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## Foreword

This new book by Evelina Mineva, lecturer in Byzantine and Medieval South Slavic literature at the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens, is a much anticipated event: not only for Bulgarian specialists in Medieval studies but also for Palaeoslavists. It will be superfluous to speak in detail about the importance of the book's subject – the cult of St Parasceve of Epibatae in the medieval Balkan states. The pious reverence for this female saint shaped the medieval culture and the literature of the Bulgarians, Serbs and Romanians and later spread to Russia, Ukraine, and the Polish-Lithuanian principality; indeed, it has never faded – even today. The nations which possessed her relics for certain periods of time during the Middle Ages still consider her their celestial protector. Alluding to the towns where her relics were kept, the sources attach different epithets to her name and refer to her as St Parasceve (St Petka) “of Epibatae”, “of Tărnovo”, “of Belgrade”, or “of Iași”. A vast bibliography is available relating to the saint, to the texts dedicated to her, and to the forms of her veneration in church rituals and in folklore. However, as Evelina Mineva points out, the existing publications have only rarely transcended narrow national frames, and the attention of their authors has presumably been focused on one particular literary tradition or other. As paradoxical as it may sound, the least studied subject is the root of the cult of St Parasceve in the Byzantine period. There is a logical explanation, however: the subject is not of special interest to Byzantinists, since the saint was not very popular within the empire

and was venerated only locally, in a small part of Thrace (centred on the towns of Epibatae and Kallikratia). It is widely accepted that St Parasceve's fame increased very quickly after the transfer of her relics to Tǎrnovo, where she was eventually granted the status of the protector of the capital city, guardian of the ruling dynasty, and helper of the Bulgarians. Her rise within the hierarchy of saints naturally inspired a large number of both original and translated literary pieces dedicated to the anchoress. However, the Slavic texts thus produced cannot be properly evaluated and interpreted without their being compared to their Greek prototypes. It is precisely this difficult but undoubtedly important and promising task that Evelina Mineva undertakes: to shed light on the "dark" side of the early cult of St Parasceve of Epibatae, to study in detail the existing Greek hagiographic narratives about her (and mostly her *vita* – BHG 1420z), to establish the mutual connections between the Greek texts and their relations to the surviving Bulgarian readings, and to outline how and when different revisions and borrowings came into being.

Mineva's book has been impatiently anticipated for several other reasons, as well: firstly, because the conclusions reached by the author, who some time ago devoted herself to the investigation of the medieval literary works about St Parasceve, have already been presented in part at significant scholarly forums or published in leading periodicals in the field of Medieval studies,<sup>1</sup> thus making her

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<sup>1</sup> Evelina Mineva is the author of a monograph about five hymnographic works for St Parasceve of Epibatae preserved in South Slavic manuscripts – cf. Минева, Е. *Пет химнографски творби за св. Петка Търновска* [Five hymnographic works about St Petka of Tǎrnovo]. Sofia, 2005. She has also published a number of articles related to the texts which served the cult of the saint – see, for instance “Непубликувани византийски стихери за св. Петка Търновска от XVв.” [Unpublished Byzantine Stychera to St Petka of Tǎrnovo from the fifteenth century]. – *Palaeobulgarica* 20/3 (1996): 85–95; “Някои общи мотиви във византийската и южнославянската химнография от XIV–XV в.” [Some common motifs in the Byzantine and South Slavic hymnography]. – In: *Études en honneur du prof. Vasilka Tǎpkova-Zaimova*. Sofia, 2006

one of the leading experts on this subject; secondly, because Evelina Mineva is a researcher who is equally and highly competent in both Byzantine and Palaeoslavica studies, which undoubtedly broadens her horizons; and, last but not least, because her commitment to taking into consideration all known facts from the domains of palaeography, political history, archaeology, art history and other related disciplines while searching for answers has already yielded interesting results. It would hardly be an exaggeration to claim that, since the foundational research conducted by Emil Kałużniacki (1899)<sup>2</sup> into the Greek, Slavonic and Romanian manuscript tradition

