

БЪЛГАРСКА АКАДЕМИЯ НА НАУКИТЕ ИНСТИТУТ ЗА ИСТОРИЧЕСКИ ИЗСЛЕДВАНИЯ	
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REVIEW

of the scientific papers presented by Assoc. Prof. Olga Todorova Todorova, PhD, the only participant in the competition for the academic position of “professor” in a professional field 2.2. History and Archeology, scientific specialty “History of Bulgaria” (Social History, 15th – 18th centuries) – published in the State Gazette, issue 111 of 31.12.2021, for the needs of the section “Bulgarians, the Ottoman Empire and Europe” at the Institute for Historical Research at BAS

by Prof. Krassimira Yordanova Mutafova, PhD
external reviewer of the Academic board

1. Contest data. By order № 18 of February 25, 2022 of the Director of the Institute for Historical Research at the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, I was appointed an external member of the academic board, concerning the announced competition. The documents provided to me under the procedure show that it took place in accordance with all the requirements of the Annex to the Regulations on the terms and conditions for obtaining scientific degrees and holding academic positions at the Institute for Historical Research at the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences and no omissions or violations. The documents of the only candidate who participated in the announced competition – associate professor Olga Todorova Todorova, PhD – were presented.

2. Details of the candidate. I have known Olga Todorova since my postgraduate years at Sofia University “St. Kliment Ohridski” and I have direct impressions from a number of her scientific appearances, the defense of her dissertation “The Orthodox Church and the Bulgarian people in the 15th – the third quarter of the 18th century” in 1987, as well as from her professional and academic development, which to this day is closely related to the Institute of History (today – Institute for Historical Research at BAS). Since 1988 O. Todorova has been a research associate II degree, and after a few years (1992) she is already a researcher I degree at the Institute of History. In 1999 she was elected a Senior Research II degree (Associate Professor since 2010) at the Institute of History at BAS. Currently, O. Todorova is an associate professor in the section “Bulgarians, the Ottoman Empire and Europe” at the Institute for Historical Research. In parallel with her research work, O. Todorova also performs administrative functions: member of the Scientific Council of the Institute of History / Institute for Historical Research at BAS (since 2008), Deputy Chairman of the Scientific Council of the Institute of History / Institute for Historical Research (2008–2012), Head of the Section “Bulgarians, the Ottoman Empire and Europe” at the Institute for Historical Research (since 2012). Part of O. Todorova's scientific activity is her editorial work. including as a member of the editorial boards of prestigious publications and magazines (*Bulgarian Historical Review* journal – since 2000, *Istoriya-History* journal – since 2012).

Of a significant meaning for the broad perimeter of Assoc. Prof. Todorova's research and the convincing argumentation of her scientific theses are her specializations and the opportunity to work in archives and libraries in Russia (Moscow / Institute of Slavonic and Balkan Studies), UK (Cambridge / Skilliter Centre for Ottoman Studies at Newnham College) and Turkey (Istanbul/ Başbakanlık Osmanlı Arşivi (The Ottoman Archives of the Prime

Minister's Office).

3. Description of scientific papers, notes and recommendations. At the current competition Olga Todorova presents her research on significant issues thematically related to the social history of Bulgarians in the 15th – 18th centuries, published after her election as a senior lecturer II degree (Associate Professor) in 1999. d. For the purposes of the competition 1 monograph and a total of 30 studies (23 volumes in content, 1 in co-authorship) and articles (7, 1 in co-authorship) were selected. Some of the studies were published in English (№ 15, with a Bulgarian version), translated into Greek (№№ 16, 17) or with a published version in German (№ 2). The list of publications correctly indicates different versions of the articles with a link to their electronic version (№ 2). Outside the topic of the competition, O. Todorova pointed out dozens of articles, scientific reports, columns in encyclopedic publications, popular science researches, prefaces, bibliographies, reviews, some of which were published in English and Serbian. In “Who is Who among the Bulgarians 15th – 19th century. 501 Names from the Era of the Ottoman Rule” (2000) she is the author of 41 individual articles, etc. I would not miss her magnificent monograph “Women from the Central Balkans during the Ottoman Era (15th – 17th centuries)” (2004), although it is not the subject of this review (the monograph is not included in the list of publications for participation in the competition). I will only note that the first of its kind summary study in Bulgarian historiography, dedicated to women in the Central Balkans in the early centuries of the Ottoman rule, aroused undeniable interest both in specialized scientific circles and among the wider readership.

