

БЪЛГАРСКА АКАДЕМИЯ НА НАУКИТЕ ИНСТИТУТ ЗА ИСТОРИЧЕСКИ ИЗСЛЕДВАНИЯ	
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by Prof. Dr. Hab. Ilia G. Iliev in connection with the competition for the academic position of "Professor", announced in State Gazette No. 38 of 28.04.2023 for the needs of the "Medieval History" section at the Institute for Historical Studies at the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences

In the competition for the occupation of the academic position "professor" in professional field 2.2. History and archaeology, specialty "History of Bulgaria" (Italian sources for Bulgarian medieval history), only one candidate appeared - Associate Professor Dr. Penka Stiliyanova Danova. A committee from the Institute of Historical Studies at the BAS, which announced the competition, was tasked with checking the submitted documents and found that they were properly formed and completed and certified the candidate's right to appear in such a competition, as a result of which Associate Professor Danova was allowed to participate in the competition.

In 1980, Penka Danova graduated from the "Italian Philology" specialty at the Faculty of Classical and Modern Philology of the University of St. Kliment Ohridski". Later, he joined the Institute of Balkan Studies at the BAS as a researcher. He developed and successfully defended in 1997 a dissertation for obtaining the educational and scientific degree "Doctor" on the topic "The Balkan peoples under Ottoman rule in the works of Venetian diplomats and travelers (second half of the 15th - 16th centuries)". In 2011, she was elected as an associate professor in the "Cultural History of the Balkan Peoples" section at the Institute of Balkan Studies at the BAS. In 2020, Associate Professor Danova moved to work at the Institute for Historical Studies at the BAS, "Medieval History" section. Meanwhile, for years he participated in joint projects, publications and scientific conferences organized by colleagues from different sections of the Institute, together with professors from Sofia University and other higher schools in Bulgaria.

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At the competition for the academic position of "professor", announced for the needs of the "Medieval History" section at IIstI - BAS, Associate Professor Danova appeared with four monographs (one co-authored with Prof. Snezhanka Rakova) and nineteen studies and articles. One study was written jointly with Prof. Snezhanka Rakova (*Fonti italiane per la storia dei popoli balcanici tra Medioevo ed Età Moderna: edizioni e studi in Bulgaria*) and it is not clear from the publication how the work was divided between the two co-authors. Therefore, I will not consider this work (under No. 19* in the list attached to the competition documents).

As for the co-authored monograph (*Rakova, Sn., Danova, P. Benedetto Ramberti and Danielo Ludovizi - two Venetian envoys in Constantinople in 1534*. Plovdiv, 2016) (No. 2), Associate Professor Danova's participation in it is clearly indicated, which gives me reason to consider this monographic work as meeting the conditions for submission under this competition.

First, I will focus on all the other works of Associate Professor Danova, presented in appendices to the documents for the competition, a list of selected scientific production of the candidate, and then I will take a position on her habilitation thesis, which is placed under No. 1 in this list: *Bulgaria and the Bulgarians in Italian historiography (XIV–XVII centuries)*. – Sofia: Institute for Historical Studies, 2023.

The scientific production in question, consisting of 3 monographs and nineteen studies and articles) can be conditionally divided into four groups:

1. Travel writings - this includes the monographs *Giovanni Chiaromani and his journey from Vienna to Bursa in 1659*, S., 2017 (No. 2*) and *Benedetto Ramberti and Danielo Ludovisi - two Venetian envoys in Constantinople in 1534*. Plovdiv, 2016 (No. 3) (together with Prof. Snezhanka Rakova; Associate Professor Danova is the author of the introduction, research, translation and commentary to "Danielo Ludovizi and his final report on the mission in Constantinople of June 3, 1534", on pp. 193 – 282 in the edition). Of the studies and articles here can be counted as fully relevant: *The borders of Bulgaria according to Italian travelogues of the 16th century* (No. 10) and *Giovanni Battista De Burgo's Balkan routes of 1682: real or imagined travel?* (No. 23).

