

БЪЛГАРСКА АКАДЕМИЯ НА НАУКИТЕ ИНСТИТУТ ЗА ИСТОРИЧЕСКИ ИЗСЛЕДВАНИЯ	
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REPORT

by Prof. Dr. Yordanka Gesheva, Institute for Historical Studies at BAS

for the presented works of Assoc. Professor Dr. Stefka Parveva for participation in a competition for the academic position of Professor in professional direction 2.2 History and Archaeology, scientific specialty "History of Bulgaria" (Agrarian Economy and Society in the XVII-XVIII centuries) for the needs of the section " The Bulgarians, the Ottoman Empire and Europe", announced in the State Gazette, no. 30 from 15.04. 2022

Assoc. Professor Dr. Stefka Parveva is the only candidate in the announced in no. 30/15.04. 2022 of the "State Gazette" competition for a Professor for the needs of the "Bulgarians, Ottoman Empire and Europe" section. The candidate meets all the requirements for occupying the relevant academic position. The tables for scientometric indicators completed by her cover the conditions for publications, citations, participation in projects. The candidate was the supervisor of a successfully defended Ph.D. student at the Institute for Historical Studies. In the period from 1994 to 2021, Associate Professor Parveva led a series of university lecture courses at Shumen University and Sofia University on problems of ethno-cultural processes in the Balkans between the 16th and 20th centuries, the history of the Bulgarian lands during the specified period, as well as on problems of the rural communities of the Balkans from the 16th - 18th centuries. She participated in several international projects funded by various institutions.

The main research with which Assoc. Prof. Dr. Parveva participated in the competition is the monograph: **Wealth and Poverty in the Rural Communities in the Province of Rumeli in the 17th – 18th Century. Research and Documents, Sofia, 2022, 568 p.** Prof. Marin Drinov Publishing House of Bulgarian Academy of Sciences.

The monograph proposed for review consists of two parts. The first of them is a study that is divided into three chapters. The second part of the book includes a preface and translations of 130 inheritance inventories of deceased villagers. The publication has a terminological and geographical dictionary, as well as lists of sources and literature used, as well as a summary in English.

The monograph was built on the basis of newly discovered, translated and brought into academic circulation Ottoman Turkish sources, kept at the archival collections of the Oriental Department of the National Library "St. St. Cyril and Methodius" and the Ottoman Archives in Istanbul. Based on the inheritance inventories of individuals of different professional groups among the rural population, bearers of the typical features of the respective group, the author examines professional and property categories of peasants in the province of Rumelia in the 17th - 18th centuries. For this purpose, not only the specified tereke defters, but also all other sources relevant to the study were used. Offering relatively rich information, these documents allow to restore not only the property status of individual layers of peasants - men and women, Christians and Muslims, but also to trace moments of their personal stories, to show their family and professional relationships, their social status.

The first chapter of the book is devoted to the criteria for determining the property status of the villagers. The research task is related to establishing the main criteria that the Ottoman government used to categorize its subjects according to their property capabilities. An attempt was made to systematize the standards of wealth and poverty of the rural population, reflected in the legislative acts and in the tax registers. Assoc. Prof. Dr. Parveva's conclusion is that the Ottoman authorities sought to align their policies with the existing realities related to property and social differentiation among the Sultan's subjects.

The second chapter reflects the construction of property and social profiles of main groups among the peasants having *reaya* status. The inheritance inventories of deceased villagers

from the *kaza* of Sofia, Ruse and Vidin represent the main source base on which Assoc. Professor Parveva built the reconstructions of the property and social portraits of these villagers. The efforts of the author to create specific criteria for assessing the level of poverty and the relative well-to-do status of the deceased peasants in their capacity as legators should be noted. With this aim, the theoretical structure and content of the supposed heritage of the so-called basic peasant - a main figure in the agrarian system of the Ottoman Empire - was built. Attention is paid to his home, family, farm, property.

An important object of research is the group of well-to-do villagers. The analyzed sources show that these were people who benefited from all the positive conditions, prerequisites and incentives of the Ottoman agrarian system. These prerequisites allow a certain layer of peasant farmers to organize the micro-economy of their households, which reproduces every year an agrarian surplus in quantities exceeding the needs for the existence of the farm, for feeding the family and for covering the money rent. This surplus realized on the market could be turned into a new investment, accumulated as wealth or transformed into usurious capital.

