



## SHORT REVIEW

by Professor Dr. Margaret D. Dimitrova

for the competition for the position of Associate Professor in professional field 2.1.

Philology, announced in the State Gazette 13 of February 14, 2025

for the needs of the Cyrillo-Methodian Research Center,

Bulgarian Academy of Sciences

The only candidate for the announced position of Associate Professor is Dr. Tsvetomira Danova. I have known her research since her doctoral studies and my impression is that she is an excellent researcher who approaches very seriously and competently her academic tasks and who has all the knowledge necessary to make a precise characterization of the medieval Slavonic sources examined by her.

In the announced competition, she applied with two monographs (one in Bulgarian and one in English), six larger articles (five of which in collaboration with leading Bulgarian scholars) and other six papers of which she is the only author. All of them demonstrate the high level of competence of their author.

Dr. Danova's latest monograph entitled "The Orthography of The Psalter of Tsar Ivan Alexander (Ms 2 in The Scientific Archives of The Bulgarian Academy of Sciences) was published in the authoritative academic series *Cyrillo-Methodian Studies*", no. 34 of the Cyrillo-Methodian Research Center (Bulgarian Academy of Sciences) and covers 168 pp. The book is dedicated to a very important Middle Bulgarian manuscript, Tsar John Alexander's Psalter known as Pesnivets, and particularly to its orthography. It is methodologically correct that the author characterizes the spelling of each of the four scribes, separately, and then makes a juxtaposition of their scribal habits and preferences. First, she correctly and precisely identifies which texts in the manuscript (they differ in genre and time of composition) by whom were copied. Then, in detail and competently, she traces the distribution of letters for all the vowels, for some consonants, superscript signs and punctuation. The objectivity and solidity of her conclusions stem from a full excerption of the material from the manuscript and the on the use of statistical data.

The author correctly uses the terminology established in Slavic historical linguistics and is familiar with various opinions concerning the phonetic changes in the history of Bulgarian dialects

and in the history of orthographic norms. This is a sound basis of her analyses and she is right not to discuss and put forward hypotheses about the links between the orthography and phonological system of Bulgarian because her goal is to describe the *usus scribendi* of the four scribes identified. In one place, however, I would recommend her to avoid, as in other places, the discussion of what kind of pronunciation the Middle Bulgarian spelling рѣ, лѣ, нѣ denotes in this particular manuscript. Dr. Danova correctly cites the relevant academic literature elucidating that this spelling was typical of Glagolitic writing and was widely used in Middle Bulgarian Cyrillic manuscripts. This statement is enough for her argument and there is not any need for further assumptions about the pronunciation because she is dealing with the orthography of a particular manuscript and we do not know how its scribes pronounced these combinations of letters.

Further, the analyses of the spelling of Greek loanwords in the monograph deserves admiration, especially valuable are the appendices containing a complete excerpt of the forms in the Psalter manuscript being accompanied with their Greek correspondences. Also, the author compares these forms with the most authoritative descriptions of the orthography of Greek loanwords in the Old Bulgarian manuscripts. She rightly concludes that most of forms identified in the Psalter examined follow the orthography established already in the Old Bulgarian era. I would suggest that here it would be better if she reinforces this conclusion by emphasizing forms, such as еѡга, мѡсини, иѣрданѣ, аѡуѣѣ and juxtaposing them with the forms in Old Bulgarian manuscripts, on the one hand, and on the other, contrasting them with such Middle Bulgarian sources that prefer еѡа, мѡсини, иѡрданѣ, аѡуѣѣ. In general, some forms of Greek loanwords are characteristic of a certain textual revision of the Psalter, for example, those characteristic for the archaic version vs. the forms in the Norov Psalter or in the Athonite revision, while other forms (usually of lexemes of higher frequency) do not depend on the textual version but reflect certain types of scribal habits.

Next, I highly value the earlier monograph by Tsvetomira Danova entitled “John of Damascus' Marian Homilies in Mediaeval South Slavic Literatures”(Berlin: Peter Lang GmbH Internationaler Verlag der Wissenschaften, 2020, 542 pp. (=Studies on Language and Culture in Central and Eastern Europe 36). In it, she examines in detail the translations of three homilies by St. John Damascene, dedicated to the Mother of God (two translations of two homilies on the Dormition of the Theotokos and two translations of the Homily on the Nativity of the Virgin Mary). Dr. Danova bases her conclusions on a precise and detailed analysis of the manuscript witnesses



and thus draws a clear textological picture and searches for Greek versions that are closer to the medieval Slavonic ones. As it is methodologically justified, only then does she analyze the translation techniques and linguistic features on the morphosyntactic and lexical levels – analyses that are distinguished by high professionalism and that help her localize and date the translations – one made early in a Preslav milieu and three made later, perhaps produced in Mount Athos and Tarnovo. Further, for dating and localizing the translations and for studying the translators' approaches to the sermons and Christian theology, Danova's excellent examination of the transmission of biblical quotations in these translations is worth mentioning.

Invaluable are the editions of the homilies in the second part of this book of the candidate: she edits the translations identified from thoughtfully selected manuscript witnesses with variant readings from other witnesses and with parallel Greek texts. Through these precise editions and through the dictionaries accompanying them, not only does the author defend her conclusions, but also provides an opportunity for future research and comparisons with translation preferences in other Old Bulgarian and Middle Bulgarian translations and demonstrates how lexical choices could be used as an argument for localizing and dating a given translation.

What is typical of Dr. Danova's academic profile is that she works – always with precision, objectivity and in depth – in more than two paleoslavic fields (that were discussed above in connection with her two monographs) as evidenced by her publications in journals and edited academic volumes. This requires different competences and is, as rule, assumed for the academic position of a full professor. For example, in papers nos. 3, 4, 5, and 6 in the list submitted, she concentrates on the specifics of particular medieval Slavonic manuscripts with an emphasis on their composition, in order to outline the homiletic corpus in *Triodion Panegyrica*. On the other hand, she examines five homilies in papers nos. 9, 10, 11, 12, and 13: she discusses the character of the translations from Greek, their dissemination and linguistic features. All these studies are a trustful contribution to the analysis of the Old Bulgarian and Middle Bulgarian homiletic repertoire and to our idea of translation skills and preferences of medieval Bulgarian men of letters. Further, a difficult topic that the candidate approaches are exegetical texts: jointly with Professor Maria Spasova, she focuses on the linguistic features of the Old Bulgarian translation of Hesychius' commentaries on the Psalter and thus contributes to the question of the early reception of this theological genre in medieval Bulgarian literature – see papers nos. 7 and 8. Through this

investigation the authors demonstrate how language peculiarities may be used as arguments for dating and localizing a given translation.

Further I should mention that since 2008, the candidate has contributed to eight academic projects on different topics, including medieval Bulgarian written heritage, the history of Cyrillic alphabet, the use of digital resources for the study of medieval manuscripts, and others.

The candidate's academic ideas and searches have been approved at academic forums – the list is long. Also, an evidence of her discoveries and accomplishments in paleoslavic studies is the fact that her publications have been cited in Bulgarian and international research (I counted 49 citations according to the list provided for this competition).

In conclusion, I am convinced that the academic publications of Dr. Danova dealing with several topics of palaeoslavic studies prove in an indisputable manner that she has the competence and academic achievements that qualify her as completely suitable candidate for the academic position of Associate Professor at Cyrillo-Methodian Research Center of the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences and therefore I recommend – without any reservation – to the academic body of this center for this position

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