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MEDIEVAL BULGARIA IN POLISH HISTORIOGRAPHY AFTER 1989

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СРЕДНОВЕКОВНА БЪЛГАРИЯ В ПОЛСКАТА ИСТОРИОГРАФИЯ СЛЕД 1989 Г.

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Abstract: *Polish-Bulgarian relations have a centuries-old history, and medieval Bulgarian history has been widely present in Polish research and publications throughout the 20th century. However, the deep crisis processes that started in the early 1980s, the massive activity of the Solidarity trade union in Poland, and the events of the 1980s marked the beginning of a new period in Polish research and, accordingly, in Polish-Bulgarian relations and contacts.*

The main task of the paper is to present and analyze studies and publications on medieval Bulgarian history over the decades following the fall of communist rule, in the context of complete liberalization of political, scientific, and cultural life in Polish society. Are there any traditional topics that continue to develop after 1989? Are there new topics and problems in Polish studies and publications on Bulgarian history that emerged in the decades of transition after 1989? Are there any new Polish research centres and schools working in the field of the Bulgarian Middle Ages that appeared in the last three decades? Despite the transition and difficulties of the 1980s and 1990s in Polish society and for Polish historians, the analysis demonstrates a strong and lasting interest in medieval Bulgarian history in Polish historiography at the end of the 20th and the beginning of the 21st centuries. Finally, the author expresses hope that, despite the vicissitudes and challenges facing the two nations in today's globalizing world, this interest in the medieval Bulgarian past will persist in the coming decades.

Keywords: *medieval Bulgaria; Polish historiography; post-communist era.*

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Polish-Bulgarian contacts and mutual interest in each other's past have a long-lasting history, and the period after 1989 marked a new stage in research and publications in Poland on medieval Bul-

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garian history. The interest of some Polish historians in medieval Bulgarian history is traditional, and the result is a series of scientific studies. The purpose of this review is to cover major monographic studies and articles on medieval Bulgarian history after the transitional year 1989, categorizing them into thematic groups.

The year 1989 was of significance for Polish medieval and Slavic studies, as the first volume of the series of sources *Testimonia najdawniejszych dziejów Słowian: seria grecka* was published. The first three volumes were composed by Alina Brzóstkowska, who was also the main translator of ancient Greek texts into Polish, and by Wincenty Swoboda, who was the author of the commentaries on the texts (both from the Institute of Slavic Studies of the Polish Academy of Sciences in Poznań)¹. After the death of Wincenty Swoboda, the fifth volume² was composed only by Alina Brzóstkowska, and the sixth volume³ by Anna Kotłowska – a classical philologist and Byzantine scholar from the University of Poznań. The third volume, dedicated to authors and works from the 7th – 10th centuries, includes excerpts from medieval sources with parallel texts in Greek and Polish translation by Alina Brzóstkowska, as well as excellent comments written by Wincenty Swoboda, which are especially useful for foreign researchers, including Bulgarian medievalists⁴.

The fourth volume presents selected proto-Bulgarian inscriptions, as well as excerpts by *Peter of Sicily*, episcopal notations and books of tactics, the works of *Constantine VII Porphyrogenitus*, sigils of Emperor Basil II, the so-called *Catalogue of Dukange*, the *Book of Souda*, the notes and letters by *Leonis Choerosphactis* (epistolae), *Romanos I Lekapenos (Theodore Daphnopates)*, and *Theophylactus Of Ochrida*, as well as lives of Byzantine saints from the period 8th – 12th centuries concerning medieval Slavic and Bulgarian history.

The Greek texts are accompanied by a Polish translation and a commentary. The last two volumes contain parts of *Theophanes Continuatus*, the chronicles of the circle of *Symeon Logothete*, *Leonis Diaconi Historiae*, *Skylitzes' Synopsis Historion* and his *Synopsis Continuation (Skylitzes Continuatus)*, *Michael Psellos*, *Kekaumenos*, *Michael Attaleiates*, *Anna Komnene*, and *Nikephoros Bryennios*, all of which concern medieval Bulgarian history.

Next, in the current review of Polish historiography after 1989, I would point out several monographic studies on medieval Bulgarian history. Among the brightest examples of the Polish contribution to medieval Bulgarian history are the studies by Tadeusz Wasilewski, a famous historian from the University of Warsaw and ambassador to Bulgaria in the period 1991–1996 [**Василевски, Т.** 1997; **Wasilewski, T.** 1999, pp. 100–109]. The interest of Polish historians in the medieval Bulgarian history of the 1960s and 1970s continued after the turning point of 1989. A second edition of the collective work *Słowianie Południowi i Zachodni VI–XX wiek* by Tadeusz Wasilewski, Jerzy Skowronek, and Mieczysław Tanty appeared in Poland in 2005 [**Wasilewski, T.** 2005].