O. Todorova combines her exploratory searches over the last two decades, devoted to a poorly developed topic in the Bulgarian historiography, in her latest monograph “Domestic Slavery and Slave-Holding in Ottoman Rumili”, published in 2021 (№ 1) – an in-depth and multifaceted comparative study of the most widespread form of slavery practiced throughout the Islamic world, including in the Balkans. The center of the study is the present-day Bulgarian lands and their adjacent territories – the core of the former Ottoman province of Rumili, and the chronological framework, although the emphasis is on the period 15th – mid-18th century, covers the entire Ottoman era up to the Bulgarian liberation in 1878. The monograph is the result of a multi-layered study of an impressively rich source database and a wide range of researches. Predominant place among the dozens of published and unpublished sources of various genres and origins (Ottoman, Western European, Slavic, etc.) is occupied by archival documents extracted from the *sicills* (protocol books of local *cadi*'s courts) of the cities of Sofia, Russe and Vidin (p. 26), as well as the sultan's lawyers (*kanunnames*), *fermans*, *fetvas*, etc. No Ottoman tax registers from the period have been commented on, although many of them include freed slaves (*muatiks*) with a specific social status. Of course, the single register data would hardly significantly change the conclusions and findings of the author. I will note, however, that the diverse source material and unpublished archival sources should be more clearly distinguished in the Bibliography, in which the published sources are generally presented together with the researches.

The text, with a total volume of 442 pages (with bibliography), is structured in six chapters, Preface, Introduction and Epilogue. The questions asked about the typology, the essential characteristics of the slave systems and the formation of the *Sharia*'s slave paradigm in the first two introductory parts – Preface and Introduction – are relevant to the whole study. The leading understanding is that in the Ottoman Empire slavery is not a marginal phenomenon, but has a preserved place in both private and socio-political life and is an

important element of the overall Ottoman socio-cultural code. Even here, the author touches on some of the most debated issues in recent years related to the designation of the Ottoman period in Bulgarian history, which are discussed in detail in the Epilogue of her book. O. Todorova is absolutely right that many of today's misunderstandings and heated disputes on **slavery / Turkish slavery** during the Ottoman period are due not only to political, ideological, psychological, etc. factors, but also to the lack of a sufficient number of profiled “slave” researches in Bulgarian historiography (pp. 11, 19–20), which is the reason for all kinds of amateur and pseudo-scientific speculations. Indicative is the fact that until the 90s of the 20th century domestic slavery, with the exception of B. Tsvetkova's article from the distant 1954, in which the topic is only vaguely touched upon, remains out of sight of Bulgarian historians. For decades, the controversies over slavery, as the author rightly points out, have been conducted primarily under the sign of ideological and political opposition, and have developed much more in the mass media than in the pages of academic journals. So even today the topic is still poorly developed. With the exception of O. Todorova's own publications (№№ 4, 12, 19, 23, 24, 25, 27, 28, 30, etc.), only few are the studies based mainly on Western European sources, which raise questions about the trade with captured Bulgarians in the Mediterranean-Black Sea basin in the period of or immediately after the Ottoman conquest (Iv. Sakazov, V. Gyuzelev, Hr. Matanov, S. Hinkovski, M. Mladenov) and the fate of mass slaves in the later, “classical” Ottoman times (N. Atanasov and others). Here I will add that more than two decades ago the topic of domestic slavery was set as a diploma thesis of my student majoring in History (Dimitrina Kuprindzhiyska), but she did not continue researching this area.

