

## R E P O R T

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BAS

Subject: Competition for the academic position of 'professor' in the professional field 2.2. History and Archeology, specialty "History of Bulgaria" (Social History, 15th-18th century) - for the needs of the section "Bulgarians, the Ottoman Empire and Europe", Institute of Historical Studies at BAS, published in the "State Gazette" - issue. 111, December 31, 2021.

Associate Professor Olga Todorova Todorova, PhD, is the only candidate who has submitted documents for the competition announced by the Institute for Historical Studies. She has lawfully, correctly and precisely applied all the necessary documents and materials required by the Law on the Development of Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria. Assoc. Prof. O. Todorova participated in the competition with a monograph, which is a habilitation thesis, and 30 studies and articles published in renowned scientific journals in the country and abroad. From the attached references and tables, it is evident that the works of Assoc. Prof. Todorova collectively meet the national scientometric requirements. The publications and other scientific and teaching activities with which the candidate participates in the competition were published and carried out after she took the academic position of "Associate Professor". Everything presented so far allows me to proceed to the analysis of the works and materials of the competition.

Olga Todorova is a graduate of the Faculty of History of Sofia University (1977-1981), and in the period 1983-1986 she is a graduate student / doctoral student at the Institute of History, where she defended a dissertation on *The Orthodox Church and the Bulgarian People in the 15th to Third Quarter of the 18th Century* (1987). Her entire subsequent scientific career has been connected with the Institute, successively passing through all the steps of the scientific hierarchy from researcher (1987) to associate professor (1999). From 2008 to the present, she has been elected without interruption as a member of the Scientific Council, and between 2008 and 2012 she was its Deputy Chairwoman. For more than ten years she has been trusted to be the head of the section "Bulgarians, the Ottoman Empire and Europe". This is an indisputable indicator of the respect she enjoys among the members of the Section and in the Institute. After 2000, she gave three courses of lectures at Sofia University. She specialized successively in Moscow (1989-1990), Cambridge (1995) and Istanbul (1999), which significantly contributed to her formation and growth as a scientist. So far, she has authored three books and co-authored three more.

Over the years, as a member of the section "Bulgarians, the Ottoman Empire and Europe" I have had the opportunity to closely monitor the scientific and organizational work of Assoc. Prof. O. Todorova. "On the move" I got acquainted with her main works, in which she shows a very good knowledge of historical facts, available documents and scientific literature, as well as an in-depth interpretation. A characteristic manner in the work of the author of the peer-reviewed works is to take a critical look at each socio-cultural problem she considers, to look for the roots and causes of its appearance, nature and development, to analyse them comprehensively and thoroughly. A distinctive feature of her research work is not to serve well-established theories in scientific circles and in public space, but to subject them to thorough analysis and to fight for overcoming those that do not correspond to the data in the sources and documents of the era. Tolerant of other people's opinions, O. Todorova has the quality to be independent, consistent and to firmly uphold her views and beliefs, which are usually backed by solid scientific arguments.

It is difficult in this short statement to cover and present in a few words the great variety of topics and plots in the works proposed for review. However, it should be noted that Assoc. Prof. O. Todorova began her research with a study of the history of the Bulgarian Orthodox Church and culture during the early centuries of Ottoman rule, which ended with the defence of a doctoral dissertation, followed by publication of the book *Orthodox Church and the Bulgarians in the 15th – 18th centuries*. Sofia, 1997. The merits of this work are eloquently shown by its numerous citations by authoritative scholars at home and abroad (see Reference to the citations..., pp. 2-13). The author's interest in the topic is not interrupted by the published monograph, but is expanded and deepened (see: № 7, 9, 10, 16, 18, 20, 21 from the list of publications). At the same time, she works in other areas of social history: interethnic and interfaith relations, history of women, marriage, family and children in the Balkans in the 15th - 18th centuries (see: № 3, 4, 5, 6, 16, 17). This new stage in the scientific work of Assoc. Prof. O. Todorova is realized through the publication of her second major monographic study (*Women from the Central Balkans during the Ottoman era, XV-XVII centuries*. Sofia, 2004), which also enjoys great interest among specialists (see Reference to citations..., pp. 13-17). Thus, the research fields on which Assoc. Prof. Todorova is working cover ever wider areas of social relations and structures in the Bulgarian lands during the "classical period" of the Ottoman era.

