

REVIEW

BY: Dr. Krum Ernstov Bacvarov, Associate Professor, Department of Prehistory, National Archaeological Institute and Museum, Bulgarian Academy of Sciences

ON: Publications submitted in the competition for the academic position of Associate Professor in Professional Field 2.2. *History and Archaeology* (specialization: *Prehistory*) at the Department of Prehistory, announced in the *State Gazette*, Issue No. 62 of 7 July 2026

DATE: 30 September 2026

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The Scientific Committee was appointed by Order No. I1698 of 4 September 2026 of the Director of the National Archaeological Institute and Museum, Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, in connection with a competition announced by a decision of the Academic Board of the NAIM (Minutes No. 44 of 25 June 2026). The requirements of the Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria Act and the regulations for its implementation have been duly complied with.

Documents for participation in the competition have been submitted by Assistant Professor Dr. Kalin Lyubenov Dimitrov.

In 1992, Kalin Dimitrov graduated from the St. Kliment Ohridski University of Sofia with a degree in History and a major in Archaeology. In 2007, he defended his doctoral dissertation, entitled “Copper Metallurgy on the Western Black Sea

Coast (mid-5th – early 4th millennium BC).” He has completed specialized training in Belgium and France. His academic career began in 2007 at the Center for Thracology at the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, where he held the position of Research Associate, Grade II. Since 2010, he has been Assistant Professor at the Department of Prehistory, National Archaeological Institute and Museum, Bulgarian Academy of Sciences. From 2016 to 2020, he served as Director of the Center for Underwater Archaeology, after which he continued to work there as an archaeologist.

Throughout his academic career, Dr. Dimitrov has consistently pursued his research interests in the field of later prehistory, with a particular focus on ancient metallurgy and underwater archaeology. He has participated in and directed archaeological excavations, presented papers at national and international academic forums, and co-edited collective volumes. His research work has resulted in 26 studies, articles, and chapters in monographs.

The submitted report shows that Dr. Dimitrov is participating in the competition with scholarly output that meets the minimum national requirements under Article 2b, Paragraphs 2, 3, and 5 of the Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria Act (DASRBA), as well as the requirements under Article 18, Paragraph 2 of the Regulations on the Terms and Procedure for the Acquisition of Scientific Degrees and the Occupation of Academic Positions at NAIM–BAS. The list of citations of his publications indicates that the candidate’s research is known within the academic community.

A total of 28 publications have been submitted for review by the Scientific Committee: 1 monograph in print (habilitation thesis), 16 articles, and 11 chapters in edited monographs. Dr. Dimitrov is the sole author of 4 of these; the remainder were published in co-authorship. Five of the articles and 4 of the chapters in edited monographs were published before the candidate defended his doctoral dissertation and are therefore excluded from this review.

The research presented in the articles and chapters in edited monographs focuses on ancient metallurgy (9), underwater archaeology (6), and innovative approaches to the study of artifacts (3). Some of the publications also devote particular attention to non-destructive field investigations, as well as to the protection of underwater cultural heritage.

I would like to highlight the significant contribution of two of the articles. The first (R. Krauss, E. Pericka, K. Dimitrov, R. Kunze, P. Leshtakov. The transregional significance of the south-east Bulgarian copper deposits. – In: R. Krauss, R. Pernicka, R. Kunze, K. Dimitrov, P. Leshtakov (eds). *Prehistoric mining and metallurgy at the southeast Bulgarian Black Sea coast. (RessourcenKulturen, 12). Tübingen, 2020, 419–425*) examines the transregional significance of the copper ore deposits at Varli bryag, Rosen, and Medni rid, placing the three deposits in the context of early metallurgy along the western Black Sea coast.

The second (A. Ballmer, K. Dimitrov, N. Prahov, P. Georgiev. Prehistoric wetland settlements of the Bulgarian Black Sea coast. – In: A. Ballmer, A. Hafner, W. Tinner (eds). *Prehistoric wetland sites of Southern Europe. Springer, 2024, 149–173*) draws on parallels with the European phenomenon of so-called pile-dwelling settlements and examines the place of settlements along the Bulgarian Black Sea coast, investigated through underwater excavations, within their broader cultural landscape.

The fact that Dr. Dimitrov's research has been published almost exclusively in co-authorship does not diminish its significance. On the contrary, the two specific areas of his scholarly interests – underwater archaeology and early metallurgy – require the involvement of specialists in different branches of the archaeological discipline, as well as a high degree of interdisciplinarity.

