

## REVIEW

by **Professor D.Sc. Lyudmila Doncheva-Petkova**

member of the Scientific Jury, appointed by order of the Rector of the SU (No. RD 38-565/3.10.2023) in a competition for the academic position "Associate Professor", professional field 2.2. History and Archeology (Archaeology – Medieval Archaeology).

The competition for the occupation of an academic position " Associate Professor" for the needs of the Department of Archaeology at the Faculty of History of the Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski" was published in the State Gazette, no. 65 of 28.07.2023. The only candidate is Assistant Prof. PhD Chavdar Yanakiev Kirilov. The documents for the competition were accepted by a committee appointed by the Rector of the University, and the basis for his participation in the competition procedure is the deposited certificate that he fulfills the minimum national requirements under Art. 2b of ZRASRB.

In 1998, Chavdar Kirilov graduated with a Master degree in Archeology from the Faculty of History of the "St. Kl. Ohridski", and in 2006 he defended his doctorate in archeology at the "Johann Wolfgang Goethe" University in Frankfurt am Main - Germany on the topic: "Studien zu den frühmittelalterlichen Wurzeln europäische Stadtentwicklung: Archäologische Befunde Mitteleuropas, ihre sozial- und wirtschaftsgeschichtliche Deutung und der Vergleich zum Raum der östlichen Balkanhalbinsel". From 2006 to 2010, he was an archaeologist and chief specialist at the Faculty of Chemistry of Sofia University. From 2010 to 2012, he was an assistant, and from 2012 until now, a Assistant Professor at the Department of Archaeology, teaching medieval Bulgarian archaeology, as well as archeology of Late Antiquity and the Great Migration.

Chavdar Kirilov's scientific interests are in the field of Late Antiquity, the Middle Ages, and more recently, the Ottoman era. He is the author of two monographs, one is the dissertation in German, the other is the habilitation thesis. He is the author of 18 studies/articles in scientific journals and collections, of which three are in German and two in English, one is co-authored. 29 short publications, mostly presented in the Archaeological Discoveries and Excavations series, are defined as "articles in a collection". Three of them are independent, and the rest are co-authors. One in English – No. 32 was published in Germany, and another – in German co-authored with R. Koleva – in Romania.

The proposed scientific production for habilitation is represented by the two monographs and eight studies/articles, two of which are in German and two in English. They are dedicated to various monuments and problems, to interesting finds, to questions about

cities, settlements, capitals, castles, migrations. In general, they can be grouped into three areas: small finds, settlement problems, demographic problems.

**1.Small finds.** I begin with these publications (there are two of them) because they are connected with the habilitation work that should be given more attention and because many and various small findings have been neglected in our scientific studies so far. The habilitation thesis has the original title "Unknown Familiars. The glass bracelets in Bulgaria from the Late Iron Age to the Ottoman era" and is in a volume of 432 pages. Of these, the main text, divided into nine parts, covers 158 pages, followed by a register of 372 archaeological sites up to p. 359, a rich bibliography presented in 72 pages and an Appendix (six maps and 19 tables). As the title indicates, the monograph is devoted to glass bracelets, widespread but poorly researched ornaments from the 3rd century BC until the end of the Ottoman era. The emphasis of the work falls on today's Bulgarian lands, but the author repeatedly dwells on these ornaments in the vast space from the Rhine to the Crimea and from the Tatras to the Sinai Peninsula. Each part begins with well-chosen and relevant quotations taken from various, well-known authors.

The preface is detailed and discusses the necessity of the subject and structure of the monograph, as well as the terminology of the eras. The author explains why he prefers to call bracelets from pre-Roman times "La-Tene", rather than "Late Iron" and/or "Hellenistic": "... I believe that the chosen term is not only chronologically correct, but also reflects much – adequate (at least based on what is known so far) their cultural affiliation" (p. 15). However, it remains unclear why the term "from the Late Iron Age" remained in the title of the book. The accepted terms for the other eras – Roman, Middle Byzantine, Ottoman – are also explained. The state of research in our country is shown in detail – from the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century with the Topra Asar mound near the village of Salalii (now Borets), the information of K. Shkorpil and D. Ainalov about the bracelets in Pliska, the research of the medieval settlement near the village of Koprinka over the ancient Sevtopolis and the mistakes made by J. Changova, the Sliven graves with bracelets and those from the necropolis "St. Sofia" in Sofia to reach the 372 objects registered by the author.

