

STATEMAN

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For the PhD thesis of Donika Tsanovska-Schneeweiss „Role and activity of the dragomans. The Austrian branch of the Testa family between the second half of the 18th century and the first half of the 19th century”

Submitted for the acquisition of the of the educational and scientific degree „PhD”

in the field of higher education 2. Humanities, professional field 2.2. History and Archaeology

For years, the Dragoman institution has attracted the interest of specialists in the history of the Ottoman Empire. Unfortunately, among the names of the researchers of this issue, we will not find, at least so far, representatives of Bulgarian Balkan studies. In this sense, the decision of Assoc. Dr. Maria Baramova to direct her doctoral student to a study of the famous and influential Dragoman family Testa is commendable, because the chosen topic not only fits into the scientific pursuits of the established Ottoman schools in Europe, but also because it reveals new, completely unknown pages from the life and works of significant representatives of this family.

The dissertation work of Donika Tsanovska-Schneeweiss has a volume of 215 pages and is structured in an introduction, four chapters, a conclusion, 6 appendices and a bibliography. The problem-chronological approach used is appropriate, and the time span of the research is well argued. The author has used rich and varied source material, and the information about the Testa family, which she managed to find in the Austrian State Archives and in various old printed publications, is especially valuable for the research. A good knowledge and critical understanding of the scientific literature on the subject (including more recent studies) is also a merit of the work. The previous achievements of every researcher who has studied dragomans in the Ottoman Empire are correctly highlighted and used, and the existing debatable and unclear aspects of their activity are outlined clearly and fully justified.

I would distinguish essential and indisputable contributions of Donika Tsanovska-Schneeweiss in the following five directions:

- the detailed clarification of the origin the origin, history and branches of the Testa family

- highlighting Bartholomew I as the founder of the Austrian branch of the Testa family and tracing his specific merits in defending the interests of the Habsburg Empire in the Balkans; the most important aspects of the professional activity of Bartholomew I are described in detail; the prerequisites for his career advancement are specified; curious touches from the everyday life in the 18th century of the dragomans in Constantinople have been reconstructed; special attention merit the observations and comments of Donika Tsanovska-Schneeweiss about Bartholomew's role in maintaining good relations between the two empires in the context of the actions of the Vidin separatist Osman Pazvantoglu;

- the clarification of various facts from the activities of the next two generations of the heirs of Bartholomew I (Johann Anton Testa, Caspar Testa, Bartholomeus III von Testa and Heinrich von Testa);

- uncovering the networks of influence of the representatives of the Testa family for more than a century; the prerequisites and individual stages of the process of formation and strengthening of the Dragoman networks for influence in the Ottoman Empire are explained in detail; special attention is paid to the genealogical connections between between the Testa and the different Venetian, French and English dragoman families such as Salvaggio (Venice), de Negri (France), Dane (France and England), Fortis (Venice and France), Fornetti (France); on the example of Elizabeth Testa, the family's desire to connect with representatives of the Austrian aristocracy is shown, which guarantees the strengthening of the family's positions in the public life of the Habsburg Empire;;

- the inclusion in scientific circulation of unknown and unused documentary material on the diplomatic relations between the Habsburg and Ottoman Empires.

Donika Tsanovska-Schneeweiss has 3 publications on the topic of her doctoral thesis. She participated with reports in 9 scientific conferences. According to the submitted documents, it meets all the requirements of the ZRASRB and the Regulations for its application, as well as the minimum scientometric indicators laid down in the relevant regulatory documents. The abstract correctly reflects the structure, content, main conclusions

and contributions of the dissertation work. All this gives me reason to confidently recommend to the Honorable Scientific Jury to award Donika Tsanovska-Schneeweiss the educational and scientific degree „PhD”.

prof. Plamen Mitev

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