

BYZANTINA LODZIENSIA

XXXVI

Maria Lekapene, Empress of the Bulgarians

Neither a Saint nor a Malefactress

Zofia A. Brzozowska
Mirosław J. Leszka



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Introduction



According to some of the scholars attempting to recreate the biographies of Bulgarian tsaritsas, the character of the relevant medieval sources can be most fully summarized with the principle: *do not mention them, or speak of them poorly*¹. This also applies to Maria Lekapene, wife of tsar Peter. While the former part of the statement seems to pertain primarily to contemporary authors, the latter is common among modern historians, constructing their narratives based on exceedingly small source material and accusing the tsaritsa of an unambiguously negative impact on the events taking place in the Bulgarian state during the 10th century².

¹ В данните от изворите и от специализираната литература по отношение на повечето от българските владетелки важи принципът “Или нищо, или лошо”. Помайки тежестта на короната, те сякаш се дематериализират до степенята на безплътни сенки на своите съпрузи или пък се митологизират като разюздани юди самовили, обсебени от сатанински егоцентризъм, алчност, коварство и всякакви низки щения (В. Игнатов, *Българските царици. Владетелките на България от VII до XIV в.*, София 2008, р. 6).

² В.И. Златарски, *История на българската държава през средните векове*, vol. I/2, *Първо българско Царство. От славянизацията на държавата до падането на Първото царство (852–1018)*, София 1927, р. 535–536; П. Мутафчиев, *История на българския народ (681–1323)*, София 1986, р. 201.

According to scholars of the caliber of Vasil Zlatarski and Petar Mutafchiev, the tsaritsa exerted major influence on her husband's foreign policy, even acting as an 'agent' of Constantinople at the Preslav court and indirectly contributing to the collapse of Bulgarian statehood in 971. Moreover, some historians are also willing to blame Maria for carrying out an ideological transfer of some kind, i.e. for infecting Old Bulgarian culture with elements of Byzantine political ideology – a 'plague' from which (as per the uncompromising Petar Mutafchiev) the medieval Bulgarians never recovered.

Much more balanced assessments regarding Maria's influence on the direction of the foreign and internal policies of her husband, as well as the dissemination of Byzantine culture in Preslav, can be found in the works of later historians, e.g. Vasil Gjuzelev³ or Jonathan Shepard⁴. These scholars stress that the exceptionally scanty source material makes it impossible to formulate unequivocal conclusions concerning this matter.

Maria Lekapene has also attracted the attention of scholars working on the Bulgarian ideology of power and the system of the monarch's self-representation in the 10th century, i.e. titles, seals and insignia (Georgi Atanasov⁵,

³ В. Г ю з е л е в, *Значението на брака на цар Петър (927–969) с ромейката Мария-Ирина Лакапина (911–962)*, [in:] *Културните текстове на миналото – носители, символи, идеи*, vol. I, *Текстовете на историята, история на текстовете. Материали от Юбилейната международна конференция в чест на 60-годишнината на проф. д.и.н. Казимир Попконстантинов, Велико Търново, 29–31 октомври 2003 г.*, София 2005, p. 27–33.

⁴ J. S h e p a r d, *A marriage too far? Maria Lekapena and Peter of Bulgaria*, [in:] *The Empress Theophano. Byzantium and the West at the turn of the first millennium*, ed. A. D a v i d s, Cambridge 1995, p. 121–149.

⁵ G. A t a n a s o v, *On the Origin, Function and the Owner of the Adornments of the Preslav Treasure from the 10th century*, "Archaeologia Bulgarica" 3.3, 1999, p. 81–94; i d e m, *Инсигниите на средновековните български владетели. Корони, скиптри, сфери, оръжия, костюми, накити*, Плевен 1999; i d e m, *Печатите на българските владетели от IX–X в. в Дръстър (Силистра)*, [in:] *От тука започва България. Материали от втората национална конференция по история, археология и културен туризъм "Пътуване към България"*, Шумен 14–16.05. 2010 година, ed. И. Й о р д а н о в, Шумен 2011, p. 286–293.

