

**Preservation of Soul and Spirit:  
The Role of Bulgarian Monasteries in the Preservation of Culture**

**Objectives:**

- A. The student will be able to explain the function of monasteries.**
- B. The student will be able to identify the geographic location of significant Bulgarian monasteries.**
- C. The student will be able to describe the contributions of Bulgarian monasteries.**

## Overview

The context for this curriculum unit could be in conjunction with such topics as medieval life in World History; Comparative Religion; or European studies in Global Studies. In World Geography, this unit could be used as a supplement to European studies; a stand-alone unit on the role of geography in creating sacred spaces, or perhaps an introduction to the connections between geography

and culture. Depending on the course and make-up of the class, I would recommend introducing this topic by discussing monastic life. For that reason, included in this unit is a brief overview of monasticism. References for this section are found at the conclusion.

## Procedure

- 1) Students will locate Bulgaria on a world map and identify its borders.
- 2) Students will read Handouts 1-4 then discuss the accompanying questions.
- 3) Students will locate and mark the following monasteries on their maps of Bulgaria:  
Rila, Bachovo, Troyen.

## Extension

As a culminating activity, students can brainstorm about what parts of their culture they would try to save, if threatened by cultural extinction. Help students to identify their culture(s) by asking questions about traditions, language(s), music, dance, etc. Students could then compile cultural narratives.

For example, would certain works of literature be important to save? Which ones? How would students choose? How would students save these works?



## Handout 1

### **Monastic Life**

What are monasteries? Why do they exist? Who lives there?

Some students may think first of Roman Catholic monks, dressed in robes, perhaps copying manuscripts, and living in tiny rooms. This is partly true, yet there are monks (who are males) and nuns (who are females) living the monastic life as Orthodox Christians, Buddhists, Hindus, and other religious beliefs. In the United States, for example, there are currently hundreds of active monasteries.

The earliest recorded accounts of monastic life are *ashrams*, where groups of Hindu monks lived and worked. These ashrams date from 600 200 BCE, preceding the advent of Buddhism. (1)

Monasticism is defined as an institutionalized religious movement whose members attempt to practice works that are above and beyond those required of both the laity and the spiritual leadership of their religions. The Christian monastic practice began in the deserts of Egypt and is best represented by the hermit, St. Anthony of Egypt, who organized his followers early in the 3rd century, CE. He gathered hermits into loosely-knit communities and exercised a certain authority over them. These hermits came to be known as the Desert Fathers (2) St. Anthony's biographer, Athanasius, writes of the pattern of the saint's life: a withdrawal in order to return---a monk must first withdraw, and in silence must learn the truth about himself and God. Then, after this rigorous preparation...he can open the door of his cell and admit the world. (3)

It was St. Basil the Great (330-379) who made service to society, rather than just isolation from it, a part of monastic life. He advocated opening hospitals, serving the poor and uneducated. Also during this time, the practice of having an abbot or abbess as head of the community was developed. St Basil is justly recognized as the father of Eastern communal monasticism. As Christianity spread, so did the monastic life. From the Byzantine empire in the 4<sup>th</sup> through 7<sup>th</sup> centuries CE, to Kiev and Moscow, by 1354, monasteries were established.(4) It is interesting to note that organized monastic life moved more slowly westward into Europe. Truly, monastic life originated and flourished in the east, though many people tend to associate monasteries with western Europe.

Notes:

(1) Encyclopaedia Britannica: *monasticism*

(2) Dictionary of Saints: Donald Attwater

(3) The Orthodox Church: Timothy Ware

(4) Encyclopaedia Britannica: *monasticism*

## Discussion

- 1) Where was the earliest Christian monastery?
- 2) Who was St. Basil the Great? What is his significance?
- 3) Why do monasteries exist?
- 4) Is monasticism still a choice for religious people today?

## **Handout 2**

### **Bulgarian Orthodox Church History**

The extensive history of Bulgaria might have been foreshortened and unavailable had it not been for the work of Bulgarian Orthodox monks and nuns of the medieval period. A synopsis of Bulgarian ecclesiastical history is necessary to fully appreciate the contributions of the monasteries:

Christianity entered the Balkan Peninsula as early as in the time of the apostles, mainly due to the work of the Apostle Paul. After the formation of the Bulgarian State (AD 681) Christianity continued to gain ground among the local population. Bulgaria's relationships with Byzantine Empire had a major role in this process, as well as the usage of Greek in Bulgaria, the exchange of captives, etc. Seeking to achieve stability within the country (by uniting Slavs and Bulgarians) as well as recognition from the other Christian European countries, and lead by his personal faith in the truthfulness of Christianity, Bulgarian king Boris (852-889) in 864 adopted Christianity from the Byzantine Empire. Shortly afterwards the whole of Bulgaria was christened.

