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Review of: Troyan. Documents, discoveries, events, personalities.
Compilers E. Avdzhieva, D. Vutova. Troyan: Faber Publishing House, 2018, 594 p.

The recently published jubilee collection “**Troyan. Documents, discoveries, events, personalities**”, dedicated to the 150th anniversary of the announcement of Troyan as a town, in just a few months became a significant event in our academic life. The materials published in it have attracted the attention of both academic and wider readers, not only at the regional level, but also in the country. And it is far a coincidence. For decades the history of Troyan and Troyan region has focused the interest of historians, archaeologists, onomastics, folklorists¹. However, the past of this region has not yet found its definitive outlines in the specialized and regional literature. The valuable studies published in the anniversary and thematic collections dedicated to Troyan², as well as the targeted archaeological and field studies³ of Iv. Zahariev, G. Kitov, M. Tsacheva, M. Balbolova-Ivanova, Iv. Hristov [**Balbolova-Ivanova, M.** 1988, pp. 21–29; **Zahariev, I.** 1978, p. 42; **Tsacheva, M.** 1992, pp. 34–45, etc.] fill in many of the gaps, but also many debatable questions remain unclear. The answer to many of them is given by the publications, included in the commented here jubilee collection published at the initiative of the Museum of Folk-Art Crafts and Applied Arts – Troyan⁴.

The resent jubilee collection, which in a way is a continuation of the collection dedicated to the 100th anniversary of the announcement of Troyan for a town [**Town of Troyan** 1968] and the one published in 1973 [**Troyan** 1973], has a several years prehistory. Yet in 2012 the director of the Museum of crafts –

¹ Already in 1891, Vlasi Iliev, the first of the Trojans, responded to Professor Ivan Shishmanov’s call for research, collection and preservation of the national folklore richness. The work of his life was consecutively issued in 1933 and 1934. “The town of Troyan in the 19th century. Historical materials” and “Town of Troyan. Historical materials. Part II. After the Liberation (1878) to the present days (May 19, 1934)”. See [**Iliev, V.** 2006]. About him [**Stancheva, T.** 2013, pp. 352–353].

² Of a contributing character are the studies, published in the collections **The City of Troyan**, 1968 and **Troyan**, 1973. Not less valuable are the collections of materials from the thematic and jubilee conferences, as well as the collection “The Museum and the City” (2013) with materials from the National Academic Conference that took place in Troyan (18–19 October 2012) dedicated to the 50th anniversary of the museum.

³ The beginning of the archeological researches in the Troyan region is set by the excavations in the cave Topliya near the village Golyama Zhelyazna in the end of the 19th c., but the systematic study of the region in the prehistoric age, Antiquity and the Middle Ages dates back to the 70s of the 20th c. [**Totevski, T.** 1992, p. 3 and the following].

⁴ The edition of this kind would hardly be possible without the preliminary ongoing preparation and the best possible selection of themes and authors by the director of the Museum of crafts – Eleonora Avdzhieva, as well as the whole team and of course without the financial support of the management of Troyan Municipality – in the face of the Mayor Donka Mihaylova.

Eleonora Avdzhieva, conducts the first consultations with Prof. Ivan Stoyanov and the author of this review regarding her ideas for a large-scale edition dedicated to the 150th anniversary. A publication that not only adds to the problems that have been mainly researched so far, but also the specialist involved in its development to present the latest achievements, to comment on the new theses and hypotheses, to search for new documents if possible. I.e. to be reconsidered what has already been studied for the history of the town and the region in the light of the latest archaeological discoveries and new archival sources. In its present form the collection even goes beyond this ambitious project. It is a result of long-lasting, in-depth and multi-aspect research work by young academics and some of the best specialists in history, archeology, numismatics, ethnology, anthropology, philosophy, onomastics, dialectology, as well as by local researchers. Unfortunately three of the authors died before the publishing of the collection – **Prof. Veska Zhivkova-Kozhuharova** – Doctor of Philosophical Sciences, sociologist and anthropologist, **Prof. Dr. Ivan Stoyanov** – one of the best specialists in history of the Bulgarian Revival, a long-time lecturer at Veliko Tarnovo University “St. St. Cyril and Methodius” and **Prof. Ivan Dochev**, whose work has not been completed. But their “touching responsibility”, as mentioned by E. Avdzhieva, and constructive contribution to the study of Troyan and Troyan region, deserve unconditional/without hesitation respect and recognition.

