

ECONOMIC FORMS, STATE SOCIO-ECONOMIC POLICY AND SOCIO-ECONOMIC IDEAS OF BULGARIAN SOCIETY IN THE CONTEXT OF THE ORTHODOX CHRISTIANITY (9TH - FIRST HALF OF THE 19TH CENTURY)

The paper outlines some of the main characteristic features of Bulgarian social and economic thought during the period, dominated by the norms of Orthodox Christianity. In the context of this thinking of the period before the appearance of specialized economic knowledge, several key elements can be identified, such as first, the strong role of the state, relied upon to help solving economic and social problems, which is praised and receives advice from intellectuals, and second, the ethical approach, expressed in the desire to help the poor and to reject profits, considered as immoral (theft, usury, etc. in.), to negate the extremes of poverty, but also of wealth.

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During the period from the Christianization to approximately mid-nineteenth century the Bulgarian socio-economic thought was dominated almost entirely by the norms of Orthodox Christianity.¹ Still at the end of the Bulgarian Revival, in the third quarter of the nineteenth century, the Bulgarian intellectuals began to be interested in the achievements of political economy as a science, which in turn resulted in a gradual reduction of the role of religion in the overall perception and analysis of social and economic phenomena. The reception and the subsequent interpretation of these achievements were not made on *tabula rasa*, for almost a thousand years in Bulgarian society certain models of socio-economic thinking had been established. Those were durable, stable and influential. These models strongly influenced what would be adopted from the ideas of classical political economy and other schools of economic thought and how, what, and to what extent would be applied in economic policy after the Liberation of Bulgaria (1878). The Orthodox beliefs and ideas do not give a comprehensive explanation of the question about the origin and peculiarities of the specialized economic thought in Bulgaria. The answer to this requires further research and identification of the other influences on Bulgarian socio-economic thinking. However, the role of religion should not be neglected.

Unlike Catholicism and Islam, the historical peculiarities of the Orthodox Christian socio-economic thought are largely ignored and/or little known in general courses and in specialized publications on the history of economic thought. So filling the gap from the perspective of Bulgarian Orthodoxy stands as a second goal of the study. Therefore the purely chronological presentation of history should be interrupted

¹ Catholicism and Orthodoxy were formally separated after the Great schism of 1054, but even before this year there were certain differences between eastern and western Christians, that give grounds for usage of the term Orthodoxy since the Christianization of the Bulgarians.

at certain points because in this way the clarification of a particular idea or principle would be more meaningful. In the light of the problem raised, certain characteristics of Orthodox Christianity, related to socio-economic thinking, should be explained in details.

The first one is the particular combination of "conservatism" and "liberalism".² The Orthodox Christianity on the one hand is highly conservative and strives to keep the tenets of early Christianity and the Church Fathers intact. It is a universal, not an ethnic or a national religion. On the other hand, Orthodox Christianity is liberal – in a sense that the Orthodox Church allows for national or ethnical features such as national language of worship and national churches more easily (compared to Catholicism for example) etc. The second peculiarity of Orthodoxy is the relationship between mundane and church authority. Eastern Christianity, unlike Western, after the Edict of Milan of Emperor Constantine (313)³ has been existing in the context of a strong central government. This determines the imposition of so-called caesaropapist model in the relationship between the Church and the State, under which the secular power practically dominates the spiritual. It is extremely difficult for the Church to oppose the secular rulers and therefore it focuses its activities mainly on the spiritual salvation of the laity.⁴

Bulgarian socio-economic thought and Orthodox Christianity

Pre-Christian Period

The Medieval Bulgarian state was founded in 681 by proto-Bulgarians and Slavic tribes, who almost two centuries later lived in isolation from each other. Until their Christianization their key socio-economic and political views were predetermined by the relatively low level of development and were dominated by the pagan religion of each of the two communities. A relatively weak political organization was typical for the Slavic tribes on the Balkans before the formation of the Bulgarian state, during the 6th and 7th centuries. This was defined by the Byzantine authors of the time as a "democracy" verging on anarchy. At the time of foundation of the Bulgarian state the hereditary aristocracy was in process of formation, but generally the Slavs were still considered to be free and equal. The proto-Bulgarians in turn as a predominantly nomadic people were characterized by a tight centralized organization, strong autocracy

² In this case the terms conservatism and liberalism are used as indications of attachment to the covenants of the past (conservatism) and the propensity to adopt certain innovations (for liberalism). They are not used as an expression of a particular political ideology, program or beliefs characteristic of the Modern times.

