

Connections between the Migrating Early Magyars and Byzantine Christianity¹

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1. Introduction; 2. “Symphony” of Church and Empire; 3. Missionary activities in the Cimmerian Bosphorus region; 4. Missionary activities in Khazaria; 5. Missionary work among the Slavs; 6. Byzantine missionary work among the Bulgarians – an analogy with the mission of Hierotheos; 7. Hierotheos’ missionary activity; 8. The assessment of Greek missionary activities; 9. The consequences of Hierotheos’s missionary activities

1. Introduction

Discussing the connections between the migrating early Magyars (Hungarians) and Byzantium raises a range of serious questions, chief among them being the concern whether such an attempt could be viable and feasible at all. The necessary documents are of a rather small number compared to the situation with other periods or peoples. The current wealth of information creates the impression as though sources – be they written or material/archaeological records – were equally available on the subject. (It must be noted, for instance, that, at the time of the 1204 and 1453 sack of Constantinople, the entire Byzantine imperial and patriarchal archives perished, and patriarchal documents produced between 1315 and 1402 are only known from two Viennese manuscripts.) As one must take account of a loss of sources on an immense scale, it is only natural that the attempt made may only be aimed at sketching a collage in which the gaps between

1 Translation by Dávid Veljanovszki

relatively secure points are not occupied by the imagination but by the knowledge of academically verifiable facts.

Sketchy as this picture might be, a more ambitious undertaking in the subject would not be possible at the moment.

At this point, it seems fitting to consider the character and quantity of sources one can rely on insofar as the subject under investigation is to conclude with the turn of the first millennium. Possessing written records on the migrating early Magyars' religion and connections with Christianity composed by themselves appears to be impossible since – as far as it may be currently ascertained – they did not use writing, and, even if they did, no specimens have been preserved. The information currently available may come from accounts on the ethnic groups and ruling entities in contact with them. Similarly, the relevant material remains amount only to little more than nothing. Methodologically, caution must be exercised in drawing on analogies or putting forward hypotheses as Hungarian prehistory is in the centre of academic debates even at present, and no direct reports exist on the ancient religion of the Magyars, either.

In his 1237 report on his first exploratory trip in search of the ancestral homeland of the Hungarians, Friar Julian merely notes the following about the Magyars of *Magna Hungaria* in a tone far from flattering when it comes to their religion:

They are pagans with no knowledge of God but not worshipping any idols, either, but living like animals instead. They do not cultivate land but eat horse meat, wolf meat and the like and drink mare milk and blood. They abound in horses and weapons and are particularly brave in battle.²

On the contrary, the documents available on the Byzantine side are more numerous, mainly covering periods after the Hungarian Conquest of the Carpathian Basin (AD 896).

2 György Györffy (ed.), *Julianus barát és a Napkelet fölfedezése*, Szépirodalmi Könyvkiadó, Budapest 1986, 68.

2. *“Symphony” of Church and Empire*

To explore the subject at hand, it is essential to examine on what ideological basis Christian missionary activities were conducted. This aspect has hitherto been scarcely addressed in the literature. Previously, it was tendency to accept it as a simple fact that missionary work walked hand-in-hand with the Emperor’s political endeavours and actions to expand the empire, in a sense suggesting that the Church played a subordinate role in politics. Naturally, this assertion could prove to be correct in some cases, but it failed to offer an explanation holistically.

It would be appropriate to ask how the relationship between Church and Empire, two realities of heavenly origin yet of different characters in the understanding of the age, may be captured in Antiquity. According to the edict of the Emperor Justinian addressed to Patriarch Epiphanius on 5 March 535:

The *priesthood* (ιεροσύνη) and the *Empire* (βασιλεία) are the two greatest gifts which God, in His infinite clemency, has bestowed upon mortals; the former has reference to Divine matters, the latter presides over and directs human affairs, and both, proceeding from the same principle, adorn the life of mankind; hence nothing should be such a source of care to the emperors as the honour of the priests who constantly pray to God for their salvation. For if the priesthood is everywhere free from blame, and the Empire full of confidence in God is administered equitably and judiciously, general good (συμφωνία τις ἀγαθή) will result, and whatever is beneficial will be bestowed upon the human race.

Therefore, We have the greatest solicitude for the observance of the divine rules and the preservation of the honour of the priesthood, which, if they are maintained, will result in the greatest advantages that can be conferred upon us by God, as well as in the confirmation of those which We already enjoy, and whatever We have not yet obtained We shall hereafter acquire. For all things terminate happily where the beginning is proper and agreeable to God. We think that this will take place if the sacred rules of the Church which the just, praiseworthy, and

adorable Apostles, the inspectors and ministers of the Word of God, and the Holy Fathers have explained and preserved for Us, are obeyed.³

Thus, in the Hellenistic-Christian political system defined and endorsed by Justinian, Empire (state) and priesthood (Church) do not constitute two rigidly distinct social structures.

In practice, the *principle of symphony* was enforced in a way that wherever the Emperor's authority was recognised in some form, Christian missionary work would *ab ovo* seek to establish its presence, an effort *ex officio* supported by the Sovereign. As a consequence of the administrative structure of the Empire, divisions within ecclesiastical administration would correspond to civil structures as of the time of Constantine. Therefore, missionary activities among the surrounding pagan peoples would also start from the respective ecclesiastical provinces as mother Churches and received assistance and directions for further development from there.

Closest to Constantinople, migrant ethnic groups emerging in the Balkans and along the shores of the Black Sea provided opportunity for Christian missionary work. An institutional framework was supplied by Canon 28 of the Council of Chalcedon convening in 451:

Following in every detail all the decrees of the holy Fathers and knowing about the canon, just read, of the one hundred and fifty bishops dearly beloved of God, gathered together under Theodosius the Great, emperor of pious memory in the imperial city of Constantinople, New Rome, we ourselves have also decreed and voted the same things about the prerogatives of the very holy Church of this same Constantinople, New Rome. The Fathers in fact have correctly attributed the prerogatives (which belong) to the see of the most ancient Rome because it was the imperial city. And thus moved by the same reasoning, the one hundred and fifty bishops beloved of God have accorded equal prerogatives to the very holy see of New Rome, justly considering that the city that is honored

3 Samuel Parsons Scott (ed.), *The Civil Law*, The Central Trust Company, Cincinnati 1932, novella 6, praefatio.

by the imperial power and the senate and enjoying (within the civil order) the prerogatives equal to those of Rome, the most ancient imperial city, ought to be as elevated as Old Rome in the affairs of the Church, being in the second place after it. Consequently, the metropolitans and they alone of the dioceses of Pontus, Asia and Thrace, as well as the bishops among the barbarians of the aforementioned dioceses, are to be ordained by the previously mentioned very holy see of the very holy Church of Constantinople; that is, each metropolitan of the above-mentioned dioceses is to ordain the bishops of the province along with the fellow bishops of that province as has been provided for in the divine canons. As for the metropolitans of the previously mentioned dioceses, they are to be ordained, as has already been said, by the archbishop of Constantinople, after harmonious elections have taken place according to custom and after the archbishop has been notified.⁴

According to canon commentators Zonaras and Balsamon, the barbarians mentioned were the Alans (on the fringes of the Province of Pontus) and the Russians (on the fringes of the Province of Thrace), adopting Christianity, though not part of the Roman Empire.⁵ Originally, the Canon only affirmed the ordination of bishops, but later it also enabled the bishoprics evolving out of the missionary activities in the territories of the “barbarians” to occupy suitable hierarchical positions in the extensive ecclesiastical network of the Patriarchate of Constantinople as well. This process may be traced from the lists of episcopates.⁶

4 Canon XXVIII of the Fourth Ecumenical Council (Constantinople, 451) on the privileges of the Archbishop of Constantinople. Peter L’Huillier (ed.), *The Church of the Ancient Councils: The Disciplinary Work of the First Four Ecumenical Councils*, Scarsdale, St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1996, 267-268.

5 Ibid. 96.

6 Jean Darrouzès, *Notitiae Episcopatum Ecclesiae Constantinopolitanae. Texte critique, introduction et notes*, Paris 1981, 241.

3. *Missionary activities in the Cimmerian Bosphorus region*

Drawing on the discoveries of his time, the first to publish a comprehensive study on the connections between the migrating Magyars and Byzantium was Gyula Moravcsik in 1938.⁷ His views have ever since been but mostly reiterated in the literature with some modifications on varying scales. The first part of the present paper also utilises his study as a point of reference.

For the subject in focus, the first detail to scrutinise is Note 3 on the lists of bishops, reflecting conditions after about 787. Article 37 discusses the Metropolitanate of Gothia, with its seat in Doros, under Item 611.⁸ This ecclesiastical province comprised seven bishoprics: Khotziron, Astel, Khouales, Onogouron, Rheteg, Ounon and Tamatarkha.⁹ The majority of these names did not refer to places but ethnicities.¹⁰ In relation to Hungarians, it was the mention of the Onoğurs and the Huns, along with their link to Gothia, that piqued the interest of researchers in Hungary. Such details provided an inspiration for the examination of the allusions in Malalas's *Chronographia*, with the author describing the first step of missionary work among the Huns in conjunction with the events of the years 527 and 528:

7 Gyula Moravcsik, *A honfoglalás előtti magyarság és a kereszténység*, in Jusztinián Serédi (ed.), *Emlékkönyv Szent István király halálának kilencszázadik évfordulóján*, Magyar Tudományos Akadémia [The Hungarian Academy of Sciences], Budapest 1938, 173-212. English version: Gyula Moravcsik, "Byzantine Christianity and the Magyars in the Period of Their Migration", in *The American Slavic and East European Review* 6 (1946), 29-45.

