**Statement**

**by Professor PhD Nadya Manolova-Nikolova**

**Sofia University “St. Kliment Ochridski”**

**Professional field 3.1. Sociology, anthropology and cultural sciences**

Regarding the documentation and academic materials, submitted for the open competition for the academic post of “Associated Professor” in the professional field 3.1. Sociology, Anthropology and Culture studies (Bulgarian ethnology. Traditional medicine) at Sofia University “St. Kliment Ochridski”, announced in the State Gazette, issue 48 from 28.06.2022

**1. Information about the competition**

In the open competition for the academic position of “Associated Professor” the only candidate is Assistant-professor PhD Violeta Kalinova Kotseva – Popova. The procedure and the resulting requirements in accordance with the *Act for Development of Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria* and the *Regulations at Sofia University* have been observed, which is evident from the submitted documentation. Having acquainted myself with its contents, I find it to be complete and correct.

**2. Information about the candidate**

Assistant-professor PhD Violeta Kalinova Kotseva–Popova graduated with Master’s Degree in History, with a specialization in ethnology in the Faculty of History at Sofia University “St. Kliment Ohridski” in 1999. She did her postgraduate studies in the period 2000 – 2004, and in 2010 she defended her PhD thesis on the topic of the hygiene of the Bulgarians. Since 2011 she has been Assistant-professor in the department “Ethnology and Cultural Anthropology’’ at the Faculty of History, University of Sofia. The materials presented for the competition show her progress and the accumulation of significant pedagogical and academic experience, as well as her participation in numerous scientific events – conferences, round table discussions, seminars, etc. Our colleague Kotseva-Popova is an active participant in various educational and scientific projects, 19 in total, she is involved in editorial work, textbook-writing work and others. Her dynamic scientific and professional activity proves convincingly her growth as well-prepared specialist and educator in the field of ethnology and medical anthropology.

**3. Description of the scientific works**

For the competition Assistant-professor PhD Violeta Kalinova Kotseva–Popova has submitted her monograph “Healers and Traditional Practices at the Beginning of XXI Century. Ethnological Aspects’’ ISBN:978-954- 07-5520-5; ISBN 978-954-07-5521-2.pdf, 2022, University of Sofia Publishing House, along with another 8 books (including works where she has been co-author or editor), 33 articles (including editorial publications), and 6 textbooks. All of these give evidence for the broad scientific interests of the author, and at the same time reflect the stages of her formation as on-site investigator and scientist. It is obvious that Assistant-professor PhD Kotseva-Popova is a perspective young researcher and lecturer, a highly necessary asset for the development of the department “Ethnology and Cultural Anthropology’’ at Sofia University.

**4. Academic contribution**

A main and most important place among the presented works holds Assistant-professor PhD Kotseva’s newly published monograph “Healers and Traditional Practices at the Beginning of XXI Century. Ethnological Aspects’’ ISBN:978-954- 07-5520-5; ISBN 978-954-07-5521-2.pdf, 2022, University of Sofia Publishing House, Sofia 2022. It is doubtlessly a well chosen topic bearing in mind its actuality and significance not only from the perspective of the medical anthropology, but also from societal point of view. The work was developed on the basis of the author’s extensive on-site investigation , which included several key regions in Bulgaria. The methodology applied is contemporary, combined with a very good knowledge of the respective Bulgarian and foreign scientific literature.

In my view the choice of observation of the traditional healers in rural settings, as well in the small towns, where these traditional practices have been preserved for larger periods of time and have remained removed from the influence of the urban commercialization, as a very good one. The specifics of the separate chosen regions are accurately analyzed which is very useful.

The groups of traditional healers are well defined on the basis of age and gender. The autobiographical method is effective and well used; the ways via which these healers gain the confidence of those in search of their services are mapped, emphasizing the specifics of the two sides in this two-sided process of interaction. The syncretic depiction of the healers has been achieved with numerous detailed examples, appropriate systematization and explanations for the separate types. The possibility for online monitoring of groups of people has also been used, which confirms the thesis for the necessity to begin studying the humankind in its online habitat. I was strongly impressed by the ethics of author, who made the decision to leave the respondents anonymous, in the context of the opposition understanding/non-understanding between the world of the investigator and the one of the traditional healer.

I am in full agreement with the rejection of the traditional practices being automatically separated as rational and irrational as extremely incorrect and harmful for the scientific investigation. I think that in result of the extensive investigative work on-site, the good knowledge of past practices from the history of the traditional medicine and the corresponding ethnological literature, a contemporary, scientifically-based presentation of the social status and importance of the traditional healers in our society has been achieved. Each one of the elements in the book contributes towards the development of the image and the position of the traditional healers, but these contributions, in my view, have been best summed up in the third and fourth chapters.

At the same time I would like to note some shortcomings in the text such as repetitions of conclusions already reached, long interviews, which could have been separated in the reference part; the text sometimes lacks enough analytics by using terminology, introduced by contemporary anthropologists; there are also spelling and punctuation errors.

**4. Conclusion**

After reviewing the submitted materials and scientific works for the competition and after pointing out their scientific contributions, the candidate’s acquired on-site and investigative experience, and despite the remarks I have made, I am in no doubt to give my vote for the election of Assistant-professor PhD Violeta Kalinova Kotseva – Popova for the academic position of “Associated Professor” in the professional field 3.1. Sociology, Anthropology and Culture studies for the needs of department “Ethnology and Cultural Anthropolgy” at Sofia University “St. Kliment Ohridsky”

25th September 2022 …………………………….

Sofia Professor PhD Nadya Manolova-Nikolova