КИРИЛО - МЕТОДИЕВСКИ
НАУЧЕН ЦЕНТЪР - БАН
Вх. № 113 НО-05-05
Дата 01.10.2026

STATEMENT

by Assoc. Prof. Evgeni Dimitrov Zashev, PhD

Cyrillo-Methodian Research Centre at the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences

member of the academic jury for the competition announced for appointment to the academic position of "Associate Professor" in Area of Higher Education 2. Humanities, Professional Field 2.1. Philology, for the needs of the "Cyrillo-Methodian Literary Heritage" Department at the Cyrillo-Methodian Research Centre of the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences (State Gazette No. 61/03.07.2026), with Chief Assistant Professor Ivan Ivanov Iliev, PhD, as the sole candidate

Chief Assistant Professor Ivan Ivanov Iliev, PhD, participates in the competition announced by the Cyrillo-Methodian Research Centre at the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences with a body of scholarly work that demonstrates the consistent development of a research profile in the fields of Old Bulgarian Studies, the history of medieval Slavic literature, textual criticism, and the history of translation. His scholarly development rests on a solid philological foundation: he graduated in Classical Philology (2009), completed the Master's programme "Old Bulgarian Studies in the Context of Byzantine Literature" (2012), and in 2016 defended his doctoral dissertation entitled "Hippolytus of Rome's Commentary on the Book of the Prophet Daniel in Old Bulgarian Translation."

Central to the scholarly output submitted for the competition is the monograph "Lives of Bulgarian Saints in the Latin Tradition. Second, Expanded Edition" (Sofia, 2026, 284 pp.), presented as the habilitation thesis. The monograph is devoted to a comparatively little-studied aspect of the history of Bulgaria's medieval literary heritage: its reception in Western European and Catholic milieus through translation into Latin. The study examines the Latin translation of Patriarch Euthymius's Life of St Petka of Tarnovo, made by the Croatian Franciscan Rafael Levaković in the seventeenth century, and the Latin translation of the Life of St John of Rila, produced by the Russian Jesuit Ivan Martynov in the nineteenth century. Both texts were published in *Acta Sanctorum*, but, as the author shows, prior to his study they had not been subjected to detailed analysis from the perspective of language and translation technique.

One of the principal merits of the work, in my view, lies in its comprehensive approach to the texts under study. Ivan Iliev does not examine the Latin translations in isolation, but traces the entire chain of their emergence and transmission: the Slavic text, its manuscript and early printed tradition, the specific source used by the translator, the Latin translation itself, and its subsequent incorporation into Western European scholarly and hagiographical tradition. The specific philological analysis is thus placed within a considerably broader cultural-historical context.

Particularly illustrative in this respect is the first part of the monograph, devoted to the Life of St Petka of Tarnovo. The study begins with the early printed tradition of the text and the question of the source used for the translation by the Croatian Catholic missionary Rafael Levaković, while at the same time introducing the necessary historical context: Slavic palaeotypography, the Catholic missions in the Balkans, and the activities of Rafael Levaković, Petar Bogdan Bakshich, and Petar Bogdan. The Latin translation itself is directly compared with the Slavic text. The analysis demonstrates Levaković's effort to follow the original with a relatively high degree of accuracy while simultaneously adapting it to the norms and stylistic possibilities of Latin. An important result is precisely the possibility of characterising, through the translator's choices, his attitude toward the Slavic source and the degree to which he understood it.

The second part of the monograph significantly broadens the chronological and cultural perspective. Ivan Martynov's Latin translation of the Life of St John of Rila is

examined in the context of nineteenth-century European Slavic Studies, the work of the Bollandists, and the activities of the Russian Catholics Ivan Gagarin and Ivan Martynov. The author establishes the translation's connection with the early printed Russian Prologue tradition and traces the changes transmitted from that tradition into the Latin text. The comparison also reveals instances in which the Slavic source was understood inaccurately. The two translations thus make it possible to observe two different historical situations and two different ways in which Bulgaria's medieval heritage was received and presented to a Western European audience.

