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Promotion Review of a Candidate's Application for the Academic Position "Associate Professor"

by Prof. Alexandar N. Nikolov, Faculty of History, University of Sofia "St. Kliment Ohridski" on behalf of Konstantin Valeriev Golev, the only applicant for the academic position of Associate Professor in Professional Field 2.2: History and Archaeology, Scientific specialty "Documentation, Archival Science, Paleography, including Historiography and Source Criticism" for the needs of the "Auxiliary Historical Sciences and Informatics" Section at the Institute for Historical Studies – BAS, announced in Issue No. 55 of June 16, 2026 of the "State Gazette"

1. Procedure Information:

The competition for the academic position "Associate Professor" has been announced for the needs of the "Auxiliary Historical Sciences and Informatics" Section at the Institute for Historical Studies – BAS, announced in the "State Gazette" No. 55 of June 16, 2026. The only candidate is Chief Asst. Prof. Konstantin Valeriev Golev , PhD.

When announcing the competition, the norms of the Law for the Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria (LDASRB), the Regulations for the application of the same law, as well as the respective regulations of BAS were strictly observed. The jury is completed in the prescribed manner - in compliance with deadlines, quotas and professional competencies.

The prepared documentation, to which I received access as a member of the Scientific Jury, is precise and informative. All this gives me reason to accept that the competition is completely legitimate.

2. Information for the Applicant. Educational and Professional Record:

Dr. Konstantin Valeriev Golev is a graduate of the Faculty of History at Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski," where he completed degrees in Archival Studies (Bachelor's in 2007, Master's in 2009) and History (Master's in 2009). In 2013, he obtained his doctoral degree in

the field of History and Archaeology (specializing in Medieval Balkan History) from the Department of History of Byzantium and the Balkan Peoples at the Faculty of History, Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski," with a dissertation titled "Causes of the Cuman Migrations to the Balkans." From 2014 to 2015, he served as an adjunct assistant at the Centre for Eastern Languages and Cultures within the Faculty of Classical and Modern Philology at Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski." Between 2016 and 2017, he held postdoctoral positions at the American Research Center in Sofia, the Centre for Advanced Study, Sofia, the Department of History at Uludağ University (Bursa, Turkey), and the Faculty of Philosophy at Comenius University in Bratislava. He was an Erasmus program fellow in Istanbul, Szeged, Oxford, Athens, and Thessaloniki, and a recipient of the Black Sea Scholars Fund award from the British Institute at Ankara.

Dr. Konstantin Golev possesses excellent linguistic skills. In addition to his native Bulgarian, he is fluent in English, Russian, Turkish, and Persian. He also has a basic knowledge of Serbian, and among ancient and historical languages, he works with Latin, Ancient Greek, Ottoman Turkish, and Old Bulgarian.

3. Description of Applicant's Scientific Works and Achievements:

Chief Assistant Professor Dr. Konstantin Golev has submitted a substantial body of high-quality work for the competition. This includes a monograph—his habilitation thesis—and 17 studies and articles. Dr. Golev has also included three volumes under his edition.

The monograph presented here—"Eurasian Nomads in Turbulent Times: Cuman-Qïpchaq and Mongols in the Turmoil of the Thirteenth Century" (Sofia: Prof. Marin Drinov Academic Publishing House, 2026, 317 pp.)—is a natural continuation of research Dr. Golev has pursued since his doctoral studies. In this work, he focuses on the dynamic events of the first half of the 13th century that transformed the political, social, economic, and ethnic landscape of Western Eurasia, while also examining the factors behind the Mongols' stunning success in their lightning-fast expansion—a campaign that led to the creation of the largest contiguous land empire in human history. The monograph comprises an introduction, five chapters, and a conclusion, as well as a substantial scholarly apparatus, totaling 317 pages. The principal actors are the Cumans—known in Eastern sources as the "Kipchaks"—and the Mongols, who dealt a death blow to the vast yet loosely organized Cuman community, thereby ending its hegemony over the Black Sea and Caspian steppes. Until that point, the Cumans had been a formidable military force, participating in various campaigns across Eastern Europe and the Eastern Mediterranean—whether through independent operations by individual clans and tribes or as

mercenaries and allies of local rulers. However, their undeniable military might proved utterly insufficient to cope with the Mongol war machine—a phenomenon that posed a complex puzzle to all their potential adversaries and remained virtually unsolved, at least during the initial decades of their expansion. In the introduction, Dr. Golev also addresses the question of why such a development occurred, drawing on solid theoretical argumentation and highlighting the typological differences between the nomadic societies of Western Eurasia and those of "Inner Asia"—the latter being compelled to withstand far greater pressure from their powerful neighbor, the Chinese Empire, and thus driven by necessity to strive for unity and the construction of their own mighty empire.