The included in the collection 21 studies, articles, reports and essays with an impressive volume of 594 pages, set various problems of the socio-economic, demographic, religious and cultural history of the town and region from Antiquity to the 21st century. Their vast chronological and thematic profile has imposed the problematic-chronological principle of structuring them, but, at least in my opinion, it would be more appropriate to divide them into separate sections. The focus of the studies as mentioned in the short preface are **the mountain, the tradition, the monastery**. I would add the town, its name, the personalities, the folk-psychology. The common theme of these quite diverse materials is **man – society – nature**, because there is hardly any other region in the country so inseparably binding man and nature. The circumstance that adds a particular importance to the region is its identification as a transitional zone of centuries-old significance in the infrastructure not only of Central Northern Bulgaria but also of the Balkan Peninsula. Yet in the period of the Roman rule, here passed one of the most important roads that connected the Danube lands with Thrace, crossing the central part of the Stara Planina mountain chain⁵.

Precisely on the Trajanov / Troyan road is the emphasis in the article of the deceased Prof. **Veska Zhivkova** – “Another return to the name of the town of Troyan”. Her study is another attempt to resume the discussion on the name of the town in the context of mythology and history. The designation of the long road from Belgrade to Constantinople, as well as other roads and places as “Troyanov”, according to V. Zhivkova, suggests a mythical rather than historical layer in the local memory. “In the end,” as the author notes, “we are again closer to the mythological discovery of the origins of the “Troyan toponymy” in the Balkans and among the Slavs in general, rather than the historical one associated with the Roman Emperor Trajan”. These problems are also discussed by **Pavlin Stoyanov** through the prism of mythical toponyms, legends, traditions and folklore songs (“Troyan as a transitional zone – meeting places for the people and gods”). According to the author, since ancient times Stara Planina has been considered a sacred mountain and a habitation of the gods, and the folklore from the region of Stara Planina and Ruse, show that the image of the road and the pass, as special places in the mythical topography, is a common knowledge of the Bulgarian folklore tradition.

Particular attention deserves the study of **Ivan Hristov** “The ancient history of the Troyan region (the 1st millennium BC – the beginning of the 7th c. AC)”, based on the results of the archeological researches and studies of the author for a period of almost 20 years. Concerning the repeated question about the continuity in the historical development of the network of settlements in the region, I will mention the clearly defined by

⁵ Marked in the recent studies as *Eskus-Philippopolis*, the so-called Trajan’s way is in fact was build under the rule of Emperor Nero (37-68) and extended under Emperor Trajan (98-117). I. Duychev [**Duychev, I.** 1968, pp. 11–17] draws the attention to its importance for the infrastructure of the region in the late antiquity and the Early Byzantine era, but V. Avramov has the credit for specifying the main stations on it [**Avramov, V.** 1914, pp. 226–240]. The mistaken idea of the name of the road in today’s Troyan pass is commented in details by I. Hristov [**Hristov, I.** 2009, pp. 22–30].

I. Hristov outlines of the complex network of roads, or more accurately routes that cut the mountain. The more important among them are marked by the guarding fortresses, nearby settlements and necropolises, which he discusses in details. A significant conclusion reached by the author is that all available sources and archeological materials, found during the researches of the antiquities around the Roman road through the today's Troyan pass, show that the settlements are slowly "moving" up to the peaks, as the early Byzantine provincial authority restores the old Thracian fortresses.

