



REVIEW

in connection with the competition announced in the State Gazette, issue 11/06.02.2024, for an associate professor in the field of higher education
2. Humanities, professional direction 2.2. History and Archaeology,
for the needs of the "Cyrillo-Methodian sources and traditions" section
at the Cyrillo-Methodian Scientific Centre of the BAS

Only one candidate submitted documents for participation in the competition in question - Dr. Evgeni Dimitrov Zashev from KMNC. Pursuant to Art. 17, para. 5 of the Regulations on the terms and conditions for acquiring scientific degrees and holding academic positions of the KMNC-BAS, the candidate is allowed to participate in the competition by a committee appointed by order No. 17 RD-16/ 05.04.2024 of the director of KMNC (protocol No. 1 HO-05-05/ 09.04.2024), to which the members of the Scientific Jury for the competition, appointed by Order No. 16 RD-16/ 04.04.2024, – again to the director of KMNC at the BAS, did not object either after getting acquainted with the candidate's documents, submitted within the deadline established by law to the office of the Cyrillo-Methodian Scientific Centre.

The candidate for this competition, Evgeni Zashev, graduated from NGDEK "Constantine-Cyril the Philosopher", then studied at Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski", in the Faculty of Slavic Philology. He received a master's degree in Bulgarian philology, as well as in history and theory of culture from the Faculty of Philosophy of the same university. In 1994-97, Evgeni Zashev was a doctoral student at the

Cyrillo-Methodian Scientific Centre of the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences. Later, he defended a dissertation on the topic "History and peculiarities of the paterical part of the Laurentian collection", for which he was awarded the educational and scientific degree "doctor".

For many years, Dr. Zashev taught at the National High School for Ancient Languages and Cultures, led a lectureship in Bulgarian language, literature and culture at the Department of Slavic Philology at the Faculty of Philosophy of the "Jan Amos Comenius" University of Bratislava, and since 1997 until now he is a key figure in the research team of KMNC. He participated in numerous scientific and scientific-applied projects, the most important of which are directly related to his close specialization in the field of Old Bulgarian Studies, Slavic Studies and Cyrillomethodology.

The teaching work of Dr. Evgeni Zashev deserves special attention, in which he shows one of the best sides of his versatile profile as a specialist. The teaching of Bulgarian language and literature at the Classical High School is well supplemented by his numerous participations in summer seminars on Bulgarian language and culture, organized by Sofia University and other Bulgarian institutions, in order to reach the lectureship in Bulgarian studies, which he leads for five years (2006-2011) at the "Jan Amos Comenius" University of Bratislava and to the video lecture "200 minutes KYRILOMETODIEVISTICA" (History, culture and literature of medieval Bulgaria) within the framework of the national program "Cultural-historical heritage, national memory and social development", financed by the Ministry of Education and Science. Close to this aspect of Dr. Zashev's multifaceted activity is the project prepared by him "Cyrillo-Methodian places of memory in Bulgarian culture - contribution to the construction of the European cultural route "Cyril and Methodius", which became part of the virtual cluster under

construction "Kyrilomethodikon" at the Center for Excellence "Heritage.bg".

This brief presentation of Dr. Zashev as a specialist in his preferred fields of humanitarian studies explains his multiple engagements as an expert in: the Commission on Minorities at the Council of Europe, the National Assembly of the Republic of Bulgaria, the Council for Foreign Bulgarian Studies (BAS), Ministry of Education and Science, Government Office of the Slovak Republic, Faculty of Philosophy, Jan Amos Comenius University (Bratislava, Slovakia), Konrad Adenauer Foundation, British Council, Centre for Educational Initiatives, Humanitas Foundation, etc., duly listed in document No. 13 according to the number of the document array with which the candidate appears in this competition.

Dr. Evgeni Zashev has long been a recognizable figure among the international community of slavists and medievalists, and this is clearly evident from his participation in thirty prestigious international and national scientific forums. Half of them are closely related to Cyrillo-Methodian studies, and the rest cover wider areas of the spiritual culture and heritage of Europe, as well as their reception in the Bulgarian language, literature and mentality. In the last few years, Dr. Evgeni Zashev's attention has been increasingly focused on the subject of the holy Seven Apostles and more specifically on the traces of their work related to the Albanian city of Berat and this can be seen from the topics of his reports at various scientific forums held between 2021 and 2023.

At the current competition, Dr. Evgeni Zashev appears with 12 publications that meet the requirements of Art. 4, para. 6 of the ZRASRB - were not submitted for participation in a previous procedure under this law and have no connection with his dissertation for the acquisition of the educational and scientific degree "doctor". But there is something else.

This set of works by Dr. Zashev (document No. 6.1. according to the numbering of the document array with which the candidate appears in this competition) also reflects the stages of preparation for writing the habilitation thesis with which Dr. Zashev presents himself at the competition: the monographic study "The Berat Memory of the St. Seven Apostles" (Sofia, 2024. ISBN 978-954-9787-62-7, 264 pages). It concerns the publications numbered 6 to 11, which precede the candidate's monograph (under number 12) in the mentioned list.

Of the remaining five works, three (Nos. 3, 4 and 5) are related to the theme of paterical stories, although the "soul-helpful" stories of Bishop Pavel of Monemvasia (No. 5) are only a late echo of this genre. The other two publications are further away from these two main directions in Dr. Zashev's scientific activities so far and are related to his activity as a lecturer in Bulgarian studies in Bratislava (publication No. 1) and, in general, to the echo of the Bulgarian mediaeval past in Early Modern Western Europe (Publication No. 2).

