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ACADEMIC REVIEW

by Prof. Dr. **Georgeta Nazarska**, ULSIT, Sofia,

for the scientific works of Associate Professor **Yura Toteva Konstantinova,** D.Sc,

applied for the academic position of Full Professor

This review was prepared on the basis of an order of the director of the Institute of Balkan Studies and 'Prof. Alexander Fol' Centre of Thracology at the BAS (IBSCT-BAS) and regarding a competition for the academic position of Full Professor under 2.2. 'History and Archeology' Professional Field ('Bulgarian-Greek relations in the XIX - XX centuries'), announced for the needs of the 'Modern Balkans' Section in the State Gazette (№55, 15.07.2022). Prof. Dr. Yura Toteva Konstantinova participated in it as the sole applicant.

The complete folder of documents and publications of the competition were provided to me as a member of the scientific jury. Their number and content meet the requirements of the Development of the Academic Staff in Republic of Bulgaria Law, of the Rules for its application in the BAS, and of the Rules of the Scientific Board of the IBSCT-BAS.

1. Evaluation of the scientific results and contributions of the applicant

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Yura Konstantinova obtaines master's degrees – in 'History' with a specialization in Modern and Contemporary History, and in 'Modern Greek Language Studies', at the 'St. Kliment Ohridski' Sofia University (1994). She holds a Ph.D. in 'Modern and Contemporary History' and D.Sc. degree in 'History and Archeology' (2020) by the IBSCT-BAS. She specialized at famous scientific centers: Pantheon University – Athens (2005), in Athens with scholarships from the 'A. Mellon' foundation and 'Al. Onassis' foundation (2007 and 2012) and at the London School of Economics with a 'M. and D. Sotirovi'

scholarship (2014). Assoc. Prof. Konstantinova had been working as a history teacher and part-time Greek language lecturer at the Sofia University and Academy of Ministry of Interior. Since 2001, she was appointed at the IBSCT-BAS as: full-time doctoral student (2001-2006), Chief Assistant Professor (2006-2014) and Associate Professor (2014 to date).

In the current competition, Assoc. Prof. Konstantinova participated with 2 monographs (one of which was a habilitation thesis), with 2 studies and 8 articles, of which 8 were published in peer-reviewed collections and collective works, and 1 in a refereed periodical. The presented publications are dedicated to the political ideologies and practices in Bulgaria, Greece and in South-East Europe during the Modern, Contemporary and Global era, to the projections of leadership, manifestations of ethnic and ethno-religious identity and to the notions of the Other.

The habilitation work 'Bulgaria and Greece in a Labyrinth of Monologues' (Sofia: IBCT, 2022. – 350 p.) is a synthesis of the author's long-standing creative interests and shows her broad awareness and criticality of existing studies on bilateral relations. The political-diplomatic theme of the text frames a social history study focused on migration processes, created and disintegrating identities, fluctuating economic activity, projected or realized cultural interactions.

This is proved in the First Chapter, where, in addition to their traditional dimensions of interstate problems, the Macedonian and Thracian issues are commented on in their social dimensions as refugee (expatriate) and minority phenomena and as affecting the countries of the peninsula and the great powers. In a similar way, the author examines the Balkan Wars, emphasizing the internal factors, such as national ideologies, ideologema and policies, cross-border economic interests and negative stereotyping, specially developed in the later parts of the book. Here she begins her analysis of the image of the neighbor as an image

not of the 'near' but of the 'distant Other', perceived 'short-sightedly' by local elites, hyperbolized in the mass consciousness and causing confrontation or alienation.

In the Second Chapter, the researcher directs her 'lens' from the beginning to one of the 'low' levels in the diplomatic hierarchy – the consular level, in order to recreate a 'thick' historical reconstruction of the diasporic communities. Dealing with an essentially unstudied issue, Y. Konstantinova highlights both the political functions of the consular institution in Greek-Bulgarian relations, as well as the place of the educated elites for bilateral co-operation and mutual acquaintance. The same approach was applied in the detailed tracking of neighboring economic contacts in the 19th-20th centuries, which are among the least studied in the literature. Their vicissitudes have been discussed in the political framework of the regime of capitulations, international agreements and protectionist policies, but mostly outside the institutional framework: as a free initiative of diasporic communities in the 19th-early 20th centuries, as an expression of individual entrepreneurs and companies, as a strong affected by forced political migrations in 1906-1927.

