



REVIEW

by Associate Professor Dimitar Veselinov Dimitrov, Plovdiv University "Paisii Hilendarski",

Faculty of Philosophy and History,

of the dissertation for the acquisition of the educational and scientific degree

"Theodora Krasimirova Georgieva on the topic:

**"The economic development of the Bulgarian lands according to the Cyrillic monuments
in the 13th - 14th centuries".**

The present review is prepared in accordance with the order № 26 RD-10/14.07.2023 of the Director of the Cyril and Methodius Scientific Center at the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences and on the basis of the following submitted by the PhD student: dissertation; abstract; statement of contributions in the dissertation; publications on the topic of the dissertation.

I. Relevance of the topic developed in the dissertation

The dissertation presented by Teodora Georgieva fits into the large thematic field devoted to the economic history of medieval Bulgaria, which after decades of intense interest and extensive ideological treatment has been seriously neglected in recent years. This principle of the pendulum swinging between the overexposure and neglect of economic issues in the native mediaeval studies, on the one hand, bequeathed a large number of studies burdened more or less by the Marxist stamp, and on the other - due to a peculiar historiographical oversaturation delayed the emergence of a qualitatively new type of research on the economic development of the Bulgarian lands during the Middle Ages. In this sense, the present dissertation meets the current need for the development of modern studies of the medieval Bulgarian economy both thematically and conceptually, because it has as its object the economic development of the Bulgarian lands in the thirteenth - fourteenth centuries and because it applies a complex approach in revealing its natural-geographical and sectoral features. Teodora Georgieva's peer-reviewed dissertation is designed within the interdisciplinary methodological cross-section of history, philology, economics, geography and law and has found its contributory research niche by drawing on the underappreciated Cyrillic monuments in terms of the economic information they contain. On the basis of their thematically calibrated analysis, heterogeneous data have been extracted and illuminated

a number of aspects of the economy of medieval Bulgaria in the 13th - 14th centuries. At the same time, the doctoral student has successfully complemented the domestic source emphasis of her research by drawing on information from foreign primary sources, thus outlining the place of the Bulgarian economy in the global economic conjuncture in the 12th - 14th centuries.

II. Instrumenta studiorum - degree of knowledge of the source base and research in the thematic-chronological spectrum of the dissertation

In its essence the dissertation is a source study and its foundation are the Cyrillic monuments in their genre diversity. The doctoral candidate has managed to cover the domestic sources published in various editions and to subject them to textual-critical and structural-content analysis in order to extract the information available in them about the economic situation of the Bulgarian lands in the 13th - 14th centuries. In this way, the leading methodological angle of the dissertation has been provided with the necessary empirical material, which is a testimonial for the quality of the research and the generalizations it has reached. The good knowledge of the domestic sources is combined and supplemented with the use of both Cyrillic monuments from the offices of the Serbian and Vlach rulers, and the information contained in the Byzantine and Western European sources of the period under consideration, as well as archaeological and numismatic finds, which adds even greater factual density and merit to the study. In addition to the solid base of primary sources, the dissertation also draws on numerous studies on the economic history of medieval Bulgaria, showing an ability to systematize known scientific achievements, synthesize scientific theses, highlight and formulate unsolved problems, and form and present conceptual models. In theoretical terms, the dissertation is visibly influenced by the works of F. Brodel, which filled with a new methodological charge the studies in the sphere of economic and social history, as well as from the fundamental "Economic History of Byzantium", published under the general editorship of Ang. Laiu, which foreshadowed the macro perspectives for researchers of the economy of the medieval Balkan states gravitating towards the Pax Byzantina.

III. Structural-compositional framework and content characteristic of the dissertation

Structurally, the dissertation consists of an introduction, four chapters, a conclusion, a bibliography, appendices (glossary of economic terms used in Cyrillic monuments; images) and has a total length of 334 pp.