³ With this edict Christianity was recognized as an official religion, along with the other religions in the Roman Empire. The property of the Church that had been confiscated during the anti-Christian persecutions was returned, and the Church acquired the rights of a legal entity (for more details see Koev and Bakalov, 1992, p. 55-61)

⁴ The paper is based on diverse primary sources: the lives of Bulgarian saints and other original works of the medieval Bulgarian literature, Revival books, textbooks, manuscripts etc. The author also builds on the studies of various modern authors, which to a greater or lesser extent affect the problem.

and availability of state tradition from the pre-681 period (Mutafchiev, 1992, p. 41-93). In general during the first century of its existence, the Bulgarian state was set up on Confederation principle, where each of the two communities lived separately in their own lands. Since the beginning of the 9th century, however, the process of centralization under which the central government represented by the Khan acquired more and more authority in the administration, in the guarding of state borders, etc. (Nikolov, 2005, p. 63-104). That process indicates that the idea of a central authority being responsible for more and more aspects of the life of the inhabitants was gaining ground in Bulgaria.

The well-known laws of Khan Krum (802-814) from the beginning of the 9th century give certain idea about the Bulgarian socio-economic concepts during the pagan period. It should be noted that the original text of the laws is not known to science. The information about the legislation of Khan Krum comes from a Byzantine source that tells about them as a curious event. The laws were issued personally by the ruler without the intervention of any other institutions. This could be interpreted as a sign of the growing power of the central government and of the prevailing opinion among the people that the ruler could legislate on its own initiative and will, and also that these laws shall be valid for both proto-Bulgarians and the Slavs. The Khan was urged to introduce laws after a conversation with captured Avars. They explained to him the reasons for the decline and subsequent collapse of their once mighty state. According to them it was due to the internal strife, theft, unfair judicial system, corruption, drunkenness and trade. As a result of this conversation, the Khan issued laws which provide for the death penalty for false denunciations, tougher penalties for theft and concealment of thieves, prescribed to be given enough to beggars in order to prevent them from falling again into destitution and all the vineyards in the country to be uprooted (Bobchev, 1998 [1910]).

Without being too different from to similar legislation (in Byzantium, Serbia, etc.) these laws reflected both the views about the inviolability of private property as a prerequisite for economic prosperity and the need for state intervention to "solve" certain social problems – in this case the poverty, inducing people to beg. It is interesting that according to the captured Avars among the main reasons for the decline of their country was trade - all became merchants and mutually deceived each other. Despite this the Bulgarian Khan did not take measures to restrict trade. Almost a century earlier in 716, Bulgaria and Byzantium had signed the first trade agreement with each other, i.e. the significance of international trade was well-known to the Bulgarian rulers and they were convinced that the trade could not induce social or economic problems in their country.

Christianization, Orthodoxy, and Caesaropapism

The Christianity was adopted in Bulgaria in 865, after the baptism of Prince Boris I (852-889). The new religion was essential for the elimination of the tribal particularism that had been characteristic for the pagan period. For the next several years the so-called Bulgarian Church question caused tension and rivalry between the Patriarchate of Constantinople and Rome regarding the jurisdiction of

the newly converted Balkan country. Ultimately at the local ecclesiastical council, held in Constantinople in 870 it was decided the recently converted lands to be under the jurisdiction of the Patriarchate of Constantinople with the status of independent archbishopric. In 927 the Bulgarian church obtained the status of a Patriarchate, but was reduced to an archbishopric rank once again after the fall of Bulgaria under Byzantine rule in 1018. With the restoration of the Bulgarian state in 1186, Bulgarian rulers took steps to achieve church autonomy. For this reason, in 1204 Tsar Kaloyan (1197-1207) signed a union with Pope Innocent III and the Bulgarian church temporarily came under the rule of the Roman Catholic Church. Bulgaria returned to Orthodoxy in 1235, when its church became a Patriarchate again. After the fall of Bulgaria under Ottoman rule in the late fourteenth century the Patriarchate was destroyed again, and up to 1870 most of the Bulgarian lands were under the jurisdiction of the Ecumenical Patriarch of Constantinople (Snegarov, 1946).

