

Competition for Associate professor in professional field 2.4. Religion and Theology (Eastern Church Chant) in the Theological Faculty of the State Sofia University “St. Kliment Ohridski”

R e v i e w by Academician Svetlana Kujumdzieva

Chief Assistant Dr. Lubomir Angelov Ignatov is the only candidate in the competition for Associate professor in a professional field 2.4. Religion and Theology (Eastern Church Chant) in the Theological Faculty of the Sofia State University “St. Kliment Ohridski”. The completion is announced in the State Gazette no. 63 of July 30, 2021.

Dr. Ignatov was born on April 10, 1963. He graduated successively from Sofia Theological Seminary “St. John of Rila” and the Theological Academy “St. Kliment Ohridski” with a specialty “Practical and Systematical Orthodox Theology”. Dr. Ignatov was involved as a teacher of Eastern Church chant and Liturgical order (Typikon) in the Sofia Theological Seminary “St. John of Rila”, in the Plovdiv Theological Seminary “St. Cyril and Methodius” and in the Department of Practical Theology at the Faculty of Theology at Sofia University “St. Kliment Ohridski”. In 2007 Dr. Ignatov received the award for best teacher from the Ministry of Education and Science. In 2018 he defended his dissertation and received the educational and scientific degree “Ph. D.” in the field of Eastern Church chant. Dr. Ignatov is a member of the church board at the chapel of the Faculty of Theology, conductor of Eastern Church chants at the same faculty, as well as founder, leader and conductor of the Sofia Psalms Choir. As a conductor and church singer he has participated in a number of concerts in Bulgaria and abroad with a repertoire in the field of church music. In addition, he organized and conducted pilgrimage educational trips.

According to the presented materials, Dr. Ignatov is the author of 42 publications – articles, studies and one monograph. 17 of them were published from 2018 onwards, i.e. from the time of the defense of his dissertation, 5 of which are from the last 2021¹. The number of submitted publications is sufficient and unconditionally allows the candidate to appear in the competition for Associate professor. The topics developed in them in the field of theology, worship and Eastern

¹ Another monograph is added in the application of the publications published in 2021, “Псалмопението. Духовно-музикална съкровищница на двата Завета“ (“The Psalm. Spiritual and musical treasury of the two Testaments”), 282 pages. However, it is not included in the List of all publications (№ 10A in the main documentation), as well as in the List of publications for participation in the competition (№ 10B) and in the summaries in Bulgarian and English of the submitted works for participation in the competition (№ 17). It is cited in the document for minimum requirements for participation in the competition (№ 12) and its summary is included in the Scientific contributions of the research activity of Dr. Ignatov (№14).

church chant are in a wide range. Theological and liturgical topics related to the Mother of God and to the Typika of the Orthodox Church; to the oktoechal system and to understanding the nature of Eastern music; to the presentation of prominent personalities and their significance for Eastern Orthodox music, such as St. Basil the Great, Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite, St. Maximus the Confessor, and to the three reformers of church music from the early 19th century Chrysantos, Churmusios and Gregorios Protopsaltis; and last but not least, publications that outline the personal character of a number of writers and figures with contributions to Bulgarian hymnography and church music, such as the holy brothers Cyril and Methodius, St. Kliment Ohridski, St. John Kukuzelis, Hadji Angel Ivanov Sevlievets, Dimitar Zlatanov Gradoborski (also known as Gradoborcheto), Metropolitan Methodi Kusev, etc. The works correspond to the scientific interests of Dr. Ignatov, related to theology and liturgy, the history, theory and archeography of Eastern church chant, its simeography, axiology and prosopography.

Dr. Ignatov participates in the competition for Associate professor with 18 works – 1 monograph, 2 studies and 15 articles published since 2009 in prestigious publishing houses, such as the University Publishing House „St. Kliment Ohridski”, East-West Publishing House, Bulgarian Music Association, Theological Thought, Christianity and Culture, Bulgarian Musicology, etc. It should be emphasized that the publications presented in the competition are appropriately selected: they give a fairly complete picture of the wide range of scientific interests of the candidate. I will discuss them from my point of view.

In the monograph **„Dynamics in the understanding of church singing in the period of IV–VI century (axiology and praxiology)”**² the author examines an important period in the history of Christian culture. A detailed review of the classical patriological literature is made. Many of the presented data are purposefully and expediently systematized according to the researched problems, some of which go beyond the set topic. Important characteristics of the period under consideration are presented with appropriate arguments, such as the formation of a certain value system for correctness and incorrectness in church singing, the emergence of liturgical rules regarding singing according to the ecclesiastical Ecumenical and Local Councils concerning issues of singing and singers, the appearance of certain genres, the establishment of some rites with the use of singing, the role of singing against heretical teachings, etc. An important contribution of the work is that the individual chapters are formulated according to the problems derived from the

² Published by the Holy Metropolis of Varna and Veliki Preslav in 2021.

writings of the Holy Fathers. A number of the issues raised are still debatable in Bulgarian and international research. For example, about the concept of church singing – how to call it – “Byzantine” or “Eastern”? The author convincingly accepts the term „Eastern” as corresponding to historical reality, which he defends with a number of arguments. Dr. Ignatov also noted the presence of poetic structure, techniques and stylistics, which he discovered in church singing genres of later times. The considered period 4th – 6th centuries is correctly characterized as “creative” and “formative” with the participation of prominent church figures. There are convincing arguments that even at this early period church singing became one of the factors for the unity of Christians, which is determined as its mission.

