

OPINION

by Assoc. Prof. Dr. Konstantin Trendafilov Konstantinov,
Shumen University "Bishop Konstantin Preslavski"
for the dissertation of Assoc. Prof. Dr. Krasimir Todorov Krastev on "*Thaler coins in the Bulgarian lands in the 16th – 17th century*" for awarding the scientific degree "Doctor of Science" in the field of higher education 2. Humanities, professional field 2.2. History and archeology, scientific specialty Archeology (Numismatics)

I. Data about the author of the dissertation

Krasimir Todorov Krastev was born on April 3, 1977. In 2000 he graduated from the University of Veliko Tarnovo "St. St. Cyril and Methodius", specialty "History". From 2001 to 2005 he was a history teacher at the High School for Agriculture in town of Veliki Preslav. In the academic year 2006 – 2007 he was a history teacher at the High School "John Exarch of Bulgaria" in town of Shumen. In the period 2008 – 2012 he was a curator in the Archeology Department at Museum of History in town of Pomorie. In November 2009 he defended his doctoral dissertation on the topic: "Katoikiiai and emporia of the West Pontic polies 7th – 1st century BC (based on archaeological and numismatic data)". Since March 2012 he has been a senior assistant at the Department of History and Archeology at the Shumen University "Bishop Konstantin Preslavski", and since 2015 he has held the academic position of "Associate Professor" in Archeology (Numismatics).

II. Details of the procedure

According to the Regulations for the development of the academic staff of the Shumen University, the work of Krasimir Krastev was discussed at a meeting of the Department of History and Archeology at the Faculty of Humanities of the Shumen University. Then the Department Council took a unanimous decision to open a procedure for public defense, which was approved by the Faculty Council of the Faculty of Humanities. By Order of the Rector of Shumen University (№ RD-16-140 / 24.09.2021) a scientific jury was appointed. The latter held its first meeting on 04.10.2021, at which a chairman was elected and the reviewers and authors of opinions in connection with the forthcoming public defense were determined. The above facts give me reason to conclude that the current course of the procedure is in full compliance with the provisions of the regulations.

III. Data for the dissertation and the abstract

The dissertation consists of Preface, Sources and Historiography, seven chapters, five appendices (including tables, maps, diagrams, catalog), List of abbreviations, descriptions of image sources, List of references and Conclusion with a total volume of 345 pages of text and 173 pages of applications. The chosen topic is dissertable and is practically the first specialized study of thaler coins in Bulgaria.

The foreword begins with a short introduction, after which the subject and objectives of the dissertation are outlined. The chronological scope of the topic has been determined, as the

initial and final borders are clearly defined and connected with socio-political events from the life of the Ottoman Empire.

The source and historiographical review on the topic are separated in a separate structural part of the work. Such an approach at first glance seems illogical, but after careful reading the reader is quickly convinced of the correctness of the author's assessment. Sources and researches are analyzed in depth, in many cases critically, which is definitely one of the contributions of the dissertation.

According to the proposed structure, the first chapter of Krasimir Krastev's dissertation is devoted to the preconditions for the appearance of the thaler in money circulation. Based on a detailed analysis of socio-political events in Europe in the 15th – 16th centuries, the author very accurately manages to identify three of them: the crisis of silver, the situation with the ratio between gold and silver and the imbalance in trade with the East, which are set out in separate paragraphs.

Chapter Two traces the spread of the thaler in Europe and beyond. This long process is presented in detail in separate paragraphs, devoted to both the predecessors of the thaler and the real thaler coins and their entry into the coinage of individual countries. The author shows excellent knowledge of the issue, which allows him to very accurately navigate the complex economic relations during the study period.

Chapter Three of the dissertation provides a detailed overview of the various thaler coins circulating in the Netherlands. A significant number of silver denominations have been analyzed, some of which are widespread in a number of places around the world, including in the Bulgarian lands under Ottoman rule. The individual coins and coin types are distinguished in detail, mainly the lion-thalers.

Chapter four is one of the main ones in Krasimir Krastev's dissertation. It is dedicated to the prerequisites and reasons for the entry of the thaler in the Bulgarian lands under Ottoman rule in the period 16th – 17th century. Separate paragraphs analyze in detail the processes that led to the massive entry of European silver coins into Ottoman markets: the decline in production of precious metal mines in the Ottoman Empire, declining revenues in the Ottoman treasury, rising prices, early fiscal crises in the empire, the great financial crisis of 1585, etc.

As the title itself, which repeats that of the dissertation, shows, the fifth chapter is central to the work of Krasimir Krastev. With its inherent accuracy and detail, the author examines in detail the various types and variants of thaler coins known from collective and individual finds, found on the territory of modern Bulgaria. The ways of penetration of the European silver coins in the Bulgarian lands under Ottoman rule are traced. The excellent awareness of the dissertation on the issue is evident from the fact that he not only presents the information, but also argues on some controversial issues.

The sixth chapter, which concerns the value and purchasing power of thaler coins in the Bulgarian lands in the 16th – 17th century, also has a definite contribution character. Krasimir Krastev skillfully handles the historical facts of the period, which allows him to highlight important characteristics of market relations in the Ottoman Empire, which significantly affect the entry of thaler coins.

A significant amount of work has been done in the last seventh chapter of the dissertation. In it, Krasimir Krastev presents all known data on 155 coin treasures from the territory of Bulgaria, which contain thaler coins. A good impression is made by the fact that the dissertation has tried not only to present according to a certain model all the available information about the given find, but also to correct some previous mistakes and confusions.

The conclusion of the dissertation presents in summary the conclusions reached. The author has approached analytically and synthesized the goals and objectives. The style is readable and at the same time strictly scientific, which also makes a positive impression.

The presented abstract is made according to the rules for this type of research and fully reflects the content of the dissertation.

IV. Scientific contributions

In his self-report on scientific contributions, the dissertation has singled out eleven. In my opinion, they are all plausible and correctly stated. In this opinion, however, I want to highlight the most important, namely that in the dissertation of Krasimir Krastev for the first time processed and analyzed all the information about the circulation of European thaler coins in the Bulgarian lands in the 16th – 17th century.

V. Notes and recommendations

Without questioning the qualities of the proposed dissertation, some remarks can be made to it. First, in view of the territorial scope of the subject, a certain reduction of a third chapter could be considered, with some of the coin types and denominations presented there being set out in a separate annex. Secondly, in my opinion, it would be more successful in the future printing of the work to conclude the conclusion with more concluding material by the author and to place it immediately after the main presentation.

VI. Conclusion

The work presented by Krasimir Krastev summarizes and illustrates his research on the issue. Notwithstanding some remarks, this work is a successfully developed dissertation with undoubted originality and contributing moments related to clarifying the role and place of thaler coins in market relations in the Ottoman Empire in the 16th – 17th century. All this gives me reason to conclude that there are the necessary circumstances (scientific and procedural) for Krasimir Krastev to be awarded the scientific degree "Doctor of Science" in the field of higher education 2. Humanities and professional field 2.2. History and archeology, scientific specialty Archeology (Numismatics).

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