

## REVIEW

by ..... Dr. Rayna Dimitrova Gavrilova, Professor, Sofia University «St. Kliment Ohridski», Faculty of Philosophy, Department of Cultural Studies

of the materials, submitted for participation in a competition for the academic position of "professor" at Plovdiv University "Paisiy Hilendarski"

field of higher education 3. Social, economic and legal sciences, 3.1. Sociology, Anthropology and Cultural Studies (Cultural Studies – Historical Anthropology of Political Culture).

DOBRINKA DRAGIEVA PARUSEVA from the Department of Ethnology is applicant in the competition for the appointment of "tenured professor" for the needs of the Department of Ethnology at the Faculty of Philosophy and History announced in the State Gazette, no. 39/02.05.2023 and on the internet page of Plovdiv University "Paisiy Hilendarski" (PU), participated as a candidate.

### **1. General presentation of the received materials**

I have been appointed (order No. RD-21-1601 dated 31.07.2023 of the Rector of the Plovdiv University "Paisiy Hilendarski" (PU), as a member of the scientific jury of a competition for the academic position of "tenured professor" in the PU in the field of higher education 3. Social, economic and legal sciences, 3.1. Sociology, Anthropology and Cultural Studies (Cultural Studies - Historical Anthropology of Political Culture), announced for the needs of the Department of Ethnology at the Faculty of Philosophy and History.

Only one candidate has submitted documents for participation in the announced competition: Associate Professor Dr. Dobrinka Dragieva Parusheva, Department of Ethnology, Faculty of Philosophy and History, PU.

The set of materials submitted by Dobrinka Parusheva in electronic and paper form is in accordance with the Regulations for the Development of the Academic Staff of the PU, and includes the following documents: Application, Order for the appointment of jury members, Europass CV, Reference for the minimum requirements, 13 publications, list of all publications, list of the publications submitted for participation in the competition, evidence of academic work, evidence of research activity.

The candidate Dobrinka Parusheva has submitted a total of 13 scholarly publication, 12 of which are studies and articles (6 in a foreign language) and one monograph. All 13 publications are accepted for review. 20 academic papers and 15 reviews outside of the

thematic focus of the contest are not reviewed, but are taken into account in the final evaluation.

## **2. Brief biographical data of the applicant**

Dobrinka Parusheva holds a master's degree in history (specialization in the history of Byzantium and the Balkan peoples) from the Faculty of History of the University of St. Kliment Ohridski" and Ph.D. (candidate of historical sciences) from the Institute of Balkan Studies at the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences (BAS). Since 1990, she has been a chief assistant at the Institute of Balkan Studies BAS and a part-time lecturer at Sofia and Plovdiv universities. Since 2009, she has been an associate professor of Modern and contemporary general history at the Institute of Balkan Studies and an associate professor of Theory and history of culture at the Department of Ethnology, FIF, PU "Paisiy Hilendarski". She speaks English, German, French, Russian and Romanian languages.

## **3. General characteristics of the candidate's activities**

### *Evaluation of educational and pedagogical activity and preparation of the candidate*

The educational and pedagogical biography of Dobrinka is an evidence of a scholar seriously engaged in the education of university students. Her training and research work in two different but related disciplines – History and Cultural studies – has enabled her over the years to prepare and offer a variety of courses, both for Bachelor and Masters level, including three courses in English. She has been a guest lecturer at four different foreign universities. Six doctoral students worked under her supervision, two of whom, after a successful defense, have become her colleagues. Since 2012, she has been the supervisor of seven bachelor's and master's theses.

### *Evaluation of the candidate's scientific and scientific-applied activity*

The research and applied activity of Dobrinka Parusheva is impressive. First of all, we should note the monographic work, presented for this competition *"Down with the government! Long live the caricature!" Politics, culture and caricature in Bulgaria at the beginning of the 20th century*. UI "Paisiy Hilendarski": Plovdiv, 2023 (265 p.) In this work, the author aims to explore "the place and role of cartoons in shaping the political culture of Bulgarians at the beginning of the 20th century" (p. 6), but from the very beginning it is clear that what concerns her is the much broader topic of the politics-culture nexus. The line of reasoning is clearly outlined and convincingly defended. The discussion of the several basic concepts and their interrelationships that organize the material – picture and image, political culture and culture, imagined and communicated ideas, etc. – rests on an excellent knowledge of both classic and new works on the subject. The exposition is structured in two chapters,

which try to see the impact of a variable, from the political world - the wars of 1912-1918 - in order to ascertain that if on the surface of the plots, themes and slogans there is a storm boiling, then in the depths of political culture their impact is weaker. When examining the plots, images and messages, it turns out that the caricature as a visual materialization of the political imaginary is much more related to the socio-economic (including demographic) features of the society than to the hot issues of present visible on the surface. The author's previous research has outlined the approaches to larger, albeit carefully formulated, conclusions about the nature of the political culture in Bulgaria.

