

## OPINION

by Assoc. Prof. **Iskra Gencheva Mandova**, PhD,  
Department of Classical and Oriental Languages and Cultures,  
Faculty of Modern Languages,  
*St Cyril and St Methodius* University of Veliko Tarnovo,  
Member of the scholarly panel (Order of the Rector of SU № RD-38-85 /  
18.02.2025)

concerning the materials in the selection procedure for the academic position of Associate Professor in *Persian literature and culture*, Sofia University, in the field of higher education 2. Humanities, professional area 2.1. Philology, announced in State Gazette, issue 5/ 17.01.2025

In the selection procedure for obtaining the academic position of “Associate Professor”, announced in the State Gazette, issue 5/ 17.01.2025 for the needs of the Department of Classical East at the Faculty of Classical and Modern Philology, the only applicant is Dr. **Sirma Veselinova Kostadinova**.

### 1. INFORMATION ABOUT THE PROCEDURE

This opinion is written on the basis of a decision of the Faculty Council of the Faculty of Classical and Modern Philology for election of members of the scholarly panel, Proceedings № 6/ 11.02.2025 and appointed by Order No. PД-38-85/ 18.02.2025 of the Rector of Sofia University. This opinion was assigned by a decision of the Scholarly Panel – Proceedings № 1 dated March 21, 2025.

The selection procedure for the academic position of Associate Professor in professional field 2.1. Philology (Persian literature and culture) was announced by Sofia University “St. Kliment Ohridski” in SG issue 5 /17.01.2025 for the needs of the Department of Classical East at the Faculty of Classical and Modern Philology. The only applicant in this procedure is Dr. Sirma Kostadinova, chief assistant professor at the same department.

The set of materials provided to me by Dr. Kostadinova fully meets all the requirements of the Law on the Development of Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria and the Regulations for the Conditions and Procedure for Acquiring Academic Degrees and Holding Academic Positions at Sofia University “St. Kliment Ohridski” in higher educational field 2. Humanities, professional area 2.1. Philology for holding the academic position of “Associate Professor”.

The set of materials submitted by the candidate is precise and informative, and includes all the necessary documents for the procedure. I have not found any violations of the application procedure.

After thoroughly reviewing the applicants's habilitation thesis and publications, I declare that I have not found any instances of plagiarism according to art. 4, para. 11 of the Law on the Development of Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria, and that I, as a member of the scholarly panel, have not received any such reports.

## **2. INFORMATION ABOUT THE APPLICANT**

Dr. Sirma Kostadinova obtained her PhD degree in the field 2.1. Philology („Persian literary studies”) after defending her dissertation on the topic: “Mythological Images in the “Shāh-nameh” of Abulghasem Ferdowsi”.

She has completed master's programs in Indian and Iranian Cultural Studies and Social Studies at Sofia University “St. Kliment Ohridski” and Art and Social Work at New Bulgarian University. She has been appointed as project member and project leader, worked as a translator and administrative assistant at the Embassy of the Islamic Republic of Iran – Sofia. Dr. Kostadinova is proficient in Persian, English and French.

The candidate has participated in nearly 40 scientific forums and conferences with reports in the fields of Persian literary studies, cognitive linguistics, and intercultural communication.

### **3. DESCRIPTION OF THE SCHOLARLY WORKS**

Dr. Kostadinova participates in the current selection procedure with a total of 15 publications, including two monographs (a published book based on his doctoral thesis and a habilitation work) and 13 papers, published in scholarly journals and collections of papers. Sirma Kostadinova's research work fully correspond to the profile and field of the announced competition.

The attached list of publications of Dr. Kostadinova shows that she develops active scholarly research and expert activity. From a linguistic point of view the presented scientific works are of high level. There is no evidence of unlawful use of other people's research data.

### **4. SCHOLARLY CONTRIBUTIONS**

The candidate's scientific output has numerous undeniable contributions to the field of Iranian studies, namely a broad-spectrum and comprehensive study of certain metaphorical units in the Persian language, their specificities and use in contemporary political discourse.

