

## PROMOTIONAL STATEMENT

By Assoc. Prof. Dr. Maria Georgieva Barramova, Department of History of Byzantium and the Balkans, Faculty of History, Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski"

Member of the Scientific Jury (No. RD 38-565/ 03.10.2023 ) in the competition for the academic position *Associate Professor* in the professional field 2.2. History and Archaeology 65/ 28.07.2023.

1. The competition for Associate Professor is announced for the needs of the Faculty of History at Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski", particularly for the Department of Archaeology, as the only candidate is Assist. Prof. Dr. Chavdar Yanakiev Kirilov.

The documents submitted by Dr. Chavdar Kirilov meet the legal requirements of Article 2b of the Law on Research and Teaching, which allows for an objective assessment of his research and teaching activities. The scientific data presented by the candidate fully complies with the minimum national requirements in all four indicators required by the Law. No attempts at plagiarism have been detected.

The candidate has Master degree in Archaeology at the Faculty of History of Sofia University Sv Kliment Ohridski (1998) and was a full-time PhD student in Archaeology at the Johann Wolfgang Goethe University in Frankfurt am Main, Germany. In 2006 he defended his dissertation: „Die Stadt des Frühmittelalters in Ost und West. Archäologische Befunde Mitteleuropas im Vergleich zur östlichen Balkanhalbinsel“. Since 2010 he has been an assistant and, since 2012 a senior assistant professor at the Department of Archaeology, Sofia University. Dr. Chavdar Kirilov is a well-established and well-recognized specialist in medieval archaeology, including the archaeology of Late Antiquity and Byzantium, both in Bulgaria and abroad. The academic reference provided by the candidate - CV, publications, list of conducted archaeological excavations, scientific research projects, and teaching activities, meets not only the scientific metrics required by the Law for the academic position "Associate Professor" but is also a testimony of the high professional experience as a university lecturer and researcher. Chavdar Kirilov teaches compulsory courses "Archaeology of *Late Antiquity*; *Archaeology of the Great Migration of Peoples*; seminars in *Medieval Bulgarian Archaeology*. A particular contribution to academic teaching is Dr. Kirilov's pursuit of Ottoman archaeology and his aspiration to make it part of the curriculum in Archaeology; the application of interdisciplinary methods in the research of archaeological sites such as dendrochronology, geophysics, geographic information systems, etc.

Since 2009, Dr. Chavdar Kirilov has been the co-leader of the research team of excavation in a medieval fortress in the quarter of Sofia "Horizon". Since 2009, he has been conducting the annual student study practices there. Apart from his duties as a university lecturer, Dr. Kirilov is the head of the archaeological survey of the late antique and medieval fortress "Gradishte" and the site of Melnitsa, municipality Elhovo (since 2018); the archaeological survey of a settlement from the 15th-19th c. near the village of Konush in Plovdiv region (since 2019); participant in numerous field archaeological studies.

Dr. Chavdar Kirilov has an impressive biography in terms of research projects (in Bulgaria and abroad): e.g. The current project dedicated to the study of the settlement network, road infrastructure and population in Bulgaria during the Ottoman period; the project "Early Christianity in the present Bulgarian lands (based on historical and archaeological data)"; his participation in the project "Historical and Geographical Information System of Southeast Europe: Phase Thrace"; FENDA (from excavation to non-destructive archaeology); for the compilation of regional dendrochronological standard chronologies in Bulgaria and their use for dating archaeological finds and sites, etc.

Dr. Kirilov participates in several international academic organizations: the Association of Bulgarian Archaeologists (ABA), the European Association of Archaeologists (EAA). He is a member of the editorial board of the Bulgarian e-Journal of Archaeology and Studien zur Archäologie Europas.

2. Dr. Chavdar Kirilov is the author of 2 monographs and over 50 studies and articles on various aspects of medieval archaeology and the archaeology of Late Antiquity. He participated in the competition with a monograph published and submitted for discussion under the title: *"The Unknown Known: Glass Bracelets in Bulgaria from the Late Iron Age to the Ottoman Era"*. Sofia, Sofia University Press, 2023. The second monograph of the author (the result of the successfully defended doctoral dissertation in 2006) and 7 selected publications - studies and articles.

The monograph is the result of many years of research by Dr. Kirilov and is, in its essence, a study that attempts to contextualize the appearance and distribution of a seemingly insignificant type of archaeological finds, such as glass bracelets. It traces their spread from the 3rd century BC right up to the Ottoman period and covers the territories of the present-day Bulgarian lands, but also looks for parallels in a much wider spatial range - as the author writes - "from the Rhine to the Crimea and from the Crimea to the Sinai Peninsula". The study connects the methods and perspectives of several research fields besides archaeology, but also Byzantine studies, Balkan studies, Ottoman studies, historical geography, geographic information systems, etc., which otherwise rarely cooperate in their historiographical postulates.

After an in-depth historiographical review, the book presents in its second part an interesting theoretical focus on the discussion of the two main approaches to the systematization of archaeological material - classification and typology. Here, I will leave it to

the archaeologists to discuss the conclusions about the 'dynamic classifications' proposed in the distribution of glass bracelets. However, the 8 factors identified by Dr. Kirilov, woven into a semantic web (pp. 77-78), sound quite convincing to an "outside reader".

The following chapters of the book trace the production and distribution of glass bracelets from the 3rd century BC to the Ottoman era. I can confidently assert that the author's theses on the appearance and use of bracelets arouse research interest and raise many questions. Apart from the distribution and dating of the finds, their mapping, and the analysis of geographical information, it is particularly valuable to trace the use of the bracelets according to social status, gender identity, religious and even ethnic characteristics (although for the latter I remain skeptical about the argumentation provided). The thesis that from the middle of the 13th century, bracelets almost disappeared as a part of the Byzantine costume, which is related to changes in the fashion of clothing itself, is interesting and undoubtedly finds confirmation in the examples given. Whether this alone accounts, however, for the change in the distribution of this type of jewelry is a question that will certainly continue to preoccupy the scholarly community in the future. As for the reappearance of glass bracelets in the second half of the seventeenth century in an Ottoman context, driven by a kind of 'Middle Eastern (fashion) impulse', it seems to me to need a more detailed analysis. Not least because in the eighteenth century, more and more "European fashion impulses" entered Ottoman society.

The monograph contains a register and a *Register of Archaeological Sites with Glass Bracelets in Bulgaria* containing 372 detailed examples of glass bracelet finds. One of the most valuable and, thus, most contributory points of the monograph presented is the author's detailed effort to map the distribution of glass bracelets during the different periods. With the help of modern digital methods provided by geographic information systems, the documented archaeological sites are scrupulously described, included in a database, and mapped. The visualization of the artifacts allows a more in-depth analysis, revealing clusters of finds and 'white spots'. All of this, in turn, provides scope for inferences and hypotheses about geographical distribution, trade links, the social character of 'users', etc. In short, the transformation of a neglected archaeological artifact into a valuable resource.

The second monograph, submitted for the competition, is based on the doctoral thesis defended in 2006. The book is titled "Die Stadt des Frühmittelalters in Ost und West. Archäologische Befunde Mitteleuropas im Vergleich zur östlichen Balkanhalbinsel" and is a comparative study of urbanization processes in the early Middle Ages between the world of the Merovingians and Carolingians and that of the "Byzantine Commonwealth". As the author himself notes, the book is an attempt to present a model of the 'city' based on archaeological materials for the early medieval period, including the notions of 'capital' and 'permanent residence'. Here again, I would like to underline that in this case, we are also dealing with an academic study that has an undoubted scientific contribution (already definitely proven) in terms of European and global historiography.

The other publications are related to the above research interests of the author, which are focused on the study of the urbanization processes, different types of fortified

settlements, the development of the settlement and road network from the Late Antiquity to the Ottoman period, etc. (Appendix 3-9), as well as topics related to the systematics of smaller artifacts such as the iron shoe-shoe horseshoes - nalchets - found in archaeological investigations, which he links to the Ottoman period. The author connects the appearance of the horseshoes with the imposition of specific footwear for the period after the fifteenth century - paposes and chizms (Appendix 10). Here is the place to stress once again the importance of Dr Kirilov's involvement in archaeological research from the Ottoman period and his efforts to introduce 'Ottoman archaeology' as part of the academic curriculum at Sofia University.

The list of citations corresponds to the legal requirements, but also just a review of world databases Scopus and WoS (and not only) shows a high degree of recognition of the candidate among academics in Bulgaria and abroad. Given the many publications in English and German, we can definitely say that Chavdar Kirilov is a researcher of international renown and authority.

There is no doubt that the proposed academic output with which Dr. Kirilov participated applies for the academic position "Associate Professor" not only meets the legal requirements but in some respects, exceeds them.

3. Based on my detailed and careful examination of the documents submitted for the competition, it is my great pleasure to recommend without hesitation to the esteemed scientific jury **to award the academic position "Associate Professor", Medieval Archaeology to the Assistant Professor Dr. Chavdar Yanakiev Kirilov.** In all mandatory aspects - research, teaching and project activities, the candidate fully meets the requirements of the Law on the Development of Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria and the Regulations for its implementation of the Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski", necessary for holding the academic position of Associate Professor.

Sofia 19.11.2023

  
Assoc. Prof. Maria Barramova