

OPINION

by **Prof. Daniela Todorova Markova, PhD**, lecturer in Plovdiv University 'Paisii Hilendarski',
Faculty of Pedagogy,

of the materials submitted for participation in the competition for occupation of the academic position
**'Associate Professor' in Plovdiv University 'Paisii Hilendarski' in Area of Higher Education 2.
Humanities, Professional Field 2.4. Religion and theology, Scientific Speciality: 'Christian art'**

In the competition for the academic position 'Associate Professor', announced in State Gazette No 99/20.11.2020 and on the web page of Plovdiv University 'Paisii Hilendarski' for the needs of the Department of Theology within the Faculty of History and Philosophy and History, Assist. Prof. Adriana Hristoslavova Lyubenova, PhD, from the Department of Theology within the Faculty of History and Philosophy, Plovdiv University 'Paisii Hilendarski', participates as a candidate.

General Presentation of the Procedure and the Candidate

By Order No. P 33-610/18.02.2021 of the Chancellor of Plovdiv University 'Paisii Hilendarski' I was appointed as a member of the Scientific Jury of the competition for occupation of the academic position 'Associate Professor' in Plovdiv University 'Paisii Hilendarski' in Area of Higher Education: 2. Humanities, Professional Field 2.4. Religion and theology, Scientific Speciality: 'Christian art', announced for the needs of the Department of Theology within the Faculty of History and Philosophy. The Scientific Jury of the competition was approved by a decision of the Faculty Council of the Faculty of History and Philosophy with protocol No. 146/25.01.2021.

Documents for participation in the competition were submitted by the only candidate – **Assist. Prof. Adriana Hristoslavova Lyubenova, PhD**.

The set of materials presented by Adriana Hristoslavova Lyubenova in electronic format complies with the Rules for the Development of the Academic Staff of Plovdiv University 'Paisii Hilendarski' and includes the following papers: Application to the Chancellor for admission to the competition; CV in European format; Diploma for Master's Degree; Diploma for educational and scientific degree 'Doctor'; Reference for compliance with the minimum national requirements /prepared by the applicant/; Declaration of originality and authenticity of enclosed documents; annotations of the materials, including self-assessment of contributions; annotations of the materials,

including self-assessment of contributions in English; document for work experience; list of scientific works; research papers: monographs; articles, reports; citations; participation in research projects.

A list of scientific publications is presented in which the publications before the PhD and those with which the candidate participates in the competition are marked, in accordance with the requirements of the Development of Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria Act (DASRBA) and the Rules for the Development of the Academic Staff of Plovdiv University 'Paisii Hilendarski', according to which the presented materials do not repeat others with which the candidate has participated in procedures for PhD. These are 3 monographs; 3 studios; 11 articles, of which 8 abroad, 7 of them in publications and participation in international forums in Russia.

General Characteristics of the Applicant's Activity

The biographical data of the candidate related to his education and interests are impressive. Adriana Lyubenova graduated bachelor's degree in sculpture from George Mason University, USA; Master's degree in Church Painting at The Academy of Music, Dance and Fine Arts in Plovdiv; Master's degree in "Practical Theology" at the Plovdiv University 'Paisii Hilendarski', Master's degree in "Archeology" and "Restoration and Conservation" at the Konstantin Preslavski University of Shumen.

She has specialized in "Theology and Symbolism of Early Christianity", "Technique and Technology of Painting", "Iconography", "Restoration and Conservation of Cultural Monuments" at UNESCO.

Since 2014 she has been working at the Plovdiv University 'Paisii Hilendarski' as a lecturer in the Department of Theology at the Faculty of History and Philosophy. She is a scientific secretary of the University Center for Christian Art and Culture.

A. Lyubenova is a member of the International Committee for Restoration and Conservation of Mosaics /ICCM/, the Board of Directors of Bulgarian Schools Abroad and the Bulgarian Iconographic Association.

The monograph "Logos and Image (the Visible and the Invisible in Orthodox Iconography)" was published in 2013, in a volume of 172 pages, but as a topic it does not repeat the topic on the dissertation work of the candidate. In 2021, 2 monographs were published - "Mosaic art in late antiquity Philippopolis IV-VI C" in a volume of 341 pages and the monograph presented as a habilitation work "Mosaic pavements from Philippopolis", 2021, 227 pages.

