

Promotion Review of a Candidate's Application for the Academic Position "Associate Professor"

by Prof. Alexandar N. Nikolov, Faculty of History, University of Sofia "St. Kliment Ohridski" on behalf of Kalin Kirilov Yordanov, the only applicant for the academic position of Associate Professor in Professional Field 2.2: History and Archaeology, (Power and Regionalism in the Balkans, 12th-13th centuries), advertised in *DV* 55/ 15.07.2022, for the needs of the Digital Cultural Heritage Dpt., Institute for Balkan Studies with Center of Thracology, BAS.

1. Procedure Information:

The competition for the academic position "Associate Professor" has been announced for the needs of the Digital Cultural Heritage Dpt., Institute for Balkan Studies with Center of Thracology, BAS. The only candidate is Kalin Kirilov Yordanov, PhD.

When announcing the competition, the norms of the Law for the Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria (ZRASRB), the Regulations for the application of the same law, as well as the respective regulations of BAS were strictly observed. The jury is completed in the prescribed manner - in compliance with deadlines, quotas and professional competencies.

The prepared documentation, to which I received access as a member of the Scientific Jury, is precise and informative. All this gives me reason to accept that the competition is completely legitimate.

2. Information for the Applicant. Educational and Professional Record:

Dr. Kalin Kirilov Yordanov is a graduate of the National Educational Complex of Culture with Italian Lycee-Sofia, (Language and Humanities Profile) (1996) and of the University of Sofia "St. Kliment Ohridski" where he graduated in history in 2004 obtaining MA in Bulgarian Medieval Studies. In 2011, he defended his doctoral degree in the scientific specialty "Medieval History" (History of the Mediterranean), under the supervision of Prof. Dr.habil. Krasimira Gagova, with the topic: "The Crusades: Relics and Miracles".

Between 2000 and 2007 he worked as a freelance journalist for Radio France Internationale and Radio Classic FM, and as a technical assistant for the Riva Sound record company. This activity

of his is also closely related to his musical career as a producer, performer and musician in the groups Irfan and Isihiya, who also promote medieval music. After 2011, he worked again as a journalist for National Geographic Bulgaria and "Nash Dom" magazine and as a technical associate at Export Expert OOD, where he significantly expanded his digital skills and competencies.

After 2011, he worked as a part-time teacher and part-time assistant at Neofit Rilski University in Blagoevgrad, "St. Kliment Ohridski" University in Sofia, and at the International High School "Prof. Vasil Zlatarski" - Sofia. Between 2018 and 2020 he was the manager of the Boyana Church Museum, and from 2020 he was a historian in the Digital Cultural Heritage Dpt. of the Institute of Balkan Studies with the Center for Thracology - BAS. Dr. Kalin Yordanov has excellent language training. Along with his native Bulgarian, he is fluent in Italian, English and Russian. He also knows the Latin language well.

3. Description of Applicant's Scientific Works and Achievements:

Dr. Kalin Yordanov has submitted a significant volume and quality of production for participation in the competition. It includes two monographs (a published dissertation and a habilitation thesis), a chapter of a collective monograph, 6 studies and 8 articles. Among the publications, the candidate's two monographs stand out.

The first in time is the monograph "The Crusades: Relics and Miracles (Pilgrimage, Adventure and Relic Hunting in the Orient XI-XIII centuries)" (Sofia, 2015, East-West Publishing House, ISBN: 978-619-152 -604-8 (Paperback), ISBN: 978-619-152-613-0 (Hardcover). Based on his dissertation, the candidate focuses on the subject of relic cults and sacred treasure hunting in the Eastern Mediterranean and the Balkans and their transfer to Western Europe in the era of the classical crusades (XI-XIII centuries). This topic has been

addressed in world medieval studies, but there is no such comprehensive study, except for Patrick Geary's famous monograph, which covers the preceding period. Kalin Yordanov has managed to present this phenomenon on a very broad, panoramic basis, which covers various aspects of the era of the Crusades, the history of the Latin states in the Eastern Mediterranean and a few issues dedicated to specific historical figures associated with this phenomenon. An in-depth analysis is made of the role of relics in religious life in general, but also in the specific environment of crusading propaganda, their practical role in military campaigns and numerous other aspects of this cult. The author carefully examines the sources dedicated to this phenomenon, outlining the contours of a whole genre in medieval literature, which is dedicated to relics, their authenticity, the problem of their "translation" and "sacred theft".