8 J. Darrouzès, *Notitiae Episcopatum*, 241.

9 ἐπαρχία Γοθθίας.

α' Δόρος μητρόπολις, β' ὁ Χοτζίρων, γ' ὁ Ἀστήλ, δ' ὁ Χουάλης, ε' ὁ Ὀνογούρων, ζ' ὁ Πετέγ, ζ' ὁ Οὔνων, η' ὁ Ταμάταρχα.

10 Ibid. 242.

At this time, the king of the Huns called Grod, who lived near Bosphorus, appealed to the aforementioned Emperor.¹¹ He came to Constantinople and was enlightened.¹² The Emperor himself was made his godfather and, presenting him with many a gift, he dismissed him to his country to represent Roman interests and ensure the defence of Bosphorus. This town had been founded by Heracles of Hispania, who had provided that, instead of money, it render cattle to the Romans in the way of taxation, giving the town the name *Boon phoros* [= “cattle tax”] and obliging it to honour this duty. In this town, Italian soldiers labelled Romans, i.e. Hispanians, were accommodated [by the Emperor], along with a tribune to join them in its defence. The Romans and Huns engaged in trade by barter in this town. On his return to his homeland, this Christianised king (of the Huns) found his brother near Bosphorus. Leaving him with Hunnish auxiliary troops, he departed. And these Huns venerated idols (*ἀγάλματα*) and, taking these, they melted them down, for they were made of silver and electron, and they exchanged them for *miliaresia* in Bosphorus.¹³ Enraged, the priests (*οἱ ἱερεῖς*) of the aforementioned Huns slew the king and installed his brother Mugel instead¹⁴ and, fearing the Romans, they came to Bosphorus and slaughtered the defenders of the town. Upon hearing this, the aforementioned Emperor made proconsul Ioannes *Comes* of the Straits of the Black Sea, his responsibility being to have his seat at the estuary of the Black Sea, and dispatched him with Gothic auxiliary troops. And the said Emperor launched a military campaign against the Huns, sending ships filled with soldiers and an exarch across the aforementioned Black Sea, along with major assistance on land as well, and Magister Badouraios. Hearing this, the Barbarians

11 Justinian I (527-565).

12 I.e., he was baptised. In Greek, Baptism is called “φωτισμός”, i.e. enlightening.

13 *Miliaresion* was a 2.27-3.03 gram (0.08-0.1 oz) silver coin used in Byzantium from the 7th to the 11th century.

14 In the apparatus: *Muageris* or *Moageras*. The fact that the publisher of the text, H. Thurn, did not include such variations in the main text does not necessarily preclude the possibility that the names (and their bearers) in the different manuscripts existed in reality.

fled, and Bosphorus would live in peace under the rule of the Romans.¹⁵

It is known that missionary activities among the Goths already began in the time of Saint John Chrysostom; it would, however, produce a major impact primarily on their groups moving westwards, with the creation of the Gothic Bible and commitment to the Arian faith. Questions about the affiliation of the Huns mentioned by Malalas (Utigurs? Kutrigurs?) have not been resolved completely as yet.

Earlier attempts were made to label Mugel (Muageris) as the eponym of the Hungarians; based on its acoustic similarities with the ethnonym “Magyar”, it has been frequently identified with it since *Origines Hungaricae* by Fóris Ferenc Otrókoci (1693!). Although initially Moravcsik maintained his view that the text spoke of two princes who ruled over the “Magyars or a federation of tribes in which the Magyar elements played a role, in all probability a leading one at that”, implying that “the Magyars, or part of them, had come into contact with Christianity as early as at the beginning of the sixth century, even though this first convertive experiment had, owing to

15 Johannes Thurn (ed.), *Ioannes Malalas, Chronographia*, Corpus Fontium Historiae Byzantinae 35, Walter de Gruyter, Berlin 360-361. See Gy. Moravcsik, *A honfoglalás előtti magyarság*, 191-193. Moravcsik’s translation with minor modifications. In the 12th century, Michael the Syrian also adopts this episode in his *Chronicle* with substantial abridgement: “At about the same time (in the first year of Justinian I.), *Gurdios*, the king of *Hunnaye*, arrived in the capital of the Empire accompanied by a great army and, having become a catechumen, he was baptised. He was also held over the baptismal font by the King himself. On returning to his homeland, he began to smash the golden and silver idols that were worshipped there. When this was seen by his brother and even the army and the heathen priests, they set a trap for him and killed him. Afterwards, however, fearful that the King of the Romans himself would avenge them, they escaped to a different location.” Michael Syros, *Chronica*, IX, 21, 192-193; Mihály Kmoskó, *Szír írók a steppe népeiről*, Balassi, Budapest 2004, 171-172.

the resistance of heathen elements, been unsuccessful”.¹⁶

Later he refined his opinion by adding that “it seems probable that the term «Hun» is a reference to the Onogurs, who, as suggested by other sources, lived near Maeotis and whose undefined connections with the Magyars have been indicated before”.¹⁷ The current state of affairs in this relation was mostly aptly expressed by Károly Czeglédy with a linguistic focus; nothing has changed ever since:

... the basis and, at the same time, principal evidence for equating *Muageris* with *Magyar* no doubt remains the similarity of the two names. Albeit in no way coercive, this resemblance is certainly a thought-provoking one... Thus, it would be premature to pass a final verdict on the *Muageris* issue... At the same time, it is also obvious that the *Muageris* episode is surrounded by too much uncertainty for this piece of data to function as support in other questions of prehistory.¹⁸

In other words, the association cannot be substantiated by any cogent arguments.¹⁹ No matter what actual ethnicity the text speaks

16 Gyula Morvacsik, *Byzantine Christianity and the Migrating Magyars*, 39.

17 Gyula Moravcsik, *Bizánc és magyarság*, Budapest 1953, 35. It is remarkable to what extent the development of a particular discipline is dependent on the language skills and perspectives of its practitioners. Darrouzès does not reference Moravcsik's study *Byzantine Christianity and the Magyars in the Period of Their Migration* from 1946.

18 Károly Czeglédy, *A magyar népnév legrégebb előfordulásai a forrásokban*, in Géza Bárczi – Loránd Benkő (ed.), *Pais-émlékkönyv*, Akadémiai Kiadó, Budapest 1956, 273.

19 Starting from this episode, ecclesiastical historiography verging on romanticism regarded it as proven that *Ungorda-Gordas* and *Muageris-Mogyeri* were princes of the prehistoric Magyars... Gordas-Ungorda is a martyr of Christianity. When, led by his brother, Muageris-Mogyer, the pagan element separated from his people, those staying in the tribal confederation remained faithful to Christianity as well. The Christianity that they came to know, adopt and retain was Byzantine-rite Christianity. Imre Timkó, *Keleti kereszténység, keleti egyházak*, Szent István Társulat, Budapest 1971, 377. The citation provides a typical example of the tendency insisting on demonstrating (or even

of, two aspects relevant to the subject under investigation may be highlighted here: What did missionary work consist in? What impact did it have? The mention of idols made of metal suggests that the missionary must have strived to persuade the people into destroying them because the presence of idols was not compatible with Christian religious practice. Therefore, a different devotional attitude was to be introduced to replace totemistic pagan cult. The account does not relate how this was implemented. The “change of cult” seems to have been unsuccessful though: apparently, the “priests” understood it as an act of profaning their sacred objects when the melted down metal items were exchanged for Byzantine money rather than having them turned into Christian sculptures – a move that could have supplied a justification for displacing old idols.

Odd as it might appear, based on the data available, it gradually becomes clear that, before the 9th century, Christian missionary work was not informed by a definite concept, but individual bishops sought to cope with the task as they saw it fit for specific contexts. The Byzantine Court began to develop the methodology of missionary activities from 860. The first impetus in this process was provided by the Russian attack of Constantinople from Rus, prompting Patriarch Photius to send missionaries to the Balkans at the request of Khan Boris of Bulgaria, while Constantine, the Philosopher, and his brother went to Moravia to the Court of Rastislav.

In these missionary undertakings, it was already evident that they had been prepared in Constantinople beforehand, identifying the establishment of literacy and the translation of Christian foundation

constructing) historical continuity between the sporadic records of a distant past and the current ecclesiastical *status quo* (i.e. Hungary’s Hungarian-speaking Greek Catholic community), interpreting the events of Antiquity and the Middle Ages in a peculiar (*academically* unsound) manner. The opposite, however, is also true as will be revealed by the interpretation of Hierotheos’s missionary work currently prevalent in Hungarian historical scholarship.

literature into the language of the people to be converted – in this case, into the language of the Slavs. Subsequently, missionary centres were created (Ohrid and Preslav), where the local clergy would be trained. Of course, this highly desired outcome would fail to be achieved in a number of instances: Especially in areas under the influence of Byzantine administration, the Hellenised variant of the religion was promoted, hindering the development of a local “national” Church.

