



REVIEW

by **Assoc. Prof. Dr. Aneta Gergova Dimitrova**,

Sofia University “St. Kliment Ohridski”, Department of Cyrillo-Methodian Studies,
member of the scientific jury appointed by the Order of the Director of Cyrillo-Methodian
Research Center at the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences

No. 18 RD-16/11.04.2025,

in the competition for the academic position of **Associate Professor** in the field of higher
education 2. Humanities, professional field 2.1. Philology (Bulgarian Literature)
for the needs of the “Cyril and Methodius Sources” section
of the Cyrillo-Methodian Research Center – BAS,
announced in **State Gazette No. 13/14.02.2025.**

The only candidate in the announced competition for Associate Professor is Senior Assistant Professor Dr. Tsvetomira Stoyanova Danova, who, according to the submitted documents, meets the legal requirements for the development of academic staff at the BAS and the CMRC (article 17, paragraph 3), and meets all the minimum requirements for the academic position of “Associate Professor.”

The table with quantitative indicators (Appendix 9) needs some corrections. In section Г, items 4 and 5 are duplicated; only item 5 (“Published book based on a defended dissertation”) is taken into account here, one article from item 7 (no. 2) should be counted in item 6 (“Articles and papers published in scientific journals, referenced and indexed in world-renowned scientific information databases”), and two articles from item 8 (nos. 4 and 5) should be counted in item 9 (“Studies published in non-referenced peer-reviewed journals or published in edited collective volumes”). With these corrections, the points meet and even exceed the minimum requirements (290 points out of the required 220 points).

Dr. Danova has been working at the CMRC at the BAS since 2013 as a researcher, and since 2015 as a Senior Assistant Professor. In 2014, she successfully defended her dissertation at the CMRC on “The Homilies of John of Damascus on Virgin Mary in Bulgarian Medieval Literature (based on materials from South Slavic calendar collections up to the 14th century)”. She is the author of two monographs and one co-authored monograph currently in print, 15 articles and

studies, some co-authored, one teaching aid, and four reviews. For the Associate Professor competition, two monographs (one of which is a habilitation thesis), six studies (five of which are co-authored), and six articles have been submitted.

One of the monographs (no. 2 on the list) is based on the candidate's doctoral dissertation. It is a complete reworking of the dissertation with a changed structure and additional information, published by a prestigious publishing house and indexed in the Scopus database, and its numerous citations and reviews show its wide resonance in the scientific community. However, it will not be included in this review. Two of the articles provided (Nos. 13 and 14 in the list) are also related to the topic of the dissertation, but will be taken into account in the review as they were published after the defense of the dissertation and after the candidate took up the academic position of “Senior Assistant” and do not repeat the research presented in the previous procedure. However, the remaining publications are sufficient in volume to meet the mandatory criteria.

The monograph submitted for the competition (The Orthography of the Psalter of Tsar John Alexander (Manuscript 2 from the Scientific Archive of the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences) (= Cyril and Methodius Studies, vol. 34). Sofia, 2024, 168 pp.) is a new study that broadens the thematic scope of the candidate's scientific interests and activities and differs from most of her publications. It is part of a larger project dedicated to the study and publication of one of the most famous Bulgarian manuscripts from the 14th century, the Sofia Commentary Psalter from 1337, known as the Songbook of Tsar Ivan Alexander (*Pesnivec*). The manuscript, kept in the Scientific Archive of the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, is by no means unknown to science and has been the subject of a number of studies, especially in connection with specific issues or in the context of other manuscripts. However, the proposed monograph is the first independent and comprehensive study of the orthography of the manuscript. Its structure is very clear and coherent, with an identical arrangement in each of the chapters, which makes it accessible for consultation and comparative studies. A separate chapter is devoted to each of the four (or five) copyists of the manuscript, and in the concluding section, the observations are summarized in a comparative table and several appendices are added.

The order of the chapters follows the order of the copyists in the manuscript (rather than the volume of text they wrote). Where relevant, the following features are discussed in each chapter: letters for jers, nasals, ђ and iotated a, the letters ery, i, e, o, u, epenthetic l, letters for the sound dz, iżitsa, the use of Greek letters, the spelling of Greek loanwords, the use of diacritical

marks, ligatures, and punctuation marks. The first chapter (pp. 17–66) is the most extensive, as it is devoted to the main copyist with the largest share in the manuscript. The orthographical principles he follows include a preference for the use of ѣ (including at the end of the word after most etymologically soft consonants up to f. 117v, and more frequent use of ѣ after f. 118r – a feature that, unfortunately, is hardly discussed in the study, see p. 17, note 24), the omission of weak jers in certain positions, their preservation in prefixes and suffixes, and the frequent transition ѣ > e in some suffixes. The first copyist uses five letters for the nasal vowels, with a predominance of ꙗ and ꙗ and a typical Middle Bulgarian mixing of nasals, in which the etymological place of the nasal vowels is preserved mainly after hard consonants, with very few examples of mixing of nasal and non-nasal vowels. With regard to the distribution of the yat vowel (ѣ), yotated and non-yotated a, there is an etymological use of ѣ, as well as after soft consonants (except for sibilants and the results of 3 palatalization, after which a is written), the letter ery is also rarely mixed with i. Three allographs are used for и, о, and y, and for the affricate dz, two allographs are used for e. The epenthetic l is almost always preserved.