In conclusion, it can be said that Kalin Yordanov's work on this topic has an original character and a significant and complex scientific contribution to the study and examination of this issue in Bulgarian, European and world historiography.

The second presented monograph of Kalin Yordanov "The Prince of Philippople: the unknown despot Alexius Slav in the light of new sources and discoveries" (Sofia, 2022, "Wunderkammer" publishing house, ISBN: 978-619-92254-0-0, ISBN: 978 -619-7179-29-3), dedicated to the history of Northern Thrace and the Rhodopes in the first half of the 13th century, is a natural continuation of the author's successful research on the history of this region in the period under consideration. His contributions are already known in the field of studies of the Duchy of Philippopolis - the Latin possession in Upper Thrace, which managed to survive, albeit for a short time, in a complex diplomatic and military situation.

In the course of these studies of the Bulgarian-Latin and Bulgarian-Epirote relations, Kalin Yordanov inevitably reaches the topic of the possessions of Alexius Slav, the fate of this well-known, but not sufficiently well-studied side branch of the Asenid dynasty, originating from Ivanko and who declared against the Tsars of Tarnovo, seeking support from Byzantium, and

later entered into a close alliance with the Latin Empire, at the time of the famous emperor Henri de Hainault. The monograph consists of an introduction, four chapters, a conclusion, and many valuable appendices together with an index. Even with the most superficial reading, the already proven ability of colleague Yordanov to work with a variety of source material, to express bold but well-founded hypotheses, to squeeze literally everything from the often-scarce source base at his disposal is evident - a skill that every medievalist dealing with Bulgarian and Balkan history is forced to constantly develop.

In this direction, Kalin Yordanov's skills are truly excellent, combined with excellent language training and a wonderful writing style, which, in addition to its obvious scientific merits, also possesses undeniable literary qualities.

In the first chapter, Kalin Yordanov convincingly supports the already stated claim by Pierre Vincent Clavery that the assassination of the Archbishop of Philippi, Guillaume in 1217 was the work of "S. princeps Philippensis", successfully identified with Alexius Slavus, called "prince of Philippi", due to the frequent confusion of Philippopolis and Philippi in several medieval sources. The analysis of the events leading up to this episode is extremely detailed and persuasive, covering every possible point of view, showing a superb knowledge of historiography in the widest possible context. The analysis of the reasons that led to the conflict between Alexius Slav and the Philippian bishop Guillaume is also convincing. The dynamics of the stormy events that followed the death of Henri de Hainaut, including the assassination of Guillaume, Alexius Slavus' final break with the Latins and his reorientation towards Theodore Comnenus, as well as the construction of Melnik as the new center of his dominions, are traced in detail. also connected with the loss of control over the Duchy of Philippopolis, which again came under direct Latin control. No less impressive is the second chapter, in which Kalin Yordanov fully developed his creative potential and presented us with a truly panoramic picture of the political and diplomatic events during the time of the despot Alexius Slav, the changing

nature of his possessions and loyalties. This picture, however, directs us to two main questions: the origin and fate of the despot, and the genesis of his power, together with the extent of his dominions. Kalin Yordanov presents an extremely intriguing hypothesis about the direct connection between Ivanko and Slav, who is probably his illegitimate son. The hypothesis of the forced death of Slav after the battle of Klokotnitsa is also very interesting, as well as the abundant archaeological, prosopographic and linguistic support for this and other hypotheses, presented very convincingly by the author. The content of the third chapter is also of great interest, where the author very thoroughly and convincingly introduces us to his hypothesis that a sgraffito-ceramic image from the church