The established strategy of Byzantine missionary work was henceforth characterised by the following pattern: The converter would first endeavour to win over the leader and elite of a particular people, and, once they were “officially” converted, i.e. baptised, Christianity would continue to spread “from top to bottom” in the ranks of their subjects, whom the missionaries sought to make acquainted with and endorse the faith – most commonly through church services – by performing “ongoing fieldwork”.²⁰

4. Missionary activities in Khazaria

Later episcopate lists make no mention of the bishoprics of the Onoğurs and Huns comprised within the Metropolitanate of Doros. This circumstance may also imply that the ethnic groups known by this name no longer lived in the area of Crimean Doros, occupied by the Khazars in 787. At that time, the ancestors of the Magyars lived at first under an Onoğur and subsequently a Khazar-Turkic political system, as taxpayers of the Khazars, attaining independence from them only in the 9th century.²¹

In terms of religion, the Khazars present a unique or even colourful picture: Whereas their ruling elite and the majority of the nomads

20 Cf. Timothy E. Gregory – Ihor Ševčenko, *Synkellos, Missions*, in Alexander Kazhdan – Alice–Mary Talbot (eds.), *The Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium*. Oxford University Press, New York – Oxford 1991, 1993.

21 Cf. István Vásáry, *A régi Belső-Ázsia története*, Balassi, Budapest 2003, 147, 142.

under their rule preserved the traditional worldview of steppe peoples, Christianity from Byzantium also found its way to them, and so did Islam thanks to contact with the Arabs. Despite the ruling class's adherence to its pagan belief system, it was so profoundly affected by Judaism in the last quarter of the 8th century that the Khagan and those around him converted to Judaism. This development spurred the Byzantine ecclesiastical government to take the decision to launch a missionary campaign as well in conjunction with the political talks conducted with the Khazars.

The diplomatic mission was headed by the erudite Constantine, called the Philosopher by his *Legend* written in Old Church Slavonic. The embassy with a dual purpose was triggered by the siege of the Crimean Greek trading town, Cherson, by the Khazars around 861:

Having been informed of this, the Philosopher did not procrastinate but went to the Prince, and, by talking to him, he persuaded him with his wise words into acting with moderation. Promising to receive Baptism, the Prince retreated, doing no manner of harm to those people. Then the Philosopher continued his journey, and (one day) as he said his prayer at the first hour, he was raided by the Magyars (*Ougri*), howling like wolves, who wanted to kill him. However, he was not alarmed, nor did he interrupt his prayer, but merely cried *Kyrie eleison* as he had completed his devotional service.

Upon observing him, guided by a divine command, the Magyars were pacified and began bowing before him, and, listening to his sage admonishments, they let him go free with his whole entourage.²²

The Constantine-Cyril Legend describes the encounter of a Christian missionary and the Hungarians for the first time. Though the result of an accidental event, the occasion is at once exploited by the diplomat for preaching. His ecclesiastical attire and liturgical conduct make it unambiguously clear to those carrying out an abrupt attack on him that

22 Pirooska F. Kováts (ed.), *Pannóniai legendák. Cirill és Metód szláv apostolok élete*, Madách – Európa, 1978, 33-34 (The Vita of Constantine, VIII).

they are faced with a divine emissary: Owing to either a comparison with priests of their own religion or their prior – albeit superficial – acquaintance with Christianity, they show due respect to him.

The brief meeting does not give rise to catechism, only to some “sage admonishments”. Accordingly, it seems appropriate to draw the automatic conclusion that the assertion found previously in the literature claiming that the migrating Hungarians came into contact with Byzantine Christianity could not mean that they were baptised – at least not in large numbers. Under Khazar rule, they must have been familiarised first with Islam and subsequently with Judaism as well besides Christianity.

It is also possible that the *sabretache* unearthed in a grave from the period of the Hungarian Conquest in Tiszabezdéd had been made before 895 and was brought to the Carpathian Basin by its owner. In analysing its iconography – independent of its dating – Etele Kiss observes that:

the *sabretache* already represents the local outcome of some Christian missionary activity as the cross placed on the central palmette bouquet fits into palmette foliage typical of early-Magyar ornamentation and is surrounded by mythical animals – a simurgh and unicorn – clearly as an unparalleled specimen memorialising a newly baptised nobleman’s idiosyncratic definition of faith. The *sabretache* has given rise to diverse interpretations, including retrospective evidence for the early Magyars’ shamanistic beliefs and the myth of the sky-high tree as an expression of religious syncretism, or, more recently, as a depiction of the Crucifixion. Although these readings are by no means unrealistic, the composition is most likely to evoke Psalm 73 (74), 12: “Yet God our King is from of old, working salvation in the midst of the earth”.²³

23 Etele Kiss, *Ut mos est grecorum* – Byzantine Heritage and the Era of the Árpád Dynasty, in Szilveszter Terdik (ed.), *The Light of Thy Countenance. Greek Catholics in Hungary*, Debrecen 2021, 24.

During the diplomatic mission, Constantine was granted an opportunity to preach and he did make some accomplishments:

The Khazars spoke thus: “We are no enemies unto ourselves, but – better safe than sorry – we hereby order that everyone be baptised as he will. And whosoever of you prostrates himself turning to the west, prays after the manner of the Jews or persists in the Saracen faith, will before long take death from our hands”. Afterwards, they dispersed in jubilation. As many as two hundred of them were baptised, abandoning pagan abominations and illicit marriages. And the Khagan wrote this letter to the Emperor: “You sent us a man, O Sovereign, who showed us that the Christian faith is sacred in both word and deed. And thus assured that this is the true faith, we have ordained voluntary baptism, hoping that we shall also attain it. We are all supporters and friends of your Empire, always ready for your service, wherever you may require it”.²⁴

5. Missionary work among the Slavs

Before the examination of the relationship between the early Magyars and Byzantium, it must be discussed briefly how Eastern Christianity appeared in the Carpathian Basin. After the Khazar missionary campaign, along with his brother, Methodius, Constantine was tasked with going to Moravia in order to perform missionary activities there. He did in fact begin the assignment with the support of the local prince:

When (in 863) Constantine arrived in Moravia, Rastislav received him with great honour and, gathering disciples, he gave them over to him. Translating the entire church service programme soon, Constantine would teach them the Matins, the Hours, the Vespers, the Compline and the services of the feasts.²⁵

²⁴ Piroska F. Kováts (ed.), *Pannóniai legendák*, 55 (The Vita of Constantine, XI).

²⁵ Ibid. 63.

The missionary work progressed:

having spent forty months in Moravia, (in 867) he left for Rome to ordain his disciples. En route he was received by Kocel, Prince of Pannonia, who became rather fond of the Slavonic books and assigned fifty or so disciples to him to familiarise them with the contents of these books. And paying great homage to him, he saw him out.²⁶

As a result of the Slavic missionary campaign, Christianity could take root among the Bulgarians and the Slavs of the Carpathian Basin. Kocel's seat was in Mosapurc, in the vicinity of contemporary Zalavár. At this point, it may be natural to ask – apart from the Slavonic version of the liturgical texts – what the actual liturgy employed by the Apostles of the Slavs was like: Was it the liturgies named after Saint Basil the Great and Saint John Chrysostom – differing mostly in their *anaphoras* only – used in Constantinople at the time or perhaps a different Mass that would be initially more conducive to the goal of missionary work? Researchers have tried to make inferences from two documents. Previously, it was believed that the oldest Slavonic record written in the Glagolitic script, the so-called *Kievan Pages*, was the translation of a Latin Order of Mass, called the Liturgy of Saint Peter by the Greeks and in use in the Greek Churches in Italy and along the Adriatic coast as early as the 8th century.

This view, however, is no longer tenable today.²⁷ The other is a translation of the Chrysostom Liturgy in the Glagolitic script found in

²⁶ Ibid. 65-66.

²⁷ The latest research findings have revealed that the Liturgy of Saint Peter represented a formulary of Eucharistic celebration consisting of Western liturgical elements (parts of the *ordinarium*, various prayers and the Eucharistic Canon), as well as elements (i.e. prayers and hymns) of Byzantine and/or Oriental origin. Its ultimate beginnings may be traced to Southern Italy – Calabria and Campania, and its original language was Greek. However, the assumption that it could be compiled by Cyril and Methodius from Latin and Byzantine prayers is unacceptable. A thorough analysis of the manuscripts

the *Sinai Collection*; it is Constantine's work.²⁸ It must have been used by the Slavic Apostles and their successors during their missionary work.

Ordained Archbishop of Pannonia in Rome, Methodius encountered the marauding Magyars in the course of his missionary trip, before 6 April 884 at the latest.

