БЪЛГАРСКА АКАДЕМИЯ НА НАУКИТЕ
Институт по балканистика с център по тракология
"Проф. А. Фол"
Вх. № 15 НД-05-05 2002 14.

REVIEW

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member of a scientific jury appointed by the Director of IBCT - BAS

by order 131.1 RD-16/22.11.2023

on the competition for the academic position of "associate professor", in the field of higher education 2. Humanities, prof. direction 2.1. Philology ("Byzantine-Slavic literary contacts during the Middle Ages"), announced in SG no. 87/17.10.2023 with a single candidate, Dr. Ekaterina Dikova

Ekaterina Dikova is a researcher with an established profile in the study of the Bulgarian medieval literary heritage. Anyone who knows her publications, dedicated to original and translated Old Bulgarian texts, could highly appreciate her specific approach to their composition and structuring, her interest in their stylistic layout, her ability to interpret the details in the individual phrases, to situate them in the context of the rhetorical and poetic tools characteristic of the medieval literary text. It would not be an exaggeration to say that she focuses primarily on the vocabulary and stylistics of medieval literary works. And of course, it is necessary to specify that it examines stylistics and analyzes its manifestations in the deepest sense of the concept, namely as the construction not only of the formal unity of the artistic language of the works, but also as a key to their hidden semantic levels , which were intended for a highly educated and erudite audience. In the context of this horizon of expectation, I will examine the materials submitted by the researcher for participation in the competition for associate professor in the professional field of "Philology".

The documents, scientific publications and references presented by Dr. Ekaterina Dikova show that it not only meets, but in many respects exceeds the minimum requirements under Art. 26, para. 1 of the ZRASRB and of the Regulations of the IBCT - BAS. Scientometric indicators, together with the attached summaries and copies of the publications convincingly testify to her purposeful work, to her constant growth in the chosen field of scientific research. In the competition, she presents 17 publications - 2 monographs, 3 studies and 12 articles, 4 of which are in the world's referenced and indexed databases. All other publications are in specialized scientific publications, 6 of them in foreign and 9 in Bulgarian. The monograph with which Dr. Dikova participated in the competition has a volume of 528 pages, structured in two parts - research and publication of the text.

The monograph *Rhythm and Narrative. The calendar verses of Christopher of Mytilene and their South Slavic translations*, presented by Dr. Dikova is dedicated to an interesting and

so far unstudied phenomenon – the couplets preceding each short life by the so-called Stishen prologue (Synaxarion with verses). This liturgical composition, in which the short lives of the saints are supplemented by the iambic couplets and triptychs of Christopher of Mytilene, has its background on Byzantine soil, spanning several centuries (from the 11th century, 1028-1043, when the poetic calendar probably arose to the second half of the twelfth century, from when the earliest manuscript containing the verses in combination with the so-called Mauritian Knostantinoposki synaxar dates. In the 14th century, a variant of the Verse Prologue spread among the South Slavs. Two translations have been attested - Bulgarian (Ternovsky) and Serbian, which are related to the replacement of the Studio Typikon with the Jerusalem one.

The verse prologue has been the subject of a number of scientific studies from a linguistic, literary, liturgical and hagiological point of view, but so far no attempt has been made to single out and examine in depth the verses preceding the short lives. This is part of the question of the reception of Byzantine literary monuments in a Slavic-speaking environment. Usually, liturgical and theological texts are given priority, and in this case the short lives seem to have monopolized the attention of the researchers, while the poetic compositions that preceded them remained in the background. Their epigrammaticity remains either undetected or merely registered, without serious attempts (with few exceptions) to single out their aesthetic value and their importance as a source for the translation techniques and skills of South Slavic scribes. In this sense, the choice of the object of research made by Dr. Ekaterina Dikova is extremely successful, because she enters an unexplored field, hiding unsuspected possibilities for scientists.

Her two-part study is structured as follows. The first part, dedicated to the scientific analysis of the phenomenon "Calendar verses by Christopher of Mytilene", contains an Introduction (p.9-20), three chapters: Main characteristics of the original (p.21-41); Form, meter, rhythm (p. 42-81); Compressed Narrative (pp. 82-140) and Conclusion (pp. 141-149). After the bibliography follows the second part, the edition of the calendar couplets for the summer semester from March to August (p. 177 - 474). An alphabetical index of the memories at the end is added.