This political act marked a new beginning in the history of the Bulgarian people. King Boris did a lot to strengthen the positions of Christianity within the borders of Bulgaria. What is more, he sought not only autonomy for the Bulgarian church, but independence too, even though he knew he would not obtain it. Being an extraordinary diplomat, he tried to secure autonomy for the Bulgarian church through negotiations with the two established cultural and religious centres at the time - Rome and Constantinople. Subsequently, on the fourth of March 870, in the final days of the church council in Constantinople, attended also by representatives of the Roman church, the Bulgarian

church was officially acknowledged as autonomous, ranked eighth among the eastern churches.(2)

**Handout 2 Questions:**

- 1) What reasons did King Boris have for adopting Christianity?**
- 2) How did the people of the Balkan Peninsula know of Christianity?**

## The Ottoman Occupation

### **From Outline of Bulgarian History**

*-Dimiter Markovski*

On the eve of the Ottoman occupation, the population of Bulgaria split into two kingdoms and two independent feudal areas, numbered, according to rough estimates, about 2,500,000 people. It is assumed that immediately after the establishment of Ottoman power it was reduced by half - some part of the Bulgarians perished in the course of the war, others were taken captive and sold in slavery. From the fifteenth to the eighteenth century the Bulgarian population, which was composed primarily of peasants, was placed in the conditions of feudal oppression much graver than in previous times. The land was regarded as the property of the supreme ruler, the Sultan, who distributed it among his subordinate administrators (judges), war veterans and servicemen of the reserve, and to the so-called spahi - regular servicemen all of whom were granted the rights of feudal landowners for life.

Prime importance was accorded to Islam (the word means obedience, submissiveness) - to that last offshoot of monotheism which had become a world religion. The Ottomans claimed that it was they who spread the pure, orthodox so-called Sunni Islam contrary to the Shiite branch of Islam which had established itself in Iran. As the Soviet scholar of Ottoman Turkey M. S. Mayer points out, the sultans "devoted a great deal of attention to the spreading of the Muslim religion in the newly conquered European territories, both by forcible Islamization of the population and by creating numerous faith-propagating centres (imarets) on the basis of vakif property." The aim was to inculcate obedience and submissiveness to the supreme authority, given the existing economic fragmentation and ethnic and religious diversity of the subjects in the Empire.

In any case, the Ottoman state developed best those of its functions which most helped plunder the population. The heaviest tax collected by the state from the non-Muslim people was the poll-tax (*ciziyе*). Every non-Muslim from the age of 15 to 75 had to pay only for figuring in the lists of the Sultan's subjects (such lists were made once in 30 years). According to a 1736 decree, the wealthier Christians paid 10 grosh each, the middling ones - 5 grosh and the poorer ones - 2.5 grosh (one grosh at that time bought 13 loaves of bread of 750 g each).

In addition to this economic pressure, there were regular campaigns of Islamizing the Bulgarian people by force, especially in the Rhodopes and in Northern Bulgaria. A particularly cruel form of oppression was the blood tax (*devsirme*), levied periodically from the 15th to the 18th century. The Bulgarian families were forced to give up their

best male children who were then Turkified and educated in exceptional Muslim fanaticism.

Under these conditions, the Bulgarians found refuge - particularly in the initial centuries of Ottoman domination-in their traditional commune and also in the local cloister, newly-built or remaining from the past age. Although their state had been abolished and they themselves were reduced to living in primitive conditions, the Bulgarians succeeded in preserving themselves as a nationality. The more stouthearted resorted to armed resistance, fleeing into the mountains. From acts of personal revenge, the haidout movement of rebels became a means of collective self-defense. There were also periodic rebellions and insurrections.

