**OPINION**

Of Prof. Plamen Mitev, PhD, Faculty of History,

on the procedure for holding academic position “Associate Professor”

in the professional field 2.2. History and Archeology

(History of Bulgarian lands ХV - ХVІІ century)

for the needs of Faculty of History (SG, 105 dated 11.12.2020)

Senior Assistant Professor Milena Ivanova Petkova-Encheva, PhD, is the only candidate in the announced by Sofia University “St. Kliment Ohridski” competition for “Associate Professor” in the professional field 2.2. History and Archeology (History of Bulgarian lands ХV - ХVІІ century). She participates in the competition with two monographs and 13 studies and articles published in scientific journals and thematic collections. Eight of the publications are in foreign languages (2 in Turkish and 6 in English), and seven of them are included in foreign specialized publications.

The first of the two monographs – “The Central Balkans and the Ottomans. Demographic development and agrarian economy in the Eastern part of the Thracian Plain in the 16th century” (App. No 2) is identical with the doctoral thesis of Milena Petkova-Encheva, successfully defended in 2009 and therefore it will not be reviewed in this opinion.

The second monograph – “Between Anatolia and Rumelia. The Yürüks and the economic zones of the Central Balkans, mid-15th – mid-16th century”. (App. No 1) meets all the requirements for habilitation work and convincingly illustrates the research manner of Milena Petkova-Encheva. Aiming to shed light on the dynamic demographic changes in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries in the Upper Thracian Plain, she studies a significant volume and variety of source material, compares the existing conclusions and assessments in the historical literature, and presents solidly her interpretation of the migration of large nomadic groups from the Asia Minor region in the Bulgarian lands. The author demonstrates a thorough knowledge of the available scientific literature and an ability to critically analyse, summarize and make sense of the documentary evidence found. The unquestionable contribution of the monograph is putting in scientific circulation of new factual materials about our history found in the Ottoman archives, as well as the detailed tracking of the mechanisms of economic and sociocultural adaptation of Karaman Yürüks to the situation in the newly conquered by the Ottoman Empire Balkan territories. The author's efforts to trace the stages of settlement of the settlers arriving from Anatolia, as well as to compare the types of settlements they create, are also admirable. To be marked is also Milena Petkova’s interpretation of the intra-community transformation processes accompanying the migration and permanent establishment of the Yürüks groups from Karaman in Rumelia.

Among the studies and articles Milena Petkova-Encheva, PhD, participates in the competition, a group of 6 texts (App. No 3, 5, 6, 8 10 and 13) stands out, thematically related to the history of the *kaza* of Stara Zagora in the early centuries of the Ottoman rule. In these publications, analysing and summarizing the information taken from the available Ottoman archival material, the author builds on her achievements in her doctoral thesis and contributes significantly to clarify various aspects of the administrative status, economic development, demographic and architectural appearance of this administrative unit. Recognition merit also the researches of the *kaza*s of Haskovo and Sevlievo (App. No 11, 12 and 14). Valuable observations and findings have been made on some judicial and administrative practices of local authorities in determining the boundaries of rural lands (No 10, 13), changing the status of individual settlements (App. No 10), accommodation of settlers (Yürüks – app. No, Magyars – app. No 8, Muslims – app. No 14). Indicative of Milena Petkova's research manner and approach are her attempts to specify the southern border of Bulgaria during the time of Tsar Ivan Shishman (App. No 7), the well-prepared typology of the Ottoman documents for Sevlievo and Sevlievo region from the Oriental Collections Department at the Bulgarian National Library and the Ottoman Archive in Istanbul /*Başbakanlık Osmanlı Arşivleri*/ (App. No 12), the inclination for topics and problems not developed by the Bulgarian historiography such as the plague epidemic in the Balkans at the end of the 17th and the beginning of the 18th century (App. No 9 - co-authored with Prof. Nadia Manolova-Nikolova). The well-argued clarifications about the specifics of entering copies of court records in the Ottoman tax registers (App. No 13) contribute to the field of Ottoman paleography and diplomatic. Milena Petkova, PhD, demonstrates consistently her ambition to implement innovative methods of working with historical sources by understanding the need to develop and implement appropriate digital platforms for archival heritage usage (App. No 15).

The scientific production submitted for the competition illustrates the qualities and abilities of Milena Petkova-Encheva as a researcher of Late Bulgarian Middle Ages unquestionably. Her solid general historical and linguistic training, as well as the wide range of her scientific interests, distinguish her as a competent expert and modern thinking scientist. Undisputed proof of professional maturity of Senior Assistant Professor Milena Petkova-Encheva, PhD, is her teaching activity. The main lecture courses she teaches in various bachelor's and master's programs at the Faculty of History are in line with the latest achievements in the field of Ottoman and Bulgarian studies. She is able to catch the attention and gain the trust of her students. She represents excellently the Faculty at international and national forums and actively participates in 10 research projects, leading two of them.

All requirements of Act on development of the academic staff in the Republic of Bulgaria and the Regulations for its implementation are met. The candidate also meets all the additional requirements provided in the Rules of Sofia University for holding the academic position of “Associate Professor”, which allows me to recommend to the respectable Scientific Jury to elect Senior Assistant Professor Milena Petkova-Encheva, PhD on the position of “Associate Professor”.

Sofia, 21.04.2021 Prof. Plamen Mitev, PhD