

*The Byzantine model of Christianization:  
Alienation of the “Others”*

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Byzantium is the continuation of the ancient Roman Empire, which existed in mediaeval times. It differed from the Old Empire in that it had a new center – Constantinople and a new religion – Christianity. However, what made the main difference between Byzantium and other countries of that period was that it did not become an entirely mediaeval state. Since it had not been born in the Middle Ages, Byzantium remained, internally and externally, the old East Roman Empire, which had survived the turbulences of the Migration Period and continued to exist in changed historical conditions. Imperceptibly, slowly and without any noticeable quakes, Byzantium adapted to the new conditions; the exact manner this happened has remained a disputable issue among historians – as well as the moment that should be accepted as the boundary between antiquity and the time when the Eastern Roman Empire was transformed into Byzantium.

Among the three elements (ancient tradition, Christianity and barbarism) the mutual relations or the subsequent changes in the mediaeval history of the Western peoples was built upon, it was not only that the ancient tradition did not disappear, but in a sense, it subdued barbarism and Christianity while transforming itself under the influence of the views they brought within.<sup>1</sup>

The most impressive traces left by antiquity were in the domain of the state knowledge and the state ideology of the Byzantines. The Byzanti-

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<sup>1</sup> П. Мутафчиевъ, *Изтокъ и Западъ въ европейското средновековие*. София 1993, стр.130-131.

nes were not only considered the formal descendants of the dignity of the Roman state, but they believed for themselves that they were Romans (Romaioi, as they called themselves);<sup>2</sup> the name we use nowadays to denote them was unknown to them. That vanity in their belief of what they were, could explain, *inter alia*, their overbearing and resenting behavior towards other peoples. Even when Byzantium layed half-collapsed in front of them, they remained nothing but petty barbarians. Byzantium treated their leaders as usurpers who were obliged to ask for acknowledgment of their reign from the Constantinopolitan absolutist – the sole legal ruler of the country.

Along the laws of ancient Rome, Byzantium inherited Rome's universality. All tribes and races inhabiting Byzantium were equal in the state-legal relation; they were united, more or less, by one culture. The tight state organization uniting those ethnically diverse masses adjusted its forces. The idea of statehood served as a means for accomplishing and maintaining balance between different ethnicities. Byzantium inherited the institution of absolute monarchy from Rome; that is why Byzantium never wanted to free itself from the legacy of Rome, and that was the reason Byzantium never fell into unrest, such as the West had been forced to live in for centuries.

The concept of the ideal ruler, the savior of the empire is "the last Utopia of the ancient world." In Byzantium, that concept is further developed and displayed in the form of the single ruler, the "Emperor" who stands out highest of all. The attachment of the Byzantines to the exclusivity of every attribute of the Byzantine emperor, as well as the permanent disputes with other rulers who tried to gain titles which *ipso iure* belonged to the emperor of Byzantium, should not be accepted as empty endeavors about a dead system arrangement, but as protection of an idea expressing the essence of the 1000-year-long history of Byzantium.<sup>3</sup> That is why the image of the empire was mixed with the so-called Roman idea, and Constantinople was a new, a second Rome independent of its name, relying on a publicly expressed view that Constantine The Great named the capital New Rome.

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<sup>2</sup> Constantinus Porphyrogenetus, *De administrando imperio*, ed. Gy. Moravcsik and R. J. Jelkins, Budapest, 1949, p. 122; C. Neumann, *Byzantinische kultur and Renaissance kultur*, Stuttgart, 1903, 31.

<sup>3</sup> J. E. Караянопулос, *Политическата теория на Византийците*. София 1992, 16.

On the one side, the main characteristic of the Roman idea is the longevity, because Rome is the eternal city (*urbs aeterna*),<sup>4</sup> and on the other, it is the continuous renewal of the Empire. By transferring the state capital from Rome to Constantinople, the City of Constantine also became an imperial, or a tsarist city<sup>5</sup> (Slavic: Carigrad) and naturally the city gained the characteristics of old Rome – eternity and renewal (*aeternitas* and *renovatio*).<sup>6</sup> Therefore, the Roman idea gained mystical meaning for the faithful disciples. Hence, the term *Romaioi* was used for the citizens of the Roman Empire (*Romania*).

The term "Romania," (Ρωμανία, Ῥωμανεία<sup>7</sup>) as the geographic-political term for a "land inhabited by Romaioi" appears in the 4<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>8</sup> The ethnical inclusion of the term includes all the people that inhabited the Eastern Roman Empire regardless of their tribe origins. During the whole existence of the empire, the Byzantines called themselves "Romaioi", thus giving the name a confessional and political meaning.

What was the ideology of the huge, long-lasting and self-renewing Byzantine state and church organization? We have already mentioned that what we are calling the Byzantine Empire nowadays was considered a direct successor of the Roman Empire by tradition and territory by the Byzantines themselves. They saw themselves as subjects of one and same country and that can explain the aptitude of the Byzantine emperors to accept their rule as heritage from the old Roman emperors. In the 6<sup>th</sup> century, Justinian I further developed that position, writing in a novel about "our previous Caesar", who gave "the devotional beginning of our mono-reign."<sup>9</sup>

According to the Byzantine historical representations, the Roman Empire was not the old one, an empire wrapped in antiquity and sinfulness,

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<sup>4</sup> "Romulus aeternae nondum formaverat urbis moenia..."; F. Dölger, *Rom in der Gedankenwelt der Byzantiner*. *Zeitschr. f. Kirchengesch.*, 56, 1937, p.71, 72.

<sup>5</sup> Κωνσταντινος Πορφυρογεννητος. *Περι θεμάτων 1.84.2: επει και πολις, εστι βασιλευουσα του τε κοσμου παντος υπερεχουσα.*

<sup>6</sup> J. E. Καραιοπουλος, *Πολιτικησκατα θεωρια*, 16.

<sup>7</sup> K. Amantos, *Ρωμανία, Ἑλληνικά*, 6, 1969, 231-235.

<sup>8</sup> V. Ταρκοβα- Ζαϊμοβα, *L'idée byzantine de l'unité du monde et l'état bulgare*. *AIE-SEE*, III, 1969, 291; L. Brehier, *Les institutions de l'Empire Byzantin*. Paris 1949, 122.

<sup>9</sup> *Novellae Justiniani* (R. Schoell; G. Kroll); 30, pr.-a.534.

but was a new state in which Christianity and its doctrine formed the new spiritual contents and orientation.<sup>10</sup>

In a way that was worth both admiration and impression, God's willing thought arranged the world order in such a way that the new empire was transformed into God's "chosen neighbor" where it will be used to spread the Christian word and the salvation of mankind. Since the ages of Octavian Augustus, the universe was united, in other words the common human community was born in God-Man, who was to be born and whose doctrine was to be spread. The existence of that community was supported by the existence of one language that would be understandable to all and would facilitate the faster spreading of Christianity.<sup>11</sup>

The acting of God's willing thought started to be considered at the time of Constantine the Great.<sup>12</sup> Since then, the humankind testified how the order conceived by God's thought had become reality, the new Roman Empire had been formed where the Christian religion, Christian law, the spiritual heritage of Hellenism, Roman law and the Roman state organization lived together.<sup>13</sup>

The new empire had a purpose to deter the barbarians, keep peace, enforce common justice and unity of the dogma and spread Christianity between the barbarians so "a herd with one shepherd"<sup>14</sup> could be created. It would give the new Christian-Roman view of the world, which would simultaneously secure the legal basis for any claims of the empire for world dominance.<sup>15</sup>

After the final consolidation of the Eastern Roman Empire at the beginning of the 5<sup>th</sup> century and the breakup of the Western Empire, the Western countries were only seen in Constantinople as temporarily fallen.

<sup>10</sup> A. Heisenberg, *Staat und Gesellschaft des Byzantinischen Reiches*. Leipzig-Berlin, 1923, 364.