This reprint of an earlier work summarizes the history of the Western and Southern Slavs in the period under review, and the part about the Middle Ages, and especially about medieval Bulgaria, is the work of Tadeusz Wasilewski. However, it should be emphasized that this work was not produced updated with more recent research, but it was only a reprint of a solid study dating before 1989. Also, the work lacks any research notes, although it was prepared by the best specialists in the field.

The tradition of this interest in medieval Bulgarian history is still alive today, and among the most active modern research centres are the Department of Byzantine History and the Ceraneum Research Centre at the University of Łódź. The result of this hard work on the part of the researchers

¹ [**Testimonia najdawniejszych...**, 1989; **Testimonia najdawniejszych...**, 1995; **Testimonia najdawniejszych...**, 1997].

² [**Testimonia najdawniejszych...**, 2009].

³ [**Testimonia najdawniejszych...**, 2013].

⁴ [**Testimonia najdawniejszych...**, 1995]. The volume includes *Oratio historica*, *Theodore Synkellos*, *Pseudo-Callisthenes*, *Teofanes*, *Nikefor patriarcha*, *Żywot Grzegorza Dekapolity*, *Scriptor Incertus*, *Focjusz patriarcha*, *Jerzy Monachos*, *Jan Kaminiates*, *Mikołaj Mistyk*, *Genseios*, *Arethas z Cezarei*, *Konstantyn Porfirogeneta*, *Kronika Monemwazji*, *Epitomator Strabona*, *Księga Prefekta*, and *Anonim Hasego*.

in the Department is the scientific journal *Studia Ceranea. Journal of the Waldemar Ceran Research Centre for the History and Culture of the Mediterranean Area and South-East Europe*, as well as *Byzantina Lodziensia* and *Series Ceranea*. I would also not omit *Balcanica Posnaniensia. Acta et Studia* – a journal of the University of Poznań, which has published many articles related to medieval Bulgarian history in the period after 1989.

In 2013, a monograph was published, dedicated to the Bulgarian-Byzantine relations during the reign of Simeon the Great (893–927)⁵. This monographic study is the first of its kind in Polish historiography in view of the publications on this topic so far. Its author Mirosław Leszka previously published his habilitation thesis entitled “Wizerunek władców Pierwszego Państwa Bułgarskiego w bizantyńskich źródłach pisanych (VIII – pierwsza połowa XII wieku).”⁶ Another notable work of the representatives of the Department of History and the Ceraneum Research Centre is the collective monograph *Carstwo Bułgarskie. Polityka – społeczeństwo – gospodarka – kultura, 866–971* by Mirosław Leszka and Kirił Marinow (with additional co-authorship by Jan Wolski and Zofia Brzozowska), published by the Polish Scientific Publishing House in Warsaw in 2015 [Leszka, M. 2016 b].

This work not only testifies to the scientific interest in medieval Bulgarian history abroad, but it also popularizes the Bulgarians and their past among a wide Polish academic and non-academic readership. In a brief presentation of the rule of Prince Vladimir (889–893), Mirosław Leszka demonstrated knowledge of both written sources and various opinions and disputes about the reasons for the removal of Vladimir from the throne. The rule of Simeon the Great (893–927) is presented and analyzed in much more detail. As for the controversial question of the coronation of Simeon by Patriarch Nikolaos I Mystikos in Constantinople in 913, the author analyzes various possible versions and interpretations of the 913 ceremonies, rejecting the possibility of recognizing the title of *basileus* in its broad meaning, limiting it only to the Bulgarian ethnic group, i.e. recognition that Simeon was the ruler of the Bulgarians. Mirosław Leszka disputes Prof. Ivan Bozhilov’s thesis about *Pax Simeonica* and does not accept that the ruler’s goal was to create a Bulgarian-Byzantine Empire. The special attention paid by Kirił Marinow to the military organization and the army in the period under consideration could also be noticed. The chapter on economic development in the Bulgarian lands during this period was also developed by Kirił Marinow, who presents the large regions and their geopolitical significance. The short section on monastic life, Bogomilism, and church architecture is the work of Jan Wolski, who is also the author of the subchapter devoted to spiritual culture and literature in the period under review. Following the traditions in the research of old Bulgarian literature, Jan Wolski presents the Preslav and Ohrid literary schools, as well as some apocryphal works from the 9th – 10th centuries.

Another collective monograph by authors from the University of Łódź is the English-language *The Bulgarian State in 927–969: The Epoch of Tsar Peter I*. This is the first monograph on the reign of Peter by Polish and Bulgarian authors in English [Leszka, M. 2018]. Remarkable monographs on medieval Bulgarian rulers appeared in 2017 and 2018. In 2017, the book by Zofia Brzozowska and Mirosław Leszka, dedicated to Maria Lekapene, was published [Brzozowska, Z. A. 2017]. This study presents Maria Lekapene as a mother, queen, and legendary figure, whose image, together with the Bulgarian Tsar Peter, appeared in Russian historiography in the 15th – 16th centuries. The largest chapter, which is the focus of this study, is entitled “Maria Lekapene and the Transfer of the Imperial Feminine in Medieval Bulgaria”. I would also like to mention Zofia Brzozowska’s study of Sofia as a symbol of God’s wisdom [Brzozowska, Z. A. 2015].

In 2018, a Polish-language monograph entitled *Piotr I Święty car bułgarski (ca. 912–969). Maria Lekapena caryca bułgarska (ca. 912–?963)* was published [Brzozowska, Z. A. 2018]. The

⁵ [Leszka, M. 2013]. According to the author, the ceremony of 913 was the result of a pre-agreed recognition of the title of *basileus* by the Bulgarians. Leszka also believes that Simeon’s policy was aimed at limiting Byzantine influence in the Balkans and establishing Bulgarian domination on the peninsula, rather than complete conquest of the Byzantine West.

⁶ [Leszka, M. 2003].

authors Zofia Brzozowska, Mirosław Leszka, and Kiril Marinow present the role of Maria Lekapene along with that of Tsar Peter I (927–969). The book presents a summary of the two above-mentioned English-language monographs to provide the conclusions of the study in which, similarly to the one dedicated to the era of Tsar Peter, some chapters are missing (especially those written by Bulgarian scholars), but instead, the parts written by Kiril Marinow have been significantly expanded.

Apart from the topic of the rulers Simeon and Peter's epoch, the interests of some Polish researchers are focused on topics that, at first glance, are not directly related to medieval Bulgaria, but are close to medieval Bulgarian history. In 2015, the remarkable work of Aleksander Paroń, a research associate at the Institute of Archeology and Ethnology of the Polish Academy of Sciences, Wrocław, entitled *Pieczynowie. Koczownicy w krajobrazie politycznym i kulturowym średniowiecznej Europy* was published [Paroń, A. 2015]. This is the most voluminous and most recent study on the Pechenegs, which consists of more than 500 pages, and which indirectly and directly concerns the history of the Bulgarians and the Bulgarian lands in the 10th and 11th centuries. From this point of view, the chapter on the war of the Pechenegs with the Magyars under the rule of the Bulgarian ruler Simeon can be mentioned, and secondly, the migration of the Pechenegs to the Balkans, including to the Bulgarian lands. Equally important is a book by Jarosław Dudek from the University of Zielona Góra entitled *Chazarowie. Polityka, kultura, religia, VII–XI w.*, which presents topics related to early medieval Bulgarian history [Dudek, J. 2019 a].

We should also mention the monograph by Błażej Cecota from the University of Kielce (branch in Piotrków Trybunalski), dedicated to the Arab sieges of the 8th century. The book is based on a doctoral dissertation prepared at the Department of Byzantine History of the University of Łódź and defended in July 2013. The author's interest also includes Arabs' attacks on Constantinople in the 7th and 8th centuries. The author not only analyzes these sieges in the context of a broader historical overview, but he also reflects on the process of their mythologization in the historical sources and historical memory of the Byzantines. The reader can also find information about the Bulgarian role in helping Byzantium during the siege of Constantinople in 717–718 [Cecota, B. 2016].

