

RESEARCH REPORT: HISTORICAL RESEARCH THROUGH MANUSCRIPT COLOPHONS AND MARGINALIA

By Tatiana Nikolova-Houston, September 3, 2002

1. Topic of research and countries visited.

Developing and utilizing manuscript colophons and marginalia as primary source material for historical research.

Counties visited: Bulgaria.

2. Relevance and contribution to field: Brief description of the scholarly significance of your research and its impact on the field.

Colophons, the addendum to the beginning or end of a manuscript, describe the conditions of each manuscript's production and occasionally include personal notes of the scribes. Marginalia, the notes written in margins, reflect the thoughts of users. Until now, no one had digitized colophons and marginalia to create a comprehensive collection of manuscript description, text, and image. My research produced such a corpus of textual and digital data, plus three CD-ROMs containing 300 digital images of 180 colophons and marginalia from 67 manuscripts, with translations into Bulgarian, English, and normalized (written in standard computer script) Old Church Slavonic (OCS). I also have begun to add this material to my website on Slavic medieval manuscripts (www.gslis.utexas.edu/~slavman) to achieve the widest possible dissemination. These images and translations allowed me, and will allow other scholars, to examine the colophons and marginalia without the difficulties of travel and without damage to the original, to enlarge images, to observe the subtle changes through the centuries in manuscript handwriting, and to manipulate with any conventional word processor the texts for study and publication.

To facilitate further study, I also synopsisized the data and arranged them in tabular form for convenient ordering by date, scribe, location of writing, conditions of writing (news, difficulties, wars, etc.), content analysis, initial wording, data about the manuscript binding, donation and purchasing history, historical evidence concerning the Ottoman occupation of Bulgaria, the basic manuscript paleographical and codicological description, manuscript price, associated signs, and notes reflecting the significance of these documents in the medieval world.

Finally, I have begun to analyze the historical events portrayed in the material and will contribute the results to a number of scholarly discussions.

3. A concise summary of your approach and research methodology including a list of research sites.

To establish the approximate size of this project, I conducted a literature review, including study of the catalogs of the collections that I thought might house manuscripts with appropriate colophons. Directors of manuscript collections and scholars in the discipline helped me further to discover relevant scholarly literature, achievements, problems and gaps. Based on this study, the Historical and Archival Church Institute became the primary location to digitize and analyze material from 45 manuscripts and search existing catalogs and other scholarly literature. The National Library Sts. Cyril and Methodius served as a second location for investigating scholarly literature on the subject and for meeting with experts in the field, e.g., Prof. Elena Uzunova, Head of the National Commission for Archeography. Rila monastery formed a third research site with 14 manuscripts to process. Gabrovo provided seven previously

uncataloged manuscripts through its Historical Museum and church of St. John the Forerunner, including the oldest, a 450 year-old manuscript from the monastery that developed into the town of Gabrovo. "Ivan Dujchev" Center for Byzantine-Slavic Studies provided one manuscript colophon from the late 18th century.

In all, I examined and selected 67 relevant manuscripts that contained notes that illustrated the history of manuscript production and documented events during the latter years of Ottoman rule of Bulgaria. I read, deciphered, translated, and verified the text against existing manuscript catalog descriptions: Sprostranov (1900), Goshev (1927-1936), and Hristova, Uzunova, and Karadzhova (1986, unpublished). For some manuscripts, no cataloging or description existed, and I developed it.

4. A summary of research findings and preliminary conclusions.

These 180 manuscript colophons and marginalia revealed a new world of historical data about the cultural, social, and religious life of the medieval world. They comprise a major literary genre, and the notes of each manuscript reflect the manuscript's provenance and characteristics. They also reflect the lives of the scribes who wrote them.

The Scribes:

These colophons and marginalia allow us to reconstruct their authors. Monks, priests, and, in isolated cases, laypeople, copied and annotated the manuscripts, expressing an utter sense of ultimate humility before their God and a responsibility to future generations. For them, eternal salvation itself depended on accuracy in copying, aesthetics in illumination, and veracity in reporting. Each scribe signed their works, always characterizing themselves as the least important and most sinful. Monks produced 64% of these sacred documents, and their devotion leaps from each page. After the 18th century, laypersons began to scribe such texts: e.g., layman Kostadin Kiriakov produced a Menaion (monthly hymnal) in the mid-19th century.

The Scriptoriums:

These colophons allow us to reconstruct the existence and personnel of medieval monasteries, sometimes consisting of the only such historical record. For example, Etropole became a major literacy center, producing eleven of the manuscripts at its three monasteries, *The Entrance of the Theotokos*, *Holy Trinity*, and *Holy Theotokos*. Monks such as Daniil from *Holy Trinity* produced an *Ochtoich* (Byzantine hymnal) in 1632, Raphael completed Menaions in 1600 and 1637, and Abbot Zaharii commissioned another Menaion at Etropole in 1639.

The Times:

Manuscript colophons from the 14th to the 19th centuries comprise one of the most important sources for historical events surrounding the Ottoman occupation of Bulgaria, reflecting a minimum of political influence and a maximum of religious devotion to veracity. The lack of a Bulgarian central government administration allowed scribes to develop styles of collecting and recording historical information, demonstrating independent authority for the accounts of events. Official documents, created by the Ottomans and their servants, reflected the needs of their creators, the rulers of the land. Colophons, however, reflect an understanding of the times as seen by clergy and their congregations, the common people. Because of lack of precedent (Estimates vary: up to 98% of all Orthodox religious manuscripts were lost or destroyed during the occupation.), colophons departed from traditional Byzantine structures and

formulas. Still containing basic data about the creation of the manuscript and the transactions surrounding it, they began to incorporate more historic information about the events of the day. My survey indicated that the remote and inaccessible monasteries produced 70% of the manuscripts, while 22% reflected no location of origin. This tends to support other accounts of persecution of the Orthodox under Islamic rule of Bulgaria.

Further significance of the notes:

These colophons and marginalia allow us to speculate on the scarcity of paper and the role of clergy in recording the news of the day. Each manuscript contained several notes left by various people (180 notes in 67 manuscripts). The original scribes placed colophons in 42% of the manuscripts. Notes about binding occur in 26%, notes about ownership transfer occur in 37%, and events associated with the Ottoman rule in 24%. Clergy recorded visits of important ecclesiastical authorities and tonsuring of people in 24%, and prayers, lists of people's names, and thoughts about the value of books and about writing tools occur in others.

Curiously, 70% of Menaions contain colophons, almost twice the percentage of other types of manuscripts. More research will be necessary to determine the significance of this datum.

Colophons reflected the evolution and democratization of Bulgarian literature to a form serving the entire population. Bulgarian scribes originally followed the Byzantine structure and arrangement of colophons and the use of uncial script, especially until the 14th century. Handwriting became semi-uncial after the 15th century, semi-cursive in the 17th, and cursive in the 18th century. After the 18th century, colophons became more diversified in the type of information presented and began to use the Bulgarian language rather than OCS, indicating more freedom of expression.

5. Suggestions for future research agendas in your field for scholarly community.

To further this research, colophons and marginalia from hitherto unknown Bulgarian collections must be digitized and virtually reunified with those I collected. In this manner, collection by collection, we can map the medieval world and develop a comprehensive collection of primary historical research material.

6. Any recommendations for the US Policy Community.

As world tensions grow, the United States must take the high moral ground of adherence to substantiated historical information and interpretations. Further, the United States must make public such a stance. I believe that IREX-sponsored research aids this position and should continue to do this on as wide a scale as possible.