Review

 of N. Dyulgerov for acquiring ass. Professor title

The numerous documents required for the competition are accurately and carefully drawn up or filled out. I say this as someone who gets tired of doing things like this, and when they're done right, I have real respect for the person who made it happen.

According to the announced competition, Dr. Dyulgerov appeared with three monographs and four articles, although the list of all his publications is much larger. It must be accompanied by textbooks, teaching aids and maps, which the candidate has scrupulously produced, most often in co-authorship with other colleagues. It was surprising to me that Dr. Dyulgerov was a participant or director of so many scientific projects (I say this again as someone who is not good at such endeavors). In any case, it shows that the candidate is well integrated into the scientific community both at the university and more generally. But let's return to the works that Dr. Dyulgerov himself indicated for participation in the competition.

It is remarkable that the three monographs were published in the last three years. Detractors would say that this was done because of the announcement of the contest. A closer look into the matter, however, shows that this was done after the candidate had accumulated enough material both in his "narrow subject" and from the teaching of medieval general history - an infinitely interesting discipline which, for some reason, is still regarded here as exotic. I will begin my exposition by the years of publication of the individual monographs.

The first monograph was published by the university publishing house and was entitled "The Angevin dominions in the Balkans (XIII-XIV centuries)". In it, the author reveals the political ideology of Charles d'Anjou, his ambitions in Italy and the Balkans, his successes and failures. In general, Dr. Dyulgerov follows a moderate line in evaluating the patron's achievements. As the biggest mistake in his management of such divergent lands, the candidate points out his desire to unify the system of management (the preserved specifics are too few, but Dr. Dylgerov pays special attention to them), thereby entering into an irresolvable contradiction with the principle of conquest. And it is to introduce as few changes as possible in the newly acquired lands. Attention is also paid to some common features in the governance of the Balkan territories: the presence of their immediate rulers, governance through deputies, the participation of local leaders in the administration, the presence of mercenary troops and commanders, etc. The specifics to which attention is drawn concern the Kingdom of Albania, Epirus and the Principality of the Morea. After the Sicilian Vespers, the importance of these "overseas territories" decreased and they became subject to exchange and purchase and sale. The remaining independent rulers are looking for new patrons.

Peculiarities in the development of the Albanian lands and Epirus are sought in the absence of a developed hierarchy in the former, the patriarchal way of life of the population and the limited territory. The population of Epirus, for its part, has long been accustomed to the feudal system, which appeared and developed even before the arrival of the knights-crusaders. And a small but significant contribution of the author. He is of the opinion that the center of the Achaean principality in the 14th century was not Andravita, as is commonly believed, but Clarenitsa.

The second monograph published by the Millennium Publishing House is entitled The Wars of Charlemagne. In it, Dr. Dyulgerov moves away from his traditional topic and ventures into the wilds of general medieval history. For her, a favorite topic since the birth of the discipline is the rule of Charlemagne (Charles) the Great. The monograph focuses on some little-known things, such as the campaigns against the Bretons, Benevento, Bavaria, the wars with the Slavs, the Vikings and in Istria. Attention is paid to both victories and failures, with which Dr. Dyulgerov shows that he strictly adheres to a balanced approach to the objects of research, regardless of who they are.

Since it is about wars, the military organization in Charlemagne's state is considered in some detail. It starts with the benefit reform of its predecessor and comes to the gambling-social principle of recruitment combined with geographical features. Here the author uses a new term, "social gambling". The role of the "engineering" units in the army, later successfully used by the Mongols, is particularly emphasized. Attention is paid to some "modern" techniques of fighting, such as pinning, used repeatedly in the wars of this remarkable ruler. In this, not only the "human factor" comes into play, but also other side factors, such as the disease of Avar horses during Karl's Avar campaigns. However, the author did not prove something that has long been known from scientific literature and sources: that the Bulgarian ruler took advantage of the demise of the Avar Khaganate to annex its eastern part to his state. I like the fact that Dr. Dyulgerov emphasized the role of the economic factor. The wars did not lead to exhaustion and did not adversely affect the economy of Charlemagne's state.

