

OPINION

From Assoc. Prof. Dr. Zhenya Yordanova Zhekova

Regional Museum of History – Shumen

Member of a scientific jury, composed on the basis of Order № RD-16-140 / 24.09.2021.

For awarding the scientific degree "Doctor of Science" in the field of higher education: 2.

Humanities; professional direction: 2.2. History and archeology, scientific specialty:

Archeology (Numismatics)

Author Krasimir Todorov Krastev

On the topic "*Thaler coins in the Bulgarian lands in the 16th – 17th century*"

I. Details of the procedure.

The candidate for the scientific degree "Doctor of Science" Assoc. Prof. Dr. Krasimir Todorov Krastev meets the requirements of the Law for development of the academic staff in the Republic of Bulgaria, the Regulations for its implementation and the Regulations for development of the academic staff at Konstantin Preslavski University of Shumen. According to the documentation submitted to me, the procedural requirements have been met and I have not found any violations. The candidate's work was discussed at an extended department council on 13. 09. 2021 (Protocol № KD-01-01/13.09.2021), which unanimously decided to direct to public defense of the dissertation of Assoc. Prof. Dr. Krasimir Todorov Krastev "*Thaler coins in the Bulgarian lands in the 16th – 17th century.*"

II. Dissertation data.

The dissertation, presented for discussion by Krasimir Todorov Krastev, consists of: preface, review of sources and historiography, seven chapters, 5 appendices, list of abbreviations, descriptions of the sources of images, abbreviations and used literature and conclusion in general of 518 pages.

The chosen topic is related to a particularly difficult area to study, such as the monetary system in the Bulgarian lands during the period of Ottoman rule. Krastev makes an attempt to

fill a chronological gap in our numismatics, namely the chronological range of the 16th – 17th century. This gap is visible not only in numismatic, but also in general historical and archaeological research. This is the period when the modern European monetary system, based on the thaler, was born. The processes in the Bulgarian lands at that time are unclear, mostly due to the lack of a source base, which leads to the neglect and circumvention of the currency circulating in this era. In practice, the period remains unexplored.

Quite logically, in the **Preface** to the dissertation, Krastev substantiates his idea for writing this work, sets the goals and chronological scope of the study. As he himself notes, the aim of the present study is not to create a corpus of thaler coins from the territory of present-day Bulgaria or to describe all discovered thaler coins, but to highlight the place of Bulgarian lands in the European processes taking place during the study period. In the section for historiographical review, he analyzes all the used sources from the epoch, both of historians and of travelers and merchants. Following is a critical analysis of the state of research on the subject – from 1878 to the present day. The strengths and weaknesses of the few publications on the topic are highlighted, with due respect given to each predecessor who worked on the topic.

Chapter One begins with an analysis of the prerequisites for the appearance of the thaler. It consists of several paragraphs. The first of them is associated with silver in Europe in the 15th – 16th century. The reasons that led to the gradual decrease in the quantities of this metal are traced, due to a number of factors, among which – depletion of large mines, difficulties with imports from the East due to the Ottoman invasion, increased demand and others. A special paragraph is set aside on the ratio between gold and silver. It was this fluctuation and gradual decline after the middle of the 15th century that became a source of significant income for various citizens and countries. As one of the reasons for the crisis that occurred at the end of the 15th century, he sees the disrupted trade between East and West – a natural consequence of the Great Geographical Discoveries and the change of trade routes and centers.

Chapter Two traces the process of the emergence and spread of thalers in Europe and beyond. This chapter also consists of separate paragraphs dealing with various problems or stages of this long and complex process. The thaler, like many other coins in the world, has a long history. The first paragraph discusses the issue of thaler's predecessors. Its appearance, its prehistory and the connection with several older gold denominations are traced.

