



**A Novel Comparative Study of the Dating of Bulgarian Parchment Manuscripts**

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There is an ongoing scientific debate on the exact time and speed of replacement of parchment with paper. The opinions of researchers form three groups: the first one based on Sobolevskij views claims that paper completely replaced parchment as early as in 14<sup>th</sup> century; the second one suggested by Hunter is that parchment was still widely used during the 15<sup>th</sup> century; and the third group suggests that the parchment was still in use in the 16<sup>th</sup> century. The wider spread of catalogues of manuscripts in digital form make it possible to study on a comparative basis the European collections of manuscripts. We will present in the paper a statistical study based on the data within an electronic catalogue of manuscripts including 823 Bulgarian manuscripts currently stored in Bulgaria. We continue our research with collections of manuscripts from the Delorez's Codicology, manuscripts in Dubrovnik archives and in the Bodleian and British libraries. This study as anticipated is based on the dating in the catalogues. Our basic conclusion is that while there is rare evidence of any Bulgarian parchment manuscripts dated after 1350, this is in controversy with manuscript collections from libraries in Central and Western Europe.

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