

OPINION

of the scientific works of Chief Assistant Professor Magdalena Stefanova Abadzhieva, PhD, submitted for participation in a competition for the academic position of "Associate Professor" in professional field 2.1. Philology, scientific specialty "Bulgarian Language", for the needs of the Section for the History of the Bulgarian Language, announced by the Institute for Bulgarian Language "Prof. Lyubomir Andreychin" at the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences in the State Gazette, issue No. 33 of 2026.

Author of the opinion: Prof. Diana Georgieva Blagoeva-Stefanova, PhD, Institute for Bulgarian Language "Prof. Lyubomir Andreychin" at the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences

By Order No. RD-09-36 of 1 June 2026 of the Director of the Institute for Bulgarian Language, I have been appointed a member of the Scientific Jury for the competition announced in the State Gazette, issue No. 33 of 2026, for the academic position of "Associate Professor." The sole candidate in the competition is Chief Assistant Professor Magdalena Stefanova Abadzhieva, PhD. The submitted set of documents is complete and complies with the requirements of the Act on the Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria (ADASRB), its Implementing Regulations, and the internal regulations of the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences and of the Institute for Bulgarian Language.

For participation in the competition, the candidate has submitted a substantial and thematically unified body of scientific work: the habilitation thesis – the monograph *The Literature of the Bulgarian Catholics of the Nineteenth Century and the Banat Literature* (Sofia, 2024); the single-authored monograph *The Manuscript Bulgarian-Italian Dictionary of Father Maurizio from 1845. A Study and Text* (Sofia, 2020); the reader *Texts from the Literature of the Bulgarian Catholics and the Banat Literature* (Sofia, 2026), co-authored with Prof. Mariyana Tsibranska-Kostova, DSc; a contribution to the collective volume *Pages from the History of Bulgarian Literature and Language. Texts and Translations* (Sofia, 2024); as well as 26 articles, studies, and conference papers published in refereed and peer-reviewed scholarly publications in Bulgaria and abroad. Some of the publications are co-authored, which is common practice in collective projects and source-based research. All of the submitted works fall within the thematic scope of the competition and build upon the problematics of the candidate's doctoral dissertation, without duplicating the publications submitted for the acquisition of the educational and scientific degree PhD. Twenty-eight citations of the candidate's works have been recorded in Bulgarian and foreign scholarly publications. Data on seventeen presentations by the candidate at scholarly forums in Bulgaria and abroad have been submitted. M. Abadzhieva has served as head of, or participant in, major research projects, some of which have been funded by the National Science Fund or carried out within the framework of the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences' bilateral international cooperation with foreign academies. The candidate's project activity attests to her ability to attract funding and to organize collective scholarly work.

M. Abadzhieva's scholarly inquiries are united around a single central problematics: to prove, document, and bring to public awareness the affiliation of the literature and the dialects of the Bulgarian Catholics – including the Banat community across the Danube – with the shared Bulgarian linguistic and cultural heritage and identity. Her research work encompasses both

scholarly and applied aspects: the search for, decipherment of, and introduction into scholarly circulation of manuscript monuments from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries; in-depth linguistic analysis aimed at deriving graphic-orthographic, lexical, terminological, and ethnolinguistic arguments substantiating the continuity within this literature; and applied activities (digitization of the sources, orthographic proposals for the textbooks of Banat Bulgarian, the compilation of a reader and of a primer for children in the Romanian Banat) of direct relevance to education, to Bulgarian studies abroad, and to the preservation of the cultural identity of the Banat Bulgarians.

The candidate's habilitation thesis is the first comprehensive study devoted to the literature of the Bulgarian Catholics of the nineteenth century – a period from which, as the author rightly notes, the largest body of hitherto unprocessed material has been preserved. The monograph comprises an introduction, eight chapters, a conclusion, a bibliography, an index of names, a summary in English, and an appendix. In the introduction, five hypotheses are formulated: on the existence of a stable lexical stratum linking the Banat literature with the Catholic literature of the southern Bulgarian lands; on the affiliation of this stratum with everyday and Christian lexis; on shared orthographic features demonstrating that monuments from the southern lands were used in the compilation of Jozu Ril's *Orthography* (1866); on the continuation, in the Banat, of the tendency to bring religious texts closer to the spoken language; and on the preservation, within the Banat literature, of archaic native lexis attested as early as the Old Bulgarian period. The course of the main exposition of the monograph is subordinated to the testing of these hypotheses, with the analysis proving purposeful and of high argumentative value.

The first chapter offers a review of existing studies on the literature of the Bulgarian Catholics and substantiates the need for a systematic investigation of the nineteenth-century literature, hitherto poorly known. The second chapter presents a critical analysis of the periodizations proposed to date and introduces a new periodization criterion: the predominantly manuscript form of dissemination through miscellanies intended for individual reading and furnished with prefaces addressed to specific readers, a practice established after the second half of the eighteenth century. The third chapter offers concrete textological arguments in support of the new periodization criterion through a comparison of manuscripts documenting the practice of compiling books for specific individuals. It is a genuine contribution to conceptualize the personalized miscellany as a socio-cultural practice – the book as an instrument for the spiritual and educational development of the individual reader – as well as to analyze, for the first time, monuments that have entered scholarly circulation only in recent years (two of which were discovered by the author herself). The following chapter is likewise of contributory value in documenting hitherto unknown types of monuments within the Bulgarian Catholic tradition – containing lexis of everyday life or pertaining to the legal-domestic genre. The fifth and sixth chapters concentrate on the analysis of the graphic-orthographic systems and the Banat norm. Both the continuity and the internal dynamics of the refinement of the graphic system are demonstrated. The information briefly mentioned by Miletich, that Ril made use of Yakovski's books, receives for the first time systematic graphic-orthographic corroboration, thereby confirming one of the principal hypotheses of the work. Particularly valuable is the observation regarding the direction of development: whereas the literature of the second half of the eighteenth century overcomes dialectal features without reflecting them graphically, the later tradition increasingly conforms to the phonetics of the spoken dialect – a tendency that the Banat norm carries to its ultimate conclusion. The following chapter systematizes the most characteristic phonetic phenomena on the basis of material from four monuments. An important conclusion is drawn, namely that texts

written by foreigners (Fathers Canova, Edoardo, Benvenuto, and Maurizio) consistently render the Bulgarian dialectal substratum, which legitimizes them as fully valid sources for the history of the Bulgarian language. The most extensive, eighth chapter presents a detailed analysis of lexical data, whereby the lexis of the southern lands is excerpted from seven monuments and the Banat lexis from six editions of the nineteenth–twentieth centuries, as well as from the dictionary of St. Stoykov. The existence of a shared stratum of everyday and Christian lexis is established, thereby convincingly proving the thesis of continuity and a stable tradition within the literature of the Bulgarian Catholics.

The monograph *The Manuscript Bulgarian-Italian Dictionary of Father Maurizio from 1845* is likewise of contributory character. It renders publicly accessible a unique source for the everyday life, the material and spiritual culture, and the dialect of the Bulgarian Catholics of the mid-nineteenth century – the sole surviving monument of the community from this period that is not directly bound to religious practice. Of particular value are the dialectal words registered in the dictionary and the lexical items not otherwise attested in lexicographic sources. Thematically related to this problematics are the publications in *Foreign Language Teaching* (2019) and in the Italian journal *Catechesi* (2025).

The reader *Texts from the Literature of the Bulgarian Catholics and the Banat Literature* presents, for the first time, this literature systematically within a diachronic span from the seventeenth to the twenty-first century. The texts are accompanied by introductory notes and adapted for pedagogical purposes, which lends the publication high applied value for university teaching, for Bulgarian studies abroad, and for the Catholic community itself. The methodological principles underlying its compilation are separately substantiated in an article in *Foreign Language Teaching* (2023). The candidate's contribution to the collective volume *Pages from the History of Bulgarian Literature and Language. Texts and Translations* (2024) confirms her competence in working with texts spanning a wide chronological range and in presenting them to a broader audience.

The cycle of articles on the dialect of Belene opens up a new field of dialectological inquiry in the candidate's work. Drawing on material collected from an informant born in the town, as well as on her own observations, the author describes the lexis of this typical northern Paulician dialect by thematic groups. An original ethnolinguistic contribution is the analysis of confessionally marked lexis in the article on the opposition “one's own” – “foreign” (2024). The studies of Christian designations (2025) further establish systematic parallels with the Banat dialect, whereby the Belene lexis becomes yet another testimony to the unity of the Paulician dialects on both sides of the Danube. In this way, M. Abadzhieva's studies connect the historical literature with living speech while simultaneously creating a valuable empirical basis for the lexis of this dialect. The need – motivated in several of the publications – for a dictionary of the dialect of the Bulgarian Catholics of Belene deserves to be realized as the candidate's next major research project.

The contributions of M. Abadzhieva in source-based, analytical, and applied work may be systematized as follows: the discovery, description, and publication of monuments hitherto unknown to scholarship, and the typological enrichment of our conception of the written culture of the Bulgarian Catholics; the expansion and enrichment of scholarly knowledge of the literature of the Bulgarian Catholics of the nineteenth century through the refinement of periodization and an in-depth analysis of the linguistic characteristics of this literature; the demonstration of a stable orthographic tradition and of attempts at a literary norm based on the Latin script; the establishment of graphic, orthographic, and lexical continuity between the literature of the southern Bulgarian

lands and the Banat literature; the substantiation of the concept of “the language of Bulgarian Catholic literature”; the refinement of the terms “Banat dialect” and “Palkene language”; the collection and analysis of empirical data (new survey data on the linguistic self-awareness of the Banat Bulgarians and field data on the dialect of Belene); and the creation of scholarly-applied resources for educational purposes.

The submitted works fully meet the requirements of the Act on the Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria, its Implementing Regulations, and the corresponding internal regulations, and the minimum national requirements are met across all groups of indicators.

CONCLUSION

M. Abadzhieva is a linguist with a clearly defined field of research and stands out as one of the leading specialists in this field in Bulgaria. Her research activity is valuable not only for its theoretical contributions but also for its direct social relevance to the Bulgarian communities abroad.

On the basis of all of the above, I confidently give a **positive assessment** of the candidate’s scientific output and propose that the esteemed Scientific Jury recommend to the Scientific Council of the Institute for Bulgarian Language “Prof. Lyubomir Andreychin” – BAS that Chief Assistant Professor Magdalena Stefanova Abadzhieva, PhD, be elected to the academic position of “Associate Professor” in professional field 2.1. Philology, scientific specialty “Bulgarian Language,” for the needs of the Section for the History of the Bulgarian Language.

28 July 2026

Signature:

Prof. Diana Blagoeva-Stefanova, PhD