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## RULER MARTYRS ON THE PERIPHERY OF MEDIEVAL EUROPE<sup>1</sup>

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### Abstract

From the early tenth to the early twelfth century the northern and eastern periphery of Europe was composed of polities which had recently adopted Christianity as the official religion. Here a special type of veneration of saints or martyrs emerged. This type of sainthood refers to historical personalities characterized by a martyr's death caused out of political self-interest by Christians themselves—not by members of other religions as a result of hatred against the Christian faith as such. The veneration of martyr rulers was unknown both in (Latin) southern Europe and the Byzantine Empire of the time. This article is dedicated to a historical, theological, and literary analysis of three saints: Boris and Gleb (died in 1015) from Kievan Rus', Jovan Vladimir (died in 1016/1018) from Dioclea, and Magnus Erlendsson (died in 1115/1117) from the Orkney Isles, at the time a part of Norway. All of these saints share the same fundamental characteristics: in the face of mortal danger, they did not resort to revenge or fratricide as a means of struggle for power, but rather voluntarily accepted their deaths for the benefit of peace in their homelands. The phenomenon of ruler martyrs focuses on the example of their voluntary sacrifice, highlighting a duality between the righteousness of an innocent victim and an unfair act of a murderer. Ruler martyrs were regarded by their contemporaries as promoters of a new ideal of Christian monarchs and as symbols of the rejection of the recent pagan past. This

<sup>1</sup> This article is a part of the postdoctoral basic research project »Z6-1883 Ruler Saints (Martyrs) on the Periphery of Medieval Europe: Kievan Rus', Norway, Dioclea« at the Faculty of Law and Business Studies (Ljubljana) financed by the Slovenian Research Agency (ARRS) from the state budget.

phenomenon is also connected with the self-esteem of the ecclesiastical and secular elite of the newly Christianized peoples—they saw their homelands, despite their relatively late adoption of Christianity, as religiously »mature« and therefore on equal footing with others, which was to a large extent possible due to the emergence of the first local saints.

*Key words:* Boris and Gleb, Jovan (John) Vladimir, Magnus Erlendsson, Kievan Rus', Dioclea, Orkney Isles, ruler martyrs, voluntary sacrifice, medieval literature.

## Introduction

The eastern and northern periphery of Europe from the early tenth to the early twelfth century was composed of polities which had recently adopted Christianity. Here, regardless of the rising doctrinal differences between the Western (Catholic) and the Eastern (Orthodox) Christianity, a special common type of veneration of saints emerged—ruler martyrs or »passion-bearers« (»страстотърпыцы«) in Church Slavic terminology. This type of sainthood refers to saints characterized by a martyr's death caused out of political self-interest by Christians themselves, not by members of other (pre-Christian) religions as a result of hatred against the Christian faith as such. In the face of mortal danger, these saints did not resort to revenge or fratricide as a means of struggle for power, and they accepted their deaths for the benefit of peace in their homelands. Among these ruler saints the following are studied in this article: princes Boris and Gleb (died in 1015) of Kievan Rus', prince Jovan Vladimir (died between 1016 and 1018) from Dioclea (Duklja, present-day Montenegro), and jarl (earl) Magnus Erlendsson (died between 1115 and 1117) of the Orkney Isles, at the time a part of Norway. Each studied saint and the phenomenon of ruler martyrs as a whole is presented against the theological, socio-political and literary background of the time. For this purpose, a semiotic culturalological method is applied, based on a deep analysis of the narratives of the original sources and their spiritual and socio-political implications, enabling us to grasp the self-understanding of the ecclesiastical and secular elite behind them.<sup>2</sup> In this context, pertaining to innocence of the murdered victims and

<sup>2</sup> The same methodology, including the concept of »salvation history«, was used by the same author in several of his previous works dealing with the construction of historical consciousness among the medieval Slavs belonging to the East Orthodox sphere in the period directly after their official adoption of Christianity, such as: Simon MALMENVALL, *Kultura Kijevske Rusije in krščanska zgodovinska zavest* [Culture of Kievan Rus' and Christian Historical Consciousness], Ljubljana, 2019; Simon MALMENVALL, Boris and Gleb: Political and Theological Implications of Overcoming Violence through Sacrifice in Kievan Rus', in: *Konstantinove listy*, 12 (2019), 2, 43-58; Simon MALMENVALL, Beseda

renouncement of the pre-Christian warrior ideals, theoretical considerations of two prominent authors, French anthropologist René Girard (1923–2015) and Russian literary historian Mikhail M. Bakhtin (1895–1975), are also taken into account.

## 1. Sources and state of research

The story of two princely brothers Boris and Gleb is found in various narrative Rus' medieval sources, written in Church Slavic, which came to be known as the »Boris and Gleb cycle« (Борисоглебский цикл) in the Russian historiographical tradition. A group of the most comprehensive and also earliest testimonies date from the late eleventh to the early twelfth centuries. Stylistically and conceptually the most advanced of the entire Boris and Gleb cycle is a hagiography by monk Nestor from the Kiev Monastery of the Caves titled *Lesson Concerning the Life and Murder of the Blessed Passion-Bearers Boris and Gleb* (Чтение о житии и погублении блаженую страсотерпицю Бориса и Гльба).<sup>3</sup> This source is also the one that we will shed further light on. The story of prince Jovan Vladimir can also be found in several narrative sources, the most extensive and literary elaborated among them is a report (interpolation) on Jovan Vladimir's life and death representing the thirty-sixth chapter of the medieval Latin historiographical text *Gesta regum Sclavorum*, more commonly known as the *Chronicle of the Priest of Dioclea*. It is generally regarded as the earliest known medieval narrative source from the Western Balkans, most probably written in the second half of the twelfth or at the beginning of the thirteenth century.<sup>4</sup> Written testimonies on Magnus Erlendsson are provided

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о postavi in milosti metropolita Hilarijona kot primer osmišljanja preteklosti v Kijevski Rusiji [Sermon on Law and Grace of Metropolitan Ilarion as an Example of Giving Meaning to the Past in Kievan Rus'], in: *Zgodovinski časopis*, 71 (2017), 1-2, 8-29.

<sup>3</sup> Надежда И. МИЛЮТЕНКО, *Святые князья-мученики Борис и Глеб: Исследование и тексты* [Holy Princes-Martyrs Boris and Gleb: Research and Texts], Санкт Петербург, 2006, 57-58, 249-250, 257-260, 269-277; Ярослав Н. ЩАПОВ, *Письменные памятники Древней Руси* [Written Monuments of Rus'], Санкт Петербург, 2003, 198-199; Герхард ПОДСКАЛЬСКИ, *Христианство и богословская литература Киевской Руси (988–1237 гг.)* [Christianity and Theological Literature of Kievan Rus'], Санкт Петербург, 1996, 187-188, 207.