Georgi Bakalov⁶, Ivan Jordanov⁷, Angel Nikolov⁸, Todor Todorov⁹). Of course, Peter's spouse also appears in studies devoted to Bulgarian female royalty and the role of women in medieval Bulgaria (Judith Herrin¹⁰, Sashka Georgieva¹¹, Magda Hristodulova¹²).

The paucity of source material pertaining to Maria is most likely the primary reason why the empress has not yet been the subject of a separate, monographic study. The goal of the present book is to fill this gap in historiography. Starting with the assumption that the history of medieval Bulgaria cannot be considered in isolation from the history of the neighboring Byzantine empire, and being aware that it is in the transmission of Byzantine spiritual and material culture that Maria Lekapene's influence could be seen most clearly, we decided to analyze the life of our protagonist against a wider cultural background. Therefore, we present

⁶ Г. Б а к а л о в, *Царската промулгация на Петър и неговите приемници в светлината на българо-византийските дипломатически отношения след договора от 927 г.*, "Исторически преглед" 39.6, 1983, p. 35–44; i d e m, *Средновековният български владетел. Титулатура и инсигнии*, София 1995.

⁷ И. Й о р д а н о в, *Корпус на печатите на Средновековна България*, София 2001; i d e m, *Corpus of Byzantine Seals from Bulgaria*, vol. III/1, Sofia 2009; i d e m, *Корпус на средновековните български печати*, София 2016.

⁸ А. Н и к о л о в, *Политическа мисъл в ранносредновековна България (средата на IX–края на X в.)*, София 2006.

⁹ Т. Т о д о р о в, *Константин Багренородни и династичният брак между владетелските домове на Преслав и Константинопол от 927 г.*, "Преславска книжовна школа" 7, 2003, p. 391–398; i d e m, *България през втората и третата четвърт на X век: политическа история*, София 2006 [unpublished PhD thesis]; i d e m, *Владетелският статут и титла на цар Петър I след октомври 927 г.: писмени сведения и сфрагистични данни (сравнителен анализ)*, [in:] *Юбилеен сборник. Сто години от рождението на д-р Васил Хараланов (1907–2007)*, Шумен 2008, p. 93–108.

¹⁰ J. H e r r i n, *Theophano. Considerations on the Education of a Byzantine Princess*, [in:] *The Empress Theophano. Byzantium and the West at the turn of the first millennium*, ed. A. D a v i d s, Cambridge 1995, p. 64–85 [= J. H e r r i n, *Unrivaled Influence. Women and Empire in Byzantium*, Princeton 2013, p. 238–260].

¹¹ S. G e o r g i e v a, *The Byzantine Princesses in Bulgaria*, "Byzantinobulgarica" 9, 1995, p. 163–201; e a d e m, *Жената в българското средновековие*, Пловдив 2011.

¹² М. Х р и с т о д у л о в а, *Титул и регалии болгарской владетельницы в эпоху средневековья (VII–XIV вв.)*, "Études Balkaniques" 1978, 3, p. 141–148.

her biography in comparison with those of the Byzantine empresses of the 4th–10th centuries, describing the model of the *imperial feminine* they had created and the ways in which it had changed over the course of the centuries (until it was successfully transplanted onto Bulgarian soil by Peter's wife). The image is further enriched by the occasional appearance in the pages of this monograph of two other female royals, Maria's contemporaries. Kievan Rus', by accepting Christianity from Constantinople and adopting the Old Church Slavic language and writing, became a state culturally related to Bulgaria. Accordingly, in this book, the reader shall find references to the Kievan princess Olga, as well as to Anna Porphyrogenete (a fairly close relative of the Bulgarian tsaritsa).

