

REVIEW

**By Yura Toteva Konstantinova, Dsc, Professor at the Institute of Balkan Studies
and Centre of Thracology, Bulgarian Academy of Sciences**

of the materials submitted for participation in the competition

for the academic position of **Professor**

at the Paisii Hilendarski University in Plovdiv

in: higher education field 3. Social, economic and legal sciences, professional field

3.1. Sociology, anthropology and cultural studies (Cultural studies – Historical anthropology of political culture)

The only applicant participating in the competition for the position of Professor announced in the *State Gazette* No. 39 of 2 May 2023 and on the web site of the Paisii Hilendarski University in Plovdiv (UP) for the needs of the Ethnology Department at the Faculty of Philosophy and History is Associate Professor Dobrinka Dragieva Parusheva, PhD, from the Ethnology Department of the Faculty of History and Philosophy of UP.

General presentation of the material received

By Order No. RD-21-1601 of 31 July 2023 of the UP Rector, I have been appointed as a member of the Scientific Jury of a competition for the academic position of **Professor at UP** in higher education field 3. Social, economic and legal sciences, professional field 3.1. Sociology, anthropology and cultural studies (Cultural studies – Historical anthropology of political culture), **announced for the needs of the** Ethnology Department of the Faculty of Philosophy and History (FPH).

The only candidate for taking part in the announced competition is Associate Professor Dobrinka Dragieva Parusheva, PhD, at the Ethnology Department at FPH of UP. The set of materials submitted by Assoc. Prof. Parusheva is in compliance with the UP Rules for the Development of Academic Staff and includes the following documents: application for admission to the competition, curriculum vitae, full-text publications, list of publications and their abstracts in Bulgarian and English, reference to the minimum national requirements, list of citations, self-

assessment of the applicant's contributions, documents regarding her lecturing and research activities. I accept for review all of the submitted 13 scholarly works: one monograph and 12 articles and studies. They were issued evenly in Bulgaria and abroad after Dobrinka Parusheva was appointed to the academic position of Associate Professor.

Brief biographical details of the applicant

Dobrinka Parusheva has a Master's Degree in History with specialization in History of Byzantium and the Balkan Peoples and a minor in German Language from Sofia University “St. Kliment Ohridski”. She defended her thesis for acquiring the scholarly degree of PhD in History and habilitated in the field of Modern and Contemporary History at the Institute of Balkan Studies of the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences (BAS). Since 2003 she has had continuous lecturing experience at the Universities of Plovdiv and Sofia, including supervision of PhD students and participation in international doctoral programmes. Since 2010 D. Parusheva has been Associate Professor of Theory and History of Culture with the Ethnology Department at FPH of UP and parallel with that has pursued impressive research activities at the Institute of Balkan Studies and Centre of Thracology of BAS. Assoc. Prof. Parusheva is one of the few Bulgarian scholars who can boast proficiency in five languages, including a Balkan one (Romanian), and this has logically predetermined her participation in three international scholarly organizations, three editorial boards of foreign language journals and in international scholarly expert committees and evaluation panels in five countries.

General description of the applicant's performance

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Dobrinka Parusheva teaches 10 mandatory university courses: seven for Bachelors, two for Masters and one for PhD students, as well as several elective courses. She teaches international students under UP's Erasmus program (in English) and lectures under the same program in Eskişehir, Prague, Ljubljana and Regensburg. Assoc. Prof. Parusheva is the supervisor of six Bachelor's and one Master's theses, as well as of six PhD students, two of them within the joint programs of Plovdiv University and universities in the Netherlands and the Czech Republic. The candidate's strong commitment to the development of young people is also evident from the fact that she co-organized Student Ethnological Meetings held by the Department of Ethnology of UP three times (in 2011, 2017 and 2019) and has been member of the Governing Board of the University Centre for Work with Young Scholars, Doctoral Students and Postdoctoral Fellows at the same University (since 2019).

In this procedure Assoc. Prof. Parusheva has presented her monographic research “*Down with the Government! Long Live Caricature!!*” *Politics, Culture and Caricature in Bulgaria at the Beginning of the Twentieth Century*. Plovdiv: UP Paisii Hilendarski, 2023, ISBN: 978-619-202-861-9, which consists of an introduction, three chapters, afterword, bibliography and summary in English with a total volume of 265 pages. The publication is profusely illustrated with 89 colour and black and white images that highlight the first and second chapters of the study. Apart from being an indisputable bonus to a monograph devoted to political caricature and political culture, the publication of so many high quality caricatures from the Bulgarian periodical press of the early twentieth century also indicates the huge volume of source material on which Assoc. Prof. Parusheva has based her research. In fact, a characteristic feature of the submitted monograph is the use of caricature both as a historical source and as a tool for anthropological analysis, which enables one to assess its place and role in moulding the political culture of Bulgarians.

The aim of the monograph is to seek an answer to the question "how did the political imaginary appear in the field of caricature in Bulgaria in the early twentieth century" (p. 10). The chosen structure is logical and supports the achievement of the tasks that the author has set for herself. The first chapter discusses the image of politics and the political that caricaturists construct in peaceful times. The second chapter builds upon this theme by tracing the dynamics of change in this image in wartime. The third chapter wraps up the issues raised by analysing the divergent relationships between politics, culture and caricature. This would be the right place for me to draw attention to the fact that Assoc. Prof. Parusheva not only has excellent knowledge of the bibliography on the subject, but also skillfully juggles with the theses of the various authors and seems to be in a continuous dialogue with them, as well as with herself. Theoretical concepts are usually the downside of historical writings, and anthropological studies often suffer from lack of a good factual foundation. The study by Assoc. Prof. Parusheva is a rare synthesis of the best of both disciplines, one of the main reasons being that it is both factually excellent and theoretically well supported. Moreover, it not only applies innovative approaches, but also for the first time focuses attention on the caricature-culture-politics relationship.

The interdisciplinary nature of the monograph enables the examination of the issues discussed in it over a chronological period that is long for a historical study. It focuses on the late nineteenth century and the first three decades of the twentieth century, but in fact there are references to the whole period from the Liberation of Bulgaria to World War II, and even to the present day. This, on the one hand, makes it possible to trace the process of visualizing political culture in its development and, on the other hand, provides a context for already existing studies addressing the topic of political culture and caricature.

Another important characteristic of the work is its Balkanistic nature. It features the image not only of the Bulgarians, but also of all their neighbours, revealing how the Bulgarian caricaturists saw the politicians and people of the Balkans. It is precisely the juxtaposition between one's own and foreign "rotters", as Balkan societies often perceive their politicians, but also between "us" and the "Other", that is the productive approach to understanding, and hopefully overcoming, stereotypical notions and negative historical build-ups. I fully share the observation that the image of the Other adds touches to the characterization of the Bulgarian political imaginary (p. 73). It is particularly valuable that the Balkanistic context of the monograph is presented as part of the European and global context, so that the region does not seem peripheral but part of the global trends and events. Another contributing factor in this respect is the connection of the Bulgarian caricaturists with their international counterparts revealed in an excellent manner.

The monograph by Assoc. Prof. Parusheva raises several important issues that I am convinced will be the subject of future scholarly discussions. Outstanding among them is the issue of whether and to what extent the relations between Bulgarian caricaturists (but not only) and their European counterparts are centre-periphery relations; to what extent they reflect the desire to promote certain ideas or they are a mere transfer of the foreign "political imaginary". The other theme that emerges in the study is whether the war should be seen only and solely as a limit in chronological development. Analyzing the image of Bulgarian politicians in the pre-war and war period, Assoc. Prof. Parusheva convincingly proves that this is not always the case. Although all caricaturists support their governments during wars and ridicule the enemy, this does not make their relationship with the authorities easy. The topics of the "difficult dance" of the intellectuals with the authorities, as well as with their people; of the role of the ruler (governing authority) in history; of the people's view of themselves as victims of their rulers are only some of the interesting and significant issues discussed in the monograph.