<sup>4</sup> Тибор ЖИВКОВИЋ (ed.), *Gesta regum Sclavorum*, vol. 2: Коментар [Commentary], Београд, 2009, 25-26, 28, 262-263; Jan LEŚNY (ed.), *Historia Królestwa Słowian czyli Latopis Popa Duklanina* [History of the Kingdom of the Slavs or the Chronicle of a Priest from Dioclea], Warszawa, 35-38; Норман ИНГАМ, Мучеништво светог Јована Владимира Дукљанина [Martyrdom of Jovan Vladimir of Dioclea], in: *Летопис Матице Српске*, 166 (1990), 876-879.

by three Old Norse sagas, written between the mid-twelfth and the late-thirteenth century, and one Latin hagiography, allegedly composed in the late Middle Ages. The Old Norse texts on Magnus are interrelated and presumably had among their sources a lost Latin *Vita sancti Magni*. Among the mentioned works, we will shed further light on the *Longer Magnus Saga* (*Magnús Saga Lengri*) which has the greatest hagiographical character and abounds with theological commentary.<sup>5</sup>

In historiography and literary science, research of the phenomenon of Boris and Gleb has had a long tradition. One of the latest Russian critical editions of the Boris and Gleb cycle was prepared by the literary historian Nadezhda Ilinichna Milyutenko,<sup>6</sup> followed by a critical edition with extensive complementary studies of Russian literary historian Andrei M. Ranchin.<sup>7</sup> In the English-speaking world, the most comprehensive study of the Boris and Gleb theme was carried out by American cultural historian Paul Hollingsworth.<sup>8</sup> The study of the phenomenon of Jovan Vladimir and Magnus Erlendsson does not have such a long tradition and international recognition as in the case of Boris and Gleb. A wider northern European political and cultural context of Magnus's life and death has been addressed by contemporary Icelandic-British historian Haki Antonsson.<sup>9</sup> His works complement the referential study of German historian Erich Hoffmann (1926–2005).<sup>10</sup> The study of Jovan Vladimir has usually been a part of a wider context of research and discussion pertaining to the *Chronicle*. The latest critical edition of this source was prepared by Serbian historian Tibor Živković (1966–2013).<sup>11</sup> A systematic contemporary research of the sources pertaining to the martyrdom of Jovan Vladimir, including an edition of less known early modern Greek and Slavic

<sup>5</sup> Haki ANTONSSON, *St. Magnús of Orkney. A Scandinavian Martyr-Cult in Context*, Leiden, 2007, 5-17; Judith JESCH – Theya MOLLESON, The Death of Magnus Erlendsson and the Relics of St. Magnus, in: Olwyn OWEN (ed.), *The World of the Orkneyinga Saga: The Broadcloth Viking Trip*, Kirkwall, 2006, 129-130, 132; Norman W. INGHAM, The Sovereign as Martyr, East and West, in: *The Slavic and East European Journal*, 17 (1973), 1, 7, 15.

<sup>6</sup> МИЛЮТЕНКО, *Святые князья-мученики*.

<sup>7</sup> Александр М. РАНЧИН, *Памятники Борисоглебского цикла: текстология, поэтика, религиозно-культурный контекст* [Monuments of the Boris and Gleb Cycle: Textology, Poetics, Religious-Cultural Context], Москва, 2017.

<sup>8</sup> Paul HOLLINGSWORTH, *The Hagiography of Kievan Rus'*, Cambridge MA, 1992.

<sup>9</sup> ANTONSSON, *St. Magnús of Orkney*.

<sup>10</sup> Erich HOFFMANN, *Die heiligen Könige bei den Angelsachsen und den skandinavischen Völkern. Königsheliger und Königshaus*, Neumünster, 1975.

<sup>11</sup> Тибор ЖИВКОВИЋ (ed.), *Gesta regum Sclavorum*, vol. 1: *Критичко издање и превод* [Critical Edition and Translation], vol. 2: *Коментар* [Commentary], Београд, 2009.

liturgical texts, was conducted by Bulgarian historian and philologist Veneta Savova.<sup>12</sup>

The phenomenon of the ruler martyr saints on the eastern and northern periphery of medieval Europe has thus far never been presented in one historical-theological comparative study forming a coherent synthesis. It has been only partly and fragmentarily addressed within various works (monographs and articles), mostly in the field of cultural history. Therefore, an integrative study of the subject at hand in a broader European perspective is necessary. Nevertheless, the subject of the ruler martyrs on the periphery of medieval Europe was already concisely explored by American cultural and literary historian Norman W. Ingham (1934–2015).<sup>13</sup>

## 2. Historical context

The first canonized Rus' saints Boris and Gleb, baptized as Roman and David respectively, were sons of the Kievan prince Vladimir Sviatoslavich (980–1015), baptized as Vasili (Basil). Vladimir as the Kievan prince and other Rus' princes belonged to the Rurik dynasty, which ruled over all East Slavic territories from the second half of the tenth century onwards. Vladimir adopted Christianity from the Byzantine Empire as the state religion of Rus' in 988 or 989. At the time of Vladimir's death in 1015, his older son Boris was already ruling over the principality of Rostov, and the younger Gleb was reigning over the principality of Murom.<sup>14</sup> Shortly before Vladimir's death in 1015, his son Yaroslav Vladimirovich, at the time prince of Novgorod and later of Kiev (1019–1054), started a rebellion against his father and stopped paying him tribute. Soon, however, the news reached Novgorod that Vladimir had died. Yaroslav persuaded the Novgorodians to join him in the struggle for the Kievan throne

<sup>12</sup> Венета САБОВА, *Песни за св. Йоан Владимир. Изследване и издание на словесната традиция за свети Йоан Владимир* [Poems for Holy Jovan Vladimir. Research and Edition of the Literary Tradition on Holy Jovan Vladimir], София, 2018.

<sup>13</sup> Norman W. INGHAM, The Martyred Prince and the Question of Slavic Cultural Continuity in the Early Middle Ages, in: Henrik BIRNBAUM – Michael S. FLIER (eds.), *Medieval Russian Culture*, vol. 12, Berkeley, 1984, 31-53; INGHAM, The Sovereign as Martyr, 1-17; ИНГАМ, Мучеништво, 876-896.

<sup>14</sup> Simon MALMENVALL, Kijevska Rusija in Pripoved o minulih letih [Kievan Rus' and the Tale of Bygone Years], in: Blaž PODLESNIK (ed.), *Pripoved o minulih letih* [Tale of Bygone Years], Ljubljana, 2015, 184-190; Donald OSTROWSKI, *The Povest' vremennykh let: Interlinear Collation and Paradosis*, Harvard MA, 2004, 1020-1027; Борис А. УСПЕНСКИЙ, *Борис и Глеб: Восприятие истории в Древней Руси* [Boris and Gleb: Reception of History in Kievan Rus'], Москва, 2000, 41.

in order to stop the rampage of Vladimir's eldest son Sviatopolk, who in the meantime had taken the Kievan throne and had his younger brothers Boris and Gleb killed.<sup>15</sup> All of this contributed to the first dynastic war<sup>16</sup> in the Christian period of Kievan Rus'. In 1019 Sviatopolk was finally defeated by Yaroslav in the Battle of the Alta River east of Kiev. This allowed Yaroslav to resume rule over the western half of Rus', and then in 1036, after the death of his brother Mstislav, he extended his rule over all Rus' territory.<sup>17</sup>

Vladimir, baptized as Jovan (John),<sup>18</sup> was the son and heir of Peter, prince of Dioclea (Duklja), a South Slavic polity in present-day Montenegro and north-western Albania.<sup>19</sup> During military conflicts between the Byzantine emperor Basil II (976–1025) and the Bulgarian tsar Samuel (977–1014) he was a loyal vassal of Byzantium.<sup>20</sup> When Samuel attacked and later conquered the territory of Dioclea and the province of Dyrrachion (Drač, Dürres, present-day western Albania), Jovan Vladimir, having started an armed resistance against the Bulgarian tsar, was betrayed by one of Dioclea's military-administrative officials (*zhupan*) and immediately sent into captivity to Prespa, Samuel's capital city.<sup>21</sup> He was soon liberated owing to the pleas of Samuel's daughter Kosara who

<sup>15</sup> MALMENVALL, *Kijevska Rusija, 190-191*; OSTROWSKI, *The Povest' vremennykh let, 1023-1129*.

