

SHORT REVIEW

by Professor Dr. Margaret Dimitrova (St. Kliment Ohridski University of Sofia)
of the academic contributions of Assoc. Prof. Dr. Habil. Ana Stoykova,
candidate for the position of professor of Old Bulgarian literature (2.1. Philology,
Bulgarian literature – Old Bulgarian literature)
at the Institute of Literary Studies – Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, Section “Old
Bulgarian literature”
(the position is announced in State Magazine no. 102 of February 8, 2019)

The only candidate for this position is Dr. Habil. Ana Stoykova who has worked at the Institute of Literary Studies since 1978 and who has contributed to its best initiatives. She has served to this institution as a vice-director (2001-2007, since 2012 – currently) and as a member of the editorial board (1999-2011) and as the editor-in-chief (since 2011) of the academic journal “Old Bulgarian Literature”, one of the most respectful periodicals in the field of medieval Slavonic studies. Also, she has contributed to several academic projects, of five of which she has been the leader, and has intensively published on medieval Bulgarian literature in authoritative editions.

In 1993 Ana Stoykova defended a phd dissertation on *Physiologos* in medieval Slavonic manuscripts and in 2015 – a dissertation for the academic degree “doctor of philology”. On the basis of latter, analyzing the *passiones* of St. George, she published a book entitled „Sveti Georgi Pobedonosets. Agiografski proizvedenija v juznoslavjanskata srednovjekovna traditsija” [St. George the Victory-Bearer. South Slavic Medieval Hagiographic Tradition] Sofia; Iztok-Zapad, 2016, 728 pp. ISBN 978-619-152-903-2.

The main academic work with which Ana Stoykova applies for the position of a professor of Old Bulgarian Literature is her monographic study dealing with other hagiographic texts dedicated to the battles of three saints with the dragon viewed in the Byzantine context. It is entitled “Svettsi zmeebortsi v juznoslavjanskata srednovjekovna traditsija: Teodor Tiron, Teodor Stratilat, Georgi Pobedonosets” [Dragon-Slayer Saints: Theodore Tiron, Theodore Stratilatis and George the Victory-Bearer. South Slavic Medieval Tradition] (Sofia: Iztok-Zapad, 2019, 320 pp.). The work traces back the translations of different Greek versions of the

battles of these saints with the dragon and their dissemination in medieval Cyrillic manuscripts of *Slavia orthodoxa*. Rightly the author starts with the text about St. Theodore Teron/ Tiron as it is considered to be the most earliest one of that type in Byzantine tradition and it has been suggested that it influenced the stories about St. Theodore Stratelates/ Stratilatis and St. George and the dragon. Ana Stoykova correctly identifies the Greek versions of the story about St. Theodore Tiron that might have been translated into Old Bulgarian literary language. Regretfully, as a rule, these Greek texts do not have critical editions and this is one of the difficulties that Ana Stoykova faced and managed to overcome by comparing the available editions and studies.

She juxtaposed information on various Greek and Slavonic manuscripts containing the hagiographical texts examined in order to describe the functions of these texts in Byzantine milieu and in medieval Slavonic milieu. Thus, for instance, she discovers that the translation of the story of St Theodore Tiron was not frequently copied both in Greek and Slavonic manuscripts. Scrutinizing the manuscript tradition, Stoykova correctly concludes that the episode with the dragon in the Martyrdom of St *Theodore Stratilatis* ascribed to Augarus is the only liturgical text among all the narratives about dragon-slayer saints: it was copied in the framework of official manuscripts of the Church with liturgical use. In respect to the translation and dissemination of this hagiographical text and especially of the miracle with the dragon included in it, she puts forward a thought-provoking hypothesis that sheds light on the *modus operandi* of medieval Bulgarian men of letters and on their literary preferences and needs. In particular, she rightly identifies two translations of this Martyrdom: an early made in the Old Bulgarian period and a later one produced in the Middle Bulgarian period. In the former, according to her, the episode with the dragon was not originally included but apparently it was regarded as a needed one and therefore later it was independently translated three times by three different *literati* and added to the earlier Old Bulgarian translation of the saint's martyrdom.

Further, the author contributes to the description of the literary activities of South Slavonic men of letters by examining the translations of three different Greek versions of the Story of St. George and the dragon. She discovers that the most popular Greek text was translated twice amongst the South Slavs.

The study of Ana Stoykova of the medieval Slavonic translations and revisions of the episodes with the dragon is not limited to textual foci – she juxtaposes visual sources with the textual ones, tracing back the history of the Church cults of three saints, dragon slayers. In this way she analyzes the contexts in which the written works about the victory over the dragon

were disseminated, used, and perceived both in Byzantine and Slavonic settings: in what types of books they were copied and what type of Christian interpretation of this old motif they provided to their readers, what the literary and liturgical functions of the different texts were and for what purposes they were intended. Also, A. Stoykova has observations on the language of the medieval Slavonic manuscripts and texts examined by her and reports mostly those of them that could be used as argument for the defining the time when a translation was made. In this respect, it is correct that she views the frequent use of *Dativus Absolutus* as an archaic feature only as part of a complex of other language features that point to an archaic translation. Otherwise, this construction appears both in early and later translations.

The indebt analyses of the object of her study and its examination from various perspectives gave solid ground to A. Stoykova to overcome any prejudice and bias in her research and to discuss the existing hypotheses with solid arguments (I shall give only one example, her critique of Hengstenberg's hypothesis about the motif of the dragon in the Miracle with the dragon of St Theodore Stratilatis ascribed to Augarus, p. 57) and to draw reliable conclusions. For instance, I subscribe for her opinion that the wide dissemination of the story of St George and the dragon written in the vernacular in the so-called New Bulgarian damaskinars' collections of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries is the reason for the popularity in this period of the iconography of St George as a horseman killing the dragon, and that, further, both the narrative in spoken Bulgarian and this iconography are the reason for the popularity of oral narratives about St George as a dragon slayer.

Extremely useful are the comparative table of the motifs of the Miracle of St George with the dragon in Cyrillic sources (pp. 172-176) and the editions of Greek and Slavonic texts with variant readings (pp. 182-291) – in the case of the latter I would prefer to see the original superscript signs rendered.

Along with this valuable study, A. Stoykova is the author of an excellent electronic edition of *Physiologos* in medieval Cyrillic manuscripts accompanied with the Greek versions that were translated (more than once), a dictionary, and translation to English. In my view, this electronic product meets even the most demanding needs of a student of medieval Slavonic letters and literatures. Judging from her experience with this e-edition and from her contributions to other projects for digitalization of medieval Slavonic written heritage, Dr. Stoykova has published papers on the prospects of this rapidly developing field in palaeoslavic studies (nos. 6, 28, 36 in the list of publications submitted by her).

In addition to her other discoveries and valuable publications I should mention her contributions to the most recent History of Medieval Bulgarian Literature (ed. by Anisava Miltenova, nos. 18-24) devoted to key problems, figures or works, such as Cyrillo-Methodian heritage in medieval Bulgarian culture, Constantine of Preslav's writings, O pismenex'' by Chernorizec Hrabr'', original and translated hagiography, and others.

Bearing in mind Ana Stoykova's brilliant contributions to palaeoslavic scholarship I, as a member of the committee (jury) – without any reservation – will vote positively and will support the decision Ana Stoykova to become professor of Old Bulgarian Literature at the Institute of Literary Studies, Bulgarian Academy of Sciences.

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