

## **EXPERT OPINION**

from Prof. Dr. Alexandar Nikolov Nikolov

SU "St. Kliment Ohridski",

PN 2.2 History and Archeology (Medieval History)

On the academic achievements for participation in a competition for the academic position of "Associate Professor" in Professional Field 2.2 History and Archaeology, academic specialty Archaeology-Medieval Archaeology announced in SG No. 65/28.07.2023 by the University of Sofia "St.Kliment Ohridski", for the needs of the Department "Archaeology", Faculty of History with a single candidate, Chief Asst. Professor Ph.D. Chavdar Yanakiev Kirilov.

### **Assessment of compliance with the minimal national requirements and the requirements of the Regulations of the Activity of the University of Sofia:**

The verification of the data submitted by the applicant shows that the minimal national requirements of The Development of Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria Act, and the requirements of the Regulations of the Activity of the University of Sofia have been met and the procedure is completely legitimate. The candidate meets the conditions for participation in the procedure for occupying the academic position "Associate Professor", as the indicators in all six groups fully cover the necessary condition.

### **Research activity and results:**

The only candidate Chief Assistant Dr. Chavdar Yanakiev Kirilov graduated with a degree in "Archaeology" in 1998 at the "St. Kliment Ohridski" with a master's degree.

In 2006, he successfully defended his doctoral thesis on "Studien zu den frühmittelalterlichen Wurzeln europäische Stadtentwicklung: Archäologische Befunde

Mitteleuropas, ihre sozial- und wirtschaftsgeschichtliche Deutung und der Vergleich zum Raum der östlichen Balkanhalbinsel" at the Johann Wolfgang Goethe University, Frankfurt am Main , Germany with a grade Magna cum laude.

From 2006 to 2008 he held the position of "archaeologist" at the Faculty of Chemistry. In 2008, he was appointed to the position of "chief specialist in archaeology" at the same faculty. In November 2010, he was appointed assistant professor of archaeology at the Department of Archaeology in the Faculty of History, and since November 2012 he has been the main assistant professor at the Department. Chavdar Kirilov is a member of the prestigious European Association of Archaeologists and a member of the editorial board of the journal Studien zur Archaeologie Europas and of the editorial board of the Bulgarian E-Journal of Archaeology.

He is fluent in German, English and Russian, and uses Czech, Slovak, Serbian and Croatian languages to a considerable extent. Chavdar Kirilov has significant technical skills in the field of computer software, photography, geodetic and geophysical equipment, drone control, etc. Chavdar Kirilov has participated in and led numerous field practices and archaeological studies and projects.

The candidate, Chavdar Kirilov, has presented an impressive total list of publications, which includes two monographs, 10 studies in a scientific journal, 10 studies in anthologies, 49 articles in various journals and essay collections. Of these, one monograph is in German (2006), two studies in English, three studies in German, two articles in English and one in German. Of the presented articles, 24 are co-authored. One of the studies is also co-authored.

For the competition, the candidate has submitted a separate list of ten publications, which includes his two monographs, from 2023 and from 2006, and the remaining eight are studies and articles, two of which are in English and two in German. All publications are issued by renowned publishers, among them, Bonn: Verlag Dr. Rudolf Habelt GmbH and De Gruyter.

### **Description of the academic achievements and contributions:**

The main work presented here is the monograph "Unknown Familiars. Glass bracelets in Bulgaria from the Late Iron Age to the Ottoman era." Sofia: University Publishing House "St. Kliment Ohridski". ISBN: 978-954-07-5798-8 (hardback) / ISBN 978-954-07-5799-5 (PDF). It is devoted to a particular kind of artefacts that have been studied up to this point, but never in such broad chronological frameworks and based on such a broad geographical scope for the purpose of comparative analysis. Chavdar Kirilov points out a number of errors in the methodology of researching archaeological material of this kind, justifying the need to overcome the thesis that glass bracelets are primarily associated with the Middle Ages. Finds from the Late Iron Age, the Latin Age, the Antiquity and the Middle Ages, and the Ottoman period have been studied, up to the end of the 19th century. The author proposes a new approach in developing a methodology for the study of this material, based on a more flexible typology related to specific features of glass bracelets from different eras and regions. He also analyzes the chronology of their distribution, distinguishing periods of their wider distribution, which alternate with periods in which they are almost completely absent.

The second monograph, published in German in 2006, was developed on the basis of the candidate's dissertation defended at the Goethe University in Frankfurt am Main. It is dedicated to the discussion question about the origin and development of early medieval cities in the "Carolingian" and "Byzantine" areas, in particular in Central Europe and the Eastern Balkans. The author tries to present this process through the prism of archaeological data, identifying the main parameters of urban life: the presence of a market, a specific urban economy based on trade and crafts, etc. marks.

Another important issue is the presence of permanent capitals and royal residences, and not least the continuity with ancient urban centers. According to Chavdar Kirilov, some firmly established concepts regarding the differences between the West and the East regarding the development of cities should be reconsidered. His studies show that in the eastern part of Europe the development of cities is largely related to the inherited traditions of Late Antiquity and the presence of a central authority, while in Central Europe geographical and economic factors play an important role, but the connection with the ancient era is also strong and comprehensive.

In both cases, the appearance of permanent capitals and royal residences was quite late, as in Bulgaria, according to him, we only had the role of such a full-fledged center with

the appearance of Preslav. Another important conclusion of the author is the presence of urban centers in both parts of the continent in the Early Middle Ages, which contradicts the widespread thesis that it was a time of almost complete deurbanization and agrarianization of the economy. The data show the presence of urban life in Central Europe as well, before the appearance of the first city charters and constitutions in the 11th century.

In addition to the two monographs, the candidate has also submitted 8 other publications, which can be grouped thematically as follows:

1. Three articles with a late antique theme, dedicated to the late antique settlement network in Thrace, to the problem of the territory of the late antique city and in particular to the shrinking of its area and its closure in a smaller fortified area as a symptom of a possible decline of urban life, and also analysis of the late antique fortification system in the Eastern Balkans.
2. Articles devoted to the medieval archeology and history of Bulgaria, which discuss issues such as the presence of medieval castles in Bulgaria, the location of the city of Constantia, where was the residence of the bishops of Cherven and the demography of the subject Paristrion in the 11th century and in particular the question of the supposed emigration of the Bulgarian population in this period.
3. One of the articles also examines the specific problem of the presence of metal-shod shoes, revising the thesis that they appeared after 1200 and referring them to the 15th century, becoming more widespread in the Ottoman era.

The high quality of the candidate's publications is evidenced by the brilliant scientometric indicators such as citations and the properly described scientific contributions of the submitted publications, which are truly indisputable.

### **Conclusion:**

From everything stated so far, we can summarize that Chief Assistant Professor Dr. Chavdar Yanakiev Kirilov, the only candidate, fully meets the criteria and requirements for occupying the academic position of "Associate Professor", in

accordance with the minimum national requirements and the requirements of the Regulations of the Activity of the University of Sofia "St. Kliment Ohridski". His scientific production, teaching and project activities testify to high professionalism and significant scientific achievements in the field of medieval archaeology. Therefore, I strongly support and vote positively with "Yes" for the candidacy of Chief Assistant Professor Dr. Chavdar Yanakiev Kirilov for taking the academic position of "Associate Professor".

Date: 16<sup>th</sup> of November 2023  
Signature: