

БЪЛГАРСКА АКАДЕМИЯ НА НАУКИТЕ ИНСТИТУТ ЗА ИСТОРИЧЕСКИ ИЗСЛЕДВАНИЯ	
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OPINION

by prof. PhD Plamen Hristov Pavlov

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Regarding the announced competition for the academic position of Associate Professor for the "Auxiliary Historical Sciences and Informatics" Section at the Institute for Historical Studies of the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences. Professional field 2.2 History and Archaeology; scientific specialty: "Documentation, Archival Science, Paleography, including Historiography and Source Studies."

Details regarding the competition and the candidate

The competition was announced in 16 June 2026 and the scientific jury was appointed by Order No. 66 dated 13 August 2026, issued by the Director of the Institute for Historical Studies. The candidate is Chief Assistant PhD Konstantin Valeriev Golev, who has submitted a habilitation thesis titled "Eurasian Nomads in Times of Upheaval: Cuman-Kipchaks and Mongols in the Whirlpool of the Thirteenth Century" - published as a scholarly monograph by the "Prof. Marin Drinov", Academic Publishing House of the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences in 2026, along with a significant number of other scholarly publications. The submitted documentation is fully in order and complies with all legal and regulatory requirements.

The sole candidate in the current competition is Chief Assistant PhD Konstantin Golev. He holds Master's degrees in History (2009) and Archival Science (2009) from Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski" and defended his doctoral dissertation in 2013. Since 2020, he has been working at the Institute for Historical Studies in the "Auxiliary Historical Sciences and Informatics" section. The candidate possesses diverse language skills—including proficiency in Eastern languages—which aligns with his professional development and deep-seated research interests. Chief Assistant PhD Konstantin Golev fully meets the required scientometric criteria; his scholarly output attracts interest from researchers in Bulgaria and abroad - a logical outcome given the quality of his academic works, his participation in prestigious national and international scholarly forums, and his publications in specialized academic journals. Furthermore, he is an active member of various Bulgarian and international academic organizations.

Information regarding the habilitation thesis

Chief Assistant PhD Konstantin Golev has authored a highly successful study that addresses a vast and critically important - yet often underestimated - subject matter concerning the history of medieval Europe, Bulgaria, Byzantium, and the Balkans, as well as their connections to the Eurasian steppes and the Near and Middle East. It is safe to say that the monograph in question fills significant gaps in Bulgarian and European medieval and Byzantine studies. The subject matter concerning the so-called "late nomads", the "Mongol world," and the Golden Horde - is still frequently treated as a peripheral, or even somewhat "exotic," topic. Admittedly, recent decades have seen the appearance of numerous publications, that go some way toward rectifying the tendency to underestimate the role of nomadic (including Kipchak-Cuman) and Mongol/Tatar factors in the historical development of various states and peoples, including medieval Bulgaria. Yet, precisely because of this context, Konstantin Golev's study is all the more necessary and timely. The work spans 319 pages, however, far more significant are the study's broad scope, the vast yet skillfully condensed body of evidence, the historical sources - whether newly introduced or re-examined—and the author's numerous scholarly contributions across the full spectrum of issues addressed in the monograph. It is worth noting that Konstantin Golev presents - for the first time in Bulgarian medieval studies - such a comprehensive picture of the geopolitical and ethnocultural processes unfolding across almost the entire "Old World" during the 13th century, naturally including a number of inevitable and necessary references to earlier and subsequent events.

In his "Introduction," the author outlines the study's conceptual framework as well as the specific concepts and terminology employed.

The first chapter is dedicated to historical sources and modern historiography concerning the Cumans and the Mongols. As previously mentioned, Konstantin Golev draws upon a range of little-known or underutilized historical sources: Byzantine, Western European, medieval Russian, Persian, Arabic, Armenian, Bulgarian, and others, utilizing the latest and/or best critical editions. Regarding historiography, the author covers a broad spectrum of research by leading scholars in the field (from Western Europe, the Americas, Russia, Ukraine, Hungary, Serbia, Kazakhstan, Turkey, etc.), as well as studies by Bulgarian authors (V. Stoyanov, Pl. Pavlov, L. Krastev, G. Vladimirov, G. Atanassov). It is worth noting that Konstantin Golev treats those who have written on the subject with marked propriety, adhering to the written and unwritten rules of academic ethics - regardless of whether he agrees or disagrees with specific opinions and interpretations put forward by other authors.

The second chapter bears the striking yet apt title "The Ecology of War." The author addresses a range of issues concerning the Cumans (or "Cuman-Kipchaks," as he terms them, supporting this with his own arguments) - covering their economy, military affairs, diplomacy, and more,- while paying particular attention

to the phenomenon of "seasonal military aid." K. Golev details this aspect within the context of wars waged by Bulgaria during the era of the early Asen dynasty and beyond. At the same time, he introduces a number of new and original perspectives regarding both well-known and lesser-known political events and military campaigns. The book's third chapter deals with the complex and insufficiently clarified issue of the migration of Cuman population "waves" to the Balkans, specifically to Bulgarian lands, following the onset and during the course of the Mongol expansion into Eastern Europe. Here, too, Konstantin Golev presents new source material and analysis, drawing necessary comparisons and parallels with Cuman migration to other regions - such as Hungary, Byzantium, and the Russian principalities,- as well as the emergence of the Mamluks in Egypt and similar phenomena elsewhere.

A significant place in Konstantin Golev's study is held by the fourth chapter, which is dedicated to the "birth" of the global Mongol Empire and its early development - a topic that has received scant attention in Bulgarian historiography (and beyond). For the first time, a Bulgarian researcher provides a detailed account of the so-called the military culture of the Mongols, including its ideological and ethical aspects. There is no doubt that a proper understanding of all this is crucial when examining the so-called Tatar hegemony within the Second Bulgarian Empire, including the fates of prominent figures such as Tsars George I Terter, Smilets, and, in particular, Theodore Svetoslav. At the same time, the author shares the view I expressed three decades ago - that Chaka, the son and heir of Nogai, was not a Bulgarian tsar.

Konstantin Golev's observations in the book's fifth chapter—dedicated to so-called intra-Mongol diplomacy, particularly during the disintegration of the global empire built by the heirs of Genghis Khan - are both interesting and significant. The habilitation thesis presented by Chief Assistant Professor Dr. Konstantin Golev merits high praise, not only for the author's analytical approach and extensive knowledge (reflected in the comprehensive and precise bibliography) but also for his engaging language and style. In conclusion, the monograph "Eurasian Nomads in Times of Upheaval: Cuman-Kipchaks and Mongols in the Whirlwind of the Thirteenth Century" stands as eloquent proof of the scholarly development of Chief Assistant PhD Konstantin Golev and the high standard of modern Bulgarian medieval studies.

Publications and participation in academic forums

In connection with the present competition, Chief Assistant PhD Konstantin Golev presents one monograph, three edited collections, and seventeen articles published in scholarly journals and volumes in Bulgaria, Hungary, Kazakhstan, and Tatarstan (Russian Federation). Some of these works are listed with abstracts in other established publications, including „Archivum Eurasiae Medii Aevi“.

In conclusion, I vote with full conviction in favor of the appointment of Konstantin Valeriev Golev to the academic position of Associate Professor at the Institute for Historical Studies of the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, within Professional Field 2.2 (History and Archaeology) and the scientific specialty of "Documentation, Archival Science, Paleography, including Historiography and Source Studies."

September 29, 2026

Veliko Tarnovo

Prof. PhD Plamen Pavlov