The candidate's third, most recent monograph is relatively close to his traditional pursuits. It is dedicated to "The Western model of governance in the Aegean - Franks and Venetians XIII-XV centuries". It is published by a university publishing house. The author distinguishes two types of government - "feudal" and "Italian" (Venetian) in the lands of former Byzantium. He advocates the thesis that the manifestations of succession between the emperors and the basileuses are much less than advertised officially. Dr. Dyulgerov uses three "case studies" in his analysis: the central apparatus of the Constantinople Empire, the Principality of Achaea, and the Venetian possessions in Achaea. Episodically, it sneaks into the island of Corfu, which, by the way, has also been under Venetian rule since 1386. The author reveals why free cities did not arise in the empire, while a strong urban class was created in the Morea. However, free cities were not created, and the reason for this must be sought in the control of Venice through her appointed officials and periodic inspections. It should be noted that the great weakness of the Byzantine model of government was the lack of free cities of the communal type. The presence of parliaments in the Venetian and in the imperial domains (despite the conventionality of this concept) have their own specifics, to which the candidate has paid due attention. The military forces of the units that make up "Romania" also deserve attention: navy and land forces. In Achaia, the feudal principle prevailed (apparently, according to the author), which was gradually replaced by a mercenary army. In the empire, mercenaries appeared and strengthened much earlier - from the first decade of its existence. The author disputes the popular thesis that in Achaia the recruitment system was feudal. In fact, it is reflected as such in the various versions of the Moray Chronicle. In Venetian Crete, however, military duty was more like pronia. As for the integration of the local population, the author agrees with the thesis of the Russian author Karpov that it was strongest in the Achaean Principality: hence its longevity.

From the numerous articles and studies written by Dr. Dyulgerov, he chose four for participation in the competition: either because of their quality, or because they were published in authoritative publications. However, this does not apply to the article "Establishment of Venetian power from the island of Crete", as it was published in Kyustendilski chetenia, and they, as is well known, are not the most authoritative of the periodicals in Bulgaria. Whatever!

The first article is devoted to the fate of Boniface de Montferra and his actions in the Balkans. The actions and motives of this large feudal lord in the Fourth Crusade are examined in detail. The diversion of the march to the Byzantine capital is seen as the result of the actions of the Angeli family. The conflict between Baudouin and Boniface regarding the election of a Latin emperor and the role of the Doge of Venice in overcoming it are examined. B. Ferjancic's thesis that Boniface de Montferra does not have a royal title is supported.

The other development is devoted to the status of the Principality of Morea (Achaea) at the beginning of the 13th century. The theses on the position of the Morea ruler after the capture of Constantinople were examined. The author justifies why after 1209 he was a double vassal to both the Latin emperor and Venice. According to the author, the oath before the emperor takes precedence.

Another article has as its object of research the establishment of Venetian power on the island of Crete. It begins with the status of the island, emphasizing its geographical location, demographic potential and wealth. Attention is drawn to little-known details of the acquisition of the island by the Serene One. It was not simply obtained as a result of a small sale but was the subject of a secret agreement between the Doge and Boniface de Montferrat, including additional financial terms and obligations for military aid. The article deals in detail with the difficulties in acquiring the island and the resistance of its inhabitants to Venice's attempts to take it.

The last article is devoted to the Walloon Principality and its relations with Venice during its relatively long existence. I do not agree with the author's statement in the summaries that this is the first presentation in Bulgaria of the principality in its historical path. Similar attempts were made long before that. It begins with the desire of the despot John Comnenus Assen, brother of the Bulgarian king, to support Simeon Uros Palaiologus (according to the author, this is vassalage) and reaches around 1417 with attempts to acquire a Venetian protectorate over Valona (Vlora). Otherwise, our tiny principality could resist the rising Ottoman state.

I deliberately avoid dwelling on the numerous participations in projects and other articles that the author himself did not consider necessary to add to the research on the competition.

The candidate for associate professor works in a discipline that is not very typical of a Bulgarian historian. It exhibits a clear thought, a concise exposition, and clear theses, which suggest a clearness of knowledge in a matter on which the most famous representatives of European and non-European thought have worked during the last two centuries. I am not very sure that Dr. Dyulgerov has managed to cover the vast literature on the issues he discusses. One thing is certain: an inspired Bulgarian scientist is born, who has the necessary knowledge to measure up to his European and American colleagues. He has found his niche: it is the Western world in its interaction with the Balkan reality. One of his monographs, however, suggests that he broke out of this problematic circle and confidently turned to other topics repeatedly discussed in Western scholarship on the Middle Ages. We wish him success in this endeavour!

The competition papers are not a place where one should show monastic humility. He should highlight his contributions and the smallest detail. However, the use of expressions such as "for the first time in Bulgaria" or direct polemics with colleagues from other countries made an unpleasant impression on me. This is my opinion, but I feel that bragging should come from the outside, not from the affected party.

Otherwise, Dr. Nikola Dyulgerov fully deserved to be awarded the scientific and educational title "docent". I will confidently vote for his habilitation in the hope that after it he will continue to be an inspired researcher of medieval phenomena in their many facets.

​Sofia

23. 11.2023 Prof. Christo Matanov