<sup>11</sup> E. Peterson, *Der Monotheismus als politisches problem*. Leipzig 1935, 66; 81.

<sup>12</sup> Ευσεβιος, Βίος II, 19, 48.13 (I.Heikel).

<sup>13</sup> F. Dölger, *Bulgarisches zartum und byzantinisches kaisertum*. In: *Byzanz und die Europäische Staatenwelb*. Ettal 1953, 141.

<sup>14</sup> According to Gospel of John (10:16): "I have other sheep, which are not of this fold; I must bring them also, and they will hear My voice; and they will become one flock with one shepherd."

<sup>15</sup> J. E. Караянопулос, *Политическата теория...*, 12; Г. Бакалов.

Byzantium was considered an indivisible part of the overall Roman Empire, the center of the Universe.<sup>16</sup> Byzantine Princess Anna Komnene clearly formulated the Byzantine understanding of predetermination and the mission of the Romaioi as "special", "chosen" people, summoned to rule over others.<sup>17</sup> According to her, "Romaioi" were all the people within the empire, who professed Eastern Orthodox Christian religion. In many cases, that understanding was consciously spread to create the impression that Constantinople's emperor, by law and tradition, stands at the top of the whole world of Christianity.

After accepting Christianity as the state religion, the common opinion changed and a new view of the emperor, who was not God anymore but was called by God himself, was introduced.<sup>18</sup>

The Byzantine Emperor ruled with the help and support of God's blessing and therefore, he should be "a friend of the word and subordinate to God". It was his duty to be subordinate to Great Tsar - God. In the Christian-Eschatological type, this means that it was necessary for an emperor to be God's temporary regent on the earth until the day when the Heavenly Emperor returned. With such authority, the emperor should be a teacher to his subjects in learning about God, and should lead the terrestrial kingdoms on the model of the Heavenly Tsar, gaining power to fulfill his responsibilities from God himself.

That view of the origins of the emperor's rule, and in particular of the emperor being chosen by God, which was typical for early Byzantium, was determined as the living law of the old Roman Empire in letting the throne be taken by the greatest and the most glorious one. That law predicted the crowning to be performed with the support from the three main pillars in the state structure – the military, the Senate and the people, which guaranteed divine acknowledgment of choice. The simplest expression of that regularity was the crowning of every future emperor. The emperor was

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<sup>16</sup> Г. Г. Литаврин, Некоторые особенности этнонимов в византийских источниках. *Вопр. этногенез. и этнической истории Славян и восточных Романцев*. Москва 1976, 202.

<sup>17</sup> Cf.: Ана Комнина, *Алексиада* (встъпит. статья, превод и коментар от М. Любарски), Москва 1965, 391.

<sup>18</sup> Караянопулос, J. E., *Политическата теория на Византийците*, София 1992, 19.

chosen by the people. The divined spirit was recognized and acted in that very selection.

Such understanding is confirmed by the many testimonials from emperors themselves. For example, when Constantius wanted to declare Julianus a Caesar, he requested approval from the military: "I want to elevate him to the rank of Caesar and I want this intention of mine to be supported by your approval if it seems useful."<sup>19</sup> Valentinianus I underlines that he was been chosen to be the emperor by politicians and the military, but at same time, he also got the blessing of divine forces.<sup>20</sup> Those perceptions were also valid in the 5<sup>th</sup> century. Marcianus announces the election of Pope Leo with the following words: "We came to this vast empire by God's providence and a wise choice of the Senate and the entire military." Leo I, thanking to the soldiers for the election says: "Almighty God and your estimate chose me to be the emperor."<sup>21</sup> Later on, Anastasios I underlined: "My election by the glorious Senate and the acknowledgment by the military and the people to accept the duty of the Emperor of the Romans, but primarily of the Holy Trinity".