With the Christianization of Bulgaria in the country Christian moral norms were adopted and enforced, which had an notable impact on the economy. Among these were the prohibitions on stealing and lying, the praise of poverty, the care for the salvation of the soul, sobriety and encouragement to live a humble life, charity, diligence, etc. The moral condemnation of the theft in the Christian religion was perhaps the most important from an economic point of view. It reinforces the idea of the inviolability of private property, which was legally established in the pagan period. The Bulgarian Church enforced this rigorously. For example when in 1211 in Tarnovo was held a Special Council against the Bogomil heresy, the church authorities also exposed "those who rob Christian homes or steal horses and oxen, or rob on the road, and cause harm and injury to the Christians, and ... all who send them to such evil, or know that they are doing such and conceal them..." (Duychev, 1944, p. 167).

These general guidelines for the individual's life were combined with a new concept about the role and functions of the ruler/government. After 870, when Bulgaria finally remained under the jurisdiction of the Patriarchate of Constantinople, new institutions were established in the country, the Byzantine conception about the role of state power and the ruler was adopted. All these facts were closely connected to some of the pre-Christian socio-economic ideas of the Bulgarians. First the idea of the monarch who is expected to be a highly moral person with a constant care for the welfare of his subjects was introduced in Bulgaria (Karajanopoulos, 1992). A direct expression of this is fact that the monarch assumed the task of protecting the interests of the Bulgarian merchants abroad. The first war of Tsar Simeon (893-927) against Byzantium was caused by the fact that the marketplace for Bulgarian goods in Byzantium was moved from Constantinople to Thessaloniki, where Bulgarian traders suffered losses due to abuses by senior Byzantine officials (Duychev, 1940, p. 127-128). The war ended with the victory of the Bulgarian ruler and restoration of the market in Constantinople. Tsar Peter I (927-970) who inherited Simeon was canonized a saint. In the prayer dedicated to him, he is praised as "an abundant source of treasures always giving (and) pouring to the poor" (Duychev, 1940, p. 101). This concept that the ruler should care for the prosperity of his subjects was not new for the

Bulgarians and had existed since the pagan period. With the adoption of Christianity, however, it was reinforced. It determined the positive adoption of the direct involvement of government in the economy and limiting of the private interests for the benefit of the society.

Moreover, the caesaropapist Byzantine pattern in the relationship between church and state was introduced in Bulgaria, in which the secular government dominates the religious power. Relations between the church and the state were much more complex, but generally the church was under the custody of the Emperor (Ostrogorsky, 1998 [1963], p. 71). The Bulgarian Prince Boris I deliberately chose this model of relations with the church because it was useful for strengthening his personal power, avoiding any competitors. Some researchers of the medieval Bulgarian history even speak of "deliberately pursued policy of secularization regarding the Church" by Boris I (Bakalov, 2006).

As a result of the inculcation of the caesaropapist model in Bulgaria the most influential intellectuals were compelled to focus their attention mainly on issues that were not directly or closely related to the material wellbeing, though it is not accurate to speak of complete isolation from it. The church leaders concentrated their efforts on spiritual and religious issues, on the idea to fight heresies, or on the praise of the rulers. Still during the so-called Golden Age of Bulgarian Medieval culture Yoan Ekzarkh in his work "Shestodnev" describes the stunning impression that would have been made on ordinary people by the tsar in his "robe embroidered with pearls, with a string of gold coins around the neck, with bracelets on his hands, wrapped in velvet belt, and golden sword hanging on his thigh" (Duychev, 1940, p. 87). On the other hand, representatives of the ecclesiastical elite were known for their remoteness from earthly problems. For example in "A Proclaim to the Gospel" the Bishop Konstantin of Preslav (Bulgarian writer of the 9th-10th century) extols Christianity because it makes it possible to repel the "corruption of this world" and to find spiritual salvation of the soul (Duychev, 1940, p. 36). Later on the patriarch Evtimii noted in the Life of St. Ivan Rilski, written in the second half of the fourteenth century, that "if this holy man's insight had been at least a little concerned with the lower and corruptible things, or if he had been concerned with something earthly, we would have quickly passed over his memory and sent it into the depths of oblivion" (Evtimii, 1990, p. 42). The Orthodox intellectuals, compared to the Catholic, rarely deal with issues like fair price, interest, etc.

