

Reference

by Dr. Nikolay Ivanov Nenov, Professor at the University of Ruse

on the materials submitted for participation in a competition

for the academic position of "Associate Professor"

at the Plovdiv University "Paisiy Hilendarski"

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

professional field 3.1. Sociology, anthropology and cultural sciences (Methodology of anthropological research)

In the competition for "associate professor", announced in the State Gazette, issue 98 of 19.11.2024 and on the website of Plovdiv University "Paisii Hilendarski" for the needs of the Department of Ethnology at the Faculty of Philosophy and History, Dr. Stoyan Antonov from Plovdiv University "Paisii Hilendarski" participated as a candidate.

1. General presentation of the procedure and the candidate

Dr. Stoyan Antonov graduated in 1995. The Faculty of History of Sofia University, where he defended his dissertation on the topic "The Tatars in Bulgaria (ethnological study)" in 1999. In the meantime, he worked at the History Museum in Razgrad, and later was a teacher in Plovdiv. Since 1998, he has been a curator at the Ethnographic Museum in Plovdiv, and since 2000, he has been a research associate at the museum. Since 2005, he has been a chief assistant at Plovdiv University. I list all these places, because they are important for the formation of the researcher and show the diverse experience that has been accumulated over time. He has participated in over 20 research projects, including international ones. In his public activities, he is highly prominent as the founder and chairman of the Bulgarian Heraldic and Vexillological Society, through which he seeks and finds other paths to knowledge that excites him.

2. General characteristics of the activities of the candidate/s

For this competition, Dr. Stoyan Antonov has submitted for review scientific works that have not been submitted for the acquisition of the educational and scientific degree "doctor", in accordance with the requirements of Art. 24 para. 3 of the Act on the Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria. They are grouped as follows: monographs - one (individual), studies - 1 and articles - 13. From the description of the materials for the competition it is clear that the candidate has indicated original scientific research works and publications. The scientific production submitted for review, in terms of its scope and structure, provides an excellent opportunity to assess the qualities of the candidate as a researcher. In general, the submitted works meet the minimum requirements in accordance with the Regulations

for the Implementation of the ZRASRB of the University of Plovdiv, and no evidence of plagiarism is found in them.

The monographic work of Dr. Stoyan Antonov focuses on the changes in the village of Chereshovo in Northeastern Bulgaria, which are described through transitions in the life of the village as a community, through interviews with local residents who insert themselves and their manifestations into the transformations of the social fabric. The use of various field methods, "as part of the strategy of the anthropological approach to research "up close and personal", builds models for understanding synchronizations between personal and community interaction. Thus, the author tries to answer the question of how the villagers individually, on the one hand, and together, as a collective, on the other, maintain their identity, living with their past. The village he chose for research is not a closed traditional and homogeneous community, which is why it is appropriate to focus on the problem of the cultural reproduction of group identity in the conditions of a changing world.

As expected, "synchronization" is an idea that permeates the entire study, as it connects the individual with the social. Through it, the identity of the village is "seen in the present as a synchronization of a selected past and a desired future" (p. 13). Key to the narrative is a character, "a specific social actor, a carrier of changes, who combines the key positions of power for a place", defined by the author as a "transforming personality" (p. 18). Through it, Dr. Antonov has achieved a densification of the context in which the "synchronizations" registered by him are presented, which essentially gives additional persuasiveness to the study.

The author traces the genealogical nomenclature, which he registers in the toponymic system of the village and presents as part of the mechanisms for social control. Dr. Antonov emphasizes the "transformations" that occurred with the emergence of modern names originating from the monarchical institution of the country, which show the impact and changes that occurred in the local community.

Based on the idea of individual, collective and historical memory, which are mutually conditioned, the researcher focuses on creating interpretations of memory and history, tied to the place. Particularly important for him is the visual history, which he considers as a separate narrative about the village, standing in opposition to the existing ones, which it complements. I will pay attention to one detail discussed by the author – it is about the thematic part of photographs, which are from the opening of a monument to a local important party functionary. I support the position of the author, who relies on the interpretation of the choice of the compiler of the "visual history", for which not the official propaganda narrative is leading, but the modeled image of the "young" village at that time. At the same time, I lack a research comment on the question – which photographs and why did the compiler include them? The album with photos from the opening of the monument to Dimitar Genchev has been published, Dr. Antonov knows him, as he indicated in his monograph, but how he would interpret the compiler's choice against the background of the photos from the album is a question that gnaws at me and I have no answer.

