

S T A T E M E N T

by **Totko Neykov Stoyanov**, PhD, Professor, member of the Scientific Jury

appointed by order of the Rector Kl. Ohridski", in a competition for the academic position of "Associate Professor" in the professional field 2.2. History and Archaeology (Archaeology – Classical Archaeology) published in the State Newspaper 48/ 28.06.2022.

In the announced competition, organized at the request of the FS of the Faculty of History for the needs of the Department of Archaeology, the only candidate is Assoc. Dr. Ivan Dimitrov Valchev. His documents have been accepted by the Commission appointed by order of Mr. Rector. The basis for his participation in the competition procedure is the submitted certificate that he fulfils the minimum national requirements under Article 2b of the Law on the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms.

Ivan Valchev graduated in Archaeology from the Faculty of History of Sofia University in 2007. In 2008 - 2011 he was a regular PhD student at the Department with the topic. Since 2013, after competition, he has been a Senior Assistant Professor at the Department of Archaeology, teaching Thracian and Classical Archaeology.

He participated in the competition with a habilitation thesis, published and submitted for evaluation under the title: 'The Cult of Jupiter in Lower Moesia in the Roman Age'. University of Sofia, Sofia University Press, "Jupiter to Jupiter", University of Sofia, Sofia. He also contributed 10 selected studies and articles according to the attached list, published after 2011.

Ivan Valchev was among the students in the Archaeology major who showed early and lasting interests in classical archaeology, crystallized gradually and permanently into religious life in the Thracian provinces of the Roman Empire. This resulted in the topics of his coursework and master's thesis, and then the topic of his doctoral dissertation. The accumulated erudition and confidence in dealing with this difficult scientific problem found expression in the habilitation thesis presented in this competition, dedicated to the cult of Jupiter in the province of Lower Moesia.

The candidate is not only a promising researcher in the field of classical antiquity, but also an erudite and qualitative lecturer in the undergraduate programmes of Archaeology, Ethnology and Hebraic Studies (cf. the reference on his disciplines and workload). The increasing workload, which exceeds the norms, is not an obstacle to his responsible attitude to work with students. As his holder since his first steps as a seminar lecturer in the core course Archaeology of Southeastern Europe in the 1st millennium BC (since 2013) and the course Mediterranean Archaeology, in the specialty of Hebraic

Archaeology, I have witnessed his professional growth. The formation of the Mediterranean Archaeology course and the beginning of its teaching, within a very short time, has manifested his ability to adapt and prepare thoroughly in, in practice, new and complex issues. The pedagogy of his teaching and lecturing in this discipline, after my retirement, was based on my confidence in his abilities.

Successfully defended 6 master theses led by I. Valchev graduates are another objective criterion of his qualities as a teacher. Another indication of his growth as a lecturer not only in the classroom but also in the formation of future archaeologists is his involvement in the summer field practices of the students of Archaeology in the regular studies of the ancient city of Kabyle (in which he participated as a student), as deputy head (2014-2017) and head (after 2018).

Ivan has participated in a number of educational and scientific projects, generally thematically related to the issues of cultural development of Ancient Thrace. Ivan Valchev's responsible attitude in every engagement and respect among the faculty college led naturally to his election as a member of the Faculty Council.

Since 2015 he has been a member of the Association of Bulgarian Archaeologists, and since 2021 he has been a member of the ABA Board. He is also a member of the editorial board of the association's electronic journal and portal (Be-JA).

The monograph, with which prof. Dr. Ivan Valchev participated in the competition is a manifestation of his aspiration to build on his research experience in the field of primary phenomena of religious life in Roman Thrace, determined by its development within the Roman Empire from its formation and entry into the Balkans to its sunset and collapse in Late Antiquity. The choice, the cult of the supreme Roman god of Rome, Jupiter, was a challenge, and the well-defined geographical and chronological scope of the study a prerequisite for a good research result. The monograph has a classical structure - an introduction, five chapters and a conclusion, a catalogue of monuments (255), a bibliography and an appendix with images (391 pp. in total).

