# I

# OLD BULGARIAN LITERATURE
(Ninth-Eighteenth Centuries)

## A. THE GOLDEN AGE OF OLD BULGARIAN LITERATURE AND ITS SUBSEQUENT DECLINE (NINTH TO THIRTEENTH CENTURIES)

The literature of old Bulgaria at the end of the first millennium was part of a generally homogeneous medieval culture deriving from the widespread and unquestioning acceptance of the Christian faith by almost all those who created it. Literature was designed to serve ecclesiastical purposes and promote orthodox Christian doctrine, so that there is often nothing either specifically Bulgarian or very original in the major literary monuments of medieval Bulgaria. Consequently medieval literature seems quite foreign to the modern reader, who is alienated by writing so thoroughly ideological and disappointed at its lack of national color or originality.

Indeed the medieval mind hardly recognized many features which modern man seeks in literature, of which originality is among the most important. The chief cultural institution, the church, encouraged the production of translations of the Holy Scriptures for liturgical use, different types of service books, lives of saints for the edification of the faithful, and other works such as sermons and homilies designed to explain the main tenets of the Christian faith to the unlettered believer. The intellectuals who were the guardians of this ecclesiastical culture considered it their mission to transmit the Christian message to the people in as pure a form as possible, which meant that for them any originality was a vice. They drew heavily upon Scripture and the accepted church authorities, and many of their 'original' writings consist in large measure of quotations from these sources. Though the writers of the Golden Age of Bulgarian literature — that period of intense cultural activity following the country's official Christianization in 865 — labored under great handicaps from the modern point of view, some of them possessed sufficiently powerful personalities to produce works of stylistic excellence on interesting topics. They refined certain literary devices to a remarkable

degree within the all-encompassing tradition, and many of their writings are still of value to the modern reader willing to approach them with an open mind.

It should be remembered that old Bulgarian literature did not reach the bulk of the population in written form. The written literature of the period was read by a thin layer of the educated classes, of whom most were churchmen. Some works of old Bulgarian literature which have reached us in a small number of copies probably were not accessible to more than a few readers in the course of the centuries. With the exception of the sermons and homilies delivered orally to groups of the faithful gathered for worship, we cannot speak of literature's reaching anything resembling a mass audience before the modern period.

In its earliest phases Bulgarian culture was closely linked with the eastern, Byzantine tradition. Because of its geographical proximity to Byzantium, Bulgaria was the first Slavic area of significance to be converted to Christianity. Bulgaria continued to draw sustenance from the Byzantine heritage after its conversion; moreover, it transmitted Byzantine culture to the other Slavic nations as one by one they were added to eastern Christendom. Scholars speak of the 'Second South Slavic Influence' on old Russian culture borne by refugees from Bulgaria and Serbia after the Turkish conquest of the Balkan peninsula in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. The 'first' South Slavic influence on Russia was precisely this early transmission of Byzantine ecclesiastical culture to it through the South Slavs, particularly the Bulgarians.

In recent years several Bulgarian scholars have asserted that some form of written culture in the native language existed in Bulgaria before its Christianization. Attractive and even plausible though this hypothesis may be, we have no documentary evidence of such a literature and thus must assume for the time being that the beginnings of written Bulgarian literature date from that country's Christianization.

At this point a word should be said about the texts of literary works from the oldest period of Bulgarian literature. In no case do we possess anything resembling an author's manuscript. In some rare instances we may have a manuscript dating from as early as the twelfth or occasionally the late eleventh century, by authors who had died by the early tenth century. More often — since the devastation of the Turkish conquest entailed the destruction of numerous older manuscripts — we possess manuscripts of works originally written in the ninth or tenth centuries which are no older than the fourteenth or fifteenth century. Plainly there is an excellent chance that such manuscripts may contain texts substan-

tially corrupted in the course of being copied several times over the centuries. Moreover, copyists sometimes attributed works to authors other than the genuine one in order to enhance their prestige. All these factors must be kept in mind as we deal with medieval literature.

The first identifiable 'authors' in old Bulgarian literature are Sts. Konstantin-Kiril (born Konstantin, he took the name Kiril [Cyril] when he became a monk shortly before his death) and Metodij (Methodius). Known as the "brothers of Salonika" or the "Preceptors of the Slavs", their activity was of such import for Slavdom as a whole that perhaps they are best treated outside the history of any particular Slavic nation. However, if they are to be included in the history of a single national literature, then Bulgaria may lay the most substantial claim to them.

We obtain considerable information about Kiril and Metodij from the several *žitija* (*vitae*, saints' lives) of them now extant. The brothers were born in Salonika, then a major city of the Byzantine Empire located in Macedonia, Konstantin in 826 or 827, Metodij a few years before him. It is likely that at least one of their parents was a Slav, but even if the brothers were without Slavic blood, they were thoroughly familiar with the dialect spoken by the Slavs who lived around Salonika. Thus when in 862 the prince of Moravia, in present-day Czechoslovakia, requested that someone introduce Slavic service books there, the brothers were deemed well equipped to carry out this mission. After spending some time in Moravia, at the end of 867 or the beginning of 868 Konstantin and Metodij journeyed to Rome to obtain a papal endorsement both for themselves personally and for their cause. The endorsement was partially granted, but Konstantin-Kiril fell ill and died in Rome on 14 February, 869, after adjuring his elder brother to continue their work.

Heeding Kiril's wishes, Metodij returned to Moravia and resumed his labors, translating the Scriptures and other vital ecclesiastical works into Slavic and creating his own literary 'school', despite the vicissitudes of church politics and his own reportedly difficult temperament. He stayed on in Moravia for some sixteen years until his death on 6 April, 885. His followers, expelled from Moravia as a result of ecclesiastical intrigues and disputes, migrated to Bulgaria to carry on their educational task there.

Kiril's chief contribution was the designing of an alphabet for the Slavic dialect known to him, so that the Scriptures might be translated into Slavic. The question of precisely which alphabet Kiril devised is still a matter of dispute. Old Slavic texts were written either in 'Cyrillic' (an alphabet named in honor of St. Kiril, based upon the Greek and Hebrew alphabets, similar to that still employed by the Orthodox Slavs) or

'Glagolitic' (an alphabet of highly uncertain origin quite different from Cyrillic). Although it appears that Glagolitic is the older alphabet — and therefore it would stand to reason that it was the one invented by Kiril — other substantial considerations lead most scholars to believe that the Cyrillic alphabet was the one devised by St. Kiril. In any case we can be fairly certain that at least one of these alphabets was invented by him, whether or not it is the one that now bears his name.

Through their translations Sts. Kiril and Metodij elevated their Macedonian dialect into an ecclesiastical literary language, now commonly known as Old Church Slavic, used by all Orthodox Slavdom. Thus at its inception Old Church Slavic presumably coincided with a spoken dialect of old Bulgarian. Bulgarian, however, thereafter developed and changed as a living language, while Old Church Slavic, being primarily a written language, underwent little alteration over the centuries, although it does exist in different recensions incorporating features from the spoken languages of particular areas in which it was employed. Still, the early Bulgarian literary language remained quite close to Old Church Slavic for some time, and thus it is possible to use the terms 'old Bulgarian' and 'Old Church Slavic' nearly interchangeably in discussions of the language of the Golden Age.

