

## EVALUATION

of the application for the position of Professor in (Bulgarian Language – Old Bulgarian), branch of science 2.1 Philology, announced in “Darzhaven Vestnik” 103, Dec 10, 2021.

The sole applicant for the position is Ass. Professor Petko Dimitrov Petkov, a long-time serving lecturer at the Faculty of Slavic Studies at the Sofia University “Sv. Kliment Ohridski”. He has submitted a large number of publications written after he was elected for Ass. Prof. in 2016, part of them in collaboration with other scholars. In this evaluation I will focus on the works he has written personally or in which his contribution is clearly stated.

Central place among these holds the monograph „Zaropismo illi Balgarska Istorija by farher Edoardo Valpa”, to appear in 2022 (the publisher “Bukvica” has submitted an official statement). It represents a valuable manuscript of the Pavlikjani (I prefer this somewhat awkward spelling to the seemingly more appropriate “Paulician”, because of the latter’s overt religious meaning) literature written in 1849 by a Catholic priest who served consecutively in Zhitnica and General Nikolaevo (currently a quarter of the city of Rakovsky). The book includes materials from all available variants of the text, and the text of “Book of Tsars” by Hristaki Pavlovich which served as a model, is published alongside. The publication of this book is an important event for Bulgarian dialectology, and also for the history of Bulgarian. The Pavlikjani dialect has a unique place in Bulgarian dialectal diversity. Spoken on both sides of the Balkan Mountain range, in villages that are not even in close proximity in each of the two areas, it nevertheless exhibits remarkable structural unity. This is in stark contrast with the situation of another confessional group – the Bulgarian Muslims – in which the linguistic differentiation is correlated with geographic space, as in every dialect continuum. Its relation to the Rhodope dialects, suggested by Miletich, is still not a fully settled question. This is why all new data on this dialect are of great value.

Petkov has written a detailed linguistic description of the manuscript, taking into full consideration the classical works of Ljubomir Miletich from 1912. The author’s approach is extremely cautious and he manages to distinguish the real

features of the dialect reflected in the texts, from the limitations imposed by the spelling system chosen by Valpa, and his attempts at standardizing. With thorough knowledge of the Pavlikjani dialect, Petkov outlines the few in number, but significant nevertheless cases in which the dialect features surface in the text (it is necessary to edit the typo “change of *e* (instead if *o*) to *u* can be illustrated with the following examples: kuren, od koguto” on page 41, in the final edition).

The author’s conclusion that the Pavlikjani dialect, as presented in this manuscript, is closer to the dialect of Zlatograd than to the Central Rhodope dialect is quite compelling. Also important is the problem with the resolution of the jat vowel. Petkov has no doubt that at the time of writing of the document it was distinct from /*e*/ (p. 36). He has enough evidence for this claim, in view of the fact that the manuscript does not distinguish between /*a*/ and /*ɔ*/ (p. 36). Several decades later Miletich claimed that only the oldest speakers had different, somewhat more open, pronunciation of jat. It is the efforts of scholars like Petkov that could settle such questions, which are central to the history of the Bulgarian phonology.

Another important publications is the “The Dragotin Apostol. Bulgarian Manuscript from 12–13 century”, in collaboration with Iskra Hristova-Shomova. The linguistic analysis is done by Petko Petkov alone. He has described in details the graphic and the spelling features, the changes in the verbal system, and the gradual declining of the cases. The excellent knowledge of the Bulgarian dialects allows the author to draw important parallels with the current state of the extreme South-Western dialects, e.g. the loss of the consonant /*s*/ in the auxiliary verb.

Although short at first glance, and written in collaboration (with Ivan Iliev), Petkov’s contributions to dialectology are impressive. The frequently underestimated field work and reporting of new facts are at the real base of this science. This is why I hold in high esteem contributions such as “Primary and Secondary Nasals in a Western-Rhodope Dialect” (Balgarska rech, 28, 2–3, 2020, 39–47), and “Unknown Model for Negative Imperative (In: Neno Nedelchev v naukata za balgarite. Sofia, 2017, 275–279).

Petkov’s studies ”Compound in the Egyptian Pateric” (Ricerche slavistiche 14 (60) 2016: 439–489) and “Suffix Motivated Abstract Nouns in the Text of the Egyptian Pateric” (Yearbook of Sofia University, 101, 2016, 5–104) are model word formation investigations.

Large part of Petko Petkov’s publications are critical editions and catalogs of written monuments. His entire scientific activity seems to be aimed at one direction

– widening, in terms of time and space, of the whole picture of the historical development and the functioning of the Bulgarian language.

Petko Petkov is a competent investigator of the Bulgarian literary heritage and the Bulgarian language in all its varieties. No wonder he is so sought-for co-author. His work is precise, fact-oriented, his conclusions are clear and well-founded. As a long-time university teacher, he also works to improve the process of education, as evidenced by his collection “Through the Old Manuscripts: South Slavic Texts from 14th and 15th Century”, to appear in Sofia University Press.

Petko Dimitrov Petkov is a linguist with his own approach and contribution to Bulgarian linguistics. This is why I recommend that the scientific jury appoint him as a professor. I will vote for this with full conviction.

10.04.2022

prof. Vladimir Zhobov