

БЪЛГАРСКА АКАДЕМИЯ НА НАУКИТЕ ИНСТИТУТ ЗА ИСТОРИЧЕСКИ ИЗСЛЕДВАНИЯ	
Изходящ №	дата 201 г.
Входящ № <u>256</u>	дата <u>11.04</u> 20 <u>22</u>
София 1113, бул. Шипченски проход № 5 тел.: 02/ 979 29 98 ; факс: 02/ 870 21 91	

REVIEW

of the academic work of
Assoc. Prof. Olga Todorova Todorova
re her competing for the academic post of
Professor
by Prof. Nadia Danova, D.Sc. (History)

Associate Professor Olga Todorova, PhD, is the only candidate for the academic post of Professor, professional line 2.2. History and Archaeology, specialty History of Bulgaria (Social History 15th c.-16th c.), requested by Section *The Bulgarians, the Ottoman Empire and Europe* of the Institute for Historic Studies of the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, and published in *Darzhaven vestnik* No. 111 of 31. 12. 2021.

Olga Todorova was born on May 13, 1957 in Sofia. She graduated from the Faculty of History at the St. Kliment Okhridski University of Sofia. As a post-graduate in Cultural History of the Bulgarian People at the Institute for History, now the Institute for Historic Studies, she defended successfully her doctoral thesis *The Orthodox Church and the Bulgarian people (15th c. – third quarter of 18th c.)*. Following that, she became in turn Researcher, Research Associate 2nd degree, Research Associate 1st degree, and Associate Professor. Currently she is an Associate Professor at Section *The Bulgarians, the Ottoman Empire and Europe* of the Institute for Historic Studies. She enhanced her academic qualification through diligent work and specializations at the Institute for Slavic and Balkan Studies, Moscow; the Skilliter Centre for Ottoman Studies at Newnham College, Cambridge; and the Basbakanlik Archives, Istanbul. She has established a reputation as a deeply respected Ottoman historian, with significant contributions to Bulgarian, Balkan and Ottoman history. Her excellent polyglot skills allow her the use of a broad basis of primary sources, among which documentation in Ottoman Turkish has a special place. Her academic production is famous for being abreast of the latest developments in Bulgarian and world research, both in terms of theory and factology. She is most meticulous when examining her sources and

manages to place them with precision in their historical context. The result is a convincing reconstruction and conceptualization of the past, its processes and actors.

Accents in the prodigious academic *opus* of Olga Todorova prompt one to designate several thematic circles. The first would comprise investigations in **the social structure and social relations** in the Bulgarian and Balkan provinces of the Osmanic Empire in the period 15th c. – 18th c. They are listed by the candidate under nos. 1, 4, 12, 19, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29 and 30. Central here is the problematique of domestic slavery in Osmanic Roumeliya. Without understanding this phenomenon, comprehension of the past of our society would be lacking: slavery is not a marginal social trait of the Empire, and occupies an important place both in private and public life. Domestic slavery was the most proliferated kind of slavery in the whole Osmanic Empire, and merits research as such. However, in Modern times and especially in most recent times, a generalized notion of “Turkish slavery” has become popular and emblematic for the whole Osmanic period of Bulgarian history. It functions as a strong de-formant of Bulgarian historic consciousness, supplying a ready explanatory model for all kinds of mishaps in the Bulgarian past. Thus, Todorova’s relevant and thoroughly verified facts help the dissolution of such popular misconceptions.

In this respect, a major achievement of Olga Todorova is her monography on slavery, especially domestic slavery in Osmanic Roumeliya, researched in depth for years and published in 2021. It is founded on a massive collection of primary sources. First place among them take the documents of the central Osmanic administration: collections of laws, *ad hoc* Sultan’s *firmans*, *fatwas*, and personal legal documents; all of them are picked from the *sicils* (registers of local *kadi* courts); especially fruitful has been the research in the *sicils* in Sofia, Rousse and Vidin.

Among the non-Osmanic sources of West-European, Balkan and domestic provenance, there are travelogues, memoirs, letters, diplomatic reports, hagiography, *kondikas*, marginalia, folklore, etc. Documentary material from Bulgarian collections and the Bulgarian press of the 19th c. is also used. The study is aptly structured, enabling the author to penetrate all layers of this complex problematique, to trace the genealogy of the phenomena in question and reveal the mode of functioning of the historic factors that made this or that tendency in the development of domestic slavery prevail.

