

EXAMINER'S ASSESSMENT

by Assoc. Prof. Dobrinka Parusheva, PhD,

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on the documents submitted in application for the open position of Associate Professor at the Paisii Hilendarski University of Plovdiv in the Sphere of HE 3. Social, economic and juridical sciences, Area of professional qualification 3.1. Sociology, anthropology, and cultural studies (Cultural anthropology – Intangible cultural heritage and cultural policies)

The sole applicant for the open position of an Associate Professor for the needs of the Department of Ethnology at the Faculty of Philosophy and History, Paisii Hilendarski University of Plovdiv (announced in the State Gazette, issue 40 from 14.05.2021) is Elitsa Stoilova, PhD, Chief Assistant Professor at the same department since 2016. The portfolio submitted by the applicant includes all necessary documents in accordance with the Regulations for the development of the academic staff in the Paisii Hilendarski University of Plovdiv. The applicant participates in the competition with a monograph, two major studies, eight articles and a book chapter, all of the published in the period 2017-2021. The monograph, studies, four of the articles and the book chapter are in Bulgarian language while the remaining three articles are in English.

The monograph entitled *Food Celebrations and Festivals: Valorisation of the Local Culinary Heritage, 2021* (*Празниците и фестивалите на храните: валоризация на локалното кулинарно наследство, 2021*) is published by the Plovdiv University Press. I assess it as a habilitation endeavour which results from a several years' in-depth work. In the focus of interest are not only the new forms of celebration as festivals but also the processes of valorisation of food and technologies that accompany them as well as the resulting social and economic changes. The presentation follows the principle of narrowing the focus. The first chapter presents the "landscape", which will be analysed further, some specifics of the celebrations dedicated to food and drinks in Bulgaria, and their thematic diversity; the chronotope of the culinary festivity is discussed too. Stoilova pays special attention to the organizers, who (she supports here an already established opinion) practically construct (the claim for) the authenticity of the culinary traditions. In the second chapter, the problems are refracted through the prism of established terms – festivalisation and neo-localism – in combination with the new term introduced by the author in previous recent publications, *gastrolocalism* (inspired by the established wider term *gastronationalism*). She introduces this term to illuminate the growing role of regional rather than national identity in the processes of constructing local symbols, celebrations, and

festivals dedicated to culinary diversity. Narrowing the focus brings us in the third chapter where an elaborate discussion of a specific festival, whose full name is *Kurtovo Konare Fest – Festival of pepper, tomato, traditional foods and crafts*, is offered. Elitsa Stoilova has chosen this case study in order to present the processes of patrimonialisation of the heritage and to clearly outline the processes of festivalisation, which are analysed in the second chapter. The example of *Kurtovo Konare Fest* comes as a confirmation of the main ideas of Elitsa Stoilova, as it perfectly illustrates the path of mythologizing the traditions (through the image and history of Alexander Dimitrov) and the process of festivalisation (through the diverse program of the festival, which targets different publics).

If I have to briefly summarize my impressions of Elitsa Stoilova's monograph *Food Celebrations and Festivals: Valorization of the Local Culinary Heritage*, I would say that this is a text that, although short, is a contribution to the anthropology of festive forms. It is based on the accumulated knowledge in this field, which is well known to the author and even better used by her, as well as on her own field research of celebrations and festivals dedicated to food and nutrition in Bulgaria.

The problems discussed in the other texts presented by Elitsa Stoilova clearly outline the main fields of her academic interest: anthropology of food and nutrition, on the one hand, and intangible cultural heritage, on the other. The content of the publications allows to judge that the author cites sources as well as other scholars' research correctly. Large part of the candidate's ideas have received national and international recognition through her participation with presentations in a number of conferences as well as in more than ten national and international projects.

As for the teaching activity, a part of the main courses that E. Stoilova has taught (Anthropology of Food and Nutrition, National Cuisine – Construction and Use) is directly related to her research interests, which allows her to apply the results of her research in the process of teaching. Another part of her teaching relates directly to the profile of the announced position (Museums and Heritage, Cultural Policies and Institutions in the Field of Cultural Heritage, Intangible Cultural Heritage) and comes as a result of the candidate's participation in many national and international projects. The high evaluation given by the colleagues from the department to the work of the candidate with students is evidenced by the supervised and successfully defended bachelor's and master's theses.

To sum up, the documents and materials submitted by Elitsa Rumenova Stoilova, PhD, meet the requirements of the Law on the Development of Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria (ZRASRB), the Regulations for implementation of ZRASRB and the relevant Regulations of the Paisii Hilendarski University of Plovdiv. The publications of the candidate and their citations meet the minimum national requirements for an associate professor in the area of professional qualification as well as the additional requirements of the Faculty of Philosophy and History, the Paisii Hilendarski University of Plovdiv. The author's self-assessment about her scientific contributions is correct. Undoubtedly, both the candidate's publications and the main disciplines taught by her are in the field of the open position (Cultural Anthropology – Intangible Cultural Heritage and Cultural Policies). Her contributions to the academic field are related to the theoretical understanding of forms of heritage and manifestations of local culture as well as to the analysis of food festivals and celebrations, and they are incontestable. Therefore, I confidently present my positive assessment for the promotion of Elitsa Rumenova Stoilova, PhD, to the academic position of an Associate Professor at the Department of Ethnology in the area of professional qualification 3.1 Sociology, anthropology and cultural sciences (Cultural anthropology – Intangible cultural heritage and cultural policies).

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Author of the assessment:

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