The next object of study is the group of poor and landless peasants. Special attention is paid to the hired workers and sharecroppers in the *çiftlik*s with their specific and very different property characteristics. Their inheritance inventories show that, in accordance with their property status, they could own household items, large and small livestock, agricultural implements, sometimes vineyards, meadows. It should also be emphasized that, based on the documents presented in the book, the quantitative parameters of the wealth and poverty of the Rumelian peasants were studied; the economic activity of the population, the interest in it is shown.

The third chapter is devoted to the study of some specific professional groups, whose representatives are part of the rural community, but have more specific functions. These are itinerant and settled traders, as well as the related carriers of goods and passengers - *kiracis*

and *arabacis* (wagoners). They participated in the trade exchange between the city and the village, and also between different regions of the empire in the 17th–18th centuries. On the basis of individual cases, features of their family and property status have been reconstructed. The type and quantity of the goods sold by them were studied, which outlines the range of items sought by rural households. There is also space for other essential elements of the transport system: roads and road infrastructure - inns and caravanserais. The author pays special attention to the issue of crime and violence on the roads of the empire, as well as to the measures taken by the authorities to ensure the security of movement of merchants and ordinary people.

The second part of the book includes documents translated by Associate Professor Parveva. These are inheritance inventories, which were registered in the *kadi* protocol books (*sicils*) preserved over the centuries, kept at the courts of the *kaza* of Sofia, Ruse and Vidin in the 17th-18th centuries. They represent an inventory and valuation of the property of a deceased person, which are registered in the kadi protocol books - sicils. This type of documents have a high informational value and therefore, as the author notes, they have long attracted the attention of researchers. The collection of “*Sicils*” is kept at the Oriental Department of the “Sts. Cyril and Methodius” National Library in Sofia. The translations of the inheritance inventories are preceded by a preface that reviews the structure and content of this type of source. Statistics of the inheritance inventories by *kaza*, gender, social and property status, religion of the deceased villagers are presented in tabular form and in the commentary. They fall into this category because of the desire of their relatives to divide the property remaining after the death of the testator according to the provisions of Muslim inheritance law.

I especially note the closing words of the monograph. This is not the traditional conclusion for the case. Here it is devoted to the study of another rare but very interesting feature of the portrait of the peasants. This is the attitude of respect and reverence towards the book in its

quality of possession or gift by a largely illiterate rural society. Still, I want to note that without the traditional conclusion for such a serious research work, the monograph seems unfinished. The source material used in the book is new, interesting, but difficult to work with. So, it would be good, if not at the end, then at least at the end of the individual chapters, to have conclusions in the form of an analysis of the included material. The author gives a few lines of closing words to each problem under consideration, but in my opinion, this is not enough for a comprehensive understanding and analysis of the huge specific and very interesting material.

The fact that, on the basis of the translated and presented documents, the described and researched property, the author makes an effort to build the categories of rich and poor among the rural communities in Rumelia deserves an undeniably positive assessment. By means of tables and numerical expression, the property and social differentiation among the Sultan's subjects is shown. The profile of the so-called basic peasant is outlined. It was on the basis of the characteristics of its production and property that the Ottoman authorities constructed the system of taxation of the individual categories of the rural population. An attempt has been made to show the quantitative elements of the categories of wealth and poverty in the *kaza* of Sofia, Ruse and Vidin in the period under study.

I note with satisfaction the very good historiographical awareness of Associate Prof. Parveva. The use of such a broad historiographical basis enables the problems considered by the author to be presented competently and up-to-date, to see what the state of the issues being developed is, what is the literature on the individual issues, to see the errors accumulated over time, as well as the corrections, to highlight the novelties.

Based on the positive assessment of the research and scientific qualities of the presented studies, articles and monograph of Assoc. Prof. Dr. Stefka Parveva, I believe that she meets all the requirements and conditions for acquiring the academic position of "Professor".

Therefore, I allow myself to suggest to the respected members of the scientific jury, as well as to the Scientific Council of the Institute for Historical Studies at the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, to support the academic growth of Assoc. Prof. Dr. Stefka Parveva, for which I will also vote.

Sofia,

August 11, 2022

Assessor:

Prof. Dr. Yordanka Gesheva