The second chapter (pp. 67–74) shows that in a volume of about three pages, the second copyist uses almost only the back jer (ѣ), after the prefix vьz- there is no jer or paerchik (which distinguishes him from the first copyist), he knows only the two non-iotated letters for nasals, which are often mixed with a preference for the back nasal (at the beginning of the syllable and after sibilant consonants). The yat vowel remains in its etymological place and after soft sonorants, the epenthetic l is preserved. This copyist uses a richer system of diacritical marks compared to the first one.

The third copyist (pp. 75–80) also uses almost exclusively the back jer, the two uniotated nasals with a predominance of the back one when they are mixed, and the use of the yat vowel does not differ from that of the other copyists. He uses the letter for wide e at the beginning of the syllable. His system of diacritics is more limited.

The fourth chapter (pp. 81–112) is devoted to the spelling habits of the so-called second main copyist of the manuscript. He uses almost only the back jer and, like the first scribe, retains the weak jer in some prefixes, while in a number of suffixes the jer is missing or is marked with a paerchik. There is normalization in the strong position of the front jer in suffixes and, exceptionally, in several roots. He knows five graphemes for nasals, but uses almost exclusively the two uniotated letters, with a preference for the back nasal at the beginning of the word and after sibilant

consonants. The mixing of nasal and non-nasal vowels is an exception and occurs only in two roots. The yat vowel remains in its etymological place after soft sonorants, labials, and affricates from the second palatalization, while after other soft consonants, a is used. Iotated a at the beginning of a syllable is written less frequently, and after a vowel, usually a is preferred. The letter ery is mixed with i in separate words and regularly after the prefixes v̄bz-, iz-. There are three allographs for i, e, four allographs for o, and two for dz. The epenthetic l is preserved. This copyist is consistent in his principles for the use of diacritical marks.

After a brief description of the spelling of the fifth copyist (known from only five lines), the author systematizes her observations in Conclusions and Summary (pp. 113–119). This section again points out the main features of each copyist of the manuscript, commenting on similarities with other manuscripts (especially regarding the distribution of the jers). The use of nasal letters and their mixing in the manuscript is defined as characteristic of the pre-Euthymian period. With regard to the distribution of the vowel Ъ, iotated and non-iotated a, attention is paid to their combinations with historically soft or hardened consonants and their analogous uses in other manuscripts from this and earlier periods. The etymological use of ery and the rare cases of mixing with i are noted, as well as the preservation of epenthetic l in almost all cases with few exceptions. The two main copyists (first and fourth) consistently distinguish between the uses of dz and z. The principles for the use of Greek letters and the transmission of foreign names and borrowings are diverse, which is why most of the appendices in the book are devoted to this. The copyists also differ in their use of diacritical marks and punctuation. In conclusion, the author emphasizes that “a number of orthographical rules are not consistently applied, are optional in nature, and are in the process of being created and codified” (p. 120); there is no common and comprehensive concept of orthography in the manuscript, and each copyist follows a different system.

The work undoubtedly stands out for its detail and comprehensiveness, the entire material has been excerpted, and the description is supported by quantitative data. An undoubted contribution is the refinement of the information on the scope of work of each of the copyists of the manuscript, as well as the parallels with other manuscripts from the pre-Euthymian period. At the same time, some of its shortcomings can also be noted. Relatively little space is devoted to the analysis of the data presented – both in comparison with other written monuments (some parallels are given in the concluding section of the book) and in relation to the development of the spoken language during the period and the influence of the manuscript's antigraphs. In some of the features

described, although the use of letters is traced (for the jers, nasals, ery, yat, etc.), it is a matter of studying phonetic, not just orthographic, phenomena. They cover a wide range of processes such as changes in phonetically soft consonants and the graphic means of marking them, changes in the pronunciation of a number of vowels (especially jers and nasals, but also ery and yat), the loss of the nasal pronunciation of nasals, which is mentioned only in passing (e.g., the rare cases of mixing nasal and non-nasal vowels, cf. pp. 34, 64, 115), the presence of epenthetic l and its loss in certain positions, etc. On the other hand, the detailed tracking of the distribution of the allographs of e, o, i, u, etc. is not convincingly linked to the phonetic development of the vowels themselves or the consonants preceding them. For example, along with the graphic variants for writing u (with a digraph, ligature, etc.) there is also competition with ю after some soft consonants – a phenomenon that affects the development and denoting of soft consonants and is more relevant when discussing the alternations of ѣ, iotated and non-iotated a, iotated and non-iotated nasals, etc.