Among the monographs indirectly concerning Bulgarian medieval history, I would also like to mention two titles by Zdzisław Pentek from the Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań. The first was published in 1996 and is dedicated to Geoffroy de Villehardouin, a famous participant and chronicler of the Fourth Crusade. This is a complete and comprehensive historiographical and bibliographical study of the great knight, chronicler, and his history of the conquest of Constantinople in 1204 [Pentek, Z. 1996]. The second title is a history and analysis of the character of the Latin Empire in Constantinople in the period 1204–1261 [Pentek, Z. 2004]⁷. In this study, Zdzisław Pentek assumes that the Bulgarian Tsar Kaloyan expected to take part in the distribution of the Byzantine territories, and initially regarded the Latins as allies, not enemies. According to the author, the Bulgarian ruler did not want to initiate a direct war with the Latins, but a convenient reason for such a war appeared in the spring of 1205 [Pentek, Z. 2004, pp. 94, 96]. Among Zdzisław Pentek's contributions to medieval Bulgarian history, I can also note an article dedicated to Agnes of Montferrat – the first Empress Consort of Emperor Henry I and Maria of Bulgaria, Latin Empress between 1213 and 1216 [Pentek, Z. 2021, pp. 31–40].

Delving into the essence of the topic and presenting the published articles on medieval Bulgarian history in the last decades, I would like to present several thematic areas. Each of them brings together some authors and publications based on a thematic approach. First of all, I would like to mention research and publications about medieval Bulgarian rulers. Among the researchers on this topic is Mirosław Leszka who published some articles about Bulgarian rulers and their images in Byzantine sources [Leszka, M. 2003; Leszka, M. 2001, pp. 97–106; Leszka, M. 2006, pp. 145–152; Leszka, M. 2002, pp. 35–43; Leszka, M. 2007, pp. 109–117; Leszka, M. 2013, pp. 229–237; Leszka, M.

⁷ Zdzisław Pentek is well acquainted with Old French and Latin written sources and has translated into Polish Geoffroy de Villehardouin and Robert de Clari [Geoffroy de Villehardouin, 2003; Robert de Clari, 1997].

2017, pp. 5–14; **Leszka, M.** 2013, pp. 53–59; **Leszka, M.** 2019, pp. 43–51]. An important theme in the work of Mirosław Leszka is that of the Bulgarian ruler Simeon the Great (893–927). Here, the author demonstrates detailed knowledge of both the government and diplomacy of Simeon the Great, and presents his own theses and opinions [**Leszka, M.** 2011, pp. 19–30; **Leszka, M.** 2013/2014, pp. 69–73; **Leszka, M.** 2013, pp. 19–24; **Leszka, M.** 2020, pp. 33–41; **Leszka, M.** 2015, pp. 87–99; **Leszka, M.** 2016, pp. 429–442].

Some Bulgarians, mostly local rulers, are also the subject of research in articles by Jan Wolski who examines the information about Strez in *The Life of St. Sava* by Teodosije of Hilandar [**Wolski, J.** 2012, pp. 51–69]. The author applies a critical reading of the sources, focusing on the chronology of Strez's life, the territorial scope of his possession, relations with neighbours, and the circumstances surrounding his death. The article also stands out with translations of parts of the sources used.

Another important topic is dedicated to the wife of Tsar Peter I – Maria Lekapene – found in the publications by Zofia Brzozowska [**Brzozowska, Z.** 2017 a, pp. 40–55; **Brzozowska, Z.** 2017 b, pp. 17–26; **Brzozowska, Z.** 2017 c, pp. 1–28; **Brzozowska, Z.** 2018, pp. 55–90]. Zofia Brzozowska emphasizes the important role of Queen Maria both in Bulgarian-Byzantine relations and in imposing elements and practices of Byzantine dynastic ideology during the reign of Tsar Peter I. The topic of marriage policy and the role of women in political history is present in an article by Ilona Czamańska (University of Poznań), dedicated to the Christian wives of the Ottoman sultans in the 14th – 15th centuries [**Czamańska, I.** 2013, pp. 47–63].

Among the publications related to the marriage policy of Bulgarian rulers and the Bulgarian medieval aristocracy, I would like to mention those by researchers such as Zdzisław Pentek, Jarosław Dudek, and Anna Kotłowska. Zdzisław Pentek represents Agnes of Montferrat and the second wife of the Latin Emperor Henry (probably Maria - daughter of the Bulgarian Tsar Kaloyan) [**Pentek, Z.** 2001, pp. 31–40]. Anna Kotłowska analyzes the role of Byzantium in the dynastic crisis in Bulgaria in 1015 and the diplomatic recognition of the Bulgarian ruler Ivan (Joan) Vladislav by Emperor Basil II [**Kotłowska, A.** 2010, pp. 255–262], Jarosław Dudek – the fate of the Bulgarian elite after the fall of Byzantine rule in 1018 [**Dudek, J.** 2019, pp. 43–71], the image of Basil II in old Bulgarian literature [**Dudek, J.** 2011, pp. 62–85], and the medieval comparison of Tsar Kaloyan with Khan Krum [**Dudek, J.** 2012, pp. 105–114].

