

## STATEMENT

Concerning the competition announced by Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski" for the academic position of professor in the field 2.2. History and Archaeology (Medieval Bulgarian History) for the needs of the Faculty of History, published in the State Gazette No 21 of 15

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with a single candidate: **Dr. GEORGI NIKOLOV NIKOLOV, Associate Professor** in the Department of History of Bulgaria, Faculty of History, Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski"

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In the current competition for the academic position of professor there is only one candidate, the famous Bulgarian medievalist scientist – Assoc. Prof. Dr. Georgi Nikolov Nikolov. I have been following the candidate's scientific work for decades and I know him in detail. I have used his writings many times in my own research and I have quoted him many times. I also wrote a review in the scientific press of his book (Independent and semi-independent possessions in the restored Bulgarian kingdom (end of the XII – middle of the XIII century)). 45-46, 2012, 327-334). This greatly facilitates the writing of my opinion on the competition.

First of all, the only candidate in this competition, Assoc. Prof. Dr. Georgi Nikolov Nikolov by groups of indicators (dissertation, habilitation – monograph, published book based on a defense dissertation, etc.), meets the national requirements under Art. 26 of the ZRASRB.

Secondly, the bibliography attached to the competition documents, despite the fact that only some of the works participate in the competition, shows exceptional scientific productivity. Assoc. Prof. Nikolov has written: 8 monographs, 82 studies and articles, 41 reviews and reviews, 56 biographies and bibliographies, 5 textbooks and teaching aids, 78 popular science publications, 578 (!) Encyclopedic articles, 8 articles in electronic publications, 8 preface, introduction, afterwords, etc., 1 translation, 21 compilations of collections and participation in editorial boards (including Palaeobulgarica, Drinovski sbornik, Yearbook of Sofia University), 18 interviews. It is unclear why Assoc. Prof. Nikolov has saved his participation in popular TV shows with a mass audience such as. History.bg, through which

academic knowledge reaches the widest audience. Something extremely important in the conditions of the spread is the profanation of historical research!

Of all these publications, Assoc. Prof. Nikolov has chosen 33 to participate in the competition for professor. Of these, one monograph, and 32 studies and articles.

The presented monograph is dedicated to the history of medieval Bulgaria during the reign of Tsar Samuel. To it we can add 9 more studies and articles, directly dedicated to the same problem and in which he elaborates in detail important moments from this period of Bulgarian history. The other studies and articles are devoted to other important problems of Bulgarian medieval history: its periodization; of the medieval Bulgarian aristocracy; the Bulgarian-Georgian relations in the Middle Ages; of the Bulgarian medieval economy; at the battle of Aheloy; the history of some important regions in the medieval Bulgarian lands (Bdin, Borui); of prominent Bulgarian medievalists (V. Tapkova-Zaimova, V. Gyuzelev); of the Christianization of the Bulgarians; the Asenevtsi uprising and the sources and problems around it and its aftermath; of the presence of Bulgarian princesses in Constantinople in the fourteenth century, etc.

The main work for the participation in the competition of Assoc. Prof. Dr. Georgi Nikolov is the monograph "From the history of Samuil's Bulgaria". Sofia, 2022, published by the Macedonian Scientific Institute in Sofia. Writing such a monograph is fully justified, its appearance is due to the rapid development of the historiographical process on the issue, especially in connection with the recent anniversary of the death of Tsar Samuel, as well as some attempts to revise history in some nearby countries.

The monograph is divided into two parts, in which a different approach to research is applied. In the first part the leading is the thematic principle of research of the source material, emphasizing some important problems of the last decades of the First Bulgarian Tsardom. In the first place, this is the genealogy of the Comitopuli, a question very popular in modern medieval studies. Here the author supports and substantiates the logical hypothesis that the Comitopuli are related to the previous Bulgarian dynasty, dating back to Khan Krum. Then he continues with the problem of blinding the Bulgarian soldiers captured in the battle of Kimva Long (to the present day village of Klyuch), which has recently been disputed on the basis of formal calculations and considerations. The author returns to the classical thesis existing in medieval studies, which is based on numerous sources and, ultimately, on logic.

The next few parts are dedicated to the death of the rulers of this last Bulgarian dynasty of the First Tsardom. While the problems surrounding the deaths of kings Samuel and John Vladislav are more discussed in science, some of these problems are not put up for special consideration, but are usually only registered following the chronology of events. Such are e.g. questions about the deaths of Tsar Boris II and his brother Roman-Simeon. In addition to the issues surrounding the death of these Bulgarian rulers, other important issues are also touched upon, such as the one about whether Roman Simeon was a Bulgarian king. The author has given the explanation that he was a Bulgarian king, taking into account the tendencies of the Byzantine sources and leaning on some eastern ones, which are usually neglected. Logically, this part ends with the problem of the tomb of Tsar Samuel in the famous basilica “St. Achilles”. In this case G. Nikolov is based on the Bulgarian translation of the famous study of the excavator of the basilica N. Mutsopoulos.

The second large part of the monograph is called “Macedonia” and is dedicated to the history of this historical and geographical area during the Bulgarian Middle Ages. A purely chronological approach is applied here. The author has managed to combine the two approaches – thematic and chronological, successfully avoiding the repetition of historical episodes.

