

## **EXPERT OPINION**

From

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On the scientific materials for participation in a competition for the academic position of "Professor" under PF 2.2 History and archaeology, announced in SG no. 65/12.08.2022 with candidate associate professor Dr. Toma Ivanov Tomov.

### **I. Assessment of compliance with the minimum national requirements and the requirements of the New Bulgarian University.**

The verification of the data submitted by the applicant shows that the minimum national requirements of the RSARB and the requirements of the Regulations of the NBU have been met and the procedure is completely legitimate. The candidate meets the conditions for participation in the procedure for holding the academic position "professor".

### **II. Research (creative) activity and results.**

In 1994, Toma Ivanov Tomov graduated with a degree in "History" at the Faculty of History of the University "St. Kliment Ohridski", specializing in the History of Byzantium and the Balkan peoples, with a master's degree. In 1998, he became a PhD student at the Faculty of History and defended his doctoral dissertation in 2003. In the meantime, he was a scholarship holder of the Center for Slavic-Byzantine Studies "Prof. Dr. Ivan Duychev". He worked as a cartographer at the Institute of Cartography between 1989-1992 and as a history teacher at 88<sup>th</sup> Secondary School "Dimitar Popnikolov" in Sofia. Since 2006, he has been a

full-time lecturer at NBU, and in 2007 he was habilitated as an associate professor in General History of the Middle Ages.

To participate in the competition, Assoc. Prof. Tomov presented an impressive scientific production. First, here we must point out his last monograph, "The Secrets of "St. Sofia. The forgotten ships-graffiti and their messages, Veles Consult, Sofia, 2021, as well as its predecessors: "The unknown temple "St. Sofia". Inscriptions-graffiti in Cyrillic and Glagolitic" (2016); (2019; second, revised and expanded edition); Klyuch 1014 (2015); "Byzantium - known and unknown" (2012); (2014; second, revised edition). "Constantinople and the Russian Colony" (to 1204) (2008). (All in Bulgarian).

Three of them are related to studies of the presence of the Varangians and Russians in Constantinople and the material traces left by the Varangian settlers and travelers in the capital of Byzantium and more precisely in the patriarchal temple "Saint Sophia". "Byzantium-Known and Unknown" has a more general character and is written based on the experience of Assoc. Prof. Tomov as a researcher of Byzantine history and culture, which is also an essential part of his teaching activity.

His teaching experience relates to his other important publications: the e-textbook "History of Ancient Rome" (2007) and the co-authorship of the History and Civilization textbook for grade 11, for profiled preparation, modules 1. Power and institutions, 2. Culture and spirituality, 3. Man and Society, Prosveta, Sofia, 2021, co-author, 10 lessons), as well as the electronic study materials "The Romans" (2014). To this we can add about 50 articles and reviews devoted to various topics of Byzantine and medieval history in general. His overall scholarly output reveals a thorough approach and high professionalism, with an emphasis on certain themes and problems of the history of Byzantium and its contacts with the surrounding peoples.

Among the proposed scientific publications, the monograph "The Unknown Temple "St. Sofia". Inscriptions-graffiti in Cyrillic and Glagolitic", 2019, which is the second revised and supplemented edition, the first being from 2016. This work is the result of long-term studies, within the framework of independent research and project activity. Its writing was preceded by a long and thorough research work, which continued from 2005 with the first studies in Istanbul of St. Sofia until 2015, when the systematization, analysis and publication of the graffiti began

In the monograph, which has a volume of 332 pages, the known and newly discovered graffiti in Cyrillic and Glagolitic from the Saint Sophia church are systematized, analyzed, and published, and at least four separate typological groups are distinguished, of which the first two follow certain formulas, the third has a historical character, and the fourth unites graffiti with a diverse content.

Most of these graffiti are identified as Old Russian, but there is a Balkan part in which inscriptions of Bulgarian origin dominate. Part of the inscriptions, 19 out of 94 in total, according to Associate Professor Tomov, cannot be defined in this way, and he singles them out in the group of "neutral". A rich photographic material is also offered, which represents a solid argument in support of the author's claims. Assoc. Prof. Tomov's conclusions about the rather wide spread of literacy in the ancient Russian lands are confirmed by other sources, but the graffiti from "Saint Sophia" are a brilliant illustration of this thesis

A Continuation of this topic is the last monograph of the candidate "Secrets of "St. Sofia". The Forgotten Graffiti Ships and Their Messages", Veles Consult, Sofia, 2021, which presents new aspects of the study of images and graffiti that were little known or practically unknown and unexplored until now.

The articles and studies presented by Assoc. Prof. Tomov are mainly related to this issue, many of them are in English and have been published in authoritative indexed and

referenced publications such as *Paleobulgarica*, *Byzantinoslavica*, *Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies*. Assoc. Prof. Tomov is an author known and cited by the international Byzantine and medievalist community, which is well documented in the materials submitted for the competition.

Assoc. Prof. Tomov was the leader of the *Byzantine Antiquities in Istanbul* project, at NBU in 2013. He also took an active part as a lecturer in the "Training seminar for teachers and administrators from Bulgarian schools abroad" (24-26.07.2013) within the framework of the Annual Working Meeting of the Association of Bulgarian Schools Abroad, from the program under the project "Multimedia, information and educational digital platform for Bulgarian language, geography and culture" under scientific program 4 at University Humanities Complex "Alma Mater" at the University of Sofia "St. Kliment Ohridski".

### **III. Educational and teaching activities:**

The teaching activity of the candidate shows his various possibilities for successfully conducting teaching and pedagogic activities within the framework of numerous bachelor and master programs in Archaeology, History, Tourism, etc. A large part of the courses is specialized and is closely related to the scientific activity of Assoc. Prof. Tomov, namely the history of Byzantium, Byzantine Constantinople, the history of the Hagia Sophia temple, an introduction to the history of Christianity, etc. The candidate receives a consistently high score from the student surveys, which with a maximum score of 5 equals an average score of 4.53 over the last five-year period.

### **IV. Administrative and public activity**

Assoc. Prof. Tomov has significant administrative experience. He was dean of the Bachelor's Faculty of NBU for 2 terms from 2006 to 2012, in the meantime he was also

deputy rector for academic and international activities (2010-2011) and chairman of the Faculty Council of BF during the period in which he was also dean of the faculty. He also held the position of Chairman of the Commission on the Quality of the Bachelors Faculty of NBU. He was also a member of the Commission for the Development of the Academic Staff and a member of the Program Council of History and Archaeology.

His rich scientific activity, which is also expressed in the participation in numerous scientific forums at home and abroad, is accompanied by membership in the British Society for the Promotion of Byzantine Studies since 1996 and in his membership in the Association of the Byzantinists and Medievalists in Bulgaria (since 2006).

#### **V. Personal impressions of the candidate.**

I have worked with Assoc. Professor Tomov in a team, in writing a History and Civilizations Textbook for profiled preparation for 11th grade for "Prosveta" publishing house, and I have excellent impressions of our joint work.

#### **VI. Opinions, recommendations and notes on the activity and achievements of the candidate**

From everything stated so far, we can summarize that Associate Professor Toma Ivanov Tomov, the only candidate, fully meets the criteria and requirements for occupying the academic position of "professor", according to the minimum national requirements and the requirements of the Regulations of the NBU. His scientific production, teaching, administrative and public activities testify to high professionalism and significant scientific achievements in the field of Byzantine studies and medieval studies. Therefore, I strongly support and vote positively with "Yes" for the candidacy of Associate Professor Toma Ivanov Tomov for the academic position of "Professor".

Date:

Signature: