REVIEW

from Prof. Rumen Hristov Yankov, PhD - member of the scientific jury for evaluation of the dissertation of Assoc. Prof. Ventsislav Evtimov Muchinov, PhD, for the degree of Doctor of Science (DSc) in the field 2. 2. History and Archaeology, field of higher education 2. Humanities Science

The present review is prepared on the basis of the Order of the Director of the IPHS-BAS № RD-6-498/11.10.2023, confirming the composition of the scientific jury and the decisions of the first meeting on 16.10.2023. It is in accordance with the requirements of the Regulations for the implementation of the Law for the Development of Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria, the Regulations for the conditions and procedure for the acquisition of scientific degrees and for the occupation of academic positions in BAS, and the Rules for the work of the scientific juries in the Institute for Population and Human Studies of the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences on the procedures for the defense of dissertations.

1. General characteristics of the dissertation - volume and structure

The candidate, Assoc. Prof. Ventsislav Evtimov Muchinov, PhD, presents his habilitation thesis "Urbanization in the Bulgarian lands under Ottoman rule in the 19th century (until 1878)". The total volume of the work is 285 pp. The main text includes 245 pp. This is followed by a bibliographical section on the sources and literature used, a list covering 39 pages, and finally, a list of abbreviations.

The exposition is structured in an Introduction, "Urbanization in the Bulgarian lands under Ottoman rule at the border of two epochs (the end of the 18th - the first decades of the 19th century)", two main parts - "Influence of the Tanzimat reforms on urbanization in the Bulgarian lands under Ottoman rule in the 19th century" and "Urbanization policy of the Ottoman rule in the Bulgarian lands during the Tanzimat era", divided, respectively, into four and three chapters, and a conclusion ("Instead of a conclusion"): "Urbanization in the Bulgarian lands under Ottoman rule on the eve of the Liberation - European dimensions and regional specificities".

The first part of the work includes the following topics: administrative-territorial structure of the Ottoman Empire during the reform era, economic development of the empire in the 19th century, modernization of transport and communications, and health measures of the Ottoman power, discussed in the context of the factorial impact on urbanization in the Bulgarian lands during the period under consideration. The second part develops the themes of the new Ottoman urbanization policy up to the Vilayet reform, the modernization and improvement of the cities in the Bulgarian lands, and the policy of new towns in the third quarter of the 19th century.

Structurally, all the necessary elements of a dissertation are included. The exposition is in a logical sequence, which provides an opportunity for a reasoned development of the author's theses and, on the other hand, facilitates reading and evaluation.

2. Literary awareness and theoretical background of the candidate

The sources used in the development of the dissertation include: unpublished archival materials (I.), periodicals from the 1850s-70s (II.), published sources (III.; 80 titles) - travel books, collections of documents, statistical materials, revival textbooks, etc., and research (IV.) - more than 450 monographs, studies and articles.

The materials used are from the fonds of the regional state archives, the oriental collections of the National Library and the archives of the Institute for Balkan Studies in Thessaloniki. Included are over 50 sources of historical information and contemporary studies by foreign authors, published in Greek, Turkish, etc. languages.

The candidate's literary awareness is very good. The outlined broad base of sources is an essential element proving the theoretical preparedness to carry out the research. Apart from that, it could be the subject of a special bibliographical edition, expanded with a commentary section, on urban development in the Bulgarian lands during the last decades of Ottoman rule.

1. Методичен подход

It is the author's decision to address the main issues of the methodology in a more extensive introduction (22 pages). Taking into account the prevailing thesis that urbanization is a process that in our country is developing "… in the post-liberation era and especially in the post-World War II period" (p. 5), the candidate puts as the centre of research interest the question to what extent this process (which in its early stage was primarily a European process) affected the Bulgarian lands. The need to study Bulgarian protourbanization can hardly be questioned, given the activation of cities as one of the defining features of the Bulgarian Revival.

The aim of the dissertation is to reveal the nature, peculiarities and tendencies in the development of urbanization in the Bulgarian lands under Ottoman rule in the 19th century. Assoc. Prof. V. Muchinov, PhD, applies a complex historical approach to the problems. It manifests itself both in the toolkit of historical-geographical, historical-demographic and quantitative methods, and in the research tasks set to reveal the multilayered socio-economic, demographic and political dimensions of the process of enclosure of Bulgarian society in the course of the Tanzimat reforms.

