moesians, and also in Kefaliniya, which translated from Bulgarian is Glavitiza, where he also left monuments.¹¹³

The letter and the hagiography imply that Demetrios Chomatenos, like Theophylact of Ohrid before him perceived his Bulgarian flock at least three dimensionally – by linguistic sign, because of the Bulgarian language that unites it; by an ethnic aspect – he calls them Moesians or Bulgarians; he also associates the people in his eparchy with the territory they inhabit – referred to as Bulgaria and we could as well include here their citizenship of the certain settlement they dwell in – for example the city of Ohrid. Like Theophylact, Demetrios was a chronicler of the Bulgarian history and that of the Bulgarian Church in particular. What clearly separates them, according to Ivan Snegarov, is their relationship with their congregation – Chomatenos had much more intimate connection with the subordinate people of his diocese.

“Chomatenos cared for his flock not just as a Christian mass like Theophylact, but also as a Bulgarian one,”¹¹⁴ Snegarov writes. The author thinks that the knowledge of Bulgarian (not the literary one, but the vernacular), after spending 20 years among the Bulgarians as an archbishop, helped Demetrios to a large degree to maintain close relationships with his pasture and Snegarov justifies this claim with the aforementioned letter of Chomatenos to the Serbian king Stefan Radoslav.¹¹⁵ In this letter the Archbishop writes

¹¹¹ Ibid, p. 90.

¹¹² Ibid, p. 90.

¹¹³ Ibid, p. 91.

¹¹⁴ I. Snegarov, “History of the Ohrid Archbishopric – Patriarchy since its fall under the Turks until its annihilation (1394 – 1767).p. 248.

¹¹⁵ Ibid, p. 248.

that the Bulgarian language knows not what is essence, and nature, and unit, nor does it know what is hypostasis and what is whole and private, was is trinity and so on.¹¹⁶ In another occasion Chomatenos calls himself “Chief-Shepherd of the Bulgarians in an inscription on a big icon which he donated to the church of the archbishopric and this is also how he refers to himself in a hagiography of St. Clement of Ohrid.¹¹⁷

In a letter of Chomatenos to the Metropolitan of Kerkyra Basil Pediaditus he recognizes the canonicity of the Bulgarian church books and this gives enough reason for Snegarov to renounce all suspicion towards the Archbishop of Ohrid that he persecuted Bulgarian scripts and literature.¹¹⁸ In this line of thinking Snegarov claims that with the same fervor of Theophylact, Demetrios Chomatenos intensified the cult towards St Clement and his assistants and he also most probably established the celebration of the festivities of the Seven Saints and of St. Clement in particular.¹¹⁹

We already got acquainted with the “Life of St. Clement” by Chomatenos, where the author refers to the inventor of Cyrillic Alphabet as a “Bulgarian,” “Archbishop of Moravia and Bulgaria,” “Bishop of the whole Illyricum and the surrounding lands, where Bulgarian was spoken,” “a father, a teacher and an enlightener to the Bulgarians,” “a preacher of the truth, a wonderworker and equal to the apostles.” Chomatenos writes further (in Old Bulgarian) in this hagiography that Clement gave a form to the otherwise crude and barbaric Bulgarian language.¹²⁰ The archbishop testifies that during his time commemorations and sacred books from St. Clement still existed in Ohrid and this is a blunt testimony for Snegarov about Chomatenos’s tolerance and reverence towards the Bulgarian writing and

¹¹⁶ Ibid, p. 248-249.

¹¹⁷ Y. Ivanov, “Bulgarian Antiquities in Macedonia,” 1931, p. 60. In I. Snegarov, *History of the Ohrid Archbishopric – Patriarchy Since its Foundation to the Ottoman Conquest of the Balkan Peninsula*, p. 249.

¹¹⁸ Snegarov, I. *History of the Ohrid Archbishopric – Patriarchy since its Foundattion to the Ottoman Conquest of the Balkan Peninsula*.”p. 249.

¹¹⁹ Ibid, p. 249.