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(=Studia Balcanica 25), 488–493; “Службите за св. Петка в гръцките кодекси от колекцията на ЦСВП “Проф. Ив. Дуйчев” [The Offices for St Petka in the Greek Codices of the Collection of the Centre for Slavic and Byzantine Studies “Prof. Ivan Dujčev]. – *Годишник на Софийския университет, Център за славяно-византийски проучвания “Иван Дуйчев”* 98 (17) (2013): 299–307; Ένας κώδικας με μονόγραμμα των Παλαιολόγων (Conventi Soppressi B.1, Camaldoli 1214). – *Parekbolai* 5 (2015): 121–134; “Был ли Ярослав Мудрым υἱὸς τῷ ἄρχοντι Ῥωσίας в Византийском пространном житии св. Параскевы Эпиватской (ВНГ 1420z)?” [Was Yaroslav the Wise υἱὸς τῷ ἄρχοντι Ῥωσίας in the Byzantine vita of St Parasceve of Epibatae (ВНГ 1420z)?] – *Byzantinoslavica* 74/1–2 (2016): 175–189; “Едновременното почитане на стари и нови светци (въз основа на непубликуваната комбинирана служба за св. Назарий, ГERVасий, Протасий и Целзий и св. Петка Търновка в Cod. Vaticanus Slavus 26 (XIV–XV в.))” [Common veneration of old and new saints (on the basis of the combined office for SS Nazarios, Gervasios, Protasios and Celsius and St Petka of Tărnovo in Cod. Vaticanus Slavus 26 from the fourteenth-fifteenth century)]. – In: *Трети международен конгрес по българистика, 23-26 май 2013 г., София. Секция “История и археология”, подсекция “Българите през Средновековието”*. София, 2014. Her paper „Is the Byzantine Vita of St Paraskevi of Epibatae (ВНГ 3 1420z) the “Lost” Vita of Deacon Vasilikos from the twelfth century?” was presented at the 23<sup>rd</sup> International congress of Byzantine studies in Belgrade in the summer of 2016.

<sup>2</sup> Kałużniacki, E. *Zur älteren Paraskevalitteratur der Griechen, Slaven und Rumänen* (Sitzungsberichte der Kais. Akademie der Wissenschaften

about St Parasceve, the publications of Evelina Mineva represent the most significant attempt to carry out a parallel survey of the medieval literature concerning this saint – an attempt which is, moreover, undertaken with an eye on the broader cultural context.

Mineva's book is conceived as two separate volumes dealing with the Byzantine hagiographic and hymnographic works glorifying St Parasceve. In the first volume, the Greek *vita* BHG 1420z (first published in 1988 by François Halkin in a book dedicated to the memory of Prof. Ivan Dujčev<sup>3</sup>) naturally attracts the author's greatest attention: unknown to Kałużniacki, this is the earliest and the most detailed text about the anchoress. Very rare, it survived in only two fourteenth-century manuscripts which gathered together selected readings about female saints. In her study, Mineva adds new key information not only about the *vita* itself, but also about the codices in which the text has been found. She points out the similarity between these two manuscripts and the common antibolon they share, proving that one of them was undoubtedly owned by an unknown representative of the imperial Palaiologan dynasty. Further, Mineva scrutinizes the specific features of the genre, language and style of St Parasceve's *vita*, which define it as belonging to the Byzantine high literature, and makes suggestions about its literary sources. Based on this thorough analysis, Mineva formulates a hypothesis about its author and date, producing convincing arguments that BHG 1420z must be the so-called "Vasilikos' *vita*".<sup>4</sup> The scarce information about the Greek hagiographic narrations dedicated to St Parasceve

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in Wien. Philosophisch-historischen Classe der kaiserlichen Akademie der Wissenschaften). Wien, 1899.