In my view, the comparison of these two cases is one of the monograph's significant results. Nearly two centuries separate the translations; the translators, their specific aims, and the intellectual environments in which they worked are different. In the conclusion, Iliev finds that Levaković's translation shows greater closeness to the Slavic original, whereas Martynov's contains more errors and misunderstandings. In this way, the comparison goes beyond the description of individual translation choices and becomes evidence of the different forms through which the Orthodox Slavic heritage was received and incorporated into the Western tradition.

The source-critical component of the work is also of substantial value. The author works with early printed books, editions of *Acta Sanctorum*, and materials located in Bulgarian and foreign libraries and research centres. The second edition incorporates new information accumulated through continued work on the subject after the first edition of 2020; the presentation of the Bollandists and the Catholic missions has been expanded, as has the discussion of figures such as Rafael Levaković, Petar Bogdan, Ivan Gagarin, and Ivan Martynov. Ivan Iliev himself notes that the new source data and studies are among the reasons for preparing the second, expanded edition. For this reason, the 2026 edition should not be regarded as a mechanical reprint of the 2020 book, but as an expanded and revised outcome of ongoing research.

A distinct merit of the monograph is its editorial and lexicographical component. The Slavic texts of the two Lives are published together with their corresponding Latin translations, and Old Bulgarian–Latin and Latin–Old Bulgarian glossaries have been compiled for each. The book thus combines scholarly study, source edition, and reference tool, providing a basis for future research on Slavic–Latin translation relations.

In a broader perspective, I would identify as a significant contribution of the habilitation thesis its focus on the Latin reception of Bulgaria's medieval literary heritage. Traditionally, these works have been studied primarily within the framework of the Slavic manuscript tradition. Iliev traces another trajectory of their existence: through the early printed book, Latin translation, and Western European scholarly and ecclesiastical circles. In this way, the history of the individual texts is situated within the broader issue of contacts between the Orthodox East and the Catholic West and of the place of the Bulgarian literary tradition within the European cultural sphere.

The candidate's remaining scholarly output delineates another major and enduring line of research: the Old Bulgarian translations of the works of Hippolytus of Rome and their manuscript tradition. This includes studies on the Commentary on the Book of the Prophet Daniel and On Christ and Antichrist, on the biblical quotations they contain, the lexical features of the translation, individual manuscript witnesses, and the dissemination of Hippolytus's texts in the Slavic milieu. In this field, Iliev works systematically with the Greek originals and Slavic copies, identifies and introduces new manuscript witnesses into scholarly circulation, and traces the textual relationships among them.

Another characteristic aspect of his work is connected with this research line: the compilation of bilingual lexical indexes. The Old Bulgarian–Greek and Greek–Old Bulgarian indexes are not merely auxiliary apparatuses to the editions, but tools for studying translation

technique, lexical choice, and the relationships between the Byzantine original and the Slavic translation. In this respect, there is methodological continuity between the studies on Hippolytus of Rome and the habilitation thesis: an interest in translated texts, precise lexical correspondences, and the movement of works between different languages and cultural environments is a consistent feature of the candidate's scholarly work.

The scholarly activity of Chief Assistant Professor Ivan Iliev, PhD, is also accompanied by substantial teaching and project experience. Since 2015, he has taught at the Faculty of Theology of Sofia University, where he has offered courses in Biblical Greek and Latin, as well as Ancient Greek, medieval Old Bulgarian botany, and New Testament apocrypha; his earlier teaching experience includes Latin and Old Bulgarian. His participation in national and international research projects, as well as his research specialisations abroad, has also been significant for his professional development. Particular mention should be made of the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation fellowship (2020–2022), within which he continued his research on the Slavic translation of Hippolytus of Rome's *De Christo et Antichristo*.

In conclusion, I would like to emphasise that the scholarly output of Chief Assistant Professor Ivan Iliev, PhD, demonstrates a clearly established research profile, consistency, and a high level of professional competence in working with multilingual source material. On the basis of the scholarly output submitted, the established scholarly contributions, and the candidate's overall academic development, I give a positive assessment of the candidacy of Chief Assistant Professor Ivan Ivanov Iliev, PhD, and firmly support his appointment to the academic position of "Associate Professor" in Professional Field 2.1. Philology, for the needs of the "Cyrillo-Methodian Literary Heritage" Department at the Cyrillo-Methodian Research Centre of the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences.

Assoc. Prof. Evgueni Zashev, PhD:

