

БЪЛГАРСКА АКАДЕМИЯ НА НАУКИТЕ ИНСТИТУТ ЗА ИСТОРИЧЕСКИ ИЗСЛЕДВАНИЯ	
Изходящ №	дата 201 г.
Входящ № ... 500	дата ... 16.08. 2022 г.
София 1113, бул. Шипченски проход № 52, бл. 17 тел.: 02/ 979 29 98 ; факс: 02/ 870 21 91	

REPORT

of Prof. D.Sc. Tamara Stoilova
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for the works of Assoc. Prof. Dr. Stefka Parveva,
a candidate for the announced competition for a professor
at the Institute for Historical Studies at the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences,
professional direction 2.2. History and Archeology

Dr. Stefka Parveva is an associate professor at the Institute for Historical Studies, section "Bulgarians, the Ottoman Empire and Europe". She leads and participates in research projects of the Institute for Historical Studies and other scientific institutions in the country and abroad. Her scientific research covers a significant period of the history of the Ottoman Empire and the Bulgarian lands, includes topics from the daily life and duties of the rural communities in Rumelia, the urban population in peacetime and in wartime. Of special interest are studies on religious and cultural relationships between ethnic and religious groups in Ottoman society in the Balkans.

For the period 2009-2022, Assoc. Prof. Parveva has published two monographs and a Collection of articles (it is published in English in Istanbul and has two editions). The list of publications with which Stefka Parveva participated in the competition for professorship includes a monograph and 17 studies and articles in Bulgarian and English (some of the ones published in Bulgarian also have an English version). Each of the studies and articles, as well as the monographs published in 2009-2022, have a contributing character and are a step towards the implementation of the monographic study "Wealth and poverty in the rural communities in the province of Rumeli in the 17th - 18th centuries. Research and Documents".

Assoc. Prof. Parveva notes the gradual shaping of the monograph's problematics as an idea and realization of its interrelated, but specific parts. The in-depth work in the archives of Sofia and Istanbul is paying off. The research part contains an introduction and three chapters. The second part is entirely documentary. The nature of the documentary material, the purpose of the research, the chronological scope are presented in the introduction.

The first chapter examines the standards of wealth and poverty of Ottoman subjects according to legislative acts and tax registrations and according to the chronicle of the Seres priest Papsinadinos. The Ottoman authorities' criteria for categorizing their subjects and policies for determining tax burdens are examined. The specifics in the text of Papsinadinos' chronicle Stefka Parveva notes as corresponding to historically reliable processes and giving an idea of the perceptions that the Sultan's subjects have regarding wealth and poverty.

The second chapter is devoted to the main groups of peasants who had *reaya* status. A major place is given to the basic peasant, who was a major figure in the agrarian system of the Ottoman Empire. The source base (inheritance inventories of deceased villagers of the *kaza* of Sofia, Rousse and Vidin) is presented, which allows to achieve the aim of the study: "to outline the profile and construct the presumed inheritance of this basic villager in the context of the

overall configuration of a home, family and economy, emphasizing those elements that were key to daily life – appearance, clothing, construction and layout of the dwelling, furniture, livestock owned, agricultural implements, land, crops fertility, quantity of grain harvested by one *raiye* *çiftlik*, annual distribution of family income, etc."

Stefka Parveva consistently and in detail traces the factors on which the economic life and livelihood of the rural family depend. The main role is played by the owned working cattle and the domestic animals needed for food, for clothing, for the market. Closely related to the working livestock and an essential part of the basic peasant's economy are the agricultural implements. Particularly valuable information is offered by the tables for livestock prices and agricultural inventory, which not only specify the data, but are also a basis for their visual specification and comparison.

A third main element of the "*çift-hane*" system, in which the whole farm is included, are the peasant's fields, cultivation, sowing, harvest, i.e. the complete *raiye* *çiftlik* system. It should be noted the continuity in the research of Assoc. Prof. Parveva, the gradual expansion of the circle of problems that outline the place and role of the basic peasant in the "*çift-hane*" system.

The results of the previous research give the author grounds for conclusions "relating to the factors that created opportunities and environment for the formation of the group of wealthy peasants with the *reaya* status". The next part of the study is dedicated to them. The preconditions for the provision of rural producers have been examined. While the character of the farm is predetermined by nature, success is the result of the character of the farmers, whom Papasinadinos quite rightly refers to as "industrious, far-sighted, active, resourceful and prudent".

The changing economic and military-political conjuncture, unfavorable climatic conditions and the resulting poor harvest, deadly epidemics are discussed in the monograph as factors that determine the poverty of rural communities and individual members of them. There is another category of peasants employed in *çiftlik*s – hired workers and sharecroppers.

Of special interest is the content of the third chapter, which examines several professional groups among the rural population – merchants, *kiracis* and *arabacis*, for the emergence of which there are suitable conditions: the formation of independent village markets along the coast of water basins and at crossroads. The task of this study is to draw an approximate portrait of the rural traders, the *kiracis* and the *arabacis* (Christians and Muslims), to present their family and property status. The analyzed examples reveal a rich picture of commercial relationships, the assortment and volume of goods, the organization of their transportation. The examples and generalizations about crediting and lending to rural traders are interesting. The role of the *kiracis* and *arabacis* in carrying out commercial traffic in the empire is assessed. Their social portrait is outlined, their professional realization on the border between the city and the village.

As a condition for the successful and rapid movement of goods and passengers within the boundaries of the Ottoman Empire, including the Balkans, land roads, their poor condition and special attention to their maintenance during wartime are considered. At the same time, care is taken for the construction and maintenance of bridges, inns, caravanserais. An interesting and important element in the history of the road network is the construction of imarets, mosques, masjids, tekkes, etc., carried out with the financial resources of sultanic and private waqfs. People subsequently settled around these complexes and new settlements gradually emerged, some of which grew as urban centers tied to administrative functions.

A complete picture of commercial activities is impossible without presenting the means and ways of transporting goods. Stefka Parveva pays special attention to the formation and

functioning of caravans, travel, security and rest, inns and caravanserais. The main source in this case are the descriptions of European travelers. Another is the nature of the documents which reveal the crime on the uncertain roads of the empire and the measures of the authorities against it.

I must especially note the final part of the study – about the villagers and the book. Muslim villagers who are known to own books are briefly presented, but there is no information about their donating behavior. Christian villagers are donors to public libraries and participate in the creation of the church book fund. Table 18 is particularly valuable as an illustration of the overall process of creation and preservation of books in the 16th – 17th centuries.

The second part of the monograph is entirely documentary. It contains 130 inheritance inventories of peasants from the *reaya* category ("Sicils" collection, Oriental Department of the National Library "Sts. Cyril and Methodius"), translated by Stefka Parveva from Ottoman Turkish into Bulgarian. An exceptional work, useful for specialists, interesting for a wider range of readers as well, which includes information about the daily history of the Bulgarian lands under Ottoman rule.

The monograph contains a terminological dictionary, a geographical dictionary, a list of the used sources and the literature on the developed problems. A summary in English presents the main questions to which the study is devoted.

The indisputable scientific contributions in the presented research, the long list of noticed citations, the detailed and reasoned "Self-reference of the scientific contributions", the teaching activity, as well as the coverage of the minimum points required by NACID for the academic position "professor" are grounds for my offer to the Scientific Council of the Institute for Historical Studies at the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences to elect associate professor Dr. Stefka Parveva as a professor at the Institute, section "Bulgarians, the Ottoman Empire and Europe".

August 15, 2022, Sofia