# O P I N I O N

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on the competition for the academic position of *Associate Professor*

in the Professional field 2.2. History and Archeology (History and Culture of the Balkans in the 15th–17th Centuries), announced by Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski"
(State Gazette, issue 5 of 17.01.2025)

In the announced competition for the academic position of "Associate Professor" for the needs of the Centre for Slavo-Byzantine Studies "Prof. Ivan Dujčev" at Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski" as a candidate participates Assistant Professor Svetozar Simeonov Angelov, PhD.

Svetozar Angelov has a master's degree in history from Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski" in 1999, and during the period 2005–2008 he was a full-time PhD student at the Centre for Slavo-Byzantine Studies "Prof. Ivan Dujčev". In 2009, he successfully defended his PhD thesis on the topic: "Monumental Painting in Western Bulgaria in the 16th Century (Sofia and Kyustendil Region) – Conservatism and Innovation" and obtained the educational and scientific degree PhD in "Art History and Fine Arts". From 2000 until now S. Angelov has been working at the Centre for Slavo-Byzantine Studies "Prof. Ivan Dujčev" at Sofia University as an Inspector, Inspector of publishing programs, Assistant and since 2011 - as Assistant Professor. His research publications includes 2 monographs (one of which is co-authored) and 23 studies and articles (two of which are referenced in international databases).

S. Angelov's research interest is concentrated in several areas. The main direction covers the problem of the formation of Kyustendil as a spiritual Christian center and the historical development of the church and monastery network in the city and the region. The habilitation thesis "Kyustendil as a spiritual Christian center through the centuries. The Metropolitan Church of the Assumption of the Virgin Mary" (Sofia, 2025) submitted by S. Angelov for the purposes of this competition is dedicated to this topic.

The presented habilitation thesis has two main goals: 1) to make a synthesized overview of the history of the town of Kyustendil as a spiritual Christian center throughout the centuries; 2) to mace a comprehensive study of the Metropolitan Church of the Assumption of the Virgin Mary. To achieve these goals, various sources have been used: materials from archaeological researches and epigraphic monuments; documents of the various church institutions (such as the Patriarchate of Peć and the Patriarchate of Constantinople), under whose jurisdiction the Kyustendil diocese was located during various periods; documents from the Ottoman chancellery; church codices, etc. Some of these sources have been included in scientific circulation for the first time, such as the notes from the old printed editions kept in the library of the metropolitan church; the inscriptions from icons and frescoes that have not been published until now; etc. Methodologically, the thesis creates a model for this type of research, by using both a historical approach and art historical analysis. This makes the research interdisciplinary.

Structurally, the habilitation thesis consists of an introduction, an exposition (in two main parts), a conclusion, an appendix, and a list of used sources and literature with a total volume of 198 pages. The structuring of the exposition in two main parts is appropriate, as they cover the two main issues related to the studied problems. In the first part of the study, S. Angelov provides a comprehensive overview of the history of the town of Kyustendil as a spiritual center from the penetration of Christianity into the town in the 4th century to the closure of the Kyustendil Metropolis at the end of the 19th century. Various aspects of the city's development, not only in ecclesiastical, but also in political-administrative, economic and demographic terms, have been studied. In the second part of the study, the history of the Metropolitan Church of the Assumption of the Virgin Mary is examined in detail for the first time, clarifying a number of issues related to the time of its construction and the specifics of the architecture and interior of the church – iconostases, icons and frescoes. At the end of the study, the most valuable old printed books preserved in the church library are presented. As an appendix, a list of the bishops/metropolitans of the Kyustendil diocese from the early Christian era to the end of the 19th century is presented.

The conclusions of the author are contributing and original and fully meet the goals and objectives of the study. This gives me reason to state, that the monograph fully meets the requirements for habilitation thesis for the academic position of “Associate Professor”.

Other publications by the author are also dedicated to the topic of the church and monastery network in the Western and Southwestern Bulgarian lands, among which the

collaborative (with Yavor Mitov) monograph on the Church of Saint Michael the Archangel near the village of Goranovtsi in the province of Kyustendil, published in 2023 by St. Kliment Ohridski University Press, should be noted. Also impressive are the studies, published in the authoritative magazine "Palaeobulgarica / Starobalgaristika" about the monastery "St. John the Theologian" (Kasinets) near Vratsa and about the Kremikovtsi Monastery, in which specific Cyrillic inscriptions from the 15th–16th centuries have been identified and deciphered. A significant part of S. Angelov's research efforts are focused on the field of frescoes epigraphy and iconography. They have an important contribution to this field of humanities.

An important direction in S. Angelov's scientific production is the research on the photo archive of Prof. Assen Vasiliev, stored at the Centre for Slavo-Byzantine Studies "Prof. Ivan Dujčev", as a source for the history of valuable and hard-to-reach monuments in the Balkans. The study of the mission of Prof. Ivan Duychev to the town of Kostur (now Kastoria) in 1941, aimed at collecting data on the number and fate of the Bulgarian population in the western parts of Aegean Macedonia occupied by Italy during World War II, is interesting. These publications show that the author's research interests are gradually expanding to cover new chronological periods and thematic fields.

It should be noted that during his many years of work at the Centre for Slavo-Byzantine Studies "Prof. Ivan Dujčev", S. Angelov has participated in a number of projects and scientific forums, as well as in the organization of thematic exhibitions related to the preservation and promotion of monuments of cultural and historical heritage. S. Angelov applies a list of 22 citations of his scientific publications. Thus, he meets the minimum requirements for the academic position of "Associate Professor", set by art. 2b of the Law on the Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria. Therefore, as a member of the Scientific Jury, I will vote "YES" for awarding the academic position of "Associate Professor" in the professional field 2.2. History and Archeology (History and Culture of the Balkans in the 15th–17th Centuries) of Assistant Professor Svetozar Simeonov Angelov.

Sofia,

22.04.2025 Assoc. Prof. Ventsislav Muchinov, DSc