The habilitation work of Dr. Kostadinova, titled "*The Journey*" as *Reality and Metaphor in Persian Literature and Culture*, focuses on the representation of the journey as a reality in Persian literature, considered in close connection with the corresponding religious concepts and cultural context within which these narratives are formed. The first chapter traces the development of the journey motif in key written resources from the pre-Islamic period of Persia, as well as in selected Middle Persian texts. Special attention is

given to the Zoroastrian concept of the Otherworld, along with a description of the rituals that prepare and legitimize the earthly envoy's entry into the afterlife.

The second main research line in the monograph examines metaphor as a cognitive mechanism through which extended meanings of the concept of “path” in the Persian language and the perception of life as a journey are formed. How the semantic field expands through associations derived from life experience and ethical and religious principles is analysed, the dichotomy of the “good path – bad path” in Zoroastrianism is presented. In the third chapter, the metaphor *LIFE IS A JOURNEY* is examined, as for the first time in cognitive linguistics and in global Iranian studies, the *rubaiyats* of Omar Khayyam serve as the object of a consistent and comprehensive study of the comprehension of “life” and “death” as a journey, specific to the Persian language and cultural environment, and of their articulation in the language of poetry.

The other research works of Dr. Kostadinova have significant contributions in two main areas. The first area of contribution, which includes publications numbered 5, 6, 7, 9, 10, 11, and 12, examines previously unexplored metaphorical linguistic expressions in the field of cognitive linguistics. These expressions are widely used in contemporary Persian – in literary, conversational, journalistic speech styles, as well as in media and political discourse.

The second main direction is in the field of intercultural interaction and comparative linguistic studies. The papers, numbered 13 and 14 are of great interest for me. The paper *The Word Chāy in the Persian Literature of the Qajar Period* traces the use of the Chinese lexical loanword *chāy* in a period of widespread adoption of tea drinking, which subsequently became an integral part of the contemporary daily life and traditional customs of the Iranian people. The study examines how literature reflects the introduction and growing popularity of tea in society. How globalization and the widespread dissemination of elements of Chinese culture and gastronomy in Iran have

provided a basis for the emergence and adaptation of neologisms, which have found their way into social spheres and everyday life, are discussed in publication 14.

Sufficient scientific output that meets the minimum requirements and evidence of a strong aspiration for scientific research work has been shown by the applicant, while at the same time the research fields in which she expresses a lasting interest and systematically and thoroughly researches are clearly outlined.

The scientific output of the candidate in the selection procedure for associate professor has been cited at least 6 times.

## **5. TEACHING ACTIVITY**

From the candidate's CV it is evident that Senior Assistant Professor Dr. Sirma Kostadinova is an esteemed lecturer at Sofia University “St. Kliment Ohridski”, teaching the disciplines “Theoretical Persian Language”, “Persian Phraseology”, “Persian Language – Practical Course”, “Persian Civilization (Pre-Islamic and Islamic)”, “Traditions and National Holidays in Iran”, “Arts and Crafts of the East”, “Sources of Persian Culture”.

## **6. CONCLUSION**

Having reviewed the documents and scholarly work presented by the candidate for the selection procedure, I confidently declare that Dr. Sirma Veselinova Kostadinova meets all the formal and substantive requirements for holding the academic position of Associate professor, formulated in the Law on the Development of Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria and the Regulations for the Conditions and Procedure for Acquiring Academic Degrees and Holding Academic Positions at Sofia University “St. Kliment Ohridski”

After having analysed the significance and contributions of her scientific output, I definitely **give my positive evaluation** and confidently recommend that the esteemed Scholarly Panel should select Chief Assistant Professor Dr. **Sirma Kostadinova** for the academic position of “Associate Professor” at Sofia University “St. Kliment Ohridski” in the field of higher education 2. Humanities, professional area 2.1 Philology (Persian Literature and Culture).

May 16, 2025

Author of the opinion:

Veliko Tarnovo

(Assoc. Prof. Iskra Mandova, PhD)