Dr. Ignatov dedicates separate works to a number of the problems posed in the monograph: **„Is our singing Byzantine or Eastern”**³, **„On church singing”**⁴, where, on the basis of some writings of prominent church figures, the role of Orthodox music in human history and its beneficial effect on spiritual attitudes is considered; **„Singer positions”**⁵ by discussing the decisions of the local Laodicean Council of 367, when it was decreed that only those who had studied church singing „by book” should sing in a temple. As the author notes, this paves the way for the formation of the singing positions of psalt, domestikos, lampadarios protopsaltis, master-protopsaltis and kanonarch; and the article **„The woman and the church singing work through the centuries (prominent singers and songwriters in the Orthodox Church)”**⁶ in which the author presents a number of arguments for the contribution of the Christian woman to the Orthodox Church: the hymn-singing and chanting women, as he emphasizes, diligently performed their church-singing duties in worship and the problems for them should not be neglected.

In his study **„The number of Eastern church modes in the works of St. Maximus the Confessor”**⁷ the author dwells on the important and great problem of the oktoechal system – why exactly this system was established as such in Eastern music. He examines the development of it since the 4th century onwards, emphasizing that it received its completed form in the epoch-making work of St. John of Damascus in the 8th century. Dr. Ignatov commented on the symbolism of the number eight. He came to the conclusion that the greatest influence on the acceptance of this number in the understanding of modality in Eastern chant has the symbolic numerology discussed

³ *Ab oriente lux. Музика на православния изток*, 2018, 37-43.

⁴ *Ab oriente...*, 60-64.

⁵ *Ab oriente...*, 64-70.

⁶ *Свидетелство, служение и богослужение на Църквата*, 2021, 254-269.

⁷ *Богословска мисъл*, бр. 2, 2016 г., 15-41.

in the writings of the Holy Church Fathers. The number eight is accepted as the eighth day of the Creation on the one hand, and on the other – as a period of eight weeks from Easter to Pentekost. The eighth day in Christology emerges as a new day after the holy number seven for the Jewish Sabbath, laying, as the author notes, the basis of everything new – the New Testament, the New Israel, the New Jerusalem, etc. It should be stressed that the medieval scholars agree that the origin of the modal echos system remained an unsolved problem and why it was based mainly on the number eight. Various reasons are given. The number eight is believed to be related to the Christ's resurrection. According to the scriptures, Jesus first appeared to his disciples on the eighth day. As Dr. Ignatov commented, Sundays were originally celebrated during Easter time. The main meaning of this time is in the belief that “we are saved, we belong to Christ”. The Easter mystery from the earliest times formed the basis of the rhythmic division of the year as a liturgical expression and center of Christian salvation. This is also an argument for the connection of the modal system with the calendar. The calendar is connected with what Dr. Ignatov also commented on. The much used calendar based on 50 days is considered. It included seven weeks (including Saturdays) and one final holiday. Soon, three more such cycles were added to the first one of 50 days. The full year is considered to be composed of seven Pentekostals, to which are added fourteen days (= 364). It is assumed, according to this calendar theory, that the repetition of seven + one day, of which the eighth day differs from the first one, determines the system of the eight church modes. In the symbolic-numerical theory, which is on the ground of Dr. Ignatov's research, in the Christian religious literature the number eight has always been given special value. It was conceived as a symbol of perfection and wholeness, as an indication of the Resurrection of the Lord and His peace. According to St. Gregory the Theologian and Dionysius the Areopagite, the number eight symbolizes eternity, and according to St. John of Damascus – the resurrection of the dead. Dr. Ignatov emphasizes that it is a sacred number and characterizes it as “fullness of fullness”. He also discusses the problems of the eighth modal system in his publications **„The symbolic-numerological hypothesis about the number of the Eastern church modes in the context of the works of St. Maximus the Confessor and the church writers from the IV–VI century“**⁸ and **„On the 8 tone musical system of the church“**⁹.

⁸ *Христианство и культура*, т. 137, № 10, 2018, 115-133.

⁹ *Ab oriente lux...*, 60-64.

A separate group of issues is addressed in the articles **“About the works of St. Basil the Great from the musical point of view”**¹⁰ and **“Church hymnography and music in the context of the creations of the Holy Three Saints”**¹¹. The studies present the church-musical views according to the writings of St. Basil the Great, Gregory the Theologian and John Chrysostom. Their works, which inspired later poets to write church hymns, some of which remain in practice to this day, are listed. Emphasis is put on their teaching on the purity and spirituality of Christian poetry and music. Similar problems are posed in the article **„The hymns in celebration and prayer of the Holy Mother of God (in front of the doors of the Virgin Lent)”**¹². On the basis of two of the very famous chants for the Mother of God, the Prayer Kanon and the Akathistos Hymn, the theotokia chants are commented in the works of St. Romanos the Melode, Georgios Pisidiyski, St. Theosteriktos Medikijski and St. Nikodimos of Mount Athos.

Important issues are also discussed in the article **„Church-musical and hymnological data in the works of Pseudo-Dionisius the Areopagite”**¹³. The author comments on the views of the prominent writer from the beginning of the 6th century on the essence and significance of church music. Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite is known to have adapted Plato's and Neoplaton's philosophy to Christian theology. According to this adaptation, the work of art belongs to the world of images. It is a projection of a reality that can be seen, and everything in it can be heard only by the highest celestial hierarchy, represented by Angels, Cherubim and Seraphim. They are able to capture the divine beauty of what is present in the heavenly reality, and to transmit it to the lower heavenly rank of Prophets and Saints; from them it can reach the earthly authors, who in a state of divine vision write a text, compose music or draw an image. The respective author of the text, the music or the image had to be guided by the patterns bequeathed by the sacred tradition. In this sense, Dr. Ignatov characterizes the hymns as a “reflection” of the heavenly Church.

Some of the presented publications are dedicated specifically to problems in Bulgarian music history. In the article **„Church music in the Bulgarian lands”**¹⁴ the development of music in Bulgaria is discussed – from the time of the holy brothers Cyril and Methodius to the views of Bulgarian musicians from the first half of the 20th century, such as Atanas Manov, Peter Sarafov and others. In the study **„About St. Climent Ohridski as a church songwriter and the first**

¹⁰ *Християнство и култура*, т. 36, № 1, 2009, 93-104.

¹¹ *Богословска мисъл*, № 2, 2019, 77-91.

¹² *Светодавец*, № 8, 2021, 18-30.

¹³ *Християнство и култура*, т. 127, № 10, 2017, 102-115.

¹⁴ *Ab oriente...*, 44-59.

Bulgarian music teacher¹⁵ the author defends the position that the great writer is the creator of a song repertoire necessary for the Bulgarian Church and its employees; St. Cement is ordained among the most prominent figures of psaltic art, such as Andrew of Crete, John of Damascus, Theodore the Studite and others. In the study „**St. Ioan Kukuzel – a measure of singing mastery in Eastern Church music**“¹⁶ the author pays special attention to the activity of the great Master as a creator not only of music, but also of spiritual-poetic texts, which activity has remained little known in musical medieval studies. He also gives arguments about the Bulgarian origin of a famous musician. The life and activity of one of the famous Bulgarian National Revival figures and his contribution in the field of church singing art are discussed in the article „**Newly discovered sources about the life and church music activity of Dimitar Zlatanov-Gradoborski**“¹⁷. A newly found church-chant collection is presented, which contains hitherto unknown authorial and translated works of Dimitar Zlatanov. A newly discovered manuscript originating from the Rila Singing School is also presented in the article „**Unknown musical manuscript from the Rila Church Singing School**“¹⁸. The author describes the manuscript in detail. According to data in it, he concludes that the manuscript was composed and written by the famous Rila writer Epiphaniij of Rila in 1886. The article „**The history of the liturgical Typikon of the Bulgarian Orthodox Church in the context of the church-public work in the Stara Zagora diocese during the consecration of Metropolitan Methodij Kusev**“¹⁹ is dedicated to the 110th- anniversary of the publication of the Constantinople liturgical Typikon in modern Bulgarian language in 1909. Emphasis is put on the publisher of the Typikon, Ivan Neychev, and his contemporary Metropolitan Methodij Kusev. For the first time, data extracted from the study of the kondika of the church “St. Virgin” in the town of Stara Zagora, covering the educational and public activities of the two church figures, are announced.

Conclusion. The commented studies of Dr. Lubomir Ignatov present him as a serious, profound and responsible researcher. He poses and studies a number of important questions from the great history of Eastern Orthodox church, to which he seeks answers defending his opinion on them with arguments. Dr. Ignatov is well acquainted with the scientific literature on the issues

¹⁵ *Св. Климент Охридски, пръв епископ на българския език*, 2020, 217-232.

¹⁶ *Св. Йоан Кукузел – личност, творчество, епоха*, 2020, 44-83.

¹⁷ *Българско музикознание*, № 1, 2009, 34-50.

¹⁸ *Културното наследство на Рилския манастир – състояние и перспективи на проучването, опазването и реставрирането му*, 2011, 135-144.

¹⁹ *Нашата вяра*, № 2, 2021, 3-11.

involved. His language is clear and precise. 10 citations have been found in Google Scholar and other scientific journals. As a whole, his publications enrich our knowledge in the field of Eastern Church chant, including the introduction of new valuable sources. They are a contribution to both science and education.

I strongly suggest that Dr. Lyubomir Angelov Ignatov be awarded the academic position of „ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR”.

Sofia, December 6, 2021