Until the 1970s, the situation was no different in the world Ottoman studies. As O. Todorova emphasizes in the short historiographical review (pp. 15-21) in the Preface, in contrast to the so-called elite slaves in the context of the *kul* system, with a lasting perimeter and achievements in Bulgarian and foreign historiography, far less studied are the “domestic slaves” (p. 16). Interest in them has been growing only since the 1970s and 1980s, when the striking disparity in research was overcome. With this shortage of publications on the problems of domestic slavery in the Bulgarian scientific literature, the author sets several main tasks leading to the structuring of her book – study of the ethnic origin of domestic slaves, conversion into its various manifestations, socio-legal and socio-cultural dimensions of domestic slavery. , the integration of slaves in Ottoman society, etc. The theoretical statements made in these introductory parts of the study, directly related to the prototypes of slavery in the Islamic world and the liberation from slavery are not self-serving. It is they who outline the general normative framework, which makes it possible to trace how and to what extent the Ottomans “filled it with content” in the following centuries. It is important to conclude that incl. and to this day, a sustained system of ethical rules, directly influenced by Qur'anic precepts, has proved to be crucial to the “long life“ of the institution of Muslim domestic slavery.

Commenting in detail on the sources and main methods of recruiting slaves in the Ottoman Empire, in the first chapter (pp. 53-102) O. Todorova arguably disputes the illegitimate claim that both during the Ottoman conquest and throughout the centuries of the Ottoman rule “the ranks of the slaves” were fed mainly at the expense of the conquered local Christian population, including also the Bulgarians. She proves the insolvency of this thesis through a punctual study of the dynamics in the ethnic composition of the slaves within three periods. In the epoch of the conquest and establishment of the Ottoman rule in the Balkans

(the 14th – around the middle of the 15th century, in fact the final conquest of the Balkans was in 1499, my note, K.M.) the representatives of the Balkan peoples predominate among the domestic slaves, including the Bulgarians, without exception, slave prisoners of war from Western Europe (p. 60). The lasting stabilization of Ottoman rule in the Balkans put an end to the mass uncontrolled enslavement of the Balkan Christian population. During the era of the so-called Pax Ottomana (around the middle of the 15th – 18th centuries) the slave contingent was filled mainly at the expense of (military) captives from Europe, Africa and Asia. Convincingly argued is the conclusion that after the middle of the 15th century the Bulgarian presence among the slaves was minimized – the so-called “penal” enslavement during rebellion against the authorities or significant outbreaks of the bandit and *harami* movement on the ground (legitimate from the point of view of Sharia). However, invariably practiced without being a policy aimed selectively at Bulgarians, are the so-called “criminal” enslavement, in which not only Christians but also Muslim men and women fall victim to kidnappings for sale or ransom (pp. 77-80). During the third period – the era of the Late Empire (late 18th – 19th century) – the ethnic spectrum of slaves sharply narrowed and was reduced mainly to black Africans and white slaves from the Caucasus. The tabular data from the Sofia *sicills* (1550–1750) and the prepared appendix on 113 slaves (pp. 69–70, 87–101) convincingly argue the author's conclusions about the ethnicity of the slaves. Important for understanding the paradigm of slavery in the Ottoman reality are the striking differences commented in the first chapter between the situation of foreign slaves – on the one hand, and personally free non-Muslim subjects (*zimmi*), including also the Bulgarians – on the other hand, underpinned by the specifics of the status of slaves and *zimmis* according to the Sharia regulations (pp. 83–87).

An essential part of the monograph are the problems discussed in a dichotomous relationship in the second and third chapters. While the second chapter focuses on the stages and mechanisms of slave integration in Rumili in the 15th–18th centuries (pp. 102–180), the third chapter focuses on non-integrated slaves until the mid-18th century. In the second chapter, referring to the *sicills* of the cities of Sofia, Ruse and Vidin from the 16th to the 18th century, Todorova analyzed in detail the various mechanisms of the integration of slaves in the Ottoman society (economic, religious, marital, linguistic, etc.). It is important to conclude that a prerequisite for a better life prospect for slaves is their professional realization and labor integration, as well as the relatively high degree of physical freedom they enjoyed (p. 124). An indispensable feature of the integration is Islamization, although some slaves, according to analyzed sources, retain their old religion. Particularly important in the formation of the Sharia slave paradigm is the case, commented by Todorova in the Introduction that the adoption of Islam by a slave has never been recognized as a reason leading to his “automatic” release, but the emancipation of such a slave, was encouraged (p. 43). A significant place in the study is given to the border statuses between slavery and freedom, through which many domestic slaves pass before joining the ranks of free people. Key to the integration of slaves is the liberation from slavery, commented in detail by the author, as well as her finding that the Balkans apply all forms of liberation permissible under Islamic law (*itk*, *mukataba*, *tedbir*, etc.). Important for understanding the essential characteristics of domestic slavery is its conclusion that in the Central Balkan provinces of the Ottoman Empire, liberation after more or less long-term service is a regular and generally accepted practice. Hereditary slavery, although perfectly legitimate from the point of view of Sharia, is in fact rarely practiced (p. 137). Appropriate place is given to the act of emancipation of integrated slaves, which

