

## REVIEW

By Professor Ivo Panov, PhD, Iranian Studies, Classical East Department, Faculty of Classical and Modern Philology, Sofia University “St. Kliment Ohridski”, member of the Scientific Jury (Rector’s order No. PД-38-85/18.02.2025)

for the competition for Associate Professor in the field of the 2. Humanities, scholarly area 2.1 Philology (Persian Literature and Culture), announced in the *State Gazette*, No. 5/17. 01. 2025.

### I. Competition data

The announced competition for an Associate Professor in the field of the 2. Humanities, scholarly area 2.1 Philology (Persian Literature and Culture), announced in the *State Gazette*, No. 5/17. 01. 2025, is for the needs of the Classical East Faculty of Classical and Modern Philology, Sofia University “St. Kliment Ohridski”. The only candidate for the announced competition is **Senior Assistant Professor Dr. Sirma Veselinova Kostadinova**.

The review was assigned by decision of the Scientific Jury – protocol No. 1 of 21.03.2025 on the basis of a decision of the Faculty Council of the Faculty of Classical and Modern Philology, protocol No. 6 of 11.02.2025 and following order No. PД-38-85/ 18.02.2025 of the Rector of Sofia University “St. Kliment Ohridski”.

### II. Data about the candidate

Sirma Kostadinova completed her secondary education in 2003 at the High School for Foreign Languages “Nikola Y. Vaptsarov”, Shumen – majoring in English, French and Economics. In the period 2004 – 2011, she completed the Bachelor’s program in Iranian Studies at the Faculty of Classical and Modern Philology (FCMP) of Sofia University “St. Kliment Ohridski” and the Master’s program in Indian and Iranian Cultural and Social Studies at the Classical East Department, FCMP of Sofia University. In 2010, she graduated also with a Master’s degree in Art and Social Work at New Bulgarian University.

In 2018, she defended her doctoral dissertation in 2.1. Philology (Persian Literary Studies) on the topic: “Mythological Images in *Shahnameh* of Abulghasem Ferdowsi”. She has specializations in Persian language at the University of Tehran, I.R. Iran – Certificate for International Course in Persian Language and Literature, 2008 and at Allameh Tabatabaei University, Tehran, I.R. Iran – Certificate for Iranian Studies Course, 2015.

Dr. Kostadinova is a long-time lecturer in the courses and programs of the Iranian Studies at Sofia University “St. Kliment Ohridski”. In the period 2012 – 2017 she was a part-time lecturer in the Iranian Studies Bachelor’s program at the Classical East Department of FCMP. In 2017, she was appointed as an Assistant Professor of Persian Linguistics, and in 2019, she was reappointed as a Senior Assistant Professor of Persian Language and Culture in the same department and faculty.

### **III. Description of scholarly works**

Senior Assistant Professor Dr. Kostadinova participates in the competition with the following scholarly works:

1. Two books:

“‘Journey’ as Reality and Metaphor in Persian Literature and Culture”. Sofia: Avangard Prima Publishing House, 2025. Habilitation thesis – monograph.

and

“The Persian “Book of Kings” – from Myth to Epic”. Sofia: Avangard Prima Publishing House, 2024. Published on the basis of a defended dissertation for the educational and scientific degree of “Doctor”.

2. Articles (13 issues), published in non-refereed journals with scientific review and in edited collective volumes.

Dr. Kostadinova’s publications are in the field of Iranian studies and touch on various aspects of this field of knowledge: mythology, epic, linguistics, literary studies, cognitive linguistics and conceptual metaphor theory, comparative linguistics, rhetoric, journalism, art, cultural studies, religious studies, social studies, intercultural communication... Or with her publications, Dr. Sirma Kostadinova convincingly covers a huge range of topics, the

familiarity with which demonstrates that she feels extremely comfortable in the vast ocean of Persian spirituality.

The topics that the Bulgarian scholar focuses on are extremely relevant both for Studies of the East in Bulgaria and for world Oriental studies, because they have not been developed in such depth and on such a large scale in world science. In this sense, Dr. Kostadinova's publications have a contributing character in literary studies, linguistics and cultural studies in general.

#### **IV. Contributions**

Sirma Kostadinova participates in the competition with a collective work (No. 6), in which the author's personal style clearly stands out. The piece, written by Dr. Kostadinova, fits harmoniously into the overall tone of the study, but is also characterized by the personal presence of its author, thematic innovation and her characteristic writing style.

The two books and thirteen articles are distinguished by their originality and their contribution to Iranian studies in our country and abroad.

The monographic work "‘Journey’ Reality and Metaphor in Persian Literature and Culture" is an innovative study with a contribution to world Iranian studies and even world Oriental studies, which undoubtedly raises the authority of Bulgarian Iranian studies on an international scale. The object of our scholar's attention is the conceptual sphere of "journey" in the Persian linguistic communication system. Both Zoroastrian texts and voluminous excerpts from Persian classical literature have been processed. The author's parallel between "thought", "language" and "social environment", in which the different meanings of the concept of "journey" are used, makes a strong impression.

In the part of the monograph dedicated to the poetic legacy of the Persian encyclopedist Omar Khayyam, a bold step is once again taken with an undeniable asset in a hitherto unexplored space, namely the "dissection" of Khayyam's rubais through the methods of cognitive linguistics. Particular attention is paid to the themes of "life" and "death" and their projection in the literary work of the Persian classical poet.

In the work “The Persian “Book of Kings” – from Myth to Epic”, as well as in two other independent articles, the path of transformation of themes and images from mythology to epic is examined, a typical example of which is the grandiose epic canvas “Shah-nameh” by Ferdowsi. And in this work, Sirma Kostadinova breaks new ground in the field of world Iranian studies, because no one before her has ventured to explore with such scrupulousness the issue of the transition of mythological themes and characters in the epic narrative.

