

## REVIEW

for the academic position Associate Professor  
Specialty Bulgarian language

according to announcement for competition in SG No. 36/03 May 2019

Candidate: Dr. Maya Dimitrova Vlahova-Angelova, Assistant Professor at the Onomastics Section, Institute for Bulgarian Language "Prof. L. Andreychin", Bulgarian Academy of Sciences

Reviewer: Prof. Dr. Slavka-Georgieva Keremidchieva- Tsvetanova, Section for Bulgarian Dialectology and Linguistic Geography, Institute for Bulgarian Language "Prof. L. Andreychin", Bulgarian Academy of Sciences

In response to the announced in State Gazette issue 36/03 May 2019 competition for the academic position *Associate Professor* for the needs of the Onomastics Section of the Institute for Bulgarian Language (IBE) "Prof. L. Andreychin" at the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences there has been one candidate - Assistant Professor Maya Vlahova-Angelova. She has submitted all the necessary documents in an impeccable manner, which facilitates the process of review. The same applies to the information regarding the minimum national requirements for publications and their quantitative dimension in points.

M. Vlahova began her scientific career in 2005 as a doctoral student at the Onomastics Section. In 2010, she successfully defended her doctoral thesis on "*Urbanisms in the City of Sofia (sociometric research and cognitive image of the city based on street names)*". Since 2013, after a competition, she has been working as *Assistant Professor* in the same section to date. Her scientific interests are mainly in the field of onomastics - toponymy and anthroponymy, and sociolinguistics.

In order to take part in the current competition, Assistant Prof. Dr. M. Vlahova has presented 2 monographs, 1 study, 22 articles, 2 of which are under print, 7 are co-authored, 2 reviews for works and 3 scientific publications and chronicles - a total of 30 publications. Three of them have been published in indexed Bulgarian and foreign editions. The candidate points out 26 citations from Bulgarian and foreign scientists on her individual works and 4 cites on collective works with her participation. There are 3 reviews on her books. She has participated with presentations in 22 prestigious scientific forums in Bulgaria and abroad. She has worked in 8 scientific projects as a participant; since 2016 she has been the scientific adviser of a doctoral student in a project within the Program for Young Scientists at the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences. To promote the work of the IBL and to support education M. Vlahova is actively participating in the educational project "The writing remains. Write correctly"; she has also had a number of media appearances. I would specifically commend her over 10-year long precise and effective work as an editorial secretary and a member of the editorial board of *Balkan Linguistics Journal*, whose visible result is 32 issues, 5 journal projects funded by the Research Fund, and the inclusion of the journal in the SCORUS indexed journal system. She has won 2 personal projects. She has been a member of organizational committees. She is a member of the

UNGLEGN exonym group.

According to Appendix A to the Regulations for application of the Law on the development of the academic staff in IBL, this review of M. Vlahova's research proves that all scientific-metric requirements for acquiring the academic position of *associate professor* have been met, even with a considerable excess of the number of points.

Prior to her *Doctoral Degree*, the candidate had 6 publications (2 of them abroad) related to her dissertation. The monograph *Sofia Streets: Mapping Urban Identity. Sofia: IBL, 2013, 328 pp.* presents the main content and results of the dissertation and therefore it will stay away from the task of my review. However, it is worth noting the overall impression she makes - the amazing comprehensive preparation of a young scientist. The original application of the sociometric method in onomastics and the contrastive method in the scientific description of the global picture and everyday consciousness turns empirical research into a detailed diagram of the collective social memory and history of our capital.

The candidate's habilitation work presents an e-book with the title *Onomastics and Ethnobotany: Names of Fruits According to Toponymy Data in Western Bulgaria*. Sofia: Ed. of BAS "Prof. Drinov", 2018, 120 pp. <http://www.baspress.com/book.php?l=b&id=1368>. It is the result of several years of the author's focused work on toponymy containing a national botanical taxonomy, which she interprets as a source of data about the Bulgarian folk knowledge of the surrounding flora. Although after defending her doctoral dissertation M. Vlahova-Angelova elaborated in several articles on the topic of Sofia urbanonyms (№ 5, 6, 18), in a series of articles preceding the monograph, she began an onomasiological study of the names of fruit trees and fruits, which are found in Bulgarian toponymy (№ 7, 10, 17, 20, 21, 22).

With the accumulation of empirical material, extracted from the rich database of the Onomastics Section, the focus of the study is expanded and the goals and objectives of the study are increased. As a result, the work is based on a solid foundation of reliable material - the microtoponymy, containing names for 20 fruit trees and fruits from the Western Bulgarian language territory and the Western suburbs, is included. Before proceeding to the onomasiological analysis, M. Vlahova makes a thorough and critical analysis of the theoretical developments on the topic, which she has not only read, but also conceived and is therefore able to flexibly use in her study. Being able to use several languages allows her to become acquainted with some of the original works and creatively apply their basic theoretical formulations, some of which are further developed and enriched. This is one of the features of the scientific approach used by the candidate in all her major or minor works - excellent awareness of the theoretical developments before her - from the creation of the latest theory or scientific field through the terminological apparatus to tracing the latest developments in the area, presented at conferences or seminars, or as deliverables of completed foreign projects.