In the "Technology" part, the two production stages known since antiquity are traced – glassmaking, i.e. the production of glass by mixing different natural raw materials at high temperature, and glass processing, in which the raw glass is transformed into various forms. The attention is focused on the glass-forming elements and the formation of the glass bracelets, which is carried out with two different techniques – stitched and seamless (so far it has not been commented on in our country).

The "Systematics" part discusses theoretical and methodological problems of two of the main approaches to the systematization of archaeological material – classification and typology. The author advocates the thesis "that it is preferable to work with dynamic classifications of the material depending on the needs of a specific study".

In the next four parts, glass bracelets are examined in the four major eras – La-tene, Roman, Middle Byzantine and Ottoman. It is noted that these parts are uneven due to "the different degree of knowledge and the different number of objects, resp. the different amount of materials from each of them". Depending on the material from different eras, attention is focused on their distribution in our country and analogies outside Bulgaria. It was established that "there are no Middle Byzantine and Ottoman bracelets on the Rhine, no La-Tene bracelets in Asia Minor and Palestine. We have everything" (p. 14). In these four parts, the technique of making, shape, dimensions, color, transparency, surface, sections, social status, use, users, ethnic and religious affiliation, individual identity, chronology (questions about the beginning and end date) are traced.

The "ubiquitous" La-Tene glass bracelets dated from the middle of the 3<sup>rd</sup> to the middle of the 1<sup>st</sup> century BC are described, and those from Bulgaria between the last decades of the 3<sup>rd</sup> century and the end of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century BC. The La-Tene bracelets are defined as a "distinct group", "well distinguished from the groups of later eras" (p. 82). The researchers of these ornaments are indicated, credit to T. Hevernik for identifying them as an independent group. The few known sites in our country with such bracelets have been traced, mostly between the Danube River and Stara Planina. Their features are examined – shape, colors, decoration, sections, mostly seamless technique, which is the reason for T. Hevernik to call it "Celtic". The author remains hopeful that in the future more attention will be paid to these little-known ornaments in our country, because "the South Danube lands have the potential to be not just a consumer, but (and) a corrective of knowledge, ideas and (traditionally cherished) dates"(p. 89).

Chavdar Kirilov established that glass bracelets identified as "Roman" appeared towards the last decades of the 3<sup>rd</sup> century, without being able to speak of a "boom" in their use. He establishes the complexes that can be dated after 400 AD, and that in the lands south of the Lower Danube they did not completely disappear in the 5<sup>th</sup>–6<sup>th</sup> centuries. He notes that it is currently unclear whether they were spread throughout the Roman Empire. The sites in which they are attested in our country are few (most of the discovered specimens have not been published), while in the Eastern Mediterranean and the Levant they are common. And for these bracelets, the author remains hopeful that in the future the production centers will be established (he admits local workshops in our country), the penetration routes, regional

features, etc. It defines their marks with the predominant sewing technique and black color. It suggests that their wearers are people of different religious beliefs, as some bracelets are decorated with pagan, Jewish (seven candlesticks) and Christian (chrisms, etc.) religious symbols.

Glass bracelets have been defined as "one of the calling cards of the Middle Ages" (p. 109). Despite the disputes surrounding their appearance, the author rightly assumes that they are not earlier than the middle – the second half of the 10<sup>th</sup> century, even in "properly Byzantine lands". Their fashion most likely died out in the first half of the 13<sup>th</sup> century. There are almost no objects from the Middle Byzantine era in which they were not found. Their large quantity helps their full characterization. All their marks, as well as their use (as jewelry and as an item of clothing), are described in detail. The "reasons for the end" are explained in detail. In the concluding part, an attempt is made to bring out several groups of bracelets "which are diagnostic of the Middle Byzantine era and can be considered as undoubted (and only its) representatives". Such are painted, wide polychrome, as well as wide monochrome with a flat section and longitudinal grooves.