ensured their status as legally legitimate subjects, equating them with other free subjects of the sultan. An important part of the research is the monitoring, as far as possible, of the realization of the “liberated slave” and the “ceiling” of social growth, as well as the so-called patronage-client relationship between master and slave, widely reflected in the documents for liberation from slavery (p.150). On the example of the so-called case study – several slave cases, reflected in a Sofia *sicills* with hereditary inventories (*tereke defter*) from the period 1671–1678, concretizes the life realization of the freed slaves in the Ottoman society, which was far from being carried out according to a single model. The considered examples argue the conclusion that in the territory of the Central Balkans the integration of domestic slaves in the Ottoman society followed long-established models in the Islamic world. What is specific in the Balkan case is the extreme unpopularity of hereditary slavery and the almost universal liberation of slaves after a relatively short period of service. Encouraging the emancipation and integration of domestic slaves – both through regulations of Ottoman secular law and through a number of *Sharia*-based practices – the state did not interfere directly in these processes. In other words, the integration of domestic slaves, as O. Todorova emphasizes, is a state-tolerated, but not state-controlled phenomenon.

In exactly the opposite direction are the typical cases of non-integrated slaves until the middle of the 18th century – victims, fugitives, criminals, discussed in the third chapter. The most drastic and widespread forms of arbitrariness are considered: physical violence – reflected mainly in *fetvas*, sexual coercion, illegal abduction of subjects of the empire, “chain” sales, violent conversion to Islam, etc. It is the manifestations of such arbitrariness according to Todorova, they are the main reason for the development of various – more passive or more active forms of slave resistance, including slave escapes and slave crime.

A very different type of question provokes the “special case” of “black domestic slaves” (the so-called *araps*), considered in the fourth chapter and discussed in one of the last studies (№ 29) of O. Todorova. Despite their relative small numbers in the Ottoman Empire's Central Balkan provinces, they say they deserve more attention for several reasons: their unofficial racial marginalization (more noticeable only in the 19th century); the peculiar forms of their internal organization and self-organization (lodges); the specific culture of which they are the bearers and the way in which this culture functions in Ottoman conditions. However, as Todorova notes, apart from single mentions in the *sicills* of Sofia, Ruse, Vidin and Bitola of “dark-skinned” slaves (p. 237), there is no evidence of African slave “colonies” in present-day Bulgaria and northern Macedonia. According to her, it is symptomatic that although no descendants of “black Africans who once enslaved our lands” could be found in Bulgaria today, an imaginary image of “black Araps” has long remained in the collective national memory. during the Late Middle Ages and completed during the Ottoman centuries, heavily distorted and racist in color, with almost no contact with the actual history of the Ottoman era.

Based on the summarized data from the Sofia *sicills* from the middle of the 16th to the middle of the 18th century, in the fifth chapter the author makes a successful attempt to outline the socio-religious profile of the slave owners. The data “extracted” from the sittings argue her conclusion about the diffusion of domestic slavery among almost all strata of provincial Ottoman society. The other major problem it raises concerns the different types of “strategies” of slaveholders towards their slaves. The approach applied to their study is undoubtedly interesting, but the summaries based on tabular data on the attitude of masters to their slaves according to the type of slave documents in the Sofia *sicills* (mid-16th - mid-18th century) (p. 286), are inevitably subjective.

