

## STATEMENT

By **Assoc. Prof. PhD Metodi Manchev Daskalov (NAIM – BAS)**

Member of SCIENTIFIC JURY,

according to the Decision of the IF Faculty Council (Protocol No. 11/ 26.09.2023) and Order RD-38-565/03.10.2023 of the Rector of SU "St. Kliment Ohridski" to determine the composition of the Faculty of Science in a competition for the academic position of "Associate Professor" in professional field 2.2 History and Archeology (Archaeology – Medieval archaeology), announced in State Gazette no. 65/ 28.07.2023

The announcement of the competition for the academic position of "Associate Professor" in professional field 2.2 History and Archeology (Archaeology - Medieval Archeology) and the submission of documents for participation are in accordance with items 105-109 of the Regulations for the acquisition of scientific degrees and holding of academic positions at SU. The documents submitted by the applicant Assistant Professor PhD Chavdar Yanakiev Kirilov fully meet the requirements in art. 107 of Section IV of the Regulations.

He obtained a master's degree in archeology in 1998 at the Faculty of History of the University of St. Kliment Ohridski" with work: "To the problem of the so-called "feudal castle" in Medieval Bulgaria".

His training and scientific development continued with a full-time doctorate and in 2006 he defended his thesis and obtained the scientific degree "Doctor of Archeology" at the Johann Wolfgang Goethe University, Frankfurt am Main, Germany with a thesis on the topic: Studien zu den frühmittelalterlichen Wurzeln europäischer Stadtentwicklung: Archäologische Befunde Mitteleuropas, ihre sozial- und wirtschaftsgeschichtliche Deutung und der Vergleich zum Raum der östlichen Balkanhalbinsel.

Since 2006, he has been an archaeologist and chief specialist in scientific research structures of the SU. Since 2010, he has been successively "Assistant" and "Assistant Professor" in the Department of Archeology at the Faculty of History.

As a university professor, Chavdar Kirilov leads and conducts significant teaching activities:  
In the Bachelor's program:

Basic courses

1. Archeology of Late Antiquity, compulsory; lectures, 60 hours per year

(total 120 hours, equated to seminar classes)

2. Archeology of the Great Migration, compulsory; lectures, 45

hours per year (90 hours in total, equated to seminar classes)

3. Medieval Bulgarian archaeology: First and Second Bulgarian Kingdom;

Mandatory 60 hours per year (60 hours in total, equated to seminar classes)

Elective courses:

4. Weapons and implements of labor for specialization in "Medieval archeology" (total 90 hours, equated to seminar classes)

5. Monasticism and monasteries (total 90 hours, equivalent to seminar classes)

In the Master's program:

– City and "non-city" in early medieval Europe (total 60 hours, equivalent to seminar classes).

– The Byzantine city (60 hours in total, equated to seminar classes).

– Dendrochronology (75 hours in total, equated to seminar classes).

His teaching work covers 540 hours of lectures and 75 hours of seminars (or a total of 655 hours equivalent to seminars).

The organization and conduct of a mandatory field practice in Medieval archeology for the students of the bachelor's program (held since 2009 in the late antique and medieval city of Balchik) is directly related to the educational activity. Training continues and takes place during field work on regular archaeological excavations on various research projects. In reality, this is a deepening of the training of students who have shown an interest in archaeology, a specific topic and period.

The candidate is the supervisor of successfully defended master's theses. More than 10 of them continue their educational and scientific development as doctoral students. Some of them have already defended their doctoral theses, whose inspiration, mentor and editor is Assist. Prof. PhD Chavdar Kirilov. I note with great pleasure that some of the graduates are already realized professional archaeologists and hold academic positions.

The field research activity of the candidate is 9 scientific projects under different national programs. Their implementation is related to field work, processing of results, acquired materials and scientific developments. In recent years, these have been sites near Melnitsa, Elhovsko and Konush, Asenovgradsko. They are conducted and documented according to the best achievements of traditional archaeology, non-destructive methods are applied as much as possible and the widest possible range of interdisciplinary research is used.

An integral part of the teaching and research activity of Chavdar Kirilov is the active participation (individually and in a team) with reports at various scientific forums: national, international at home and abroad. His appearances are always awaited with interest in the college and provoke active discussions.

An eloquent expression of the active research work are the publications: 2 monographs, studies and articles in scientific periodicals, in thematic collections, publications of reports from scientific events, reflected in the appendices. More than 30 articles on conducted field archaeological surveys are very informative. A large part of the publications are of a contributory nature.

The scientific production with which the candidate participates in this competition is presented in Appendices 1–10.

In the first place is the presented habilitation thesis: *The Unknown Familiars. Glass bracelets in Bulgaria from the Late Iron Age to the Ottoman era.* Sofia. "St. Kliment Ohridski" University Press. 2023.

