

STATEMENT

Concerning the competition announced by Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski" for the academic position of professor in the field 2.2. History and Archaeology (Medieval Bulgarian History) for the needs of the Faculty of History, published in the State Gazette No 21 of 15 March 2022.

by Assoc. Prof. Dr. Angel Nikolov Nikolov
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Only one candidate has submitted documents for participation in the competition: associate professor Georgi Nikolov Nikolov, lecturer at the Department of History of Bulgaria at the Faculty of History of St. Kliment Ohridski University in Sofia. The Committee on the examination of the documents has found that the documents submitted for the competition meet the legal requirements. The submitted table on the fulfilment of the minimum national requirements under Article 2b of the Law on the Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria shows that the candidate obtained the required number of points for participation in the present competition.

The applicant entered the competition with 33 publications from 1981 to 2022, whose original scientific contributions are described by him in detail and correctly. The central place is occupied by the habilitation work (monograph) *From the History of Samuil's Bulgaria*. Sofia, 2022. 319 c. ISBN 978-619-7377-25-5 (paperback); ISBN 978-619-7377-26-2 (hardback); ISBN978-619-7377-27-9 (pdf)

The book includes a preface, four chapters, a bibliography, and a list of abbreviations.

In the preface (pp. 7-10) the author has outlined the main objectives of his new monographic study, namely - to present and defend his professional view on a number of old interpretations and to offer his own new interpretations of the historical sources that have come down to us about the fate of the Bulgarian kingdom in the late 10th - early 11th century in the light of the scientific discussions and the accompanying political and social debates that took place around the 1000th anniversary of the death of Tsar Samuel, which was celebrated in 2014.

The first chapter (pp. 11-22) is devoted to the genealogy of the Kometopouloi, one of the controversial issues often commented on in historiography, on which Georgi Nikolov strongly

advocates the view that Tsar Samuel and his brothers were related by blood through the maternal line to the dynasty of Khan Krum (p. 17ff.). The author assumes that Samuel was the eldest son among the sons of Comte Nikola (p. 16), but it seems to me highly probable that he was a third son, a possibility that Georgi Nikolov himself discusses at length, only to ultimately define it as unprovable (pp. 13-14).

In the second chapter (pp. 23-36) Georgi Nikolov makes a critical analysis of Peter Schreiner's thesis that John Skylitzes' information about the blindness of Samuil's army after the battle of Klyuch in 1014 is a product of Byzantine propaganda and is not based on real historical facts. In particular, the author assumes that Skylitzes "benefited from a corpus of Bulgarian chronicles that has not come down to our time" (p. 29), an interesting assumption that should be borne in mind in further research on the historical work of this Byzantine author. Some sources are also cited which indicate that individual and mass blinding were commonly practiced during the long and much bloodied reign of Basil II (pp. 25-26). I fully endorse Georgi Nikolov's objections to Peter Schreiner's rather extreme and categorical thesis, which has its scholarly value but could not be taken as anything more than a bold and interesting hypothesis. After all, there is no serious reason to doubt that the Byzantines carried out blinding after the Battle of Klyuch, it is another question how massive they were and whether the figure of 15,000 should be taken literally.

The third chapter (pp. 37-134) is devoted to the problem of the deaths of the Bulgarian rulers of the late 10th - early 11th centuries: Boris II (978), Romanos-Simeon (997), Samuel (1014), Gavril-Roman Radomir (1015) and John-Vladislav (1018). As Georgy Nikolov rightly notes, the sources for this era "contain relatively more information about the last days and hours of the Bulgarian kings, about the circumstances leading to their demise, about their assassins, etc." (p. 38), while the excavated by the Greek archaeologist A. Moutsopoulos graves in the basilica of Fr. St. Achilles in the Lake of Prespa enable modern researchers to build a more immediate picture of the posthumous tribute to Tsar Samuel and some of his family members. Particularly convincing is the author's proposed reconstruction of the chronology and sequence of events surrounding the capture and final years of King Romanos-Simeon (991-997) - the dramatic discrepancy in the accounts of John Skylitzes and Yahya of Antioch has always provoked serious discussion in historiography, and I therefore find useful Georgi Nikolov's attempt to offer his own view of this problem in an orderly and clear form (pp. 60-68). The

author's proposed alternative interpretation of some of the graves in the south aisle of the St. A-1 and B-2 are associated with the comitatus Nicholas, his wife Ripsimia and David (in Mutsopoulos - with John Vladislav and Ivan Vladimir), and grave Δ-2 is associated with Gavriil-Radomir and his family members with a certain degree of conditionality (pp. 123-132).

The fourth chapter, entitled "The Historical and Geographical Area of Macedonia in the History of the Bulgarian Middle Ages" (pp. 135-284), is a panoramic presentation of a topic that has always occupied a central place in the studies of our medievalists. The exposition begins with a useful sketch on the (proto-)Bulgarian and Slavic invasions of the Balkans and the Macedonian lands, with an emphasis on; the Slavic colonization that eventually transformed in the seventh-tenth centuries. Macedonia into the arena of a "visible and invisible war" (p. 153) between Byzantium and Bulgaria to attract this population; the settlement of the Kuber's Bulgarians north of the town of Thessaloniki in the 7th century, their attempts at military-political cooperation with Danubian Bulgaria (p. 160), and the role of their descendants as a "link that facilitated the national and political unification" of the Macedonian Slavs with the Bulgarian khanate of the Bulgars of Asparuh during the reign of Khan Presian (p. 170); the conversion and activities of St. Clement and St. Naum; the position of Macedonia within the Bulgarian state until its demise in 1018 and attempts to restore it; the establishment and development of the Ohrid archbishopric, etc. Attention is also paid to the policy of the Bulgarian tsars to incorporate Macedonia into the Tarnovo Tsardom, as well as to the gradual entry in the 13th-14th centuries of Serbia into this geographic space (p. 278 ff.), whose population undoubtedly belonged to the Bulgarian medieval people formed after the Conversion and thanks to the activities of the disciples of St. Cyril and St. Methodius.

I cannot but note the remarkable precision with which Georgi Nikolov quotes historical sources, always striving to use the latest critical editions of the relevant texts, as well as some of their translations into modern languages. Within the scope of the reviewed work are both well-known historical works and some works that until relatively recently were not commented on in our historiography, and their content is subject to further study and reflection (a striking example of this is the Life of St. Fantino the Young, pp. 184-185). Some recently published archaeological materials are also reported, such as the unknown until 2016 type of copper coins minted in the Thessaloniki mint, with the image of Tsar Ivan Asen II crowning his vassal despot Manuel Komnenos (p. 270).archaeological materials are also reported, such as the unknown until

2016 type of copper coins minted in the Thessaloniki mint, with the image of Tsar Ivan Asen II crowning his vassal despot Manuel Komnenos (p. 270). archaeological materials are also reported, such as the type of copper coins minted at the Thessaloniki mint, unknown until 2016, with the image of Tsar Ivan Asen II crowning his vassal, Despot Manuel Komnenos (p. 270).

Of course, some minor inaccuracies can be found in the work, among which I would note the interpretation adopted by Georgi Nikolov (supported before him by Y. Shchapov and V. Gyuzelev) of the text known only from East Slavonic transcripts, "The Tale of the Bulgarian and Serbian Patriarchate", as a text created on Mount Athos in the early 15th century (pp. 275-276) - as shown by the research of E. Belyakova and M. Korogodina, this work was composed in Moscow Russia in connection with the accession of the second autocephalous Metropolitan of Moscow, Theodosius (1461-1464), and the compilation of the Russian Kormchaya kniga (the tale is usually placed as a preface to it).¹

No elements of plagiarism are found in the publications of Assoc. Prof. Dr. Georgi Nikolov. As already noted, the minimum national requirements under Article 2b of the Law on the Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria for the scientific field History and Archaeology (Medieval Bulgarian History), professional field 2.2. History and Archaeology are fulfilled by Assoc. Prof. Dr. Georgi Nikolov Nikolov - candidate for the academic position of Professor. The materials on the relevant indicators are presented fully and comprehensively. All procedural deadlines and legal requirements for the competition have been met. Last, but not least, I would like to share that over the years I have had the opportunity to be

¹ Белякова, Е. Обоснование автокефалии в русских кормчих. – Церковь в истории России. Сб. 4. Москва, 2000, 139–161 (a new edition of the text); Белякова Е. О происхождении Ярославского списка Кормчей книги. – В: Ярославский список Правды Русской: Законодательство Ярослава Мудрого. Ярославль – Рыбинск, 2010, 42–44; Корогодина М. „Сказание о болгарской и сербской патриархиях“ и происхождение Софийской редакции Кормчей книги. – В: Очерки феодальной России. Вып. 15. Москва – Санкт-Петербург, 2012, 22–44; Корогодина, М. Кормчие книги XIV – первой половины XVII вв. как исторический источник. Автореферат диссертации на соискание ученой степени доктора исторических наук. Санкт-Петербург, 2015, 21–22; Корогодина М. Кормчие книги XIV – первой половины XVII веков. Т. 1. Исследование. Москва – Санкт-Петербург, 2017, с. 240, 274, 297-303. See also: Николов, А. Между Рим и Константинополь. Из антикатолическата литература в България и славянския православен свят (XI–XVII в.). София, 2016, 137-138.

convinced of Georgi Nikolov's high qualities as a scientist and as a lecturer who has always treated his colleagues and students with care, attention and respect.

The foregoing allows me to conclude that Assoc. Prof. Dr. Georgi Nikolov Nikolov fully meets the legal requirements for the acquisition of the academic position of Professor. On the basis of the above, I recommend to the Honorable Scientific Council of the Faculty of History of Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski" Prof. Dr. Georgi Nikolov Nikolov be awarded the academic position of Professor.

Saarbrücken, 13 June 2022.

Angel
Nikolov

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