OPINION

by Assoc. Prof. PhD Gergana Yordanova Georgieva

member of the scientific jury for the evaluation of the dissertation "Urbanization in the Bulgarian lands under the Ottoman rule in the 19th century (until 1878)" of Assoc. Prof. PhD Ventsislav Evtimov Muchinov for the acquisition of the scientific degree "Doctor of Science" in the field of higher education 2. Humanities, 2.2. History and Archaeology, based on Art. 40 of the Regulations for the Implementation of the RSARB, Art. 6, para. 2 and 3 of the corresponding regulations of the BAS and decision of the Scientific Council of the Institute for Population and Human Research dated 11.10.2023

The procedure was launched on the basis of a decision of the Scientific Council of the Institute for Population and Human Research (11.10.2023, Minutes No. 9, Item 1). The scientific jury was approved by Order No. RD-6-498/11.10.2023 of the Director of the Institute of Scientific Research. All procedural actions are in accordance with the Regulations for the implementation of the RSARB in the BAS. The participant in the procedure – Assoc. Prof. PhD Ventsislav Evtimov Muchinov, meets the minimum national requirements.

Assoc. Prof. Ventsislav Muchinov obtained his bachelor's degree in history at Sofia University in 2002; master's degree at the same university in 2003, and PhD degree at the Center for Population Research at the BAS (2009). His professional experience at the Institute for Population and Human Research at the BAS includes academic development from Chief Assistant to Associate Professor and the administrative position of Scientific Secretary of the Institute. Assoc. Prof. Muchinov participated in ten projects with different sources of funding – FNI, BAS, Ministry of Education of the Republic of Bulgaria, Irish National University in Galway, Ireland. He is the leader of two of the projects and a member of the team in the others. He has a specialization at the Aristotle University in Thessaloniki, Greece (2007–2008).

In the current procedure for obtaining the scientific degree "Doctor of Sciences", Assoc. Prof. V. Muchinov presents twelve publications: a dissertation and eleven articles. The presented dissertation "Urbanization in the Bulgarian lands under Ottoman rule in the 19th century (until 1878)" has an indisputable contribution character. In seven chapters, the conditions and factors for the development of the process of urbanization in the Bulgarian lands in the 19th century are successively examined. The importance of the administrative system and the economic development of the Ottoman Empire in the process of urbanization are convincingly presented. Attention has been paid to some key measures during the Tanzimat period such as the modernization of transport and communications, and the struggle to contain epidemics.

The volume and variety of the used sources is impressive. Assoc. Prof. V. Muchinov researches in detail the development of a number of Bulgarian cities, which he achieves thanks to numerous and diverse sources. He effectively used the available Bulgarian, Greek and Ottoman periodicals to extract statistical data, demographic development and follow the reformed and administrative acts of the authorities, related to the change of the status of some Bulgarian cities. Particularly valuable is the use of some sources little known to Bulgarian researchers, such as the documents from the Macedonian archive in Thessaloniki and Ottoman documents from the Oriental Department of the National Library – Sofia, as well as from some other state archives in the Bulgaria.

A good knowledge of historiography allows Assoc. Prof. Muchinov to have a clear view to the development of a number of cities in the Bulgarian lands. His observations about the decline of some cities as a result of political turbulence, migrations (such as Sliven, Svishtov, Nikopol, Varna, etc.) are important; the lack of synchronicity in the development of Plovdiv –

an important commercial and craft center, but not an administrative center; the rise of some urban centers at the expense of the decline of others, such as Ruse, which managed to "overshadow" not only Silistra, but also Shumen and Tarnovo. I believe that Assoc. Prof. V. Muchinov has managed to achieve a real understanding of the overall picture by avoiding the presentation of a mechanical collection of statistical data, as could happen when studying such a large number of urban centers. As an omission in the historiography, I consider the absence of the two monographs by Assoc. Prof. Nikolay Todorov on the development of Tulcha and Kotel in the 19th century, which would have been a good contribution on the topics of labor migrations and the demographic and economic development of Dobrudzha.

Assoc. Prof. V. Muchinov very precisely formulates his goal and convincingly emphasizes its importance and the need for such research: a comprehensive, large-scale examination of the process of urbanization in the Bulgarian lands, including the various factors that have had an impact on it. Urbanization is a very important topic for historical science, as it affects the dynamics of a number of processes and relates to many topics in historical research. The study of the urbanization of the Bulgarian lands in the 19th century in a comparative plan with Western Europe is an even more significant contribution, as it gives a new perspective, raises the question of the "backwardness" of the processes in the Balkans, helps to understand these processes in a broad perspective. It is particularly valuable and important that Assoc. Prof. V. Muchinov places the urbanization development of the Bulgarian lands in an Ottoman context, emphasizing the role and importance of the Tanzimat modernization reforms, the territorial-administrative structure, etc. – a context that was neglected for a long time in our historiography. Even until now, not enough attention is paid to the legal and administrative framework in which Bulgarian cities develop. In this way, he enters a new trend of a deeper understanding of Bulgarian history from the 19th century with the inclusion of the Ottoman environment and its influence on the Bulgarians. As an example of this trend, I will point to the recent lectures and articles of Prof. Ivan Rusev and the reports of a number of colleagues in the annual conferences on economic history, organized by the Center for Economic-Historical Research.

The rest of the studies and articles are directly related to the interests of Assoc. Prof. V. Muchinov in the field of urbanization and the demographic development of cities in the Bulgarian lands. Specific cases of urbanization development and urbanization policy, such as the Plovdiv sandzhak, the Danube vilayet, the cities of the mountain of Sredna Gora, have been examined. The topic on which Assoc. Prof. Muchinov focuses is very interesting and useful – the Ottoman policy in the third quarter of the 19th century to increase the number of cities and grant city status to some settlements. The topic of cholera epidemics in the Bulgarian lands and the measures of the Ottoman authorities to limit them was also touched upon – a topic which, in the light of the current events, i.e. Covid 19, has acquired a new meaning.

I declare that I do not find plagiarism in the works of Assoc. Prof. Ventsislav Evtimov Muchinov and there is no unreliability of the scientific data presented by him. After familiarizing myself with the materials and scientific works presented in the procedure and analyzing their significance and scientific contributions, I give my positive assessment and recommend to the respected Scientific Jury to prepare a report-proposal to the Scientific Council of the Institute for Population and Human Research for awarding of Assoc. Prof. Ventsislav Evtimov Muchinov of the scientific degree "Doctor of Sciences", in the field of higher education 2. Humanities, 2.2. History and archaeology.

12.11.2023 ……

Veliko Tarnovo /Assoc. Prof. Gergana Georgieva/