

REVIEW

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ON THE COMPETITION

for the academic position of
“**ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR**” in the professional field **2.2. History and Archaeology**
(specialization: Prehistory), for the needs of the Prehistory Section
at the National Archaeological Institute with Museum, Bulgarian Academy of Sciences,
announced in the State Gazette, No. 62 of 7 July 2026,
with candidate **Chief Assistant Professor Dr. Kalin Lyubenov Dimitrov**

There is one candidate in the competition for the academic position of Associate Professor, announced by the National Archaeological Institute with Museum at the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences (NAIM–BAS) for the needs of the Prehistory Section—Chief Assistant Professor Dr. Kalin Lyubenov Dimitrov. He holds a Master’s degree in History, with a specialization in Archaeology, awarded by the Faculty of History of Sofia University “St. Kliment Ohridski” in 1992. In 2007, he obtained the educational and scientific degree of Doctor following the successful defense of his dissertation entitled *Copper Metallurgy on the Western Black Sea Coast /5th–4th Millennium BC/*. From 2007 to 2010, Kalin Dimitrov was a Research Associate, Second Degree, at the Center for Thracology of the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, after which he became a Chief Assistant Professor at NAIM–BAS, a position he has held to the present day. Dr. Dimitrov has continued his successful academic career, serving as Director of the Center for Underwater Archaeology in Sozopol from 2016 to 2020. Since March 2020, he has also held the position of Deputy Director of NAIM–BAS. Kalin Dimitrov is a member, Vice-President, and founding member of the Association of Bulgarian Archaeologists.

The results of Dr. Dimitrov’s research activity presented in the competition documentation exceed the minimum national requirements for holding the academic position of Associate Professor, pursuant to Article 2b (2) of the Development of Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria Act (DASRBA) and Article 1a (1), respectively the Appendix (Field 2, Professional Field 2.2), of the Regulations for the Implementation of the DASRBA. They

also meet the remaining requirements stipulated in Article 24 of the DASRBA, the Regulations for its implementation, and Article 18 of the Regulations of NAIM–BAS for the implementation of the DASRBA.

The submitted list of publications includes four articles and papers published in scholarly journals indexed and abstracted in internationally recognized databases of scientific information (Nos. 6.1–6.4); eight articles and papers published in non-indexed peer-reviewed journals or in edited collective volumes (Nos. 7.1–7.8); four studies published in non-indexed peer-reviewed journals or in edited collective volumes (Nos. 9.1–9.4); and eleven published chapters in collective monographs (Nos. 10.1–10.11).

As part of the competition documentation, the candidate has also submitted a report on recorded citations, totaling 20, published between 2020 and 2024, the majority of which are by foreign researchers. This fact is unequivocal evidence that Dr. Dimitrov is clearly recognized by researchers working in his fields of scholarly inquiry, not only in Bulgaria but also internationally.

Among the documents submitted for the competition, K. Dimitrov has included a single-author monograph entitled *Ropotamo and Sozopol. Underwater Archaeological Investigations, 2017–2024*. It forms part of the series *Underwater Archaeological Investigations. Prehistoric Settlements and Historical Harbours*, Volume 1.1. The monograph was discussed and recommended for publication at a meeting of the Prehistory Section of NAIM–BAS and constitutes the habilitation work submitted within the present competition. It has been accepted for publication in the series *Excavations and Archaeological Research*, published by NAIM–BAS. The monograph comprises an introduction, ten chapters, concluding remarks, a bibliography, and appendices (maps, plans, field documentation, and descriptions of finds). Unfortunately, the author has not provided an English-language abstract or parallel English text, for example. This omission could readily be remedied in a subsequent online edition.

One of the principal objectives of the forthcoming publication is to present the history and results of underwater investigations of prehistoric settlements off the mouth of the Ropotamo River and in the waters of Sozopol. The monograph focuses in particular on the results of underwater excavations off the mouth of the Ropotamo River after 2017 and in Sozopol Bay during the period 2020–2024. The study is interdisciplinary in character. It

incorporates combined data from marine geophysical surveys, palynological studies, radiocarbon (^{14}C) dating, dendrochronological sample analysis, and other sources.