**Questions:**

- 1) What was the purpose of the *devisirme*?**
- 2) Besides the financial oppression, how else did the Ottomans make the Bulgarians suffer?**

## Handout 5

### The Church under Ottoman Oppression

from *History of Bulgarian Orthodox Church*

At the end of the 14th century the Bulgarian people lost its political and spiritual independence. The hard condition of this double subjugation hampered their cultural and political development. The suppression, the merciless exploitation and the atrocities compelled thousands of Bulgarians, along with the majority of the intelligentsia who survived, to emigrate to Wallachia, Moldavia, Russia, Serbia and Austria. Mass-scale emigration of Bulgarians from their motherland were frequent after the uprising, and after each one of the Russo-Turkish Wars.

Many people were converted to Islam by force, banned from their home and killed by the Ottoman oppressors. Thus for instance, by order of the Grand Vizier Mehmed Kuprulu the Chepino Bulgarians were Mohammedanized in 1657. Methody Draginov, a priest of the village of Korova, informs that those who refused to accept Islam were killed, while the houses of those who fled to the woods were burnt down. In the 16th and 17th centuries many Bulgarians from the districts of Lovech, Teteven, Svishtov, Nikopol and Turnovo were Mohammedanized in the same way. The Deliorman region, which in the 16th century was still Bulgarian, after the 17th century acquired a Mohammedan aspect through colonization and forceful conversion of the Christian population to the Islam. Thus the Christians merged with the dense Ottoman masses and lost their native language. During the 17th century many other Bulgarians from Razlog, Kroupnik, and from the valley of the River Bregalnitsa suffered a similar fate. In the 18th century the population of the villages of Turnovti and Cherkovna in the Preslav District was also Mohammedanized. Part of the Mohammedanized Bulgarians lost forever their national consciousness and their native language. Another part, the so-called Pomaks or Bulgarian-Mohammedans, preserved their native Bulgarian language and customs, but lost for centuries the consciousness of being part of the Bulgarian people.

The conquerors did not spare even the Christian sanctuaries and the cultural monuments. In Turnovo the Patriarchal Cathedral church of the Holy Ascension and the St. Petka Court Church were destroyed. The conquerors of Turnovo razed to the ground 18 Boyar churches at the Trapesitsa Hill. The Church of the 40 Holy Martyrs was turned into a mosque, while the Church of the Holy Virgin in Turnovo was reconstructed as a Turkish bath. In the Plovdiv diocese Chepino Pomaks destroyed 218 churches and 33

monasteries. In the town of Vidin the Cathedral Church of the Holy Virgin was destroyed. Many Churches in various parts of the country were turned into mosques.

The blow dealt to the Bulgarian church organization was also a heavy one, since it was made subordinate to the Patriarchate of Constantinople. The Greek clergy pursued an assimilatory policy. At the beginning the high Bulgarian clerics were replaced by Greek ones, who officiated the churches and celebrated mass in the Greek language, of which the Bulgarian population was completely ignorant. They opened Greek schools which conducted assimilatory activities. Such schools were organized in Turnovo, Svishtov, Kotel, Sliven, Plovdiv, Andrianople, Strouga, Bitolya, Voden, Stroumitsa, Melnik, Seres and other towns.

The Ottoman conquerors granted extensive civic and judicial rights to the Patriarch of Constantinople. He became a high-ranking officer of the Sultan and the head of all Orthodox Christians in the Ottoman Empire. Civic and judicial functions were also granted to the diocesan metropolitans, mostly of Greek origin, who imposed on the Bulgarian population heavy taxes which they collected by force with the help of the local authorities.

The tormented Bulgarian people were eager to have their own independent church and to enjoy political freedom for which they fought with might and main. During this hard time the Church proved to be the staunchest defender of the faith of the ancestors, the protector of the national spirit and the propagator of patriotism. Among those who took part in the first Turnovo uprising, organized in 1598, were some high church dignitaries such as Metropolitan Dionissy of Turnovo and the bishops Theophan of Lovech, Jeremiah of Rouse, Spiridon of Shoumen and Methody of Roman (of Thracia), as well as 23 priests from Nikopol and 12 priests from Turnovo.

In the second half of the 16th century Archbishop Athanassy of Ohrid was prominent as an organizer of the liberation movement. During the 17th century the Roman Catholic Priest Peter Parchevich organized an uprising against the Ottoman authorities. In 1737 Metropolitan Simeon of Samokov was hanged for his patriotic activities. The Church gave quite a numbers of martyrs for faith and kin. Stunning are the feats of St. Georgi of Kratovo (+1515), St. Nikolay of Sofia (+1515), Bishop Vissarion of Smolen (+1670), Damaskin of Gabrovo (+1771), St. Zlata of Muglen (+1795), St. John the Bulgarian (+1814), St. Ignaty of Stara Zagora (+1814), St. Onouphry of Gabrovo (+1818) and of many others.

