

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 38-404/12.07.2024),

concerning the competition for the academic position “Associate Professor” in professional field 2.2. History and Archaeology (Archaeology – Museology), announced in the State Gazette (No. 55/ 28.06.2024).

1. In the announced competition, organized at the request of the Council of the Faculty of History for the academic position in the Department of Archaeology, the only candidate is Dr. Iliana Georgieva Borisova-Katsarova, Assistant-Professor. Her documents have been approved by the Commission appointed by the Rector and the reason for her participation in the competition procedure was the submitted certificate that she fulfils the minimum national requirements under Article 2b of the Law on the Development of Academic Staff. I. Borisova graduated with a degree in Archaeology at the Faculty of History of Sofia University (1997), she was a full-time PhD student at the Faculty of History with the dissertation topic: “*Archaeological museums and museum exhibitions in situ - achievements and perspectives in Bulgaria*” (defended in 2002). Since 2003 to 2008 she was an expert at the Central Archive Agency, at the same time a part-time assistant at the NBU, the Academy of Fine Arts and at the Department of Archives of the St. Kliment Ohridski University of Sofia. Since 2008 she is Assistant-Professor in the Department of Archaeology of Sofia university. In the current contest, she participated with a habilitation thesis, published and submitted for discussion under the title: “*The Western Gate of Serdica. Archaeological research and socialization*”. Sofia, St. Kliment Ohridski Press, 2024. She also contributed 24 selected publications – studies and articles according to the attached list.

2. Iliana Borisova’s scientific activities are focused on Roman archaeology in an interesting combination with Museology, which gives her the opportunity to approach the fortune of the discovered archaeological sites and objects after their excavation. This supports her professional growth, in order to establish herself as a competent researcher of antiquity in the area between the archaeological survey and the adaptation of the discovered monuments in their new environment. And the benefit of this is undoubted, hopefully she will not remain alone in this direction. This scientific engagement can be traced in her teaching activity – these are lectures on Museology in the undergraduate programs in Archaeology, History (full-time and part-time), Archival Studies and Documentary (full-time and part-time), as well as four seminars in the master’s program in Museology at Historical faculty, of which she has been the Head since 2011. Separately are her general lecture courses on Archaeology in the bachelor’s programs in History and Philosophy and History and a Foreign Language, as well as a specialized course on crafts in Roman Thracia and Moesia in the bachelor’s program in Archaeology. In fact, her academic employment for the past five years has been above the norm, nearly doubling, as evidenced by her academic employment report. The same can be seen in her engagement with the student’s master theses, supervised by her (12 in number), again on two topics – on museum activity and cultural heritage, and in the study of artifacts and archaeological sites of Roman

archaeology in Thracian lands. And I would also note her involvement as a scientific consultant to two doctoral students on museology, one was on the medieval archaeological sites in Western Bulgaria and the possibilities for their exposure and socialization.

Iliyana Borisova is a member of the archaeological college, she is included in the register of archaeologists at the Ministry of Culture (2016), and she participated in a number of archaeological surveys and salvage excavations of infrastructure projects as a head and deputy head of research teams: near the village of Zavoy, Tundzha Municipality; at the village of Bikovo and the town of Kermen, Slivensko (2008), at the village of Benkovski, Starozagorsko (2009). The rest are sites on the territory of Sofia: Metro Station 8-II (2009-2011); The Western Gate of Serdica (2011-2013, 2014, 2016); Muslim necropolis and late antique structures at Tsvetan Minkov Street (2018); archaeological structures from the Late Antiquity and Ottoman times at George Washington Street (2019, 2020, 2024); Western Necropolis of Serdica, Ivan Denkoglu Street (2019); Eastern Necropolis of Serdica on Yanko Sakazov Blvd. (2020); structures from the Roman and Late Antiquity on Veslets Street (2020).

Her participation in research projects is as an expert in the field of museology, such as at the Durankulak Archaeological Park project under the EU PHARE program, as well as the project for archaeological research, promotion and socialization of the “Western Gate” site under the Culture program of the Metropolitan Municipality. She is a member of the International Council of Museums (ICOM) and the Association of Bulgarian Archaeologists (ABA).

