

## Opinion

**of Associate Professor Dr. Mariyana Nikolova Stamova from the Institute of Balkan Studies with Centre of Thracology – Bulgarian Academy of Sciences**

**concerning the competition for the academic position of Associate Professor in the Higher Education Sphere 2. Humanities, Professional Field 2.2. History and Archaeology, for the needs of the Regional Museum of History – Montana, promulgated in the *State Gazette* No. 57/9 July 2021, with Dr. Vanya Ivanova Georgieva as the only candidate**

Only one candidate – Vanya Ivanova Georgieva – participates in the competition. She obtained her MA in Bulgarian Language and History from the Paissiy of Hilendar University of Plovdiv and in 2005 – her regular PhD from the Department of History of Byzantium and the Balkan Peoples of the Faculty of History of the St. Kliment Ohridski University of Sofia. Dr. Vanya Ivanova has submitted two monographs, seven studies and 14 articles (two of which in co-authorship).

The works submitted by Dr. Vanya Ivanova for the competition present her as a researcher with a broad spectrum of interests. They are devoted to several thematic spheres. First, the Yugoslav idea as ideological postulates and practical realisations in the history of the second Yugoslav state – socio-political and cultural-educational dimensions; second, identity markers and “images of the otherness” in Northwestern Bulgaria, with emphasis on the historical development of the town of Chiprovtsi – an emblematic *topos* both in the national Bulgarian history and in the Balkans as a whole; third, the anthropogeographic research as a useful research paradigm with interdisciplinary orientation, unfairly alienated in the sphere of historical knowledge, but with frequently used research results in the nationalist confrontations in the Balkans; fourth, certain aspects of the official Bulgarian policy vis-à-vis the Turkish national minority in the Eastern Rhodope region, including in the context of the Bulgarian-Turkish diplomatic relations (mass change of names of settlements and personnel policy in the sphere of education), and fifth, various issues belonging to the sphere of theoretical and applied museology, presented through the prism of the historical development and current state of museum work, mainly in the area of today’s administrative region of Montana.

Here I shall draw special attention to two of the thematic spheres: Yugoslavianism in Yugoslavia and the image of the “others” in the Bulgarian Northwest, which evoke considerable interest and carry original research contribution that Vanya Ivanova has clearly derived after in-depth research in Bulgarian and foreign archives, and with a detailed historiographic analysis of the issues.

Vanya Ivanova’s research works on Yugoslavia and on the path followed by the Yugoslav idea after World War II, on which I am an expert, are made with the first thematic sphere of research. She has used the rich available archive documentation and specialised literature in

the submitted book on the basis of her dissertation work, as well as in the studies and articles, which demonstrates her high erudition and in-depth research.

The monograph *Yugoslavianism in Yugoslavia. Principal Viewpoints of the Federal Centre (1945–1974)* is the principal academic work to which I shall devote more special attention here. The monograph, which was published in 2013, is the extended variant of her dissertation defended in 2004 on *Yugoslavianism in Tito's Yugoslavia. 1945–1974*.

The four chapters of the book examine the socio-political, economic and cultural development of the socialist Yugoslav federation from the time of its actual construction as a state formation in 1945 until yet another Yugoslav Constitution was adopted in 1974 and an attempt at typologisation of the principal meanings with which the polysemantic term “Yugoslavianism” is used, including its synonyms “Yugoslavism” and “Yugoslav idea.” In studying the theoretical dimensions and the practical applications of Yugoslavianism in the second Yugoslav state, it is possible to perceive original academic contributions at several semantic levels. Logically, the attempts at clarifying the content with which the term “Yugoslavianism” is filled, namely the idea of a unification of the Southern Slavs, come first. The different options for that unification and its respective components lead to differentiation of various defining factors of the lexeme “South Slavism” and its synonyms “Yugoslavianism” and “Yugoslav idea”, accordingly. The federal state system as a system and mode of functioning after World War II with the “lessons learned” from the unsuccessful state-forming experiment after World War I is examined in detail on the basis of the relation: Yugoslav state – Yugoslav citizen – Yugoslav nation. The multi-aspect analysis of the diverse theoretical and practical projections of the three principal components in the derived relation (together and separately) also highlights original research contributions. They comprise detailed examination of the so-called “Yugoslav self-government pathway to socialism,” as well as detailed description of all essential changes in the state system, the socio-economic and the cultural-educational development of the socialist Yugoslav federation on the basis of the correlation integration vs. disintegration.

