REVIEW

from Associate Professor Stefka Parveva – Institute for Historical Studies (BAS)

for the research and teaching activity of Senior Assistant Professor Milena Ivanova Petkova, PhD, candidate in the competition for Associate Professor in the professional field of 2.2 History and Archeology (History of the Bulgarian Lands in 15th – 17th Century) for the needs of the Faculty of History at Sofia University “St. Kliment Ohridski”, published in the State Gazette, No. 105, December 11, 2020.

Senior Assistant Professor Dr. Milena Petkova, graduated in history at Sofia University “St. Kliment Ohridski” in 2003, defending a master's thesis on the topic: “Ethno-demographic, social and urban structure of Stara Zagora in the XVth - XVIIth century.” During the period 2004-2009, she was a doctoral student at the Department of History of Bulgaria. During this period she further developed her master's thesis in a doctoral dissertation on the topic: "Demographic development and agrarian economy in the Eastern Upper Thrace in the XVIth century". In 2009 Petkova received the scientific and educational degree "Doctor" in History. In 2010 and 2015 she worked as a part-time Assistant Professor in the Department of History of Bulgaria. In 2015 she was appointed as an Assistant Professor, and since 2016 as a Senior Assistant Professor in the same department.

Dr. Milena Petkova participates in the competition for Associate Professor with two monographs and 13 papers. The first monograph on the topic: *“Between Аnatolia and Рumelia. The Yörüks and the Regional Economic Development in Parts of the Central Balkans, Mid 15th – Mid 16th Century”,* Sofia: Gutenberg Publishing House, 2021 is the main work with which Dr. Petkova participates in this competition. The second monograph, entitled: *“The Central Balkans and the Ottomans. Demographic Development and Agrarian Economy in Eastern Upper Thrace during the 16th Century”*, Sofia: Gutenberg Publishing House, 2020, is in fact her doctoral dissertation published.

Here I will focus on the advantages and some shortcomings of the first monograph, which is a habilitation work required by law.

The first thing I would like to note about the reviewed text is that reading the book, I understand with professional satisfaction that Dr. Petkova continued to look for answers to research problems that were addressed in her doctoral dissertation. But due to lack of time and experience then they remained unsolved. Accumulated subsequently skills and knowledge, as well as the emergence of new research on the topic of nomads in Anatolia and the Balkans, have allowed the author to re-examine this complex process of settlement and adaptation of the Yörüks in the Upper Thrace, placing it in a comparative perspective.

The monograph consists of an introduction, three chapters and a conclusion.

In the introduction the purpose of the research is formulated precisely and clearly. It is aimed at studying the processes of demographic and economic adaptation and settlement of the Yörüks in the Upper Thracе in the period from the second half of the 15th to the middle of the 16th century. The chronological and territorial frameworks of the research are sufficiently well substantiated in the text. Special attention is paid to the reasons that led to the choice of Karaman province, as a starting point for comparison between the settlement structures and the economic profile of the nomadic groups, who later moved to the Balkan territories of the Ottoman Empire. I agree with the author that one of the leading motives for the choice of the two compared territories is the similarity of the ecological environment and the prerequisites created by it for the formation of the models of demographic and economic development of the space.

An important clarification that Dr. Petkova makes in the introduction is about the meaning of the term Yörük. She very correctly adheres to the characteristics of its use in Ottoman sources, which she uses in her research. The author emphasizes that according to the laws (*kanun*s) regulating the economy and social relations of the province of Rumeli and the *vilayet* of Karaman, as well as according to the censuses, the term Yörük / Yörüks is used to denote all nomadic groups in the empire.

Next, a brief overview of the sources and bibliography on the studied problems is made. Despite the stipulation for a more detailed presentation of the sources in the individual chapters, I think this is the place to point out in more detail both the wealth of information they provide and the existing limitations and the many problems they pose to the researcher. This is an important issue that many researchers have worked on and a wealth of academic literature has been accumulated on the subject.

The first chapter of the monograph deals with problems related to the ecological environment in the *vilayet* of Karaman and the Upper Thrace, as well as the conditions for the resettlement of the Yörüks from Anatolia to Rumeli.

Based on research on the topic, Dr. Petkova points out that the population of the Karaman region creates a settlement network that masters the space with different densities up to over 1000 m above sea level. Nomads also find their place in this settlement network. The various phases of their sedentarization took place there in the period from the middle of the 15th to the middle of the 16th century. Another characteristic feature of the ability of nomads to integrate into a specific ecological environment is their ability to use swampy areas in their specific livelihood. These suitable conditions under which the nomads of Karaman functioned were also discovered during their migration to the Upper Thrace. They are becoming an important factor for their successful establishment and gradual sedentarization in the new territories.

The second part of this chapter presents a brief historical overview of the possibilities of the nomadic population in Anatolia to settle in and master economically defined territory. Attention is also paid to the qualities of the Yörüks as a paramilitary population and their use as an ally in various political groups. In this part of the study, it would be good to expand the information on the geography and chronology of the migration of nomadic groups from Anatolia to Rumeli, as the title of the chapter and paragraph suggest.

The second chapter of the monograph deals with the settlements of the Yörüks in the Upper Thrace (specifically in the territories of the *kaza* of Stara Zagora and Plovdiv) and the *vilayet*of Karaman. The main goal of the author is to trace the changes in the tax registrations, which provide information about the main types of settlements that create and inhabit the nomadic groups in Anatolia. To this end, the first research problem she addressed was to clarify the term "*karye*" / village, which is associated with a settlement of a settled population.

The second research problem is related to clarifying the tax policy of the Ottomans towards the nomadic groups in the region of Anatolia and the Upper Thrace. The difference in the taxation of the nomads is pointed out, both at the stage when they are engaged only in animal husbandry, and at the stage of their gradual sedentarization and the inclusion of agriculture in their economic activity.

