

Evaluation

by Assoc. Prof. Dr Teodor Arsov Lekov

a member of faculty of New Bulgarian University, professional direction: 2.2. History and Archaeology, for the participation in the academic competition for PROFESSOR in professional direction: 2.2. History and Archaeology, announced in SG no. 65/12.08.2022 r. with the only candidate of Assoc. Prof. Dr. Toma Ivanov Tomov.

I. Assessment of compliance with the minimum national requirements and the requirements of the New Bulgarian University

The candidate, Assoc. Dr. Toma Tomov, meets the minimum national requirements and the requirements of the New Bulgarian University for the academic position of professor in the competition. The submitted materials for the competition correspond to the requirements for the formation of the number of points according to the various criteria, a total of 885 points.

II. Research activity of the candidate

I have the honor of knowing Toma Tomov for thirty years, from the time he studied at the Faculty of history of Sofia University "St. Kl. Ohridski" and I am a direct witness of his path in scientific researches. I know well the challenges and difficulties he overcame. Toma Tomov graduated with a master's degree in history from the University of St. Kl. Ohridski", specializing in History of Byzantium and the Balkan Peoples at the Faculty of History of the University in 1994.

Already in this early period of his career as a researcher, Toma Tomov showed a clear desire to set the high scientific criteria and an innovative approach in his research as a mandatory requirement in his work. His master's thesis "Constantinople according to the text and plans of Crestoforo Buondelmonti of the 14th century" and his studies on the topography of Constantinople introduced new, little-explored pictorial source material to the study of the Byzantine capital and inspired other foreign scholars to continue in this direction of research and to achieve substantial results. An expression of recognition for the young scientist is his membership in one of the most authoritative scientific organizations in the field of Byzantology - the Society for the Promotion of Byzantine Studies since 1996.

In the period 1997-1998, Toma Tomov was promoted to a scholarship at the Center for Slavic-Byzantine Studies "Prof. Ivan Duychev", and from 1998 to 2001 a full-time doctoral student at the Faculty of History of the SU. Five years later, he became a full-time lecturer at the New Bulgarian University, and in 2007 an associate professor of Medieval General History.

The submitted materials for the competition include five monographs: Constantinople and the Russian Colony until 1204 (2008); Byzantium - known and unknown (in two editions from 2012 and 2014); Key 1014 (2015); The unknown temple "St. Sofia". Inscriptions-graffiti in Cyrillic and Glagolitic (2016, 2019); The secrets of "St. Sofia". The Forgotten Graffiti Ships and Their Messages, (2021). The number of scientific articles by the candidate is significant - 48 in prestigious Bulgarian and foreign publications such as *Paleobulgarica*, *Byzantinoslavica*, *Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies*, etc. He is also the author of teaching tools, textbooks, approved by the Ministry of Education and Culture and an electronic textbook dedicated to the history of Ancient Rome, intended for students at NBU.

An overview of Toma Tomov's research shows broad scholarly interests in Byzantium, Medieval Studies and Balkan History, with competences extending to the history of the Roman Empire and Late Antiquity. However, the important thing is that Toma Tomov became the leading researcher of the graffiti and drawings from "St. Sofia", which continued the drawings of Prof. Cyril Mango from the middle of the 20th century for the possible and necessary future explorations of Constantinople. The database that Toma Tomov has collected over the last 20 years from inscriptions and graffiti in the Byzantine capital is a prerequisite for the development of a whole new direction in Byzantological studies, even more so in the light of the recent political decisions to turn Hagia Sophia into a working temple, which hinders research at the object. An expression of this scientific strategy for the discovery and publication of new source material related to the life of the Byzantine capital is reflected in the candidate's two main monographs - the Unknown Temple "St. Sofia". Inscriptions-graffiti in Cyrillic and Glagolitic (2019) and Secrets of "St. Sofia". The Forgotten Graffiti Ships and Their Messages (2021).

These two monographs set a standard for the publication of graffiti in general - the first monograph is dedicated to Cyrillic and Glagolitic inscriptions, respectively, they are published with a photo, redrawing, paleographic and historical commentary, analysis of the location of the graffiti and an attempt to search for the meaning, for their position in the temple that takes into account all possible and accessible factors for analysis. The typology of the inscriptions and their

attribution - Russian, Bulgarian, Serbian, Vlach, unidentified or neutral - creates a prerequisite for statistical observations that lead to historical conclusions - for example, the predominant amount of Russian graffiti from the 12th century speaks of the importance of the presence of the Russian commercial community in the city and the high level of written culture among Russian pilgrims. The published graffiti provide important data on the prosopography, trade contacts and influences both in the capital of the empire and the presence of Byzantium in the history of the Balkan peoples.

The monograph dedicated to the images of ships in "St. Sophia" refers us to the importance of the image in the medieval pictorial tradition and the possibility of reaching from seemingly schematic images to a deep iconographic analysis to determine the type, origin and dating of these images, thereby supplementing the historical picture of shipping and trade in Byzantium, looking at the issue in its entirety - from the Viking presence to the role of Italian traders. The most important thing in both monographs is that they bring into scholarly circulation an important segment of the available and still undiscovered and documented sources for the history of the Byzantine capital, something that becomes increasingly difficult in view of the specifics of Byzantine studies and available sources.

The author's scientific articles and studies complement the value of the monographs, often being devoted to the detailed examination of a given graffiti or image, accompanied by copious historical commentary. The contribution of these publications is undeniable and deserves wide recognition.

III. Learning and teaching activity

The review of the courses taught by the candidate shows the diligence of Toma Tomov to implement at NBU a comprehensive program in Byzantium, to provide a palette of general education courses to introduce the topic of Roman history, without which teaching in programs in the fields of archaeology, history, cultural tourism and etc. is unthinkable. His courses are devoted to Roman history and culture, the history of Christianity, Byzantium, the history of Constantinople, the Coptic period in Egyptian history, and spiritual phenomena in Late Antiquity. His teaching work supports a number of programs to achieve a meaningful, comprehensive curriculum with a wide selection of courses, including the Egyptology programs, where Toma Tomov introduces students to the topics of Coptic history and culture. The teaching materials developed by the

candidate, as well as the complete set of materials in the electronic learning system (Moodle), testify to a high professional level of teaching, which is also reflected in the survey among students, who give a very high assessment of the teacher's work.

IV. Administrative and public activity

Assoc. Dr. Toma Tomov has made a significant contribution to the administrative development and the work of the faculties at NBU. He held the position of dean of the Bachelor's Faculty for six years, was deputy rector for academic and international activities of NBU, chairman of the Faculty Council of the Bachelor's Faculty and member of the Academic Council of NBU, chairman of a number of committees, program boards, etc. His expertise in the field of higher education is solid, and also it should be added a number of his participations in public meetings and presentations, promotional lectures, participation as a consultant in a number of projects, which speaks of his active attitude towards building a positive and informed attitude to the problems of medieval and Byzantine history in Bulgaria.

Conclusion

My overall assessment of the candidate's research achievements, teaching skills and experience, administrative and personal qualities give me reason to confidently support with a positive vote the election of Associate Professor Dr. Toma Ivanov Tomov to the academic position of "Professor" at the New Bulgarian University, with professional direction 2.2. History and archaeology.

01.12.2022

Assoc. Dr. Teodor Lekov

Sofia