¹²⁰ Ibid, p. 249-250.

literature.¹²¹ Apart from this, the public acts that the Ohrid church primate issued contained many authentically Bulgarian names like Bratan, Rada, Tihota, etc. The large degree to which the archbishopric wished to adapt to Bulgarian realities in its diocese is in addition conveyed by the fact the many Bulgarian words could be met in the official stationary documents, like for example *κατὰ τὴν ἐζερλίαν* (at the lake), comes from the Bulgarian word *ezero* (ezero) – lake.¹²²

Moreover Snegarov accepts that other Greek archbishops after Demetrios Chomatenos distinguished themselves with the same tolerance towards the ethnic belonging of their congregation. Thus for example Konstantinos Kavasillas (1250-1263) glorified the Saints Cyril and Methodius, St. Clement and St. Naum with wondrous songs, calling them Bulgarian enlighteners and apostles.¹²³ Kavasillas qualified Cyril and Methodius as teachers and coryphaei of the Bulgarian land and in almost all of his songs the term *Bulgarian* is used instead of *Moesian* as he writes about St. Naum that through him god elevated the Bulgarian people and calls him “a reverend saint of the Bulgarians” and that he “taught the savage Bulgarian nation” and “educated the Bulgarians together with Methodius.”¹²⁴ Especially remarkable for Snegarov is a certain expression from Konstantinos Kavasillas in which he calls St. Naum “our father and greatest intercessor and enlightener of ours” and that “Bulgaria celebrated in a dignified manner his memory.”¹²⁵

Snegarov claims that it was namely due to this close relationship between the Ohrid Archbishopric and the Bulgarian ethnos that the Byzantine emperor Andronikus II Palaiologos (1282 – 1328) donated a shroud to the church of the Archbishopric.¹²⁶ The emperor gave it as a gift to the Ohrid archbishop and it had an inscription, saying: “O

¹²¹ Ibid, p. 250.

¹²² Ibid, p. 250.

¹²³ Ibid, p. 251.

¹²⁴ Ibid

¹²⁵ Ibid

¹²⁶ Ibid.

shepherd of the Bulgarians, remember during a sacrifice, of the ruler Andronikus Palaiologos.”¹²⁷ Such acts and other occasions give Ivan Snegarov enough ground to maintain that there was an absence of elinizing policy in the Ohrid archbishopric and that the Slavic writing was thriving in the Ohrid diocese during the Byzantine domination and that the Ohrid Archbishopric was Bulgarian and that it identified with the Archbishopric from Prima Justiniana.¹²⁸ An expression for this can be found in the nomocanon¹²⁹ of the “St. John monastery of Slepchene.”¹³⁰ It is written in Church Slavonic there, in the chapter regarding the rights of the autocephalous churches that the Ohrid Archbishopric is not a subject to the Patriarch and its archbishop is called Bulgarian Archbishop of Ohrid and of The First (Prima) Justiniana.¹³¹

In conclusion Snegarov writes that it is untenable to claim that the Ohrid Archbishops, although being Greek, were exercising elinizing policy and he explains this with their interest of stabilizing their position of autocephalous Bulgarian ecclesiastics and that in pursuance of this they tried to follow a middle way.¹³² They neither wanted to oppress the ethnic feeling of their flock, nor did they try to work very hard for its development as the former measure was necessary for them to preserve the foreign character of their congregation which was a crucial condition for their autocephalous status. By not creating circumstances too conducive for the ethnic self-perception of their subjects, on the other hand, the archbishops strived to keep the Bulgarian flock under the Byzantine sphere of influence and the authority of the emperor in Constantinople.¹³³ In another words, the self-interests of the archbishops drove them to stay aware that they were on top of a Bulgarian flock and that they needed to identify themselves

¹²⁷ Y. Ivanov, “The Bulgarians in Macedonia,” 1915. p. 149-150. In *Macedonia. Collection of Documents and Materials.*, p. 96.

¹²⁸ Ibid, p. 251-252.

¹²⁹ According to the Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium The term “nomocanon”, which comes from the Grek nomos (law) and kanon (rule), designates a Byzantine legal collection composed of extracts from the canons, i.e. the norms of Church law.

¹³⁰ Near Ohrid.

¹³¹ I. Snegarov, “History of the Ohrid Archbishopric – Patriarchy Since its FoundationS to the Ottoman Conquest of the Balkan Peninsula.”” p. 252.