The binding of Bulgaria to the Patriarchate of Constantinople had other long-term consequences. After the Great Schism in 1054 the Bulgarian lands remained within the framework of Orthodoxy⁵. Hostility towards the Western Christianity and towards the West in general with all its characteristic features, scientific and philosophical achievements became one of the peculiarities of the Bulgarian Orthodox socio-economic thinking for centuries. In 1275 Western Knights (the so-called *Latini*)

⁵ The union with the Catholic Church for the period between 1204 and 1235 was relatively short and is caused by political reasons of the day. It did not change the already established concepts and understandings of place and role of the monarch to govern the state.

defined in "Story of Zograf martyrs" as "wicked" attacked and robbed the Bulgarian monastery "St. George Zograf" (on Mount Athos). They set the tower of the monastery on fire, where 26 monks and lay persons were burned. They were later canonized as saints (Ivanov, 1931: 438-440). At the end of the 18th century Hieromonk Spyridon included this event in his work "History" (Spiridon, 1792 [1900]). The behaviour of the crusaders commanded by Władysław III of Poland (also King of Hungary) and John Hunyadi towards the Orthodox Bulgarians during their crusade against the Ottoman Empire in 1444 was extremely aggressive. Their armies plundered the local population and openly insulted the Orthodox faith. This caused overt resistance by the Bulgarians (Dimitrov, Zhechev and Tonev, 1988). An example of the animosity towards Western Christians are the frescoes of the church of the Bulgarian monastery "St George Zograph" where in a composition called "Infallibility of the Christian Church", painted in 1817 the Pope and Martin Luther are presented as opposed to the Christian Church. The Pope with a hook in his hand is trying to stop the sailing of the ship of the Christian church, and M. Luther with a rifle in his hand is shooting at the same ship (Bozhkov and Vasilev, 1981, p. 112). The implication of this composition is clear - the Protestants and the Catholics are enemies of the true Christianity, including the Orthodox Christians.

Economic Policy and the Orthodox Christian socio-economic thought

The Medieval economic policy of the state authorities was often left without any assessment, regardless of its possible or real consequences. For instance, Tsar Ivan Asen II (1218-1241) gave the merchants from Dubrovnik the right of free trade with Bulgaria, and later on in 1253 Tsar Michael Asen II (1246-1256) signed a commercial and military treaty with Dubrovnik for mutual guarantee of free trade between Bulgaria and Dubrovnik (Duchev, 1946, p. 43, 49). However it is not known if there was any reaction of the church to these treaties and to the foreign trade policy in general.

According to the traditions from pagan period trade was not seen as a harmful occupation. This is evident from the story "The Miracle of St. George and the Bulgarian", which reveals some interesting details of the history of Bulgaria in the 9th century. In this primary source St. George advised a Bulgarian to buy a second horse before going to war (Duychev, 1940, p. 72). In the Life of St. Theodosius (a Bulgarian saint of the fourteenth century) the author describes the saint who strove for spiritual perfection "like a wise and experienced trader, hoping for a higher profit" (Ivanova, 1986, 446). Comparison of the behaviour of the saint with this of a good merchant is evidence that trade and the related profit-seeking is not condemned by the Orthodox Church. This attitude remained until the first half of the nineteenth century. In 1837 the well-known secular teacher and scholar R. Popovich notes that it is possible to find drunken priests and merchants that are liars and thieves. However, he writes, it cannot be concluded on this basis that the church causes drunkenness or that trade itself has made traders liars and thieves (Popovic, 1837,

p. 51). Obviously, the tolerant attitude of the Orthodox Church towards trade influenced the secular Bulgarian writers of the first half of the nineteenth century.

Until now we do not have information about any reaction of the Bulgarian Orthodox socio-economic thought to the first inflation in Bulgaria in the second half of the XIII century. During the reign of Tsar Constantine Tih-Asen (1257-1277) the government sharply increased money supply, causing enormous tension among the poorest segments of the population. The inflation was one of the most important causes of peasant rebellion spearheaded by Ivailo. The uprising resulted in the overthrow of the Tsar and the ascension of Ivailo to the Bulgarian throne (Andreev and others, 1994, p. 123).