This is the first comprehensive study on glass bracelets in Bulgaria since their appearance in the 3<sup>rd</sup> century BC until the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The materials are from 372 archaeological sites, which are presented and commented in a detailed catalog-register. Attention was paid to the classification according to the technology, and the problem of the so-called "seamless" technique. Single descending criteria are proposed for building and structuring a classification according to: material, shape, manufacturing technique, dimensions, color, degree of transparency, shaping of surfaces, section, etc. The distinguishing features of the Late Iron Age glass bracelets, which are a phenomenon foreign to Thrace and associated with the La-Tene world, are clearly defined. The question is raised about the places of finding, the distribution and the possibility of being seen as a symbol of a certain status.

The appearance of glass bracelets from the Roman era is clarified - certain characteristics are highlighted to distinguish them from earlier and later products. Various aspects related to manufacture, mode of use, etc. are discussed. General chronological frameworks during this era are outlined, as is an explanation for their disappearance around/after AD 400. It is possibly related to the abandonment of the bracelet as an ornament, except for a circle of representatives of certain communities, for whom they may also have the role of an insignia.

A major place is devoted to the character and appearance of the glass bracelets of the "Middle Byzantine" era, the definition being very well founded and defended. The revision of the traditional thesis that they are cheap and easily regrettable items is beneficial. The analysis of the monuments shows that in certain communities they play the role of status symbols and it is not by chance that they are found in the "richest" graves. Another contribution is the chronological limitation of their use in our country to the middle of the 13<sup>th</sup> century. It is also characteristic of the entire Byzantine world at that time.

A hypothesis has been proposed that this is due both to the disappearance of the bracelet as a mass ornament (or an element of the costume characteristic of the "Middle Byzantine" period) and to the changes in clothing that entered during the Palaeologous era.

The thesis that precious metal bracelets (as part of 13<sup>th</sup>–15<sup>th</sup> century hoards) can be used as evidence of the continued popularity of these ornaments is revised. These expensive specimens are more like family treasures and are treasured. They are not placed in the graves of the owners after their death.

From a chronological point of view, it is important to note that between the first half of the 13<sup>th</sup> and the first half of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, glass bracelets were not worn in our country. Their next appearance around the middle of the 17<sup>th</sup> century is a Middle Eastern influence, not a revived local tradition. In addition, main groups of bracelets, characteristic of the Ottoman era, are shown (they are already a kind of chronological indicator!). The opinion that their use is not ethnically or religiously conditioned has also been proposed.

Chavdar Kirilov's attention is also directed to another type of hitherto unexplored finds related to clothing (Appendix 10). Iron horseshoes found during excavations of sites from the Middle Ages and the Ottoman era, which have not been paid attention to, are examined. The analysis of the environment where they were found necessitates a revision of the opinion that they were used in the Middle Ages. They are not known in certain medieval contexts, but are well known in structures (including numerous necropolises) of the Ottoman period and are one of the characteristic finds. Their appearance is connected with the spread of time-specific shoes after the 15<sup>th</sup> century – slippers and boots. Their Bulgarian name (nalche) comes from the Turkish word nal (horseshoe).

Chavdar Kirilov's long-standing and in-depth research interests are related to the issues related to the emergence of the city and its development during the Middle Ages (Appendices 2, 4, 7).

The first (Appendix 2) is a monograph and represents a pioneering comparative study of urbanization processes during the early Middle Ages in Western and Central Europe, on the one hand, and in South-Eastern Europe, on the other. It is based on the analysis of dozens of archaeologically studied "central sites" from both regions, commented and analyzed in detail in a single register.

Criteria for the introduction of the concept of "city" – economic basis and market, social and professional differentiation of the population, various "central" functions, assumed number of inhabitants, uniform settlement structure, identification and appearance of buildings with different functions are set forth.

Direct examples of continuity in the West (of continuing life in ancient urban centers) are more and more visible than in the East. The city in the West has very little in common with its Late antique predecessor, while in the East it is the opposite. The reasons are the different ways in which urbanization takes place. The cultural influence of Byzantium and its role in preserving a number of features of the Late antique city is decisive. A traditional thesis (especially in German-language historiography) that there were no early medieval cities in the West before the appearance of the first city constitutions in the 11<sup>th</sup> century has been revised. Power in the West was not a major urbanization factor. If the other appropriate conditions are absent, the "power centers" do not become the cores of new cities. A major incentive for urbanization in the West is the opportunities for trans-regional trade. The model in the East is different - the leading role is the power. The thesis is argued that medieval Europe practically did not know the phenomenon of "capital" (a permanent residence of the ruler), because there were no territorial states, central and provincial administrations, etc. In the East, this changed only in the 10<sup>th</sup> century, when, in the case of Preslav, Bulgaria acquired its first capital, while in the West the model of attachment to exchange continued for centuries. He also revised the traditional notion that "Pliska was the first Bulgarian capital".

Next work (Appendix 4) is dedicated to the so-called "feudal castle" in Medieval Bulgaria (thesis and concept imposed from the 1950s–1960s). After an analysis of the objects declared as castles from the Bulgarian lands and by comparing them with similar structures from Western Europe, it was doubted and rejected. The "feudal castle" of the West is the fortified residence of the hereditary landed aristocrat. It is also a sign of its dominant position in the area.

