

STATEMENT

by Ivan Dimitrov Valchev, PhD, Associate Professor in Classical Archaeology, member of the Scientific Jury according to the order of the Rector of the University of Sofia St. Kliment Ohridski, No. ПД 38-122/ 27.02.2024,

concerning the defense of the dissertation of **Denis Danielov Borisov** for obtaining the educational and scientific degree “Doctor”, with the title: “Economic and cultural contacts of Northwestern Thrace with the Greek world (5th–1st c. BC)”, with supervisor: Assoc Prof. Dr Sc. Nartsis Torbov (University of Library Studies and Information Technologies)

The dissertation work of Denis Danielov Borisov addresses a topic that is a challenge even for an established scholar, namely the economic and cultural contacts of Northwestern Thrace with the Greek world in the second half of the 1st millennium BC. The paucity of available sources and the absence of clear archaeological contexts for a significant proportion of the artefacts present a challenge to the analysis and clarification of these contacts. Unfortunately, the topic of the dissertation was not corrected and specified in a timely manner, which is also the reason for some of the shortcomings of the work mentioned below. As an initial problem, it should be noted that the dissertation concentrated entirely on published materials, without searching for unpublished artifacts in the museums, at least in Northwestern Bulgaria.

The dissertation is structured into the following sections: an introduction, five chapters, a summary, a catalogue, a bibliography, and appendices including plates, maps, and tables. The total number of pages is 426. The aims and tasks of the research are motivated in the Introduction, the chronological and territorial scope of the work is justified. While the chronological framework is unambiguous, the territorial boundaries remain unclear. It is not entirely clear whether Northwestern Thrace encompasses only the territory inhabited by the *tribaloi* tribe. It is stated that the boundaries formulated by N. Theodosiev were adopted (Theodossiev 2000, 72–73), but in fact this is not the case (pp. 8–9). On page 9, it is stated that the borders of Northwestern Thrace were changed. However, the reasons for this change and the nature of the altered borders are not elucidated.

In the Introduction, the exclusion of coin finds from the analysis is also motivated. This is justified by “the circumstances in which they were found – accidental finds, as well as the lack of a certain context” (p. 6). However, this also applies to quite a few of the ceramic and metal artifacts included in the text. In the so-called summary, the opinions of I. Belitov on the penetration of coins and his assertion of a “new model of economy, which is connected with monetary circulation” are presented (pp. 179–180). It is regrettable that in both instances, the author does not offer any commentary. Furthermore, the notion of a developed money market is at odds with some of Denis Borisov’s conclusions.

In the initial chapter of the dissertation, a historiographical review is presented, and subsequent chapters (2–5) are devoted to different categories of artifacts: ceramics, metal vessels, jewelry, and weapons. The presentation of the artefacts discovered in Northwestern Thrace is accompanied by numerous parallels from a wide chronological and territorial range. The presentation in this section gives the impression of some incoherence, and the style is characterized by numerous repetitions. On occasion, it appears that the author has not sufficiently engaged with the literature he has consulted. A few illustrative examples will be provided below. The settlement of Beos mentioned in inscriptions on *phialai* is identified by a number of authors with the road station of Beodizos. Leaving aside the question of whether this is so, Denis Borisov contrasts the statements of the various authors: “J. Haydn offers another interpretation. . .”, “G. Mihailov suggests. . .” (p. 76). And in fact, the authors are of the same opinion! D. Borisov notes that two distinct localizations have been proposed for Geiston. One is along the Lower Maritsa, while the other is along the lower course of the Hebros! (p. 77) (p. 77). A comparison is also made of the opinions of Venedikov and Gerasimov (1973) and of Venedikov (1977). However, it should be noted that the author of the relevant part in Thracian art is only Venedikov. Indeed, in his later article, he confirms an earlier opinion.

In his text, Denis Borisov mainly repeats previously expressed opinions, without always subjecting them to the necessary critical analysis. The conclusions lack a clearly expressed author’s opinion. The so-called summary merely reiterates the content of the preceding chapters, failing to build upon the insights and conclusions that have been established in them. Consequently, the dissertation remains without a definitive conclusion.

The dissertation comprises two catalogues: one of the archaeological complexes and one of the archaeological finds. The first catalogue, that of the archaeological complexes, is of great

importance. However, it is regrettable that it is not referenced or cited in the text, and the question remains as to why it exists at all. Furthermore, an analysis of the archaeological contexts and an attempt to take a deeper look at the complexes as such would contribute to the work. The artefact catalogue is of a high standard and well-illustrated.

The abstract accurately reflects the content of the dissertation. It should be noted that two of the five publications on the dissertation topic refer to Roman-era artifacts and are not directly related to the dissertation.

Denis Borisov is the author of three scientific publications that are directly related to the topic of the dissertation. Two of the aforementioned publications have already been published.

The dissertation submitted to me for a statement is author's work of Denis Borisov and I have not found any signs of plagiarism in the text.

My general opinion of Denis Borisov's work is that it meets, but unfortunately does not exceed, the minimum for a doctoral dissertation and the requirements of ZRASB. Considering this, although not without some hesitation, I vote "For" the awarding of the educational and scientific degree "doctor" to the full-time PhD student **Denis Danielov Borisov**.

Sofia,
27. 05. 2024



Assoc. Prof. Dr. Ivan Valchev