¹³² Ibid, p. 252.

¹³³ Ibid

with it. This is why they wished to preserve to some degree the feeling of the members of this group that they were Bulgarians in whose minds the idea of the continuation of the Bulgarian church tradition from the times prior to the Byzantine rule should stay alive as well as their self-awareness of being Bulgarians.

As it is clear from the beginning of this chapter the significance of the Ohrid Archbishopric did not decrease when the Byzantine rule over Bulgaria was over, but on the contrary. This was evident from the fact that the newly formed Tarnovo Archbishopric sought recognition both from Constantinople and from Ohrid. After it was denied the Bulgarian ruler Kaloyan engaged in a correspondence with the Roman Pope Innocent III wishing to obtain royal dignity for himself and a patriarchal one for the church in Tarnovo. The Tsar went so far as to declare that the Bulgarian rulers who were his predecessors had received their crowns from Rome, which is considered as not being true by some scholars and a mere diplomatic maneuvering. Interestingly enough, the roman pontiff confirmed these claims in a letter to the Hungarian king at the time and as the Tarnovo Archbishopric received the title of “Primas” from the Pope, the church in Tarnovo entered into union with the Roman Catholic Church which lasted around two decades. The Ohrid Archbishopric was the official continuator of the Bulgarian Orthodox Church tradition during that time. Moreover this was a sign for the high prestige and authority, as well as independence of the church in Ohrid including in the interstate domain since the Bulgarian Tsar was forced into a union with the Roman Catholic Church after its refusal to ordain the first priest of Tarnovo for patriarch. Another interesting fact is that in his correspondence Pope Innocent III recognizes the hitherto Bulgarian state and church tradition.

In going back to the internal affairs of the Ohrid Archbishopric, this chapter was mostly dedicated to one of its strongest and most influential figures – Archbishop Demetrios Chomatenos. I have written a great deal about the autocephalous status and the independence of the Ohrid Archbishopric, but as Günter Prinzing argues no other of its church primates, either preceding or these after Chomatenos took such a big advantage of the position of the Archbishopric. Of course here we have to take into account that the archbishop made use of the conducive political and clerical circumstances of a fragmented Byzantine Empire and the Nicaean exile of the ecumenical patriarch. The terms “restriction of power” idea and a “substitute patriarch” also came into use vis-à-vis Demetrios Chomatenos signifying the magnitude of his authority, not just in the clerical context, but also in political and judicial sphere of the Byzantine life. He ruled a law court in Ohrid, passing judgments including in the sphere of the secular legislation and its activity went beyond the boundaries of his immediate diocese. Chomatenos pronounced his judgment on whether the emperor could move certain bishops from their ecclesiastical see and used the argument of the “emperor-priest.” In one occasion Chomatenos even had the decisive say in the coronation of the Epirus despot Theodore Comnenos after the Thesaloniki Metropolitan Constantinos Mesopotamitis had denied the crown to the ruler. This occasion is interesting for the purposes of this thesis for yet another reason as well because in depicting the details around these events the Byzantine chronicler Georgii Acropolites¹³⁴ testifies about Bulgarian lands that the despot of Epirus had seized. The narrative of this chapter continues with assertion that no other Archbishop after Demetrios Chomatenos could obtain such a freedom of action and this was celebrated with the addendum of “Archbishop of Justiniana Prima” to his official title. Nevertheless the autocephalous status of the Ohrid Archbishopric remained untouched for a long time after the office of Demetrios Chomatenos was over, as Prinzing writes.

¹³⁴ See R. Macrides, *George Akropolites. The History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press., 2007).

Chomatenos's strong policy regarding the status and privileges of his ecclesiastical see was complemented by caring attitude towards his flock according to Ivan Snegarov. He claims that the archbishopric, during the time of Chomatenos, was accepting everyone who had grievances and was asking to know the truth concerning his/her lawsuit; the church let the plaintiffs speak freely, listened carefully and compassionately to them; inquired, verified if the facts are credible; assured the complainants when it was necessary for them to be reconciled and finally passed well-founded judgments.¹³⁵ In addition to this the church "considered it as its sacred duty to protect the parentless, to help the underprivileged orphans and to make them happy through the benefits of the law."¹³⁶

As far as the issue of the language can be continued with one of the most significant (with respect to the Bulgarian church and history) works of the Archbishop – the hagiography of St. Clement of Ohrid that he wrote, following the example of Theophylact. Here Demetrios testifies that the people, dwelling in the region of Macedonia are Bulgarians, although sometimes he uses the ethnonym *Moesians* as an alternative. Chomatenos confirms that Clement belonged to the Bulgarian ethnic group and refers to him as a father and an enlightener of the Bulgarians. He also asserts that Clement's teacher – St. Cyril translated the Holy Scripture into Bulgarian, whereas Clement is qualified as a bishop to the whole Illyricum and to the Bulgarian people who often resided in the city of Lychnidos, a name which translated in Bulgarian is Ohrid.

Thus in the same fashion as Theophylact of Ohrid, Demetrios views the Bulgarians with respect to their Bulgarian/Moesian ethnic belonging, their language and the land that they inhabit, qualified as Bulgarian. They are also associated with the city of Ohrid, which is counted as a part of these lands. As Theophylact, Demetrios was impersonator and chronicler of the Bulgarian church tradition, but the clear difference between the two of them, according

¹³⁵ I. Snegarov, *History of the Ohrid Archbishopric since its Foundation to the Ottoman Conquest of the Balkan Peninsula*, p. 247.

¹³⁶ Ibid, p. 247.

to Snegarov, is the relation with their Bulgarian congregation, a topic that was touched upon earlier on. Demetrios mastered not just the official Bulgarian language but also the local vernacular in order to build closer ties with his Bulgarian flock. In addition, in the Life of St. Clement and in inscriptions on icons he refers to himself a “Chief-Shepered” of the Bulgarians. This close relation of the Ohrid Archbishop and its congregation inspired one of the later Byzantine emperors to write on a shroud that he donated to the church of the Ohrid Archbishopric writing on the inscription of the shroud that it was for the “shepherd of the Bulgarians.”

In order to continue depicting the contributions of Demetrios Chomatenos with regard to his elucidating of the Bulgarian church tradition, we cannot omit his act of recognizing the canonicity of the Bulgarian church books, which together with other deeds give enough ground for Ivan Snegarov to renounce all suspicions that Chomatenos and the Ohrid Archbishop as a whole tried to extirpate the Bulgarian culture. In fact there are opposite stand points in the more recent Bulgarian historiography, concerning this segment of the Medieval Bulgarian History. Thus for example in their article “Church and Church Life in Macedonia” Petar Petrov and Hristo Temelski state that the Byzantine state assigned to the Ohrid Archbishopric the role of a suppressor of the Bulgarian national/ethnic consciousness, especially during the office of Theophylact. I personally don’t find this argument very credible since many documents scrutinized in this thesis lead us to other directions. In the second chapter, for example, I cited a document which states that the some subordinate bishops of Theophylact were trained to perform their service in Bulgarian in the town of Bregalnica. We also saw that some local cults, saints and the memory of certain historical figures were held in respect, as Margaret Mullet leads us to think.

Speaking about local cults and saints we might return to Demetrios Chomatenos and the way he encouraged the reverence towards St. Clement of Ohrid and also his establishment

of the celebration of Clement and of the Seven Saints, festivities that are still observed in Bulgaria nowadays. With respect to St. Clement in particular Chomatenos used epithets like “a preacher of the truth, a wonderworker and equal to the apostles,” also “a father and a teacher of the Bulgarians,” and an enlightener who “civilized” the otherwise “barbaric” Bulgarian language. Snegarov’s point of view towards Demetrios as someone who tolerated and revered the Bulgarian writing, literature is further backed up with some accounts of the archbishop using authentic Bulgarian names and “slavized” Greek words in his official documents.

