

EXAMINER'S ASSESSMENT

by Prof. Dobrinka Parusheva, PhD, Paisii Hilendarski University of Plovdiv

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 (Culture and Communication)

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*, no 98, 19.11.2024) is Maria Stoyanova Petrova, PhD, Senior Assistant Professor in the same department. 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 eleven academic publications, among which the required habilitation monograph, three major studies (one co-authored, so-called “partition protocol” presented) and seven articles; all works published in 2016-2024. The co-authored study and one of the articles are in English, published respectively in Romania and in Macedonia. All other texts are in Bulgarian language and published in Bulgaria. As a reviewer I accept the attached publications, whose scientometrics meet the minimum national requirements for the academic position Associate Professor, when one adds to them the book (not attached) published on the basis of the candidate's PhD thesis – *The Scientific Heritage of Ivan Hadzhiyski. An Interdisciplinary Reading* (2019).

Maria Kissikova's (Petrova) monograph *Chitalishte and Time. Institutional Construction and Social Transformation. From the Pages of the Chronicle Book* is the result of several years of work in the framework of two research projects and is an attempt to use the chronicle book of the community centre (*chitalishte*) in the village of Pchelarovo, Kardzhali region as an anthropological field case. The first chapter of the monograph presents the contents of the document in question. This description, in my opinion, could run parallel to the following analysis. The second chapter introduces the reader to the thematic scope of the chronicle records and this could be interpreted as a first stage of analysis. A discussion of the various “roles” the community centre played in the everyday life of the village is added. In the third chapter, the author has taken an institutional-chronological approach and presented the community centre as a factor in the transformation of the local community.

A brief summary of my impressions of the candidate's monograph: this is an interesting study focusing on the content of the chronicle of a cultural institution. In my opinion, the narrative dominates the interpretation. I expected to witness more directions of analysis – not so much of the events covered, but of the influence of the main social actors who played an important role in the institutional life of the “Ivan Buyukliev” People's Community Centre in the village of Pchelarovo, and, conversely, the influence of the community centre on the dynamics of local identity. Apparently, the work in the context of the projects mentioned in the introduction “led” Dr. Kissikova (Petrova) to the community centre whose chronicle book is under research. However, I would like to learn whether the book of this community centre resembles or differs from the chronicle books of other community centres in Bulgaria kept during the same period. It is not a question of “random comparisons” (which the author rightly wishes to avoid – see the file *Annotation of Materials*, p. 3), but of placing the particular document not only in the local rural but also in the national context of community centres, if only in broad strokes, so that the study not only provides information about the “small place” but also somehow fixes the “big issue” being discussed (after Eriksen).

The themes of the other texts, with which Maria Petrova participated in the competition, outline the main fields that are the focus of her research interest: institutions (in the broad sense of the word); cultural heritage and its preservation and transmission (or impossibility of transmission); the interrelation between identity and community, etc. The author herself, in her *Statement of Contributions*, presents her texts in three groups (plus two stand-alone texts), the groups being presented according to the object of study rather than the thematic they cover. All publications submitted for this competition are the personal work of the candidate and the results are her own merit. The presentation of the contributions could be less descriptive.

In addition to publications, the candidate's research work is also presented through her participation in projects – national (11) and international (3), some of which are applied projects. This gives me a reason to highlight her ability to “translate” academic science into a language understandable to a wider audience, and as we know, communication of science to the public is of paramount importance lately. Dr. Kissikova (Petrova) has presented her research at numerous national and several international scientific forums. The visibility of her research is also demonstrated by the listed citations of her work, which meet the minimum national requirements.

Regarding teaching, the candidate teaches nine courses, of which one elective and three with a practical focus. Most of them are compulsory for “Cultural and Social Anthropology” and “Cultural Tourism” majors, and *Intercultural Communication* and *Stereotypes and Prejudices* are among the most attractive courses for students from these two majors as well as from other majors (“History and

Cultural Heritage”, “English Language and Cultural Heritage”, “Geography, Technology and Entrepreneurship”). In addition, this discipline is regularly chosen by foreign students visiting Paisii Hilendarski University under the Erasmus+ programme. In the last academic year Dr. Petrova has also taken the main course in *Bulgarian Ethnology*, which speaks for the trust of her colleagues in the department. The good evaluation they give to her work with students is evidenced also by the five bachelor theses supervised by her and successfully defended.

As one of Maria's colleagues in the Department of Ethnology, I have known her since 2010, when I started working at Paisii Hilendarski University of Plovdiv. We have participated in two projects together (under numbers 3 and 4 in the *Research Activity* file), yet I have no co-authored publications with her. My personal impressions are more than good: she is a person who knows how to communicate and charges her colleagues with good mood.

In conclusion, the documents and materials submitted by Senior Assist. Prof. Maria Petrova 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 candidate has presented a sufficient number of academic publications published after the defence of his PhD thesis. The results achieved in teaching and research activities comply with the minimum national requirements.

After examining the materials and academic publications presented in the competition, I find it justified to give my positive assessment and to recommend the Scientific Jury to prepare a report-proposal to the Faculty Council of the Faculty of Philosophy and History for the election of the Senior Assist. Prof. Maria Stoyanova Petrova, PhD, to the academic position of Associate Professor at Paisii Hilendarski University of Plovdiv in the field of higher education 3. Social, Economic and Legal Sciences, professional field 3.1. Sociology, Anthropology and Cultural Sciences (Culture and Communication).

Plovdiv, 15 April 2025

Author of the assessment:

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