The geographic boundaries of the study coincide with the territories of today's Bulgaria and their nearest periphery. The lower chronological line is drawn at the turn of the 14th c., the years of the Osmanic conquest of Bulgaria and the Central Balkans; the upper line is drawn at mid-18th c., it being a *sui generis* watershed in the history of the Empire and of slavery in its Balkan lands. Relevant events from 1877-1878 are also considered in the concluding part of the study.

The problems that the author addresses in turn are well selected, being fundamental for a comprehensive study of both the essence and the functioning of the institutions researched. Todorova's precise analysis, based on the social aspects of legal and cultural history, has enabled her to introduce into Bulgarian history not a few individuals that have hitherto been absent from it.

The first problem to be addressed is the prehistory of the institution in question, i.e. slavery in the Islamic world in pre-Osmanic times and the formation of the paradigm of slavery in the *shariat*. That paradigm was established during the first centuries of Islam and functioned until the Tanzimat epoch, following norms and regulations stated in the *shariat* and the Q'uran. Subsequently, the sources feeding slave labor and the ethnic composition of the slaves are discussed. Here Todorova distinguishes three periods in the history of that institution: (1) the epoch of conquest and solidification of Osmanic rule of the Balkans (14th c. – mid 15th c.), when domestic slaves are Balkan inhabitants, including Bulgarians; mid 15th c. – 18th c., when the slave contingent is filled mainly by prisoners of war from Europe, Africa and Asia; the period of the Later Empire (end of 18th - 19th c.), when the ethnic specter narrows sharply down to black Africans and people from the Caucasus. Attention is paid to the fact that after mid-15th c. there are very few domestic slaves of Bulgarian origin. Todorova endeavors to draw a clear line between the status of the slaves and the vast majority of the Bulgarian population. These were protected under *shariat* right in their quality of *zimmi*, non-Muslim subjects of the Empire, and their status was different from the status of slaves.

Another major problem is the integration of slaves in the Osmanic *milieu*, its stages and mechanisms. The evolution of individuals is followed from "civic death" at the moment of enslavement until their "resurrection" as full members of society. Todorova then follows the fate of the non-integrated slaves until the end of the 18th c. She pays special attention to black slaves, whose numbers become significant in the 16th c., and dominant by the 19th c.

From the viewpoint of history of mentality, especially interesting is the evolution of the image that Bulgarians had of black people. Besides, a profile of a Roumelian slave owner is drawn. Data are quoted referring to 211 adult slave owners from Sofia, from mid-16th c. to mid-18th c.; the social diffusion of slavery and the attitude of slave owners to slaves are commented on. Quite revealing is the comparison with the functioning of synchronic slave practices in and out of the Osmanic state. Also of interest are the data re slave practices in late Middle-Age and early Modern Europe. Cases are cited of the existence in Christian Europe, up to the French Revolution, of slaves both Orthodox Christian and Muslim.

In her Epilogue, Todorova takes a glimpse beyond the actual boundaries of her study, i.e. at the history of Osmanic slavery from the end of the 18th into the 19th c., times of modernization and bourgeois boom. A valuable component here is the analysis of the reflection of the government's measures to curb slave trade in the 19th c. Bulgarian press. The author makes incisive observations on the whole range of opinion on slavery, as related to the general ideological *penchant* of the authors of the respective publications. Todorova is convincing when she launches the thesis that events on the eve of the liberation of Bulgaria from the Empire brought about in the public's consciousness a convergence of the two "Turkish slaveries", the literal and the metaphorical. Thus, Olga Todorova produces a categorical negative answer to the question, subject to controversy even today, whether the Osmanic period of Bulgarian history may be defined as "slavery" Bulgarians under the Empire were variously oppressed in fact, and also in feeling; however, not every oppression may be diagnosed as slavery. Todorova gives convincing proof that during the five centuries of Osmanic domination the vast majority of Bulgarians had not been slaves; in any case, slaves were mostly foreigners.

Olga Todorova's monography deals with a problem of importance for our region, on the basis of sources found and analyzed by the author. The new documentary material, plus the author's historical culture and professionalism, have allowed her to add significantly to our knowledge of the societies that used to exist here. It is a contribution to social history. We get portraits of unknown segments of Balkan population and our picture of the socio-cultural processes in this area at the early stages of Osmanic rule becomes richer as we fill in lacunas in the Bulgarian and Balkan history of the region. Being the result of conscientious, diligent and highly competent work, this *opus* of Associate Professor Olga Todorova meets all the requirements for a habilitation work.