The continuity in the development of the settlement network at the Troyan region in the Middle Ages is backed up with detailed arguments in the study by **Konstantin Dochev** "The Troyan region in the Middle Ages (11th – 14th c.) (Historical and archaeological data)". The author emphasizes the importance of the region as a passage zone in the centuries after the late Antiquity. The elaborate system of defense complexes on both sides of the Troyan passage, according to him, set still not entirely solved questions about the attitude of the central royal authority towards this strategically important area, guarding the approaches to the capital of Tarnovo from the west and southwest. K. Dochev pays special attention to the role of the local Bulgarian population in the defense and maintenance of the fortification complexes along the Troyan and partly on the side of the Maragidik Pass. The acquired specific defense skills, maintenance of roads, bridges and passes, as well as of horse stations, according to the author, have left long-lasting traces in the everyday life of the population, who is among the main contingent of the system of the *derbencis* / the passes and the *vojnuks*' formations during the Ottoman period. One of the significant lacks in the study of Troyan and the Troyan region, as noted by Dochev, remains by now the lack of intensive archaeological researches on medieval sites, which hinders the statistical, topographic and chronological analysis of the fortification and settlement system, churches, chapels and other religious sites from the period 12th – 14th c. However, thanks to the long-term work of the former director of the Museum T. Totevski, the researchers and readers have data not only about the rich prehistoric and ancient cultural heritage of the region, but also about its history in the Middle Ages.

New information about the history of Troyan and its region provide the found and newly translated Ottoman sources by **Rumen Kovachev** ("Population and economy of Troyan from the second half of the 15th c. to the beginning of the 17th c. according to the Ottoman tax cadastre") and by the author of the recent review in the vast study "Troyan and the Troyan region in the ottoman documentation from the 15th – 17th c. (Settlement network, demographic and ethno-demographic image of the population, Orthodoxy and Islam, anthroponymy and economic characteristic)". The Ottoman register material from the 15th and 16th centuries, published by the authors, allows a well-argued corrective of the still popular thesis on the emergence and development of the settlements in Stara Planina and specifically of Troyan as a result of the outflow of the population of Thrace and the Rodopi region, who suffered by the Ottoman invasion [**Batakliiev, I.** 1940, p. 17–24; **Tsvetkova, B.** 1968, p. 18–34]. The summarized register data categorically implies the conclusion of the continuity in the development of Troyan and several medieval fortresses and settlements in the region, included in the system of the Ottoman provincial administration as *derbendzhiski* (guarding settlements). Particularly important for the future study of the history of Troyan are the published here earliest written traces of its existence. For the first time under the name Troyan the settlement can be found in the tax inventory from 1541 – 1545. Of a key meaning for the early history of the town is the information about the two passes (*derbends*), the four guarded points and the seven bridges, as well as the explicit specification "old *derbend* is" in the explanatory text to the inventory of its inhabitants. With some reservations regarding the way of writing and separate details in the explanatory note, according to Mutafova the village, recorded as Broyan in a tax inventory of 1516/17, could be identified as Troyan (commented by R. Kovachev). This information, besides revealing the important place of Troyan in the Ottoman infrastructure and the fortification system, gives a definite reason to rethink the assumptions about the time of its occurrence. Most researchers are inclined to refer its settlement to the beginning of the Ottoman domination. Others, including some of the authors in the here commented volume, accept as the earliest written source the "Turkish register for the possession of the timars from 1608–1609". A similar opinion expresses **Docho Nikolov** in his review of Troyan and Troyan region in the topographic maps, as he notes that the earliest written source for Troyan is

from 1608-1609, and his first portrayal in the cartography, written as Trajanac, is from 1648 on the map of Nicholas Sanson – son. A date around which the author builds all his assumptions about the time of occurrence and the transformation of Troyan into a large settlement. In the study of Prof. Kozuharova, as well as in most of the materials in the collection, including in the book by **I. Hristov** “About the Name of a Town” [**Hristov, I.** 2009], the possibility of existence of a prosperous village of Troyan in the early 17th century also is not accepted.

In support of Troyan’s “medieval past” in the pre-Ottoman period or at least its earliest possible occurrence, are the remarkable demographic indicators discussed by R. Kovatchev and K. Mutafova – more than 1,000 inhabitants, with a rather heterogeneous social composition – *derbencis*, priests, blacksmiths, shepherds, cowherds. The compact documentary material has allowed the authors to outline the demographic and ethno-demographic composition of the population, the domination of the Orthodox community in Troyan and in most of the settlements in the region, among which only Alaeddinler (present village of Leshnitsa) and Borima have predominantly Turkic population. Far more fragmented are the data concerning church and monastery network as the specific dimensions of the religious life and the devotion to the tradition being mainly traced into the anthroponymic data, registered in the commented *mufassal defteri* (K. Mutafova).