Unlike the early Byzantine period, for which we have enough and valid information about the election and the promulgation of the emperors, in the middle and late Byzantine era, that information is minor and obscure. However, where sources are relevant and detailed, we can see that the driving forces of the state structure at the election of Basileus remained in the Senate, the military and the people as well as in the previous period.

Anastasios II (14 June 713) was promulgated with "the blessing of life-giving Holy Spirit, with general voice and assessment of the Reverend Senate, the military and all citizens." Michael II "was declared Basileus of Romans... by the entire Senate and the regiments,"<sup>22</sup> whereas Theodora "was declared emperor by everyone involved in the assembly, by all repre-

<sup>19</sup> Dölger, F., *Die Familie der Könige*. In: *Histor. Jahrbuch*. 1940, p. 181.

<sup>20</sup> Ammiani Marcellini rerum gestarum libri qui supersunt. Recensuit rhythmicceque destinxit C.U. Clark, I, Berolini 1910, XXVI, 1.5-a, 364.

<sup>21</sup> Treitinger O., *Kaiseridee*, p. 9, 36.

<sup>22</sup> Teophani Cronographia, rec. C. de Boor, I, Lipsiae 1883, 493. 29; cf.: Ioannis Skylitzae synopsis historiarum, ed. I. Thurn, Berolini 1973, II, 43; Ioannis Zonarae Epitomae historiarum, tomus III, ed. Th. Büttner-Wobst, Bonnae 1897, III, 312.

sentatives of the people and the church."<sup>23</sup> Similar conclusion is implied in Niketas Choniates' information about the crowning of Alexios III Angelos (1195) "by the whole military and as many members of the Senate as they are, he is declared Basileus and an autocrat."<sup>24</sup> Pachymeres informs on Michael IX (1294) and mentions actions by senior officials and military officers.<sup>25</sup> At the end, we will mention information given by John Kantakuzenes, who comments: "everyone who has rank and authority, and the military – and not just them but the one who is at the head of the church and the whole city together"<sup>26</sup>, participated in the election of Basileus.

A problem in the culture of Byzantium that has been least understood until today is the church–state and the emperor–patriarch relation. Mistakes are made if we take into consideration the relations in the mediaeval West, if rivalries between the Papacy and the emperor are used for comparison. Because of the deviated political center of the empire towards the East and lack of emperor's authority in the immediate vicinity as early as in the second half of 5<sup>th</sup> century, it was possible in the West to establish powerful theocratic knowledge (Pope Gelasius I, 492-496). In Byzantium, there were no conditions for rivalries between the church and the state of the kind that existed in the West. Over many centuries, Byzantium saw integration between the church and the state initiated as early as Constantine the Great. For the Eastern mentality, it was easier for the church to recognize the emperor as its master rather than to prove its own power by criticizing him. That is why teaching about two authorities did not have any meaning for Byzantium.

The authority of the emperor in the church was neither fixed in writing nor in civil legislation or church canons; rather, it was executed by tradition.<sup>27</sup> The relations between the patriarch and the emperor depended on respective persons.

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<sup>23</sup> Ioannis Zonarae epitomae historiarum, tomus III, 661.

<sup>24</sup> Nicetae Choniatae Historia, ed. J.A. Van Dieten, Berolini et Novi Eboraci 1975, 598.

<sup>25</sup> Georges Pachymères, Relations historiques, ed. A. Failler, II, Paris 1984, 195. 9 sq.

<sup>26</sup> Ioannis Cantacuzeni eximperatoris historiarum libri IV, cura L. Schopeni, I, Bonnae 1828, 196. 14 sq.

<sup>27</sup> H. G. Beck, Kirche und theologische literatur im byzantinischen Reich, München 1959, 36.

The tight relation of the Byzantine state in all of its structures with Christianity was not expressed in any other institution as clearly as in the emperor institution. The relations between the emperor's personality and God had many aspects. The connections between Byzantine ceremonial and church and its liturgy were numerous. In many of those cases, we can recognize occurrences and analogies that may be discovered much earlier in older cultures and other peoples. The fact that it was Byzantium within the Christian oikoumene and Christian opinion where the God–Emperor antithesis, as well as their synthesis, were reviewed in detail for the first time remained unexplained.