There are other texts of Todorova's, preceding her monography and dealing with various aspects of domestic slavery, such as the historiography of the problem, the fate of enslaved prisoners of war in the 17th c., the fate of enslaved women, slave traffic, integration of slaves in society and the fate of non-integrated fugitive slaves.

Then there is Olga Todorova's research paper on the *hajj*, elucidating the proportion of Muslim *hajjis* in Osmanic society, of the *hajj* as norm, the social and economic profile of the *hajji*, and of the *hajj*'s social functions. It is shown how, along with its religious role, the *hajj* helped to ease social tensions and redistribute economic resources and prestige among the members of Muslim society. The *hajj* is also considered as an instrument, used by newly converted Muslims to facilitate their integration. Todorova refutes the popular notion that the *hajj* was limited to elites; it is also seen as a factor for unification of the Muslim community locally and globally.

Todorova's paper on the non-Muslim *vakufs* belongs to the same thematic circle. It describes how the Christians adopted that *shariat* institution, albeit there was no legislation to make that practice compulsory for them. The legal and practical problems arising from the situation with *vakufs* belonging to the Church are discussed.

The second thematic circle addressed by Olga Todorova deals with **ethno-religious relations**, with Christianity and Islam on the Balkans (nos. 8, 9, 10, 15, and 22). The main goal for Todorova here is to present non-researched or barely researched areas of the Christian-Muslim con/flict/tact, which characterizes the whole Osmanic epoch on the Balkans. There is Todorova's paper on alcoholic beverages consumption in the period 15thc. – 16thc., as a factor that may act both as a separator and integrator for Christians and Muslims. There is also her paper on some marginalia in manuscripts that describe the Christians and Muslims of Plovdiv in acts of solidarity against a common enemy, the *Kirdjalis*. Another paper is based on the text of Sinadinos, a priest from Seres in the 17th c., which contributes to understanding of the legitimism, developed by some Christians re the Osmanic rule.

Several other texts aim at shedding additional light on the **history of mentalities** (nos. 2, 16, 18, 29). One of them is the paper on the image of "the Jew" in Bulgarian literature, one of the first research in imagology in Bulgaria. We also find papers on how Sofroniy of Vratsa understood the religion of "the others", as well as the text revealing that the religion of the "other" was being sexualized. Part of Todorova's mentality research is her text that follows

the evolution of the image of the “Black Arab” in Bulgarian tradition. Our notions of Bulgarian imaging of the “otherness” while building a national identity are enriched by the author’s discussion of the causes that brought about such stereotyped and predominantly negative images. Moreover, that kind of research is not academically self-sufficient: the author undertakes a study of the phenomenon in order to help neutralize the negative stereotypes extant today.

Other pioneering work of public significance is the research of Olga Todorova in the history of **women, children, marriage and family** (nos. 3, 4, 5, 6), in which she discusses the divisions of society by age and sex in the period 15th c. – 18th c. In her research paper on the interrelations children-adults, based on extensive sources of Bulgarian, Osmanic and foreign origin, she reconstructs the legal status of children, compared to their real status, with its specificities resulting from confession and sex. She comes to the conclusion that in the researched space-time continuum the status of the child is typical for a pre-industrial society, and that the cultivation in adults of an attitude of attention and respect would be a thing for the future. In other writings she depicts the place of women in public life and argues convincingly that women, albeit far from being equal to men, still weren’t total outsiders to public life. Todorova also has undertaken special research of the position of women of the most marginal social categories, such as prostitutes and slaves. It is shown that prostitutes came from various social strata: along with marginalized women such as slaves or Romani women, with their nomadic or semi-nomadic lifestyle, there were free-born, stationary dwellers of Christian and Muslim origin. Their clients are profiled too: janissaries, merchants, unmarried men. It is pointed out that prostitution served as a handy “social safety hatch”, therefore the Osmanic state didn’t admit its existence, but didn’t prohibit it either.

The **history of the Orthodox Church and culture** in Osmanic times is the topic of Olga Todorova’s publications nos. 7, 20 and 21. Todorova attempts to present a more general view of the Church as institution in the social space. Scrutinizing the data re the position of the Orthodox clergy in the Osmanic social structure and in the frame of the so-called *millet* system, the author concludes that due to the alienation of the clerics high in the hierarchy, of Greek origin mainly, from their Bulgarian flock, the Church failed on the whole to realize in full its potential as public leader, especially locally. Thanks exclusively to the lower clergy, mainly of Bulgarian origin, the Church would deliver, but only to the lower tiers of Bulgarian

society, which in turn lowered the overall quality of Bulgarian religious and cultural life. Based on the chronicle of the AM priest Sinadinos, the author describes parish life in the Central Balkans in the 17th c. In another paper she situates two Greek marginalia with the signatures of metropolitans of Tarnovo from the first half of the 17th c., which allows her to produce a convincing reconstruction of social and political realia in Arbanasi village and Tarnovo town, and also enrich our notion of the role of the Church in the courts of justice.

