ATTITUDE

From

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Hristiyan Atanasov Atanasov

On the dissertation by

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Ventsislav Evtimov Muchinov

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Entitled: **"Urbanization in the Bulgarian lands under Ottoman rule in the 19th century (until 1878)"**

Submitted for the acquisition of the scientific degree Doctor of Science, specializing in "2.2 History and Archaeology", within the field of higher education "2.2 Humanities".

1. General impression of the dissertation

The work of Assoc. Prof. Dr. Ventsislav Muchinov is dedicated to a topic whose importance is inherent. Demographic expansion or regression serves as the primary indicators of the developmental trajectory of any society. The significance of this topic is further underscored by the ongoing public debate on demographic trends in contemporary Bulgaria. Hence, Assoc. Muchinov's research is timely and well-placed, addressing the pivotal issue of urbanization – a prominent marker of modernity from the 18th to the 20th centuries. This period witnessed a notable shift in population from rural areas to urban centers, accompanied by various prerequisites and consequential outcomes. Cities, as the showcase of any society, merit thorough examination of their structure and arrangement – a fundamentally crucial aspect. Notably, Assoc. Muchinov's dissertation aims to achieve this, as clearly articulated in its introductory section. The primary objective is to *unveil the nature, peculiarities, and trends in the development of urbanization in the Bulgarian lands under Ottoman rule during the 19th century* (p. 12).

In the pursuit of this objective, Assoc. Muchinov establishes a rather unconventional yet exceptionally intriguing and logically consistent structure for the study. The arrangement includes an introduction, introductory part, "Part One" comprising four chapters, "Part Two" encompassing three chapters, a comprehensive conclusion, bibliography, and a list of abbreviations. This innovative structure offers a highly analytical and intelligently written exposition, grounded in a substantial volume of primary sources. Notably, these sources span various languages, including Bulgarian, Greek, and Ottoman Turkish, reflecting the author's commendable linguistic diversity. It is noteworthy that the author has meticulously incorporated a vast array of research papers, leaving little room for omission of any major work dedicated to the period, a specific topic, region, or settlement.

2. Significance and cogency of the obtained results, nature of the scholarly contributions

Assoc. Muchinov's profound knowledge of both published and unpublished sources, coupled with an excellent bibliographical awareness, enables him to construct an original and authorial research with scholarly merits across various dimensions. Several noteworthy

contributions deserve highlighting. Firstly, the meticulous presentation of the context in which demographic changes unfold, including internal strife, wars, pandemics, etc., stands out prominently. The dissertation adeptly underscores the pivotal role played by the Ottoman state in the rapid urbanization process, particularly post the 1830s. The narrative skillfully points to the Ottoman bureaucrats' undeniable merits, such as the construction of roads, administrative reconstruction, modern vision, and effective policies in health, economics, and credit. These aspects collectively contribute to the dissertation's scholarly depth and significance.

In this regard, certain historiographical theses undergo fundamental revision and reevaluation. For instance, the notion that serious progress of urbanization only became pertinent after the Second World War, or that Ottoman rule imposed a constraining influence on the development of Bulgarian cities, is critically examined. Notably, the author employs global scientific standards in conducting calculations and analyses related to urban development. This includes determining quantitative indicators to define the term "city". This approach facilitates meaningful comparisons between the processes observed in Ottoman Bulgaria and those in Europe and Russia, enriching the study with valuable contextual insights.

3. **The quality of the scientific works on the dissertation topic**

Assoc. Muchinov showcases a comprehensive collection of eleven studies, beyond the dissertation itself – ten of which are independent works, and one is co-authored. Notably, these studies and articles have undergone publication in peer-reviewed journals, with several being accessible in prominent global research databases such as Scopus and Web of Science. This corpus of publications serves as a substantial complement to the dissertation, enhancing the weight of the author's scholarly achievements and metrics. I can confidently affirm that Assoc. Muchinov surpasses the minimum requirements outlined in Article 26, paragraphs 2 and 3 of the "Law on the Development of Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria" and the "Rules for the Work of the Scientific Juries in the Institute for Population and Human Studies – BAS on Procedures for the Defense of Dissertations". Beyond the sheer volume of publications, Assoc. Muchinov provides a meticulous list of citations specifically related to the dissertation's topic. This list includes a noteworthy number of references from the last two or three years, underscoring the author's recognition and appreciation within the academic community.

4. Conclusion

All the aforementioned arguments distinctly and unequivocally lead me to assert that Assoc. Muchinov has my categorical and resolute "**YES**" for the award of the scholarly degree "Doctor of Sciences". I wholeheartedly recommend that the other esteemed members of the scientific jury also cast positive votes and assess the candidate's qualities and skills with due dignity.

Sofia /……./
November 9, 2023 Assoc. Prof. Dr. Hristiyan Atanasov