2. Chronicles/stories of Bulgaria and the Bulgarians - Here - in addition to the habilitation thesis of Associate Professor Danova, which will be discussed later, the monograph *Anonymous Chronicle of the Bulgarian Counts (end of the 17th century)*. S., 2014 also belongs, as well as the following studies and articles: *Two Italian chronicles about the Nicopolis battle of 1396* (No. 8); *Medieval Bulgarians in reference books and dictionaries from early modern Europe* (No. 9); *La Bulgaria e i Bulgari nell'opera di Giovanni Tarcagnota* (No. 11); *Bulgaria and the Bulgarians in Orazio Torcellini's "Short History of the World"* (1545–1599) (No. 13); *Did Franz-Xaver Peyachevic write a history of the Bulgarians?* (No. 14); *Le fonti della Cronaca Bulgari* (No. 16); *Medieval Bulgarian rulers in Antonino Pierozzi's Chronicle (1389–1459)* (No. 17) and *Giovanni Nicolò Doglioni's On Bulgaria and Its Rulers (1623)* (No. 23).

* All references to sequential numbers in parentheses to Assoc. Prof. Danova's publications refer to the corresponding numbering of her compositions from the appendices to the competition documentation, a list of selected compositions for participation in the competition.

3. Source studies and historiography - in this group I place the following works: *Bulgarian scientific studies (2010–2020) on issues related to the history of Italy and the Bulgarian-Italian contacts (XIV–XVIII centuries)* (No. 5); *Studi ed edizioni di fonti italiane per la storia bulgara in Bulgaria. Bilancio di due ventenni* (No. 15) and *Ivan D. Šišmanov: l'insegnamento e i primi studi di storia della letteratura italiana all'Università di Sofia* (No. 20).

4. In the last fourth group are the studies on economic and social history, although - here is the place to remind - all the other studies of Associate Professor Danova include abundant data, analyzes and observations on the life, economy, culture and customs of the lands inhabited by Bulgarians during the considered era. And yet, formally, the works fall into this category: *Everyday life in the ambassador's house according to Marino Cavalli's "Report" of 1550* (No. 7); *The will of the Venetian diplomat Marino Cavalli (1500–1573)* (No. 12) and *Le marchand dans les Balkans (XVe – XIXe siècles)* (No. 21).

Several general conclusions can easily be drawn from the classification made. First, Associate Professor Danova has been researching the writings in Italian and/or Latin during the Middle Ages and the Early Modern period for a long enough time, which literary heritage has some relation to the history of Bulgaria and the Bulgarians at that time and in a retrospective plan. Her main monographic studies, devoted to Italian works, are either the first publications of the texts from preserved manuscripts, or the first presentation in Bulgarian for the scientific community of medievalist historians. No less important is the systematic approach to the problems of provenance and historiography, with which Associate Professor Danova emerged as one of the researchers who contributed the most after the time of Iv. Sakazov, Iv. Duychev and J. Spisarevska for thickening our knowledge on the relations between Italy and the lands from the Italian "sphere of influence" during the last centuries of the Middle Ages in Europe (understood as chronological boundaries according to what Academician Ivan Duychev taught us) and the Bulgarians, respectively the Bulgarian lands during that era. This - it goes without saying - is the solid foundation on which colleague Danova has stepped when choosing a topic for her habilitation thesis, with which she participated in the competition for acquiring the academic position of "professor": *Bulgaria and the Bulgarians in Italian historiography (XIV - XVII century)*. S., 2023

This work represents the first comprehensive study of the historical writings preserved in the Italian language and relating to the history of Bulgaria and the Bulgarians. The exposition follows two different approaches that determine the content of the three chapters of the book - chronological, presented with chapters one and two, and thematic, to which the third chapter of the work is dedicated.

From the point of view of chronology, there are two relatively independent periods of origin and distribution of the Italian historical works of interest to us - early (XIV - XV centuries), when the main, albeit modest, source of information about Bulgarian history is the city, universal and monastery chronicles , and late (XVI century). Associate Professor Danova has rightly paid special attention in the first chapter to the three representatives of the famous Florentine Villani family and authors of city chronicles - Giovanni, Matteo and Filippo, as well as to the writings of Giovanni Cercambi and Buonacorso Pitti, providing information on events related to The Nicopolis battle of 1396. The monastery chronicle, written by the Augustinian monk Giacomo di Filippo Foresti from Bergamo, is also of interest.

In the sixteenth century, information about Bulgaria and the Bulgarians was found in Italian works on general history. Associate Professor Danova has analyzed four of them, with authors Marco Guazzo, Giovanni Tarcagnotta, Giovanni Nicolo Doglioni and Giovanni Botero. Not because their information is of primary importance, but because it has been widely read, revised and republished, and because "the names of all four are on the list of authors used by Mavro Orbini in The Kingdom of the Slavs." And let's not forget that the Russian translation and reworking of this work is one of the sources of Paisius' history."

