

OPINION

by Professor Dr. Margaret Dimitrova

on the procedure for the position of a professor in 2. Humanities, 2.1. Bulgarian
Language/ Old Bulgarian Language

at St. Kliment Ohridski University, Faculty of Slavic Philologies,

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The only candidate for the position of professor announced is Associate Professor Dr. Petko Petkov. He applies with voluminous academic publications, including monographs, papers published in periodicals and collective volumes, and a textbook.

Today Dr. Petkov is one of the best specialists at the Slavo-Bulgarian History by Paisij of Hilandar, at its dissemination and revisions. After his contribution to the most recent academic edition of the Zograf autograph accompanied with variant readings from six copies belonging to the so-called archaic group (it includes copies that are close to the two copies of the autograph disseminated amongst the Bulgarians) and after his work on the project for electronic descriptions of the extant copies of Slavo-Bulgarian History accompanied with maps showing their production, dissemination, and preservation (see geographyofletters.org, 2017), in the competition for the position of professor, Dr. Petkov presents a monograph dedicated to the latest known historical compilation based on Paisij's Slavo-Bulgarian History – the compilation is known as Paulician's version (because it was produced in the milieu of the former Paulicians in Plovdiv region who converted to Catholicism and produced manuscripts written in the vernacular with Latin alphabet in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries). Up to now this version or compilation known in four manuscripts has not been fully studied. In order to elucidate its character and the links amongst these four manuscripts, Petkov made an exemplary edition of the *Zaropismo illi Balgarska Istoria* by father Edoardo Valpa (№ 1 in the list of the monographs submitted). Through this edition he revealed the work process of the priest. Dr. Petkov edited the draft of the priest which followed the printed compilation based on the Slavo-Bulgarian History known as Tsarstvenik of 1844 by Khristaki Pavlovitch, and further he parallelly edited his later version in which Valpa added information from other sources and another version, in all likelihood, composed again by the

priest of Torino but surviving in a copy by other scribe. Also, Petkov added variant readings from the fourth copy and the primary source of don Edoardo – the Tsarstvenik. In this manner, the relations between the five sources are clearly shown, as well as the work process, the doubts, choices, and predilections of the priest are elucidated. The edition by Petkov allows for various comparisons, including of the language of the Tsarstvenik influenced by Church Slavonic and the language of Father Edoardo's versions that is very close to the vernacular. Petkov comments on the language of this compilation of the Slavo-Bulgarian History contextualising it in the existing variety written varieties of the Bulgarian eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. It is also worth noting that Petkov's edition is valuable contribution to the study of the Paulician literature of these two centuries. It should be borne in mind that editions of such sources are very few and those that exist are editions of religious texts most of which translations from Italian.

Along with this individual monograph, Petkov co-authored other monographs in which his contributions are invaluable. For instance, in the volume co-authored with Iskra Hristova-Shomova (№ 4 in the list of monographs: Петков, П., И. Христова-Шомова. *Драготин апостол. Български ръкопис от XII - XIII в. С.*, УИ „Св. Климент Охридски“, 2019) the analysis of the language of the Middle Bulgarian Dragotin Apostol (pp. 59–98) is a masterpiece. The scholar outlined the specifics of this manuscript in juxtaposition with the features typical of other Middle Bulgarian sources. His analysis contributes to the elucidation of the main tendencies in the written norms (or *usus*) and deviations from them in the Middle Bulgarian manuscripts. In this book the volume of the work of the co-authors on the edition of the text is clearly defined (see p. 15). About $\frac{3}{4}$ of this edition is prepared by Petkov. I should underline that the edition includes variant readings from five Apostoli of the eleventh – thirteenth centuries and from one of the early fourteenth century, all six belonging to the most archaic version (redaction) of the translation of the Acts and Epistles. Also, the edition of the Dragotin Apostol includes a parallel Greek text. In this manner, this book allows for further conclusions of the dissemination and revision of the earliest translation of this New Testament texts in Bulgarian milieu. Since the editions of Middle Bulgarian New Testament sources are not many, the edition of this valuable manuscripts contributes to the study of the *textus venerabilis*, as language, text transmission, and ornament in the Middle Ages. The parts in the monograph written by Petkov reveal the high professional standards that he observes in his work and his profound knowledge of medieval Slavonic written heritage, including both details and main tendencies.