However, if we want to understand the medieval Orthodox way of thinking we have to know that it was characteristic of it to react to certain events of social life with parables, i.e. not directly but in a veiled way. In this way we could find some indirect reactions to the inflation. During the sixteenth century, when the Bulgarian authorities were replaced by the Ottoman power, the so-called Damascenes were disseminated in the Bulgarian lands. These were popular collections of sermons, lives of Orthodox saints, etc. In some of them we could find convictions of tavern-keepers who mix wine with water (Petkanova-Toteva, 1965, p. 115). Later on, similar motives are to be found in some of the frescoes of the Rila Monastery, created in the first half of the 19th century. Condemnation of mixing wine with water could be interpreted as a direct condemnation of this lie, but in the spirit of Orthodox thinking spoiling the goods by merchants could be considered as a condemnation of the falsehood and lie to which the government is resorting by mixing the precious metals with cheaper ones in order to increase the money supply.

According to the scarce available primary historical sources the attention paid by the Bulgarian Orthodox writers on the tax policy of the state was relatively slight. An interesting and important exception in this respect is the anonymous "Bulgarian Apocryphal Chronicle of the 9th century." The author of this chronicle notes that taxes in the reign of the Bulgarian Tsar Simeon the Great (893-927) were negligible "one distaff-full (of wool), and spoon of butter, and an egg per year." The results of this tax policy, according to the anonymous author were remarkable "and there was abundance at the time of this tsar Simeon" (Duchev, 1940, p. 157). It is necessary to make an important clarification on this case. "Bulgarian apocryphal chronicle of 9th century" was written at the time when Bulgarian lands were under Byzantine rule. In a sense, the chronicle and the assertion about taxes could be interpreted as an expression of the Bulgarian opposition to foreign rule. However, the conclusion of the author about the direct relation between lower taxes and economic prosperity is indisputable. This essentially theoretical formulation (though in a typical medieval scientific style) finds its practical confirmation in the Bulgarian uprising against Byzantine rule in 1186, when one of the main reasons for the uprising were extraordinary taxes imposed by the Byzantine Emperor on the population of Balkan region. These taxes increased poverty and caused widespread discontent, which in turn created a favourable environment for the Bulgarian riot against the empire.

Usury, material prosperity and poverty

Like the Russian Orthodox economic thought in the Middle Ages and unlike the Western, medieval Bulgarian authors do not deal with theories of "just price".⁶ Another important and much debated issue in the Roman Catholic Church was the question of usury. The Orthodox Church in Bulgaria unconditionally accepted canon 17 of the Council of Nicaea (325 AD), which prohibits to the clergy to lend money on interest. In terms of secular individuals, however, the prohibition was not applied, or it was much milder. In the Orthodox Bulgarian literature until the fall of medieval Bulgaria under the rule of the Ottoman Turks (late 14th century) the problem of usury was practically not discussed. This probably has to do with the fact that the Byzantine model of relationship between the church and the state had been imposed in Bulgaria with the Christianization. In Byzantium the government regulated and controlled, but did not condemn or prohibit usury. It is for this reason that the Ecumenical Patriarchate in Constantinople did not express its opinion on this issue (Laiou, 2002). Only in the Life of Saint Nicholas the New of Sofia, killed by the Turks in 1555 for refusing to convert to Islam, his hagiographer Grammarian Matthew writes that the martyr lived according to the Old Testament proverb "Better little with righteousness than lots of on interest" (Ivanova, 1986, p. 324). In 1840s usury was depicted as immoral in frescoes of the Rila Monastery. As it could be seen, this condemnation of interest was made during the Ottoman rule when the secular power was not Christian. In the traditional Bulgarian folk culture interest loans were rarely practiced and were stigmatized as immoral and the information thereto dates back to the same period of time. In this sense the replacement of the Christian rule with Muslim enables the Christian Orthodox Church to declare its attitude towards the usury problem.

