

REVIEW

by Dr. Plamen Georgiev Bochkov

Professor at New Bulgarian University

on the materials submitted for participation in the competition for the academic position of
Associate Professor at Plovdiv Paisii Hilendarski University

field of higher education 3. Social, economic and legal sciences, Professional field 3.1.
Sociology, Anthropology and Cultural Studies (Folkloristics - Folklore and Religion)

In the competition for the post of Associate Professor, announced in the State Gazette, no. 98 of 19.11.2024 and in the internet page of Plovdiv University "Paisii Hilendarski" for the needs of the Department of Ethnology at the Faculty of Philosophy and History as a candidate participates Assoc. Dr. Borislava Petkova Kostova from Paisii Hilendarski University

1. General presentation of the received materials

By Order No. 22-432 of 18.02.2025 of the Rector of Plovdiv University "Paisii Hilendarski" (PU) I have been appointed as a member of the scientific jury of the competition for the academic position of "Associate Professor" at PU "Paisii Hilendarski" in the field of higher education 3. Social, Economic and Legal Sciences, professional field 3.1. Sociology, Anthropology and Cultural Sciences (Folkloristics - Folklore and Religion), announced for the needs of the Department of Ethnology at the Faculty of Philosophy and History.

For participation in the announced competition has submitted documents only one candidate Assoc. Dr. Bo-rislava Petkova Kostova from Paisii Hilendarski University.

The set of paper materials submitted by the candidate is in accordance with the Regulations for the Development of the Academic Staff of PU, and includes the following documents:

- List of scientific publications;
- Reference of citations;
- Reference of scientific contributions;
- Biographical reference;

- Reference to compliance with the minimum national scientific metric requirements;
- Reference of research activities;
- Transcript of teaching work, and other documents required by procedure.

The applicant, Principal As. Dr. Borislava Petkova Kostova has enclosed a total of 25 (twenty-three) scientific works: three studies, two monographs, 18 (eighteen) articles, parts of collective monographs. Nineteen (19) scientific works, which are outside the dissertation, are accepted for review and are counted in the final evaluation. Four research papers on the dissertation for the degree of Doctor of Science and Education, as well as two other publications that are in the field of the professional field of Sociology, Anthropology and Cultural Studies, but are outside the more narrowly defined area of the Folkloristics-Folklore and Religion competition, are not reviewed. The distribution of the scientific works according to the relevant headings, in the country and abroad, is as follows: two monographs, 18 articles and reports in non-refereed editions with scientific review, three studies, two chapters of collective monographs (in English).

2. Brief biographical details of the applicant

Borislava Kostova graduated in Bulgarian Philology and Ethnology from Paisii Hilendarski University in 1998 as one of the first graduates in the specialty. As a student she participated in field expeditions in ethnology and folklore studies, read papers at scientific conferences. He enrolled for a full-time PhD at the Department of Ethnology and Sociology (later only Ethnology) at the Faculty of Philosophy and History in 1999 and defended his doctoral dissertation on "Folklore Legends of the Fall" in 2011. Between 2003 and 2010 he was an administrative officer at the faculty, since 2010 he has been an assistant professor, since 2012 he has been a senior assistant professor at the same department ("Ethnology").

3. General description of the candidate's activity

1. Teaching:

Borislava Petkova teaches basic courses in folklore, ethnology and cultural sciences at the Department of Ethnology such as "Folklore Culture", "Mythology", "Ethnology of Plastic Arts", "Cultural Studies", etc. He also teaches at the branches of Paisii Hila-Darski University in Kardzhali and Smolyan. She has prepared five graduates for the successful defense of their Bachelor theses in the field of Ethnology and Folklore Studies.

I will highlight separately the activity of Borislava Petkova as a lecturer in the Erasmus programme, because I believe that this activity is part of the future of university teaching and research, and university connectivity in a European context. Borislava Petkova has five years of lecturing experience at the University of Lodz, Poland, and has taught eight Erasmus students from the Czech Republic, France, Turkey, Germany and Greece with lectures on Bulgarian folklore at Plovdiv University.

2. Field research:

Borislava Petkova regularly supervises the field research of students of Ethnology in the region of Zagraden in the Rhodope Mountains, as well as urban research in Plovdiv, Asenovgrad and the region.

3. Participation in projects

According to the submitted official reference, Borislava Petkova has participated in a total of eight research projects funded by the Research Fund of Paisii Hilendarski University, the Ministry of Culture, the Ministry of Education and Science. One of the projects was funded by the National Research Fund and another - by the Horizon 2020 programme. All the projects are in the scope of the field of sociology, anthropology and cultural sciences, and at least two of them are on topics related to the habilitation thesis through the issues of religious communities in Bulgaria and their cultural heritage.

4. Content analysis of the main scientific, applied, applied and methodological contributions.

Borislava Petkova's habilitation thesis "The Devil. An Attempt to Reconstruct the Folklore Image" contains 380 pages, divided into two chapters and an appendix including 102 folklore legends and tales published in the Collection of Folklore Creations over a period of almost one hundred years. The work is the first comprehensive study of one of the most complex characters of Bulgarian folklore literature. The image of the Devil is placed in a multi-faceted context such as the Bible, medieval Bulgarian apocryphal written monuments, theological treatises on the one hand and folklore legends and tales on the other. Borislava Petkova studies the emergence of the devil as the personification of evil from dualistic notions (mainly in the Bogomils), through the influence of Byzantine apocryphal literature and ancient mythological concepts enshrined in folklore texts (legends and fairy tales, but not only!). The first chapter of

the work traces and analyses in detail all these influences, interconnections and possible overlaps to form the familiar figure of the dominant antagonist, the Devil.

And already in the second chapter the folkloric version of the Devil is fully reconstructed as several important aspects of his identity are explored - physical characteristics, names, activities, alliances and oppositions. Special attention is given to four functions of the folkloric character: the Devil as God's antagonist, the Devil as man's more powerful, the Devil as victor in rivalry with man, and the Devil as vanquished in the same rivalry. Quite predictably, folktales discuss the cosmogonic role of the Devil (his clash with God), while fairy tales consider the Devil-man relationship on a more everyday plane. The monograph impresses with its neat structure, precise citation, and attention to the details of the texts involved. This enables Borislava Petkova to go into depth on the problem she has studied and to offer strongly argued solutions to the questions posed at the beginning.

All of these qualities of the habilitation work, which I only briefly mention, are already evident in Borislava Petkova's first book, based on her doctoral dissertation, *Making Land and People. The Narrative of Creation and Fall in Bulgarian Culture*. In it Borislava Petkova traces the main mythological cosmogonic and anthropo-genic motifs through three textual corpora - the biblical text of the creation of the world and the Fall, the medieval apocryphal literature and folklore legends. The book on the Devil builds on the achievements of the monograph on Creation and shows the growth of Borislava Petkova as a researcher and author in the field of, I would say, Classic folkloristics.

The studies, articles and papers submitted to the competition complete the picture of Borislava Petkova's presence as an author in folklore and ethnology with an established name and place in the college. The publications where her works have been published have a reputation and a reputation that underline the high quality of the materials. These are most notably the BAS publishing house "Prof. Marin Drinov, the publishing house of the Paisii Hilarovski University, the journals *Bulgarian Folklore* and *Bulgarian Ethnology*. The study "A Few Notes on the Names of the Devil in Bulgarian Verbal Folklore" is indicative of Borislava Petkova's path towards the great theme of the folkloric image of the devil, considered in its entirety. The numerous variants of his names - of biblical origin, of folklore-apocryphal origin and euphemistic names, are one of the approaches to this theme. Another landmark publication in this sense is the article "The Devil's Body - Visible and Invisible (Based on Materials from Bulgarian Verbal Folklore)", forthcoming for publication in a representative collection of the

Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, as well as the small article "The Devil-Caluger in Bulgarian Folklore Legends or on the Permeability of the Boundaries of Human Space".

Several things stand out in every publication of Borislava Petkova: serious meta-ideological argumentation; thorough work with texts (mainly folklore, but also from Bulgarian medieval literature); bibliographical awareness and originality of the conclusions from the analysis of the texts. This gives me reason to turn to the candidate's contributions.

First, a new territory in folkloristics, extending the boundaries of the scientific study of Bulgarian folklore legends, started by Albena Georgieva and other colleagues. For the first time, the main mythologies present in Bulgarian folklore culture, such as the creation of the world and in particular the motif of the Fall, the phytomorphic codes, folklore demonology and specifically the figure of the Devil, have been studied in detail and monographically.

