

## REVIEW

by Dr. Elena Ivanova Genova, Professor, Institute for Art Studies (currently retired)

of the materials submitted for participation in a competition for the academic position of

### **Associate Professor**

### **of the Paissiy Hilendarski University of Plovdiv**

in the sphere of higher education

#### 2. Human Sciences

Professional field 2.4. Religion and Theology (Christian Art)

In the competition for the position of Associate Professor, as announced in the State Gazette, No. 99 of November 20, 2020, and on the internet page of the Paissiy Hilendarski University of Plovdiv for the needs of the Department of Theology at the Faculty of Philosophy and History, Adriana Lyubenova of the Department of Theology is taking part as applicant.

General presentation of the procedure and the applicant: the competition is announced in the State Gazette, No. 99 of November 20, 2020; on February 2, 2021, by a Protocol of a commission appointed by Order P33-611/18, the only applicant submitting documents within the legally established deadline is allowed to participate in the competition, namely Head Assistant Professor Ph.D. Adriana Hristoslavova Lyubenova.

With Order PU №P-33-610 of February 18, 2021, of the Rector of the Paissiy Hilendarski University of Plovdiv, I was appointed as a member of the scientific jury of the competition for the academic position of Associate Professor in the University of Plovdiv in the sphere of higher education 2. Human Sciences, professional field 2.4. Religion and Theology, **announced for the needs of** the Department of Theology at the Faculty of Philosophy and History.

For participation in the announced competition, documents were submitted by **a single applicant**, namely Head Assistant Professor Ph.D. Adriana Hristoslavova Lyubenova of the Paissiy Hilendarski University of Plovdiv.

The set of application materials on paper submitted by Adriana Hristoslavova Lyubenova is in conformity with the Regulations for the Development of the Academic Staff of the University of Plovdiv and includes the following documents: 1. Application form; 2. CV; 3. M.A. diploma; 4. Ph.D. diploma; 5. List of scientific works; 6. Certificate of conformity; 7. Annotations of the materials; 8. Declaration of originality; 9. Certificate of work experience; 10. Documents of teaching work.

The applicant Adriana Hristoslavova Lyubenova has submitted a total of 20 scientific works: 3 studies, 3 monographs, 11 articles. Of these, 17 scientific works are accepted for reviewing. One monograph whose content is that of the dissertation for the educational and scientific degree of Docgtor (Ph.D.), as well as one article which is beyond the problematic of the competition, are not reviewed. The geographical distribution of scientific works is as follows: seven publications abroad, and the rest are publications in Bulgaria, monographs and in scientific collections.

The applicant Adriana Lyubenova has an envious background for scientific growth with the education that she has obtained abroad, in the USA. In the 2007-2013 period the applicant has accumulated teaching experience as the head of the iconography workshop at the Plovdiv Metropolitanate and by lecturing in Church Painting in the Academy for Music, Dance, and Fine Arts in Plovdiv. She teaches iconography, fresco, glass painting, mosaic, Christian art, and theology. In 2009-2011, she obtained an M.A. in Practical Theology in the University of Plovdiv. In 2010-2012 she obtained an M.A. in Archaeology, Conservation and Restoration in the University of Shumen. In Bulgaria, in the Institute for Art Studies at the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, she obtained a Ph.D. degree in 2014. Her doctoral thesis put the foundations of her scientific career; she continues to accumulate professional experience with her research of the floor mosaics of Philippopolis, which is the subject of her current habilitation thesis. Since 2014, the applicant is a Head Assistant Professor in the Paissiy Hilendarski University of Plovdiv, accumulating experience with the production of a number of course programs as well as with lecturing and leading seminars with students. She is a member of the International Committee of Restoration and Conservation of Mosaics. She has taken part in many international projects as stated in the applicant's CV.

In the Paissiy Hilendarski University of Plovdiv, the applicant has produced tens of programs for such lecturing courses as: Theology of the Icon, Introduction to Theology, Iconography: Pedagogical Aspects, Protection of Monuments of the Christian Cultural and Historical Heritage, The Christian Temple, Non-Christian Religious Doctrines, Christian Art,

Painting and Photography for Archaeologists, etc. I can give my high evaluation to the teaching and pedagogical activity of the applicant solely on the basis of the programs she has produced but the reading of lecturing courses, the guiding of summer practicums etc. complement her professional and practical experience with high quality.

Adriana Lyubenova also demonstrates a high level in her scientific and applied scientific activity. The works she has submitted for evaluation – monographs, studies and articles – present her as a fully formed research scientist of high qualities. These qualities can be found and are demonstrated also in the main habilitation work that she has submitted. This is *The Floor Mosaics of Philippopolis* which has also been already published as a monograph. The work contains 226 pages. The first part has three chapters that theoretically elaborate on problems of the terminological system of Bulgarian art, which includes studies on mosaic art.