In commenting on the scholarly qualities of the monograph, I would first like to emphasize that over the past 60 years three principal research directions have developed within Bulgarian underwater archaeology. The first has accompanied the work of dozens of underwater divers since the beginnings of Bulgarian underwater archaeology and is associated with the systematic search for traces of ancient harbours throughout the Black Sea waters.

The second direction concerns the investigation of submerged post-medieval ships in several bays south of Cape Emine, such as the bay near the town of Chernomorets and the southern bay of the town of Kiten.

The third direction is associated with archaeological excavations conducted within prehistoric settlements, historical harbours, and structures of ancient towns and settlements submerged by marine waters, including the waters of Nessebar, Sozopol, the mouth of the Ropotamo River, Kiten, and Vromos Bay. It is precisely within this third direction of Bulgarian underwater archaeology that the principal scholarly research of Dr. Kalin Dimitrov belongs.

As a certified diver (CMAS; Instructor in Underwater Archaeology (IDA)) and a specialist in underwater archaeology, I consider that the monograph by my colleague Dimitrov, which has been discussed and recommended for publication, contains particularly important and original contributions to the development of underwater archaeology in Bulgaria. Chapter 2, entitled "Methodology and Organization of Underwater Investigations by the Center for Underwater Archaeology after 2017," is, for example, a veritable scholarly manual for conducting underwater archaeological investigations using contemporary methodology. Bulgarian literature contains only one book (*The Sunken Flotilla*, 1975), and that work is of a popular-scientific nature, in which a chapter is devoted to the methodology of underwater investigations. Prof. Mihail Lazarov entitled one section of his book *Expeditions into the Future* and prophetically wrote that, in the overall diving process, "knowledge of paleogeography, paleobotany, and paleobiology is also important. Geophysical methods for exploration and surveying have recently been entering archaeology at an increasingly rapid pace.... The future underwater archaeologist must above all be familiar with the principles of photography and its possibilities for recording traces of the past submerged beneath the water. The method of photogrammetric recording of submerged archaeological sites offers great

possibilities for saving time and labor. Is all this knowledge within the capabilities of one person? Certainly not, even if he is the underwater archaeologist of the twenty-first century. It follows that, in organizing underwater archaeological expeditions, specialists from different fields of human knowledge will increasingly participate, first and foremost representatives of the technical sciences.”

Half a century after M. Lazarov wrote these words, Dr. Dimitrov, taking into account the latest international trends in underwater archaeology, devotes particular attention in his monograph to the organization of underwater archaeological investigations. Appropriate procedures for the Black Sea environment are proposed, relating to preliminary marine geophysical surveys, documentation of underwater excavation, work organization, and excavation methodology. In this regard, the author emphasizes that modern bathymetric surveys are routinely conducted using echo sounders, most commonly multibeam systems, while other methods are also employed, including bathymetric LiDAR, photogrammetry, and sonar surveys. The principal method used to document archaeological excavations at the sites near the Ropotamo River and Sozopol, and subsequently in other underwater investigations conducted by the Center for Underwater Archaeology (CUA; since 2026, the Institute for Underwater Heritage), is underwater digital photogrammetry. The method was introduced with the assistance of the international MAP Black Sea team (Black Sea Maritime Archaeological Project) in 2017 and was dynamically adapted in subsequent years to the various CUA projects in accordance with the specific characteristics of the sites.

The method consists of two principal stages: underwater image acquisition and processing using specialized software to produce a photogrammetric model. According to K. Dimitrov, this method is suitable for the detailed documentation of individual projects covering an area of up to 100 sq. m. For the comprehensive documentation of larger sites, such as shipwrecks, buildings, and fortification structures, individual sector-based surveys must be assembled using appropriately positioned markers. It should be noted that this approach is already being applied in underwater investigations near Nessebar.

In underwater excavations, when recording archaeological contexts, instead of the conventional elevation measurements used in terrestrial excavations, the depth of the respective structure or the level reached in relation to the contemporary sea surface is measured. In the methodology presented, K. Dimitrov notes that depth in the marine environment can be measured in four ways: with a diving computer/depth gauge; with a float

and measuring tape; by determining the elevation of a point using a GNSS receiver; or with an echo sounder. The latter method is suitable for measuring large areas and depths and is not directly applicable to the measurement of archaeological excavations. In essence, this methodology is well established, but the author of the monograph benefits from having access to the diverse and modern equipment of the Institute for Underwater Heritage in Sozopol.

With regard to the marking and preservation of profiles in underwater excavation squares, the use of a special metal structure is described. The principal tool employed for underwater excavation is the so-called water dredge or water jet dredge—a device for removing bottom sediments by means of water pumped under pressure from the surface. This section of the book clearly demonstrates the author's personal experience, as well as Bulgarian innovations resulting from many years of accumulated practical experience in diving operations.

Chapters Three, Four, and Five are devoted to the archaeological investigations of the prehistoric settlement and historical harbour off the mouth of the Ropotamo River. First and foremost, I would again like to emphasize the high scholarly integrity demonstrated by the author in his use of archival information from previous researchers, most of whom are no longer living. In assessing and building upon the results of Prof. Ivan Karayotov's investigations, for example, as well as in reconstructing the plans and spatial information from the earlier excavations, Kalin Dimitrov establishes a sound basis for the development of his own interpretations and arguments.

The renewed investigations in the area of the Ropotamo River mouth were carried out over four seasons between 2017 and 2020. According to Dimitrov, it may be considered that one completed stage of research was achieved. This conclusion causes me some degree of perplexity, given the possibilities for further archaeological investigation of other areas off the mouth of the river. The focus of the excavations at the Ropotamo site during the specified period was the investigation of the Early Bronze Age settlement. A separate chapter is devoted to this subject, interpreting the principal results of the research. Following the discussion of typically prehistoric issues in this section of the book, the development of the settlement's harbour area—Chersonesus/Tera/Oriospotamo/St. Dimitar—is also presented. The earliest harbour-related materials date to the Late Archaic period, while the most recent are modern and from the nineteenth century.

According to K. Dimitrov, the finds from the Ottoman period and those from Late Antiquity, which are the most numerous, evidence that the southern part of the western Black Sea coast was an important component of flourishing regional and supra-regional trade networks that developed most vigorously in the hinterlands of the imperial capitals Istanbul and Constantinople. The finds from the Late Archaic period should probably be directly associated with Apollonia Pontica. In this context, Prof. Karayotov's hypothesis is recalled, according to which the Ropotamo River formed part of the *chora* of the colony during its early period, while the bay was part of Apollonia's network of harbours.

It is also appropriate here to mention the possibility of a pier or breakwater—an artificial structure—having existed underwater in the northern part of Ropotamo Bay. I draw attention to this aspect of the research because such structures are exceptionally rare in terms of their preservation in the Black Sea and are particularly problematic in terms of interpretation.

The hypothesis was proposed by K. Dimitrov and K. Velkovski on the basis of observations of the seabed as well as an analysis of historical photographs of the area. An archival aerial photograph of the river waters dating from 1918, taken by German aviators, as well as contemporary satellite imagery, shows that the eroding Cape Skombolito at the mouth of the river is surrounded to the southwest and southeast by a linear and arcuate escarpment with a total length of approximately 300 m.

According to K. Dimitrov, underwater surveys show that this escarpment consists of large, angular stones of the type commonly referred to as “quarried stone” in terrestrial archaeological excavations. The structure of large stones forms the foundation and shapes a shallow area located south of the scattered rocks of Cape Skombolito. The hypothesis concerning the artificial nature of this structure is indirectly supported by its position south of the cape, which contributes to the formation of the better-protected part of the bay.

At present, confirmation or rejection of the hypothesis concerning an artificial harbour-breakwater structure in the bay off the mouth of the Ropotamo River remains a matter for further research.

A substantial part of the book (Chapters Six through Ten) is devoted to archaeological excavations in the waters of the old city near the island of St. Kirik and St. Julita. Beyond the chronological and thematic perspective concerning the prehistoric settlement near Sozopol, K.

Dimitrov incorporates into the monograph detailed observations and notes on the development of the historical harbour of Apollonia and Sozopol, including its location and zoning.

