

SCIENTIFIC OPINION

About: dissertation of Dimitar Antov Videnov

Part-time doctoral student at the Department of History and Archeology

Faculty of Humanities - Shumen University "Bishop Konstantin Preslavski";

Topic: "Educational movement of the Bulgarians in the town of Haskovo during the Revival"; for obtaining the educational and scientific degree "Doctor" in the area of higher education; Scientific field: 2. Humanities; Professional field: 2.2. "History and Archeology; research supervisor Prof. Dr. Rositsa Zhechkova Angelova- Georgieva.

Prof. Doctor of Science Pencho Denchev Penchev, UNWE

The presented text consists of 230 pages, which include an Introduction, four chapters, a conclusion, appendices, a bibliography and a list of abbreviations. From the submitted documents, it is clear that the regulatory requirements for admission of the dissertation to public defense are met.

The research topic selected by the doctoral student and his research supervisor is dedicated to a classic problem for Bulgarian historiography, related to the peculiarities of the educational development of an important geographical region. The topic can be assessed as dissertable because it is focused on the Haskovo region, for which there is no comprehensive monographic study. Some aspects of the educational movement in the Haskovo region have been the subject of research interest, but there is no comprehensive development for them. In this sense, the dissertation will fill an important gap in Bulgarian historical science.

For the aims of writing of the dissertation, a diverse source base of central and local archives, published documents, periodicals, etc. were used. I find the similarity of data from regional archives, which often go unnoticed by researchers, particularly valuable. The author of the dissertation knows with the necessary depth and uses most of the researches that directly or indirectly contribute to the clarification of individual problems on the topic.

In my opinion, the contributing elements and achievements of Dimitar Videnov can be synthesized in several directions:

1. The author has made efforts to gather in a meaningful story the scattered facts about the development of Bulgarian education in the Haskovo region during the Revival. Despite the objective difficulties associated with the lack of sufficiently authentic source material, a relatively dense and comprehensive picture of the educational development of not only the city of Haskovo, but also the most important settlements in the region is depicted. It shows that the cultural and educational movement affects not only the city center, but also reaches more developed villages. The Bulgarians in them, especially in the last two decades before the Russo-Turkish war of 1877-1878, took the initiative to open schools and other educational institutions, self-organized and were ready to give part of their funds for national and secular education.

2. The doctoral student has achieved a careful balance between the focus on the development of schools on the one hand and the other socio-economic, political and cultural processes that take place among Bulgarians on the other. In this sense, the dedication of one of the chapters (Chapter Four) to the Chitalishtes in the Haskovo region in the third quarter of the 19th century can be defined as particularly successful. With an important part of their activity, the chitalishtes are essentially presented as a specific appendage of the school network. They are engaged in educational activities among people who are outside the school network, perform auxiliary social functions for schools, etc.

3. With the second and third chapters of the dissertation, which are directly devoted to the emergence and development of modern Bulgarian education in Haskovo, Dimitar Videnov reveals many interesting details of the functioning of educational structures in the Bulgarian lands during the Revival. The difficulties and obstacles faced by the Bulgarian Revival teachers and the municipalities that finance education are becoming clear. Careful reading of the collected facts shows how difficult it is to summarize them and put them in pre-set schemes and periodizations. While modern and secular schools are established in the leading Revival centers, in the villages there are often no schools at all or there are private, cell and other schools.

4. My acquaintance with earlier versions of the dissertation shows that in the final version, which is presented to our attention as a jury, a significant evolution has been achieved in the direction of overcoming many weaknesses and insufficiently substantiated claims. The author has significantly reduced empty emotional outbursts and strengthened the analytical part. Striking errors have been removed and corrected (for example, because the Revival began with "Slavo-Bulgarian History", etc.), the language of the exposition has been significantly improved. All this creates the impression of conscientious work and a correct attitude to scientific criticism.

Like any good scientific development, this one opens up new research perspectives. In my opinion, the issue of size, chronological scope, cultural and educational dimensions, etc. of Greekism in the Haskovo region deserve special attention. From what is stated in the dissertation, it is clear that the struggle against the so-called Greeks often gives meaning and is a driving motive for educational development.

Some relatively insignificant remarks can be made to the dissertation, which should be taken into account if the author decides to rework this study into a book. It is still necessary to refine the titles of the separated chapters and paragraphs. For example, the first chapter is entitled "Economic characteristics of Haskovo and the region until the middle of the XIX century as a prerequisite for the educational movement." However, in the content of this chapter there are facts that are after the Crimean War (p. 17) and some processes that are not part of the economic but of the social development of Haskovo has been described. The author must define what is meant by Haskovo area, what is the administrative status of the town and the changes in it and what is the church-administrative situation of the region. It is good to make a summary at the end: how many settlements are there in the Haskovo region, how many of them have a Bulgarian population and how many have had some registered form of educational activity. Thus, the overall achievements and problems facing the educational development of Bulgarians will become much clearer.

The summary of the characteristics of the presented dissertation shows that the positive features are significantly more than the disadvantages. There is an original work with clear author's theses. The goals and tasks set in the introduction can be considered fulfilled. This gives me a reason to vote for the award of Dimitar Antov Videnov to the educational and scientific degree "Doctor" in the field of higher education 2. Humanities, professional field 2.2 History and archeology.

10.04.2022

Signature: (illegible)

(Prof. P. Penchev)

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'P. Penchev', written over a faint rectangular stamp or grid.