

БЪЛГАРСКА АКАДЕМИЯ НА НАУКИТЕ ИНСТИТУТ ЗА ИСТОРИЧЕСКИ ИЗСЛЕДВАНИЯ	
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## STATEMENT

BY Prof. Dr. Hab. Ivan Alexandrov Biliarsky

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concerning the competition about the research position of "Professor"

with only candidate assoc. prof. Penka Stilianova Danova

Associate Professor Penka Danova has a remarkable creative professional career. I have known her since the beginning of my own research work, we have collaborated on various projects both in Bulgaria and abroad, and I think I have enough grounds to be able to speak about her work.

Prof. Danova graduated in Italian philology at the Faculty of Classical and Modern Philology at the University of St. Kliment Ochridski", which largely determines her scientific interests. Initially, she worked as a researcher, and then as a research assistant and associate professor at the Institute of Balkan Studies. In recent years she transferred to the Institute for Historical Research, in the Medieval History Section, of which she is an active member.

Her interests are mainly in the eras of the Middle Ages and early modern times. Thus, they are placed in a transitional age, which is characterized by active contacts between the Apennines and the Balkans. I have always felt that our section needs a specialist in Italian history and culture, not only with a view to discovering and publishing sources, but also their adequate interpretation. In this sense, I emphasize that Assoc. Prof. Danova joining us was useful and necessary. She is precisely the specialist who can not only publish the texts, but also offer their in-depth research.

These observations of mine are confirmed by the review of the scientific output of Associate Professor P. Danova. It is worth noting that she has a remarkable scientific output for the time since she was awarded the scientific position of "associate professor". It is about four monographic works, one of which was co-authored with Prof. Snezhana Rakova, and several dozens of studies and articles.

I will focus on the habilitation thesis of Assoc. Danova separately, and for the others I would like to say that they are not only of great scientific interest for researchers, but also fill a

certain gap in the Bulgarian historiography for the Middle Ages and the early modern period. All four monographs are devoted to different sources - Italian or in some way related to Italy. This also applies to the Anonymous Chronicle of the Bulgari Counts (end of the 17th century). Sofia: Paradigma, 2014, 200 p., as well as to the joint monographic work with Snezhana Rakova (Benedetto Ramberti and Danielo Ludovisi - two Venetian envoys in Constantinople in 1534. Plovdiv: Foundation "Bulgarian Historical Heritage", 2016, 329 p.). Among them, although in the travelogue genre, we can also include the monographic work Giovanni Chiaromanni and his journey from Vienna to Bursa in 1659 // Giovanni Chiaromanni e il suo viaggio da Vienna a Bursa fatto l'anno 1659. Sofia: Paradigma, 2017, 257 pp. Of course, it should be explicitly noted that the publication of the texts is accompanied by a detailed commentary and research of the historical context.

In fact, it can be said that the articles and studies published by P. Danova are located in the same historiographical context. Most of them are dedicated to individual documents or historical writings, concerning various issues of mainly early modern history, related to Bulgaria and the Balkans. Among them we find both diplomatic reports and daily writings or private documents of merchants, etc. Undoubtedly, the importance of the information found in them is determined by the intensity of the connections between the Balkan and Apennine peninsulas, the aggressive power of the Ottoman Empire penetrating the West and the economic and cultural rise of the Apennine and Adriatic countries during this era. The works of P. Danova are undoubtedly interesting and extremely useful to a wide range of researchers with the new source evidence they introduced.

Associate Professor P. Danova's habilitation work is entitled *Bulgaria and the Bulgarians in Italian historiography (XIV-XVII centuries)*. - Sofia: Institute for Historical Studies, 2023, 359 p. and represents, in a certain sense, a synthesis of her previous research. The author offers a broad overview of Italian early modern historiography on the Balkans, with a particular emphasis on the history of the Bulgarian lands and the Bulgarians. Unlike some previous works, where the author is interested in documents, travelogues and memories, here the emphasis is placed on the historiography of the period. The paper consists of three chapters and presents various aspects of this literature: 1. Bulgaria and the Bulgarians in universal and city chronicles; 2. The Bulgarians with world history exhibitions in the 16th century; 3. Parcelling of historical knowledge in the

Baroque era. I could confidently say that the work is not only of interest to the entire historical college, but also opens up new horizons for further research.

Here it is appropriate to point out that it was precisely in connection with this monograph that the idea of creating a special volume with Italian sources for Bulgarian history arose from Associate Professor Penka Danova. This will continue the tradition of the "Sources for Bulgarian History" collection around and in connection with which both our section and the Institute arose.

Probably to those unfamiliar with the problem, collecting and publishing Italian sources seems easier than some others. Yes, the Italian language is more accessible than Latin, Greek, Ottoman Turkish or Syriac, but in this case the difficulty comes from compiling such an edition. The texts are a huge number, often published only in the XVI-XVII century and difficult to access, but at the same time of great importance for our history. It is precisely for this reason that the presence of a specialist like Associate Professor P. Danova in our section is of great importance for the development of the entire team, and it also has its importance for the study of the subject of the section on Ottoman history. Her publications, which have already been mentioned, as well as the data on citations and scientometric indicators speak for the author's qualities.

The documentation for conducting the competition is in accordance with the requirements of the law, with the deadlines and everything necessary.

Based on everything that I stated above in my opinion, I am convinced to vote for awarding the scientific position of "professor" to Penka Stilianova Danova and allow myself to invite the other members of the scientific jury to do the same.

Sofia, August 11<sup>th</sup>, 2023

Ivan Alexandrov Biliarsky