Beside the thesis that “The Emperor has authority without necessarily giving account for it, he has turned into God among people”, there is another thesis, a less radical idea for “God's authority”<sup>28</sup> acceptable for those who have rejected the cult to the emperor. “God's authority” represented transition to the Christian idea of God's mercy within which some elements of the old doctrine about the God–Emperor were preserved in Byzantium.

That the Emperor executed his authority owing to his divine charisma, to God's mercy, was a popular notion long before the victory of Christianity.<sup>29</sup>

There are many examples from the oratorical prose, codes and documents, which can validate that a concept of “God's authority” was established between the Byzantines. “Our God-derived majesty” is a formula appearing constantly in the emperor's documents. During the election of Leo I (457) as the emperor, people acclaimed: “God has given you, let God keep you. Obeying Christ, let you always win.”<sup>30</sup> This acclamation highlighted the Byzantines' belief that only a pious and orthodox emperor has the right to divine protection. The acclamation during the election of Anastasios I (491) placed the terrestrial and the celestial rulers next to each other: “Basileus in the skies, give us a non-greedy Basileus on earth as well.”<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> Бакалов Г., Византия, “Век” 22, София 1999, 294.

<sup>29</sup> F. Taeger, *Charisma. Studien zur Geschichte des antiken Herrscher-kultes*. 2 Bände, Stuttgart 1957-1960.

<sup>30</sup> Constantini Porphyrogeniti imperatoris *De ceremoniis aulae Byzantinae*, II, Bonnae 1829-1830, 411, 10.

<sup>31</sup> *De Ceremoniis*, 422, 13.



Sometimes, Lord in the skies was called on to participate in the ruling of the terrestrial emperor: "Son of God, co-rule with Him!"<sup>32</sup> The emperor is "the one who is married to God" or with the meaning "the one who is chosen by God." We will mention one more acclamation during the election of Anastasios I, when people chanted to the emperor's widow, Ariadne: "Long Live Augustus! An Orthodox emperor for the oikoumene."<sup>33</sup> The reliance of the emperor on God is the basis for deep-rooted knowledge about the unique relation between God and his terrestrial regent. In Byzantine images, the emperor's orthodoxy appeared as a condition for his special position. If a candidate belongs to the oikoumene, i.e. to the Christian civilized world, than racial prejudice hardly has any meaning for the election of the emperor. Example: Isaurians Tarasicodissa–Zeno (474-491); Phocas (602-610) who was half-barbarian; Leo III (717-741) of Syria; Leo V (813-820) of Armenia<sup>34</sup> etc.

Duties and limitations of the emperor's authority derived from the Christian dogma.

Firstly, towards God: authority should be service to God. "You rule by serving God and serve Him by ruling," writes Leo I to emperor Marcian.<sup>35</sup> The emperor should always think how to please God who has given him the power to rule: "receiving the scepter from God, imagine yourself showing to the one who endowed you with the power."<sup>36</sup>

The novelty that the emperor is the servant of God's will only give spirit to the belief that every specific holder of the imperial rule stands above other people. Justinian rejected the idea of supremacy and started introducing despot-like tendencies at the Byzantine court. Justinian and his successors, without changing anything in the custom of electing the emperor, shifted weight to God's factor in promulgating the emperor. Without deny-

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<sup>32</sup> Ibid. 612, 4; 650, 4.

<sup>33</sup> Ostrogorski G., *Istorija Vizantije*, 83; Бакалов Г., *Византия*, 155.

<sup>34</sup> Ostrogorski G., *Istorija Vizantije*, 81; 101; 165; 204; Мутафчиев П., *Лекции по история на Византия*, Том I, АНУБИС, 1995, 126; 279; том II, 3.