Reaching the banks of the Danube, the Hungarian King wished to see him. Although some thought and openly said that he would not be released by him without torture, he went to see him. However, the King received him in a way fit for a prince, with honour, solemnity and pleasantries, conversing with him as such men are supposed to converse, and then kissing him and showering him with presents, he dismissed him affectionately, saying: "Remember me, honourable father, in your prayers at all times".²⁹

From the half a century after the Hungarian Conquest of the Carpathian Basin, no information pointing to missionary campaigns among the Magyars started by Byzantium is available. This does not mean that it did not strive to make contacts though, as accounted in the work *De Administrando Imperio*. The comprehensive work was compiled by (or possibly at the request of?) Constantine VII (Porphyrogenitus) by 952, from numerous documents, intended as a present for the 14th birthday of his son, Romanus. In it, he publishes detailed reports on the connections of individual peoples (the

might indicate that the Slavonic version of the "newfangled" Liturgy of Saint Peter was created in St Catherine's Monastery on Mount Sinai (well after the activities of the Apostles of the Slavs), where the different branches of Christian culture converged. Stefano Parenti, *Un testimone glagolitico della liturgia romano-bizantina di S. Pietro*, in *A Oriente e Occidente di Costantinopoli. Temi e problemi liturgici di ieri e di oggi*, Monumenta Studia Instrumenta Liturgica 54, Librerie Editrice Vaticana, Città del Vaticano 2010, 231-233.

28 Imre H. Tóth, *Cirill-Konstantin és Metód élete, működése*, JATE Bölcsészettudományi Kar és Szláv Filológiai Tanszék, Szeged 1991, 89-90.

29 Piroska F. Kováts (ed.), *Pannóniai legendák*, 105 (The Vita of Methodios, XVI).

Pechenegs, Oghuzes, Khazars, Alans, Russians and the Magyars called “Turks”) between themselves and with the Empire. Constantine’s work, however, says nothing about the religion of the pagan Magyars.

In the decades following the Hungarian Conquest, the Magyars represented a constant threat to Byzantium – occasionally an ally against the enemies of the Empire. Their conduct did not bode well for the success of a missionary campaign. In his *Tactica*, the Emperor Leo the Wise describes the Magyars not only in military terms:

The Turks are very numerous and independent. More than on wealth or other forms of extravagance, they focus their attention only on conducting themselves bravely against their own enemies. This nation has a monarchical form of government and is subjected to cruel and oppressive punishments by their rulers for their offences. They are governed not by love but by fear and they steadfastly bear labours and hardships. They bear up under heat and cold, as well as the further lack of necessities, since they are a nomadic people. The Turkish tribes are meddlesome but keep their plans to themselves. They are hostile and faithless. Possessed by an insatiable desire for riches, they scorn their oaths and do not observe agreements they have made. They are not satisfied by gifts; even before they receive the gift, they are making plans to break the agreement.³⁰

In his *Synopsis of Byzantine History* written in the second half of the 11th century, John Skylitzes records:

The Turks did not discontinue their raiding and ravaging of Roman land until their chieftain, Boulosoudes [Bulcsú], came to the city of Constantine under pretence of embracing the Christian faith. He was baptised and received [from the font] by the emperor Constantine who honoured him with the title of patrician and put him in possession of great riches; then he went back to his homeland. Not long afterwards,

30 George T. Dennis (ed.), *The Taktika of Leo VI*, Corpus Fontium Historiae Byzantinae, Vol. XLIX. Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection, Washington D. C. 2010, 455 (XVII, 45-47).

Gylas [Gyula]³¹ who was also a chieftain of the Turks came to the capital where he too was baptised and where he too was accorded the same honours and benefits. He took back with him a monk with a reputation for piety named Hierotheos who had been ordained bishop of Tourkia [i.e. Hungary] by Theophylact. When he got there, he converted many from the barbaric fallacy to Christianity. And Gylas remained faithful to Christianity; he made no inroad against the Romans nor did he leave Christian prisoners untended. He ransomed them, took care of their needs and set them free. Boulosoudes, on the other hand, violated his contract with God and often invaded Roman land with all his people. He attempted to do likewise against the Franks but he was seized and impaled by Otto their emperor.³²

Albeit covertly, Skylitzes's account makes it clear that what the Byzantine Court expected from the missionary activities was that, rather than acting only as temporary allies, the newly converted would thenceforth maintain friendly ties with the Empire. This pragmatic aspect would prevail even with the Bulgarians. At the turn of the 9th and 10th centuries, Leo the Wise remarks:

Since I have mentioned the Turks, we do not judge it out of place to describe how they form up for battle and how one should form up to fight against them. Let us put in writing what we have learned from a certain amount of experience when they were our allies. At that time, the Bulgarians had disregarded the peace treaty and were raiding through the Thracian countryside. Justice pursued them for breaking their oath to Christ our God, the emperor of all, and they quickly met up with their punishment. While our forces were engaged against the Saracens, divine Providence led the Turks, in place of the Romans, to campaign against the Bulgarians. Our Majesty's fleet of ships supported them and ferried

31 Historians claim that "gylas"/"gyula" was not a proper name but a title, owned by Zombor. Cf. György Györffy, *István király és műve*, Gondolat, Budapest 1977, 47.

32 John Wortley (ed.), *Ioannes Skylitzes, Chronica*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, UK 2010, 231.

them across the Danube. [Providence] sent them out against the army of the Bulgarians that had so wickedly taken up arms against Christians and, as though they were public executioners, they decisively defeated them in three engagements, so that the Christian Romans might not willingly stain themselves with the blood of the Christian Bulgarians.³³

An approach centred on military policy does not of course invalidate the Christian way of thinking but seeks to keep it within its own confines – a tendency that would have long-term effects during the missionary campaigns.

Leo the Wise continues thus:

These characteristics of the Turks are different from those of the Bulgarians only inasmuch as the latter have embraced the faith of the Christians and gradually taken on Roman characteristics. At that time, they threw off their savage and nomadic way of life along with their faithlessness.³⁴

This evidently shows how the practical utility of the principle of symphony was seen in Byzantium.

6. Byzantine missionary work among the Bulgarians – an analogy with the mission of Hierotheos

It is therefore no far-fetched proposition to draw some internal parallel between the missionary campaign among the Bulgarians and that among the Hungarians one century later, from a Byzantine viewpoint.

Before the presentation of any further examination of the story of Hierotheos's mission, it would be by no means irrelevant to consider what preconditions it was initially based on and what expectations it set out to fulfil. The Byzantine missionaries dispatched to the Bulgarians

33 G. T. Dennis, *The Taktika of Leo VI*, 453 (XVIII, 42).

34 Ibid. 459.

did not only approach those to be converted in a merely religious way but also endeavoured to “Byzantinise” them simultaneously, aiming to introduce the mores of a civilisation more refined than those of a semi-nomadic people.

This is recorded in the letter of Prince Boris to Pope Nicholas I. Disappointed in the Byzantines, the ruler sent it to the Pope in the hope that the latter would, on the one hand, treat his country more favourably in terms ecclesiastical organisation and, on the other hand, give acceptable responses to the questions troubling his subjects as a consequence of Byzantine influence.³⁵

These questions pertain to different levels. The first level is dominated by questions relative to the problems of the whole of society. The Bulgarian ruling elite was concerned how to make the traditions of their military society compatible with Christianity, placing great emphasis on honouring martial virtues and exalting military accomplishments. There was a strong potential for instances when the requirement to comply with Christian duty would hamper war efforts: What is a Christian to do when his military campaign happens to coincide with Great Lent³⁶ or news of an enemy attack is received during prayer?³⁷ How ought soldiers to devote themselves to prayer in a military camp under siege?³⁸ Some questions concerned military rituals: the use of the horse-tail as a banner;³⁹ the pursuit of

35 W. L. North, *The Responses of Pope Nicholas I to the Questions of the Bulgars A.D. 866 (Letter 99)*, in *Monumenta Germaniae Historiae VI (Epistolae)*, Berlin 1925, 568-600.

36 Ibid. “If no necessity compels you, you should abstain from battles not only during Lent, but at all times.” *Resp.* 46, col. 998.

37 Ibid. “What else should you do, of course, than complete the good which you have begun.” *Resp.* 74, cols. 1007-8.

38 Ibid. “It is therefore more fitting that one should cease from arms than from prayer.” *Resp.* 38, col. 994.

39 Ibid. “It is more fitting that you should carry the sign of the cross as your military sign instead of that horse’s tail as you go forth in battle formation.” *Resp.* 33, cols. 992-3.

fortune-telling, practising magic before battles, the presentation of festive songs and dances;⁴⁰ the oath sworn on the sword.⁴¹

The contradiction inherent between Christian perseverance in mercifulness and goodness and the ruler's demands was even more disturbing because, if he was to exercise his authority efficiently, he had to be tough in confronting criminals and all who erred in discharging their military duties. Other queries included the following: Are murderers, robbers and adulterers to be forgiven?⁴² May a confession be obtained without torture?⁴³ Can a criminal be granted asylum in a church?⁴⁴ How are deserters or soldiers failing to obey the command to assault the enemy to be treated?⁴⁵ What could be the replacement of the death penalty in the case of border guards

40 Ibid. "The observations of days and hours, the incantations, the games, iniquitous songs, and auguries are the pomp and workings of the devil, which you already renounced, thank God, in baptism and you cast off all these things completely along with the old man and his actions...Instead, go to the churches, carry out prayers, forgive sinners, be present at the solemnities of the Mass, offer oblations, make a confession of your sins to the priests, receive the reconciliation and communion, open the jails, loose the fetters and grant liberty to servants and especially to those who are broken and weak and captives, and distribute alms to the needy." *Resp.* 35, cols. 993-4.