The introduction introduces us in general terms to the history of the Verse Prologue and the work of Christopher of Mytilene. The author defines the object of her research: "... the original synaxar verses and their two South Slavic translations for the months from March to August inclusive, since it is the summer half-year that has been preserved in its entirety in a Serbian translation." (p.13) Makes a reservation why the third, dating, verses in the poetic prefaces are not included in the analysis, but only in the edition. She justified this decision with

the fact that these verses were probably added later, they are fifteen-syllable and refer to another variety of Byzantine poetry, the so-called political or civil verse, and suggest a different research methodology. I find the refinement of the rhythmic content specifics of the two groups of verses very important from a methodological point of view and I fully support it, because the twelve-syllable, which is the basis of the couplets in the Prologue of the Verse, is a natural successor of the ancient Greek metrical and rhythmic verse models, while the fifteen-syllable is almost it is unanimously defined by researchers as a "typical Byzantine invention". The essential difference between the two rhythm-content models predetermines different ways of reception of the poems. In the further reflections and analyses, Dr. Dikova convincingly proves this to us.

An essential part of the introduction is the review of the scientific research on the couplets to date and the correct marking of the contributions of the individual scientists who examined different aspects of this phenomenon. At the same time, it becomes clear that the calendar verses were not considered independently as poetic texts, resp. as part of the translated Bulgarian medieval poetry, regardless of the fact that they are the only examples of the Byzantine epigram translated in a South Slavic environment.

At the end of the introduction, the author presents the sources she uses for the analytical part and for her edition - for the Greek original these are the editions of the calendar poems of Eustratiadis, Cresci, Siberus, Folieri, for the Bulgarian translation 5 transcripts from the 14th century and one from the middle of the 15th century, for the Serbian translation - three copies from the 14th, 15th and 16th centuries. The Serbian translation was published for the first time in Dr. Dikova's edition.

The first chapter of the monograph is devoted to the main characteristics of the original. When it comes to a translated text, a detailed knowledge of the original context of its origin and existence is a prerequisite. Dr. Dikova shows in this chapter an excellent knowledge of the history of the iambic calendar of Christopher of Mytilene. Taking into account the epigrammatic nature of the verses, she briefly presents the most important characteristics of the Byzantine epigram, referring to the most recent and up-to-date research in this field. It presents the connection of the Byzantine epigram with the ancient one and at the same time points out the peculiarities of the epigrams for saints as a specific type of postancient epigram (p. 27), a clarification that is important for the further understanding of the reception of the verses in the South Slavic environment.

When it comes to translating poetry, it is also a necessary requirement to represent the specific characteristics of the original poetic matrix. In the case of epigrams, this is Byzantine

twelve-syllable verse, also known as iambic trimeter and six-step iambic. These terms reveal, in a certain sense, the evolution of this metrical scheme. Taking into account the time appearance of calendar verses in an era when the ancient quanity no longer exists, and the places of accents in the verse are not completely fixed, (p.28) i.e. the transition to tonic versification is not completely complete, Dr. Dikova sets herself the task of clarifying its distinctive features. It presents us in a synthesized and precise manner the stages of the evolution of Byzantine poetry from prosody to isosyllabism and isotonism.

The acoustic characteristics of the twelve-syllable verse are presented (pp. 30-33), its visual prosody, which in the period under consideration is no longer as relevant a mark as a mark of high education (pp. 34-36), and finally the rhetorical rhythm determinants are analyzed, which finally form the appearance of the twelve-syllable (p. 37-40). This theoretical part is very important for the understanding of the following chapters, which analyze the specific translation approaches and solutions. It is a key to the problems of the medieval South Slavic translators from Greek, who were faced with the serious requirement of positional and quantitative identity of the translated text with respect to the original, especially for liturgical texts. Their problem was which to prefer - the form or the content. But in the translations of the poetic text, another complication is added - the Greek twelve-syllable verse is a product of the evolution of the classical quantitative metric in the direction of isosyllabism and isotonism, due to changes in pronunciation and intonation, which led to isochrony of vowels. The host language does not have similar characteristics, and the transmission of rhythmic patterns had to look for another toolkit.

This fact perhaps explains why in the next chapter the author first uses the principles of statistical analysis. This is a relevant approach, because it gives a relatively accurate and objective picture of how the requirements of the Byzantine twelve-syllable verse are respected, how much the Bulgarian and Serbian translators were aware of the specifics of the original in formal terms. The main results of the statistical analysis present us with a general idea of how the poetry calendar of Cristopher of Mytilene was perceived. The main rhythm in the Greek original and in the translation is the two verses couplet. It is punctuated in the manuscript witnesses of all three versions. This conclusion, based on the palaeographic features of the transcripts, shows an awareness of the poetic nature of the original and opens a new perspective for the researcher - how it is transmitted in translation.