<sup>35</sup> Mansi J. D., *Sacrorum consiliorum nova et amplissima collectio*. Florentia, 1769, VI, 305: "quanto sit in vestra clementia dilectio dei, cui serviendo regnatis et regnando servitis".

<sup>36</sup> J. P. Migne, *Patrologiae cursus completus. Series graeca*. T. 86, 1. 1181.

ing obligations towards the people, they stressed that they originated from God whom they owed their authority.

2. The view of the church fathers about the emperor and emperor's authority is much self-shaped. It relies on the words of Apostle Paul: "Every soul should subordinate itself to superior authorities because there is no authority that is not given by God. Therefore, the one who opposes to authority opposes to God's order. And the ones opposing will fail into condemnation."<sup>37</sup> Besides, church fathers, especially John Chrysostom, were sometimes of opinion that God has allowed the imperial authority as necessary evil that will increased the natural law lost by people. Chrysostom does not miss to mark that the emperor is "God's slave" as well as his subordinates and the priest stands even higher than the emperor does.<sup>38</sup>

In order to keep law of a unique and universal empire, Byzantium skillfully used the Christian understanding about the origins and organization of authority. To save the empire from permanent barbarian pressures, Byzantium gradually started letting barbarians settle on its territory. Since mid- and the second half of the 4<sup>th</sup> century, Byzantium spread Christianity among the Goths, who had already settled in Byzantium and made effort to integrate themselves in the Byzantium's administrative system. In order to perform state positions, the Goths had to be Christians. They had to quit their old traditions and accept new Christian learning, which enabled them to rank among the civilized population of Europe. Byzantium even allowed translation of the Bible in the Gothic language in order to keep the Goths in the Byzantine domain of influence, and on the other hand, to force them – through Christianity – to respect the established order, which the Gothic leaders also saw as important.

Having been integrated in the Byzantine system, the Goths rejected their old habits and accepted not only the new teachings, but as servants and performers of various functions, even the Greek language, which was the main state language, meaning that their language and script were gradually squeezed out into a secondary position.

With the help of Christianity and the church, Byzantium tried to tame and to spiritually make subordinate all those who would pose a threat to

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<sup>37</sup> Послание на Апостол Павле до Римјаните, 13.1. Свето Писмо (Библија), Скопје, 1990. Новиот завет, 205.

<sup>38</sup> J. P. Migne, *Patrologiae cursus completus. Series graeca*. T, 63.696; 49.56.

the empire one way or another. Byzantium practiced such policies towards the Slavs too and used similar tactics, first to impose Christianity on them and then to include them in the Byzantine church organization. At the beginning, Byzantium even allowed the Slavs to use their script and language only to later make them abandon not only their pagan rites, but to forget their script and accept new reformed script – Cyrillic, on the example of the Byzantine (Greek) one. This is most striking in the example of Bulgaria, where having concluded a peace agreement in 864, Bulgarian ruler Boris accepted to be baptized.<sup>39</sup> During the Christianization of the Bulgarian people by the Byzantium's church mission, the largest barrier was language. Therefore, with some external actions, Boris–Mikhail tried to show the crucial and deep change, and so he rushed “with Christ's power and the sign of cross to defeat the Bulgarian disobeyed and tough tribe,” and “deter them from the dark, smelly, fake sacrifices and bring them out from darkness into light, from deception and heresy into truth.” He ordered for all of the pagan places to be destroyed and for temples of the new God to be erected instead.<sup>40</sup>

After protracted turmoil in 870, the Bulgarian church was placed under the jurisdiction of Constantinople, and Christianity was spread in Bulgaria by Byzantine priests in Greek.<sup>41</sup> When Simeon came to rule as a disciple of Byzantium, he had already known the principles of Byzantine diplomacy; however, he was also well informed about the Christian dogmas, so he tried to obtain church independence from Constantinople and replace Byzantine priests with Slavic ones. Byzantium tacitly accepted that and allowed the return of the disciples of Cyril and Methodius, who had been banished from Moravia to Bulgaria. This was well planned, with the intention to keep Bulgaria in the Byzantine sphere of influence. Even Simeon summoned the people's assembly in 893 where it was decided that Bulgaria intro-

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<sup>39</sup> For this baptizing: Божилов Ив.–Гюзелев В., История на средновековна България VII–XIV в. (История на България в три тома. Т. 1. София 1999, 171–175.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid*, 174. Also cf.: Снегаров Ив., Старобългарският расказ “Чудото на св. Георги с българина” като исторически извор. – ГДА, VI (1956), 225.

