

# Travelling and Travellers: Persons, Reasons, and Destinations according to *A Tale of the Iron Cross*

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The essential role of narratives when trying to learn about the past is a fact. However, when the efforts of a researcher are focused on the early Middle Ages, they often face a dilemma. This is clearly illustrated by the question of how to accomplish quality historical research, provided that only a part (not always the most informative one) of the written sources is still extant. This is particularly the case with various types of texts of the Byzantine-Slavic world in South-eastern Europe. This peculiarity leads to particular approaches used by medievalists and their colleagues in related fields. On the one hand, the historical research is presented with a certain amount of reconciliation given the limitations of the preserved evidences; on the other hand, historical research explodes in a feverish tension when a new, unused, or forgotten historical sources are (re-) discovered.

These historiographical struggles can be easily applied to the voluminous Old Bulgarian medieval work titled *A Tale of the Iron Cross* (also recently known as *The Tale of the Monk Christodoulos*). This hagiographical work is relatively well-known but a sufficient number of significant details concerning everyday life of that time should be added to it. This medieval literary work has a complex structure. *A Tale of the Iron Cross* is a macro-composition that incorporates ten stories dedicated to Saint George – 1. *The Miracle with the Priest's son*; 2. *The Miracle with the Child*; 3. *The Miracle with the Monk*; 4. *The Miracle with the Cross and the Bulgarian* (also known as *The Miracle of Saint George with a Bulgarian Warrior*); 5. *The Miracle with the Woman*; 6. *The Miracle with the Furious Adolescent*; 7. *The Miracle with the Shepherd Bitten by a Snake*; 8. *The Miracle with the Man with a Leg Injury*; 9. *The Miracle with Clement Who Was Saved by Saint George*

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in War, 10. *The Miracle with the Woman Having a Breast Wound*. These miracle stories are framed by a preface and a closing part.<sup>2</sup> The first critical survey which concerns the entire hagiographical macro-composition was done by the Bulgarian scholar Bonyo St. Angelov in the 1970s.<sup>3</sup> However, it must be highlighted that at least one of the *Tale*'s copies was studied quite earlier, in mid-nineteenth century, but in a limited manner. The study was primarily concerned with revealing the available copies of the work within the group of Old Slavonic manuscripts. The existence of this information was a reason to start using as a source the so-called story *The Miracle of Saint George with a Bulgarian Warrior* that is undoubtedly the most famous part of the entire hagiographical work.<sup>4</sup> This text had a good

<sup>2</sup> Cf. *Rukopisi slavyanskaya i rossiyskaya, prinadlezhashchiya pochetnomu grazhdaninu i Arheograficheskoy komissii korrespondentu Ivanu Nikitichu Tsarskomu* [Slavic and Russian Manuscripts Owned by Ivan Nikitich Tsarski, the Honorary Citizen and Correspondent of the Archeographic Commission], ed. Pavel Stroev (Moscow: Tipografiya V. Got'ye, 1848), 768, № 717; 781, № 728; *Sistematicheskoye opisaniye slavyano-rosskiiskikh rukopisey sobraniya grafa A. S. Uvarova* [A Systematic Description of the Slavic-Russian Manuscripts of the Collection of Count A. S. Uvarov], ed. Arkhimandrit Leonid, Part 4 (Moscow: Tipografiya A. I. Mamontov, 1894), 45, № 1783.

<sup>3</sup> B. Angelov, "Skazanie za zhelezniya krast [A Tale of the Iron Cross]," *Starobalgarska literatura* 1 (1971): 121-155. Reprint: Idem, "Skazanie za zhelezniya krast [A Tale of the Iron Cross]," in *Iz starata balgarska, ruska i srabska literatura*, ed. B. Angelov, Vol. III (Sofia: Izdatelstvo na Balgarskata akademiya na naukite, 1978), 61-78; T. Mollov, "Arheografiya na SZhK i na otdelnite chudesata ot nego [Archaeography of TIC and its Miracle Stories]," in *"Skazanie za zhelezniya krast" i epobata na tsar Simon*, ed. A. Kaloyanov et al. (Veliko Tarnovo: Universitetsko izdatelstvo "Sv. Sv. Kiril i Metodiy", 2007), 218-223. For the miracle stories as a literary genre, with the enclosed bibliography, see: M. Hinterberger, "Byzantine Hagiography and its Literary Genres. Some Critical Observations," in *The Ashgate Research Companion to Byzantine Hagiography*, ed. St. Efthymiadis. Vol. II, *Genres and Context* (Farnham: Ashgate 2014), 25-60; St. Efthymiadis, "Collections of Miracles (Fifth-Fifteenth Centuries)," Ibidem, 103-142.

<sup>4</sup> Episkop Filaret Rzhizskiy, *Kirill i Metodiy, slavyanskije pravitelitelii* [Kirill and Methodius, the Enlighteners of the Slavs] (Moskva: Izdanie Imperatorskago Obshchestva Istorii i Drevnostey Rossiyskikh, Universitetskaya tipografiya, 1846), 5, n. 10; Arkhiyeppiskop Evgeniy Astrakhanskiy, "Vneshneye sostoyaniye tserkvi Vostochnoy Pravoslavnoy, s poloviny IX-go veka do nachalo XIII-go [The External Condition of the Orthodox Church, from the First Half of the 9<sup>th</sup> to the Beginning of the 13<sup>th</sup> Century]," *Khristskoye chtenie* 1 (1848): 249-250; O. Bodyanskiy, *O vremeni proiskhozhdeniya slavyanskikh pis'men* [About the Time of the Emergence of the Slavic Alphabet] (Moskva: Universitetskaya tipografiya, 1855), 357-358, CXIV-CXV; S. Palauzov, *Veka bolgarskogo tsarya Simeona* [The Epoch of the Bulgarian Tsar Symeon] (Sanktpeterburg: Tipografiya Imperatorskoy Akademii nauk, 1852), 23-24, n. 34; E. Golubinskiy, *Kratkiy ocherk istorii pravoslavnykh tserkvey: Bolgarskoy, serbskoy i rumynskoy ili moldo-valahskoy* [A Brief Essay on