* * *

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* * *

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I

Zofia A. Brzozowska

Sources



Most of the information regarding the life and activities of Maria Lekapene has come to us from Byzantine authors. Crucially, many of the accounts which we are going to examine here were written during Maria's life, or soon after her death. The most detailed description of the developments of 927, i.e. the negotiations leading to the conclusion of peace between the empire and Bulgaria (the guarantee of which was to have been the marriage between Peter and the granddaughter of Romanos I Lekapenos), is found in a narrative written down in the 10th century in Constantinople. It was created by authors from the so-called 'circle of Symeon Logothete': the Continuator of George the Monk (Hamartolos), Symeon Logothete, Leo Grammatikos and Pseudo-Symeon Magistros¹.

¹ The reader may find a review of Byzantine historiographical texts focusing on Maria and the events of 927 in such works as: В. Гюзелев, *Значението на брака на цар Петър (927–969) с ромейката Мария-Ирина Лакапина (911–962)*, [in:] *Културните текстове на миналото – носители, символи, идеи*, vol. I, *Текстовете на историята, история на текстовете. Материали от Юбилейната международна конференция в чест на 60-годишнината на проф. д.и.н. Казимир Попконстантинов, Велико Търново, 29–31 октомври 2003 г.*, София 2005, p. 32; А. Николов, *Политическа мисъл в ранносредновековна България (средата на IX-края на X в.)*, София 2006, p. 233–236; Т. Тодоров, *България през втората и третата четвърт на X век: политическа история*. София 2006 [unpublished PhD thesis], p. 150–152;

The output of the anonymous Continuator of George the Monk includes the description of events from 842 onwards – from the point at which George’s narrative ended. The fragments devoted to Peter and Maria are practically identical with the relevant passages in the *Chronicle of Symeon Logothete*. The text is known in two variants. Redaction A, older, written down before 963, describes the events prior to 948, i.e. the death of Romanos I Lekapenos. The later redaction B includes the history of Byzantium up to 963 (enhanced with certain additional details). The older version of the *Chronicle of Symeon Logothete* is highly similar to redaction A of the *Continuation of George the Monk*, while the newer version closely resembles redaction B. In this monograph, I am not going to differentiate between the redactions A and B, as the passages relating to Maria Lekapene in both variants are identical. They include first and foremost an unusually extensive and detailed narrative of the events of 927², as well as a mention of the Bulgarian tsaritsa’s visits to Constantinople in the later period³.

Textologically separate, but related in content, are the *Chronicle of Pseudo-Symeon Magistros* and the *Chronicle of Leo Grammatikos*. Their descriptions of the developments of 927 are similar to the ones discussed above, but presented more concisely⁴.

The second, later redaction of the *Chronicle of Symeon Logothete*, completed ca. 963, most likely served as the basis for the anonymous author of the first part of book 6 of the *Continuation of Theophanes*, written at roughly the same time. It is hardly surprising, therefore, that this work’s account of the circumstances in which the Bulgarian-Byzantine peace treaty of 927 was concluded is also highly similar to the descriptions mentioned above. It also includes a strikingly close depiction of the marriage

и де м, *Владетелският статут и титла на цар Петър I след октомври 927 г.: писмени сведения и сфрагистични данни (сравнителен анализ)*, [in:] *Юбилеен сборник. Сто години от рождението на д-р Васил Хараланов (1907–2007)*, Шумен 2008, p. 94–95.

² Continuator of George the Monk, p. 904–907; Symeon Logothete, 136, 45–51, p. 326–329.

³ Continuator of George the Monk, p. 913; Symeon Logothete, 136, 67, p. 334.

⁴ Leo Grammatikos, p. 315–317; Pseudo-Symeon Magistros, 33–34, p. 740–741.

between Maria and Peter, as well as a record of the tsaritsa's several journeys to Constantinople, where, accompanied by her children, she paid visits to her relatives⁵.

Some information on Maria Lekapene was also included in the works of later Byzantine chroniclers: John Skylitzes and John Zonaras. Both of these authors included a description of the facts of 927, based on the above-mentioned earlier accounts but presented in a more condensed form⁶. Moreover, they also noted an event that, for obvious reasons, could not have been mentioned by the authors of the earlier historiographical works (concluded in the early 960s) – i.e. the death of Maria⁷.