The fortification facilities similar in position and structure in our country and in Byzantium were built and maintained by the central government, not by representatives of the (official) aristocracy that inhabited cities. It is not hereditary, and its wealth is not tied to the land and its resources, but to proximity to a central authority.

This topic is also reflected in the next study (Appendix 7). The in-depth analysis of a complex of buildings in medieval Cherven, forming an inner courtyard with a church, was made. It has traditionally been interpreted as a "feudal castle".

A careful comparison with similar complexes from various other places in Byzantium shows that in this case it is a residence of the bishops (metropolitans) of Cherven, and not the seat of a "local feudal lord", which is not attested in any way. According to the known inscriptions, the construction projects here were carried out by the central government and not by the will of a supposed local ruler.

An essential place among the research interests of Chavdar Kirilov are the problems related to the settlement system and settlement life during Late antiquity (Appendices 3, 5, 8).

The study, presented as Appendix 3, is dedicated to a phenomenon specific to Late Antiquity – the reduction of the fortified city area. It is usually interpreted as a sign of the decline of cities and urban life, of the demographic decline, of the economic and military weakness of the Roman Empire, especially in the 6<sup>th</sup> century. The analysis of archaeological data and

written sources from the period from different parts of the Roman world points to a more different conclusions: the reduction of the fortified area was for the purpose of more effective defense of the cities by their inhabitants, not by a regular army; since their number is probably increasing, not decreasing (compared to the Roman imperial age); this phenomenon is a sign of the vitality of cities and does not indicate decline and an approaching end.

Another original study (Appendix 5) analyzes the reasons for the appearance and characteristics of the fortified highland settlements during Late Antiquity in today's Bulgarian lands. It is established that they are in an environment (geographic conditions) where there are almost no traces of habitation in the 1<sup>st</sup>–3<sup>rd</sup> centuries, they were actively settled in the 4<sup>th</sup> century, and from the 6<sup>th</sup> century they were preferred; their character is different – some are temporary shelters of communities living elsewhere, others are military fortresses, and still others (probably the most numerous) are fortified settlements of a civilian population; the preference for this settlement form is also proven by the fact that cities newly built in the 6<sup>th</sup> century (in contrast to the "old" Roman urban centers) have such a geographical and natural position. They differ from "fortified villages" only in scale and the possible presence of various public buildings.

In the following work (Appendix 8), the problem of the "end" of the late antique settlement network in our country and the "depopulation" of numerous high-altitude settlements on the border of the 6–7 centuries AD is considered. It is traditionally associated with Avaro-Slavic invasions, which destroyed the vast part of them and depopulated today's Bulgarian lands. According to the researcher's analysis, they are not the main cause of the archaeological reality. The study of agricultural implements shows that from the second half of the 6<sup>th</sup> century the local population reduced grain production and was highly dependent on supplies carried in amphorae and stored in doliums, pits and fortress towers; the loss of the huge imperial granaries at the beginning of the 7<sup>th</sup> century led to the drying up of the sources and to the disruption of the supply chains, as a result of which the mountainous and semi-mountainous parts of Bulgaria (and the Balkans) were no longer able to support significant groups of population, which is forced to turn its eyes again to the plains.

Chavdar Kirilov's scientific interests are focused on individual regions and settlements during the Middle Ages, and in his research he makes observations and offers original theses (Appendices 6 and 9).

Appendix 6: The study is a critique of the popular thesis, according to which the invasions of Pechenegs, Uzis and Cumans in the 11<sup>th</sup> century largely destroyed the settlement network north of Stara Planina and led to a mass migration of Bulgarians to Thrace. It is based on the fact that in a number of settlements north of the mountain there was a break in coin circulation after the second third of the 11<sup>th</sup> century. The analysis of a series of coin finds in the region shows that: the coins are associated with the military contingents stationed in certain fortresses and show trade relations with the "barbarians" north of the Danube. The reorganization of the army in the Balkans during the last third of the 11<sup>th</sup> century and changes in the imperial policy regarding direct payments to federates lead to the changed picture of coin circulation and are not evidence of depopulation of the lands between the Hemus and the Danube.

In a subsequent paper (Appendix 10), the traditional localization of the medieval Constantia on the Asara hill near Simeonovgrad is criticized and discussed. During the long-term

excavations, no pottery with sgraffito decoration was found, and this is a reason to conclude that the city known in sources around 1200 is not in this place and it could not have been captured in 1201 by King Kaloyan. He captured another Constantia (today's Constanta on the Black Sea) together with Varna.

The entire teaching and research activity fully covers the requirements for acquiring the academic position "Associate Professor".

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

In conclusion of what has been stated so far, I express my positive opinion and make a proposal to the other esteemed participants in the Scientific Jury of the announced competition, as well as to the members of the honorable Faculty Council of the Faculty of History, to elect Assistant Professor PhD Chavdar Yanakiev Kirilov at the academic position "Associate Professor".

11/13/2023  
Sofia

Assoc. Prof. PhD Metodi Daskalov