<sup>16</sup> Although Sviatopolk was the eldest living son of Vladimir Sviatoslavich and might at first glance be perceived as a rightful successor, according to the native Rus' sources (the chronicle *Tale of Bygone Years* and the »Boris and Gleb cycle«) Sviatopolk's taking of the throne was accompanied by deception and deliberate violence—he treacherously killed off his brothers to ensure his position.

<sup>17</sup> MALMENVALL, *Kijevska Rusija, 191-192*; Sophia SENYK, *A History of the Church in Ukraine, vol. 1: To the End of the Thirteenth Century*, Rome, 1993, 225-228; OSTROWSKI, *The Povest' vremennykh let, 1129-1161, 1190-1192*.

<sup>18</sup> It should be made clear, although, that in the *Chronicle* the mentioned prince of Dioclea is named Vladimir only.

<sup>19</sup> ЖИВКОВИЋ (ed.), *Gesta regum Sclavorum, vol. 1, 124*; Дмитрий И. ПОЛЫВЯННЫЙ – Анатолий А. ТУРИЛОВ, Иоанн Владимир [Jovan Vladimir], in: *Православная энциклопедия* [East Orthodox Encyclopedia], vol. 23, Москва, 2010, 736; ИНГАМ, *Мучеништво, 877*; Milan BOŠKOSKI, *Odnosi kneza Jovana Vladimira sa carem Samuilom, Gavrilom Radomirom i Jovanom Vladislavom* [Relations of Prince Jovan Vladimir with Tsar Samuel, Gavril Radomir, and Jovan Vladislav], in: Đorđije BOROZAN, *1000-godišnjica svetog Jovana Vladimira* [Millenary of Saint Jovan Vladimir], Podgorica, 2017, 255; Stefan TRAJKOVIĆ-FILIPOVIĆ, *Inventing a Saint's Life: Chapter XXXVI of The Annals of a Priest of Dioclea*, in: *Revue des études Byzantines, 71* (2013), 1, 259.

<sup>20</sup> ЖИВКОВИЋ (ed.), *Gesta regum Sclavorum, vol. 1, 124, 126, 128*; BOŠKOSKI, *Odnosi kneza Jovana Vladimira, 258*.

<sup>21</sup> ЖИВКОВИЋ (ed.), *Gesta regum Sclavorum, vol. 1, 126*. Prespa was the name of Samuel's polity capital city located on the island of Saint Achilleas on the Lake Prespa (present-day northern Greece) (Јадран ФЕРЛУГА (ed.), Јован Скилица [John Skylitzes], in: Георгије ОСТРОГОРСКИ – Фрањо БАРИШИЋ (eds.), *Византијски извори за историју народа*

fell in love with him—she was overwhelmed by his beauty, piety and virtue, and threatened to kill herself if her father did not liberate the man and let her marry him. Samuel granted Kosara's wish, made Jovan Vladimir his son-in-law and sent him back to Dioclea as a new Bulgarian vassal prince.<sup>22</sup> Shortly after the death of Samuel in 1014, Ivan Vladislav, Samuel's nephew, usurped the throne by killing his cousin (Samuel's son) and rightful successor Gavril Radomir and invited Jovan Vladimir to Prespa.<sup>23</sup> Jovan Vladimir's wife Kosara tried to convince her husband not to travel, however, he put trust in the tsar's oath and left Dioclea. On his way to Prespa Jovan Vladimir was ambushed by Ivan Vladislav's soldiers, but was allegedly saved by the angels who guarded him.<sup>24</sup> When Jovan Vladimir had safely arrived in the Bulgarian capital and was praying in one of the city's churches, Ivan Vladislav sent his assassins to the church to kill the prince. He then took confession and Holy Communion and was assassinated outside the church.<sup>25</sup> Not long after this event, Ivan Vladislav was himself treacherously assassinated by one of his soldiers during the siege of Dyrrachion as a result of a Byzantine plot—just before his death he allegedly saw an angel with a face resembling that of Jovan Vladimir whom he recognized as the one executing the punishment for his past crime.<sup>26</sup>

Jarl (Earl) Magnus Erlendsson of Orkney (1106–1115/1117) was a ruler of a semi-independent polity of the Orkney Archipelago on the north of present-day Scotland within the Norwegian kingdom. Sources on Magnus from saga and hagiographic material agree that he was assassinated at Easter—resembling the sacrifice of the »innocent Easter Lamb«, i.e. Jesus Christ—between 1115 and 1117 at the behest of his cousin Haakon Palsson who had rival claims to rule the Orkney Isles and for a time contrived to coexist by dividing the realm with Magnus. However, »ill-willing men« incited Haakon to kill his cousin. Consequently, he lured Magnus to a peace-meeting on the island of

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*Југославије* [Byzantine Sources for the History of the Peoples of Yugoslavia], vol. 3, Београд, 1966, 83–84).

<sup>22</sup> ЖИВКОВИЋ (ed.), *Gesta regum Sclavorum*, vol. 1, 128, 130.

<sup>23</sup> ПОЛЫВЯННЫЙ – ТУРИЛОВ, Иоанн Владимир, 736; ЖИВКОВИЋ (ed.), *Gesta regum Sclavorum*, vol. 1, 130, 132.

<sup>24</sup> ЖИВКОВИЋ (ed.), *Gesta regum Sclavorum*, vol. 1, 132, 134.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid*, 134, 136.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid*, 136, 138. Events described above occurred between the years 1014 (Ivan Vladislav's usurpation) and 1018 (Ivan Vladislav's death and final defeat of Bulgaria against Byzantium). See also: Liliana SIMEONOVA, A Murder Reconsidered: Jovan Vladimir, Jovan Vladislav and the Byzantine-Bulgarian Conflict, in: Đorđije BOROZAN (ed.), *1000-godišnjica svetog Jovana Vladimira* [Millenary of Saint Jovan Vladimir], Podgorica, 2017, 161–162, 168.

Egilsay, where his men lay in ambush. Haakon carried out his intention with treachery and oaths of friendship. When the conspiracy had been revealed, the earl decided against violent resistance to spare the lives of his men. He went to church and after the mass voluntarily surrendered to the murderers. The cousin then ordered Magnus's cook to behead his master. Soon after Magnus's death, miracles supposedly began occurring. In 1135, local residents demanded the disinterment of his relics, but were opposed by both Earl Paul, Haakon's son, and bishop Vilhjalmr (William). Because of his disbelief, the bishop then temporarily lost his sight and, under the strong impression of such a »divine sign«, he finally ordered Magnus's tomb to be opened. Magnus was canonized the same year and his relics were translated to a church in Birsay, the political centre of the Orkneys at the time. On this occasion the bishop declared that 16 April, which was Magnus's feast-day and the day of his martyrdom, and 13 December, the day of his translation, should be observed as holy days. Two years later (1137) Earl Rognvald Kali Kolsson, later called Rognvald the Crusader (1136–1158), Magnus's nephew and after his canonization in the late twelfth century known as Saint Rognvald, laid the foundations for a cathedral dedicated to Saint Magnus in Kirkwall, the new political and ecclesiastical centre of the Orkney Isles.<sup>27</sup>

