

## OPINION

by **Assoc. Prof. Dr. Veneta Handzhiyska-Yankulova**,

of the dissertation work for awarding the educational and scientific degree doctor in  
professional field 2.2 History and Archaeology of

**Denis Danielov Borisov**, full-time doctoral student at the Department of Archaeology,  
Faculty of History - Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski"

on the topic: *"Economic and cultural contacts of Northwest Thrace with the Greek world  
(V–I centuries BC)"*, with supervisor: Assoc. Prof. Narcis Torbov (SULSIT)

The topic of economic and cultural contacts in antiquity has always aroused the interest of researchers, not losing its relevance due to the continuous accumulation of new data on the processes of interaction in the past. The doctoral dissertation submitted for defence has the laborious goal of investigating *"the economic and cultural contacts of Northwest Thrace with the Greek world during the classical and Hellenistic eras through the analysis of archaeological monuments from Northwest Thrace and written sources related to the history of this region and Thrace as a whole, relevant to the issue at hand"*. The difficulties are presupposed both by the extensive territorial scope of the study and by the broad chronological boundaries. Additionally, the scarce source data and the few studied archaeological contexts present Denis Borisov with a serious challenge.

The structure of the dissertation has a total volume of 427 pages and includes an Introduction, five chapters, a Summary (instead of a Conclusion), a Catalogue, references and appendices (maps and tables). The initial impression is of a well-structured and technically precise preparation of the work. In shaping the Table of Contents and annotating the individual paragraphs/parts of the chapters, a different approach has been taken, which in some places makes it difficult for the reader.

In the Introduction, the doctoral student traditionally states his main research goals and objectives, omitting to note what motivates him to work on this issue and where he sees potential in terms of his own contribution. Chronological and territorial frames and boundaries are stated, and the latter are not clearly defined. The Introduction also lists the archaeological materials under consideration – extremely diverse in type, function and context. The unifying factor in this case is their origin - products of Hellenic masters (or made in local studios under

Hellenic influence) and the presence of a publication. Although he requests to propose an "analysis of historical sources" (in fact, a very complex topic and perhaps suitable for a separate dissertation work), Denis Borisov limits himself to mentioning a few selected sources, in order to outline the historical development of the region in the second half of the 1st millennium BC, perhaps realising the vast amount of information to be analysed, he excludes coins which, although in most cases accidental finds, are essential source material as far as trade contacts are concerned and deserve at least partial consideration. On the other hand, the only find from the amphora group (Rhodian stamp seal) included in the catalogue has been used many times to make important conclusions about the intensity of trade exchange, about the routes of penetration, about the chronology.

The first chapter represents a kind of historiographic review of the research that is directly or indirectly related to the topic of the dissertation. In it, Denis Borisov meticulously and chronologically presents the researchers and the objects of their study. While positively evaluating the large volume of information that has been collected, I believe that a more concise presentation, with a clearer accentuation of the issues characteristic of individual periods, would be more appropriate. In this case, the circumstantial description of archaeological finds, which are presented in detail in the catalogue and in the main part of the study, is also an unnecessary repetition.

The following four chapters present the different groups of archaeological materials that form the basis of the study – ceramic and metal vessels, ornaments and dressings, defensive weaponry. In this case, they are again described in detail, and in order to determine their origin and dating, numerous analogies are cited. Denis Borisov's handling of the vast amount of information is commendable, but in a number of examples pointing out multiple parallels, sometimes in very distant contexts, is redundant and does not contribute to the goals of the analysis. Perhaps this is what makes it even more difficult for the doctoral student and does not allow him to clearly distinguish the focus in the concluding parts of each of the chapters.

The final part of the study is entitled "Summary", which really reflects what is presented in it. Here, Denis Borisov summarises the conclusions drawn in the main text, and again, in order to highlight his personal contribution, it is necessary to more categorically state his own opinion regarding the stated hypotheses.

In fact, the most valuable part of the study, which is also fundamental, is the Catalogue. It is distinguished by precision and comprehensiveness, is well illustrated and provides an opportunity to analyse the enormous volume of information. Perhaps there is much to be desired in terms of its structure, but in this case it is the author's right to decide that.

Denis Borisov meets the minimum requirements for the award of a doctoral degree. He has three scientific publications on the subject of his research. The abstract accurately reflects the content of the dissertation.

In conclusion, bearing in mind the positive qualities of Denis Borisov's dissertation work, I vote positively and recommend that the doctoral student be awarded the educational and scientific degree "Doctor".



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