For the first time in our country, Chavdar Kirilov examines in detail the glass bracelets from the Ottoman era. He notes that they were a popular piece of jewelry in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries, that they were distributed throughout the Balkan Peninsula, that the published specimens from Bulgaria are few, although they are found throughout the territory. Unlike Middle Byzantine bracelets, which with few exceptions are absent north of the Danube, Ottoman glass bracelets have been found in both Wallachia and Hungary. He diagnoses a number of their characteristic features. Their widespread distribution in the Middle East is indicative that some of their users belonged to the Muslim community within the empire. The author finds that, despite the usual lack of inventory of the Muslim burial ritual, glass bracelets are found, not so rarely, in grave contexts. Finding them in Christian necropolises in our country and in Romania has shown that they do not play the role of a distinctive religious symbol.

Already in the preface, Chavdar Kirilov notes that the huge amount of bracelets is the reason for not working with original, but with published materials, which is why "the answers given in the book are far fewer than the questions posed" (p. 10). And yet, for unclear questions, he could look at the materials stored in museums, such as the bracelets from Odartsi, located in RIM Dobrich.

The so-called "Conclusion" part consists of several paragraphs with the author's reasoning. In fact, there is no conclusion, because Chavdar Kirilov notes: "I have no intention

of summarizing the main conclusions of the study or drawing directions for future studies. What I had to say has already been said."

The register of archaeological sites, for the presentation of which an enormous amount of work has been invested, is an essential part of the book. It contains detailed and critical information about each monument and the found glass bracelets. Objects are listed in alphabetical order. After the name of each settlement, its corresponding code is indicated, according to the Unified Classifier of Administrative-Territorial and Territorial Units in the Republic of Bulgaria (ECATTE). It seems to me that for greater clarity and for the convenience of the reader, the sites could have been separated by periods, as not all sites are marked in the sections on the different eras. This is done in the five maps, but there the numerous codes are what make it difficult.

The monograph was made with great effort, with the author's great desire to present the characteristic features of glass bracelets in the four eras. The depth of the problem is visible. The reader gets acquainted with a huge literature, with hitherto unknown works of foreign authors in our country. The monograph will be useful to anyone who touches, who discovers these ornaments, because he will be able to easily identify and date them.

Other small finds – the shoe horseshoes – are the subject of the last article No. 10 in the attached list. These rare objects have hardly been commented on in the archaeological literature, and to the extent that they are mentioned, their appearance dates back to around 1200 AD. They were considered common in 13<sup>th</sup>–14<sup>th</sup> century, continuing to be used through the Ottoman era to the present day. Chavdar Kirilov's observations, however, show that shoe horseshoes are not found in 13<sup>th</sup>–14<sup>th</sup> century necropolises, but are characteristic of Ottoman ones. They are also absent in the well-documented settlements before the end of the 14<sup>th</sup> century. They appeared in today's Bulgarian lands during the Ottoman conquest, being used by all groups and strata of the population, not only by the army. Such are the data from other Balkan countries – Greece and Serbia.

**2. Settlement issues.** Most of the publications indicated for habilitation belong to this direction. Already in his master's thesis, Chavdar Kirilov deals with the problem of the so-called "feudal castle" in the Bulgarian lands. His interests continued in the doctoral dissertation published as a monograph in Bonn in 2006 (No. 2). The topic is very difficult, and it is given for the development of a novice scientist. It is dedicated to the study of urbanization processes during the early Middle Ages in Central and Western Europe, on the one hand, and South-Eastern Europe, on the other, i.e. between the "Carolingian" and "Byzantine" worlds. Questions about the existence of cities, about the continuity between (late) antique urban culture and the early medieval one, about the role of power in

urbanization processes, about the role of roads and communications in the development of cities, as well as the question about the existence of capitals, of permanent residences of rulers. In search of answers, an attempt has been made to outline the archaeological concept of a city. As a result of the analysis of objects from Central Europe and the Eastern Balkans, the author comes to the conclusion that "direct examples of continuity in the West, i.e. of the continuation of life in ancient urban centers, are generally more and better visible compared to East, but that the city of the high Middle Ages in the West has very little in common with its late antique predecessor, while in the East it is just the opposite". The reasons for this are the different paths of urbanization in the East and the West, as well as the powerful cultural influence of Byzantium in the East, which played a significant role in preserving a number of features of the Late antique city in the Middle Ages.

In article No. 4 "Bulgarian castle – real or aerial?" the author justifiably disputes the opinions imposed in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century on the existence of feudal castles in Bulgaria, especially during the period of the Second Bulgarian Kingdom, close to those of the feudal castles in Western and Central Europe. He traces the appearance and development of the castle in the West. He finds that in the Balkans there is no evidence that the landed aristocracy built fortifications on their own lands. He found that the fortifications were built on behalf of the central authority, which took care of their maintenance and the military units stationed in them, that the fortresses in the Byzantine world did not serve the interests of individuals or families, but the defense of the entire state.

In article No. 7 "On the Residence of the Cherven Bishops in the Middle Ages", the author notes that no episcopal/metropolitan residence has been identified in medieval Cherven. He re-evaluates the results of the excavations of the most representative building in Cherven, which in the 1960s was declared the seat of an alleged local feudal lord. He rightly notes that no written records of medieval feudal lords have been preserved in Cherven, and building inscriptions from the city testify that the actual builder there was the king or the central government. Therefore, it suggests that the representative building in question was rather the residence of the bishops and metropolitans of Cherven, which are attested in writing, than the seat of a feudal lord.

In article No. 9, the author disputes that Constantia was appointed by Iv. Velkov, a large town in "Asara" near Simeonovgrad. This city is mentioned in written sources from the 9<sup>th</sup> to the beginning of the 13<sup>th</sup> century. Archaeological excavations in the town of "Asara" testify that there was no life there after the first half of the 12<sup>th</sup> century, and the absence of coins from the 12th century and the beginning of the 13th century is particularly impressive, as for sgraffito ceramics. The author points out that a city named Constantia was captured by

King Kaloyan in 1201 during a campaign in which Varna was also captured. According to him, it is much more logical to identify this city with the former capital of Scythia Minor – Tomi, which in the early Middle Ages acquired the name Constantia, a name that it bears in a modified form even today.

Chavdar Kirilov's interest in settlement problems and economic processes in the Middle Ages, in the problems of the transition between Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages, and more recently in the period of the Late Middle Ages, in the Ottoman era, can be seen in other works.

Thus, in article No. 3, in English "The Reduction of the Fortified City Area in Late Antiquity: Some reflections on the End of the "Antique City" in the Lands of the Eastern Roman Empire" he tried to answer the question of to what extent the reduction in fortified area can be interpreted as a sign of the decline of Roman cities. The numerous examples lead him to conclude that the Late Antique city dweller occupied a smaller living area than his predecessors in Classical Antiquity, and that habitable space and fortified area in the Late Antique period were one and the same. According to him, the reduction of the fortified area was not (at least in most cases) caused by a demographic catastrophe or by a "general decline" of the "city" institution. In a number of cases the new, albeit shorter, walls proved an insurmountable obstacle to the invading barbarians. The author defines the reduction of fortified area as a preventive measure rather than a sign of urban decline and notes that in many cases "reduction" is synonymous with "survival".

In another work (No. 5) in German "Der rissig gewordene Limes. Höhengiedlungen im östlichen Balkan als Zeugnis für die Schwäche des oströmischen Reichs in der Spätantik" discusses the time and reasons for the appearance of numerous fortified (with stone walls) high-altitude settlements in today's Bulgarian lands, erected in Late antiquity and reused in the Middle Ages. They are generally seen as military installations erected against the barbarians, in which military garrisons are stationed. According to Chavdar Kirilov, archaeological research shows that not all of them are military installations and that many of them were inhabited by a civilian population engaged in crafts, trade and agriculture. While some were built by the central government, most were erected by the provincial population, who only cared about their survival and their property. The author notes that the uncertainty has led to the fact that even newly founded cities in the 6<sup>th</sup> century differ from the classic ancient city and are essentially high-altitude fortified settlements. This is also one of the reasons for the blurring of the boundaries between "city" and "village" in Late antiquity.

