OPINION
by Prof. Dr. Rumen Hristov Yankov – member of the scientific jury for evaluating the dissertation work of Assoc. Prof. Dr. Spas Angelov Tashev for the acquisition of the scientific degree "Doctor of Sciences" in the professional field 2.2. History and Archaeology

1. General impression and evaluation of the dissertation work. The candidate Associate Professor Dr. Spas Tashev has presented the dissertation work "The Bulgarian communities in Albania and Kosovo - socio-political processes and demographic consequences (1913-2023)." The dissertation work consists of an introduction, a basic exposition in three chapters, a conclusion, sources, a list of abbreviations and appendices. The total volume is 265 pages. The topic is dedicated to the historical Bulgarian communities in the territory of two countries of the Western Balkans. The Bulgarian communities in Albania and Kosovo are at the heart of the geopolitical clash with our direct Western neighbors. The author does not veil the problem behind some sterile scientificity, but directly and with solid argumentation opposes the attempt to deny their Bulgarian character. In this work, scientific evidence is organically connected with extremely sensitive topics in Bulgarian society and politics. The chronological scope of the study is justified. The relevance is reinforced in the current situation of the accession of Albania and North Macedonia to the EU, by the legislative changes regarding the Bulgarian minority in Albania and the recent population censuses conducted in Albania and Kosovo. The dissertation is based on an extensive documentary and literary base - previously unpublished materials from the Central State Archives, from the author's personal archive, publications in periodicals, monographs, articles, etc., including in Albanian, Russian, English, Turkish and other languages. The exposition has a logical sequence, clear structuring and sustained scientific style. Leading is the historical-demographic methodology, supplemented by statistical-demographic and other methods. The presence of more and more detailed map materials would have been of benefit to the reader in making sense of the abundant factual material, especially in the delineation of the areas and in the presentation of certain demographic indicators.

2. Significance and persuasiveness of the obtained results. Scientific contributions. The self-reference for the scientific contributions is correct. Assoc. Prof. Dr. Spas Tashev has presented a complete and in-depth study. The conclusions are categorical and scientifically proven. The presented work expands the knowledge of the Bulgarian communities in Albania and Kosovo, especially in their development after the Second World War. Current data on the ongoing demographic processes are analyzed. The consequences of their geographical, social and economic peripherality are examined. The dissertation work has a methodological

contribution as an interdisciplinary study of the Bulgarian communities in countries where their ethnic identity has been denied for a long time. The problems facing its self-preservation, both in the past and in the contemporary socio-political situation, are outlined. The author has studied and interpreted in the study documents, archival and statistical materials of different origins, which have not been in scientific circulation so far. To the scientific and applied contributions I include the proposed algorithm for establishing the Bulgarian origin of candidates for Bulgarian citizenship. The significance of the study in a practical aspect can be much greater if the potential of scientific argumentation is taken into account in the development of policies and diplomatic actions to uphold Bulgarian interests.

3. Assessment of the quality of scientific papers reflecting the research on the dissertation. On the topic of the dissertation, the candidate has submitted a monograph and six articles that do not repeat those for awarding the educational and scientific degree of "Doctor" and for occupying the academic position of "Associate Professor". Parts of the study were presented at scientific forums. Seven citations of three of the publications were noticed. I positively assess the quality of the publications reflecting the work on the dissertation.

4. Conclusion. In developing the dissertation "Bulgarian Communities in Albania and Kosovo - Socio-Political Processes and Demographic Consequences (1913 - 2023)", Assoc. Prof. Dr. Spas Tashev has achieved real scientific contributions of great value to Bulgarian science and society. The scientific publications submitted under the procedure are original author's works. The above statement, as well as the compliance of the candidacy with the regulatory requirements, give me reason to support the award of the scientific degree "Doctor of Sciences" to Assoc. Prof. Dr. Spas Angelov Tashev, for which I will confidently vote "For".

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