

Promotion Review of a Candidate's Application for Professorship

by Prof. Alexandar N. Nikolov, Faculty of History, University of Sofia "St. Kliment Ohridski" on behalf of Roumen Zhivkov Boiadzhiev, the only applicant for the academic position of Full Professor in Professional Field 2.2: History and Archaeology, Research Area: Late Antiquity (Christian Prosopography), advertised in *DV 57/26.06.2020*.

1. Procedure Information:

The professorship competition was announced for the needs of the CSBS "Ivan Douychev", Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski". The only applicant for the position is Assoc. Prof. Roumen Zhivkov Boyadzhiev. The documents submitted by him meet the requirements of the ZRASRB and in essence provide an opportunity to evaluate his scientific achievements and research and teaching activities.

2. Information for the applicant:

Educational and Professional Record:

Roumen Boyadzhiev graduated from the secondary school in Sofia in 1979 and after accomplishing his military service he attended the University of Sofia "St. Kliment Ohridski", speciality "Bulgarian Philology", which he graduated in 1986. Meanwhile he specialized at the Faculty of History in the newly opened specialization in History and Theory of Culture and ended his studies in 1988.

Between 1986 and 1988, he worked as a teacher at 126 Secondary School in Sofia, and in 1988 was recruited as a postgraduate student and later as a PhD student at the newly founded

CSBS "Ivan Douychev". Since then his scientific and professional career is closely tied to this scientific institution, where he started to work as full-time collaborator in 1991. Meanwhile he specialized in Germany, at KAAD (Bonn), successively in 1990 and 1992-1994 in Regensburg and Hamburg .

In 1996 he successfully defended a doctoral dissertation on "Early West European Monasticism: Benedictine monks and the East until the middle of the 11th century", and subsequently published a monograph of the same title, which was an innovative study not only for the Bulgarian Medieval Studies. He won a competition for Assistant Professor (researcher) at CSBS "Ivan Douychev", and in 2009 was successfully promoted as Associate Professor.

Assoc. Prof. Boyadzhiev teaches several Bachelor's and Master's courses in Balkan Studies at the Faculty of Slavic Philology and the Faculty of History of Sofia University. These courses are closely related to his scientific field: History of Byzantium, Medieval Balkan History, History of Bulgaria, Preservation of the Bulgarian Literary Heritage, Mediterranean Cultures and Civilizations in the Antiquity and the Middle Ages, Christian Prosopography. His publications are concentrated in the field of late antique and early medieval culture, with particular emphasis on religious life and monastic culture, but they will be discussed in detail in the section dedicated to his publications and scientific contributions. The applicant is member of the Association of Byzantinologists and Medievalists in Bulgaria and coordinator of KAAD for the selection of applicants from Bulgaria.

2. Description of applicant's scientific works and achievements:

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Assoc. Prof. Dr. R. Boyadzhiev has provided for the competition a considerable amount of high quality works. First of all, this is the monograph "*Lost Africa Sacra, Late Antique Christian North Africa in the 4th- 6th Centuries*", 492 p. This is an unparalleled study in Bulgarian Medieval Studies as it is devoted to a region distant from the Balkans and the Eastern Christian tradition. The "*Lost Africa Sacra*", geographically located in Roman Africa, in the centuries researched by the author, was one of the most prosperous regions of the late Roman Empire, and at the same time a cradle of Western Christianity, which not only competed, but also overtook Italy in this respect. It is enough to recall the names of Tertullian, Lactantius, Arnobius and, of course, of St. Augustine of Hippo, to establish, even in the slightest reading, the

significance of this region, nowadays largely dominated by Islam, for the development of the Western and, in general, Christian religious tradition.

Roumen Boyadzhiev is an established researcher of the Early Christian monastic culture, of the cult of the saints, and especially of the all-round research on the role of women-saints in early Christianity. Here, however, we find a truly comprehensive panorama of life in these prosperous provinces, flourishing in some turbulent times that eventually reach them but do not affect them as deeply as they would be affected irreversibly later by the Islamic expansion. After a consistent and in-depth analysis of the political and economic framework in which this North African "Horn" was the center of Romanization on the southern coast of the Mediterranean, the author provides us with a detailed picture of the Early Christian community during the time of *Ecclesia militans*, the rich martyrdom traditions of the region, and at the same time the transformation of Christianity from persecuted to permitted and ultimately dominant religion in the Empire and in the particular area studied by the author. Quite naturally, special attention is devoted to the activity of the colossal figure of St. Augustine the Blessed - a system creator of all Western Christianity, whose views dominated at least to the time of St Thomas Aquinas. Of particular interest is the period of struggle of the local Christian community in the conditions of the Arian rule of the Vandal kingdom, when the followers of the Nicene Orthodoxy and direct disciples of St. Augustine fell into situation reminiscent of the former persecutions of the "Fighting Church". Particular attention is paid to the ecclesiastical structure and organization in Roman Africa, closely linked to and deriving from the late antique urban network and environment, which is another important aspect of the monograph's contribution. Of course, this vast panorama is followed by an extremely precise and detailed study within the author's usual research area, which is a continuation of "an older project" to quote his words, but in fact a cornerstone of his research over one long and fruitful period of his academic career.