The last part of the book unfolds the interpretation on the topic of the updated tradition, against the background of the created holiday Grandfather's Day. Described

through observation, as well as through numerous media publications, the holiday is considered as a form of local cultural heritage, living in the collective needs for local identity. Of course, to some extent, the possibilities for placing this phenomenon in a broader context remain unrealized – both among the "holiday of the son-in-law who has been killed" (in Etropole), and with the example of Gostilica indicated by the author, where Grandfather's Day also turns out to be alive. Even in a regional context, this type of newly created holiday during socialism is also known from the village of Tetovo, Ruse region, where Grandfather's Day was also celebrated until the end of the 80s, and the "holiday of the son-in-law who has been killed" existed in the 90s of the twentieth century. The proximity of Chereshovo to Tetovo – spatially and chronologically, excludes the coincidence of the appearance of this type of holiday. Naturally, the mentioned moments do not harm the scientific contributions of Dr. Antonov in any way, but are mentioned only as an element of the research dialogue.

I will also point out that I agree with the author that the Grandfather's Day holiday is "a marker of local identity, and its renewal declares, maintains and renegotiates it by referring to memory and heritage. This process is framed by the role of local activists, project activity, media coverage and interaction of various centers of power." (p. 138). In this way, examined in depth and mastered, the holiday turns out to be one of the strategic points in the process of "synchronizations" that change the object under consideration over time.

The monograph is based on the subject area of cultural anthropology and ethnography, striving to discuss the topic of changes in the modern Bulgarian village from many sides, with which he undoubtedly makes his contribution to this topic of research.

In his scientific work, Dr. Stoyan Antonov focuses on topics that sharpen his senses as a researcher, which is why he works in several specific areas. In the topic of heraldry, he uses an anthropological approach and has contributions to shedding light on specific topos for an international audience. At the same time, in "Bulgarian Heraldry: Prejudices and Perspectives", Dr. Antonov also makes a critical review of the research on Bulgarian heraldry, suggesting new topics and approaches for work.

Another important topic for the author is that of the Tatars in our country, where he broadens his view on the topic of his dissertation, conditioned by his own scientific growth, thus focusing on the characteristics of scientific knowledge, its ability to self-observe. The moment of introducing the concept of "community scientific activism" is particularly important, which helps to understand the role of Crimean Tatar activists in Bulgaria in the scientific discourse on Tatar studies.

The studies and articles of Dr. Stoyan Antonov represent research that is not part of his monograph. As a university lecturer with extensive experience, he is also tempted by the methodology that underlies various types of research, which is why he also creates scientific texts for teaching ethnology, as well as for field studies, as is the case with the Russians in Plovdiv. In this way, he demonstrates knowledge and skills that confirm and link his scientific research with his teaching work.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, I can say that the scientific works presented by the candidate for participation in the competition are sufficient in volume and are in thematic areas within the scientific field in which he is applying. In general, the candidate meets the requirements of the competition, covering the necessary points for scientific production.

Dr. Stoyan Antonov is an established specialist in the field of ethnology and cultural anthropology, who with his research meets the requirements of the current regulatory framework for holding the academic position of “associate professor”. His scientific contributions, related to the anthropological reading of the studied phenomena and objects, placed in a broad socio-cultural context (synchronic and diachronic), determine his scientific production, which gives me reason to propose to the esteemed members of the Scientific Jury of this competition to support the selection of Dr. Stoyan Antonov for holding the academic position of “associate professor” in the field of higher education 3. Social, economic and legal sciences, professional field 3.1. Sociology, Anthropology and Cultural Sciences (Methodology of Anthropological Research), for the needs of the Department of Ethnology at the Faculty of Philosophy and History, Plovdiv University "Paisiy Hilendarski", in accordance with the Act on the Development of Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria and the Regulations for its Implementation.

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Prepared the opinion:

Prof. Dr. Nikolay Nenov