reputation among scholars and it was widely and continuously exploited in the studies of the medieval Bulgarian history. As a result, a type of investigational habit was formed, supplemented by a little dose of inertness in the perception and usage of the *Tale's* stories. After the nineteenth century, the benevolent attitude to *The Miracle of Saint George with a Bulgarian Warrior* has been treated with some kind of neglect as compared to the other parts of *A Tale of the Iron Cross*. However, from the early 1970s, the scholars' interest has been increasing gradually. The study of the texts encompasses several main research directions, including: the *Tale's* origin as a complete literary work; the *Tale* studied as separate stories; the personality of the writer; the writer's literary fictions and linguistic peculiarities; and finally (but importantly), the value of the miracle stories as a source of diverse information regarding the late ninth and early tenth centuries.<sup>5</sup>

So far, the most prominent and steady research activities concerning *A Tale of the Iron Cross* have been conducted by the Russian scholar

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the History of the Orthodox Churches: the Bulgarian, the Serbian and the Romanian, also Known as the Church of Moldova and Wallachia] (Moskva: Universitetskaya tipografiya, 1871), 34, 256; Khr. Loparev, "Chudo syatogo Georgiya o bolgarine [The Miracle of St. George with the Bulgarian]," *Pamyatniki drevney pis'mennosti* 100 (1894): 19-21; M. Drinov, "Istoricheski pregled na Balgarskata tsarkva ot samoto i nachalo do dnes [Historical Overview of the Bulgarian Church from its Foundation to the Present Day]," in Idem, *Izbrani sacheniya*, Vol. 2 (Sofia: Nauka i izkustvo, 1971), 34.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. with the enclosed bibliography: A. Turilov, "Vizantiyskiy i slavyanskiy plasty v «Skazanii inoka Khristodula» (k voprosu o proiskhozhdenii pamyatnika) [The Byzantine and the Slavic layers in "The Tale of the Monk Christodoulos" (on the Question Concerning the Narrative's Origin)]," in *Slavyane i ikh sosedi. Grecheskiy i slavyanskiy mir v Sredniye veka i ranneye Novoye vremya*, ed. G. G. Litavrin et al., 6 (Moskva: Indrik, 1996), 81-99; A. Stoykova, "Proizvedeniyata za sv. Georgi v balkanskite kirilski rakopisi (Predvaritelni belezhki) [The Works about St. George within the Balkan Cyrillic Manuscripts (Preliminary Remarks)]," in *Bulgaria i Serbia v konteksta na vizantiyskata tsivilizatsiya. Sbornik statii ot balgarsko-srabskiya simpozium 14-16 septemvri 2003*, ed. V. Gyuzelev et al. (Sofia: Akademichno izdatelstvo „prof. Marin Drinov“, 2005), 413-422; D. Petkanova, *Starobalgarska literatura IX-XVIII vek* [The Old-Bulgarian Literature, 9<sup>th</sup> – 18<sup>th</sup> Centuries] (Sofia: Universitetsko izdatelstvo "Sv. Kliment Ohridski", 1997), 349-351; "Skazanie za zhelezniya krast" i epolata na tsar Simeon ["A Tale of the Iron Cross" and the Epoch of Tsar Symeon], ed. A. Kaloyanov et al. (Veliko Tarnovo: Universitetsko izdatelstvo "Sv. Sv. Kiril i Metodiy", 2007); *Istoriya na balgarskata srednovekovna literatura* [The History of Medieval Bulgarian Literature], ed. A. Miltenova (Sofia: Iztok-Zapad, 2008), 30, 140-141; Ya. Hristov, *Sbrihi kam «Skazanie za zhelezniya krast»* [Essays on "A Tale of the Iron Cross"] (Blagoevgrad: Universitetsko izdatelstvo "Neofit Rilski", 2012), 5-20.

Anatoliy A. Turilov. In his publications, he tried to find the answers to the questions of when, how, why, and by whom the work was written, taking into consideration the political and cultural situation on the Lower Danube in the late ninth – the early tenth centuries. The name of the medieval author (compiler) – the monk Christodoulos, who composed the regarded macro-composition, also became known through Turilov's research. He noted that the first three stories of the macro-composition's arrangement appear to be the obvious Byzantine layers in the *Tale*, while the rest of it (from the fourth story - *The Miracle with the Cross and the Bulgarian*, to the last one - *The Miracle with the Woman*) were part of the original Old Bulgarian prose. To a great extent, this is also the reason why the current lines focus on the aspects related to the topic of travel and travellers, but only within the original part of the hagiographical collection.<sup>6</sup> Nevertheless, the presence of translated and original strata