The rich information extracted from the tax headings in the translated Ottoman registers, allowed the authors (K. Mutafova and R. Kovachev) to present a relatively complete economic characteristic of Troyan and the region. One of the main findings is that within the Ottoman documentation of the 15th – 17th century almost nothing suggests the development of Troyan as one of the most important centers of craftsmanship in the Revival and post-liberation period. A town, not without a reason described as “the most craftsmen town in Bulgaria”, since in the beginning of the 20th century over 20% of its inhabitants are craftsmen. However, the comparative analysis of the summarized descriptive data shows agriculture and livestock farming as two main livelihoods of the population during this period, and the data on crafts and craftsmen are too limited. The great change most probably occurred in the 18th century, but according to the study of **Ivan Stoyanov**, rather in the 19th century – during the second half and the 20th century. It was then that the growing population of Troyan cardinaly changed its livelihood, and pottery, fur-cap making, leatherwork, fur trade and cart and ironmongery became fundamental for its economic life. The critical interpretation of the of Felix Kanitz’s description of 1872, made by **Ivan Stoyanov** (“Troyan during the period of the Bulgarian Revival. National liberation struggles”), reveals that even in the second half of the 19th century, the population of the town – about 3500 people, are rather occupied with cattle-breeding, agriculture and fruit-growing than trade and crafts. Those conclusions are also confirmed by several “domestic sources”. Even when the importance of the crafts grows, great part of the craftsmen are occupied with agricultural production as well. So, the associative linking of Troyan with “Troyan ceramic” and “Troyan plum brandy (*rakiya*)” has no grounds in the 18th century. In fact, pottery is a craft that has appeared later, which, unlike many others, has kept its vitality and relevance to this day. Among the first crafts are *goryanstvo* (woodcraft for household items and carts’ parts) and *dyulgerstvo* (construction or masonry).

Quite different from the imposed ideas is the comment of I. Stoyanov concerning the state of education, church and national liberation struggles, Levski and the April Uprising in Troyan and the region. However, according to him, the role, importance and place of the Troyan monastery in the life of the Bulgarian Revival society is undeniable. The Troyan monastery becomes an educational center of national importance in the 17th, 18th and 19th century. The proximity of the monastery, visited by pilgrims from nearby and distant villages, travelers and historians, the education of young people from Troyan in Svishtov by magnificent teachers such as Emanuil Vaskidovich and Hristaki Pavlovich, in Karlovo – by Rajno Popovich and many other factors generate and strengthen among the people of Troyan the national feeling of belonging to the common and to the separation of the nation in its own state formation.

The great change that has occurred in the image of Troyan as a craftsmen town in the 19th and the first decade of the 20th century, when the growing population of the town totally changes its livelihood, is convincingly presented in the studies of Desislava Vutova and Dimitar Vassilev.

In the focus of the research interest of **Desislava Vutova** (Crafts in Troyan and Troyan region in the 19th and the first decade of the 20th century) is the craftsmen production in Troyan and Troyan region right after the Liberation. The study is based on the so called “death register” for the period 1881–1901, which has not been a subject of thorough research and publication, and the participation of the Troyan craftsmen in the Balkan exhibition in London. The above mentioned register, four books of which are preserved and nowadays kept in the church “St. Paraskeva – Petka” in the town of Troyan, although it does not include the names of all the deceased in the town, it is reasonably defined by Vutova as an important source of information about the development of crafts. The punctual “reading” of the include in the register data of 280 craftsmen has allowed the author to present an intriguing profile of the craftsmen guild in Tryan, among which are not uncommon the women craftsmen and which stands out with a very narrow specialization within the individual crafts: *abadzhii* (tailors of special coats), *terzii*/tailors, *kaftandzhii* (shoemakers), *furriers*/fur-makers, *kyurkchii* (kind of coat-makers), pants-makers, tanners, *tabatsi* (kind of tanners), *papukchii/ chehlari* (slipper-makers), *kundurdzhii* (shoe-makers), painters, iconographers, *arabadzhii* (carters, cart-makers), *duvardzhii* (wall-makers), bricklayers, *dyulgeri* (masons, builders), carpenters, chair-makers, joinery-makers, cask-makers, blacksmiths, *nalbanti* (horseshoe-makers), braziers, whitesmiths, coppersmiths, tinsmiths, cutlers, potters, *mutafchii* (weavers of ropes, laces, sacks, rugs, etc. from goat wool), saddlebag-makers, harness-makers (saddlers), *kiradzhhii* (carters/cart-makers), bakers and others. Among the mentioned for 1886 could be found the name of the first iconographer from Troyan Pencho h. Naydenov. No less interesting for the development of the crafts in the beginning of the 19th century is the information on the participation of the Trojan craftsmen at the 1907 Balkan Exhibition in London. It has proved to be very successful for 22 people, who have presented their craft products and many of them were awarded with diplomas, gold, silver and bronze medals, however it is not certain whether anyone of them have been present personally in London or not.