Second, bringing in new source material for analysis. Borislava Petkova makes use of both field-collected materials on folklore literature and published but little-known in scholarly circulation or not cited at all so far. An example of this are the attached over one hundred texts from the Collection of Folk Wisdom, covering a hundred-year period, many of which have not been the subject of analysis before.

Third, an emphasis on an interdisciplinary approach - between medieval studies, ethnology and folkloristics. Although I mention it in the third place, this contribution is of particular importance to me, since in general both folkloristic and ethnological studies are interdisciplinary - they require linguistic, historical, art, musicological, sociological, if you will, and social psychological knowledge. In Borislava Petkova's case, this approach is still more of a stated emphasis and is gradually unfolding, as her publications show, in the course of her growth as a researcher. I hope that in the future this approach will become a guiding one for her.

Fourthly, extremely independent work both in the field and with the texts. Borislava Petkova has already shown in her work on her PhD thesis that she works completely independently, without this meaning that she does not take into account the opinions and recommendations of her colleagues. It is significant that the main part of her publications, as well as the two monographs, have no co-authorship.

Borislava Petkova has enclosed a list of citations in nearly 15 publications. The citations are from before the publication of the last monograph "The Devil. An attempt to reconstruct the

folklore image". They show a wide range of scholarly curiosity about her texts on the part of linguists, folklorists, medievalists, and cultural workers. Naturally, the citations also include Borislava Petkova's first book, *To Make Land and People*. I believe that the citations are sufficient for the purposes of the competition in terms of volume and speak convincingly of an already-established authority in humanities circles in our country.

5. Critical remarks and recommendations

I recommend expanding the field of Borislava Petkova's research beyond her current preoccupation mainly with verbal folklore. I mean cultural heritage in urban environment, interactions between different types of ethnic and religious communities of the region (Plovdiv), young cultural policies. In these areas Borislava Petkova has interests, observations and publications on some of them, but it seems to me that she could even more boldly enter and propose serious projects, as well as, why not, a new monographic study.

6. Personal impressions

I have known Borislava Petkova as a lecturer in Ethnology and Folklore Studies since the first years of my studies. Their motivation to study this new discipline for Bulgarian higher education was enormous and inspired the teachers. After graduating from the specialty Borislava Petkova became my first PhD student at Paisii Hilendarski University. She began to teach and lead ethnology students on expeditions and field research in the city (Plovdiv). I have not had any difficulties in working with her as a supervisor because she practically prepared the text of her dissertation quite independently, and I have mainly provided methodological support and guidance to specialized literature. There was some delay before the defence, but this is the usual situation for very young PhD students.

Her ability to work as part of a team and to help her colleagues makes her a respected and loved member of the departmental team. My impressions are that she works hard and purposefully to achieve the goals she has set for herself. She has the necessary work ethic and academic integrity.

CONCLUSION

The documents and materials, presented by Asst. Dr. Borislava Petkova Kostova comply with all the requirements of the Law for the Development of Academic Staff in

Republic of Bulgaria (Law for the Development of Academic Staff in Republic of Bulgaria), the Regulations for the Implementation of the Law for the Development of Academic Staff in Republic of Bulgaria and the relevant Regulations of the Paisii Hilendarski University.

The candidate in the competition has submitted a significant number of scientific works published after the materials used in the defense of the PhD. There are original scientific contributions in the candidate's works which have received recognition, and a representative part of them have been published in journals and scientific collections published by reputable academic publishing houses. His theoretical developments have practical applicability, as some of them are directly oriented to teaching work. The scientific and teaching qualification of prof. as. Dr. Borislava Petkova Kostova is undoubted.

The achievements of prof. as. Dr. Borislava Petkova Kostova results in teaching and research activities, fully comply with the minimum national and additional requirements of the Faculty of Philosophy and History, adopted in conjunction with the Regulations of the PU for the implementation of the Law on Philosophy and History.

After familiarizing myself with the materials and scientific works presented in the competition, analysis of their significance and scientific, scientific-applied and applied contributions contained in them, I find it justified to give my positive assessment and to recommend the Scientific Jury to prepare a report-proposal to the Faculty Council of the Faculty of Philosophy and History for the election of the head as. Dr. Borislava Petkova Kostova to the academic position of "Associate Professor" at Paisii Hilendarski University in. Sociology, Anthropology and Cultural Sciences (Folkloristics - Folklore and Religion).

1.04.2025

Reviewer:.....

Prof. Dr. Plamen Bochkov