

OPINION

by Prof. Dr. Lyudmil Vagalinski (NAIM-BAS) regarding the candidacy of Chief Assistant Professor Dr. Kalin Lyubenov Dimitrov (NAIM-BAS) in the announced competition for the academic position of "Associate Professor" in professional field 2.2 "History and Archaeology," specialization "Prehistory," for the needs of the Prehistory Dept. (NAIM-BAS), announced in the *State Gazette*, Issue 62 of July 7, 2026.

This opinion has been prepared in accordance with the requirements of the Act on the Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria (ADASRB) and the Regulations for its implementation.

The candidate obtained the educational and scientific degree of "Doctor" (PhD) in the same specialization in 2007.

The candidate has held the academic position of "Chief Assistant Professor" in the Prehistory Dept. of NAIM-BAS since 2010.

Dr. Kalin Dimitrov is participating in the competition with one habilitation monograph and 27 scientific publications (articles, studies, and chapters in collective volumes).

The book presents two prehistoric sites currently located on the seabed of the Black Sea – one off the mouth of the Ropotamo River and the other within the modern-day harbor of Sozopol. The detailed structure of the exposition suggests the study is comprehensive. A brief introduction justifies the choice of the two sites and prepares the reader for what to expect – namely, a well-substantiated chronology, which constitutes the primary contribution of any scientific publication reporting the results of archaeological fieldwork. The development of underwater archaeology in Bulgaria is outlined in Chapter 1. The research goal is formulated in rather general terms: "...to present the underwater archaeological investigations conducted between 2017 and 2024 at two sites: Ropotamo and Sozopol" (p. 11, paragraph 1). Tracing the development of the two settlements¹ would have been a more clearly stated goal, aligning better with the introduction and the manuscript's structure/content. The third and fifth research objectives (pp. 11-12) essentially mirror the research goal itself. A useful critical historiographical analysis presents the development of underwater prehistoric archaeology in Europe (briefly) and in Bulgaria (in detail) (pp. 12-28, sections 1.3.1-1.4.3). I would characterize Chapter 2 – titled "Methodology and Organization of Underwater Investigations by the Centre for Underwater Archaeology since 2017" (pp. 29-41) – as a handbook on underwater archaeology. The prehistoric settlement at the mouth of the Ropotamo River is analyzed in detail in Chapters 3 and 4. Well-substantiated conclusions regarding the Bronze Age paleoenvironment at the site and the site's chronology are presented in sections 4.3 and 4.4.

¹ The underwater site in Sozopol is a harbor deposit associated with an adjacent settlement.

A comprehensive final characterization of the site – and, above all, of the human-nature interaction – is presented concisely yet informatively in section 5 (pp. 109-110). Five chapters (6-10) are dedicated to underwater archaeological research in Sozopol. Similar to the section on the Ropotamo River site, the results of (primarily) underwater archaeological expeditions in Sozopol are discussed in detail and in chronological order. Kalin Dimitrov successfully synthesizes scattered – and often poorly documented – field results. His characteristic healthy scientific skepticism enables him to present a reasoned challenge to, for instance, the hypothesis regarding a prehistoric settlement located outside the current harbor area at a depth of approximately 13 meters below sea level (p. 124). The candidate demonstrates that the material in question consists of cultural layers dumped into the sea after being excavated during harbor dredging operations (p. 124). This constitutes a classic example of "inverted stratigraphy" caused by human activity. Georeferencing a 1926 plan of the Sozopol harbor allows for the creation of a historical bathymetric model (p. 142). This model provides a reliable basis for reconstructing the paleoenvironment and exemplifies a commendable priority of the manuscript: the application of modern technologies to legacy archival documentation². An in-depth analysis of information (both scientific and otherwise) regarding the Sozopol harbor accumulated over the past century evolves into "predictive archaeology," outlining six zones for future systematic research (pp. 147-149). The "unraveling" of the stratigraphy in square X at the Sozopol harbor site – that is, correlating the pottery with specific layers and chronology – represents another contribution by the author (pp. 153-158, 160-182) to the analysis of field results (specifically those from 2020-2024). The human-environment interaction at the Sozopol site during the period spanning the Late Chalcolithic to the Middle Bronze Age³ is recounted in a concise and engaging manner in chapter 10 (pp. 206-215). The book's conclusion – modestly titled "Concluding Remarks" (pp. 216-218) – does not merely reiterate previous illations but elevates the understanding of both sites through a comparative analysis. A clear distinction emerges regarding the superiority of the Sozopol site over the Ropotamo site in terms of both the representativeness of the finds and the continuity of settlement. This conclusion applies both to the prehistoric era (specifically, the Late Chalcolithic through the Middle Bronze Age) and to the period extending from the Archaic age to the present day. The primary advantage of the Sozopol settlement was its naturally protected marine bay (or lagoon), featuring freshwater springs and close proximity to the ore deposits of the Meden Rid ridge. The horizontal stratigraphy of the Sozopol site is summarized convincingly. Further contributions by the author include the identification of a Middle Bronze Age presence in Sozopol and the interpretation of the Early Bronze Age cultural layer at the Ropotamo site as a "beach settlement" as well as the discovery of an Early Neolithic evidences at the latter. The author's analysis is aptly illustrated with a variety of images interspersed throughout the text: photographs (archival and contemporary, primarily underwater and satellite); predictive digital

² See, for example, p. 143.

³ The Bronze Age has three periods, not three ages!

models; medieval engravings; tables; stratigraphic sections; 14C dating results; photogrammetric surveys featuring axonometric terrain and elevation models; diagrams; drawings; sketches; topographic surveys; orthophoto views; and bathymetric surveys. The majority of these were produced by the author himself or with his direct involvement. The bibliography reinforces the impression – gleaned from the main text – of the candidate's strong scientific focus; he avoids the temptation to include engaging yet irrelevant digressions, such as general accounts of global underwater archaeology. Kalin Dimitrov's scientific approach is distinctly interdisciplinary. His personal involvement in the underwater investigations of both sites enables a comprehensive critical analysis of the fieldwork results. The candidate's integrity leaves a positive impression, as he consistently acknowledges the scholarly contributions of colleagues working in the field. Kalin Dimitrov's writing is grammatically correct and readable, avoiding overly burdensome terminology or tedious descriptions. The narrative follows a clear internal logic, and the style is concise and succinct, yet substantive and informative. The second part of the book ("Appendices") contains high-quality illustrations spanning 187 A4 pages. These numerous figures support the author's conclusions. Kalin Dimitrov's habilitation manuscript is the first Bulgarian scholarly book on underwater archaeology. It merits an excellent assessment.

Of the 27 articles, studies, and chapters from so-called "collective monographs" presented, two have been published in journals with an impact factor. Almost all are in foreign languages (primarily English), ensuring wider accessibility. The candidate remains committed to the research interests he developed as a student: prehistoric metallurgy and underwater archaeology. More than half of these publications are co-authored, reinforcing the positive impression formed by the book regarding Kalin Dimitrov as a collaborative researcher who consistently employs an interdisciplinary approach and modern remote-sensing methods.

The candidate lists 20 citations of his work. He has participated in five scientific forums, including one international event, and has served as a co-editor of two scholarly volumes.

The summary table and supporting evidence provided by the candidate demonstrate that he meets the minimum national requirements for the academic position of Associate Professor.

I found no evidence of plagiarism in his scholarly works.

In conclusion, I support the candidacy of Chief Assistant Professor Dr. Kalin Lyubenov Dimitrov for the academic position of Associate Professor at NAIM-BAS.

X

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