Quite broad is the timeframe of the review of the development of the craftsmanship in Troyan (predominantly pottery, carpentry and furry craft) from the 80s of the 20th century to the present day (The New Craft Tradition in the 80s years of the 20th century to modern times), presented by **Dimitar Vasiliv**. The author relies mainly on the empirical material collected during his field work in 2014 and 2015 in nine settlements in Troyan region. Leading highlights in the study are the model of mastering and practicing the craft, the nature of the craft activity – profession or hobby, the market and realization of the production, the role of the Fellowship of the masters of folk-art crafts. Particular attention is paid to the Museum of Folk-Art Crafts and Applied Arts – Troyan and to the National Exhibition of Artistic Crafts and Arts – Oreshak – two institutions which have the greatest influence on the development and current state of the crafts in the region. One of the conclusions of D. Vassilev is that the development of crafts in Troyan region from the 1980s to the present days is characterized by constant intensity and continuity. Although on a much smaller scale than before World War I, they are part of the economy of Troyan and the region, which continue to be one of the main craft centers for ceramics and woodworking in the country.

The tradition – calendar holidays and customs are presented by one of their greatest experts – **Rachko Popov**. As he himself mentions, his study is subjected to his own terrene materials, collected from the villages of Dalbok Dol, Golyama Zhelyazna, Kaleytsa and Novo Selo, as well as materials from the Archives of the Ethnographic Institute with a museum from the villages Dobrodan and Shipkovo and several students’ theses (written within the period 1936–1947), kept in the handwritten fund of the university library of Sofia University “St. Kliment Ohridski”. In the system of annual calendar holidays and customs of the population of the Troyan Balkan there are unique phenomena, according to R. Popov without an analogue in the other Bulgarian lands. Among them is the custom *Misha svatba* (Mouse wedding), long time unknown to the Bulgarian ethnographers; the cult of St. Todor, conceived and worshiped as a saint-vampire or a *karakon*; the incredibly strong respect to the bear, also expressed in the Summer Mechin day (Bear’s day) in memory of St. Andrew of Crete; the non-canonical commitment of the cult to St. Elena with her two “brothers” Peter and Paul and many others. The day of St. Petka is particularly honored by the inhabitants of Troyan and the population of the entire Troyan Balkan, and the saint is declared the heavenly patron of the town. According to R. Popov,

the first big temple in her name was built during the Revival period in the village of Novo Selo in 1814, and the church “St. Petka” in the town of Troyan was built in 1835 on the place where her chapel was located. And here I will allow myself to make an addition about an earlier cult center – the one mentioned in an excerpt from an Ottoman detailed register of the 17th century, the “disappeared” today monastery “St. Petka”, located between Dulbok Dol and Golyama Zhelyazna, which I encountered years ago while researching for documents for the region in the Oriental Department of the National Library “St. St. Cyril and Methodius”⁶.

In the consciousness of the Bulgarians Troyan and Troyan region are identified with our Rival culture and ecclesiastical art. The detailed review of the construction in the town and the region for the period 1600–2014, made by the young researcher **Maria Minkovska** (Churches and monasteries in Troyan region. 1600–2014) reveals a quite different picture. Except for the Troyan monastery, respectively the old monastery church “Nativity of the Holy Virgin”, rebuilt in stone in 1780, all the temples in the region date back to the 19th century and just a few of them to the 20th century. The comparative analysis of the filigree-carved iconostases in the church “St. Nicholas Letni” in the village of Gumoshnik and in the church of the Troyan Monastery, made by the master Nikola Mateev from Novo Selo and Petar Rezbar from Gabrovo, one of the most remarkable masterpieces of our Revival art, definitely deserves the attention. One of the important conclusions reached by the author is about the density of the temple network in the region, further evidence of the state of Orthodoxy in the Revival period. Additional value of the study is given by the rich illustrative material and the necessarily included historical perspective for each of the churches presented.