<sup>41</sup> Божилов Ив.–Гюзелев В., История на средновековна България VII–XIV в. 184; Also cf.: Божилов И., Българският църковен въпрос (870) и хърватският историк Матия Влаичич. Тангра. - Сборник в чест на 70-годишнината на акад. Васил Гюзелев. София 2006, 234–247.

duced the Slavic language as its official language and Cyrillic – which in many ways was similar to the Greek uncial script – as its official script.<sup>42</sup> So, Bulgaria *de facto* and *de iure* abandoned the Old Bulgarian language and took the path of modernization with a foreign language and a foreign script. In fact, Byzantium’s ideology for spiritual unity of the whole universe was thus materialized. Byzantium had never thought that winning over Bulgaria on their side was only of a church-related nature. For Byzantium, political subordination was much more important, conditioned with the entrance of the Bulgarian ruler into the circle of the “family of rulers” headed by the Byzantine Basileus. In Byzantium, there was belief that having been baptized, Boris became the Byzantine emperor’s “spiritual son” because he received Christianity and was given a Christian name in the spirit of the religious secret ritual established in Christianity. According to the then Patriarch Photios, Christianization of a foreign people or a barbarian tribe was the most reliable method of termination of any of their hostilities and disrespectfulness of Byzantine politics.<sup>43</sup>

Not only did Byzantium spread Christianity among people living in what was then the Roman Empire, but among people outside of its borders with whom Byzantium had political and trade ties. Such were the Khazars and the Russians. Cyril and Methodius with their disciples acted as missionaries among the Khazars. For Russia, a Byzantine priest was sent there to be the first Metropolitan bishop in Russia and thus, Byzantium’s spiritual influence started to spread in that country as well.

Accepting the view of the Byzantine Empire as a “chosen neighbor” of God’s will through which God’s predestination is accomplished, it can be said that we have excluded the possibility of the existence of another empire in the world because only in that way, unity strived for by the Thought can be kept.<sup>44</sup> For the Romans, the existence of the former *orbis Romanus* (Roman world) and of other rulers except for Constantinople’s emperor was obvious, and it was already known that some of the emperors were not Christian. This reality did not interfere with their views about the idea of a unique legal empire. In Byzantium’s opinions, the universe is composed of a

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<sup>42</sup> Божилов Ив.–Гюзелев В, История на средновековна България VII-XIV в., 237.

<sup>43</sup> Гюзелев В., Княз Борис Първи, 136; Божилов Ив.–Гюзелев В, История на средновековна България VII-XIV в., 176.

<sup>44</sup> A. Gasquet, L’Empire byzantin et la monarchie franque, 1888; p. 283.

huge and hierarchically dependent family union of peoples and rulers headed by a "*basileus of Romans*", actually, the Byzantine emperor. He is followed in kinship hierarchy order by "his spiritual infants" – rulers of Armenia and Bulgaria, "his spiritual brothers" – rulers of the Franks and the Germans, "his friends" – the Emir of Egypt and governors of England and Italian cities – Republic of Venice and Genoa. Small local rulers of Armenia and Serbia are placed at the periphery of hierarchy. However, they all stand in a much lower position than that of the Byzantium emperor, they have not been given the title of Basileus (= emperor), and therefore, they do not violate the idea of one – a single and rightful empire.<sup>45</sup>

