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## R E V I E W

By: *Assoc. Prof. Gergana Yordanova Georgieva, PhD*  
*Scientific field: 2.2. History and Archeology (History of Bulgaria)*  
*St. Cyril and St. Methodius University of Veliko Turnovo*

Subject: *Competition for a Professor in Scientific field 2.2 History and Archaeology, Scientific specialty "History of Bulgaria" (Agrarian Economy and Society in the 17<sup>th</sup> – 18<sup>th</sup> Centuries) at the Institute for Historical Studies, Bulgarian Academy of Sciences*

### 1. Information about the Competition

The competition was announced for the needs of the Department “Bulgarians, the Ottoman Empire and Europe” at the Institute for Historical Studies, Bulgarian Academy of Sciences in Darzhaven Vestnik, no. 30 of 04/15/2022. I am participant of the scientific jury for the competition according to the Director’s Order No. 35 / 06/21/2022.

### 2. Information about the Candidate in the Competition

The only candidate in the competition for “Professor” is Assoc. Prof. Stefka Georgieva Parveva, PhD – Master in History at St. Cyril and St. Methodius University of Veliko Turnovo (1982) and PhD in History (1989). She worked as a Research Assistant at the Institute for Historical Studies, Bulgarian Academy of Sciences from 1988 until today, and since 2007 she has held the position of Associate Professor at the aforementioned institute. Since 2012, she has been a member of the Scientific Council of the Institute for Historical Studies and since 2021 she has been the Institute’s scientific secretary. From 2008 to 2021, she was a member of the editorial board of the Bulgarian Historical Review. Assoc. Prof. Stefka Parveva is a member of the Bulgarian Society for the Study of the Eighteenth Century. She has specialized in prestigious scientific institutions abroad such as the International Society for the Study of the Eighteenth Century in Naples (1992), the Laboratory of Demographic History in Paris (1992), the Rikkyo University in Tokyo (1999) and the Skilliter Center for Ottoman Studies, University of Cambridge (2000). Thanks to international and Bulgarian projects, she regularly works in the Ottoman Archives in Istanbul (Başbakanlık Osmanlı Arşivi).

### 3. Fulfillment of the Requirements for Occupying the Academic Position

The table of the quantitative requirements for occupying the academic position “Professor” at the Institute for Historical Studies, BAS shows that according to all criteria, Assoc. Prof. Stefka

Parveva fulfills the requirements. Instead of the minimum 590 points, established according to the Regulations of the BAS, she presents 775 points.

#### **4. General Characteristics of the Presented Scientific Publications**

The scientific results obtained in the studies of Assoc. Prof. S. Parveva, presented for her participation in the competition for “Professor” at the Institute for Historical Studies, BAS can be summarized in the following sections:

##### **A/ Agrarian Space and Agrarian Economy:**

The research reconstructs the production capacity of the average peasant chiftlik and the profile of the average peasant. Thanks to these two main criteria, a basis for further developments in the field of agrarian economy is created. The agrarian strategies in the microeconomics of the different types of villages – plain, mountainous and semi-mountainous, are clarified, taking into account the dependence on environmental conditions and other factors for their development. Different strategies for survival or market realization of the production of the different types of villages are outlined. While the environment has been reconstructed, the characteristics of the people in the rural area are outlined as well – the notions of wealth and poverty, the intensified processes of impoverishment among the rural population in the 17<sup>th</sup> and the first decades of the 18<sup>th</sup> centuries – their causes and mechanisms. Some specific categories of agricultural workers are examined, such as: the wage earners (*ratais*, *ortakchis* and *kesimdzhis*) with their work commitments, salary structure, contractual relations with the land owners. The other roles of the peasants are introduced: traders, carriers of goods and people, and etc (No. 7a, No. 7b, No. 8, No. 11, No. 13, No. 14, No. 16, No. 17);

##### **B/ Study of Social, Religious and Professional Groups:**

In this thematic framework, I will again mention as dominant the profiles of the peasants – the basic peasant whom the authorities take into account when building the production structure and taxation in the provinces; the *kiradzhis* and *arabadzhis* – transporters of goods and people, village traders who participate in regional and town-to-village trade, and finally the hired workers (*ratais* or *ortakchis*). Their strategies for organizing their specific activities, the peculiarities of their family and property status, commercial practices of association and lending are investigated. However, other categories are added. For example, the representatives of the Muslim and Christian clergy who became part of the urban or rural communities. Their spreading in the urban centers of the Balkans, economic activities and property status were tracked. Thirdly, the research outlines the behavior of two groups of mobile population in the Ottoman Empire – merchants and pilgrims.

