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**Report on the thesis presented by Stanimir Jasminov Pärvanov
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Stanimir Jasminov Pärvanov's thesis, carried out under the supervision of Professor Petya Georgyeva and entitled *Керамиката от енеолитните селища в района на Варненските езера* (in English: *The Pottery from the Eneolithic Settlements from the Varna Lakes Region*) takes the form of a thick 373-page volume of text, to which three volumes of appendices are attached: the first (73 pages) deals with the classification of the pottery; the second (132 pages) is the catalogue, in the form of a detailed 23-column descriptive table, of the 2843 ceramics (complete or fragmentary) selected; finally the third (255 pages) contains the illustrations, in the form of 43 figures (maps and photographs) and 232 tables (drawings of the ceramics).

The general subject therefore concerns the study of ceramics from seven settlement sites located around Lake Varna, which were discovered between 1921 and 1976, two of which were the subject of rescue excavations. The documentation is therefore difficult, as none of these sites could be excavated precisely and documented, unlike other sites in the region. The candidate very carefully examined all the documentation relating to these sites, from which he provides a research history and a critical reading.

The candidate has thus collected 4110 vases, 2843 of which are carefully listed in the catalogue (appendix 2), while a further 1267 are ‘just processed’. A total of 2,617 vases were decorated, including 1,816 with painted decoration. All of this pottery is stored in the Varna Historical Museum, and the candidate warmly thanks Vladimir Slavtchev for his access to this material.

One of the major interests of this work is its technological study of the vessels. From the point of view of the clay used, the candidate can distinguish between mineral temper (fine sand, quartz, limestone inclusions and grog) and vegetable temper (chopped or broken chaff). The main technique used is the coil, but the use of plates is also attested as well as, more rarely, the use of conical moulds, which can be used to make both conical and biconical vessels. On the other hand, there is no evidence for the use of the wheel, as earlier suggested by Henrietta Todorova and Veselina Natcheva. Most of the vessels were fired in a reductive manner. More than twenty shades of colour can be identified. An engobe is frequently used, but it does not always cover the entire surface.

The typology of the vases is very detailed. It is based on 1,735 of the 1,926 with a rim. It comprises six hierarchical levels, based on 19 groups. Of these, bowls are the most numerous, and particularly dishes, which can be broken down into 17 types and 32 sub-types. The large table in Appendix 2 shows this in detail. On the other hand, some groups, such as fruitières, fumigators, askos and rattle, are much rarer, if not unique. Finally, there are the miniature vases.

Of the 2,617 decorated individuals, 1,816 are documented and divided into three main groups. The first group consists of incised decorations, which account for 90% of the decorations identified and can be divided into seven main techniques. The second group consists of plastic decorations, with the addition of plastic ribbons, buttons or barbotine. Finally, the third group consists of painted decorations, of which four main techniques can be identified, the most widespread of which is graphite painting (which, more generally, is very characteristic of painted Aeneolithic pottery in Bulgaria and northern Greece).

To sum up, then, this is a very detailed and elaborate descriptive work, which seems entirely convincing.

In the absence of stratigraphic documentation for these sites, the candidate has therefore rightly relied on the periodisation of the Varna culture into three main periods made possible by the Durankulak cemetery (published in detail) and the Durankulak (Goljam Ostrov) and Levski settlements, as yet unpublished but to which the candidate has had access. From this point of view, the five sites with the most artefacts can be considered as belonging to the first period. These are Arsenalna, Devnya, Ezerovo (the most reliable and representative site), Poveljanovo I and Strashimirovo. Although the ceramics from the Morflot and Poveljanovo

sites mainly belong to the latter period, it is not certain, given their small number, that these sites were not occupied earlier. The documentation does not allow us to know whether these occupations were continuous or whether they included periods of abandonment on certain sites. Similarly, it is difficult to know whether all the habitats were occupied at the same time. It is also difficult to know whether the chronology of the ceramics is synchronous with cultural evolution, or whether major historical changes occurred without being reflected in the typological evolution of the ceramics.

Based on geographical location, three groups can be distinguished: settlements around present-day Varna, to which only the habitat of Morflot belongs in the current state of knowledge; settlements around the western end of Lake Varna and at the mouth of the Provadia River, with the sites of Ezerovo, Arsenal and Strashimirovo; finally, settlements at the western end of Lake Beloslav and at the mouth of the Devna River, with the sites of Poveyanovo I, Poveyanovo II and Devnya. In each case, these settlements are sufficiently distant from each other (from one to three kilometers) to allow the existence of their own agricultural territory. Occupation seems to have ceased with the catastrophic rising waters of the lake. There are no notable typological differences between the different sites from the same period.

The period immediately preceding the Varna culture seems to be very present in the Morflot habitat and to be well preserved, but the layers are about nine meters from the present surface. From a typological point of view, it seems that the transition between period IV of the Hamangia culture and the Varna I period was gradual. The characteristic elements and basic ornamental motifs remain quite similar.

Typological comparisons, and also some imports, with neighboring regions, and in particular with the vast Kodzhadermen - Gumelnitsa - Karanovo VI culture, make it possible to associate the early phases of the Varna culture with period II of the KGK VI culture.

Generally speaking, the Morflot, Strashimirovo and Poveyanovo I sites appear to be partly preserved, not to mention the site that may lie beneath the current Hristo Botev factory. However, the first two are located in a marshy area that is not very suitable for exploration. The settlements at Arsenal I, Devnya and Poveyanovo II appear to have been completely destroyed. Only the Ezerovo site would be suitable for underwater excavation.

From this point of view, Stanimir Părvanov's thesis is also a very valuable documentary rescue operation, in difficult conditions and also in anticipation of new excavations, which seem very necessary, especially as some of the sites seem to be threatened by industrial and urban development. It sheds light on the occupation of the lakes of Varna at that time, and opens up new prospects for archaeological research in the region.

I therefore give a very favorable opinion to this thesis, which is very clearly written and well-illustrated and documented, and I hope that it will be published in some form or other.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'JP Demoule', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Prof. Dr. Jean-Paul Demoule