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## The Brief Chronicle of Methodij Draginov and Other Parallel Texts about a Massive Islamization in Western Rhodope

### Introduction

The brief chronicle of Methodij Draginov is a very significant primal source for Bulgarian historiography and despite the controversies about its authenticity its testimony about the islamization of Western Rhodope area were considered accurate till recently. As a matter of fact, his influence reached to the point of overcoming the academic circles and insert on the political field.

The narration of the chronicle presents the following: When Mehmet the Hunter was Sultan, someone named Mehmet pasha came to the area of Chepina( Western Rhodope).He wanted to slay all the population there for he was warned by the archbishop of Fillippoli(metropolitan Gabriel),that the peasants were preparing a rival. The allegations of the archbishop were false accusations, because the peasants didn't pay him the ecclesiastical taxes, but the slaughter was shunned by the intervention of Hashan hotza who begged the pasha to forgive them if all of them convert to Islam. So , all the villages of the area proceed to the conversion and after that those who convert destroyed 218 churches and 33 monasteries. Those which refused to convert where either expelled or murdered. The narration has the signature of priest

Methodij Draginov, from the village of Korova , on the year ax' (1600).

The existence of Slavic-speaking Muslim minorities on the Bulgarian land is a fact beyond doubt from the era of the Bulgarian liberation already. At the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century those minorities were considered from the Bulgarian state as «remaining Turks», while from year 1905 they begin to be called Pomaks unofficially. About their origins and their historical evolution loads of theories have been proposed from the side of Greek, Bulgarian and Turkish researches. So far, the scientific community hasn't come up to about the anthropological, social and racial dissension of the Pomaks and all sides follows their own theory. In the present study we aren't going to deal with the «Pomakian issue» but for some basic observations which are related to the chronicle of Methodij Draginov that concern us.

In the Bulgarian state, the 1920s and 1930s were characterizing on one side by its homogenization and from the campaign of some political parties to convince the public opinion to separate religion from nationality and to accept the Pomaks as a part of Bulgarian society on the other. According to them it was obvious the Bulgarian origin of the Pomaks<sup>1</sup>. The effort for the embodiment of the Pomaks into the Bulgarian society had as a result the establishment of the organization Rodina (Motherland) on 1937<sup>2</sup>. Its prime goal was the creation and endorsement of Bulgarian national conscience to the Pomak population, by means of interventions upon their

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<sup>1</sup>M. Todorova, «Conversion to Islam as a trope in Bulgarian historiography, fiction and film», *Balkan Identities. Nation and Memory* Hurst, London & New York University Press, 2003, 1-14

<sup>2</sup>M. Todorova, «Conversion to Islam as a trope in Bulgarian historiography, fiction and film», 1-14

traditional structures. After the World War II and especially for 1980 decade, the campaign for Bulgarian states homogenization had reached its highest peak with the current government aiming on the expulsion and deportation of the Turkish origins Muslims. At that point Pomak populations had been found on an adverse situation since it was clear that they had to define themselves either as Bulgarians or as Turks and the options they had were either deportation on Turkey or to remain in Bulgaria, but with the cost of sacrificing their traditions and religion.

Within this framework, it is conceivable for what reason Draginov's chronicle and his alongside texts affected that much the social affairs in Bulgaria, as his historical testimony supposedly proves the Pomaks Bulgarian origin and the coercion from the ruler Turks to accept their religion.

### **Literary and historical approach of the brief chronicle of Methodij Draginov and of his alongside texts**

The chronicle of Methodij Draginov was first publicized from Stefan Zahariev, on his work «Geographical-Historical-Statistical description of Tatar Pazartzik» in 1870 .He claims on his book's epilogue that he hasn't change anything from the prototype text, as the original manuscript was partially ruined and it has been lost since then. The text has been reprinted afterwards by G.Dimitrov<sup>3</sup> and Ct. N. Šiskov<sup>4</sup>. In the following years it is publicized again with a more critical point of view

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<sup>3</sup> Г. Димитров, Княжество България в историческо и етнографическо отношение, Ч. 1 София 1894, 110-111, Пловдив 1895<sup>2</sup>, 101-102.

<sup>4</sup> Ст. Н. Шисков, Помаците в трите български области Тракия Македония и Мизия, Пловдив 1914, 39-40.

from B. Conev<sup>5</sup> and R. Čolakov<sup>6</sup>, which includes and language corrections. Since then, the text has been reprinted in many collections<sup>7</sup>. About the forced islamization's narration there have been discovered two more similar texts the past years: the Batkyn chronicle and the Belovo chronicle.

The chronicle of Batkyn was publicized for the first time from H. P. Konstantinov in his article «Letters from Rodopi. Letter XIV, historical review of Čepino's district» in 1893 on the newspaper Свобода part 1070, April the 7<sup>th</sup>. There were after a mere reprintings of Batkyn's chronicle<sup>8</sup>.

The chronicle of Belovo it is known in two editions. The first edition is publicized in 1898 from N. Natsov, on the magazine Български преглед. Contrary to the other two chronicles the specific manuscript it has been saved and exists until our days in the Manuscripts Collection of the Bulgarian Academy with the number 101. After N.Natsov, the text has been publicized again from Hr. Kodov<sup>9</sup>, who deleted some inaccuracies of the first edition and identify the time writing of the text in the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The second edition

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<sup>5</sup> В. Цонев, История на българският език, vol. 1 София 1919, 309-310, 1940<sup>2</sup>, 256-257.

<sup>6</sup> Р. Чолаков, «Поп Методиевий летописен разказ за потурчването на чепинските българи», Духовна култура, 1925, № 24-25, 84-96.

<sup>7</sup> Е. И. Иванов, Старобългарски разкази, София 1935, 80-81, П. Динеков, К. Куев, Д. Петканова, Христоматия по старобългарска литература, София 1961, 457-458, П. Петров, Асимилаторската политика на турските завоеватели, София 1962, 131-132, П. Петров, По следите на насилието. Документи за похамеданчвания и потурчвания, София 1972, 256-257.