The introduction contains all the necessary elements revealing the conceptual design, the subject of the study, the methodological focus, the thematic scope, the time-space frame, the thesis objective, the main tasks, the methods used and last but not least, the contribution and significance of the dissertation. The main *aim of* the dissertation is the study of the various aspects of the economic development of the Bulgarian lands in the 13th - 14th centuries on the basis of the Cyrillic monuments, extracting, analysing and systematising the information contained therein on the legal and institutional frameworks, fiscal mechanisms, agrarian activity, craft production and trade. In this regard, quite naturally, the introduction lays special emphasis on the source base, proposing a generalized genre classification of the Cyrillic monuments, which according to their typological characteristics are divided into two major groups: legal and narrative texts. With a view to their in-depth textual-critical analysis and the collection and sifting of the necessary data, these two types are in turn divided into genre subgroups, clarifying their peculiarities and differentiating the information they carry about the economic development of the Bulgarian lands during the period under consideration. The knowledge and reference to the genre system with its explicit and implicit information resources proves very useful in the study of the individual microthematic nuclei on which the dissertation is structured. Undoubtedly, the application of this complex interdisciplinary approach to the Cyrillic sources is a key methodological lynchpin for the realization of the main goal of the dissertation. In order to achieve it, Ph. Theodora Georgieva has identified the following priority tasks:

- to outline the legal and institutional framework of the medieval Bulgarian economy;
- address the issue of ownership and fiscal p o l i c y ;
- to highlight natural conditions and demography as factors for the development of the economy
- to trace the sectoral structure of the medieval Bulgarian economy;
- to present the organization of the craft activity;
- to study the organization of trade activity in the Bulgarian lands;

- to compile a dictionary of the main economic terms used in the Cyrillic monuments in the period of the 13th - 14th centuries.

It is noteworthy that all of the above tasks are embedded in the composition of the statement as main structural-content components (chapters or paragraphs), which is indicative of how Doc. Theodora Georgieva has applied her research vision and how through it she has configured the meaning-logical cohesion of her dissertation.

The first chapter (pp. 18-83) of the study "Legal and Political Frameworks of the Bulgarian Economy (13th-14th Century)" aims to illustrate the role of the state and in particular of the ruling institution in the regulation of economic development. The main building blocks of this chapter are the ruler's charters, as well as the laws and canon law collections, which provide data on the institutions in operation, i.e. on the organs of central and provincial government, as well as on the legal regulation of agricultural production and commodity exchange, on types of property, on individual economic units, on immunity rights, tax obligations and state revenues. Structurally, the chapter is divided into three subchapters. The first of these, **The State as a Factor in Economic Development. A review of the sources**", reveals the key role in economic processes of the ruler autocrat, who ruled according to the Byzantine model, as their main regulator. The instruments through which control was exercised were the set legal and political frameworks and the functioning fiscal system. The second subchapter, **"Fiscal Administration and the Institutional Framework of the Bulgarian Economy"**, is devoted precisely to it. Doc. Theodora Georgieva discusses the influence of the Byzantine administrative-institutional model and its reception on Bulgarian soil and, making a comparison with the trends in Western Europe, rightly states that "feudalism, often attributed to the Roman and Bulgarian socio-economic structure, turns out to be an incorrect term" (p. 36). The problem of the fiscal system turns out to be of particular importance, since in an economy with a predominantly agrarian character, such as the medieval Bulgarian one, obligations to the fiscus were an important factor in its development. In the context of revenues and expenditures to the treasury, the question of the existence of a tax cadastre is also raised, as Doc. T. Georgieva logically maintains that there were tax registers and inventories maintained by the administration of the medieval Bulgarian state (p. 44). On the basis of the information from the Cyrillic documents a distinction is made between