### 3. Boris and Gleb: fulfilling religious and patriotic ideals

*Lesson on Boris and Gleb* by monk Nestor reflects a typical medieval Christian belief that the historical process is a struggle between good and evil in which God eventually rises as the final victor. Nestor claims that the Devil had compelled Sviatopolk to order the murder of two innocent brothers Boris and Gleb, with the Rus' figures corresponding to the Old Testament figure Abel.<sup>28</sup> Sviatopolk, the Rus' Cain, had submitted himself to the idol of lust for power,

<sup>27</sup> Finnbogi GUÐMUNDSSON (ed.), *Orkneyinga saga. Legenda de Sancto Magno. Magnúss saga skemmri. Magnúss saga lengri. Helga þáttir ok Úlfs* [Orkney Saga. Legend of Saint Magnus. Longer Magnus Saga. Shorter Magnus Saga. Tale of Helgi and Ulf], Reykjavík, 1965, 122-125; Haki ANTONSSON, *St. Magnús of Orkney: Aspects of his Cult from a European Perspective*, in Olwyn OWEN (ed.), *The World of the Orkneyinga Saga: The Broad-cloth Viking Trip*, Kirkwall, 2006, 145; INGHAM, *The Sovereign as Martyr*, 7-9.

<sup>28</sup> МИЛЮТЕНКО, *Святые князья-мученики*, 360, 364, 368; Simon MALMENVALL, *Branje o Borisu in Glebu: reprezentacija verskega in političnega zgleda* [Lesson on Boris and Gleb: Representation of a Religious and Political Example], in: Blaž PODLESNIK (ed.), *Pismenost in kultura Kijevske Rusije: prevodi in komentarji izbranih tekstov* [Literacy and Culture of Kievan Rus': Translation and Commentary of Chosen Texts], Ljubljana, 2019, 86-87.



which caused his deviation from God and those close to him. Recent historical experience of Kievan Rus' was thus placed in the biblical context of Divine providence. Just as, according to Genesis, the history of mankind after the expulsion from paradise experiences its spiritual turning point with Cain's fratricide and Abel's sacrifice, so does the history of Rus' after the crucial event of official Christianization experience its spiritual turning point with Sviatopolk's crime and the holiness of Boris and Gleb.<sup>29</sup>

»Do you see that a second Cain has appeared? Cain indeed plotted, we are told, how and in what manner he might kill his brother Abel, for it was not possible then to know in what manner death takes place. Lo, the criminal enemy [i. e. the Devil] revealed murder to him at night in his sleep, and he arose and thus slew his brother Abel. So, as this was revealed to Cain, likewise was it revealed to Svjatopolk, as he plotted how and in what manner he might kill his brother Boris. The criminal enemy insinuated into his heart that, having summoned him, he should kill him on the way. He sent his servants to kill him.«<sup>30</sup>

The moments before Boris's death are depicted by Nestor with dramatic escalation comprising warnings of Boris's retinue (*družhina*) about Sviatopolk's intention, suggesting Boris to either escape or resist by force. However, Boris voluntarily chooses to sacrifice himself in order to prevent further bloodshed and »save many lives.« He then embarks on a journey to Kiev, submitting himself to the will of Sviatopolk. During the journey he sets up a tent, in which by praying he makes his preparations for death. Upon hearing the murderers closing in, Boris instructs his priest to begin the morning liturgy. At the end of the liturgy, Boris says goodbye to his escort and is pierced by the spears. The body of Boris is then transferred to Vyshgorod and buried beside the church of St. Basil.<sup>31</sup>

When Gleb learns about Sviatopolk's intention to kill Boris, he initially decides to flee north from Kiev to the »other brother«, probably the Novgorodian prince Yaroslav. After Boris's death, Sviatopolk orders his men to pursue the fleeing Gleb, and they soon catch him in his boat. As in Boris's case, Gleb's retinue is willing to defend their prince. Gleb, however, instructs them to withdraw to the river bank and leave him alone with the servants. The assassins take over the boat and then order Gleb's cook to cut his lord's throat.

<sup>29</sup> MALMENVALL, *Branje o Borisu in Glebu: reprezentacija*, 87; УСПЕНСКИЙ, *Борис и Глеб*, 32-35, 38-39, 47.

<sup>30</sup> Hollingsworth, *The Hagiography*, 12.

<sup>31</sup> МИЛЮТЕНКО, *Святые князья-мученики*, 262-265, 370; MALMENVALL, *Branje o Borisu in Glebu: reprezentacija*, 87-88.

In his last prayer before his death, Gleb compares himself to the righteous Zacharias,<sup>32</sup> assassinated in front of the altar in the Jerusalem temple.<sup>33</sup>

Among the local Rus' saints, the cult of Boris and Gleb was the oldest and most widespread. The first phase of the canonization of the princely brothers was concluded by the confirmation of the Kievan metropolitan Georgi in 1072. It is 1115, however, that can be regarded as the second and final phase of the canonization because their relics were translated to a new church in Vyshgorod, dedicated to the princely brothers.<sup>34</sup> The cult of Boris and Gleb started to develop its prominently political dimension at the end of the eleventh and beginning of the twelfth century. This was a time of frequent internal dynastic conflicts and division of Rus' territory among strengthening individual half-independent principalities. In the consciousness of East Slavic (ecclesiastical) writers, Boris and Gleb have become increasingly present as the protectors of the Rurik dynasty and guardians of the homeland.<sup>35</sup> According to the *Tale of Bygone Years*, the main East Slavic chronicle of the Kievan period, and Nestor's *Lesson*, the example of princely brothers relinquishing their own life takes the shape of a political warning, applicable to the conduct of some of the Rus' princes of the time, who in their struggles for power often fled to foreign lands, only to return home with foreign armies, aided by which they eventually achieved victories against the members of their own dynasty. Therefore, the tradition of stories about ruler martyrs serves as an appeal to the Rus' princes to stop their fratricidal conflicts and subordinate their interests to the welfare of the common homeland of Rus', and, consequently, become genuine Christians, and not in name only.<sup>36</sup>

The narrative on Boris and Gleb has gained such literary and spiritual impact due to its placement within a sensitive historical context and thus resulted in a kind of political theology. Namely, the death of Boris and Gleb pertains to the time of the first dynastic conflict after the official Christianization, i.e. the nominally already Christian princely dynasty which ought to have served as an example of concord and virtuous life. The murder of the princely brothers

<sup>32</sup> Cf. Matt. 23:35; Luke 11:51.

<sup>33</sup> МИЛЮТЕНКО, *Святые князья-мученики*, 372-376; MALMENVALL, *Branje o Borisu in Glebu: reprezentacija*, 88; УСПЕНСКИЙ, *Борис и Глеб*, 36-39.

<sup>34</sup> OSTROWSKI, *The Povest' vremennykh let*, 1462-1473; HOLLINGSWORTH, *The Hagiography*, XXVI-XVII; MALMENVALL, *Branje o Borisu in Glebu: reprezentacija*, 89.

<sup>35</sup> MALMENVALL, *Branje o Borisu in Glebu: reprezentacija*, 89-90; МИЛЮТЕНКО, *Святые князья-мученики*, 5, 271-272, 279-280; HOLLINGSWORTH, *The Hagiography*, XIV-XVI, XXVII-XXXI, LV-LVI.