Furthermore Snegarov argues that Chomatenos’ successors maintained his line of conduct towards the Bulgarian culture and illustrates this claim with Konstantinos Kavasillas who praised the aforementioned Bulgarian saints with no less commitment adding to this peculiar pantheon St. Naum whom he calls “a reverend saint of the Bulgarians” and “our father and most great intercessor and enlightener of ours.” Moreover Snegarov argues that the Slavic/Bulgarian writing, in addition to not being persecuted, actually thrived in the city of Ohrid in a counter-argument against the claims concerning the policy of Hellenization maintained by some.

According to Snegarov the latter is counterintuitive since the interest of the Ohrid archbishops dictated them to stabilize the autocephalous status of the archbishopric, which guaranteed them independence. This meant that they needed to bolster the ethnic, cultural and linguistic distinctiveness of their flock since this was a major condition for their ecclesiastical see to be autocephalous, which as to me is the more rational thing to do, than attempting to obliterate everything Bulgarian. This line of thinking, on the one hand justifies Snegarov’s claim of the close relation between the cleric estate and the laity in the diocese of the Ohrid Archbishopric, and vindicates my detailed scrutiny of its status and privileges, on the other. Because the latter is closely connected with the distinctive and intrinsic character of the flock

and the archbishops had to create favorable conditions for maintaining and even encouraging this status quo. For this reason Snegarov's "middle way" described in the end of last chapter seems more plausible in this instance than the claims of some authors, characterizing the policy of the Ohrid Archbishopric as rigidly anti-Bulgarian.

Conclusion

This thesis demonstrated the important contribution of the Ohrid Archbishopric and its primates in continuing and impersonating the Bulgarian church tradition as well as their crucial role in furnishing documentary evidence on the Bulgarian flock of the archbishopric in which they shared their perceptions of the Bulgarians in the Ohrid diocese in the specific time frame. The text also showed that the Ohrid church and its Greek priests rather created favorable circumstances for the thriving of the Bulgarian self perceptions of the laymen and it is safe to say that they succeeded in maintaining continuity in the clerical sphere from the times prior to the Byzantine rule over Bulgaria. I arrived to the finding that it was in the interest of the Ohrid Archbishops to sustain the local distinctiveness of their congregation although the latter did not always enjoy very good attitude from the high church officials. This however should not downplay their contributions and sometimes close connection with the Bulgarians within their diocese.

In this context I claim to have expressed an unconventional and novel point of view, as opposed to some widespread notions in Bulgaria with respect to the period of Byzantine rule over the country and the Greek priests presiding over Bulgarian churches. However, we need to always be cautious with generalizations of any kind and rather to adhere to some kind of a “middle way” as proposed by Ivan Snegarov. Of course the opposing views over the Byzantine period and the Ohrid archbishops in the Bulgarian academic environment were not studied in a great detail in this thesis, but some examples were given, nonetheless.

The claims and questions posed in the introduction of this work were addressed in the subsequent chapters in a chronological and thematic manner and summarized in short conclusions after each part. Thus the first chapter of this thesis dealt with the issues of the autocephaly and independence of the Ohrid Archbishopric – matters which, at least at first

glance do not have much to do with the fundamental issues of this thesis. The sigillia of Basil II, however, imply the distinctiveness of the Ohrid Archbishopric as it was in charge of a foreign flock. In this connection Günter Prinzing refers to the Archbishops of Ohrid as being among the “great autocephalous bishops,” heads of autocephalous and independent churches. The author maintains that there is an inextricable link between the Bulgarian ethnicity of the population in the Ohrid diocese and the autocephaly of the church and the latter should be deducted almost automatically from the former. The Ohrid Archbishops, however, did not just rest on this status quo but worked actively to sustain the local distinctiveness and keep its old customs alive, as demonstrated throughout the text.

Moreover, the older traditions of the Bulgarian church, the way in which it functioned and assertions for their continuation are explicitly stated in the three charters of Basil II. He most probably degraded its status to from Patriarchy to an Archbishopric and this is the only palpable change that he administered, as even the old Bulgarian archbishop – John of Debar was allowed to continue his office. Thus the Bulgarian church tradition was to a large degree preserved, in spite of some opposing views in the academic environment and the only restriction imposed by the emperor was the stipulation that he would appoint the archbishops after a church synod had teamed three candidates.