The third research problem in this chapter is related to the establishment of the structure of the settlement network during the period under study. Dr. Petkova focused on the entire nomenclature of villages (*karye*), *mezra*, *mahale*, *kışla* and other types of settlements of nomadic groups registered in the *defter*s covering the territories of *vilayet* of Karaman and *kaza* of Stara Zagora and Plovdiv, as a sign of different stages of their sedentarization and their involvement in agriculture. Reflecting on the nature of each type of settlement, Dr. Petkova came to an interesting conclusion. She found that nomadic groups brought from Anatolia to the Upper Trace a settlement network with small settlements prone to "swarming". This type of settlement organization of the space bears the signs of instability, given the dynamics in the livelihood of the Yörüks. The settlement structures inhabited by Yörüks and registered with the term "*mahale*", "belonging to" or "near" main settlements with a settled population, she rightly accepts as a sign of sedentarization of the nomadic group. Contacts with the agricultural population of the main settlement also played a role in this process.

The last, third chapter of the monograph deals with the economic profile of the Yörük settlements in the two studied areas - Karaman and Upper Thrace. In this part of the book, Dr. Petkova seeks answers to questions related to the emergence, balance or dominance of various components of the economic activity of nomads in Anatolia. She seeks to find the time and reasons when subsidiary farming appears in their livelihood and when it begins to dominate mobile livestock. The author seeks answers to these questions in the various population registrations, again comparing their data for the two areas under study - Karaman and the Upper Thrace. To build her hypotheses, she also used the observations of ethnographers on seasonal migration and the practice of agriculture by Yörük groups in Anatolia in the XXth century.

I find very important and well-founded the conclusions that Dr. Petkova reaches, namely that the Yörük groups in the Karaman region practiced agriculture and, more precisely, grain production. With this skill they settled in the Upper Thrace, continuing to sow there mainly wheat and barley. The appropriate ecological environment in their new settlements gradually turned agriculture into their production list from ancillary to a dominant occupation. This was one of the factors for the settlement of some of the Yörüks and their melting among the rest of the *reaya*.

The next question that the author dwells on is that of *mezra*s, pastures and village common pasture (*meraa*) and their use by Yörük groups, studied in a comparative plan.

In the conclusion of the monograph Dr. Petkova synthesizes the main conclusions she reached in the separate chapters. She presents the live of the nomadic groups in Karaman and their resettlement in Upper Thrace in a generalizing scheme, which shows the general and specific in their development in the field of demography and economy.

The qualities of the research consist firstly, in the good bibliographic awareness of the author and in the use of valuable, unpublished Ottoman-Turkish source material. Secondly, I define as very successful the idea of Dr. Petkova to study the structures and processes that take place among the nomadic groups in Rumeli and Anatolia, in a comparative perspective. This allowed her to reach much more reasoned and convincing conclusions and to build noteworthy research hypotheses. In general, the proposed research work represents a step forward in our understanding of the livelihood of the Yuruks and their migration to the Balkans.

My main note to Dr. Petkova's work is that she could make the Ottoman-Turkish sources she uses more visible to the professional reader. It is appropriate for a study, which is dedicated to the demographic and economic characteristics of a population, to be accompanied by tables, graphs, maps, which synthesize the source information and which are an invariable addition to the analytical part of the text. I recommend the author in the next edition of the book to try to fill this gap, which will allow the reader a fuller perception of the text.

Dr. Milena Petkova participates in the competition with 13 papers, 8 of which were published in English and Turkish in academic journals and proceedings in Turkey and Germany. The author introduces into scientific circulation and analyzes new, unpublished archival documents in them. The main issues in these publications are in the field of historical demography and economy. This proves her enduring orientation towards population research and its economic activity in various parts of the Ottoman Empire.

Dr. Petkova is also actively involved in research projects, some of which are funded by the Research Fund, others by internal funds of Sofia University. Among the projects in which she is a participant or leader, I would like to emphasize the special benefit for students and their lecturers of the type of learning projects in which they participate together. Such is, for instance, the project on the topic: "The Vidin kingdom of Ivan Sratsimir - between the resistance and its inclusion in the Ottoman Empire", led by Dr. Milena Petkova. The preliminary academic training of the participants - bachelor and doctoral students, their field work and scientific seminar require the project manager to have not only academic and teaching qualities, but also those of a good organizer. Obviously, Dr. Petkova has these skills, which is a guarantee for her successful work as a university lecturer.

It is also clear from the academic report that Dr. Milena Petkova is a lecturer in courses on the topics: "History of the Bulgarian lands in the 15th - 17th century", "Dynamics of demographic changes in Bulgarian lands under the Ottoman rule”, “Bulgarians in the imperial world-economy”, “Ottoman diplomatics and palaeography” (together with Assoc. Prof. Sv. Ivanova), “Ottoman Turkish language”. Apart from these courses, I would like to mention two other courses within the ERASMUS program, in which Dr. Petkova teaches in English: The Ottoman “world-economy” – new approaches to imperial “economic mind”, „The Ottoman rule and the demographic changes – the Bulgarian lands, the Balkans and Europe“. This list comes to show that the candidate has gained enough experience as a university lecturer. This fact suggests that she is ready to meet the challenges and requirements of the academic position of "Associate Professor".

What has been written so far gives me reason to vote positively for the election of Senior Assistant Professor Milena Ivanova Petkova, PhD, for the academic position of "Associate Professor" in the professional field 2.2 History and Archeology (History of the Bulgarian lands in the 15th – 17th century).

Sofia, 24.04.2021 Associate Professor Stefka Parveva, PhD