

## Opinion

by

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**Member of the academic panel of the competition for Associate Professor in the sphere  
of higher education**

### **3. Social, Economic and Legal Sciences, Professional Field**

#### **3.1. Sociology, Anthropology and Culture Studies for the needs of the Regional Museum of History – Sliven, promulgated in the *State Gazette* No. 57/9 July 2021**

Only one candidate – **Dr. Nikolay Tanev Sirakov** – has applied to participate in the competition for Associate Professor, promulgated in the *State Gazette* No. 57/9 July 2021 for the needs of the Regional Museum of History – Sliven.

Nikolay Sirakov (Dr. since 2018) has been a museum worker for many years. He worked in the Archaeology Department of the Regional Museum of History – Sliven and since 2013 he is Director of the Museum. In 1999 he completed his MA in Archaeology at the St. Cyril and St. Methodius University of Veliko Tarnovo, and in 2003 he obtained his MA in Economics from the same university.

He has PhD in Art History and Visual Research from the New Bulgarian University – Sofia (2018) with dissertation work *The Language of the Burial Rite of the Thracians along the Middle Course of the Tundja River*.

Nikolay Sirakov participates in the explorations of numerous archaeological sites:

- initially as university student at the medieval sites Carassura, Rupkite village, Chirpan municipality (1997) and the Karachtepe Monastery near Varna (1998);
- later on a number of infrastructural sites, notably: along the Thrace Motorway, at a medieval settlement near the village of Zavoy, Yambol municipality (2005 and 2007); along the National Railway Infrastructure Company near Harmanli (2006) and Zavoy village (2021); along a gas pipeline in the Haskovo Region (2018–2019) and Lukovit (2020), as well as at an interconnector near Lozenets village, Yambol region (2016);
- rescue excavations in Stara Zagora (2016);
- Thracian tumuli near Zhelyo Voyvoda village, Sliven municipality (2004) and on a larger scale on the territory of the Sliven region (2007);
- the ancient villa near the town of Kermen (2018);
- the regular explorations of Kabyle near Yambol (2018–2020);
- and above all the regular explorations of Tuida fortress (2004, 2012, 2017–2021);
- field explorations in recent years in the villages Strupets near Sliven and Nauchene near Nova Zagora (2019).

At some of the sites he is deputy team leader: Zhelyo Voyvoda village (2004), the tumuli in the Sliven region (2007), along the gas pipelines in the Zornitsa village, Haskovo region (2018–2019) and Lukovit (2020). He was team leader in charge of the archaeological explorations of Tuida in 2012 and 2017–2021.

Publications and materials in press by Nikolay Sirakov have been submitted for opinion.

Over the relatively not long period of creative activity (assuming 2003 as the start of his work at the Museum) Nikolay Sirakov has a good academic production. He has one published autonomous monograph and is co-author in four other monographic studies. At present he has a total of 48 publications, alone or in co-authorship. Many of them present the results of archaeological explorations and research.

His academic quests in the past 18 years already clearly highlight the research on Thracian culture in Sliven and the region as the key focus of his research. This is the defining, but not the only trend in the sphere in which Nikolay Sirakov is working. Part of his studies, I mean the explorations of Tuida, one of the most important archaeological sites in Southeastern Europe, are also focused on the issues of the Late Antiquity and Early Middle Ages. Working in the sphere of a museum, Nikolay Sirakov has been compelled to broaden the scope of his research and exploratory activities in the sphere of mythology, local lore, new and newest history.

Dr. Nikolay Tanev Sirakov participates in the competition for **Associate Professor** with a total of 15 publications (without the cited ones that are in press), among which the monograph *Ancient Articles of Adornment from the Regional Museum of History – Sliven*, 2021, ISBN 978-6197445-42-8. The monograph has 174 pages (151 of which are text and literature). It comprises: Introduction, three chapters, Conclusion, sources, literature and figures. The Introduction contains substantiation of the data on the articles of adornment as a reflection of the aesthetic taste and needs of the users. This is followed by information indicating the significance of works of jeweller's art from the depositories of the Regional Museum of History – Sliven (a part of them are exhibited in the halls of the Museum). The principal techniques of their production are presented: casting, engraving, incrustation, filigree and hammering (stippling). The assertion expressed by Nikolay Sirakov that “undoubtedly there existed a good school in Thrace that disseminated its production throughout the Balkan Peninsula, Asia Minor and the Northern Black Sea coast” (p. 10) is insufficiently supported with the respective examples and literature. Further on, the author dwells on *The History of the Articles of Adornment*, where there is both concreteness with respect to the results of the research in the Sliven region on copper ores, slags, deposits and metal mining, and general historical reference. A summarising characterisation is given also of the technological process relevant to the processing of gold and silver, notably: workshops, tools. Technological processes, Egypt, the Aegean region, Etruria, Greece and Rome. Against that background Nikolay Saratov presents concrete materials from the Sliven region to illustrate the technological processes in that region. The next chapter examines gold articles of adornment: a wreath from Kitova Mogila tumulus from Krushare village; a plaque (half-mask) from Yakimova Mogila near Krushare; mask from Dalakova Mogila – Topolchane village; hairpins (Popova Mogila – Trapoklovo); earrings (from: the town of Sliven; Kitova Mogila – Krushare; Eastern=Drumeva Mogila – Staro Selo village; Yankova Mogila – Staro Selo; Lechkova Mogila – Topolchane; Krastava Mogila – Dragodanovo village; Gyurlyudjiyska Mogila – Staro Selo), rings (Yankova Mogila – Staro Selo and Krastava Mogila – Dragodanovo), etc. The author examines these archaeological materials in detail with the respective academic interpretations, analyses, symbols and suitable literature. The next section in the monograph addresses the articles of adornment for the body. Nikolay Sirakov devotes considerable attention to the fibulae during their processing, and their publication contributed substantially to shedding light on this issue in Southeastern Bulgaria. He also dwells on the rings and publishes direct finds from the explorations of several tumuli, including a ring-seal from Dalakova Mogila. Here in addition to the other published bracelets, gold plaques (from: Kitova Mogila – Krushare; Yankova Mogila – Staro Selo; Krastava Mogila – Dragodanovo), appliqués from the region of the villages Staro Selo and Zhelyo Voyvoda, I believe that the mirror from Krastava Mogila is of definite interest for the entire Southeastern Bulgaria, because together with the already known mirror from Chukarka village, it broadens considerably the comprehensive notions about the cultural processes and influences in the region. The monograph has substantial bibliography (more than 125 in Cyrillic script and more than 73 – in Latin script), up-to-date specialised literature in line with the profile of the study.

The work in co-authorship *The Horse and Its Mythological Transformations (Three Ancient Monuments from the Collection of the Regional Museum of History – Sliven)* by Gorgi Kovachev and Nikolay Sirakov is also of interest and it was also published by Obnova Publishers, Sliven, 2020.

In addition to the published works, it would be necessary to take into consideration – but without reviewing – also his specialised works in press in editions like ИМЮИБ, as well as in the volumes *The Bulgarians along the Northern Black Sea Coast* and the forthcoming volume in honour of the 65<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Prof. Dr. Totko Stoyanov.

Nikolay Sirakov has a peculiarity and a specificity in his research activities: interdisciplinarity and complexity.

Nikolay Sirakov's contributions can be synthesised along several lines:

1. Studies on the issues of Thracian culture in Southeastern Bulgaria.
2. The archaeological explorations of Tuida.

The colleague Nikolay Sirakov already has a number of publications in both spheres. As regards his activities (archaeological explorations and publications) in Southeastern Bulgaria, he appears to be one of the leading researchers.

With respect to complying with the minimum requirements for scientometric indicators under Article 2, Paragraphs 2 and 3 of the Law on the Promotion of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria, the candidate has the necessary number of points: a total of 474.

With respect to the other parameters, Dr. Nikolay Sirakov has activities connected with:

1. Participation in projects:

- *Valorisation of the Heritage* at the Research Fund for the 2018–2022 period;
- Conservation and restoration of museum houses at the Regional Museum of History – Sliven.
- The project connected with the Late Antiquity and medieval fortress – *Restoration, Conservation and Socialisation of the Tuida Late Antiquity and Medieval Fortress in Sliven in 2013–2014* – is of particular importance.

2. Leader and deputy leader of important archaeological sites (dated to the Thracian, Late Antiquity and medieval periods).

The activities of Dr. Nikolay Sirakov leave the best possible impressions of professionalism. His contribution to the sphere of Thracian archaeology and cultural-historical heritage is important.

In conclusion, I believe that the candidate Dr. Nikolay Sirakov meets the requirements for occupying the academic position of Associate Professor and I recommend to the distinguished academic panel to vote in favour of his assuming that position.

Town of Karnobat

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