41 Ibid. "Instead of the sword, one should rightly swear by the Gospel, for whatever is contained therein is clearly recognized to be no one's if not God's." *Resp.* 67, col. 1005.

42 Ibid. "Let the venerable laws keep their force. But if they (i.e. the murderers) have fled to a church, let them in fact be saved from the laws of death and let them submit without hesitation to the penance that the bishop or priest of the place has decided." *Resp.* 26, col. 992.

43 Ibid. "Neither divine nor human law allows this practice in any way, since a confession should be spontaneous, not compelled, and should not be elicited with violence but rather proffered voluntarily." *Resp.* 86, col. 1010.

44 Ibid. "The bishop should decide whatever it is clear the sacred canons have defined." *Resp.* 28 32, cols. 991-2.

45 Ibid. "If compassion does not mercifully prevail, at least let the severity of the laws be tempered." *Resp.* 22, 23, col. 991.

letting fugitives slip through the frontier,⁴⁶ or for a soldier whose weapons and horse are not found to be in proper condition before battle?⁴⁷ In fact, these specific questions all boil down to a broader and more complex question: Is the existence of penal law, along with its system of penalties, reconcilable with Christian ethics?⁴⁸ To what treatment should obdurate worshippers of pagan idols be subjected? Should they be forced to accept Christianity?⁴⁹

Understandably, the ruler was also eager to know what could be the right way of contracting an alliance with a friendly nation. Alternatively, what could be done if a Christian state violated a contract that had been ceremoniously signed with another country? Additionally, was a Christian kingdom allowed to conclude a treaty with a pagan country?⁵⁰

46 Ibid. "As for border guards and those crossing the border by stealth..., you should no longer desire deaths but should without hesitation recall everyone to the life of the body as well as the soul, when any opportunity is found." *Resp.* 25, col. 991.

47 Ibid. "We advise you to turn the rigor of such great severity to the exercise of piety." *Resp.* 40, col. 994-5.

48 Ibid. "Owing to the burden of sin, ruling is permissible. You are not allowed, however, to judge clerics, since it is more fitting that they be judged by themselves." *Resp.* 83, cols. 1009-10.

49 Ibid. "You move them towards the right faith by warnings, exhortations, and reason rather than by force, proving that what they know in vain, is wrong... But if they do not listen to you, you should neither take food nor have any communion at all with them, but rather remove them from your service and friendship (*familiaritas*) as if they were foreign and polluted...Yet, violence should by no means be inflicted upon them to make them believe. For everything which is not voluntary, cannot be good." *Resp.* 41, cols. 995-6.

50 Ibid. "Familiarity with the customs and words of the nation in question is required... with the person who does not have the peace of Christ, we should also not have the peace of communion...The treaty upon which you have agreed should be violated on no account, unless a clause was included in the article confirming this treaty, such that one party shall maintain the pact, only if the other party has not violated it by any evasion...If the faithful man has

Not specifically, but only tangentially related to faith, the second group of questions covered everyday conduct and the rite. It seems that the replacement of a set of ritual rules with another could obviously not dispense with the extensive involvement of society: Can work be done on Saturdays, Sundays and on certain feast days;⁵¹ may polygamy be continued;⁵² is coitus permitted on Sundays?⁵³ On how many days a year is a fast to be observed;⁵⁴ at what time may one have

established a pact with the infidel with this intention, namely that he be able to attract him to the worship of the true God, this should not be forbidden.” *Resp.* 80, 81, 82, cols. 1008-9.

- 51 Ibid. “Work may be done on Saturdays..., but worldly engagements must be avoided on Sundays as well as on feast days.” *Resp.* 10, 11, cols. 984-5.
- 52 Ibid. “Neither the origin of the human condition nor any Christian law allows a man to have two wives at the same time.... In whosever household two wives are found at the same time, that man shall be forced to send away the later wife, while keeping the earlier. Furthermore, he shall be compelled to accept the penance which the priest of the place provides.” *Resp.* 51, cols. 999-1000.
- 53 Ibid. “If one should cease from all worldly labour on Sunday, as we taught above, how much more should one beware of carnal pleasure and every sort of bodily pollution, especially since the name “the Lord’s day” shows clearly that the Christian should do nothing on this day except what is the Lord’s. Furthermore, the same thing goes for the nighttime on Sunday as was judged concerning the daytime. For it is one day, which consists in day period and night period, having twenty-four hours.” *Resp.* 63, col. 1004.
- 54 Ibid. “On the days of fasting on which one should especially supplicate the Lord through abstinence and the lamentation of penance, one should completely abstain from meat... One should nevertheless be even more of a slave to abstinence at times of fasting, namely so that the person who recalls that he has committed illicit deeds may keep himself on these days even from licit things in accordance with the sacred decretals, namely during Lent, which is before Easter, on the fast before Pentecost, at the fast before the assumption of the holy mother of God and the ever virgin Mary, our Lady, as well as on the fast before the feast of the birth of our Lord Jesus Christ...But on the sixth day of every week [i.e. Friday] and on all the vigils of famous feasts one should cease from eating meat and should apply oneself to fasting.” *Resp.* 4, cols. 980-1.

breakfast on the mornings of non-fast days;⁵⁵ what animals and birds is a Christian allowed to eat,⁵⁶ especially when these were slaughtered without draining their blood;⁵⁷ is bathing⁵⁸ or the consumption of the meat of an animal slaughtered by a eunuch permitted on fast days, i.e. on Wednesdays and Fridays?⁵⁹ Is it allowed to wear trousers?⁶⁰ Is it appropriate for the ruler to dine at a raised table on his own as is customary?⁶¹

The question of which of the ritual practices associated with paganism could be accommodated alongside Christianity also arose. One of its important elements was ancestor cult: Could one pray to one's deceased parents if they had died as pagans?⁶² Was it to be

55 Ibid. "We exhort you to consume no corporeal food at all before the third hour of the day (during fasts) even on the noteworthy festivals." *Resp.* 60, cols. 1002-3.

56 Ibid. "Every animal whose food is shown not to be harmful to the body and human society admits as food, is not forbidden to be eaten." *Resp.* 43, cols. 996-7.

57 The Pope approves the consumption of animals even without their blood drained. Ibid. *Resp.* 90, col. 1011.

58 Ibid. "We do not deny on Wednesday or Friday, though we preserve this distinction, that, if someone wishes to bath out of a desire for luxury or pleasure, we do not allow this to occur on any day, but if it is done because of bodily necessity, we prohibit this on neither Wednesday nor Friday." *Resp.* 6, col. 982.

59 Ibid. "This sounds truly strange and silly to us. But since we have not heard the reasoning of those who say these things, we are unable to decide anything definitively regarding their assertion, since it is not yet fully known." *Resp.* 57, col. 1001.

60 Ibid. "Pants (*femoralia*) are ordered to be made, not in order that women may use them, but that men may... but really do what you please." *Resp.* 59, col. 1002.

61 According to the Pope, this is not against the faith, though it is indeed in conflict with good conduct. *Resp.* 42, col. 996.

62 Ibid. "You are not allowed to pray for those who died without the faith (*infideles*) because of their sin of unbelief (*incredulitas*). Indeed, it is a sin unto death for those who die in this sin." *Resp.* 88, col. 1011.

tolerated if Christians resorted to magic stones for their recovery⁶³ or wore an amulet around their neck as an antidote to their illnesses?⁶⁴ Boris must have felt justifiably apprehensive that the rigid ritualism of Byzantine priests would block the spread of missionary efforts. Naturally, the Prince did not even mention those clearly pagan rites and customs for which he could not have hoped to receive blessing. Additional questions included: Could lay people hold public prayers for rain,⁶⁵ and were they to be punished when they omitted to make the sign of the cross at the table before a meal?⁶⁶

Concerning conduct in church, the following questions emerged: Must the faithful stand with their hands folded on the chest;⁶⁷ is it allowed to wear a belt for Holy Communion;⁶⁸ may one receive communion every day during Great Lent;⁶⁹ are women to cover their heads in church?⁷⁰

63 Ibid. "We respond and judge that every use of this (magic) rock should be completely forbidden and refuted in every way as the tinder of error." *Resp.* 62, cols. 1003-4.

64 Ibid. "We clearly forbid these, for amulets worn around the neck are the works of diabolical intrigue." *Resp.* 79, col. 1008.

65 Ibid. "Of course you are allowed to do this, because prayer and fasting are great virtues, and your exhortation has a great effect by having these performed constantly." *Resp.* 56, col. 1001.

66 Ibid. "You ask if you are allowed to place the standard of the holy cross over a table and to eat at a table, from which a priest or deacon is absent. You are undoubtedly permitted to do this, for all of us are allowed to protect our things from the plots of the devil with this sign and to emerge triumphant in the name of Christ from all his attacks." *Resp.* 53, col. 1000.

67 Ibid. "By not doing so, you commit no sin." *Resp.* 54, col. 1000.

68 Ibid. "We have no idea with what witnesses from sacred Scripture they are shown to have rightly forbidden this." *Resp.* 55, col. 1000.

69 The Pope's comment on daily communion in Lent: "We humbly pray to omnipotent God and exhort you all most vehemently that you do so." Ibid. *Resp.* 9, cols. 983-4.

70 Citing Saint Paul, the Pope argues for wearing a veil. Ibid. *Resp.* 58, cols. 1001-2.

7. *Hierotheos' missionary activity*

The basis of pagan Hungarian belief system was shamanism, with its traces surviving in popular beliefs involving the figures *táltos* (wizard) and the “wise shepherd” (medicine man).⁷¹ This system accommodated a manifestation of ancestor cult, totemism – in both its collective and individual form – as may be inferred from the legends of the *Csodaszarvas* (a mythical stag) and the *Turul* (a mythical bird of prey).⁷² Without a servile imposition of the problems mentioned by Boris on the Magyars of the 10th century, it is fair to assume that Hierotheos (along with the Western missionaries of the period) was confronted with similar questions, primarily in conjunction with a militaristic way of life. It seems clear that the Bulgarian analogy may only serve as a point of reference, providing no straightforward or safe conclusions. Naturally, it could not be expected that Gylas and his whole tribe would be baptised, but, based on the information supplied by Skylitzes, it may be speculated that a gradual process did begin. In addition, it must be taken into account that, as a result of the missionary work among the Slavs, smaller Christian “islands” had existed and these could integrate into the process organised by the missionary bishop. The number of the faithful may also have been increased by the Greek prisoners-of-war ransomed by Gylas. This could be illustrated by the outcome of the Hungarian war action recorded by Liudprand of Cremona in embassy to Constantinople. He notes: “When you were besieging Bari, not more than three hundred Hungarians laid hands on five hundred Greeks near Thessalonica and haled them off into Hungary”.⁷³

71 Cf. Mihály Hoppál, *Hitvilág*, in Gyula Krist (ed.), *Korai Magyar Történeti Lexikon*, Akadémiai Kiadó, Budapest 1994, 264; Id., *Samanizmus*, *ibid.* 592.

72 László Szegfű, *Totemizmus*, in Gyula Kristó (ed.), *Korai Magyar Történeti Lexikon*, 681.

73 F. A. Wright (ed.), *The Works of Liudprand of Cremona*, Routledge, London 1930, 262.

This intelligence is corroborated by a different document⁷⁴ as well: The marauding Magyars carried off the majority of the inhabitants of the 36 houses belonging to the estates of the Leontia Monastery – as many as five hundred Greeks – as slaves when looting this area as the auxiliary troop of the Bulgarian Tsar Peter around the year 967.⁷⁵ The captives presumably included (a) priest(s) as the residents of the village were kidnapped en masse. This/these cleric(s) must also have contributed to the expansion of Hierotheos's missionary activities.

As distinct from direct traces, a somewhat remote reflection of this missionary activity may be preserved in the East-Slavic elements of the Christian terminology of the Hungarian language kereszt (= cross), karácsony (= Christmas), szent (= holy/saint), panasz (= complaint), pap (= priest), barát (= friar/friend), szombat (= Saturday), vádol (= accuse), diák (= pupil), as well as by the large number of 10-11th-century Byzantine pectoral crosses functioning as reliquaries found across most of the country. It is reasonable to expect that Hierotheos took the existing pagan customs into consideration. It is not known what training he had received in Constantinople in this regard because the historical account simply notes that he was a “pious monk”, and, in terms of his educational background, he cannot be compared to Constantine or Methodius. The missionary campaign among the Magyars did not have any political supporters other than Gylas. Although it is probable that he had his daughter, Sarolt, baptised⁷⁶ – and this could have an impact on her husband

74 Terézia Olajos, *Bizánci források az Árpád-kori magyar történelemhez – Fontes byzantini ad historiam hungaricam aevo ducum et regum e stirpe Arpadiana pertinentes*, Lectum, Szeged 2014, 71-76.

75 István Baán, *Újabb lehetséges adalék a magyarok balkáni kalandozásaihoz*, in Tibor Almási – Éva Révész – György Szabados (eds.), *“Fons, skepsis, lex”*. *Ünnepi tanulmányok a 70 esztendő Makk Ferenc tiszteletére*. SZTE Történeti Segédtudományok Tanszék, Szegedi Középkorász Műhely, Szeged 2010. 21-26.

76 Cf. György Györffy, *István király és műve*, 64.

as well later – no further indications of a wide political endorsement are in evidence in the records. Neither is it known if the Imperial City provided Hierotheos with any “replenishment” in terms of personnel or spiritual content to help him with his missionary efforts. It cannot be substantiated with any evidence whether he sought to lay the foundations of a Hungarian liturgy or prepare at least a partial translation of the Bible.⁷⁷ Such a romantic perspective in ecclesiastical history was but a vision replicating the Slavic missionary campaign.

Hierotheos could make accomplishments only step by step, a circumstance that was also favourable for the survival of earlier, pre-Christianity customs as noted by Thietmar, Bishop of Merseburg, in relation to Grand Prince Géza, and as also amply exemplified by objects found alongside pectoral crosses and other Christian items in early cemeteries:

To account for the simultaneous usage of pectoral crosses and objects of other, pagan origins, archaeologists have generated various explanations; previously, the denial or relativisation of the Christian character of these was general; nowadays, some slightly more nuanced views are also to be encountered. Nonetheless, graves frequently containing a combination of elements of personal religiousness and superstition hardly ever coincide with a particular missionary centre

– claims Etele Kiss.⁷⁸

In the context of Byzantine missionary work, the portable *aspersorium* from Beszterec is a significant specimen. Albeit problematic, its inscription – a Greek verse line recorded aurally meaning “Christ, the living spring of healings” – is an allusion to the function of the item.⁷⁹ In Hungary, it was obviously Hierotheos’s

77 Cf. Imre Timkó, *Hierotheos “Misekönyve” és a “Halotti Beszéd”*, in Idem., *Keleti kereszténység, keleti egyházak*, Szent István Társulat, Budapest 1971, 389.

78 Etele Kiss, *Ut mos est grecorum*, 22.

79 *ibid.*

mission that introduced the practice of the blessing of waters at Epiphany, the Greek-character of which was remembered even a hundred-and-fifty years later at the foundation of the Cathedral of Zagreb, with a truly unique synthesis created in Latin on the basis of the Byzantine rite.⁸⁰

8. The assessment of Greek missionary activities

It is worth considering how Hierotheos and the consequences of his contribution are seen by modern historical scholarship. (In doing so, sometimes one must inevitably cross the boundary of the first and second millennia to ensure a better understanding of the issue.)

On account of the small number of material evidence, it is to some extent understandable why Hungarian historical scholarship would for a long time accord little importance to the missionary activities of the Greek Church. Ferenc Makk argues that “it seems likely that, in the wake of the deterioration of Hungarian-Byzantine relations at the turn of the 950s and the 960s, the Greek episcopal hierarchy was forced out of Hungary...”⁸¹

László Koszta has opined that the Byzantine missionary bishop had to cease his activities in Hungary around 1003 at the latest.⁸² In Makk’s view, after the defeat at the Battle of Arkadiopolis, in the early 970s, Hungary found itself in a vice between the Holy Roman Empire and Byzantium, nearly under the threat of a devastating attack from Constantinople.⁸³ This assessment suggests as though a

80 Cf. Miklós István Földváry, “Vízkeresztí vízszentelés a görögök szokása szerint”, in *Magyar Egyházzene* 23 (2015/2016), 3-28.

81 Gyula Kristó (ed.), *Korai Magyar Történeti Lexikon*, Akadémiai Kiadó, Budapest 1994, 109.

82 Cf. Ferenc Makk, *A keresztény egyházszerkezet kialakulása*, in Gyula Kristó, – Ferenc Makk (eds.), *Árpád előtt és után. Tanulmányok a magyarság és hazája korai történetéről*, Szeged 1996, 105-115, 114.

83 Ibid. 29-30.

German-Byzantine coalition had been formed, with an expressly anti-Hungarian purpose. (This view appears to overestimate the actual facts considerably as the marriage of Otto II and Theophanou was primarily the fruit of the Italian policies of the two empires,⁸⁴ and it does not seem plausible that the Hungarian Grand Prince could have such a broad political perspective of the events concerned.)

Irrespective of Géza's vantage point, however, Byzantium never made an effort to transcend the *limes* of the Empire in the east, and, as for crossing it in the west, it did not even dream of that because it had never had the chance to do so since the great migrations disintegrated the Western Roman Empire. (The missionary work of Cyril and Methodius among the Slavs may by no means be seen as a first step towards the territorial annexation of the Moravian Empire by Byzantium.) Byzantine expansion was mainly conservative in character. In no source is it mentioned even as a brief reference that Constantinople could pose a threat to the Grand Principality of Hungary. Thus, any such fear on Géza's part would certainly have been unwarranted, and it cannot be supported by data, either.