In the first chapter, "Cuman-Kipchaks and Mongols in the Mirror of Medieval Sources and the Focus of Modern Scholarship," Dr. Golev examines the relevant historiography and sources in detail. Here, he demonstrates impressive expertise in the field, revealing the solid scholarly foundation upon which he builds the monograph's arguments. The chapter also outlines the research methodology in detail and introduces the necessary terminological framework—an essential component for a study covering such a vast geographical area and complex subject matter.

Chapter Two, "The Ecology of War: Seasonal Campaigns of the Cuman-Kipchaks in Eastern Europe and Central Asia," examines Cuman warfare and the role of the Cumans as a significant military force in Western Eurasia and neighboring regions on the eve of the Mongol expansion. It provides a detailed analysis of Cuman military campaigns in the Balkans, Khwarezm, and neighboring Kievan Rus', while also explaining the operational pattern of these campaigns—a pattern characterized by asymmetry, particularly regarding the campaigns against the Balkan lands and Khwarezm. This model was not strictly adhered to only in relations with the nearby Kievan Rus'. Dr. Golev highlights a number of factors accounting for this asymmetry and the avoidance of the hot months for more distant campaigns, focusing in particular detail on the climatic factor, which played a significant role in shaping the military tactics and strategy of Cuman campaigns.

Chapter Three, "Cuman Refugees in Southeastern Europe, the Passage of the Mongol Army through Bulgaria, and the End of Cuman Bulgarophilia," examines a turning point in the history of the Cuman Steppe: the Mongol invasion, the devastation suffered by the Cumans, and the wave of refugees that swept into neighboring lands—Bulgaria in particular. It traces the connection between this influx and the subsequent Mongol invasion of Bulgarian territories, as well as the end of Cuman "Bulgarophilia"—that is, the mutually beneficial military and political alliance between Bulgarians and Cumans during the first half of the 13th century. It was the

Mongol invasion that put an end to the independent political role of the Cumans. From then on, they would feature in the history of Western Eurasia and the Eastern Mediterranean within the framework of other societies and state formations—albeit sometimes occupying high-ranking positions within those societies, whether in the aristocracy or even in positions of rulership.

Chapter Four, "But Think of Nothing Else but Your Mission: Ethos, Discipline, and Fighting Spirit in Mongol Military Culture at the Dawn of the Empire," examines the reasons behind the stunning success of the Mongol expansion. The author convincingly presents the essence of Mongol military culture—a phenomenon that, in its nature, rivals such world-historical examples as the spirit of the Spartan and Macedonian phalanxes or the Roman legion. Iron discipline, fighting spirit, and absolute subordination lie at the foundation of Mongol military successes. While some elements of traditional nomadic Eurasian military practices were retained, the Mongol army of conquest was, on the whole, a new type of army—a precursor to modern military forces—and therein lay the secret of its success, at least during the era of conquest. Naturally, like most empires, the Mongol Empire transitioned—and quite rapidly—from a period of rise and expansion to one of internecine conflict and disintegration. This was due in no small part to the gradual decline of the Mongol military machine and a reversion to certain traditional methods of warfare.

Chapter Five, "Inner-Mongol Diplomacy and Witch-Hunting During the Empire's Collapse: The Witchcraft Trial at Hulagu's Court," focuses precisely on the processes that led to the gradual decline of Mongol military supremacy and the transformation of Mongol society itself under the influence of conquered peoples. This issue is examined through the prism of the conflict between Hulagu and Berke—or, more broadly, between the emerging *ulus* (realms) of Jochi and Hulagu, known by the more common names of the Golden Horde and the Ilkhanate. These two superpowers in Western Eurasia and the Middle East engaged in a fierce conflict that disregarded the pan-Mongol framework and the legacy of the Chinggisids, thereby contributing significantly to the end of Mongol global hegemony. Martial valor gave way to courtly and diplomatic intrigues—as well as "witch hunts" (involving actual witches and sorcerers)—ultimately undermining the concept of Mongol unity centered on the legacy of Genghis Khan. The spread of Islam among the populations of the two uluses, the "Kipchakization" of the Mongol aristocracy in the Golden Horde, and the profound social, political, and ethnic changes—which ultimately led to the demise of both western Mongol uluses during the 14th and 15th centuries—will also play a significant role in this process.