The works of Constantine VII Porphyrogenetos deserve particular attention. He was of a similar age to Peter and his spouse and was married to her aunt – Helena Lekapene; he also participated in the events of 927 and most likely knew Maria personally. However, the ‘purple-born’ author is not objective: he is unsympathetic to our heroine’s family and does not conceal his outrage that she, a granddaughter of emperor Romanos I Lekapenos, married a foreign, Slavic ruler. Constantine included an evaluation of this marriage in chapter 13 of the treatise *On the Governance of the Empire*⁸. Another of his works, the *Book of Ceremonies*, may also prove a valuable source. While it would be futile to search the pages of this text for direct remarks on Maria, it does provide us with

⁵ Continuator of Theophanes, VI, 22–23, 35, p. 412–415, 422.

⁶ John Skylitzes, p. 222–224; John Zonaras, XVI, 18–19, p. 473–475.

⁷ John Skylitzes, p. 255; John Zonaras, XVI, 23, p. 495.

⁸ Constantine VII Porphyrogenetos, *On the Governance of the Empire*, 13, p. 72–74. For the opinion of Constantine VII on the Bulgarians, as well as on the causes of this ruler’s negative attitude towards the Lekapenos family and their dynastic marriage of 927, see: Г. Литаврин, *Константин Багрянородный о Болгарии и Болгарах*, [in:] *Сборник в чест на акад. Димитър Ангелов*, ed. В. Велков, София 1994, p. 30–37; F. Tinnfeld, *Byzantinische auswärtige Heiratspolitik vom 9. zum 12. Jahrhundert*, “Byzantinoslavica” 54.1, 1993, p. 21–22; Т. Тодоров, *Константин Багрянородни и династичният брак между владетелските домове на Преслав и Константинопол от 927 г.*, “Преславска книжовна школа” 7, 2003, p. 391–398; В. Гюзелев, *Значението на брака...*, p. 30–31; А. Пароń, “Trzeba, abyś tymi oto słowami odparł i to niedorzeczne żądanie” – wokół *De administrando imperio* Konstantyna VII, [in:] *Causa creandi. O pragmatyce źródła historycznego*, eds. S. Rosik, P. Wiszewski, Wrocław 2005, p. 345–361; А. Николов, *Политическа мисъл...*, p. 269–279.

some important information about the official status and titulature of the mid-10th century Bulgarian ruler⁹.

Maria is also mentioned by a Western European author contemporary to her: Liudprand of Cremona, who came to Constantinople on a diplomatic mission twice (in 949 and in 968)¹⁰. The person of Maria and the circumstances of her marriage with the Bulgarian ruler drew Liudprand's attention during both of his stays in the Byzantine capital. In 968, the reasons were obvious – the goal of his visit to Constantinople was, after all, to negotiate Nikephoros II Phokas's agreement to marry a 'purple-born' Byzantine woman to the son of Otto I. The Byzantine-Bulgarian marriage of 927 may have been an important argument during these negotiations, in that the rule according to which a woman from the imperial family could not marry a foreign ruler was not strictly adhered to at the Constantinopolitan court¹¹. Curiously, Liudprand is also the only author to mention that, upon entering into marriage, Maria adopted a new name (Irene, i.e. 'Peace'), symbolically underscoring the role she was to play in the Byzantine-Bulgarian relations after 927¹².

We do not know why Bulgarian medieval authors consistently fail to mention Maria Lekapene. The tsaritsa is entirely absent from Bulgarian works that refer to her husband, e.g. the *Sermon Against the Heretics* by Cosmas the Priest (10th century), or historiographical texts devoted to St. John of Rila (the so-called 'folk' life from the 11th century or the prologue life from the 13th century, or the work of Euthymios of Tarnovo). Even more surprisingly, we will not find any references to the empress in hymnographic works dedicated to Peter as a saint of the Eastern Church

⁹ Constantine VII Porphyrogenetos, *The Book of Ceremonies*, II, 47, p. 681–682.