In any case, of decisive importance in my assessment of the overall performance of the candidate for this competition - Dr. Evgeni Zashev, is his habilitation thesis dedicated to the traces left by the work of Cyril and Methodius and their students in Berat (publication no. 12 of the already repeatedly cited list).

The aim of the monographic composition is to identify the genesis of the veneration for the holy Seven Apostles, which apparently arose in the south-western Bulgarian lands during the Middle Ages and more specifically in the region of the Berat bishopric, for which there is no small reason from the point of view of the medieval Christian – the reliquary with particles of their relics. As the alleged compiler of the so-called by the author Berat service of the St. Seven Apostles, the bishop of Gora and Mokra from the 18th century, Michael Ipishiot, is highlighted.

The originality of one part of the service has been emphasized – quite justifiably – the Canon for St. Gorazd and St. Angelarius.

The third and fourth chapters of the monographic work are of particular importance for understanding the seven-component image of the saints - heroes of the Service, as well as their merit for the enlightenment of the population in the lands where they ventured. In the fifth chapter, the genesis of the joint cult of the seven saints is traced. For this purpose the author takes us to all the places important for their memory and analyzes a number of artifacts and monuments, supporting his conclusions about the end of the 17th century as the *terminus post quem* for the fixation of their common cult. The last, sixth chapter takes the research to a much later era (the end of the 19th century) in order to show the influence of the so-called Berat tradition in the veneration of the holy Seven Apostles on the highest representatives of the clergy in Berat, regardless of the hierarchical changes that occurred after the destruction of the Ohrid Archbishopric at the end of the eighteenth century. The useful appendices to the monography should not be overlooked, namely: the new edition of the Berat Service of the Septuagint and three texts of its most likely compiler - Michael Ipischiot, extracted from the Moskhopolis editions of the services of St. Clement and St. Naum.

It is at least inappropriate to talk about the style and language of such an established researcher as Dr. Evgeni Zashev. Therefore, I will go directly to the contributing moments in his habilitation thesis, the presence of which, according to the already quoted ŽRASRB, are the *conditio sine qua non* for the occupation of the academic position of "associate professor". For greater clarity, here I will follow the order of the contributions highlighted by the participant in the competition in the

document No. 9 presented by him (Author's reference for the original scientific contributions of Dr. Evgeni Zashev), pp. 1-3.

First of all, and common to the entire work, the author's decision to investigate the problem of the Berat Service is not in the expected retrospective, but in a prospective plan. This approach was used not to achieve originality, but to harmonize the set research tasks and the results of their implementation. And in this regard, success is indisputable.

In second place (but not in importance!) is the analysis of the reasons for the emergence of such a certain interest in the brothers Cyril and Methodius and their most prominent students in Berat, and answering the question of who first materialized this interest in the so important for the cult of saints presence of a church service. In this direction, what Dr. Zashev wrote about the Berat Reliquary and Michael Ispischiot can be defined as an important scientific contribution.

Thirdly, I will note the contribution analysis of the original part of the Berat service, namely the canon of St. Gorazd and St. Angelarius. In order not to rehash the author's conclusions, I will quote in part a passage from page 2 of the said document No. 9, which well sums up this undoubted scientific contribution and with which I fully agree:

This memory (about Gorazd and Angelarius - note my I.I.) is entirely post-biographical and has a mixed (folk and literary) origin, and is based on the alleged relics of the saints... This narrative was probably part of two macro-narratives, including Gorazd and Angelarius in the group of the St. Seven Apostles. The first macro-narrative is closer to the folk tradition... and the second rests on the literary sources used by the author of the Berat Service.

In the fourth place, I will note the carefully systematized topography of the early stage of the process of formation of a common cult of the St. Seven Apostles (pp. 168-173 of the monograph). And I will not fail to agree with the conclusion reached by Dr. Zashev, saying:

...the whole traced tradition is Greek-speaking and cannot yet be recognized as a real Bulgarian national initiative of the revival type, but rather a regional post-Byzantine cult that arose in the southwestern regions of the Ohrid archdiocese in a multi-ethnic environment with a dominant cultural Hellenism. (Document No. 9, p. 3)

I believe that the distinguished scientific contributions are sufficient for a monographic work, regardless of whether it is a reason for holding the academic position of "associate professor" or claims to fill a niche in our knowledge on the issues of our cultural-historical heritage. And in this case, in my opinion, Dr. Evgeni Zashev's monograph successfully fulfils both mentioned functions.

After all that has been said so far, it remains to point out that the participant in the current competition provides evidence of a completely satisfactory number of citations of his works, as can be seen from document No. 7 in the repeatedly mentioned list of documents for the competition; citations in authoritative publications and by authoritative scientists at home and abroad. Therefore, it is not surprising that, from a scientometric point of view, Dr. Zashev also occupies the enviable position of a well-recognized specialist in his chosen field of research.

In conclusion of the observations shared in this review regarding the only participant in the competition for the academic position "associate professor" - Dr. Evgeni Dimitrov Zashev from the KMNC of the BAS, I want to say that I will vote with complete conviction "FOR" the

Scientific Council relevant in this case - that of the Institute for Historical Studies of the BAS, to elect Dr. Evgeni Dimitrov Zashev as associate professor in the "Cyrillo-Methodian Sources and Traditions" section at the Cyrillo-Methodian Scientific Center of the BAS.

Sofia, May 15, 2024

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