The second paragraph is dedicated to the appearance of the first real thaler coins – the guldiner and the guldengroschen. Krastev correctly takes into account the fact that even today in numismatic science there is still no unanimity on the problem of the emergence of the thaler

as a currency. Similarly, the third paragraph deals with the appearance of the joachimsthaler. The remaining paragraphs of this chapter analyze the emergence and distribution of various thaler coins in some European countries.

Chapter Three provides a detailed overview of the various thaler coins circulating in the territory of the United Provinces (Netherlands). In this chapter 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. Some of them were struck specifically for export. Others are intended for use on the Dutch domestic market. However, in recent years it has turned out that they are also found in our country. In this chapter a distinction is made between the individual coins, representing different types, widespread in our lands. It's mostly about the lion-thalers. But there are other denominations similar to them, which very rarely, in fact almost never, have been defined in our country – city and provincial lion-thalers, silver florins (guldens) and joint city coinage.

Having already clarified the appearance and role of the thaler in the European monetary system, **Chapter Four** traces the prerequisites and reasons for the entry of the thaler in the Bulgarian lands under Ottoman rule in the period 16th – 17th century. Here are analyzed a variety of processes that led to the massive entry of European silver coins into the Ottoman markets and their gradual adoption as legal tender, for example in the payment of taxes and fees. The chapter is divided into paragraphs, the first of which deals with the problem of reducing the production of precious metal mines in the Ottoman Empire. This leads to a reduction in the amount of silver in circulation, which is actually offset by European silver.

The following paragraphs trace and analyze various problems, such as: declining revenues in the Ottoman treasury, rising prices, early fiscal crises in the Empire, the Great Crisis of 1585, and others. As a consequence, there is a gradual decrease in the weight (and therefore the value) of the main Ottoman coin – the akche. It was then that the time of the entry of huge quantities of European thaler coins, especially after the outbreak of the crisis of 1585.

Chapter Five already discusses in detail the different types and variants of thaler coins found on the territory of modern Bulgaria and known from collective and individual coin finds. In the beginning, the ways of penetration of the European silver coins in the Bulgarian lands under Ottoman rule are traced. It is here that the greatest contributing moments in the dissertation are manifested, as Krastev dwells on debatable and controversial issues. Based on his personal experience, working with the findings themselves, he was able to analyze and correct many of the previously imposed opinions. Analyzes the reasons for the vaulting of the collective finds containing coins of the 16th – 17th century.

After analyzing the finds themselves, the purpose of **Chapter Six** is to clarify the value and purchasing power of thaler coins in the Bulgarian lands in the 16th – 17th century.

In **Chapter Seven**, Krastev presents all known data on the collective coin finds on the territory of Bulgaria, containing thaler coins. Here are commented the data for 155 treasures. Some of them are known only from the scarce data in the bulletins for the collective finds discovered over the years. Unfortunately, as with other finds from antiquity and the Middle Ages, much has been scattered and lost forever to science. For other findings, there are more detailed data, but often very confused and inaccurate. Here is the other strong contribution of Krastev, who brings all the available information about a find, trying to correct and add where necessary. Thus, in the end, the maximum detailed information was extracted for each of the 155 documented treasures. The same scheme of presentation was followed: information about the discovery of the collective finding, about the publications and its composition, an attempt to define the earliest and latest coin in a given treasure, as well as a characteristic of the whole collective find and the more important coins in it.

At the end of the study there is the obligatory for this kind of literature **Catalog**, or rather a kind of inventory, with described 155 collective coin finds from the territory of the Republic of Bulgaria. Krastev has identified 174 coin types. The personal analysis and commentary of the author is added to the description of the vaults. Impressive is his correct attitude towards other publications and opinions of authors, which are correctly reflected and precisely corrected, without attacks and non-collegial attitude.

In the section **Abbreviations and References** all publications used in the dissertation are presented. 488 titles in Bulgarian, English, German, French, Russian, Serbian, Dutch, Romanian, Turkish and other languages are included.