Despite the superiority of the secular rulers, the Orthodox Church in Medieval Bulgaria tried to become a moral corrective of the actions of the ruler and the other representatives of nobility, including on questions involving the economic policy to some degree. Still when Bulgaria passed the diocese of the Patriarchate of Constantinople, Prince Boris I received a special personal message from Patriarch Photios with guidelines for basic moral traits of the Christian ruler. Among them we find the following recommendation "... keep the manners of your country uncorrupted ... and show everyone that gold – this powerful enemy of those who love it – is useless" (Duichev, 1940, p. 57). In the tenth century the Bulgarian Tzar Peter (927-970) wanted to meet with St. Ivan Rilski but the saint declined. After that the tsar sent to the saint gold and other gifts. St Ivan Rilski, however, returned the gold back with the words that it is harmful for the monks and recommended to give it away to the poor (Duichev, 1947, p. 128-132; Evtimii, 1990, p. 52). Again in the tenth century Presbyter Kozma condemned those members of the clergy who pursue wealth and earthly pleasures. For centuries greed was considered as one of the most dangerous and harmful

⁶ For details about the attitude of the Russian Orthodox authors to the problems of "just price", interest etc. see Pashkov, 1964.

features of a person. In the first half of the nineteenth century avarice used to be regarded as one of the deadly sins, by Orthodox writers and by the secular authors of textbooks for primary schools (see Ognjanovic 1844, p. 34; Georgiyevich, 1853, p. 22).

The focus of the Orthodox Church primarily on spiritual and mystical issues and its isolation from the daily routine of the government did not mean a complete denial of material issues and rejection of the need to care for daily bread by the common people. According to the primary sources Saint Ivan Rilski healed and relieved the poor (Duichev, 1947), St. Patriarch Evtimii helped the population in a drought year and brought rain with his prayers (Partenii, 1974), in "Eulogy for St. John Polivotski" again Evtimii notes that the saint "healed many afflicted with various disabilities" (Evtimii, 1990, p. 151).

The attitude towards manual labor on the part of the Orthodox Church was positive. In the life of St. Romil of Vidin (14th century) the author notes that the saint worked hard in the construction of the monastery, in the kitchen and the bakery of the monastery, etc. (Petrov and Gyuzelev, 1978, p. 382). Hard physical work is cited as characteristic for the life of the famous church painter from the second half of the 16th and the beginning of the 17th century - St. Pimen Zografski. While in Zograph monastery, he himself carried firewood, prepared food for the monks, assisted the weak monks and diligently painted icons. In the life of St. Theodosius of Tarnovo it is noted that in 14th century the monk Dionysius lived in the Kilifarevski monastery, who was distinguished by many virtues, including that "he worked with his hands and never ate his bread as if it were a free gift" (Partenii, item 2, 1974).

The absolute rejection of everything material and mortal was a characteristic feature of the Bogomil heresy that appeared in the Bulgarian lands in the tenth century and that persisted until the fall of Bulgaria under the Ottoman rule in the late fourteenth century.⁷ According to presbyter Kozma, for the Bogomils the whole material world was a creation of Satan, they disgusted young children, denying religious and secular power (Duichev, 1940, p. 103-117). In the fourteenth century rejecting everything material, they recommended their followers not to be engaged with handwork and to cut off their reproduction organs (Petrov and Gyuzelev, 1978, p. 369). For that reason the supporters of the Bogomil heresy did not strive for any social or economic reforms, for better understanding and/or improvement of material life (Mutafchiev, 1934). Their worldview of the material world as a creation of Satan prompted for denial of the possibility and necessity of its improvement. This is precisely one of the main criticisms of the Bulgarian saint of XII century St. Hilarion Muglensky against heretics. According to his hagiographer Patriarch Evtimii St. Hilarion told

⁷ For a detailed presentation on the onset, dissemination of its ideas and the influence of Bogomil heresy in Bulgaria, on the Balkans and in Europe see Angelov, 1993. The author of this study, however, associated Bogomils with the principles of early Christianity and believes that the duality of the Bogomils moderate. This thesis is not correct because the negation of everything material (typical for the Bogomils) practically means negation of the possibility and necessity to change the material world, which is regarded as intrinsically evil. This notion is not typical of the early Christianity.

them that "the Lord is Lord of both heaven and earth" (Evtimii, 1990, p. 63). This means that, despite the fact that the salvation of the soul (i.e. the immaterial) is an absolute priority for Christians, the care for material well-being should not be neglected.

