

REVIEW

of the works of Assoc. Prof. Dr. Roumen Zhivkov Boyadzhiev, sole participant in the competition for the position of PROFESSOR in the professional direction 2.2. History and Archeology (History of Late Antiquity: Christian Prosopography) at the Sofia University “St. Kliment Ohridski”, Center for Slavo-Byzantine Research “Prof. Ivan Duychev” (Department of the University of Sofia), promulgated in State Gazette, no. 31 of 12. 04. 2019

Reviewer: Prof. Dr. Ivayla Popova, Sofia University “St. Kliment Ohridski”

1. Details of the competition

The procedure and the ensuing requirements under the Law on the Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria (ZRARSR) and the Regulations of the Sofia University are respected, as evidenced by the submitted documentation. When I was introduced to its contents, I did not find any breaches committed.

2. Details of the applicant

Roumen Boyadzhiev graduated in Bulgarian Philology at Sofia University “St. Kliment Ohridski” with a specialization in History and Theory of Culture at the Faculty of History of Sofia University.

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Roumen Boyadzhiev began his scientific studies as a postgraduate at the Center for Slavo-Byzantine Research “Prof. Ivan Duychev” with a one-year scholarship in 1988, and from 1989 he became a PhD student at the Center of Culture Studies at Sofia University (in the direction of “History of Culture and Arts, History of West European Art Culture”). In June 1991 he started working as a specialist (organizer of publishing activities) at the Center for Slavo-Byzantine Research “Prof. Ivan Duychev”.

In 1996, the candidate for the present competition acquired the educational and scientific degree PhD, after a successfully defended thesis before the Superior Attestation Commission on the topic: “Early West European Monasticism: Benedictine and the East Until the Middle of the 11th c.”, with academic heads Prof. Aksinia Djurova (Sofia University “St. Kliment Ohridski”) and Prof. Henke Gulzow (University of Hamburg).

In 1997, after a competition, he became an Assistant Professor at the Center for Slavo-Byzantine Research “Prof. Ivan Duychev” (Department of the University of Sofia). In 2009, he was elected Associate Professor of Medieval History. His traineeship at the Sofia University thus totals almost 30 years.

In the period 1990-1994 Assoc. Prof. Boyadzhiev specialized in various scientific centers of medieval studies in Germany (Regensburg, Hamburg).

Specializations played a significant role not only in his professional growth but also in his constant orientation towards the study of the problems of the Late Antiquity the early medieval church history and geography, the early history of monasticism, as well as the urbanism in the Late Antiquity, pilgrimage practices, and early Christian prosopography.

3. Description of scientific papers

Assoc. Prof. Roumen Boyadzhiev is the author of 25 scientific publications, of which 3 are monographs. In their entirety, they reveal not only the formation and affirmation of Assoc. Prof. R. Boyadzhiev as a historian of the medieval period, but also show his constant aspirations to deepen the subject of his research.

At the competition, the candidate is presented with a total of 13 scientific papers, including 1 monograph, plus studies and articles. In my opinion, the papers mentioned in the report and submitted for review are in accordance with the requirements of the competition and I accept them without comment.

4. Scientific contributions

The most significant among the papers presented for review is the new monograph by Assoc. Prof. R. Boyadzhiev – *“The Lost Africa Sacra. Late Christianity North Africa IV-VI c. Western Provinces of Africa Proconsularis, Numidia, Byzacena and Mauretania: Christian Urbanism, Bishops and "Radiant" Women. Prosopographia Feminarum Christianarum, Pars II /Africa, Saec. IV-VII/*. София (Парадигма), 2019 (ISBN 978-954- 326-385-1). Above all, I would like to emphasize that the work is devoted to an important historiographical problem that has not yet been the subject of an independent and purposeful study. This work is the result of a long and profound research done by R. Boyadzhiev, which gave him the opportunity to explore a considerable and rich source material.

The study is based on various in origin, volume and content sources, such as works of art, letters, speeches, treatises, homilies etc. of the early Christian apologists, thinkers, and bishops (among them are Augustin of Hippo, Cyprian of Carthage, Fulgencius of Rouspe, Pope Gregory I the Great, Jeronimus, Paulinus of Nola, John Chrysostom and many others), works of ancient and Byzantine historians (Plinius, Ammianus Marcellinus, Procopius of Caesarea etc.), church histories, epigraphic monuments and others.

The monograph is significant in volume – it comprises nearly 500 pages and includes five chapters, as well as a prosopographical section. The structure of the book is almost identical to another monograph of the candidate devoted to the “Women’s Monasticism in Rome during the Late Antiquity” (Sofia, 2011). The final purpose is obviously to form a common framework that includes a historical part (concerning one specific region of the late Roman Empire) and a prosopographical part referring

to Christian women in the area under consideration. The author deliberately follows a similar pattern in the layout of both books.

The range of topics relating to the early Christian political and ecclesial history of the lands in the West of North Africa is extremely large and certainly impressive as far the number of studies which are cited is concerned. The book is undoubtedly a major Bulgarian contribution to this great subject. It presents a detailed picture of the urban development of the Christian life in part of the provinces of North Africa from the 4th century to the end of the 6th century. As a geographic scope, these are the lands of today's central Maghreb, or more precisely five old Roman provinces – Africa Proconsularis, Numidia, Bysacena and the two Mauretaniae.

In Bulgarian historiography there are already some studies related to the topic of North Africa, by Dimitar Dimitrov and Antoan Tonev, but Boyadzhiev's book is the first attempt in Bulgaria to present a brief but thorough review of the early history of the western North Africa. The first chapter of the monograph – *Historical framework. Northwest Africa between the 2nd c. BC and the 6th c. AD* is devoted exactly to that subject.