All of them were spiritually dependent on Constantinople. As for spiritual dependence of all those who had accepted Christianity from Byzantium, the most illustrative example is a letter of Constantinople's Patriarch Antonius to Moscow's Duke Basil I. Basil forbid his Metropolitan Bishop to mention the Byzantine Emperor in his prayers and to say: We have a church, but we do not have a Tsar!". Saying this, he accepted the Byzantine church's prerogatives but did not recognize the Byzantine Tsar. So, in 1393, Patriarch Antonius sent a long letter to Basil in which the Byzantine church-state theory had a classical expression: "It's impossible for Christians to have a church, but not to have a Tsar". Since the empire and clergy are united in community, it is not possible to separate them from each other. Christians only reject those emperors who are heretics, those who protest against the church and introduce fake dogmas not connectable to the Apostles and church fathers' teaching. But, my grand autocrat by God's mercy is a faithful, righteous and very pious ruler, a champion for the church, its protector and avenger, and it is not possible for any bishop not to mention him. Listen to Apostle Paul's master who says in his first epistle: "Fear God, and respect the Tsar". He does not say tsars so that no one can think about the so-called tsars of other people, but only "tsar," wanting to show that there is only one tsar in the world."<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> F. Dölger, *Die "Familie der Könige" im Mittelalter*. In: *Byzanz und die europäische Staatenwelt*. Ettal, 1953, 37; Г. Бакалов, *Византия*, София 1995, 70.

<sup>46</sup> Miklosich et Müller, *Acta et diplomata graeca*, II, 191; cf.: Острогорски Г., *Византијски систем хијерархије држава*. Сабрана дела, књига пета. Београд 1970, 239-240; Vizantinci. Priručnik Guljelmo Kavalo, Beograd 2006, 261-262.

These words of the Patriarch of Constantinople are understood as evidence of the “idea of one and only common tsar of Byzantium and Russia.”<sup>47</sup> However, according to Patriarch Antonius, not do only Byzantium and Russia have one and single tsar, “the great autocrat by God’s mercy,” but the whole universe. What the Patriarch objects with the Russian duke might have related to any other ruler.

Byzantine claims for supreme law were meant for the whole universe, not only for Russia. Patriarch Antonius’s letter starts from the problem with Russia, however, he goes beyond the problem in the letter. The Patriarch does not say “every Russian” but – every faith-righteous bishop should mention the Byzantine Tsar. Furthermore, reference to the Apostle Paul’s words emphasizing the relevance of the universal tsar is also of general importance. To be clear, we will mention one more excerpt from the same letter, which refers not only to Russia but also to Western rulers or South Slavs’ tsars: “If some other Christian peoples have appropriated the title of the tsar, this has happened contrary to nature and contrary to law, by tyranny and violence. Which church fathers, which assemblies and which canons talk about that? Always and everywhere, it is spoken clearly and loudly about one natural tsar whose laws, orders and statutes are in force in the whole world and who the Christians only mention anywhere not speaking about anyone else.”

A successor of the first Christian ruler, Constantine the Great, the Byzantine Basileus was the only tsar by law. As there is only one rightful church just there can be only one legal empire in the whole Christian world. Of course, not all of the other Christian countries could be seen as vassals of Byzantium. Obviously, the supreme authority, which Byzantium has the right to, was of conceptual nature. Byzantium had the highest rank in the developed hierarchical system of states, whereas other states were ranked lower in the hierarchy.

Heeding with the established order, all of the states that had received Christianity from Byzantium, were included in the civilized peoples of Europe on one hand, and on the other, by accepting the Byzantine hierarchical system, they lost their autochthonous culture, and part of their script and their customs. The Goths had forgotten about the German runes, the

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<sup>47</sup> Острогорски Г., Византијски систем хијерархије држава, 240.

Slavs had forgotten the Glagolitic alphabet, and both accepted the Greek constitutional script, known as the Gothic to the ones and as Cyrillic to the others but very similar to each other. Therefore, trying to get closer to the civilization they had forgotten their literacy and culture and had thus been assimilated into the Byzantine sea, becoming a people with a foreign script and foreign culture – in fact, they were alienated.

