

REVIEW

of the works, presented for the acquiring of the academic position of PROFESSOR in the area of Old Bulgarian Literature at the Institute of Literary Studies in the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, in the competition announced in The State Newspaper, Vol. 12 from 8.02.2019.

Scholarly field: 2. Humanities

Professional area: 2.1. Philology (Bulgarian Literature. Old Bulgarian Literature)

Reviewer: Dr. Diana Atanassova, Associate professor in Bulgarian Medieval Literature in the Faculty of Slavic Studies of the Sofia University “St. Kliment Ohridski“

The only candidate in for this position, announced in The State Newspaper, Vol.12 from 8.02.2019, is Assoc. Prof. Dr. Habil. Ana Stoykova. She has graduated in a German language high school in Sofia in 1974; then she took her MA degree in Bulgarian Philology at Sofia University “St. Kliment Ohridski” in 1978 (with Degree in German Philology as her second specialization). In 1993 she defended her PHD dissertation with the title “The Physiologus in the South Slavic Literatures”. In 2015 she acquired the degree of Doctor Habil., defending a dissertation with the title “St. George the *Victory-Bearer*. South Slavic Medieval Hagiographic Tradition”. Both of these influential studies were published as books in 1994 and 2016 respectively.

Ana Stoykova works for more than 40 years in the Institute of Literary Studies at the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences: initially as an expert-philologist (1978 – 1994), then as a 1st level scholarly contributor (1994 - 1999); and since 1999 she is a 2nd level scholarly contributor (equal to Associate professor).

Ana Stoykova has been working for many years as an editor of one of the most respectable Bulgarian journals in the field of humanities – Old Bulgarian Literature. She was part of the editorial board in the period 1999 – 2011 and since 2011 is editor in chief. In addition to her scholarly achievements should be mentioned her experience in the administration of the proceedings in the Institute – she was a Secretary of Science (1999 - 2001) and Deputy Director of the Institute of Literature from 2001 to 2008 and since 2012 to nowadays. The positions Ana Stoykova has occupied and is still occupying are an evidence that the academic community recognizes her scholarly contributions and organizational abilities. Another acknowledgement of Ana Stoykova’s expertise are the five scholarly projects (three of them international), directed by her. She is a member of the teams of more than ten another research projects.

It should be mentioned that Ana Stoykova has also respectable teaching experience. She was in charge of the fundamental lecture course “Old Bulgarian Literature” in the University of Plovdiv (1994 – 2003) and New Bulgarian University (2003 – 2005). She also designed new interdisciplinary courses, for example “Use of Digital Technologies in the Medieval Studies Research” (delivered at University of Plovdiv in 1998) and “Christianity and Literature” (delivered in New Bulgarian University in the period 2004 – 2006). As a lecturer in Bulgarian language, literature and culture at the University of Warsaw she developed a cluster of courses, connected not only with the Old Bulgarian Literature, but with the problems of contemporary Bulgarian language and literature as well. She displays erudition and knowledge, but also ability to adapt her teaching to the needs of the audience. It should be mentioned, that Ana Stoykova is one of the authors of the digital course of Old Bulgarian Literature on the online platform *e-Medievalia*, designed as a basis for distant education. One of her more prestigious achievements is her participation in the realization of the new Academic History of the Bulgarian Medieval Literature (2008).

For the procedural requirements of this competition Ana Stoykova has presented 45 publications – 4 books (one in co-authorship) and more than 40 articles in journals and scholarly collections, reviews and articles in encyclopedic and reference books. Her works are published after 2000, so the requirement that the publications must be after her appointment as an Associate professor is fulfilled. The materials, presented by Ana Stoykova, corresponds with requirements of the Law for the development of academic staff in Republic of Bulgaria; the required reference note shows, that the scholarly publications of Ana Stoykova successfully meet the national requirements for the academic position of “Professor”.

The main study, deposited by the candidate, is the monograph “**Dragon-Slayer Saints: Theodore Tiron, Theodore Stratelates and George the Victory-Bearer. South Slavic Medieval Tradition**”. Sofia: Iztok-Zapad, 2019, 320 pp. And I’ll start my review with this book. It is the first study dealing with the theme of the dragon slaying in texts, dedicated to these three saints in the South Slavic literature. The book consists of two main parts. The first is a study in three chapters, while the second part presents a publication of the Slavonic translations with the corresponding Greek originals. Each separate chapter is focused on one of the saints, announced in the title, and goes into details about the textual tradition of the texts that include a story about the victory over a chthonic creature. With precision, typical of her works, Ana Stoykova unfolds an ordered study, beginning with the history of the motive, followed by its development and re-interpretation in the analyzed works. In this manner she succeeds to shed light not only on the narrative strategies and the plot developments, but also on the relationship between the separate hagiographic cults with regard to the motive of dragon slaying.