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<sup>6</sup> A. Turilov, "Skazaniye o zheleznom kreste kak istochnik po istorii i obshchestvenno-politicheskoy mysli Bolgarii kontsa IX - nachala X vv. [*A Tale of the Iron Cross as a Source for the History and Socio-Political Thought of Bulgaria at the End of 9<sup>th</sup> – the Early 10<sup>th</sup> Centuries*]," in *Ideologiya i obshchestvenno-politicheskaya mysl' v stranakh Tsentral'noy i Yugovostochnoy Evropy v period Srednevekov'ya: Sbornik materialov i tezisev IV chteniy pamyati V. D. Korolyuka*, ed. V. N. Vinogradov et al. (Moskva: Nauka, 1986), 36-37; Idem, "Dannyye «Skazaniya o zheleznom kreste» o khristianizatsii Bolgarii [The data of "A Tale of the Iron Cross" concerning the Christianization of Bulgaria]," in *Vvedeniye khristianskaya u narodov Tsentral'noy i Vostochnoy Evropy. Kreshcheniye Rusi: Sbornik tezisev*, ed. N. I. Tolstoy et al. (Moskva: Nauka, 1987), 53-54; Idem, "Novosibirskiy spisok Skazaniya inoka Khristodula [The Novosibirsk copy of the *Tale of the Monk Christodoulos*]," in *Obshchestvennoye soznanie, knizhnost', literatura perioda feodalizma*, ed. D. S. Likhachev et al. (Novosibirsk: Nauka, 1990), 220-222; Idem, "Vizantiyskiy i slavyanskiy plasty," 81-99; Idem, "K izucheniyu Skazaniya inoka Khristodula: datirovka tsikla i imya avtora [To the study of the *Tale of the monk Christodoulos*: dating of the cycle and the name of the author]," in *Florilegium. K 60-letiyu B. N. Flori: Sb. statey*, ed. A. A. Turilov (Moskva: Yazyki russkoy kultury, 2000), 412-427; Idem, "Madra Pl'skovskaya i Madra Drastorskaya – dve Mundragi pervoy bolgaro-vengerskoy voyny (geografiya chudes vmch. Georgiya v Skazanii inoka Khristodula) [Madra Plyskovskaya and Madra Drastorskaya – two Mundragas of the first Bulgaro-Magyar war (the geography of St. George's miracle stories within the Tale of the monk Christodoulos)]," in *Slavyane i ikh sosed. Slavyane i koevery mir*, ed. B. N. Florya et al., 10 (Moskva: Nauka, 2001), 40-58; Idem, "Ne gde knyaz' zhyvet, no vne (Bolgarskoye obshchestvo kontsa IX veka v «Skazanii o zheleznom kreste») [Not where the prince lives, but outside (the Bulgarian society at the end of the 9<sup>th</sup> century according to *A Tale of the Iron Cross*)]," *Slavianovedenie* 2 (2005): 20-27. The opposition "original – translated" should not be overestimated. In the early Slavonic literature the translation of the Byzantine literary works sometimes was combined with a relatively free attitude to the protographs. Byzantine texts were used as a role model to follow, but the Slavonic

within the frames of the version of *A Tale of the Iron Cross* known today does not hinder its use as a complete historical source. There can be no doubt that the religious moment in the *Tale* is the leading one in the foreground, while the recorded daily life activities seem as secondary importance. Their presence in the work intensifies the eventful, geographical, and public background on which the celebration of St. George's miraculous intercession and the objects related to his cult was developed. Despite this, in an attempt to reconstruct the knowledge, skills, habits, or principles of social behaviour, the probable presence of unreal, imaginary characters in the fragments of the text is not significant, because the *Tale's* stories display selected examples and depict particular aspects of daily life.<sup>7</sup>

The focus of the stories on the events of the late ninth – early tenth centuries makes the geographical area outlined in the texts of the hagiographical macro-composition filled with descriptions of miracles, specific places or interpersonal relations among the lower strata members of the society in newly converted Bulgaria. More than once, the hagiographer makes a meaningful link between the separate stories within the entire work through a described series of travels. Such specifics are hardly surprising, at least because hagiography is a key source of traveling and travellers' information in the Orthodox world, especially when it comes to the travel of monks. And *A Tale of the Iron*

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authors often blur the boundary between this part of their works that was a result of their own creative genius and the one that was copied. Cf. I. Bozhilov, *Kulturata na Srednovekovna Bulgaria* [The Culture of Medieval Bulgaria] (Sofia: Abagar, 1993), 30-32; *Istoriya na balgarskata srednovekovna literatura*, 81-82; D. I. Polyvyanny, *Kul'turnaya identichnost', istoricheskoye soznanie i knizhnoye nasledie srednovekovoy Bolgarii* [Cultural Identity, Historical Consciousness and Literary Heritage of Medieval Bulgaria] (Moskva–Sankt-Peterburg: Tsentr gumanitarnykh initsiativ, 2018), 37-91. See also: I. Lunde, "Slavic Hagiography," in *The Ashgate Research Companion to Byzantine Hagiography*, ed. St. Efthymiadis. Vol. I, *Periods and Places* (Farnham: Ashgate 2014), 369-383 [pp. 369-371 in particular].

<sup>7</sup> Cf. Ya. Hristov, "Za bolestite i lechitelските практики v starobalgarskiya tsikal razkazi «Skazanie za zhelezniya kras» [On the Maladies and Healing Practices in the Old-Bulgarian Collection of Miracle Stories *A Tale of the Iron Cross*]," *Istoricheskoto badeshte* 1–2 (2011): 178-191; Ya. Hristov, *Shtrihi*, 109-118. For the use of hagiographical texts as the source of information see: M. Kaplan, El. Kountoura-Galaki, "Economy and Society in Byzantine Hagiography: *Realia* and Methodological Questions," in *The Ashgate Research Companion to Byzantine Hagiography*, ed. St. Efthymiadis. Vol. II, *Genres and Context* (Farnham: Ashgate 2014), 389-418.

*Cross* is no exception. Judging by the records in the work, the inhabitants of the Lower Danube Plain, Dobrudzha, and the vicinity of Haemus moved from one place to another, driven by a variety of motives.