Assoc. Prof. O. Todorova has an innate and carefully cultivated sense to discover less researched, but current and socially significant topics for science, which quickly attract the attention of both specialists and the wider cultural community. This finding fully applies to the topic of domestic slavery and slavery in Ottoman Rumelia. A book with the same title is presented as a habilitation thesis in the current competition (Sofia, Gutenberg Publishing House, 2021, 444 pages). For this large-scale work in terms of volume and

scope of the affected issues, it should be said that it follows the classical historiographical model and is based on an impressive number of Ottoman, Bulgarian, Balkan, Slavic and Western European sources of various origins and genres, as well as on numerous Bulgarian and foreign scientific literature (the bibliography of the book contains 594 titles in Bulgarian, English, French, Russian, Serbo-Croatian, Turkish and Greek). However, the documents from the Qadi registers in Sofia, Ruse and Vidin are definitely leading in the research.

The chronological scope of the study is impressive, spanning a very long temporal period: from the Ottoman conquest of the Balkans in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries to the end of the nineteenth century. Thus, the author traces in practice three different historical epochs from the existence of slaves in Ottoman Rumelia - the Late Middle Ages, the Early Pre-Modern Times and the Bulgarian Revival. This fact alone is enough to show the scale of the research presented by Assoc. Prof. Todorova in the competition.

The author's professional approach is also evident in the various issues addressed in the book. She is not content to trace the presence of domestic slaves and slaveholders in Rumelia, but seeks an explanation for many other problems related to their social roles. Among them are the reasons that gave rise to the slave institution in early Islamic societies and countries, the ways of recruiting slaves in the Ottoman Empire over the centuries and the specific conditions in which they lived, their integration and disintegration in their new social conditions. The issues of the crimes committed by slaves and the punishments imposed on them by the masters and the society were not left out either. The rich erudition and fine sense of detail allow Assoc. Prof. Todorova to reveal to the reader intriguing paintings, variegated with specific faces and exciting human destinies. The author relativizes the object of her research, placing it in a comparative plan with similar practices in the Mediterranean world. In this way she successfully reveals it to the reader in the real dimensions of its time and space.

For easily understandable reasons, I was particularly interested in the Epilogue, which presents and analyses slavery in the Ottoman Empire in the 19th century and the attitude of the Bulgarian Revival to this painful social phenomenon. After the publication of the book, this particular text gained wider public distribution and provoked mixed reactions among the readership. However, I must immediately emphasize that from a purely scientific point of view in these pages also Assoc. Prof. Todorova makes significant contributions, revealing not only the decline of the slave institution, but also analyzing the presence, metamorphoses and various meanings of the term "slavery" in political and the social culture of the Bulgarians from the end of the 19th to the first years of the 21st century.

No product of human hands can be completely perfect. However, the weaknesses in the work of Assoc. Prof. Todorova are not related to

shortcomings in the research methods she uses or in the nature of the analysis and the style of her presentation, but in the incompleteness of the source base, which can always be supplemented and expanded. I believe that she will continue her work in this direction as soon as possible. However, I would be surprised if in the near future in Bulgarian historiography such an in-depth study on the subject appears, written by another author.

The published works of Assoc. Prof. Todorova contain indisputable and significant contributions in the field of socio-cultural history of the Bulgarian people for the period 15th-19th century. They present the author to the readership as an established scientist with a noticeable and lasting presence in scientific life at home and abroad.

The above analysis of the scientific papers, documents and references participating in the competition allow me to vote with full conviction and without hesitation for the award of Olga Todorova Todorova to the academic position of "professor" in professional field 2.2. History and archaeology, specialty "History of Bulgaria" (Social History, 15th-18th century) for the needs of the section "Bulgarians, the Ottoman Empire and Europe".

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Signature: .....  
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