the ruler's and the state treasury and the various fiscal officials active in the Bulgarian lands in the 13th - 14th centuries are presented, as well as the various taxes they were responsible for collecting. On this basis, it can be seen that the fiscal system covered all branches of the late medieval Bulgarian economy and ensured their revenue to the state treasury. Within the scope of the so-called legal-political framework of the economy also falls the subject of property, the types of property and the revenue derived from it, as well as the penalties provided by law for infringements and crimes against property. These issues are the subject of the third subchapter, **"Legal regulation of property: types of property and legal-economic status according to documents from the royal chancery (charters)."** It also comments on the implications of tax exemptions granted to individuals and legal entities. Doc. Theodora Georgieva also comments on the status of the "paritsi", which has been a long-standing subject of discussion in historiography. Although the status of the Parisians included dependence, this does not give grounds to define them as an enslaved population" (p. 65). Moreover, according to Doc. Georgieva, it would be a stretch to define their situation as harsh and disadvantageous, since their status provided them with greater security and reduced their tax burden (p. 66). Similar is the opinion of Doc. Theodora Georgieva's opinion with regard to the "serfs", who, although they had limited freedom and imposed dependencies, could also not, on the basis of a mechanical analogy with Western European feudal practices, be defined as an "enslaved population". The conclusions drawn regarding the status of the "pariahs" and "orot" is an excellent illustration of how critical and analytical work with domestic Cyrillic sources helps to reject the layered ideologies and artificial conceptual implants in the socio-economic stratum of medieval Bulgarian history. The same observations apply to the terminological apparatus concerning the political and economic elite of medieval Bulgarian society. In this subchapter attention is also paid to monasteries as economic units functioning with the powerful support of the central authority. Through the privileges they received, the monasteries acquired the rights of economic entities disposing of their property and played a significant role in the economic life of medieval Bulgaria. The final part of chapter one examines the negative consequences of the granting of immunity rights and privileges, among which the foremost

political decentralisation and its adverse impact on the economy.

The second chapter "**The agrarian economy of medieval Bulgaria according to the Cyrillic monuments**" is the most extensive in volume (84-166 pages), which is not accidental because it is devoted to the dominant economic sector in the medieval Bulgarian economy - the agrarian. This part of the study is predominantly based on narrative Cyrillic texts, which confronts the PhD student with the serious challenge of the "symbolism-reality" relation, at the heart of which is the ability to sift out the topoi, trappings, allegory and subjective tendentiousness of this type of monuments and extract the nuggets of reliable information. In the course of this peculiar deconstruction, the PhD student comes to the aid of the philological toolkit and knowledge of the genre specifics of particular groups of written monuments, as well as the relevant application of the methods of typological and textual critical analysis, with the help of which she extracts valuable details from the Cyrillic narratives. Compositionally, Chapter Two is divided into two subchapters, in turn consisting of multiple paragraphs. The first of these, '**Factors and conditions for the development of agricultural production**', focuses primarily on the impact of natural geography on the economy. It examines the role that geographical location, topography, climate, water, soil and bio-resources have on agriculture, crop yields, living standards, the daily life of the population, and the development of particular crafts and trade. On the basis of the physico-geographical features, natural conditions and resources of the respective areas, the doctoral student has made a successful attempt at an economo-geographical assessment of the Bulgarian lands in the Middle Ages, distinguishing two large zones, clearly outlined in the source material itself - mountainous and plain. Their natural features predetermine their economic specification - the mountainous regions favour the development of animal husbandry, while the plain ones - the cultivation of various agricultural crops and facilitate the functioning of a better communication system. Admiration should be given to the efforts of Doc. Theodora Georgieva's effort to search for the domestic-psychological projections of the natural-geographical factor in the collective consciousness of the medieval Bulgarians through a purposeful systematic analysis of the information contained in Cyrillic monuments of various genres, among which the so-called "divination books" are particularly impressive. The doctoral student links natural resources and economic activity with the invisible everyday concerns of

food security, which mirrors the primordial human fear of natural cataclysms and the onset of mass starvation. The end of this chapter is devoted to the demographic factor and its structurally determining role for the economy, but as the doctoral student herself admits, the conclusions about its importance are rather hypothetical and are the result of theoretical generalizations and logical assumptions due to the lack of sufficient information in the sources, which do not allow to verify the basic rule in the extensive type of economy, such as the medieval Bulgarian one, that population growth in itself is an indicator of increased production. The second subchapter deals with the medieval Bulgarian village and traces the structure, organization and development of agricultural production, here the data from the genre-diverse Cyrillic monuments (grammars, medical treatises, divination books, monastic tips, hagiographies, penitentials) are examined in juxtaposition and supplemented with information from Byzantine and Western European sources. In their totality, the information from all the primary sources involved confirms in a definite way the well-developed and structured agrarian sector of the medieval Bulgarian economy.

