**OPINION**

For the Dissertation of a PhD-student at the Department “[History of Bulgaria](https://www.uni-sofia.bg/index.php/eng/the_university/faculties/faculty_of_history/structure/departments/history_of_bulgaria)”,

Faculty of History, Sofia University “St. Kliment Ohridski”

***Ekaterina Krasimirova Angelova***

Scientific supervisor: **Assoc. Prof. Angel Nikolov**

Entitled:

***“The Ecclesiastical Policy of Bulgaria between the union of Tsar Kaloyan and the restoration of the Bulgarian Patriarchate”***

For obtaining the educational and scientific degree **“Doctor” (PhD)**

In the Professional Field:

**2.2. *History and archaeology,***

**PhD Program:  *“History of Bulgaria”-* History of Medieval Bulgaria**

The dissertation of Ekaterina Angelova is dedicated to a significant problem from our medieval past and thus formulated the topic is dissertable (defensible). The paper consists of 179 pages, and the exposition follows a structure that includes an introduction, three chapters, a conclusion and appendices, as well as a bibliography (list of references). Each of the separate parts of the work is dedicated to an important issue related to the ecclesiasticalhistory of Bulgaria, unfolded within the framework of the chosen chronology. The appendices are dedicated to the specific problems, complementing the theme of our ecclesiastical policy in the thirteenth century. The main structural units, in turn, are divided into separate paragraphs and in this way, the various aspects, involved in the examination of the problematic, are clearly formulated.

The study begins with a lengthy introduction, explaining the chronological scope of the work. In this part of the presentation, the problems on which the work is directed are convincingly formulated, as well as the main goals and tasks that E. Angelova intends to develop in the course of her work. The PhD-student clearly directs her research towards “examination of ecclesiastic-state relations in Bulgaria with an emphasis on the policies carried out by the Bulgarian Church”. Furthermore, the research methods are presented in detail in the introduction. An overview of the nature of the sources and the content of the historiography related to the chosen topic was also made. It makes a good impression that the PhD-student uses a significant part of the scientific literature related to the studied issue.

The first chapter is entitled “The Ecclesiastical Policy of Tsar Kaloyan: The Union between Bulgaria and the Papacy”. In this part of the exhibition, the PhD-student follows in detail the policy of Pope Innocent III and that of Tsar Kaloyan, related to the imposition of the Union in Bulgaria, and the diplomatic activity of both parts stands out in the dissertation. The main highlight of the exhibition is the correspondence conducted between the Papacy and the Bulgarian ruler court. The second main point that the PhD-student examines in this part of the work is related to the Fourth Crusade and the political and diplomatic moves of Tsar Kaloyan, who was forced to act in the new situation in the Balkans. At the end of the chapter, colleague Angelova presents her conclusions, pointing out, albeit succinctly, some archaeological evidences related to the contacts between Bulgaria, the Papacy and the Latin Empire.

The second chapter of the dissertation is devoted to “The Ecclesiastical Policy of the Bulgarian Tsardom under the Heirs of Tsar Kaloyan until the Termination of the Union with the Papacy”. The exhibition reveals the politics of Tsar Boril, as well as the role of despot Alexius Slav and Sebastokrator Strez as independent rulers. In this part of the dissertation, a special place is devoted to the Council against the Bogomils of 1211, as well as to the Synodical transcripts of Tsar Boril, which has become a written source of great importance for the issues. The third emphasis in this chapter of the dissertation is placed on the ecclesiastical policy of Tsar Ivan Asen II. It should be noted that in the course of her research, the PhD-student reaches her own conclusions and summaries. It makes a good impression that in the exhibition, in addition to written testimonies from the era, E. Angelova was also focused on some archaeological artifacts that support her theses. Also, the colleague Angelova pays attention to specific details from the mural decoration of various medieval churches and monasteries, which become a kind of “historical source” for the imposition of the Union throughout the Bulgarian lands.

The third chapter bears the title: “Suspension of the Union with the Papacy”. The exhibition presents the political and diplomatic activity of Tsar Ivan Assen II, who successfully maneuvered between his most important foreign policy partners – the Latin Empire, Nicaea, Epirus, Hungary and Serbia. The reasons that led to the termination of the Union with Rome are also presented in this chapter. The events are presented in a broad all-Balkan and European historical context. The doctoral student puts forward multiple hypotheses and different points of view, setting out in detail the facts surrounding the events under consideration. Along with her good knowledge of the historiography, E. Angelova skilfully handles with the sources of the era.

The exposition is followed by a conclusion, which, at least in my opinion, should be more extensive and thorough. In this part of the dissertation should be presented the contributing moments, as well as the results that the doctoral student achieves in the process of her work. Two appendices are also included in the dissertation, which aim to present the role of Hungary and Serbia in the ecclesiastical politics of Asseniden.

After this brief overview of E. Angelova's dissertation, I would like to emphasize that it is clear that the PhD-student knows the historical facts and problems related to the chosen topic. In some parts the research strives to achieve interdisciplinarity and is based not only on the written testimonies of the era, but also on some of the achievements of archaeology, numismatics and art studies.

Some scientific contributions stand out in the dissertation. The research represents an attempt to comprehensively study of the ecclesiastical policy of Bulgaria in the period between the Union concluded by Tsar Kaloyan and the restoration of the Bulgarian Patriarchate during the time of Tsar Ivan Asen II. The abstract reflects the content of the dissertation and meets the requirements. The PhD-student has also presented a list of a total of five publications, one of them is in print (forthcoming).

The procedure for announcing the competition is in accordance with the legal provisions and requirements. All of the above and the fact that the dissertation meets the necessary basic criteria and requirements give me the reason to give my positive assessment. I would like to recommend to the esteemed Scientific Board to award ***Ekaterina Krasimirova Angelova*** the educational and scientific degree “Doctor” – PhD.

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Sofia, April the 26th, 2024 Elena Kostova, PhD, Assoc. Prof.

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