Significance and cogency of the results, interpretations and conclusions

The conclusions of the thesis are synthesized at the end of the respective chapters. They present clearly enough the most significant final results of the study of a multifaceted social phenomenon - the emerging process of urbanization. In the first part of the dissertation (Part I. Chapter I) an in-depth analysis of the influence of the administrative-territorial reconstructions in the Ottoman Empire on the formation and development of the cities - administrative centers is made. As the author himself points out, there are no other studies so complete in this aspect and specifically for this period. By the middle of the 19th century, the network of towns - the primary

economic and administrative centres in the territory under consideration - had already taken shape. This status was largely preserved later in the administrative-territorial division of the Principality of Bulgaria and Eastern Rumelia. The correlation between the accelerated economic and demographic development of the towns in the Bulgarian lands and their rise in administrative terms has been convincingly demonstrated. The ascending dynamics of the settlements - economic nuclei caused (along with the factors of internal geopolitics) a reconsideration of their place in the administrative structure of the empire. The acquisition of a more significant administrative role, in turn, further stimulates the demographic and economic development of cities. The author uses a comparative analysis of the development of competing cities, and some relations to their functions in earlier and later periods.

The dissertation follows one main thesis - the economic growth in the 19th century had a demographic projection, which was summarized in an increase in the population and ultimately - to the intensification of urbanization in the Bulgarian lands under Ottoman rule. This understudied dimension of settlement and demographic development is the focus of the candidate's analyses and conclusions. A number of generally well-known historical facts are supported in the present work by a range of new data drawn from a variety of sources. The second chapter analyses the impact of economic factors - crafts, manufactures, trade and labour migration on the population growth of a number of revival towns. Beyond the descriptive and quantitative comparisons, the conclusions about the penetration of elements of urban culture and urban lifestyle among wider layers of the population towards the middle and in the third quarter of the 19th century are very important.

The author's attention to the construction of the first railways in the Bulgarian lands, the planned construction of the road network and the attempts to modernize some of the Danube and Black Sea ports is fully justified. They are seen not only as factors in the development of transport links and trade, but also in the dynamics of cities and the "penetration of urbanization into villages located close to the constructed routes" (p. 135). The author acknowledges the limitations of their impact and critically assesses the organization and effect of the Ottoman authorities' economic initiatives.

The fourth chapter contributes to the clarification of a less frequently discussed factor of the settlement development during the era - the epidemics in the Bulgarian lands until the middle of the 19th century (plague, cholera, etc.), respectively, the quarantine and vaccination measures, as well as the attempts to build a network of hospitals. Great detail and information saturation is achieved in this section of the study.

The second part of the dissertation concentrates on the urbanization policy of the Ottoman authorities during the reform era, including the policy of administrative-legal recognition of new cities. The first chapter analyses the initiatives in the field of urbanization and town planning in the

Bulgarian lands that began to be implemented before the beginning of the Vilayet reform in the Ottoman Empire. The conclusion is that the notion of urbanization as a measure of modernity was already imposed during this early period. The cities became part of the state policy to give at least a semblance of a European image to Ottoman rule in the Balkan dominions. Some aspects of the Ottoman urbanization policy in the Bulgarian lands during the Tanzimat have been touched upon in the works of Bulgarian and foreign scholars, but the topic has not been the subject of a separate study so far. The depth reached in this specific direction determines the scientific significance of the entire second part of the reviewed work. The main goals and means of the settlement (urbanization) policy of the Ottoman power in the Bulgarian lands during the reform era are outlined and the results achieved as a result of its implementation are analyzed.

The author discusses in detail the measures taken for the improvement and sanitation of the towns in the Bulgarian lands until 1864 (Vilayet reform), and the plans for creating new towns, mainly for the displaced Muslim population after the Crimean War (Tatars, Circassians, etc.). The second chapter deals with the period of modernization and redevelopment in the 1860s and 1870s. The author finds that the process of urbanization is visible "on both sides of the Balkan", by which is meant the proven increase of the urban population, both in absolute numbers and as a relative share of the total population.