The conclusion presents the author's general findings regarding the "turning point era" of the 13th century, when Mongol military expansion triggered profound changes across a

vast geographical region and long-term alterations to the landscape of the Pontic-Caspian steppe—the territory once inhabited by the Cuman-Kipchak tribal confederation.

Dr. Golev's study is groundbreaking, bringing together several important sub-themes to form a comprehensive, vivid picture of the era that marked the end of the early medieval steppe. This period ushered the region into the Late Middle Ages and the Early Modern Time, when the Pontic-Caspian steppes became the stage for new military, political, and social realities associated with a new geopolitics and geostrategy.

The studies and articles by Konstantin Golev enlisted in the competition could be categorized as follows:

1. Articles dedicated to the history of the Cuman-Kipchaks—to use the author's terminology. These comprise four articles in English, Russian, and Bulgarian that address broader historical issues concerning this community—specifically its settlements in Crimea, along the border with Khwarezm, and in Khorasan, as well as the wave of refugees that arrived in the Balkans on the eve of the Mongol invasion of Southeast Europe.
2. Two articles dedicated to the history of the Mongol Empire and the Golden Horde, examining the "witch-hunt" at the Mongol royal court and the symbiosis between nomadic communities and cities within the Golden Horde.
3. Three articles dedicated to Bulgarian-Cuman relations and the reign of Theodore Svetoslav, specifically his accession to the throne following the assassination of the Chinggisid Chaka.
4. An article dedicated to early medieval nomads—the Huns and the Avars—and their settlement in the Pannonian Plain, a distinctive geographical extension of the Pontic-Caspian corridor.
5. Three collections compiled by Konstantin Golev are also presented. They cover diverse topics: one (co-compiled with Delyan Rusev) is dedicated to the late nomads of the pre-Ottoman era, while the other two volumes focus on the recollections of World War II veterans—the result of a long-term project by Konstantin Golev and Marian Gyaurski.

The additional materials submitted for the competition—specifically the articles and studies included—demonstrate once again Dr. Golev's broad scholarly interests and his ability to address diverse topics and issues. These range from subjects within his specialized field of research to more general themes requiring a different set of skills, such as working with contemporary archives, conducting interviews, and carrying out fieldwork.

Dr. Golev's multifaceted scientific activity is complemented by his numerous appearances in television and radio programs, podcasts, and other popular science media, covering a wide range of topics. The candidate has participated in many prestigious scientific forums both in Bulgaria and abroad, as detailed in the provided documentation. Furthermore, it is worth highlighting that his publications appear in peer-reviewed and indexed journals, and his citation record is high, fully meeting the minimal national requirements for the position of Associate Professor.

The reports generated by the scientometric measurement system, along with the data regarding the candidate's citations and contributions, present an exceptionally compelling case for the appointment of Chief Assistant Professor Dr. Konstantin Golev to the academic position of Associate Professor. This would also serve as well-deserved recognition of his fruitful efforts in the fields of Bulgarian, Balkan, and General Medieval Studies—contributions that are yet to be fully appreciated.

4. Conclusion:

The scientific, teaching and project activities of Dr. Konstantin Valeriev Golev fully correspond to the requirements for occupying the academic position of "associate professor" according to the requirements of the Law on the Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria and the regulations of the BAS. Based on this circumstance, I am pleased to propose to the esteemed jury to award the academic position of associate professor to Dr. Konstantin Valeriev Golev in professional direction 2.2. History and Archeology, Scientific specialty "Documentation, Archival Science, Paleography, including Historiography and Source Criticism" and to wish the candidate every success in his future career.

15th of September 2026

Sofia

Signature:

/Prof. Alexandar Nikolov/

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Александър Николов