Handout 5 Questions:

- 1) How was the Bulgarian language under attack during this time? Give examples.
- 2) What administrative actions did the Ottomans take to destroy the Bulgarian church?

3) How did the Bulgarian church resist the Ottoman oppression? Give examples.

## **Handout 6**

### **Contributions of the Bulgarian Monasteries: Part 1**

#### **Stronghold of the Bulgarian Spirit**

"Worth are for us the Bulgarian monasteries, reputable relics of the strongholds in which the Bulgarian spirit was kept living, for a long time being the bequest of the fathers' testament and aeries from which the eaglets flew away to proclaim the dawn of the Bulgarian Revival. They are the lively and moving history of an epoch, so glorious and so dismal."

- *Ivan Vasov, Bulgarian poet, 1850-1921 (1)*

#### **from the Papal Address to Orthodox clergy at the Rila Monastery , May 26, 2002:**

Dearest Brothers and Sisters, all the Orthodox Churches know how much the monasteries are a priceless heritage of their faith and culture. What would Bulgaria be without the Monastery of Rila, which in the darkest periods of your national history kept the flame of faith burning?

- *Pope John Paul II*

The monasteries played a great part in the preservation of the Orthodox faith and the national consciousness of the Bulgarian people during the years of foreign domination. Scattered all over the Bulgarian lands, the monasteries satisfied the religious demands of the people in the place, where there were neither churches, nor priest. They preserved the Christian and national consciousness, they taught the population how to write and read in their schools, they trained the future priests, propagated piety and carried out literary and education activities. This was true especially of the monasteries of Zograph and of Hilendar on Mt. Athos, of the Rila Monastery, the Troyan, Etropole, Dryanovo and Cherepish Monasteries, as well as of the Kouklen Monastery near Assenovgrad, the Lessnovo, Glozhene, Dragalevtsi and other monasteries. Famous scholars of that epoch were Vladislav Grammatik (15th century), Dimiter Kantakouzin (15th century), Father Peyo (16th century), Mathey Grammatik (16th century), Father Todor of Vratsa (18th century) and others.

Besides them, traveling monks (*taxidiotes*) toured the country, opened cell schools, taught the illiterate people how to read and write, and carried out educative activities. They were the predecessors of the Bulgarian National Revival. An untiring *taxidiote* and scholar was Yossif Bradati (Joseph the Bearded) (18th century). During the yoke, primary school attached to churches and monasteries were opened in Tryavna, Elena, Vratsa, Gabrovo, Sofia, Plovdiv, Pirot, Skopie, Samokov, Kalofer, Sopot, Koprivshtitsa, in the villages in the Strandja Mountain and elsewhere.

A series of uprisings against the oppressors were organized in the monasteries. The first ardent call for a national awakening came also from a monastery. St. Paisy of Hilendar (second half of the 18th century) was the first who headed the Bulgarian National Revival. The program for an independent church and political freedom was outlined in his "Slav-Bulgarian History". This wonderful book attracted other active workers for a national awakening. Among the followers of St. Paisy were the following clergymen: St. Sophrony of Vratsa (1739-1813), hieromonk Spiridon of Gabrovo (18th century), hieromonk Yoakim Kurchovski (+1820), hieromonk Kiril Peichinovich (+1845) and others. The power of resistance of the people was stirred to action. A struggle for religious and national independence began, which brought about the Third Bulgarian Kingdom.

### **Handout 6 Questions:**

- 1) What role did traveling priests play in preserving education? What was their link to monasteries?
- 2) What role did the monasteries play in the uprisings?

