



STATEMENT

on the dissertation of **Teodora Krasimirova Georgieva**, PhD student at the Cyrillo-Methodian Research Centre at the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, for the award of the Doctoral degree 2. Humanities, professional field 2.1. Philosophy, doctoral programme Theory and History of Literature ("Cyrillo-Methodian Studies") on the topic "**The Economic Development of the Bulgarian Lands According to the Cyrillic Monuments in the 13th - 14th Centuries**" with scientific supervisor Prof. Dr. Dimo Cheshmedzhiev

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The dissertation of Teodora Georgieva "The Economic Development of the Bulgarian Lands According to the Cyrillic Monuments in the 13th-14th Centuries" represents an original look at the Bulgarian economy of the Second Bulgarian Empire through the prism of the domestic Cyrillic sources - a topic that undoubtedly represents significant scientific interest and provides relatively broad opportunities for new synthesis and generalizations based on a number of written sources and archaeological monuments that have become known to researchers in recent decades.

The main text of the dissertation consists of an introduction, four chapters, a conclusion and a list of references used, with a total length of 301 pages. This is followed by an appendix, which includes a Glossary of economic terms in Cyrillic monuments (25 pages), photographs of images from miniatures and frescoes (7 pages) and graphics (1 page). The total length of the dissertation is 334 pages.

In the short introduction (pp. 5-18) Teodora Georgieva has presented and argued the subject and object, as well as the aims and objectives of her research, with the main focus: "on the basis of the information in the Old Bulgarian monuments to present the different aspects of the economic development of the so-called Second Bulgarian Empire: legal and institutional frameworks, fiscal mechanisms, agrarian activity, craft production and trade" (p. 5). Leaving aside the question of whether it is necessary in our historiography to follow the approach of some foreign researchers, who in the titles of their publications obsessively testify their disregard for the imperial status and historical continuity of the Tarnovo Empire¹, I believe that here (as well as later, on p. 6-7), the wide range of research undertaken in the dissertation is well articulated, which has predetermined the complex kaleidoscopic structure of the work as a whole (cf. pp. 16-

¹ A typical example of this trend is the famous article by R. L. Wolff 'The 'Second Bulgarian Empire'. Its Origin and History to 1204. – Speculum, Vol. 24, 1949, No. 2, 167-206. Nowadays, the American historian John Freed even went so far as to describe Emperor Peter as "the ruler of the Vlach-Bulgarian confederation".: Freed, J. Frederick Barbarossa: The Prince and the Myth. New Haven, 2016, 492. It is interesting that a different approach to the designation of the restored Bulgarian Empire has recently been demonstrated by the Romanian researcher Alexandru Madgearu, who systematically uses the term "Second Bulgarian Empire" without quotation marks (I leave aside the question of what understanding he puts into it): Madgearu, A. The Asanids. The Political and Military History of the Second Bulgarian Empire (1185–1280). Leiden – Boston, MA, 2017.

17). Another interesting line of research, according to Teodora Georgieva's observations, is to "trace how the economic information from the Cyrillic monuments relates to that from the foreign testimonies and thus to look for, on the one hand, the external influence and, on the other hand, to highlight the specific in the development of the late medieval Bulgarian economy and to delineate its place in the global economic conjuncture in the thirteenth - fourteenth centuries" (p. 6). A special place in the introduction is given to the genre characteristics of the Old Bulgarian monuments involved², the source base is presented and an overview of the main studies in the historiography is made.

Chapter I (pp. 18-83) is devoted to the legal and political framework of the Bulgarian economy in the 13th-14th centuries, with special emphasis on the charters of the Bulgarian emperors of that era. The following issues are addressed here:

- the state as a factor in economic development (in particular, the institution of the sovereign and the limits of the emperor's power in the context of what was borrowed from the Byzantine model);

- the fiscus and fiscal administration;

- the legal regulation of property in all its dimensions, including tax exemptions and immunity rights, which are structurally decisive in the field of socio-economic relations.

It is interesting to note the doctoral student's thesis that during the period in question "a general decentralization was observed", as "the policy of granting immunity rights, as evidenced by the charters, led to economic decentralization" (p. 78, cf. also p. 30). Here I would like to ask Teodora Georgieva whether we should also consider as a manifestation of "economic decentralisation" the well-known tendencies towards political separatism in various parts of the Bulgarian lands during the period under consideration, which may find an explanation in local circumstances (e.g. a more permanent or more fleeting rise of a local centre of power to the detriment of Tarnovo), a confluence of circumstances (e.g. loss of a major battle or war), intertwining of interests in the course of the struggle for supremacy, etc.? I also think, in the context of the idea of "economic decentralization," that we should not exaggerate the ruler's ability to dispense with lands and other real estate almost completely freely (cf. 31), since by many of his deeds of gift he does not actually relinquish anything of his own, but merely reaffirms old or, for the first time, asserts rights and privileges that have arisen recently and not of his own volition (and so he simply accepts an entrenched position) for the primary purpose of demonstrating his supreme (but often very fleeting) jurisdiction over the "grateful" beneficiary? As far as the issues of separatism are concerned, it would be good for the PhD student to draw in her research the book by Georgi Nikolov „Самостоятелни и полусамостоятелни владения във възобновеното Българско царство (края на XII – средата на XIII в.)“ (София, 2011).

Chapter II (pp. 84-166) presents the agrarian economy of medieval Bulgaria according to the Cyrillic monuments. Here, too, Teodora Georgieva demonstrates her original approach, which combines in a complex picture the data of the Cyrillic texts on the basis of a complex analysis of the geographical and climatic conditions that set an all-embracing framework for rural life, subject in no small measure to the rhythms of nature and to the necessity of a constant

² In case of future publication of the dissertation as a book, I would recommend here to refer to the study of V. Gjuzelev „Домашните извори за историята на средновековна България (Класификация, опит за характеристика и основни издания)“, published in his book „Средновековна България в светлината на нови извори“ (София, 1981), which is no doubt known to Teodora Georgieva.

struggle for survival within an extensive economic model (see pp. 83, 115, 273)³ characteristic of the medieval era. Not only are questions of the organization of rural settlements, forms of organization, and technologies of agricultural production commented on at the level of specific activities, livelihoods, and industries, but also such problems as natural disasters, harvests, and fears of famine. Attention is also paid to the reflection of demographic processes in Bulgarian medieval texts, rightly focusing on "the interrelation between the type of economy and demographic fluctuations, migration processes and the spread of epidemics" (p. 115).

Chapter III (pp. 167-216), under the title "Craft production according to Old Bulgarian, Byzantine and Western European texts", is a series of thematically linked essays on the city and its economy, the basis of which is craft production in all its diversity: metalworking (goldsmithing and blacksmithing), construction, spinning, weaving, tailoring and shoemaking, ceramic production, glass- and woodworking. On the basis of craft specialisation, specific population groups are outlined. Some additions and clarifications can be made in future publication of the thesis, such as: on p. 189-190 should be taken into account the book by Konstantin Totev „Златни пръстени-печати от времето на Второто българско царство 1185-1396“ (Велико Търново, 2010); on pp. 205, where the publications and the dissertation defended two years ago by Georgi Sengalevich on the issue of the luxury Tarnovo sgraffito pottery with underglaze imperial, patriarchal and other monograms can be taken into account⁴; on the production, import and circulation of offensive and defensive armament it would be good to consider the numerous publications by Deyan Rabovyanov (alone or co-authored with other colleagues).⁵

Chapter IV (pp. 217-271) is entitled "Exchange, Trade and Markets in the Bulgarian Lands in the 13th-14th Centuries According to the Cyrillic Monuments". It deals in turn with: the notion of the merchant in the mind of the medieval Bulgarian; state taxes and fees related to commercial activity; various aspects of internal trade (auctions and fairs, the role of the Jews as moneylenders and commercial intermediaries). Most attention is paid to the better documented foreign trade (overland - with Dubrovnik, along the Black Sea - Venice and Genoa, along the river Danube - with Wallachia, Moldavia and Brasov). Import and export and trade and monetary circulation are also dealt with

In the conclusion (pp. 272-279) Teodora Georgieva has synthesized the results of her research.

The analytical part of the dissertation is supplemented by a useful "Glossary of economic terms in Cyrillic monuments", which is based on Bulgarian, Serbian and Vlach rulers' charters, and some literary texts are also covered.

³ "The main focus of economic activity was on the agricultural sector. It has been repeatedly noted in this study that this was the essence of the medieval Bulgarian economy. The economy itself can be defined as an extensive type with a predominant development of the primary, also called extractive sector" (p. 124).

⁴ See for example: Sengalevich, G. The Bulgarian group of sgraffito ceramics with underglaze monograms: characteristics and problems. – Contributions to the Bulgarian Archeology | Приноси към българската археология, 10, 2020, 185-208 <https://www.publications.naim.bg/index.php/CBA/article/view/261> (Accessed: 29 August 2023; Сенгалевиц, Г. Средновековна сграфито керамика с монограми и други подглазурни съкращения от българските земи. Автореферат на дисертация за придобиване на образователната и научна степен "доктор". София, 2021.

⁵ I will limit myself here to just three titles: Rabovyanov, D., S. Dimitrov, Medieval armour from the Royal Palace in the Bulgarian capital Tyrnovgrad. – Acta Militaria Mediaevalia, VII, 2011, 161-174; Rabovyanov, Deyan, V. Naydenov, Vladimir. Late Medieval Coat of Plates from the Lower Danube Fortress of Nikopol. – Archaeologia bulgarica, 17, 2013, № 2, 73-88; Rabovyanov, D., S. Dimitrov, Western European armour from medieval Bulgaria (12th-15th centuries). – Acta Militaria Mediaevalia, XIII, 2017, 37-53.

In conclusion, I would like to point out that the dissertation work of Teodora Georgieva has an original character and is written with a marked striving for a complex reconstruction of the economic processes in Bulgaria in the 13th-14th century in all their diversity. Certainly, some incompleteness and weaknesses can be found in it, but my overall impression is that the doctoral candidate has successfully coped with her task. Along with that, Teodora Georgieva has fulfilled all the legal requirements - her abstract adequately reflects the content of the dissertation and contains the required list of scientific contributions, six scientific publications on the topic are also presented, two of which are in print.

On the basis of the statements made so far, I believe that the dissertation work "The Economic Development of the Bulgarian Lands According to the Cyrillic Monuments in the 13th-14th Centuries" testifies to formed professional skills and satisfies the scientific and legal requirements for the defense, which gives me grounds to vote positively for the awarding of the educational and scientific degree "Doctor" in the field of higher education 2. Humanities, professional field 2.1. Ph.D. programme Theory and History of Literature (Cyrillic Methodology).

Sofia, 01. 09. 2023

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