The monograph lives its second life; the first one lasts since 2011, when was edited in Bulgaria and entitled The Tale of Prophet Isaiah and forming a political ideology in Early Medieval Bulgaria\(^1\). The English edition is not just a translation. As the author emphasizes in the preface, it is significantly enlarged and enriched with ideas, some of which are new, others have been neglected in the Bulgarian version (p. XI).

The idea of Ivan Biliarsky’s Tale… is based on commentary to the Medieval (11\(^{\text{th}}\) cent.) text entitled: Tale of the Prophet Isaiah of How an Angel Took Him to the Seventh Heaven, also known as The Bulgarian Apocryphal Chronicle of the 11\(^{\text{th}}\) century\(^2\). Let me remind the source text, being the object of the study. The Bulgarian Apocryphal Chronicle is preserved in only one copy, rather late – dating back the 17\(^{\text{th}}\) cent., the so called Kičevo codex, now in the archives of the State Historical Museum in Moscow (Khludov collection, № 123). For the first time the text was published at the turn of the 19\(^{\text{th}}\) cent. and ever since is drawing attention of medievists, mostly historians and students of belle-lettres. The text itself originates from the 11\(^{\text{th}}\)-13\(^{\text{th}}\) cent. compila-

\(^1\) Ив. Билярски, Сказание на Исайя Пророка и формирането на политическата идеология на ранносредновековна България, София 2011 [Поредица История и книжнина].

\(^2\) Though Biliarsky protests against calling The Tale of the Prophet Isaiah, Bulgarian Apocryphal Chronicle, I do it in order to distinguish the source text and the monograph.
ing in the Eastern part of the Slavia Orthodoxa area by St Cyrill of Turovo, but also the so called apocryphal prayers to St Trifon the Martyr. The codex contains also another text coming from the Slavonic milieux, not directly connected with The Tale: a compilation of Jeremiah’ Paralipomenon and Baruch’s Revelation. Biliarsky handles a question of possible influence of printed books for the contents of the manuscript – of The Book for Various Occasions by Jacob Kraykov, a Bulgarian publisher active in the second half of the 16th cent. in Venice.

The second chapter, Tale of the Prophet Isaiah in the context of Medieval Literature and Modern Researches, is a detailed analysis of the text’s origins. It begins with an extended historical discourse, presenting the fate of the text’s editions and thesis and speculations about its origins and sense, with a review of selected translations into contemporary languages (Bulgarian, English, French). An important problem is a dominating in studies devoted to The Chronicle, question of interpreting it as a patriotic and anti-Byzantine text, which makes Biliarsky to oppose and argue with; he emphasizes, that the compiler’s focus on the Bulgarian past, which he presented in a heroic light, does not suggest any opposition to the Empire (p. 34). The author underlines, that The Tale rather seems to be a result of not only loyalty, but even sense of the unity of the Bulgarians and the Byzantines, based on the best grounds: Christianity, and that the Christian identity prevails over the national one (p. 35).

Chapter two contains also a polemic with a thesis – presented in many studies on The Chronicle… – that the text has a sign of Bogomil origin (J. Ivanov) or, in general, od ‘apocryphal’ one (p. 39–43). It discusses also problem of the Chronicle’s origin, its potential recipients and spread, including character of its components.

The third chapter, entitled The Chosen People and the Promised Land, the Tale’s… author presents an idea of the so called royal messianism, God’s theocracy. The reader finds out a picture and analysis of the prophetic elements of the text: vision of the Profet Isaiah and how it is realized in terms of the Bulgarian chronicle… Here a reader can find description of the figure of Isaiah against a background of texts typical for medieval literary tradition, especially within narrations: About the Future Times and About the Kings, and About the Antichrist Who Is to Come and About the Last Times (the very beginning of the Bulgarian Apocryphal Chronicle comes into close textological relations with the last one). Here there is presented an idea – born in late antiquity and evolving in Byzantium (later also in Bulgaria) – of the Empire as New Israel and of the promised land converting into a holy land of the Christians. On the basis of this model, Constantinople (a specific synthesis of Rome and Jerusalem) – and, later on, the Bulgarian capital cities: Preslav and Turnovo – become New Jerusalem. Biliarsky attempts to identify the literary “promise land” (Karvuna = land of Bulgarians) with Southern Slavic territories and boundaries. It’s interesting to focus on the motif of a town: its origins, of a town understood/interpreter as a holy place, identified with state and state authorities. Toponyms listed in the text are presented in a symbolic context of their role in Bulgaria’s and Bulgarians’ history (p. 127).

A significant part of this chapter is an attempt of reconstruction of identity of selected rulers-builders and temples; some of them are described/depicted as ‘more legendary’, others – as ‘more historical’ ones. Kings-founders, builders carry – in the light of the Bulgarian chronicle… – features of prophets or even half-gods; the motif of building a town has a symbolic meaning, in some respects similar to the creation act of the world.

Chapter four, The Divinely Chosen King, Humble to God: Tsar Izot, or Davidic Royalty, interpretes the figure of the tsar Izot, who slew Ozia, the king of the East with his armies, and Goliath, the sea Frank […] in the years of whom there were many great cities (Bulgarian Apocryphal Chronicle, p. 16). In Ivan Biliarsky’s belief, it’s difficult to find out this king’s prototype

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in any historical ruler. He rather seems to be a symbolic character, constructed in likeness of the king David – especially, that his antagonist is ‘Goliath’ – the sea Frank, that means a person connected with Western Europe and the Catholic world, not in the narrow sense of someone of Frank nationality or related to the Frankish state (p. 136). In this chapter we find also interpretations of other characters, as Ozia, defeated by Izot. What is drawing the reader's attention, is a selection of biblical stories, being simultaneously background and pivot for understanding/interpreting some fragments of the Bulgarian Apocryphal Chronicle.

Chapter five, The Renovator King: Tsar Ispor and the Mosaic Royalty: Constantine and the Royalty of the Ruler-Converter to Christianity, is devoted to a picture of a ruler-renovator, one of the most characteristic images in Byzantine civilisation (p. 163). In this model we may find – except Constantine the Great – echoes of Christ Redemptor The New Adam and the prophet Moses, which can be seen e.g. in a report about tsar Ispor, a child carried in a basket for three years (p. 15). It’s only an introduction to extent reflections on Moses in both Hellenistic and Medieval Christian writings; it’s also an introduction for presenting some archetypes recorded in literature of the Southern Slavs, typical especially for stories (also myths and legends) referring to Bulgarian rulers – or only founders – like Boris-Michael, Simeon or Peter. Some parallels between the history of the Byzantine Imperium and the First Bulgarian Kingdom, analysed by Biliarsky, seem to serve as a narrative framework of the Bulgarian apocryphal chronicle.

The last, sixth chapter (Kings and Their Names) is devoted to those of the characters mentioned in Tale of the Prophet Isaiah whose historical identification is somewhat problematic (p. 205). The proposed by Ivan Biliarsky attempts of deciphering identities of the Bulgarian apocryphal chronicle heroes, comes out not only from looking for the historical prototype, but rather needs seeking fora constructed ideological character borrowed from the biblical or some other tradition (p. 205). In the context of the entire text, the characters constructed this way may have greater significance for its meaning and force of its impact than historical Bulgarian rulers.

The monograph is provide with three interesting “excurses” (appendixes). The first one, entitled The List of Names of the Bulgar Princes: Between Myth and History, is devoted to particularities of a rulers list, preserved in three manuscript copies; a list included to a world history chronicle; the second one, The Birth of the Founding Kings, follows a myth of miraculous birth of rulers “sent by God”; the third one – The Tabernacle of the Empire or the State-Church – presents a motif renovatio imperii as recorded in literary texts referring to the origin of the Second Bulgarian Empire (p. 269).

Ivan Biliarsky suggests to read the Bulgarian apocryphal chronicle in a context of a process of building a new – Christian – identity of the Bulgarians. His extremely interesting studium aims at presenting a special figurativeness, signs and symbols present in the Bulgarian chronicle. In fact, it’s a “tale of a tale”: history of meanings, presentations, imaginations and their interpretations in changing geopolitical conditions. Biliarsky presents an influence of a (Biblical) text into forming a political doctrine; he offers a religious interpretation of a state and political ideology. However, it’s worthwhile mentioning a Polish voice in discussion on the Bulgarian Apocryphal Chronicle, especially, that there is a voice excluded in both variants of the monograph. In his paper from 2007 on aims and ideology of the Bulgarian Apocryphal Chronicle, Kiril Marinow focuses on selected elements of the source text, offering some original interpretations 4. One of them concerns a fragment, where God orders Isaiah to take one third part of the Cumans and lead them to the land called Karvuna (p. 14). Unlike elder studies on the Bulgarian Apocryphal Chronicle, Marinow finds here out an evidence, that the new Christian people are chosen: “the third part” is – in light of the Book of the Prophet Zechariah (13, 8–9) – faithful servants, refined and heard out 5. Moreover, the Cumans were to be ‘chosen’ still before accepting Christianity, which should be an evidence for the depth.

5 Ibidem, p. 69–70.
of God’s purpose. What should be emphasized, Marinow suggests a need to verify a belief on the ‘messiah idea’ in the text; in his opinion, majority of scholars equate this idea with God’s choice of Bulgarians, when there is nothing in the text what indicates, that its author intends to point out suffering of the Bulgarians, which could set the other inhabitants of the world free from their sins and fallen nature.

Emphasizing the presence of Bible texts tradition in medieval history, in history of medieval Slavonic literature, using prosopography for describing characters acting in the text, interpretation of sources and meanings of

a literary text leads to quit the ‘national’ understanding of the Bulgarian Apocryphal Chronicle and makes it an evidence of significance of the Byzantine-Slavonic Commonwealth. One of the Tale’s reviewers defined it as a crucial text – from historical and historiographical point of view; as a text beginning a new era of Bulgarian historical thought. Maybe this opinion shall convince the up-to-now unconvinced ones to get acquainted with this valuable monograph.

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3 А.И. Яцымирский, Славянская и русская рукописи румынских библиотек, СБОРЯС 79, 1905, p. 479.
4 А. Риго, op. cit., p. 488.