The phenomenon of non-Muslim slavery in Rumili, which provoked ambiguous questions, assessments and comments – practiced both inside and outside the Ottoman Empire, which so far remains almost unknown outside the narrow scientific community, is discussed in Chapter Six. Special attention is paid to the non-Muslim (Jewish and Christian) slavery within the empire, which, despite the efforts of the Ottoman authorities to abolish or at least limit it, survived until the 19th century. which lacks prohibitions on the possession of non-Muslim slaves by *zimmis*, with the exception of the absolute prohibition on Muslim slaves (pp. 289-290). The acquisition of underage slaves is also problematic from *Sharia* point of view, as Islamic doctrine treats minors as potential Muslims (290). In contrast to the very widespread slavery among the upper and middle Jewish classes in the larger Ottoman cities (pp. 294-296), the data on Christian slavery testify to a rather marginal phenomenon. According to Todorova, the reasons should be sought not so much in the restrictions imposed by the Ottoman government, but in the long-interrupted slave-owning tradition in the Balkans, long before the Ottoman invaders set foot on the peninsula. Although scarce, the available sources reveal a very diverse social composition of the Christian slaveholders, including even a Bulgarian slaveholder. The sources also testify to provocative for the general public examples of the participation of persons of the Christian faith (mostly rioters, harams and outlaws) who acted in “mixed” confessional gangs, in the abduction and enslavement of free subjects of the empire (pp. 309). Indicative of the very “insignificant” size of Christian slavery during the Ottoman epoch are the commented examples of “fictitious” slaveholders who immediately granted the freedom of purchased slaves. A typical case is that of Metropolitan Daniel of Sofia, who granted the freedom of his female slave of Wallachian origin before the Sharia court in 1662. Significant is the fact that throughout the Ottoman Empire, Orthodox bishops invited Christians – both locals and foreigners – to donate funds for the redemption of Christian slaves (pp. 311–312). However, the cases concerning some Balkan ones are not an exception, also including Bulgarian merchants, who settled in Russia in the early 18th century, who served the two-way slave traffic between the two empires. One of the reasons for the continued slavery of Christians, subjects of the empire, incl. and in the 19th century, according to O. Todorova, it was due to the fact that the vast majority of slaves in the Ottoman Empire were mostly foreigners. Among other factors favoring the inclusion of individual Christians, also including Bulgarians, to the group of slaveholders, she points out the ambivalent attitude of the Church towards slavery. Along with these examples, the sixth chapter paints a panoramic picture of slavery and slave ownership in Europe's Late medieval and Early modern world. Based on recent research on these issues, the author focuses on the Balkan victims of Western European slavery – both Orthodox Christians and Muslims and Jews – and reveals some of its intersections with its contemporary Ottoman slave realities. Her conclusions are convincing that even before the end of the Middle Ages, Western European slavery began to take shape as an almost reciprocal image of Muslim slavery.

The last part of the monograph, referred to as the Epilogue, is too far from the traditional understanding of conclusion. Not only because it exceeds the generally accepted volumes (pp. 356–402). Apart from the chronological finalization of the period – it is more than 100 years, in this last part the author raises extremely important questions for today's society – both the Bulgarian “reading” of slavery in the 19th century and the reasons that led to the imposition of the metaphor of “Turkish slavery” as a designation of the entire Ottoman period of the Bulgarian history. This final part of the monograph integrates the ideas set out in several of her publications (№№ 12, 23, 27) about the last period of the existence of the slave institution,

its rethinking in contemporary historiography and public space. One of the questions she raises and tries to answer is when and how exactly the two “Turkish slaveries” – the real and the metaphorical one – are mixed in the public consciousness. According to her hypothesis, the preconditions for their permanent merger should be sought in the events of the eve of the Liberation (393 et seq.). From the first years of the so-called According to Todorova, the transition to democracy dates back to the first purposeful attempts to “metaphorize” Turkish slavery, to crush its figurative meaning, or at least to leave it in the background to give it a literal sound (p. 402). The final findings of the author are emotional, but unfortunately very realistic (pp. 402–403). Without going into an in-depth commentary on this “open” controversy in public, I will fully agree with Olga Todorova that “The more we know about the actual slavery during the Ottoman era in its various manifestations – public and private, domestic and military, agrarian and galley, male, female, children's, etc., the more difficult it will be in the future to abuse this topic” (p. 403).

Within the framework of the present review I could hardly consider in detail the thematic fields of the voluminous scientific production of O. Todorova in the field of the social history of the Bulgarians in the 15th–18th centuries. However, some of the studies are of a borderline nature, so that they could only be conditionally placed in one or the other of the subgroups presented below.

