

OPINION

by Prof. Thomas Thomov, New Bulgarian University

on a dissertation for awarding the educational and scientific degree DOCTOR

on the topic: THE CULTURAL AND HISTORICAL WEALTH OF BULGARIA IN THE LIST OF THE WORLD CULTURAL AND NATURAL HERITAGE OF UNESCO. NEW DATA AND PROMOTION METHODS

author Asen Bonjev

The opinion is based on a 222-page dissertation submitted by the doctoral student and a separate 121-page appendix (strategies, administrative-legal documents and archival documents for the Priest's Tomb). It is structured in an introduction, two parts - the first (pp. 24-169) with four paragraphs, the second (pp. 170-195) with two, conclusion, appendices, scientific contributions and a bibliography covering 18 translations of historical sources, 152 Bulgarian and 62 foreign language titles.

First of all, it should be pointed out that structurally, labor is in an obvious imbalance, breaking up into two independent parts, each significant for its professional direction. In this situation, it is difficult to talk about a mastered material or a research approach! In the Introduction, the cultural-historical heritage is defined as "an irreplaceable resource for economic development ... [and] an instrument of international influence" and, in accordance with UNESCO's criteria, the author makes his choice of objects - anthropogenic and natural. The question is how far the telegraphic registration of the latter is relevant in a doctoral dissertation in history! But what is more inappropriate is the statement by the author "... an irresistible desire for the state to regain its rightful role as a good steward", which remains only within the framework of the template request, which is not developed in the exhibition. Again, the author's stated goal of "making full use of modern methods for international popularization" of material Bulgarian monuments under the auspices of UNESCO puts the reader in the role of Diogenes with a lit candle, but not looking for the person, but the connection with history! Added to this is the request to "survey existing practices of promoting our cultural wealth, analyze our current external target sectors and potential future ones, especially in view of the new trends after the 2020 crisis, and propose new methods of attracting interest ". Of course, there is an explanation for this, which is due to the author's self-recognition that his competences are in the field of international commercial activity and "therefore, outside the first (historical/research) part, marketing techniques for promotion are prioritized - a field in which, I dare say, I have some competence'. Here I should stop and conclude that this is quite enough for the author with the work thus presented to appear before another jury and in another direction, but not related to history!

But I will go on to outline what not to do in a dissertation! On page 23 it is stated that the meaning of science is "to analyze, to investigate, to doubt, to build new hypotheses, and the truth, although sometimes subjective, is born in the dispute". An indisputable fact as long as there is a solid foundation and the necessary competencies for this, but in our case they are not available. This is supported by the completely redundant consideration of Thracian Orphism and the entire first paragraph of the first part. There is no contribution point when listing each of the Bulgarian material monuments under the auspices of UNESCO, instead the author is content to indicate as a conclusion either the website of the world organization or the thesis of one or two authors - e.g. p. 81, note 161, 88, note 178 or L. Ognenova-Marinova/ B. Dimitrov (for Nesebar), O. Minaeva (Madarski Konnik), E. Bakalova (Ivanovski rock monasteries). Citing sources makes a bad impression - e.g. Stephanus Byzntinus, *Ethnica*, ed. August Meineke, Berolini: Reineer 1849, whose text is in Greek and the mention of Messemvria is found on pp. 446.15-21. To this I should add the quotations from sources without reference - e.g. Boyana monument (p. 120), founder's inscription from the Boyana church (p. 123) and from the Rila monastery (p. 134), etc. I note this as it is after all a dissertation and a claim to a "Science and Education Doctorate"! The explanation of hesychasm (pp. 111-114) stands apart from the text and should find its place among the footnotes in a much more compact form. In practice, the entire first part of the dissertation has taken the form of a reference book that lists but does not present new contributions! I don't see the point of listing the natural treasures under the auspices of UNESCO since the emphasis is on the "cultural and historical wealth of Bulgaria"! In the same way, the issue with the so-called "intangible cultural heritage" - if the author wishes to deal with it, it must be indicated in the title.

In the second part, the author admits that it "has little to do with historical science"! From here follows the question, why then he chooses history, and did not focus on the direction in which he has knowledge and competences, where he could find adequate recognition for his proposals! I cannot point out the merits of the presented dissertation, especially in the so-called a historical part which, apart from listing and usual information about the cultural and historical monuments in Bulgaria under the auspices of UNESCO, is devoid of analysis followed by synthesis! What is the use of it for the presented work remains a mystery. The Conclusion, in which the marketing, the tourist destination and the related problems-recommendations prevail again, but again in a stenciled form, leads to this thought! In the end, the author should show an upgrade in the ability not only to collect information, but above all to use it adequately and professionally, something that is not found in this work. Even a large application does not go beyond a simple application of disparate materials with a claim to volume and familiarity.

The results of the dissertation research have been presented through one participation in an international conference, the remaining three titles have been declared "in press", but it is impossible to know where!

The dissertation's abstract in terms of form, volume and content meets the regulatory requirements.

From the above findings, it follows that Asen Bondjev did not cope with the main requirement for a doctoral student - to show that he is able to conduct scientific research, that he has the appropriate capacity to perform research tasks.

The above gives reason to give a NEGATIVE assessment and recommend to the honorable Scientific Jury not to award Asen Bondjev an educational and scientific degree "doctor" in professional direction 2.2 History and archaeology.

May 15, 2023

Prepared the opinion:

Sofia

(Prof. Thomas Thomov)