

REVIEW

Of the materials on competition for the academic position of "Associate Professor" in the field of higher education 3. Social, economic and legal sciences, direction 3.1. Sociology, anthropology and cultural sciences (Ethnography - Bulgarian ethnology), announced in the Official Gazette, no. 37 of 17.05.2022 with a single candidate Ch. Assistant Professor Ivelina Avramova Eftimovaq PhD

Reviewer: Assoc. Prof. Ilia Stoyanov Iliev, PhD, Department of Ethnology, Faculty of History, Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski"

On the basis of an order of the Rector of Shumen University "Bishop Konstantin Preslavski" dated 15.07.2022, I am named as an external member of the scientific jury, which at its first meeting appointed me to prepare a review.

1. Biographical and professional data of the candidate

Dr. Ivelina Eftimova received a master's degree in history from Shumen University in 2001, then she was a doctoral student at the same university, and in 2014 she defended her dissertation on "Gender Positions in the Bulgarian Traditional Family". Since 2009, she has been working as an assistant, and since 2011, as a chief assistant professor in the Department of History and Archaeology, where her main teaching activity is related to Bulgarian ethnology. The candidate's education and professional career fully meet the needs of the competition.

2. Scientific indicators

The candidacy of Dr. Ivelina Eftimova meets the minimum requirements under the Law on the Development of the Academic Staff of the Republic of Bulgaria and the Regulations of the Shumen University. According to the report submitted by her, supported by the necessary evidentiary material, she has 435 points out of the required minimum of 400 under Art. 2b of ZRASRB, allocated respectively 50 points according to criterion A (dissertation), 100 according to criterion B (habilitation work), 220 according to criterion D (publications) and 65 according to criterion D (citations).

3. Publications

In essence, Dr. Ivelina Eftimova participated in the competition with a habilitation book entitled "Ethnological aspects of old age and aging in Bulgarian society (from tradition to modernity)", published

by "Bishop Konstantin Preslavski" University Publishing House in 2022 and 23 articles , published in academic journals. I found no plagiarism in any of the publications.

3.1. The habilitation work is dedicated to the notions of ideal old age, as reconstructed on the basis of ethnographic data from the end of the XIX century and later studies, comparing them with memories of today's elderly people about the period of socialism and with their current values and behavior. At the beginning, a clear theoretical framework is presented, the key world authors, research paradigms and concepts that are used later in the book are indicated. The exposition is disciplined and competent, the author is mature enough to know the contemporary debates on the issue and to be able to select exactly those research tools that best suit the field data she collected and the needs of the study.

The first chapter examines the situation in pre-modern and early modern Bulgarian society, with the main sources being classical ethnographic texts devoted to customary law. Dr. Eftimova convincingly defends the thesis that during this period the criterion for a successful old age was the inclusion of the elderly in the family, lineage and community social structures. Old people are not only respected, but also economically and socially necessary for those around them, and the main value is not the individual health or wealth of the specific elderly person, but his relations with other people from his family or village.

The second chapter is mainly devoted to the socialist period, with Dr. Eftimova showing how social policy is superimposed on the traditional value system. Eldercare institutions offering a lonely old age are not becoming the preferred form of aging. The choice of the elderly is definitely in favor of a life in which they continue to actively interact with others and remain useful to their family, kin, and society. This choice is also supported by the socialist state, for which the cheap and often free labor of the elderly (for example, in childcare or in OF organizations) is definitely extremely profitable.

The third chapter, which I find the most original and innovative, is dedicated to the Pensioners' Union, pensioners' clubs and forms of association after 1989. The ideal is again an active old age, not closed in on itself, but interacting with the younger generations. The retirees interviewed by Dr. Eftimova do not dream of enriching trips to distant countries, but to be useful to their families and those around them, even if they do not find support from modern social policies or even if they are at odds with other modern ideals of individual realization.

Thus, the three chapters of the monograph convincingly show how the idea of a successful old age in Bulgaria is based on the active relationship between generations, in which old people feel useful to others.