The portrait of the traveling merchants, their family and property status, and their economic activities is outlined. The way of organizing their trips, the roads, the places where they stay has been traced. Special attention is paid to the mechanisms for gathering and disseminating information used by representatives of both groups. The importance of the transmitted information about the economic activity and cultural development of the various ethnic and religious communities in the Ottoman society is emphasized (No. 3, No. 4, No. 7a, No. 7b, No. 12, No. 15a, No. 15b, No. 16, No. 17);

#### C/ Military Conflicts and Impact on the Society:

Certain moments of tense daily life of Christians during war are highlighted through the specific cases of the cities of Nicopolis and Silistra. Changes in the status and tax obligations of Christians engaged in the defense and maintenance of fortresses and participating in the fleet are analyzed. In an innovative way, the mechanisms for preserving the memory of traumatic events are studied – the ways of creating, preserving and transmitting written information about the war through official archives of state institutions and private archives of citizens and villagers (No. 2; No. 6, No. 10a, No. 10b);

#### D/ Characteristics and Analysis of Individual Types of Sources:

The structure and content of the documents are presented, the reasons for their compilation are analyzed and the new opportunities they provide for the study of unexplored topics and problems are outlined. Particularly interesting are the detailed land inventories of villages in two regions – the region of Odrin (Edirne) and Southwest Peloponnese from the end of the 17<sup>th</sup> – beginning of the 18<sup>th</sup> c. Assoc. Prof. S. Parveva draws attention of the historical community to some unknown documents, which are excellent source for researching the agrarian economy of the Balkans thanks to the massive and detailed information they include. On the other hand, working with the inheritance inventories from the Ottoman judicial registers, she demonstrates that even well-known documents can provide new research opportunities thanks to a carefully chosen approach and analysis (No. 5, No. 9);

#### - Encyclopedic article on the region of Deliorman:

It is worth mentioning also the article on the geographical area of Deliorman, now called Ludogorie, which was published in the third edition of the prestigious Encyclopedia of Islam. The concise but informative description of the geographical features and history of the region, the carefully selected bibliography are a valuable source and necessary starting point for all specialists interested in Islam and Islamic communities around the world (No. 18).

In the competition for professor, Assoc. Prof. Stefka Parveva presents a monograph “Wealth

and Poverty among the Rural Communities in the Province of Rumelia in the 17<sup>th</sup> – 18<sup>th</sup> Centuries. Research and Documents”. Sofia: Publishing House of BAS “Prof. Marin Drinov”, 2022, 567 pages, ISBN 978-619-245-187-5. The monograph is a continuation of her work on the Balkan agrarian economy, and in this study she develops completely new aspects of the subject. The monograph demonstrates the in-depth knowledge that Associate Professor Parveva has in her scientific field. While her previous book centered on the cultivation of agrarian space, in this study she focuses on “gallery of images” (p. 13) that occupy that space – the average peasant, the peasant hirelings, the village merchants, the transporters of goods and people. Thanks to the rich and varied source material, she creates a vivid picture of rural society and its everyday life. Specific parameters for wealth and poverty are set, standardized levels are constructed, to serve as a starting point for future studies of the agrarian economy. At the same time, the Christian moral code that people of the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries followed and which determined their daily life and mentality is presented.

The approach of the study brings together processing of a large database provided by the hereditary inventories, with deployment of individual specific cases (case studies), which in this research are presented in the form of portraits of villagers from the analyzed categories. The inclusion of the ethnographic records of the nineteenth-century customary law and court cases from the kadi registers brings the study close to historical anthropology.

The huge amount of sources used in the study is distinguished by variety and gives detail to the work. First of all, I would like to mention the 130 inheritance inventories of deceased villagers selected from the court registers of Vidin, Ruse and Sofia. Thanks to the in-depth knowledge of the sources (publications No. 5, No. 9), Assoc. Prof. Parveva manages to extract the maximum amount of useful information from them and make completely new interpretations. However, the analysis does not stop there – the voluminous information from the hereditary inventories is combined with travelogues, kadi documents, marginal notes, ethnographic records that give density to the historical narrative. Therefore, Stefka Parveva's monograph is an emblematic example that can be used by young historians as a model for historical research in the field of social history.

Well thought out, carefully and precisely prepared, the monograph has all the necessary scientific apparatus for such a study. Detailed lists of sources and literature are included. Terminological and geographical glossaries have been added, which make it easier to work with the text. The detailed abstract in English allows international scholars to access the research and expands its audience. As an additional bonus for professional readers is the second part, which presents in a complete form, conveniently arranged in tables, 130 *terekkes* from the courts of Vidin, Sofia and Ruse. Assoc. Prof. Parveva enables all researchers, even non-specialists, to use the vast

accumulated material that has been translated and provided by her.

The study is distinguished both by the exceptional detail of the analysis and by the scale of the period under study. In the best traditions of social history, geographical and chronological frameworks delineate some broad parameters that allow us to trace the trends in the development of the Ottoman Balkans in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries.