I believe that the study of Assoc. Prof. Parusheva should be viewed as a logical continuation of her interest in the Balkan elites, which was the focus of her previous monograph *The Political Elite of Romania and Bulgaria in the Second Half of the 19th and Early 20th Century. Social History*. Sofia: Institute of Balkan Studies, BAS, 2008. Already there the author demonstrates a thorough understanding of the Bulgarian and Balkan political elite in general, which enables her not only to see it through the eyes of the caricaturists, but also to capture the almost invisible threads that inevitably connect the author with the object of caricature. The indisputable upgrade of knowledge in the new monograph of Assoc. Prof. Parusheva has led to the fact that she has managed to make us visualize Bulgarian (Balkan) politicians as full-blooded persons. Furthermore,

their images are on the way of losing their textbook (straight) linearity, which is a sure sign that we have come closer to a real understanding of political life in the early twentieth century.

It is indeed her understanding of political life in Bulgaria, of the political culture of the Bulgarian national, of the role of caricature in moulding this political culture, of what the Bulgarian political imaginary actually is, an understanding built during her scholarly career, that Assoc. Prof. Parusheva presents in the third chapter of the monograph, which plays the part of a summary and conclusion. This highly analytical text showcases the long-term accrual and research maturity of Assoc. Prof. Parusheva, who has managed to "read" not only the caricatures, but also the Bulgarian society of the early twentieth century, and then to explain it clearly, neatly, precisely and in a peremptory manner. The author's excellent style and her pleasant sense of humour cannot, and obviously do not seek to mitigate the bitter reflections on the national psychology of the Bulgarians and the intrusive analogies with modernity.

Besides the above mentioned monograph, Assoc. Prof. Parusheva has also submitted for this competition 12 publications (six in Bulgarian and six in English), which reflect her long-standing scholarly interests in several main areas. The first group of publications are devoted to the Balkan elites and the networks created by them (Parusheva, D. 2012. *"We Are All Members of the Same Club": Bulgarian Political Elite and Their Networks in Early 20th Century*. Bulgarian Historical Review, 3–4, 62–72; Parusheva, D. 2013b. *Family Matters: Using Social Capital for Political Ends in the Nineteenth Century Balkans*. In: Baramova, M., Pl. Mitev, Iv. Parvev and V. Tacheva (eds.) *Power and Influence in South-Eastern Europe, 16th–19th Century*. LIT Verlag: Zuerich-Muenster, 149–166 and Parusheva, D. 2017. *Patrons and Clients. Bulgarian Examples and Balkan Parallels from the Late 19th and Early 20th century*. History, XXV, 6, 600–612). The second group of publications focuses on the study of the modern city in the Balkans and the importance of communications for its development (Parusheva, D. 2021a. *Modern city in the Balkans: Directions and Perpectives of Research*. In: Preshlenova, R. *Cities in the Balkans: Spaces, Faces, Memory*. Institute of Balkan Studies and Centre of Thracology, Bulgarian Academy of Sciences: Sofia, 33–58 and Parusheva, D. 2021b. *Cities along the Route: Plovdiv Becoming Modern at the End of the Nineteenth Century*. In: Riedler, Fl. and N. Stefanov (eds.) *The Balkan Route. Historical Transformation from Via Militaris to Autoput*. De Gruyter: Berlin/Boston, 121–138). Logically, most of the presented publications are devoted to visual culture and analyze its various aspects (Parusheva, D. 2019b. *Description of images – images of description*. Bulgarian Ethnology, 1, 5–15; Parusheva, D. 2019c. *Visual Representations of World War I in the Bulgarian magazine Ilyustratsia Svetlina*. In: Parvev, I., N. Kaychev and M. Barumova (compilers) *Central Europe and the Balkans. Collection in memory of Prof. Milcho Lalkov*. St. Kliment Ohridski University Press:

Sofia, 203–228; Parusheva, D. 2020. Uprisings, Revolutions and Wars: Visual Representations in Bulgarian Illustrated Press at the End of the Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Century. In: Stamatopoulos, D. (ed.) *European Revolutions and the Ottoman Balkans: Nationalism, Violence and Empire in the Long Nineteenth-Century*. I.B. Tauris: London-New York, 149–181 and Parusheva, D. 2023. *The Russo-Japanese War of the Early Twentieth Century: Visual Representations in the Bulgarian press*. In: Georgieva, T. and Y. Konstantinov (compiler). *Russia: Balkan Perspectives (19–20 c.)*. Institute of Balkan Studies and Centre of Thracology, BAS: Sofia 2023, 287–314). As a subsection of this group, one can single out the publications devoted to caricature and caricaturists. (Parusheva, D. 2013a. *Bulgarians Gazing at the Balkans: Neighboring People in Bulgarian Political Caricature at the Beginning of the Twentieth Century*. In: Demski, D., Il. Sz. Kristof and K. Baraniecka-Olszewska (eds.) *Competing Eyes: Visual Encounters with Alterity in Central and Eastern Europe*. L'Harmattan: Budapest, 418–437 and Parusheva, D. 2019a. *In the Mirror of Satire: The End of World War I in Bulgarian Caricatures*. *Etudes balkaniques*, 2, 249–277). The publications submitted for peer review contain both theoretical contributions (e.g. the proposed typology of urban studies) and new elaborations (e.g. the influence of informal and clientele networks), as well as leads for future academic debates (e.g. on the relationship between ethnography and photography).

Part of the submitted publications are the outcome of the participation of Assoc. Prof. Parusheva in 13 national and 35 international scholarly forums (since 2009) and are among the works actively cited by colleagues, as evidenced by the over 100 citations referenced. Actually, both the citations and the additional 20+ publications not submitted for review in the current procedure show that scholarly metrics are not a problem for Assoc. Prof. Parusheva.

Assessment of the applicant's personal contribution

The publications submitted by Assoc. Prof. Parusheva (340 points) as well as the citations (270 points) **comply with all** the requirements of the Academic Staff Development Act in the Republic of Bulgaria, its Implementing Regulation and the Rules of the Plovdiv University. They exceed the minimum national requirements, differ from those evaluated in previous procedures and are far from the only ones that the applicant could present. The scholarly works contain significant research generalisations and contributions, both of a theoretical nature and in terms of the precise methodology and facts used. **I find neither plagiarism nor inauthenticity of the scholarly data** in them and I am convinced that the merit for all research works, their results and contributions goes to Assoc. Prof. Parusheva herself. The data on citations spotted, on participations in scholarly forums, projects, panels and research organizations as presented in the documents confirm my

personal impressions that Assoc. Prof. Parusheva is well respected and reputed among her colleagues in various Bulgarian and international institutions. This would not have been possible if she had not been a proven professional in her research field, ready to support young colleagues and meaningful scholarly endeavors. The results she has achieved in academic activities are impressive and aimed at establishing a school that would continue to elaborate topics in the areas of social sciences and humanities.

CONCLUSION

Having familiarized myself with the materials and scholarly works presented in the competition and having analyzed their significance and the contributions they contain, I express my **positive** evaluation and recommend that the Scientific Jury prepare a report-proposal to the Faculty Council of the Faculty of Philosophy and History to select Assoc. Prof. Dobrinka Parusheva for the academic position of Professor at the Paisii Hilendarski University in Plovdiv in: higher education field 3. Social, economic and legal sciences, professional field 3.1. Sociology, anthropology and cultural studies (Cultural studies – Historical anthropology of political culture).

20 September 2023

Reviewer:

Prof. Yura Konstantinova DSc.