For this purpose, Dr. Dikova statistically analyzed the number of syllables in each verse to show that both South Slavic translations show deviations from isosyllabism, i.e. violate the number of syllables in the verses, which is inevitable when the priority is the content. Individual

verses convey both the meaning and the rhythm well, individual verses show serious deviations. But in general the tendency towards isosyllabism is present, which distinguishes twelve-syllable translations from fifteen-syllable translations, as can be seen from the studies done so far. In this point, the results reached by Dr. Dikova are a very important contribution to the study of the mechanisms of translation of poetic texts from Greek. It is obvious that we could think of a critical limit of the verse, beyond which the Slavic translators either did not understand the speech as poetic or could not follow the Greek as rhythmic, tonal system and meaning at the same time and preferred prose.

The other aspect of statistical analysis is the caesura in the verses. Here too, variability is observed, but also a tendency to observe the caesura after the fifth syllable, similar to the original. Another feature can be seen - a high percentage of verses with a caesura in the middle of the sixth syllable, which the author emphasizes as a matter that requires further research. (p. 56).

The place of stress also gives important information about the translators' approach. While in the original the requirement of final stress on the penultimate syllable is 100% respected, the translated texts pose very serious problems, since the transcripts do not always mark the stress graphically, it changes its place depending on the dialectal environment and practically no serious conclusions can be drawn. But in his experimental observations of random samples, Dr. Dikova concluded that the place of emphasis varies, which is expected. And in her observations, she comes to another, very important conclusion: "...rhythm determiners are valuable not by themselves, but work complexly, both in source and **target texts according to the requirements of Byzantine rhetoric**. (semi-bold font by me. V.V.) Moreover, the rhythmic factors are combined with other techniques by the author not only to achieve a specific connection within the individual couplets, but also between them." (p.60) This is a very an important contributing point in Dr. Dikova's analyses.

It turns out that when the translator realized the impossibility of conveying with the necessary accuracy the specific characteristics of the poetic original (isosyllabism, rhythm, constant emphasis), he reformatted the texts from iambic into highly organized rhetorical stanzas, which practically proves the functional unity of medieval poetic and prose speech in South Slavic environment. In the mind of the writer, both are characterized not only by their rhythmic determinations, but also by the figures of language and figures of thought, by their trope-pleonastic utterance and other rhetorical generators of rhythm, through which the poetic character of the original is transmitted.

I will not dwell on the analysis of prosodicity, since from everything said so far, and from the results achieved by the author so far, it is clear that we cannot talk about visual prosodicity when it comes to a language that does not know the quantity of vowels. The reference to Konstantin Kostenechki's treatise in this case is not particularly productive, because it follows a clearly defined tendency of the literature, influenced by Hesychasm and the Euthymian orthography, to visually bring the texts closer to the Greek originals through systems of superscripts and orthographic rules, behind which often there are no real linguistic phenomena. The author herself summarizes this part with a conclusion, that in both translations we cannot look for visual prosody.

The analysis of rhetorical rhythm markers complements the conclusions of the stress analysis. The pacemakers are part of the complex of techniques for smoothing out the rhythm. Both in the original and in both translations, they are used complexly and placed at the service of the overall rhythmic system.

The chain principle is presented last in the second chapter. In the original verses, it is stable, since the calendar in verse arose as an independent work in which the author sought a unity of meaning. In translations, this principle is partially conveyed, since the translators know the verses in their „fragmentedness“against each short life. According to Dr. Dikova's observations, the Bulgarian translation shows more preserved connections between the rhythms, while the Serbian creates stronger connections within the rhythms. But this is a trend that should also be further studied.

In the second chapter of his work, Dr. Dikova presents us the translation techniques and approaches at the macro level of the poems, i.e. at the level of the rhythm, the pattern of which is a twelve-syllable distich. It reveals the desire of the translators to observe the isosyllabism, caesura and punctuation of the original. It shows how the lack of some specific features in the system of accentology of the target text, compared to the original, are compensated by rhetorical rhythm markers. Her observations, although based on statistical analysis, do not remain at the level of recording the results, but strive to reach a meaning and interpretation according to the immediate context of the phenomena under consideration. In this chapter, the author convincingly shows the translators' approach to the formal characteristics of hagiographic epigrams. The conclusions drawn by her are a very important contributing point in understanding the overall process of reception of Byzantine poetry among the southern Slavs.

The third chapter takes us to the micro level of the verse, to the specific lexical translation decisions and revealing the exquisite stylistics of the original, conveyed to varying degrees in the Bulgarian and the Serbian translation. The main feature of the content of the

epigrams of Christopher Mytilene is a compressed narrative, i.e. a lot of content in a little speech. By describing this feature of the Byzantine epigram, the author brings out the main tools with which this effect is achieved. They are: adnomination, intertextuality, sensory imagery and enigma.

The denomination is related to the anthroponym. It can be based on the phonetic appearance of the personal name of a specific hagiographic character, on its semantics or on its etymology. The author's analysis of the use of personal names and their transformation into stylistic markers and meaning-generating topos has been done with skill, erudition and with a great sense of the nuances and playing with the meaning in the original. I will not dwell on each example individually, they are numerous.

I will emphasize that it is precisely in this part that the breadth of Dr. Dikova's philological approach to the material, her sense of the polysemantic nature of the Greek original and her desire to present each translation decision in detail, to analyze and evaluate it on merit, are evident. Its main conclusions, that the translators recognize the adnomination and convey it in the translations, that they often apply it compensatory and combine it with other figures of repetition give us a clear idea, both of stylistic markers in the couplets, and of the requirements and possibilities of the medium- recipient. The same goes for intertextuality. The numerous skillfully selected examples show that in the spirit of the Christian tradition, Christopher Mitileny makes associations primarily with biblical characters that are captured and conveyed in both translations. The situation is more interesting when allusions are made to ancient realities. According to the author, in both translations they are usually avoided, although it is difficult to determine gifts due to a misunderstanding on the part of the translators or due to compliance with the requirements of the environment for which the translation is intended. The two translations lose some of the mythological imagery and the related semantic and emotional suggestions, but sometimes this is also determined by the possibilities of the language of the translation. The researcher also notes that sometimes the translators themselves generate intertextual connections that are missing in the original, which speaks of a conscious and skillful use of this tool to compress the narrative.

Sensory imagery operates on a subconscious level. Dr. Dikova presents numerous examples of this technique for compressing the narrative. He achieves mostly artistic goals and works with key words in the couplets. The two translations differ in their use of sensory imagery. Serbian is more literal, while Bulgarian strives to convey the poetic imagery of the original.

The enigma is the last narrative compression technique analyzed, in which the author sees the most nuances in use. The main thing with him is the interpretation.

Thus, the third chapter presents us with the wide palette of translation solutions, systematized in the context of the requirement of the compressed narrative in the epigram. The author's conclusions are convincing and well-motivated. Before us is a complex picture of the interaction between translation and original, and the comparative examination of the two translations enriches our knowledge of the mechanisms of literary translation in the 14th century. The achievement of Dr. Ekaterina Dikova in this part of the work has important theoretical significance, because it presents one of the few examples of the reception of a secular genre such as the epigram in South Slavic literatures and its placement in the liturgical context of the Silent Prologue. The excellent analyzes of the individual translation solutions, the comparisons with the Greek original and of the translations with each other illustrate an important process observed in other translations of a poetic text. This is the reformatting of the poetic, measured speech of the original into highly organized oratorical prose, which has preserved all the stylistic markers of poetry - based on Dr. Dikova's conclusions, we could speak of a typical South Slavic phenomenon.

The second part of the monograph presents us with an exemplary edition of the poems of the original and of the two translations for the months from March to August according to modern edition principles, which was prepared precisely and with professional skill. The memory index attached at the end facilitates the use of the published text. Thus, the reader has the opportunity to convince himself of the accuracy and precision of Dr. Ekaterina Dikova's analysis and to discover other examples for himself. The edition practically opens a wide field for the work of philological concerns in the field of anthroponymy, lexicography and stylistics.

The remaining publications presented for the competition are two main groups – publications that lift the curtain on the monograph and approve certain aspects of the analysis and publications dedicated to various issues of the stylistics of the medieval text. What they have in common is the complex analytical approach and the author's broad philological culture, which makes the conclusions convincing and helpful.

Dr. Dikova has actively participated in various national and international scientific projects, she has also presented a certificate for her teaching activities, so in terms of these indicators she fully meets the requirements for holding the academic position of "associate professor". The attached reference to the citations of her works clearly shows us their contribution. Although she works in a narrowly specialized field, the results of her analyzes are theoretically important. Also, the attached statement of contributions corresponds to the

candidate's achievements, although the results of her works can be supplemented with more important achievements. In other words, returning to the beginning of my review, I will repeat that before us is a well-formed scholar who reached creative maturity, developed his own approach to literary monuments and proved his qualities as a philologist-medievalist of the highest class.

Bearing in mind everything that has been revealed in the review, the references and materials presented, I fully support the candidacy and propose to the honorable Scientific Jury without hesitation to vote "for" Dr. Ekaterina Pancheva Dikova to occupy the academic position of "associate professor". I am convinced of her future new scientific achievements.

19.02.2024

Sofia

Prof. Vasya Velinova