Only by simply skim-reading through *The Miracle with the Cross and the Bulgarian* and *The Miracle with Clement Who Was Saved by St. George in War* one can see that fairly significant attention was paid to the clashes between the Bulgarians and the Magyars in the war of 894-896. Undoubtedly, the concentration and deployment of different contingents from the Bulgarian armies at the dawn of the reign of Tsar Symeon the Great (893-927), as well as their retreat or flight from the battlefield, are beyond the scope of the scientific efforts in a publication dedicated to travel and travellers in Slavia Orthodoxa during the Middle Ages. However, descriptions concerning military actions, and especially those involved in them, should by no means be ignored. On the pages of the *Tale*, even in its today's well-known edited, revised and abridged version with its later copies, two models of maintaining and recruiting army units are noticed. These models are directly related to two different population groups. The information in *Miracle with Clement Who Was Saved by St. George in War* represents a Bulgarian warrior who belonged to, or at least was close to the aristocratic circles and was in direct contact with the ruler.<sup>8</sup>

Unlike Clement, the other Bulgarian warrior, George, was described in a very different way in *The Miracle with the Cross and the Bulgarian*. This work is also known as *The Miracle of Saint George with a Bulgarian Warrior*.<sup>9</sup> The latter is the full, unabridged (large) version of the text, which can be found not only within the *Tale*'s frames but as a separate miracle story too. It is especially emphasized that George did not have and did not acquire a high position, did not belong to the aristocracy and the ruler's milieu, but was a member of a recruiting squadron of self-armed and self-equipped horsemen. "... I have never ever had a rank at all, any, and I have not lived where the prince lived, but out of the place and with my spear I fought..." – reads an illustrative passage of the unabridged text.<sup>10</sup> However,

<sup>8</sup> B. Angelov, "Skazanie za zhelezniya krast," 150.

<sup>9</sup> Khr. Loparev, "Chudo svyatogo Georgiya o bolgarine," 20. See Fig. 1.

<sup>10</sup> I. Snegarov, "Starobalgarskiyat razkaz „Chudo na sv. Georgi s balgarina“ kato istoricheski izvor [The Old-Bulgarian Story "The Miracle of St. George with a Bulgarian Warrior" as a Historical Source]," *Godishnik na Duhovnata akademiya* 4.2 (1954-1955): 226; Hr. Kodov, *Opis na slavyanskite rukopisi v bibliotekata na Balgarskata akademiya na naukite*

participation in the troops recruited by the peasants in the provinces does not automatically mean social levelling in their group. According to the information, the depicted warrior did not belong to the aristocracy, but he was a wealthy owner of a relatively large farm with workers and servants. Despite this fact, he completed the military service in person and performed alone, along with others like him in the recruitment troop. Moreover, judging by the additional details in *The Miracle with the Furious Adolescent* (the *Tale*'s sixth miracle story), he was not young at all during the war of 894-896, as thirty years earlier, in the mid-860s he was already married.<sup>11</sup>

The attention to the information about the Bulgarian warrior in question from the fourth miracle story in *A Tale of the Iron Cross* is owed to the fact that in the subsequent fragments of the hagiographical collection, having already given up the worldly life and possessing a miraculous iron cross, he left his native village and undertook several short and long-distance trips, the final one of which was even beyond the Balkans. In this connection, one can appreciate the temptations surrounding the attempts to somehow approximate the localization of the settlement from which the journey began. Focusing only on the pieces of information in the fourth story of the *Tale* (notwithstanding whether the short-edited version or the extensive one of the text would be used) results in fruitful productivity. According to the facts, the settlement was about a three-day trip from the place of the Magyar defeat and, at the same time, it was beyond the scope of their loot raids.<sup>12</sup> Even

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[Description of the Slavonic Manuscripts in the Library of the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences] (Sofia: Izdatelstvo na Balgarskata akademija na naukite, 1969), 143. See Fig. 2. B. Angelov also published this copy of the story. Cf. B. Angelov, "Staroslavjanski tekstove: 1. Nov prepis na starobalgarskiya razkaz „Chudoto s balgarina“; 2. Razkaz za pastira, uhan ot zmiya [Old Slavonic Texts: 1. New Copy of the Old-Bulgarian Story "The Miracle with the Cross and the Bulgarian"; 2. The Miracle Story about the Shepherd Bitten by a Snake]," *Izvestiya na Instituta za balgarska literatura* 3 (1955): 171-172. It is worth emphasizing that in the short version of *The Miracle with the Cross and the Bulgarian* the above-quoted passage as well as that one about Symeon's coup were abridged. In the long-awaited translation of the entire collection of miracle stories M. Spasova fills in the lack according to the text of a spacious version of the story from the fourteenth-century manuscript of the Trinity Lavra of St. Sergius (Russia). – M. Spasova, "Skazanie za zhelezniya krast (prevod) [A Tale of the Iron Cross (Translation)]," in "*Skazanie za zhelezniya krast*" i epohata na tsar Simeon, 198, n. 26. For additional details see: Ya. Hristov, *Shtrihi*, 30-47.

<sup>11</sup> B. Angelov, *Iz starata balgarska, ruska i srabska literatura*, 88, 89.

<sup>12</sup> B. Angelov, "Skazanie za zhelezniya krast," 142.

on this basis, and with certain caution, it can be assumed that the settlement from which soldiers were recruited for both phases of the Magyar conflict was located in the South-eastern parts of the Danube Plain and even in the adjacent parts of the Eastern Pre-Balkan. At the same time, other not so well-known and studied parts of the hagiographical collection provide some further details on the localization of the settlement and a wonderful example of expanding the knowledge of movement through the Eastern Haemus. These are the sixth and the seventh stories, respectively *The Miracle with the Furious Adolescent* and *The Miracle with the Shepherd Bitten by a Snake*.<sup>13</sup> Within the framework of the *Tale*, the two fragments point to the initial stage in the wanderings of the former warrior George who renounced the secular life. According to the monastic tradition, he had to be taken by a mentor for a period of his noviciate. But his mentor did not live in the proximity to George's home village, so he had to walk for two days to the easternmost wooded slopes of Haemus "*near to Mesembria*," where the hermit cell of the old monk Sophronius was located. Meanwhile, as it is inherent in hagiographical literature, through the intervention of St. George, Sophronius learnt about the arrival of his future novice and greeted him on the "*Severskiy road*" ("сѢверскыи пѣтъ"; "Severskiy" can be translated either as the Severian road or as the North road – Y.H.).<sup>14</sup>