With articles No. 2 and No. 3, the candidate directs her scientific interest to the path of transformation of myth to epic – a study that finds its logical continuation in the monograph “The Persian “Book of Kings” – from myth to epic”. In two other articles (No. 5 and No. 6) the Bulgarian researcher pays special attention to the use of the word دل (“del” – “heart”). In them, Kostadinova begins her research from the works of Persian classical literature and reaches modern vocabulary, including the speech of the political and religious Iranian elite of our time. Two of Dr. Kostadinova’s articles (No. 13 and No. 14) examine the presence of common vocabulary in the Persian and Chinese languages, which is a new interesting touch in Iranian studies in our country.

The series of articles (No. 7, No. 8, No. 9, No. 10, No. 11, No. 12) examining the various nuances of metaphorical expressions leaves a strong impression. In them, the author explores the metaphorical use of words such as “heart”, “hand”, “leg”, “eye”, “back” in the formation of verbal phraseologisms in the Persian language. No similar study has been conducted in world oriental studies so far, making its contribution undeniable.

Overall, the works of Dr. Sirma Kostadinova are original, distinguished by their depth, strict order, logical consistency and, last but not least, the author’s expression, which is free from terminological burden, is readable, fascinating, and therefore convincing. These contributions hold both theoretical and empirical, as well as methodological and applied significance.

Sirma Kostadinova has a total of 6 citations – four in monographs and collective volumes with scientific review, and two in non-refereed journals with scientific review. She is a highly regarded member of our academic community, whose presence consistently inspires respect and esteem.

## **V. Teaching activity**

I have known Dr. Kostadinova since 2004, when she enrolled as a student in the Iranian Studies Bachelor's program. She has consistently presented herself as an active, excellent student, as a serious young lecturer and pedagogue, as a profound scholar, as one devoted to the cause of developing Bulgarian Iranian Studies and establishing its authority internationally.

Dr. Kostadinova leads classes in the Iranian Studies Bachelor's program and in the Indian and Iranian Cultural and Social Studies Master's program in the following mandatory disciplines: "Persian Civilization (Pre-Islamic and Islamic)", "Persian Language", "Theoretical Persian Language – Phonetics", "Theoretical Persian Language – Lexicology", "Theoretical Persian Language – Morphology", "Theoretical Persian Language – Syntax", "Persian Phraseology" and "Theory of Translation". She also teaches elective courses, including "Arts and Crafts of the East", "Traditions and Festivals in Persia and Iran", "Monuments of Persian Culture", and "National Epic of the Iranian Peoples". These courses are available through the e-learning system of Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski".

The candidate has developed curricula in the disciplines: "Introduction to Cognitive Linguistics" (co-authored with Dr. Mohsen Bakhtiar) and "Business and Private Correspondence".

Dr. Kostadinova works with students, doctoral students and lecturers in research and artistic projects: organizing an annual celebration of the festivals Nowruz, Yalda and Sizdah-be-Dar in the Iranian Studies; leads students and doctoral students in the organizational activities for the International Scientific Conference "30 Years of Bulgarian Iranian Studies" and the retrospective exhibition dedicated to the 30th anniversary of the founding of the Iranian Studies at Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski"; has joint scientific research with doctoral student Yana Hristova (Iranian Studies), with Dr. Nihal Özergan (Turkology), and with Senior Asst. Prof. Dr. Nikolay Yankov (Indology).

Sirma Kostadinova is highly respected and admired by both her colleagues and students. Since 2020, she has led the Iranian Studies Bachelor's program with unquestioned authority and has overseen the Indian and Iranian Cultural and Social Studies Master's program since 2023.

## **VI. Project, organizational and social activity**

Sirma Kostadinova participated as a member of the scientific team of the project: “30 Years of Iranian Studies in Bulgaria”, accompanied by an international scientific conference. She is the author of the retrospective exhibition dedicated to the 30th anniversary of the founding of the Iranian Studies at Sofia University “St. Kliment Ohridski”, as well as the International Exhibition “Clouds are Absolutely Free” at the Intro Gallery, Sofia, 2024. She is a co-organizer of the exhibition in our country with works by Iranian artists Farshid Davoodi and Sudabeh Chalashtari.

She is a member of the “Society of Friends of the Persian Language and Culture in Bulgaria”.

Dr. Kostadinova is an organizer of celebrations of anniversaries of Persian classics, of holding celebrations on the occasion of Iranian traditional and national holidays, thereby actively promoting Iranian studies as an independent and important branch of Oriental studies in Bulgaria and around the world.

## **VII. Meeting the requirements for the position**

Sirma Kostadinova meets the national requirements under Art. 2 b of the Law on the Higher Education of the Republic of Bulgaria and complies with the Regulations on the conditions and procedure for acquiring scientific degrees and for occupying academic positions at Sofia University “St. Kliment Ohridski” for the scientific field 2. Humanities, professional field 2.1. Philology.

In indicator group A there are 50 points, in indicator group B – 100 points, in indicator group D – 200 points, in indicator group E – 50 points.

The documentation submitted by Sirma Kostadinova for participation in the competition is complete, accurate and correct.

The candidate's publications do not contain any traces of plagiarism under Art. 4, para. 11 of the Law on the Academic Staff Development.

## **VIII. Conclusion and recommendation**

In conclusion, and based on the above, I confidently I recommend that the esteemed Scientific Jury confer the academic title of “Associate Professor” in

the professional field 2.1. Philology (Persian Literature and Culture) upon  
Senior Assistant Professor Dr. Sirma Kostadinova.

Date: 21. 05. 2025

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