The Third chapter, euphemistically called 'Compatriots in the Foreign Nation-State', in fact fully deals with the question of diasporic communities and their relations with the ethnic and religious policies of the two nation-states towards them within more than a century. Here, the usual macro-political view of them is replaced by a mosaic of micro-stories, telling about assimilation and integration as chosen possibilities, not as categorical imperatives, and convincing with real-life examples of dual identities (Iv. Seliminski and Z. Saroglu). On this basis, Y. Konstantinova formulates precise conclusions about the nature, goals, means and consequences of the practically 'mirror' ethno-national policies conducted in the 20th century towards the established diasporic communities from Bulgaria and

Greece. I share her conclusions that their mistakes and failures reinforce the traumatic memory and hinder good neighborly relations. I find the comparative approach appropriate, which allowed her to make rational, precise and documented assessments of past events, persons and processes (including Bulgarian), as well as valuable conclusions about the destructiveness of assimilationist policies towards the cultural heritage and cultural memory of /for the Greeks and Bulgarians.

The Fourth chapter of the habilitation thesis is a contribution in both its parts. The first complements the conclusions about the image of the Other, drawn by native imagology specialists from the 1990s onwards. Circulating archival and summarizing published impressions of diplomatic representatives from the two countries, the author clarifies the mutual 'vision' as not always supporting bilateral 'seeing' and 'recognition', but on the contrary – distancing and reinforcing the misunderstanding of the Other. But if here the educated elites are not up to their leadership role, the second part of the chapter convinces otherwise. On the example of the activity of the Greek-Bulgarian and Bulgarian-Greek societies and their initiatives in the 1930s, it discusses real models for cultural interactions and productive social exchange, and highlights the figures of significant personalities.

The appendices in the book are also original. Assoc. Prof. Konstantinova turns the ordinary lists of ministers and diplomatic representatives from both countries into a prosopographical database for the composition of the political elites. The will of Z. Sarooglu illustrates her thesis about the dual identity and the functioning of the economic elites.

The habilitation thesis combines the traditional historical with the cultural approach and emphasizes the comparative plan, and the set interdisciplinary field is framed by each chapter - political-institutional, economic, social-community, and cultural. The text is conceived and implemented not as a usual history of bilateral relations, but a look at them, from a Bulgarian and Greek

perspective. Furthermore, they are not treated one-dimensionally – only as international relations, but are looked at at micro levels – as inter-ethnic and inter-religious interpenetrations, e.g. within a monastery, family or individual biography.

Those familiar with the previous work of Assoc. Prof. Konstantinova know that she is a scientist who is 'writing' history based on primary sources, without improvisations and without compromises. In her habilitation thesis, she follows this rule, once again introducing into circulation valuable archival documentation, which she personally searched for in a number of (so far, difficult to access) institutions.

In the title and in her reciprocal ('mirror') historical narrative, the author uses the metaphors 'labyrinth' and 'monologues', emphasizing the repeated fruitless political patterns in different eras that hinder the development of the Balkans and in particular Greece and Bulgaria. However, the text also describes the possible 'exits' from such wandering among mutual mistrust, ignoring, fear and violence. In Y. Konstantinova's interpretation, the cultural elites of both countries (diplomats, scientists, and artists) have the potential to push 'Ariadne's thread'.

In general, the habilitation thesis justifies the expectations of a synthetic composition - the fruit of 20 years of accumulation and an example of a mastered historian's 'craft' (M. Bloch). It demonstrates the qualities of its author to search for, use and analyze diverse and, if possible, all sources available to her, and illustrates her possibilities for a reliable and vivid description of social dynamics in historical processes. In the discussed book, they are presented as complex, intertwined, non-linear, multivalent and asynchronous, sometimes difficult to explain, viewed from different perspectives and in diverse contexts.

Also Y. Konstantinova presents for review the printed edition of her dissertation for the Doctor of Sciences degree 'Bulgarians in Ottoman Thessaloniki' (Sofia: IBCT, 2020. - 440 p.). Since this exemplary work on social

history received deservedly high praise even in its unpublished version, I will present its content here quite succinctly. Its focus is the history and development of one of the largest Bulgarian diasporic communities – in Thessaloniki. Therefore, its First Chapter describes its formation and functioning, analyzes migrations, social stratification, the foundation of the church community and its substructures. In the Second chapter, an in-depth study of the education of the Thessaloniki Bulgarians in their own, foreign and other religious institutions is made. The final chapter draws attention to urban space, as a 'social field' in its public and political dimensions, and to Thessaloniki, as a memorial, functional and symbolic 'lieu de mémoire'. Much of the work guidelines, incl. Assoc. Prof. Konstantinova further develops the identity issues and the diverse methodological and methodical tools set in the book in the above-discussed habilitation work.

Along with the monographs evaluated above, she applies another 8 articles and 2 studies, dedicated to various political aspects of the Bulgarian-Greek relations from the beginning of the 20th century and during the Balkan Wars; the educational institutions and the daily life of the Bulgarian diaspora in Greece and Thessaloniki; the refugee and minority issue. In two of them, she worked not only in the 'long' 20th century, but typified migrations and crises in South-Eastern Europe almost to the present day. Thus, she shows not only her excellent skills for historical reconstruction, but also for analyzing the recent past and even the present, using the tools of political studies.