These are precisely the two parts of the present work, the second part being namely a priceless prosopographical corpus dedicated to Christian women from the period and region concerned. This prosopography is the second part of the study, which is part of the second monograph we will touch here, that has been issued in 2011. It is dedicated to the period from the 4th to the 7th centuries and encompasses a vast and varied source material which is arranged very precisely and informs us completely of each unit of this kind of "catalog" in terms of living, ethnic origin, environment, etc. Roumen Boyadzhiev has shown here his inherent precision and

scrupulousness, which in the present time of hectic research and quick expected results remains an invaluable opportunity and skill.

As we have already mentioned, the monograph under consideration is also a natural extension of the previous study by Assoc. Prof. Boyadzhiev, published in 2011 under the title "Late Antiquity Female Monasticism in Rome and its spiritual patrons in the Apennines and in the Eastern Mediterranean between the Second and the Third Ecumenical Council (381 to 431 AD). *Prosopographia Feminarum Christianarum, Saecula IV-VI.* " based on the applicant's first habilitation. In general, such an organic link between studies also demonstrates the fruitfulness of the chosen topic and the methodology of the research.

The candidate presents for the competition three further monographs, dedicated to various aspects of the Late Antique history.

The first among them, entitled "From the Wane of the Late Antiquity to the "Entry" of the Middle Ages: High Clerics and Their Correspondence to Christian Women Throughout Fifth and Sixth Centuries", "Paradigma", Sofia, 2020 (132 p.) is dedicated to the topic of the relations between men and women in the Late Antiquity, presented through the prism of a very specific link: that of the spiritual tutor, representing the high clergy, and the zealous Christian women, usually from the elite circles of the epoch, who contributed significantly for the implementation of the Christian values in the Late antique society. The author includes and analyzes the correspondence of the African bishops Fulgentius of Ruspe and Evodius of Uzalis, Bishop Ennodius of Pavia, the Roman Popes Gregory the Great and Hormisdas and Patriarch Severus of Antioch with their female respondents, with whom the bishops maintained close spiritual ties. The analysis of epistolary sources reveals specific aspects of the inter-gender relations in the Late Antiquity and the changing role of the high society woman in an already profoundly Christianized environment.

Similar topic is researched in the second monograph of this cycle: " St Jerome and St. Augustine: Prosopographical Portraits and Epistles to (and about) Women", Paradigma, Sofia, 2020, (175 p.). The research is following the deeds of the two most prominent figures of the Western Christianity from the fourth and the beginning of the fifth centuries - St. Augustine of Hippo and St. Jerome, the translator of the Bible into Latin, who created broad circles of female followers from the Roman high society, zealous Christians and disseminators of the new values among the

Roman elite. The research of Roumen Boyadzhiev reveals interesting new aspects not only from the lives of these prominent persons of the Latin Christianity, but also about the changing role of the women in the late antique society and the specific relations between the spiritual tutor and the following Roman matronae, who embraced the values of the victorious Christendom.

To the third place another monograph should be noted, namely "Late Antique Urban Centers in the Valleys of the Rivers of Strymon, Nestos and the Middle Flow of Axios (Southwestern Bulgarian Territories and the Adjacent Trans-border Areas), University Publishing House, "St. Kliment Ohridski", Sofia, 2020, (207 p.). Here Roumen Boyadzhiev demonstrates his abilities as a researcher of the late antique urban culture, localization and identification of various urban centers from modern Southwestern Bulgaria and the neighbouring territories of Greece and the Republic of Northern Macedonia, that at those times were part of a relatively homogeneous space. The author shows here a complex approach, high ability to combine data from different types of sources in order to reveal a highly probable picture of the epoch and to contribute for the mapping of this late antique region, thus providing a solid base for further research of the topic.