The subject of the harbour of Apollonia/Sozopol has been discussed repeatedly in the scholarly literature. In fact, the ancient city did not have a single harbour but rather a system of harbours serving both the city and the extensive hinterland extending between the Atiya Peninsula to the north and Maslen Cape to the south. There is no doubt that the principal harbour area was situated between the island of St. Kirik and St. Julita and the Skamni Peninsula. It was precisely here that Kalin Dimitrov's team conducted meticulous stratigraphic investigations of the different historical layers underwater, reaching traces of the prehistoric settlement. Although the principal scholarly interests of the investigator lie in the field of prehistory, the data provided by hundreds of predominantly fragmented ceramic objects associated with harbour accumulation dating from the late seventh century BC to the present day have not been disregarded.

During the archaeological excavations in the western and northern parts of the Sozopol harbour, harbour-related materials from different historical periods were discovered in varying states of preservation, at different depths, and in different quantities in excavation squares T, R, Q, U, W, V, and Q1. The field information recorded on the seabed in the investigated squares of the extensive grid system allows an analysis of the intensity of use of the harbour waters during different historical periods. The use of combined data from underwater work, geophysical surveys, and the analysis of cartographic and archival photographic material enabled K. Dimitrov to reconstruct the ancient and medieval harbour zone, identifying its entrance from the north, navigational hazards (a narrow passage at the entrance and shallows at the southern end of the island), and potential locations for anchorage or for hauling smaller vessels onto the sandy shoreline. A comparative analysis of the quantity, type, and character of the finds from excavation squares Z, O, Q1, W, and U, on the one hand, and those from square Y, on the other, led to the formulation of the hypothesis that two functional zones existed within the historical harbour: one serving vessels in the southern part near the sandy shore of the isthmus, and a principal commercial harbour zone in the northern part between the island of St. Kirik and St. Julita and the Skamni Peninsula.

For both sites—the one at the mouth of the Ropotamo River and the harbour near the old city of Sozopol—one exceptionally interesting chapter is devoted to the processes of dynamic

human adaptation to a changing environment. This approach corresponds to ideas long established in a number of ecological studies, originating with Claude Lévi-Strauss, Julian Steward, and Marshall Sahlins, who understood culture as a form of human adaptation. What should be emphasized here is the original contribution of K. Dimitrov's research to the reconstruction of the surrounding marine cultural landscape of the settlements and harbours.

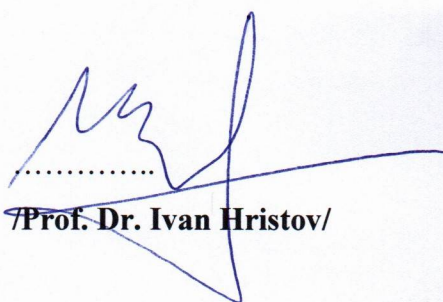
The concluding part of the monograph is entitled "Notes." It is entirely justified to point out that the investigation of the two sites (Ropotamo and Sozopol) provides evidence for the existence of historical harbours and prehistoric settlements, while their comparison allows us to identify, alongside numerous similarities, substantial differences between them.

A careful examination of the extensive appendices to the monograph confirms this. Here, the author suggests that before the investigated waters can be fully explored and the Chalcolithic layer completely exhausted, it would be premature to claim that the research process has reached its final stage. Indeed, I see here the potential for a second volume in his series *Underwater Archaeological Investigations. Prehistoric Settlements and Historical Harbours*.

In conclusion, I would like to state that the procedural requirements of the Development of Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria Act and the Regulations for its implementation at NAIM-BAS have been duly complied with. The candidate also meets all additional requirements stipulated in the Institute's Regulations for occupying the academic position for which Dr. Dimitrov is applying.

This gives me grounds to recommend that the Scientific Jury vote positively on the candidacy of Chief Assistant Professor Dr. Kalin Dimitrov and propose to the competent body of NAIM-BAS that he be elected **Associate Professor** in Professional Field 2.2. History and Archaeology.

Sofia, 10 September 2026



/Prof. Dr. Ivan Hristov/