### **5. Assessment of the Teaching and Educational Activity**

Along with her scientific work at the Institute for Historical Studies, Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, Assoc. Prof. Stefka Parveva maintains her teaching activity by leading university lecture courses for Bachelors and Masters at the “Episkop Konstantin Preslavski” Shumen University (theme “History of the Bulgarian Lands in the 15<sup>th</sup> – 17<sup>th</sup> C.” (1994-1997) and Sofia University “St. Kliment Ohridski”, where her topics are diverse: “Ethnocultural processes and realities of the Balkans 14<sup>th</sup> – 20<sup>th</sup> C.” (major “Turkology”, 1998-2001); “Historical demography” (major “Ethnology”, 2000-2008) and “Wealth and poverty among rural communities in the Balkans in the 16<sup>th</sup> – mid-18<sup>th</sup> C.” (Master program “Christianity and Islam in the Balkans”, 2016/17 - 2020 /21).

In addition, Assoc. Prof. Stefka Parveva has delivered specialized academic and public lectures at foreign universities and various Bulgarian scientific institutions: the European University Institute in Florence (1994); the University of Tokyo (1999); Skilliter Center for Ottoman Studies, University of Cambridge (2000); the American Research Institute in Sofia (2010 and 2011); Association of Tour Guides in Bulgaria (2011); Student Club 28 of Sofia University “St. Kliment Ohridski” (2012) and the Center for Culture and Debate “The Red House” (2012).

Assoc. Prof. Stefka Parveva is the supervisor of one successfully graduated full-time doctoral student – Stefan Hristov Dimitrov, topic of dissertation: “Population and Settlements in Sakar Mountain and Its Adjacent Region in the 15<sup>th</sup> – 16<sup>th</sup> C.” (2013).

### **6. Assessment of the Scientific Contributions**

The scientific contributions of the publications of Assoc. Prof. Stefka Parveva can be formulated in the following directions:

1/ Assoc. Prof. Stefka Parveva is a recognized specialist on the subject of the Balkan agrarian economy during the Ottoman period. In her monographs and articles, she builds a model of research on agrarian structures – land ownership and land use, profile of the private farm, production capacity, regional and local features, etc. Within this framework, she successfully weaves different types of documents – inheritance inventories, local chronicles, travelogues,

folklore, ethnographic records of customary law that illuminate various aspects of rural economy and everyday life. Thanks to this combination of information, a completely new reading and a more complete understanding of some well-known sources, such as the inheritance inventories in the judicial registers of Ottoman cities, is possible. In her model of work, the connection between history, economics and the geographical environment is evident – an approach that has proven its success in the international historiography.

2/ The main features of the agrarian economy of the settlements in Southwestern Peloponnese (kazas of Arkadia and Anavarin) in the first decades of the 18<sup>th</sup> century and region of Edirne have been studied in detail. The production capacity of the average peasant homestead has been reconstructed. The agrarian strategies and economic behavior of the population of different types of villages (in plain, mountainous, semi-mountainous and hilly areas) have been studied. The specific features of their micro economies are outlined, analyzed in the context of the particular ecological and economic environment. The profile of the “basic peasant” has been explored by drawing individual portraits and paying attention to personal history. Some specific professional groups have been studied – religious leaders, peasant traders, transporters of goods and people.

3/ As a contribution, it should be noted the enormous new source material that Assoc. Prof. Stefka Parveva provides in the form of tables, complete translations (*in extenso*) and a separate corpus of sources. Here I will also mention the hereditary inventories of deceased peasants – 130 items in her latest monograph “Wealth and Poverty among the Rural Communities in the Province of Rumelia in the 16<sup>th</sup> –18<sup>th</sup> Centuries. Research and Documents”, as well as the large-scale land registrations of the villages of Edirne region (1669/1670) and the kazas of Arcadia and Anavarin, Southwest Peloponnese (1716). Assoc. Prof. Parveva does not stop there, but makes a thorough analysis of the type of sources, their structure and possibilities, thus contributing to the development of source studies in Bulgaria.

4/ The reflection of the war in a social and economic aspect is studied. It is revealed how it directly affects people's lives and behavior; how they react to military actions, especially in the form of migrations and refugee flows; how the Ottoman power acts during war, e.g. the inclusion of Christians in repair and supply arrangements; what was the policy of the Ottoman state towards the Christian population after the end of the war, especially with regard to their tax status and military obligations.

## **7. Critical notes and recommendations**

I have no critical notes and recommendations to the candidate.

## **8. Conclusion**

The foregoing gives me reason to recommend to the Honorable Scientific Jury to support Assoc. Prof. Stefka Georgieva Parveva's application for the academic position of "Professor" in the Scientific Field 2.2 History and Archeology, scientific specialty "History of Bulgaria" (Agrarian Economy and Society in the 17<sup>th</sup> – 18<sup>th</sup> Centuries).

19/08/2022  
Veliko Tarnovo

Signature: .....  
/ Assoc. Prof. Gergana Georgieva, PhD /