The third chapter of the dissertation, **"Craft production according to Old Bulgarian, Byzantine and Western European texts"** (pp. 167-216) covers craft production and the so-called urban economy. Compositionally, it is divided into two subchapters. The first subchapter, **"Aspects of the development of the urban network in the Bulgarian lands (13th-14th centuries)"**, serves as a kind of introduction to the subject, presenting the main Cyrillic sources on the topic (grammars, hagiographies, epistles, oratorical prose, inscriptions) and characterizing the city through the prism of its economic functions. The main part of the content of chapter three is concentrated in its second subchapter, **"Structure, organisation and development of craft production"**. It deals with the city government and its subordination to the central government, as well as the terminology concerning those engaged in craft activities. The structure, organisation and development of craft production are traced in detail, the main branches of which, according to the information in the Cyrillic monuments, supplemented by data from Byzantine and Western European sources, are: metalworking, construction, spinning, weaving, tailoring, shoemaking, c e r a m i c s , glass- and woodworking. The analysis carried out by Ph.

Teodora Georgieva, points out that the handicraft production was mainly directed to the domestic market and was not sufficient either in quantity or quality to become an export commodity. In this sense it was of secondary importance in the overall structure of the medieval Bulgarian economy, giving way to the agricultural sector. This observation is confirmed by the fact that the charters mainly mention taxes related to agricultural activity or refer to the regulation of trade relations, but there is virtually no indication of crafts. With the method of comparative analysis, the PhD student finds that this trend regarding craft production is also valid for the territory of the Wallachian Principality. More data are available for the Serbian state, in which compulsory obligations existed, expressed in the supply of various products of craft activity: clothes, shoes, utensils, tools, etc. (pp. 208-210) The third chapter concludes with the enumeration of individual professions (bakers, millers, milkmen, butchers, cooks, etc.) directly related to the urban economy, whose emergence and development was a direct response to the advanced specialization and division of labor.

The fourth chapter **"Exchange, trade and markets in the Bulgarian lands in the 13th-14th centuries according to the Cyrillic monuments"** (pp. 217-271) is related to trade in the Bulgarian lands in the 13th-14th centuries. The main research challenge for Ph. Theodora Georgieva in the development of this part of the dissertation is the scarce information contained in the domestic Cyrillic monuments (mainly in the charters, and mainly on the fiscal levies on commercial operations, and only fragmentarily in some hagiographies) regarding trade, which is compensated by the attraction of information mainly from foreign sources, supplemented with materials from archaeological research. The collected data are systematized in four subchapters. The first of them, **"The idea of the merchant in the medieval Bulgarian. Sources on the trade activity"** illustrates the collective social stereotype of trade and the persons engaged in it. The second subchapter, **"Risk and Revenue from Commercial Activity"**, deals with the revenues to the state treasury from the taxation of commercial exchange and examines the various claims and levies. The third subchapter **"Internal Trade"** traces the organization of auctions and fairs in the Bulgarian state, which were both a good source of income for the treasury and a way to overcome the imbalance in the distribution of natural resources by region. The role of the monasteries in organising auctions and fairs is also highlighted and

paid attention to the participation of the Jews in domestic trade. The fourth subchapter covers "Foreign Trade" and presents the trade relations of medieval Bulgaria with Dubrovnik, with the Italian maritime republics of Venice and Genoa, and also with Wallachia, Moldavia and Brasov. The chapter concludes with an overview of the import-export assortment of goods in Bulgarian lands and with summary observations on the coin circulation serving the trade operations. Doc. Theodora Georgieva reaches the general conclusion that "trade in the Bulgarian lands in the 13th-14th centuries was part of the general upsurge in international exchange" (p. 270).