The last chapter of the second part of the dissertation presents the generalizations and conclusions regarding the policy of granting urban status to the most economically and demographically significant villages in the Bulgarian lands. The candidate demonstrates the increased role of cities in the socio-economic development of the Danube Vilayet. The conclusions about the limited effect of the actions of the central and provincial Ottoman authorities are well founded. The contribution of the Bulgarian population in terms of labour and resources is highlighted. The author advocates the view that despite the additional economic burden borne, the revival man realized that the growth of cities and the improvement of transport links was a good opportunity for economic and cultural progress.

The final part of the work contains a critical review of the quantitative estimates of the urban population in the Bulgarian lands by our and foreign researchers. An independent analysis of data from Ottoman documents and information from the periodical press is made. The applicant demonstrates the outstripping growth of the urban population relative to the total population and the doubling of its relative share in the 19th century (until the Liberation). The direction and speed of change is described as "fully comparable with that in most European countries during the period under review" (p. 230).

In this part of the presented dissertation, regional differences in the level of urbanization in the present-day Bulgarian lands on the eve of the Liberation are revealed and factors are identified -

the specificity of the settlement network, the impact of the wars, the connections with the main centers of the empire, etc. A categorization of the cities is made and the most important conclusions are formulated.

5. Critical notes to the dissertation

Along with the acknowledged merits of the work, some of the author's interpretations and theses can be criticized. In the extensive bibliography, e.g., the almost complete absence of authors from the anthropogeographical school - Anastas Ishirkov, Alexandra Monedzhikova, Yordan Zahariev, Guncho Gunchev, etc. - is striking. with valuable historical-geographical works on Bulgarian settlements.

I cannot agree with the candidate's opinion that the reason for the absence of research on urbanization in the country until the middle of the 20th century is the dominant private scientific interests of individual specialists, and not the objectively late beginning of the actual process, started with the so-called "urbanization". socialist industrialization and state-imposed concentration of production.

In places, the territorial scope of the study was exceeded. This, of course, is not a mistake. Undoubtedly the development of Bitola, Nis, Tulcea, etc. cities is closely related to those within the modern borders of the country. However, it would be good to avoid discrepancies in what is declared. It is stated that "A comprehensive study of urbanization in the 19th century in the lands outside the boundaries of modern Bulgaria will be the subject of future research efforts", but in the introduction, and elsewhere, the territory is expanded to: "… the Bulgarian-populated provinces of the Ottoman Empire in the 19th century. " (p. 5), or narrows it down: "the study concentrates on the development in the 19th century of the settlements with urban status, located on the territories that after 1878 became part of the two Bulgarian state entities - the Principality of Bulgaria and Eastern Rumelia." (Abstract, p. 11).

In terms of the structure of the thesis, I believe that the elements of theory and methodology of the research should have had a clearly demarcated and, accordingly, titled section in the text. A certain dispersion in the sections of the work is also observed in the clarification of the conceptual and terminological apparatus.

In order to provide a fuller explanation of urban dynamics and of the sources of urban population growth itself, it is also necessary to look at the relationship with the nature of natural reproduction of the population in general and of the urban population in particular. The process of urbanisation in Europe, with which compliance is sought, is parallel and interrelated to the demographic transition of European nations. The demographic changes in the revivalist society are only mentioned here, without drawing on the connection with historical-demographic studies already carried out.

The very quantification of the increase in the share of the urban population contains a certain contradiction with the advocated thesis of the acceleration of the process after the 1930s and its synchronicity with the (Western) European trend. The aggregate data (Table 9) shows that the urban population growth rate in the previous period 1800-1837 was higher. Clarification is important given that the share of urban population is the most general quantitative measure of the degree of urbanization.

The conclusion of a higher urbanisation compared to that of neighbouring Balkan lands is also questionable. As far as the other European countries are concerned, including those of Central Europe, it should be emphasised that the primary factors in the urbanisation process in these countries in the 19th century were the concentration of large heavy industry and the development of rail transport. One of the hallmarks of urbanization is the outpacing of the development of large cities. The lag in the Bulgarian lands becomes even more obvious (but is not explicitly stated in the text) after the author has applied a quantitative threshold - settlements with a population of over 5000 p., which "drops" 40% of our urban population. Thus, a characteristic feature of the Bulgarian (proto)urbanization stands out - the development of small trade and craft towns.