The monograph "Mosaic art in late antiquity Philippopolis IV-VI C" is presented as a published book based on the materials used for the defense of the educational and scientific degree 'Doctor'. Given that A. Lyubenova continues to work in the field of iconographic and theological research of Christian art and ancient mosaics, the monograph is an upgrade of her previous research

and deepening the issues. The candidate in the competition submitted a significant number of scientific papers published after the materials used for the defense of the educational and scientific degree 'Doctor'. The author himself emphasizes that he aims to provide new information and to show in a different, more analytical light the already known mosaics, adding new observations to the characteristics of the iconographic styles; new archaeological and epigraphic data, combined with previously known historical data.

There is reason to define most of the research as interdisciplinary, as different aspects of the presented problems are considered. Orthodox iconography is analyzed on the one hand by shedding light on its historical and theological aspects, on the other - on technological and art criticism. The fine arts in the church are connected with the whole spiritual life of the Church. Since the Orthodox image itself is multi-layered, it is a "theology in images", a complex internal content transformed into a material form, this approach allows to reveal in greater depth the issues under consideration. The connection between fine arts and worship is traced more precisely and completely. Religious art is not considered in isolation, as existing in itself, but in connection with the liturgy, architecture, architectural details and decorations, which contributes to the full elucidation of its specificity.

Mosaic art is seen through the prism of Theology, Art history, Cultural and political history, Archeology and Architecture. In the study of the problems a complex analysis of the written sources and the epigraphic monuments, of the results of archeological excavations is applied. The topic of interest to the candidate is not one-sided - samples of Orthodox iconography are considered, which have scientific and cultural value and which are part of the national and world wealth, the study of which is essential.

Christianity and the peculiarities of the religious life in Philippopolis in IV-VI are traced; the liturgy and symbolism of the images in the mosaics from Philippopolis IV-VI C; the technique, technology and materials used in the process of making the late antique mosaics are analyzed; the mosaics from the so-called A small basilica, opened in Plovdiv, the modern church painting. Valuable recommendations are given for specialist restorers.

Current issues related to alarming trends in the modern decoration of Orthodox churches are being discussed. A particularly important step in overcoming this problem is the openly stated position of professionals.

Although due to the professional direction of the announced competition, her creative activity is not presented, I can not fail to mention her many participations in exhibitions, her creative achievements in the field of icon and church frescoes. These achievements support and increase the significance of her scientific achievements in the field of scientific specialty, as they show a full experience of Christian art not only in theory, from the point of view of the researcher-theorist, but

also from the point of view of the practicing artist. art and thus understanding its various aspects more comprehensively and in depth.

My personal impressions of A. Lyubenova's activity are connected with her professionalism in painting the frescoes in the chapel "St. Paisii Hilendarski" in Plovdiv and with images of the icons created by her.

In her educational and pedagogical activity A. Lyubenova has developed 9 curricula and lecture courses. She has undoubted organizational skills and competencies - this can be seen from the work on projects (national and international scientific and educational projects), as well as from the presented student activities organized and conducted under her guidance. The theoretical developments in the main monographs and other works that are submitted for consideration have indisputable value. I have no critical remarks or recommendations. I accept the contributions presented in the annotation, as they are systematized in the annotation presented by the candidate.

Particularly valuable and suitable for the subject of research is the interdisciplinary approach through which the one-sided approach to the considered issues is avoided. The quantitative indicators of the criteria for holding the academic position of "Associate Professor" are met. For this period a sufficient number of scientific publications have been realized which /with the exception of 1 article dealing with advertising/ are related to the issues of the competition.

CONCLUSION

The papers and materials submitted by Assist. Prof. Adriana Hristoslavova Lyubenova, PhD meet all the requirements of the Development of Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria Act (DASRBA), the Rules for its implementation, and the relevant Rules of Plovdiv University 'Paisii Hilendarski'. The candidate's works have original scientific and applied contributions that have been recognized in professional circles. After studying the materials and scientific papers presented for the competition, and after analyzing their significance and scientific, applied research and applied contributions, I find it reasonable **to give my positive assessment and recommend to the Scientific Jury to prepare a report-proposal to the Faculty Council of the Faculty of History and Philosophy for the election of Adriana Hristoslavova Lyubenova for the academic position 'Associate Professor' in Plovdiv University 'Paisii Hilendarski' in Area of Higher Education 2. Humanities, Professional Field 2.4. Religion and theology, Scientific Speciality: 'Christian art'.**

9.04. 2021

Reviewer: ...

.....

(Prof. Daniela Todorova
Markova, PhD)