Next, I would like to emphasize a group of publications on the issues of religion, the Church, the bishop, monasticism, holy cults, and heresies in medieval Bulgaria. Here, I will again mention the name of Mirosław Leszka who deals with the Bulgarian Patriarchate in the first half of the 10th century [**Leszka, M.** 2013, pp. 581–590], the religious context of Byzantine-Bulgarian relations in 863–927 [**Leszka, M.** 2008, pp. 32–39], and others related to church and political issues in the period 9th – 11th centuries [**Leszka, M.** 2009, pp. 87–98; **Leszka, M.** 2011 a, pp. 55–70; **Leszka, M.** 2011 b, pp. 23–33; **Leszka, M.** 2011 c, pp. 417–422]. Also, I would like to emphasize the publication by Maciej Salamon from the Jagiellonian University, dedicated to Cyprian, Metropolitan of Kiev, and the Byzantine policy in Eastern Europe [**Salamon, M.** 2001, pp. 221–235].

Among the most important topics in Polish historiography in recent decades is also that of monasticism and monastic culture in medieval Bulgaria. Here, first of all, I would like to point out Jan Wolski's doctoral dissertation, published in 2018, which is the only study of its kind in Polish historiography [**Wolski, J.** 2018]. In addition to this monograph, Jan Wolski is the author of articles on the church class and, in particular, monasticism and Bogomil heresy in early medieval Bulgaria [**Wolski, J.** 2012, pp. 39–44; **Wolski, J.** 2018, pp. 84–95; **Wolski, J.** 2011, pp. 43–57]. In this group of articles, I would include Kiril Marinow's publication entitled *Między Bułgarią, Bizancjum a Serbią – mniszne peregrynacje św. Teodozjusza Tyrnowskiego i św. Romila Widyńskiego* [**Marinow, K.** 2009, pp. 99–111].

A specific group of publications on the broad topic of church and religion is that of the medieval Bulgarian heresies, and especially of Bogomilism. Here I would like to emphasize the special interest of several Polish scholars, such as Jan Wolski, Georgi Minčev, and Małgorzata Skowronek, in Bogomilism and other dualistic medieval heresies in Bulgaria [**Minčev, G.** 2015]. The three authors

have prepared an exclusive collection of documents (practically an anthology of dualistic heresies) in a comparative parallel form – in Old Bulgarian and Polish. These documents present the dualistic heresies of the Balkans, with a significant place devoted to Bogomilism. This 267-page edition of the Ceraneum Research Centre, with a glossary of heretical terminology, indexes, and a summary in English, is a remarkable and useful guide for those interested in dualistic heresies in the Middle Ages. In this subtopic, I would point out other publications by Jan Wolski, dedicated to the dualistic heresies in medieval Bulgaria [Wolski, J. 2013, pp. 74–81]. Some of the conclusions of the author are of interest, who believes that the names of Bogomilism and Messalianism do not always denote real dualistic heretical practices.

For me personally, as well as for a wide range of professional historians and admirers of the topic of medieval war, Polish research on the problems of war and peace in medieval Bulgaria is also of interest. First of all, I would like to mention some works by Mirosław Leszka and Kirił Marinow. According to the former, the goal of the campaign of Emperor Nicephorus I against the Bulgarians in 811 was not the destruction of the Bulgarian state [Leszka, M. 2007, pp. 55–62]. Also, the author presents his reading of the famous battle of Anchialos in 917, looking for the real reasons for the defeat of the Byzantines in this battle [Leszka, M. 2011, pp. 409–414]. Leszka also dwells on the image of war in the letters of Patriarch Nikolai the Mystic to the Bulgarian ruler Simeon [Leszka, M. 2006, pp. 9–16], as well as on the use of naval fire (Greek fire) in the Bulgarian-Byzantine wars in the period 7th– 11th centuries [Leszka, M. 2012, pp. 9–15].

