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**SOME OBSERVATIONS ON THE CHRONOLOGICAL
DISTRIBUTION OF MEDIAEVAL MANUSCRIPTS AND
CHURCH ITEMS FROM BULGARIA^{*}**

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The paper presents some initial observations on the distribution of mediaeval Bulgarian manuscripts and items used in the Church decoration and services. The study is based on data on 820 manuscripts and 252 Church items. Having in mind that a substantial part of the manuscripts are religious, both groups of studied objects should have developed under similar cultural and historical circumstances. The study shows similarities in the growth and decline in the both groups of studied objects in several historical periods.

Introduction. The study of the cultural heritage is helping us to reveal the development of the mankind in various regions and time periods. While most of the efforts of the researchers have been traditionally concentrated on the studying particular phenomena (most often related to arts, crafts, literary culture, religion, etc.) and cultural similarities and dissimilarities, the volume and dynamics of the growth and decline of the various heritage items are still not examined in detail. However, studies on the dynamics of the volume of these items could help to find an evidence for economic growths and declines in different periods; flourishing of certain crafts/arts in particular time, etc.

The basic aim of our study was to collect and analyse data on the distribution of manuscripts and items used in church decoration and services going back to the 10th century of the Bulgarian history. Most of the manuscripts in that period had religious content and many of them were used in the Church services.

It is not surprising that smaller amount of objects survived from earlier time. In cases where we find a decline of the volume in later periods compared to earlier ones, we should seek for a significant historical or cultural reason. Thus, a natural assumption would be that in times of devastations of the country, where large number of churches, monasteries and manuscripts were physically destroyed should leave traces in the data which we study. In periods which are known for revival of monastic centres and literary schools, we should witness a raise in the volume of the respective items.

Scope of the study and method. We collected data on 820 Bulgarian manuscripts based on the catalogue [1] and on 252 church items described in [2] consisting of 122 icons, 42 miniatures, 58 plastics, 14 woodcuts, 7 fabrics and embroideries, 7 prints and 2

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portraits. They are spread over the period between 900 and 1900. We should stress here that we rely on the datings made by specialists who published data on such collections.

We used the method for data processing and building volume functions introduced by A. Fomenko [3] and applied by J. Tabov in his research on chronological distribution of information in historical texts [4]. This method led also to interesting conclusions when applied to the study of monetary circulation in Bulgaria [5] showing that the natural expectation for stable growth of the number of finds is far from the real picture where significant growths or declines can be observed in some periods.

We entered the data using the correction coefficient 60 which proved to be useful in the research of J. Tabov (in addition, this would allow us to compare later results of various studies).

On Fig. 1 we present the chronological distribution of all 252 church items. The most interesting from our point of view is the serious growth after 1500, and the significant decline at the last decades of the 17th century, followed by another raise in the volume after the middle of the 18th century.

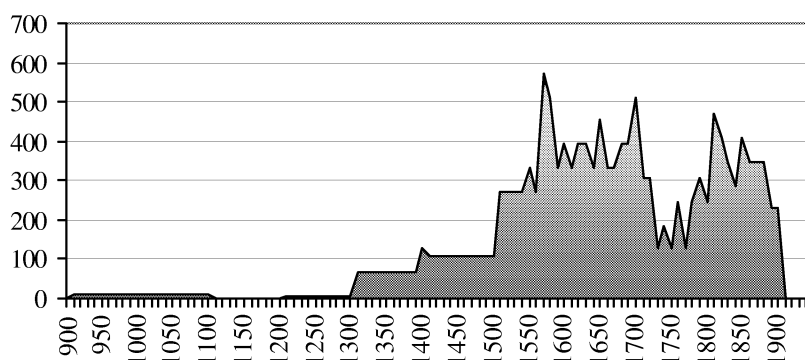


Fig. 1. Chronological distribution of the Bulgarian church items from the Church Museum in Sofis

On Fig. 2 we present only the data on the icons included in the study, which generally show the same picture of significant growths and declines as the data on the church items, but offer also several interesting local shifts, including a more serious growth in the beginning of the 15th century.

On Fig. 3 we present a comparison of the chronological distributions of both: manuscripts and church items. In order to make the comparison more clear, we applied a correction coefficient 3 to the values for the church items. Our goal was to study whether these two groups of items show significant differences or similarities.

Discussion. From the presented data we can see that the fluctuations in manuscripts' volume is more visible. It is essential to mention the periods of growth of **both** types of items around 1490, 1550 and decline after 1690. The highest peak for the manuscripts (1770–1800) can be explained with the Bulgarian Revival, and we see that in this period there are local ups and downs for church items, but not reaching such an extent as the manuscripts did. It is not always easy to find explanations for all periods marked by a decline or a growth of the studied data.

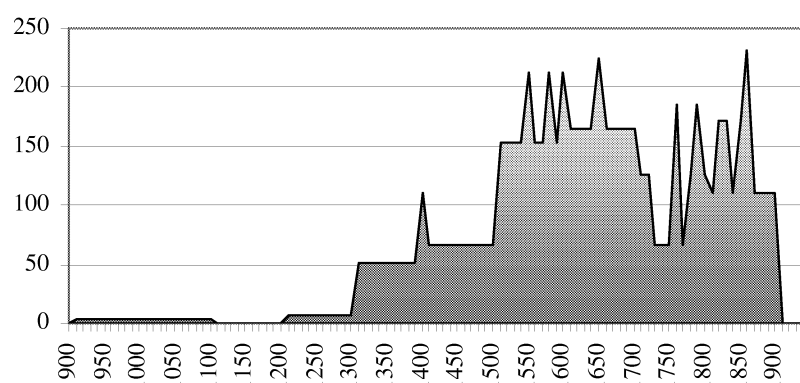


Fig. 2. Chronological distribution of the icons

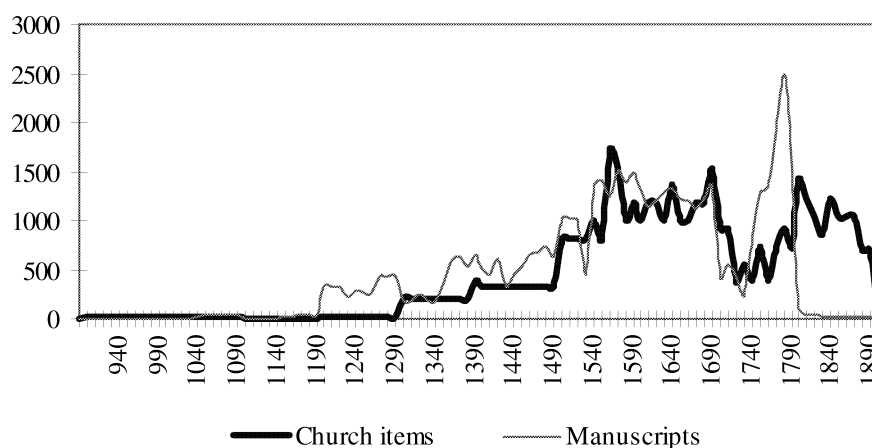


Fig. 3. Chronological distribution of manuscripts and church items

We will try to give a possible explanation for the decline after 1690. In 1683, the Ottoman army was defeated at Vienna by the troops of the Holy league consisting of Venice, Austria, Poland and Russia. In 1686 the Ottomans were ejected from Budapest. In 1699 the “Treaty of Carlowitz” was signed in today’s Sremski Karlovci, concluding the Austro-Ottoman war of 1683–1697. The Ottoman Empire was finally stopped in conquering new lands. On the other hand, the Bulgarian population used this situation to organise a series of uprising: the Second Turnovo uprising in 1686, the Uprising in Chiprovets in 1688, Karposh Uprising in 1689. Although they did not succeed, the devastations after the uprisings might be one of the reasons for the decline in the number of manuscripts and church items which survived until now.

We are offering these initial observations with the intention to raise interest in the comparative study of various historical finds. We will continue this study collecting data on other types of cultural heritage. We can not claim that the explanations based

on historical facts are giving the primary and only reason for our observations, but we hope that our study would contribute to collect materials for a wider discussion on the historical grounds behind the analysis of finds.

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НЯКОИ НАБЛЮДЕНИЯ ВЪРХУ ХРОНОЛОГИЧНОТО РАЗПРЕДЕЛЕНИЕ НА СРЕДНОВЕКОВНИ БЪЛГАРСКИ РЪКОПИСИ И ЦЪРКОВНИ ПАМЕТНИЦИ

Свилена Й. Христова, Милена П. Добрева

Докладът представя някои начални наблюдения върху разпределението на средновековни български ръкописи и паметници, свързани с църковната украса и богослужението. Изследването включва данни за 820 ръкописа и 252 църковни предмета. Двете групи паметници са се развивали при сходни културни и исторически условия, като се има предвид това, че голяма част от средновековните ни ръкописи са с религиозно съдържание. Изследването показва подобие в нарастването или намаляването на изследваните обекти в няколко исторически периода.