As the author points out (p. 39), the idea of exploring Bulgarian toponymy in terms of national names is not new; however, although with her inherent modesty she does not express it explicitly, she actually managed to create a new, modern and fully applicable for other research scientific model. The author's original view of the relation between toponymy and folk

biosystematics represents one of the ethno-scientific classifications, which enables her to defend her hypothesis for the reliability of folk phytonyms as a reflection of the mental models revealing the conceptual approach in the organization and systematization of plant nature.

The multidimensional analysis of toponymical material organized in onomasiological manner presents a number of hyperonymic and hyponymic names of fruit trees (especially significant for toponymy as a mark of the location, as the author rightly notes), some of which are very archaic. All of them are also organized into semantic tables that illustrate the categorization of plant species and subspecies. A contribution that complements the overall picture is the inclusion of the names of places designed following the same motivational trait, however before being accepted for personal names for specific objects in the toponymic system. Tracing the geographical (with no linguogeographic maps applied, we cannot speak about linguogeographical contribution) distribution of hyperonyms and hyponyms and their variants, the author cites data from various sources, including the latest developments in Bulgarian linguogeography – Bulgarian Dialect Atlas. Summary volume. Atlas data help the author to prove that the toponyms that preserve archaisms indicate that some local names still retain the old spoken language prior to the arrival of Turkisms, e.g. the registration of the phytonym *mulberry* 'tree mulberry' in speech in which only 'dud' and 'dudi' are used today (p. 87). It is worth highlighting the candidate's stable systematic knowledge about Bulgarian dialects, without which her work as an onomast would not be precise. Interesting, and even somewhat unexpected, are some of the conclusions, such as the fact that there are over 50 hyponyms of the concept pear, which define its supremacy over other fruit names in the toponymy of Western Bulgaria. On the other hand, regarding the apple species, which is widely represented in folk culture and folklore works, there is a surprisingly small number of toponyms and a relatively large number of names of varieties of this phytonym (p. 67). M. Vlahova makes interesting parallels in the attitude of the folk artist to one or another concept in the toponymic and folklore material. It is important to emphasize the lack of symbolic meaning in the names of fruits in toponymy (p. 99), which they have in folklore works. I would like to note that the term *folklore* is not precisely used in toponymy; it is included in compound terms such as *folklore consciousness*, *folklore names*, *folklore awareness*, *folklore systems*, *folklore person*, etc., as identical with *popular* (p. 9). Just as folklore is not identical with dialect and the term *folklore language* is not synonymous with the term *dialectal language*.

It is not possible to list all the merits and contributions of the candidate's habilitation work in a review of this genre. It presents the first of its kind in our scientific literature, a serious theoretical applied research of the complex toponymic system where the national artist organizes the most important fruit species according to their cognitive representations. The author's merits in systematizing and analyzing the material are indisputable and original. The conclusions follow the logic of the entire work and are well reasoned. In many respects, they disrupt validated perceptions or expected findings, thereby enhancing the contribution of the study. It is an achievement for the candidate and defends her claims for habilitation work by contributing to the study of Bulgarian toponymy from an ethno-linguistic point of view.

Contributions in the same field are the articles in which the candidate examines multifaceted terms for colors in Bulgarian toponymy (№ 4, 8). The author's concept on the topic crystallizes in the summary studio *Colors in Bulgarian Toponymy (on material from Western Bulgaria)*. - IBL, 2014, 130–160. Some approaches to dialect and obsolete vocabulary have been criticized (p. 138) and, by contrast, "all types of color names, regardless of the fact if they are dialectical, archaic, or extinct from modern language are taken into account." In describing the dialectical specifics of color names, the author skillfully deals mainly with phonetic and lexical features, using recent linguistic and geographical publications. Another understanding of synonymy in terms of color is offered and their semantics and transpositional use in toponymy is sought. The work impresses with the detailed analysis of semantic relations and fields in these names, accompanied by clear graphs. The color-naming model has been proved to be widespread in West Bulgarian toponymy, with many terms referring to old lexical strata.

One of the lexicographic problems not yet sufficiently developed is the selection of proper names to be included in a dictionary. This is the topic of one article (№ 11) where it is discussed in theoretical and applied aspects. M. Vlahova thoroughly traces the approach of Polish authors of bilingual dictionaries when including onyms, as well as the various forms (such as annexes or entries in their alphabetical order) to do this. However, she rightly notes that, despite the theoretical models offered to produce dictionary entries of onyms that should also include cultural information, in Polish lexicographic practice proper names are not satisfactorily represented either in quantity or in quality (lacking their secondary meaning).

Valuable and of high public importance are several articles in which important problems of contemporary Bulgarian anthroponymy are developed independently or in co-authorship (№ 12, 14, 15, 24). Through an interdisciplinary approach with application of statistical methods and classical word-forming and etymological analysis, current trends in the selection of personal names by Bulgarians in different settlements are explored. The distribution and frequency of personal names are monitored and a conclusion is made that there is a tendency for globalization in the Bulgarian anthroponymic system.

M. Vlahova's interest in the most current processes occurring in Bulgarian toponymy is reflected in two contributory co-authors' works, which seek a causal link between contemporary demographic processes and their reflection in toponymy (№ 19, 23). The toponymic material collected from the 28 settlements in Plovdiv region in recent years is compared with previous studies of the district, taking into account the degree of development of the settlements and their migration processes. It is important to conclude that there is an inverse relationship between migration and stored toponymic knowledge - the increase in migrants leads to a gradual oblivion of local names. At the same time, it is noted that the toponymic system remains relatively conservative in terms of the form and type of toponyms.

The toponymic analysis is inconceivable without the etymological one, and it is therefore not surprising that M. Vlahova has elaborated on the etymology of a fairly common name in Bulgarian toponymy - *Galata* (№ 9). Proving the unmistakable archaicity of the toponym, the author traces its distribution throughout the Bulgarian linguistic continuum, citing all known etymologies. The analysis of the data and the hypotheses, carried out by the methods of the transonymisation theory, leads her to conclude that the origin of the toponym is most likely

related to a similar transfer of the name of the famous Istanbul district.

The first results of the extremely important for the Bulgarian science interdisciplinary project related to the most recent Thracian study were published in a co-authored article (№ 16). On the basis of personal studies and excerpted sources, the Thracian heritage is sought in the modern Bulgarian onomastic system. For the first time, microtoponymy is studied for this purpose – names of settlements, local and aquatic names, as well as anthroponymy - generic names that are found in toponyms. The authors suggest that Thracian personal names are to be found in them. In the light of the latest data, scientists undertook a new etymological analysis of the traces of the Thracian substratum and found that in the West Bulgarian micro-toponymy the names, which have a basic personal name, the so-called onomastic toponyms, predominate. The research of M. Vlahova and her colleagues is a significant scientific contribution to the search and study of the traces of the Thracian language in Bulgarian toponymy.

My personal assessment, based on the candidate's peer reviewed work, is definitely positive. I have not noticed any examples of plagiarism. I recommend in her future work that she avoid the categorical nature of the claims made by some sociolinguistic studies, but reasonably rejected in recent times by Bulgarian and foreign sociolinguists and dialectologists, who objectively take into account the dynamics of social and linguistic processes. These are for example assertions that "toponymy is nowadays the only sphere of language in which many of the folk terms exist in some form" (p. 35); it is doubtful that "a large proportion" of "fruit trees / fruits are endangered as plant species, and their names have long been forgotten by most native speakers (pp. 80-81); it is not true that "ubiquitous urbanization and depopulation of villages leads to catastrophic loss of dialects ...", and that "territorial dialects are among the most endangered and the efforts of foundations and lingua-eco activists can hardly stop or delay the dying process" (in № 10). The latest studies point to the opposite tendency - under the conditions of globalization, small communities show surprising consolidation and strive to preserve their language and culture as a mark of their national identity, and dialectics even takes over the recently banned territory of the literary.

M. Vlahova's work presents her as a young, yet capable scientist, aware of the basic and latest theoretical studies in her field. She skillfully applies her knowledge in her research being critical and suggesting original ideas and approaches, which defines the contributions of her publications. The study of Bulgarian toponymy from the ethno-linguistic aspect - folk terms for fruits, colors, geographical concepts, and their study in the context of dynamic demographic processes; monitoring the development of the Bulgarian anthroponymic system and informing the public about the results of such monitoring; the difficult but extremely important topic for science concerning the Thracian heritage in the Bulgarian language, and in particular in the Bulgarian toponyms and anthroponyms - these are the aspirations and achievements of the candidate which define her scientific path and affirm her name as a specialist onomast. She has the potential for future meaningful research, and this gives me the conviction to recommend to the Honorable Scientific Jury and the Scientific Council of the Institute for Bulgarian Language "Prof. L. Andreychin" that Assistant Professor Dr. Maya Vlahova-Angelova be elected as

*Associate Professor.*

30 July 2019

Reviewer:  
(Prof. Dr. Sl. Keremidchieva)