The conclusion of the dissertation is a systematized summary of the conclusions, evaluations and observations reached by the PhD student on all structural elements of her thesis in fulfillment of the main objective and related research tasks.

Particular attention and admiration is caused by the dictionary of economic terms, prepared by Theodora Georgieva, found in the Cyrillic monuments she studied. It is compiled in the spirit of the best lexicographical traditions, as the PhD student does not simply list the terms and their meaning, but makes references to the primary sources from which the respective lexemes were derived and cites examples of their contextual usage, thus contributing to a better semantic clarification of each of the terms.

The abstract is composed as required and correctly reflects all the main parts of the thesis. In terms of content, the contributions mentioned in the abstract are correctly formulated, reflect objectively the achievements of Ph. Theodora Georgieva and in their totality are indicative of the significance of her research. Among them the following three undoubtedly stand out:

- The dissertation presents the development of the medieval Bulgarian economy (13th-14th centuries) on the basis of the domestic Cyrillic sources, whose information has not been sufficiently studied in the historiography through the prism of economic history;
- the main conceptual views of the medieval man about the economy, his idea of trade and his attitude to this activity are synthesized;
- on the basis of the Cyrillic monuments studied, a glossary of the main economic terms was compiled;

The PhD student has published six articles in Bulgarian publications on the problems addressed in the dissertation, of which 4 have been published and two in print.

IV. Notes and recommendations

The following more important remarks and recommendations can be addressed to the presented dissertation concerning its structure, style and bibliography:

- it would be better to merge the econogeographic assessment with the paragraph on geographic zoning, as it is not supported by factual material from the sources and seems like an artificial borrowing from a geography textbook;
- the title of the fourth chapter should also indicate the foreign sources to correctly reflect the origin of the data used in this part of the study;
- In some places, a bolder and more critical commentary is needed on controversial views and interpretations in the historiography in order to make the presentation more discursive and dialogical and to clarify one's own position;
- excessive use of deponent forms;
- not to cite online material, especially when it is published in book form;
- Some gaps in the main literature on the topic are noticed, such as: the series of publications (2005-2007) by St. In 2007 - 2007 and 2007 - 2007, the authors of the book "The World of the Internet", N. Nikolov, devoted to the names and terminology of craft industries, professions, tools, buildings and equipment in the Old Bulgarian language; the study by Sakuzov, Iv. On the Economy in Medieval Bulgaria. - BIB, vol. II, vol. 3, 1929, 178-211; the study of Vacheva, E. The economic life of the Bulgarians according to the Western European sources of the XII-XIV centuries - Dialog, 2008, 68-123;
- in the enclosed illustrative material the editions on which the respective primary sources were used are not indicated; it is not clear why some of the explanatory notes to the enclosed miniatures are in English; the authorship of the enclosed photographs of frescoes is also not clear.

I would like to emphasize explicitly that the notes thus made do not in any way undermine the overall excellent insight of Theodora Georgieva's dissertation. We are confronted with a truly qualitative interdisciplinary study, with a clear concept and methodology, testifying to the skills of doctoral student Teodora Georgieva to work with the study of media studies. This dissertation, crowned by its useful terminological vocabulary, presents its author as a competent, diligent and promising researcher of the medieval past.

Conclusion

The dissertation "The economic development of the Bulgarian lands according to the Cyrillic monuments (XIII - XV c.)" is a personal work of the PhD student Teodora Georgieva. The author's abstract is correctly compiled and presented objectively scientific achievements and contributions. The publications correspond to the topic and the content of the dissertation, which is prepared in accordance with the requirements for the acquisition of the educational and scientific degree "Doctor" of the Law on Education and Research. The dissertation has a complete form and with its achievements has contributed to the study of the Cyrillic monuments and the economic development of the Bulgarian lands in the period XIII - XV centuries. There are the necessary grounds to declare my positive evaluation of the dissertation research of Theodora Georgieva. In conclusion, I vote "for" with full conviction and I propose to the esteemed scientific jury to award to Teodora Krasimirova Georgieva the educational and scientific degree "PhD".

03.09.2023 r.

Reviewer:

Dimitrov/