Therefore, there appears to be no reason to believe that, during Géza's reign, Hierotheos or his successors had to leave the territory of the country as *personae non gratae*. This might have been the case only if the Greek bishop had been brought along by the Grand Prince himself or if he had performed missionary activities within his colony. In fact, the relevant sources supply proof of exactly the opposite. Ferenc Makk also posits that an army mustered by the whole Magyar tribal confederation fought in the Battle of Arkadiopolis, thus including the troops of Gylas of Transylvania, implying that Gylas also pursued anti-Byzantine policies at the time.⁸⁵

84 Louis Bréhier, *Vie et mort de Byzance*, Éditions Albin Michel, Paris 1946, 177.

85 Ferenc Makk, *Magyarország és keleti szomszédai Szent István korában*, in Ferenc Glatz – József Kardos (eds.), *Szent István és kora*, MTA Történettudományi Intézet, Budapest 1988, 81.

Byzantine sources, however, point to the contrary: “He made no inroad against the Romans”⁸⁶ and “kept the peace”,⁸⁷ suggesting that he did not participate in the military campaigns against Constantinople in 959, 961 and 968. (Why should he have changed his position by 970?) Gylas’s conduct indicates that he took Christianity seriously, implying that a member of the Christian faithful would not assault anyone from a different nation “nor did he leave Christian prisoners [captured by marauding troops] untended. He ransomed them, took care of their needs and set them free.”⁸⁸

The author of the present paper published his divergent view on the matter in 1995, with the potential for a significant shift in the perception of Hierotheos’ missionary work. Among the signatories of a document on the 1028 Synod of Constantinople, Nikos Oikonomidès discovered a bishop by the name of Ióannés, who was Metropolitan of Tourkia.⁸⁹ Using this discovery as a starting point, the author of the present study described a different episcopate register reflecting 11th-century conditions, with Tourkia in the 60th place on the list of metropolitanates, preceding Rhosia (Kievan Rus).⁹⁰ Accordingly, he presented his hypothesis that, during the reign of Saint Stephen I, Hungary had a Byzantine-rite metropolitanate comprising multiple episcopates and organised only within the borders of the country: the

86 Skylitzes, 231.

87 Gyula Moravcsik, *Az Árpád-kori magyar történet bizánci forrásai*, Akadémiai Kiadó, Budapest 100.

88 Skylitzes, 231.

89 Nicholas Oikonomidès, “A propos des relations ecclésiastiques entre Byzance et la Hongrie au XI^e siècle: le métropolitain de Turquie”, in *Revue des Etudes Sud-Est Européennes* 9 (1971), 527. For the document, see T. Olajos, *Bizánci források az Árpád-kori magyar történelemhez*, 80-85.

90 István Baán, “*Turkia metropóliája*”. *Kísérlet a Szent István kori magyarországi orthodox egyházszervezet rekonstrukciójára*, in Idem., *Bizáncon innen és túl*, Szent Atanáz Görögkatolikus Hittudományi Főiskola, Nyíregyháza 2018, 199-207. For the document, see: Olajos, 86-89.

“Metropolitanate of Tourkia” under the jurisdiction of the Patriarchate of Constantinople.⁹¹ In this relation, the third document cited is the Deed of Foundation of the Monastery of Veszprémvölgy written in Greek, which consistently uses the reference “the Monastery of the Metropolitan”. This could be interpreted as meaning either that it was located in the territory of the Eparchy of the Metropolitan or that it was under the jurisdiction of no other (local) bishop.

Oikonomidès’s discovery published on the basis of contemporary written records, along with Baán’s hypothesis, was given a negative reception by Hungarian historians.⁹² Their criticism centred on the claim that the Metropolitanate of Tourkia signalled merely a Byzantine demand rather than any historical reality,⁹³ as well as

91 István Baán, “*Turkia metropolitája*. Újabb adalék a bizánci egyház történetéhez a középkori Magyarországon”, in *Századok* 129 (1995), 1167–1170.

92 Ferenc Makk admits that, although “it seems likely that, in the wake of the deterioration of Hungarian-Byzantine relations at the turn of the 950s and the 960s, the Greek episcopal hierarchy was forced out of Hungary..., Hierotheos would have successors in the persons of Antonios and Theophylaktos – in all probability, to perpetuate the claim of the Byzantine Church. However, it is rather unlikely that they ever reached Hungary... Bearing the title «Metropolitan of Tourkia» (i.e. Hungary) under the jurisdiction of the Patriarch of Constantinople in 1028, Ioannés cannot have operated in Hungarian territories, either. Locating his putative seat within Hungary is completely unacceptable”. Ferenc Makk, *Tourkia metropolitája*, in Gyula Kristó (ed.), *Korai Magyar Történeti Lexikon*, Akadémiai Kiadó, Budapest 1994, 109. This opinion was shared by László Koszta as well, with the only difference that the Byzantine missionary bishop must have ceased his activities in Hungary around 1003 at the latest in his view. László Koszta, *A keresztény egyházszervezet kialakulása*, in Gyula Kristó, – Ferenc Makk, (eds.), *Árpád előtt és után. Tanulmányok a magyarság és hazája korai történetéről*, Szeged 1996, 105–115, 114.

93 Even though (Saint) Stephen I appealed to the Pope and created a Latin-rite episcopal organisation in his country, far from hindering the expansion of the Greek Church in Hungary, he advocated it... The Hungarian King maintained equally good relations with both European centres of the Christian Church, but it is indisputable that, in ecclesiastical matters, ties with Rome were

on the circumstance that this Eparchy no longer existed in the 12th century as the corresponding source is only a compilation, i.e. not a reflection of a temporal situation, and it is not included in any list of metropolitanates after 1028.⁹⁴ This criticism did not bear scrutiny,⁹⁵ which would not, of course, prevent it from gaining currency as part of the established view thereafter. Nowadays, it appears as though a more carefully worded criticism slowly approximated to the position of accepting the existence of the Metropolitanate, even though its long-term survival remains surrounded by scepticism.⁹⁶

Prior to a detailed analysis of the two documents critical to Greek missionary efforts in Hungary, the question why these two records have been rejected as valid evidence must be considered.

One of the principal reasons of this rejection seems to be an understanding that posits a close and necessary connection between society, politics and religion. Every time the question of Christian missionary work arises, it is always treated as if it were almost solely

paramount and decisive. There are strong grounds to suspect that, exploiting friendly Hungarian-Byzantine relations, in the first few decades of the 11th century, the Patriarch of Constantinople made repeated attempts at expanding his own influence in church governance to Hungarian territories by renewing at a high level of ecclesiastical organisation the Greek missionary activities that had been begun by Hierotheos but soon stalled... (It must be noted that recently discovered data suggest that the term «Metropolitan of Tourkia» is found on a later Byzantine ecclesiastical list as well. However, this is also only indicative of a Byzantine demand rather than historical reality...) Ferenc Makk, *Magyar külpolitika (896–1196)*, Szegedi Középkortörténeti Könyvtár 2, Szegedi Középkorász Műhely, Szeged 1996, 60-61.

94 László Holler, "A magyar korona néhány alapkérdéséről", in *Századok* 130 (1996), 907-964, 960, note 83.

95 István Baán, "The Metropolitanate of Turkia: A historical fact or a Gordian knot of historical writing?", in *Orientalia Christiana Periodica* 85/1 (2019), 139-166.

96 Cf. Gábor Thoroczkay, *Oklevelek Szent István korában*, Collectanea Sancti Martini, A Pannonhalmi Főapátság Gyűjteményeinek Értesítője 8 (2020), 12-13.

driven by politics (a consequence of the misunderstanding of the principle of *symphony*), and, as a corollary, it is also believed that its continuation may nearly exclusively be accounted for in terms of political causes. In default of an extensive discussion of this problem (i.e. how inappropriate it would be to generalise this view), mainly warnings of its negative consequences will be furnished instead.

It would be bold to regard the Magyar princes' leanings towards Christianity as a merely political decision for the following reasons. The issue should be assessed in a completely different way if, on the one hand, the Magyars had had no chance of becoming acquainted with Christianity even before the Hungarian Conquest of the Carpathian Basin, and if, on the other hand, no Christianised ethnic groups had lived in the Carpathian Basin.

How strong the aforementioned influences were is impossible to determine accurately. Nevertheless, some researchers tend to be of the opinion that the missionary campaigns among the Franks and the Bulgarians alike must have provided more profound foundations for the conversion of the Magyars to the Christian faith than previously thought. As a logical conclusion of the above, the Magyar princes and chieftains (or, at least, some of them) were more likely to *choose* Christianity than to experience it as politically imposed on them and would adhere to their faith even when this did not result in even indirect political advantages. Church life and foreign policies in particular were thus not so intimately related that would have rendered Hungarian ecclesiastical activities and functioning fully subject to the prevailing political regime.

Another – only surmised – reason for the rejection is the perception that the “Metropolitanate of Tourkia” may not fit into the one-sided view long established in Hungarian historical scholarship claiming that it would represent an interruption in the concept about the hegemony of Western missionary work.

