

REVIEW

of the application submitted by Chief Assistant Professor Magdalena Abadzhieva, PhD, the sole applicant in the competition announced for the needs of the Section for the History of the Bulgarian Language at the Institute for Bulgarian Language "Prof. Lyubomir Andreychin", Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, for the academic position of Associate Professor in Professional Field 2.1. Bulgarian Language (History of the Bulgarian Language)

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Information on the Competition

The competition for the academic position of Associate Professor in the History of the Bulgarian Language was announced in the State Gazette, No. 33, of 3 April 2026. I was appointed as an external member of the Scientific Jury by Order No. RD-09-36 of 1 June 2026, issued by Professor Svetla Koeva, PhD, Director of the Institute for Bulgarian Language "Prof. Lyubomir Andreychin". The sole applicant in the competition is Chief Assistant Professor Magdalena Abadzhieva, PhD, an established scholar in the fields of historical and contemporary linguistics whose research has gained recognition both in Bulgaria and internationally.

Brief Information about the Candidate

Magdalena Abadzhieva was born in 1978 in the city of Ruse. In 2002, she graduated in Bulgarian Philology from Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski". In 2013, she published her debut poetry collection, *Healed Oblivion*, followed in 2015 by her second volume of poetry, *Between Two Seconds*. She holds a PhD in Bulgarian Language. In 2017, she successfully defended her doctoral dissertation entitled *The Paulician Literary Tradition of the Eighteenth Century in the History of the Bulgarian Language*.

She has pursued her academic career at the Institute for Bulgarian Language "Prof. Lyubomir Andreychin", Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, where she has served first as Assistant Professor and currently as Chief Assistant Professor in the Section for the History of the Bulgarian Language. She has undertaken research specializations in Rome, Italy, and Ljubljana, Slovenia.

Dr. Abadzhieva has repeatedly delivered lectures on the history of the Bulgarian language to students of Bulgarian philology and history. Her lectures invariably attract considerable interest and stimulate lively discussions on both historical and contemporary issues concerning the Bulgarian language. She is a member of the Editorial Board of the journal *Balgarska Rech* (Bulgarian Speech) and is proficient in English and Italian.

I would also like to draw attention to the breadth of Dr. Abadzhieva's scholarly and creative pursuits, as they considerably expand the horizons of her intellectual profile. They reveal a philologist of exceptional versatility who is equally capable of creating poetic worlds through

the power of language and, as a scholar, of interpreting and organizing those worlds within a rigorous scientific framework. It is equally important to emphasize that, in the person of Magdalena Abadzhieva, linguistic scholarship finds a thoroughly contemporary approach to the observation and analysis of linguistic phenomena by examining them simultaneously from both diachronic and synchronic perspectives.

Assessment of the Submitted Materials

The set of documents submitted for participation in the competition fully complies with the requirements of the Act on the Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria and with the corresponding regulations governing its implementation at the Institute for Bulgarian Language.

Chief Assistant Professor Magdalena Abadzhieva has fulfilled—and indeed substantially exceeded—the national minimum requirements for appointment to the academic position of Associate Professor. This allows me to state with confidence that she is fully prepared to take the next step in her academic career. Her modesty and unobtrusive presence within the academic community have probably contributed to the fact that this competition was announced later than it might reasonably have been.

The list of scholarly works submitted for evaluation demonstrates not only to the reviewers but also to the Bulgarian and international scholarly communities the true scope of her academic achievements. It should be emphasized that her studies devoted to the Banat Bulgarian community and its literary tradition are far more than scholarly descriptions of outstanding quality. They represent a genuine scholarly mission, continuing the work of those distinguished Bulgarian linguists who sought out and documented the manifestations of the Bulgarian language across diverse historical communities. As principal investigator of a research project funded by the National Science Fund of the Ministry of Education and Science, Dr. Abadzhieva has fulfilled this mission with remarkable dedication, scholarly depth, and lasting significance.