¹⁰ Liudprand of Cremona, *Retribution*, III, 38, p. 86; Liudprand of Cremona, *Embassy*, 16, 19, p. 194–195.

¹¹ T. Wo liń s k a, *Konstantynopolitańska misja Liudpranda z Kremony (968)*, [in:] *Cesarstwo bizantyjskie. Dzieje. Religia. Kultura. Studia ofiarowane Profesorowi Waldemarowi Ceranowi przez uczniów na 70-lecie Jego urodzin*, eds. P. K r u p c z yń s k i, M. J. L e s z k a, Łask–Łódź 2006, p. 208–212.

¹² J. S h e p a r d, *A marriage too far? Maria Lekapena and Peter of Bulgaria*, [in:] *The Empress Theophano. Byzantium and the West at the turn of the first millennium*, ed. A. D a v i d s, Cambridge 1995, p. 126–127; B. Г ю з е л е в, *Значението на брака...*, p. 30.

(e.g. in the *Officium* from the 13th-century *Menaion of Dragan* or in the troparion from the 1330 *Lesnovo Prologue*). The laudatory part of the *Synodikon of Tsar Boril* omits Lekapene completely; it does, however, include praises of numerous Bulgarian royals of both sexes (among them another Maria, the last empress consort of the first state – 1018), of several later tsaritsas, and of Peter himself¹³. Given that the *Synodikon* has not reached us in its complete form, we may venture a hypothesis that some mention of Maria Lekapene may have been present in the part that is now lost. Rather symptomatic, on the other hand, is the account from the *Tale of the Prophet Isaiah*, a 12th-century compilation: according to its anonymous author, Peter purportedly died without having known either sin or a wife/woman (ГРЪХА НЕ ИМАХЕ НИ ЖЕНИ)¹⁴.

Against this backdrop of medieval Bulgarian literary tradition, one entry, added as a gloss to the 14th-century Slavic translation (completed in Bulgaria) of the *Chronicle of Constantine Manasses*, seems unique: СЕГО ЦРЬ [i.e. Romanos I Lekapenos's] ВНСКЖ ПЕТРЪ ЦРЬ БЛЪГАРСКЫ ИМЪ ЖЕНЪ. This passage, repeated in Bulgarian and Serbian copies of this source, seems to be the only one across the entire South Slavic material that mentions Maria¹⁵.

In a study that requires the analysis of native sources (such as e.g. research into the titlature of the Bulgarian empress consort), the historian needs to seek additional information by examining the Slavic translations of Byzantine chronicles. From among the above-mentioned Greek historiographical texts, both versions of the *Continuation of George*

¹³ *Synodikon of Tsar Boril*, p. 149–150; Г. Б а к а л о в, *Царската промулгация на Петър и неговите приемници в светлината на българо-византийските дипломатически отношения след договора от 927 г.*, “Исторически преглед” 39.6, 1983, p. 37–38; i d e m, *Средновековният български владетел. Титулатура и инсигнии*, София 1995, p. 172; Т. Т о д о р о в, *България...*, p. 155; i d e m, *Владетелският статут...*, p. 98.

¹⁴ *Tale of the Prophet Isaiah*, p. 17. On the portrayal of Peter in the *Tale of the Prophet Isaiah*: D. Č e š m e d ž i e v, *Bulgarska tradycja państwowa w apokryfach: car Piotr w “Bulgarskiej kronice apokryficznej”*, transl. Ł. M y s i e l s k i, [in:] *Biblia Slavorum Apocryphorum. Novum Testamentum*, eds. G. M i n c z e w, M. S k o w r o n e k, I. P e t r o v, Łódź 2009, p. 139–147.