The habilitation thesis submitted for review, "Prehistoric Settlements and Historical Harbours. Volume 1.1, Ropotamo and Sozopol. Underwater

Archaeological Investigations 2017–2024”, was discussed at an extended meeting of the Department of Prehistory, NAIM–BAS, and approved for publication in the *Excavations and Research* series. In the form in which it was submitted, the monograph consists of two parts – text and appendices (233 and 187 pages, respectively). The textual part comprises an introduction, 11 chapters (including the conclusion), and a bibliography.

The brief introduction concisely and clearly presents the subject of the study – the results of the underwater archaeological investigations of the sites at the mouth of the Ropotamo River and in the area between St. Cyricus and St. Julitta Island and the Skamni Peninsula near Sozopol. It provides convincing arguments for bringing these investigations together in a single monograph, sets out the author’s chosen narrative approach, and finally, but most importantly, formulates the principal aim of the study: to create a “narrative” of the life of prehistoric settlements and historical harbors and of the “interaction of people with the environment.”

Chapter 1 begins with a brief history of underwater archaeological investigations in Bulgaria and outlines the research and scholarly-organizational context of the work at Ropotamo and Sozopol. Although it could readily remain in its present form, the author’s intention to describe the environment in which the conditions for carrying out these projects were established would have been fulfilled more comprehensively if the efforts and achievements of Bulgarian scholars and organizations had been placed within the broader development of underwater archaeology worldwide, which is only briefly alluded to through the mention of Cousteau and Benoît’s excavations in 1957.

The second section of the chapter presents and substantiates in greater detail the scope, aims, and objectives of the research, clarifies the different types of ancient remains identified (not entirely accurately referred to in some places in the text as “sites”), and, accordingly, formulates the logic underlying the research

questions. The third and fourth sections of the chapter are historiographical in nature and introduce the issue of “submerged” prehistoric settlements, first in Europe (briefly) and then along the western Black Sea coast (in greater detail). A separate section provides a detailed account of the underwater archaeological excavations of the Early Bronze Age (EBA) settlement at Urdoviza Cape, the results of which are directly relevant, from a methodological perspective, to the specific subject of the monograph.

Chapter 2 is devoted to the contemporary methodology and organization of underwater investigations conducted by the team of the Center for Underwater Archaeology, to whose development Dr. Dimitrov has made a substantial contribution. The chapter examines both non-destructive and destructive research methods, as well as the techniques and means used for documenting underwater excavations.

The following two chapters examine the underwater archaeological investigations of the site at the mouth of the Ropotamo River, dating to the Neolithic and Early Bronze Age, respectively covering the periods before and after 2017. All stages and methods of the research are presented, the stratigraphic sequence is analyzed, and the principal categories of finds are included with varying degrees of detail. Finally, the hypothesis, developed on the basis of the research results, concerning the drastic changes in the ancient landscape of the bay at the river mouth is presented and substantiated. The chronology of occupation is interpreted on the basis of stratigraphic observations and radiocarbon dates, and a well-founded hypothesis is put forward concerning the type of buildings and the nature of the Early Bronze Age settlement. In this way, the study arrives at the synthesized account promised in the introduction: a narrative of people’s lives and of their efforts to adapt to and exercise control over their environment.

In Chapters 6–10, Dr. Dimitrov examines the results of the investigations at the site near Sozopol, following a structure similar to that of the section devoted to

the mouth of the Ropotamo River, with the relevant differences necessitated by the specific characteristics of the site. The concluding chapter of this part of the monograph synthesizes the data concerning landscape changes, the historical harbours of Apollonia and Sozopol, and occupation during the Late Chalcolithic and the Early and Middle Bronze Age.

The Concluding Remarks provide a very brief summary of the principal conclusions and hypotheses presented in the main sections of the study.

The monograph by Kalin Dimitrov submitted as his habilitation thesis is distinguished by a consistently structured organization, precise methodology, clear and accurate language, and comprehensive factual coverage. The historiographical perspectives further reinforce the logic of the presentation and transform it into an engaging account of the development and achievements of underwater archaeology in Bulgaria. The conclusions and hypotheses presented in the research sections of the work represent a new stage in the study of human occupation along the southwestern Black Sea coast during the Late Prehistory and historical periods.

Although the textual part of the monograph contains a large number of illustrations, the author has justifiably placed the supplementary images in a separate volume. I hope that the occasional grammatical and stylistic errors, as well as the shortcomings in the overall presentation and formatting of the monograph, will be corrected by the editorial and publishing team of the *Excavations and Research* series.

Conclusion

My overall assessment of the scholarly output of the sole candidate in the competition is positive. It fully meets the minimum scholarly requirements, and I therefore consider that Assistant Professor Dr. Kalin Lyubenov Dimitrov should be elected to the academic position of Associate Professor in the Department of

Prehistory, National Archaeological Institute and Museum, Bulgarian Academy of Sciences.



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