The monograph is based on impressive empirical material. The field material was collected over five years and includes both 90 interviews and systematic personal observations on the life of pensioner clubs and associations. Archival materials were also used, including raw sources from the retirement clubs researched by Dr. Eftimova.

3.2. Остаряването и модернизацията в българското общество в края на XIX-първата половина на XX век“, в: *Исторически*, т. 14, 2021.

In this article, Dr. Eftimova, relying on the modernization theory of aging, defends the thesis that with the modernization of Bulgarian society, the status of the elderly decreases. The article would have benefited if Dr. Eftimova had entered into a dialogue with Kristina Popova, who works on similar topics

(e.g. "The state and public services during the first years of socialism in Bulgaria", in: Bulletin of the Department of Bulgarian History and Archaeology, SSU Blagoevgrad, vol. 1/2003, <http://www.history.swu.bg/PDF/20.pdf>, checked on 4 Sept. 2022). Also, the pioneering publications of Peter Laslett on England and Milenko Filipovic on extremely unfair treatment of the elderly among the South Slavs show that perhaps one should not idealize the situation of the elderly in pre-modern societies and particularly among the Balkan Slavs. But Dr. Eftimova's materials are mainly about nursing homes, where old people abandoned by families and relatives find refuge, and with this caveat I accept her conclusions.

3.3. *Пенсионерските клубове: полезна за остаряването формална форма на неформалните отношения*“, в: Българска етнология, кн. 1, 2020.

The article examines the emergence of pensioner clubs during the socialist period and their modern functioning. She relies on highly original, meticulously collected field material, and her observations and conclusions are expanded and supplemented in the third chapter of the monographic work discussed above. This is a valuable and helpful text.

3.4. *Нямахме много, но имаше спокойствие*“. *Остаряването през социализма в динамиката на автобиографично-институционално-общественото взаимовлияние.*

The article is devoted to the concepts of successful old age and the policy of the socialist state. The material and conclusions presented in it are supplemented and developed in the second chapter of the habilitation thesis.

3.5. *„Награждаване и награди в пенсионерските клубове*“, в: Награди и награждаване в културата, Бургас 2020.

The article again uses an impressive amount of precisely collected field material. The awards received by the folk groups are a matter of pride and discussion, with Dr. Eftimova showing how they build the social fabric of retirement clubs, creating a shared memory and identity and simultaneously making them part of larger communities – the folk groups, with who compete, even when they are not satisfied with the result, of the municipality whose folklore they represent, as well as of the nation.

3.6. *Автентичният фолклор като символ на българската идентичност: из репертоара на певческите групи към пенсионерските клубове*“, в: Историкии, т. 13, 2020; *Художествените занаяти след пенсиониране – хоби и/или бизнес*“ - В: Народните занаяти – минало, настояще, бъдеще. Т. 13, 2019, ЕМО – Етър; *Материализиране на културата: съвременен състояние на традиционните занаяти и домашни дейности сред българските турци (по материали от с. Тушовица, Върбишко)*. – Народните занаяти. Минало, настояще, бъдеще. Т. 9, Габрово, 2014; *Българските традиционни календарни празници и обичаи в годишните планове за културно-масовата работа на пенсионерските клубове.* –

В: Банкова, П. (съст.). Жива старина. Научното наследство на Димитър Маринов (1846-1940). БАН, София, 2018

The articles are devoted to the relationship with traditions and the construction of the concept of "authenticity" by various social agents - folklore groups, retirement clubs, artisans or representatives of ethnic minorities. Dr. Eftimova shows how they position themselves as guardians of authenticity based on a personal transmission of crafts, songs and melodies, rather than, for example, a careful reading of ethnographic and folkloristic texts from the 19th and 20th centuries. The articles contribute to the debate about what constitutes 'authenticity' by bringing to light the position of elderly folk performers, as well as representatives of ethnic minorities.