¹⁵ *Среднебългарский перевод Хроники Константина Манассии в славянских литературных*, eds. Д. С. Л и х а ч е в, И. С. Д у й ч е в, София 1988, p. 232, 237.

the Monk as well as the work of John Zonaras were certainly translated into the language of the Orthodox Slavs¹⁶.

The Slavic translation of the *Continuation of George the Monk* was completed in Bulgaria in the late 10th or early 11th century, and it was based on the newer, expanded redaction of the text (B), written after 963. Therefore, the Slavic translation dates back to merely several decades later than the original Greek version (i.e., incidentally, soon after Maria's death). According to numerous scholars, the Slavic translation is unusually faithful to the original, preserving a version of the text that is closer to the protograph than some of the extant Byzantine copies¹⁷. It features a thorough account of the year 927 and a reference to Maria's later visits to Constantinople¹⁸.

Interestingly enough, another translation of the *Chronicle of Symeon Logothete* (vel *Continuation of George the Monk*), entirely independent from the translation discussed above, was produced in the 14th century in the South Slavic area. It was based on the older redaction of the Byzantine chronicle (A), covering events until 948. In the manuscripts of this translation, the work is unequivocally ascribed to Symeon Logothete¹⁹. Again,

¹⁶ Д.И. По л ы в я н н ы й, *Царь Петр в исторической памяти болгарского средневековья*, [in:] *Средновековният българин и "другите"*. Сборник в чест на 60-годишнината на проф. дин Петър Ангелов, eds. А. Н и к о л о в, Г.Н. Н и к о л о в, София 2013, p. 139.

¹⁷ А.П. К а ж д а н, *Хроника Симеона Логофета*, "Византийский Временник" 15, 1959, p. 126; W. S w o b o d a, *Kontynuacja Georgiosa*, [in:] *Słownik starożytności słowiańskich. Encyklopedyczny zarys kultury Słowian od czasów najdawniejszych do schyłku XII w.*, vol. II, eds. W. K o w a l e n k o, G. L a b u d a, T. L e h r - S p ł a w i ń s k i, Wrocław 1965, p. 468; М. К а й м а к а м о в а, *Българска средновековна историопис*, София 1990, p. 170–171; А. В р з ó s t k o w s k a, *Kroniki z kręgu Symeona Logotety*, [in:] *Testimonia najdawniejszych dziejów Słowian. Seria grecka*, vol. V, *Pisarze z X wieku*, ed. А. В р з ó s t k o w s k a, Warszawa 2009, p. 64–66.

¹⁸ *Continuator of George the Monk (Slavic)*, 6–7, 10, p. 560–562, 566.

¹⁹ Г. О с т р о г о р с к и й, *Славянский перевод хроники Симеона Логофета*, "Seminarium Kondakovianum" 5, 1932, p. 17–37; А.П. К а ж д а н, *Хроника...*, p. 130; W. S w o b o d a, *Symeon Logotheta*, [in:] *Słownik starożytności słowiańskich...*, vol. V, eds. W. K o w a l e n k o, G. L a b u d a, T. L e h r - S p ł a w i ń s k i, Wrocław 1975, p. 506–507; М. К а й м а к а м о в а, *Българска средновековна историопис...*, p. 187–188; Т. Т о д о р о в, *България...*, p. 155–156; i d e m, *Владетелският статут...*, p. 98; А. В р з ó s t k o w s k a, *Kroniki...*, p. 66.

the fragments of the source referring to Maria Lekapene were rendered particularly faithfully, free from abbreviations or editorial interpolations²⁰.

The Bulgarian translation of the *Chronicle of John Zonaras* (from the second half of the 12th century) and especially the 14th-century Serbian redaction can hardly be considered complete. In the manuscripts containing the most extensive version of the Slavic text, we encounter a lacuna between the reign of Leo VI (886–912) and that of Basil II (976–1025). Accordingly, it is impossible to find any mention of Maria in the text²¹. Interestingly, information about her death and her role as a *sui generis* ‘guardian of peace’ between Byzantium and Bulgaria was included in the synopsis of John Zonaras’s work by the anonymous author of manuscript РНБ, F.IV.307, which comprises the 14th-century Slavic translation of the *Chronicle of Symeon Logothete*: *Црѣ же блъгарскаго Петра женѣ оумерши, иже съ Гръкы мирь оутврѣждаж*²².