<sup>8</sup> Ст. Н. Шисков, Помациите, 1914, 43-44, П. Петров, Асимилаторската политика, София 1962, 133 and on his next work, По следите на насилието, 257-258.

<sup>9</sup> Хр. Кодов, Опис на славянските ръкописи в Библиотеката на БАН, София 1969, 256-258.

of Belovo's chronicle was publicized in 1915 from P. Mutafčiev<sup>10</sup>. After P. Mutafčiev this second edition of the chronicle it hasn't been publicized again from other researcher. Besides Draginov's text, none of the other chronicles have any author signature so it isn't clear who recorded them. What is more for Methodij Draginov there hasn't been found and identified other sources except of the brief chronicle, so it can't be proved if he really existed.

About the similarities and differences of the texts we can observe the following: Draginov's text is first referred to the Turkish king Mehmet, who is referred on the other texts as sultan Ahmet. In Draginov's text he is been given the nickname the Hunter.

All four sources agree for the departure of someone named Mehmet pasha and of six more pashas through the area of Fillipyoli. They also agree for the number and the names of the first men which islamized, as well as for the dates which the islamization took place and for the consequences that had those who resist. The only addendum in Draginov's text is a person who is called ban Velio, who was one of the local lords that spoke with the pasha and then was one of the firsts to be islamized. All four texts are referred to Hasan hotza with variations about his actions.

Finally, they all agree approximately for the number of the churches and monasteries which were destroyed from the islamized ones, because in Draginov's text is mentioned 33 monasteries and on the other texts 32. Supposedly this is a negligible difference, as none of the three texts records namely

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<sup>10</sup> П. Мутафчиев, Стари градища и друмове из долините на Стрема и Тополница, София 1915, 73-74.

the destroyed churches and monasteries, a record that will be helpful if it could be compared with archaeological researches. Only Belovo's chronicle is referred namely in one monastery or church (the Assumption of Christ) and lists briefly the story of its foundation and constitution till it was ruined from the islamized ones.

In Draginov's text it is described with many details the Mehmet pasha's arrival in Čepino and it is listed the conversation that he had with the local lords, which lead to their islamization. Then it refers to the departure of the pasha from Thessaloniki and for the supplying of the islamized ones with food. The chronicle of Batkyn is shorter and describes briefly the terrorizing of the Rhodope's villages and the islamization of its people. But it is mentioned on Čepino, something which Belovo's chronicle doesn't mention. Also it is not mentioned metropolitan Gabriel (1638-1672), the archbishop who made the false accusations to the pasha, nor on the other chronicles.

On the first edition of Belovo's chronicle beside the islamization's narration, there are listed various historical facts without chronological order, so the text was copied from an unknown person from another chronicle either that person gathered in one text various memorials of the document, which were written in various ecclesiastical books. On the second edition of the chronicle the narrative line begins with the story of the foundation of the monastery the Assumption of Christ (1040 A.D.) and its description. It follows the passes in the year 1620 and describes the case of the islamization almost in the same way that the first edition does (the differences are noted on the adverbs which are used on the second edition). The only addendum on the second edition is the reference to the assassination of the 20 monks of the monastery the Assumption

of Christ and the fleeing of all the priests from Konstantovo. It is the only text that mentions that area besides Draginov's chronicle.

All three texts record a different year for the islamization's occur: Draginov's chronicle places it in year 1600 (but according to Zahariev the facts took place in the year 1657), Batkyn's chronicle in 1670 and both of Belovo's chronicle texts place the islamization in the year 1620.

In order to confirm the actual year of the facts we analyzed the warfare notes of the texts. The brief chronicle of Methodij Draginov starts with the note that the facts occurred in the reign of sultan Mehmet the Hunter. With this nickname was known the sultan Mohamed IV<sup>11</sup> (in the Turkish language Mehmet is a diminutive for Mohamed<sup>12</sup>). He ascended to the throne when he was only six years old after the assassination of his father sultan Ibrahim I in 1648<sup>13</sup>. The first years of his ruling were sealed from the dispute among the state leadership, the palace and the order of the Janissaries which had as an impact the disorganization and destabilization of the empire<sup>14</sup>. The palace was taking care to remove him from the state affairs by finding him various activities. His main pass time was hunting, therefor his nickname<sup>15</sup>. This non stability on the political field

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<sup>11</sup> E. K. Shaw, *History of the Ottoman Empire and modern Turkey*, Cambridge University Press, 1977, vol. 1, 200

<sup>12</sup> A. Göksel, C. Kerslake, *Studies on Turkish and Turkic Languages*, Oxford 1998, 51

<sup>13</sup> E. K. Shaw, *History of the Ottoman Empire*, 200, P. F. Sugar, *Southeastern Europe under Ottoman Rule, 1354-1804*, University of Washington Press, 1977 part D, chapt. 9, 187-209

<sup>14</sup> E. K. Shaw, *History of the Ottoman Empire*, 204-205, P. F. Sugar, *Southeastern Europe under Ottoman Rule*, part D, chapt. 9, 187-209

<sup>15</sup> E. K. Shaw, *History of the Ottoman Empire*, 203, P. F. Sugar, *Southeastern Europe under Ottoman Rule*, part D, chapt.9, 187-209

allowed to the Kioproulou family to appear in the foreground from 1656 and to take on their hands the political power in the later years, as all the Grand Viziers of that period came from their ranks<sup>16</sup>. In the following years, the continuous defeats of the Ottoman Empire on Austria, Hungary and the Balkan Peninsula caused the insurrection of the Janissaries and led to his dethronement in 1687<sup>17</sup>.

According to Draginov's chronicle the facts occurred in the reign of sultan Mehmet the Hunter, so it is quit impossible the year of its writing to be 1600. Zahariev reports in one footnote that the facts actually occurred in 1657 during the conflict between the Ottomans and the Venetians, but he doesn't clarify why there is a false date on the text. We could assume that, since Zahariev noted that the prototype was partly ruined and the actual date was 1657, because of the document's bad condition it was obliterate and it was seen only the letters ax which in the Arabic calculation system goes for 1600.

