

REVIEW

By Prof. Dr. Miliyana Kaimakamova, professional field 2.2. History and Archeology in the competition for the academic position of Professor in the following field of the higher education 2. Humanities, professional field 2.2. History and Archaeology (History of Medieval Bulgaria - History of Samuil's Bulgaria) for the needs of the Department of History of Bulgaria, Faculty of History of Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski", announced in State Gazette No. 21 of 15th March 2022 with the only applicant Assoc. Prof. Dr. Georgi Nikolov Nikolov.

No violations were committed in the competition procedure. The applicant has not only fulfilled the minimum national requirements under Article 26 of the Act on the Development of Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria, but according to the indicators in three of the groups he has significantly exceeded them.

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Georgi Nikolov is permanently associated with the Faculty of History of Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski". In the period from 1990 to 2011 he held successively the positions of assistant, senior assistant and principal assistant in the Department of History of Bulgaria. In the meantime, in 2001 he was awarded the educational and scientific degree of "Doctor". In 2011, he was elected Associate Professor at the same Department, and from 2015 to 2019, Assoc. Nikolov was the Deputy Dean of the Faculty of History of Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski".

At the same time, he developed active in social-scientific and teaching activities in a number of other educational and scientific institutions. He was a lecturer at the National Academy of Arts (1998 to 2008) and has lectured at foreign universities and other scientific institutions. Important for the growth and affirmation of Assoc. Prof. Nikolov as a university medievalist scientist are his

specializations in various scientific centres in Greece, Germany, Poland, etc., as well as his participation in numerous national and international scientific forums, projects, research and public organizations. From 2017 to 2020, Assoc. Prof. Nikolov is the Deputy Chairman of the Management Board of the Macedonian Scientific Institute, and from 2020 he became its Chairman. Along with that, independently or in co-authorship, G. Nikolov is a compiler of a number of scientific collections. He participates in the editorial boards of various authoritative Bulgarian and foreign periodicals and has an active presence in various public media (electronic publications, newspapers, magazines, agencies, radio and television programs, interviews, documentaries, etc.).

The overall scientific output of Assoc. Prof. G. Nikolov is impressive, as evidenced by the list of his scientific works provided in the documentation. Apart from Bulgaria, he has published in Germany, Georgia, Greece, Poland, Russia, North Macedonia, Serbia, Hungary and France. He is the author of 10 books and monographs, of which 6 are self-authored and 4 co-authored, 82 studies and articles published in Bulgarian and foreign journals, 42 reviews and comments, 56 bio-bibliographies, 5 textbooks and teaching aids co-authored or self-authored, 78 popular science publications, 578 articles in encyclopaedias, among which the largest is their share in the Great Encyclopedia of Bulgaria - over 570. Here I would like to emphasize the great merit of Assoc. Prof. G. Nikolov for the popularization of Bulgarian Byzantine studies and medieval studies on the pages of one of the most prestigious international publications for Byzantine studies, namely "Byzantinische Zeitschrift", in which he is a reference for Bulgarian publications since 2009.

For the announced competition the applicant has submitted one monograph and 32 articles and studies. In their entirety, they reflect his diverse interests in the field of medieval Bulgarian, Byzantine and Balkan history. In terms of

language, the publications are precise. I find these citations sufficient, especially since some of them are in authoritative foreign studies, which are in referenced and indexed publications.

His article on the periodization of medieval Bulgarian history (No. 4) is important from a methodological point of view. In this first-of-its-kind study, G. Nikolov came to the main conclusion that the Bulgarian Middle Ages extended from the earliest history of Proto-Bulgarians and Slavs to the end of the 17th century. Studies related to the institutional and political development of medieval Bulgaria detail aspects of this process that have been poorly studied in the literature so far (No. 6, 7, 11, 18, 19, 24, 26, 27, 28, 30, 32, 33). The articles of a sourcing, historiographical and prosopographical nature contribute to the elucidation of a number of facts related to individual personalities and events in the history of the medieval Bulgarian state (No. 2, 3, 7, 9, 10, 14, 17, 25, 29, 31). In the publications dedicated to events and personalities from the time of Samuil's Bulgaria, chronological and factual clarifications have been made, which are important for their refinement (No. 5, 8, 12, 13, 16, 20, 21, 22, 23). This group of studies represents a preliminary stage in the overall research of the history of Samuil's Bulgaria, to which the latest monograph of Assoc. Prof. G. Nikolov is dedicated.

This work entitled "From the History of Samuil's Bulgaria" undoubtedly has the greatest weight in connection with the announced competition. The study is accompanied by a variety of photographic material and illustrations from manuscript books that enhance its value and completeness.

The preface points out the relevance of the history of Samuil's Bulgaria against the background of the political constellation of the Balkans in the XX - XXI century. It also indicates the principles that guided G. Nikolov in writing the work.