2. Assessment of the pedagogical activity and publications of the applicant regarding the fulfillment of the national minimum requirements for the academic position of Full Professor under 2.2. Professional Field

Assoc. Prof. Yura Konstantinova has pedagogical experience in secondary education and as a part-time lecturer in Modern Greek at the Sofia

University and at the Academy of the Ministry of Interior – Sofia (2008-2014) and at the Training Center – BAS with specialized courses for doctoral students (2018, 2022).

In the last 12 years, she has been developing intensive and creative project activity, awarded by the management of the BAS with a special diploma (2020). The two projects under her leadership ('Thessaloniki and the Bulgarians: history, memory, modernity' (2016-2020), 'Vectors of historical development and national identity in the Balkans' (2020-2022), financed in competitions for fundamental scientific research and for bilateral cooperation of the 'Scientific Research' Fund, are an example of successful management and high efficiency. Assoc. Prof. Konstantinova also took part in a total of 7 scientific projects: the 'Cultural-Historical Heritage, National Memory and Social Development' National Scientific Program of the Ministry of Education and Science (2019-2021), two national projects of 'Scientific Research' Fund (2011-2014, 2017-2020), two bilateral between the BAS and the Czech and Romanian Academy of Sciences (2012-2017) and two projects of IBSCT-BAS (2010-2019). She is also coordinator of IBSCT-BAS for 'KLADA' e-infrastructure. The projects are searching for primary sources, aiming at the digitization of cultural heritage, exploring the interactions of East and West, the dynamics of national identity and the development of the European idea, material and symbolic dimensions of Thessaloniki in Bulgarian history and memory, and the state of the modern Balkans.

The quality of Assoc. Prof. Konstantinova's scientific work was approved and popularized in the period 2008-2022 not only in dozens of publications, but with her participation in 13 national and 20 international scientific forums, where she presented papers in Bulgarian, Greek, Russian, and English language.

Compared with the national minimum requirements for the academic position of Full Professor under 2.2. 'History and Archeology' Professional Field, the publications (two monographs, 8 articles and 2 studies, published in Bulgarian and English in refereed and non-refereed and peer-reviewed scientific journals and in peer-reviewed scientific collections) equate respectively in section A – at 50 items (min. 50 items); in section B – per 100 items (min. 100 items); in section B – per 100 items (min. 100 items); in section D – 340 points (min. 340 points). The 30 citations of 4 publications described in the documentation, testifying to their relevance and the recognizability of the author in the scientific space, are equivalent in section D to 195 items (min. 195 items). In section E, evidence is presented for a defended dissertation for the Doctor of Science degree in 2020 (40 points), leadership and participation in national and international projects (70 points + 35 points), compilation of collections (25 items) and teaching activities (10 items). In general, Assoc. Prof. Konstantinova collects the necessary 400 points and fully satisfies the national minimum requirements for the academic position of Full Professor under 2.2. 'History and Archeology' Professional Field.

I declare that I have no joint publications with the candidate.

3. Critical assessments, remarks and recommendations

Assoc. Prof. Konstantinova's peer-reviewed works are sufficiently mature and contain a serious potential of topics and problems that she can continue to explore in the future. Among them are the contemporary projections of ethno-national policies and of migrations in the context of the crisis states of the Balkan societies and in a comparative plan; the place of social elites in the development of the region; the Bulgarian and Greek diasporic communities in the Ottoman, Austro-Hungarian and Russian empires, etc. In fact, a recent documentary collection under

her authorship – about the emigration of a part of the Bulgarian Armenians to the USA in the 1960s, makes a serious request for this.

Conclusion

Based on the following: the punctual and transparent procedure, the compliance of the submitted documents with the requirements of the current Development of the Academic Staff in Republic of Bulgaria Law and the Regulations for its implementation, the implementation of the national minimum requirements for the academic position of Full Professor under 2.2. 'History and Archeology' Professional Field, the availability of sufficient number, original and with high quality scientific works, the lack of plagiarism, the evidences of citations and recognition in the scientific field of the applicant, I give my **positive assessment** of the scientific achievements and pedagogical activity of Assoc. Prof. Dr. Yura Toteva Konstantinova.

I declare that I will **vote positively** for her choice of the academic position f Full Professor under 2.2. 'History and Archeology' Professional Field ('Bulgarian-Greek relations in the 19th - 20th centuries') for the needs of the 'Modern Balkans' Section at the IBSCT-BAS.

Sofia, November 11th, 2022

Reviewer:

(Prof. G. Nazarska, Ph.D.)