Rositsa Bineva, Ana Kocheva, Eleonora Avdzieva and Neli Genkova- Marinova focus their study on the post-liberation realities and the present days through the prism of the economic development of the town, the education, the history and the current state of the Troyan language, the factors contributing to the preservation of the traditions and popularizing the applied arts.

In her research **R. Bineva** emphasizes on the institutions, which have proven their importance for preserving the traditions of craftsmanship in Troyan (Participation of the Troyan masters in the activities of AEC “Etar”). She focuses her attention on the emblematic for today’s town of Troyan and the region: National High School of Applied Arts “Prof. Venko Kolev” – since its establishment in 1911 to this day it is the only one in the country, educating specialists in the field of ceramics; The Museum of Artistic Crafts and the National Fair of Folk Art Crafts in the village of Oreshak. R. Bineva comments on an idea, which remains unrealized – the establishment of an Ethnographic Complex and an Open-air Museum, but which, according to her, would have undisputable significance for the development of artistic crafts in Troyan and Troyan region. The detailed review, made by the author of the participation of the Troyan masters in the activities of AEC “Etar”, shows that many of the most prominent representatives of traditional and artistic crafts over the years have been constant participants in the so called “master competitions” and most of all partners in the realization of the most attractive and successful initiatives of AEC “Etar” and above all shows that Troyan and the Troyan region continue to be one of the major centers of the Bulgarian craft culture.

Completely detailed in terms of facts and statistic data, richly illustrated with suitable tables, schemas, diagrams and photo material is the article of **Eleonora Avdzieva** on the economic development of Troyan after the 70s of the 20th century (Trends in the Economic Development of Troyan from the 70s and the First Half of the 21st Century). One of the author’s conclusions is that the first major changes occur after November 10, 1989 – for a period a bit longer than a decade, some of the productions are saved by restructuring them, others are completely destroyed, and new private firms have emerged. One of the positive trends is the fast development of small and medium-sized enterprises in 1989-1999, which resulted in relatively low level of unemployment. Within the study of the main economic processes and the occurred changes in the subsequent period, the author also comes up with several less optimistic findings about the reasons for the “ruining” of some of the most prosperous sectors. At the same time, she outlines the main priorities of the municipality of Troyan for the last decades, among which the first one is the improvement of the conditions for sustainable

⁶ See the study of K. Mutafova in the jubilee collection.

economic development. Instead of a conclusion E. Avdzhieva correctly presents part of the notes of Prof. Ivan Dochev, who started to develop the subject in 2014, but unfortunately died at the end of 2015.

A separate thematic field in the collection is the study of **Anna Kocheva** on the history and current state of the speech of Troyan, as part of the central Balkan speech. A starting point for the author, is the established during the recent years, thesis in the specialized studies, that the Gabrovo-Lovech-Troyan speech is not the only dialect in the base of our literary language, as it has been claimed in the past. One of the highlights of the publication is the literary practice from the late 1860s to the end of the century, when the Balkan speeches have a crucial influence on the formation of the Bulgarian literary language. Referring to the studies of L. Miletich, St. Kovatchev, St. Mladenov and others, A. Kovacheva presents the phonetic, morphological and lexical features of the Troyan speech, also relevant today. The fact that in Troyan's speech are kept remnants of old maturity, mainly in personal and family names, according to the author speaks of a sustainable tendency to preserve some of the most archaic old-Bulgarian features in our language. As a confirmation of this conclusion, she also indicates the new Map of the dialects of the Bulgarian language from 2014, in which the Troyan speech, situated geographically within the vast range of Stara Planina and Sredna Gora, is represented graphically in a red color range – a marker for archaicity and proximity to the old-Bulgarian state. An interesting aspect of the study, which is a subject to development in some subsequent studies, is the Troyan speech, registered among the settlers from the Troyan region in the Severno Priazovie.