As for the evidence for the continuation of the way the church worked before the Byzantine conquest, the three sigillia state that the Ohrid Archbishopric shall be exempted from certain taxes as it was the reality during Tsar Samuil, which for Prinzing is a sign for the desire of the emperor to preserve the Patriarchal tradition of the Bulgarian rulers before him. The territorial extent of the diocese of the church in Ohrid was also kept the same, as the same bishoprics from the times of Peter and Samuil were included to its see and their amount was complemented by the ones that were omitted in the first sigillion and those that were previously taken over by foreign elements.

The issue of the Bulgarian identity of the Archbishopric's Bulgarian flock is also treated by Basil in his official documents. It is distinguished from other subjects, belonging to different ethnic groups in the context of the taxes they were entitled to pay. The emperor concludes the stipulations in the sigillia with the admonition that the various state officials and even the Ecumenical Patriarch in Constantinople should respect the authority and independence of the Ohrid archbishops.

The addendums of Michael of Devol to the History of John Skylitzes present us with a direct testimony concerning the autocephaly of the Ohrid Archbishopric and Basil's confirmation of this. The author traces the origin and identification of the church in Ohrid to the times of the Justinian the Great and Prima Justiniana and provides some information on the successors of the John of Debar - Leo and Theodoulos to whom he refers as Bulgarians and primates of Bulgaria.

The second chapter proceeded with Theophylact of Ohrid – a figure which might leave the reader with some mixed impressions, considered by some as an oppressor of the ethnic consciousness of his Bulgarian subjects. Regardless of his relations with his Bulgarian flock and the negative connotations he often attached to it, he had an important role as a chronicler of the Bulgarian church history and a writer, depicting his self perception of the aspects that characterized the “Bulgarianness” of much of his entrusted population. He does this in a multidimensional fashion in his writings and covers pretty much all the ethno-determining factors, listed by Anthony Smith in his ethnosymbolist theory, as given in the introduction. The shared ancestry and myths of the Bulgarian congregation are explicitly conveyed in Theophylact's letters and the hagiography of St. Clement of Ohrid where the author writes about the Bulgarian church during the old rulers of the state. He outlines the history of the Bulgarian church since the Christianization of the Bulgarian lands and discerns the work of the saints Cyril and Methodius and their disciple – Clement as they elaborated

specific Slavonic scripture, adjusted for the needs of the Bulgarian language. Thus Theophylact acknowledges the cultural idiosyncrasy of the Bulgarians through linguistic means. He also refers to them as a specific people/nation and some priests were even trained to perform their service in Bulgarian.

Concerning the myth and local religious beliefs, Margaret Mullet testifies about the revival of some of the cults during the time of Theophylact and the commemoration of Bulgarian rulers – especially Samuil, who had had Ohrid as his capital. As far as the city is concerned the archbishop attaches another identifier to his Bulgarian subjects – he qualifies them as citizens of Ohrid (*καστροηνοί*) and associates them with the land they inhabit, which he calls their homeland. Thus the indicator of a common territory is added to the palette of the local ethnic reality. Moreover the archbishop appeals to the son of the Byzantine emperor in connection with the region in question qualifying it as a part of a wider Bulgarian geographical space. All these considerations sum up the view of this highly educated priest concerning his idea of what a Bulgarian meant, coming from the “queen of all cities” to a “barbaric” and crude environment with which he had to associate himself and become “a Bulgarian by a miracle.”

The different manner (in comparison with Theophylact) in which Demetrios Chomatenos viewed and governed his Bulgarian congregation was presented to the reader in the final chapter of this thesis. Apart from being depicted by Snegarov as someone who is caring and concerned about its members, Chomatenos is presented by Prinzing as the Ohrid archbishop who took the most advantage of the autocephalous status of the institution entrusted to him. Of course, here we should not disregard the favorable circumstances which accompanied the office of Chomatenos like the segmented Byzantine Empire and the exile of the Ecumenical Patriarch. Nevertheless Prinzing uses the terms “restriction of power” and “substitute patriarch” when referring to this influential archbishop. He had a significant role

in the coronation of the Epirus despot and was in charge of a judicial tribunal that also operated with individuals from outside the immediate diocese of the Ohrid Archbishopric.