<sup>36</sup> MALMENVALL, *Branje o Borisu in Glebu: reprezentacija*, 90; SENYK, *A History of the Church*, 232-234.

committed by Sviatopolk through deception symbolically opposed everything the Church had tried to achieve in the moral field in the newly Christianized society.<sup>37</sup> The texts of the »Boris and Gleb cycle« are also a testimony about the profound reflection on the position of Kievan Rus' within the community of Christian polities, especially in relation to its spiritual »teacher« Byzantium, whose example encouraged Vladimir Sviatoslavich to adopt the Christian faith. The parallels with biblical events and personalities testify about the desire of East Slavic writers of the time to seek through them a confirmation that »Divine providence« has been reflected in the recent history of Kievan Rus' as well. The martyrdom of Boris and Gleb is thus seen as a historically and geographically specific re-realization of the Old Testament story of Cain and Abel. In this way, Kievan Rus', despite its relatively late adoption of Christianity, was portrayed as included in the global process of salvation history and as a fully-fledged part of the Christian community. Hence, emphasizing the fact of the principle of love towards one's enemies made it into the acts of the representatives of East Slavic secular authorities, the bearers of the political ideal in the Christian society, which eventually served the confirmation of the legitimacy of the Rurik dynasty.<sup>38</sup>

The historical case both of the Rus' princely brothers and other medieval ruler martyrs can be additionally explained using the theory of »mimetic violence« by René Girard.<sup>39</sup> According to the author, archaic (pre-Christian) cultures originated in a so-called mimetic desire which encouraged an imitator to surpass one's own model (»to be like God«)<sup>40</sup> and, when necessary, use various means of exclusion, murder, war and violence. This mimetic desire, which cyclically resulted in mimetic violence, was ambiguous in its own right: on the one hand, it (re)created human culture, while, on the other, it paved the way towards its destruction. When violence resulting from mimetic desire reached its critical point, a »scapegoat mechanism« was activated time and again in order to achieve reconciliation and restore original peace—it pointed out a particular innocent victim, often perceived as a rival brother (Cain and Abel, Romulus and Remus, etc.), which was sacrificed for a renewal of a particular

<sup>37</sup> MALMENVALL, *Branje o Borisu in Glebu: reprezentacija*, 90–91.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid*, 91-92.

<sup>39</sup> René GIRARD, *Things Hidden Since the Foundation of the World: Research Undertaken in Collaboration with Jean-Michel Oughourlian and Guy Lefort*, Stanford, 1987, 235-245; René GIRARD, *Les origines de la culture: Entretiens avec P. Antonello et J. C. de Castro Rocha*, Paris, 2004, 126-130. See also the revised edition of his most representative previous works: René GIRARD, *De la violence à la divinité*, Paris, 2007.

<sup>40</sup> Cf. 1 Gen 3.

community. The sacrificed innocent victim was initially declared guilty for the spread of violence; however, after its execution, it acquired sacral attributes and was regarded as the saviour of the community. Therefore, archaic cultures were perpetually ambivalent, internally divided between progress and destruction, order and chaos, virtue and deception. This pattern of cyclical violence was, argues Girard, defeated through the person of Jesus Christ who subverted the scapegoat mechanism by voluntarily sacrificing his own life for the salvation of every person »once and for all.« In this respect, an irreconcilable duality emerges between the archaic mythical world and the Gospel, social determinism and personal freedom, fight for power and detachment from the earthly goods, violent sacrifice of someone's life for the alleged benefit of the community and voluntary sacrifice out of love for every irreplaceable human life.<sup>41</sup> The main difference between mimetic violence and the Christian worldview lies in their relation to the other: an ambivalent archaic culture finds the other both attractive (worthy of imitation) and dangerous (adequate for sacrifice), while the Christian mindset presupposes love towards every person and without deception acknowledges the innocence of the victim. In this context, the studied ruler martyrs of the eastern and northern periphery of medieval Europe can be seen as innocent victims following the example of Jesus Christ by voluntarily sacrificing themselves to save the lives of others. In this way, they succeeded in (symbolically) breaking the previous cycle of violence and, consequently, rejecting the recent pagan past, rooted in the notion of mimetic violence.

#### **4. Jovan Vladimir: being a »Good Shepherd« of his own people**

As in the case of Boris and Gleb, Jovan Vladimir's life and death, depicted in the hagiographical interpolation of the *Chronicle*, are fundamentally understood not in terms of a political struggle but in terms of self-sacrifice for the benefit of others.<sup>42</sup> Many typological similarities can be drawn between Boris and Gleb, on the one hand, and Jovan Vladimir, on the other: they all lived in the same historical period; they were princes of two Slavic and relatively

<sup>41</sup> Robert PETKOVŠEK, Svoboda med žrtvovanjem in darovanjem [Freedom between Sacrifice and Self-giving], in: *Bogoslovni vestnik*, 78 (2018), 1, 37-40.

<sup>42</sup> ИНГАМ, Мучеништво, 890-891; Александра КОСТИЋ ТМУШИЋ, Поетски елементи и структура Житија светог Јована Владимира [Poetical Elements and Structure of the Life of Saint Jovan Vladimir], in: *Црквене студије*, 13 (2016), 129.

recently Christianized polities<sup>43</sup> under a strong Byzantine cultural influence;<sup>44</sup> they were murdered by their own relatives as a result of political interests; they all voluntarily accepted their death for the sake of peace in their homeland and to save lives of other people, following the example of Jesus Christ; furthermore, they all eventually became known as saints emphasizing the impact of recently adopted Christian ideals<sup>45</sup> on decisions of social importance in their homelands. However, a distinctive divergence between the mentioned princes can be traced: in the narrative about the prince of Dioclea a prominent role is given to a woman character, Jovan Vladimir's wife Kosara—this, from a literary and ideational point of view, represents a peculiarity which differs from the typically masculine military milieu, seen in the case of Boris and Gleb and other literary representations of ruler martyrs on the eastern and northern periphery of Europe.<sup>46</sup>

The central literary and theological motif in the hagiographical report on Jovan Vladimir included in the *Chronicle* is the biblical reminiscence taken from the Gospel of John<sup>47</sup> about the »Good Shepherd.« This motif permeates the entire story of the prince of Dioclea, starting from his decision to surrender himself to tsar Samuel for the sake of peace in his homeland: »Dearest brethren, it seems fitting to me that I fulfil the adage of the evangelist, which states: The good shepherd lays down his life for his sheep. Therefore, brothers, it is better that I devote my being to all of you and deliver my body voluntarily for butchery or slaughter, and thereby deliver you from famine or the sword.«<sup>48</sup>

<sup>43</sup> Сима ЂИРКОВИЋ, *Срби међу европским народима* [Serbs among the European Nations], Београд, 2004, 18-23; Živko ANDRIJAŠEVIĆ, Crnogorsko nasljeđe ranog srednjeg vijeka (država, društvo, kultura) [Montenegrin Heritage of the Early Middle Ages (State, Society, Culture)], in: Đorđe BOROZAN (ed.), *1000-godišnjica svetog Jovana Vladimira* [Millenary of Saint Jovan Vladimir], Podgorica, 2017, 157.

<sup>44</sup> There is an important difference between Kievan Rus' and Dioclea: the former was never politically dependent on the Byzantine Empire, while the latter existed as a vassal principality of Byzantium or was at least a part of Byzantium's political sphere of interest. On the relations between Rus' and South Slavic polities with Byzantium from the tenth to the twelfth century, see: Tibor ŽIVKOVIĆ, *Forging Unity: The South Slavs between East and West 550–1150*, Belgrade, 2008; Геннадий Г. ЛИТАВРИН, *Византия, Болгария, Древняя Русь: IX–начало XII века* [Byzantium, Bulgaria, Rus': 9<sup>th</sup>–Beginning of the 12<sup>th</sup> Century], Санкт Петербург, 2000.

