

OPINION

By Assoc. Prof. Dr. Dimo Krastev Penkov, Sofia University “St. Kliment
Ohridski”,
Faculty of Theology

On the presented scientific works by Assoc. Prof. Dr. Klara Asenova Toneva in
relation with her participation in the announced competition for “professor” in
the professional field 2.4 Religion and Theology (History of Religions),
State Gazette, No. 63/30.07.2021

The opinion is written based on the:

Order of the Rector of the University No. RD 38-450/17.09.2021

Procedure No 1 of the Scientific Jury from 07.10.2021

1. Brief biographical details of the applicant.

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Klara Asenova Toneva is a long-standing lecturer in the discipline of “History of Religions” and participates as the only candidate in the announced competition for the academic position of “professor” for the needs of the Faculty of Theology. She was born on 2.05.1971. She completed her secondary education at the Physics & Mathematical High School “D. Kalyashki” in the town of Kyustendil in 1989. She has studied theology from 1990 until 1995 at the Theological Faculty of Sofia University „St. Kliment Ohridski”. She graduated with a thesis on “The Religiousness of Lyuben Karavelov” under the supervision of Prof. Dr. Nikolay Majurov. During the period 2000-2003 she was a full-time PhD student in the History of Religions at the Faculty of Theology of Sofia University. Following the successful defense of her dissertation on “The Status of Women as a Contemporary Challenge to Islam” in 2004, she obtained the degree of Doctor of Theology. From 2002 to

2003 she served as a tenured assistant professor, and in 2004 she was appointed as a senior assistant professor in the Department of Systematic and Practical Theology. In 2012, following her habilitation thesis on the “The Islamic View on Jesus Christ (an Orthodox Theological Study)”, she was appointed Associate Professor in the same department.

2. General characteristics of the scientific production included in the competition

In the current competition for professor, announced in State Gazette No. 63/30.07.2021, assoc. Prof. Dr. Klara Toneva participates with two monographs, four studies, sixteen articles and two teaching textbooks. These are various studies of different character and demonstrate the excellent theological training and also the recognizable style of Assoc. Prof. Dr. Klara Toneva. It is also evident, the undoubted linguistic culture of the candidate, which is demonstrated by her precise expressions and the specific harmony of the texts

In addition to the activities of Assoc. Prof. Dr. Klara Toneva, I should also mention her participation in national and international conferences, along with her participation in several research projects directly related to the disciplines that she teaches at the Faculty of Theology and elsewhere.

The main monograph with which Assoc. Prof. Dr. Klara Toneva participates in the competition is “Secularized religiosity”, Sofia 2018, University Press “St. Kliment Ohridski”. This work has been discussed in the Department of Historical and Systematic Theology Procedure No. 5 of 16.01.2018. Basically, it is a timely theological study in the context of the phenomenon of “secularized religiosity” and attempts adequately to interpret and clarify it. What is striking about this work is the author’s ability to unfold the problem under study in all its fundamental, dynamic and practical aspects. The presented monograph could be seen as a contribution to many

different fields of the humanities related to the establishment of effective and relevant programs and strategies in the service of the human being and society as well. Undoubtedly the monograph of my colleague Klara Toneva is a carefully planned, well thought and a systematically presented scientific work that deserves admiration and high appreciation. Furthermore, what distinguishes it from other similar studies (see e.g. Prot. R. Bigovich “Secularised religiosity in our time” In: Cerkva I obshtestvo [Church and Society], Sofia 2003, p. 183-211), is its scientific breadth, along with the conceptual orientation and the degree of thoroughness and detail regarding the complex and ambiguous subject under study. Overall, the monograph under review represents a valuable study not only in the field of the History of Religions, which will be further enriched by this work, but it is also important for the field of Christian Sociology.

The other main work, with which Assoc. Klara Toneva participates in the competition is “The Church – Community of Love”, Sofia, 2008 “Pleiada” Publishing House. This work does not relate to the scientific field of “History of Religions”, as it fits into another theological discipline, this of Dogmatic Theology. Because of the discrepancy between this text and the announced competition of the academic position of professor on “History of Religions”, I do not think that is necessary to comment on this work. The same applies to the two teaching textbooks “Introduction to Orthodox Dogmatic Theology”, “Pleiada” Sofia, 20017 and the “Appendix to ‘Introduction to Orthodox Dogmatic Theology’, “Pleiada”, Sofia, 2007.

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Klara Toneva has been scientific supervisor of eight PhD students until now, and so far three of them have successfully defended their thesis.

The scientific competence and tolerance towards students provide authority to Assoc. Prof. Dr. Klara Toneva, which complements her academic profile.

3. Final Evaluation

The documentation submitted by Assoc. Prof. Dr. Klara Toneva is complete and correct. It is in accordance with the legal requirements of the Law for the Development of Academic Staff in Bulgaria and also with the Regulations for the Implementation of the Law for the Development of Academic Staff in Bulgaria, determining the procedure for holding a competition for the academic position of “Professor”. It is also in accordance with the Regulations on the Conditions and Procedure for Acquisition of Scientific Degrees and Obtaining of Academic Positions at the Sofia University “St. Kliment Ohridski”.

The scientific expertise of Assoc. Prof. Dr. Klara Toneva is reflected in her involvement as an expert in several landmark court cases of the Bulgarian state against some extreme forms of Islamic fundamentalism.

The candidate's scientific parameters as a sum of all groups and categories exceeds the required minimum.

The multifaceted activity of Assoc. Prof. Dr. Klara Toneva as a researcher and expert outlines the profile of a conscientious theologian with a clear and adequate position on many current issues of our time. In parallel to this, the excellent evaluations of the candidate’s teaching activity are also of utmost importance, because present an undeniable contribution to the improvement of the level of the teaching process at the Theological Faculty of Sofia University “St. Kliment Ohridski”.

Declaring my strong support, I recommend the scientific jury to vote positively and to elect as a professor in the professional field 2.4. Religion and Theology (History of Religions) Assoc. Prof. Dr. Klara Asenova Toneva.

06.12.2021

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(Assoc. Prof. Dr. Dimo Penkov)