St. Kiril contributed further to the history of Slavic literature proper as an author. Once, before the Moravian mission, he visited Kherson on the Black Sea, where he discovered what he thought were the relics of Clement of Rome (a first century pope) and took them back to Rome. He recounted the whole episode in a *Slovo* (literally 'word') which is still extant. Kiril also produced some of the earliest written Slavic poetry in a 'Prologue' — encouraging his readers to read on — to his translation of the Gospels. He composed theological works, for example the "Napisanie o pravei vere" (Tract on the True Faith[1]), and polemical pieces, for instance one defending the Slavs' right to hear and read the Gospel in their own language and attacking the views of the 'three-tongue heretics', who held that since the inscription on Christ's cross had been written in Latin, Greek and Hebrew, none but these three languages could be used for sacred purposes. The dispute on this point was bitter and crucial, for the entire philosophical underpinning of the movement to bring Christian

[1] Often the medieval author did not title his work, and pieces may be known by slightly varying titles given them by later copyists or editors. In this chapter I shall try to use the most widespread old Bulgarian title by which a work is known. If no widely accepted title exists, I shall refer to it in English.

culture to the Slavs in their own language would be wrecked if the 'three-tongue heresy' were accepted.

When Metodij's disciples returned to Bulgaria they founded two cultural 'schools'. One, centered in Ohrid (Macedonia), consisted chiefly of Kliment Oxridski and Naum. The other was located in Preslav, the capital of the First Bulgarian Empire, and included such figures as Konstantin Preslavski, Ioan Ekzarx bəlgarski (John Exarch of Bulgaria), Czar Simeon, Černorizec Xrabər, and Černorizec Doks. It was in these two centers that old Bulgarian literature in the strict sense first developed.

St. Kliment Oxridski (the Sofia University of today is still named in his honor, although the 'St.' is dropped) was perhaps the most significant writer of those who had had direct contact with Kiril and Metodij. As he died at an advanced age in 916, he was presumably born sometime around 840. His parents, who were almost certainly of Slavic stock, probably lived in Macedonia. He went to Moravia with Kiril and Metodij and was ordained priest in Rome while accompanying them there in 867-869. After Kiril's death Kliment actively supported Metodij; when Metodij died he became a leader in the continuing struggle for the cause of Slavic enlightenment in Moravia. When he was forced to return to Bulgaria he eventually based himself in the no longer extant town of Devol, probably located somewhere in southwestern Macedonia. After the accession of Czar Simeon (reigned 893-927) Kliment was appointed the first Slavic bishop, his see in all likelihood encompassing the southwestern part of Macedonia. Beyond his ecclesiastical duties, Kliment assumed an enormous educational responsibility. According to the author of his *žitie*, in the approximately thirty years he lived in Macedonia he trained 3500 students, which works out to about 120 students per year, assuming that each student spent three years with him. Even if one supposes that Kliment had several assistants, it was still quite a task to educate so many young men. And even if the total figure is inflated, it is clear that St. Kliment made an immense contribution to the spread of ecclesiastical culture in Bulgaria.

Aside from his teaching, Kliment Oxridski also wrote, his translations of Scripture and liturgical service books being of especial importance. About fifty *slova* have been attributed to him, of which roughly a quarter seem actually to be his. These *slova* — small sermons to be delivered on special occasions — may be considered the foundation of original Bulgarian literature. Kliment produced an all-purpose sermon, a text suitable for commemorating saints into which the name of the particular saint being remembered could be inserted by a preacher unskilled at

writing his own sermons. Kliment's *slova* may be divided into homilies and eulogies, the first offering rhetorical instruction and the second rhetorical praise. His eulogies could be especially flowery and replete with Pauline rhetoric; for instance his "Eulogy to Sts. Michael and Gabriel" contains a long passage based on alternate addresses to the archangels, each beginning with "Rejoice!" and similar syntactic patterns: "Rejoice, archangel Michael, leader and first head of the disembodied powers; rejoice, archangel Gabriel, first annunciator of all joys; rejoice, archangel Michael, first sceptrebearer of the Trinity, one in essence and indivisible; rejoice, archangel Gabriel, true servant of the thrice uncreated light." Kliment was also among the very first in Slavic literature to employ the device of apostrophizing the parts of a saint's body, in his "Eulogy of St. Kiril": "I envy thy blessed lips, through which flowed spiritual sweetness for all peoples. I envy thy many-voiced tongue, which thundered like thunder and, gleaming with the dawn of the thrice-uncreated Divinity, dispersed the darkness of our sins." His use of compounded words ('many-voiced', 'thrice-uncreated') and his repetition of roots ('thundered like thunder') are among the means by which Kliment attained powerful rhetorical effects.

Naum (ca. 820-910), a disciple of Metodij and Kliment from their Moravian days, was the other principal member of the Ohrid school. In 894 he accompanied Kliment to his see in Macedonia, where he presumably assisted him actively. If Naum ever wrote anything it has not come down to us.

The Preslav school was the richer of the two early centers of old Bulgarian culture. That city, the capital of a flourishing state, was at one time very grand, although today nothing remains of it but low-lying ruins. One of its citizens (Ioan Ekzarx in his *Šestodnev* [Hexaemeron]) described the effect wrought upon the foreign visitor by the magnificence of the Czar's palace and Czar Simeon himself: according to Ioan, the impression made by the expensive woods, stone, fabrics and adornments was so overwhelming that, upon returning home, the foreigner was often at such a loss for words to describe what he had seen that he could only urge his compatriots to visit it for themselves.

In its day the capital's cultural life was no less remarkable than its appearance. A prime mover in Preslav's literary and intellectual development was Konstantin Preslavski, also a member of the Kiril-Metodij school. Since he seems to have known Metodij, we may infer that he was born around the middle of the ninth century. For roughly the last two decades of the century he resided in Bulgaria, working for a while as a

*prezviter* (priest). At some point before 906 he was appointed bishop, with his seat in Preslav, and set about organizing the Bulgarian church. We do not know when he died because, since he was never canonized, no official *žitie* of him was written.

Konstantin Preslavski's best known work was the *Didactic Gospel.* In a foreword he wrote that he had compiled it at Naum's urging, and since Naum went to Macedonia in 894, the *Didactic Gospel* must date from about 890-893. The compilation consisted of: the famous "Alphabet Prayer", a foreword, an introduction, *besedi*, or talks, on Gospel subjects, the *Čerkovno skazanie* (Ecclesiastical Legend), and the *Istorikii*, a skeletal chronology of Creation beginning with Adam and coming down to 893-894.

The "Alphabet Prayer", usually considered the first poem written in Slavic, has been attributed to both Konstantin Preslavski and Konstantin-Kiril, as identical names are a frequent cause of confusion in the attribution of medieval literary works. The prayer is a meditational poem, with the first letters of each line yielding an acrostic which reads as the alphabet. While the form of the "Alphabet Prayer" is thus of some interest, its content is quite orthodox. The *besedi* are not particularly original either in form or in content, for each is a commentary on a gospel text constructed upon the same pattern. There are fifty-one of them, one for each Sunday from Easter to Palm Sunday. Of these fifty-one it appears that thirty-eight are free adaptations of sermons by St. John Chrysostom, twelve by Cyril of Alexandria, and only one (no. 42) was composed by Konstantin Preslavski himself. Even this lone original among the *besedi* relies heavily upon Scriptural quotations and consists of straightforward exegesis of Christian doctrine.

Konstantin Preslavski also did some direct translation and compilation. He is credited with a "Service in Honor of Metodij", and rendered into Bulgarian a work on church organization and a tract, "Four Sermons Against the Arians", which stands near the source of the polemical tradition in old Bulgarian literature.

Another major figure of the Preslav school — an especially interesting one, whom a Russian scholar investigated as early as 1824 — was Ioan Ekzarx bəlgarski. We know even less about Ioan's career than we do about Konstantin Preslavski's. Indeed scholars disagree over the meaning of his title "Exarch": it might have designated a very high church official, but it might also have meant that he was merely the abbot of a leading monastery. In view of his erudition, though, it seems likely that he stood reasonably high in the church hierarchy. It is probable, though still con-

jectural, that Ioan was roughly a contemporary of Czar Simeon and that he served as a court writer. Born very likely around the middle of the ninth century, he somewhere — perhaps in Constantinople or else the former Bulgarian capital at Pliska — acquired a good command of Greek and encyclopedic knowledge for his day. Ioan himself remarks that he was not a student of Metodij's. We have as little information about Ioan's death as we do about his life, but it is usually assumed, for no apparent reason, that he died about the same time as Czar Simeon (927).