Along with the mentioned monographs, the applicant presents as a part of his production for the competition and his first monograph on early Western European monasticism and the links of the Benedictine Order with the East - a very valuable study that has long been a part of the curriculum in the Bachelor courses in Medieval History. Here are also outlined the main directions in which the candidate's scientific research was subsequently developed namely in the sphere of monastic life, the early phases of the development of the Christian Church during the Middle Ages and the contacts between the Eastern and the Western Church.

Other 12 papers (one study and 11 papers) are also presented. They could be grouped as follows: Six of them are dedicated to the issue of the role of women in the spread of Christianity in the late antique and early medieval era, which is obviously a serious component in the research of R. Boyadzhiev. Two of them are published in foreign languages, respectively in Modern Greek and Italian in prestigious international publications. In particular, they are concerned with prosopographical issues related to the Christian women who lived in the Western provinces of the Roman Empire between the 4th and the 6th centuries. (No. 3, 2013, AUS, CSBS, item 98 [17], 193-204); on the spread of Christianity among women in the age of Constantine the Great and his successors (No. 4, AUS, CSBS "Ivan Douychev", 2017, 98 (18), 641-649; (No.7, *La figura di*

Costantino imperatore e l'ideologia imperiale nella storia culturale, religiosa e civile dei Paesi slavi (a cura di Fr. Braschi; M. Di Salvo), [Accademia Ambrosiana; *Slavica Ambrosiana*, 4]. Milano, 2013, 37-48.), to the nuns from the Early Christian age (No. 9, AUS, CSBS "Ivan Douychev", 93 (12), 323-328), to the fate of three famous Roman aristocrats with special merits for the dissemination of the monastic ideal and the Eastern asceticism, namely Melania Senior, Melania Junior and Paula. (No. 10, *Studia Slavico-byzantina et Mediaevalia Europensia*, Vol. VIII (

60). Sofia, 2004, p. 89-101); the article dedicated to the lives of Christian women on the Apennine Peninsula, based on epigraphic data from mid-4th to mid-6th centuries. (No. 6, *Aureus. Volume dedicated to prof. Evangelos Chrysos*. (Eds.: Kolias, T.; K. Pitsakis), [Institute of Historical research - Athens]. Athens, 2014, 57-73).

The second group of articles is devoted to various problems from the history of late antique Christianity, the urban environment, the system of Late Roman Limes, and others. These are, in particular, the issues of early monasticism of the Lérins Islands and its contacts with Eastern ascetics (No. 12, AUS, CSBS "Ivan Douychev", v. 90 (9), 453-480); studies on the Christian symbolism of Ravna Monastery on the basis of preserved and studied by the author graffiti (No. 11, AUS, CSBS "Ivan Douychev", v. 84-85 (4), 219-247); (No. 13, *Studia protobulgarica et mediaevalia europensia*. . . , 1993, 261-270)) and last but not least, two particularly valuable articles devoted to studies on the Pannonian and North African Limes through the prism of early Christian culture in these areas: (No. 5, AUS, CSBS "Ivan Douychev", v. 99 (18), 145-162) and No. 2 in *Realia Byzantino-Balcanica*.

60). Sofia, 2014, 85-106.

The general impression of the scientific production of Assoc. Prof. R Boyadzhiev presents to us a fully developed, strict scientist with a very clear and precise focus of his research, who can both summarize and analyze in detail the object of his research. In my opinion, he is one of the most profound researchers of Late Antiquity in the Mediterranean, especially in view of the spread and triumph of Christianity in this age. I would pay special attention to his studies on the role and place of women in these processes and on the studies of urban culture and the Roman Limes area, focused especially on the spread and imposition of Christianity as the dominant religious and cultural framework of the late antique society. Another proof of the quality of the scientific production of Assoc. Prof. Boyadzhiev is the solid number of citations in prestigious

publications, as well as positive reviews of part of his research in Bulgarian and foreign editions. Along with his scientific work, Assoc. Prof. Boyadzhiev has provided detailed information which shows both a rich teaching activity and participation in a number of projects, which, in my opinion, fully meets the necessary criteria for obtaining the academic position "Professor" .

3. Conclusion:

The teaching, scientific and project activities of Assoc. Prof. Dr. Roumen Zhivkov Boyadzhiev correspond fully to the requirements for obtaining the academic position "Professor" according to the requirements of the Law for the Development of the Academic Staff in Republic of Bulgaria (ZRASRB) and of the Regulations of Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski" for its application. Therefore, I am pleased to suggest to the honorable Election Committee to award the academic title "Professor" to Assoc. Prof. Dr. Roumen Zhivkov Boyadzhiev in the professional field 2.2. History and Archaeology and wish the applicant professional success in the future.

18.10. 2020

Sofia

Signature:

/Prof. Dr. Alexandar Nikolov/