An important contribution is the study of the early history of the Roman provinces in the region, the specific urban environment, as well as of the African economy. These is the subject of Boyadzhiev's Chapter II - *The "Provincial" Situation in Late Antique North Africa 3 - 6 c.* and Chapter III – *The Unique African Urbanism and Farming.*

Another issue related to church history and geography is analyzed in Chapter IV - *Africa Sacra - Early African Christianity.* Here the author strives to build a complete picture of the specific religious situation in Africa during the Late Antiquity. In this section, Boyadzhiev deliberately overlooks the role of one very important figure of the African Church, Augustine of Hippo, because scrutinizing his activity would have shifted the focus of the whole study. Obviously, the objective of the author is to present all the famous bishops from the region witnessed in the sources. A contribution in the field of African ecclesiastical geography is the statistical part at the end of Chapter IV. It is based on rich archaeological material and presents the approximate number of Christian basilicas in provinces and cities, the number of their aisles and their dimensions.

Chapter V *Urban and Archeological Picture. Episcopal Presence in the Cities of the West African Provinces* is also an important contribution as it deals with this topic for a first time in the Bulgarian historiography.

The author has selected and summarized a plethora of archeological material covering about 55 settlements grouped in the provinces under consideration. The new here is the presentation of all the known names of bishops of the given geographical department, which is a concise *Notitia Episcopatum*. Thus, each

village is purposefully identified with a specific name in the following prosopographic catalogue, and vice versa.

From p. 287 onwards starts the second and most important prosopographic part of the book: *Prosopographia feminarum christianarum (Saec IV - VII), Pars II. Prosopographical Corpus of the Christian Women in the Provinces Africa Proconsularis, Numidia, Byzacena and Mauretania (second half of the 4th c. - mid-7th c.)*.

In this section, the portraits of 160 female Christians from the aforementioned African lands are alphabetically sorted between the 4th and the beginning of the 7th c. They are presented according to epigraphic or literary data. I am convinced that this part of the book definitely has a contributing character. Until now, in Bulgaria (and abroad), a complete prosopography has not been produced exclusively for the Christian women of that period. This prosopographical corpus is a continuation of another book by R. Boyadzhiev, which was dedicated to the female Christian monasticism in other parts of the Late Roman Empire and was published in 2011 ("Women's Monasticism in Rome during the Late Antiquity and its Spiritual Patrons on the Apennines and in the Eastern Mediterranean Between the 2nd and the 3rd Ecumenical Councils: 381 - 431. *Prosopographia Feminarum Christianarum Saec. IV-VI*", Pars I. Sofia, 2011)

Obviously, the author consciously seeks repeatability in the preparation of his prosopographic sections in order to initiate the creation of corpora in the Bulgarian scientific community listing early Christian women.

At the end of the book is also provided a detailed list of the African synods and conventions, as well as two detailed indexes with the names of the persons and of the ancient and modern settlements. I am convinced that they also form a significant contribution.

The above mentioned contributions give me grounds to point out that the monograph is an undeniable success not only for Assoc. Prof. Roumen Boyadzhiev, but also for the Bulgarian medieval history as a whole. His book is undoubtedly a very original work and can be viewed as a solid basis for a number of future studies on the history, historical geography, urbanism and economy, Christian history and the culture of North Africa during the Late Antiquity.

I am also convinced that the work will be a standard reading for many Bulgarian and foreign researchers of Late Antiquity, Early Christianity and African History. I also want to praise the author for the good language of the book, the brilliant and readable style, which adequately presents to the reader this difficult subject, something very rare in the scientific circles.

The studies and articles of the candidate that precede the monograph in question offer a detailed analysis of the early Christian female prosopography of North Africa, of the Christian urban environment there, of the North African *limes* and the

pre-limes, of the Christian tombstones and of the epigraphic material from the Danubian and Pannonian frontier of the Roman Empire, of the monasticism in Christian Gaul during the 5th century, of the reception of the Eastern monastic ideals in Gaul and so on.

The “Authors” system of Sofia University “St. Kliment Ohridski”, which lists all the scientific contributions of the teaching staff, and the reference system for indexed publications and quotes in the Central University Library contain more than 30 citations of Assoc. Prof. Roumen Boyadzhiev in Bulgarian and foreign languages, as well as 16 quotes in Google Science.

5. Teaching activity

The report from the Department of Educational Activity of the Sofia University for the last five academic years shows the full auditorium of Assoc. Prof. Dr. R. Boyadzhiev, who has a bachelor lecture courses on History of Byzantium and Medieval Balkan History in the Department of Balkan Studies of the Faculty of Slavic Philology, as well as various lecture courses in Master’s degree programs in the Faculty of History.

His successful work with young people is also evidenced by the fact that Prof. R. Boyadzhiev is a coordinator for Bulgaria for selecting candidates for scholarships and for offering scholarships for students, PhD students, and for higher scientific research to the KAAD (Bonn) academic foundation.

Conclusion

Having examined all the materials, the scientific papers, and the description of Boyadzhiev’s scientific contributions presented in the present competition, I find it justified to give my positive vote for the appointment of Assoc. Prof. Dr. Roumen Boyadzhiev to the academic position "PROFESSOR" at Sofia University “St. Kliment Ohridski”, in the professional field 2.2. History and Archeology (History of Late Antiquity: Christian Prosopography). I think he deserves it completely.

16.07.2019

Sofia

Reviewer:

/ prof. Dr. Ivaila Popova /