<sup>3</sup> Halkin, F. *Sainte Parascève la Jeune et sa Vie inédite* BHG 1420z. – In: *Studia slavico-byzantina et mediaevalia europensia*. Vol. 1. Sofia, 1988, 281–292.

<sup>4</sup> Jürgen Fuchsbauer came to the same conclusion, though following other logical deductions. Cf. Fuchsbauer, J. "The Thracian and the Constantinopolitan Life of Paraskeva of Epibatai". – In: *Сребърният век: нови открития* [The Silver Age: New discoveries]. Sofia, 2016, 203–210.

comes solely from a comment by the Byzantine canonist Theodore Balsamon to the 63rd canon of the Quinisext council in Trullo.<sup>5</sup> Due to this brief remark, it is known that a certain Deacon Vasilikos composed a full-text Life of St Parasceve of Epibatae at the request of Patriarch Nicholas IV Mouzalon (1147–1151), since the existing vita (usually labelled “popular” or “vernacular” in modern scholarly publications<sup>6</sup>) was found to be too elementary and unworthy of the saint, and subsequently consigned to the fire. Judging by the stylistic and linguistic characteristics of BHG 1420z, Mineva suggests that, although the name of its author does not appear in its title, the text contains clear traces that date the appearance of its protograph to the twelfth century, thus pointing to the time when Deacon Vasilikos is likely to have been writing. According to Mineva, Vasilikos, whose name is not known from other works, must have been a highly educated, talented and probably renowned writer. Furthermore, Mineva proposes interesting interpretations for some episodes in the vita (such as, for instance, the possible identity of the lame “archon of Russia” mentioned in one of the saint’s posthumous miracles), studies the ties of kinship attributed by some sources to St Parasceve and St Euthymios, bishop of Madytos, and also outlines the “sacral geographic network” of the initial centres of the cult in Byzantium.

Since I am not a Byzantinist, I am not going to comment on the significance of Evelina Mineva’s work for establishing the complicated relations among different Byzantine hagiographic texts about St Parasceve. However, from the point of view of Palaeoslavica studies, Chapters 5 and 6 of this book are probably the most important. Here, the author makes valuable contributions demonstrating how the

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<sup>5</sup> Ράλλης, Γ., Μ. Ποτλής. *Σύνταγμα των Θείων και Ιερών Κανόνων*. Τόμος 2. Αθήναι, 1952, 453.

<sup>6</sup> Krumbacher, K. *Geschichte der byzantinischen Litteratur von Justinian bis zum Ende des Oströmischen Reiches, 527–1453*. München, 1897: 791; Podskalski, G. *Theologische Literatur des Mittelalters in Bulgarien und Serbien, 865–1459*. München, 2000, 313; Fuchsbaauer, J. “The Thracian and the Constantinopolitan Life...”, 209.

Byzantine vita of St Parasceve correlates not only with the Modern Greek texts, but also with the hagiographic narratives preserved in medieval South Slavic literatures. It must be stressed right away that Mineva does not simply discuss the extant source material or present her own observations: she entirely transforms – and quite categorically at that – our existing ideas about the hagiographic tradition of the saint. Since Kałużniacki's times, it has been considered common knowledge in Palaeoslavica studies that the two Greek hagiographic texts mentioned by Theodore Balsamon – the “popular” one and the one written by Deacon Vasilikos – did not survive in their original language; it has been assumed that Vasilikos' vita came down to us in a Slavonic translation preserved in a well-known Bulgarian manuscript, the so-called *Germanov Sbornik* [*Germanos' Miscellany*] from 1358/1359.<sup>7</sup> Scholars believed that the text in the *Germanov Sbornik* has its Greek counterpart in BHG 1420z.<sup>8</sup> On the basis of a detailed study and a scrupulous collation of the Byzantine and Slavic texts, Mineva rearranges the scheme of the complex interrelations of the Greek and Slavic versions of St Parasceve's vita and reaches the following conclusions:

First, the Slavic version of St Parasceve's vita in the *Germanov Sbornik* has nothing in common with the “Vasilikos' vita” BHG 1420z; nevertheless, the text in the *Germanov Sbornik* probably originated as a translation from a Byzantine prototype that has not been discovered. According to Mineva, the Vita in the *Germanov Sbornik* is a stylistically and rhetorically extended variant of a Synaxarion text. The so-called First Slavonic vita of the *Prologue* type

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<sup>7</sup> Мирчева, Е. *Германов сборник от 1358/1359 г. Изследване и издание на текста* [Mircheva, E. *The Germanov Sbornik from 1358/1359. A Study and Edition of the Text*]. Sofia, 2006.

<sup>8</sup> See, for instance, commentaries on St Parasceve's vita in the *Germanov Sbornik*'s edition where its Greek parallel is erroneously identified as BHG 1420a (cf. Мирчева, Е. *Германов сборник от 1358/1359 г. ...*, 101). Klimentina Ivanova (Иванова, Кл. *Bibliotheca Hagiographica Balcano-Slavica*. София, 2008: 249) obviously depends on the *Germanov Sbornik*'s edition.

(preserved in manuscript copies from the *Verse Prologue*<sup>9</sup>) is based on the *Germanov Sbornik*'s text, enlarged with an addendum about the translation of St Parasceve's relics to Târnovo;

Second, the "Vasilikos' vita" BHG 1420z does not have any attested Slavic translation. Its influence, however, is clearly visible in the First canon from the most ancient Slavonic service for St Parasceve (most probably a translation from a non-preserved Greek hymnographic work created on the basis of BHG 1420z);

Third, one of the short vitae of St Parasceve preserved in early printed books and attributed to Meletios Syrigos (1585–1664), a Cretan preacher and man of letters who later became Metropolitan of Braila, also borrows from "Vasilikos' vita". This is proven by Mineva, who demonstrates that the two texts are almost identical in places. Here, Mineva's expertise in medieval Slavic hagiography turns out to be very useful and her knowledge of Slavic texts allows her to reconstruct the Greek manuscript tradition. She establishes that a portion of Meletios Syrigos' work is incorporated (in its Slavonic translation) into the vita of St Parasceve written by Patriarch Euthymios of Târnovo (1375–1393). It thus becomes clear that the text ascribed to Meletios Syrigos (or at least a part of it) already existed in the fourteenth century. In Mineva's view, its protograph had most probably functioned in Byzantium as a synaxarion notice. Meletios also paraphrased it into the Modern Greek spoken in his time and appended to it the narrative about the transfer of St Parasceve's relics from Constantinople to Iași (an edition of Meletios' full text is provided as an appendix to Mineva's book). Meletios' Modern Greek version of the Byzantine synaxarion notice of St Paraceve obviously laid the foundations for several later adaptations in Modern Greek which continued to circulate until the middle of the nineteenth century;

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<sup>9</sup> The name *Prologue* is applied to the Slavonic translation of the Byzantine Synaxarion. The Slavonic translation of the Synaxarion's version combined with the metrical calendar composed by Christopher of Mytilene is usually referred to as *Verse Prologue*.



Fourth, a comparison of the extant Greek hagiographic versions with the Vita written by the Bulgarian Patriarch Euthymios reveals some factual differences (omissions and insertions of details or episodes), which Mineva enumerates and summarizes in a comparative table, thus outlining the specific content, structure and peculiarities of each vita as well as their interdependence and mutual connections.

Although the book's title implies that the author's attention is focused on a single text – the Byzantine vita BHG 1420z which she suggests was written by Deacon Vasilikos – Mineva does not restrict herself to this vita alone. Rather, the scope of her investigation is broad and covers the entire hagiographic tradition of St Parasceve of Epibatae, including full-text vitae, shorter synaxarion-type texts, and Greek and South Slavic literary pieces (both translated and original). Thus, she draws a complex picture of the development of St Parasceve's cult in hagiography, identifying "Vasilikos' vita" as the root of a rich and many-branched hagiographic tradition. In her book, Mineva asks important questions about the reception of Byzantine literary works among Slavs and about the shaping of the corpus of hagiographic narratives about St Parasceve, as attested in medieval manuscripts. She singles out texts which, preserved in Slavonic translations, bear witness to the existence of lost Byzantine protographs. These clear contributions to the study of the hagiographical sources, combined with the meticulous analysis of the facts concerning the geographical, cultural and historical context of the cult, provide a new starting point for further scholarly investigations and interpretations of the texts dedicated to one of the Balkans' most popular female saints.