3. The monograph with which Iliana Borisova participated in the competition is about the archaeological study of the Western gate of Serdica, supplemented with a discussion on conservation and restoration, as well as the exposure and socialization of the archaeological site in modern urban environment. This highlights the importance and contribution of the study that “leaves” the usual course of archaeological analysis to present us with a comprehensive view of such an important and already visible monument in the capital city. The book has a volume of 328 pages and its structure is in two parts, each designed as independent with a separate introduction and conclusion – the first is for the description, study, and dating of the discovered archaeological structures; the second is for conservation, restoration, exposure and socialization of the monument and the site. The arrangement is usual, and its analysis is organized in chapters, in which the distinct elements, and their related situations are discussed. Such are the fortification (I), the street network (II), the sewage and water supply system (III), the civil architecture (IV). As expected, the last chapter is a survey of the development of Serdica during the Roman and Late Roman times (V). The second part is in three chapters: the first introduces the management of archaeological heritage with a discussion on concepts and regulations; the second presents the conservation and restoration of the site, and the third presents the archaeological park “Western Gate” in the context of the archaeological heritage of Sofia. A bibliography and appendices are included at the end.

The value of the monograph increases with the participation of her author in the second stage of the study on the site of the Western Gate (2011-2016), as well as with many years of participation in archaeological research on the territory of Sofia, which has provided knowledge about the stratigraphy and structure of the city in different sections. The description and analysis are well supplemented and substantiated with photographs and plans/drawings. In fact, in her book, I. Borisova managed to combine the primary publication of the monument with a description of structures and situations, with an

analysis of the discovered elements, which she interpreted with knowledge of other examples and situations on the territory of Serdica, but also in the vast expanse of the Thracian provinces and the Roman Empire.

As for the second part, it is a reliable attempt to pose the problems of the conservation of the monuments and their socialization, which the archaeological science, and not only it, has avoided for decades. In fact, what is written in this part is not an appendix to the publication of the object, but a mature analysis of the approach of researchers and institutions to inform the modern society about its past. These are not just ideas generated by the researcher's encounter with problems in the particular situation. No, this is a professional reading by a specialist in museology to specify the institutional cooperation, to update normative documents – for example the ordinance (No. 2) for the preservation of the historical-archaeological reserve in the centre of the city of Sofia (see p. 264). Which also supports the topic of the current competition for Associate Professor in Museology.

4. Iliana Borisova also participates in the competition with 24 scientific publications: studies and articles, all published after 2002, except one (No. 2), but it concerns an archaeological survey. Two of these are in English, 6 are co-authored, published in prestigious Bulgarian and foreign scientific publications and series. In the listed publications we find the same aspiration towards the two main topics in the teaching activity and in the scientific pursuits. The first is related to the study of archaeological sites from the Roman times, among them, as expected, stand out the publications about the Western Gate of Serdica (Nos. 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 18, 19), but also some other publications of artifacts from Roman times and related problems (Nos. 17, 21, 22), referring mostly to the study of crafts and their production (Nos. 2, 6, 24, 25), which is also the subject of a specialized course in the bachelor program in Archaeology. The other topic is directed to the study of Museology, especially to specific problems of museums and museum collections, organization of museum activity (Nos. 3, 4, 5, 7, 8, 9), as well as an effort to synthesize the two topics in the discussion of exposing the Western Gate in a modern urban environment (No. 20).

The specified publications, as well as others that are not included in this selected list, outline Iliana Borisova's permanent interest in the problems of Roman archaeology and in Museology, an aspiration to continue after the scientific research and publication in order to adapt the monument and site to its presentation in an urban or museum environment. Here are her efforts to develop the museum activity by participation with reports in scientific conferences and directing discussion towards adapting the regulatory framework for useful and effective cooperation of specialists from various scientific fields in conservation/restoration and socialization of the archaeological monuments.

A clear testimony of the contributions of her work is the response in the scientific literature, the numerous citations of her papers, according to the appendices in the competition documentation.

The texts are written in professional language, clear and readable, nevertheless the specific terminology. I have not noticed any elements of plagiarism in the text, in fact I did not expect to find any.

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5. In conclusion, I would emphasize the undoubted contribution of Iliana Borisova's texts proposed in the competition, which reveal her as a scientist who is precise with the facts and correct in the proposed reconstructions. Their discussion, as well as the review of her teaching and project activities, I appreciate as a manifestation of undoubted scientific potential and accumulated field experience. But I would add that what Iliana Borisova is doing is a convincing example of a combination of different activities, all aimed at a thorough interpretation of the past, but also an effort to make it accessible and true for the public. Which is my reason to vote positively for the award of the academic position of **Associate Professor to Dr. Iliana Georgieva Borisova-Katsarova.**

November 4th, 2024



Kostadin Rabadjiev