

STATEMENT

by Assoc. Prof. Dr. *Marina Nikolova Koleva*, Institute of Art Studies – BAS, member of scientific jury by Order RD 38-461/ 26.07.2022 of the Sofia University “St. Kliment Ohridski” Rector

in the competition for the academic position “Associate Professor” in the professional field 2.2. History and Archaeology (Archaeology – Classical Archaeology), for the needs of the Faculty of History, Sofia University “St. Kliment Ohridski”, published in State Gazette, iss. 48 of 28.06.2022.

1. In the announced competition, sole candidate is Assistant Professor Dr. **Ivan Dimitrov Valchev**, Department of Archaeology, Faculty of History, Sofia University “St. Kliment Ohridski”. Grounds for his participation in the competition is the deposited verification of meeting the national requirements set by Art. 26 of the LDASRB.

For the competition Iv. Valchev submitted the habilitation thesis: *The Cult of Jupiter in Lower Moesia in the Roman Age*. Sofia: UPH “St. Kliment Ohridski”, 2022. In addition, he has submitted another monograph, titled *Extraurban Sanctuaries in the Roman Province of Thrace (1st–4th century)*. Sofia: UPH “St. Kliment Ohridski”, 2015, and 9 selected articles featured in the attached list, all published since 2015.

2. Ivan Valchev received his master’s degree in Archaeology from Sofia University “St. Kliment Ohridski” in 2007. In 2008–2011, he was full time doctoral student at the Department of Archaeology, Faculty of History, Sofia University “St. Kliment Ohridski”, his dissertation topic was *Extraurban Sanctuaries in the Roman Province of Thrace (1st–4th century)* (2011). Since 2013, Ivan Valchev teaches at the Department of Archaeology, Faculty of History, Sofia University “St. Kliment Ohridski”, reading courses in the bachelor’s degree programme in Archaeology, in Ethnology/Ethnology and cultural anthropology and in Hebrew Studies. In addition to this, from 2014 until 2017 he served as deputy-director of the Kabyle Summer Archaeology School for the students of Classical Archaeology; since 2018 Valchev is the School’s director. He has also served as academic advisor to successfully defended master theses in the Department of Archaeology.

Ivan Valchev is a long-time participant in the Kabyle research team, and in the recent years is director of the site’s archaeological excavations for the Sofia University “St. Kliment Ohridski” team.

Ivan Valchev is a member of the Association of Bulgarian Archaeologists since 2015, and since 2021 – member of its Managing Committee.

3. The submitted habilitation thesis, *The Cult of Jupiter in Lower Moesia in the Roman Age*, Sofia, 2022, is the first monograph on the cult of the supreme Roman deity in Bulgarian literature. It consists of an introduction, five chapters, conclusion, catalogue, bibliography, plates with illustrations and an English summary – 392 pages total.

The book examines a Roman by its origin cult, to the supreme Roman god Jupiter, introduced in the provincial Roman setting. It seeks to outline the specificity of the cult in Moesia Inferior on the one hand through a comparison to the classical manifestations of the cult in Rome, and on the other – to its manifestations in the adjacent provinces.

The monuments from Moesia Inferior are examined from multiple perspectives, each new chapter offering a new venue of inquiry, augmenting and building upon the conclusions drawn in the previous chapters.

First, attention focuses on the notion of the deity in Moesia Inferior – its artistic image, its functions, and epithets.

In the subsequent chapters the focus shifts and considers the context in which the cult was practiced. The book makes important observations on the role of the army in the distribution of the cult in the provincial setting. It remarks also on its retention even after the withdraw of the military from the respective territories. Another context for observance of the god is identified in the civilian settlements, with their temples, sanctuaries, altars, and statues.

I would like to emphasize the extracted and interpreted valuable information on the cult to the foremost Roman god in the province's vici, on the connections to the imperial cult, on the holidays in his honour. The monuments from Moesia Inferior offer the rare opportunity to look at the religious world of these small peasant communities, which don't usually leave noticeable footprint.

Finally, the book examines the individual people-dedicants of monuments to Jupiter, considering them by social group and extracting data on their origin. It reaches the conclusion, that 90 per cent were either Roman citizens or associated with the Roman administration, part of, or influenced by Roman culture.

The work also comments on the encounter of the cult to the Roman Jupiter with the local milieu and the culture in the province. It notes that the cult had not been especially popular among the Thracians, who are attested only by collective dedications. It discovers rare instances of links to the Thracian religious notions, such as the images of Zbelsurdos, the isolated instances of local epithets, and of syncretism between the iconography of Jupiter and that of the Thracian Horseman.

The urban centres on the Black Sea coast present a different cultural setting. The text refers to monuments from those and draws certain general conclusions. The study would have only benefited from a more in-depth analysis of these towns and from an outline of the specifics of their response upon encounter with the cult to the principal Roman god compared against the response of the rest of the regions in the province's interior.