Article No. 8, "Sword or Plow" is reflections on the end of the Late Antique settlement network in Thrace. And it is associated with the fortified high-altitude settlements in the

mountainous and semi-mountainous regions. It is stated that in the Bulgarian scientific literature, the thesis of the sudden abandonment of these settlements in the Early Middle Ages and their re-settlement only in the 10<sup>th</sup> century was imposed. According to the author, the large-scale "devastations" attributed to the Avars and Slavs are not supported by substantial written data and by convincing archaeological evidence. So he's looking for another explanation. Paying attention to the lack of archeological data in our country about tools for grain production in the 6<sup>th</sup> century, contrasting with the abundant examples of grain consumption in high-altitude settlements, he assumes that a large part of their inhabitants, engaged in economic activities other than agriculture (for example mining), were centrally supplied with food – an economic model that collapsed after the Persians, and then the Arabs, seized the great imperial grain-producing regions. His opinion is that as a result, in our country and elsewhere, a centralized food supply becomes impossible, and people are forced to look for different economic and settlement models.

**3. Demographic changes.** Publication No. 6 refers to this direction. "The supposed emigration of Bulgarians from Paristrion. Some notes on the question of the demographic processes between the Danube and Stara Planina in the XI–XII centuries". Chavdar Kirilov notes that in Bulgarian historiography, the period between the end of the 10<sup>th</sup> and the end of the 12<sup>th</sup> century is considered a difficult time, marked by a demographic and social catastrophe. It is assumed that as a result of the barbarian pressure in the second half of the 11<sup>th</sup> century, dozens of settlements were destroyed or perished, and a significant part of the population emigrated to the south in Thrace. As archaeological evidence for this catastrophe, both the lack of coins and archaeological finds (pottery, etc.) in Paristrion after the end of the 11<sup>th</sup> century are generally considered. According to his analysis of numerous coin collections from the 11<sup>th</sup> to 12<sup>th</sup> centuries, the reduction, and in many places the cessation of coin circulation was not the result of an interruption of the life of one or another settlement. They are due to the fiscal policy of the empire and the role of money in its economic life, which is not so much related to daily market transactions in villages and towns, but serves the payment of the army and the supra-regional trade with the lands north of the Danube. For this reason, he believes that the reorganization of the army (and in general the way of administration of the lands between the Danube and the Stara Planina) at the end of the 11<sup>th</sup> century and the prolonged difficult financial situation of the empire after 1071, and not the departure of these lands from the previous their inhabitants, are the cause of the disappearance of the coins from them. Therefore, he accepts that there is no basis for the hypothesis that these people migrated en masse to the south, to Thrace.



Chavdar Kirilov is a rather critical author, as can be seen from the examined materials submitted for the competition (No. 4, 6, 7, 8, 9). He shows his original views and disputes the opinions of even authorities such as Prof. V. Beshevliev.

His scientific activity is not limited to publications. He participates in numerous research projects (23), 20 of which he is the leader of. In 2006 and 2007, he participated under the guidance of Assoc. Prof. St. Angelova in studies of NAAR Durostorum – Druster – Silistra. Together with R. Koleva, in 2008, they conducted a rescue archaeological survey of the site UPI 1, quarter 69, NAAR "Durostorum – Druster – Silistra". In 2009, he participated in a rescue archaeological survey of site №1, km 276+950 – 277+150, LOT 4 along the route of Trakia highway in the territory of the village of Hadjidimitrovo, Tundzha municipality, Yambol region and in a non-destructive archaeological survey of the fortress of "Kaletto" hill near the village of Dobri dol, Parvomai municipality. Participated in 2008 and 2010 in the research of a medieval settlement and necropolis near the village of Zlatna livada, km 19+900 – 20+400 of the "Maritsa" highway, and in 2012 in the rescue archaeological excavations of the "Roman settlement" site, Yablkovo village, Dimitrovgrad municipality, in 2013 in archaeological survey of site №1, km 276+950 – 277+150, LOT 4 along the route of Trakia highway in the land of the village of Hadjidimitrovo, Yambol region and in archaeological monitoring of construction at km 05+000 – 25+000 from LOT 1 of Maritsa highway. From 2010 until now, together with R. Koleva, they have been conducting excavations of the late antique and medieval fortress in the district "Horizon", Balchik. In 2021, he led "Non-destructive studies" of the site "Settlement of the XV–XIX centuries" in the town of Tursko Konush, village of Konush, and the town of Jamiyata, village of Bogdanitsa, region Plovdiv. For several years now (since 2018) he has also led the excavations of the late antique and medieval fortress "Gradishteto" near the village of Melnitsa, Elhovo municipality, region Yambol.