For the present competition, Dr. Abadzhieva has submitted a habilitation monograph, a second scholarly monograph (not presented as the habilitation work), a chrestomathy, and twenty-seven research articles published in journals of various profiles and indexing status. She has also documented participation in seventeen national and international scholarly conferences and forums.

In this case, however, the quantitative dimension—impressive though it undoubtedly is—is not the decisive factor. Far more significant is the thoughtful selection of substantial and intellectually challenging research topics to which the author has brought not only profound scholarly expertise but also a strong sense of responsibility toward some of the most important questions facing contemporary linguistics: the complex relationship between language and nation, history and synchronic description, and the interaction between linguistic continuity and change.

Scholarly Evaluation of the Publications

I. Habilitation Monograph

1. Abadzhieva, M. *The Literary Tradition of Bulgarian Catholics in the Nineteenth Century and the Banat Literary Tradition*. Sofia: Prof. Marin Drinov Publishing House of the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, 2024, 168 pp.

Dr. Abadzhieva's monograph is an outstanding scholarly study devoted to the literary tradition of the Bulgarian Catholics of Banat. The analysis conducted at the various linguistic and textual levels demonstrates remarkable depth of observation and synthesis. Indeed, even if this were the only publication submitted for the present competition, it would by itself substantially exceed the requirements for appointment to the academic position of Associate Professor. The work is original, methodologically rigorous, and establishes a sound scholarly framework that will undoubtedly serve as a foundation for future research in this field.

An examination of the individual chapters reveals a coherent conceptual design, logical organization, and a sustained effort to provide a comprehensive account of the literary tradition of Bulgarian Catholics from the seventeenth to the nineteenth century. The author not only systematizes the existing body of scholarship but also offers new interpretations and well-supported conclusions that significantly expand our understanding of this distinctive literary tradition.

As the author herself appropriately notes, the first chapter presents a detailed and chronologically structured survey of the principal scholarly studies devoted to the literary production of Bulgarian Catholics written in Latin, "Illyrian," and Modern Bulgarian during the seventeenth through nineteenth centuries. This review serves not merely as a bibliographical overview but also establishes the current state of research, traces the development of scholarly interest in the subject, and provides the necessary foundation for the analyses that follow.

The second chapter contains one of the study's most important theoretical contributions. It systematizes and critically reassesses previous attempts to periodize the literary tradition of Bulgarian Catholics, convincingly grouping the various scholarly approaches according to the criteria on which they are based. Of particular significance is the identification of a distinctive feature that has not previously been clearly formulated in the scholarly literature: namely, the recognition of the literary production of Bulgarian Catholics after the second half of the eighteenth century as a separate stage in its historical development. This observation not only refines existing models of periodization but also opens new perspectives for interpreting the literary process and therefore constitutes one of the monograph's most significant scholarly contributions.

In the third chapter, the author turns her attention to a number of manuscripts containing prefaces, through which she convincingly traces a clearly defined tendency in literary practice during the second half of the eighteenth and throughout the nineteenth century. Her analysis demonstrates the increasing production of manuscript compilations intended for specific individuals or communities, whose practical and spiritual purposes were explicitly articulated in specially composed prefaces. These texts reveal the perception of the book as an instrument of moral improvement, religious instruction, and the preservation of communal memory, thereby conferring considerable cultural and historical significance upon the manuscripts under examination.

The fourth chapter naturally focuses on the relationship between nineteenth-century Catholic manuscript culture and everyday life. Through the analysis of two particularly valuable sources—manuscript NBKM 1308 and the newly discovered notarial register of Father Edoardo of Turin—the author convincingly demonstrates the close interconnection between religious practice, social relations, and everyday culture within the Bulgarian Catholic community. These sources illuminate the complex interaction of the cultural traditions that shaped the spiritual and social identity of the community and demonstrate the exceptional value of manuscript heritage as a historical and cultural source.