The direction, and especially the name of the road, give reason to associate with the tribe of Severians – settled in the Eastern Haemus during the last quarter of the seventh century, as indicated by Theophanes the Confessor. The chronicler mentioned the Severians once again, in regard to the conflicts between Bulgaria and Byzantium of the 760s when their knyaz Sklavoun was abducted by people of Emperor Constantine V (741-775).<sup>15</sup> A recent hypothesis has further linked Severians with Mesembria [present-day Nesebar, on the Black Sea coast, South-eastern Bulgaria] and its environs in the first years of the ninth century. These thoughts are reliable and acceptable.

<sup>13</sup> In the 1950s B. Angelov drew attention to *The Miracle with the Shepherd Bitten by a Snake*. Cf. B. Angelov, "Staroslavjanski tekstove," 174-177; Idem, "Skazanie za zhelezniya krast," 145-147. Despite this fact, it seems that the work still remains away from the scholars' proper attention. Cf. Ya. Hristov, "Otnovo za razkaza *Za pastira, ubapan ot zmiya* [Once again for *The Miracle with the Shepherd Bitten by a Snake*]," *Palaeobulgarica* 2 (2010): 78-84.

<sup>14</sup> B. Angelov, "Skazanie za zhelezniya krast," 145; Idem, "Staroslavjanski tekstove," 175.

<sup>15</sup> *Theophanis, Chronographia*, ed. C. de Boor, Vol. I (Leipzig: Tübnner, 1883), 359, 436.



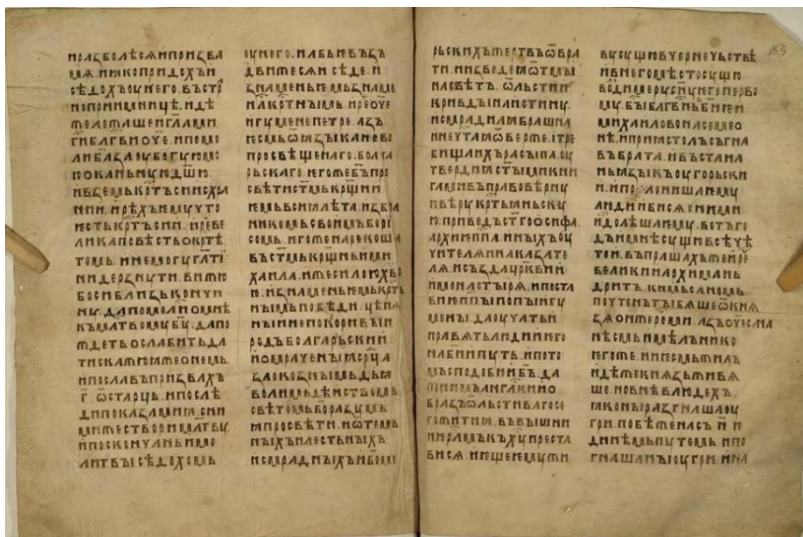


Fig. 1. *The Miracle of Saint George with a Bulgarian Warrior*  
(fourteenth-century manuscript of the Trinity Lavra of St. Serguis, Russia)

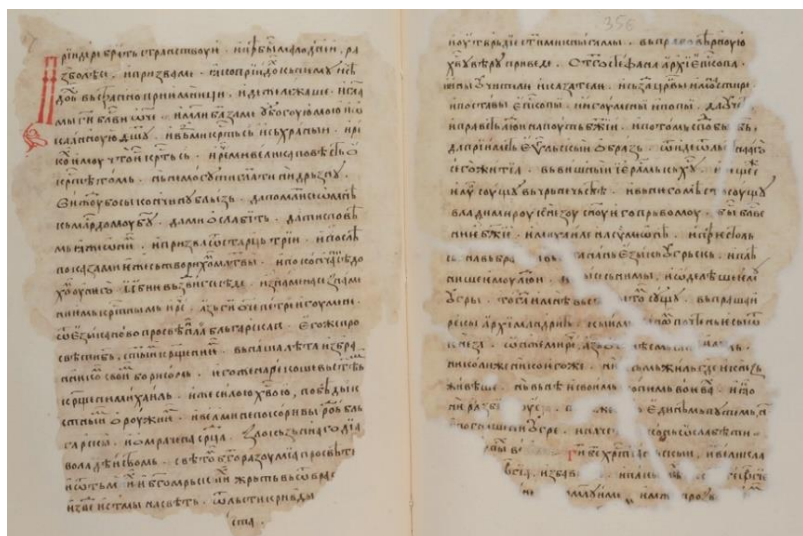


Fig. 2. *The Miracle of Saint George with a Bulgarian Warrior*  
(fourteenth-century manuscript of the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences)

Defining one of the roads through the Eastern passages of Haemus as “сѣверскѣи” in an Old Bulgarian collection of miracle stories might hardly be a mere coincidence. It is rather an echo of the former presence of Severians in the area which connects the Lower Danube lands with the important ports in the Southwestern Black Sea.<sup>16</sup>