In the first place, of course, stand out the in-depth research on various aspects of slavery, especially domestic slavery, published in the period 2002–2020 – 8 studies (№№ 4, 12, 24, 25, 26, 27, 29, 30) and 3 articles (№№ 19, 23, 28), which find a place in the general framework of her last commented book. I will only note that the interest in this issue is evidenced in one of her earliest publications on women's slavery (№4). Conceived as an attempt to shed more light on women's social history in the Bulgarian lands from the Ottoman period, the study is a significant contribution to the study of neglected Bulgarian historiography on domestic slavery and, I would say, outlines the direction of an ambitious and successful scientific “program”.

The problems related to the gender-age division of the society, “free” women (Muslim/non-Muslim), marriage and family have a lasting perimeter in O. Todorova's creative pursuits – only some of them are mentioned in the competition list. 3, 4, 5, 6, 10), and the issues discussed are in a very wide range – from prostituted women (№3) to the possibilities for realization of women in public space (№ 5). Next among the developed topics and problems are some poorly studied Muslim institutions, in terms of their functioning and their social projections in the Bulgarian society: the *Hajj* from the Bulgarian lands in the 15th–17th century, which treats Muslim pilgrimage not only as an important religious, but also a social phenomenon (№ 9), the Christian reception of the *wakf* institution (№ 13), etc. A separate thematic field is everyday life and the history of manalities during the Ottoman era (№№ 8, 15, 22). Another part of Todorova's publications related to the “reconstruction” of some symbolic “images of Otherness” that existed in the Bulgarian collective consciousness during the Ottoman era falls into the sphere of imagology: the images of Jews, Muslims and blacks (№№ 2, 16, 18, 29). The complex relationship between history and folklore is at the heart of several studies focusing on the very contrasting discrepancies between real events, personalities, religious and ethnic communities and their folklore reflections (№№ 2, 10, 14, 29). One of the themes with a lasting perimeter is the Orthodox Church and culture during the Ottoman centuries (№№ 7, 20, 21). The “new” can be highlighted in the attempts to trace its place in the Bulgarian Renaissance social space, to present some more specific issues in the

form of case studies (parish life, church justice, etc.). Without being an independent focus, in some of her publications O. Todorova also discusses historiographical problems (№№ 1, 11, 23). Her studies on the life and work of some extraordinary personalities related to the Bulgarian 19th century – Frederick Millingen (Osman Bay) and Fanny Janet Blunt, wife of the longtime British consul in the Balkans in the second half of the 19th century – are isolated and co-authored. (№№ 17 and 31).

Many of O. Todorova's studies and articles are a result of targeted research in the framework of collective long-term and short-term projects (14 in total), one of which she is a co-leader.

4. **Scientific contributions.** Before pointing out the main contributions to the publications presented for the competition, some of which I have already commented on, I would like to emphasize that they are largely due to the language training of Assoc. Prof. Todorova and her excellent bibliographic awareness. Although she entered the “depths” of the Ottoman language relatively late, she used original Ottoman source material in a number of her publications, also including in the last published monograph, and introduces into scientific circulation unpublished or not well known and used Ottoman documents, which undoubtedly contribute to the persuasiveness of her conclusions.

In all her researches O. Todorova necessarily generates her own conclusions and opinions on debatable historiographical theses, rethinks and successfully corrects imposed stereotypes and stencils in national and foreign historiography, as well as in public space. It would hardly be possible for me to refer here to all the academic contributions in her voluminous academic output, which she correctly brought out in the auto-report on academic contributions. I will pay attention only to some directions in her research, which are undoubtedly contributing and innovative.

Without repeating what has already been said, I will emphasize that Assoc. Prof. Todorova introduces and develops as an independent in Bulgarian historiography the topic of domestic slavery, interpreted in the spirit of the so-called "History below", illustrated and condensed with case study examples (№№ 1, 4, 12, 19, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30). It introduces another, fundamentally unexplored topic in our historiography – “children's”, focusing on the details of the status, normative and real, of children (Christians and Muslims) in the 15th –18th centuries (№ 6).