Particularly noteworthy is the fifth chapter, which presents a comprehensive graphemic and orthographic analysis. Drawing upon extensive and diverse linguistic material, the author convincingly demonstrates that, after the second half of the eighteenth century, one can speak of an established and relatively stable orthographic tradition within the literary production of Bulgarian Catholics. She traces continuity across successive generations of authors and texts, clearly identifying shared orthographic principles that were adopted, preserved, and further developed over time. This conclusion is of considerable importance both for the history of the Bulgarian literary language and for the study of regional literary practices.

In the sixth chapter, Dr. Abadzhieva broadens her investigation by comparing the graphemic and orthographic system employed by Yako Yakovski with the Banat literary norm. Her analysis convincingly demonstrates that, during the nineteenth century, the printed literature of the Catholics from the southern Bulgarian lands developed a second, considerably more sophisticated orthographic system, exemplified most clearly by the publication *Nauka kristianska za kristianete od Filibelskata darxiava* (Rome, 1844). The author persuasively argues that this orthographic model differs substantially from the earlier tradition represented in manuscript literature and in the books produced by the Capuchin missionaries working among the Bulgarian Catholics in the Plovdiv region. Particularly valuable are her observations concerning the effort to represent the phonetic characteristics of the language more accurately, including the distinction between stressed and unstressed vowels, the notation of the phoneme /ǎ/, and the representation of the characteristic broad e found in the Paulician dialect. In this way, the author convincingly reveals both the diversity and the internal dynamics of orthographic practice within the Catholic literary tradition.

The seventh chapter examines the phonetic characteristics of nineteenth-century Bulgarian Catholic literature. The analysis concentrates on those linguistic phenomena that occur most frequently and may be regarded as typologically characteristic of the literary tradition under investigation. The discussion is distinguished by its precision and consistency, while the observations presented complement the preceding graphemic and orthographic analyses and contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of the linguistic profile of Bulgarian Catholic literature.

The concluding eighth chapter, entitled *Lexical Evidence for Continuity between the Literary Tradition of the Bulgarian Catholics of Banat and That of the Bulgarian Catholics in the Southern Bulgarian Lands*, successfully synthesizes the preceding analyses and extends them toward broader scholarly conclusions. Through carefully selected lexical evidence, the author convincingly demonstrates the continuity between these two literary traditions and argues that the Banat Bulgarians should be regarded as an integral part of the overall development of Bulgarian Catholic literary culture. In doing so, she outlines a linguistic and cultural heritage

whose scope is considerably broader than has traditionally been assumed, thereby making a substantial contribution to a fuller understanding of its place within the history of Bulgarian literature.

Taken as a whole, the monograph is distinguished by its clear structure, coherent methodology, and profound analysis of a rich body of primary sources. The individual chapters complement one another, collectively constructing a comprehensive picture of the literary tradition of Bulgarian Catholics through the integration of linguistic, textological, historical, and cultural approaches. The conclusions are well argued and convincing, while the new interpretations proposed significantly broaden existing scholarly perspectives and open promising avenues for future research. The monograph therefore represents an important contribution both to the history of Bulgarian literary culture and to the study of the cultural heritage of the Bulgarian Catholic community.

A detailed examination of the monograph further demonstrates that the study is characterized by a clearly articulated scholarly conception, a consistently applied methodology, and a high degree of argumentative rigor. The author successfully combines historical, philological, linguistic, and textological approaches, enabling her to examine the literary production of Bulgarian Catholics not as an aggregate of isolated monuments but as a coherent literary tradition possessing its own internal logic, continuity, and distinctive characteristics. This integrated methodological approach is among the study's greatest strengths, overcoming earlier interpretations that tended to consider individual manuscripts and printed books in isolation.

Particularly convincing from a methodological perspective is the integration of linguistic analysis with cultural and historical context. Graphemic, orthographic, phonetic, and lexical observations are never treated as ends in themselves but are consistently employed to illuminate broader questions concerning the development of the literary tradition, the continuity among different literary centres, and the establishment of a stable written tradition among Bulgarian Catholics. In this way, linguistic evidence becomes a reliable foundation for broader historical and cultural generalizations, lending the study both scholarly depth and interpretative strength.

Another unquestionable merit of the monograph lies in its meticulous engagement with primary sources. The analysis is based upon a rich corpus of manuscript and early printed materials, some of which have never before been subjected to comprehensive scholarly examination. Particularly valuable is the interpretation of the newly discovered notarial register of Father Edoardo of Turin, which significantly expands our knowledge not only of the literary activity of Bulgarian Catholics but also of their everyday life, social relations, and spiritual culture. Consequently, the study possesses not only linguistic significance but also considerable value as a contribution to source studies, introducing important new materials into scholarly circulation and providing an indispensable basis for future historical, philological, and cultural research.

Among the principal scholarly contributions of the monograph are its critical reassessment of existing periodizations of Bulgarian Catholic literature; the convincing identification of a new defining stage in the development of this literary tradition after the second half of the eighteenth century; and the demonstration of a stable graphemic and orthographic tradition, traced through its continuity and evolution. Equally important is the clarification of the relationship between the literary tradition of Bulgarian Catholics in the southern Bulgarian lands and that of the Banat

Bulgarians, with abundant linguistic evidence supporting the thesis that both belong to a common literary and cultural heritage.

The monograph also makes an important contribution to the history of the Bulgarian literary language. Its analyses of graphemics, orthography, phonetics, and vocabulary considerably enrich our understanding of literary developments during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and demonstrate that the Catholic literary tradition should be regarded as an essential component of the overall development of Modern Bulgarian written culture. In this respect, the study successfully challenges the traditional tendency to view this body of literature as peripheral and convincingly argues for its full integration into the general history of Bulgarian literary culture.

A further strength of the monograph is its consistently balanced scholarly judgment. The author carefully avoids categorical conclusions where the available evidence does not justify them, supporting each of her arguments with concrete textual evidence. This methodological restraint enhances the scientific reliability of the study and establishes it as a solid foundation for future research on the literary heritage of Bulgarian Catholics.

In its entirety, the monograph constitutes an original and profound scholarly investigation that substantially enriches our understanding of the literary tradition of Bulgarian Catholics and convincingly demonstrates its place within the history of Bulgarian written culture. Through its extensive factual basis, meticulous linguistic analysis, and well-substantiated conclusions, the work ranks among the most significant contemporary studies devoted to Bulgarian National Revival literature and the historical development of the Bulgarian language. The observations and conclusions advanced in the study have every potential to become an important point of departure for future research into both the literary heritage of Bulgarian Catholics and the broader processes shaping Bulgarian literary culture during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

2. Abadzhieva, M. *Father Maurizio's Manuscript Bulgarian–Italian Dictionary of 1845*. Sofia: Simolini, 2020, 328 pp. ISBN 978-619-7265-91-0.

This is the second study submitted by Dr. Abadzhieva for the present competition. The monograph presents the complete text of the earliest preserved and, to date, the earliest discovered Bulgarian–Italian manuscript dictionary, compiled primarily by the Catholic missionary and man of letters Father Maurizio da Castelazzo in 1845 for the Catholic communities of the southern Bulgarian lands. Once again, one is deeply impressed by the thoroughness of the linguistic analysis, which highlights the principal graphemic, orthographic, phonetic, and lexical characteristics of the manuscript.

Father Maurizio's dictionary is examined not merely as a lexicographical work but also as an important historical and cultural document reflecting the life of Bulgarian Catholics during the nineteenth century. This broader perspective constitutes yet another indisputable scholarly contribution of the monograph.

3. Abadzhieva, M.; Tsibranska-Kostova, M. *Texts from the Literary Tradition of Bulgarian Catholics and the Banat Literary Tradition. A Chrestomathy*. Sofia: Prof. Marin Drinov Publishing House of the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, 2026, 152 pp. ISBN 978-619-245-595-8.