3.7. *Identity, Shifting Borders and Migration: Everyday Experiences among Bulgarian Muslims in the Shumen and Razgrad regions.* – In: Contextualizing Changes: Migrations, Shifting Borders and New Identities in Eastern Europe, Sofia, 2015; *Different neighbors – different borders.* – in: Venets: The Belogradchik Journal for Local History, Cultural Heritage and Folk Studies Volume 6, Number 2, 2015; *Komünist partisinin ideolojisi ile realite arasinda – Razdgrad'in yerel basininda "öteki".* – In: Balkanlarda Türk Kültürü: Bulgaristan Örenği Uluslararası Sempozyumu, 27-28 Eylül 2018, Istanbul, Baskı Yeri-Ayı-Yılı: 2019; „Викаха ми „турския българин“: конструиране на етническа идентичност (по материали от с. Ясенково, Шуменско). – В: Историкии, Т. 5, 2012

A significant part of Dr. Eftimova's research is devoted to the construction of the identity of the Bulgarian Turks and the cultural policies aimed at them. In them, she uses the approach demonstrated in her habilitation thesis – combining field research, personal observations, interviews and work with archival material. The empirical material collected by Dr. Eftimova is comprehensive and precisely collected, and the conclusions are well defended.

3.8. *“Отражението на традиционната представа за „мъжка“ и „женска“ работа върху изграждането на половите (gender) позиции в българското традиционно семейство”.* В: Епископ-Константинови четения, Т. 10, ч. 2, 2007; *“Ролята на девическото образование в годините след Освобождението (по материали от гр. Шумен)”*; *“Изграждане на индивидуалните полови разлики при момичетата и момчетата по време на социализацията им в семейството”.* – В: Епископ-Константинови четения, Т. 16, 253–259; *“Влиянието на игрите и играчките върху изграждането на традиционните „женски“ и „мъжки“ модели на поведение в българската традиционна култура”.* – В: Историкии, Т. 4, 2011

Another part of Dr. Eftimova's research is devoted to the construction of gender roles in traditional Bulgarian society - a topic that is also the basis of her dissertation. These are early texts in which,

however, the researcher's ability to handle modern theoretical concepts and rely mainly on empirical material collected by her is already evident.

I can only recommend that they be combined with her current interest in aging in Bulgaria and turned into research on the gender specifics of aging in contemporary Bulgarian society.

4. Other scientific and teaching activities.

Dr. Eftimova has participated in one international, three national and nine university scientific projects, all of which are related to Bulgarian ethnology and meet the requirements of the competition. The same applies to her teaching activity - she supervised 6 successfully defended diploma theses, led 6 bachelor's and three master's courses in various programs of Shumen University. Her professional training and career fully meet the requirements of the competition.

5. Contributions.

Dr. Eftimova's main contributions are related to aging in Bulgaria. She compares the situation of old people from pre-modern and early modern societies to modern times. Her approach is innovative, as she successfully combines the use of archival materials, interviews and, where possible, personal observation in researching a given problem. Contributing are her studies of pensioners' clubs – forms of top-down organization under socialism that appear to have continued beyond 1989 and apparently been adopted as their own by many older people. Her research on the formation of the long-lasting value system of the elderly and the notions of successful aging, based on interaction with other generations, are an innovative contribution, too. Research on the role of traditional songs, crafts and skills in the formation of the identity of the elderly and the accompanying controversies surrounding the concept of authenticity are also of contribution.

6. Conclusion

Without hesitation, I give a positive assessment of Dr. Eftimova's candidacy. She meets the minimum scientometric requirements laid down in ЗРАСРБ and the Regulations of Shumen University, her publications are original and in-depth, the empirical material she has collected will be useful for future researchers, and her theses will drive scientific debates, her teaching experience is impressive, and the accumulated professional experience fully meets the requirements of the competition.

That is why I recommend to the esteemed scientific jury to elect Dr. Ivelina Avramova Eftimova to the academic position of "associate professor" in the field of higher education 3. Social, economic and legal sciences, direction 3.1 Sociology, anthropology and cultural sciences.

Sofia, 10/09/2022

A handwritten signature in blue ink, consisting of stylized cursive letters, likely representing the name Ilia Iliev.

Ilia Iliev