The second and most important part, named ‘Catalogue of the mosaics of Late Ancient Philippopolis’, presents nine archaeological sites on the territory of Plovdiv. Essentially, this is a scientific catalogue in which every site is presented comprehensively and profoundly. It includes, besides the exact description of each buildings in which mosaics are situated, the state in which they have been preserved, as well as a strict and detailed description of every separate mosaic in the different locations within the site. This is the basis of establishing the functions of the building, be it a religious temple or a lay construction.

The description proceeds from the whole down to the smallest details, beginning from the size, the technology of laying the mosaic, the colors used, the description of each decorative motive and composition – geometrical patterns, plants, or inanimate objects like standalone vessels such as e.g. a kantharos, or compositions of baskets with fruits, birds and animals. In these descriptions, an analysis is done of each motive and its origin, identification of the species of birds whenever possible, as well as of the animals.

It is striking that she describes and presents the separate sites with the most up-to-date methodology of mosaic research. In her analyses, the applicant proposes corrections of certain theses in publications of other authors, suggesting new hypotheses on the architecture of the buildings and their functions, the dating of the mosaics, the deciphering and interpretation of images, the influences of certain artistic centers etc.

The deep penetration into details and their analysis is essential for the clarification of the appearance of the destroyed and missing part, for the reconstruction of the whole mosaic floors, for the ideas of the people who have composed the mosaic decoration, as well as of the

overall look and purpose of the buildings. Within the range of analysis, there is also the evaluation of the abilities of the artists themselves. I can single out the analyses of some of the sites like e.g. the Episcopal Basilica whose restoration has been finished very recently and it is now open for visitors; the Martirium; the so-called Small Basilica. Of course this isn't meant to undervalue the other analytic texts on mosaic sites.

Especially essential and contributinal is her analysis of the separate images in the mosaics and the clarification of their function and symbolism. The exploration of the range of bird types and the ease of dealing with ornithological terminology are strongly impressive.

I want to stress that this work has entirely the nature of a contribution because the archaeological sites have never so far been collected comprehensively, and in a separate monographic publication.

As a proof of her scientific and applied scientific knowledge that is especially relevant to this competition, I will point out a part of the publications cited in the habilitation thesis. Such is the other monographic work of the author, *Word and Image*, which introduces into the theology of the icon and in the technique of drawing the sacred images; and also the studies *Christianity and the Particularities of Religious Life in Philippopolis*; *Liturgy and the Symbolism of the Images in the Early Christian Mosaics from Philippopolis*, as in this latter text, in order to draw the correct conclusions, a particular attention is lent to the synthesis of all components of the Christian temple – architecture, decoration, divine service, and their symbolism and semantics. I would say that this has been done for the first time in this context. Such are also the articles whose titles I will cite in a shortened form: *The Symbolism of Bread in the Mosaic Art of Philippopolis*, *Challenges before Contemporary Church Painting*, etc.

The author's contributions in the presented materials – monographs, studies and a multitude of articles and publications in collections, most of which from international conferences and congresses in which Adriana Lyubenova has taken part, are extraordinarily rich. First of all, there is the fact that they are of an interdisciplinary nature and concern matters of archaeology, history, art studies, theology, conservation and restoration in the attempts to reconstruct the missing parts of mosaics. In some of the publications, theological analysis has the leading part, clarifying diverse important problems relative to the big heresies of Antiquity, such as Arianism, Nestorianism, Monophysitism, Moothetism etc. Attention is paid to many questions that have so far remained unclarified by other authors and out of the interest of researchers.

The submitted works reveal in-depth the different aspects of Orthodox iconography and Orthodox art.

Of the works the author quotes, I would point out as especially important the two publications of Stephen Mitchell.

As to my impressions from my contacts with Adriana Lyubenova, I can say that her extraordinary commitment to her goals and their ambitious pursuit have yielded good results, leading her to applying for the position of Associate Professor.

The documents and materials submitted by Adriana Hristoslavova Lyubenova are in conformity with all requirements of the the Development of Academic Staff in Bulgaria Act (DASBA), the Regulations for the Application of DASBA, and the Regulations for the Development of the Academic Staff of the Paissiy Hilendarski University of Plovdiv.

The applicant to the competition has presented a considerable number of scientific works published after the materials she has used in the defense of the educational and scientific degree of Doctor (Ph.D.).

I give my highest evaluation to all presented works in the habilitation of Adriana Lyubenova that have a high-level scientific research character. Especially valuable are also those works that have a clear applied scientific character. The scientific and teaching qualification of Adriana Lyubenova is beyond doubt.

Therefore I find it justified to give my positive evaluation and support the candidacy of Adriana Lyubenova for the academic position of Associate Professor. I recommend to the Scientific Jury to prepare a proposal report to the Faculty Board of the Faculty of Philosophy and History on the appointment of Adriana Hristoslavova Lyubenova to the academic position of Associate Professor in the Paissiy Hilendarski University of Plovdiv in professional field 2.4. Religion and Theology (scientific speciality of Christian Art).

April 21, 2021

Reviewer:

(Prof. Dr. Elena Genova)