Batkyn's chronicle also places the facts in the reign of sultan Mohamed IV (1670). Furthermore, the name Ahmet which is referred here and in Belovo's chronicle is nothing more than a variation of the name Mohamed<sup>18</sup>. The difference on the pronunciation lays on that the name Mehmet is based on Turkish language origin and the name Ahmet on Arabic one<sup>19</sup>.

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<sup>16</sup> E. K. Shaw, *History of the Ottoman Empire*, 207, P. F. Sugar, *Southeastern Europe under Ottoman Rule*, 195-200.

<sup>17</sup> E. K. Shaw, *History of the Ottoman Empire*, 217, P. F. Sugar, *Southeastern Europe under Ottoman Rule*, 200.

<sup>18</sup> A. Göksel, C. Kerslake, *Studies on Turkish and Turkic Languages*, Oxford 1998, 51.

<sup>19</sup>A. Göksel, C. Kerslake, *Studies on Turkish and Turkic Languages*, 55.



Belovo's chronicle places the facts in the year 1620, but then it wasn't ruling sultan Ahmet or Mehmet but sultan Osman II<sup>20</sup>.

The next clue which all three chronicles have in common is the report on the campaign which the Ottomans make in Morea with a navy of approximately 105 ships and land army 150000 men. This information leads us to the hypothesis that the placing of the facts must be during the period of the Fifth Ottoman-Venetian War (1645-1669). It's also known as the Cretan War<sup>21</sup> because it was mainly fought over the island of Crete, Venice's largest and richest overseas possession. For the particular campaign there are reports on the academic research for two cases: on the first case the war inaugurated with the decision of the Ottoman Empire to proceed to warfare in Crete under the leadership of Kapudan Silahdar Yusuf Pasha. It was gathered over 100000 militants and 100 ships navy which departed from the Dardanelles on April the 30d sailing towards the harbor of Navarino in Peloponnese, where it remained for three weeks so they can fool the Venetians<sup>22</sup>.

But in 1645 we're out of Mehmet IV reign. On the second case the researches are noting about May of 1666, were under the leadership of the Grand Vizier, Köprülü Fazıl Ahmed, the Ottoman army departed from Thrace (with a pass from

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<sup>20</sup> S.N. Faroqhi, *The Ottoman Empire*, The Cambridge History of Turkey-vol.3, 18, P. F. Sugar, *Southeastern Europe under Ottoman Rule*, 317, J. Mccarthy, *The Ottoman Turks, An Introductory History to 1923*, Routledge 1997,176.

<sup>21</sup> S.N. Faroqhi, *The Ottoman Empire*, The Cambridge History of Turkey-vol.3, 90, P. F. Sugar, *Southeastern Europe under Ottoman Rule*, part D, chapt. 9, 187-209.

<sup>22</sup> K. M. Setton, *Venice, Austria, and the Turks in the Seventeenth Century*, Diane Publishing, 1991, 105, P. F. Sugar, *Southeastern Europe under Ottoman Rule*, part D, chapt. 9, 187-209.

Thessaloniki) for southern Greece, whence it would embark for Crete during the winter. That second case places us on the reign of Mohamed IV even though it isn't mentioned any further detail about the size of the army, only that it was «great in number»<sup>23</sup>, we consider it as the most possible date matching the chronicles. Another able fact that will ensure us for the year 1666 is the conversation of the local lords with the pasha in Draginov's chronicle. In the text, the local lords say to the pasha that it is impossible for them to be traitors against the Ottomans, since their sons had served on the campaigns in *Tripoli*, *Tunis* and *Egypt* so they won't pay any taxes as they had agreed.

That note can be verified from the following historical fact: in 1654 while the Ottomans marshaled their strength<sup>24</sup> the Arsenal (Tersâne-i Âmire) in the Golden Horn build new warships, and squadrons from *Tripolitania* and *Tunis* arrived to strengthen the Ottoman fleet. By the end of the year the Ottomans had enough casualties on the Greek islands so they build even more warships coming from *Egypt*, Rhodes, Xios and Malvasia (Monemvasia). Finally the next year the Ottomans had their worst naval defeat near the islands of Lemnos and Tenedos<sup>25</sup>. Since in Draginov's text the lords claim that their men had already fought on those campaigns, we're most certain that the year of completion of the chronicle's facts is 1666.

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<sup>23</sup>K. M. Setton, *Venice, Austria, and the Turks in the Seventeenth Century*, 240, C. Finkel, *Osman's Dream: The Story of the Ottoman Empire 1300–1923*, London 2006, 289.

<sup>24</sup>K. M. Setton, *Venice, Austria, and the Turks*, 172, P. F. Sugar, *Southeastern Europe under Ottoman Rule*, part D, chapt. 9, 187-209.

<sup>25</sup> K. M. Setton, *Venice, Austria, and the Turks*, 176, P. F. Sugar, *Southeastern Europe under Ottoman Rule*, part D, chapt. 9, 187-209.

Apart from sultan Mehmet and metropolitan Gabriel the other named persons of the chronicles (Mehmet pasha, Hasan hotza and others) cannot be connected to any historical figures of the era due to lack of sufficient evidence. The similarities and differences of all four texts have been mentioned pretty early, but they weren't analyzed thoroughly. As we mentioned, the first edition of Belovo's chronicle is kept in the Bulgarian Academy (BAH) but the prototype texts of Methodij Draginov, of Batkyn's chronicle and of Belovo's chronicle second edition are all lost. Consequently, for their linguistic and philological approach we can rely only on their existing publications which we quoted above.

Draginov's text is placed in the 17<sup>th</sup> century; it is upon the period of the early new-Bulgarian language. His syntax has an influence from the Russian syntax which can be seen on the use of the **и** and **ы** on the nouns of male gender, although it isn't written in the ecclesiastic Slavonic language. There are used enough Turkish words too (Amira, sefer, karabasot, verimi), which Zahariev translates on his book's epilogue. The use of letters and phonemes from the medieval period as from the newest period of the Bulgarian language creates a speculation as well as the partial and selective use of the Russian syntax. So it seems that Draginov's text was recorded linguistically in the common spoken language but morphologically and syntactically it draws elements from the literal tradition, as it can often be found in the texts of the era.