In the history of Bulgarian literature Ioan is remembered as an erudite translator and a compiler who added certain interesting elements of his own to his compilations. He first appears in 891 or 892 with a translation of "On the Orthodox Faith" by the eighth century Byzantine theologian St. John of Damascus. He prefaced his translation with a foreword in which he made the traditional disclaimers about his unworthiness to undertake it as well as dispirited comments upon the difficulties of translating from Greek into a language which was so unready to express St. John's ideas that he himself had been compelled to devise a great deal of the vocabulary. But Ioan overcame these hindrances, and the entire encyclopedic work in its Slavic form, which later acquired the title *Nebesa* (The Heavens), served the medieval reader as a valuable source of information not only about the Orthodox faith, but on natural phenomena as well.

Of greater importance than *Nebesa* was Ioan's more original *Šestodnev*, the account of the six days of Creation. Byzantine literature provided several works of this type, and Ioan's was based upon the *Hexaemerons* of Basil the Great (fourth century) and St. John Chrysostom (fifth century) and others, supplemented by some original material. Ioan's *Šestodnev*, the most famous book of its kind in medieval Slavic literature, resembled an encyclopedia of natural history. The author equipped it with a foreword eulogizing Czar Simeon as a promoter of scholarship and expounding his own view of the nature of God's creative act. Theological polemics make their way into the main body of the text as the Exarch combats heretical doctrines and pagan survivals, while simultaneously he popularizes certain pagan philosophers of antiquity. For example, he draws upon Aristotle for detailed descriptions of the human body: "At the edge of the forehead, in front, there are two eyebrows. If straight, they indicate that the person is good, humble and merciful; but if they angle toward the nose, they indicate that the person is irritable, crotchety and fearful." In addition to essays on the human body and the descriptions of Preslav and Czar Simeon mentioned above, the medieval reader could discover

geographical and miscellaneous information in the *Šestodnev*. As a piece of literature the *Šestodnev* is a lively work, full of its author's sense of wonder at the marvels of creation. "I am amazed", he wrote, "that the quantity of air in existence does not decrease with so many humans and animals breathing it.... And yet we should not be amazed at God who has made all, but rather thank and praise Him." Ioan's rhetorical devices — e.g. the piling up of similar roots and words — are not nearly so stylized as with many medieval authors. The reader's feeling that he is always being directly addressed by the author helped give the *Šestodnev* great immediacy and interest.

A few sermons of an ordinary sort, such as a "Sermon on Our Lord's Ascension", are attributed to Ioan, though not with great certainty. His reputation as a leading figure of the Golden Age of old Bulgarian literature rests upon the *Šestodnev* and the *Nebesa*, which were indeed considerable achievements.

Another member of the Preslav school, about whom next to nothing is known, was Černorizec Xrabər (Monk Xrabər), author of the very brief "O pismenex" (On Letters). We are sure of nothing more than Xrabər's name, and some scholars have declared even that a pseudonym, possibly one used by Czar Simeon before his ascension of the throne. There is, however, no reason to consider the name false except for an instinctive reluctance on the part of scholars to admit they know nothing more about him than his name, which has led them to identify him with some more famous figure. In fact, this approach impoverishes the history of medieval Bulgarian literature by diminishing the number of identifiable authors. It seems quite justifiable to add Černorizec Xrabər's name to the list of medieval Bulgarian writers of independent standing.

"O pismenex" was probably composed at the end of the ninth or the beginning of the tenth century, since in one copy it is stated that people who had known Kiril and Metodij were still alive at the time of writing. Xrabər sets out to defend Kiril and Metodij's life work and the idea that the Slavs were entitled to their own culture and their own alphabet. He rails at those who maintained that the sacred books should exist only in Hebrew, Greek and Latin, terming them 'madmen', and argues that all languages have come of God. Furthermore, he says, it was impossible for the Slavs to write their language properly using the Greek alphabet, and so it was quite essential that a Slavic alphabet be invented. Xrabər then switches to the offensive, maintaining that not only is Slavic not inferior to Greek, it is superior to it. To prove this he points out that the Greek alphabet evolved gradually over many years and that the Holy

Scriptures were translated from Hebrew into Greek by 70 scholars, whereas the Slavic alphabet was devised and the Holy Scriptures rendered into Slavic by just one man, St. Kiril. "Therefore", Xrabər concludes triumphantly, "the Slavic letters are more holy and more to be respected, because a holy man created them, but the Greek letters were invented by pagan Hellenes." By thus moving from the defensive to the offensive Xrabər very effectively achieved his polemical end and placed his opposition in what the Slavs would have considered an awkward position. It is probably for this reason that "O pismenex", despite its brevity (approximately a page), has always occupied a prominent place in medieval Bulgarian literature.

Two other members of the Preslav school evidently wrote nothing themselves but instead acted as catalysts upon their more productive colleagues. One was Černorizec Doks, whom Ioan Ekzarx bəlgarski mentions in the foreword to *Nebesa* as the person who urged him to embark upon the scholarly life in the first place. The other mentor of Bulgarian letters was Czar Simeon, who during his reign encouraged cultural activity as only he was in a position to do. The chief evidence for this is the *Compilation of Svjatoslav of 1073*, which has reached us in only one copy made in Kievan Russia for prince Svjatoslav of Kiev. The compilation, containing selections from the Byzantine church fathers, was originally put together at Simeon's behest. Other, similar collections now extant only in Russian versions further buttress the conclusion that Simeon was an important patron of culture at a critical time.

Thus far we have discussed the creation of a more or less original literature in the older period; the translations mentioned have in most cases been the work of identifiable individuals. But there also existed an anonymously translated literature whose spread was not particularly encouraged by the church. This was the situation with apocryphal literature — books rejected by the church as non-canonical and excluded from the approved text of the Bible, such as the Gospel of Nicodemus and the Gospel of Thomas, which purported to describe Christ's childhood — as well as a number of shorter legends likewise denied the church's sanction. Apocryphal literature penetrated Bulgaria in the tenth century, along with the canonical books that legitimately accompanied the land's Christianization. From there it spread to other Slavic countries.

Some apocryphal legends are fascinating. The "Tale of the Wood of the Cross", for instance, links the trees from which the crosses were made (upon which Christ and the two thieves were crucified), to the three trunks of a single tree which grew in the Garden of Eden: one trunk was Adam's,

one Eve's, and one the Lord's. Another apocryphal legend widely known among the medieval Slavs was the "Virgin's Visit to Hell". In this tale the Virgin, accompanied by the archangel Michael, observes the various more or less inventive tortures inflicted upon sinners in Hell: one woman is hanging by a tooth, "and all sorts of serpents were issuing from her mouth and eating her". Upon inquiring, the Virgin learns that the woman is being punished for gossiping and stimulating strife during her lifetime. Finally the Virgin, distressed by what she has seen and moved by the sufferers' pleas for surcease, intercedes with her Divine Son and obtains for them respite from Maundy Thursday until Pentecost every year.

Another category of anonymous translated literature in Bulgaria consisted of stories of a secular and on the whole non-ideological nature from the international fund of 'literature of entertainment'. Some were imbued with Christianity, but others were more worldly and described secular heroes. Among the religiously oriented works was "Aleksii, čelovek Božii" (Alexis the Man of God), rendered into Bulgarian during the tenth century. Alexis is a young man who abandons all, including his recent bride, for the sake of his religion and departs for a foreign land to live in utter poverty. When he returns home years later his family does not recognize him until shortly before his death. Though cast largely in the traditional hagiographic form, "Aleksii čelovek Božii" does contain elements of secularized adventure literature, especially in the description of Aleksii's wanderings. Other stories of a similar nature include the "Tale of Akir the Wise", in which the hero solves tricky problems in no less tricky fashion in order to prove that he has been slandered by an ill-wisher; and anecdotes about King Solomon, that embodiment of wisdom, whose personality so attracted the medieval reader.