The role of these routes for the movement of people and goods is described relatively clearly within the literary work under consideration. Interesting nuances in this particular direction provide the final sections of *The Miracle with the Shepherd Bitten by a Snake* and the following 8<sup>th</sup> miracle story from the *Tale*, known as *Miracle with the Man with a Leg Injury*. “And one day, as we were sitting, the old man [the old hermit Sophronius – Y. H.] told me: George, get up, prepare a meal because guests from your land are coming to us ...” – noted in the final lines of the seventh miracle story, refined in the next section of the hagiographical work – “... Three of them were from Madra [Madara – misreading of the later copyists] Pliskovska, two from Drastarska ...”<sup>17</sup> The recorded movement on foot of the small group from Drastar [present-day Silistra, Northeastern Bulgaria] through the state centre of the early medieval Bulgaria (Pliska-Preslav area) towards Mesembria, is one of the several performed short or long-distance travels described within the framework of the *Tale*. However, the importance of consolidating the knowledge of traveling in the Eastern Balkans in the early tenth century is found not so much in the identification of the two significant political and spiritual centres as the starting points of it, but in a completely different aspect. Due to the fact that the Bulgarian ethnicity of novice George was explicitly emphasized, the notice of the five passengers from his homeland gains more nuances. According to the text, the group consisted of “four Bulgarians and one native Greek.”<sup>18</sup> Only the last of them was addressed by name - Ephraim, and the details about him have an important place in the ninth miracle of the macro-composition. The pieces of information concerning a person of a different ethnic origin from that of the other travellers would not have been paid attention to if some Byzantine hagiographical texts, relatively close to the time of the writing of *A Tale of the Iron Cross*, were not known

<sup>16</sup> K. Stanev, “Edna hipoteza za sadbata na severite sled pohoda na Nikifor I prez 811 godina [A Hypothesis about the Fate of Severi Tribe after the Campaign of Nicephoros I in 811],” *Acta Musei Varnensis* VIII.1 (2011): 431-450.

<sup>17</sup> B. Angelov, “Skazanie za zhelezniya krast,” 147.

<sup>18</sup> Ibidem.

in the medieval studies. For example, the *Life of St. Germanos*, dedicated to a saintly monk, who lived along the lower reaches of the Strimon (Struma) and Axios (Vardar) rivers about the middle and the second half of the ninth century, mentioned the problems the saint had with the local inhabitants.<sup>19</sup> Equally revealing is the *Life of St. Vlasios of Amorion*, dedicated to another wandering monk from the second half of the ninth and the early tenth century. The text hinted of the possibility for foreigners passing through the Bulgarian lands to be deceived by their travel companions and be sold into slavery.<sup>20</sup> As far as we can rely on what is written in the *Tale's* stories, it was not completely accidental that the five companions were together, and each of them had left home for some (unfortunately unspecified – Y. H.) reason.

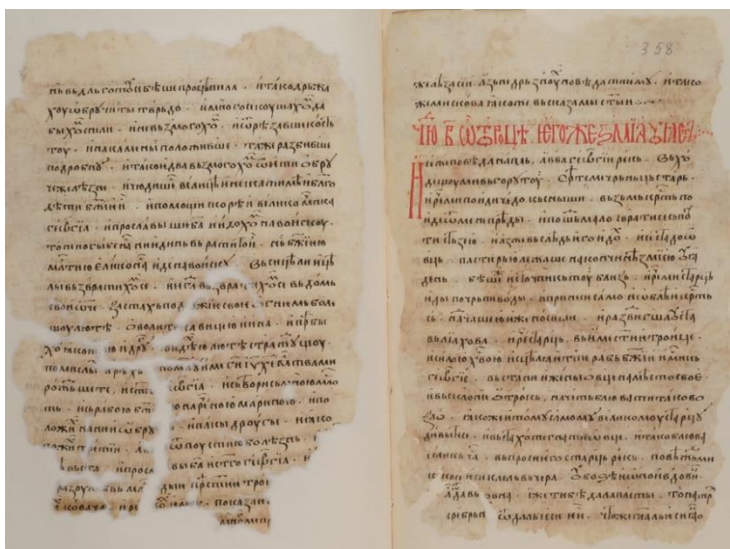


Fig. 3. *Miracle with the Shepherd Bitten by a Snake*  
(fourteenth-century manuscript of the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences)

<sup>19</sup> "Vita sancti Germani," in *Fontes Graeci Historiae Bulgariae*, ed. G. Tsankova et al., Vol. 5. (Sofia: Academic publishing house, 1964), 104-106.

<sup>20</sup> "Vita Blasii Amoriensis" in *Fontes Graeci Historiae Bulgariae*, ed. G. Tsankova et al., Vol. 5, 14-18; V. Gyuzelev, *Srednovekovna Bulgaria v svetlinata na novi izvori* [Medieval Bulgarian in the Light of the New Historical Sources] (Sofia: Narodna prosveta, 1981), 51-60; See also: P. Sophoulis, "Bandits and Pirates in the Medieval Balkans: Some Evidence from the Hagiographical Texts," *Bulgaria Medievalis* 7 (2016): 339-350.

The different ethnicity of one of them is an important feature that makes the opening lines of *The Miracle with Clement Who Was Saved by Saint George in War* quite revealing. It becomes clear that the Greek Ephraim not only had set off on a journey from the Madara Drastarska but for years he had lived there and performed his duties as a priest among his Christian fellows of Bulgarian origin.<sup>21</sup> Such a record once again points towards one of those Byzantine missionaries who, after Bulgaria's converting into Christianity, remained in the newly baptized country, among the lower, middle and high levels of clergy in the new Bulgarian archdiocese.

Two more trips are recorded in *The Miracle with the Shepherd Bitten by a Snake*. The information about one of them is closely related to the well-known postulates in the Orthodox world. It can be defined as evidence of the fulfilment of the spiritual-mentoring duties and assistance among the members of the provincial clergy. Some conclusions might be drawn from the fact that the presbyter Sava arrived from the nearby town in the cell of the old monk Sophronius and performed the necessary ritual actions at the end of George's noviciate.<sup>22</sup> The abridging in the late copies of the text of the particular story included within the version of *A Tale of the Iron Cross* popular today, published by B. Angelov based on the manuscript of the sixteenth century, does not make it clear enough whether the cell of Sophronius had housed the old monk and his novice for a relatively long period. Fortunately, the gap can easily be filled in by comparing it with the available copies of the story, both from the manuscript No. 73 of the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, and from the *Collection* of various texts of the early seventeenth-century manuscript No. 805 (1901) of the Trinity Lavra of St. Sergius – Russia. These more informative copies report that the former warrior spent three years under the tutelage of Sophronius. The additional details make one think that the old monk and his novice's cell was adapted for long-term habitation, and more inhabitants might have been temporarily housed there. The hagiographer also reported about regular movement of people between the nearby settlements and the cell of the monk Sophronius, although without further details.

However, the text states that the two monks earned their living with knitting and rope making by exchanging ready-made ropes for food from people who came from nearby villages for their produce. Such a simple

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<sup>21</sup> B. Angelov, "Skazanie za zhelezniya krast," 147-148.

<sup>22</sup> Ibidem, 146.

small-scale barter is not surprising at all. This *Tale's* information overlaps entirely with the knowledge of the economic characteristics of the societies in the Eastern Balkans during the Middle Ages. At the same time, performing such activities was in line with the emerging trends among Orthodox monasticism at that time.<sup>23</sup>

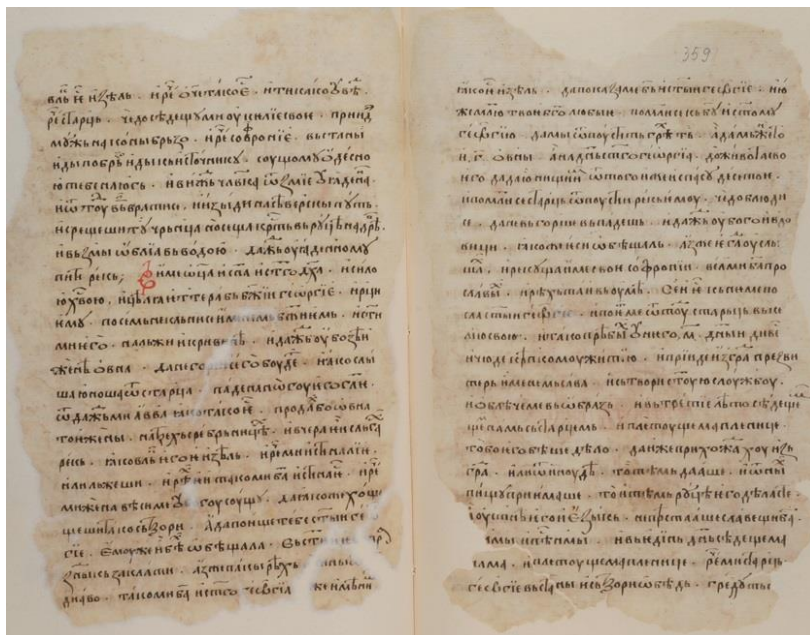


Fig. 4. *Miracle with the Shepherd Bitten by a Snake*  
(fourteenth-century manuscript of the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences)

The forms of spiritual tutorship described and the life in relative seclusion (but without losing the connection to the surrounding population) fit into the well-known monastic practices in the tenth-century Bulgaria.<sup>24</sup> The compiler of the macro-composition also

<sup>23</sup> B. Angelov, "Staroslavjanski tekstove," 176. See Fig. 3, Fig. 4 and Fig. 5.

<sup>24</sup> Cf. K. Popkonstantinov, "Kam vaprosa za otshelnicheskite praktiki v Bulgaria prez X vek. Svetiyat otets Antony ot Krepcha i sv. Yoan Rilski [On the Question of Hermit Practices in Bulgaria during the 10<sup>th</sup> Century. Holy Father Anthony of Krepcha and St. John of Rila]," in *Svetogorska obitel Zograf*, ed. V. Gyuzelev et al, Vol. 3 (Sofia: Gutenberg, 1999), 83-89; G. Atanasov, "Za hronologiyata i monasheskata organizatsiya v skalnite obiteli prez Parvoto

recounted another travel, in harmony with what was known at that time about the local mainly Byzantine (but not only) reality.<sup>25</sup> The Balkan residents, especially those near Constantinople, had the opportunity to seek medical care in the Imperial capital. It is significant that such a fragment was also described in the last, tenth miracle story of the *Tale*.<sup>26</sup> *The Miracle with the Woman Having a Breast Wound* describes the overnight stay of a woman with a breast wound at the gates of Constantinople. Moreover, the stay there was forced due to the fact that the traveling family arrived in the evening after the gates of the city were closed.<sup>27</sup> The next miraculous healing within the collection of miracle stories under review would hardly have attracted attention had it not resembled the popular Byzantine literary models.<sup>28</sup>

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balgarsko tsarstvo [About the Chronology and the Monastic Organization in the Cave Monasteries in the First Bulgarian Tsardom],” in *Svetogorska obitel Zograf*, ed. V. Gyuzelev et al., Vol. 3 (Sofia: Gutenberg, 1999), 281-293; R. Kostova, “Ot mirskiya zhivot kam monashestvoto. Kade e granitsata i koy ya preminava v Bulgaria prez X v.?” [From the Secular Life to the Monasticism. Where is the Border and Who Crosses it in Bulgaria during the 10<sup>th</sup> Century?],” in *Traditsii i priemstvenost v Bulgaria i na Balkanite prez srednite vekove*, ed. K. Popkonstantinov et al. (Veliko Tarnovo: Universitetsko izdatelstvo “Sv. Sv. Kiril i Metodiy”, 2003), 147-166; Eadem, “Skalniyat manastir pri s. Krepcha. Oshte edin pogled kam monasheskite praktiki v Bulgaria prez X v. [The Cave Monastery Near the Village of Krepcha. Another Look at the Monastic Practices in Bulgaria in the 10<sup>th</sup> Century],” in *Prof. din Stancho Vaklinov i srednovekovnata balgarska kultura*, ed. K. Popkonstantinov et al. (Veliko Tarnovo: Universitetsko izdatelstvo “Sv. Sv. Kiril i Metodiy”, 2005), 289-301; Eadem, “Patronage and Monastic Geography in Bulgaria in the Late Ninth and Tenth Centuries,” in *State and Church: Studies in Medieval Bulgaria and Byzantium*, ed. V. Gyuzelev and K. Petkov (Sofia: ARCS, 2011), 189-207.

