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A REVIEW

by Professor Dr. Margaret Dimitrova

regarding the competition

for the academic position of Associate Professor

in field 2.1. Philology,

announced in the State Gazette, issue 61/03.07.2026,

for the needs of Cyrillo-Methodian Research Centre,

Bulgarian Academy of Sciences

Candidate: Ivan I. Iliev

The candidate, Dr. Iliev, has a significant academic background. As part of his application for the position of Associate Professor, he submitted publications that meet the high criteria of Cyrillo-Methodian Research Center and are an excellent fit to its academic projects. As a matter of fact, the number and quality of his papers far exceed the minimal scientometric criteria required for the academic position of Associate Professor. For example, his works were cited in numerous publications in Bulgaria and abroad. Given the narrow field of Palaeoslavic studies, the number of these citations is impressive. I would add that he is fluent in English, German, Russian, and he masters the ancient languages: Latin, Ancient Greek, and Old Bulgarian (Old Church Slavonic and Church Slavonic).

I have personally known Ivan Iliev for many years. I met him when he was a student in the MA Programme on Medieval Bulgarian Studies of the Department of Cyrillo-Methodian Studies of St. Kliment Ohridski University of Sofia. He wrote his MA thesis under my supervision. I remember his as a hard-working and responsible young person who knew how to pursue his goals, who had vivid intellectual curiosity and who was capable of working in an academic setting. Since he had excellent training in ancient cultures as an alumnus of the National Gymnasium of Ancient Languages and Cultures and as bachelor of classics (the received this degree from Sofia University), he easily broadened his intellectual horizons enriching his knowledge on medieval Slavonic manuscripts and translations, on the history of the Bulgarian language and on the use of the Old Bulgarian literary language in various Slavonic cultural milieux with different types of

orthography. Following an idea of Professor Lilia Ilieva, we chose as a topic for his MA thesis the Latin translations of the later (printed) versions of two vitae written by St. Patriach Evtimii: Vita S. Parascevae and Vita S. Joannis Rylensis. Although up to that point Ivan Iliev had mainly worked with ancient Latin texts, he handled the Latin language of the catholic church from the seventeenth and nineteenth centuries very well.

In his thesis he demonstrated brilliant research qualities – precision, thoroughness, and objectivity. The foundation that he laid in this research topic was significantly expanded, enriched, and rethought in his book "Lives of Bulgarian Saints in the Latin Tradition" (2020), 224 pp., published as part of the project "The Gutenberg Revolution and the Bulgarians," led by Professor Lilia Ilieva and financially supported by the Bulgarian Scientific Research Fund (ДН 10/9, 2016-2020). In 2026, this book underwent a second, revised and expanded edition, 283 pp. (ISBN 978-619-284-033-4), which includes numerous changes and additions—not only in volume but also in interpretations. The author took into account the latest discoveries and research on Slavonic paleotypes and on the relations of the Bulgarians with the Catholic world in the seventeenth centuries. He carefully examined the surviving copies of the printed Molitvoslov of Božidar Vuković, including a previously unstudied copy held in the Ivan Vazov Public Library in Plovdiv. The researcher used this copy for the study and publication of the Life of St. Petka of Turnovo (St. Parasceve of Epibatai). From this version of the vita, Rafael Levaconić produced the translation to Latin in the seventeenth century. Also, Dr. Iliev traces back the history of the early printed East Slavonic Prologue, which included the Life of St. John of Rila: from this version Ivan Martynov made the translation to Latin in the nineteenth century. Together with the excellent analyses of the Slavonic texts and their Latin translations, Ivan Iliev draws a broad picture of the cultural contexts in which these vitae were first printed and translated to Latin. He discusses the Catholic missions amongst the Bulgarians in the seventeenth century and the role of Peter Bogdan Bakšić who is likely to have inspired the translation of St. Petka to Latin. Further, Dr. Iliev dwells upon the life and activities of the Jesuits Ivan Gagarin and Ivan Martynov seen in the context of the cultural relations between the catholic Europe and Russian Empire in the nineteenth century.