## Handout 7

### Contributions of the Bulgarian Monasteries: Part 2

Literacy and cultural identity were under siege during the Ottoman domination of Bulgaria: “the conquest had been a cultural as well as a political disaster for the Bulgarian nation. Not only did the state disappear and the church fall subject to the domination of Constantinople, but Bulgarian language and literature seemed also to die. Bulgarian had once ranked with Greek, Latin and Arabic as the major tongues of the civilised European world, and it had produced a flourishing literature of secular as well as sacred works...yet the language remained alive ...and eventually its literature was to be reborn.” (1) How was this done? The historian R.J.Crampton credits the traditional Bulgarian village and the church: “the festivals and holidays which the small Bulgarian villages preserved were primarily religious and the church’s role in keeping alive a separate sense of ‘Bulgardom’ was critical.” Though only the Ohrid Patriarchate remained in the control of the Bulgarian church, “at the parish level, many Bulgarian priests were still nominated and at least until the eighteenth century the liturgy was still held in Bulgarian...”(2) The relationship between the Bulgarian and Greek Patriarchate produced refuges for Bulgarian writers, Slav schools on Mount Athos, and the continuation of education for Bulgarian children. Thus it was that monks, trained on Mount Athos, came back to Bulgaria to link monasteries and villages through the schools which they founded. These schools helped keep literacy alive during the Turkish occupation. They also “facilitated the merging of the old Bulgarian language with more vernacular usages, a process which produced in the seventeenth century...*new Bulgarian*.”(3)

Finally, according to Crampton, “what the monasteries and the scriptoria did was to preserve that basic sense of ethnic separateness without which a national revival would have been impossible.” (4) This was accomplished in large part by the fact that “monks copied old hagiographies...which gave great prominence to Bulgarian saints and martyrs...”(5)

(1) A Concise History of Bulgaria by R.J. Crampton

(2) *ibid.*

(3) *ibid.*

(4) *ibid.*

(5) *ibid.*

### Handout 7 Questions:

1) Give 3 examples of the complex relationship between the Greek and Bulgarian churches during the Ottoman oppression.

### **Handout 3**

### **The Monastic Tradition in Bulgaria**

When the Christian monastic community emerged as a spiritual vanguard of the new Christian world, it was as early as the 4th - 5th century that monasteries began to be built in the Bulgarian lands. Written documents and archaeological excavations from that time testify to the existence of several dozen monasteries raised on territories that would later be inhabited by Bulgarian people. The adoption of Christianity as a state religion in 865 gave new scope to monastery building. The excavations in the old Bulgarian capitals of Pliska and Preslav are convincing proof of the fact that it was in the monastery complexes that the new Christian culture in Bulgaria came into being. From the very beginning the monastic community was called upon to fight for the establishment of a coherent ethnic structure by joining the Proto-Bulgarian and Slav population to common rites and religious traditions, thus creating and developing an all-Bulgarian culture.

After the adoption of Christianity in the second half of the 9th century the monasteries built near Pliska and Preslav, bearing similarities to the Byzantine ones, carried out, apart from their church-and-ritual functions, broad cultural, educational and economic activities. There appeared art studios for ceramic icons, scriptoria in which liturgical books were translated into Slavonic, new literary works were created, literary miscellanies were compiled which satisfied the necessity of propagating and consolidating the new religion. At that time the monasteries near Preslav gave shelter to such prominent men of letters as Chernorizets Hrabr and Exarch Yosif, who created works of extreme cultural and historical value, thus marking the so-called Golden Age of Bulgarian literature.

The creative activities carried out in the Preslav monasteries gave a strong impetus to the development of fine arts. In the 9th-10th century art studios were set up in some of the monasteries where they painted glazed ceramic icons and decorative canvases. The Preslav ceramic icons are not just unique pieces of the art of painting in the Balkan Peninsula; they are the earliest Slav icons ever to have been painted.

In the 13th and 14th century scriptural and art studios were set up in the Great Laura of the Forty Holy Martyrs, in the patriarchal monastery of the Trinity, and in the Kilifarevo and Preobrazhenie monasteries where books were decorated and murals and icons were painted. The remains and the magnificent monumental decoration in the monastery churches of the Forty Holy Martyrs, of St Demetrius and in the old Preobrazhenie monastery, in the churches of Tsarevets and Trapezitsa, in the Ivanovo and Cherven rock monasteries illuminate the scope and high merits of the famous Turnovo school of painting. The ensembles of mural paintings in the mediaeval monasteries of Rila, Zemen and Bachkovo, remarkable for their high artistic value, have left a milestone along the road of Bulgaria's cultural progress. The Great Laura of the Forty Holy Martyrs, the Batoshevo and Zemen monasteries, and the Boyana Church have preserved commemorative inscriptions of extreme historical significance for Bulgaria.

The traditions that had been established in the field of construction and fine arts were carried on in the 17th and the early 18th century. A number of buildings and monumental decorations which arouse interest today go back to those days - the Karloukovo Monastery (1602); the Alino Monastery (1626), the Belino, Trun, Malomalovo and Bachkovo monasteries (1643), the Rozhen Monastery (1662), the Arbanassi Monastery, as well as others.

During the Ottoman domination (15th -19th century), and particularly during the period of the National Revival (18th-19th century), the monastic communities acquired a key role in

Bulgaria's public life as the monasteries turned into animated sociopolitical and artistic centres and a field of spiritual and material expression of the reviving Bulgarian nation. Of great importance in those days were the Rila, Etropole and Dragalevtsi monasteries. (1)

(1) [www.bulgaria.com](http://www.bulgaria.com)

## **Handout 8**

### **The Monasteries of Bulgaria**

There are 160 Orthodox monasteries in Bulgaria today. The two monasteries described below are considered the most significant and are the most visited sites.

#### **Bachkovo Monastery**

Bachkovski Monastery is located 29 km south of Plovdiv, 11 km south of Asenovgrad in the Chaya river valley, in the foothills of the scenic Rhodope mountains. Bachkovski Monastery was founded in 1083 A.D. by brothers Grigorii and Abbassi Bakouriani, Georgians by nationality. It was destroyed by the Turks in the 15th century. The monastery was restored at the beginning of the 17th century

Bachkovski Monastery ranks second only after the Rila Monastery both with regard to size, and to architectural, artistic and literary significance. During the Turkish occupation, the monasteries were the strongholds in which the Bulgarian spirit was kept alive.

(1) Richard Zastrow <http://www.abvg.net>

#### **Rila Monastery**

The Rila Monastery is situated in Southwestern Bulgaria, 117 km away from Sofia and 40 km away from Blagoevgrad. Rising at 1147 m above sea level, it lies amidst some of the most scenic recesses of the Rila Mountains, to which the monastery owes its name. On either side the swift and clear flowing rivers of Rilska and Drushlyavitsa flank it. The Malyovitsa peak, reaching a height of 2729 m, is within four hours walking distance.

John of Rila founded the monastery in the 10th century as a colony of hermits. Later it became one of the centers of early medieval culture. Over time it has been destroyed by fire, pillaged, and abandoned by the monks, but it remains a truly spectacular place. The largest and best-known of Bulgaria's monasteries, famed for its architecture and mountainous setting, Rila receives a steady stream of visitors. The single road to the Rila Monastery runs above the foaming River Rilska, fed by innumerable springs from the surrounding mountains, which are covered with pine and beech trees beneath peaks flecked with snow. Even today there's a palpable sense of isolation, and it's easy to see why Ivan Rilski – or John of Rila – chose this valley to escape the savagery of feudal life and the laxity of the established monasteries at the end of the ninth century. The majestic Rila Monastery is one of nine Bulgarian sites included on the UNESCO List of World Heritage.

(2) All Bulgaria Virtual Guide

## Useful Websites for exploring Bulgarian spirituality and history

<http://www.digsys.bg/books/history/>

<http://www.katolsk.no/nyheter/2002/05/27-0027.htm>

<http://www.bulgaria.com/index.html>

<http://www.bulgariana.com/>

<http://www.focus-fen.net/>

<http://www.kutriguri.com/index.html>

<http://tangra.bitex.com/eng/foundation.htm>

<http://www.bok.at/en/geschichte.htm>

<http://www.kolumbus.fi/boykor/church.htm>

<http://www.faculty.de.gcsu.edu/~dvess/ids/medieval/eastmon.html>

<http://members.tripod.com/~zlatnite/Paisiy.htm>

<http://www.orthodoxinfo.com/>

[http://www.plovdivcityguide.com/?lang\\_id=1](http://www.plovdivcityguide.com/?lang_id=1)

<http://www.roca.org/OA/75/75g.htm>

<http://www.pensoft.net/>

<http://bulch.tripod.com/boc/mainpage.htm>

<http://www.bulgaria-italia.com/bg/info/monasteri/default.asp>

<http://www.omda.bg/engl/common/history.htm>

<http://www.mythinglinks.org/euro~east~balkans~bulgaria2.html>

<http://www.orthodoxinfo.com/images/bulgaria/index.htm>

<http://www.abvg.net/Monasteries/index.html>

<http://www.studentholidays.com/bg/bg10.htm>