Dr. Ivanova devotes special attention in several papers and studies in that thematic sphere to the linguistic equity as principal component of the equal national rights in the multinational Yugoslav federation. The codification of the already non-existent Serbo-Croatian language is examined in detail. The academic contribution here consists in the fact that for the first time in the Bulgarian research space there is a detailed clarification of the prerequisites and the concrete reasons that led to the emergence of the multilingual inscriptions in the public space of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, as well as again for the first time, based on authentic documents, the essential specificities of the so-called “national keys” and rotational principles whose introduction started in the second half of the 1960s, are presented in detail.

On the other provisionally identified thematic sphere, which the candidate emphasises in her academic studies under the present procedure, she has submitted the habilitation work – the monograph *Images of the “Others” in the Bulgarian Northwest*, which was published in 2016. The attitude to the different “other” – ethnos, confession or ethnographic group – is examined for the first time in the proposed thematic format. The proposed academic work by

Dr. Vanya Ivanova analyses fundamentally various receptive attitudes to the “otherness” characteristic of the Bulgarian Northwest. The otherness is identified and analysed at three main semantic levels: ethnoses, confession and ethnographic group, semantically differentiated as three separate chapters of the book. The town of Chiprovtsi with its diverse spatial-temporal realia, including the “memory places,” is examined as a peculiar case study in the outlined thematic area. The special attention to Chiprovtsi is not accidental: the history of the settlement in the 16<sup>th</sup>–17<sup>th</sup> century as ore-mining centre and as centre of Catholic activity in the Balkan areas of the Ottoman Empire has become a significant component of the national Bulgarian history. The author’s important research contribution here is the thesis that Catholicism and Chiprovtsi are yet another example of the so-called “ethnoscopia.” The detailed presentation of the different stages in the “imagining” of the *Torlak* identity after the year 2000 also ranks among the original academic contributions. Here there is a strong ideological influence from the Serbian side and diverse practical materialisations of that process in two municipal centres in the Bulgarian Northwest: Chiprovtsi and Chuprene.

Last but not least, contribution in Vanya Ivanova’s research work can be perceived in her anthropogeographic studies as a useful research paradigm with interdisciplinary orientation, which are much less common among historians; the topic of the mass change of settlement names and the HR policy in the sphere of education, especially after 1934 under the government of Kimon Georgiev, but with its own prehistory, as well as her research interest in museum talks as an invariable component of the museum communication and the evolution of museum work as a whole, with emphasis on the area of the present-day administrative region of Montana.

Finally, I would draw the conclusion that in addition to the mandatory minimum of academic publications and citation to comply with the minimum required points under the different indicators pursuant to Article 2b, Paragraphs 2, 3 and 5 of the Law on the Promotion of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria (LPASRB), Dr. Vanya Ivanova has submitted a greater than needed academic production for assuming the academic degree of **Associate Professor**. It is absolutely necessary to highlight Dr. Ivanova’s professional activities: as coordinator on the implementation and participant in the elaboration of projects, curator and tourist guide in the History Museum in Chiprovtsi and subsequently in the Regional Museum of History in Montana. Her professional skills and competences are also evidenced by her consistent teaching activities: from Assistant Professor to Chief Assistant Professor in the University of Plovdiv – the L.Karavelov Subsidiary in the town of Kardjali, where she delivered lectures and seminars and had direct teaching basically in the disciplines: History of the Balkan Peoples in the 15<sup>th</sup>–19<sup>th</sup> century; Museum Work; Contemporary (Newest) General History, with specialisation in Bulgarian Language and Literature. Her organisational and management qualities are attested by her successful work as Director of the Regional Museum of History – Montana since 2018.

From everything stated so far, I believe that Vanya Ivanova possesses the academic qualities and complies with the necessary requirements for assuming the academic position of **Associate Professor**. In this connection, I recommend with complete conviction to the

Academic Panel to confer to Dr. Vanya Ivanova Georgieva the academic position of **Associate Professor**, Professional Field 2.2. History and Archaeology.

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Mariyana Stancheva

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