

STATEMENT

according to the procedure for the defense of a PhD thesis on

"Technology and society at the end of the second millennium BC in the western Black Sea region. The Late Bronze Age settlement near Durankulak"

for the acquisition of educational and scientific degree PhD

from

PhD candidate: **Bogdan Stoyanov Athanassov**
Scientific field 2. Humanities
Professional field: **2.2. History and Archaeology**

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Member of the scientific commission after Order 3-PK-61/06.12.2023 of the Rector of NBU

The dissertation “Technology and society at the end of the second millennium BC in the western Black Sea region. The Late Bronze Age settlement near Durankulak” presented by Bogdan Athanassov is a result of study of field work that have happened in the 70s and 80s of the 20th century, being carried out on the basis of archaeological record from preliminary research and unpublished material processed and presented by the PhD student. The settlement fits into the context of the Late Bronze Age (LBA) in the Eastern Balkans.

The work contains 396 pages and consists of a text part (364 pages) and illustrative appendices in tables (32 pages).

The text is structured according to a Content, a main part that includes an introduction, ten chapters that, along with the analytical part, also include a history of studies (1-165 pps), a conclusion (323-327), bibliography. The illustrative part consists of thirty-two Tables with the topography of the settlement, the chronology of the construction periods, architectural plans and illustrations of the finds.

The layout is clear, the set of computer pages is legibly presented. In-text citations are in parentheses (Oxford and Harvard system), which is one of the accepted standards in archaeological publications.

Even the title of the dissertation suggests that B. Athanassov will not limit his study to the specific empirical material he works with, even though more than forty years have passed since its discovery, which is quite a labor-intensive undertaking.

This happens within the context of LBA and EIA in Eastern Balkans but also into the Eastern Mediterranean cultural Commonwealth. The research is an attempt to transmit reconstructions, new interpretations and critical analysis of known theses through a new interpretation and application of innovative or rarely used methods not only in native but also in Balkan archaeology. The work could also be considered as a study that tries to fill a significant gap in Bulgarian historiography on the problem compared to the accumulated amount of publications from the Aegean region.

The first chapter is devoted to the history of the studies and presentation of the objectives of dissertation. With a view to explaining the goals, tasks and methods, B. Athanassov offers a comprehensive review of theoretical studies on the concepts of archaeological cultures, trade relations with raw materials, migrations, etc. Both classic studies and more innovative authors are subjected to a critical review. Against the background of this methodological picture, the PhD student's claim that the objects from the Balkan Black Sea coast have not been studied to

a sufficiently satisfactory degree is fully justified, which necessitates the approach to theorizing and creating frameworks and models. Obviously, B. Athanassov has set himself the ambitious goal that the Late Bronze Age settlement near the village of Durankulak will serve as a landmark object that would be a model for future studies of similar complexes and their interpretation. Undoubtedly, this interpretation is complicated by the low intensity of the cultural layers, the risks associated with the vertical stratigraphy approach devoid of the assumption of local settlement mobility within one or two generations.

The second chapter called “Physico-geographical conditions and paleoenvironment...” presents in detail the specifics of the landscape and living environment. Changes in the climate from the end of the 2nd and the beginning of the 1st millennium BC are reported, during which B. Athanassov found that there are no data to show out the extreme drought at the end of the 1st millennium BC.

Observations on the level of the Black Sea and Lake of Durankulak indicate that there was no danger of salinization of freshwater basins and soils. However, the level of the river waters does not allow the development of a nomadic-like economy, which otherwise has ever been characteristic feature of areas with a steppe climate, such as the Dobrudja region in other historical eras.

The next three chapters (3-5) specifically reflect the studies of the settlement near the village of Durankulak and are based on the detailed familiarization with the available documentation from the previous studies, as well as the personal observations of the PhD student. Significant corrections were made both in the historical topography and in the periodization of the complex. Observations on the architectural facilities, the distribution of housing and economic structures allow B. Athanassov to propose a social reconstruction of the population inhabiting not only the specific complex, but those similar to it. In the end, after the detailed analysis of other data from the settlement context, the conclusion was rightly made that the complex of facts does not allow the local economy to be considered as semi- or fully nomadic, but as developing a certain type of agriculture. The agricultural nature of the settlement is partially confirmed by the analysis of the flint artefacts made in the Ninth chapter of the dissertation. The absence of data on metal agricultural implements among the objects examined in the tenth chapter (Metal objects) does not limit the author from the assumption that, along with bronze sickles for harvesting, those with flint blades have been also in use.

The pottery material in the seventh chapter, in spite of its scarcity, is handled accurately, drawing numerous analogies and making corrections to some of the accepted datings.

The conclusion contributes to the complex at Durankulak as part of the settlement patterns in the Western Black Sea and the Eastern Balkans, but also in the general system of economic, social and political changes in the Eastern Mediterranean world.

The abstract compactly presents the full content of the dissertation and meets the criteria for synthesizing the results achieved on the basis of the studies carried out. The listed contributions are indisputable.

The specified scientific works - dissertation and articles meet the minimum national requirements, as well as those of New Bulgarian University for the acquisition of scientific and degree of PhD in the scientific field and professional direction.

After getting acquainted with those presented in the procedure of the dissertation work and based on the above, I recommend to the educational commission to award to Bogdan Stoyanov Athanassov an educational and scientific degree "PhD" in scientific field 2. "Humanities", professional direction 2.2 "History and archaeology".

04/03/2024

Author of the Statement:

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