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The Notion of the Jews in Medieval Bulgaria

(Summary)

The study researches the character and the development of the notion of the Bulgarian Jews in the medieval Bulgarian society. The factors, that have had a great influence on its genesis, are also explained. Amongst those factors, for example, stand out the traditional prejudices about the Jewish society, formed in the Ancient; the earliest connections between proto- Bulgarians and Jews in the lands of Great Bulgaria; as well as the strong anti-jewish propaganda led by the church after the entire Latin Empire conversed to Christianity. Relying on various historical sources, the image of the Jews is reviewed in two main courses. On the first hand, the theoretical aspect, which results from the stereotypical characteristics of the spirit and the behavior of the Jewish society, forced by the New Testament. This is a dogmatic belief, adopted by the Bulgarians after the Conversion to Christianity carried out by prince Boris I. The negative characteristics predominate in this idea, despite the different shades, that can be pointed out in some proto-Bulgarian MS books. On the other hand, the study particularly stresses on the problem how this dogma influences the everyday intercourse between Bulgarians and Jews. It also analyses particular historical events and facts from the cultural history of medieval Bulgaria, showing the governments attitude to the Jews. Some aspects are mentioned, concerning the state of the Jews after Bulgaria falls under the Ottoman Empire. It is ascertained that during the centuries of foreign domination, the notion of the Jews does not change in any significant way in the minds of the Bulgarians.