<sup>45</sup> Тибор ЖИВКОВИЋ, *Портрети српских владара* [Portraits of Serbian Rulers], Београд, 2006, 72-73.

<sup>46</sup> ИНГАМ, *Мучеништво*, 893.

<sup>47</sup> Cf. John 10: 11.

<sup>48</sup> ЖИВКОВИЋ (ed.), *Gesta regum Sclavorum*, vol. 1, 126.

The motif of the »Good Shepherd« invokes the Christ's parable about his authority (»godliness«), but also his own sacrificial love towards mankind, resulting in giving »his life for his sheep.« The murdered prince of Dioclea is thus a *rex iustus* and *pastor bonus* at the same time. As Wenceslaus and Boris and Gleb before him, although the narrative texts dealing with their saintly lives do not compare them directly with the »Good Shepherd«, Jovan Vladimir uses his position of a leader and, consequently, political authority, for a kenotic imitation of Christ.<sup>49</sup> In this respect, it is interesting that Jovan Vladimir is persecuted twice and by two different rulers, initially by Samuel and then Ivan Vladislav—both of them being his own (future) relatives occupying the Bulgarian throne. The betrayal of Jovan Vladimir by his *zhupan*, directly compared by the author of the *Chronicle* to Judas Iscariot who betrayed Jesus Christ to his death,<sup>50</sup> is a symbolical prelude of future events. Namely, the prince's captivity in Prespa under Samuel is a typology which culminates in his assassination at the same place under Samuel's nephew Ivan Vladislav. Similarly, Jovan Vladimir's first coming to Prespa (suffering in captivity) is a prefiguration of the second one (death), while both of them are fulfilled by the prince's spiritual victory, the final »coming home«, when he is buried at his court in Krajina and where he is eventually, after the death of Kosara, united with his wife for »all eternity.«<sup>51</sup> Therefore, Jovan Vladimir's life is that of betrayal by men, genuine love towards his wife, his own trust in Divine providence, and imitation of Christ until »the end« when he becomes an innocent sacrifice for others—like the »Good Shepherd« who gives his »life for his sheep.« On this basis, the entire story about Jovan Vladimir can also be understood in terms of a theologically rich Eucharistic image of the »Good Shepherd« whose blood is »poured out for many.«<sup>52</sup> Just as the synoptic Gospels deal with the Last Supper, when Christ announces his sacrifice, and the actual sacrifice on Mount Calvary after the report on Judas' betrayal, so the thirty-sixth chapter of the *Chronicle* initially mentions the betrayal of one of the princes' *zhupans* and then narrates about the just ruler as the »Good Shepherd«, whose life is that of sacrifice for others. Finally, the last act of Jovan Vladimir before his voluntary death is the reception of the Holy Communion (»body and blood of our Lord«)<sup>53</sup> which means that he identifies with the death of Christ.

<sup>49</sup> КОСТИЋ ТМУШИЋ, Поетски елементи, 130.

<sup>50</sup> ЖИВКОВИЋ (ed.), *Gesta regum Sclavorum*, vol. 1, 126. Cf. Matt 26: 14-16, 21-25; 27: 3-10; Mark 14: 10-11, 43-46; Luke 22: 3-6, 21-23, 47-48; John 12: 4-6; 13: 21-30; 18: 2-5.

<sup>51</sup> ИНГАМ, Мучеништво, 886.

<sup>52</sup> Cf. Matt 26: 28; Mark 14: 24; Luke 22: 20.

<sup>53</sup> ЖИВКОВИЋ (ed.), *Gesta regum Sclavorum*, vol. 1, 134.

A distinctive divergence between the Rus' princely brothers and Jovan Vladimir is that the cult of the latter has never acquired a strong dynastic or patriotic dimension. The »glory« of Jovan Vladimir was already in the thirteenth century overshadowed by a new South Slavic (Serbian) ruling dynasty Nemanjić with its own saintly members, most notably Stefan Nemanja (died 1199) and his son Rastko Nemanja or monk Sava, the first archbishop of Serbia (1208–1236).<sup>54</sup> Nevertheless, the story about Jovan Vladimir could have exerted some (literary) influence on the *Life of Simeon (Stefan Nemanja)* (*Житие Симеона*), the earliest known Church Slavic hagiography, written on the territory of present-day Serbia.<sup>55</sup> This hagiography is dedicated to Stefan Nemanja, the first independent ruler (*veliki zhupan*) of Serbia from the dynasty of Nemanjić who died as a monk named Simeon. It was written between 1208 and 1216 by his son Stefan Nemanjić or Stefan the First-Crowned (1196–1227), brother of Sava.<sup>56</sup> The main idea of the hagiography is that God's mercy towards mankind is actively present through all historical periods, giving every people not only their own »holy men and women«, but also »holy earthly rulers«—in this case Stefan/Simeon to the Serbs.<sup>57</sup> Thus, the story of Simeon is a re-realization of God's mercy in specific historical circumstances within a global context of salvation history. The most obvious similarities between Simeon and Jovan Vladimir are the following: they were both saints from the ranks of political leaders; they both originated from South Slavic polities in the Western Balkans; they were both taken into captivity by their own relatives and saved from imprisonment by Divine intervention; both saints eventually punished their enemies; they were both characterized as »Good Shepherds« of their people.<sup>58</sup> On the level of historical circumstances, theological ideas and literary images, it can be presumed that the cult of Simeon and, consequently, the beginning of the entire hagiographical tradition dealing with the saints from the Nemanjić dynasty, did not begin in a fully independent way, without at least some influence coming from the existing hagiographical patterns. However, there is an important difference between Jovan Vladimir and

<sup>54</sup> ИНГАМ, Мучеништво, 877.

<sup>55</sup> Љиљана ЈУХАС ГЕОРГИЈЕВСКА – Лазар МИРКОВИЋ – Миливоје БАШИЋ (eds.), *Стефан Првовенчани: Сабрани списи* [Stefan the First-Crowned: Collected Works], Београд, 1988, 13.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, 11.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, 16-17.

<sup>58</sup> ЈУХАС ГЕОРГИЈЕВСКА – МИРКОВИЋ – БАШИЋ (eds.), *Стефан Првовенчани*, 28, 33–34, 65–70, 136–137, 140–148; Stanislaus HAFNER, *Studien zur altserbischen dynastischen Historiographie*, München, 1964, 44-53.

Simeon: the latter was a military-type saint consciously fighting against domestic and foreign enemies; his successful political reign was eventually fulfilled by another kind of sacrifice—the choice of »angelic« life of a monk fully dedicated to the »heavenly« realities.

