

STATEMENT

done by: Kostadin Rabadjiev, Dr.Sc., Professor in Classical archaeology, member of the Scientific Jury according to the Order of the Rector of Sofia University (No. PД 38-407/14.07.2024), concerning the competition for the academic position “Associate Professor” in professional field 2.2. History and Archaeology (Archaeology – Thracian archaeology), announced in the State Gazette (No. 55/ 28.06.2024).

1. In the announced competition, organized at the request of the Faculty of History for the needs of the Department of Archaeology, the only candidate is Dr. Nikola Petrov Theodossiev, Assistant Professor in Thracian archaeology. His documents have been approved by the Commission appointed by the Rector, and 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 Development of Academic Staff. N. Theodossiev graduated with a degree in History at the Faculty of History of VTU “St. St. Cyril and Methodius” (1991), he was a full-time PhD student at the Department of Archaeology of the Sofia university with the dissertation topic: “*Northwestern Thrace in the 5th-1st centuries BC*” (defended in 1998), and since 1995 he was a lecturer in the Department of Archaeology. In the competition he participates with a habilitation thesis, published and submitted for discussion under the title: “*The Tholos Tombs in Ancient Thrace*”. Sofia, St. Kliment Ohridski University Press, 2024. He also contributed 8 selected publications – studies and articles according to the attached list.

2. Nikola Theodossiev is an established researcher of Thracian archaeology and a lecturer at the Department of Archaeology of the Sofia university. In the bachelor’s program in Archaeology he is the holder of the basic course in Archaeology of South-Eastern Europe in the 1st millennium BC, also in a specialized seminar on funeral customs and practices through Late Iron Age, as well as courses in Archaeology of Bulgarian lands in the program of History (correspondence study) and in History and Geography. In the master’s program in Archaeology, he teaches a specialized course on the monumental tomb architecture in the Eastern Mediterranean in the 1st millennium BC. In fact, his teaching load in the last five years is above the norm, as evidenced by the employment report.

N. Theodossiev has been a member of the Association of Bulgarian Archaeologists (ABA) since its founding until now; also to a number of international societies and organizations: The Society of Fellows of the American Academy in Rome (AAR), from 2002 to the present; a honorary member of Associazione Internazionale di Archeologia Classica (AIAC), from 2006 to present; a corresponding member of the Archaeological Institute of America (AIA), from 2010 to present; member also of Association des Amis de la Fondation Maison des Sciences de l’Homme (FMSH), from 2013 to now.

He also participates in the editorial boards of several international scientific publishers: Ancient West & East (publishers Brill, Leiden and Peeters, Leuven); Colloquia

Antiqua, formerly *Colloquia Pontica* (publishers Brill, Leiden and Peeters, Leuven); *Fasti Online* – <http://www.fastionline.org> (published by Associazione Internazionale di Archeologia Classica in Rome).

He is also a participant in the following scientific and educational projects: Archaeogenetics of Bulgarian Prehistory and Protohistory, Collaborative Research Project of Stanford University, from 2013 to 2015; ARIADNEplus (European Commission, H2020 Programme), from 2018 to 2022; “Saving European Archaeology from the Digital Dark Age” COST Action 18128 (COST European Cooperation in Science & Technology), from 2019 to 2024; NEMESIS: International Research Network (an international scientific network labeled by Centre national de la recherche scientifique), from 2021 to 2026; “Managing Artificial Intelligence in Archaeology” COST Action 23141 (COST European Cooperation in Science & Technology), from 2024 to 2028.