Although the voluminous material requires a more detailed analysis and systematization of the results obtained, the very existence of the excerpted data provides a solid basis for further comparative studies, which is an indisputable contribution of the proposed monograph.

Two other studies (nos. 7 and 8 in the list, co-authored with Maria Spasova) are thematically related to the monograph, examining the linguistic features of Hesychius' commentaries in the Psalter. With a complete excerpt of the interpretative parts from the first half of the manuscript (up to Ps. 76:21), archaic morphological and lexical features of the text are analyzed and compared with other manuscripts (in terms of morphology) and other translated and original Old Bulgarian works with a known or unknown author (in terms of lexicology). Among the morphological archaisms are forms of the asigmatic aorist, the first sigmatic aorist with preserved sigma, and the first sigmatic aorist with lengthening of the root vowel in verbs with a consonant base, descriptive future and future in the past, passive voice with participle, old declension types, use of cases, etc. In terms of vocabulary, special attention is paid to rare words that are absent or poorly attested in the classical Old Bulgarian corpus. This comprehensive linguistic analysis not only enriches our knowledge of the language of the commentaries of Hesychius (or Pseudo-Athanasius) of the Psalter, which are undoubtedly of early Old Bulgarian origin, but also offers a well-argued and reliable methodology, based on a significant number of earlier studies and dictionaries.

Two articles (nos. 13 and 14 in the list) continue the topic of Tsvetomira Danova's dissertation, devoted to the reception of John of Damascus's sermons on Virgin Mary. New material not included in the dissertation has been brought in and studied – six copies from Romanian libraries of two of Damascene's sermons (three copies of each sermon, see article no. 14), which have helped her to refine observations on the textual history and the relationships between their versions. Particularly valuable is the identification of the Greek source of another sermon, previously attributed to the original work of John the Exarch, which is in fact a translation and compilation of the Second Homily on the Assumption of Virgin Mary by John of Damascus (article no. 13). These studies demonstrate the author's high scholarly qualities in the fields of archaeography, textual criticism, and philology, as well as her ability to maintain a lasting and deep interest in certain topics to which she returns.

These qualities are particularly evident in the third thematic area of the candidate's research – the study of various works, mainly rhetorical, preserved in South Slavic calendar collections, which is part of the extensive and long-term project of compiling the *Bibliotheca Homiletica Balcano-Slavica* reference book together with Klimentina Ivanova. Several publications address more general issues, e.g. publications nos. 3 and 4 are devoted to the description of the composition of two important manuscripts, Hil. 390 and Tihanov 540, and their contextualisation among South Slavic triodion panegyrics. Publication no. 6 addresses methodological and terminological issues – an important topic, since in Paleoslavic studies there is variability both in the naming of this type of collection and in the approaches to their study. With the help of Klimentina Ivanova (with whom the study is co-authored), the scope of the reference book (BHomBS) is outlined and the already established terms “triodion panegyric,” “old source,” and “new source” are again discussed. It should be emphasized that this type of summary publication is also of great importance for future research, since, on the basis of specific manuscripts and the systematization of the diversity of translations, editions, revisions, and copies of a large number of texts, an attempt is made to construct a model (or models) for their classification, to seek order in the apparent disorder.

The complex and voluminous work on the calendar collections far exceeds the scope of any individual researcher's activities, which is why collaboration and co-authorship yield rich results. However, this also requires a number of separate detailed studies of specific texts and their versions, translations, and textual history. It is in this regard that the contribution of several

publications by Tsvetomira Danova (nos. 9, 10, 11, 12) should be noted. It is well known that in the Slavic environment, not only do various translations and adaptations of the same texts circulate, but also many compilations composed of separate parts with similar beginnings and endings, which are therefore difficult to identify. Each identification of individual works and their comparison with their closest parallels is an important step towards understanding the entire repertoire of medieval manuscripts.

Both individually and as a whole, Tsvetomira Danova's scholarly output demonstrates her excellent qualities as an archaeographer, linguist, textual critic, discoverer, and conscientious and disciplined scholar. To this should be added her active participation in multiple forums and projects, through which she has established her presence in the paleoslavic scholarly community.

All this gives me reason to express my high appreciation for the selection of Senior Assistant Professor Dr. Tsvetomira Danova as an Associate Professor in field 2. Humanities, professional field 2.1. Philology (Bulgarian Literature) at the Cyrillo-Methodian Research Center at the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, and to propose to the distinguished members of the scientific jury to vote in favor, for which I will also cast my vote with conviction.

05.06.2025

Reviewer:

/Assoc. Prof. Dr. Aneta Dimitrova/