The main task of **Nelly Genkova-Marinova**'s research on education in Troyan, which is relatively well researched in literature, is to show and recall that in the Revival and Post-Liberation period it has always been “a driving force of the entire local community, the key to its success and dignity”. Particular attention is paid to the first professional school in Troyan – “Grancharskoto” (the “Pottery one”), founded in 1911, today National High School of Applied Arts “Prof. Venko Kolev”. Rightfully it is considered the “living connection of the city with the applied and fine art” as the school is a start for many artists and performers of applied arts from all over Bulgaria, a center of artistic performances. The other focus of the study are the teachers and their students. The brief review of the most prominent representatives of the Troyan's teachers, including Vlasi Iliev, whose public energy is impressive, as well as a number of other teachers, suggests the need for a separate study to show the importance of all these persons, including those who have come under different circumstances of live in provincial Troyan and have become bearers of cultural influences through their educational activities. Impressive is the list of names of graduates of the Troyan High School, who have become nationally significant in their fields: Prof. Nikola Shipkovenski – doctor, Prof. Ignat Penkov – geographer, Prof. Damyan Danchev – pharmacist, Prof. Marko Semov – sociologist, Prof. Tsocho Boyadzhiev – philosopher, Prof. Hristo Dudevski – philologist, the artists Anja Pencheva, Lilyana Kisyova, Minko Bosev, N. Bordzhiev, the film director Docho Bozhakov and many others.

An important part of the history of the town are the persons. Among them are the folk-psychologist Ivan Hadzhiyski, the literary critic Minko Nikolov (1929-1966) – a nationally prominent name and Troyan's pride, with “knightly honor” uncharacteristic for our geographical latitudes and unsolved human drama in the words of **Neli Genkova-Marinova** (“To feel another world”. In memory of Minko Nikolov). The study of **Dobrin Tododrov** is dedicated to Prof. Tsocho Boyadzhiev – one of the emblematic names of the “Bulgarian school of philosophical medieval ages” and culturology, a peculiar legislator in the field of translation of philosophical literature from Antiquity, Middle Ages and Revival period. As the author himself notes, this is a task “unusual and difficult to be solved in an acceptable way”, as his “work has not yet finished”, but even what is done so far is an important contribution of Ts. Boyadzhiev to our national culture. The important persons are so many and a future volume **Troyans – persons**, according to me would best represent the history of the town, through the prism of their dramas, upraises, academic searches and remarkable achievements.

An integral part of the new history of the town is also the history of the Mountain Rescue Team, presented by **Emil Hristov** and **Hristo Mitchev** (History and Activity of the Troyan Mountain Rescue Team). The detailed study of the second largest and the seventh in order of establishment team, which is inevitably among the leading in the country, is rich of facts, historical perspectives and modern aspects are

present as well. It is, according to the authors, their best expression of respect and gratitude to the deceased and perished mountain rescuers, friends and allies. E. Hristov and Hr. Mitchev also focus on a significant event in the development of the Mountain Rescue Service – the establishment in 2000 of the so far only school in Bulgaria for mountain guides, the implementation of the magnificent idea of our great alpinist Minko Zankovski, who leads the school until his death. The instructors from the Troyan squad has their merit to the practical training of the future mountain guides (Petko Panamski, Marin I. Hitrov, etc.).

The specific picturesqueness of Troyan as atmosphere and peculiar folk-psychology of its inhabitants are probably best presented by *The Little Troyan Stories*, selected and magnificently narrated by Gennady Marinov and Eleonora Avdzhieva. This coloring is complemented by the short essay of Gennady Marinov (Troyan – a touch of class), a suitable finale of the collection. Although Troyan is a small town with just over 20,000 inhabitants, people from Troyan, according to the author, “not quite without a reason, are convinced that here it is like in the famous American film – “A touch of class”. Along with the complexes, they have a solid self-confidence – probably coming from some sense of a more special position or a lasting success.

I sincerely hope that this jubilee collection which with its many discoveries, new documents, theses and hypotheses is a contribution not only to the history of Troyan and the Troyan region, but also will have its worthy continuation.

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