In her research on everyday life and the history of manalities during the Ottoman era (№ 8, 15, 22), Todorova reconsiders a number of stenciled productions. , as close to the representatives of the two denominations in the 15th –18th centuries (№ 8). A poorly studied aspect of the Balkan mentality and political culture in the period preceding the birth of modern Balkan nationalisms is set out in her study, dedicated to the so-called Orthodox legitimacy – the loyal attitude of the Christian subjects of the Ottoman Empire to the central Ottoman government. An interesting perspective from the daily life of Muslims and Christians in the turbulent years of the so-called Kardzhali time is the solidarity of Christians and Muslims in the face of the general Kardzhali danger, recorded in Bachkovo manuscript with Greek chronicles of the attack on Plovdiv in the 18th and early 19th century (№ 22, co-authored).

As a contributor to the field of imagology, I would highlight her study, presenting the Bishop of Vratsa Sophronius as a borderline figure between two epochs – the Middle Ages and the New Age (№18). Different perspectives on the understanding of folklore and historical realities place her research in the complex field of history and folklore. A typical

example is the “screaming” discrepancies between the gender dimensions of “historical” Islamization, as outlined in authentic documents that have come down to us, and the “folklore” (№ 10), in which the propensity for religious betrayal and susceptibility to temptation is attributed, especially the “weak” sex. No less interesting is the approach applied in the study of the folklore hero known as “The Mighty Sklav” in Bulgarian folklore and historical memory, whose real prototype is a historically attested janissary commander of the first half of the 17th century (№14).

In summary, I will emphasize that in the research approaches of O. Todorova the leading place is occupied by the comparative, the applied methodology for precise extraction of information and its interpretation, as well as the often applied type of case study. Her author's handwriting is characterized by a strong “taste” for detail and context, and her research is often on the border between micro- and macro-history (№№ 15, 21, 30), as evidenced by her latest monograph (№ 1). The published reviews (O. Mazhdrakova, T. Stoilova, R. Radkova, St. Ivanova, K. Mutafova, etc.) for the monographs and the works with her participation, as well as the noted citations – are a definite confirmation of the contribution nature and recognizability of her works over 400 for the period after 2001 (according to the attached list) in Bulgarian and in prestigious foreign publications.

5. Teaching activity. An important place in the creative career of Assoc. Prof. Olga Todorova is occupied by her teaching activities at Sofia University “Kliment Ohridski”, mainly at the Faculty of History, at the Faculty of Classical and Modern Philology and the Faculty of Philosophy. The thematic focus of the courses is directly related to the field of her academic interests and researches. Among her lectures are: “Methodology of Women's History: Problems of Women's History of the Bulgarian Lands during the First Centuries of the Ottoman Rule” (Sofia University, Faculty of Philosophy, 2000–2001); “History of Women in the Ottoman Empire and the Balkans in the 15th–17th Centuries” in front of students from the European Master's Program “History of Women and Gender” (Sofia University, Faculty of Philosophy, 2008–2009); Master's course “New Martyrdom Cults during the Ottoman era - representations in the sources and historical context” (Sofia University, Faculty of History, 2016–2017, 2019–2020); Bachelor's course “The Orthodox Church and the Bulgarians in the 15th–18th century” (Sofia University, Faculty of History, 2017–2019); “Women in the Balkans, 15th–18th century”, master's program “History of Women and Gender” (Sofia University, Faculty of Philosophy, 2018–2019). Assoc. Prof. Todorova is the research supervisor of 1 full-time doctoral student at the Institute for Historical Research, Krastyo Yordanov, who successfully defended his dissertation on “The *Voynuk* Institution in the Bulgarian Lands in the 15th–16th Centuries” (2013).

The publications selected for the competition, the pointed citations and the submitted reference for participation in projects and scientific guidance of doctoral students cover the required scientometric indicators (reflected in the reference for the implementation of the minimum national requirements).

In conclusion, I will emphasize that the indisputable qualities and contribution of the presented scientific output and valuable habilitation work meet and exceed the regulatory requirements of the Academic Development Act of the Republic of Bulgaria and the Annex to the Rules of the Scientific Council of the Institute for Historical Research. Based on all the above, as a member of the Academic board I will vote with a resounding “YES” for the election of Assoc. Prof. Olga Todorova Todorova, PhD to the academic position of “Professor” at the Institute for Historical Research at BAS in the professional field 2.2.

History and Archeology, scientific specialty “History of Bulgaria” (Social History, 15th – 18th century).

April 25, 2022

Prof. Krasimira Mutafova, PhD

City of Veliko Tarnovo