The compassion for the poor and the desire to help them was a constant theme in the works of Orthodox writers throughout the above-mentioned period. In almost all lives of Bulgarian saints or lives of saints written by Bulgarian authors we could find an expression of their disparaging attitude towards material wealth and worldly honours. Charity was among the main activities of the Orthodox monasteries in the Bulgarian lands. For example according to the funder of Bachkovo Monastery "Assumption of Holy Mary" (founded in 11th century) Gregory Bakuriani, the visitors to the monastery should receive free meals, the monastery maintained inns, which provided free food and shelter to strangers, etc. (Petkova, 2005). According to D. Petkanova "the poverty rises to an eminence almost equal to a cult" in the medieval Bulgarian literature (Petkanova, 2006, p. 101). In Orthodox Christianity, however, poverty was not perceived as normal. According to the author of the life of St. Romil of Vidin the parents of the saint were not rich but they had "as much as is necessary for the satisfaction of their needs without scarcity", which in turn allowed them "to do charity to the poor as is typical to the men of Christ" (Petrov and Gyuzelev, 1978, p. 378). Apparently a life "without scarcity" is assessed as a positive thing, because it gives the opportunity to help the poor and destitute.

This attitude remained among the characteristic features of many books, written or translated during the first half of the nineteenth century and especially in textbooks issued during this period. Thus, in 1819 Joachim Karchovski noted that he who collects a lot of money risks to remain blind to the true Christian values. He encourages the rich to give alms to the poor and to widows, arguing that the wealth of the rich is not theirs but "somebody else's", i.e. obtained not by work and saving, but thanks to God. Textbooks for primary schools are full of moral teachings like "Honest poverty is better than shameful richness" (Busilin, 1844, p. 41), "Help the poor if you can" (Polizov, 1824, p. 21) etc.

*Changes in the Orthodox socio-economic thought in the
18th-first half of the 19th century*

During the eighteenth and early nineteenth century the Bulgarian Orthodox authors were actively involved in the process of national revival. The reasons for the changes are complex. Among the most important should be distinguished: the increased rate of economic and cultural contacts with the countries of Central and Western Europe and the consequent infiltration of Western ideas in Bulgarian society, the economic progress of these countries and ambition of the Ottoman leadership to introduce reforms following the Western model, the prosperity of individual representatives of Bulgarian society and the spread of secular education among the Bulgarians, etc. The Orthodox intellectuals such as the Athonite monk Paisii Hilendarski, Bishop Sophronius of Vratsa, Neophyte Bozveli and many others had great merits in the modernization process.

The "spirit" of capitalism, however, penetrated slowly in the Bulgarian lands. In 1757 the Bulgarian monk Parthenius Pavlovich wrote in his autobiography that the neglect of Christ's commandments has brought huge problems to Western and Eastern Christians alike. The troubles took for Eastern Christians were epitomized by their conquest by the Muslims, while the Westerners were badly affected by "Lutheran and Calvinist trouble" (Dimkov, 1993). Apparently the Protestantism, which is believed as an expression of the 'spirit of capitalism, is seen by the author as evil equal to the conquest of the Balkans by the Ottoman Turks. In his famous book "Slav-Bulgarian History" (1762), which was extremely important for the Bulgarian national Revival, Paisii Hilendarski points out among the virtues of the Bulgarians the fact that they were: poor, hard-working, hospitable, giving alms, among them there were not "a lot of merchants" etc. (Paisii, monk, 1911 [1762]), i.e. they resemble early Christians.

The economic views of Bishop Sophronius of Vratsa in his request to the commander-in-chief of the Russian army Michail Kutuzov of 1811 are interesting. The Request was written in the course of the Russo-Turkish War of 1806-1812 with the idea to persuade the Russian authorities to create an autonomous Bulgarian region north of the Danube. The economic ideas of its author were summarized in several points. He insisted that the Bulgarians should have enough land in order to be able to develop agriculture, stock breeding, and to build factories; the Bulgarian merchants should be allowed to trade freely in the Russian Empire, Wallachia and Moldova; the Bulgarians should be exempted from paying taxes for 10 years; the lakes on the left bank of the Danube should be provided to the Bulgarians as their "perpetual domain" for industrial fishing; the Russian authorities should prohibit the settlement of "Jews and heretics" in the Bulgarian communities in order to protect their trade. On the other hand the state power (in this case the Russian) was relied upon to give financial and material assistance to the poor Bulgarian settlers, who shall dwell in the autonomous region; to provide state allowances for medicine doctors, judges and teachers in the autonomous region (Pletnyov and Stoyanov, 1988, p. 11-13). This request was not approved, but it is an evidence that the mercantilist principles (or perhaps cameralist) like the demand for certain privileges, subsidies, and incentives granted by the state, etc. were popular among the Orthodox thinkers and political leaders. The mercantilist views are clearly visible in the proposal for reforms in the Ottoman Empire written by the Bulgarian intellectual Alexander Ekzarh in 1843. He insisted that the Ottoman government should fund the vocational and medicine education of young Bulgarians in Western Europe. The development of local production would reduce the export of gold and silver from the country and would achieve a positive trade balance (Ekzarh, 1843, p. 4-5).⁸

⁸ At the end of the 18th century the mercantilist views became popular among the representatives of the Ottoman socio-economic thought (Ermis, 2014, p.125, 140, 144-145). Apparently in search of the key factors for the economic prosperity of the West the Orthodox Christians and Muslims almost simultaneously reached

In the late eighteenth and during the nineteenth century, up to the liberation of Bulgaria from the Ottoman rule (1878), the Orthodox Christian communities became key drivers of the spread of secular education by funding school construction, paying teachers, sponsoring the publication of books, magazines, newspapers etc. Many of the teachers in the first half of the nineteenth century were monks or priests. In the textbooks issued and used in these schools the first signs of bourgeois social and economic thinking can be found, which remained does not break abruptly with the ethical traditions of Orthodoxy. Thus, in "Primer with different teachings" published by P. Beron in 1824 were included advices and maxims such as "Everything is easy for hard-working, everything is hard for the lazy one", "Laziness is the father of evil", "The merchant was asked once how did he make so much money, and he replied "the much is easy, and the little is hard" (Beron, 1847 [1824]). Hard work has been cited as a major virtue and education as a sure path to material prosperity (Hrulev, 1850). The well-known teacher and author from the time of Bulgarian Revival Period - R. Popovic also connects economic prosperity with education (Popovic, 1837, p. 101-102). So gradually, without turning away from the ethical arguments against profiteering, the Bulgarian society began to take a more positive attitude towards richness, especially when it was accumulated in an honest way.

On this basis, the interest in political economy appeared in the circles of Bulgarian intellectuals in the third quarter of the 19th century. The influence of Orthodox Christianity on the intelligentsia gradually decreased, but in the third quarter of the 19th century there was complete reorientation to the modern rationalism.

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The matrix of the Bulgarian socio-economic thinking of the time, before any interest was shown in specialized economic knowledge and before any opportunity emerged for independent economic policy, has several key features: the strong role of the state, which should assist for overcoming economic and social problems, which is praised and receives advice by the intellectuals, the ethical approach, which is expressed in the desire to help the poor and in rejection of profits which are considered as immoral (theft, usury, etc. in.), the rejection of extremes in poverty, but also in wealth, etc. These characteristics partially explain a number of phenomena in the intellectual and economic life in Bulgaria before and after the Liberation of the country from the Ottoman rule.

At the first contacts with Western political economy the representatives of Bulgarian intellectuals show affinity to the ideas of French liberalism and later to the German Historical School, which are characterized by ethical approach to the problems of the economy. After the Liberation, even the representatives of the Bulgarian Liberal Party (and later on of different parties who accepted the label liberal) introduced economic policy, in which the role of the central government constantly

the conclusion that the positive balance of trade, privileges from the state, protectionism, etc. are the appropriate policy tools for the enhancement of social and economic progress.

grew. This approach is not consistent with the classical liberal view about the limited state, but it is closely related to the long-time established traditions in the Bulgarian socio-economic thinking. In the early 1920s the government of Bulgarian Agricultural People's Union introduced an agrarian reform, through which it aimed to enable the largest possible number of households to live "without scarcity", and also to apply its specific understanding of redistributive justice.

Such examples do not prove that social and economic policy of Bulgaria was predetermined by the socio-economic mindset inherited from centuries of Orthodox dominated social and economic thinking. It was determined by a rather complex group of factors. However, the Orthodox traditions should not be ignored as a possible explanation for some of the features of Bulgarian economic policy. And the effective and successful economic policy in the future requires at least a minimal knowledge of these lasting features of the Bulgarian perception of economic problems.

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