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Legal Restrictions Defining Validity of Marriage in Medieval Bulgaria

(Abstract)

The main purpose of this study is to consider the requirements of the laws that applied in medieval Bulgaria after the conversion, on which the lawfulness of lay marriages depended, as a prelude to the study of the validity of rulers' marriages in medieval Bulgaria. Laws and canons included in various collections, preserved from the medieval past of the Bulgarian tzardom after the conversion, are discussed, such as the Synagogue of Fifty Titles by John Scholastic (also called Nomocanon of Methodius), Nomocanon of Fourteen Titles, Kanonarion of John Nesteutes, the Zakon Sudnyj Ljudem or The Penal Code for Laymen, canons of the Holy Fathers, Agricultural Law, the Ecloga, Slavic Pseudo-Zonar (Nomocanon of Cotelerius) and the Prochiron. The following legal restrictions have been established, the violation of which made a marriage illegal or invalid: kinship, disparity of cult or different denominations, marriage age, as well as the number of previous marriages and their legal termination. After extensive scrutiny, it is concluded that although these restrictions were not numerous, they did include too many people the marriage with whom was considered unlawful, which in all likelihood led to difficulties in applying the law in practice. Only a study of the actual application of the laws in question in the marriage life of medieval Bulgarian rulers will show to what extent the law was able to influence the marriage policy of statesmen.

Keywords: *medieval marriage law; medieval marriage impediments; divorce; marriage age; kinship and marriage*