Several other merits of the work should be noted. First of all, the excellent knowledge of the facts, phenomena and personalities of the political history of Bulgaria, which prevents self-serving speculation or purely iconological isolationism. Secondly, the richness of the empirical basis - verbal and visual. The proposed illustrative material is not only an illustration, but the canvas of the study. In short, I find the work contributing on several levels: as a method of exploring history and culture through visual culture, interpreted in its entirety; as a new and much more holistic view of authors and their baggage; as a multifaceted study of an external environment exerting pressure; as an in-depth analysis of cartoon languages; as a realistic interpretation of the weight and role of the audience(s).

The monograph synthesizes and crowns a series of previous studies, which are followed in the 12 publications proposed for participation in the competition. At least five of them are studies of 20 pages or more, and six are published in English. Four of them are in indexed scientific publications and one - in refereed. The article *"We Are All Members of the Same Club": Bulgarian Political Elite and Their Networks in Early 20th Century* (2012) reconstructs the creation and functioning of the informal networks of the Bulgarian political elite on the basis of archival materials and diaries. This is the first research on this topic I am aware of which explores these materials, and it marks the beginning of a serious historical study of the emerging political culture in Bulgaria. *Bulgarians Gazing at the Balkans: Neighboring People in Bulgarian Political Caricature at the Beginning of the Twentieth Century* (2013) marks the beginning of her interest in one of the languages of modern political culture – caricature – in a different and new perspective (compared to the existing literature); the thematic focus is the presentation of the Other - the neighboring countries of Bulgaria: a line that finds its full interpretation in the second chapter of the above-mentioned monographic text. The article *Family Matters: Using Social Capital for Political Ends in the Nineteenth Century Balkans* (2013) explores another theme persistently present in the political imaginary, but explored in this text through the family networks that produce the political elite. I find the comparative perspective especially helpful, which allows to highlight the idiosyncratic elements against the background of the generic peculiarities of South-Eastern Europe. *"All are mas-cars!" Politics, Culture and Caricature* (2015) is the first formulation of the research axis politics-culture-visual

representations and the proposed interpretation of materials from the beginning of the 20th century form the core around which are shaped her subsequent studies. *Patrons and customers. Bulgarian examples and Balkan parallels from the end of the XIX and the beginning of the XX century* (2017) is the third article dedicated to the formation of political culture in Bulgaria (in the sense adopted by the author in her monograph) and deals with a phenomenon as old as democracy itself – the clientelism. A theme noticed a long time ago by fiction, but not by traditional historiography and which casts long shadows even into modern times. In *In the Mirror of Satire: The End of World War I in Bulgarian Caricatures*. (2019) we find a development of the theme of otherness as subject of cartoons and a discussion of the question how war affects the stereotypes, found in cartoons' authors and audiences. *Description of images - images of description* (2019) connects the theses and discussions of anthropology with visual representations, including the pictorial turn that appeared by analogy with the literary and cultural turn. The article (actually a preface to a thematic issue of the magazine "*Bulgarian Ethnology*", of which Dobrinka Parusheva is the editor) marks an important milestone in the evolution of humanities and social sciences in Bulgaria. The excellent knowledge of the classical texts finds application in connecting the tasks of the anthropologists/ethnologists in Bulgaria with modern science and in questioning the certainties of the descriptions and the dominance of testimonies. As the title suggests, the article *Visual Representations of the First World War in the Bulgarian magazine Illustration Svetlina* (2019), *Uprisings, Revolutions and Wars: Visual Representations in Bulgarian Illustrated Press at the End of the Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Century* (2020) and *The Russo-Japanese War of the Early Twentieth Century: Visual Representations in the Bulgarian Press* (2023) are steps towards reconstructing the national political imaginary in years of significant political upheaval. The analysis of the materials and their interpretation as comments and, above all, manifestations of the forming political culture in Bulgaria are innovative and have no precedents in political science studies - especially in those produced by "pure" historians.

*The Modern City of the Balkans: Research Directions and Prospects* (2021) is a manifestation of another enduring topic of Dobrinka Parusheva's research interests, which has not been commented on until now, as it is not related to the theme of the competition. I have in mind the topics of history of everyday life and culture within the modern city. The article is historiographical and offers one of the most penetrating modern analyzes of the urban history of the Balkans. *Cities along the Route: Plovdiv Becoming Modern at the End of the Nineteenth Century* (2021) is aimed at the formation of the modern city through modern communication.