3. The monograph with which N. Theodossiev participates in the competition is about the tholos tombs in Thrace, and at the very beginning I would note that it is on the topic of the competition for docent in Thracian archaeology. Its structure is usual: an Introduction; The origin of the tholos tombs in Thrace (chapter I); The typology, chronology and distribution (chapter II); The political, social and religious context (chapter III). A Conclusion and Bibliography at the book’s end, as well as two additional parts: an Analytical Catalogue of selected tholos tombs and a List of uncatalogued tholos tombs, all 182 p. with an English summary included. The text and ideas are clearly arranged and as concrete as possible. All the problems of the tombs discovered in Thrace, which have intrigued their researchers for more than a century, are covered, but the feeling remains that only the conclusions of a long and difficult analysis are given, which is otherwise spared to the reader. The first chapter is the real highlight of the book – the problems in the second and even in the third one have been discussed repeatedly and many of them have been answered, while the problems of the origin and the influences in appearance of the tholos tombs in Thrace have been avoided from thorough attention and study. N. Theodossiev approached it with a good knowledge of the monuments of the Aegean world, Anatolia and Etruria. The comparisons he points out are well judged, and the supposed paths of influence and penetration of ideas are all logically constructed. The problem is that the parallels of the Thracian monuments are discussed too generally, and for convincing solutions I would expect a comparison of architectural structures, building material, techniques and constructions. The other problem is accompanying the study of thus delimited group of monuments – while provenance, typology and distribution are achievable solutions, the effort to define the social/political and religious context is complicated by the fact that these questions concern monumental tombs in Thrace in general, not only the tholos ones, and the questions can receive a clearer and justified answer only in the unity of the analysis. In this case, N. Theodossiev did his best to clarify the issues, but it remains an incomplete solution. The catalogued monuments (Nos. 1-15) have been examined in detail, the available, sometimes too scarce, information has been collected and supplemented in most cases with personal observations on the spot. For some of the monuments, what is written and clarified in this part is a significant contribution to the discussion of Thracian tombs. The remaining, non-catalogued monuments are supplemented

in a list (Nos. 1-25), in which the information refers only to the date and bibliographical data, and I can only regret that they too are not presented in detail.

In my reading of the text, the book is a convincing example of its author's ability to analyse monuments and summarize his observations without being partial towards one or another thesis about what happened in Thrace. As in of his other texts, N. Theodossiev knows well what was written by the ancient observers of the events in Thracian lands, as well as the modern writings in native and foreign historiography.

4. In the competition Nikola Theodossiev participates with 8 scientific publications also: studies and articles, from which I exclude his monograph on NW Thrace (No. 2), published by BAR, Oxford, as this was his PhD. The rest are all in English by prestigious publishers in foreign editions. And they all concern different aspects of the Thracian problematics. This very theme of death in Thracian monuments and practices I also find in other studies, such as the two written about the dead with golden faces/masks (Nos. 3 and 4 on the attached list). This also applies to the reading of the Kjolmen Thracian inscription (No. 7), which is from a grave context and has been interpreted with funerary meaning. Among his interests are the semantics of artistic products in Thracian environment (No. 5), which he interprets with an idea of their religious function in Thracian society. Another topic is about Ancient Thrace in the 1st millennium BC in voluminous studies with a general overview of ethnic, cultural and religious processes, as well as artifacts (Nos. 6, 8, 9). I would highlight the last one, which is an introductory chapter in the prestigious volume on Ancient Thrace (*Companion to Ancient Thrace*) by Blackwell (2015).

These themes also stand out in the entire work of N. Theodossiev, especially those on the studies of Thracian burial tumuli and constructions, which are closely related to what was written in his habilitation thesis. The written texts present N. Theodossiev as a serious researcher, profound in his scientific interests and pursuits, which outlines his lasting interest in the problems of Thracian archaeology. Still, I can't be none other than restrained in my expectations in perspective, since he has no publications in the last decade, but his habilitation book. The picture is similar according to the list of all his publications, except for a series of scientific reports in recent years.

A clear testimony of the contributions made by N. Theodossiev are the prestigious editions in which his texts were published, as well as the numerous citations of his publications in the scientific literature, as reflected in world databases: Google Scholar (848), Scopus (328), attached to the competition documentation. But I would not omit to specify that the large number of citations come from publications that are not related to the scientific issues in which his contributions are.

The language of his writings is professional, clear, readable and concrete, which is among the distinguishing features of his style. I have not noticed elements of plagiarism in the texts, in fact I did not expect to find any.

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5. In conclusion, I would like to confirm my positive assessment of Nikola Theodossiev's publications, emphasizing the undoubted contribution of the texts with which he participates in the current competition. In them I recognize a researcher with deep interests and knowledge of Thracian archaeology and history, who knows the sources and the achievements of generations of researchers in leading scientific schools, precise to the facts and correct in the proposed reconstructions. And this is my reason to vote positively for the award of the academic position of **Associate Professor** to **Dr. Nikola Petrov Theodossiev**.

November 4th, 2024



Kostadin Rabadjiev