Consequently the form of the text's written language cannot be the determining element of its recording year, as it could be a text originated from the 17<sup>th</sup> century but also it could be a text originated from the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Lots of researches although underline that exactly this asymmetry of the text proves that it cannot be originated from the 17<sup>th</sup> century. The

fact which concerns the researchers a lot is that of the full absent of the dialectological particularities of the area of Čepino. As for the chronicle of Batkyn and the two editions of Belovo's chronicle, their linguistic analysis proved that they had been recorded in the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

The major fact of the chronicles is the massive and forced conversion to Islam. As we already saw, there are differences between the chronicles about the narration of the islamization. In Draginov's text the cause of islamization are the false accusations which the "cursed" metropolitan Gabriel put on the people of the area to Mehmet pasha about a rival. In the chronicle of Batkyn and in the two versions of Belovo's chronicle, the cause of the islamization is the terrorizing tactic of Mehmet pasha. Beside the cause all the chronicles agreed about the date which the islamization was completed on August the 15<sup>th</sup>. In Draginov's chronicle only is referred to the date which started, on Saint George's day.

If we take in mind and the historical note about sultan Mehmet's campaign with the 105 warships and the 150000 militants<sup>26</sup>, which occurred around May, then the duration of the islamization actually estimated in a pass of time that does not exceed more than three months. Also based upon the number of the villages which were islamize, which were 74 according to Belovo's chronicle, this mass acceptance of Islam becomes a shocking event that can be compare only with the first spread of Islam during the Arabic and Turkish evasions.

Until the 1950's, the Bulgarian academic community didn't studied the subject at his full length and because of the

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<sup>26</sup>K. M. Setton, Venice, Austria and the Turks, 240, C. Finkel, Osman's Dream, 289.

lack of related sources, the narration was accepted as veritable and was used so it can determine the reason for the existence of the Bulgarian speaking Muslims minority. But from 1960 and after, the discovery of new archives-especially of Ottoman origin- started to rebut the narration. They concluded mainly demographic files of the enslaved areas as for as tax records of the people with the tax amount that corresponded to each area. Ctr. Dimitrov first studied those files<sup>27</sup> and through the fluctuations that he observed on the demographic registers, he proved the long period of the islamization's process. The same procedure also followed Ev.Radushev<sup>28</sup> many years later and he end up to the same results. Since the subject has been studied on his smallest detail it has been proved that the mass and forced islamization is simply a fiction and that the actual process of the islamization occurred to the course of at least two centuries with remissions and exacerbations, without ever the Christian element to be extinguished. Therefore in the case of our chronicles we are dealing with an exacerbation of the islamization, for the cause of which there have been proposed six theories:

The first theory refers to islamizations as the result of the migration of populations, which were motivated by the Ottoman Empire due to the fact that entire territories were abandoned so the people could escape from the whirlwind of war. Therefore for the replenishment of this huge demographic vacuum when the Ottoman government was stabilized, there were organized migrations of population in the deserted areas

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<sup>27</sup> Стр. Димитров, «Демографски отношения и проникване на Исляма в Западните Родопи», Родопски Сборник, 1 (1965).

<sup>28</sup>Е. Радусhev, «Meaning of the historiographical myths about conversion to Islam», Itarih Arařtirmalari Dođubati, Ankara 2009,1-23.

especially of people coming from Asia Minor<sup>29</sup>. But for the year that considers us, such of migration movements can't be proved.

The second theory mentions that the islamizations were favored from the existence of heretical groups. Especially they are reported to the heresy of Paulicianism, which was connected with the Vogomilism<sup>30</sup> that had battered enough the Orthodox Church at the era of the first and second Bulgarian state. The heresy of Paulicianism had a great spread in the Bulgarian land. So it isn't inexplicable the existence of the heresy's outbreaks on the areas that are mentioned in the chronicles nor their islamization would be peculiar, since it wasn't difficult for heretical populations to switch faith, much more for the Paulicians because Islam had many common grounds with their heretical beliefs. But already from the 15<sup>th</sup> century the Ottoman administration was classifying the Paulicians as a special religious group, which is reflected in the surviving records where they recorded them as Bavljanjani or Pavlijani, and from the demographic files that had been studied it has been proved that there were no tracks of Paulicians on the areas that were mentioned on the chronicles.

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<sup>29</sup> People who were used to colonization originating from Asia Minor were the so-called Giouroukos.

<sup>30</sup> About Vogomilism see: Д. Ангелов, Богомилството, София 1993, К. Гечева, Богомилството, София 2007, Д. Ангелов, Б. Примов, Г. Батаклиев, «Богомилството в България, Византия и Западна Европа в извори» Наука и изкуство 1967, 223, St. Runciman, The Medieval Manichees, Cambridge 1947, 69, G. Vasiliev, «Traces of the Bogomil Movement in English», Etudes Balkaniques, 3 (1994), 85-94, Кр. Гечева, Богомилството Библиография, София 1997, Д. Оболенски, Богомилите, студия върху балканското новоманихейство, София 1998.

The third theory refers that islamizations were the result of the enslaved people to improve their living standard. It wasn't a rare phenomenon the change of faith from groups of people who had a high social stand and wanted to preserve it by the privileges which obtained through their conversion. In this course researches dealt with the private documents drafted by new Muslims to the Ottoman administration, in which they advanced rewards (especially monetary) for their accession to the «true faith»<sup>31</sup>. These documents were titled «Kisve bahasi». Although «Kisve bahasi» constitute a significant primal source that proves the bureaucratic establishment of the islamizations, their small percentage in amount and in time period makes difficult their acceptance in a general level. That's because in a time period of only 65 years (1670-1735) there had been discovered 636 documents of that kind. So if we take in mind the width of the Ottoman Empire and the millions of its civilians, the picture that we could exclude from the «Kisve bahasi» is quite unstable. Also the fact that similar documents haven't been found before or after the course of the years 1670-1735 it comes a dilemma upon the researches if a) there were former or later documents that just hadn't been saved b) the «Kisve bahasi» system was a bureaucratic procedure that lasted only for that period because of the reformation in the interior of the ottoman administration.