For the purposes of this review, I need to say a few words about the scientific production of Dobrinka Parusheva, which is not on the topic of the competition, but outlines the academic profile of the candidate. After her habilitation in 2009, she has published 22 articles and studies, 10 of which in a foreign language and one in an indexed edition. The topics of the articles are

from the social history of Bulgaria: networks and communities, heritage and identity, cities and urban living. In the same period, she published 15 reviews. She participated in 35 international scientific forums and 13 national ones. She took part in five international and seven national scientific-research and applied projects and was the leader in another two. She is a member of the editorial board of two Bulgarian scientific journals and two international ones. She was a member of the jury in 22 competitions for the acquisition of scientific degrees and positions.

The candidate submitted a list of the following noted citations: 22 citations of the monograph *The Government Elite of Romania and Bulgaria, the second half of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th century* in the period after 2009, four of which in foreign language indexed periodicals, two in dissertations and the rest in monographs and collections. 12 of the citations are in foreign language publications. The list includes citations of 25 different articles and studies by Dobrinka Parusheva with a total of 118 references, which is testimony to the place of her research and publications in contemporary Bulgarian humanities.

The quantitative indicators in the reference submitted by the applicant show the following:

- Indicator A – 50 points with a minimum requirement of 50
- Indicator B – 100 points with a minimum requirement of 100
- Indicators D.6 – 90 points; D.7 – 30 points; D.8 – 120 points or a total of 240 points with a minimum requirement of 200
- Indicators D.11 – 45 points; D.12 - 80 points; E.13 – 15 points or a total of 140 points with a minimum requirement of 100 points
- Indicator E.15 – 80 points; E.17 – 20 points; F.18 – 30 points or a total of 130 points with a minimum requirement of 100 points.

The review of the presented documents and publications confirms the correctness of the submitted tables. Dobrinka Parusheva exceeds the minimum national requirements of the Law on the Development of the Academic Staff and the Regulations of the Plovdiv University "Paisii Hi-Lendarski" for awarding the academic position of professor.

#### **4. Evaluation of the personal contribution of the candidate/s**

The presented publications and lists of publications show that both the volume and merits of the texts are the personal and sole work of Dobrinka Parusheva. She is the sole author of the 13 works submitted for review. From the general list of publications, it is evident that 4 out of 22 publications are co-authored, and this is clearly indicated.

## **5. Critical remarks and recommendations**

I have no critical remarks about the candidate. As a historical anthropologist, I think that a continuation of research on political culture after the Second World War (and until nowadays) would be very useful. Many of Dobrinka's observations and interpretations could be viewed in the context of the even greater cataclysms of the Second World War and the communist regime in Bulgaria.

## **6. Personal impressions**

I have known Dobrinka personally for many years and I have impressions from her participation in academic events, in juries, and from informal communication. First of all, I want to note her basic integrity, which should not be missed behind her unflinching courtesy, calmness and sense of humor. In her relations with colleagues, she is correct and constructive. I have no doubts that these qualities are also manifested in her relations with the students.

## **CONCLUSION**

The documents and materials presented by Dobrinka Parusheva meet all the requirements of the Law on the Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria (ZRASRB), the Regulations for the Implementation of ZRASRB and the Regulations for Awarding Scientific Degrees and Positions of PU "Paisiy Hilendarski".

The candidate in the competition has submitted a significant and sufficient number of scientific works published after the materials used in the defense of her doctorate and the awarding of the academic position of associate professor. References to publications close to the subject of the competition, but unrelated to it, indicate high productivity and high standards. The candidate's works contain original scientific and applied contributions in the field of historical political science and historical anthropology, as well as pure political history. They have received international recognition, as a representative part of them have been published in journals and scientific collections issued by international academic publishing houses and have been presented at a number of international and national forums. The theoretical developments, especially in the most recent monographic work, have the potential to inform contemporary political science discussions and practices. The list of courses offered shows that the candidate's research work finds application, methodologically and empirically, in her teaching as well. Dobrinka Parusheva's scientific and teaching qualifications are unquestionable.

The results achieved by Dobrinka Parusheva in her educational and research activities fully correspond to the minimum national and additional requirements adopted by the University of Plovdiv in connection with the implementation of the RASRD.

After getting acquainted with the materials and scientific works presented in the competition, analyzing their significance and the scientific, scientific-applied and applied contributions contained in them, I find it justifiable to **give my positive assessment** and to **recommend** to the Scientific Jury to prepare a report-proposal to the Faculty Council of the Faculty of Philosophy and History for the election of Dobrinka Dragieva Parusheva to the academic position of "Professor" at PU "Paisiy Hilendarski" in: field of higher education 3. Social, economic and legal sciences, 3.1. Sociology, Anthropology and Cultural Studies (Cultural Studies - Historical Anthropology of Political Culture).

27.09.2023

Reviewer: .....

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