The popular "Aleksandrija", an account of the life and military adventures of Alexander the Great, is an example of a more secular tale. It was frequently thought a trustworthy biographical work and included in serious historical compilations. Stories about the heroes of the Trojan War were akin to the "Aleksandrija". A more artistic tale was "Varlaam and Ioasaf", which entered the mythology of Christendom from the East. Ioasaf's father, a king, in order to insulate him from any contact with Christianity, kept him in strict isolation from the world. One day, however, Ioasaf manages to get out and discovers, to his horror, the existence of sorrow, suffering and death in the world. Thereafter he is converted to Christianity by the hermit Varlaam and eventually brings his father and then the entire kingdom to the true faith.

The inquisitive medieval Bulgarian could satisfy his curiosity about

history through translations of Byzantine chronicles by Georgios Hamartolos or Sinkellos. He could find information, much of it fantastic, about the natural world in such compilations as the *Fiziolog*, in which descriptions of animals, birds and minerals were accompanied by didactic interpretations. From the *Fiziolog* he could learn, for instance, that the unicorn could be captured only by a virgin. For devotional reading he could obtain compilations of the works of the Byzantine church fathers, especially St. John Chrysostom. These collections had varying titles and were composed in various ways, so that books under the same title often had widely differing contents in different copies.

Following the abrupt outburst of literary and cultural activity during Czar Simeon's reign, Bulgarian culture almost ceased to exist for several centuries, but certain isolated works which appeared between Simeon's death and the late fourteenth century should be mentioned. The most extensive and interesting monument of that period, Prezviter Kozma's *Beseda protiv bogomilite* (Discourse Against the Bogomils), was directed against Bogomilism, a powerful heretical movement of medieval Bulgaria.

So far as we can tell, the Bogomil movement gathered strength after the end of Czar Simeon's reign and remained a prominent component of Bulgarian intellectual life until the fifteenth century; indeed in the thirteenth century it became so powerful that a special church council was convened to condemn it in 1211. Despite opposition, the movement spread over the Balkan peninsula and reached northern Italy and southern France.

The origins of the Bogomil movement in Bulgaria are uncertain. Prezviter Kozma claimed that it was begun by a certain *pop* Bogomil (priest Bogomil: the name literally translated means 'pleasing to God' and was probably adopted by him for publicity purposes), who lived during the time of Czar Petər (reigned 927-969). Since we read in Kliment Oxridski's *žitie* that after the saint's death in 916 an 'evil heresy' spread throughout the land, we may conjecture that there existed a priest under this name in the 920's who worked in southwestern Bulgaria.[2] The movement, whose doctrines were rather clearly defined, was connected with the dualistic heresies of Manichaeism and Paulicianism. The heretics believed in a dualistic interpretation of the cosmos, according to which the entire visible world was created, not by God, but by the Devil, who was as much the son of God as Christ. If all things visible and material

[2] In recent years the Bulgarian medievalist Vasil Kiselkov has argued that *pop* Bogomil was a mythical figure, but other medievalists have rebutted his arguments, and on balance it seems likely, though not certain, that such a person did exist.

were the creation of the Evil One (Bogomilism did hold that, though Good and Evil might have independent existences and struggle ferociously, Good would overcome Evil in the final accounting), they reasoned, then it followed that they should negate the things of this world as far as possible. Therefore the Bogomils preached — as an ideal, anyway — abstention from marriage, meat and wine. Furthermore, the Bogomils quite logically denied that material things could be God's instruments, so they rejected the sacrament of the Eucharist, which used bread and wine as a channel of grace, icons as an aid to worship, crosses (in this case they further argued that it was blasphemous to venerate the instrument through which the Son of God met His death), and church buildings. In addition, they felt an insuperable aversion to the established church hierarchy, a settled liturgy, and ecclesiastical discipline, although they replaced the latter with a rigid Protestant discipline of their own. Moreover, they soon had to organize their own movement, for without organization of some type it could not have survived. In the beginning at least, the Bogomils adhered to high standards of personal morality, for they were consciously reacting against the laxity and corruption of the official church. Whatever may have been the reasons for the heresy's appeal — its adherents' exemplary lives, the insufficient time which orthodox Christian doctrine had had to establish itself, its rebellion against the Establishment, its popular nature — its challenge and the church's response furnished the framework for the primary literary monuments preserved from the period of its ascendancy.

As the Bogomils opposed the church and the church saw to the copying of most written literature in medieval Bulgaria, it is not astonishing that very little written by the heretics themselves should have survived. Traces of Bogomil doctrine appear in certain apocryphal works, however. Bogomil views are set forth at length in the *Tajna kniga* (Secret Book), which, though originally written in Slavic, has come down to us only in Latin translation. Cast in the form of Christ's answers to questions by John, "your brother", at the Last Supper, the *Tajna kniga* expounds Bogomil notions of the origin of Satan, the Creation, the Second Coming and the Last Judgment; it also incorporates other elements of Bogomil doctrine, such as opposition to baptism as a sacrament. Literarily the *Tajna kniga* has a certain biblical power, especially in its description of the Second Coming, even though ideologically it is a handbook for heresy.

Tracts by the defenders of orthodoxy have reached us in greater quantity, since their wide distribution was in the church's interest. The best known of these is Prezviter Kozma's *Beseda protiv bogomilite*. As with

Černorizec Xrabər, we can say nothing for certain about Kozma beyond what is to be gleaned from his own work. Scholars have advanced wildly divergent hypotheses as to when Kozma lived, placing him anywhere from the early tenth century to the thirteenth century. It appears most probable that he worked in the last third of the tenth century — after Bogomilism had become successfully entrenched but before its origins were totally forgotten.

While the *Beseda protiv bogomilite* is squarely in the tradition of polemical medieval literature, its concrete character and vivid reflection of contemporary life give it a novel, almost journalistic tinge. The *Beseda* is composed in the form of a first-person monologue interspersed with dramatic dialogues and polemics framed as prayers and appeals. In his introduction Kozma wrathfully unmasks his ideological opponents: "Externally the heretics are like sheep: meek, humble and quiet. To all external eyes their faces are pale from hypocritical fasting.... Externally they do everything in order to remain indistinguishable from Orthodox Christians, but inwardly they are ravening wolves, as the Lord has said." He then summarizes the chief bogomil doctrines in order to deride and refute them. In one ferocious passage he pronounces anathemas against all those (i.e. the Bogomils) who reject certain basic tenets of Christian doctrine: "He who does not love our Lord Jesus Christ, may he be accursed! He who does not believe in the Holy and Indivisible Trinity, may he be accursed! He who does not pray with hope to the Holy Virgin Mary, may he be accursed!" and so on through a considerable series which takes on the aspect of a perverse litany.

Vigorously though Kozma condemns the bogomil heresies, as a man of intellectual honesty he is compelled to admit that the established church is not perfect. Monks, who have withdrawn from the world and should be ideal representatives of the Orthodox faith, all too often are unworthy men not only insufficiently cognizant of the seriousness of their calling but also very subject to that most heinous of sins, spiritual pride. At one point Kozma even comes close to wondering how the monastic ideal differs from the bogomil belief that the Christian should abandon the things of this world, such as wife and family, and retire to the wilderness, but he manages to sidestep the problem. In terms little less powerful than those he employs polemically against the Bogomils, Kozma adjures Orthodox Christians to adhere to the highest ideals. Though he anathematized the heretics, then, he also saw the beam in his own eye and attacked his unworthy allies quite sharply. In the process he wrote one of the livelier works of the medieval period.

After Prezviter Kozma (if we assume he wrote in the latter part of the tenth century), the literary vineyards bore meager fruit for centuries. What writings of the period we do possess are of little esthetic worth and sometimes were not even composed in Bulgarian. In the eleventh century a Greek prelate, Archbishop Teofilakt, memorialized Ohrid's ancient traditions with a *žitie* of Kliment Oxridski. The *žitie* supplies some information on Kliment's life, but it was written in Greek and its author does not conceal his low opinion of the Bulgarian people and their language. A monument dating from the twelfth century is the folk *žitie* of Ivan Rilski. St. Ivan Rilski (ca. 876-946) was one of the earliest and greatest of the native saints, and his relics were perhaps the most peripatetic in Bulgarian ecclesiastical history. After his death they were deposited in Sofia. Subsequently, in 1183, they were exhibited as far away as Hungary before being returned to Sofia. Later they were moved to Tərnovo before they finally came to rest in the Rila Monastery south of Sofia, the most famous monastery of medieval and modern Bulgaria. A *žitie* of Ivan Rilski was presumably composed soon after his demise, but it has not been preserved. However, it must have been used as a source for the folk *žitie*, written by an anonymous author in the twelfth century sometime before 1183, since he says nothing about the display of the saint's relics in that year. The *žitie* was intended to be widely read, and evidently was, for it has come down to us in multiple copies. It is an apotheosis of a simple man, a shepherd, who attained sanctity while dwelling in the very midst of the Bulgarian people (places and things associated with him may still be seen, according to the author) and who serves as a powerful intercessor for Bulgarian believers.

Another popular work of the twelfth century is the so-called "Solunska legenda" (Legend of Salonika), a brief account of the life of Konstantin-Kiril which patriotically sets the Bulgarian nation above even the Greek, much as Černorizec Xrabər had done some centuries before. Both the "Solunska legenda" and the *žitie* of Ivan Rilski bear witness to a revived interest in the nation's halcyon days during the discouraging period of Byzantine overlordship. The memory of better times has often been a source of comfort for the Bulgarians in years of trial.

A totally fantastic species of history is presented in another monument of this time, the *Bulgarian Apocryphal Chronicle*, written after the middle of the eleventh century. The apocalyptic first part contains bogomil ideas in the description of Isaiah's ascension into Heaven and his mission to inform people of the Day of Judgment. The second portion promotes mostly an idealized version of Bulgarian history, and although much of it

is fictional, it did make the reader realize that the Bulgarian state at one point had been a mighty entity, especially under Czar Petər, who was asserted to have ruled for twelve years, during which time the land enjoyed great prosperity.

By the thirteenth century Bulgaria had long since freed itself from Byzantium and commenced the formation of the Second Empire, with its capital at Tərnovo, the city which in modern historical tradition embodies the quintessence of the Bulgarian national spirit. And yet literature did not revive. A no more than semi-literary work of the early part of the century is the *Borilovijat sinodik*, produced by the special church council called in 1211 by Czar Boril to condemn Bogomilism. Much of the *Sinodik* is merely a translation of Byzantine imprecations against heretics with some original anathemas against Bulgarian heretics added, the sort of curses Prezviter Kozma utilized and which were common in medieval church practice: "On those who say that Satan created Adam and Eve, anathema.... On those who do not confess that the Son of God is the creator of Heaven and Earth, threefold anathema...". Though the *Borilovijat sinodik* can only with some indulgence be regarded as literature, after it the thirteenth century saw almost nothing written. But this was the prelude to a more fruitful period.

## B. THE SILVER AGE OF OLD BULGARIAN LITERATURE AND ITS SUBSEQUENT DECLINE (FOURTEENTH TO EIGHTEENTH CENTURIES)

In 1185 the boyar brothers Asen and Petər headed a successful rebellion against the Byzantines, which resulted in the establishment of the Second Bulgarian Empire. During the Second Empire Bulgaria reached the apogee of her political might and territorial expansion, stretching from the Black Sea in the east to the Adriatic in the west, almost reaching Belgrade. Disunifying tendencies inevitably developed, however, and in the second half of the fourteenth century, for dynastic reasons, the country was divided into the Tərnovo and Vidin kingdoms. The Bulgarian rulers' shortsightedness combined with the ruthlessness of the Ottoman onslaught led to the greatest catastrophe in Bulgarian history, the fall of Tərnovo in 1393 (Vidin resisted until 1396). But the very imminence of political disaster, it seems, stimulated Bulgarian culture to produce the Silver Age of old Bulgarian literature.

The literature of the Golden Age had exuded confidence in the future,

for at the time it was produced a newly introduced Christian church was bent upon consolidating its position and eradicating all remnants of the old pagan beliefs. Authors were men of a practical turn of mind who wrote about their faith in a matter-of-fact manner. They were not plagued by doubts or, before the rise of Bogomilism, unsettled by effective opposition. Consequently the tone of the literary monuments of Czar Simeon's time had been one of healthy assertion and firm belief.

By the fourteenth century the intellectual atmosphere in Bulgaria had been considerably altered. At that point Christianity had been long established in the land and events and personalities were always viewed in a religious context. But the reigning ideology no longer displayed its youthful exuberance, and even when it was reformed it was modified in a deeply conservative spirit. The literary tone, no more healthy and firm, was set by an ill-defined, mystical movement: Hesychasm.

It is difficult to analyze Hesychastic doctrine with any precision, for the adherents of a mystical outlook always find it hard to describe their experiences and theories in words. Originating in the fourteenth century in the monasteries of Mt. Athos in Greece, the Holy Mount of Eastern Orthodoxy, Hesychasm soon spread to Bulgaria, Russia and other Slavic counties. Its adepts strove to cultivate the eternal and uncreated divine light through intensive contemplation and sought tranquility through silence. As a form of discipline the Hesychasts evidently meditated on their navels, something their opponents made fun of by terming them *umbilis animi*, or people with their souls in their navels. The Hesychastic movement proved not nearly so viable as Bogomilism, but it appeared at a highly strategic time for medieval Slavic literature.

Paradoxically enough, though Hesychasm encouraged contemplative silence, the Hesychasts who were writers became absorbed in questions of form rather than content, concerned with the word *qua* word and the interpretation of texts. Where form is involved, the literature of the period is interesting and elegant, while at the same time its content is stagnant. The era also saw a flowering of the graphic arts, as witness the miniatures provided for a Slavic translation of the Byzantine chronicle of Constantin Manasses made in the mid-fourteenth century and now preserved in the Vatican library. Another point about the Silver Age is that several of its representatives worked in emigration: after the Turkish conquest some made their way to Russia; others settled in Rumania and Serbia. The Silver Age was an exotic development of Bulgarian culture which managed to survive for a time in scattered areas even after the collapse of the state which gave it birth.

The central figure of the Silver Age was Patriarch Evtimij, who, in addition to being a prominent literary man, is also remembered as a great leader of the Bulgarian people in adversity. His followers revered him and sought to preserve his memory, so we know a great deal about his life from such sources as Grigorij Camblak's eulogy of him and writings by other contemporaries of his (Ioasaf Bdinski, Konstantin Kostenečki). Evtimij was born in Tərnovo, presumably sometime between 1325 and 1330, and almost certainly was educated in monasteries located in and around the capital. When Teodosij, the first great preacher of Hesychasm in Bulgaria, came to Tərnovo in 1350 to found a monastery there, Evtimij, by then already a monk, hastened to receive instruction from him. In 1363 Evtimij accompanied his mentor to Constantinople; subsequently he spent some time at Mt. Athos, imbibing Hesychasm at its source. About 1371 Evtimij returned to Tərnovo, where he settled in the Holy Trinity Monastery and laid the foundations of the 'Tərnovo literary school', which saw to such projects as the translation of service books. It was apparently at this point that Evtimij began the campaign to correct the errors which had crept into the church books over the years, a campaign with which his name has been linked ever since.