The fourth theory refers to that the islamizations were the result from the tax oppression of the area. But right from the start there were objections about that theory because of the administrative form of Čepino's area. First V.Mutafčieva<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> A. Minkov, *Conversion to Islam in the Balkans*, Leiden 2004, ch. 6, 145-166.

<sup>32</sup> В. Мутафчиева, «Към въпроса за статута на българското население в Чепинско под османска власт», *Родопски Сборник*, vol. 1 София 1965, 116-126.

publicized an official document of sultan Murat III (1574-1595), on which there were recorded all the villages of Bulgaria that were under the vakif system from the era of Suleiman the Magnificent. On this recording there are nine villages from Čepino's area at least. The hypothesis of the people's islamization in order to avoid taxes and tasks cannot be accepted since as a vakif the area should had privileges and tax exemptions<sup>33</sup>. If we assume that Čepino's vakif was declassified in the midst of the 17<sup>th</sup> century then it is possible the islamization's exacerbation was caused by the emergent and heavy fee. But once again we can't be sure for that theory because Dimitrov and Radushev, which studied the tax records of the area as we mention before, didn't noticed any kind of an emergent tax levy for the specific year.

The fifth theory refers to that the islamizations were the result of the proselytizing Islamic propaganda. Especially it concerns the named movement of the *Kadizadeli* that shook the Ottoman sultan authority during the 17<sup>th</sup> century. Essentially, it was about a mystical order that had spread earlier but revived through the work of Yusuf Abi Abdudeyyan, a converted Muslim of Jewish origin<sup>34</sup>. The basic declarations of this movement was about the reformatting of Islamic society and return to the old traditional Islam. Their believe was that the sultan authority applied incorrectly the divine law, succumbed several times in sins and established inappropriate relationships between believers and nonbelievers and this perversion of the Islamic law was the main cause for the political, economic and social crisis of the empire. Through

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<sup>33</sup> В. Мутафчиева, «Към въпроса за статута на българското население», 116-126.

<sup>34</sup> T. Krstic, *Contested Conversions to Islam*, Stanford University Press , California 2011, ch. 3, 75-98.



repentance and return to tradition, the forgiveness of Allah would come and the crisis would exceed<sup>35</sup>. With this way the movement developed an intense proselytizing activity and although at first was aiming only the Jewish groups of Asia Minor it wasn't long that passed upon the Christians too. Especially during the reign of Mohamed IV (1648-1687), this movement was reinforced so much that the central government was afraid for a possible revolution<sup>36</sup>. That danger comparing with the threat of a Janissaries rival, led the sultan in 1656 to the decision of assigning the duties of Grand Vizier to Mehmet Köprülü in order to stabilize the situation. The result of his accession was the mass slaughters of all the dissidents<sup>37</sup>.

However the movement managed to survive outside the borders of Asia Minor mainly through preaching of the roving ulemas. Sources from the work of Yusuf Abi Abdudeyyan as of the rest preachers of the movement were found and kept even at the wider area of Vienna<sup>38</sup>. Based on the intense proselytizing activity of the movement and of the dispersion of its believers to the most remote areas of the empire, we could accept that for the islamization's exacerbation is responsible the movement of the Kadizadeli. One more time though, the lack of any kind of sources that could support that theory doesn't allow us to accept it.

Last theory that was proposed was the existence and occurs of extreme external and environmental factors that led to

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<sup>35</sup> T. Krstic, *Contested Conversions to Islam*, ch.3, 75-98.

<sup>36</sup> E. K. Shaw, *History of the Ottoman Empire*, ch. 5, 112-168, S.N.Faroqhi, *The Ottoman Empire*, ch. 4, 207-225.

<sup>37</sup> E. K. Shaw, *History of the Ottoman Empire*, ch. 5, 112-168, S.N.Faroqhi, *The Ottoman Empire*, ch. 4, 207-225.

<sup>38</sup> T. Krstic, *Contested Conversions to Islam*, ch. 3, 75-98, Ş. Hanioglu, *A brief history of the late Ottoman Empire*, Princeton University Press 2008, 55-56.

the islamization's exacerbation. This theory wasn't thoroughly analyzed in the grade that the others did and the only one who does a very short reference to that fact was Ev.Radushev<sup>39</sup>, on the article where he analyzes the demographic changes of Western Rhodope. Starting from his comment though, with the analysis of the environmental factors of the era we could reach to an enlightening peak of our research.

It is known that during the middle and newest years, the extreme weather conditions as well as other environmental factors were common ground. Earthquakes, floods, famines and epidemics afflicted on a great degree the course of history. According to researches of meteorologists and environmentalists the period from 1400 until 1850 was characterized as the *Little Ice Age-LIA*<sup>40</sup>. The first one who introduced this terminology for the phenomenon's description was F.Matthes<sup>41</sup> in 1939 and it was accepted by the scientific community. Although it is difficult to define with absolute precision the timeouts, the prevailed perspective is that the LIA can be separated to two periods: the first is starting from the beginnings of the 14<sup>th</sup> century until the 15<sup>th</sup>, where there is after 1500 a relatively warm period. The second one is starting from the beginnings of the 17<sup>th</sup> century until the midst of the 19<sup>th</sup> (1850) where it reaches its highest peak<sup>42</sup>.

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<sup>39</sup> E. Радусhev, «Meaning of the historiographical myths about conversion to Islam», Itarih Araştırmaları Doğubati, Ankara 2009, 1-23.

<sup>40</sup> St. Dafis, *Little Ice Age years 1300 to 1850*, University of Ioannina 2012, D. Melas, C. Asonitis, B. Amoiridis, *Climate Change [Guide teachers]*, Athens 2000.

<sup>41</sup> F. E. Matthes, «Report of the committee on glaciers», *Transactions of the American Geophysical Union*, 1939, 518-23.

<sup>42</sup> St. Dafis, *Little Ice Age years*, 16-26, R. McNeill, E. Stewart Mauldin, *A Companion to Global Environmental History*, 394- 411.

Possible cause of the phenomenon is considered the change of the solar activity<sup>43</sup>. The ripples of the solar power that Earth received led to changes in the energy balance of Earth's system while the volcanic eruptions fueled the atmosphere with huge amounts of particles and aerosols, which formed such a dense veil that prevented sunlight from reaching Earth's surface. It was calculated that during the second period of LIA occurred at least five volcanic eruptions per century which affected the temperature in a global scale.

The sources on which the research was based for the phenomenon's analysis were historical records such as logbooks, taxes timetables, social history extracts, recordings of the agricultural production and literary texts as also as environmental researchers such as analyzes on tree trunk rings, on pieces of ice, on sediments from the seabed, on stalagmites etc<sup>44</sup>.

The main characteristics of LIA were violent winters, low temperatures even during the summer period, changes in rainfall heights and prevalence of stormy winds at times and in places<sup>45</sup>. The effects of that phenomenon were characterized from a negative impact in sectors such as agriculture, stockbreeding, economics and health especially during its second period (17<sup>th</sup>-19<sup>th</sup> century).

As for the Balkan Peninsula the impact of these extreme weather conditions were causing chain reactions. The destruction of crops and the incomplete harvests led to decrease

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<sup>43</sup>St. Dafis, Little Ice Age years, 10-14, R. McNeill, E. Stewart Mauldin, A Companion to Global Environmental History, 394- 411.

<sup>44</sup>St. Dafis, Little Ice Age years, 10-14.

<sup>45</sup>St. Dafis, Little Ice Age years, 14-16, R. McNeill, E. Stewart Mauldin, A Companion to Global Environmental History, 394- 411.

of the production that contributed to the financial crisis, the abnormalities caused to flora from the great drought periods led to the decrease and disease of livestock, the financial crisis led to tax increase and so forth<sup>46</sup>. The result was the general malnutrition of the population which led to diseases and shorter life expectancy<sup>47</sup>.

If we include the wars that were conducted by the Ottoman Empire and harassed it throughout the 17th century, then fairly enough we can agree with the scientists who characterized that century as "the century of crisis"<sup>48</sup>. In connection with the chronicles it is difficult to say if the environment affected the area of Rhodope or not. But only in Draginov's chronicle there is a short reference that lightens the situation.

After the intervention of Hasan hotza when he begged Mehmet pasha to forgive the supposedly rebelled people if they islamize, he stayed along with other four hotza to perform the islamization and on those who were islamized the pasha ordered to supply them with wheat "*because there was a great hunger*". After that Hasan hotza himself went with horses to Beglik han and gathered enough food to the village Konstantovo where he was handing it to the islamized ones. It is obvious, that the area was affected by famine.

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<sup>46</sup> R. McNeill, E. Stewart Mauldin, *A Companion to Global Environmental History*, 394- 411.

<sup>47</sup> R. McNeill, E. Stewart Mauldin, *A Companion to Global Environmental History*, 394- 411.

<sup>48</sup> E. K. Shaw, *History of the Ottoman Empire*, 218-129, S. N. Faroqhi, *The Ottoman Empire*, 95, K. M. Setton, *Venice, Austria, and the Turks in the Seventeenth Century*, 260, C. Finkel, *Osman's Dream: The Story of the Ottoman Empire*, 290, Ş. Hanioglu, *A brief history of the late Ottoman Empire*, 55-68.

To sum all the above about the Little Ice Age, we come to the conclusion that there was nothing more left for the people of the area but to convert to Islam so they can ensure their survival. Also noticing the study upon the documents «Kisve bahasi», if it was indeed established the principle of retribution of the ottoman administration to the new Muslims in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, then it isn't peculiar the fact that the islamized ones were supplied with food by Mehmet pasha.

From all of the above we can conclude with certainty that the extreme conditions that prevailed because of the Little Ice Age phenomenon it was possible to led to the islamization's exacerbation that is described in the chronicles to a last effort of the people of Western Rhodope for survival.

Besides the islamization's narration, two more important facts of the chronicles should be taken into account: the deeds of metropolitan Gabriel and the destruction of the churches and monasteries.

The named metropolitan Gabriel was indeed a historical figure of the era. He was elected metropolitan of Plovdiv (Fillippoli) after the death of metropolitan Christopher in December 1636, during the patriarchy of Neophyte III<sup>49</sup>. However, there existed a conciliar decision for the ordination of Curil, ex metropolitan of Corinth, for the place of Plovdiv's metropolitan, so Gabriel stayed temporarily hovering. Two

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<sup>49</sup> T. Gritsopoulos «Contribution in the history of the ecclesiastical province of Philippopolis» Archive of Thracian Folklore Language Thesaurus, 19' 1954 270-276, Mj. Gideon, «Metropolitans of Philippopolis notes» Truth Church in Istanbul, 44, 1913, 386-390.

months later, Curil was discharged as “troublemaker” and Gabriel returned to his base<sup>50</sup>.

After his reinstatement he took up his duties normally. It's worth notice that he's referred to four conciliar decisions from 1639 until 1647, as well as on elections or depositions of bishops and metropolitans<sup>51</sup>. Also upon his primacy was carried out the construction of the narthex of Petritsonitissis monastery<sup>52</sup> and were testified fundraisers in favor of the Holy Sepulcher<sup>53</sup>. There were even sources that refer about his serving as Patriarchal Exarch in Jerusalem (during the patriarchy of Parthenos IV) and that he traveled there in 1661 for the election of Patriarch Nectarios<sup>54</sup>. It is also noted in the relative sources that he offered financial help to Patriarch Dositheos (1669) and organized fundraisers in favor of the Holy Sepulcher much later<sup>55</sup>.