Remarks about Maria Lekapene can also be found in several Russian historiographical sources which were dependent content-wise, and sometimes even textologically, on Slavic translations of Byzantine chronicles. Thus, the highly detailed description of the events of 927 as well as the passage on Maria’s later visits to Constantinople – *de facto* re-edited fragments of the *Continuation of George the Monk* – were weaved into the text of the *Hellenic and Roman Chronicle* of the second redaction²³. The latter is a monumental relic of Rus’ historiography of the late Middle Ages, compiled prior to 1453 on the basis of native accounts as well as Byzantine sources acquired in the East Slavic area (e.g. the *Chronicle of George the Monk* and the *Chronicle of John Malalas*)²⁴.

²⁰ Symeon Logothete (Slavic), p. 136–137, 140.

²¹ О.В. Творогов, *Паралипомен Зонары: текст и комментарий*, [in:] *Летописи и хроники. Новые исследования. 2009–2010*, ed. О.Л. Новикова, Москва–Санкт-Петербург 2010, p. 3–101.

²² John Zonaras (Slavic), p. 146.

²³ *Hellenic and Roman Chronicle*, p. 497–498, 501; Z.A. Buzowska, *The Image of Maria Lekapene, Peter and the Byzantine-Bulgarian Relations Between 927 and 969 in the Light of Old Russian Sources*, “Palaeobulgarica” 41.1, 2017, p. 50–51.

²⁴ Т.В. Анисимова, *Хроника Георгия Амартола в древнерусских списках XIV–XVII вв.*, Москва 2009, p. 9–10, 235–253; Т.В. Илчул, *Літопис і хронограф. Студії з домонгольського кийського літописання*, Київ 2015, p. 372–387.

A brief entry on Maria, based on the above-mentioned Bulgarian gloss to the Slavic translation of the *Chronicle of Constantine Manasses*, can also be found in two (interrelated) 16th-century Russian compilations which contain an extensive history of the world: the *Russian Chronograph* of 1512 and the *Nikon Chronicle*²⁵. The tsaritsa is mentioned in both of these sources along with the description of the reign of emperor Romanos I Lekapenos. The Russian historiographer relates that this ruler's granddaughter was the wife of Bulgarian tsar Peter: **сего царя Ромона [внукѹ] Петръ болгарьскый царь имѣ женѹ**²⁶.

Noteworthy information about Maria and her position at the Preslav court can be gleaned from sphragistic material. It is beyond any doubt that, during the period 927–945, tsar Peter was depicted on official seals accompanied by his spouse. A relatively high number of artifacts of this kind have survived to our times. Ivan Jordanov, a specialist in medieval Bulgarian and Byzantine sigillography, divided them into three types²⁷:

- I. *Peter and Maria – Basileis/Empereors of the Bulgarians* (after 927) – a depiction of Peter and Maria is found on the reverse. The tsar is shown on the left-hand side of the composition, the tsaritsa on the right (from the viewer's perspective). Both are portrayed in the official court dress of Byzantine emperors. The Bulgarian rulers are holding a cross between one another, grasping it at the same height. The inscription presents them as the *basileis* of the Bulgarians: Πέτρος καὶ Μαρίας βασιλεῖς τῶν Βουλγάρων²⁸.

²⁵ М.А. Салмина, *Хроника Константина Манассии как источник Русского хронографа*, "Труды Отдела древнерусской литературы" 32, 1978, p. 279–287; А.А. Турилов, *К вопросу о болгарских источниках Русского хронографа*, [in:] *Летописи и хроники. Сборник статей*, Москва 1984, p. 20–24 [=Межславянские культурные связи эпохи Средневековья и источниковедение истории и культуры славян. Этюды и характеристики, Москва 2012, p. 704–708].