## 5. Magnus Erlendsson: establishing a »new covenant« between God and people

In medieval history, the cult of ruler martyrs was not limited to the eastern and south-eastern regions of Europe under a strong Byzantine cultural influence, but was also present in Scandinavian lands. All these polities represented a territory where the introduction of the Christian faith at that time was a notable social innovation. In the Byzantine Empire of the time, this phenomenon was unknown; such saints also cannot be found in South European Latin hagiographies and liturgical texts. The category of murdered rulers or other members of a ruling dynasty as saints was thus typical of those parts of medieval Europe where the new Christian ideals only started to gradually shape the social norms.<sup>59</sup> The phenomenon of saintly martyr rulers can be briefly explained in two fundamental ways; not only did it enable newly Christianized ruling dynasties and their homelands to position themselves in the Christian salvation history, but it also positioned them in the symbolic centre of the European culture of the time. Consequently, this created a changed (symbolic) perspective in which the periphery became the centre. Its centrality was ensured through hagiographical narratives of saints, relics, and miracles. This also explains why the first written records produced on the eastern and northern periphery of medieval Europe are all about local saints. Newly Christianized lands tended to position themselves in the centre of the imagined Christian world and history by creating their own saints, by providing themselves with evidence of God's presence and power that would position them in the centre. Therefore, from this perspective, not only did the earlier periphery become the centre, but the division between the centre and periphery lost its relevance. Wherever God's presence was manifested through

<sup>59</sup> Marina PARAMONOVA, The Formation of the Cult of Boris and Gleb and the Problem of External Influences, in: Haki ANTONSSON – Ildar H. GARIPZANOV (eds.), *Saints and their Lives on the Periphery: Veneration of Saints in Scandinavia and Eastern Europe (c. 1000–1200)*, Turnhout, 2010, 281; Gabor KLANICZAY, Conclusion: North and East European Cults of Saints, in: Haki ANTONSSON – Ildar H. GARIPZANOV (eds.), *Saints and their Lives on the Periphery: Veneration of Saints in Scandinavia and Eastern Europe (c. 1000–1200)*, Turnhout, 2010, 288–289, 302–304.



a saintly ruler, his people were in the centre of the Christian world.<sup>60</sup> Because these saints imitated Christ and poured their »innocent blood« as a reflection of the »Easter lamb«, which in Christ's case signified the establishment of a »new covenant« between God and people, their voluntary sacrifice was also regarded as a kind of a »new covenant«—between God and people who lived in the polities where these saints had emerged.<sup>61</sup>

As the closest typological counterpart for the Slavic princes Boris and Gleb and Jovan Vladimir on the northern periphery of medieval Europe, the death and canonization of Magnus Erlendsson, jarl (earl) of the Orkney Isles within the Norwegian kingdom, is worth outlining.<sup>62</sup> Magnus's martyrdom can be typologically compared to the story of the two East Slavic princes and also to the narrative on Jovan Vladimir, pointing out the following literary images: death of an innocent ruler due to a political conspiracy lead by his close relative; deception of a conspirator resulting in encirclement of a victim at a remote place far from home; decision of an attacked ruler not to resist evil by force; premortal moments of an innocent victim dedicated to prayer and concluding with the reception of the Holy Communion. In the saga of Magnus's martyrdom, some obvious parallels particularly with the texts of the »Boris and Gleb cycle« can be observed: Magnus, like Boris and Gleb, despite the presence of his retinue, rejected armed resistance against his enemy in order to save lives of innocent men; Magnus was, like Gleb, murdered by his own cook; bishop Vilhjalmr, like the Kievan metropolitan Georgi in the case of Boris and Gleb, initially questioned the sanctity of the murdered prince. All this enables Magnus to be spiritually joined with the Christ's death on Calvary, while his murderer becomes a symbol of betrayal drawing from the image of the apostle Judas Iscariot.<sup>63</sup> The »Boris and Gleb cycle« could, in fact, have exerted at least some literary influence on the authors of the sagas about jarl Magnus Erlendsson because the ties between Scandinavia (Sweden and Norway) and Kievan Rus' were very vibrant and diverse between the tenth and the thirteenth centuries; at the highest societal level, the dynastic marriages fostering political alliances and cultural exchange are especially worth

<sup>60</sup> Stefan TRAJKOVIĆ-FILIPOVIĆ, *Saint Vladimir of Zeta between Historiography and Hagiography* (MA Thesis in Medieval Studies), Budapest, 2012, 9-10; Gabor KLANICZAY, *Holy Rulers and Blessed Princesses: Dynastic Cults in Medieval Central Europe*, Cambridge, 2002, 327.

<sup>61</sup> TRAJKOVIĆ-FILIPOVIĆ, *Saint Vladimir of Zeta*, 14-15; Franklin A. SCIACCA, In Imitation of Christ: Boris and Gleb, Saint and the Ritual Consecration of the Russian Land, in: *Slavic Review*, 49 (1990), 2, 254-257.

<sup>62</sup> INGHAM, *The Sovereign as Martyr*, 7.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, 6-9, 16.

pointing out.<sup>64</sup> Therefore, it can be reasonably assumed that the Scandinavian elite was familiar with some Rus' literary works which could have served as an inspiration to adopt similar literary patterns and adjust them according to the local circumstances.

Following the interpretation expressed in *Magnus Saga Lengri*, the Orkney Isles seem to be Christian in name, but still much pagan in reality. For instance, this source tells how Haakon Palsson visited a pagan soothsayer during a stay in Sweden in order to gauge his future and assure his »earthly glory.«<sup>65</sup> It is a sentiment of this sort that the saga's writer or compiler, describing the events in the land »on the uttermost edge of the world«, additionally explains in his prologue: »Praise glory and splendor and honor be to Almighty God, our redeemer and maker, for his manifold mercy and grace, which he bestows on us who dwell on the uttermost edge of the world; so that after the saying of the masters who so set it in their books, it seems to them as though we were come out of this world.«<sup>66</sup>

Apparently, this »remote land« has been blessed by »God's grace« who has granted it a saint. The death of a secular ruler was thus included within both a secular historical and religious salvific context, as the defining point in the history of the people over whom he had governed during his lifetime. Magnus's willingness to suffer martyrdom heralds the completion of one step in God's plan: the spread of the »true faith« even to a remote land like the Orkney Isles. Magnus, however, does not convert his people to Christianity, for they are already Christians in name, but still his martyrdom represents a symbolic inclusion of the polity into the family of Christian people. Magnus's innocent blood has washed away the violent pagan past which heralds in a new era of the Orkney Isles.

»Now, for that no man can be Abel, save he who tolerates and proves the spite and envy of Cain; and as the holy Ezekiel<sup>67</sup> dwelt with the venomous men, and the righteous Lot<sup>68</sup> was hard pressed of wrongful men; so the foe of the whole human race waked up temptation, and the heat of persecution on all sides against this knight of God [Magnus], sowing discord and hatred

<sup>64</sup> МИЛЮТЕНКО, *Святые князья-мученики*, 22-23; INGHAM, *The Sovereign as Martyr*, 7-8; Maria-Claudia TOMANY, *Sacred Non-Violence, Cowardice Profaned: St Magnus of Orkney in Nordic Hagiography and Historiography*, in: Thomas A. DUBOIS (ed.), *Sanctity in the North: Saints, Lives, and Cults in Medieval Scandinavia*, Toronto, 2008, 128.

<sup>65</sup> GUÐMUNDSSON (ed.), *Orkneyinga saga. ... Magnúss saga lengri*, 341-343.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, 335.

<sup>67</sup> Cf. Ezek 3-33.

<sup>68</sup> Cf. Gen 11-14; Gen 19.

between brothers and kinsfolk and dear friends, all that he might hinder him, and make those wonders of none effect, which then began to grow with him.«<sup>69</sup>

On this basis, the spiritual reasoning behind comparing Magnus to innocent Abel and Haakon to murderous Cain is almost identical with the already explained Cain and Abel motif pertaining to the case of Boris and Gleb—in both cases, the same motif serves as a starting point for the reflection on the recent history of the newly Christianized lands making part of »salvation history«.

