

## STATEMENT

By Dr Ivan Dimitrov Valchev, Associate Professor in Classical Archaeology, member of the Scientific Jury, appointed by order of the Rector of the Sofia University “St. Kliment Ohridski” no. ПД 38-404/ 12. 07. 2024, concerning the competition for the academic position “Associate Professor” in professional field 2.2. History and Archeology (Archaeology – Thracian Archaeology).

The competition for the academic position of “associate professor” has been announced for the needs of the Department of Archeology of the Faculty of History of the Sofia University “St. Kliment Ohridski”. The announcement was published in the State Gazette no. 55 of 28. 06. 2024. Documents for participation in the competition were submitted by one candidate – assistant professor Iliana Georgieva Borisova-Katsarova, PhD, full-time lecturer in the Department of Archaeology. The document acceptance committee appointed by the Rector determines that the candidate meets the requirements of the ZRASB and the Regulations of the University and is therefore admitted to participate in the competition. Appendix 12 shows that assist. prof. Iliana Borisova-Katsarova meets the minimum national requirements set forth in art. 2b of ZRASB.

Iliana Borisova-Katsarova obtained her master’s degree in Archaeology at the Faculty of History of the Sofia University in 1997. She subsequently defended her PhD thesis, entitled “Archaeological museums and museum expositions *in situ* – achievements and prospects in Bulgaria” at the same institution in 2003. From 2002 to 2008, Dr Borisova-Katsarova held two positions: first at the Sofia State Archives and then at the Central State Archives in Sofia. Concurrently, she worked as a part-time assistant at New Bulgarian University, Academy of Fine Arts “Nikolay Pavlovich”, and Sofia University “St Kliment Ohridski”. From 2008 to the present, she has been employed as an assistant professor at the Department of Archaeology.

Dr Iliana Borisova-Katsarova is a lecturer in the field of museology, which is taught as part of the Bachelor of Arts programs in archaeology, history, and archival studies and documentary studies. Additionally, she teaches several elective courses. Thirteen master’s theses, addressing a range of issues pertaining to Roman archaeology and museology, have been successfully defended under the guidance of Dr Borisova-Katsarova.

I. Borisova-Katsarova is engaged in a number of scientific projects pertaining to both the methodology of archaeological excavations and the socialization of previously studied

archaeological sites. She is a member of both the Association of Bulgarian Archaeologists and the International Council of Museums (ICOM).

The proposed by Dr Iliana Borisova-Katsarova habilitation monograph is entitled “The Western Gate of Serdica. Archaeological survey and socialisation”. Sofia, “St. Kliment Ohridski” Publishing House, 2024. The monograph is divided into two parts: I. Archaeological survey. Description and dating of the uncovered archaeological structures; II. The Western Gate of Serdica – conservation, restoration, exposure and socialization. The monograph is 336 pages long, of which text part (pp. 7–280), appendices (pp. 282–285), bibliography (pp. 287–300), list of images (pp. 301–307) and a summary in English (pp. 308–333).

The monograph of I. Borisova-Katsarova represents the inaugural attempt in Bulgarian historiography to trace the fate of an archaeological complex from its construction in the Roman period, through its investigation in the 20<sup>th</sup> and early 21<sup>st</sup> centuries, to its socialization and its opening to the general public just a few years ago. The initial section of the monograph presents the findings of the archaeological excavations conducted at the western gate of Serdica, with a particular focus on the architectural remains. These include elements of the fortification, the street network, the sewerage and water supply systems, and examples of civil architecture. The structures and facilities in question are described in detail and presented with appropriate graphic and photographic documentation. The artifacts unearthed during the excavations, predominantly coins but also ceramics, are employed to substantiate the chronological assertions put forth by the author. The latter are not presented in detail, but all are illustrated with high-quality photographs, which enable the information provided by the author to be verified. The western gate of Serdica was subjected to two distinct phases of investigation: the first between 1972 and 1980, and the second between 2011 and 2016. Dr Borisova-Katsarova was a director of the second phase of the archaeological investigations. It is regrettable that the findings of the initial excavations, which were conducted under the direction of Magdalina Stancheva, have never been made public. For these reasons, archival materials are extensively utilized in the monograph under review. However, numerous aspects of the initial excavations remain ambiguous. As a participant in the studies of Kabyle, where a significant portion of the excavations conducted over the past five decades have not been published, I can only express my admiration to Dr Borisova-Katsarova for her efforts and the results achieved in the work, both in the field and with documentation. It is worth noting that the latter is not always fully preserved and does not always meet modern standards.

The final fifth chapter of part one represents an effort to situate the findings of the studies conducted at the western gate within the broader context of the development of Serdica during the Roman and Late Roman periods. This is where Dr Borisova-Katsarova's profound understanding of the history and topography of the ancient city is most evident, enabling her to formulate hypotheses about the extent of the Roman and particularly the late Roman fortification of Serdica. The proposed route of the fortress walls of the so-called Serdica II will likely remain hypothetical for an extended period. However, the version proposed by Borisova-Katsarova addresses issues that have remained unresolved for an extended period, such as the traces of fortifications along Georgi Benkovski Street.

The second part of the habilitation work presents the conservation, restoration, exposure, and socialization of the architectural remains. The case study of the western gate of Serdica has been examined in a broad international context, with the use of various normative documents affecting cultural heritage and archaeological monuments in particular. The practical experience shared in the second chapter of this part would undoubtedly prove beneficial in the development of future projects for the socialization of monuments from antiquity, not only in an urban environment.

The book is an original work by the author, and no instances of plagiarism were identified.

In addition to the habilitation monograph, Dr Iliana Borisova-Katsarova participated in the competition with a further 24 publications, comprising five studies, 14 articles, and five communications. Some of these were co-authored. Excluding articles pertaining to the doctoral dissertation and announcements in the series "Archaeological Discoveries and Excavations", those publications illustrate Dr Borisova-Katsarova as an accomplished researcher of Roman cultural heritage in Bulgaria and a distinguished expert in museological issues, which aligns with the current competition's focus on the position of associate professor.

In light of the aforementioned evidence, I am compelled to cast my vote in favor of the appointment of Assistant Professor Iliana Georgieva Borisova-Katsarova, PhD, to the academic position of Associate Professor in PN 2.2. History and Archaeology (Archaeology – Museology).



November 14<sup>th</sup>, 2024

Assoc. prof. Ivan Valchev, PhD