

БЪЛГАРСКА АКАДЕМИЯ НА НАУКИТЕ ИНСТИТУТ ЗА ИСТОРИЧЕСКИ ИЗСЛЕДВАНИЯ	
Изходящ №	дата 201 г.
Входящ № 768	дата 08.09. 2016 г.
София 1113, бул. Шипченски проход № 52, бл. 17 тел.: 02/ 979 29 98 ; факс: 02/ 870 21 91	

R E V I E W

by Prof. D.Sc. VALERY STOYANOV on the habilitation thesis of Chief Assistant Dr. STRAHIL PANAYOTOV, participant in the competition for the academic position of "Associate Professor" at the Section "Auxiliary Sciences of History and Informatics" of the Institute for Historical Studies at the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences.

The habilitation thesis by Dr. STRAHIL V. PANAYOTOV, published in co-authorship with Prof. MARKHAM J. GELLER under the title "*Mesopotamian Eye Disease Texts. The Nineveh Treatise*" (Berlin–Boston: Walter de Gruyter, 2020), constitutes the tenth volume of the authoritative academic series "*Die babylonisch-assyrische Medizin in Texten und Untersuchungen*". The monograph is dedicated to the critical edition, translation, and historical-philological analysis of the cuneiform texts known in scholarship as the "Nineveh Treatise on Eye Diseases" – one of the most significant medical corpora preserved in the library of King Ashurbanipal (681–669 BCE).

The work fits within long-standing international research on Mesopotamian medicine, substantially building upon it. For the first time, the corpus of texts dedicated to eye diseases is presented as a unified work through critical text establishment, reconstruction of its composition, English translation, and detailed scholarly commentary. In this way, the authors overcome the limitations of previous publications, which examine individual cuneiform fragments in isolation, without attempting to reconstruct the original structure of the treatise.

The scientific significance of the monograph derives from both the nature of the source material used and the chosen research approach. Medical cuneiform texts rank among the most complex monuments of the Akkadian literary tradition. Their study requires simultaneous mastery of cuneiform writing, the historical grammar of the Akkadian language, paleography, textology, and the history of ancient medicine. Therefore, the presented work should be evaluated not only as a philological edition of historical sources, but also as an interdisciplinary study combining the methods of Assyriology, history of science, and medical humanities.

The monograph is distinguished by a clearly formulated scientific objective – the reconstruction of the Nineveh treatise on eye diseases based on all available cuneiform evidence, their critical edition, and historical-philological interpretation. This objective has been consistently realized through systematic work on the original sources, careful comparison of variant readings, and detailed argumentation of the proposed textual solutions. The result is an edition that significantly expands the source base for future research on the medical tradition of ancient Mesopotamia.

From the book's preface, it is established that STRAHIL PANAYOTOV has performed the collation of practically all cuneiform monuments used, prepared the transliteration, transcription, initial translation and a significant portion of the philological commentary, as well as the indexes, glossaries and photo plates. These activities represent the essential foundation of any critical textual edition and attest to the determining participation of the candidate in the preparation of the monograph.

Particular attention deserves the introduction, in which are formulated both the history of the problem and the methodological principles of the study. The authors examine the place of the

treatise in the system of Mesopotamian medical literature, trace the history of its study, and argue the grounds for the proposed reconstruction of the text. In this way, the reader obtains the necessary scientific framework within which the published texts and their commentary should be perceived.

The source database is impressive in its scope and in the manner in which it has been processed. The study combines all known cuneiform evidence belonging to the examined treatise, regardless of their degree of preservation. This allows individual fragments to be considered not as independent texts, but as parts of a larger compositional design. Precisely this approach represents one of the most significant methodological innovations of the work.

In the reconstruction of the text, Dr. PANAYOTOV applies consistently the principles of critical textology. Each fragment is analyzed in the context of the remaining evidence, taking into account variant readings, paleographic features, and the condition of the corresponding tablet. The proposed reconstructions are not a mechanical result of comparing parallel passages, but are based on a complex philological analysis combining linguistic, textological, and historical arguments. This imparts to the critical edition a high degree of reliability and scientific persuasiveness.

An essential merit of the monograph is also the clear distinction between securely attested text and hypothetically reconstructed passages. The authors consistently indicate the degree of reliability of each reconstruction and provide detailed justification for the textual decisions made. Such a scholarly approach is particularly important when working with fragmentarily preserved cuneiform monuments and testifies to high methodological rigor.

In methodological terms, the monograph combines the best traditions of the European school of Assyriology with the possibilities of contemporary textological practice. The result is an edition that meets the highest international standards for the publication of cuneiform texts and has all the qualities to establish itself as a major reference study on the Nineveh treatise on eye diseases.

* * *

A central place in the assessment of the presented habilitation work should be occupied by its textological and philological contribution. It is precisely in this direction that the monograph offers the most significant original results and demonstrates the high scientific competence of the authors. The foundation of the research is based on the endeavor not merely to publish the known cuneiform monuments, but to restore to the maximum possible extent the original appearance of the Ninevite treatise on ocular diseases as a unified work.

The implementation of such a task implies overcoming a number of difficulties stemming from the condition of the source material. Most texts have reached us in a fragmentary form, contain numerous lacunae, and belong to different manuscripts of the same text. This confronts the researcher with the necessity to simultaneously perform paleographic analysis, philological interpretation, and textological reconstruction. It is precisely in the successful combination of these three levels that one of the greatest scientific merits of the monograph is demonstrated.

A significant contribution of the work is the reconstruction of the internal structure of the tract. In this way, the systematic character of the Mesopotamian medical tradition is revealed, and the long-

held perception that such texts represent mechanical compilations of recipes and incantations is overcome.

No less convincing is the philological commentary that accompanies the critical edition. It does not limit itself to the linguistic explanation of individual words or grammatical forms, but examines the terminology in its cultural and medical context. Special attention is devoted to the names of eye diseases, diagnostic observations, therapeutic procedures, and the medicinal remedies used. Thus the text becomes a valuable source not only for the history of the Akkadian language, but also for the history of medical knowledge in the ancient Near East.

It should also be emphasized one more quality of the work – its terminological consistency. Throughout the entire text, the authors employ a unified system for rendering Akkadian terms, which ensures precision of the analysis and facilitates future comparative studies. Particularly useful in this regard are the glossaries and indexes, which transform the monograph into a reliable reference tool for specialists.

Overall, the textological and philological analysis is the strongest aspect of the presented habilitation work. It is precisely here that its scientific novelty and international significance are demonstrated. The monograph not only publishes an important corpus of cuneiform texts, but proposes a completely new model for their critical processing and historical interpretation. For this reason, it has every reason to be regarded as a reference publication upon which future research on Mesopotamian medicine and cuneiform textology will be based.

* * *

The presented work contains clearly distinguishable scientific contributions. They stem both from the publication of new or insufficiently known source materials, as well as and above all from the manner in which these materials have been processed, interpreted, and incorporated into a comprehensive scientific concept.

First and foremost, it should be emphasized that this represents the accomplishment of the first comprehensive critical edition of the Ninevite treatise on eye diseases. Previous publications have dealt with individual tablets or limited groups of texts, whereas the present work reconstructs the treatise as a unified composition, restores its internal structure, and proposes a systematic critical establishment of the text. In this manner, one of the significant gaps in the study of Mesopotamian medical literature is addressed.

A second important contribution is the clarification of the structure and content of one of the main medical treatises from the library of Ashurbanipal. Through philological and textological analysis, it is demonstrated that the examined corpus possesses a clearly constructed internal organization, based on a sequential description of symptoms, diagnostic observations, and therapeutic procedures. This contributes to a more accurate understanding of the way in which medical science was organized in the Neo-Assyrian period.

Of particular importance is the contribution to the study of medical terminology. The detailed analysis of Akkadian names for eye diseases, therapeutic practices, and medicinal substances

employed expands the possibilities for comparative research on the development of medical knowledge in the ancient Near East and on the connections between Mesopotamian, Egyptian, and Greco-Roman traditions. In this respect, the monograph constitutes a contribution not only from a philological perspective, but also to the history of medicine as an interdisciplinary scientific field.

The role of the candidate in this regard is significant. He has carried out the actual scientific work in the preparation of the critical edition. This presupposes direct examination of the original cuneiform monuments, profound knowledge of the Akkadian language, paleography and textology, as well as the ability to independently solve complex philological problems. Therefore, his contribution could not be considered merely as auxiliary or editorial. On the contrary, it encompasses the main stages of scientific inquiry and has decisive significance for the final form of the monograph.

It should be noted that the presented work is not an isolated result, but a natural continuation of Dr. PANAYOTOV's long-standing research on Mesopotamian medical literature. As can also be seen from the presented overview of scientific contributions, the development of the Nineveh treatise is connected with his previous publications on medical catalogs, specialized terminology, and the structure of cuneiform medical tradition. Therefore, the book summarizes and develops a consistent research program, the results of which have already received international recognition.

* * *

The high scientific value of the monograph does not preclude making certain recommendations that should be understood as guidelines for future research development rather than objections to the presented work.

