



## Promotion Statement of a Candidate's Application for Associate Professorship

by Prof. Alexandar N. Nikolov, Faculty of History, University of Sofia "St. Kliment Ohridski" on behalf of Evgeni Dimitrov Zashev, the only applicant for the academic position of Associate Professor in Professional Field 2.2: History and Archaeology, advertised in *DV* 11/06.02.2024, for the Cyrillo-Methodian Research Center- BAS, Department "Cyrillo-Methodian Sources and Traditions".

### 1. Procedure Information:

The competition for the academic office "Associate Professor" has been announced for the needs of the Cyrillo-Methodian Research Center- BAS, Department "Cyrillo-Methodian Sources and Traditions".

. The only candidate is Chief Ass. Evgeni Dimitrov Zashev, PhD.

When announcing the competition, the norms of the Law for the Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria (ZRASRB), were strictly observed. The analysis of the research production confirms its originality of the presented scientific production. The jury is organized in full compliance with the prescribed deadlines, quotas and professional competencies.

The presented documentation, to which I received access as a member of the Scientific Jury, is precise and informative. All this gives me reason to accept that the competition is completely legitimate.

### 2. Information for the Applicant. Educational and Professional Record:

Chief Assistant Evgeni Dimitrov Zashev. PhD is a graduate of NHALC "St. Constantine-Cyrl the Philosopher" and of the Sofia Universty "St. Kliment Ohridski", Faculty of Slavic Philology, where he graduated in Bulgarian philology with a pedagogical license ("master's" degree) in 1991. In 1992, the candidate acquired a second master's degree in "History and Theory of Culture" at the Faculty of Philosophy of the SU " St. Kliment Ohridski". From 1994 to 1997, he was a full-time doctoral student in Cyrillo-Methodian Studies at CMRC-BAS.

At the same time, he worked as a teacher of Bulgarian language and literature at NHALC (1991-1997). In 1997, he was appointed a third-grade research assistant at CMRC, a position he held until 2011. In parallel, he was a lecturer in Bulgarian language and literature at the "Jan Amos Comenius" University in Bratislava from 2006 to 2011. In 2011 the candidate won a competition for chief assistant at CMRC, a position he holds to this day. Since 2018, he holds the position of responsible for the "Public Relations" of CMRC. In 2005, Evgeni Zashev was a stipendiary of the Onassis Foundation in the field of Byzantine literature. In 2010, he defended his doctoral dissertation on the topic: "History and peculiarities of the text of the Pateric section in the Lavrentyi miscellany". The list of expert activities of Dr. Zashev is impressive. He has worked on a number of projects with local and foreign educational organizations and foundations and is still a member of the Expert Council of the Center for Educational Initiatives. He is co-author of textbooks and teaching materials in Bulgarian language and literature for the secondary education system in Bulgaria. Dr. Zashev participated as a leader in three scientific projects - Library "Legend"; Video lecture "200 minutes of Cyril and Methodius studies"; "Cyrillo-Methodian places of memory in Bulgarian culture". Five more projects in which he actively participates are also indicated. Dr. Zashev is the scientific editor of the Legenda Library, as well as of three other scientific collections listed in the appendices. The candidate is often invited as an expert by our and foreign government bodies, foundations and associations described in the appendices.

Dr. Zashev has extensive teaching experience, including in the field of secondary education, strong computer skills and teamwork skills. He is fluent in written and spoken Slovak, Russian and English, uses the classical languages - Latin, Old Greek and Old Bulgarian, and to varying degrees all Slavic languages.

### **3. Description of the scientific works and contributions of the candidate:**

Dr. Evgeni Zashev, Chief Assistant Professor, has provided a significant volume and quality production for participation in the competition. He provides a general list of numerous publications - monographic studies and editions of monuments (7 of which one is in English); articles and studies (24, of which one is in English); one electronic publication in Slovak language; one review for a scientific forum; co-authorship in three books for the teachers, in four literature textbooks, six Bulgarian language textbooks and ten teaching materials

A separate list is presented for participation in the competition, as provided in the legal provisions. It includes one monograph and eleven studies and articles that are the subject of this promotional statement.

First of all, I will focus on the monograph "Berat's Memory of the Seven Saints", Sofia, 2024. ISBN 978-954-9787-62-7, 264 pp. It is an indisputable breakthrough in the study of the emergence of the cult of the Seven Saints, which takes us to the southwestern borders of the Diocese of the Bulgarian Archdiocese of Ohrid, in the borders of the Berat Diocese of present-day Southern Albania, and to a Greek-language literary and religious tradition from the Late Middle Ages and the beginning of the Modern Age. The monograph consists of six chapters and an appendix, which represent a very detailed analysis of a number of sources related to the emergence of this cult and especially to one very important monument, namely the Berat service dedicated to the Seven Saints.

The first chapter examines in detail the so-called Berat reliquary, which, according to the author, can be defined as the "material foundation" for the emerging cult of the Seven Saints. The power of this emerging cult is due to the interweaving of two traditions - the local oral tradition and the legacy of key authors for the Ohrid archdiocese – Theophylactus of Ohrid, Demetrius Chomatianos and Constantine Kabasilas, who dedicated an important part of their works to Saint Clement and Saint Nahum.

In the second chapter, Evgeni Zashev dwells in detail on the Berat service for the Saints of the Septuagint, probably related to the transfer of their relics to Berat. The author's theses about the authorship and composition of this service are convincing, which overturn the previous opinion about its ancient origin and indicate as the author Bishop Michael Ipischiotis, bishop of Gora and Mokra, as well as the time of creation in the first half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century before its printing in Venice ca. 1720. Zashev also traces in great detail the sources on which the service was composed, among which the Canon of St. Gorazd and St. Angelarius stands out.

In the third chapter, the author dwells on the construction of the image of the Seven Saints as a group of saints, subject to a certain internal hierarchy - teachers and followers and a certain historical and cultural environment, in which, along with "Bulgaria" and "Mysia" and "Dalmatia" appears, but far less often and only as a tribute to an existing tradition. The creators of the tradition were clearly aware of the medieval Bulgarian context in which the activity of the saints included in the group cult developed and at the same time sought to strengthen their

connection with the Ohrid Archdiocese, which continued to traditionally bear the Bulgarian designation in its name as a sign of independence in relation to the dominant Patriarchate of Constantinople.

In the fourth chapter, Dr. Zashev dwells on a long-held, but not exhausted question about the cult of Saint Gorazd and Saint Angelarius and their connection with Berat. Here the author has shown extraordinary scrupulousness and thoroughness in researching the problem of the formation of this cult and its relation to the main theme of the monograph. The strong local traces that lead to the core of the cult of the Seven Saints, associated with SS. Gorazd and Angelarius is supported by the clarification of a number of artifacts and events and their connection in a single meaning framework, and also by an analysis of the work of Anthemios Alexoudis "A brief historical description of the holy Metropolis of Velegrad", which links Prince Boris-Mihail to the cult, who, according to this version, met with Clement Nahum and Angelarius in Ohrid, after their arrival not in northern but in southern Belgrade, i.e. Berat.

The fifth chapter is devoted to the construction of the whole group of saints, which takes shape under the name "Heptarithms" according to the original terminology of the cult. The stages of its formation are traced, both chronologically and topographically, the issue of the two dates adopted for its celebration is clarified, and the role of Moschopolis as a center of literary activity related to the confirmation of this cult, the imposition of on the date of July 17<sup>th</sup> and the emancipation of the cult from its regional Berat foundation centered on and around the date of November 26<sup>th</sup>. And here the connection of the cult with the Bulgarian history and the Bulgarian people is emphasized, which connection is reflected most conscientiously, but also in a wider context, which allows to include an extensive Balkan framework, including Serbia, Illyricum, Albania, Dalmatia and Epirus, along with "Bulgarian Mysia" as the area of activity of the saints.