Other two co-authored monographs reveal the professionalism and deep insights of Petkov in the analysis and edition of medieval Slavonic sources, viz.: 1) Христова-Шомова, И., В. Савова, П. Петков. *Песни за Климент. Служби за св. Климент, писани от X до XX век*. С.: УИ „Св. Климент Охридски“, 2016 (№ 6 in the list of monographs submitted by the author) and 2) Петков, П., К. Поповски, А. Бояджиев. *Пергаментни кирилски откъслечи от библиотеката на Зографската света обител*. Зографски манастир, Света гора, 2019 (№ 5 in the list of monographs submitted). These two monographs use different methods of study and testify of the ability of Petkov to overcome different types of difficulties. In the former one, the specifics are that the hymns dedicated to St. Kliment Ohridski survive in later copies, while in the latter, the identification of the parchment fragments kept in the Library of Zograph Monastery is not an easy task. Both volumes show that Petkov is able of making thought-provoking analysis of source belonging to different time, milieux, genre, and having different manners of dissemination and use. As a matter of fact, this ability of making deep analysis of sources that differ in function and language strategies is typical of his academic research as a whole: he has valuable contributions to the examination of texts and manuscripts dating from the tenth to the twentieth century. This feature of Petkov's expertise is evident in his papers published in edited volumes and periodicals. These publications reveal that he has analysed difficult texts that are fundamental for the history of Christian thought and mentality, such as compositions by Gregory Sinaites (№ 2 in the list of papers submitted by the author), by Basil the Great (№ 1, 7, 8), by Anastasios Sinaites (№12), as well as a sermon by the famous medieval Slavonic writer Gregory Tsamblak (№16). Many of the texts that Petkov studied and edited are part of manuscripts held in Zograf Monastery. Judging from his publications and from the project to which Petkov contributed I could say that today he is one of the scholars who know best the rich manuscript heritage housed in this monastery. It is not by chance that he is a member of the team dealing with the analytical description of Zograf manuscripts.

Along with the study of medieval manuscripts, Petkov has dedicated research to late manuscripts written in nineteenth-century Bulgarian kept in this repository (see № 6 in the list of articles submitted by the author). This sphere of research of our colleague is connected to his study of Bulgarian dialects and written forms of dialectal speech. In collaboration with Ivan Iliev they studied dialects about which little is known in the present-day scholarship, like some spoken outside the boundaries of Republic of Bulgaria (see № 2, 3, 11 in the list of articles submitted by Petkov).

The publications of Petko Petkov commented above speak of the author's profound knowledge of various manifestations of the history of the Bulgarian language and of his expert choice to find the most appropriate methods of studying and editing the sources – depending on the nature of the manuscript and/or text. I must add that he never follows well known paths. Due to his extensive knowledge of sources, he discovers new research fields and problems and/or gives innovative solutions to familiar problems. Moreover, what is characteristic of his academic profile is that he is not afraid to dedicate research to difficult and time-consuming tasks. His approach is always objective and corresponds well to the nature of the sources studied. His academic style of writing is excellent: elegant, informative, precise, clear, and moving.

Associate Professor Petko Petkov is an excellent university teacher who is able of presenting the most complex issues in the history of the Bulgarian language in a memorable and attracting manner. Even more valuable is his manner of involving students in joint research problems (see № 1 and № 9 his lists of publications). It is my believe that this is most effective paedagogical method: to offer the students an opportunity to solve research problems of their own. Petkov's rich teaching experience is evident in the way in which he composed a textbook containing texts from fourteenth and fifteenth-century South Slavonic manuscripts. The volume is unique: it contains texts most of which have never been published before and the manuscripts in which they survive are little known. Moreover, the editions of the texts are accompanied with information on their authors and translations, as well as on the manuscript sources. The selection of the sources sheds light on the large variety of texts translated and copied in these centuries amongst the South Slavs. The choice of scribal notes and colophons speaks not only of their language but also about the mentality and spiritual quests of the scribes.

Considering the multifaceted research contributions and academic activities of Petko Petkov, his whole-hearted dedication to academic work and his excellent scholarly results, I will vote – without any hesitation – in favour of him taking the position of professor at St. Kliment Ohridski University of Sofia.

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