9. *The consequences of Hierotheos's missionary activities*

Inasmuch as – based on the two documents – it is accepted that, far from petering out, Hierotheos's missionary efforts would further intensify, it is reasonable to ask if the Metropolitan of Tourkia had any suffragan dioceses. This cannot be fully ascertained from the lists of episcopates available, yet such a possibility cannot be ruled out, either, given the size of Rhosia at the time and the bishoprics found there. As the list contains a number of metropolitanates without suffragans, it may be justifiable to speculate that Tourkia did not have any such under its jurisdiction, either.⁹⁷

Metropolitanates without suffragans are encountered in the registers from approximately the same period. (It must be remarked that, in the Byzantine ecclesiastical system, a real distinction was maintained between metropolitans and archbishops (*archiepiskopoi*). A list of the latter came after that of metropolitans, and they never had suffragans, their only distinctive characteristic being that they were not under the jurisdiction of a metropolitan.) It would seem fair to ask what could be the cause of this situation in general.

The middle-Byzantine period saw the beginning of the process wherein the sequence of individual episcopates came to be seen as a rank order as well, prompting them to endeavour to advance from eparchy to metropolitanate. Ecclesiastically, only metropolitans and archbishops – about one tenth of all the bishops – were members of the Patriarchal Synod. Not only did this ranking have its significance within the Church, but it also set a list of precedence in relation to the dignitaries of the Imperial Court, commonly enforced at court ceremonies. Such aspects were regulated in detail in Philotheos's *Kletorologion*.⁹⁸

97 Cf. Aristeides Papadakis, *Metropolitan*, in Alexander Kazhdan – Alice-Mary Talbot (eds.), *The Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium*, Oxford University Press, New York – Oxford 1991, 2, 1359.

98 Cf. Alexander Kazhdan, *Philotheos, Kletorologion of*, in *Ibid.* 3, 1661.

In case a bishop was ordained by the Patriarch for a missionary area which was not under the jurisdiction of another metropolitan, the ordainee practically had the rank of archbishop as his direct superior was the Patriarch. In such an instance, the next rank for him would be the metropolitanate. Elevation to the rank of metropolitan was regulated by a specific ritual, and members of the Patriarchal Synod would vote on the matter.⁹⁹ Advancement in rank was also proof of progress in church organisation in a particular area.

Accordingly, it is reasonable to assume that the number of the followers of the Greek Rite increased in Hungary. During the 1028 synod, Ioannes may well have been elected metropolitan, provided he had not possessed that title previously. Filling metropolitan sees always required a synodal decree; a local candidate could not automatically obtain this position, though theoretically he did not need to appear in person in the Imperial City. Ordination was usually performed by the Patriarch himself, who did not have an ecclesiastical province of his own outside the city of his see.

Numismatics also had its share in raising public awareness of the Metropolitanate Tourkia. The obverse of the seal kept in the Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection, Washington, DC, bears a depiction of Saint Demetrius, while the inscription on its reverse states that it was owned by “Antonios, *Proedros* (Metropolitan) of Tourkia, monk and *synkellos*”.¹⁰⁰ As, unfortunately, its place of discovery is unknown, it may only be hypothesised that it was unearthed in the territory of the historic Kingdom of Hungary.

Originally, the term *synkellos* referred to the Patriarch’s advisor, fellow resident and table companion, and subsequently it became a

99 J. Darrouzès, *Notitiae Episcopatum*, 54.

100 <https://www.doaks.org/resources/seals/byzantine-seals/BZS.1947.2.414>. The text published by Moravcsik is not completely identical: (“[proto]synkellosnak és Turkia elnökének pecsétje” [= the seal of (proto-)synkellos and President of Tourkia]). Gy. Moravcsik, *Az Árpád-kori magyar történet*, 255.

title conferred by the Emperor, and its holder was made a member of the Senate. Whereas earlier it would be granted to priests and deacons, from the 10th century it was also conferred on ambitious metropolitans before it slowly began to lose its significance.¹⁰¹ The title *Proedros* could originally denote any bishop, though sometimes it was used in reference to the metropolitan.¹⁰² In the case of Antonios, the joint use of the two titles makes it probable that the referent in question was a metropolitan.

The seals of two other bishops – Theofylaktos and Demetrius – are also in evidence, but the fact that their inscriptions do not feature the word “Tourkia” but “(Bishop of the) Turks” as an ethnonym detracts from their validity as proof. In fact, episcopate registers frequently contain the designation “Vardariot Turks”, whose episcopate was under the jurisdiction of Thessalonike.¹⁰³

Bishoprics varied greatly in structure depending on their size and location. A missionary episcopate was dissimilar from a hierarchal see active for centuries. It is unclear to this day where the centre of the Bishop (subsequently, Metropolitan) of Hungary was located and what it was like. As the seat of the converted Gylas, Alba Iulia (*Gyulafehérvár*) could be a strong candidate in this regard. The lately excavated single-apse, nave-and-aisles church, with four pillars at its centre, there is also a possibility because, according to the estimate of archaeologists, it must have been built between 950 and 1050. In case, however, the centre of the first Gylas was to be found not here but in

101 Cf. Aristeides Papadakis, *Synkellos*, in Alexander Kazhdan – Alice-Mary Talbot (eds.), *The Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium*, Oxford University Press, New York – Oxford 1991, III, 1993.

102 Cf. Aristeides Papadakis, *Proedros as an Ecclesiastical Title*, in Alexander Kazhdan – Alice-Mary Talbot (eds.), *The Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium*, Oxford University Press, New York – Oxford 1991, III, 1727.

103 J. Darrouzès, *Notitiae Episcopatum*, 279 (note 7, 308), *ibid.* 317 (note 10, 229), *ibid.* 371 (note 13, 832).

the Tisza/Tisa–Maros/Mureş –Körös/Criş triangle or within Ajtony’s later colony, the seat of the Greek Bishop ought rather to be located in that region.¹⁰⁴

As a plausible centre for the initial stage of a missionary programme, György Györffy identifies several locations: Sirmium (Száva-szentdemeter/Sremska Mitrovica) Kiszombor, Marosvár (Csanád/Cenadu Vechi), Apostag, Pécs (*Pente ecclesiae*, to use its Greek-type name), Titel (with the title *Hagia Sophia*) and Szeged (with the title “Saint Demetrius”).¹⁰⁵ Archaeological specimens from these places have been interpreted in different ways.¹⁰⁶ It might well be the case that, in the beginning, only a church made from wood functioned as a liturgical centre. (Being religious, the majority of Byzantine bishops fundamentally differed in their way of life from the senior clergy associated with the Western feudal system. Comparisons could even lead to indignation, as it happened, for example, with Liudprand of Cremona, who saw the modest household of the Bishop of Leukas with puzzlement in 948, suspecting parsimony in the background.¹⁰⁷)

104 Cf. Etele Kiss, *Ut mos est grecorum*, 30.

105 Cf. György Györffy, *István király és műve*, 47.

106 Miklós Takács, *Byzantinische oder byzantinisierende Raumgestaltungen kirchlicher Architektur im früharpádenzeitlichen Ungarn: Eine vergleichende Analyse auf Grundlage von Parallelen aus dem Balkan*, Verlag Schnell und Steiner GmbH, Mainz 2018.

107 In all Greece – I speak the truth and do not lie – I found no hospitable bishops. They are both poor and rich; rich in gold coins wherewith they gamble recklessly; poor in servants and utensils. They sit by themselves at a bare little table, with a ship’s biscuit in front of them, and instead of drinking their bath water they sip it from a tiny glass. They do their own buying and selling; they close and open their doors themselves; they are their own stewards, their own ass-drivers, their own «capones» – aha, I meant to write «caupones», but the thing is so true that it made me write the truth against my will – as I say, they are «capones», that is, eunuchs, which is against canon law; and they are also «caupones», that is, innkeepers, which is again uncanonical. F.A. Wright (ed.), *The Works of Liudprand of Cremona*, Routledge, London 1930, 274.

In light of the above, it is apposite to assert that the effects of Byzantine missionary work and the Greek-rite Church endured in the life of the Magyars during the period of the establishment of the Kingdom of Hungary, as well as long afterwards.¹⁰⁸

108 This is also possibly indicated by the decisions of the 1092 Synod of Szabolcs concerning married priests and the start of Great Lent, in agreement with Eastern canons, cf. László Komáromi, *A bizánci hatás kérdése a középkori magyar jogban és a magyarországi egyházjogban*, Pázmány Press, Budapest 2013, 93-123.

Abstract

Les contacts des anciens Hongrois nomades avec Byzance. Le manque des documents écrits sur la religion originale des conquérants Hongrois avait produit des hypothèses concernant la christianisation de ce peuple nomade (10^{ème} s.), liée aux contacts avec les empires voisins comme la Khazarie, Byzance et le Saint-Empire romain-germanique. La mission byzantine conduite par l'évêque Hierotheos avait à lutter avec le paganisme dont les coutumes ressemblaient à celles des Bulgares récemment convertis. La théorie byzantine sur la symphonie entre l'Eglise et l'Empire venait à l'appui de cette mission laquelle a servi de base pour une organisation ecclésiale sous la juridiction du Patriarcat de Constantinople.