In the **Conclusion**, Krasimir Krastev surprisingly traces the development and use of thaler coins after the end of the study period. The emphasis is on the dollar and its transformation into a dominant world currency not only in the following centuries, but to this day.

III. Scientific contributions.

In the self-report on the contributions of his research, Krasimir Todorov Krastev correctly highlighted the moments that were contributed and they summarize and place its development at a high scientific level. In my opinion, they are all plausible and correctly stated.

One of the most important is that in practice this is the first study of its kind in Bulgaria. It fills a gap in Bulgarian numismatics – the period 16th – 17th century. The processes taking

place in Europe in the 16th – 17th century, inevitably reflected in the Ottoman Empire, where the monetary system gradually collapsed (for a number of reasons listed by the author) and so there was a gradual shift from circulation of domestic Ottoman coins – mangirs and akches and their replacement with Western European denominations. It is these extremely important from a financial and numismatic point of view problems that are at the center of the study, and the attempt to clarify them, I believe, is one of his great contributions.

Among the contributions of the study is that it is based entirely on the personal observations of the author and his work with the coin finds included in it. Both single and collective coin finds were published in the development for the first time, making them available to science for the first time.

Krasimir Krastev identifies a number of coins that have either not been published or have been published incorrectly. Among the coins found in Bulgaria, he found a large number of hitherto unknown state formations, rulers, cities and coin types. It also registers a number of new coin variants.

IV. Notes and recommendations.

Despite the huge amount of literature that Krasimir Krastev successfully handles during his work, I noticed a significant omission.

1. In the historiographical review, where he pays tribute to all those who worked on the topic, the name of perhaps the best specialist in Ottoman and Western European numismatics in Bulgaria – the deceased Dr. Vasil Haralanov was omitted. He himself has several publications in this field, and much of the data reported in the Bulletin¹ for finds from the territory of Bulgaria are due to his professional description.

2. In recent years, enough literature has been published about the life and achievements of Dr. Vasil Haralanov as the largest collector in Bulgaria. In the latest edition, based on the correspondence between Vasil Haralanov and Todor Gerasimov (which is omitted in this dissertation), there are reported collective findings that remain outside the regularly written Bulletin. In practice, they are published for the first time in this edition. Among them there are several, whose place is in the present dissertation (Shumen region – p. 403, reported in a letter dated 20.04.1946; Shumen region – p. 405 / 14.11.1958; Ruse region – p. 408 / 18.05.1967).

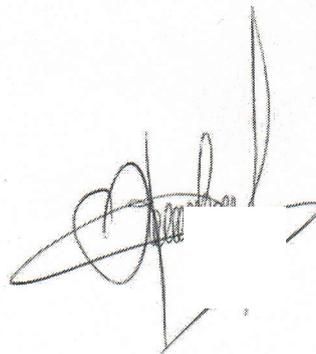
¹ Zh. Zhekova. *Vasil Haralanov – a life in letters*. The letters by Dr. Vasil Haralanov to Prof. Todor Gerasimov. Veliko Tarnovo, 2018 (Ж. Жекова. *Васил Хараланов – един живот в писма*. Писмата на д-р Васил Хараланов до проф. Тодор Герасимов. Велико Търново, 2018).

I hope that this information added by me will be only in favor of my colleague Krasimir Krastev in the future publication of this dissertation.

V. Conclusion

Krasimir Todorov Krastev's work is thorough, correct and reflects both his scientific growth and the development and finalization of his long-term research on monetary circulation in Europe and the Balkans in the 16th – 17th century. It covers the necessary indicators for the degree of "Doctor of Science".

All this gives to me a reason to conclude that there are the necessary scientific circumstances for Krasimir Todorov Krastev to be awarded the scientific degree "Doctor of Science" in professional field 2.2. History and archeology, scientific specialty: Archeology (Numismatics).



November 4, 2021.

City of Shumen

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Zhenya Yordanova Zhekova