The book draws conclusions that the cult to Jupiter in Lower Moesia was a means to demonstrate loyalty to the Roman state, to its rulers, as well as an indication of involvement into the Roman culture and beliefs.

The study presents the history of the cult to Jupiter in Moesia Inferior, traced from the first introduction of the images of the god during the first century AD, through the apogee during the Antonine and the Severan dynasties, the sporadic manifestations during the second half of the third century and the Tetrarchy, until its end during the reign of Emperor Constantine. It regards the official and the political aspects of the cult and its association with the worship of the Roman emperors. It also examines its private aspect, in the life and home of the individual persons.

The monograph is an in-depth academic work with definite contribution to the field, which through its analysis of the cult to Jupiter in Moesia Inferior increases our knowledge not only on the beliefs of the people in the province, but also on their attitude towards the Roman state and on their induction into Roman culture.

4. The second monograph, submitted by Ivan Valchev, is titled *Extraurban Sanctuaries in the Roman Province of Thrace (1st–4th century)*, Sofia, 2015, 416 p. It builds upon the defended dissertation and offers an analysis of the said cult sites from the territory of the Roman province of Thrace. The monograph offers contributions to the field, acknowledged by Bulgarian and foreign colleagues, as demonstrated by the frequent citation of the book.

Ivan Valchev submitted for the competition nine more articles published in periodicals and collected works volumes, printed since 2015. Two of the articles appeared in referred and Web of Science indexed publications (Attachments 3 and 4). Here, I would like to mention that both,

submitted as articles texts fulfil the requirements for a “study” set in § 1, item 12 of LDASRB’s additional provisions.

The rest of the articles too have appeared in respected scientific periodicals, most produced by the Sofia University “St. Kliment Ohridski” Publishing House, but also some by the National Institute of Archaeology with Museum to BAS and by the Institute of Balkan Studies with Centre for Thracology “Prof. Alexander Fol” to BAS.

All studies and articles reflect Ivan Valchev’s long-standing scholarly interests in the religious life in the Thracian territories. Some of the papers are on the subject his habilitation work (Attachments 3 and 4). I would like to draw attention here to *The Cult of Jupiter in the Lower Danube Provinces during the Tetrarchy* – Bulgarian e-Journal of Archaeology, 11, 2021, iss. 1, 103–120 (Attachment 4). It expands and amends the section in his monograph dedicated to Jupiter which dwells on the Tetrarchy, by placing the monuments from Moesia Inferior within the broader context of the monuments from the entire Empire.

Of the rest of the papers, special attention deserves the synthesis and contribution paper treating the issue of the use of coins in the sanctuaries of Roman Thrace (Attachment 7).

Some of the published texts examine the end of the pagan cults, temples, and sanctuaries in the Later Roman Age (Attachments 4, 5 and 6). This topic clearly excites the scholarly curiosity of Ivan Valchev, and could, in my opinion, grow into a subsequent monograph study, dedicated to religious life in Thrace.

The candidate has also submitted articles, which introduce in the academic discourse new monuments, discovered during archaeological excavations in which Iv. Valchev was either director or participant (Attachments 8 and 11).

Most publications included in the list submitted for the purpose of the announced competition are in Bulgarian; only one is in English. I would like to mention here that the complete list of the candidate’s publications includes 5 articles in print (one co-authored) – all in English. A large portion of those is accepted for publication within proceedings of international academic conferences and their circulation would undoubtedly expand awareness and the number of references to Iv. Valchev’s works.

Twenty references to the candidate’s works have been registered, from Bulgarian and foreign scientific publications. I draw attention here to M. Oppermann’s review of Iv. Valchev’s monograph titled *Extraurban Sanctuaries in the Roman Province of Thrace (1st–4th century)*, which appeared in *Archaeologia Bulgarica*, XX, 2, 2016, 95–102. A large portion of the references are to this particular work, but several other of Iv. Valchev’s papers had also attracted scholarly attention.

Ivan Valchev is author of two monographs and a number of other publications which make undeniable contributions to the relevant academic fields. All these works reflect his steadfast interest in the study of Thrace during the Roman and Late Roman period. Through his published works, published and referenced by prestigious academic publications, Ivan Valchev is known within the academic community. Finally, I need to add that he is an honest scholar and his texts are free of any trace of plagiarism.

5. The publications characterize Ivan Valchev as a systematic student of the Antiquity. Evidence of his participation in the editorial committees of specialized academic publications in the field of Archaeology, in academic projects on the history of Ancient Thrace, and in archaeological field studies, substantiate his experience and capabilities.

Ivan Valchev fulfills the requirements for acquiring the academic position “Associate Professor”, set in the Law for the Development of Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria, Art. 24, cl. 1.

In conclusion, based on the professional and personal qualities of the candidate, I vote positively and with conviction for the appointment of Assoc. Prof. Dr. **Ivan Dimitrov Valchev** to the academic post of “**Associate Professor**”.



Sofia
2.11. 2022

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Marina Koleva