The sixth chapter dwells on the work of Anthemios Alexoudis, published in 1868, which affirms on the one hand Berat as the center of the cult of Seven Saints, and on the other is an exceptional example of a well-intentioned exposition regarding the Bulgarian people, with whom it is definitely connected the cult in question. The most valuable thing in this case is that Alexoudis wrote at a time of strained relations between Bulgarians and Greeks in the course of the movement for a national church, which reached its climax in 1870 with the establishment of the Bulgarian Exarchate.

In the Appendix, Evgeni Zashev has presented a new edition of the monument in question and three more literary pieces related to the author of this service, Bishop Michael Ipischiotis, namely: Consecration of Ohrid Archbishop Joasaph from the Service for St. Nahum (Moschopolis, 1740) , Consecration of the Ohrid Archbishop Joasaph from the Service for St. Clement (Moschopolis, 1742) and A brief history of the great famine and deprivation that occurred in 1740, placed at the end of the Service for St. Nahum of Ohrid (Moschopolis, 1740) In general, Evgeni Zashev's monograph is a serious contribution to a topic that has been touched upon in our historiography, but never in such depth and comprehensiveness.

The author's approach, involving a careful search for all the fragments of the most diverse nature and origin, which allow the reconstruction of the origin and development of this important cult, have allowed convincing conclusions to be drawn, both around the chronology of the cult, convincingly referred rather to the era of the Early Modern Age and the beginning of the National Revival, as well as to its geography, which points to the lands of today's Southern Albania as the initial area of its spread - an area inextricably linked to the traditions of the Ohrid archdiocese "of all Bulgaria". It shows that the cliché of the total opposition of Bulgarians and Greeks in the era of the struggle for church independence, at least for the described period, does not correspond to reality.

Seven of the presented articles are inextricably linked to the main topic of Dr. Zashev's research in recent years and show us the evolution of the author's theses on a number of issues regarding the emergence of the cult of the Seven Saints, the clarification of its primary sources, the authorship of the Berat service and much more other issues fully developed in the text of the presented monograph. The remaining four articles are devoted to four different topics related to his previous research - these are an article in English on the Lavrentyi Miscellany, the subject of Dr. Zashev's earlier publications, a translation from Greek and a commentary on 50 medieval Paterical narratives, with the most diverse subject matter, an article dedicated to the poem *La Bulgheria convertita*, which is an attempt by the Catholic missionary structures to impose their vision for the conversion of the Bulgarians in the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries, when the Catholic mission achieved its greatest successes in the Bulgarian lands. The publication dedicated to the development of Bulgarian studies at the Comenius University in Bratislava deserves special attention - a publication that is also related to the long-term activity of Dr. Zashev as a lecturer at this university.

The presented references in relation to the scientometric indicators, the reference to the citations and the contributions of the candidate outline an extremely convincing application for the academic position of "Associate Professor" for the needs of the section "Cyrillo-Methodian Sources and Traditions" at CMRC-BAS in the person of Chief Asst. Prof. Dr. Evgeni Zashev. This would be a well-deserved recognition for his fruitful efforts in the field of Cyrillo-Methodian Studies and Bulgarian Studies in general.

#### 4. Conclusion:

The teaching, scientific and project activities of Ch. Assistant Professor Evgeni Dimitrov Zashev, Ph.D., fully comply with the requirements for holding the academic position "Associate Professor" according to the requirements of the Law on the Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria. Based on this circumstance, I am pleased to propose to the esteemed jury to award the academic position of "Associate Professor" to Ch. Asst. Prof. Dr. Evgeni Dimitrov Zashev, in professional direction 2.2. History and Archeology and to wish the candidate every success in his future career.

7<sup>th</sup> of May 2024

Sofia

Signature:

/Prof. Alexandar Nikolov/

5/7/2024

**X** Александър Николов

Александър Николов

Signed by: Alexandar Nikolov