

## **OPINION**

regarding the competition  
for the academic position “Professor” in professional sphere  
2. Humanities, field 2.1. Philology (Japanese literature and culture), published  
in State Gazette, issue 21/17.03.2020 by Sofia University “St. Kliment Ohridski”

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### **1/ Competition data**

The competition for a professor of Japanese literature and culture announced in SG, issue 21/17.03.2020 meets all the requirements of the Law on the Promotion of Scientific Degrees and the Occupation of Academic Positions in Bulgaria and the Regulations on the Terms and Conditions for Acquisition of Scientific Degrees and Occupation of Academic Positions in Sofia University St. Kliment Ohridski, and no procedural violations have been found. The only candidate, Assoc. Prof. Gergana Rumenova Petkova, PhD, has submitted all the necessary documents for the competition on time, complying with the requirements of the Law and the Regulations.

## **2/ Minimum national requirements**

The submitted data for compliance with the minimum national requirements for holding the academic position of "professor" in the scientific field 2. Humanities, professional field 2.1. Philology fully meets the requirements.

In regard to the indicators from **Group A**, min. 50 points, Assoc. Prof. Dr. Gergana Petkova has presented a diploma for a PhD degree from the University of Zurich (June 23, 2004), recognized by the Higher Attestation Commission in Bulgaria with a protocol № 37 /07.12.2005. The defended doctorate was published as a monograph in English, entitled *Male Characters in the Japanese Fairy Tale: Classification and Analysis* in 2009.

In regard to the indicators from **Group B**, min. 100 points, the candidate has presented a published monograph entitled *Conscious Education: Examples of Bulgarian Japanese Studies*, ISBN: 978-954-8697-82-8, Zvezdi, Sofia.

In regard to the indicators from **Group D**, min. 200 points, Assoc. Prof. Petkova has presented studies published in refereed and peer-reviewed publications, such as chapters from collective monographs and articles, a total of 237.5 points.

In regard to the indicators from **Group D**, min. 100 points, citations are presented in refereed and peer-reviewed editions and in PhD dissertations, a total of 145 points.

In regard to the indicators from **Group E**, min. 100 points, Assoc. Prof. Petkova has presented a list of two successfully graduating PhD students, a published textbook and participation in projects, a total of 220 points.

### **3/ Biographical data**

Gergana Petkova has a rich professional and scholarly biography. After graduating with honors from the First English Language High School, Sofia, she graduated with honors from Sofia University St. Kliment Ohridski with a master's degree in Japanese Studies with a literary specialization in 1999. In 2004 she successfully completed her studies as a doctoral student at the Faculty of Philosophy at the University of Zurich. After working for four years as a part-time lecturer in Japanese at the Department of Languages and Cultures of East Asia at Sofia University, she was appointed as a full-time assistant-professor in 2007. In 2012 she was elected associate professor in 2.1. Philology (Japanese literature and culture) at the same department of Sofia University, and since June 2018 she has been the Head of the newly established Department of Japanese Studies. Gergana Petkova has also been working very actively for the establishment of a successful Master's degree in Japanese Studies at Sofia University.

### **4/ Description of the scholarly publications**

The candidate participates in the competition with a monograph, "Conscious Education: Examples of Bulgarian Japanese Studies", ISBN: 978-954-8697-82-8, Zvesdi, Sofia, and 25 publications - two chapters from collective monographs, three studies and 20 articles, as well as a textbook. The total number of all publications of Gergana Petkova is 45.

The publications presented for this competition by Assoc. Prof. Petkova can be grouped in several thematic and genre circles. One part is related to the topic of her dissertation and the different approaches to the analysis of the traditional Japanese fairy tale.

Another, no less fruitful perspective, in the scholarly publications of Assoc. Prof. Petkova is associated with the problems related to the gender research of contemporary Japanese popular culture and the reception of Japanese literature in Bulgaria. A significant place in her scholarly research is occupied by the problems of modern education and in particular of the education in Eastern languages, in particular in Japanese. This is also the topic of the monograph submitted for participation in this competition.

Since the monograph is the central work submitted for participation in this competition, I will dwell on it in a little more detail. It is an in-depth summary of the scientific and teaching experience not only of Assoc. Prof. Petkova, but also of the development of Japanese studies in Bulgaria. The chosen approach of presenting the opportunities provided by the so-called "conscious education" combines the experience and perspectives of teaching both a foreign language such as Japanese

and the acquaintance with classical and modern Japanese literature. According to the definition proposed by Assoc. Prof. Petkova:

В настоящата монография ще представим един подход към образованието, който тук наричаме „съзнателно образование“ (conscious education). Целта на подхода е да обедини съществуващите методи за теоретично и интерактивно (включително хибридно) обучение с комплекс от целенасочени образователни действия в посока съзнателно организиране, усвояване и практикуване на учебния материал в постоянна връзка с реалността. В термина „съзнателно образование“ влиза разбирането за самоосъзнаването и осъзнаването на околната среда и взаимовръзките/взаимодействието между личността и обкръжението. В известен смисъл това „осъзнаване“ се доближава до будисткото разбиране за сати и сампаджанна ... (стр. 10)

It is this attempt to blend traditional, European, approaches to education and the Far Eastern philosophical tradition, in my opinion, which is one of the most valuable aspects of the work presented. It is even more significant that these theoretical foundations of building an integrated method for teaching and learning are supported by significant empirical experience, which in itself is an important contribution to the development not only of Japanese studies in Bulgaria, but of Far Eastern studies in general.

It should be noted here that both this monographic work and all the publications submitted for participation in this competition are original scientific

works for which no plagiarism has been established. The fact that many of them are part of publications referenced in international scientific databases also speaks of their innovative and original nature and their scientific value.

### **5/ Scholarly contribution**

From all of the above mentioned, it is clear that the publications of Gergana Petkova have not only played a major role in the development of Japanese studies in Bulgaria, but also have significant value in the field of international research and teaching of Japanese language, culture and literature. The versatility and depth of her research achievements, the work done to critically rethink and disseminate Japanese literature and culture in Bulgaria, make her a worthy candidate for the academic position of "professor".

Another important contribution that I would like to draw special attention to is the fact that as a translator, Gergana Petkova has also contributed greatly to the promotion of Japanese culture and literature and to the acquaintance of Bulgarian readers not only with some of the classical works of this culture, but also with new readings of some of them.

### **6/ Teaching work**

Gergana Petkova's teaching work is characterized by creativity, openness to the introduction of new topics and methods of teaching and the search for continuous improvement. The courses she has designed and read are another proof of her wide-

ranging scholarly pursuits and the depth of her scientific interests. As the head of the MA Program in Japanese Language and Culture and the Head of the two-year postgraduate specialization in Japanese Language and Culture and the specialization in Improving Communication Skills for a Successful Dialogue with the East, she has proven her lasting interest in finding innovative forms of teaching Japanese language, culture and literature.

The successful supervision of two doctoral students who defended doctoral dissertations in Japanese studies, as well as the leadership of several successful research projects for the development of Japanese studies in Bulgaria and the promotion of Japanese studies among a wide range of teachers, students and all interested in Japanese culture should also be pointed out.

## **7/ Conclusion**

Based on all of the above said, I can state that Gergana Petkova, as the only candidate in the competition for Professor of Japanese Literature and Culture at the Department of Japanese Studies, Sofia University St. Kliment Ohridski, meets all the necessary requirements for this academic position and I whole-heartedly recommend her election as a professor of Japanese literature and culture.

Professor Madeleine Danova, PhD