A separate thematic circle from Todorova's publications dedicated to the **relation between history and folklore**. Publications nos. 2, 10, 14, and 28 fall under this rubric. In these texts, focused on individuals such as "Sklav the Strong", on religious groups such as the Jews, racial groups such as black slaves, or the process of Islamization, a careful demarcation line is drawn between historic realities and their reflection in folklore, with the discrepancies, occasionally shocking, pointed out. Todorova discusses the probable motives of the nameless author to depart from reality, and the educational and safeguarding features of folklore concerning faith and ethnicity. Acceptable is the author's contention that in the circumstances of domination of foreigners of different faith, Bulgarian folklore functioned not as a "mirror", but rather as a "corrector" of reality. Simultaneously, Todorova underlines the fact that the normativistic patriarchal function of folklore prevailed. The folk author strives hard to defend the authority of the "strong" sex, and to depict exclusively the "weak" sex as sinful for being enticed to a more secure and rich life through a conversion to Islam, which constitutes religious treason and a fall to temptation.

The **problems of historiography** are not central to Todorova's academic interests, yet she has addressed them in some of her publications (nos. 1, 11 and 23). In one of them she criticizes convincingly the contention of Hristo Gandev that the migration of Bulgarian Christian peasants from the rural hinterland of Vidin at the end of the 17th c. and the beginning of the 18th, is proof of the start of a process of "Bulgarization of the towns", due to Bulgarian economic prosperity, plus the development of a stronger religious and cultural consciousness. Based on Osmanic and Austrian sources, Olga Todorova comes to the conclusion that the Bulgarian "invasion" of Vidin hadn't been caused by any special economic or social growth: rather, the migrants had been attracted by the low prices of land in the town, seriously depopulated and destroyed after the Austrian occupation. Dedicated to historiographic problems is also a research paper which analyses in parallel contemporary Bulgarian and foreign historical research on slavery in the Later Osmanic Empire. (A critical

historiographic review of major Bulgarian and foreign studies of the different kinds of slavery in the Osmanic world is made also in the AM monography on domestic slavery.)

A separate group form Todorova's writings on **separate individuals** (nos. 17 and 31). Such is the text dedicated to the life and works of Fanny Blunt, spouse to a long-term, outstanding British Consul in the Balkans during the second half of the 19th c. , and herself a Consul's daughter, bred and born in the Osmanic Empire. On the basis of published and unpublished sources, the author depicts the everyday life of a diplomatic wife in the Later Osmanic Empire. She also sheds light also on the role of Lady Blunt as an intermediary for her husband, and her assistance in strenghtening and widening his ties to diplomats and local peoples and elites. Todorova also tells of the personality and writings of the adventurer Osman Bey – Frederick Millingen, who has left a trace in Balkan history without having been hitherto the subject of historic research.

Olga Todorova has authored 42 items in the directory *Who Is Who Among Bulgarians From the 15th c. to the 17th c.* which is a remarkably useful publication both for specialists and the general public. She is on the editorial board of the renowned journal *Bulgarian Historical Review*. She is also the author of two parts of the collective work *History of the Bulgarians*, Sofia, 2004. Her output includes 6 reviews in Bulgarian academic periodicals of new foreign publications, as well as numerous prefaces to academic publications. She is also collector and editor of 7 academic publications of repute.

The long list of Bulgarian and foreign authors who cite Todorova is a testimony of the authority which she enjoys among her peers. The respect she commands is seen in more than 10 international collective academic projects with her participation. More than 10 are her participations in national and international academic fora. She has been academic consultant in one successful doctorate. Her teaching experience after 2000 includes one 60-hour lecture course, one 60-hour masters course and one 90-hour bachelor's course in St. Kliment Okhridski University of Sofia. Todorova garners the necessary number of points for a professorship.

On the basis of the AM assessment of Olga Todorova's academic activity, I gladly recommend that she be awarded the title of Professor.

Sofia, 10.04.2022

Reviewer:

Prof. Nadia Danova D.Sc. (History)