"The Virgin of Panthanassa" in Melnik is the family coat of arms of the family of Slav, who was knighted by his suzerain and father-in-law, Henri de Hainaut. Kalin Yordanov has done a wonderful job with a variety of archaeological, heraldic and written data, and against a very wide background has presented convincing evidence for his hypothesis of the presence of a Latin-style coat of arms of the Slav family. The fourth chapter is also very original and comprehensive, where Kalin Yordanov formulates another bold hypothesis about the relationship between Alexius Slav and Sebastocratoritsa Desislava, wife of Sebastocrator Kaloyan and founder of the Boyana Church. Kalin Yordanov's long-term work in the Boyana church allowed him to get to know in detail the secrets of the church, to familiarize himself with the details of the iconography, to study the "Latin codes" in the images, although he refrained from final conclusions on this matter. My overall impression of colleague Yordanov's work is that it is a study of high scientific value, beautifully designed and presented, with indisputable contributions. It has all the necessary characteristics of a habilitation thesis.

The studies and articles of Kalin Yordanov, which participate in the competition, can be divided into two main thematic circles.

The first thematic round covers publications devoted to the topic of "relic hunting" and the wider context of the cult of saints and martyrs in the age of the Crusades. Among them, the chapter from the collective monograph *The Western Expansion of the Balkans: The Military Monastic Orders and the Italian Maritime Republics of the XII-XV Centuries* stands out, co-authored (University Publishing House "St. Kliment Ohridski", UHC "Alma Mater", Sofia, 2018, ISBN: 978-954-07-5020-0, 36), pp. 227-263. This chapter revisits the subject of the *furta sacra* carried out by the Venetians in Romania. Two more studies from the presented publications related to the cult of saints, blessed and martyrs that appeared in the context of the crusading movement and the pilgrimage and hunting of relics on the eve of the First Crusade also relate to this topic. Three articles on this topic are also presented, dedicated to the relics in Constantinople, and to the search for the Holy Grail, as part of the process of searching for relics.

The second thematic circle is related to the reconstruction of the history of the Duchy of Philippopolis and Bulgarian-Latin relations after 1204. The ideas from some of these studies and articles are reflected and developed in the candidate's habilitation circle. Four studies and three articles with similar issues are presented, which are distinguished by jewel-like precision in the study of specific, unexplored problems and which clearly reflect Kalin Yordanov's precise ability to capture the details and work with various types of sources. Thus, he carefully examines written sources, heraldic material, wall paintings and reconstructs aspects of the history of Thrace and the Rhodopes from the first half of the 13th century, which shed additional light on the period and the fate of specific individuals.

Two of the presented articles are outside these two thematic circles. One of them is dedicated to the history of prostitution in the Latin Orient, and the other to magic in Byzantine political practice and the death of some Bulgarian rulers. In these articles, we again discover Kalin

Yordanov's excellent skills in finding the detail and weaving it into the big picture of the events of the era he is investigating.

Along with his indisputable scientific achievements, Dr. Kalin Yordanov also has a varied career path, diverse scientific interests and obvious skills in the field of digitalization of cultural heritage, especially in view of his work as the head of the Boyana Church Museum.

The presented references from the system for measuring scientometric indicators, the reference for citations and the candidate's contributions outline an extremely convincing candidacy for the academic position of "associate professor" in the person of Dr. Kalin Yordanov. This would also be a well-deserved recognition of his fruitful efforts in the field of Bulgarian, Balkan, and general medieval studies, which will yet be fully appreciated.

4. Conclusion:

The scientific, teaching and project activities of Dr. Kalin Kirilov Yordanov fully correspond to the requirements for occupying the academic position of "associate professor" according to

the requirements of the Law on the Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria and the regulations of the BAS. Based on this circumstance, I am pleased to propose to the esteemed jury to award the academic position of associate professor to Dr. Kalin Kirilov Yordanov in professional direction 2.2. History and Archeology and to wish the candidate every success in his future career.

23th of October 2022

Sofia

Signature:

/Prof. Alexandar Nikolov/