**Opinion**

**By Prof. Dr. Miliana Kaimakamova**, Sofia University “St. Kliment Ohridski”, professional field 2.2. History and Archeology on the materials submitted for participation in a competition for the academic position of “Associate Professor” in the professional field 2.2. History and Archeology (History of the Bulgarian Lands XV-XVII century) at Sofia University “St. Kliment Ohridski” for the needs of the Faculty of History, announced in the State Gazette, issue 105 of 11th December 2020.

Chief Assistant Professor Milena Ivanova Petkova is the only applicant in the competition. The procedure and all the requirements arising from it are complied with. I did not establish any violations upon becoming acquainted with her documentation. The applicant has fulfilled the minimum national requirements under Article 26 of the Act on the Development of Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria.

Milena Petkova is a graduate of the Faculty of History, where she successively completed a bachelor's (2001) and a master's (2003) degree in higher education. In 2009 she was awarded the educational and scientific degree of "Doctor" after successfully defending her doctoral thesis on “Demographic development and agricultural economics in the Eastern part of the Thracian lowlands in the XVI century.” During her doctoral studies, she studied Ottoman Turkish language, Ottoman Turkish diplomacy and palaeography, and attended a course in historical demography. In 2010 she specialized at the American Research Institute, Istanbul. In the period from 2012 to 2015 M. Petkova worked in the Archives State Agency as a chief expert in the “Publicity of the Archives' Department.” Since 2015 until today she is an active member of the Department of Bulgarian History at the Faculty of History. Her participations in various international and national scientific forums are numerous. In the period from 2010 to 2021 Dr. Petkova is a member of Bulgarian and foreign editorial boards, she has participated in 10 projects as a member or team leader, she translates various Ottoman-Turkish documents, and is involved in the organization of various thematic exhibitions both here and abroad.

In the announced competition Chief Assistant Professor Petkova participated with 2 monographs, 13 articles and studies. Some of them are published in English and Turkish. In their entirety, they reveal the methodology of her research activity, based on the principles, methods and rules of Ottoman studies. Her works are characterized by thematic diversity and the aspiration for the creation of a picture, as realistic as possible, of the state of agriculture and the economic profile of the Bulgarian settlements during the first centuries of the Ottoman rule across the Bulgarian lands. As is well known, the period between the XV-XVII century is extremely important in terms of continuity and changes that occur in the overall development of the Bulgarians and especially in the field of agriculture, economy and demography. Some of these fundamental problems are the subject of research in the studies and articles presented in the competition. The results of the research of various documents from the Ottoman chancellery, carried out by M. Petkova, are of a contributory nature. They relate to the stages of conquest of a territory by the Ottomans and its subsequent administration, the acquiring of agrarian space in the Stara Zagora Kaza (administrative district), the tax policy of the Ottoman government towards the Yuruks, the colonization of the Muslim population in the different regions and the demographic changes in villages and towns during this period.

The observations, findings and conclusions reached by the author in the studies have served to a large extent as a basis for proceeding to their overall development in the monographs published in 2020 and 2021.

“The Central Balkans and the Ottomans. Demographic development and agrarian economy in the Eastern share of the Thracian lowland in the XVI century” monograph (474 pp., Gutenberg Publishing House), is in fact the doctoral thesis defended by Petkova in 2009. The research is based on extensive source materials and the considerable amount of literature, thematically related to the matters developed by M. Petkova. A detailed description of the settlement network, the ethno-religious structure, the migrations of the population and the development of the agrarian economy in the eastern share of the Thracian lowland has been created on the basis of the eleven Ottoman tax registers studied. The connection between the ecological environment, the population and the economic activity in the studied region is revealed in a convincing manner. The observations and conclusions of Dr. Petkova regarding the demographic situation of the cities of Stara Zagora, Nova Zagora, Haskovo and Chirpan in the sixteenth century, as well as the practice adopted by the Ottomans in the administrative management imposed by them to follow the status quo in settlements with a non-Muslim population, are distinguished by a great contribution. These observations and conclusions are undoubtedly of interest not only to the Ottomans, but also to the medievalists.

M. Petkova's latest work entitled "Between Anatolia and Rumelia. The Yuruks and the economic development in parts of the Central Balkans, mid fifteenth to mid sixteenth century” (150 pp., Gutenberg Publishing House) is dedicated to the settlement and adaptation of the Yuruk community in the Balkans. The settlement of part of this community on the territory of the Upper Thracian Plain during the abovementioned period has served as an example case for the study of this significant problem, closely related to the functioning of the Ottoman system of government. The study is characterized by its innovative nature, as evidenced by its differentiated structure and content. The revelation of the "world-economy" relationship has been made in the context of modern trends in the Bulgarian and European science in the recent decades and this is one of the main merits of the work. At the same time, it is noteworthy that where the sources allow, the author seeks to show the importance of socioeconomic and demographic processes taking place in the Bulgarian lands during the conquest of the Bulgarian kingdom by the Ottomans in the late fourteenth century. The mechanisms of adaptation used by the Yuruks population in the development of certain areas of the Upper Thracian lowland are convincingly revealed. The observations made in connection with the migrations of the Yuruks and their mobility in peacetime and wartime are also important for future research. The typical settlements are very well presented, revealing the importance of the introduced model of the settlement network from Anatolia in the Upper Thracian lowland. On this basis, the stages during which the settlement of the Yuruks in this region takes place are indicated. The economic profile of the various villages of Yuruks and Jemaats, attested in the Ottoman tax registers, is persuasively outlined.

By writing this monograph M. Petkova fills a significant gap in the contemporary Bulgarian Ottoman studies and creates a solid scientific basis for future research.

I would like to point out that Chief Assistant Professor Petkova carries out her teaching activities among the students in the seminars with exceptional responsibility. While at the same time, she is successfully involved in the social and scientific life of the faculty community. After becoming acquainted with the scientific papers and indicating the contributions contained therein, I find it justified to give my positive vote for the election of **Chief Assistant Professor Milena Ivanova Petkova** for the academic position of **“Associate Professor”** in professional field 2.2. History and Archeology (History of the Bulgarian Lands XV-XVII century).

15th April 2021 Opinion prepared by:

Sofia Prof. Dr. Miliana Kaimakamova