<sup>25</sup> V. Gyuzelev, “Tsarigrad i bulgarite prez Srednovekovieto (VII - XV v.) [Constantinople and the Bulgarians during the Middle Ages (7<sup>th</sup> – 15<sup>th</sup> Centuries)],” *Istoricheskoe badeshte* 1 (1998): 3-11; K. Belke, “Roads and Travel in Macedonia and Thrace in the Middle and Late Byzantine Period,” in *Travel in the Byzantine World: Papers from the Thirty-fourth Spring Symp. of Byzantine Studies, Birmingham, Apr. 2000* [Society for Promotion of Byzantine Studies. Publications 10], ed. R. Macrides (Aldershot: Ashgate Variorum, 2002), 73-90; L. Simeonova, *Putuvane kam Konstantinopol. Targoriya i komunikatsii v Sredizemnomorskiya sriyat (kerayat na IX - 70-te godini na XI v.)* [Traveling to Constantinople. Trade and Communications in the Mediterranean (the End of 9<sup>th</sup> - 70s of the 11<sup>th</sup> Century)] (Sofia: Paradigma, 2006).

<sup>26</sup> B. Angelov, “Skazanie za zhelezniya krast,” 151.

<sup>27</sup> Ibidem, 151-152.

<sup>28</sup> Undoubtedly, one of the most popular examples is related to the appearance of the founder of the Macedonian dynasty in the Imperial capital. Cf. *Theophanes Continuatus, Chronographia*, ed. I. Bekker (Bonn: E. Weber, 1838), 222-224. Particularly useful in this regard are the comments of G. Moravcsik, “Sagen und Legenden über Kaiser Basileios I,” *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 15 (1961): 59-126; N. Koutrakou, “La rumeur dans la vie politique byzantine. Continuité et



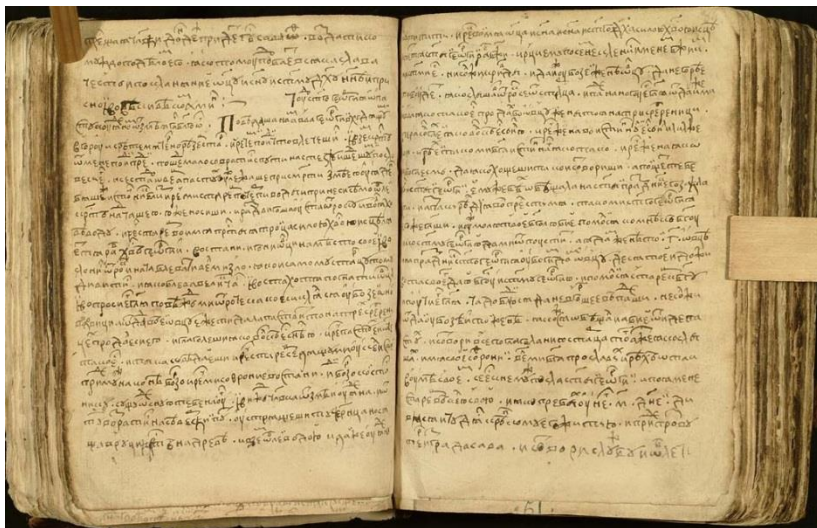


Fig. 5. *Miracle with the Shepherd Bitten by a Snake*  
(seventeenth-century manuscript of the Trinity Lavra of St. Sergius, Russia)

Analyzing the *Tale of the Iron Cross* as a source of information concerning the late ninth – the early tenth centuries makes it possible to identify the travels in the Eastern Balkans described in its texts as a problematic unit whose aspects are a subject to a certain classification. Traveling individually, in small or larger groups, religious and pilgrimage traveling, traveling with a non-religious character of laymen and clergymen can be easily tracked. In addition, the geography of miracles (in the words of Turilov), both in the compiled strata and in the original part of the *Tale*, covers a wide area - the lands around the Danube Delta, parts of the Eastern Haemus, the southwest coasts of the Black Sea, the surrounding areas of Constantinople and the Eastern Mediterranean. Within the outlined space, apart from the short-distance travel (in the immediate habitat), there was also long-distance traveling. Last but not least, it is important to point out that not all the moments of everyday life at a popular level in newly converted Bulgaria listed in the text have been discussed here, while others have been only briefly commented on.

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mutations (VIIIe - Xe siècles),” *Byzantinoslavica* 56 (1995): 66; G. Dagron, *Emperor and Priest: The Imperial Office in Byzantium* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 192 ssq.

This is quite understandable with a view to highlighting those aspects that are directly relevant to the major theme of traveling in Slavia Orthodoxa. What is more, it must be admitted that the present text can hardly deal with all the aspects that have remained out of the scope of attention of scholars dealing with the *Tale of the Iron Cross* until now. It is clear that the comments offered here are but a small step towards a thorough study of the entire text of the hagiographical work and its involvement in the full-scale scientific circulation of the historical information recorded within the frames of its miracle stories.

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