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REVIEW

BY PROF. YORDANKA GESHEVA, PhD, INSTITUTE FOR HISTORICAL STUDIES AT BAS

ABOUT THE PUBLICATIONS OF CHIEF ASSISTANT PROFESSOR CHAVDAR VETOV, PhD, PARTICIPANT IN THE COMPETITION FOR ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR IN PROFESSIONAL FIELD 2.2. HISTORY AND ARCHAEOLOGY, SCIENTIFIC SPECIALTY "DOCUMENTALISTICS, ARCHIVISTICS AND PALEOGRAPHY (INCLUDING HISTORIOGRAPHY AND SOURCE KNOWLEDGE)" (VISUAL HISTORICAL SOURCES) FOR THE NEEDS OF THE SECTION "AUXILIARY HISTORICAL SCIENCES AND INFORMATICS", PUBLISHED IN THE STATE GAZETTE, NO. 97 FROM 21.11. 2023

Chief Assistant Professor Chavdar Vetov, PhD, is the only candidate in the competition for associate professor announced in the State Gazette, no. 97/2023. Appears with the monograph "The Bulgarian National Liberation Movement through the eye of photography". Sofia, 2023, 304 p., as well as with 18 articles and studies, three of them co-authored. The completed scientometric tables meet the requirements and reflect active scientific activity. The noted more than 25 citations for the last 7–8 years show that the author is noticed in the scientific community.

The name of Chief Assistant Professor Chavdar Vetov relates to the history and achievements of photography in the Bulgarian lands and in the Principality/Kingdom of Bulgaria. Dr. Vetov began to deal with photography as a source, with photographic images and illustrations already with his doctoral dissertation on the topic: "Photographic documents (XIX - mid-XX centuries) as historical sources and their preservation in archival institutions", defended by 2015. The topic continues to excite the author even after the defense. Thus, as a result of several years of hard work in archives, museums, libraries, after examining many collections with photos and illustrations, memories, after researching interesting material about the introduction and spread of photography

in the Bulgarian lands, Dr. Vetov is preparing a monographic work, dedicated to the photographic coverage of the Bulgarian national liberation movement.

The main purpose of the study is to examine, describe and analyze the photographs related to the revolutionary liberation movement. The book begins with a presentation of the first photographs of Bulgarians taken abroad. The appearance and development of photography in Bulgarian lands in the period around the 1850s are shown - brief information is given about the foreign photographers who toured our lands and took the first photographic images of revolutionary and political figures. In the 1860s, the first Bulgarian photographers appeared. Many photos are presented - magnificent examples of their creativity. Brief attention is paid to the more interesting biographies of the most famous photographers - Bulgarians and foreigners, related to our history. The role of photographs in preserving the memory of our revolutionary movement, shown in a different way than narrative, is examined. Thus, in Dr. Vetov's book, the significance of photographic material as a historical source is outlined. And one more thing: photography is shown as a factor in the modernization of the young Bulgarian state.

Photographs of revolutionary figures in uniforms and weapons were searched for and studied (second chapter). The events related to the taking of these photographs are specified. In addition to some characteristic features of the photographs, attention is also paid to the historical setting in which the photographed person acted and his contribution to the revolutionary movement. In this way, the photo fits into a specific historical event.

The author's idea to present the photographs of revolutionary activists before and after the Liberation, not only in Chetnik clothes, but also in civilian clothes (third chapter), is interesting and well implemented. Many photographs of volunteers after the Liberation are also shown - evidence of the desire not to forget their work. In addition to preserving the memory of the events, these photographs speak in different ways about the social activity of the photographed

characters, as they participate in state-political life, in parties, in National Assemblies, in public organizations. Many family photos are presented – usually with wives, with children, sometimes with parents. A smaller part of them were made before the Liberation, the others - after. Many group photos with the participation of revolutionaries deserve attention. Most of them show the former revolutionaries as participants in the construction of a free Bulgaria.

The role of “Bulgarian opalchenie“ (volunteer army), Bulgarians in the Russian-Turkish War (1877–1878) was the most massive participation in the liberation movement, therefore special attention is paid to the photographs of volunteers (fourth chapter). There are photos from the time around the formation of the “Bulgarian opalchenie“ (volunteer army), and quite naturally many more from the period after (personal and group). In some of the photos, the former volunteers (opalchenci) used military uniforms from the time of the “Bulgarian opalchenie“, in others they are in civilian clothes; there are re-enactments of battles and revolutionary actions.

The formation and construction of the modern Bulgarian state and our national identity is related to the study, preservation and popularization of Bulgarian history and cultural-historical heritage (fifth chapter). So, the role of photographs in the national liberation movement and in the process of modernization of the state and society is quite purposefully reflected. Therefore, the book examines photographs aimed at preserving the memory of the revolutionary struggles - not only of participants, but also photographs of historical buildings associated with the revolutionary movement, places of historical significance as well as other artifacts from the recent past - in this case, photographs of the ship "Radetsky", celebrations, monuments. Photographs reflecting moments from reenactments of various events - the April Uprising, the Botev's Cheta, a number of local Cheta, locating the area and searching for Botev's place of death, etc., were also studied and shown. In this case, the photographs become unique testimonies of the striving of the Bulgarian society at the end of

the XIX and in the first decades of the XX century to preserve the memory of our historical past, as well as to honor the memory of the heroes of the revolutionary movement. The concept of photographs as a historical source runs throughout the book.

I would especially like to point out that the book includes (with complete bibliographic data) more than 500 photographs, which speaks of a persistent and purposeful search and analytical work by the author - Dr. Chavdar Vetov, for which he deserves congratulations. For most of the illustrations, the author has searched for the photographer or the studio/atelier where the photo was taken, describes the setting, the place, the event; recognizes and presents captured faces. Information is given about the photographers (Bulgarians and foreigners), about the studios. So the work presented by Dr. Vetov helps to enrich historical science, to document events. Real-life personalities, the setting, the atmosphere of the time are represented. From the book and from Dr. Vetov's articles, one can see the attitude of the public towards the past: the numerous monuments, commemorative plaques, busts of revolutionary figures show that those who gave their lives for the freedom of the Bulgarians are not forgotten; their work is also remembered.

The subject of photography is permanently present in Dr. Vetov's research. And I would mention that this is a systematic upgrade in the research problem. This is evident not only from the monographic work submitted for the competition. It is also evident from the articles and studies that the candidate has published in the last ten years. Some of them are theoretical, others are more practically oriented.

I would like to draw attention to some basic problems inherent in these studies: they all present to the public certain historical events, celebrations, settings, emphasize people's attitude towards freedom fighters or preserve the memory of the past, preserving not only the images of revolutionaries and volunteers (opalchenci), but also clothing, manners, habits, mentality. And one

more thing: the author strives to show the shortest but authentic commentary on the events, to correct errors and distortions in the presentation.

It should be noted the participation of Dr. Vetov in the scientific-research and scientific-organizational activities of the Department of Auxiliary historical sciences and informatics at the Institute for Historical Studies at the BAS, in scientific projects (including international ones), in editorial preparation teams of collections. Chavdar Vetov was the secretary-recorder of the Scientific Council of the Institute for Historical Studies in the period 2016-2020, and also the secretary-recorder of the Department of Auxiliary historical sciences and informatics from 2016 to 2021 inclusive. He has participated in 20 scientific conferences, round tables, seminars and other forums.

I would recommend Dr. Vetov to look more carefully at the writing of the scientific apparatus, which in his research is too rich. There is some variation in the way publications are reflected in journals, in collections, in noting publishers and publishers, etc. In some respects he complied with the way of presentation in COBISS, in other cases he used generally accepted methods.

While I highly appreciate the monograph, studies and articles, as well as the participation of Ch. Assistant Professor Chavdar V. Vetov, PhD, in various scientific events, I believe that he meets all the requirements to be elected to the academic position of Associate Professor as announced in the State Gazette, no. 97 /2023 competition at the request of the Department of Auxiliary historical sciences and informatics at the Institute for Historical Studies at the BAS, for which I will also vote.

Sofia, March 12, 2024

Reviewer:
(Prof. Y. Gesheva, PhD)