From a similar moral and spiritual perspective, Magnus's martyrdom, even more in the *Orkneyinga Saga*, seems to be satirical and subversive in relation to the generally accepted warrior values provided by the Scandinavian sagas. Criticism of fame occurs when Magnus, an openly Christian character, breaks the established cycle of competition for renown between an individual and the traditional oral (pagan) past. In similar terms, as explained in the earlier chapter on Boris and Gleb, the breaking of the cycle of competition for renown is comparable to the breaking of the mimetic cycle of violence. A saint's life and death represent an example where the ideal of fame, presupposing violence, material wealth and political power, is dealt in a Christian fashion that contrasts with the traditional heroic one.<sup>70</sup> However, the martyrdom in the sagas on Magnus does not simply discard the oral tradition: within the Magnus's sections of the sagas there is a kind of a meeting or dialogue between the sacred (»heavenly«) and secular (»practical«) traditions that results in, as Russian literary historian Mikhail M. Bakhtin describes it, a »dialogized hybrid« or »bilingual phenomenon« in which the first language (with its literary images and values) is structured and perceived in the light of another language (with other literary images and values).<sup>71</sup> In this respect, the writers or compilers of the sagas depict Magnus as a person that is wise, successful at war, and generous. One could apply all of these attributes to a skilful political leader and many traditional saga characters share them. However, further on, the writers start to include more typically Christian virtues: the saint is »gentle and agreeable«, chaste, charitable, and a follower of God's commandments.<sup>72</sup> His saintly and secular attributes are so intimately interwoven that his reputation as a saint is inseparable from his position as a jarl. One can also see this connection when he dies, not only because of his faith, but also because of

<sup>69</sup> GUÐMUNDSSON (ed.), *Orkneyinga saga. ... Magnúss saga lengri*, 354.

<sup>70</sup> Robin WAUGH, Saint Magnus's Fame in Orkneyinga Saga, in: *The Journal of English and Germanic Philology*, 102 (2003), 2, 163-165.

<sup>71</sup> Mikhail M. BAKHTIN, *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays*, Austin, 1981, 75-76.

<sup>72</sup> GUÐMUNDSSON (ed.), *Orkneyinga saga. ... Magnúss saga lengri*, 103-104.

his involvement in quintessential conflicts and rivalry between the kinsmen over rulership, compared to countless other narratives in the sagas. This interweaving occurs at the start of his biography and continues to its end, so that several depictions of him in the sagas amount to a gradual development toward sainthood, as opposed to a sudden shift into homiletic preoccupations which would be inappropriate for the coherence of the saga narrative.<sup>73</sup>

## Conclusion

The main challenge with comparative analysis of the ruler martyrs on the periphery of medieval Europe, drawing from hagiographic and other texts, represents the difficulty to distinguish between those literary motifs and spiritual interpretations that would allow recognizing typological patterns and those details and motifs that can be seen as results of specific historical facts and social circumstances concerning individual ruler martyrs or their cults. In general terms, it can be concluded that authors or compilers of historical narratives and hagiographical texts, bringing an evaluation of lives and deaths of ruler martyrs, used a comprehensible model of imitation of the Christ's voluntary death on the cross, connected with the image of treason committed by Judas Iscariot. Therefore, innocence of the victim and his voluntary renouncement of resistance against evil by force became two crucial elements enabling medieval writers to construct an image of ruler martyrs as imitators of Christ. This was joined by comparisons with the righteous Abel as a forerunner of a God's pleasant ruler and wrongful Cain as a forerunner of a power-hungry murderer under the influence of the Devil. Unique traits of individual saints as well as their literary imagery and typological similarities formed the phenomenon of ruler martyrs, which had emerged between the tenth and twelfth century in the newly Christianized polities on the eastern and northern periphery of Europe. Every single ruler martyr, despite his particularity on the historical and literary level, became a part of a new saintly tradition characterized by a ruler's righteousness and humility, fulfilled through voluntary sacrifice for the benefit of peace in his homeland. This type of sainthood supported the notion of spiritual »maturity« of a newly converted people on the periphery of Europe of the time and, consequently, enabled its transfer from a geographical and cultural periphery to a symbolic centre of the

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<sup>73</sup> WAUGH, *Saint Magnus's Fame*, 170-171.

Christian world, defined by an establishment of a »new covenant« between God and his Christianized people.

There is, however, pertaining to the proper understanding of the term of the (eastern and northern) periphery, an important difference between Kievan Rus', on the one hand, and Dioclea and the Orkney Isles, on the other. As commonly acknowledged, Kievan Rus' of the time, despite its late adoption of Christianity, geographical distance from the centres of Christian culture and the need to place itself within the frame of »salvation history«, presented a territorially vast, politically strong, diplomatically vibrant, and culturally creative polity—it was, nevertheless, the most distinctive (geo)political factor on the east of Europe.<sup>74</sup> Contrary, Dioclea and the Orkney Isles, although situated on the routes of relative regional importance, presented not only geographically and culturally peripheral, but territorially minor realms—they were, indeed, a periphery on the north and south-east of medieval Europe.

### Sažetak

#### VLADARI MUČENICI NA PERIFERIJU SREDNJEVJEKOVNE EUROPE

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*Od početka 10. do početka 12. stoljeća sjevernu i istočnu periferiju Europe činile su političke tvorevine koje su nedavno primile kršćanstvo u svojstvu službene religije. Na tim prostorima pojavio se poseban tip štovanja svetaca, odn. mučenika. Ovaj tip svetosti odnosi se na povijesne osobe za koje je karakteristična mučenička smrt kao posljedica političkih interesa samih kršćana – ne pripadnika drugih religija zbog mržnje prema kršćanskoj vjeri kao takvoj. Kult vladara mučenika nije bio poznat ni u tadašnjoj (latinskoj) južnoj Europi, ni u Bizantinskom carstvu. Ovaj članak posvećen je povijesnoj, teološkoj i literarnoj analizi triju svetaca: Borisa i Gljeba (poginuli 1015. godine) iz Kijevske Rusije, Jovana Vladimira (poginuo 1015/1018. godine) iz Duklje i Magnusa Erlendssona (poginuo 1115/1117. godine) sa Orknejskih otoka, u ono doba*

<sup>74</sup> More on the political and cultural role of Kievan Rus' in medieval Europe and the (religious) self-image of its elite between the early eleventh and early twelfth century, see: MALMENVALL, *Kultura Kijevske Rusije*.

*dio Norveške. Sve upomenute svece povezuju iste temeljne karakteristike: uoči smrtne opasnosti, nisu se zatekli ka osveti ili bratoubojstvu kao sredstvu borbe za vlast, nego su dobrovoljno primili svoju smrt u korist mira u njihovim domovinama. Fenomen vladara mučenika usredotočava se na primjer njihove dobrovoljne žrtve, naglašavajući dvojnost između nevine žrtve i nepravednog postupka ubojice. Vladare mučenike njihovi suvremenici tumačili su kao promotore novog ideala kršćanskog monarha i simbol odbijanja nedavne paganske prošlosti. Ovaj fenomen povezan je također sa samosviješću crkvene i svijetovne elite novopokrštenih naroda – oni su svoje domovine, nezavisno od njihovog relativno kasnog primljenja kršćanstva, doživljavali kao religiozno »zrele« i, stoga, jednakopravne drugima, što je bilo u velikoj mjeri moguće upravo zbog pojavljivanja prvih domaćih svetaca.*

*Ključne riječi: Boris i Gljeb, Jovan Vladimir, Magnus Erlendsson, Kijevska Rusija, Duklja, Orkneyski otoci, vladari mučenici, dobrovoljna žrtva, srednjovjekovna književnost.*