Although the idea of the work is to be generalizing, in it Assoc. Prof. Nikolov has presented some very interesting ideas that deserve attention. Such is e.g. the idea of the names of the Comitopules, who are known to be Old Testament, are named after the four great prophets. At the time, J. Ivanov sought support in these names for the idea that they were of Armenian origin, while G. Nikolov directed the research in a more fruitful direction, and tried to solve a specific problem – the sequence and age of the Comitopuli. It seems to me that this idea is very interesting and deserves to be developed further. As well as the unraveling of information “encrypted” with texts from the Old Testament (and other sacred texts, through their liturgical excerpts), which is often found in sources and which information modern science often ignores (positivist) or, conversely, overinterprets (semiotic) !

In reviewing this monograph, I can note the relatively limited bibliography used by the author. Given his bibliographic activities, which can be seen from the attached bibliography, and which show his exceptional awareness. Moreover, he is the co-author of a large bibliography on the subject, accompanied by his article on Bulgarian research on King Samuel (1945–2020). The author has generally ruled out the so-called northern Macedonian

historiography, and if I'm not mistaken there is only one study from this country, that of B. Aleksova for Bregalnitsa. The use of a limited bibliography has obviously been done quite deliberately, as there are a huge number of titles on the subject. However, I must immediately say that the author has saved huge bibliographic arrays, referring most often to his own research, including bibliographic reviews (in addition to the mentioned bibliography, as well as the article from 2017), some of which he applied for the current competition. Without listing all the examples, I can only give two that are from the second part of the monograph. The first is with Dobromir Hriz, who is relatively briefly affected here, but to whom a whole part of G. Nikolov's monograph from 2011 is dedicated, and the second with Sebastocrator Strez, who ruled the same region (Prosek region), which is also examined in detail in the past.

I support the neglect of the so-called northern Macedonian historiography, as most of it is ideological and difficult to even call historiography, although there is some research in it on specific issues that could be used (mainly archeological, of cultural monuments and historical-geographical).

Considering this work, I must immediately say that G. Nikolov has succeeded, and this can be seen in his research throughout his scientific career, to present accessible complex scientific problems and to make definite decisions on complex issues of our historical past. He can do this because he knows the springs very well and strictly adheres to them. They are quoted accurately and correctly, texts are not taken out of context, as can often be seen in recent times. He always quotes from the best critical edition, notes the date of the monument, its manuscript tradition, etc. such "details" that often determine the information contained. It is strange for me to mention such things for research, insofar as they must be mandatory for all works with claims to academicism. However, such cases are becoming less and less, in contrast to the growing number of "discoveries" based solely on the wishes of their authors...

Secondly, some of these problems, as can be clearly seen from the presentation of G. Nikolov, can be solved relatively easily on the basis of common sense and if you remove any strange and influenced interpretations. And here again we rely on the sources and their correct use!

It is completely normal, given the state of the source base for Bulgarian medieval history, that some of these solutions are not acceptable to all. I also have my disagreements and issues that I think need to be discussed further: e.g. for the attempt for a new intervention of Khan Tervel in the Byzantine internal affairs in 821 (not Artemius received from the Bulgarians, Kuber's or Asparuh's, money, but vice versa); about the accession of Macedonia to the Bulgarian state

and the famous campaign of Khan Persian “to the resins”, where we can not talk about the battle of Kavhan Isbul with Alexis Moselle. Such is the question of the accumulation of Roman-Symeon, who is hardly subjected to this action to break the Bulgarian dynasty, otherwise his brother Boris would have been saved. In the controversy over John of Debar, I am on the side of those who believe that John was the first autocephalous archbishop of Bulgaria after 1018, despite the prevailing opinion, especially in some foreign historians, that he was the last Bulgarian patriarch of the First Bulgarian Tsardom. who later became the first archbishop. Questions also arise about the church “St. Achilles” in Prespa and its short-lived status as a patriarchal cathedral, which is debatable given the massive and representative building (at the same time we do not know what the cathedral in Ohrid looked like, despite the brief description of Theophylact of Ohrid). Issues related to the diocese of St. Clement of Ohrid, etc. could also be discussed. at least canonically. The Ohrid Archbishopric is also a Bulgarian church, but it continues to be autocephalous and under the direct order of the Bulgarian ruler. Finally, Nahum of Ohrid should not be called “Naum of Moesia” (although this name is increasingly common in Bulgarian historiography), because his relics are in Ohrid and he begged there. Ohrid is a Bulgarian city, and we should not comply with the political claims of ephemeral modern state entities!

It has already been mentioned above that G. Nikolov is able to convey complex problems in an accessible way. This is partly due to his style – accurate, clear and at the same time emotional and impactful! All this makes the texts of Assoc. Prof. G. Nikolov very suitable for students as well, and in this case his long-term teaching work obviously plays a role!

Based on all this, I declare that I undoubtedly support the only candidate in the competition, Assoc. Georgi Nikolov Nikolov to receive the academic position of “**Professor**” at Sofia University “St. Kliment Ohridski”!

June 14, 2022

Constantinople (now Istanbul)

Prof. Dimo Chesmedjiev