Another remarkable name in the research of the war in medieval Bulgaria is Kirił Marinow. First of all, I would like to mention his doctoral dissertation on the role of Mount Hemus in the Bulgarian-Byzantine wars, entitled *Znaczenie Hemusu i jego twierdz w zmaganiach zbrojnych Bizancjum z Bulgarią* (not published yet) [Marinow, K. 2009]. Also, Marinow studies the fall of the medieval Bulgarian capital of Tarnovo under Ottoman rule in written and archaeological sources [Marinow, K. 2005, pp. 139–160], the role of the Bulgarian capital as a centre [Marinow, K. 2011, pp. 343–371], the role of Tarnovo in the legalization of usurpers of the royal throne [Marinow, K. 2004, pp. 299–313], and Tarnovo as a sacred city in the late Middle Ages [Маринов, К. 2015, с. 697–722]. Kirił Marinow pays considerable attention to the Byzantine-Bulgarian wars [Marinow, K. 2007, pp. 119–141; Marinow, K. 2007, pp. 381–392; Marinow, K. 2011, pp. 9–18; Маринов, К. 2018, с. 201–213; Marinow, K. 2020, pp. 5–30; Marinow, K. 2020, pp. 17–46] and the role of Mount Hemus in military and strategic terms [Marinow, K. 2008, 52/1, pp. 617–633; Marinow, K. 2017, pp. 11–32; Marinow, K. 2018, 1, pp. 11–24; Marinow, K. 2013, pp. 5–17; Marinow, K. 2011, pp. 443–466; Marinow, K. 2014, pp. 17–32; Marinow, K. 2006, pp. 181–199; Marinow, K. 2020, pp. 7–42; Маринов, К. 2013/2014, с. 363–381; Маринов, К. 2014, с. 111–134; Маринов, К. 2016, с. 351–371]. Following in part the old thesis of Prof. Mutafchiev about the decisive role of the Balkan Mountains in the Bulgarian-Byzantine conflicts, the author explores the role of this geographical factor through a critical analysis of Byzantine sources. Another important topic in Kirił Marinow's research is the image of war, the enemy, and peace in medieval written sources [Marinow, K. 2012, pp. 85–93; Marinow, K. 2011, pp. 157–190; Marinow, K. 2018, 69, pp. 449–465; Marinow, K. 2011, pp. 35–45; Marinow, K. 2011, pp. 229–230; Marinow, K. 2017, pp. 489–500; Маринов, К. 2018, 1, с. 201–213; Маринов, К. 2014, с. 271–283; Маринов, К. 2016, с. 70–83], the ideological and eschatological meaning of the Bulgarian Apocryphal Chronicle [Marinow, K. 2007, pp. 61–75], and several publications on medieval Bulgarian rulers [Marinow, K. 2016, pp. 15–34; Marinow, K. 2017, 1, pp. 23–39; Marinow, K. 2018, pp. 167–191]. All this establishes Kirił Marinow as one of the most prolific Polish historians (of Bulgarian origin) in the field of medieval Bulgarian history after 1989.

In addition to the topic of war and peace in medieval Bulgaria, we should mention several publications by Jacek Bonarek from the University of Kielce (branch in Piotrków Trybunalski), which are an indisputable contribution to the topic of the Kiev ruler Svyatoslav Igorevich's campaigns in Bulgaria in the period 968–971 [Bonarek, J. 2017, pp. 9–20; Bonarek, J. 2018, pp. 430–441; Bonarek,

J. 1996, pp. 287–302]. The theme of war and peace is directly related to the Battle of Belasitsa (Klaydon) in 1014, which is of interest in Polish historiography in the period under review and the theme of a conference entitled “Bałkany w bizantyńskiej perspektywie – w 1000-lecie bitwy pod Kleidion”, and held in Piotrków Trybunalski on 4 December 2014⁸. The topic is also reflected in a publication by Maciej Salamon who defines the events at Belasitsa (Klaydon) not as a battle, but as a full-scale military operation, brilliantly carried out by the Byzantines [Salamon, M. 2015, pp. 108–141].

Particularly significant for Polish historiography and in direct connection with medieval Bulgarian history is the topic of the Vlachs in the Bulgarian and Balkan lands. Jarosław Dudek examines the early reports about the Vlachs until the beginning of the 11th century and those after this period in two of his articles, emphasizing in the first place their treatment as semi-barbarian subjects, along with Bulgarians and Serbs [Dudek, J. 2021, pp. 35–50], and analyzes the causes and consequences of the Wallachian revolt in Thessaly against the Byzantine authorities in 1066 [Dudek, J. 2019, pp. 197–218]. In turn, Anna Kotłowska presents the image of the Vlachs in the historical works of Georgios Akropolites [Kotłowska, A. 2021, pp. 51–64]. In a joint article, Mirosław Leszka and Kiril Marinow dwell on the issue of research on Vlachs and medieval Bulgaria in modern and contemporary Bulgarian historiography with an emphasis on the role of the Vlachs in the restoration of the Bulgarian Empire at the end of the 12th – beginning of the 13th centuries [Leszka, M. 2021, pp. 225–252]. Ilona Czamańska, the best Polish specialist on the Wallachian topic, also contributed to the topic of the Vlachs [Czamańska, I. 2021, pp. 7–34].

A particularly important topic in Polish historiography in recent decades has been the anti-Ottoman campaigns of King Władysław III from 1443–1444.⁹ One of the most popular books on the subject in Polish historiography is that by Wincenty Swoboda entitled *Warna 1444* [Swoboda, W. 1994]. It is one of the most frequently cited books on Polish historiography. The fact that the author is very well acquainted with the Bulgarian historiography on the subject is also very impressive. Karol Olejnik (University of Poznań) published his book *Władysław III Warneńczyk (1424–1444)* in 1996, which was republished in 2007 [Olejnik, K. 2007]. In this study, the author traces the life of the Polish ruler – his early years and coronation, the civil war in Hungary, as well as the campaigns of 1443–1444. Karol Olejnik dwells in detail on the legends about the survival of King Vladislav after the battle of Varna. The author analyzes a significant number of sources on the subject, but is reluctant to accept any of the legends of the king’s rescue, believing that Vladislav III died in the battle of 10 November 1444. Next, I would note Mieczysław Bielski’s book *Władysław Warneńczyk na Bałkanach (1443–1444): dwie wyprawy*, published in 2009 [Bielski, M. 2009]. Although he is not a professional historian and his style is emotionally uplifting, M. Bielski applies extensive historiography on the subject and index. To date, two thematic collections on the campaigns of King Władysław III have been published in Polish historiography. The second contains materials from the conference held at the Jagiellonian University on 14–15 November 1994 on the occasion of the 550th anniversary of the Battle of Varna¹⁰. The collection is a significant achievement of Polish historiography on the subject, as the publications by authors such as Piotr Wróbel [Wróbel, P. 1995, pp. 95–110], Maciej Salamon [Salamon, M. 1995, pp. 73–94; Salamon, M. 1992, pp. 29–43], Wojciech Mruk [Mruk, W. 1995, pp. 35–42], and Stanisław Sroka [Sroka, S. 1995, pp. 43–46] (all from the Jagiellonian

⁸ The following reports stand out in the conference programme: K. Marinow, *Brama Ilirii i Tracji. Znaczenie strategiczne Przełęczu Ichtimańskiej w dobie średniowiecza*; M. Leszka, *Wyprawy Jana I Tzimiskesa przeciw Światosławowi (971). Kontekst bułgarski*; J. Bonarek, *Status ziem zachodniej Bułgarii po roku 971*; M. Salamon, *Dyskusja wokół bitwy pod Bielasicą (1014)*; J. Dudek, *Ostatnie sojusze ginącej Bułgarii*.

⁹ The most significant research on the subject in Polish historiography was conducted in the first half of the 20th century. We owe it to two world-renowned scholars who have held clashing views for decades. These are Jan Dąbrowski and Oscar Halecki. The first generalized study on the subject, which is still relevant today, was written by Jan Dąbrowski. The author analyzes all known sources – Polish, Hungarian, Italian, etc. [Dąbrowski, J. 1922]. The next important study on the subject is [Halecki, O. 1943].

¹⁰ Świat chrześcijański i turecy osmańscy w dobie bitwy pod Warną, red. Danuty Quirini-Popławskiej. Krakow, 1995.

University in Kraków) indirectly concerned Bulgarians and Bulgarian lands in the first decades of Ottoman rule. Another collection of articles on the Battle of Varna in 1444 was published in 1997. In this collection, I would like to highlight the article by Małgorzata Dąbrowska (University of Łódź) entitled “Hexamilion i Varna” [Dąbrowska, M. 1997, pp. 61–70]¹¹. Articles by Karol Olejnik [Olejnik, K. 1997, pp. 5–15], Zdzisław Pentek [Pentek, Z. 1997, pp. 93–108]¹², Wincenty Swoboda [Swoboda, W. 1997, pp. 109–118], Artur Kijas [Kijas, A. 1997, pp. 167–173], and Ilona Czamańska [Czamańska, I. 1997, pp. 175–184] are dedicated to the Battle of Varna in the same collection. To the group of researchers of King Władysław III’s reign and the anti-Ottoman campaigns of 1443–1444, I can also mention the names of Stanisław Sroka [Sroka, S. 2016], Wioletta Zawitkowska [Sroka, S., Zawitkowska, W. 2017] and Tomasz Graff [Graff, T. 2017]. It is obvious that the topic is seriously presented in the Polish historiography of the 20th century, and it is in this area that some of the most significant studies have been carried out.

The interest of Polish researchers in medieval Bulgaria is focused not only on political, ecclesiastical, and military history, but also on art and architecture. In this context, I would like to point out Andrzej Hermanowicz’s research on medieval church and monastery painting in the Balkans [Hermanowicz, A. 2019]. The author presents remarkable examples of church painting, and along with those in today’s Bulgarian lands, many examples are provided in the lands of the present-day Republic of North Macedonia. This study is among the remarkable publications related to medieval culture and art in the Bulgarian lands.

At the end of this review, I would like to mention a few more titles, such as A. Paroń’s study on nomads in the Black Sea steppes [Paroń, A. 2009 a, pp. 97–146] and the role of Byzantine diplomacy in the assassination of Svyatoslav I Igorevich of Kiev [Paroń, A. 2009 b, pp. 494–499]. I would also like to mention the article by Mirosław Leszka on the Bulgarian-Khazar conflict in the 8th century [Leszka, M. 1999, pp. 49–62], the article by Stanisław Turlej from the Jagiellonian University on the role of the Avar Khaganate’s disintegration in Bulgarian-Byzantine relations in the early 9th century [Turlej, S. 2007, pp. 31–54], and the article by Jacek Bonarek on the situation on the lower Danube in the second half of the 11th century [Bonarek, J. 2007, pp. 193–200]. From this group of other publications, I would pay special attention to an article by Maciej Salamon, dedicated to the earliest mention of the name *Bulgaria* in a medieval Polish chronicle [Salamon, M. 2006, pp. 463–471]. Other Polish medievalists specializing in other disciplines have also made episodic statements, such as Ryszard Grzesik, who dedicated one of his articles to the Christianization of the Great Moravian state and Bulgaria [Grzesik, R. 2011, pp. 55–65].

Finally, I would like to note some observations. First of all, after 1989, there has been a growing intensity of Polish research on topics of medieval Bulgarian history. This is, no doubt, partly a product of a good foundation laid in the decades after the Second World War, but it is also the result of the formation of groups and centres that focus on medieval Bulgaria. The most vivid example is the circle of researchers at the University of Łódź, which includes Mirosław Leszka, Kirił Marinow, Jan Wolski, and, to some extent, Zofia Brzozowska. Outside of this research circle, of course, are the names of a dozen other Polish medievalists, mentioned above, altogether representing a large, significant group. Undoubtedly, this group of Polish medievalists who show a lasting interest in medieval Bulgarian history is among the most numerous and fruitful ones outside Bulgaria. In this context, I would briefly summarize that contemporary Polish historiography is among the most significant foreign historiographies in the field of medieval Bulgarian history. The implemented projects and the published works are both significant contributions and a good basis for further development of researchers of medieval Bulgarian history, both in and outside the Polish language environment.

¹¹ According to Dąbrowska, the 1444 expedition was not of Byzantine interest.

¹² Zdzisław Pentek lists by name the people of King Vladislav in the Battle of Varna from 1444 according to archival data – about 101 people.

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Съкращения

ЗРВИ – Зборник радова Византолошког института

ИРИМ-Г – Известия на регионален исторически музей-Габрово

AUL.FH – *Acta Universitatis Lodziensis. Folia Historica*

BM – *Bulgaria Mediaevalis*

BP. AS – *Balcanica Posnaniensia. Acta et studia*

FAH – *Fasciculi Archaeologia Historica*

FE – *Fundamenta Europaea*

Pbg – *Palaeobulgarica*

PH – *Prace Historyczne*

PNH – *Przegląd Nauk Historycznych*

RH – *Revue historique*

PZH – *Piotrkowskie Zeszyty Historyczne*

SA – *Slavia Antiqua*

SB – *Studia Balcanica*

SC – *Sources Chrétiennes*

SH – *Studia Historyczne*

SM – *Slavia Meridionalis*

SSH – *Słupskie Studia Historyczne*

VP – *Vox Patrium*

VTUR: SHSS – *VTU Review: Studies in the Humanities and Social Sciences*