

Opinion

on the election of **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, concerning **Dr. Nikolay Tanev Sirakov** as the only candidate,

by Prof. Dr. Vanya Borislavova Lozanova-Stancheva

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The opinion is drafted on the basis of the decision dated 17 September 2021 of the academic panel formed with Order No. 90 ПД-16/22.07.2021 of the Director of the Institute of Balkan Studies with *Professor Alexander Fol* Centre of Thracology (IBSCT) of the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences (BAS), on the grounds of Article 4 of the Law on the Promotion of Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria, Article 18, Paragraph 5 of the Annex to the IBSCT Regulation on the conditions and procedures for acquiring academic degrees and for assuming academic positions, and decision of the Academic Council of the IBSCT – BAS of 14 July 2021, Protocol No. 12, item 1. The evaluations on the principal issues of the requirements are based on analysis of the materials submitted for the competition, as well as copies of the required documents.

Brief biographical data of the candidate

Dr. Nikolay Sirakov has MA in Archaeology from the St. Cyril and St. Methodius University of Veliko Tarnovo, MA in Economics, specialisation in Finances of the St. Cyril and St. Methodius University of Veliko Tarnovo, and MA in Art History of the New Bulgarian University. He has also obtained a PhD degree in the professional domain of Art Theory, with academic specialisation in Art History and Visual Research from the New Bulgarian University. Since 2003 the candidate has been working as curator and archaeologist at the Regional Museum of History – Sliven, and since 2013 he is Director of that museum.

Contributions of Dr. Nikolay Sirakov's research activities, reflected in his publications

The candidate participates in the competition with one habilitation work – a monograph *Ancient Articles of Adornment from the Regional Museum of History – Sliven* (2021), 11 articles, four of which written by him alone and seven in co-authorship.

Monographic study. The monograph *Ancient Articles of Adornment from the Regional Museum of History – Sliven* (176 p.) ranks first and is of key importance to the competition. The text is structured in three chapters, Introduction and Conclusion, bibliography and illustrations that visualise very well the analysis of remarkable artefacts in the depository of the Regional Museum of History – Sliven. The artefacts of the jeweller's art, divided in two groups – articles of adornment for the head and the neck and articles of adornment for the body – are interpreted against the background of an in-depth comparative analysis in a broad geographic horizon (Egypt, the Aegean region, Etruria, Greece and Rome) and cultural-historical context. The in-depth survey of ore mining during the prehistoric periods and during the Antiquity in the region build the cultural-historical background where the ideas that were reflected in the visual art of the local Thracian population were generated. The interdisciplinary

approach to the archaeological material suggests inferences and conclusions that concern both art history and culturological aspects in which the Thracian religious notions and their socio-cultural and ideological functions find a central place.

Unfortunately, the three monographs in co-authorship, namely *The Horse and Its Mythological Transformations. Three Ancient Monuments in the Collection of the Regional Museum of History – Sliven* (in co-authorship with Georgi Kovachev), *Pages from the History of the Village of Kaloyanovo* (co-authors Nedelcho Mitarkov and Minko Stefanov) and *Under the Banner of Freedom*. Sliven, 2021 (co-authors Maria Pavlova and Penka Dimitrova), which the candidate has submitted for the competition, lack a clear indication of the parts written by the candidate, hence it is difficult to evaluate his concrete contribution. Indisputably, they are part of the candidate's contribution to the study of local lore, and they complement the picture of his research quests.

The articles submitted for the competition can be analysed in two groups:

Studies of the local lore and cultural heritage – *Stefan Gidikov – Patriot from Sliven and Close Associate of Georgi Rakovski* (author), *Pages of the History of the Village of Kaloyanovo, Sliven Region. Book One, Chronicle of the Village of Zhelyo Voyvoda, Sliven Region*, and the study *Under the Banner of Freedom: the Goryani*, in which he is co-author. It is possible to add to this group Dr. Nikolay Sirakov's participation in the editorial board of Volume 3 of *Attempt at History of the Town of Sliven* by Dr. Simeon Tabakov.

Terrain research and archaeological explorations of Sliven and its adjacent region, including the publishing and interpretation of artefacts from the Regional Museum of History – Sliven. A great advantage of the author is that he had the opportunity to use the rich collection of the museum he was in charge of as curator, archaeologist and director for many years, and could introduce in academic circulation remarkable sites and works of art, as well as his own observations from terrain research and archaeological explorations. The focus of that group of studies and publications is predominantly on the ancient, respectively Thracian, cultural heritage in the region.

Dr. Nikolay Sirakov has also submitted for the competition six author's articles and three more in co-authorship, which are in press.

The academic production submitted by the candidate is of a high quality and with professionally defensible positions. Dr. Nikolay Sirakov's spheres of interest and research activities correspond to the domains stipulated in the notification for the **competition for Associate Professor**. The candidate complies with the minimum national requirements for associate professor in the professional field 3. Social, Economic and Legal Sciences.

Everything stated above gives me grounds to suggest to the distinguished members of the Academic Panel to confer to Dr. Nikolay Tanev Sirakov the academic degree of **Associate Professor** in sphere 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.

Sofia, 1 November 2021

/sg./ Prof. Dr. Vanya B. Lozanova-Stancheva