The first part, entitled "The Genealogy", explores in detail the question of the origins of King Samuil and his brothers. In clarifying it, G. Nikolov has drawn on little-used sources, indicating new possibilities for their interpretation. On the basis of the detailed commentary on the information in Ioannes Scylitzes, Stepanos of Taron, Anna Comnena and Mihail Devolski, G. Nikolov came to the following significant conclusions: 1) In the chronicle of Ioannes Scylitzes the Kometopuli are mentioned not according to their age, as it was assumed in the historiography, but according to the time of their destruction (p. 13-15); 2) The assumption is made that the Kometopuli were related by blood to the Krum dynasty on their maternal lineage (15-17); 3) It is concluded through biblical onomastics that Samuil was the eldest of his four brothers; 4) It is also concluded that the information in Anna Comnena about the common dynastic root of Krum and Samuil is not an interpolation, but an *ipsisima verba* of the writer herself; 5) The data in Anna Comnena together with a little-known in our country study of Dieter Reinsch are evaluated by G. Nikolov as direct evidence for the origin of Samuil and his brothers of the Krum dynasty (pp. 17-20).

The second part, entitled "The Blinding", deals with the problem of the mass blinding of Bulgarian prisoners of war by order of Emperor Basil II after the Battle of Klyuch in 1014. The reason for its examination by G. Nikolov is that in recent times this mutilation of Samuil's warriors was challenged by the famous German Byzantinist P. Schreiner.

G. Nikolov cites a number of examples from Byzantine and Bulgarian sources, toponymic data around Strumeshnitsa River, attesting that "blinding" was a real fact. As an *argumentum ex silentio*, he points to the non-interference of the well-informed Bishop Mihail Devolski in the text of Ioannes Scylitzes, reflecting the fact of the blinding. In addition to his analysis, the colleague Nikolov cites a number of Arabic sources, which show that mass blindings were practiced in the ancient East as early as the pre-Christian era. The thesis is also

defended that it was this blinding in the summer of 1014 that led to the nickname "Bulgar Slayer" of the Byzantine basileus given to him by the Byzantines themselves.

The third part, entitled "The Death", analyses the death of the last Bulgarian kings who ruled Bulgaria from 969 to 1018. This part of the study is prosopographical in nature and is distinguished by the clarification of a number of important details about the fate of the kings Boris II, Roman-Simeon, Samuil, Gavril Radomir and Ioan Vladislav. The contributions in this part of the monograph are in the following several directions: 1) G. Nikolov gives new evidence in support of V. Gyuzelev's thesis about the existence of a Bulgarian royal chronicle, from which foreign authors have derived information about the death of Tsar Boris II (pp. 44-48); 2) The status of Roman-Simeon as Bulgarian king is convincingly substantiated and the chronology of the events of the last years of his life is specified; 4) The importance of the Bulgarian Apocryphal Chronicle is revealed, especially the allusion made by its author to the Old Testament history in clarifying the question of the status of Ripsimia, the mother of the Kometopuli, as a "widow-prophetess" at the beginning of their struggle against Byzantium; 5) An attempt is made to identify (different from that of N. Mutsopoulos) of the graves found in the basilica of "St. Achilles", according to which there were the graves of the komes Nicolas and Ripsimia, their son David, King Samuil and his son Gavril Radomir.

The fourth part of the work, entitled "Macedonia", traces the political, ecclesiastical and cultural role of the eponymous historical and geographical region in the history of medieval Bulgaria. The author's position that Macedonia was invariably inhabited by Bulgarians during the Middle Ages (IV-XIV centuries) is of major importance. It is also pointed out that the domination of Byzantium and Serbia in separate periods did not lead to a change in its Bulgarian ethnic appearance.

With this work G. Nikolov presents himself as a worthy successor of V. Zlatarski, I. Duychev, J. Ivanov, V. Tapkova-Zaimova, J. Zaimov, V. Gyuzelev, who devoted themselves to the study of Macedonia in the political and cultural life of the medieval Bulgarian state. At the same time, by writing it, Assoc. Prof. Dr. Nikolov affirmed himself as an expert in the history of Samuil's Bulgaria.

In parallel with the intensive scientific activity G. Nikolov also carries out his teaching activity. He is the holder of a major lecture course on the history of medieval Bulgaria, of many different disciplines in the bachelor's, master's and doctoral training programs. They are distinguished by their thematic diversity, which is indicative of his broad interests and his preference for topics and issues that he himself researches. Two doctoral students have successfully defended their theses under his scientific supervision.

On the basis of the overall examination of the academic and scientific activity and the mentioned contributions of the publications in the competition, I express my opinion that **Assoc. Prof. Dr. Georgi Nikolov Nikolov** fully deserves to hold the academic position of "**Professor**" in professional field 2.2. History and Archaeology (History of Medieval Bulgaria - History of Samuil's Bulgaria) for the needs of the Department of History of Bulgaria, Faculty of History of Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski".

11th June 2022

Sofia

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