Chapter One provides a meaningful overview of the history of the cult of Jupiter from the emergence of the Roman state to the reign of Constantine I. Its functions are outlined, with an emphasis on its role as supreme patron of the Republic, and subsequently of the Empire and the Emperor, the reason for its popularity in the provinces, including Lower Moesia. Chapter Two introduces the cult of Jupiter in Lower Moesia, traced and analyzed through the god's epithets, his iconography in cultic and votive monuments, and in festivals. The concrete and precise analysis, while highlighting general trends in imperial religious politics, also makes clear the local specificity (Zbelsurd).

Chapter three analyses the official aspect in the cult of Jupiter and its relationship with the emperor and the army. The popularity of the practice in the rural areas of northern Dobrudzha gives a specific shape to the cult in Lower Moesia and finds no parallel in the other Danubian provinces. The factors for this peculiarity are also indicated.

The cult of Jupiter in the civilian settlements of Lower Moesia is the subject of study in chapter four. The analysis of official and private dedications shows the penetration of the cult among all strata and social groups of the population. While the official aspect of the cult is predominantly present in northern Dobrudzha, private initiations predominate in the central and western parts of the province.

The last chapter examines the dedications of monuments to Jupiter. Roman citizens led the way in the veneration and propagation of the cult. Three-quarters of all dedicators bear two or three Roman names. With Roman names out of the pattern or in combination with Greek patronyms are about 5%, nearly half of the Peregrines are tied to the Roman state, i.e. over 90% of the dedicators are either Roman citizens or connected with the Roman administration in Lower Moesia. Regardless of their names and ethnic origins, they show an affiliation with Roman culture and, in not a few cases, the state in the person of its supreme patron god.

The monograph is a contribution to the study of religious life in Roman Thrace, and through this to the general history of religious life in the Empire. It displays the author's erudition and ability to focalize research objectives and analyze and interpret the possible source data to support them.

It has already been pointed out that ch. as. Dr. Ivan Valchev participated in the competition with 10 scientific publications: one monograph and nine studies and articles according to the attached list, published in prestigious journals. The monograph is his doctoral dissertation, critically edited, expanded and adapted for monograph format. Two of the publications are in refereed and indexed journals. Most of them are related to the main themes of the candidate's research: two are on the topic of the habilitation thesis (Appendices 3 and 4), the others are on different groups of monuments and forms of religious life in Thrace (Appendices 5-7, 9-11). I would single out my colleague Valchev's study of religious life at Nicopolis ad Nestum and its hinterland in the Roman period (app. 10). This, a first attempt, in fact, is a continuation of the author's efforts in this direction (cf. No. 17 of the general list and Appendix 2, pp. 353-355) on the basis of epigraphic and archaeological monuments and coinage issues to outline the currently possible picture of religious life in this region of Thrace, set in the context of general trends. There is a scrupulous analysis of the data from each type of source, a critical, yet correct, evaluation of the available theses and hypotheses, and a balanced statement of the proposed interpretations. The result is a good starting point for further programmatic research in this direction. The attitude towards numismatic data as a specific and significant source of information and its handling is demonstrated in the commented study by I. Valchev and in other publications. Two of them, submitted for evaluation (Appendices 7-8), demonstrate his entry into this specific field of archaeological knowledge.

Knowing closely the manner of work and publications of Ivan Valchev, I would add, for the record, that his texts are distinguished by correctness and there are no elements of plagiarism.

In conclusion, and as a consequence of the above, confirming the above qualities of Ivan Valchev as a formed thorough researcher in the field of archaeology of the cult in ancient Thrace, but also in other important areas of ancient archaeology, a skilled teacher and teacher, a field archaeologist, a loyal

colleague and friend, I declare my confidence to vote positively for the award of Asst. Dr. Ivan Dimitrov Valchev to the academic position of Associate Professor.

5 November 2022

Prof. Totko Stoyanov

