



OPINION

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regarding the candidacy of Dr. Evgeni Dimitrov Zashev for the academic position of "associate professor" in the field of higher education 2. Humanities, professional direction 2.2 History and archeology for the needs of the "Kyril-Methodiev sources and traditions" section, announced in SG no. 11 of February 6, 2024

The candidacy of colleague Dr. Evgeni Dimitrov Zashev for the academic position of "docent" is based on the availability of 11 of his scientific publications, published after the acquisition of his doctoral degree. The contributions – scientific, popularizing and documenting – of these publications are as follows:

1. The earliest article of the colleague Zashev is of a contribution-documenting nature and was published in co-authorship with Yana Hutyanova in 2009. It is dedicated to the history of Bulgarian studies in the philosophy faculty of the "Jan Amos Comenius" University in Bratislava (*Bulgarian Studies* 14, 44–55). The article traces the history of the Bulgarian studies major at the "Jan Amos Comenius" University of Bratislava from the establishment of the educational institution in 1921 to 2009 and has a distinct prosopographic appearance, as its second part offers short scientific biographies of Bulgarian scholars who worked at the University of Bratislava.
2. The author's second publication is a contributing scholarly article published in 2011. It examines the Catholic propagandist Francesco Bracciolini's poem *La Bulgheria convertita*, printed in 1637 in Rome (*Cyriil-Methodievski Studii* 20, 166–189). The work in question was written by order of the *Congregatio de propaganda fidei* (Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith) and has a clear religious-propaganda character, aiming to change the Bulgarian national identity in favor of Catholicism. What is significant here is that Dr. Zashev analyzes the paratext of the poem in view of the activity of the Bulgarian Catholics in the thirties of the 17th century.
3. Dr. Zashev's third publication, a book published in 2014 is entitled "Stories of Miracles, Robbers, Prodigals and Other Stories" It is a contribution, but also a popularizing work, and is a translated anthology of 50 pateric stories, like all works with an identified Greek prototype were translated from Middle Greek, and only five stories were translated from Old Bulgarian whose Byzantine prototypes were either unavailable or unknown. What is significant here is that the book selectively presents texts taken from the so-called Synoptic, Sinaitic, Egyptian and Jerusalem pateriks, as well as texts from the well-known work of John Moschos *Eukratas*, *Spiritual Fields*. Dr. Zashev published a phototype Slavic translation of the last work in 2005, but this work was not submitted when he was nominated as an associate professor.
4. The candidate's fourth publication is strictly scientific and is an independent book published in English in 2015. Its title is "Lavrentiy's miscellany / Tsar Ivan Alexandăr's miscellany of 1348", KMNC, Sofia, 2015). The book offers a critical analysis devoted to the Lavrentivian or Ivan-Alexander collection of 1348, clarifying the historical context of the monument and providing information about the era of its origin and its creator (pp. 9–40). The text of the Collection is reproduced in phototype, and the main goal of the author is to correct the mistakes made by K. Kuev in the incomplete printed-set edition of the manuscript from 1981.

5. Dr. Zashev's fifth publication is both scientific and popularizing. This is a stand-alone book published in 2020. Its title is "Stories useful for the soul by Paul - bishop of the God-protected Monemvasia. Translation from ancient Greek, comments and notes" (KMNC, Sofia, 2020). The book reveals for the first time to the Bulgarian reader the small literary heritage of Bishop Pavel, spiritual shepherd of the Peloponnesian city of Monemvasia, and offers a Bulgarian translation of his writings. The introductory study represents an attempt to reconstruct the biography of Bishop Pavel Monemvasiyski and offers tables of the correspondences of the individual narratives in Greek and in Old Bulgarian sources. The translation of the sixteen stories of Pavel Monemvasiyski is equipped with a rich supporting apparatus, including reference articles on the mentioned historical figures and geographical names.

6. Dr. Zashev's sixth publication is a scientific article entitled "Brief historical description of the Holy Metropolis of Velegrad and the information about the Holy Heptarithmoi in it" (*Starobulgarska literatura*, 63-64 (2021)). The article presents the notes and the mentions of St. Septuagint in the 1868 work of the Berat bishop Antimus Alexudis entitled "Σύντομος ιστορική περιγραφή τῆς ἱερᾶς Μητροπόλεως Βελεγραδῶν". Dr. Zashev examines the genesis of Bishop Antim's interest in the work of the Holy Heptarithmoi and attempts to reconstruct various aspects of the spiritual atmosphere in the Berat diocese related to the Slavic enlighteners - oral tradition, church services and church images, emphasizing the fact that Bishop Antim also committed himself to the preservation of the relics, which are believed to belong to St. Gorazd and St. Angelarius, ordering a special reliquary for this purpose.