What's most important for the purposes of my thesis, however, is the manner in which Demetrios Chomatenos treated his Bulgarian flock and his contributions for preserving and continuing the Bulgarian Church tradition. Thus, for example, according to Ivan Snegarov the church carefully listened to plaintiffs, meticulously examined the proofs and pronounced fair sentences. The archbishopric also helped orphans and unprivileged people. For these reasons Chomatenos was viewed by his flock not only as a shepherd, but also as a father, exactly the way a priest should be perceived by his laymen.

As far as the Bulgarian ethnicity, language and church custom are concerned, we have a lot of information available in the letters of Demetrios and in the hagiography of St. Clement of Ohrid that he wrote following the line of Theophylact. Similarly to Theophylact Chomatenos refers to the Bulgarian/Moesian ethnicity, the land the Bulgarians inhabited and the Bulgarian vernacular which he himself learned. This brings us back to the close ties between the archbishop and his congregation to which he qualifies himself as a "Chief-Shepherd." In continuing the issue of the language, Slavonic scripture, etc, we also need to pay attention to Chomatenos's act of recognizing the canonicity of the Bulgarian church books which justifies Snegarov's claims that this Ohrid archbishop maintained a policy of toleration towards the Bulgarian culture inside his diocese, despite some opposing opinions in the contemporary Bulgarian historiography concerning this historical period.

With regards to the encouragement of the Bulgarian culture and church tradition, it is sensible to come back to St. Clement. Chomatenos established a celebration of him as well as of the Seven Saints, festivities that have not been forgotten until nowadays. Regarding St. Clement in particular the Ohrid primate used a multitude of laudatory words like "a preacher of the truth, a wonderworker and equal to the apostles," also "a father and a teacher of the

Bulgarians,” and an enlightener who “civilized” the otherwise “barbaric” Bulgarian language. In fact, Chomatenos used some authentic words from this language in his official documents written in Greek.

Similar policy was conducted by the successors of Demetrios Chomatenos like Konstantinos Kavasillas who also made his contribution to the Bulgarian hagiographic history, being a champion for the cult of St. Naum calling him “a reverend saint of the Bulgarians” and “our father and most great intercessor and enlightener of ours.” The aforementioned facts encourage Ivan Snegarov to conclude that the Slavic/Bulgarian writings and culture as a whole proliferated with the help of Byzantine clerics, an assertion which goes against some of the tenets of the modern Bulgarian historiography which maintain the claims of Hellenization and anti-Bulgarian policy, exercised by Byzantium and the Ohrid archbishops in particular.

Snegarov has a very sound and pragmatic explanation for his thesis – as it was upheld in the course of this thesis, the Ohrid primates and the lower clergy had an interest in promoting the distinctiveness of their Bulgarian flock in order to enjoy the autocephalous status of their see and to seek further independence for it, a fact confirmed by Prinzing in his interpretation of the sigillia issued by Basil II. This is why I dedicated so much space in this thesis scrutinizing the position of the Ohrid church. A position which was strong even vis-à-vis the independent Bulgarian state during the Second Bulgarian Tsardom and the Patriarch in Constantinople, as demonstrated in the beginning of the third chapter. We also saw there that in a specific interim period (during the union of the Tarnovo church with the Papal see) the Ohrid Archbishopric was the sole official continuator of the Orthodox religious tradition in the Bulgarian lands.

I fully realize that with the refutation of the “hellenizing” and “anti-Bulgarian policy” allegedly carried out by the Ohrid Archbishopric towards its Bulgarian subjects I risk to be

perceived as a maverick in many scientific circles in Bulgaria if this thesis reaches some audience there. However I am inclined to think that the “middle way” is usually the right one. For this reason it is unwise to engage with extremes and in my case the opposite stance to mine can never be entirely overruled. Of course a foreign political or ecclesiastical rule over a certain territory cannot be just a positive thing. If nothing else the outside authority is associated with unfamiliar customs and language and is frequently prone to tax its subjects excessively. Nevertheless the considerations that I offered in this text are justifiable and pragmatic and they lead us to think that the Ohrid Archbishopric bolstered rather than repressed the Bulgarian self-awareness of its flock during the time period presented in the title.

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