The results of these studies are indisputable, but especially important is the discovery of the pagan temple in Druster, which confirmed the idea of Prof. V. Beshevliev that the Omurtag House on the Danube is the medieval Druster. Important are the observations in the fortress near Balchik, where it was established that the rampart is early Byzantine, and not proto-Bulgarian, as claimed by M. Dimitrov. Also important are the precise stratigraphic observations in Zlatna livada, thanks to which an earlier date was determined for the pottery discovered there (from the 8<sup>th</sup>–10<sup>th</sup> centuries), traditionally attributed to the 11<sup>th</sup> century, as well as the discovery and precise documentation of a rich warrior's grave from the beginning of the 13<sup>th</sup> century, a Cumanian, perhaps a participant in the battle near the Klokotnizha. The results of the study of the late antique and medieval fortress near Melnitsa with its rich

collection of seals, mostly of clergymen (private correspondence), some even from the end of the 8<sup>th</sup> – the beginning of the 9<sup>th</sup> century, with the study of the necropolis from the 13<sup>th</sup> – 14<sup>th</sup> centuries are indisputable.

Chavdar Kirilov's scientific interests are also reflected in his classroom activities with students from the Bachelor's and Master's program in archeology at the Sofia University “St. Kliment Ohridski”. Along with the main lecture courses for which he is an assistant or titular teacher (Medieval Bulgarian Archaeology, Archeology of Late Antiquity, Archeology of the Great Migration), he also leads the specialized seminars "Weapons and Tools of Labor", "Monasticism and Monasteries", "The Byzantine City", "City and Non-City in Early Medieval Europe", etc. His auditoria work far exceeds the statutory requirements.

Chavdar Kirilov's scientific interests are also evident in the topics of the archeology master's program students he supervised, nine of which were successfully defended. He directs the summer field practice in medieval archeology for students from the bachelor's program in archaeology, which since 2009 has been held at the late antique and medieval fortress in the city of Balchik. Dozens of students from the Bachelor's and Master's program in archeology have increased their field qualifications (including in the field of non-destructive archaeology) through their participation in other archaeological surveys led by him, including the late antique and medieval fortress near the village of Melnitsa, of the microregion "Konush" (Asenovgradsko), etc.

Along with the numerous realized projects, allowing him to develop active field activity, Chavdar Kirilov has also participated in a number of other scientific and educational projects, mainly dedicated to spatial analyzes in archaeology, to the application of geographic information systems in archaeological analysis, as well as to various interdisciplinary activities that allow archeology to transcend the sometimes narrow confines of its own scientific toolkit.

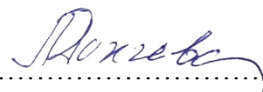
Chavdar Kirilov has long established himself as an authoritative member of the archaeological college, well known both in Bulgaria and abroad. This is due not only to his scientific creativity, but also to his participation in scientific forums here and abroad (thanks to his language culture), to his membership in the European Association of Archaeologists, as well as to the editorial board of the Bulgarian e-Journal of Archeology. His scientific work characterizes him as a researcher with a lasting interest in the problems of medieval archaeology. Evidence of his scientific contributions are the prestigious editions in which a significant part of his works were published, as well as their numerous citations not only in our country, but also by foreign researchers.

Both in the texts with which Chavdar Kirilov participated in the competition, and in those from the general list, I have not noticed any elements of plagiarism.

All this gives me reason to vote positively with conviction for awarding Assistant Professor PhD Chavdar Yanakiev Kirilov the academic position of "Associate Professor" in professional field 2.2. History and Archeology (Archaeology – Medieval Archaeology) for the needs of the Department of Archeology at the University of “St. Kliment Ohridski”.

10/11/2023

Sofia



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(Prof. Dr. Sc. Lyudmila Doncheva-Petkova)