The careful comparison between the episodes in the different works provides deeper knowledge about the development of the motive. On these grounds the researcher comes to the conclusion that the emphasized dramatism and the additional fictional layers have appeared in a later period. The striving for thoroughness and multi-faceted observation, characteristic of the works of Ana Stoykova in general, ensured the possibility for detailed description of the history of each text: *The Miracle of St. Theodore Tiron with the Mother and the Dragon*, BHG 1766-1767 (Chapter I, pp. 9-51), *The Passio of Theodore Stratelates ascribed to Augarus*, BHG 1750 (Chapter II, pp. 51-103) and *The Miracle of St. George with the Dragon*, BHG 687, 687κ, 687b (Chapter III, pp. 102-167). Each part includes information about the original appearance of the work, its social and cultural context, its place in the history of the Byzantine literature, its translations with their recensions in Slavonic language and the manuscript collections they appeared. As expected, more attention was paid to the appearance and the spread of these texts in South Slavic context. The study is focused on the historical, cultural and literary particularities of the South Slavic tradition. It must be said, however, that despite its primary interest to the Cyrillic manuscript, originating from the Balkan Peninsula, the study examines also the Russian tradition, achieving a much clearer and detailed picture of the dissemination of these texts. In this way Ana Stoykova becomes able to clarify and correct some existing views, for example the suggestion of A. Turilov about the possible Russian influence on the formation of the South Slavic version of *The Miracle of St. Theodore Tiron with the Mother and the Dragon*.

When the object of the research are translated literary texts, the researcher is usually predisposed to make comparisons between the preserved copies and to track down the possible originals, from which they stemmed. This assumption makes natural the choice of the method, which Ana Stoykova has followed – comparative textology. She has worked with many manuscripts, which include witnesses of the works, which are the object of the study. Stoykova has also tracked down their Greek counterparts, or the versions most similar to the preserved Slavic variants, some of them not yet published. After making an exhaustive comparative analyses of the witnesses of the Slavic texts, on the one hand, and between the Slavic translations and their putative Greek originals, on the other, Stoykova came to important conclusions about the spread of the works both in Byzantine and Slavic context. She made also impressive contribution about the question when the texts were translated, what are their linguistic features, what editorial changes they have undergone during their reproduction. I'd singled out as most insightful the conclusions, following from the detailed analyses of the witnesses, for example the identification of more than one translation of each work. The accumulated information about the spread of these works in South Slavic literature provides knowledge not only about their literary context, but also about the cultural practices of the people, engaged in the reading and copying

of them – the bookmen and the audience to which they were addressed. Starting from the textological analysis, the researcher built a larger picture, situating the concrete texts as part of the religious culture of the South Slavs. Especially important is the conclusion that the texts were spread in the South Slavic tradition in a way, resembling their original Byzantine context – for example, *The Miracle with the Mother and the Dragon* could be found in non-liturgics manuscripts both in the Byzantine and the Slavic tradition. *Passio of Theodore Stratelates ascribed to Augarus* however was present in different type of collections (calendrical collections) both in the Byzantine and the Slavic tradition. These facts confirm the idea about the continuity between the Slavic and the Byzantine culture.

Among the numerous insights of the study should be stressed the valuable observation on the language of the South Slavic translations and their recensions, which are indicative of their connectedness with specific literary circles and translators attitudes; the comments on the specific lexical material, enriching our knowledge of the lexical repertoire of the Bulgarian Medieval manuscripts. Unquestionable value has the second part of the book – the critical edition of the works in question, implemented with knowledge and rigor by the author.

Taken as a whole, the monograph about the three dragon slayers saints is an important study, impressive with the scope and depth of the analysis. Anna Stoykova displays a lucid style of exposition, making the difficult, ryzomatic dissemination of the Medieval texts accessible to the reader. Personally I admire her precision and objectivity. Just like her previous scholarly work, this monograph shows an erudite, experienced researcher, combining knowledge and intuition while pursuing the clarification of complicated and intriguing issues. Ana Stoykova puts the literary facts in a broad cultural and historical contexts, paying attention to the different traditions and the place of the South Slavic one between them.

The book impresses also with the broad bibliographic conversance of its author. Ana Stoykova is aware of very many scholarly publications, related with the topic of her research. She doesn't rely blindly on the existing ideas and notions, but always makes a thorough check and corrects the established views, if necessary. Her ideas and conclusions are always innovative and contributing for the best understanding of the researched phenomena.

Closely connected with the monograph are several articles of Ana Stoykova, which extend and enrich the researched topic. Especially important is the panoramic article, dedicated to the cult of the two saints with the same name – St. Theodore Tiron and St. Theodore Stratelates (№ 31). The article discusses issues, related with the literary texts in the Byzantine and Slavic traditions, also with the iconography of the two saints and the contamination of the two cults, looking for explanations of this

“merging”. Most numerous are the articles, connected with the cult of St. George (№ 7, 8, 10, 12, 14, 15, 16, 39 and others). This is understandable, if we have in mind the long lasting interest of Ana Stoykova towards the translated hagiographic texts and the texts, serving to the cult of St. George.

Another area, where Ana Stoykova has made valuable contributions is the Cyrillo-Methodian studies and the Medieval Bulgarian literature as a whole. The articles (№ 18-24), which are part of the collective volume “History of the Bulgarian Medieval Literature” (2008) exceeds the scope of the usual reference article. These articles, to which we may add the articles, dealing with particular questions about the original Old Bulgarian hymnography (№ 5, 11), are evidence for the ability of Stoykova to find original research perspective and with detailed analysis to build an argument for her hypothesis and conclusions.

Important part of the research interests of Ana Stoykova is the problem of the adaptation and re-interpretation of pre-Christian models and motives in the Byzantine literature and the Medieval Slavic literatures. Her articles, dealing with mythological material like the myth of the phoenix (№ 33) and the myth about the giant cosmic bird (№ 34) in the Slavic literatures, represent precise and detailed overview of the all possible variations in large number of manuscript sources. These studies are marked with broadness of scope and encyclopedic exhaustiveness, thus opening interesting cultural perspectives. In the article, exploring the motive about Satanael’s refusal to bow to Adam (№ 37), the researcher brought attention to non-canonical texts and apocrypha. In this sense the above mentioned studies are valuable contribution to the study of the non-canonical literature and apocrypha.

Another field, where Ana Stoykova has a significant interests and valuable contribution is the digital humanities – namely, the digital technologies for processing and exponation of medieval textual sources. Most spectacular example is her study of the Physiologus (№ 2) – an early Christian text that contains many pagan motives. Ana Stoykova has prepared a digital edition of all available witnesses of the identified three recensions of the Slavic version. This edition is published on a bilingual Internet site, which could be accessed freely. The texts are accompanied by pictures from preserved manuscripts with Western origin. This online based edition is not just a user-friendly resource for reference and work, but is also a great instrument which I use regularly in my teaching and which the students enjoy. The editorial principles of this online edition are explicated in the article “Electronic edition of the Slavic Physiologus” (№ 28). Ana Stoykova has participated in three scientific projects, related with the digital humanities, so there is no doubt she has the skills and knowledge, making her an important figure in that field. The high value of the projects’ outcomes, both personal and collective, are an evidence for the scholarly reputation of Ana Stoykova.

My review didn't cover all the articles, presented by Ana Stoykova for this competition. I chose to focus on the texts, outlining her main research areas. She is an author of many articles in the academic Cyrillo-Methodian Encyclopedia – one of the most authoritative collective effort in the field of Bulgarian Medieval studies. She is a contributor to prestigious periodicals and encyclopedias (*Scripta Bulgarica*, *Encyclopaedia Slavica Sanctorum*). Ana Stoykova was also an editor of many scholarly collections. Among them are the *Festschriften* of eminent Bulgarian and foreign scholars like prof. Klimentina Ivanova, prof. Krassimir Stanchev, prof. Alexander Naumov.

Evidence for the scholarly excellence of Ana Stoykova and her international recognition are the numerous quotations of her works – 168. (Most probably there are more). In the period 2000-2018 she has participated in 30 scientific forums, a great part of them international.

For me personally, Ana Stoykova is an authority, whom I very much appreciate and respect. She is an example of academism, professionalism, loyalty, helpfulness, solidarity and goodwill. Her books and articles which I have carefully read, not only because most of them are in the field of my research interests - have been inspiration not only for me but also for the young people I work with. From her and her work I have learned a lot.

In conclusion I would like to state, that the research work and the publications of Ana Stoykova completely fulfil the requirements for obtaining the academic position of “Professor”. Ana Stoykova is not only an internationally recognized, distinguished and highly valued scholar. She is a successful administrator, able to cope with the challenges as a leader of scientific projects and as a deputy director of the Institute of Literary Studies. As a member of the scientific jury I will vote without any hesitation for Assoc. Prof. Dr. Habil. Ana Stoykova to take the academic position “Professor”.

Sofia, 7 June 2019

Reviewer:

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