²⁶ *Russian Chronograph*, p. 358; *Nikon Chronicle*, p. 28; Z.A. Brzozowska, *The Image...*, p. 51–54.

²⁷ There are also some atypical artifacts. Cf. И. Йорданов, *Корпус на средновековните български печати*, София 2016, p. 269–271.

²⁸ И. Йорданов, *Корпус на печатите на Средновековна България*, София 2001, p. 58–59; В. Гюзелев, *Значението на брака...*, p. 27; И. Божилков, В. Гюзелев,



Fig. 1. Seal depicting Peter and Maria Lekapene with the inscription: Πέτρος βασι[λεὺς] εὐσ[εβ]ής, Bulgaria, 940–945. Drawing (reconstruction): E. Myślińska-Brzozowska

- II. *Peter and Maria – Autocrats/Augusti and Basileis of the Bulgarians* (940s) – the depiction of the tsar and his spouse on the reverse does not differ fundamentally from the one described above. Because of the poor state of preservation of all specimens of this type, the accompanying writing can be reconstructed in several ways: Πέτρος καὶ Μαρίας ἐν Χριστῷ αὐτοκράτορες Βουλγάρων (*Peter*

История на средновековна България. VII–XIV в., София 2006, p. 275; И. Йорданов, *Корпус на средновековните български печати...*, p. 86–89. All seal inscriptions in this book quoted as reconstructed by Ivan Jordanov.

and Maria in Christ Autocrators of the Bulgarians); Πέτρος καὶ Μαριάς ἐν Χριστῶ ἀύγουστοι βασιλεῖς (*Peter and Maria in Christ Augusti and Basileis*); Πέτρος καὶ Μαριάς ἐν Χριστῶ αὐτοκράτορες βασιλεῖς Βουλγάρων (*Peter and Maria in Christ Autocrators and Basileis of the Bulgarians*). According to numerous scholars, the second interpretation should be considered correct; on the other hand, in his most recent publications, Ivan Jordanov is inclined to accept the third reading²⁹.

III. *Peter and Maria, pious Basileis/Emperors* (940–50s) – the most common type. On the reverse of the *sigillum*, we find a depiction of Peter and Maria, portrayed similarly as in the previous types. The couple is holding a cross – the tsar from the left, the tsaritsa from the right side. However, contrary to the seal images of type I and II, the hands of the monarchs are placed at different heights. In the majority of cases, the tsar's hand is higher; however, there are also examples in which it is Maria who is holding the cross above her husband's hand. The inscription only mentions Peter, calling him a pious emperor: Πέτρος βασι[λεὺς] εὖσ[εβ]ής³⁰.



²⁹ J. Sheppard, *A marriage...*, p. 141–143; Г. Атанасов, *Инсигниите на средновековните български владетели. Корони, скиптри, сфери, оръжия, костюми, накити*, Плевен 1999, p. 98–99; И. Йорданов, *Корпус на печатите...*, p. 59–60; В. Гюзелев, *Значението на брака...*, p. 27; И. Божилов, В. Гюзелев, *История...*, p. 275–276; Т. Тодоров, *България...*, p. 156–159; idem, *Владетелският статут...*, p. 99–101; С. Георгиева, *Жената в българското средновековие*, Пловдив 2011, p. 313–315; M.J. Leszka, K. Marinow, *Carstwo bułgarskie. Polityka – społeczeństwo – gospodarka – kultura. 866–971*, Warszawa 2015, p. 159–160; И. Йорданов, *Корпус на средновековните български печати...*, p. 90–95.

³⁰ J. Sheppard, *A marriage...*, p. 143–146; И. Йорданов, *Корпус на печатите...*, p. 60–63; В. Гюзелев, *Значението на брака...*, p. 27; И. Йорданов, *Корпус на средновековните български печати...*, p. 95–110.