We should also give due credit to the efforts that Associate Professor Danova makes to put order in the infinite variety of literary genres and "fashions" in baroque Italy and to present the main groups of works in which we should look for (and find) information about Bulgaria and the Bulgarians: regional historical works, educational literature, historical maps, reference books and dictionaries of a general nature.

As you can see, here I pay attention mainly to the contribution of Associate Professor Danova for the systematic presentation of a huge and genre-diverse source material, without going into the details of the historiographical analysis, the parallels drawn, the indicated primary sources and possible errors of the individual authors. I also pass over the author's efforts on interpretation and translation of many of the texts used, the first editions of which - both in the original and in translation into Bulgarian - are her personal work.

Another merit of the book is that it contains both a comparative analysis of the stored source data and a number of information presenting the general background against which interest in the "Bulgarian subject" appears (or rather is maintained) in the Apennines region. An evaluation of the extracted source material is given in view of other available sources. Attention is paid to the angle from which the Italian authors observe and tell about the Bulgarian past and present.

Along with these problems, Associate Professor Danova's book also contains serious contributions with a view to the development of the genre characteristics of Italian literature from the Late Middle Ages and the Baroque, the evolution of these genres, the role of printing for the distribution of the created manuscript works and

other important issues of cultural history of the Eastern Mediterranean, relevant to the Bulgarian past and the maintenance of interest in it in Christian Europe during the centuries when there was no Bulgarian state, but the Bulgarians continued to inhabit their traditional land in the eastern part of the Balkan Peninsula and a number of "traveling" Italians (or people, Italian speakers and writers) have direct contact with them.

For the new book by Associate Professor Danova, reviews will no doubt be written in the relevant scientific periodicals, where her method of work and what she achieved in terms of historical provenance will be analyzed in detail. Here I will only allow myself to point out that during the preliminary discussions of the work in the seminar of the "Medieval History" section, expanded with colleagues from Sofia University and the Institute of Balkan Studies at the BAS, the idea arose (formulated most clearly by Prof. Ivan Bilyarski) this work of Associate Professor Danova to lay the foundation for a new sub-series in the series Sources for Bulgarian History, namely "Italian-language sources for Bulgarian history" - a project with a long-term perspective, giving the opportunity for the participation of colleagues from the section and others related to chronology and problems units of the Institute, as well as colleagues from other scientific institutes and higher schools at home and abroad. This decision, around which all those present at the seminar meeting (as well as later also the members of the Scientific Council of IIstI, who were informed about the idea by the head of the "Medieval History" section, Assoc. Prof. Elena Kostova), was able to would be the best attestation for the qualities of Assoc. Prof. Penka Danova's monographic research, which she presents as a habilitation thesis in this competition for acquiring the academic position of "professor".

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In addition to the research with which she participates in the current competition, the candidate builds her "scientometric profile" and through her participation in various scientific forums and projects, as well as her teaching activities, which contributed both to recruiting a very decent number of (revealed!) citations in authoritative scientific publications, as well as with the recognition achieved through them in the circles of the international scientific community of historians.

From the documentation attached to the competition, it is clear that Associate Professor Danova can boast of two dozen reports and scientific reviews for her monographic studies, as well as several dozen citations in the most authoritative publications, and by colleagues whose opinion, according to Danova's considered questions is authoritative to say the least. In addition, Danova has two semesters of lecturing at the Faculty of History of Sofia University. During the period from the acquisition of the academic position of "associate professor" until the eve of the current competition (2011 - 2022), she participated with reports in several dozens of

scientific forums at home and abroad, and in a number of cases she participated in their organization and holding as a member of the organizing committee, meeting moderator, etc. It is difficult to enumerate the scientific projects (over twenty) funded by BAS, other state institutions, international scientific organizations or foreign higher schools, in which Assoc. Prof. Danova participated as a member of the team or leader, without being allowed any of these projects to fail for one reason or another! Despite all this workload, the participant in the current professorial competition has managed to successfully complete (discharge with the right to defend) one full-time doctoral student at the Institute of Balkan Studies at the BAS.

All this specific organizational-scientific activity brings her enough "points" according to the relevant scientometric tables, which are the conditio sine qua non for participants in the competition for the academic position of "professor". Seen from another angle, all this activity accompanying the scientific research work makes Associate Professor Danova easily recognizable in the scientific circles at home and abroad and an indisputable authority in the field of her scientific activities, which, in my opinion, is a really important condition for her to apply for the academic position of "professor", for which I will give my vote at the final meeting of the scientific jury for this competition.

Sofia, August 22, 2023

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