Another book by the candidate that has high academic value is dedicated to an unexplored translation, made in tenth-century Bulgaria, of the difficult exegetical text by Hippolytus of Rome on the Septuagint Book of Prophet Daniel. In fact, Ivan Iliev's book, published in 2007 (628 pp.), is an expanded and revised version of his doctoral dissertation. In comparison with the dissertation,

the book incorporates analyses of new sources shedding light on the dissemination of the Old Bulgarian translation in later manuscripts produced in different milieux. Through a detailed and expert discussion of medieval Greek and Slavonic witnesses of Hippolytus of Rome's commentary, of translation techniques and linguistic features, the researcher contributes to the elucidation of the literary activities during the First Bulgarian Kingdom and to the reception of the commentary literature on the Old Testament in medieval orthodox Slavonic cultures.

In addition to the two books mentioned, for this competition, the candidate has presented nine extensive papers (1 co-authored) and 11 articles (2 co-authored), written in either Bulgarian or English, one in German, and published in authoritative academic journals. A sign of both scholarly maturity and intellectual curiosity is the fact that these publications are in different fields of diachronic linguistic and textual research: they approach diverse texts and apply different methods. Iliev's study covers different levels: investigation of both Greek and Slavonic manuscript witnesses of a chosen text, textual criticism, discussion of style, syntax and lexis of the original and of the translation, contextualization of the translations in the cultural settings of their production and dissemination. This concerns not only his contributions to Hippolytus of Rome's Commentaries on the Book of Daniel, but also to his *De Christo et Antichristo,* to the deuterocanonical text on Susanna, to *Ecclesiastes*, and others. I would like to emphasize that Ivan Iliev works with major and complex Christian texts, such as commentary literature, and with numerous manuscript copies. He masters the methods of approaching biblical citations in medieval Slavonic translations, of producing high quality bilingual dictionaries, of studying lexical units that designate central Christian notions and symbols.

In my view, indisputable success is the publication of the following two recent extensive papers: 1) „*Cedrus libani*: in the Bible, the Prophet Isaiah, the Homily de *Christo et Antichristo* by Hippolytus of Rome and in the Old Slavonic sources," *Scripta & e-Scripta* 25 (2025): 361–392. In this paper, he traces back the image of the tree *cedrus Libani* (cedar of Lebanon) in biblical and exegetical texts in Greek and Old Bulgarian. This research reveals the author's high linguistic competence, knowledge of Christian interpretative paradigms, symbols and images, of intertextual links in yearly Christian exegesis and their reception in medieval Slavonic milieux; 2) „The Book of Daniel, included in the Chronicle of Johannes Zonaras, no. 105 from Zograf Monastery (Preliminary notes)," *Scripta & e-Scripta* 23 (2023): 231–260. The author compares the known Old Bulgarian versions of the Book of Daniel with its version in the framework of the Chronicle

of John Zonaras surviving in manuscript no. 105 (kept in the Library of Zograf Monastery on Mount Athos), which is regarded as an autograph of Konstantin Kostenečki. Dr. Iliev discusses the specifics of the version of the Book of Daniel in this manuscript at the structural, stylistic and lexical levels.

Further, the candidate in this competition has publications outside the field of medieval studies, for example on Catullus' poems about Lesbia, on the origin and semantic development of lexemes referring to key concepts related to education, mainly in English, Bulgarian and in the classical languages. From Latin to Bulgarian, Dr. Iliev translated a very important text for early Christianity – the diary of Egeria (Aetheria) *Peregrinatio ad Loca Sancta.* His translation was published by Sofia University Press 'St. Kliment Ohridski' (2019). His broad knowledge and interests, as well as his ability to conceptualize large amounts of material, are evident in his numerous encyclopedic articles published online in *Scripta Bulgarica*, which are very useful for students.

Ivan Iliev has experience in teaching both at school and university levels. His lectures in our joint course on plant names in medieval Bulgarian texts was aligned with the latest methodological trends, piqued the students' interest, and encouraged them to engage in independent work. Therefore, I believe that his expertise will be exceptionally valuable to the team at the Cyrillo-Methodian Research Centre, not only because of his philological competence and experience in work with old texts written in Old Bulgarian, Greek, and Latin, but also because his teaching skills that could contribute to the Centre's educational programmes.

To sum up, judging from the documents submitted for the competition and from my personal observations of the academic growth of Dr. Ivan Iliev, I could conclude that he applies for the position of Associate Professor with a robust portfolio of academic publications and achievements. His scholarly work demonstrates exceptional professionalism, deep commitment to academic research, and a capacity to ask new research questions. Therefore, as a member of the academic jury, I wholeheartedly and without any reservation will vote in favour of Ivan Iliev being appointed to the academic position of Associate Professor at the Cyrillo-Methodian Research Centre at the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences

October, 22, 2026,

Sofia