Gabriel's primacy lasted until his death in 1672<sup>56</sup> without to be noticed anything reprehensible about him. The only black mark to his primacy it was the decision of his deposition by Patriarch Parthenos II in 1648<sup>57</sup>. The decision was firstly issued

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<sup>50</sup> T. Gritsopoulos «Contribution in the history», 270-276.

<sup>51</sup> T. Gritsopoulos «Contribution in the history», 270-276.

<sup>52</sup> M. Apostolidis, «The Holy Metropolis of Filippoupolis and codes of this» Archive of Thracian Folklore and Linguistic Thesaurus, 4 (1937-38), 3-42.

<sup>53</sup> T. Gritsopoulos, «Contribution in the history», 270-276.

<sup>54</sup> T. Gritsopoulos, «Contribution in the history», 270-276, MJ Gideon, «Metropolitans of Philippopolis notes», 386-390.

<sup>55</sup> T. Gritsopoulos, «Contribution in the history», 270-276.

<sup>56</sup> T. Gritsopoulos, «Contribution in the history», 270-276 MJ Gideon, «Metropolitans of Philippopolis notes», 386-390 Apostolidis, «The Holy Metropolis of Filippoupolis», 3-42.

<sup>57</sup> T. Gritsopoulos, «Contribution in the history», 270-276, MJ Gideon, «Metropolitans of Philippopolis notes», 386-390.

in November 29<sup>th</sup> 1648 after a synodical tome<sup>58</sup>, where he's characterized as "deserter" and "disdainful", due to his non presence in the patriarchal Synod where he was called as an inductee and on December of the same year, it was issued and the official text of that decision<sup>59</sup>. The accusation which complained about him was that he supported the dethroned patriarch Ioannikios and when Parthenos was elected he didn't «awarded him an appropriate reverence» but was seeking for Ioannikios return. Patriarch Parthenos called him "arrogant" and "a harmful partisan" and he asked his immediate expulsion and the convening of Synod for the election of a new metropolitan<sup>60</sup>.

Gabriel's expulsion however probably didn't happened at all as there were no testimonies about the election of a new metropolitan so perhaps Gabriel apologize at once and he was forgiven. It hasn't been found any document that states for his restitution; however his name appears again in synodical decisions in 1651 and onwards<sup>61</sup>.

About Gabriel's deposition T.Gritsopoulos and M.Gideon note that it was about those makeshift designed depositions which aimed on the intimidation of the high priests that wouldn't pay the money due for the common fund of the Ecumenical Patriarchate<sup>62</sup>. Thus obviously is explained the reason which Gabriel's deposition didn't happened after all, for

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<sup>58</sup>K. N. Sathas «Summary of the Patriarchal Documents (1538-1684)», Medieval Library C', 152b-153a, Venice 1872.

<sup>59</sup> K. N. Sathas, «Summary of the Patriarchal Documents», 154a-155b.

<sup>60</sup> T. Gritsopoulos "Contribution in the history», 270-276.

<sup>61</sup> T. Gritsopoulos, "Contribution in the history», 270-276.

<sup>62</sup> <sup>62</sup> T. Gritsopoulos "Contribution in the history, 270-276, MJ Gideon, «Metropolitans of Philippopolis notes», 386-390.

maybe he finally achieved to pay his debt through the church taxes of his province.

In connection with Draginov's chronicle this last clue leads us to the assumption that the denunciation of Gabriel was valid. Since in 1648 Gabriel was threatened with dethroning because of his debts to the Ecumenical Patriarchate we could suppose that in 1666 he found himself on the same situation and since the people of the province refused to pay him the ecclesiastical taxes he planned the calumny to the pasha so the people would be terrorized and pay him off at the end. Moreover the Metropolis of Plovdiv (Fillipypoli) was tortured by the weight of accumulated debt to the Ecumenical Patriarchate for many decades, a fact that is certified by the publicized epistle of Neophyte of Plovdiv (1681-1711) where he underlines his « *great sorrow and emerge need to be under the weight of the severest depth unto this province...*»<sup>63</sup> Nonetheless it still remains the question why this fact of Gabriel's calumny is recorded only in Draginov's text and misses from the other chronicles.

Aside from the differences that we analyze before all the texts agree upon the basic structures of the narration which is the place, the persons which participated, their names, the timeline of the islamization, the consequences for those which refused to convert and the total destroy of the churches and monasteries. Such an unsettling fact as it is the betrayal of the metropolitan to his congregation, there was no case to miss along with the other elements from the rests of the texts.

Beside those, on the biographical notes refer to Gabriel there is no indication for a mass islamization of his

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<sup>63</sup>Mj. Gideon, «Metropolitans of Philippopolis notes», 387.



congregation and for ruining of church structures, something that we consider that it would be an unlikely omission if we think about the number of villages that were islamized (74) and the number of churches and monasteries that were destroyed (218 and 32 respectively).

On this case, we assume that we have to deal with a suspicious recording of facts, for the convenience of third party to historical truth expediencies. More specific, in 1870 when St. Zahariev publicized his book «Geographical-Historical-Statistical description of Tatar Pazartzik» the anti-Greek spirit in Bulgaria was at its highest point and was fanning by the events of the Bulgarian Exarchate<sup>64</sup>. St. Zahariev as a proponent of the Exarchate it wasn't possible to not be influenced by the general climate of his days. We only have to note that Zahariev was responsible for the expulsion of the Greek high priests from the province of Tatar Pazartzik in October 19<sup>th</sup> 1859, as it is recorded on his biography collocated by Ivan Batakiev. Beside this, it is also noted the often collision that Zahariev have had with priests of Greek origin. For this we come to the conclusion that for the case of metropolitan Gabriel, Zahariev made an interference in Draginov's text so he would show the "everlasting" hostile treatment of the Bulgarian people from the Greek clergy.

As for the destroying of the 218 churches and 33 monasteries, the general picture of the archeological data proved that it's nothing more than an authorial overkill. During the period of the Turkish ruling in Bulgaria, there were

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<sup>64</sup> For the Bulgarian Exarchate see D. Dakin, *The Greek Struggle in Macedonia*, Kyriakidis, 1996, D. A. Stamatopoulos, «The Bulgarian Schism Revisited», *Modern Greek Studies Yearbook*, 24/25 (2008-2009), 105-125, J. E. Anastasiou, *Ecclesiastical History*, ed. Epicedro, Thessaloniki, vol.B', n. y., 640-647.

recorded two occasions<sup>65</sup> of mass distraction of churches and monasteries: the first one occurred on the period from the midst of the 14<sup>th</sup> century till the midst of the 15<sup>th</sup>, when it had started the progressive conquests of the Bulgarian land by the Ottomans. The second one occurred on the period of the Bulgarian revolution in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. From the end of the 15<sup>th</sup> till the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century there is absolutely no record for an equal mass distraction<sup>66</sup>.

In fact the archeological studies reveal to us exactly the opposite that during that time and especially in the 17<sup>th</sup> century there were founded new churches and monasteries in impressive numbers. From 1578 until the end of the 17<sup>th</sup> century there have been recorded 67 churches and 114 monasteries which remain till nowadays<sup>67</sup>, and the number will increase if we calculate and the constructions that were destroyed during the revolution, for which we have only archival records<sup>68</sup>.

We have to clarify here that the Ottoman regime didn't allow the erection of new church constructions<sup>69</sup>, but based to the privileges which had been established by Suleiman the Magnificent<sup>70</sup>, Christians had the right to repair and expand the existing churches under the term to not exceeded in size and

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<sup>65</sup> M. Kiel, *Art and Society of Bulgaria in the Turkish Period*, Maastricht 1985, 128.

<sup>66</sup> M. Kiel, *Art and Society of Bulgaria*, 128.

<sup>67</sup> X. Генчев, *Българската култура 15-19 век*, София 1988, M. Kiel, *Art and Society of Bulgaria*, ch. 4, 6-9.

<sup>68</sup> Г. Несеv, *Български довъзрожденски културно-народностни средища*, 1977, 150- 168.

<sup>69</sup> M. Kiel, *Art and Society of Bulgaria*, 121-22.

<sup>70</sup> M. Kiel, *Art and Society of Bulgaria*, 122-127, Г. Несеv, *Български средища*, 150- 168, *The travels of Evliya Celebi*, translation Joseph von Hammer, Arab Research Institute of Great Britain and Ireland, London 1834, chap.4, 88-100.

decoration from the Muslim mosques<sup>71</sup>. This rule was inviolable for the urban areas which were the seats of the Ottoman administration, but for the rural areas where the surveillance was looser, it could be seen frequently enough the erection of new church constructions, which usually occurred after the offering of a gift to each Kadi or spachi<sup>72</sup>. Two examples of churches are in the provinces of Plevle and Vidin as in Sofia's surrounding area<sup>73</sup>. For the monasteries which were under different privileged status (tax exemptions etc.) there was no similar impediment hence their larger number from the churches<sup>74</sup>. This also applies for the area of Western Rhodope which considers us, in which there aren't records for mass destruction of churches and monasteries (except from the chronicles).

### Conclusion

The brief chronicle of Methodij Draginov, as well as the rest sources (Batkyn's chronicle and the two editions of Belovo's chronicle), that record the islamization of Western Rhodope area isn't fictional narrations in total, as they are based in real historical facts such as the Ottoman campaign during the Cretan war and the islamization's phenomenon exacerbation, which triggered the writers of the chronicles to

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<sup>71</sup>M. Kiel, *Art and Society of Bulgaria*, 122-127, 141-143,150.

<sup>72</sup>M.Kiel, *Art and Society of Bulgaria*, 122-127.

<sup>73</sup>M. Kiel, *Art and Society of Bulgaria*, 129-130.

<sup>74</sup> Б. Николов, М. Манолов, *Огнища на българщината. Пътувания из манастирите*, 1977, 134-156, F. Kotzageorgis, «The monasteries as Ottoman local elites», *Monasteries, economy and politics of the Middle Ages to modern times Rethymno- Greece*, vol.1, 2011, 163-190, «Economic Activities of the Christian Monasteries in Ottoman Society (15th-18th c.)», 12o International Conference on Social and Economic History of the Ottoman Empire. 12o International Conference on Social and Economic History of the Ottoman Empire, Rets 2011.

the addition of their own details so they would transfigure the texts for the service of their personal goals.

In Methodij Draginov's case that aim was to reinforce the anti-Greek movement of the era, attributing the islamization of the Western Rhodope's Bulgarians on the Greek ecclesiastical authorities, and on the other side the other chronicles are emphasizing the violence and zealotism of the Turks.

In any case, the 19<sup>th</sup> century is mainly characterized by the production of similar texts. To the frame of the effort for the establishment of the national states, the categorization of "goods" and "evils", immolators and victims, was a phenomenon that could be observed through all the European literature, beginning from the France Revolution in which appeared the national ideology, and was spread on the continent along with the principals of freedom, independence and justice.

For the countries of the Balkan Peninsula, the immolator was obviously the Ottoman Turks, which the enslaved Christian peoples struggled to win in order to gain their freedom (Greek Revolution of 1821, Bulgarian Revolution of 1856). Especially on the Bulgarian case, they had to emancipate both nationally and ecclesiastically, as the regime of their Church were on the hands of the Greek clergy and the Ecumenical Patriarchate. This, in the consciousness of the Bulgarian world was established a hostile dipole, around of which were assembled and organized the national consciousness- the Ottoman oppressors and the Greek enemies. Therefore the produce and publicizing of similar texts was aiming to their demonization and combat and this shouldn't surprise us.

Consequently, the chronicles are just representing the general condition of their time and they are showing how the distortion of historical events cures committed history writing.

*About the author*

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The Brief Chronicle of Methodij Draginov