6. Nature of scientific contributions

I have carefully read the attached list of scientific contributions. I fully accept the self-evaluation as a true reflection of the high scientific results achieved. The reference formulates ten contributions of scientific-theoretical, scientific-methodological and scientific-applied character. Insofar as the evaluation of the scientific contributions of the dissertation is crucial to the overall assessment of the candidate for the degree of Doctor of Science, I will provide an extended review of each of the contributions listed, in order, according to my understanding of their nature.

The dissertation is the first comprehensive and detailed study of the revival urbanization in the Bulgarian lands. The candidate's scientific elaboration of this issue is of high value not only for historical science, but also for the border thematic areas of demography and social geography. The methodology of the study is an original contribution to the enrichment of the theoretical base of historical demography and historical geography of Bulgaria.

The theoretical contributions include the scientific justification of the concepts of "city" and "urban population". This is very significant in the study. The conceptual and terminological refinements are related to the specific historical period under study and reflect both common perceptions and their regulation in the legal framework of the state, and statistical approaches in accounting for the settlement structure of the population.

Scientifically and methodologically, the research was carried out by introducing and analyzing primary material that is complex in content and diverse in origin. Some of the sources are used for the first time in a scientific work. Their disclosure is a credit to the author. The dissertation

creates a model for future research. A productive combination of private methods within the framework of the leading historical approach is approbated.

Contributions to the expansion and complementation of empirical knowledge in the thematic area under study are related to the candidate's scientific argumentation for:
- the impact of separatist tendencies, wars and uprisings in the late 18th and early 19th centuries, and the associated mass migrations, on the development of cities in the Ottoman Empire;
- the impact of the Tanzimat reforms on urbanization in the Bulgarian lands; the identification and assessment of the main factors activating the urban economy.

In terms of content, I refer to the above contributions as mostly confirmatory of results from previous studies.

The candidate's achievements in the detailed study of the Ottoman urbanization policy, the establishment of the dynamics of urbanization for the period under study and the formulated thesis of early urbanization in the Bulgarian lands are original. Certainly the author's views will stimulate the scientific discussion on the raised questions about the prehistory and the course of urbanization in Bulgaria.

Important from a scientific and general cultural point of view are the contributions of the candidate to the discovery of the Balkan and pan-European dimensions of the process. This comparison establishes the place of Bulgarian revivalist society in one of the most important vectors of modernization in the new times - demographic and socio-economic fencing. In addition - the dissertation helps to establish the level of socio-economic, demographic and cultural development of Bulgarian cities in the complex conditions of foreign domination.

The achievements in the research deserve to be given a field for scientific and applied expression in education through specialized courses in the history curricula of higher education institutions, as well as in the history and civilizations curriculum in secondary school.

7. Evaluation of the quality of scientific works related to the fulfillment of the minimum national requirements for the degree of Doctor of Science.

The report of Assoc. Prof. Ventsislav Muchinov, PhD, shows that the minimum requirements of the BAS for obtaining the degree of Doctor of Science have been met. On the topic of the dissertation the candidate presents 11 publications - studies and articles, 10 of which are independent. Some of the results of the study have been made public through papers presented at eight scientific conferences and related forums. Six of the papers on the subject of this dissertation have been cited 14 times in scientific publications by other authors. I give a positive assessment of the quality of the candidate's scientific work.

8. To what extent is the dissertation research primarily the personal work of the candidate?

Familiarity with the content of the scientific works of Assoc. dr. Ventsislav Mucinov allows me to express my firm opinion that they are his personal work. References to the achievements of other researchers are correct. The required declaration of originality is attached.

9. Conclusion.

The above mentioned scientific contributions of the dissertation work "Urbanization in the Bulgarian lands under Ottoman rule in the XIX century (until 1878)", the achieved high scientific results in the study of the development of cities during the Bulgarian Revival and the compliance of the candidate's scientific indicators with the normative requirements give grounds to support the award of the degree of Doctor of Science to Assoc. Prof. Ventsislav Evtimov Muchinov, PhD. I will vote in the affirmative and urge the other members of the distinguished scientific panel to support the nomination.

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