So far as we can judge from the writings of Evtimij's disciples — we have none of his own on the subject — he compared the Slavic service books with their Greek originals in order to eliminate corrupt readings which could give rise to heresy. He advocated a return to the standards of Kiril and Metodij because he believed antiquity should furnish the standard for modernity. The Word was of the utmost importance because it was thought equivalent to the concept, and therefore some order had to be brought into the use of words if one were to maintain seriously that the articles of the Christian faith were known and certain. On the more strictly linguistic level, Evtimij's concern for precision went beyond phrases and words all the way to individual letters: he was deeply interested in orthographical reform. On the literary level, he developed an ornate style which he transmitted to his followers. The elaboration of this style and the orthographical reform were the two major facets of the Evtimian linguistic revolution, which had a profound effect upon old Russian as well as old Bulgarian culture.

Evtimij did not limit his activities to the areas just discussed: he also played an active role in ecclesiastical politics. After his election to the Bulgarian patriarchate around 1375, he worked to reform his church and defended its independence from Constantinople. In 1379 he led the populace in greeting the Metropolitan of Kiev, Kiprian, when the latter

passed through Tərnovo on his way to the Byzantine capital. After Tərnovo's fall Evtimij retained the moral leadership of his flock. He was imprisoned for a period in Thrace, and probably lived out his last years in the Bačkovo Monastery before dying around the turn of the century. He is now one of the most universally respected figures in Bulgarian history.

Patriarch Evtimij was the author of a number of extant literary works. Aside from his translations of church books and four epistles which deal with questions of narrowly theological interest (for example the problem of why God created the angels when in His foreknowledge He was aware they would fall from grace), his legacy consists primarily of *žitija* of saints and of eulogies. We now have four works in each of these genres: *žitija* of Ivan Rilski, Petka (Paraskeva) Tərnovska, Ilarion Məglenski and Filoteja Temniška; and eulogies addressed to Constantine and Elena (the Roman Emperor and his mother), Nedelja, Mixail Voin and Ivan Polivotski.

In writing his *žitija* Evtimij followed the established hagiographical tradition but at the same time embroidered upon it. For instance, he prefaced his *žitie* of St. Ivan Rilski, based on the earlier folk *žitie*, with a treatise on asceticism. He lauded Ilarion Məglenski, a twelfth-century bishop, as an ideal ecclesiastical statesman and a defender of orthodoxy against heresy. The *žitie* of St. Petka, who lived probably in the tenth to eleventh centuries, is worth considering at slightly greater length as an example of Patriarch Evtimij's hagiographical style. He commences his account of Petka's life, not with the established disclaimer as to his unworthiness to undertake her biography, but rather with a lyrical introduction comparing the joy afforded by meditation upon saints' lives to the freshness engendered by the warm rays of the spring sun and proclaiming the spiritual benefits to be derived from reading the lives of such saints as Petka. Evtimij begins the *žitie* proper with the expected comments on the piety of Petka's parents. After telling of her feats in life, he recounts in detail a miracle attendant upon her death, when she appeared in a vision to a certain poor man, complaining that a sailor's stinking corpse had been buried near her incorruptible remains and demanding that they be transferred to a more suitable place. The request was granted with alacrity. Although Petka was reputed to have accomplished many miracles for others after her death, Evtimij avoids describing them, treating instead the removal of her relics from her native town to Tərnovo. Evtimij also composed a litany of blessing for parts of the saint's body reminiscent of the one in the Eulogy of Konstantin-Kiril: "I envy thy hands, which

were ever constant in labor and never tired! I envy thy feet as well, for they never grew fatigued during night-long vigils!" He concluded the *žitie* with a sequence of elaborate rhetorical apostrophes of his subject.

Evtimij's eulogies, though similar to his *žitija*, are more lyrical and contain less biographical information as well as a more prominent panegyrical element in the introduction and conclusion. Evtimij's eulogies were detailed, lengthy and flowery by comparison with those of the Golden Age. They were also widely read.

Patriarch Evtimij's immediate literary following consisted of Metropolitan Kiprian, Grigorij Camblak, Konstantin Kostenečki and Ioasaf Bdinski. As most of them worked in some place other than Tərnovo, the influence of the Tərnovo literary school spread far beyond the capital's confines.

Kiprian, for instance, carried the Evtimian tradition to Russia. For some time he was thought to have been a Serb, but now it has been reasonably well established that he belonged to the wealthy merchant family of the Camblaks of Tərnovo, where he was born sometime in the 1330s. In 1364 he accompanied Evtimij to Mt. Athos and remained there for ten years before moving on to Constantinople in 1374 instead of returning to his native land. In Constantinople he so impressed the patriarch that he was dispatched on a special mission to mediate an ecclesiastical dispute in Russia. Once there he made himself such a prominent personage that in 1390 he was elected Metropolitan of Moscow and all Russia. From then until his death in 1406 he played a key role in the early stages of Muscovite political consolidation. Chronologically he was the first to bring the Evtimian linguistic reforms to Russia: he put together service books, revised existing ones on the basis of the Greek originals, compiled an index of forbidden books, and introduced a conservative orthographical reform of the Russian language. He also did some writing of his own, but his literary activity properly belongs to the history of old Russian literature.

Another member of the Camblak family, Grigorij Camblak, remained nearer home than Kiprian. Grigorij recalled that in his boyhood he had seen his kinsman Kiprian during his visit of 1379, so he must have been born around 1365, presumably in the capital. He studied with Evtimij and also at Mt. Athos, turning up toward the end of the century as a refugee in Constantinople. Thereafter he went to Serbia, where he became abbot of a monastery and produced some important literary works. Around 1402 he traveled to Rumania and continued his scholarly activity there.

Later on he set out to visit Kiprian in Moscow but turned aside to Constantinople upon learning of the latter's death. Eventually, in 1414, he was elected Metropolitan of Kiev and had to deal with some difficult political and ecclesiastical problems before his death in 1420. Grigorij Camblak's career was truly international: his literary production belongs to the history of Serbian and Russian as well as Bulgarian literature.

Aside from several sermons, well known in Russia, the prime segment of Grigorij Camblak's legacy are *žitija* and eulogies, which, moreover, are valuable as historical sources since several of them were written about people whom Grigorij knew personally. His most significant work is a biography of the Serbian king Stefan (Stevan) Dečanski (died 1331), whose relics were preserved in the monastery where Grigorij was residing at the time of writing. A species of *žitie* deriving from the Evtimian tradition is the "Tale of the Transfer of Petka's Relics from Tərnovo to Vidin and Serbia", composed sometime after 1402, an adjunct to Evtimij's life of St. Petka. Two works glorifying persons with whom Camblak had been acquainted were his eulogy of Kiprian, composed a few years after his death in 1406 and extant in a single Russian copy, and a eulogy of Evtimij, probably written in 1415-1418 during Camblak's tenure as Metropolitan of Kiev. The "Eulogy" of Evtimij is reasonably extensive and resembles a *žitie*. After a rhetorical foreword Camblak describes the patriarch's childhood, utilizing nature comparisons reminiscent of Evtimij: "Just as selected saplings, which from the very beginning appear with straight branches, by their external appearance foretell to the cultivator's eye how beautiful they will be later, in the same way did [Evtimij] appear [as a child]." Since Evtimij was never canonized, Camblak does not attribute posthumous miracles to his relics, but he does praise the efficacy of his intercessions in life, as for example when he broke a terrible drought by praying. Throughout his eulogy Camblak employs a rhetoric of pathos: he says that "even the very stones of the city wept" at Evtimij's exile to Thrace by the Turkish conquerors. The "Eulogy" also exhibits the beginnings of an interest in character and personal psychology.

A third follower of Evtimij's was Ioasaf Bdinski, appointed Metropolitan of Vidin in 1392, shortly before that capital of a separatist state in medieval Bulgaria fell to the Turks in 1396. We know nothing of his fate after this, but in 1394 he journeyed to Tərnovo to bring St. Filoteja's relics back to Vidin. His sole literary work still extant is a eulogy of this same Filoteja, based on her *žitie* by Evtimij. The piece is quite derivative, although Ioasaf does add some original passages, especially a pathetic description of the devastation wrought by the Turks upon Tərnovo and

its lands. The "Eulogy" is of some value both as an historical and an ecclesiastical document.

The last important member of the Evtimian school, a student of a student of Evtimij's, was Konstantin Kostenečki, one of the more intriguing personages in old Bulgarian literature (he is usually treated in the history of Bulgarian letters even though he spent most of his life in Serbian exile). It is uncertain where Konstantin was born, though if we judge by the epithet "Kostenečki" it would seem likely that he came into the world in the village of Kostenec, sometime around 1380. About the turn of the century he sought refuge in the Bačkovo Monastery, where he remained until approximately 1410, when further Turkish incursions compelled him to flee to Serbia. There he was kindly received by King Stefan Lazarević (reigned 1389-1427) and eventually settled in Belgrade. After 1431 we lose sight of him entirely.

Konstantin Kostenečki is credited with one translation and three original works. The latter are: an account of a journey to Palestine, which may possibly have been translated from the Greek after all; a *žitie* of Stefan Lazarević; and the *Skazanie izjavlenno o pismenex* (Treatise on Letters).

The Palestinian travelogue is of little interest for the reader of modern times. Konstantin's literary talent is most apparent in his *žitie* of Stefan Lazarević, written in 1431 after the death of the man who had done so much for Serbian culture. Konstantin sets the subject of his biography in the context of his time, for this purpose including in his work considerable geographical and historical material. However, his convoluted style makes the reading of the *žitie* a philological feat and diminishes its esthetic value. Furthermore, since strictly speaking the *žitie* belongs to the history of Serbian literature, there is no need to dwell upon it here.

The *Skazanie izjavlenno o pismenex*, on the other hand, is an original and interesting work which deserves greater attention, although it too is more closely linked with the history of Serbian than Bulgarian literature. When the reader succeeds in penetrating the thickets of Konstantin's syntax he usually obtains something worthwhile. Dedicated to Stefan Lazarević, the work consists of four parts: a short introduction; a table of contents; the body of the treatise, divided into 40 chapters; and an encoded inscription at the conclusion made up of the first letters of each of the forty chapters.

Being something of an internationalist, Konstantin expounds the view that Russian is the most nearly perfect Slavic language and that Kiril and

Metodij translated the Scriptures into Russian with an admixture of other Slavic tongues. But this question is not crucial for him, since he places greatest stress upon orthography and the formal, external appearance of language: for him, to understand a thing is to be able to name it correctly. He even links what he considers the low state of morality in contemporary Serbia to the fact that insufficient attention had been given to orthography, thus emerging with a rather unusual explanation for the breakdown of law and order in society. Not that the graphic form of the word is so vital in and of itself, but as the word and the essence of the thing denoted are equivalent, incorrect language may lead at best to misunderstandings, at worst to heresies. It follows that faultless orthography and correct texts are of the utmost importance, and that variant readings in the Scriptures must be eliminated at any cost. Konstantin recognizes that the existence of different languages, each with a different word denoting the same thing, undermines his argument. He attempts to resolve the difficulty at least partially by adopting an anthropomorphic approach and holding that languages occur in families. The Hebrew language is a paternal one, he wrote, the Greek language is a maternal one, and the various Slavic languages are as children, who must obey their progenitors when conflicts arise.

Konstantin extended his theories down to individual letters. He believed that each letter possessed its own special significance and contended, for example, that it was no chance matter that certain letters never began a word. He wished to preserve all the differences between various letters and retain some odd letters even though they had first appeared only in the fifteenth century. He also applied the anthropomorphic approach to letters. The consonants, Konstantin said, are like men, the vowels like women: the former command and the latter obey. The diacritical marks inserted in manuscripts over vowels (their significance is not always clear to us now) are analogous to women's hats, which it is improper for men to wear. Just as women may remove their hats when at home and in the presence of men, so vowels accompanied by consonants may be written without diacritical marks. It will be obvious from this summary that Konstantin's theories are of little use as serious explanations of anything, but they are frequently entertaining, and some of the information on the language of his day which he throws out in the course of elaborating his hypotheses is of value to historical linguists.

After 1393, then, Bulgarian culture survived for a time in scattered areas. Following the Turkish invasion literary life centered in the churches

and monasteries, especially those in the western part of Bulgaria, which were farthest from the center of Turkish power. Serbia granted refuge to such men of letters as Konstantin Kostenečki, Grigorij Camblak and — possibly at the end of his life — Ioasaf Bdinski, in addition to extending its general influence into western Bulgaria and Macedonia. This could occur because the Serbian state continued to exist until 1459, because portions of western Bulgaria and Macedonia were under the archbishop of Ohrid, and because in the sixteenth century books suitable for distribution in Bulgarian areas began to be printed in Serbia.

After Konstantin Kostenečki passed from the scene in the early part of the fifteenth century, Bulgarian literature almost ceased to exist, just as it had following the Golden Age. In what remained of the fifteenth century only two men attained any literary prominence: Vladislav Gramatik and Dimitər Kantakuzin, both of whom flourished in the decades between 1460 and 1480.

Vladislav Gramatik is a shadowy figure. It is not even certain that he was ethnically a Bulgarian, as he was born in a Serbian town in the 1420s, but he is nonetheless usually claimed as one by historians of Bulgarian literature. After his native town was sacked by the Turks in 1455 he moved on to the Žegligovo Monastery, where he probably resided until his death, sometime after 1480. It is likely that he visited the Rila Monastery, where he learned something of the life of St. Ivan Rilski.

Vladislav Gramatik was more nearly a scholarly compiler than an original litterateur. His production includes a *Šestodnev* (Hexaemeron, probably a translation of that by St. John Chrysostom); a more original "Rilska povest" (Tale of Rila), describing the translation of St. Ivan Rilski's relics from Tərnovo to the Rila Monastery in 1469 and extant in both a long and short redaction; and four compilations: one written in 1455-1456 containing a detailed autobiographical note and displaying an anti-Catholic bias, as the Roman church was then attempting to increase its influence in Vladislav's area; the Zagreb compilation of 1469, a standard collection of *vitae*, sermons by church fathers, articles on Christian doctrine, eulogies and historical tales; a compilation of 1473 containing thirty-one sermons; and the Rila compilation of 1479. The collections are mainly of scholarly or ecclesiastical interest, for Vladislav Gramatik rarely included anything of his own in them.

The other major writer of the period, Dimitər Kantakuzin, probably came from a prominent Byzantine family which had settled in the Balkans. He was connected with Vladislav Gramatik and the Rila Monastery: in 1466 he commissioned a 'panegyric' collection put together

by Vladislav Gramatik, which he then donated to the Rila Monastery in 1469. In all likelihood he died toward the end of the fifteenth century.

Kantakuzin, who was evidently a man of means, not only subsidized Vladislav Gramatik's labors, but himself wrote original works of greater literary value than Gramatik's. He is best remembered for three items: a service in honor of Ivan Rilski; a *žitie* of the same saint; and the verse "Prayer to the Holy Virgin". It has recently been discovered that two further eulogies and an epistle belong to him.

The *žitie* of Ivan Rilski was probably written around 1 July, 1469, the day when the saint's relics were transferred to the newly revived Rila Monastery; it was perhaps read at the monastery itself. Unfortunately for Bulgarian national sensitivities, Kantakuzin's *žitie* may have been first composed in Greek, and if not it certainly followed ornate Byzantine models. Like Ioasaf Bdinski, Kantakuzin painted a melancholy picture of Bulgaria's lot under Turkish rule in the *žitie*.

Kantakuzin's best work is the "Prayer", which has survived in variants of 250 and 312 lines. A strong Byzantine influence is detectible in this work as well as the *žitie* of Ivan Rilski. Except for its concluding portion, the poem's organizing principle is repetition of the first word of each line: ordinarily four, occasionally two, consecutive lines will begin with the same word. The prayer is a highly rhetorical but still sincere plea to the Virgin for her aid in combatting sins:

> Thou, oh Virgin, art my hope,
> Thou art my faith and refuge,
> Thou art my intercessor and salvation,
> Thou art my protection, advocate and aid.

Kantakuzin's moving supplication is among the most impressive prayers in old Bulgarian literature.

After Vladislav Gramatik and Dimitər Kantakuzin, Bulgarian literature of the late fifteenth century and the sixteenth century had little to offer. The cultural center of gravity shifted from Tərnovo to Sofia, at that time called Sredec. What literature was produced was less aristocratic than the writing of the Silver Age, more involved with the cruel reality of Turkish oppression. Although the two chief surviving works of the sixteenth century were cast in the traditional hagiographic form, in each instance the author was chronicling the life of a martyr who had been his own spiritual son. Consequently the hagiographers were writing not of some vague saint who had lived perhaps centuries before, as did Evtimij, but rather of men whose martyrdom they themselves had witnessed.

Their *žitija* therefore possess an immediacy unprecedented in Bulgarian literature.

The first member of the sixteenth century 'Sofia school' is known only as *pop* Pejo (priest Pejo). We have almost no information about him, although it may be surmised that he lived at the end of the fifteenth century and during the first decades of the sixteenth century, that he was a priest, most likely an important one, in a Sofia church, that he traveled extensively, and that he was reasonably well off financially, since the Turks criticized him for being excessively concerned with money and the things of this world. *Pop* Pejo's contribution to literature was a *žitie* of St. Georgi Novi (the adjective 'New' distinguishes him from the better-known St. George), martyred in Sofia in February 1515, and a liturgy in Georgi's honor. The *žitie*, composed soon after Georgi's death at the age of only eighteen, was designed to encourage the Bulgarians to resist forcible conversion by the Turks. Georgi was born into a quite ordinary family in the village of Kratovo and learned goldworking. As he was endowed with extraordinary physical and spiritual beauty, the Turks attempted to lure him from the true faith by both persuasion and deceit. When Georgi, with *pop* Pejo's support, rebuffed their efforts, the enraged Turks executed him by burning near the historic church of St. Sofia. Afterwards *pop* Pejo was permitted to give the martyr a solemn burial in another Sofia church. The point the hagiographer wishes to make in his *žitie* of Georgi Novi is clear: the martyr furnished a shining example of faithfulness to Christianity even unto death. In order to emphasize his message, Pejo occasionally puts long speeches into Georgi's mouth which the latter surely never dreamed of making and markedly idealizes his character. In other areas, however, Pejo is a typically matter-of-fact Bulgarian: for instance he neglects to describe any miracles connected with Georgi's martyrdom. In general old Bulgarian saints' lives exhibit much less interest in miracles, especially posthumous ones, than the *vitae* of old Russian hagiographers. *Pop* Pejo participated too directly in the events he chronicled to be tempted to describe miracles which never occurred. The miracle of Georgi's steadfastness was sufficient for him.

The second major work of sixteenth-century Bulgarian literature, Matej Gramatik's *žitie* of Nikola Novi the martyr, resembles the *žitie* of Georgi Novi and was written for much the same reasons. Presumably a native of Sofia, Matej Gramatik probably lived during the middle decades of the century and held an important ecclesiastical post in the capital. He was a very cultured man by the standards of his time.

The *žitie* of Nikola Novi was written soon after the subject's martyrdom

in 1555 in Sofia. Like Georgi, Nikola was a son of the common people, a cobbler; but he was older than his predecessor, a man with a family who had traveled and who knew something of the world. For a while in 1554, it seemed that the Turks had succeeded in converting him, but after a period of brooding, at Easter of the following year he announced publicly that he was a Christian. The Turks thereupon brought him to trial and executed him by stoning outside the city. Matej's *žitie*, the longest one in Bulgarian literature, follows the old Byzantine and Bulgarian models, with extensive introduction and theological digressions. It is of historical interest not only because of the author's intimate knowledge of the events he recounts but also because he is a local patriot who describes the life and architectural monuments of Sofia, subjects not ordinarily treated in hagiographies. Thus the *žitie* of Nikola Novi represents a fusion of the traditional with the new: the old hagiographical forms are combined with an interest in the historical milieu, a focus upon a hero from the common people and — especially — attention to the critical question of the Islamization of the Bulgarian population.

In the seventeenth and first half of the eighteenth centuries Bulgarian literature, though it remained firmly under church control and consequently dealt largely with problems of religious doctrine and church life, all the same strove to reach an ever more extensive audience through the distribution of manuscript copies over a wide geographical area. A relatively large number of persons had access to the more popularized ecclesiastical literature of the last century and a half before the beginning of the Bulgarian Renaissance.

Though Sofia was the primary center of Bulgarian cultural life for a brief period in the sixteenth century, over the next two centuries most literary production issued from monasteries scattered all over the country. The main vehicles of literary expression were *sbornici*, or compilations, which differed from earlier ones in that they were intended for a broader reading public and were written in language closer to the vernacular. It is customary to distinguish two types of compilations: compilations of miscellaneous content (*sbornici səs smeseno sədəržanie*) and the so-called *damaskini*. In practice it is difficult to establish a clear line between the two, but the *damaskini* were composed of *vitae* and sermons by the Greek churchman Damaskin Studit (died 1580), who lived in Salonika. The miscellaneous compilations also included sermons by Damaskin, but in addition they contained a larger proportion of other items, such as apocrypha, *žitija*, sermons by church fathers, didactic stories and legends, and excerpts from chronicles.

Damaskin Studit's best-known collection, published under the title of *Thesauros* (Treasure) about the middle of the sixteenth century, was eventually translated into Bulgarian at least ten different times. *Damaskini*, properly so called, began to appear at the end of that century and continued to be compiled as late as the nineteenth century; thus they survived for an extraordinarily long time and were an important part of the tradition from which emerged the pioneers of the Bulgarian Renaissance. Among the compilers, termed *damaskinari*, the most prominent was Iosif Bradati. Bradati was a monk attached to the Rila Monastery possibly from 1690 to 1757, which means that he must have reached an advanced age. He traveled extensively about the country collecting money for the monastery and also distributing his compilations, of which at least six (some copied by others) have survived to this day. Iosif Bradati's *sbornici* circulated widely partly as a result of the circumstance that he could establish personal acquaintances with leading churchmen because of his position at the Rila Monastery, partly because he wrote in the vernacular and not only translated sermons but adapted them in a lively, colloquial manner. He discussed problems of immediate concern to his readers: for example, he gave mothers advice on raising their daughters — girls, he says, should "have a sense of modesty, not laugh or tell jokes, and close their ears to evil words". The *damaskini* were in part a practical guide to the moral life.

A much less important literary genre of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries is represented by the *letopisni beležki* (historical marginalia) written wherever convenient on the pages of books and compilations. The chief instance of such writing is a two-page note by *pop* Metodij Draginov, dating from 1657, describing the forced conversion to Islam of a group of Bulgarians.

These, then, are the gray-green hillocks in the wasteland of Bulgarian literature after the Turkish invasion. The Turkish occupation was long, arduous, and not at all conducive to literary activity. But culture still clung to life, and the Renaissance was approaching.