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## Preface

The impulse for engaging in a work of scientific research can have multilateral – and sometimes fairly personal – dimensions. Although many people may imagine the writing of an academic book as a boring, rational process, in fact the researcher pours his soul, character and feelings into its writing. All the reasons for undertaking this effort and its multiple dimensions are, however, interwoven into a chain: a given scientific discovery and a given question will continue to generate new discoveries and questions as long as the desire to study reality – albeit one that is already passed – and a bold curiosity to discover the truth remain. I sometimes find scientific study to be similar to a detective investigation, because the past conceals many unsolved enigmas and mysterious acts whose authors remain unknown, while any number of valuable objects and works are also lost, their fate and possible current locations still to be traced or found. This is the challenge that inspires me in my work. The challenge in the history of the cult of one of the Balkans' most popular female saints, St Parasceve of Epibatae (Petka of Tarnovo, of Belgrade, of Iași) was the little known hymnographic and hagiographic Byzantine tradition. Had she been forgotten in Byzantium and, later, in Ottoman-ruled Greece, and what traces of the Byzantine dimension of her veneration remain today? Is it possible that several stichera by the late Byzantine man of letters Markos Eugenikos, Metropolitan of Ephesus, are all that have been preserved along with a single Byzantine vita, when there are so many works about her in the Slavonic tradition, many of which were

certainly translated from the Byzantine? Did the Byzantine works that have survived into the present really influence the Slavonic texts? I have been attempting to find answers to these questions for many years, and the answers I have found are shared in the pages that follow.

As Aristotle said, man is “a social animal” (ζῷον κοινωνικόν) and rarely – perhaps never – does one do something completely alone: the presence, collaboration and spirit of others always represents a part of what any of us think and create. I would like to thank my family, my friends and colleagues without whose support and stimulus I would not have been able to complete this work. More specifically, Assoc. Prof. Angel Nikolov of Sofia University for providing me with the otherwise hard-to-access bibliography and for never ceasing to encourage my research; Assoc. Prof. Ivayla Popova of Sofia University for the photocopy of the Florentine manuscript; my paleography teacher Agamemnon Tselikas, Head of the Historical and Palaeographical Archive of the Cultural Foundation of the National Bank of Greece, for his priceless collaboration in the study of the Florentine manuscript; my husband, Prof. Ioannis Polemis of Athens University, Dr. Iliana Genew-Puhalewa of the University of Silesia and Prof. Despina Chila-Markopoulou, a professor of linguistics for many years in the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens for their help in proofreading certain parts of the book; Dr. Elka Traykova, Director of the Institute of Literature of the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, for her invaluable assistance with this publication; Dr. Maya Petrova of the Institute of Literature of the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences for her willingness to review the text and write a preface; academician Vassil Gyuselev and Prof. Maria Yovtcheva of the University of Sofia, for their constant commitment and support during my writing; the translators Orlin Chochov and Michael Eleftheriou for their patience and dedication in translating my challenging text into English and my friend, the painter Martin Krastev, for the beautiful cover design. And, last but not least, two very close friends of mine whom I will not mention by name since they are not associated with academia and academic

circles, but whose love and inspirational words have encouraged me and given me strength in a period difficult for me. My heartfelt thanks to everyone named and unnamed and to all those I may have omitted without meaning to do so!

And ultimately, following the example of medieval scribes, I beg the reader's indulgence:

*Read and correct but do not find fault, for the mind and hand of a man wrote this!*