7. Dr. Zashev's seventh publication is a scientific study entitled "Once more about the Berat reliquary" (*Palaeobulgarica*, XLV (2021), 3, 3-33). It is dedicated to the already mentioned reliquary, kept in the Church of the Assumption in the city of Berat (Albania), which is said to contain relics of St. Gorazd and St. Angelarius and even the holy Septuagint as a group. Colleague Zashev summarizes the information related to the reliquary, but not with regard to its authenticity, but with a view to the emergence and confirmation of the cult of the Holy Heptarithmoi. The study traces the scientific discussion about the authenticity of the relics that lasted from the second half of the 19th century to the present day.

8. Dr. Zashev's eighth publication is a scientific study entitled "Memorial places for St. Gorazd and St. Angelarius in the city of Berat (Albania)" (*Starobulgarska literatura*, 65-66 (2022), 282 –317). It is dedicated to the places of remembrance associated with St. Gorazd and St. Angelarius in the city of Berat and aims to highlight the place and role of memory for the two Cyril-Methodivian disciples in the process of the emergence and institutionalization of the cult of St. Seven digits. The object of research are the oral tradition about the relics of St. Gorazd and St. Angelarius, the artifacts and written monuments testifying to the veneration of these saints. The author's conclusion is that probably the unauthentic relics of St. Gorazd and St. Angelarius are the material basis for the construction of a local tradition of honor, which constitutes the core of the cult of Holy Heptarithmoi institutionalized at the beginning of the 18th century.

9. Dr. Zashev's ninth publication is a scientific study entitled "On the earliest topography of the cult of the Holy Heptarithmoi. Separation of the cult" (in the volume *Kirilo-Methodievski places of memory in Bulgarian culture*. Sofia, 2023, 53-109). In this research, the author traces and summarizes the information about the historical persons from the circle of Saints Seven-Sevens based on both written monuments - the prologue life of St. John Vladimir (1690), the Berat Service for Saints Seven-Sevens (c. 1720) and the Venetian Service for the Holy Heptarithmoi (1742), as well as numerous artefacts – eight frescoes, three icons, a carved medallion and three reliquaries. Based on the

mentioned sources, the earliest topography of the cult of the seven saints is outlined, and the individual monuments are presented in their geographical, cultural-historical and architectural context.

10. Dr. Zashev's tenth publication is strictly scientific and is again related to the Albanian city of Berat and the cult of St. Seven-Numbered Saints there. This is a study entitled "On the Question of the Authorship of the Berat (Venetian) Office for the Holy Heptarithmoi" (*Palaeobulgarica*, XLVII (2023) 4, 39-75). The study critically re-evaluates two hypotheses related to the authorship of the so-called Berat Service for St. Seven Seven, according to which the Canon for St. Gorazd and St. Angelarius, included in the liturgical work, was created between 889 and 893 by the Bulgarian prince Boris I, and the entire service was compiled by the Metropolitan of Dyrrhachion (Durazzo), Gregory, in the 14th century. As a result of the analysis of the presented arguments, this hypothesis was rejected and it was proved with full justification that the author of the service was the bishop of Gora and Mokra, Michael Ipschiot, who was active in the 1720s.

11. Dr. Zashev's eleventh publication is his habilitation thesis, published in the current year 2024 with a volume of 261 pages. Its title is "The Berat Memory of the Holy Heptarithmoi" (Sofia, 2024). This excellent monograph is dedicated to the cult of St. Seven-Numbered Saints in Southern Albania and synthesizes the conclusions and ideas of the author regarding the emergence and consolidation of this cult at the end of the 17th and the beginning of the 18th century. Dr. Zashev's new ideas were developed and thoroughly argued in his studies published after 2018, and in his habilitation thesis these ideas were subjected to an excellently constructed scientific synthesis, so as to form a complete and comprehensive picture of the local cult of the Holy Heptarithmoi in the city of Berat.

Based on the scientific works of Dr. E. Zashev thus presented, which in my opinion are fully contributing, namely three articles, three independent books, four studies and one synthesizing habilitation monograph, I recommend to the honorable scientific jury to choose Dr. E. Zashev to the academic position of "associate professor" in the field of higher education 2. Humanities, professional direction 2.2 History and archeology for the needs of the section "Kyril-Methodiev sources and traditions", published in SG no. 11 of February 6, 2024.

With respect,

Prof. D.Sc. Kyrill Pavlikianov

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