This chrestomathy will prove particularly valuable for university teaching. No comparable collection has previously been compiled. The selected texts are remarkably diverse in subject matter and are representative both of the historical development of this literary tradition and of individual authors and regional traditions within its predominantly religious orientation. Special mention should be made of the methodological principles employed by the two distinguished scholars of the Bulgarian language and its history in selecting and presenting the texts. Their approach makes the volume innovative from several scholarly perspectives. Equally significant is the inclusion of the five funeral prayers recorded in the village of Zhitnitsa, which constitutes an important contribution in itself, demonstrating that these texts continue to live within the cultural memory of the community.

The scholarly articles authored by Chief Assistant Professor Magdalena Abadzhieva have been published in a variety of specialized linguistic journals. Most of them reflect her sustained research interest in the literary heritage of Bulgarian Catholics (No. 5) and in Father Maurizio's manuscript Bulgarian–Italian dictionary, which, according to the author, is currently the earliest surviving dictionary of its kind from the period of the Bulgarian National Revival (No. 4). Her interest in manuscript studies is further demonstrated by publication No. 6, which examines the characteristics of a newly discovered manuscript by Andrea Canova dating from 1845, produced among the Bulgarian Catholic communities of the nineteenth century. Alongside these original scholarly discoveries, the author also addresses more specialized issues, such as the methodological principles underlying the compilation of a chrestomathy of texts from the literary tradition of Bulgarian Catholics (No. 8).

The largest group of publications is devoted to the Banat Bulgarians, Bulgarian Catholics, and their literary tradition, everyday life, literature, and culture. It is precisely in this area that Magdalena Abadzhieva's most significant scholarly contributions are most clearly manifested. Representative examples include publications Nos. 9, 10, 11, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 23, 24, 25, 28, 29, and 30, all of which are dedicated to the dialect of the Banat Bulgarians and to various issues concerning newly discovered as well as previously known written monuments relating to Bulgarian Catholics, both from a historical and a contemporary perspective.

These publications extend far beyond the strictly linguistic dimensions of the questions they address. Profoundly understanding language as an integral part of a people's spirit and culture, the author situates her research within a much broader intellectual framework. This distinguishes her as a scholar with a highly recognizable analytical style and methodology, one who examines linguistic processes in their intricate relationship with national identity, traditional ways of life, and culture. These studies are characterized by a distinctly creative scholarly approach in which language is interpreted as a complex phenomenon shaped by both linguistic and extralinguistic factors.

Another important characteristic of these publications is their sustained dialogue with scholars whose earlier work has laid the foundations of both historical and contemporary Bulgarian linguistics. This also explains her fruitful collaboration with one of the leading figures in Bulgarian historical linguistics, Professor Maria Tsibranska-Kostova. At the same time, these studies further develop a number of ideas introduced by Professor Liliya Ilieva, a scholar of international standing, whose pioneering research has shed new light on Bulgarian history and the history of the Bulgarian language, opening new contemporary perspectives for linguistic scholarship.

A separate group may be distinguished among Dr. Abadzhieva's publications, comprising studies devoted to topics beyond historical linguistics. These include, for example, publications Nos. 7, 13, and 26, which address such issues as students' written language, specific deviations from the codified norms of the standard language in poetry, and the use of certain loanwords in the language of young people.

Taken together, Dr. Abadzhieva's scholarly achievements demonstrate exceptional depth of analysis, meticulous work with the collected material, a remarkable ability to identify significant research problems, and an understanding of language as inseparably connected with the broader complexities of human existence. Over the years, she has often reminded me of Paisii Hilendarski: a quiet scholarly presence behind an undertaking of extraordinary significance. The refinement and precision that characterize her work make her publications a reliable point of reference for all future research not only on language itself but also on the history, culture, everyday life, and spirituality of the Bulgarian people.

Her contribution to Bulgarian linguistics is indisputable. Indeed, it cannot adequately be measured by any academic degree or academic title, for such distinctions can scarcely encompass the scale of her discoveries, the significance of her analyses, and the importance of her devoted work in identifying, collecting, and preserving previously unknown written sources.

Scholarly Contributions

The foregoing overview of the principal scholarly interests of Chief Assistant Professor Magdalena Abadzhieva allows the following general conclusions to be drawn:

Building respectfully upon the existing body of scholarship, the author has advanced the study of the literary tradition of Bulgarian Catholics by introducing important, original, and indispensable new evidence supported by discoveries that elevate historical linguistics to a field of both national and international significance.

Her exceptional expertise in working with manuscript sources places her among those distinguished Bulgarian linguists who have left an enduring mark on Bulgarian linguistic scholarship.

Her understanding of language as both a powerful instrument and a marker of identity, examined within the broader contexts of spirituality, culture, everyday life, history, and contemporary society, defines her scholarly profile. She is at once a specialist in the historical development of the Bulgarian language and a perceptive philologist who remains deeply engaged with issues concerning its present-day state.

Dr. Abadzhieva's scholarly contributions may be grouped into several principal areas. They are fundamentally theoretical in nature, while at the same time possessing considerable practical and applied value. They substantially advance the historical branch of Bulgarian linguistics by fostering a productive dialogue between synchronic and diachronic perspectives in the interest of objective linguistic analysis.

Citations and Scholarly Impact

Magdalena Abadzhieva substantially exceeds the national minimum requirements regarding citations of the candidate's scholarly publications. Her contributions to important and highly specialized research areas have established her as an indispensable authority in studies devoted to Bulgarian Catholics and their literary heritage. Her publications are widely recognized within the scholarly community, are read with considerable interest, and are regularly cited for the conclusions they advance.

I would also like to emphasize the exceptional precision that characterizes Dr. Abadzhieva's work. This is evident not only in her meticulous treatment of primary sources and the careful documentation of the literature she cites, but also in the thoughtful organization of her publications with due regard for the requirements of indexed scholarly journals. Her exemplary command of bibliography in the fields in which she works reflects, on the one hand, her respect for previous scholarly achievements and, on the other, her scrupulous attention even to the most specialized academic standards.

The same high level of professionalism is evident in her approach to the preparation and implementation of research projects. I regard with great respect the record of project activities submitted by Chief Assistant Professor Abadzhieva, and I can personally attest that every stage of this work—from formulating the research topic and preparing the project proposal to defending its scholarly contributions—has been carried out with exemplary professionalism and with genuine dedication to the subject matter pursued by Dr. Abadzhieva and her research team.

Her editorial work likewise demonstrates the qualities of a mature and accomplished linguist and philologist. In this regard, I would particularly mention a special issue of the journal *Balgarska Rech* (Bulgarian Speech), which was edited under her supervision and was published to an exceptionally high scholarly standard.

I can also draw upon my direct observations of her participation in scholarly events, including seminars and conferences at both the national and European levels. Everywhere she represents herself and the institution to which she belongs, Chief Assistant Professor Magdalena Abadzhieva stands as a model of outstanding professionalism—indeed, of the highest professional standard.

Critical Remarks

I have no critical remarks concerning the scholarly activity of Chief Assistant Professor Magdalena Abadzhieva.

I know her as an exceptionally dedicated linguist, an erudite scholar, and a generous and supportive colleague. I also know her as an outstanding lecturer on both historical and contemporary issues of the Bulgarian language, which she has presented in lectures delivered to students of Bulgarian Philology and History at Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski."

Conclusion

In conclusion, I state without reservation that Chief Assistant Professor Magdalena Abadzhieva, PhD, of the Section for the History of the Bulgarian Language at the Institute for Bulgarian Language "Prof. Lyubomir Andreychin", Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, exceeds by a wide margin the requirements established by the Act on the Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria for appointment to the academic position of Associate Professor.

For this reason, I give my unequivocally positive vote in favour of her appointment to the position of Associate Professor and strongly recommend that the Scientific Council of the Institute for Bulgarian Language confirm her election. By doing so, the Institute will strengthen its academic staff with a distinguished contemporary linguist and scholar whose erudition, dedication, and outstanding research achievements will continue to enhance the prestige of the institution both in Bulgaria and internationally.

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