First and foremost, it would be useful in future editions to expand the comparative analysis of the Nineveh Treatise with the remaining specialized medical series from the library of Ashurbanipal. Although the book indicates numerous textual and terminological parallels, their systematization in a separate synthetic section would allow an even clearer delineation of the treatise's place within the overall structure of the Mesopotamian medical tradition.

Secondly, given the interdisciplinary nature of the research, in places it would be desirable to have a more detailed discussion of the medical interpretation of individual diagnoses and therapeutic practices. Such expansion would facilitate the perception of the results by specialists in the history of medicine and would reveal even more fully the possibilities for comparison with other ancient medical traditions.

It can also be recommended in the future to develop an electronic version of the critical edition, allowing parallel visualization of cuneiform originals, transliteration, translation, and philological commentary. Such a resource would significantly increase the practical value of the work for the international scientific community and would correspond to contemporary trends in digital humanities.

The indicated notes have – of course – only a recommendatory nature. They do not question either the scientific reliability of the research or its main results. On the contrary, they are a natural

consequence of the broad thematic scope and the perspectives that the work opens for future research.

* * *

A few words in conclusion and regarding the candidate's other publications. In the competition, he participates with five additional studies and seven articles, most of which have been published in prestigious international publications. Dr. PANAYOTOV has shown commendable modesty by submitting only these from his substantial scientific output. Since under his name in "Academia.edu" there are listed 6 Books, 59 Papers, 20 Talks, and 1 Event. He has 1246 followers, 158 citations, and 32000 Public Viewers, namely visitors and readers, which ranks him among the Top 3% of authors. Furthermore, not all of his works concern the treatment of eye diseases in Mesopotamia and generally ancient Assyro-Babylonian and Sumero-Akkadian medicine. I was especially impressed by his successful and engagingly presented attempt to compare the concept of cuneiform demons with the modern understanding of pathogenic viruses. In both cases, the terms are borrowed from older languages, cultural bearers of deeply rooted teachings and traditions (Sumerian in relation to Akkadian and Latin compared to today's European languages). Both demons and viruses are invisible to the human eye (except through their manifestations), they inhabit the boundary zone between life and death, were among the first inhabitants of the Earth with possibly non-terrestrial or extraterrestrial origin, having come here from the Primordial Cosmos. All of this testifies to the fact that throughout his thousand-year history, humanity has scarcely changed in its fundamental understanding, behavior, and relationship to the world. The only visible development is observed in the sphere of increasingly sophisticated means he employs to combat nature (instruments of labor) and against those like himself (weapons). This is a disturbing conclusion, and today's global development provides us with increasingly serious reasons for concern.

* * *

In conclusion: The presented habilitation work "*Mesopotamian Eye Disease Texts. The Nineveh Treatise*" represents a completed scientific research with a high degree of originality and with a substantial contribution to the development of contemporary Assyriology, cuneiform textology, and the history of ancient medicine. The monograph combines the precision of the critical text edition with the depth of historical-philological analysis and offers a convincing reconstruction of one of the most significant medical treatises that have reached us from ancient Mesopotamia.

Particularly high evaluation deserves the methodological consistency of the research. Work with original cuneiform monuments, critical analysis of variant readings, substantiated textual reconstructions, and detailed scholarly commentary demonstrate high philological culture and excellent knowledge of the contemporary state of scientific research in the field.

From the perspective of the habilitation procedure, the clearly distinguished role of Dr. STRAHIL PANAYOTOV in the preparation of the monograph should be specially emphasized. His contribution covers the main stages of critical processing of the source material – collation of cuneiform monuments, transliteration, transcription, preparation of the translation, a significant part of the philological commentary, and the development of the scientific reference apparatus. This makes it

reasonable to conclude that the candidate's contribution has an independent and decisive character for the final scientific result.

The monograph meets the highest international standards for critical edition of cuneiform texts. It not only introduces into scientific circulation a comprehensively reconstructed medical corpus, but also establishes a solid foundation for future research on the history of medical knowledge, the development of scientific terminology, and the intellectual culture of the ancient Near East.

Based on everything presented so far, I am of the opinion that the presented habilitation work fully meets the requirements of the Law on the Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria and the Regulations for its implementation for the acquisition of the academic position "Associate Professor" in professional field 2.2. *History and Archaeology*, scientific specialty "*Documentary Studies, Archival Science, Paleography, including Historiography and Source Criticism*". Therefore, I confidently recommend to the esteemed Scientific Jury to award Dr. STRAHIL V. PANAYOTOV the academic position "Associate Professor".

Sofia, 31.08.2026

(Prof. D.Sc. VALERY STOYANOV)